



尤伦斯当代艺术中心  
Center for Contemporary Art

**Anicka Yi: There Exists Another Evolution, But In This One**

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**Exhibition Period:**

2025.3.22 – 2025.6.15

**Location:**

UCCA Beijing Great Hall

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UCCA Center for Contemporary Art presents “Anicka Yi: There Exists Another Evolution, But In This One” between March 22, 2025, and June 15, 2025, the artist’s first solo exhibition in China and her most extensive presentation to date, featuring nearly 40 works. This exhibition offers a profound entry point into Anicka Yi’s multisensory universe of biology, technology, philosophy, and art, in a bold yet nuanced reflection of the human experience against the background of systems in flux.

BEIJING, China—From March 22, 2025, to June 15, 2025, UCCA Center for Contemporary Art presents “Anicka Yi: There Exists Another Evolution, But In This One,” the first solo exhibition by acclaimed Korean-American artist Anicka Yi (b. 1971, Seoul; lives and works in New York City) in China and her most extensive presentation to date. Featuring nearly 40 works spanning her career—including a number of pieces newly commissioned for this presentation—this exhibition offers a unique experience of Yi’s constantly evolving practice. The exhibition is co-organized by UCCA Center for Contemporary Art, and Leeum Museum of Art, and co-curated by Peter Eleey, UCCA Curator-at-Large, and Gina Lee, Curator, Leeum Museum of Art.

For over a decade, Yi has been merging the technosphere with the biosphere in her art, creating works that are both provocative and deeply resonant. She has captivated the global art community not just through visual appeal, but through what she terms the “biopolitics of the senses”—an exploration of how sensory experiences are shaped by cultural and biological forces. Utilizing organic and ephemeral materials such as bacteria, scents, and tempura-fried flowers, Yi delicately captures the nuances of human emotion and sensation. By meditating on the fragile yet resilient interdependence of life, she underscores the shared stakes that connect all living forms, embedding existential questions of life, death, and decay into her work.



The exhibition's spatial design unfolds across gallery spaces that evoke the sterile atmospheres of laboratories, spacecraft, and corporate interiors. In their material language, these environments heighten the tension between containment and interdependence, while allowing for close study and examination of artistic histories and possible futures, echoing Yi's exploration of worlds in flux. Anchoring the exhibition's survey of Yi's nearly two-decade-long career is *Mr. Taxi for GG* (2012), an early work that foregrounds the artist's enduring interest in sensory experience, impermanence, and the porous boundaries between human and nonhuman entities. The piece introduces key themes and materials that continue to resonate in Yi's practice today and are prominently featured in this exhibition.

Though the body is a constant reference throughout Yi's oeuvre, the human form appears within it only rarely. In *Mr. Taxi for GG*, it is simply evoked through the use of a plastic raincoat, an early example of her frequent use of transparent, protective materials. Employing a moldering tempura-fried bouquet in place of a head, Yi alludes to death and rituals of mourning. In allowing natural environmental and bacterial forces to reshape the work over the course of its display, she pushes against the notion of art as something fixed or preserved, and alludes to a posthuman condition.

In a similarly transformative vein, Yi's recent scent work *Walking on Two Paths at Once* (2023) extends these explorations into the olfactory realm. Beginning with her earliest works, Yi has used scent to immerse viewers in her practice on a visceral level, as smells are often perceived before conscious awareness is formed. She has also described her attraction to scent as something rooted in absence, as smell can powerfully evoke people, places and things no longer present. Collaborating with renowned perfumer and founder of the Arpa fragrance brand, Barnabé Fillion, Yi crafted a fragrance that blends marine, animalic, metallic, floral, and umami notes, balancing citrus, intensifying algae, and incorporating bold accents like gasoline and petrichor. The result is a multifaceted, slightly abject scent that



conjures vast oceanic and otherworldly realms, unfolding at the convergence of land, sea, and sky, bridging illusions of the past with the future.

Highlighting Yi's ongoing exploration of organic and non-organic life forms, the "Kelp Pods" series (2019-2023), the "Radiolaria" series (2023-2024), and *Another You* (2024) further explore the boundaries between the biological and the synthetic, reflecting Yi's continuing inquiry into the ways in which technology and nature intersect to form new possibilities for life. Yi uses kelp—a seaweed that forms underwater forests—to create organically shaped lamp sculptures that resemble insect cocoons and internal organs. Mechanical moths cast shadows on the interior surfaces of the works. Illuminated by soft yellow light, the Kelp Pods evoke Yi's concept of the "biologized machine" that blends the organic and artificial.

Inspired by ancient zooplankton, the animatronic sculptures in the "Radiolaria" series further expand upon these interests and forms. The exhibition features the largest group of Radiolaria yet assembled, and premieres three new works in the series. *Another You* (2024) extends Yi's investigation of human/non-human relationships. Realized in collaboration with biologists from the College of Life Sciences, Beijing Normal University, the work employs colorful, genetically engineered bacteria that incorporate the DNA of marine organisms like jellyfish and coral in a hybridization that redefines the lines between species. Together, these works challenge conventional notions of life, kinship, and identity, offering a vision of a future where biology, technology, and humanity are intricately connected through a reshaping of conventional understandings of existence.

In recent years, Yi has explored artificial intelligence, taking it both as a tool and a subject for her work. The "Quantum Foam Painting" series (2020-2024) documents her experiments applying machine learning to the medium of painting. The series title refers to the theoretical physics concept of quantum foam, in which tiny particles and energy fluctuations spontaneously appear and disappear due to Werner



Heisenberg's uncertainty principle, allowing "nothingness" to briefly become "something" before vanishing again. Trained on imagery from the artist's earlier works, algorithms created shapes that bring to mind blood cells, algae, and oceanic landscapes. Yi then layered these elements over each other to form compositions that simultaneously evoke aliens, deep sea creatures, and electronic machinery.

The exhibition also features a new video work, *Each Branch of Coral Holds Up the Light of the Moon* (2024), which is the first work that Yi has created with her *Emptiness* software. Projected along the curved wall that marks the edge of the main exhibition space, the video delves into the potential for the creative process to continue beyond the artist's biological death, offering a provocative meditation on the future of creativity and human expression. At the heart of the project lies an algorithm that is learning from Yi's studio output, functioning as a "digital twin" of her practice. The resulting video reimagine Yi's past artworks as living virtual creatures, referencing Buddhist philosophy and quantum meditation. The piece also speaks to Yi's desire to continue creating art after her death: trained on her work, the software will be able to continue creating "Anicka Yi" art even without her presence. Through these and other collaborations with experimental technologies, Yi redefines our relationship with the digital realm, questioning traditional notions of art as a solely physical and exclusively human endeavor.

As the exhibition unfolds, early works enter into dialogue with Yi's more recent projects, including these algorithmic explorations and immersive environments. Rather than a linear progression, Yi's practice emerges as a series of interconnected experiments, looping back on itself while advancing into unknown futures. Foundational concerns raised early in her career—such as material instability, the blending of organic and synthetic life, and the evolution of intelligence—have remained relevant while continuously being reconfigured through new frameworks, technologies, and conceptual approaches. This dynamic interplay of the organic and the artificial



reflects the ever-evolving nature of Yi's creative strategy, where decay, transformation, and interdependence shape the underlying narrative.

Through her groundbreaking, multisensory approach to art, Yi reimagines the boundaries between life and technology. "We're at this critical razor's edge," she has said, "where we can either annihilate ourselves with our fear of technology or try to endure and prosper." In a time when rapid advancements in artificial intelligence are provoking both hope and trepidation, Yi offers new possibilities for considering the nature of human evolution, creativity, and emerging forms of coexistence.

#### **About the Artist**

Anicka Yi (b. 1971, Seoul; lives and works in New York City) has been the subject of numerous solo exhibitions at institutions around the world, including "Metaspore" (Pirelli HangarBicocca, Milan, 2022); "Hyundai Commission: Anicka Yi: In Love With the World" (Turbine Hall, Tate Modern, London, 2021); "Life Is Cheap" (Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, 2017); "Jungle Stripe" (Fridericianum, Kassel, 2016); "7,070,430K of Digital Spit" (Kunsthalle Basel, Basel, 2015), "You Can Call Me F" (The Kitchen, New York, 2015).

Group exhibition highlights include "New Order: Art and Technology in the Twenty-First Century" (Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2019), the 58th Venice Biennale "May You Live In Interesting Times" (Venice, 2019), "The Body Electric" (Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 2019), "The Dream of Forms" (Palais de Tokyo, Paris, 2017), 2017 Whitney Biennial (Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 2017), "The Eighth Climate (What does art do?)" (11th Gwangju Biennale, Gwangju, 2016), and "Meanwhile... Suddenly and Then" (12th Lyon Biennale, Lyon, 2013).

She is the recipient of the Guggenheim Hugo Boss Prize (2016) and the Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation Award (2011). Yi's works are included in several public collections including the Solomon R.



Guggenheim Museum, New York; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Julia Stoscheck Collection, Dusseldorf; the Rubell Family Collection; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

#### **Public Programs**

On the day the exhibition opens to the public, UCCA Curator-at-Large and exhibition co-curator Peter Eleey will lead an on-site special guided tour, introducing the artworks and curatorial concepts. This will be followed by an Artist Talk by Anicka Yi, after which she will engage in dialogue with the curator. Marking the artist's first visit to China, this program will introduce Yi's artistic practice to local audiences, inviting them to immerse themselves in her multisensory world and explore the expansive symbiotic system she constructs at the intersections of science, philosophy, and art.

Throughout the exhibition period, UCCA will curate a workshop series "The Ultimate Guide to Raising Extraterrestrials in Your Local Museum," offering participants a hands-on exploration of AI-generated imagery. Over the course of four structured sessions, this workshop series will systematically introduce AI and its applications in artistic creation, followed by an exploration of mainstream AI image-generation tools. It will then delve deeper into the theoretical principles and algorithms behind AI technology. The ultimate goal of this series is to equip participants with the core skills needed for AI image creation, enabling them to produce their own unique AI-generated visual works.

Alongside the exhibition, UCCA and the Berggruen Research Centre at Peking University will co-present the "Symbiosis and Temporal Flow" conversation series. As a parallel program to the exhibition, this three-part series will bring together scientists and scholars from biology, medical anthropology, and science fiction literature, in dialogue with contemporary artists working in digital imagery, video games, new media sculpture, and installation. Together, they will explore the intersections of the sciences and humanities through cross-disciplinary dialogue.



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#### **Support and Sponsorship**

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#### **Catalogue**

A multilingual catalogue will follow the exhibition, co-published by UCCA Center for Contemporary Art and Leeum Museum of Art, featuring texts by exhibition co-curators Peter Eleey and Gina Lee alongside contributions from Cathy Park Hong, Bogna Konior, Kriti Sharma, and Gary Zhexi Zhang.

#### **About UCCA**

UCCA Center for Contemporary Art is China's premier museum of modern and contemporary art. Committed to the belief that art can deepen lives and transcend boundaries, UCCA presents a wide range of exhibitions, public programs, and educational initiatives across four architecturally and programmatically distinct locations. Owned by a group of committed patrons, it is funded by donations, sponsorship, ticketing, and proceeds from the commercial activities of UCCA Lab. UCCA has presented more than 200 exhibitions and welcomed more than ten million visitors since its founding in Beijing in 2007 as the Ullens Center for Contemporary Art.

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