

# GLADSTONE GALLERY

## Anicka Yi

*We Have Never Been Individual*  
12 Rue de Grand Cerf, Brussels  
April 23 – June 15, 2019  
Opening April 23, 2019

Gladstone Gallery is pleased to present an exhibition of new work by Anicka Yi entitled *We Have Never Been Individual*, her first with the gallery. Through her work, Anicka Yi directs us to the dissolving boundaries between the human, animal, and vegetable and emphasizes that the question of who and what we are – what animals and bacteria and plants and machines are – is an open and urgent question. By way of her technosensual explorations of hybridization and contamination, Yi repositions the human in terms of vulnerable co-subjectivity, interdependency, and agitated symbiosis with other lively entities.

As discoveries are made in the fields of microbiome research, artificial intelligence, and animal and plant cognition, traditional ideas of individual autonomy and human exceptionalism appear wholly inadequate. Fluid entanglements between lively and intelligent entities at both the micro and macro scale reveal to us that there is no defined center, no single inner voice or single self at the helm. Neat and tidy categories no longer serve as our current models struggle to keep pace with the rapid mutations of our bodies, technologies, and environments.

In *We Have Never Been Individual*, Anicka Yi explores the potency and precariousness of entangled life in multiple spatial and temporal scales. Suspended throughout the gallery, Yi's series of glowing spherical sculptures are upholstered with a stretched leather-like kelp, calling attention to the ecological history and exciting potential uses of algae, a powerful and shapeshifting entity comprising the largest biomass on the planet. As green and gold light shines through the varied kelp surfaces, the texture of scratches and scars on the "skin" of each sculpture suggest embattled aquatic life and remind us of our primordial crawl from the sea. Shadows of small animatronic insects flicker inside the sculpture walls, offering a humorous nod toward notions of autonomy and artificial intelligence, while also suggesting the presence of parasites, symbionts, or hive colonizers.

In a second series, Yi creates minimalist microalgae and cyanobacteria aquascapes, focusing on the symbiotic partnership between these microorganisms – the basis of all terrestrial life on earth. Drawing inspiration from algae-exploiting, solar-powered sea slugs and contemporary aquaculture practices, Yi's aquascapes are staged as mini-bioreactors, suggesting the human capacity to harness algae as a food and energy source, and hinting towards a more intimate symbiosis in the future. Within these living paintings are nested glass incubation chambers and fabricated insect eggs, evoking associations with bodily fluids, gestation, and disease. In contrast to these minimalist scapes, Yi includes a set of intricate and richly colored bacterial light panels. Bacterial cultures are UV-printed on the surface of the panels, interweaving with an abstracted architectural pattern that references computer networks and urban infrastructural grids.

Central to the exhibition are the hypertextural and tactile *Techno-Geo* sculptures, which muddy the imperfect categorizations of natural, synthetic and trans-natural through a collage of organic, geological, and industrial elements. Fossilized remnants of animals and plants emphasize blurred ecological boundaries as evolutionary trajectories are compressed, accelerated, and expanded through time. Delicate, connection points between the sculptural components underscore the unhinged, teetering balance between living species and the damaged and hazardous terrain of manufactured environments. The uncertain distinction between natural elements and synthetic intervention suggests that the status of "natural" is always changeable. Whether through simulation, biomorphism, or mimicry – nature is a concept that is constantly in drag as itself. In *We Have Never Been Individual*, assemblages masquerade as wholes, robots pose as insects, plant flesh mimics animal flesh, life resembles death and vice versa. Within this matrix of shifting impersonations, the modern mythology of the human proves to be an outdated disguise for something at once smaller, greater, and more complex than we had imagined.

Anicka Yi was born in Seoul, South Korea, and currently lives and works in New York City. Her work has been the subject of numerous solo exhibitions at institutions around the world, including the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Fridericianum, Kassel, Germany; Kunsthalle Basel, Switzerland; List Visual Arts Center, MIT, Cambridge, Massachusetts; The Kitchen, New York; and the Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, Ohio. Group exhibition venue highlights include the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Zürich, Switzerland; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota; Witte de With Contemporary Art, Rotterdam, The Netherlands; Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris, France; Institute of Contemporary Art / Boston, Massachusetts; New Museum, New York; Palais De Tokyo, Paris, France; the 2017 Whitney Biennial, New York; K11 Art Foundation, Hong Kong; the 12th Biennale de Lyon; Studiolo, Zurich; MoCA, North Miami; Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Basel; White Flag Projects, Saint Louis; SculptureCenter, New York and White Columns, New York, amongst others. In 2016, Yi was awarded the Hugo Boss Prize in recognition of the power and singularity of the experimental body of work she has produced over the past decade. This May, her work will be featured in Venice at the 58th International Art Exhibition, titled *May You Live In Interesting Times*, curated by Ralph Rugoff, on view from May 11 until November 24, 2019.

Damián Ortega  
515 West 24th Street  
May 1 – June 8, 2019

Vivian Suter  
530 West 21st Street  
April 11 – June 8, 2019

Lina Bo Bardi  
130 East 64th Street  
April 27 – June 15, 2019

For further information, please contact Andrew Huff: [ahuff@gladstonegallery.com](mailto:ahuff@gladstonegallery.com)  
Brussels gallery hours: Tuesday–Friday, 10am–6pm and Saturday, 12pm–6pm  
New York gallery hours: Tuesday–Saturday, 10am–6pm