

GLADSTONE

Anicka Yi

Begin Where You Are

Gladstone Seoul

May 31 – July 8, 2022

For her first exhibition at Gladstone Seoul, *Begin Where You Are*, Anicka Yi presents an exhibition of new and classic artworks from the artist's oeuvre. In a self-metabolic process, the artist collapses the space and time of over a decade of artistic practice. The works on view touch upon moments spent in the Amazon rainforests of Brazil and along the bubbling algae-covered coastlines of California, before returning to our present reality of machine and screen-mediated existence. This will be Anicka Yi's first solo exhibition in Korea.

Reflecting on the past few years, the artist asks, "What does it mean to reset in times such as these? What of the past are we leaving behind, and what new paths of becoming are opening before us?" While withholding any clear answer, the artist's characteristic biomorphic and "techno-sensual" aesthetics blend aspects of synthetic and industrial life with entropy, sensuality, and abjection, all infused with a bright and playful palette that hints toward the stubborn resilience of life, even amidst global cataclysm.

Begin Where You Are opens with a large panel intricately carved with sea anemone, coral polyp, and amoeba shapes. Similar to the sinuous, polychromatic forms of sea anemones that Yi observed while living in the headlands of California, the rippling surface of this sculpture flashes from deep wine, to flaming orange, to a burnished gold. Beyond coastal aquatic life, Yi's Anemone Panels are also inspired by the concentric, spiky geometries that spontaneously form within magnetized ferrofluid, originally developed at NASA. These ferrofluid structures bear an uncanny resemblance to both sea anemones and flowers, reflecting the tendency of self-organizing phenomena, both living and nonliving, to converge on similar patterns. Through their immaculate surface suggestive of CGI, the panels evoke a frozen feeling, as if stumbling upon a computer rendering suspended in the physical world. With an exquisite swirling core, this central sculpture seems to indicate an undulating cosmos, flickering between the rendered and the real.

Borne from her earliest experiments with materiality and technique, incorporating sensual aspects of taste, smell, salivation, and sweat, Yi's Tempura-Fried Flower works are one of the earliest series of her practice on view. In these works, the delicate and romantic connotations of blooming flowers, one of nature's most precious commodities, are corrupted by the irreverent and greasy, yet tantalizing process of battering and deep frying in oil. As if suspended permanently in a process of decay, the blooms maintain their elegant forms while their original vivid colors are softened and obscured by the frying process. For *Begin Where You Are*, Yi premieres a new iteration of these works, in which she has refined the alchemical process, extracting the grease and replacing it with an archivally-stable resin.

Yi's Chicken Skin series emerged from her travels in the Brazilian Amazon and her readings of anthropologist, Eduardo Viveiros de Castro. Both animalistic and vegetal, the goose-pimpled surface of the chicken skin sculptures outlines a central orifice where leaves and flowers sprout, blossom, and take root. The rectilinear frames are wrapped in silicone and interlaced with pores and hair-like fibers, mimicking the gooseflesh and raised hairs of animal skin in a stimulated state. By incorporating orchids, which coevolved to mimic and entice their insect pollinators, the Chicken Skins replicate this

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transgression between the plant and animal kingdoms. Yi's interest in the destabilizing distinctions between the natural and synthetic, paired with what she terms the "fugitive" quality of these categories is reflected in the Chicken Skins and their ability to shape-shift and hybridize.

With their languorous, honeycomb forms draped and folded like skin over a metal scaffolding, Yi's Nest sculptures were inspired by insect hives. Representing a marriage of the biological and technological, and as if harboring emergent lifeforms, these fleshy hive structures glow from within and their surfaces are embedded with vibrant beads, resembling gestating larvae or stored pollen. A digital clock trails from beneath each hive, with gleaming red numbers that indicate the passing of human-measured time, perhaps a countdown, as a vague sense of crisis seems to hang overhead. Propped up on their spindly legs, the Nest sculptures elicit an empathetic response to their fragile and swaying, yet somewhat ominous forms. Often exhibited in multiples, these nests with their insectoid associations, show the early traces of Yi's fascination with collectivity, networked intelligence, and "hive minds."

Yi's Lenticular Prints offer a glimpse into a haunting space where the digital and the biological merge. The imagery is generated from a machine learning model that was fed selective works and reference images from Yi's archive. For this most recent set of lenticular prints, Yi has developed a vibrant palette by hybridizing her machine learning model with fresh images of brightly colored and patterned tropical fish, jellyfish, and sea slugs. Abstract watery patterns bubble and foam, interrupted by streaks of electric greens and violets, warm oranges, and cool yellows.

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 Hyundai Commission, Turbine Hall, Tate Modern, London (2021); Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (2017); Fridericianum, Kassel (2016); Kunsthalle Basel, the MIT List Visual Arts Center, Cambridge (MASS.), and The Kitchen, New York (2015); the Cleveland Museum of Art (2014). Yi has also participated in significant group shows, including the Venice Biennale (2019); the Whitney Biennial, New York (2017); the Okayama Art Summit, the Gwangju Biennale (2016); the Taipei Biennial (2014); the Lyon Biennale (2013). Important prizes won by Yi include The Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation Award (2011) and the Guggenheim Hugo Boss Prize (2016). *Metaspore*, Yi's expansive solo exhibition curated by Fiammetta Griccioli and Vicente Todolí at Pirelli HangarBicocca in Milan, is on view through July 22.

For further information, please contact press@gladstonegallery.com
Seoul gallery hours: Tuesday–Friday, 10am–6pm and Saturday by appointment only
New York gallery hours: Tuesday–Saturday, 10am–6pm
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