

ANICKA
YI

7,070,430K of
DIGITAL
SPIT

12.6. – 16.8.
2015

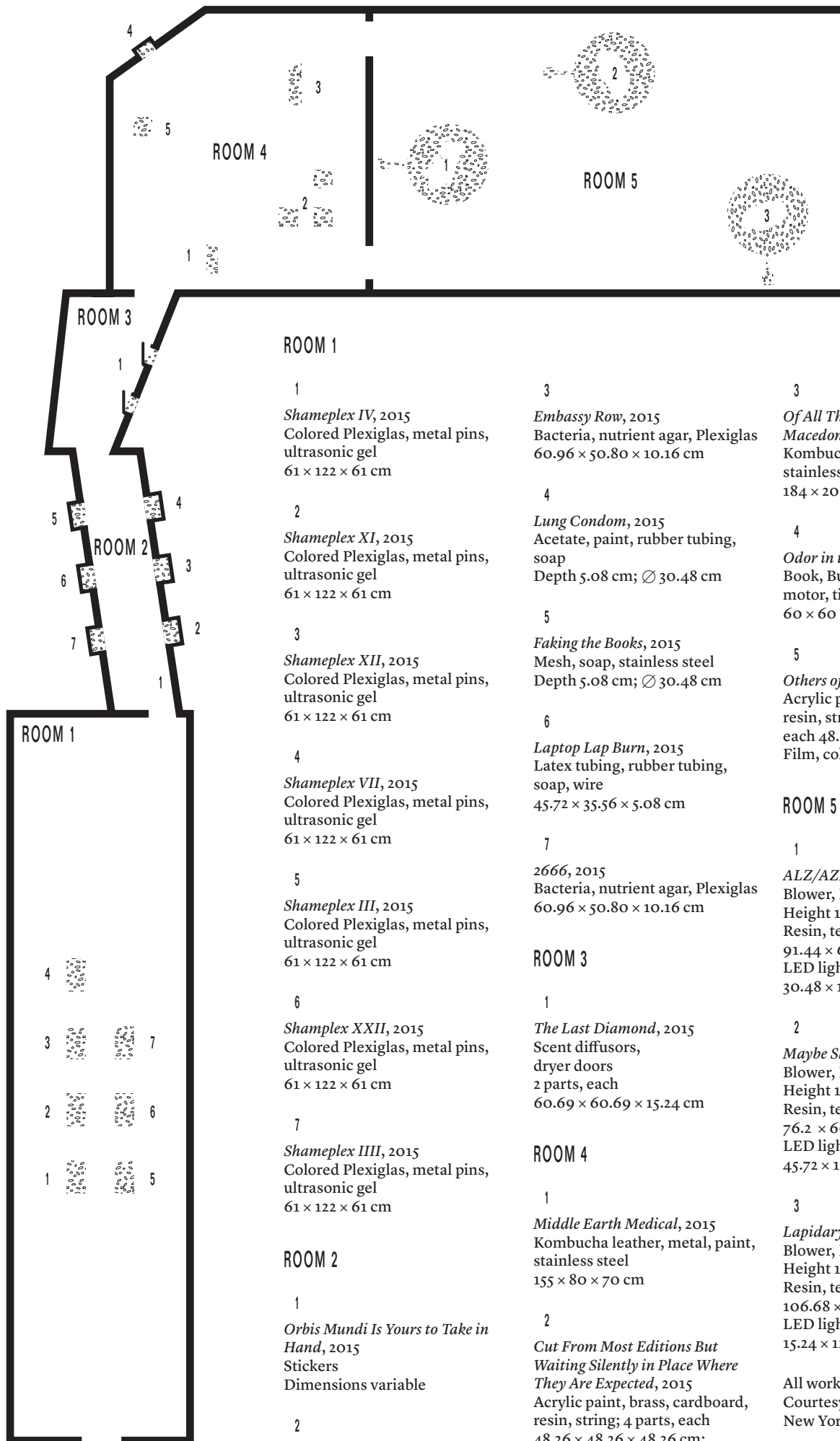
KUNSTHALLE BASEL

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What does forgetting look like? Smell like? Anicka Yi's exhibition *7,070,430K of Digital Spit* takes the attempt to forget not so much as a subject or a theme, but as an aesthetic operation. The show is a coda to Yi's last few years of intense artistic production. That production was built around perishable substances (tempura-fried flowers, recalled powdered milk, monosodium glutamate crystals, snail excretions) juxtaposed with their opposites (seemingly indestructible plastics, steel pots, chrome dumbbells) and often embedded within glycerin, resin, or hair gel. Her combinations testify as much to her adventurous chemical experimentation as to the psychological charge (desire, longing, loss) she imbues things with.

Denial, Divorce, Death: these were some of the ominous titles of Yi's past shows, each one confronting the pursuit of what the artist calls "the forensics of loss and separation." In the works, things slowly cooked, rotted, melted, or even dripped grease down the gallery walls. This staging of perishability, metabolism, and entropy is intimately connected to the artist's idea of the self as it is transformed by increasingly digital technologies.

Yi now returns to that past as if to exorcise it. She started by devising a scent to evoke exactly that ineffable process she was seeking: forgetting. Working in collaboration with a French perfumer, she approached the design of the smell from the perspective of the absence of memory—specifically a fetus in an amniotic sac. She then added to the narrative visions of an Alzheimer's patient surrounded by the metallic, sterile smells of hospital beds, medication, and despair. As Yi recounts, "The smell of forgetting is also an imagined apocalyptic end when all memory is eradicated." It is, in other words, the death of history.

It was a renegade artistic gesture on Yi's part to take her very first monograph and reprint it as *7,070,430K of Digital Spit, A Memoir*, on handmade incense paper impregnated with her newly concocted smell of forgetting. She invites you to literally burn the book after reading it, thereby releasing the embedded fragrance while destroying this important first overview of her production. After all, what



ROOM 1

- 4
- 3
- 2
- 1

ROOM 1

- 1
Shameplex IV, 2015
Colored Plexiglas, metal pins,
ultrasonic gel
61 × 122 × 61 cm
- 2
Shameplex XI, 2015
Colored Plexiglas, metal pins,
ultrasonic gel
61 × 122 × 61 cm
- 3
Shameplex XII, 2015
Colored Plexiglas, metal pins,
ultrasonic gel
61 × 122 × 61 cm
- 4
Shameplex VII, 2015
Colored Plexiglas, metal pins,
ultrasonic gel
61 × 122 × 61 cm
- 5
Shameplex III, 2015
Colored Plexiglas, metal pins,
ultrasonic gel
61 × 122 × 61 cm
- 6
Shamplex XXII, 2015
Colored Plexiglas, metal pins,
ultrasonic gel
61 × 122 × 61 cm
- 7
Shameplex IIII, 2015
Colored Plexiglas, metal pins,
ultrasonic gel
61 × 122 × 61 cm

ROOM 2

- 1
*Orbis Mundi Is Yours to Take in
Hand*, 2015
Stickers
Dimensions variable
- 2
S.S.S., 2015
Brass, paint, rubber tubing,
soap, string
45.72 × 35.56 × 5.08 cm

- 3
Embassy Row, 2015
Bacteria, nutrient agar, Plexiglas
60.96 × 50.80 × 10.16 cm
- 4
Lung Condom, 2015
Acetate, paint, rubber tubing,
soap
Depth 5.08 cm; Ø 30.48 cm
- 5
Faking the Books, 2015
Mesh, soap, stainless steel
Depth 5.08 cm; Ø 30.48 cm
- 6
Laptop Lap Burn, 2015
Latex tubing, rubber tubing,
soap, wire
45.72 × 35.56 × 5.08 cm
- 7
2666, 2015
Bacteria, nutrient agar, Plexiglas
60.96 × 50.80 × 10.16 cm

ROOM 3

- 1
The Last Diamond, 2015
Scent diffusers,
dryer doors
2 parts, each
60.69 × 60.69 × 15.24 cm

ROOM 4

- 1
Middle Earth Medical, 2015
Kombucha leather, metal, paint,
stainless steel
155 × 80 × 70 cm
- 2
*Cut From Most Editions But
Waiting Silently in Place Where
They Are Expected*, 2015
Acrylic paint, brass, cardboard,
resin, string; 4 parts, each
48.26 × 48.26 × 48.26 cm;
Film, color, silent, loop

- 3
*Of All Things Orange or
Macedonian Wine*, 2015
Kombucha leather, metal, paint,
stainless steel
184 × 200 × 60 cm
- 4
Odor in the Court, 2015
Book, Bunsen burner, metal,
motor, tiles, various materials
60 × 60 × 60 cm

- 5
Others of Little Weight, 2015
Acrylic paint, brass, cardboard,
resin, string; 2 parts,
each 48.26 × 48.26 × 48.26 cm;
Film, color, silent, loop

ROOM 5

- 1
ALZ/AZN, 2015
Blower, Mylar, plastic, wood
Height 1.52 m; Ø 3.05 m;
Resin, tempura-fried flowers, wax
91.44 × 60.96 × 60.96 cm;
LED lights, Plexiglas, wood
30.48 × 121.92 × 121.92 cm
- 2
Maybe She's Born with It, 2015
Blower, Mylar, plastic, wood
Height 1.52 m; Ø 3.05 m;
Resin, tempura-fried flowers, wax
76.2 × 60.96 × 60.96 cm;
LED lights, Plexiglas, wood
45.72 × 121.92 × 121.92 cm
- 3
Lapidary Tea Slave, 2015
Blower, Mylar, plastic, wood
Height 1.52 m; Ø 3.05 m;
Resin, tempura-fried flowers, wax
106.68 × 60.96 × 60.96 cm;
LED lights, Plexiglas, wood
15.24 × 121.92 × 121.92 cm

All works
Courtesy Anicka Yi and 47 Canal,
New York

better way to erase the memory of a past oeuvre than to stage its *auto-da-fé*?

But if memory is to be truly eradicated, one must also confront it physically and dissect it materially. The show *7,070,430K of Digital Spit* is an attempt at that. Yi sought to reckon with the last five years—her production since 2010, and the five shows that featured it—by projecting it and exorcising it here at Kunsthalle Basel. Even arriving at the show's title was an exercise in numerological voodoo: she multiplied the title of one of her very first works from 2010, *235,681K of Digital Spit* (a transparent PVC and leather Longchamps ladies' handbag filled with hair gel and a cow's stomach), with the sum of five (past years) times five (past shows) plus five (spaces of this new show at Kunsthalle Basel).

The exhibition is entirely composed of new works, but each bears a slight resemblance to, or slyly references, a previous piece. Just as memory warps, resizes, and reshapes things in the haze of remembrance, so too are Yi's new versions like objects seen in the rearview mirror of her consciousness—some closer, some farther away, some larger, some smaller, some materially different.

ROOM 1 The show opens with seven Plexiglas containers lined with ultrasonic gel. Metal pins float within the clear, glutinous substance. As forms, they sit like a solemn arrangement of Donald Judd sculptures, but the army of chrome-hued pins and gooey, medical gel, rife with connotations of hospital visits and examination rooms, reminds us that Yi's is an anthropomorphic minimalism, inconceivable without references to the body.

ROOM 2 is deliberately narrowed, the walls inset with new glycerin soap sculptures. These fragile works, containing materials that recur in Yi's practice (petri dishes, vinyl tubing, chrome rings), sit in individual light box displays alongside living, transmuting, bacteria-lined "paintings." Made from agar (the gelatinous remains of boiled algae) and calling upon Yi's signature techno-sensual alchemy, the results are chemically mutating organic assemblages, as volatile in their materiality as they are unpredictable in their ever-so-slightly shifting visual form. Moreover, they are

highly site specific: bred from the air and samples of the surfaces of the Kunsthalle, they contain bacterial traces of the institution's every past exhibition, visitor, and event.

ROOM 3 has been made over into an angled corridor to host *The Last Diamond*, twin dryer doors embedded in the wall. The doors are meant to be opened by visitors, who can lower their heads into the black void behind. In one, they will take in notes of the artist's specially designed "forgetting" scent, named *Aliens and Alzheimer's*. Behind the other door is the scent of paper burning.

ROOM 4 includes two artificial leather sculptures, *Of All Things Orange or Macedonian Wine* and *Middle Earth Medical*, whose peculiar, translucent skins are made from Yi's fermentation of Kombucha yeast and bacteria. They are splayed and hung from metal lab stands near two cardboard-box video sculptures, *Others of Little Weight* and *Cut From Most Editions But Waiting Silently in Place Where They Are Expected*. They stand near *Odor in the Court*, a white-tiled "oven" built into the wall. Inside the oven, a copy of Yi's fragrance-infused publication is skewered on a spit and rotating over a flame, taunting but never actually touching the fire.

ROOM 5 features a trio of transparent, inflatable pods, *Maybe She's Born with It*, *ALZ/AZN*, and *Lapidary Tea Slave*, pumped with air and throbbing ever so slightly, like living organs. At the center of each sits an amorphous, almost alien-blob form, built from thousands of individually tempura-fried and then resin-fixed flowers. Strangely repulsive, delicate, and curiously enthralling, the works evoke the tempura-battered and then deep-fried flowers of a number of Yi's previous works in which the romantic connotations of floral arrangements met the abject, as pretty organic matter became greasy, decayed, and progressively pungent. In this piece as in others, the threat of formal and even chemical instability means that the works themselves will never behave like polite, eternally fixed objects. Throughout the exhibition and indeed throughout her oeuvre, Yi's works refuse the illusion of the transcendent experience of the work of art while simultaneously undermining the logic of the author as its unique

activator, since so many other forces (environmental, bacterial, entropic) affect her forms.

There is something impetuous—violent, even—about artworks that operate as these do. And Yi wouldn't have it another way. "The alchemical concoctions that Yi produces," Johanna Burton has written in the publication, "complicate divisions between the natural and the artificial, the intellectual and the corporeal, the analytic and the affectual." It is precisely this alchemy, rooted in an assault on the senses, that has consistently driven Yi's keenly disruptive, feminist, and brilliantly contaminatory aesthetic logic. But if this logic has guided the artist from the start, here she one-ups all that, asking us to both disremember her past by confusing it with eerily similar but different new works, and to literally destroy the very commemoration of what she has done to date—her first monograph—thereby participating in the slow burn of historical eradication.

Anicka Yi was born 1971 in Seoul; she lives and works in New York (USA).

The exhibition and the accompanying, specially fragranced artwork-as-publication *7,070,430K of Digital Spit, A Memoir*, are co-produced with the Fondation d'entreprise Galeries Lafayette.

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ART SCANNER

This educational project uses QR codes to call up stories compiled by kindergarten children about Anicka Yi's exhibition. Use your smartphone to access these stories here.



Drawings about the exhibitions



Story about the work *The Last Diamond*



Story about the work *Odor in the Court*

<http://www.kunsthallebasel.ch/en/education/kids-and-youth/kunst-scanner/>