The signature style of Korean-born, NY based artist Anicka Yi—winner of the 2016-17 Hugo Boss Award—involves repurposing materials associated with feminine domesticity—cooking paraphilia, edible ingredients, bath and vanity products—and coassembling them alongside industrial polymers, fiberboard, and metallic components. She has gained some notoriety as a smell portraitist due to her collaborations with perfumers and her incorporation into her work of molds and bacteria often sourced specifically from women’s mouths, armpits and vaginas.

Through her fabricating techniques, her thematic riffs on consumption, and her recycling ethos, Yi forwards an intersectional feminist and racialized critique that widens the domain of what we think of as reproductive labor. I attend to the delicate balance whereby Yi both provokes within her viewer, on the one hand, stomach rumblings and distributed visceral feelings of implicatedness in consumption and, on the other, of observational distance or narrative reassurance that one is coming out advantaged by one’s metabolic encounters. Yi’s artistry occasions a productive conversation not only with feminism and food studies, but also with critical race studies precisely because of the artist’s engagement with social issues via an aesthetic lexicon indebted to biochemical and sensory insights.

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