

# 4. Exhibitions

**Anicka Yi**  
Pirelli Hangar Bicocca, Milan

Peer inside Anicka Yi's glass display cases at Milan's cutting-edge gallery Pirelli Hangar Bicocca and what might at first seem to be bright sand paintings soon reveal themselves as moving, living things. The slowly morphing stripes of colour are bacteria, chosen by Yi for the pigments they create. "They're beautiful," says Yi, dressed in head-to-toe Balenciaga. "They're incredible portraits of ourselves."

The pandemic might have made everyone conscious of the ubiquity of microbes but Yi (pictured) had long been attuned to their presence. The 51-year-old South Korea-born American artist has a penchant for working with enigmatic materials that speak of the contemporary human condition, whether that's a reflection on biology or robotics. "What it means to be human today is not the same as 200 years ago."

As part of her much-admired, recent commission for the Tate Modern's Turbine Hall, she devised floating, balloon-shaped machines that moved in response to people's movements below, hovering in air scented with perfume. Then – and now – Yi sought the help of scientists to make these works: it's all part of what she calls the "interdisciplinary conversation" of her creative process.

The idea is to challenge deep-seated preconceptions about our bodies or bring attention to functions that are often overlooked. "Without bacteria, we don't exist," she



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"I wanted to have an immersive experience, where you don't have a mind-body split"

says. "It's like a Shakespearean tragedy that we want to condemn the thing that keeps us alive." Yi also believes in the evocative power of our sense of smell and she's not afraid to use some surprising methods to remind us of it. In her early days, she and a friend carried out rogue scent-based experiments, distilling a fragrance that mimicked copper pennies ("The scent of money!") and releasing it on metro carriages, inside banks and, once, in a clothes shop, where staff mistook the odour for a gas leak and called the fire brigade. The pair escaped. "We didn't want to be labelled as bio-terrorists," she says, laughing.

The reaction goes to show how emotional and overwhelming the response to scent can be. "People generally prefer a completely odourless environment," says Yi. "Anything beyond that becomes an assault on their senses." She makes active use of that weapon in artworks such as a pair of wall-mounted dryers that visitors stick their head into to inhale not the anticipated scent of clean laundry but something murkier and more intriguing. Sniffing one, Yi lights up: "Bullfrog!" she says, describing the fragrance that she made with a French nose as "vegetal, mossy and really humid". Like many of her creations, it is uncannily bewitching despite its oddness: Hangar Bicocca staff have taken to wearing it.

Yi also relishes the confrontational nature of her creations. "To smell something is a form of risk," she says. "But to be alive is a form of risk. We have an anthropocentric view where we like to think that nature exists elsewhere. But that's negating ourselves, because we are also from the natural world; we are animals."

Still, scent is an uncommon medium in art. "I wanted to have an immersive experience, where you don't have a mind-body split," she says. "With smell, you can't be disinterested because it forces you to engage on a corporeal level." The volatility of Yi's creations is in stark contrast to the common desire to make art a lasting monument. "Many people want art to withstand the ages but that's not my goal," she says. "By creating works that last for only a few days or a few weeks, it means you have to be present. It's a rallying call to be awake and alert with art." — LR  
*'Anicka Yi: Metaspore' runs until 24 July.*

1. Anicka Yi
2. Finishing touches
3. Hanging out
4. Layers of paint
5. Philipp Fürhofer
6. Found images



**Philipp Fürhofer**  
Galerie Judin, Berlin

When the light fades inside Philipp Fürhofer's works, everything changes. His three-dimensional light boxes of painted panels, cables and everyday materials, reveal new perspectives: landscapes appear and disappear. Collages look like idyllic natural scenes, only to then reveal their inner workings. They seem like apocalyptic sci-fi visions but Fürhofer doesn't see it that way. "Without deciphering the ambivalence behind these works, you could read them in a pessimistic way but I consider myself an optimist," he says from his Berlin studio in post-industrial Moabit, where factories are being turned into apartments. "You can see them as both a beautiful sunrise or total lack of nature. It's about finding a way of coexisting."

Fürhofer began painting *en plein air* as a child.



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Much of his work reveals a fascination with landscape but was also shaped by having a heart valve transplant at the age of 24. "When your body is connected to electrical wires and not able to survive by itself, it's a very weird experience."

Years spent designing sets for opera have also left a mark. "The two influence each other: the staging aspect particularly," he says. "I'm creating nature, but you're always a spectator. You can see how it's done."

For his show at Berlin's Galerie Judin, Fürhofer is showing his latest painting-only works, encased by glass and set up across two panels, so that elements are concealed. "When you paint something, you create something but you destroy something else," he says. "It becomes very existential. It's all part of the circle of life." — CHR  
*'The Truths Behind' runs until 11 June.*

## Exhibitions in brief Global

1

**Jean Painlevé**  
*Jeu de Paume, Paris*  
The French avant garde would have turned out very differently if not for the influence of photographer and filmmaker Jean Painlevé. Born in 1902, the wild, provocative anarchist pioneered underwater cinematography, creating short films filled with pseudoscientific explorations that had a profound effect on the Paris surrealists. This is a deep dive into his aquatic film-making, including works about seahorses. — EF  
*'Jean Painlevé' runs from 8 June to 18 September.*

2

**Ugo Rondinone: Life Time**  
*Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt*  
Ugo Rondinone's Stonehenge-for-kindergarteners aesthetic has seen the Swiss artist become one of today's most instantly recognisable sculptors. Working with installation, painting and sculptural stacks of coloured rock, his art looks like the lost work of some wildly creative prehistoric human. This major exhibition tackles some common Rondinone themes: reality and fiction as well as time and transience. — EF  
*'Life Time' runs from 24 June to 18 September.*

3

**Chiharu Shiota: The Soul Trembles**  
*Queensland Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane*  
Japanese artist Chiharu Shiota's work is like an explosion of haberdashery. Her immersive installations of countless strings create clouds of fabric. The show features work made from old suitcases, pianos, burnt chairs and an awful lot of thread. — EF  
*'The Soul Trembles' runs from 18 June to 3 October.*

4

**In the Black Fantastic**  
*Hayward Gallery, London*  
Afro-futurism, like science fiction, allows writers, artists and film-makers to imagine possible futures from a black perspective. This exhibition features 11

artists from the African diaspora – including Hew Locke, Chris Ofili and Kara Walker – and uses fiction and science to question the world today. — EF  
*'In The Black Fantastic' runs from 29 June to 18 September.*

5

**Federico Fellini: From Drawing to Film**  
*Kunsthaus Zürich*  
This in-depth exhibition looks at how one of the most influential film-makers in history used drawing to develop his ideas, characters and scenography, featuring more than 500 works. Unsurprisingly for a director responsible for erotic films such as Fellini's *Casanova*, there is also a fair share of bawdiness. — EF  
*'Federico Fellini: From Drawing to Film' runs from 1 July to 4 September.*

6

**Martine Syms: She Mad Season One**  
*Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago*  
Mixing humour and razor-sharp social satire, multi-disciplinary artist Martine Syms' ambitious show in Chicago combines video and sculptural installation. At the heart of the exhibition is the latest episode of *She Mad*, the artist's ongoing semi-autobiographical sitcom about a young woman trying to make it as an artist in Los Angeles. Mashing up popular culture and cinema, Syms explores how blackness is represented in the media we consume. — EF  
*'She Mad Season One' runs from 2 July to 12 February 2023.*

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**Tatiana Trouvé**  
*Centre Pompidou, Paris*  
Italian conceptual artist Tatiana Trouvé specialises in what the Pompidou calls "memory art": installations that combine drawing and sculpture to explore how memories are related to objects. The resulting uncanny images act as echoes of their real-world counterparts. Past works have used archival material but this new installation is all about messing with the gallery's own architecture to conjure eerie, odd emotions in the viewer. — EF  
*'Tatiana Trouvé' runs from 8 June to 22 August.*

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