DEVALS

Biography

My color washes, monochrome paint skins, found metal skeletons and shadow perspectives respectively call upon abstract expressionism, color field painting, a post-minimalist sensibility and the light and space vernacular; they all coexist as a whole, unsequenced.

— Kennedy Yanko

Kennedy Yanko's practice occupies the shifting territory between painting and sculpture, where salvaged metal and poured paint are transformed into forms that appear at once materially grounded and remarkably weightless. Although her works may initially situate her within the realm of sculpture, Yanko approaches her practice through the sensibility of a painter. Her manipulated metal assumes the gestural quality of a brushstroke: bending, folding, dripping down walls or projecting into space with an apparent lack of weight. Across these industrial remnants, she drapes her signature *paint-skins* : expansive membranes of acrylic paint poured onto a flat surface and lifted, once nearly dry, into supple, autonomous forms. Suspended over and threaded through the crevices of their metallic supports, these skins retain the immediacy of a painterly gesture while acquiring a sculptural presence of their own.

Yanko's work is defined by the tension between the fluid and the resistant, the organic and the industrial, the intuitive and the deliberately constructed. Her paint-skins gather and unfold like fabric, their surfaces shifting between translucency, saturated colour and sculptural density. Scarlet, tangerine and magenta coexist with lavender, mint and moss green, recalling the varied patinas of the metals beneath them. The resulting compositions seem to hover between expansion and collapse, their forms suggesting movement, breath or the suspended instant of a body in motion.

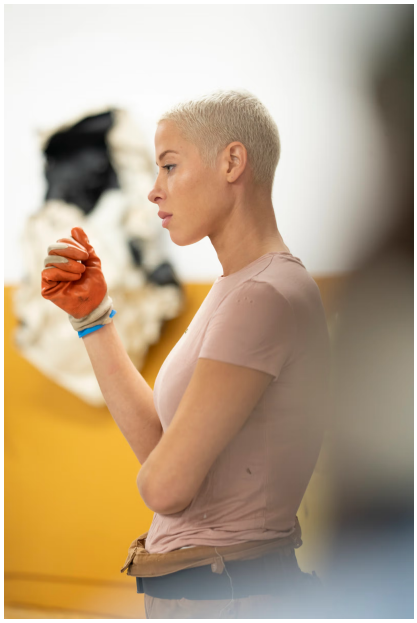


Fig. 1 Kennedy Yanko, Portrait by Antoine "Noemad" Reid, 2026
Courtesy Salon 94 & Kennedy Yanko

The joining of paint and metal is an intensive, often physically demanding process, requiring the artist to manipulate the skins around jagged edges and irregular frameworks. The resulting sculptures preserve the traces of this encounter: the apparent spontaneity of the paint is held in tension with the force and resistance of the metal. Their precarious balance challenges the presumed solidity of sculpture, producing forms that seem poised between material weight and the possibility of flight.

Yanko's understanding of sculpture is thus inseparable from an interest in corporeality and movement. After studying art history and painting at the San Francisco Art Institute, she moved to New York in 2008, where she worked with the experimental Living Theatre. Observing performers use their bodies to establish and transform physical space became a formative experience, informing her transition from painting towards a more expansive sculptural language. The body remains an implicit presence in her work: in the gestures required to shape its materials, in the folds and tensions of the paint-skins, and in the viewer's physical negotiation of forms that seem to hover, stretch or recoil. Her sculptures do not simply occupy space; they appear to activate it.



Fig. 2 Kennedy Yanko (Installation view), The Rubell Museum, Miami, FL, 2021–2025
Courtesy The Rubell Museum & Kennedy Yanko
Collection of The Rubell Museum

Steeped in the visual languages of Abstract Expressionism, Action Painting and Color Field Painting, Yanko extends the concerns of these traditions beyond the painted surface. Her practice also engages with a lineage of modern sculpture shaped by the material and existential pressures of the twentieth century. She has studied artists including Ruth Asawa, Lee Bontecou, John Chamberlain, Herbert Ferber, Richard Hunt and Seymour Lipton, whose approaches to three-dimensional abstraction brought industrial processes and unconventional materials into dialogue with the realities of their time. The use of tools such as the oxyacetylene torch, and the transformation of resistant matter through direct physical intervention, resonate with Yanko's own commitment to material experimentation. Rather than treating abstraction as a self-contained formal language, she approaches it as a means of registering force, vulnerability and the conditions of existence.

A more meaningful historical precedent to Yanko and her work can be found in the towering example of Barbara Chase-Riboud (b.1939), a Black, female, American artist, who has exhibited her abstract sculptures and drawings at museums internationally since the mid-1950s and has spent much of her six-decade career dividing time between the United States and Europe. An award-winning novelist and accomplished poet as well, Chase-Riboud is best known for her own hybrid sculptures combining cast bronze or aluminum with fiber components, such as knotted and coiled skeins of silk or wool.



Fig. 3 Kennedy Yanko, *61st International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia* (Installation view) Venice, Italy, 2026. Courtesy of La Biennale di Venezia, Salon 94 and Kennedy Yanko.

Alongside these artistic precedents, Yanko's longstanding engagement with Daoism and theosophic thought informs her interest in transformation, interconnectedness and the possibility of renewal. Materials that have already served a purpose are redirected into new configurations; discarded fragments acquire a different life through the act of making. This cyclical process resists the idea of a definitive or closed form, suggesting instead that matter remains open to reinterpretation.



Fig. 4 Kennedy Yanko, *Ce qui nous rassemble* (Exhibition view), Cité de l'architecture et du patrimoine, Paris, 2026. Photography: Adrien Dirand. Courtesy Cité de l'architecture et du patrimoine & Kennedy Yanko

In 2026 the artist's work is included in *Ce qui nous rassemble*, Cité del'architecture et du patrimoine, Paris (FR); *In Minor Keys*, the 61st International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia, Venice (IT); and *Ascendancy: The Self in Contemporary Art*, Mattatuck Museum, Waterbury (CT).

In 2025, the artist's work was included in *Epithets*, James Cohan Gallery, New York (NY); *Retro Future*, Salon 94, New York (NY); *Without Gravity*, Pace Prints, New York (NY); *Intimacy of Throes*, Art Basel Meridians, Miami Beach (FL); *FEMMES*, Perrotin, Paris (FR); *Drop, Cloth*, Susan Inglett Gallery, New York (NY); and *The Abstract Future*, Jeffrey Deitch, Los Angeles (CA).

In 2024 the artist's work was included in *Grazing Bodies*, CF Hill, Stockholm (SE); *In an effort to be held*, The Shepherd, Detroit (MI); *Stories that need to be told*, Firestorm Collection, Stockholm (SE); *The Beauty of Diversity*, Albertina Museum, Vienna (AT); and *Giants: Art from the Dean Collection of Swizz Beatz and Alicia Keys*, which traveled to the Brooklyn Museum (NY); the High Museum, Atlanta (GA); the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond (VA); and the Minneapolis Institute of Art (MN).

In 2023 Yanko unveiled two public sculpture commissions: *Crystallized Tears* at Pinnacle Mountain State Park, Little Rock (AR); and *Tilted Lift*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Detroit (MI).

In 2022 her installation *No More Drama* was part of *Brooklyn Abstraction: Four Artists, Four Walls*, Brooklyn Museum, New York (NY).

In 2021 Yanko was Artist-in-Residence at the Rubell Museum, Miami (FL).

Her work is in numerous public and private collections, including The Museum of Modern Art, New York (NY); Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (IL); Albertina Museum, Vienna (AT); Brooklyn Museum (NY); Bunker Artspace, West Palm Beach (FL); the Dean Collection, Brooklyn (NY); Firestorm Foundation, Stockholm (SE); the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (IL); Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (MA); the National Museum of African American History and Culture, Washington, D.C.; Pérez Art Museum, Miami (FL); Rubell Museum, Miami (FL); Ståhl Collection, Norrköping (SE); and The Norton Museum, West Palm Beach (FL), among others.



Fig. 5 Kennedy Yanko, *She is a Verb* (installation view), DEVALS & Salon 94, 15 October - 12 November 2023.
Courtesy DEVALS, Salon 94 & Kennedy Yanko

EDUCATION

2008 *San Francisco Art Institute*, San Francisco, CA

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2026

Ce qui nous rassemble, Cité de l'architecture et du patrimoine, Paris, France.

2025

Retro Future, Salon 94, New York, NY
Epithets, James Cohan, New York, NY
Intimacy of Throes, Art Basel Meridians, Miami Beach, FL
Without Gravity, Pace Prints, New York, NY

2023

She is a Verb, Salon 94 x Devals, Paris, FR
Soul Talk, Salon 94, Miami, FL
Humming on Life, Jeffrey Deitch, New York, NY

2022

By Means Other Than the Known Senses, Art Basel Unlimited, Switzerland
Moving Weight: Kennedy Yanko in discussion with Hilma Af Klint, Cf Hill, Stockholm, Sweden

2021

White, Passing, Rubell Museum, Miami, FL
Three Generations, Salon 94, New York, NY
Postcapitalist Desire, Jack Tilton Gallery, New York, NY

2020

Salient Queens, VIELMETTER, Los Angeles, CA
Because it's in my blood, Galleria Poggiali, Milan, IT

2019

Before Words, Urban Institute for Contemporary Arts, Grand Rapids, MI
HANNAH, Kavi Gupta Gallery, Chicago, IL
HIGHLY WORKED, Denni Dimin Gallery, New York, NY

2018

Chasing Time, Galería Leyendecker, Santa Cruz de Tenerife, Canary Islands, ES

2013

Alchemy in Silent Spaces, Idiosyncrasy Gallery, New York, NY

2012

Permutations, The Paragon Theater, St. Louis, MO

2010

Paroxysm, Art Monster, St. Louis, MO

2009

Wu-Wei, Abstrakt Gallery, St. Louis, MO

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2026

In Minor Keys, Venice Biennale, curated by Koyo Kouoh, Venice, IT
Ascendancy: The Self in Contemporary Art, Mattatuck Museum, Waterbury, CT

2025

FEMMES, curated by Pharrell Williams, Perrotin, Paris, FR
Drop, Cloth, curated by Glenn Adamson and Severin Delfs, Susan Inglett Gallery, New York, NY
GIANTS: Art from the Dean Collection of Swizz Beatz and Alicia Keys, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, VA; Minneapolis Institute of Art, Minneapolis, MN
The Abstract Future, curated by Alia Dahl, Jeffrey Deitch Gallery, Los Angeles, CA

2024

In an effort to be held, the Sheperd, Detroit, MI
GIANTS: Art from the Dean Collection of Swizz Beatz and Alicia Keys, Brooklyn Museum, NY
The Beauty of Diversity, The Albertina Modern, Vienna, AT
Stories that need to be told, Firestorm Collection, Stockholm, Sweden
Grazing Bodies, CF Hill, Stockholm, Sweden

2023

Keith Sonnier: Live in Your Head, Franklin Parrasch, Los Angeles, CA
Chromazones, Analog Diaries, Beacon, NY
(Mostly) Women (Mostly) Abstract, Eric Firestone Gallery, East Hampton, NY
About Art, Makasiini Contemporary, Turku, FL
Surface Level, Dimin, New York, NY
Frontline, Swivel Gallery, New York, NY
Search and Rescue, Kentucky Museum of Art and Craft, Louisville, KY
Bangkok Art Biennale, Bangkok, TH

2022

Brooklyn Abstraction: Four Artists, Four Walls, Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, NY
Set It Off, curated by Mickalene Thomas and Racquel Chevremont, Parrish Art Museum, Water Mill, NY

2021

Artsy Vanguard 2021, curated by Erin Gilbert, Mana Contemporary, Miami, FL

2020

We Are More Than A Moment, MCLA BCRC/Gallery 51, North Adams, MA
Life During WarTime, University of South Florida Contemporary Art Museum, Tampa, FL
SITE: Art and Architecture in the Digital Space, Library Street Collective, Detroit, MI
ABSTRACT From Minimalism to Now, Jack Tilton Gallery, New York, NY

2019

IMPLIED BODY, ASSEMBLY ROOM, New York, NY
Harlem Perspectives, The Faction Art Space, New York, NY
PARALLELS AND PERIPHERIES, Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit, Detroit, MI

2018

Cry of Victory and Short Walks to Freedom, Projects + Gallery, St. Louis, MO
Outside in 2, Michael David Gallery, Brooklyn, NY
PARALLELLS AND PERIPHERIES, Art Center South Florida, Miami, FL
The Barn Show 2018, Johannes Vogt Gallery, Brooklyn, NY
Alchemy, BRIC Arts Media, Brooklyn, NY
Senses and Perceptions, MANA Contemporary, Jersey City, NJ
The Aesthetics of Matter, curated by Mickalene Thomas and Racquel Chevremont, VOLTA NY, New York, NY
Out of Line, Long Gallery Harlem, NY

2017

PROJECTS, PULSE Contemporary Art Fair, Miami, FL
Hidden in Plain Sight, curated by Derrick Adams, Jenkins Johnson Gallery, Brooklyn, NY

2015

AART, Joseph Gross Gallery, New York, NY

2014

I Kan Do Dat, Rush Art Galleries, New York, NY
Art Now, Poppington Gallery, New York, NY

PERFORMANCES

2011 *History of the World*, The Living Theatre, New York, NY

2010 *Korach*, The Living Theatre, New York, NY

2009 *Red Noir*, The Living Theatre, New York, NY

2009 *Eureka*, The Living Theatre, New York, NY

PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

Albertina Museum, Vienna, AT
Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, NY
Espacio Tacuari, Buenos Aires, AR
Firestorm Foundation, Stockholm, SE
Michael Ballack Collection, Chemnitz, DE
Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, IL
Museum of Fine Arts Boston, Boston, MA
Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY
Norton Museum, West Palm Beach, FL
Rubell Museum, Miami, FL
Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, Washington, D.C.
Pérez Art Museum, Miami, FL
Ståhl Collection, Norrköping, SE
Stora Väsby Sculpture Park, Upplands Väsby, SE
The Bunker Artspace, West Palm Beach, FL
The Dean Collection, Brooklyn, NY