

Kara Springer

Because I come from the earth's inside

Supported by Artists Alliance Inc

Cuchifritos Gallery + Project Space

On View December 1, 2023 - February 24, 2024

Education Materials

Exhibition Overview

Borrowing from Audre Lorde's poem "Coal," the exhibition's title reflects on Springer's ongoing confrontation with the precarity of systems that undergird our relationships to one another and to the land we occupy while positing the possibility for transformation, revision, and renewal. Springer considers the parallel impact of broken systems on black and brown bodies and inhabited lands, offering sites of familial and collective memory as spaces for potential liberation.

Drawing from the archival matter of her maternal lineage, Springer "...employs several layers of abstraction in the work (in addition to the chromatic inversion, the extreme magnification of the images factors here) as a means of confronting, with the materials at hand, the phenomenological dilemma of the Body that produces its Appearance, which in turn produces its Idea, which in turn produces its Name" (Ana Tuazon).

Using repeated images that echo throughout the gallery in series and mirrors, Springer urges sustained, if not deeper, looking at the work on view, proposing that restructuring reality is perhaps the most productive place from which to begin making meaning.

Reference Terms

Chromatic Inversions

Relating to a color having a photo effect that flips all colors to their opposite hue on the color wheel.

Phenomenological Dilemma

Phenomenology is a philosophy of experience. It is the nature of intentionality, perception, time-consciousness, self-consciousness, awareness of the body, and consciousness of others.

Precarity

The state of being uncertain and dependent on chance.

Undergird

To give fundamental support; provide with a sound or secure basis.

Maternal

Behaving or feeling in the way that a mother does toward her child, especially in a kind, loving way; related through the mother's side of the family.

Jamaican Maroons

Jamaican Maroons descended from Africans who freed themselves from slavery in the Colony of Jamaica and established communities of free black people in the island's mountainous interior.

Installation Art

Used to describe large-scale, mixed-media constructions, often designed for a specific place for a temporary period of time.

Interconnectedness

The state of being connected with each other.

Futurity

A time to come; the quality or state of being future; future events or prospects.

Fragility

The quality of being delicate or vulnerable.

Archive

A collection of historical documents or records providing information about a place, institution, or group of people.

Racialize

Categorize or divide according to race.

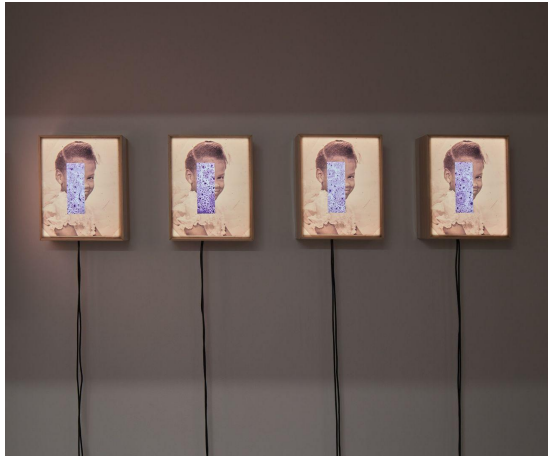
Refuge

A condition of being safe or sheltered from pursuit, danger, or trouble.

Artist Narrative

In *Because I Come from the Earth's Inside*, Springer utilizes photography, sculpture, and installation in her work on view. Springer's series *The shape of Mountains* is born from the artist's current research, reflecting on mountains as sites of refuge and representations of futurity, their connectedness to pyramids and spaceships, and the otherworldliness of their harshly beautiful terrain. The exhibition includes two works within this series of structural installations, featuring double-sided color inverted photographic prints on Japanese rice paper depicting high-resolution scans of repeatedly fired clay suspended from simple poplar wood support structures.





Judith Mae, part one and *part two* are part of the artist's current exploration using archival photographs from her maternal line, obscuring the women they feature with cutouts of repeatedly fired clay scanned at high resolution. The luminosity of the light boxes is synchronized in real time to a sensor worn by the artist monitoring her breathing pattern. Each box brightens with every inhalation and dims upon exhalation. In this way, the installation becomes a system unto itself whose infrastructure relies on the artist continuing to breathe. In the gallery's backroom, seven lightboxes feature the repeated image of the artist's mother at seven years old, close in age to Springer's daughter now. In the adjacent space of the larger gallery, two double-sided light

boxes feature the artist's mother at age 17 in Jamaica, just before beginning her studies at the University of the West Indies.

The photo-based work *Death Defying Acts and Everyday Abstractions* considers Springer's own role as a mother, chronicling the artist's experience of pregnancy and childbirth amid reports of high maternal mortality rates experienced by Black women in the United States. Through portraiture, repetition, and sparse yet succinct text, Springer draws attention to how racialized bodies, particularly those of Black people, are frequently met with disregard and inattention within institutional settings such as healthcare systems, subtly positing that care can serve as an antidote to this predilection.



The seven text panels within the work detail the mounting indifference and anxiety that Springer experienced while pregnant, which was mitigated by the attentiveness of women of color. Each text is paired with a repeated photographic image of the artist and her daughter. The physically small photograph, taken by the artist's mother shortly after the pair returned home following her birth, underscores Springer's experience with her bodily fragility and its broken relationship to multiple systems of power, support, and care.

About the Artist

Kara Springer is an artist based between New York and Toronto. She is particularly concerned with armature — the underlying structure that holds the flesh of a body in place. She works with photography, sculpture, and site-specific interventions to explore systems of care and structural support through engagement with architecture, urban infrastructure, and systems of institutional and political power. Springer holds degrees from the University of Toronto, ENSCI les Ateliers in Paris, and the Tyler School of Art in Philadelphia. Her work has been exhibited at the Philadelphia Institute of Contemporary Art, the National Gallery of the Bahamas, the National Gallery of

Jamaica, and the Frankfurt Museum of Applied Arts. She is an alum of the Independent Study Program at the Whitney Museum of American Art and the Core fellowship at the Museum of Fine Arts Houston.

More Information: karaspringer.ca

Recommended questions for discussion

Before your visit:

1. What emotions do jewel tones (blue and purple hues) evoke for you?
2. Are there any personal or family photographs that are especially important to you? Who is in this image, and what emotions are tied to it?
3. How has your environment and the people in it shaped your personality? What changes in yourself have you noticed over time?
4. Think of the complexities of motherhood through the lens of race. Are you aware of the institutional neglect in healthcare systems and high maternal mortality rates experienced by Black women in the United States?

During your visit:

1. Take notice of your breathing as you observe the installation that changes in illumination according to the artist's breathing patterns. Is it faster or slower than your normal breathing? What do different breathing paces signify to you?
2. Sync up your breathing with the installation. How do you feel when you copy the same pace of breath? Does the meaning of the piece change?
3. What emotions does reading the excerpt *Coal* by Audre Lorde bring up?

After your visit:

1. How do you feel that we, as a collective, can help evolve and support women of color throughout pregnancy and motherhood?
2. Can we cultivate a sense of interdependency between humanity and nature?
3. What spaces have offered you a meaningful refuge from everyday concerns and allowed you to imagine a different future?

Recommended Reading

Lorde, Audre. *Coal*. Norton, 1976.

Adnan, Etel. "Etel Adnan: Excerpt from Journey to Mount Tamalpais." *SFMOMA*, 30 Apr. 2019, www.sfmoma.org/read/journey-mount-tamalpais/.

Rainford, Monique. *Pregnant While Black: Advancing Justice for Maternal Health in America*. Broadleaf Books, 2023.

Washington, Harriet A. *Medical Apartheid: The Dark History of Medical Experimentation on Black Americans from Colonial Times to the Present*. Anchor Books, 2008.

Roberts, Dorothy E. *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty*. Vintage, 1999.

Oparah, Julia Chinyere, et al. *Battling over Birth: Black Women and the Maternal Health Care Crisis*. Praeclarus Press, 2018.

Austin, Nefertiti. *Motherhood so White: A Memoir of Race, Gender, and Parenting in America*. SOURCEBOOKS INC, 2024.

Petry, Ann. *The Street, by Ann Petry*. Houghton Mifflin, 1946.

Haupt, Lyanda Lynn. *Rooted: Life at the Crossroads of Science, Nature, and Spirit*. Little, Brown and Company, 2023.

Jones, Lucy. *Losing Eden: Why Our Minds Need the Wild*. Penguin Books, 2021.

Oliver, Mary. *Devotions: The Selected Poems of Mary Oliver*. Corsair Poetry, 2023.

Tuazon, Ana. "Kara Springer: I / Must Be Given Words." *Patel Brown*, 14 May 2022, www.patelbrown.com/kara-springer-i-must-be-given-words.

Accessibility Information

Visitors Who Are Deaf, Partially Hearing, and/or Have Sensory Sensitivity including those on the Autism Spectrum

The current exhibition includes the main room and a smaller room that can be accessed through the opening in the left-hand corner of the gallery. Both spaces include large street-facing windows. This exhibition includes nine lightboxes between these two spaces. Please be advised the lightboxes included in the exhibition fluctuate in illumination at a moderate pace. The exhibition does not include any sound-based work.

Facility Accessibility

Baby strollers are welcome in Essex Market and Cuchifritos Gallery + Project Space. Both facilities are wheelchair accessible, and service animals on a leash are permitted.

If you have questions, comments, or concerns about accessing Cuchifritos Gallery + Project Space or attending programs, please contact Jodi Waynberg at jodi@artistsallianceinc.org or (212) 420-9202.

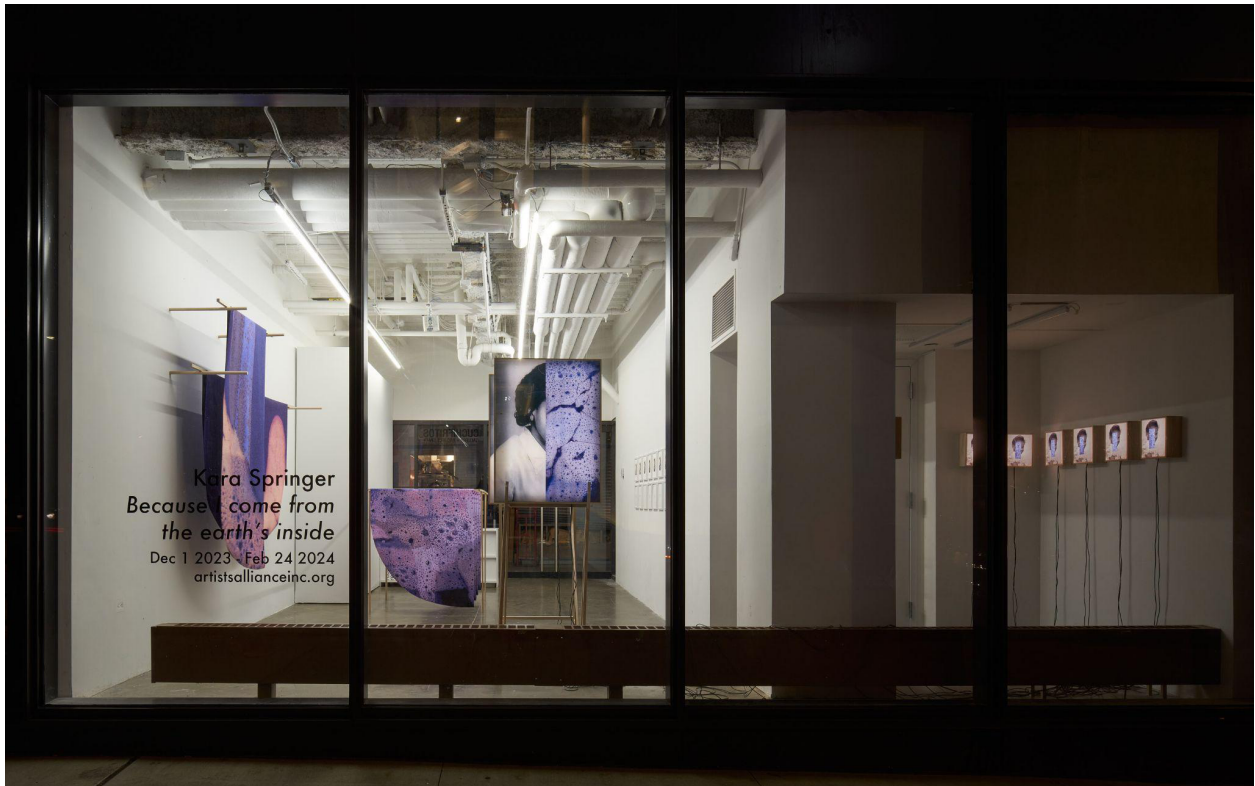
Restrooms

Restrooms for visitors are located on the second floor of Essex Market, which is accessible via elevator or stairs

The following pages provide a visual guide to accessing Cuchifritos Gallery + Project Space:

Visual Guide: Accessing Cuchifritos Gallery

Hello! This is a visual guide for visiting the Cuchifritos Gallery in Essex Market at 88 Essex Street in New York City. Walking down the street, you may be able to recognize us! At Artists Alliance Inc., we display contemporary artworks by new and emerging artists.



Our Cuchifritos gallery is located inside Essex Market, where many shops are indoors. This means that many people are walking and touring the shops and the people who run them. You will most likely hear the sounds of chopping from the vendor's food prep, the smell of food, and the voices of people talking and interacting with the stores. It is a comfortable social space, and entering our gallery is as open and welcoming.

This is the entrance to the Essex Market on Broome Street between Essex and Norfolk streets.



Once we enter through the automatic glass doors, we should head to the right. We can check if we're heading in the right direction by following the vendors: Top Hop, Puebla Mexican Food, Cafe D'Avignon, Dominican Cravings, and Zerza (in that order). Once you hit Zerza, you can take a left turn, and we will be right in front of the gallery!



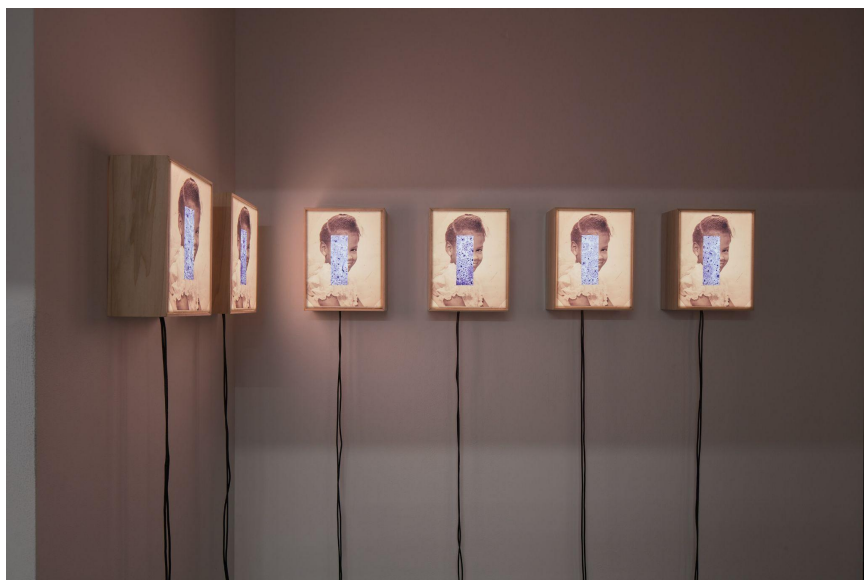


You can enter the gallery through the glass doors (which are always open during visiting hours!). There will be someone at the desk to greet you, but you may freely walk around the space to see what you like. On the desk are one or two stacks of paper: one with the names of the Curator and Artists of the show and one that provides the titles and materials in the work on view. You can take these with you to better understand the artwork.

Upon entering the gallery, pulsing may be seen coming from the light boxes in the main room and the gallery's backroom. These lights illuminate at the pace of the artist's breath. To imagine a sense of this pace, pay attention to the speed of your own inhalation and exhalation..



The lightboxes at the center and left of the gallery display semi-abstract artwork like the images above and below—the light boxes cycle between lighting on and off at a slow pace. If you suffer light sensitivity or seizures, please be aware of this when visiting the gallery.



Guide to the Bathrooms

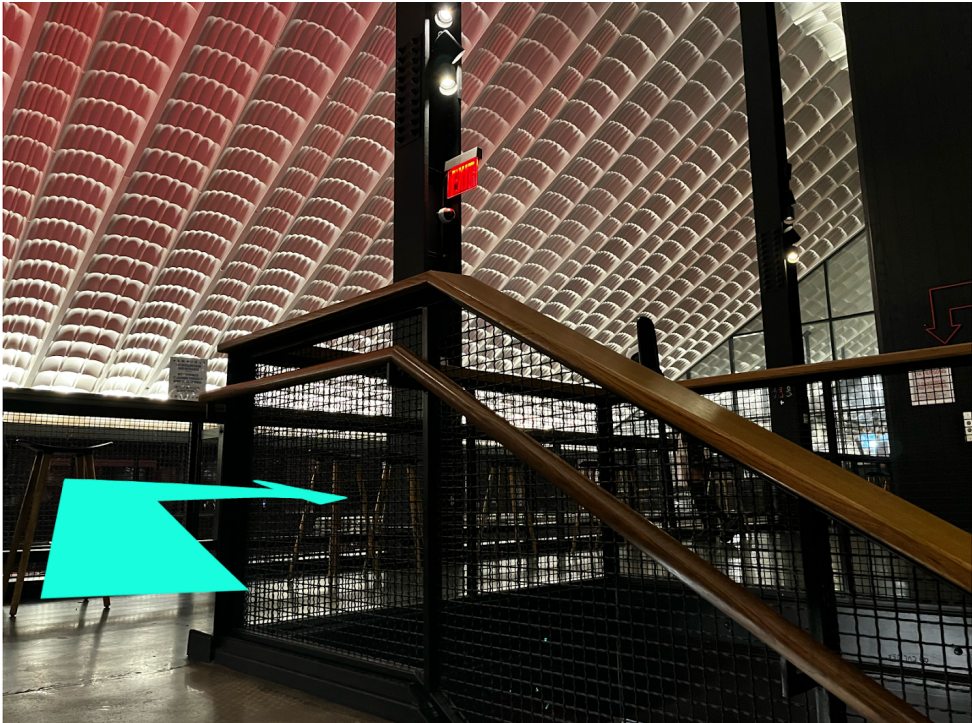
To enter the bathrooms, you can head back toward the same entrance you came through in the very beginning. Just beyond that you should be able to see a staircase leading up to the mezzanine. You can walk up these stairs. Or...



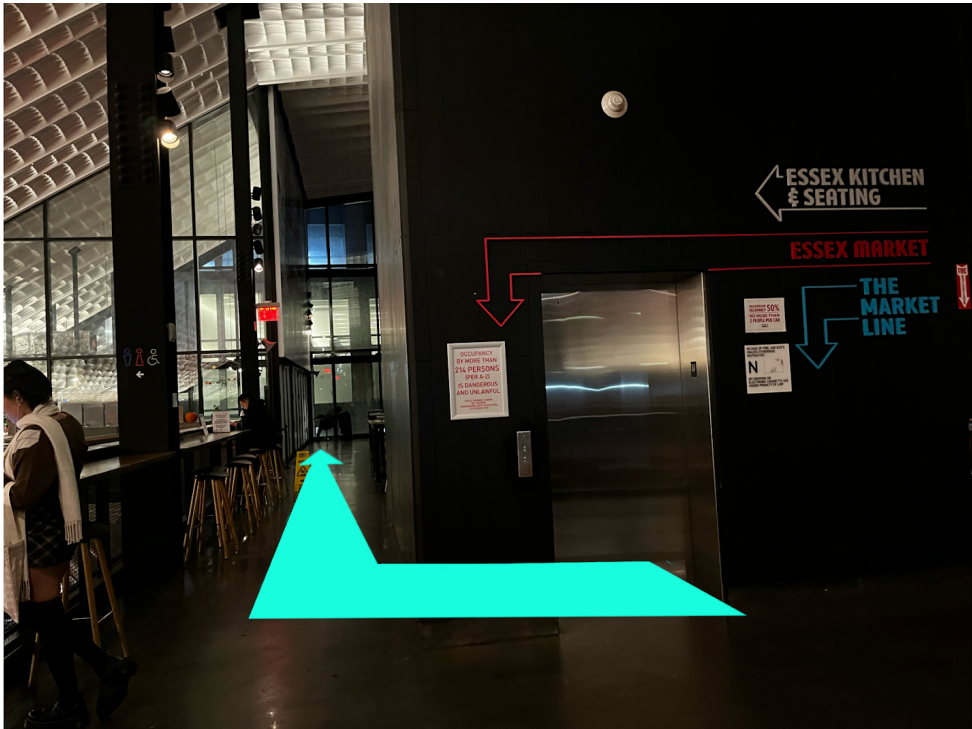
You can use the elevators, which you might have noticed on the right side when we first entered the market



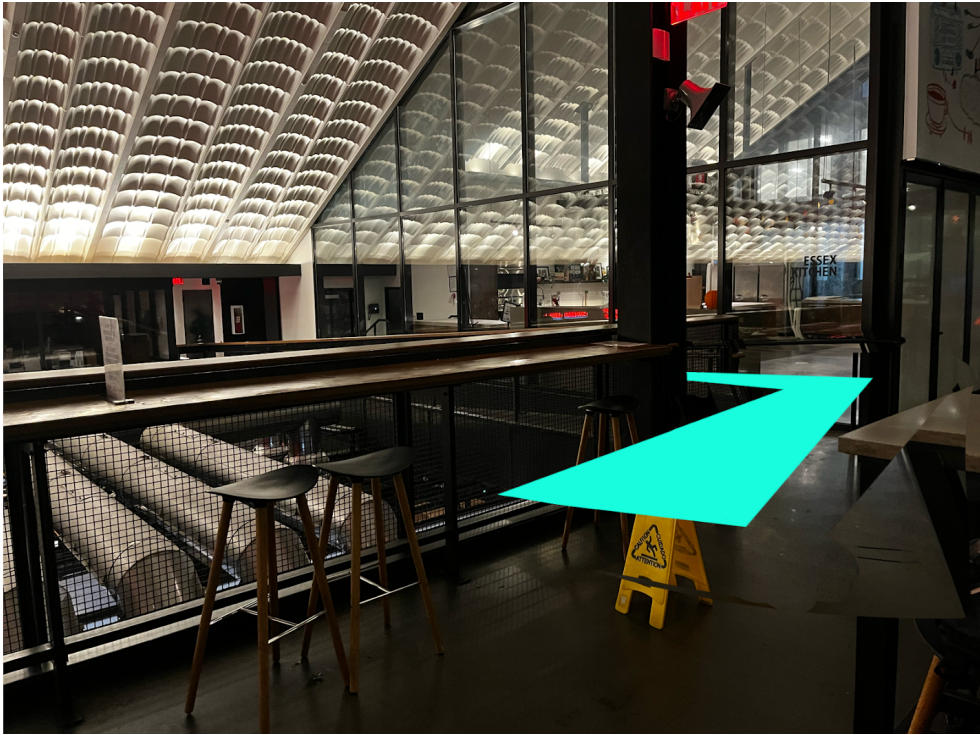
If you take the stairs up to the mezzanine, you can head toward the right.



If you took the elevator, you should make two right turns



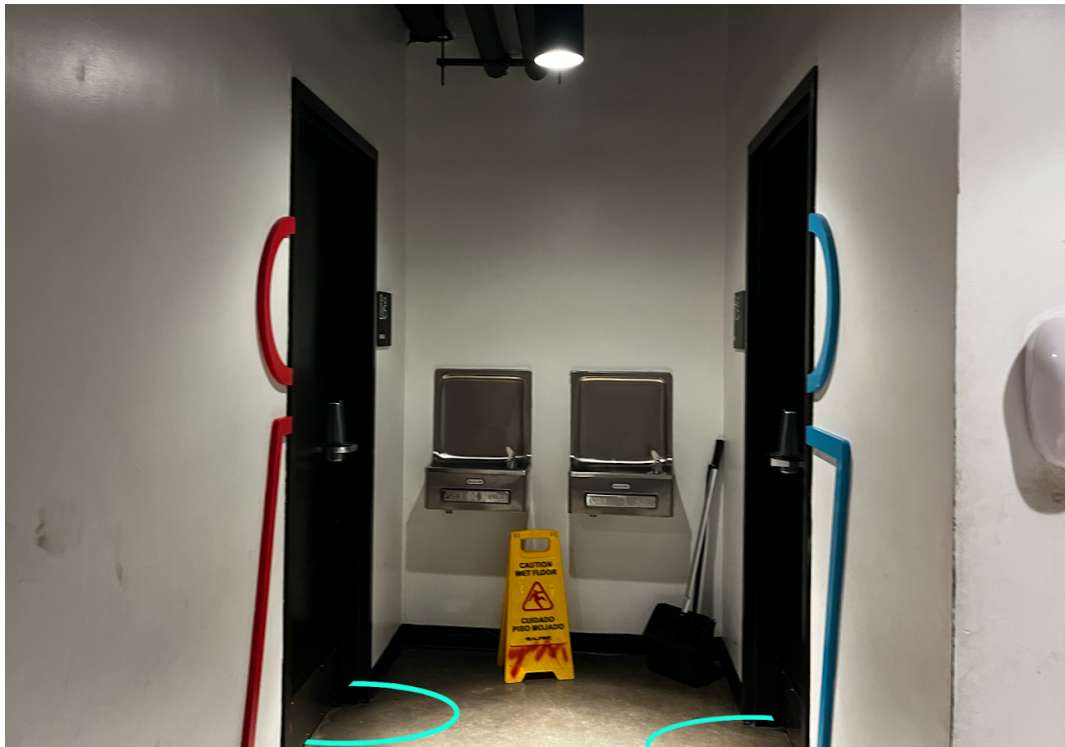
Then, you should keep walking along the counters and stools to the left, until you see a long, declining ramp. You can follow it straight down until we reach the end of it by the multiple doors and a glowing exit sign overhead.



Once you reach this area, you can turn right toward the hand sanitizer dispenser.



There are the bathrooms! The one on the left with red is for women, and the one on the right with blue is for men. To use them, you will need to put in the bathroom code: 80220#



When you are ready to leave, you can exit through the gallery doors and retrace your steps to the large glass doors of the market. Or feel free to explore the other amazing Essex Market shops and installments!

We can meet again at the Cuchifritos Gallery + Project Space.

