

***Textures of Feminist Perseverance***

A two-venue exhibition presented by  
Cuchifritos Gallery + Project Space and The James Gallery

Artists on view at Cuchifritos Gallery:  
Mimi Biyao Bai, Amy Khoshbin with House of Trees and Naomi Shihab Nye

On view March 1, 2024 - April 27, 2024

Presented in two venues—Cuchifritos Gallery and The James Gallery—*Textures of Feminist Perseverance* asks how women's daily experiences and contributions are recorded in the public spheres of our physical, virtual, and social lives. On this occasion, Cuchifritos Gallery is very pleased to present two projects, Mimi Biyao Bai's *Net* within the gallery space and the collaborative project *I Pledge* on Essex Market's exterior windows.

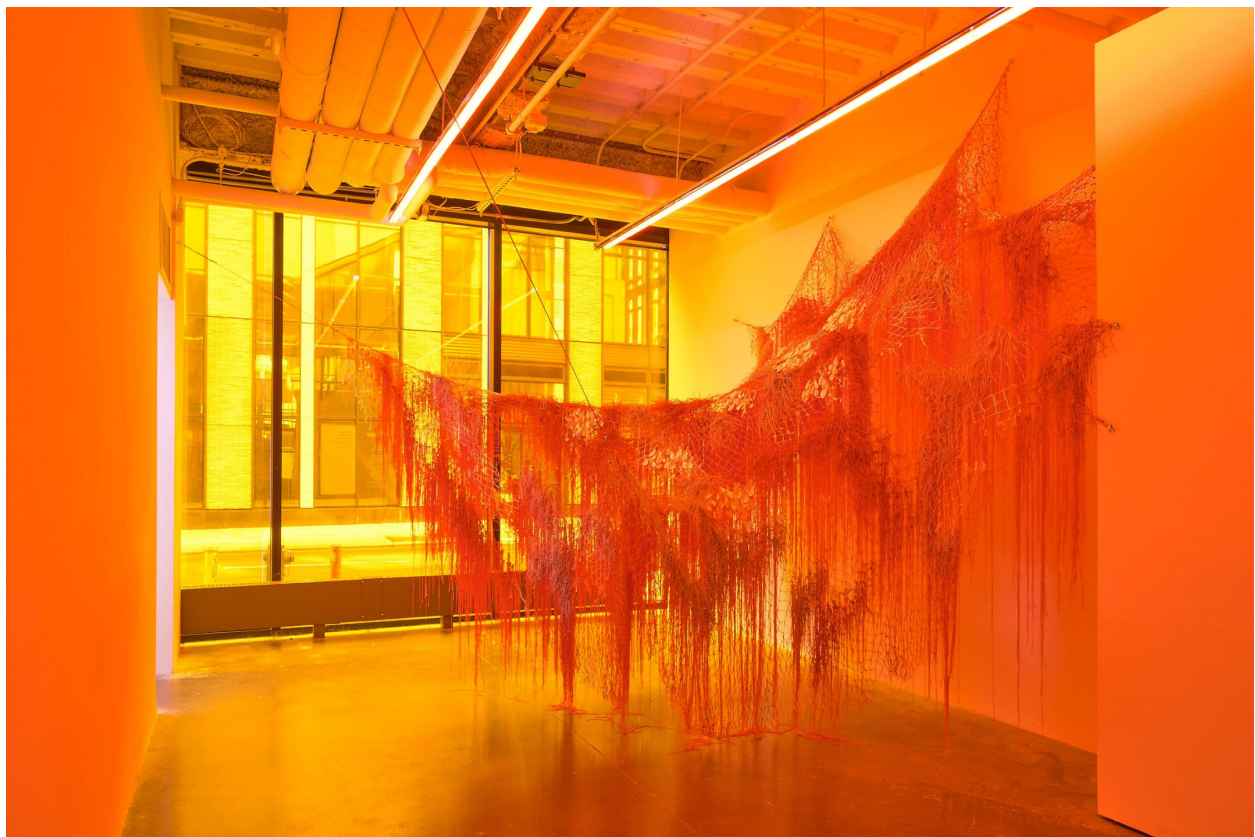
*Net*, artist Mimi Biyao Bai's site-responsive project contemplates safety, survival, and visibility. Drawing a parallel between camouflage and assimilation, Bai considers both as labor-intensive adaptations for survival that selectively reveal and/or conceal.

[Mimi Biyao Bai] *"The installation of Net constructs a state of simultaneous hyper-visibility and invisibility by creating an environment that is saturated with orange, red, and yellow light. This allows the piece—primarily made from blaze or safety orange twine that is highly visible under more conventional lighting conditions—to become less visible or discernible in the space."*



Obscuring the traditional white box of the gallery in a wash of safety orange—a color often worn by hunters due to its high visibility to most humans and the difficulty of discernment it causes for prey animals—Bai asks visitors to question how one can be simultaneously invisible and hyper-visible. Effective camouflage requires the *camoufleur* to be aware of their environment, how they are being perceived in relation to it, and *who* is doing the perceiving.

*“The ideal way to view Net is to see it multiple times over the course of the day. In the morning, sunlight comes through the tinted windows and fills the gallery with a wash of yellow. There are more shadows and contrast on Net, and one can more clearly see the different materials and textures of the piece: the rough, spotted orange and white twine sprouting from the surface, the hand-sculpted clay pieces dangling from cotton patches, and the orange strands hanging in clumps on the inside of the piece.”*







Suspended across the space, an accumulation of individual knots forms a flexible mass that can expand and contract in response to the environment. *Net* can be viewed as a temporary shelter, a flayed ghillie suit, and a matrix of entanglements. Hand-made using thousands of yards of nylon and cotton twine, the artist used her body weight to achieve the proper tension for each knot. Bai's intense physical labor makes tangible the often invisible and immaterial effort necessary to "blend in" to one's surroundings.

*"My research into early 20<sup>th</sup>-century military applications of camouflage focused on nets as a technology that was flexible, adaptable, and multi-functional. It could be used to disguise tanks, people, and positions in a variety of landscapes, while also providing shade or cover."*







By abstracting fragments of her personal and familial history into patterns and forms, the artist has developed an iconography that she employs throughout her larger practice. A prominent example is the ghost, seen in *This Kind of Memory Requires Motion* on view in the gallery's backroom. The character of the ghost emerged from a costume Bai wore as a child during her first Halloween in the United States, then evolved through her research into ghillie suits—garments worn by snipers and hunters to conceal their bodies from an enemy or target. Through drawing and sculpture, Bai re-imagines and enacts alternative perspectives on survival, adaptation, interdependence, and creative possibility.

*“In my practice, I often move back and forth between 2-D, 3-D, and time-based work. The pairing of these two projects allows the viewer to see the multiple lives and forms that one object can have: as a shelter with an interior space, a creature mid-crawl up the wall, and as a character jumping, slouching, and crouching. The watercolor monotypes became another way to focus on and explore the ghost, which has been a recurring motif in this project since its inception.”*

*The ghost is often recognized as a figure of mourning and loss, but in my work, ghosts have evolved into avatars through whom I can explore adaptation, survival, and creative possibility. What if a ghost had a body? How would it move through the world? Would it be more or less free?”*







*“I have a two-pronged approach to the studio: research and physical making. Each side wanders and veers off on its own and then the two periodically converge — a dance of coming together and falling apart. In my practice, labor weaves concepts and materials together, meaning accumulates through repetition and iteration, and ideas are processed through the sustained physical engagement of my body.*

*I am interested in understanding the artist as a worker, in order to recognize the different forms that artistic labor takes and to connect this labor to that of other workers, and in contrast to the fantasy of the individual, atomized artist-genius. Finally, I consider both camouflage and assimilation to be strategies for survival that require labor and resources, and I view my sculptures as making physical these often immaterial or unrecognized forms of labor.*

*Making Net was demanding - I hand-tied rough nylon twine and used my body weight to get the correct tension for each knot. Through this process I have touched every inch of the piece. Net has a direct relationship to my body and is imbued with the different ideas, influences, and relationships that have shaped my work (and life).”*







Also on view, on the exterior of Essex Market at the corner of Norfolk and Broome streets, is a re-presentation of *I Pledge*. Presented here as a vinyl installation, *I Pledge* was created by Amy Khoshbin, House of Trees, and Naomi Shihab Nye in response to mounting xenophobia and gender-based violence on the one-year anniversary of the 2016 Women's March. *I Pledge* continues to advocate for a public covenant of respect for all. The collaborators offer a poetic pledge to fight for inclusive, empathetic, humane, and intersectional change.











The exhibition continues at The James Gallery in midtown Manhattan, centering the work of 17 female-identifying artists, who imagine ways for women to take up the space they are already producing. What might a city honoring women's lived experiences look like? How can the city be a living archive of women's accomplishments in a visual vocabulary that may not already be recognized in the dominant discourse? This work is often achieved through a preoccupation with hands-on and labor-intensive making practices that foreground physical and embodied attentiveness to materials, social gathering, and awareness of time.

On view February 15 - June 7, 2024





**Artists on view at The James Gallery**

Sarah Ahmad, Mimi Biyao Bai, Fay Ku, Deborah Mesa-Pelly, Ani Liu, Sara Jimenez, Sonya Blesofsky, Amy Khoshbin, Jen Mazza, Ashley Minner Jones, Natalie Moore, Martine Kaczynski, Jodie Lyn-Kee-Chow, Langdon Graves, Rhea Karam, Ellie Murphy, Dina Weiss





About the artists at Cuchifritos Gallery:

**Mimi Biyao Bai** was born in Xi'an, China, and is based in Brooklyn, NY. Her practice encompasses sculpture, drawing, and film. Bai has presented work at institutions including Artists Space, the Boston Center for the Arts, BRIC, and the Whitney Museum of American Art. Her films have screened at Rooftop Films, the Rockaway Film Festival, and the Maryland Film Festival. Bai was a SIP Fellow at the Robert Blackburn Printmaking Workshop, a NYSCA/NYFA Artist Fellow for Interdisciplinary Work, and a recipient of two Foundation for Contemporary Arts Emergency Grants. She has been an Artist-in-Residence at the Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts, Pioneer Works, the Saltonstall Foundation, and the Santa Fe Art Institute, among others. Bai attended the Whitney Independent Study Program and is a graduate of Alfred University (MFA Sculpture) and Wesleyan University (BA Sociology). [www.mimibiyaobai.com](http://www.mimibiyaobai.com)

**Amy Khoshbin** is an Iranian-American Brooklyn-based artist and activist. Her practice builds bridges between disparate communities to counteract fear with a collective sense of empowered radical acceptance. She has shown at venues such as The Whitney Museum of American Art, The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, Brooklyn Museum, Times Square Arts, Artpace, The High Line, Socrates Sculpture Park, Arsenal Contemporary, National Sawdust, and festivals such as River to River, FORMAT, and South by Southwest. She has received residencies at spaces such as The Watermill Center, Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, Project for Empty Space, Anderson Ranch, and Banff Centre for the Arts. She has received a NYFA Grant, Franklin Furnace Fund, and a Rema Hort Mann Grant. Khoshbin received an MFA from New York University in Tisch School of the Arts and a BA in Film and Media Studies at the University of Texas at Austin. [www.tinyscissors.com](http://www.tinyscissors.com)

**House of Trees** (HOT) is a family-run art collective— Amy Khoshbin, Jennifer Khoshbin, Noah Khoshbin— producing high-visibility, publicly engaging visual and installation projects. Located in San Antonio and New York City, its mission centers on collaboration, arts, and politics. House of Trees has mounted projects nationally and internationally with venues including the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, Artpace, Times Square Arts, and The Watermill Center.

**Naomi Shihab Nye** is a Palestinian-American author of numerous books of poems, including *Transfer*, *You and Yours*, which received the Isabella Gardner Poetry Award; *19 Varieties of Gazelle*; *Poems of the Middle East*; and *Fuel*. Nye's honors include awards from the International Poetry Forum, the Texas Institute of Letters, and four Pushcart Prizes. She has been a Lannan Fellow, a Guggenheim Fellow, and a Witter Bynner Fellow, and received The Academy of American Poets' Lavan Award, selected by W.S. Merwin. She lives in San Antonio, Texas.



Cuchifritos Gallery + Project Space  
(located inside the Essex Market)  
88 Essex Street, No. 21  
New York, NY 10002

**HOURS**

Wednesday–Saturday;  
12–6p or by appointment  
(closed on public holidays)

All photos: Brad Farwell

