

# CUCHIFRITOS GALLERY + PROJECT SPACE

— a program of ARTISTS ALLIANCE INC

artistsallianceinc.org 88 Essex Street  
New York NY 10002

Weds through Sat  
Noon - 6p or by appt.

## ***Textures of Feminist Perseverance***

March 1 through April 27, 2024

Presented in partnership with The James Gallery at the CUNY Graduate Center [365 5th Ave, NYC]. The James Gallery presentation will remain on view through June 7, 2024

### Artists at The James Gallery

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

### Artists at Cuchifritos Gallery

Mimi Biyao Bai and Amy Khoshbin

## ***Education Materials***

### **Exhibition Overview**

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 Norfolk Street exterior windows.

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.

***Textures of Feminist Perseverance*** is conceived by artist **Dina Weiss** and curator **Katherine Carl, Ph.D.** (James Gallery Institute for Art, Inquiry & Collaborative Practice, CUNY Graduate Center) and presented in partnership with **Jodi Waynberg**, Executive Director of Artists Alliance Inc and Director of Cuchifritos Gallery + Project Space.

### **Reference Terms**

#### **Feminist**

An advocate of women's rights based on the equality of the sexes

#### **Perseverance**

Continued effort to do or achieve something despite difficulties, failure, or opposition.

Mimi Biyao Bai

**Survival**

The state of continuing to live or exist, typically in spite of ordeal, or difficult circumstances.

**Camouflage**

A disguise to blend in with one's surroundings.

**Assimilation**

The process whereby individuals or groups of differing ethnic heritage are absorbed into the dominant culture of a society.

**Adaptation**

The adjustment of behavior to conform with the prevailing norms and values.

**Installation Art**

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

**Safety Orange**

A hue of orange color used to set objects apart from their surroundings.

**Hyper-visible**

The feeling of being overly visible because of an individual's race or ethnicity, sometimes to the point of overshadowing their unique skills and personality.

**Labor-intensive**

A form of work needing a large workforce or a large amount of work in relation to output.

Amy Khoshbin

**Pledge**

A promise of commitment.

**Xenophobia**

Dislike of or prejudice against people from other countries.

**Public Covenant**

A public agreement to abide by rules or laws.

**Empathetic**

Showing an ability to understand and share the feelings of another.

**Intersectional**

The complex, cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms combine, overlap, or intersect.

**Inclusive**

Not excluding any of the parties or groups involved in something.

**Humane**

having or showing compassion or benevolence.

**Vinyl Installation**

Works produced on vinyl material, usually installed on storefront windows.

**Gender-based Violence**

Refers to any type of harm that is perpetrated against a person or group of people because of their factual or perceived sex, gender, sexual orientation, and gender identity.

**Advocate**

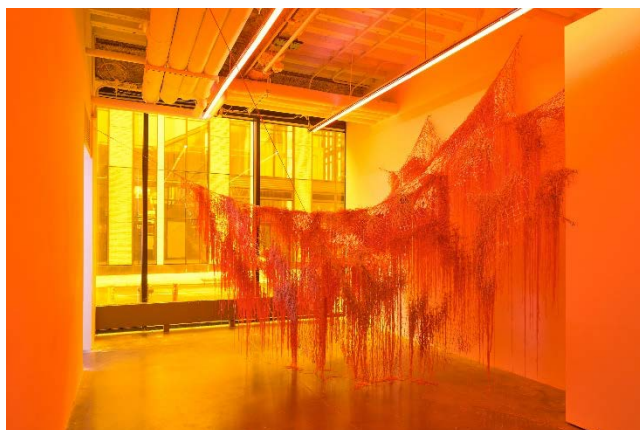
A person who publicly supports or recommends a particular cause or policy.

**Artist Narratives****Mimi Biyao Bai**

*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 20th-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).”

### Amy Khoshbin

Also on view, on the exterior of Essex Market at the corner of Norfolk and Broome streets, is a re-presentation of the collaborative project *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.



## **About the Artists on View 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).

Her forthcoming solo show, *More-than-Self-Defense*, opens at A.I.R. Gallery in May 2024.

**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, a 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.

**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. Its mission centers on collaboration, arts, and politics in San Antonio and New York City. 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.

## **Recommended questions for discussion**

### **Before Your Visit**

1. What emotions do warm colors (red, yellow, and orange) evoke for you?
2. Are there any areas within your life to which you have to conform? Do you reject feelings of conformity or assimilation?
3. Are you aware of any inequalities or double standards around you that you or others assimilate to?

### **During Your Visit**

1. Can you identify experiences in your own life when the contributions of women have been rendered invisible?
2. Throughout history, how have historical narratives shaped the recognition of women's contributions? What efforts do you believe modern society can take to empower women in history and today?
3. How might media representation influence the visibility or invisibility of women's efforts in society? What stereotypes perpetuate the invisibility of women's contributions in social space?

### **After Your Visit**

1. What relationship do you draw between camouflage and assimilation in modern society?
2. How does art contribute to discussions about identity and assimilation?
3. Based on your own experiences and observations, how do you interpret Bai's themes of safety and survival? Do these concepts resonate with or challenge your understanding of the concepts presented in this Exhibition?

## **Recommended Reading**

*Reference materials provided by Mimi Biyao Bai*

Day, Iyko. *Alien Capital: Asian Racialization and the Logic of Settler Colonial Capitalism*. Duke University Press, 2016.

Hong, Cathy Park. *Minor Feelings: A Reckoning on Race and the Asian Condition*. Profile Books, 2021.

Karuka, Manu. *Empire's Tracks: Indigenous Nations, Chinese Workers, and the Transcontinental Railroad*. University of California Press, 2019.

Mauro, Hayes Peter. *The Art of Americanization at the Carlisle Indian School*. University of New Mexico Press, 2011.

Shell, Hanna Rose. *Hide and Seek: Camouflage, Photography, and the Media of Reconnaissance*. Zone Books, 2012.

Tsing, Anna Lowenhaupt. *The Mushroom at the End of the World*. Princeton University Press, 2017.

Tuck, Eve and C. Ree. "A Glossary of Haunting." *Handbook of Autoethnography*, edited by Stacy Holman Jones, Tony E. Adams, Carolyn Ellis, Left Coast Press, Inc., 2013, pp. 639–658.

## *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 four watercolor monoprints in the smaller room, and a large hand-woven nylon net, suspended within the larger gallery space. Tight nylon cords do limit some movement in the gallery, and we ask that visitors use caution while moving around the space.

Please be advised that the gallery is illuminated by red-orange lighting that may trigger light sensitivity or significantly alter the perception of the space. Additionally, the deep orange vinyl film covering the storefront windows affects the natural light entering the space. Visitors should take note of the potentially intense visual and spatial stimuli within the gallery. If you have concerns or require accommodations, please inform gallery staff for assistance in navigating the space comfortably. 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](mailto: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:



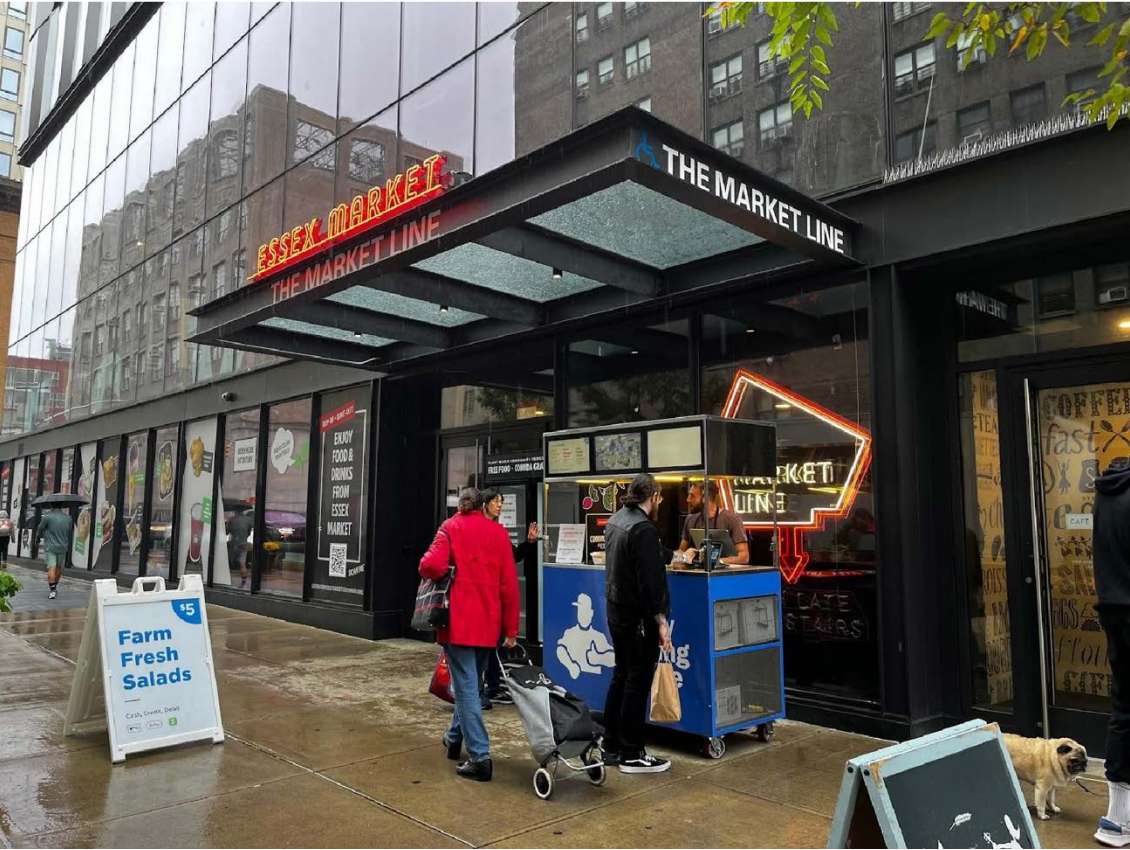
## *Visual Guide: Accessing Cuchifritos Gallery*

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.

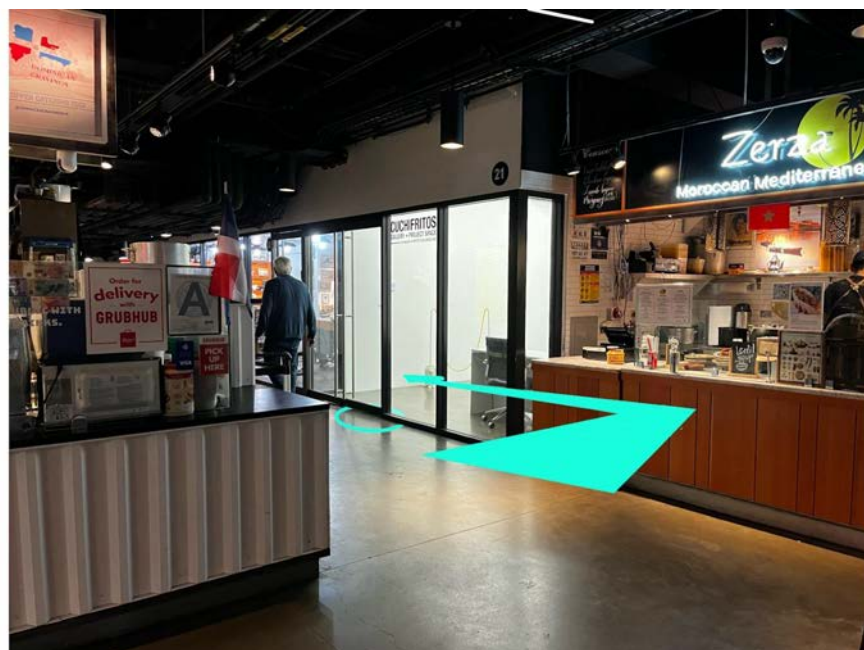
This is the entrance to Essex Market on Broome Street between Essex and Norfolk streets. This entrance provides the shortest walk to the gallery space.



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, and 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, the installation *Net* takes up most of the open space of the gallery, stretching from one side to the other. Illuminated by a shade of orange, the gallery lights are covered by a filter gel. A deep orange vinyl film covers the storefront windows to color the light coming from outside.



Through the left-hand doorway of the gallery, you will enter a small backroom. In it, you will find the paper-based print series *This Kind of Memory Requires Motion*, which features an abstract character fixed in different positions while mid-movement and wearing an earlier iteration of *Net*.



While *Net* is inside of the gallery, the vinyl works *I Pledge* are on the exterior of Essex Market, mounted on the storefront windows adjacent to the gallery at the corner of Norfolk and Broome streets. The installation can be viewed by exiting through the same entrance that we used to enter the Market and turning left towards Norfolk Street. The installation is on the Norfolk Street side of Essex Market and continues from the corner up to the gallery storefront.



# Visual Guide: Accessing Essex Market Restrooms

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...

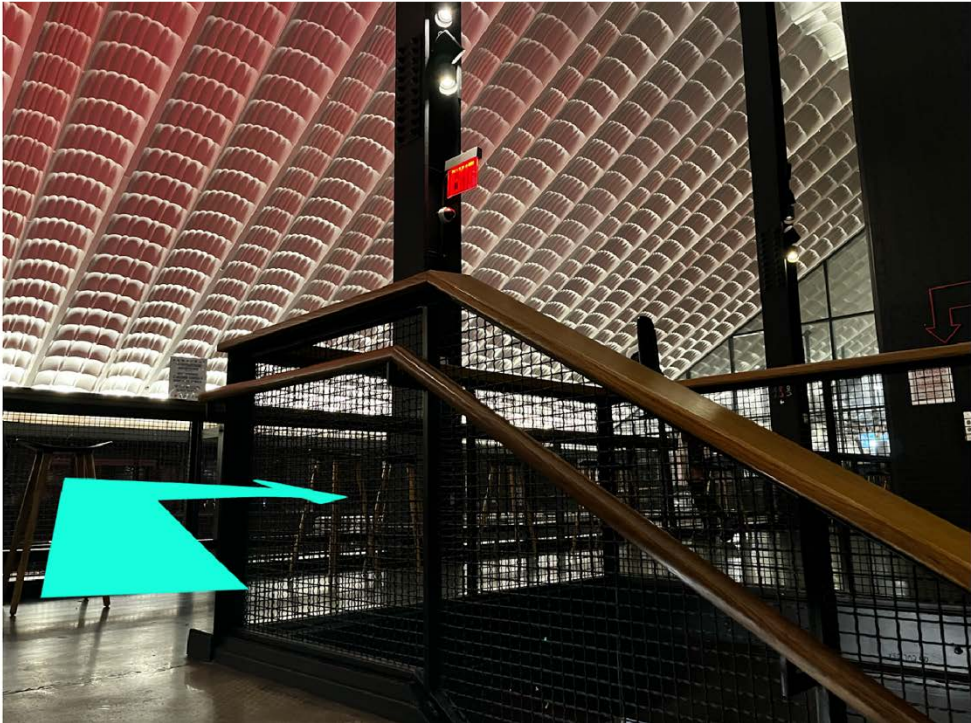




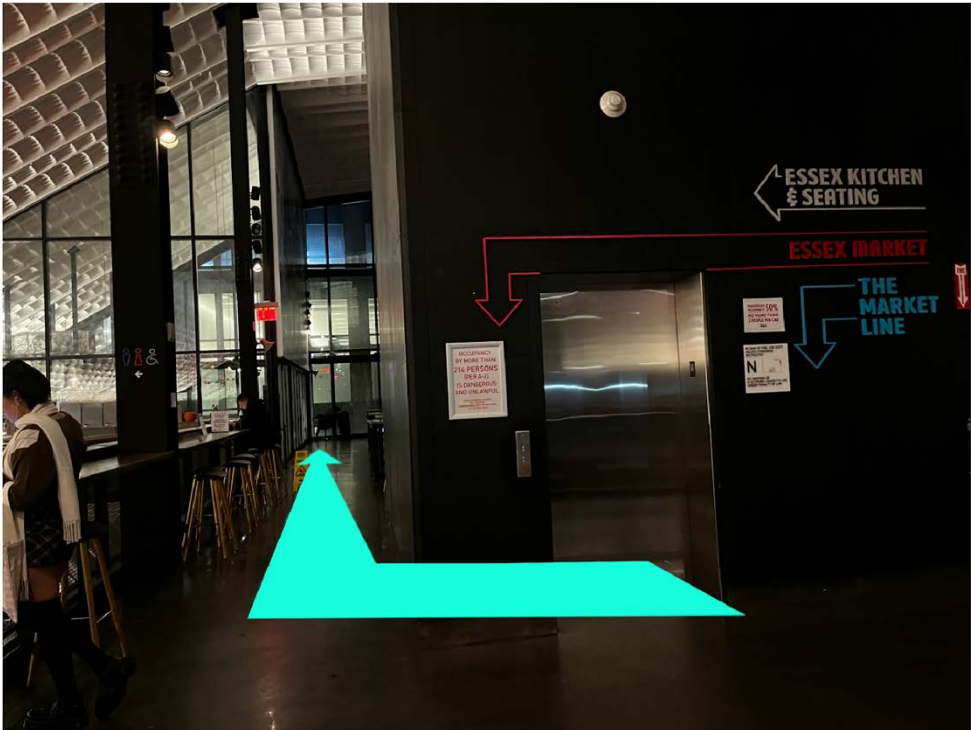
You can use the elevators, which you might have noticed on the right side when we first entered the market.



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

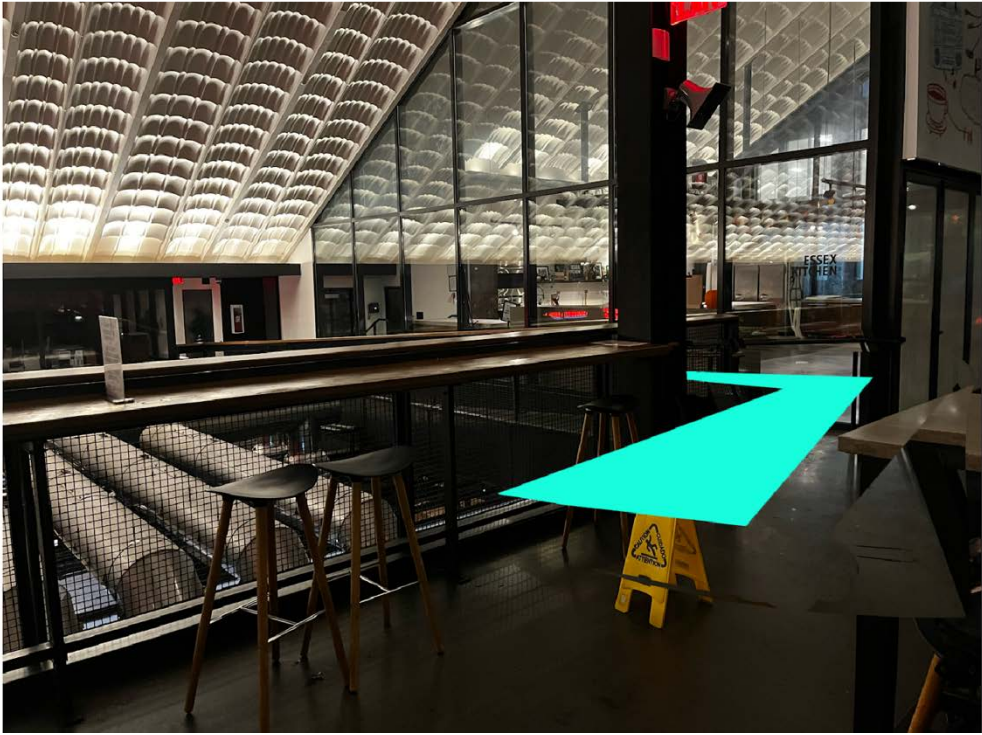


If you took the elevator, you should make two right turns.





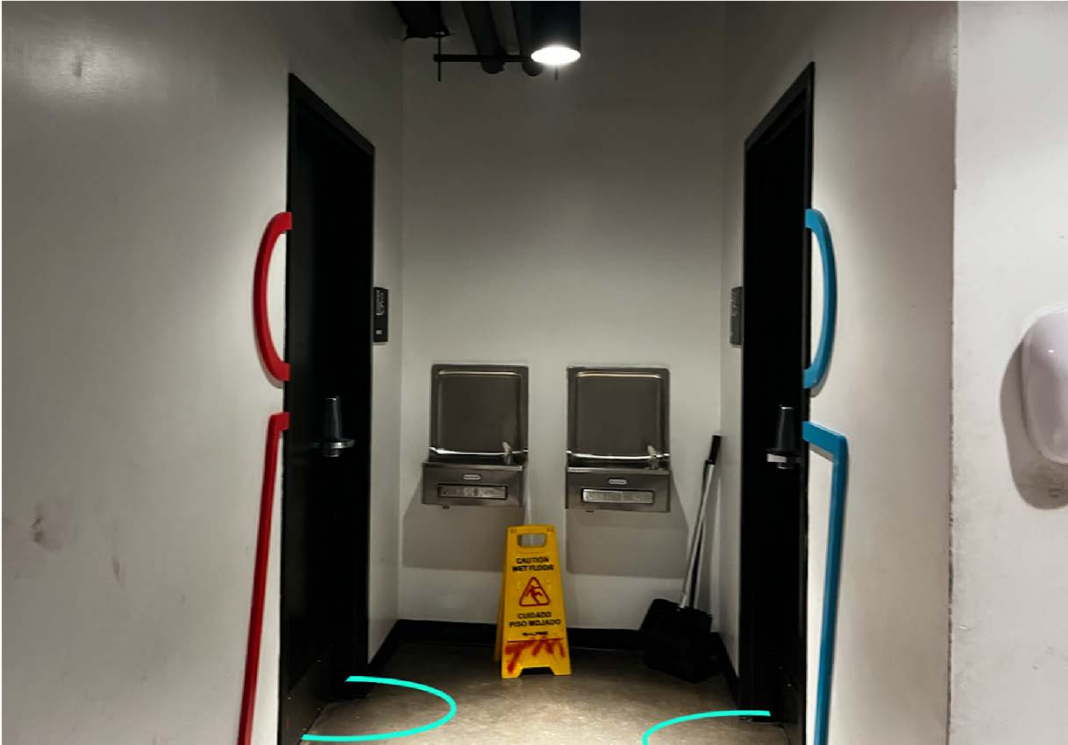
Then, you should keep walking along the counters and stools to the left, until you see a long, declining ramp. You can follow it straight down until we reach the end of it by the multiple doors and a glowing exit sign overhead.



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



There are the bathrooms! The one on the left (red) is for those who identify as women, and the one on the right (blue) is for those who identify as 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!

We hope we can meet again, at Cuchifritos Gallery + Project Space!

