

Art

Five New York City Shows to See Right Now

From historical shows about labor to investigations of color to John Singer Sargent's renderings of hands, we're enjoying a variety of art this week.



Natalie Haddad, Lisa Yin Zhang, Julia Curl, Daniel Larkin and Julie Schneider April 28, 2025

**arms ache avid aeon: Nancy Brooks Brody / Joy Episalla / Zoe Leonard / Carrie Yamaoka:
fierce pussy amplified: Chapter Eight**

Participant Inc., 116 Elizabeth Street, Lower East Side, Manhattan

Through May 11



Carrie Yamaoka, "14 by 11 (flake.swell)" (2024), reflective polyester film, urethane resin and mixed media on wood panel (photo Natalie Haddad/*Hyperallergic*)

"[The show] creates a cohesive sensibility that is all the more meaningful because of the human relationships that underlie its formal relationships." —*NH*

Read the full review [here](#).

Art [Reviews](#)

A Collective of Lesbian Activists Is a Fierce Family

A show highlighting work by members of the collective fierce pussy presents them not out on the streets, but communing with one another, like family.

Natalie Haddad April 28, 2025

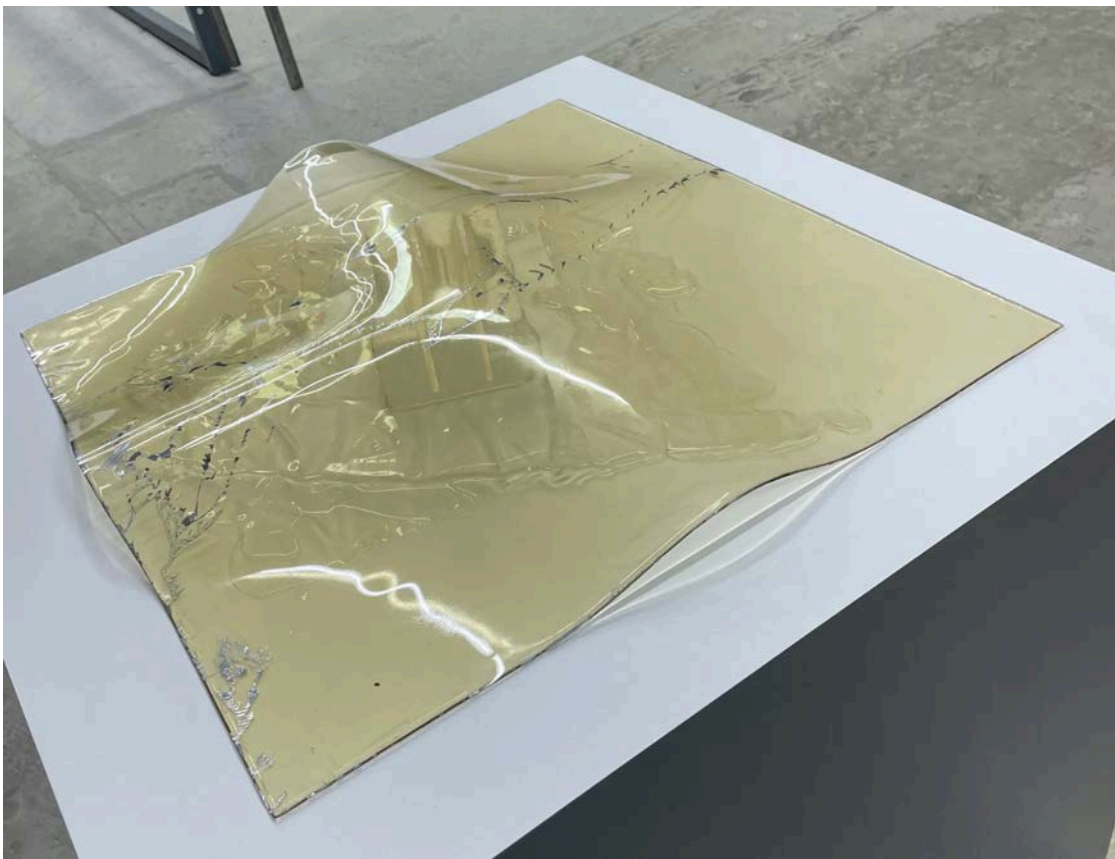


Installation view of *arms ache avid aeon*: Nancy Brooks Brody / Joy Episalla / Zoe Leonard / Carrie Yamaoka: *fierce pussy amplified: Chapter Eight* at Participant Inc (all photos Natalie Haddad/Hyperallergic)

As its title suggest, *arms ache avid aeon*: Nancy Brooks Brody / Joy Episalla / Zoe Leonard / Carrie Yamaoka: fierce pussy amplified: Chapter Eight is two things at once: a group exhibition featuring longtime collaborators and an exploration of the art collective fierce pussy.

Structurally, it's more the former. With one exception, the works represent the individual practices of the core collective members. The outlier is a fierce pussy poster, which visitors are welcomed to take, printed with the line "I got all my sisters with me" from Sister Sledge's 1979 disco anthem "We Are Family." The only didactic work in an otherwise dense conceptual show, it's a nod to the group's history and activism: They formed in 1991 to take lesbian identity to the streets with interventions like wheat-pasting posters around New York City, renaming streets after lesbian icons, and distributing materials including greeting cards and stickers.

The exhibition was conceived by curator Jo-ey Tang to put the artists' solo practices in dialogue. A handout identifies the artworks, but there are no wall labels, so viewers can wander the show without always knowing who made what (as I did, deliberately). As a result, something curious happens: fierce pussy *is* amplified, not as an activist group but as friends, partners, and creative collaborators.



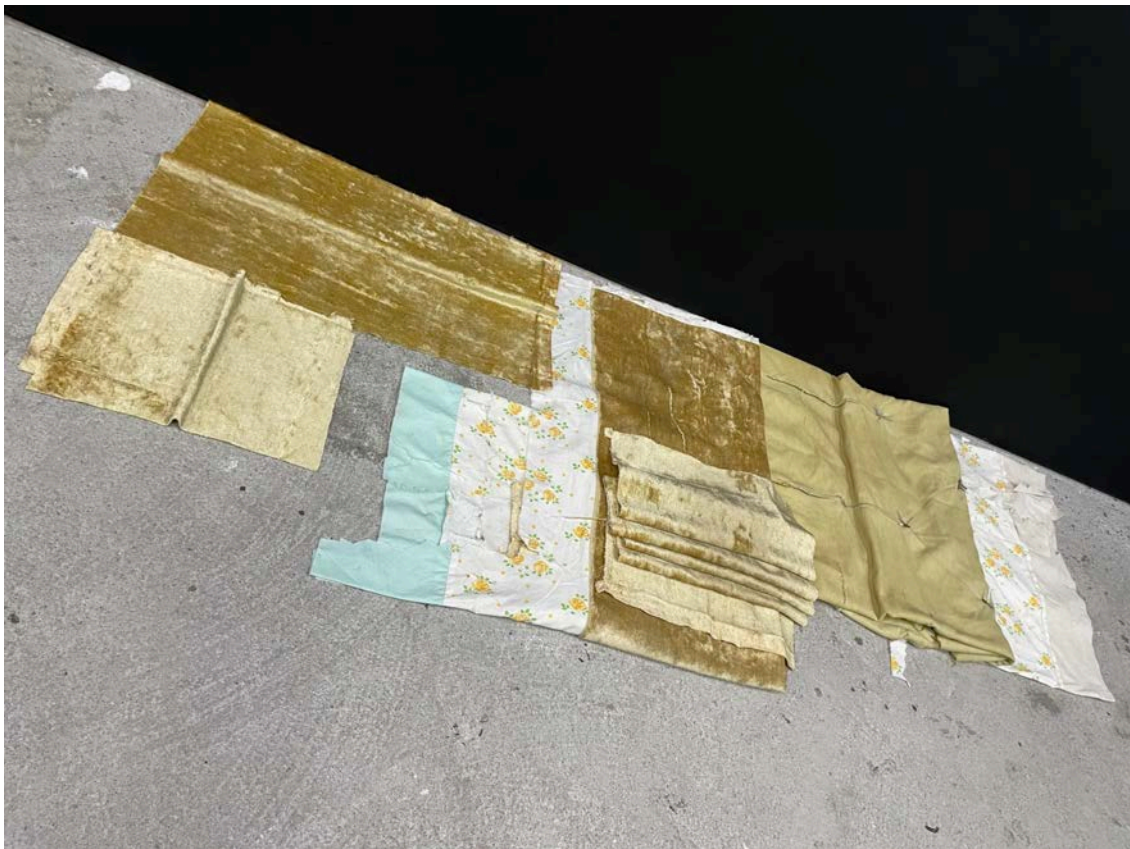
Carrie Yamaoka, "Overlay" (2024), foam block, urethane resin, epoxy resin, traces of reflective polyester film

The show is composed of pieces that resonate with one another visually and texturally: The mostly beige textiles that form Joy Episalla's "removed: 5 skins" (2001/2018/2024/2025) might look at first like scraps someone left on the concrete floor, but the sculptural sheet of clear, yellowing resin in Carrie Yamaoka's nearby "Overlay" (2024) brings out their folds and color variations, and vice versa. Likewise, Yamaoka's abstract mixed-media work "14 by 11 (flake.swell)" (2024) draws attention to the formal qualities of Zoe Leonard's photograph "Tree +

Fence, Out My Back Window” (1998), while the latter coaxes potential figurative readings in the former. A similar dynamic unfolds between Yamaoka’s “Stump 3” (2024), a digital print of a tree stump on fabric draped over a wood panel, and Episalla’s “foldtogram (chromo white/blue, winter 40’ x 50’”)” (2025), which reminded me of a giant, crumpled metallic food wrapper.

Hypnotic optical paintings of a cheesecloth-like pattern by the late Brody (to whom the show is dedicated) allude to the mutability of perception in the show. The shared title — “Glory Hole, (vibgyor)” — articulates queerness as a presence in the two pieces: “vibgyor” is a mnemonic device for memorizing the optical spectrum, or the colors of the rainbow. The presence echoes throughout the show in the way that some works can denaturalize, or queer, superficial readings of others.

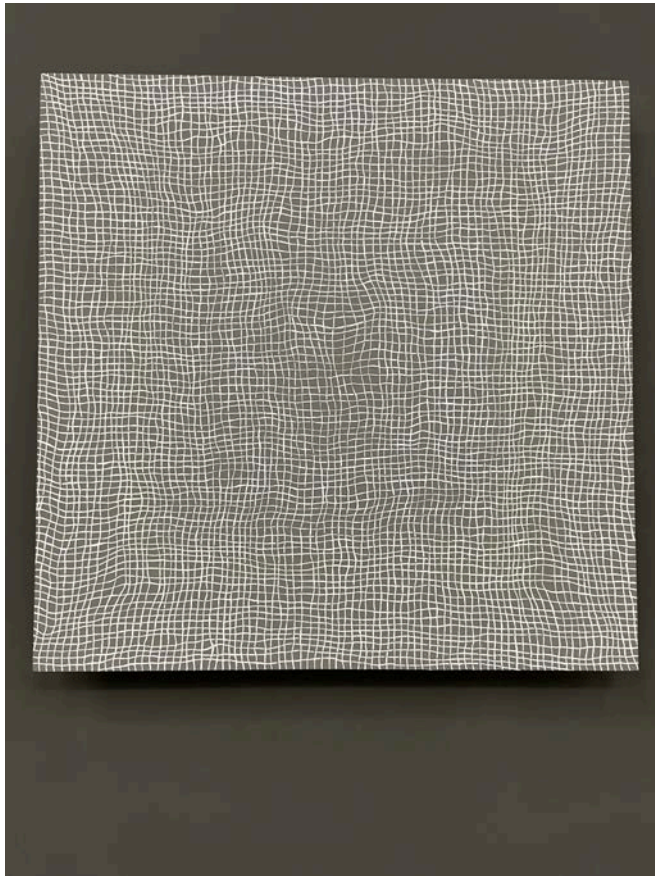
This is not to say that the works act as keys to each other. *arms ache avid aeon* brought to mind a recent show that Yamaoka curated, *Exposure* at Ulterior Gallery. In her [Hyperallergic review](#), Alexis Clements noted that “Artists aren’t obligated to spoon feed audiences, but it’s a choice to present work that turns in on itself.” This show definitely does not spoon feed its audience, but it creates a cohesive sensibility that is all the more meaningful because of the human relationships that underlie its formal relationships. Bound together by the collective’s poster, the show presents fierce pussy not out on the streets, but in a more private realm communing with one another, like family.



Joy Episalla, “removed: 5 skins” (2001/2018/2024/2025), five sections: cotton, metal



Carrie Yamaoka, "14 by 11 (flake.swell)" (2024), reflective polyester film, urethane resin, and mixed media on wood panel



Nancy Brooks Brody, "Glory Hole, (vibgyor) white on black" (2012), oil on venetian plaster on wood

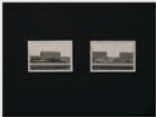
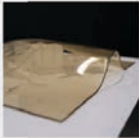


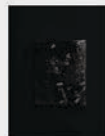
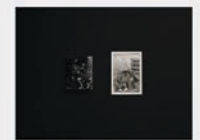
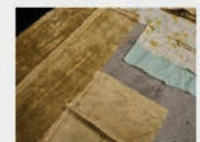
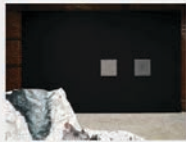
Carrie Yamaoka, "Stump 3" (2024), digital inkjet print on synthetic chiffon, wood panel

arms ache avid aeon: Nancy Brooks Brody / Joy Episalla / Zoe Leonard / Carrie Yamaoka:
fierce pussy amplified: Chapter Eight *continues at Participant Inc (116 Elizabeth Street, Lower East Side, Manhattan) through May 11. The exhibition was curated by Jo-ey Tang.*



Nancy Brooks Brady, Joy Epistalla, Zoe Leonard, Jurek Jurek, Carrie Yonaka
arms ache and areon: Nancy Brooks Brady / Joy Epistalla / Zoe Leonard / Carrie Yonaka Jurek Jurek amplified Chapter Eight
Participant Inc., New York
March 2 - May 11, 2015
Curated by Jurek Jurek
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