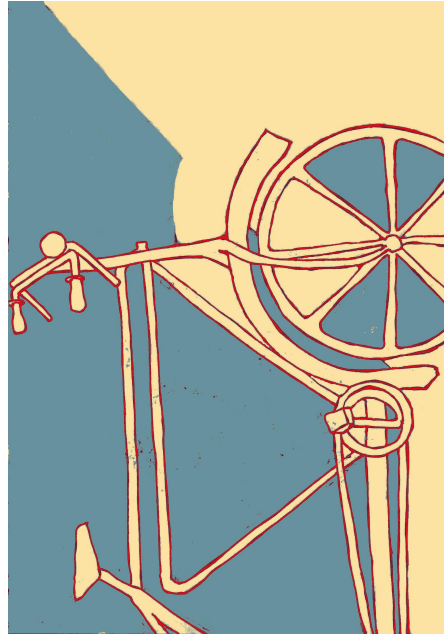


AMOS ENO GALLERY

Inaugural Critique Group Show: *Let's Get Critical*

On view December 8, 2023 - January 14, 2024



Afrin, Sazia. *Rickshaw Print* (2017). Matte print, 4 x 6 inches.

Opening Reception

Friday, December 8, 2023, from 6 p.m. – 8 p.m.

The Project Space at Amos Eno Gallery in Bushwick, Brooklyn, is pleased to present *Let's Get Critical*, a group exhibition by seven emerging artists from the New York City area. An opening reception will take place at the gallery's location at 56 Bogart St., Brooklyn, NY, on Friday, December 8, from 6 to 8 p.m.

Curated by gallery director Ellen Sturm Niz, *Let's Get Critical* will be on view through January 14. Artists featured are Sazia Afrin, Naomi Frank, Leah Harper, Dustin Oriente, Lynn Ubell, Renee Valenti, and Gail Vachon, who were participants in Amos Eno's inaugural critique group, held over six online sessions this fall. This cohort of artists investigated their artistic practices with each other and with a rotating cast of nine of the gallery's artists who served as moderators.

"Artists constantly think critically about their practice and their work, but outside perspectives and feedback are integral to growth and evolution," Niz says. "External viewpoints offer valuable insights that artists might not have considered within the confines of their own creative bubble. At any stage of their career, constructive criticism and diverse interpretations from peers contribute to an artist's ability to refine their skills, broaden their conceptual horizons, and adapt to changing artistic landscapes."

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As an artist-run gallery for almost 50 years, Amos Eno is dedicated to fostering creative communities in New York City and beyond. The virtual critique group connected local New York City-based artists with each other and with the gallery's artists from Philadelphia to Dallas to Santa Fe, NM, to explore their creative practices.

"One area of interest in my creative practice is the making and unmaking of identity, particularly from an immigrant's perspective," says Sazia Afrin " I use mixed-media and text-based art to revisit memories and family stories, or to investigate the conflicting process of assimilating into another culture or nationality."

Afrin's *Rickshaw Book: A Study, A Memory* (2023) itself makes and unmakes colorful rickshaws as one flips through the cutout papers marked with acrylic gouache and acrylic markers. Bound together, the collected pages reveal and assemble fragmented forms of the vehicle.

Further, engaging in critical thought about the world and society is a cornerstone of an artist's practice. By delving into the nuances of social, political, and cultural landscapes, they can distill their observations into visual narratives that resonate with viewers on a profound level.

"It's through this analytical process that artists not only reflect on the current state of affairs but also envision alternative perspectives and possibilities," Niz says. "Through their critical engagement with the world, artists contribute to a collective dialogue, fostering understanding, empathy, and, at times, sparking transformative change."



"My photographs explore themes of gender identity, body image, sexuality and desire through the lens of being a transmasculine queer individual," says Dustin Oriente, whose digital photographic prints *Sprout* (2023) and *Decay* (2023) are on view. "Using color, texture and landscape, I create a visual representation of my body's appearance changing from testosterone therapy. Through physical transition, my fear, shame, dysphoria, and feelings of undesirability decay with the dying plants, and in its place sprouts newfound confidence, a sense of thriving and belonging as a beautiful part of nature."

Leah Harper's work also investigates nature but through her own critical lens: "My practice centers on experimentation with materials, such as bioplastics containing algae or seaweed, and my work often highlights the implications of rising seas by portraying nature overtaking interior space," she says. "Drawing inspiration from marine ecosystems, I create sculptures and installations that explore the balance between nature and the built environment."

Her sculptures *Overgrown* (2023) and *Stagnant* (2023) transform everyday ceramic and glass dishware with the addition of gelatin-based bioplastic and nori seaweed, as if ocean life is taking back its space and more, flooding into cupboards to show humans what it feels like to be invaded and polluted.

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Meanwhile, in Renée Valenti's recent series of work — of which the oil on canvas paintings *Tether* (2023) and *Give Me Your Awful Parts and I Will Lick Them* (2023) are on view in *Let's Get Critical* — biomorphic shapes and saturated colors draw from spaces that straddle reality and the imaginary. Her work is heavily influenced by cinema, low culture, and the genres of figure painting and early abstraction, as well as fantastical and outlandish sets and films from artists like John Waters, David Lynch, Sofia Coppola, and sets and performances from opera and drag.

Ultimately, the interplay between internal reflection and external engagement — with each other and the world around them — forms a crucial foundation for an artist's continuous development, ensuring that their creative journey remains dynamic, relevant, and resonant. A critical look, in meaning both analytical and urgently important, is evident in all 14 of the works from these seven artists who came together through this critique group.

“Our supportive community is a testament to the belief that artistic expression thrives in a collaborative environment,” Niz says. “ At Amos Eno, we recognize that the strength of our gallery lies not only in the individual talents of our artists but in the collective spirit that binds us together.”

About Amos Eno Gallery

Amos Eno Gallery has been a fixture in the New York art scene since 1974 when it opened in Soho. It has moved with changing arts neighborhoods over the years to land at its current space at 56 Bogart St. in Brooklyn, across from the Morgan Ave. L train stop. The gallery is open Thursdays through Sundays from noon to 6 p.m. and is run by a small community of professional artists, both from New York City and across the country, and a part-time director.

For more information, please contact Gallery Director Ellen Sturm Niz at amosenogallery@gmail.com.

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