

ARTNEWS

MARKET NEWS

Essex Street Gallery Relocates to Hester Street, Opening New Space With an Anti-Inauguration Show

BY [Alex Greenberger](#) POSTED 01/18/17

Since Essex Street, the gallery, first moved to Eldridge Street in Lower Manhattan, in 2012, it's been located in a smallish ground-floor space near a beauty spa, a Vanessa's Dumpling House, and a dollar store. There's something charming about its lo-fi, unassuming appearance, but this week, the gallery will relocate to shinier digs at 55 Hester Street, under a luxury condo building. Its first show will be "[Change of State](#)," a political group show that opens on January 19, right before Inauguration Day. (On January 20, the gallery will be closed in solidarity with [the J20 Art Strike](#).)

in the first place. So the question is: what is really being exchanged?

The problem with TV, even on the newest, hugest screens with the highest definition, is how little we're able to see change in relation to how much change we're told is happening.

Lucy Raven, *4:3*, 2008, cable public access service announcements.
COURTESY ESSEX STREET

"I started seeing the artists having shows in larger institutional settings," Essex Street's founder, Maxwell Graham, said last week. "I just thought they looked so good there. I was like, Wow!" Indeed, many on his roster have recently had solo shows at major museums and nonprofits, and three—Park McArthur, Cameron Rowland, and Torey Thornton—will have work in the upcoming Whitney Biennial. But, if he was being honest, he is making the move just to make a change, he said. "I was not necessarily looking for a larger space." The Hester Street location, formerly the home of Lu Magnus Gallery, is about three times bigger than the Eldridge Street space, and has a soaring ceiling, a big change from the two previous homes of the gallery, which focuses on conceptual work with an interest in institutional critique.

Graham mentioned that he actually had been considering a much bigger change, moving the gallery to Berlin for a year, or even relocating for good to Brussels. "There's a number of Art Nouveau buildings there," he told me. "They cost less to rent a month than any Lower East Side storefronts do."

With his shaved head, tight-fitting blazer, and fancy-looking black sneakers, Graham would seem like a natural Belgian gallerist, but he said he has no plans for Essex Street to leave America in the near future. He does, however, have one idea for a future experiment: "I would *love* to have a gallery in Washington, D.C.," he said.

**IF THE
RICH WIN
THE LIVING
WILL ENVY
THE DEAD**

Allan Sekula, poster designed for Kadist Art Foundation's "In Protest" publication, 2012.
COURTESY ALLAN SEKULA STUDIO

Essex Street's first show at Hester Street, "Change of State," is a protest exhibition of sorts. "I planned on doing an anti-inauguration exhibition regardless of which of the two candidates were elected," Graham said, noting that doing so would "remind me of my purpose." The show, which will be held simultaneously at Eldridge Street and Hester Street, will feature almost entirely old works. As we spoke, Graham was installing Sharon Hayes's *Symbionese Liberation Army (SLA) Screeds #13, 16, 20 & 29* (2003), a four-channel video work in which the artist, looking straight into the viewer's eyes, performs as Patty Hearst and ultimately renames herself Tania.

"I didn't think that new work made sense because I don't think we're necessarily moving forward," Graham said. "Amongst other moments of contemporary art history, critical practices from the '80s and '90s are foundational for me and members of the gallery. It's very depressing to see the increased need for them again." He plans to include

a sculpture Hans Haacke made about George W. Bush and a photo series by Fred Lonidier that documents the arrests of 29 protesters as a 1972 sit-in. There will, however, by one new work—a "video bag" by Georgia Sagri, an artist who was closely tied to the Occupy Wall Street movement.

Though he is in a new space, Graham emphasized he is not forgetting his roots. He's excited to be closer to Essex Street's original location (on Essex Street, of course), but he's going to miss the galleries near his soon-to-be-former space, a rich group that includes Shoot the Lobster, Invisible-Exports, and Tomorrow. "I really love the community of galleries on Eldridge Street, and also the dollar store across the street," Graham said. "I think I'll miss them the most, but that'll always be my dollar store." Will he change the gallery's name any time soon, to fit the street where it's now located? "Oh, yeah, good question. I don't know!" he said. "Officially, it's still provisional. I still think, in my head, One day, I'll come up with a better title."