

Press Release

Contact: pr@welancoragallery.com

646-818-0612

welancoragallery.com

Ethos

Opening Reception: Thursday, March 12, 2026

6:00pm–8:00pm



Still from *The Ethos of Water*, 2026
Video, 7:39 minutes

Welancora Gallery is pleased to present *Ethos*, a solo exhibition of new work by Aisha Tandiwe Bell on view at 33 Herkimer Street in Brooklyn, NY. The opening reception will take place on Thursday, March 12, 2026 from 6:00–8:00pm. The exhibition will remain on view through June 9, 2026.

Ethos marks Aisha Tandiwe Bell's third solo exhibition at the gallery. The works on view utilize clay, wood, handmade paper, cloth, twine and acrylic paint. This new body of work is a continuation of the themes explored in her first two shows with the gallery, *Conjure* (2017) and *Akin* (2020), which presented the concept of conscious inanimate objects existing across multiple realms and identities concurrently.

Bell's subjects have ceramic masks that emerge from painted wooden panels, while their bodies remain trapped in their two dimensional planes. These figures possess a degree of vitality and

authority as they extend out of the frame, monitoring the world from their protruded positions. Their simultaneous existence across multiple planes relates to their fragmented, shape-shifting, and hyphenated identities. Bell's work investigates this multiplicity as an example of the human condition: How does one reconcile conflicting social philosophies regarding how we treat one another? How does the desire to effect change coincide with the persistent ethos of greed, destruction, and even indifference? Above all, are we truly aware of these concurrencies and how they drive us to act? Inspired by the DuBoisian concept of double consciousness and Lacan's shape-shifting subconscious, Bell's figures don various 'masks' at different iterations of life to align with their surroundings. Mid-emergence from their two-dimensional plane and towards freedom, these embodied ceramics locate their power in their pensive gaze, as they record and judge. Some figures calmly keep their eyes closed, meditating and absorbing prior to acting.

Two-dimensional painted cardboard boxes float above some of the ceramic masks, acting as self-imposed traps – at once a place of solace, a place of escape, and a trap. These works simultaneously reference displacement caused by gentrification, war, greed and climate change. The stripes painted onto the figures and the deadfall traps reference carceral identifying markers, such as fingerprinting and early prison uniforms, while also alluding to traditions of war paint and scarification.

Bell's free-standing traps are constructed of intricately patterned fabrics, mostly Dutch African Prints. These prints have embedded implications of cultural erasure and the eradication of origin, as African prints created by a colonizing country. Bell renders these traps with metalpoint, gold leaf, silver, and copper, which carry implications of wealth, status, and dream-fulfillment, alluding to the pitfalls of consumerism. The beauty of these traps entices and seduces one to enter, reflecting the ways in which we justify our decisions that align with a certain ethos. The traps that we create for ourselves are based on the façade of perceived power, which seeks to render humans unchanged and unchallenged.

These various duplicities of meaning invite, or perhaps obligate, the viewer to question the (mis)alignment of their own ethos and actions. As the ceramic heads protrude outwards, the viewers' space is utterly invaded, and they become the new subject to gaze upon. Bell challenges the roles of predator and victim by offering a new outlook that requires one to consciously observe and reject self-serving modes of thinking and being. In dismissing the numbing ethos of apathy, or the selfish ethos that drives overconsumption, a renewing force emerges in which despair is balanced with hope.

About the Artist

Aisha Tandiwe Bell's work is inspired by the fragmentation of our multiple identities. Her practice is committed to creating myth and ritual through sculpture, performance, video, sound, drawing and installation. Bell holds a BFA, and an MS from Pratt and a MFA from Hunter College. Bell received a NYFA fellowship in Performance Art/ Multidisciplinary Work and has had artist residencies/fellowships at Skowhegan, Rush Corridor Gallery, Abron's Art Center, LMCC's Swing Space, The Laundromat Project, BRIC and more. She has been a fellow with DVCAI on

International Cultural Exchanges (Jamaica 2012, Surinam 2013, Antigua 2014, Guadeloupe 2015 and 17). The Museo De Arte Moderno's Triennial 2014, The Jamaica Biennial 2014 and 17, The BRIC Biennial 2016, The Venice Biennial 2017, MoCADA, The Rosa Parks Museum, CCCADI, Columbia College, Space One Eleven, Welancora Gallery and Rush Arts are a few spaces where Bell has exhibited her work. Bell was a 2017-18 LMCC Workspacefellow. Her work is in the collections of the Columbus Museum of Art, Studio Museum in Harlem, and The National Museum of African American History and Culture. She lives in Brooklyn with her husband and two children.

Please scan the QR code below for the artwork information.

