

GLADSTONE

Domenick Ammirati, "Scene Hopping Across the Political Abyss: A Dispatch from Election Night in New York,"
Cultured, November 8, 2024

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Scene Hopping Across the Political Abyss: A Dispatch from Election Night in New York

Critic Domenick Ammirati flitted from one social event to the next as the bad news rolled in.



Audience at Barbara Gladstone Gallery on Nov. 5 with Carrie Mae Weems's

For this very special, un-paywalled edition of the *Critics' Table*, writer and critic Domenick Ammirati of the newsletter *Spigot* recounts his kaleidoscopic Tuesday—including a marathon reading featuring bold-type name authors at Gladstone Gallery, a party at publicist Kaitlin Phillips's apartment, and a glimpse of the edgelords on the Lower East Side. Ammirati narrates an evening of anxiety and hope—and its dismal conclusion. Next week: [Pamela Sneed](https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/pamela-sneed) (<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/pamela-sneed>) on Kara Walker's new show, [Whitney Mallett](https://substack.com/@whitneymallett) (<https://substack.com/@whitneymallett>) on Bad Girls, and much more. Subscribe to the [Critics' Table](https://www.culturedmag.com/the-critics-table) (<https://www.culturedmag.com/the-critics-table>) now.

In November 2016 I was in Greece. Athens.

A woman I was in love with came to visit from New York. On election night we attended a talk by [Terre Thaemlitz](http://comatone.com/thaemlitz/) (<http://comatone.com/thaemlitz/>), a contrarian DJ and musician who switches pronouns and genders with a kind of aggression. It's genuinely prescient, in retrospect, the emphasis on trans issues that [Documenta 14](https://www.documenta14.de/en/) (<https://www.documenta14.de/en/>)—full disclosure: I was working there—had woven in, largely at the impetus of Paul B. Preciado. American politics have now grimly cemented his intellectual legacy. Didn't you catch the ad? *He's for you, she's for they/them.*

The performance artist [Georgia Sagri](https://georgiasagri.com/) (<https://georgiasagri.com/>) had planned to have people over to her space to watch the returns but changed her mind at the last minute. Thus, after the lecture we appropriated the projector from my office and lay on the floor in my small, awkward living room nibbling on meat and nuts, drinking wine, while everything revealed itself to be not what it had seemed.

Let no one say I am a bad employee: The next day, after I had woken up R. to affirm the truth of the results we had witnessed, I went to work. It was muggy. The office was deserted. My boss, the writer [Quinn Latimer](https://www.instagram.com/ql_ql_ql/) (https://www.instagram.com/ql_ql_ql/), materialized briefly and disappeared.

I had nowhere to go. Home? R. was crying at the temple of Artemis. I sat looking past my computer screen out the window. It does not rain much in Athens (you may recall the last few years' terrible fires in Attica). That day, however, the sky darkened unexpectedly, swiftly; clouds gathered like in time-lapse stock footage. And then dimes of ice began falling from the sky, nickels, quarters pelting the pavement, a rattlesnake din growing louder and louder.



Anne Waldman performing on Nov. 5 with Carrie Mae Weems's *Cyclorama – the Shape of Things*, a Video in 7 Parts, 2021, in the background.

The aftermath of the election of 2024 has so far seen no Jovian declarations; the sick warmth we're experiencing in New York this week feels all too petty, too human. Election night was not surprising, but it was disorienting. I had guaranteed that it would be that way for me, one way or another, when I volunteered to write a column about it for a magazine. It was a cope: I would flit from place to place, roam the streets. By focusing on the social, I could avoid staring into the political abyss, regardless of what was staring back.

Around 6 p.m., I went to [Gladstone Gallery](https://www.gladstonegallery.com/) (<https://www.gladstonegallery.com/>), which had decided to host an extravaganza of readings and music inside [Carrie Mae Weems's video installation](https://www.carriemaeweems.net/installation-1) (<https://www.carriemaeweems.net/installation-1>) on 21st Street. The resistance-lib redolence of the event made me queasy. Rirkrit Tiravanija was slinging wok, Modelos sat ready for the popping, and an all-star lineup had been performing since mid-afternoon. Inside the blue-curtained cyclorama, like a geode with Weems's shifting images glinting around its interior, [Lynne Tillman](https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/135676.Lynne_Tillman) (https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/135676.Lynne_Tillman) was on the mic explaining why she prefers to French exit a party, which had something to do with her toilet training. After her, [Anne Waldman](https://www.annewaldman.org/) (<https://www.annewaldman.org/>), with her charismatic jet-black hair and Ginsbergian *sprechstimme*.

Then, via video, [Eileen Myles](https://www.eileenmyles.com/bio/) (<https://www.eileenmyles.com/bio/>), delivering an absolutely scorching poem about Gaza. It stripped off the veneer of pretense that this country is anything other than horrid to the core, no matter what happened in the electoral college.



Eileen Myles performing remotely on Nov. 5 with Carrie Mae Weems's *Cyclorama – the Shape of Things, a Video in 7 Parts*, 2021, in the background.