

# STIPAN TADIĆ

**Selected Press**

# HYPERALLERGIC

Art

## From Brooklyn to the Bronx in 36 Paintings

Stipan Tadić rode the D train back and forth for a year, retracing the route countless times in search of scenes for his series of New York cityscapes.

Elaine Velie



Stipan Tadić, "Smoker - 20th Ave" (2022), oil on canvas, 18 x 14 inches (all images courtesy James Fuentes Gallery)

For most of 2022, Stipan Tadić rode the D train from Coney Island to the Bronx and back as he meticulously explored each stop, retracing the route countless times in search of perfect scenes for his series of New York cityscapes. Now, Tadić's finished project *Metropolis: 36 Views of New York* — composed of 36 oil canvases that document the blocks surrounding the subway line — is on view through September 5 at James Fuentes Gallery in Manhattan's Lower East Side.

The result is a series of ubiquitous New York imagery: chicken hanging in a steamy restaurant window, delivery drivers waiting in the cold, and the unabashed stare of a bodega cat. Sometimes Tadić sketched what he saw and other times he snapped photographs, bringing both back to his studio to paint them in his characteristic cartoonish style.



Left: Stipan Tadić, "Old Theatre - Fordham" (2022), oil on canvas, 18 x 14 inches; right: "Ecuadorian Restaurant - 62nd Street" (2022), oil on canvas, 18 x 14 inches

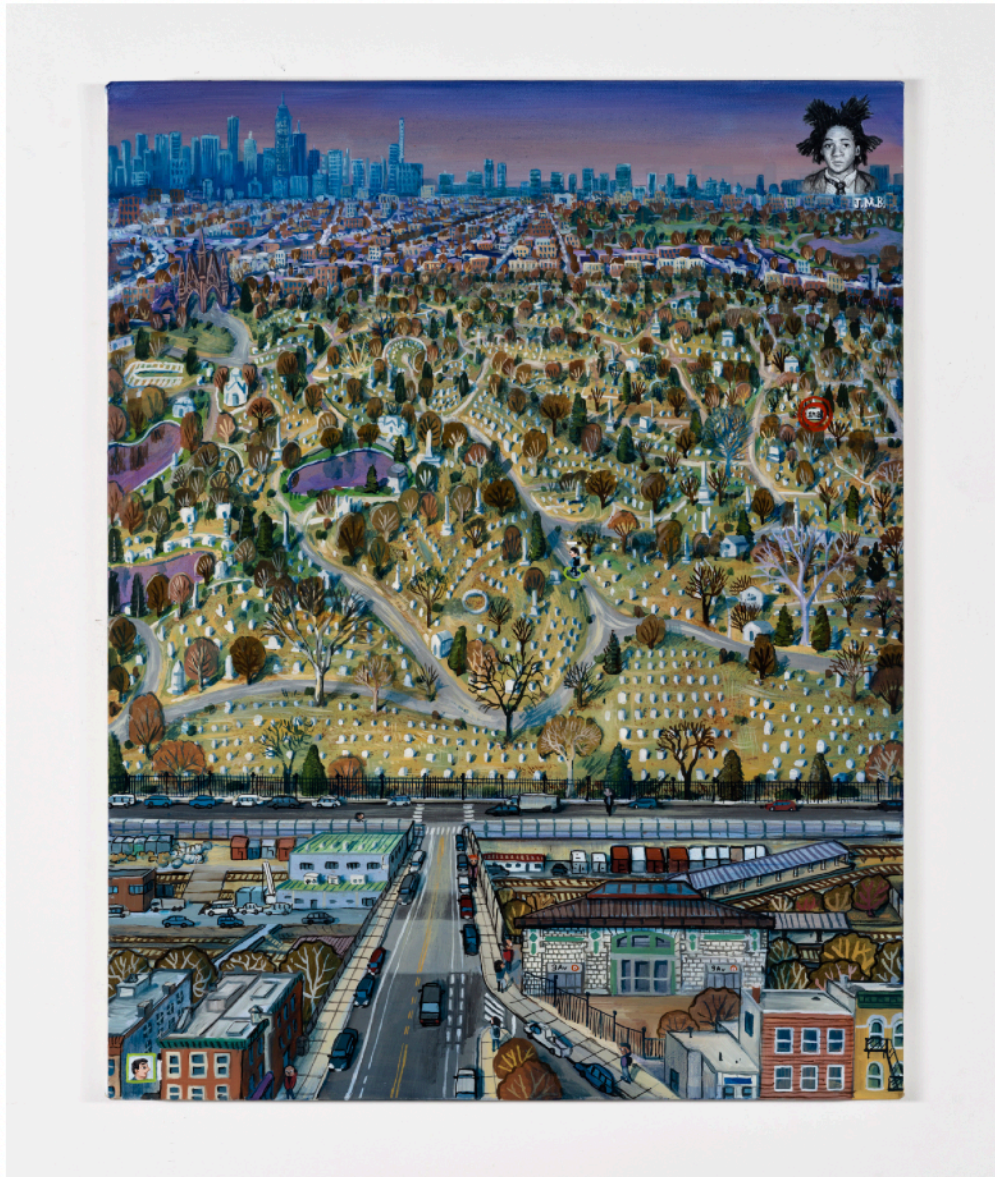
Now a resident of Brooklyn's Greenpoint neighborhood, Tadić was born and raised in Zagreb, Croatia, and moved to New York to earn an MFA, graduating in 2020 and staying through the pandemic. But he says he still paints from an outsider's perspective. With dozens of scenes so distinct from one another, even when the locations they portray are geographically close, the finished series probes the notion of whether one can truly ever know a place.

“New York gives you a lot of ideas without you going too deep into your own creativity,” the artist said. “New York is doing its own thing, and you can pick that up.” Tadić wanted a project with a beginning and an end, and found inspiration in 19th-century Japanese artist Katsushika Hokusai's series [\*36 Views of Mount Fuji\*](#). The woodblock prints all show the mountain foregrounded by different people and activities in varying locations throughout the same region. Tadić thought the idea could translate to depicting New Yorkers who share one commonality — in this case, the D train. The “next logical step,” the artist said, was to document the city along the subway line, which he thinks provides “the most fundamental mapping of New York.”



Stipan Tadić, "Bodega Cat - 50th Street" (2022), oil on canvas, 18 x 14 inches

Tadić didn't romanticize what he saw on his subway journeys or alter the passengers' clothing or accessories. "I wanted the work to be in the now," he said. The artist's works are rife with timestamps: A man in a painting near the Fordham Theatre in the Bronx wears a mask and the Tommy Hilfiger tricolor coat that was everywhere last winter. In "Ecuadorian Restaurant - 62nd Street," Tadić paints his chicken dinner in vibrant colors and his surroundings in black and white, rendering a pair of diners, the subway entrance, and the brick buildings outside as washed-out sketches in comparison to the meal in front of him. A snapshot of a winter morning outside of the Barclays Center on Atlantic Avenue shows delivery app drivers, bundled up and chatting with their scooters parked waiting for the first pickups of the day.



Stipan Tadić, "Greenwood Cemetery – 9th Ave" (2022), oil on canvas, 18 x 14 inches

Other works venture beyond obsessive documentation. Tadić infuses his paintings with historical references and contextual information, often compulsively spilling his internal commentary onto the canvas, however lost it may be on the viewer. In his painting "Bedford Cafe – Bedford Park," a photograph tacked on the wall above the diner table depicts a train yard — the artist knew one was nearby and wanted to make sure this small fact made it into the piece. Other details are much more recognizable, even iconic: A headshot of Jean-Michel Basquiat appears above an overhead view of Greenwood Cemetery, where Basquiat is buried.

The rest of the work is painted from life. A steaming cup of diner coffee and a familiar set of condiments help set a cozy diner scene, one of the warmest and most familiar locations in the series. Many of the paintings include videogame references, such as imagery from a 1990s game called *Elders Scroll* in “Bodega Cat – 50th Street.” Here, a relaxed central figure lies surrounded by shiny packaged junk foods, gazing at the viewer from his resting place on a rubber non-slip mat, sporting a slight look of fear but an even more convincing expression of not wanting to get up.



Stipan Tadić, “Bedford Cafe – Bedford Park” (2022), oil on canvas, 18 x 14 inches

“Smoker – 20th Street” depicts two subjects standing below horizontal bars that appear when a file downloads, and another walking beneath the three dots that emerge when a person types on an iPhone. A warm-hued painting of the Bryant Park Christmas fair shows a navigator and a young man with an imaginary mission scrawled below: “Find a German bratwurst.” It’s a lighthearted response to what could be a very grim observation: That living in a place as dense and overwhelming can strip someone of empathy and make them reduce other people to side characters in their own life.

In other works, Tadić paints New York City devoid of human subjects. An overflowing trash can is plastered in flyers and a filthy subway tunnel is empty. In a wide view of Yankee Stadium, Tadić adds his subjects back into the canvas in the form of floating close-ups. In all of his works, Tadić paints the places and the people he sees in detail, translating their images from the photographs and sketches he took near the D train to playful musings that speak to the endless number of tiny worlds that exist along a single New York City subway line.



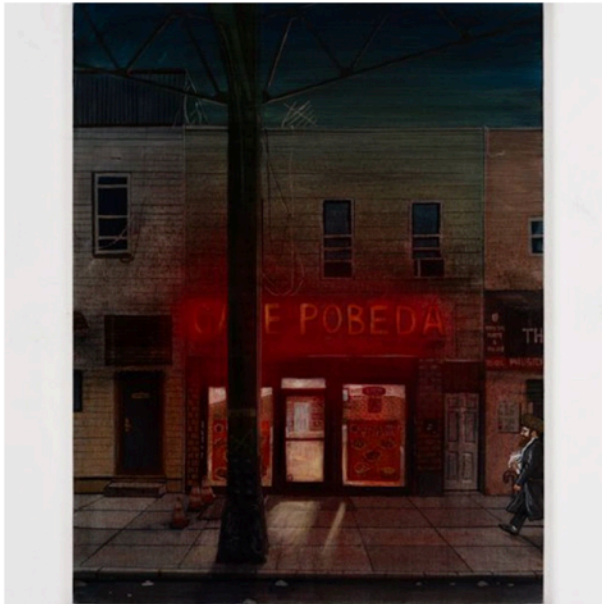
*Metropolis: 36 Views of New York* is on view at James Fuentes through September 5. (photo Elaine Velie/Hyperallergic)





*Metropolis: 36 Views of New York* at James Fuentes Gallery (photo Elaine Velie/Hyperallergic)

## 36 Views of New York



August 02, 2023

Croatian born artist **Stipan Tadic** is taking a fresh, and critical, approach to the changes impacting New York City's infrastructure across the last few years. His new show, which opened today at James Fuentes gallery, is a commentary of the social fabric of the city that portrays earnest renditions of everyday life in New York. Titled *36 Views of NYC*, Tadic pays close attention to quintessential New York City landmarks, exploring each neighborhood surrounding the D line train from the Bronx to Coney Island.

Part of a year-long walking tour, Tadic has been exploring cities across the world, observing everyday people, historical landmarks, and common spots popular amongst locals. Absorbing bits of culture in every scene he captures, Tadić creates 36 unique portals into New York City psychogeography. Mixing surrealist and socio-political elements, he explores the inequality affecting subaltern communities in New York City, and how a space can consciously or unconsciously shape the dynamics and values of a community.

*Text by Colleen Rodgers*

*Photos courtesy of [ALMA Communications](#)*

His visual language serves as a vehicle to tougher conversations surrounding race, class, and gentrification within these neighborhoods. Through easily digestible “comic strip” imagery of the 80s animation he grew up on, the cartoon type art allows this series to be a storytelling work. Each passerby is a new character in our story, one a viewer can choose whether or not to identify with. These small details give us insight into the culture of each New York area, giving us a peek into the personal lives of everyday people.

As a New York based artist, Stipan isn't afraid to depict the truth about living in a romanticized city. Often praised for its opportunity for “dreamers”, Stipan reminds us that there is still much work left to be done. Avoiding quixotic interpretations of the cityscape, paintings like *West 4th Street*, depict the dark and dirty subway hallways we're faced with everyday, reminding us of the failed promises of progress and development. His paintings confront the structural issues of contemporary urban life and highlight the everyday realities for marginalized communities.

A storytelling expert, Tadic toys with simplicity and absurdity in all his works. The detail of the works comes from his background in comics, having a keen eye for highly detailed yet playful scenes, Tadic uses a fine tip paintbrush to capture a great deal of detail in one picture, combining sometimes up to 5 points of view in one canvas. Each building and street sign is one we might pass by everyday, presented alongside different points of view of the same cityscape to show the complex network of human relations in New York City.

Tadic portrays the city in such a way that feels otherworldly and almost dystopian to us, yet familiar. His series provides us with an approachable yet informative set of visual resources to start conversations surrounding the current state and future of New York City.