

STIPAN TADIĆ
Diamonds and Rust
May 3–May 31, 2025**Opening reception:**
Saturday, May 3, 6-8pm

James Fuentes is pleased to announce Stipan Tadić, *Diamonds and Rust*, the Croatian-born, New York based artist's second exhibition with the gallery. The works on view represent an ode to Los Angeles and take on a largely horizontal sense of scale in response to the city's sprawling, cinematic landscapes. This project also marks Tadić's separation from documenting New York City in particular, to painting American cities more broadly, reflecting on their varied urbanism as well as their influence on "image-making" at large.

Tadić's work as a painter lives within the long lineage of social realism. The Los Angeles series hones in on the heavily layered aesthetics of a city understood *as* an image, as much as it is known for the imagery that it produces. These highly detailed paintings are often constructed through multiple transparencies and metered by dull washes of light. Tadić incorporates a long range of influences, from Croatian folk art to illuminated manuscripts, the expressionist innovations of James Ensor, the atmospheres of Flemish Renaissance painters like Joachim Patinir and Pieter Bruegel the Elder, to comic book logics and video game aesthetics—convened through Los Angeles' own highly encoded urban landscapes and architectural references.

A number of works in this series hone in on the neighborhood of Hollywood itself; materializing Tadić's visitation of the *idea* of Hollywood. *At the ATM* (2024) takes a birds-eye view of the Walk of Fame, detailing the landmark TCL Chinese Theatre, Roosevelt Hotel, and celebrity-populated hills beyond. The work's title lands upon a far smaller cartoonish figure at a storefront ATM, resembling the artist. At this scale we also see the strip's 99-cent store patrons, a stationary U-Haul, cops loitering, a sidewalk beggar, and a Minnie Mouse impersonator on a smoke break with The Joker; delivering a sense of negligibility in tension with Hollywood's mythic dimensions. In fact this part of the city—Hollywood and eastward—represents a highly transient zone to which many newcomers arrive to the city with big dreams, whether tourist or immigrant.

Larger in scale, *The Mayan* (2024) is by contrast empty of people. Instead, its intricate, thickly-painted detailing resembles a tapestry, presenting a frontal view of the Mayan Theater in Downtown Los Angeles. Once a famed movie palace, later a porn theater, today the Mayan houses a sometimes-open nightclub on an apparently forgotten nighttime street. Still, this architectural icon reflects the extravagance of early Hollywood as built from the perspective of its self-proclaimed gods. It demonstrates the distinct kind of layering that makes up the city's mythologies at large—via references drawn out of context and placed together to construct a grand new idea via the weight of an image. Tadić pulls this literal and proverbial facade into relief with this work, as searchlight beams shine into the sky from something happening behind and beyond the image we encounter here.

Tadić's largest painting made to date, *Angels in Parking Lots* (2024) collapses the LA Dream into a stark, immediate present. From on-ground-view "POV," the image gazes upon everything and nothing in particular at the intersection of Santa Monica Blvd and Wilton Pl. A new texture of emptiness, the emotional kind, hangs in the benign daytime taking place in this work. A crumbling parking lot feels as vast as the sky above it, and between the two is a sense of waiting (for the bus, or the light to turn green, and a dream to arrive). A yellow comic-strip storyboard lies at the bottom of the frame, detailing some of the artist's time spent in Los Angeles. This parallel story is also a nod to the artist's future moving-image work in progress. Its phantoms here play at the aspiration of writing one's story in LA; a sacred and mundane experience.

Night falls again in *Shadows* (2025), now filled with ghosts. The work began as a copy of James Ensor's *Christ's Entry into Brussels in 1889* (1888), which famously hangs in LA's Getty Museum. It's an odd, even random presence in the city: a heavily populated scene untethered to its inception. On top of his thickly-painted replica, Tadic renders a scene in Chinatown, the early figures turning transparent as if flowing through this contemporary space. In this sense, the image is possessed by its constructed past; and Tadic's suggestion is that the reality itself isn't any different. We encounter a layer on top of a layer, flattened and haunted—each one equally arbitrary and consequential as the one that comes next.

Stipan Tadić (b. 1986 in Zagreb, Croatia) received an MFA from Columbia University, New York in 2020, and BFA from the Academy of Fine Arts, Zagreb in 2011. *Diamonds and Rust* follows the artist's first solo exhibition and accompanying publication with the gallery, *Metropolis: 36 Views of New York*, held in New York in 2023. Other solo exhibitions include Zlatna vrata Center, Split, Croatia (2024); ATM Gallery, New York (2022); and Steve Turner, Los Angeles (2020). He was exhibited in group exhibitions at Pace Gallery, Hong Kong (2025); the Croatian Pavilion at the 60th Venice Biennale curated by Vlatka Horvat (2024); and Taymour Grahne Projects, London (2024). In 2014 he published his first comic book, *Parisian Nightmares* and has participated in independent comic zines since then. He lives and works in New York.

For further inquiries please contact James Fuentes at james@jamesfuentes.com, Katrin Lewinsky at kl@jamesfuentes.com, Quinn Charles at qc@jamesfuentes.com, Rachel Keller at rk@jamesfuentes.com, or Yann Perreau at yp@jamesfuentes.com.