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Fred Tomaselli on New York's Magical Humanity



"New York is such a beautifully constructed city. . . . If you love humanity and you love culture—which I also love—New York is the best city in America to live in just with everybody just all up against each other, you know? It's kind of magical that way."

Though Brooklyn-based artist Fred Tomaselli is known for his kaleidoscopic paintings featuring symbolic ephemera like pills, dead bugs, and dried flowers, his solo show at James Cohan Gallery goes in a new (though not entirely foreign) direction. In his series entitled *Current Events*, Tomaselli has co-opted the front page of the *New York Times*, injecting his signature colorful, poetic style into a place that is typically neither. Toeing the line of personal/political and real/unreal, the works are poised to create a dialogue about the media, culture, and, of course, current events.

Speaking to artnet News from his studio in Bushwick, Tomaselli revealed his inspiration for the series. In 2005, at the height of the Bush Administration and the war in Iraq, he said, he found himself absorbed by a photo on the cover of the *Times*. It was of Bernie Ebbers, the just-convicted WorldCom chairman, holding the hand of his wife as he was "being expelled from 'the Eden of Finance.'" He began drawing and collaging on the photo in an attempt to reconcile his feelings towards the image and what it represented. Now, almost 10 years later, the series consists of more than 90 works, which have been combined into a book entitled *The Times*, in which the artist reimagines the biggest events of the decade: Hurricane Katrina, the financial crisis, the Berlusconi scandal, and more.

JAMES COHAN GALLERY

Many of the *New York Times* pieces, along with new large-scale works, are on view at James Cohan Gallery until June 14.