



Mind-Bending *Current Events*

The artist Fred Tomaselli takes on the news in a new exhibition

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"Penetrators," 2012 by Fred Tomaselli. Courtesy of the artist and James Cohan Gallery.

The Brooklyn-based artist [Fred Tomaselli](#) sees his paintings as “escape holes or portholes to other dimensions.” Perhaps that’s not surprising given that his highly detailed works are composed of such unorthodox materials as herbs and pills sealed under glossy plastic resin. In his latest show, *Current Events*, opening tonight at New York’s [James Cohan Gallery](#), Tomaselli’s myriad obsessions—birds, gardening, mind-blowing drugs and front-page news—explode into view in all of their hallucinatory splendor.

Take *Penetrators*, (2012) a photo-collage on a wood panel that shows a bird plunging its beak into the mouth of a serpent in a Darwinian battle for dominance. Or the fish jumping from the sea in *Gyre* (2014), either inhaling or vomiting the stream of household trash in which it swims. Both offer up Tomaselli’s vision of a ruptured Eden while demonstrating the lush complexity of his compositions. As the show’s title suggests, the

JAMES COHAN GALLERY

real world regularly impinges on the artist's halcyon imaginings. Since 2005, Tomaselli has been painting over photographs from the front pages of *The New York Times* while leaving the surrounding text in place.

In *March 4, 2014*, an image of Vladimir Putin surrounded by his henchmen has been altered so that Putin appears as a naked woman and his cronies are clad in colorful knitted balaclava face masks that recall those worn by [Pussy Riot](#). Juxtaposing the newspaper's black-and-white columns of words with his zany imagery invites us to consider alternate visions of reality. The news, says Tomaselli, "is a rude interruption of reality into my world."

Fred Tomaselli, Current Events, open through June 14, 2014 at the James Cohan Gallery, 533 26th Street.