

Laster, Paul, "Q&A: Fred Tomaselli," *TimeOut New York*, April 24, 2014.

# Art

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## Q&A: Fred Tomaselli

After an eight-year absence, the master of psychedelic decoupage returns to New York.

By **Paul Laster**

Fred Tomaselli built his career over 20-odd years with hallucinatory nature scenes cobbled together out of thousands of collage elements, including images cut from books and magazines, as well as pills, insect parts and marijuana leaves. Layers of clear polyurethane are poured on top, resulting in an impregnable surface with uncanny optical depth. For his first New York exhibit in eight years, Tomaselli rolls out his newest resin paintings, along with collages based on front pages from *The New York Times*. *Time Out New York* sat down with him at his Bushwick studio to discuss the message and method behind his work, and why he's been away so long from the city's gallery scene.

**Your last solo show in New York was in 2006. What have you been doing since then?**

Mostly museum shows and biennials. It takes me a long time to make my work. This latest show took me three years to complete. I'm a real slowpoke!

**Your pieces based on *The New York Times* involve collaging or painting over the main photo on the front page. Is it the news value of an image or the way it looks that attracts you? What is the message?**

It's a little bit of both. It's really the image itself that sparks my formal interventions, but content can be a factor. I don't know if I have an overarching message, other than



Fred Tomaselli talks more about his process, and some recent changes in his art, at [timeout.com/nyart](http://timeout.com/nyart)

maybe that the world is going to hell, yet we're still making art. Anyway, they're starting to inform my larger paintings, and my larger paintings are informing them, so they're having a conversation.

**Speaking of which, you have nine new paintings in this show. Do you still embed pills and marijuana in them?**

I stopped using pills in 2005. I still use leaves, though not necessarily pot. I use fig, grape and rose leaves, and the fact that you can't tell the difference means,

maybe, that anything I do now has become psychoactive in a way. Like, when I took the pills out, I replaced them with dots, with the idea that they functioned as placebos. Either that, or maybe they're just dots.

**Fred Tomaselli, "Current Events," opens at James Cohan Gallery May 1**

**“It takes me a long time to make my work. I’m a real slowpoke!”**

