

JEFF BYE

Vanishing Point



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New York City is one of the most densely populated places in the world. Manhattan alone has more than 1.6 million people living in just 23 square miles. As full of people New York City is, there are still great hidden locations where humans are largely absent. It's those places that call out to Jeff Bye as he walks through the city.

"That's what I love about this place—there are locations all over that are often overlooked or never visited, but they grab your attention," Bye says of painting out-of-the-way places. "I have lots of New Yorker friends who have lived their entire life in the city, and when I show them some of these scenes they wonder where it is. The city has secrets still."

Bye will show his New York City paintings in *Vanishing Points*, a new exhibition at Greenhut Galleries in Portland, Maine. Of the 19 new works, there will be interior scenes, cityscapes and images of graffiti artists using forgotten walls as their canvas.

"It's taken some work to get connected to the graffiti artists, but sometimes it was just as easy as messaging them on Instagram. Others send me footage of walls they're painting. And then sometimes they just tell me where they'll be and I show up," he says. "It makes



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my painting schedule go from midnight to 4 or 5 a.m., which makes it interesting.”

Bye, who lives in central Pennsylvania, says he’s noticed some of New York City is dirtier than it once was. This is not a criticism, only an observation. He welcomes some dirt, grime and graffiti—things countless New York City mayors, from Ed Koch to Rudy Giuliani to Mike Bloomberg, all vowed to eradicate. And yet it comes back eventually. “The dirtiness adds texture and I really love that,” Bye says.

The artist will typically travel with a sketchbook so he can make notes and small drawings, and he will also create small watercolor studies. Sometimes he’ll focus on different parts of the day to see the tonal shifts. When he’s up on a rooftop, he can paint different skies and how the light bounces through the canyons of concrete, glass

and steel. Being up on a roof is also quite peaceful and isolated even though countless people can simply look out a window to see him. Without sight of the street below, it feels like he has the city to himself. In *Towers (Tribeca)*, *Manhattan Bridge* and *Rear View*, Bye paints a city that has no signs of being full or empty as the buildings conceal the life that is happening at street level.

In other works, he goes indoors, such as *Men’s Social Club*, which shows a barber shop he witnessed in 1998 and he is just now painting. The painting quickly grew as he worked on it and he had to add another canvas to it to contain the whole scene.

The city is just too big for one canvas. ●

1
Bowery, oil on linen,
24 x 48”

2
East Village, oil on linen,
19 x 27”

3
Men’s Social Club, oil on
linen, 20 x 55”

4
Towers (Tribeca), oil on
linen, 22 x 48”

Greenhut Galleries 146 Middle Street • Portland, ME 04101 •
(207) 772-2693 • www.greenhutgalleries.com