

Everything appears exciting - sometimes even intoxicating - when one travels to New York for the first time. The noisy, busy streets, the energy, the chaos. One gets thrown into that same intense mode of living that Frank Sinatra described in his immortal evergreen New York, New York. "I want to wake up in a city that doesn't sleep. I want to be a part of it – New York New York." But even up to this day, his song hasn't lost its full prevalence. Every year, thousands of people move to the Big Apple in pursuit of money, fortune, or both, dreaming of becoming a millionaire or - at the very least - a model or a movie star.

Since 2010, the artist Ekaterina Zacharova has undertaken numerous travels across the globe. She visited different metropolises, impressions from which she has since interpreted into her acclaimed series In Public, Panta Rhei – Come Along, and Habana – Amor Nostalgico, thereby creating haunting portraits of those places and their inhabitants, their attitudes and customs. Without resorting to over-the-top symbolism, Zacharova succeeds in capturing a Zeitgeist and the unique energy of those places.

Her sequence of paintings entitled „ New York-New York“ spans approximately over an entire day in town, starting off with a morning commute and ending in the early morning hours of the next day, when the last nighthawks make their way back home from a night out.

A first painting in the series shows a group of immaculately dressed businessmen in Grand Central Station, typing on their smartphones and reading daily newspapers while getting their shoes polished on their way to the office. What's striking is the fact that this scene could just as easily be taking place in the 1920s, a circumstance that we encounter every day in a present time – a type of timeless nostalgia that New York seems to exude everywhere.

Yet another large chapter in Zacharova's artistic storytelling is dedicated to a feeling of solitude in the midst of the crowds. Our daily lives and interactions appear to increasingly rely on social media and messenger services like WhatsApp. Yet, as a society, we paint a strangely antisocial picture. Everywhere people are squeezed together in small spaces, be it cafes or strongly frequented shopping malls. Yet, social isolation is maintained at every cost. Our gaze can stop anywhere - newspapers, billboards, cellphone - except the eyes of a stranger sitting opposite of us on a bus. At the same time, these strangers' lives are scrutinized from afar, sometimes with voyeuristic curiosity, other times with a mere indifference as one of Zacharova's one painting shows. A woman, clearly after hours, is portrayed holding a cup of Coffee to Go while glancing out on the streets with an unreadable expression. A high glass window separating a woman from the sidewalk appears to be both a metaphorical and a literal barrier.

In her series, Zacharova portrays New York as a city full of rich colors and movement, occasionally contrasted by steely cool surfaces. She dedicates her catalogue to her late professor, to whom she owes her understanding of laws of movement.

New York is in every way an intense city that can seem exhilarating when bustling with activity and downright frustrating with social idleness. Much like Sinatra has noted before, "If you can make it there, you can make it anywhere." If you can make it there, nothing will faze you anymore.

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