

**From Sun to Sun: the photo series livening up New York City bus shelters**  
Elle Pérez has used 100 bus stops in the city to showcase their experience growing up as a non-binary Puerto Rican New Yorker



Elle Pérez – How to Flight, Four (Flight created by Jay P Fury in the Bronx, NY), 2019 Grand Concourse and McClellan St, the Bronx. Photograph: Courtesy of the artist and 47 Canal, New York

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The punk community in the Bronx has a secret handshake called the Flight. It involves a fist bump, a finger point and a chest pat. Most of us will never understand it, but we will see it.

A photograph of the handshake is now on view in various bus stops across all five boroughs of New York City until 24 November. It's part of a new series of images by the Bronx-born artist Elle Pérez called *From Sun to Sun*, which puts 16 photos on 100 bus stops in 13 neighborhoods in the city, from Harlem to Williamsburg.

“There’s figures, portraits, the hands and environments like street scenes, fake flowers and bicycles,” said the Public Art Fund exhibition curator Katerina Stathopoulou. “Elle wanted to combine figurative work and street scenes to create a rhythm of daily life.”

The photos detail Pérez's experience growing up as a non-binary Puerto Rican in the Bronx, from flags to special meals, community leaders and pensive moments with city architecture.

"It's a decentered exhibit outside of a gallery or museum," said Stathopoulou. "There's something so powerful about Elle's portraits and environments that is so engaging, which is apparent in their work."

This photo of the handshake, and others, credits its co-creators, Jay P Fury and Bryan Keith, friends of Pérez. "It's a handshake specific to the Bronx," said Stathopoulou. "The fist pump and the chest touch. It's created in the punk scene, which Elle was involved with as a teenager. Elle incorporated images specific to their experience."

"Elle asked: 'What is the daily rhythm of New York, what is the cyclical nature of life in New York?'" said Stathopoulou. "There's a familiarity but also an abstraction in terms of the details of the city; it has the presence and absence of people in New York. It's meant to be a meditation on daily life in New York City."



Elle Pérez – Arroz con pollo asado, platano maduros, y yuca, 2019. Photograph: Courtesy of the artist and 47 Canal, New York

The bus shelters are strategically placed in neighborhoods that are important to the artist – from the Bronx to East Harlem, East Williamsburg and Queens. "It's not meant to represent New York as a whole but it's Elle's personal story of New York," said Stathopoulou. "It's to portray their experiences of growing up in New York, born in the Bronx and living in Brooklyn – the familiar people, the places they frequent and the experiences that Elle has daily."

The artist, who has previously documented the queer and Latinx communities of New York, told [Art21](#) that their artwork has always been made collaboratively, "because my work has a raw, visceral relationship to emotional authenticity", said Pérez. "People haven't often recommended that I go into documentary, but I could never figure out the ethics of it."

Pérez's photos look like they're casually taken but most of them are staged. One image shows a woman and child gardening at school. The woman is Pérez's sister, who is an outdoor educator in the Bronx, planting raspberries and evergreen shrubs with a student.

There's also a photo of an East Harlem middle school teacher named Brandon, seated wearing a tie. "As an educator at the school, he shaped the curriculum of what students learn, one of the reasons Elle wanted to include him in the series," said Stathopoulou. "Education is another theme."

Another photo depicts a Dominican street food dish that Pérez has found in their Brooklyn neighborhood. "The people eating the dish in the photo are all close friends," Stathopoulou said. "Elle wanted to capture this daily activity, this routine moment of sharing a meal among friends. Brooklyn and the Bronx are both important to Elle, personally and photographically."



Elle Pérez – How to Flight, Five (Flight created by Jay P Fury in the Bronx, NY), 2019, East 116 St between 3rd Ave and 2nd Ave, Manhattan. Photograph: Courtesy of the artist and 47 Canal, New York

One of the most poignant images is a portrait of a man with the Puerto Rican flag tattooed on his arm. It says “*Mi orgullo*”, which reads, in Spanish, “my pride”.

“Elle wanted to shoot it in black and white as an opposition against the US government’s oversight of Puerto Rico and the control they have over their economy,” said Stathopoulou. “This is Elle’s way of showing solidarity to support Puerto Rico. It ties into Elle’s experience in now, in present day New York.”