

# ARTnews

Looking for Thrilling Public Art in New York City? Head to Your Local Bus Stop—ASAP

BY Andrew Russeth POSTED 11/05/19 3:13 PM



Elle Pérez's *Brandon T., Activist Educator* (2019) in the St. George section of Staten Island.  
PHOTOS: ANDREW RUSSETH/ARTNEWS, EXCEPT WHERE NOTED

“Art of the City” is a weekly column by Andrew Russeth that runs every Tuesday.

THIS WEEK... Elle Pérez dots New York with 100 tender photographs, Hadi Fallahpishseh makes a star turn at Tramps, and the glorious return of ART-RITE in reproduction.

## Only Connect

A few months ago, I sliced off a tiny bit of my right index finger. I was talking on the phone and using a huge knife to chop cilantro (a fact mocked by my doctors and nurses, which is fair), and

I ended up sporting a sizable bandage for quite some time. To avoid injuring the wound as it healed, I stopped biking and running, avoided crowded subways, and walked a lot —slowly. Elle Pérez’s current Public Art Fund project came along at just the right time. Titled “from sun to sun,” it has brought prints of 16 of the artist’s intimate photographs to bus shelters in all five of the city’s boroughs. It’s a project that rewards long strolls.

Just off the ferry in Staten Island, the black-and-white photo Brandon T., Activist Educator shows its namesake perched atop a desk, looking at the camera with a gentle gaze, iPad in hand. A few blocks away, in another work on view next to Tompkinsville Park, radiant silk roses—red-orange, baby blue—spill from metal baskets outside a shop. And on a quiet street in Sunnyside, Queens, yet another shot shows Puerto Rican flags waving serenely, seen from below in black and white. These pictures recur throughout the exhibition (which spans 100 advertising locations in more than a dozen neighborhoods), along with ones of a cracked sidewalk, a worn subway seat, a weathered door—places and things that have seen a lot and been touched by countless people.

Spotting Pérez’s works becomes a kind of treasure hunt, with the side benefit of awakening you to other sights, like a wonderfully named What U Need Deli & Grill or an orange peel crushed into a brilliant abstraction on the asphalt. They are located in areas that have been important to the Bronx-born artist, who is 30 this year. (An online map guides the way.) Walking to view Pérez’s latest works, one has the uncanny sense of seeing the city through another person’s eyes, finding where their map of New York just might overlap with your own. “I think I went to that bakery years ago,” I found myself thinking, blessedly forgetting the pain in my finger for a few minutes one morning. “And a woman I used to date lived here. Maybe.”

Hands appear repeatedly in these pictures: they’re caring for a garden, or digging into an absolutely sumptuous-looking bowl of arroz con pollo with plastic forks, or, in a series of majestic close-up shots, enacting the intricate steps of completing the Flight, a handshake from the Bronx punk scene. One could think of “from sun to sun” as an impressionistic memoir, or as a distillation of the little jolts of beauty this city delivers at unexpected moments, through exquisite fake flowers, a hearty meal, a beloved flag, or a greeting passed by code from one individual to another. (Organized by PAF’s assistant curator, Katerina Stathopoulou, the exhibition runs through November 24.)



Elle Pérez’s *Roses* (2019) at a bus stop in the Tompkinsville section of Staten Island.