

Hell's Kitchen Paintings

Richard Maxwell

I take photos on my phone. I use the photos as an atmospheric reference to go back to. Impressed with the empty streets of Hell's Kitchen, my home for the last twenty years, I started taking photos as I walked my dog. Hell's Kitchen had recently been overrun by Times Square and luxury apartments. Here was a chance for me to come to terms with the place through an emptied-out landscape. Despite the upheaval of the last year, somehow these buildings seemed calm and stoic. Do they perceive what's happening around them? Are they impugned by world events around them?

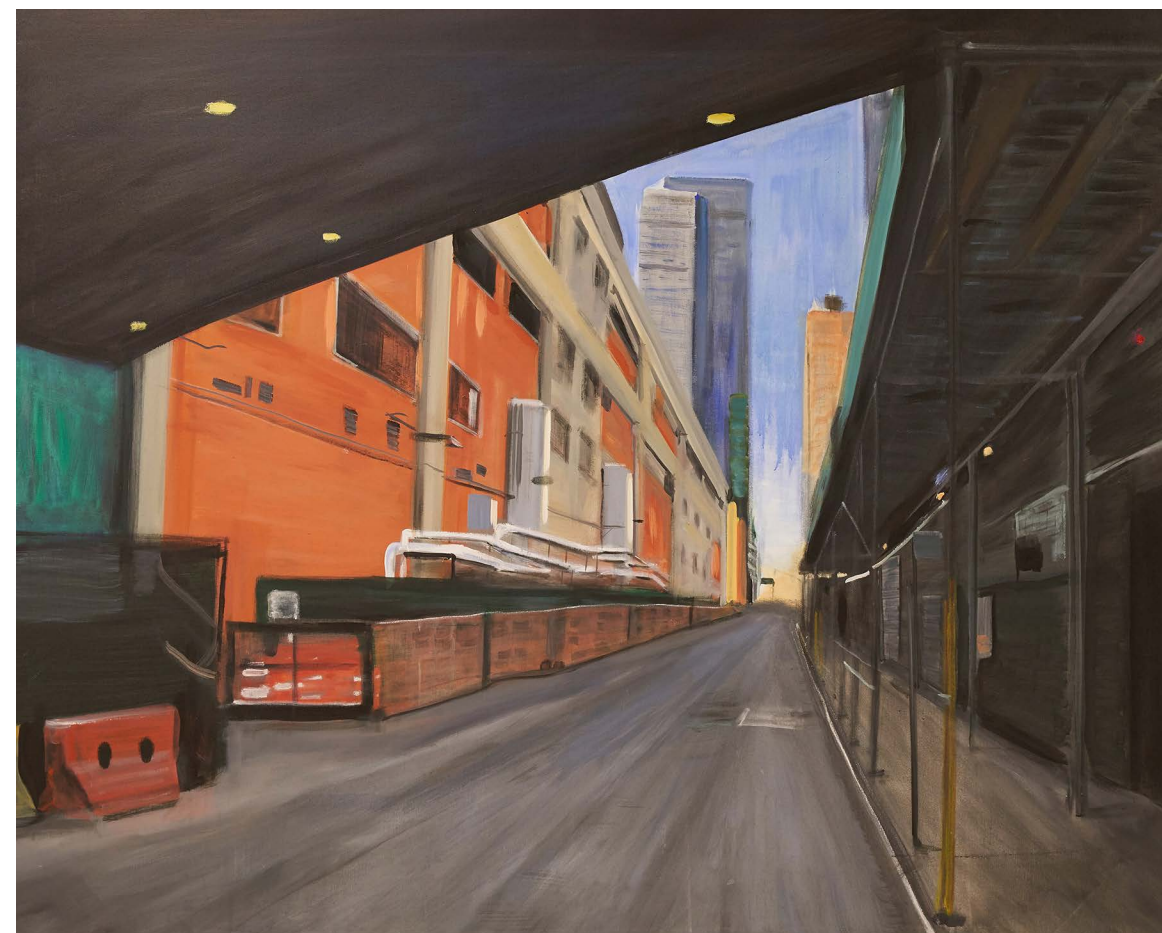
During the pandemic, I could find no footing for writing about anything. Maybe I needed more perspective. With the absence of crowds and cars, the buildings took on a figurative aspect. I decided to paint them instead. I started painting before the pandemic, but during is when it really took hold.

Early last fall, I started using a friend's studio in Hoboken, and coming home one night on the bus, I saw that in the South Building of Port Authority Six Summit Galleries had taken over a vacant storefront across from the Dunkin' Donuts. Then it clicked for me: the paintings belonged here. I wrote an email to the gallery and they said I needed to talk to Leo. I called Leo and breathlessly explained the idea. Leo said, "Sounds good, send me the images and I'll call you back." I didn't have images, because I didn't have the paintings. The conversation motivated me to get the paintings done. Three months later, they were hung inside for commuters to see. I liked how the commuters might look at the paintings as they travel by the glass and become both viewer and subject.

RICHARD MAXWELL is a playwright and director and artistic director of New York City Players. He is the author of *Evening Plays*, *The Theater Years*, *Theater for Beginners*, and *Plays, 1996–2000*.



Ninth Avenue looking north. Acrylic on canvas. 60" x 48".



41st Street looking east. Acrylic on canvas. 52" x 66".

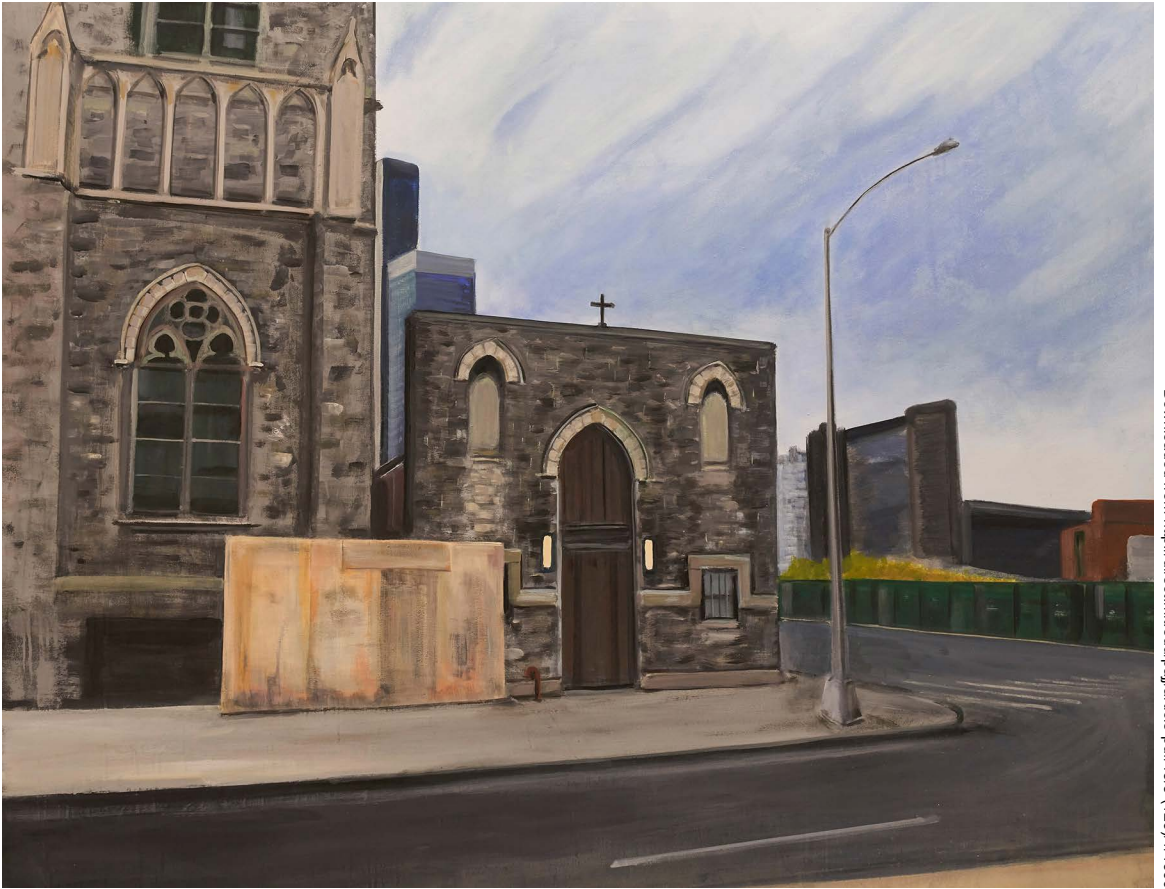
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42nd Street looking west. Acrylic on canvas. 66" x 62".



43rd Street looking east. Acrylic on canvas. 72" x 60".



Croatian Church. Oil and acrylic on canvas. 54" x 69".



Installation view. Six Summit Gallery, 2nd floor, Port Authority bus terminal, NYC.



View of passersby in front of gallery.