

Tessa Solomon, "Photographer Ruben Natal-San Miguel Is Capturing a New, Silent New York," ARTnews, March, 2020



ARTnews

Photographer Ruben Natal-San Miguel Is Capturing a New, Silent New York

BY **TESSA SOLOMON**

March 26, 2020 4:19pm



MARCH 26, 2020

Photographer Ruben Natal-San Miguel Is Capturing a New, Silent New York

The day photographer Ruben Natal-San Miguel's exhibition "Women R Beautiful" was set to open at New York's Postmasters Gallery, the city went dark amid growing concerns over the rapid spread of the new coronavirus (Covid-19). Business deemed nonessential, including bars, salons, art institutions, were among those put on lockdown, which is still ongoing. New York is currently the epicenter of the nation's coronavirus outbreak; as of March 26, New York State has reported 37,258 confirmed cases and 385 deaths from Covid-19.

Like those left in the city, Natal-San Miguel takes precautions every time he steps outside: gloves, mask, camera. From his home in Harlem, he ventures by foot, often in the sparse bicycle lane. Over the past few days, he's taken walks from the Bronx to Broadway and beyond, in what has become a virtual ghost town, shooting images along the way as part of a new series. In one image, taken from the sidewalk, his camera peers into Central Park, which is disturbingly crowded on a recent sunny Saturday.

"I get nervous when I do this, but I do it," Natal-San Miguel told *ARTnews* by phone. "It is my responsibility as a documentary photographer to convey what is happening. And with my show at Postmasters closed, this is a way for me to give myself a sense of hope, and therapy, if you want to call it that."

Tessa Solomon, “Photographer Ruben Natal-San Miguel Is Capturing a New, Silent New York,” ARTnews, March, 2020



Ruben Natal-San Miguel, 'Savage & Ruthless', 2019
COURTESY RUBEN NATAL-SAN MIGUEL



PHOTO : COURTESY RUBEN NATAL-SAN MIGUEL

“I take images of the Bronx and Harlem for [people] who live outside of New York, who only think of Times Square, [to show] there are so many more people here—suffering. Small vendors who rely on the economy of street traffic.”

Ruben Natal-San Miguel, *East 149th Street & Third Avenue*, The Bronx, NYC, 2020.

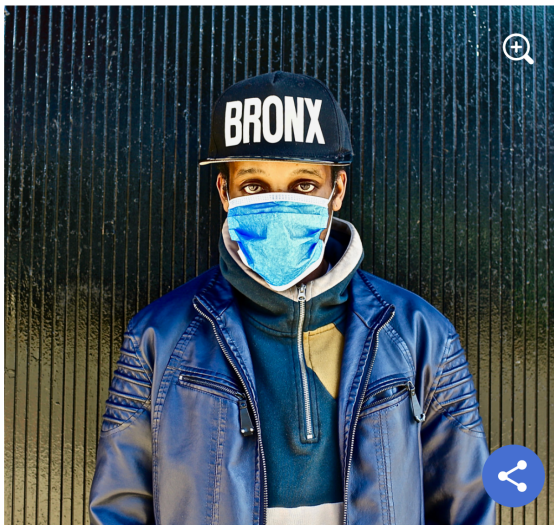


PHOTO : COURTESY RUBEN NATAL-SAN MIGUEL

“There was a primal fear about them [Natal-San Miguel’s subjects], but at the same time defiance. We New Yorkers are resilient.”

Ruben Natal-San Miguel, *BRONX (Primal Fear)*, 149 & Third Avenue, The Bronx, NYC, 2020.



PHOTO : COURTESY RUBEN NATAL-SAN MIGUEL

Ruben Natal-San Miguel, *Restaurant*, East Harlem, NYC, 2020.

Tessa Solomon, "Photographer Ruben Natal-San Miguel Is Capturing a New, Silent New York," ARTnews, March, 2020



PHOTO : COURTESY RUBEN NATAL-SAN MIGUEL

Ruben Natal-San Miguel, *BE WELL (Apollo Theater)*, 125th St. Harlem, Manhattan, NYC, 2020.



PHOTO : COURTESY RUBEN NATAL-SAN MIGUEL

Ruben Natal-San Miguel, *Subway Platform*, Harlem, Manhattan, NYC, 2020.



PHOTO : COURTESY RUBEN NATAL-SAN MIGUEL

"A lot of people I've known have passed away. The Broadway playwright, Terrence McNally, the critic Maurice Berger. This reality is catching up with everybody."

Ruben Natal-San Miguel, *Central Park, (59th Street Entrance)*, Manhattan, NYC, 2020.



PHOTO : COURTESY RUBEN NATAL-SAN MIGUEL

Ruben Natal-San Miguel, *Rockefeller Center Park*, Manhattan, NYC, 2020.

Tessa Solomon, "Photographer Ruben Natal-San Miguel Is Capturing a New, Silent New York," ARTnews, March, 2020



PHOTO : COURTESY RUBEN NATAL-SAN MIGUEL

"I don't get out much, but when I do, I bring my camera. I'm trying to make something out of this historical event."

Ruben Natal-San Miguel, *Times Square Station*, 42nd Street Manhattan, NYC, 2020.



PHOTO : COURTESY RUBEN NATAL-SAN MIGUEL

Ruben Natal-San Miguel, *Fifth Avenue (Gucci)*, Manhattan, NYC, 2020.

Highway the day after 9/11. Empty."

Ruben Natal-San Miguel, *Times Square Station*, 42nd Street Manhattan, NYC, 2020.



PHOTO : COURTESY RUBEN NATAL-SAN MIGUEL

"It's almost like a drive by now. Now everybody is so scared. In every photo I feel the fear."

Ruben Natal-San Miguel, *Plaza Hotel Park (Fifth Avenue)*, Manhattan, NYC, 2020.

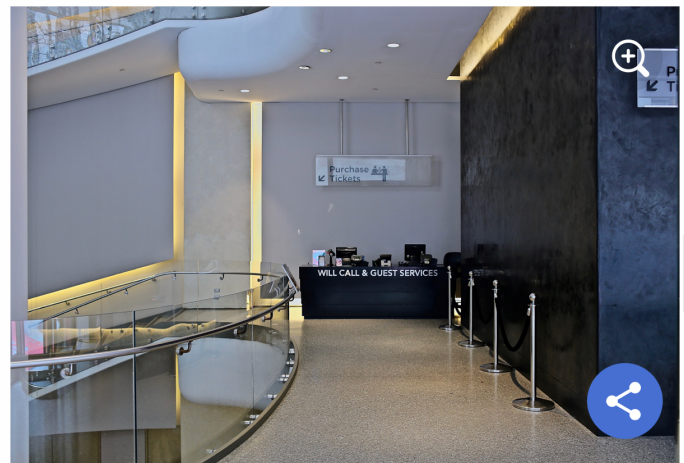


PHOTO : COURTESY RUBEN NATAL-SAN MIGUEL

Ruben Natal-San Miguel, *Rockefeller Center (Reception Office)*, Manhattan, NYC, 2020.

PHOTO : COURTESY RUBEN NATAL-SAN MIGUEL

"Even though we were at a distance I think they understood what I was doing and they respected that, that we're in this together. I need to communicate that, especially now. I don't think people should feel more invaded than they already are."

Ruben Natal-San Miguel, *Savage & Ruthless*, Times Square Station 42nd Street Manhattan, NYC, 2020.

Tessa Solomon, "Photographer Ruben Natal-San Miguel Is Capturing a New, Silent New York," ARTnews, March, 2020



PHOTO : COURTESY RUBEN NATAL-SAN MIGUEL

Ruben Natal-San Miguel, *Broadway Theater District*, Times Square, Manhattan, NYC, 2020.



PHOTO : COURTESY RUBEN NATAL-SAN MIGUEL

Ruben Natal-San Miguel, *Central Park Jogger*, Central Park West, Manhattan, NYC, 2020.

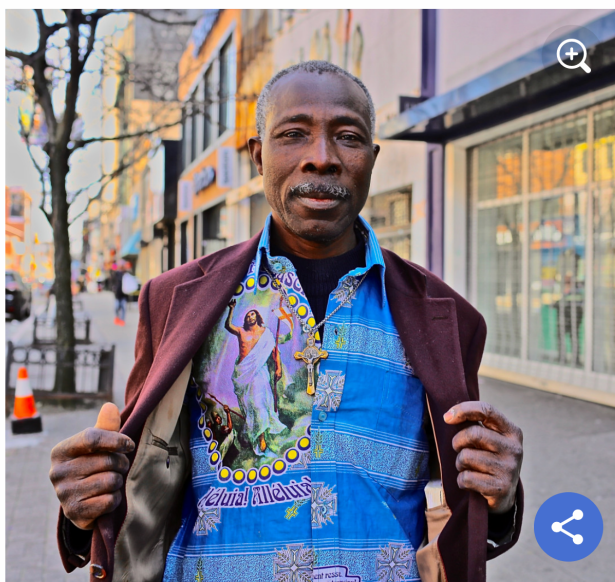


PHOTO : COURTESY RUBEN NATAL-SAN MIGUEL

Ruben Natal-San Miguel, *Black Jesus*, 125h St. Harlem, Manhattan, NYC, 2020.



PHOTO : COURTESY RUBEN NATAL-SAN MIGUEL

Ruben Natal-San Miguel, *Times Square*, 42nd Street Manhattan, NYC, 2020.

Tessa Solomon, "Photographer Ruben Natal-San Miguel Is Capturing a New, Silent New York," ARTnews, March, 2020



PHOTO : COURTESY RUBEN NATAL-SAN MIGUEL

Ruben Natal-San Miguel, *Times Square Station, 42nd Street* Manhattan, NYC, 2020.