

HEARD  SCENEHailing Artworks
On the Avenue

The commercial advertisements on taxi toppers aren't generally perceived as thought provoking, but that changed this week when Show Media, a media company, partnered with Art Production Fund, a nonprofit organization dedicated to public art projects, for their second annual "Art Adds" collaboration.

Instead of an ad for a product or a mass retailer like Ciroc vodka or Sephora, 500 cabs across the city will boast the highbrow pieces of Chuck Close and Kehinde Wiley atop their cabs for the month of January. Mr. Close re-imagines his two portraits, "Lucas" and "Lorna," while Mr. Wiley offers up his pieces "The Virgin Martyr St. Cecilia" and "Femme Piquee Par Un Serpent."

The timing was particularly important to Show Media President John Amato. "I can do this as my annual holiday gift not just to myself, but to everyone who enjoys seeing the art as it travels around New York City's streets," he said.

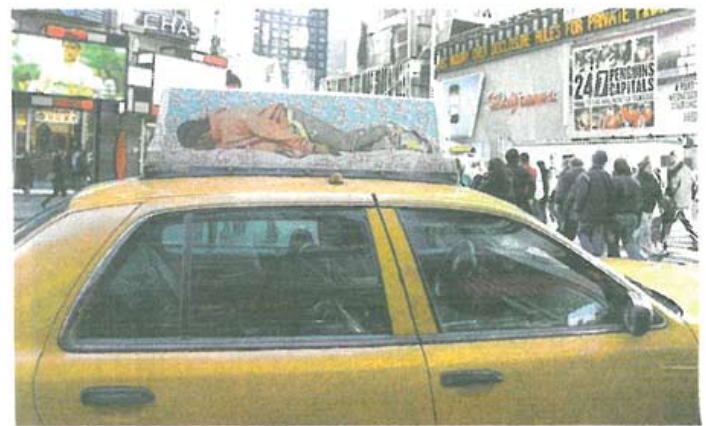
"This is nothing against consumerism or companies, but this is a different kind of exchange," added Art Production Fund co-founder Doreen Remen. "It's about the intangible and having a conversation that isn't about the physical world."

Mr. Close's part in the project came from his interest in "recycling and recontextualizing what art means," he said. "If someone sees an image in a gallery, they're predisposed to like it, but when art is in the real world or people bump into it, there is a different reaction. They're surprised or pissed off."

The artist is expecting some of that reaction when viewers see that the "Lucas" and "Lorna" taxi toppers only feature part of the subjects' faces—the eyes on one side and the bottom of the face on the other.

"It's not some perfect lip," said Mr. Close of "Lucas." "There's an unruly moustache with a lot of hair. It's not glamorous."

—Priya Rao



As part of a collaboration between Show Media and the nonprofit Art Production Fund, re-imagined versions of Chuck Close's 'Lucas,' top, and 'Lorna,' above, and Kehinde Wiley's 'The Virgin Martyr St. Cecilia,' middle, will read atop taxis for the month of January.