

P R E S S R E L E A S E

Jamel Shabazz: *City Metro* / Book launch on May 8th, 2020

Available at Galerie Bene Taschen, Moltkestrasse 81, 50674 Cologne



Jamel Shabazz, *Untitled*, Spanish Harlem, NYC, 1980 // *Rush Hour*, NYC 1988, both images: © Jamel Shabazz + courtesy Galerie Bene Taschen

After the successful exhibition ***City Metro*** in December 2018/January 2019 at the Cologne-based **Galerie Bene Taschen**, the gallerist is now pleased to announce the launch of the same-titled book on May 8, 2020.

Jamel Shabazz has long been recognized as a leading figure in the New York street photography scene. Born and raised in Red Hook, Brooklyn, he has spent the past four decades documenting the rapidly changing social fabric of New York City. Active humanism drives Shabazz in his image making, as he has consistently sought to show and preserve the city's many populations, regardless of their age, class, race, or occupation, with the New York City transit system serving as the backdrop to many of his most iconic images.

Just like the exhibition, the book *City Metro*, curated by Bene Taschen, showcases Jamel Shabazz's keen eye for capturing the integrity and beauty of the city's communities and the extent to which the NYC transit system serves as a fundamental component of urban life. Since its inauguration in 1904, the subway has become an essential part of the city's identity with several millions of journeys carried out every day. As the favored means of transport for New Yorkers over the last century, it has historically been recognized as a source of artistic inspiration, with notably Walker Evans, Helen Levitt, and Bruce Davidson each turning their lenses to the crowds that have populated its carriages.

For Jamel Shabazz, the subway represents a pathway for adventure and meeting new people. He began his study of the subway's crowds in the 1980s and has routinely photographed its activity ever since.

With an insatiable appetite for images, he would spend countless hours a day documenting this profound underground world, often favoring the lines where he might cross friends or familiar faces. Social engagement is key to Shabazz's work. Much of the warmth and familiarity his images imbue come from the genuine exchanges that took place when they were taken: "For me, having constructive conversations was far more important than the photograph itself." Of all the images presented, *If it Concerns You*, (Brooklyn, NY, 1980), is of particular importance to Shabazz. Highlighting social issues, relevant both then and now, it marks one of the first images he took following three years of military service in Germany. "Since returning home from serving in the United States army, seeing the poverty and homelessness caught my attention like it hadn't before. I decided early on to turn my lens not only to photographing young people, but equally to highlight the poverty and social conditions in New York City." Greatly inspired by the documentary photographer Leonard Freed, Shabazz has strived to continue this legacy by drawing his public's attention to social realities. The juxtaposition between the statement in the poster, "If it concerns you, it concerns us," and the subject lying across the station floor, is a powerful and direct message that the viewer is required to confront when looking at the image.

Jamel Shabazz's oeuvre has been, and continues to be, indispensable for capturing the look and feel of New York over past and recent decades. He vivaciously chronicles New York at an electric time, documenting the culture and style that can be identified with the emergence of hip-hop. With leather jackets, gold chains, and boom boxes in the '80s, basketball vests and baseball caps in the '90s, his subjects are proud to show off their undeniable swagger as they travel throughout the city. Thanks to his instinctive eye, Shabazz's mesmerizing images carry through time the energy and vibrancy of these moments shared with the photographer. It is almost impossible to not smile back at their beaming faces. Among these fleeting moments are a group of young boys up to no good on the subway platform, three ladies on their way to church dressed in their Sunday best, and two lovers saying goodbye on the station's steps. We can practically hear the jovial conversations between the passengers on the bustling platforms, or the silence in the empty early-morning carriages. In the spirit of street photography, *City Metro* documents these passengers going about their everyday lives, showing the city's humanity, and preserving these significant moments in world history and culture.

City Metro, curated by Bene Taschen

Launch date: 8 May 2020. 68 pages. Edition: 1,000 copies. ISBN: 978-3-00-065181-6

Price: 39 € (incl. taxes). Shipping: 5 € within EU. For delivery outside the EU, shipping fee calculated according to actual costs.

To purchase the book, please send an email to: info@hardhittagallery.com

or use Paypal (account: info@hardhittagallery.com)

© 2020 Galerie Bene Taschen; Bene Taschen

Contact for information about the gallery and the book:

Galerie Bene Taschen | Tel: +49 (0)221 1690 5505 | Email: info@benetaschen.com

www.benetaschen.com | Hours: Wednesday – Saturday, 1 pm – 6 pm

For press materials and interview requests, please contact:

Nadine Dinter PR | Nadine Dinter | Fasanenstrasse 70, 10719 Berlin

Tel: +49 (0)30/398 87 411 | Cell: +49 (0)151 123 70 951 | Email: presse@nadine-dinter.de