

ARTIST PAINTS FACES OF HAMILTON HEIGHTS

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A Manhattan artist loves the people in his neighborhood so much, he decided to start drawing and painting them. The result is an exhibit that pays tribute to the diversity and spirit of Hamilton Heights. NY1's Roger Clark filed this report. Artist Tom Sanford can tell you a thing or two about everyone inside this A train car he painted—because he knows most of them from Hamilton Heights. "I've become more focused on sort of my neighborhood and my life



here. It's started to inhabit my work. And it seemed like a natural progression to start painting my local neighborhood and the things that I do and see everyday—the people I run into," says Sanford.

"What's Good in the Hood" features one large painting and 25 ink drawings of neighbors, friends, and even celebrities who call Hamilton Heights and Harlem home. They are on exhibit through January 18th at the Gitler and Gallery on Broadway between 149th and 150th Streets. Owner Avi Gitler opened up last year much to Sanford's delight. "I've shown my art all over the world, from Chelsea to Tokyo, but having a gallery right down the street...As soon as this place showed up, I really wanted to be involved," Sanford says. "There's just a great sense of community which I think Tom has really captured in the show, and that's one of the reasons that I decided to open up here," Gitler says. For the subjects of Sanford's work, there's been some extra notoriety on the streets around these parts. "People would see me from across the street and say, 'Oh I know you. You're in the painting.' Oh my goodness, I thought it was... it's very celebratizing. I wasn't expecting that," says Hamilton Heights resident Ivan. Carmen Keels says her portrait lead her young daughter to ask: where's mine? "When Tom asked me I told her, 'Oh, Tom is going to do a drawing of me.' 'Me too? Do I get one too?'" says Keels. Lauren Lynch is also on the gallery wall. She owns Harlem Public restaurant and At the Wallace Bar across Broadway. "Not many people realize it's me. But I love these guys so I have been telling everyone to go over and see it and see all the portraits and it's been great," Lynch says.

The Gitler & ___ gallery is open Saturday and Sunday from 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. and Monday from 3 p.m. to 8 p.m. For more information, head to their website, gitlerand.com.

artist-paints-faces-of-hamilton-heights.html