

Giles Ashford's *City without People* Is Now Open

First Digital Exhibition in the Re-Launched Freedman Gallery

(September 16, 2020 | New York, New York) The Municipal Art Society of New York (MAS) announced the relaunch of the Doris C. and Alan J. Freedman Gallery with its first exhibition, a journey through some of Manhattan's most iconic public spaces devoid of people. In its new digital format, the Freedman Gallery will seek to highlight the work of artists based in or inspired by New York City, whose work deepens our understanding of the relationship between people and the built environment. Future exhibitions by Stanley Greenberg, James and Karla Murray, and Jeff Chien-Hsing Liao will debut in late 2020 and early 2021.

Captured by architectural photographer Giles Ashford at the height of the COVID-19 shutdown, the images of *City without People* bring the viewer into areas of Manhattan that most New Yorkers might otherwise avoid or rush through. Joining Mr. Ashford on his solitary walk through once-crowded streets, plazas, and transit hubs, we see these spaces with new eyes, reminded of the spirit of community and shared experience that is integral to life in New York.

"We are delighted to be relaunching the Freedman Gallery with such a timely and captivating series of photographs," said Elizabeth Goldstein, President of MAS. "Mr. Ashford's collection captures a moment in time when Manhattan's public realm briefly felt almost post-apocalyptic, like an ancient remnant left behind. While this year has been full of challenge and often heartache, it has also reminded us of our love for this city and our neighbors, and our enduring belief in New York's capacity to rebuild, reopen, and begin anew."

"With the COVID-19 shutdown, I wasn't able to shoot for my regular architectural clients, so I took to wandering Manhattan after the sun had set," said the artist, Giles Ashford. "The city was still there, as beautiful as always only the streets were now empty. It was so tranquil and quiet... and there was the realization that people in great cities all around the world were sharing the same experience. And there was also the feeling that this was all just temporary, and that the pandemic is just one more problem that New York will overcome like it always does."

The Doris C. and Alan J. Freedman Gallery was housed at the former offices of MAS at the Villard Houses prior to the organization's move in 2010. In 2020, the gallery was reimaged as a digital space made accessible to visitors from across the city and world. Both the digital gallery and its original programming at the Villard Houses have been made possible through the generosity of the Freedman Family. Doris Freedman (1928–1981) served as New York City's first Director of Cultural Affairs and founded the Public Art Fund in 1977. Alan Freedman (1923–1982) was the founder and chairman of the WNYC Foundation, which raised private financing to support public radio broadcasting in New York. Both Doris and Alan Freedman served as Presidents of MAS in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

About the Municipal Art Society of New York

The Municipal Art Society of New York (MAS) lifts up the voices of the people in the debates that shape New York's built environment and leads the way toward a more livable city from sidewalk to skyline. MAS envisions a future in which all New Yorkers share in the richness of city life—where growth is balanced, character endures, and a resilient future is secured. Over more than 125 years of history, our advocacy efforts have led to the creation of the New York City Planning Commission, Public Design Commission, Landmarks Preservation Commission, and the Tribute in Light; the preservation of Grand Central Terminal, the lights of Times Square, and the Garment District; the conservation of more than 50 works of public art; and the founding of such civic organizations as the Public Art Fund, the New York Landmarks Conservancy, P.S. 1, the Historic Districts Council, the Park Avenue Armory Conservancy, and the Waterfront Alliance.