

# AP

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## Serrano's Homeless Photos Pop Up

By Ula Ilnytsky



NEW YORK (AP) — Best known for his provocative images, photographer Andres Serrano has turned his attention to putting a very public face on New York City's skyrocketing homeless population.

His stark portraits of individuals who live on the street appear in some of the very locations that his subjects often populate — a subway station, a park, a church. They're also inside 50 phone booths and bus stop shelters around Manhattan.

"I wanted to pay homage to them and put them somewhere visible where people could actually see the faces of the people you encounter on the street that you normally don't look at," Serrano explained.

"Residents of New York" is his first public art project. It runs through June 15.

It's a departure from Serrano's most well-known work, which have involved photos of corpses and the use of bodily fluids. An image of his unveiled in 1989 featuring a crucifix dunked in his

own urine thrust him into the middle of the culture wars, drawing outrage from Christian conservatives and lawmakers.

With the homelessness exhibit, Serrano returns to a subject he addressed some 20 years earlier in a series of studio-style photographs of homeless people titled "Nomads."

This time, "I wanted to record and document them the way I found them on the street," said Serrano, who shot with film for six weeks in January and February.

The native New Yorker said he had never seen more homeless people on the city's streets.

The number of people without permanent homes has skyrocketed in recent years and as of last week more than 53,000 people slept in city shelters, according to city officials, who this week unveiled a multimillion-dollar program to address the problem.

The most dramatic display in "Residents of New York" is at the West Fourth Street subway station in Greenwich Village, where all 35 poster-sized photographs line two corridors and the entrance. Among the many faces is that of a 27-year-old man who posed with his wife and died of liver complications two weeks after the photo was taken.

"Serrano captures the direct gaze of these men and women, which we too often attempt to avert our eyes from," said Mary Brosnahan, president and CEO of the Coalition for the Homeless.

Serrano said he got no resistance about taking the pictures, saying the homeless "were happy to be asked to be a part of something. Normally, they're ignored."

Subway rider Andri Prozio called the installation powerful.

"It kind of gives you a feeling that you should have a conscience, that you should be able to do something to help homeless people," she said.

The subjects are not identified in the photos but all their names appear in a panel at the subway station.

The installation is sponsored by More Art, a nonprofit group dedicated to the development of socially engaged public art projects.

"The idea was to create something between an art exhibition and an awareness campaign," said its executive director, Micaela Martegani. "We hope it will spur debate about homelessness in New York."

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AP photographer Kathy Willens contributed to this report.

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