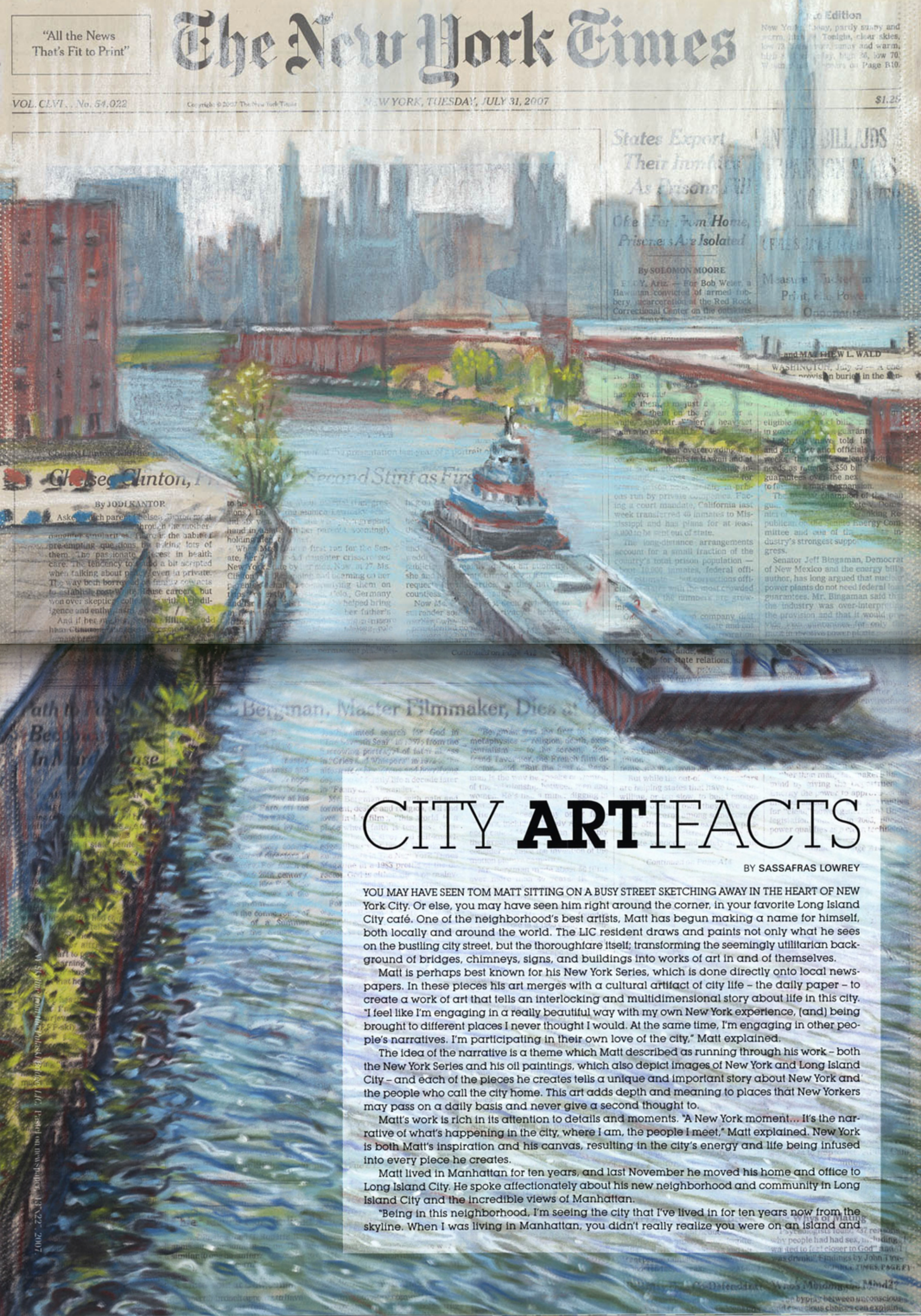

CITY **ART**IFACTS

BY SASSAFRAS LOWREY

YOU MAY HAVE SEEN TOM MATT SITTING ON A BUSY STREET SKETCHING AWAY IN THE HEART OF NEW York City. Or else, you may have seen him right around the corner, in your favorite Long Island City café. One of the neighborhood's best artists, Matt has begun making a name for himself, both locally and around the world. The LIC resident draws and paints not only what he sees on the bustling city street, but the thoroughfare itself; transforming the seemingly utilitarian background of bridges, chimneys, signs, and buildings into works of art in and of themselves.

Matt is perhaps best known for his New York Series, which is done directly onto local newspapers. In these pieces his art merges with a cultural artifact of city life – the daily paper – to create a work of art that tells an interlocking and multidimensional story about life in this city. "I feel like I'm engaging in a really beautiful way with my own New York experience, (and) being brought to different places I never thought I would. At the same time, I'm engaging in other people's narratives. I'm participating in their own love of the city," Matt explained.

The idea of the narrative is a theme which Matt described as running through his work – both the New York Series and his oil paintings, which also depict images of New York and Long Island City – and each of the pieces he creates tells a unique and important story about New York and the people who call the city home. This art adds depth and meaning to places that New Yorkers may pass on a daily basis and never give a second thought to.

Matt's work is rich in its attention to details and moments. "A New York moment... It's the narrative of what's happening in the city, where I am, the people I meet," Matt explained. New York is both Matt's inspiration and his canvas, resulting in the city's energy and life being infused into every piece he creates.

Matt lived in Manhattan for ten years, and last November he moved his home and office to Long Island City. He spoke affectionately about his new neighborhood and community in Long Island City and the incredible views of Manhattan.

"Being in this neighborhood, I'm seeing the city that I've lived in for ten years now from the skyline. When I was living in Manhattan, you didn't really realize you were on an island and