

Zito Madu, "Passport Photos, Edible Arrangements, and Adidas: Our New York Critics Pick Shows in Chelsea and Dumbo," *CULTURED*, April 16, 2025

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IN BRIEF

THE CRITICS' TABLE

ART

Passport Photos, Edible Arrangements, and Adidas: Our New York Critics Pick Shows in Chelsea and Dumbo

Margaret Sundell is moved by Keisha Scarville's tiny family portraits, Johanna Fateman chooses disturbing still-lifes by Alina Bliumis, and Zito Madu finds warmth in Aaron Gilbert's painted wastelands.



Aaron Gilbert, *g o p u f f*, 2025. Photography by David Regen. Image courtesy of the artist and Gladstone.

Aaron Gilbert

Gladstone Gallery | 515 West 24th Street

On view through April 19, 2025

Aaron Gilbert's exhibition "World Without End" at Gladstone Gallery tells the story of the sanctity of human life persisting within capitalism. The Brooklyn-based artist's world is tinged with the fantastical: the divine intermingled with the mundane, the mythical with the real, the human with the alien, and the solid with the transparent.

In *•g•o•p•u•f•f•*, 2025, the viewer looks through a crack in the wall to see the small figure of a man hunched over inside a Gopuff store, a billion-dollar food delivery company. The store's cold, blue and white fluorescent light makes the man look as if he's encased in ice. The wall we look through contains the greater myth, with images carved into the brick like ancient pictographs. On the left side of the wall is the figure of an alien centered in front of a large Adidas logo. On the right side are the figures of humans crowding around and lifting up a child. Barely visible are the transparent bodies and heads of serpents—which can't escape their biblical metaphor—that run down both sides, combining them.

Compare this with the pinks and yellows of *Deana and Grace*, 2024, where a mother sits up in bed, doing her child's hair, a painting which radiates warmth. (The photographer [Deana Lawson](https://www.culturedmag.com/article/2021/05/03/deana-lawson) (<https://www.culturedmag.com/article/2021/05/03/deana-lawson>) appears as a frequent subject in at least a couple of the show's dozen paintings, all oil on linen, like *Deana Bathing*, 2024.) The cold light of the Adidas logo appears again in *The Dream Before (22)*, 2024, falsely illuminating the night. Above the storefront, through the bigger logo at the top, another rupture that makes another world transparent: the figure of a man holding a baby. Gilbert mingles Italian Renaissance painting with contemporary Black figuration, but this image of a parent with child reminded me of the Diego Rivera murals in the Detroit Institute of Arts, in which in one corner of the north wall, among the machines and humans at work, is a recreation of the Holy Family with common people.—*Zito Madu*