

Subway Station Art Installations Gathered at One Hardcover Stop

By ANNIE KARNI
Special to the Sun

It wasn't the typical Chelsea art gallery crowd that gathered Wednesday evening at the PaceWildenstein Gallery on West 25th Street. Engineers, architects, and MTA employees mingled with artists at a signing event for a new coffee table book, "Along The Way: MTA Arts For Transit."

The book of photographs pays homage to more than 160 site-specific art installations commissioned by the MTA since 1985.

"Artwork in the subways is on par with any first-rate museum," the director of Arts For Transit, Sandra Bloodworth, said. "The book is a tour of the art in the MTA system. It's a guide to station art."

The book organizes the art projects along subway lines. For example, artist Toby Buonagurio's illuminated shadow-boxes in Times Square station are followed by photographs of artist Lisa Dinhofer's "Losing My Marbles," a mosaic at the Port Authority Bus Terminal.

"It's so nice to have this book to bring the work into one place, because it's scattered all over the city," artist Mary Miss said. Her "Framing Union Square" installation at the 14th Street Union Square hub station uses frames, mirrors, and windows to highlight historic decorative work that has been covered up dur-

ing station renovations over the years.

When Ms. Bloodworth shopped around the idea for the book in 2004, a managing editor at the Monacelli Press, Elizabeth White, jumped at the project. "I was very interested in the artists' process and how they approached their different stations," Ms. White said. "I love that the subway had the goal of becoming a space with an artistic dimension to it."

The Arts For Transit program was formalized as an MTA agency in 1985, in part as a reaction to two decades of vandalism in the subways and station decay. "It grew indirectly out of the sense that the system was falling apart," Ms. Bloodworth said.

She said the introduction of art underground coupled with New York City Transit's aggressive anti-graffiti campaign changed the atmosphere in the subway system. "We found that people will treat art very well. And what a contrast to what had been there," Ms. Bloodworth said.

Arts For Transit runs the Music Under New York program and commissions artists to create permanent public art installations. About 1% of the cost of rebuilding a station is set aside by the MTA for the inclusion of public art. The Arts For Transit budget is determined by the MTA's Capital Program.



ROB WILSON ALONG THE WAY: MTA ARTS FOR TRANSIT

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