



Second Avenue subway artworks were unveiled on Dec. 19, 2016, ahead of the line's projected Jan. 1 launch date. Above, artwork at the 72nd Street station. (Credit: Office of Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo / Tara Foster)

## Second Avenue subway art unveiled as Cuomo confirms Jan. 1 launch date of the line

By Vincent Barone *December 19, 2016*

Long-suffering Upper East Siders are ready to pop the cork!

Gov. Andrew Cuomo and the MTA on Monday confirmed a Jan. 1 public opening of the Second Avenue line and unveiled the art and architectural details for three new stations at 72nd, 86th and 96th streets and a redesigned 63rd Street at an event at the Museum of Modern Art on Monday.

"This really is just the beginning, I believe, of a new period of enlightened birth," said Cuomo, speaking grandly about building new infrastructure in the region. "We know what we need to do. We know what made us great. Now we just need to do it. And we know that we can."

An inaugural Second Avenue ride will take place on Dec. 31, carrying officials and perhaps a few glasses of Champagne.

The first public train will head under Second Avenue at noon the next day, when an uptown Q train departs from the 57th-7th Avenue station. Trains will run every six

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minutes during peak hours and will run from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. for the rest of the first week. Overnight service will begin on Monday, Jan. 9.

The new line, which will at the moment exist as the northern terminus of Q trains, is expected to serve about 200,000 daily riders and relieve the congested Lexington Avenue line that runs nearby.

But unlike the stuffy stations of the 4, 5 and 6 trains, the new Second Avenue line will feature a “spacious” mezzanine level, domed ceilings and column-less platforms. Cuomo gushed over their design and went as far as to say that it will have somewhat of a profound impact on riders.

“The architecture of these new stations is special,” Cuomo said. “The subway stations of themselves will give you a sense of space that you have never felt before in a subway station. That claustrophobia that descended on you when you walked into a subway station is gone ... I think it will encourage a different type of human behavior.”

The MTA turned to four New York-established artists—Chuck Close, Sarah Sze, Jean Shin and Vik Muniz—to bring the stations to life with their work. Mosaics peppering platforms and elevate entryways, brought together under unifying themes that celebrate the diversity and history of New York City, and by extension, its subway riders.

There are large portraits of every-day New Yorkers. Some zoom close to their faces; others offer wider scenes like a child reaching for a balloon or a man reading in a Yankees cap.

“I think you’ll find the art there exhilarating,” MTA Chairman Tom Prendergast told the crowd at the museum. “I think you’ll find the environment vastly different than what you see in the New York City subway and you’ll be pleased, I think, with the end product.” The governor’s office is billing the art installations as “the largest permanent public art installation in New York history.”

Funding for the stations’ art was provided through the MTA’s Arts for Transit at the tune of \$4.5 million, part of the whopping \$4.45 billion cost for the long-delayed subway project.

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## 63rd Street



At the rebuilt 63rd Street station, Jean Shin used archival photographs to harken back to the Second Avenue El, the demolished elevated line that ran above Second and Third avenues until the summer of 1940, as well as the New Yorkers who were ambling around it. Her piece is called "Elevated."

"I feel that role as artists being able to infuse beauty, history, memory, the reimagined into public audiences who commute every day -- and having art be part of their everyday experience -- is humbling," Shin said.

*(Credit: Office of Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo / Tara Foster)*