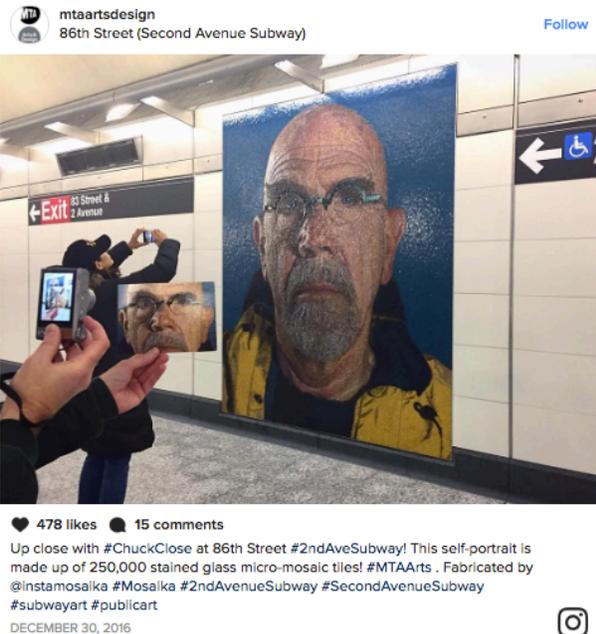


The Creators Project

Here's What New Art is Coming to New York's MTA

Andrew Salomone — Feb 2 2017



Everyday the New York City subway takes visitors and residents to see the art in the city's many museums and galleries, but with the opening of the Second Avenue Subway, the MTA is taking art to the subway as well. "The stations have the feeling of visiting a museum with the benefit of the train arriving right downstairs," says Deputy Director of MTA Arts & Design Amy Hausmann of the recently unveiled works by popular artists including Jean Shin, Vik Muniz, Chuck Close, and Sarah Sze. "People are visiting the stations just to see the art and post pictures of it!"

As the city's first major subway expansion project in more than 50 years, the opening of the Second Avenue Subway was welcomed by many commuters and businesses in Manhattan. Hausmann tells The Creators Project that it was also a rewarding opportunity for the MTA Arts & Design team to work with artists to bring new works to the public. "Going to see the stations the day after they opened to the public and seeing people stopping in front of each figure, delicately laying their hands on the mosaic—reaching out and actually touching the artwork is something you can't do in other museums—gave me a lump in my throat. Knowing that our neighbors and fellow New

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Yorkers are connecting to the city and each other in a personal way through this work reminds us how important art and culture are to a vibrant city and our team is thrilled to be a small part of making that happen.”

Hausmann points out that the MTA Arts & Design has been around for 31 years and have installed nearly 300 permanent projects. But when you’re responsible for the artistic elements of a 112-year-old transportation system that serves millions of people everyday, the chances to facilitate the development of new artworks with a totally clean slate can be few and far between. “It’s rare for us to have the opportunity to start from scratch like we did at Second Avenue. Our team was in it from the very beginning thinking about how the artwork would be integrated into the newly built architectural space, weighing in on station design and art locations, thinking about the medium and the kind of artists and artwork that should be incorporated into this brand new historically important project.”

The materials available to artists working with the MTA are limited by the function of the works and their need to withstand the everyday wear and tear of being part of an active subway station. “We know that glass mosaic and ceramic tile are durable and beautiful and stands up to the challenges we face in the transit environment,” says Hausmann. So the artists and the MTA chose to focus on ways to innovate with these traditional materials and processes. “Working with a variety of art fabricators, each artist profoundly affects their assigned station. Each artist uses a mosaic and tile in a fresh and modern way, and each installation monumentally impacts the experience of the architectural space.”

The works in the Second Avenue Subway were made possible by the MTA’s Percent for Art program, which sets aside 1% of the budget for new stations or station rehabilitation projects for public artwork. Hausmann says MTA Arts & Design is currently in the process of working on over 100 other projects with a diverse group of artists. “James Little is working on a large-scale glass project at the Long Island Rail Road Jamaica station; Kambui Olujimi, Jackie Battenfield, Lisa Sigal, Leslie Wayne, Saya Woolfalk, Derek Lerner, Andrea Belag and Julien Gardair are working on projects in Brooklyn; Diana Cooper is completing a mosaic project on Roosevelt Island, Ann Hamilton is working on a project for the Cortlandt St station, and many more are underway or in selection right now.”

In addition to enriching the travel of MTA patrons, the Second Avenue Subway has certainly helped to bolster the confidence of MTA Arts & Design. “The success of the Second Avenue Subway is a testament to the experience and ability of the Arts & Design team to commission and manage projects with great contemporary artists to produce exemplary public art.” And, if you haven’t seen the Second Avenue Subway

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yet, don't be shy about sharing your experience when you do go. "There are thousands of snapshots across all platforms and we love when people tag #MTAArts so that we can see them all."

Stop by and see the Second Avenue Subway's artworks: Sarah Sze at 96 St, Chuck Close at 86 St, Vik Muniz at 72 St and Jean Shin at Lexington Av/63 St. And keep up with new MTA Art & Design projects on their website and on Instagram. See more pictures of the work in New York Governor Andrew Cuomo's Flickr album.