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NEW YORK CITY'S SECOND AVENUE SUBWAY IS AN UNDERGROUND WONDERLAND

More than a century in the making, New York's Second Avenue Subway opens for business on New Years Eve 2017.

by **Miss Rosen** Jan 1st, 2017



Artwork: 72nd Street: Vik Muniz, Perfect Strangers. Glass mosaic and laminated glass, fabricated by Franz Mayer of Munich.

On December 31, ninety minutes before the clock struck midnight, a select group of New York's elected leaders and officials from the Metropolitan Transit Authority boarded the very first Q train to travel the newly-opened **Second Avenue Subway**.

The Second Avenue Subway launch was an invitation-only event held in the city's true underground: the tunnels that run beneath the pavement. Here, dignitaries and VIPs were given a tour through the new 86th Street and 96th Street Stations, which have been created as mini-museums of public art.

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63rd Street: Jean Shin, Elevated. Ceramic tile fabricated by Frank Giorgini Handmade Tiles, Glass mosaic fabricated by Miotto Mosaic Art Studio, and Laminated glass fabricated by Tom Patti Design

More than a century in the making, the Second Avenue Subway officially opens today. For the going rate of \$2.75, subway riders can enjoy vast installations by contemporary masters Chuck Close, Vik Muniz, Jean Shin, and Sarah Sze. Each artist has been given their own station to create an installation of vast scale, scope, and reach.

Chuck Close has undoubtedly stolen the show with his series of twelve “Subway Portraits” that rise nearly nine feet high inside the 86th Street Station. Based on his painstakingly detailed photo-based portrait paintings and prints, “Subway Portraits” features glass and ceramic mosaics of Lou Reed, Philip Glass, Zhang Huan, Kara Walker, Alex Katz, Cecily Brown, and Cindy Sherman. Close has also included two self-portraits in the series.

Crave fave Vik Muniz has populated the 72nd Street Station with mosaics of more than three dozen archetypes of subway riders for his installation “Perfect Strangers.” As anyone who has ever rode the New York Subway knows, out here, anything goes. This is the “Melting Pot” in the sauciest, most succulent sense, bringing together people from all walks of life with a common goal: getting from Point A to Point B.

“Perfect Strangers” is a reminder of what makes New York one of the most unique places in the world. It’s not simply a matter of tolerance but rather urbane sophistication. There is nothing so gauche as to gag and to geek; New Yorkers are the master of the side eye, used to shade and to peep. In this way, they become more open to the idea of live and let live—as well as to living out loud because we’re all strangers here; it’s not like reputations will be soiled by simply being yourself.

“In the subway you really don’t end up remembering anything but the people. You remember the characters, and you make up stories about them,” Muniz tells the **New**

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York Times. Or you simply are one of them, and you do it for the crowd.

In a statement, Governor Andrew Cuomo explained, “Public works projects are not just about function—they’re an expression of who we are and what we believe. Any child who has never walked into a museum or an art gallery can walk the streets of New York and be exposed to art and education simply by being a New Yorker.”

—Or a visitor with a yen to run the subway for what is often a wholly unexpected mix of the mundane, the bizarre, and the fabulous.