

Against a Brick Wall (2008)

MTA in collaboration with HBO in
collaboration with Unknown Artist

The artist invites the viewer to get pumped by stepping into the lives of boxers. By setting the advertisement against a plywood backing and inserting a brickwork background, the artist insinuates that viewing the program will get the viewer no further into the lives of the boxers than they could get into a brick wall.

You Can Take It with You (2008)

MTA Subtalk Program

Lamponing the 1938 Capra film "You Can't Take It with You", this piece ironically encourages riders to carry garbage with them while presenting a straphanger to do exactly the opposite.

Flat Model (2008)

MTA in collaboration with
Internationale Filmproduktion Stella-
del-Süd Company

By inflating the head on this poster, the artist lampoons the narcissism present in the new genre of film wherein male stars become desirable when portrayed as emotionally stunted slackers, as in “Failure to Launch” and “Wedding Crashers”. The addition of the Obama support sticker and the covering of the mouth indicate the perception by viewers that the advertisement is falls dimensionally and affectively flat.

Top Chef, Bottom Mystery (2008)

MTA in Collaboration with Bravo
Network

The interleaving of advertisements present in the partial removal of outer ads has been a recent trend in modification from platform users. This reveals the mystery of previous advertisements hidden just under the current. The artist implies that the viewer should consider the past placements in this location, stretching back to the inception of the MTA's selling of ad space in their subways, and the layering of meaning which can occur in such a small space.

The Great Wave of the Shockingly Unique (2008)

Collaboration between MTA and Passerby of 11-8-08

Originally a call to alcoholism, where part of the appeal of drinking is based on the potential appearance of a scantily-clad leggy blonde, this piece evolved into a study of contrasts juxtaposing the encroachment of unconsciousness with the temptation of intoxication

Time Managed (2008)

MTA in collaboration with Monroe College

Combining a classical chronometer with a sleek modern advertisement, the MTA here encourages the viewer to consider the vast differences between the world of 30 years ago, and the world today. Monroe College implies that going online can eliminate all the time-consuming phone calls and visits of yesteryear, giving the viewer, in effect, control over time.

The Arriving and Departing Of the Train (Ongoing since 1932)

MTA

The periodic arrival of the C and E trains mimic Martin Creed's "Work No. 850" in which a runner sprints through the Tate every 30 seconds. Since its inaugural performance in 1932, an untold number of people have become participants in the C and E trains. The piece has become an integral part of life in west Manhattan, where many cannot imagine life without the ritual of this piece's daily involvement in their routine.

Yellow Square on Bathroom Door (2007)

Anonymous MTA Employee

Latex paint on metal

The highly-acclaimed 2002 documentary "Subconscious Art of Graffiti Removal" took as its subject the increasing number of unintentional public art pieces being funded by the city of Portland as workers covered the less desirable, unauthorized graffiti, leaving in its stead works comparable to Mark Rothko, Kazimir Malevich and Robert Rauschenberg. This work follows in the tradition of these masters, and the city-employed artists in Portland, supplanting unwanted graffiti with squares of surprising beauty.

Impressionist Industrialization

(2008)

MTA

Paper on plywood

The Williamsburg Bridge, opened to traffic in 1903, is combined with an almost impressionist interpretation, rendering a utilitarian, industrial design with an artistic eye.

Caged Men (1994)

MTA in collaboration with
Department of Health

Mixed Media

Here, the tension between the strength of manliness and the hidden helplessness of micturation is evoked by the bars preventing access to the private internal space.

Defacement (2008)

MTA in collaboration with unknown artist

Paper with ink and felt-tip marker

A quadtych exploring simple alterations that humiliate a subject, from artificial gap-teeth, to boogers, to unibrows, to an ink soul-patch. This study will act as inspiration and guidance for future modifications intended to result in embarrassment from the subject.

Repository: #982 in a series of 2,000 (2005)

Metropolitan Transit Authority

Inspired by permanent art installations in metropolitan underground transit systems around the world, the artist recreates the subtle yet insistent timbre of those "Trash Receptacles" here. This clearly ironic reinterpretation of a predetermined location for waste disposal plays on the tropes of idealism in opposition to expediency.

Telephone Line (2002)

Metropolitan Transit Authority in collaboration with Telecom

This homage to the urgency of communication is meant to highlight the recent necessity, from instant to instant, to maintain the potential for instantaneous, world-wide contact from any location, at any time. That a conversation from such a location would be abruptly interrupted by an arriving train suggests the artist's intent to lampoon the perceived dependence on telecommunication.

Self-Referential Art (2008)

Unknown Artist

Long a standard in graffitic rebellion, the sticker allows for a quick, nearly undetectable modifications to one's surroundings. Where spray paint is too noticeable, and carries with it a stiffer fine due to cleaning costs, a sticker provides the same content, with less likelihood of arrest. This artist furthers this evolution from spray to stick with a sticker of spraying. This meta piece encompasses a revolution in graffiti, while saying true to the roots of the genre.

Yellow Tactile Edge-Warning Strip
(1997)

MTA Safety Crew

Mixed Media – Latex Paint, Gravel,
Gum

The Italian Renaissance, around the 15th Cent., influenced the artist in this installation of interactive art. During the Renaissance, artists experimented with perspective, introducing a concrete three-dimensional reality into flat art. Here the artist moves the art 90 degrees, creating a vanishing point upon which the viewer may walk, gaining a deeper understanding of the long-lasting effects of Renaissance art innovations.

Convergence (1962)

MTA

Electrical Conduit and Fittings, Tile
Wall

This work is at once a heroic call to solidarity and a hopeful ode to the future. The diverse collection of pipes, flocking together chaotically from all across the platform, can only burst through the wall once they've banded together. Instead of a bright knowable future, however, the pipes – brimming full of power – disappear into the ambiguous dark abyss on the other side of the wall. The viewer is left in anticipation, hoping the newly-assembled coalition can successfully harness the energy within itself on the other side.

Caged Women (1994)

MTA in collaboration with
Department of Health

Here, the tension between the perceived helplessness of femininity, combined with a need for protection and the need for secrecy in micturation is evoked by the bars preventing access to the private internal space.

Three Yellow Boxes and One Red on Black Background (1983)

MTA

Mixed Media

Dramatic differences in contour and color make this fascinating collection of conduits deeply rooted in both a realist and surrealist tradition. The unrelenting geometric shapes, constructed from metal panels introduces the concept of concealment as the locks on the panels prevent access to the inner workings. The grouped shapes, though similar, have such wild variation in their bold colors and textures that this piece turns an industrial scene into a mesmerizing tapestry.

Go South, Young Man (2003)

MTA

The strong contrast of red and white in this piece sets a dramatic introduction to the underground tunnels of New York City. The boldly striding figure, its path crossed by a barrier, evokes the image of a traveler with the determination to continue forward despite potential danger. The subtle statement that the voyager will continue unhindered lends a balancing tone to the menacing words.

Textured Glass (1998)

Metropolitan Transit Authority

These simple glass blocks, with their textures turned at angles to one another, serve as a reminder that even in similarity, otherwise overlooked backgrounds have vast differences, and that considered as a whole, those differences create a subtle beauty. The tension between the glass blocks and tiles serves to force the blocks into a separate plane from the surface.

Brick Window (2003)

Metropolitan Transit Authority in
collaboration with Unknown Artists

Glass Bricks with Ink marker

This piece inverts the typical window by making it from opaque bricks, set within a larger opaque wall. This opens the dialogue between the lower spaces of the MTA subway and the upper world where sunlight would necessitate such windows. The null opacity of the glass is called to attention by the use of ink markers.

23rd Street Sign #5 in a series of 108 (1978)

Metropolitan Transit Authority

Reminiscent of Warhol's series Campbell's soup cans, these repeating 23rd Street signs stress the branding of the subway station, along with the art which comes with extensive repetition. Rather than Warhol's subversion of the concept that painting must be a medium of originality, the MTA here reinforces that industrial plastics can be used as an artistic medium as well.

Locked Box #2 (1988)

Metropolitan Transit Authority

This extremely subtle piece reexamines the assumption that art must be visually accessible to be important and identifiable as a creative work. This artist explores the limitless possibilities of the hidden here, allowing the viewer to reevaluate underlying preconceptions, and to recondition the inner mind to work with the perception of the commonplace outer space.

Black Metal Slam Gate with Panic Bar #367 (2004)

Gricelda Cespedes, Assistant Chief Stations Officer responsible for Maintenance; Overseer of the panic bar installation at stations system-wide.

The panic bar initiative, including these fashion-friendly safety bars, was launched with the goal of providing a way for customers to safely evacuate a station in an emergency, according to Ken Brown from New York City Transit's Office of System Safety. More than 450 panic bar kits have been installed. A total of 1,500 will be in place by the end of the year, in all fare control areas where you can enter or leave a station, where feasible, in the system's 468 stations.

Woman Sitting on Bench (Ongoing)

Performance Art Performed at
Regular Intervals

Combining the ambulant with the recumbent, "Woman Sitting on Bench" allows the viewer to experience from a distance the tension between repose and the exigencies of train arrival.

Drain (1975)

MTA and unknown artists

Mixed Media on Metal and Concrete

Describing the irresistibility of natural urges, and situated thematically near the restroom, this drainage grate offers deliverance. Consequently, here lies an indelible yellow nitrogen stain, as evidence of the passings of hundreds, if not thousands of strained commuters. Each straphanger, surreptitiously seeking relief, has helped create this totally organic, revolutionary art piece.

Locked Box #1 (1988)

Metropolitan Transit Authority

This surrealist piece plays on the idea that the mystery of what is inside sparks the imagination more than the reality of what is inside. Perhaps concealing an electrical panel, or fusebox, this locked space nevertheless fascinates us, introducing the possibility that the unseen space contains hidden wonders.

Unlocked (2004)

MTA

The industrial nature of the subway sometimes implies that any potentially openable spaces must be locked at all times. This statement of distrust for the average straphanger is here deconstructed, as the hidden objects are revealed to be as standard and indestructible as the objects kept in plain view. This piece questions the necessity for locked public spaces and champions the concept of open access.