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Press Release

January 8, 2010

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IMMEDIATE

Art and Architecture Unveiled at the New MTA Long Island Rail Road Atlantic Terminal

Event Advisory: Art and Architecture Tour, January 12, 2010 -- 11:00 a.m., Atlantic Pavilion -- at the "Overlook"

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) opened the new Long Island Rail Road (LIRR) Atlantic Terminal in downtown Brooklyn, improving the experience of travel for thousands of commuters each day in a majestic pavilion that features an artist/architect collaboration in a soaring, light-filled atrium.

The project architects, di Domenico Partners and the artists, Allan Wexler and Ellen Wexler, were challenged with working together to create a special place of arrival in the entry pavilion which reaches from the street level down to the ticket office, waiting room and LIRR and NYC Transit subways.

"This terminal reminds us of how central the transit system is to all of our lives," said Jay H. Walder, MTA Chairman and CEO. "It provides a 21st century customer experience for the thousands of subway and rail riders who use it to enter our system. They are met with a soaring atrium that not only brings natural light to the interior but an exterior that restores a 'civic presence' to this important Brooklyn community."

"The design of a railroad station at Brooklyn's busiest transit hub required a structure that is both functional and expressive," said Helena Williams, President of MTA Long Island Rail Road. "The artwork is integrated into the architecture in a way that adds visual interest and drama. Customers are stopping, looking and saying 'Wow' the first time they see the art, the overlook, the grand staircases and the glass atrium."

The artists were commissioned by MTA Arts for Transit, which oversees the installation of permanent public art throughout the MTA's 5,000-square-mile network of subways, buses and commuter trains. The Wexlers, a husband and wife team, proposed using the vocabulary of architectural materials that appear throughout the subway and railroad complex into a two-story sculptural balcony that visually evokes the adventure of travel. Titled "Overlook," the work references scenic overlooks often found in national parks, where travelers are encouraged to pause and take in the larger scene.

Just as the grand clock in Grand Central Terminal, "Overlook" is destined to become a meeting place and local landmark, through which more than 25,000 LIRR passengers and 31,000 NYC Transit riders pass each day. "This vantage point was created as a collaborative effort combining our design that placed the wall between two sweeping stairways and the artists' vision of morphing that structural wall into an outcropping of rocks," said architect John di Domenico.

Allan Wexler commented, "We sought to create the experience of viewing an urban public space as if it were a nature setting, using granite tiles mathematically pixilated to create nooks and crannies similar to those found in rock walls. Our public work seeks to engage the people who use the space, creating a rich experience that resonates over time."

Ellen Wexler said, "We wanted to create a space where one can stop and take in the dynamic energy, which is as exciting as stopping to take in the Grand Canyon or other major vista. Carving out a place for the "experience" of pausing and people watching to happen within this great civic architecture was our particular creative challenge."

The Brooklyn communities which surround the terminal --Prospect Heights, Fort Greene, Downtown Brooklyn and Park Slope- have witnessed tremendous growth in the past decade, particularly among artists and families. The new terminal is connected to a retail and office development and is within walking distance of such cultural facilities as Brooklyn Academy of Music, Mark Morris Dance Group, and the New York Transit Museum. The presence of a major public art work at this location speaks to the larger community as well as the cultural institutions that have sparked the area's resurgence.

The Entry Pavilion meets the MTA's architectural design goals to provide clear paths of travel to the adjacent retail plaza, connections to 10 subway lines and quick access from the street to the LIRR ticket office, waiting room and tracks. A large display board listing departures and arrivals is installed below the overlook, providing convenient information to commuters who become the choreographed dance to those overlooking from above the artwork.

The Wexlers' use of granite squares to form the overlook wall relate this monumental public art work to the work of George Trakas which appears in passageways that connect subway lines somewhere in the transit complex. Trakas uses granite and stone to demarcate areas, and nautical iconography to reference the meeting place of the connected Atlantic Avenue and Pacific Street subway stations. "Adding a layer of geographical reference to the complex's series of public art is a subtle, but important, link that connects the art works to the architecture and the conceptual play on the travel experience," said Sandra Bloodworth, Director, MTA Arts for Transit. "The best public art is about place, and the Wexlers take the idea of travel and capture that moment of excitement when you pause and take in the view."

About the Artists

Allan Wexler's art work explores human activity and the built environment and his work from the past five years was on view last fall at Ronald Feldman Gallery in New York. The exhibit included drawings from "Overlook" and another recent public art work in New York, "Two Too Large Tables" at the

Hudson River Park from 2005. Allan Wexler has been represented by the Ronald Feldman Gallery since 1984 and teaches at Parsons The New School for Design. He holds a Master of Architecture from Pratt Institute and a BFA and a Masters in Architecture from Rhode Island School of Design.

Ellen Wexler has been the collaborating partner with Allan Wexler in their public works, which often use familiar forms and imbue them with new meanings and functions, fostering a new way of looking at or using the specific site. From picnic tables in Santa Monica (2000), to sculpture at Ohio University, the Wexlers create thoughtful public art that results from a long process of dialogue with designers, users and stakeholders. The materials used often are construction materials, as in the case of "Overlook." Ellen Wexler has undertaken several major art education projects at schools and museums. Her BFA is from Rhode Island School of Design.

About the Architect

John di Domenico, the architect, was raised in Brooklyn and attended Brooklyn Technical High School before going on to the City College of New York and Harvard University. He was a Fulbright Scholar in Rome and currently teaches at the New York Institute of Technology. His firm is based in Long Island City. Mr. di Domenico is also an artist with an interest in the intersection of art and architecture.

About the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA)

Serving 8.5 million customers per day on a network of subways, buses and commuter railroads spanning 5,000 square miles, the MTA operates one of the largest collections of public transportation services in the world. It is a public benefit corporation chartered by the State of New York.

About MTA Arts for Transit

MTA Arts for Transit has overseen the installation of over 200 works of permanent art in New York's subway and commuter rail stations, including work by Sol LeWitt, Mary Miss, Doug and Mike Starn, Jacob Lawrence, Vito Acconci, and Jean Shin. Arts for Transit commissions art in subway and rail stations that are being rehabilitated or constructed and also administers temporary and performing arts programs, including Music Under New York. For more information, visit www.mta.info.

About MTA Long Island Rail Road

The Long Island Rail Road is the busiest commuter railroad in North America, carrying an average of 301,000 customers each weekday on 735 daily trains serving 124 stations. The LIRR system is comprised of over 700 miles of track on 11 different branches, stretching 120 miles from Montauk -- on the eastern tip of Long Island -- to Penn Station in the heart of Manhattan and Atlantic Terminal in Brooklyn. The LIRR serves over 80 million customers each year, taking them to and from jobs, homes, schools, sporting events, concerts, beaches, Broadway shows, and many other attractions around the New York metropolitan region.

Caption information:

"Overlook"

2009

Granite

Allan Wexler

Ellen Wexler

In collaboration with di Domenico Partners

Fabricated by Digital Stone

Photo by Rob Wilson

JPEGS available upon request