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Press Release

December 8, 2014

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IMMEDIATE

MTA Arts & Design Installs New Photography Exhibit by Danny Lyon

‘Underground: 1966’ Features Images of Subway Riders on View for First Time

MTA Arts & Design has installed a new photography exhibit that features exclusive images by Danny Lyon, who photographed subway riders in 1966. The exhibit, located at the Atlantic Av-Barclays Ctr [B](#) [D](#) [N](#) [Q](#) [R](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#) station in Brooklyn, will be on view for one year.

Lyon has had a storied career as a photographer and filmmaker who documented, as both an observer and participant, the civil rights movement in 1962 in the South and motorcycle gangs in Chicago. He injects the medium with a decisive point of view that directs attention to those often unseen. His later work took him to prisons to explore conditions there.

Lyon returned to New York City in late 1966, when he took his mother’s advice: “If you’re bored, just talk to someone on the subway.” He used a Rolleiflex camera and color transparency film to photograph the subway in Brooklyn. The images in “Underground: 1966” have never been publicly exhibited.

“Brooklyn is changing very rapidly and so many newcomers have joined longtime residents among the 40,000 people who use the Atlantic Av-Barclays Ctr station every day. ‘Underground: 1966’ is a great opportunity to show them how it used to be, and to show off the work of a groundbreaking photographer who was born in Brooklyn,” said Lester Burg, Senior Manager of MTA Arts & Design.

“Underground: 1966” comprises eight large-scale photographs that show a lone woman standing on the platform; two women bundled up from the elements; a dapper reveler; a lone sailor, and two teenagers waiting on an elevated platform. They evoke a mood and atmosphere in which people were alone with their thoughts as they traveled by subway. Lyon uses the available lighting and creates a moment of quiet and calm that is reminiscent of the work of Edward Hopper and offers a more sympathetic version of earlier Walker Evans photographs of subway riders.

Lyon was especially pleased that the work can now be viewed in a subway station, saying: “There is something about taking the work to where the people are that makes for a different viewer connection from visiting a museum to see an exhibit.”

Lyon created the originals with a Rolleiflex camera using Kodak safety film slides. He did not use a tripod during long exposures, so moving objects like people show up in the photographs as ghostly figures. The transfer of Lyon’s images on vintage slides to large-scale transparencies required the assistance of several sponsors, which donated their services. MTA Arts & Design would like to thank Magnum Photos, which created the scans; Kodak/alaris, which provided the Endura transparency material; and Griffin Editions, which printed the proofs and the final photos.

Lyon was featured in a retrospective at the Menil Collection museum in Houston, Texas, in honor of his 70th birthday. His work has appeared in books, museum and gallery exhibitions throughout the United States. His work is represented by Edwynn Houk Gallery in New York.

MTA Arts & Design’s lightbox project exhibits photography at four locations within the transit system: [B](#) [D](#) [F](#) [M](#) 42 St-Bryant Park station, [4](#) [5](#) [6](#) [7](#) [S](#) Grand Central-42 St, [B](#) [D](#) [N](#) [Q](#) [R](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#) Atlantic Av-Barclays Ctr and [4](#) [5](#) Bowling Green. New artworks are installed annually at each location.

About MTA Arts & Design

MTA Arts & Design, formerly known as MTA Arts for Transit & Urban Design, encourages the use of mass transit in the metropolitan New York area by providing visual and performing arts in the transit environment. The permanent art program is one of the largest and most diverse collections of site-specific public art in the world, with more than 300 works by world famous, mid-career and emerging artists. Arts & Design produces photography installations as well as award-winning graphic arts and live musical performances in stations, and the Poetry in Motion program in collaboration the Poetry Society of America. Arts & Design serves more than 8 million people who ride MTA subways and commuter trains daily and strives to create meaningful connections between sites, neighborhoods, and people. For more information, please visit mta.info/art.



Credit: Danny Lyon, courtesy Edwynn Houk Gallery



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