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Press Release

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IMMEDIATE

MTA Arts & Design Debuts Glass Mosaic Murals at 163 St-Amsterdam Av

Artwork by Firelei Báez Celebrates Cultural Heritage of Washington Heights Neighborhood

Photos of the Artwork and Station are Available [Here](#)

MTA Arts & Design today unveiled a glass mosaic by artist Firelei Báez at the newly reopened 163 St-Amsterdam Av  subway station in Washington Heights. The artwork comprises four murals that altogether reflect the Caribbean culture and heritage of the community served by the station, which recently underwent major station repairs and improvements.

“Ciguapa Antellana, me llamo sueño de la madrugada (who more sci-fi than us),” by Firelei Báez, is steeped in the Dominican artist’s Caribbean cultural heritage and that of the neighborhood. The artwork features tropical and North American leaves and vines intertwined with intricate patterns and hand symbols representative of the communities in Washington Heights and nearby Inwood, where the artist lives. It incorporates healing imagery familiar to many cultures and inspiring a vision of hope for the future. Ciguapas, which are powerful feminine figures from Dominican folklore, welcome customers as they begin their daily commute.

“Firelei’s mosaics give riders a sense of place and connection to community,” said MTA Arts & Design Director Sandra Bloodworth. “The artist’s cultural roots in the Caribbean and her current roots in New York are deeply imbued in these mosaics, which contain references and a sense of tropical landscape that will be a familiar to many of the riders who experience these mosaics as they move through the station.”

The four glass mosaics brighten the walls along the station mezzanine stairs and on both platforms at 163 St-Amsterdam Av station, replacing tiled walls that had been in need of repair. The station closed in March 2018 for critically needed repairs to its rusted steel infrastructure and deteriorating concrete slabs, waterproofing, and repairs and replacements to its wall tiles. The station reopened to service on Thursday, Sept. 27, 2018.

Báez is known for large-scale, intricate work that explores diasporic identities and how women of color navigate selfhood. She uses humor and imagination to create lush alternate environments in which cultures can commune. Her work has appeared in exhibits around the world, including in the 2018 Berlinale and 2017 Venice Biennale, the Perez Art Museum in Miami and Harlem’s Studio Museum in New York City. Báez received a bachelor’s degree of fine arts from The Cooper Union School of Art and a master’s degree of fine arts from Hunter College.

About MTA Arts & Design

MTA Arts & Design encourages the use of mass transit in the metropolitan New York area by providing visual and performing arts in the transit environment. Its permanent Percent for Art program is one of the world’s largest and most diverse collections of site-specific public art in transportation, with over 300 site-specific commissions by world-famous, mid-career and emerging artists. Arts & Design produces photography installations, digital art, graphic arts and live musical performances in stations, and the Poetry in Motion program in collaboration with the Poetry Society of America. It 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.