



Arts &  
Design

## Media Announcement

### MTA Arts & Design Announces Spectacular Artwork by Donald Lipski at LIRR Mineola Station



*Bessie and Roxey* (2023) © Donald Lipski, LIRR Mineola Station. Commissioned by MTA Arts & Design. Photo: Jason Mandella.

(NEW YORK, NY — September 22, 2023) MTA Arts & Design is pleased to announce a new public artwork created by artist Donald Lipski at the Long Island Rail Road (LIRR) Mineola Station. *Bessie and Roxey* (2023) celebrates two separate but interconnected figures of Long Island history – aviator Bessie (Bessie) Raiche and Roxey, the LIRR dog.

Commissioned by MTA Arts & Design, *Bessie and Roxey* is a majestic 20' tall bronze sculpture that lifts two incredible stories from the early twentieth century. Raiche, the first woman to pilot an airplane solo, stands proud on her plinth. Seated at the top of her raised left arm is Roxey, de facto mascot of the Long Island Rail Road.

“*Bessie and Roxey* is whimsical and inspirational. Donald Lipski's vision brings home to the Mineola community these all but forgotten stories,” said MTA Arts & Design Director **Sandra Bloodworth**, “Although these notable Long Island residents did not cross paths, the pair is connected through time and place. Stories of their courage and determination have gone unsung for many years. Their shared local history is now forever preserved.”

The history of the figures and their ties to Mineola was deeply researched by Donald Lipski. On September 16, 1910, Bessie Raiche (1875-1932) took flight alone for the first time in a biplane constructed with her husband at their Mineola home. She is credited by the Aeronautical Society of America as the "First Woman Aviator of America." After starting a company with her husband building planes and giving flying lessons in the neighborhood, the couple moved to California where she resumed her previous career as a physician. Raiche's extraordinary achievements do not end there. She went on to become one of the first women specialists in obstetrics and gynecology.



Portrait of Bessie (left), courtesy of Ashley Shelby and John Wiker; Portrait of Roxey (right) from a postcard, collection of David D. Morrison.

"Bessie Raiche was a maverick and pioneer of her times; blazing the way in aviation, medicine and women's rights. The Cradle of Aviation Museum is honored to participate in LIRR recognition of her contributions and achievements," remarks the Cradle of Aviation Museum Executive Director, **Jennifer Baxmeyer**.

Roxey's story is notable in its own right. In 1901, a stray dog found his way to the LIRR Garden City Station where he was given the name Roxey and adopted by the station master. Roxey regularly rode the trains and was well cared for by railroad crew and passengers. Roxey became the unofficial mascot of the LIRR. He was given a pass to sit wherever he chose while train hopping but would always return to spend the night with the station master in Garden City. On several occasions, the LIRR dog traveled with President Theodore Roosevelt in his private car to Oyster Bay and visited the President's home at Sagamore Hill. Roxey passed away in 1914 and lies in rest next to Sunrise Highway at the LIRR Merrick Station.



*Bessie and Roxey* (2023) © Donald Lipski, LIRR Mineola Station. Commissioned by MTA Arts & Design. Photo: Jason Mandella.

"I'm so pleased to be making a sculpture," said artist **Donald Lipski**, "for this historic town. To me, the warm, traditional style of the station called for a bronze statue, something I'd never made. I hope it is loved and enjoyed by generations."

Lipski's sculpture *Bessie and Roxey* playfully commemorates this remarkable pair. Realistic depictions of Raiche and Roxey are joined in a pose reminiscent of the Statue of Liberty. In place of the torch, Raiche holds up the LIRR dog. The similar green patina continues the reference and gives the statue an immediate sense of history. Standing on a stone base, the towering duo can be seen in the station plaza and from across

the platform. Lipski collaborated with Christopher Collins, modelling artist, to create the figures. Art Castings of Colorado then fabricated the towering project in bronze and finished the sculpture in a patina.

### **ABOUT DONALD LIPSKI**

Donald Lipski is a sculptor who creates large-scale sculptural installations in public places. His work explores how context transforms meaning through a whimsical combination of materials and site. Over the course of his career, he has been awarded National Endowment of the Arts grants for both Sculpture and Conceptual Art. Additionally, he was granted fellowships with the New York Foundation on the Arts and the Guggenheim. His work is included in the collections of the Art Institute of Chicago, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, and many other institutions. He holds a BA from the University of Wisconsin–Madison and an MFA from the Cranbrook Academy of Art, Michigan.

### **ABOUT MTA ARTS & DESIGN**

MTA Arts & Design encourages the use of public transportation by providing visual and performing arts in the metropolitan New York area. The Percent for Art program is one of the largest and most diverse collections of site-specific public art in the world, with more than 380 commissions by world-famous, mid-career and emerging artists. Arts & Design produces Graphic Arts, Digital Art, photographic Lightbox exhibitions, as well as live musical performances in stations through its Music Under New York (MUSIC) program, and the Poetry in Motion program in collaboration with the Poetry Society of America. It serves the millions of people who rely upon MTA subways and commuter trains and strives to create meaningful connections between sites, neighborhoods, and people.

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