

Contemporary Art Underground New York MTA Arts & Design

By Sandra Bloodworth and Cheryl Hageman
Foreword by Hilarie M. Sheets

Virtual conversation with the authors hosted by the New York Transit Museum celebrates the publication of the new book today, April 24 at 2pm

Features more than 100 new commissions for New York's 'Underground Art Museum'

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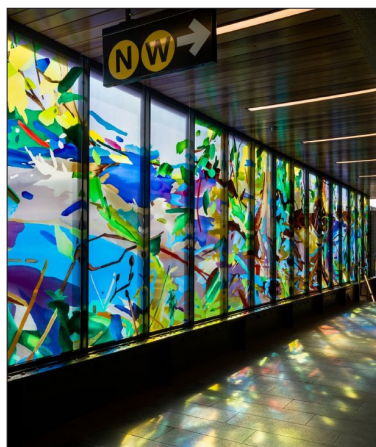
Over the past four decades, more than 400 permanent artworks have been commissioned by the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) across New York's transit systems. On view 24 hours a day, the collection is seen by more than four million subway riders and commuters daily and has been hailed as 'New York's Underground Art Museum.' A celebration of these ground-breaking projects, *Contemporary Art Underground: New York MTA Arts & Design* highlights more than 100 artworks completed between 2015 and 2023 that embody the spirit, vibrancy, and diversity of New York.

Organized into ten chapters, the book journeys across the city's boroughs, from Manhattan and Queens to the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Staten Island, and beyond. Several chapters focus on monumental projects in major stations and reconstruction initiatives—the World Trade Center, Second Avenue Subway, Hudson Yards, Times Square, and Grand Central Madison—highlighting how they uniquely engage with and inform their surroundings. Three material-focused chapters explore artworks interpreted in mediums chosen for their resilience in the transit environment: colorful mosaics, dazzling glasswork, and robust metal sculptures. Emphasis on medium deepens the book's scope, offering an unprecedented glimpse into the details and fabrication process of each artwork. Through vivid descriptions, intricate close-up photographs, and behind-the-scenes studio images, the book shares the stories behind these permanent works, from artist selection through the translation of an artwork into a large-scale, site-specific installation.

The authors—Sandra Bloodworth, who has directed MTA Arts & Design for nearly 30 years, and Cheryl Hageman, deputy director—lead this journey. The program has attracted an impressive roster of artists whose work is now publicly accessible, often for the first time. The artists featured in the book, Kiki Smith, Yayoi Kusama, Nick Cave, Sarah Sze, Jim Hodges, and Derrick Adams, among many others, have made museum-quality experiences a regular part of the daily commute. The projects, shepherded by the Arts & Design team, coalesce to produce an exuberant portrait of New York City.

Contemporary Art Underground includes a preface by Janno Lieber, Chair and CEO of the MTA, as well as a foreword by writer Hilarie M. Sheets. In her text, Sheets gives a brief history of the program, also emphasizing its impact on everyday New Yorkers: 'The unexpected—or daily—encounters with artworks become cinematic frames in the personal journey of millions of people traversing the system every day. With 68 percent of the projects by artists of color and women, the MTA's permanent collection comes closer to reflecting the diversity of its audience than the holdings of most museums.'

A stunning reference for frequent subway riders or a keepsake for visitors just passing through, this definitive survey highlights a tremendous period of creativity in public art throughout one of the world's most iconic transit systems. Like its subject, *Contemporary Art Underground* will delight and surprise, providing insight to more than 100 recent artworks and inspiring a fresh appreciation for a diverse collection that has become symbolic of New York City.



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About the Authors

Sandra Bloodworth is director of MTA Arts & Design and the principal author of *Along the Way* and *New York's Underground Art Museum*. Under her leadership, MTA Arts & Design has gained renown in the field of public transportation by creating a collection of nearly 400 public artworks. Bloodworth is the recipient of numerous awards including the Sloan Public Service Award and the Gari Melchers Award from the Artist's Fellowship.

Cheryl Hageman is deputy director of MTA Arts & Design, responsible for commissioning new projects and maintaining the permanent art collection throughout the MTA system. She has applied an in-depth knowledge of materials and fabrication to produce and care for award-winning artworks during her two decades as an arts administrator.

Hilarie M. Sheets writes frequently on public art for the *New York Times* and the *Art Newspaper*.

About Monacelli

As a leading publisher of illustrated books for more than twenty-five years, **Monacelli** has challenged the conventions of publishing to produce provocative, inspiring, and essential titles. Founded in 1994 by Gianfranco Monacelli, the organization has released nearly 600 books on architecture, art, interior design, landscape and gardens, photography, and the applied arts. Monacelli's books have been made in collaboration with prominent practitioners and scholars ever since its inaugural title, the groundbreaking *S,M,L,XL* by Rem Koolhaas and Bruce Mau. In 2015, the applied arts imprint Monacelli Studio was launched, adding elevated books on art instruction, photography technique, and crafts to the publisher's roster. In 2020, Monacelli joined the Phaidon family of companies.

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