



# Media Announcement

## MTA Arts & Design Reveals Artwork by Celebrated Artist Kiki Smith at Grand Central Madison



*River Light* (2022) © Kiki Smith, Grand Central Madison. Commissioned by MTA Arts & Design. Photo: Richard Lee, courtesy of Pace Gallery.

(NEW YORK, NY — November 30, 2022) MTA Arts & Design is pleased to announce a collection of five mosaic artworks by celebrated contemporary artist Kiki Smith commissioned for Grand Central Madison, a new 700,000-square-foot Long Island Rail Road terminal below Grand Central Terminal, along Madison Avenue between 43 and 48 Streets in Manhattan. Titled *River Light*, *The Water's Way*, *The Presence*, *The Spring*, and *The Sound* (2022), the artwork can be found throughout Long Island Rail Road's new eastside terminus, slated to open in December 2022.

"Kiki Smith's spectacular mosaics capture the natural beauty of Long Island and light dancing across the East River", says **Sandra Bloodworth, Director, MTA Arts & Design**. "The mosaics offer moments of tranquility within the new terminal's caverns, providing reflective moments for riders who will now be able to travel directly to Midtown East, to and from Long Island."

Renowned since the 1980s for her multidisciplinary work that explores embodiment and the natural world, Smith's expansive practice resonates personally and universally, manifesting in sculpture, glassmaking, printmaking, watercolor, photography, and textile, among other production methods. Drawn to the cogency of repetition in narratives and symbolic representations, much of Smith's work

is inspired by the visual culture of the past, spanning scientific anatomical renderings from the eighteenth century to the abject imagery of relics, memento mori, folklore, mythology, Byzantine iconography, and medieval altarpieces.

Works on view build on the motif of the natural world that Smith has explored in her oeuvre for decades. Smith's five new artworks are located throughout two levels of Grand Central Madison. The glass mosaics totaling over 1,400 square feet were fabricated by Mayer of Munich. Smith has been creating works with them over the last 25 years.

Upon entering the new terminal's Madison Concourse from the historic Grand Central Terminal, one first encounters *River Light*, a nearly 800 square foot mosaic inspired by the way sunlight glints on the surface of the East River, the threshold between Manhattan and Long Island. The mosaic provides a visual connection to celestial bodies of the night sky and references the nearby Grand Central Terminal's sky ceiling. Thin white tesserae are inlaid with various solid blue tones and custom-made patterned glass pieces, approximating the process, colors, and effects of the original cyanotype artwork, in an extension of the artist's long-time practices of drawing and photography. Activated by viewers passing, the delicate lines take on a sense of movement.

Smith's work in drawing, sculpture, photography, and many other disciplines explore the innate bonds between the natural world and human spirituality and mortality. For the four mosaics located throughout the Mezzanine level, Smith brings flora and fauna into the new terminal and relates conceptually with Grand Central Terminal and Long Island.



*The Presence* (2022) © Kiki Smith, Grand Central Madison. Commissioned by MTA Arts & Design. Photo: Richard Lee, courtesy of Pace Gallery.

"I made images from nature that hold affection and personal significance to me as I hope they will for others," states artist **Kiki Smith**. "I am very honored to be included in the tradition of artists making work for the MTA, particularly as I have rarely had the opportunity to make something that lives within the public

realm. I tried to bring pleasure to people that may feel hectic as they move to-and-fro and to give them an image to locate themselves in the station and to carry with them home.”



*The Spring* (2022) © Kiki Smith, Grand Central Madison. Commissioned by MTA Arts & Design. Photo: Richard Lee, courtesy of Pace Gallery.

Smith developed the images both visually and narratively by photographing the local landscape and animal life to portray quiet moments found on the Long Island landscape, rendered in exquisite detail within each of the four arched node walls. The artwork at 45 Street, *The Water's Way*, is based on a collage by the artist and includes natural stone to represent the tumbled rocks and rough sand where water makes its way to the ocean. A solitary deer in *The Presence* at 46 Street stands among the safety of reeds rendered with gold foil mosaic pieces, including refracted rainbow prisms and Smith's iconic blue stars – Ursa Major, Ursa Minor and the North Star – to create a tender, dreamlike scene. Wild turkeys, native to Long Island and currently totaling around 6,000 in population in Nassau and Suffolk County, are intricately depicted in *The Spring* at 47 Street, featuring fowl perched on logs in a verdant forest lush with early spring growth. Lastly, at 48 Street, *The Sound* is the northernmost and longest mosaic, featuring a portal to Long Island's waterway. Nimbus clouds rain onto the calm sea, representing a natural cycle of exchange in this 28' wide mural.

In addition to the permanent artwork by Smith, a new mosaic by artist Yayoi Kusama, *A Message of Love, Directly from My Heart unto the Universe* (2022), is located in the north end of the Madison Concourse between 46 and 47 Streets. Grand Central Madison is set to be the new destination in Manhattan, a space that is not only a portal into and out of the New York City, but a place where people will gather to eat, drink, shop and see powerful and thought-provoking art. Kusama and Smith have contributed their visions to this new destination in a way that will shape the public experience and be part of meaningful experiences waiting to happen.

## ABOUT KIKI SMITH

Kiki Smith, born 1954 in Nuremberg, Germany, uses a broad variety of materials to continuously expand and evolve a body of work that includes sculpture, printmaking, photography, drawing, and textiles. Smith has been the subject of numerous solo exhibitions worldwide including over 25

museum exhibitions. Her work has been featured at five Venice Biennales, including the 2017 edition. She is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and in 2017 was awarded the title of Honorary Royal Academician by the Royal Academy of Arts, London. Previously, Smith was recognized in 2006 by TIME Magazine as one of the “TIME 100: The People Who Shape Our World.” Other awards include the Skowhegan Medal for Sculpture in 2000; the 2009 Edward MacDowell Medal; the 2010 Nelson A. Rockefeller Award, Purchase College School of the Arts; the 2013 U.S. Department of State Medal of Arts, conferred by Hillary Clinton; and the 2016 Lifetime Achievement Award from the International Sculpture Center, among others. She is an adjunct professor at NYU and Columbia University.

## **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 350 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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