



NEWS

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LONG BEACH METRO BLUE LINE STATIONS BEGIN TO REFLECT COMMUNITY SPIRIT AS ART PROJECTS ARE INSTALLED

Some of Long Beach's Metro Blue Line stations lately have begun taking on distinctive personalities, much like the thousands of riders who use the stations every day as they travel between downtown Los Angeles and downtown Long Beach. It's all part of MTA's Art for Rail Transit (A-R-T) program, which commissions local artists to create public art at rail facilities throughout the county.

Long Beach artist Terry Braunstein's work was installed last week at Anaheim Station, and work by artist Joe Lewis will be installed later this week. To help celebrate Long Beach Arts Month, Lewis and Braunstein will officially introduce their work Sunday, Oct. 23, from noon to 2 p.m. at their respective stations. The public is invited to visit the stations and talk to the artists about their projects.

"These works of art contain something for everyone to enjoy," noted MTA Chief Executive Officer Franklin White. "The subjects range from historical to reflective to whimsical, and all are designed to instill a sense of community pride."

Braunstein's work at the Anaheim Station, titled "Local Odysseys," is a series of 14 porcelain enamel panels dealing with values, community and travel. The panels were made from photos commemorating "local heroes" who have contributed to the community in ways that often don't receive wide recognition.

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Braunstein said the people who participated in her project inspired her to think beyond her initial ideas for the piece. "I was interested in the question: Can people with drastically different backgrounds, cultures and values live together?", she said. "This work gave me the answer, because they brought with them a strong sense of self and an intense community pride. The history books are filled with stories of kings, generals, and geniuses. My work celebrates the ordinary people ignored by the books, whose convictions and courage make progress possible."

"We are committed to involving communities in their station's art projects," said Maya Emsden, MTA's A-R-T Program director. "This promotes not only a sense of community identity, but ownership as well. Many of our artists have included the community's residents in the planning of their projects."

Artist Joe Lewis's work, "Twelve Principles," is a good example of this, Emsden said. Lewis sought to establish common ground among the many different communities served by the PCH Station. He interviewed a number of adults, children, students and business people in the area, then comprised a list of 12 principles that create a well-rounded person. These qualities include faith, family, unity, open mind and integrity. Twelve tile and aluminum discs each house an icon representing one of the principles.

"Most people want the same things out of life," Lewis said. "They want access to the bountiful opportunities of our society, and the freedom to try to attain their personal potential and a safe haven for their families and themselves."

"My hope is that, when people see this art work, they will reflect upon themselves and their relationship to their community and the world."

"Terry and Joe each chose a unique and thought-provoking way to reflect the Long Beach communities surrounding their respective stations," Emsden said.

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In the coming weeks, the Blue Line's "loop" stations in Long Beach will see the completion of four more projects. The First Street Station will become "Breezy and Delightful" with artwork by Paul Tzanetopoulos; the Fifth Street Station will feature the work of Jim Isermann in "Failed Ideals;" the Pacific Street Station will feature June Edmonds' "This Is Who We Are, This I What We Bring," and artist Patrick Mohr's work entitled "Angel Train" will adorn the Transit Mall Station. All artists were selected by panels of arts professionals and community members.

Passengers already are enjoying and reflecting upon completed projects along the Blue Line. Examples include a sundial featuring a small globe and some poetry at the Wardlow Station in Long Beach. Up at the Vernon Station near Los Angeles, a whimsical set of stools that look like colorful spools of thread have been installed to remind riders of the dependence of the Vernon area on its many manufacturing and commercial enterprises.

For more information on these and other A-R-T projects, call (213) 244-6408.

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