

M Metro News Pressroom

September 20, 2004

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Artists Transform Concrete Wall into Urban Respite at Civic Center Metro Rail Station; Pillars into Symbolic Gateways at Wilshire/Vermont Station

LOS ANGELES - A hanging garden composed of glass and granite has transformed the First and Hill streets entrance to the Civic Center Metro Rail Station into a lush landscape that invokes the poetry of Ovid as it transports subway riders and passing pedestrians to their urban destination.

Artist Samm Kunce, whose artwork was completed August 29 at the First and Hill streets entrance to the Civic Center station, was inspired by plant forms, the tonal shift of geologic layers and the primal beauty of organic materials.

The "hanging garden," brilliant in hues of green, violet and red, is a mosaic of Venetian cake glass supported in an expanse of striated sand-colored granite. A contrasting black granite ribbon etched with a passage from the poet Ovid runs through the center of the piece. The mural runs the length of the 160-ft curved wall that frames the stairway and escalator entrance to the subway station.

At the direction of artist Kunce, local subcontractors installed the intricate mosaic in a six-week time period.

Kunce is a Brooklyn-based artist, who exhibits regularly in New York and in Germany. Her public artwork, "Under Bryant Park," was commissioned by the New York City MTA Arts for Transit Program and was awarded the 2002 Best Public Art Project by the New York Municipal Society.

Located in the heart of downtown Los Angeles, the Civic Center Station serves the Los Angeles Courthouse and major attractions, among them: The Los Angeles Music Center and Walt Disney Concert Hall, the recently renovated Los Angeles City Hall, the community of Little Tokyo, the Museum of Contemporary Art and the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels.

Meanwhile, a series of ceramic tile murals by artist Bob Zoell reinvented four columns that support the upper and lower platforms of the Wilshire/Vermont Station. The former concrete-gray exterior of each column is now a palette of citrus yellow, velvety black, crisp white and vivid pea green wall of tiles that frame his arrangement of typographic design symbols.

Both pairs of columns serve as symbolic gateways for transit riders at the significant Wilshire/Vermont station, a transfer point with two platforms for trains en route to North Hollywood or Wilshire Boulevard stations and the site of a new 449-unit residential development now under construction. The artworks were completed in June.

Zoell lives in downtown Los Angeles. He is the author and illustrator of several children's books and has exhibited internationally. His artwork has been featured in the New Yorker magazine.

PHOTO: WILLIAM SHORT PHOTOGRAPHY



"No Title:" A series of bold and graphic ceramic tile murals by artist Bob Zoell, reinvents four concrete columns on the platforms of the Wilshire/Vermont Station.

PHOTO: ANGELENE CAMPUZANO



"Under the Living Rock:" A classical hanging garden of Venetian glass and striated granite at an entrance to the Metro Rail Civic Center station by artist Samm Kunce is an oasis for thousands of transit riders and passers-by. And, a poem runs through it.

Artists Zoell and Kunce were selected for the project by a panel brought together to review qualifications from artists competing for public art projects to be commissioned by Metro Art. Some 198 artists responded to a nation-wide call for the public art opportunities at the Wilshire/Vermont and Civic Center Metro Rail stations in the summer of 2003.

The 63 Metro Rail stations and Gateway Transit Center feature the work of more than 85 artists commissioned to enhance the 73.1-mile transit system.

Metro policy allocates 0.5% of rail construction costs to the enhancement of the rail system through the arts.

Established in 1989, Metro Art has commissioned over 250 artists for a wide variety of both temporary and permanent projects. Artists are selected through a peer review process with community input; all works are created especially for the transit-related sites.

Free tours of the art of the Metro Rail system are given by the Metro Docent Council on the first Saturday and Sunday of every month. For more information e-mail lashenickb@metro.net or call 213.922.2738. Free tours for groups of 15 or more are available by special arrangement.

For directions by Metro Bus or Metro Rail call 1-800-COMMUTE or visit www.metro.net. For more information, visit www.metro.net/metroart or call Metro Art at 213-922-4ART.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: Contact Gayle Anderson, Metro Media Relations, for print-sized digital images of artwork at andersonga@metro.net or 213.922-2702.

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