
A Platform for Art: Infrastructural Citizenship Beyond Monumentality in Toronto's Transit Art

Item Type Journal Article

Author Theresa Enright

Abstract The flourishing of transit art globally reflects a widespread belief in the power of aesthetic practices to promote infrastructural and civic revitalisation. This article analyses how transit art engages spaces and practices of publicness and how art explores ideas of mobility in Toronto. It argues that while arts are frequently deployed to reproduce status quo relations of power and to bolster elite and exclusionary forms of urbanisation, they can also work to challenge these. Through the notion of infrastructural citizenship, I show how arts can unsettle grounds of public space and public life and illuminate the contentious relations that cohere in public transit space. Overall, I claim that transit networks are a key platform through which the politics of public art are staged and that despite existing constraints, there are many affordances for transit art to critically intervene into neoliberal urban processes.

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Language en

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aesthetics, infrastructure, mobility, public art, public transport, Toronto, urban transit

Notes:

Advocates for transit art "claim a range of benefits from increasing public safety, to stimulating economic development, to overcoming social discord, to decreasing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, to democratizing planning processes"

"With a focus on tolerance, inclusivity, and a celebration of common goods, transit art may create a sense of shared history and a horizon of foreseeable common life amidst longstanding segregation and marginalisation"

"rather than a simple binary of, for example, state complicity and contestation, most works will fall in between these extremes, and many will express both at once"

"artworks can unsettle place and identity, drawing commuters' attentions to contentious dynamics of urban mobility and occasioning a forced reflection on the dialectics of presence and absence, domination and freedom, and benefit and harm."

"art also registers for citizenship insofar as it modulates and regulates phenomenological experience"

TALKS ABOUT ZONES:

"draws attention to the dynamic and porous boundaries between private and common lives"

Attachments

- Full Text PDF

Call for Submissions: Union Station Platform Upgrade

Item Type Web Page

Abstract In spite of the proposed cuts demanded of the TTC by the city, they are still some good things in the works. The Toronto Transit Commission is accept...

Date 2007-26-07

URL https://www.blogto.com/arts/2007/07/call_for_submissions_union_station_platform_upgrade/

Accessed 2026-03-08, 7:46:03 p.m.

Short Title Call for Submissions

Language en

Website Title blogTO

Date Added 2026-03-08, 7:46:03 p.m.

Modified 2026-04-21, 10:51:34 p.m.

Notes:

Attachments

- Snapshot

Commuters' souls lost in zones of immersion

Item Type Newspaper Article

Author Murray Whyte

Abstract [...]Reid's piece, a platform-length stained-glass installation of text, colour and drawings, has provoked strong reactions already, few of them positive (though the Star's Christopher Hume is one of the latter).

Date May 8, 2015

URL https://torontomu.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01OCUL_TMU/1jthkr/cdi_proquest_newspapers_1679363859

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Tags:

Subways

Notes:

Short article reacting to the response of the unfinished work.

“One can imagine an intent of unity - trench-bonding, maybe, an underground communion of the commuters' souls. That being the case, their voices matter more than mine. And it sounds like they've spoken”

Functional to emotional: Exploring the role of art in enhancing well-being in Singapore's MRT stations

Item Type Journal Article

Author Joni Ker Shing Ong

Author Thomas Schroepfer

Author Sushma Goh

Abstract Abstract Transit spaces, originally designed for functionality, have evolved to also serve as emotional and psychological environments for commuters. Traditionally focused on efficiency, transit spaces now prioritize emotional engagement, combining functional needs with emotional design to create calming, connected, and joyful experiences. In doing so, these spaces not only serve as travel gateways but also provide a sense of respite and well-being. Art, recognized for its impact on mental and physical health, plays a key role in enhancing mood, reducing stress, and fostering social connections. There is increasing research that emphasizes the role of art in health, aligning with the World Health Organization's definition of health as a holistic state of well-being. This paper explores the influence of art on well-being through Singapore's Art in Transit (AIT) program, the country's largest public art initiative within the Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) system. It examines how art in public spaces transforms functional spaces into enriching cultural environments. The study highlights how integrating art into transit infrastructure enhances urban livability, fosters social interaction, and promotes a sense of place, identity, and community well-being, thus demonstrating the transformative power of art in public spaces.

Date December 2025

DOI 10.1080/29941849.2025.2497274

URL https://journals.scholarsportal.info/details/29941849/v02i0001/nfp_ftetrewisms.xml

Accessed 2026-03-08, 10:39:42 p.m.

Short Title Functional to emotional

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Date Added 2026-03-08, 10:39:42 p.m.

Modified 2026-03-08, 10:43:34 p.m.

Tags:

art in transit, public art, transit stations, urban livability, well-being

Is the new public art at Union Station depressing?

Item Type Newspaper Article

Abstract A new glass mural graces the renovated Union Station subway platform, but some riders say it's creeping them out.

Date 2015-05-07

URL https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/is-the-new-public-art-at-union-station-depressing/article_e8750646-4c06-5f8e-816a-262d0d0ee864.html

Accessed 2026-03-07, 3:14:48 p.m.

Language en-CA

Library Catalog Toronto Star

Section GTA

Publication The Toronto Star

ISSN 0319-0781

Date Added 2026-03-07, 3:14:48 p.m.

Modified 2026-03-07, 3:14:48 p.m.

Notes:

Star article - initial reactions to the piece

TTC Spokesperson Brad Ross: the piece "captures, in fact, the modernization efforts of the TTC."

HERE WE SEE DISCONNECT BTWN (upper class, planners, gov, cant think of the word) and the working class of toronto.

Public Art Has to Be Art First and Public Second: A Conversation with Stuart Reid on Union Station

Item Type Blog Post

Author Sky Goodden

Abstract Toronto recently saw Union Station's protracted and over-budget revitalization project achieve one of its first clear signs of completion, an expansive public art installation...

Date 2015-10-28T02:23:49+00:00

URL <https://momus.ca/public-art-has-to-be-art-first-and-public-second-a-conversation-with-stuart-reid-on-union-station/>

Accessed 2026-03-07, 2:27:42 p.m.

Short Title Public Art Has to Be Art First and Public Second

Language en-US

Blog Title Momus

Date Added 2026-03-07, 2:27:42 p.m.

Modified 2026-03-07, 2:27:42 p.m.

Notes:

Reid's commentary on the public reaction to his art. Very dismissive. Expecting a positive reaction to the ugliest portrait ever created of you is crazy.

"Here, they weren't asking for anything" -this is strange to me. how common is this?

"It was an international competition, and I needed a clear idea to win it" -curious what the other entries were.

"It's almost as if the [subway riders'] characteristics didn't matter" -weird and against what TO represents now- very protestant lowk

"I'd glance up for half a second, and I got a feeling that theirs wasn't all that different from my life" - breaking news! man discovers something i figured out a 7 years old.

"but there is this sense that there's a basic pulse in the city that you go to work and you come home – that we're longing to get home again" -so you wanted to emphasize this??? and we were fine with that?? huh

Stuart Reid's Union Station Art Encourages TTC Riders to Engage

Item Type Web Page

Author Julian Mirabelli

Abstract Stuart Reid's Zones of Immersion, a glass artwork which will separate the two tracks at the TTC's Union Subway Station, is ready to be installed in Toronto's Downtown transit hub.

Date 2015-07-02

URL <https://urbantoronto.ca/news/2014/08/stuart-reids-union-station-art-encourges-ttc-riders-engage.10396>

Accessed 2026-03-07, 2:52:02 p.m.

Website Title UrbanToronto

Date Added 2026-03-07, 2:52:02 p.m.

Modified 2026-04-21, 10:53:42 p.m.

Notes:

Details about the process.

500 foot Mural

Entered competition in 2007 " with a digital collage of text, sketches, and colour fields"

Images are drawings he made of subway passengers. Some poems directly accompany the sketches, others are more general.

Redrew the figures life sized in 2011 ("in transit") bc the notebook size drawings were too blurry.

On the original sketches: "Sometimes they stare back, look away or just get up and leave," WhAT BRO WHAT

Attachments

- Snapshot
-

The war years

Item Type Web Page

Abstract Against the backdrop of war, Henry Moore firmly established his reputation on the global stage in the 1940s, appointed by the British government as an official war artist and holding his first international exhibitions.

URL <https://henry-moore.org/discover-and-research/discover-henry-moore/henry-moores-story/the-war-years/>

Accessed 2026-04-21, 9:25:16 p.m.

Language en-GB

Website Title Henry Moore Foundation

Date Added 2026-04-21, 9:25:16 p.m.

Modified 2026-04-21, 9:25:29 p.m.

Attachments

- Snapshot
-

Toronto Transit Commission Report

Item Type Attachment

URL https://cdn.ttc.ca/-/media/Project/TTC/DevProto/Documents/Home/Public-Meetings/Board/2008/February-27/Other/Union_Subway_Station.pdf?rev=9c79afa09de6489ea740785a3aba466f&hash=8B0069087644CE1FD4E360D67B37E302

Accessed 2026-03-08, 7:01:31 p.m.
Date Added 2026-03-08, 7:01:31 p.m.
Modified 2026-04-21, 10:52:17 p.m.

Zones of Immersion unveiled at Toronto's Union Station

Item Type Blog Post

Abstract The Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) recently unveiled Stuart Reid's extraordinary glass mural entitled *Zones of Immersion* at Union Station, Toronto's main public transportation hub. Over the past several months, TTC riders passing through the Union Station subway station have witnessed the installation of this art wall. Now complete, this large-scale artwork is a lasting contribution and marks an [...]

Date 2015-07-30

URL <http://www.canadianarchitect.com/zones-of-immersion-unveiled-at-torontos-union-station/>

Accessed 2026-03-07, 2:44:24 p.m.

Language en-US

Blog Title Canadian Architect

Date Added 2026-03-07, 2:44:24 p.m.

Modified 2026-04-21, 10:55:14 p.m.

Notes:

" 7' x 500' layered glass wall that runs the entire length of the Union Station subway platform, and portrays the people who ride the TTC every day."

Artist Quote: "Zones of Immersion is about being in the subway—being conscious of riding it, waiting for it, looking around at the people who surround you, and noticing the rhythm of the trains. I sketched the portraits while on the train and on the platform, and they are portraits of everyday commuters, showing a range of humour and pathos, quiet contentment and pensive reserve."