The Gaze and the Glance in Transitional Spaces:

Public Art in Toronto's Sheppard Line Stations

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores public art and its reception in subway stations based on a case study of commissioned art projects in the five subway stations of the Toronto Transit Commission Sheppard Line. Through the application of various theoretical models such as Ronald Lee Fleming's concepts of "placemaking" and Georg Simmel's account of viewing and modernity, I argue that the contemplative gaze and disengaged glance are not two separate forms of reception, but are more closely related than generally perceived. Art that exists in subway stations provides an ideal case study for this consideration because it is a site where viewers are in transit. The resulting viewing experience—alternating between the gaze and the glance—reveals insights not only about reception in "transitional spaces" such as subway stations, but many other modern experiences as well. The integrated approach to public art taken by artists and the TTC for the Sheppard Line encourages this type of transitory viewing experience, which is variably attentive, fleeting, and grounded in the meaning of place.

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INTRODUCTION

A single subway station is merely a space within a larger interconnected transportation system. It is a site that users traverse en route to their final destination. It can also be a site for art.

Viewing art in a subway station is diametrically opposed to the more conventional experience of viewing art in spaces such as galleries or museums, spaces designated for art where we are conditioned to stop and contemplate individual works. What happens when there is more going on than just a viewer contemplating an art object? How important is the opportunity for contemplation in deeming artwork meaningful? How can public art installations be meaningfully received by viewers in modern transitional spaces such as subway stations? Public artwork in the subway stations of the Toronto Transit Commission's (TTC) Sheppard Line provides a case study in this thesis to address these questions.

The Sheppard Line is the most recently built line of the Toronto Subway system. Connecting to the Yonge-University-Spadina Line at Sheppard-Yonge Station, it runs East-West under Sheppard Avenue East in Toronto's suburban district of North York. Integrated public art installations were an important component of the five stations on the new subway line. During the early stages of planning and construction in 1997, the TTC in association with the Toronto Percent for Arts Program issued a public call for the participation of Ontario artists. They were in search of artists to work cooperatively with architects and engineers in the project's initial stages, with the overriding objective to create public art that "creates identity of place" in each station.[1] Rather than adding complementary art in the stations as an afterthought, the TTC gave artists the opportunity and the challenge of *creating* interactive and engaging art in a space used for transit. This is a frequently used process for public art commissions, and that is why the

[1] Toronto Transit Commission, "Sheppard Subway Public Art Program 2002," Brochure.

Sheppard Line makes a meritorious case study for a broader examination of public arts reception in subway stations.

Through case study analyses of artworks by five artists, I will examine how the Sheppard Line station artworks can connect with transit users through various methods of reception. My detailed examination of the Sheppard Line public art will also provide a broader theoretical framework for modern reception as I illustrate the variety of ways public art engages with an audience in transition. An analysis of public art's reception in transitional spaces challenges conventional notions of the importance of the gaze. If the premise is that prolonged gazing at an artwork creates meaning for an individual, how then are transit users expected to gain meaning from art situated in subway stations? Through the application of various theoretical models, in particular Georg Simmel's account of viewing and modernity, I argue that the contemplative gaze and disengaged glance are not two separate forms of reception, but are more closely related than generally perceived.

Public art projects, like the works commissioned for the Sheppard Line, help us understand how artists, art, and individuals interact in transient urban spaces. The subway station, the site of the works discussed here, crystallizes some of the effects of fast-paced, transient contemporary urban life and how artworks can meaningfully fit in.

Public Art

Public art is generally described simply as artwork situated in a public space. It is usually found outdoors in locations such as parks and plazas, but can also exist inside public buildings like subway stations. Public art is commonly realized in the media of sculpture or murals, but other experimental forms, such as those which utilize electrical or technological components, are also

employed. Public art typically expresses themes of community and is often related to the location where it is sited. In major cities it is frequently installed with the authorization and collaboration of the government or private corporations that owns, administers, or develops the site on which the work is to be located. Primarily funded by tax dollars via various "Percent for Art" programs, there is also privately funded public art, which is donated by individuals or corporate bodies.

Public art's characteristic accessibility makes it available for a broad public to experience. The discourse surrounding public art engages with the notions of 'public' and 'private', positing public art as more accessible than art situated within institutional frameworks. 'Private art' generally refers to art that is found in individual collections, corporate collections, or privately owned galleries and museums. In countries where museums and galleries are funded by publicly, such as Canada, artworks found within these institutions are generally referred to as 'semi-private'. The level of accessibility for private and semi-private art is limited to individuals who willingly and voluntarily engage with the art. These viewers enter a museum or gallery of their own volition expecting an art experience, often paying a fee or donation for the experience. As a willing lay population, and often art-educated audience, engages with the art of these institutions, themes of social, political, and cultural issues are expected, desired, and received through the concentrated gaze of an individual. In contrast, there is generally no admission fee or spectatorial intent when it comes to experiencing public art. Typically public art is easily accessible, as in the case of such well known examples as Claes Oldenburg's *Clothespin*, a forty-five foot tall sculpture of a spring loaded clothespin situated at and offering a visual pun on Philadelphia's City Hall. However, even a public artwork so visually dominant and free of charge will not engage every passerby.

In "Debated Territory: Toward a Critical Language for Public Art," Suzanne Lacy summarizes some of the challenges for this practice: "Public art has become a highly competitive alternative gallery system in which artists are thrust into contact with a broad and diversified audience."[2] Art historical and museum studies discourses often examine the way in which art is framed by its location within a cultural institution or social setting; in contrast, public art calls for a discussion of how the experience of art and quotidian life intersect. 'Private art' is often displayed in a particular setting that invokes the contemplative gaze of an art-educated audience; whereas 'public art' is often installed in a location intended to quickly provide an aesthetic experience or convey a social message comprehensible to generalized audiences.[3] Even though the traditional relationship between artwork and audience exists for both alternatives, the variables of reception for the public art audience are more diverse. Outside institutional walls, how do factors such as limited time and intent to ponder the artwork affect individual reception? How do artists address this issue? When situated within a space not inherently intended for art, such as a subway station, how does art speak to a popular audience yet still convey social meaning for transit users who enter the station regularly? Issues such as these concerning art and its reception in transitional spaces are explored in this thesis.

Literature Review

Scholarly discourse on public art is a relatively recent development, only coming to fruition in the latter half of the twentieth century. The development of the discourse on public art in the 1980s and 1990s was closely informed by larger trends in art historical and theoretical discourse.

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[2] Suzanne Lacy, "Debated Territory: Toward a Critical Language for Public Art," in *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art,* ed. Suzanne Lacy (Seattle: Bay Press, 1995), 172.
[3] Cher Krause Knight, *Public Art: Theory, Practice and Populism* (Malden: Blackwell, 2008), 1.

The sources I have chosen for this thesis discuss the relationship between public art and place. Many of the theoretical works on public art selected for this thesis address critical approaches to the analysis of audience reception of art in public spaces.

Mapping the Terrain, a collection of articles by artists, academics, critics, and curators, edited by eminent public art scholar and practitioner Suzanne Lacy, is fundamental to understanding current discourse surrounding public art.[4] Through case studies and theoretical essays, the scholars in the anthology explore how public art fosters audience engagement with social issues. Prior to the 1995 publication of *Mapping the Terrain*, the term 'public art' generally referred to sculptural or installation artwork occupying public spaces such as parks, plazas and shopping malls. The anthology explored new questions about the social, historical, cultural or political functions of site specific art, a movement in thought that Lacy terms "new genre public art." This concept runs through the anthology and stresses a shifting focus towards aspects of public art's capacity to bring voice to members previously excluded from the conventional art world, and which therefore raise new and important issues. *Mapping the Terrain* as a whole, and Suzanne Lacy's essay "Debated Territory: Toward a Critical Language for Public Art" in particular, effectively identifies critical issues inherent in public art such as engaging multiple audiences, notions of public and private, and the role of the artist as collaborator.

A recent publication titled *Public Art in Canada: Critical Perspectives*, edited by Annie Gérin and James S. McLean presents a series of essays by Canadian scholars, curators and critics concerning various aspects of public art such as its social contribution.[5] In a manner similar to that of *Mapping the Terrain,* this collected volume takes a critical approach to the discourse of

[4] Suzanne Lacy, *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art*, ed. Suzanne Lacy (Seattle: Bay Press, 1995).
[5] Annie Gérin and James S. McLean, *Public Art in Canada: Critical Perspectives*, ed. Annie Gérin and James S. McLean (Toronto: University of Toronto Press).

public art. In relation to transit systems, Bernard Flaman's essay in this book titled "Public Art and Canadian Cultural Policy: The Airports" conducts a case study of public artworks installed at the Toronto, Winnipeg, and Edmonton airports in the 1960s, arguing that they are laden with nationalistic values inspired by The Massey Report (1951).

Ronald Lee Fleming's *The Art of Placemaking: Interpreting Community through Public Art and Urban Design* uses a mixture of case studies and theoretical analysis to support his view that public art fosters a powerful experience of connection to place for individuals.[6] 'Placemaking' is a term often used by architects and urban planners to describe the process of designing public places, such as squares and plazas connecting people to the site in a positive way. Fleming expands on this concept by critically analysing the role that public art plays in the process of placemaking, advocating that site-specific art engages the popular audience through elements such as orientation, connection, direction, and animation. Important to Fleming's case for placemaking is the concept of 'site-specificity.' While James Meyer's essay "The Functional Site" in a further work *Space, Site, Intervention: Situating Installation Art* provides a framework for a more in-depth analysis of this aspect of placemaking, Fleming's exploration of how public art creates sites of meaning for the individual finds expression in all facets of my thesis. [7]

There is a limited amount of critical literature dedicated specifically to art in rapid transit systems. Select chapters such as "Art and Metropolitan Public Transportation" in Malcolm Miles' *Art Space and the City* (1997) provide an overview of the topic of art in transportation sites by using case studies of the New York Subway and London Underground. Miles examines the development of public art in transit stations in regards to urban rehabilitation programs,

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[6] Ronald Lee Fleming, *The Art of Placemaking: Interpreting Community through Public Art and Urban Design* (London: Merrell, 2007).

[7] James Meyer, "The Functional Site," in *Space, Site, Intervention: Situating Installation Art*, ed. Erika Suderburg (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000).

which opened up a new outlet for public art in the 1980s. Ronald Lee Fleming's chapter entitled "Transit Facilities: Providing Orientation for Travelers" in *The Art of Placemaking: Interpreting Community through Public Art and Urban Design* examines five case studies of stations in the New York subway system that use public art as a nostalgic memory trigger, referencing historic moments of the station site. These chapters both provide a basic model with which to critically approach the subject of public art in transit systems that have a rich historical context. While Fleming does effectively illustrate aspects of 'placemaking' in the historical context of these works, he does little in terms of a visual analysis of the artwork in the stations.

Descriptive publications specifically regarding art in the New York Subway and London Underground are abundant. *Platform for Art* is a recently published book about projects the London Underground Platform For Art (PFA Program) commissioned for its stations from 2002 to 2007.[8] The London Underground is popularly regarded as a forerunner in this genre of public art. Alex Coles' essay in the book titled "A Platform for Site-Specifity" examines specific PFA Program graphic, permanent, and temporary art projects which attempt to incorporate contemporary art into the London Underground network. Even though it is specific to the one transit system, this book illustrates the variety of modes of artistic expression possible for transit systems and, although it looks at projects commissioned after the completion of the Toronto Sheppard Line in 2002, has been very instructive for my work. The New York Metropolitan Transit Authority has an excellent website about the MTA Arts for Transit Program as well as images of all the station art. It also provides information on the various publications about the New York Subway.

[8] Alex Coles, "A Platform for Site-Specifity," in *Platform for Art: Art on the Underground*, ed. Tamsin Dillon (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2007), 20.

The Montreal Metro has received quite a bit of attention by Master's students for its installations of art. A 2002 Carleton Master's thesis by Melanie Boyne entitled *The Montreal Metro: Reflection of a City* examines how the artworks communicate ideas of Montreal's civic aspirations at the time of the Montreal Expo in 1967. Boyne's thesis demonstrates how art in transit stations can communicate the history and social context of its site, and its social implications for the Montreal community.[9] Her approach addresses specific social historical analyses of art installations in Montreal's Metro system, the approach taken by art historians, and other interested members of people studying art in transit stations. In this thesis, however, I am more interested in examining the concepts of looking, reception, and experiences of art in spaces other than traditional institutions.

An earlier Concordia University Master's thesis titled *Metro Montreal: Integration of Art and Architecture* written by Graham Cantieni in 1987 examines the amalgamation of art and architecture in the Montreal Metro. Cantieni employs A.C. Sewter's three-fold framework of the integration of painting and architecture—art subordinated to architecture, art and architecture in equilibrium, and art dominating architecture—through seven case studies of the Montreal Metro.[10] Cantieni's explanation about how art and architecture function together in the infrastructure of a subway system is significant for my thesis. However, Cantieni takes more of an architectural approach in his research, and does not explore how the integration of art in subway architecture affects how viewers 'see' the artworks. My thesis will address some of the aspects regarding the relationship of art and architecture that Cantieni explores in the Montreal Metro, but I will also complement his formulaic relationship of art and architecture by addressing the concept of the gaze, reception, and experience of the viewer.

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[9] Melanie Boyne, "The Montreal Metro: Reflections of a City," *Master's Thesis* (Carleton University, 2002).
[10] Graham Cantieni, "Montreal Metro: Integration of Art and Architecture," *Master's Thesis* (Concordia University, 1987).

There are a number of illustrated survey books on public art in metro stations in general, as well as specific transit networks such as *Art in the Stockholm Metro*.[11] None look only at the Toronto Subway and its installation of public art in stations. While art installations in stations of other cities' rapid transit systems will be referenced, the main case study for my thesis will be provided by Toronto's Sheppard Line. David Bennett's *Metro: The Story of the Underground Railway* is a general survey about the construction, use, and design of international transit systems. Featured in Bennett's survey is a one-page overview of the artistic projects for the five stations of Toronto's Sheppard Line. With just a paragraph dedicated to the description of each station, Bennett surveys the transit line in relation to themes of "community, location, and heritage."[12] While Bennett's mention of the artwork in an international survey credits the TTC's integration of art into the new line, it does not critically examine how the artworks express these themes.

When the stations were complete and the Sheppard Line opened in 2002, the TTC created a brochure showcasing its public art. A photograph of each station is accompanied with didactic information and an artist statement. Other general publications of the TTC in the form of press releases and online articles have showcased the various public artworks of the Sheppard Line's stations, as well as other TTC public art projects such as the Spadina Line. Publications such as these also explain in detail the logistics of the Sheppard Line construction project, as well as policies of the TTC and history of the subway. Books published by the TTC itself, such as *The TTC Story: The First Seventy-Five Years,* have also provided excellent resources for the

[11] Storstockholms Lokaltrafik, *Art in the Stockholm Metro* (Stockholm: Ekotryck Redners, 2008).
[12] David Bennett, *Metro: The Story of the Underground Railway* (London: Octopus Publishing Group, 2004), 118.

historical context and framework of the Subway system's construction, evolution, and administration.[13]

Methodology and Theory

The City of Toronto Archives is the repository for the TTC historical records. There is a wide range of documents concerning past TTC public art installations such as the Spadina Line public art program of the 1970s and 1980s. Records found at the City of Toronto document aspects of the commissions, development, and procedures concerning the Sheppard Line Project. Since the Sheppard Line is a relatively recent project, not all of the archival files have been transferred to the City of Toronto Archives from the TTC. David Lawson, Supervisor of Architecture and Communications at the TTC, provided further access to details regarding the Sheppard Line public art commissions. Press response, public articles, and scholarly publications about the Sheppard Line were also consulted.

My analysis of the artworks will consider the significant role of the artist. Interviews were conducted with Panya Clark Espinal, the artist of Bayview Station's *From Here Right Now;* Sylvie Bélanger, who created work for Bessarion Station *Passing;* Micah Lexier, whose installation, *Ampersand*, is featured at the Leslie Station; and Stephen Cruise, the artist of *before/after* for Don Mills Station. These interviews provide a greater understanding of their artistic goals and objectives for the commissions. When interviews were not possible, artist statements are referenced. Not all of the architects, engineers, planners, or advisors have been interviewed. While the conceptions of a work and anecdotes are very interesting, for the purposes of this thesis the finished artwork is the primary content.

[13] Mike Filey, *The TTC Story: The First Seventy-Five Years* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1996).

This thesis challenges conventional notions of the importance of the contemplative gaze for connecting with art. I have applied a variety of theoretical arguments to illustrate how art can be meaningfully processed by a viewer travelling through a subway station. Perceptual psychology regarding cognition and the visual arts from theorist Robert Solso's *The Psychology of Art and the Evolution of the Conscious Brain* reveal conditions of the viewing process.[14] Based on Solso's description, my use of the term perception is more closely linked to the actual process of viewing an object or artwork. Although I single out Solso's understanding of perception as an example of the visual process, he is simply one of many researchers writing about the process of perception. It is by no means a straightforward process and is easily complicated with psychological theorists such as Freud and issues of the subconscious.

Discussions of the gaze posit various, now established, methods of visual reception of art. My use of the term reception is more closely linked with theoretical models of viewing art, such as the gaze and involves multiple factors for viewing art, such as spatial context and viewing time. Norman Bryson's *Vision and Painting: The Logic of the Gaze* explores polarities between the gaze and glance, positing the contemplative gaze as superior to the fleeting glance.[15] His theoretical framework provides a platform from which to explore issues of art's reception when the spatial display context of a subway station is not conducive to this mode of viewing. New Museology scholarship by Carol Duncan provides an excellent example of how an art object's spatial context influences the viewer's reception in "The Art Museum as Ritual."[16] In his book *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture*, Jonathan Crary acknowledges that modes of viewing such as the gaze and glance have been attributed a

[14] Robert Solso, *The Psychology of Art and the Evolution of the Conscious Brain* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003).
[15] Norman Bryson, *Vision and Painting: The Logic of the Gaze* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983).
[16] Carol Duncan, "The Art Museum as Ritual," *Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums* (London:Routledge, 1995).

hierarchical status.[17] I seek to explore characteristics of the gaze's opposite, the glance, and how viewers can draw meaning from these methods of reception.

This thesis positions spatial characteristics of subway stations as both modern and 'transitional spaces.' Here Marc Augé's *Non-Places* has provided a theoretical context for my understanding of the subway station as a 'transitional space,' in which both the art and viewer exist in a location that is in-between two destinations.[18] I hope to illuminate how both the artwork and visual reception of an individual is affected in transitional spaces. Georg Simmel's historical account of modern viewing in his essay "The Metropolis and Mental Life" first written in 1903 provides insight into how viewing in transitional spaces supports shifting methods of reception between the gaze and the glance for an individual.[19] Even though Simmel wrote about urban society at the turn-of-the-twentieth-century, his notions of urban viewership are directly relevant for transitional spaces of subway stations.

Based on Solso's description, my use of the word "perception" is more closely linked to the physical and psychological processes of viewing an object or artwork. My use of the term "reception" is more closely linked to the theoretical characteristics of viewing art, and involves various factors such as spatial context and viewing time. Inherent in the discussion of art and its reception are notions of subjectivity and the individual. However, through a detailed study of individual public artworks and their surrounding influences, specifically in the Sheppard Line stations, I seek to explore various "methods of reception" that art in transitional spaces can elicit. Methods of reception consider characteristics of an artwork such as physical design, artistic intent, and relation to site.

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[17] Jonathan Crary, *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture* (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1999).
[18] Marc Augé, *Non-Places* (London : Verson, 2008).
[19] Georg Simmel, "The Metropolis and Mental Life," in *Simmel on Culture*, ed. David Frisby et al. (London: Sage, 1997), 178.

Chapter Breakdown

This thesis is organized into three distinct chapters. They move from a broad historical context to the specific analyses of the case study art works and then on to a more theoretical discussion of the implications of viewing art within the transient environment of the subway.

Chapter 1: Art in the Subway

The first chapter of this thesis begins by historically contextualizing the development of art in transit stations. It examines a selection of national and international rapid transit systems as examples of the various approaches taken in both art installation as well as initiating public art programs for transit stations. Concluding my survey of art in subway stations will be a discussion of the initial incorporation of art into the TTC with the Spadina Line in 1978. Discourse regarding support of public art in transit stations is important for understanding the reasoning for installation. Central to this discussion is Ronald Lee Fleming's notion of 'placemaking.' As introduced briefly above, 'placemaking' identifies attributes of public artwork that foster relationships between person, place, and art. Fleming's conceptual model is central to my discussion of how artworks situated in subway stations are linked to site in this chapter.

The second half of Chapter One outlines the development of the Sheppard Line Subway and the commissioning process for its public art. Opening on November 22, 2002, the Sheppard Line (Fig.1) was Toronto's first new subway line constructed since the Bloor-Danforth Line (and the latest extension of a line in 17 years.) The TTC's first subway line was the Yonge Subway, a North-South running line that opened in 1954. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the Yonge Subway was extended into its current U-shaped Yonge-University-Spadina Line. This line runs

on a north-south axis, up and down Spadina Avenue and Yonge Street. In 1966 an East-West Bloor-Danforth line opened along Bloor Street, closer to the south end of the Yonge-University-Spadina Line. This line was expanded in the 1980s with the Kipling and Kennedy extensions.

As examined in the survey of various transit system public art programs, the TTC was not the first transit system to conduct an integrated commissioning process for its station artwork; however, the Sheppard Line project provides a valuable example of a system that changed its approach to commissioning work based on previous experience. Integrating the artist into early stages of station development and construction is a frequently used process for public art commissions, and thus establishes the Sheppard Line as a model case study in a broader examination of public art and its reception in subway stations. Furthermore, integrated artworks serve as an exemplary case for broader discussions of site-specificity and placemaking.

Chapter 2: Analysis of Public Art in Stations of the TTC's Sheppard Line

The second chapter is comprised of case study analyses of Sheppard Line public art and the methods of reception for each. Specifically, I examine Stacey Spiegel's transformative panoramic landscape *Immersion Land* at Sheppard-Yonge Station; visual disorientation at Bayview Station through Panya Clark Espinal's *From Here Right Now*; Sylvie Bélanger's *Passing* as a celebration of transitory space at Bessarion Station; Micah Lexier's *Ampersand* conceptual art at Leslie Station; and Stephen Cruise's geographically site-related *before/after* at Don Mills.

My examination of these artworks explores the potential for multiple modes of looking and reception when art is situated in a transit station. Specific visual analysis of the artworks themselves will be examined for this discussion of reception.

Chapter 3: The Gaze, the Glance and Art in Transitional Spaces

The final chapter of this thesis posits my analysis of multiple modes of looking at the artworks of the Sheppard Line within a broader theoretical framework concerning modern reception when art is situated within infrastructures that house the viewer in transit. Robert Solso provides a straightforward analysis of generally accepted understandings of perception through two modes: 'nativistic' and 'directed' perception. These two modes of perception are directly related to Norman Bryson's account of viewing art. Directed perception recounts Bryson's notion of the contemplative gaze, a deliberately focused look at art. Nativistic perception is described by Solso as the objective "seeing" of a visual object (its color, form, or composition) that essentially every individual experiences. Bryson discounts the fleeting glance as a type of nativistic perception in which meaning is not found. In *Vision and Painting: The Logic of the Gaze*, Bryson explains the contemplative gaze as a mode of looking that creates a meaningful connection between individual and art object. Carol Duncan's description of viewing in art museums as "secular ritual" exemplifies how the contemplative gaze is created, supported, and valued.

In his book *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture*, Jonathan Crary acknowledges that modes of viewing have been attributed a hierarchical status. However, he argues that the nature of perception in modernity positions these two modes of viewing as interrelated. Crary's supposition of a close relation between the gaze and glance is further explored by the application of modern and urban studies theories. By employing these theories I seek to examine the viewing practice of both the gaze and glance in sites I term "transitional spaces". Michel Foucault's concept of "heterotopias" and Marc Augé's description

of "non-places" support my discussion about the transitory characteristics of subway stations, while Georg Simmel's account of modern viewing supports my examination of a transitory viewing experience within these spatial contexts.

Throughout my theoretical exploration of modern viewing and reception in transitional spaces, I reference the detailed case study examples of the five projects of the Sheppard Line. I have chosen to examine the TTC Sheppard Line specifically because it is a recently created suburban subway line that sought to create identity of place through "character and orientation" by the integration of public art in sites that were essentially transient civic spaces. This is a common goal of transit commission public art programs and therefore an analysis of how these artworks can be meaningfully received merits a close study. The potential of viewing reception is essential for understanding a continued impetus for public art programs that support the integration of art into transitional spaces such as subway stations.

CHAPTER ONE:

Art in the Subway

The public art project on the Sheppard Line of the Toronto Transit Commission subway system is part of a long trend to use transit stations as sites for art. The first part of the chapter situates the Sheppard Line in a broader context for the installations of art in subway stations. I conduct a brief survey of various methods for the incorporation of art into stations of rapid transit lines in order to demonstrate how these systems acted as precursors to art and architecture in subway stations today. In particular, the approach and design of art installation in both the Stockholm and Montreal Metro influenced the TTC's decision to include art in its subway stations, commencing with the Spadina Line in 1978.

An analysis of the discourse regarding support of public art in transit stations facilitates an understanding of the impetus for such installations. Central to the discussion is Ronald Lee Fleming's notion of 'placemaking' as identified in his book *The Art of Placemaking: Interpreting Community through Public Art and Urban Design*. Placemaking identifies the attributes of a public artwork that foster relationships between person, place, and art. Acknowledging these and other aspects in the artworks situated in subway stations demonstrates how these works can be embraced by the public.

In the second part of the chapter I discuss the Sheppard Line in more detail by examining the development of the Sheppard Line Subway and the commissioning process for its public art. Under the "Let's Move" program, artists were commissioned as part of an integrated art approach. They worked closely with the station architect and engineers to create installations incorporated directly into the architecture of the station, rather than installed as an afterthought. Toronto was not the first to conduct this type of integrated commissioning process; however, the Sheppard Line project was the first time it was utilized for the stations of the TTC. The

integrated approach to public art installations is an increasingly frequent process for commissions, and therefore situates this detailed examination of the Sheppard Line within the broader context of public art commissions for subway stations.

History of Subway Station Art

The first modern subway tunnel opened January 9, 1863 under the River Thames in London, England, reinforcing London's position as the preeminent modern industrial city. But it was not until 1908 under the guidance of Publicity Officer Frank Pick that the first associations between art and the London Underground, as the system is widely known, began.[20] In an effort to increase the London Underground's popularity, Pick commissioned posters to entice transit users indirectly by showcasing destinations such as museums, parks, theatres, (Fig.2) and other sights of London accessible by "the Tube."[21] By 1921, the City of London was spending £60,000 on advertising for the London Underground itself, twice the amount allotted in 1913. But what started off as an opportunity to place advertising posters inside Underground stations soon blossomed into an opportunity to incorporate art and design. As the poster program grew, Pick increasingly explored other opportunities to hire new artists. His emphasis on incorporating art and design into station interiors in the 1920s and 1930s effectively became less an opportunity for advertisement, and more of a showcase for modern art.[22] Yet although Underground posters were a vibrant visual medium in the 1920s, the fervour soon dissipated, and production of

[20] Design Museum and British Council, "London Transport," *Designing Modern Britain – Design Museum Exhibition* (November 2006), accessed December 2010, http://designmuseum.org/design/london-transport
[21] Oliver Green, *Underground Art: London Transport Posters 1908 to the Present* (London: Studio Vista, 1990), 10.
[22] In 2010 the MoMA held an exhibition titled "Underground Gallery: London Transport Posters 1920s-1940s" showcasing the "striking modern posters began to transform the stations of London's underground railway system into public art galleries." Museum of Modern Art, "Underground Gallery: London Transport Posters 1920s-1940s," *Exhibitions: MoMA*, (2010), accessed March 31, 2011, http://www.moma.org/visit/calendar/exhibitions/1096.

posters by the mid-1950s was reduced to an average of seven per year.[23] Nonetheless, the London Underground remains an important early example of how art was introduced subway stations.[24]

Transit systems elsewhere in Europe during the first half of the twentieth century used other approaches for the inclusion of art. Prior to the Second World War, architectural features became a key site for artistic embellishment. For example, Parisian officials appealed to transit users aesthetically through decorative Art Nouveau exterior entrances to its Métro (Fig. 3). Designed by Hector Guimard around 1900, these now iconic stylized gates were "intended to visually enhance the experience of underground travel on the new subway system for Paris."[25] In Stalinist Moscow, Metro stations were designed in high quality materials such as polished marble and granite, which was intended to glorify socialism.[26] The result was grand, spacious, uniform stations that emphasized architectural features (Fig. 4). Inclusions of art and design in early transit systems such as the London Underground and the Paris and Moscow Metros were precursors to the contemporary use of public art in subway stations.

The Stockholm Metro system is viewed as an initiator and international model for its incorporation of art at an early stage in construction rather than including it after stations were built. The first underground rail line in Stockholm was opened in 1950 with Klara Station, or T-Centralen as it is now called, as the central point of the network. Local artists Vera Nilsson and

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[23] Green, *Underground Art*, 16.

[24] Currently, the London Underground has a vibrant public art program and is generally considered a forerunner in the genre of contemporary, temporary and permanent public art in subway stations. Partnerships appear to be essential to the public art programs of the London Underground. For example, the London enterprise Art Below has recently begun to establish public galleries in the London Underground by using billboard space to display artists' work. Transport for London, "Art on the Underground," *Transport for London*, (2011), accessed March 31, 2011, http://art.tfl.gov.uk/about/.

[25] The Museum of Modern Art, "The Collection: MoMA Highlights," *Museum of Modern Art* (2010), accessed February 2011, http://www.moma.org/collection/browse_results.php?object_id=2393.

[26] David Bennett, *Metro: The Story of the Underground Railway* (London: Octopus Publishing Group, 2004), 68.

Siri Derkert led a campaign for art in the Metro. Nilsson and Derkert sent letters to the Commissioner Hjalmar Mehr, urging him to establish an art program for the future station interiors. Nilsson thoughtfully expressed her opinions to the transit Commissioner: "We want fun, cheerfulness and a blaze of colour in the underground... In the old days people had churches, and they were inundated with everything the county had to offer in the way of art. They were filled with unimaginable treasures...Let us create similar places under the earth, underground cathedrals!"[27] Nilsson and Derkert worked very hard to ensure that the Stockholm Metro was infused with art. By 1955 two motions for art on the Metro were submitted to City Council, a move which attracted cross-party support and resulted in the establishment of the Stockholm Transport Art Advisory Council. [28]

In its formative stages, the City of Stockholm Tramways Company and Highways Commission recommended a competition format in order to commission and install art in future Metro stations, as well as the few stations that had already been constructed. In addition, the commissioning bodies for the Metro felt that the art "should not be limited to the occasional wall surface being handed over to the artists for treatment... The whole area must be regarded as an entity, and artists should therefore cooperate with architects and use suitable materials for floor, wall and roof so as to create a harmonious artists whole suited to the function of a station."[29] T-Centralen Station was installed with art selected through competition, and currently contains more works of art and sculpture than any other station of the Stockholm Metro. The initial impetus was to create a public art work through the collaboration of artists, engineers and architects: this integrated process would be used for all subsequent stations.[30] The integrated

[27] Göran Söderström, *Art Goes Underground*, trans. Laurie Thompson (Solna: Lettura, 1988), 78.
[28] Storstockholms Lokaltrafik, *Art in the Stockholm Metro* (Stockholm: Ekotryck Redners, 2008), 5.
[29] Söderström, *Art Goes Underground*, 82.
[30] Storstockholms Lokaltrafik, *Art in the Stockholm Metro,* 5.

process was utilized in the Blue Line expansions of T-Centralen Station, where the natural bedrock and cavernous space is kept in its original uneven surface formations, and onto which concrete was sprayed and later painted by artist Per Ultvedt (Fig. 5). The natural angles of the bedrock and concrete surface was painted bright motifs of leaves, vines, flowers and silhouettes of workers on a blue and white background of the platform and concourse levels. The leaf motif is reminiscent of old murals found in Swedish churches.[31]

Today there are 100 stations in use in the Stockholm Metro and over 90 of them feature art commissioned from over 150 different artists. Each station's artwork varies in size and style, with artwork ranging from sculptures to mosaics and paintings. The Stockholm transit system is known for its art, taking on the self-proclaimed title as "the world's longest art exhibition."[32] One major reason why the Stockholm Metro is an international model for subway art is because of its firm position designating stations as a space for art.

The Montreal Metro was designed in a similar fashion to that of Stockholm: the transit system hired separate architects and artists for the design of each station.[33] Crucial to the Montreal Metro program was a purposeful avoidance of uniformity in station architecture and art. Melanie Boyne, in her 2002 thesis entitled "The Montreal Metro: Reflection of a City" examines how the artworks communicate ideas of Montreal's civic aspirations at the time of its construction for Expo '67. The first station which installed art under the Montreal Metro Art Project was the centrally located Place-des-arts Station. This station serves Place-des-arts, a site housing many theatres and performance spaces for drama, dance and music as well as a link to the Musée d'art contemporain. To underline this association, architects David, Boulva & Cleve commissioned artist Frédéric Back to create a 2.74m x 13.72m stained glass mural entitled *Les*

[31] Bennett, *Metro: The Story of the Underground Railway*, 80.
[32] Storstockholms Lokaltrafik, 5.
[33] Melanie Boyne, *The Montreal Metro: Reflections of a City* (Master's Thesis: Carleton University, 2002), 39.

Arts lyriques (Fig. 6). Back's artwork displays images recalling Montreal and Quebec's musical history. The commission was based on drawings and detailed plans for the work submitted to the architects prior to the construction of the station. There were two main goals for the incorporation of art into stations of the Montreal Metro: to communicate notions of Montreal culture and community to transit users, and to create stations that each had an individual character. The Montreal Metro's emphasis on the installation of art to create distinctive environments, as opposed to station uniformity, highlights an early trend in transit station art admired by other developing art programs such as Toronto's TTC.

The Toronto subway system, which was established in 1954, predates the metro in Montreal and was, in fact, the first constructed in Canada. Initially, Toronto's system was limited to a north-south system along Yonge Subway, spanning twelve stations. Unlike Montreal, Toronto did not initially incorporate art into the fabric of the station interiors. Based on standardized designs by John B. Parkin Associates, the original Toronto Subway stations were designed primarily for functionality, with clean-line architectural features that were intended to be durable and efficient. Its lack of artistic presence was duly noted in a 1967 article in the journal *Canadian Architect*:

> The result is a superbly functional subway interior, pathologically clean and as colourful as the gent's toilets that adorned Victorian England at the time of the Prince Consort... It is a system in which little thought seems to have been given to the emotional context of travelling above and underground; it could well be represented by a prim old lady who nightly looks under one of the clean white tiles for any wicked imagination that might have escaped to go underground.[34]

The installation of public art in TTC transit stations began with the opening of the Spadina Subway Line on January 28, 1978. The Spadina line was an extension of the city's then thirty-four mile subway system. The TTC "recognized the construction of the new [Spadina]

[34] Robert Gretton and Norman Slater, "Montreal Metro," *Canadian Architect*, (February 1967), 27-28.

subway line and stations as a unique opportunity to celebrate the visual arts in an environment that combines art and technology for the daily benefit of thousands of people."[35]

The Spadina Line public art project incorporated at least one artwork into each of the eight new subway stations after the stations were constructed. The original concept for incorporating art into the future construction of the Spadina line was presented to the TTC in early 1974 by Nina Kaiden Wright, then President of Arts and Communications Councillors of Toronto.[36] After a feasibility study was conducted from May to December of 1974, the TTC authorized spending of up to $500,000 for the commission of art in the eight new stations of the Spadina Line. Three architectural firms were selected and assigned two stations each: Arthur Erickson Architects for Eglinton West and Yorkdale, Adamson Associates for Spadina and Glencairn, and Dunlop Farrow Aitken for Dupont and Lawrence West Stations. The TTC sent out a call for Ontario artists to submit proposals for each station interior. An advisory committee was assembled to work in conjunction with architects and contractors as a jury panel in order to select winning proposals for the stations. Nine Ontario artists were selected to work on the project: Ted Bieler, Claude Breeze, Louis de Niverville, Michael Hayden, Rita Letendre, Gordon Rayner, James Sutherland, Joyce Wieland and Gerald Zeldin.

The establishment of the Art in Architecture Program for the Spadina Subway placed artworks in stations of Toronto's subway for the first time. The stations were each allocated an artwork selected by the jury. At Dupont Station, James Sutherland's coloured glass mosaic entitled *Spadina Summer Under All Seasons* (Fig. 7) displays an enormous flower in cross-section on the platform level, and lines the curving walls of the mezzanine with more depictions of flora. Outside the station, influenced by the Paris Metro's Art Nouveau exterior features, Ron

[35] City of Toronto Archives, "Art in the Subway" (Fonds 16, Series 1549, File 326, 1974-1983).
[36] City of Toronto Archives, "Art in the Subway" (Fonds 16, Series 1549, File 326, 1974-1983).

Baird created the station gates with an interlocking circular design. At Spadina, the namesake station of the line, Joyce Wieland's quilt entitled *Barren Ground Caribou* appears at the Kendal Avenue entrance. The massive quilt depicts a herd of caribou in a tundra landscape. A public release entitled "Art in the Subway" in the February 1979 issue of *The Ontario Bulletin*, describes the new Spadina art project: "The eight-station 6.17 mile Spadina line adds a new dimension for the travelling public with art works in the shape of glass, porcelain, and mosaic tile murals, steel sculptures, neon light works, an aluminum wall relief, and cotton and Dacron creations."[37] It concludes by stating that Toronto joins a select group of cities (Boston, Paris, Mexico City, Montreal, Moscow, San Francisco and Stockholm) that offers "Art in the Subway" to commuters.

The Spadina Subway art project provided a learning opportunity for the TTC, complete with challenges. Two of the pieces installed under this program were later dismantled and removed due to conservation issues. At Glencairn Station, Rita Letendre's painted glass skylight entitled *Joy* (Fig. 8) was removed at the artist's request because the panels had faded from years of sunlight exposure. At Yorkdale Station, Michael Hayden created *Arc-en-ciel* (Fig. 9), a series of 158 multicolored neon glass tubes that when lit up made a 570-foot neon rainbow along the vaulted glass roof above the station platform. The arrival and departure of the train would signal the custom-built computer system, causing the lights to pulsate in sequence. Yorkdale Station marks a striking divergence from the type of art commonly installed in subways at the time. Unfortunately, due to issues of technical conservation and a lack of maintenance funds, the sculpture was removed in the early 1990s. Technical difficulties experienced with this piece

[37] Archives, "Art in the Subway" (1974-1983).

engendered hesitation in the TTC regarding the incorporation of electronic media into station art of future projects.[38]

The Spadina Subway was the TTC's first experience installing art in its subway stations. According to the TTC's installation program mandate, the artworks within Spadina's stations would "make a subway ride on Toronto's Spadina line a cultural experience," countering perceptions of the Toronto subway as a purely functional, sterile system.[39]

Support for Permanent Art Installations in Subway Stations

Commissioning bodies argue that public art should encourage a greater use of public places and increase an individual's sense of comfort and security.[40] In the 1980s, the New York City Subway's installation of public art exemplified this new purpose and incentive for the incorporation of art into transit stations. Stations of the New York Subway were in various stages of disrepair due to the wear and tear of public traffic and the subway was viewed negatively as a grimy, unwelcoming and unsafe space. In 1981, the New York Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) responded to the declining state of their transit stations by issuing a $16.3 million rehabilitation program.[41] As a result of this program, the MTA Arts for Transit Program was officially established in 1985.[42] The MTA Arts for Transit Program urged that "original, engaging and integrated artworks should be part of the rehabilitation process" along with other measures such as improved lighting and station cleaning.[43] In order to create artwork for station rehabilitations, MTA Arts for Transit continues to commission artists through a competitive

[38] David Lawson, email message to Chelsea Ruckle, December 10, 2010.
[39] Archives, "Art in the Toronto Subway System" (1984).
[40] Malcolm Miles, *Art, Space and the City: Public Art and Urban Features* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 110.
[41] Miles, *Art Space and the City*, 134.
[42] Metropolitan Transit Authority, "The Official Subway Art and Rail Guide," *MTA – Arts for Transit* (2010), accessed November 2010, http://www.mta.info/mta/aft/.
[43] Metropolitan Transit Authority, "Arts for Transit was Created," *MTA – Arts for Transit* (2010), accessed November 2010, http://www.mta.info/mta/aft/.

selection process in which a call for artists' submissions is circulated, and subsequent proposals are judged by a diverse jury panel.[44] Although the TTC's Sheppard Line was not developed as part of a rehabilitation program, the underlining purpose stands strong: art can be used as a tool to provide a sense of security by adding a humanizing element to sometimes intimidating underground spaces.

In light of the rehabilitation program, there is an increased awareness of conservation and durability issues within the unique set of conditions created by subway stations. As a result, many of the projects that have been created for New York City's Subway are composed of ceramic tile and mosaic and other media, such as bronze or glass, which are relatively easy to maintain. The MTA Arts for Transit's focus on sustainability in its art highlights a feature that is now considered essential by most rapid transit art programs.

In the essay titled "Public Art, Design-led Urban Regeneration and its Evaluation," visual studies critic and psychologist Doug Sandle states that the "most powerful driver for the recent expansion of public art has been its use in environmental and social regeneration."[45] This statement of Sandle's is closely linked to the notion of new genre public art, where in addition to the benefit of public art to physical rejuvenation, it also possesses potential social value. Sandle's statement regarding public art's connection to environmental and social regeneration can be interpreted through the concept of sustainable art. Generally, 'sustainable art' is art which is produced with consideration for the wider impact of the work and its relationship to its surrounding environment. Sustainable art is achieved when shared projects are undertaken by multidisciplinary design teams, involve the community, and address larger social, cultural, and

[44] Metropolitan Transit Authority, "Arts for Transit," *MTA – Arts for Transit* (2010), accessed November 2010, http://www.mta.info/mta/aft/.
[45] Doug Sandle, "Public Art, Design-led Urban Regeneration and its Evaluation," in *Design and Creativity: Policy, Management and Practice*, ed. Guy Julier et al. (New York: Berg, 2009), 76.

environmental concerns, emphasizing the potential of public art's social value. For example, transit station public art has the capacity to celebrate transit and the station site as well as the surrounding community through the display of themes that illustrate the integration of transportation into the community. According to the MTA, John Cavanagh's work at Woodside and 61st Street, *Commuting/Community* (Fig. 10), reflects

> ...impressions of Woodside, a Queens neighbourhood where railroad and subway lines intersect. The two photo-montage murals are related to one another in revealing the daily life of Woodside's residents. Both murals spell out "Woodside" using letters based on neighbourhood sites. The murals reflect the contrasts present in this city neighbourhood, from the rushing train overhead to the pleasant street life below. In another scene, the artist juxtaposes children playing in the park with adults commuting into the city. The portrayal of the community is offered to Woodside, in Cavanagh's words, 'to provoke, stimulate, console, strengthen, and enjoy.' [46]

Transit authorities who embrace public art result in recognizable and locally distinctive station spaces. Art has the capacity to provide a public space with a sense of identity. How many times have you been on a subway system where every station looks identical, and even though you always get off at the same stop you are never quite sure if it is the right one? Art that is visible from the inside of the station serves as a practical point of reference and recognition. Varied art installed in each station location can set subway systems apart from generic, homogenous design schemes that are typically employed in these spaces.

Relationships Between Public Art and People: "Placemaking" and Site-Specificity

Thus far, I have presented practical purposes and incentives for the funding of public art projects such as increasing ridership and creating a safer, cleaner environment. However, there is an impetus for installing art in subway stations more closely related to the role of art itself.

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[46] Metropolitan Transit Authority, "Arts For Transit – Woodside-61st Street," *MTA – Arts for Transit* (2010), accessed November 2010, http://www.mta.info/mta/aft/.

Permanent installations of artworks in stations perform an important cultural function for users of transit systems.

The majority of transit users are regular commuters who encounter the same stations in their daily routine. For many commuters on rapid transit systems, stations installed with art works can signal a sense of the familiar, of home. When distinctive art installations indicate the end of the commute home, they can provoke nostalgic qualities. This is doubly apparent in suburban communities, where there is the assumption that transit systems are used to transport people from the depths of urban city centres to the comfort and familiarity of their community and home. This element of connection to and experience with public art contributes to the health and well being of community members.

For people living in urban centres, the rapid transit system is a staple in their lives and experiences due to its necessity and central role in transporting them to their professions on a daily basis. Permanent installations of public art establish new landmarks that punctuate the journey of millions of people. These art projects have the capacity to become part of the everyday for the viewer. Some seek to distract the transit user, while others engage the viewer in the activity of travelling through transitional space. Permanent projects are important because they become a consistent presence in the network of the transit system for users.

The concept of public art as "placemaking" is central to Ronald Lee Fleming's book *The Art of Placemaking: Interpreting Community through Public Art and Urban Design.* Fleming emphasises the cultural and social context of a public artwork's creation as the vehicle for enriching "the narrative of place meaning."[47] The elements of placemaking are closely related to urban-design strategies which seek to create publically accessible meanings. The four urban-

[47] Ronald Lee Fleming, *The Art of Placemaking: Interpreting Community through Public Art and Urban Design* (London: Merrell, 2007), 13.

design objectives Fleming identifies as necessary for public art to attain the quality of placemaking are: orientation, connection, direction, and animation.[48] "Orientation" indicates that the art possesses elements of "research that reveals the layers of meaning" for the viewer.[49] This happens in a number of ways. For example, a broader social or cultural context concerning the work may be provided for the viewer overtly through an artist statement or information plaque. An artwork's "connection" to site carries corresponding elements of orientation, but specifically refers to the integrated design of orientation throughout the site. Placemaking public art contains "visual elements [that] can bind a site together with a matrix of related messages and engage each other in a visual relationship that helps define spatial ties."[50] Community-based public art projects are an example of placemaking art through connection as they often address cultural concerns and are firmly rooted in a specific site and the individuals who regularly occupy it. "Direction" can be provided for the viewer through artworks to help navigate public space. Small inserts or plaques can catch the attention of a viewer, implicitly or explicitly leading an individual on a specific path of engagement or awareness. The final placemaking tool recognized by Fleming's is "animation": the notion that there are unforeseen "uses and activities that can build complexity in and around the space" and can only be created by people who engage with both the art and space after the artwork's creation and installation.[51] Fleming's analysis of "placemaking" illuminates how a public art work creates sites of meaning for individuals at sites that are not outwardly rife with historical or cultural significance.

"Site-specificity" is an important concept to consider when examining permanent public artworks and notions of "placemaking." According to Alex Coles, a site-specific artwork is one

[48] Fleming, *The Art of Placemaking,* 19.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid, 20.
[51] Ibid, 19.

that is "deemed to be an artist's response to their engagement with a particular site with the presumption being that if the site were different then so would be the work."[52] James Meyer explores this concept in his essay "The Functional Site." Meyer argues that there are two relationships between art and site: the 'literal' and the 'functional' site. Literal site-specificity indicates that a work is physically located in one particular place. However, these works are not necessarily integrated physically or conceptually with the site. The resulting artwork "is thus determined by a physical place, by an understanding of the place as actual... [it is] a kind of monument, a public work commissioned *for* the site."[53] Literal site-specificity indicates that a permanent work was created for a specific place. In contrast, functional site-specificity does not necessarily incorporate a physical place, "instead, it is a process, an operation occurring between sites, a mapping of institutional and textual filiations and the bodies that move between them (the artist's above all)."[54] Meyer describes the notion of the functional site as "wilfully temporary; its nature is not to endure but to *come down.*"[55] In the context of the artistic practice of 'Institutional Critique', Meyer explains how the functional site exists by emphasizing how site-specific works by artists such as Hans Haacke and Michael Asher "exposed this space [gallery] as a material entity, a no longer neutral place, a backdrop for the merchandising of portable art objects."[56] The types of artworks associated with institutional critique oppose the timelessness and placelessness of art situated inside institutional space. According to Meyer's definitions, literal and functional site-specific artworks are created under different pretences. Yet, both are premised on the notion of locating the artwork at a specific, single place.

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[52] Alex Coles, "A Platform for Site-Specifity," in *Platform for Art: Art on the Underground*, ed. Tamsin Dillon (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2007), 20.
[53] James Meyer, "The Functional Site," in *Space, Site, Intervention: Situating Installation Art*, ed. Erika Suderburg (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 24.
[54] Meyer, "The Functional Site," 25.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Ibid.

In his discussion of site-specificity, Meyer briefly considers the viewer's attention towards site-specific art, stating that "deferring attention from the portable modernist work to the gallery, the site-specific installation was said to render one conscious of one's body existing within this ambience."[57] Meyer's description of viewing site-specific art emphasizes a connection to the surrounding space. This is an important consideration in discussions of public art, as site-specificity is a crucial aspect considered by artists when creating a work. Critic Alex Coles builds on Meyer's description of the viewer by distinguishing viewing practices of literal and functional site-specific art:

> The notion of the literal site often involves a form of passive optical contemplation of a composition as the viewer stands and regards the artwork, albeit perhaps in a fleeting way. The notion of the functional site necessitates a quite different form of contemplation which is often tactile in character.[58]

The argument made by Coles concerning viewing and site-specific art is dependent on both the artwork and the individual viewer. While contemplation can nourish a viewer's experience with art and its relation to site, other factors such as proximity can also extend and reinvigorate an artwork's resonance. Contained within the artwork can be pegs for the cognition of the viewer to hang on to, so that each time the individual comes into proximity, the meaning of art in its space is regenerated and reinterpreted.

The Sheppard Line Project

The 1970s and 1980s saw a significant expansion of metropolitan Toronto and its surrounding municipalities. The TTC's transit lines facilitated travel in the downtown core, but there was a growing need to incorporate outlying communities into the Toronto transit system. It was

[57] Ibid, 26.
[58]Coles, "A Platform for Site-Specificity," 21.

apparent that Sheppard Avenue, an east-west connector of Scarborough to North York, was heavily used for suburb to suburb travel via car and bus.

In 1985 the Sheppard Subway Line officially became part of future projects for the TTC and was included in the TTC's future rapid transit plan "Network 2011," drafted by the TTC and Metropolitan Toronto. The plan proposed that the first stage of construction span Sheppard Avenue from Yonge Station to Victoria Park, and then eventually be extended from the western Spadina line east to Scarborough Town Centre. It was thought that this new line would provide access to Toronto's transit system for developing suburban towns north of the metropolitan area, as well as ease traffic along the Bloor-Danforth line by providing another east-west corridor. Furthermore, creating a transit line extension that would connect North York with the Yonge-University-Spadina line was viewed as a strategy for decentralizing metropolitan Toronto's office growth and making North York a satellite downtown of office towers and high-rise housing. However, due to shifting provincial leadership and budget cuts in the following years, development of a Sheppard Line Subway was both prolonged in time and reduced in size.

In 1991 a scaled-down version of the proposed Network 2011 Sheppard Line plan called "Let's Move" was presented by the NDP. Under new funding terms reached by Premier Bob Rae, Metro Chairman Alan Tonks and North York Mayor Mel Lastman, Metro Council agreed to finance the development of the Sheppard Line by constructing the tunnels but not the tracks from Sheppard station to Don Mills.[59] Shortly after the project started with NDP provincial funding, the Conservative party won the 1995 provincial election, a change that would once again influence the project's outcome due to increased budget cuts.

The Sheppard Line opened on November 22, 2002. The 22 minute round trip journey between Yonge Street and Don Mills Road along Sheppard Avenue East was the first Toronto

[59] Ibid.

subway line extension in 17 years. Much like the development for the project, its construction was met with setbacks such as reduced budgets and delayed production. It took nearly seven years to construct.

The decision to go ahead with the construction of the Sheppard Line was made in advance of Toronto's 1998 amalgamation of six former municipalities: North York, Etobicoke, Scarborough, York, the Borough of East York and the municipality of metropolitan Toronto. Prior to the 1998 amalgamation, North York was the second-largest of the six municipalities after metropolitan Toronto. Based on the growing population of the area of North York it was seen as a wise investment. Although not directly linked to amalgamation, the very construction of the line corresponded with it quite nicely, representing one of the first concrete links of Metro Toronto to its former municipalities and current self. The Sheppard Subway Line aided "the fulfillment of city planners' vision of Toronto's first real urban centre outside the downtown core."[60]

Commissioning Public Art for the Sheppard Line

The TTC viewed the construction of the Sheppard Line as a positive improvement not only to the transit system, but also to the quality of life of Torontonians: "A dynamic and expanding infrastructure ensures Metro's role as the engine of growth for the GTA and contributes to an increased quality of life for all of Metro's citizens."[61] Creating "dynamic" infrastructure was achieved in part through the integration of art in the five stations of the Sheppard Subway.

In 1988, the former Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto established its first Public Art Policy Advisory Committee (PAPAC); the following year it adopted a Public Art Policy

[60] Royson James. "Subway Creates Town of Sheppard-Ville," *Toronto Star* (November 16, 2002), accessed November 24, 2010, http://transit.toronto.on.ca/archives/data/200211160901.shtml.
[61] City of Toronto Archives, "Sheppard Subway" (Fonds 72, Series 336, File 387, 1996-1997).

Framework.[62] The PAPAC for Metropolitan Toronto reviewed and approved a variety of public art projects including the installation of art in the TTC's Spadina Subway. In 1994, a Culture Plan was adopted which included an art strategy which emphasized the importance of early integration of public art in the planning process. This strategy was encouraged in both Metro policy and practice, which deemed public art to be most efficient and rewarding when integrated into the initial planning process. The TTC employed this strategy in the development of public art in the TTC's Sheppard line.[63]

In a letter to Al Tonks, Chairman of the Municipality of Metro Toronto, provincial Minister of Transportation Al Palladini stated that the province of Ontario was "firmly committed to the construction of the Sheppard Subway and will be funding 75% of the new allowable costs of a 'no frills' Sheppard Subway line."[64] In order to create dynamic stations under the "art in architecture" program for the Sheppard line with a "no frills" approach, the TTC decided to design stations with integrated art. The work of the artists would have to be tile-based, a medium which carries minimal maintenance costs.

The Sheppard line art program was funded by the TTC with sponsorship from the province of Ontario and City of Toronto, and was administered by local public art consultant Rina Greer. The Sheppard line was the first and only project built under the "Let's Move" (Rapid Transit Expansion Program), a program which also sought to update the TTC's design program and create art integrated into the architecture of the stations. The budget concept was "0.5 % for Art" of the cost of architectural finishes.[65] Rina Greer developed the parameters for

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[62] Toronto City Planning, "Percent for Public Art Programs Guideline," *Toronto Urban Design* (August 2010), accessed November 3, 2010. http://www.toronto.ca/planning/urbandesign/pdf/public_art.htm, 32.
[63] Toronto City Planning, "Percent for Public Art Programs Guideline," 32.
[64] City of Toronto Archives, "Sheppard Subway line: vol 2" (Fonds 16, Series 1595, File 2, 1995-1996).
[65] In 1995 the initial artist's fees for Sheppard Line public art were $27,000 for a line station (Bayview, Bessarion and Leslie) and $37,500 for a terminus station (Sheppard-Yonge and Don Mills). However, when art is directly integrated into the architectural or structural finishes of the station the 0.5% budget is a "delta" over and above the

the installation of integrated art in the stations in order to "facilitate the design, fabrication and installation of the artwork and to ensure that public art played a significant role in the evolution of the design concepts for the new [Sheppard] line."[66]

Prior to the construction of the stations of the Sheppard Line, both an open commission call and invitational call for artists were issued. The commissions call requested that artists from the Ontario area with experience in public art who were capable of working closely with architects and engineers as part of a design team submit a proposal to work on the project.[67] Over 300 proposals were submitted to the TTC, which also invited a select number of experienced artists to participate in the commission call. The list of artists—through open invitation and commissioned calls--was narrowed by the TTC. The long list of artists was then reviewed by a panel of art experts as well as by consultant Rina Greer, and each artist was judged based on portfolio of previous artworks. Subsequently, the shortlisted artists were interviewed by the respective station architects, who then selected their artists.[68]

Together the artists, architects and engineers generated evolving ideas of the art for each station from the beginning of development and construction.[69] However, before artworks were set into construction plans, an independent Art Design Review Committee (ADRC) reviewed, and ultimately approved, the artist's idea.[70] Coordinated by Greer, these ADRC's were composed of "recognized art experts, a local representative with an interest in art, and representatives from TTC Maintenance and Project Management."[71] Greer not only developed

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cost of materials required for the station. Currently, the TTC policy states that the public art budget should be a minimum of 1% of the cost of building the space which the public circulates (ie interior station space). David Lawson, email message to Chelsea Ruckle, April 7, 2011.

[66] Toronto Transit Commission, "Sheppard Subway Public Art Program 2002," Brochure.

[67] Toronto Transit Commission, "Sheppard Subway Public Art Program 2002."

[68] David Lawson, email message to Chelsea Ruckle, December 7, 2010.

[69] Lisa Urbach, "The Artists Behind the Images," in *Taking Public Art Underground* (Toronto: July 2003), 1.

[70] Lawson.

[71] Ibid.

the parameters of the art program, but was also an advocate for the artists during the process of development.

Both the selection process for the artists and the development process of artwork in the Sheppard line stations were unlike that for artworks located along the Yonge/University/Spadina line. The artworks for the Spadina line were created by the artist after the station had already been built. The "Let's Move" design project for the Sheppard Subway encouraged the integration of art in the early stages of design in order to generate works that were incorporated directly into the architecture of the station rather than installed as an afterthought. The artwork was intended to be integrated into the finish of the station, a process which is different than having an architect simply designate a space for a sculpture, painting, or mosaic to be placed. After the completion of the Spadina Line art project, the TTC realized that it was important that artworks be integrated into the station in such as way that they would not stop functioning over time, and that they be relatively maintenance free.

According to the TTC's Design Manual for art installation under the "Let's Move" program, "The artwork should be compatible with the station architecture and enhance its overall image. It should assist in creating a humane and inviting atmosphere by the imaginative use of colour, texture, lighting and contrast."[72] Design criteria for artwork in the Sheppard Subway were established to ensure this outcome. In the 1993 TTC Design Manual, it states that art should work with architectural elements of the station without diminishing public safety or security. In order to create a "humane and inviting atmosphere," artists were encouraged to have their work address one of the following themes: community, transportation, or the process of constructing the station.[73]

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[72] Toronto Transit Commission, "DM-0404-01 Artwork Program," Design Manual (1993).
[73] David Lawson.

The most important criteria set out by the TTC for the Sheppard stations is the integration of the work, which would necessarily require little to no maintenance. It was essential to the TTC that the works maintain durability over a lifespan of 30 years, be resistant to vandalism, and be maintainable by TTC personnel.[74] Due to the negative experience with Michael Hayden's *Arc-en-ciel* at Yorkdale Station, the Commission advised that artists avoid electronic media, owing to the related difficulties in conservation.[75] Freestanding art pieces were also determined to be problematic to maintain and would incur additional costs such as display cases and routine inspections. The Sheppard stations artworks were to be made of the same materials which comprise the interior finishes (ceramic wall tiles and terrazzo-type floor screeds.)[76] In order to meet TTC maintenance requirements as well as budget restrictions, it was specified to artists that the medium of their works be tile. In response to these criteria, Rina Greer stated: "Public art is all about problem solving," and that "we were not unhappy with the constraints of the project. We decided to address them, to confront them head on."[77]

Conclusion

The installation of public art in transit stations through public art programs emerged in the second half of the twentieth century in systems such as the Stockholm Metro and Montreal Metro. Art entered Toronto's subway system with the opening of the Spadina Line on January 28, 1978, an extension of the city's then thirty-four mile subway system. With the establishment of the Art in Architecture Program, at least one artwork was incorporated into

[74] Toronto Transit Commission, "DM-0404-01 Artwork Program."
[75] Ibid.
[76] Toronto Transit Commission, "Sheppard Subway Public Art Program 2002."
[77] Julia Dault, "Tunnel Visionaries," *The National Post* (November 14, 2002): A4.

each of the eight new subway stations after the stations were constructed. The Spadina Subway art installation was the TTC's founding experience with art in subways.

This chapter has explored rationales for subway art installation that reach beyond public art programs. Ronald Lee Fleming offers a theoretical model to understand how public art can be meaningful for transit users through the concept of 'placemaking.' Placemaking public art possesses elements of orientation, connection, direction, and animation. Traditional public art surveys and case studies have looked at grand gestures of art, large monuments, or controversial pieces. Perhaps though, it is the public works of all shape, size and form, that commuters encounter daily which should be relocated to the forefront of public art program agendas. The public artworks present in rapid transit stations make otherwise bland activities socially central and rewarding through processes of placemaking and visual stimulation.

An integral component for new stations on the Sheppard Line is the installation of public art. Rather than having architects and engineers create the station space then have artists come to the project in later stages to incorporate art, the Toronto Transit Committee in association with the Toronto Percent for Arts Program opted for an integrated approach. It was in opposition to commission processes where artists are signed on during later stages of construction: a kind of art selection process sometimes described as "plop art" and criticized for not having "consideration for their aesthetic, semiotic or sustainable relationship to either their surroundings or users".[78] The commission process for artists of the TTC's Sheppard Line project was designed in order to create engaging and dynamic art that was fully integrated into the station interior.

As exemplified in the survey of the Stockholm and Montreal Metro, Toronto was not the first subway system to conduct this type of integrated commission process. However, the Sheppard Line's induction of an integrated commissioning process for public art does signal a

[78] Sandle, "Public Art, Design-led Urban Regeneration and its Evaluation," 74.

change of approach in the Toronto system. I have chosen the TTC Sheppard Line artworks as a foundation for a theoretical exploration of reception in transitional spaces in the following chapters because its public art program's specific goal to create identity of place through art clearly indicates an important dimension to the reception of public art: its relation to spatial context.

CHAPTER TWO:

Analysis of Public Art in Stations of the TTC's Sheppard Line

> ...what's different here [in the Sheppard Line Stations] is the degree to which artists managed to create works that engage riders, turning travellers into audience members along the way. – Christopher Hume, *Toronto Star.*[79]

People enter transit systems with no expectation or anticipation of encountering art. Yet, when art does exist in subway stations, it has the potential to impact the lives of many people. It can be argued that, based on the nature of the transit user's passage, there are two primary modes of engagement for art in transit systems: the gaze and the glance. As passengers in transit stations enter or wait for trains, they have the opportunity to stop, and, if they choose, engage with art through a more focused, deliberate "gaze". When an individual rushes through linked spaces working their way to the destination point or train, they will generally "glance" at the artwork. In this chapter, I explore how artworks in stations of the Sheppard Line have been created to be perceived by a specific transit user audience, and the *various* methods of reception that are present. I will present these case studies in order from the most westerly station of the Sheppard Line, starting with Sheppard-Yonge, then Bayview, Bessarion, Leslie and concluding with Don Mills.

Sheppard Line Station Structure

Private architectural and engineering firms were commissioned by the TTC to develop the Sheppard Line's five stations. The architectural firm Stevens Group Ltd won the commission for two stations, Don Mills and Bayview, while the three others were by NORR Limited at

[79] Christopher Hume, "Art the Ticket on the Train to Nowhere," *Toronto Star* (November 14, 2002), accessed November 2010, http://transit.toronto.on.ca/archives/data/200211140556.shtml.

Sheppard-Yonge, URS Cole Sherman at Bessarion, and Moriyama & Teshima Architects at Leslie Station. As a result, each station is different in terms of actual design but much like the design requirements for the station artworks, there are uniform standards established for all of the Sheppard Line's five stations.

Access to the platforms is provided either through adjacent buildings, transfer corridors (Sheppard-Yonge), and/or street level entrances. As well, each station entrance coordinates with surface level TTC bus routes. All stations have elevators for wheelchair access, and either escalators or stairs lead to the platform level. Some of the stations have retail tenants such as 'Gateway Newstands' located on the concourse levels. Sheppard-Yonge is the only station to have a tenant on the platform level: the franchise pastry shop 'Cinnabon' is located on the southern platform immediately adjacent to where passengers embark and disembark trains. Like most subway stations, poster advertisements are present and are located mainly on the platform levels of the Sheppard Line.

Bordering the platform and track is a cautionary yellow line in each of the five stations. Except for areas altered by the artist, the floor and walls are a tiled off-white colour. Six-car trains have been assigned to operate on the Sheppard Line; however, only four train-cars are currently in use, owing to the low-volume of ridership. As the TTC uses shortened trains along the line, portions of each station have been walled off to ensure that station platforms are not too long. These walled off portions are designed to look like an extension of the wall in order to avoid giving the appearance that the station is still under construction. However, these walls are temporary and therefore made of dry-wall material.

While the actual designs of the five stations are not uniform, elements of standardization create similar environments for the integration of artworks. The Sheppard Line stations can be

described as "shoe box" designs, as each station forms an enclosed box made distinct by the artist and his/her artwork.[80] Each station has two explanatory stainless steel plaques about the station's artwork.

Stacy Spiegel's *Immersion Land*: Transformation of Space at Sheppard-Yonge Station

Imagine you are standing on the platform level of a subway station waiting for your train to arrive. Instead of dulled tones of grey concrete and monochromatic tiled walls, there is a bright landscape scene that spans the platform level of the entire station. It seems as if the outdoors have been transported to the subterranean space of the subway station. This imagery, visible at Sheppard-Yonge, is the work of artist Stacy Spiegel. Inspired by the landscapes of southern Ontario, *Immersion Land* (Fig. 11) is an example of how the integration of art can transform space for the transit user.

Chosen by Sheppard-Yonge Station architectural firm NORR Limited, Stacey Spiegel was one of the first artists commissioned to take part in the Sheppard Line public art project. A Canadian artist, Spiegel was born in Hespeler, Ontario, and currently resides in Canada and Norway. Spiegel received a BFA from York University in Toronto where he studied fine arts, and has continued to work closely with post-secondary institutions both nationally and internationally. Specializing in computer technology-based new media art, Spiegel has created other public art installations in Toronto such as *Facets* (1990) a glass and steel sculpture near the Eaton Center, and *Synthetic Eden* (1990), a collection of stainless steel, bronze, marble, and glass fountain sculptures located on Yonge Street near the courtyard of One Financial Place in addition to his work in the Sheppard-Yonge Station.

[80] Stephen Cruise, interview with Chelsea Ruckle, *Don Mills Station Public Art* (December 7, 2010).

Stacy Spiegel's *Immersion Land* at the Sheppard-Yonge Station is a tile mosaic depicting a panoramic landscape typical of southern Ontario. The piece runs continuously from one end of the platform to the other. Spiegel's process for creating this installation was multi-step: First, he photographed a landscape throughout the four seasons of the year using a panoramic camera. He then "digitized, condensed and blended" the one hundred and fifty images he had taken.[81] The resulting mosaic is made up of 1,500,000 tiles, and covers 305 square meters of wall. The composition of sixty-four separate one-inch-square solid blocks of coloured tile creates a pixelated view of a country landscape with mustard fields, dirt roads and grazing cows.

Spiegel brings the natural environment underground into the concrete interior of Sheppard-Yonge Station, offering "alternative destinations to commuters, [and] scenic escapes from the city."[82] Visual Culture scholar Anne Friedberg writes about the function of the panorama in modern life, stating:

> The panorama did not physically *mobilize* the body, but provided virtual spatial and temporal mobility, bringing the country to the town dweller, transporting the past to the present. The panoramic spectator lost, as Helmut Gernsheim described, 'all judgment of distance and space' and 'in the absence of any means of comparison with real objects, a perfect illusion was given.'[83]

Here, Friedberg is discussing an installation of a panorama in Leicester Square London by Irishman Robert Barker in 1790. However, her basic concept of transportation through imagery is still relevant today. Spiegel states that "time, space and movement are compressed in this imagery" of *Immersion Land.*[84] He suggests that the panoramic landscape offers a spectacle in

[81] Toronto Transit Commission, "Sheppard Subway Public Art Program 2002," Brochure.
[82] Julia Dault, "Tunnel Visionaries," *The National Post* (November 14, 2002) A1.
[83] Anne Friedberg, "The Mobilized and Virtual Gaze in Modernity," in *The Visual Culture Reader*, ed. Nicholas Mirzoeff (London: Routledge, 2002), 258.
[84] Toronto Transit Commission, "Sheppard Subway Public Art Program 2002."

which all sense of time and space is lost - much the same function served by Barker's panorama in eighteenth century London.

Spiegel's inclusion of elements of familiarly recognizable scenery both challenges and underlines the characteristic placelessness of a subway station. Because he has combined a myriad of photos to create a panoramic landscape image, it is not an actual site that is being represented, therefore reinforcing the sense of placelessness. However, through the same combination of images Spiegel also creates a direct link to the kinds of landscape that can be seen outside the Sheppard Line, resituating the subway within its own historical environment.

Both the title and pixilated execution of the work conjures notions of the digital and modern. *Immersion Land* shows what happens when the natural world and society come together and are "mediated through technology."[85] With the aid of technological innovations, Spiegel combined photographic images to create a digitally re-mastered version of an earlier landscape outside of Sheppard Yonge Station. As such, the work seems to comment on urban modernity as "a displaced landscape of nostalgia and one of an imagined farmland that might have existed several metres above the transit platform before succumbing to the inexorable urban sprawl and development of the past fifty years."[86] Spiegel visually represents the change of landscape due to modernity by depicting a traditional landscape in the digital technique of pixilation. Through Spiegel's careful consideration of the subway station's complex relation to characteristics of modernity, he is creating an element of 'connection' for transit users. In contrast to the sense of placelessness that may be invoked through the artwork and subway site, the element of connection for placemaking can establish a relationship between the viewer, the

[85] Toronto Transit Commission, "Sheppard Subway Public Art Program 2002."
[86] Ian Chodikoff, "Subterranean Landscapes," *Reading Toronto* (March 31, 2005), accessed February 2011, http://www.readingt.readingcities.com/index.php/toronto/C13/P240/.

artwork, and the space *Immersion Land* achieves this by exploring the complex spatial characteristics of a subway station in relation to an exterior, rural Ontario setting.

Immersion Land must currently be viewed from the opposing platform, as the platform side on which the mosaic landscape is installed is not open due to low ridership. The design for the artwork was created with the understanding that both sides of the platform would be operating and accessible for passengers (although the northern platform is not currently in operation, it may be in the future if ridership demand increases.) This means that the majority of people viewing the work encounter a vision of a landscape scene from a distance in Sheppard-Yonge Station. This type of distant viewing of *Immersion Land* means the panoramic content of the image can be comprehended in a glance at the artwork. While I have linked the glance to distant viewing for the reception of *Immersion Land* by a transit user, this does not necessarily mean that a fleeting impression follows. The opposite mode of viewing would take place if one were up close to the work. In a concentrated space, the landscape scenes are almost indecipherable, crystallizing into individually coloured square tiles. The panoramic image dissolves into individual components, or conversely, emerges out of essentially nothing. Owing to Spiegel's decision to use small mosaic tiles, the image can be visually received in multiple ways. From afar the landscape is "clear and resolved and you feel surrounded by nature" while up close "the image dissolves into abstraction."[87]

Yet another dimension of viewing Spiegel's panorama can be experienced by those riding in the moving train. As the train both picks up speed leaving the station, and slows as it enters, the entire horizon of southern Ontario appears, reminiscent of a year-round road trip with scenery out the window. Motion and movement of the viewing audience itself are essential components for the reception of Stacey Spiegel's *Immersion Land.* Spiegel has considered the

[87] Toronto Transit Commission, "Sheppard Subway Public Art Program 2002."

specific transit user audience, which moves through the station, rides a moving train, or stands and waits for a train, while creating *Immersion Land*. It is not only the panoramic and pixilated medium from which *Immersion Land* is fashioned that creates an element of connection for transit users, but also the capacity for various methods of its visual reception by transit users.

Visual Disorientation at Bayview Station: Panya Clark Espinal's *From Here Right Now*

Panya Clark Espinal was chosen by Stevens Group Architects to create the art for Bayview Station for a number of reasons. Espinal is a Toronto-based artist who graduated from the Parson's School of Design in New York in 1982 and then the Ontario College of Art in Toronto in 1988. Prior to winning the Bayview Station commission, Panya Clark Espinal completed four other public art commissions, three in the GTA and one in Whitby, Ontario.

Espinal's art at Bayview Station is of a very different character than Stacey Spiegel's panoramic art at Sheppard-Yonge Station. While *Immersion Land* spans the walls of the platform level as one continuous image and is most often perceived by a viewer from a certain distance (due to its location on the inaccessible opposite platform wall), or in motion; Panya Clark Espinal's work at Bayview Station comprises several object image renderings that engage the viewer in more direct and playful ways. Transit users perception are jolted when, for example, they are walking to the platform stairwell as what appears to be a black and white floor pattern suddenly, through a shift of their own perspective, morphs into a spotted dog!

Entitled *From Here Right Now* (Fig. 12), Espinal's piece is composed of twenty-four hand-drawn images of everyday items such as a clock, umbrella or ladder that are integrated into the station interior using water-jet cut black porcelain tile to outline the images and custom

terrazzo.[88] Most of the images are accompanied by a geometrical block of solid color, located either behind the image or nearby. The images of everyday items are enlarged and situated at unusual angles on both the concourse and platform levels of the station, as well as in corridors, stairwells, and on ceilings and floors. When viewed at a particular angle, the image takes on its recognizable form (such as a clock), but will continuously morph as the viewer moves through the station and farther away from the particular point of perception. In order to best conceive the visual characteristic of the station images, imagine that the images were first drawn onto a transparent slide, then randomly projected onto different surface areas of the station's interior. Then imagine that the images were copied onto the multi-dimensional surface areas with permanently installed black tile. From the specific point of projection the image appears to the viewer exactly as it was drawn. However, as soon as one strays from the fixed point of perception, the image starts to morph into distortion. Espinal created the projected effect with computer technology in the preliminarily stages of the project.

Espinal's enlarged pen and ink drawings were derived from famous art historical examples such as Hans Holbein the Younger's *The Ambassadors,* (1533) which features an anamorphic skull in the foreground of the painting (Fig. 13). In order to reconstitute the distorted image that appears when the viewer directly faces the painting, a specific vantage point must be occupied in order to see the intended skull image. Espinal translates this concept to the interior of Bayview Station. She also multiplies its use to more than one image so that every image in the ensemble is anamorphic. Espinal used the multiple rigid angles of the station to her advantage, projecting her images in places where two or three planes intersect such as in the stairwell, thereby changing the character of the distortion. As commuters travel through the

[88] Panya Clark Espinal, interview with Chelsea Ruckle, *Bayview Station Public Art* (December 9, 2010).

station, images will either slowly regain their shape or distort even further into abstraction. For example, on the concourse level is a clock face: the bottom half is tiled into the floor while the top half is tiled into the wall with the second and minute hands stemming from the base where wall and floor meet. When transit users traverse the concourse level toward the elevator and escalators connecting to the platform level, the top half of the clock face is in recognizable form whereas the bottom half appears to be almost melting towards the individual. As transit users move closer, the distended clock appears to configure into a recognizable clock face structure. This anamorphosis of shape occurs solely from the individual's own changing perspective while in motion.

By experimenting with perceptual space Espinal creates interactive art in the Bayview Station. She carefully considers the viewing audience, recognizing that it is in transition, travelling through the interiors of Bayview Station. Espinal calls on the viewer's perception to playfully interact with the specially rendered images of everyday objects. According to critic Christopher Hume *From Here Right Now* was created, "to inspire TTC users, normally a fairly passive lot, into active involvement."[89] Espinal's images highlight how spatial relationships are constructed through various kinds of visual stimuli, and how perception alters how we view spaces that we occupy in our everyday lives. In some cases, the individual objects rendered by Espinal at Bayview Station have been enlarged to a point that encourages individual interaction. Coupled with a *trompe l'oeil* effect, distended images allow transit users to actually insert themselves into the artwork. For example, on the concourse level of the station an image of a ladder is projected where the wall meets the floor: the steps of the ladder begin on the floor, inviting participants to "step" onto the ladder themselves. On the platform level of Bayview station there is a series of painted stairs, which like the ladder, invite participants to "step" onto

[89] Hume, "Art the Ticket on the Train to Nowhere."

the stairs. Numerous examples of transit users actively participating in the artwork have surfaced in blog and popular culture websites.[90] *From Here Right Now* also received an eight-page spread in *3D Street Art*, a 2010 published book showcasing "some of the most remarkable artists from the past, present and future of 3D street art."[91]

The various degrees of high public engagement with *From Here Right Now* recall Ronald Lee Fleming's notion of 'animation' for placemaking. The interactive relationship of images with transit users infuses the station with activities not usually associated with transit spaces. By providing interactive opportunities for engagement, *From Here Right Now* is an example of how art in a subway station can be immersive. Christopher Hume of the *Toronto Star* recognizes this special quality of Panya Clark Espinal's art, stating that it "humanizes the subway and helps remind us that getting around underground does not have to be dreary, dull and dirty... it can be entertaining."[92] Bayview Station is no longer simply a subway station, functioning solely to transport people from point 'a' to point 'b.' Rather, it is a playfully interactive and animated public art site.

Espinal recognized that one of the challenges for creating subway art was that it must endure both physically and conceptually. TTC officials preferred integrated tile art for this station, like the others. Inherent in this specification is the notion that the public art produced for the stations would be two-dimensional. Espinal worked with this material limitation to produce objects which become three-dimensional through perception. She made sculptural illusions from tile, proving that integrating artwork into the station finish opens up the possibilities of what an artwork can be, while maintaining manageability of maintenance. Beyond conservation issues,

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[90] Beembee, "Subway Art At Toronto's Bayview Station," *Beembee.com: Entertain Yourself* (June 7, 2010), accessed January 2011, http://www.beembee.com/2010/subway-art-at-torontos-bayview-station.
[91] Birgit Krols, *3D Street Art* (Antwerp: Tectum Publishers, 2010), 6.
[92] Hume, "Art the Ticket on the Train to Nowhere."

the concept of the work must also somehow stay alive and relevant for transit users. Bayview Station, like all subway stations, is a very public space in which those entering do not go in with the anticipation or intention of seeing art. It is very different from making a work for a gallery or another space where people go intent to be challenged by artworks. The majority of people entering Bayview Station would be doing so on a regular basis for as long as they lived in the area, or however long the subway station exists. Espinal could create a work that was alive, and not stagnant, by "developing an experience that can be viewed again and again, that can be discovered in different ways."[93] Anamorphic art can inherently and continuously be not only perceived, but also received in myriad ways.

Sylvie Bélanger's *Passing*: Celebration of Transitory Space at Bessarion Station

The commission for Bessarion Station was one of the last to be assigned. Sylvie Bélanger was chosen by architect URS Cole Sherman. A Toronto-based artist, Bélanger holds a Baccalauréat in Philosophy of Religion from the Université de Montréal, a BFA from Concordia University, and a MFA from York University. Her body of work consists largely of technological components explored in media such as photography, computer imaging and the audio/visual. Bélanger states that her work often "investigates the constant transformations that affect our understanding of personal, cultural and social identities."[94] This aspect of Bélanger's passion has been incorporated into the fabric of Bessarion Station through a variety of photographic frieze images.

Passing, by Sylvie Bélanger, represents the users of Bessarion Station (Fig. 14). The photographic friezes of black and white images reveal an awareness of station space in which

[93] Ibid.
[94] Sylvie Bélanger, "Bio/CV," *Sylvie Bélanger*, (2008) accessed January 2011, www.sylviebelanger.com.

many cultures and people coexist within the metropolis of Toronto. Bélanger's contribution to the Sheppard Line public art series at Bessarion Station channels the pulse of urban existence by connecting individuals and communities with the spaces they occupy. The photographic friezes speak about social diversity inherent in the democratic space of a transit station.

In her studio, Sylvie Bélanger photographed parts of the human anatomy, such as feet and hands, of a variety of people representing the multicultural urban community characteristic of the GTA.[95] With the aid of a computer, the photographs taken by Bélanger were recombined to underline the diversity of transit users. For example, images of people's feet on the concourse level capture "groups of strollers, people in wheelchairs or with crutches or a cane, with grocery carriages, bags or bicycles, and people alone or in groups, walking, running, waiting and meeting." [96] In doing so, Bélanger was able to compose a photographic frieze featuring people from the leg down, yet still clearly representative of a diverse group.

The photographic representation of people that use the subway system acts as a visual essay about the public space in which the work is situated. Bélanger chooses to create an artwork that overtly speaks about the social function provided by subways: serving the community at large. Subway stations can be viewed as "macrocosm[s] of the city, bringing together different ages, genders, races, and cultures, social and economic classes and the personal history and behaviour of each person."[97] *Passing* can be viewed as an example of what James Meyer terms 'functional' site-specificity, offering a commentary on the specific democratic space of the subway station. These reconfigured portraits construct an identity for the community, emphasizing notions of diversity and commenting on the social makeup of the GTA. According to Alex Coles, the type of viewing for artwork such as this would typically be

[95] Lisa Urbach, "The Artists Behind the Images" in *Taking Public Art Underground* (Toronto: July 2003), 1.
[96] Toronto Transit Commission, "Sheppard Subway Public Art Program 2002."
[97] Ibid.

categorized as the gaze, a more contemplative look.[98] When engaging with portraiture an individual typically pays close attention and becomes immersed in the work in order to get a sense of the person whose likeness is being portrayed. However, the black and white representation maintains a level of distance between the viewer and viewed object, reinforcing the notion that this work is a representation of an entire community.

Bélanger has purposefully situated the photographic images in places that relate to the movements of transit users. Installed just above the stair railing that leads down to the platform level are photographic frieze tiles that show hands gripping railings; images of people's shod feet and lower legs in different poses wrap around the entirety of the lower portion of the concourse space; and the backs of people's heads standing in a group are situated on the upper portion of the platform level where commuters wait for their train to arrive. Bélanger has chosen her images and their placement carefully, establishing a series of relationships between artwork and individual. As opposed to the wrap-around tile mosaic at Sheppard-Yonge, or the disorientating images at Bayview Station, the photographic frieze tile images at Bessarion are more co-ordinated with the station as they mirror the movement of the users of the station.

Bélanger has created the elements of both 'direction' and 'connection' for placemaking at Bessarion Station. *Passing* mimics the actions of transit users travelling through station space by the strategic choice of images and placement of photographic tiles. These images act as markers, subtly guiding the public through the space. By carefully inserting her photographs, the images connect characteristics of a subway station with its users. This relationship between the art and transit user can be established through a glance for example when a user looks up and notices that the photographic image of hands on a stairwell imitates his/her own actions. It can

[98] Alex Coles, "A Platform for Site-Specificity" in *Platform for Art: Art on the Underground*, ed. Tamsin Dillon (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2007), 21.

also occur in the moment when waiting for the doors of the train to open: standing in a group of forward-facing people and seeing the backs of all their heads, posted on the columns of the central platform level are images of the backs of people's heads. The art inserts itself into the transitory context by corresponding with the function of the space through its strategic placement, allowing the visual content of the work to be received even in a brief glance.

In addition to making connections with transit users through photographic correspondence, Bélanger also provides the opportunity to contemplate the beauty of engaging with art, people and space in a culturally diverse location. Her photographic compositions stress an important cultural characteristic about subway station space not necessarily readily recognized by transit users. Bélanger provides multiple methods of reception to engage transit users as viewers, whether they are in transition through the concourse and stairways, or standing still at the platform level.

Viewing Micah Lexier's *Ampersand* in Leslie Station: From a Distance and Up Close

Moriyama & Teshima Architects won the commission for developing Leslie Station, choosing artist Micah Lexier to create integrated public art. Throughout his career Lexier has held more than 90 solo exhibitions, participated in over 150 group exhibitions and produced many permanent and temporary public art commissions. Lexier's artwork is primarily conceptual, often involving series or repetition, and frequently addresses themes of time, mortality, and the individual.

At the Leslie Station, Micah Lexier created a work entitled *Ampersand* (Fig. 15). It consists of 17,000 ceramic tiles each featuring the phrase "Leslie & Sheppard.' There is no element of colour in this work as the text is black and the tile is white. Each tile has a uniform

structure, with the word 'Leslie' handwritten and underlined, appearing above the ampersand and underlined word 'Sheppard'. Connecting the two words in the centre of the tile is an ampersand (the logogram '&' representing the conjunction 'and'). The tiles cover the walls of the central platform from floor to ceiling, and continue up the stairwell walls to the entrance of the station.

Samples of 3400 different people's handwriting were collected to create *Ampersand.* Going to a number of different locations in North York, Lexier collected samples from community members as well as from TTC passengers and employees.[99] To expand the collection process Lexier placed ads in local newspapers calling for samples, and also hired summer students to collect ballots.[100] Samples with distinguishing features such as hearts as a diacritic on the lowercase 'i' in 'Leslie' were omitted. In the end, enough handwriting samples were collected to make each tile of the station unique. However, for various reasons, primarily the expense of silk-screening 17,000 tiles, it was decided by both the artist Lexier and architect Moriyama to reproduce 3,400 tiles in quantities of five. In order to avoid having two identical tiles in the same area, when they were being created, the tiles were packaged into separate boxes then distributed to different areas of the station for installation.

Artists were encouraged to create a "humane and inviting atmosphere" through public art for the Sheppard Line stations by addressing the theme of community.[101] Community public art projects are generally characterized as possessing interaction or dialogue with a specific or general community. While the artist remains at the centre of the creative process, the involvement of the broader community shares the creative role and adds another dimension to the work. A shared process engages individuals who may not usually be involved with the art projects, and connects individuals to the specific site associated with the work. Micah Lexier's

[99] Toronto Transit Commission. "Sheppard Subway Public Art Program 2002."
[100] Micah Lexier, interview with Chelsea Ruckle, *Leslie Station Public Art* (December 8, 2010).
[101] Toronto Transit Commission, "DM-0404-01 Artwork Program," Design Manual (1993).

project *Ampersand* responded to this aspect by involving different members of local residents of the Leslie station as well as member of the larger transit-user and GTA community in the creative process.

The nature of Leslie Station's public artwork infuses the space with the notion of 'orientation' for placemaking. Orientation emphasizes the significance of cultural and/or social contexts in an artwork to create meaning for a viewer, and is closely related to concepts of site-specificity.[102] In a variety of ways, elements of *Ampersand* reveal layers of meaning concerning the station space and its users. The overt repetition of the location naming the street intersection throughout the entirety of the station reinforces the connection to site through 'literal' site-specificity; it was created *for* Leslie Station. James Meyer posits a problematic feature of 'literal' site-specific public art, suggesting that often times these artworks are not necessarily integrated physically or conceptually with the site. This is not the case with *Ampersand.* Through the integrated commissioning process, the artwork has been physically worked into the fabric of the station creating almost a wallpaper-like effect. Conceptually, Lexier advances the notion of 'literal' site-specificity by involving the community and personalizing the site. Notions of identity, the individual, and the collective community are illuminated by the inimitability of the handwritten words 'Leslie' and 'Sheppard'. Posted in the center of the platform level, Lexier's statement "acknowledges the duality of being both an individual and a part of a larger community."[103] It gives the sense that the people who wrote the words 'Leslie' and 'Sheppard' wrote them specifically for this site and no other.

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[102] Ronald Lee Fleming, *The Art of Placemaking: Interpreting Community through Public Art and Urban Design* (London: Merrell, 2007), 13.
[103] Toronto Transit Commission, "Sheppard Subway Public Art Program 2002."

In an interview conducted by the writer with Micah Lexier, he suggests three distinct methods of reception for *Ampersand.*[104] The first is from a distance. When the work is observed as a whole, individual tiles take on a uniform pattern with little or no differentiation between. The overall design of 17,000 tiles creates an almost graphic design from the repetition of the same words and symbols in the same colours and design. Minimal aesthetic and material elements draw out a conceptual element of the artwork. Rather than focusing on a particular image like at Bayview Station, repetition of text in a massive scale potentially creates a conceptual dynamic to the work. A second method of reception for *Ampersand* by a transit user in Leslie station is a closer view, when the viewer realizes the minor differences between each of the tiles. Although uniform in overall design, differences in the handwritten words may not be realized initially when a transit user traverses the station. Related to this realization is the third method of reception, closer still, which arises when the viewer starts to acknowledge and question aspects of the individual behind the handwriting. For example the viewer may start to interpret the personality of the individual based on the nature of the handwriting, speculating on aspects such as age or gender. Micah Lexier acknowledges that "for some people it is very conceptual, cold and understated, but under some scrutiny it becomes quite rich and involving, opening up to a world of individuals."[105] The viewer could alternatively have an individuated encounter that develops over time, an immediate response to a particular style of writing that triggers a recollection, or be affronted by a conceptual sensation generated by the design element of many tiles coming together as one. All these responses and more are possible through different methods of reception created by *Ampersand*'s locale in Leslie Station.

[104] Lexier, interview.
[105] Ibid.

Lexier was conscious that many of the same people would be going back into the station every day as part of their commute to work or school, so he created a work that had multiple layers. In order to engage this audience, Lexier did not want to develop a work that would grab the viewer's attention only the first time, and then be forgotten or dismissed. Rather, he sought to produce a work which would continuously reveal itself over time.[106] His inclusion of a variety of handwriting styles was the catalyst for this element in *Ampersand.* Ideally, as regular commuters encounter the work, they begin to question who the individual behind the handwriting is.

Not only did Lexier take the audience within the transit systems into consideration, he also acknowledged the particular space of the subway station. By creating a work consisting of many small elements representing a larger whole, it is not wholly necessary to have 17 000 tiles to make it work. As in a synecdoche, parts have the ability to stand for the whole. Due to this element of *Ampersand,* if things change within the station, such as the addition of advertisements, the work itself still remains the same. Lexier also acknowledges that through a team process of development compromises were made, such as having to produce editions of five rather than each tile being unique, but he feels that these compromises often had a flipside. For example, the replicated tiles allowed the work to cover a wider space than originally planned. Also, the fact that the medium of the piece was restricted to easily maintainable ceramic tiles proved to aid the installation process and was a uniting medium for the individual tiles. For Lexier, despite the increased number of meetings, developing *Ampersand* through the integrated design process developed by the TTC for the Sheppard Line public art projects was an ideal way to create art for the Leslie Station.

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[106] Ibid.

Before the Sheppard Line was even opened, the TTC organized an open house at the Leslie Station to showcase *Ampersand.* On June 29, 2000 the media and public were invited for a complimentary BBQ lunch, and to listen to speeches about the Sheppard Subway from the TTC.[107] Leslie Station was viewed as an ideal place for such an event because of the community involvement in creating *Ampersand.* One of the main objectives set forth by the TTC for the project was to produce a work that responded to local residents of the Leslie Station community in North York. In creating *Ampersand* at the Leslie Station, Micah Lexier, in effect, collected the personalities of individuals and the community through their handwriting. On the day of the Leslie Station open house, many people came to the site looking for "their" tile, the one created with their handwriting.[108]

Stephen Cruise's Site-Related *before/after* at Don Mills Station

In the art brochure created to accompany the opening of the Sheppard Line Stations, the introduction outlines the decision-making process for choosing artists: "Artists were selected for their experience with *site-specific projects* and public commissions, their understanding of the materials and processes required for a project of this scale, and their ability to work with architects and engineers as part of a design team."[109] The TTC's call for artists specified that work selected for the five stations should contain an element of site-specificity. Although aspects of site-specificity are present in stations such as the Leslie Station with Micah Lexier's *Ampersand* and in Sylvie Bélanger's photographic friezes at Bessarion Station which directly connect to the democratic nature of transit station space, the artwork produced for the Don Mills

[107] Bow, "The Leslie Station Open House (June 29, 2000)."
[108] Lexier, interview.
[109] Toronto Transit Commission, "Sheppard Subway Public Art Program 2002." (Emphasis added)

Station by artist Stephen Cruise is more concretely rooted in the notion of site-specificity, or, as Cruise refers to it, site-relation.[110]

Prior to his commission at the Don Mills Station, Cruise created several public art installations in the city of Toronto, as well as the TTC. In 1997 Cruise was co-commissioned by the Toronto Fashion Industry Liaison Committee and the TTC to create a bronze sculpture of a giant thimble titled *Uniform Measure/Stack* located outdoors on Spadina Ave and Richmond Street as part of the Spadina LRT project. Also in conjunction with the Spadina LRT project, Cruise was commissioned by the TTC to create sculpture for other locations along Spadina Avenue.[111] For this commission Cruise created a sculptural series called *Pole Colonnade* along Spadina Ave at Sussex Street, Harbord Street, and Willcocks Street. Fabricated in bronze, Cruise erected poles crowned with specific sculptural references to their locale.

As discussed in Chapter One, Ronald Lee Fleming considers the notion of site-specificity an integral component of 'placemaking'. Fleming states that "even brand new developments on bare ground have their stories, which may be rooted in the ground, in the archaeology or the geology of the site, or in the flora and fauna that characterize it."[112] Stephen Cruise began addressing issues of site-specificity in 1973 as a founding member of Toronto's "A Gallery Space." Describing his relationship to space, Cruise states that, "If I am true to the specificity of space, then I am not going to end up with these signatures of my work. The space itself is going to speak and you are going to generate something that you would have not ever come up with.

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[110] Cruise, interview.
[111] The Spadina LRT Public Art Program was sponsored by the TTC with funding from the City of Toronto and the Province of Ontario. Eight public art commissions were awarded to complement the Spandina LRT on street level. While the Spadina LRT project is an example of a public art project supported by the TTC, the artworks were placed outside of transit stations therefore possessing a different dynamic concerning reception.
[112] Fleming, *The Art of Placemaking*, 16.

That is what intrigues me."[113] For his work *before/after* at the Don Mills Station, Stephen Cruise called on his dedication to space in order to create place (Fig. 16).

Stephen Cruise was chosen to create an art work for the Don Mills Station by Stevens Group Architects, who also designed and built Bayview Station on the Sheppard Line. Part of the appeal for Cruise in gaining a public art commission for a station on the Sheppard Line extension was the opportunity to work collaboratively with the architect during the development of the station.[114] His previous commission for the Spadina LRT followed traditional processes involving a jury and installation of artwork after the site was built. In the Spadina LRT project, Cruise's work was compromised due to the external safety requirements of the site. The poles he had designed had to be elongated and raised above the electrical lines of the area. As a result, the objects on the top of the poles (which were pertinent to the concept of the artwork) were raised above the sightlines of passers-by. Based on his previous experience with creating public art, Cruise thought it logical to create an artwork for the station space from an early stage rather than it appearing as an afterthought. Winning the commission of the Don Mills Station provided "the opportunity to create something in advance, rather than after."[115]

Cruise's initial conception of the Don Mills Station was basically that it was an enclosed, generic underground box that was to be made distinct through his work. With this understanding of the project Cruise was intrigued by the question "what is on the other side of the box?"[116] Cruise's concept for Don Mills Station was born out of the artist's involvement with the project during the early stage of construction. The first idea he had for the work was influenced by core

[113] Cruise, interview.
[114] Ibid.
[115] Ibid.
[116] Ibid.

sampling and drilling, his first exposures to the specific nature of site.[117] Cruise first proposed two pillars alongside the openings for the escalators rising through the station from the concourse level up to the ground level bus station. The pillars would represent striations of the site's soil as discovered from initial core sampling. At that point in time, the architectural station design was to include a straight cement beam that would support the entire structure: Cruise envisioned this beam as an excellent architectural feature that, once decorated, would represent a stratigraphic measure. Due to structural issues it was not possible for the beam to be straight; therefore Cruise's idea had to be amended. Stephen Cruise's experience of frustration stemming from attempting to design an artwork for a space not yet solidified highlights a potential problem in the integrated design team approach to public art.

Building upon his initial idea, Cruise sought to bring in elements of site from 'outside the box' into the station interior. Located just east of the Don River near the Don Valley, the surrounding space of the station is replete with various flora and fauna. During the excavation process for the station and in the Don Valley, Cruise was exposed to a wealth of fossils and natural diversity. Cruise wanted to make transit users aware that these items were underneath surface level in the ground. To accomplish this, he stratigraphically represented the location of the waterline and layers of sediment through which the subway line travels with tile patterns on the concourse level, and integrates a selection of fossil, shell, turtle, maple leaf, and willow leaf bronze inlays reflecting local flora and fauna predating the station. [118] On the concourse level the bronze tile inlays are arranged to create enlarged, pixilated outlines of fish, shells, leaves and turtles. In the terrazzo tile inlaid in the floor around the opening of the escalator, Cruise created the pattern of a turtle shell The TTC's brochure for the artwork states that "It is like an

[117] Ibid.
[118] Hume, "Art the Ticket on the Train to Nowhere."

archaeological dig, where one carefully brushes away the top level to uncover what is/was there all the time" what was "before/after" the construction of the station. [119]

When producing public art, Cruise tries to create a work that engages the viewer on first impression. Whether negative or positive, if an individual can gain any kind of impression from Cruise's artwork, he considers the work an achievement, because at least viewers are thinking about it.[120] Distinctive to subway stations is the fact that a lot of the viewers will be commuters, and therefore repeat viewers. Like Micah Lexier at the Leslie Station, Cruise wanted to incorporate elements that would continuously reveal meaning for individuals in relation to the station site.

As with the majority of the Sheppard Line Station's artworks, there are multiple methods of reception for *before/after* at Don Mills Station. Cruise has identified two methods of reception for his art in Don Mills Station: the 'macro' from a distance, and the 'micro' close up.[121] From a distance, viewers are able to visually take in the larger concept of the artwork. Reception of the work and its link to notions of site-specificity can best be understood when viewed from a distance: the tile representation of the earth layers directly correspond to the exterior earth of the station. These earth lines cover the entire concourse level, providing ample opportunity for a viewer to register the interior tile artwork in relation to exterior characteristics of the station while moving through the station. A closer look is more directly related to an intended examination of the art. This type of viewing may occur when a transit user is intrigued and engages in a closer inspection of the bronze inlays that represent local flora and fauna. Both methods of reception for *before/after* are purposely created by Cruise for a transit user audience, and are grounded in notions of site-specificity.

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[119] Toronto Transit Commission. "Sheppard Subway Public Art Program 2002."
[120] Cruise, interview.
[121] Ibid.

Impact of the Commissioning Process

Public art projects are generally commissioned with specific intentions or media limitations which impact the design of a work. As part of the design policy for public art of the Sheppard Line, there was a need for artists to work with associates of the development project such as architects, planners, and engineers from the initial stages of project. As we have seen, the TTC's integrated public art process for the art commissions of the Sheppard Line was both an advantage and a drawback. As part of the integrated process, the space in which the artwork was to be installed was not yet constructed, so there were changing circumstances such as architectural features and budgets. However, the Sheppard Line case studies also highlight ways in which artists overcome limitations of the commission process. For example, Panya Clark Espinal used anamorphosis to give a three-dimensional quality to her two-dimensional artwork.

In "What Happens When American Art Goes Public," Peter Plagen argues that the democratic nature under which public art is produced compromises the integrity of the work. [122] In his opinion, recent public art installations in transit stations were "arty, but not too arty, playful but not too playful, colourful but not too colourful, and avant-garde but not too avant-garde."[123] For Plagen, these mediocre public art characteristics are due to subtle burdens placed on public art by society. It is asked to be "...popular with the general public, inoffensive to minorities and alternative views, profit-inducing (if connected to a private company), administration-enhancing (if connected to a civic one), and, somehow aesthetically meritorious."[124] The potential pitfalls of the commissioning process are important to consider when discussing public art. However, for the purposes of this thesis, the previous case studies

[122] Peter Plagen, "What Happens When American Art Goes Public," *New England Review* 17, no. 3(1995): 58-65.
[123] Plagen, "What Happens When American Art Goes Public," 62.
[124] Ibid, 65.

have not been examined to measure the work's integrity. Rather, these case studies serve to suggest the variety of methods of reception for public art in transitional spaces. I have conducted this examination of content, process, and the end result of each Sheppard Line public artwork to explore how an integrated public art program affects the final form of an artwork as a way of explicating how the artwork interacts with specific station sites.

Conclusion

This chapter has utilized case study examinations of five public artworks integrated into the Sheppard Line stations to explore various methods for reception. Owing to durability, tiles have been used by artists throughout the Sheppard Line Stations to create artworks. Yet, due to the nature of the artworks themselves, fundamental differences exist between each artwork and the way that tiles have been utilized.

At the Sheppard-Yonge Station, Stacy Spiegel transformed space through his panoramic landscape *Immersion Land.* Three methods of reception are invoked in this work: a pixilated landscape viewed from a distance; abstract blocks of colour observed up close; and a moving landscape reminiscent of a Southern Ontario country-side drive visible from the train. Panya Clark Espinal animated the Bayview Station through visual disorientation with *From Here Right Now* with ordinary objects projected at unusual angles onto various surfaces of the station interior, thus playing with notions of perception to encourage interaction as well as engagement while in motion. Bessarion Station is infused as a site of social and cultural interaction through Sylvie Bélanger's strategic placement of photographic tiles representing parts of bodies. Relationships are quickly and clearly made between photographic subjects and individuals in transit by identifying with the actions and characteristics inherent in station space. At the Leslie

Station Micah Lexier identifies three methods of reception in relation to *Ampersand*: the conceptual pattern of 17 000 tiles seen from a distance, the awareness of personalization through handwriting, and the contemplation of the individual behind the writing. Stephen Cruise makes a direct relation to site at the Don Mills Station. The application of detailed inlays featuring local fossils, flora and fauna encourage a close, contemplative look at the artwork, whereas large tile design representations of the striations of the earth provide a quickly comprehendible version of his artistic vision.

CHAPTER THREE:

The Gaze, the Glance and Art in Transitional Spaces

In a space that is constructed to facilitate people in motion, how can art be meaningfully received? How can a work engage a viewer who has neither the time nor the inclination to ponder an artwork? Public art installations in transit systems have a tricky task: they exist in a realm where the message must be conveyed almost instantaneously to the viewer, who may only take a glance or see a glimpse of it. The transit user's visual attention is divided between the immediate surroundings (which includes the art installation), and the task at hand (such as catching the next train on the correct platform). What happens when there is more going on in a space than just the viewer contemplating an art object? How does viewing in these spaces differ from viewing in an art museum setting? How important is the opportunity for contemplation in deeming artworks meaningful?

The preceding chapter's analyses of public artworks in stations of the TTC's Sheppard Line serve as models for the following theoretical exploration of modern reception. While the specifics of individual artworks influence methods of reception, there is a broader theoretical framework that can be applied to viewing art in transitional spaces such as subway stations. For the purposes of this examination of subway station public art and reception, I will examine modern conditions and circumstances of viewing art in transit systems, challenging conventional notions of the importance of the gaze for engaging with art. In order to address these concerns, I will turn to an interdisciplinary approach, drawing on theoretical models from Art History, New Museology, and Urban Studies, each of which contributes to an understanding of how art in a subway station is received.

The foundations of viewing begin with perception. Robert Solso informs this discussion; specifically, his concepts of perceptual psychology relating to cognition and the visual arts in *The Psychology of Art and the Evolution of the Conscious Brain* help to clarify the viewing process in subway stations. I then explore notions of reception in terms of the gaze and glance as discussed by Norman Bryson in his book *Vision and Painting: The Logic of the Gaze.*[125] Although Bryson bases his theory in artworks from antiquity to the eighteenth century, his understanding of the value of the gaze will begin my theoretical exploration of modern reception. By suggesting that the glance is substandard to the gaze based on a hierarchy in modes of looking (i.e. informed versus uninformed, devoted time versus fleeting pause), Bryson raises concerns directly applicable to the function and employment of public art. In spaces where the viewer does not possess the necessary conditions and circumstances to "gaze" at art, will a mere "glance" do?

Jonathan Crary's study of the nature of perception in modernity advances Bryson's argument concerning dissonance between the gaze and the glance when looking at art. In his book *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture*, Crary questions the relevance of "gazing," suggesting that attentiveness and distraction are actually related. This begs the question: are the gaze and glance two separate modes of looking or are they actually more closely related? Can reception shift between the gaze and glance, and still be meaningful?

Theories of the gaze examine not only the artwork, but also the setting in which it is presented. The subway station is a modern 'transitional space' that only came into existence at the turn of the twentieth century with the creation of rapid transit systems. Marc Augé's study *Non-Places* provides a theoretical context for the discussion of the subway station as 'transitional space.' I will also refer to aspects of Georg Simmel's seminal essay of 1903 "The Metropolis

[125] Norman Bryson, *Vision and Painting: The Logic of the Gaze* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983).

and Mental life" which address the circular effects of desensitization attributed to modern viewing. Through this theoretical discussion of reception and space, I will discuss how the viewing attention of modern individuals encourages various methods of meaningful reception of art in transitional spaces.

Perception and Viewing Art

Viewing art whether in a subway station or museum is not a straightforward action, and the physiological and psychological processes of how an eye "sees" an object are still not wholly understood. In his book *The Psychology of Art and the Evolution of the Conscious Brain*, cognitive psychologist Robert Solso argues that there are two aspects of perception utilized when viewing art. First, 'nativistic perception' occurs and then a more personalized 'directed perception' transpires. 'Nativistic perception' is the "hard-wiring" of a visual stimulus in the sensory-cognitive system, which involves the synchronicity of the eye and brain when triggered by a physical stimulus.[126] This process of perception is quite straightforward; it assumes that every viewer is essentially "seeing" the same thing. Contrary to nativistic perception's more objective definition, 'directed perception' is individuated and involves the processing of a physical stimulus in the brain. After the initial stimulus has been acknowledged, it sets off a series of individual neurological and psychological actions. While the physical stimulus stays the same, it is the processing of the stimulus in the brain that differs between subjects. Directed perception refers to the individual's personal history, knowledge, and associations with the visual stimulus, and is distinctive to the viewer. Applying one's own context, whether art historical,

[126] Robert Solso, *The Psychology of Art and the Evolution of the Conscious Brain* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003), 2.

social, cultural, or religious, is what creates directed perception and connects the individual with the art as visual stimulus.

A conscious, cognitive brain is necessary for both nativistic perception, in which art is to be "seen", and also directed perception, in which art is to be processed and "understood". Solso attributes the development of modern man and art objects to the rise of consciousness.[127] Although Solso describes nativistic and directed perception as two aspects of perception as a whole, their characteristics overlap to some degree. Both forms of perception create an appreciation of art, which Solso argues is a product of the evolution of the conscious brain. Solso's sense of perception differs from traditional approaches which place the art object in the "real" world, and the experience of art in the mind of the observer by suggesting that the process for seeing an art object is a unitary task of the visual stimulus and the conscious mind.[128]

Solso does not suggest that there is a universal concept of art, but rather explains that the visual processing of art is shaped by specific historical and cultural contexts. For example, there are formal elements in an artwork such as colour and line that attract the viewer's attention. From this single visual stimulus the process and components of consciousness are similar for all observers. It is the individual's consciousness that is subjective, in the sense that it has its own personal and cultural context. Stephen Davies' review of *The Psychology of Art and the Evolution of the Conscious Brain* breaks down Solso's description of art perception, stating, "We share the same basic perceptual systems and processes, and we have enough background in common to agree in the broadest terms about what is pictured, but what we make of this is necessarily filtered through individually distinctive schemata shaped by our individual histories,

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[127] Solso, *The Psychology of Art and the Evolution of the Conscious Brain,* 39. Consciousness is brought forth from not only art, but also imagery, language, technology, and religion, each of which are interconnected and evolutionary.
[128] Solso, 19.

proclivities, and genetic dispositions."[129] Vision and the ocular experience are, therefore, mediated through natural, cultural, and individual variables.

The Contemplative Gaze

The term 'gaze', when employed in the discourse of art history, generally draws on psychoanalytical models, founded on the thinking of French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan in his concept of the 'mirror-stage' in the 1950s. In Lacanian theory, an individual begins to develop a sense of subjectivity through specific language, cultural, and social influences that are being reflected back onto the individual through various media. The idea that one is socially accustomed through looking is the foundation of Lacan's concept of 'the gaze.' Lacan's theory of the gaze brought the term into popular use in the discourse of art history by arguing that there is a psychoanalytical implication to viewing art.

Since Lacan, there have been multiple applications and interpretations of the theory of the gaze. In her well-known 1973 essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," Laura Mulvey coined the term 'the male gaze' to characterize the ways that female characters in Hollywood films of the 1950s and 60s were viewed.[130] Mulvey's concept of the male gaze is an example of a feminist application of the theory: through subtle conventions, such as Hollywood cinema, the patriarchal order of society was being reinforced. Michel Foucault equates the gaze with authority. According to Foucault, the gaze is never static, but is always shifting and morphing preventing one single outcome.[131] Here, Foucault raises an important and relevant point: who

[129] Stephen Davies, "Review: The Psychology of Art and the Evolution of the Conscious Brain," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 47, no.1 (2007): 99.
[130] Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Visual and Other Pleasures* (New York: Macmillan, 2009), 14-30.
[131] Michel Foucault, "Discipline and Punishment: The Birth of the Prison," translated by Alan Sheridan (New York: Pantheon, 1977).

has ownership of the gaze? The more we learn about the gaze and its implications, the harder it is to locate, define, and explain. These transient and subjective aspects of the gaze are exactly why it is so interesting, complex, and important to consider when studying art.

Psychoanalytic concepts of the gaze, such as the versions of the gaze presented thus far, are examples of the broader foundation on which the contemplative gaze is built as they each denote a characteristic of cognitive processing. For the purposes of this thesis, the 'gaze' is a contemplative mode of vision produced by the interaction of artistic content, the viewing time of the individual, and characteristics of the surrounding space. This type of gaze is comparable to Solso's description of 'directed perception', in which the individual viewer associates personal contexts with the artwork. One instance where the contemplative gaze may occur in the public art installed on the Sheppard Line is in the personalized handwriting of Micah Lexier's *Ampersand.* In Lexier's description of the three methods of reception possible for *Ampersand*, the contemplative mode occurs when the viewer takes a close look at the handwriting and starts to question who the individual behind it could be. The viewer's reflective response can be described as eliciting the contemplative gaze. While this type of gaze does assume the subjective psychological process of directed perception, there are further contextual elements that encourage this kind of thought process, analysis and overall reception of the work to occur. For example in an art museum setting, an artwork such as *Ampersand* that requires a process of critical thinking is often isolated on display, and the viewer is expected to have ample contemplation time for gazing. The traditional art museum context supports the contemplative gaze, but when an individual encounters art while travelling through a subway station the mode of viewing is more complicated. Occupants of transit system space may have a mode of viewing

that necessitates a contemplative glance, rather than gaze. However, is a "contemplative glance" possible?

In *Vision and Painting: The Logic of the Gaze*, art historian Norman Bryson illustrates the polarities of the 'gaze' and the 'glance' in relation to art and the viewer. Although Bryson examines the opposition of these two modes of looking at art in a context other than within transit stations, the conclusions that he draws about these modes of looking from his case studies are also applicable to the Sheppard Line public art. Bryson uses a selection of European case studies from the Byzantine era to the eighteenth century to explore how artworks possess signifiers often unaccounted for in theories that are purely 'perceptualist' or 'structuralist.'[132] Bryson suggests that simply "seeing" an artwork through a perceptual lens does not create a relation between viewers and paintings; rather, an artwork possesses elements and contexts which create a connection for the viewer.

Through his analysis of specific works, Bryson essentially claims that the artist's "Founding Perception" is the basis for an integral connection with the viewer's gaze. For Bryson:

> In the Founding Perception, the gaze of the painter arrests the flux of phenomena, contemplates the visual field from a vantage-point outside the mobility of duration, in an eternal moment of disclosed presence; while in the moment of viewing, the viewing subject united his gaze with the Founding Perception, in a perfect recreation of that first epiphany.[133]

[132] Bryson fundamentally disagrees with the concept of Ernst Gombrich's notion of "perceptualism" which suggests universal perceptual and psychological responses govern the reception of images regardless of time or culture. Bryson believes that art is full of cultural signs that reveal truths about a society, but he takes issue in strictly "structuralist" readings of art. He argues that analyzing human culture semiotically (through signs and symbols) is too narrow, and should instead be combined with other analysis, such as "formalism."

[133] Bryson, 94.

Here, Bryson is actually revealing two characteristics of the gaze: first, an artistic intent brings a picture into being; second, the meeting point of the artwork and the viewing individual is revealed through the process of the gaze.

Norman Bryson's description of meaningful reception through the gaze is directly akin to my understanding and use of the term "contemplative gaze". For Bryson there is a spectrum of reception for seeing art, which starts at the moment of perceiving a work, acknowledging it as visual stimuli, to the more important "moment of closure, of receptive passivity: to a transcendent temporality of the Gaze."[134] According to Bryson, the meaningful reception of an artwork for the viewer is constructed through the gaze: a deliberate look, focused, chosen, purposeful, and supported by previous knowledge.[135] Although he develops his argument in relation to these varied case studies, Bryson examines the process of reception through perception, signs and symbols, time of viewing practice, moment of contemplation as well as spatial context.

For Bryson, churches and art museums are conducive sites for producing the gaze. New Museology scholar Carol Duncan in her chapter "The Art Museum as Ritual" in *Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums*, analyzes how the ritual character of the art museum experience produces particular responses in viewers.[136] "Like most ritual space, museum space is carefully marked off and culturally designated as reserved for a special quality of attention – in this case, for contemplation and learning."[137] In art museums, architectural features such as monumental size, defined grounds, and sculptures marking entry into the institution set them apart from other sites and denote importance. The specific arrangements of objects within

[134] Bryson, 93.
[135] Ibid, 94.
[136] Carol Duncan, "The Art Museum as Ritual," *Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums* (London: Routledge, 1995).
[137] Ibid, 10.

museum space, such as the way they are lit, sequential placement or isolation, have an impact on the way they are perceived. Duncan suggests that spatial features of the art museum and objects inside not only reference older ritual sites, such as temples or churches, but are actually settings for the performance of secular rituals.[138] She argues that the museum experience possesses ritual characteristics "in terms of the kind of attention one brings to it and the special quality of its time and space."[139] Distinct from day-to-day time and outside space, the kind of attention paid to these objects in a museum is "intense, undistracted visual contemplation."[140] The spatial features of the art museum and objects located within reinforce the contemplative gaze valued by Bryson.

Bryson's theory of the gaze is closely related to common elements of reception, in which visual comprehension involves three main components: the individual who is seeing, the image which is being looked at, and the social context in which the viewer is seeing the image. Based on the premise that prolonged gazing at an artwork creates meaning for an individual, how then are transit users expected to gain meaning from art situated in subway stations?

The Glance

The conditions for gazing as laid out by Bryson suggest that in order to create a connection, an individual must have a purposeful intent to focus on a work. Yet there is a duality that occurs in the way that we view art. Bryson outlines this by clearly stating that there is a separation between the specific activity of the focused gaze and that of the disengaged glance. His description of the gaze as a "prolonged, contemplative" act utterly distinct from the "furtive or

[138] Ibid, 8. Duncan defines "secular rituals" as emerging from the shift of power from the church to secular knowledge institutions (scientific or humanistic) that arose in the Enlightenment.

[139] Ibid, 12.
[140] Ibid, 19.

sideways look" of the glance emphasizes the difference between these two modes of viewing.[141] According to Bryson, the glance, a fleeting look, is uninformed and therefore a disengaged encounter with art for the viewer.[142] Most art historians and theoretical discussions do not directly address this duality of looking, and disregard the glance, or glimpse, in favour of actions related to gazing such as closely scrutinizing, or beholding a piece of art.[143] This hierarchy established between different modes of looking at art potentially relegates public art works to the realm of mere decoration.

Jonathan Crary's arguments in *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture* synthesize and then complicate aspects of both perception and the gaze in comparison to the glance. Crary explores how modes of looking have been attributed with a hierarchal status:

> Western modernity since the nineteenth century has demanded that individuals define and shape themselves in terms of a capacity for "paying attention," that is, for a disengagement from a broader field of attraction, whether visual or auditory, for the sake of isolating or focusing on a reduced number of stimuli.[144]

Crary suggests that modern modes of viewing can best be understood through the conditioned relations of attentive norms and practices. He connects influences of modernization (industrialization and urbanization) with shifting assumptions about the notion of attention, "that, for example, a cultivated individual gazing on a great work of art could have little or nothing in common with a factory worker concentrating on the performance of some repetitive task."[145]

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[141] Bryson, 94.
[142] Ibid.
[143] Wolfgang Kemp, "The Work of Art and Its Beholder: Methodology of the Aesthetic of Reception," in *The Subjects of Art History: Historical Objects in Contemporary Perspective*, ed. Mark A. Cheetham et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
[144] Jonathan Crary, *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture* (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1999), 1.
[145] Ibid, 2.

Crary narrows his breadth of scope, tracing a genealogy of attention. Starting in the late nineteenth century, the emergence of new, technological forms of perception such as spectacles like world expos, commercial enticement and different modes of artistic representations such as Impressionism, coincided with the social and economic shifts of modernity. Crary argues that modernity and its theorization of subjective and physiological aspects of perception (characteristics of the gaze) have brought about an unstable state of both perception and attention.

In his exploration of hieratical viewing values in modernity, Crary conducts a comprehensive analysis of Édouard Manet's 1879 painting *In the Conservatory* (Fig. 17). Crary sees in the painting a reflection on modern life, as it depicts a split in supposed perceptual norms in modern societal viewing practices; his case study interprets the artwork as an example depicting the duality in attention and distraction in viewing practices. The painting positions a woman on a bench, looking off in the distance while a man leans over the back of the bench. Crary examines details of location and expression in Manet's painting "in relation to social/institutional spaces in which attention would increasingly be claimed as the guarantee of certain perceptual norms."[146] For example, the composed nature of the woman in a civilized conservatory setting, painted with detailed artistic integrity of the face and eyes seems to "maintain the articulated hierarchy of a socialized body."[147] However, contrasting that hierarchy is the vacant expression on her face, a feature of Manet's painted figures—particularly women—

[146] Ibid, 91.
[147] Ibid.

that appear in other paintings of his such as *A Bar at the Folies-Bergère.*[148] Its existence in *In the Conservatory* reveals clues to modern modes of looking.

According to Crary, Manet's portrayal of the woman's gaze suggests that the attentive gaze contains a paradox: "attention and distraction cannot be thought outside of a continuum in which the two ceaselessly flow into one another."[149] He recognizes that there *is* a duality of looking, yet the elements in this duality can be closely related and sometimes interchangeable, especially in modern societies. Crary states that, with the emergence in modernity of new technologies of perception, distraction was actually "an *effect,* and in many cases a constituent element, of the many attempts to produce attentiveness in human subjects."[150]

Crary's discussion of dualities between modes of looking through attention and distraction have a direct co-relation to my discussion of the contemplative gaze as informed by Bryson, and its opposite, the glance. Despite the desire of Western societies to create, develop, and elevate the attentive gaze of humans, the distracted glance has come into existence because of changes in social settings, particularly urbanization. Even though Crary does not fully explore the constituents of the glance and how it functions for individuals, he does acknowledge its presence in the perceptions of modern individuals. Through his theories and case studies, Crary addresses the issue of attention "in order to question the relevance of isolating an aesthetically determined contemplation or absorption."[151] Based on the notion that perception and reception are rooted in both attentiveness and distraction is there really a hard and fast line between specific temporal and spatial components of the gaze and the glance? Or can they actually meet

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[148] T.J. Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and his Followers* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984). This text demonstrates the relationship between art and society in relation to habits of modern life such as leisure using case studies such as Manet's *A Bar at the Folis-Bergère.*
[149] Crary, 51.
[150] Ibid, 49.
[151] Ibid, 7.

somewhere in the middle or flux in and out, cultivating meaningful reception of art by the viewer?

An examination of modern contextual spaces for viewing art, specifically the subway station, reveals how both the contemplative gaze and glance can co-exist. This concept of viewing is supported by Georg Simmel's account of the individual viewing process in his essay "The Metropolis and Mental Life."

The Gaze and the Glance in Stations of the Sheppard Line

Based on the transitional nature of the subway station, it would seem as though this kind of space would not be conducive to artwork that demands the full attention of the contemplative gaze. However, artworks that draw on this method of reception do exist in such spaces. Stacy Spiegel explores urban and modern characteristics of the underground subway through his panoramic landscape reminiscent of rural southern Ontario. Its representation in pixilated form can be interpreted as a commentary about the effect of urban development and the characteristics of modernity and placelessness often associated with subway stations. *Immersion Land*'s dynamic relation to both the ambiguities and specificities of the Sheppard-Yonge Station can evoke contemplative responses from the viewer. Panya Clark Espinal's *From Here Right Now* may results in a playful interaction between art, space and transit users, however, it also seeks to highlight how powerful perception is in altering the construction of these spatial relationships. The interactive nature of *From Here Right Now* engages transit users in a form of the contemplative gaze, as it invites the viewer to stop and contemplate images of morphing objects. At Bessarion Station, Sylvie Bélanger's photographs comment on the democratic and multicultural nature of public transit and its users. According to Bryson's understanding of the

gaze, an artwork that possesses contexts such as social or cultural commentary creates a connection for the viewer through focused, deliberate concentration. *Passing* possesses such contexts related to the gaze. At the Leslie Station, a closer look at *Ampersand* encourages a contemplative reflection: "who is the individual behind the handwriting?" Stephen Cruise urges the gaze in transit users with detailed bronze inlays of flora, fauna, and fossils found in and around the area of Don Mills Station itself.

What is distinctive about the public art installed on the Sheppard Line is that it also caters to the glance. Artists consciously worked to create art in the subway with immediate accessibility that could be meaningfully grasped even with a glancing look, blurring the boundary between contemplative gaze and fleeting glance. While Spiegel's *Immersion Land* elicits the gaze for communicating notions of modern spatial characteristics of the subway station, his landscape can also be received in the most transitory glance possible, in motion. Panya Clark Espinal's ever-changing images at Bayview Station are best viewed while in transition, easily conveying notions of perception. At Bessarion Station, the strategic placement of Sylvie Bélanger's photographic friezes instantaneously creates a sense of dialogue between the transit user and the artwork. Micah Lexier's *Ampersand* portrays a conceptual artwork that covers the platform and concourse level walls of Leslie Station. Its repetitious format and total integration into all areas of the station allow an individual's collection of glances, or even a single glancing look, to take in the work as a graphic design as well as more complex conceptual concepts of dualities between the individual and community. Stephen Cruise's life-size striations of land outside the Don Mills underground box station convey notions of site-specificity in a glance. Bryson's description of the glance as a fleeting, disengaged encounter with art is challenged by the Sheppard Line art program and artists. Rather, I argue that there is

a possible middle ground, as well as a moving back and forth between the two. As Crary suggests, the attentive gaze and the disengaged glance are not two separate forms of reception, but are perhaps more closely related than generally thought.

There is more to the meeting of the contemplative gaze and the glance than just how the artists have created meaning in their work or how it is installed. Art's reception has to do with the space occupied by artworks as well as audience. The following sections explore the specificities of viewing art in modern spaces such as the subway station. Underground subway stations are modern sites in the sense that they are the result of modern rapid transit systems. These systems only came into physical existence near the end of the nineteenth century in industrialized and urbanized cities. Below, I explore the role that modernity plays in viewing art, as well as the specific characteristics of station space.

Modern Viewing in Transitional Spaces

As exemplified by Carol Duncan's discussion of viewing art in the museum, an individual's reception of art is influenced by surrounding space. This realization complicates the ritual of looking at art installed in subway stations. Art installed in transit systems occupies a markedly different space than art that is traditionally exhibited in galleries or other institutions.

In his essay "Of Other Spaces," Michel Foucault discusses the concept of the "heterotopia": a real place or space that seems to be simultaneously outside of conventional places and time.[152] Foucault lists graveyards and hotel rooms as among these "other spaces." The reason why heterotopias can possess dual meanings is because of the characteristics they embody. Foucault describes the museum institution as a heterotopia of time, because even though it is a real place, the spatial characteristics and objects within uphold "the idea of

[152] Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," 239.

constituting a place of all times that is itself outside of time and inaccessible to its ravages" and "in this way [is] a sort of perpetual and indefinite accumulation of time in an immobile place."[153] When individuals enter heterotopias of time, they break with traditional time (or real time) and engage their reception in specific, slices of time. Foucault's concept of the museum institution as a place built to be insusceptible to time influences how an individual engages with the artworks enclosed within.

Within Foucault's discussion of heterotopias of time, he describes the museum as a heterotopia that is linked "to time in its most fleeting, transitory, precarious aspect."[154] Other heterotopias recognized by Foucault that are transitory are festivals, or fairgrounds, sites that are absolutely temporal. While Foucault explores the polarities for heterotopias of time in museums and festivals, where do transitional spaces such as subway stations that exhibit art fit in? A subway station is a site for transit with people in transit. Unlike fairgrounds or festivals which are sites themselves that actually exist only for a moment in time, the people that enter the subway station are the transient ones. However, by Foucault's definition, a transportation station that exhibits art would be an example of a heterotopia because it is "between cultural space and useful space."[155] Public art in transit system stations has its own specific conditions of reception. Notably, it is both the viewer and the artwork that has changed, as both are in 'transitional space.'

In this thesis, usage of the term 'transitional space' is reminiscent of Marc Augé's concept of a 'non-place.' A 'non-place' refers to places of transience, formed in relation to certain ends that do not intentionally produce social life: "If a place can be defined as relational, historical and concerned with identity, then a space which cannot be defined as relational,

[153] Ibid, 242.
[154] Ibid, 242.
[155] Ibid, 238.

historical, or concerned with identity will be a non-place."[156] An example of a 'non-place' is an airport or hotel room. A transitional space is similar to Augé's term in the sense that it is a space which does not wholly have a defined identity because it is typically in-between two other places for the individuals entering it. People occupying transitional spaces are in transition from one place to another. However, transitional space is dissimilar to Augé's negative conception of 'non-place,' as an ambivalent space that incites no sense of belonging. Rather, this thesis examines how the introduction of art in transitional spaces can produce social qualities which garner meaning for individuals travelling through them.

Augé attributes the increasing occurrence of non-places to super-modernity and urbanization. The 1998 amalgamation of metro Toronto with its surrounding five municipalities is an example of urbanization and the de-centering of Metro Toronto's downtown core. Previous to the 2002 expansion of the Toronto Subway through the Sheppard line, there had been no changes to the structure of the system for seventeen years: the Sheppard Line became the first subway line to reach the suburbs of metro Toronto. Based on the circumstances of their creation, the Sheppard line stations would be considered 'non-places' in terms of Augé's theory. Furthermore, for Augé these kinds of spaces typically exist in transit systems such as airports, railway stations and subways—spaces in which an individual is in the midst of going somewhere or doing something else. In Augé's terms, stations of the Sheppard line are simply places "to be passed through."[157]

Augé's discussion of reception in non-places of super-modernity echoes Georg Simmel's account of modern "seeing" in urban cities. In his essay "The Metropolis and Mental Life,"

[156] Marc Augé, *Non-Places* (London: Verso, 2008), 63.
[157] Augé, *Non-Places*, 83.

Simmel suggests that desensitization to visual sensation has occurred in modern society.[158] This is a direct result of the urban city's continuous overstimulation and intensification of perceptions. Modern viewers have had their capacity to react or engage with the visual sensations in their surroundings negated. [159]

However, despite the dilemma of modern viewing and reception, Simmel does not make this notion of the blasé viewer his main argument. "The Metropolis and Mental Life" describes an interesting aspect of modern perception: modern urban contexts of viewing desensitize the perception of one's surroundings, such as public art, but also of other individuals in their surroundings. Although this essay was written just over 100 years ago, it still compellingly defines experience and perception in the urban environment. The effect of isolation via desensitization allows for the sense of anonymity often felt in large urban cities or sites. Simmel goes on to suggest that this anonymity "grants the individual a kind and an amount of personal freedom which has no analogy whatsoever under other circumstances."[160] This dimension of metropolitan life allows individuals to engage with their surroundings based on their own interpretations. Essentially, Simmel's essay describes a circular effect of perception in modern life, in which over-stimulation leads to desensitization, and desensitization leads to individual perception. What appears to be Bryson's main understanding of the contemplative gaze is actually focused individual perception. The spatial context in which art is presented can reinforce the contemplative gaze, through, for example, isolation in the art museum. Yet, as Georg Simmel's theoretical account of modern viewing posits, the contemplative gaze is also reinforced in transitional spaces. In the Sheppard Line stations, artworks are not isolated, set

[158] Georg Simmel, "The Metropolis and Mental Life," in *Simmel on Culture*, ed. David Frisby et al. (London: Sage, 1997), 178.
[159] Simmel, 178.
[160] Ibid, 180.

apart or placed on a pedestal. Instead, they are integrated into the walls of the station. Simmel illuminates how the individual, despite the conditions of modernity, can still have a focused and purposeful reception of art, especially when it is located in a subway station. Even though modern viewing practices have been desensitized due to overstimulation, there is a circular effect that happens, in which desensitization leads to isolation therefore allowing myriad methods of reception for individuals in urban spaces, such as the subway station.

Audience: Where the Gaze and Glance Meet

Audience reception for public art is important to the work itself. As exemplified in public art for the Sheppard Line, artists who create works for public spaces do so with a conscious awareness of audience in mind. This conscientiousness is exemplified by Panya Clark Espinal's emphasis on the transitioning perception of the viewer, which both crystallizes and morphs the projected pen and ink drawings in Bayview Station. Public art theorist Suzanne Lacy underlines this reality, stating that, "of interest is not simply the makeup or identity of the audience but to what degree audience participation forms and informs the work – how it functions as integral to the work's structure."[161] No two people, seeing the same thing, will come to the same understanding of its meaning or significance. Although seemingly obvious, this is an important point to emphasize when discussing audience and modes of looking and reception of art.

When discussing reception in transitional spaces in relation to subway stations, it is important to recognize a few defining characteristics specific to both the transit station and permanent art installations. Beyond the fact that reception is very much individually mediated,

[161] Suzanne Lacy, "Debated Territory: Toward a Critical Language for Public Art," in *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art,* ed. Suzanne Lacy (Seattle: Bay Press, 1995), 178.

viewing art in subway stations is unlike the experience of viewing artworks in gallery spaces or institutions. This is because transit users do not enter the system purposely to view, ponder, or experience the art within; rather, transit users enter the system to continue towards a specific destination - they are in the midst of travel. Augé touches on this concept in his discussion of non-place as an archetypal space for the traveller. The traveller in these types of spaces "catches only in partial glimpses [their surrounding], a series of 'snapshots' piled hurriedly into his memory and, literally, recomposed in the account he gives of them, the sequencing of slides in the commentary he imposes on his entourage when he returns."[162] Here, Augé illuminates how one's visual senses are altered when in motion; he also explains how a traveler's "partial glimpses" may lead to a more meaningful connection to objects in transitional spaces through memory.

Ronald Lee Fleming's notion of 'placemaking' is directly related to the various methods of reception explored thus far. However, much like the reciprocal conditions for reception explored by Simmel, there are reciprocal conditions for placemaking. It is not enough that the artwork possess placemaking elements: conditions of the individual are also pertinent. For example, commuters who regularly enter a station will encounter its art continuously to build a collection of mental associations with the artworks. These mental associations based on repeated visits and aspects of directed perception (personal context) that enrich the site of transitional space and make it meaningful for the viewer. However, as explored in the Sheppard Line case studies, an artist can also leaves pegs for the cognition of the viewer to hang on to (such as elements of orientation or connection) so that each time the glance is practiced the viewer can regenerate and reinterpret the meaning of art in transitional spaces.

[162] Augé, 69.

While commuters do make up the heaviest traffic, commuters are not the only passengers on the subway. People ride the subway when they travel leisurely or on an atypical route. Art's presence in transitional spaces plays an important role: it instils these sites with layers of meaning that can be received by transit users if they so choose. Whether through the gaze, the glance, or a variation of the two, modern experiences of art can be meaningfully received in transit stations.

Conclusion

This chapter opened with Robert Solso's discussion of perception via two main strains: the more general "seeing" of an object through 'nativistic' perception and the more personalized reception of an object through 'directed' perception. Both Norman Bryson and Carol Duncan's art historical analysis of the gaze can be considered in relation to Solso's definition of directed perspective. The gaze implies that the viewer will take in the visual stimulus and engage in the contemplative processes of considering artist intent, or social and cultural context. The glance, therefore, implies that the viewer will perceive only the formal elements of the visual stimulus. However, Jonathan Crary questions the relevance of the gazing attention and suggests that attentiveness and distraction are related.

Art situated in subway stations is an example of dualities of the contemplative gaze and glance both being meaningfully stimulated in the same spatial context. Modern and transitional characteristics of space complicate established notions of art reception in relation to the gaze. Georg Simmel's theory, which emphasizes the individual as central to reception exemplifies how reception can be focused in settings other than art museums. Art situated in the specific context

of a transitional viewing space creates a dynamic site at which many different viewpoints of the gaze and the glance intersect.

CONCLUSION

This study on the reception of public art in transitional spaces challenges conventional privileging of the gaze. Art installed in subway stations is intrinsically viewed by individuals in a transitory manner, through passing glimpses and glances. However, based on the characteristics of the contemplative gaze as laid out by Bryson, the glance is seemingly substandard to the more fruitful and rewarding contemplative gaze primarily engaged in viewing museum or art gallery objects. Employing a case study analysis of public art commissioned for the Sheppard Line of the TTC's subway line, my thesis elucidates how public art can be meaningfully received when situated in transitional spatial contexts in urban centers.

A subway station possesses specific transitory characteristics of place. It reflects aspects of both Michel Foucault's concept of "heterotopias" and Marc Augé's description of "non-places," as well as modernist writer Georg Simmel's concept of modern urban viewing. In all, the transitory nature of subway stations reveals that individuals in urban settings are desensitized to their surroundings, resulting in a feeling of isolation in modern, urban spaces. Through the exploration of Simmel's notion of modern viewing, it is apparent that the so-called contemplative gaze and disengaged glance are actually more closely related than generally perceived. The artists of the Sheppard Line project actively encourage this type of urban viewership that both alternates and merges the gaze and glance. Engaging with art in stations of the Sheppard Line is variably attentive, momentary, and experienced in passing. Grounded in the meaning of place these artworks continuously draw out shifting modes of meaningful reception from a single individual.

Enhancing the environment of rapid transit systems through art is vital. To people living in urban centres, the rapid transit system is a staple in their lives and experiences due to its

necessity and central role in transporting them to their professions on a daily basis. Public art has the capacity to transform the tediousness of riding transit into an enjoyable experience. To perceive these works as art, it is not necessarily the quantity of time we spend in contemplation of them that is important, but rather the quality of thought and mode of communication on the part of both the individual and the artist that are fundamental for a meaningful connection to art. In this sense, the meaning of that proverbial quote, "It is not the destination, but the journey that is worthwhile," rings strong and true. This thesis explores how station art installations engage the viewer through modes of looking, creating meaning and experience for transit users of the TTC's Sheppard Line.

Examining the specific conditions of viewing in transitional spaces is important to consider not only for the Sheppard Line artworks, but also tells us more about modern viewing attention. The integrated art program and artworks were specifically designed to engage with an audience in transition through the stations. These theoretical viewing practices in transitional spaces such as subway stations can be applied to other instances of urban viewing when an individual traverses through a city enlivened by public art.

Subway Station: An Alternative Viewing Space

Subway stations are increasingly being considered as suitable gallery exhibition space. This thesis has examined the reception of permanent installations of art in the transitional space of subway station. Once a year the subway stations of the TTC participate in a one night art exhibition in Toronto called "Scotiabank Nuit Blanche" when "hundreds of thousands experience a full night of contemporary art and performance in multiple venues across the city,

including on the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) subway platforms."[163] Stations of the TTC temporarily place artworks on display for transit users to engage with. Incorporating art into subway spaces brings about a whole new dimension to the process of reception. Based on theories of reception explored in this thesis, I would argue that similar processes of visual engagement would exist. However, temporary and contemporary characteristics of such installations have traditionally placed emphasis on the contemplative gaze, as these works are more generally displayed and viewed in the context of the art museum. The examination of reception of temporary installations in subway stations would be a valuable subsequent direction in the examination of reception in transitional spaces.

[163] Toronto Ontario Press Release, "TTC Transformed into Unique Exhibit Space for Scotiabank Nuit Blanche," *Marketwire* (October 1, 2010), accessed February 2011, http://www.marketwire.com/press-release/TTC-transformed-into-unique-exhibit-space-for-Scotiabank-Nuit-Banche-1328283.htm.

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ILLUSTRATIONS

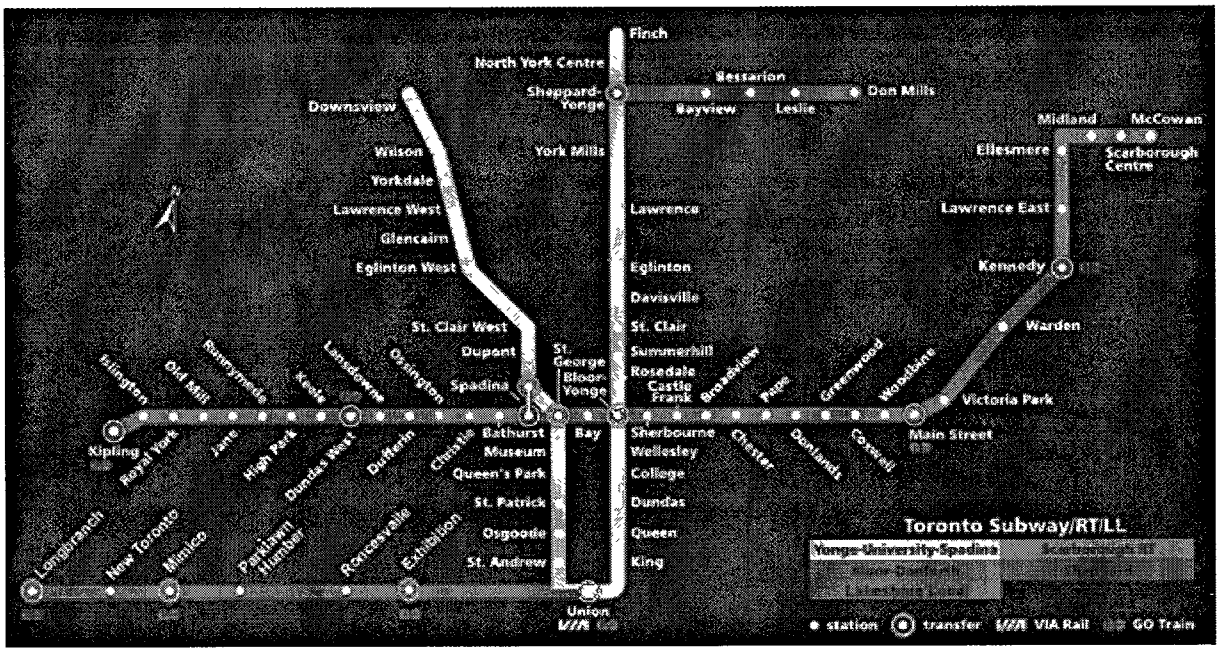

Figure 1: Toronto TTC Subway System Map.

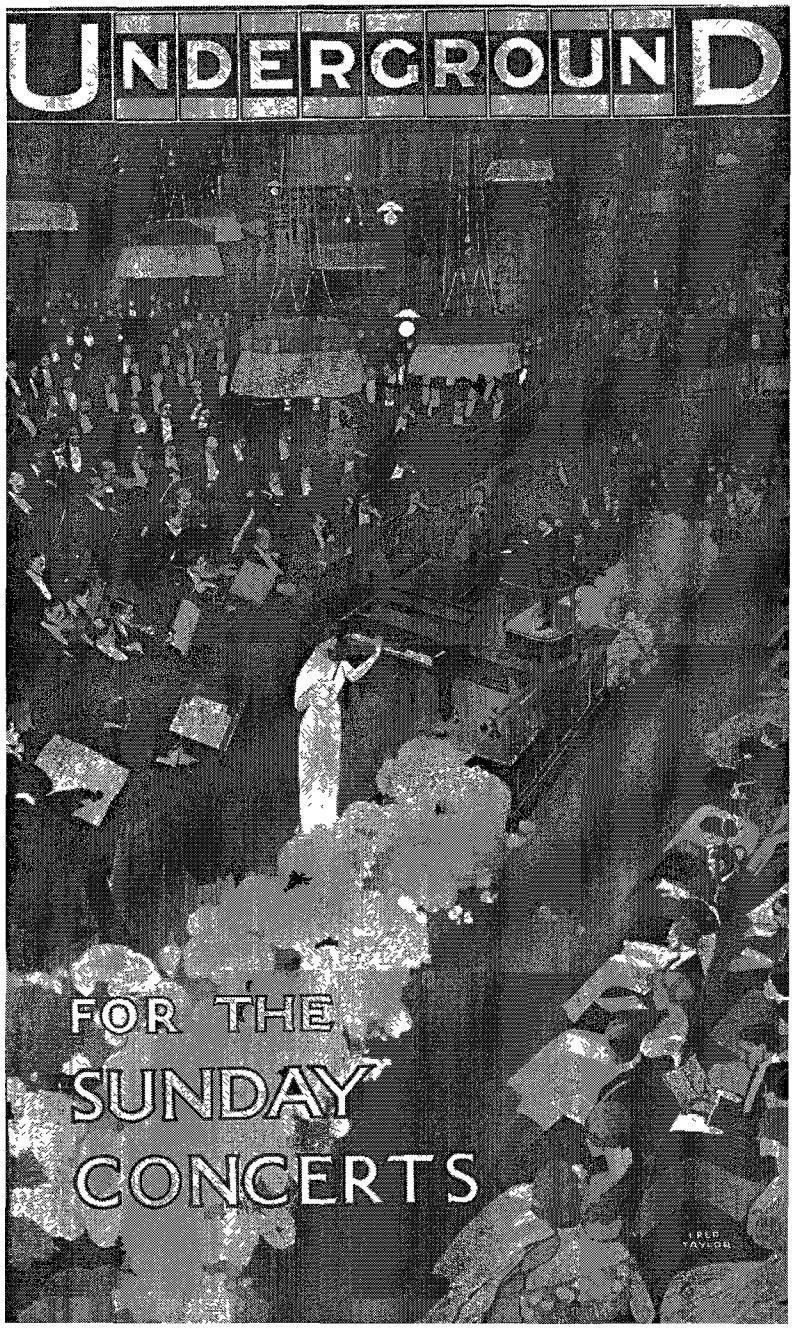

Figure 2: Fred Taylor, *For The Sunday Concerts*, 1912, London Underground poster.

Figure 3: Hector Guimard, Art Nouveau canopied entrance of the Paris Métro, 1900. Image from David Bennet's *Metro: The Story of the Underground Railway*, p. 50.

Figure 4: Central Platform of Komsomolskaya Station, 1952, marble, Moscow Metro. Image from David Bennet's *Metro: The Story of the Underground Railway*, p. 72.

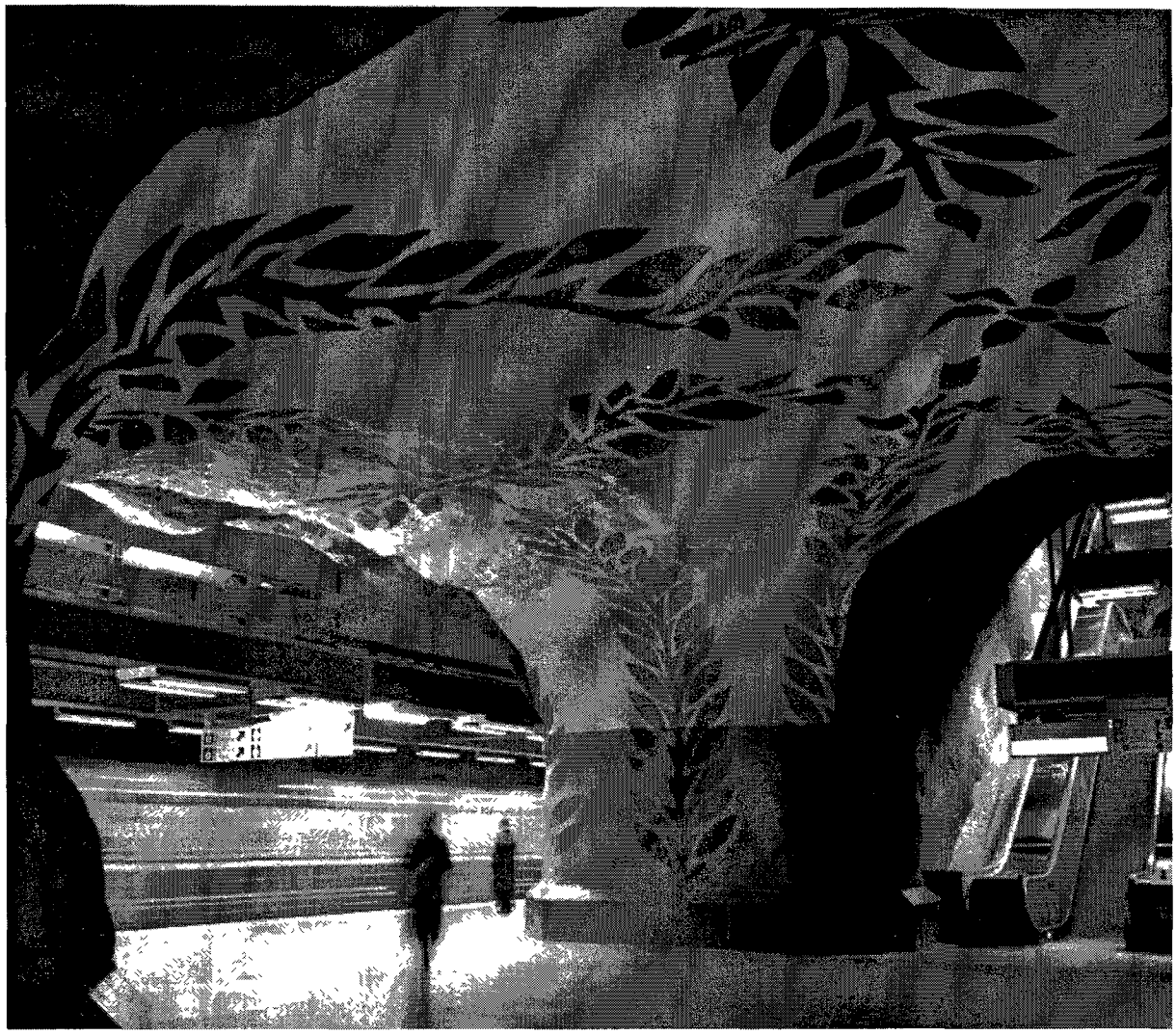

Figure 5: Per Ultvedt, Platfrom of T-Centralen Station, 1975, Stockholm Metro. Image from David Bennet's *Metro: The Story of the Underground Railway,* p. 79.

Figure 6: Frédéric Back, *Les Arts lyriques,* 1967, iron and glass with lighting elements, Place-des-arts Station, Montreal Métro. Above: Panoramic view. Below: Central grouping. Images from Matt McLauchlin, "Art in the Metro" *Montreal by Metro*, accessed March 2011, http://www.metrodemontreal.com/art/back/metro.html.

Figure 7: James Sutherland, *Spadina Summer Under All Seasons*,1978, coloured glass mosaic, Dupont Station, Toronto Subway Spadina Line. Image from Eli McIlveen, "Art on the TTC," *Transit Toronto,* March 17, 2010, http://transit.toronto.on.ca/spare/0008.shtml (accessed February 2011). Photo by Michel Proulx.

Figure 8: Rita Letendre, *Joy,* 1978, painted glass skylight, Glencairn Station, Toronto Subway Spadina Line. Image from Eli Mcllveen, "Art on the TTC," *Transit Toronto,* March 17, 2010, http://transit.toronto.on.ca/spare/0008.shtml (accessed February 2011). Photo by Michel Proulx.

Figure 9: Michael Hayden, *Arc-en-ciel*, 1978, multicoloured neon lights, Yorkdale Station, Toronto Subway Spadina Line. Image from Eli McIlveen, "Art on the TTC," *Transit Toronto,* March 17, 2010, http://transit.toronto.on.ca/spare/0008.shtml (accessed February 2011). Photo by Michel Proulx.

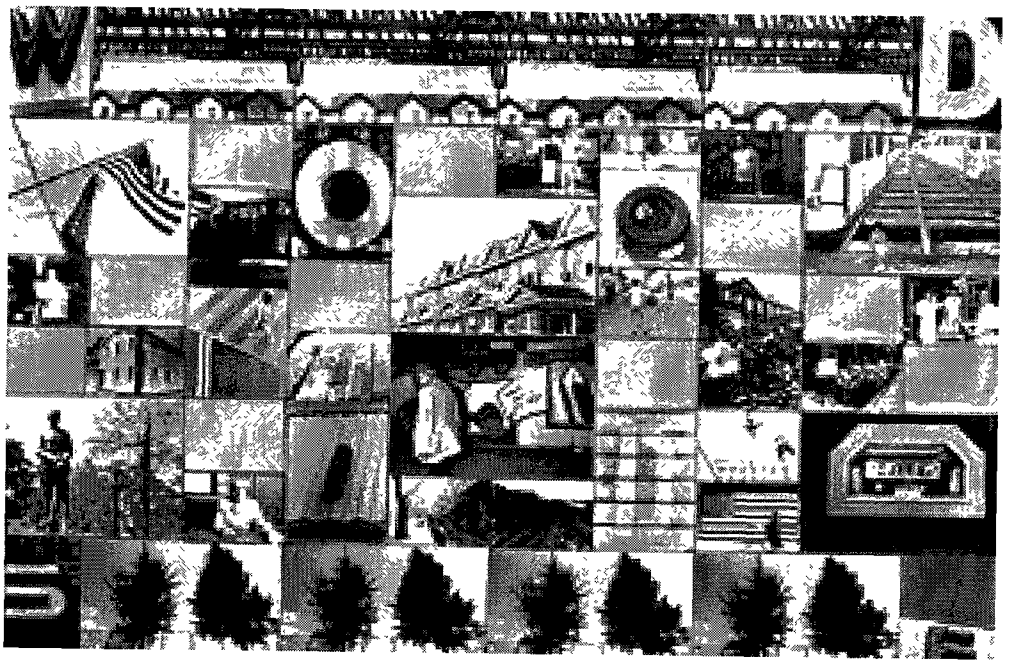

Figure 10: John Cavanagh, *Commuting/Community*, 1986, porcelain enamel on mezzanine walls, Woodside-61st Street, New York City Subway. Image from website Metropolitan Transit Authority, "Arts For Transit – Woodside-61st Street," *MTA – Arts for Transit* (2010), accessed November 2010, http://www.mta.info/mta/aft/.

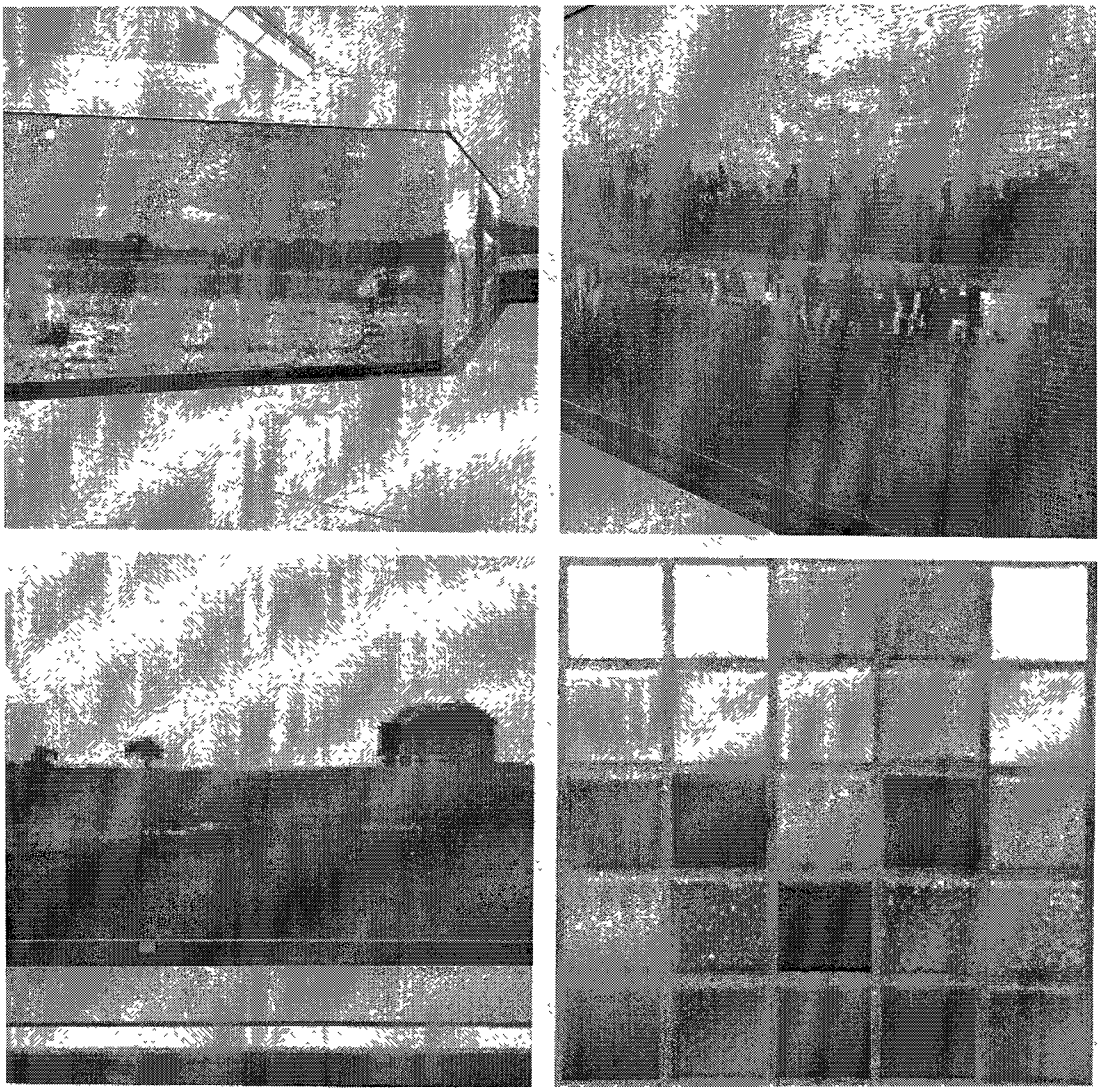

Figure 11: Stacey Spiegel, *Immersion Land*, 2002, porcelain tile, Sheppard-Yonge Station, Toronto Subway Sheppard Line. Image from Toronto Transit Commission, Sheppard Subway Public Art Program 2002 (Sheppard Line Subway Art, 2002).

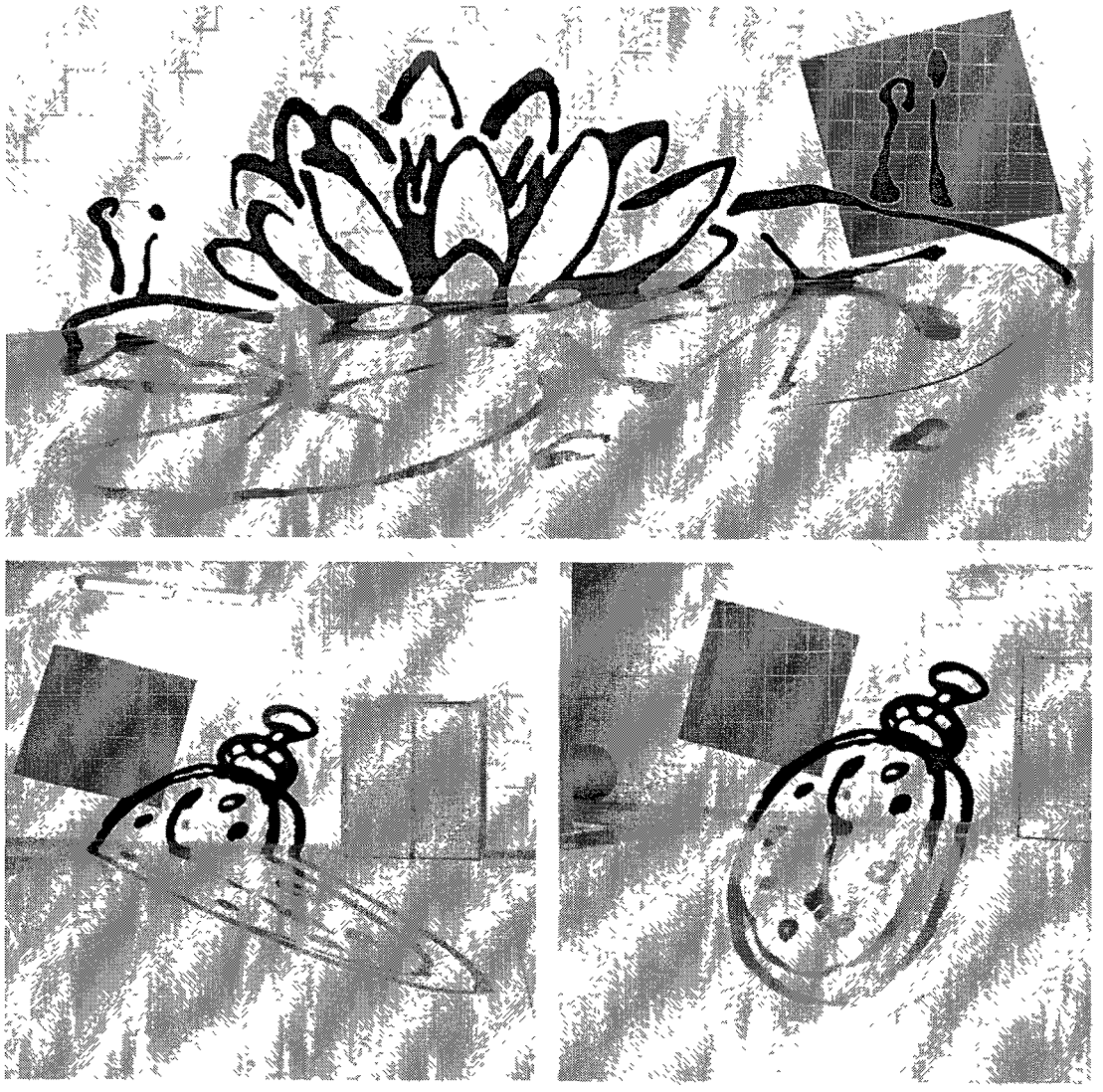

Figure 12: Panya Clark Espinal, *From Here Right Now*, 2002, ceramic tile and terrazzo, Bayview Station, Toronto Subway Sheppard Line. Image from Toronto Transit Commission, Sheppard Subway Public Art Program 2002 (Sheppard Line Subway Art, 2002).

Figure 13: Hans Holbein the Younger, *The Ambassadors*, 1533, oil on canvas.

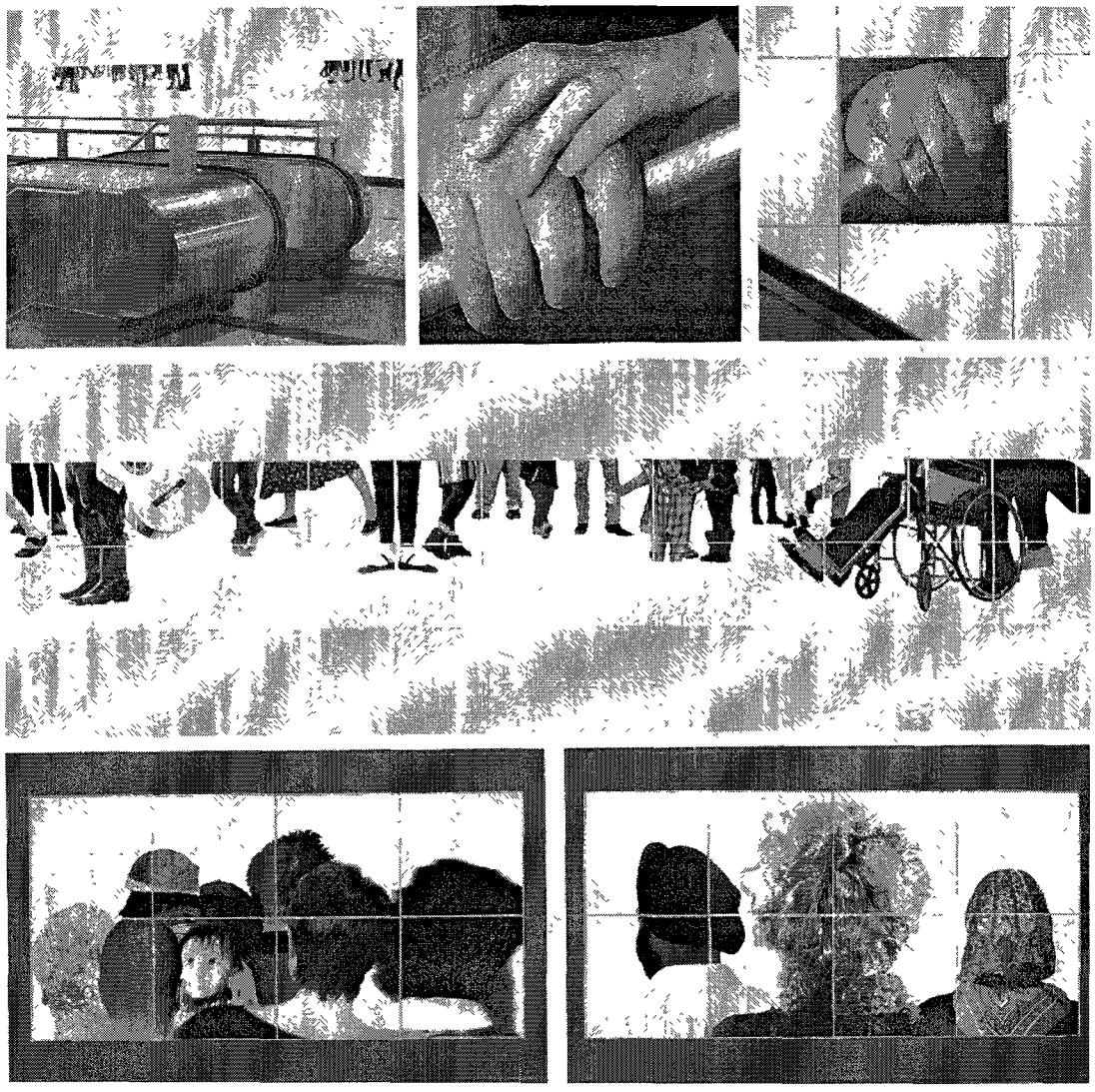

Figure 14: Sylvie Bélanger, *Passing*, 2002, ceramic tile, Bessarion Station, Toronto Subway Sheppard Line. Image from Toronto Transit Commission, Sheppard Subway Public Art Program 2002 (Sheppard Line Subway Art, 2002).

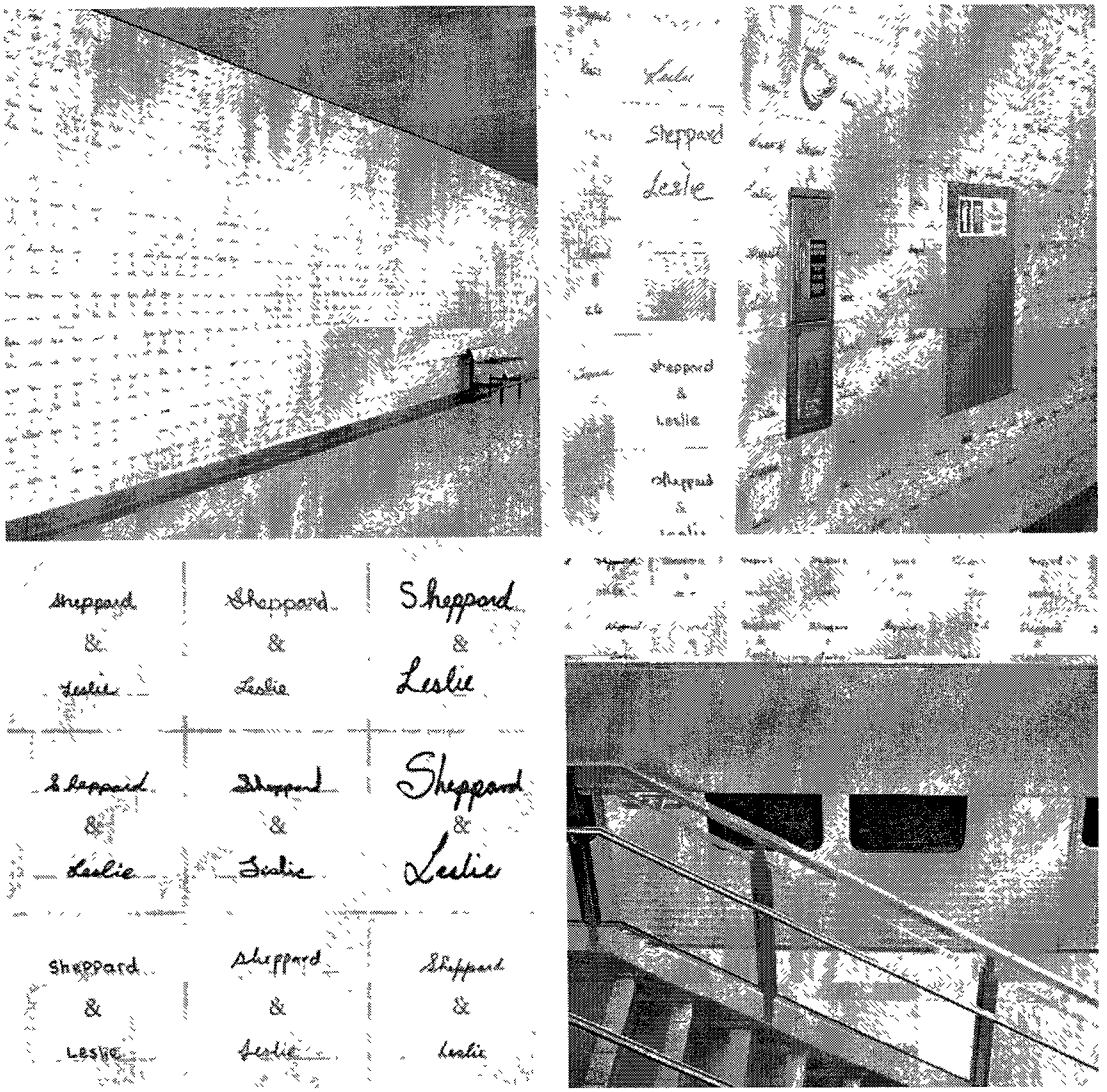

Figure 15: Micah Lexier, *Ampersand*, 2002, porcelain tile, Leslie Station, Toronto Subway Sheppard Line. Image from Toronto Transit Commission, Sheppard Subway Public Art Program 2002 (Sheppard Line Subway Art, 2002).

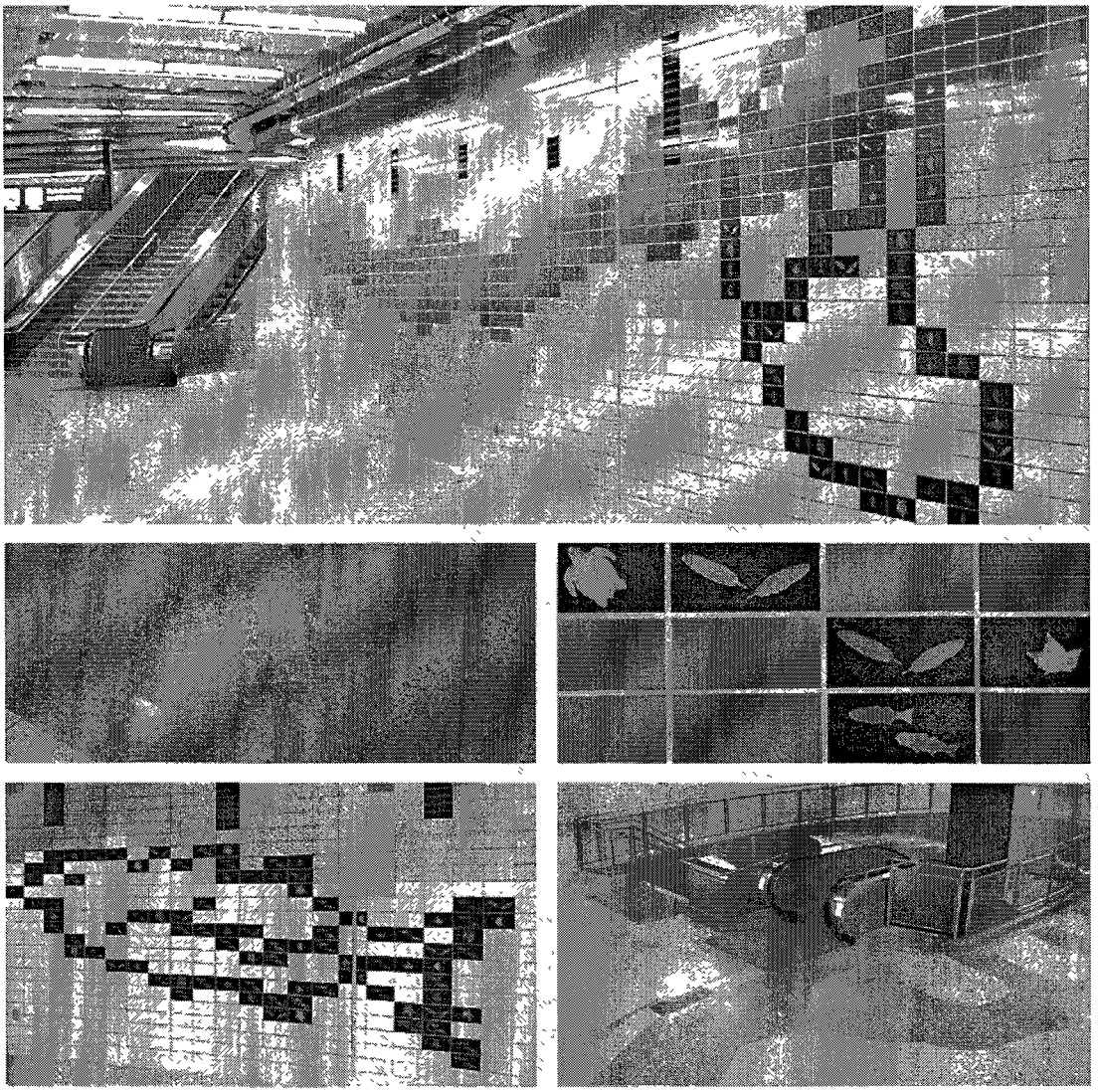

Figure 16: Stephen Cruise, *before/after*, 2002, ceramic tiles, brass inlays, epoxy resin, terrazzo, Don Mills Station, Toronto Subway Sheppard Line. Image from Toronto Transit Commission, Sheppard Subway Public Art Program 2002 (Sheppard Line Subway Art, 2002).

Figure 17: Édouard Manet, *In the Conservatory*, 1879, oil on canvas.