



**HEMPSTEAD.** Artist Ron Baron, above, went to garage sales and thrift shops to find elements for "Lost and Found: An Excavation Project," which is of interest to Melissa Jordan, 5, at right.

# Artists get new platform

MTA program brings art to LIRR stations in bid to inspire, entertain

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**L**ike many LIRR commuters, Damien Bada usually has his head buried in his smartphone each morning as he waits for a Manhattan-bound train at the Valley Stream station. "But sometimes your phone dies, and you need something to look at," said Bada, 22, an art student and a teacher's aide for a second-grade class in Manhattan.

For years, Bada's options were worn poster ads for



**HUNTINGTON.** Joe Zucker's glass panel installation.

Broadway shows, train tracks and the blank expressions of fellow travelers. But in 2009, upon completion of a \$4.3-million renovation at the station, Bada's commute got considerably more colorful.



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**SEAFORD.** Carson Fox created the "Blue Sky Pursuits" stained glass window installation, after visiting Germany to work with a world-renowned stained glass fabricator.

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**VALLEY STREAM.** A mosaic with glass and ceramic pieces was created by Swedish-born artist Malin Abrahamsson.



PHOTO BY ROB WILSON

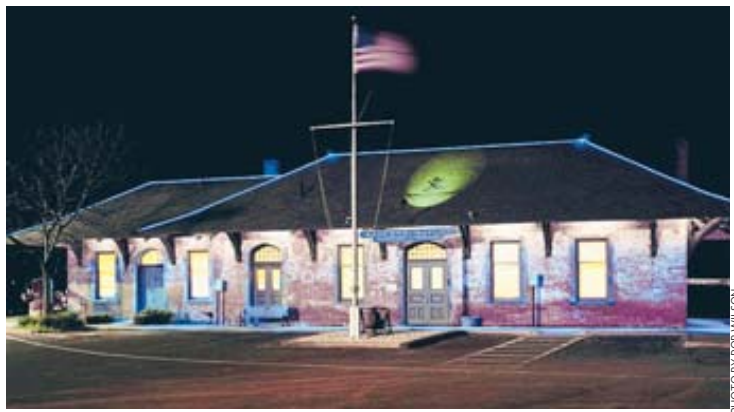


PHOTO BY ROB WILSON

**GREENPORT.** Anita Thacher used lighting and projection for her project.

On the floor of the ticket office, a warm yellow sun rises over a lush green lawn, bisected by a flowing blue stream. On the walls near the landings of the station's two escalators, birds soar over lampposts and utility lines. And in the station platform waiting room, geese peck around a field just across the way from a stately clock tower.

And although Bada, of Valley Stream, may not have

noticed that the images are stylized depictions of the community around him, he knew this much: They looked real nice.

"It's very peaceful. It's very calming, subtle," Bada said. "It's not too loud, not too slow."

**A thing of beauty**

The ceramic tile mosaics are the work of Swedish-born artist Malin Abrahamsson and

come courtesy of the Arts for Transit initiative of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, which operates the LIRR. The program, created in 1985, is known most for its underground artworks at more than 150 city subway stations. About 15 Long Island Rail Road stations also serve as galleries for Arts for Transit projects, including a dozen locations in

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**NOW ONLINE**  
 For more photos of the LIRR artwork, go to [newsday.com/lilife](http://newsday.com/lilife)

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Artists interested in being considered for Arts for Transit projects should go to [mta.info/mta/aft/about/call.html](http://mta.info/mta/aft/about/call.html)

**View Arts for Transit art at these LIRR stations:**

- Bay Shore
- Bellmore
- Great Neck
- Greenport
- Hempstead
- Hicksville
- Huntington
- Merrick
- Ronkonkoma
- Seaford
- Valley Stream

PHOTO BY ROB WILSON

# Art makes a stop at LIRR



**BROOKLYN.** Allan and Ellen Wexler's two-story "Outlook," completed in 2009, features hundreds of white granite cantilevers, suggesting scenic overlooks usually found in national parks.

PHOTO BY ROB WILSON



**HEMPSTEAD.** Station art can be functional. At right, "Lost and Found: An Excavation Project" also serves as seating.



PHOTO BY PATRICK CASHIN

**HICKSVILLE.** Roy Nicholson's "Morning Transit" recreates the days when Hicksville was largely a prairie plain.

## ART from G4

Nassau and Suffolk.

A new project is in the planning stages for Wantagh, MTA officials said.

One percent of the first \$20 million of a station construction or rehabilitation project is dedicated to Arts for Transit, whose mission is one passed down more than a century ago from the founders of New York's transit system.

"It needed to be engineered

to be functional, but also beautiful," said Amy Hausman, assistant director of the program. "The concept is that if you create a place that is beautiful, it will bring out the greater good in people."

From a concrete relief frieze at Bay Shore depicting the Fire Island Lighthouse as a chess piece, to the hand-painted porcelain tiles recalling Merrick's past as a farm town, the LIRR stations that have benefited from Arts for Transit fund-

# stations



NEWSDAY PHOTO / AUDREY C. TIERNAN



PHOTO BY SEONG KWON

**FLUSHING.** Artist Jean Shin created the mosaic mural "Celadon Remnants" with shattered celadon vases from South Korea.

ing boast some of the most iconic and recognizable pieces of art not only on Long Island, but also of Long Island.

"The most important thing is that an artist . . . is responding to the place where the work is going to be installed, and the people who live in that place and the people who lived in that place in the past and the people who may come into that place in the future," Hausman said. "That really is the most important thing — that

the artist is really connecting their work to that place."

That was Ron Baron's objective after he was chosen in 2005 by an MTA Arts for Transit selection panel to create several sculptures for the outdoor waiting area at the Hempstead station.

Baron, 53, a Brooklyn resident, said he scoured garage sales and thrift shops in Hempstead to find authentic artifacts

See ART on G8

## Gallery on the go

The LIRR can serve as a gallery for some of the area's most creative and inspiring artwork. Here's one tour to try:

**Brooklyn**  
5:23 p.m.\*

**Hicksville**  
3:49 p.m.

**Ronkonkoma**  
3:11 p.m.

**Greenport**  
12:58 p.m.

\*Back to Greenport on the 5:23

\*Note: Unless you have a monthly ticket covering the entire route, you may get charged each time you get back on a train.

NEWSDAY / ROD EYER

## Station-ary art exhibits

If you can't make it to an art museum, some routes along the Long Island Rail Road offer a traveler's art exhibit.

**On any weekday start your trip at Greenport and head west on the 12:58 p.m. train.**

At 2:22 p.m. you'll arrive at Ronkonkoma, where you can check out Alice Adams' "Planting."

The work, installed in 1995, is an arrangement of trees planted in rows, concrete planters, and brick walls working in harmony to create a tribute to Long Island's nurseries and tree farms, which played an important role in Long Island's growth. MTA officials acknowledge that some landscaping elements have fallen into disrepair.

Adams' goal was "to create an ensemble of functional and sculptural forms that is unique and specific to the region and together with the architectural structures makes a place that is memorable," according to the MTA.

**Catch the 3:11 p.m. west-bound train out of Ronkonkoma and hop off at Hicksville at 3:49.** Once there, head into the waiting room,

where you'll find Roy Nicholson's "Morning Transit, Hempstead Plain & Evening Transit, Hempstead Plain."

The glass mosaic, installed in 2002, takes the viewer back to the days when Hicksville was largely a prairie plain.

Through his patterns and color choices, Nicholson captures the setting as if seen from a moving train. The soft green and blue hues depict the morning sunrise, and the red and blue hues show the sunset.

"Each commuter imagines his or her own personal scenery," Nicholson told the MTA. "One can look at it over and over again and discover new images."

**Board the 4:23 p.m. train in Hicksville and arrive at Atlantic Terminal in Brooklyn at 5:10.** In the terminal's atrium, feast your eyes on Allan and Ellen Wexler's grand "Outlook," which was completed in 2009.

The two-story sculptural balcony features hundreds of white granite cantilevers that jump out at viewers, suggesting the kind of scenic overlooks usually found in national parks.

"We wanted to create a space where one can stop and take in the dynamic energy, which is as exciting as stopping to take in the Grand Canyon or other major vistas," Ellen Wexler told the MTA.

**Head back on the 5:23 p.m. train** — the last train to Greenport for the day. At 8:17 p.m. you'll arrive home at a station that looks quite different from the one from which you departed.

Anita Thacher's "Illuminated Station" features an array of lighting and projection techniques that are best viewed after dark.

The station house's roof is outlined with blue LED lights. A deeper blue light envelops surrounding areas. Warm yellow lights inside the building suggest candlelight or gaslight.

And an American Indian pictograph is projected on the station walls and roof, paying homage to the earliest Long Islanders.

"Through each work the past meets the present," according to the MTA's description of the project. "And a special place in the community is made more meaningful by the artist."

— ALFONSO A. CASTILLO

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## coverstory

# A journey toward art

ART from G6

from the community's history. He settled on a newspaper account of the Islanders' 1981 Stanley Cup victory, a Hofstra University backpack, a New York Jets training camp football and an ABA basketball — paying homage to Hempstead native Julius "Dr. J" Irving.

Baron arranged the items around old suitcases stacked to create chairs, cast them in bronze and created "Lost and Found: An Excavation Project."

"It was very much about this idea of trying to find objects that reflected the culture and history of Hempstead," he said.

### Local connection

Using email lists and messages posted at art schools and other institutions as well as in art publications, the MTA scours the region for artists to commission. Artists submit samples of past works, and the MTA whittles the pool of applicants to a few dozen, who then go before a selection committee that includes local artists and community leaders who strive to further ensure that a piece of art truly connects with the community where it is displayed.

The MTA informs the artists about the medium they would work in, and the applicants submit their specific vision for a station. The selected artist receives a fee of up to 20 percent of the art project budget, and typically takes at least two years to complete the work.

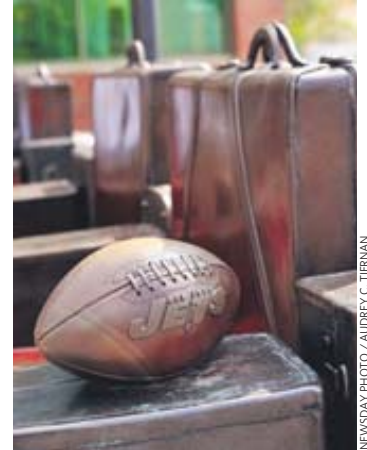
A commissioned artist visits the station to get familiar with the location and its surroundings. Sometimes the locally inspired projects take artists far from home. For her giant mosaic at the Broadway LIRR station in Flushing, Queens, Jean Shin, 40, traveled to South Korea and had tons of shattered fragments of celadon vases shipped here.

For her installation at the Seaford LIRR station — the most recently completed Arts for Transit project on Long Island — Carson Fox flew to Germany to work with a world-renowned stained glass fabricator.

Although Fox is already an accomplished sculptor and painter whose work has been displayed in museums and galleries around the globe, the Seaford station project guaranteed her largest audience ever. It also gave her a shot at something rarely achieved by artists: immortality.

"What was most interesting for me and the most fun was the idea that this was something that people will live with for a long time," said Fox, 42, also of Brooklyn, who responded to an open call from the MTA looking for an artist. "Hopefully, it will be around for a hundred years. And that's really a wonderful thing — that you might leave that kind of legacy."

The result: "Blue Sky Pursuit," in-



NEWSDAY PHOTO/AUDREY C. TIERNAN

**HEMPSTEAD.** Ron Baron's work includes a Jets training camp football.

stalled in 2009. On the windows of the station's platform waiting room, Fox depicts the patterns in which birds and butterflies crisscross their environment, much as commuters do each day.

### Dynamic vision

And it's because commuters will be exposed to a particular art installation every weekday for years on end that MTA Arts for Transit administrators look to commission artists with dynamic visions.

Fox's Seaford project, for example, takes on different shapes and colors throughout the day, depending on how the sun peeks through dotted paths in the windows and reflects off assorted jewels.

"We tell them people are going to be looking at this every day for a couple of minutes. So it should be more than one punch line, one visual and you get it. There needs to be some discovery that happens," said Lester Burg, program manager for MTA Arts for Transit. "We want it to sort of unfold over time. You may notice something one day, and something different another."

Besides not being shallow, MTA arts projects also cannot be fragile, Burg noted. Exposed to the elements and to thousands of commuters and rumbling trains each day, the projects must be strong and durable.

Those working in papier-mâché need not apply.

But, in the end, there is little separating a masterpiece at a train station from one at the Met. It's a bit of beauty, culture and inspiration — all as you wait for the 7:49 to Penn Station.

"It's an everyday thing. It's not going into some threatening, high-end gallery. It's right there when you're commuting," said Joe Zucker, 70, of East Hampton, the artist behind Huntington Station's colorful glass panel installation. "And it can have a positive effect."

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