

LA Metro stops show off art decor

By Nicole Pajer
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

LOS ANGELES — It takes a lot to get an Angeleno on a subway. Though Los Angeles has had its own operating Metrolink system since 1992, it's still a largely underused form of transportation for the city's car-preferring busy bodies. But while many residents look to carpool lanes and Uber as their preferred means of getting across town these days, the public transit system is finding another way to woo customers — with art.

Under the city's bustling sidewalks lie miles of original artwork, and as the Metro changes station locations, the below-ground gallery evolves to tie in with the area's surroundings. It's all part of LA's Metro Art initiative. Since its 1989 inception, the program has commissioned more than 250 artists for a variety of both temporary and permanent works that are displayed throughout the various divisions of the Metro. And while these pieces are constantly on display, they are best enjoyed on an organized tour.

On the first Saturday and Sunday of every month, the Metro offers free docent-led walkthroughs of the artsy side of the transit system. Volunteer guide John Coanda, an art enthusiast and train fanatic, recently ran one such tour. As a crowd of participants gathered to educate themselves on the wonders of subway art one Saturday morning, Coanda handed out free Metro access cards, playfully warning that "if you find yourself lost, the tour keeps going." The group was then off on a two-hour journey that took them through four of Coanda's favorite Metro stations.

"Each station has its own artist," he said to the group as he ushered it to the first stop, the Hollywood and Highlands station. "Those artists work with the [Metropolitan Transportation Authority]. They submitted a proposal with many other people. People who work at the MTA narrow down the list to a few, have them submit actual work samples, and talk about how they would work in this particular station. Then they pick one," Coanda explained.

From there began a journey interpreting every square inch of four Metro stations, finding art in everything — from the ceiling panels to the floor tiles, and even the arm rails of the benches filled with waiting passengers. And as the station changed, so did the theme, matching the neighborhood's surrounding aesthetics. The

Vermont and Sunset station, for instance, is bordered by three hospitals: Kaiser Permanente, Children's Hospital Los Angeles, and Hollywood Presbyterian Medical Center. And, upon glancing up from the above ground station entrance, the hills offer views of LA's famed Griffith Park Observatory. So artist Michael Davis, a Los Angeles native and graduate of Cal State Fullerton, infused the station with medical and space-oriented installations, blending contemporary post-modern designs with 1950s sci-fi elements. "If you want to get selected as an artist, cater to your clientele," joked Coanda, as he pointed out Davis's collaboration with the station architecture firm Diedrich Architects (now Diedrich/Niles Bolton Associates). Inside the station, the floor is inlaid with granite patterns of celestial objects and metal spheres etched with medical themes, such as splitting DNA, red blood cells, and chromosomes. The mezzanine deck offers a view of "The Ether of Space," a work that showcases a chart that maps a viewer's placement in the universe, and the street level elevator is reminiscent of the domed top of the nearby observatory deck.

After a quick ride on the Metro, the group made its way to Hollywood and Western. They were greeted by "Untitled Sun," a piece by artist May Sun, who infused copper, granite, and porcelain enamel panels with photographs and text on an array of multi-colored tiles. "To build the station, they had to excavate and dig giant holes," said Coanda. "They found some bones while digging from animals like an extinct horse breed. Those photos are embedded in the tiles of Sun's work," he added. The docent also pointed out that it's common for the station artists to cater to four customary themes — earth, air, fire, and water. To accomplish this, Sun infused her tiles with images of fish, deer, and birds.

From there, it was on to what Coanda deemed his favorite station, Hollywood and Vine. To capture old Hollywood, artist Gilbert "Magú" Luján worked in conjunction with architect Adolfo Miralles to create a ceiling installation made up of 20,000 reels of 35mm film that were acquired from an old production studio. The ground represents Lujan's version of the Yellow Brick Road, and up the escalator is a projector screen and music notes that line the railing and circle throughout the station. "If you read all the notes, they play 'Hooray for Hollywood!'" exclaimed Coanda. Next to a



PHOTOS BY NICOLE PAJER FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE



line of artificial palm trees sits two 1930s-era projectors donated by Paramount Pictures. Lujan also adorned the station walls with tiles that incorporate faces of animals native to the area and images of Toto and the Cowardly Lion from "The Wizard of Oz." As Coanda's curated tour centered around the mecca of Hollywood, it was the perfect note on which to end.

When asked if it was a love of art that prompted Coanda to dedicate his time to lead the monthly tours, he

LA's Hollywood and Vine Metro station has 20,000 recycled 35mm film reels in the ceiling (top). Docent John Coanda, leading a tour of the subway, stands on artist Gilbert "Magú" Luján's version of the Yellow Brick Road in the station.

said, "I'm a train buff too. I grew up in LA when we didn't have trains, and it really [stunk], so I was super excited when they started to build them." He

praised the public transit system and smiled when his group declared that the subway was in fact pretty cool.

For more information on LA's Metro Art Tours, visit www.metro.net/about/art/. Standard tours depart at 10 a.m. from the Hollywood and Highlands Station on the first Saturday of every month, and from Union Station on the second Sunday of every month.

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Don't uncouple from your travel explorer side

By Danielle Braff
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NEWLY single? You shouldn't give up on travel because of a breakup, but you may want to avoid destinations popular with honeymooners (we're talking about you, Maui). Fortunately, there are many expeditions that seem to have been created with recent divorcees in mind, whether you want to heal by means of downward dog, helping others, or a big adventure.

"A lot of therapists keep our brochure in their offices," said Susan Eckert, president of Adventure Women, an organization offering adventure-based women-only tours based in Montana. "You need to get out of your comfort zone and do something different and fun. It changes your perspective and gives you self-confidence."

IF YOU WANT TO GIVE BACK

Book this A weeklong volunteer vacation to one of 17 countries through GlobeAware, a Texas-based nonprofit.

Destination Multiple international destinations available

Details Volunteers will do a variety of things, including distributing wheelchairs for landmine victims in Cambodia; helping with education projects in India; supporting elephant conservation in Thailand; and installing concrete floors for impoverished families in Guatemala. The program is one week, but volunteers can add additional weeks. The majority of volunteers are solo travelers, and all programs are abroad.

Price The price ranges depending on your destination, but the average is \$1,200, which includes meals and accommodations, but not the flight.

More information globeaware.org, 877-588-4562

IF YOU WANT A HIKE AND SCENERY

Book this A backcountry, hut-to-

hut hiking tour through The World Outdoors, a Colorado-based adventure tourism company

Destination Colorado

Details This six-day, five-night hiking tour starts in Vail and explores parts of the 10th Mountain Trail System (pictured), which is the country's most extensive backcountry accommodation-served trail network. The hiking is done by day, and at night, you'll sleep in a European-style chalet before you return to Vail. Experienced guides cook all the meals and coordinate the logistics of the trip. Sometimes, it's wine and cheese back at the hut, sitting around the fire listening to the guide strum the guitar. Other times, it's gourmet meals dished out family-style, said Scott Phillips, president of The World Outdoors. "Regardless of a guest's family dynamic back home, when they travel with us, we all become family during the trip. This is the special sauce that keeps our guests coming back year after year."

Price \$1,598

More information theworldoutdoors.com, 800-488-8483

IF YOU WANT TO RESTORE, RENEW

Book this Ananda in the Himalayas, yoga retreat at a resort spa

Destination India

Details The Ananda experience is based on Ayurveda, yoga, and Vedanta (Hindu philosophy) combined with wellness practices. Visitors will do yoga, meditate, hike, and take part in healing experiences including crystal, reiki, and chakras.

Price Starting price for a five-night wellness program is \$570 per night for single occupancy.

More information anandaspa.com, 800-102-5233

IF YOU WANT TO RELAX OR GET FIT

Book this Sanctuary Camelback Resort and Spa

Destination Arizona



Details Play tennis, swim, and hike with views of Camelback Mountain and Paradise Valley. The resort is home to Olympic gold medal swimmer Misty Hyman, who is available for individual training sessions, and triathletes can do a triathlon training program (three days of training with each day focusing on swimming, running, or biking). Or do a customized wellness journey with meals and spa treatments designed to compliment a personalized plan.

Price Starts at \$499 per night based on double occupancy.

More information sanctuaryoncamelback.com, 480-948-2100

IF YOU WANT TO DINE AND EXPLORE WITH OTHERS

Book this Real Food Adventure through Intrepid travel, an Australian-based company that organizes small groups to travel like locals do throughout the world.

Destination Thailand

Details Forget dining alone. On this trip, you'll be with a group, eating in popular Bangkok restaurants, exploring bustling markets for the freshest dishes, and seeing all the sights of Chiang Mai and Bangkok. The group will learn the trick behind making palm sugar, experience the thrill of a

passing train in the Mae Glong railway market, slurp noodles alongside locals in Bangkok, whip up a jungle curry in Kanchanaburi, enjoy home cooking with a family in Chiang Mai, sit down to a Khantohk feast, and tour all the must-see sights of Thailand.

Price \$995 for eight days

More information intrepidtravel.com, 800-970-7299

IF YOU WANT TO GO ON A CRUISE, BUT NOT ON A LOVE BOAT

Book this Cruise France by river barge in Burgundy

Destination France

Details This women-only ship fits up to 20 and sails on the Canal du Centre in France, where travelers will see the sites through southern Burgundy. Stops include visits to historic castles, bike rides through canal towpaths, and wine tastings in medieval villages. Food, wine, excursions, and accommodations are included.

Price \$4,395 for seven days and six nights

More information adventurewom.com, 800-804-8686

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Nonstop flights start from Boston to Tel Aviv

By Juliet Pennington
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IF you've been thinking about visiting Israel, now's the time. El Al Israel Airlines will begin nonstop service from Boston's Logan International Airport to Tel Aviv's Ben Gurion International Airport on June 28.

This will be the first nonstop service from Boston to Israel. Currently El Al offers direct service from North American airports in New York, New Jersey, Los Angeles, and Toronto.

El Al will offer three weekly nonstop flights from Boston, on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays. Departure is at 9 p.m. and arrival at Ben Gurion will be at 3:05 p.m. local time the next day.

Return nonstop flights will be on those same days, leaving Tel Aviv at 12:30 a.m. local time and arriving in Boston at 5:45 a.m. the same day.

There are 218 seats on the Boeing 767 aircraft, including 22 fully reclining seats in business class and 28 in economy class plus.

"We are proud to provide the best light options and excellent service to residents of Boston as well as [those in] neighboring communities and states wanting to travel to Israel," said Danny Saadon, El Al vice president for North and Central America. "As a national airline, the Israel experience begins on El Al with warm Israeli hospitality, Israeli flight attendants who make you feel at home, and the best trained Israeli pilots."

For more information, visit www.elal.com.

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