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TARRYTOWN-SLEEPY HOLLOW PATCH

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**Fantastical Overpasses: Our New Train Art**

The "Hudson River Explorers" project has turned our new Metro North overpasses into light boxes worthy of exploration. Meet the artist, Holly Sears, behind these scenes both real and surreal.

* By [Krista Madsen](http://tarrytown.patch.com/users/krista-madsen-fabe6a78)

Holly Sears, of Brooklyn, has been working on her art installation for the new overpasses of Tarrytown's Metro North station for about as long as the $39 million renovation has been going on itself.

It took about two years from inception to installation, when several weeks ago, beautiful animal imagery turned the north and south overpasses into – what one happy commuter described as – light boxes.

Through the MTA's Arts for Transit and Urban Design program, Sears submitted a proposal specific to this station, made it through a review process to becoming a finalist, and, finally, won the commission.

“MTA Arts for Transit has turned the Hudson Line into an open air museum,” said Metro-North President Howard Permut. He cited works by Joy Taylor at Peekskill, Liliana Porter and Ana Tiscornia at Scarborough, Joseph Cavalieri at**Philipse Manor**, Barbara Segal at Yonkers, Robert Goodnough at Ossining and Dennis Oppenheim at Riverdale. “Our customers love it.”

Sears combined in these panels a mix of exotic species non-native to here (like a swimming elephant, for instance) “because they are compelling” alongside many flora and fauna of the Hudson Valley, which she researched extensively. “One thing I do with my work is this 'peaceable kingdom' concept combining them and playing with scale.”

So you'll have a bobcat and a common cat, polar bears and black bears, seahorse and sturgeon across six above-water and five underwater riverscapes. All of these often magical juxtapositions, said Sears, “make you notice the native species even more” and “gives you a whole different view of the world, imagining what-ifs.”

The glass is not stained glass, but laminated, a relatively new process in which layers of the artwork were actually forged between layers of glass. (Stained glass, on the other hand, involves the use of colored glass.)

Sears would paint in oils on a white background. She did a series of watercolors as well. Following was a good amount of digital work, blowing up the images to larger sizes, and layering them together, discovering how they would look at different times of day, and with glass, since “glass is such a presence in itself.”

The watercolors were smaller than the oil paintings. On the finished product, the watercolors are 8x their original size, while the oils are 4x. The more amplified watercolors reveal the quality of the paper, adding a textural element to the images.

Often there are three to four images within each final scene. The digitized images were scanned and printed out on a film which was applied to the glass. Then another layer of glass was added on, another image, and so on. The whole thing was then sort of forged together through tremendous heat and pressure.

Sears, though not the one laminating the glass (this was farmed out to a fabrication studio, Tom Patti Design in Pittsfield, MA) got to oversee all stages of the process, including the installation at the station, which she thought was incredible to witness (as did the lucky passersby). It was expected to take the workers a few weeks, but they were done in just four days, which of course were among the hottest to be on ladders in our endlessly hot summer.

A permanent plaque with the name of artist and work is on the way in one overpass, until then you have to find an explanatory piece of paper below on the bulletin board.

For a full education on the creatures and the process, you can visit the accompanying show up now through Oct. 13 at the Yonkers' [Hudson River Museum](http://www.hrm.org/exhibits/Sears/sears.html), where the 11 original oil paintings are displayed with a list of all the species.

Sears, now a New Yorker by way of the mountains of southwestern Virginia, is thrilled to enter the hallowed ranks of Hudson River artists and have her works live in such a visible, real-world space surrounded by such a gorgeous setting.

“I've been in New York since the early '80s and travelled a good bit up and down, as well as on the water sailing," Sears said. "For me it was the perfect project. It's a really exclusively beautiful place. I can't compete with that, I can just enhance it and bring more to it.”

As the people shuttle to and fro, so too do her animals in a way befitting the transit of a train station and the aura of this river region.

“The Hudson Valley has such a history of amazing exploration and traveling," Sears said. "It's as if the creatures are being ushered through the landscape."

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***Visit the originals:*** *Metro-North offers a one-day Getaway to the Hudson River Museum. Take the Hudson Line to the Glenwood Station and it’s a short walk to the Museum, which is open Wednesday through Sunday, noon to 5 p.m. The package includes discounted rail fares and admission. Click* [*here*](http://mta.info/mnr/html/getaways/outbound_hudsonrivermuseum.htm) *for details.*

***Read more about it:*** *“Hudson River Explorers” marks the 25th installed artwork in the Metro-North system. The station was rebuilt as part of the MTA Capital Program with funding provided by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. For more on MTA Arts for Transit and Urban Design, visit* [*mta.info/art*](http://mta.info/art)

***Get the app:*** *Sears’ artwork has been added to the* [*Meridian Arts for Transit app*](http://mta.info/art/app/) *so that travelers can have the art collection in the palm of their hand. The app includes links to the more than 230 permanent art projects installed throughout the MTA system.*

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