Make This Accessible
Wednesday, June 3, 2020
The First Annual For-Teens-By-Teens Virtual Exhibition
On view: June 3, 2020

EXHIBITION ARTISTS
Asilbek Akmalov
Hunter Blu
Educational Video Center
Youth Documentary Workshop
Jose Gonzales
Kyra Horario
Angel Melgar
Mahnoor Sheikh
Orchid Sylvester

CURATED BY BRIC’s 2019-20 YOUTH CURATORIAL FELLOWS
Cameron Burns
Angelica Cecilio
Oscar Martinez
Emily Ojeda
Sabina Shopshekbayeva
Gilbert Teston
Justin Walters
What is New York’s perspective on transit? What inspires you about your daily commute, whether it be good or bad? How do artists view the MTA? The diversity that comes with this institution; the many faces of its community and the perspectives that they bring. The dark side of transportation and the cost you have to give when taking the Metro Transit Authority. *Make This Accessible* reveals small secrets within the system you see every day.

*Make This Accessible* is an exhibition curated by BRIC’s inaugural Youth Curatorial Fellows focusing on New York City’s transit system.

**ABOUT THE YOUTH CURATORIAL FELLOWSHIP**

BRIC’s Youth Curatorial Fellowship program is a group of teen curators developing and producing the first annual *For-Teens-By-Teens* Exhibition. This exhibition showcases Visual Arts pieces in 2D & 3D mediums created by Brooklyn high school and college undergraduate age (14-21) artists, including printmaking, drawing, painting, photography, sculpture, textile, mixed-media, and installation art.

**Teaching Curator:** Sarah Simpson  
**Contemporary Art Education Manager:** Beto Sepúlveda

BRICartsmedia.org/Make-This-Accessible  
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#MakeThisAccessible
As part of BRIC’s mission to build Brooklyn’s creative future, we are excited to present the first exhibition through the Youth Curatorial Fellowship program. During this eight-month internship, a cohort of amazing teens has worked together to curate an exhibition while exploring careers in the arts. The program is unique because it positions young people to create an opportunity to celebrate the work of young artists and present their work to the public. BRIC is committed to igniting learning in people of all ages, and our young people are the future leaders of the arts and cultural sector.

The fellows’ choice to focus on the MTA as the topic of the exhibition reflects their maturity and empathy. It connects their experiences of growing up in New York City’s five boroughs and their interest in creating a more just future. Like nearly all New Yorkers, public transit is a shared experience that plays a major part in our daily lives. The MTA is a force of nature—it shapes our days, can cause us to be late, connects us with our friends and family, and allows us to explore all corners of our diverse city for one $2.75 fare. At the same time, public transit reveals many of the inequalities and injustices that we currently face. The works in this exhibition ask important questions and prompt conversations about a wide range of issues.

The participating artists have also shown immense creativity as they offer their unique perspectives on the MTA through diverse and creative mediums. Although this was planned as an in-person exhibition at BRIC House, we are impressed with how the teens have moved seamlessly from the physical to the virtual realm. We are in awe of their resilience, commitment, and creativity, and both the fellows and the participating artists all have very bright futures ahead of them. BRIC is proud to present this exhibition as a culmination of all their efforts.

Kristina Newman-Scott
President

Keith Kaminski
Director of Education
Emily Ojeda: What does the MTA mean to you?

Mahnoor Sheikh: The MTA has so much power that it almost has New Yorkers held hostage; it’s vital to day-to-day life. The MTA is also the main way I transport my art. It’s not easy: the stairs are murder, slipping through the emergency exit is terrifying, and the feeling of people looking at me on the train is often demeaning. And I feel that by increasing police presence and raising prices for the same inefficient service, the MTA is working against the people it’s meant to serve.

EO: How has your opinion of the MTA affected your work?

MS: My art tends to be the medium I use to reflect and respond to my observations and feelings, and I have strong feelings towards the MTA.

EO: What is it like being an artist in New York City?

MS: New York has fantastic art museums that are great places for inspiration for artists, but being an artist where there are so many others can be intimidating. Being an artist is finding a balance between unbridled creativity and stable existence. It's self-discovery and destruction and pursuing a visual solution to a problem that's been solved before.
Oscar Martinez: What does the MTA mean to you?

Orchid Sylvester: The MTA for me is being able to have connection and access anywhere. It’s one thing to be able to travel, but it’s another thing for it to be accommodating for all types of people with various needs.

OM: What interested you in applying to this specific exhibition?

OS: At first, the piece I’ve made on public transportation immediately came to mind, so that was my initial thought, but it became more as a point of interest in trying to use my work as a form of awareness directed to nuanced yet significant things.

OM: What kind of message do you want the viewers to receive?

OS: There are so many opportunities around you, yet it’s not easy to access them all, some, or few. Sometimes it’s good to ponder on where you are now, because reflections on what you can influence and affect in your immediate environment can evolve into being able to have influence beyond your circle. Things take time. Be swift, but not in a rush.
Sabina Shopshekbayeva: What does the MTA mean to you?

Hunter Blu: The MTA provides a space for subterranean socio-spatial meditation; a moment to sense my life as it's shared with the lives of others. Does the problem come when I skip the $2.75 fare or when the MTA spends $249 million on transit police? Is it more problematic when I ignore beggars or when the police beat a black teenager? Its accessibility seems increasingly imperative.

SS: What’s your source of inspiration?

HB: I draw from what is before me and the unknowing of what is next. I have been tracing back major events within the “downtown Manhattan” epoch: Michael Stewart’s death, Basquiat’s legacy, the stock market crash. Somewhere in that past my family lived on this land. I’m gathering the pieces of who I am with my brown skin and indigenous blood blocks away from the financial center with its “freedom tower.” The people, motivations, and art before me inspire my curiosity and conviction.

SS: Why do you create?

HB: I create because I don’t know what else I could do. My art is an act of survival, defiance, sincerity, and contribution. I create because I care, because it can be hard to understand how much truth is present in the social world.
Cameron Burns: *What does the MTA mean to you?*

**Kyra Horario:** I think the MTA represents a sense of freedom. It unifies the entire city and allows people to familiarize themselves with all kinds of different people. I also think the MTA is overlooked by the people who use it. Capturing photos in train stations is a visualization of the moments that are easily lost on an everyday commute.

**CB:** *What was your inspiration?*

**KH:** One of my inspirations is the photographer Gunner Stahl. I fell in love with his photography when I first started shooting on film. A lot of his work is just capturing whatever him and the model were up to. This appealed to me when I was becoming familiar with film photography since it helped me realize that expensive equipment doesn’t define anyone as a photographer.

**CB:** *Why did you choose this medium?*

**KH:** I shot most of these pieces on film because it forced me to avoid overthinking. With the collage, I thought taking elements of different materials and putting them together was a perfect analogy for the way the MTA brings together people who aren’t associated with each other.
Angel Melgar

**BRIC: What does the MTA mean to you?**

**Angel Melgar:** The MTA is an underground representation of how the city functions to discriminate against colored people and sets to accommodate those privileged by placing their economic status as standards. It’s a monopoly that knows its nature and keeps raising its fare.

**BRIC: What other artists or kinds of art do you look to for inspiration?**

**AM:** In order to create, I especially like to watch obscure avant garde movies or walk down the galleries in the east village. But more often than not, it’s a constant process of layering over time in order to produce a piece that is composed of various ideas.

**BRIC: How long have you been making art?**

**AM:** I’ve been drawing since I was six but I didn’t get a real interest in art until I hit twelve. I am now eighteen making it close to a decade since I started drawing.
Angelica Cecilio: What does the MTA mean to you?

Asilbek Akmalov: It’s a place where I get references for my paintings. When people enter the subways or the buses, they are in their own world. From every culture around the world, they are reading, looking at their phones, thinking, sleeping.

AC: What in your personal life has influenced you?

AA: I never thought art would be my future. I thought that I would work in the medical field like my parents. I had to prove to them that this is something I’m serious about. During senior year of high school, I worked on an oil painting that ended up displayed in The Metropolitan Museum. Now I’m at Pratt Institute as an industrial design major, still painting.

AC: Are there any hidden messages or meanings behind your work?

AA: I’ve been painting the underground portrait of New York City. The underground of the city reflects humanity, our society’s priorities, and more. The environment, the people on their phones or magazines, and even the cramped up spaces become the norm for riders. I’m trying to show everyone the individual stories of people during their ride.
BRIC: What does the MTA mean to you?

Jose Gonzales: The MTA is a form of transportation that can be useful, but for the most part it can be a pain in daily life.

BRIC: What do you hope people learn from looking at your artwork?

JG: I hope people see that the MTA can take you to wonderful places to visit, but can also ruin your day by all the delays it has.

BRIC: What inspires you to make art?

JG: I am a student that takes the MTA everyday and I have to deal with a lot of problems due to the actions of the MTA. I have gotten to school late, been late to meetings because of the MTA, and gotten detention or in trouble for being late.
Educational Video Center
Youth Documentary Workshop

Founded in 1984, the Educational Video Center (www.evc.org) is a non-profit youth media organization dedicated to teaching documentary video as a means to develop the artistic, critical literacy, and career skills of young people, while nurturing their idealism and commitment to social change. Their flagship program, Youth Documentary Workshop, is a rigorous credit bearing afterschool program that provides high school students with the technical and civic engagement skills to collaboratively film, edit, and produce award-winning documentaries about social justice issues impacting their lives and communities.

Ride to Nowhere: Investigating the MTA was produced during the Fall 2018 semester of Youth Documentary Workshop by the following EVC Youth Producers:

Tyshon Bailey
Emily Blas
Manny Birnbaum
Temis Anthony Cantos
Kaz Doha
Cyeann Edwards
Fernanda Espinoza

Farrell Jarvis
Destiny Martinez
Tariqur Rahman
Georges Abigail Remy
Berny (Ben) Santos
Alexus Stewart

Instructor: Gil Feliciano
Asilbek Akmalov

B3 Bus, 2020
Oil on wood panel
24 x 18 in.

Q Train, 2019
Oil on canvas
30 x 24 in.

Sleeping Worker, 2019
Oil on wood panel
24 x 18 in.

Hunter Blu

Hot As Fuck, 2019
Mixed media
29 x 45 in.

Little Negro, 2019
Mixed Media
24 x 18 in.

Nigga boy, 2019
Mixed Media
23 x 32 in.

“urban” is the new “primitive”, 2020
Single-channel video
1:22 min.

Sarah Simpson
Teaching Curator

EDUCATION STAFF

Keith Kaminski
Director of Education

Linda Mboya
Senior Manager, Youth Education

Beto Sepúlveda
Manager, Contemporary Art Education

Tyrone Copeland
Manager, Youth Media Education

ABOUT BRIC

We are a leading arts and media institution anchored in Downtown Brooklyn whose work spans contemporary visual and performing arts, media, and civic action. For over forty years, our institution has shaped Brooklyn’s cultural and media landscape by presenting and incubating artists, creators, students, and media makers. As a creative catalyst for our community, we ignite learning in people of all ages and centralize diverse voices that take risks and drive culture forward. BRIC is Building Brooklyn’s creative future.

647 Fulton Street
Brooklyn, NY 11217
BRICartsmedia.org

SUPPORTERS

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