Gallery-In-Transit

Photography Rides the Transit System

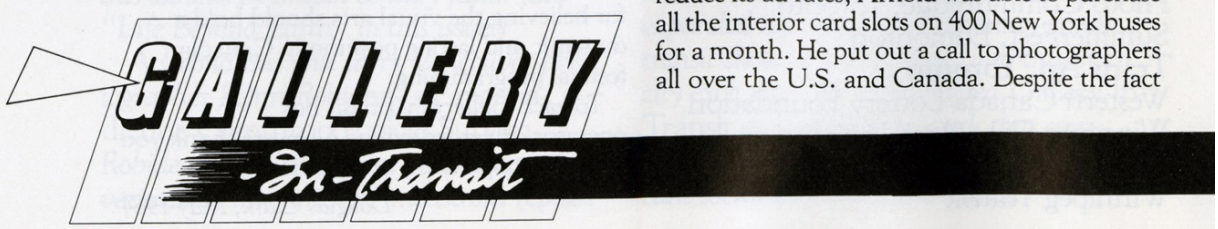
by Michael Mitchell

If you ride the bus you've got hemorrhoids, dandruff and a weight problem. You eat rather than dine. There's no escape: the floor will bear limited scrutiny and staring at your fellow passengers either gives offense or is dangerous. If your gaze drifts up above their heads the assault begins again.

Bus and subway ads are extremely aggressive—they have to be. They are installed in an anxiety producing environment—the limbo between one place and another—and they must compete in a cacophonous space. The ring of words and images above the rider's head can seem like a scream. Many artists have thought about this—they're part of the urban poor perpetually condemned to travel from place to place beneath the ads. The first person to really do anything about it all was Bill Arnold, a Bostonian and former chairman of the photography department at Pratt Institute. Arnold had studied in California with John Collier Jr., a professor of Anthropology and Education at San Francisco State who also taught photography at the San Francisco Art Institute. In the forties Collier had worked as a member of the Farm Security Photographic Unit with photographers like Arthur Rothstein and Russell Lee. He was no stranger to the issues raised by documentary photography. Collier gradually developed certain notions about the place of photography in the anthropologist's endeavor. The Collier idea that most impressed his student Arnold was that when you approach an alien culture, taking photographs is the quickest entrée, but you must also give back. Collier saw the camera as a vital tool for the ethnographer. Your subjects could read the photographs of themselves you gave them and gain a sense of how you saw them and the nature and honorableness of your intentions. Collier's procedure, best expressed in his classic text *Visual Anthropology* (1967), had been effectively applied by SNCC workers in the American South during the days of civil rights activism. The Southern Blacks were rightly distrustful of the white college students coming south from the Northeast to work on the voter registration drives. However, when the students were equipped with Polaroid cameras which they used to record the local people and events, an atmosphere of trust and cooperation began to develop as the Polaroids were returned to their subjects.

By the early 70s Collier's ex-student Arnold was living in Boston. As he rode the buses around the city he thought a lot about the notion of giving back. In October of 1972 his thoughts crystallized into a project. With Boston's Institute of Contemporary Art acting as sponsor, Arnold submitted a proposal to the Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority for a Transit exhibition based on his own photographs. Since his student days in San Francisco he had been experimenting with prints made by a microfilm reader/printer. It was the ideal production machine for his concept. It put out big prints of good quality in twenty seconds. Using this machine Arnold was able to fill forty-four buses with prints and send them out into the Boston streets in 1973. The bus displays included a telephone answering number at the Institute of Contemporary Art. It quickly became apparent that many riders, upon discovering the photo buses, were jumping off them and rushing to pay phones to express their gratitude and excitement. Bill Arnold had found the perfect way to give back.

Arnold had originally planned to put his exhibition on buses in five different cities. However, organizational and funding problems in the end restricted it to one. Two years passed before he got a chance to expand his concept. In 1975, with a $13,500 grant from the New York State Council on the Arts and a commitment from the Transit Authority in New York City to reduce its ad rates, Arnold was able to purchase all the interior card slots on 400 New York buses for a month. He put out a call to photographers all over the U.S. and Canada. Despite the fact



that photographers had to pay their own production costs and donate the prints, over 5,000 photographs flooded Arnold's office at Pratt.

There were so many beautiful things—fine prints from people like Jerome Liebling and Ruth Orkin. What was so wonderful about it was that the 236 photographers who submitted understood the concept so well. People who ride buses are subjected to advertising in a closed environment. They get numb and are afraid to look up because they're afraid someone will try to sell them something. I wanted work that didn't editorialize or persuade, that excluded political statements and porn which in their own way are a kind of selling. In the end I had to reject only two or three prints.

Arnold's exhibition had some surprising results. It immediately became apparent that the cumulative effect of all the shrill competing ads was a perceptive shrinking of interior space. The buses with photographs seemed much larger, less claustrophobic. Also, because the exhibition buses were randomly distributed in the MTA system, the thousands of people looking for them never knew whether they were getting on a regular or gallery bus. The buses became objects of anticipation; all the buses became special. Even though the advertising spaces occupied by the photographs had been rented only for a month, in the end Douglas Leigh Inc., the agency that sold the space for the city, decided not to take any of the photographs down. Although not one of the photographs was ever defaced, gradually fans of individual images took them home. Months after the show was officially over, riders on New York buses would find a lone surviving photograph amid the hemorrhoid ads, a little island of relief. Although Arnold never mounted another transit show, he and Kate Carlson collaborated on a story about the project that was published in the *Massachusetts Review* in 1978; that article, along with the New York Times coverage of 1975, found its way into the files of photographers and photographic organizations all over North America. Together the two articles have inspired dozens of similar projects in both the U.S. and Canada.

In November of 1976 CEPA, Buffalo's Center for Exploratory and Perceptual Arts, opened their first bus show. It included images by Ellen Carey and Cindy Sherman. Since then CEPA has had bus 7711, an unassigned bus that can appear on any route in the city, as a full time exhibiting space for photographs. Every CEPA bus show leaves the downtown gallery after a month to spend an equal length of time traveling the streets. A recent show included material by Joseph Beuys and Vito Acconci. With the bus show permanently established, CEPA members like Bob Collignon and Biff Henrich have since expanded their activities to include bus shelters and billboards.

A little over a year after the first CEPA bus

Bill Arnold; *Aaron Siskind With His Picture*, Boston, 1973

show the concept crossed the border into Canada. Organized by Ben Mark Holzberg with help from David Hlynsky and support from the artist-run gallery A Space, *Rolling Landscape* filled Toronto subway car 5780 with Cibachrome landscapes by Canadian photographers. This project was followed a year and a half later by Holzberg's *Station-to-Station*. The original idea was to turn the Museum stop of the Toronto subway line into "a big public art cave". However, by this time, Transad, the company that sold ad space for the Toronto Transit Commission, had cooled to the concept. In the end they agreed to rent single spaces in thirty-one different stations. The effect was to dilute the impact of the pieces because so much traveling was required in order to see the whole show. Moreover, the individual photographs had to compete with the ads surrounding them. Although *Rolling Landscape* had had the advantage of being concentrated in one place, Car 5780 had proved difficult for many people to find. Both these public art shows proved to be somewhat inaccessible.

Holzberg's last project, *Street Photography*, utilized the big backlit display panels in the glass shelters along the bus and streetcar stops in Toronto. Mounted in late 1982, *Street Photography* addressed the accessibility problem of the previous shows by concentrating on stops along one route—the downtown Queen Street car line. *Street Photography* provided the most difficult technical problem for the organizers to solve. Whereas *Rolling Landscape* had consisted of permanently backlit transparencies and *Station-to-Station* utilized conventional prints viewed by ambient light, the car stop shelters required huge images that would work under ambient daylight and also function as transparencies at night. The solution involved using unwatermarked mural paper. The most effective pieces were those in which the photographers hand-colored their big prints on the back, a tinting which was visible only at night, thus giving a very different appearance from that in the day. *Street Photography* filled ten stops with work by ten photographers.

Of the three Toronto projects, *Rolling Landscape* was the most direct heir of the Bill Arnold legacy. In its concentration on one theme—landscape—it paralleled the original Boston show which had divided the buses up into themes—there had been a portrait bus, a landscape bus and so on. The basic concept was simply the bus as public gallery. Several recent American projects have functioned in a similar way. In the spring of 1980 the Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia produced *Street*

Sights 1, an exhibition of photographs that was installed on more than 1000 buses and elevated trains operated by the South East Pennsylvania Transit Authority. Ray Metzker, William Larson and four other Philadelphia photographers were commissioned to produce pictures of the city which were then reproduced as bus cards and installed in the overhead advertising panels. The following year ICA produced *Street Sights 2*, a similar project which utilized photographic work by Nancy Hellebrand, Harvey Finkle and three other photographers. Although the Institute's director Janet Kardon had hoped to make the *ICA In Transit* project an ongoing one, budget cuts under the Reagan administration have suspended it.

A few months after ICA's first transit show, Mark Schwartz, a photography instructor at Cleveland State University, organized the largest bus show that has ever taken place. The *Bus Project*, based on a widely advertised open call for entries, placed close to 9000 photographs by 800 artists and photographers on the buses and trains of the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority.

In Seattle Wendy Brauer invited 70 photographers and artists to produce color Xeroxes for the show *Metro Repro*. It rode the city buses for three months in 1980.

The bus show, seen by many of its early organizers as a kind of guerilla exhibiting concept, has become established and, to some extent, establishment. Boston, the originating city, now has an *Arts on the Line* project that puts permanent art in MBTA stations and has put artwork by public school children on the car cards of trolleys in North Cambridge. Jennifer Dowley, *Arts on the Line*'s original director, is now in California working on similar projects for Sacramento Light Rail. In New York the Municipal Art Society under the leadership of Doris Freedman helped to initiate *Adopt-A-Station* in 1976, and Creative Time Inc. successfully negotiated with the Metropolitan Transit Authority for permanent use of an abandoned subway stop in Brooklyn. The Myrtle Avenue Station contains a visual installation that occupies the entire platform. Filmmaker Bill Brand, inspired by the strobing light effect created by passing train windows, created a sequence of 228 images mounted in an enormous box and animated by complex lighting equipment. As each train passes through Myrtle Avenue the individual images seen through the car windows combine to form a continuous animated image that gives a sense of growth and evolution. *Masstransiscope* was funded by both the New York State Council on the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA).

Behind these and other projects lie certain artists' and administrators' notions about public art. Organizers speak of giving exposure to artists, of bringing art to the people and of educating the public. More pragmatic considerations are involved as well. The concept,

basically an American one, is deeply rooted in traditional American utilitarianism. Activities are judged by the rightness or wrongness of their consequences or, more crudely, by their usefulness. By this criterion, artmaking is not usually seen as a serious or practical activity. However, public art projects like bus exhibits have become established because their usefulness is statistically demonstrable.

When Ronay Menschel, a member of the MTA board and a key figure in the development of public art projects in New York, speaks of these projects, her opinions strongly reflect this strain of thought:

I think that the introduction of art material into places like the subway serves to enliven and humanize the environment. It signals that the transit authority cares about the rider. Left unchecked, graffiti-making creates the sense that anything goes and the resultant climate of lawlessness reduces ridership. Without the protection of number, vandalism increases—lawlessness spirals upward. However, the subway art projects, by providing interest for the rider and projecting a sense that we care, effectively increase the security of the stations.

Last summer a photographic exhibition organized by Douglas Clark, traveled on the Number 9 bus in Edmonton for eleven days. Larry Litt, publications coordinator for Edmonton Transit quickly realized the benefits of the project. "Our ridership increased because the public loved it. Passengers got up and walked about to look and people who'd ridden together for years and never spoken were suddenly talking with each other for the first time. The revenue lost for a few weeks was inconsequential compared with the good public relations. I couldn't buy the front page of the *Edmonton Journal* if I tried, but last summer's project got it for us."

There are pragmatic advantages for artists' groups as well. In mid May of this year the Montréal artist-run gallery Optica opened *L'ART EN COMMUN*, an exhibition that put the work of six Montréal photographers on 400 of the city's 1600 buses. Each photographer contributed one image or a pair of images scaled

to the size of a single advertising panel. Each contribution was then reproduced as a serigraph on translucent polystyrene in an edition of 400. All six photographs went to each bus and were randomly distributed among the ads.

Diana Nemiroff, who originally conceived the project for Optica, was directly inspired by reports of Bill Arnold's successes in Boston and New York. She was attracted by the idea of public art and wanted to improve the gruesome environment created by advertising. She also saw direct benefits for the gallery and its programs. Although Optica had an enviable record after a decade of operation, it was still having trouble getting financial support from the city. The bus project seemed the ideal vehicle for increasing Optica's visibility. Arts funding was a metropolitan decision and since the buses also ran out into the suburbs they would publicize Optica there as well. In the end negotiations with the city produced a $3,000 grant: Optica had a foot in the door.

Most transit projects have relied heavily on public funds. Although rate concessions can usually be negotiated with the transit authorities and their agencies, the main funding comes from the municipalities involved and the applicable arts councils—the NEA and state councils in the U.S. and the provincial councils and Canada Council in Canada. They are public projects supported by public funds in public spaces of high visibility. This immediately puts the content under public and institutional scrutiny. Many projects have experienced censorship problems—in most cases, exercised by transit authorities and their advertising agencies. CEPA's long-running Buffalo project operates under a guideline put forward by Winston Network, Inc.—"If it would bother a nun we don't want it on the bus." Under this guideline a photo-collage of newspaper headlines concerning Khomeini was rejected but pieces visually parodying well-known ads were passed. CEPA organizers find the exercise of censorship to be puzzlingly arbitrary.

Occasionally it is the naïveté of the artists that creates problems. They fail to understand that participating in transit projects should be an act of giving and sharing with the public. Those artists who view the project in conventional terms—one more exhibition, one more line on the resumé, can get into trouble. Ben Mark Holzberg's last Toronto project, *Street Photography*, saw censorship of two of the ten street shelter pieces. One of the artists accepted a compromise and exhibited her piece unchanged in a store window located on the same street as the rest of the show. The public could then make their own judgments about the

appropriateness of the work. The other chose to grandstand, accusing the advertising firm Mediacom of exercising "corporate totalitarian censorship" which was "bordering on fascism". The affair alienated the company, compromised the organizers and left the possibility of future projects in doubt.

Group Material's September 1983 *Subculture* show also had censorship problems. They rented 1400 randomly distributed card slots on New York's IRT subway line for display of artists' 'ads' that addressed public issues. If it pays for the space, a project is technically protected against all censorship other than that concerned with public decency, porn and violence. However, the New York Subways Advertising Company objected to the political and satirical content of several pieces. One was an implied comparison of Reagan and Hitler, another, "Merger King", made visual insinuations about the relationship of Burger King and McDonalds. No compromise was ever negotiated, and Group Material still suspects that the offending material was never installed.

Implicit in all transit exhibitions is a set of ideas about advertising, its role in our culture and its effects upon people in closed environments. Even in its most basic form—the bus or subway as gallery for traditional photographic work—the transit show implies comment and criticism of transit advertising. Most shows, from Arnold's original projects, to the Cleveland, Philadelphia and Seattle shows, through to the 1984 Canadian shows in Montréal, Winnipeg, Edmonton and Vancouver have been of this type.

CEPA exhibits have become more of a mix. The long experience of some photographers in Buffalo has made them reflect more upon the nature of the medium and its content. Biff Henrich and Bob Collignon have gradually developed a style of personal work that addresses advertising directly. Collignon's photographs look like ads because ad imagery is more familiar to the non-artistic public. He wants his bus work to be accessible to people who ultimately paid for it. Henrich's pieces have been based on events in specific ads.

As more artists have gotten involved in transit projects, more sophisticated and thoughtful concepts have appeared. In 1981 Les Levine managed to rent "premium squares", the most expensive and prominent ad spaces on the New York subways. He replaced the liquor and cigarette ads usually occupying such spaces with a photographic poster of his own—a smiling Oriental couple standing before a sunset. Over their heads in large type was the legend "WE ARE NOT AFRAID". Levine wanted to help people deal with the high anxiety level provoked by aggressive advertising. His piece was based on the notion that artworks using the idea of advertising could be as effective as ads, but used to alleviate anxiety. They could

I am a photographer.

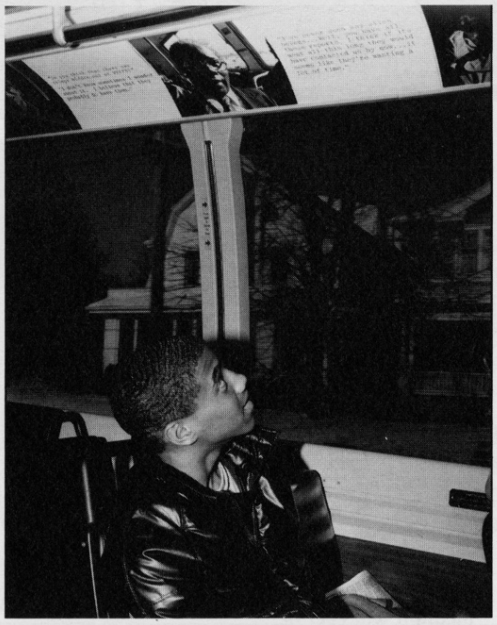
I believe that creative work should be available to people and not kept solely in museums and galleries.

I use a small, fast, automatic camera and print on a microfilm reader-printer that I have modified. The machine can process a print in 20 seconds. The combination of the speed of the camera and the ease with which the machine produces a print encourages me to photograph whatever and whenever I feel like it. I feel the best about photographing when it is as natural as talking.

There are 40 traveling gallery buses in the Boston-Cambridge area, and each bus has a different set of my pictures. What I've learned making these pictures is how much I rely on other people. Without other people fantasies remain fantasies. I want to thank the Institute of Contemporary Art for a grant which made this show a possibility. I want to thank Eugene Kenney, Tony Sanchez, Lea Viele, Jane Dillenberg, Janet Borden, Laurie Yarlow and Elaine Mayes for making it a reality.

I believe that this is the first time that buses have been used as galleries. I hope it won't be the last. If you have any comments about this show please write to me at the Institute of Contemporary Art, 137 Newbury Street, Boston 02116, or you can call and record a comment at 266-3133.

Bill Arnold



Nancy Bless; *Aliens In Transit*, RTA Installation, Dayton, Ohio, 1983

change the way people think. To this end he used all the important elements of an effective ad—a simple striking image, a brief declarative statement and frequency—there were 5000 copies. For Levine the Orient is a kind of manifestation of *Mind*, whereas the West is a collection of hardware people. His couple represents a desirable state of consciousness, an alternative. His piece was, in effect, an ad for fearlessness.

The job of anything that has an idea is to be saleable and an art idea should sell as well as any. I've learned that you can't make anyone think anything new about a subject if you put up an image that reminds them of old, dumb ideas about it. The medium may be the message, but the content is the problem. It is more of an issue than the medium will ever be.

Levine's strategy is to understand the structure and techniques of a system that oppresses and reapply them to new ends—change the content. His subway ad, like all of his pieces, dealt ultimately with freedom. Behind "WE ARE NOT AFRAID" was the idea that in the long run, fearlessness is the greatest hope for peace. It is imperative that an artist try to deal with the problems that he perceives. "I don't expect my pieces to change the world...they are just attempts...a record of a certain way of thinking. I want art to be a way of looking forward." Levine's poster became one of the most stolen car ads in the history of the New York subway.

Other issues raised by transit have been addressed as well. In 1978 Noel Korten and Nigel Cooper began work on their show *The Art of Traveling*. Both artists were interested in transportation so they began riding trains out of L.A. on passes donated by Amtrak. They soon discovered that the social environment on trains is extraordinary. Passengers frequently walked about the trains looking at each other but seldom communicated. Although time seemed to be used for collecting and sorting out thoughts, if one made an effort to reach out to people, they would reveal the most intimate things about themselves. Korten and Cooper began to make Polaroid portraits of passengers

which, combined with material from interviews, became *The Art of Traveling*, an exhibition "about the difference between looking at someone and getting to know them". Selected so as to both confirm and violate people's suppositions about each other, the portraits were framed with each subject's statements and hung in the trains. For Korten the best thing about the project was its implication about the role of the artist. It took the artist out of the studio and made him a director of events. The artist became a kind of general practitioner who could be dropped into any environment and respond.

Nancy Bless' 1978 project *Public Transit* focused more directly on the consciousness of passengers. She interviewed about fifty commuters on Columbus, Ohio, buses about their thought patterns while riding. These interviews were combined with photographic portraits by collaborator Stephanie Bart and used to fill two Columbus buses for two months. At the end of the project the photographs were returned to their subjects.

Encouraged by the success of this project, Bless set out to teach herself photography. In 1979 the Contemporary Arts Center in Cincinnati sponsored a second Bless bus project—a photo fiction about a woman on her way to work. It enabled her to refine both her photographic skills and the journalistic methodology.

Her most recent project in participatory public art was commissioned by the Dayton City Beautiful Council. Dayton, Ohio, birthplace of the Wright Brothers, is the home of Wright-Patterson Air Force Base. During the 50s and 60s the base was the headquarters for Project Blue Book, the U.S. military investigation of UFO phenomena. In 1983 the base was very much in the news because of a lawsuit filed against the U.S. government by a group of civilian UFO researchers who alleged that the government had covered up the results of its research on aliens. Some thought that Wright-Patterson was a kind of junkyard for crashed flying saucers. Once again Bless took to the buses with tape recorder and camera.

> *I believe that UFOs are the workings of demonic intervention...I believe that UFOs are gonna be done away with at Christ's second coming so I feel that one of Satan's forms of lying wonders is the heavens...when Christ comes again the perfection of the universe is going to affect those alien beings as well as us.*
>
> *Dayton Bus Rider*

The riders' statements, a mixture of popular science and religious fundamentalism, were installed along with the speakers' portraits on two Dayton buses for three months. The catalogue for *Aliens in Transit*, designed in the style of the *National Enquirer*, was distributed free on the transit vehicles. Bless' piece was a true site-specific work. It dealt with local history and regional belief systems, making both visible.

The writer thanks the following artists and administrators who submitted to interviews, gave information and generously provided material for reproduction:

Stuart Alexander — Center for Creative Photography, Tucson, Ariz.
Bill Arnold — Florence, Mass.
Nancy Bless — Cincinnati, Ohio
David Buchan — Art Metropole, Toronto, Ont.
Douglas Clark — Edmonton, Alta.
Sorel Cohen — Montréal, Qué.
Victor Coleman — Toronto, Ont.
Bob Collignon — CEPA Gallery, Buffalo, N.Y.
Peter D'Agostino — Temple University, Philadelphia, Pa.
Jennie Dixon — Public Art Fund, New York, N.Y.
Jennifer Dowley — Sacramento Arts Commission, Sacramento, Calif.
Michel Gaboury — Optica, Montréal, Qué.
Laura Griffiths — ICA, Philadelphia, Pa.
Biff Henrich — CEPA Gallery, Buffalo, N.Y.
David Hlynsky — Toronto, Ont.
Ben Mark Holzberg — Toronto, Ont.
Cathy Huffman — Long Beach Museum, Long Beach, Calif.
Nancy Joseph — Seattle Arts Commission, Seattle, Wash.
Noel Korten — University of Southern California Atelier Gallery, Santa Monica, Calif.
Dan Levine — CEPA Gallery, Buffalo, N.Y.
Les Levine — The Museum of Mott Art, New York, N.Y.
Larry Litt — Edmonton Transit, Edmonton, Alta.
Pallas Lombardi — Arts On The Line, Cambridge, Mass.
Paula Marincola — ICA, Philadelphia, Pa.
Jennifer McGregor — Public Art Fund, New York, N.Y.
Mundy McLaughlin — Group Material, N.Y.
Ronay Menschel — MTA, New York, N.Y.
Antonio Muntadas — New York, N.Y.
Diana Nemiroff — National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Ont.
Al Nodal — Otis Parsons Institute, Los Angeles, Calif.
Andrea Pederson — Creative Time Inc., New York, N.Y.
Henri Robideau — Vancouver, B.C.
Doug Sigurdson — A Space, Toronto, Ont.
Gabor Szilasi — Montréal, Qué.
Peter Tittenberger — Winnipeg, Man.
Martha Townsend — Optica, Montréal, Qué.

Like Korten and Cooper's piece it went beyond display to set up a dialogue between the artist and the public as well as among members of the public.

Similar interests and methodology lie behind Maria Karras' 1979 *Both Here and There* project. Karras, a Greek-American photographer, interviewed and photographed immigrant women in Los Angeles. She was particularly interested in contrasting the former lives of these women with the degree of independence from traditional roles that they had developed since arriving in America. Although the photographic interviews were conducted in her subjects' homes, Karras chose to exhibit them on Los Angeles buses where the majority of riders were women and immigrants. A grant received through Artists for Economic Action enabled Karras to buy space for six months on 1000 Los Angeles buses for this study of bicultural anxiety.

Another Los Angeles project used the advertising panels on bus stop benches as exhibiting space. Linda Wolf "wanted to put up images reflecting fellowship instead of estrangement, to encourage communication." Her photographs of bus patrons seated on the stop benches were enlarged to mural scale and silkscreened onto bench backs in Los Angeles and San Diego.

Anthropologist John Collier, who'd so influenced Bill Arnold, also taught the Philadelphia artist Peter D'Agostino. Since 1977 D'Agostino has been working on a complex exploration of mass transit and communication systems. *Coming and going* consists of five related but independent works: New York (Subway), Paris (Metro), San Francisco (BART), Washington (METRO) and Angel Island. The various components are executed in film, still pictures and both live and taped video and are basically dialectical in method. In Paris (Metro) videotaped sequences derived from television surveillance monitors trace a passenger's underground travel through various stops, transfers and connections in the Paris Metro. The visual images are paralleled by text that explores the etymology of the word 'metro'. The San Francisco (BART) piece contrasted images of a BART train's journey under the bay from San Francisco to Berkeley with those of a car traveling the Bay Bridge in the opposite direction. Additional information concerning the BART system was displayed on three video tape monitors carried by passengers during the trip under the bay. The Washington pieces used three video projection screens installed in the L'Enfant Plaza station of the Washington subway system to present and synthesize three classes of information about the site and the system: historical (the correspondence of Pierre L'Enfant, the designer of the original city, with George Washington and Thomas Jefferson), topographic (a travelogue of Washington sites) and surveillance images of passengers using the METRO system. The BART portion of *coming and going* considers at one point or another almost every idea or strategy ever employed in a transit project.

The audience for public art galleries has always been minuscule. What in many cases began as a more populist alternative, the artist-run space, has experienced a narrowing of its audience to the point where artists talk largely to each other. The idea of 'public art' is hence a vital one. Taking photographs down from the walls of galleries and having them ride the buses is a vital first step. However, it is only that. Bus shows are ephemeral—portraits and landscapes today, bad breath and hemorrhoids tomorrow. Although most transit exhibits are curated with an eye to the accessible, they still frequently fail to address the experience of the audience, or recognize and intelligently engage the urban fabric they pass through and the network they ride. If they remain merely transfers of exhibiting context they will become as irrelevant as the sculptures that squat in corporate plazas and lobbies all over this continent. ≪

Much of the information in this article was gathered from telephone conversations. Although the author and editorial staff tried to be as accurate as possible, all of the facts could not be verified. Photo Communique *would appreciate hearing about any corrections and other information available on transit shows that have not been mentioned here.*

Michael Mitchell is a photographer and writer who lives in Toronto.

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