The definitive exhibition of photographs documenting subway paintings to receive a long awaited homecoming at the Bronx Museum.

On View: September 25, 2019—March 8, 2020


Recognized as one of the most significant documentarians of subway art, Chalfant’s photographs and films immortalized this ephemeral art form from its Bronx-born beginnings, helping to launch graffiti art into the international phenomenon it is today. The historic exhibition looks back at a rebellious art form launched in the midst of a tumultuous time in New York City history. Chalfant’s graffiti archives are a work of visual anthropology and one of the seminal documents of American popular culture in the late twentieth century.

Starting in the early 1970s, graffiti became a cultural movement, along with hip-hop and breakdancing, created by teenagers and young people who used the infrastructure of the city, its streets and subway cars, to circulate their tags, murals, and radical visual expressions. Through the lens of Henry Chalfant, the public will be able to see the now largely disappeared works of legendary subway writers, including Dondi, Futura, Lady Pink, Lee Quiñones, and Zephyr, and Bronx legends including Blade, Crash, DAZE, Dez, Kel, Mare, SEEN, Skeme, and T-Kid.

Chalfant developed an immediate interest in this burgeoning culture when he moved to New York in 1973, and began to explore the uptown stations where the trains ran outside on elevated tracks. By 1977, he had developed a technique of capturing exposures in rapid succession on his 35mm camera from different positions on the platform, documenting the entire train in multiple, overlapping shots.

Curated by the world renowned Spanish street artist SUSO33, *Henry Chalfant: Art Vs. Transit, 1977-1987* is a long awaited homecoming that celebrates a global art movement that was born in the Bronx and upper Manhattan. Chalfant’s subway car photographs constitute the centerpiece of the exhibition—life-sized prints of train cars simulate the experience of a graffiti writer standing on the tracks and looking up. These prints display the different styles of graffiti: from “burners” to iconic full-car murals. In addition to the monumental prints, over 100 of Chalfant’s smaller photographs will also be on display.

The exhibition also includes significant and rare historical ephemera from Chalfant's personal archives, as well as his more anthropological photographs capturing the birth of the hip hop movement. These include
black book drawings and outlines by subway writers, objects from various art exhibitions and hip hop shows, as well as over 200 photographs of icons like SEEN and the Rock Steady Crew, along with lesser-known DJs at park jams in the Bronx, and graffiti artists at the writer's bench on 149th street.

Many of these artists were mainstays at Chalfant’s SoHo studio throughout the 1980s, where they would browse through the photographer’s photo albums, comparing their works with their friends and rivals. A section of the galleries will be transformed into a recreation of Chalfant’s studio. The installation will be paired with a soundtrack of subway sounds, as well as archival videos, including *All City* (1983) and a video produced in 1982 by Kodak about Henry Chalfant's technique for capturing subway art.

The exhibition is produced in consultation with Eric Firestone and Sacha Jenkins, as well as additional advisors.

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**About Henry Chalfant**


**About the Bronx Museum of the Arts**

The Bronx Museum of the Arts is an internationally recognized cultural destination that presents innovative contemporary art exhibitions and education programs and is committed to promoting cross-cultural dialogues for diverse audiences. Since its founding in 1971, the Museum has played a vital role in the Bronx by helping to make art accessible to the entire community and connecting with local schools, artists, teens, and families through its robust education initiatives. In celebration of its 40th anniversary, the Museum implemented a universal free admission policy, supporting its mission to make arts experiences available to all audiences. The Museum’s collection comprises over 1,000 modern and contemporary artworks in all media and highlights works by artists of African, Asian, and Latin American ancestry, as well as artists for whom the Bronx has been critical to their development. Located on the Grand Concourse, the Museum’s home is a distinctive contemporary landmark designed by the internationally recognized firm Arquitectonica.
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