

Artist Statement - The Underground

In the clamor of urban life, the metro emerges as a central point of diversity, an everyday location, seemingly mundane. Beyond its basic functionality, to simply get from one place to another, the metro encapsulates a myriad of individuals and stories, each commuter being a distinct human being with a unique existence and purpose. From hurried businessmen to reflective stares into cell phones, people come and go incessantly. The infrastructure has been established by past citizens and will be used for generations to come, yet it is simultaneously so fleeting, only a crossroad that is so near yet so far. A crossroad where people spend so much of their life, yet move through so rapidly, barely giving a second thought to the space or those around them, so I made this my purpose.

Over two consecutive days, I spent my hours on a lengthy walk, or ride if you will. I descended at every stop from Cote-vertu to Berri-Uqam through the orange line, then all the way back to Atwater through the green line with no particular method or goal in mind, only to capture what I saw. I dedicated at least 45 minutes to each stop, taking the time to absorb the essence of each space, before photographing what has captivated me and moving on to the next. This includes not only the people but more importantly, visual expression and architecture.

Montreal's metro stations present a compelling narrative of the city's people and identity, including cultural background. Hidden beneath their practical function, these stations serve as architectural canvases, often lined with vivid patterns and striking geometric compositions. Thus, the timeless architectural innovation can be observed through the everyday staircases and benches in addition to the various installations. This is not only relevant as artistic expression, but also as a medium through which people interact with their environment.

In sum, this project seeks to highlight the often-overlooked beauty within the normal. Even the ordinary, whether the stark or slight visual nuances of metro stations, can possess great aesthetic charms that enrich our daily experience.

Photo #1



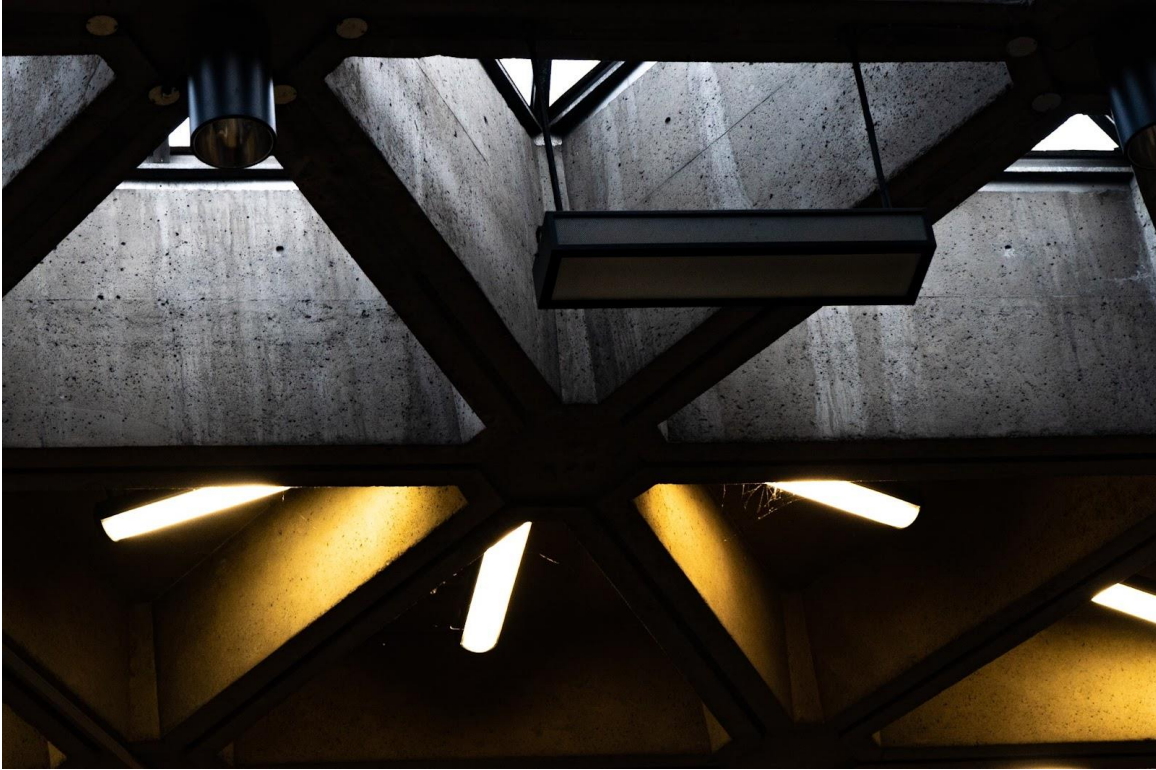
This photo was taken on Day 1 of the shooting process in the Namur station (Orange line). While some stations may be discreet with their design choices, expressing their artistic endeavors subtly, Namur stands out among them for its bold choices. Upon exit, these expertly crafted light structures will catch the attention of any passerby, though few stop to reflect upon the masterful engineering process that strings the dozens of shapes together. The complex geometry creates a striking motif that is quite difficult to present in a clean manner, indeed no easy task for the artist. I too found myself overwhelmed by the saturation of patterns and lights. Thus, I did not know where to begin photographing to accord it proper justice. After many trials and location changes, I have brought forth an image that accurately represents the majestic nature of the piece. I have further modified the image in Adobe Lightroom Classic to increase the contrast, regulate the light emission, adjust the color towards a rather metallic tint and obscure the background that was previously visible in the photo. This art of engineering and creativity is not displayed in a museum, but in this common space where it is given the opportunity to be appreciated by many, but is seldom recognized for its intricacy and the work that has been put in.

Photo #2



This photo was also taken on Day 1 of the shooting process in the De La Savane station (Orange line). This photo greatly differs from the preceding photo above, as this station had chosen to embellish the entire space as opposed to having only a statement piece displayed in a particular spot. De La Savanne presented a futuristic aesthetic that enriched the overall experience of the average commuter, immersing the individual in an alternative world. When photographing environments, we must recognize that all elements work together to form the whole, thus, what truly makes up the fabric of that environment may not be the flashiest. I have chosen not to submit my photo of the overhanging sculpture, which certainly evoked major cyberpunk vibes, I instead opted for the basic details that adorn the walls. Once again, making use of Lightroom Classic, I have zoomed into the image to elevate feelings of immersion in this world, furthering the imposition of the prominent orbs. The color has also been adjusted to emit a warmer tint, contrasting with the alien-like visuals. The shadows have been deepened as well to highlight the depth of the structure. The average person's time spent riding the metro is made up of delving into their own thoughts and life, thus unaware of less appealing details that improve the overall positive. While they may subconsciously interact with the sculpture, these overlooked details are what make the mundane less mundane.

Photo #3



A metro station must be functional, but that doesn't mean it needs to be boring. This is also a photo taken on Day 1 in the Saint-Henri station (Orange line). Humans thrive on social contact, nature and fulfillment, yet many attribute sunlight to happiness. Though artificial light achieves the same function, windows are often preferred. Thus, most metro stations have windows, for practical purposes. An interesting choice was made here to insert windows on the ceiling, creating somewhat of a sunroom that was well lit but also simultaneously somber due to the grey concrete. It was a particularly gloomy day, so the darkness highlighted the dark geometric structures and yellow lights, creating eye catching contrast. This is a marriage between practical and aesthetic architecture that shows modern innovation within architecture. Depending on the angle, I ended up with dramatic diagonals, hazy light rays pouring in, deep contrast and so much more, all breathtaking sights. The insightful design yielded a beautiful photo on its own so I simply dehazed the photo to bring forth the structures and regulate the light emission. This is truly a versatile composition that exemplifies Montreal's metro system but moreover local ingenuity and brilliance.

Contact Sheet - 1



1/10 sec at f / 5.0



1/4 sec at f / 9.0



1/15 sec at f / 5.6



1/50 sec at f / 5.6



1/20 sec at f / 5.6



1/50 sec at f / 5.6



1/40 sec at f / 5.6



1/15 sec at f / 5.6

Abdul Aziz, Nadia



1/20 sec at f / 4.0



1/20 sec at f / 5.6



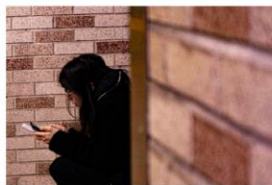
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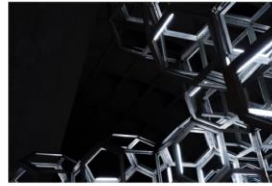
Contact Sheet - 2



1/20 sec at f / 5.6



1/20 sec at f / 5.6



1/60 sec at f / 5.6



1/80 sec at f / 5.0



1/20 sec at f / 5.6



1/30 sec at f / 5.6



1/80 sec at f / 5.0



1/40 sec at f / 5.6

Abdul Aziz, Nadia



1/20 sec at f / 5.6



1/25 sec at f / 5.0



1/10 sec at f / 9.0



1/20 sec at f / 5.6



1/25 sec at f / 5.6



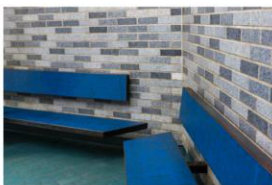
1/6 sec at f / 5.6



1/15 sec at f / 5.6



1/20 sec at f / 5.6



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