

**This summer, an exciting new collection
of art will debut in the Clinton/Washington
subway stop on the G line**

by Vanessa Drake-Johnson

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The story of this collection goes back to the fall of 1997. Led by Bill and Lucy Sikes, two dozen members of the Clinton Hill Society formed a committee to address concerns about public transportation in the neighborhood. High on their list was crime at the Clinton/Washington G station, and a resulting decrease in riders. Some people had even stopped using the station because of several muggings in the long tunnel

leading to the exits. This new transportation committee came up with a number of ideas before meeting with the MTA to offer suggestions. Because the MTA was equally concerned, it welcomed them.

One result was that the MTA put in new Metrocard readers at both ends of the station, but residents wanted something still more dramatic to improve the station's ambience. After all, this subway station is not scheduled for renovation until 2015. With four artists on the committee and a

large number of artists living in the neighborhood, it didn't take long to think of assembling a collection of art, and mounting a permanent art exhibit in the station. Spearheading the effort are Chandra Hauptman, George Bartenieff, and Bill and Lucy Sikes. Many others have contributed valuable time and energy to the project.

The collection will consist of 69 large works, glued or painted directly onto the empty advertising panels lining the station's walls. All these works are being created especially for this project. Working individually and in groups, 65 artists from the Fort Greene/Clinton Hill area are participating. The tremendous multicultural diversity of these neighborhoods is well represented, as is a wide range of aesthetics. The artists range in age from 8 to 80. Some are nationally known; others have never exhibited their work. Some have lived in this neighborhood for many years; others are recent immigrants to the United States. Yet under the experienced direction of artist/curators Daniel Simmons and John Kelley, these diverse works complement each other, exploring three different but related themes. The first theme is community at the local level: what it's like to live in this neighborhood, and what aspects of the community—such as the subway stations, the parks, the sounds of children playing in the summer—shape the artists' experiences and work. The second theme focuses on what it means to live in the larger community of New York, and how the turbulent but exciting mix of people and cultural traditions influence artists. The third theme is how art, including abstract art, can beautify and enhance the community environment.

Just who are all these artists in our midst? Some of the most well-known in the exhibit include Barry Johnson, Daniel Simmons, and Mary Salstrom. Although

there are far too many to mention in this article, here are a few:

Beuford Smith, an African-American photographer, is doing a panel of three photographs of the West Indian parade. John Kelley paints in the seventeenth-century classical style, and has painted the god Mercury. Sakeem Nelbert is a classic graffiti-style artist doing a panel that will say "Clinton Hill." Gwynne Duncan is doing a subway painting that pictures a simpler life of the 40s, and has a folk-art feel.

Pratt is sponsoring Peter Adamski, a young Polish artist and Pratt graduate, who will be doing the six panels in the Washington end of the station. Two neighborhood high schools are sponsoring three students who are doing panels. Artist Kimberly Bush, who runs an art studio for children, is collaborating on a panel with several children. Jitu Maat, an 8 year-old artist whose work has been featured on an album cover for Universal recording artist Rakam, will be doing his own panel.

Father, mother, and son Ellsworth Ausby, Jamillah Jennings, and Kalif Ausby each has a panel. Although they sometimes work with a palate of similar bright primary colors, their paintings are otherwise very different in style.

Onnie Millar is an 80-year-old former teacher whose work has largely focused on paintings of the West Indian community, costumes and parade. She is doing a painting about the education of a child going through different stages of life, in the style of a medieval painting of a traveling saint.

Luba Lukova, an artist who emigrated



Above: Daniel Simmons,
Gatekeepers

Right: Gwynne Duncan,
Smith & 9th

