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# 14 Art Stations of the Naples Metro

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The Art Stations of Naples Metro are a functional art-project ideated by Achille Bonito Oliva that includes some stops of Naples Metro: in this particular stopping and transit places, special attention was paid to making the environment beautiful, comfortable and functional.

The Art Stations originated from a project formulated by the city government with a view to make the urban area's public transport centers more attractive and to give everyone a chance to get an up-close look at prime examples of contemporary art: here, art works are not considered as furniture, but strictly enclosed in the architecture. The secondary purpose of this project is to redevelop large areas of the suburban tissue (such as Piscinola, Scampia or Chiaiano) and act as a driving force for the construction of new buildings that assume the role of focal points of the city of Naples (such as the Hospital of the Sea or the Citadel of the Book). The project makes art integral to the cityscape, and more importantly, accessible to the everyday commuter: in this way, the art works are perceived as pride of the city by all the citizens. On November 30, 2012, the Toledo station was elected as the most beautiful of Europe by the Daily Telegraph; while the Materdei station resulted at 13th place; on February 4, 2014 CNN confirmed Station Toledo as the most beautiful in Europe. The objective of this paper is to demonstrate how Naples, with this interesting artistic project, shows itself as a new model of Mediterranean culture that looks to the future.

**Key words:** Metro, art-project, integration, culture, future

The Art Stations of Naples Metro are some stops of Naples Metro, in which special attention was paid to making the environment beautiful, comfortable and functional. With the construction and expansion of numerous metro lines the municipality of Naples developed the project Stations of Art (also known as Hundred Stations Plan), with which it was intended to entrust the planning of metro stops to well-known contemporary artists and architects. Then, with a resolution, the Campania region issued guidelines to be applied to the design and construction of a station.

Under the direction of Achille Bonito Oliva, former director of the Venice Biennale, several stations have been converted into art galleries displaying over 180 works by more than 90 artists and architects such as Alessandro Mendini, Anish Kapoor, Gae Aulenti, Karim Rashid, and Sol LeWitt. Not only do these stations function as underground galleries, but they are architectural feats that stand alone as works of art.

Of the seventeen stations of Line 1, ten are known as Stations of Art: Garibaldi, Toledo, Università, Dante, Museo, Materdei, Salvator Rosa, Quattro Giornate, Vanvitelli, Rione Alto. To which four Stations of Line 6 have been added: Mostra, Augusto, Lala, Mergellina. The project of Stations of Art has been promoted by the town administration to make the transportation environment more attractive, to put big areas of the city to its best use and to offer everybody the possibility to meet contemporary art. The Art Stations, as well as to be beautiful to look at, and comfortable to hang out, have also aims to redevelop the surrounding areas (such as Piscinola, Scampia or Chiaiano) and push the construction of new buildings (such as the Hospital of the Sea or the Citadel of the Book).

The functionality is provided by the easy accessibility to all segments of users, made possible by an increase in the service areas for the rapid identification of a station. The latter, in fact, is made easily recognizable thanks to a system of communication and orientation, making use of visual signals, sound or customized (such as info point), which represent the unifying character of the system. The signage is clear and uncluttered, in order to allow the users to be able to move independently within the station (also allowing a hurried user the instantaneous planimetric orientation) exploiting in an optimal manner every service offered by the structure. The information is presented according to a precise plan that integrates dynamic works of art, signage and architectural space. The pleasantness of the stations is ensured by high levels of architectural quality, together with the redevelopment of the surrounding area.

Inside the stops are finished with works that protect the cleanliness and comfort of the environment, the latter in particular should be a standard of quality recognized only by choosing plants that give rise to an elegant, comfortable, clean, and modern. This is useful also to entice the user to assume correct behavior.

The sensation of space produced by the structure is of significant importance in the stations, and it is determined by the quality of the used materials. The use of the material, processing, the color, grain and texture determine the different functions of the complex; chosen materials are especially linked to local tradition (in this case, the tuff) and make the architectural work immediately perceptible and recognizable by the user, especially by the residents of the area. Finishes, decorations, written objects then determine the expressive character of the environment of the station (docks, mezzanine, connecting corridors), and similarly define the uniqueness of the image work.

The light is able to give plastic expressiveness to the individual functions and also represents an enrichment with respect to the minimum necessary to meet the need for sun. Well-controlled use of light may play a role in the organization of non-trivial paths and spaces within the ports, ensuring (as already mentioned) an immediate guidance to the public. The natural light must also be measured with the aid of filters, and regulators must be integrated with the artificial lighting in such a way as to ensure the comfort of the user and the perception of natural environments.

Napoli metro stations, new art on the underground

The idea of giving a very high artistic and cultural level to the stations has been accomplished in two different ways. On one side the internal and external spaces of the stations, collecting 200 works realized by 90 of the most prestigious contemporary artists, make one of the most interesting examples of a museum located on the whole urban area. In this way the museum is not a closed space with its usual concentration of works; it is an exhibition route on the open space for a dynamic enjoyment of the art. "I think of it as an obligatory museum," said Achille Bonito Oliva, an art critic and curator who has been the artistic coordinator of the project — "catacombs of beauty," he calls it — since it began more than a decade ago. "It isn't a museum in the sense of a repository of art," he continued, "there's a thread running through it" as stations are built to fashion "an underground aesthetic of the contemporary, bearing witness to our time".

Antonella Di Nocera, the city counselor responsible for culture said that "Artists come and present their vision of Naples to help Neapolitans see their city differently [...]. In this city, people take history for granted, but we want to teach young people that they are part of a stratified city".

Working in various media, the artists have collaborated closely with prominent architects to transform utilitarian places of transit into captivating sites. In a recent interview Mr. Bonito Oliva said that "This wasn't about decorating the architecture, it's about enhancing the space with the works of artists called on to dialogue with the space". The stations, he added, are "monuments to innovation".

ANM (Azienda Napoletana Mobilità) management of such artistic patrimony is quite complex comparing to the general management of urban public transportation. To better understand the management of the Stations of Art is useful to introduce the notion of "non-lieu" ("non-place", defined by Marc Augè in *Non-Lieux, introduction à une anthropologie de la surmodernité, Le Seuil, 1992*). In fact the main purpose of the art Station, well connected to the historical places and well integrate to the transit spaces of the city is to preserve the crucial points of the net of urban transportation from the anonymity and the homogeneity that usually characterizes stations, airports, highways.

Which is the role played by works of art? If certain number of works would have been located as simply objects and icons, of various natures and of various origins, underling a condition of isolation in the new context of the stations, they would have looked like pathetic fragments of life or of historical memories exhibited under the glass.

On the contrary a braver game has been played with paintings, sculptures, mosaics, photos and the installations directly commissioned to the artists who have been able to redraw the environment.

Important artists as Jannis Kounellis, Joseph Kosuth, Mimmo Paladino, Sol Lewitt, Enzo Cucchi, Mario Merz, Renato Barisani, Mimmo Rotella, William Kentridge, Robert Wilson, Michelangelo Pistoletto, have been asked to give a face and a voice to the need of identity and of historicity that the time in which we live, called by Augè "surmodernité" ("supermodernity"), forces to the borders of the social life.

The art from the inside of the stations moves outside, where it starts to correspond with the unpublished signals left by the history. In some Stations of the art, some works located along internal paths are directly linked to those located into open spaces, in buffer areas or entirely external to the perimeter of the stations.

One of the most meaningful examples of extension of art station over the physical borders of buildings is offered by the station "Salvator Rosa", designed by Studio Mendini and endowed with two exits quite far from each other, marked by two colored obelisks made in glass and steel. The inner works of art are ringed by those externals leaded into historical architecture of a Roman bridge and a neoclassic chapel. They carry mosaics and wall painting to the walls of the surrounding buildings until bravely absorbing a very high-density traffic zone next the second exit. This enormous artistic patrimony requires special cares, both specific and different according the characteristics of the materials and the techniques used in the realization of the single works. In fact in the subway they are different typologies of installations: from oil-painting or acrylic to mosaics, from the sculptures in bronze or in steel to the tubular neon, from the majolica to the light box and to the photos. To protect such public patrimony and to arrange the good state of preservation, the maintenance and the restoration of the works, ANM has stipulated an agreement with Academy of Arts of Naples and Metropolitana of Naples (the dealership of the Municipality of Naples for the planning and construction of the Line 1). It is an example of cooperation of involved parts, in order to emphasize competency and young people.

Within this project, every work is filed both from the historical-artistic and preservation point of view, with regards to the knowledge of techniques, of materials used and of the state of maintenance, according to the standard methods of "Istituto Centrale per il Restauro". All artists are interviewed to catalogue techniques and materials. Moreover a photographic promotion edited by Fabio Donato, teacher at the Academy and author of some art works, proves by documents the status of each work, from the damages to the maintenance and restoration.

The maintenance and restoration necessary are realized therefore from the Academy with the involvement of "yard-school" students and of the trainees of the Contemporary Art Maintenance and Restoration Course.

The great variety of materials and techniques used (already mentioned) makes also the activities of maintenance very interesting. In the case of the great work "Untitled" of Jannis Kounellis (200 x 2340 cm), installed in the station "Dante", the restoration was quite complex due to the heterogeneity of the materials (steel plates, iron beam, shoes, coat, hat, little trains). Consequently different treatments were necessary in order to remove dust, to scale crusts and stains.

Before restoring common materials worn by the weather, it was also necessary to think about the limits of restoration, not to risk to return to the public an art work "newer" than the one created by the artist.

Besides the mentioned project of preservation, ANM is involved also for what concerns the logistic organization and the demands of the circulation of the trains and the passengers. Several works in fact are installed above escalators

linking the entrance to sidewalk of the stations. For instance, for the extraordinary maintenance of "Intermediterraneo", a work of Michelangelo Pistoletto, needed to realize two suspended scaffolds whose weight didn't burden on moving staircase.

ANM wants to develop the potentialities of this project: the Stations of the art are not only containers of valuable works with regard of their structural aspects and their symbolic value. They urge an active relationship with the territory in which they insist. For these reasons Metronapoli has realized agreements with the town institutions, schools and private associations in order to make art stations public places for local communities.

The object of ANM SpA, is to guarantee an efficient service in line with demands and expectations of people and in same time to guarantee its maintenance, to support their knowledge and to make, the mentioned daily transit places, a scenario where is possible to identify and recognize all symbols of the city.

## ***Garibaldi Station***

The futuristic Garibaldi Station bears the signature of the famous French architect Dominique Perrault. It houses two installations of Michelangelo Pistoletto, both inspired to the concepts of transparency and brightness. This station is accessible through a complex system of crossing escalators, covered in mirrors to reflect the natural light passing through the glass ceiling. At the bottom of the escalators, some reflective steel panels show imaginary passengers on the way, blurring with the real ones passing through.

## ***Università Station***

This station, renovated by the Canadian designer and interior architect Karim Rashid, is an overwhelming explosion of modern shapes and colours. Sculptures and graphic artworks line the escalators, leading to platforms with backlit patterns on the walls. Two abstracted portraits of Dante and Beatrice follow the commuters descending and ascending the stairwells on each respective platform. The sparkling lime and pink point the way and guide the commuters to their destination. The metro stop, eclectic and full of color, has been designed to symbolize digital and information. In fact, Rashid said that he imagined spaces "that embodies the knowledge and language of the new digital era, which transmit ideas of simultaneous communication, innovation and their mobility of the Third Technological Revolution." In fact, next to the steps leading to the station, were put ceramic tile on which you can find many words coined since the 1960s as "network", "operating", "laptop", "database" "interface" or "software".

The station hall is characterized by very striking panels and colors, the materials used to produce them are Corian and mirrored steel. In the interior there is a strong contrast between the two main colors, fuchsia pink and lime, which are also useful for direct the user to the docks. In the lobby there are numerous works of art. Beyond the turnstiles there is the artwork Conversational Profile, two large cylindrical pillars in which it is possible to see two faces in profile, symbolizing the dialogue and communication between human beings. The second artwork, Ikon, is a large light box, in which several three-dimensional figures seem to float. Instead, among the black pillars and the light box stands Synapsi (or Synopsis), a sculpture in brushed steel which refers to human intelligence and the neural network of the brain.

## ***Toledo Station***

Designed by the Spanish architect Oscar Tusquets Blanca, Toledo station was built at 50 meters below the ground water and is the deepest metro station built on Line 1 to date. The station is inspired to the themes of water and light, including two mosaics designed by the South African artist William Kentridge and realised by Neapolitan craftsmen. In 2013, Toledo Station was celebrated as Public Building of the Year in the category Transport & Infrastructure of the Emirates Glass LEAF Awards. On November 30, 2012, the Toledo station was elided as the most beautiful of Europe by the Daily Telegraph; while the Materdei station resulted at 13° place.

## ***Materdei Station***

Designed by Atelier Mendini, Materdei Station opened in 2003, bringing new life and prestige to Piazza Scipione Ammirato, which was transformed into a pedestrian area with green spaces and works of arts, such as the bronzed Carpe Diem sculpture by Luigi Serafini and Lucio Del Pezzo's ceramics. The ramp leading to the lower level passes underneath Luigi Ontani's mosaics with ceramic reliefs, representing fantastic sea creatures and the traditional mask of Pulcinella. Both platforms are enriched by the coloured silkscreens panel designed by Mathelda Balatresi, Anna Gili, Stefano Giovannoni, Robert Gliglorov, Denis Santachiara, Innocente and George Sowden.

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## Biography

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