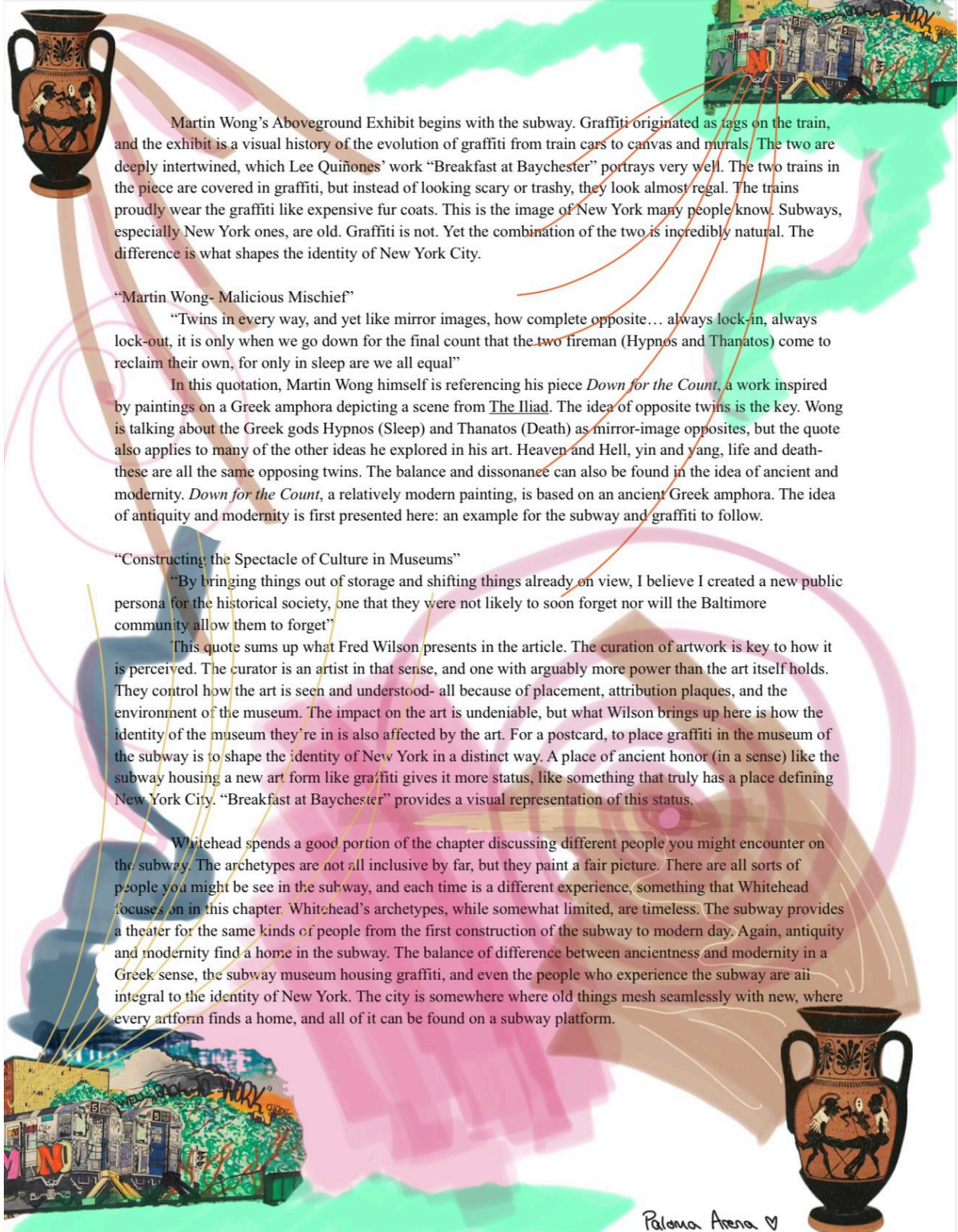


Paloma Arena's postcard- Breakfast at Baychester



Martin Wong's Aboveground Exhibit begins with the subway. Graffiti originated as tags on the train, and the exhibit is a visual history of the evolution of graffiti from train cars to canvas and murals. The two are deeply intertwined, which Lee Quiñones' work "Breakfast at Baychester" portrays very well. The two trains in the piece are covered in graffiti, but instead of looking scary or trashy, they look almost regal. The trains proudly wear the graffiti like expensive fur coats. This is the image of New York many people know. Subways, especially New York ones, are old. Graffiti is not. Yet the combination of the two is incredibly natural. The difference is what shapes the identity of New York City.

"Martin Wong- Malicious Mischief"

"Twins in every way, and yet like mirror images, how complete opposite... always lock-in, always lock-out, it is only when we go down for the final count that the two fireman (Hypnos and Thanatos) come to reclaim their own, for only in sleep are we all equal"

In this quotation, Martin Wong himself is referencing his piece *Down for the Count*, a work inspired by paintings on a Greek amphora depicting a scene from The Iliad. The idea of opposite twins is the key. Wong is talking about the Greek gods Hypnos (Sleep) and Thanatos (Death) as mirror-image opposites, but the quote also applies to many of the other ideas he explored in his art. Heaven and Hell, yin and yang, life and death—these are all the same opposing twins. The balance and dissonance can also be found in the idea of ancient and modernity. *Down for the Count*, a relatively modern painting, is based on an ancient Greek amphora. The idea of antiquity and modernity is first presented here: an example for the subway and graffiti to follow.

"Constructing the Spectacle of Culture in Museums"

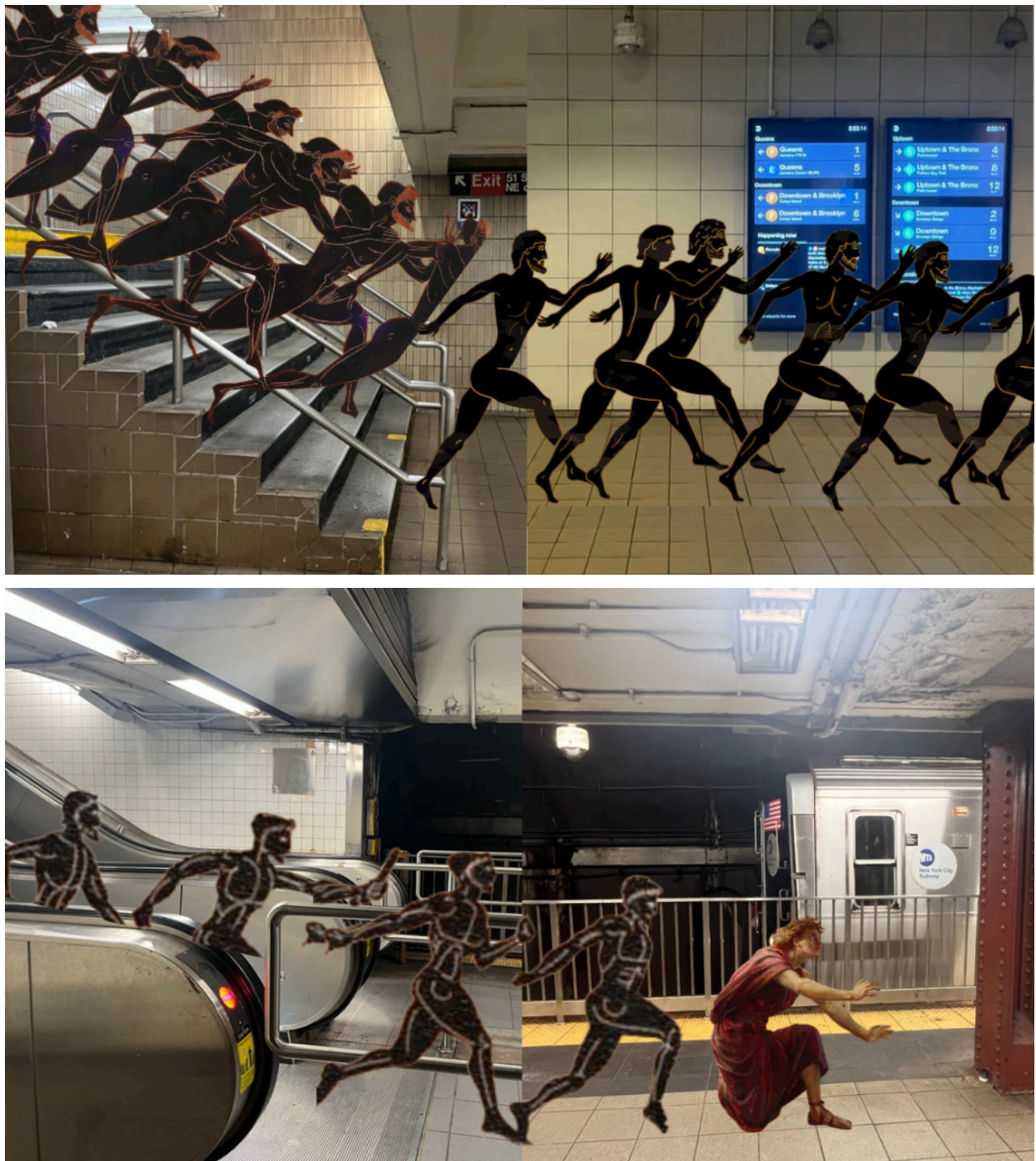
"By bringing things out of storage and shifting things already on view, I believe I created a new public persona for the historical society, one that they were not likely to soon forget nor will the Baltimore community allow them to forget"

This quote sums up what Fred Wilson presents in the article. The curation of artwork is key to how it is perceived. The curator is an artist in that sense, and one with arguably more power than the art itself holds. They control how the art is seen and understood— all because of placement, attribution plaques, and the environment of the museum. The impact on the art is undeniable, but what Wilson brings up here is how the identity of the museum they're in is also affected by the art. For a postcard, to place graffiti in the museum of the subway is to shape the identity of New York in a distinct way. A place of ancient honor (in a sense) like the subway housing a new art form like graffiti gives it more status, like something that truly has a place defining New York City. "Breakfast at Baychester" provides a visual representation of this status.

Whitehead spends a good portion of the chapter discussing different people you might encounter on the subway. The archetypes are not all inclusive by far, but they paint a fair picture. There are all sorts of people you might see in the subway, and each time is a different experience, something that Whitehead focuses on in this chapter. Whitehead's archetypes, while somewhat limited, are timeless. The subway provides a theater for the same kinds of people from the first construction of the subway to modern day. Again, antiquity and modernity find a home in the subway. The balance of difference between ancientness and modernity in a Greek sense, the subway museum housing graffiti, and even the people who experience the subway are all integral to the identity of New York. The city is somewhere where old things mesh seamlessly with new, where every artform finds a home, and all of it can be found on a subway platform.

Paloma Arena ♡

Bhavani Rupee Postcard: Orpheus & The Subway



On the subway, everyone takes different trains and gets off on different stops to get to different places, but in the end, they're all on the train of life. There are certain experiences in the subway that any New Yorker in a rush can relate to. This can be seen in *The Sweet Flypaper of*

Life, which is full of extremely human stories about people who are on varied paths in life and have differing backgrounds from each other. The narrator states, “The rush hour in the subway mixes everybody-white, black, Gentile, and Jew-closer than you ever are to your relatives.” It serves as an equalizing experience; everyone has moments when they’re running to catch the train or they miss the train. Ultimately, factors like race are inferior to how the subway brings everyone on an equal level.

In Rashid Johnson’s exhibit titled *Rashid Johnson: A Poem for Deep Thinkers*, he displays an untitled mirror mosaic work that is covered in blood, scratches and cracks, and depicts a person upside-down. It reminded me a lot of the people who died in the subway, and were quite literally trapped there forever (they went down to the underworld and didn’t come back, much like Eurydice). There has been so much violence on the subway, be it being pushed onto the tracks or being attacked, that it has contributed to the subway’s physical atmosphere. For example, the edge of the platform is colored yellow as a warning to stay back, and some stations have even started installing railings there. This has created a set of rules that passengers have to follow, which in turn generates a sense of universality. Everyone needs to follow the rules, whether they choose to or not depends on them.

In his subway chapter of *The Colossus of New York*, Colson Whitehead even delves into how the subway relates to hell, or the underworld. There are lots of connections to be made there, the most literal of which is that just like hell, the subway is underground. As I read through the chapter, I was also reminded of the Greek myth of Orpheus and Eurydice. When Orpheus goes to the Underworld to get his dead wife Eurydice back, Hades agrees on the condition that he has to lead her out, but cannot look back. At the end of his long journey, Orpheus is overcome with doubt, and looks back, losing Eurydice forever. Meanwhile, in the subway, you can’t be overcome with doubt like Orpheus. It’s like Whitehead says, “Get off. Get off now and hurry, before you are trapped in the underworld.” Any hesitation, any “looking back” will lead to you missing your train, and being trapped in the “underworld”. Everyone knows the desperation to catch your train, especially when you know there’s a chance you might not make it—every second counts. And after all that, when your hope is at its peak and you start to think that maybe you’ll make it, you hurry down the stairs only to find it gone. Much like Orpheus looking back when he is so close to escaping. And you are stuck there forever—at least that’s what it feels like.

The Sweet Flypaper of Life is full of extremely human stories about people who are on varied paths in life and have differing backgrounds from each other. It can also serve as an analogy of the subway—how everyone takes different trains and gets off on different stops to get to different places, but, in the end, they’re all on the subway of life. The narrator states, “The rush hour in the subway mixes everybody-white, black, Gentile, and Jew-closer than you ever are to your relatives.” It serves as an equalizing experience; everyone has moments when they’re running to catch the train or they miss the train. Ultimately, factors like race are inferior to how the subway brings everyone on an equal level.

The term social choreography in the article “Battling in the Bronx: Social Choreography and Outlaw Culture Among Early Hip-Hop Streetdancers in New York City” is defined as “the ways the people of a given society are trained to move (both physically and spatially) and to contort and comport their bodies in keeping with and in (counter) production to a given social order.” The subway allows for many of these choreographies to be played out, such as running to catch a train and the swaying to maintain balance inside the train. When a person knows that there is a strong chance of missing their train and an equal chance of catching it if they rush, running, or at least moving quickly, is inevitable. This is a “dance” that they have more control over, as they can choose to run and catch their train, or move regularly and miss it. On the contrary, when a person is standing in a subway car, they may sway a bit to keep their balance—this is a more involuntary choreography, but one that is nonetheless aided by the subway’s movement. Ultimately, the social choreography that is facilitated by the subway is one that is universal, but changes depending on the situation.

Thomas DiLorenzo Postcard: Youth & The Subway



To be shown with “New Direction” by Gorilla Biscuits playing

Mediums: Photography, Music

The subway has always provided, sanctioned or not, an avenue of expression for the youth of New York City, with graffiti being one of the most well-known and modern artforms for this adolescent articulation. From its inception in the 70s during a time of lacking identity for NYC, graffiti has become intertwined with the subway as the subway was and still is the canvas for young artists. They imbued each work with their own personalities, in a sense putting themselves on display for every passenger and passerby at each station. Colson Whitehead acknowledges this reality within his essay on the subway, “We’ve all sped past ghost stations

where the exits have been bricked up and graffiti warns in looping letters. Abandon all hope.” (Whitehead 17). Whitehead’s acknowledgement of this nature of graffiti highlights not only the sense of humor behind the art and within the artist, but also the iconicity of graffiti itself. His statement that it is an experience that every New Yorker has had, shows just how thoroughly connected the art of the subway and the city has truly become. They lived their urban realities and then created their art based on it. Because of this each artist had their own style influenced by each of their own existences. As Baudelaire says “He began by being an observer of life, and only later set himself the task of expressing it. This has resulted in a thrilling originality...as a flattering compliment to the truth.” (Baudelaire 15). One’s interactions with their surroundings makes a profound impact on them, once one is able to appreciate and understand their own viewpoint one’s art holds even more value as their style and their expression becomes further unique, and a further extension of their reality. The rogue artists of the subway tagging every surface had become a reflection of the city around them. From the walls to the subway cars they painted on, they did so in order to let the city know them; to detail and accentuate their grievances as well. Lee Quinones’ *A Life Takes a Life* was on display at the Museum of the City of New York as a part of the *Above Ground: Art from the Martin Wong Collection* and communicates the fear of the rampant violent crime that plagued Latino communities in the 1980s. Quinones painted this in order to shine a light upon this issue so that the places that he grew up in would have to suffer no longer from this violence. This was his reality, he presented it to the rest of the city in order to express his want for change; to express his need for change; to express the need for change. Quinones was one of the many young artists impacted by Martin Wong, a man who not only championed but vehemently assisted in the expression of youth. In his younger years as “Wong played a key role in helping the Angels [of Light Free Theatre]

realize their aesthetic ambitions. He taught them technical skills gleaned from his art school education..." (Kwon 22), showing his complete devotion to helping others express themselves just as he desired to himself. This is further continued when one examines his time in NYC. Wong would consistently supply young artists with supplies from the store he was employed at, along with being the man that opened the Museum of American Graffiti in order to push forward more young artists into the eyes of the public. This was all derived from Wong's will and want for expression, for he knew that the identity of the individual could speak for the masses. And for the masses to be reached one needed a canvas. Because these adolescent artists were unable to put their works on big exhibits, they instead turned to where they knew more people would see it: the subway. The subway is the great leveling ground of the city, no matter one's background, age, or tax bracket one takes the same train to get to the same places. It is for that reason that the subway harbors such importance to arts and to the city, it gives the youth an equal exposure opportunities to those museums, if not a bigger one.

Apollo Pittman Postcard: Subways from the heart



What is the point of being alive, is it to simply be within a structure or were we meant to bend it. That is the topic I had to face when going through the task of making this postcard. It may seem over exaggerated or playing into a deep notion I don't believe in but in all honesty that was what I interpreted this project to be. "To be or not to be" The famous line, but in this context what does it mean, to be, is to live in between the moments of a camera flashing, the hours of make up, the setting up for the perfect pose paired with the perfect caption. Through the help of Will Rawls and his performance *Siccer* I began to fully understand what it meant to be. The almost deafening silence clashed with the overwhelming noises, your body couldn't predict the next line or breathe, you simply had to watch, lean forward a little to better hear the noises in the voices echoed throughout the room. The experience shaped my lens for the postcard, in addition to the chapter subway in Colton Whitehead's *The Colossus of New York*.

With Colton Whitehead as a guide, I used his work to help me understand the interfaces of the subway. To think beyond it just being people packed together trying to get from point A to point B. To walk down those steps on 51st street is to take a pathway to another time in another world. It is a collection of stories waiting to be told and stories concluding all at once. It is the

collimation of students on a trip with teachers at the help to rangle them. For a second sometimes I forget that I'm in college, and I remember school trips. The usually easy going teacher had a stern look on her face. She wasn't upset with me, it's just the face one develops on the subway. It's a built in mask learned by all New Yorkers to maintain a sense of ominousness while riding through the city. The way Whitehead depicts the subway in a way reminds me of that teacher. Ever the observant person, dissecting the behavior of others passing by. Watching to see what scene plays out next, trying to blend in with the crowd. I took Whitehead's approach to having a detailed eye to how I approached and looked at art in New York City.

When one is viewing art it is hard not to include biases because looking at the art also requires one to look at the artist. There is something very unique about New York that I have lacked the honor of seeing elsewhere in the United States. That is that to be a black person in New York means you take up space, beyond that of just your body but in your field as well. Kimberly Drew said it best "As the years carried, I used this optimism as a shield. I wielded it when people expressed surprise that someone *like me* sauntered proudly through the museum's halls." The essence of this sentiment is that: yes, she was the most qualified in her field, yes she worked hard at her craft to be honored with the position, and yes she held her head high for everyone to see that she deserved to be there, and made it known. In a very similar fashion I was also inspired by Rashid Johnson. After viewing his exhibit I read into part of an article written, within it Johnson wrote "My mother introduced me to the book when I was 15. She specifically said that she really did not like it. One of her concerns with *Native Son* was why, through the portrayal of an uneducated black man, Wright makes us look like animals?" It caused me to reflect on how I view the black male in art, how I view myself as a trans black male, and maybe how to change how I think for the better. And through my efforts I tried to consider that through my postcard. Through the use of old greeks, performers, familiar stops, I hope to emulate the feeling of something otherworldly and yet comforting.

Izzy Rodrigues: Criminal Statue



In Colson Whitehead's "Colossus of New York", he provides thirteen different essays, all about different aspects of New York City. One chapter that was interesting was the chapter about the subway. The subway is a commonly used mode of transportation, with millions of New Yorkers using it everyday to get to where they need to go. Whitehead goes into depth about all the things that could happen in the "underworld" that is the subway. One example being that terrible feeling you have when you realize your train is going express and you end up in a "whole different borough", or when your train is stuck in the middle of the tunnel because there is an issue with the train ahead of yours. The subway is a prime part of the New York City experience, even though it does sound like Hell. But one thing that makes it less of a Hell, is art. When you hop the train, you often see some type of stylized writing on the train walls, windows and doors, which we recognize as graffiti. This form of art is often condemned by those inside and outside the art community. But graffiti should always be recognized as art, even though it doesn't follow the guidelines of what "real art" should be, it's a form of visual creation and expression, just like the classic ancient greek sculptures that have been highly revered in the community. Antiquity and modernism should be embraced as all the same, especially in places like the subway, where we are all able to experience art.

In September, 2025, the Museum of the City of New York held the Martin Wong exhibit, a curation of the artist, Martin Wong, collection of graffiti work from various famous graffiti artists. Graffiti became an important part of New York City's art scene, starting in the 1970's, with graffiti artists making art on the streets, whether it is on the side of buildings or the walls of a train. Specifically, they would write "tags", a stylized version of their street name. They would use all types of dramatic lettering styles with all different types of colors. With that, a community of artists were created. Then graffiti became a well known art form in New York City, so much

so that the mayor even had to set a precedent to remove any trains that had graffiti on it. This art form is relatively new, compared to other art styles like realism or abstraction. It is a modern form of art.

In Susan Stewart's book, *Crimes Of Writing: Problems in the Containment of Representation*, She briefly talks about Graffiti and the duality of it being considered a crime or art. As mentioned before, there was a big effort to criminalize graffiti artists who would freely tag on buildings and trains. Many people thought that graffiti was not a form of art and is in fact "distasteful" and an "eyesore". It became a "conflict regarding the status of the artist and the artwork", meaning it was not as well respected compared to other art forms, considering the fact that it became outlawed in the city. Nonetheless, graffiti is still art, it just happens to be an art form that comes with political weight. Susan Stewart perfectly explains this political side to the culture of graffiti, by emphasizing how the "attitudes toward graffiti" became based on the interests of social, political and class groups, as well as conservatism. Many classical-preferring individuals or groups dislike the art of graffiti because of its abstraction, fluidity, and individuality, compared to classic styles like realism. Graffiti has also been seen as an indicator for the lower class, driving high class and wealthy groups to condemn it. Wealthy individuals can influence the government, hence the crackdown on graffiti when it reached popularity. However, this does not change the fact that graffiti is a well known part of New York City Culture. It was prominent in the late 1900's, and citizens of NYC still see it everywhere today. No matter how illegal or condemned it is, it is still an important part of New York City culture.

It makes you wonder though, why can't we respect all types and periods of art forms? They all contribute to each other, they evolved from one another. Humans began art with the cave paintings, then to making sculptures in Ancient Greece and Rome, and now we are here,

writing stylized versions of our names on train windows. Artists learned from the past, then added their touch of modernity and individuality. Graffiti is nowhere near different in that aspect.

This postcard is representing the evolution and remembrance of art in an ever changing city, especially in one of its key components, the Subway. It shows how antiquity, like the ancient Greek sculpture, can come hand in hand with modernism, like graffiti, no matter how different they may be. It is important to remember the art we come from, and how it inspires the city and inspires its changes, and how it will always live on, whether it is in a museum or on the wall of the train door.