

“Parkside Portals,” 86th Street and Central Park West Subway Station, B & C lines, MTA Arts for Transit, fabricated by Miotto Mosaic Art Studios and Trivisanutto Giovanni s.r.l., photography: Tom Vinetz

Artwork by Joyce Kozloff at the newly renovated 86th Street and Central Park West subway station offers a view of the Upper West Side through a micro and macro lens in six colorful glass mosaic and ceramic tile murals. The perspective shifts from faraway aerial views of Central Park West using Google Earth technology to close-ups of the lavish design elements found on the neighborhood’s majestic building facades. Framing these details are the trees of Central Park during the four seasons of the year, as well as views of rooftops and street intersections merging at that location. Zooming in, the artwork pays homage to the architecture of the adjacent streets and their *beaux arts* and art deco ornamentation, which the artist embellishes with her eye for color and knowledge of the community, from the decade she lived on the Upper West Side. [In fact, her first New York apartment was at 124 West 86th, where she experienced this station daily, traveling to and from her job.]

When a visitor walks off a train and onto the shallow platform of a New York subway station, the arches that support the structure repeat in a long, monotonous horizontal stretch. Here, those arches become portals into other worlds, as the artwork fills their space and is girded by mosaic pilasters that echo their rhythm. Each bay is capped by elements derived from carved doorways, wrought iron gates and balconies, terra cotta animal mascots and stained glass windows.

There are surprises to be found throughout the six panels. Inserted into the center of the cool, wintry upper platform south mural, there is a map of Seneca Village, a nineteenth century community of freed slaves, which was destroyed to build Central Park. The two smallest pieces are located over the stairwells at the north (88th St) and south (86th St) entrances. Their steep views down Central Park West could produce vertigo, but bold mid-century geometrical side panels anchor them. The largest mural, on the lower platform south, contains six portals. Four are views into the park encompassing vast stretches of fall foliage and spring blossoms, one of which is turned on its side; the other two are an ebullient mash-up of local building details, reimagined in hues never seen at those locations.

Kozloff collaborated closely with mosaicists who translated her intricate paintings into glazed tiles and glass mosaics. The panels alternate between one-foot square ceramic tiles executed so that the artist’s brushstrokes are visible, and finely cut glass mosaic *smalti*, an enduring craft perfected in the

Friuli region of Italy.