

# Subway Series

## A Photographer's Ride through the Art World

IMAGES AND TEXT BY DARYL-ANN SAUNDERS

I work in New York City as a commercial and fine art photographer. My commercial work consists of portraiture, corporate advertising, special events and architecture. My fine art work is of quiet subjects—nature, nudes, isolated landscapes, and industrial settings. Creating a cohesive body of artwork and getting it exhibited, promoted and sold is hard work. It takes dedication, time, money, and long-term persistence. That said, it's also enriching and affirming when the process works. In my case, artwork has sold, opportunities have been revealed, and colleagues and loved ones finally believe me now when I say I'm an artist!

### THE INSPIRATION

Several years ago, I started a new, ongoing series of subway photographs entitled *Metallic Metropolis*; now called *On The Platform*. It came from a need to immortalize some aspect of New York after September 11, 2001; to create something new that embodied the themes of deconstruction and re-creation all around me. The subject matter and 'assemblage' technique came from something I remembered seeing years before. Two subway images, shot on assignment, were lying adjacent to each other on my lightbox and seemed to merge, forming a single cohesive image;



Gate 80, from the series 'On The Platform' by Daryl-Ann Saunders. Fuji Crystal Archive Print

this unusual perspective became the launch pad for this series of photographs.

### THE CREATION PROCESS

Straddling the divide between film and digital processes was a challenge. I decided to use film rather than digital,

and 35mm rather than a larger format.

I scouted subway locations and revisited with an assistant to shoot at night on a tripod with Fuji 800 ASA color negative film. With film development, I ordered double 4x6 prints to lay out the assemblages manually. In addition, I had low-resolution scans made and burned to CD so I could recreate them on the computer and create small test prints.

### GOING SOLO

I showed 10 of these test prints to the curator at Pfizer, Inc. in New York City. Pfizer has a corporate art collection and conducts 3 to 4 photography exhibits a year of work by artists represented in their collection. After making the presentation, I was extended an invitation for a solo exhibition in their 19th floor Gallery. Pfizer's curator, Ingrid Fox, had this to say about the series: "Landscape and cityscape are themes that a conservative corporate collection embraces—consequently, we try to find artists taking a fresh approach to this tradition. Daryl-Ann Saunders has done this brilliantly in her approach to cityscape in which she elevates the mundane".

To prepare for this opportunity, I had



Saunders' work on display at Pfizer's 19th floor gallery

much to do. I decided to tailor the exhibit prints for the specific space, which is within a large elevator lobby, so I first measured the individual wall spaces. I wanted to use Fujifilm's Fujiflex Crystal Archive because it's an archival photographic paper for digital color printing. Super glossy and saturated, it complements the metallic look of the subway subject matter. So, I showed samples of my work to Fujifilm, requested film and paper sponsorship for the exhibit, and they agreed.

Photo by Denny Tillman



Daryl-Ann Saunders at Safe-T-Gallery

## TECHNICAL DETAILS

I scanned 35mm negatives on a Polaroid SprintScan 4000 film scanner at the largest size possible (approximately 80 mgb RGB files, or 20x30 inches at 180ppi) for printing on a Durst Lambda digital C-print machine. Image assembly and Photoshop adjustment layers sometimes expanded the files to 400 mb or more, so adequate RAM and empty hard drive space were vital. Images were finally flattened and burned to CD for output.

I first worked with an independent graphics professional for the exhibit printing and the exhibit prints were superb. However, due to inadequate information from this professional, numerous mistakes occurred initially which required time-consuming file corrections. I learned that it is always best to consult with others before undertaking a challenging project, or immediately, if you suddenly run into problems. Since then, I've been working with Jay Tanen at Duggal Visual Solutions in New York City for my exhibition digital C-prints and I recommend their work with confidence.

Ten exhibition prints were made in three sizes, from 27"(h) x 37"(w) to 25"(h) x 70"(w). City Frame, a well-regarded New York exhibition framer, used 8-ply mats with 3.5" of mat border space all around each print, framed with black maple wood. The four large 'panoramic' prints were mounted to plexi for flatness. All pieces were framed with plexi in front.

Pfizer's Gallery is not a public access space, so media promotion wasn't a viable option. However, Pfizer's compelling photo invitation sent to my mailing list and my e-mail follow-up delivered a tremendous turnout at the opening reception. The exhibit, originally slated for two months, stayed in place for four, and a number of framed prints were sold.

## SAFE-T SECOND

Don Burmeister, Director of Safe-T-Gallery in Brooklyn, NY saw the Pfizer exhibit and contacted me to have a solo exhibit at his gallery. He noted, "When I first saw the work it was in a rather difficult space, but the photos were very strong and the presentation very professional. I spent several minutes looking at the work before I realized that it would make a good fit in my gallery. I had been thinking of doing a show about the New York Subway (2004 is the 100th anniversary) so the work was topical".

I accepted the opportunity from Safe-T-Gallery so press releases, e-mails and postcards went out to their mailing list and mine to announce the show.

Promoting the opening of an exhibit is one thing, but maintaining ongoing interest is another. To do this, I arranged a speaker event in which Shoshana Rothaizer, a licensed NYC tour guide, gave an entertaining talk with visual aids about the history of the NYC subway system. This was a wonderful way to offer something educational and fun to the community, plus it drew a wider audience and enhanced listings in various publications, including Photograph, Photo District News, the New York Times weekend section, and others. And once again, artwork sold.

This full circle: artwork creation, exhibition, promotion, and sales, is a challenging one, and I learned many things from the experience. I look forward to showing this work in other venues (e.g., galleries, corporate and public spaces) and I welcome comments and exhibition inquiries. **DI**

*Daryl-Ann Saunders's commercial and fine art work can be viewed at [www.DASaunders.com](http://www.DASaunders.com).*