

ART on BART

An artist guided tour of the San Francisco Bay Area Urban Ecosystem



Amber Hasselbring and Art on BART Photo: Jessamyn Lovell

Woodward kept record in his own journal during the tour; his account appears below formatted like this.

9:25 AM

I've just entered the system, as Amber and the officials at BART would call it, and I will not be leaving it for some time, until around 1 PM, I believe, and here at the same station, Rockridge. I don't actually know what to expect when I try to leave then, regarding my ticket, but I'm sure I'm not the first person to do it. I'm not sure I know what to expect overall regarding Art on BART, even though I've discussed it with Amber any number of times. Maybe that's the point.

After Amber's conversation the other day with someone higher up at BART, which she described as "fatherly in a way", I'm very curious to see what greets us at the platform at Civic Center this morning.



Photo: Bill Owens

Art on BART (Bay Area Rapid Transit) happened on Saturday, October 1, 2005. The daylong artwork took the shape of a tour, designed to investigate the urban ecosystem. Onboard, artists engaged riders with performance art, dance, readings, music and activism. We visited the ends of each train line, we explored the Bay Area and we celebrated public transportation.

The Art on BART Found Journal Project was conceived by Toph Woodward for the tour. At 10:15 AM, Woodward distributed three journals, in which riders wrote their thoughts, ideas and responses. This booklet includes a selection of Art on BART Found Journal Project entries as well as photographs taken during the tour.



Civic Center Station Photo: John Grimes

It's been a while since I've written while riding the train, and I'd forgotten how jerky the movements can be, despite it being on a basically straight track. My bad handwriting will be even worse today.

I think it's amusing that I am as excited as I am about riding to all the BART endpoints.

I DELETED AN EMAIL LAST NIGHT WHILE IN THE MIDDLE OF ANOTHER INSOMNIA SESSION. IT READ. . .

"BART IS NOT ON STRIKE, WANT TO GO CLIMBING TODAY?"

We just came to a stop in the bay tunnel, which is never a good sign. Reminds me of being stuck here once before on my way

to an opening, years ago. It's funny how you never forget that, even though it was only maybe 15 minutes of your life. Moving now again, very fast, and it's loud, like a dinosaur bellowing.

At the Civic Center Station now, which is rather busy, but no sign of Amber or a BART-happy crowd immediately. I'm going to walk the length of the platform. It's just after ten.



Photo: John Grimes



Running towards car 2 the adventure begins . . . ART on BART . . . I haven't ridden BART in years. ~I've left the Bay Area. Now I live in a place with spotty public transportation. My 1st time on the train there, people were so offended at being on a crowded car (oh no!) they had to get off and walk. It's good to be in a place where people can share space and still breathe.

10:45 AM

There's certainly a crowd now, and we've all made it onto the second train. I don't recognize most of the people joining us, aside from Andres, who is a fixture when Amber is around. It's about 15 or 20 people total. I passed out the journals I made and immediately wished I'd had time to make more. Someone named Rick made a clean and super-informative booklet about all the stops on the system, bound like a company's annual report and looking very official. I like it. Amber herself made a really well-designed fold-out origami sort of poster/schedule/brochure. I didn't know she was going to do that. It's very cool. I hope the journals work and that people use them and enjoy it.

There's a sort of nervous buzz on the train, people talking to each other quietly. In some ways, I think this is the part everyone has been waiting for: What happens now? We're pulling into the third stop now. Most people have sort of clustered, and it seems much less disruptive than I think I expected it to be. We're at Balboa Park Station; I've never been here before. Isn't this where the Scorpio Killer operated?

Eesh Art on BART. Great idea. It would be fun to meet the driver . . . I like the idea of a notebook that travels with BART capturing crumbs along the way. Experiencing the journey as we do, collecting impressions, changing seats, blotting thoughts and anxieties. We're also being photographed. Don't look now but there's someone looking at you. Looking at the Art. (B)ART. There should be a BART line of essential oils and cosmetics. Beige. Aqua.

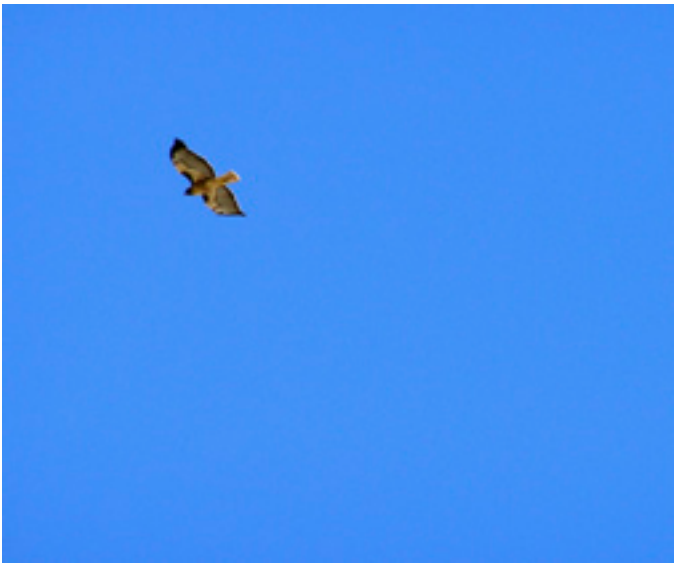
The landscape blurs, and with it, the mind clears. Allowing for open space, truth, wisdom and joy, a gentle lullaby of a passing tree, mall, mother, filth, beauty. Animated, travelers stand, engaged in being human. A trip most dynamic. Traveling without moving.

The doors are closing. Mind the gap. Stand clear of the door. Open your eyes. Smile to your neighbor. Embrace the joy in circumstance. Live. All riders are kin. It is only the stops, taken too literally, that create pause and shame in embracing each other. Open your eyes, rehumanize. The guy to your left is the best friend you've ever met.

It looks as though more people are joining. For some reason, I think I expected this to be like a Bacardi commercial, with all of us commandeering a subway train and turning it into our own little rave or what have you.



Lorna Brod reads Bay Area Ecology map
Photo: Andres Larin-Baranda



Hawk above Millbrae Station Photo: John Grimes

Funny how motion gives way to new motion and clumsiness by some becomes choreographed. A dissolution from normal to abnormal and back again.

We're above ground now and it's very foggy. I'm beginning to think I should have tied the pens to the journals so people wouldn't lose or take them. Not that I think people would be taking pens on purpose, just accidentally. It's strange, as I have now counted 5 people walking around in this car with cameras, all waiting for something to happen like journalists in a war zone.

We're at the Millbrae Station now, which is very modern and replete with sculptures and nice architecture, as though we've just pulled into Tomorrowland and it's 1963 inside the train and 2005 outside the train. Welcome to the future.



Daisie Huang (back) Sam Brower (front)

We're all now waiting on the platform in 2005 for the train to start back going the other way. It's very suburban here. These sculptures are hideous up close. I think they would scare small children.

Back on the train and moving again. The event has begun to take on a sort of community party-type quality; everyone has started milling about and chatting now, after the long break at the station.

Several years ago, I spent an entire evening in the 24th St. Mission BART Station. From 1:30 AM until 5:30 AM, BART allowed a number of student filmmakers use the platform to shoot their films during the early hours. During the next four hours I came to realize how horribly filthy the BART Station was - coated in a thick, black grime.

Riding backwards makes me dizzy . . .

It's odd to be on the same train, going in the opposite direction, as I didn't think that was how BART worked for some reason. I thought the trains turned around, but I suppose, really, I never paid that much attention. And, if anything, that is certainly the point of Art on BART, yes?

The train now has a slew of people in it, standing room only. I have no idea where these people are going. They're probably heading to SF for a sports event or to buy things. I almost didn't wear a coat today, but now I'm glad I did.

One time I got on a crowded BART at Rockridge there were so many people face to face, back to back. I looked at this one man and he was exposing his penis - I wanted to scream at him to put it away - and I wondered why no one else screamed at him, or was I the only one who saw - which is hard to believe - or just a figment of my imagination.

This is a BART blessing may your BART ride always be fun safe and holy.



Photo: Andres Larin-Baranda

12:00 PM

We're sitting at Richmond Station, home sweet home. I could walk home from here is what I mean to say. It's breezy and cool out. Yay again for me wearing a coat. I would guess that this is the first time most of these people in our little

group have ever been to Richmond. I'm not blaming them, really, it's just odd to think that their one visual of Richmond will be the BART station.



Passing by the shipping cranes at West Oakland
Photos: Andres Larin-Baranda

I came from the edge-less land, somersaulting toward the edges, half-buried I rise beyond my own, and edge-less I return.
I grew up with BART.
I lived in the East Bay, went to school in San Francisco. BART was my best friend and my worst enemy, but it never let me down.
It never let me get to school late, nor to a meeting late. I think we need to remember though it may not be a perfect transit system that it's very useful for many people of the Bay Area. Other cities in the country are still trying to catch up to BART in terms of service and distance it covers. I think we take BART for granted, so let's take a second to appreciate it. Thanks for the great ART on BART day!

A marketing instructor I had worked for public transit organizations throughout his career. He spoke of customer who demanded every aspect of the system be high-end and, as a result, non standard and expensive to maintain. Despite his warnings they demanded their jewel of a system. Their justification was that they could not sell the public on granting funding for a system that was anything less. I am riding that system now.

Can you feel the quality?

Back on the train and moving. I think I was expecting more activity somehow. There's a sense of art happening, I think, a sense that we are creating an event here, but I'm not sure I could define it beyond that. I'm assuming some art activities will happen when we deboard the train (exit the system) at Rockridge shortly for lunch. I'm very hungry.

Approaching Ashby. Someone is now leading an activity meant to introduce people to one another. I should be participating, I suppose, but then I couldn't do this. I think the activity leader is a middle school teacher, if I heard the introduction correctly. They do seem like classroom exercises, though much more open-ended, or maybe I don't give middle schoolers enough credit.



Loma Brod with Lori Gordon performing Kiss it Goodbye

WARNING!
WALLS HAVE EARS
BE CAREFUL OF WHAT YOU SAY!

Who do you trust? Why?

I trust you because what are we without trust, real trust

"IF YOU SEE SOMETHING UNUSUAL, SAY SOMETHING."
UM . . .YEAH.

I am sitting at the back of the train under a "report suspicious behavior" sign, and it occurs to me that people might think having isolated myself is suspicious. At the station, waiting, and a child is screeching, people are wandering through as this exercise is happening. This is good.

I've never felt comfortable initiating conversation on public transit. It's



NO, WE LOVE EVERYBODY.

interesting that it's so easy to do as part of Art on BART.

Yes, Thanks!
so important to have an
excuse to interact and bring life, learning and excitement (or, er, whatever) to BART.

Photo: John Grimes

Now we're underground again and I can't hear anything above the whining of the train in the tunnel aside from the screeching child and Andres. I'm moving back closer now to the group. I feel like Marlin Perkins on The Wild Kingdom. People are thanking each other and switching seats. At the opposite end of the train from me, there's an Hispanic man wearing a huge white cowboy hat. He looks both interested and confused. I think everyone in our excursion group is white. How sad.

More instructions and more exchange about the Bay Area. A young couple just sat down across from me, totally oblivious to what's going on. They are either in love already or on their second date and deciding; they can't stop looking at each other and talking.

I could use a nap right now, let me tell you. Or lunch. No tea this morning after breakfast. The group is listing vegetables and fruit now. New instructions and we're back above ground in Oakland, I believe. I've lost track of the stations.

2:20 PM

Back from lunch break at Rockridge. There was a cart full of fruit waiting for us when we exited the system, which was sort of amazing and almost magical, actually. I would love to arrange to have carts of fruit waiting for me at various locations as I traveled through my day.



Temescal Amity Works' cart full of apples, pears, bread and preserves greets us as we exit the BART for lunch Photo: Jessamyn Lovell



There once were some people wise people. They were sages and knew all there was to know. They passed on what they knew to the others who wanted to receive it. And so it was.

By and by, the ones who wished to receive it became fewer and fewer. And the ones who knew, dispersed themselves across the lands.

"What shall we do?", the wise ones who remained together asked. They thought on it for many days. They came up with many ideas.

And one of them said, "We shall create a beautiful package of all the materials of the land. It will shine and glisten. Inside, we will put what we know and we shall call this package Art."

I'd bury copies of all my favorite images. . .

When it is thoughtful, Art strikes with a luminous tickle, glorious and painful, a jolt.

I had lunch at the Rockridge Café with Jesse, Monja, and Andres. Jesse and I made it back onto the right train in the nick of time. It was literally that close. Andres missed the train, but I'm not sure he was joining us for the second leg anyway.

We lost someone after lunch. I don't think it was intentional. It was the guy in the red shirt who'd been playing the harmonica.



Levana Saxon leads us in Flocking

I don't know what his name was, but he said his nickname was Chewbacca, and he made the best wookie noises.

Sorry Chewbacca.

I ride BART frequently. I am finding it a little difficult to make myself see it as something of a vehicle for culture. Art on BART is waking me up a little bit. Whoa a lot! Having traveled a little bit lately to other cities with large mass transit systems I'm noticing how peculiar BART is. There's carpeting in the trains for one thing. It also makes louder screeching noises than the other systems. Also, all the stations are individually designed!?! I like the Pittsburgh Station.

Jesse has joined us, though, and is now getting people to take photos on the train. For this leg, a car without carpeting, which is sort of odd, as I rarely see them. We're on our way to the Pittsburg Station. I think. Maybe it's Dublin. I'm not really sure.



I normally work alone so it's hard to know what to do. With all the activities, it might be distracting.

map after map is traveled:
scenes of blue ink swimming pools against tree lined streets.
people are making noises with their mouths but I can only hear a blur of words much like the landscapes unidentifiable.

life seems to be passing by in this way lately.
too fast to tell each moment from the next.
I try to live in each map one at a time but each one evolves into the next so I can't remember what I just experienced.
this day will end and a new one will start.
it will lead to the next and the next but will I remember this one particular day moment minute breath?

which ones will stand out on the day I die?

I can only think about what's happening next even in the very minute in which I exist.



Pittsburg Bay Point Station

More activities now from the friendly middle school teacher. This activity is actually causing a few people to switch cars, and that's fine and sort of the point to. Some other people look quite interested. To me, it would seem like this is the safest line to do crazy things on, as it's sort of isolated. I feel like we're in the middle of nowhere between some of these stations.

Now onto another game, with Jesse taking plenty of photos now too. I'm noticing that most all of these are group activity games, which is appropriate, I suppose. Elizabeth is taking pictures now; it's nice to see her again. I know that Jesse's enjoying the chance to use her mini-printer, which looks sort of like a doll house toaster.

With the floors in here like this, I feel as though they could walk in at any moment and start hosing the train car out at one of these stations. Now the group is playing follow the leader and have indeed drafted some of the interested onlookers from outside the group. To me, jumping up and down on an elevated train is exactly what I expected from Art on BART. I mean, if we don't derail the train, have we really done our jobs today?

Now onto storytelling by way of dancing. I would say this is the highlight leg of the journey. Much more activity. Elizabeth is sitting in front of me now reading Dracula. We're at Concord Station. A lot of the guys are telling stories, I think, just so they can keep the women dancing. Amber's trying to convince an outside passenger to tell a story as well now. She looks cute in her stewardess outfit, and her hat is kind of shaped like a BART car from the side.



M (front) and Jenny Selgrath (back) dancing

NO FLIRTING. VIOLATORS SUBJECT TO (BE) FINE.

Dance with me.



Jovino (front) M (back) with Amul Goswamy (front) Jenny Selgrath (back)
Photo: Andres Larin-Baranda

North Concord Station, which I don't think I knew existed. It does, though. Amber's now shooting the guy she's been talking to, and he seems happy to have his photo taken.

Now on the train back towards Oakland amongst many touristy outside participants on their way to "the wharf", whatever that is. Do they mean the Embarcadero? They're passing a small tin of cinnamon Altoids around between them, and now this part of the train smells like a candy shop.

Storytelling via dance again. The tourists are from Hawaii, which seems strange. Isn't that where tourist go to? One of the tourists offers his seat for a dime, and now I think we have a challenge to learn how to Hula dance with instruction from said gentleman. They are all now singing as a group, "Lovely Hula hands." I could not make this up if I wanted to.

I'd

like to scale this piece up so it takes place on transcontinental RR trip, or a transatlantic ship trip.



Onboard Hula lessons

Concord Station. "This is how you do palm trees--oh wait, are we going to stop?" There's a woman in a wheelchair who has a front seat to all of this. It's amazing how well all of the women in the group know each of the moves by name and seem to do them reflexively almost. The flower, the ocean, the wind. I feel like I'm in the studio audience of the most low-budget reality show ever created. Amber should sell this idea to MTV. These tourist will talk about this for years (I hope). They're now singing something called "The Hukilau."



Photo: Amber Hasselbring

There should be Hula dancing on BART everyday! WORD!!

Now moving on to belly dancing, which is a celebration of child bearing, apparently. I did not know that. Walnut Creek Station. Cell phones going off among the tourists. Mt. Diablo drifting past on the left. The dancing is over, though I think our party is trying to come up with something else to entertain. The audience now is too good to ignore.



BART trip 10/01/05 2:57 pm
Aloha From Hawaii
what a fun experience.

Was fun trying to teach you the Hula motion and you trying to teach us your motion of dancing. Take care and God Bless. The BART ride was a bit more interesting with a group of us riding it to San Francisco. Mahalo.

Going to S.F. to see Menopause the Musical.
Good Luck God Bless.
The Aloha Family.

MAUI, TO DANCE ON THE BEACH!

TOKYO, TO VISIT MY DEAREST FRIEND!

UP INTO THE HAIGHT, BECAUSE IT TAKES FOREVER ON THE BUS.

Quito. Ecuador to get some fresh fruit juices and humita.

(It might be a very long train ride, though . . .)

I would go to Heaven to speak with God and sip tea with Goddess on a cloud.

3:00 PM

Lafayette Station, which I never recall knowing was the name of a station. I should consult Rick's book and see what happened

here. Rick should sell his book to BART for them to use in classrooms. One of the dancers is now making it rain inside of the train, which is actually sort of relaxing.



Mount Diablo



"A world without trees
Scientists from
NASA's Goddard

Space Flight Center say that between one-third and one-half of the planet's land surface has been transformed by human development, with global consequences. Their new study focused on how deforestation in tropical regions affects the global climate.

Onboard Hula lessons



Printing digital photos in transit

They found that while deforestation has done little to affect global warming, decades of wholesale forest clearing in the Amazon severely reduced rainfall in the Gulf of Mexico, Texas and northern Mexico during the spring and summer growing seasons. Similarly, deforesting in central Africa affects precipitation patterns in the American Midwest.” - source unknown

Does this matter to you?

It's information that I'm not sure what to do with?

It is possible to generate an ozone by passing a high-voltage electrical charge between two plates separated by a thin sheet of glass (to prevent arcing). If we all do this, can we patch the hole?

Perhaps instead of more “news” we need more thoughtful questions. What is the best way to address a particular problem? Is this the most important thing to ask right now?

New game, something to do with clapping and rhythm, snapping and the like. Orinda Station now, which is actually very crowded. As we get closer to the city, more people seem to be boarding. The Hawaiian tourists can't seem to keep a rhythm. One of them has his BART card tucked between his watch and his forearm. I have never ever seen anyone do that in all my time riding BART. There's one younger girl among the tourists and she looks positively appalled. I can't believe no one's filming this.

I think Jesse's shot some of it and is now printing photos at the other end of the car.

Back at Rockridge now, our crew still intent on keeping the dancing and rhythm going. It's almost become part of the noise I expect to hear now, and when it stops I will miss it. I can see tourists tapping their feet too. That was the Bay Point line, and the ride back seemed longer than the ride out. Perhaps because we didn't know where we were going, what was at the end of the line. There was anticipation in a way, if only to see what was there. But coming back, there is none.



Sarah Burns and Jessamyn Lovell

I like it when BART goes along the freeways. I remember times when I peered from my car into a window of a BART car. A little head appeared always to be looking in my direction. Now, I am in BART staring at the scattering cars as they buzz past our slightly slower means of transport. I feel sleepy on BART. Want to take a nap on my boyfriend's lap. The constant motion, the loud rumbles, the chatter - all are soothing in a funny way. Mmm . . . nap time.

I think improving gas mileage is important but the larger picture - urban planning, public transit, CSA's, bike trails, etc. are probably more important!

I used to ride a Raleigh fold-up bike to BART, fold it up and then BART to work taking my bike on board to use from the final station to the job. So one day I fell on the street



smashed my wrist and had to one arm schlep my bike on BART and try not to faint before I got back to my station of origin. Called my wife and she got me to Kaiser that afternoon. I had to give up the bike. Sported a cast for a month and had to walk to the station there after.

CUL DU SAC

We transferred at MacArthur and are now Fremont bound on a carpeted and much quieter train. Jesse's writing in one of my BART journals, which was handed to me by the guy now sitting behind me. He's talking to someone else in our party about sculpture. Art on BART is alive and well despite the lack of dancing.



Jovino resting with an ART on BART Found Journal



Tohp Woodward (front) and Jessamyn Lovell (back)

Park & Ride Next Exit

I saw A McDonalds logo flying in the wind beneath an American Flag. Barbed wire separated the freeway I passed military instillations and took digital photos of transportation color coding systems. Interactive exchange with Hawaiian dance Hula Hula, boy scouts joining in the clapping. Laughter, collective systems on the outskirts of PC hip San Francisco. So thanks for getting me out of my bubble. We speed toward the coliseum.

Do you believe in aliens?
Why?

Some are believable, some are unethical scoundrels.

Has anyone see the show alien nation?

If we don't believe in aliens, how can they be all they can?
As such, I do believe in aliens . . . and rainbows, and fairies.

How many miles is this tour?
I'm guessing roughly 280 miles.
How many miles does a BART train drive in a day?
How any miles do all the trains drive collectively?
and MUNI?

How much money would that be in gas?



3:50 PM

12th St. Oakland. The people in our party in front of me are talking about software in public schools. I think this is what Amber had in mind as well. I could so take a nap.

The train is remarkably quiet compared to the last one. Jesse's sitting down finally and handed the journal off to Amber, I think. I wonder if all three journals are even still with us.

Bay Fair Station. Almost to the end of the line. Jesse printed out a great shot of Amber. I'm hoping the car is a little less crowded on our way back. More clapping now from our party. At Fremont, and people are joining us to read something aloud here at the station. I should look at my schedule. The reading is going well; I think people needed a break.



Oakland McAfee Coliseum



Melting into the padded BART seats during story time

I just took some photos and Jesse's printing one out for me now. We're back on the train, and the man who read is now still telling some stories, most of which seem to involve killing farm animals. I'm mildly surprised there has been no effort to add interpretive dance to his stories.

5:50 PM

The woman across the aisle from me is falling asleep. It has been a long day for everyone, I suppose.



Missing our transfer stop, we got off at the next station, and raced down one escalator and up another just in time to catch the train to Dublin Pleasanton

At the end of the day, we each exited at respective stops. With every departure a full round of applause bowing and laughter filled the BART car.

I rode BART on its first day, September 11, 1972. At that time it ran only from MacArthur to Fremont. There was a jubilant mood and the train was filled with families checking BART out for the first time. I rode down to Fremont in the first car and had the drivers' eye view. The speedometer reached 81 mph on the long straightaways and I got very impressed with what people could construct in California. After the first few weeks the families returned to their cars. Their infatuation with rapid transit was over.



Amber records Chad Irwin reading from Bill Owens' memoir Chicken Heads

Wait! San Leandro was not our scheduled stop. Oops, we forgot to get off, but as luck would have it, we were still able to catch our connection to Dublin. Now the journey winds to a close and we are on our way home. Yay for Random encounters. If you see something 'unusual', call the authorities.

THE DOOR IS OPEN-
LET THE
BEAUTY WITHIN BE WHAT YOU ARE

THE DOORS ARE CLOSING.
PLEASE STAND CLEAR OF THE DOORS.

