

THE ANNOTATED ARTWORK

## A Forest in the Subway

WHEN COMMUTERS PUSH through the turnstiles at the new South Ferry Terminal in a few weeks, they'll find themselves surrounded by an arabesque of glass panels depicting intertwined silhouettes of trees—a lyrical, \$1 million installation by the identical-twin artists Mike and Doug Starn. *See It Split, See It Change* reveals a parallel between the trees' veiny structure and the gnarliness of the century-old subway. "We view cities as complex organisms made up of various systems, and we wanted to work with images of nature to help bring that through," explains Doug, who with his brother has employed sinuous and knotty bark before, in the series *Structure of Thought*. The Starns spoke to *New York* about their new work, one of the MTA's most ambitious "Arts for Transit" projects.

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### The Location

"The South Ferry station is thought of as just the terminus of the 1 train," says Mike. "But we see it as the beginning of the city, from which everything else branches out."

### The Map

The marble mosaic is based on a 1640 image of Manhattan. "There's a way to do contemporary mosaics in the subway, but we wanted to take it back," says Mike. "So we spent time in Pompeii studying."

### The Collaboration

The Starns worked closely with the MTA's architects and even had a say about issues like the placement of doors. "It's the first time the art has been part of the process from the get-go," says Mike.

### The Links

Many of the outlines come from photos taken in Battery Park. "Trees have a hierarchal structure: trunk, branches, leaves," says Doug. "When you flatten the images, you collapse that hierarchy—and suddenly connections happen everywhere."

### The Armor

Yes, it's glass. In the subway. But at least it's toughened: "It's fused, which gives it resistance equivalent to tempered glass," says Doug. It's also hung as its own curtain wall, to avoid damage from behind (vibration, settling, seepage).