

NEW YORK TRANSIT MUSEUM

For Immediate Release

March 14, 2019

SEA TRAIN: SUBWAY REEF PHOTOS BY STEPHEN MALLON

Exhibit opening March 20th at the New York Transit Museum's Grand Central Gallery

Opening March 20th at the New York Transit Museum's Grand Central Gallery, ***Sea Train: Subway Reef Photos by Stephen Mallon*** features nineteen large-format photographs. Mallon's images, many exhibited for the first time, capture the seemingly impossible: iconic subway cars dropped like toys by brightly-colored cranes off hulking barges. As they are deployed to become artificial reefs, these symbols of industry and city life, which carried millions of passengers along New York City's iron rails for decades, appear shrunken in scale against the vastness of the Atlantic seascape.

"*Sea Train* is the largest show of my career and I am thrilled beyond words to be working with the New York Transit Museum," says photographer Stephen Mallon. "In organizing this exhibit, we chose an intimate selection to provide a fresh look at one of my all-time favorite projects."

Between August 2001 and April 2010, MTA New York City Transit deployed more than 2,500 deaccessioned train cars to underwater locations off the coasts of New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, South Carolina, and Georgia. The reefing program took shape in two different phases. From 2001-2003, 1,269 carbon steel "Redbird" cars and from 2008-2010, 1,311 stainless steel "B-Division/Brightliner" cars were repurposed and reefed. The cleaned shells of these subway cars created a flourishing new habitat for varied sea life including sea bass, tuna, mackerel, flounder, blue mussels, sponges, barnacle, and coral, and improved marine environments in areas of the ocean floor that were once barren deserts.

Mallon learned of the project in 2008, and spent the next two years documenting the last group of stainless steel subway cars along their journey to a new life on the ocean floor. His images follow the cars as they are cleaned and prepped by crews at New York City Transit's 207th Street Overhaul Shop, following rigorous protocols approved by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, then moved onto barges in the Harlem River, and deployed using GPS off the coasts of Maryland, Delaware, Virginia, and South Carolina.

"Stephen Mallon sees these familiar subway cars and highlights the beauty of their design, the patina of their metal bodies, and the intricacies of their engineering. His work is abstract in many instances, and it is only when we see these stripped-down machines juxtaposed against the sweep of the Atlantic Ocean that we understand he is celebrating both their past and their future as a new home to thriving marine life," says Amy Hausmann, the Museum's Senior Curator and Deputy Director for Collections and Exhibitions.

The subway car reefing program not only spurred the creation of miles of artificial reefs along the eastern seaboard from New Jersey to Georgia, it also helped the agency avoid \$30 million

in disposal costs. The program spurred economic growth in coastal communities by successfully establishing robust underwater environments for divers and anglers. But its greatest impact affects marine life itself, benefitting different life stages for a wide variety of aquatic species, working to prevent overfishing, and providing a broader habitat for spawning and growing fish populations.

On Earth Day 2010, the subway reefing project came to a close, having placed 2,580 obsolete subway cars on ocean reef sites from as close as 54 nautical miles off the coast of New Jersey to as far away as 742 nautical miles in Georgia's coastal waters. While the program proved cost-effective for decommissioning large fleets all at once, it may not be as efficient going forward given New York City Transit's current standard of decommissioning only a few cars at a time.

Sea Train: Subway Reef Photos by Stephen Mallon opens to the public on Wednesday, March 20th at the New York Transit Museum Gallery & Store at Grand Central Terminal. The Museum's Gallery & Store are open Monday through Friday, 8am to 8pm; Saturday and Sunday, 10am to 7pm; and is closed on major holidays and for special events. It is located in the shuttle passage on 42nd Street and Park Avenue, adjacent to the Station Master's Office, and is free to the public year-round. Plan your visit at nytransitmuseum.org/visit.

ABOUT STEPHEN MALLON:

Stephen Mallon is a photographer and filmmaker who specializes in documenting the industrial-scale creations of mankind at unusual moments of their life cycles. Mallon's work blurs the line between documentary and fine art, revealing the industrial landscape to be unnatural, desolate, and functional, yet simultaneously human, surprising, and inspiring. His work has been exhibited nationally and internationally, and featured in publications including *The New York Times*, *National Geographic*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Daily Mail*, *Atlantic*, *GQ*, and *Vanity Fair*.

ABOUT THE NEW YORK TRANSIT MUSEUM:

The New York Transit Museum is the largest museum in the United States devoted to urban public transportation history and one of the premier institutions of its kind in the world. Since its inception over forty years ago, the Museum – which is housed in a historic 1936 IND subway station in Downtown Brooklyn – has grown in scope and popularity. For nearly 25 years, the Transit Museum has also operated a Gallery & Store in Grand Central Terminal. To learn more, visit nytransitmuseum.org.

What: *Sea Train: Subway Reef Photos by Stephen Mallon*

When: Opening March 20th, 2019

Where: New York Transit Museum Gallery & Store at Grand Central Terminal

Admission: FREE

More Info: www.nytransitmuseum.org/exhibits