

MORNING STORIES TRANSCRIPT

Art is Good: For recording artist Deborah Henson-Conant, a walk to the subway can change the way you look at everything.

Tony Kahn:

Hi, I'm Tony Kahn, the producer and the director of *Morning Stories* on WGBH in Boston. Deborah Henson-Conant is a jazz harpist and a singer and a songwriter. Sometimes, though, instead of working to bring her art to others, she likes to kick back and let art find her. Her story is called: *Art is Good*.

[Sounds of pedestrian traffic begins and continues throughout narrative.]

Deborah Henson-Conant:

Art makes you see the world differently. About fifteen years ago they put in a bunch of new subway stops here in Cambridge and they put in a lot of subway art. [bells chiming] At the Kendall square stop they had a set of tubular bells in between the tracks. People going inbound could work levers to ring the bells and people going outbound had a different set of levers. If people on both sides of the track worked the levers at the same time, the bells would go crazy.

They made all the rest of the subway noises sound different too. The subway sounded more like music, even when nobody was playing the bells. At the Davis Square stop they tiled the subway with these big ceramic tiles that school kids made, with pictures and poetry glazed onto them. Words and images jumped out of the walls – out of the floors. And suddenly, even graffiti started looking more like poetry.

At my stop, Porter Square, they collected piles of old, abandoned mittens and gloves and they bronzed them. Sometimes it was just a single, threadbare mitten, bronzed and stuck between the escalators. Sometimes it was a whole pile of gloves lurking there in the corner, and suddenly regular gloves and mittens started looking different too, even when they weren't bronzed.

Things people dropped on the ground started looking like art. One day I was heading down towards Porter Square: overnight someone had built a new sculpture at the crossroads and I had never seen anything like it. "Oh my gosh," I said, "Look at that! That is incredible! It looks like a big, black, plastic bag wrapped around a stop sign! Oh...it is a black, plastic bag wrapped around a stop sign."

But in that one moment, before I realized it was just a stop sign and a plastic bag, I saw art. I felt art. And it was beautiful. Hey, if you get enough real art around, the whole world looks different.

Tony Kahn:

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every Friday. You can also visit us on our website if you'd like. That's at <www.wgbh.org/morningstories> all one word.

[End of recording]

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