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The Pitch: Unexpected Subway Living, part of MOCCA'S Ineffable Plasticity: The experience of being human



BEN KAPLAN | Dec 22, 2011 10:47 AM ET | Last Updated: Dec 21, 2011 3:55 PM ET
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Detail from Jordan MacLachlan's Unexpected Subway Living.

Walter Wilens



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Unexpected Subway Living is an extraordinary piece at the Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art by Jordan MacLachlan, a self-taught ceramic artist. The work, which features 223 terracotta figurines lost somewhere between Dante's Inferno and the Dufferin Mall, took 15 months to complete. We asked MacLachlan why readers should brave the holiday traffic to check out her thought-provoking show.

- 1. It was fuelled by desperation.** "I was very much on the edge financially," says MacLachlan of her inspiration for creating her underground secret universe of the unemployed. "With everything that's happening, people have nowhere to go. 'Where do they go?' I thought, and started making this world."
- 2. Her work was inspired by a story of people taking up residence in a dark subway station in New York,** but Toronto Transit is her stomping ground, and she frequently uses the train. "The TTC is a huge part of my life," says MacLachlan, a resident of Trinity Bellwoods.
- 3. MacLachlan likes to create entire sub-cultures, and she says there's a story for every figurine in her exhibit.** "When you first look, it can seem gruesome," she says, "but if you look more closely, you see there's a quietness."
- 4. MacLachlan says that regular Torontonians are picking up on the themes, perhaps even more than the art crowd.** "I think **my work appeals more to the general population than to critics** or galleries," she says. "Audiences aren't just walking by smiling; they're truly wanting to be engaged."

Showing as part of Ineffable Plasticity: The experience of being human at the Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art, 952 Queen St. W., until Dec. 31. For details, see mocca.ca.

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