



### *Ordinary Relic*

Permanent public artwork installation for the Chicago Transit Authority Diversey Brown Line station, Chicago, Illinois

Mathew Wilson

2020

Mixed media installation

Multiple elements displayed or integrated in the Diversey station engage a dialogue between the past and present, challenging the viewer to consider or reconsider public art, monuments, and cultural preservation.

*Ordinary Relic* is comprised of four elements: Painted track structure over Diversey Parkway; a sculptural replica of the vintage ticket agent's booth which is preserved inside the historic stationhouse; a painted concrete plinth embossed with ten dates of local historic significance; and six message panels exhibited on the platforms and in the north-side stairways.

Mathew Wilson (b. 1967, England) is a Chicago-based artist, graduate of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and member of Industry of the Ordinary, a two-person conceptual art collaborative (with Adam Brooks) known for performances and interventions, often incorporating audience participation.

Of *Ordinary Relic*, Mathew Wilson states, "We cherish our personal memories and keepsake connections to our past as a matter of course. But we are sometimes less

immediately troubled by the corrosive power of indifference for the collective memory. And so, in time, history can be lost.

In this work, several elements combine to celebrate one forgotten fragment of the city's memory. Standing for years, unseen, in the historic station house is an original artifact from the much earlier days of this Chicago neighborhood. Now, this ticket agent's booth has been cleaned, lit and replicated to bring attention to a sliver of the past that has survived and been brought into our contemporary cultural landscape.

Around the station the words 'MEMORY' and 'HISTORY' encourage public acknowledgement of this durable artifact. The girders that span Diversey Parkway are painted a warm, bright yellow, arching from one side of the street to the other, bridging the span between the historic and modern station houses. Around the pedestal that displays the ticket booth replica, years are enumerated during which formative events in local history occurred.

It is the case that cities around the world are full of oversized men staring down from massive plinths at a public who rarely know who these men were. This is troubling - not so much in the sense that the monuments are important works of art - but that the history they represent has been forgotten. This is problematic, whether we want to understand the past or avoid repeating it.

In this work I address the (in)visibility of public art and the disappearance of culture and history. The work invites the public into a conversation about the critical importance of an open dialogue with histories of all kinds.”

*Mathew Wilson, 2020*

Thanks go to Elizabeth Kelley, the Project Coordinator, Strategic Planning, CTA, for her commitment to this project, and everyone on the CTA construction and fabrication teams; the team at ADM Works, Santa Ana, CA, for their consummate fabrication of the ticket booth; Lightswitch Architectural, Chicago for lighting design; Iñigo Manglano-Ovalle for fabrication suggestions, and Bryan Schuetze at SpaceHaus, Chicago, for initial consultation.



Original ticket booth *in situ*





