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>> GREATER TORONTO

Toronto's beauty is down the drain

Contact photo fest provides striking images of city's sewer system

PATTY WINSA
URBAN AFFAIRS REPORTER

TTC riders descending below ground at the St. Patrick subway station might feel like they have tunnel vision times two.

During the month of May, the concourse and tunnel of the station at Dundas St. W. and University Ave. will feature Toronto photographer Michael Cook's stunning images of the city's massive underground sewer system. "There's some really beautiful structural architecture there," says Cook.

The poster-sized images feature tunnels with gothic arches as well as brick structures dating from 130 years ago. Other photographs show the newer, concrete versions, some of which are dug out using tunnel boring machines similar to the ones currently being used to extend the city's transit system.

"There's some really beautiful structural architecture there."

**TORONTO PHOTOGRAPHER
MICHAEL COOK**
ON THE CITY'S SEWER SYSTEM

The show is part of Contact, a city-wide festival of photography taking place this month.

The exhibit includes three stop-motion videos from Andrew Emond, who captured images of sewers such as Toronto's Garrison Creek. The creek, which ran through Trinity Bellwoods Park and Christie Pits, was buried in 1880 because it was the easiest way to convey waste water out of the city, he says. Cook, 30, has spent a de-



DAVID COOPER/TORONTO STAR

Michael Cook's tunnel photos line the walls of the St. Patrick subway station, on exhibit in Contact, Toronto's photography festival.

cade descending below ground, taking photos to demystify and inform people about water use.

His goal, he says, is for people to understand "how wastewater from their houses, and how storm water from their streets, actually goes somewhere else, as opposed to just kind of imagining it away."

The graduate student in landscape architecture wants Toronto residents to care about disconnecting their downspouts so that the city's combined sanitary and storm sewers don't overflow and pollute the lake during big storms.

"It's very important to me that people actually understand visually, to see in place the infrastructure that they're involved in," says Cook. "It's a lot harder to get people to buy into these kinds of changes if the infrastructure itself is invisible."

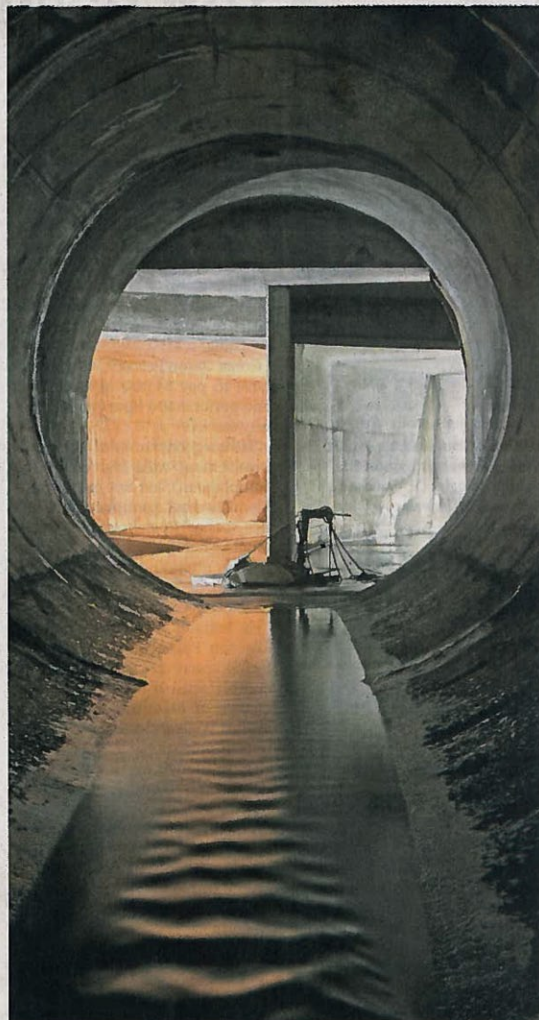
Cook says he started taking the pictures initially because he had questions "about where the water was going."

But he says, "it's not like this is something I do every weekend. When I have specific questions, I might go out and take these photographs."

Exhibit curator Sharon Switzer, who works for Pattison advertising — the company which has given most of its poster and video advertising space in the station over to the show for the month — came up with the idea last year.

Switzer said it made "perfect sense" to use the underground space to show videos and photos of the city's infrastructure.

The subway "is really our only — as average people — connection to the underground in Toronto," she said.



Photographer Michael Cook captured this image of Wilket Creek flowing through a storm sewer in North York. His show is on now at Contact