

May 5, 2014 Good Afternoon!

Revealing Guastavino

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Installation view of the wall mural celebrating the tiled vaults of Guastavino's 1904 City Hall Station.
(Photograph by Michael Freeman).

Few of us have gazed up at the tiled Guastavino vaults of the beautiful but shuttered City Hall Station, which debuted in 1904 as the architectural jewel of the original IRT Lexington

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Jewish American Heritage Month

MTAHQ Diversity Council and Metro-North Railroad Office of Diversity and EEO invite you to tomorrow's "All you've ever wanted to know about the Jewish Sabbath and holidays but were afraid to ask." [See flyer for details.](#)

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On Sunday, May 11, from noon to 2 p.m., MTA Information Technology will perform preventative maintenance on the fiber optic cable that links headquarters to computer servers at 2 Broadway. During

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Avenue Line.

But this underground wonder is given star treatment in the new exhibition at the Museum of the City of New York in the exhibit *Palaces for the People: Guastavino and the Art of Structural Tile*, on display through September 7.

Organized to honor the technical achievement of Rafael Guastavino Sr., his family, and construction company, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology show reveals that the artistry of the City Hall station was the very reason that the Guastavino family became the go-to firm in the early part of the 20th century to embellish and support most of our city's grand halls, hotels, and places of worship.

Before entering the MCNY gallery, you will encounter the list of over 200 still-standing Guastavino works in the five boroughs. The list also features Grand Central Terminal and the Oyster Bar as well as the market under the Queensborough Bridge, the domes over the rhinos living in the Bronx Zoo Elephant House, the soaring overhead expanses of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine and Riverside Church, the 79th Street Boat Basin, and the entry to Lord & Taylor.

Inside the gallery are photographs of the works, ceramic tile samples, drawings, and other documentation of how the Guastavinos made so much magic happen in record time. In 1889, he gave two lectures at MIT while he was working on the Boston Public Library – lectures that served as the basis for his 1889 book, *Essay on the Theory and History of Cohesive Construction*, and for the exhibition itself.

In the center of the gallery, you will experience a working model of how these constructions were conceived – a half-scale project carried out by MIT students in collaboration with some of Boston's finest union bricklayers. The accompanying video reveals their reactions to implementing 19th-century technology and design compared to 21st-century building techniques.

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More than 600 Guastavino projects are known to still exist in 35 states across the country, but the show's curators concede that the beautiful tiled vaults and domes are often hidden in plain sight. To address any oversights for this celebrated master builder, they have created the [Guastavino Project](#), which provides a digital map of all the known sites and a way for the public to identify others and upload photographs of them.

You can find Guastavino's structural tiles hiding in underground passageways of [Penn Station](#), in the Battery Marine Terminal, and underneath the plasterwork of the grand elliptical dome in the Customs House. Keep your eyes peeled elsewhere, and you may be able to find an as-yet undiscovered structural embellishment by the father-and-son team that created some of the most [iconic, beautiful public spaces](#) in America.

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