

Object Spotlight: Cortlandt Street Ferry Terracotta Plaque



Cortlandt Street Ferry Terracotta Plaque, circa 1918. New York Transit Museum Collection.

What is this made of?

Terracotta, ceramic tiles, grout, wood

Where was it made?

American Encaustic Tile Company
Zanesville, Ohio

Where was it originally located?

In the Cortlandt Street Station in
Lower Manhattan

Artwork placed in subway stations can be seen as decoration and as a way to visually share information about a location. Mosaics are made up of small tiles pieced together to create a larger image or pattern, but the central image of a ferry here is actually a single terracotta tile, cut with grooves that were then filled with grout to create the look of a mosaic. The tile depicts the Cortlandt Street Steam Ferry that used to take commuters across the Hudson River between New York and New Jersey. The first steam ferry, like the one depicted here, operated one block west of Cortlandt Street starting in 1812.