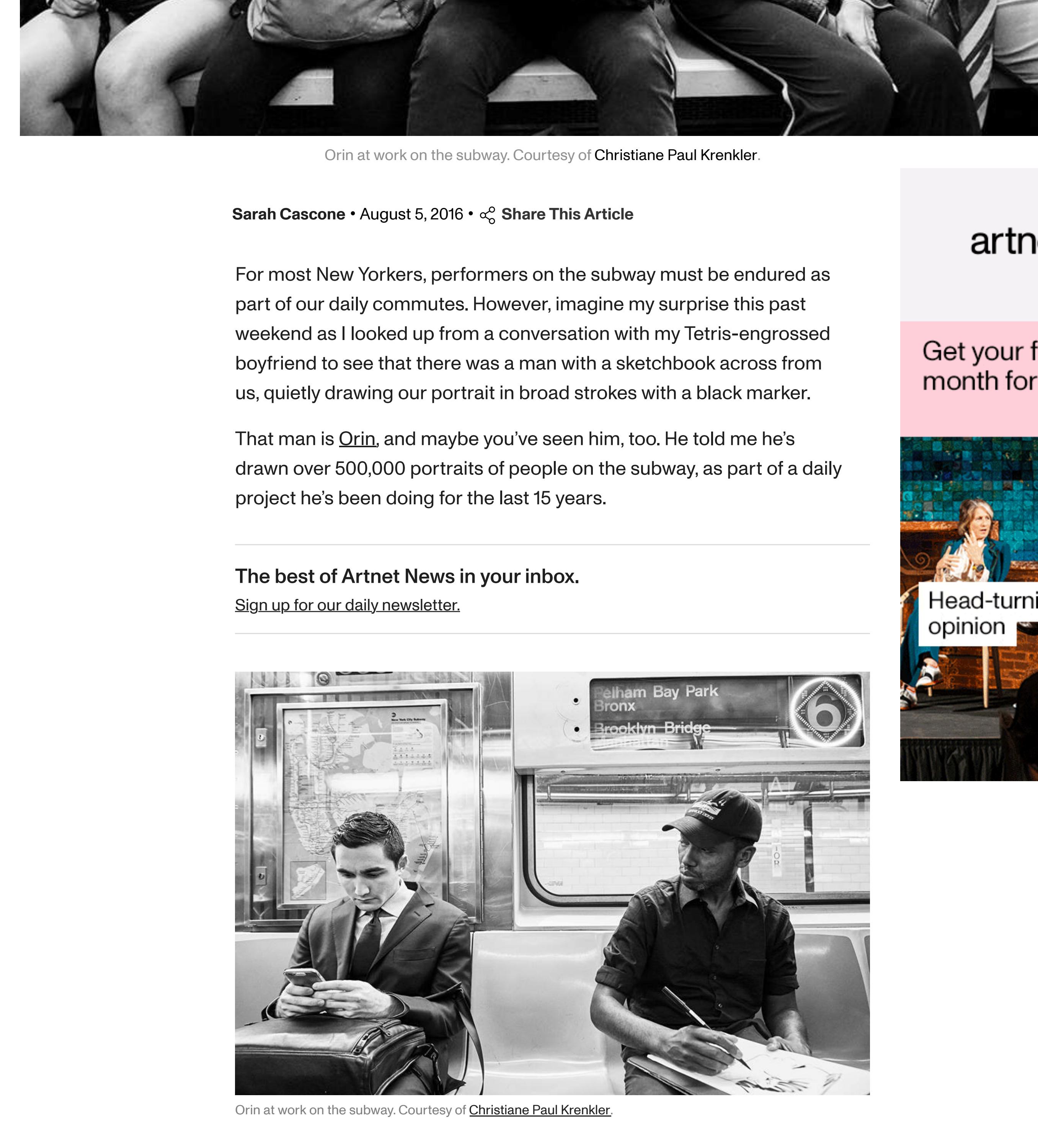


People

Meeting This Artist Could Be the Best Thing to Happen to You on the Subway

He's made portraits of over 500,000 straphangers.



Orin at work on the subway. Courtesy of Christiane Paul Krenkler.

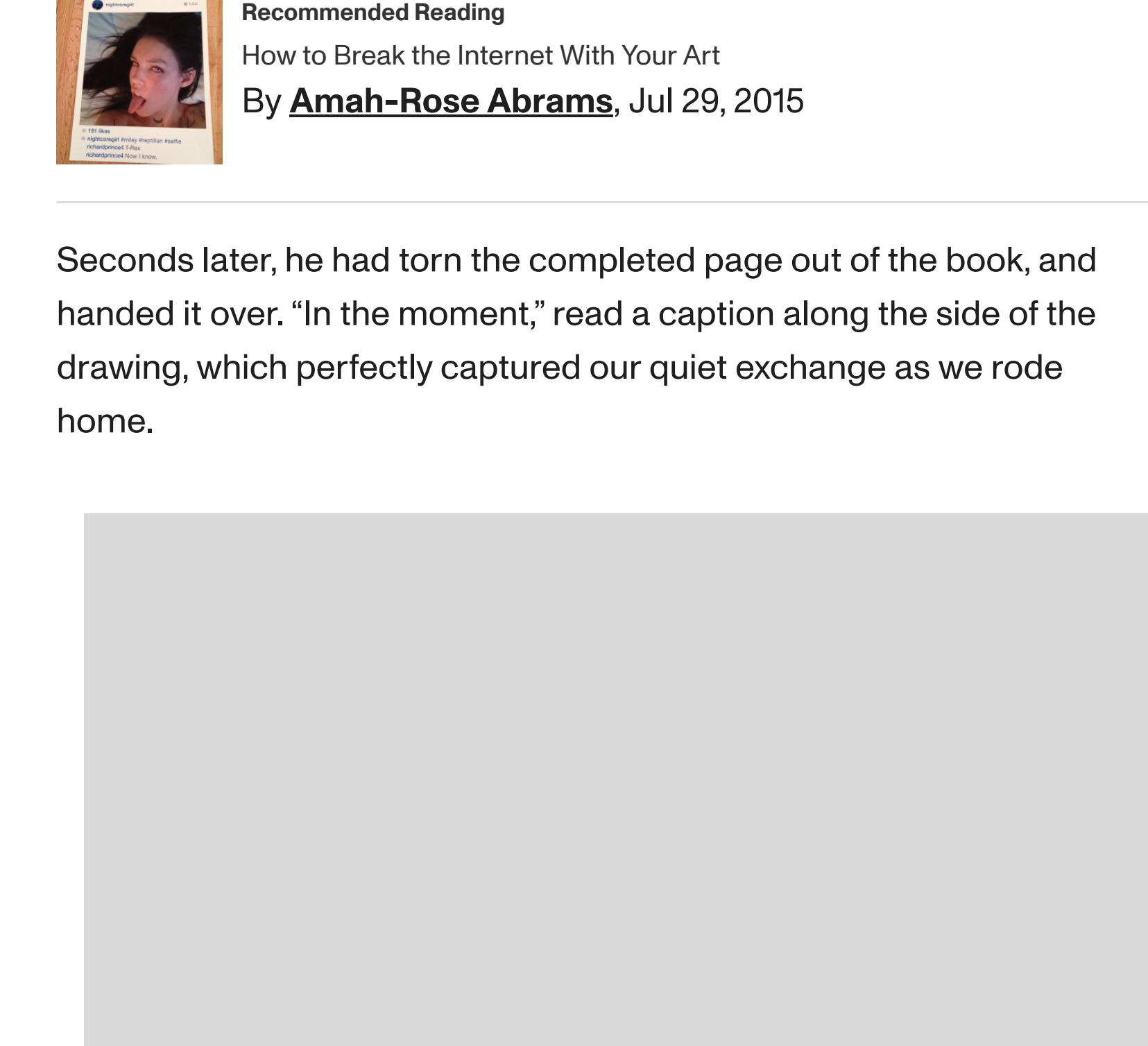
Sarah Cascone • August 5, 2016 • Share This Article

For most New Yorkers, performers on the subway must be endured as part of our daily commutes. However, imagine my surprise this past weekend as I looked up from a conversation with my Tetris-engrossed boyfriend to see that there was a man with a sketchbook across from us, quietly drawing our portrait in broad strokes with a black marker.

That man is Orin, and maybe you've seen him, too. He told me he's drawn over 500,000 portraits of people on the subway, as part of a daily project he's been doing for the last 15 years.

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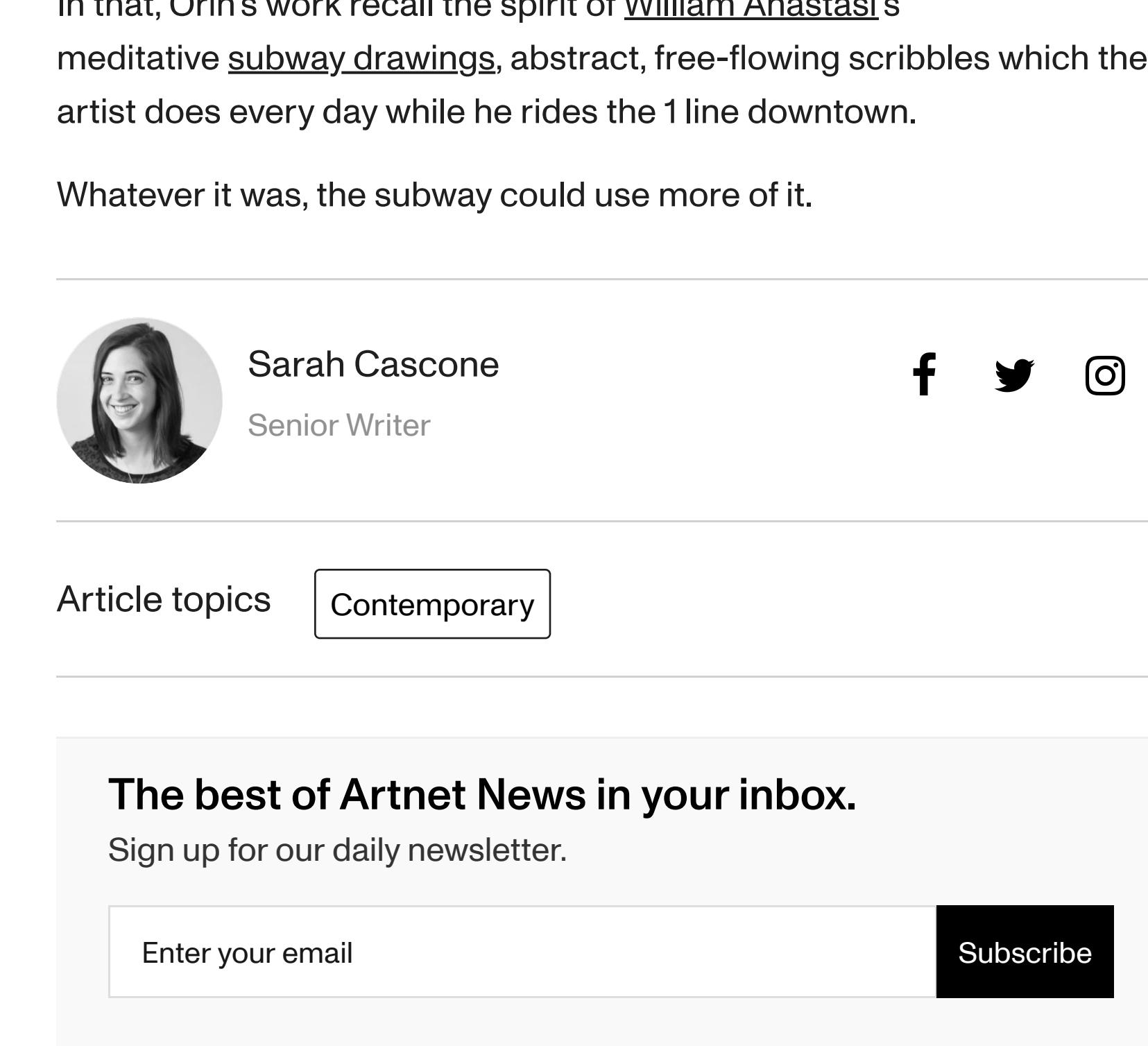


Orin, *In the Moment* (2016), a sketch drawn on the subway of the author and her boyfriend. Courtesy of Nathan Monroe-Yavneh.

Orin was almost finished sketching when I spotted him, and he smiled as I caught his eye. "Can I see it?" I asked.

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Seconds later, he had torn the completed page out of the book, and handed it over. "In the moment," read a caption along the side of the drawing, which perfectly captured our quiet exchange as we rode home.



A couple with their portrait by Orin. Courtesy of Sarah Cascone.

"Keep it," he said. There was a note on the back, I realized, reading "Enjoy please. Tip if you like." (We did.)

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By this point, the man sitting next to Orin had hopped across the car to the empty seat next to me, eager to have his own portrait drawn. "I hate subway performers, like musicians and stuff, but this is so much cooler," he said.



A couple with their portrait by Orin. Courtesy of Sarah Cascone.

I asked Orin how long each drawing takes, on average. "About two-and-a-half minutes!" he exclaimed. "About two-and-a-half minutes!"

As he settled in on his third drawing of the ride, Orin's pace slowed noticeably as he chatted with us. "It's kind of, like, Buddhist for me."

In that, Orin's work recall the spirit of William Anastasi's meditative subway drawings, abstract, free-flowing scribbles which the artist does every day while he rides the 1 line downtown.

Whatever it was, the subway could use more of it.

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