



Adult Learning Within Reach

Member Lecture – 23 May 2024

The London Underground: pioneers in modern architecture
Mike Grundy, guest speaker

Questions answered post-lecture

Q1 Were certain contractors engaged to build these designs for a particular architect?

In the case of the latest lines, the Elizabeth Line opened in 2022 and the Jubilee Line eastern extension of 1999, the different architects of each station worked with a wide range of engineering and build contractors. As an example, Ove Arup have had a long history in London Underground projects, and for the Elizabeth Line they were involved in overall tunnel design and in elements of the design of some stations. It's a complex picture!

Q2 What are the stripes you can see in the ceiling at Tottenham Court Road Station?

The vertical black and white stripes on the walls of the new concourse at the Elizabeth Lines' Tottenham Court Road station are just a standard trope of Daniel Buren's design approach. You can see further examples of this in Paris in the courtyard of the Palais Royale.

The stripes on the ceiling of the Broadgate entrance to Liverpool Street's Elizabeth Line station are a reference to the pin-stripe designs of the suits worn by the city office workers rushing through the station.

Q3 Could you tell us a little bit about the great Harry Beck?

Harry Beck was an electrical designer and technical draughtsman who created the first topological map for the London Underground in 1931. Initially rejected, the map was eventually issued in 1931 to immediately become a firm favourite with travellers. He then worked full time for London Underground for the rest of his career. He produced revised versions of the map to include new Lines and stations as they appeared, and also tried variations of the design aesthetics in the search for even more clarity and simplicity for users. His name was included in the bottom left-hand corner of many of the maps produced under his design leadership.