



'CAST IN A NEW LIGHT

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PHOTOS BY JEFFERSON SIEGEL

FOR A commuter, a ride on the 7 train from Grand Central to Flushing provides enough time to take a decent nap, listen to several songs on a music play list or read a newspaper.

But a group of Columbia University students and faculty wants riders to spend that time learning about the wild things in Queens — from the weeds in the abandoned lots of Sunnyside to decomposing bodies in the cemeteries of Woodside.

Safari 7 is a series of student-produced podcasts, timed to the mostly above-ground train ride

Students create podcast timed to 7 train as it cuts through borough

through Queens. "It's about being on the train and paying attention to what's around you," said Glen Cummings, a curator at the Safari 7 Reading Room, an exhibit that opened in October to complement the podcasts.

The Reading Room is located on Varick St. in SoHo at Studio-X, an exhibit space for the university's Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation.

The center of the display is an 18-foot, Queens-shaped table that

maps out the 7 train route. Visitors can plug headphones into each stop, as well as other locations in Queens, to learn a bit of the borough's history and ecology.

"This is largely a way to visualize the podcast," said Janette Kim, another of the exhibit's curators.

The downloadable audio clips — about a dozen so far — describe germs on the 7 train, squirrels in Queensboro Plaza, illegal cock-fighting in Corona and the story of Flushing Meadows-Corona Park,

the former ash dumping ground that was the site of the 1939-40 and 1964-65 World's Fairs. Students narrate the podcasts, interspersing interviews with experts with sounds of the locations.

"The 7 train cuts through the most diverse ecosystems in New York City," said curator Kate Orff. "It also has this incredible diversity of people."

The three curators plan to produce more podcasts and use the Safari 7 project in schools, libraries and museums in Queens.

"We want to start to involve the people of Queens more seriously," Kim said. "It has a lot of educational potential."

