Digital out-of-home screens are usually installed with commercial ends in mind, but that hasn't stopped them being used for a quite different purpose – as showcases for public art.

Last month, for example, the third annual Art by Chance festival saw a series of "ultra-short" films, each around half a minute in length, aired on public screens in North and South America, Europe and Asia. In total, they brought film-makers' creativity to about 20,000 displays in some 200 cities, in malls, transport hubs, public plazas and the like. And screenings continue at festivals through the summer.

In California, meanwhile, another innovative DOOH-art project is running on the Los Angeles bus system this summer. About 2200 buses served by the Transit TV network, most of them with two screens apiece, will show experimental videos (like that pictured), many made by local teenagers.

And just as commercial DOOH is increasingly interactive and context-sensitive, these young artists are taking advantage of GPS technology to add banner images which change as the bus trundles from one neighbourhood to another, and allowing passengers to respond to content by text message. The banners occupy the bottom of the screen, below the videos.

The Out the Window project is the brainchild of local artist Anne Bray, who previously showed video content on Transit TV in 2008. This time, backed by a $100,000 grant, she's also received help from the Echo Park Film Center, citizen-media organisation Public Matters, and the REMAP unit at the University of California at Los Angeles.

Just as with the best commercial DOOH content, the 37 teenagers who made the two dozen films shot them with the screens' situations in mind. "It seems important that students think about the limitations of the bus and take responsibility for the space they're working in," said Echo Park Film Center's Lisa Marr in a local interview.

The videos will be shown for five minutes each hour on 13-17 June, and again for two 45-minute sessions per day on 18-19 June. They'll return to Transit TV screens in October.

This kind of content isn't entirely new to the network's viewers. For instance, besides Bray's earlier outing on the buses, Transit TV also showed the winners of last year's Transit Flicks Video Contest, which invited members of the public to submit short films up to two minutes long.

But is it, well, art for art's sake? Perhaps not purely. While the instigators of the project aren't looking to a bottom line, Transit TV's owner Tezo Systems reportedly favours Out the Window as a means to show off not only city teens' creative nous, but also the potential of the network for localising content and interacting with passengers.

www.artbychance.org
www.out-the-window.org
www.transitv.com