

Sound Wave

Beth Galston, Artist

2013, Music City Center, Nashville, TN

with Bartek Konieczny

Materials: Aluminum pipe, LEDs, computer controller, plexiglas, steel cable

Dimensions: 20' H x 40' W x 120' L

Sound Wave, a site-specific sculpture, is inspired by a musical staff of five lines and the undulating shape of a sound wave. It was commissioned for a large new convention facility in downtown Nashville, across the street from the Country Music Hall of Fame.

When I first visited the Music City Center site under construction, I noticed that the curve of the building's giant guitar shape went right through the space for which I was proposing. I imagined: What if sound waves reverberated off the guitar and into the space? What would these patterns look like? This became the catalyst for *Sound Wave*.

To create the design, I made a series of models in which I cut and twisted musical staves, releasing them from the flat page into three dimensions. Then working from a scale model, I envisioned how these undulating forms would fit harmoniously into the space, and how people would experience them.

The sculpture consists of three main elements: twenty serpentine aluminum pipes in groups of five to create four "staves"; 134 custom-made blue LED light fixtures arranged on the staves to form "notes"; and a computer program to control and vary a sequence of lighting changes in a 6 minute loop. To realize this design, I collaborated with a master fabricator and electrical engineer.

The 120 foot long piece is suspended overhead in a corridor at one of the main entryways to the building adjacent to a glass curtain wall, making it visible from multiple vantage points, both inside and outside. My goal was to immerse viewers in the sculptural environment while walking down the corridor, as if they were inside a piece of music. While there is no sound, I wanted to create a visual melody, where sequences of lighting changes unfold in a musical way, with fast and slow sections of different rhythms.