



UNCONVENTIONAL

NASHVILLE'S  
MUSIC CITY CENTER



## Sound Wave

BETH GALSTON

Suspended metal sculpture in four sections, each 20-30' long  
Aluminum pipe, computer-controlled LED  
light fixtures with blue acrylic lenses

When Boston-area artist Beth Galston visited Nashville to tour the Music City Center under construction, she realized that the space for which she was competing went right through the curve of the guitar-shaped building. "What would happen if sound waves went ricocheting through the space?" she wondered, and that became her core concept for *Sound Wave*.

Instead of putting her ideas down on paper in the form of drawings, Galston made models of the complex curves and straight lines that form sound waves. She bent them apart from one another, pulling them into three-dimensional space, the way sound might travel as it bounces around inside the resonating chamber of an instrument like the guitar. By weaving the imagined strands of a sound wave in and around the familiar five-bar musical staff used in music notation, and positioning musical "notes" in the form of LED lights, Galston was able to visually join the concept of sound waves to the fluid motion of melody.

The resulting lobby-sized sculptural environment looks like floating snippets of music come alive. Suspended metal pipes are riffs on the idea of five-bar notation. They bend and curve to complement the open glass and wood paneled space looking out onto the Sixth Avenue passageway through the building, carrying blue "notes" that light up in sequences as if music is being played. Even though there is no sound coming from the sculpture, the lights are programmed in a six-minute sequence based on a variety of musical rhythms, with calm and active moments changing quickly. Galston hopes visitors will experience a moment of magic as they walk through *Sound Wave*, as if they are experiencing music from the inside.

Galston, who was born in Los Angeles, lives in Carlisle, MA. She is a graduate of Cornell University, the Kansas City Art Institute, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's acclaimed Visual Studies program. Galston, who exhibits in both temporary exhibitions and permanent settings, creates immersive interior and exterior environments, using innovative materials and often based on the transformative processes of nature. Inspired by the theme of music and the architecture of Nashville's Music City Center, Galston and her team of collaborators, which included a master fabricator and an electronic engineer, took the opportunity to develop a software program that would control the "melodic" lights in a natural, intermittent manner. This is something that she has long wished to do; how fitting that she achieved this bit of musical engineering in Nashville.

Photo by Dean Dixon