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May 21, 2008

“THIS WAY”
LIGHT ART INSTALLATION AT THE BROOKLYN BRIDGE

BACKGROUNDER

“This Way” is a light art installation by Linnaea Tillett, principal of Tillett Lighting Design Inc., and Karin Tehve, principal of KT3D LLC. It is permanently installed at the Brooklyn Bridge pedestrian entrance in the DUMBO neighborhood of Brooklyn, New York City.

The project was commissioned by the City of New York—Percent for Art, and the DUMBO BID to commemorate the Bridge’s 125th anniversary. With critical support from the NYC Department of Transportation, it opened on May 21, 2008.

The art installation works in concert with new signage to improve the significant threshold between the Bridge and Manhattan, DUMBO, and other parts of Brooklyn.

Lisa Kim, director of Percent for Art, said, “This project conveys the transformative power of art and good design. The signage and lighting program here unite to literally and figuratively provide both direction and delight,” she added.

Description of Artwork and Site

The artwork can be viewed at twilight and nighttime.

Formerly a dark and forbidding ‘back door’, the Bridge stairwell and underpass are now a welcoming entrance to Brooklyn. The artwork simultaneously performs aesthetically and practically—both place-making and way-finding. Residents and visitors are engaged by linear light forms, which also guide them through the urban maze. The areas under the Bridge along Washington and Prospects streets glow a distinctive blue from new sidewalk lighting. Commissioned by the City of New York, Percent for Art Program, and the DUMBO BID, the project opened on May 21, 2008 to commemorate the Bridge’s 125th anniversary.

Light sources use energy-efficient LED and fiber optic technology and blue acrylic lenses. The lighting is mounted onto the fascia and understructures of the Bridge with steel and aluminum supports.

The artwork was installed in concert with new signage to improve the experience of visitors and residents passing through this significant threshold between the Bridge and Manhattan, DUMBO, and other parts of Brooklyn. Pedestrian access to the Bridge at the site is through a narrow set of stairs cut into a massive anchorage under an overpass at the corner of Washington and Prospect Streets. This stair cannot be seen from 20 yards away in any direction. The site’s adjacent urban wall is constructed by the Bridge’s anchorages, access ramp and the elevated Brooklyn-Queens Expressway. This gives the waterfront neighborhood of DUMBO its discrete urban character, but also makes intuitive navigation perplexing for visitor and resident alike.

Art of the Public Encounter—Statement by Linnaea Tillett

“What excites me about “This Way” is that—through art—we transformed the public space underneath the Brooklyn Bridge into an environment where people can interact more intimately. Before, you would see visitors wandering around lost. Residents would quickly hurry through the dark, forbidding underpass. It’s with great pleasure that I now see people strolling through and even gathering in the area. As a woman, I feel safer because I can see the faces of those coming towards me. Strangers not only read the new map, they ask each other for directions. Mothers stop to point out the light forms above to their children, and neighbors meet and chat on the corner.

“I consider these kinds of interactions to be the heart of a healthy city. In a sense, we facilitated the art of the public encounter, the dance of interchange between strangers so necessary for a vibrant city.”

Transition both Visual and Cognitive—Statement by Karin Tehve

“As part of our study of the site, we observed that the proposed mounted maps and signage at the bottom of the steps would reinforce a sense of the surrounding area for visitors coming down from the Bridge. However, for people coming from adjacent Brooklyn neighborhoods, these cues were not going to be available. It was this understanding that drove our investigation into how this lighting installation could participate in way finding.

“Our response was directional linear forms, constructed of fiber optic cables, drawn on the underside of the bridge’s structure. Also, the blue light distinguishes the spaces underneath the bridge, a distinctive value which makes naming and reference intuitive and reiterates locus. Both can be seen from a distance. Both are abstract, inviting visitors to make their own interpretations.

“Bridges are some of the most sublime urban monuments, but their undersides are often seen as residual spaces. We wanted to engage those spaces into the larger experience of the bridge. It mediates between paths and termini, a borough and its waterfront, the experience of an iconic bridge and its (formerly) quotidian underbelly.”

Linnaea Tillett Background

Linnaea Tillett, PhD, is principal of Tillett Lighting Design Inc., which she founded in 1983. An artist, lighting designer and environmental psychologist, she has extensive experience in public landscape and architecture, light art, fine art and luxury interiors. The firm has built a reputation for crafting highly nuanced lighting programs, combining artistry, technical innovation and functionality.

Ms. Tillett holds a doctorate in environmental psychology. Her innovative approach incorporates a thorough understanding of the perceptual, behavioral and psychological effects of light with extensive experience in lighting design. She pays careful consideration not only to the visual environment, but to the emotional texture of the space as well—seamlessly merging comprehensive and up-to-date technical knowledge with sophisticated aesthetic values.

Ms. Tillett and her staff have collaborated with leading architects, interior designers, landscape architects, and artists: Beyer Blinder Belle, Maya Lin, Toshiko Mori, David Easton, Olin Partnership, Cooper Robertson, Quennell Rothschild, Kiki Smith and Lebbeus Woods.

Ms. Tillett frequently speaks on lighting, public space, and the psychology and physiology of lighting, and has been on the faculty of the Masters in Lighting Design Program at Parsons The New School for Design since 1992.

Ms. Tillett holds Masters and Doctorate degrees in Environmental Psychology from the Graduate School and University Center, City University of New York, and a bachelor degree in Philosophy from University College, London. She is a native New Yorker and currently lives in Brooklyn, New York.

For more information, please visit www.tillettlighting.com.

Karin Tehve Background

Karin Tehve is an architect and founding principal of KT3D, an interdisciplinary design studio balancing architectural projects with in-situ art and autonomous digital work. This practice informs the more conventional environmental design with the exploration of new processes, materials and concepts. When collaborating with other disciplines, design problem-solving is treated as a series of open-ended negotiations.

Ms. Tehve teaches at Pratt Institute in the Departments of Interior Design and Architecture, and currently teaches a graduate design studio and seminar entitled “techniques in presentation and representation”. She previously taught at Harvard University Graduate School of Design’s Career Discovery and at the Boston Architectural Center.

Ms. Tehve has a Master’s Degree in Architecture from the Harvard University Graduate School of Design (M.ARCH II, '97) and a Bachelor’s Degree in Architecture from the Pennsylvania State University (B.Arch, '88).

Ms. Tehve is a Registered Architect in New York and Pennsylvania. She has lived in the Brooklyn neighborhood of DUMBO for nine years.

For more information, please visit www.kt3d.com.

The New York City Department of Cultural Affairs Percent for Art Program

The New York City Department of Cultural Affairs Percent for Art Program commissions artists to create permanent public artworks in municipal buildings and spaces throughout the City. To date, Percent for Art has completed over 210 projects, with another 45 projects currently underway.

Ms. Tillett and Ms. Tehve won the competition for the commission in May 2007.

The DUMBO Improvement District

The DUMBO Improvement District is entrusted with keeping the community's public spaces, addressing public safety, advocating on behalf of DUMBO to public and private stakeholders, and marketing and promoting the area to attract new visitors and businesses. DUMBO is a historic waterfront area in Brooklyn, New York that is now home to artists families, young professionals, offices, small businesses, restaurants and galleries.

Project Credits

“This Way” is part of the Brooklyn Bridge Pedestrian Walkway Project, made possible by generous contributions from the City of New York, Brooklyn Borough President Marty Markowitz, and Councilmember David Yassky. Additional support provided by the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs—Percent for Art, the New York City Department of Transportation and Two Trees Management Co. LLC.

Artists:

Linnaea Tillett, Tillett Lighting Design Inc.
Karin Tehve, KT3D Inc.

Commissioned by:

The City of New York, Percent for Art Program—Lisa Kim, Director
DUMBO Business Improvement District—Tucker Reed, Executive Director

Lead Design Consultant and Signage:

emphas!s design inc.—Andrew Simons, Adam Tanski, Marilyn Acosta

Design Team:

Tillett Lighting Design Inc.—Stephen Horner, Kate Gardner, Seth Ely and Jennifer Bickford

General Contractor:

Unicorn Construction Enterprises, Inc.—Sanjeev Dhawan, Michael Zysk, Victor Alvarez

Structural Engineering:

Liam O’Hanlon Engineering PC—Liam O’Hanlon

Electrical Engineering:

Plus Group Consulting Engineers, PLLC—Imtiaz Mulla, Johnson Esho

Fiber Optics:

Drama Lighting

Coordinating Agencies:

New York City Department of Cultural Affairs— Kate D. Levin, Commissioner

New York City Department of Transportation— Janette Sadik-Khan, Commissioner

Community Board 2, Brooklyn, New York

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The installation can be viewed at twilight and night. Photos will be available in the near future.

For online media kit with preliminary photos, visit:

http://tillettlighting.com/press/this_way_brooklyn_bridge_underpass_light_art_installation. For more information or to schedule an interview with Linnaea Tillett or Karin Tehve, please contact Kelle Adams at +1-718-218-6578 or kelle@tillettlighting.com.