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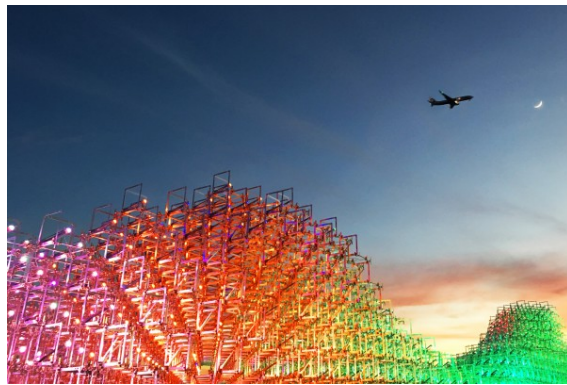
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From Urban Media Gestures to Spatial Micro-Meditations: Brian W. Brush Creates Geometric Designs of Light, Color, and Form

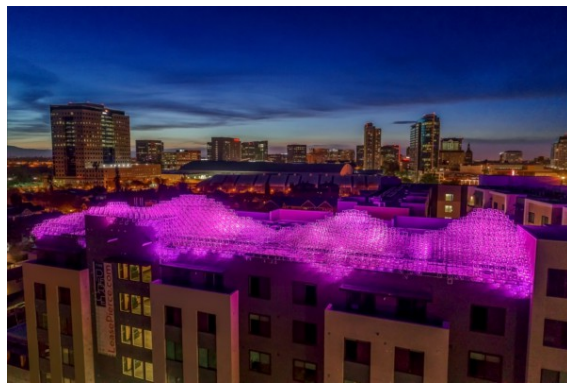
Posted on February 14, 2018 by The Art Commission

Hovering above the Pierce Building in San Jose, California, thousands of data-driven RGB LED lights, reflected through a matrix of identical reflective cube frames, shimmer amidst the city's downtown high rises. Ethereal as mist, the geometric designs of *Voxel Cloud* mirrors the valley's daily weather patterns. Elongated and irregular as a mountain range, it mimics the surrounding landscape. Reminiscent of a detailed map or diagram, the installation's thousands of shimmering lights give a nod to the region known for its computer and semiconductor industry.



"Voxel Cloud"
Photo: Brian W. Brush

"I regard light as a material," says artist and lighting designer **Brian W. Brush**'s whose scintillating architectural installations harness refractive and reflective materials to impart a sense of movement and complexity inspired by parametric design. Whether constructed from anodized aluminum, fiber optic cables, polycarbonate, or a data-driven LED lights, each takes flight from a similar concept. At their foundation is a single, autonomous component that, when duplicated hundreds or thousands of times, produces a complex and dynamic organism all its own. They also begin with a similar goal: to engage individual viewers in a shared experience, whether that be to learn something new, identify with a local landmark, or even interact with the responsive qualities of a piece itself.



"Voxel Cloud"
Photo: Scott DuBose

Public Art and the Collective Experience

Acutely aware that he was creating a civic landmark with *Voxel Cloud*, for example, Brush gave thoughtful consideration to the lasting impression the installation would have on its countless viewers. "I really regard public art as a public service," he says. "I try hard to consider how my pieces will affect the places in which they live."

In a bid to achieve what urban planners call "positive externality," he explored "entry points" or visual signifiers that could tap into residents' own imaginations. "I knew that people driving home from work on the highway would see it every day," Brush says. "I really looked for opportunities to embed or imply things that they would recognize and say, 'that speaks to me somehow.'"

In the case of large-scale and highly public installations, Brush's entry points are often necessarily site-specific. The 2013 piece, *Filament Mind*, created in collaboration with Yong

anywhere in the state perform a search from a computer, individual cables illuminate that specific query through corresponding filaments. Like a "branching fibrous neural network," Brush says, the individual cables in bundles of bundles provide viewers with the visual impression of a collectively generated and continually responsive brain. As a whole "it's like experiencing neural behavior."

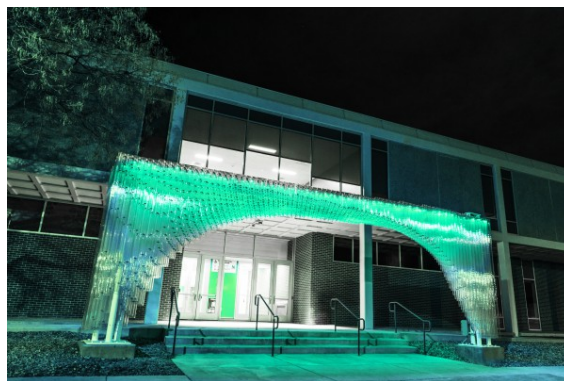


"Filament Mind"
Photo: David Agnello



"Sonarc"
Photo: Brian W. Brush

Brush's work-in-progress, *SONARC*, in Raleigh, NC, will be similarly interactive. Sited on a stretch of green grass in front of the Duke Energy Center for the Performing Arts, Brush designed what amounts to a public plaza that serves to integrate his piece with the Center's historic building as well as a nearby bronze sculpture, *The Acorn* by David Benson. Building on techniques explored in his previous project *LUMINARC* (photo below), *SONARC* will be composed of 1200 clear polycarbonate tubes. Arranged in a hexagonal honeycomb grid, the 30-foot by 30-foot luminescent arcade will be programmed to change the color and frequency of data-driven lights in response to visitors talking or singing into a microphone. As the program converts their voices into "light behavior," he says, viewers are given the opportunity to "see" their own sounds. Viewers will also receive audible feedback from the installation itself, to which they can respond in kind. The result is a unique and continuous exchange between viewer and design.



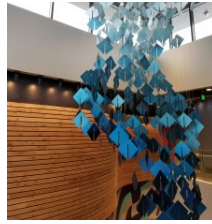
"Luminarc"
Photo: Alanna Singer

Meditations of Form and Color

Brush is quick to point out that not all of his works tackle such "grand urban media gestures." Others, gracefully suspended above a public space for example, strive to imbue an atmosphere of "micro-meditations of form and color." While absent the "broad, powerful concepts" of his large-scale projects, however, they are no less dynamic in their detail and construction.

In *Reef*, for example, 300 identical and vibrantly blue shapes of anodized aluminum are suspended from the ceiling of Harbor 05 at Olympic Towne Center assembled into a three-dimensional abstract form. "There's a kind of cellularity to it," Brush says of that form, "a sense that each autonomous unit combines to create the larger artistic organism." Evoking the seascapes so prominent in Harbor 05's home of Gig Harbor, WA, the installation recalls the form and motion of an ocean reef, a succession of waves, a school of fish.

With hundreds of anodized aluminum geometrical shapes in a saturated copper tone, Brush's earlier installation, *Growth*, suspended in San Jose's Pierce Lobby, responds similarly to its own surroundings. Calling to the sculpture of a tree installed outside the lobby's window, *Growth* mimics the texture and movement of leaves while reflecting the natural light that floods the building's glassed-in space. Simulating the complexity of the natural world, the effect is a meditation on the existence of an elaborate, intricate whole.



"Reef"
Photo: Ian Wingate



"Growth"
Photo: Scott DuBose

It's an effect not unlike Brush's body of work itself. Each project, while discreetly unique and conscientiously site-specific, when taken as a whole [or "in their composite"], combine to celebrate [or "convey" or "capture"] the connection inherent in our shared experience of place and public art.

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