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Founded 1872

Anne Patterson's large-scale installation at 125 High St.

By Eryn Carlson
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Who: Artist Anne Patterson

What: "The Light Between," a large-scale installation comprised of more than seven miles of suspended aluminum wires

Where: On view now at 125 High St.; officially opens with a reception on March 4

We expect to view art when we head to the museum, but what happens when we stumble upon it by chance? Does encountering art in an unconventional setting change our perception of it?

That's what artist Anne Patterson hopes people will contemplate when they lay eyes on her latest work, a large-scale installation housed in a high-rise office building in downtown Boston.

"We've all had that moment when we come across art in unexpected places," said Patterson, who grew-up in Rhode Island and is now based in New York. "It really brings a breath and a moment of light into your day."

Comprising more than seven miles of aluminum, Patterson's piece, titled "The Light Between," hangs in the 10-story atrium of 125 High St., consuming the space and enhancing the abundant natural light pouring in from the glass roof above. Nearly 450 aluminum strands are suspended from overhead cables, with each of the 110-foot long wires — which vary in width and color — meticulously bent into its own distinct shape.

The idea for "The Light Between" first came to Patterson while working on a similar project as artist-in-residence at San Francisco's Grace Cathedral two years ago. The installation was made up of thousands of multicolored silk ribbons cascading from the cathedral's ceiling.



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“When I was putting up that piece, I noticed the ribbons made an amazing pattern [as they fell through they air],” said Patterson, who sought to encapsulate the motions in a more malleable material. “I have worked with aluminum before, and it’s great because it keeps its shape unless you move it, and it makes the colors so vibrant.”

Meant to represent the sky, stars, and sun, her new installation’s celestial hues — blue, turquoise, silver, red, copper and gold — capture and reflect the sunlight, harnessing energy and movement for a vivid effect. The light radiates outwards as the space between the wires increases from the inside out, with the warm colors packed densely in the middle, only 6 to 8 inches between the strands.

It took a crew of 10, including Patterson’s associate designer Kina Park, seven days to put “The Light Between” together, but the project began in 2013 when Patterson met Jerry Speyer of Tishman Speyer, 125 High St.’s developer. Speyer, the chairman of the Museum of Modern Art in New York City, was excited to bring Patterson’s aesthetics to his large and busy atrium. For the artist, it was the perfect place to implement her vision.

“I love working large scale, and I love doing art in nontraditional spaces,” said Patterson, who studied architecture at Yale and got her MFA in Theatre Design from London’s Slade School of Art. Patterson has never limited herself to one medium; as well as working in set design and fine art, she has created mixed-media installations for symphonies across the US. Encompassing elements of set design, sculpture, lighting, projection and costumes, her installations are created as a visual response to orchestral music.

Music affects Patterson’s work beyond orchestral halls, as well. The artist has synesthesia, a neurological phenomenon that causes her to see shapes and colors when she hears music, so much of her art is often a response to that. For “The Light Between,” the work of local composer Michael Gandolfi — who works at New England Conservatory of Music — was a big part of her conceptualization process.

The installation, Patterson’s first project in Boston, also serves as a bit of a connection to her childhood home.

“I love Boston. Being from Rhode Island, it’s been really fun to be here,” she said.