Her Secret is Patience

Her Secret is Patience, the 44.2-meter-tall aerial sculpture in Phoenix, Arizona, is a new civic icon hailed for contributing to the revitalization of downtown. Suspended above the new two-city block Civic Space Park, the sculpture is monumental yet soft, fixed in place but constantly in motion, it dances gently in the air, choreographed by the flow of desert winds.

The large 3-dimensional multi-layered form is created by a combination of hand-batting and machine-loomed knitting, and is the result of a collaborative effort with an international team of award-winning aeronautical and mechanical engineers, architects, lighting designers, landscape architects, and fabricators. This work redefines the "art space," by bringing viewers' eyes upwards to the sky, focused on a new celestial object. During the day, the sculpture hovers high above heads, treetops, and buildings. The sculpture creates what the artist calls "shadow drawings," which the artist says are inspired by Phoenix's cloud shadows that captivated her from the first site visit.

At night, the illumination changes color gradually through the seasons. The goal in selecting the colors is to provide residents some small climate relief through color, adding cool hues in summer, and warm tones in winter. The lighting design also changes what portion of the sculpture is illuminated, leaving parts obscured in mystery, much like the phases of the moon.

The artist was inspired by the region's distinctive monsoon cloud formations and the shadows they cast, in addition to forms found in desert flora and the local fossil record. The title quotes American poet Ralph Waldo Emerson, who wrote, "Adopt the pace of nature; her secret is patience."

Janet Echelman

Janet Echelman transforms urban space with soaring, building-scale sculptures that fuse with forces of nature - wind, water and light. Combining traditional craft with cutting edge technology, she taps the potential of unlikely materials - from fishing net to atomized water particles - to create dynamic, accessible art environments in cities worldwide.
Water Sky Garden
空中水花园

Visitors approach by a red boardwalk and intersecting bridges over a new water garden. Above their heads, visitors see the red netted forms moving in the wind; below they see “water drawings” amidst the reflections in the pond. The environmental component, however, remains invisible through a collaboration between the artist, urban designer, landscape architect and site team. This project takes the run-off water from the Olympic Oval’s 20,234 m² roof and cleans it through its aerating system and plant selection.

The red boardwalk and “sky lanterns” are inspired by the city’s cultural communities. Richmond has the largest immigrant population by proportion of any city in Canada with the majority of those immigrants being of Asian descent. The wooden boardwalk follows a curving path similar to the choreography of the Dragon Dance, a performance frequently seen in local Chinese festivals. The Nitobe Japanese garden and the Sun Yat Sen Chinese garden of the Vancouver region are important references, especially their material presence, intersecting paths and reflective ponds, and their framing of views. Water Sky Garden is a contemplative art environment that encourages participants to linger. The overhead netted forms provide a new visual experience, putting art in the sky. Made of colorfast 100% ultraviolet resistant expanded PTEF fiber nets, they are transparent and integrate with the landscape they inhabit, allowing viewers to look at them and through them at the same time. At night, they glow like lanterns.

Designer
Janet Echelman

Landscape Architecture
Phillips Farevaag Smallenbergh

Architects and Urbanists
Hoskin Bikker Bomfice Hadid

Lighting and Design
Joseph Scott

Material
Painted galvanized steel, architectural fiber net, cedar bridges, aeration system, plants, lighting

Location
Canada

Area
6,967 m²
Janet Echelman
Janet Echelman transforms urban space with soaring, building-scale sculptures that fuse with forces of nature: wind, water and light. Combining traditional craft with cutting-edge technology, she taps the potential of unlikely materials—from fishing net to atomized water particles—to create dynamic, accessible art environments in cities worldwide.
Janet Echelman’s 70.1-meter-long aerial sculpture “1.26” suspends from the roof of the 7-story Denver Art Museum above downtown street traffic to commemorate the inaugural Biennial of the Americas.

The temporary nature of the Biennial and its accelerated timeline precluded the artist's use of a permanent steel armature, as employed in the artist's previous monumental permanent commissions. Instead, “1.26” pioneers a tensile support matrix of Spectra® fiber, a material 15 times stronger than steel. This low-impact, super-lightweight design made it possible to temporarily attach the sculpture directly to the façade of the Denver Art Museum, and this structural system opens up a new trajectory for the artist’s work in urban airspace. Because this monumental sculpture is made entirely of soft materials, it is animated by the wind. Its fluidly moving form contrasts with the rigid surfaces of the surrounding urban architecture. At night, colored lighting transforms the work into a floating, luminous form while darkness conceals the support cables.

Janet Echelman

Janet Echelman transforms urban space with soaring, building-scale sculptures that fuse with forces of nature: wind, water, and light. Combining traditional craft with cutting-edge technology, she taps the potential of unlikely materials – from fishing nets to atomized water particles – to create dynamic, accessible, art environments in cities worldwide.

Artist
Janet Echelman, Janet Echelman, Inc.

Design Engineer
Peter Heppel, Peter Heppel Associates

Lighting Designer
Joseph Gann, Richter Scale Productions

Art Project Manager
Mark Drummond-Dawne, Janet Echelman, Inc.

NASA Scientist
Brad and Chris, Art Production Laboratory

NOAA Scientist
Christopher Moore, Center for Tidal Estuarine Research

Material
spectra fiber, high-tensile polyester fiber, lighting

Location
Denver, Colorado

Size
70.1 m long, 15.2 m x 9.1 m

The dynamic, ethereal quality of Janet Echelman’s 70.1-meter-long aerial sculpture “1.26” contrasts with the rigidity of the surrounding urban architecture. The lightweight, super-tensile fiber supports the sculpture, making it possible to install the artwork temporarily on the Denver Art Museum’s façade. This innovative design not only brings art to the streets but also engages the public with its interactive qualities, as the sculpture is animated by the wind and transformed by night-time lighting.