



ARTWORK **BROKEN WALL | THE COLORADO**

ARTIST **JIM CAMPBELL**

INSTALLED 2006
BYRON G. ROGERS U.S. COURTHOUSE
DENVER, COLORADO

Jim Campbell employs computer technology to create works of art that illuminate ideas about memory, perception, and the passage of time. For his commission at the courthouse in Denver, he also revolutionizes conventional modes of architectural decoration by synthesizing traditional and contemporary visual language. Whereas artists of earlier eras had to rely on composition and figure postures to imply movement in classical friezes and pediment sculptures, Campbell's images are truly kinetic. His electronic medium also draws from vernacular imagery of the contemporary urban landscape, such as advertisement billboards, theater marquees, and sports stadium scoreboards.

For *Broken Wall*, located on the exterior of the building, Campbell filmed pedestrians in the Denver area (including at the street corner next to the courthouse) and converted the footage into low-resolution moving images that are displayed on a screen of light-emitting diodes (LEDs). The imagery is purposefully very spare—almost like shadow puppets. The moving silhouettes are easily recognizable, but details are obscured. The framing and pacing of the movements create poetic meaning out of everyday experiences.

To create this artwork, Campbell chose to infill an obsolete entryway with a grid of glass blocks and LEDs. Like a pointillist painting, the LEDs create dots or pixels of light that collectively form an image. The image is set in motion by a simple computer program that controls the timing and illumination pattern of the LEDs. Campbell chose to bring his work to street level by installing a series of glass-block columns along the entire length of the building. The lighting of these columns corresponds in real time to the fluctuations of the imagery on the larger screen. The columns also provide a sculptural presence during sunlight hours, when the brightness of the LEDs is not apparent.

Campbell continued his work with two elements inside the building. He made the exterior glass-block screen of *Broken Wall* two-sided, and thus its reverse surface is visible from the lobby. *The Colorado*, a three-panel LED companion piece to *Broken Wall*, is also located in the building's lobby. In three successive images, Campbell shows the whitewater rapids of the Colorado River, which appear to flow from panel to panel. JP/SH

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