

ARTWORK **RIVER OF LIGHT**

ARTIST **MIKYOUNG KIM**

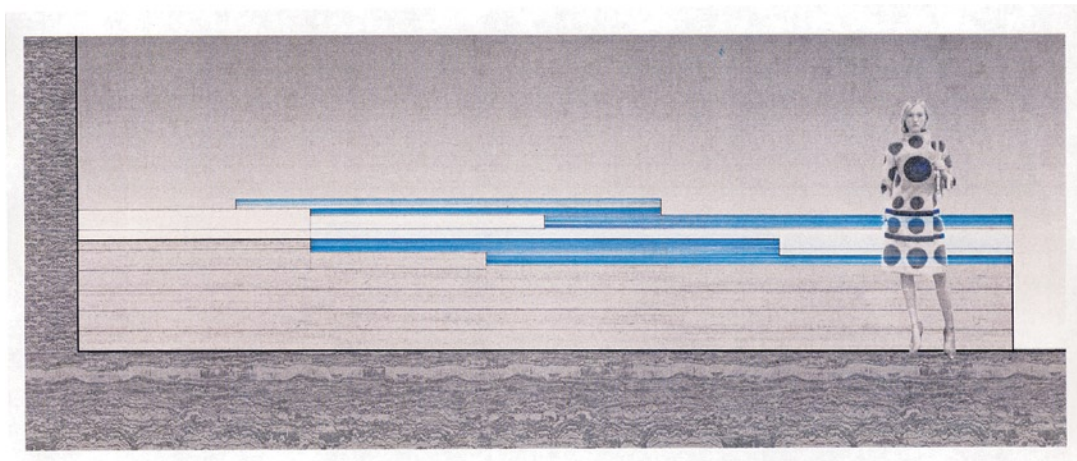
INSTALLED 2004  
U.S. COURTHOUSE  
WHEELING, WEST VIRGINIA

Resting on the staircase plinth in the courthouse annex designed by Goody, Clancy & Associates, *River of Light* is an abstract image of a river distilled to its essence. It consists of two parallel bands of glass layered to appear as though they cascade into the central atrium. The translucent glass is embedded with fiber-optic cables that glow with an ever-shifting range of water-evoking hues. Even at the lowest tier, the color is visible through the glass layers, similar to the way that objects remain visible when submerged in the depths of a clear stream.

The contrast of the sculpture with the solidity of the stone surrounding it, combined with the fluidity of the light, suggests the flowing water of the Ohio River through the hilly West Virginia landscape. The river has always been an essential element of Wheeling's identity. During the nineteenth century, when a steady stream of enterprising pioneers made the trek westward along the Ohio to the Mississippi River and beyond, Wheeling became a place to stop before continuing on the journey. As a result of its prime location on the banks of the Ohio River, Wheeling quickly became a prosperous industrial and commercial center, known for its glass factories and iron foundries. *River of Light's* glass panels refer to the city's industrial past, when Wheeling was a center of glass production.

The artwork received a GSA Design Award in 2004. The jury admired how "The piece creates a beautiful and meaningful relationship between its own radiant form, the architecture, and the location. The symbiosis it achieves with its setting is clear and concise, as well as unusually compelling." In *River of Light*, the artist unites historical reference with modern materials to depict the pulse and shimmer of moving water. The result is an artwork that is both of its time and of its place. RN/JG





THE PIECE WAS REALLY AN EXPLORATION OF CREATING A WORK THAT WAS CONSTANTLY EVOLVING WITH THE CHOREOGRAPHY OF LIGHT AND COLOR. WE WORKED VERY CLOSELY WITH THE TEAM TO DESIGN AN INTEGRATED SCULPTURE WITH THE LANGUAGE OF THE STAIR SYSTEM AND PODIUM. THE STEPPED SLABS OF GLASS WORK IN THE SAME WAY AS THE LAYERS OF STONE. – MIKYOUNG KIM



**Mikyoung Kim** is an environmental artist and landscape architect whose work ranges from single sculptures to large-scale master plans. Using natural resources like water and stone, as well as manmade materials such as steel and fiber optics, she creates environmental installations that explore multi-sensory experiences. Kim's background in sculpture, music, landscape architecture, and design have merged in her practice over the past ten years, yielding unusual works for public and private commissions in the United States and abroad. In addition to *River of Light* for the U.S. Courthouse in Wheeling, Kim has been involved in two other projects with GSA. She created *Echo Dynamics*, a stainless steel and water installation for the Richard Sheppard Arnold U.S. Courthouse Annex in Little Rock, Arkansas, and served as a member of the GSA art master plan team for the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's new headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland.

Kim received a BA in sculpture and music from Oberlin College and Conservatory and an MA in landscape architecture from the Graduate School of Design at Harvard University. She is currently chair of the Graduate School of Landscape Architecture at the Rhode Island School of Design in Providence, where she has been teaching since 1994.



MEDIUM GLASS AND FIBER OPTICS  
 DIMENSIONS 4 FT 6 IN X 23 FT 7 1/2 IN X 7 FT 5 1/2 IN