

MIT List Center

Kenneth Noland

This work of art was created by Kenneth Noland in 1985, as part of a collaboration supported by the MIT percent for art. Which included architect I.M. Pei, and artist Richard Fleischer, and Scott Burton.

Kenneth Noland was at the time a very well-known painter, whose work was usually associated with a group of painters under the name of Color Field.

Formalized Public Art Curator Patricia Fuller:

He had never before done an architectural commission. In this case the challenge for him, was to grapple with the scale of the architectural space and explore the use of standard building materials.

Architect Sandi Pei:

And what he ended up doing, was to really treat it as a one big enormous canvas that he very definitely introduced subtle colors to and some primary colors to really animate this wall.

Things seemed to jump and change and pulse it in your eye, in the middle of this very pristine, beautifully, skylight very restrained space.

The work has an elusive quality about it, you can never see it all at once.

The most intense and activated part is the interior atrium and then as it goes around the corner, it turns into a series of color blocks red, yellow, and black. And then in the other direction, it becomes a subtle blue line at the base of the building. It's a rich experience of the building through the art, it leads you and it makes you stop in the atrium and look up at that beautiful wall and then you see it on the outside. So in a funny way it's dissolving the interior and exterior of the building and making it a transparent transposition.

Additional commentaries on the architecture by I.M. Pei, and Scott Burton on Richard Fleischer's artwork, is available on the list website.