

KENDALL BUSTER

Fluent Traces

Washington, DC

For a recent commission at the law firm of Wilmer Hale, Kendall Buster worked with a site of “seemingly infinite vantage points.” The space in question is a 12-story atrium designed to join two buildings, with a water feature at the bottom and three bridges crossing it at rather dizzying heights. Conference rooms and offices border two sides of the atrium; a sleek wall and a curtain of windows form the other sides. The shape of the space is unusual: in a departure from traditional right-angled geometry, it assumes a trape-

zoidal-style form that narrows as the floors ascend. For this challenging site, Buster created *Fluent Traces*, three nebulous forms suspended at intervals from the ceiling.

These large-scale, hovering forms are shaped by white shadecloth stretched over welded steel frames. Depending on the lighting, the synthetic material appears opaque or transparent, which alternately gives the forms a massive presence or an effervescent quality. The interior steel skeletons echo the structure of the building but translate architectural rigor into something more organic, collapsing and morphing it as though it were a living being or shaped in response to natural elements. The forms each have several layers—some with openings—and from above, they resemble a topographical map. *Fluent Traces* rewards viewers from a variety of vantage points. From one of the conference rooms, where the central zeppelin-like form seems to be docking outside the window, one can observe the orderly and delicate stitching that holds each shadecloth panel in place. From afar, one appreciates how the forms interplay with their environment.

Buster, whose background includes microbiology, invokes the structures’ whimsical, even living character. She observes that they “operate like scale models for imaginary buildings,” offering the fantastic vision that “for a moment, fragments of the existing architecture have been shaved off or broken free to torque and drift.” She aimed “to articulate a form that appears to have been built with a precise blueprint, while at the same time to contradict this with [a] demonstration of the structure as a dynamic system,” highlighting differences and new connections between the organic and the fabricated.

Left: Kendall Buster, *Fluent Traces*, 2006. Powder-coated stainless steel, greenhouse shadecloth, and stainless steel aircraft cables, 3 elements, each approximately 10 x 25 x 5 ft. Above and detail: Niels van Eijk and Miriam van der Lubbe, *A Rectangular Bobbin Lace Lamp*, 2007. Optic glass fiber, 2.5 x 2.5 x 7 meters.

