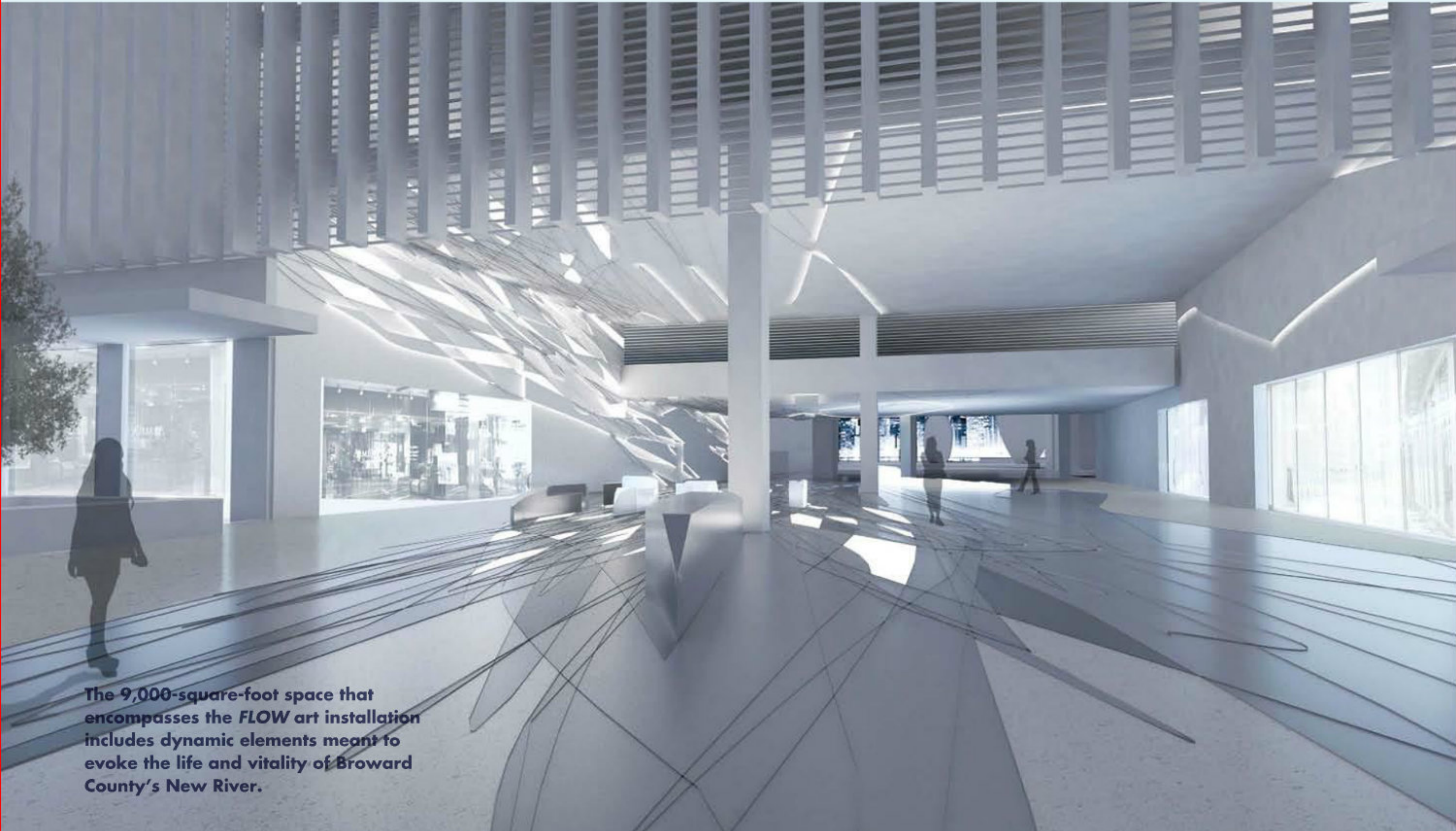


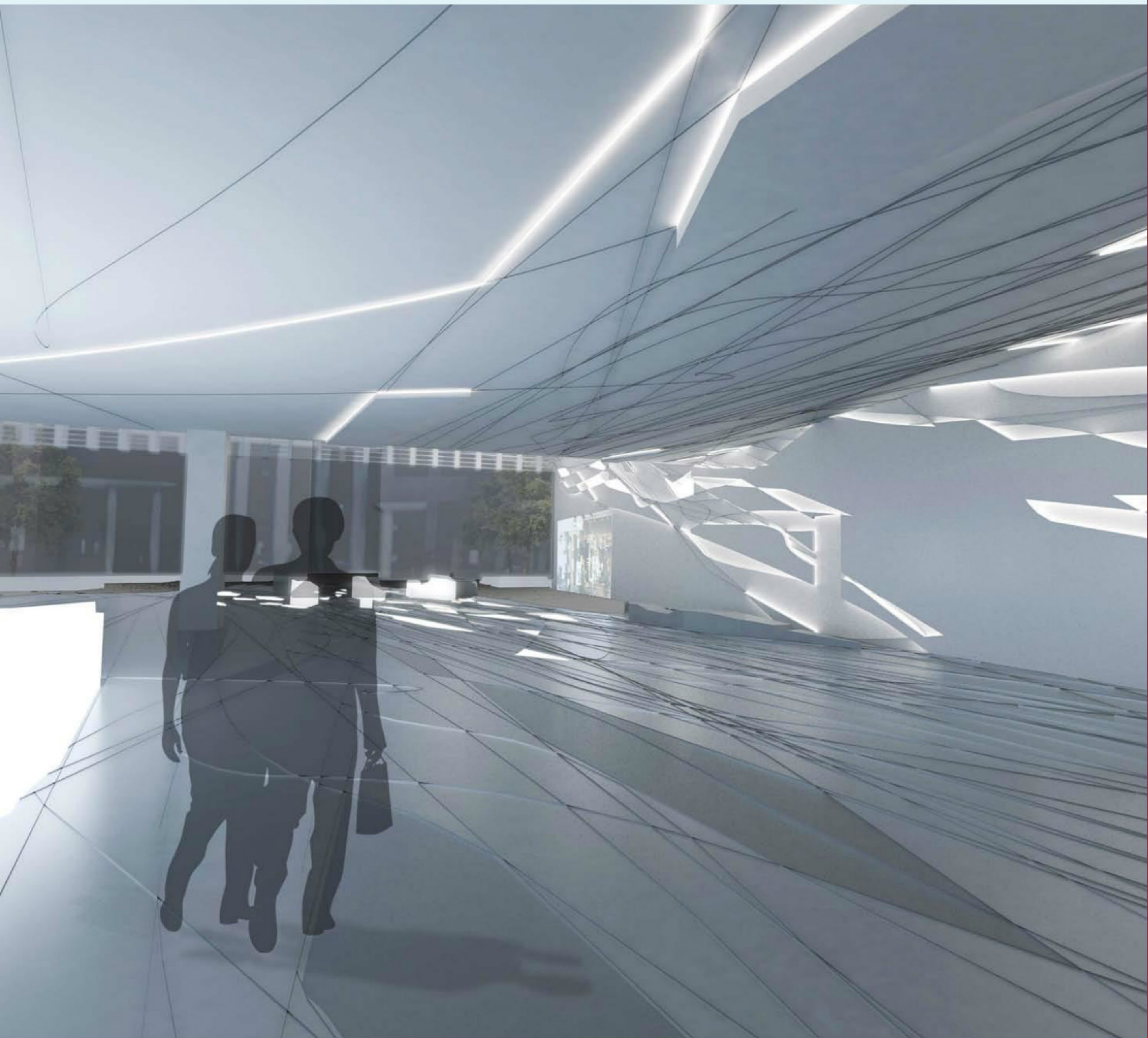
FLOW: ACTIVATING A PIVOTAL PUBLIC SPACE WITH ART

Text John T. O'Connor



The 9,000-square-foot space that encompasses the *FLOW* art installation includes dynamic elements meant to evoke the life and vitality of Broward County's New River.

THE AMAZING PROLIFERATION OF NEW CONSTRUCTION, much to some people's amazement, does not end with condominium towers in Fort Lauderdale. Brightline is building its downtown rail station as fast as it can, Fort Lauderdale/Hollywood International airport is in the midst of a \$2.4 billion (that's billion with a b) expansion and upgrade, and the long overburdened Broward County Courthouse is moving into the completed, AECOM and Cartaya and Associates Architects-designed, 20-story tower this summer.





This tower is part of an 18-acre campus and will allow the court system much needed breathing room. The tower will have 75 individual courtrooms, 14 elevators, 11,500 light fixtures... You get the picture.

Sited on a 1.5-acre lot, the new tower is also the site of a 9,000-square-foot public art project entitled *FLOW*, which runs the length of a public access breezeway at the base of the tower and adjacent parking structure. The idea behind artist Margi Glavovic Nothard's project is to turn a non-descript connecting passage into a dynamic procession, recalling the New River, the only river to run from the Everglades to the Atlantic Ocean, entirely within Broward County.

The width of the New River is almost identical to the width of this breezeway space, allowing the artist, who was selected and commissioned by the Broward Cultural Division, to explore aspects of the river itself and translate some of those elements into a permanent, multimedia installation that would be experienced by

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hundreds, perhaps thousands, each day. This doesn't mean art that sits on a pedestal, but rather engaging the entire space, floors, walls, ceiling, concrete, glass, lights and more.

Nothard's work promises to activate this pivotal, urban space with lighting that interacts with the movement of passersby. In addition, raised, nature-inspired forms that will double as seating, will create not just a walk-through afterthought, but an amazing space that, according to the artist, offers those who enter "an urban hub in which everyone pauses, reconnects and re-exchanges with the environment and each other." Broad views beyond the space make sure those who pass through are aware of the city that surrounds them as well.



Sculptural forms that look as though they were stylized creations of the water's flow over time are meant to double as benches.

Visually connecting this space and Broward's own river to the Courthouse, the City and the Community is a lofty goal for a space one might just breeze through on their way to a hearing, but if this installation, inspired by the shifts, movement and life in the New River, acts to calm or center those who pass through, even just a little... then we say *brava* to the artist and her concept.

Designing major public art, art that truly engages those who walk by it, is an endeavor, but completely worth the effort as it enriches our cities and the experiences we have within our cities. Great public art is often, in my opinion, about placemaking — creating spaces that promote people's well being. *FLOW* promises to be exactly that. ■