

Hoosac River Revival

North Adams, Massachusetts artist, Ralph Brill, presented a challenge to the LRC's Design Workshop class—revive a river lost. Brill's idea stemmed from a movement to celebrate the Hoosac River in North Adams, once the life of the surrounding mill town.

LRC graduate students, under the guidance and mentorship of LRC faculty, designed and installed a light art sculpture capturing the essence of the river.

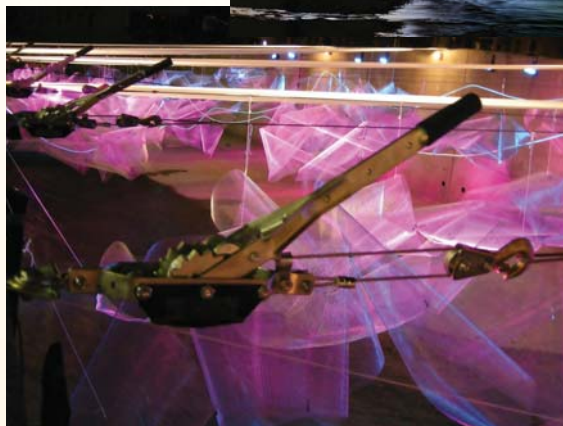
History

The Hoosac River was the life blood upon which the city of North Adams was built, including water-powered mills that became an integral part of the region's commerce. However, this great source of power and commerce also brought flooding to the surrounding town, and by the 1950s, the Hoosac River had been channeled with large cement walls to prevent flooding within the city center.

Concept

The initial light-art design concept for the river revival began with a simple light art installation and grew to a more complex representation of the river's history, as well as its future. The LRC students focused on three artistic elements to tell the river's story through the use of light and materials.

- Fabric bridges spanned the river and connected the two sides of North Adams.
- Rocks, in the form of wire sculptures, filled an existing concrete channel and provided an interactive surface for the light, as well as a moving spatial element to cast multicolored shadows onto the concrete walls.
- Finally, a glowing fiber optic cable represented the flow and surge of the river, an ever-present force in the community of North Adams.



Response

The community offered volunteers and the local vocational high school offered technical services to help construct and install this challenging mosaic of light art. Visiting artists from around the world added their light exhibits along the river channel, making it a living gallery, all of which was showcased in the Hoosac River Lights Festival, endorsed and supported by North Adams Mayor John Barrett III, local businesses, and MASS MoCA, and attended by more than 3,000 people.

