

## PROJECTS

[Home](#) > [Projects](#) > “This Way” Brooklyn Bridge Installation

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# “This Way” Brooklyn Bridge Installation

By [Sallie Moffat](#)

The underbelly of a busy freeway overpass is typically an overlooked area where darkness prevails. But in DUMBO—an acronym for Down Under the Manhattan Bridge Overpass, and the name for a historic Brooklyn waterfront neighborhood—light has transformed one such space from foreboding to inviting thanks to a collaboration between two firms—Tillett Lighting Design and interdisciplinary design studio KT3D.

The result of a competition that was commissioned by New York City's Percent for Art Program and the DUMBO Business Improvement District to commemorate the Brooklyn Bridge's 125th anniversary, the art installation, titled “This Way,” illuminates and directs visitors to the DUMBO entrance of the Brooklyn Bridge's pedestrian walkway, where a concealed staircase is cut into the bridge's masonry anchorage.

Unlike the Manhattan side of the bridge with its small greenway and opening onto City Hall Park, the Brooklyn side of the bridge and the DUMBO approach with its orange-hued high-pressure sodium lighting and insufficient signage did little to welcome pedestrians into the borough. Now, in addition to making the area feel safer, the installation also works in concert with new signage to improve wayfinding for residents and tourists alike. Mounted maps and signage at the bottom of the stairway guide visitors to local attractions they otherwise may have missed.

Inspired by the bridge's giant cables, lighting designer Linnaea Tillett and KT3D principal and architect Karin Tehve designed white arrow-like fixtures with “arms” composed of twisted fibers inside flexible PVC channels. Attached to the girders on the underside of the overpass with steel and aluminum supports, the linear fiber optic luminaires, each illuminated by a 150W metal halide lamp, point toward the obscured stairway. Because the installation had to provide both wayfinding and lighting for the street below, five-bar light-emitting diode (LED) downlights with white light illuminate the roadbed, while three- and two-bar fixtures with custom blue lenses light the perimeter of the overpass as well as the sidewalks. The downlights range from 79W to 128W, and each luminaire contains rows of 1W LEDs. While the white light was selected to connect the underpass to the bridge's span, blue was chosen “because we wanted a color that stood out from standard urban lighting, one that people could see from a distance, even at low light levels,” Tillett explains.

These simple, yet significant, improvements to the underpass are both aesthetic and practical. “This Way,” like other light art installations before it, has become a part of the urban landscape, addressing public safety and transforming a once residual space into the larger experience of the bridge—and of Brooklyn.

**Location** Brooklyn, N.Y.

**Clients** City of New York, Percent for Art Program, and the DUMBO Business Improvement District

**Design Team** KT3D, Brooklyn, N.Y. (architect); Tillett Lighting Design, Brooklyn, N.Y. (lighting designer)

**Photographer** Seth Ely, Tillett Lighting Design, Brooklyn, N.Y.

**Project Size** 15,000 square feet

**Project Cost** \$600,000

**Lighting Cost** \$132,250

**Watts Per Square Foot** 0.28

**Manufacturers** BetaLED, Drama Lighting, Gardco