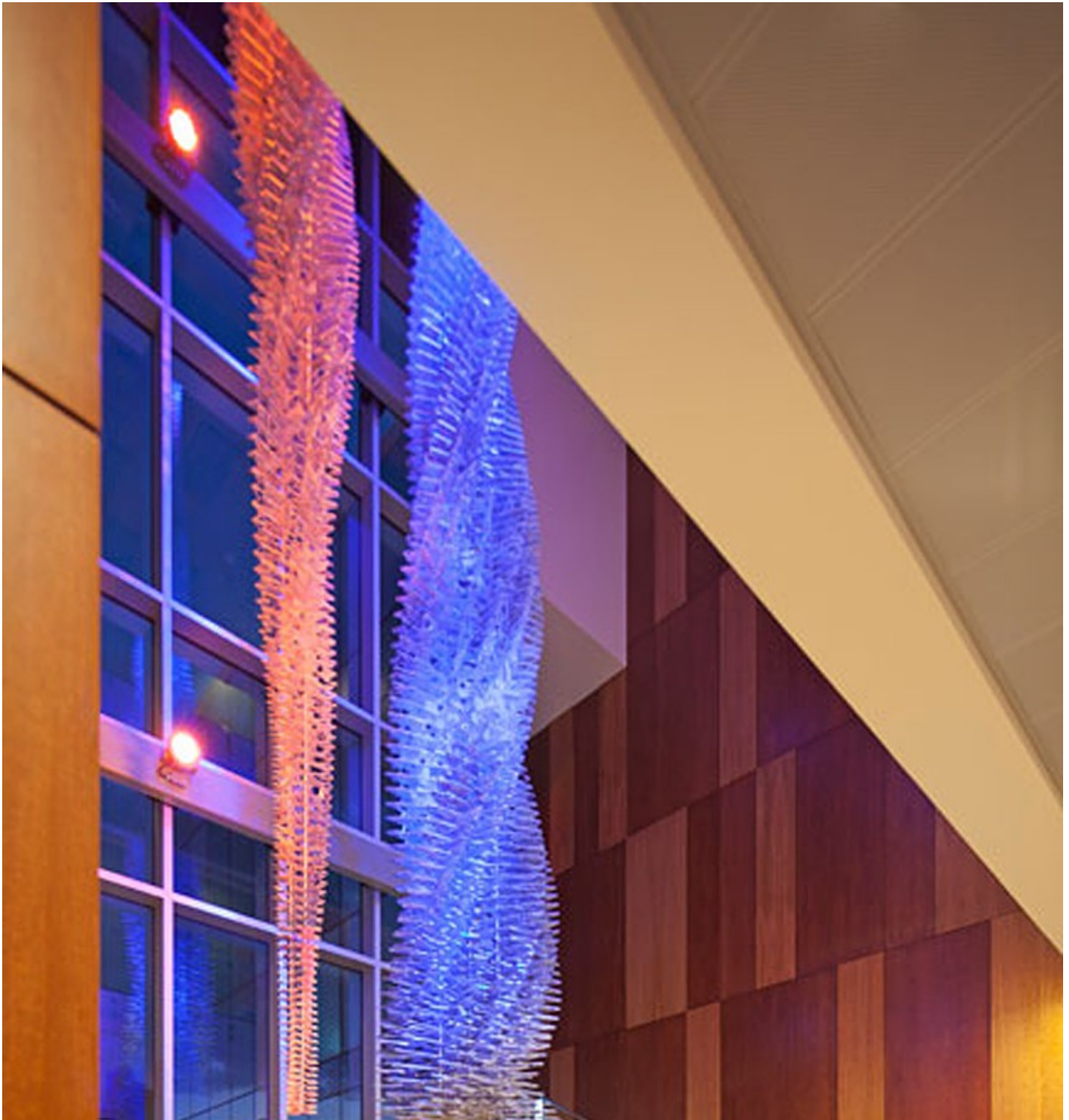


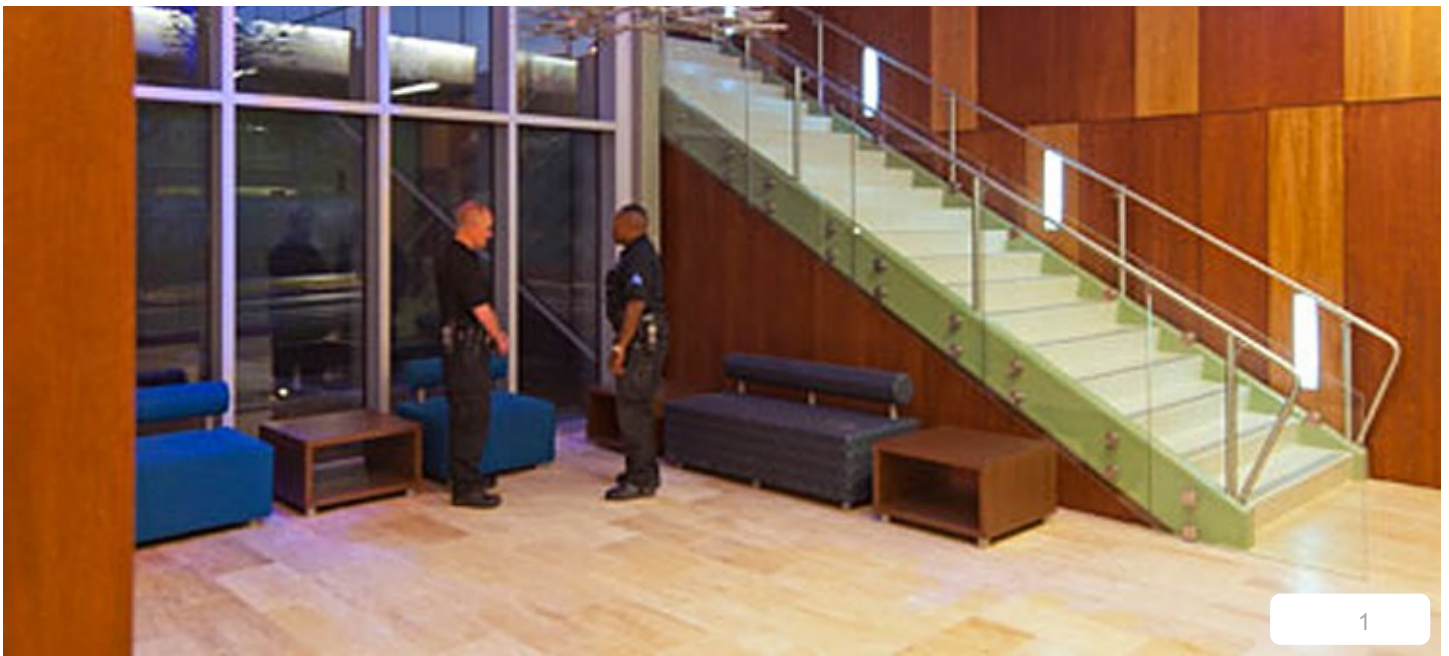
Westword

The Denver Police Crime Laboratory offers engaging new art

BY MICHAEL PAGLIA

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During the twentieth century, one new public building was constructed in the greater Civic Center area for each decade. But it's been a very different story in the current century: By my count, eight new landmarks have been built in the mere twelve years since 2000. Some, like History Colorado, are great from an architectural standpoint; others, like the Van Cise-Simonet Detention Center, are mediocre; and one, the Ralph L. Carr Colorado Judicial Complex, is downright awful, having broken new ground in the realm of formal clumsiness and in the crudeness of its detailing.

The Carr isn't finished yet, so that means that the much nicer Denver Police Crime Laboratory, at 1321 Cherokee Street, is the latest Civic Center element to come on line. The modest building, designed by the Durant Smith Group, is more than a little engaging with its folded-plate walls and many cantilevered parts. And the materials – mirrored glass and masonry – work perfectly together. Hopefully you will never be inside the Crime Lab because, unless you're an employee, you'd probably be in the form of a smear on a glass slide. But that doesn't mean you can't enjoy the public art there while you're still alive: One of the two pieces, "Suspect," done by California-based artist **Cliff Garten**, is visible through the double-height window that faces West 14th Avenue. The other, "Bullet," is inside the courtyard entrance and can only be glimpsed from the outside.

Both are paired aluminum forms suspended from the ceiling and lighted by ever-changing colors. Garten says that he was inspired to do this binary approach because the

job of the lab is to match evidence to a crime, so everything going on there may be understood to be in pairs. Another duality is that the sculptures look solid from below yet open when seen from the side. They are also examples of transmedia, since digital programs have been used to determine both the specific shapes of the parts and their relationship to one another.

"Suspect" is worth checking out, especially because it's visible from the safety of the sidewalk.

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