LUMEN

GLOWING TOPIARY GARDEN
New York, NY

Lighting Designer
Jim R. Conti

Landscape Architects
Ken Smith

Owner
Alliance for Downtown NY

The project site encompasses a city block in downtown Manhattan known as Liberty Plaza. A sound and light environment transforms the park into a formal garden-like arrangement of topiary forms. The installation consisted of sixteen 16-foot tall translucent cones installed over the park's existing light poles and one 24-foot tall cone located at the center of the park. The location of the central cone revealed the formal nature inherent in the existing light pole arrangement.

In addition to the original light poles providing illumination at the top of the cones, three wet location fluorescent fixtures equipped with color filters were installed in a tripod like arrangement at the base of each pole. The fixtures facing west were deep amber; southeast, brilliant yellow; and northeast, pale lavender. The changing nature of color perception resulted from the constant change in point of view as one strolled through the park.

A sound element consisting of 200 wind chimes installed in the trees was complemented by solid state digital sound boards installed in the eight cones arrayed around the larger central cone. These played 32 sampled low frequency bell sounds in a continuously evolving looping arrangement that contrasted with the random high frequency sounds of the wind chimes.

The large effective area of the cone shaped elements together with their even diffuse illumination produced a nighttime environment of low contrast and gentle luminosity. The overall effect of the sound and light created an ambient environment giving the park a sense of being a totally self-contained space within the city.