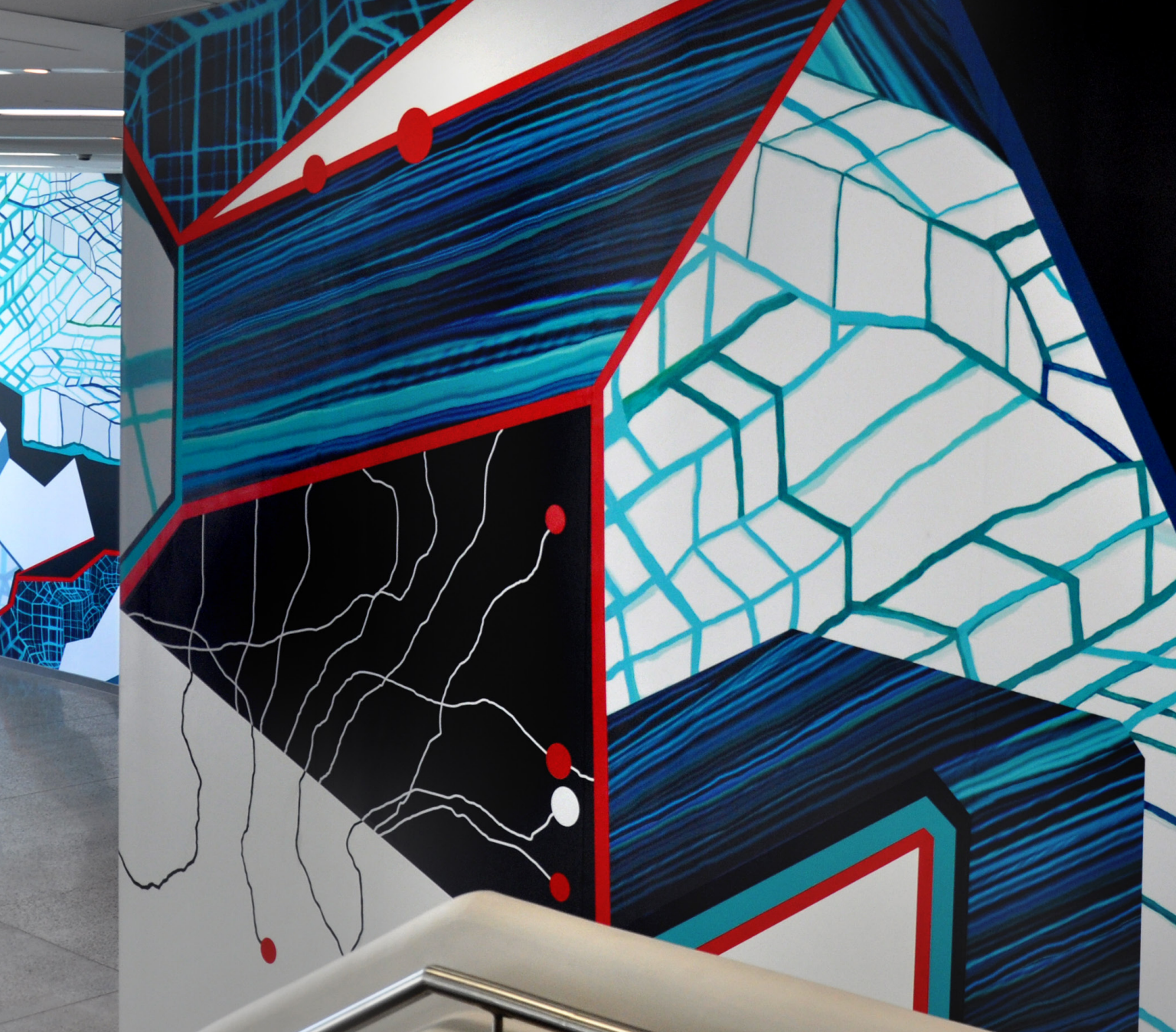




DIANA COOPER: HIGHWIRE, 2016

Grand Lobby Wall Installation
Moss Arts Center

MOSS
ARTS
CENTER



General Information
Admission to galleries and exhibition-related events is free.

Gallery Hours
Tuesday–Friday, 10 AM–5:30 PM
Saturday–Sunday, 10 AM–4 PM

For more information about exhibitions and events:

www.artscenter.vt.edu



[/artscenteratvt](https://www.facebook.com/artscenteratvt)



[@artscenteratvt](https://twitter.com/artscenteratvt) use #attheMAC



[@artscenteratvt](https://www.instagram.com/artscenteratvt) use #attheMAC



About Diana Cooper

Cooper is a nationally acclaimed artist based in New York City, whose work has been exhibited in the United States, Europe, and China. Her most recent work, *Double Take*, commissioned by the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, is an 8-by-96-foot permanent wall installation in mosaic, ceramic, granite, and steel on Roosevelt Island in New York City.

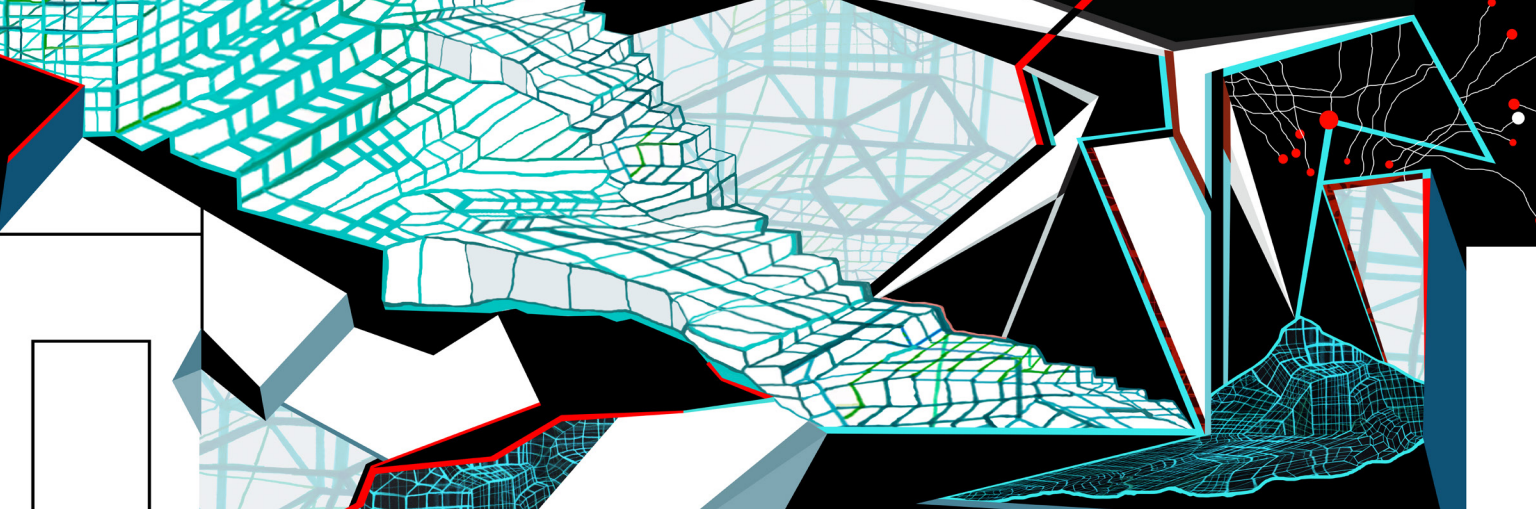
Cooper is the recipient of the Rome Prize, a Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship, a Pollock-Krasner Grant, and a New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship. In 2008 she was awarded a public art commission from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs Percent for Art Program and Polshek Partnership Architects. In 2009 Americans for the Arts honored her project as one of the top public art projects of that year.

Diana Cooper received a bachelor's degree from Harvard College in Cambridge, Massachusetts (1986); attended the New York Studio School; and received a master of fine arts from Hunter College in New York City, New York (1997).

For more information about Diana Cooper, visit www.dianacooper.net.

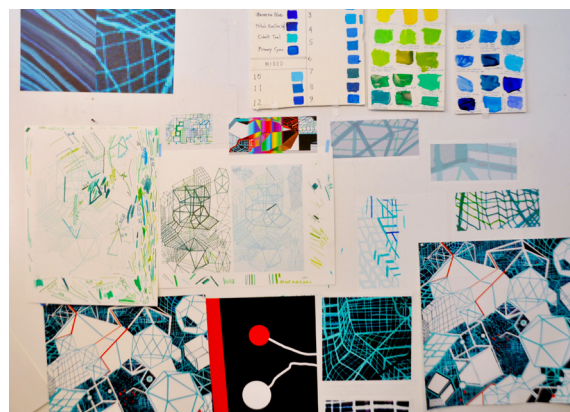
Acknowledgements

The artist would like to especially thank James Mercer. Without his assistance, this project wouldn't have been possible. Special thanks to our installation team: Jaclyn Sanders; Brennan Young; Felta Hall; AB Installations, Inc.; and, above all, to Diana Cooper.

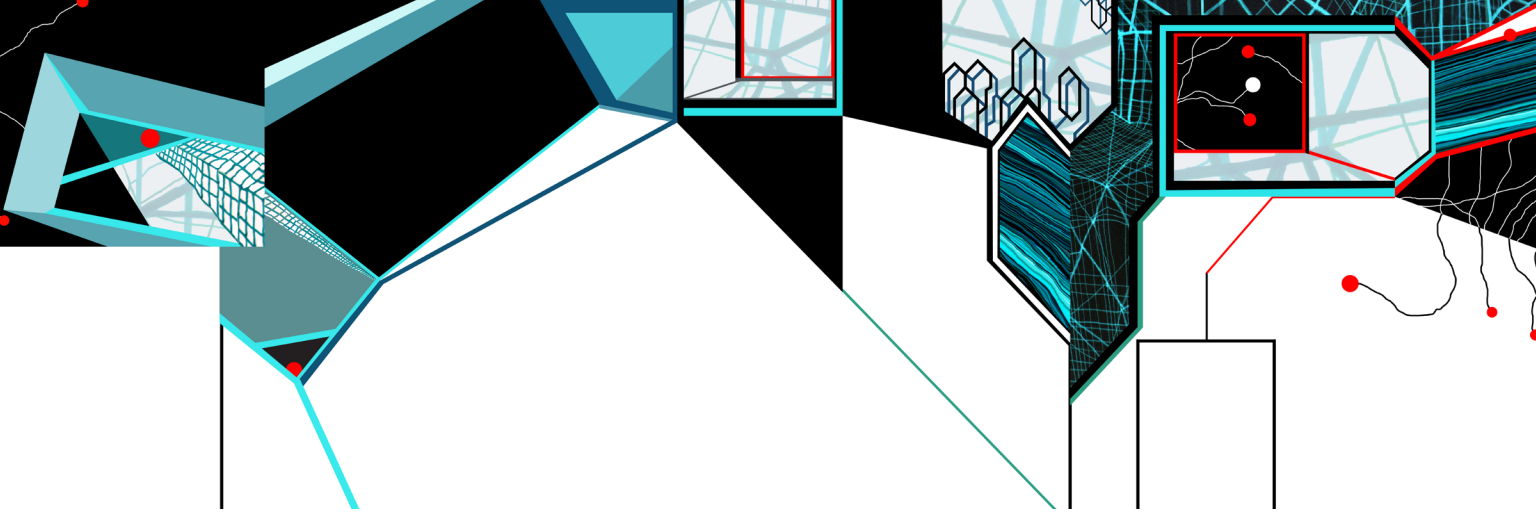


ABOVE AND BEYOND...

Diana Cooper is no stranger to large-scale works of art. Several of her earlier installations, comprised of both two- and three-dimensional materials, have sprawled over the walls and floors of entire galleries, corridors, and building façades. When approached with the opportunity to create a wall installation in the Moss Arts Center, she was immediately inspired by its architecture and, more importantly, its mission to serve as a transdisciplinary institution dedicated to creativity, art, intellectual inquiry, and meaningful cultural experience. Informed by elements of geometry, architecture, technology, digitally-rendered images, Islamic art, blackboards, constellations, doodling, and an ever growing mental catalog of places, imagery, and experiences, Cooper created *HighWire*, an expansive and commanding 17-foot-tall, 116-foot-long wall installation in the Grand Lobby. This project, with its unique spatial and logistical requirements, offered new opportunities to further expand and explore her creative process. Faced with the challenge of employing technologies and materials new to her, Cooper pushed beyond boundaries and limitations to achieve her vision on a grand scale. Most notably, Cooper chose to produce *HighWire* using a material she had not previously worked with—PhotoTex, a printable, repositionable adhesive material similar to that used in commercial signage. It's certainly not unusual for artists to experiment in medium or technique, but to do so for the first time with such a large project demonstrates a decided willingness to take risks and courage to venture in new directions.



▲ Photos by Diana Cooper



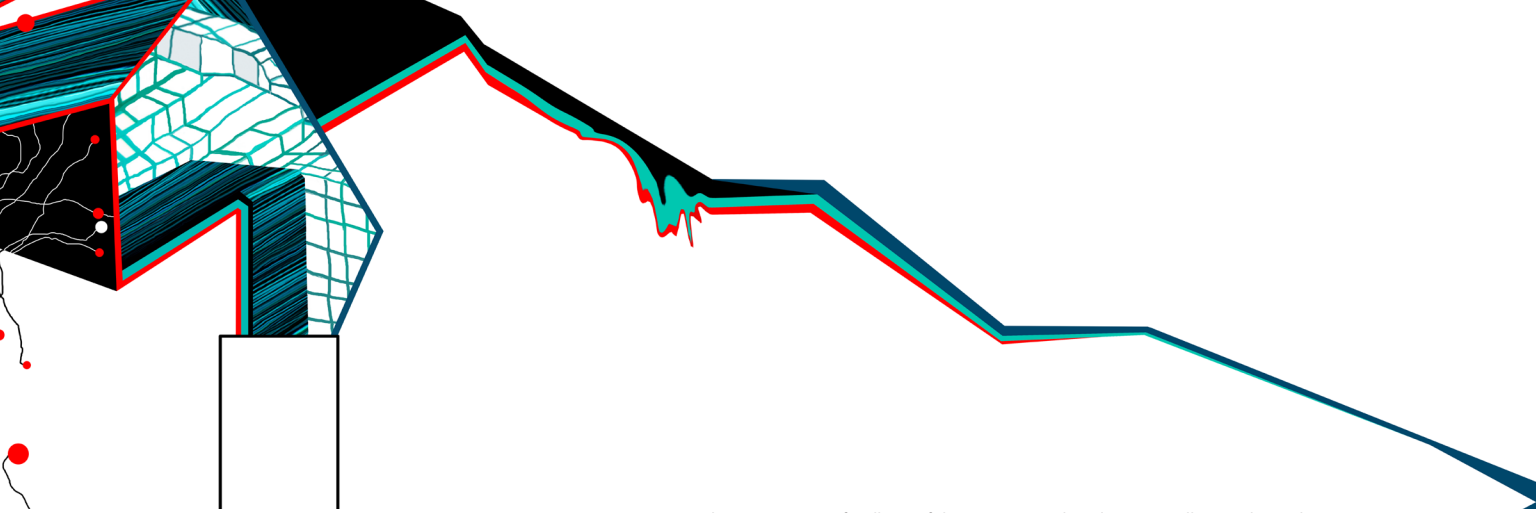
Cooper developed the concept and imagery for *HighWire* in her New York studio, using computers to combine her digital compositions, scans of her own hand-drawings, and images from various forms of data visualization, such as graphs, networks, and schematics. Another reference that informs the work is IBM's History Flow, a tool used to create a visual record of edits made to Wikipedia pages over time. The overall composition was then carefully calibrated to fit within the specific dimensions of the Moss Arts Center lobby walls, presenting quite a challenge for the artist and the on-site crew. Due to the scale of the project and the complexity of the printing process, every inch and feature of the walls required accurate measurement; even the slightest variation in height or width had to be noted. After a few rounds of measurement and adjustment, Cooper was able to create a digital model of the wall surfaces within which to scale and manipulate her immense composition. Once complete, the file was sent to a commercial printer that split the enormous image into narrow panels (similar to strips of wallpaper), printed it, and shipped it from New York to Blacksburg for installation.



Nearly 10 months in the making from conception to completion, *HighWire* was installed in the Grand Lobby in February 2016. The adhesive panels, wrapped in tremendous rolls, were installed first, carefully hung and trimmed to fit every corner, outlet, and doorway of the eight adjacent lobby walls. Once installed, Cooper painted over large portions of the printed design by hand, intensifying and darkening selected areas. Cooper spent 10 days in residence to complete this overpainting, often working 17 feet in the air, her workspace limited to the confines of the tiny platform of an aerial scissor lift. The process involved carefully masking areas of the mural to protect it from paint drips, as well as continually mixing batches of paint to a consistent color. While the the digital and printing process of *HighWire* was meticulous, the hand-painting was more gestural and intuitive.



▲ all other photos by Jaclyn Sanders



▲ *HighWire*, 2016, 17 ft tall, 116 ft long across eight adjacent walls. Rendering by Diana Cooper.

This interweaving of the digital and the handmade, the planned and the spontaneous, the precise and the emotional, hearkens back to one of her original inspirations for *HighWire*—the function of the Moss Arts Center itself as a crossroads for the interdisciplinary exploration of creativity.

Cooper's work has arguably always resided at a point of intersection—of media, style, and genre—playfully but deliberately dancing between and beyond definitions. Her works can be at once sculpture, painting, and drawing, or simultaneously formal with symbolic and emotive connotations. Although drawn from systems of data visualization, such as graphs and charts seemingly devoid of expression, her treatment of these images transforms them into lyrical compositions that verge on the representational or even narrative. Cooper's use of scale, depth, and layering reimagines and re-presents data as a landscape of sorts, employing both two- and three-dimensional techniques to create a digital terrain for the eye to traverse. Data, line, and shape are manipulated in her work to exceed their presumed rigidity and finality, evolving, like the artist herself, beyond the constraint of definition. *HighWire* is decidedly humanist in its approach to technology and space; it is a reflection and amalgamation of human experience—memory and vision—that speaks to the continual evolution of knowledge and being. Cooper has stated that her art represents “a visual way of thinking or of tracing one's thoughts;” that it reveals “the inner workings of the mind—the impulses to play, to invent, and to change.” *HighWire* is an immense, yet engaging, embodiment of all this and more.

Meggin A. Hicklin

Exhibition Program Manager, Moss Arts Center

