

# MIT List Center

## Scott Burton

Artist Scott Burton designed the settee, benches, and balustrade in the Wiesner Building's atrium as well as the granite bench in the building's lower level. He created these pieces in 1985 as part of collaboration enabled by the MIT Percent-for-Art, which also included architect I.M. Pei and artists Richard Fleischner and Kenneth Nolan. As former List public art curator Patricia Fuller explains, they evolved out of his earlier performance-based practice.

"In the '70s he became interested in the choreography of social interaction through this design and arrangement of public seating, no longer on a stage as a performance but out in the public as a kind of series of interactive possibilities for people. Burton's atrium piece creates this platform for socializing and observing activity in the atrium. "

The simple curvilinear form of Burton's first floor bench would have a dramatic impact on the design of the atrium. Sandy Pei, one of the building's architects, recalls.

"Scott came in with a model with this very central curve, the definition of that opening. That's for us sort of a Eureka moment. It made the building much more poetic inside."

"In response to the development of Burton's design, the architect I.M. Pei echoed the curves of the settee's bench and railing in the projecting upper balconies. "

Pei also extended Burton's balustrade from beyond the benches to wrap the first floor balcony and stairs to the building's lower level.

"If you look up from the settee and the bench, you see these curving balconies projecting. And those kind of engage with and knit together the sculpture and the building."

You can hear more about I.M. Pei's architecture, Kenneth Nolan's and Richard Fleischner's contributions to building, on the List's website.