

BELLS AND WHISTLES

RITA MCBRIDE

RITA MCBRIDE (b. 1960)

Bells and Whistles, 2013–2014

Brass, variable, approximately 530 ft. long

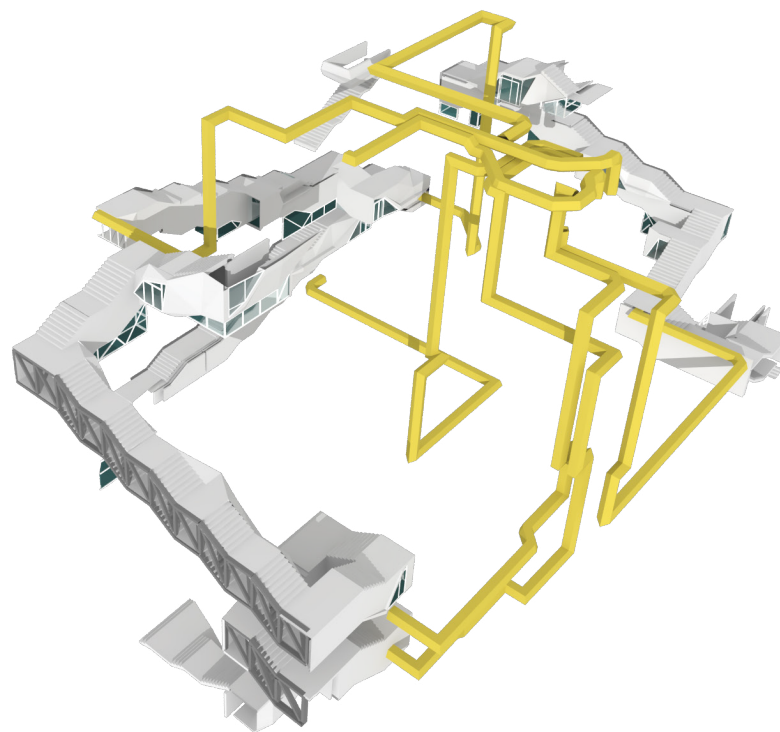
Permanent site-specific installation

Commissioned by The New School Art Collection Advisory Group

Bells and Whistles, a pentagonal brass profile, takes its dimensions largely from its function as the egress stair pressurization duct. Spanning six floors and over 530 feet long, the work weaves in and out of classrooms and communal spaces, creating an episodic presence throughout the visual journey of the building. As each space is unique, the ducts resist standardization; rather, consistent with the building's infrastructure, the ducts' profile changes, twisting and turning to resolve each obstacle.

From a close collaboration with Skidmore, Owings & Merrill and an early engagement with the design process of the University Center at The New School, Rita McBride has realized what she calls a “dream public artwork.” Her sculptures and installations are often prompted by the struggle between serving and served space—a struggle central to modernism—the open, inhabited, and transparent areas versus the dark, concealed, mechanical spaces. In earlier installations entitled *Servants and Slaves*, McBride addressed the relationship of art and architecture by highlighting buildings' mechanical programs. *Bells and Whistles* employs the same brass material as the University Center's facade, but is formed by another set of functions, the essential but hidden mechanical life of the building.

—Rita McBride



About the artist:

Rita McBride (b. 1960, Des Moines, Iowa, USA) lives and works in Dusseldorf, Germany, and Los Angeles, California. She studied at Bard College in New York and holds an MFA from the California Institute of the Arts. McBride's practice often involves large-scale installations that complicate distinctions between minimalist sculpture, industrial design and modernist architecture. Her work has been exhibited internationally.