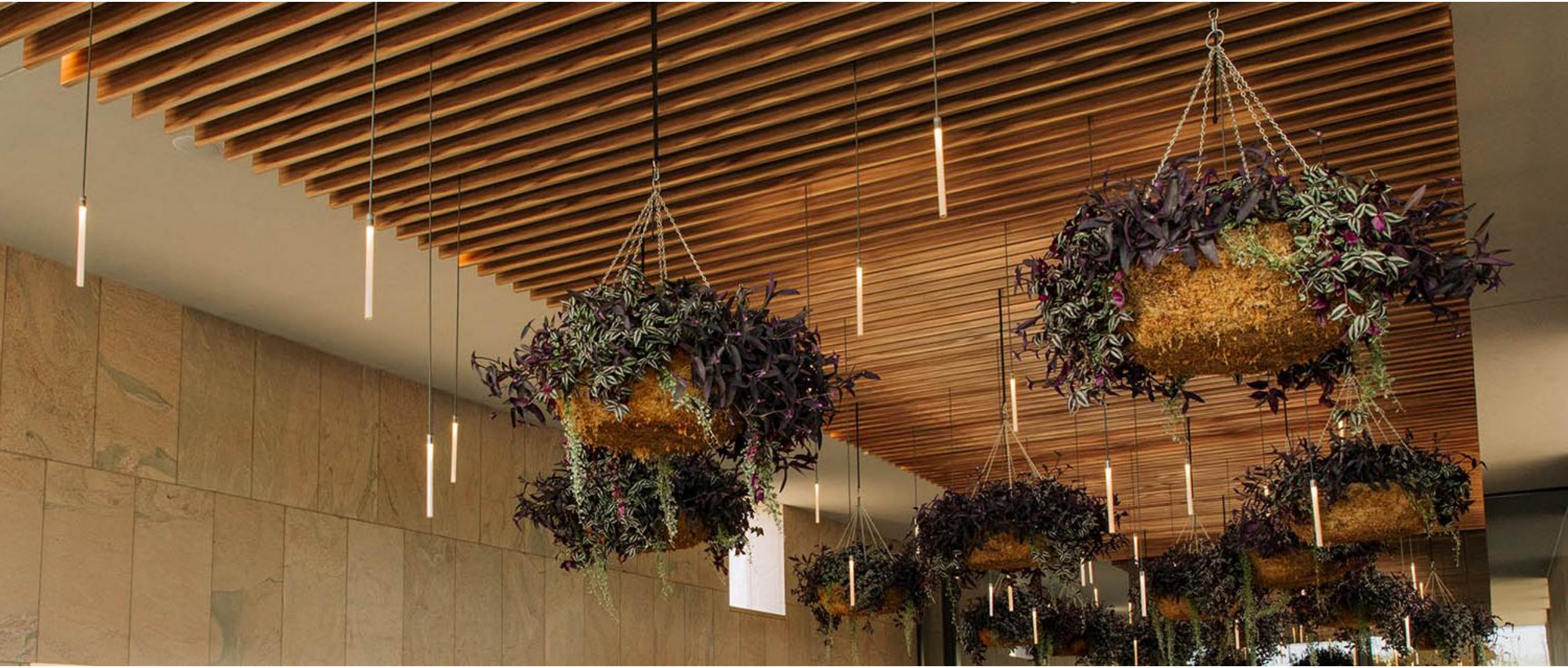
Case Study: Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park – Entry Portico Lighting



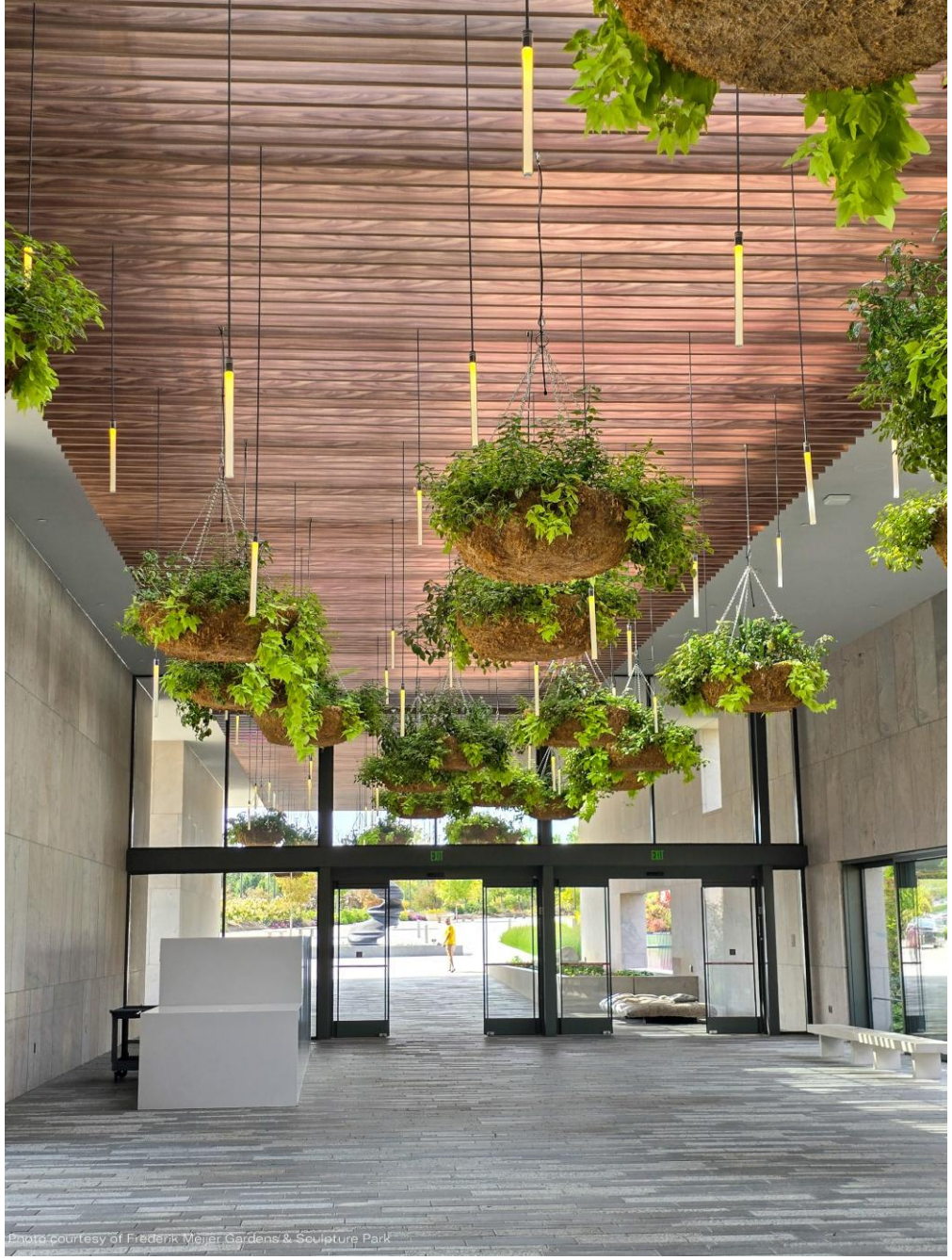


Photo courtesy of Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park

Project Overview

Since 1995, the Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park has been a cultural destination for the Grand Rapids community and beyond, celebrated for its lush landscape, educational programs, and world-renowned collection of outdoor sculpture. Over the years, the Gardens have more than doubled in size, expanding from 70 to 158 acres and diffusing spaces across the grounds.

The latest expansion project sought not simply to add new structures, but to create a unified, cohesive experience that would serve the institution well into the future. A new Welcome Center and Entry Portico were conceived to improve circulation, access, and visitor experience while providing a quiet architectural backdrop for art and horticulture.

World-renowned architects **Tod Williams and Billie Tsien** were commissioned to realize this vision, bringing their signature ability to combine restraint and elegance into spaces that heighten the experience of both art and nature.

Photo courtesy of Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park

The Arrival Experience

Upon arrival, visitors are greeted by *Bent of Mind*, a conceptual sculpture by **Tony Cragg** that shifts in form as one moves around its 3-dimensional surface. Passing through the **PNC Pavilion**, a breezeway pergola of natural stone, wood, and plantings, guests enter a transition zone that sets the contemplative tone of the Gardens—leaving the outside world behind to engage with the beauty of art and nature.

Inside the new Welcome Center, the **Garden Pavilion** enfolds visitors in a monumental installation by **Jaume Plensa**, merging art and architecture into one seamless encounter.

The Lighting Challenge

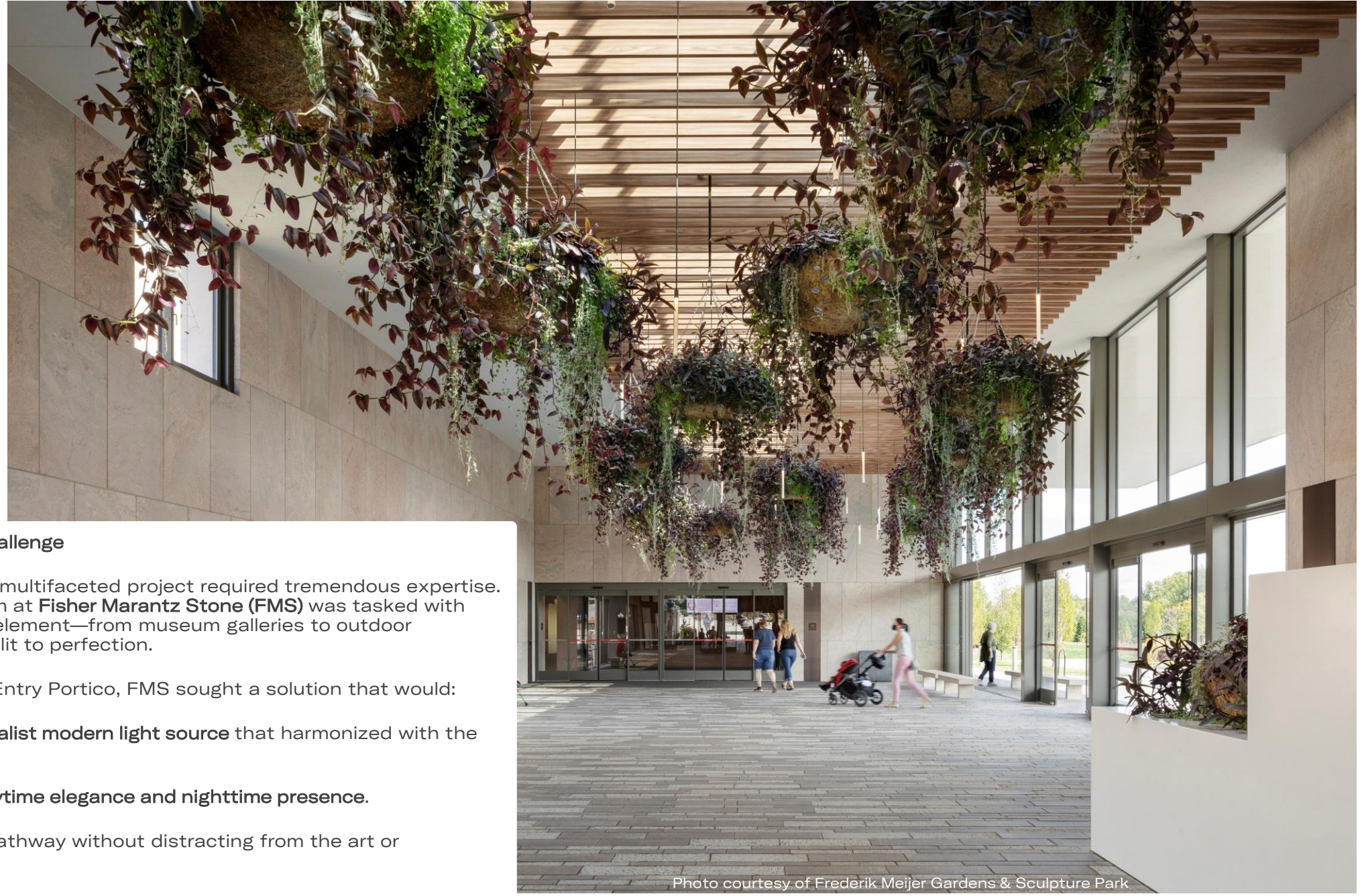
Lighting such a multifaceted project required tremendous expertise. The design team at **Fisher Marantz Stone (FMS)** was tasked with ensuring every element—from museum galleries to outdoor passages—was lit to perfection.

For the pivotal Entry Portico, FMS sought a solution that would:

Provide a **minimalist modern light source** that harmonized with the architecture.

Deliver both **daytime elegance and nighttime presence**.

Illuminate the pathway without distracting from the art or architecture.



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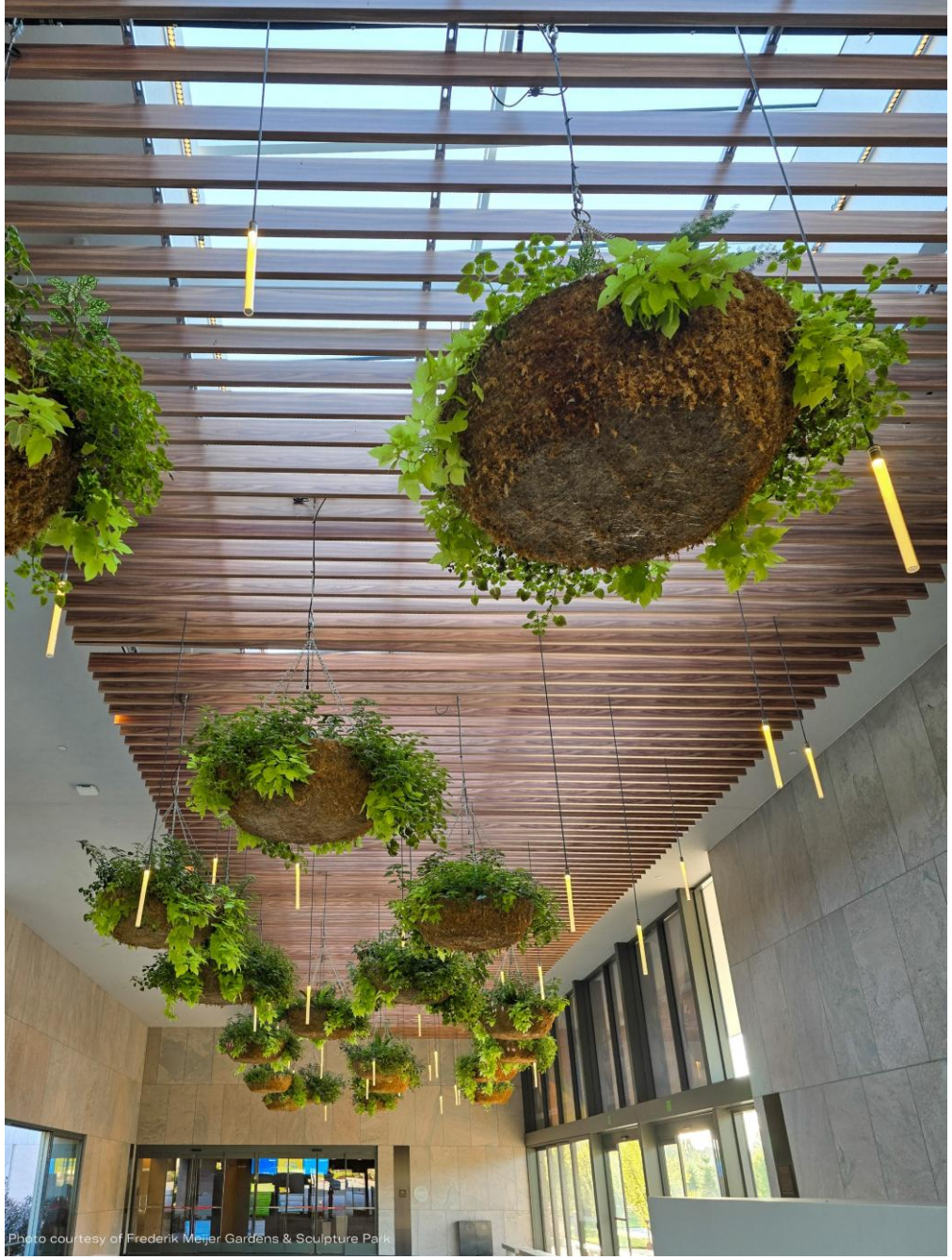


Fabbian's Customized Solution

To meet this challenge, Fabbian's **Multispot Tooby F32 pendant** was selected. Each pendant, composed of **1" diameter borosilicate glass with an internal diffuser**, created a 3-dimensional light effect ideal for the transition space.

However, the standard cord-and-canopy mounting was not suitable for the breezeway pergola. Fabbian collaborated with the design team to develop a **customized solution**, including:

Rigid rods of varying lengths in place of cords.

A **custom mounting bracket** designed specifically for integration with the pergola.

A **custom RAL paint finish** that matched the building's architectural palette.

These modifications allowed the pendants to seamlessly integrate into the Entry Portico's structure while maintaining the design integrity of both the architecture and the artwork.

Photo courtesy of Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park

The Result

The finished installation is nothing short of spectacular. The customized Tooby pendants appear to **float effortlessly from doorway to doorway**, guiding visitors through the passage while adding a soft glow that enhances both the path and the surrounding architecture.

Far from being just functional, the lighting itself becomes a visual element—an elegant backdrop for those pausing to take in the space, bridging architecture, nature, and art in a way that elevates the entire visitor experience.

Project Details

Client: Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park

Architects: Tod Williams & Billie Tsien Architects

Lighting Designer: Fisher Marantz Stone

Manufacturer: Fabbian (customized Multispot Tooby F32 pendants)

Completion: 2022

Location: Grand Rapids, MI

Size: 93,600 SF (Welcome Center), 15-acre site, 158-acre total campus

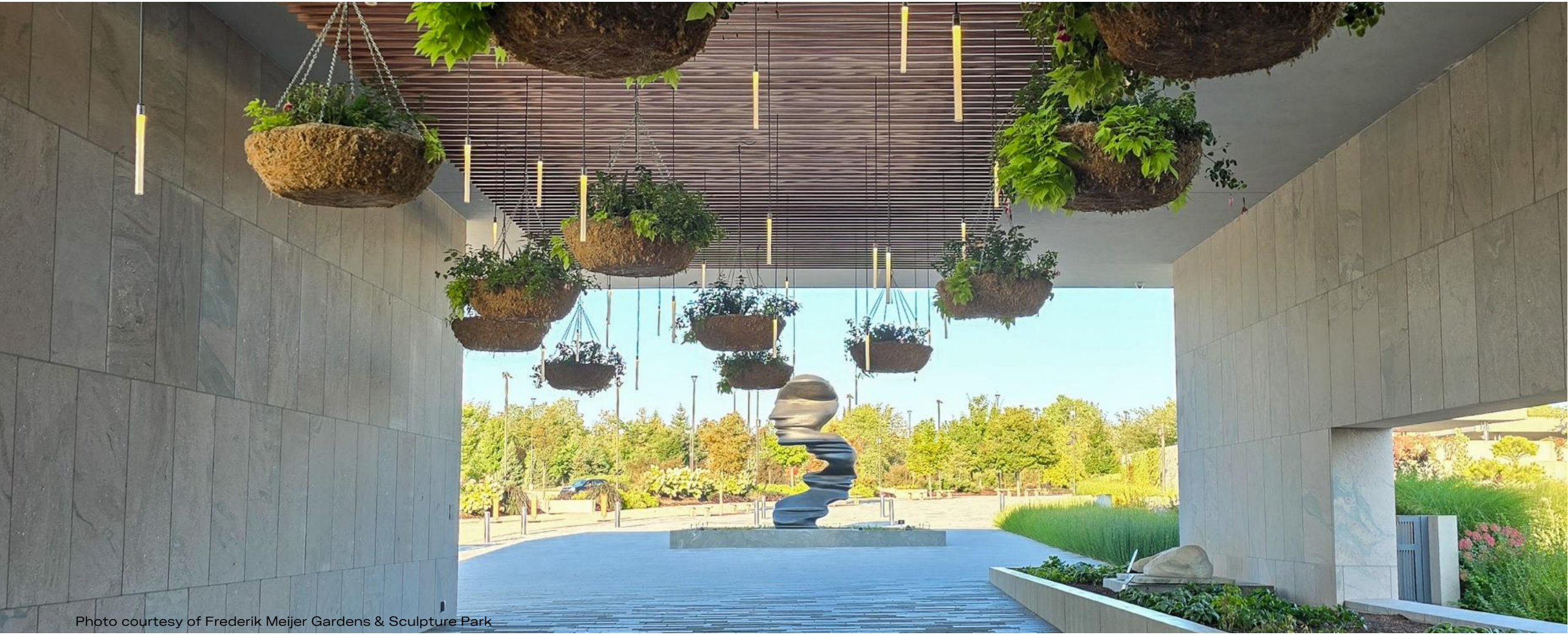
Program: Welcome Center, Tram Stop, Amphitheater Expansion, Concession Stand, Increased Parking, Outdoor Seating

Sustainability: LEED® Certified™ Campus

Closing Statement

Fabbian USA is proud to have been selected for this landmark project, providing a customized lighting solution that complements world-class architecture and brings joy to hundreds of thousands of visitors year after year.

Photo courtesy of Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park



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Case Study

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