



Critic's Rating



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Ball-Nogues Studio

"Unseen Current," **Extension Gallery**, through May 11.

The Extension Gallery continues a dazzling series of installations with this project by Los Angeles designers Benjamin Ball and Gaston Nogues. *Unseen Current* is a rumination on the inverted catenary arch, which resembles a chain suspended between two level points. Ball and Nogues suspend 3,000 lengths of custom-dyed nylon cord from mesh to create an environment that suggests the framework of a graceful ocean wave. The designers were inspired by architect Philip Johnson's hanging-chain window treatments at the Four Seasons restaurant in New York City. But they also intended to bring a slice of Los Angeles to Chicago: The cords' coral and blue colors suggest the brilliant, smog-enhanced sunsets to which Angelenos have grown accustomed.

In some respects, the piece reads like a drawing rather than a solid object. Diaphanous and cloudlike, *Unseen Current* stands on its own as a beautiful and sensuous sculptural construct. But the way it makes visitors navigate the gallery space—although you can see through it, you have to wend your way under and around it—raises intriguing questions: What is a procession of arches if it doesn't support anything or if you can't walk through it? Does a spatial design have to be composed of traditional building materials—or be functional—to be considered "architecture"? *Unseen Current's* foglike form reveals new perspectives on art, design and the ways the two intersect.

— Philip Berger



Ball-Nogues Studio, *Unseen Current*,