

Fermilab Architecture and Sculptures

When Fermilab’s founding director, Robert Wilson, imagined an ideal laboratory, he wanted it to be architecturally impressive and artistically inspiring. With this in mind, he installed remarkable sculptures and designed buildings influenced by culture, history, and physics.

1 Wilson Hall, 1973

Wilson Hall, the focal point of the Fermilab site, was originally called the Central Laboratory Building. Wilson was inspired by French Gothic architecture to create a “cathedral of science,” formed by two separate towers connected by crossovers that soar over the atrium. As you enter the 16-story building, you will find that the atrium is richly verdant, while the large glass walls cast natural light into the main entrance. The building is made of reinforced concrete. Fiber-glass forms cast from wooden boards gave the concrete walls their distinct texture.

2 Acqua Alle Funi, 1978

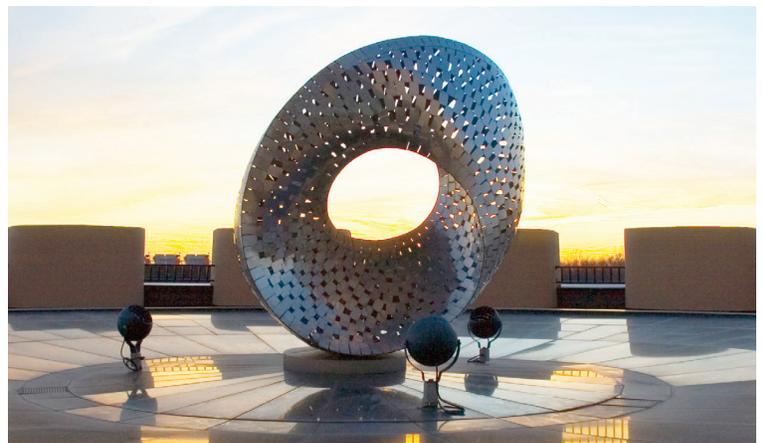
On the reflecting pond across from the entrance of Wilson Hall, you will see a hyperbolic obelisk designed by Wilson. The name “Acqua Alle Funi” is an Italian phrase meaning “water to the ropes,” which refers to a story about an Egyptian obelisk being raised in St. Peter’s Square in the 16th century.



Acqua Alle Funi sculpture and Wilson Hall

3 Möbius Strip, 1974

On a rooftop patio next to Wilson Hall sits the Möbius strip sculpture, an artistic adaptation of a mathematical marvel discovered in 1858. Pieces of stainless steel were welded to a tubular form that is eight feet in diameter.



Möbius Strip sculpture

4 Broken Symmetry, 1978

This 21-ton sculpture greets you as you come through the Pine Street entrance to Fermilab. The three legs are of different height and weight, which creates the asymmetry at the top—but when viewed from directly above or below, the sculpture is perfectly symmetrical. Broken Symmetry is made of metal from the retired U.S. Navy aircraft carrier Princeton, which was the prime recovery ship for the Apollo 10 lunar mission.



Broken Symmetry sculpture

Explore Fermilab's fascinating visual aesthetic.

5 Leon Lederman Science Education Center, 1992

The education center bears similarities to the works of architect Frank Lloyd Wright, with a strong emphasis on geometry in the bold horizontal lines. Meanwhile, the windows resemble the style of Japanese houses. The building is dedicated to Nobel laureate and passionate educator Leon Lederman, Fermilab's second director. Hands-on science exhibits for students in grades 5–12 cover everything from detectors and accelerators to particles that make up the Standard Model.

6 Tractricious, 1988

Located across from the Illinois Accelerator Research Center, this distinctive 36-foot sculpture is able to withstand winds up to 80 mph. It is composed of 16 stainless steel outer tubes (made from scrap cryostat material from the Tevatron dipole magnets) and 16 inner tubes (made from carbon steel pipes from the Fermilab "boneyard"). The freestanding tubes twist in a way that is similar to the shape of the Acqua Alle Funi sculpture.

7 Neutrino Area Geodesic Dome, 1971

The unique dome was constructed using colorful fiberglass triangles with 10-foot-long sides. The public contributed 120,000 soda cans that support the fiberglass.



Tractricious sculpture

Fermilab Map

