To create *Parallax Gap*, nine ceilings from iconic works of American architecture were drawn, printed at large scale, and then suspended in layers above the Renwick’s Bettie Rubenstein Grand Salon. Architectural drawings are traditionally used to represent buildings. However, architects David Freeland and Brennan Buck have challenged the medium’s typical role by transforming their drawings from two-dimensional illustrations into three-dimensional installations. The processes and sensibilities of drawing are applied to the fabrication of physical structures, creating a rich new medium.

Each ceiling is drawn in perspective from off-center focal points. From most viewing angles, the layers offer abstract patterns and distorted perspective. But from certain points in the room, the layers lock into defined views, and an illusion of space appears. As a result, *Parallax Gap* is a visual puzzle that plays with its title’s concept of parallax—an effect in which an object’s position seems to change depending on the viewing angle. The work is simultaneously a collection of distinct architectural volumes, an abstract installation, and a single, united drawing.

This installation is the winning submission from the Museum’s 2016 design competition “ABOVE the Renwick,” in which architects were invited to present designs for ceiling-suspended works that feature innovative approaches to fabrication and consider the full volume of the Bettie Rubenstein Grand Salon. With its imaginative overlap of both drawing and fabrication techniques, *Parallax Gap* speaks directly to the Renwick’s ongoing effort to feature new interpretations of contemporary craft.

We encourage you to meander about the room and linger under each of the nine ceilings, allowing time to discover the different illusions and distortions of space. Please visit the adjacent gallery to your left to view a short film explaining more about the work.
Fabrication and Assembly

Though the experience of *Parallax Gap* is colored by moments of visual abstraction and distortion, the construction of the piece was, by necessity, precise, linear, and sequential. FreelandBuck began by creating a series of perspective drawings that illustrate notable nineteenth- and early twentieth-century examples of American architecture. Large-scale printers transferred the drawings onto lengths of synthetic fabric, which were then cut to create each individual layer. The fabric was stretched across aluminum tubular frames to hold it in tension, and then each panel was fitted with strips of LED lights to illuminate the structure from the inside. Finally, the layers were hung from steel aircraft cable at precise intervals.

By exploding their perspective drawings into multiple layers, FreelandBuck introduces a constantly shifting, complex landscape, and a peek into the assembly of the piece.
Drawing a Building/Building a Drawing

An iconic ceiling design can inspire more than a sense of shelter. It can suggest distance and volume beyond its physical limitations. During the Renaissance, for example, artists and architects collaborated on designs for ceilings that presented the fantastical illusion of space overhead by mastering techniques like trompe l’oeil, or “trick of the eye,” and other perspectival illusions.

Inspired by these masters, FreelandBuck further investigates how to combine traditionally separate activities of making a drawing and building an object. In Parallax Gap, the act of drawing becomes the act of making, and the drawing becomes the structure itself.
PERSPECTIVAL DISTORTION

Perspective drawings create the illusion of three-dimensional space on a single plane. In *Parallax Gap*, however, traditional constructed perspective drawings are skewed, distorted, and spread across multiple planes, presenting an intricate composition. Overlapping the drawings at a large scale amplifies the perspectival complexity, resulting in glitches that create a bold visual impact.

While searching for the familiar view of each iconic ceiling—which is placed off-center rather than directly beneath the center point—the viewer is confronted with gaps and abstract forms where the perspective has been purposefully fractured. The piece presents an opportunity to rediscover familiar architecture with a heightened sense of how illusions are both created and disrupted. With this approach, FreelandBuck believes *Parallax Gap* “opens up the space of illusion to creative interpretation.”