Much like a real ocean dive, a visitor’s journey through the New York Aquarium’s new 57,000 sqft Ocean Wonders: Sharks! exhibit begins outside, where artist Ned Kahn’s shimmering wall uses wind and light to create a mesmerizing visual, reminiscent of ocean waves.

Each night, a curated 5 hour lighting display triggers automatically as sunset approaches over the beach, with bright cyans and undulating whites painted dramatically against a pink- and orange-streaked sky. As night falls, deep blues and purples slowly replace the pastels, edding and flowing in a rhythm of bioluminescent tides. When wind ripples through the sculpture, flashes of white backlight dance through like a school of iridescent fish.

A 20 by 20 ft mock-up built on the Coney Island Boardwalk confirmed the team’s decision to use two rows of linear LEDs at the wall’s base. White uplights behind the wall bounce off its 33,000 swinging panels and directly into viewers’ eyes as a quick sparkle, while LEDs in front paint the surface with colored light.

Visible for miles up and down the boardwalk, the shimmer wall serves as a public display of light and art that captures the curiosity of everyone who sees it.

“Part of the beauty of the shimmer wall at Ocean Wonders: Sharks! is that even if you aren’t on the boardwalk to visit the aquarium, you can still experience and appreciate the exhibit’s direct connection to the ocean.” — Christine Hope, Focus Lighting