Window to a city: Airport art design with a purpose

Blending beauty, usefulness, and civic identity to leave airport travelers with a lasting impression

Pearson Airport connects a daily average of 117,000 passengers to and from their destinations. When Stantec was approached to design a new central information zone in the domestic terminal, we asked ourselves, “how can we incorporate a design that makes sense of a place?”

Pearson Airport serves as a gateway into our community, connecting the city of Toronto to numerous national and international destinations. With non-stop passenger flows, we wanted to design an impactful structure that welcomes passengers and emits feelings of connectedness to the local environment and overall journey. The structure not only benefits arriving passengers, but also provides a unique experience to those passing through to their final destination, who’s only experience of the city is the airport.

A beautiful space with a spectacular ceiling and daylight shining through was the perfect place to design a new structure that was going to be unique to Toronto. To deliver a phenomenal passenger experience, we transformed the information zone into a destination. This structure was going to be a memorable place within the large busy airport, embodying an iconic character that represents Toronto’s beautiful natural parks, while still conveying the information required.

The design of the structure was inspired by the nature that surrounds the city; the lake, the beautiful parks and the emblem of the province. In drawing our inspiration from nature, we designed “The Flower” which merges flight information, vivid light design and an organic steel structure, all in one public art piece. The new information area includes:

- A flower centre piece that is 25 x 37 ft wide with 4 petals, each petal having a backlight and holding a 12 x 5 ft LCD (see photo 1);
- An information desk with curved cantilevered sections (see photo 2);
- A 12 ft high information pylon (see photo 2) and;
- Six kiosks with LCD screens (see photo 3) with solid white surface and wood finishes.

All structures were designed with similar characteristics of graceful curves and organic shapes to complete the artistic look and feel of the new area, while still serving the needs and experience for passengers.

The flower project is a demonstration of successful team work. The team consisted of the Greater Toronto Airports Authority (Client), Stantec (Design), Eventscape (Architectural Fabrication) and Icon Media (Digital Messaging). The flower is more than just a passenger information zone. It is a landmark that travelers gravitate to see, set up as a meeting place and feel welcomed by. In creating beautiful spaces of art in airports, it is a chance for our community to connect with travelers and offer a gift from the city to all.