CONSTRUCTED DESTINATIONS:
ART AND REPRESENTATIONS OF HISTORY AT THE
VANCOUVER INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

by

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ABSTRACT

Since its opening in 1931, the Vancouver International Airport has been a site where significant representations of the city, its geography and its population have been made. Instead of being utilitarian structures the airport terminals have been purposefully designed and decorated with art chosen specifically to communicate Vancouver's distinct qualities and culture to travelers. As culture is never static and changes continuously, the representations have also shifted over time.

By considering the specific history of Vancouver's airport in conjunction with the wider history of Canadian and international airport development, patterns (such as the continuous use of symbols from native cultures to represent aspects of the colonizer's culture) and tensions (such as Vancouver's relative position as a major Canadian urban centre and the growth of visible immigrant populations) which accompany the representation of locality at the airport become apparent. Henri Lefevbre's understanding of space as an active social product, David Harvey's assessment of the impact of globalization upon the local and Siegfried Kracauer's interpretation of architecture as illustrative of broad social trends underpin my analysis.

The adoption of an historical and theoretical framework within this thesis is directed at developing an interpretation of the current art program at the Vancouver International Airport which can move beyond the point where debate regarding "authenticity" and the agency of the native artists or their communities constricts the discussion. Through an examination of airport design, both theoretical and actual, the genesis of and reactions to art programs executed at the airport since the 1960s, as well as aspects of the city's social history, I illustrate that the current art program is representative of more than a superficial thematic strategy. Instead, it points to a complex and ongoing struggle to define and represent Vancouver both to its residents and the rest of the world.

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ABBREVIATIONS

CAV ....City Archives of Vancouver

CCA ....Canadian Centre for Architecture

DIA ....Denver International Airport

IATA ....International Air Travel Association

YVR ....Call letters for Vancouver International Airport

YVRAA ....Vancouver International Airport Authority

YVRAS ....Vancouver International Airport Services

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

INTRODUCTION

The art on display at the Vancouver International Airport has recently attracted

the attention of both journalists and art historians. The airport's collection, consisting

mostly of neo-traditional native sculpture, has been discussed in daily newspapers, local

magazines and academic papers.[1] Although aspects of the art program, such as the

political and social implications for native artists and native communities have been

critically addressed, past conclusions have been limited by the failure to consider the

airport's history as an influence on the current construction of Vancouver as a

destination.

I will argue that because the historical development of airports in Canada has

been a complex process involving much more than technological change and the growth

of the aviation industry, this development must be taken into account in any attempt to

assess the significance of the art displayed in them. As will be argued below, Canada's

urban airports have been treated as national and local showcases, sites where changing

identities have been presented, contested and re-stated. Through a consideration of the

history of representations at Vancouver's airport, influenced over time by the social and

economic growth of the city and the country, one may arrive at a more nuanced

understanding of the architectural design and thematic program at the current facility.

Informing my study of the historical development of Vancouver's airport is the

basic principle that art and architectural style, beyond any decorative quality,

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[1] For academic papers see Leddy, Shannon. *Tourists, Art and Airports, Vancouver International Airport as a Site of Cultural Negotiation*. UBC Department of Fine Arts Masters Thesis. 1997 and Fairchild, Alexa, *Canada Customs, Each-you-eyh-ul Siem (?)* UBC Department of Art History, Visual Art and Theory Masters Thesis, 2001.

communicate meaning to the viewer. Architectural design and monumental art have been employed at the airport to project concepts of local identity to travelers. The social and cultural history of Vancouver, which includes constantly changing notions of identity, has influenced the aesthetic choices made at the airport. Furthermore, anxieties about the representation of local identity have twice resulted in significant re-modelling of the terminals, once in the late 1960s and again in the early 1990s. Although the primary purpose of both reconstruction projects was to improve the airport's infrastructure, other important changes also occurred.

Drawing on the work of Henri Lefebvre, the space of the airport can be considered as a social product, and not as a neutral or utilitarian void. In his analysis, space is not simply a "passive locus of social relations" but instead is "active", "operational or instrumental" serving the hegemonic group which makes use of it.[2] Space produces social relations. In the era of late capitalism, heavily influenced by the phenomenon of globalization, space ultimately serves the interest of capital. Drawing on Lefebvre's theorization of space, David Harvey's own work *The Condition of Postmodernity* (1990) reiterates the thesis that spatial practices are not neutral but "...always express some kind of class or other social content, and are more often than not, the focus of intense social struggle."[3] He argues that because of the unimpeded flow of capital across the globe, particular qualities of certain spaces which are attractive to capital are emphasized as distant communities are forced into competition with each

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[2] Lefebvre, Henri; *The Production of Space*; Nicholson-Smith, Donald Translator; Blackwell Publishers; Massachusetts, 1991; page 10.
[3] Harvey, David; *The Condition of Postmodernity*; Blackwell Publishers; Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1990; page 239.

other.[4] This competition is intensified or accelerated under the conditions of globalization which compress time and space in order to increase production and consumption of goods and services.[5] Harvey implies that "localized competitive strategies" arise. They are designed specifically to maximize the special qualities of a place to provide an advantage over other, rival places. In his assessment, this reaction to globalization "…looks strongly to the identification of place, the building and signalling of its unique qualities in an increasingly homogeneous but fragmented world."[6]

In this thesis I will depart from the conclusions of both Lefebvre and Harvey by arguing that while the space of Vancouver International Airport has been actively produced in an effort to articulate aspects of locality, efforts to represent the constructed identity of the local hegemonic group have recently begun to work at something else in addition to the most efficient manner of attracting and accumulating of capital. Over time, the dominant representation of the city at the airport has changed from one which focused on a linkage of the local to the national and international to one that promotes 'distinctive' local qualities, de-emphasizing cultural connections to the rest of the world. The space of the current airport has been harnessed to express only certain aspects of the city and its history, those which construct Vancouver as a distinctive destination and reinforce a particular identity. This representational strategy has been aimed primarily at travelers arriving from the United States and other international points of departure. Other aspects of Vancouver have been ignored. Importantly, any illustration of the area's

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[4] *Ibid*, page 271. See also Harvey; page 295: "The active production of places with special qualities becomes an important stake in spatial competition between localities, cities, regions and nations."
[5] *Ibid*, pages 284-287.
[6] *Ibid*, page 271.

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close economic ties to Asia is refused by the airport's current thematic program. Instead the local is signified overwhelmingly through art by First Nations artists. The limited picture of native culture generated through the display is but one piece of the puzzle of representations of a diverse population within one site. My analysis must therefore go beyond the inadequacies of a primitivizing construction of aboriginal peoples and attempt to grasp what the significance or utility of this portrayal may be to other, non-native, communities.

For the sake of clarity, I have divided development at the airport into phases, the first of which ran from the beginning of aviation in the late 1920s through to 1962 when the facility was sold by the municipality to the federal government. The second phase of development ran from 1962 until the transfer of the airport's management, in 1992, from the federal government to the YVR Airport Authority (YVRAA). The third phase began in 1992 and continues to the present. As the re-construction of a working airport is a lengthy process these arbitrary chronological divisions mark the commencement, not the completion, of each new design strategy.

Monumental art has been featured prominently at Vancouver's airport since 1936. The airport's art works have represented particular aspects of locality with varying degrees of success. Some works, such as the Sheet Metal Workers' *Rocket* and Bill Reid's *Jade Canoe* have been embraced by a broad audience. The popularity of these two works rests in their high degree of legibility. They successfully communicate to viewers by making use of symbols around which exists a common consensus of meaning. The *Rocket* symbolizes the future, the contribution of organized labour to Vancouver's history as well as the Sheet Metal Workers' technical skills. Similarly, the *Jade Canoe*

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symbolizes well recognized aspects of the local history such as the Northwest Coast style of carving, the myths or legends of native culture and a close connection to the sea. Other works, particularly less legible modernist pieces such as Robert Murray's sculpture *Cumbria*, have provoked a storm of controversy because abstraction tends not to make use of these recognizable symbols and subsequently fails to easily communicate with viewers.

'Permanently' installed sculptures have been discarded and destroyed, and major changes to the terminals have occurred. These changes have been related neither to the logistics of safe passenger movement nor to advances in flight technology. On the two occasions that old terminals have been replaced, a new plan to communicate a certain image or fiction of the "local" has been constructed. At no time, however, has the fiction of the destination been monolithic; in fact, competing representations of local identity have always existed simultaneously. Explanations and justifications for artistic and design choices have met with denials and accusations during moments of change from the old aesthetic to the new one. Editorial opinion and laymen's statements recorded in print regarding the choice of art works for the passenger terminals are often sarcastic and abrasive, illustrating the disagreement over what constitutes an appropriate representation of the Vancouverite and/or British Columbian identity. In each chapter of this project, the 'work' that art has been expected to do to represent the destination will be examined.

Although airports are facilities dedicated to the practical function of air transport, they are simultaneously sites where travelers' impressions are formed and where a local 'self-portrait' can be created. Following Harvey, airports are spaces where unique and

particular aspects of a place are presented in the competition for global capital.

Frequently, however, the history of airport design and development has been discounted

as irrelevant because practical function is assumed to override all other considerations

within terminal buildings. In December 2000, Murray Whyte, writing in the *National

Post,* described airport terminals as "...simple utilitarian boxes, airports have historically

been architectural un-statements, designed as little more than conduits between land and

air."[7] In the Summer 2000 issue of *Western Living,* Allan Casey interpreted the style of

Canadian airports of the late 1960s, designed in the International Style, as "...bland,

bilingual ministry-of-transport approved spartanism...".[8]

Contrary to this perspective, I present the argument that airport architecture is

neither a foregone conclusion ruled exclusively by function nor is it devoid of cultural

meanings. Siegfried Kracauer argued in *The Mass Ornament* that architecture has

significance as a "surface level expression"[9] and as such is a medium through which it is

possible to understand some aspects of society. He wrote that an era's relative position

in history can be understood by considering the "surface level expressions" as

articulations of tendencies, not as total comprehensive statements.[10] Following Kracauer,

I will pursue the argument that airport design should also be considered as an

ideologically embedded statement representing aspects of locality that are important to

the dominant cultural group.

Semotician Umberto Eco has also interpreted architecture as a form of mass

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[7] Whyte, Murray; *The National Post*; December 12, 2000; page B1.
[8] Casey, Allan; "Air Mall" in *Western Living*; Summer 2000; pages 20-26.
[9] Kracauer, Siegfried; *The Mass Ornament*; edited by Levin, Thomas. Harvard University Press; Massachusetts, 1995; page 75.
[10] *Ibid*; page 75.

communication. Architecture's primary purpose is identified by Eco as a "functional object", which provides shelter and organizes space, while architecture's secondary purpose is as a "symbolic object" which, for example, in the case of a pavilion at a World's Fair, can symbolize a national culture.[11] I suggest that in an airport terminal the secondary, symbolic function may dominate the primary functional quality of architecture in a similar way.

French architect Paul Andreu, who was responsible for Terminals 2 and 3 at Roissy - Charles de Gaulle, described airports as places where "anything is possible...[they have] no identity, no history and no corresponding social fabric."[12] While it may be true that anything is possible from a design perspective, I will illustrate that development of Vancouver's airport has been inextricably tied to the city's social history, attempts at creating a national identity and to the representation of the local to the rest of the world.

Design does not occur in a vacuum; it both reflects and is influenced by the wider social, economic, political and technological climate.[13] The historical development of Vancouver and of Canada have had direct bearing on the physical appearance of the airport. The desire to create a distinctive 'sense of place'[14] using art and architectural design, although more blatant in the 1990s structure, has been a coherent strategy at the airport since the late 1960s. In a somewhat less consistent mode, the first phase of the

[11] Leach, Neil; *Re-thinking Architecture: A Reader in Cultural Theory*; Routledge, New York, 1997. Chapter by Umberto Eco "Function and Sign: The Semiotics of Architecture" pages 182-202 and "How An Exposition Exposes Itself" pages 202-204.
[12] Ellenberger, Michelle; "Paul Andreu: The Architecture of Airports" in *Art Press*; Sept. 1996; page 64.
[13] Woodham, Jonathan; *Twentieth-Century Design*; Oxford History of Art Series; Oxford University Press; New York, 1997; page 8.
[14] Phrase used in YVR Press Release of June 2000 re: IATA award

airport also communicated regional identity. Since several plans to capture the 'sense of place' have been put into effect at Vancouver International Airport over the last seventy years, it does not make sense to suggest that the terminal designs can reasonably be assessed as purely functional or pre-determined.

In Chapter 1, I will provide a foundation for the assertion that terminals are not entirely determined by their practical function by considering several early theoretical airport designs. While none of these utopian plans were ever built, they illustrate the wide range of possibilities which aviation suggested to architects. Each design differs significantly from the next and each represents the philosophical and political perspective of the designer. Because airports of the 20th century have been sites where technological advance is highly visible, flight and its infrastructure have become linked to representations of the future. Early 20th century predictions of the future, such as the eventual replacement of the automobile by personal aircraft, hint at the affinity between aviation and popular imagination of the future.[15] The Sheet Metal Workers' *Rocket* itself was inspired by the image of the world of tomorrow created within comic books and Buck Rogers films.[16] The decision to install this work at the airport in 1937, over any other location, is indicative of what the airport site represented.

Chapter 2 will discuss the active production of space by the federal government in the form of the airport building initiative of the 1960s. This government initiative

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[15] See Wilson, Richard, Pilgrim, Dianne and Tashjian, Dickran. *The Machine Age in America*. Harry N. Abrams Inc. New York. 1986; see Chapter 2 "Machine Aesthetics," especially pages 55-57 and Koolhaas, Rem. *Delirious New York*. The Monacelli Press. New York. 1994. See page 84 for an illustration captioned " The Cosmopolis of the Future" which pictures a crowded sky filled with bi-planes buzzing between city buildings referred to as "1,000 foot structures".
[16] Letter from Robert Colvin, Business Manager and Financial Secretary for Sheet Metal Workers Union Local 280 to Rosalind Rorke dated February 1, 1998.

resulted in the expansion and upgrading of airports across Canada and had, as a key

component, a large art program. The art program was specifically designed to

compliment and enhance the new International Style airport buildings and, at the time,

was heralded as a route by which Canada could favourably compete with the finest air

facilities all over the world. The results of this well-defined policy[17] were not always

appreciated. The subsequent failure in some quarters, only 30 years later, to even

recognize the adoption of International Style architecture and abstract modern art by the

federal government as a conscious aesthetic program, much less as a policy directed

specifically at the formation of a 'Canadian identity', is illustrated by Murray Whyte.

Regarding federal government involvement in airport construction and expansion, Whyte

quoted Andrew McAlpine who is a senior associate at Arup NAPA, an international

airport consultancy firm as saying:

> Up until several years ago, it was a Transport Canada function, and it was very
> much patchwork development. It was sort of 'make do, meet demand, don't do
> any more than you absolutely have to' ... I think that it was previously seen as a
> public service in the same way that a highway was, or that a utility grid was, or
> any number of things. It was simply part of the infrastructure of the city, and it
> was a government function to provide that infrastructure.[18]

Examination of newspapers and periodical literature from the 1960s contradicts

McAlpine and leads to a different conclusion. Careful centralized planning, attention to

detail and regional variation as well as an attempt to create an international face for

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[17] For elements of the federal policy see Lowe, Frank.. "Art in the New Airports Gives Canada a Sophisticated Image". *Canadian Art*. May-June 1964; page 144 where details of Deputy Minister of Transport John R. Baldwin's activities to organize a budget for art acquisitions are provided. See also Syme, Edward and Wells, Alexander. *Airport Development, Management and Operation in Canada*. Prentice-Hall Career and Technology. Scarborough. 2000; page 12. See also, Ferrabe, Lynn. "Toronto Airport: Interior Design". *Canadian Architect*. February 1964; page 63. The Chief Architect for Department of Transport was W.A. Ramsay, who over saw work across the country.
[18] Whyte. page B1.

Canada characterize this period far more accurately than does the glib description 'patchwork development'.

Abstraction did not resonate with all Canadians as appropriate art for airports. The ferocity of the laymen's critique of the airport's modernist aesthetic is a window into the anxiety which was caused by the federal planner's inability to create a 'sense of place' through abstract art that was legible to some local residents. The desire to illustrate Canada's sophistication to an international audience dominated the Department of Transport's agenda at the expense of accommodating local, domestic audiences.[19] Records of the intense opposition to the abstract artworks installed at airports across the country indicate these terminals were anything but bland utilitarian transport depots.

In Chapter 3, I show that a 'sense of place' (which relies on neo-traditional native art and references to the natural geography) was distilled and magnified for Vancouver by the YVR Airport Authority in an effort to "brand" the destination. A shift in aesthetic strategy occurred as abstract art was replaced by art which made use of more commonly accepted symbols. The representation of locality in Vancouver's airport is now achieved within a neo-modern terminal which showcases the natural geography and prominently features the work of native artists. According to YVR publicity, this type of native art "celebrates the natural beauty"[20] of the region.

Art peppers the terminals and is essentially decorative. Placed at points where crowds stream by on their way to customs, parking lots or to meet arriving travelers, the

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[19] Lowe quoted Stan White of the Department of Transport as saying: "There was no catering to popular taste...We were trying to achieve for Canada the most sophisticated image we possibly could."
[20] Voice over from promotional YVR CD-ROM, distributed from information kiosk at the airport during the summer of 2000.

art works function as billboards. Large displays of native art quickly register Vancouver as 'exotic' and distinct. The art's potential to engage and perhaps educate viewers is limited by its physical arrangement in space which may curtail, but not eliminate, the traveler's desire to contemplate the displays. Nor does the art allegorize the current condition of native peoples. YVR's presentation of native culture as non-confrontational, homogeneous and transhistorical has the effect of eliding the ongoing social and political challenges which native individuals and communities currently face.

The art program does even less to address other cultural groups. In fact, the current airport design seems to be more than just indifferent to local realities. It will be presented in this analysis as an organized attempt not to discuss the outside world on any level other than a highly superficial one. The world beyond the Canadian border is represented within the airport terminals by fast food restaurants, by signage, by currency exchange kiosks and by newspaper stands. Because the YVR construction of local culture is based almost exclusively on native culture, the influence of other cultural groups upon the character of the city of Vancouver is erased.

Perhaps as a response to the pressures of globalization and internationalization, the airport's representation of locality, which as late as the 1970s was focused on a connection to other international destinations, has turned inward. The desire to portray the local as unique and distinct from all else has replaced the former representation. However, the expression of a specific, narrow 'sense of place' at the airport fails to address the cultural diversity which exists in the city.

The limited representation of Vancouver and British Columbia, which was undertaken prior to the recent economic downturn, resists the illustration of the close

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connection to Asian markets and travelers. While the attraction of capital may arguably

be the most significant motivation for the current representation of place within the

Vancouver International Airport terminals, aspects of Vancouver's social history

complicate the portrait. The airport's representations of the city and its culture are

complex and vary within facility from area to area. I will argue that the absence of

representations of other cultures, particularly Asian ones, reflects the anxiety which

accompanies social change and ethno-cultural competition. The changing patterns of city

life, from real estate development, to shifting ethnic demographics in certain

neighbourhoods and schools, which have caused social tension and anxiety are avoided

by the YVR version of local culture.

The colonial vision of Vancouver as a "village on the edge of the rainforest"[21]

persists and has been re-presented at YVR as a marketing device which both courts

travelers from abroad and obscures Vancouver's position as an international port with

strong trade and immigration links to Asia. Simultaneously, however, Vancouver's

airport is presented as a world class destination on the YVR website and by Fairmont

Hotel brochures. This advertising proclaims the hotel to be "The Most Luxurious Airport

Accommodations in the World" and makes frequent reference to services, such as

internet access, newspaper delivery, advance check-in and meeting rooms, which would

appeal to the international business traveler. The current "Fairmont Vancouver Airport"

brochure makes absolutely no reference to native art or culture. The multi-layered and

occasionally contradictory nature of the representations currently constructed within the

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[21] Allan Fotheringham's description of a facet of Vancouver's identity as recorded in Wynne, Graeme and
Oke, Timothy, Editors, *Vancouver and its Region*; UBC Press; Vancouver, 1993; page 236.

terminals will be discussed in the final chapter.

My main conclusions will be as follows: the space of Vancouver International Airport is a social product where art and architecture have been linked in communicating particular aspects of local identity, that an analysis of the current representations of Vancouver at the airport is aided by a consideration of past representations at the airport site and that the current art program can be understood as an aspect of one of several constructions of the city which have been created since the 1930s. Finally, I will suggest that the current construction of Vancouver, which may be a response to local anxiety about globalization and internationalization of the city, represents an attempt to re-assert a distinctive local identity. Moreover, the construction of native culture as "supernatural" represents an aspect of the assertion of a hegemonic group's identity. As such, the display of native art at the airport must be understood as more than evidence of increasing political empowerment of aboriginal peoples, of blatant tokenism or as a mistaken rendering of native culture.

CHAPTER 1

Airport terminal buildings have only existed for approximately seventy-five years. Until the mid-1920s, aviators had no need for a centralized group of maintenance and service buildings because parks, race tracks and farm fields were adequate as runways for the earliest aircraft which were relatively light and slow moving.[22] Because of their small size, airplanes could be stored in pre-existing agricultural barns that had been converted into hangars.[23] However, aviation was a powerful stimulant to the imagination and the design of airports, however unnecessary, commenced as soon as the possibilities of mechanical aviation were realized.

The first theoretical architectural plan for an urban airport was prepared by Antonio San't Elia, a member of the Italian Futurist group. San't Elia's airport was fully integrated into his *La Citta Nuova* (1914) project which presented a complete city and urban transportation system (figure 1). His designs were for imposing, angular structures to be built in concrete where ornamentation was almost absent.[24] The structural silhouette of his airport mirrored other buildings in the *Citta Nuova*. Its function as a transportation nexus practically and stylistically enhanced by bridges, overpasses and

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[22] The first airplane flight in Canada was made in 1909 by J.A. D. McCurdy at Bras d'Or Lake, Nova Scotia. See McGrath, T.M.; *History of Canadian Airports*, 2nd Edition; Lugus Publications; Canada, 1992; page 1.
[23] Canadian Centre for Architecture; *Airport Origins: Three Projects by Frank Lloyd Wright*; Montreal, 1990; page 3.
[24] A unifying aesthetic was created by repetition of elements such as bridges, arches and exterior tower elevators.

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elevator towers. The large central terminal structure was placed within a massive, walled

trench where trains could arrive on one side while planes landed on a wide runway on the

opposing side.

His design consistently embodied the Futurist ideology which glorified

technology, speed, urban development and the new. According to the Canadian Centre

for Architecture (CCA), San't Elia's was the first architect to envision "monumental

cities centred on the airplane."[25] The Futurists believed that theoretical architecture was

"...a direct expression of contemporary forces and a dynamic celebration of the

uprooted, anti-natural tendencies of the modern city."[26] San't Elia's design for *Citta*

Nuova has been referred to as "visionary architecture" because it was "...the original and

classical expression of the notion of architecture as a metaphor for technology."[27] His

design illustrates the Futurist's perception of the airplane as the "symbol of a new age, as

well as the instrument by which art, and civilization itself could be transformed ".[28] It

points to the potential for aviation technology to influence urban planning.

Another airport design that was similarly central, but even more immense in

scale[29], was planned by French architect Le Corbusier in 1927, and was included in his

project "The City of To-morrow" (figure 2). Le Corbusier planned a transportation hub

where the roof of the central rail station was a landing strip for "aero-taxis" which would

link the city to a larger airport beyond the downtown area.[30] This design expresses an

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[25] CCA; page 7.
[26] Curtis, William; *Modern Architecture since 1900*; Phaidon; London, 1996; page 109.
[27] Finch, Christopher; "Introduction one" in *Design Quarterly*; Volume 74/75; January 1996; page 6.
[28] CCA; page 7.
[29] *Ibid*, page 7.
[30] *Ibid*; page 11.

efficient, rational approach to urban planning as the central landing pad/runway was in close proximity to four huge skyscrapers, the roofs of which were also conceived as potential landing spots.[31] The small airplanes illustrated in the plan appear to be intended to function as present day helicopters do, making short trips around the city and landing on small paved strips. As San't Elia had done earlier, Le Corbusier presented a complete plan for the larger urban area, with feeder airports located within the city and specifically mapping out areas of housing and open spaces.

Designs for airports that were more modest in scale than those proposed by San't Elia and Le Corbusier, were created in the late 1920s by Richard Neutra and Frank Lloyd Wright. The lack of a grandiose monumentality was reflective of these Modernist architects' desire to create spaces which functioned on a more human scale. Modernism, both as a style and philosophy, has been described as a derivation of the

> ...Enlightenment idea of empirical technical progress, through the Romantic conception of epoch-making art forms and the Victorian pursuit of an amalgamation of arts and manufactures, to the early twentieth-century rejection of historical models by Futurists, and the Constructivists and the De Stijl belief in the universal legitimacy of abstract expressionism.[32]

For Neutra and Wright, the relationship between form and function was paramount. The work of Richard Neutra bears consideration in this work because of the direct influence he had on Vancouver architects in the 1940 and 1950s, including the firm which built the 1968 airport, Thompson, Berwick and Pratt.[33]

With respect specifically to airport design, architectural historian Anthony Vidler

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[31] Le Corbusier; *The City of To-morrow and its Planning*; Dover Publications Inc., 1987; page 187.
[32] Windsor Liscombe, R.; *The New Spirit: Modern Architecture in Vancouver 1938-1963*; Douglas and McIntyre, Vancouver, 1997, page 28.
[33] *Ibid*, page 40 minor details of interaction facilitated by B.C. Binning.

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noted that

> ...from the inception of air travel, modernist architects made the metaphorical connection between air flow, air speed, the streamlined section of the wing and the determinants of functional design.[34]

An airport design competition was conceived by an American firm, the Lehigh Portland Cement Company, in 1929 to promote the use of portland cement as a building material.[35] The competition attracted over 250 submissions including designs by Richard Neutra. Neutra submitted *Rush City Air Transfer* (figure 3), a modified version of a pre-existing project *Rush City Reformed* which was a "utopian" design for an American city that he had begun in the early 1920s.[36] In 1930, Neutra published a short article in *The Architectural Record* about his *Rush City* plans, entitled "Terminal ? Transfer !" in which he discussed transportation systems and the airport's potential role within those systems. As the title of the article indicates, he believed that the airport could and should be an integral part of a complete system where "flow" and "efficiency" were the prime concerns. He wrote

> At present an inefficient link between long distance air travel and regional traffic counterbalances the advantages of the former to quite an extent. Speed and fluidity in the transition from air to ground vehicles is what is needed more than a *grand court d'honneur* in front of an airport.[37]

Expressing sentiments still of concern to travelers 70 years later Neutra suggested that travel through airports should ideally be "smooth, rapid and inexpensive."[38] To this end,

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[34] Vidler, Anthony in Rosler, Martha; *In The Place of the Public; Observations of a Frequent Flyer*; Cantz; 1998; page 13.
[35] CCA; page 17.
[36] Hines, Thomas; *Richard Neutra and the Search for Modern Architecture*; Oxford University Press; Oxford, 1982; pages 60-61.
[37] Neutra, Richard; "Terminal ? Transfer !" in *The Architectural Record*; August 1930; page 100.
[38] *Ibid*; page 100.

he designed the air transfer point as an urban hub where different transportation systems were conveniently linked together within one structure. Definitively modern aspects of Neutra's design include the streamlined appearance of the terminal's exterior, the creation of regular sections which would result in a visual rhythm, large open spaces within the structure and the near absence of surface decoration. The transfer point also included practical amenities such as bathrooms, a post office, writing and waiting rooms. Another level of the facility would feature shopping arcades, cafes, a hotel and an amusement park.[39] Neutra's modern design re-enforced his commitment to flow by featuring an efficient, functional building with open spaces through which travelers, not staying long enough have need for any services, could quickly pass.

The potential for an efficient transportation hub which included an airport was also recognized by Frank Lloyd Wright. The structure he designed for the Lehigh Competition accommodated air and sea planes as well as ships, trains, buses and automobiles (figure 4).[40] Wright designed a circular terminal structure which included, as Neutra's had, offices for mail, baggage and ticket sales as well as a restaurant, observation deck and weather bureau.[41] Wright tried to design the airport so that passengers would have the shortest possible distance to go to reach the terminal from their aircraft and planned the entire terminal around the concept that it could be a "transfer point" between various modes of transportation.[42]

All four of these early airport designs were, despite their significant differences,

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[39] *Ibid*, page 104.
[40] CCA; page 17.
[41] *Ibid;* page 19.
[42] *Ibid;* page 19.

united by the fundamental optimism they express toward industrial, scientific and technological advances and now characterize planning this era. Faith in the power of transportation technology to carry mankind into a prosperous, industrial future is expressed in these architectural plans. However, the unrestricted dominance of technology in the designs by San't Elia and Le Corbusier was rejected by Wright and Neutra in favour of a more 'human' scale. In his assessment of the history of modern design, art historian Rhodri Windsor Liscombe notes:

> By the time Modernism reached Canada in the late 1920s, its early iconoclastic radicalism had moderated. Increasingly it seemed to promote a socially relevant approach to design, not a dogmatic set of formulas.[43]

Windsor Liscombe suggests that the moderation of modernism as an approach to planning led to an increasing professional interest in and adherence to this design philosophy in Canada by 1930s. As a result, modernist ideas had a significant influence on post-World War II development.[44]

The local history of airport design began in Canada shortly after World War I. Prior to the war, the Aero Club of British Columbia (formed in 1915), the first organization of aviators in the province, operated relatively light and slow aircraft for personal use from Minoru park racetrack without what could be described as a airport (figure 5). The critical point past which airports became a necessity was reached only when planes began to carry passengers and freight, thereby increasing their potential to generate profits. The Canadian Centre for Architecture's exhibition catalogue for *Airport Origins* (1990) states that "Only with the advent of a profitable commercial

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[43] Windsor Liscombe; page 28.
[44] *Ibid*; page 29-30.

aviation industry in the late 1920s did the modern airport become essential."[45] Hangars,

passenger terminals and cargo buildings became mandatory to the operation of larger,

heavier and faster aircraft.

The roots of commercial air transport are found, according to Edward Syme and

Alexander Wells, with pilots trained for air combat during WWI who returned to Canada

and worked as bush pilots for small transport companies involved in the exploration and

development of remote northern areas. They state

> These small operators (often one pilot, a mechanic, and an airplane) gradually
> evolved into small air transport companies, forming the basis of Canada's air
> transport industry.[46]

Despite the creation of the Air Board in 1919 to regulate civil aviation, no

equivalent bureaucratic body existed to deal with airport facilities. The development of

airport facilities, according to Syme and Wells, was a co-operative effort between three

levels of government: federal, provincial and municipal. They suggest that federal

government interest in the development of a national airmail service provoked policy

changes in the late 1920s. As a result of these changes, financial support was provided to

municipalities to establish a cross country network of airports. By 1928 the federal

government had decided to construct the Trans-Canada Airway, a chain of airports every

100 miles "to be equipped with runway lights, lighted beacons, radio range

communications, hangars, and maintenance facilities."[47] For increased safety, emergency

landing strips were planned every 30 miles between the main airports. During the

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[45] CCA; page 3.
[46] Syme, Edward R. and Wells, Alexander T.; *Airport Development, Management and Operation in Canada*; Prentice Hall Canada Career and Technology; Scarborough, 2000; page 5.
[47] *Ibid*; page 7.

Depression, approximately 50 airports were constructed by the un-employed, under the supervision of the Corps of Royal Canadian Engineers as a part of a federal make work project.[48]

The buildings constructed in Vancouver in the 1930s did not resemble the theoretical airport architecture mentioned above. According to art historian John Zukowsky, many of the early air terminals built in North America were designed to resemble railway stations in order to assuage traveler's feelings of anxiety surrounding the new technology of air travel.[49] Early luxury aircraft interiors also mimicked aspects of travel by rail or cruise ships as passengers were seated in relatively spacious cabins fully equipped for fine dining. The text of a Ford Motor Company advertisement for transcontinental air transport in the October 1929 *Scientific American* declared their concern for passenger safety and comfort in a combined rail and flight service between New York and Los Angeles. The dependability of Ford engines was emphasized, after which they stated:

> ...never has greater care and forethought gone into the development of a
> transportation service. Because the vehicles employed must lift human beings out
> of their element to fly across the sky, it was necessary to leave nothing to
> chance...it was vitally important to reduce every hazard to a minimum and to
> insure every possible comfort for travelers...All metal construction makes the
> planes durable, weather-proof, uniformly strong, and fire-proof....Each plane is
> furnished with wicker chairs. The interior is beautifully decorated. Hot and cold
> food and refreshments are served by an attendant. A lavatory with hot and cold
> running water is well-planned for the comfort of passengers.[50]

The early association of air travel with rail travel has re-surfaced at the current airport

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[48] *Ibid*, page 7.
[49] Zukowsky, John; *Building for Air Travel*; University of Chicago; 1996; page 13.
[50] *Scientific American;* October 1929; page 280.

most obviously at the Fairmont Airport Hotel where a Chateau roof portal has been added to the main entrance of an otherwise modern, glass façade, in an attempt to mimic Canadian Pacific Railways luxury resort hotels built in the late 1800s. In the retail corridors of the domestic terminals trestle-like ornamentation has been attached to the ceilings at regular intervals.

In 1928, due to the increasing popularity of flying, the Aero Club of British Columbia and the municipality of Vancouver arranged to lease fields on Lulu Island, where the current day municipality of Richmond is situated, in order to construct the first airport. It had two runways, a hangar and a waiting room. By 1929, in order to accommodate further expansion, a new site was purchased on Sea Island and the Vancouver Municipal Airport was opened by premier Simon Fraser Tolmie on July 22, 1931. This airport featured one runway, an administration building and two hangars.[51] The administration building was a multi-storied brick structure with an art deco stepped-façade which was also repeated on the power station across the roadway (figure 6). (The administration building was destroyed by fire in 1949.[52])

The gap between the utopian, theoretical architectural designs discussed above and what was actually built in Vancouver in the 1930s was bridged by a futuristic

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[51] McGrath, T.M; page 242. The name was changed to Vancouver International Airport in 1948, McGrath page 244.
[52] *Ibid;* page 245. Shortly after the 1931 opening of the Vancouver International Airport, it was clear that further expansion and costly maintenance of the facility were required. As early as 1935 the city of Vancouver wanted to relieve itself of the huge expense of running the airport and passed a resolution requesting the Department of Defence to take over maintenance and expansion of the airport. At this time, the federal government paid for one third of the cost of developing airport terminals and the municipalities and provinces were responsible for the rest. Vancouver's airport remained a local venture with the exception of the WWII period, when it was temporarily taken over by the Department of Defence, until it was finally sold to the federal government in 1962 for 2.75 million dollars. See McGrath, T.M.; pages 243-244.

sculpture which was installed outside the terminal. The first monument at the airport was the *Rocket* (figure 7), a fortified parade float constructed by Sheet Metal Workers Local 250 for the 1936 Pacific National Exhibition.[53] The float won 'best of parade' in this Exhibition and was popular enough that a local alderman suggested that the *Rocket* be fortified and installed permanently at the airport.[54] This sculpture, which made reference to popular sci- fi comics and space travel, was constructed of sheet aluminum with brass detailing. According to its makers, the *Rocket* was created to illustrate the valuable contribution made by skilled labour to the growth of Vancouver.[55] The industrial construction materials and aerodynamic form of the sculpture simultaneously expressed the excitement and optimism which surrounded the potential of aviation and air travel, the ultimate extension of which was space travel. Mounted on the *Rocket*'s pedestal were the slogans "Use the Airlines", "Look Ahead", "Advance with Aviation" and "Vancouver - Canada's Pacific Airport" all of which combined to promote air travel as the transportation of the future. The *Rocket* was designed in an era when, as suggested above, technological progress was optimistically embraced as the best path to an exciting and prosperous future. The efficient linkage of British Columbia, on the western periphery of the country to the resource-rich North, the west coast of the United States and to eastern Canada was important to the growth of Vancouver. From 1937 to 1972, the *Rocket* was a popular feature of the airport. According to *Vancouver Sun* columnist

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[53] Rose, Chris; in the *Vancouver Sun*; October 10, 1985.
[54] *Ibid.*
[55] Letter from Robert Colvin, Business Manager and Financial Secretary for Sheet Metal Workers International Association, Local Union No. 280 dated February 19, 1998.

Denny Boyd, it formed the backdrop for countless family vacation snapshots.[56] The celebratory quality of this sculpture emphasized the role that industry, technology, and aviation would play in the economic growth of British Columbia.

The *Rocket* was removed in 1972 when the airport was expanded and an anti-skyjacking fence was erected around the airport perimeter.[57] It was re-located to a maintenance hangar for repair and alteration after removal from the terminal area but after the planned restoration was not performed, the *Rocket* was discarded in the Terra Nova dump.[58]

Technological advance and industrial progress were not the only representations of Vancouver's identity created at the airport in the 1930s and 1940s. The idea of Vancouver as a frontier settlement in close proximity to native peoples was also utilized (and has continued to be used) as a thematic device. One representation of the local native population exists in the form of a photograph taken at the airport in 1939 (figure 8). In this image, created at the occasion of the launch of trans-continental service on the Lockheed 14 series aircraft, three Musqueam individuals and a teepee occupy the foreground. They look at the plane, the latest in aviation technology. The viewer surveys the entire scene from the behind the three men. The photograph's caption states

> Musqueam Reservation Indians, Basil Point, Chief Semilhano and Dominic Pint took part in ceremonies at departure from Vancouver of Lockheed 14-H-2-CF-TCK on April 1, 1939 inaugurating regular passenger service on the

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[56] Boyd, Denny; in *Vancouver Sun*; July 1985. Boyd's nostalgic recollections were aimed at jumpstarting a fundraising campaign in order to re-build the *Rocket*.
[57] Rose.
[58] The *Rocket* was re-built from the original blueprints in 1986 after a publicity campaign generated sufficient interest in a restoration project. In addition to funding, considerable time and materials were donated by the Sheet Metal Workers themselves to aid in the re-construction of the symbol of their contribution to the growth of Vancouver.

transcontinental.[59]

This image records the employment by the airline, Trans-Canada Airways, of a non-band specific "Indian-ness" as the individuals are dressed in both Musqueam and western clothing and are posed with a tepee, a housing type not normally used on the Northwest coast. This photograph suggests a multi-valent identity for Vancouver, as a city where technological progress and a colonial frontier had co-existed. It foreshadows the design of the third phase of the airport, a design which has taken maximum advantage of native cultures. The 'tradition' of appropriating the symbols and art of the First Nations by non-native Vancouverites for their own use in representing west coast identity was not new, even in the late 1930s. Aldona Jonaitis' work on the appropriation of Northwest Coast cultural signifiers by the non-native population of the west coast locates the beginnings of this pattern as early as the 1880s.[60] Nor is the visual representation of First Nations culture without corresponding political or social recognition unique to British Columbia. (The adoption of the totem pole as a 'Canadian' icon is part of a larger discussion of Canadian identity formation beyond the scope of this essay.[61]) From the 1930s to the 1960s, the display of Native art works by European colonizers illustrated that cultural difference could be absorbed into the dominant mainstream without constituting a threat. In the 1990s the active promotion of native art at the airport still represents something other than the native cultures themselves. It has become a representation of Vancouver which denies the reality of globalization and the internationalization of the city. In

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[59] National Archives of Canada; RG 12; File 1980-206, negative 82.
[60] Aldona Jonaitis, "Northwest Coast Totem Poles", in *Unpacking Culture: Art and Commodity in Colonial and Postcolonial Worlds*, eds. Ruth Phillips and Christopher Steiner, Berkeley, 1999; pages 104-121.
[61] For a detailed investigation of the appropriation of the totem pole as a symbol by non-natives see Kim Phillips (2000) M.A. Thesis *Making Meaning in Totemland: Investigating a Vancouver Commission.*

Chapter 3, I will expand the argument that in the current airport extensive use is made of this trope in order to individuate Vancouver, British Columbia as a North American destination and 'YVR' as a 'unique' airport.

CHAPTER 2

The art work, above all, won't be parochial. There'll be no falling logs, or fish heads, or mining shafts or $ signs. The idea is not to forget that Vancouver's airport is international.
Reporter Jack McCaugherty in the *Vancouver Province*, June 13, 1968.

If greater Vancouver and British Columbia citizens do not scream, then we will deserve what we surely get, a 1966 or '67 edition of the awesome and abstruse international air terminal at Toronto...Why should we have to accept a twisted tangle of meaningless shapes and colours recommended by a committee of far-out artists? ...We want an airport so designed that when people deplane from Europe or the Orient or any other part of the world they will know beyond a shadow of a doubt that they are in British Columbia.
Tourist Bureau Manager Harold Merilees in the *Vancouver Sun*, December 15, 1964

If anyone arriving by air here doesn't see the beauty of the area, its staggering view and know it's B.C. - or isn't told by the friendly captain - then he's either blind or absolutely gassed.
Tony Emery, Vancouver Art Gallery Director and member of national advisory committee on air terminal art quoted in the *Vancouver Province*, June 13, 1968.

The first phase of airport development described in the previous chapter emphasized an identity for Vancouver in which technological and industrial progress were the dominant motifs and colonization and the appropriation of local native cultures was a less significant one. The theme of technological progress was not limited to Vancouver. It was also recognized as a characteristic feature of early to mid-twentieth century urban development. The second phase of airport development, which began in the late 1950s, continued to emphasize the theme of technological progress and modernity. It presented a Canadian national identity linked to the growth of urban centers as international destinations. This chapter will examine the Department of Transport's role in the modernization of urban airports from the late 1950s to 1980s. It will also consider the divergent reactions of art critics and the Canadian public to the modern art installed at airport terminals as part of this development program.

The re-development of airports in the 1960s had a practical beginning. In part, the federal government's growing interest in airport infrastructure was motivated by political concerns about American economic encroachment that could have a negative impact on Canadian sovereignty. Even in the 1920s it was recognized that to avoid complete American domination of the aviation industry, ground facilities would have to be maintained on the Canadian side of the border.[62] In order for aviation to play a role in national economic development, co-ordinated service was required. Syme and Wells identify federal government policies which allowed for the creation of the Trans Canada Airway in 1928, the Department of Transport in 1936 and Trans Canada Airlines in 1937, and provided the foundation for a successful civil aviation program.[63]

During World War II the federal government took over financial responsibility (either by lease or purchase) for civilian airports in Canada and made infrastructure improvements to the 62 municipal facilities. Following the war, work toward establishing a more coherent policy for airport development across Canada commenced. The Department of Transport continued to develop major airports to accommodate modern aircraft which became progressively faster and heavier. A minimum number of international airports were developed to meet Canada's international obligations. The Department of Transport provided financial assistance to municipalities to further develop their airports and established landing strips in remote areas to facilitate resource extraction. To increase air safety, the Department provided funding for aids to

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[62] Feldman, Elliot and Milch. Jerome; *The Politics of Canadian Airport Development*; Duke University Center for Commonwealth and Comparative Studies; Durham, 1983, page 30. Also Syme and Wells; page 6 "Signs were evident that American air transport companies wanted to tap traffic in the main centers of Canadian population and industry, all of which lie adjacent to the international boundary."
[63] Syme and Wells; page 8.

navigation such as landing systems, radio ranges, weather monitoring services and air traffic control for all airports. After the war, municipalities were given the opportunity to re-assume control over their airports while receiving financial assistance and all but three chose to do so. Funding for airports became a federal policy where grants of up to $25,000 were available for each site per year.[64]

The Air Terminal Building program, which was implemented in the 10 years immediately following the war, resulted in the construction of new larger, modern airport facilities in Gander, Halifax, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Winnipeg and Edmonton.[65] Vancouver was one of the later urban airports to be modernized under the federal initiative as re-development was begun on the east coast at Gander and moved across the country from east to west.

The construction of new, modern airports across the country was specifically identified as a national policy objective in the Governor General's 1958 Throne Speech.[66] Since their inception, the cost of maintaining and operating airports has steadily increased. The great expense of up-grading facilities to keep pace with aviation technology and increasing passenger demand became prohibitive for municipalities to bear alone, and, as a result, massive amounts of money were spent by the federal government from the 1950s to the 1980s to keep airports operational.[67]

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[64] McGrath, T.M.; pages 18-19.
[65] *Ibid*; page 51.
[66] "In particular, a large expansion in the construction and equipment of our systems of airports and airways will be proposed..." from *House of Commons Debates*; Session 1958; Throne Speech; Volume 1; Queen's Printer and Controller of Stationary; Ottawa, 1958; page 25.
[67] Syme and Wells; pages 11-12 "Cities, mainly for financial reasons, opted out of airport operation by selling them to the federal government. Developments in the international aviation field that gave rise to the need for larger, better equipped, and more expensive airports further involved the federal government."

Under Department of Transport supervision, local architectural firms were

contracted to re-design airports across the country, under supervision of the Department

of Transport's Chief Architect W. A. Ramsay[68], the effect of which was a thematic

linkage of geographically distant facilities through a common architectural aesthetic.

This development plan[69], executed over more than a decade, was the product of an era of

federalism and increased spending, where a centralized bureaucracy was able to organize

and complete large, expensive infrastructure improvement projects. In addition to the

assertion of economic and geographical sovereignty, airport development provided the

federal government with a forum in which to present Canada as a vital, modern nation

and as a significant member of the international community.

The construction of new airport facilities from coast to coast under the close

supervision of the Department of Transportation allowed for the development of an

aesthetic which, while including regional references, aimed to be national. Airport

terminals built between 1958 and 1968 were constructed in the International Style which

prominently featured building materials such as glass, steel and tile and planned for

large, open interior spaces. Photographs from the time of construction in Montreal and

Edmonton suggest that variations in the design of each facility were overshadowed by the

consistent application of modernist design. The similarity of the airport terminals was re-

enforced by the purchase of identical furniture. (figures 9 through 16)

Canadian architectural historian Harold Kalman identifies the fundamental

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[68] Ferrabee; page 63.
[69] McGrath notes federal level planning had begun at least by 1948 when details of the Department of Transport's main principles for the establishment of airports and airways were explained to parliament; page 19.

qualities of International modernism as emphasizing volume instead of mass, providing a

sense of regularity as opposed to symmetry and relying on the "intrinsic elegance" of the

construction materials rather than any applied decoration.[70] The perception, on the part

of the Department of Transport at least, of modernism as a design with no historical

attachments and the ability to represent progress and the future made it, in their

assessment, ideal for use at airports. Historian T.M. McGrath described these new

buildings as being of the "latest design, incorporating features from the leading airports

in the world."[71] Syme and Wells referred to Dorval (of the 1960s) as "one of the most

modern in the world, as well as the most beautiful, with its interior marble walls and vast

expanses of glass."[72]

Aspects of the interior decoration, such as paint and carpet colours were

considered to be an integral part of the building program, as was the art program, planned

by the Department of Transport specifically to compliment and emphasize the modernity

of the terminal buildings.[73] One *Canadian Art* contributor, Frank Lowe, identified the

Deputy Minister of Transport, John Baldwin, as primarily responsible for the airport art

program in the late 1950s.[74] Baldwin enlisted the help of Alan Jarvis, the Director of the

National Gallery, in finding a work for a large wall in Gander's new airport terminal,

eventually choosing a work by Kenneth Lochhead (figure 17) from a limited competition

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[70] Kalman, Harold; *A History of Canadian Architecture, Volume 2*; Oxford University Press; Toronto; 1994; page 779.
[71] McGrath, T.M.; page 51.
[72] Syme and Wells; page 12.
[73] "News on the D. o. T." ; September/October 1963; Volume XIV, No. 5, Department of Transport and Turner, Evan H.; "Art at the Airports" in *Canadian Art*; May-June 1964; pages 128-143.
[74] Lowe, Frank. "Art in the New Airports Gives Canada a Sophisticated Image". *Canadian Art*. May/June 1964; page 144.

of five artists. Other panels charged with selecting artworks were formed by Baldwin to coincide with the expansion of Toronto, Edmonton and Winnipeg airports.[75] This airport art program has subsequently been assessed by architect Bernard Flaman, as the "largest public art project ever in Canada"[76]. Lowe wrote (in 1964) of the program

> It provided a handful of established artists with the biggest commissions they had ever had. And it touched off a public brawl about art which disproved forever the plaint that this country was "indifferent" to what was being painted and sculpted by its native sons.[77]

Further details of the Department of Transport's efforts to present Canada as a sophisticated nation were provided in a 1964 *Canadian Architect* article entitled "Toronto Airport Interior Design". Writer Lynn Ferrabee described the terminal itself as "an original and exciting building" and identified the furniture as "imaginative" because it "admirably maintain[ed] the efficiency of the machine while the interiors [were] perfectly integrated with the temperament of the building."[78] Referring specifically to the furniture, Ferrabee noted that the Department of Transport purchased only that of the "best" quality, not stooping to buy Canadian if the quality was too low.[79]

The Department of Transport planned to illustrate regional difference through abstract art and the modern quality of Canadian cities through a unified architectural idiom. Although the federal government was responsible for all airports in Canada, it chose to develop the larger urban centers differently from the smaller, low traffic

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[75] *Ibid.*
[76] Interview with Bernard Flaman, March 31, 2001 and also quoted in Western Living Summer 2000.
[77] Lowe, Frank; page 144.
[78] Ferrabee, Lynn; "Toronto Airport Interior Design" ; in *Canadian Architect*; Volume 9, Number 2; February 1964; page 63.
[79] *Ibid*; page 63.

facilities, which did not tend to have art programs.[80] In 1963, Yvonne McWilliam

outlined the Department's aesthetic objectives in a lengthy, well-illustrated article

entitled "From Railway Prints to Riopelle" published in *News on the D 'o T.*

McWilliam described the pre-1960s state of airport architecture in Canada as relatively

uninspired.

> When Canada's first transcontinental airline was established in the late 1930s,
> terminals were homey, blue and white frame buildings surrounded by picket
> fences…Inside artworks usually consisted of large sepia prints of Lake Louise or
> Jasper scrounged from the railways.[81]

This assessment of early terminals, which was inaccurate with respect to Vancouver's

buildings, was likely motivated by the need to justify a new architectural style which was,

by 1963, receiving some criticism. McWilliam continued to illustrate that the purpose of

displaying abstract art at airports was to represent regional difference. She wrote "The

effects sought from art work are as varied as the building's design, its locale, in relation

to both area history and the rest of the country…"[82] Numerous examples of modern art

works which directly referred to the locality were then provided by McWilliam. In

Winnipeg, a 7 foot mahogany sculpture by Anne Kahane that commemorated the

pioneers of flight in the West. She wrote that this work " …symbolizes the spirit which

motivated Stevenson, after whom the airport was originally named."[83] Also at the

Winnipeg airport, a 32' x 6' mural entitled *The Prairies* by Alfred Pellan was glowingly

described by McWilliam as "…the artist's interpretation of Western Canada's rich and

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[80] Turner; press clippings insert (pages not numbered), where uneven federal support was noted by areas
with smaller facilities.
[81] McWilliam, Yvonne; "Railway Prints to Riopelle"; *News on the D 'o T.*; Vol. XIV. No. 5
September/October 1963; page 5.
[82] *Ibid*; page 5.
[83] *Ibid*; page 5.

original landscape…" where "The spirit of the prairies is powerfully dramatized…".[84]

The decision to re-name Winnipeg's Stevenson Field airport as the Winnipeg

International Airport was reported enthusiastically by the *Winnipeg Tribune* in December

1958 as a sign of the potential for this city to become a trans-polar aviation hub.[85]

In Edmonton, a 37' x 18' mural painted by Jack Shadbolt, commemorating

Canadian bush pilots, was described by the artist himself as a "sort of winged image of

the Northern terrain".[86] A sculpture, planned by Norman Slater, which was not as

abstract as other examples at airports, was a 60-foot beacon of spiralling flames fuelled

by natural gas, an important resource in Alberta. It was intended to be "…richly

suggestive of man's explorations, which reach up into space and down into the earth."[87]

Since a centralized bureaucracy ultimately controlled the design choices, a

consistent building program was followed.[88] Minister of Transport George McIlwraith,

who directly supported the modern art program was quoted as stating that "Good

contemporary buildings are enhanced by, and indeed should have works of art related to

their style and size".[89] For the Department of Transport planners the more

representational 'old-style' landscape art of the Canadian wilderness and the above-

mentioned prints of Canadian Pacific hotels found in train stations were seen as opposed

to abstract modern art. The latter was taken to be far more sophisticated and

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[84] *Ibid*, page 6.
[85] RG 12; File 5151-C146 part 16. Clipping titled "Airport would Gain Prestige" noted that the Minister of Transport proposed the change of name for the purpose of standardizing maps and that a local commission "felt the new name will indicate to all the travelling public that this airport is now a major link in trans-polar routes."
[86] *Ibid*, page 6.
[87] *Ibid*, page 7.
[88] Conversation with Bernard Flaman in Vancouver March 31, 2001.
[89] McWilliam; page 5.

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-contemporary and therefore ideal for new, technologically advanced Canadian airports.

McWilliam ended her article with the following praise for the re-development policies.

She wrote

> Picket fences, frame buildings and railway prints have been left behind. Canada,
> it appears, must keep its best foot forward, artistically speaking, for reasons of
> international prestige and domestic fulfillment. D.O.T.'s new air terminals will
> continue to reflect, at these important crossroads, a small part of the Canadiana
> which is emerging in the second half of the 20th century.[90]

Airports were not the only venues available for the government-sponsored

promotion of Canada's modernity via art. The Department of Public Works also had a

budget for art to enhance their sites. In the catalogue for his 1996 exhibition *It Pays to*

Play, Peter White included a post card of a provincial government trout hatchery near

Wardner, B.C. where a large abstract metal sculpture (figure 18) foregrounds the

fisheries building. White commented:

> A virtual commonplace in these years, sculptures of this type were usually
> commissioned, against the wishes of the public and politicians, for public
> buildings in urban centers as a demonstration that modernity has not only arrived,
> but that it had been embraced.[91]

During this period, a gap between planner's objectives and public's reactions to modern

art became evident. Lynn Ferrabee's discussion of the art purchased for Toronto's

terminals included an acknowledgement of difficulty in choosing works which would be

broadly accepted. She noted "Although the principle of encouraging Canadian artists

will be applauded by most, the actual choice of artwork will always stir controversy."[92]

The controversy which modern art works caused was recorded by Lowe who noted that

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[90] *Ibid*, page 10.
[91] White, Peter; It Pays to Play, British Columbia in Postcards 1950s - 1980s; Presentation House
Gallery/Arsenal Pulp Press; Vancouver; 1996; page 22.
[92] Ferrabee; page 64.

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Jack Shadbolt's mural tribute to Canadian bush pilots was "angrily attacked" in parliament and Anne Kahane's allegorical representation of Winnipeg Airport's founder, Frederick J. Stevenson was so unpopular that the Department of Transport had to agree to place a "life-like" bronze bust elsewhere in the terminal.[93] The purpose of the art program was succinctly articulated by Stan White, also of the Department of Transport, who stated that "There was no catering to popular taste...We were trying to achieve for Canada the most sophisticated image we possibly could."[94]

The only art which truly escaped controversy in Lynn Ferrabee's assessment of Toronto's airport were the 'Eskimo' Inuk-suks. In fact, Ferrabee, Lowe and McWilliam all had positive comments to make regarding these indigenous forms. The large stone structures were identified by McWilliam as "the oldest transportation symbols" and as such created an artistic contrast with the modern air traffic control.[95] Ferrabee described the Inuk-suks as possessing an inherent "dignity and grandeur" which was lessened only slightly by a practical problem with their placement in a location where the path they were meant to reveal was obstructed by a bridge.[96] Lowe's discussion of the Toronto Inuk-suks reveals that they were meant to communicate a package of ideas that Canada was a frontier nation, free from the constraints of the old world and that this country had a romantic, exotic aspect. He wrote

> ...in Toronto, they point the way for the newly arrived traveler and give the
> first-time visitor a refreshing and authentic feeling that while he is in a new land,
> he is also in a land that has a history and a culture which stretches back into the

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[93] Lowe; page 145.
[94] *Ibid*; page 145.
[95] McWilliam; page 7.
[96] Ferrabee; page 64.

misty unknown.[97]

The display of Inuit art[98] in Toronto can be viewed, as can the use of totem poles across

the country, as an attempt to present a 'Canadian' aesthetic which was distinct from the

European sculptural tradition. Their presence provides another example, parallel to the

totem poles at Vancouver's airport, of the use of indigenous cultural forms to represent

something which some non-native groups see as a 'distinctly Canadian' identity.

Opposition to the modernist aesthetic, as constructed earlier at other airports east

of Vancouver, was recorded in local newspapers across Canada. Articles entitled "One

man's art is another's bad taste…"; "Master Mural at Airport Termed Modernistic Blob";

"DOT Defends Airport Mural" and "The Layman, the Critic, The Mural" indicate the

negative and somewhat derisive tone of the discussion.[99] One political cartoon suggested

that the only way to tell the new airports apart was through examination of the particular

selection of modern art contained within. Although the new airports were not actually

identical, local differences were subsumed by the modern idiom to the point of becoming

virtually undetectable by some of the public.

The modernist aesthetic represented a cultural affront to some Vancouverites, as

illustrated by comments made by tourist bureau manager Harold Merilees who felt his

city was being homogenized into a bland or generic metropolis modelled upon the much-

despised city of Toronto. In his assessment, the evidence supporting Vancouver's

identity as a Northwest Coast city in a distinct geographical area was missing. In 1968

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[97] Lowe; page 145.
[98] Although the Inuit did not produce inuk-suks as art in the western sense, it is clear that they were used art
at Toronto's airport and received as art by these critics.
[99] Turner; Press comments insert; *Canadian Art*; May / June 1964.

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the *Vancouver Sun* newspaper reported that the Department of Transport had been

obliged to give in to a local group (of which Harold Merilees was a member) demanding

the inclusion of art works which could be identified as distinctly British Columbian.

These columns suggest that some Vancouver residents desperately wanted the city to be

represented only in the more local, familiar style, which employed objects such as totem

poles or carvings in a 'Northwest Coast' style to convey the local identity. Merilees was

quoted, with respect to his struggle to have totem poles included at Vancouver's airport,

as saying "This is the culmination of a four year fight to have something in the terminal

that will identify it with Vancouver rather than Toronto or with Tel Aviv."[100] The view

that modern art was antithetical to the representation of a regional identity is evident.

The second phase of development at Vancouver International Airport terminal

was completed in 1968.(figure 19) The design referenced the natural geography of the

adjacent sea shore and made use of local building materials. Local art critic Joan

Lowndes described the new airport terminal favourably, as she wrote that

> From each end extensions sweep out in a shallow arc rather like a breakwater, a
> comparison enhanced by the material used: pre-packed concrete and stone
> quarried in Keremeos. The "breakwater" terminates in spiral towers of an
> intriguing sculptural nature which serve as fresh air intakes.[101]

This modern facility was to be complemented by abstract murals by Guido Molinari and

Bodo Pfeifer[102] as well as a sculpture by Robert Murray, a Vancouver-born artist who first

enjoyed critical success in New York in the mid-1960s. His work, *Cumbria*, a large

angular sculpture constructed of steel and painted in a bright, warm yellow (figure 20),

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[100] *Vancouver Sun*, September 6, 1968.
[101] Lowndes, Joan; in *The Vancouver Province*, September 13, 1968, page 10.
[102] *Ibid.*

was purchased in 1969 by the Department of Transport "to underscore the international ambitions of the airport and Vancouver in particular."[103] The sculpture was interpreted in 1967 in *Artforum*:

> It is not a sculpture in the usual sense, that is, it isn't primarily about mass, texture, or enclosed space...the twin planes move away from the ground with the exhilaration of a jet leaving the runway.[104]

Denise Leclerc has discussed the events leading up to the purchase of this work in 1969. She noted that it had been shown outside Toronto's city hall as part of the Sculpture '67 shown organized by the National Gallery of Canada. It was displayed the next year, 1968, in New York's Battery Park as part of a sculpture of the month program.[105] Regarding the New York exhibition, Leclerc commented "...probably influenced by this prestigious siting, the Canadian Department of Transport purchased *Cumbria* in 1969 for Vancouver International Airport."[106]

The Department of Transport's decision to purchase and display *Cumbria* was intended to present a previously absent level of sophistication in Vancouver. Initially, the work was to be placed in a prominent, highly visible location, directly in front of the newly completed main terminal; however, in an act of defiance against the Department of Transport, local airport planners re-located the sculpture to a grassy median between roadways leading to and from the airport.[107] This sculpture became a focal point for local opposition (Lowndes cites "irate letters to the editor"[108]) to the addition of modern

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[103] Leclerc, Denise; *Robert Murray, Factory as Studio*; National Gallery of Canada; Ottawa; 1999, page 36.
[104] *Ibid*, page 35.
[105] *Ibid*, page 35.
[106] *Ibid*, page 36.
[107] *Ibid*, page 36.
[108] *The Vancouver Province*; October 10, 1968; page 13.

abstract art to the airport terminals. Despite a favourable review in the Canadian edition of *Time* magazine which described Cumbria as "one of the most successful public sculptures"[109], it also represented the illegibility or incomprehensible quality of modern abstract art. To some residents of Vancouver it was symbolic of the imposition of an ill-fitting pan-Canadian identity on the region by the federal planners.

Criticism of this sculpture continued for decades. In 1986 Ian Gray, past president of CP Air described *Cumbria* (in a letter of support to the builders of the second *Rocket)*, as a "rusting yellow bulldozer set of blades".[110] In 1993 *Cumbria* was damaged beyond repair by bulldozers when they attempted to move the sculpture to make way for the next airport expansion.[111] (The sculpture currently resides behind the Lasserre building on the campus of the University of British Columbia after it was re-built in 1995 and installed in 1997).

As airports became more and more expensive, the Department of Transport attempted to limits its financial obligations. In the 1960s, government contributions were capped at $1 million per year per airport. Another policy, generated in the late 1960s, of immense significance to airport development was that of cost recovery. This meant that airports in Montreal (Dorval), Toronto, and later Mirabel and Vancouver had to become financially "self-sufficient".[112] Air Canada was privatized in 1985-86. Finally, the

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[109] Leclerc; page 36.
[110] Letter of May 9, 1986 from Ian Gray to the Sheet Metal Workers Local 250.
[111] Leclerc; page 36.
[112] Syme and Wells; page 14 "Two major international airports, Montreal (Dorval) and Toronto were grouped together under a financial concept titled *revolving fund*. Some time later, Mirabel and Vancouver airports were added to this group. The terms of the fund stated that the airports should make every effort to be profitable and that they would be funded by vote netting…that the Federal Treasury Board would provide funds only to cover the shortfall between revenues and expenses."

federal government sought at this time to remove itself from the airport business, seeking

to retain only the position of "landlord" at the larger airports.[113] In the early 1990s, a new

National Airports Policy was announced. This policy was designed to provide the

mandate for the federal government to "transfer commercialized ownership" of airports

to the private sector.[114] Syme and Wells suggest that the new policy was favourable for

aspects of airport development other than the purely economic as it would allow for more

regional concerns to be accommodated.

> Commercialization of Transport Canada's operations was touted to allow better
> response to the needs of clients and user groups who wanted more local control,
> and to allow these corporate entities to participate in the equity markets to raise
> capital for expansion and modernization."[115]

Ultimately this change in policy has allowed urban airports to embark on their

own developmental paths and has created the conditions under which Vancouver's

airport came to be re-constructed a second time. In 1992, the federal government

transferred control of the airport to the Vancouver International Airport Authority, a

"non-governmental, not-for-profit"[116] corporation. This corporation does generate large

profits but does not have shareholders or pay dividends. Instead, earnings are paid to the

federal government and re-invested in the facility. The massive reconstruction of the

airport began shortly after this transfer.

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[113] *Ibid*, page 16.
[114] *Ibid*.
[115] *Ibid*.
[116] http://www.yvr.ca/GeneralInfo/AirportAuthority/yvrauthority.htm

CHAPTER 3

Airports say a lot about a place because they are both a city's business card and its handshake; they tell us what a community yearns to be as well as what it really is...

Pico Iyer, *The Global Soul*, page 46.

The current airport re-construction project began in 1992. Specifically designed to represent aspects of locality, the new aesthetic program for the terminal interiors can be understood, in part, as a reaction to the homogenizing tendency of the modern 1960s International Style airport. The popular perception of modernist design as an 'absence' of style, rather than a purposeful design choice, has been addressed in the current plan. The new terminals designed by Vancouver-based Architectura re-visit more familiar, less abstract signs of the local that had been evacuated from the second phase of the airport. This increased emphasis on locality can also be understood as a response to the erosion of national and cultural borders which occurs under the pressures of globalization.

The idea that modern abstract art is antithetical to the clear expression of a 'sense of place' has been embraced by the Airport Authority. Instead of modern art, the airport is now decorated with neo-traditional[117] native art, which although abstract and culturally specific in its own right, tends to be received as beautiful and 'readable' by a broad, non-native public. According to a YVR promotional CD-ROM, native art is featured

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[117] The label "neo-traditional" is used in this study to describe contemporary art work by artists Bill Reid, Robert Davidson, Susan Point, Dempsey Bob, Connie Watts and Richard Hunt which employ aspects of the old visual codes of Northwest Coast art including specific forms, colours and media in their creation. The term is problematic because an exact definition "tradition" regarding First Nations art involves delimiting pre- and post-contact styles, defining 'authenticity' and the acceptance or rejection of a history of artistic innovation. See Townsend-Gault, Charlotte; "Hot Dogs, a Ball Gown, Adobe and Words: The Modes and Materials of Identity" in Rushing, Jackson, Ed; *Native American Art in the Twentieth Century*; Routledge, New York, 1999.

specifically because it "honours" the natural geographical beauty which the terminals

themselves "celebrate".[118] The terminal interiors are complimented by integrated art

installations and the resulting environment magnifies and re-invents Vancouver as a

culturally unique and naturally spectacular gateway to the pacific Northwest Coast.

A distinctive local 'look' has been created in the terminals by constructing a

building which directs travelers' attention to local geographical features[119], such as the

mountainous skyline and ocean, and promotes the area's cultural connection to the

natural environment via native art. Skyways and corridors built with floor to ceiling

glass walls allow panoramic views of the mountains for arriving passengers. The ocean

is evoked within the international terminal by a huge glass art work, the *Great Wave Wall*

(1995), by Lutz Haufschild (figure 21). It functions as a backdrop for the *Spirit of Haida*

Gwaii, the Jade Canoe (figure 22), the centrepiece of YVR's thematic art program.

Purchased before the terminal was completed for $3.5 million, the *Jade Canoe*

has become, according to architect and spokesman Clive Grout of Architectura, "the

most photographed spot in Vancouver".[120] Promotional material generated by YVR in

1996 to announce their purchase of the sculpture explained that "...the piece speaks to

the role of Vancouver as a city attempting to define itself as a growing international

community in a dynamic and quickly changing world."[121] The characters in the 18 foot,

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[118] YVR Promotional CD-ROM narration.
[119] Designer Larry French is quoted as saying "...there was a very strong emphasis on trying to find metaphors that would relate the design to the natural landscape of Vancouver." in *Architectural Record*, November 1997, page 163.
[120] Barton, Adrianna; "Fly-by Culture"; in *Vancouver Magazine*; March 2001; page 28. This sculpture was voted the third most popular public art work in the *Georgia Straight's* 2001 Best of Vancouver reader's poll, September 20-27, 2001, page 19.
[121] Leclerc; page 66.

multi-ton canoe represent supernatural Haida beings and form a contemporary mythical composite as opposed to illustrating one single myth. The sculpture links travel to spiritual fulfillment and as such seems particularly useful in a travel industry setting.[122] The distinctive, deep green patina suggests a connection to nature and the lush, coastal rainforest environment. The *Jade Canoe*, and its pre-cursor the *Black Canoe*, have been the subject of two television documentaries which both explore the sculpture's mythical content and the construction process with commentary by Bill Reid on his work.[123] The Haida's connection to nature is repeated continuously in both programs which feature footage of the islands, mist, drumming and dancing. "The Spirit of Haida Gwai" (1991) reported Reid's decision to halt work on the Black Canoe to protest clear cutting in Haida Gwai and his presence at a dark and rainy road block on Lyle Island. According to George Rammell, artist and long time technical assistant to Reid, this work has attained significance beyond Haida and Canadian culture as it carries an additional layer of meaning as an icon for the eco-movement, representing their desire to preserve nature and restrain the forestry industry.[124]

Metaphorical reference has also been made within the airport terminal to local industries such as forestry through the arrangement of overhead lighting in some corridors and patterning on carpets designed to resemble log jams (figure 23). Architect

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[122] Boddy, Trevor; "The airport terminal as rain-forest theme park"; in *The Globe and Mail*, November 9, 1996, page C7. Boddy wrote "In 1993, YVR Airport Authority issued a manifesto for architects interested in the job, called Celebrating Art and Culture, declaring that "B.C. and Canada West have unique strengths that attract tourists and people seeking lifestyle changes. The attraction of getting back in touch with nature and authenticity resonates."

[123] "The Spirit of Haida Gwai" Royal Bank of Canada, 1991 and "Bill Reid's Jade Canoe" Kate Wisnicki, 1997, aired as part of the Bravo! Network's series Appointment with the Arts.

[124] "The Spirit of Haida Gwai" 1991, filmed interview of Rammell.

Clive Grout stated that the arrangement of lights to resemble the passage of floating lumber was meant to "...introduce strong regional themes that would celebrate the heritage of British Columbia".[125] Fishing is obliquely represented, particularly in a food court area thematically decorated as a 'dock-side bistro'.

The 'dock-side' area, modelled on Granville Island (which was itself transformed into a tourist destination), is also used to construct the city of Vancouver as a distinctive destination at the airport. The manufactured quality of space within the airport generally is illustrated in this small area by the selection and collage-like grouping of fragments of Vancouver's urban infrastructure (figure 24).[126] Hanging above the Pacific Market restaurant are miniaturized elements based on Lion's Gate, Burrard and Granville bridges, combined to loosely recall views from Granville Island. The miniaturized bridge segments, symbolic of the actual, existing bridges, are re-arranged and become a 'thumb-nail' itinerant sketch of the city.[127] The representation skips over what lies between the bridges - the residential and commercial spaces of Vancouver and population of the city itself. Below the 'bridges' the building materials of Granville Island - the horizontally ribbed, painted steel sheeting - decorate the back wall of the airport's Pacific Market evoking but not communicating any information about the actual shops and studios themselves. Granville Island, a sea-side shopping and entertainment destination, has been distilled down to its simplest component parts within the airport, becoming a

[125] Fenley, Gareth; "Forest and River are Metaphors in Vancouver Airport's Light" in *Architectural Record*; November 1997; page 163.
[126] It is not possible to view the Lion's Gate bridge, the most recognizable and famous of Vancouver's bridges, from Granville Island.
[127] This trope of representing an urban area by its most familiar silhouettes without particular regard for geographical accuracy has also been used for years on talk shows such as those currently hosted by David Letterman or Jay Leno.

simulacrum of itself.[128]

Vancouver's status as a <u>Canadian</u> destination is reiterated by the Chateau portal, installed against the advice of the architects, above the entrance to the Fairmont Hotel located on the northern arm of the main terminal (figure 25). This decorative amendment to the building is a direct quotation of the distinctive "Chateau" style used for Canadian Pacific Railway resort hotels such as those built at Banff Springs and Lake Louise. This architectural style has come to be considered as a distinctly Canadian one because of its shared British and French roots and because of its close identification with the railways. By 1915, it was suggested that the Chateau style be used as a Canadian national building style.[129] In this case the Fairmont's mock-patina green roof, regardless of its (historically) incorrect placement and non-traditional construction materials, signifies a luxurious "Canadian style" hotel. Actual limestone veneer has been used for the exterior walls of the façade.

At the current airport, a narrow vision of specific qualities of the Northwest Coast has been distilled, magnified and transformed in to a "brand".[130] In December 2000, Frank O'Neill, chief executive officer of YVR Airport Services (YVRAS), described the purpose of branding airports in *SkyTalk*, the YVR newspaper. He stated that with respect to selling their management services, the objective at Vancouver was "... to show

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[128] This area of the plaza has been critiqued by Boddy who wrote: "Encircling Reid's green bronze squabbling figures is the building's main public space, a plaza edged by Cara Operations Ltd.'s $4 million tiny-town diorama recalling the early buildings along the mud flats. An ersatz Steveston (the fishing village swallowed up by Vancouver) serves fast food. Sit-down diners are accommodated at an instant Granville Island, complete with rusting, corrugated-tin-covered facades and a forced-perspective version of the tourist district's bridge." *Globe and Mail*, November 9, 1996; page C7.

[129] Kalman, Harold; *History of Canadian Architecture Volume 2*; pages 718-722.

[130] *YVR SkyTalk*; "Expanding YVR Airport Services seeks capital for Equity Investments" December 2000 issue; page 15.

leadership in managing safe, friendly, clean, efficient and profitable airports with a distinctive sense of place." The value of a brand, in his opinion, rests in the potential to "...anticipate what you are getting".[131]

Airport retail enterprises also participate in the YVR brand by displaying Northwest Coast art within their commercial space. Particularly in the U.S. Departure lounges there has been a significant blurring of the distinction between retail space and non-retail space through the use of thematic decorative elements. In one instance, a large Duty Free shop in the U.S. departure area purchased three large panels carved by Roy Vickers, previously owned by the Airport Authority, and installed them around the entrance to the store as decorative elements. The display case program[132] contributes to this blurring by displaying art, clothing and furniture by British Columbian artists and designers inside tall glass and polished aluminum cases which resemble store front window displays.

The construction of a "distinctive sense of place" in medium-sized airports, (those serving more than 1 million and less than 15 million passengers annually[133]), has also occurred in cities such as Calgary, Phoenix and Denver, distinguishing these facilities from larger, busier, more generic airports. Airports in these three western cities also tend to emphasize the existence of indigenous native culture. In Calgary, historical objects from the Glenbow museum are displayed in combination with wildlife taxidermy and pioneer-era artifacts presenting a version of history that emphasizes conquest, cowboys

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[131] *Ibid.*
[132] Organized by Rita Beiks of the YVR Art Foundation, who is planning to add 5 cases per year, rotating contents on a quarterly basis to showcase local artists and designers.
[133] *YVR Sky Talk.*

and the settlement of the 'wild west'. Denver International Airport (DIA) also has a large art program featuring the work of both native and non-native artists. The DIA art program has been described as presenting thematic metaphors for the "land itself"[134]. Phoenix's Sky Harbour airport makes use of the indigenous art of the Southwest, differing from Vancouver in that it is far more commercialized. In that case, the Sky Harbour web site has direct links to local commercial art galleries selling "Southwest-style" works. Referring to other airports managed by YVRAS, O'Neill commented "They are not just processing factories…" attempting to distinguish the smaller airport from far larger European facilities.[135]

In June of 2000, the Vancouver International Airport was rated the best in North America and fourth best in the world, after Copenhagen, Singapore and Helsinki, by the International Air Travel Association (IATA).[136] This award recognized both YVR's "superior customer service" and the creation of a "unique sense of place" within the airport passenger terminals.[137] The immense resources directed to art and interior design in the Vancouver airport strongly suggest that it has been organized as a showcase to aid in the sale of YVRAS airport management services to other airports. Less than ten years after YVRAS took over at Vancouver they have become involved in the management-for-profit trade at airports in Hamilton, Moncton, Kamloops, North Peace, Cranbrook,

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[134] Huebner, Jeff. "Holding Pattern". *The New Art Examiner*. Summer 1995. Page 25. "This is about the Native Americans that migrated through these lands, the farmers that utilized their well-worn art of toiling the land. This is about the history, anthropology, sociology and topography of the land." quoting former director Jennifer Murphy.
[135] *YVR SkyTalk*; page 15.
[136] Press Release of June 21, 2000 from the YVR Airport Authority. Survey was based on responses of 65,000 travelers who participated.
[137] Beiks, Rita; speaking at VAG public forum, July 6, 2000.

Santiago, the Dominican Republic, Turks and Caicos, Bermuda and Wellington, New Zealand.[138]

In December 2000 O'Neill explained the strategy behind the brand system where each element was the product of research and development in Vancouver. Their goal was to "[reduce] the uncertainty of how airports could be managed."[139] In the thematically branded airport, the traveler's attention is diverted away from the generic and boring aspects of air travel and re-directed toward the culture and natural environment of the local region. The "hyper-local" airport, as described by Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas, "…display[s] museum-like representations of local culture…" and can use "…photomurals, vegetation, local costumes [to] give a first concentrated blast of local identity."[140] The success of this strategy is undeniable.

As a manufactured identity, the YVR brand packages Vancouver's culture in a comfortable, nostalgic, easily digestible format. O'Neill's vision of the native cultures of British Columbia is supported by original art works which he described in 1990 not only as "authentic" but as a "counterpoint to Umberto Eco's statement that we are creating an 'absolutely fake world'.[141] O'Neill's interpretation of the airport's thematic strategy

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[138] *YVR SkyTalk;* page 15.

[139] *Ibid.*

[140] Culham, James; in *The Globe and Mail,* Wednesday May 18, 2001, page R5. See also related article by Gillespie, Gina. *Globe and Mail,* Tuesday July 17, 2001, page B11 where the expression of locality at Ottawa's Macdonald-Cartier Airport was reviewed: "The design team wanted to incorporate a palette of materials symbolizing the Ottawa Valley. So the entrance canopy might echo the limestone and copper found on Parliament Hill. And a Three-storey waterfall inside the terminal will create a calming effect, plus reflect the importance of water to the city, which is founded on three rivers."

[141] O'Neill, Frank; December 1990 mission statement, comment appears to be based on Eco's 1975 essay "Travels in Hyper Reality" published in English in 1986 as part of a collection of essays in a book of the same title.

relies heavily on the "aura" surrounding an original work of art[142] which helps

camouflage the contrived nature of the airport's representation of native cultures. In

March 2001, Clive Grout claimed that the airport's thematic master plan celebrated

"B.C.'s cultural heritage" and presented "...tourist icons that a visitor would

recognize...it reinforces the good memories, and also ones that those of us who live here

feel good about."[143] Since the local culture of Vancouver is represented almost

exclusively by native art works in a neo-traditional Northwest Coast style, any references

to either the dubious colonial past or the rapid and uncomfortable social change presently

occurring in the city are absent.

Art functions primarily as interior decoration within the terminals, signalling the

'exotic' quality of the area. YVR's prominent sculptural installations are not intended to

educate viewers in a manner identical to an art gallery or museum. Although audiences

may indeed glean certain information or appreciate the pieces aesthetically, their

placement at points of transit, sites which the public must continue to move past, may

lessen the attention paid to these works. The Pacific Passage (figure 26), a thematic

corridor, presents a rocky sea shore adorned with a canoe, carved animals, Connie Watts'

immense sculpture *Hetux, Thunderbird, Keeper of the Sky*, as well as natural vegetation,

to passengers arriving from the United States as they leave the plane, hauling their carry-

on baggage to Canadian customs. Farther inside the terminal, both the large weavings by

Debra Sparrow (hung above and beside stairs leading directly to the customs area) and

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[142] Idea articulated by Benjamin, Walter; *Illuminations*; New York, 1969, Chapter " Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction".
[143] Barton; page 28.

Susan Point's *Spindle Whorl* and waterfall, (located midway down these same stairs), are overshadowed by the stress with which most travelers approach Customs itself. Near the International and U.S. check-in areas, the *Jade Canoe* is installed in a large, specially designed plaza at the intersection of three terminal arms and a food court. Although the area tends to be promoted by YVR as a meeting place, it is also a hectic thoroughfare. The best example of art installed in a location which actively discourages contemplative, unhurried viewing is a display of masks and other large scale carvings by Robert Davidson, Dempsey Bob and Richard Hunt that were placed directly in front of the exit to the parking garages on the domestic arrivals level (figure 27).

The emphasis on neo-traditional art, which according to YVR publicity is featured simply because it "honours the beauty"[144] of the natural environment, tends to promote native culture as static and fundamentally unchanged by the passage of time. As part of a primitivizing presentation of native cultures, the art becomes detached from its "historical contingency and cultural specificity"[145]. It acquires a transhistorical or timeless quality and illustrates a supposed heightened spiritual connection to nature. Describing the Pacific Passage and other large displays, cultural critic Adrianna Barton concluded that

> ... the dioramas freeze Aboriginal cultures in time, evoking a past bearing little resemblance to Native life today. By commissioning sculptures based on legends about the land, sky and sea, and displaying them in settings evoking an exotic "Supernatural" British Columbia, the airport perpetuated the illusion of mystical Natives living in harmony with nature, carving ceremonial masks and communing with otherworldly beings in the wilderness.[146]

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[144] CD ROM
[145] Nelson, Robert S., and Shiff, Richard, Eds.; *Critical Terms for Art History*; University of Chicago Press; Chicago, 1996; page 170.
[146] Barton; page 26.

This primitivist construction of native culture ignores the history of their active participation in the industrial development of Vancouver over the last century, beginning at least by the mid 1800s when members of local bands were employed as workers both in Fraser river fish canneries and by lumber companies.[147] The failure to include native art in styles other than neo-traditional denies the native cultures' ability to adapt, evolve and progress along with the rest of the world.

Also contributing to the sense that this art preserves an ancient world are didactic panels, produced by the YVR Art Foundation, in some cases in conjunction with the Museum of Anthropology, which repeatedly describe the objects on display with terms such as "supernatural" or "spirit".[148] The presentation of art in the airport with supporting didactic explanatory panels mimics an anthropological museum display and allows the cultural content of a work to dominate over its aesthetic qualities. It legitimizes the message YVR presents about the brand "Vancouver". Neo-traditional art works may also stimulate an interest amongst travelers in the local area that is divorced from practical problems associated with air travel or negotiating the possible hazards of a large urban area.

The primitivist construction of native culture presented at the airport displays is subtly reinforced by the use of art which gigantifies its subject. Larger-than-life scale works, such as the *Jade Canoe*, the *Spindle Whorl* (which as a spinning implement

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[147] Wynne and Oke; pages 60-64.
[148] Carving display near domestic level parking has an explanatory text panel which details the "Supernatural worlds, The Sea, The Land, The Sky" as well as details of the artist's biographies. The panel for the Wamiss transformation mask mentions the "underworld" and the "outer and inner beings" which are represented in the transformation ceremony.

would normally be only 16 inches in diameter as opposed to 16 feet), huge masks carved by Dempsey Bob (one of which was previously identified as the "Largest Mask in the World") or the towering Musqueam welcoming figures are displayed throughout the terminals. In *On Longing* (1984) literary theorist Susan Stewart discusses the miniature and the gigantic as western cultural formations. She interprets the miniature as a "metaphor for the interior space and time of the bourgeois subject"[149] representing closure, interiority, the domestic, and the overly cultural" while the gigantic tends to signify "...infinity, exteriority, the public and the overly natural."[150] While Stewart discourages the application of her theories to non-western cultural objects produced in the past, her analysis is appropriate for the contemporary art works within the airport terminals because, with the exception of the *Jade Canoe*, they were all commissioned by the Airport Authority. As a western cultural formation, the association of the gigantic with the "overly natural" operates for viewers independently from any significance the objects may have within the producer's own culture. Within the context of YVR, where native culture is already nearly synonymous with the rainforest, the exhibition of numerous larger-than-life works reinforces the location of indigenous culture outside modern civilization, technology and rationality.

The exclusion of contemporary native art other than neo-traditional from the airport limits the role art can play in any meaningful exploration of present-day Northwest Coast native cultures. In a recent *Vancouver Magazine* article that reported on the airport's thematic strategy, the absence of contemporary native art in other styles

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[149] Stewart, Susan; *On Longing*; Duke University Press, Durham, 1993; page xii.
[150] *Ibid*; page 70.

was noted by Barton. She argues that the failure to include overtly politically-engaged artists such as Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun or Brian Jungen results in a one-dimensional portrayal of native cultural heritage and denies the existence of an urban native population.[151] In other words, the emphasis on neo-traditional art privileges the past and elides un-marketable present-day aspects of the region, such as urban sprawl, environmental pollution and unresolved land claims. Politically engaged contemporary art could work against the YVRAS purpose of creating a coherent, positive, stimulating but non-threatening brand image for Vancouver, but YVR's problematic thematic strategy of seeking refuge in native art would remain. Even if they had decided to include a broader range of contemporary native art in the terminal it may not have succeeded in presenting the city in all of its complexity. Passengers may not have the time or energy to absorb such a complex message and the addition of overtly politically critical art could also be seen as a sort of institutional co-optation. This phenomenon is discussed by Hal Foster in *The Return of the Real* . He writes

> ...the deconstructive-ethnographic approach can become a gambit, an insider game that renders the institution not more open and public but more hermetic and narcissistic, a place for initiates only where a contemptuous criticality is rehearsed.[152]

The power of the art to criticize and provoke is limited by the institution's ability to absorb the critique and include it as part of the institutional identity itself. Further , damage can be done if the issues raised are sufficiently visible to allow for a false sense of resolution to exist for viewers.

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[151] Barton; page 30.
[152] Foster, Hal; *The Return of the Real*; MIT Press; Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1996; page 196.

Barton's essay fails to ask several other difficult questions which arise when one considers the choice of thematic program at the airport. For example, if the socio-political position of B.C. First Nations peoples has not substantially improved in recent decades, then why have aspects of their cultural heritage <u>now</u> been harnessed at the airport to promote the British Columbian tourist industry ? Is the relative position of native people sufficiently non-threatening to the established order that their culture can be appropriated freely without reproducing the anxiety that the presence of newer immigrant cultures may cause? Does a focus on neo-traditional art also imply a timelessness for non-native British Columbia and suggest a return to a less socially fraught era ? In other words, does the current thematic program actually erase local anxiety surrounding globalization and internationalization, by re-presenting the city in a fictional, mono-cultural format ? Does, following David Harvey's argument, the representation of Vancouver as rainforest portal "draw a veil over real geography through [the] construction of images..?"[153]

To deal with the above questions, the socio-historical context in which the theme for the airport was conceived must be considered. From the mid 1960s to the 1990s, the population of Vancouver grew enormously and became more ethnically diverse. Until the 1960s Vancouver had been an ethnically homogenous city; statisticians estimate 94% of the population was of European ancestry. In addition to the overwhelming 'whiteness' of the city generally, ethnic groups were geographically segregated in distinct

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[153] Harvey, David; *The Condition of Postmodernity*; Blackwell Publishers; Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1996; page 87.

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neighbourhoods[154] making them less visible to the white majority. In 1966 changes to federal immigration policies, specifically the introduction of a points system to calculate the economic desirability of a given applicant, resulted in a shift in the nationalities of the immigrant population. Social geographers Wynne and Oke report in *Vancouver and Its Region* (1992) that prior to the introduction of the points system, the top five countries of origin for individuals immigrating to Canada were Britain, Italy, the United States, West Germany and Portugal. By 1989 the top five countries of origin were Hong Kong, Poland, the Philippines, India and Vietnam.[155] Statistically, there was a 422% increase in the non-European population of Vancouver between 1971-1986 while the overall growth rate was 28%; Non-Europeans accounted for 50% of the growth during this period.[156]

As well as an increasing non-European population, the historical geographic segregation of ethno-cultural communities within the space of the city began to break down as affluence among Non-Europeans groups increased, thereby allowing increased social mobility.[157] This trend was amplified with the introduction of the investor immigrant category in the 1980s, a scenario which allowed the purchase of Canadian citizenship for $250,000. By 1988 the top ten investor immigrant countries were: Hong Kong, Taiwan, West Germany, Macao, Lebanon, England, Iran, Kuwait, Philippines and Malaysia.[158] Vancouver's growth in the post-Expo '86 period continued. The success of

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[154] Wynne and Oke; page 249-250.
[155] *Ibid*; page 250.
[156] *Ibid*; page 252.
[157] *Ibid*; page 256. "The interweaving of economic and ethnic competition is nowhere more controversial than in Vancouver's established elite neighbourhoods, where immigrants from Pacific rim countries (together with upwardly mobile Asian-Canadians) have begun to redevelop housing in non-traditional styles."
[158] *Ibid*; page 254-55.

Expo '86 as a government initiative intended to showcase the province as a destination for foreign investment was apparent in so far as the purpose of the Fair "... was to advertise the amenities and economic opportunities of Vancouver and British Columbia to an international audience."[159]

After Expo '86, when the excitement of the Fair had faded, the change to Vancouver's social landscape continued unabated and as the agents of social change, the new and visible immigrant population was blamed for destruction of the traditional west-side Vancouver way of living. Describing the social atmosphere of the early 1990s, Trevor Boddy noted that

> Through these years, the Vancouver press was filled with hysterical and often racist tales of limited auctions in Hong Kong of False Creek condominiums, a mass yellow exodus into the city, the dreaded emergence of "Hongcouver...[160]

News of Vancouver's rapid social change spread beyond the Canadian border. The representation of Vancouver in the American media in the post-Expo years cannot be discounted as an important influence on the re-construction of the airport. The following examples of how Vancouver's situation was reported in the United States illustrate that a particular image of the city has been created, one which emphasized cultural change accompanied by social anxiety as a direct result of the city's increased ties to Asia.

In 1989 the *New York Times* reported in its financial section that Hong Kong billionaire Li Ka Shing had purchased the former Expo lands for the bargain price of $272 million in order to construct developments worth US$ 1.7 billion. The following

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[159] *Ibid*, page 255.
[160] Boddy, Trevor in Delaney, Paul Editor; *Vancouver, Representing the Postmodern City*, Arsenal Pulp Press; Vancouver, 1994; page 33.

year an article in the travel section of the *New York Times* described Vancouver's future

as resting with the Pacific Rim, as a city thriving with new citizens, new buildings and

new investment. The sources of this tide of newness were identified as Hong Kong,

Taiwan, Japan, Singapore and Malaysia. The price of this new-found prosperity was said

to be social tension and resentment stemming from the unwelcome changes being forced

upon the city and its long-time residents. Reporter Moira Farrow noted that between

1980 and 1990, still a full seven years before the British colony was to return to Chinese

rule, 21,607 Hong Kong residents had moved to British Columbia. She continued to

discuss aspects of the real estate boom noting the rising prices of homes on the west side

of the city. Farrow identified an important source of local anxiety - new housing

construction that did not continue with familiar residential building patterns. She wrote:

> Size restrictions on new homes have been enacted as a result of the uproar caused
> by the émigrés construction of what some local residents call "monster houses".
> Traditional Vancouver houses are wood-framed and set in large gardens. The
> new houses are usually taller and brick or stucco and occupy almost the entire
> lot, erasing the leafy look of many residential streets...[161]

Having established that new residents in Vancouver were both anti-garden and anti-

tradition, the article continued with a comment on the need for very expensive (and un-

necessary for any native Vancouverite) language training in public schools as "...nearly

half of local school children do not speak English as their mother tongue and special

English classes cost school authorities up to $8.5 million a year."[162] By way of partial

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[161] Farrow, Moira; in the *New York Times*; Sunday March 25, 1990; Travel Section, page 10. Wynne and
Oke describe the defining characteristics of a monster house as at least 5,000 sq. ft, and are "virtually
antithetical to picturesque tradition", clad in brightly coloured brick, large windows and ostentatious
entrance ways "Trees, shrubs, hedges and flowerbeds are replaced by stark cement, gravel and grass yards
which are, in turn, surrounded by imposing fences and elaborate gateways." page 257.
[162] Farrow; page 10.

consolation, Farrow ends her introduction to the city with the thought that "...social

changes have not affected the city's natural beauty with its miles of beaches and parks

ringing the waterfront and the Coast Mountains as a 4,000-foot backdrop".[163]

The following month, the April 1992 *National Geographic* issue contained a

lengthy, abundantly illustrated essay by Andrew Ward entitled "Vancouver- Good Luck

City". In Ward's article, three main images of Vancouver's population are opposed. The

native component of Vancouver is presented as ancient, inextricably linked to the land

and as powerless to stop change. The European immigrant population are presented as

the natural and rightful heirs to the city. Asians are presented as newcomers, as agents of

change and as the group who is threatening the historical continuity of economic

dominance by the European population. On the title page, the area's latest admirers are

identified in bold type as "pacific rim investors" and a "host of prosperous immigrants

from Asia"[164]. Vancouver's largest ethnic community are identified as Chinese on the

following page. The article's main text begins with Chief Ed Sparrow's memories of

hunting in Vancouver, previously Musqueam territory, prior to the last 80 years of

development. The elderly Sparrow was photographed resting on an immense tree trunk,

the image confirming the connection between the aboriginal and nature, aging and decay

(figure 28).[165] A more stable and cyclical past is suggested by Sparrow's reflections and

is opposed to the rapidly changing and unpredictable present.

Further on, Ward suggests the advent of an "identity crisis" for "old guard

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[163] *Ibid.*
[164] Ward, Andrew; "Vancouver Good Luck City"; *National Geographic*; April 1992; Page 95.
[165] *Ibid*; page 101.

Vancouver" who may no longer own the business district's skyscrapers. Drawing

attention to the changing distribution of wealth, away from those who previously had it,

to newcomers, he writes:

> ... today more and more of the signs you see downtown are in Chinese and
> Japanese. Thousands of investors from Asia are buying not only skyscrapers but
> also homes, and they are transforming whole neighbourhoods with their traditions
> and magnified wealth.[166]

Ward discusses the development of the Expo lands by "Hong Kong billionaire" Li Ka

Shing, assessing the price he paid as "a steal" and one of the most contentious aspects

associated with the immigration of wealthy Asians, namely the construction of so-called

monster houses.

Two illustrations essentialize the conflict or tension between old and new

Vancouver by presenting contrasting images. The first image is of an elderly white male

tending to his front lawn with the aid of a push mower and a wheelbarrow, across the

street from a monster house (figure 29).[167] The other image, taken inside the monster

house illustrates the palatial entrance, cavernously large living room with double height

ceilings and the owner conferring with another individual, gesticulating toward a

towering marble fireplace presumably about the upcoming renovation (to <u>increase</u> the

size of the front door) detailed in the main text. In Ward's assessment, the possibility that

old and new could achieve a peaceful co-existence as the city evolves and grows remains

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[166] *Ibid*, page 105.

[167] *Ibid*, page 107. Caption for the images read: "The "Asian invasion" is most visible in neighbourhoods where modest homes are razed to make way for "monster houses" (below) - the million dollar mansions favored by some immigrants. Recent demand has nearly doubled home prices and sent taxes through the roof." In the main text, the monster house owner was referred to as Mr. Ip while the long time resident across the street was repeatedly mentioned by his first name only, Doug thus further alienating readers from the newcomer.

unexamined. The message that new development was out of control and was reaching

past any reasonable point is made clear by both the images and text[168] as oppositions were

made between old and young, the natural and the constructed environment, modesty and

excess, morality and materialism. The article concludes as it began, with a native voice

and thoughts on the spiritual quality of the natural environment. For Ward, old

Vancouver was presented as occupying a sort of moral high ground while the perpetrators

of new development and change became suspect. Within this binary view of Vancouver,

old was synonymous with European, newness with Asian, and native peoples became

little more than a cautionary echo from the past, a remnant of a simpler time.

Viewed within the historical context of Vancouver's rapid globalization and

internationalization, and this kind of reporting in the American media, the thematic

choices at YVR take on a markedly escapist character. Within the space of YVR all of

the anxiety-causing aspects of Vancouver's development which were the focus of

articles such as those published in the *New York Times* or *National Geographic*, have

been skilfully avoided. The focus on native cultures as represented through visual art

presents a calming, spiritual and 'beautiful' portrait of the city and beyond. Rapid

infrastructural changes, social anxieties, economic competition amongst ethno-cultural

groups are avoided in a design which showcases the mountains, the ocean, the sky and

the earlier inhabitants of the Northwest Coast.

A pronounced difference in orientation between the first two phases of the

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[168] Ward continued to discuss "old guard" Vancouver's reactions to development such as monster houses and changing ethnic demographics in the school system, positioning them as long suffering, tolerant and justifiably anxious. The insidious negativity toward Asian Canadians in the report continues on the following page 109, which features an image of conspicuous over consumption. An Asian customer, Grace Lok, photographed at Leone's boutique wearing a Versace jacket which retailed for $4,059.00 U.S.

airport's development and the third phase becomes evident when the representations of

locality are compared. In the past, the art and architecture at the airport re-enforced

significant aspects of the 'spirit' of their times. Specifically, in the first phase of

Vancouver airport's development, the *Rocket* commemorated the industrial growth of

Vancouver and expressed its maker's optimistic hope for a prosperous industrial future.

The *Rocket* also gave expression to a general feeling of optimism about the future and the

possibilities inherent in technological advances. In the second phase, modernist

architecture and abstract art were the physical manifestations of a desire to be free of the

constraints of history and to make a new future which reached beyond a single nation's

border. They were used to define Canada as a sophisticated country capable of taking its

place on the international stage. Today, instead of re-enforcing social reality promoting

an ideal for the future , the design of Vancouver's airport seeks to escape it. The

representation of locality within YVR rests on a primitivizing, fictional portrayal of

native culture which results in the complete denial of the internationalization of the city.

Vancouver's 'unique sense of place' at the airport, now a commercial enterprise with an

economic imperative to produce revenue, has come to rest almost entirely on natural

geography, an aspect of the city which is beyond the influence of social change and upon

a version of Northwest Coast native culture which is, as a largely fictional and

transhistorical construction, also beyond the reach of rapid social change and the anxiety

that change necessarily causes. The only remnants of Vancouver's non-native culture to

be included within YVR terminals were those related to the fishery, to forestry and

historic Canadian icon, the railway. Fragmented references to these aspects of the city

and its industrial, resource-based history reinforce this flight from the anxiety-ridden and

complicated path for development Vancouver now faces.

CONCLUSION

"The heritage industry, far from compensating for present discontents, either as a spiritual or crudely economic resource, quietly increases them, by holding before us the contrast between a decaying present and an ever improving and more appealing past."

Robert Hewison, *The Heritage Industry*, page 141.

In the introduction to this thesis, I suggested that prior attempts to interpret the airport's current art program were limited by time frames that focused only on the present display. In my view, the current representation of locality at the airport is best understood as part of a pattern of representations, and not as a discrete or isolated formation. The lack of a longer historical view in earlier analyses has had the effect of obscuring the significance of a representation of locality that is based on a highly selective image of native art. A more complex interpretation is made possible by considering the historical development of the facility and the various modes in which the local has been represented over time. It is one stage in a series of representations of locality which influence and are influenced by the city's particular history.

Through the examination of both the earliest theoretical plans for airports and the historical development of Vancouver's airport, I have shown that terminal design has never been simply utilitarian or functional in nature. The airport is a site where representations of locality have been made throughout its entire history. Although what was actually built in Vancouver in the 1930s was more conservative than any of the four theoretical plans discussed in the first chapter, an optimism about technological progress was expressed, as was a 'sense of place'.

Art displayed at the airport has supported the architectural program of each stage

of development. In the late 1930s, the Sheet Metal Workers' *Rocket* helped illustrate

Vancouver's position as Canada's Pacific gateway to an increasingly industrial future. In

the late 1960s Vancouver, like other urban Canadian airports, was modernized in order to

accommodate increased demand for air transport. It was simultaneously used as a venue

within which the nation's increased attention to the international arena was expressed.

Modern abstract art works were installed at airports across Canada to illustrate the

nation's sophistication and international outlook. Vancouver's main terminal was

decorated with abstract modern art which thematically supported the facility designed by

Berwick, Thompson and Pratt. The modern, technological future was presented in a

unified government plan aimed at demonstrating a Canadian identity and expressing our

modernity as a nation. (The 'national' image of Vancouver was subverted to some

degree by the display of totem poles which were eventually included at the 1968 airport.)

In the 1990s the thematic program for the terminals employs neo-traditional

native art to represent Vancouver. The effort to brand this destination has resulted in the

construction of an image which emphasizes Vancouver's distinctive geographical

attributes as a coastal city on the edge of the mountainous rainforest. The art which fills

the airport has been employed to emphasize the city's supposed connection to the natural

environment and to promote a spiritual aspect to travel in the Northwest coast which

relies heavily on evocations of misty rainforest and the beneficial influence of nature

upon culture. This construction of Vancouver denies urban development and rapid

population growth.

Following the work of David Harvey, it is apparent that at Vancouver's airport the

influence of globalization has been met with a representational strategy which

emphasizes the "unique" aspects of the destination in an attempt to differentiate the local from an increasingly homogenous world. As an anxious response to globalization and the internationalization of the city, the thematic design of the airport terminals can be interpreted as an attempt to re-assert a distinctive local identity. This reaction involves more than the economic motive of attracting capital.

The shift in aesthetic strategy which occurred in the early 1990s and involved the rejection of modernist abstraction in favour of neo-traditional native art mirrors the conflict between proponents of increasing growth and those who seek to halt change and preserve (their version of) the past. Over time, there has been an increase in the level of conscious planning to create or construct a particular image for the city and province and, I would argue, a decrease in the sincerity of the image as it excludes more and more and focuses on one particular, and as has been discussed above, problematic theme.

The airport as it now stands has a schizophrenic exterior where older sections of the terminal protrude through the new neo-modern skin (figure 30). The disjointed quality of the exterior maps out the development of the facility as time has passed and expansion became unavoidable. The crushed rock wall surfaces and conical air ducts face new, glazed glass walls. Chester Johnson Park, a small oasis of greenery, home to old, weathered totem poles is overlooked by the Fairmont Hotel's faux Chateau entrance. The thematic representations of the city and local culture inside the terminals are part of an evolving, impermanent construction of this destination.[169]

Drawing on the work of Henri Lefebvre, the space of the airport can be

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[169] As work on the exterior of the airport continues, the current appearance cannot be viewed as final.

understood both as a social product and as a space that actively produces social relations. By extension, expressions of locality at the airport are also produced by social relations. Therefore it is reasonable to conclude that as the identity of the city's dominant groups continues to shift and evolve there will be a continued evolution of representations of the city and its residents within the airport terminals.

At Vancouver's airport the idea of an undisturbed, undeveloped natural environment has become the main focus of the interior design. The natural geography is represented in two modes. Vancouver's actual, physical geographical features are showcased by the terminal's panoramic windows while the more distant rainforest and ocean are represented by neo-traditional native art. The specific expressions of place in Vancouver have changed over time but there has been a continued reliance on the use of symbols of native culture to express locality. The task of unpacking the YVRAA evocation of nature via native art is complicated by a history of the appropriation of native cultural symbols in Canada for the purpose of nation building that was largely unrelated to native peoples themselves. Native art will remain only as long as it can successfully 'mask' the anxiety currently existing regarding the influence of immigrant populations on the development of Vancouver.

This representation of the city looks back to an earlier era when the competition for resources amongst ethno-cultural groups was limited by the dominance of the European-descended population. Because the expression of locality at the airport is bound up in anxiety about change and represents a sort of identity crisis, it cannot be understood as objective evidence about the contemporary socio-political situation of native peoples.

A similar reaction has occurred elsewhere. British historian Robert Hewison has also discussed the impact of globalization on culture in his country. His study focuses on areas where industrial decline, particularly the closing of coal mines, has been followed by the creation of open-air historical museums which feature a romantic, sanitized version of the now-absent industry as their subject. He identifies these heritage museums as a reaction to changing economic conditions with implications beyond job creation in adversely affected areas. Hewison contends that aspects of Britain's past are being actively re-created without serious regard for accuracy; nostalgia problematically dominates history. The re-writing of history in his opinion, is motivated by "a decline in industrialization"[170] which has led to an immense dissatisfaction and uncertainty about the present. His conclusions are valuable to this analysis of the history of representations of Vancouver at the airport because they present another case where anxieties about socio-economic change resulted in the construction of spaces that attempt to assuage that anxiety.

Another conclusion which is made possible by an examination of the entire development history of Vancouver's airport is that architecture does, in fact, articulate social trends. As Kracauer suggested, the particular architectural strategies employed can provide insight into the era during which the spaces and buildings were constructed. He wrote: "Spatial images are the dreams of society. Wherever the hieroglyphics of any spatial image are deciphered, there the basis of social reality presents itself."[171] In the first two phases of development, the design of the airport embodied the modernist spirit

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[170] Hewison, Robert; *The Heritage Industry*; Methuen Paperbacks; London, 1987; page 89.
[171] Leach; page 51.

of the times. The art deco style of the administration building and the streamlined *Rocket*

monument illustrated a general acceptance of technological progress, the importance of

the machine and industrial growth as a route to a prosperous future. Later, the idealist

modernist philosophy was expressed at Canadian urban airports through consistent use of

International Style architecture, art and furniture.

The architectural vision of the city and its future expressed in the first two stages

of airport development can be contrasted with the design of the 1990s which, instead of

proposing a path for the future, looks back to the past. Instead of an architecture which

supports a universalizing narrative as the International Style did, the current designs seem

to illustrate multiple perspectives. A fragmented, alternate reality is proposed, one which

superficially accommodates cultural difference but which has at its core a primitivizing

and escapist quality.

At the airport, nostalgia for an imaginary past rules over any contemporary

attempt at the negotiation of changing social or ethnic patterns within the city. The neo-

modern design of the airport in combination with neo-traditional native art and stylized

interpretations of industries such as forestry, fishing and the rail network allow the

terminal design to avoid the anxiety which may accompany changes to the cultural

landscape. The failure to acknowledge social and cultural change suppresses

Vancouver's diversity. In the face of increasing claims to local identity, the solution at

YVR has been to squash out all but one representation of culture.

Thematic environments within the terminals have nothing to do with the logistics

of passenger movement or safety, they are designed to entertain and distract travelers.

John Zukowsky has suggested that the development of airports beyond their practical

transport functions reflects a broader socio-cultural pattern. He argues that the evolution of airport terminals toward becoming thematic spaces amounts to "...an expression of the public's search for secure, controlled environments for entertainment in suburban malls, sports facilities, and even theme parks..."[172] The imaging of a mystical, natural utopia escapes reality, providing a comfortable refuge for travelers and Vancouverites alike. However, because of the deceptive quality of the present design, it is crucial to scrutinize the image of locality that is communicated to viewers.

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[172] Zukowsky; page 16.

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FIGURE 1 Antonio San't Elia's "Station for airplanes and trains with funiculars and elevators on three levels", 1914 (da Costa Meyer, 104)
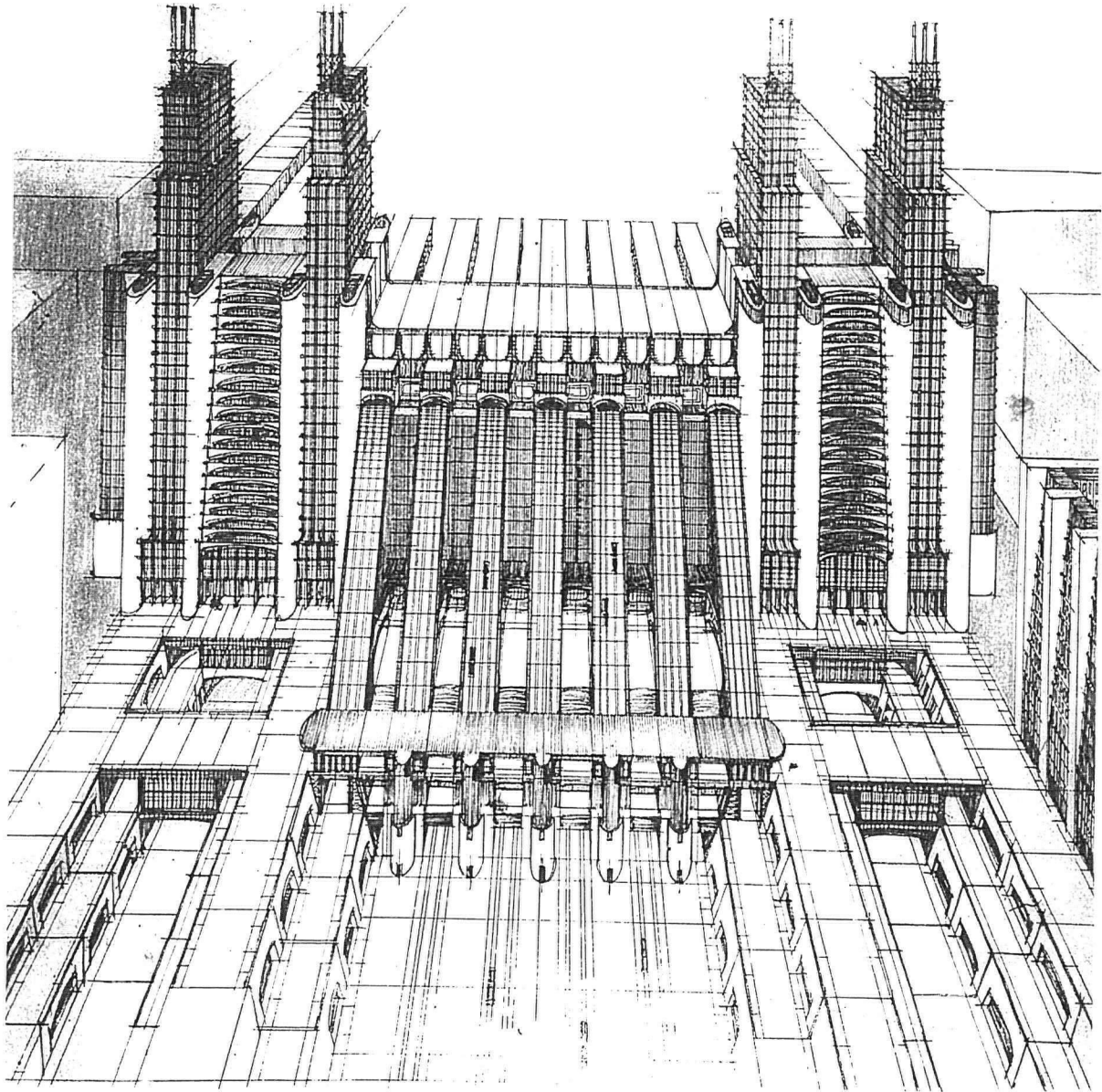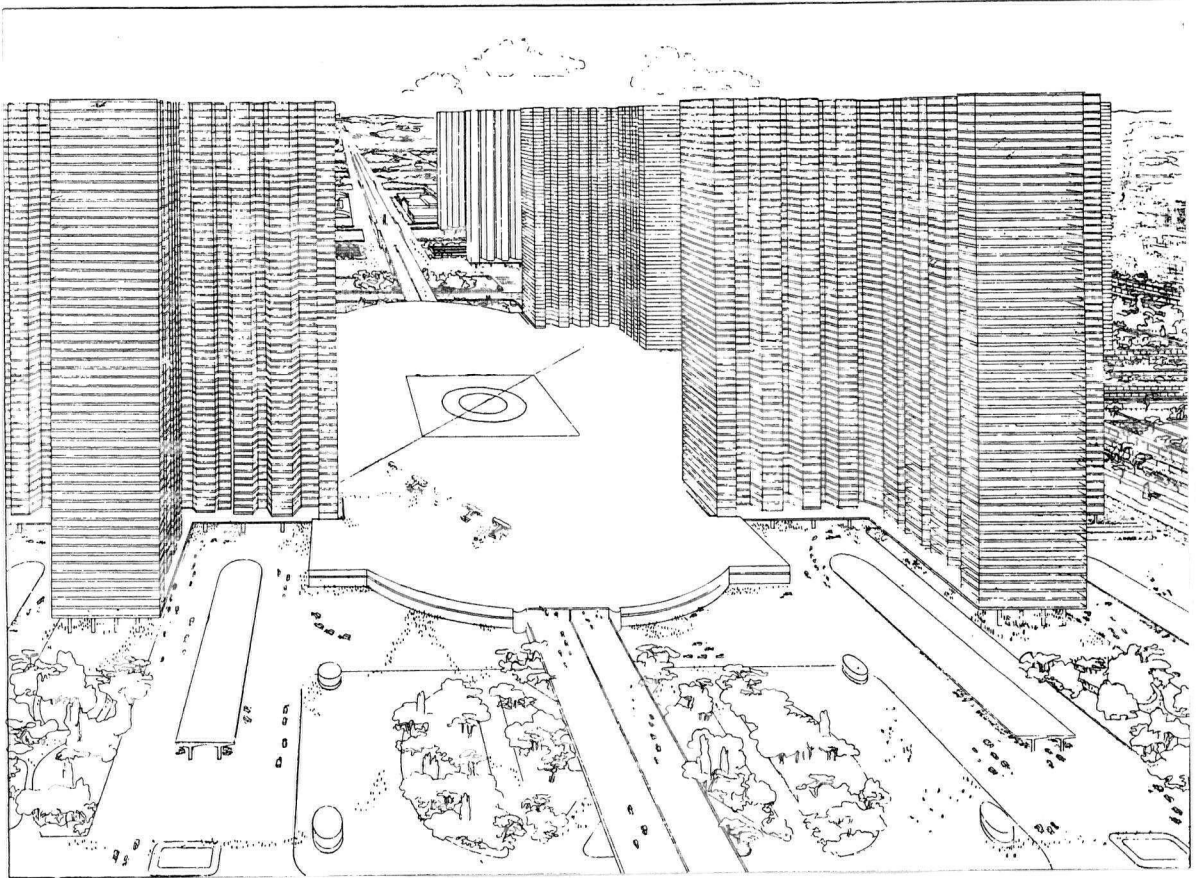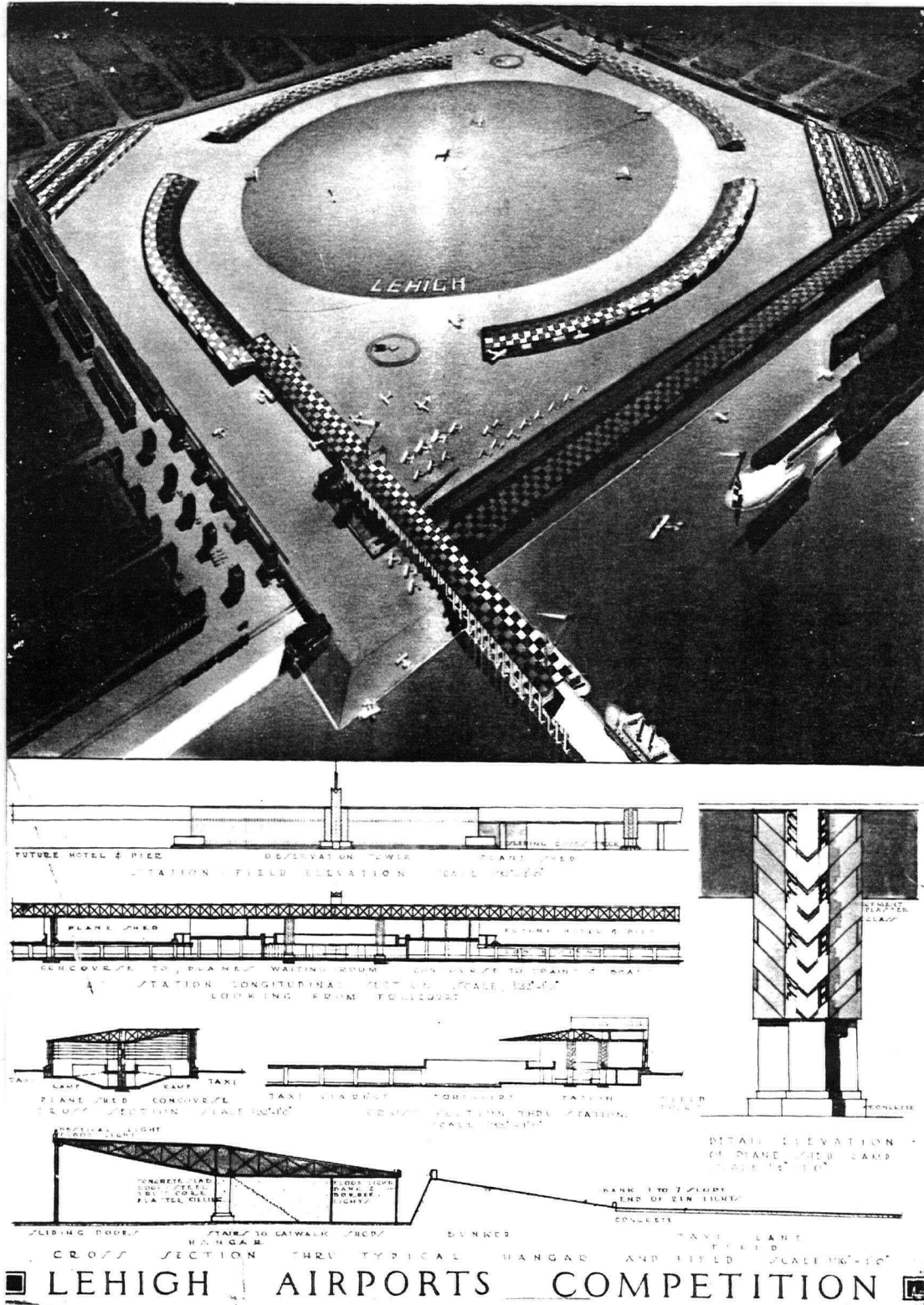
FIGURE 3   Richard Neutra's "Rush City Air Transfer", 1930 (Neutra, 100)

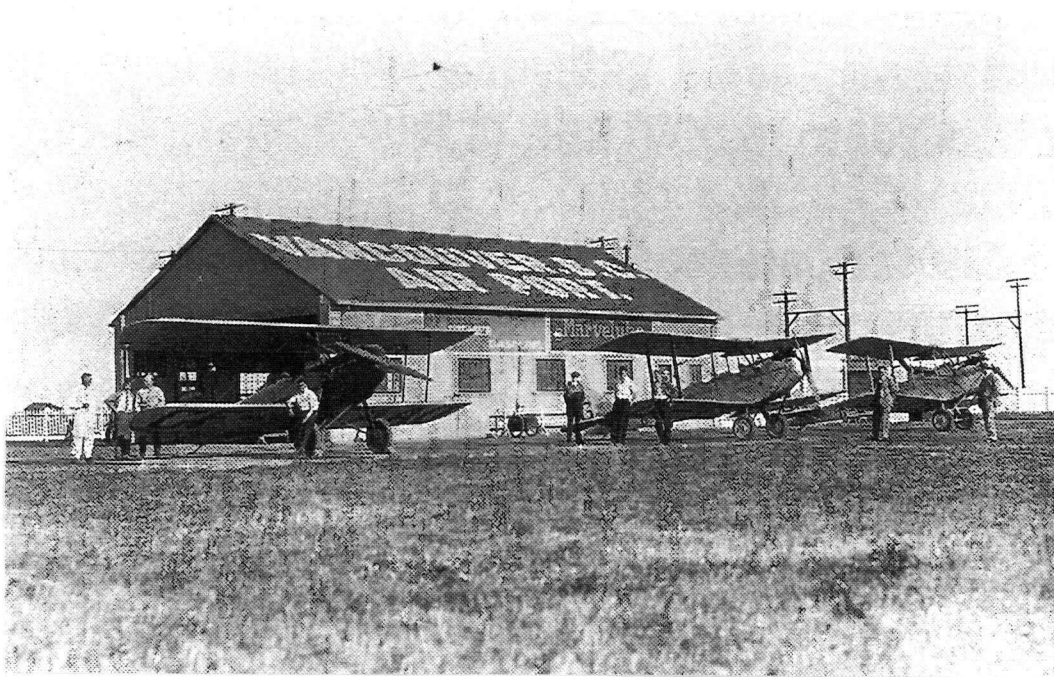CONCOURSE
PERSPECTIVE SECTION
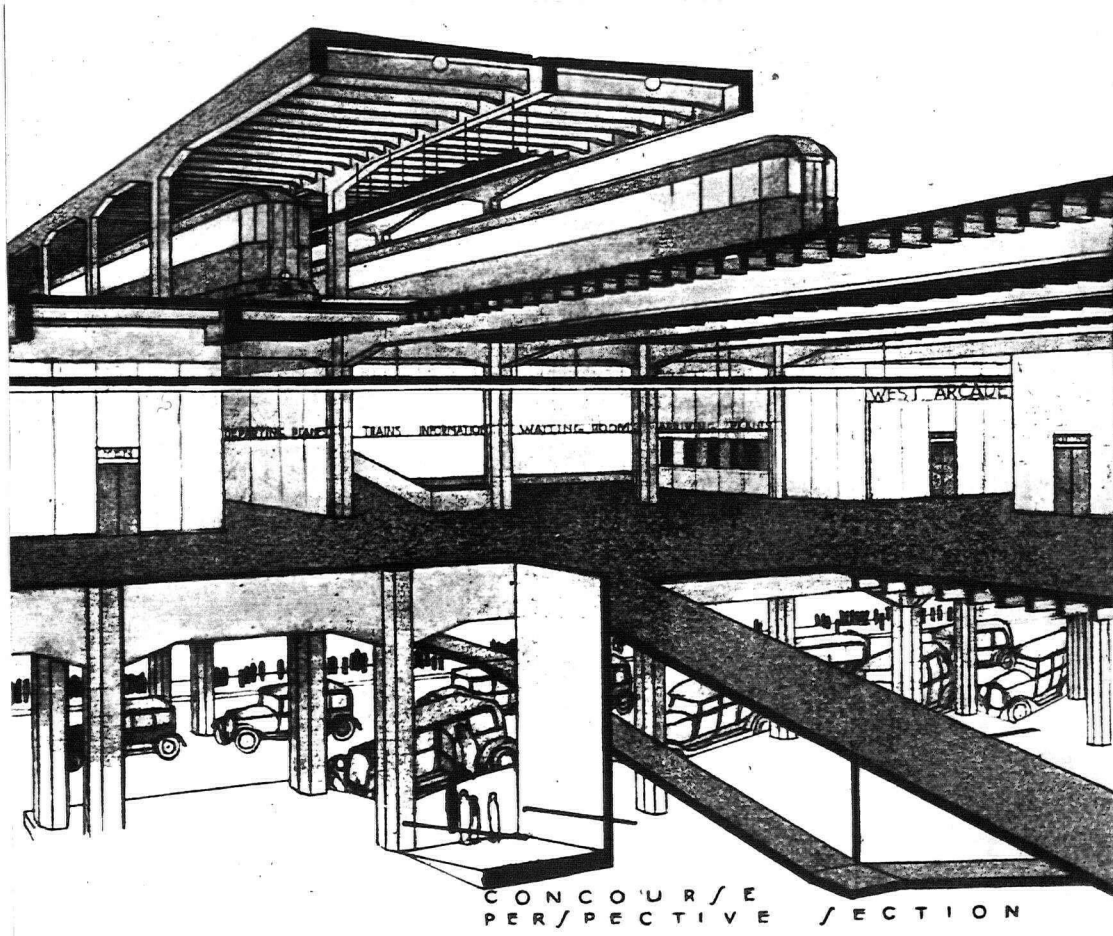
FIGURE 4 Frank Lloyd Wright's submission to the Lehigh Airport Design Competition, 1929 (Shubert, 288)

FIGURE 5   Hangar at Vancouver Municipal Airport, 1931 (McGrath, 242)

FIGURE 6   Administration Building at Vancouver Municipal Airport, 1931 (Pigott, 77)

FIGURE 7 Sheet Metal Workers' *Rocket*, 1937 at the Vancouver Municipal Airport (City of Vancouver Archives)

FIGURE 8   Musqueam men view Lockheed-14 on airfield at Vancouver Municipal
Airport, 1939 (National Archives of Canada)

FIGURE 9   Baggage Claim Lobby at Edmonton Airport, December 11, 1963
(National Archives of Canada)

FIGURE 10   Gift Shop and Concession at Edmonton Airport, December 11, 1963
(National Archives of Canada)

FIGURE 11   Customs Check out at Edmonton Airport, December 11, 1963
(National Archives of Canada)

FIGURE 12 Edmonton Airport, Exterior View, West Elevation, July 3, 1963
(National Archives of Canada)

FIGURE 13 Waiting Lounge, Dorval Airport, November 2, 1960
(National Archives of Canada)

FIGURE 14 International Exit Lobby, Dorval Airport, November 2, 1960
(National Archives of Canada)

FIGURE 15 Baggage Claim, Dorval Airport, November 2, 1960
(National Archives of Canada)

FIGRUE 16   Dorval Airport, Exterior view from Northwest, February 2, 1959
(National Archives of Canada)

FIGURE 17   Kenneth Lochhead's Mural at Gander International Airport, October 1958
(National Archives of Canada)

FIGURE 18 Postcard of sculpture foregrounding government trout hatchery at
Wardner, B.C. (White, 25)

FIGURE 19 Vancouver International Airport, post card image circa 1968
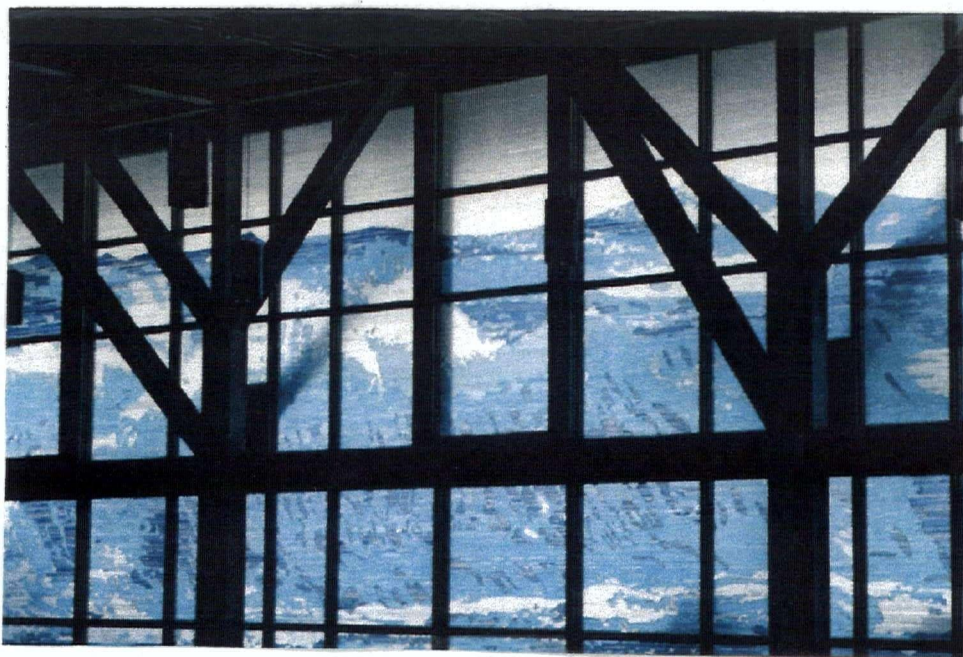(White, 88)

FIGURE 20 Robert Murray's *Cumbria*, (1966), University of British Columbia, 1997
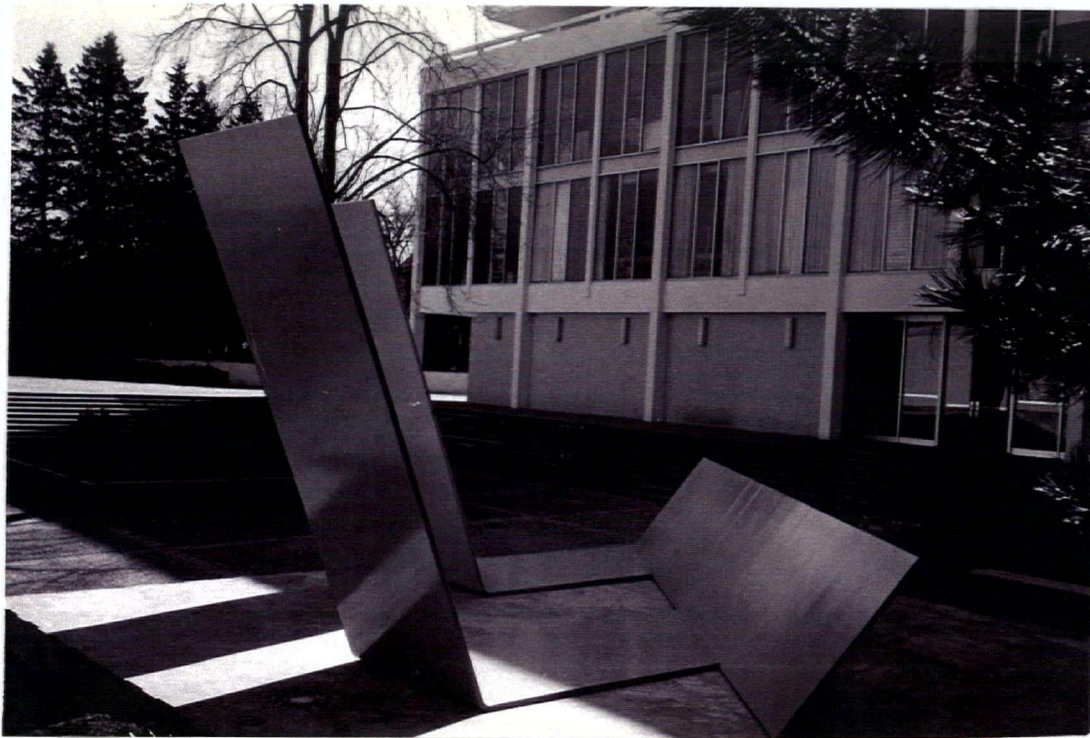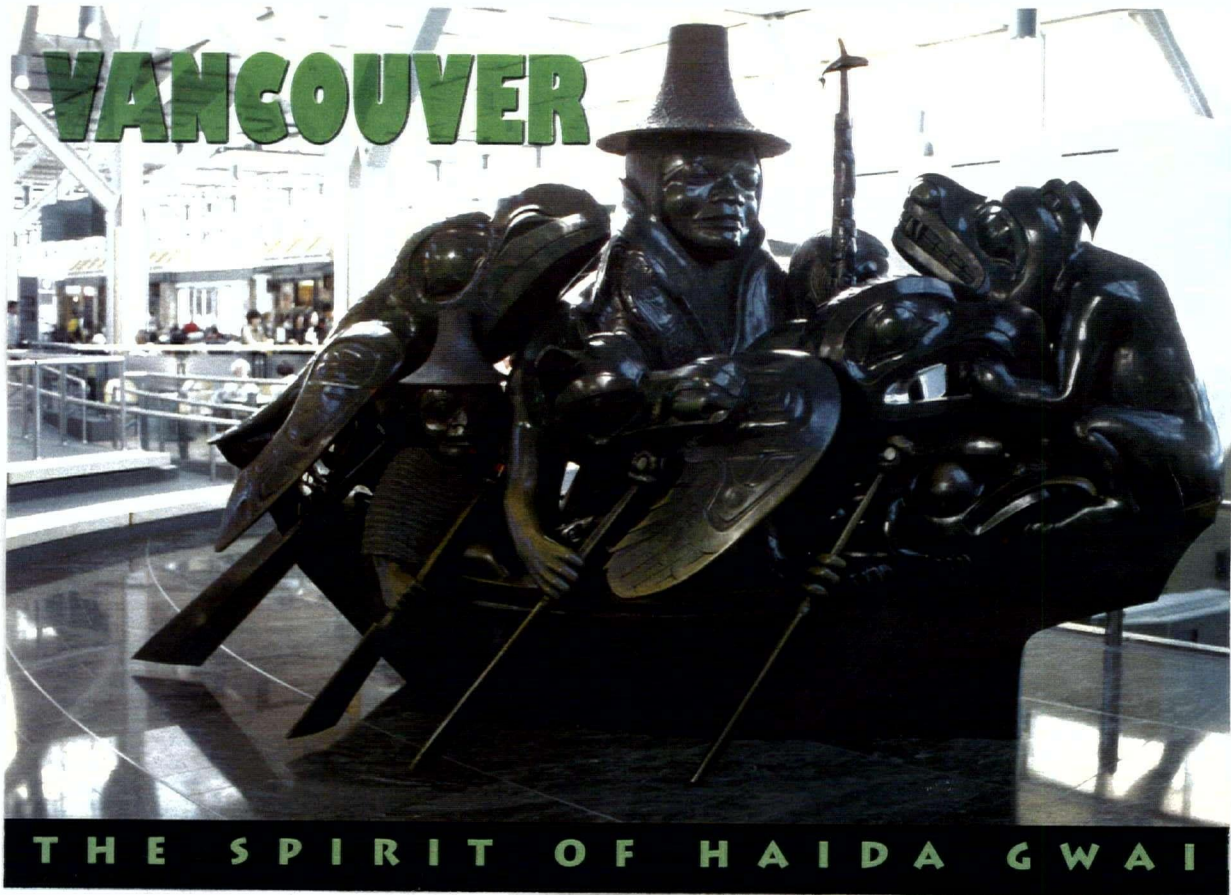

FIGURE 21 Lutz Haufschild's *Wave Wall* (1995), Vancouver International Airport, International terminal (2001)

FIGURE 22   Bill Reid's Spirit of Haida Gwaii, Jade Canoe (1994), Vancouver
International Airport, International terminal, 2001

FIGURE 23   Close up of "log-jam" carpet pattern, corridor connecting Domestic and
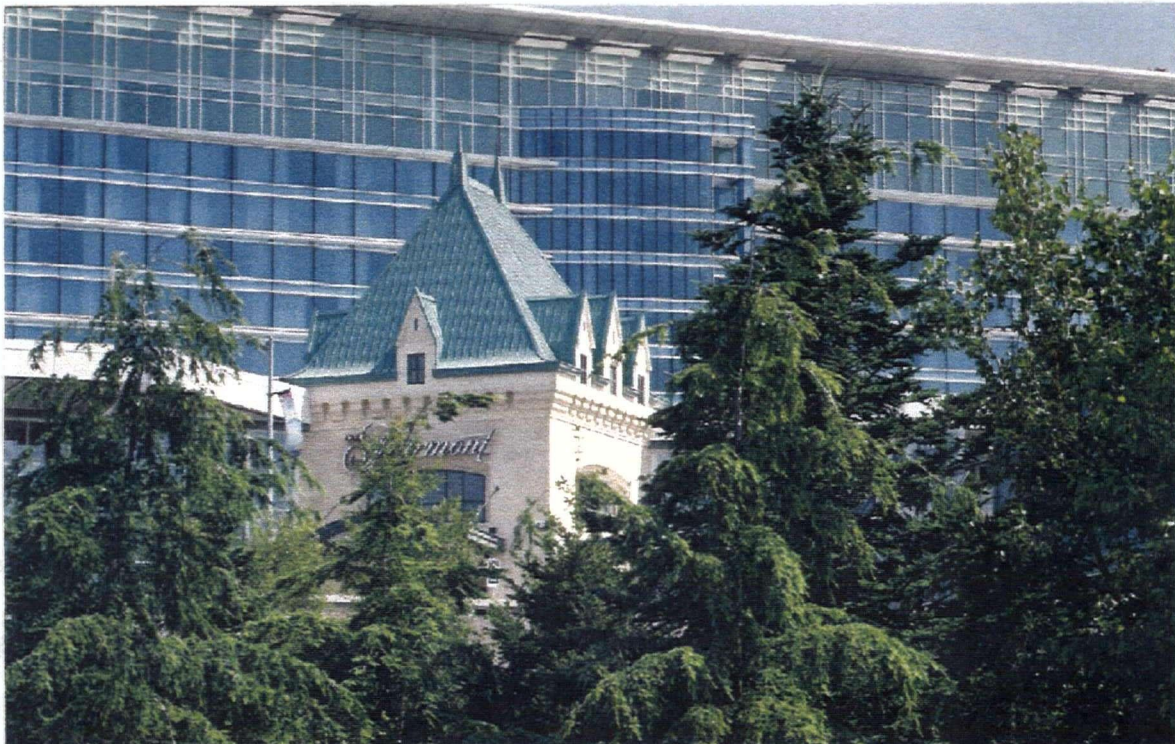International terminals, 2001

FIGURE 24 Bridge Medley above "Pacific Market", Vancouver International Airport, International terminal, 2001

FIGURE 25 Fairmont Hotel's chateau entrance, 2001

FIGURE 26   The Pacific Passage, Vancouver International Airport, U.S. Arrivals,
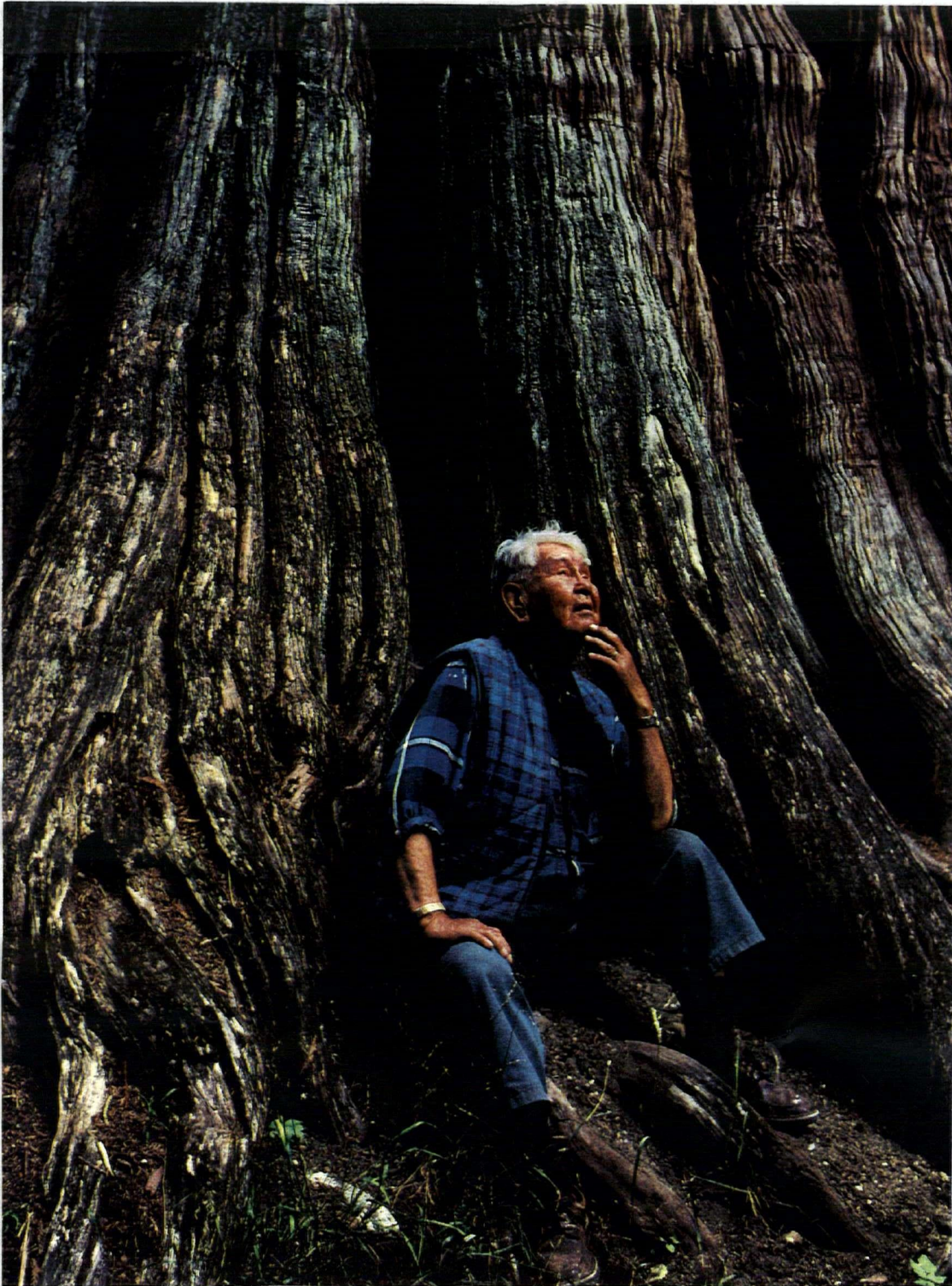photograph by R. Melnychuk, 2001

FIGRUE 27   Display located in front of exit to parking garages on Domestic terminal
level, 2001

FIGURE 28 Chief Ed Sparrow as he appeared in *National Geographic* magazine in 1992 (Ward, 101)

The "Asian invasion" is most visible in neighborhoods where modest homes are razed to make way for "monster houses" (below)—the million-dollar mansions favored by some immigrants. Recent demand has nearly doubled home prices and sent taxes through the roof.

Rod Hourston (left) gets along fine with his new neighbors, though they live half the year in Taiwan. "I kind of miss the old neighborhood, kids running back and forth," he says.

"I miss it too," says his son Greg, an airline agent. "No way could I afford a house like the one I grew up in."

FIGURE 30   Vancouver International Airport, Exterior View, July 2001