While architects and planners often design today’s international airport buildings as global hubs with few or no signifiers that point to their region, they sometimes design them to convey themes of place. At Jakarta’s Soekarno-Hatta International Airport, for instance, Paul Andreu modelled the terminal’s structures after local building types. At Vancouver’s International Airport (YVR), the Vancouver International Airport Authority (VIAA) designed the terminal’s interiors such that they evoke a “sense of place” associated with coastal British Columbia. Its terminals contain naturalistic settings inspired by the region’s environment as well as a vast number of Northwest Coast First Nations artworks. YVR’s International Terminal, which opened in 1996, was the first structure at the airport designed in this manner. Shortly thereafter, the VIAA redesigned the Domestic Terminal in a similar fashion. In this paper, I concentrate on two artwork installations the VIAA commissioned while it was planning the International Terminal. This includes YVR’s flagship artwork, Bill Reid’s The Spirit of Haida Gwaii: The Jade Canoe, which the VIAA purchased in 1993, and the Musqueam Welcome Area, an installation designed in consultation with the Musqueam people—the owners of the unceded territory YVR is situated upon (figs. 1, 2, 3). The latter consists of artworks by Susan A. Point, Krista Point, Robyn Sparrow, Debra Sparrow, Gina Grant, and Helen Callbreath. I illustrate how these artworks are significant in terms of the terminal’s architectural design, since the architects, Waisman Dewar Grout Carter Inc., shaped the
building’s interior based on how these creations would be installed in the space. I concentrate on where they are positioned in the International Terminal, and I consider how their symbolic content parallels the type of political space in which they are located. Reid’s The Jade Canoe is in a publicly accessible area on the landside near the food court. The Musqueam Welcome Area is in the post-security airside in a passageway through which arriving passengers must walk before entering the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) screening area. I argue that the Musqueam Welcome Area, which points to the contested nature of the land that the airport occupies, is situated in a quasi-stateless space and that it contrasts with Reid’s The Jade Canoe, which is symbolic of the Canadian state and situated in a space governed by Canadian federal laws.

THOMPSON, BERWICK AND PRATT’S 1968 TERMINAL AND THE VIAA’S ACQUISITION OF THE AIRPORT

Before YVR opened its International Terminal in 1996, domestic and international passengers departed from and arrived in the same terminal. This earlier steel and reinforced concrete structure, which is now the Domestic Terminal, opened in 1968.¹ Thompson, Berwick and Pratt, a local architectural firm, designed the terminal, and it cost 32 million dollars to build.² It was one of the last air terminals that the Department of Transport redeveloped during the 1950s and 1960s. In the decade prior, the federal department built new terminals in Gander, Halifax, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Winnipeg, and Edmonton, and, like Vancouver’s terminal, these buildings were modernist designs.² In some of these terminals, the Department of Transportation installed abstract artworks, whose themes, in certain cases, derived from the Canadian landscape. For Vancouver’s Airport, the Department of Transport purchased Robert Murray’s Cumbria in 1969 and placed it in the meridian on the roadway leading to the airport.³ This yellow-painted steel sculpture, which Murray completed in 1966, has three large angled planes projecting upward from its base, likened in a review published in Artforum in 1967 to a jet aircraft about to take off.³ Indeed, with its angled wings, this abstract modernist sculpture conveys a theme of flight and is a representation of movement that passengers could see as they arrived along the roadway.
Thompson, Berwick and Pratt’s terminal, which was originally planned for a capacity of 3.5 million passengers per year, was renovated and expanded a number of times to accommodate growing passenger traffic. This ever-increasing demand spurred the construction of the International Terminal, a 116,000-square-metre expansion that cost 250 million dollars. The VIAA, a non-profit private organization, administered the building’s development. It acquired the airport in 1992, when Transport Canada transferred its control of Vancouver’s, Calgary’s, Edmonton’s, and Montreal’s airports to local privately managed groups. Transport Canada did not sell the airports to the local authorities; rather, they were each handed a sixty-year lease. This shift toward airport privatization was part of a larger global trend that began during the 1980s. The British government, for instance, privatized the British Airport Authority by signing the Airports Act in 1986.

Shortly after acquiring Vancouver’s airport, the VIAA started developing the new International Terminal as well as a new runway and a new control tower. Upon completion, the VIAA set out to renovate the Domestic Terminal, with renovations completed in 1998 and 1999. It upgraded the building again in 2002 and expanded it by 15,000 square metres in 2009. Consequently, the Domestic Terminal looks drastically different today from when it first opened; the smokestacks located outside are one of the few visible remnants of the original design.

The VIAA removed Murray’s Cumbria in 1993 since the abstract sculpture did not align with the types of artwork it was planning to install at the airport. During the same year, it purchased Reid’s The Jade Canoe for three million Canadian dollars. The VIAA believed that Northwest Coast First Nations artworks would reinforce the International Terminal’s “nature” theme. This was part of “The North Star” strategic plan that the VIAA launched in 1993. This plan aimed to “capitaliz[e] on the tourism appeal of SuperNatural British Columbia” in order to establish YVR “as a major international and domestic destination” and as “a premier intercontinental and North American gateway.” The VIAA also started publishing SkyTalk in 1993. Its bi-monthly issues contain the VIAA’s reports on current renovations and upcoming developments, changes to retail operations, strategies for attracting more airlines and more passenger traffic, and updates by the organization’s president and chief executive officer. SkyTalk also printed Frank O’Neill’s accounts of the terminal’s artworks; they explain their intended meaning, why the VIAA chose these works, and why they were installed in specific locations in the terminal. O’Neill was chairman of the VIAA’s thematics committee during the International Terminal’s development phase and was in charge of commissioning YVR’s artworks and determining their placement. My analysis of YVR’s design is in part based on the information in these issues.

YVR’S INTERNATIONAL TERMINAL: ARCHITECTURE AND ARTWORKS

The VIAA hired the Vancouver-based architectural firm Waisman Dewar Grout Carter Inc. to design its International Terminal in 1993 (fig. 4). It met the VIAA’s objectives by designing an interior space inspired by British Columbia’s coastal environment.
Menno Hubregtse  > ANALYSIS | ANALYSE

architect in charge of the terminal’s interior design, noted that “the materials are green and blue, very natural, reflecting the water and the foliage that we have around here.”25 His firm also included ample amounts of wood, a staple of the province’s resource-based economy, as well as rock facing and ceramic tiles. Grout designed the restaurant and retail spaces such that they resemble popular tourist destinations within the region: Steveston Waterfront, Granville Island, and Whistler Village. As much as the terminal employs materials, artworks, and architectural façades to evoke YVR’s location in coastal British Columbia, it is not a “continuous interior” where passengers are only cued to the world outside of the terminal via a pastiche of things putatively quintessential to the region.26 Rather, the terminal is encased in glass and incorporates elevated walkways that allow passengers to look out toward the impressive coastal mountain landscape. These sceneries, however, are primarily visible in the post-security area of the terminal (fig. 5). The exterior glazing on the pre-security side facing the access road and parking garage is opaque on the lower half of the wall, except for the glass sliding doors and Lutz Haufschild’s The Great Wave mural (fig. 6). Light streams into this side of the terminal through the upper panels on the exterior glass façade and through the skylights above the steel columns. During the planning phase, the VIAA championed this design aspect and the vistas it offered, and they noted how it would improve the experience of international travellers arriving in Vancouver.27 In place of the long underground tunnel accessing the border screening area in the old terminal, arriving passengers now walk along elevated passageways enjoying views of the surrounding landscape, before descending to the border screening zone and baggage claim area.28 Like the numerous First Nations artworks installed in the terminal, this view of a distinctive landscape also calls to mind that the passenger has arrived at a specific place—the Pacific Northwest Coast.

Similarly, the terminal’s design includes other elevated walkways and balconies that afford views onto interior spaces below. For instance, standing behind Reid’s The Jade Canoe one can look down from the balcony to the “meeters and greeters” who await arriving travellers (fig. 4). Glass-enveloped passageways are suspended in the concourse, and their structural supports are clearly visible. The steel columns and struts supporting the ceiling are painted white and are arranged in rows running the length of the terminal (fig. 1). The promotional material distributed at the terminal’s opening emphasized both their functional and aesthetic value:

Steel columns that resemble trees in a forest will gracefully support the roof and floors. Branch-like column struts will reduce roof beam spans, allowing widely-spaced columns. The structure will efficiently resist the forces of man and nature while allowing passengers to see through the building to the distant landscape.29

However, the Vancouver Sun’s Pete McMartin commented that the columns look simply like steel columns.30 The terminal’s carpeting is another architectural element supposed to signify an aspect of British Columbia’s topography but whose intended meaning has likely been
recognized by none but few of the millions of passengers that have transited through the International Terminal since its opening (fig. 5). The short blue stripes scattered over a dark green background are apparently meant to signify log jams in the Fraser River.31

Waisman Dewar Grout Carter Inc. also designed the building’s interior based on how the VIAA-commissioned artworks would be positioned in the space. The VIAA wanted Reid’s The Jade Canoe, its most expensive artwork, located where it would be easily seen and could act as a landmark and a meeting point.32 Throughout the design process, the VIAA and the architects deliberated on where they would place this 6.05-metre-long, 3.48-metre-wide, and 3.89-metre-high bronze cast. In a watercolour from 1994, Rudy Kovach depicted The Jade Canoe as a central focal point in the airside of the terminal (fig. 7).33 It appears as though it is in the orchestra of a theatre-like space. A semi-circular arrangement of steps surrounding the monumental work leads upward to a food court area, and the sculpture is situated in front of a floor-to-ceiling glass wall that offers views of the coastal mountains. The VIAA ultimately decided to place the sculpture in the landside of the terminal on the departures level, since this is a publicly accessible area and more people can see the work. The final design for the interior space surrounding Reid’s sculpture is similar to Kovach’s illustration from 1994. The space surrounding the work is designed as a place where people can sit before passing through security or while waiting for friends and family to arrive (figs. 1, 6). The Jade Canoe is an eye-catching object in the terminal space due to its shimmering reflective surface, and it appears to operate as an effective landmark. During my visits to the terminal, I observed that there is almost always someone engaging with the work; many of whom are passersby who stop to photograph, or be photographed with the work.

In both the 1994 sketch and the completed design, The Jade Canoe is adjacent to commercial spaces. It is currently between a Starbucks Coffee stand and a gift shop. The food court is just a few metres to the north. The VIAA deliberately made this choice since they believe that Northwest Coast First Nations artworks such as this will encourage passengers to spend.34 A few days before the International Terminal opened in May 1996, O’Neill told the Vancouver Sun that the five million dollars spent on installing artworks will pay off since
these sculptures will brighten passengers’ moods, and they will therefore spend more money in the airport’s shops and restaurants. He also argued that international air travellers will choose to fly to YVR because of its “authentic sense of place,” instead of its main competitor, SeaTac (located between Seattle and Tacoma).

Like most of the artworks installed at YVR, it is accompanied by an informational panel with Reid’s statement on the meaning of the work. He explains that The Spirit of Haida Gwaii is a Haida dugout canoe with thirteen passengers on board who are based on figures of that culture’s mythology. They include the Mouse Woman, the Beaver, the Dogfish Woman, the Raven, the Wolf, the Frog, the Eagle, the Ancient Reluctant Conscript, and the Bear with his human wife and their twin cubs. Reid states that “the tall figure in the middle of it all . . . may or may not be the Spirit of the Haida Gwaii.” The artist, however, did not create this artwork specifically for Vancouver’s airport. The first cast of this sculpture, The Black Canoe, was commissioned for the Canadian Embassy in Washington, DC. In 1985, the building’s architect, Arthur Erickson, asked Reid to create a work for the embassy’s outdoor courtyard. It was installed in 1991. The VIAA commissioned the second cast two years later. While the first cast is painted in a black patina, the second is coated in a jade-green patina. O’Neill is partly responsible for The Jade Canoe’s colour. Initially, Reid wanted the second cast to have a brown patina. O’Neill, however, advised against this choice when he saw a sample of the hue at the foundry. This prompted Reid to choose the green colour of a gemstone mined in British Columbia.

It is noteworthy that the airport’s most expensive work is also emblazoned on a currency note that has been widely used at YVR after it was brought into circulation in 2004. The green Canadian twenty-dollar note from the Canadian Journey series is illustrated with an etching of Reid’s The Spirit of Haida Gwaii. Bills of this denomination are the most frequently distributed from Canadian automated teller machines, including those at YVR, which are often the first point of contact with Canadian currency for international passengers arriving at the airport. Some of these passengers, along with countless numbers of other passengers and visitors to YVR, have likely paid for a coffee or a snack from the Starbucks Coffee stand next to Reid’s sculpture with a twenty-dollar bill depicting this iconic artwork. However, the number of passengers paying with this bill has been diminishing since November 2012, when the Bank of Canada introduced a redesigned polymer twenty-dollar note which does not feature Reid’s artwork. While the reproduction of The Spirit of Haida Gwaii on a currency note is not related to the sculpture’s role at YVR, this coupling of an airport artwork and money reflects the commercial aspect of air terminal design. Planners design terminals such that passengers move past consumption spaces, and therefore install spectacular elements to entice them to spend.

Reid’s sculpture is not the only First Nations artwork depicted in Kovach’s sketches of the terminal’s interior from 1994. Susan A. Point’s Flight (Spindle Whorl) appears in two illustrations of a set of escalators and stairs leading from level four to the CBSA screening area on level three (fig. 8). All travellers arriving on flights originating outside of Canada must walk through this passageway, which the VIAA envisioned as a welcoming area that exhibits the artworks of the Musqueam people, whose traditional lands include the unceded territory occupied by YVR. The VIAA consulted with the Musqueam Nation to determine the installation’s general layout and which artworks would be appropriate for the airport, as they both want passengers to be aware that they are arriving in a territory where the Musqueam have lived for thousands of years. In Kovach’s designs, Point’s Flight (Spindle Whorl) hangs on the wall adjacent to the stairway’s intermediate landing. The artwork is an enlarged version of a tool that is typically 15 centimetres wide. Unlike the traditional spindle whorls that the Musqueam used to spin yarn, Point’s sculpture does
not include the shaft fixed to the centre of the disc. Like Kovach’s rendering of The Jade Canoe and its surrounding interior, Flight (Spindle Whorl) is depicted as the central focal point in the space. In terms of the two sketches’ compositions, the staircase and escalators that lead from the landing to the space below draw one’s eyes toward Point’s work. Kovach included several passengers in his illustrations. While most appear to be moving through the passageway, some are engaging with Point’s work and others have stopped to look at the water cascading in the spaces between the stairs and the two escalators heading to the level below. The VIAA and the Musqueam Nation intended this rushing water to refer to the Fraser River Delta, the traditional fishing and hunting grounds of the Musqueam people.

The realized design is similar to Kovach’s sketches from 1994 (figs. 2, 3). Passengers walk past Flight (Spindle Whorl) on the staircase’s landing. This red cedar disc, 4.8 metres in diameter, hangs in front of a granite wall with water cascading down its face, and it occupies a central focal point for those looking back at the stairway from the border screening area (figs. 3, 9). The water that rushes down the granite wall is directed into two channels that flow alongside two escalators flanking a central stairway (fig. 3). As passengers head down this lower set of escalators and stairs, they are faced with Susan A. Point’s Musqueam Welcome Figures (fig. 10). When the terminal first opened, the Musqueam Welcome Figures consisted of a male carved by Shane Pointe and a female carved by Susan A. Point.46 In May 1997, the VIAA replaced Shane Pointe’s male figure with a new male figure by Susan A. Point, which she carved out of the same red cedar log as her female figure.47 These two houseposts stand 5.2 metres high and are aligned with the two channels of water running on either side of the staircase.

Point intended Flight (Spindle Whorl) and her Musqueam Welcome Figures to depict two themes: flight and the Musqueam people.48 The enlarged spindle whorl has two eagles carved into its surface, and the men illustrated on the eagles’ wings have salmon ensigns adorned on their chests, which is meant to refer to one of the Musqueam’s primary food sources. The artist carved the male and female figures depicted on the front of each housepost in the
The female figure is draped in a ceremonial blanket, a valuable item made with yarn spun by a spindle whorl. The male figure has two eagles carved into his chest. On the back of each housepost, Point attached a circular glass panel with an etching of an eagle. Each panel is above a low-relief carving of the same man that Point carved onto the eagles’ wings on Flight (Spindle Whorl). Below this illustration is another low-relief carving. It is a geometric abstraction of two flying geese.

The VIAA and the Musqueam Nation also commissioned four tapestries which now hang from the ceiling beside the two escalators in the Musqueam Welcome Area (fig. 2). Krista Point’s, Robyn Sparrow’s, Debra Sparrow’s, and Gina Grant and Helen Callbreath’s weavings are examples of the types of blankets that the Musqueam used in religious ceremonies. The artists followed traditional weaving processes and replicated the type of imagery applied to these ceremonial blankets. They are made from white, yellow, red, and black hand-spun and hand-dyed yarn, and they depict abstract shapes including zig zags, diamonds, triangles, squares, and curved lines. Debra Sparrow’s tapestry features four-winged shapes that mirror the abstracted flying geese carved into the base of Susan A. Point’s Musqueam Welcome Figures.

As a passageway, the Musqueam Welcome Area achieves a functional aim of smooth circulation and successfully directs passengers toward the CBSA screening area. However, it is debatable whether it clearly conveys to passengers that they have entered Musqueam territory. Unlike the people depicted in Kovach’s watercolours, arriving passengers typically rush toward the screening area such that they spend less time waiting in the queue and are processed sooner. While Point’s Musqueam Welcome Figures appear monumental and certainly capture one’s attention, there are no informational panels adjacent to the work to explain their meaning. Point’s Flight (Spindle Whorl), which also lacks a nearby panel, is less noticeable for those passing by since the disc is viewed in profile as one walks down the stairs toward the landing. It does, however, occupy a central focal point for those looking back at the stairway from the border screening area.

Unlike Reid’s The Jade Canoe, the artworks in the Musqueam Welcome Area are site-specific pieces—the artists created these works based on where they were going to be placed. These artworks also meet the VIAA’s aims for the International Terminal’s interior design. Not only do they refer to the Musqueam Nation, but they also reinforce the desired “SuperNatural British Columbia” theme. The VIAA has deployed many other Northwest Coast First Nations artworks throughout the International Terminal since it opened in 1996. For instance, in 1998, it installed an additional set of welcome figures that greet passengers arriving on international and United States flights (figs. 4, 11). These figures, however, were not commissioned specifically for YVR. Nuu-chah-nulth artist Joe David carved the male and female figures for the British Columbia Pavilion at Expo ’86 and modelled them after...
traditional Clayoquot welcome figures. These two cedar statues stand in a publicly accessible area of the International Terminal’s arrivals level where “meeters and greeters” await arriving passengers, who enter this less restricted space through a secured exit that is a short distance from the Canada Customs screening zone in the baggage claim area. A metre-high steel-and-glass wall with a wooden railing partitions the route that arriving passengers must follow and the waiting area that contains the meeters and greeters. People waiting in this space can read on the informational panel installed next to the figures: “Carved in the Clayoquot tradition, figures such as these would be taken from storage and temporarily positioned, with arms raised, on the beach in front of the village, to welcome guests to the figures: “Carved in the Clayoquot tradition, figures such as these would be taken from storage and temporarily positioned, with arms raised, on the beach in front of the village, to welcome guests to special events.”

The VIAA expanded the International Terminal a few times since its opening. Some of these renovations include interior designs that incorporate Northwest Coast First Nations artworks and pseudo-naturalistic settings. For instance, in 2000, the VIAA opened seven new gates dedicated to flights departing to and arriving from the United States. Passengers deplaning at these gates walk along an “arrivals theatre” called “Pacific Passage,” which replicates an outdoor scene purportedly similar to the landscapes on Haida Gwaii. It includes a manufactured beachfront with a whaling canoe carved by Nuu-chah-nulth artist Tim Paul and a wharf that passengers can walk onto, as well as replicated sections of forest made with real timber and ornamented with shrubs and ferns. Connie Watts’s Hetux, a thunderbird, hangs from the ceiling above the passageway. In 2007, the VIAA expanded the International Terminal’s post-security area by 36,000 square metres. In the centre of the building, it added a creek lined with rocks, ferns, grasses, and weather-beaten logs. The tables and chairs for the food court flank this “supernatural” scene, and restaurants, cafes, and shops circle its periphery. A saltwater aquarium containing marine life indigenous to British Columbia’s coast is located at the end of the creek. Situated directly above the aquarium’s glass pane is Orca Chief and the Kelp Forest, an installation consisting of Haisla artist Lyle Wilson’s formline representation of the Orca Chief and John Nutter’s “forest” of etched glass panels.

The VIAA undeniably values Northwest Coast First Nations artworks for aesthetic and symbolic reasons, and their installation of the Musqueam Welcome Area is a sincere gesture that acknowledges the airport’s location on Musqueam land. Nevertheless, as previously noted, this intended meaning is not clearly elucidated for arriving passengers. While the signage accompanying YVR’s Indigenous artworks acknowledge their First Nations authorship and iterate that their ancestors have lived in British Columbia since time immemorial, they do not refer to the political aspects of First Nations land rights and unceded territory. Besides, the VIAA portrays Northwest Coast First Nations people as being “one with the land,” but they do not address contemporary concerns regarding stolen land and treaties. Furthermore, it chose First Nations artworks in a traditional style rather than more critical works by artists such as Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun, whose work addresses land claims, and Brian Junger, whose work critiques the commercialization of Indigenous art. The VIAA’s apolitical display of First Nations art certainly supports its larger aim to create a “comfortable” environment where passengers are encouraged to spend. Indeed, the VIAA has deployed Northwest Coast First Nations artworks for the airport’s commercial profits. However, O’Neill argues that these gains extend to First Nations artists in British Columbia since some passengers travelling through YVR are enticed to buy their artworks. While this claim is difficult to substantiate, the VIAA has tangibly supported the region’s First Nations artists through its YVR Art Foundation. This non-profit organization, established in 1993, provides scholarships, grants, and awards for First Nations artists from British Columbia and the Yukon. The Foundation exhibits some of these recipients’ works in display cases at YVR.

YVR’s Artworks and the Politics of the International Terminal’s Interior Spaces

The artworks described above are all situated within the International Terminal’s interior. While this interior space is homogenous in terms of its physical characteristics as a volume enclosed by the building’s envelope, it is a heterogeneous space in terms of the numerous governmentalities at work at YVR. The airport is situated on unceded Musqueam territory, as already noted. Although the Musqueam people are the rightful owners of this land, YVR is governed by the City of Richmond’s local laws, British Columbia’s provincial laws, and Canada’s federal laws. Part of YVR’s space also falls under the United States’ federal laws as passengers must pass through a United States border control checkpoint before entering the airside of the U.S. departures area. Additionally, the International Terminal’s post-security airside is a quasistateless space. I consider how the symbolic content of two of YVR’s permanent artwork installations reflect the type of political space they are situated in. The artworks in the Musqueam Welcome Area, which refer to the disputed land YVR is situated upon, are located in a “no man’s land” that precedes the passenger’s official entry into Canada. Reid’s The Jade
Canoe, on the other hand, is symbolic of the Canadian state since a cast of this sculpture has been installed outside of one of its embassies and it appears as an image on official Canadian currency; it is situated in the publicly accessible side of the terminal which is governed by local, provincial, and federal laws. Before I illustrate how the symbolic content of these artworks accords with the terminal’s disparate political spaces, I will discuss how the terminal’s post-security airside operates as a type of “no man’s land.”

The nebulousness of the law in the international terminal was brought to the world’s attention in 2013, when Edward Snowden avoided extradition to the U.S. by staying in Moscow’s Sheremetyevo International Airport. Russia’s president, Vladimir Putin, argued that his country could not extradite Snowden because he had not exited the airside onto Russian soil. This case illustrates how the post-security airside appears to be a “no man’s land.” This seemingly stateless zone is located before and is apart from the border security area. In these screening spaces, the state’s control over passengers is amplified; passengers can be detained and deported, and often they cannot dispute these decisions. This checkpoint can also be considered a “no man’s land,” particularly with respect to its military meaning. Cornelia Vismann describes how the “no man’s land” during WWI was a border not defined by a line but by a zone where combatting soldiers were unsure as to whether they were on “hostile ground.”

She notes that it “finds its legal equivalent” in Carl Schmitt’s state of exception, “where the enforcement of positive law is suspended.” As for Giorgio Agamben, he argues that George W. Bush’s administration enforced a similar state of exception when it enacted a “military order” on November 13, 2001, that allowed the U.S. to detain terrorists for indeterminate periods and deny them legal status. U.S. authorities have used the airport security zone to enforce this state of exception. Agents can intercept anyone deemed to be a threat and detain them without charges. Sometimes they are flagged for erroneous reasons. For instance, U.S. authorities detained Maher Arar, a Syrian-born Canadian, at JFK Airport in New York on September 26, 2002, based on wrong information. They confined him in this “no man’s land” before deporting him to Syria, where he was incarcerated for more than a year.

Curiously, the artworks installed in the arrivals area at YVR’s International Terminal speak to the passage from the “no man’s land” on the airside of the terminal to the state of Canada on the landside. At YVR, the Musqueam Welcome Area occupies a set of escalators and stairs that all international travellers arriving at YVR must pass through on their way to the CBSA screening area (figs. 2, 3, 9, 10). Let us recall that this installation is meant to signify that YVR is built on land where the Musqueam people used to live, hunt, and fish. The Musqueam Welcome Area’s location in the terminal, in the “no man’s land” situated between one’s arrival gate and the border screening area, is particularly notable considering that YVR occupies a space on unceded Musqueam territory. Its placement in the one zone of the terminal that in practice has shown to be a quasi-stateless space reflects the disputed nature of the Musqueam’s ownership of the land upon which the airport is situated. This correlation between the Musqueam Welcome Area and the contested nature of the space is even more strongly suggested when the artworks of this welcome area are contrasted with the pieces in the landside of the terminal. For instance, Reid’s The Jade Canoe, which is in the publicly accessible landside area, does not point to the Musqueam people and their territory, but to Haida Gwaii, which is over 700 kilometres away. This artwork is also symbolic of the Canadian state. The only other cast of this work, The Black Canoe, was installed in 1991 at the Canadian Embassy in Washington, DC, and an etching of this work appears on the Canadian twenty-dollar bill printed between 2004 and 2012. Although not as strong of a visual synecdoche for the Canadian state as Reid’s sculpture, David’s Welcome Figures also point to Canada and the Province of British Columbia. The Nuu-chah-nulth artist carved the male and female figures for the British Columbia Pavilion at Expo ’86, the world’s fair hosted in Vancouver that celebrated a theme of transportation. Like Reid’s The Jade Canoe, a Musqueam artist did not carve these cedar statues nor do they refer to the Musqueam people or their culture. Rather, they are modelled after the traditional welcome figures installed in Clayoquot Sound, a coastal region located 200 kilometres away on Vancouver Island.

David’s two figures, which welcome the passengers as they exit from the airside to the landside of the International Terminal’s arrivals area, are the first artworks that passengers encounter after they have officially entered Canada (fig. 4). Although the passenger’s entry into the state occurs in the CBSA screening zone and baggage claim area, the perception that one is actually in Vancouver and Canada occurs as one passes through the automatic door that separates the public greeting area from the passenger services area in the secure side of the terminal—David’s Welcome Figures are within the scope of the passenger’s view as they cross this boundary. This experience contrasts with how passengers move past the welcome figures in the Musqueam Welcome Area (figs. 3, 10). Passengers encounter these figures shortly after they
have disembarked from their plane and as they walk down the staircase toward the screening area. Even though passengers often devote a fair amount of time in the space where these sculptures are visible, most will spend little time looking at these welcome figures. Moreover, passengers who have filed into the queue waiting to be deemed admissible to enter Canada stand before the CBSA agents with their backs turned toward Point’s Musqueam Welcome Figures, a visual synecdoche for the rightful owners of the land YVR is situated upon.

CONCLUSION

YVR’s International Terminal is a significant example of a “glocal” air terminal design. Its Northwest Coast First Nations artworks assert a place-based identity in a transfer hub intended to operate on a global scale. The Viera carefully considered the location of these artworks in the interior based on what purpose they are intended to serve. Reid’s eye-catching sculpture, for instance, is meant to be a meeting point and is deliberately positioned near the International Terminal’s food court. The Musqueam Welcome Area, which is situated in a passageway that all arriving travellers must pass through, is intended to operate as a symbolic entranceway that announces the passengers’ entry into a territory traditionally owned by the Musqueam people. The VIAA and Waisman Dewar Grout Carter Inc. did not simply add these artworks to an existing interior design. Rather, they designed the interiors surrounding these works based on how the pieces were positioned in the space. The locations of the Musqueam Welcome Area and Reid’s The Jade Canoe, however, are curious because of the different types of political spaces that define the landside and the airside of the terminal. The Musqueam Welcome Area, which is situated in a “no man’s land” that precedes one’s official entry into Canada, points to the contested nature of the Musqueam’s unceded territory. Reid’s The Jade Canoe, which is situated in a space governed by local, provincial, and federal laws, is symbolic of the Canadian state. Furthermore, these installations are intriguing based on how passengers view these works. While the Musqueam Welcome Area is a symbolic representation and political statement which all arriving passengers will see, it is located where most passengers pass by and spend little time. Reid’s The Jade Canoe, on the other hand, is in a place where people are encouraged to wait and is surrounded by a theatre-like seating arrangement.

While both of these Northwest Coast First Nations artwork installations are intriguing in terms of their capacity to evoke a “sense of place” and to serve a functional purpose in the airport, their placement in two different political spaces in the terminal illustrates some of the complex aspects pertaining to how Canadian institutions use Indigenous artworks to convey themes of place, identity, nation, and heritage.

NOTES

1. This research was supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. I wish to thank Rhodri Windsor Liscombe, Charlotte Townsend-Gault, Sherry McKay, and the Journal’s reviewers for their suggestions and helpful remarks on various drafts of this essay.

2. London Heathrow Terminal 5 and Hong Kong International Airport are two examples of air terminals that are not designed with overt references to their region. This essay is based on my doctoral research which examined the architectural design of these terminals as well as Amsterdam Airport Schiphol and Vancouver’s YVR. Hubregtse, Menno, 2015, Aero-kinaethetics: Airport Aesthetics and the Regulation of Mobilities in the Terminal, Ph.D. dissertation in art history, Vancouver, The University of British Columbia.

3. In this essay, I refer to the Vancouver International Airport as “YVR” since it is the name the airport uses to identify itself on its website and in its marketing materials.

4. For a cursory overview of the First Nations artworks installed at YVR, see Laurence, Robin, 2015, A Sense of Place: Art at Vancouver International Airport, Vancouver, Figure 1 Publishing. Laurence’s book catalogues the art pieces installed in the airport and includes descriptions similar to those listed on the informational panels accompanying the artworks in the terminal. See also Sandra Alfoldy’s analysis of YVR’s Northwest Coast First Nations’ artworks: Alfoldy, Sandra, 2012, The Allied Arts: Architecture and Craft in Postwar Canada, Montreal, McGill-Queen’s University Press, p. 161-165.


6. In a promotional pamphlet titled “Into the Jet Age,” the Department of Transport declares that “[d]espite the terminal’s size, getting through it is fun.” Navigating the new terminal is described as a pleasurable experience because of its escalators and elevators and because way-finding is “easy for travellers of any language as pictures, instead of words, show the short route to services and airport fun spots.” Canada Department of Transport, 1968, “Into the Jet Age: Vancouver International Airport,” City of Vancouver Archives Pamphlet Collection, AM1519-PAM1968-133.


The VIAA followed a similar strategy while it was building YVR’s International Terminal. In 1994, it established a subsidiary, YVR Airport Services (YVRA). Three years later it won a contract to renovate Santiago International Airport in Chile. (SkyTalk, 1999, “Santiago International Airport: More Than a Passenger Gateway for YVRAS,” vol. 6, no. 4, p. 8.) Like YVR’s International Terminal, YVRA intended to design Santiago’s terminal with a “nature” theme inspired by the country’s volcanos and glaciers. YVRA, renamed Vantage Airport Group, has managed the operations and developments of 31 airports worldwide, including Fort St. John, Kamloops, Hamilton, Moncton, and New York’s LaGuardia, as well as airports in the Bahamas, Jamaica, and Cyprus. See Vantage Airport Group, Fact Sheet, [http://www.vantageairportgroup.com/media/factsheet/], accessed April 19, 2017.


17. Sadly, Cumbría was damaged when it was removed from the meridian. (Gram, Karen, 1994, “Artist Angry at Airport’s Treatment of His Sculpture,” Vancouver Sun, April 4, p. B2.) In 1997, the restored sculpture was installed outside the Lasserre building at Vancouver’s University of British Columbia.


21. The Vancouver Public Library has retained copies of SkyTalk starting with its first issue, July 1993.

22. O’Neill was also the VIAA’s senior vice-president from 1992 to 1994 and the airport’s general manager from 1987 to 1994.


26. Mark Pimlott argues that airports such as Schiphol are a “continuous interior”; although there are views out to the aprons and the aircraft outside, the spectacular aspect of the terminal is directed inward to the numerous advertisements and shopping opportunities. Pimlott, Mark, 2008-2009, “The Continuous Interior: Infrastructure for Publicity and Control,” Harvard Design Magazine, no. 29, p. 77-79.


33. Waismann Dewar Groutx Carter Inc. hired Rudy Kovach, a partner with the interior design firm Hopping Kovach Grinnell, to sketch the terminal’s interior during the planning phase. Grout, Clive, 2017, e-mail messages to author, April 18 and May 12. The sketch of Reid’s Jade Canoe appears in SkyTalk, 1994, special insert; and Odam : B1.


36. For a more detailed consideration of why planners design terminals with themes of place and why they believe that these


42. These images appear in SkyTalk, 1994, special insert; and Day : 9.


44. See the discussions of this consultation process by the following authors: Leddy, Shannon, 1997, Tourists, Art and Airports: the Vancouver International Airport as a Site of Cultural Negotiation, M.A. thesis in art history, Vancouver, The University of British Columbia, p. 30-40; Fairchild, Alexa, 2001, Canada Customs, Each-you-eyh-ul Siem (?): Sights/Sites of Meaning in Musqueam Weaving, M.A. thesis in fine arts, Vancouver, The University of British Columbia, p. 36-41.


47. The VIAA moved Shane Pointe’s male figure to the Domestic Terminal and installed it alongside a female figure carved by Pointe.

48. Laurence : 19-29; YVR, Musqueam Welcome Area.

49. There are small informational panels at the top of the stairs leading into this space that provide a brief overview of the Musqueam Welcome Area. These signs, however, are easy to miss since they are not placed next to the installations.

50. While most of the artworks at YVR are by Northwest Coast First Nations artists, there are a few pieces by non-First Nations artists such as Patrick Amiot and Brigitte Laurent’s Flying Traveller. The VIAA placed this acrylic-painted fiberglass sculpture, which depicts a man in full stride with two suitcases in hand and his hat blown off his head, in the International Terminal in 1996. (O’Neill, Frank, 1997, “Where It’s Art,” SkyTalk, vol. 4, no. 3, p. 5.) O’Neill asked the duo to create a sculpture that had either a forestry or fisheries theme. Instead of making an artwork depicting one of British Columbia’s resource industries, the duo sculpted and painted a frazzled Caucasian man running to a departure gate. Even though this work does not convey the VIAA’s desired “nature” theme, O’Neill conceded that the Flying Traveller is fitting for an airport, and it was installed shortly past the security screening zone in the departures area. It has since been moved to the post-security area in the Domestic Terminal.


54. The nature theme also extended to the design of the light fixtures installed in this expansion; their shape and scattered arrangement is intended to allude to the log jams found in many of British Columbia’s rivers. Berg, Larry, 2007, “President’s Corner: Land, Sea and Sky – A Natural Fit for YVR,” SkyTalk, vol. 14, no. 10, p. 3.


64. See also Leddy’s analysis of Reid’s The Jade Canoe as a Haida artwork in a building on Musqueam land (Leddy : 33-37).