

Renovation of a Terminal, Keyed to San Francisco

A City and Its Culture, Reflected in an Airport Design

By TODD WOODY

SAN FRANCISCO — If the prospect of flying holds all the appeal of a cross-country bus trip, the \$6,500, lipstick-red leather Egg chairs at San Francisco International Airport's Terminal 2 are intended to return some long-lost glamour to air travel.

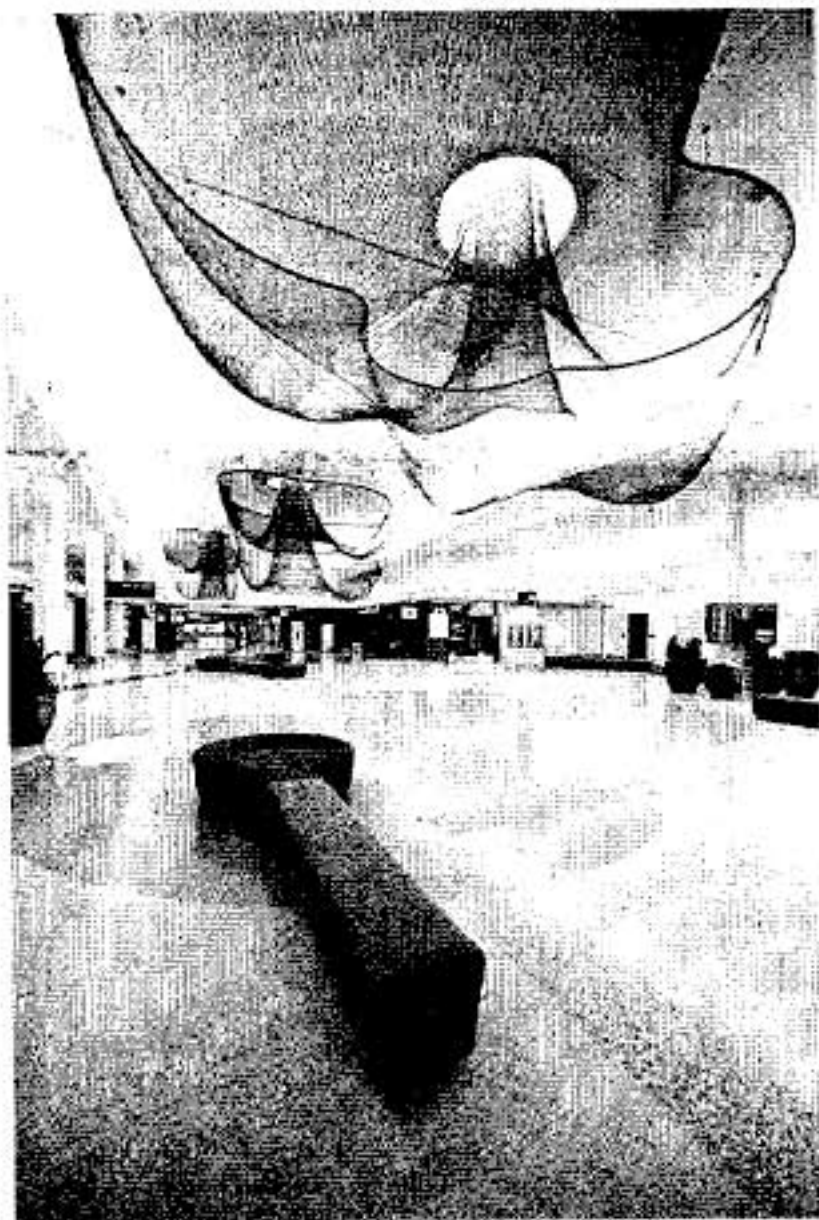
More Standard Hotel than standard airport gateway, T2, as it is known here, is one of the few terminals renovated top to bottom since the 9/11 terrorist attacks and represents an ambitious attempt by the airport and airlines to take both stress and carbon out of air travel. The \$383 million renovation gutted a drab 1950s-era building that last served as the international terminal before being shuttered more than a decade ago. Even compared with more contemporary terminals at San Francisco International, T2 represents a new approach to airport design. It opens on Thursday.

"It's about the intersection between passenger delight and bringing back the joy of flying with the high-performance building aspects," said Melissa Mizell, a senior associate with Gensler, the San Francisco firm that designed the renovation. "That really guided a lot of our decisions, even with sustainability."

The words delight, joy and flying do not usually appear in the same sentence. But airport officials, airlines and architects said that they put as much emphasis on redefining the travel experience as on lessening its environmental impact.

"We wanted this to feel like a San Francisco terminal and not a terminal anywhere else in the world," Raymond Quesada, an airport project manager, said as he stood in the soaring, light- and art-filled ticket lobby shared by Virgin America and American Airlines, the terminal's two tenants.

Those San Francisco values include a city mandate to achieve at least LEED Silver status for the renovation. LEED — Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design — is a rating system ad-



After a security check, travelers enter an art-adorned "recompose" area with ottomans, not hard benches.

from the ceiling. The system, called displacement ventilation, cuts energy use by 20 percent because the air does not need to be cooled as much since it displaces the rising warmer air, Mr. Quesada said.

Reclaimed water is pumped into the restrooms, reducing water consumption by 40 percent. The abundant natural light through walls of windows makes

Bringing back the joy of flying, and helping the environment, too.

fashion and flow, all of which reflect the esthetic of Virgin America, which has its headquarters in San Francisco.

The neon mood lighting found on Virgin planes is mirrored in the lobbylike ticketing area, where pods of those high-backed, Danish-designed Egg chairs are clustered around sculptures and paintings by local artists.

The security checkpoint has six lanes to expedite screening and passengers exit into an airy "recompose area" that features colorful ottomans, installed with the Transportation Security Administration dispensation in place of the government's usual utilitarian benches.

That area opens into a food hall modeled after the one in San Francisco's Ferry Building and offers some of the same upscale Bay Area restaurants, including Cowgirl Creamery, Acme Bread, Napa Farms Market and Lark Creek Grill. Travelers hungering for a Burger King or Dunkin' Donuts are out of luck.

"The whole idea is that you feel like you're in San Francisco, with an emphasis on local, organic produce," Mr. Quesada said.

Beyond the food hall are the gates, arrayed in two wings. "The concept was to make this area very much like a lounge,"

he said. "You could be in the food area and still be within ear- and eyeshot of your check-in podium and thus minimize stress."

Free Wi-Fi and the presence of some 350 power outlets — available on work tables and every few seats in the gate areas — may well also be a major stress reducer for travelers accustomed to sprawling on terminal floors with their laptops.

Virgin does not plan on having a separate airport lounge. "We feel like the gate area is the lounge," Ross Bonanno, Virgin's vice president for airports and guest service, said as he rested an arm on an Egg chair.

(American Airlines has built a dedicated lounge, which will seek LEED Silver