

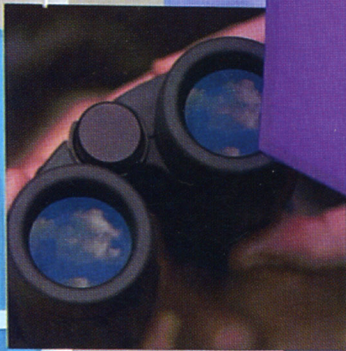
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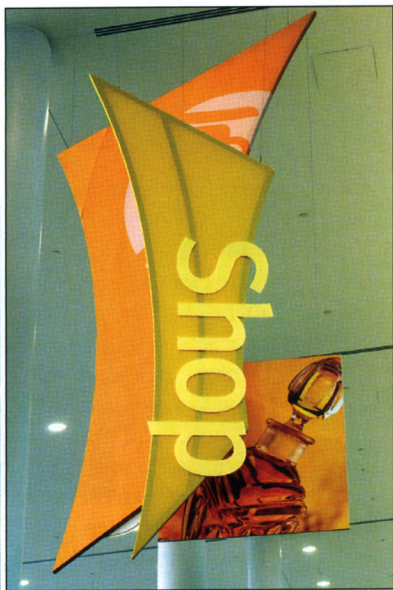
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Echoes of Flight

BY KRISTINE CONNOR



Kevin Monko, Kelsh Wilson Design



From a distance, terminal visitors see four distinct signs, but as they approach they realize that each sign is actually a composition of three hanging banners.

Kevin Monko, Kelsh Wilson Design

New retail signage welcomes international travelers to Philadelphia.

Client: MarketPlace/Redwood, L.P., a partnership of MarketPlace Development, Boston, and Redwood Advisors, Philadelphia

Architects: Kohn Pederson Fox, New York City

Design Team: Julia Colton and Andy Parsons, Cloud Gehshan Associates, Philadelphia

Symbol design: Dorothy Funderwhite, Cloud Gehshan Associates

Photography: Nick Kelsh and Kevin Monko, Kelsh Wilson Design, Philadelphia

Fabrication: Transformat, Gorham, Maine, and Capital Manufacturing, Lansdale, Pa.

AS PART OF the recent makeover of Philadelphia International Airport, retail developer MarketPlace/Redwood created a national award-winning food and shopping experience. When it sought to expand that experience to the new 800,000-square-foot international terminal, the firm knew that effective signage would be a key component. The terminal interior features massive, angular, light-filled spaces, and most of the three million travelers expected to pass through it annually are first-time visitors who may not speak English, notes MarketPlace Development president Paul McGinn.

“Our primary concern was the scale of the building,” McGinn says. “I think it increased the size of the airport by something like 50 percent. The terminal only has 13 gates, but it had to be built this way to fit into the airport’s overall geography.

So we knew that people would be moving long distances to get to the services they need, which are clustered at the angle of the building.”

McGinn stresses that it was important for the signage to be large and colorful enough to let people know that “something different” is going on in the retail area. But it also had to be done with “great respect” for the terminal’s dramatic design and neutral palette.

THINKING ABOUT FLIGHT

Cloud Gehshan Associates, an environmental graphic design firm based in Philadelphia, met this challenge by developing an overhead banner system that announces the retail area to approaching travelers while also acknowledging the nature and function of the space.

“For the banners, I was thinking about flight as well as the shape of the terminal

itself, which led me to the kite-like shapes," says designer Julia Colton. "I also wanted them to be translucent, so the natural light would make them glow."

Keeping in mind the needs of her multilingual audience, Colton incorporated simple words — *Eat, Drink, Shop, Enjoy* — and explanatory visual images, including large photographs and simple icons of a fork, cup, and gift. She chose colors that were bright enough to call attention to the area while still complementing the terminal's neutral palette.

Andy Parsons, senior project manager for Cloud Gehshan, faced the challenge of figuring out how to fabricate such large signs. "We knew that we needed material that would be light enough to be suspended from above, and translucent, too, so that it would capture the light," he recalls.

Parsons worked with fabricators at Transformit in Gorham, Maine and Capital Manufacturing in Lansdale, Pa. to develop a solution. The eight colored banners (four sets of two) by Transformit are essentially Lycra *socks* stretched over welded aluminum tube frames. Four of them have a word panel screwed to the frame. Capital cut the letters out of 1/4-inch thick tinted clear Acrylite GP, mounting them on slightly smaller letters cut from Sintra, which the viewer cannot see. As a result, the words capture the light and appear to be "floating" over the banner, Parsons says.

A WORKING COMPOSITION

The third component is a photo panel mounted on Sintra, which Capital produced using provided custom photography. All components were suspended from the ceiling by stainless steel ropes.

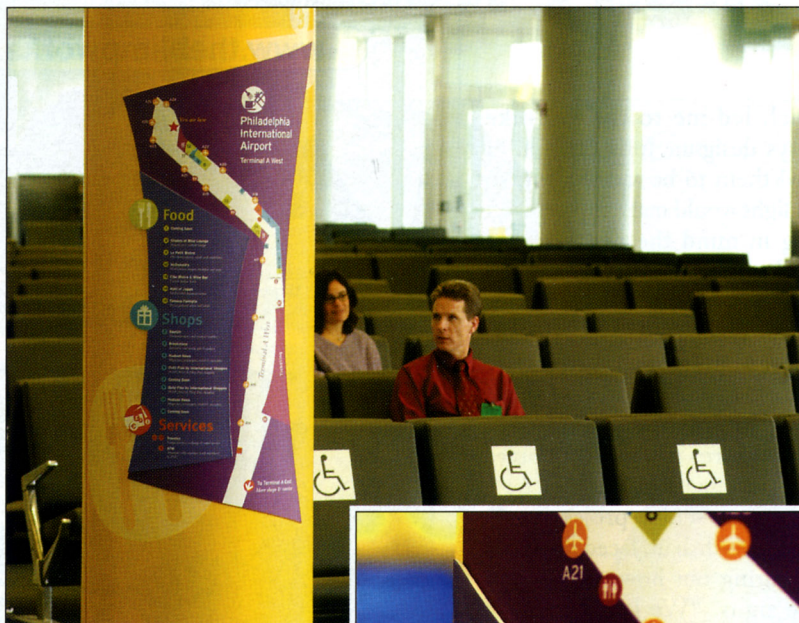
"The cool thing is that, for each location, the three elements work as a composition," says Parsons. "As you move closer and stand under the signs it becomes apparent that they are actually three different panels suspended from the ceiling."

Julia Colton extended the banners' shapes and color scheme to the directional maps placed on 16 columns throughout the terminal. These *mini-maps*, which were printed on vinyl and

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ECHOS OF FLIGHT

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Kevin Monko, Kelsh Wilson Design

Colored columns train the visitor's eye to recognize that they are part of an informational system. Keyed maps then help users find their way to essential services and concessions.



Kevin Monko, Kelsh Wilson Design

mounted on Sintra by Capital Manufacturing, show the location of shops, restaurants, and other services in relation to other critical areas such as the gates, ticketing, and restrooms. Parsons notes that each map's key was printed on a separate piece of material, which was then attached as an overlay — providing flexibility that will allow for easy updates as tenants change.

Colton also incorporated the fork, cup and gift icons into the column maps. She and Parsons decided that each column featuring a map should be painted a bright color — red, yellow, green, or blue — in order to help viewers recognize they are working as part of a system. The icons were incorporated as well, decorating each column in a wallpaper-like fashion and extending the visual theme.

Cloud Gehshan's signage system was unveiled as part of the terminal's grand opening last spring. MarketPlace Development's Paul McGinn says that it has met the most important challenge facing any retail signage system: to alleviate visitors' anxiety about finding the services and concessions they need, but without overwhelming the space.

"In any public space, you face the task of creating signs that have enough pizzazz and drama to announce retail locations, but that do not conflict with the primary signage," he says. "And this system pulls that off quite well."

Kristine Connor is a staff writer for Cloud Gehshan and a freelance writer in the Philadelphia area.

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