

Feeling Trippy?



GRAAL 121

EVEN BEFORE SARS, TORONTO had an image problem. With labels like the Big Smoke and Canada's Economic Engine, the city was seen as impersonal, uptight and stressed out. A \$23 million art project at Pearson International Airport's new terminal might help change that. Eight new installations in the \$2.5 billion complex, which opens April 6, challenge the

Grosse's mural, above, spices up a departure lounge, while LeWitt makes a skylight groovy

city's stereotypes with an infusion of color, energy and flights of whimsy.

A team led by San Francisco consultant Elsa Cameron chose from 350 submissions. One inspired pick was German artist Katharina Grosse, who attacked



two large walls in a departure lounge with the spray-pistol style of a graffiti artist. The result is an aurora borealis of tangerine, hot pink, lime green and yellows. A playful spirit also inspired Canadian Robert Charles Coyle, who suspended a flock of mock paper airplanes

that appear to swoop over a retail section of the terminal. But the centerpiece is arguably a Sol LeWitt installation—a huge skylight surrounded by concentric circles of colors—that has more in common with the rainbow revelry of Toronto's gay-pride parade than the pinstripes of Bay Street.

Was it all needed? Yes, says Greater Toronto Airports Authority CEO Lou Turpen. Aesthetics are crucial, he thinks. Despite post-Sept. 11 terrorism anxieties and security restrictions, Turpen envisions the new terminal's ushering in "an era that will bring back the enjoyment of air travel." In fact,

the psychedelic effect at Pearson may make travelers feel as if they are embarking on an entirely different kind of trip—or maybe just passing through the set of an Austin Powers movie. Either way, they will be saying, Toronto, yeah baby. —By Leigh Anne Williams