

TAKE TWO™

Weekdays 9 to 11 a.m.
with Alex Cohen & A Martinez

New Wave, On The Lot, Pacific Crest, Rubin 'Hurricane' Carter and more

The uplifting art of LAX

Take Two | April 21st, 2014, 9:53am



([http://www.scpr.org/programs/take-](http://www.scpr.org/programs/take-two/2014/04/21/37038/the-uplifting-art-of-lax/)

[two/2014/04/21/37038/the-uplifting-art-of-lax/](http://www.scpr.org/programs/take-two/2014/04/21/37038/the-uplifting-art-of-lax/))

Maya Sugarman/KPCC

Two images from Jill Greenberg's series of professional synchronized swimmers in stilettos are included in the "Welcome to L.A. / Please Come Again" exhibit at Los Angeles International Airport.

When you want to see world class art in Los Angeles, you might head to LACMA or a gallery in Santa Monica.

But you probably wouldn't think to hop a flight.

At airports around the country, however, millions are being spent to showcase public art ranging from towering sculptures to collections of paintings to performance pieces.

At LAX, alone, the 66 million passengers who go through its terminals is a huge audience.

"For people who might be traveling through Los Angeles, they might not have time on their itinerary to stop at one of the local museums or galleries," says LAX's curator Sarah Cifarelli, "but they can have an art experience at the airport."

One example is a collection of paintings and photographs at terminals 7 and 8 called, "Welcome to LA /Please Come Again." Featuring dozens of works by local artists, it's a tribute to Southern Californian culture.

For instance, one set of large-format photographs shows desolate beach locations, some at night. Serene and somber upon first glance, Cifarelli explains their hidden meaning: "They all reference beach locations where a famous person may have disappeared.

"Because L.A. is known for lots of legends and stars and notorious happenings, I think it just emphasizes you're in Los Angeles."

The growth spurt in art at airports actually has some roots in the tragic events of 9/11 and the increased security afterwards.

"A lot of airports saw that people were spending more time at airports especially because you have to allow more time to get through security," explains Cifarelli. "Then once you're through security, you have quite a chunk of time on your hands. So for a lot of airport art programs, we were able to sort of fill that void and give passengers something to do and to look at during that waiting time at the gate."

One example flanks the line of the security checkpoint at terminal 3: "Elevate," by Joyce Dallal.

It's a dramatic sculpture of a flock of paper airplanes swirling up and seemingly out the atrium windows.

Printed on each plane is an excerpt of the Geneva Conventions and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, combining the image of a soaring journey with ideas of war and security.

"What [the artist] realized is that she wanted people to feel at peace as they were embarking on this journey," says Cifarelli. "They were going to go through security, which can be stressful, and she really wanted people to have a sense of peace and tranquility."

The prospect of an airport being an art venue has also excited some artists, says Cifarelli.

"It's very different from a gallery because we don't have the four perfect white walls and things like that," she says, "but for a lot of artists they're not looking for that perfect pristine space. They're looking for a place that's energized by the public that has lots of different people moving through it."

Some of the art at LAX don't even require a ticket to view: many are located before the security checkpoints throughout the airport. You can preview some examples [here \(http://www.lawa.org/welcome_LAX.aspx?id=7580\)](http://www.lawa.org/welcome_LAX.aspx?id=7580).

And Cifarelli hopes that the next time you hurry through the terminal, you're able to take a breath and soak in the art.

"The airport can be a stressful place," she says, "but it can also be a place of discovery and delight."

