

## Public Art in New JFK Terminal

In May, New York's **John F. Kennedy Airport** completed its new international terminal, encompassing five ambitious public art works. Privately funded, the projects cost \$1.1 million, which includes acquisition and maintenance. Three large-scale, site-specific pieces by contemporary artists greet arriving travelers. **Alexander Calder's** *Flight* mobile, formerly in the old international arrivals building, has been restored and hangs over the departure area. A partial re-creation in ceramic of **Arshile Gorky's** lost murals made for Newark airport in the 1930s is displayed near the ground transportation area. Enlarged from gouache sketches, this fourth panel of *Modern Aviation* is an abstract depiction of an open-cockpit plane. U.S. art lovers will see only these historical pieces, unless they are returning from abroad. The art commissioners were chosen and organized by **Wendy Feurer**, an independent art and urban design consultant, who was founding director of the New York City MTA's **Art for Transit** program.

Disembarking passengers coming from the airplane gates first encounter *Travelogue*, by the team of **Diller + Scofidio**, arranged along two corridors, 1,200 and 600 feet long. This series of back-lit, lenticular screens are framed in stainless-steel panels suspended from the ceiling. Using a technology that

mimics time-lapse photography, the screens portray the contents of a suitcase. Along two 300-foot-long windowed ramps leading to the Immigration Hall, passengers will see Poughkeepsie-based **Harry Roseman's** *Curtain Wall*. These wall sculptures, made of modified gypsum, a plasterlike substance, depict a series of draperies that become increasingly windblown as one approaches customs. In the large Immigration Hall, above the bank of customs portals,

Brooklyn-based sculptor **Deborah Masters's** *New York Streets* presents 28 narrative relief panels, each 8 by 10 feet. Also made of modified gypsum, the painted panels show varied scenes of life in New York City. Capturing a lively multicultural mood, her detailed renditions of people riding the subway, sitting in parks or walking in different neighborhoods will furnish travelers forced to wait in long lines with plenty to look at.

This seemingly uncontroversial project had its own small drama before opening to the public. A construction worker, upset by a small image of a naked Christ on the cross in Masters's depiction of a store selling religious items, called the **Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights** (a national group involved in both the **Chris O'Fall** and **Renée Cox** disputes at the Brooklyn Museum [see "Front Page," Nov. '99, Apr. '01]). The league's president, **William Donohue**, complained to an airport official, who consulted the workers and the artist. Masters added a loincloth to the offending midsection, saying that she had meant to cover the figure's genitals all along but had forgotten.

—Cathy Lebowitz



Deborah Masters, *New York Streets*, 2001.

