

French artist spices up new Incheon airport terminal

2018-01-17 : 17:33

By Kwon Mee-yoo

The long anticipated Terminal 2 of Incheon International Airport opens its doors to passengers and planes, Thursday.

The shiny, brand-new terminal is not only equipped with state-of-the-art technology for the best travel experience, but also with a handful of artworks that will enrich the passengers' sensibilities even before their flights start.

"While the existing Terminal 1 focused on serving increasing numbers of passengers overflowing the capacity of the airport, the second terminal is packed with brand-new automated systems for faster and smoother handling. So the passengers will now have more time in the terminal and that is why we decided to add more artworks to the space," an airport official said.

The airport, dreaming to establish an "Artport," tried to put artworks at unexpected places. Visitors entering the terminal for departure will be greeted by the grand kinetic sculpture by French artist Xavier Veilhan. Jinnie Seo created facade art inspired by clouds in the gatehouse area. When visitors arrive at the baggage claim area, Julius Popp's "Bit.Fall" will display popular words from news consisting of momentary water droplets.

Veilhan's "Great Mobiles" are two blue-green mobiles hanging from the ceiling and connecting through the first basement floor, visible from anywhere on the landside of the second terminal.

Veilhan is known for his minimalistic and geometric portrayals of the human body or animals. However, for Incheon Airport, the French artist created something more abstract.

"It is a great opportunity for me to have my work include in a public environment. What I wanted to do was to deal with the scale of this very large space. It should be comparable to the size of the space and it should be impressive but not to imperialistic. So I thought of something transparent and always moving -- a mobile," Veilhan said at a press preview of his artwork at the new terminal last week.

"Great Mobiles is very big and always changing. If you take a picture of it, it will be unique, because the mobile and the environment would be slightly different after that instant. It's a piece about movement, flexibility and going from one place to another, which could relate to the ever-changing airport."



French artist Xavier Veilhan stands in front of his work "Great Mobiles" at the second passenger terminal of the Incheon International Airport. / Courtesy of the artist and 313 Art Project

Veilhan created the mobile for this specific environment and he had done a lot of research about the new terminal and its architecture.

"It is interesting that the mobile is not in the White Cube, but in real life, between arches of an airport. When I was a kid, flying and travelling were exotic experiences. I wanted to bring a more poetic, glamorous atmosphere to travel," he said. "Movement of air is also very important, because it is related to time, space and dynamic."

Seo's "Wings of Vision" at first just looks like part of numerous shops at the airport. However, the artist interpreted the shapes of clouds, which are always on the go. Visitors can see the dynamic shapes of clouds _ none of them identical _ as they move around the terminal on the moving walkway.

"The baggage claim area you enter after your flight is where you encounter Korea for the first time and a welcome-home place for those returning to Korea," the airport official explained.

Popp's installation presents random words collected from newsfeeds in nine languages including Korean, English, Chinese, Arabic, Hindi and French and they appear and disappear in an instant on a curtain of water. Though ephemeral and random, the words show a slice of the world.

Kim Byung-joo's "Ambiguous Wall" has more Korean elements. The artwork of steel shows Seoul's major landscapes such as Gwanghwamun Gate, Seoul Station and Dongnimmun Gate. Portrayed in simple and colorful lines, the piece excites curiosity about the city which awaits the air traveler outside the terminal.