

Blowing in

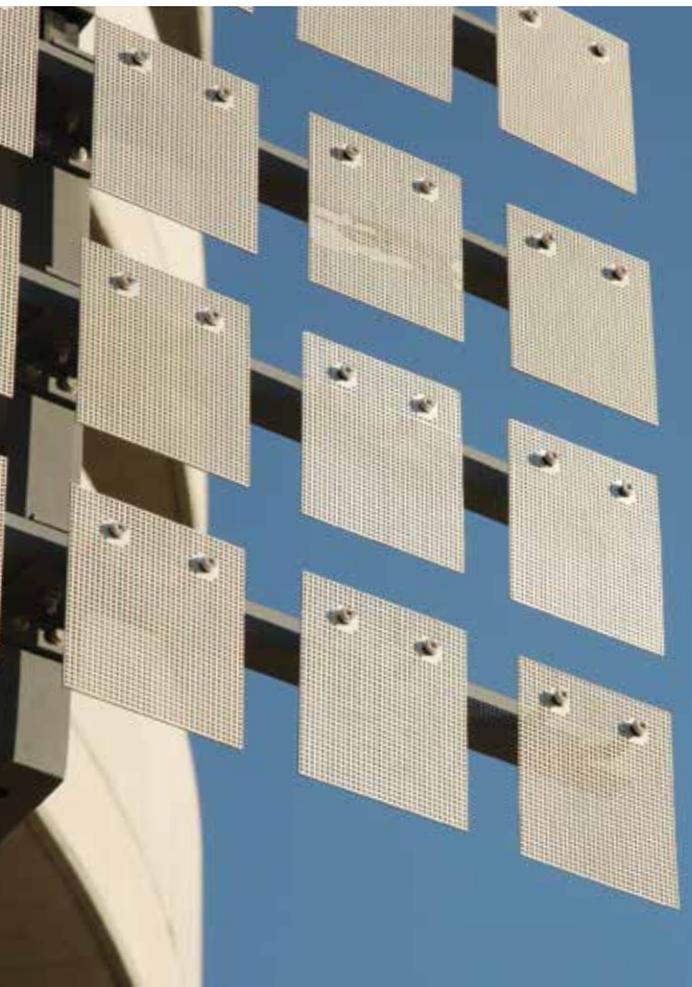
Australia's Brisbane Airport's new garage plays host to one of the country's largest pieces of art.

By Jacinta Messer

Environmental artist Ned Kahn is known for his large-scale art depicting natural phenomena that include wind, water, and fire. His art is sustainable and fluid, often incorporating materials and movement that capture the elements in multiple dimensions; it's so profound that even *Smithsonian* magazine has featured his work.

Kahn constructed one of the largest pieces of art in Australia in 2012. The piece brings together thousands of metal squares in a hinged design that illustrates wind, both in shading and in the motion of the piece, which changes as the breeze blows around and through it. One might expect to find this massive piece on a museum or government building, but it's in a much more prominent place: covering one entire side of a new garage at the Brisbane Airport, where it's visible to travellers, commuters, and art enthusiasts every day.

A parking garage may seem like an odd place to put a 54,000-square-foot piece of art, but to the many millions of passengers at Brisbane Airport, the breathtaking Turbulent Line sculpture that adorns the airport's brand new multi-story car park is the perfect combination of art and aviation.



the **Wind**





Artist Ned Kahn

The Piece

Valued at several million dollars, the Turbulent Line is made up of more than 117,000 small aluminium panels, each of which is individually suspended from the side of Brisbane Airport's new Domestic Terminal Car Park. Brisbane's ever-changing wind patterns create a fluid rippling effect that sweeps across the face of the car park (see a video at nedkahn.com). In a nod to the city's signature water feature and to create a site-specific reference, the dark gray line running through the middle of the art represents the Brisbane River.

The piece is beautiful and has received rave reviews from critics and fans, but it also provides a number of other functions that are pivotal to the comfort of those within the structure. Inside the car park, sunlight cascades through the external panelling system, whose design offers both light and shade inside. The piece is open, offering natural ventilation to the interior of the building. In addition to this, the roof of the car park catches rainwater, which is reused for irrigation throughout the 2,700 hectare (6,672 acres) site Brisbane Airport occupies.

Kahn's impressive array of works generally involves complex natural systems and making invisible natural elements visible. He alternates between recreating environmental conditions in controlled settings and letting nature animate his works. Kahn's pieces include the Cloud Rings that explores the movement of fog, a Sonic Pool that plays off vibrations below the body of water to create intricate wave patterns, a 20-foot tall tornado of swirling fire called the Fire Vortex, and now the parking garage façade at Brisbane Airport.



The idea for Turbulent Line was born when Kahn spotted the reflection of a ship's mast in the Brisbane River. He was taking photographs in the inner-city suburb of New Farm when he spotted the reflection of the mast in the river and became fascinated by the way the straight line of the mast appeared warped by the water beneath it.

Once the idea for the project was born, the driving forces behind it were Brisbane Airport Corporation (BAC) and Urban Art Projects (UAP). Both companies sensed a cultural shift throughout Brisbane. Innovative artworks were scattered throughout the central business district as part of the Brisbane City Council's New World City program. BAC, already a strong advocate for the arts and a partner to many of Brisbane's flagship cultural institutions and a firm supporter of transforming the city into a cultural destination, had the perfect location for the massive artwork in the airport garage. The fit seemed natural and would ensure that visitors experience a unique first or final impression of Brisbane.

The Garage

The nine-level parking complex that's home to the Turbulent Line is the largest single-structure car park in the southern hemisphere. Aside from gorgeous art, customers enjoy state-of-the-art wayfinding technology along with innovative safety and security measures. The car park has more than 5,200 bays catering to both short- and long-term parking customers and is one of two car parks at the Domestic Terminal, bringing the total number of available spaces to 9,000. The added capacity means there is room for additional parking



products including valet and premium areas, online booking, guaranteed spaces, and even a car wash facility.

Making it Happen

As expected, a project of this scale presents number of design challenges, particularly given the feasibility and suitability of the location. The sheer size and the close proximity to the terminals and millions of passengers meant ventilation, sound, glare and reflectivity, durability, and lighting all had to be considered—unusual challenges for art, to be sure.

The car park itself was still a construction site during the artwork installation process, which created some additional challenges, including access constraints, for the team charged with hanging the massive piece. It also meant the materials had to be stored off-site and transported in pieces via trailer to the car park deck, where it was all put together.

Once the materials were in place, the construction process involved five trolleys (compact units on wheels). The 369 frames that made up the Turbulent Line were constructed on the trolleys and then a large machine we called “The Ned” picked up each frame and placed it on the side of the garage. The construction team was expected to complete five frames per day; by the end of the process they were turning out 20 frames each day.

The process wasn't easy, but has been more than worth it. The airport's large-scale artwork creates a lasting impression on the more than 16 million passengers who use Brisbane Airport's Domestic Terminal each year and is on the way to becoming a memorable icon for the city of Brisbane. Needless to say, we are very proud of our Turbulent Line! 



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