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29-foot-high Tech-driven Interactive Sculpture Hoisted at MSP **Jen Lewin's *The Aurora* Will Create Inspirational Gathering Space in Terminal 1**

MINNEAPOLIS-ST. PAUL – It was a huge lift for art and technology at Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport (MSP). A 29-foot-high glass and metal sculpture was hoisted Wednesday and is now suspended through a new oval opening between the ticketing and baggage claim levels in Terminal 1. The sculpture is the signature element of a larger, interactive artwork that will soon welcome and enhance the experience of millions of passengers and visitors at MSP.

The 740-pound sculpture is a twisting, aerial wave of more than 23,000 aluminum rings that will house more than 2,600 hand-blown glass bulbs, each with a set of LEDs within. *The Aurora* is the creation of [Jen Lewin](#), an internationally renowned new media and interactive sculptor who has designed and installed permanent interactive public artworks worldwide, including the [Sidewalk Harp](#) in downtown Minneapolis.

“*The Aurora* is one of MSP’s largest art projects and was designed to serve as a symbol of the airport and our region,” said Rick King, Chairman of the Metropolitan Airports Commission (MAC), which operates MSP. “When you consider the tens of millions of people who fly to and from MSP every year, this is likely to become one of the most visible artworks in Minnesota.”

“This is an exciting milestone for a project that began more than three years ago to create an inspirational gathering space at Terminal 1,” said Brian Ryks, CEO of the MAC. “The art installation is part of a multi-year project to expand and modernize the terminal’s ticketing and bag claim facilities and will help transform travelers’ experience at MSP.”

The sculpture’s 8,000 LEDs will be programmed to use live weather data to alter its color palettes to reflect Minnesota’s seasons and weather conditions, such as blues and whites in colder times, greens and yellows more prevalent in the spring, or oranges and reds in the fall.

“It is a true honor to be able to create new interactive artwork for the airport, which is such a dynamic public space,” said Lewin. “My hope is to capture viewers for a moment of joy, dance, and playful connection.”

Below *The Aurora*, nestled within the baggage claim floor, Lewin also designed an 18-foot-wide interactive cluster of reflective glass platforms loosely depicting public lakes in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area including Lake Phalen, Lake Como, Lake Nokomis and Lake of the Isles.

People standing, or dancing, on the lake platforms will be able to trigger colors changes beneath their feet as well as wisps of color in the same palette up into *The Aurora* above, resembling a gesture of light.

“*The Aurora* depicts the beauty of our region in an abstract way with a nod to the natural phenomenon of the aurora borealis,” said Ben Owen, Director, Arts@MSP, Airport Foundation MSP. “Our hope is that it will create a sparkling space for guests to bid their loved ones goodbye and to welcome them home at the conclusion of their journey.”

Over the next two months, Lewin and her team will complete the artwork by installing the glass bulbs and lake forms. They will also test the programming that makes the piece interactive. It's expected that *The Aurora* will make its debut in early 2021.

The MAC, in partnership with Airport Foundation MSP, commissioned Lewin in 2018 to design and create the artwork. A 16-member Blue Ribbon Artist Selection Panel, made up of Minnesota civic and arts community leaders, Airport Foundation staff, and MAC staff led the artist selection process. Lewin and her design team conducted public meetings and public surveys that yielded more than 10,000 engagements or ideas to help inform her design with a goal that it would reflect the airport and the region.

Available upon request: video and images of site preparations, sculpture fabrication, light show development, and hoisting of the sculpture.

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The Metropolitan Airports Commission (MAC) owns and operates one of the nation's largest airport systems, including Minneapolis-St Paul International (MSP) and six general aviation airports. The MAC's airports connect the region to the world and showcase Minnesota's extraordinary culture to millions of passengers from around the globe who arrive or depart through MAC airports each year. Though a public corporation of the state of Minnesota, the organization is not funded by income or property taxes. Instead, the MAC's operations are funded by rents and fees generated by users of its airports. For more information, visit www.metroairports.org.