



AIRLINE LOUNGE,  
VANCOUVER, CANADA  
ARCHITECTS  
PATKAU ARCHITECTS

"The Architectural Preview"  
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## CANADIAN CLUB

Part London club, part gallery, part forest clearing, this new executive lounge for Air Canada is a tranquil airport refuge.

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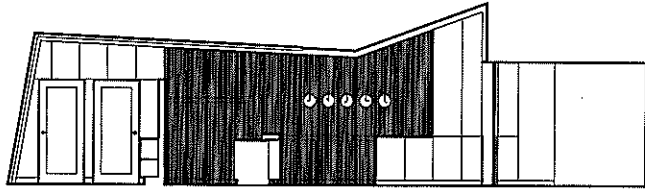
Created for the airport elite who fly frequently and buy expensive tickets, executive lounges are exclusive havens. Located off the beaten track, watched over by receptionists and open only to card carrying members, they provide many of the same services as a city club with space, privacy and quiet. With more frequent flyers the airport lounge has become an increasingly popular and inevitably generalized place of tasteful finishes and elegant furniture yet it is one which also embodies the identity for an airline and a country.

The new lounge designed by Patkau Architects at the recently completed airport in Vancouver represents a significant act of patronage on the part of Air Canada. The client is a national airline that, albeit part of a global alliance, serves a country preoccupied with identity. For this project the client set aside interior decor typical of many other airline lounges in favour of a considered and specific architectural response.

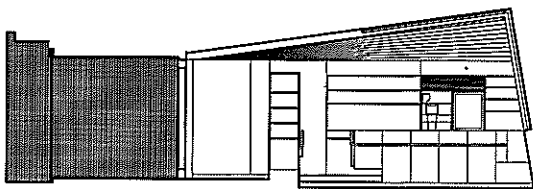
The Patkaus have spoken frequently of the importance of site and the value of 'found potential' as inspirations in their work. This 'site' of newly built space – windowless, stranded beneath haphazard service runs and within the confining shell of the new airport – held little obvious promise. However further study and consideration of its use revealed potential.

This particular lounge, the second of its type, has been designed for first class passengers. Modelled on a similar one at Heathrow, it provides an alternative to a hotel for long distance travellers arriving in the city for short visits. It is a place to take a shower, change clothes, check the news, eat and gather your senses before meetings or after flights.

Within the lounge a series of ribs of natural maple, which lean from one wall and across the ceiling, create an undulating canopy. It is a profile devised to negotiate existing services – the seemingly random networks of overhead conveyors, pipes, wires and ductwork that help to

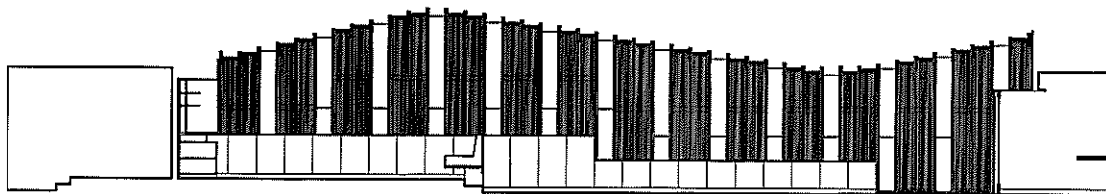


cross section through entrance lobby

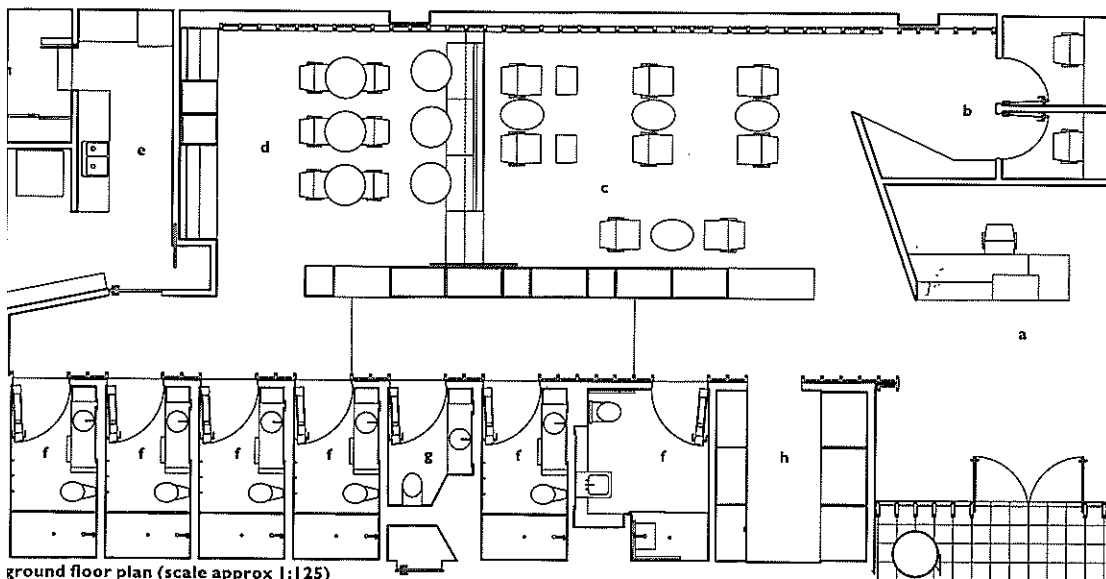


cross section through lounge

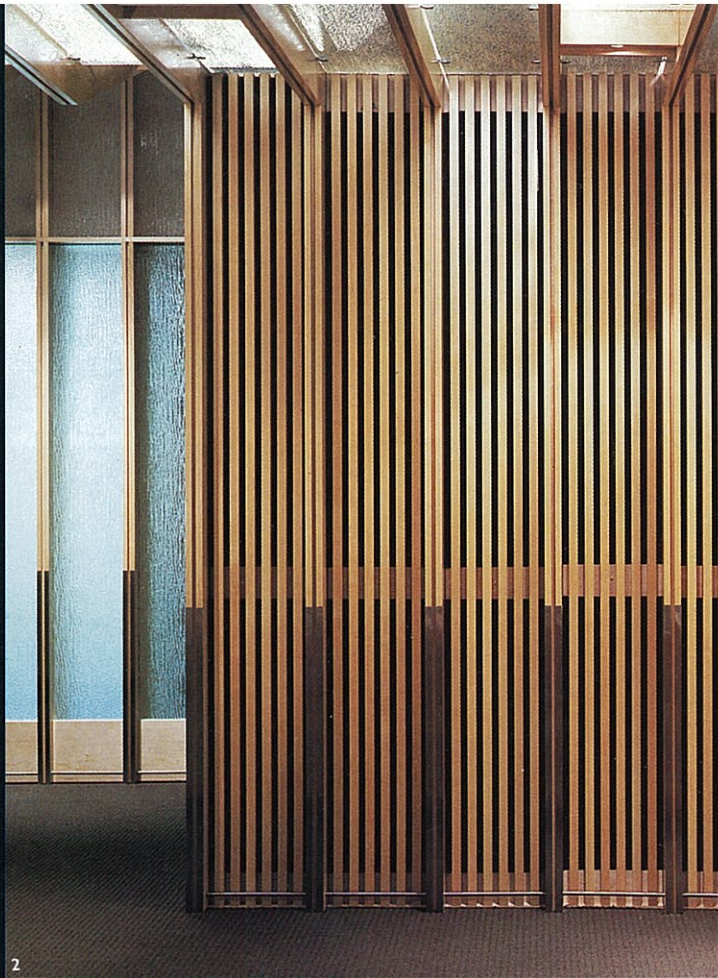
- a reception
- b business centre
- c lounge
- d breakfast area
- e kitchen
- f shower room + wc
- g wc
- h luggage storage



longitudinal section



ground floor plan (scale approx 1:125)



2



3

1 (previous page)  
Historic artefacts from Vancouver's Museum of Anthropology redefine and transform the Air Canada lounge into a small gallery.

2  
Infills of timber battens and opaque glass panels create a layered wall structure.

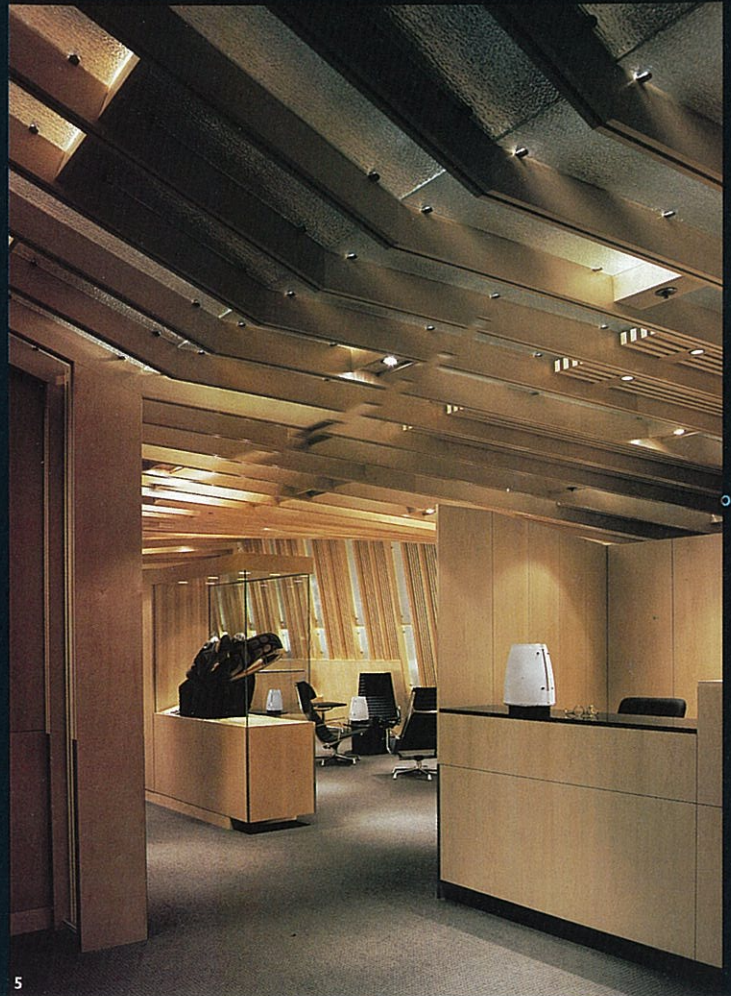
3  
Small shower and rest room pods are arranged along one edge of the lounge.

4  
Undulating roof ribs of natural maple define and articulate the space.

5  
Reception area with main lounge beyond.



4



5

make buildings work. Set between the wood framing ribs, a series of delicate infills of subsets of timber battens and opaque glass panels create a filigree with a sense of lightness and the opportunity to integrate lighting systems. Designed to be filtered and tuned, the system evokes a sense of changing light and weather. The space of the main room recalls the forest clearing or the camp – a place of calm that is sheltered and set aside. Yet it achieves this without reverting to kitsch.

Conscious of the issue of identity, the client – in

discussion with the architects – sought to explore the potential of the country and the nature of the Canadian Pacific Northwest. With their interest in local aboriginal traditions and considerations of First Nation concerns derived from experience designing Seabird Island School (AR May 1993), the Patkaus made a place for historic artefacts at the centre of the lounge. Collaboration with the Museum of Anthropology in Vancouver initiated loans and a wall of cabinets has become an exhibit. It is a move which recognizes identity and capitalizes on the potential of a

supervised space without daylight, planned for people with curiosity and time to redefine the lounge not only as club but also as gallery.

The design of a lounge in an airport is a modest commission. Working together, these architects and their client have sought out potential in a small and seemingly dull space. By patiently listening, carefully looking, and with thoughtful survey, they have discovered ways to make a quiet place to settle within the inevitably chaotic landscapes of travel.

BRIAN CARTER

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