

UTAH TRAVEL BUSINESS

Salt Lake airport's newest art feature moves Utah's mountains closer to its terminal

Airport officials formally dedicate “The Peaks” — a 75-ton art feature paying homage to Utah’s mountains — on the road leading people from the airport into Salt Lake City

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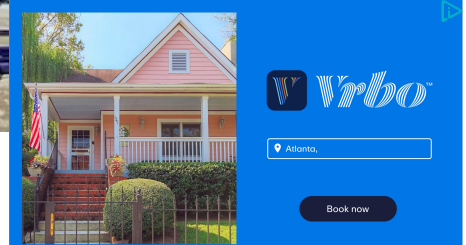


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Salt Lake City International Airport

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By Carter Williams

Most large airports have some sort of entry feature welcoming people to the facility or the city outside it.

These tend to symbolize the community the airport serves, says Bill Wyatt, executive director of the Salt Lake City Department of Airports. Salt Lake City International Airport has lacked this feature, especially since the new airport terminal opened in 2020.

"For Salt Lake City, that was a green highway sign out here that said, 'Salt Lake City Airport that way,'" he said.

That is no longer the case. Salt Lake City leaders and airport officials gathered Wednesday to formally dedicate "The Peaks" — a 75-ton art feature paying homage to Utah's mountains — on the road leading people from the airport into Salt Lake City. The massive feature has five peaks made from weathered Corten steel reaching as high as 90 feet tall, according to artist Gordon Huether.

The peaks symbolize the state's five Native American tribes and the five elements of the natural world: air, earth, fire, space and water, Huether said. He also placed a glass orb near the top of the tallest peak that points to Utah's location on a globe. Giant block letters spelling out "SLC" are at the front of the sculpture and there's also a light feature that illuminates the peaks at night, too.

It joins Hoberman Arch, a piece from the 2002 Salt Lake City Winter Olympics, installed there in August to help welcome people to the city, as well.

"We want people to know where they are, but we also want them to know that we prioritize," said Salt Lake City Mayor Erin Mendenhall, pointing out the airport has held an art program for nearly 50 years. "This is a reflection of our priorities, it's a reflection of the mountains by which we are known."

The massive project cost about \$6 million to complete and was covered with the airport's redevelopment budget and not the city's general fund, according to the mayor.

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A rendering of Gordon Huether's "The Peaks" outside of Salt Lake City International Airport lit up at night. | Gordon Huether + Partners 2023

It's also Huether's latest piece for the airport. The artist, who has crafted public art installations all over the world, has had his hand in many of the airport's art features, highlighting Utah's natural wonders, in most cases.


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His massive installation inside the airport's main terminal is a large-scale replica of the slot canyon landscapes found throughout Utah. He's also behind the [river-themed tunnel set to open next year](#), as well as [more slot canyon-themed artwork](#) for the airport's forthcoming North Concourse. Even Hoberman Arch, which he helped restore, was partly built to reflect Utah's natural features.

Huether views his latest installation as an "enormous hello and welcome" to Utah, building on this theme.

"We are celebrating the natural beauty that is Utah," he said, standing at the base of his towering sculpture. "That's what it is here and all the way through the airport."

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