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HANK WILLIS THOMAS AND COBY KENNEDY REACH FOR THE SKIES WITH CHICAGO AIRPORT SCULPTURE

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Hank Willis Thomas and Coby Kennedy, *REACH*, 2023
Photo: Nicole Harrison. Courtesy of For Freedoms

An airliner-sized sculpture has landed at Chicago's main air travel hub, O'Hare International Airport, courtesy contemporary artists Hank Willis Thomas and Coby Kennedy.

Fresh off of high-profile sculptural turns at the Super Bowl and in Boston—where his monument to Martin Luther King, Jr. and Coretta Scott King, *The Embrace* (2023), was the subject of much debate following its unveiling in January—Thomas has collaborated with Kennedy on the colossal sculpture, *REACH* (2023), which is now installed above escalators in the airport's Multi-Modal Facility.



Hank Willis Thomas and Coby Kennedy, *REACH*, 2023
Photo: Nicole Harrison. Courtesy of For Freedoms

Appropriately for a site where millions of people welcome and bid farewell to each other every year, the sculpture consists of two massive outstretched hands spanning 27ft and 31ft that almost but don't quite touch, suspended in an ambiguous moment that could signal separation or coming together. The sculptural commission and installation was organised by the Chicago Department of Aviation and Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events, and is part of the Expo Chicago fair's programme for large-scale and site-specific works.

"As longtime collaborators we have had an incredible opportunity to create an artwork together and reframe a piece of public space, where most are in transit and passing through, for interconnectivity and togetherness," Thomas and Kennedy said in a joint statement. "*REACH* is a connection point and large-scale gesture that inspires us to come together."

The duo's massive sculptural hands are the latest additions to an ambitious public art programme at O'Hare, which is in the midst of a \$3.5m effort to bring more contemporary art to the airport.

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