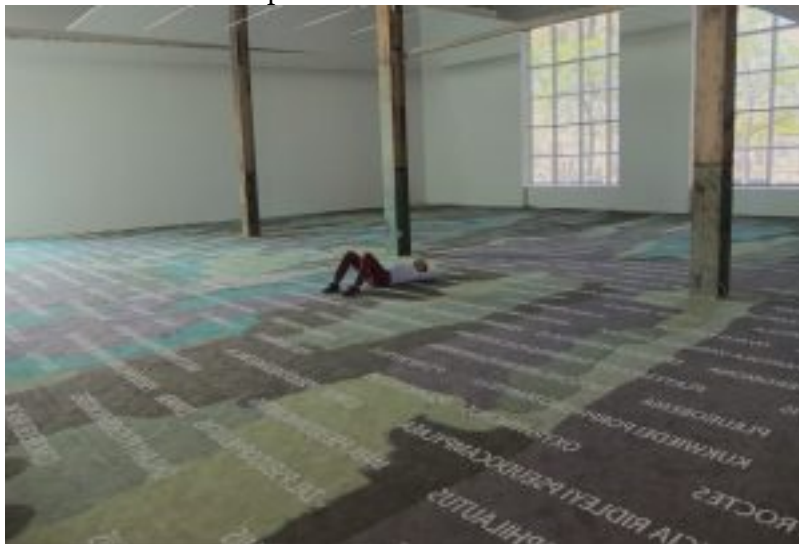


TORONTO STAR

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Pan Am Games hit The Power Plant in four shows

The Pan Am Games sponsor four shows at Toronto's The Power Plant.



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A viewer reclines to read the backwards-printed text on the custom-printed carpet for Bik Van der Pol's piece *Eminent Domain* at the Power Plant. The text, which lists species that have become extinct since 1500, can be read in the mirror on the ceiling.

By: Murray Whyte Visual arts, Published on Thu Jun 25 2015

The Pan Am Games seems determined to brand itself far beyond the field of play this summer, and one of its unlikely arenas is the Power Plant, which casts itself as on the bleeding edge of international contemporary art practice.

That the earnest nationalism of the games might not mesh easily with the challenging fare one expects to find in such a gallery appears to be the least of the organizing committee's concerns, and good on them: The four projects here wave no flags, but for the marginalized, the disenfranchised and the quite literally extinct.

Bik Van de Pol, *Eminent Domain*

The chorus of cicadas that greets you on entering the main space embraces the ones that got away: Namely, the countless species to have gone extinct since 1500, more or less the beginning of European exploration of the new world. The gallery is fitted with carpet emblazoned the scientific names of bygone creatures in reverse; only by looking up to the ceiling, fitted with mirror, can you read them. Whether it's a gesture to move the viewer from active to passive, or a gimmick to get you to lie down, I'm not sure, but lying yields more than merely wandering through: The sounds shift and change with time, and feel all the more distant the longer you recline.

Mine, *Tercerunquinto*

Tercerunquinto, a three-person collective from Mexico has been here before, in 2005, when they built a back door to the Power Plant where patrons could sneak in past the admissions desk for free. Here, they continue their sly subversion with *Mine*, a 6-by-6-foot square carved through the gallery floor to expose the soil underneath. Within it a litany of implications are unearthed: About land and resource rights, for one thing. In this era of Aboriginal reparations and apologies that can never hope to fully compensate, “*Mine*” begs the response, “Whose?”

The Mouth Holds the Tongue, A collaborative project by Nadia Belerique Lili Huston-Herterich and Laurie Kang

Big blocks of green foam form a makeshift labyrinth. The point isn't to vex, but to engage. It's comic, inviting, and tactile (to mild disaster – impressions of fingertips, palms and more than a few names of couples mark its squishy hide, breaking the look-don't-touch rule all over the place). The three artists, all Toronto-based, make objects that don't sit politely on plinths but rather invade your personal space, rupturing the tidy gallery convention of viewer and viewed (Belerique, by way of example, is in a show at G Gallery where her works, shafts of copper protruding from the ceiling, are a cheekily intentional hazard to be avoid). The work surely toes that line, and verboten though it may be, it seems only fair for the viewer to do a little invading of his or her own.

(art)work(sport)work(sex)work, YES! Association

With most people putting on their best Pan Am smiley faces for the international hordes – We're happy, tolerant, diverse Toronto! – the Power Plant has enlisted YES! Association, a collective from Sweden, to peel back some of those layers. In the gallery, they've installed a reading room, where you can brew a cup of tea (really – they've put in a kitchen) and peruse various documents of marginal histories and people: Gay, transgendered, sex workers and minorities alike. But the group's main offering is a summer's worth of bus tours to spots not typically in a tourist brochure: The sites of past bawdy and bath houses, say, or all-female boxing clubs.

For more information on all tours, see the Power Plant's web site. END

- Whyte, Murray. “Pan Am Games hit The Power Plant in four shows”,
Toronto Star, June 25, 2016.