



COURTESY LYLA RAE

Swing Stage is both a love letter to industrial history and a challenge to visitors' stability.

BIG SUSPENDERS

Why artist Lyla Rye likes to leave her patrons hanging

BY MANORI RAVINDRAN

A suspension of disbelief: that's how artist Lyla Rye describes her latest project, an eight-metre-long installation featuring a suspended three-metre-long platform attached with chains to the trusses of the gallery's roof.

Presented by the Koffler Gallery Off-Site at the Olga Korper Gallery, *Swing Stage* is as much a love letter to the industrial history of the Morrow Avenue complex as it is a challenge to our sense of stability.

What might be *Swing Stage's* most uplifting element is undoubtedly the interactive platform, which visitors are encouraged to climb on. The platform and chains, which hold up to 10 people at a time, create a stage-like setting that moves and sways, dispelling the notion that a structure as big as this one can't be hung from rafters.

The entire experience of hovering a few inches transports the visitor into a space

that recalls the gallery's industrial past, prior to its development into Korper's gallery space. For the Toronto-based artist who began her studies in architecture, it also revisits her own past.

"I graduated out of undergrad into Toronto in the 1990s, which was in a recession, and so I was part of the collective movement where we defined

ing a reflective platform.

Though the materials dwarfed both her studio and backyard, forcing the artist to build the system one half at a time, Rye was determined to exploit the ceiling structure for her art.

"When I was given the opportunity, I kept thinking about the exposed truss structure and the roof and wanting to be up in that ceiling," she says. "And there's a circular window facing east, and I kept thinking I'd really like to be up there and see the view out." The artist was able to incorporate video footage of the rooftop view in the installation.

"For me, there's both this acknowledgement of [a 100-year] history but also the last 15 years of the history of the city, and how those spaces have changed," Rye says. "I think it's because when [industrial spaces] lose the machinery and they lose that factory function, they don't have a set purpose for it. They're open. And they kind of give room for you to think outside the box and think big."

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industrial spaces and we set up do-it-yourself collective shows," Rye says. "My whole interaction with industrial spaces in Toronto goes back more than 20 years."

Built as a foundry in the 1890s, the Olga Korper gallery qualifies as a repurposed industrial space. Trusses that support the roof are telltale signs of this past. Rye adds an intricate web of chains carry-