

Review

Lyla Rye: A Platform for Ideas

KOFFLER GALLERY OFF-SITE AT OLGA KORPER GALLERY, TORONTO
JUL 14 TO AUG 20 2011

by TESS EDMONSON



Lyla Rye *Swing Stage* 2011 Installation view Courtesy Koffler Gallery Off-Site at Olga Korper Gallery / photo Isaac Applebaum

Lyla Rye's *Swing Stage* is a lyrical homage to a renovated foundry—the Morrow Avenue complex of former industrial buildings now used by commercial and cultural organizations, among them [Olga Korper Gallery](#). The large-scale installation, through both its structure and its use of projected images, references the space's history. Suspended by a geometric network of chains, the "stage" is a sleek black platform raised roughly a foot off the ground. Viewers are invited, after removing their shoes, to stand on the platform, and given a shift in balance, the structure swings softly back and forth.

Mounted at one end of the platform is a bright white circle, on which a succession of videos and images are projected. Digital images pulled from Google Street View show the industrial architecture in the immediate neighbourhood of the gallery, offering a contemporary index to the space. A video stream documents nearby buildings housing still-functioning industry; I was able to recognize [the chocolate factory on Gladstone Avenue](#). Lastly, the oracular white circle features archival illustrations made of the gallery building in its first life as a foundry, which are also presented on a plinth close to the gallery's door.

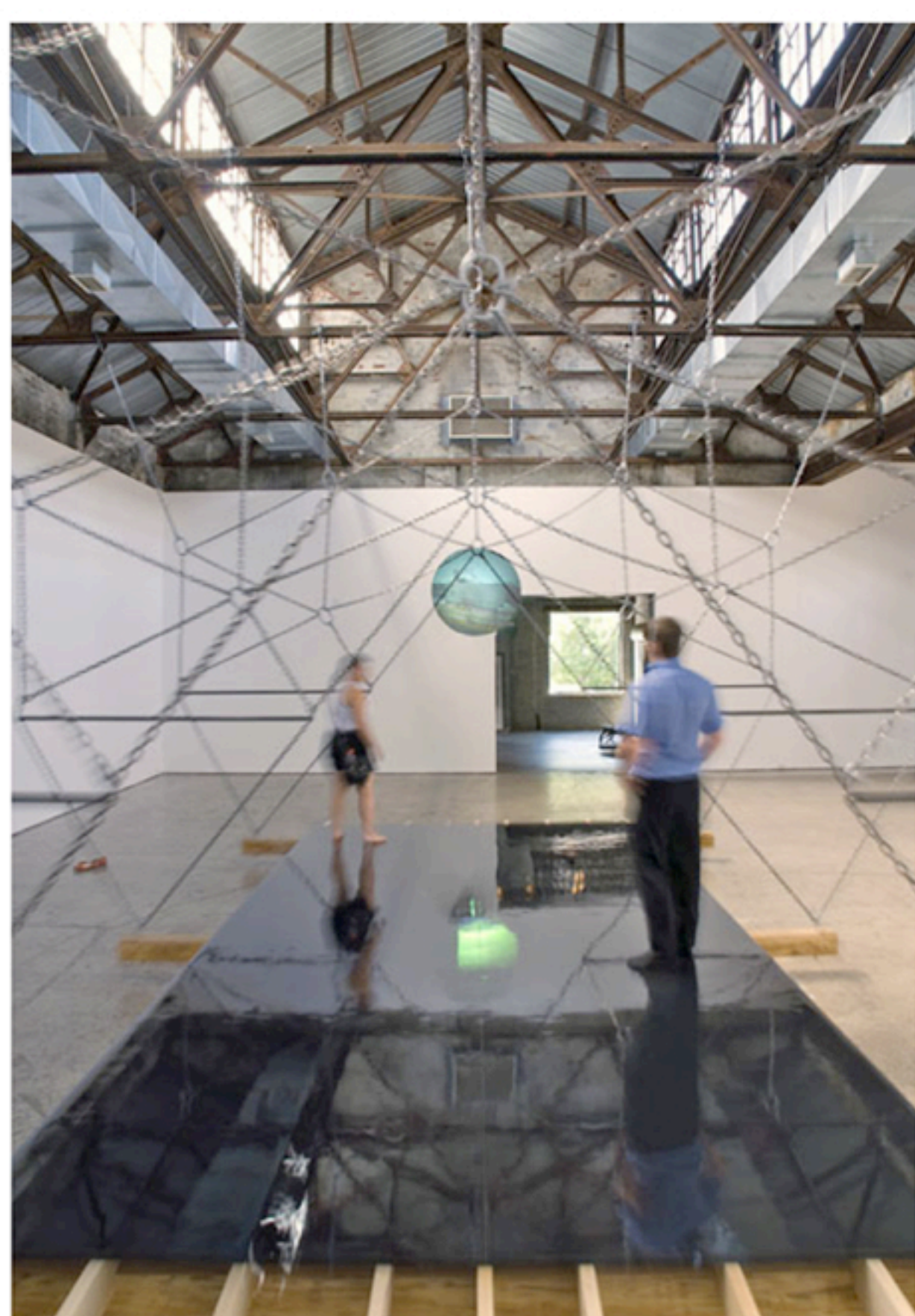


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The piece establishes a number of graceful parallels. The angular web of heavy chains mirrors the metal trusses from which it hangs, forming a complicated gradient from the ceiling to the platform. From the centre of the platform, the glowing circular screen follows from one line of sight. Facing the opposite direction, a viewer sees white light coming in through a circular window. The motion of the stage is surprisingly elegant, happily incongruous to the industrial bulk of its construction. The suspension also gives a nod towards a history of temporary structures, complementing the work's reading of industrial residues.

As a person who is embarrassingly vulnerable to vertigo at the best of times, I wasn't entirely comfortable standing on the slowly swinging stage, whose movement underfoot reminded me of a ship's. Very much within a history of participatory art, the piece also directed my attention unwaveringly to the fact that I was in a public space in socked feet, "interacting." While doing so, I wondered about the resonance of a work that is very placidly about the gallery it finds itself in. The circularity of the piece's self-reference gave me the impression of a closed circuit, fully formed and somewhat uninteresting. Despite this, the feeling of suspension is an incomparable one, and Rye capitalizes on the viewer's happy confusion at somehow both standing still and floating.

www.kofflerarts.org



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