

THE POWER PLANT CONTEMPORARY ART GALLERY

Wayne Baerwaldt, Director of The Power Plant, sees inspiring contemporary art as essential in a time of ongoing conflict abroad and at home. “We should embrace the concept in the midst of the current ideological position that many in North America appear to favour, that is, believing in war and market factors to set the stage for survival. There is a certain sense of failure in such an overwhelmingly brutal and intrusive social, political and economic system.”

His solution is several upcoming dynamic solo exhibitions and group shows including Belgian artist Wim Delvoye, whose Cloaca machine will bring out the child in you; John Kormeling, a zany and inspiring artist-architect from the Netherlands; and German abstract painter Daniel Richter, whose newer works “bring revisionist politics ... and the impact of popular culture in the media (such as pervasive acts of violence and global issues) into sharp focus amidst zones of deliberate obfuscation.”

Mr. Baerwaldt, 41, has a certain style and flair. Adjunct Curator and former Managing Director of Winnipeg’s Plug In Institute for Contemporary Arts before joining The Power Plant in March, 2002, he is one of a new breed of art professionals that appeared in the 1980s: independent curators.

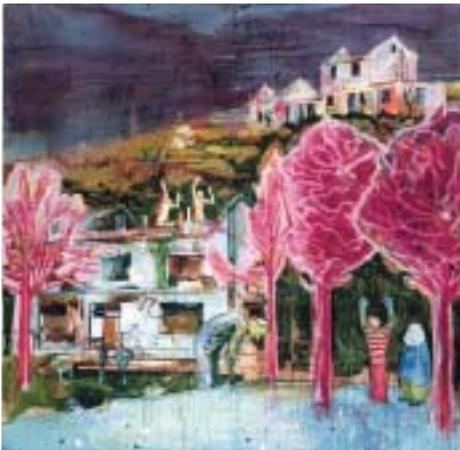
These independent curators took advantage of the worldwide boom in contemporary art to mediate between artists and the institutions that wanted to participate, but which had difficulty understanding the field. Between 1994 and 2000, Mr. Baerwaldt organized numerous exhibitions, from Sao Paulo to Istanbul to Shanghai. And even now, he is in demand as a curator as well as a writer on the Canadian and international art scene. He co-curated a recent exhibition at the Seoul Museum of Art.

“I think of the curator as someone who tries to bring certain worlds of influence together,” Mr. Baerwaldt said recently over a glass of Henry of Pelham wine in the Gallery’s offices. “Someone who tries to make sense

of contemporary art by linking contemporary art with historical movements and certain flashpoints in the making of modern art.”

He creates a platform for artists, sets up relationships between various interests and media, initiates a conversation about what art is and the world that surrounds it. Mr. Baerwaldt arranges artist talks and other events that allow for interaction between exhibitor and audience. A series of the gallery’s publications can be found in libraries and bookstores around the world.

Only Canada’s leading contemporary art gallery could have tempted him to come in



ABOVE: Daniel Richter, “Süden”, 2002. Oil, lacquer on canvas, 289 x 300 cm. Collection of Dr. William Goldiner, M.D. Image courtesy of Contemporary Fine Arts Galerie, Berlin. Photo credit: Jochen Littkemann, Berlin. BELOW: Daniel Richter, “Zurberes”, 2000. Oil on canvas, 255 x 370 cm. Collection of Susan and Michael Hort. Image courtesy of Contemporary Fine Arts Galerie, Berlin. Photo credit: Jochen Littkemann, Berlin.



out of the Winnipeg cold. The Power Plant has won international acclaim for consistently presenting the highest level of contemporary art since opening in 1987. The gallery houses constantly changing exhibitions. The building’s origins as a power plant give it clear advantages for housing industrial-sized works of art. It was converted by leading Canadian architects Lett/Smith; all that’s missing is a glass structure addition to the exterior of the building to house a café offering outstanding lakefront views. Inside, new directional graphics by Bruce Mau will add new freshness.

For Mr. Baerwaldt, whose academic training was in urban sociology and urban design, not art history, taking the job was a chance to co-direct gallery programming, to showcase conceptually groundbreaking creative work from around the world. Since his arrival, he has curated, among others, Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller; The Paradise Institute, originally produced for the Canadian Pavilion at the 2001 Venice Biennale; Ask the Dust, the first international touring exhibition of The Royal Art Lodge, a group of young Canadian artists who, together and separately, have begun to achieve recognition around the world.

With an increased audience for exhibitions of contemporary art over the past ten years, companies have caught on to the marketability of contemporary art as a way to stay at the leading edge of cultural trends. Companies have offered support by endowing museums, sponsoring exhibitions and even buying the art. The Power Plant has worked with corporate and media sponsors on a number of shows, including the Power Ball, “Toronto’s art party extraordinaire.” By associating their brand with an experience, companies can engage their clients and employees in meaningful dialogue, which in turn can help them create brand communities that enrich their business. Contemporary art covers a wide demographic, from students to major corporates. A great starting point is a visit to The Power Plant.

PAUL ROSS

Sit On It

It’s been a few years since you were on your bike, any bike for that matter. Those long winding rides through the neighbourhood and parks are all distant memories. Times do change. Today, some bikes are light enough to pick up with two fingers. Enter carbon fibre. This light, durable material has been all the buzz the last few years and Selle Italia has made a saddle of said carbon fibre and weaved it with kevlar. A new usage for body armour. Weighing in at 65 grams, the question then becomes is it actually comfortable?

Once you breakthrough those saddle sores, bums pardon me, crotch- es the world over will sing its praises. Over time the seat becomes flexible enough that it may feel like it’s moulding to your body shape. Made only for roadies, this may not get you to the finish line in Paris, but it may get you the additional cool points to cross some kind of line. Remember when you thought that banana seat was the be all to end all? *Michael N. Sinanan*



Willow Stream

Earth, Fire, Water, Wood... are not Aristotle’s elements. This fragrance quartet constitutes the basic elements in the Willow Stream product line found at and made for Fairmont’s eponymously titled Willow Stream spas across the country. The products themselves (a candle, massage oil, body lotion, and bath crystals) are truly amazing but these botanicals have also managed to capture the essence of the spa scent, bottle it, then offer it for sale. If you are one of those spa junkies ever-searching for the elixir that will reproduce that spa fragrance at home, this is definitely it. www.willowstream.com LR

