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The Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery Announces Lead Exhibitions for 2023

New works by artists Abdelkader Benchamma, Amartey Golding, Brenda Draney, Jen Aitken, and Ron Terada make their debut at Canada's leading public gallery devoted to contemporary art



Jen Aitken, *Caelif*, 2019, fiber-reinforced concrete. Courtesy the artist, Nicholas Metivier Gallery, Toronto, and Trépanier Baer, Calgary. Adbdelkader Benchamma, Art Brussels, Belgium, courtesy of the artist and Templon, Paris — Brussels — New York, photo: © Isabelle Arthuis. Ron Terada, *TL; DR 1* (detail), 2017–2018, acrylic on canvas, 26 paintings, courtesy Catriona Jeffries, Vancouver, photo: Site Photography.

The Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery, Toronto, has announced the five lead exhibitions for its 2023 program. Beginning February 3, 2023, the gallery will showcase new commissions and work by celebrated and emerging artists who are shaping cultural conversations in Canada and abroad. The 2023 program includes exhibitions of **Abdelkader Benchamma** (born in Mazamet; based in Paris and Montpellier), **Amartey Golding** (born in London; based in Norwich), **Brenda Draney** (born in Sawridge First Nation, Treaty 8; based in Edmonton), **Jen Aitken** (born in Edmonton; based in Toronto), and **Ron Terada** (born and based in Vancouver). Further details will be announced in the coming months.

“As 2022 comes to a close, we are thrilled to share a preview of our program for the year ahead, one that represents The Power Plant’s commitment to diverse art and ideas,” said Carolyn Vesely, Interim Director. *“This year, we are proud to continue this mission with a spotlight on voices shaping artistic practices in Canada today. As a non-collecting institution, The Power Plant constantly seeks to expand the reach of the artists we work with through our commissioning program and touring exhibitions. We look forward to sharing their thought-provoking works with audiences across Canada and internationally, in 2023 and beyond.”*

2022–23 marks The Power Plant’s 35th anniversary. In celebration of this milestone, the gallery will present *in parallel*, a two-part presentation of twelve Ontario-based artists that evokes The Power Plant’s inaugural

exhibition in 1987 — *Toronto: A Play of History (Jeu d'histoire)*. Both presentations will highlight the tensions, hopes, and the transformative spaces artists create in the unfolding aftermath of settler colonialism. The first iteration runs February 3 – May 13, 2022, followed by a second June – September 2023.

About the 2023 Program

Winter 2023

Brenda Draney (b. 1976, Sawridge First Nation, Treaty 8; based in Edmonton, Canada)

Drink from the river

February 3 – May 14, 2023

Painter Brenda Draney's largest institutional exhibition to date, *Drink from the river*, features a selection of existing and newly commissioned works that examine the complex nature of intimacy. Referencing her own memories and experiences living in Edmonton, the artist explores the layered meanings embedded in everyday motifs and situations. However, instead of simply reproducing these elements, Draney is interested in addressing how their meanings can shift when filtered through individual interpretation. By deliberately leaving blank spaces in her paintings, Draney leaves room for viewers to deeply reflect on the subject matter presented. Audiences are invited to connect to the wide range of emotions tied to the nuanced experience of intimacy that the artist explores in her works.

Drink from the river features nearly 40 works by Draney, including five previously unexhibited paintings. The presentation will be accompanied by a publication co-produced by Arts Club of Chicago.

Curated by Jacqueline Kok, Nancy McCain, and Bill Morneau Curatorial Fellow, 2021–23.



Brenda Draney, *Visit*, 2021, oil on canvas. Brenda Draney, *Toast*, 2022, oil on canvas.
Courtesy Catriona Jeffries, Vancouver, photo: Site Photography.

Amartey Golding (b. 1988, London, UK; based in Norwich, UK)

February 3 – May 14, 2023

Amartey Golding's first solo exhibition in Canada features three films, including the debut of *Chainmail 3* (2018) from the artist's Chainmail film series and *Bring me to Heal 1 and 2* (2021). Screenings are accompanied by two installations of garments featured in the films, as well as photographs that further explore their imagery and narratives.

In this exhibition, Golding's practice brings together film, photography, writing, fashion, and chainmail and wig making to explore processes of healing from generational trauma, considering how the fear of the future can justify the inflicting of trauma. This immersive and self-implicating exhibition specifically presents the artist's engagement with intimacy, vulnerability, and physical strength through the materials, movements, oral storytelling, and sounds, which offer the viewers multiple entry points to a plethora of meaning. Both garments took lengthy, meticulous processes to be created. To create the hair garment,

intricately designed by Golding in collaboration with hair artist Kevin Fortune and using the hair of potentially thousands of people, each strand was hand knotted and tended to by a group of makers in the name of collective healing. Together, they created the largest full body, hand-knotted human hair wig currently known in the world. Drawing on Amarte's need to protect his younger brother who chose to be in the British Army and the anxiety of not being able to do so, the chainmail suit is by far the largest he created to date. Weighing 166kg and stuffed with horsehair, it took Amarte and four studio staff five months to complete. Golding's artistic process is a communal act that pushes all those involved to imagine beyond what they believe they are capable of doing while inviting viewers to take time to engage with and be moved by the depth of his practice.

Curated by Joséphine Denis, TD Curator of Education and Outreach Fellow, 2021–23.



Amarte Golding, still from *Chainmail 3*, 2018. Courtesy the artist.

in parallel

February 3 – May 14, 2023

in parallel brings together six artists from Tkaronto—the Mohawk word from which Toronto originates, meaning “the place in the water where the trees are standing”—to explore how visual documentation and cultural practices can reclaim narratives of their respective communities despite colonialism’s persistence. Featuring work by **Rouzbeh Akhbari, Joi T. Arcand, Aylan Couchie, Simon Fuh, Anique Jordan,** and **Julia Rose Sutherland**, the exhibition looks at each artist’s pursuit of alternative histories and how their work reflects a desire to preserve connections to lands, peoples, and ways of living that mold who they are. In doing so, it also highlights the impact of oppressive forces on numerous communities around the world that continue to resist erasure by undertaking land-based resistance. The exhibition is anchored by two new commissions: a vinyl installation by Simon Fuh and reimagination of the Fleck Clerestory by Joi T. Arcand.

in parallel is the first of two exhibitions that present the work of twelve local artists, evoking The Power Plant’s inaugural exhibition, *Toronto: A Play of History (Jeu d’histoire)*, 1987. The first iteration highlights the intimate connections between land and body, while expressing each artist’s desire for changes that can lead to an intercommunal future. The second, centred on language-based forms of resistance, will be presented as part of The Power Plant’s Summer 2023 program and feature work by **Ella Gonzales, Sami Tsang, Erdem Taşdelen, Shaheer Zazai, Micah Lexier,** and **Matt Nish-Lapidus**.

Curated by Joséphine Denis, TD Curator of Education and Outreach Fellow, 2021–23; and Jacqueline Kok, Nancy McCain, and Bill Morneau Curatorial Fellow, 2021–23.

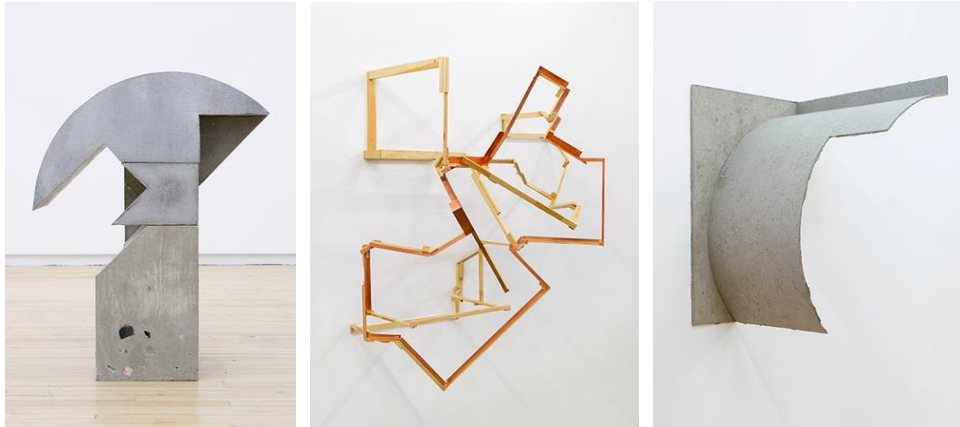
Summer 2023

Jen Aitken (b. 1985, Edmonton, Canada; based in Toronto, Canada)

June – September 2023

Jen Aitken's solo exhibition at The Power Plant—the artist's first major institutional presentation—features both new commissions and a selection of concrete sculptures from the past several years. Primarily working in sculpture, Aitken's practice considers how we relate to space, form, and material as we move through our urban environment. Common building materials—concrete, wood, and fiberglass—are formed into unexpected and ambiguous configurations that engage with the viewer's body and interact with the gallery's architecture. The exhibition also debuts her first video installation, animating the geometric shapes of her sculptures into an immersive prelude to the exhibition.

Curated by Jacqueline Kok, Nancy McCain and Bill Morneau Curatorial Fellow, 2021–23.



Jen Aitken, *Balopine*, 2015, concrete and foam. Jen Aitken, *Knot 1*, 2021, pine trim and lumber, framing lumber, spruce plywood, copper, and brass hardware. Jen Aitken, *Phano*, 2017, papier maché, concrete, plywood, and gesso. Courtesy the artist, Nicholas Metivier Gallery, Toronto, and Trépanier Baer, Calgary.

Ron Terada (b. 1969, Vancouver, Canada; based in Vancouver, Canada)
June – September 2023

Ron Terada's exhibition at The Power Plant is comprised of paintings from *TL; DR*, his most recent series of work, produced in five parts since 2017. The texts rendered onto the surface of the various size canvases are found; short headlines taken verbatim from a single website, *The Verge*, in Cheltenham, the typeface used by *The New York Times* for their print edition headlines, as well as for the outdoor outfitter L.L.Bean's logo and any bill in the United States Congress. *The Verge* was founded in 2011 to examine how technology will change life in the future for a massive mainstream audience. Its original editorial insight was that technology had migrated from the far fringes of the culture to the absolute center as mobile technology created a new generation of digital consumers. The paintings' titles are also the texts of the works, followed by the date, hour, and minute that they were originally posted online.

Terada has been producing series of found text paintings since 1993. Their sources include commercial gallery ads, high school yearbook quotes, Jeopardy clues, the subject index from a book about art world finance, and the full text of an artist's memoir. The paintings on *TL; DR* might seem familiar—their texts are not precisely click bait, not quite *Buzzfeed*, *Upworthy*, or *Breitbart*—but their headlines dabble in that logic, clearly functioning under a capital of clicks. This form of communication is known, and it is dense with potential, producing texts that are simultaneously earnest, self-satirical, frightening, meaningless, and absurd.

Curated by Adelina Vlas, Head of Curatorial Affairs at The Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery.



Ron Terada, *TL; DR 1*, 2017–2018, acrylic on canvas, 26 paintings, 120 x 384 in. (305 x 975 cm). Photo: SITE Photography. Courtesy Catriona Jeffries, Vancouver.

Fall 2023

Abdelkader Benchamma (b. 1975, Mazamet, France; based in Paris and Montpellier)
October 2023 – January 2024

In his first major solo presentation in Canada, and most comprehensive to date in North America, Abdelkader Benchamma presents drawings on canvas and on paper, as well as a site-specific work as part of The Power Plant's Fleck Clerestory Commission Program.

Inspired by cosmology, science fiction, and existentialist theatre and literature, Benchamma's works explore our understanding of physical reality, time, and space. In his drawings, the artist renders visible the unstable, enigmatic natural phenomena associated with the genesis of the cosmos, animated by his fusing of techniques, including printing, engraving, landscape, and scientific drawings. These primarily black-and-white works evoke flowing abstract environments that envelop visitors and respond to the gallery's architectural features. Benchamma's works in this exhibition probe the ways in which humans psychologically experience immense geological structures such as caves and glaciers. At other times, he shifts the scale of his drawings from the monumental to the miniscule, highlighting cellular or alchemic reactions invisible to the naked eye. In so doing, he conflates our interior and exterior realms, prompting us to question our relationships to each other and the wonder of the natural world that surrounds us. Because he often works in a site-specific manner, the results are fleeting—they exist for a brief moment before being replaced or painted over. Never simply representations of people, places, or events, Benchamma's drawings poetically capture a universe that is forever in flux.

Curated by Noor Alé, Associate Curator at The Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery.



Abdelkader Benchamma, *Engramme* à la Galerie Templon, Paris – Beaubourg, 16 mars – 11 mai 2019, photo: © Diane Arques / ADAGP, 2019. Abdelkader Benchamma, *L'horizon des événements* au Centquatre, Paris, 24 mars – 6 mai 2018, photo: Gregoire Edouard.

Touring Exhibitions

Nathan Carson: *Cut from the same cloth*

Woodstock Art Gallery: February 18 – June 24, 2023

Southern Alberta Art Gallery: July 8 – September 30, 2023

Manuel Mathieu: *World Discovered Under Other Skies*

Owens Art Gallery, Sackville, New Brunswick: September 29 – December 8, 2023

Sasha Huber: *YOU NAME IT*

Turku Museum, Finland: June – September 2023

About The Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery

The Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery is Canada's leading public gallery devoted exclusively to contemporary visual art. It is a vital forum for the advanced artistic culture of our time and offers an exceptional facility and professional support to diverse living artists, while also engaging equally diverse audiences. The Power Plant pursues its activities through exhibitions, publications, and public programming that incorporate other areas of culture when they intersect with visual art. For more information, please visit thepowerplant.org.

Admission to The Power Plant and its programs is *ALL YEAR, ALL FREE*, presented by BMO Bank of Montreal Financial Group.

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