

- [Home](#)
- [News](#)
- [Comment](#)
- [Features](#)
- [Arts](#)
- [Science](#)
- [Sports](#)
- [Photo](#)
- [Video](#)
- [Magazine](#)
- [About](#)
- [Volunteer](#)
- [Contact](#)

[Navigation](#)

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- [Features](#)
- [Arts](#)
- [Science](#)
- [Sports](#)
- [Photo](#)
- [Video](#)
- [Magazine](#)

This is our house

Various facilities take on name “U of T House” during Pan Am games

By [Antoine Mondoloni](#) on July 8, 2015

Published: 8:19 am, 8 July 2015

under [Sports](#)

Emma Kikulis/THE VARSITY



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With the Pan American games only days away, Toronto — and especially U of T — has gone into preparation overdrive, rushing to ensure that the city's venues are in perfect competition shape to host some of the world's best athletes.

As one of the largest universities in Canada, it's not all that surprising that a significant number of U of T alumni and student-athletes will take part in one of the greatest international competitions the Americas have to offer. In order to commemorate the achievements and enduring sacrifices of our athletes, a number of U of T buildings will bear the honorary title of "U of T House" for the duration of the games. As such, the Goldring Centre, the Instructional Centre at U of T's Scarborough campus (UTSC), and the Eastern Common Room at Hart House will host a variety of events and exhibitions designed to pique the interest of students and visitors, and promote the games and U of T.

Changing the Change-Room

If you've visited any of the athletic facilities on campus recently, you'd be hard-pressed not to notice the multiple banners and posters advertising U of T's newest initiative, the "Change Room Project". The first of its kind at U of T, the Change Room Project endeavours to tackle issues of equality in sport "[The Change Room Project] bring[s] awareness to the barriers to participation that are still facing LGBTQ people in our communities" said Virginia Ise, communications manager at Hart House, "The stigma [still] exists in people's minds about who should be able to compete in mega-games." This news should come at no surprise considering the amount of homophobic rhetoric that surrounded the 2014 winter Olympics in Sochi, as well as the amount of recent controversy surrounding former Olympic gold medal winner Caitlyn Jenner.

Thus came the decision for U of T to collaborate with Dr. Caroline Fusco, a professor from the Kinesiology and Physical Education department, in order to help conduct interviews with U of T students, student-athletes, staff, and faculty regarding their experiences in the locker room. With hope, added Ise, "the project will bring more awareness and reflection in an effort to shift both the social and physical aspects of locker rooms to be more inclusive."

Athleticism meets Art

The second major “U of T House” exhibition that will be unveiled for the Pan Am games is the aptly titled “The Flesh of the World” exhibit. Inspired by the Pan Am games and the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty — a philosopher of phenomenology — the exposition will investigate intrinsically complex views of the human body — including its behaviour during athletic activity. “The works span across various media” added Ise, “including film and video installation, sculptures, framed photographs, drawings, paintings and performances.”. The exhibition will be hosted at the Justina M. Barnicke Gallery at Hart House and the Doris McCarthy Gallery at UTSC.

Finally, what would a major American sporting competition be without a little “Music from the Americas”? In the exhibition, live music will be performed every day of the week during the games from one to two PM in the Map Room at Hart House — showcasing music from a variety of Americana backgrounds; from blues, jazz, and R&B, to the more exotic Zydeco, Cajun, and Salsa — to cite but a few.

For Andrew Arifuzzaman, the chief administrative officer at UTSC, the “U of T House” projects present truly exciting opportunities for students and Torontonians alike, “The [U of T House] experience [is] something that people do not normally experience” said Arifuzzaman, of UTSC’s commitment to organize — on top of these exhibitions — spaces equipped with couches and televisions for students to view the games together, “It will be a place [for students] to come get the U of T flavour of the Pan Am games”, he concludes.

From this initiative alone, its clear that U of T is going the extra mile for the Pan Am games. Major sporting competitions like these constitute an unbelievable experience, and are a rare occurrence, so go out, enjoy the games and the incredible exhibitions U of T has put together — it’s worth it.

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