



**Ta-Nehisi Coates, Mira Nair, Tania Bruguera,
Damian Woetzel, Tom Finkelpearl, Toshi Reagon, Lil Buck, Cristela Alonzo,
Jose Antonio Vargas, Sonia Sanchez, among others
to Kick Off Park Avenue Armory's 2017
*Interrogations of Form Series***

**Created in Collaboration with The Aspen Institute Arts Program
First Interrogation: *Culture in a Changing America*
Will Feature Conversations, Artist Salons, and Performances**

Sunday, February 19, 2017

New York, NY – February 6, 2017 – Park Avenue Armory today announced additional details for the launch of its 2017 *Interrogations of Form* series, that will convene artists, thought-leaders, and scholars to engage in a vigorous, multi-dimensional exploration of contemporary cultural landscapes. Hosted in partnership with the Aspen Institute Arts Program, the program, *Culture in a Changing America*, will be presented on February 19 and will feature an afternoon of conversations, artist salons and performances across a range of disciplines. Over the course of the day, the convening explores responses to issues surrounding genre, gender, race, and citizenship in the new political landscape, led by artists, public figures, and cultural leaders, including:

- **Nisha Agarwal**, Commissioner of Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, New York City
- **Cristela Alonzo**, creator of *Cristela* on ABC
- **Tania Bruguera**, Cuban performance artist exploring the relationship between art, activism, and social change
- **Lil Buck**, hip-hop choreographer and dancer specializing in Jookin', a native Memphis genre
- **Ta-Nehisi Coates**, author of bestsellers *Between the World and Me* and *The Beautiful Struggle*
- **Randy Cohen**, host of *Person Place Thing* and winner of four Emmy awards
- **Negin Farsad**, writer, comedian, director, and actress whose work addresses social justice and race
- **Tom Finkelpearl**, Commissioner of New York City Department of Cultural Affairs
- **Reggie (Regg Roc) Gray**, Armory Artist-in-Residence and pioneering Flex choreographer and dancer
- **Eric Liu**, writer and founder of Citizen University
- **Jason Moran**, jazz pianist and composer, and curator of the Armory's Artists Studio series
- **Mira Nair**, filmmaker and activist whose work engages economic, social, and culture spheres
- **Toshi Reagon**, singer and band leader of the BIGLovely and founder of the Word*Rock*Sword Festival
- **Sonia Sanchez**, poet and recipient of the national Visionary Leadership Award
- **Erika Wurth**, poet and writer who tells stories inspired by her Apache/Chickasaw/Cherokee heritage
- **Deborah Willis**, Professor and Chair of Photography & Imaging, NYU Tisch School of the Arts
- **Damian Woetzel**, Director of the Aspen Institute Arts Program and former principal dancer at the New York City Ballet
- **Jose Antonio Vargas**, journalist, filmmaker, and CEO of Define American and #EmergingUS

Culture in a Changing America will activate the Armory's historic period rooms, including the Board of Officers Room, Veterans Room, Parlor, Colonel's Reception Room, and Company Rooms on the second floor, with artistic interventions and dialogue across visual and performing arts, literature, film, TV, poetry, comedy, and spoken word, reflecting the open, multi-disciplinary approach for which the Armory is known. The day will culminate in a special edition of the live-interview show *Person Place Thing* hosted by writer and humorist Randy Cohen, who will be in conversation with author Ta-Nehisi Coates and poet Sonia Sanchez, and will feature music by members of the Ebony Hillbillies.

The series is part of the Armory's expanded public offerings as the groundbreaking organization enters its 10th year of programming, which includes talks and panel discussions that draw together artists, scholars, cultural leaders, and social visionaries to explore cultural and civic issues and ideas; use Armory productions as springboards for examining contemporary interests and concerns; and provoke audiences to think beyond conventional interpretations and perspectives of art.

"Launching this year's *Interrogations of Form* in collaboration with the Aspen Institute creates both context and resonance for our 2017 season, which opened with Julian Rosefeldt's *Manifesto*, a cinematic collage of reinterpreted artistic declarations that interrogate the gendered, social, and political contexts that shape artistic disruption; and closes with *KANATA*, a three-part theater work by Robert Lepage and the Théâtre du Soleil that confronts institutionalized mistreatment of indigenous peoples across Canada," said Rebecca Robertson, Executive Producer and President of Park Avenue Armory. "For more than a decade now, we have pushed artists and audiences to topple traditional boundaries of artistic expression. This expanded series builds upon this mission, deepening engagement with our audiences and drawing in leaders from across the artistic and social spectrum to examine our cultural moment more broadly and confront preconceived notions about the role of the arts in society."

"We are delighted to be partnering with Park Avenue Armory in this exploration of how arts and culture can be increasingly impactful in this challenging time," said Damian Woetzel, Director, Aspen Institute Arts Program. "Artists and art itself can and should be a leading force for progress and building understanding, and I hope our convening will provide a base built on common values as we move forward."

Additional upcoming programs at Park Avenue Armory include: *The Hairy Ape*, directed by Richard Jones in a reimagining of The Old Vic production for the Wade Thompson Drill Hall and starring Bobby Cannavale; *FLEXN Evolution*, dance performances and conversations envisioned by Reggie (Regg Roc) Gray and Peter Sellars that address critical issues of social justice; *Hansel and Gretel*, a new commission by Jacques Herzog, Pierre de Meuron, and Ai Weiwei that explores the meaning of publicly shared space in the era of surveillance; *Blank Out*, a 3D chamber opera based on the life and work of poet Ingrid Jonker by composer/director Michel van der Aa; Pierre Boulez's rarely performed spatial masterpiece *Répons* with Ensemble intercontemporain and led by Matthias Pintscher; *KANATA*, a commissioned, three-part theater work that confronts the treatment of indigenous peoples across Canada, directed and conceived by Robert Lepage and developed by Le Théâtre du Soleil and Ex Machina; and an annual series of eclectic and intimate concerts and conversations held in the Armory's head house spaces.

Interrogations of Form Series Launch: Culture in a Changing America

Session 1

What Makes an American?: The Culture of Citizenship

1:00pm – 2:00pm

Board of Officers Room

Nisha Agarwal, Commissioner, Mayor's Office of Immigration Affairs

Tania Bruguera, artist and Armory Artist-in-Residence

Sarah Lewis, author and assistant professor at Harvard University

Eric Liu, founder of Citizen University

Jose Antonio Vargas, journalist and activist

Tom Finkelpearl, Commissioner, Department of Cultural Affairs in New York City

Jose Antonio Vargas, Nisha Agarwal, Tania Bruguera and Sarah Lewis join moderator Eric Liu in a debate over the role of culture and the nature of citizenship in a changing America. Tom Finkelpearl concludes the session with a response.

Artist Salons

2:00pm – 4:00pm

Company C: Works by Carrie Mae Weems and guest artists Nyame O. Brown, Jennifer Hsu, Kambui Olujimi, Lava Thomas

The Colonels Room: Artworks by Elizabeth Cumbra, artist; curated by Deborah Willis, Chair of Department of Photography & Imaging at New York University, and Kalia Brooks, Curator and Adjunct Professor at New York University

The Parlor: Works on film by Paola Mendoza, actress and director

Staying Visible: The Power of Storytelling

2:00pm – 2:45pm

Company D

Introductory performance by Yosimar Reyes

Cristela Alonzo, creator of *Cristela* on ABC

Elizabeth Hutchinson, Associate Professor at Barnard College

Christopher Myers, children's book illustrator and artist

Erika Wurth, poet, writer, and Professor at Western Illinois University

Cristela Alonzo, Christopher Myers and Erika Wurth join moderator Elizabeth Hutchinson in a discussion about the essential role of the arts in preserving forgotten stories, collective memories, and fragile histories.

The Movement in Movement

3:00pm – 3:45pm

Company F

Lil Buck, Jookin' innovator

Reggie (Regg Roc) Gray, Flex pioneer

Damian Woetzel, Director of the Aspen Institutes Arts Program and former Principal Dancer of the New York City Ballet

Lil Buck and Regg Roc discuss and showcase their dance styles and how they are working for social progress through movement. Hosted by Damian Woetzel.

Session 2

Sounding Off: The Future of Music in America

4:00pm – 4:45pm

Board of Officers Room

Ric Leichtung, Talent Buyer at Webster Hall and Adhoc Founder

Jason Moran, composer and curator

Toshi Reagon, singer, musician, and composer

Davóné Tines, opera singer

Camille Zamora, opera singer and co-founder of Sing for Hope

Jason Moran, Toshi Reagon, Davóne Tines, and Camille Zamora join Ric Leichtung to discuss how music can lead, accompany, and inspire America now.

The session opens with a dedication of a “Sing for Hope” artist-designed piano for the Lenox Hill Neighborhood Women’s Shelter, and a special performance by Davóne Tines. The piano is part of the Sing for Hope Pianos Program, which each year places pianos on city streets for public use, before sending the instruments to community homes in schools, health facilities, and other sites around New York City.

Artist Salons

5:00pm – 7:00pm

Company C: Works by Carrie Mae Weems and guest artists Nyame O. Brown, Jennifer Hsu, Kambui Olujimi, Lava Thomas

The Colonels Room: Artworks by Elizabeth Columba, artist; curated by Deborah Willis, Chair of Department of Photography & Imaging at New York University, and Kalia Brooks, Curator and Adjunct Professor at New York University

The Parlor: Works on film by Paola Mendoza, actress and director

Where in the World is America?

5:00pm – 5:45pm

Board of Officers Room

Mira Nair, filmmaker and activist

Warrington Hudlin, President, Black Filmmaker Foundation

Mira Nair and Warrington Hudlin discuss the future of American cinema and its voice in the world, against a backdrop of our current reality.

Open Mic with Yosimar Reyes, Negin Farsad, and special guests

6:00pm – 6:45pm:

Company D

Karlyn Boens, Young Chicago Authors Poet and Teaching Artist

Negin Farsad, comedian

Ashley Gong, National Student Poet

Madeleine LeCesne, National Student Poet N’kosi Nkululeko, 2016 NYC Youth Poet Laureate

Yosimar Reyes, slam poet and performance artist

Yosimar Reyes hosts an open-mic session featuring spoken-word poetry that challenges myths about identity in America. Reyes is joined at the mic by youth poets Karlyn Boens, Madeleine LeCesne, Ashley Gong, and N’kosi Nkululeko. Negin Farsad will conclude the session with her pioneering brand of social justice comedy.

Session 3

Person Place Thing

7:00pm – 8:00pm:

Veterans Room

Ta-Nehisi Coates, journalist and author

Randy Cohen, host

Sonia Sanchez, poet, playwright, activist

The Ebony Hillbillies, musicians

Person Place Thing is an interview show based on the idea that people are particularly engaging when they speak not directly about themselves but about something they care about. Guests talk about one person, one place, and one thing that are important to them. The results are surprising stories from great thinkers of our time. Ta-Nehisi Coates and Sonia Sanchez debate these topics with host Randy Cohen. The show will conclude with a musical performance by members of the string band The Ebony Hillbillies.

A Park Avenue Armory and The Aspen Institute Arts Program collaboration

TICKETS

Visitors may purchase tickets to individual sessions or for the entire day.

Symposium Pass: \$40

Includes Sessions 1, 2, and 3

Session 1, 2, or 3: \$15

Tickets can be purchased at armoryonpark.org.

SPONSORSHIP

Citi; Pershing Square Capital Management, LP; and Bloomberg Philanthropies are the Armory's 2017 season sponsors.

Support for Park Avenue Armory's artistic season has been generously provided by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the Altman Foundation, The Harold and Mimi Steinberg Charitable Trust, the Howard Gilman Foundation, the Fan Fox and Leslie R. Samuels Foundation, The Shubert Foundation, the Marc Haas Foundation, The Kaplen Brothers Fund, the Juliet Lea Hillman Simonds Foundation, the Leon Levy Foundation, the May and Samuel Rudin Family Foundation, and the Isak and Rose Weinman Foundation.

ABOUT PARK AVENUE ARMORY

Part palace, part industrial shed, Park Avenue Armory fills a critical void in the cultural ecology of New York by enabling artists to create, students to explore, and audiences to experience, unconventional work that cannot be mounted in traditional performance halls and museums. With its soaring 55,000-square-foot Wade Thompson Drill Hall—reminiscent of 19th-century European train stations—and an array of exuberant period rooms, the Armory offers a platform for creativity across all art forms. Together, these and other spaces within the historic building utilized for arts programming comprise the Thompson Arts Center, named in recognition of the Thompson family's ongoing support of the institution.

Since its first production in September 2007, the Armory has organized and commissioned immersive performances, installations, and cross-disciplinary collaborations in its vast drill hall that defy traditional categorization and challenge artists to push the boundaries of their practice. In its historic period rooms, the Armory presents small-scale performances and programs, including its acclaimed Recital Series, which showcases musical talent from across the globe within the intimate salon setting of the Board of Officers Room; and the new Artists Studio series in the newly restored Veterans Room, which features innovative artists and artistic pairings that harken back to the imaginative collaboration and improvisation of the

original group of designers who conceived the space. The Armory also offers robust arts education programs at no cost to underserved New York City public school students, engaging them with the institution's artistic programming and the building's history and architecture.

Programmatic highlights from the Armory's first 10 years include Bernd Alois Zimmermann's harrowing *Die Soldaten*, in which the audience moved "through the music"; *the event of a thread*, a site-specific installation by Ann Hamilton; the final performances of the Merce Cunningham Dance Company across three separate stages; *WS* by Paul McCarthy, a monumental installation of fantasy, excess, and dystopia; an immersive *Macbeth* set in a Scottish heath and henge by Rob Ashford and Kenneth Branagh; a profound and radically inclusive staging of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* staged by Peter Sellars and performed by Sir Simon Rattle and the Berliner Philharmoniker; and Louis Andriessen's *De Materie* in a highly imaginative staging by director Heiner Goebbels that included floating zeppelins and a flock of 100 sheep.

Concurrent with its artistic program, the Armory has undertaken an ongoing \$210-million revitalization of its historic building, designed by architects Herzog & de Meuron. www.armoryonpark.org.

ABOUT THE ASPEN INSTITUTE ARTS PROGRAM

The Aspen Institute Arts Program was established to support and invigorate the role of arts and culture in public life through initiatives, public and private convenings, and strategy work across the United States and globally. Directed by Damian Woetzel, it brings together artists, advocates, educators, foundations, government officials, and others to exchange ideas and develop policies and programs that strengthen the reciprocal relationship between the arts and society. www.aspeninstitute.org/programs/arts-program/

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