



CHRISTIAN BOLTANSKI CREATES MONUMENTAL NEW INSTALLATION FILLING PARK AVENUE ARMORY'S 55,000-SQUARE-FOOT DRILL HALL

Opening May 14, *No Man's Land* is the Armory's Second Annual Fine Art Commission, Inviting Contemporary Artists to Create Site-Specific Work in Response to the Historic Space



Installation view of *No Man's Land* by Christian Boltanski at Park Avenue Armory.
Photo by James Ewing.

New York, NY, May 13, 2010 – French artist Christian Boltanski has created a monumental new work for Park Avenue Armory's soaring 55,000-square-foot Wade Thompson Drill Hall, filling the space with thousands of pieces of discarded clothing and a soundtrack of reverberating heartbeats. This installation is Boltanski's largest and most ambitious project ever staged in the United States—an affecting and poetic spectacle that explores concepts of human identity, memory, and loss.

On view from May 14 – June 13, 2010, Boltanski's *No Man's Land* is the second project in Park Avenue Armory's annual commissioning program, responding to the Armory's rich history and the immense volume of its drill hall.

"Christian Boltanski is one of France's most important contemporary artists, and this is the first opportunity for American audiences to experience his work on such an incredible scale," stated Rebecca Robertson, President of Park Avenue Armory. "The goal of our annual commissioning program is to give artists the opportunity to respond to the Armory's unusual character and enormous space to create works not possible in traditional galleries or theaters. The drill hall becomes part of the work, not just a container for it. In contrast to the exuberance and playfulness of the Ernesto Neto commission from last year, the installation by Boltanski is an emotional contemplation of humanity, mortality, and individuality."

Upon entering the Wade Thompson Drill Hall, visitors are faced with a massive 66-foot-long wall of stacked oxidized biscuit tins that obstructs their view of the space and diverts their path. Behind this wall is an eerie landscape of discarded clothing, organized in 45 rectangular plots and culminating in a 25-foot-high mountain of garments. A five-story crane with a large construction claw continuously grabs clumps of clothing from the mountain and encourages visitors to consider the role of chance and fate in all human

experience. The crane hoists these garments 50 feet in the air, and then drops them so that the individual pieces flutter down back into the massive pile. In addition to the mechanical noises of the crane and claw, the work is further animated by the pounding sound of thousands of human heartbeats that resounds throughout the cavernous space.

"*No Man's Land* is a vision reminiscent of Gustav Doré's famous illustrations of Dante's *Inferno* that continues Boltanski's exploration of humanity's capacity for evil," stated Tom Eccles, Executive Director of the Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College and curator of the exhibition. "Boltanski himself compares the claw to 'chance' or life 'as a game of dice.'"

Adjacent to the drill hall, in one of the Armory's historic rooms, visitors to *No Man's Land* are invited to contribute their own heartbeats to Boltanski's ongoing project, the *Archives du Coeur*. Since 2005, Boltanski has been collecting recordings of heartbeats from around the world, to be stored for posterity on the remote Japanese island of Teshima. In addition, the Armory has organized an exhibition of artist books created by Boltanski and will be screening the documentary film *Les vies possibles de Christian Boltanski* throughout the duration of the installation. The full schedule of related programs confirmed to date follows below.

No Man's Land is a companion piece to *Personnes*, an installation at the Grand Palais in Paris that opened in January 2010 as part of *Monumenta*. Both installations draw upon a shared vocabulary and materials, yet take on much of their meaning from the specific building and city within which each is created. In another version, the work will be presented June 23 – September 19, 2010, at the Hangar de Biccoca in Milan.

About Christian Boltanski

Christian Boltanski is considered one of France's greatest contemporary artists, noted for his installations, photography, and film that explore concepts of identity, memory, and loss. Born in occupied Paris in 1944, Boltanski spent his formative years in post-war France and was deeply influenced by the Holocaust. Throughout his 40-year career, Boltanski has consistently transformed found materials and photographic images into powerful and elegiac installations that ask viewers to examine how we remember and what we choose to forget.

Recently selected to represent France in the 2011 Venice Biennale, Boltanski has exhibited his work at major museums around the world and has been recognized with notable international arts awards, including the "Créateurs sans frontières" award for visual arts by Cultures France and Japan's Praemium Imperiale. Recent solo exhibitions have included the Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein (2009), Magasin 3, Stockholm (2008), and La Maison Rouge, Paris (2008). His work has also been the focus of major exhibitions at the Whitechapel Art Gallery, London (1990), New Museum, New York (1988), The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (1988), and Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris (1984). It is also featured in the permanent collections of Museum of Modern Art, New York; Walker Art Center; Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; Tate Modern; and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

Boltanski currently lives and works in Malakoff, France. He is represented by Marian Goodman Gallery in New York and Paris.

Public Programs

In conjunction with the installation, Park Avenue Armory has organized a range of public programs, including artist talks and events and activities for children and families. Programs include:

- *Family Programming* - Saturdays, May 15, May 22, and May 29, at 12:30 and 1:30pm.
Teaching artists lead special arts education sessions for families with children ages 6-11 that encourage observation, reflection, dialogue, and art making.
- *Artist Talk: Christian Boltanski in conversation with Luc Sante* - Sunday, May 16, at 2:00pm.
Christian Boltanski and noted writer Luc Sante discuss Boltanski's significant body of work and his approach to the art-making process. Pre-registration is required. Boltanski will sign copies of *Christian Boltanski* by Catherine Grenier (Flammarion, 2010) after the conversation.
- *DAWN: A Performance Event within "No Man's Land"* - Thursday, June 3, at 7:30pm
A unique musical event composed by long-time Boltanski collaborator Franck Krawczyk, *DAWN* will be performed to accompany *No Man's Land* by the Argento Chamber Ensemble, made up of a vocal soloist, a choir, a wind quintet, an electric guitar player, and a saxophonist. The ensemble will present this one-time-only event from within the installation—moving through the drill hall and balconies as they perform. There will be an open rehearsal on June 2 at 6:00pm. Support provided by CulturesFrance, Cultural Services of the French Embassy, the FACE Foundation (French-American Cultural Exchange), the Sacem Foundation, and Agnès b. Endowment Fund.
- *The Book As Witness* - On view during open hours throughout installation period.
A special exhibition of artist books created by Christian Boltanski and curated by Michal Jachula will highlight Boltanski's practice of focusing on individual and collective memory through portraits of people, archives and inventories. The exhibition is on view in the Armory's historic Library along with recently published books about Boltanski and his work. Visitors are invited to peruse the books to learn more about Boltanski's work. A selection of books is also available for purchase.
- *Film Screening: Les vies possibles de Christian Boltanski* - On view during open hours throughout installation period.
A 52-minute documentary film on Christian Boltanski, including never-before-seen archival footage, provides visitors with first-hand insight to the major themes in the artist's practice from throughout his career. Among other projects, Boltanski describes his ambitious ongoing *Archives du Coeur*, which will bring together tens of thousands of heartbeats on a remote island in Japan. Directed by Heinz Peter Schwerfel, the film is on view in the Armory's Mary Divver Room.

For a complete schedule of programs please visit <http://www.armoryonpark.org/>.

Installation Organization and Credits

Installation made possible by The Pershing Square Foundation and The Rockefeller Foundation NYC Cultural Innovation Fund, with additional support from the Booth Ferris Foundation, Bloomberg, Estrellita and Daniel Brodsky, The Grand Marnier Foundation, Kenneth Kuchin, ALTOUR, The Lauder Foundation/Leonard and Evelyn Lauder Fund, Cultural Services of the French Embassy, CulturesFrance, and the Robert Lehman Foundation. This program is supported, in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, in partnership with the City Council. Special thanks to the Marian Goodman Gallery.

No Man's Land is a companion piece to *Personnes*, an installation at the Grand Palais in Paris that opened in January 2010 as part of *Monumenta*, an annual initiative of the Ministère de la culture et communication, co-produced by the Centre national des arts plastiques, the Grand Palais and the Réunion des musées nationaux.

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, and the public to experience, unconventional work that could not otherwise 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 array of exuberant period rooms, the Armory invites artists to draw upon its grand scale and distinctive character to both inspire and inform their work.

Since its first production in September 2007—Aaron Young's *Greeting Card*, a 9,216-square-foot “action” painting created by the burned-out tire marks of ten choreographed motorcycles presented with Art Production Fund—the Armory has organized a series of immersive performances, installations, and works of art that have drawn critical and popular attention, among them: Bernd Zimmermann's opera *Die Soldaten*, Ariane Mnouchkine's *les Éphémères* and Declan Donnellan's *Boris Godunov*, as part of the 2008 and 2009 Lincoln Center Festivals; the 2008 Whitney Biennial with site-specific installations and performances by 37 artists; and an evening of Stravinsky's *Sacred Masterpieces* presented in association with Columbia University's Miller Theatre. In May 2009, the Armory launched its annual commissioning program with Ernesto Neto's *anthropodino*, transforming its drill hall into a multi-sensory labyrinth of fabric and spice. In summer 2011, the Armory and Lincoln Center Festival will welcome the Royal Shakespeare Company for a six-week residency where a troop of 45 actors will perform five of Shakespeare's plays in repertory on a full-scale replica of the Courtyard Theatre constructed in Wade Thompson Drill Hall.

Hours

Tuesday - Sunday: Noon - 7:30pm
Thursday: 2:00 – 9:30pm
Monday, May 31: Noon – 7:30 pm
(Closed all other Mondays)

643 Park Avenue (at 67th Street)
New York City

Admission

\$12 General Admission (ages 12 and older)
\$10 Seniors (62 and older), Students (with valid ID), Groups (8 or more)
FREE: Children (11 and under)
FREE: Park Avenue Armory Members

(to become a member call 212 616 3952)

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