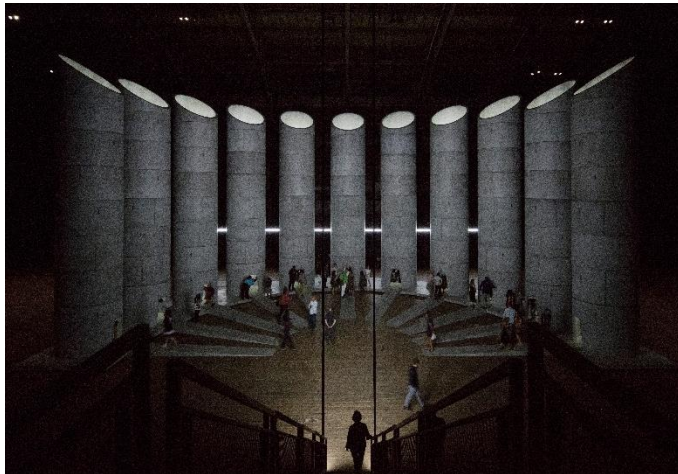




WORLD PREMIERE OF *AN OCCUPATION OF LOSS* BY TARYN SIMON  
EXPLORES RITUALS OF GRIEF AND MOURNING  
THROUGH SCULPTURE, SOUND, ARCHITECTURE, AND PERFORMANCE

Offering Distinct Daytime and Evening Experiences,  
Commission Premieres at Park Avenue Armory  
September 13 - 25, 2016



Installation view of *An Occupation of Loss*. Image © Naho Kubota

New York, NY - September 13, 2016 - Artist Taryn Simon has created a major new work for Park Avenue Armory's Wade Thompson Drill Hall, co-commissioned by the Armory and Artangel, London. A conceptual artist working primarily with image and text, Simon breaks form with her first-ever directed performance in a monumental sculptural setting, in which she considers the anatomy of grief and the intricate systems that we devise to contend with the irrationality of the universe. On view September 13 - 25, 2016 at the Armory, *An Occupation of Loss* will be presented by Artangel in London next year.

Each evening, more than 30 professional mourners from many parts of the globe activate the installation of 11 concrete pipes, each measuring 48 feet in height, designed by the artist in collaboration with architecture firm OMA/ Shohei Shigematsu. Like Zoroastrian "towers of silence," the installation makes explicit the never-ending human need to give structure to death in order to understand it.

Within each towering structure, the mourners enact rituals of grief that resound throughout the vast drill hall. Their rituals are orchestrated by the collective presence, absence, and movement of the audience within the installation. Each performance unfolds from a convergence of unique and unrepeatably factors. The mourners' recitations of tuneful, textual weeping include: Albanian laments, excavating "uncried words"; Venezuelan laments, safeguarding the soul's passage to the Milky Way; Greek laments, binding the story of life with afterlife in polyphonic poetics; and Yezidi laments, mapping a topography of exile. The professional status of these mourners—performing away and apart from their usual contexts—underscores the tension between authentic and staged emotion, spontaneity and script.

Simon's large-scale sculpture of inverted wells functions as a discordant instrument. During the daytime, visitors are invited to activate the sculpture with their own sounds, as a subtle drone created from recordings of the mourners' rituals provides echoes of the evening performances.

"Taryn has spent years working with anthropologists and scholars exploring the nature of death and grief across international borders, and the work she has created for our drill hall promises to challenge visitors to confront

preconceived notions about how we process pain and sorrow,” said Rebecca Robertson, President and Executive Producer of Park Avenue Armory. “We are thrilled to welcome visitors to the Armory to be integral parts of this ambitious work—alongside professional mourners throughout the night hours, and during the daytime activating the immense sculptural pipes with the sounds of visitors.”

Known for her research-driven approach, *An Occupation of Loss* builds upon Simon’s practice, which has yielded such impactful bodies of work as *The Innocents* (2002), *An American Index of the Hidden and Unfamiliar* (2007), *Contraband* (2010), and *A Living Man Declared Dead and Other Chapters I-XVIII* (2011), as well as the more whimsical *The Picture Collection* (2013), *Birds of the West Indies* (2013-14), and her most recent series of large-scale photographs and sculptures, *Paperwork and the Will of Capital* (2016).

*An Occupation of Loss* probes the intangible authority of the mourners in negotiating the boundaries of grief between living and dead, ancient and modern, performer and bereaved. The cacophony echoing from the installation disorients exactly who, or what, is being mourned. Without a body at the center, there is no object to receive the mediation of grief, no end to the recitation of loss.

About the creation of *An Occupation of Loss*, Taryn Simon says:

*“The abstract space that grief generates is marked by an absence of language. Individuals and communities can be transformed, redefined, reprogrammed. Results are unpredictable—the void that loss creates can be filled by religion, nihilism, militancy, benevolence.*

*“Discontent is publicly performed in the act of lamentation. The bereaved grant the mourners the authority to occupy, negotiate, and shape their loss. The mourners control a psychological experience by directing and embodying the emotion of others. Despite this authority, the mourners commanding this abstract terrain have often been marginalized by governments, economic systems, and orthodoxy.*

*“Visually and sonically, I kept gravitating toward the form of a well, but I wanted it to be super-terrestrial and have height instead of depth while retaining the echo, the reflection, and the vertigo.”*

## INSTALLATION DATES AND PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE

*An Occupation of Loss* is on view at Park Avenue Armory September 13 through September 25, 2016. The mourners will activate the installation each evening from Tuesday through Sunday for a series of 50-minute performances. The installation will also be open to the public during the daytime, when visitors will be invited to activate the sculptures with their own sounds and performances.

*An Occupation of Loss*

World Premiere

September 13 – 25, 2016

Performances Tuesdays – Sundays at 6:20 pm, 7:10 pm, 8:00 pm, 8:50 pm, 9:40 pm, 10:30 pm, 11:20 pm

Daytime hours Tuesdays (with the exception of Tuesday, September 13) – Sundays from 12pm – 4 pm

Artistic Concept and Direction: Taryn Simon

Installation Design and Architecture: Taryn Simon in collaboration with OMA/ Shohei Shigematsu

Lighting Design: Urs Schönebaum

Commissioned by Park Avenue Armory and Artangel.  
General admission for daytime viewing of installation costs \$10 for adults.  
Tickets for the performances start at \$45.  
More information available at [www.armoryonpark.org](http://www.armoryonpark.org) or (212) 933-5812.

## ARTIST TALK

*Taryn Simon and Homi K. Bhabha in Conversation*

Saturday, September 24 at 6:00pm

Tickets: \$15

Members: \$12

Renowned scholar Homi K. Bhabha joins artist Taryn Simon to discuss the complexities of creating *An Occupation of Loss*.

Homi K. Bhabha is the Anne F. Rothenberg Professor of the Humanities, Director of the Mahindra Humanities Center, and Senior Advisor to the President and Provost at Harvard University. In addition to his most famous work, *The Location of Culture*, and essays for such publications as *Artforum*, *Critical Inquiry*, and *Art in America*, he has written many essays on contemporary artists. His forthcoming books will include a collection of essays on contemporary diasporic artists and another on culture, security, and globalization. He has lectured at MoMA, JAMM-Art and the Serpentine Gallery in London, at the 30th Bienal de Saõ Paulo Symposium in Brazil, and the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles. Bhabha is a past jury member of the Venice Biennale, serves on the Academic Committee for the Shanghai Power Station of Art, and holds honorary degrees from Université Paris 8, University College London, and Free University Berlin. In 2012 he was conferred the Government of India's Padma Bhushan Presidential Award in the field of literature and education, and received the Humboldt Research Prize in 2015.

## ABOUT TARYN SIMON

Taryn Simon (b. 1975) is a multidisciplinary artist working in photography, text, sculpture, and performance. Her practice involves rigorous research and investigation into the power and structure of secrecy and the precarious nature of survival. Often highlighting moments of collapse in authority and seemingly functional systems, she underscores our operational and emotional vulnerabilities. Simon's works have been the subject of exhibitions at Garage Museum of Contemporary Art, Moscow (2016); Jeu de Paume, Paris (2015); Ullens Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing (2013); Museum of Modern Art, New York (2012); Tate Modern, London (2011); Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin (2011); and Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2007). Permanent collections include Metropolitan Museum of Art, Tate Modern, the Guggenheim Museum, Centre Georges Pompidou, and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Her work is included in the 56<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale (2015). She is a graduate of Brown University and a Guggenheim Fellow. Simon lives and works in New York. [www.tarynsimon.com](http://www.tarynsimon.com)

## ABOUT OMA/ SHOHEI SHIGEMATSU

OMA is a leading international partnership practicing architecture, urbanism, and cultural analysis. Established in 2001, OMA New York has overseen the completion of the Seattle Central Library, the IIT Campus Center, the Prada New York Epicenter, and Milstein Hall at Cornell University. Shohei Shigematsu is a Partner at OMA and has led the firm's diverse portfolio in the Americas for the past decade. His designs for cultural venues currently in construction include a new museum in Quebec City and a multi-purpose venue for Faena's

Miami Beach district. His past artist collaborations include projects with Cai Guo Qiang, Marina Abramović, and Kanye West. In addition to *An Occupation of Loss*, Shohei designed this year's Costume Institute Spring exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. His urban and public space designs include a civic center in Bogota, Colombia; a post-Hurricane Sandy, urban water strategy for New Jersey; a food hub in Kentucky; and a mixed-use development in Los Angeles. He is also conducting a research studio titled *Alimentary Design* at the Harvard Graduate School of Design, investigating the intersection of food, architecture, and urbanism. <http://oma.eu>

## 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 19<sup>th</sup>-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. Programmatic highlights 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. The Armory also presents small-scale performances and programs in its historic period rooms, 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 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.

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](http://www.armoryonpark.org)

## ABOUT ARTANGEL

Artangel produces and presents extraordinary art in unexpected places in London, the UK and beyond. For over 30 years, Artangel has generated some of the most talked-about art of recent times, including projects with Clio Barnard, Jeremy Deller, Roger Hiorns, Michael Landy, Steve McQueen, Rachel Whiteread, Ryoji Ikeda, and PJ Harvey. Appearing anywhere from vacant apartments and stores, to subterranean vaults and London's night sky, Artangel produces art that challenges perceptions, surprises, inspires and wouldn't be possible within the confines of a gallery. [www.artangel.org.uk](http://www.artangel.org.uk)

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