



Jacques Herzog, Pierre de Meuron, and Ai Weiwei Collaborate on Site-Specific Installation  
Commissioned by Park Avenue Armory

*Hansel & Gretel* Examines the Changing Nature of Public Space  
In the Era of Surveillance



Mockup of installation detail of *Hansel & Gretel*. Photo by James Ewing.

New York, NY—June 7, 2017—Park Avenue Armory today unveiled a collaborative, site-specific commission by Jacques Herzog, Pierre de Meuron, and Ai Weiwei. The immersive, interactive installation, *Hansel & Gretel*, fills the Armory's Wade Thompson Drill Hall and extends into the first floor of the Head House, creating an eerie landscape permeated by modern-day surveillance. Placing visitors in the position of the observed and the observer, the multilayered work submerges audiences in an environment where their every movement is tracked and monitored.

Co-curated by Tom Eccles and Hans-Ulrich Obrist, the project is the 49<sup>th</sup> Drill Hall engagement to be mounted since Park Avenue Armory transformed the building into a cultural center for unconventional work, and follows such milestone installations as *tears become...streams become...* by Douglas Gordon and Hélène Grimaud (2014), *WS* by Paul McCarthy (2013), and *the event of a thread* by Ann Hamilton (2013). *Hansel & Gretel* also marks 15 years of collaboration between Herzog, de Meuron, and Ai, who have worked together on the 2012 Serpentine Gallery Pavilion and the National Stadium in Beijing,

created for the 2008 Summer Olympics and coined the "Bird's Nest" for its exterior façade of interwoven steel. Herzog & de Meuron are also currently leading the ongoing revitalization of the Armory's historic building, thus bringing a depth of knowledge of the Armory's physicality to this project.

"*Hansel & Gretel* extends dynamic creative synergies that exist between the practices of Jacques, Pierre, and Ai Weiwei and adds a new dimension to the imaginative, monumental work they've created together" said Pierre Audi, the Armory's Artistic Director. "Weiwei is an artist who has an innate understanding of the impact that built environments have on the artistic experience—as well as the direct experience of being watched 24/7. Jacques and Pierre bring deep experience of the emotional interplay between the public and private domain. Together they provide the ideal complement in pushing each other's practices."

The artists conjure up an environment that envelops visitors and transforms them into active elements in the work. Visitors make their way through the Armory's bunkers and are plunged into darkness until they encounter a 5-foot high bluff filling the cavernous space of the Drill Hall. As they navigate a disorienting terrain, their movement is recorded by infrared cameras, broadcast to a global online audience, and fed back into the installation. A thin, white

light follows the path of each individual across the Drill Hall, creating a visual record of visitors' movements before vanishing into the darkness behind them. With each step, the visitors' image is projected back onto the floor, becoming interrupted by shadows formed by surveillance drones that periodically survey the Drill Hall. The experience inverts the fairytale of Hansel & Gretel—instead of purposely leaving a trail to avoid getting lost, the surreptitious tracking of visitors makes it impossible to hide their location.

Visitors transition into the role of the observer when entering the Head House, where they will be confronted by their own image as well as streaming footage from the Drill Hall. This "surveillance laboratory" simultaneously serves as a covert monitoring hub that makes participants cognizant of the extent to which they were being watched as well as a forum for visitors to discuss the ethics and societal impact of the growing culture of surveillance. A range of publications and materials on the topics of drones and surveillance technology will be available with opportunities for visitors to use facial recognition software on themselves and peer back into the Drill Hall through a peephole as others traverse the installation. An accompanying website with additional resources and a live video stream on the Armory's website.

"This project provides a powerful lens for examining surveillance as one of the defining social phenomena of our time and provokes pressing questions about the right to privacy in a hyper-monitored world," said Rebecca Robertson, Executive Producer and President of Park Avenue Armory. "In this work, Jacques, Pierre, and Weiwei have fostered a robust dialogue with our building to create a thought-provoking, immersive experience that explores how surveillance transforms public space into a controlled environment where individuals forfeit their anonymity."

## **INSTALLATION DATES**

**June 7 – August 6, 2017**

Tuesday – Thursday: 12:00pm – 8:00pm

Friday: 12:00pm – 10:00pm

Saturday – Sunday: 12:00pm – 7:00pm

Commissioned by Park Avenue Armory  
Curated by Tom Eccles and Hans-Ulrich Obrist

## **TICKETS**

Admission to *Hansel & Gretel* is \$15; free for Armory Members.

Tickets may be purchased at [armoryonpark.org](http://armoryonpark.org) or by calling (212) 933-5812. Tickets may be purchased now as part of an Armory season subscription.

The box office for this installation is open on installation days and is located at 894 Lexington Avenue, between 66<sup>th</sup> and 67<sup>th</sup> Streets. The entrance to the installation is on Lexington Avenue at 66<sup>th</sup> Street.

## **ARTIST TALK**

Wednesday, June 7 at 6:00pm

Tickets: \$15 (\$12 for Park Avenue Armory members)

Jacques Herzog, Pierre de Meuron, and Ai Weiwei discuss the inspirations, ideas, and creative process behind their latest collaboration.

## SPONSORSHIP

Hansel & Gretel is supported in part by the M K Reichert Sternlicht Foundation, Jeanne Donovan Fisher, Ken Kuchin and Tyler Morgan, and by public funds from the Swiss Arts Council Pro Helvetia.

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 Achelis and Bodman Foundation, the Fan Fox and Leslie R. Samuels Foundation, the Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation, The Shubert Foundation, The Emma and Georgina Bloomberg 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 JACQUES HERZOG AND PIERRE DE MEURON

Pritzker Prize-winning architects Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron were born in Basel in 1950, and studied architecture at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich (ETH) from 1970 to 1975 with Aldo Rossi and Dolf Schnebli. They received their degree in architecture in 1975 and established Herzog & de Meuron in Basel in 1978, a firm known for designs that are at once highly inventive and sensitive to the site, geography, and culture of the region for which they are planned.

Herzog & de Meuron's projects range from highly recognized public facilities, such as their stadiums and museums, to distinguished private projects such as apartment buildings, offices, and factories. A selection of their most recognized buildings to date include the Elbphilharmonie Hamburg, Hamburg, Germany, 2016; the Tate Modern and its extension, the Switch House, London, UK, 2016; 1111 Lincoln Road, a mixed-use parking facility, Miami, Florida, USA, 2010; and Prada Aoyama, Tokyo, Japan, 2003.

In many projects Herzog & de Meuron have worked with artists, an eminent example of that practice being the collaboration with Rémy Zaugg (Roche Pharma-Research Building 92, Basel, 2000; and many more); with Thomas Ruff (Eberswalde Technical School Library, Eberswalde, Germany, 1999, among others); and with Michael Craig-Martin (Laban Dance Centre, London, UK, 2003).

## ABOUT AI WEIWEI

Ai Weiwei is renowned for making strong aesthetic statements that resonate with timely phenomena across today's geopolitical world. From architecture to installations, social media to documentaries, Ai uses a wide range of mediums as expressions of new ways for his audiences to examine society and its values. Recent exhibitions include: *Law of the Journey* at the National Gallery in Prague, *Ai Weiwei. Libero* at Palazzo Strozzi in Florence, *#SafePassage* at Foam in Amsterdam, *translocation - transformation* at 21er Haus in Vienna, *Andy Warhol / Ai Weiwei* at the National Gallery of Victoria in Melbourne, *Ai Weiwei* at the Royal Academy of Arts in London, and *@Large: Ai Weiwei* on Alcatraz in San Francisco.

Ai was born in Beijing in 1957 and currently resides and works in both Beijing and Berlin. Ai is the current Einstein Visiting Professor at the Berlin University of the Arts (UdK), and he is the recipient of the 2015 Ambassador of Conscience Award from Amnesty International and the 2012 Václav Havel Prize for Creative Dissent from the Human Rights 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 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 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](http://www.armoryonpark.org).

**For more information or to request images, please contact Resnicow and Associates:**

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