



PARK AVENUE ARMORY LAUNCHES ANNUAL COMMISSIONING PROGRAM

Inaugural Commission by Ernesto Neto Opens May 14

**His Largest Work to Date—Spanning Nearly an Entire City Block
and Eight Stories High—Will Fill Wade Thompson Drill Hall**

April 20, 2009, New York, NY—Park Avenue Armory has announced the next step in its evolution as a dynamic arts institution with the launch of an annual program in which an artist will be commissioned to create a work catalyzed by the Armory’s vast Wade Thompson Drill Hall. The artist for the inaugural “Drill Hall Commissions” program is Ernesto Neto who is known for creating immersive, multi-sensory installations that invite viewers to engage with and often literally enter the work. The Neto work, called *anthropodino*, will open on May 14, 2009 and run until June 14, 2009, and will be his largest installation to date.

“We are a new organization whose mission is to provide the opportunity for artists to work at a scale and in a way that is not possible elsewhere in the city,” said Park Avenue Armory President & CEO Rebecca Robertson. “This commissioning program is a first step towards establishing the Armory as a place where the public can experience both the visual and performing arts in a way that is not restricted by walls or encumbered by traditional institutional procedures and operational or structural limitations. Ernesto is the ideal artist to launch our annual program and is creating for the Armory a singular experience in the Wade Thompson Drill Hall that will envelop and enmesh our visitors.”

Each year, the Armory will work with an artist to develop an installation that is inspired by the dramatic 55,000 square-foot, 80-foot-high Wade Thompson Drill Hall. For the 2009 commission, the Armory engaged Tom Eccles, a well known curator of large scale public art projects to oversee the installation.

The inaugural Drill Hall Commission is supported by the Rockefeller Foundation’s *NYC Cultural Innovation Fund*. Additional assistance is provided by Booth Ferris Foundation, The Lauder Foundation/Leonard and Evelyn Lauder Fund, G-Star Raw, Kenneth Kuchin, Petrobas, and Consulate General of Brazil in New York.

The Armory fills a critical niche in the cultural ecology of the city by enabling artists to create—and the public to experience—work that could not otherwise be realized in New York. The Armory joins an international wave of institutions that commission contemporary works of epic scale in converted industrial and other monumental structures, including Turbine Hall at the Tate Modern, the Hamburger Bahnhof in Berlin, the Arsenale in Venice, the Roundhouse in London, and the Cartoucherie in Paris.

As part of the inaugural commission, Park Avenue Armory will offer educational programs for families and schoolchildren for the first time. Arts education at the Armory will provide an opportunity for students not only to experience unique, immersive arts installations such as Ernesto Neto’s *anthropodino*, but also to make connections between major works of art and their own

creations in visual arts, music, dance, storytelling, and theater—all within the historical surrounds of the Armory. In addition to partnering with NYC schools and community groups, the Armory will also provide ongoing professional development for artists and educators to integrate arts in teaching and learning.

Curator Tom Eccles said, “Ernesto often draws inspiration from his surroundings, and I cannot think of a better place than the Armory for New Yorkers to be able to immerse themselves in one of his largest works to date. His work is awe-inspiring, visceral, and remarkably accessible to all generations. He encourages the participation of his audience and this new installation will create an unforgettable public space in the middle of Manhattan.”

About the Work

The Park Avenue Armory installation, called *anthropodino*, will be Neto’s largest work to date and will virtually fill the Armory’s expansive Wade Thompson Drill Hall. Using hundreds of yards of diaphanous material, Neto will suspend a gigantic canopy from which large, colorful, and aromatic “stalactites” will descend to within arms reach. On the ground, a series of monumental arches covered in translucent fabric will fit together like a puzzle to create a vast labyrinth of walkways and rooms that invite visitors to step inside the sculpture in which various activities, including presentations and participatory experiences, will take place.

Neto’s installation will incorporate the architecture of the Armory itself, and the public will be able to explore the piece from the different perspectives of the drill hall and its interior balcony, interacting with the work from both the ground and from a “bird’s eye view.”

The work as it has been originally conceived will consist of a fine, net-like fabric (or “skin”) to be suspended from the drill hall’s majestic steel latticework ceiling, spanning an area of approximately 192 feet by 100 feet with pieces suspended from its trusses up to 69 feet long. Hundreds of pounds of spices, including turmeric, clove, ginger, black pepper and cumin, will infuse the environment with scent and provide ballast for the vertical elements.

About the Armory’s Annual Commissioning Program

The Armory will annually invite local and international artists whose work responds to the freedom and rich context of the Armory’s spaces. This is the first work being presented by the Armory itself as it starts to build its own distinctive programming that fills a large void in New York’s cultural landscape.

Park Avenue Armory

643 Park Avenue (at 67th Street)

May 14 to June 14, 2009

Monday – Friday: 12 – 8pm

Saturday – Sunday: 12 – 6pm

*Monday May 25: 12 – 6pm

Admission:

General Admission: \$10

Seniors/Students: \$8

18 and under: Free

Armory Members: Free

Educational Programs:

Family Arts Day: Free

Saturday, May 16

Arts workshops 11am – 1pm and 2 – 4pm; Ernesto Neto Artist Talk at 1pm

Saturday Arts Workshops: Free

May 23, May 30, and June 6: 11am – 1pm

Pre-registration is required for all educational programs as space is limited. Register at: www.armoryonpark.org/education

About Ernesto Neto

Since the mid-1990s, Ernesto Neto, who lives and works in Rio de Janeiro, has developed among the most widely exhibited and influential bodies of work in contemporary sculpture and installation. Neto draws influence not only from the biomorphism and Modernist abstraction of Calder and Brancusi, but equally, from the conceptual, social, and performative installations of his Brazilian predecessors, Lygia Clarke and Helio Oiticia. Incorporating a combination of commonplace and organic materials—stockings, spices, sand, and shells among them—Neto's works engage all five senses, inviting the visitors to interact with the artwork itself and with each other.

In 1999 Neto participated in the Carnegie International, and in 2001 he represented Brazil in the Venice Biennale. Recent notable shows include: Ernesto Neto, Museo d'Arte Contemporanea Roma, Rome, Italy, 2008 (solo); Ernesto Neto, Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, 2008 (solo); Psycho Buildings: Artists and Architecture, Hayward Gallery, London, 2008 (group); Currents: Recent Acquisitions, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington D.C., 2008 (group); Tropicália uma revolução na cultura brasileira, MAM, Rio de Janeiro, 2007 (group); Merce Cunningham: Dancing on the Cutting Edge Part 1, Museum of Contemporary Art, Miami, 2007 (group); Leviathan Thot, Panthéon, Paris, 35th Festival d'Automne, Paris, 2006 (solo); Forum 57: Luisa Lambri and Ernesto Neto, Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, PA, 2006 (solo); Ernesto Neto-The Malmö Experience, Malmö Konsthall, Malmö, Sweden, 2006 (solo); Tropicalia, Barbican Gallery, London, traveling to Centro Cultural de Belem, Lisbon, and Bronx Museum, New York, 2006 (group); and Ernesto Neto, Indianapolis Museum of Art, 2005 (solo); among others.

Neto's work is extremely well represented in international museum collections, including The Museum of Modern Art, New York; The Tate Gallery, London; CAC Centro de Arte Contemporáneo Málaga, Málaga, Spain; Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, PA; Centre Pompidou - Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris; Contemporary Art Center of Inhome, Brazil; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Henry Art Gallery, University of Washington, SA; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.; Herbert F. Johnson Museum, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY; Milwaukee Art Museum, Milwaukee, WI; Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco; and The Albright Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY.

About Park Avenue Armory

Park Avenue Armory is a newly launched arts organization whose mission is to revitalize one of New York's most important landmarks as a dynamic center for the arts unlike any other in the city, unique in its non-traditional programming and for the splendor of its restored interiors. Its programming uses the vast space of its Wade Thompson Drill Hall and the array of its exuberant period rooms to present performing and visual art that resists the confines of formal single purpose halls and galleries. Filling a crucial niche in the cultural landscape of New York, Park Avenue Armory catalyzes works of contemporary art that cannot be realized at existing venues. It began with Aaron Young's *Greeting Card* produced by Art Production Fund, a 9,216-square-foot action painting created by the skid-marks

and tire burnouts of 10 choreographed motorcyclists. For the 2008 Whitney Biennial, the Armory hosted site-specific installations and performances by 37 artists, creating an experience that one critic called “this Biennial’s best surprise.” An evening of Stravinsky’s *Sacred Masterpieces* presented in association with Columbia’s Miller Theatre drew rave critical reviews as did the epic production of the opera *Die Soldaten*, presented by Lincoln Center Festival in association with Park Avenue Armory, in which the audience moved “through the music.” And, most recently, the Armory partnered with Creative Time to present the culmination of its nationwide show *Democracy In America*.

Built between 1877 and 1881, the landmarked Park Avenue Armory is one of New York City’s most important historic structures, occupying a full city block on the Upper East Side. The Armory’s Wade Thompson Drill Hall, reminiscent of a 19th-century European train shed, measures approximately 200 by 300 feet, with an 80-foot-high barrel vaulted roof, and is one of the largest unobstructed spaces in the City. The adjacent Administrative Building includes interiors by Louis Comfort Tiffany, Stanford White, the Herter Brothers, and other prominent designers of the period, constituting what the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission described as “the single most important collection of 19th-century interiors to survive intact in one building.”

###

For more information or for images, please contact:

Julia Kirchhausen, Resnicow Schroeder Associates

212-671-5161

jkirchhausen@resnicowschroeder.com

Maggie Berget, Resnicow Schroeder Associates

212-671-5157

mberget@resnicowschroeder.com