

**PARK AVENUE
ARMORY**



Park Avenue Armory Presents
Archer Aymes Lost and Found Retrospective: A Juneteenth Exhibition
as part of Making Space Public Programming Series

Newly Commissioned Art Installation by Carl Hancock Rux Drawn from his Play *Talk*

Event Includes Performance by Mezzo Soprano and Composer Alicia Hall Moran with Pianist Aaron Diehl

New York, NY – Monday, May 16, 2022 – Park Avenue Armory continues its Making Space Public Programming series with **Archer Aymes Lost and Found Retrospective: A Juneteenth Exhibition, Sunday, June 19, 2022 from 3pm to 6pm**. Audiences explore the legacy of emancipation through an immersive installation and operatic performance. **Carl Hancock Rux** is commissioned to curate an art installation of newly discovered works by Archer Aymes, the elusive subject of Rux’s Obie-award winning play *Talk*, which had its premiere at the Joseph Papp Public Theater. The sculptor **Dianne Smith** contributes to the curation and installation. The event features a concert performance by mezzo soprano and composer **Alicia Hall Moran** and pianist **Aaron Diehl**.

Talk centered around a panel discussion regarding the mysterious life of Archer Aymes, a racially ambiguous figure who may have passed for white or Black at varying periods in the 1950s, before briefly resurfacing as a radical agitator during the 1960s. Some claim he was the illegitimate offspring of one Sir Norman Victor, a wealthy carpetbagger and his “Negro concubine.” The mixed-race figure of Aymes functions as a *lieux de mémoire*, a point of interaction between history and memory, the interplay between the personal and the collective, and the ambiguity of race’s status in America’s turbulent and socially transformative history.

At the center of this Aymes retrospective is a light and sound installation that reconstructs Aymes’ experimental film *Mother and Son*—based on his novel of the same name and cultural artifacts that may have helped Aymes construct its story. The light installation in the Veteran’s room and accompanying altar of lost and found objects in the adjoining Library draw upon an impossible archive of images, objects, and sounds Aymes collected in his attempt to explore the never-ending racial injustice that continues to shape the lives of its victims into the 21st century.

In the Board of Officers room at 3:30pm, a phonograph will play a haunting 1960s jazz standard on a loop. When the recording is not playing, Moran and Diehl will deliver a recital of songs from the opera repertoire of Puccini, Weill, and Bernstein. These songs will touch upon various themes, from Aymes’ rumored closeness to Nina Simone to the desolation of family separation.

This event is one component of a three-part series curated by Carl Hancock Rux in commemoration of Juneteenth, in collaboration with Harlem Stage and Lincoln Center. On Thursday, June 16, 2022, Rux in conversation with Charles M. Blow—best-selling author (*Fire Shut Up in My Bones*) and *New York Times* Opinion columnist—leads an in-depth discussion on some of the myths of the Emancipation Proclamation and the truth of modern-day slavery, held at Harlem Stage, where Rux is Associate Artistic Director. Following the Armory’s exhibition and concert on June 19, Lincoln Center will present *I Dream A Dream That Dreams Back At Me*, an evening of immersive art, music, and performance that will take visitors on an emotional journey into the afterlives of slavery enslaved people and the powers of Black resilience. These events are part of the Festival of New York.

The 2022 Making Space Public Programming series curated by Tavia Nyong'o also included *Captcha: Dancing, Data, Liberation*, an artist salon on Sunday, February 20, 2022 anchored by interdisciplinary artist Rashaad Newsome's Drill Hall production *Assembly*. Participants included Afro-Latina MC and activist Ms. Boogie; an multidisciplinary artist and capoeirista Puma Camillé; Yale scholar and dancer/choreographer Aimee Meredith Cox; performance artist and poet Dazié Rustin Grego-Sykes; Columbia University English Professor Saidiya Hartman; artist, curator, and composer Robert Aiki Aubrey Lowe; and artist and scholar Kiyan Williams. Next in the series will be *Skillshare* on August 21, 2022, where Armory Artists-in-Residence will activate the Armory as a space for mutual aid through skill share, maker spaces, and master classes.

TICKETING

Tickets are **free** for this event, however, limited tickets are available. To reserve free tickets in advance, please contact the Armory Box Office by phone at (212) 933-5812, Monday through Friday from 10am to 6pm or visit us online armoryonpark.org.

HEALTH & SAFETY PROTOCOLS

Health and safety while at the Armory is of the utmost importance. The Armory requires that all ticket holders be fully vaccinated. Upon entry to the building, ticket holders will be required to **show proof of full vaccination** (the New York State Excelsior Pass or a hard copy or photo of your vaccination card), as well as a government-issued photo ID. The Armory will continue to follow all city, state, and CDC guidelines in regard to COVID-19 safety protocols.

All patrons and staff are **required to wear masks** while inside the Armory.

ABOUT CARL HANCOCK RUX

Carl Hancock Rux is an American poet, playwright, novelist, essayist, recording artist, actor, theater director, radio journalist, as well as a frequent collaborator in the fields of film, modern dance, and contemporary art. He is the author of several books including the Village Voice Literary Prize-winning collection of poetry *Pagan Operetta*, the novel *Asphalt*, and the Obie Award-winning play *Talk*. His music has been released internationally on several labels including Sony/550, Thirsty Ear, and Giant Step. Rux is also Co-Artistic Director of Mabou Mines, an experimental theater company founded in 1970 and based in New York City, and Artistic Director of Harlem Stage.

ABOUT DIANNE SMITH

Dianne Smith's career as an interdisciplinary artist spans over 20 years. Her group and solo exhibitions include *Visions for our Future; Echoes of our Past*, Institute of Contemporary Art at Maine College of Art & Design, 2022; *Stuff*, Milstein Center, Barnard College, New York; *Uptown Triennial*, Wallach Art Gallery, Columbia University, New York; 2020, and Festival de Artes al Aire Libre, Museo Municipal de Guayaquil, Ecuador, Fulbright, 2013. Smith is also known for her public art installations, such as *Gumboot Juba*, Armory Week, New York; *Organic Abstract*, New York City Parks Department, Armory Week; and Bartow Pell Mansion as the Andrew Freedman Houses, Bronx, New York, 2011. Smith is included in the following collections: The National Museum of Women in the Arts, The Brodsky Organization, Petrucci Family Foundation Collection of African American Art, and Dianne Smith Papers Barnard Archives and Special Collections. She currently lives and works in Harlem, New York, and received her MFA from Transart Institute in Berlin, Germany, via the University of Plymouth, UK, in 2012.

ABOUT ALICIA HALL MORAN

Alicia Hall Moran is a classical singer and songwriter based in New York City. She works in the spaces between Opera, Broadway, Oratorio, Theater, Dance, Visual Art, Poetry, Soul Music, Spirituals, and History.

ABOUT AARON DIEHL

Pianist and composer Aaron Diehl mystifies listeners with his layered artistry. At once temporal and ethereal, his expression transforms the piano into an orchestral vessel in the spirit of beloved predecessors Ahmad Jamal,

Erroll Garner and Jelly Roll Morton. Following three critically-acclaimed leader albums on Mack Avenue Records—and live appearances at historic venues from Jazz at Lincoln Center and The Village Vanguard to New York Philharmonic and the Philharmonie de Paris—the American Pianist Association’s 2011 Cole Porter fellow now focuses his attention on what it means to be present within himself. His forthcoming solo record promises an expansion of that exploration in a setting at once unbound and intimate. Diehl conjures three-dimensional expansion of melody, counterpoint, and movement through time. Rather than choose one sound or another, he invites listeners into the chambered whole of his artistry. Born in Columbus, Ohio, Diehl traveled to New York in 2003, following his success as a finalist in JALC’s Essentially Ellington competition and a subsequent European tour with Wynton Marsalis. His love affair with rub and tension prompted a years-long immersion in distinctive repertoire from Monk and Ravel to Gershwin and William Grant Still. Among other towering figures, Still in particular inspires Diehl’s ongoing curation of Black American composers in his own performance programming, unveiled this past fall at 92nd St. Y. Diehl has enjoyed artistic associations with Wynton Marsalis, Benny Golson, Jimmy Heath, Buster Williams, Branford Marsalis, Wycliffe Gordon, Philip Glass, and Cecile McLorin Salvant. He recently appeared with the New York Philharmonic and the Cleveland Orchestra as featured soloist. Bachelor of Music in Jazz Studies, Juilliard.

SPONSORSHIP

Citi and Bloomberg Philanthropies are the Armory’s 2022 Season Sponsors.

Support for Park Avenue Armory’s artistic season has been generously provided by the Charina Endowment Fund, the Donald A. Pels Charitable Trust, The Harold and Mimi Steinberg Charitable Trust, the Fan Fox and Leslie R. Samuels Foundation, the Howard Gilman Foundation, the Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation, The Shubert Foundation, the Marc Haas Foundation, The Prospect Hill Foundation, The Emma and Georgina Bloomberg Foundation, the Leon Levy Foundation, the May and Samuel Rudin Family Foundation, Gregory Annenberg Weingarten, GRoW @ Annenberg, the Richenthal Foundation, and the Isak and Rose Weinman Foundation. Additional support has been provided by the Armory’s Artistic Council.

ABOUT PUBLIC PROGRAMMING AT THE ARMORY

Park Avenue Armory’s Public Programming series brings diverse artists and cultural thought-leaders together for discussion and performance around the important issues of our time viewed through an artistic lens. Launched in 2017, the series encompasses a variety of programs including large-scale community events; multiday symposia; intimate salons featuring performances, panels, and discussions; Artist Talks in relation to the Armory’s Drill Hall programming; and other creative interventions.

Highlights from the Public Programming series include: **Carrie Mae Weems’** 2017 event *The Shape of Things* and 2021 convening and concert series *Land of Broken Dreams*, whose participants included **Elizabeth Alexander, Theaster Gates, Elizabeth Diller, Nona Hendryx, Somi, and Spike Lee**, among others; a daylong Lenape Pow Wow and Standing Ground Symposium held in the Wade Thompson Drill Hall, the first congregation of Lenape Elders on Manhattan Island since the 1700s; “A New Vision for Justice in America” conversation series in collaboration with Common Justice, exploring new coalitions, insights, and ways of understanding question of justice and injustice in relation moderated by *FLEXN Evolution* creators **Reggie “Regg Roc” Gray** and director **Peter Sellars**; Culture in a Changing America Symposia exploring the role of art, creativity, and imagination in the social and political issues in American society today; the 2019 *Black Artists Retreat* hosted by **Theaster Gates**, which included public talks and performances, private sessions for the 300 attending artists, and a roller skating rink; and *100 Years | 100 Women*, a multiorganization commissioning project that invited 100 women artists and cultural creators to respond to women’s suffrage.

Notable Public Programming salons include: the Literature Salon hosted by **Branden Jacobs-Jenkins**, whose participants included **Lynn Nottage, Suzan Lori-Parks, and Jeremy O. Harris**, a Spoken Word Salon cohosted with the **Nuyorican Poets Cafe**; a Film Salon featuring the works of immersive artist and film director **Lynette Wallworth**; “Museum as Sanctuary” led by installation artist and Artist-in-Residence **Tania Bruguera**, curated by **Sonia Guiñansaca** and **CultureStrike**, and featuring undocu-artists **Julio Salgado** and

Emulsify; and a Dance Salon presented in partnership with **Dance Theater of Harlem**, including New York City Ballet's **Wendy Whelan** and choreographer **Francesca Harper**, among others.

Artist Talks have featured esteemed artists, scholars, and thought leaders, such as: architects **Jacques Herzog** and **Pierre de Meuron** in conversation with **Ai Wei Wei**, moderated by Juilliard president **Damian Woetzel**; director **Ariane Mnouchkine** and Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright **Tony Kushner** in conversation with *New Yorker* editor **David Remnick**; director **Ivo van Hove** in conversation with **James Nicola**, Artistic Director of New York Theater Workshop; artist **William Kentridge** and his collaborators **Philip Miller** and **Thuthuka Sibisi** in conversation with **Dr. Augustus Casely Hayford**, Director of the Smithsonian, National Museum of African Art; *Lehman Trilogy* director **Sam Mendez** and adapter **Ben Power** in conversation with playwright **Lynn Nottage**; artist and composer **Heiner Goebbels** in conversation with composer, vocalist, and scholar **Gelsey Bell**; and choreographer **Bill T. Jones** in conversation with architect **Elizabeth Diller** and designer **Peter Nigrini**, moderated by vocalist and performance artist **Helga Davis**.

www.armoryonpark.org

###

Media Contacts

For more information or to request images, please contact:

Tom Trayer, tomtrayer@armoryonpark.org or (212) 933-5801

Allison Abbott, aabbott@armoryonpark.org or (212) 933-5834