



**Park Avenue Armory Opens 2023 Season with
Symposium: Sound and Color – The Future of Race in Design,
January 14 & 15**

Lighting designer Jane Cox, playwright Branden Jacobs-Jenkins, set designer Mimi Lien, and sound designer and composer Mikhaal Sulaiman curate public conversations, workshops, interventions, and professional development opportunities on the impact of race in creative design for live performance

Micro-commissions of artists from Design Action and virtual reality world by Oregon Shakespeare Festival activate historic period rooms to highlight artistry of creative designers and their contribution to performance experience

New York, NY – Monday, December 5, 2022 – Park Avenue Armory will begin its 2023 Season with [Symposium: Sound & Color – The Future of Race in Design](#), an interdisciplinary forum exploring how race matters in creative design for live performance, especially in the current moment of creative, technological, and cultural unrest. Hosted by lighting designer **Jane Cox**, playwright **Branden Jacobs-Jenkins**, set designer **Mimi Lien**, and sound designer and composer **Mikhaal Sulaiman**, this event will include a series workshops, conversations, and interventions on **Saturday, January 14, 2023** and **Sunday, January 15, 2023**, intended to allow artists, intellectuals, and designers to explore lighting, sound, costume, and set design, as well as augmented reality, as sites of innovation, magic, and transformation.

“We are energized to provide the space for these connections and conversations to be made by a wide range of artists from emerging to seasoned veterans in their respective fields,” says Rebecca Robertson, Founding President and Executive Producer of Park Avenue Armory. “We hope that this gathering is the start to further exploration and the expansion of creative boundaries.”

“Sound & Color will bridge generations of theater makers and put the spotlight on boundary-breaking artists who merge design, art, and technology,” says Tavia Nyong’o, Curator of Public Programming at Park Avenue Armory. “As we continue to make space for the future of performance at the Armory, this convergence challenges us all to do so with an inclusive and expansive vision.”

Panels and conversations will address a variety of topics, including: how creative design connects to larger conversation about artistry and performance; the process of creating a collaborative aesthetic over time with long term design partners; cross-generational learning in the creative design space; production and design education through an anti-racist lens; design processes from conception to opening, including hiring designers; Afrofuturism in conversation with design for live performance; and the future of theater design in extended reality (XR), hosted in collaboration with the Oregon Shakespeare Festival; among others.

Participants include: directors **Lileana Blain-Cruz**, **Mei Ann Teo**, and **Shariffa Ali**; new media artist and creative technologist **Lajuné McMillian**; Korean diasporic director, artist, and producer **Scarlett Kim**; costume designer and founder of Black Trans Liberation **Qween Jean**; dancer, director, and choreographer **Raja Feather Kelly**; Drama Desk-nominated composer, vocalist, and sound artist **Justin Hicks**; costume designer **Dede Ayite**; Ojibwe and Oneida writer, actor, and interdisciplinary **Ty Defoe**; and symposium hosts **Mimi Lien**, **Branden Jacobs-Jenkins**, and **Mikhaal Suleiman**.

In conjunction with the ongoing conversations, the Armory will also commission pop-up activations from BIPOC designers through Design Action to activate the historic period rooms on the first and second floors of the Armory. These micro-commissions will push the design discipline to the forefront, showcasing the unique artistry and high impact of designers on overall live performances. Commissioned artists will be announced at a later date.

Symposium: Sound & Color will also feature private programming and networking opportunities for industry professionals hosted in collaboration with Design Action. Private sessions include a kick-off event, networking receptions, and Idea Labs, where creators and artists from many walks of life and experience will be able to connect around their respective disciplines. Idea Labs held by Making Space have been gathering BIPOC costume, lighting, scenic, sound, and extended reality design professionals for workshops and roundtables to discuss their thoughts on the sector and incubate new projects. Convening of these discipline groups will invite young and rising BIPOC designers to participate with the goal of furthering their development and fostering intergenerational conversation and support in the field of creative design for live performance.

Design Action is an intergenerational coalition of Black, indigenous, people of color, and white designers advocating for a radical shift in the landscape of North American theater design. Design Action's platform includes advocating for the reduction of personal and financial harm and creating a system to repair harm in theatrical workspaces, an increase in cultural competency across production staff, equitable representation and hiring practices, and the establishment of equitable professional development paths for young and rising designers, among others.

The Oregon Shakespeare Festival will also mount a pop-up version of their Quills Fest VR World, a transmedia sandbox that radically expands access to the transformational power of storytelling and imagines a multimodal future of theater. Pop-up works will include XR projects in multiple phases of development—from prototypes and works-in-progress to fully completed projects—that boldly explore liveness, interactivity, and immersive storytelling.

Held in the Armory's historic period rooms and spaces, Making Space is an insightful series of cutting-edge conversations, performances, and activations that provides a unique forum for bridging art and culture. Curated by professor and scholar curator Tavia Nyong'o, these gatherings foster the art of conversation and dialogue about Armory productions and urgent questions of our day, making space for new points of view and unique perspectives from a diverse array of artists, scholars, cultural leaders, and social trailblazers. The 2023 Season of Making Space will also include: **Juke Joint**, a salon celebrating of the role of women and femme architects of rhythm and blues and rock and roll led by poet, writer, performer, and activist **Pamela Sneed**; a concert celebrating the full cultural breadth of the Black Arts Movement hosted by **Carrie Mae Weems** and **Carl Hancock Rux** with musical direction by **Vernon Reid**; **Revolutionary Hope**, a salon responding to James Baldwin and Audre Lorde's published conversation of the same name led by **Claudia Rankine** and co-presented with National Black Theatre; **Corpus Delicti**, a convening of artists, activists, and intellectuals imagines and enacts transgender art and music as a vehicle for dialogue across differences presented in conjunction with Arca's *Mutant;Destrudo*; and **Seasons of Dance**, a contemporary dance salon presented in conjunction with *The Rite of Spring / common ground[s]*.

TICKETING

Day passes at \$45 (plus fees) are available for purchase online at armoryonpark.org and by phone through the Park Avenue Armory Box Office at (212) 933-5812, 10am to 6pm Monday through Friday. In person box office hours may vary.

SPONSORSHIP

Bloomberg Philanthropies is the Armory's 2023 Season Sponsor.

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 Emma and Georgina Bloomberg Foundation, the Marc Haas 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; multi-day 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**; 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; *100 Years | 100 Women*, a multiorganization commissioning project that invited 100 women artists and cultural creators to respond to women's suffrage; a Queer Hip Hop Cypher, delving into the queer origins and aesthetics of hip hop with Astraea award-winning duo **Krudxs Cubensi** and author and scholar **Dr. Shante Paradigm Smalls**; the Archer Aymes Retrospective, exploring the legacy of emancipation through an immersive art installation curated by **Carl Hancock Rux** and featuring a concert performance by mezzo soprano **Alicia Hall Moran** and pianist **Aaron Diehl**, presented as one component of a three-part series commemorating Juneteenth in collaboration with Harlem Stage and Lincoln Center as part of the Festival of New York; and legendary artist **Nao Bustamante's BLOOM**, a cross-disciplinary investigation centered around the design of the vaginal speculum and its use in the exploitative and patriarchal history of the pelvic examination.

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 co-hosted 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**; 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; and *Captcha: Dancing, Data, Liberation*, a salon exploring Black visual complexity and spirit, led by visionary artist **Rashaad Newsome** and featuring **Saidiya V. Hartman, Kiyari Williams, Dazié Rustin Grego-Sykes, Ms.Boogie, Puma Camillê**, and 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 Powers** in conversation with playwright

Lynn Nottage; artist and composer **Heiner Goebbels** in conversation with composer, vocalist, and scholar **Gelsey Bell**; choreographer **Bill T. Jones** in conversation with architect **Elizabeth Diller** and designer **Peter Nigrini**, moderated by vocalist and performance artist **Helga Davis**; and composer, librettist, and director **Michel van der Aa** in conversation with conceptual and performance artist **Marina Abramović**.

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