



**Park Avenue Armory opened 2023 season with
Symposium: Sound & Color – The Future of Race in Design,
part of the Making Space at the Armory public programming series,
January 14 & 15, 2023**

Hosted by lighting designer Jane Cox, playwright Branden Jacobs-Jenkins, set designer Mimi Lien, and sound designer and composer Mikhaal Sulaiman, the weekend's programming gathered professionals and audiences to consider the impact of race in creative design for live performance

New York, NY – Thursday, January 19, 2023 – Park Avenue Armory opened its 2023 season this past weekend 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. Sound & Color launched the second season of Making Space, a public programming series of symposia, salons, and activations curated by performance studies scholar **Tavia Nyong'o**. Hosted by lighting designer and co-organizer **Jane Cox**, playwright **Branden Jacobs-Jenkins**, set designer **Mimi Lien**, and sound designer and composer **Mikhaal Sulaiman**, this event included a series of conversations and interventions on **Saturday, January 14, 2023** and **Sunday, January 15, 2023**, exploring lighting, sound, costume, and set design, as well as augmented reality, as sites of innovation, magic, and transformation.

“Sound & Color put lighting designers in the spotlight, passed the mic to sound designers, and opened the historic rooms of the Armory to design-led interventions from all disciplines,” said Curator of Public Programming at the Armory and Yale University Professor, Tavia Nyong'o. “This gathering dared to imagine that design can be a liberatory practice. So many people told me it felt like a homecoming after the pandemic suspension of live performance. I'm so thrilled that the public program at the Armory could host this unique event. It feels like an inflection point for the design field and a promise of things to come.”

The weekend welcomed over 700 audience members and boasted participation from over 60 artists, intellectuals, and designers, including: directors **Lileana Blain-Cruz**, **Mei Ann Teo**, and **Shariffa Ali**; lighting designers **Jane Cox**, **Jeanette Oi-Suk Yew**, **Itohan Edoloyi**, **Stacey Derosier**, **Alejandro Fajardo**, and **Alan C. Edwards**; set designers **Mimi Lien**, **Adam Rigg**, **You-Shin Chen**, **Regina García**; playwright **Branden Jacobs-Jenkins**; sound designers **Mikhaal Suleiman**, **Justin Ellington**, **Palmer Hefferan**, **Justin Hicks**, **JOJO ABOT**, **Holland Andrews**, **Mendi + Keith Obadike**; costume designers **Qween Jean**, **Dede Ayite**, **Dominique Fawn Hill**, **Devario D. Simmons**, **Sarita Fellows**, and **Montana Blanco**; puppet designer and fabricator **James Ortiz**; new media artist and creative technologist **LaJuné McMillian**; Korean diasporic director, artist, and producer **Scarlett Kim**; dancer, director, and choreographer **Raja Feather Kelly**; Ojibwe and Oneida writer, actor, and interdisciplinary artist **Ty Defoe**; and *Playbill* Editor-in-Chief **Diep Tran**; among others.

Panels and conversations addressed a variety of topics, such as: 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; anti-racist production and design pedagogy; Afrofuturism in conversation with design for live performance; and the future of theater design in extended reality, among other topics. Installations included a presentation of documentation of *rasgos asiaticos* by Virginia Grise, created in collaboration with Tanya Orellana, and *The Black Movement Library's Movement Portraits* by LaJuné McMillian. Videos of the panel discussion, as well as excerpts from installations and presentations will be released on Park Avenue Armory's YouTube channel in the coming weeks.

In conjunction with the ongoing conversations, the Armory commissioned pop-up activations from BIPOC designers through Design Action to activate the historic company rooms on the Armory's second floor. Commissions included: *Emergence* Barrymore-nominated scenic designer **Marie Laster** in collaboration with lighting designer DeAnna Howards; *Crack the Foundation* designer and artisan **Danielle DeLaFuente** and sound designer **Nina Field**; *UNSETTLING* by queer, nonbinary interdisciplinary artist **Gylanni Carrington** featuring performer Carecuca (Dania Miguel); *Something Borrowed, Something Green* by Mexican scenic and costume designer **Rodrigo Hernandez Martinez**; *Evil Eye* by sound designer and composer **Elliot Yokum**; and *[working]* by lighting designers **Christina Tang** and **Alex Vásquez Dheming**. These young BIPOC artists have been selected in collaboration with **Design Action**, 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.

Symposium: Sound & Color also featured private programming and networking opportunities for industry professionals hosted in collaboration with Design Action. Saturday evening's programming concluded with a private cocktail hour and dinner catered by Sweet Potatoes, allowing young and rising BIPOC designers to meet and mingle with seasoned designers, media professionals, curators, directors, and the like. On Sunday morning, Wingspace Theatrical Design held a lecture and lunch with speakers scenic designer Tanya Orellana, playwright and multidisciplinary artist Anchuli Felicia King, actor and technology artist Attilio Riggoti, and lighting designer Jonah Bobilin, where they discussed career trajectories and definitions of success with designers in early career stages.

The Oregon Shakespeare Festival also mounted 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 included XR projects in multiple phases of development by Ty Defoe, Nao Bustamante, Mentai Zhang and Lemon Guo, Dede Ayite, Raja Feather Kelly, Nehal Al-Hadi and Ayodamola Tanimowo Okynsinde, and Illya Szilak and Tsiboulski that boldly explored liveness, interactivity, and immersive storytelling.

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**, **Kiyan 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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