



**Newly commissioned performance by multidisciplinary artist
Richard Kennedy inspired by the African diaspora
to close landmark gathering of curators of color, April 12**

**Hosted by Park Avenue Armory and Princeton University,
The Radical Practice of Black Curation: A Symposium to convene an
influential, emerging transnational group of curators of color for panel
presentations, public dialogues, and private discussions exploring the
significance of their practice, April 11 & 12**

**Participants include Thelma Golden, Adrienne Edwards,
Oluremi C. Onabanjo, Legacy Russell, Bonaventure Soh Bejend Ndikung,
and Tina Campt, among others**

New York, NY – Tuesday, February 6, 2024 – Park Avenue Armory’s Making Space Public Programming Series will present multidisciplinary artist **Richard Kennedy**’s latest commission, a musical encapsulation of the African diaspora titled [*Guttural \(Conducted Contact\)*](#), **Friday, April 12 at 8pm** in the Armory’s historic rooms. Kennedy will develop and perform this piece with noted Afro-Brazilian dancer **Vera Passos** in her New York debut. This new work opens a portal of participatory gathering as truth emerges through song, dance, and a series of wordless conversations, and serves as the capstone event of **The Radical Practice of Black Curation**, a two-day symposium in collaboration with the Princeton Collaboratorium For Radical Aesthetics and co-sponsored by The Terra Foundation for American Art that will assemble a wide-ranging group of curators and art professionals of color to engage the past, present, and future of Black curation in the contemporary art world.

“The past two decades have witnessed the success of a wide range of Black artists, enabled in part by the ascent of a visionary group of Black curators and curators of color who have supplanted the role of traditional curatorial gatekeepers and expanded the capacity of arts institutions to recognize the work of an increasingly diverse group of artists,” said **Tina Campt, Princeton University’s Roger S. Berlind ‘52 Professor in the Humanities, Professor in the Department of Art and Archaeology and the Program in Visual Arts, and convener of the Collaboratorium**. “We are excited to celebrate these successes and explore with audiences how this has shaped and will continue to shape the contemporary art world into the future.”

Tavia Nyong’o, Curator of Public Programming at Park Avenue Armory, also adds: “We are proud to provide the space for this historic gathering of curators, artists, and scholars from across the globe to reflect on the unique points of view and important milestones achieved by artists and curators of color and looking toward the future for new possibilities and horizons. This program builds on the legacy of public programs at the Armory such as Theaster Gates’ Black Artists Retreat in 2019 and Sound and Color – The Future of Race in Design in 2023 with Design Action, convening Black artists for discussion, collaboration, and celebration.”

The first day of this symposium will take place on Thursday, April 11 in the Wallace Theater in the Arts complex at Princeton University’s Lewis Center for the Arts. This day will feature a series of panel presentations and public discussions exploring the past, present, and future of Black curation as a practice that exceeds the urgent but constraining question of making and exhibiting art in a time of “racial reckoning.” Participants will include: **Helga Davis** (multidisciplinary artist/performer); **Ekow Eshun** (Independent Curator, London); **Thelma Golden** (The Studio Museum in Harlem); **Adrienne Edwards** (Whitney Museum of American Art); **Koyo Kouoh** (Zeitz Museum of Contemporary African Art, Cape Town); **Renee Mussai** (Independent Curator, London); **Gabi Ngcobo** (Kunstinstituut Melly, Rotterdam); **Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung** (Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin); **Oluremi C. Onabanjo** (Museum of Modern Art, New York); **Cameron Rowland** (artist); **Legacy Russell** (The Kitchen, New York); and **Stanley Wolokau-Wanambwa** (artist and educator, RISD), among others.

On Friday, April 12, symposium participants and other invited industry professionals will come together at the Armory for a series of private forums on the institutional challenges and creative practices of intervention that shape the “radical practice” of contemporary Black curation transnationally in different locations. Forums will be moderated by leaders in the field, including curators **Legacy Russell** and **Koyo Kouoh**, artist, curator and choreographer **Rashida Bumbray**, and Artistic Director of the Brown Arts Institute **Avery Willis Hoffman**, among others. These sessions—born out of the Making Space Public Programming Series’ Idea Labs initiative, which offers artists and community groups the space and opportunity to collaborate, connect, and innovate—will provide a platform for curators and artists of color to discuss their work and network across generations for future projects. Friday’s proceedings will close with Richard Kennedy’s commission, open to the public at 8pm in the Armory’s historic rooms.

Held in the Armory’s historic period rooms and spaces, Making Space at the Armory is an insightful series of cutting-edge conversations, performances, and activations provide that provides a unique forum for bridging art and culture. These happenings—curated by writer and scholar Tavia Nyong’o—make space for new points of view and unique perspectives from a diverse array of artists, scholar, cultural leaders, and social trailblazers. The 2024 Season of the Making Space Public Programming series will also feature: **Antagonisms: A Gathering**, a symposium on June 1 led by playwright and essayist **Claudia Rankine** and featuring participants such as renowned postcolonial theorist **Homi Bhabha**, acclaimed cultural historian **Saidiya Hartman**, and Guggenheim fellow and choreographer **Shamel Pitts**; **Day for Night: A Salon on Art and Nightlife** on September 8, presented in conjunction with *R.O.S.E.*, the Armory’s new commission by **Sharon Eyal**, **Gai Behar**, and **Caius Pawson** of **Young** that sits at the intersection of arts and nightlife; and **Canto de Todes / Song for All** by singer and performance artist **Dorian Wood**, a 12-hour composition and installation inspired by a lyric written by the late Chilean singer and songwriter **Violeta Parra**, presented in collaboration with the Association for the Study of the Arts of the Present and punctuated by concurrent readings, screenings, conversations, and collaborations curated by film scholar **Michael Gillespie** and the **Tierra Narrative** poetry collective.

TICKETING

Tickets to Richard Kennedy’s *Guttural (Conducted Contact)* on Friday, April 12th at Park Avenue Armory at \$45 (plus fees) may be purchased by phone through the Armory Box Office at (212) 933-5812, Monday through Friday from 10am to 6pm; and online at armoryonpark.org.

Symposium sessions at Princeton University on Thursday, April 11th are free and open to the public. Tickets are required upon arrival, and advance tickets are encouraged.

SPONSORSHIP

Citi and Bloomberg Philanthropies are the Armory's 2024 Season Sponsors.

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The Radical Practice of Black Curation: A Symposium is supported, in part, by the Terra Foundation for American Art.

ABOUT RICHARD KENNEDY

Richard Kennedy's multidisciplinary practice is interested in relationships and navigating sexuality as it occurs at the intersection of class, race, and gender. Considering opera through a language of African American experience—drawing on the oral histories told through spirituals and chain gang songs—Kennedy disrupts the tradition of Western theater in order to generate new participatory modes of viewership. Through creating costumes and set design for opera, Kennedy was drawn to painting, sculpture, and video—drawing on a process of layering, obfuscation, and temporality (slowness) that contradicts his practice in live performance. Recent solo shows include *Acey-Dencey* (Jeonnam Museum of Art), *Libretto Accidentale* (Peres Projects Milan), *Awake in a Nightmare* (Kunsthalle Winterthur). Recent performances include: *Black Swan's Song* (Creative Director, Performance Space New York Gala 2023), *Zeferina* (The Industry LA), *Reverence*, and *Ever* (Palais De Tokyo). Kennedy is a graduate of The Milton Avery Institute at Bard College (MFA).

ABOUT VERA PASSOS

Vera Passos (choreographer/dancer) is considered one of Salvador Bahia's most elegant and eloquent contemporary Afro-Brazilian dancers. The *Los Angeles Times* called Passos, "exotic, strong but sylphlike." Passos has danced for Jorge Silva Dance Company and the acclaimed Bale Folclórico da Bahia touring throughout Brazil, Europe, Asia, the US, and South America for ten years. Passos began her dance training at the age of 14 at the State of Bahia's Escola de Dança subsequently training in the Silvestre Technique in 1992 with Rosangela Silvestre. Silvestre's protégé, Passos has taught the technique since 2002 in Salvador and throughout Brazil, South America, Europe, and the US. Her extensive technique seamlessly encompasses modern dance, classical ballet, dança afro, jazz, and traditional Afro-Brazilian. Passos performed with jazzman Steve Coleman throughout Europe in 2002 and 2003. Passos choreographs for Tocandomblé and in 2010, participated in the first annual Viver Brasil Institute in Los Angeles as a technical trainer and visiting artist. She also danced in the opera

Lidia de Oxxum, choreographed by Carlos Moraes. In 2015, she premiered her first full-length work for Viver Brasil, *Peace Transcends*, at the Aratani Theatre in Los Angeles. In 2016 she choreographed and performed in the company's *Bloco Afro Spectacle* for the Olympic Celebration at the Hollywood Bowl.

ABOUT THE PRINCETON COLLABORATORIUM FOR RADICAL AESTHETICS

Housed in the Lewis Center for the Arts and the Department of Art & Archaeology, the Princeton Collaboratorium facilitates student, faculty, and community convenings, creative initiatives and interventions, and group studios that use collaboration as the primary structure of their inquiries and take original and inventive approaches to aesthetics as their guiding principle. The Princeton Collaboratorium hosts public dialogues and seminars that explore what might constitute a radical aesthetics and what such a redefinition of this concept might yield for research, teaching, and learning at Princeton and beyond.

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**; 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; *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; 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; *Art at Water's Edge*, a symposium inspired by the work of director and scholar **May Joseph** on artistic invention in the face of climate change, including participants such as Whitney Biennale curator **Adrienne Edwards**, artist **Kiyan Williams**, Little Island landscape architect **Signe Nielsen**, eco-systems artist **Michael Wang**, and others; *Symposium: Sound & Color – The Future of Race in Design*, an interdisciplinary forum exploring how race matters in creative design for live performance hosted by lighting designer **Jane Cox**, playwright **Branden Jacobs-Jenkins**, set designer **Mimi Lien**, and sound

designer and composer **Mikaal Sulaiman** and featuring collaborations with Design Action and Oregon Shakespeare Festival; *Juke Joint*, a two-day event spotlighting the history of the juke joint in Black American social history and its legacy in music and culture, including performances by **Pamela Sneed** and **Stew**; *Hapo Na Zamani*, a 1960s-style happening curated by **Carl Hancock Rux** with music direction by **Vernon Reid**, and presented in collaboration with Harlem Stage; *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 collaboration with the **NYC Trans Oral History Project**.

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; *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; and Seasons of Dance, a contemporary dance salon featuring conversations with “mother of contemporary African dance” **Germaine Acogny**, Tanztheater Wuppertal dancer **Malou Airaud**, and dancers from *The Rite of Spring / common ground[s]* at the Armory.

Artist Talks have featured esteemed artists, scholars, and thought leaders, such as: actor **Bobby Cannavale**; architects **Jacques Herzog**, **Pierre de Meuron**, and **Elizabeth Diller**; artist and composer **Heiner Goebbels**; choreographers **Reggie (Regg Roc) Gray**, **Bill T. Jones**, and **Anne Teresa de Keersmaecker**; composers **Philip Miller**, **Thuthuka Sibisi**, **Tyshawn Sorey**, **Samy Moussa**, and **Alexandra Gardner**; composer and director **Michel van der Aa**; composer, vocalist, and scholar **Gelsey Bell**; conductors **Amandine Beyer** and **Matthias Pintscher**; designer **Peter Nigrini**; directors **Claus Guth**, **Robert Icke**, **Richard Jones**, **Sam Mendez**, **Satoshi Miyagi**, **Ariane Mnouchkine**, **Ben Powers**, **Peter Sellars**, **Simon Stone**, **Ian Strasfogel**, **Ivo van Hove**, and **Alexander Zeldin**; Juilliard president **Damian Woetzel** and Juilliard Provost and Dean **Ara Guzelimian**; musicians **Helmut Deutsch**, **Nona Hendryx**, **Miah Persson**, and **Davóne Tines**; *New Yorker* editor **David Remnick**; **James Nicola**, Artistic Director of New York Theater Workshop; performance artists **Marina Abramović** and **Helga Davis**; **RoseLee Goldberg**, Founding Director and Chief Curator of Performa; playwrights **Branden Jacobs-Jenkins**, **Tony Kushner**, **Lynn Nottage**, and **Anne Washburn**; **Dr. Augustus Casely Hayford**, Director of the Smithsonian, National Museum of African Art; visual artists **Nick Cave**, **William Kentridge**, **Julie Mehretu**, **Julian Rosefeldt**, **Hito Steyerl**, and **Ai Wei Wei**; and writers and scholars **Anne Bogart**, **Robert M. Dowling**, **Emily Greenwood**, and **Carol Martin**. www.armoryonpark.org

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