



## **Making Space at the Armory presents *Antagonisms: A Gathering*, a symposium led by Claudia Rankine, June 1**

**Series of conversations, interventions, and performances explore difference,  
difficulty, and friction in public and private discourse**

**Participants include actress and playwright Anna Deavere Smith, scholar and  
postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabha, acclaimed scholar and writer Saidiya  
Hartman, and Armory Curator of Public Programming and Scholar-in-  
Residence Tavia Nyong'o, among others**

**Featuring dance duet *An Essence of Touch of RED* by Guggenheim fellow  
and choreographer Shamel Pitts**

New York, NY – Wednesday, April 17, 2024 – Park Avenue Armory presents the second program in its Making Space Public Programming Series: [Antagonisms: A Gathering](#), **Saturday, June 1, 2024 from 1pm to 7pm**. This day-long symposium is led by playwright and poet **Claudia Rankine**, who has organized this event to examine the poetics of disagreement through panels discussions, artistic interventions, and investigations of group dynamics, starting with a performance of Guggenheim fellow and choreographer **Shamel Pitts'** boxing-ring inspired duet *An Essence of Touch of RED*.

“This gathering was inspired by a transcribed conversation between Audre Lorde and James Baldwin at Hampshire College in 1983. Through creating a space of contra-discourse, they were able to both amplify and shift their tactics and methodologies to come together on ideas of liberation and revolution,” said Claudia Rankine. “Our convening team was moved to think of this historical conversation as a springboard for talking about disagreement in liberatory and anti-colonial thinking in the modern world.”

“In today’s climate, it is especially important to interrogate how we process difference, difficulty, and friction among comrades and allies and how to challenge the dead-end loops of ‘debate’ and ‘discussion,’” added **Tavia Nyong'o**, Curator of Public Programming at Park Avenue Armory. “We are proud to make the space for this kind of conversation and to open this discussion out to different modes of engagement.”

The gathering opens with Pitts’ *An Essence of Touch of Red* at 1pm, performed by Tushrik Fredericks and Shamel Pitts. Part of his ongoing *Red Series* with Brooklyn-based arts collective TRIBE, the work is a duet for two Black men set inside a contemporary boxing ring. The dancers imbue this boxed-in site with an intense energy drawn from the power of vulnerability, effeminacy, and the healing that occurs when Black men are allowed to soften, together. This sets the scene for audiences to experience anticipation, energy, and collective softening of a boxing ring and to reframe their expectations of time, space, and normative identity.

Subsequently, three hour-long panels hosted by conveners Claudia Rankine, acclaimed cultural historian **Saidiya Hartman**, and Indian scholar and postcolonial theorist **Homi Bhabha**, respectively, will question the themes brought up by the performance and framed by Lorde and Baldwin’s conversation. Additional participants include: poet and novelist **Dionne Brand**; Queer Black troublemaker and Black feminist love evangelist **Alexis Pauline Gumbs**; specialist in African American culture and a prominent scholar in the field

of race and sexuality studies **Robert Reid-Pharr**; writer, professor, and researcher in Black Studies **Christina Sharpe**; actress, playwright, and National Humanities Medal recipient **Anna Deavere Smith**, among others.

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 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, scholars, cultural leaders, and social trailblazers. Earlier this season, the Making Space Public Programming series presented **Guttural (Conducted Contact)** by multidisciplinary artist **Richard Kennedy** and Afro-Brazilian dancer **Vera Passos** as the capstone event of The Radical Practice of Black Curation symposium in collaboration with the Princeton Collaboratorium For Radical Aesthetics, on April 12. Upcoming public programs will also include: **Day for Night: A Salon on Art and Nightlife** on September 8, an event that will bring nightlife creatives together artist and scholars; 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 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](http://armoryonpark.org).

### SPONSORSHIP

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

Support for Park Avenue Armory's artistic season has been generously provided by the Thompson Family Foundation, Charina Endowment Fund, the Donald A. Pels Charitable Trust, The Shubert Foundation, Wescustogo Foundation, 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 Marc Haas Foundation, Mary W. Harriman Foundation, the Reed Foundation, the Leon Levy Foundation, the May and Samuel Rudin Family Foundation, Gregory Annenberg Weingarten, GRoW @ Annenberg, The Emma and Georgina Bloomberg Foundation, the Richenthal Foundation, and the Isak and Rose Weinman Foundation. Additional support has been provided by the Armory's Artistic Council. Public support is provided by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Kathy Hochul and the New York State Legislature as well as the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council under the leadership of Speaker Adrienne Adams.

### ABOUT CLAUDIA RANKINE

Claudia Rankine is the author of five books of poetry, including *Citizen: An American Lyric* and *Don't Let Me Be Lonely: An American Lyric*; three plays including *HELP*, which premiered in March 2020 (The Shed, New York), and *The White Card*, which premiered in February 2018 (ArtsEmerson/ American Repertory Theater) and was published by Graywolf Press in 2019; as well as numerous video collaborations. Her recent collection of essays, *Just Us: An American Conversation*, was published by Graywolf Press in 2020. She is also the co-editor of several anthologies including *The Racial Imaginary: Writers on Race in the Life of the Mind*.

In 2016, Rankine co-founded The Racial Imaginary Institute (TRII). Among her numerous awards and honors, Rankine is the recipient of the Bobbitt National Prize for Poetry, Poets & Writers' Jackson Poetry Prize, and fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation, Lannan Foundation, MacArthur Foundation, United States Artists, and National Endowment of the Arts. A former Chancellor of the Academy of American Poets, Claudia Rankine joined the NYU Creative Writing Program in Fall 2021. She lives in New York.

### ABOUT HOMI BHABHA

Homi K. Bhabha is the Anne F. Rothenberg Professor of the Humanities in the Departments of English and Comparative Literature at Harvard University. At Harvard, he served as the director of the Humanities Center, founding director of the Mahindra Humanities Center, and in the inaugural position of Senior Advisor to the President and Provost. He is the author of numerous works exploring postcolonial theory, psychoanalysis, cultural change and power, contemporary art, and cosmopolitanism. His works include *The Location of Culture*, the edited volume *Nation and Narration*, and forewords to Frantz Fanon's major works. He is a Corresponding Fellow at The British Academy, Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, and Critic-in-Residence at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts.

#### **ABOUT SAIDIYA HARTMAN**

Saidiya Hartman is the author of *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (1997; Norton, 2022); *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2007) and *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments* (Norton, 2019), which received the National Book Critics Circle Award for Criticism, and the PEN/John Kenneth Galbraith Award for Nonfiction, the Mary Nickliss Prize from the Organization of American Historians, the Judy Grahn Prize for Lesbian Nonfiction, and the John Hope Franklin Prize from the American Studies Association. She received a MacArthur Fellowship in 2019 and was elected a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2022. She is a member of the Royal Society of Literature and a University Professor. B. A., Wesleyan University; Ph.D., Yale University.

#### **ABOUT TAVIA NYONG'O**

Tavia Nyong'o is a scholar and curator of performance. He is the author of *The Amalgamation Waltz: Race, Performance, and the Ruses of Memory* (2009), which won the Erroll Hill Award for Best Book in Black Performance Studies, and *Afro-Fabulations: The Queer Drama of Black Life* (2018), which won the Barnard Hewitt Award for Best Book in Theater and Performance Studies. He writes regularly for *Frieze*, *Artforum*, *The Baffler*, and other venues. He is currently Chair and Wiliam Lampson Professor of Theater and Performance Studies at Yale and Curator of Public Programming and Scholar-in-Residence at Park Avenue Armory. He was recently awarded a 2024 Guggenheim Fellowship in Theatre Arts and Performance.

#### **ABOUT SHAMEL PITTS**

Shamel Pitts (Brooklyn, New York) is a performance artist, choreographer, conceptual artist, dancer, spoken word artist, director, and teacher. Born in Brooklyn, New York, Pitts began his dance training at LaGuardia High School of Music & Art and Performing Arts and, simultaneously, at The Ailey School. He is a first prize winner in The National Arts Competition from YoungArts. Pitts went on to receive his BFA in dance from The Juilliard School and was awarded the Martha Hill Award for Excellence in Dance. He began his dance career in Mikhail Baryshnikov's Hell's Kitchen Dance and BJM\_Danse Montreal. Pitts danced with Batsheva Dance Company for seven years under the artistic direction of Ohad Naharin and is a certified teacher of Gaga movement language. Pitts has created a triptych of award-winning multidisciplinary performances, with his arts collective TRIBE, known as his "BLACK series," which has toured extensively to many festivals around the world since 2016. He is an adjunct professor at The Juilliard School, a guest faculty member at Princeton University, New York University, Wesleyan University, and has been an Artist-in-Residence at Harvard University. He is the recipient of a Princess Grace Award in Choreography, a NYSCA/NYFA Artist Fellow, a Jacob's Pillow Artist-in-Residence, and a 2020 Guggenheim Fellow.

#### **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 Airaudo**, 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 Keersmaeker**; 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](http://www.armoryonpark.org)

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