

Ann Hamilton
the event of a thread, 2012
Park Avenue Armory
New York City

regarding APPRECIATION

A project is made as much from conversation as it is from materials—its sounds and motions hold the energy of their many influences. *the event of a thread* is not any one singular moment or image, but an ongoing process and a condition of possibility. It began in walking the 70 paces, north to south, across the Wade Thompson Drill Hall and the 150 paces from the west to the Tiffany clock—now disused—at its eastern edge. Walking gathers space into the body. It is a form of listening. The interval between a foot lifting off and touching ground is thinking at the pace of the body.

Like all projects, this one began in solitude, but its main body is social and larger than any singular effort or gesture. It slowly materialized in response to circumstances of architecture, place, and the people who gathered in the process. A landscape of permission was made by the faith and care of willing collaborators and total strangers. It happened because a space was made for it to happen.

Park Avenue Armory takes the same risks artists take, recognizing process and creating conditions for it to occur unhindered. From Rebecca Robertson's lead as president and executive producer, an attitude of "yes" and "how" and "we can" extends throughout the organization, making permission for any "what if." I am especially grateful to curator Kristy Edmunds for the recognition of her conversation, for her clarity of mission, for asking the big questions. She listens with the heart of an artist. Senior producer Michael Lonergan and artistic associate Jamie Boyle gracefully wrangled the many details of "how," and technical director Phil Hampton, capably joined by Jerad Schomer, orchestrated logistics with unflappable calm and humor even after hours in the air crawling the trusses. Lighting designed by Brian Scott of SITI Company revealed a building we hadn't fully seen before, and sound designed by Darron L. West, also of SITI Company, and Charles Coes brought forward transmissions that span several generations of technology and are the project's material and aural accretion.

Just as we found it impossible to model the cloth's turbulence with only a few swings, it is similarly impossible to name each person that will ultimately make this project live. As of this writing, I do not know all the readers who will sit side by side at the table, the vocalists who will open and end each day, and the writers who will translate the conditions. However, I am already indebted to Anne Bogart, to whom I took my questions about reading aloud to pigeons—the earthbound mammal reading to the airborne bird. Not only was she willing to meet during her very early recovery from hip surgery, she immediately said of SITI Company, "we can be your readers." Bora Yoon, our vocalist advisor, has willingly and eagerly coordinated the soloists who will close each day by sounding David Lang's original composition. David is the first to draw a sung line from the concordance texts.

The physics of a pendulum—how swinging from a 70-foot steel truss can hold in the body the contradiction of fast and slow—was made eloquent by Marty Chafkin of Perfection Electricks. This is our 14th year working together, and I can't imagine a project without him. Thanks to Paul Discoe and Joinery Structures, our pigeons from Ohio coo in their cages; the readers sit on stools at oak tables; we swing on elm seats and sit on pine benches. Keith Caserta of KC Kennels enthusiastically trained his pigeons for their New York debut, and never batted an eye at our requests. The Workshop Residence in San Francisco afforded time and space for conceiving the "uniforms," and Georgene Shelton's wizardry with shaping cloth brought them to form.

In my studio in Ohio, Jason Mulhausen worked side by side and ahead of me from the beginning; his infinite patience and unremitting belief that we can always find a simple, elegant solution—or find the people who can—made any idea possible. He devoted himself to unusual new fields like pigeon care and record lathe restoration without hesitation, and his knack for making strangers into friends brought us the hands and minds we needed to solve any problem.

Nicole Gibbs' cheer buoys the studio. Thinking ahead of us, she finds ways to make the research and the realization easier, while keeping us organized without us ever realizing it. I am grateful for her care with words: with all the writing and editing we do, Nicole's empathy and attention make the life of the work possible. Ever diligent to the studio's shifting needs, Nicole Rome untangles the history and smooths the everyday with enormous patience and positive energy. Kris Helm, my long-time friend involved in the studio for over 20 years, has seen many projects through, and her steady, careful eye over the numbers and calm nature are wholly reassuring throughout our busy days.

Finally, the larger landscape of support and permission is made by my husband, Michael Mercil, and my son, Emmett Mercil, who ballast with humor and lightness the immersive ocean of work.

— Ann Hamilton