



**ONE OF AMERICA'S MOST IMPORTANT INTERIORS,
THE VETERANS ROOM BY LOUIS COMFORT TIFFANY AND ASSOCIATED ARTISTS,
REOPENS TO THE PUBLIC AFTER YEARLONG RESTORATION**

***As Part of Herzog & de Meuron's Reimagining of the Historic Park Avenue Armory,
Seminal Room is Transformed into an Intimate and Eclectic Cultural Salon for Public
Enjoyment***



Detailed view of the restored Veterans Room at Park Avenue Armory. Photo by James Ewing.

New York, NY – (March 7, 2016) – As part of the ongoing transformation of its historic building into a cultural institution dedicated to cutting-edge unconventional arts productions, Park Avenue Armory is reopening its restored Veterans Room, the most significant remaining intact interior in the world by Louis C. Tiffany and Co., Associated Artists. A monument of late 19th-century decorative arts, the Veterans Room is being reanimated through interventions by Herzog & de Meuron with Platt Byard Dovell White Architects, which will transform the space into a state-of-the-art room for intimate and eclectic cultural programming. The room opens today with performances by jazz pianist, composer, and MacArthur Fellow Jason Moran as part of the Artists Studio series, featuring innovative artists and artistic pairings that harken back to the imaginative collaborations of the designers who originally conceived the room.

“We are thrilled to be reopening the Veterans Room, an opulent room among the most significant surviving interiors of the American Aesthetic Movement that resulted from the collaborative work of artists led by a young, visionary Louis Comfort Tiffany,” said Armory President and Executive Producer Rebecca Robertson. “Our revitalization of this room responds to the original exuberant vision for the room’s design, bringing into dialogue some of the most talented designers of the 19th and 21st centuries—Associated Artists with Herzog & de Meuron and a team of world-renowned artisans and experts in Tiffany glass, fine woodworking, and decorative arts.”

The Veterans Room was an important civic commission awarded in 1879 to Louis Comfort Tiffany, Associated Artists, a newly formed collective that included three of the most significant American designers of the 19th century at early stages of their very distinguished careers: Louis Comfort Tiffany, Stanford White, and Candace Wheeler. According to an 1881 issue of *Scribner's*, the responsibilities for the room were divided as follows:

- Tiffany was responsible for the general character and scope, as well as the windows, the glass and plaster mural, and the glass tiles in the fireplace;
- a young White was responsible for architectural arrangements including all woodwork;
- Samuel Colman, a well-known painter and Orientalist, was responsible for Orientalist details and color harmonies;
- textile designer Wheeler was responsible for the draperies; and
- Francis Millet and George Yewell, well-known painters of the time, were responsible for the frieze that depicted scenes of war through the centuries.

The design of the room by these artisans was exotic, eclectic, and full of experimentation; as noted by *Decorator and Furnisher*: “the prepondering styles appear to be the Greek, Moresque and Celtic, with a dash of Egyptian, the Persian and the Japanese in the appropriate places.” When the Veterans Room opened in 1881, *The New York Times* called it “unique in its appointments and decorations and undoubtedly the most magnificent apartment of the kind in this country.” Its reputation did not diminish with time. When the room was designated as an interior landmark by the New York City Landmarks Commission in 1992, the Landmarks Report stated the Veterans Room and the adjacent smaller Library were “widely considered to be among the most significant and beautiful interiors of the American Aesthetic Movement.”

Though they only worked together for four years, Associated Artists would go on to design some of the most prestigious commissions of the time, including the Mark Twain House (1881), five rooms in the White House (1882), and the Cornelius Vanderbilt House (1883). While the Armory’s Board of Officers Room—which was restored in 2013—showcases the mature artistic style of Herter Brothers, the Veterans Room represents the exuberance and innovation of the younger Associated Artists, who approached the project with a new and distinctly American vision, highlighting their affinity and passion for the complexity and interplay of materials to break new ground in modern interior design.

Since the early 20th century, the Veterans Room has suffered from several low-quality alterations and restorations, causing some of the original material to be lost, though the major architectural features of the room were maintained. Its initial opulent appearance had much greater variety in color and delicacy in painted decoration as well as a profusion of carefully selected artworks, artifacts, and textiles. Fortunately, unlike other historical rooms in the Armory, such as the Board of Officers Room, there was little environmental damage, and the room still has its original wood and metalwork, gas light fixtures, glass, and some art objects. Where the original finishes are missing, they are generally well-documented.

The revitalization of the Veterans Room follows Herzog & de Meuron’s design approach for the Armory building, which seeks to highlight the distinct qualities and existing character of

each individual room while interweaving contemporary elements to improve its function. Even more so than in other rooms at the Armory, Herzog & de Meuron’s approach to the Veterans Room is to amplify the beauty of the room’s original vision by adding contemporary reconstructions of lost historic material and subtle additions with the same ethos and creative passion as the original artisans to infuse a modern energy into a harmonious, holistic design.

“What makes the Veterans Room different from all other period rooms of the Armory is its level of inventiveness and playfulness,” said Herzog & de Meuron Senior Partner Ascan Mergenthaler. “It is a collage of diverse influences and inspirations, reflecting the collaborative efforts of an outstanding team of designers. Their approach on the decorative scheme goes beyond what was typical at that time and explores methods and means that are still fascinating today.”

In addition to installing advancements in infrastructure and acoustics, the design team created new wallpaper, using both modern and original techniques that mirror the intent, color balance, and multi-stepped process of the design by Tiffany, Colman, and Wheeler. In addition, the team focused on a number of significant upgrades to the room’s lighting, including new systems for architectural lighting. They developed LED-illuminated glass lenses to replace the gas jets in the original fixtures, creating the glow and subtlety that the original designers sought to achieve, and added curtains composed of layers of copper mesh, leather strapping, and deep blue velvet for the lower windows, replacing the lost textiles by Wheeler.

The scope of work also included the removal of wall coverings, paint, varnish, and the over-floor that were added in the late 20th century; refinishing and repair of the original oak and mahogany floor; repair and refinishing of the original woodwork and metal work; the repair or replacement of broken and damaged decorative elements; the re-shoring and re-structuring of the mantelpiece; and the cleaning and restoration of artwork, including a monumental frieze by Millet and Yewell and decorative glass by Tiffany. The original decorative surfaces, including the ceiling, were de-layered of overpaints to reveal their original colors and design and then protected. The original benches were cleaned and repaired and new leather cushions were made. The room was soundproofed and engineered to a concert-level acoustic and heating, air conditioning, and power systems were discreetly installed to allow a diverse array of cultural events to be hosted in the space, ranging from performances and exhibitions to educational workshops and lectures.

About the Park Avenue Armory

Part palace, part industrial shed, Park Avenue Armory fills a critical void in the cultural ecology of New York by enabling artists to create—and audiences to experience—unconventional work that cannot be mounted in traditional performance halls and museums. With its soaring 55,000-square-foot Wade Thompson Drill Hall—reminiscent of 19th-century European train stations—and array of exuberant period rooms, the Armory offers a new platform for creativity across all art forms.

Since its first production in September 2007—Aaron Young’s *Greeting Card*, a 9,216-square-foot “action” painting created by the burned-out tire marks of ten choreographed motorcycles—the Armory has organized a series of immersive performances, installations,

and works of art that have drawn critical and popular attention. Among the highlights of its first seven years are: Bernd Alois Zimmermann's harrowing *Die Soldaten*, in which the audience moved "through the music;" the unprecedented six-week residency of the Royal Shakespeare Company in their own theater rebuilt in the drill hall; a massive digital sound and video environment by Ryoji Ikeda; a sprawling gauzy, multi-sensory labyrinth created by Ernesto Neto; *the event of a thread*, a site-specific installation by Ann Hamilton; the final performances of the Merce Cunningham Dance Company across three separate stages; the New York Philharmonic performing Karlheinz Stockhausen's sonic masterpiece *Gruppen* with three orchestras surrounding the audience; *WS* by Paul McCarthy, a monumental installation of fantasy, excess, and dystopia; a sonic environment that blurred the boundaries between artist and audience created by the xx; an immersive *Macbeth* set in a Scottish heath and henge by Rob Ashford and Kenneth Branagh; *tears become... streams become...*, a major genre-defying collaboration between artist Douglas Gordon and pianist Hélène Grimaud, which flooded the Armory's drill hall with an installation of water, light, and music; *HABEAS CORPUS*, a performance and installation by Laurie Anderson based on the story of a former Guantanamo Bay detainee that examines lost identity, memory, and the resiliency of the human body and spirit; and *Goldberg*, a performance of Bach's masterwork by pianist Igor Levit, in an immersive installation created by seminal performance artist Marina Abramović. Since 2013 the Armory's annual recital series, which is set in the restored Board of Officers Room, continues to showcase and celebrate talent from across the globe.

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