



**HISTORIC HERTER BROTHERS ROOM AT PARK AVENUE ARMORY
RENOVATED AND TRANSFORMED INTO STATE-OF-THE-ART SALON
FOR INTIMATE PERFORMANCES AND ART INSTALLATIONS**

One of the Most Important Period Rooms in America, Board of Officers Room is Restored and Refreshed as Part of Herzog & de Meuron's Comprehensive Revitalization Plan for Armory Building

Room to be Unveiled during First Public Performance on September 29

New York, NY—September 19, 2013—Park Avenue Armory has completed the renovation and restoration of its Board of Officers Room, one of the most important historic rooms in America. Designed originally by Herter Brothers and one of the few surviving interiors by the fabled firm, the room was likened to a “royal apartment” by the press when it first opened to the public in 1880, but fell into disrepair due to poor maintenance and water infiltration in the decades since. The restoration, led by Herzog & de Meuron, infuses the room with a contemporary sensibility through a series of subtle and delicate interventions. Through close collaboration with expert conservators and skilled artisans, the revitalization breathes new life into the room and transforms this extraordinary space into a state-of-the-art salon for installations, intimate performances and other contemporary art programs.

Thanks to a \$15-million gift from the Thompson Family Foundation, the room is being restored as part of the Armory’s ongoing \$200-million transformation, which reinvigorates the original design of the historic building while advancing the Armory’s mission, dedicated to the creation and presentation of visual and performing arts that cannot be realized in traditional performance halls and white-wall museums. The first public event in the revitalized Board of Officers Room will be held on September 29, with a performance by baritone Christian Gerhaher. The performance is the first in a series of recitals launching this fall that will allow audiences to experience chamber music in the room’s intimate salon setting.

“The revitalization of the Board of Officers Room has brought together two extraordinary design firms, working some 133 years apart, into direct dialogue in one of the most beautiful interiors in the country,” said Armory President and Executive Producer Rebecca Robertson. “When we first took over the building in 2006, the Board of Officers Room was being used as a coat check room for art fairs and had fallen into complete disrepair. Herzog & de Meuron meticulously studied the Herter Brothers room, which naturally had beautiful acoustics, and reanimated the space with an approach that both respects the history of the room and embraces a love of the contemporary.”

She added, “Wade Thompson, our founding Chairman, first led the fight to save the Armory building. Now his wife, Angela, and the Thompson Family Foundation have ensured that the one of the most glorious rooms from the Gilded Age is restored for future generations and reanimated for one-of-a-kind artistic experiences through their generous gift. We are forever grateful to them both for their vision and their support.”

Since being awarded stewardship of the building in December 2006, Park Avenue Armory has invested \$120 million to upgrade and restore the structure—which had been previously named by the World Monuments Fund among the “100 Most Endangered Historic Sites in the World”—stabilizing the masonry, upgrading the infrastructure, and making the drill hall and select period rooms ready for arts

productions, all in accordance with Herzog & de Meuron's design plans. Concurrent with the revitalization project, Park Avenue Armory developed its artistic program and established itself as a new arts institution that presents epic and immersive performing and visual art that cannot be mounted elsewhere in New York City.

Board of Officer's Room Original Design and History

One of the largest historic rooms at the Armory, the Board of Officers Room was originally designed as a meeting space for the colonel of the Seventh Regiment and his officers who oversaw the ten companies that made up the "Silk Stocking" brigade, as the Regiment was known. Since then, the room has served many purposes: for the memorial and viewing of General Douglas MacArthur; as the filming location for the men's club in the movie *Trading Places* with Eddie Murphy and Dan Aykroyd; and most recently as a place to experience live performances and installations by artists as diverse as Rufus Wainwright, ETHEL, Meredith Monk, Somi, Lauren Flannigan, Bora Yoon, and Jeff Koons among others.

The room was originally designed in 1880 by Herter Brothers, considered among the leading design and decorating firms of the Gilded Age and among the foremost exponents of the American Aesthetic Movement. With work spanning furniture, the decorative arts, and interior design, the Herter Brothers created some of the most celebrated interiors in the country and designed mansions for such prominent clients as William H. Vanderbilt, J. Pierpont Morgan House, Darius Ogden Mills, as well as two rooms in the White House under Ulysses S. Grant.

At the time of its completion, the Board of Officers Room was described as a "royal apartment" by *The New York Times*. The focus of the room was the south mantelpiece with its affixed paintings, and the room was bisected by a major structural beam with two columns. The high-grade Honduran mahogany was finished in a blood-red hue above which the walls were painted a deep green with darker floral stencils. The ceiling was stenciled in a series of cream panels with blue borders. The room subsequently underwent two renovations during the 20th century: the first in 1906, by William Baumgarten, who had worked for Herter Brothers during the original design and who conducted a cleaning and renovation of the ceiling; and a second comprehensive—and poorly executed—"restoration" in 1932, by architects of Irving & Casson/A.H. Davenport, which dramatically changed the look of the room and included complete over-painting of much of the walls and in-painting that altered the appearance of the ceiling.

Beginning in the 1980s, the room suffered from poor maintenance and water infiltration. By 1998, the room and the entire building had fallen into such disrepair that *The New York Times* featured an editorial calling it "a splendid crumble" where, in specific reference to the Board of Officers Room, the "ceilings were falling" and the "walls are drenched." It was this editorial, in combination with its designation in 2000 among the world's "100 Most Endangered Sites," along with Machu Picchu and Angkor Wat, that encouraged the state to award stewardship of the building to Park Avenue Armory in December 2006.

Herzog & de Meuron Renovation and Restoration

The Herzog & de Meuron design for the Armory was first unveiled in 2011 and encompasses the entire five-story building, including: the massive 55,000-square-foot Wade Thompson Drill Hall and the former rifle range below it; eighteen period rooms on the first and second floors in the adjacent Head House; all public circulation spaces; relocated office space from the second to the third floor; a transformed fifth floor for rehearsal space; and back-of-house facilities on the lower level. Platt Byard Dovell White Architects is serving as the executive architect for the project.

The design team's approach to the renovation of the historic interiors is to reveal the original American Aesthetic Movement design of the 1880s that has been covered by layers of paint and dirt, respect and maintain the age lines of the building that the 130 years has wrought, and surgically insert contemporary interventions in areas of loss or where necessitated by modern standards. The design is guided by the

understanding that the Armory's rich history and the patina of time are essential to the building's character and that, when contemporary and historic design meet, there is a new dynamic established enriching the experience of both. A defining component of the design process for the period rooms, in particular, is the close collaboration between architect and artisan. Highly skilled craftspeople working in wood, paint, plaster, and metals were employed in the creation of the building's original interiors, and the expertise—and hand—of similar artisans has been drawn upon for the renovation work throughout.

“Our design approach is informed both by the building's rich history and the Armory's mission. For the period rooms, our process is one of deep research and discovery as we de-layer, stabilize, and refurbish the spaces, in a way that honors the original artistry, while integrating fresh contemporary spirit and technology,” said Ascan Mergenthaler, Senior Partner of Herzog & de Meuron. “This is not your standard restoration or preservation project. Our design embraces the age-lines of the building equally alongside with the remarkable craftsmanship that went into its original execution. The dialogue between past and present, between historic design and contemporary intervention, between architecture and art enriches and enlivens experiences within the space.”

Similar to the renovation and restoration of Company D and Company E Rooms on the Armory's second floor, which were completed in 2011, the revitalization of the Board of Officers Room encompassed both restoration work as well as the addition of new elements that complement the building's original detailing. The walls, ceilings, and floors have been meticulously de-layered by conservators to remove the additions and dirt built up from over the years and to reveal the brush strokes and original color palette of the original artisans. The mahogany woodwork has also been de-layered to its original blood red finish. Missing elements in the painted surface patterns on the walls and ceilings have been filled in with a contemporary interpretation of the original stencil-work, which is clearly identifiable on close inspection but maintains a holistic appreciation of the original design from a distance. The 1897 chandeliers have been restored and retrofitted with contemporary light sources hung at the original levels. New metallic chain mail curtains and etched glass panels cover the five large windows in the room.

“What is so amazing and unique about this project, and what we found in the renovation of the Board of Officers room in particular, is that is that you never know what to expect before you begin the painstaking process of de-layering,” said Robertson. “Herter Brothers experts and curators had believed that the designers' original work had been destroyed during previous renovations. We found during our careful research that this was not true and that original work is still extant and, in fact, is a different pattern and color palate than originally expected. The Herzog & de Meuron design resurrects the Board of Officers Room to its original glory and re-imagines it as one of the most distinguished artist salons in the country.”

In addition to the meticulous restoration work, a number of contemporary additions have been made to the room to facilitate the presentation of a variety of art forms in the space. These include acoustic upgrades to the three large pocket doors and the glazing of the windows, a concert-level air conditioning system, production lighting and power and new audiovisual and information technology systems. All of the new equipment has been discretely interwoven within the space to facilitate its new use as a state-of-the-art recital room, while keeping the space flexible for a range of purposes, from art programs to educational activities.

The restoration of the Board of Officers room marks the reanimation of three of the Armory's eighteen historic period rooms on its first two floors. Upon completion, the restored rooms will together form an “artistic palace,” supporting outside-the-box artistic programming like none other in New York City.

2013 Recital Series

In conjunction with the completion of the room, the Armory is launching a new recital series, featuring performances by three extraordinary artists, rarely heard in New York, and allowing audiences to experience chamber music as it was originally intended: in a glorious salon setting of the restored Board of Officers Room, close enough to the artists to feel as though they are part of the performance.

Christian Gerhaer, *baritone*

Gerold Huber, piano

Sunday, September 29 at 3:00 p.m.

Tuesday, October 1 at 8:00 p.m.

Schumann Lieder

Myrthen, Op. 25

Liederkreis, Op. 39 (Eichendorff)

Die Löwenbraut, Op. 31/1 (Chamisso)

Zwölf Gedichte, Op. 35 (Kerner)

Vilde Frang, *violinist*

Michail Lifits, piano

Monday, October 21 at 8:00 p.m.

Tuesday, October 22 at 8:00 p.m.

Wednesday, October 23 at 8:00 p.m.

All-Mozart

Sonata No. 24 in F Major, K. 376

Sonata No. 18 in G Major, K. 301

Sonata No. 22 in A Major, K. 305

Sonata No. 27 in G Major, K. 379

Sonata No. 33 in E-flat Major, K. 481

Anton Batagov, *pianist*

Friday, October 25 at 8:00 p.m.

Saturday, October 26 at 8:00 p.m.

Sunday, October 27 at 7:00 p.m.

Morton Feldman's *Triadic Memories*

For more information about the recital series or to purchase tickets, visit armoryonpark.org or call Park Avenue Armory Ticket Services at (212) 933-5812. Park Avenue Armory's recital series is supported, in part, by the Wade Thompson Memorial Fund and The Reed Foundation.

About Herzog & de Meuron

Herzog & de Meuron is a partnership led by five Senior Partners—Jacques Herzog, Pierre de Meuron, Christine Binswanger, Ascan Mergenthaler, and Stefan Marbach. Founded in Basel in 1978, Herzog & de Meuron are known for designs that are at once highly inventive and sensitive to the site, geography, and culture of the region for which they are planned. An international team of 390 collaborators is working on projects across Europe, North and South America, and Asia. The firm's head office is in Basel with branch offices in Hamburg, London, Madrid, Hong Kong, and New York. Herzog & de Meuron have been awarded numerous prizes including "The Pritzker Architecture Prize" in 2001; the "RIBA Royal Gold Medal" and the "Praemium Imperiale," both in 2007.

About Park Avenue Armory

Part palace, part industrial shed, Park Avenue Armory fills a critical void in the cultural ecology of New York city 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 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 working independently or with other cultural institutions. Among the highlights of its first five years are major installations by Ernesto Neto, Ryoji Ikeda, Christian Boltanski, Tom Sachs, Ann Hamilton, and Paul McCarthy; dance performances by Shen Wei Dance Arts, Tricia Brown, and the final performances of the Merce Cunningham Dance Company across three separate stages; Bernd Zimmermann’s harrowing *Die Soldaten* and Karlheinz Stockhausen’s *Gruppen* with the New York Philharmonic and performances of his electronic masterpiece *Oktophonie*; and a six-week residency of the Royal Shakespeare Company, in their Stratford-upon-Avon home rebuilt to scale in the drill hall.

The Armory is currently undergoing an ongoing \$200-million revitalization of its historic building, named among the “100 Most Endangered Historic Sites in the World” by the World Monuments Fund in 2000. The renovation and restoration, designed by Herzog & de Meuron, will stabilize and preserve the building and create new resources and state-of-the-art spaces for exhibitions, installations, and performances, as well as Artist-in-Residence studios, rehearsal rooms, and back-of-house amenities—offering dynamic environments for artists and audiences alike.

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