

GAGOSIAN GALLERY

VOGUE

Water World: Douglas Gordon Floods the Park Avenue Armory

Patricia Garcia

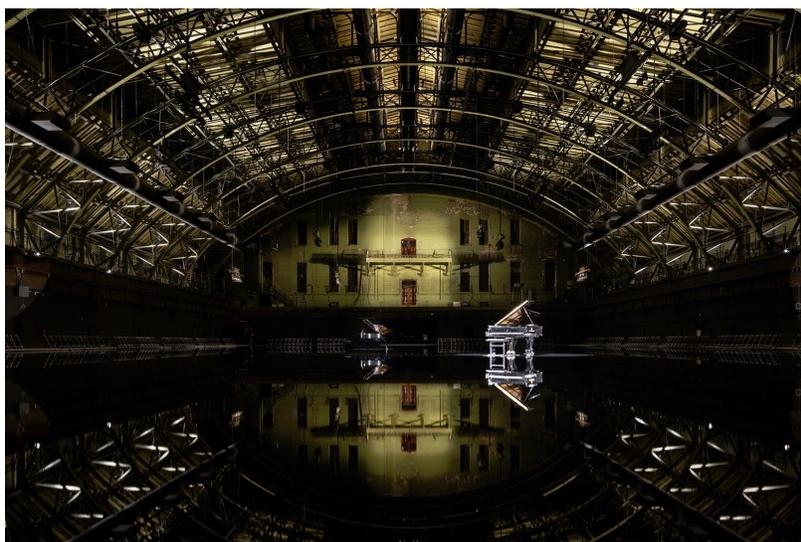


Photo: James Ewing/Courtesy of the Park Avenue Armory

The Park Avenue Armory has always been a place where artists think big. Last year, Paul McCarthy transformed the Armory's gigantic Wade Thompson Drill Hall into a nightmare fairytale land, where a promiscuous Snow White lived with seven corrupt dwarves. In 2012, Ann Hamilton reimagined it as an ethereal playground with 42 large swings hanging from its towering ceiling. Now its latest artist-in-residence, Douglas Gordon, is setting up a breathtaking, 28,000-square-foot reflective lake ("a loch," as the Scot calls it) in the middle of the space. "It's not that big actually," a bare-footed Gordon said of the 55,000-square-foot Drill Hall over the weekend. The artist had just been ankle-deep in water during a rehearsal. "Honestly, I always say to Larry [Gagosian], 'When can you get me a bigger space?' This is just not enough."

For the installation, titled *tears become . . . streams become . . .*, Gordon has collaborated with pianist Hélène Grimaud, who will be playing ten performances of water-themed works by Debussy, Ravel, and Liszt on a Steinway in the center of the piece. When the audience first arrives, all will be dry. Then, before Grimaud enters, the room will start to flood. The water will come to reflect the space's oval-shaped ceilings, rapidly creating the illusion that the space has doubled in depth.

Gordon grew up surrounded by music—his former girlfriend was a soprano, his father a bagpipe player—and he has long been fascinated, specifically, with pianos. For a 2012 video project, *The End of Civilisation*, Gordon famously set a grand piano ablaze on the border between Scotland

and England. Soon, one of his burnt pianos will be on view at a companion show at the Gagosian Gallery uptown, opening on December 11. “I think they are the most beautiful sculptures,” he said. “Sometimes you love something so much, the closer you get to it, you ignite it.” Gordon met Grimaud through the Armory’s artistic director, Alex Poots. “We both have a love of wolves and lunacy and pianos,” Gordon said of Grimaud, “so that’s pretty much how it all started.”

As for the title of the installation? “I’m a man from Scotland and we’re not allowed to have feelings because we’re tough,” Gordon explained. “But sadness is a part of life. Let’s not hide it. Let’s put it on a table. These are difficult times we’re living in.” If the underlying theme of the project is melancholic, the sheer ambition of the project seems optimistic, even uplifting. “If you acknowledge that there’s pain and trouble and sadness, then that is when you can appreciate love and kindness,” Gordon said. “Jesus, I sound like such a hippie.”

tears become . . . streams become . . . *opens December 10, performances run from December 9 to 21.*