

the event of a thread

ANN HAMILTON

DECEMBER 2012 NYC



COMMISSIONED BY PARK AVENUE ARMORY

CURATOR KRISTY EDMUNDS
PROJECT MANAGER JASON MULHAUSEN











[click the image to see video of the piece](#)

ARTIST STATEMENT

I can remember the feeling of swinging—how hard we would work for those split seconds, flung at furthest extension, just before the inevitable downward and backward pull, when we felt momentarily free of gravity, a little hiccup of suspension when our hands loosened on the chain and our torsos raised off the seat. We were sailing, so inside the motion—time stopped—and then suddenly rushed again toward us. We would line up on the playground and try to touch the sky, alone together.

Suspended in the liquidity of words, reading also sets us in motion. We fall between a book's open covers, into the texture of the paper and the regularity of the line. The rhythm and breath of someone reading out loud takes us to a world far away. As a child, I could spend hours pressed against the warmth of my grandmother's body listening to her read, the rustling of her hand turning the page, watching the birds and the weather outside, transported by the intimacy of a shared side by side.

the event of a thread is made of many crossings of the near at hand and the far away: it is a body crossing space, is a writer's hand crossing a sheet of paper, is a voice crossing a room in a paper bag, is a reader crossing with a page and with another reader, is listening crossing with speaking, is an inscription crossing a transmission, is a stylus crossing a groove, is a song crossing species, is the weightlessness

of suspension crossing the calling of bell or bellows, is touch being touched in return. It is a flock of birds and a field of swings in motion. It is a particular point in space at an instant of time.

Anni Albers, in writing for Encyclopedia Britannica, reflected that all weaving traces back to "the event of a thread." The crossings of thread make a cloth. Cloth is the body's first architecture; it protects, conceals and reveals; it carries our weight, swaddles us at birth and covers us in sleep and in death. A patterned cloth symbolizes state or organization; a red cross stitched onto a white field is the universal sign of aid. A white cloth can be a ghost, a monster or a truce. John Constable described the sky in his paintings as a "white sheet drawn behind the objects." When we speak of its qualities we speak of the cloth's hand; we know it through touch. Like skin, its membrane is responsive to contact, to the movement of air, to gravity's pull.

Suspended via ropes and pulleys by a field of swings hung 70 feet from arched iron trusses, a white cloth more than twice the hall's width and nearly as tall is the central figure in the space. Whether a tug of war or a unison effort, individualized or coordinated, the responsive liquidity of the silk registers the combined velocities and accelerations of the field of swings. The shifting weather of the white cloth is generated through collective action. A common activity perhaps reveals our kinship with bees, ants, and cranes; all united as Aristotle's "social animals," undertaking

the same action for the elevation of the whole.

At the threshold of the Drill Hall and facing a flock of caged pigeons, two readers, seated at a wood table, read out loud from scrolls. Their address is to the birds, one species bound by gravity to another whose capacity for flight provokes irreconcilable longings in the other; part explanation, part impossible communication. The scroll they read from is a concordance, which is by definition an alphabetical arrangement of the principal words of a book with reference to the passage in which each word occurs. A concordance is also an agreement, a harmony. Here, more truly a melding of mesostic and concordance forms, the vertical spine of words intersects with horizontal lines drawn from disparate inventories that categorize and organize the observable world.

Moving back and forth across the scroll, the pair read in intervals of listening and speaking, in unison or counterpoint, improvising a composition as each draws his or her own line from the paper's column of text. In weaving, the thread that floats free from the structure of the main body of cloth is called the supplementary weft, a line introducing another pattern—often decorative—over a ground cloth. If its line is irregular, it is referred to as an errant line. Each scroll contains the possibility of multiple readings, and each reading becomes an act of writing. If the scroll is warp and the reader is weft, then the voice, transmitted to hand-carried paper bags, is a shuttle,

whose reach is further extended as the script streams silently on the web. Both radio and online transmissions offer the intimacy of a private voice in a public arena. Words allow us to travel while the tactile keeps us present; a rhythmic exchange of reeling out and pulling in that is also the swing's pendulum.

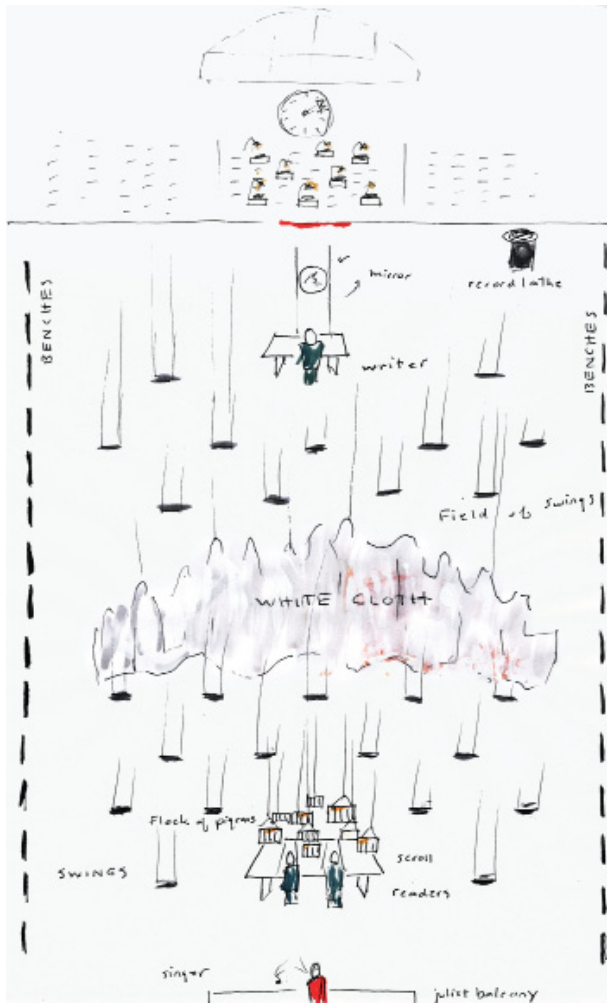
At the eastern end of the hall and facing away from the white cloth, a writer, also seated at a wood table, responds to the condition and weather of the room, the radio transmissions, the reading voices, and the space as seen in a mirror reflection. The blank of the paper filled in time by letters addressed to qualities, emotions and places far away—Dear Far, Dear Near, Dear Sadness, Dear Weight, Dear Time, Dear Here—accumulate on the table in the reverse tracings of a carbon copy. The letters themselves, sealed, await their journey. While the words written remain silent, the contact between the stylus and the paper is one of three live broadcast channels. The sound of a letter forming, the point of a period, the pause, the unfurled line register as the contact between two surfaces and the hesitations of the thinking body.

As the field of swings is bracketed by reading and writing, the interval of the day is bracketed by live song and its recording. The maximum angle of a pendulum swinging away from its vertical point is called its amplitude. Amplitude also refers to sound waves in air; sound is the second “cloth” of the work. At day's end, a vocalist on the Juliet balcony serenades the pigeons when

released to flight. The plainsong, cut live to vinyl lathe—from center to outside edge, a motion repeated when played each morning after—returns the recent past to the current moment. A different singer on each successive day accretes, in turn, an additional record, and in time, a “chorus.” Song enchants the civic, and the community of voices are archived by mechanisms and artifacts that have pragmatically and symbolically served as connection points for communications technologies. The simple interlacing of human song and animal song—the cooing of the pigeons and the singer's vocalizations—perhaps remembers that at one time, animals lived in the imagination as messengers, sometimes with oracular or sacrificial functions.

No two voices are alike. No event is ever the same. Each intersection in this project is both made and found. All making is an act of attention and attention is an act of recognition and recognition is the something happening that is thought itself. As a bird whose outstretched wings momentarily catch the light and change thought's course, we attend the presence of the tactile and perhaps most importantly—we attend to each other. If on a swing, we are alone, we are together in a field. This condition of the social is the event of a thread. Our crossings with its motions, sounds, and textures is its weaving; is a social act.

— ANN HAMILTON



LIST OF ELEMENTS

THE WADE THOMPSON DRILL HALL, 250' X 150'

11 STEEL TRUSSES

3,000,000 CUBIC FEET OF AIR

A WHITE CLOTH

A FIELD OF SWINGS

BELLS AND BELLOWS

A FLOCK OF PIGEONS

A READING TABLE

A WRITING TABLE

TWO READERS

A CONCORDANCE

A WRITER

A MIRROR

RADIO TRANSMISSIONS

A SINGER

A RECORD LATHE

A CHORUS OF RECORD PLAYERS

A CLOAK OF ANIMAL HAIR

A SCROLL

A PENCIL

A PAGE

A SCORE

A LINE OF BENCHES

A FLOCK OF RADIOS

A COLLECTION OF COATS







CURTAIN

suspended via ropes and pulleys
by a field of swings
hung 70 feet
from arched iron trusses





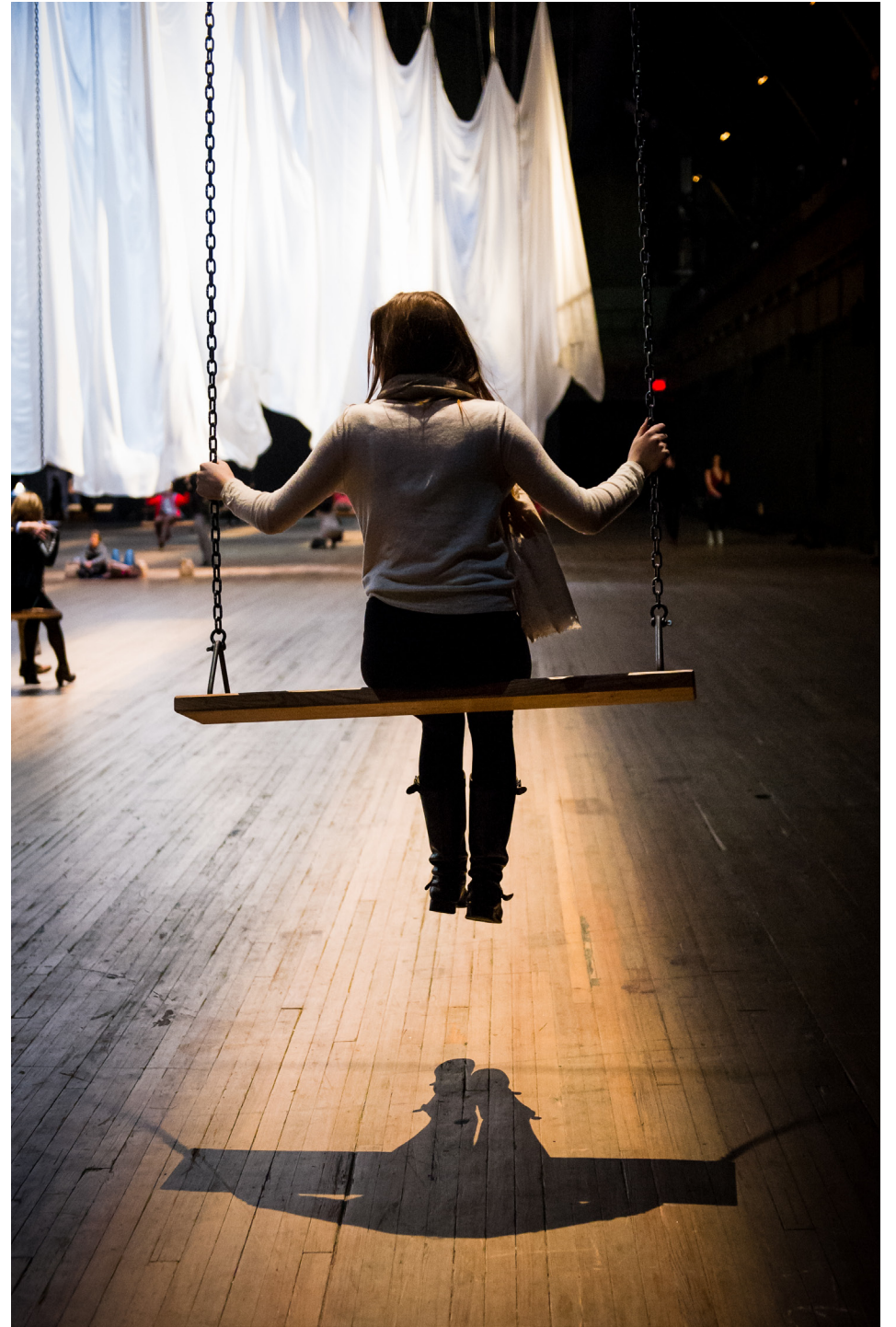




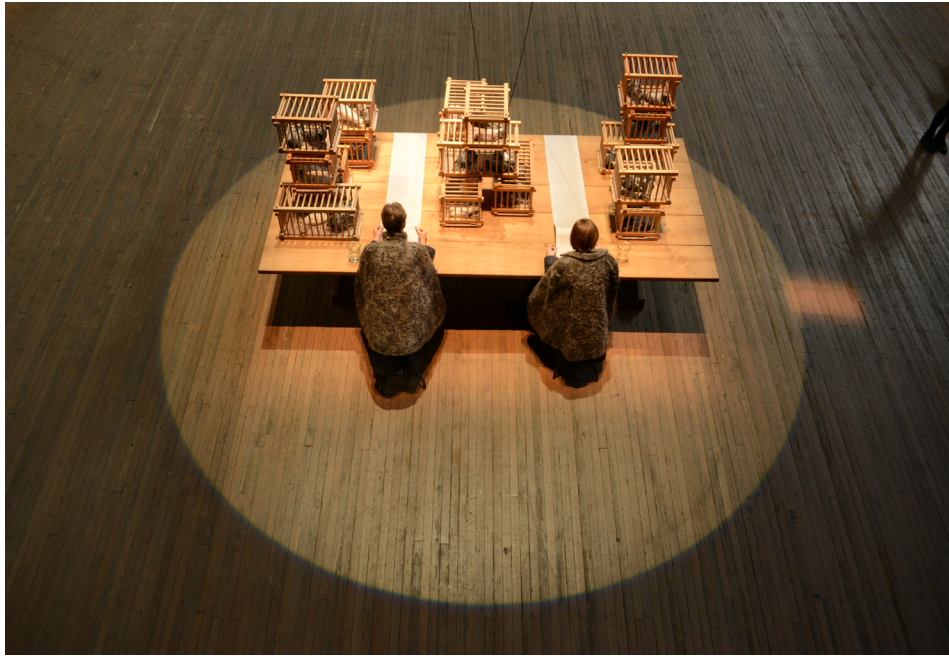
SWINGS

42 interconnected swings
register the back and forth
the up and down
the pull and lift of body weight
creating the cloth's collective turbulence









READERS

a pair of readers
 improvising a composition
 from the scroll of text
 each reading becomes an act of writing
 that is transmitted to radios within the space

SITI COMPANY MEMBERS

Akiko Aizawa	Tom Nelis
J. Ed Araiza	Barney O'Hanlon
GM Gianino	Elizabeth Wakehouse
Leon Ingulsrud	Megan Wanlass
Ellen Lauren	Stephen Webber
Tina Mitchell	

SITI COMPANY AFFILIATES

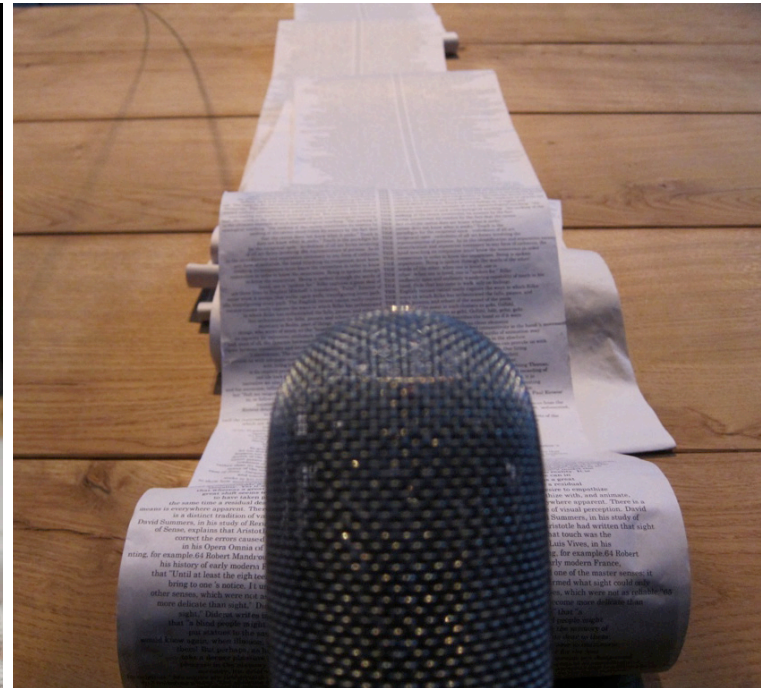
Ken Barnett	Eben Hoffer
Kym Bernazky	Beth Ann Hopkins
Deborah Black	Virginia Logan
Davina Cohen	Donnie Mather
Gabel Eiben	Jeremy Pickard
Al Foote	Sophia Remolde

ARMORY MEMBERS

Victoria Behm	Jenn Dees
Kate Bell	Tyler Eccleston-Grimes
Donna Costello	Larry Jackson
Justin Daniel	Maya Turner Singh





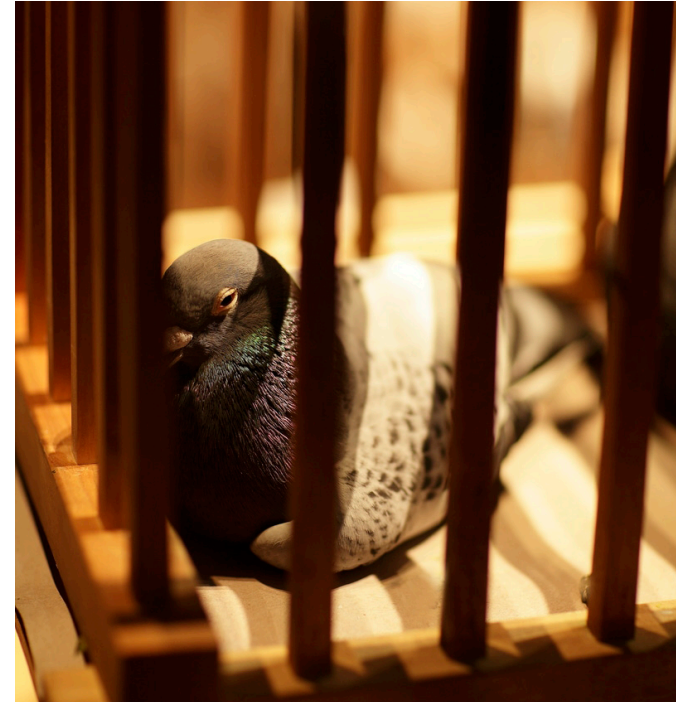


SCROLLS

the scroll is a concordance
an alphabetical arrangement
of words from selected books
and the passages in which they occur

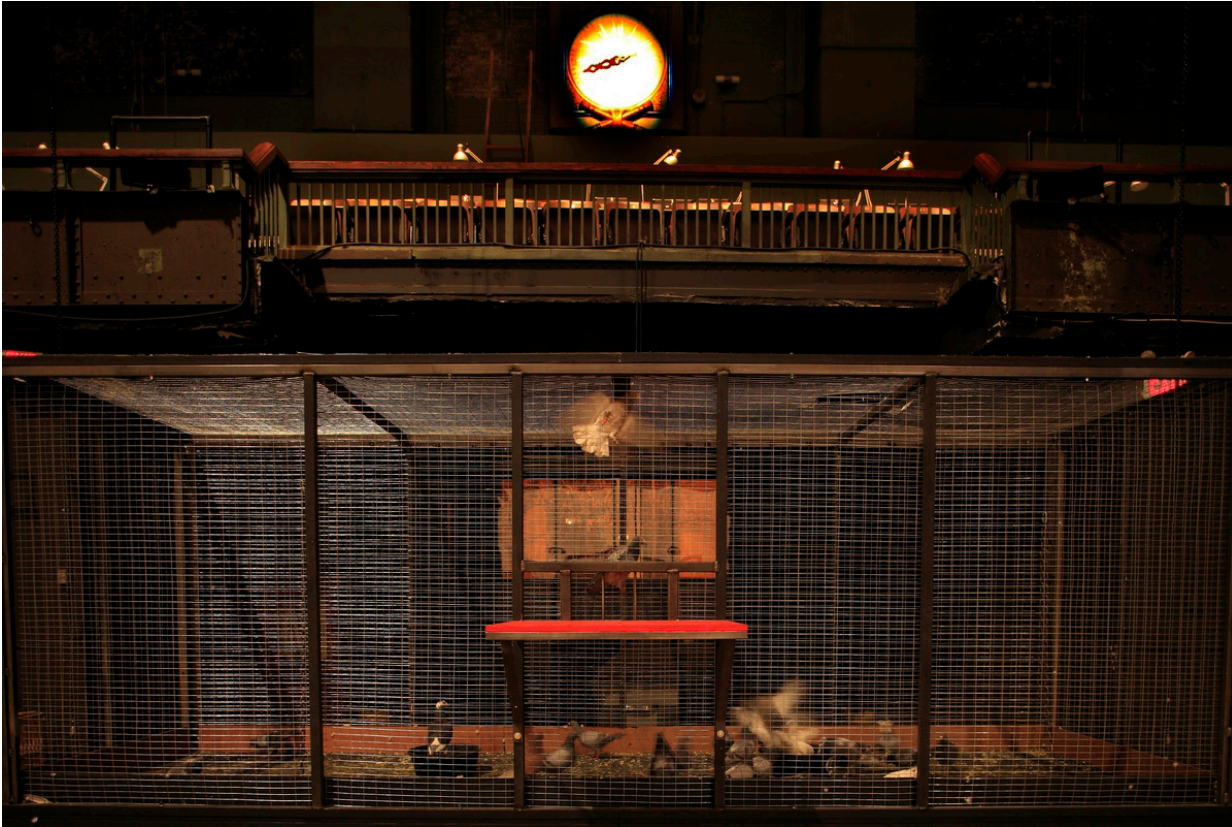






PIGEONS

caged in pairs and threes
the reader's address is to them
part explanation, part impossible communication
at day's end, the pigeons are released to flight
retiring to their feeding and sleeping loft





click the image to see video
of pigeon release



WRITER

a single writer
responds to the weather of the room
the space as seen in a mirror reflection
letters addressed to qualities, emotions and places far away
Dear Far, Dear Near, Dear Sadness, Dear Weight...

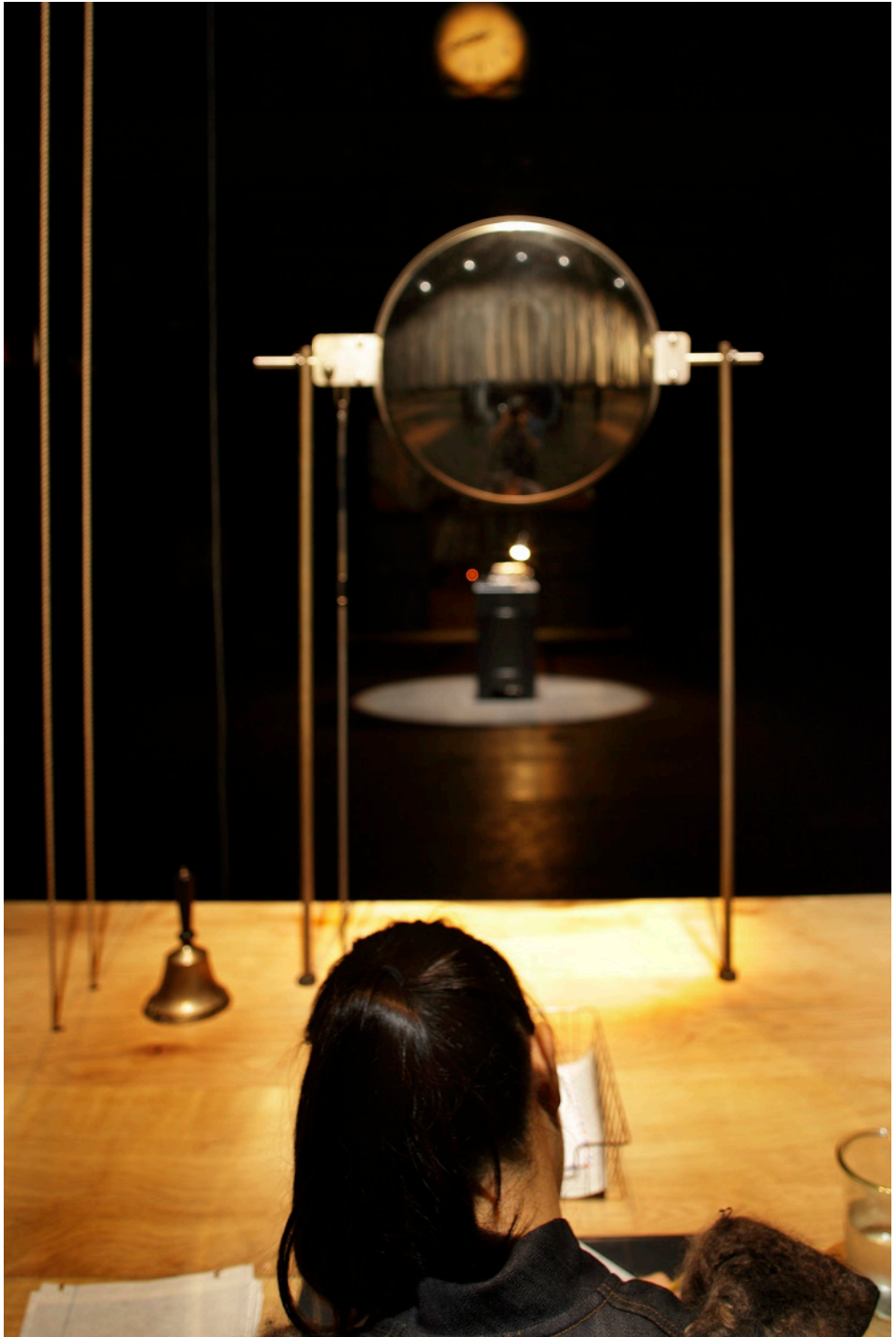
Dorothy Alberti
Stephanie Barber
Alexander Batkin
Laurel Braitman
Sarah Butler
Jan Castro
Rena Chelouche Fogel
Mark Conway

Lynne Cooke
Elizabeth Denton
Kristy Edmund
Kris Grey
Sara Grossman
Juliet Helmke
Zachary Holbrook
Christine Hou

Hawley Hussey
Bonnie Jones
Alystyre Julian
Courtney McClellan
Andrew Ondrejcek
Khadijah Queen
Sal Randolph
Margaret Rorison

Alexandra Sears
Laura Sheedy
Meg Shevenock
Buzz Spector
Stephen Truax







VOCALIST

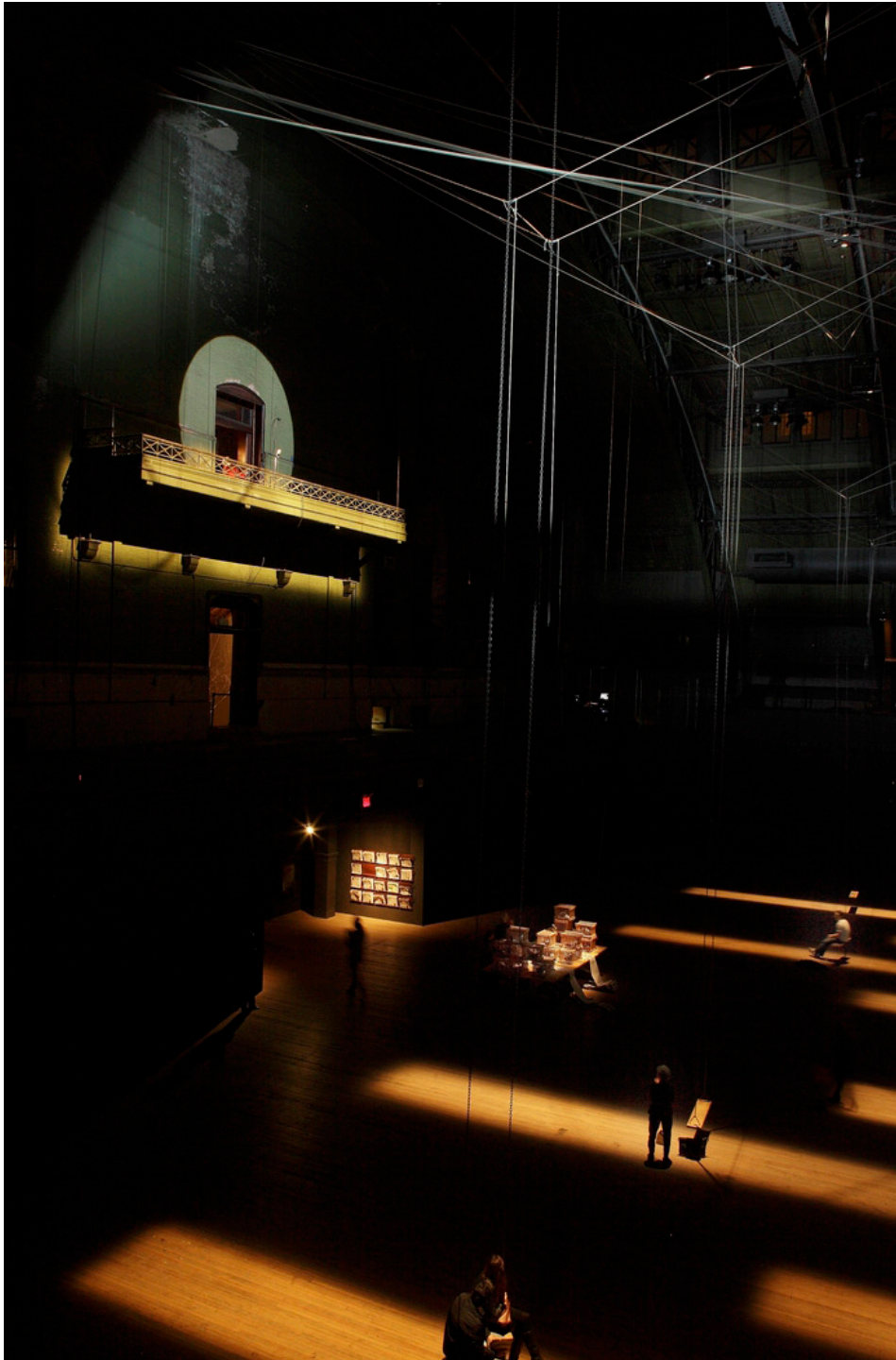
at day's end
a vocalist sings
a composition by David Lang
from the Juliet balcony
the pigeons are released to flight
after the plainsong

Bora Yoon
Lisa Bielawa
Theo Bleckmann
Hai-Ting Chinn
Eileen Clark
Martha Cluver
Margery Dale

Gregory Davidson
Helga Davis
Emily Eagen
Deborah Feldman
Lauren Flanigan
Katie Geissinger
Christopher Dylan Herbert

Silvie Jensen
Jeffrey Johnson
Elaine Lachica
Drew Martin
Thomas McCargar
Heather Meyer
Tami Petty

Barbara Rearick
Allison Sniffin
Kathy Theil
Amaranta Viera
Carla Wesby




the event of a thread
 words by ann hamilton, music by david lang
 (after aristotle)

incantatory, oddly flowing, ♩ = 90

p say no more a-bout them than was said at the be-gin-ning
 that in the cate-gory of state are in-
 -cluded though not in our time and I do not know whether
 such an e-vent could e-ver happen a-gain or could now e-
 -ven be made prob-a-ble if it did
 ha-bit dis-pon-ition per-cep-tion knowl-edge
 and at-ti-tude the sig-ni-fi-cance of
 all these is ex-plained by a refer-ence to some-thing else
 and in no o-ther way we can speak

Copyright © 2012 by Red Poppy (ASCAP)

of a wing ha-ving refer-ence the case-rily to a
 winged creature and of a winged creature as beings suck
 be-cause of its wings ac-ca-sion a-ly perhaps
 the con-nect-ion in the ly-ric po-ets is not
 un-fre-quently a tan-tered thread which in an age be-fore lo-
 -gic the po-et was un-a-ble to draw out



MUSIC

composed by David Lang





RECORD LATHE

the plainsong is cut live to an acetate record





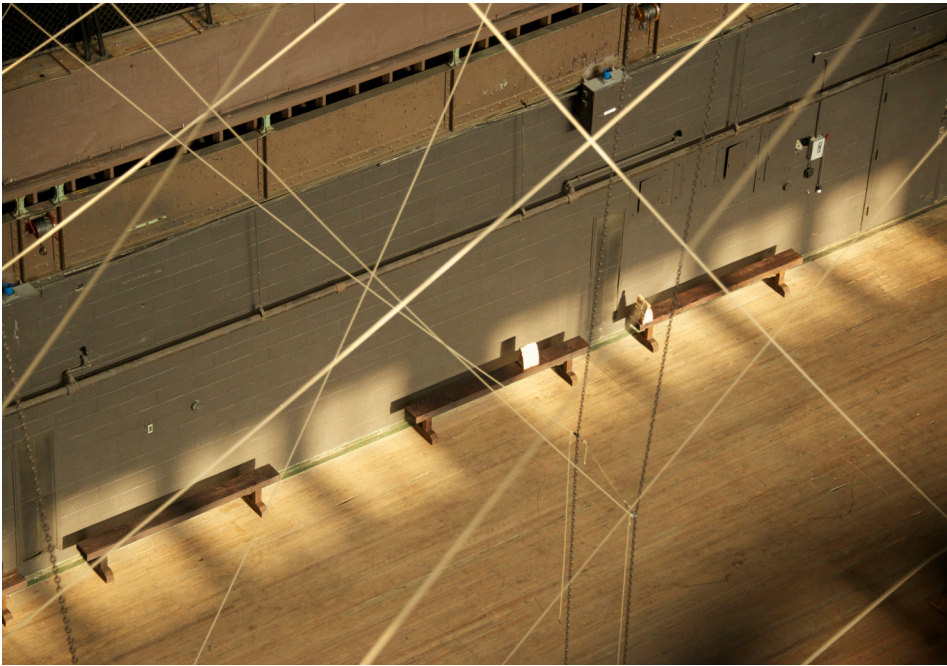
RECORD PLAYERS

31 record players
one for each successive recording
played every midday
a growing chorus



LEXINGTON AVENUE WINDOW

opened to the street
for the first time
in the building's history



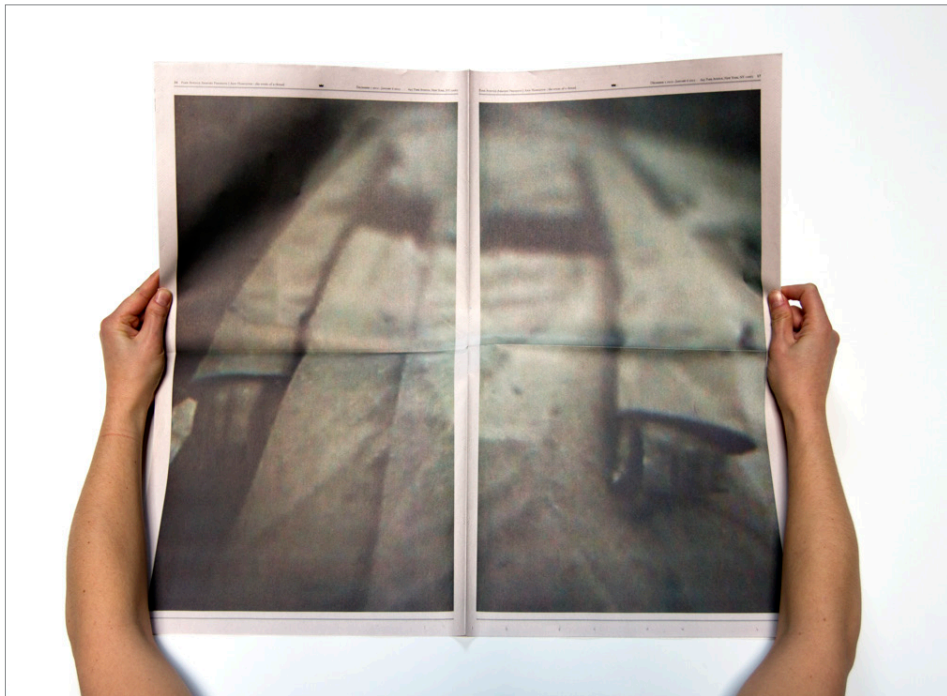
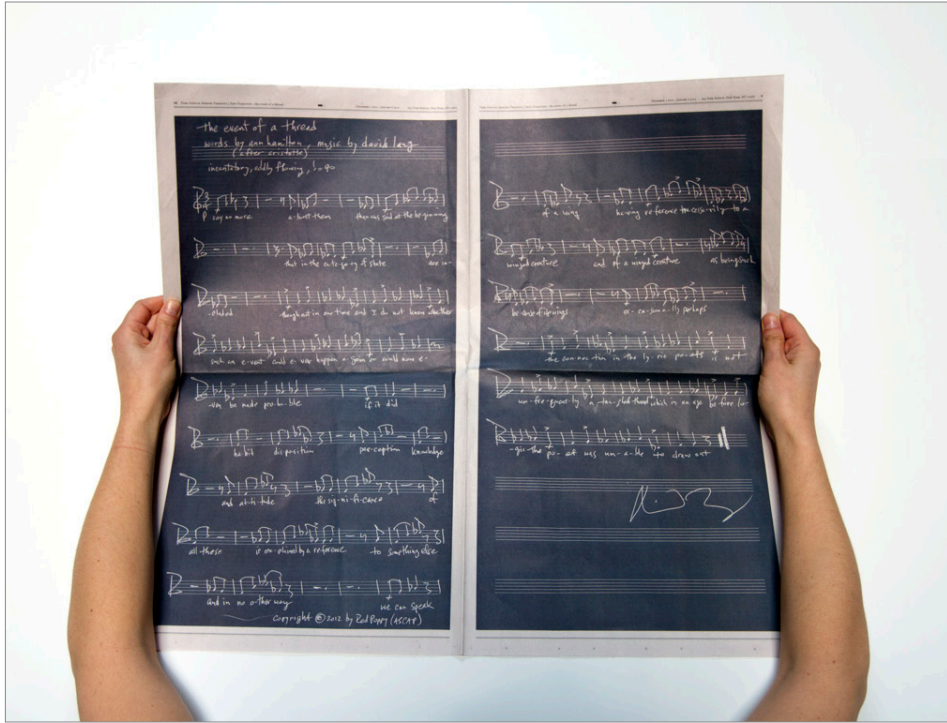
PERIMETER BENCHES

24 benches
lining the long sides
of the Drill Hall

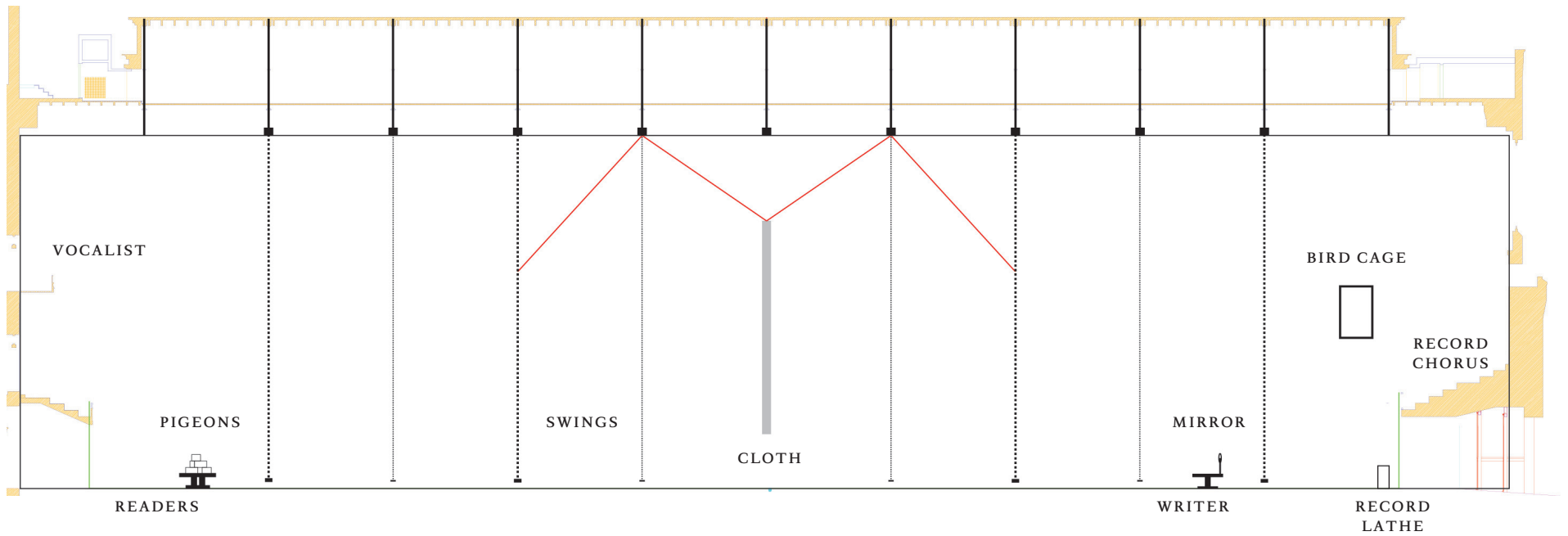


NEWSPAPER

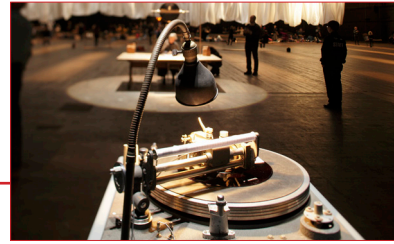
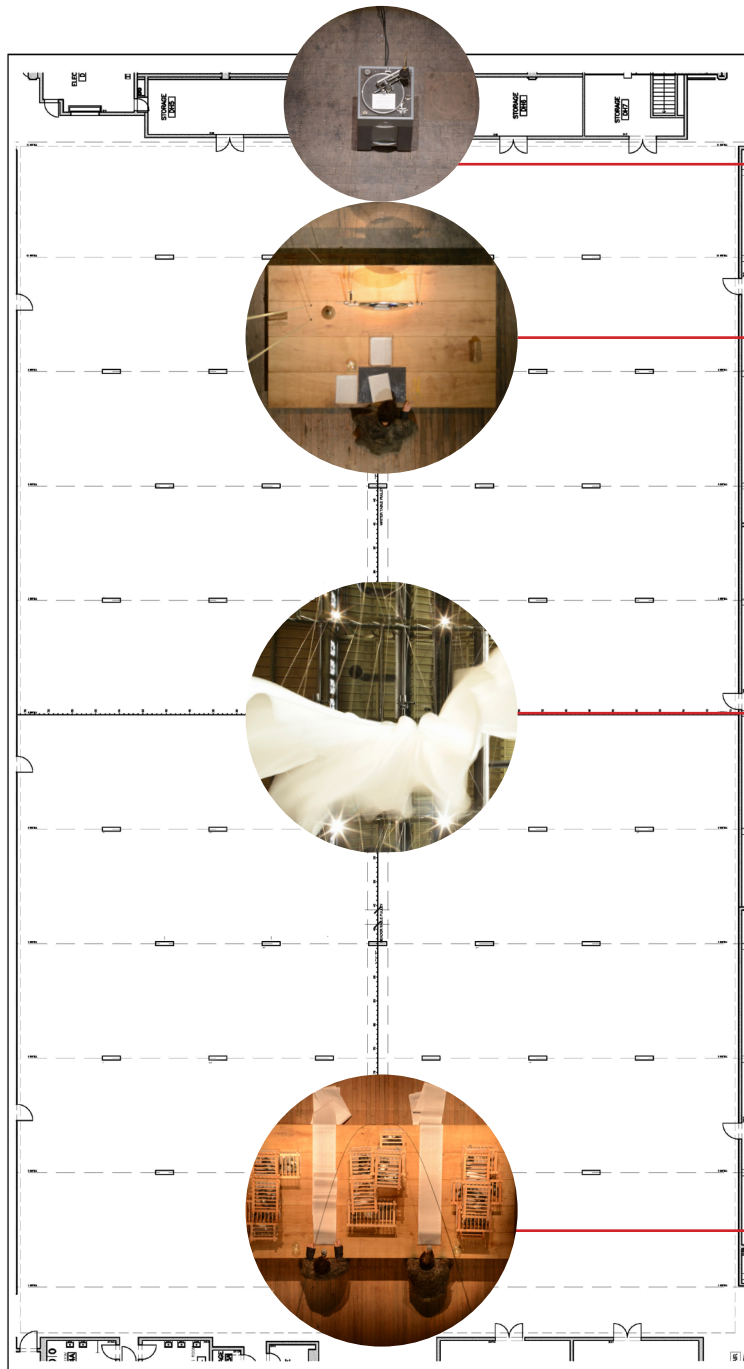
exhibition program
24 pages, 3 sections
middle section contains text
first and third contain images
from the Armory archive
filmed with a miniature camera



TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS



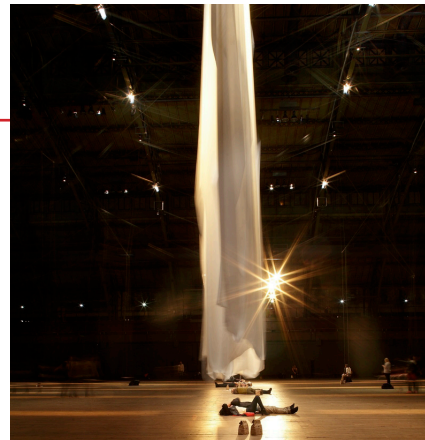
DRILL HALL ELEVATION



RECORD LATHE



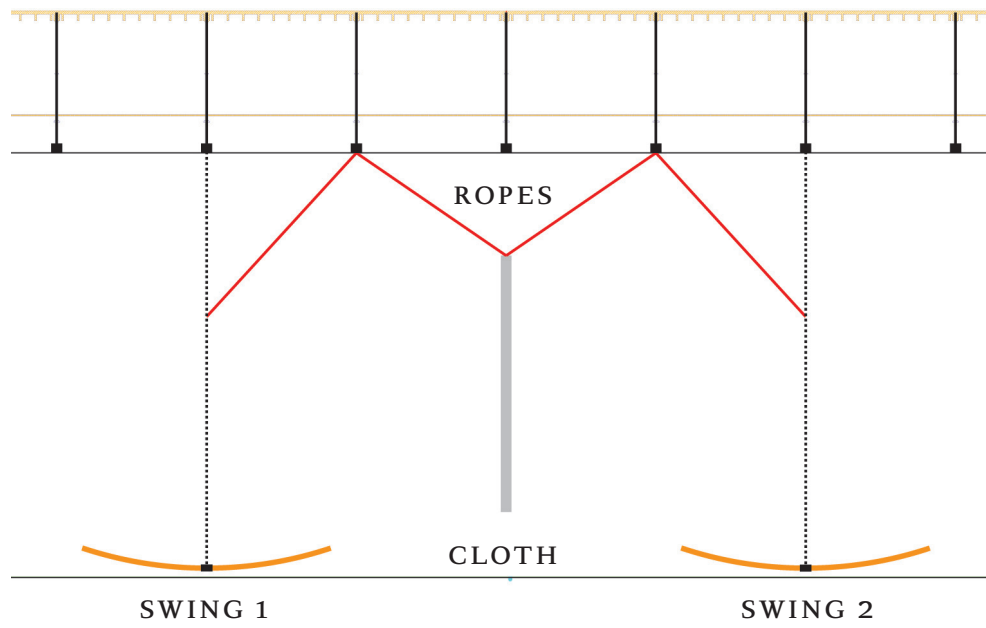
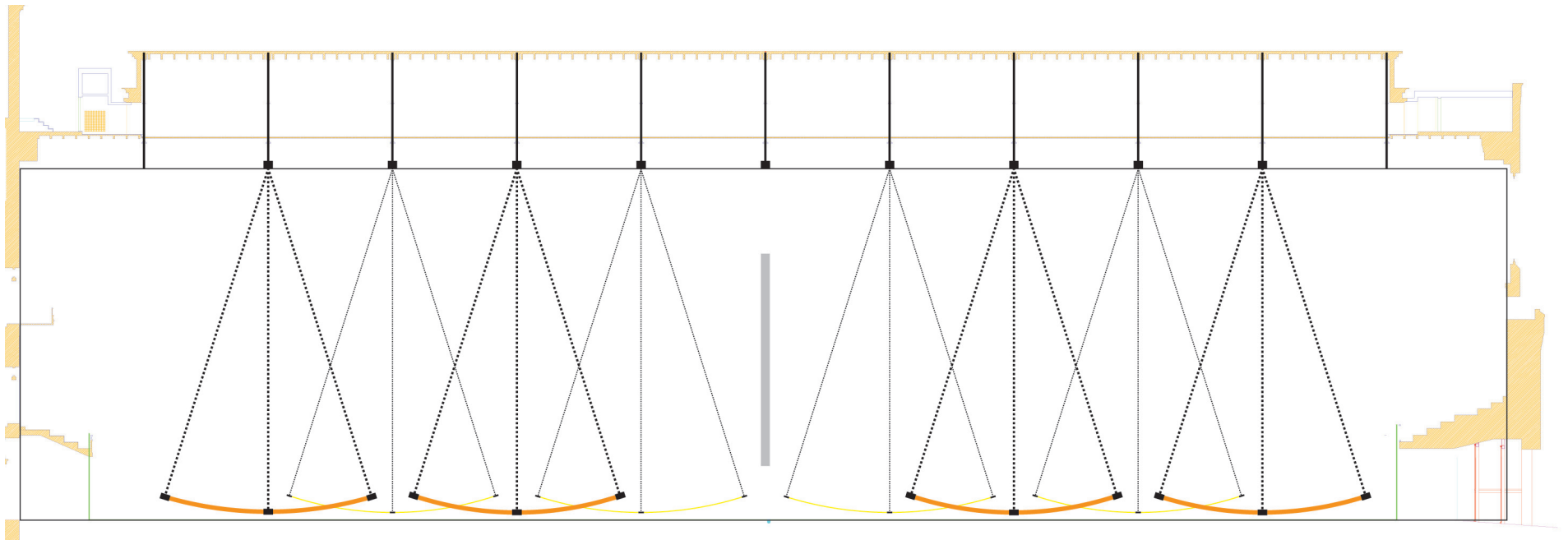
WRITER

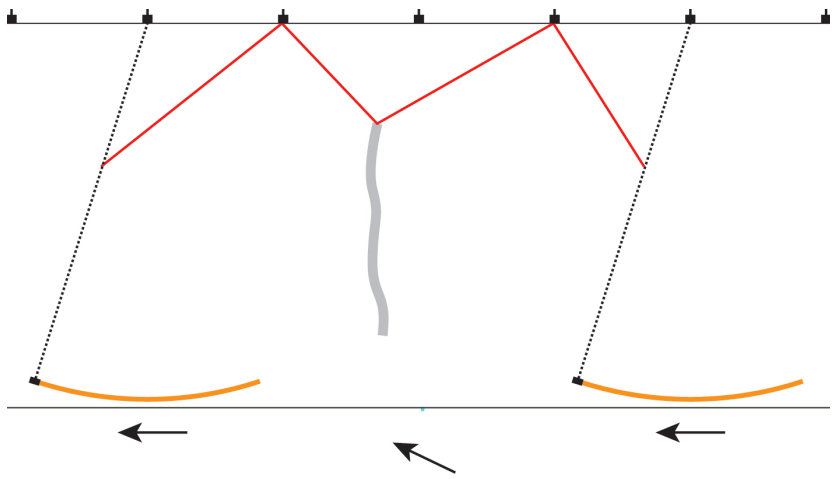


CLOTH

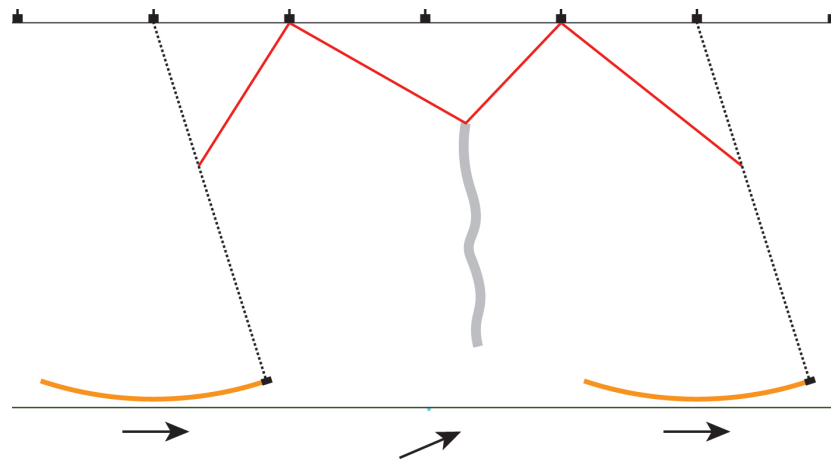


READERS

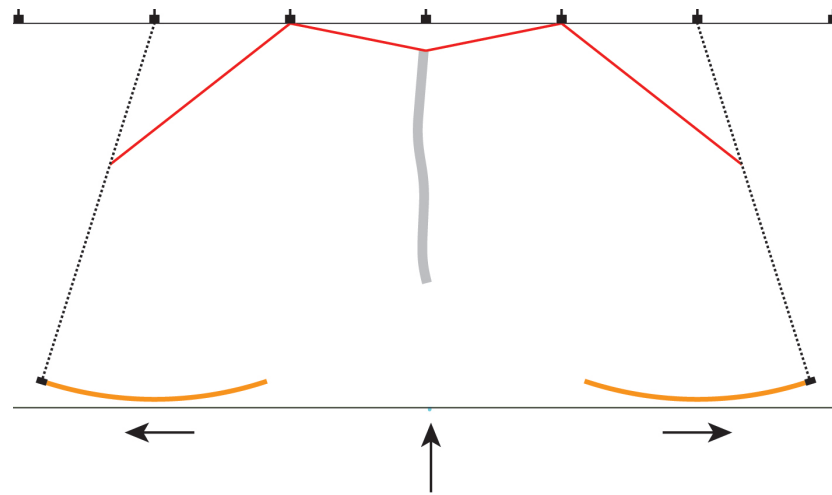




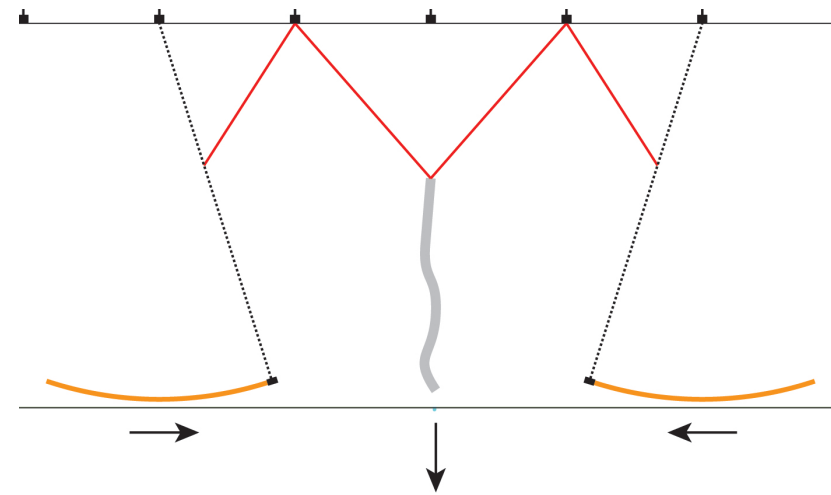
BOTH SWING WEST



BOTH SWING EAST



BOTH SWING BACK



BOTH SWING FORWARD



SOUND

DESIGNERS: DARRON WEST & CHARLES COES

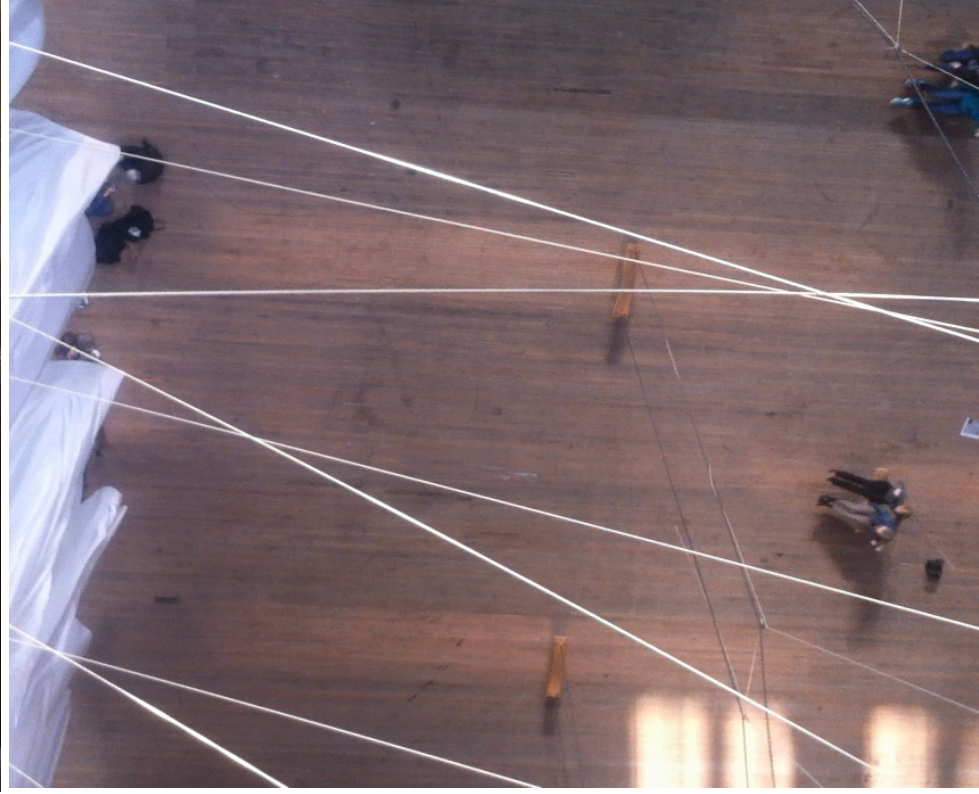


READER voices are transmitted live by FM transmission...

...to paper sacks distributed throughout the hall...

...carried and passed freely by the public.

RADIO BAGS

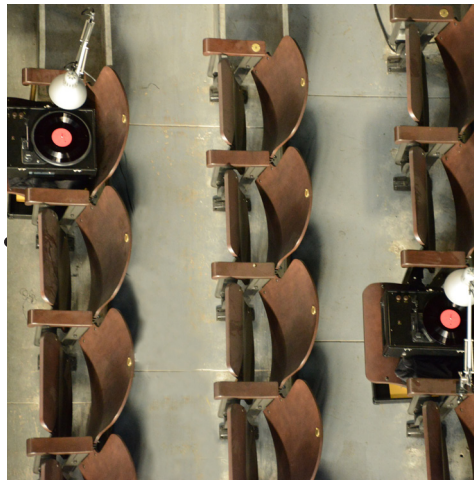


AMBIENT SOUND

bellows and telephone bells
attached to ropes
activated by swings



VOCALIST performance is recorded live by the record lathe...



...to join the previous records the following day...



...and played simultaneously back into the space at midday.

RECORD CHORUS



LIGHTING SCHEMATICS

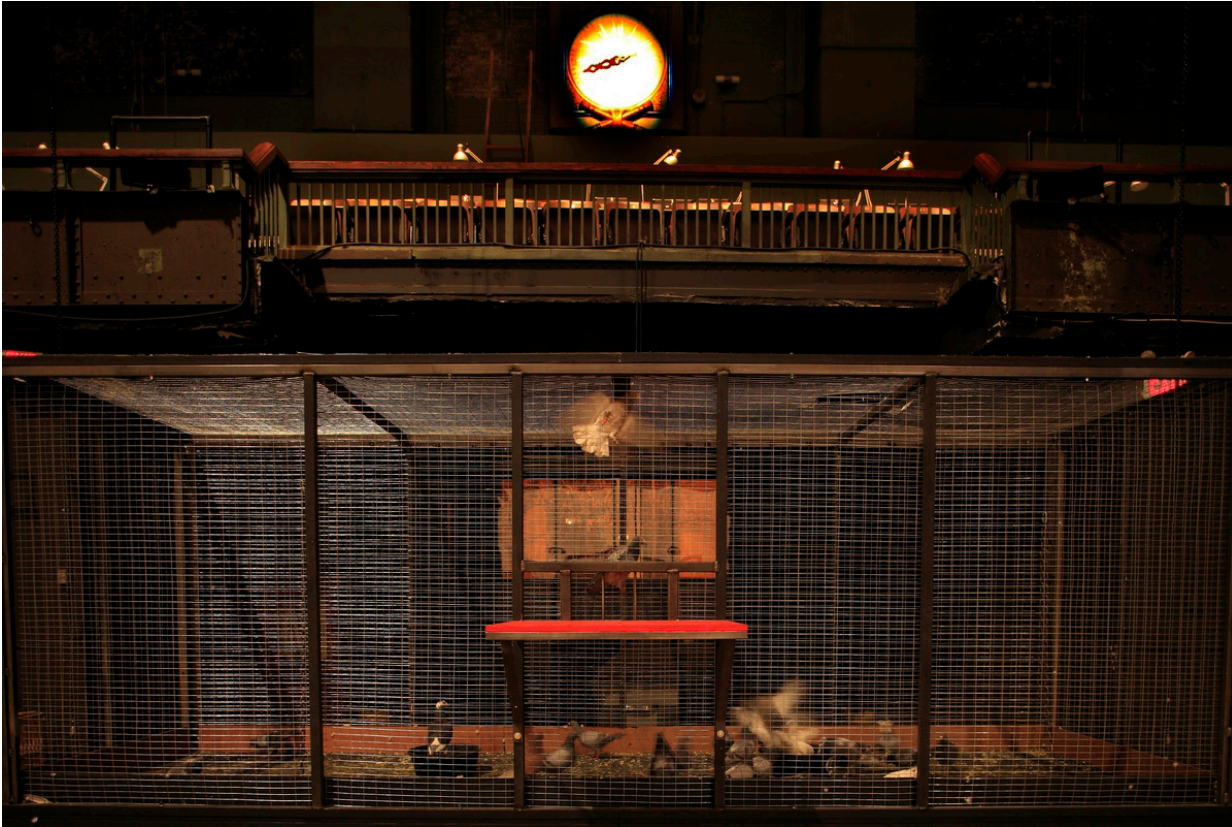
DESIGNER: BRIAN SCOTT

DAY



EVENING





PIGEON LOFT

PARK AVENUE ARMORY presents
**ANN HAMILTON: THE EVENT OF
A THREAD**
SUNDAY DEC 9, 2012 12:00PM
TICKET VALID UNTIL 7PM ON DATE PRINTED ONLY
PARK AVENUE ARMORY
643 PARK AVENUE AT 67TH ST. (212) 933-5812
MEMBERS GEN. ADMISSION \$0.00

TICKETING BY VENDINI - WWW.VENDINI.COM
#11788150*D2P3X6QZ*

Ticket valid ONLY for Day/Time indicated. No refunds. No exchanges.
Latecomers may be accommodated at the discretion of management.

NOTICE OF WAIVER

You assume all risk of any personal injury including permanent disability and death, property damage, or loss incidental to the viewing, enjoyment and participation in this exhibition. You assume all risk and danger of being injured by objects, props and devices used in this exhibition and you release the Venue, its agents, officers, directors and employees from any and all liability resulting from such causes. Management reserves the right to eject any person who fails to comply with any verbal or written safety precautions.

TICKET

PROJECT CREDITS

the event of a thread

Ann Hamilton

Commissioned by Park Avenue Armory, New York, NY

Wednesday, December 5, 2012 – Sunday, January 6, 2013

Artist: Ann Hamilton

President and Executive Producer: Rebecca Robertson

Curator: Kristy Edmunds

Composer: David Lang

Reader Advisor: Anne Bogart

Vocalist Advisor: Bora Yoon

Writer Advisor: Ann Lauterbach

Engineering: Marty Chafkin, Perfection Electricks

Senior Producer: Michael Lonergan

Technical Director: Phil Hampton

Assistant Technical Director: Jerad Schomer

Lighting Design: Brian Scott

Sound Design: Darron L West and Charles Coes

Artistic Associate: Jamie Boyle

Production Coordinator: Isabel Martin

Pigeon Advisor: Keith Caserta, KC Kennels

Curtain: Rose Brand

Newspaper Printing: Pittsburgh Post-Gazette and Linco Printing

Furniture: Paul Discoe, Joinery Structures

Clothing: Georgene Shelton and The Workshop Residence

House Manager: Courtney Caldwell

Performance Coordinator: Audra Wolowiec

Core Writers: Meg Shevenock, Rena Fogel

Core Readers: SITI Company

ANN HAMILTON STUDIO

Jason Mulhausen, Project Manager

Nicole Gibbs, Archivist & Project
Coordinator

Nicole Rome, Office Coordinator
& Archive Assistant

Kris Helm, Research & Account Coordinator

NEWSPAPER

Jim Chapa, Graphic Design

Harry Reese, Writer

Natalie Shapero, Writer

SOFTWARE DESIGN

Austin Stewart

Ryland Wharton

RADIO DESIGN AND FABRICATION

Nick Bontrager

Nathaniel Hartman

Austin Stewart

Sage Lewis

Philip Spangler

DOCUMENTATION

James Ewing

Thibault Jeanson

Open Land Films

ADDITIONAL RESEARCH

Jenny Fine

Emily Staugaitis

SPECIAL THANKS TO

Tom Coulouris, Rose Brand

Mike Dixon, PIAPTK Recordings

Nancy and Dave Gill

Alan Graves

Ann Hatch, The Workshop Residence

Lewis Hyde

Jay Reichgott, Reichgott Engineering

Yuko Saegusa, Assistant to Kristy Edmunds

Susan Stewart

Braden Weeks Earp, The Workshop Residence

Rob Weber, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Megan Wanlass, SITI Company

Shahrokh Yadegari

Jonathan Amaya

Rachel Craft

Courtney McClellan

Michael Severance

DOCUMENT CREDITS

Prepared by Ann Hamilton Studio, March 2013.

IMAGE CREDITS

Andree Bober
Lana Z. Caplan
Will Chafkin
James Ewing for Park Avenue Armory
Al Foote III
Open Land Films
Philip Greenberg for The New York Times
Thibault Jeanson
Trish Mayo
Ann Hamilton Studio

VIDEO CREDITS

Open Land Films

This document is for internal use only. Please do not copy or distribute beyond your institution without contacting studio@annhamiltonstudio.com for permission.

© Ann Hamilton Studio 2012-13. All Rights Reserved.