The New York Times

ART REVIEW

A Nick Cave Survey: Brutality, Bedazzled

The artist's fantastical soundsuits come to the Guggenheim in a retrospective that is haunting but sedate without his performing rumble and clatter.

The New York Times

By Max Lakin
Nov. 23, 2022

In 1992, when Nick Cave made his first soundsuit, the ornate, full-body garments for which he is best known, it was his response to the beating of Rodney King by police officers. Cave has described this genesis as “an inflammatory response,” a conduit of rage and helplessness channeled into something both theoretically wearable and visually striking.

The first suit, with its prickly skin of twigs and branches, was a remedy both to racial profiling and bodily vulnerability — armor as protest. That the soundsuits’ relevance has sustained, 30 years on, represents both a triumph for the 63-year-old artist and unyielding nightmare. Cave has created nearly 500 examples.

A version from 2011, on view in “Forothermore,” an alternatingly beautiful and deeply mournful survey of Cave’s work at the Guggenheim, illustrates how the soundsuits evolved since, into nearly autonomous beings. A hulking exoskeleton of clipped twigs sheathed onto a metal armature, it appears human, but only just. Its shoulders slumped, the weight of its outsize head making it appear like a Maurice Sendak creature — a wild thing, terrifying and melancholic. It stands like a golem, an entity, in the Jewish tradition, sculpted from earth and animated as the protector of a persecuted community.

Installation view of “Nick Cave: Forothermore” at the Guggenheim. A soundsuit from 2011 (second from right) illustrates how the suits evolved since their inception, into nearly autonomous beings. Jeenah Moon for The New York Times

Cave has made several twig versions, but these are outliers; the soundsuits tend to be elaborately embellished, abandoning organic material for consumer products, laden with scaffoldings of lost toys or resplendent with beadwork, buttons and artificial flowers. Unlike that first suit, which aimed to camouflage a wearer like a piece of tactical gear, Cave's soundsuits became as inconspicuous as a brass band at a monastery. They reach for magisterial levels of flamboyance, sprouting constellations of classroom globes or coated with shaggy, lurid hair, like a feral Muppet who's gotten into a cache of Manic Panic.

The soundsuits are the most recognized part of Cave's practice (he's translated them into mosaics in the subway passages beneath Times Square and oversized jigsaw puzzles) and undoubtedly the draw here, but they're also of a piece with his larger, abiding project, which centers on the Black American body and the ways in which it is devalued and brutalized. Curated by Naomi Beckwith, the survey is a condensed version that originated earlier this year at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, in Cave's hometown. Last January, the Guggenheim appointed Beckwith chief curator and deputy director, and she retrofitted the exhibition here.

As in Chicago, "Forothermore" is organized into three sections titled "What It Was," "What It Is" and "What It Shall Be," a rough past-present-future lens through which to digest Cave's themes. (The exhibition judiciously avoids the word "Afrofuturism," which as a curatorial conceit has lately been overextended; attempts to see into the future, as the last few years have demonstrated, haven't panned out.)

Nick Cave's "Wall Relief," from 2013, employs the ceramic birds, metal flowers and beads that the artist collects from flea markets and thrift shops. Jeenah Moon for The New York Times

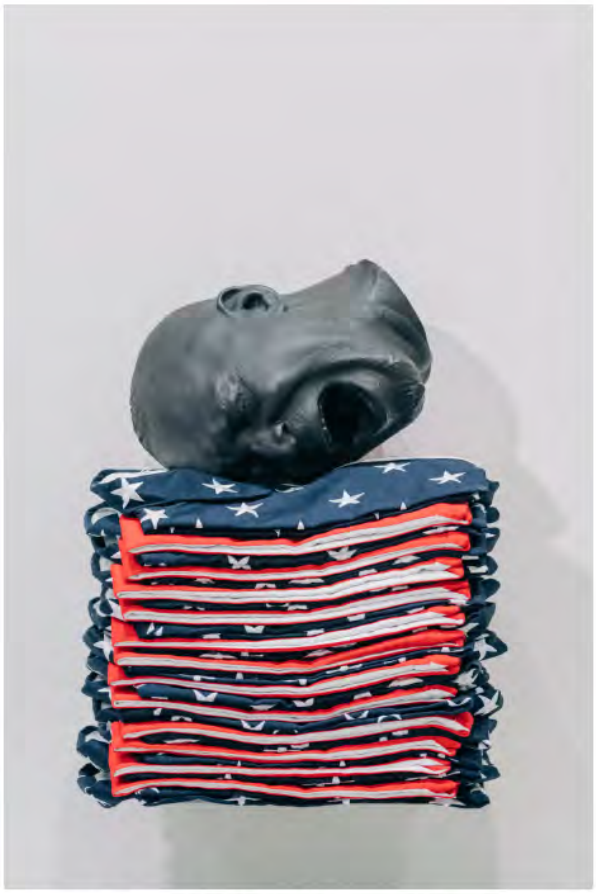
Nick Cave's "Time and Again" (2000), one of the artist's early assemblages, made from found objects, including agricultural equipment, which refer to his Midwest upbringing.
Jeenah Moon for The New York Times

This structure would probably have flowed naturally up the museum's rotunda but that's currently occupied by Alex Katz. Instead it is chopped up among three floors of its tower galleries, loosely chronological. ("What It Was" includes work from 1999 to 2015, a time frame that overlaps with the subsequent two sections, so anyone hoping for a linear reading of Cave's development will be stymied). The sections focus on several of Cave's bodies of work: his larger bas-reliefs; his cast bronze sculptures; and finally the soundsuits. Cave's performance and video work, often revelatory, is largely absent, presumably because of space considerations. (There are three short films buried in the museum's basement screening room worth viewing.)

Still, recurrent motifs emerge: Cave's magpie eye for shiny things, his recycler's zeal, his affection for weird simulacra of the natural world. The work here is unified by twin horrors: the myriad psychological oppressions Black Americans have been made to endure — ugly caricatures and minstrel depictions grafted onto banal Americana like carnival games and spittoons, the reverberations of which are still felt — and the sea of castoff plastic junk that threatens to choke us. Like Kurt Schwitters, Cave delights in shimmering trash, but Cave's rescued tchotchkes are meant to rhyme with the way life in this country is so readily discarded. There's a graceful, ethical consideration about material acquisition, and a haunting evocation of the ways time folds in on itself — how nothing is ever really lost, not even creepy lawn ornaments, if they're remembered.

The New York Times

"Arm Peace", from 2019. Many of Cave's cast bronze and found object sculptures feature disembodied limbs festooned with intricate floral brocades. Jeenah Moon for The New York Times



Nick Cave's, "Untitled", (2018,) in which a screaming head rests upon a stack of kitschy flag print shirts. Jeenah Moon for The New York Times

The middle section largely turns on Cave's cast bronze and found object sculptures, many of which deploy the artist's own disembodied limbs festooned with intricate floral brocades. They're confrontational, sometimes eloquently so, as in pieces in which arms and hands reach from walls in ambiguous gestures, outstretched and laden with towels, poses that suggest servility and conjure psychic dispossession, like a Robert Gober but with mercifully less body hair.

In other places, where a head rests upon an American flag assembled from spent shotgun shells or a stack of kitschy flag print shirts, the effect is obvious and flat. They seem to want to summon surrealism's ability to make sense of calamity, but they pale in comparison to the daily surreality of being alive in this country, which outstrips art's capacity to depict it. As in "Platform" (2018), an installation of grotesque bronze gramophones that sprout limbs, much of the experience of American life can be equated to opening one's mouth to scream and finding no sound produced.

"Platform" (2018), an installation of grotesque bronze gramophones that sprout limbs. "Much of the experience of American life can be equated to opening one's mouth to scream and finding no sound produced," the critic says. Ariel Ione Williams

All fashion is, in the end, a kind of armor. And the soundsuits are, at their most essential, clothing. In their drape, precision and sense of drama, they evince the hand of the couturier (the twig suits in particular call to mind Alexander McQueen's supremely exquisite razor clam dress). As much as Cave's suits suggest figures from an indeterminate folklore, the ornamental headdresses following from the exuberant costumes made for J'Ouvert celebrations and Native ceremonial regalia, they also pull from the camp of drag, the baroque stage costumes of funk acts like George Clinton and Earth, Wind and Fire, and the haute too-muchness of Jean-Paul Gaultier and Thierry Mugler.

Cave, who ran an eponymous fashion line in the 1990s, convincingly exploits fashion's paradox, its simultaneous desire for concealment and acknowledgment, in ways that both anoint Black cultural history and illuminate its anxieties. "Hustle Coat" (2021), a trench coat concealing a tunic of striated costume jewelry and bootleg Rolexes, is a canny sight gag on the coat-flashing street hawker, but also the idea of "ghetto fabulousness," style in the face of deprivation.

The New York Times

"Hustle Coat" (2021), a trench coat concealing a tunic of striated costume jewelry and bootleg Rolexes. Jeenah Moon for The New York Times

Detail from "Hustle Coat." Jeenah Moon for The New York Times

"Golem" in Hebrew can mean "incomplete." Cave's soundsuits are meant to be animated by the body, by which they produce the jangling, rustling and clattering that gives them their name. Looking at them lined up in a neat row, politely static, can be frustratingly anticlimactic. They represent an astonishing level of craftsmanship (and conservation), but they want to fulfill their purpose, which is to move and be loud.

Cave's art turns on performance, communion through ritual and shared grief. In their absence, we're left to imagine the heft of a suit made of hundreds of sock monkeys, and take on their word the potency of their talismanic powers.

Artists like to invoke the notion of joy now, a radical defiance in the face of so much conspiring against it. The exhibition's wall text uses the word. But there's little joy to be found. In their ability to obscure and refuse identity, the soundsuits propose a model for a utopic future, one where gender, race and sexual orientation are rendered irrelevant.

In the meantime, the soundsuits are tragic figures, girding themselves for violence, their bric-a-brac shells poised to absorb pain, which inevitably comes. The exertion required to wear their intense armatures makes them daunting, at least chiropractically unsound.

They ask us to consider what kind of country we're left with, if this is what it takes to merely survive in it.

Nick Cave: Forothermore

Through April 10, 2023, at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1071 Fifth Avenue, Manhattan; 212-423 3500; guggenheim.org.

WWD
WOMEN'S WEAR DAILY

Nick Cave's Career Retrospective at the Guggenheim Stretches Well Beyond the Soundsuit

It's textiles, sculpture and paintings that work to bring beauty to the ugliness of injustice.

By TARA DONALDSON NOVEMBER 26, 2022, 8:00AM

Nick Cave, Soundsuit, 2015. Mannequin, metal, synthetic hair, and found textiles, 98 × 28 × 12 in. Collection of Ashley and Pam Netzky. © NICK CAVE / JAMES PRINZ PHOTOGRAPHY

Nick Cave is far more than the Soundsuits most know him for.

And the visual artist and conscious creator has the span of his career's work on display in the newly opened exhibit, "Forothermore" at the Guggenheim Museum in New York, which follows a stint at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, the city Cave calls home.

A walk through Cave's unending efforts to bring light to injustice and "othered" people — through textile work, painting, sculpture and more — "Forothermore" is about honoring the past, recognizing the present and looking ahead to what's next.

"I'm always thinking about what is my responsibility to get the work out into the community and creating avenues and ways to bring underserved communities into the mix. And just thinking more about the civic responsibility of that as a human being.

‘Forothermore,’ it’s for others, it’s inclusive, it means all and it’s a moment that I feel is important right now particularly,” the artist says. “And it’s something that it’s important period. I really want this experience to be colorful.”

And colorful it is.

Installed throughout the Guggenheim’s tower galleries and overseen by Naomi Beckwith, the museum’s deputy director and Jennifer and David Stockman chief curator — who is making her curatorial debut in this role with “Forothermore” — the retrospective is delivered in three parts. In line with an old African American greeting, “What it Was,” “What it Is,” and “What it Shall Be” display Cave’s past, present and future-facing work, alongside the past, present and future-facing realities of the world we live in.

“I’ve always worked in this space of sort of a call and response to what’s going on in the world, but at the same time finding [that] through beauty, which has always been my form of rebelling, has allowed me to create ways in which you can immerse yourself in the practice and I can take you on this amazing journey,” Cave says.

‘What It Was’

Entering the exhibit first through the past in order to see where we’ve been — at least as it appears through Cave’s eyes — visitors begin with a lesson in seeing beyond what one artist may be most famous for and will come to understand that the breadth of Cave’s work has long been waving the flag for equality.

“You see all of this work that no one will ever connect me to because everyone knows me as Soundsuits, that being the body of work. But there’s all of this work that came before that,” the artist says.

The work “Platform” is a favorite of Cave’s.

“There’s a piece titled ‘Platform’ that is really a very powerful piece that could be read in two ways: It could be a resist or it can be a protest, a coming together and it’s very amplified through shape and form,” Cave says.

“And then there’s the ‘Hustle Coat’ that’s on that same sort of floor, which is this amazing trenchcoat that’s just covered in jewels and just surplus, this abundance of stones, and it’s very decorative, it’s very bright, but it’s all about the hustle,” he adds.

With “Forothermore,” Cave wants to send a message of beauty in the struggle. Regardless of how one sees the pieces, it’s really more about how they’ll feel when experiencing them. And his pieces have power in a similar way that the social movements and struggles they reflect have power.

“It’s a lot of mixed emotions that are all colliding together, but at the same time I’m operating in this space of optimism and hope and that’s always been the driving force. As a young Black man growing up, I was always told that, ‘you are amazing, you’re beautiful, you can be and do anything that you want.’ And I was very much told that these are things you must be aware of, but…be cautioned of what you may run up against [in the world],” he says.

‘What It Is’

“What It Is,” alongside the art, comes with a reality of a world in too many ways still unchanged when it comes to racism and injustice.

In his own journey in bringing this exhibit together with Beckwith over the last three years, which included the murder of George Floyd in 2020 and had an impact on the way Cave saw himself and his work, the artist was able to see his own patterns.

“It was interesting for me to spend three years working with Naomi Beckwith and putting this together and really understanding that for three and a half decades I’ve been trying to bring light to the subject of racism, injustice, inequality” Cave says. “I know that I am

triggered by what's happening socially in the world but to be able to see that commitment and purpose was really an incredible moment. But then through that also trying to find ways to reconciliate these emotions. I have to, somehow in the trauma of it all, find peace and this sort idea of moving forward.

"Going forward, it's all about Black excellence first. And then when something appears [in the social landscape] I will incorporate it into the moment."

A painting titled "Sea Sick" is one piece to watch for in "What It Is," and one Cave believes well illustrates the idea of moving forward in the face of trauma.

Nick Cave, "Sea Sick," 2014. Found oil on canvas and found ceramic, fiberglass, and plastic objects, 96 × 72 × 10 1/2 in. Courtesy the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York. © NICK CAVE

Scouting for materials on one of his cross-country antique and flea market runs, the artist happened upon something that inspired its own body of work on display in the exhibit.

“[It] was a bust of a Black man’s head and it was a container of sorts. I thought it was interesting, I pulled it off the shelf and it said ‘spittoon.’ I was just livid in that moment,” Cave says. “But it really triggered this whole body of work of traveling and finding the most repulsive objects and thinking about how racism has found its way into consumerism and product.”

‘What It Shall Be’

“What It Shall Be” is where the museum hosts 16 of Cave’s famed Soundsuits.

The Soundsuit, created first in 1992 as an artful yet provoking response to the Rodney King beating, saw Cave exploring, as a Black man, what it means to “feel dismissed, discarded, viewed [as] less than,” he says in a 2018 Smithsonian video interview. Mulling that all in the park one day, he saw a twig appearing similarly dismissed and discarded, and started to collect them. The twigs found their way into his studio, taking form as a sculpture and ultimately a garment that, once worn, made a sound that gave the suits their name.

But it was the anonymity that the part sculpture, part costume Soundsuits created that serves as the response to the racial profiling Cave was responding to. In a Soundsuit, the wearer isn’t recognizable by race, size, gender or any other commonly discriminated characteristic. He explores what it would mean in the world to appear like this.

Since then the artist has created more than 500 Soundsuits, crafted mostly from discarded materials or thrift-store finds, made with elaborate textile pieces, multihued shaggy substances and anything else that compels Cave for inclusion. Striking in both their stature and intricacy, the Soundsuits are by far the most colorful of the "Forothermore" experience.

"The reference point becomes universal," he explains. "I could be looking at Haitian Voodoo flags or I could be at Carnival or it's the Mardi Gras Indians or maybe it's the Egungun [a Yoruba masquerade for ancestor reverence], and maybe George Clinton. It's looking at everything that finds its way into this whole idea of abundance and heightened sensation."

The Soundsuits, always life-size or larger, always intricately crafted, sometimes steady as sculptures in museums and sometimes human-inhabited and brought to life through performance and dance, have been inspired by — and have likewise inspired — fashion, according to Cave.

When it comes to the former, Cave likens Soundsuits to couture in terms of craft.

"We can look at couture in terms of ways in which things are constructed, the ways in which things are built, the level of adornment, embellishment, construction, how things are put together," he says. "The infrastructures of what supports some of these shapes and forms and just the physical handwork in building a sculpture. It's not that anything is just two dimensional. Cloth becomes three dimensional. So it's really about building with the proper principles of how to construct and build a garment."

Earlier this year, as evidence of the Soundsuits inspiring fashion, Cave created an 80-look fashion collection, which debuted at Chicago's DuSable Museum of African American History, as a result of what he labeled a "call and response" to the Soundsuits' impact. Those pieces will appear in a fashion film titled "The Color Is, 137 Days," which will premiere at the Guggenheim in February, though the garments themselves won't be part of the exhibit.

What will be part of the exhibit, are pieces from "the beginning of a new body of work titled 'Soundsuit 2.0,'" Cave says.

"[These] really started right before [the murder of] George Floyd happened and then when [it] happened that whole idea was then covered in a black veil of sorts, so those are in the show," he says. "But at the same time, I just completed my first 12-foot bronze Soundsuit [also not on display at 'Forothermore' because, in Cave's words, 'it didn't fit through the door].' So now I'm thinking about bronze and thinking about public space and again thinking of the ways in which it could find its way out of institutions into public spaces. At the same time, the dismantling of monuments was coming down, so it's all sort of this transition of the was, the new and the rise of the phoenix."

“Forothermore” is on exhibit at the Guggeheim will run through April 10.

The ideal audience for Cave?

“Everyone,” he says, adding, “As an artist, museums should be accessible to everyone. At the end of the day I mean, that’s why they’re here.”

For Beckwith, “Forothermore” has been just the right foray.

“When I took on this amazing position at the Guggenheim, I knew it would be important to signal my values for my first show,” she says. “Nick and his work is the perfect encapsulation of the things I care deeply for: championing the marginalized, valuing art that intersects with performance and social life, celebrating art from the center of the country. But above all, his work and mine acknowledges that there is a lot of love, joy and beauty in our Black communities, even in the face of hate and violence. We simply want to share that joy.”

“Soundsuits.” Installation view, *Nick Cave: Forothermore*, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, November 18, 2022–April 10, 2023. © Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, New York. Photo: Ariel Ione Williams.

V MAGAZINE

VIEWING PLEASURE: NICK CAVE

The multidisciplinary artist sculpting a surreal vision

November 19, 2022

PHOTOGRAPHY STEVEN PIPER
STYLING GALINA KARUSTINA
TEXT MIKELLE STREET

Chicago-based artist Nick Cave sees himself as a messenger. “I’m a messenger first, artist second,” he says. “This is the job that I’ve been given.” A voice, if you will, for those who can’t (or won’t) be heard. And ultimately, a catalyst of change. His work, often composed of found objects, entices viewers with its beauty before confronting them with the harsh realities many, and specifically Black communities, are forced to live with.

For the name of his first large-scale survey of his career, the 63-year-old artist did what has become a hallmark of his practice: he took objects, in this instance the words “forevermore” and “other,” and fashioned something anew. Thus came Forothermore, an exhibit that first bowed earlier this year at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, which looks back at a body of work paying tribute to those lost to racism, systemic injustice, and more. Through his art, many times used as a coping mechanism, Cave hopes to enshrine their memories forever. “It was really this idea of service and using art as a vehicle for that,” Cave says. “This survey is really me offering this experience to the community at large and always thinking of ways in which we need to continue to

reflect, continue to talk about, and find some sort of reconciliation in this process of trauma."

V MAGAZINE

Since 1992, Cave's multidisciplinary work has sought to shine a light. Notably, that began with the brutal police beating of Rodney King with his first series, Soundsuits. The creations are Cave's most

body of work, in which he creates wearable sculptures that use the body in figurative ways while obstructing the wearer's identity. This second skin follows a use for fashion that he developed growing up: "I've always used embellishment, adornment, as a way of rebellion, of pushing back." But over the past three decades, that work has continued, up through the killing of George Floyd. Forothermore brings the scope of this work into one show looking at the past, present, and future of the artist's practice.

In a section of the survey, on exhibit at the Guggenheim in New York through April 2023, and more specifically the latest iterations of Soundsuits reimagined in 2020, Cave turns the spotlight he's been previously shining on issues toward himself. The result proposes a new way forward in his practice, something that begins with his own imagination and creativity, and then incorporates his reactions to the swirling world around him as it occurs. "It's about me and who I am," he says of the process, exemplified by the new Soundsuits, which come shrouded in black veils as a result of the George Floyd killing that occurred during their creation. Of a new, in-progress body of work he teases that he is beginning to explore his own queerness in ways he previously hadn't. "I'm thinking about standing even more so in my truth and everything I know I am."

Nick Cave wears all clothing Saint Laurent by Anthony Vaccarello

Forbes

FORBESLIFE

Groundbreaking Exhibit, 'Nick Cave: Forothermore' Opens In New York

Julia Brenner Contributor
I cover art, design, culture and people.

Cave primarily works with found objects and existing materials, making "something from nothing." ARIEL IONE WILLIAMS

(NEW YORK, NY)—Traveling from the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, *Nick Cave: Forothermore* opens this weekend at the Guggenheim (November 18, 2022–April 10, 2023). The retrospective honors Nick Cave's lifelong commitment to creating space for those who feel marginalized by dominant culture—especially working-class communities and queer people of color.

Forbes

The artist's survey exhibition honors his lifelong commitment to creating space for those who feel ... [+] ARIEL IONE WILLIAMS

Nick Cave (b. 1959, Fulton, Missouri) has become internationally celebrated for his elaborate sculpture and found-object installations, including his iconic *Soundsuits*, which blend sculpture, fashion, and social performance. *Nick Cave: Forothermore* examines the development of Cave's creative practice, which combines visual and performing arts while simultaneously questioning the promises—fulfilled or broken—that the late 20th and early 21st centuries have afforded those deemed as "other."

Forbes

"What It Shall Be" examines Cave's recent incarnation of Soundsuits, which exemplify his survival ... [+] MIDGE WATTLES

Cave explains that the word "Forothermore" was created as "an ode to those who, whether due to racism, homophobia, or other forms of bigotry, live their lives as the 'other', and a celebration of the way art, music, fashion, and performance can help us envision a more just future." A Chicago-based artist, Cave's influences range from the Chicago House music scene and the psychedelia of George Clinton's Parliament-Funkadelic collective, to Bauhaus design principles and lessons on creativity passed on from his family.

Forbes

Installed in the museum's tower galleries, the survey's thematic sections are titled "What It Was," ... [+] ARIEL IONE WILLIAMS

The exhibit is broken out into three distinct sections titled "What It Was," "What It Is," and "What It Shall Be," inspired by an old African American greeting. Told as a story in three parts—the sections can be thought of as chapters that look into the past, present, and future. "What It Was" explores early works that honor the artist's creative and social foundations within his family and beyond. "What It Is" includes Cave's work addressing oppression, loss, mourning, and remembrance, but also joy and collective celebration. Finally, "What It Shall Be" highlights Cave's recent collection of *Soundsuits* and *Tondo* works, which exemplify his survival strategies amid injustice.

Forbes

The exhibition investigates aspects of Cave's career that are grounded in key aesthetic and ethical ... [+] ARIEL IONE WILLIAMS

In honor of Cave's desire to give access to the broadest possible audience, the opening weekend of *Nick Cave: Forothermore* will be free to the public, thanks in part to support by the Ford Foundation.

Forbes

Cave is renowned for incorporating life-altering historical events into works that celebrate his ... [+] MIDGE WATTLES

Galerie

Nick Cave's Vibrant Artworks Inspire a Museum Exhibition and Sumptuous Collection of Textiles

The acclaimed Chicago artist opens a retrospective at the Guggenheim and launches a new collaboration with Knoll Textiles

BY MELISSA FELDMAN

NOVEMBER 15, 2022

"I see all decisions as creative ones, whether they are made for a museum, the body, or to embellish a room," says artist Nick Cave, who also serves as a professor in the Fashion, Body, and Garment program at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. This week, Cave will be celebrated in the retrospective "Nick Cave: Forothermore," at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York and is also marking the recent release of a highly anticipated fabric collection with Knoll Textiles.

The sweeping retrospective, which originated at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago (MCA), was curated by Naomi Beckwith, now Deputy Director and Chief Curator at the Guggenheim; Jack Schneider, Curatorial Assistant at MCA; and X Zhu-Nowell, Assistant Curator at the Guggenheim. On view starting November 18, the exhibition features sculptures, installations, video, and early works that illustrate Cave's

passion for fiber carefully combined with found objects and cast-offs. The three-part installation inside the museum's tower galleries includes What It Was, What It Is and What It Shall Be, which highlights the past, present, and future chapters of the artist's prolific career.

The Forest wall covering pattern is directly influenced by Cave's 2011 installation *Architectural Forest.*

PHOTO: KNOLL TEXTILES

Originally conceived in response to the beating and racial profiling of Rodney King in 1991, Cave's signature Soundsuits have become symbolic in the way they address issues of gender, race, and class while concealing the wearer's identity, serving as a second skin. The decorative forms are reminiscent of ceremonial or carnival costumes, produced from a range of discarded and tactile materials like sequins, feathers, plastic, synthetic hair, and beads. To exist inside these garments, one must balance both the physical and emotional weight and be ready to move.

Nick Cave, *Garden Plot (aka Wall Relief)*, 2013. Steel, found textiles, and found ceramic, glass, and metal objects, with beads.

PHOTO: COURTESY THE ARTIST AND JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY, NEW YORK. © NICK CAVE. PHOTO: JAMES PRINZ

Galerie

In the last decade, the 63-year-old Chicago talent has produced numerous projects featuring these wearable Soundsuits sculptures. These larger-than-life installations are the embodiment of an artistic practice that spans fashion, performance, dance, and the body politic. Highlights include; Each One, Every One, Equal All, a trio of mosaic murals installed in the Times Square-Bryant Park Subway Stations; The Let Go, a performance incorporating dance raves at the Park Avenue Armory from 2018; and Heard-NY, an art commission with Creative Time staged in Grand Central Station in 2013, all of which have now inspired a new fabric range.

“The thought process is similar for all types of projects,” Cave says when describing his partnership with Knoll Textiles. “But, the key difference between my art practice and the Knoll collaboration is the starting point. My artwork begins with what’s happening in the world and what I find as I move through it. But for the Knoll line, I began with my artwork as the instigator,” he says about the impetus behind the artful range he envisioned for the legacy brand.

Big Floral, an oversized digital printed wall covering, is embellished with antique beading.
PHOTO: KNOLL TEXTILES

Nick Cave, *Soundsuit,* 2015. Mannequin, metal, synthetic hair, and found textiles.
PHOTO: COLLECTION OF ASHLEY AND PAM NETZKY. © NICK CAVE

“The Knoll collection is another way for people to access my art and share energy,”

NICK CAVE

Galerie

Doily upholstery in Twilight (left) with Guise upholstery in Indigo (below).

PHOTO: KNOLL TEXTILES

The Nick Cave Collection for Knoll Textiles encompasses ten patterns that launched the end of October. “The textiles do make a direct reference to his artwork,” says Mary Murphy, Senior Vice President of Design for Knoll Textiles, Maharam, and Edelman Leather. “You can see the interpretations are true to his intent,” she says, adding, “Color was key.” Bob Faust, who is Cave’s partner in life and art, also played a role in the process.

The four upholstery, three drapery, and three wall covering patterns directly reference craft and decorative elements from Cave’s Soundsuits. “The essence of the collection is all about technique,” Murphy says while emphasizing the weaving process of Doily, a woven jacquard that’s embroidered using a special machine. Heard, an unusual drapery fabric is composed of five ribbon colors, handmade and intricately sewn. “It’s going to be used sparingly,” Murphy adds. Button, a digital print with an overall pattern fades from light to dark, while Big Floral, a large-scale digitally embossed wallpaper accentuates antique beaded flowers, a detail from another Soundsuits. Cave sums it up best: “The collection is another way for people to access my art and share energy.”

CHICAGO

CHICAGOANS OF THE YEAR

Nick Cave

The Activist Artist

BY LOLLY BOWEAN
NOVEMBER 15, 2022, 6:00 AM

His mixed-media art may be colorful and vibrant. And his layering of plastic dolls, beads, silk flowers, and other artifacts may trigger memories. But at its heart, Nick Cave's powerful work is meant to provoke neither joy nor nostalgia. Instead, through his art, Cave forces us to interrogate the way we live with injustice. "It is something that took over and led me to become an activist in this artistic way," he says.

Cave has spent the past three decades calling attention to police violence against Black people, the harms of both subtle and overt racism, and the cruelty embedded in othering. But his work has never felt more relevant — or more urgent. And it was hard to miss this year. He had a major retrospective at the Museum of Contemporary Art and an immersive fashion-focused exhibition with his brother Jack at the DuSable Museum

of African American History. This summer, one of Cave's films was projected onto the façade of the Merchandise Mart.

The 63-year-old native of Fulton, Missouri, came to Chicago in 1988 to take a teaching position at the School of the Art Institute. At the time, his elaborate textile sculptures fashioned out of reclaimed items like tools, dominoes, and salvaged building materials focused on family dynamics. But that changed in 1991 after the police beating of Rodney King. "That was the first video incident that we all experienced together," he says. In King, he saw himself. "My consciousness was awakened in a way it hadn't been before."

King's beating inspired Cave to craft his first Soundsuit, an intricately assembled costume made with thousands of beads, sequins, yarns, and textured threads and meant to hide gender, sexuality, race, and class. Dozens of Cave's Soundsuits — 15 of them new — were on display in Forothermore, the MCA retrospective, which is now traveling to the Guggenheim Museum in New York City. Spinner Forest, the installation that greets visitors, is indicative of Cave's approach: It's only when you look closely at the hanging strips of brilliant, reflective wind spinners that you see imagery of guns, designed to draw attention to violence.

"I've been purely focused on bringing light to these subjects," he says. "This has been my way to deal with the daily trauma. Trauma doesn't go away overnight — it resurfaces. It's my duty, my civic responsibility, to put it in our faces."

THE NEW YORKER

ART NOVEMBER 14, 2022 ISSUE

WINTER ART PREVIEW

A new addition to the American Museum of Natural History, Mayan gods at the Met, Senga Nengudi at Dia Beacon, and more.

By Andrea K. Scott
November 5, 2022

Illustration by Tomi Um

The Chicago-based phenom Nick Cave is best known for his "Soundsuits," elaborate wearable assemblages that dazzle whether they're presented as sculptures or seen in motion during performances. As jubilant as these intricate costume-objects are, they also suggest protective gear for vulnerable bodies. For Cave, fashion design and art are united by activism: he made the first "Soundsuit" in 1991, in response to the beating of Rodney King by the L.A.P.D. The Guggenheim shows a selection of the artist's polyphonic sculptures, videos, and installations in the retrospective **"Nick Cave: Forothermore."** (Opens Nov. 18.)

HYPERALLERGIC

Art Reviews

The Joyous Kitsch and Lingering Simmer of Nick Cave's Art

With explosions of color and materiality, Cave has his own enigmatic ways to funnel the funk through histories of adversity.

by Debra Brehmer
September 29, 2022

Installation view of *Nick Cave: Forothermore* at the MCA Chicago. Pictured: *Soundsuits* (photo Nathan Keay, © MCA Chicago)

CHICAGO — Before entering Nick Cave's career-spanning exhibition, *Forothermore*, curated by Naomi Beckwith, visitors must approach through a kinetic forest of twirling, twinkling wind-spinners hanging throughout the foyer and upper atrium of the Museum of Contemporary Art's fourth floor. In the first room, a dazzling beaded-mesh wall

stands adjacent to a giant wire tondo; in between are a series of riotous *Soundsuits* on a plinth. With barely a foot in the door, Cave's aesthetic world is already overwhelming.

Yet the exhibition's second room is quiet. Here, "Penny Catcher" (2009) dangles from the wall like a poignant call to remember the depth of American racial violence. Cave has clothed an antique carved wooden head of a Black man with his mouth open (a flea market relic from a carnival toss game) in a formal black suit with white spats that rest on crushed Pepsi cans. This effigy speaks of morbidity, pain, and all the country fairs where White folks did not question the enmity of degradation.

Nick Cave, "Penny Catcher" (2009), mixed media including vintage coin toss, suit, shoes, and aluminum cans, 74 × 23 × 14 in. Collection of Margo & Robert Roth (photo Debra Brehmer/Hyperallergic)

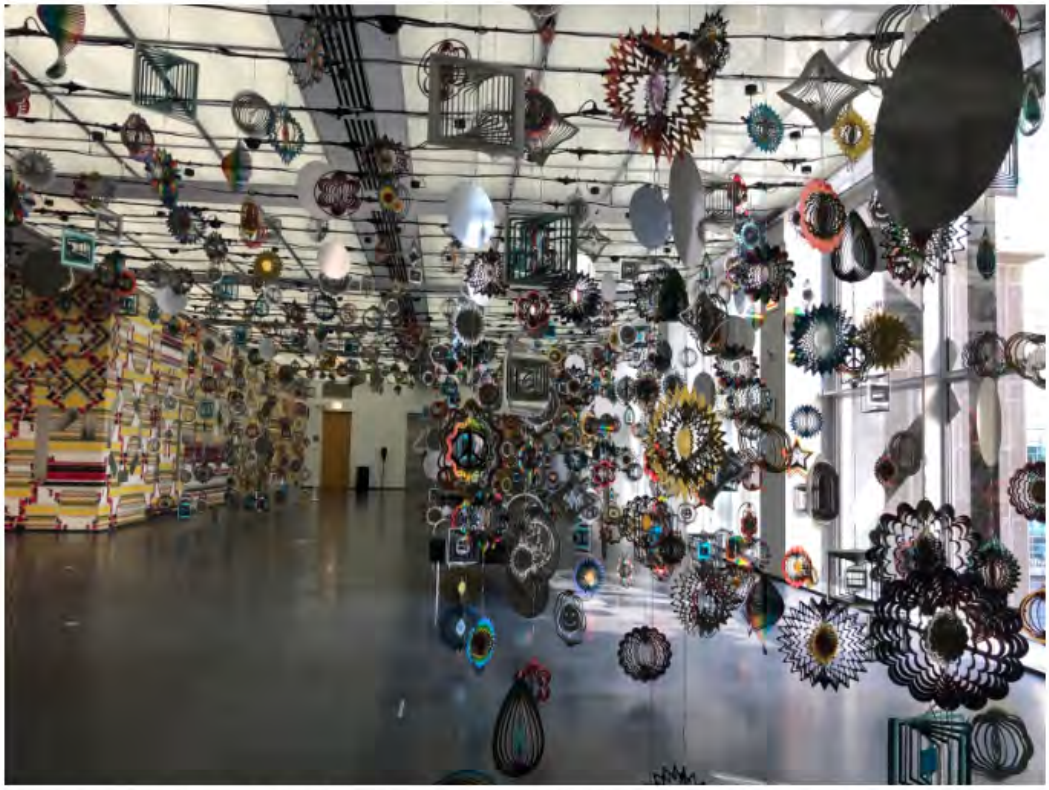
Cave's 30-year Chicago-based career has always wandered between foreign lands of materiality. His love of pattern and textiles meets his pleasure in flea market kitsch as he gathers bouquets of buttons, fake fur, beads, plastic flowers, and seemingly anything that sparkles to whorl it into lavish, almost-domestic explosions of exuberance. As a hunter-gatherer and bricoleur, Cave emerges from a Midwestern art history that draws on cultural refuse. His antecedents include Chicago artists such as Gregory Warmack, aka Mr. Imagination, who made bottle cap thrones; Ray Yoshida and Roger Brown (Maxwell Street flea market doyens); and David Philpot, with his embellished giant staffs. He also cites musician George Clinton and his bands Parliament and Funkadelic as an early influence. But Cave has his own enigmatic ways to funnel the funk through histories of adversity. And this is what gives his work a lingering simmer.

The *Soundsuits* harken back to African art and ritual, in which masks and costumes are activated with dance and music. The colonialist impulse of the Euro-American world, with its desire for acquisition and categorization, bled the life from these objects by displacing them from their contexts and isolating them on museum pedestals. Cave repairs the breach by stirring the ceramic birds, the racist artifacts, the buttons and mass produced twirlers into showers of archival evidence that illuminate how popular culture places a jolly brand of racism into middle-class homes alongside Christmas ornaments and martini glasses. Cave's tales of vernacular culture resonate with both love and anger. These emotional currents collide most poignantly in his recent fake flower *Soundsuits*, which first appear as joyful gardens but quickly wilt into funereal shrouds. The artist dedicates these suits to George Floyd, titling them with the number of minutes it took Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin to strangle him, "8:46" (2021).

Cave, who has taught in the fashion department of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago since 1990, is best known for the *Soundsuits* but his work more broadly salutes material labor, which — as an artist who can build things, sculpt, and sew — Cave knows well. The large installation "Time and Again" (2000) is a tribute to his grandfather. A wall installation presents his old tools amid religious artifacts, accompanied by a series of metal rims assembled on the floor. Part tomb, part living room, Cave celebrates a man

who used his hands, who fixed things and made furniture, who held to his faith. Another kind of memorial, “Truss” (1999) is dedicated to a friend who died of AIDS. Assorted work gloves are sealed in resin the color of amber. Cave again honors the hand, closing the gap between labor and art, vulnerability and protection.

The notion of “otherness” tucked into the exhibition’s title, *Forothermore,* is a reminder that otherness implies marginalization, but there can be freedom in that — the freedom to build totems from sock monkeys, to create from and with kitsch, the freedom for marginalized people to transform their armor into fashion. The interlocking fiberglass arms in another installation, “Platform” (2018), offer a dense emotional conclusion to the show. The dark hands link together, forming chains that dangle into a foreground of gramophones, cast male heads, and carved eagles. There’s something about the absolute resilience of those strong arms, linking together, that feels impenetrably triumphant.



Installation view of entry to Nick Cave: Forothermore at the MCA Chicago. Pictured: “Spinner Forest” (2020), hanging mobiles made from metallic spinning garden ornaments, dimensions variable (courtesy Jack Shainman Gallery, New York, photo Debra Brehmer/Hyperallergic)

HYPERALLERGIC

Nick Cave, "Truss," detail (1999), mixed media including metal, resin and gloves, dimensions variable (courtesy Nick Cave, photo Debra Brehmer/Hyperallergic)

Wallpaper*

Nick Cave unveils vibrant textile collection inspired by his artworks

American artist Nick Cave's vibrant creations have inspired an enchanting collection of home fabrics and wallcoverings for Knoll Textiles

Nick Cave with the *Soundsuit* layered with doilies, beads and embroidery that inspired the 'Doily' upholstery, and a prototype of the 'Doily' fabric for Knoll Textiles. *Photography: Lyndon French*

Wallpaper*

Nick Cave describes himself as an ‘artist, educator and messenger’. For more than 20 years, he has used sculpture, installation, performance, video and sound to create spaces of memorial, from collecting found objects to express the impact of gun violence in the United States, to fashioning fantastical *Soundsuits*, first made in response to the 1991 police beating of Rodney King, which conceal the wearer’s shape and identity as a comment on notions of race, gender and class.

It has been a busy year for Cave, even by his prolific standards. In May, the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago unveiled his first career-spanning survey. The exhibition, which travels to the Guggenheim in New York in November, not only features unseen additions to the *Soundsuits* series, but also rarely seen early works. Its title, ‘Forothermore’, is a neologism that honours those living their lives as ‘other’, and reflects Cave’s deep commitment to creating space for the marginalised, particularly working class communities and queer people of colour.

Cave has consistently pushed the boundaries of what constitutes art and where it can be exhibited. Also in May, the artist revealed two monumental mosaics in Manhattan, at the 42nd Street connector between the Times Square and Bryant Park subway stations. Commissioned by MTA Arts and Design, the mosaics *Each One* and *Equal All* depict different visual themes in Cave’s *Soundsuits* series. Along with a 2021 mosaic titled *Every One*, they span 4,600 sq ft, forming Cave’s largest permanent public artwork to date.

‘It’s all been in the works for about two and a half years,’ says Cave. ‘It’s not just bringing your work to the museum. The studio work had to be completed a month in advance so that I could be fully available for this immersive moment.’ He adds, ‘Unfortunately, we’re in this non-stop state of turmoil and trauma right now. I’m just excited that there is this place that we can go to reflect and mourn, to find some sort of calm.’

Wallpaper*

Nick Cave with his 'Buttons' drapery, a digital print of the vintage buttons the artist has sourced from antique markets to create some of his *Soundsuits*. *Photography: Lyndon French*

Wallpaper*

A collaboration with Knoll Textiles

Elements of one of Cave's *Tondo* installations, made with bugle beads meticulously threaded onto wires, sit next to the 'Wire' wallcovering they inspired. *Photography: Lyndon French*

Wallpaper*

Ahead of the opening of ‘Forothermore’ at the Guggenheim, the artist will unveil a comprehensive collaboration with Knoll Textiles – the company’s first partnership with an artist. Consisting of four upholsteries, three draperies and three wallcoverings, the vibrant textile collection conveys Cave’s sense of dimension, colour and movement, with each design referencing a specific artwork and dutifully capturing the visceral and tactile essence of the original piece.

‘When I was invited to do this collaboration, I immediately thought of Cranbrook [Academy of Art], where I did my graduate work,’ recalls Cave. ‘I was surrounded by Knoll and by [Eliel and Eero] Saarinen. I would pull out these amazing textiles created in the 1970s, and think about the Arts and Crafts movement and its influence. It’s part of my DNA now. I’m always thinking about the transition: how does an artwork transition into a textile or bronze? It comes down to the essence, and transferring that essence over.’

Created in deep dialogue with Cave and his creative and life partner, Bob Faust, the Knoll Textiles collection is an achievement in many ways. The collaboration kicked off in February 2021, when Cave selected 45 works for the Knoll Textiles team to riff on; they ultimately whittled these down to ten ambitious designs that take the artist collaboration trope to a whole new level. As expected, the draperies in the collection are the most delicate. ‘Until’, an airy, web-like textile made by embroidering on a water-soluble ground that dissolves to leave an open-weave structure, is based on an installation of the same name, while ‘Buttons’ nods to one of Cave’s *Soundsuits*, meticulously hand-beaded in buttons to achieve an ombré effect. The photorealist design was created by compositing multiple buttons together into a seamless, continuous pattern. In both cases, the results are subtle, yet dynamic and enticing.

‘Nick always uses conventional materials in unconventional ways,’ says Knoll Textiles designer Nina Chidichimo, who shepherded the collection into being with senior designer Mee Ok Ryu. ‘Working with him really pushed us in terms of how we typically create things. He really wanted it to feel organic and open, so we had a lot of conversations with mills that we normally wouldn’t, to make something extra special. There was a lot of trust too, as he gave us his body of work to run with. It was a great collaboration.’

Wallpaper*

'Until', a web-like textile based on an installation of the same name by Cave. *Photography: Lyndon French*

Wallpaper*

The larger-than-life scale of the 'Big Floral' wallcovering captures the energy and detail of another of Cave's *Soundsuits* made with antique beads. *Photography: Lyndon French*

The final drapery, ‘Heard’, is inspired by a fringed iteration of Cave’s *Soundsuits*. ‘We brought Nick a tiny sample of this and he automatically gravitated to it, because there’s such a direct correlation between this and his work,’ Chidichimo says of the drapery. ‘Each ribbon is individually sewn by hand in rows, so it also speaks to his handcrafted approach. The *Soundsuits* are not just objects, but meant to be moved in and worn.’

The collection’s upholsteries are just as adventurous. ‘Guise’ mixes knitted, space-dyed twisted yarns with chenille yarns, echoing the intricate top layer of Cave’s beaded *Soundsuits* with a dynamic, puckered effect. Drawing from a section of the installation *Architectural Forest* (2011), ‘Vert’ is a variegated design that distils the perfectly imperfect qualities so often seen in Cave’s work. Even more flexible is ‘Puff’, a cosy faux shearling available in 13 colours based on a rainbow fur *Soundsuit*. The final upholstery fabric, ‘Doily’, uses two upholstery techniques in varying scales on a woven ground to create a multidimensional effect. ‘The way in which these textiles and fabrics are built, nothing is flat,’ says Cave. ‘There is a dimension built within them that is visceral. I’ve always built cloth and so I wanted the same sensation to come across in these materials.’

The wallcoverings include ‘Wire’, a digitally printed fur pattern using matte ink on metallic mylar; ‘Forest’, a vertically charged warp lay that’s also inspired by *Architectural Forest* and probably the most joyful; and ‘Big Floral’, which recreates a pattern of antique beaded flowers from a *Soundsuit* on a larger scale. Available in their original bright hues as well as grayscale tones, the wallcoverings are tactile and exquisitely produced.

Aside from their aesthetic value, the textiles convey a deep and powerful significance in their intention to represent original works that advance social justice. ‘It’s all part of being a collective,’ Cave summarises. ‘We’re here, we exist. We’re human. For me, [how I stay hopeful is by] striving for something, it’s about being purposeful. We all have to think about accountability and what it means in the larger picture. That is hope.’ §

Wallpaper*

The 'Forest' wallcovering captures the vibrancy and abstract vertical movements of Cave's 2011 *Architectural Forest* installation. *Photography: Lyndon French*

artnet news

Art History

Can a Sculpture Dance? Here Are Three Things to Know About Artist Nick Cave's Beloved 'Soundsuits'

The artist is the subject of a current exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago.

Katie White, September 22, 2022

Dancers in Soundsuits by artist Nick Cave perform during the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art's annual Art Bash. Courtesy of San Francisco Chronicle/Hearst Newspapers via Getty Images.

At first glance, Chicago artist Nick Cave's Soundsuits are colorful, even jubilant, spectacles. Made from all manner of materials—woven synthetic hair in kaleidoscopic hues of fluorescent green and hot pink, ceramic birds, glitter, and bundles of twigs—these often-wearable costumes often resemble mythical storybook creatures or sci-fi aliens. But despite their awe-inspiring appearance, these sculptures were initially born

as a response to complex social and political realities. Cave, who was born in 1959 in Fulton, Missouri, created his first “sound suit” in 1992 in the aftermath of the Rodney King beating. “It’s amazing how something so profound can literally shift your direction of thinking and making,” the artist related in an interview with Boston’s Institute of Contemporary Art.

Walking in the park, the artist intuitively began collecting twigs and used them to construct an elaborate costume. When worn, the costume made its own unique sounds—and the Soundsuits were born. Over the past 30 years, Cave has created over 500 Soundsuits, elaborate sculptures which draw inspiration from African tribal regalia and even medieval capes. The artist sees these works as a kind of protective armor, disguising the wearer’s race, age, and gender; meanwhile, their sensorial richness dazzles the viewing public. Currently, the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago is hosting “Forothermore,” a survey exhibition of Cave’s artistic output, including several of his iconic Soundsuits.

To mark the 30th anniversary of the creation of the first Soundsuit, we decided to take a closer look at this pivotal series and found three facts that may let you see them in a more complex way.

Cave’s Interest in Costuming Started as Self-Expression

Production still from the Art21 "Extended Play" film, "Nick Cave: Thick Skin." © Art21, Inc. 2016.

artnet news

Today the director of the graduate fashion program at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Cave came by his talent for transformation early. The youngest of seven boys raised by a single mother, Cave grew up wearing hand-me-down clothing. “You have to figure out how to make those clothes your own…That’s how I started off, using things around the house,” Cave said in a 2009 interview. Cave’s mother encouraged his creative forays and his experiments with fabric, and the artist vividly recalls the imaginative power of the sock puppets she made him. “The transition from the sock being just a sock to it becoming my best friend at that moment was so enormous and yet so simple for me as a child. How do we get back to that innocence? How do we get back to that place of dreaming?” the artist asked.

The Soundsuits Recast Humble Materials in a Starring Role

Nick Cave, *Soundsuit* (2011). © Nick Cave. Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York. Photo: James Prinz Photography.

Just as the first Soundsuit was constructed from twigs found in a park, Cave still scours the world around him to collect the objects which compose these sculptural, mixed-media costumes. Though the Soundsuits may appear otherworldly, the sculptures are composed of everyday materials—plastic buttons, feathers, sequins—that create a tension between the familiar and the imaginary. The artist describes the Soundsuits as his way of "lashing out" at a world that often devalues individuals based on factors of race, sexual orientation, class, or gender. Much the same, Cave subverts traditional definitions of fine art, by creating objects that cross between sculpture, fashion, and performance.

"I found that I was interested in was this whole idea of the discarded. I started gathering materials at the flea markets and the antique malls. And so, for me, it's me sort of taking these objects and reintroducing them and giving them a new sort of role," said Cave in a conversation with the Museum of Modern Art. "A lot of the things that you will find in a Soundsuit are things that we all recognize. You know, how do we look at things that are devalued, discarded, and bring a different kind of relevancy to them."

They Can Be Additionally Activated by Dance

Nick Cave's *Heard of Horses* installation at Vanderbilt Hall at Grand Central Terminal on March 30, 2013. Photo by Mike Coppola/Getty Images.

artnet news

Before he became a visual artist, Nick Cave was a dancer who trained with the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. That passion for dance buoyed the artist as he began his career, spending hours in clubs, dancing alone, and working through his thoughts.

Over the years, the artist has organized numerous performances with his Soundsuits. While not all Soundsuits are intended to be worn, many have been made with performers in mind. In 2013, the artist choreographed the site-specific performance "Heard NY" in collaboration with 60 dancers from the Alvin Ailey School at New York's Grand Central Station. These particular Soundsuits were made of colorful, ruffling raffia in forms resembling life-size horses, each costume worn by two dancers. Together, the 30 horses—a herd—referenced the New York Metropolitan Transit Authority's use of horses for transportation in the early 1900s. The performers would spontaneously break into dance throughout the famed transit hall.

More recently, Cave has been orchestrating Soundsuit performances with underprivileged children. The sculptures, which can weigh up to 40 pounds, are meant to transport the wearer into a space of dreaming and revelation. Cave recalled trying on his first creation, saying, "I was inside a suit. You couldn't tell if I was a woman or man; if I was black, red, green, or orange; from Haiti or South Africa. I was no longer Nick. I was a shaman of sorts."

CHICAGO SUN-TIMES

Nick Cave fights racism with beauty

You've only got a few weeks left to catch the show at the Museum of Contemporary Art.

By Neil Steinberg | Updated Sept 6, 2022, 7:47pm EDT

SHARE

"A-mal-gam" is a bronze sculpture by Chicago artist Nick Cave designed to go on a plinth where the solemn tribute to some colonizer used to stand. | Neil Steinberg/Sun-Times

Sometimes it feels like we've become a nation squatting in the ruins of our past. Living off scrounged philosophy and canned food discovered in wrecked basements, warming ourselves over the flickering fires of liberties ignited long ago and not quite extinguished. There's so much stuff scattered everywhere, garish and contradictory, trash pushed up into enormous cliffs and walls. It takes focused attention to make any sense of it, and an act of rare genius to render the rubble into art.

CHICAGO SUN-TIMES

I almost missed the Nick Cave show at the Museum of Contemporary Art. Why go? Well, I'd seen one of the artist's quirky Soundsuits — a sequined costume topped with a kind of exaggerated pope's mitre — at the Whitney in New York a couple years back. He's a Chicago artist, and while I only recently realized he is a different person than the Australian singer of the same name, I try to keep track of Chicago artists. I also noticed friends on Facebook posting photos of hundreds of delicate foil spinners when the show opened in mid-May.

I've long passed the get-to-the-show-when-it-opens phase of my life, and am now firmly trudging through the try-to-see-it-before-it-closes part. With the Cave show closing Oct. 2, the canyon floor was hurtling up at me.

Still, not exactly a pitchfork at the back prodding me downtown. Perhaps key, my wife also wanted to go, and we paired a visit to the MCA Sunday with hitting the last day of the Chicago Jazz Fest. I'd point out how downtown was jammed with throngs of happy tourists, but that's becoming cliche. Still, if only all those patriots edgily fingering their weapons downstate and projecting dire thoughts at a city they last visited in 1992 could muster the courage of a 4-year-old girl in a tutu to walk down Michigan Avenue. It might be an education for them. Or might not, given the current genius to see, not what's in front of you, but what's between your ears, projected upon the world like a slideshow.

I'm glad we went. Because while the colorful Soundsuits, dripping with beads and buttons and bling, are weird and wry and engaging, what really struck me is how Cave takes ephemera, the kitsch you see sold on a blanket on city streets, and assembles it into tableaus of significance.

Look at "Untitled," his 2018 work, a few dozen wooden souvenir heads of Black people, set on a table. Add an American eagle that looks like it's deciding which eye to pluck out next, and suddenly you've got something meaningful.

The show presents a series of dramatic Cave bronzes, juxtaposing body parts with found objects. Look at this opened hand surrounded by a U of vintage beaded flowers. You instantly see that the hand is positioned as if holding a gun, except the gun isn't there. The payoff is the title of the 2016 work, "Unarmed." Not only beautiful, but with a clear message. It's a piece of art you can talk about, and should.

CHICAGO SUN-TIMES

"Untitled," a 2018 work by Nick Cave currently on display at the Museum of Contemporary Art in the first career-spanning retrospective of the artist's work. | Neil Steinberg/Sun-Times

CHICAGO SUN-TIMES

"Unarmed," by Nick Cave, a Chicago artist who sometimes combines found objects with realistic bronzes. A retrospective of his work, "Forothermore," is at the Museum of Contemporary Art until Oct. 2 | Neil Steinberg/Sun-Times

One of the most enticing works in the show is the bronze "A-mal-gam," a life-size man sitting casually on a chair, his head and shoulders sprouting

CHICAGO SUN-TIMES

branches of a tree bedecked in birds — birds being another favorite Cave motif. I saw it and thought, "Put a few of these where the Columbus statues used to be: Problem solved," and was gratified to read the placard and learn that is exactly the idea of the work, created last year.

"Statues that honor people who perpetuated colonialism and slavery are a common sight in American cities," it begins. "In recent years many have been removed, whether through the action of Black Lives Matter or local governments. These removals leave behind empty platforms — and questions about how to use them. Cave responds to these questions with a proposal; a 'tree of life' in the form of his first large-scale bronze human figure. . . . A-malgam is a call to replace historical monuments to racism and hatred with ones that look toward the future and honor the amalgamation of diverse cultures and communities."

Works for me. Those terrified of the future, particularly if it involves people who look and think differently than they do, no doubt will disagree.

Chicago artist Nick Cave, photographed in 2021. A retrospective of his work is at the Museum of Contemporary Art through Oct. 2. | Sun-Times file photo

artnet

Buyer's Guide partner

A New Festival in Arkansas Will Mix Art Projects by Maurizio Cattelan and Nick Cave With Musical Performances by Phoenix and Beach House

FORMAT festival, co-organized by Roya Sachs, Mafalda Millies and Elizabeth Edelman, with mega-event producers C3 Presents, will open this September in Bentonville.

Artnet Gallery Network, August 22, 2022

Nick Cave, Soundsuit. Courtesy of C3 Presents.

artnet

This fall, a new festival is heading to Northwest Arkansas. Called FORMAT—For Music + Art + Technology— the event runs from September 23 to 25 and promises to bring together various disciplines in the much buzzed-about, culturally vibrant region known as Oz, centered around the city of Bentonville, home to the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art and its satellite contemporary art space the Momentary, who are official partners.

The festival is also bringing work by some big-name artists to the area. Over three days and nights, attendees can explore immersive art installations, site-specific commissions, and architectural interventions by the likes of Doug Aitken, Nick Cave, Jacolby Satterwhite, Pia Camil, and Marinella Senatore.

Toiletpaper Magazine, led by artists Maurizio Cattelan & Pierpaolo Ferrari, has converted a barn into an immersive experience called Drag Me to the Disco, while artist duo Jonah Freeman and Justin Lowe have designed Nova Heat, a multi-roomed speakeasy and with a planetarium at its center. Both spaces also serve as alternative venues for some of the 80 musical acts slated to perform during the festival. Headliners include Beach House, Phoenix, The Flaming Lips, Jungle, and Herbie Hancock.

During the festival, three Nick Cave performances will take place daily, featuring 12 of the artist's iconic Soundsuit wearable sculptures, and concluding with a live drum line. Meanwhile, Doug Aitken will present his New Horizon, a mirrored hot air balloon designed as a reflective and kinetic light sculpture that will be a centerpiece of the festival landscape.

FORMAT is organized by the events company Triadic, run by Mafalda Millies, Roya Sachs, and Elizabeth Edelman, in partnership with C3 Presents, producers of Lollapalooza, Austin City Limits Music Festival, Bonnaroo, and the Austin Food & Wine Festival.

Format Festival will take place Friday, September 23–25, in Bentonville, Arkansas.

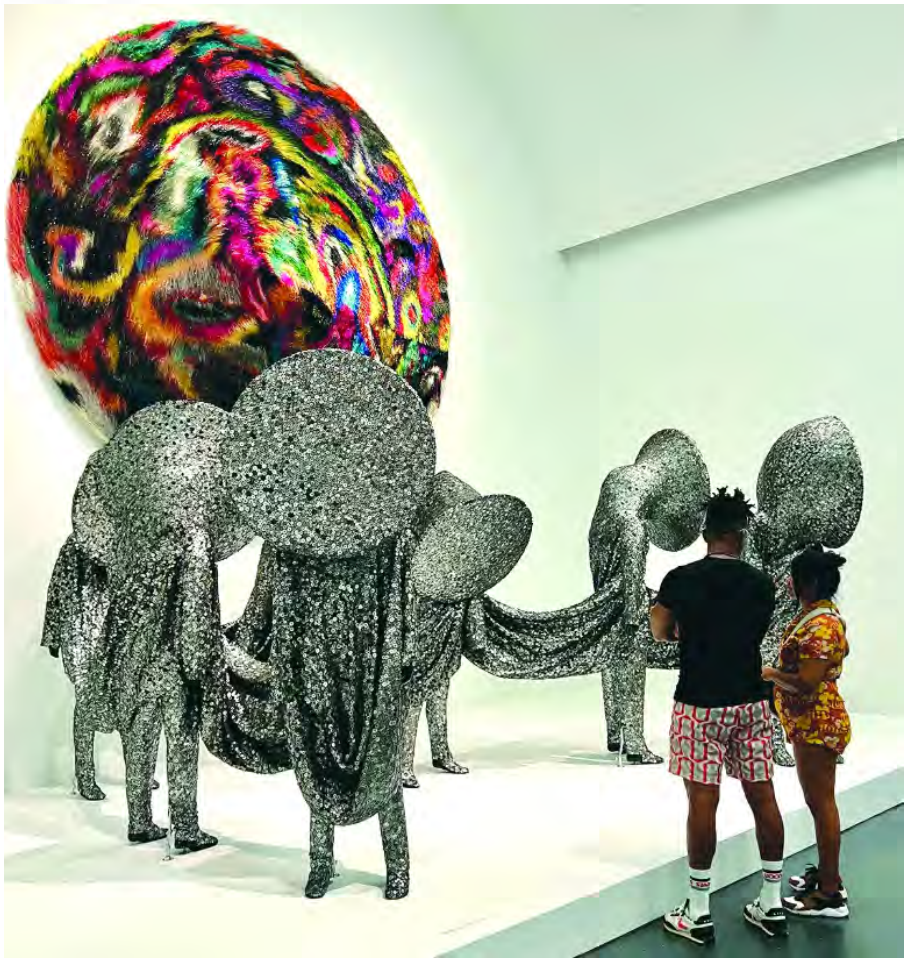
READER

STREET VIEW

Dressed to dazzle

Vibrant fashion and art celebrating "Forothermore"

by **Isa Giallorenzo**
August 18, 2022



READER

Nothing like an opening at the Museum of Contemporary Art to showcase the exceptional style Chicagoans have, in all their diversity. The festivities in May celebrating artist Nick Cave's solo exhibition "Forothermore" were no exception. Body coverings were a central theme and could be appreciated on every level: on guests' outfits in their special post-lockdown glee; on Cave's fashion collection (as presented at the "The Color Is" gala at the DuSable Black History Museum); and, last but not least, on Cave's breathtaking *Soundsuits* displayed throughout his major retrospective at the MCA, curated by Naomi Beckwith.

The first time I ever witnessed the magic of the aforementioned *Soundsuits* was in 2014 at a student fashion show at the School of the Art Institute, where Cave is a professor and the chair of the fashion design department. Seeing Cave's work at the fashion show was a memorable experience of sheer joy.

Cave's performance felt like a huge intergalactic party, featuring a parade of unique characters that looked, moved, and sounded like fascinating alien beings—each representing a very particular universe. Performers danced fully covered head to toe in amazingly intricate costumes, made of all kinds of unexpected materials. Cave has said that he considers his Soundsuits as a "second skin, or a suit of armor" which "erases gender, race, and class" and also regards them as "transformative objects with life-affirming potential when they are worn." In the Nick Cave: Forothermore catalog, MCA director Madeleine Grynsztejn writes "a Soundsuit—as much as it is a beautiful sculpture adorned with some of the most vibrant colors you'll ever see—is also a message. And what it's saying is move and change."

In addition to the Soundsuits, "Forothermore" includes a mesmerizing site-specific kinetic installation called Spinner Forest, textural sculptures, videos, and more. There are also off-site interventions connected to the show, such as Ba Boom Boom Pa Pop Pop at Art on the Mart, a video projection created by Cave and projected on the Merchandise Mart building nightly at 9:30 PM until September 7, and "Power of the Party: Chicago House and Nick Cave", an event taking place at the DuSable on August 27.

"Power of the Party" is presented by the MCA and features Dr. Meida Teresa McNeal, the artistic and managing director of Honey Pot Performance, a Chicago-based Afro-feminist public humanities organization, and DJ Lori Branch, a pioneering force in Chicago's house music and nightlife scenes. The event will include a discussion between McNeal and Branch about the early house music scene in Chicago and its influence on Cave's work. According to Dr. McNeal, who, along with Branch, is part of the team that created The Chicago Black Social Culture Map, the house music parties were "the places where we created ways of gathering with our chosen family to lift ourselves up and find joy and release and strength to move forward."

READER

“I see that in so much of Nick Cave’s body of work. So much of it comes from really horrible racialized experiences and trauma. But he takes those things and tries to reconfigure them as sites of pleasure, by making something beautiful out of something terrible,” she says. After their talk, Branch will perform a set inspired by Nick Cave’s art, providing a soundtrack to kick off “The Color Is,” an exhibition exploring the same themes of the similarly named gala: fashion and design objects by Cave and his brother Jack. It will be on view at the DuSable until November 27.

COLUMBIA DAILY TRIBUNE

CAMPUS

Hickman grad, Fulton native Nick Cave to headline Westminster College symposium

Aarik Danielsen
Columbia Daily Tribune

Published 5:00 a.m. CT Aug. 16, 2022

From mid-Missouri to the world, Nick Cave has reshaped the contemporary art landscape.

A 1977 graduate of Hickman High School, Cave's sculptures, mixed-media pieces and performance art have dazzled viewers in galleries and museums around the world — and in everyday locales such as New York City subway stations.

Cave returns to his birthplace — Fulton — next month as one of the plenary speakers for Westminster College's 17th Hancock Symposium, to be held Sept. 14-16.

Other plenary speakers include "technology evangelist" Tyler Merritt of the company UneeQ and Columbia's own Jordan Reeves, a teenaged disability advocate whose work stretches across design, publishing, television, public speaking and more.

Cave's 'multi-dimensional' approach

Cave owns a wide imagination and the skill set to see his visions become realities. Much of his oeuvre revolves around sculpture and performance art; he is also an Alvin Ailey-trained dancer.

Among his best-known bodies of work is a series of "Soundsuit" sculptures, wearable fabric pieces that often repurpose found materials. Initiated in the wake of Rodney King's beating by Los Angeles police in 1991, Soundsuits overcome "the distinctions between 'fine art' and 'craft,' as well as 'performance' and 'street' art," the Brooklyn Museum notes on its website.

They "also serve as a sort of armor, protecting against the violence of racial stereotypes and giving their wearers an outsize, fanciful, and transcendent presence," the museum adds.

"I'm multi-dimensional — I'm interested in all of these variables and in understanding their place within the context of the work," Cave said of his broader creative output in a 2013 Artspace

interview. 'It's a lot of juggling, but for me it's really about bringing all of that together and finding harmony and balance."

A practiced educator who now teaches at the Art Institute of Chicago, Cave's perspective is a perfect fit for the Westminster setting.

"As a professor, I feel that the most important thing is to make sure that students get a full-circle experience, and that they leave school knowing how to trust themselves," he told Artspace.

"An Evening with Nick Cave" takes place as part of the symposium at 7 p.m. Sept 14.

Other speakers of interest

The Hancock Symposium lineup features speakers in a wide variety of fields, including law, business, technology, medicine and education.

Other speakers of interest include former Kansas City Chiefs, San Francisco 49ers and Atlanta Falcons assistant coach Katie Sowers, both the first woman and first openly gay person to coach in the Super Bowl.

Former Missouri Gov. Jay Nixon, who held the office from 2009 to 2017, is part of this year's lineup. And from the entertainment world, former Westminster faculty member Colleen O'Brien will appear. O'Brien has published fiction and poetry books, and recently worked on the TV adaptation of Emily St. John Mandel's novel "Station Eleven," a past Daniel Boone Regional Library One Read.

Ragtag, EquipmentShare, VU all represented

Several other breakout and workshop speakers figure to interest mid-Missourians.

Among them: Ragtag Film Society co-custodian Barbie Banks; EquipmentShare CEO and co-founder Jabbok Schlacks; Veterans United Diversity and Inclusion Program Manager Secily Devese; and well-regarded Columbia artist and jeweler Kenny Greene — who will also moderate the Nick Cave event.

For more information and a full symposium schedule,
visit https://www.wcmo.edu/symposium/general/index.html.

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Art

A “Fantastic” New Show Celebrates the Black Diaspora with Myth and Magic

Emi Eleode

Aug 5, 2022 4:13PM

Installation view of works by Nick Cave in “In the Black Fantastic” at Hayward Gallery, 2022. Photo by Zeinab Batchelor. Courtesy of Hayward Gallery.

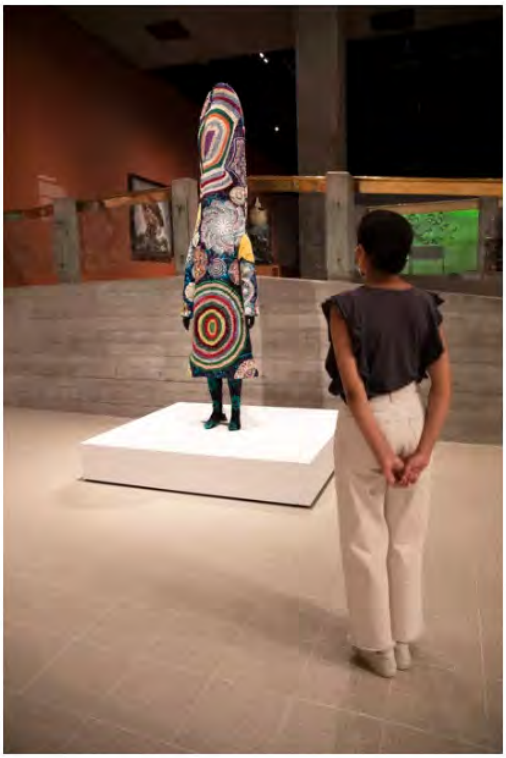
In the Hayward Gallery exhibition “In the Black Fantastic,” Nick Cave’s powerful, newly commissioned installation takes center stage. The piece, entitled Chain Reaction, features hundreds of black cast-plaster arms—shaped from the artist’s own—joined together like chains. The hands grip each other as though trying to lift one another up. The installation touches on one of the show’s major themes: the legacy of slavery and colonialism.

Curated by Ekow Eshun, the exhibition features works by 11 artists: Nick Cave, Hew Locke, Kara Walker, Lina Iris Viktor, Chris Ofili, Rashaad Newsome, Wangechi Mutu, Sedrick Chisom, Cauleen Smith, Tabita Rezaire, and Ellen Gallagher. This is the U.K.'s first major presentation dedicated to the work of Black artists across the diaspora who use spirituality, myth, science fiction, and Afrofuturism to suggest utopian possibilities.

The show also reflects challenges in our contemporary world, addressing racial injustice and issues of identity. "In the Black Fantastic" departs from a Western-centric perspective in order to explore Black autonomy and experience.

Eshun has cleverly divided the exhibition into separate rooms so that each artist exhibits within their own space; this makes it easier for the viewer to appreciate the individual artists, then analyze the cumulative power of the show as a whole.

Textiles feature prominently throughout. Some artists use diamanté (jeweled decoration), and Swarovski crystals glitter in the work of Rashaad Newsome. Multimedia pieces alternately feature wood, faux fur, beads, gold leaf, and sequins. These exuberant materials add a sense of vibrant diversity to the show, which also features painting, sculpture, video, mixed-media installation, and photography.



Nick Cave, installation view of *Soundsuit*, 2010, in "In the Black Fantastic" at Hayward Gallery, 2022. Photo by Zeinab Batchelor. Courtesy of Hayward Gallery.

Nick Cave, *Soundsuit*, 2014. © Nick Cave. Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.

In addition to showing Chain Reaction, Nick Cave also exhibits his famously colorful, bejeweled “Soundsuits,” which he makes with fabrics, embroidery, raffia, sequins, beads, and more. One features a West African masquerade look; it resembles a masked dancer with an elongated neck. Another comprises piles of knitted fabrics. Yet another looks like it hailed from the science-fiction realm, given its similarities to a suit that one might wear into space. Each Soundsuit is wearable and life-size.

Cave began making these costumes 30 years ago in response to the brutal beating of Rodney King by Los Angeles Police Department officers, which sparked the 1992 Los Angeles riots. The artist views the Soundsuits as bodily disguises and forms of armor that offer protection in a racialized society. Cave has also made a new Soundsuit that commemorates the murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police. Despite their tragic inspirations, the works embrace ambiguity. They conceal the identity, race, and gender of their wearers with exuberant adornment.

AnOther

In the Black Fantastic: Nick Cave & Ekow Eshun in Conversation

Ekow Eshun, curator of In the Black Fantastic at the Hayward Gallery, talks with Chicago-based artist Nick Cave talk about his iconic Soundsuits, privileging a Black gaze, and the power of fantasy and dreaming in the face of injustice

In the Black Fantastic, the new exhibition at the Hayward Gallery, presents ways of seeing, inhabiting and re-imagining the world through the eyes of 11 contemporary Black artists. Curated by Ekow Eshun, works by trailblazing artists like Kara Walker, Chris Ofili and Wangechi Mutu are on show alongside art by rising stars including Tabita Rezaire and Sedrick Chisom. Each artist in the show interprets the everyday realities of Blackness in a mode that is deemed fantastical, whether through engagement with literature and world-building, the consideration of mythology and colonialism, or the response to canons of western art history. With media ranging from animation and film to painting, sculpture and installation, In the Black Fantastic takes the viewer on a journey that begins with the work of Chicago-based artist, Nick Cave.

Four of Cave's iconic Soundsuits – wearable sculptures made of a host of dazzling found objects like buttons, sequins, artificial flowers and stuffed animals – are on show. They resemble the masquerades of West African cultures, such as egúngún of Yorubaland, Nigeria, but in the context of Cave's work, they are rooted in an event more sinister than their vibrant appearance suggests. Cave's first ever Soundsuit, made in 1991, was a response to the beating of Rodney King by members of the LAPD, while the most recent suit included in the show was made 30

years later in response to the murder of George Floyd – yet another act of police brutality against an African-American man.

Cave explains, "I go back to this question of 'What do we do to protect our spirits?' The one thing that I know that cannot be taken from us is dreaming." The Soundsuits act as both cocoon and armour, eliminating the race, gender, and all other physical attributes of the person within it in a manner that is both spectacular and otherworldly.

Eshun conceived of In the Black Fantastic well before the murder of George Floyd and the subsequent resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement in 2020 – but, despite the times, Eshun explains that this conversation has been going on for centuries, with generations of Black artists using fantasy and dreaming as a way to rise above an everyday, racialised reality. Cave's new installation, Chain Reaction, speaks to this action; a curtain of repeated forearms are linked together by their fingertips, spanning the height of the gallery to represent a collective rising up against forms of oppression.

In the following conversation, Eshun and Cave discuss In the Black Fantastic as a space that is frightening, harsh and painful, while also being a space of optimism, hope and dreaming.

Alayo Akinkugbe: Ekow, you've described how the artists in this show all present "new ways of seeing, new forms of possibility and new ways of being in the world for Black people". They all depart from an awareness that 'race itself is a fiction', yet it affects how we all live our lives. How is this idea of the 'Black Fantastic' manifested in Nick Cave's work?

Nick Cave: When I think about the 'Black Fantastic', I go back to this question of, 'What do we do to protect our spirits?' The one thing that I know that cannot be taken from us is dreaming. We have always dreamt of what we strive to get to. It's something that is contained, concealed, and private. We always have that one element within ourselves that we hold on to, for dear life, because that is the one thing that we use in order to move ourselves into a space of possibility.

Ekow Eshun: That's a great way to describe it. Obviously, one of the things that makes your Soundsuits so magical, so, fantastical as works, is that they're not about a retreat or an escape from reality. They're an assertion of interiority as a place of richness and possibility. They strike such a chord because you look at them and understand that they aren't decorative, they are assertions of space, and of being and dreaming, as you say.

NC: They are a pushback on the constant assault. We always have to come up with ways to position ourselves and armour ourselves in order to navigate ourselves.

EE: Your artworks invite and insist upon further inquiry. The more you engage with them, the more they give you back the truth. That's one of the ways that we can get through because, as you say, the assault is absolutely real. It's physical and psychological. It's every single day.

NC: I was telling someone recently that even if I go out to wave down a cab, I am thinking about whether or not I'm going to get one right away. So, psychologically, I'm already putting myself in this state of mind of what is possible.

EE: If I had an ambition with the show, it was to create the space that people could be within. It's called In the Black Fantastic. You enter the space, you see the world through the eyes of one artist, and then another artist, and yet further artists. Every single one of these spaces privileges a Black gaze and is about what our dreaming looks like.

NC: And the fact that you've opened the show up with Chain Reaction! At the end of the day, when I think about this show, we are all linked together.

EE: When I look at that piece, Chain Reaction, it has this sense of reaching up, but I'm always struck by the precariousness of the hand hold between these arm pieces. They're holding on by their fingertips and some of these arms have fallen into the ground. It's an extraordinary piece. And you can see people walk into the Hayward Gallery and they take a breath, and stop to get over the threshold.

AA: Ekow, what was it about Nick's work that compelled you to put it in the first room of the show? It's had a huge impact on visitors.

EE: I think it's the capacity for the work to speak so patiently and eloquently about all sorts of sorrow and beauty simultaneously. We walk through the doors of the exhibition, and we're already somewhere that's removed from where we were. We're in a space where we can anticipate encounters that are exciting and exhilarating. I started the show with these works because they took my breath away, and I think they do that with other people.

NC: When I think about Chain Reaction, it's about us being joined together in unity and in the struggle. Sometimes that joining together appears to be fragile, but we do not disconnect. In the Black Fantastic is the town hall. It's really bringing people into that space and saying: 'Let's have a meeting with the visual as a starting point.'

EE: I love this idea of a town hall. There are a bunch of people who've been back to the show, two, three or more times, because they just want to be around the artworks and they want to be in the space.

AA: The newest Soundsuit in the exhibition was made in response to the murder of George Floyd. Nick, you've made over 500 Soundsuits, and the first in the series was in response to the beating of Rodney King by the LAPD in 1991. Witnessing the aftermath of yet another sickening act of police brutality, nearly 30 years later, must really put things into perspective.

NC: The interesting thing that happened is that I had this awakening moment where it all became very clear to me that my work, up to that moment, had always been in response to. At that moment, everything shifted. I realised that for the last three and a half decades, I have been doing work in response to injustice that has been based in racism and inequality. All of a sudden, I thought, 'no more.'

When something of this sort happens, I will insert that moment into the work at that given time. But I have other ways in which I want to think about my practice. It has opened up this space for me to think very differently. However, I assure you that any confrontation, any conflict will be inserted into the work at any given moment. I'm very much about this whole new projection, but with [my] eyes wide open to a moment of disruption.

AA: What does this tell us about the timeliness of In the Black Fantastic, Ekow, which I believe you had already conceived of before the murder of George Floyd and subsequent resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement?

EE: I'd first conceived of the show about four years ago. So yes, before the recent upsurge. Artists have been making this kind of work for years upon years and I wanted to create a space of opportunities for people to catch up with that. But also, to recognise that we can look at each of these artists individually and their work is powerful and moving. But, when we look at them collectively, there's a conversation in one form or another that is taking place.

I could have done the show four years ago or four years hence. It remains timely because the conditions under which these artists are working have an ongoing history and dialogue of oppression. The other thing that remains the same, as Nick says, is that artists will always find a way to speak to possibility, to dreaming, to ambition, wonder, desire, beauty, and any of these criteria across visual art, music and literature. These are the ways we've got through.

AA: What message do you hope will be taken away from In the Black Fantastic, and what impact do you hope that it will have on art history?

NC: I'm so honoured to be with all of these amazing artists. The extraordinary thing for me is that I'm not even there, yet I feel that I can walk through that show and leave very much in tune with a belief. I'm just excited to be a part of that and to be the introduction to this amazing moment. Ekow, I just want to thank you again. We need these curators of colour to establish a position, and to be the voice to unite us as artists collectively, as we forge forward.

EE: Thank you very much, Nick. I describe the idea of the 'Black Fantastic' ultimately as a way of seeing. That's the thing that hopefully people take away. What happens when you look through the eyes of all the artists in the show? You recognise the world is complex and beautiful and really strange and historically freighted.

Certainly, that's what I do when I look at a Soundsuit or I'm looking at Chain Reaction. It's amazing to feel something aesthetically, intellectually and spiritually, in relation to these works. It's an extraordinary thing to be able to hold space in the way that your works do, Nick.

NC: Thank you.

In the Black Fantastic is on show at the Hayward Gallery until 18 September 2022.

The New York Times

Stepping Into the Expansive Worlds of Black Imagination

The curator of "In the Black Fantastic" at London's Hayward Gallery describes it as a "feel-good show about death," which also looks beyond Afrofuturism.

By Charlotte Jansen

Published Aug. 4, 2022 Updated Aug. 18, 2022

LONDON — In a sedate northwest suburb of London, in the 1970s, Ekow Eshun and his brother spent their free time in their bedroom, poring over Marvel Comics. Among their favorites were the X-Men, relaunched in 1975 as a racially diverse team of mutants.

Elsewhere in visual culture, not to mention on the streets of London, "our presence as Black people in Britain was treated with skepticism and hostility," Eshun, now 54 and a curator and writer, said in a recent phone interview.

In the fantastical universe of these superheroes, Eshun — whose parents are Ghanaian — found not escape, but a way to rationalize his experiences. "I never got over the strangeness of a racialized society that defines people of color as inferior — that is a science-fictional state," he said.

Exploring alternative worlds as a way of understanding one's own is at the heart of "In the Black Fantastic," an exhibition curated by Eshun that is currently on view at London's Hayward Gallery. The show brings together a taut selection of work from established artists from the African diaspora, all born between 1959 and 1989, presented as episodic solo presentations that unfold like a labyrinth of varied environments.

The first of these is a series of dazzling works by Nick Cave responding to acts of violence in the United States. It includes a collection of Cave's "Soundsuits," the full-body costumes he began making in 1992 after seeing televised footage of the police beating of Rodney King. The

The New York Times

exhibit's "Soundsuit 9:29" is a new ensemble dedicated to George Floyd (the title is a reference to the length of time the former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin knelt on Floyd's neck). Majestic in scale and exquisitely crafted, the Soundsuits contend with being both hypervisible and unseen — particularly as a Black person in any white-dominant society.

In the first room of the exhibition, a new commission from Nick Cave, "Chain Reaction," left, shares space with examples of his "Soundsuits." Zeinab Batchelor, via Hayward Gallery

Ekow Eshun, the show's creator, sees the Black Fantastic as "a way of seeing shared by artists conjuring new visions of Black possibility." Zeinab Batchelor

Cave's "Soundsuit 9:29" is a new ensemble dedicated to George Floyd. via Hayward Gallery

The New York Times

Cutting through Cave's space is a dramatic new commission titled "Chain Reaction." Extending from ceiling to floor, chains of black resin casts of Cave's forearm grasp on to one another, fragments connecting to create a feeling of wholeness, which reverberates throughout the rest of the exhibition.

From Cave's works, the exhibition extends over two more floors and across 10 more artists' imaginations. Ralph Rugoff, the Hayward's director, called "In the Black Fantastic" a "landmark" exhibition, one that brings together artists under this umbrella for the first time in Britain. Eshun shied away from calling the Black Fantastic a movement, defining it as "a way of seeing shared by artists conjuring new visions of Black possibility." But the exhibition still heralds a new chapter in the ways contemporary art approaches race and culture.

It is poignant that such a statement is being made in London, a city that was once the engine of Britain's slave trade and its colonial rule of African countries, and one that is still reckoning with that legacy. Hew Locke, another artist featured in the exhibition, said "you couldn't have done a show like this, here, 20 years ago."

NEWCITYART
Visual Art Culture of Chicago and Beyond

Immersive Delight: In Nick Cave's First Retrospective, the Artist Dares Us to Dream

JULY 27, 2022 AT 7:00 AM BY MEGAN BICKEL

"Nick Cave: Forothermore," installation view, MCA Chicago. May 14–October 2, 2022/Photo: Nathan Keay © MCA Chicago.

Upon entry to the fourth floor of The Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago's "Forothermore," Nick Cave's "Spinner Forest" (2022) greets the viewer with thousands of reflective, metallic and glistening spinners. "Wind spinners" that hang over porches and yards throughout the Midwest have been augmented to include shapes of Cave's design. Spinning in concentric circles, repeating polygons rotate in the sunlight; upon closer look, they contain symbols—pictograms—including guns, smiley faces, hands folded into peace signs, daisies and psychedelic ephemera.

“Spinner Forest” is a rendition of an installation of Cave’s that was first compiled for “Nick Cave: Until,” which appeared at Carriageworks in Sydney, Australia. at MASS MoCA in 2018 and at The Momentary (2020-21), a contemporary art space in Bentonville, Arkansas. In “Spinner Forest,” Cave successfully renders a fantastical space that is playful and visually intriguing, and without hesitation dives into questions such as, “Is there racism in heaven?” This question was one that Cave asked himself throughout the process of making “Spinner Forest.” It is a turn on the phrase, “Innocent until proven guilty,” or, in this case, “guilty until proven innocent.” The phrase probes the complex issues of race, gun violence, racial profiling and gender politics that divide the United States, and the extension of these complex subjects in communities around the world. “Spinner Forest” conditions the viewer to be receptive to the construction of dialogue about violence and systemic injustice side-by-side with imaginative and utopian methodologies for the creation of solutions.

“Forothermore” is Cave’s first retrospective. The Chicago artist, known for both his community-oriented projects and his visionary, multidisciplinary work, has appropriated the kitschy plastic and reflective spinners found outside the homes of many working-class people in an effort to ask serious questions about gun violence and racial profiling while insuring a grand sense of play, delight and approachability.

Proceeding into the first gallery, the viewer is greeted by a dazzling display of Cave’s “Soundsuits” and “Beaded Cliff Wall” (2016), a massive wall covering made of millions of pony beads threaded onto shoelaces, then tied together in a grid formation by hand. However, the “Soundsuits” are most notably Nick Cave-ian. They stand virile and vital. At a minimum of eight-and-a-half feet tall, they are a myriad of towering figures seemingly made of plastic flowers, thousands and thousands of beads and buttons, yard statues and sock monkeys and other items. Cave’s “Soundsuits” appeared magnetic the first time I stumbled across them in “Nick Cave: Meet Me at the Center of the Earth” at the Cincinnati Art Museum in 2012. The Soundsuits seemed to represent working-class glitz and glamour. The dime-store materials, juxtaposed with handmade crocheted patterns, when combined on this nine-foot-tall armature, felt combative yet loving and approachable. They were the suits for a utopian army somewhere in the future that militarized compassion, praise and collaboration, where weaponized dance resolved people of their ill will and reactionary maneuvers. The “Soundsuits” are icons with which to project our fantasies of better worlds. They are so utterly imaginative, that restraining my desire to imagine the absolute best-case scenario is both unnecessary and unmotivating. In the presence of “Soundsuits,” I am willing to imagine total safety and freedom.

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"Nick Cave: Forothermore," installation view, MCA Chicago. May 14–October 2, 2022/Photo: Nathan Keay © MCA Chicago.

Upon the raised platform with the first "Soundsuits" is a large printed graphic running both along the base of the wall and along the side edge of the platform, reading: "if you wanna march about it you've gotta talk about it." The text begins in clearly formed letters that are dragged across the platform, creating a type of barcode across the stage on which a collection of "Soundsuits" is situated. The text feels like a misstep, for it implies that LGBTQIA+ and Black activist communities haven't been discussing state-sanctioned violence in open forums for over a century in the Americas. Nevertheless, I prefer to believe that this phrase gestures toward institutionalized politeness that so often overpowers art that critiques systemic structures such as societal bias and carceral systems. Perhaps "if you wanna march about it you've gotta talk about it" is Cave's reminder to the museum, and the visitor, to actively protest injustice and participate in the labor that is needed to correct it.

Nevertheless, the "Soundsuits" demonstrate pride and power and joy and hold a palpable contempt for their need to exist in the first place. They are made to disguise the body wearing it. Cave has said that the suit becomes a shield for the wearer, a form of razzle-dazzle camouflage—a protective barrier shielding bodies that consistently feel othered from the gaze of those who persecute.

NEWCITYART
Visual Art Culture of Chicago and Beyond

"Nick Cave: Forothermore" is both an ode to those who, whether due to racism, homophobia, or other forms of bigotry, live their lives as the "other"—and a celebration of the way art, music, fashion and performance can help us envision a more just future.

"Nick Cave: Forothermore," installation view, MCA Chicago. May 14–October 2, 2022/Photo: Nathan Keay, © MCA Chicago.

Naomi Beckwith, the exhibition's curator and former MCA senior curator who recently moved to the Guggenheim, did a magnificent job of welcoming the viewer into Cave's joy in collaborating and organizing, while pulling them into the depths of his navigation of reclaimed materials, finding hope in discarded materials, and the potential of reimagining with that which we already possess. In this process, the viewer witnesses a tremendous amount of personal and historical grief, loss and a memorial. Upon exiting the first room of the installation, a wall text reads:

> What is truly valuable in a culture of excess? Our society produces an abundance of objects: sometimes rare and handmade, but often cheap and easily replaceable. In wealthy societies, most consumer goods ultimately end up in the trash heap of history.

> Cave plays with the way we value some items over others, collecting discarded and 'useless' objects—plastic trinkets, flea-market finds, kitschy decorations—and, with the skill of a couturier, giving them a second life as dazzling art objects. Creative reuse is a
>
> way for Cave to make not only a visual statement but also an ethical one: if we can transform junk into art, the world is abundant with potential value.

Though the statement willfully engages in classist perspectives by implying there are universally true understandings of what objects have value and to whom, the statement still manages to pose an important question that Cave consistently employs. Cave uses his myriad of flea-market finds as a metaphor for asking the audience who they value and why—by forcing them to ask themselves what objects they value and why. The statement integrates consumerism into the questions about race, queerness and class that are core to Cave's work. Questions such as how can circumventing consumerist tendencies revitalize what we prioritize or value as a society? How do our things define us? How do they unite us? And how will they isolate or unite communities that are trying to grow, develop and take care of one another—in the way that Cave is interested in?

"Nick Cave: Forothermore," installation view, MCA Chicago. May 14–October 2, 2022/Photo: Nathan Keay © MCA Chicago.

Then we come to “Speak Louder” (2011). The work is composed of seven “Soundsuits” committed to one another with an extension of fabric that unifies them into a singular body. Rather than tower over the viewer, their tops consist of round flat plateresque shapes, that later, upon seeing the use of the gramophones in “Platform” (2018), read as loudspeakers—reverberating the need to scream to be heard. “Speak Louder,” made of black mother-of-pearl buttons with other upholstery and armature details, projects an assemblage of unity and volume—both with regard to weight and sound metrics.

Installation view, "Nick Cave: Forothermore," MCA Chicago. May 14–October 2, 2022/Photo: Nathan Keay, © MCA Chicago.

As the first half of the exhibition served as a shuttle into an imaginative future, the second half pulls us into the patterned and diverse experiences of personal and social grief that are held by Cave. It serves as an evocative reminder of where all that hope comes from.

“Platform” is a fairly condensed installation compared to previous iterations; when it was displayed during “As It Was and Still Is” at Jack Shainman Gallery in New York City, the installation took up most of a large gallery. Here it is condensed into a dire diorama; we see four large gramophones, chains of bronze (and blackened) hands, Black heads, pillows and wood-carved eagles. The installation evokes Jim Crow tropes by placing Americana objects, the wood-carved bald eagles, in proximity to anguished Black faces. Black hands are suspended,

forming a chain of hand-holding that allows them to hang off of one another—creating a chain link of interwoven hands. It evokes the horror of American romanticism and how it has consistently proved violent to Black bodies, and the enduring strength of community and support structures that have been built in spite of that violence. It is brutish and it is tender.

"Nick Cave: Forothermore," installation view, MCA Chicago, May 14–October 2, 2022/Photo: Nathan Keay © MCA Chicago.

"Truss" (1999), one of the oldest pieces in the retrospective, serves as a memorial in every sense of the word. As with many of Cave's early works,"Truss" commemorates a personal loss; it is a memorialization of a friend of Cave's who died as a result of an AIDS-related illness. Many, many used, distressed, ruined and discarded work gloves are encased in golden-amber resin and installed within a metal armature. This is a memorial, but it also feels like a promise toward an unknown, better end. The inclusion of this work, sectioned off on its own, feels intimate and meandering. It's private, dark. Yet it reminds us why joy, earnest love, tried and true collaboration and working-together-ness is so very important. Those we have lost deserved better in the first place.

"Nick Cave: Forothermore" is on view at the MCA, 220 East Chicago, through October 2.

Artist Nick Cave.

FROM THE MAGAZINE

Artist Nick Cave Takes Chicago

by Laura van Straaten
Photography by Luis Alberto Rodriguez
Styled by Allia Alliata di Montereale

You would be forgiven for thinking that the calm, confident man juggling the mayhem of the photo shoot for this story was a fashion designer used to running a major house. Holding a safety pin between his teeth, he calls for a “smoky eye, with some magenta” here and “a shoe, not a boot” there; helps a model squeeze her head through the neck of a delicately woven top; and later zhuzhes another model’s hair into a faux-hawk before placing him in a rakish pose as the photographer clicks away.

But all that vision and creative direction is coming from the artist Nick Cave, who, beginning this month, is being honored across his adopted city of Chicago with several solo museum shows, and is producing an array of vibrant performances that pay tribute to the music and dance forms he’s long loved. Cave’s first career-spanning retrospective, “Forothermore,” opens at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago (MCA) on May 14, and will travel to the Guggenheim Museum in New York in November. Starting May 21, there will be a series of “performative fashion experiences,” titled “The Color Is,” at the DuSable Museum of African American History; then the DuSable will premiere, on August 25, a fashion-oriented exhibition by the same name that includes a selection of the garments and accessories Cave and his collaborators are creating for performers to wear. Finally, in Chicago’s River North neighborhood, the public art program Art on theMART will screen Cave’s 2011 film, Drive-By, remixed with new footage, on the facade of a commercial building.

All these events add up to more than just a celebration of the 63-year-old artist. They are also a coming-out of sorts for the two most important men in his life: Jack Cave, his brother; and Bob Faust, his romantic partner of more than a decade, and his creative partner for years before that. Faust collaborates with Cave on many elements of the artist’s exhibitions and performances, from books to textiles to exhibition design; Jack, after decades in graphic design, has recently returned to fashion and product design. “To be able to create these amazing platforms for me to work with my partner and my brother, with so much love, compassion, and openness between us, is really what it’s about,” Cave says. “It’s powerful. And for the work to move us all forward as a society, it’s better and much more fun when you have all that.”

Faust, 55, welcomes me on the morning of the W shoot at Facility, a 1920s factory he and Cave turned into expansive studios and living quarters for themselves and Faust’s daughter, Lulu, now 19. In a separate area, there is a work-live space for Jack, 64. At Cave’s request, the shoot will include a mix of professional models and Chicagoans who have made this year’s exhibitions and performances possible: There’s MCA’s director, Madeleine Grynsztejn; the DuSable’s curator, Danny Dunson; choreographer William Gill; and a dozen other friends, family members, art fabricators, and museum benefactors.

As everyone starts to trickle in, Nick, Jack, and Bob are still hard at work across a warren of workspaces, aided by nearly 20 assistants who are putting the finishing touches on new work for the MCA exhibition and the garments for the programs at the DuSable. In one room, a group weaves one of Cave’s large, round wall works known as tondos. This one is covered with colored wires in pinks, purples, greens, and golds that catch the light and suggest the movement of long grasses in the wind. Behind the wires is a beaded pattern evoking a bull’s-eye, a common motif in Cave’s work that he says represents “brain scans of youth who live in areas where gun violence and catastrophic weather patterns collide.”

The tondo, the largest he’s ever made, at 12 feet in diameter, will be one of two in the MCA exhibition, shown alongside seminal examples of Cave’s work, including his famous and influential Soundsuits: wearable, full-body armor he has fashioned from all manner of natural, handmade, and commercially produced materials, from vibrantly colored synthetic hair extensions to bead-encrusted crochet. Cave created his first Soundsuits in the wake of the LAPD beating of Rodney King, in 1991, as an investigation into garments that could hide race, class, and gender. Speak Louder—a piece included in the MCA show—comprises seven connected, button-laden Soundsuits with heads shaped like sousaphone-esque bells, which, as the exhibition’s curator, Naomi Beckwith, puts it, “evoke music, and yet the bells are covered and muted, so that the title implies a contradiction, maybe even a command.” Cave explains: “It’s the implication of what’s not being said,” namely how “we, as people of color, have been in this outcry for

a long time around police, and the injustice around that level of brutality. At the end of the day, my practice lies within art as a vehicle for change, and I've always been very responsible about my role and how I can help shift and make things more inclusive."

Standing, from left: Artist Lucy Slivinski, fashion design student Phoebe Heng, Jack Cave's assistant Jay Fernandez, collector Larry Fields, metal sculptor Elizabeth Fiersten, photographer James Prinz, designer and model Isaac Couch, Room 1520 owner and director Celeste Campise Hamilton, musician Andrew Jacob Bertholf, model César F. Benavente Oblitas, collector Marilyn Fields, metal sculptor Ross Fiersten, DuSable curator Danny Dunson, choreographer William Gill, collector and MCA benefactor Jennifer Litowitz. *Seated, from left:* Musician Kahil El'Zabar, Jack Cave collaborator Noah Taylor, Lulu Faust, Jack Cave, Nick Cave, Bob Faust (holding Bam-Bam), Pritzker Director of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago Madeleine Grynsztejn, executive Linda Johnson Rice, School of the Art Institute of Chicago professor Romi Crawford, director Claude-Aline Miller, collector Alec Litowitz.

Cave often turns the performances he produces into collaborations between institutions and communities. The MCA is just steps from the retail corridor known as the Magnificent Mile, on Chicago's affluent North Side, and has a revenue of more than seven times that of the DuSable, which is sited on the city's predominantly Black South Side and was formerly known as the Ebony Museum of Negro History and Art. Dunson, the DuSable curator, distinguishes the two institutions this way: "MCA's lens is contemporary art, but art is just one of the lenses the DuSable uses to look specifically at the histories of Black people, including in the community where we're located, and to meet the needs of and uplift its people."

Making garments for the DuSable performances and exhibition offered Nick and Jack a natural opportunity to work together. "We've been talking about fashion for decades," Cave says. Growing up in the 1960s and '70s in central Missouri, smack between Kansas City and St. Louis, Nick and Jack stood out from their four younger brothers, who were "regular guys," as Cave puts it. "We wished we had a sister, so we could dress her," Jack jokes. Their mother, Sharron, brought Nick and Jack to the storied Ebony Fashion Fair when it came to Missouri. "That's how the Black community was able to connect with couture: through Ebony magazine and this Ebony fashion show that traveled around America," Cave says. As a teenager, Jack made clothes for a local store; in the 1990s, he designed clothing that was sold at 30 boutiques around the country. Both brothers attended the Kansas City Art Institute, where they collaborated on their first fashion performance, which featured an all-Black local drill team called the Marching Cobras. ("That was a spectacle, honey!" Cave says.) After a stint designing the windows of the Kansas City outpost of Macy's, Nick chose the fine art route, earning an MFA from Cranbrook Academy

of Art in 1989. Both brothers currently teach in the fashion department at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

From top: Nathan Hoyle (a studio assistant) and Jasper Drummond (Nick Cave's former graduate student) wear his crocheted and beaded tops, with pants featuring patterns designed by Bob Faust, incorporating motifs from Cave's work.

Back at Facility, Jack brings his creations from his studio to his brother's just before the W shoot. "I am doing my own thing, and he is doing his own thing," Jack says. "It's funny—I can see similarities without our sitting down and having this big conversation about it." Faust and the family dog, Bam-Bam, look on as Jack considers his garments alongside his brother's. Jack's are mostly woven in gray and black wool against clear, white, and traffic cone orange silicone, vinyl, and PVC. The open weave recalls the granny-style crochet Cave often uses in his Soundsuits, but in Jack's designs, the effect is Knights of the Round Table chain mail meets 1980s punk. "It comes off as a protective shield," Jack says, holding a tunic up to the midday light, "but with a sensitivity about it that I think comes from the transparency." That preoccupation with protection is more palpable in the oversize bags Jack has designed, with handles that fit the hand like brass knuckles—a fighting tool to help the wearer literally pack a punch. Jack's bags brandish messages like i matter motherfucker, delicately laser-cut in gray wool. "There was a shift when I saw what happened with George Floyd," he says. "I had never stood in the light, my light, as an African-American."

For the performance aspect of "The Color Is," which will feature choreography by William Gill and 80 people in head-to-toe looks designed by the brothers, a key source of inspiration is the Emerald City scene from The Wiz, the 1978 Motown musical film based on The Wizard of Oz. "That whole procession is so fabulous, stimulating, magical," Cave says. He is thrilled that Patti LaBelle and Nona Hendryx, of the band Labelle, best known for their 1974 hit "Lady Marmalade," have signed on to be part of the first performance. Labelle was the most "critical," Cave says, of the cadre of funk musicians, including George Clinton, the Brides of Funkenstein, and Bootsy Collins, who were important to his development as an

artist. “Before I came out, as a young person, I was rebellious through dress,” Cave recalls. When he first saw Labelle, as a teen, “I finally realized that I’m not alone: There is a universe that I can relate to, and that set the foundation for this level of expression,” he says, gesturing to the hive of creative activity around him.

The exuberance that he found through Labelle’s music early in his life, and later, in the 1980s, through dancing to the house music that emerged at Chicago’s underground clubs—“House music saved my fucking life!” Cave is fond of saying—is still of paramount importance to Cave. Although the catalog Faust designed for the MCA exhibition is bookended by a long list of BIPOC killed by police, Beckwith stresses that Cave doesn’t want “violence, absence, loss, and mourning” to consume him or his art practice. “Much of Nick’s work is born of trauma,” Beckwith tells me. “But the reaction to trauma isn’t just death, but often, an insistence on more life, and more beauty.” So, she continues, “there are ways in which the excess of the celebration is actually the antidote to the huge traumatic violence,” and “oftentimes it does come in the form of the party, the processional, the dancing, the music.”

Cave, Faust, and Jack seat themselves amid the models, collaborators, and supporters they have invited. Cave has decided to adorn the group with some of the welded metal armatures that structure his Soundsuits. It’s been months or, in some cases, years since many of them have been in a crowd of fellow creatives like this. Everyone’s keyed up, antsy. A photographer’s assistant calls out for music, and after some doing, the sounds of Labelle come from a tiny speaker. Shoulders soften. People lean into one another. Hips sway. Cave smiles at his big brother, and then finds Faust’s fingers with his own. Almost imperceptibly, the group begins to groove.

From left: Lulu Faust, in a **Celine** jacket and sneakers; Jack Cave, in a **Balenciaga** turtleneck and pants; Nick Cave, in an **Homme Plissé Issey Miyake** top; and Bob Faust.

By John Vincler
Published May 16, 2022
Updated May 17, 2022

For an artist best known for “Soundsuits” that produce a variety of percussive effects when worn, Nick Cave’s public project, “Each One, Every One, Equal All,” has found a fittingly noisy home in the New York subway.

Earlier this month, during a preview of the completed project, a saxophone reverberated through the tunnels of the Times Square and 42 Street subway station, its sound almost overcome by the surging clatter and roar of trains. Here the artist’s wearable works, which fuse dance to sculpture, have been dramatically rendered into mosaic tiles across nearly 4,600 square feet, throughout three neighboring underground sites — the first phase was finished last year — making this the largest such project completed to date in the New York City Transit system. (It was commissioned by MTA Arts & Design.)

I’ll admit I was initially skeptical how Cave’s wearable sculptures could effectively translate into mosaic glass. I once heard Cave tick off the inspirations for a suit by saying he was thinking of the shapes of a mitre (as a Bishop might wear), a condom, and a klansman’s robe — disparate sources that suggest devotion and power, sex and care, hatred and terror. He has a knack for combining the quirky and the mundane, the painful and ugly, and rendering something joyful and beautiful on the other side.

Cave’s Soundsuits share the strangely relatable, friendly-monster energy of Jim Henson’s Muppets, if the puppets had been influenced by the traditions of African dance, ball culture, and New Orleans carnival. The variety of their textures and materials account for much of their power — from airy faux fur in a rainbow of colors to coats of thwacking porcupine-esque brown twigs. This range of plumage and their shifting visual and aural characteristics are partly why the Soundsuits remain interesting after 30 years and several hundreds of examples later. In the subway project, fur, sticks, hair extensions, sequins,

buttons, embroidery, festive masks, and even birds and flowers are marvelously and convincingly realized through the glasswork fabricated by Franz Mayer of Munich.

This marks a big moment for Nick Cave's three-dimensional work to appear in two-dimensional urban public space. The unveiling at the Times Square-42nd Street station debuts nearly concurrently with a major presentation of Cave's work in his Chicago hometown. Video of a choreographed performance of his Soundsuits will illuminate the 2.5-acre facade of the building formerly known as the Merchandise Mart (now known as "the MART"), which sits prominently across the Chicago river from the downtown loop. Also on May 14, the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, opened "Nick Cave: Forothermore," his first career retrospective.

Near the Times Square Shuttle platform, Nick Cave created one of the two new installations, "Equal All" — a mosaic aviary with porcelain birds, and a cat-headed Soundsuit as a central figure. Amr Alfiky for The New York Times

"Bunny Boy," featured in Nick Cave's 2012 video piece, reappears in tile "Equal All" installation near the Times Square Shuttle. Amr Alfiky for The New York Times

In New York, it's best to begin the underground show with "Every One," the largest and first completed phase of the project, which opened in September 2021. Enter at the 42nd Street—Bryant Park/Fifth Avenue Station and travel to the B, D, F and M train platforms deep within to reach the new pedestrian tunnel to the Shuttle at Times Square. As you move up the stairway to the connector, Cave's figures come into view before and above you.

A clever trick of perspective collapses the space between the walkway and Cave's procession on the wall to the right. While most figures are rendered at human scale, a few of the more than two dozen are enlarged, so that they seem to invade your space, as if you are brushing up against a fellow commuter in your peripheral vision. In one extreme example, a fragment of a torso, just below outstretched arms, stretches across some 20 feet. Midway through the corridor, the procession is interrupted by a set of screens that every quarter-hour plays a 3-minute video work showing the movements of dancers wearing the tiled Soundsuits on adjacent walls.

I used to work in Midtown and frequently took the Shuttle, but haven't been back in years. The platform was unrecognizable to me, a vast improvement, with art where previously I only recall I-beams of

corroded steel. Moving toward the exit under One Times Square, “Equal All” presents a regiment of figures standing in ordered bays, composing a life-size catalog of some of Cave’s most notable sculptures translated into tilework, like a feathered fur bullseye-face atop a body covered entirely with ivory-colored buttons with red thread.

Two take the form of worn mobiles: in the first, the legs and torso act as the trunk of a tree and a headdress envelops the rest in a set of branches within which an aviary of porcelain birds have perched. In the second, the branching headdress holds a collection of old-fashioned toy metal spinning tops and noisemakers. Elsewhere one figure looks like a humanoid bouquet of flowers. Another wears a suit fully composed of brown sticks, the head obscured from within a dark hole that looks like a periscope fashioned from a tree trunk. All of it in tile.

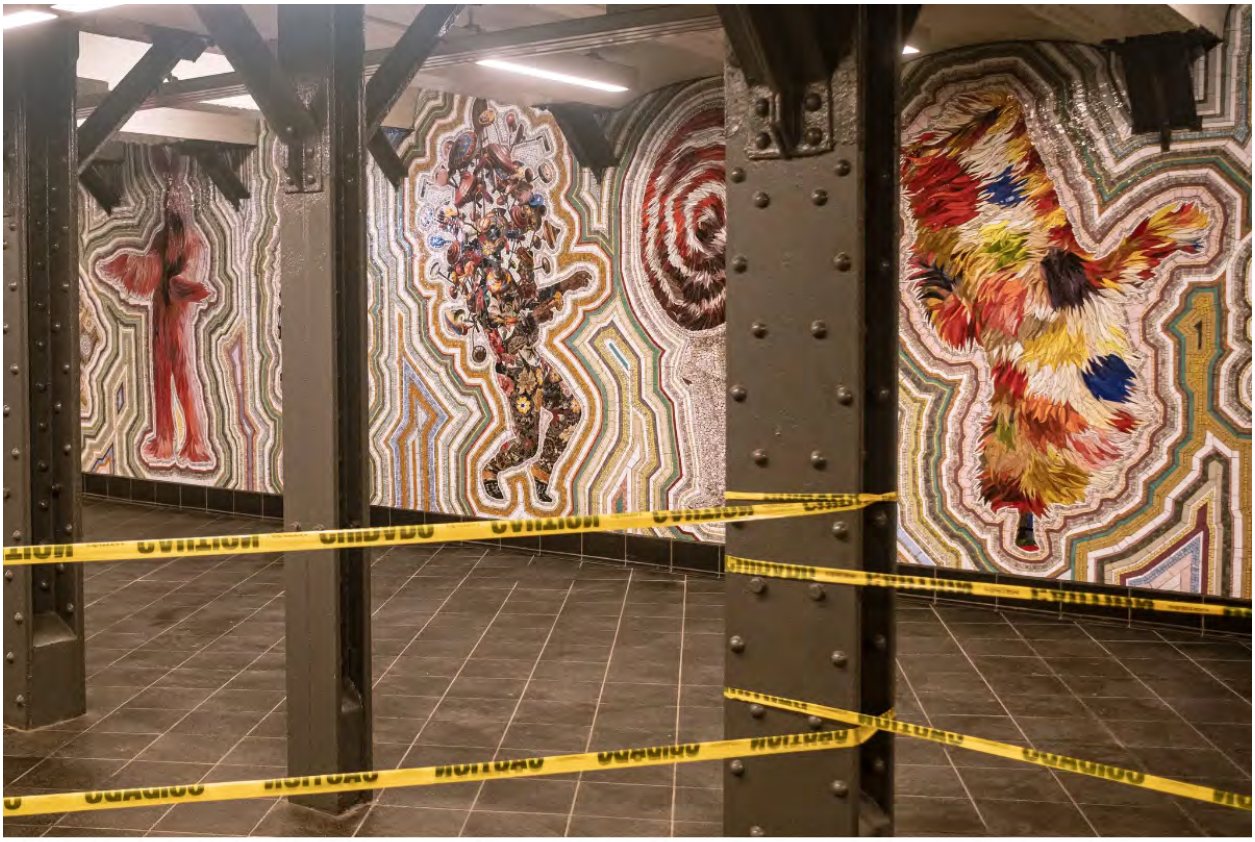
Across the way and near the exit out toward the skyscrapers and flashing lights at One Times Square, “Each One,” picks up the horizontal motion of “Every One,” shifting it vertically in an explosion of kinetic energy. The M.T.A. claims the 14.5-foot-tall mosaic mural refers to the New Year’s ball drop immediately above — but more practically “Each One” prepares an exiting rider for the sensory overload that awaits every other day of the year.

The Soundsuits seem to be in motion, creating visual vortexes, variously spinning and rising or falling, conveying differing weights and textures of the figures’ pelts and exaggerating the movements of the wearer. Even in facsimile tile, they feel more alive than when I’ve seen the actual sculptures presented on mannequins in the near-silence of museums and galleries.

How do they measure up to the many artworks in the New York subway system? Near Cave’s sprawling project you can find Roy Lichtenstein’s “Times Square Mural,” depicting a comic-strip futurist subway car in Dick Tracy yellow, in a geometric tunnel that nods to Piet Mondrian. In porcelain enamel, installed in 2002, it feels like a bit of the Museum of Modern Art on loan to the M.T.A. It’s big compared to a painting, though in the context of a station it gets lost. Cave’s project is much more effective at making its presence known.

Cave's installation "Equal All," with spinning tops and noisemakers, skillfully conveys the textured feel of tile and metal. Amr Alfiky for The New York Times

His joyous figures contrast with “The Revelers,” a diffuse 2008 mosaic by Jane Dickson along the subterranean path from the Port Authority to Times Square Station. Her figures, both generic and idealized like characters out of a Norman Rockwell painting, wear hats and hold horns also nodding to New Year’s festivities. But they don’t look much like subway riders and their celebration seems stuck in another time. Cave’s friendly monsters have an otherworldliness: there’s a natural kinship with the underground throng in their ostentatious fashion and flâneur-like anonymity. “Each One, Every One, Equal All” feels like a necessary correction, right at home amid the noise and teem.



Under Times Square, before its official opening, “Equal All” featured a catalog of Cave’s friendly monsters. There’s a natural kinship with the underground throng in their ostentatious fashion. Amr Alfiky for The New York Times

The New York Times

A Favorite Son Steps Front and Center in Chicago

A retrospective, performance piece and projected video, all by Nick Cave, will be on display.

The artist Nick Cave at the test for his upcoming Art on theMart projection, a video that will display, twice a night, his colorful Soundsuits dancing across the former Merchandise Mart. via Art on theMART

By Jane L. Levere
April 27, 2022

For fans of Nick Cave, Chicago is the place to be this year.

Mr. Cave, the multidimensional artist who was born in Fulton, Mo., but has made Chicago his home for 34 years, will be celebrated at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago with a retrospective; at the DuSable Museum of African American History in the city, with a “performative fashion experience”; and on the Chicago River facade of theMart, where one of his videos will be projected free of charge twice a night.

In his time in Chicago, Mr. Cave has drawn a following for his colorful videos, installations and performances. But his name is most commonly associated with his Soundsuits, which have been described as “wearable, noise-making costumes.”

Now 63, he is as prolific as ever. The Chicago lovefest includes numerous new works, including “Bear and Boy” and “Rescue,” both mixed media, and 15 new Soundsuits.

The retrospective at the Museum of Contemporary Art includes works that grew out of Mr. Cave’s response to pressing social issues — one hallmark of his art that has contributed to his popularity and made him a highly recognized contemporary artist. His Soundsuits, for instance, were first created in response to the 1991 police beating of Rodney King in Los Angeles and were meant “to entertain while they raise questions about race, gender and identity,” Ted Loos wrote in The New York Times in 2016. His MCA Chicago retrospective, “Forothermore,” which will run from May 14 through Oct. 2, is designed “as an immersive journey,” according to the museum, beginning with a new iteration of his kinetic “Until” installation, featuring thousands of whirling wind spinners. Mr. Cave said in a recent interview that “Until” “came out of” the 2014 killing of Michael Brown Jr., in Ferguson, Mo. The installation was first displayed at Mass MoCA in 2016 and later traveled to Sydney, Australia.

Also shown will be “Beaded Cliff Wall,” made of millions of pony beads hand-threaded onto shoelaces, displayed against a backdrop of floor-to-ceiling, geometric wallpaper; 26 Soundsuits; and “Time and Again,” an installation that is constructed from various workshop materials and tools similar to those of Mr. Cave’s grandfather, a carpenter who made furniture that has inspired his work, as have quilts and costumes made by his grandmother.

According to MCA, a gallery-sized, 13-channel video installation, “Hy-Dyve,” will surround visitors with “projections of flowing water, blinking eyes and mysterious creatures and patterns.” Recent bronze sculptures of human body parts decorated with flowers, candles and found objects, including used shotgun shells, also will be shown.

Colorful, abstract, round tondos will also be part of the exhibition. In the catalog, the art historian Krista Thompson says they “highlight the recurrent mourning that attends the loss of Black life through the police killings of Black people in the city of Chicago (and beyond it) … The tondos also sound the alarm on an increasingly devastating cycle of hurricanes experienced by people from the Bahamas to Louisiana.”

Six pages in the front of the exhibition catalog and six pages in the back are black with gray typeface listing Black, Indigenous and “people of color killed by police between May 25, 2020, and May 25, 2021, a year marked by urgent, national protests against such violence.”

The list begins with the death of George Floyd and ends with that of Darren Dejuan Chandler, who was killed by the police at a hotel in Lenexa, Kan., on May 25, 2021. Preceding the list, a page says, “Rest in Power.”

The exhibition was conceived and curated by Naomi Beckwith, former senior curator at MCA Chicago who is now deputy director and chief curator of the Guggenheim. Writing in the catalog and referring to herself as its editor, Ms. Beckwith says Mr. Cave’s art “is both a sobering recognition of all that has stayed the same as well as a portal through which to instantiate a different, more utopic future.”

His work, she continues, “possesses an altogether unique spirit that emerges not only out of his own biography and artistic training but also from the social realities and structural violence of the United States.”

“His work provides antidotes to the dominant social and historical narratives of our times,” she wrote.

In the interview, Mr. Cave said the title of his retrospective, “Forothermore,” comes from the word “forevermore” and is about “those that we haven’t forgotten, that are in our thoughts and in our imagination. I’ve never thought that my work was for me — I always knew I was just a messenger, always here to deliver these deeds.”

Noting that the retrospective will allow visitors to follow a timeline through his career that he hopes will be “very exuberant, very rich and colorful,” he said he also has tried to “shine a light on the subject of racism. It’s a reflection of that and optimism. Being proactive makes me optimistic.”

Mr. Cave said he wrote in his journal 30 years ago that he was “working toward what I’m leaving behind.”

“I now am seeing reflections of that and so I am grateful,” he said. “I am thrilled, excited to share. It’s an important moment, almost post-Covid, just the sense that we can be together.”

The exhibition, added Ms. Beckwith, “will say one should look under the surface of things and not be afraid of what they find. They should applaud the fact that someone has found a way to make beauty out of darkness.” The show will move to the Guggenheim Museum in New York and run from Nov. 18 through April 10, 2023.

One of Mr. Cave’s new multimedia works, “The Color Is,” will be shown at a May 21 fund-raising gala at the DuSable Museum of African American History in Chicago, featuring a performance by Labelle, the 1960s all-female pop group. There will be two more performances at the museum on May 22 and 23 with music by the singer-songwriter Jamila Woods.

MCA describes this work as “a performative fashion experience featuring an 80-look production” by Nick Cave and his brother, Jack, a designer and lecturer at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. It also calls it “an amalgamation of cultures, times and ideas, emancipating them from the limits of regular classifications.”

And if that’s not enough of Mr. Cave, his new video, “Ba Boom Boom Pa Pop Pop,” will be projected on the facade of theMart, formerly the Merchandise Mart, twice nightly from May 5 to Sept 7.

The video is a remix of Mr. Cave’s 2011 film, “Drive-By.” According to Art on theMart, which projects digital art on theMart, the video will display “brightly colored” Soundsuits dancing across the building’s facade, “transporting the viewer to a kaleidoscopic otherworld on the river’s edge.

“Amidst the flurry of movement,” it says, “a figure adorned with a stop sign emerges, reminding viewers of the underlying sense of urgency despite the jubilant expression of freedom.”

The New York Times

Nick Cave Digs Deep, With a Symphony in Glass

For his new installation of mosaics in New York, the artist ventures below Times Square.

By Laura Zornosa

Published Sept. 6, 2021 Updated Sept. 7, 2021, 10:37 a.m. ET

On a blistering afternoon in late August, a dedicated crew of construction workers moved through the corridor connecting Times Square and Grand Central Station, home to the 42nd Street Shuttle. Here, under the streets of New York, over two dozen figures made of vibrant glass danced along the subway walls.

On Friday, M.T.A. Arts & Design will officially unveil "Every One," the first of a three-piece installation by the artist Nick Cave, inside the new 42nd Street connector. The other two parts — "Each One" at the new shuttle entrance and "Equal All" on the center island platform wall — will be installed next year.

In August, M.T.A. workers inspected Cave's mosaic, "Every One," inside the new 42 St connector, which links the Times Square-42 Street station to the Bryant Park station. Sinna Nasseri for The New York Times

The $1.8 million budget for the project, commissioned by M.T.A. Arts & Design, is part of the overall project to rebuild and reconfigure the 42nd Street Shuttle, which cost more than $250 million.

Cave — a sculptor, dancer and performance artist — is known for his Soundsuits, wearable fabric sculptures made of materials such as twigs, wire, raffia and even human hair that often generate sound when the wearer moves. (He's also no stranger to staging art in train stations: In 2017, he brought a herd of 30 colorful life-size "horses" to Grand Central Terminal's Vanderbilt Hall.)

Walking along the new and improved corridor, figures on the wall are depicted leaping and twirling in mosaic Soundsuits.

Sinna Nasseri for The New York Times

In these two panoramas, photographer Sinna Nasseri stitched together several photographs to show long stretches of Cave's mosaic. Sinna Nasseri for The New York Times

"It's almost like looking at a film strip," Cave said in an interview from his studio in Chicago. "As you're moving down that from left to right, you see it in motion."

Since the sculptor was selected from a pool of artists in February 2018, he wondered and worried: How would a dynamic, flowing Soundsuit transition into a static mosaic? He was relieved by the answer: Seamlessly.

When Cave came to New York to see "Every One" in early August, he said, "I felt like I was in the middle of a performance, up close and personal."

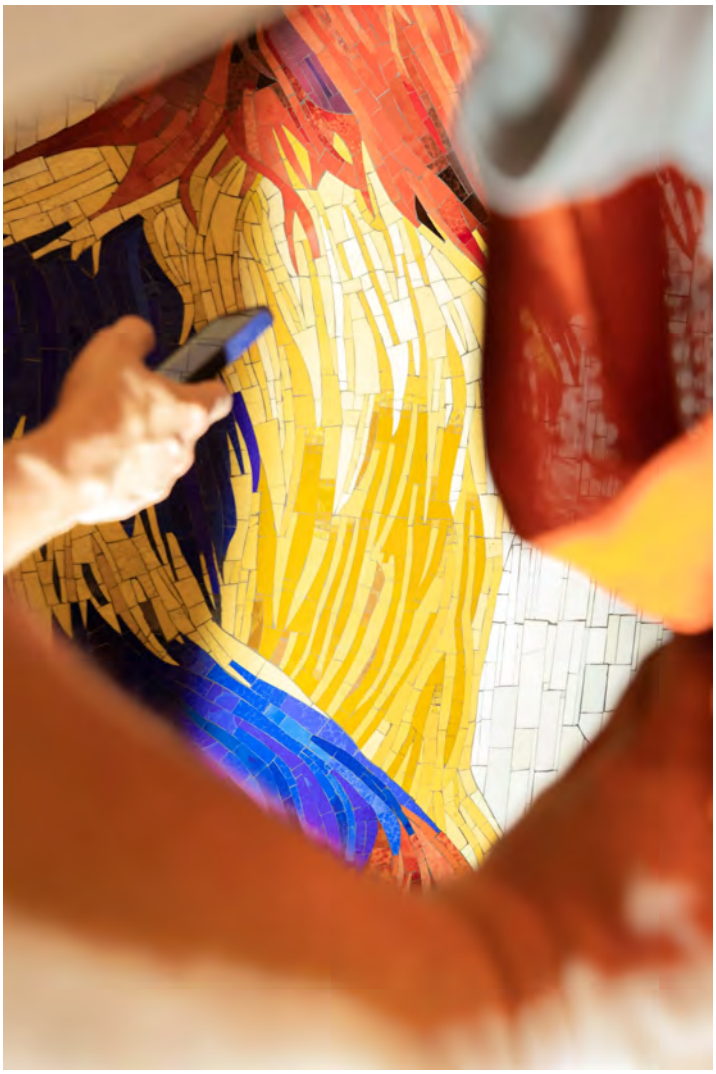
"You just felt this fast, different, visceral texture," he added, "the sensation in the movement and the flow of the material that completely resonated."

When Cave came to New York to see “Every One,” he said, “I felt like I was in the middle of a performance, up close and personal.” Sinna Nasseri for The New York Times

The Soundsuits have always been an amalgam of cultural references, Cave explained: the concepts of shamans and masquerade, obscuring the race, gender and class of the wearer and forging a new identity. They contain ties to Africa, the Caribbean and Haiti.

“It’s very important that you can make references, you can connect to something,” Cave said. “In one of the mosaics in the corridor, there’s a sneaker. So that brings it to this urban, right-now time.”

From beneath a pink-and-black cloak of raffia, carefully crafted out of glass shards, pokes a contemporary sneaker in shades of salmon, white and maroon. Cave likes the play that’s happening here: The form is sometimes figurative, sometimes abstract. “Sometimes it’s identifiable and sometimes it’s not,” he said. “But that’s the beauty of it all.”



M.T.A. workers in front of the artist Nick Cave's mosaic in a new passageway under construction for the Times Square Shuttle. Sinna Nasseri for The New York Times

A worker uses a file to smooth rough edges of the mosaic. Sinna Nasseri for The New York Times

After completing the design for "Every One" in early 2020, the sculptor selected the fabricator Franz Mayer of Munich from a list provided by M.T.A. Arts & Design. His company, Mayer of Munich — one of the world's oldest architectural glass and mosaic studios — understood Cave's vision.

Mayer of Munich has been in the family of Michael Mayer, its current managing director, for generations. (Michael is Franz's great-grandson.) Once the German fabricator gets to know the artist and their perspective, the team can translate the scanned designs of the work into a mosaic.

The artists, Mayer said, "they're the people with the magic."

Cave with one of his glass mosaic creations. Cheryl Hageman/M.T.A. Arts & Design

The fabricator prints out the designs to-scale, lays them out on a table and works on top of them. Cave's particular mosaic was done in a positive setting method, meaning the glass pieces were glued directly onto a mesh backing — rather than creating the design backward, like a mirror image.

"What is the stone that goes to the next, and creates a certain symphony?" Mayer said about the process. His team cut the glass pieces, applied them to mesh mats, and then the mosaic slowly and gradually grew outward. The finished piece measures about 143 feet on one side and 179 feet on the other, broken up by 11 digital screens in the middle. For three out of every 15 minutes, those screens will play videos of dancers performing in Soundsuits.

Shortly before the shutdown, Mayer visited Cave in his studio in Chicago. Then the artist came to see the work in progress in Munich.

Sinna Nasseri for The New York Times

In these two panoramas, the photographer Sinna Nasseri stitched together several photographs to show long stretches of Cave's mosaic. Sinna Nasseri for The New York Times

Although this represented Cave's first time working with mosaics, he is now more than interested in using the medium again.

"I'm thinking about mosaic as sculpture — not that it's just on the walls, that it exists within space that you walk around the work," Cave said. "So yeah, I've been thinking about it since I walked into that space."

And at 42nd Street, his work will keep company with giants: Jacob Lawrence's "New York in Transit," Jack Beal's "The Return of Spring" and "The Onset of Winter," and Jane Dickson's "The Revelers" are all glass mosaics in the Times Square station.

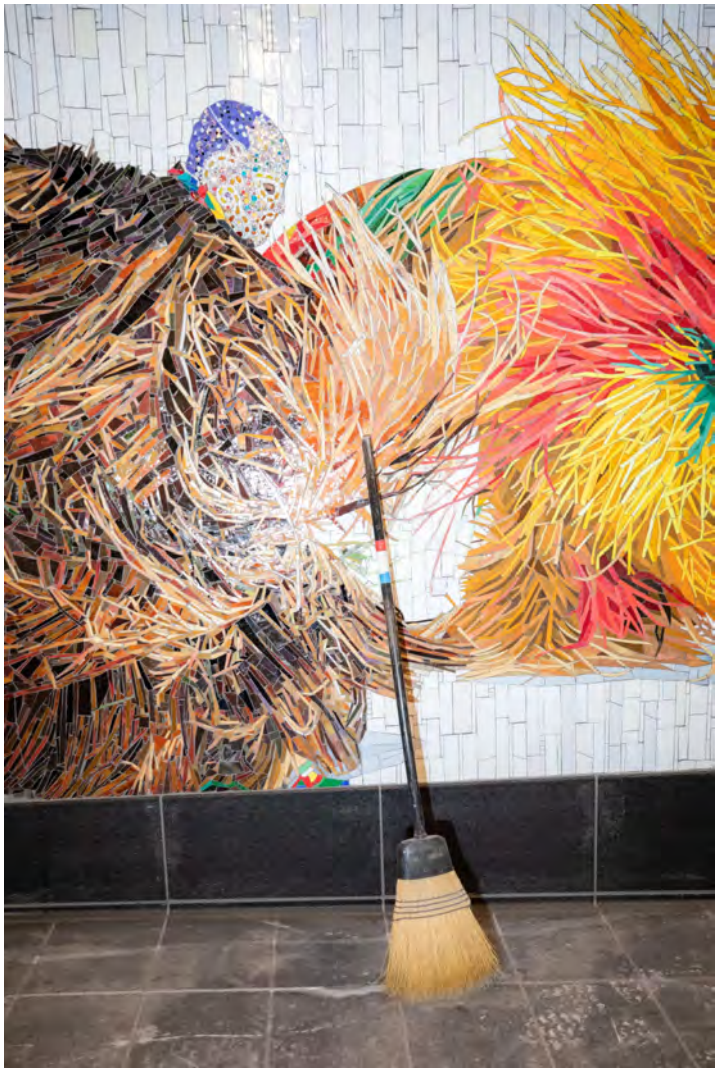
The finished piece measures about 143 feet on one side and 179 feet on the other, broken up by 11 digital screens in the middle. Sinna Nasseri for The New York Times

Roy Lichtenstein created his “Times Square Mural” in porcelain enamel. And Samm Kunce’s “Under Bryant Park” is a mosaic made of glass and stone.

“Times Square, it’s the center of the world, of the country,” Cave said.

Sandra Bloodworth, the longtime director of M.T.A. Arts & Design, emphasized the artist’s focus on other artists.

Sinna Nasseri for The New York Times

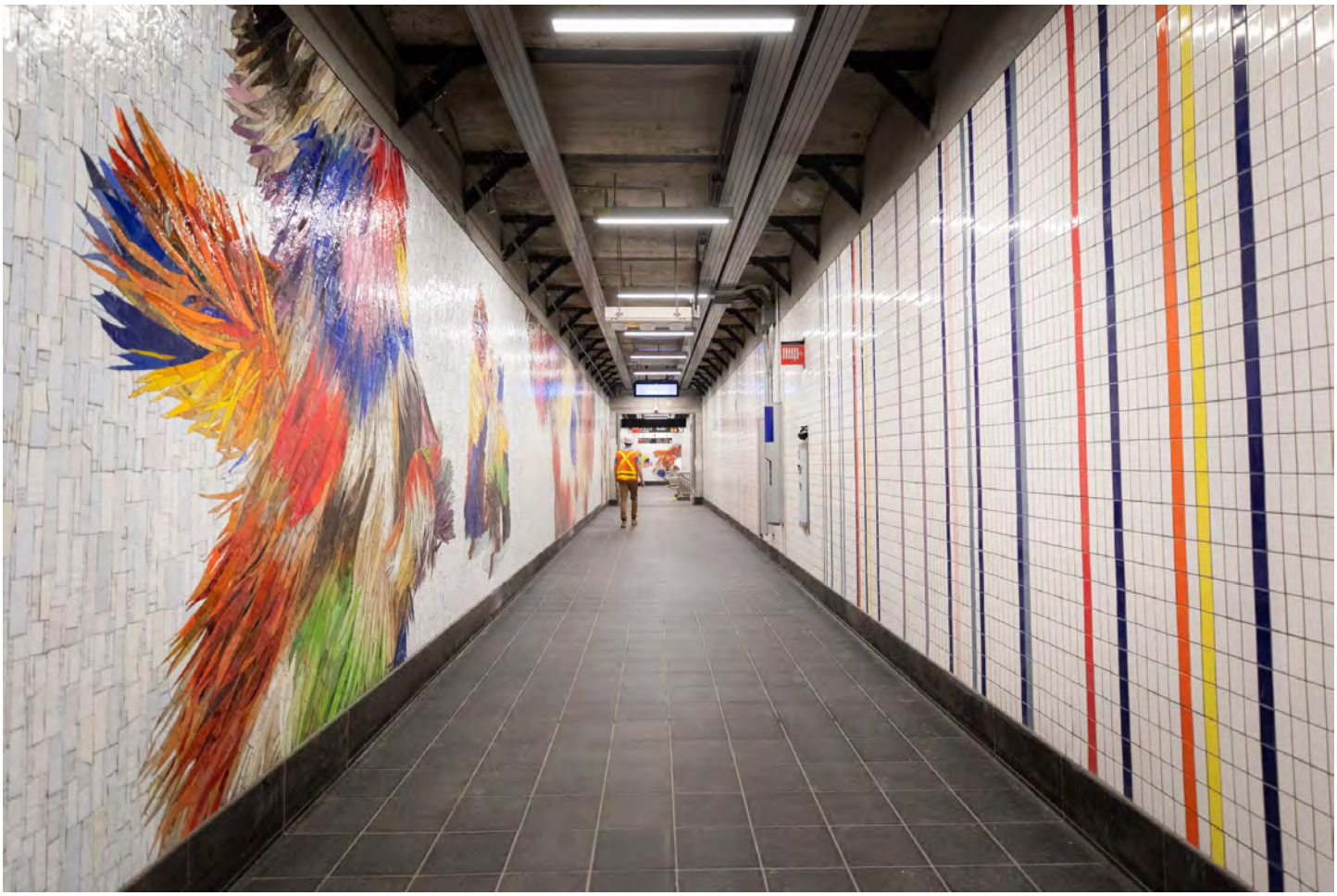


Sinna Nasseri for The New York Times

Cave is, she said in an interview in Bryant Park, “an artist who cares about people, who is so connected to community and so connected to people’s feelings.”

To have an artist who is “grounded in *that* be the work that we’re going to see as we return,” she continued, “as everyone comes back and the city revitalizes, the timing is just absolutely perfect.”

“Every One” is all about movement, Cave said. The glass dancers in their raffia and fur Soundsuits reflect the hustle and bustle of the more than 100,000 people who rode the 42nd Street Shuttle daily before the pandemic — up to 10,000 riders per hour.



At 42nd Street, Cave's work will keep company with giants such as Jacob Lawrence's "New York in Transit" and Jane Dickson's "The Revelers." Sinna Nasseri for The New York Times

On that blistering day in late August, the motion captured on the walls matched what was happening along the corridor under construction. A man in a hard hat sliced through stone in the middle of the hallway with a water-jet cutter. Another man carefully polished the freshly installed mosaic with glass cleaner and steel wool. Sweat dripped and workers buzzed around, building new tracks.

"We are not only spectators," Cave said, "but we're also part of the performance."

Correction: Sept. 7, 2021

An earlier version of a photo caption misstated the square footage of the mosaics in the passageway under construction. It's currently 3,200 square feet, not 2,000.

A version of this article appears in print on , Section C, Page 1 of the New York edition with the headline: Nick Cave Creates A Symphony of Colors

Bright ideals

His outlandish Soundsuits made him 'a rock star of the art world', and now he's aiming to reunite a divided nation through his statues. US artist NICK CAVE explains how to turn despair into hope

Words FLORIAN OBKIRCHER

© NICK CAVE/JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY

Enter The Momentary and you feel like a child in a sweetshop. More than 16,000 aluminium wind spinners of all shapes and colours dangle from the ceiling. Everything is shiny and sparkly; the constant spinning all around you is dizzying. At first, your brain finds it hard to focus, due to sensory overload. Then, after a few minutes, you settle into this surreal environment, feeling almost hypnotised and strangely calm. Until you detect some uncanny elements that wake you up sharply…

The Kinetic Spinner Forest is part of US artist Nick Cave's immersive mega installation *Nick Cave: Until (*on display until January 3, 2021), which covers 2,300sqm of The Momentary, a contemporary art museum in Bentonville, Arkansas. Most of the Forest's spinners look like the kind you find in souvenir shops. But among them are a few that stand out – spinners created from images of bullets, guns and teardrops. What at first seems like a light-hearted experience is, in truth, an exhibition dealing with the issues of gun violence, race relations and police brutality in America today.

"The idea is to create this fantastical world and disrupt it with these harsh forms and images that we, particularly

Super furry activism: Cave's colourful oversized Soundsuits perform a dance to traditional drumming. The project is more than mere fluff – these full-body costumes are a comment on prejudice, be it racial, class-based or gender-related

me as a Black male, are confronted with in our day-to-day experience," explains Cave. "The sort of imagery we try to turn our backs to, but in reality we cannot."

This artistic approach – blending the playful with the deadly serious, bringing a light touch to the heaviest of themes – is a recurring strategy in his work. Cave's art might appear provocative to some, but his artistic goal is to create a space for dialogue, to celebrate positivity. It has made the 61-year-old, Missouri-born artist one of the most respected figures in the contemporary art world. Cave's sculptures sell for as much as $150,000 a piece and reside in renowned institutions such as New York's Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), as well as in the homes of celebrity art collectors including Jay Z and Beyoncé. Cave's gallerist, Jack Shainman, even describes him as a rock star. "When I see people start to ask my artists for an autograph," says Shainman, "that changes into a different realm." And, in these turbulent times, Cave has an aim that's incredibly ambitious: he wants to heal a torn country with art.

Cave's career really began in 1992 on a park bench in his adopted hometown of Chicago. Shaken by the beating of unarmed Black American Rodney King at the hands of the Los Angeles Police Department – an event that sparked the LA riots of that year – the artist, sculptor and dancer confronted himself with questions like, "How do I exist in a place that sees me as a threat?" This feeling of dislocation drew Cave's attention to the detached and disparate twigs on the floor around him. He carried a large bag of them to his studio without an idea of what to do with them.

The result was his very first Soundsuit, a wearable installation that would become Cave's trademark. Over the years, he has created more than 500 of these full-body costumes (some are 3m tall), constantly experimenting with colours and materials. Some are made of fluoro fur; some use buttons, wires, human hair or beads; others he creates with found objects from flea markets and thrift stores. But each is an oversized suit of armour that conceals the wearer's race, class and gender. With unexpected sounds created by its ornaments, the Soundsuit warns you of the wearer's presence and, due to its otherworldly appearance, encourages you to face it without judgment. "The moment you wear it, you are shielded. Your identity is no longer relevant."

Horse play: made from raffia, with masks adorned in Asian and African patterns, Cave's equine Soundsuits stunned commuters at New York's Grand Central Terminal

"At first, a piece will seem larger than life, blissful. But get closer and it's like, 'Oh, this isn't so pretty!'"

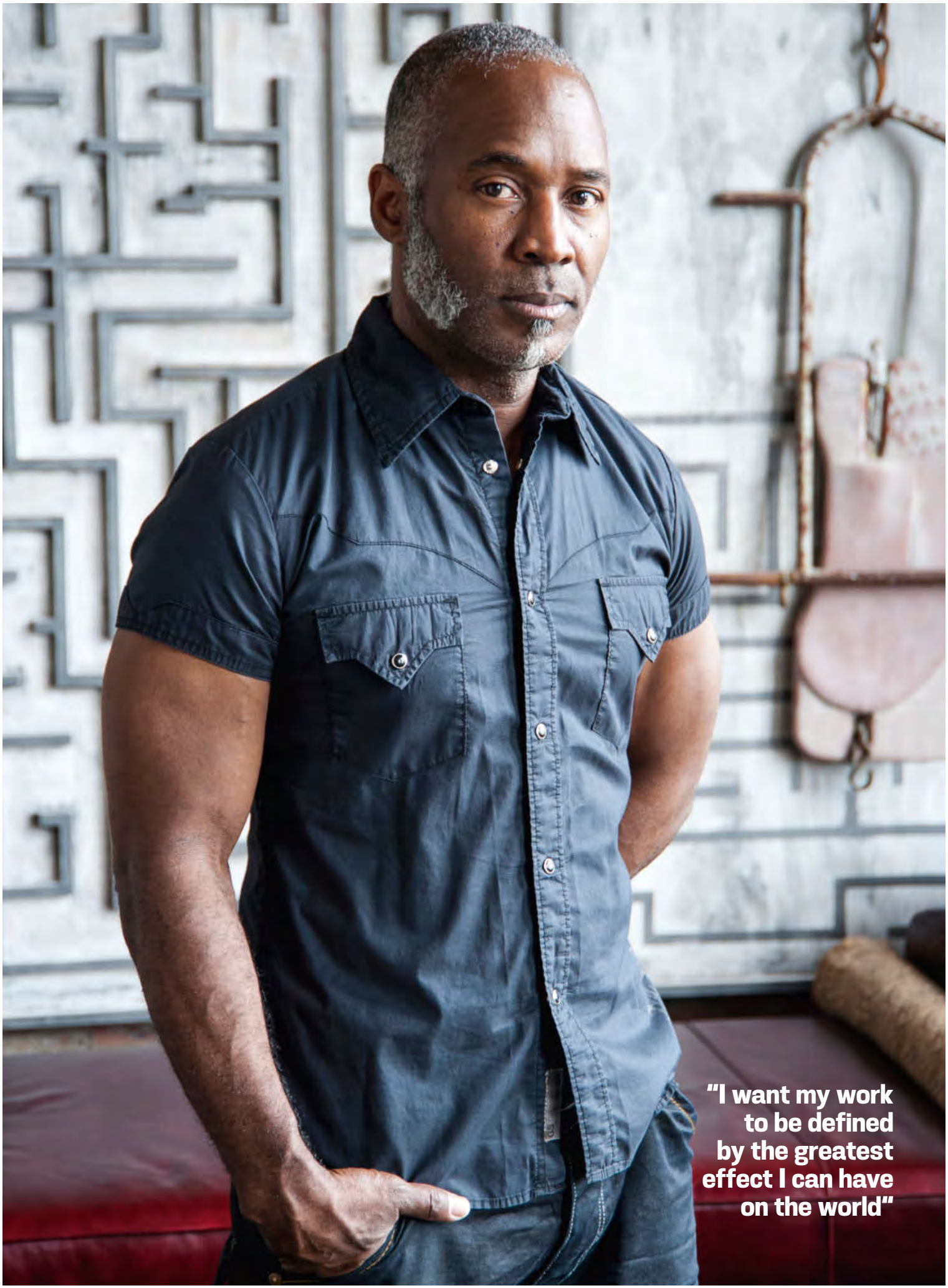
For Cave, who studied with modern dance legend Alvin Ailey's company in New York in the '80s, wearing the Soundsuits is an essential part of his artistic intention. His performances draw inspiration from ritual celebrations by Bantu ethnic groups in Central Africa. There's a lot of drumming and dancing, joy and exuberance. The Soundsuits come to life. In 2013, Cave turned New York's Grand Central Terminal into a surreal stable where 30 colourful lifesize horse-like figures in Soundsuit costumes galloped and danced for hundreds of surprised rail commuters. "The performance was about this multicultural world we live in," Cave says. "The horse is created by two individuals that make it. It's really about collective modes of working together and how we move as a collective in the world."

In 2018, he turned a former military drill hall in New York into an immersive dance experience in which visitors were invited to 'let go' during Soundsuit performances and dance workshops, allowing them to speak their minds through movement in politically tumultuous times. "How do we find refuge to release the anguish and frustration in a non-verbal way?" he remembers asking himself. "I was looking at a town hall, taking this idea and transforming it into a dance hall." Last year, Cave organised Boston's first Joy Parade, a colourful 5km-long procession featuring 75 local artists and performers and 500 members of the public, with the goal of bringing together the city's different communities.

Cave sees himself as a messenger first and an artist second: "I use my art as a vehicle for change. I'm interested in thinking about art as an array of vast options. Like, how can this work serve as a catalyst for intervention? I want my work to be defined by the greatest effect I can have on the world." The more he follows this calling, the further he moves away from the traditional gallery space. Cave believes art should be about creating communities and providing people with platforms.

One example of this is the dance training he gave to the youth of a Detroit LGBTQ shelter so they could take part in his 2015 multimedia performance As Is – a collaboration with underprivileged residents of social service organisations in Shreveport, Louisiana. "In a way, I've always done that," Cave says when asked about his positive motivation. "When I was 14, I'd put together talent shows

© JIM PRINZ/JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY, TRAVIS MAGEE


"I want my work to be defined by the greatest effect I can have on the world"

"The moment you wear the suit, you are shielded. Your identity is no longer relevant"

Head count: to make this Soundsuit, Cave used hundreds of plastic buttons and an abacus he found at a flea market. "I saw it as a face guard," he says

with friends. I need to collaborate, to pull people together. The studio is one thing, but there's a world out there. And I see that as the canvas, as my playground."

Like many people, Cave saw his optimism tested in 2020. When COVID-19 hit in spring, he created Cultural Stimulus, a series of short performance videos featuring colourful smiley face objects to cheer up his social-media followers during the lockdown. Things got more difficult after the killing of George Floyd in May. "I was really not doing very well," he remembers, "and I started to think my work wasn't purposeful enough." As a quick intervention, Cave and his partner and fellow artist Bob Faust initiated a community-based project titled Amends, where neighbours, friends and local leaders were invited to visit their Chicago gallery and fill the windows with 'Letters to the World Toward the Eradication of Racism'. In these handwritten messages, participants could open up about their privilege and role in the context of racism.

Cave believes the only way to reunite a divided nation is with honesty and dialogue. However, at the time of our interview, this goal seems more distant than ever. It's the day after the first presidential debate between Joe Biden and Donald Trump, a TV event described by the US media as "a train wreck". "Let me tell you, I am in full outrage for sure," Cave says in his gentle yet firm tone. "But I am also strategically thinking about how my [work] can be a tool to seduce, to bring us together collectively, all of us."

Bird brain: the first statue in Cave's A·mal·gams project – his solution for empty plinths that once celebrated icons of colonialism

He calls this strategy "conceal and reveal". The idea is to create colourful worlds that seem appealing and broadly accessible at first glance. By the time you discover a darker side, it's too late – you're trapped like a fly in Cave's web. "When you first encounter that experience, it is larger than life, blissful. Then all of a sudden you get closer and you're like, 'Oh shit! This isn't so pretty!' What do you do in that moment when you are confronted with that? Do you continue to experience this installation? Or do you turn away? I hope it's the former."

This simple yet effective trick can be seen in the *Until* installation as well as the Soundsuits, and thanks to the interwoven ambivalence of his work, Cave has gained popularity beyond the narrow boarders of the art world while retaining his credibility. "My audience [and I] may all come from different backgrounds and have different political intentions," he says, "but we're collaborating, because [they're all] my partners in this project."

Last year, Cave began work on a new series of bronze statues, titled A·mal·gams, which have become part of a new project, Soundsuits 2.0. The first statue (pictured left) is a seated figure with a human lower half decorated in floral tiles and an upper body that resembles a tree filled with ceramic bird sculptures. A·mal·gams is Cave's response to a current debate: what should be done with the empty plinths where icons of slavery, racism and the Confederacy stood before being toppled by Black Lives Matter protesters? How can we turn these former reminders of hatred and pain into symbols of hope?

"My proposal is the tree of life," says Cave. "A tree is a migration hub where flocks of birds come together collectively and nest within the structure." In terms of its detail and exuberance, this new project is clearly a relative of the earlier incarnation of Cave's Soundsuits, but the differences are clear: it's not wearable and it doesn't make a sound. But for Cave this isn't a contradiction, more a natural progression.

"You know, I don't always want to give it all away," says the artist with a warm chuckle. "I think it's all in the mind. You can imagine what it would be like to move around in it, what it would be like if the figure were to stand up. I want you to walk up to the bronze sculpture and ask yourself, 'What am I feeling?' It's important to stay in this space of curiosity. For me, it's all about dreaming, and imagining what a bright future looks like."

To see Cave's contribution to the Jack Shainman Gallery's online show *States of Being*, visit jackshainman.com/states_of_being

Shining a light: a trip through the Kinetic Spinner Forest – Cave's installation at The Momentary in Arkansas – is first dizzying, then hypnotising, and ultimately illuminating

URBANIZE

PROSPECT HEIGHTS

Nick Cave 'Truth Be Told' installation on display at the Brooklyn Museum

See it on display along the museum's plaza until March 2022

JUNE 10, 2021, 9:12AM MICHELLE COLMAN ↓ 0 COMMENTS

"Truth Be Told" at Jack Shainman's Kinderhook gallery

Last September, Jack Shainman's Kinderhook gallery, known as "The School," unveiled artist **Nick Cave's "Truth Be Told"** to a less than positive reception. Although one might assume the politics of the message might have been the issue since Cave created the artwork in response to the police killing of George Floyd, according to the town officials the backlash had to do with how the art was installed.

The massive, two-story words "Truth Be Told" were painted across The School's front brick facade. Unfortunately, the town officials claimed the art did not abide by town code signage/proper paint laws. The public rushed to the art and gallery's defense with a viral petition to save the piece. But, while town officials tussled with the gallery and its growing list of supporters, the Brooklyn Museum came to the rescue.

"Truth Be Told" at the Brooklyn Museum

From now until March 20, 2022, **Truth Be Told has been reinstalled** and somewhat reinvented along the museum's Plaza on the Eastern Parkway. But this time, the words are slightly warped and partially hidden. The Kinderhook version of this was bold and in your face. This newly reimagined work seems a bit more demure. Perhaps this was an intentional way to make the art (and us) more thoughtful?

Most importantly, the Brooklyn museum states that Nick Cave and designer Bob Faust "question the precarious nature of truth in our society—from governments and institutions to communities and individuals—asking where truth does and does not reside. The site-specific installation Truth Be Told takes its title from the informal conversational phrase in order to spark questions about "alternative" facts, political delusion, and assaults on objectivity. In effect, it creates both a written provocation and a simple statement on the value of personal and collective truths. The letters stretch across different planes of the Museum's lower façade, commenting on how words can be warped and distorted by those in power."

CHICAGO SUN-TIMES

Nick Cave retrospective set for Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago

"Nick Cave: Forothermore" will debut in May 2022 at the museum, and will include some of his most famous works and new installations.

By Miriam Di Nunzio | May 18, 2021, 8:58am CDT

Nick Cave, "Speak Louder, 2011," Collection Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, © Nick Cave. | James Prinz Photography

A retrospective of the work of internationally acclaimed artist Nick Cave will be presented at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago in 2022, it was announced Tuesday.

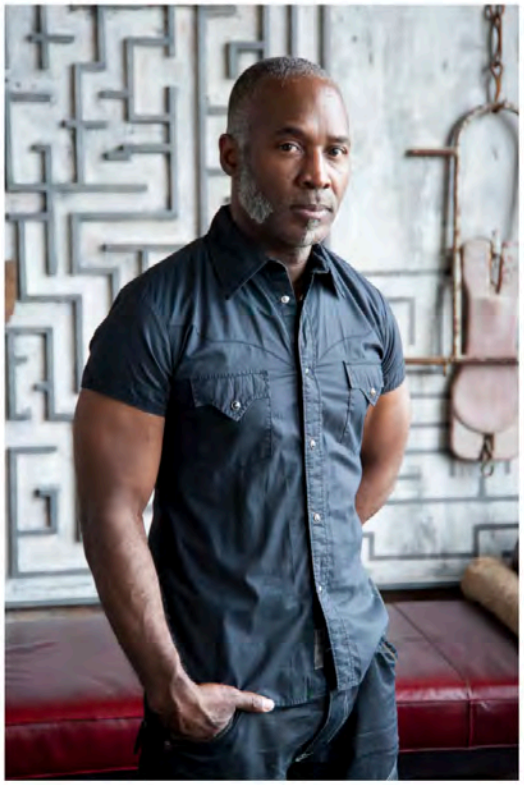
"Nick Cave: Forothermore" will run May 14 - Oct 2, 2022 at the museum, and will include some of his most famous works, immersive installations, fashion, bronze sculptures, tapestries, videos as well as never-before-seen works including "Soundsuits 9:29," the newest installation in Cave's 'Soundsuits" series of brightly colored wearable sculptures that speak to the social issues of the day.

Nick Cave, "Soundsuit," 2011. © Nick Cave.
Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York

In addition, the exhibition will feature "Spinner Forest," a site-specific installation "comprised of thousands of kinetic spinners" that will hang in the museum's two-story atrium and fourth-floor lobby, and "Hy-Dyve," a room-sized video installation in the museum's fourth floor gallery.

The retrospective is being billed as "the most comprehensive survey of Cave's work to date," spanning more than 30 years. Cave is also a professor of Fashion, Body and Garment at the School of the Art Institute.

"We are both thrilled and humbled to work with Nick Cave on the first major retrospective of his brilliant work over the last thirty years, many of those spent as a close friend and ongoing presence at the MCA," MCA Director Madeleine Grynsztejn said via statement. "Nick's passion for allowing art and beauty to address deeper questions of our time has been a tremendous influence on the artistic community, and to those who encounter his work in Chicago and abroad. Nick's awe-inspiring creations and stunning performances encourage us to think of a more harmonious future."



Nick Cave | James Prinz Photography

The New York Times

How a Museum Show Honoring Breonna Taylor Is Trying to 'Get It Right'

An upcoming exhibition brings Black contemporary artists to Louisville's Speed Art Museum to honor Taylor and her legacy. For the curator Allison Glenn, it's been an intense journey.

By Siddhartha Mitter

Published March 11, 2021 Updated March 13, 2021

"Promise, Witness, Remembrance" — an exhibition opening April 7 at the Speed Art Museum in Louisville, Ky., in honor of Breonna Taylor, the 26-year-old medical worker killed by police there nearly a year ago — came together fast, yet in a manner "tempered by conversations," said its curator Allison Glenn.

These involved, centrally, Tamika Palmer, Taylor's mother, whose input yielded the show title; and the painter Amy Sherald, whose portrait of Taylor will anchor the exhibition. Two advisory committees — one national, one in Louisville — have guided the show's making, in part to avoid the shoals on which museums have foundered in their efforts to address trauma and inequity in their communities, and in their own practices.

But "Promise, Witness, Remembrance" — whose list of about two dozen artists mixes big names (for instance Kerry James Marshall and Lorna Simpson) with others who are lesser known (Bethany Collins, Noel Anderson, Jon-Sesrie Goff), several with Louisville ties, and local photographers who documented the protests last year — has both greater and simpler ambitions. The hope, Glenn said, is to show "museums can get it right" through consultation that improves, not diminishes, curatorial quality. It is also to help stitch community in a midsize city by listening to those excluded by art institutions in the past.

Nick Cave, "Unarmed," 2018, from "Promise, Witness, Remembrance," an exhibition opening April 7 at the Speed Art Museum in Louisville, Ky., in honor of Breonna Taylor. Credit...Nick Cave

The New York Times

November 10, 2020
By Ted Loos

Nick Cave's Truth May Be Writ Large, but Is It a Sign?

The village of Kinderhook, N.Y., is not thrilled with the mark this artist made on a gallery, so the municipal government is demanding that it come down.

Nick Cave's "Truth Be Told," in the Hudson Valley village of Kinderhook, N.Y. Nick Cave and Jack Shainman Gallery

A battle is underway in the normally quiet Hudson Valley village of Kinderhook, N.Y., over three words: Truth be told.

The black vinyl letters in the artwork "Truth Be Told" measure 21 feet high and stretch some 160 feet across the facade of the 1929 red brick building that now serves as the School, a branch of Manhattan's Jack Shainman Gallery.

For the space, the artist Nick Cave created "Truth Be Told," intending to inspire a conversation about racial justice and policing in the wake of the killing of George Floyd, the Black man who died in May in police custody after Minneapolis officers pinned him to the ground for more than eight minutes, one of them with a knee on Mr. Floyd's neck.

Mr. Cave got a conversation, but not exactly the one he wanted.

Instead, the debate around "Truth Be Told" has been about whether the text-based work is technically a sign or not, a seemingly minor distinction that has significant implications.

The Village of Kinderhook says it's a sign, and hence in violation of local code, and wants it removed.

The dealer Jack Shainman and his attorney, William J. Better, say that it's an artwork and is perfectly legal under the special use permit that the School was given in 2014, when it opened.

They have until Dec. 5 to appeal the decision, which they intend to do, unless, as Mr. Better said, "the village comes to its senses."

Kinderhook's mayor, Dale R. Leiser, doesn't sound like he is changing his mind.

"The village's position is that we're going by our code, and New York State code," Mr. Leiser said, adding that Mr. Shainman "didn't have a permit. He got a use permit for banners, and this is totally different."

A secondary concern was the vinyl material the letters were made of and "whether it's flammable or not," the mayor said. "We are concerned it's covering windows and doors."

Nick Cave's recently installed "Truth Be Told" is shaking things up in Kinderhook, N.Y. Krista Schlueter for The New York Times.

The Building Department issued an order on Oct. 23 demanding the removal of the work and calling it "combustible."

Mr. Shainman had submitted a proposal to the village on Aug. 13 for "Truth Be Told." Permission wasn't granted, and the two sides had a special Zoom meeting on Oct. 20.

"I naïvely thought I could just explain it and they'd agree," said Mr. Shainman, who is liable for a $200 fine for each day the work remains in place after the order to remove it was issued. "They were saying it's a sign, and it isn't."

The matter wasn't resolved, but Mr. Shainman authorized the crew to put up "Truth Be Told" the next day anyway, and it was completed on Oct. 31.

"We're good people, doing something we're allowed to do," Mr. Shainman said, adding that he felt he needed to support his artist, Mr. Cave.

"We've spent three and a half weeks mired in this," Mr. Shainman added. "I feel like I'm stuck in a glue trap."

Mr. Better's reading of local code, he said, is that signs are defined as "an announcement, direction or advertisement, and this is none of those."

The issue of the work's flammability is "the ultimate red herring," Mr. Better added, given that the vinyl material is "a 3M product that is regularly used on buildings across New York State."

In his back-and-forth with the village, Mr. Better said he gave the example of "plastic Halloween decorations, infinitely more flammable, which are all over town."

"If someone puts up 'Seasons Greetings' on their door for Christmas, would the village tell them to take it down? I think not."

Mr. Better added, "Like any art, it makes people think."

Thomas Danziger, a New York attorney who specializes in art law, said that the dispute was an example of a “huge problem”: the fact that “zoning regulations were not intended to address what is or is not a work of art.”

Mr. Danziger noted that “there are plenty of artists whose work is just words, like Lawrence Weiner and Barbara Kruger.”

For his part, Mr. Cave said that the village’s pushback on his work was “another indication of where people stand.”

He added that the piece is “about admitting the truth that one might otherwise lie about.”

Mr. Cave, who is based in Chicago, has spent his career addressing race and identity in his work, as with his famous “Soundsuits,” which are wearable, noisemaking costumes.

In 2016, he created “Until,” a massive installation at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art in North Adams, composed of thousands of objects addressing gun violence and the deaths of Black people in police custody.

Mr. Cave said that he feels “totally supported” by Mr. Shainman and that he would have been “really upset” if the work hadn’t gone up as planned.

“It’s an artwork,” he added. “It’s freedom of expression. It’s not complicated.”

Mr. Shainman said that he intends to keep “Truth Be Told” on view through Jan. 31.
The mayor, Mr. Leiser, said that the village did not have an issue with the School’s programming in general.

“Not at all,” he said. “Jack is a good man.”

But Mr. Leiser added, “There’s always protocol.”

The New York Times Style Magazine

THE ARTISTS

Nick Cave Asks: Who Gets a Seat at the Table?

He shares a harrowing work of found sculpture inspired by the national anthem.

Nov. 6, 2020, 12:50 p.m. ET

In each installment of The Artists, T highlights a recent or little-shown work by a Black artist, along with a few words from that artist putting the work in context. This week, we're looking at a work by Nick Cave, whose installation "Until" is on view through Jan. 3 at The Momentary in Bentonville, Ark. Cave is best known for his "Soundsuits," wearable sculptures that he began making in the early '90s as, to quote Megan O'Grady's 2019 T profile of the artist, "a kind of race-, class- and gender-obscuring armature."

Nick Cave, Untitled, 2018. Mixed media including a table, a carved eagle and 119 various carved heads. Courtesy the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery

Name: Nick Cave

Age: 61

Based in: Chicago

Originally From: Fulton, Mo.

When and where did you make this work? 2018, Chicago.

Can you describe what's going on in the work? It's inspired by the national anthem, specifically the phrase "the land of the free and the home of the brave" and is commenting on the colonialism of the past and who gets to sit at the table today — as well as whose backs decisions are made upon. It's constructed of found carved wooden heads of Black men and women installed upon a library table and loomed over by a bald eagle.

What inspired you to make it? The continued murders of unarmed Black men that keep flooding our news feeds.

What's the work of art in any medium that changed your life? Anselm Kiefer. No particular works, rather all of them and how he approaches making.

ARTNEWS

November 11, 2020
By Tessa Solomon

Upstate New York Town Government Demands Removal of Nick Cave Artwork

Nick Cave's *Truth Be Told*, at Jack Shainman Gallery outpost the School.NICK CAVE IN COLLABORATION WITH BOB FAUST, TRUTH BE TOLD (2020). © NICK CAVE. COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY, NEW YORK.

A giant work by **Nick Cave** on the facade of the School, an art space operated by **Jack Shainman Gallery** in Kinderhook, New York, is currently the subject of controversy among locals, the *New York Times* **reports**. The work, a 160-foot-long text piece called *Truth Be Told*, features its titular phrase splayed across the building and is intended to spur conversations among the community on policing and anti-Black racism justice in the wake of the killing of George Floyd by Minneapolis police in May.

Residents in Kinderhook have claimed it might be illegal to display the work. City officials have alleged that the artwork is technically a sign, making it in violation of local code. Shainman and his attorney, William J. Better, maintain that *Truth Be Told* is an artwork, and its display is protected by the special use permit that the School was granted when it opened in 2014.

Per a report in the *New York Times*, Shainman submitted a proposal to the Kinderhook on August 13 for construction of the work. The town refused to sign off on the installation, prompting debates between the two sides over whether the text-based work qualified as public art. Speaking to the *Times*, Shainman said, "I naïvely thought I could just explain it and they'd agree. They were saying it's a sign, and it isn't." Shainman authorized the completion of the artwork before the issue was resolved, and the installation was completed on October 31.

The town stands by its original ruling, citing the potential fire hazard of the work which covers windows and doors on the building. Better has called the concerns of flammability "the ultimate red herring," making the point that Halloween decorations or comparable signage are perfectly legal to display.

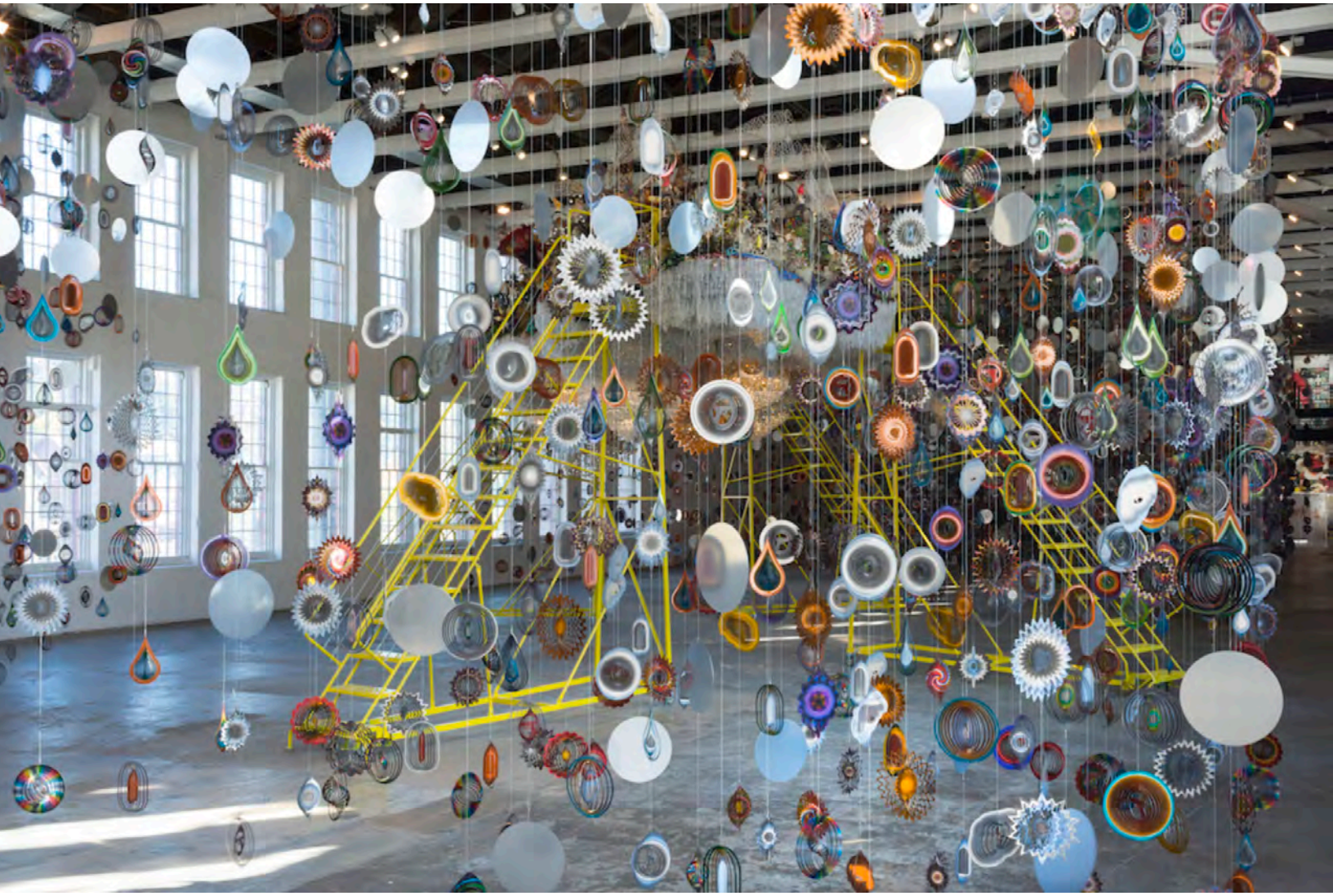
Cave, who is based in Chicago, has considered issues of race, identity, and politics through works like his "Soundsuits" series, fabric noise-making costumes originally conceived in reaction to the beating of Rodney King by LAPD officers in 1992. In 2016, he unveiled *Until*, a monumental installation at MASS MoCA in North Adams, Massachusetts; it immerses the viewer in found objects related to police brutality and gun violence.

“The gallery had to go to the city and ask permission. I’m like, just fucking do it,” Cave told ***New York Magazine*** upon the work’s debut. “Like John Lewis said when he said ‘good trouble.’ To me, it’s about that. You don’t need fucking permission. It’s an art gallery, a place of expression.”

JUXTAPOZ ART+CULTURE

Nick Cave: Until @ The Momentary, Bentonville, Arkansas
The Momentary

September 12, 2020 - January 03, 2021



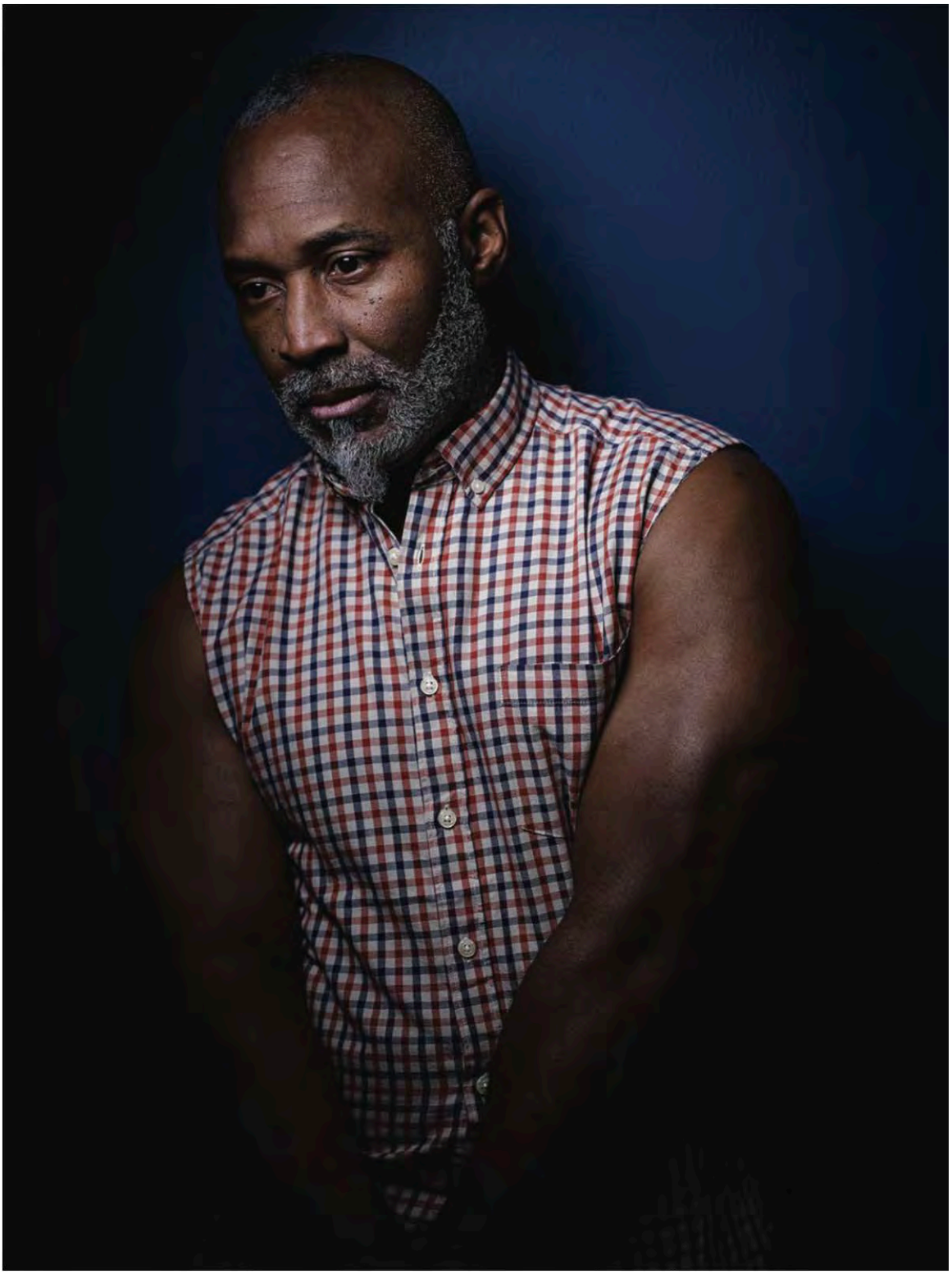
Nick Cave's famed Soundsuits feel like singular visions in the contemporary art world. True characters, and now, by way of their powerful singularity, they have become recognizable and especially "suited" to tell urgent, timely stories. With fabric serving as body armor, the handmade, textile "second skin" initially was Cave's response to Rodney King's beating at the hands of the LAPD in the early 1990s. In time, unencumbered by racial identity, they have transfigured to become triumphant cloaks of pride and powe . Now, more than ever, Cave's work continues to thrill and document in a unique hybrid of sculpture and textile, installation and narration.

The Momentary in Bentonville, Arkansas, in conjunction with 2016-17 previous host MASS MoCA, and co-produced by the neighboring Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, now presents an in-depth installation, Nick Cave: Until, a deeply personal piece that has prompted the question, "Is there racism in heaven?" As the Momentary told Juxtapoz, the immersive space and exhibition is made up of thousands of wind spinners with images of guns, bullets, and targets, along with a, "cloudscape encrusted in ceramic birds, beaded flowers, and cast-iron lawn jockeys." The title of the show, based on the almost universal presumption, "innocent until proven guilty," challenges an America trying to come to grips with gun violence and actions of police brutality directed at Black Americans throughout the country, as Cave continues to create provocative and other-worldly works that question the very nature of our world. Admission to the installation will be free, with hope the exhibition will continue as planned so that Until commands the audience it deserves. —Evan Pricco

RAIN

Dance With Me: An Interview with Artist Nick Cave

BY MARK BENJAMIN (HTTPS://RAIN-MAG.COM/AUTHOR/ADMIN/)
JULY 17, 2020



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Interview by Mark Benjamin. Photography by James Prinz. Portrait by Sandro.

Born in Fulton, Missouri, in 1959, the artist **Nick Cave** (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nick_Cave_(performance_artist)) has been meticulously building a language, a vernacular, of symbolism, artifact, and ritual. Cave's work began at the intersection of art and fashion with the creation of his Soundsuits: spectacular objects removed from race, class, and context, they are to be worn and performed in. Cave created these armored vessels as a reaction to Rodney King's beating in 1991. His performances and installations have since been exhibited around the world and his objects collected by the most prominent institutions and museums.

Much of Cave's output isn't just performance-based but are exercises in community collaboration, forums, expressing the talents and voices of real people. This summer, his most recent show, "The Let Go," was performed several times each week at the Park Avenue Armory by the Mama Foundation for the Arts and the Sing Harlem Choir, in collaboration with the creative director Bob Faust. Dancers were transformed into colorful beings in a magical and ritualistic performance of singing and dancing, while streamers several stories tall became mobile as the event transformed into an interactive party. We spoke with Cave at his home base of Chicago, Illinois, about his life's work and practice.

Mark Benjamin: How are you doing today?

Nick Cave: I'm doing great. I'm moving to my studio in probably a couple of weeks, so it's a bit hectic, as you can imagine.

MB: This is Chicago, right?

NC: Yeah. I'm moving into a smaller place that will allow everything to operate on one floor. I've been in this building for maybe 15, 20 years. I started out solo in the studio and then it changed to me having a staff of about 10, which varies from 10 to 30, depending on each project. So, I'm taking over more space in the building, but it's like, "We can only do that project on the first floor," or, "We can work upstairs, we just need to move about three floors," and I can't take it anymore. I need everything on one floor, and just a different kind of experience. I want something a lot more cohesive, where transitions are easy. So, it's good. I'm excited.

MB: That's awesome. Yeah, I know how much changing a space can change everything.

NC: Oh yeah, totally. I've been looking for a building for about five years. I've found buildings that were the one and then the zoning couldn't be changed, so it's taken a while.

MB: Tell me about it. It's the same thing in New York. It's kinda crazy.

NC: It's been magnificent to develop and to work within communities and find ways of being proactive in using art as vehicle for change. We're living in a time where we can find ways of working that can inform as well as find common ground.

MB: Totally. I first came across your work when I was a teenager, at the Contemporary Arts Museum in Houston. I'll never forget it—it was a shiny pink suit with tambourine-like symbols on it. Then it became a square at the head, and it was 8ft tall. And I remember being terrified. That was my first reaction—just, "What is going on here?" Because it's very imposing, especially for a kid. As I've gotten older, seeing your work has turned more into intrigue and curiosity, and also more celebration.

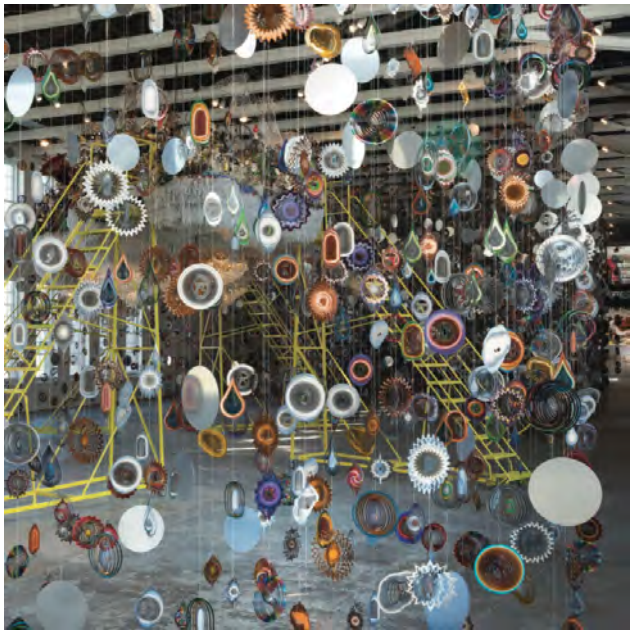
When I first saw [the suit], I never thought about any of the connotations of the creation of the Soundsuits. I just thought, "Wow, this is amazing. This is interesting. This is great." Which I think is what you wanted to achieve. Because you've said that you want to flatten class and race, and all of these aspects disappear with the suits. You flatten as you go.

NC: Yeah, but at the same time I wanted to have that very daunting thought of un-peculiar sensibility to it. It's scary, it's frightening, it's dark, yet there's something that is other about it. That is not quite from this place. This world. And yet in a peculiar way, it also evokes some sort of strong belief or optimism. You can't really define it. You know how sometimes we're scared, but at the same time we're drawn to something that's seducing us? So it's really lived in this un-peculiar kind of place that tends to arouse some sort of emotion.

MB: Totally. The only other time I've felt like that—frightened and intrigued at the same time—was probably those three minutes during Dumbo when those pink elephants are dancing. It's frightening, but you can't look away.

NC: Oh, yeah.

MB: I read somewhere that you started making these Soundsuits as a way of creating your own armor, a form of protection. Do you see them now becoming more a place to escape to than a form of resistance?



NC: Well, I've always seen it as both. Resistance can be about taking a positive kind of approach, and I sort of created "The Let Go" as a form of resistance. Creating this space, this cavity that allows us to come in and think about… I start to think about ways of letting go without being harmful. And it kept bringing me back to movement and dance. And to be able to selectively create this environment occupied by this moving curtain called Chase, and that curtain was designed with one side red, black, green, followed by blue, black. For me, it was the police chasing a minority. You would never know that. So there's always this very dark, underlying message that is—

MB: Well, you might even celebrate it. My friends were running through those streamers.

NC: Well, that's the whole idea. The amount of people who turn their backs on situations they've witnessed and then go out to dinner. So, it's just all a bit fucked up in terms of how we position ourselves in the world. You know, we don't want to say the truth, we would rather turn our backs on it as if it doesn't exist or—

MB: And have a big party.

NC: Yeah.

MB: I went to Park Avenue Armory and I saw, I experienced, your show "The Let Go". And now I'm like, "Oh, damn. Got me." But it makes sense, it's like Félix González-Torres and the eating of the candy. [For Untitled (Portrait of Ross in LA) (1991), the Cuban artist González-Torres assembled a 175lb pile of candy that visitors were invited to take a piece from, its depletion representing the diminishing weight of his late partner as he died from Aids.]

NC: Exactly. Yet, at the same time, there are still opportunities. We turn our backs against it. There are also these moments where we're back to back. You're holding up my back, I'm holding up your back. So there are ways we can almost enforce a particular way of thinking, a particular way of acting that informs and sheds light on [situations].

MB: Right. You were first inspired by Rodney King and his beating in 1991, right?

NC: Yeah.

“I sit in silence every day. As a creative person, you’re the judge of the time you’re alone. And it’s gotten me clear. It’s gotten me to understand who I am. It has gotten me to face who I am. And I think if the world were to sit in silence every day for one hour, I think we would live in a different world”

MB: And 26 years later, we’re seeing it happen again and again, except it’s worse. It’s police shootings, it’s BBQ Becky, discrimination…

NC: Yeah, it’s happening again and I think right now… I’m just one person, you know? I’ve got a lot to do and yet I’ve got to settle down and stay very focused and allow each project to fully serve its purpose. Again, I’m doing all I can to bring [communities] together in these mass quantities and… Like with Park Armory, we worked with more than 100 social services that occupied the armories daily. I’m more into volume, and the alternative ways of helping this vast world via communities through this art experience.

MB: Yeah.

NC: Because I find that unity and… those are my ambassadors. I can only present a project, but then I’m thinking, “OK, now who are my ambassadors who can also filter this information out into the world, into the communities and be proactive in that way?”

MB: That’s also something that interested me—your works are never really just you. Even the Soundsuits, somebody has to dance in them. They are just the vessel, your performances are very people-based. Without the people, there wouldn’t be art.

NC: Well, it needs the support of others in order for them to take action, or a project to come to life—

MB: Yeah. It's interesting because, with an artist like Matthew Barney, his films are kind of the works, and then if there's a prop from the film, some collector will scoop it up. But that's not really important. Then, with yours, it's the reverse—the performance is front and center.

NC: Exactly. It's really about creating the setting for us now to do the work that is asked.

MB: And I wanted to ask you, in the future, when we're all gone, and there's some incarnation of the Met or something, and your work is standing there, and somebody's sitting there, thinking, "I wonder what this was used for. What strange culture, what strange people?", what kind of crazy things do you think might be going through their mind?

NC: Yeah. It's interesting you say that, because I see what has led me to look at my work in terms of options. I would go to the Museum of Natural History and look at all these artifacts and art objects, which all served a purpose within a particular culture. So I'm like, "OK, this object was used in this particular ritual for this purpose."

MB: Right.

NC: So, I'm looking at the dualities of the ways of looking at objects, looking at environments, looking at relics and thinking, "Wow." So it's even more powerful now that I can understand [an object's] role in society. And yet I'm also asked to view this with the utmost respect and… That's when I started to think about my work differently. There was a time when I wouldn't sell a Soundsuit unless it was performed, because I wanted that history there, I wanted them to be connected to something.

MB: Right, because even a collector doesn't really own it. In a sense, they own the vessel, they don't own the performance.

NC: Exactly. For me it's just the recordings. It's getting that to video, and all the data. Which will also be what's left behind. In addition to the value is this vast library of video works and performance works. Lately I've been selling performance works, which is amazing because there are museums that will take care of each

performance, and they will continue to perform the piece. So, that's also very interesting.

MB: When you create a Soundsuit, are you thinking of the performance and the role the suit is going to have in the performance, or do you just create the suit and then find the performance to put it in?

NC: For the most part, it's the latter. The work may be incorporated in the performance or it may not be. I find that I work in this very particular way, where I'm interested in making objects and then bringing them to a performance platform. And it may not be something that occurs right away, it could happen 5 to 10 years afterwards.

MB: Right.

NC: So, I find working in this very fluid way allows enough sensibility to remain. It's much more grounded and rooted in something that has more meaning.

MB: Right. You're classically trained as a fashion designer, right?

NC: No.

MB: Maybe not classically, but fashion was your initial interest, right?

NC: No, not really. I studied dance and then I studied at the Kansas City Art Institute, then I went to Cranbrook for my master's. But it was all [about] working in this trans-disciplinary way. I took a number of classes to understand the principles of the construction of a garment. But it's never been that I was interested in fashion as a pathway, or dance as a pathway. These were the two critical discourses that influenced and brought my work to life.

MB: When you were growing up, did you know that you wanted to be an artist or imagine that you would ever have such a flourishing career as an artist?

NC: I never thought that I would have such a flourishing career. You can only imagine and hope for that. But it was not something I really thought about. I think it was brought to my attention when I was 12, when I was at high school—[I was told],

"You have this unique talent and you should consider pursuing that
as your undergraduate degree." But, you know, at that age, you think, "OK, sure."

MB: Yeah.

NC: But I don't think I really thought about where it could lead until
I was in college. And then I was exposed to living artists. These are the sorts of things that allowed me to look at that and go, "OK, you can have a successful career." It wasn't really until graduate school and probably toward the end of my graduate studies where I was like, "Oh." It's not like you leave this creative world of school with a manual of how to do it… That doesn't exist.

MB: Yeah, tell me about it.

NC: And it really is just based on pure leaps of faith and just fear. Standing up to fear is how I was able to… and just gambling my ass off, too. The whole, "Shit, I need to buy food, but I'm gonna buy art supplies." It was all a gamble and about falling on your face. Feeling that there's nothing else, and I have to get back up and get back in the game.

There were moments where I… situations where… projects that fell apart, performances that fell apart in front of, like, 3,000 people. And I'd be hiding out for four months, just embarrassed and deflated. But for some reason, I was like, "I gotta get up and face the truth. I gotta get back in the game." So that's what I did. I just fought through it. I'm telling you, there were times when I was like, "Oh my God, I can't… this isn't working." But there was something bigger— bigger than me.

And I tried corporate America. I was working in creative environments, but internally… I wasn't happy. I thought, "I've got to figure this out." But I'm one of the lucky ones. I was willing to risk it all to find out that it is possible. Oh my God, there were moments where I just had to make sacrifices, too. I had to let everything

go that was in my life—relationships, people—in order to see if this was possible. I needed every part of my being to see if it was possible. I needed to become selfish to see if this was possible.

MB: Do you have any regrets?

NC: No. Internally, we all know what we need to do. And it's really whether or not we can step up to fear. It's tough, it's hard, but we only have one life.

MB: I come from a similar thing. I tried the corporate thing, too, and I couldn't do it, so I quit my job and started this magazine like a crazy person.

NC: You think it's crazy, but it's something that, internally, you kept at. The moment you understand why you're doing it, and the influence that you can have through what you're doing as a creative being, then it all makes sense. It's like with the magazine, how do you create this magazine so that it has a purpose? Where it serves the community in some aspects? Because I think it's all about service— like, how do we [offer a] service to the world?

MB: Yeah. I also wanted to ask you about Texas. I grew up in Houston, and you went to school in North Texas, right?

NC: Yeah, my first grad school. I went there because there was a professor I wanted to continue working with, Professor Spear.

MB: [Texas] is such a strange place. Growing up there and then moving to New York… I compare it to Plato's cave—you get out and you're like, "You know what, it's not normal to have a separate pledge of allegiance to the state flag. It's not normal to have rodeos and mega- churches, and ministers who fly helicopters."

NC: While I was in school there, there was this junior high school that we occupied, so we each had this amazing studio. And I found that, out of all the grad students, I was always the only one there. At night, I was like, "Where the fuck is everybody?" And the rhythm in terms of how people moved and navigated was so slow, and at the weekends, nobody was around.

MB: Where were they?

NC: I don't know… at the beach? I was like, "I gotta get out of here. I need a more intense rigor." I need to be pushed, I need to be challenged. And I had to pack up and move on. It was really very strange.

MB: I still feel that when I go from New York to Texas. I can be there about three or four days, and it feels great, it's easy, it's cheap, everything's bigger.

NC: Yeah, and then you're like, "Gotta go." I think we're suppose to be living in the world as opposed to living in the country. And I think the moment we all get outside of these communities and neighborhoods in which we've been raised, and we operate in the world, our purpose is very different. We operate in a very different way. When I go home for Christmas, I have couple of brothers who still live in Missouri and they're like, "So-and-so wants to see you." And I'm like, "No. I can't." Because I'm just not… I don't know what we have in common, I don't know how to identify with friends I went to high school with who have chosen to stay in Columbia. I'm living in fear, emotionally. I'm sort of in hiding when I go home, because I can't bear to see anyone.

MB: I can relate to that feeling, for sure. I graduated from high school in 2009, but it was a very homophobic environment and it was very… That still lingers, to the point where I'm a very different person if I go back now.

NC: I can't even imagine a high-school reunion. I will never be able to do that. Not even college.

MB: No way. Somebody said to me, "Are you going to your reunion?" I was like, "Look, I will go to your high-school reunion, but I will not go to mine."

NC: I know. But I'm a different person, now that I understand that there's a world out there. I am so much more open—I see differently, I experience life differently, and that's a beautiful thing.

MB: Conceivably, you could be creating anywhere over the world, but when the purpose changes, does your mission change?

NC: What's been interesting in the past five years is that I've had the "studio-away-from-home studio". So, if I'm on my way to Sydney in November to install "Until," the project I did at MASS MoCA [Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art], I'm there for a month and a half, and find this is my new studio practice, that it's my studio- away-from-home studio. Chicago's my incubator—it allows me to experiment and test out ideas. It allows me to be clearer, get clearer. The way I work is that I'm pretty quiet until I'm ready to hit. But for the most part, I'm underground, producing and trying to come up with the next project and developing that, and then I present it to the world. It allows me to be protected, to not get distracted. Yes,

I could live in New York, but oh my God, if I was there, I don't know whether I would be as clear as I am today.

MB: Yeah.

NC: Because I would be so attracted to so many aspects of the arts that… Things need time to mature and to develop, for you to understand how they are to exist and function in the world. And if you do not give it [time], that becomes undeveloped.

MB: That makes a lot of sense, and I feel it all the time.

NC: I just never close the store—it took about 10 years for it to really take form. It takes time to really develop something, and once you understand that, that means your foundation is solid, you're able to build whatever you want on top of that.

MB: Right.

NC: So that's the beauty of where I'm at now in my career. These opportunities are extraordinary, but I understand them because I've been on that path for so long. Falling and getting back up, and having a clear understanding of the pros and cons. Now I'm in this extraordinary place of creativity and way of working, and

hopefully hosting the communities and providing other people platforms to stand on, and to see what's possible. That's the shit that's important —creating these platforms for people to see what is possible, what their future could look like.

MB: I definitely saw that in "The Let Go" with Jorell Williams and the Sing Harlem Choir. It's incredible. It was a very interesting piece for me, too, because… I'll tell you a story. There's an artist friend of mine, he's of Japanese descent in New York, and we were at an after-party for an art show and he asked me, "When you look in a mirror, what do you see as your identity?"

And I was kinda floored because I'd never thought about it, and it never felt important because people… People only recently—when I moved to New York—have started asking me about my ethnic background, something they might not ask somebody who's Caucasian or something like that. And I'm adopted, so I don't really know. I never know what to tell them. And one of my close friends eventually bought me one of those DNA tests, and I spat in a tube, I sent it away. Then I got the results, and I don't care because it doesn't really matter to me. It never really did. I'm North African and Italian, but I never really thought anything of it. So when I was watching "The Let Go," this process of all of these components being brought out to all these normal people, dancers, and then being equipped with all of these…

NC: Yeah, their rite of passage.

MB: And becoming something that's unrecognizable and unimportant in a way that… it's other, but it doesn't matter because it's all other. And that was a transformative thing, and I thought of the title, "The Let Go"—is that one of the things you're trying to highlight, that people should let go of these ideas of identity?

NC: Of self?

MB: Yeah.

NC: Yeah, that was part of it, and also, I was raised in a single-parent family. My father died when I was 17 and wasn't really that available when he was here. Luckily, I had great grandparents, grandfathers and uncles, who were extraordinary and who are extraordinary.

So the thing about "The Let Go" and working with these individuals, it was these testimonies that these kids were willing to share. And that this experience had given them permission to be who they need to be was just everything. So it was really about stripping down one's identity and building oneself. And no defining that through any particular [thing], but just what is your self-hood, what is that made up of, and how do you prove that? So they were all left with this certificate through this rite of passage.

And empowerment. It was very much about that. And at the same time, with the choir, with these kids who have never… who didn't even know that the armories existed… to be able to stand on that stage and to look around and think, "We're performing here."

MB: Right.

NC: In a city, in a place that we didn't know was available and possible.

MB: Right. It's not a very accessible venue, necessarily.

NC: Yeah. So it was about all of the above, and what you were talking about as well—that we're not defined by what we look like.

MB: It was pretty crazy for me to see that visually. You mentioned "Until" earlier—it started at MASS MoCA, right? In 2016?

NC: Yeah.

MB: You've had such a long and historic career, and that show… I haven't been yet, unfortunately. But from the pictures it looks very different and almost like stepping into your brain.

NC: “The Let Go” came before the Park Armory. [“Until”] was this immersive, kinetic installation, all those wind spinners spinning in that entire space by these little motives at the top. So it was this amazing journey in which you would find yourself moving through the spinner force, and then you would come up on this enormous, crystal, cloud-scape that you could then climb up to the top of and see above the object. That whole project came out of, I think it was Freddie Gray had just [died]. And I’m in the studio… you know, Trayvon, it goes on and on. So I’m in the studio and I’m thinking about all of this, and what popped into my mind was, “Is there racism in heaven?”

So that’s how MASS MoCA came about. Denise Markonish, curator of MASS MoCA, came to my studio in 2015, at the beginning of the year, and said, “We want to offer you gallery 5—we’ll be back in a year to see what you have decided to do.” And I hadn’t been thinking about it and then, all of a sudden, [Freddie’s death] triggered the project.

And so, through these horrific tragedies that we face daily, it was my next mission, my task, to deliver that project. I’m a messenger first, artist second. Once I came to terms with that, the art thing became very different for me. I’m not stressed ever. I don’t really think about it, because the work is not rooted there [in art]. Its formality is based there, but there’s a higher reason for the delivery.

MB: Maybe this is a bold question to ask, but if there’s something you’d want an audience to walk away with after experiencing any of your performances, what would it be?

NC: It’s really optimism and hope.

MB: I have a friend who’s a musician and he has these concerts—we did a profile on him in the last issue—and they’re a fun and crazy environment, and they’re really free. It’s like you can let go in them.

NC: I know what you mean.

MB: It’s real. There’s something, there’s a vibe that I… I don’t dance, I don’t usually get all rowdy, but there’s just some spiritual thing that allows you to just let go, you know?

NC: Yeah… Do you ever sit in silence?

MB: I wish I could. I’m horrible at it. My mind races like crazy.

NC: I sit in silence every day. And I’ve been sitting in silence for decades because, as a creative person, you’re the judge of the time you’re alone. And you’re just trying to make things, and you just need isolation to do that. And it’s gotten me clear. It’s gotten me to understand who I am. It has gotten me to face who I am. And I think if we were to sit in silence, if the world could sit in silence every day for one hour, I think we would live in a different world.

MB: That’s crazy. I think you’re right, it’s a great time for people to sit and reflect on—

NC: Exactly. That’s what’s gonna set you free. I can be working in the studio sometimes and then I’m bawling—just a disaster. But it’s just me trying to work through it and trying to bring understanding to why.

MB: Right. As opposed to repressing those feelings or—

NC: Or watching TV, with music on—

MB: Shopping. Retail shopping.

NC: Exactly.

MB: What’s next on your mind? I don’t necessarily mean what show have you got coming up next, I hate asking people that, but what do you want to accomplish next?

NC: Isn’t that the most horrific thing—that there’s always this thing of, “What’s next?”

MB: I know what you mean.

NC: The next thing that's on my mind is really… I really need to just take a break for once. I've got my show that opens in the fall at Jack Shainman, titled "If a Tree Falls". It's me looking at black-on-black crime. Hopefully you can make the opening.

MB: I'd love to.

NC: It opens in November, I think. I'm not sure of the exact date. And then I've got Times Square. I'm doing a video installation there on all the monitors, from December to February. I think it's every night at 11.45.

MB: That's so cool. How did that happen?

NC: Well, they used this program where it's midnight—I'm not sure what it's called—and they invite artists to do video work. It's a new art initiative.

MB: That's awesome. I can't think of anything since Barbara Kruger.

NC: I remember being in Times Square when I was 35, 40, thinking, "If only I could have these monitors." But that's the amazing thing about life—it's about dreaming. And for me that's how everything is possible. We must keep dreaming. We must keep making projects that allow us to dream. For me, these projects that I'm doing right now, I'm able to take a collective group of people, I'm able to ask them, "Are you willing to walk through this journey with me?" And that is everything to me, that I am not making these journeys alone. It's that I may have a concept or idea, but as you said before, I have always had a group of people, participants, who have always been part of my process—whether fabricators, dancers, musicians, or curators, they've always given me this amazing platform to dream.

MB: Do you dream?

NC: I don't dream a lot. Not in that sense, but I dream. I do these projects where I can't draw it, I have to make it. You have to trust that I can make it. If I say I can make it, I can make it. And I just need to be given the platform in order to play. That's how I'm able to take this collective group and walk into this dream.

MB: That's amazing. Where do you see the visual things that you're going to create? The dream world, the landscapes you form? Is that something that happens when you're sitting alone? Is that something that just strikes you?

NC: What I would like the future to look like is I would love to be able to create these projects, these dream projects, where they are permanent. All around the world, they would have permanent residencies. Like, "The Let Go" lives somewhere for ever, and it's performed for ever. "Until" is somewhere else in the world and it's there for ever. Because I think we need that. We need places to go where we can just surrender to the environment that we're experiencing.

MB: I'm sure they will.

NC: That's the first time I've ever said that. So that means I now have to put it out into the universe.

MB: Amazing. Is there any clue as to what we can expect to see in Times Square?

NC: No. I don't know. Because when it opens will be the first time I've seen it. I'm nearly 60 and at that scale… so, I can't even tell you what to expect. I know it will be immersive and it will be joyful, and scary, like it was when you first saw a [Soundsuit].

MB: Hey, if that's the entrance plan, I'm glad.

NC: Yeah. So, it's going to be all of that. But, again, it's one of these projects, like with every other project within the past five years, where I can only speculate, I can only say, "Hopefully it feels like this or that." But I don't know because I will be walking into it just as you will be.

MB: That sounds perfect.

NC: We could all go together, how about that?

MB: That sounds great. I'll sit on those stairs they have there in Times Square… I love going there at midnight. It's the only time I can tolerate it. There's something magical about it.

NC: Oh, yeah. You're surrounded by information and just visuals. It's an amazing feat to be consumed by consumerism and the insanity.

jackshainman.com (http://jackshainman.com)

A Public Art Project Devoted to Dismantling Racism at Every Level

With "Amends," the artists Nick Cave and Bob Faust have created a multipronged platform for self-scrutiny and, they hope, lasting change.

By Megan O'Grady

July 1, 2020

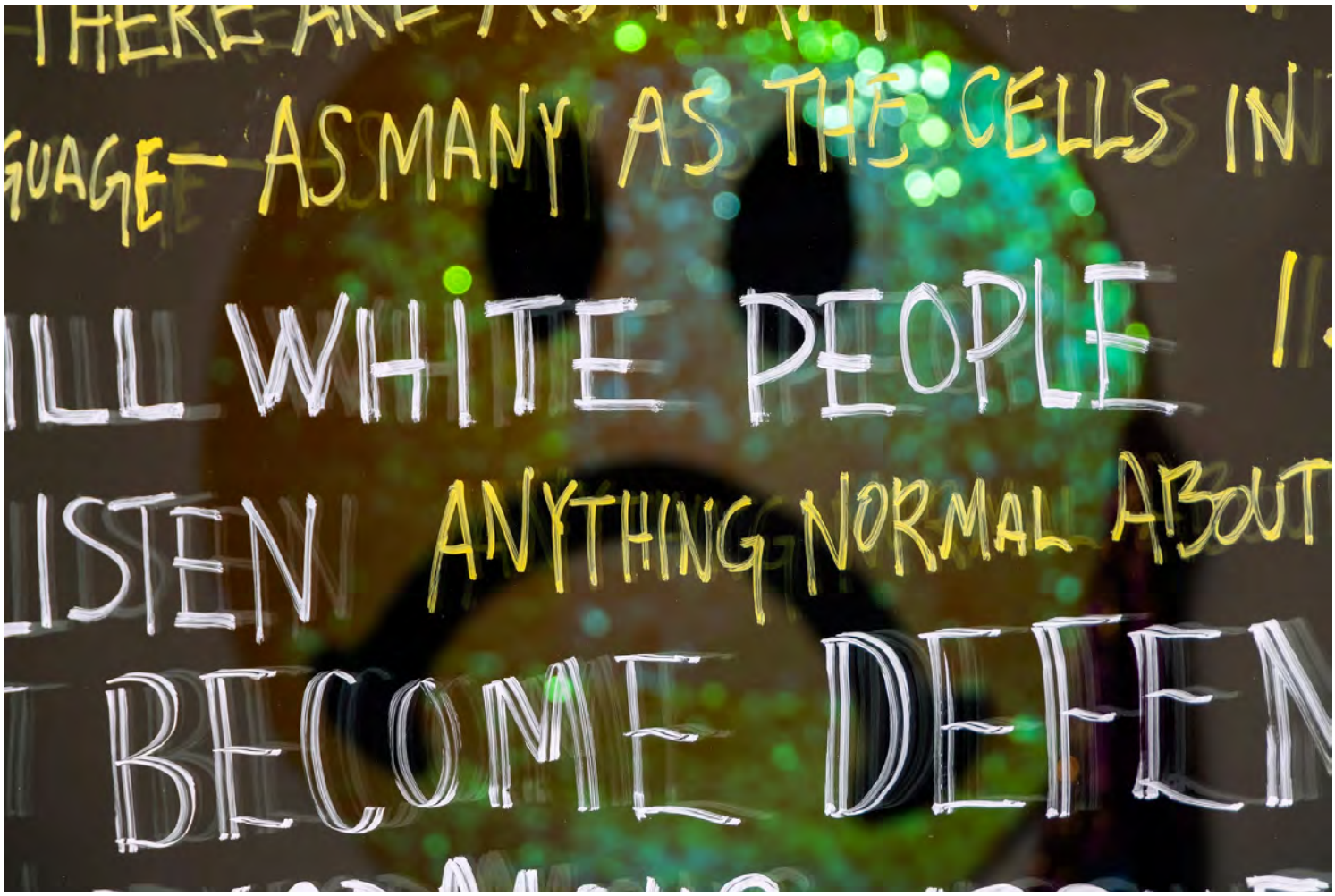
It's Juneteenth and at Facility, Bob Faust and Nick Cave's art lab and studio space in Chicago, the installation of the first component of their latest community-based project, "Amends," is underway. For it, the artists have invited friends and colleagues to hand-write personal testimonials on the gallery windows, to reflect honestly on aspects of themselves that have contributed to holding our society back from equality.

The result, "Letters to the World Toward the Eradication of Racism," ranges from inspirational mantras — Margaret Mead's quote "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it is the only thing that ever has" is printed in large caps across the storefront — to gut-wrenching personal confessions. "I was raised as a white supremacist," begins a letter by Michael Workman, an artist. There are admissions of complicity and silent acquiescence, regrets for words used and not used, apologies for taking easy paths or for acting out of fear of saying the wrong thing. Most of all, there are acknowledgments of vast unearned, unquestioned privilege and commitments to do better.

A detail of "Letters to the World Toward the Eradication of Racism" that includes a line from Cave: "If U Want to March About It, U Have to Talk About It."
James Prinz

“George Floyd was another tipping point for me,” says Cave, for whom the beating of Rodney King nearly three decades ago was a watershed moment in his career, leading him to create his Soundsuits, ornate, full-body assemblages designed to rattle and resonate with their wearer. In a profile of the artist last fall, I described them as a “kind of race-, class- and gender-obscuring armature, one that’s both insulating and isolating, an articulation of his profound sense of vulnerability as a Black man.” This year, the killing of Floyd, along with the fatal shootings of Breonna Taylor and Ahmaud Arbery, among others, have led all of us to wonder how much, if anything, has changed. “It made me question my own practice,” Cave says. “Is my work purposeful enough? Why does this keep happening? How can I do more? I’ve been working against this problem and for this issue my entire career and am more committed to it than ever. We all need to be talking about it. ‘Amends’ is one way I can ask all to contribute and to keep the conversations and momentum of right now.”

We have seen things we can never unsee; the frustration and fury that have compelled Americans to take to the streets in protest have led to reckonings at all levels and in all forms. We are, as a culture, in a process of self-scrutiny. For some, this means volunteering for progressive political candidates or raising awareness of any number of entrenched racist structures, including a for-profit carceral system, defunded public schools and gerrymandered voting districts. For others, it means taking the time to explain the history of redlining to our kids or committing to diverse hiring practices. Cave and Faust, his partner in work and life, not only want these reckonings to continue, they want them to go deeper. And for white Americans who are still asking, “Where do I even begin?” their answer is: Take a look in the mirror.



A detail of “Letters to the World Toward the Eradication of Racism.” James Prinz

A mixed-race couple (Cave is Black, Faust is white) whose collaborations have long sought to bring people together to address social concerns, the artists have never flinched from leading tough conversations about race and responsibility; their work showcases the potential power of community-engaged art in a highly individualistic, capitalist society. As Faust explains it, the origins of “Amends” came out of a talk they had after he returned from a march with his teenage daughter. Cave said to them, “If you want to march about it, you have to talk about it,” words that are now displayed prominently on the gallery windows.

Public art has already been powerfully felt as of late. From the spectacular murals of Floyd that have cropped up in cities across the country to the artist Jammie Holmes’s use of airplane banners bearing Floyd’s last words, and from screenings of Arthur Jafa’s landmark film “Love Is the Message, the Message Is Death” (2016) to the celebrations of Black creativity flooding social media, the importance of art

in our current civil rights movement is unquestionable. But how can Black artists, inevitably tasked with putting words and images to American brutality and injustice, reposition the burden to end racism by placing it where it should be — on white individuals? How to convert empathy to action, or frustration, righteousness and grief into something enduring?

The artist and Cave Studio assistant Nathan Hoyle contributing to the work. Bob Faust

Erin Diamond of the local nonprofit Uncharted transcribing a letter from Vicki Heyman, the co-founder of Uncharted and the co-author of “The Art of Diplomacy” (2019). Bob Faust

“We’re asking people to be vulnerable, and that’s a big ask,” says Faust. “To actually confront yourself, and then have to write it, and rewrite it, and rewrite it until it gets to a point that you’re actually raw and not just writing what you think you’re supposed to say.” Making amends won’t end with this project or in November, with the election, he points out; it is an ongoing process of rectifying wrongs. “Hopefully, with the commitment of real feelings to these things in a public way, we can take some of that anxiety away from an individual to do it. Because I think that’s what we all need to know — that we’re all guilty.”

During the second phase of the project, “Amends: Community Clothesline,” which begins next Thursday, anyone can stop by and write on yellow ribbons and tie them to a clothesline on the schoolyard across the street in a show of solidarity and commitment to change. But it’s perhaps the project’s final component, which asks for global participation in the form of a hashtag, #AMENDS, that is the most ambitious. “It is not a call out, but rather a call to action through acknowledgment and subsequent change in each of us,” the artists explain on their website. Everyone is invited to use the hashtag to acknowledge their own role in the common project. Taking responsibility, Cave and Faust remind us, isn’t just a matter of public performance but a necessary step in order for hearts and minds to move toward reconciliation. “At least for me,” explains Faust, “the moment you write something down it takes a different position in the body. Right?”

NICK CAVE

BOB FAUST

INTERVIEW BY MICHAEL BULLOCK
PHOTOGRAPHY BY VINCENT DILIO

apartamento - Chicago

In Chicago, on the border between Old Irving Park and Kilbourn Park, a 20-minute drive from the Loop, a rundown former textile factory, which had been dormant for the past decade, was thoughtfully rebuilt and combined with two adjoining properties. In the fall of 2018, shortly after it was completed, the newly renovated storefront windows were unveiled with giant text that boldly proclaimed: 'Love Thy Neighbor'. With this statement, the building reopened and Facility was born. Created by artist Nick Cave and designer Bob Faust, the new complex is home to a range of enterprises: Cave Studio, Faust Studio, and the partners' joint ventures, SoundsuitShop and the Facility Foundation. While the building's first floor was designed to streamline their work, a fast-paced production of interdisciplinary collaborations, art-making, and public programs, the second floor is its zen counterbalance: sparse, gallery-inspired living quarters where the non-stop couple can unwind and appreciate the work of other artists. Their personal collection is made up of Cave's friends, colleagues, and former students. Since the '90s, Cave and Faust have collaborated on everything from books and exhibitions to products and performances. In this time, Cave has gained worldwide acclaim as the inventor of the Soundsuit, an original hybrid of sculpture, fashion, and performance that began as an intuitive response to the Rodney King incident. In the past few years Cave has leveraged his stature to experiment with social-practice concepts on a large scale, with his 2016 MASS MoCA installation 'Until' (short for 'innocent until proven guilty') and 2018's 'The Let Go' at the Park Avenue Armory in New York City. Both art experiences broke down typical boundaries between artist and audience, creating joy through visual spectacle in order to engage diverse social groups in tough conversations about racial inequality, gun violence, and police brutality—problems that disproportionately affect Cave's hometown.

With the opening of Facility and its foundation, Cave and Faust are taking their commitment to community engagement a step further by using their own home as a platform for 'employing the collective powers of art and design as a means to empowerment and social change'.

apartamento - Nick Cave & Bob Faust

Is this your first interview since you finished this place?
Bob: Yes. We don't know what each other will say, so it's going to be interesting.

Well, let's start at the beginning. How did you meet?
Bob: We met in Chicago at the end of the '90s, right before Nick's career blew up. A mutual friend invited me to a clothing sale at his studio. He modified sweaters, like the ones we're wearing today. It was just like you might think: there was a rack of clothes and five friends hanging out. When I walked in, they were like, 'Oh, we've got new blood!'

So it wasn't instant romance?
Nick: Absolutely not. That took about 11 years. We both had our own lives, but we always enjoyed working together. After two books, I trusted his aesthetic; it's very much in line with mine. I was able to relax and let him do what he does. Collaboration allowed us to know each other on a deeper level than a typical romantic relationship might allow.
Bob: Plus we didn't have any of the garbage that a new relationship ordinarily comes with, where there's a lot of—I don't want to say faking, but you're putting on your very best. It's not necessarily who you are every day. Our relationship started from respect for each other's work.

So I had to try one on. Nick approached me with a stack of sweaters he'd chosen for me and asked what I did; I told him I was a graphic designer. He said he was making a book for his first show and was looking for a designer, so I invited him to my studio. I said, 'If you like what I do then maybe we can trade', and he did, so we ended up collaborating. He told me, 'I don't want it to be a book. I want it to be an object'. I thought that was the coolest creative brief, and we loved working together. So after that we manufactured a project to collaborate on every year for the next six years, and we gradually became friends.

Nick: In those years we didn't hang out that much. We worked and we'd go running together, but nothing social.

Who crossed that line first?
Bob: That's blurry.
Nick: The feeling was just there, and we both knew it.

How were your lives together set up prior to this new configuration?
Nick: For the last eight years as a couple we were living in separate places.
Bob: We have always continued collaborating. We make projects together constantly.

And Nick's practice kept growing and growing. I eventually moved my studio as close as I could to his studio/home.
Nick: In 2010 the September issue of *Vogue* ran a story on me, and we decided to make a pop-up shop in celebration. So we started a company together called SoundsuitShop that made Soundsuit-based products: stationery, water bottles, T-shirts, sketchbooks, magnets.
Bob: His work was going from gallery spaces into pop culture, and what's more popular culture than retail? We designed hundreds of products for the SoundsuitShop. After that, we've always had some sort of pop-up within the retail stores at museums. When you visit

Bob: That's when the pattern-making started and it became big. We didn't want you to feel like you were in a museum store when you left the exhibition. We wanted it to be almost another art experience, but it's retail, so it's blurry. That was the most comprehensive project we've ever done together, because it was not about making one show or one book; we created a company. The Seattle Art Museum exhibition proved that it could really be a business.
Nick: It was a success.
Bob: It was the most product they'd ever sold. I think because it was not just applying images of his work onto standard objects. His values were integrated into every design.

a Nick Cave exhibition, it's overwhelming. It's joyous. It's profound. And then you go home to share it, but it's hard to talk about, because what did I just see? Sculpture? Fashion? Visual art? Performance? We were trying to transfer some of that feeling into objects you could bring home that could help explain the complexity.
Nick: The Seattle Art Museum summer show was the first exhibition to host the shop, and they gave us an entire space for it. That's when we started to look at installation very differently, asking ourselves, 'How do we create a massive environment that could support all that product and be an experience in itself?' That's when Bob started adding wall work.

Nick, the invention of your Soundsuits began as your reaction to racial injustice?
Nick: It was a response to what happened to Rodney King and the LA riots. Our consciousness isn't fully awake until something extreme happens. And then you're like, 'Oh shit'. And that's what happened to me. When that incident happened, I was deeply affected by it. I was teaching at the Art Institute. My colleagues were all white and I just felt like I couldn't talk to them about it, and they certainly weren't going to bring it up, so I found myself alone trying to process all these difficult emotions. I just happened to be in the park, and there were twigs on the ground and I saw them

as discarded. I don't know why. I just started collecting them. I went home and made this object, and that was the beginning of knowing that my work, going forward, would be based within social practice. I made 12 suits and got my friends to parade with me. It was like the outside world became my canvas.

Your 2016 MASS MoCA show, 'Until', allowed you to bring your social-practice experimentation to the public at an incredible scale.
Nick: This summer it's coming back to a new space called the Momentary, in Arkansas. It went from Massachusetts to Sydney, Australia, to Scotland, and then back to America.

Bob: That exhibition was a new vision of what a town hall could be.
Nick: Yeah, that show and 'The Let Go' at the Park Avenue Armory in New York City: those are the new models. I've been thinking: how do we create spaces that really allow us to collectively come together? That allow us to invite performance of all sorts? My work can function more like a call and response.

So you offer a spectacular visual experience that becomes a destination, but you keep the space open for engagement with local community organisations and the artist.
Nick: We have to ask ourselves when we're coming together, 'What does it mean?' We don't really engage collectively in anything other than celebratory moments. And perhaps we should all stop and introduce ourselves to one another. I'm thinking more about what an artist's responsibility is, in terms of effecting change.

'Until' let different segments of society that normally don't connect come together for direct dialogue. I read that two police precincts participated in discussions with local teenagers about police brutality and gun violence.
Bob: There's the platform part, too. We invited other artists to make new work inspired by his exhibition. The MASS MoCA show was about gun violence, but it's an artwork, so it's not telling you exactly how to deal with that. And so you invite another artist to perform a movement piece within it. Now you've got that person's feelings, emotions, and reactions to it. It's not precisely what Nick put out there; it becomes augmented by someone else's work. And that's a really awesome way of extending the conversation.
Nick: There's not one way. I want to change the way we engage with one another and use art as a platform for diplomacy, but it's also about changing the way we use a museum. It's an experience, and the audience is an active part of that experience.

How do you bring new collaborators into an exhibition like 'Until' or a performance like 'The Let Go'?
Nick: We scout the towns and cities we're working in and find amazing talents. I'm telling you, it's mind-boggling. Then basically we go into a residency for two weeks with everybody that's involved in the performance. We pull up our sleeves and get our feet on the ground. These performers may have played for small audiences, but when you shift the scale to 4,000 people watching, it's just a whole different experience.

That must give them a tremendous amount of confidence.

Bob: To acknowledge that somebody's passion is legitimate and worthy is incredibly powerful.
Nick: I get what I'm doing when I work within a community. It's like it all comes together. The way I think about it is that we bring projects to a city and we invite that community to help build them. That's really what I've always been interested in. And so in each new place we have no idea what the hell we're getting ourselves into. But it's been life-changing.

Where do you think this drive comes from to use your art and extend your stature in a way that creates opportunities for younger or less established artists?
Nick: My upbringing. My mom was a single mother with seven boys. And there was this family that lived down the street from us that we would help feed. That moment when we took them their dinner, I would feel so bad for them.
Bob: I see it all the time, though whenever we do a show Nick's always got a group of people that want to learn from him. And then all of a sudden you see these little mentorship moments. That's the teacher in him. There's no reason at this point in his career that he should be teaching twice a week, when he's got so much to do here. But he can't help it because he gets so much back from it. Teaching's his platform too. It's all the same.

Nick: I'm a messenger. I use art as a means of delivering these deeds. I'm able to do the kind of work that I do because I'm in it for different reasons.

It's a good segue into discussing this place, which you named Facility. It's home to both of your studios, your living quarters, and your foundation, whose mission is about 'employing the collective powers of art and design as a means to empowerment and social change'. Here, you're able to further engage in that directly on a daily basis.
Bob: With Facility, the people we're collaborating with couldn't matter more, because

they're our neighbours. We'll actually see the neighbourhood kids grow over the next year or 10 years.

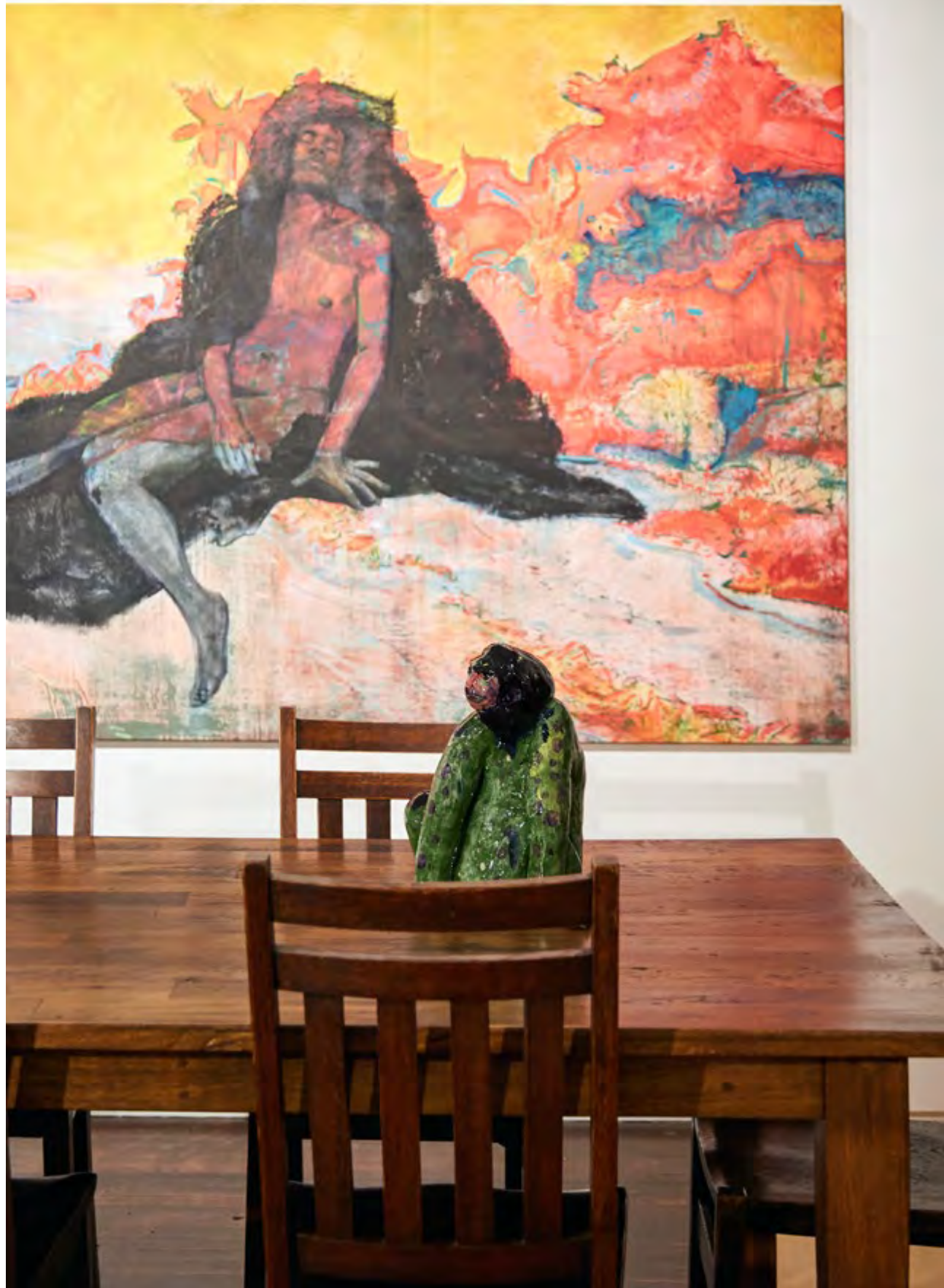
You opened with a large-scale collaborative text piece that spanned your storefront gallery windows with the words: 'Love Thy Neighbor'.
Bob: Yes. We reached out to schools and the chamber of commerce and found a few neighbours that helped out as representatives. We bought 7,000 red and white old-fashioned nametags, and we sent out packages that explained who we are and what Facility is. We asked people to introduce themselves by writing their name or drawing something that might represent who they are on one of the tags. Art teachers loved the idea and reached out to all of their classes, and we got hundreds of them back right away. And in restaurants and businesses around town, we made little kiosks and collected them that way. The neighbourhood representatives literally went to each house on the block and said, 'Here's what the project is, can you pass these on to your neighbour?' In a week we collected almost all 7,000 of them. Then we bought 7,000 suction cups and arranged the red and white nametags across all the windows so that it spelt out 'Love Thy Neighbor'. From across the street at the high school, you could clearly read 'Love Thy Neighbor', but you couldn't read the individual names obviously, because they're too tiny. But when you walked on the street next to the windows you couldn't read 'Love Thy Neighbor'; you could only read the individual names. So it had this amazing double read.
Nick: A lot of the drawings were amazing!

What a thoughtful way to begin.
Bob: Instead of 'we're taking over', our ethos is 'we're all in this together'. The community got to see the project they participated in published in the *New York Times*! And in the schools, teachers had a reason to talk about identity. The kids also got to experience firsthand that art isn't only a drawing on the wall. It could also be conceptual.
Nick: We had schools visit every day! They all came to read 'Love Thy Neighbor'! I hope it was a little bit mind-opening.

When you were planning Facility Foundation's goals, did you both instinctually know what you wanted?
Bob: It was pretty clear, because this is what we've always been doing.
Nick: Once we chose this building, with these storefront windows, we knew this should be a presentation space. And because we own the building, we can make anything we want happen here.
Bob: We are programming it regularly. It doesn't have to be visual art; it could be events based around food or music. It could be anything.
Nick: It's going to be all those things. Knowing that we have this platform to offer to all sorts of artists, we hope they will also help us imagine what's possible.
Bob: And it's fun! The second show, 'Disturbed Awakening', had three pieces: work by Carley Brandau, Shihui Zhou, and Katrin Schnabl, in collaboration with Anne Guitteau. Each artist addressed their most personal and pressing issue, the omnipresent kind that pushes and pulls on our decision-making, consciously or subconsciously. All three sculptures were white. So as different as their subjects were, they were unified visually and together made this really awesome beacon. We wanted to attract attention to each individual piece, but collectively their visual impact made you stop to take a look, and then you could break it down. We did the opening totally on the street. We brought food carts outside, and it became a block party.

It's very quiet here right now on Sunday night, but what's a typical workday like?
Bob: As busy as it is, it's a pretty zen space.
Nick: Everyone's here at 9am. It's about 10 people. Even so, it stays very chill.
Bob: It's quiet compared to what we had before; my studio was a mile from his, and his studio was in four different spaces on three different floors. In order to make anything happen you had to move something to this room and find something from that room and get in the elevator and go down the stairs. Now we can just slide around these walls. No more of that *Tetris* work.

So this new building is an incredible streamlining of your lives.
Bob: Massive. That's why we have time to give to Facility. Because we're not tracking parts, not driving to meetings. That was brutal. Nick's already busy enough. You used to have to make an appointment just to have a



two-minute conversation with him. And now we can keep things moving.

One of the reasons I was so curious to see your living space is because Nick's work is so intricate; every sculpture has a million pieces.
Bob: So our living quarters are very sparse.

Because you needed a retreat from visual overstimulation?
Nick: We have all that down here. I need to be able to go upstairs and just settle. But, you know, we're surrounded by our destiny. That has a lot to do with this.

What do you mean?
Nick: That's what art is for me. Bob, how do you view this place?
Bob: It has decluttered my mind. Everything here feels a little slower. Even though it's intensely busy.

When you moved in, how did you furnish it? Did you buy all new furniture, or are these pieces you'd both previously owned?
Bob: There's a lot of Nick's, but most of the giant stuff we collected together over time, like the science-lab tables with those sliding stools, or that snaky bench.

Tell me about the mismatched vintage living room sofas.
Bob: Nick said, 'I have an idea for the sofas; you might think it's a little crazy. Let's try it'. And we did. It just made sense and looks so good. I like that it takes old pieces of furniture and turns them into a definitive contemporary statement.

Same with the hornet's nest in the reading room. Were you in agreement about keeping it?
Nick: We were both crazy about it. The construction team found it and asked, 'What do you want us to do?' We were like, 'Do not touch it, build around it'. Of course they thought we were crazy, but it looks stunning.
Bob: Contractors want to make everything look brand new. We wanted to hold on to as much of the building's character from when we first saw it as possible.

And because you've collaborated for many years, a massive project like this—
Bob: The architecture part was easy.

Whose idea was that brilliant closet that doubles as a secret hallway connecting the kitchen to the bedroom?
Bob: That was both of us talking together with the architect. We agreed that we wanted almost everything to be hidden, to allow for this amazing gallery.
Nick: None of this art collection was ever in the other space. The closet is our behind the scenes; everything's in there.
Bob: At least you know we really live here, right?
Nick: And we cook here too.

But your kitchen looks like no one's ever touched it.
Nick: Really? We cook a lot and barbecue all the time. But my thing is that you have to clean it.
Bob: Nick's a bit of a clean freak. I'm neat, but I don't like to clean.

It must be a big adjustment for both of you to learn how to share one space after being a couple with two apartments for so long.
Bob: I try to be a little neater, but I also purposely don't make it perfect.

I won't touch that! But before I go I would like to ask, since it's been almost 30 years since the first Soundsuits were made, how does it feel for each of you when you wear them today?
Bob: When you put them on, and I've been in many different kinds, they all require a lot of you. They're not so heavy that you're overly burdened, but it's a lot of extra weight that you're not used to carrying. A lot of times it puts you off balance, because they can make you five feet taller than you normally are, so there's so much more on top of you. They also restrict your movement, and the ones that you perform in can get very hot. At first these things take a lot away from you, but what's funny is they also give you a ton of energy. It amps you up, and you almost feel superhuman.
Nick: What wearing them has always done for me is erase my identity and allow me to be whatever I want. It's very liberating to surrender and become something other. That whole process is therapeutic.

THE NEW YORK TIMES STYLE MAGAZINE

Using materials that range from twigs to crystals to rainbow-colored hair, the artist makes sculptures that, for all their beauty, are visceral and necessary critiques of racial injustice.

Nick Cave, photographed in his Chicago studio on June 6, 2019. Renée Cox

By Megan O'Grady
Oct. 15, 2019

THE INAUGURATION OF Nick Cave's Facility, a new multidisciplinary art space on Chicago's Northwest Side, has the feeling of a family affair. In April, inside the yellow-brick industrial building, the classical vocalist Brenda Wimberly and the keyboardist Justin Dillard give a special performance for a group that includes local friends, curators and educators, as well as Cave's high school art teacher, Lois Mikrut, who flew in from North

Carolina for the event. Outside, stretching across the windows along Milwaukee Avenue, is a 70-foot-long mosaic made of 7,000 circular name tags with a mix of red and white backgrounds, each of them personalized by local schoolchildren and community members. They spell out the message “Love Thy Neighbor.”

The simple declaration of togetherness and shared purpose is a mission statement for the space, a creative incubator as well as Cave’s home and studio, which he shares with his partner, Bob Faust, and his older brother Jack. It’s also a raison d’être for Cave, an uncategorizable talent who has never fit the mold of the artist in his studio. Best known for his Soundsuits — many of which are ornate, full-body costumes designed to rattle and resonate with the movement of the wearer — his work, which combines sculpture, fashion and performance, connects the anxieties and divisions of our time to the intimacies of the body.

[Sign up here for the T List newsletter, a weekly roundup of what T Magazine editors are noticing and coveting now.]

Exhibited in galleries or worn by dancers, the suits — fanciful assemblages that include bright pelts of dyed hair, twigs, sequins, repurposed sweaters, crocheted doilies, gramophones or even stuffed sock-monkey dolls, their eerie grins covering an entire supersize garment — are compulsively, unsettlingly decorative. Some are amusingly creature-like; others are lovely in an almost ecclesiastical way, bedecked with shimmering headpieces embellished with beads and porcelain birds and other discarded tchotchkes he picks up at flea markets. Even at the level of medium, Cave operates against entrenched hierarchies, elevating glittery consumer detritus and traditional handicrafts like beadwork or sewing to enchanting heights.

The artist recalls the first time he saw Barkley L. Hendricks’s painting “Steve” (1976). By Scott J. Ross

In invigorating performances that often involve collaborations with local musicians and choreographers, the Soundsuits can seem almost shaman-esque, a contemporary spin on *kukeri*, ancient European folkloric creatures said to chase away evil spirits. They recall as well something out of Maurice Sendak, ungainly wild things cutting loose on the dance floor in a gleeful, liberating rumpus. The surprising movements of the Soundsuits, which change depending on the materials used to make them, tend to guide Cave's performances and not the other way around. There is something ritual-like and purifying about all the whirling hair and percussive music; the process of dressing the dancers in their 40-pound suits resembles preparing samurai for battle. After each performance, the suits made of synthetic hair require tender grooming, like pets. Cave's New York gallerist, Jack Shainman, recalls the time he assisted in the elaborate process of brushing them out — "I was starting to bug out, because there were 20 or 30 of them" — only to have Cave take over and do it all himself. Much beloved and much imitated (as I write this, an Xfinity ad is airing in which a colorful, furry-suited creature is buoyantly leaping about), they can be found in permanent museum collections across America.

Their origins are less intellectual than emotional, as Cave tells it, and they're both playful and deadly serious. He initially conceived of them as a kind of race-, class- and gender-obscuring armature, one that's both insulating and isolating, an articulation of his profound sense of vulnerability as a black man. Using costume to unsettle and dispel assumptions about identity is part of a long tradition of drag, from Elizabethan drama to Stonewall and beyond; at the same time, the suits are the perfect expression of W.E.B. Du Bois's idea of double consciousness, the psychological adjustments black Americans make in order to survive within a white racist society, a vigilant, anticipatory awareness of the perceptions of others. It's no coincidence that Cave made the first Soundsuit in 1992, after the beating of Rodney King by the Los Angeles Police Department in 1991, a still-vivid racial touchstone in American history; almost three decades later, the suits are no less timely. "It was an almost inflammatory response," he remembers, looking shaken as he recalls watching King's beating on television 28 years ago. "I felt like my identity and who I was as a human being was up for question. I felt like that could have been me. Once that incident occurred, I was existing very differently in the world. So many things were going through my head: How do I exist in a place that sees me as a threat?"

Cave had begun teaching at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, with its predominately white faculty, two years before, and in the aftermath of the incident, followed by the acquittal of the officers responsible, he felt his isolation painfully. "I really felt there was no one there I could talk to. None of my colleagues addressed it. I just felt like, 'I'm struggling with this, this is affecting my people.' I would think that someone would be empathetic to that and say, 'How are you doing?' I held it all in internally. And that's when I found myself sitting in the park," he says. In Grant Park, around the corner from his classroom, he started gathering twigs — "something that was discarded, dismissed, viewed as less. And it became the catalyst for the first Soundsuit."

For many years after he began making his signature work, Cave deliberately avoided the spotlight, shying away from an adoring public: “I knew I had the ability, but I wasn’t ready, or I didn’t want to leave my friends behind. I think this grounded me, and made me an artist with a conscience. Then, one day, something said, ‘Now or never,’ and I had to step into the light.” Initially, he wasn’t prepared for the success of the Soundsuits. For much of the ’90s, “I literally shoved all of them into the closet because I wasn’t ready for the intensity of that attention,” Cave says. He began exhibiting the Soundsuits at his first solo shows, mostly in galleries across the Midwest; he’s since made more than 500 of them. They’ve grown alongside Cave’s practice, evolving from a form of protective shell to an outsize, exuberant expression of confidence that pushes the boundaries of visibility. They demand to be seen.

From left: a 2012 Soundsuit made from buttons, wire, bugle beads, wood and upholstery; a 2013 Soundsuit made from mixed media including a vintage bunny, safety-pin craft baskets, hot pads, fabric and metal; a 2009 Soundsuit made from human hair; a 2012 Soundsuit made from mixed media including sock monkeys, sweaters and pipe cleaners.

From left: “Speak Louder,” a 2011 Soundsuit sculpture made from buttons, wire, bugle beads, upholstery and metal; a 2010 Soundsuit made from mixed media including hats, bags, rugs, metal and fabric; a 1998 Soundsuit made from mixed media including twigs, wire and metal.

Following the phenomenal success of the Soundsuits, Cave's focus has expanded to the culture that produced them, with shows that more directly implicate viewers and demand civic engagement around issues like gun violence and racial inequality. But increasingly, the art that interests Cave is the art he inspires others to make. With a Dalloway-like genius for bringing people from different walks of life to the table in experiences of shared good will, Cave sees himself as a messenger first and an artist second, which might sound more than a touch pretentious if it weren't already so clear that these roles have, for some time, been intertwined. In 2015, he trained youth from an L.G.B.T.Q. shelter in Detroit to dance in a Soundsuit performance. The same year, during a six-month residency in Shreveport, La., he coordinated a series of bead-a-thon projects at six social-service agencies, one dedicated to helping people with H.I.V. and AIDS, and enlisted dozens of local artists into creating a vast multimedia production in March of 2016, "As Is." In June 2018, he transformed New York's Park Avenue Armory, a former drill hall converted into an enormous performance venue, into a Studio 54-esque disco experience with his piece — part revival, part dance show, part avant-garde ballet —called "The Let Go," inviting attendees to engage in an unabashedly ecstatic free dance together: a call to arms and catharsis in one. Last summer, with the help of the nonprofit Now & There, a public art curator, he enlisted community groups in Boston's Dorchester neighborhood to collaborate on a vast collage that will be printed on material and wrapped around one of the area's unoccupied buildings; in September, also in collaboration with Now & There, he led a parade that included local performers from the South End to Upham's Corner with "Augment," a puffy riot of deconstructed inflatable lawn ornaments — the Easter bunny, Uncle Sam, Santa's reindeer — all twisted up in a colossal Frankenstein bouquet of childhood memories. Cave understands that the lost art of creating community, of joining forces to accomplish a task at hand, whether it's beading a curtain or mending the tattered social fabric, depends upon igniting a kind of dreaming, a gameness, a childlike ability to imagine ideas into being. But it also involves recognizing the disparate histories that divide and bind us. The strength of any group depends on an awareness of its individuals.

FACILITY IS THE next iteration of that larger mission, and Cave and Faust, a graphic designer and artist, spent years looking for the right space. Creating it required a great deal of diplomacy and determination, as well as an agreeable alderman to assist with the zoning changes and permits. And while it evokes Warhol's Factory in name, in intent, the approximately 20,000-square-foot former mason's workshop has a very different cast.

"Facilitating, you know, projects. Energies. Individuals. Dreams. Every day, I wake up, he wakes up, and we're like, 'O.K. How can we be of service in a time of need?'" says Cave, who gave me a tour in the fall of 2018, not long after he and Faust settled into the space. Dressed entirely in black — leather pants and a sweater, and sneakers with metallic accents — the 60-year-old artist has a dancer's bearing (he trained for several summers in the early '80s at a program in Kansas City run by the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater) and an aura of kindness and irrepressible positivity. One wants to have what he's having. "Girl, you can wear anything," he reassures me when I fret about the green ruched dress I'm wearing, which under his discerning gaze suddenly strikes me as distinctly caterpillar like. It comes as no surprise that Cave's favorite adjective is "fabulous."

Vintage bird figurines in the artist's studio. Renée Cox

In contrast to his maximalist art practice, his fashion tastes have grown more austere, as of late, and include vintage suits and monochrome classics from Maison Margiela, Rick Owens and Helmut Lang. "I have a fabulous sneaker collection," he says. "But you know, the reason why is because those floors at the school are so hard," he says, referring to the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, where he is now a professor of Fashion, Body and Garment. (I also teach at the school, in a different department.) "I

can't wear a hard shoe, I have to wear a sneaker," he says. Faust teases him: "I love how you've just justified having that many sneakers."

Cave met Faust, who runs his own business from Facility, in addition to supporting the artist as his special projects director, when he happened to stop by a sample sale of Cave's clothing designs in the early 2000s. The Soundsuits are, for all intents and purposes, a kind of clothing, so fashion has been a natural part of Cave's artistic practice since the beginning — he studied fiber arts as an undergraduate at the Kansas City Art Institute, where he first learned to sew. In 1996, he started a namesake fashion line for men and women that lasted a decade. If the Soundsuits resist categorization as something to wear in everyday life, they arrive at their unclassifiable beauty by taking the basic elements of clothing design — stitching, sewing, understanding how a certain material falls or looks with another kind of material — and exaggerating them into the realm of atmospheric psychedelia. That he teaches in the fashion department at an art school further underscores the thin line Cave has always walked between clothing and sculpture, all of it preoccupied in some way with the human body, its form and potential energy. His own clothing designs are slightly — only slightly — more practical variations on the Soundsuits: loud embroidered sweaters, crocheted shirts with sparkly jewelry. "He came in and was like, 'These clothes are so out there, I can't wear any of this,'" Cave recalls, laughing. (Faust politely bought a sweater and still wears it today.) At the time, the artist was about to publish his first book and asked Faust to design it; the collaboration was a success, and Faust has subsequently designed all of Cave's publications. About eight years ago, the nature of the relationship changed. "Before that, I was single for 10 years. I was always traveling, and who is going to handle all of that?" Cave says. "But Bob already knew who I was, and that makes all the difference. Being with someone who is a visionary in his own right and using this platform as a place of consciousness — it's very important to me."

In this clip from Cave's "Here," the artist's Soundsuits are captured in Detroit. © Nick Cave. Courtesy of The Artist And Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.

Upstairs is the couple's living space and selections from Cave's personal art collection: a Kehinde Wiley here, a Kerry James Marshall there. (A lesson from Cave: Buy work from your friends before they become famous.) Cave and Faust opted to leave the floors and walls scarred, bearing the traces of its former use as an industrial building. In a small, sunny room off the kitchen, one corner of the ceiling is left open to accommodate an abandoned wasp's nest, a subtle, scrolled masterpiece of found architecture. Faust's teenage daughter also has a bedroom, and Jack, an artist with a design bent, has an adjacent apartment.

Downstairs, in the cavernous work space big enough to host a fashion show, musical or dance performance, are Cave's and Faust's studios. Some of Cave's assistants — he has six of them, Faust has one — are applying beads on a vast, multistory tapestry, a project for Chicago's O'Hare International Airport called "Palimpsest." "It'll all be gathered and bustled, so there's layers and layers of color. Kind of like an old billboard that, over time, weathers, and layers come off and you see the history," Cave explains. A front gallery is a flexible space where video art visible from the street could be projected — a nod to Cave's first job out of art school, designing window displays for Macy's — or young artists could be invited to display work around a shared theme. Facility has already established an art competition and prizes for Chicago Public School students and funded a special award for graduate fashion students at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. "There are lots of creative people that do amazing things but just have never had a break," Cave says. "And so to be able to host them in some way, these are the sort of things that are important to us, so we thought, 'Why not?'"

AWKWARD PERSONAL disclosures. Long evaluative silences. Talk of "coming to form." Art-school crits — sessions in which a professor reviews his students' work — are all pretty similar, but Cave's are famous both for their perspicacity and warmth. For all his multi-hyphenates, "teacher" may be the role that best sums up his totality of being. "When someone believes in your work, it changes how you see your future," he says when we meet in the vast, light-filled studios in downtown Chicago, where the graduate fashion students are working.

It's the second-to-last crit of the year for Cave's first-year students in the two-year M.F.A. program, and the pressure is on to develop their own distinct visual language before they begin their thesis projects in the fall. One woman from Russia has made a set of dresses from delicate organic 3-D-printed shapes — mushrooms, flowers — sewing them together and arranging them on a mannequin; they resemble exquisite body cages. Cave suggests that she should work in muslin on a flat surface rather than directly on the mannequin in order to make the silhouette "less uptight."

hugging or kissing. It was just part of the infrastructure." Personal space was limited but respected, a chart of chores was maintained, and creative projects were always afoot (his aunts are seamstresses; his grandmother was a quilter). Hand-me-downs were individually customized by each new wearer. "I had to find ways of finding my identity through deconstructing," he recalls. "So, if I didn't want to be in my brother's jacket, I'd take off the sleeves and replace it with plaid material. I was already in that process of cutting and putting things back together and finding a new vocabulary through dress."

A detail of Cave's 2019 "Augment" installation, made from inflatable lawn ornaments.
Renée Cox

The artist tells an illuminating story about his mother, who managed the household on one income and would still often find ways to send food to a struggling family in the neighborhood. Once, during a particularly tight month, she came home from work to realize that there was no food left in the house except dried corn. And so she made a party of it, showing her sons a movie on television and popping the corn. “It doesn’t take much to shift how we experience something,” says Cave, recalling how she would entertain them simply by putting a sock on her hand and changing her voice to create a character. “It’s nothing, but it’s everything,” he says. “You’re just totally captivated. It’s these moments of fantasy and belief that’s also informed how I go about my work.”

Fashion’s transformative power was also something he understood young, beginning with watching his older female relatives attend church in their fancy hats. In high school, Cave and Jack, who is two years older, experimented with platform shoes and two-tone flared pants. High fashion came to town, literally, via the Ebony Fashion Fair, a traveling show launched and produced between 1958 and 2009 by Eunice W. Johnson, the co-founder of Johnson Publishing Company, which published Ebony and Jet magazines, both cultural bibles for black America. “Ebony magazine was really the first place we saw people of color with style and power and money and vision, and that fashion show would travel to all of these small towns,” he reminisces. “Honey, black runway back in the day was a spectacle. It’s not just walking down the runway. It was almost like theater. And I’m this young boy just eating it up and feeling like I’m just in a dream, because it’s all fabulous and I just admire beauty to that extreme. I was just completely consumed by that.” His high school teachers encouraged him to apply to the Kansas City Art Institute, where he and Jack would stage fashion shows, which felt more like performance pieces thanks to Cave’s increasingly outré clothing designs. “I just had what I needed to have in order to be the person I need to be,” Cave says.

Also harrowingly formative to Cave’s outlook was the AIDS crisis, which was at its deadly height while he was in graduate school at the Cranbrook Academy of Art in Michigan in the late ’80s. He became painfully aware of the function of denial in our culture, and the extent of people’s unwillingness to see. “Watching my friends die played a big part in my perspective,” he says. “In those moments, you have a choice to be in denial with them or to be present, to be the one to say, ‘This is happening.’ You have to make a decision to go through that process with them, to pick up their parents at the airport, to clean to get their apartments ready for their parents to stay. And then you have to say goodbye, and then they’re gone, and you’re packing up their belongings to send to their families. And then you’re just left there in an empty apartment, not knowing what to feel.” In a single year, he lost five friends and confronted his own mortality waiting for his test results. “Just —choosing not to be in denial in any circumstance,” he says.

THE VULNERABILITY OF the black body in a historically white context is a subject generations of African-American artists have contended with, perhaps most iconically in Glenn Ligon’s 1990 untitled etching, in which the phrase “I feel most colored when I am thrown against a sharp white background,” adapted from Zora Neale Hurston’s 1928 essay “How It Feels to Be Colored Me,” is printed over and over again in black stencil on a white canvas, the words blurring as they travel the length of the canvas. In her book “Citizen: An American Lyric” (2014), the poet Claudia Rankine, writing about Serena Williams, puts it this way: “The body has a memory. The physical carriage hauls more than its weight. The body is the threshold across which each objectionable call passes into consciousness — all the unintimidated, unblinking and unflappable resilience does not erase the moments lived through, even as we are eternally stupid or everlastingly optimistic, so ready to be inside, among, a part of the games.”

The individual body has a memory, and so do collective bodies, retaining a longer and longer list of names — Eric Garner on Staten Island, Michael Brown in Missouri, Trayvon Martin in Florida and so many more innocent black people who have suffered violence and death at the hands of police — within it. But that day in 1992, hurrying back to his studio with a cart full of twigs and setting out to build a sculpture from them, Cave had no idea that the result would be a garment. “At first, it didn’t occur to me that I could wear it; I wasn’t thinking about it.” When he finally did put it on and moved around, it made a sound. “And that was the beginning,” he says. “The sound was a way of alarming others to my presence. The suit became a suit of armor where I hid my identity. It was something ‘other.’ It was an answer to all of these things I had been thinking about: What do I do to protect my spirit in spite of all that’s happening around me?” Throughout the Soundsuits’ countless iterations, Cave has tinkered with their proportions, thinking about the shapes of power, constructing forms that recall a pope’s miter or the head of a missile. Some of them are 10 feet tall.

But no matter their variations, these Soundsuit designs have always felt personal and unique, as if only Cave himself could have invented them. And yet he is also aware of how the pain he is addressing in these works is also written into our culture: There is a long lineage of casual cruelty that has shaped Cave’s art. His 2014 installation at Jack Shainman Gallery, “Made by Whites for Whites,” was inspired by an undated ceramic container Cave found in a flea market that, when pulled off the shelf, revealed itself to be the cartoonishly painted disembodied head of a black man.

“Spittoon,” read the label. Renting a cargo bay, Cave toured the country in search of the most racially charged memorabilia he could find. The centerpiece of the show, “Sacrifice,” features a bronze cast of Cave’s own hands and arms, holding another severed head, this one part of an old whack-a-mole type carnival game —simultaneously lending compassion to the object while implicating its beholder. Look, Cave is saying. If we’re ever going to move past this hatred, we have to acknowledge what it is that produced it.

A collection of racially charged salt and pepper shakers that Cave found in a flea market and keeps in his studio. Renée Cox

“It’s not that Nick doesn’t have a dark side,” Denise Markonish, the senior curator and managing director of exhibitions at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art in North Adams, Mass., tells me. Markonish approached Cave in 2013 about planning an exhibition for the museum’s largest gallery. “He wants to seduce you and punch you in the gut.” The result, the artist’s most ambitious seduction to date, was his 2016 show, “Until,” a twist on the legal principle of innocence until guilt is proven. For it, Cave transformed the football-field-size room into a sinister wonderland, featuring a vast crystal cloudscape suspended 18 feet into the air made up of miles of crystals, thousands of ceramic birds, 13 gilded pigs and a fiberglass crocodile covered in large marbles. Accessible by ladder, the top of the cloud was studded with cast-iron lawn jockeys, all of them holding dream catchers. It’s an apt and deeply unsettling vision of today’s America, land of injustice and consumer plenty, distracted from yet haunted by all of the things it would prefer not to see.

While they were sourcing the materials for the show, Markonish tells me, they realized how expensive crystals are, and one of the curators, Alexandra Foradas, called Cave to ask if some of them could be acrylic. “He said, ‘Oh, absolutely, 75 percent can be acrylic but the remaining 50 percent should be glass.’ She said, ‘Nick, that’s 125 percent,’ and without pausing he said, ‘Exactly.’” After the show, Markonish asked Cave and Faust to create a graphic expression of the exhibition, which resulted in a tattoo on the inside of her index finger that reads “125%.” “Of course, at that point, it wasn’t about his use of material,” she says, “but about his dedication and generosity. It was his idea to open up his exhibition to people from the community, to performers or for discussions about the difficult things he wants to talk about in his work.”

One of those themes is the gun violence that has ravaged many black communities; Chicago, Cave’s home of three decades, had more shooting victims (2,948) in 2018 than Los Angeles (1,008) and New York (897) combined, largely concentrated in a handful of neighborhoods on the South and West Sides. (Cave had hoped to open Facility on Chicago’s racially diverse West Side, only to run into intransigent zoning laws; he wants to find a permanent home there for “Until” and has art projects planned with the area’s high schools.) Cave’s most recent gallery show, “If a Tree Falls,” which featured sculptural installations and opened at Jack Shainman Gallery in fall 2018, strikes a more somber, elegiac note than his previous work, juxtaposing body parts in bronze monochrome, including casts of his own arms emerging from the gallery walls, holding delicate flower bouquets, which suggest a sense of renewal, of hope and metamorphosis. He’s now working on a new series of bronze sculptures, which include casts of his own hands, topped with cast tree branches, birds and flowers, the first of which is meant to debut at Miami’s Art Basel in December. The sculptures will be on a much bigger scale — a human form made larger than life with embellishment, not unlike the Soundsuits in approach but with a new sense of gravity and monumentality (they are intended to be shown outdoors). The man famous for bringing a light touch to the heaviest of themes is, finally, stripping away the merry trappings and embracing the sheer weight of now.

"Arm Peace," part of a series of sculptures created for Cave's 2018 solo show, "If a Tree Falls," at Jack Shainman Gallery. Renée Cox

A detail of "Tondo" (2019). Renée Cox

When I ask Cave how he feels about the critical reception of his work — he is one of that select group of artists, like Jeff Koons or David Hockney, who is celebrated by both high art and popular culture — he tells me that he stopped reading his shows' reviews, but not because he's afraid of being misunderstood or underappreciated; instead, he seems to be objecting to a kind of critical passivity. "What I find peculiar is that no one really wants to get in there and talk about what's behind it all," he says. "It's not that I haven't put it out there. And I don't know why."

I push him to clarify: "Do you mean that a white reviewer of your show might explain that the work provides commentary on race and violence and history but won't extend that thinking any further, to his or her own cultural inheritance and privilege?"

"They may provide the context, but it doesn't go further. They're not providing any point of view or perspective, or sense of what they're receiving from this engagement. I just think it's how we exist in society," he replies.

One of the four covers of T's 2019 Greats issue. Renée Cox

Is art alone enough to shake us from our complacency? Two decades into a new millennium, these questions have fresh urgency: By turning away from stricken neighborhoods and underfunded schools, we've perpetuated the conditions of inequality and violence, effectively devaluing our own people. We've dimmed the very kind of 20th-century American dreaming that led so many of us, including Cave, to a life filled with possibility. Whether or not

this can be reversed depends on our being able to look without judgment and walk without blinders, he believes. It means reassessing our own roles in the public theater. It means choosing not to be in denial or giving in to despair. It means seeing beyond the self to something greater.

"I just want everything to be fabulous," he tells me, as we part ways for the afternoon. "I want it to be beautiful, even when the subject is hard. Honey, the question is, how do you want to exist in the world, and how are you going to do the work?"

COME TOGETHER

NICK CAVE

Portrait of Nick Cave and interview by TATIJANA SHOAN

All artwork by NICK CAVE

Immediately upon entering The Park Armory Drill Hall I felt as though I had taken a time capsule back to the 90s New York City club days, but without the drugs. Dancers moved around the space gyrating to the music in big, expressive, movements. Revelers dressed in their best bling, while many came decorated in creative, handmade costumes. As I moved through the crowd, I started to feel as though the room was spinning as two gigantic mylar streamer curtains hypnotically snaked their way through the space while their multicolored tentacles washed over everyone as if we were cars in a car wash disco. A colossal game of Twister was being played in one corner, while hula hoops were being twirled in another. I couldn't help but dance. I was in artist **NICK CAVE**'s art exhibition, *The Let Go*. Chicago-based artist Nick Cave doesn't just make art, he creates spectacles, glorious happenings, and where sculptural costumes, namely his Soundsuits, bend, bounce, flounce, flutter, and flirt for enchanted viewers. Installations that can, and have, fit into a space as large as a football field, are transformed into otherworldly destinations where crystal balls, crocheted tea cozies, and reclaimed racist objects live in harmony. Cave does more than make us happy: he makes us think. The objects and materials he uses are not random, but have a larger meaning, a social significance, and are meant to fuel our curiosity, diplomacy, and our understanding of our place in society and how we view ourselves and each other. His work is inspired by racial injustice—his first Soundsuit was a response to the Rodney King beating— and his resulting message is a colorful one of unification, transformation, equality, and harmony. I had the fortunate opportunity to talk with Nick Cave while he was busy preparing for *The Let Go* in New York. We spoke about the light and dark sides of his artistic message, the importance of reclaiming racist objects, implicating the audience in his work, and what it's like to wear his infamous Soundsuits.

INSTALLATION VIEW, *NICK CAVE: UNTIL*, MASS MoCA, NORTH ADAMS, MA, OCTOBER 15, 2016 – SEPTEMBER 4, 2017

AS IF: Your work has so much joy, it's effervescent, there's explosions of color and texture, yet your work comes from very sad places like social injustice, racism, inequality, gun violence, police violence. Did your process start with the light or the dark?
NC: My practice always starts with the dark, that's the instigator that gets me fired up. From what is going on currently, politically, and personally, there is always an instigator that moves the activity in the studio. Personally, I am all color on the outside, internally I'm a very sensitive human being that is very concerned about the well-being of the country and my community. So, how do I take oil and water and find a way in which they can work hand and hand? That's how I approach the work. The façade of my work is my seduction and a way for viewers to enter the work, but once you enter and start to break it down you begin to understand that there's a much darker side and deeper meaning.

AS IF: You want to bring your message to people in need, to people who are hurting, to people who need it, to people who are marginalized and don't have a voice. How do you reach the unreachable, and how do you affect those that think art isn't for them?
NC: I tend to work outside boundaries. I run around the outskirts of cities and in inner cities to find young people to incorporate into a project, and I also work with a city's educational programs. It's never just about my project, I'm more interested in being of service. The most important thing for me is how to create a space of possibility, to bring young people into the fold and have them to stand within the space, look around, and know things are possible.

AS IF: You've once described yourself as a messenger who brings people together to heal them through art. We're certainly a fractured nation and in a world in desperate need of healing. Where do you see your bandages being applied going forward?
NC: Being an artist was easy, but that's not why I'm here, I'm a messenger first and foremost, so knowing that has allowed me to build my work around civic responsibility and humanitarian efforts. It's the foundation of my existence.

AS IF: Tell me about *The Let Go* that just happened at Park Avenue Armory in New York. I attended *The Let Go* Ball, it was amazing!
NC: *The Let Go* is an amazing project, it unfolds daily and is a community-based project. You know, a part of me wants to create my own dance company and travel around the country, but a much larger part of me is drawn back to bringing projects to cities and hiring people in the city to build the project because that is connected to my purpose. *The Let Go* involved about 150 performers from dancers to musicians, and we hosted a number of events at Park Avenue Armory. *The Let Go* came about as I was thinking about the drill hall, which then led me to think about the town halls that were happening around the country, and that transformed into the idea of a dance hall. What I was interested in was the way in which we're communicating and engaging with one another, it's become so harsh and so destructive, and I thought, *what is another way that I can bring us together in a harmless environment and activity?* And that was how I thought about dance. We all have our differences, we can all be on the dance floor and work it out through movement. It's safe, it's an invitation for anyone to participate, it can unify us. Within *The Let Go* and living within the Park Armory is an object titled *Chase* which consists of two 40ft by 100ft mylar streamer curtains that are moving throughout the entire drill hall. You coexist in the space and you find yourself moving in, with, and around it. The object is designed where the streamer is red, black, and green, followed by blue, black, blue, black, representing the African flag and the colors of a police uniform. It symbolizes black men being chased by the police, so there is this dark, political undertone, yet the space allows us to work in harmony.

AS IF: Those are also the colors of cuts and bruises.
NC: It's interesting that you said that, and there was also a lighting program that provided a number of other sensations within the space. Park Avenue Armory is a destination uptown on Park Avenue, it's a place not everybody knows exists, so how can I change the demographics of what that looks like? I work in Chicago, and I come to these cities and hit the ground running, I'm in the trenches looking for amazing talent and I wanted to change the look of who comes to the Armory.

AS IF: In your Mass MoCA show *Until* you used black lawn jockeys and I want to ask about reclaiming racist objects. Can their

"MY PRACTICE ALWAYS STARTS WITH THE DARK, THAT'S THE INSTIGATOR THAT GETS ME FIRED UP. FROM WHAT IS GOING ON CURRENTLY, POLITICALLY, AND PERSONALLY, THERE IS ALWAYS AN INSTIGATOR THAT MOVES THE ACTIVITY IN THE STUDIO."

NICK CAVE, *SOUNDSUITE*, 2009, MIXED MEDIA
© NICK CAVE. COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY, NEW YORK.

NICK CAVE,
***ARM PEACE*, 2018,**
CAST BRONZE,
SUNBURST AND
VINTAGE TOLE
FLOWERS
85 X 39 X 12
INCHES

NICK CAVE,
***SHINE*, 2014, MIXED**
MEDIA INCLUDING
CAST HAND, BRUSH,
AND VINTAGE METAL
FLOWER FRAME
19 X 12 ½ X 1 ¾
INCHES.

INSTALLATION VIEW, *NICK CAVE: HEARD•NY*, GRAND CENTRAL STATION, NEW YORK, NY, 2013
© NICK CAVE. COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY, NEW YORK.

***UP RIGHT*, PERFORMANCE AT THE LET GO, 2018, THE PARK AVENUE ARMORY, NY**
© NICK CAVE. COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY, NEW YORK.

meaning be transformed, and why not just abolish them altogether?
NC: I would like to literally demolish all racist artifacts out there. What was interesting about the Mass MoCA project and the reason I used the lawn jockeys, is that Trayvon Martin had recently been killed, and Eric Garner was choked to death by police in Staten Island for selling cigarettes, and keep in mind that my first Soundsuit was in response to the Rodney King beating, so I'm spinning out of fucking control thinking *what is going on?* I was in my studio working one day and I thought, *is there racism in heaven?* I then created this crystal cloud scene, levied the cloud up high, and created a forbidden garden with black lawn jockeys that were holding dream catchers. That was my interpretation and response to the question, *is there racism in heaven?*

AS IF: You elevated their meaning.
NC: Yes. I'm interested in negotiating how we view them, how we respond to them.

AS IF: I find the materials you use interesting— beads, plastic tchotchkes, buttons— what is the purpose of using relatable objects to create unfamiliar objects? Is it to lend familiarity to the unfamiliar, or is it a response to something else?
NC: I think it's a response to a number of things. A part of it this comes from growing up with very little and having to make something extraordinary out of nothing. I'm interested in traveling around the world to flea markets and antique stores, and I look at the surplus of discarded material and find ways to incorporate it into my work. I like to shift the hierarchy of how we identify with some of this stuff. I'm interested in what is considered low art vs. high art and blurring the lines between the two. I'm interested in the extraordinary. I don't sketch or draw, I just make, and through the process of making I get out of the way and allow whatever it is to flow through me, and I allow myself to receive ideas through the process. I have no idea why a Soundsuit is made out of the materials it is because I will grab A and put it together with Q or X and somehow there will be chemistry, and that's how we live in the world.

AS IF: I can't believe you don't draw or sketch! Your work is so intricate and complicated.
NC: But the intricacies comes from the foundation of knowing how to construct and build things, which I know how to do. In knowing that, understanding how things need to be fabricated, and knowing who I need to work with to help facilitate all the moving parts is part of my practice.

AS IF: How does the use of space expand the meaning of your work?
NC: I look at space as my canvas and visit those spaces a number of times. When there's an exhibition or installation in the space, I can experience the space and understand how I engage with things within the space— how the space informs the way in which the work may be placed or designed. For me space is like dance; I find that when I create a project in vast spaces I handle it like choreography. I think about how I want to engage my audience, how I want them to move through the space, and I think a lot about memory. In spaces that are out of the way and considered destinations I think about what it means when someone travels to get to it, and what do I want them to receive? These are probably the most important things that I think about first. If I have to get people here, what does that mean? How do I approach that? What do I want them to experience?

AS IF: You once said about your Soundsuit, *it's a transformative experience for the wearer when the suit comes on*. I would imagine as the viewer that it would be hard not to feel the emotion emanating from the person in the Soundsuit.
NC: With the Soundsuit, the wearer needs to settle into it, that's the first and most important factor: you must settle down and be open to the transformation that's going to happen. You have to get yourself ready for your identity to transform. And, what that feels like for me is going to be different for you, and that's all based on who you are as an individual. The wearer hides gender, race, class, and thus you're liberated because you are not inhibited by identifying who you are, and you start to move into the role of conviction, and what that means to you. What does that look like? Where are your boundaries and limitations within a Soundsuit? It's very therapeutic and demands a lot of the wearer, but at the same time when you're with a group of 30 and collectively moving together it's quite remarkable because you become one, you become a collective, you become a tribe and you stand with pride, you stand with power, you stand *in* power. The physical demands are extremely challenging as well, but it's all

"ONE DAY WHILE IN THE STUDIO I CAME TO AN UNDERSTANDING THAT I WAS A MESSENGER FIRST, AND AN ARTIST SECOND. I HAVE NO REAL RELIGIOUS BELIEFS, BUT I DO FEEL A HIGHER ENERGY, AND I UNDERSTAND THAT I AM FREE."

NICK CAVE,
SOUNDSUIT,
2010, MIXED
MEDIA INCLUDING
SYNTHETIC HAIR,
FABRIC, AND METAL
96 X 29 X 20
INCHES

NICK CAVE,
SOUNDSUIT,
2010, MIXED
MEDIA INCLUDING
SYNTHETIC HAIR,
FABRIC, METAL, AND
MANNEQUIN
96 X 29 X 20
INCHES

NICK CAVE,
SOUNDSUIT,
2015, MIXED
MEDIA INCLUDING
VINTAGE BURIAL
WREATH, BEADED
FLOWERS, BUTTONS,
FABRIC, METAL AND
MANNEQUIN
86 X 29 X 26
INCHES

NICK CAVE,
SOUNDSUIT,
2011, MIXED
MEDIA INCLUDING
DOGWOOD TWIGS,
WIRE, BASKET,
UPHOLSTERY,
METAL, AND
MANNEQUIN
87 X 27 X 35
INCHES

NICK CAVE, *SOUNDSUIT*, 2015, MIXED MEDIA INCLUDING WIRE, BUGLE BEADS, BUTTONS, FABRIC, METAL AND MANNEQUIN 89 X 47 X 20 INCHES

about an internal understanding of yourself and allowing yourself to go to places you've never gone to before.

AS IF: It sounds like it beckons something primal within us. While finally being free of what others may think of us.
NC: Exactly!

AS IF: It's as if the wearer becomes pure energy.
NC: When I'm working with a group of artists, let's say dancers, in some cases I have to just stop someone and say, *settle down, just settle*, because they're thinking too much, they're too much in their head. I don't let people put on the Soundsuit for the first 30 minutes, I have them touch it, feel it, pick it up, and imagine what it's like on the body because I need to get them prepared for the transition.

AS IF: Your work is in motion, I see it as emotion in motion, and you place importance on turning your viewers into participants or as you once said, *implicating them in the art*. How do you reconcile with the gallery and museum static field where the visitors are coming as observers and keep a safe distance from the art? How do you get your message across when a Soundsuit is immobile?
NC: When I was growing up, particularly in undergrad school, I would go to the Museum of Natural History and look at amazing artifacts. I would think about how all these garments and vestments had a purpose. In museums you are forced to look at them as sacred objects, and I was very interested in the duality of that, how this static object had a role where it functioned within a particular society. I was also interested in the performative side of what I would see. When my Soundsuits are not worn they are secured on two-wheeler carts where they become sculptural objects, which will later be transformed into a Soundsuit. I like their static state, and the static implications allow you to imagine them in motion, imagine what they sound like, and that's just as interesting as when they are in motion.

AS IF: I am interested in one of the titles from your last shows, *Made by Whites for Whites*. Tell me about the show and the significance of the title.
NC: The idea for *Made by Whites for Whites* came about during one of my many visits to antique stores and flea markets looking for resources for my work. During one road trip I happened to come across a container with a removeable black man's head on it. I then proceeded to read the inscription which said, "The Tomb", and I literally flipped out! I then started to look for the most repressive, obscene objects and imagery of people of color. So, these artifacts became the center of that exhibition. But, what I was interested in was how these objects made the black man identify our place within society, and that's how that title, *Made by Whites for Whites,* came about.

AS IF: It's bone chilling, systemic racism is everywhere. A few years back, *Garage* magazine's editor-in-chief, Dasha Zhukova had herself photographed on a chair made to look like a half-naked and bound black woman. The chair is by Norwegian artist, Bjarne Melgaard, and was supposed be a commentary on gender and racial politics, but the act of her sitting on it shows an utter lack of awareness and sensitivity all together.
NC: Oh My God! That's insane! That particular object is what gets me fired up.

NICK CAVE, *PENNY CATCHER*, 2009, MIXED MEDIA INCLUDING VINTAGE COIN TOSS, SUIT, AND SHOES 74 X 23 X 14 INCHES

NICK CAVE,
SPEAK LOUDER,
2011, MIXED
MEDIA, INCLUDING
BLACK MOTHER OF
PEARL BUTTONS,
EMBROIDERY FLOSS,
UPHOLSTERY,
METAL ARMATURE,
AND MANNEQUINS
INSTALLED:
93 1/2 X 199 X 123
INCHES
INDIVIDUAL SUITS:
84 X 32 X 15
INCHES, 83 1/2 X 33
X 14 INCHES, 84 1/2
X 33 X 18 INCHES,
93 1/2 X 33

NICK CAVE,
SOUNDSUIT,
2016, MIXED
MEDIA INCLUDING
VARIOUS TOYS,
WIRE, METAL AND
MANNEQUIN
84 X 45 X 40
INCHES

NICK CAVE,
SOUNDSUIT,
2011, MIXED
MEDIA INCLUDING
VINTAGE BLACKFACE
VOODOO DOLLS,
MAMMY'S COZY,
BUGLE BEADS,
MIRRORS, VINTAGE
LEATHER MASK,
FABRIC, METAL, AND
MANNEQUIN
120 X 36 X 24
INCHES

AS IF: I want to talk a bit about your background. You were raised in central Missouri by a single mother of modest means, and you are the youngest of seven boys. In American folklore, the seventh son is considered to be a special being with abilities outside of the norm. Was there a specific moment in your childhood that gave you an indication that you were born to be different, an artist?
NC: I think the moment in my childhood when I knew I was going to be different was probably when I saw Michael Jackson on TV for the first time. I remember seeing him and said to my mother, *I'm gonna be famous like him, not as a musician but famous like him*. He had a unique authenticity that I could identify with, and at the time I did not know what that meant, but I somehow resonated with that feeling.

AS IF: At what point did you know you were an artist?
NC: I was in high school when I started to get an understanding and idea of what an art practice felt like. You know, when you're in high school you're either in sports, drama or the art club, and it was in the art club where I felt the most comfortable. I was able to tap into something that I was interested in. I was also told by a high school teacher that I had a special ability at art, which helped drive me and put me in the right direction.

AS IF: You studied dance, was this at the same time you studied art?
NC: In high school I did a bit of art and drama, but I always considered dance as another medium, another form of expression. It was in college when dance really started to come into my practice. I've always been a collaborator, whether it was a talent show or a fashion show, I would just round up friends and make something happen, and that was always part of another medium to consider in my art. I was always interested in dress, and adornment, parades, and performance in some form or another. That has always been a critical discourse in my development.

AS IF: With social justice and social awareness being your main artistic mission, how has this presidency affected you?
NC: Oh honey, well that's how I created *The Let Go*. In this presidency I'm trying to ask myself how I can be of service? Can I create experiences that provide a common ground, and a place where we can collectively come together to be a vehicle for change? But for me, I don't want to do something directly in response to it because it becomes categorized with a lot of other things. I'm more interested in how I can think about this state of urgency and create experiences that provide a sense of optimism, a moment of reflection that refuels us. In my classroom I'm thinking more about ideas of collaboration where students come together around a particular theme. It's about trying to be part of a force that's keeping us together and giving people voices and platforms to share their points of view.

AS IF: Does your work with the students at The Art Institute of Chicago inform your work and studio practice? Or, is it more of a sharing relationship where you're there to give?
NC: It's a bit of both. These students keep me very much alive, they keep me relevant because of the expectation they have on me to bring solutions, clarity, and advice. I love the fact that each student comes at the work from a different place, a different approach, and they keep me on my toes. I have to find ways to bring in understanding. They think what I do is glamorous, but they also understand the enormous level of commitment to the practice. When we do study trips, I take them to meet designers in the industry, artists in the industry, decorators, professional shoppers, curators, and museum directors. What I'm trying to show them is that not all of them are going to be artists, but there are many extraordinary pathways to establish themselves in extraordinary careers in the arts. You know, this doesn't come easy, it doesn't matter if you come from a place of entitlement honey, in the creative hustle you don't get a handout.

AS IF: You were quoted as saying, *we live in exhausting times and I'm are in need of a savior*. How does your own spirituality inform this view, and who or what is your savior?
NC: One day while in the studio I came to an understanding that I was a messenger first, and an artist second. I have no real religious beliefs, but I do feel a higher energy, and I understand that I am free. I was telling my friend the other day that I'm not dependent on the art world for survival, it's not why I'm here, but I do understand that it's given me a vehicle to express and deliver deeds before I move on to the next assignment. I'm grateful for these beliefs.

"I HAVE NO IDEA WHY A SOUNDSUIT IS MADE OUT OF THE MATERIALS IT IS BECAUSE I WILL GRAB A AND PUT IT TOGETHER WITH Q OR X AND SOMEHOW THERE WILL BE CHEMISTRY, AND THAT'S HOW WE LIVE IN THE WORLD."

UP RIGHT, PONCE CITY MARKET, ATLANTA, 2015, PRESENTED BY FLUX PROJECTS
© NICK CAVE. COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY, NEW YORK.

INSTALLATION VIEW, *NICK CAVE: FOR NOW*, MARY BOONE GALLERY, NEW YORK, NY, SEPTEMBER 10 – OCTOBER 22, 2011
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INSTALLATION VIEW, NICK CAVE: UNTIL,
MASS MoCA, NORTH ADAMS, MA,
OCTOBER 15, 2016 – SEPTEMBER 4, 2017

The New York Times

Nick Cave Uses His Capital to Help Aspiring Creators

Nick Cave in his studio at Facility, his new multidisciplinary art space in Chicago. The work is called "Arm Peace." Whitten Sabbatini for The New York Times

By Hilarie M. Sheets

Nov. 1, 2018

CHICAGO — Stretching across the windows of three conjoined storefronts on the Northwest Side of Chicago is a 70-foot-long mosaic made of 7,000 circular name tags with a mix of red and white backgrounds. They spell out the message "Love Thy Neighbor." The simple declaration could be read as the mission statement underpinning the activity in the two-story brick building, a new multidisciplinary art space dreamed up by Nick Cave, the artist and educator, and his personal and professional partner, Bob Faust.

"It is our way of introducing ourselves to the community," said Mr. Cave, best known for his dazzling "Soundsuits" that double as full-body sculptures and garments.

Based for more than 20 years on Chicago's South Loop, this 59-year-old artist has recently consolidated his studio, the couple's home and Mr. Faust's design studio in this 20,000-square-foot former mason's workshop in South Old Irving Park, a largely working-class neighborhood across town. Named Facility, the space has been conceived as an incubator for collaboration — to inspire "a young artist's aspirations or put designers and chefs and dancers in one room and see what using the building as a facility makes," Mr. Faust, 51, said during a tour of their just-renovated ground-floor studio and upstairs residential loft. A cavernous space downstairs could also easily host a fashion show, musical or dance performance.

For the "Love Thy Neighbor" installation, they distributed blank name tags to local businesses, schools and block associations. People wrote in their first names or otherwise embellished them. "They are these amazing little artworks," Mr. Faust said. In the future, those storefront display spaces will host artist exhibitions and pop-up retail for emerging designers, free of charge.

"There are interesting fashion designers that just haven't had a break, so why not give them a storefront for half a year and have an amazing opening?" Mr. Cave said.

"The flux of it all is really what's interesting for us — it's how we think," added the artist, who is funding Facility himself and plans to offer stipends for some of the projects. "There's a lot we want to do other than our studio practices — bigger work in terms of being more accountable for civic responsibilities."

Mr. Cave has held a tenured position in the fashion, body and garment department at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago since 2001 and now teaches two days a week. He spent years scouting sites around Chicago before finding this uninhabited commercial building at the

intersection of North Milwaukee and West Addison, and a city official willing to work with him and Mr. Faust on zoning changes to allow for residential use as well as production.

Mr. Cave and his professional and personal partner, Bob Faust.
Whitten Sabbatini for The New York Times

Alderman John Arena said he saw their proposal as an economic opportunity that would help attract "businesses and cachet to this blue-collar area." He led a community meeting where the only concerns raised were over parking. "The folks that came exhibited excitement for the prospect that this could be quite a catalyst for changing the personality of that stretch of roadway and for casual engagement with an artist of his stature," Mr. Arena said of Mr. Cave

Heather Yutzy, principal of the nearby Belding Elementary School, had never heard of Nick Cave. But she was taken with the concept of the "Love Thy Neighbor" project and had her 600 students each decorate a name tag as a back-to-school activity. "I wanted our children to be a part of transforming an area that needs a lift," Ms. Yutzy said, "so they could walk over and say, 'Look, we helped do that.'"

The spirit behind Facility resonates with another ambitious artist-run project investing in an underserved neighborhood of the city, said Naomi Beckwith, senior curator at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, referring to Theaster Gates's Rebuild Foundation on Chicago's South Side.

Studio assistants working at Facility. The space has been conceived as an incubator for collaborations with young artists of all media. Whitten Sabbatini for The New York Times

Mr. Cave's "Arm Peace," on view at his new show at Jack Shainman Gallery.
Whitten Sabbatini for The New York Times

Facility is at a former mason's workshop in South Old Irving Park, a largely working-class neighborhood. Whitten Sabbatini for The New York Times

"What they're both asking is: Can I as an individual bring some of the social capital and financial capital that I've acquired in my life to somewhere outside the [city] center, so that those who do not have access to the center, or don't feel comfortable there, can still have an encounter with art," Ms. Beckwith said.

Facility is part of a broader shift for Mr. Cave, who for two decades has been closely associated with his crowd-pleasing "Soundsuits," acquired by many museums. "They're always going to be part of my practice," he said, while noting that in recent exhibitions at Mass MoCA and the Jack Shainman gallery, no "Soundsuits" were included. "Wanting to move forward, it's about how do you transfer the essence of that work," he said.

One of seven brothers raised in Missouri by his mother after his father's early death, Mr. Cave received his B.F.A. in 1982 at the Kansas City Art Institute in Missouri and studied dance at Alvin Ailey summer programs. As the only African-American graduate student at the Cranbrook Academy of Art in Michigan in the late 1980s, he described having the feeling of being a "black male" for the first time.

Mr. Cave made his first "Soundsuit" in 1992 in response to the police beating of Rodney King. The figural sheath made of twigs was a form of protection that obscured race, class and gender, and made a striking noise when worn. To date, he has made more than 500, ever more flamboyant.

"I have to feel like this looks," he said, pointing to a "Soundsuit" covered in exuberantly colored synthetic hair in his studio. He is interested in the power of these fantastical second skins, both for the people wearing them in performances and for the viewer. He would like to think their visual seduction will "unify and set us all in a room together for difficult conversations," he said. Mr. Cave said the most meaningful part of his work in recent years has been collaborating with underprivileged children on "Soundsuit" performances. "It's almost like a rite of passage,," he said, recalling how they learn to stand up and move in these 40-pound armatures that can make people look — and feel — like shamans.

Detail of an untitled sculptural work by Mr. Cave
in his new show, "If a Tree Falls," at Jack Shainman Gallery.
Nick Cave and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York; James Prinz

What he calls "the brutality" in all his work will be laid bare in his new show, "If a Tree Falls," opening Nov. 1 at Jack Shainman in Chelsea. It is filled with darkly monochromatic works referring to gun violence devastating African-American communities. A long, low platform teeming with black hands cradling carved wooden heads evokes a mass grave. Fragments of arms in bronze protrude from the walls; they are draped with funeral wreaths.For children growing up in these communities, he said, "somebody gets shot, but nobody's talking about it."

A goal of Facility is to find more ways to influence young people. Mr. Cave and Mr. Faust are collaborating with students and teachers at Schurz High School, across the street, on a 70-foot-long fence made from recycled shipping containers running along the south side of Facility. The art department and a group of students will design imagery. "It's going to be very guerrilla-like, all spray paint," Mr. Cave said. .

The men plan to charge a small fee to art groups requesting tours of the studio, which will go toward a scholarship fund for projects with young artists. Tony Karman, director of Expo Chicago, the international art exhibition, said he anticipates "there will be huge interest from collectors and curators and arts professionals," given Mr. Cave's stature.

Mr. Cave will exhibit his extensive personal art collection here for the first time — works by Kerry James Marshall, Beverly McIver, Titus Kaphar and Kehinde Wiley. "It's going to feed creativity," he said.

Mr. Cave now often buys work from his students. "I remember someone bought a piece of mine when I was an undergrad," he said. "That validation and motivation — it's just what that does to a young person."

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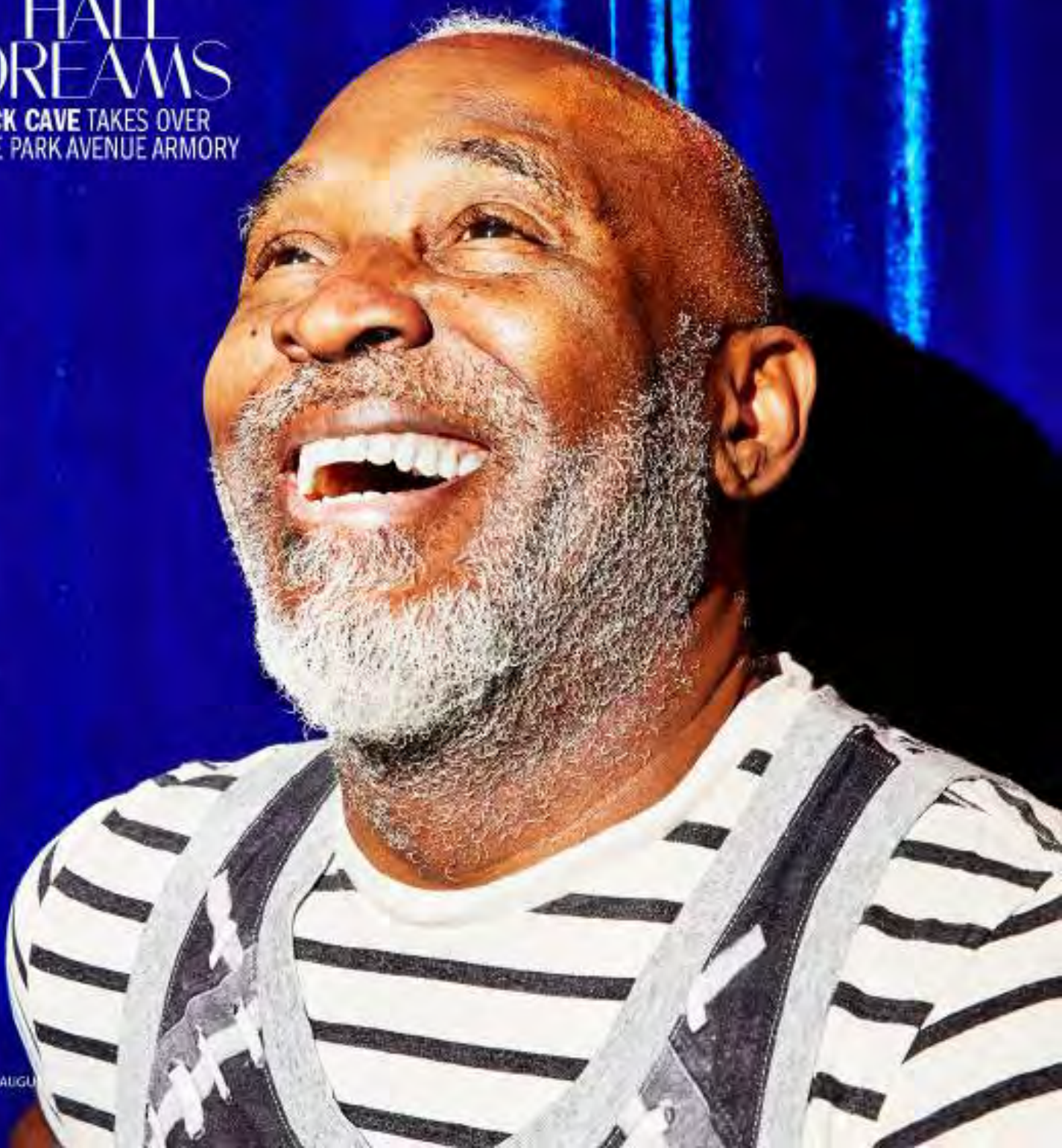
DANCE HALL DREAMS

NICK CAVE TAKES OVER THE PARK AVENUE ARMORY



JUNE/JULY/AUGU

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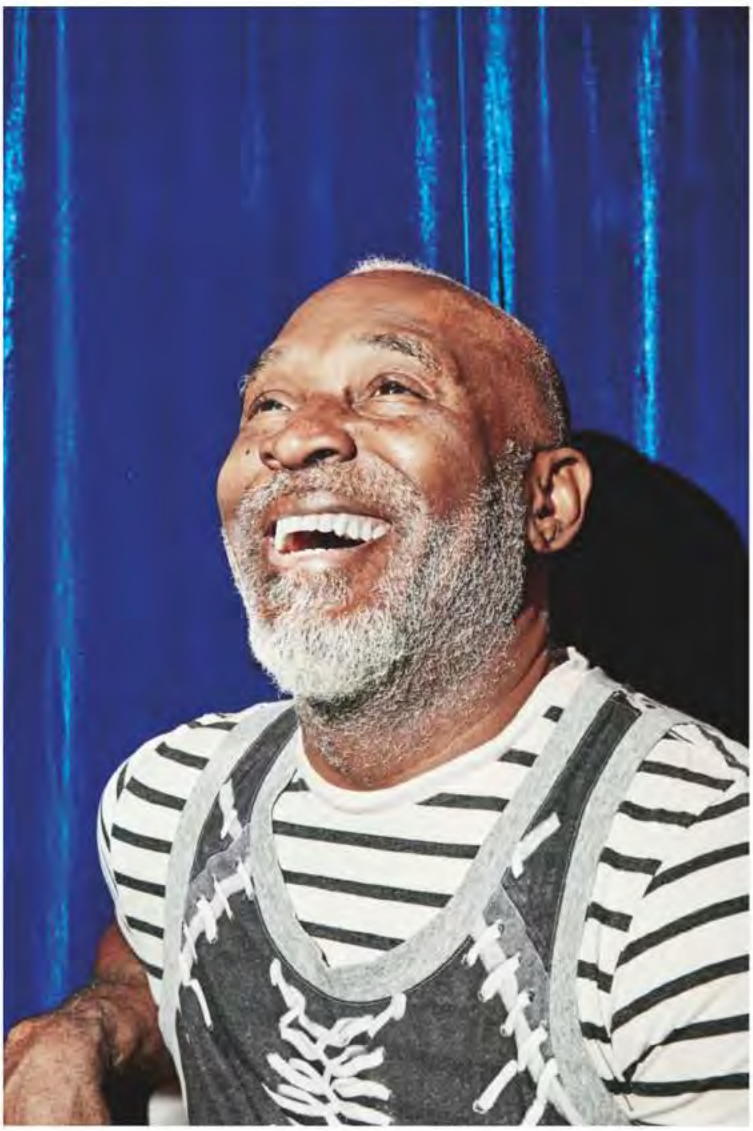
ART

NICK CAVE TURNS THE PARK AVENUE ARMORY INTO A DANCE HALL

JACOBA URIST

PHOTOGRAPHY BY AMY LOMBARD



NICK CAVE AT THE PARK AVENUE ARMORY, 2018.

"We live in exhausting times and we are all in need of a savior," Nick Cave tells me as we settle into one of the Park Avenue Armory's 19th-century period rooms. It is a remarkable statement from a contemporary artist whose life's work has addressed what it means to be a black man in America.

Celebrated for his iconic Mardi-Gras-meets-Muppet Soundsuits—named for their swish and rustle when worn, and what he calls his "bling-bling sparkle-sparkle factor"—Cave has woven fantasy and flash mob into his lexicon. But his rainbow sculptures are more than a shiny array of tassels, pipe cleaners and synthetic hair. Referencing African masquerade and religious vestments, Soundsuits bestow a second skin on their wearers, obviating inherent biases about race, gender and class.

Cave made his first Soundsuit from twigs in 1992, a response to the LAPD beating of Rodney King. In 2013, collaborating with Creative Time, his performance piece *HEARD NY* infiltrated Grand Central Station with a dance troupe in colorful horse-sized *Soundsuits*, in an attempt to force commuters from their daily fugue to an innovative dream state. In 2016, his paradisiacal Until—as in "guilty until proven innocent"—deployed millions of plastic beads and over 10 miles of crystal across a football field expanse at MASS MoCA. Scattered with lawn jockeys and images of guns and teardrops, the exhibition was designed to instigate dialogue on social injustice. Aesthetically, Cave described the experience as being inside "the belly of a Soundsuit," posing the rhetorical question: is there racism in heaven?

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Yet now, Cave says, we have officially entered unchartered territory. While politics have always galvanized resistance and self-expression in artists, there is an existential urgency today that he describes as "a collective sense of wading far into unprecedented, choppy waters." But what if we could release our frustration and fatigue through movement? His voice is quiet and resolute, with the slightest trace of his Missouri origins. After nearly two years digesting the rise of this administration, he is ready to unveil his artistic response to the 45th president of the United States: a gargantuan, shiny multisensory haven to speak our minds and move our bodies—to coalesce and reclaim a sense of freedom.

NICK CAVE'S *ARM PEACE*, 2018. COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND JACK SHAINMAN.

This is the central dogma of *The Let Go*, Cave's grand, carnivalesque summer fling for the Armory: dance party as both rejuvenation and protest. Part installation, part discotheque, from June 7 through July 1, Cave transforms the conservancy's 55,000-square-foot Drill Hall into a kinetic frenzy—with live music, DJ sets, school groups, church choirs, hula hoopers, Soul Train lines, Twister games and yes, Soundsuit invasions. There is also a schedule of Let Go community events: a Freedom Ball, outrageous costumes encouraged; Up Right dance performances, orchestrated by Cave and accompanied by the baritone of Jorell Williams and Vy Higginsen's Sing Harlem Choir.

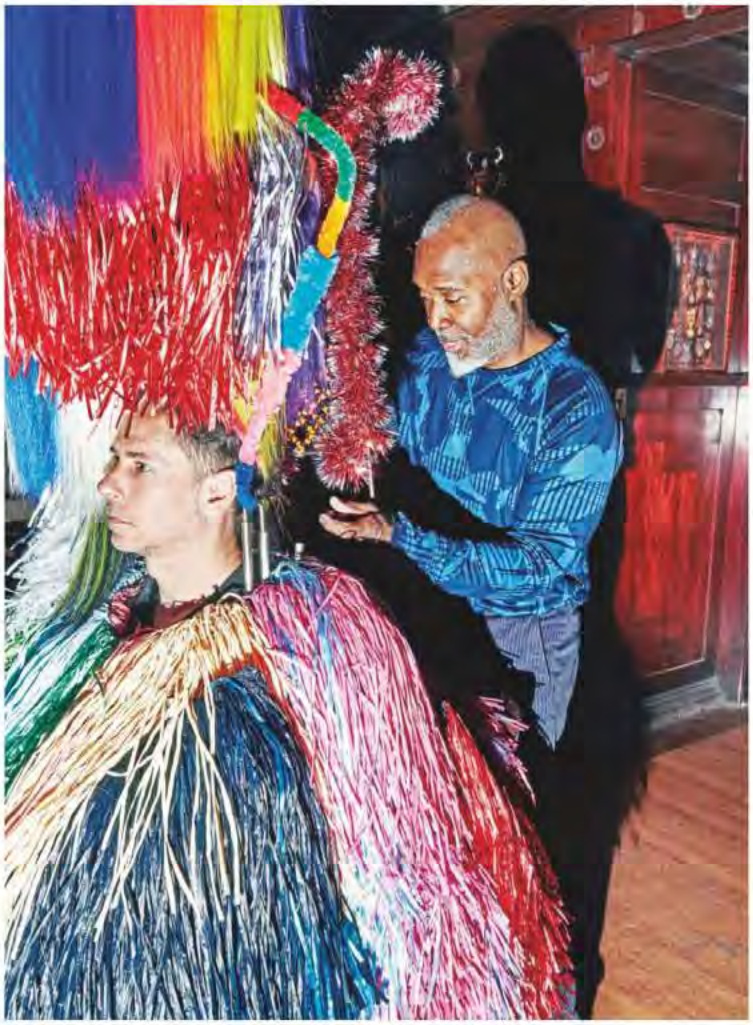
"We are all in distress as we are just trying to bring a level of understanding to the state of the political climate," Cave explains. "It is a different type of presidency with behavior that we have never, ever experienced before. How do you process that every day? You are dealing with your own shit and then on top of this, you are thinking, Oh god, what is going on in our country?"

Cave, a professor at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, describes the stream of letters the school's president Elissa Tenny has issued this past academic year. "Since fall, she has had to write about six letters to the campus addressing current affairs, which is very unusual," he says. "So I'm thinking, Wow, this is how she is going to be spending her time, trying to comfort and bring a sense of security to our student body."

NICK CAVE'S SOUNDSUIT, 2009. COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND JACK SHAINMAN.

But rather than lament reality, the Armory dance party—like his Soundsuits—is a form of empowerment. For Cave, who trained with Alvin Ailey, dance is as much emotional catharsis as political act. Conceptually, The Let Go hearkens to club culture of the 1970s and '80s. "When I need to escape, when I need to work something out, I just let it go on the dance floor," explains Cave. "I thought about the Armory's Drill Hall turned into a dance hall, in response to a town hall," he says. In a real sense though, *The Let Go* is a jubilation. "This surreal celebration defies categorization, so New Yorkers of all backgrounds and ideologies can find renewal and selfhood."

"We are always looking for art projects that challenge the orthodoxies," says curator Tom Eccles, director of the Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College and longtime Armory curatorial advisor. We are seated in the building's cavernous main hallway, with the rhythm track to our conversation provided by Cave special projects director and collaborator, Bob Faust, who is wearing a Soundsuit and posing for the camera.



CAVE AT WORK ON ONE OF HIS SOUNDSUITS, WORN BY COLLABORATOR AND SPECIAL PROJECTS DIRECTOR BOB FAUST

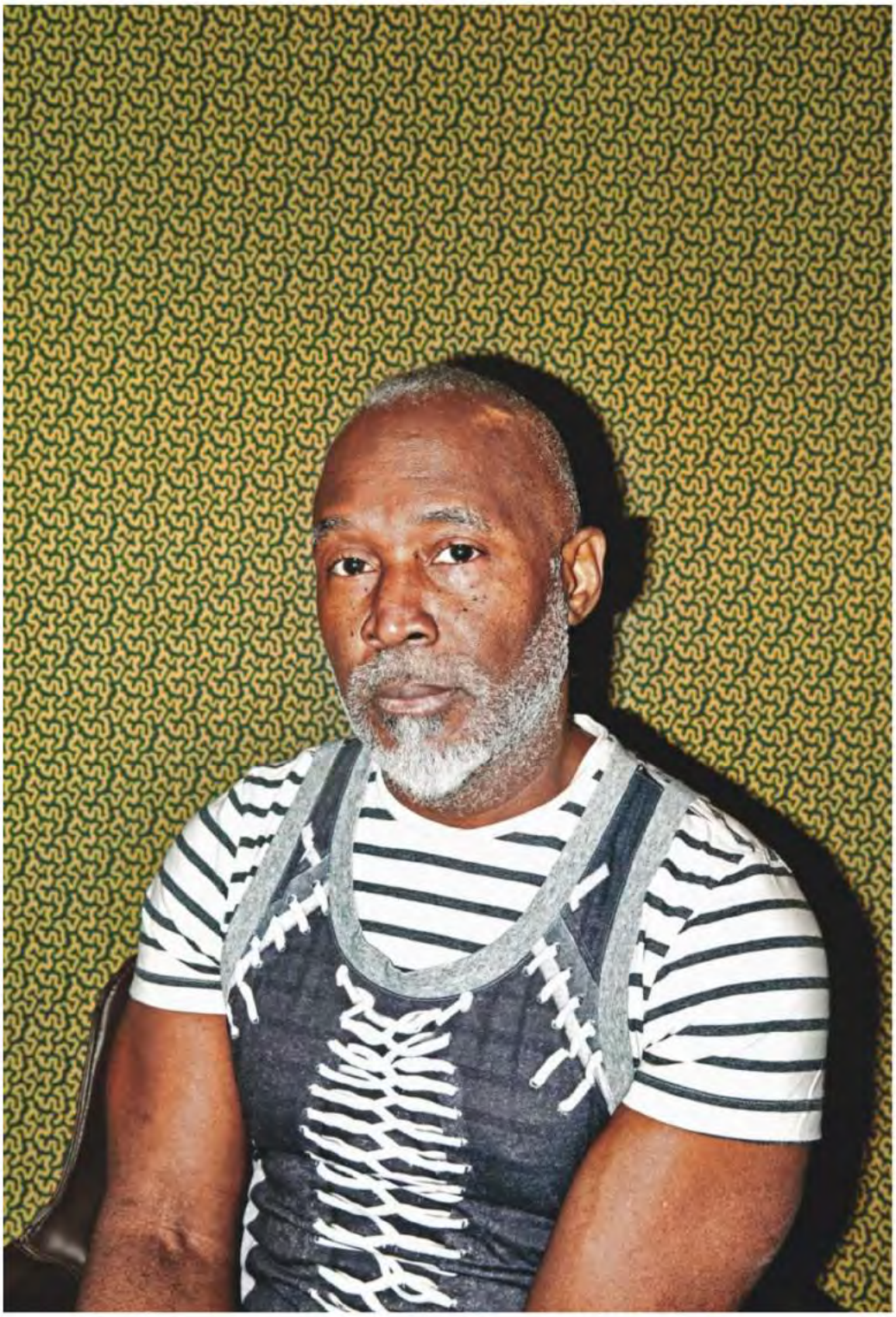
Over the years, the Drill Hall has become synonymous with site-specific, unconventional participatory art. Last year, Ai Weiwei's *Hansel & Gretel*—a high-tech surveillance zone of hidden cameras, infrared drones and face recognition software—streamed live footage of guests as projected snow- angel imprints onto the floor. Some critics found the project merely entertaining rather than provoking any serious discussion about society's creeping authoritative tendencies. But the two are not necessarily at cross- purposes, according to Eccles. Armory projects are successful when people forget they are looking at art. And audience diversity matters to the storied cultural institution. "Nick is someone whose work calls in very different audiences than we might normally have at the Park Avenue Armory," says Eccles. Enticing viewers who might not otherwise immerse themselves in a rich, sensory experience is core to the Armory's mission. "We are on the Upper East Side, which might as well be Riyadh for many folks in New York," Eccles chuckles. He contrasts the Tate Modern's Turbine Hall, similar in scale but with myriad options in the museum vicinity. "It's a hike up here and people expect to spend at least an hour," Eccles says. "One way you engage people is with a sense of playfulness."

Indeed, that wonder and whimsy is perfectly encapsulated in *The Let Go*'s show-stopping centerpiece: a 100-foot-long, 40-foot-tall mylar curtain that streams across the Drill Hall dance floor and is sure to set Instagram alight. Chase, as Cave has named the metallic sculpture—as in young black men being chased by the police—evokes one of Tina Turner's dresses on steroids, with foil fringe in layers of black, red, green and blue.

NICK CAVE'S *WIRE TONDO*, 2017. COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND JACK SHAINMAN.

"Nick walks such a fine, intelligent line," says Armory president and executive director, Rebecca Robertson. "The issues are represented there, but then he asks you to let go in a way that brings people together."

In conjunction with *The Let Go*, Jack Shainman Gallery is showing another integral facet of Nick Cave's practice, lending a sense of slow disquiet to complement the Armory's extravaganza. The exhibition "Weather or Not" is a series of tondos—circular wire, bugle bead and wood sculptures, some as large as six feet in diameter—created by mapping cataclysmic weather patterns onto brain scans of black youth suffering PTSD from gun violence. The tondos suggest shooting targets, climate change and Soundsuits, but most of all, an imminent sense of danger. In May, the single new tondo at Jack Shainman's Frieze New York booth tantalized fairgoers.



Taken together—the unapologetically optimistic dance hall and the swirling, sumptuous tondos—reflect Cave's vernacular: as dark as truth may be, art can heal the soul.

"If I were here, I would be texting my friends, 'It's Friday, let's meet at the Armory and go dance for two hours before we go to dinner,'" says Cave. "If you are inhibited about dancing, you have the dance instigators there to help you. And Chase is always moving. You always have a dance partner."

THE BROOKLYN RAIL
CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON ARTS, POLITICS, AND CULTURE

ArtSeen

Nick Cave: *If a Tree Falls*

by Alan Gilbert

December 11th, 2018

JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY | NOVEMBER 1 – DECEMBER 22, 2018

Nick Cave, *If a Tree Falls*, 2018, installation view, Jack Shainman, New York. Courtesy Jack Shainman.

Three untitled sculptural installations in Nick Cave's current exhibition, *If a Tree Falls*, feature tightly bunched rows of black fiberglass and polyurethane hands reaching up in a gesture that might be a greeting, a sign of solidarity, or a request for help. All three versions are dated 2018, as is the rest of the work contained in Cave's show, which is spread across both of Jack Shainman's Chelsea venues. Strewn among the trio's upraised hands are carved wooden heads with African features, and two of the installations include beaded flowers. Heads, hands, and flowers recur throughout the dual exhibitions, frequently accompanied by the wooden figure of an eagle, an explicit symbol for U.S. history and its political systems. At times, these eagles appear to be attacking the heads in what at best might be an update of the Prometheus myth; at worst, they are merely predators. In other works, they stand vigilant over the scattered yet carefully arranged body parts.

Nick Cave, *If a Tree Falls*, 2018, installation view, Jack Shainman, New York. Courtesy Jack Shainman.

Cave's hands reaching up from below evoke the desperation of Africans wedged into the holds of slave ships. Yet they are also raised in defiance, which is more explicit in other sculptural assemblages on display: hands and arms clasped together, a clenched fist in front of a radiant metallic disk, or a single finger in pointed warning. Cave has constructed all of the work in *If a Tree Falls* around a set of motifs that he modulates and redirects toward something hopeful or pessimistic, and an understanding of these pieces can quickly tilt from one to the other, depending on the viewer. What remains consistent throughout is the predominance of blacks and browns as well as a somber weightiness to the overall display with its references to centuries of structural racism in the United States (including the current disproportionate incarceration of African Americans), as well as to the strength, survival, and also the thriving of people of the African diaspora.

At the same time, these works are less overtly about racism in the United States than previous sculptures by Cave that featured mammy figures and lawn jockeys, which the artist collected and then incorporated into assemblages that foregrounded this racist imagery while simultaneously seeking to lift it with filigrees of flowers and birds. The works in *If a Tree Falls* also lack the shimmering buoyance of the "Soundsuits," for which Cave is best known. Humanoid in shape, early versions repurposed discarded materials (which Cave associated with the treatment of African Americans) while magically protecting the figure inside them. In comparison, the body parts in *If a Tree Falls* are broken and exposed as if lying on the ground or in an open grave. Some of the heads are screaming. One rests on a small American flag formed with rows of red, white, and blue shotgun shells; another is placed upright behind the ribbed back of a chair that forms a cage or prison cell; a third is cradled in—or offered up by?—a pair of white, female ceramic hands.

Along with its installation of upraised black hands, the smaller exhibition on 24th Street primarily consists of two series. For the first, Cave had his bent right arm and torso cast in black and bronze from which he has draped garlands of metal tole flowers across the forearms and wrists, with palms held up in supplication—each of the six is titled *Arm Peace*. The second series features a gramophone's flared-horn speaker attached to an arm ending in a fist. Also cast in black and bronze, they affirm the contributions African Americans have made to music, song, and speech. The assemblages on 20th Street are more diverse in materials and construction, and they aim their gaze at domestic spaces. Antique furniture and ivory-colored cloth napkins are combined with more heads, hands, and vintage tole flowers, signaling the work slaves did in the plantation house and the undercompensated labor of domestic workers in the domiciles of wealthy whites.

With wood and metal as primary materials, nothing in *If a Tree Falls* feels ephemeral. If not for their formal ingenuity, the substance of these works—from gramophones to a child's pink wooden chair—might be a century or more old. As a result, they reference legacies of oppression and resistance that are almost inseparable. Many of the heads remain supine throughout the exhibition—a reference to the drowned, shot, and buried from the slave ships to gun violence on the contemporary streets of Chicago, where Cave lives and works. The exhibition's title asks: who will hear them? Cave's work has always sought to listen to these voices. His "Soundsuits" are sculptures that quite literally come to life when worn in performance. The dead continue to carry the weight of history, and *If a Tree Falls* tends to them, too.

Nick Cave, Arm Peace, 2018. Cast bronze, vintage sunburst and tole flowers 68 × 40 1/2 × 10 1/8 inches. Courtesy Jack Shainman.

THE ART NEWSPAPER

Nick Cave beautifies Chicago's Garfield Park station with floral installation

The stop will serve the future Obama Presidential Center

JASON FOUMBERG
30th January 2019 15:00 GMT

The artist Nick Cave, CTA President Dorval Carter, Jr, and Mayor Rahm Emanuel, admire the new works in Garfield Park station

The Chicago-based artist Nick Cave is known for his opulent Soundsuits that blend fashion and sculpture, which are often activated through elaborate performances. He is now scaling up to works of permanent public art, with projects at major transportation hubs including a historic train station in Chicago.

Using custom-cut steel, printed tiles and lenticular lightboxes, Cave and his design collaborator Bob Faust have rendered rich floral patterns reminiscent of his Soundsuits on the ceilings, walls, and exterior surfaces of the Garfield Park station, which serves about 475,000 commuters annually and was built in 1892 for the World's Fair exhibition, as part of a $43m overhaul. The planned Obama Presidential Center is to be sited nearby.

Nick Cave's artistic windbreaks on the platform of the Garfield Green Line station
Photo: Patrick Pyszka, Courtesy of City of Chicago

Cave calls the new Chicago public artwork "a direct expression of the work I am most known for. [My] Soundsuits hide race, gender and class and force the viewer to consider something other without judgment."

"Anytime important work can get outside the institution walls and front and center for viewers who wouldn't otherwise have the opportunity to experience it, consider me in," Cave wrote in an emailed interview. The artist has also created a 70-foot-long beaded mural at the Tampa International Airport in Florida, and Chicago's O'Hare International Airport is next on Cave's design agenda.

Newsweek

Nick Cave's Goofy Vision of Hope Plays Times Square Every Night in December

BY MARY KAYE SCHILLING ON 11/21/18 AT 3:00 PM

The Soundsuits in artist Nick Cave's "Drive-By Remix," minus the pogo sticks. Color, movement and playfulness are Cave signatures. COURTESY OF NICK CAVE

Fifteen years ago, artist Nick Cave was standing in the middle of Times Square, thinking, I would love to do a video installation here. Perhaps he's also a prophet because, beginning December 1, that dream is reality.

Cave's "Drive-By Remix" will be projected onto roughly 70 screens every night between 11:57 and midnight through December 30. It's part of the Times Square Alliance's Midnight Moment series, the world's largest, longest-running digital art exhibition. The piece features dancers wearing Cave's elaborate Soundsuits—goofy, colorful, bizarrely festooned creatures, this time on pogo sticks. If you should happen to look up and think, Whoa, what the hell is that?—well, Cave has done his job.

"Everybody has their own issues and things they're dealing with, in addition to a very intense and troubling discourse politically," says Cave. "We need moments that jolt us, that wake up our consciousness—and maybe change our mood in the process."

Color, movement and playfulness are Cave signatures, but the Soundsuits' catalyst was grief—a response to the beating of Rodney King by police officers in 1991. The African-American, Alvin Ailey–trained dancer and artist made the first suit of sticks, twigs and debris (it rustled as Cave moved, thus the name) as a kind of race-, class- and gender-erasing armor. The 500 widely collected suits he's made since—half costume, half sculpture—combine multicultural influences (African, Native American, Japanese, etc.) with a hodgepodge of material: synthetic human hair, pipe cleaners, toys, bulky sweaters and whatever else is at hand. The results pose a question: "How do we look at something 'other' and still find the connection points?" asks Cave. "How do we find unity and community?"

Nick Cave in his Chicago studio. The Alvin Ailey–trained dancer and artist made the first suit of sticks, twigs and debris (it rustled as Cave moved, thus the name Soundsuit) as a kind of race-, class- and gender-erasing armor. PHOTO BY JAMES PRINZ PHOTOGRAPHY

Times Square will be Cave's biggest canvas yet, as well as a capper to a landmark year. In June, Cave took over New York's Park Avenue Armory for a nearly monthlong installation—disco ball called "The Let Go." On November 1, Cave's show "If a Tree Falls" opened at the New York gallery of his longtime dealer, Jack Shainman. And on the same day, Cave and his personal and professional partner, the designer Bob Faust, announced the opening of Facility, a self-funded incubator for young artists in Chicago, where they are based.

Cave is the 80th artist to contribute to Midnight Moment, which began in 2012 (other artists have included Björk, Laurie Anderson and rising star Alex Da Corte). Like all the previous work, says Andrew Dinwiddie, the acting director of Times Square Arts, Cave's piece reflects Moment's overarching intention. "Nick's video, in addition to being super fun, encapsulates the singular complexity of Times Square," says Dinwiddie. "The celebration of diverse culture, the history of social activism and, particularly in the New Year season, a beautiful expression of collective joy in the public sphere."

Think of the infectious "Drive-By Remix," then, as Cave's holiday greeting to the world, with a message of hope for a better future. "Midnight Moment slows everyone down for three minutes," says Dinwiddie. "You might turn to a stranger and say, 'Sorry, did you see what I saw?' It's like a collective daydream of another possible reality—and then it's gone!"

"Drive-By Remix" will play Times Square at 11:57 every night from December 1 through December 30. "If A Tree Falls" will be at the Jack Shainman Gallery—524 W. 24th in New York City—Street through December 22.

MUSEE
VANGUARD OF PHOTOGRAPHY CULTURE

NOV 6

Art Out: Nick Cave-If A Tree Falls

ART OUT

© Vasilios Smaragdas

Images by Vasilios Smaragdas

Jack Shainman Gallery is pleased to present *If a Tree Falls*, an exhibition of new work by Nick Cave, bookending the artist's spring presentations in New York. If *Weather or Not* (Jack Shainman Gallery, May 17 – June 23, 2018) was the visual manifestation of states of mind, and *The Let Go* (Park Avenue Armory, June 7 – July 1, 2018) an expression of states of being, *If a Tree Falls* explores a crucial underlying component of these personal and collective states – the state of the American nation.

Cave creates a space of memorial through combining found historical objects with a contemporary dialogue on gun violence and death inflicted both by and within the black community. Large-scale installations include towers of welded magnifying glasses penetrating a sea of blackened hands, while wooden busts are encased within clusters of furniture indicative of colonial class structures. Cave magnifies the individuals behind what so frequently is deemed "black on black" crime, forcing viewers to reconcile disinterest in resolution with the myopic vantage point often taken towards Black America. Conceptually reminiscent of Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon prison, Cave's sculptures make clear that our society's self-orientations serve a similar purpose of population control.

The figure remains central as Cave casts his own body in bronze, an extension of the performative work so critical to his oeuvre. A palpable pressure can be felt as weighted body parts press into stacks of delicate handkerchiefs, speaking to the dichotomy of anger and grief as a result of violence. Challenging "who is free" and "who is brave," American eagles perch atop the heads of black men, some caught in the midst of wrenching screams, only to be muted by the bronze cast pillows on which they lie. A suite of oversized bronze gramophones seamlessly grow from raised fists, luring us in with their unsettling silence and questioning how much power the citizens of this nation actually possess.

Cave reminds us, however, that while there may be despair, there remains space for hope and renewal. From these dismembered body parts stem delicate metal flowers, affirming the potential of new growth. Peace ribbons gently dangle from a series of outstretched finger tips, while in *Unarmed* (2018), a memorial wreath encircles a weaponless hand, raised and ready to shoot. A chain of linked bronze arms extends from ceiling to ground; it is up to us to decide – is this a downward gravitational heave, or do the figures pull one another upwards and out of the pile from which they have emerged? Cave encourages a profound and compassionate analysis of violence and its effects as the path towards an ultimate metamorphosis.

Jack Shainman Gallery

November 1st - December 22nd

Hours: Tuseday - Saturday 10 AM - 6 PM

513 W 20th Street, New York, NY

524 W 24th Street, New York, NY

For more information, click here.

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The New York Times

Nick Cave Wants You to Work It Out on the Dance Floor

Charles Grant, one of the performers, dances with the crowd at Nick Cave's "The Let Go" at the Park Avenue Armory. Mr. Cave said he was inspired by his own disco days, when spending time in clubs was a refuge. Vincent Tullo for The New York Times

By Melena Ryzik

June 8, 2018

The "Soul Train" line appeared out of nowhere, fully formed, like it was meant to be. At the Park Avenue Armory on Wednesday night, dozens of dancers paired off to spin and bounce, sashaying between 40-foot-high glittering curtains.

In another corner of the room, a giant game of Twister occupied hands and feet; then a line dance, with pivots and hip bumps, broke out. The curtain, made of multicolored Mylar strands — disco streamers — curved through the space, creating pockets for solos on what seemed like the city's largest dance floor. This was "The Let Go," and it was rallying New Yorkers toward playful, sweaty abandon.

Just an hour earlier, the crowd had been seated, quietly taking in "Up Right," a costumed performance backed by a choir, that deals with police brutality, gun violence, racial inequality and identity. At least two audience members had been moved to tears. Now they were rushing through the strands of the curtain, shimmying their butts off. "Get in here!" one yelled to me, giddy.

Getting dressed in one of Mr. Cave's signature Soundsuits, costume-like sculptures that make noise as they move. Vincent Tullo for The New York Times

Both "Up Right" and "The Let Go" are creations of Nick Cave, the Chicago artist best known for his "Soundsuits," costume-like sculptures that make noise as they move. What connects the projects — aside from their raucous, rainbow-hued color palette — is a sense of transformation. "Up Right," a signature Cave work making its New York premiere at the Armory, features dancers who slowly metamorphose into 10-foot-tall shamanesque creatures as they don their rustling Soundsuits and stomp around. "The Let Go," a work commissioned by the Armory, encourages any visitor to have that same wild, unencumbered energy.

"It's definitely pushing you toward freedom," said Jinah Parker, a dancer, choreographer and playwright, who came to the preview performances on Wednesday.

Mr. Cave, 59, who trained at Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater before becoming a visual artist, was inspired by his own disco days, which propelled him through college and graduate school. "I would go into the club and I would just work it out on the dance floor," he said. "I wouldn't talk to anyone and I would dance for about three hours."

Francesca Harper, the show's movement director, and Nick Cave. Vincent Tullo for The New York Times

"That was very safe for me," he added. "It was this place of refuge."

At this anxious, divided moment in our country, Mr. Cave said, we all need a place to lose ourselves, and unfurl. When conceiving "The Let Go," he envisioned a connection among the Armory's vast historic drill hall, dance halls and town hall meetings where Americans' political rifts have been laid bare.

For Mr. Cave, movement is a way to bridge our cultural divide. He has invited more than 90 community groups to "activate" the space each day, from the Hoop Movement, which teaches hula hooping, to the Lower East Side Girls Club and Habitat for Humanity. "Up Right" is performed Wednesdays to Fridays; afterward, and on weekends, ticket-holders can show up and dance — or just observe. D.J.s, including the downtown stalwarts JD Samson, Johnny Dynell and Ana Matronic, will spin live, and a fashion-centric "Freedom Ball," celebrating house music and ball culture, is planned for June 14. (The installation and events run through July 1.)

Neil Totton, a dancer and performance artist, is a leader of the African Dance Lab, one of the community groups, and part of both "Up Right" and "The Let Go." He's tasked with engaging visitors in "The Let Go," pulling them into motion, teaching them the line dance that was created for the piece.

The "Let Go" performers engage audience members, pulling them into motion (if they want to move).
Vincent Tullo for The New York Times

"Empowerment" is the word that performers have been using to describe their take on the project, and what they want to convey to the audience, Mr. Totton said. In an onslaught of negativity, "you have two choices," he said. You can be discouraged and tormented, "or have the audacity to say, 'I'm not going to let this break me.'"

In casting the show, Mr. Cave and his team, including his special projects director Bob Faust, and the choreographer and dancer Francesca Harper, looked for artists who had gone through their own make-or-break moment. In the auditions, they asked dancers to reveal a challenging social or emotional experience. Mr. Totton, an in-demand fitness trainer, talked about a recent mental breakdown that led him to a hospital stay. In rehearsals, dancers were given flashcards with words like empathy, compassion and connection, to inform their movement.

Putting on one of Mr. Cave's Soundsuits — "I feel like a Pop Art cartoon come to life," Mr. Totton said, "like a giant Yo Gabba Gabba" — is audacious; moving in it, extending a hand to a stranger to join in, may be more so. (Some of the Soundsuits have silky hair primed for shaking; Mr. Totton said he also felt "like the world's biggest Tina Turner.")

Performers dancing in Nick Cave's Soundsuits (yes, there are people in there) in "Up Right!" at the Park Avenue Armory. Vincent Tullo for The New York Times

Mr. Cave, a gay artist whose projects have recently become more personal — he also has an exhibition, "Weather or Not," at Jack Shainman Gallery in Chelsea this month — can sneak depth into even the most lightweight elements of his work. In "The Let Go," the colors of the curtain, which he titled "The Chase," represent gay pride and minorities being chased by police.

Though Ms. Harper, the movement director, created the "Let Go" line dance and a few other distinct phrases, she also wanted her dancers to improvise, and stay connected to the crowd. "We want to include all people, even people that are shy," she said. "I had this woman who was like, 'I can't dance, I can't dance,' and I said, O.K., can you walk with me? We walked around the Chase, and I took her hand, and we were laughing by the end."

On Wednesday night, well-heeled patrons and young creative types declared themselves dazzled. "We wish all openings were this engaging," said Juan Hinojosa, a mixed media artist, as the tinsel curtain twirled past him and a friend. "It's magical." At a rehearsal earlier in the week, attended by schoolchildren, there were cartwheels and chants of "rock it out!" A 9-year-old Brooklyn boy named Jayden showed off a fast move he called the Twister, which he created for the room (another was inspired by Fortnite, the video game). "I want a hug!" he called as the Soundsuited performers filed past him.

One of the thrills for Mr. Cave is that, in its long run, "The Let Go" can be transformed. It's an "ongoing sketch," he said. "Nothing stays the same."

And don't be surprised to see him out on the floor, recharging with the crowd. "I will definitely be dancing," he said. "And it'll come out of the birth of the project — it's that ahhh, that sigh of relief. Now *I* can just sort of let go."

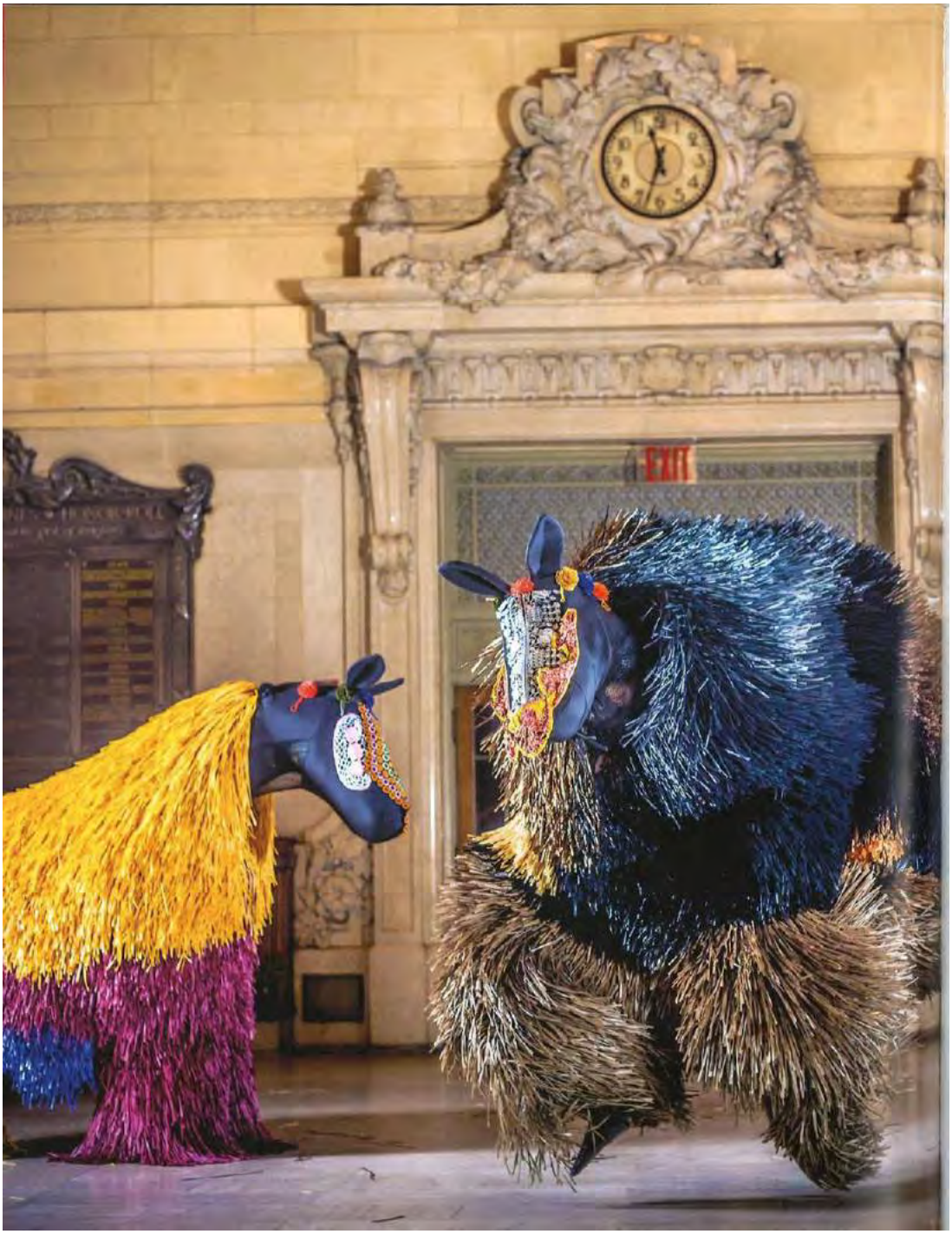
ELEPHANT

Summer 2018

Mobilizing the Masses

Nick Cave

"There's always optimism in my work. It's about bringing things to light through colour. Through movement. It's about activation. That's when the healing process begins." Margaret Carrigan heads to Chicago to meet Nick Cave, whose powerfully affirmative work cuts straight to the heart of its often hefty political subject matter.


EXIT

Previous pages
Arm Piece, 2018
Cast bronze and vintage tole flowers

Opposite page
Nick Cave: Heard NY (detail), Grand Central Station, New York, 2013
Installation view

This page
Portrait by Assaf Evron

It's mid-January when I meet with Nick Cave to talk about what's on the horizon for him this year, with two major gallery shows and a new performance commission debuting in New York in the summer and autumn. The bright morning Chicago air feels brittle and I'm blue with cold as I huff my way to his studio. I'm running an embarrassing twenty-five minutes late because I got off the L at the wrong stop, forcing me to hoof it over the Cermak Road Bridge, which rattles with the kind of bone-chilling breeze I have only ever experienced in the Windy City. When I finally arrive, Bob Faust, the artist's studio manager and partner, graciously ushers me—by this point just a popsicle in a puffer coat—into their Pilsen warehouse.

"This used to be the Motor Row District back in the day; our building was an old tyre factory," Faust tells me as we ride the large steel-encased elevator up to their living quarters. "We're going to move in August, though, we need more space." We stride into Cave's spacious, sun-spattered, open-plan apartment, which is filled with large plants, some small trees even. It feels like walking into a jungle oasis after roving the frigid factory tundra outside.

Cave is sitting at an expansive dark wood dining table, waiting patiently for my late ass. As I sit down, bumbling with apologies, he casually waves his hand to the side in a gesture of absolution, telling me he doesn't mind having a few extra minutes to himself. "I try to find time to sit in silence every day, it makes you present, brings you closer to your truth. Just imagine if we each had one hour of silence every day! I think we'd be a different people," he says, his eyes twinkling and clearly a bit bemused by my flustered hurriedness as I pull out my notebook and Faust takes my coat.

Because of the lushness of the loft, it takes a minute to register all of the art held within it—a Kehinde Wiley painting over there, a Barkley L Hendricks to my right. Everywhere I look there are sculptures, tapestries and fantastic furniture from all around the globe, blending to create a roomscape that vibrates with warmth and eclecticism. Cave explains that he's been collecting all manner of objects for many years. "I may be pretty rooted here," he tells me. He has lived in Chicago since 1980, when he began teaching at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, "but I'm operating in the world", he says, gesticulating in an arc. "I like being reminded that I'm out in it, part of it, even when I'm inside."

Certainly, Cave's work has always revealed him as having a global world view and even a penchant for collecting. Although perhaps best known for his performances in "soundsuits"—sculptural assemblages used as a surrealist armour to guard against preconceived notions relating to the race and gender of their wearers—the artist's multimedia installations are even more of a potpourri of found objects exploring class, skin colour and cultural identities. He has two major shows this year at his New York gallery, Jack Shainman, one that opened in May and another that will open in October, both of which attempt to quantify the historical and contemporary psychological condition of black lived experience in America, and have him scouring flea markets and eBay for very specific items.

"The mobilization of bodies can be just as powerful a force as the weather if we want it to be"

"I've got a whole room full of these carved wooden heads of bald eagles and black people," he tells me, which are to be used in his autumn show at Jack Shainman. "We're all told this is the land of the free and the home of the brave. But who gets to be free, who gets to be brave? These little wooden sculptures, they look similar but they represent different things. What happens when you mix them all together?"

He tells me that his whole process of collection is a political act in and of itself, since as he culls these effigies from random sources, he tries to track down and record the maker and year it was made. "It's like a reclaiming; a rewriting of history." There are all sorts of data collection now, all the time, but what about all the information that got left out before now, the names and lives and facts that got lost? "I want to track these things," he says, "analyse them. There's power in statistics; it's a kind of material, too."

Data analysis is at the centre of some of his latest fabric "paintings" too, which are featured in Cave's summer show, *Weather or Not*. The large tondos are first bejewelled with a target pattern made out of bugle beads before a sweep of colourful fur-like fabric is applied on top in various swirling trajectories. "I was looking at some studies that explore the post-traumatic stress of black-on-black crime," he says. It is worth noting that such analysis is vastly overlooked in the mainstream political dialogue around gun violence in the United States.

"I was struck by how much the brain scans from these studies looked like Doppler maps of severe weather. And that got me thinking about all these devastating hurricanes lately in places like Haiti and Puerto Rico, and how little was done to help these communities," Cave says, his voice rising a bit. These forces —one natural, one social, but equally damaging nonetheless—are affecting areas that contain a majority of people of colour while much of America turns a blind eye. The physical and psychological trauma that ensues among these communities are precisely what Cave says he's trying to convey.

Despite the hard-hitting topics that are present in Cave's work, there is joy too. "There's always optimism in my work," he says. "It's about bringing things to light through colour. Through movement. It's about activation. That's when the healing process begins." Indeed, in his site-specific commission for New York's Park Avenue Armory this summer, *The Let Go*, Cave is turning the historic building's Wade Thompson Drill Hall into a rainbow-coloured dance floor enlivened by nearly one hundred choir members and performers.

"We're in a moment of huge political activation right now—there are huge marches happening in cities across the nation. There are these town halls popping up all over the country and hundreds of people are at them. So I'm taking this idea of the town hall and making it into a dance hall," he says, explaining that dance is a form of catharsis. "The mobilization of bodies can be just as powerful a force as the weather if we want it to be."

"I always work with big groups of people these days, it seems to be what the institutions who commission me want," Cave says, when I ask if it's difficult to coordinate mini-movements all the time.

"May I chime in?" Faust ventures. "I think you might be being too humble. There's a definite strategy in your work, because when you think of affect, and making a mark, and creating opportunities for people to be seen and heard, the more people you enlist, the more impact your work can have. Your work is about participating in something that's bigger than the individual. That's the point about mobilization."

Cave smiles at me coyly as Faust finishes his sentence. "He's right. But it sounds better when he says it." Speaking of mobilizing the masses, the artist checks his watch. "It's time for me to go to class! I have students to teach." Within minutes I'm back outside, the heatless sun and chilly air once again shocking my senses. Faust and Cave wave to me from the door. "It'll be warmer out when we meet again," the artist says, always the optimist.

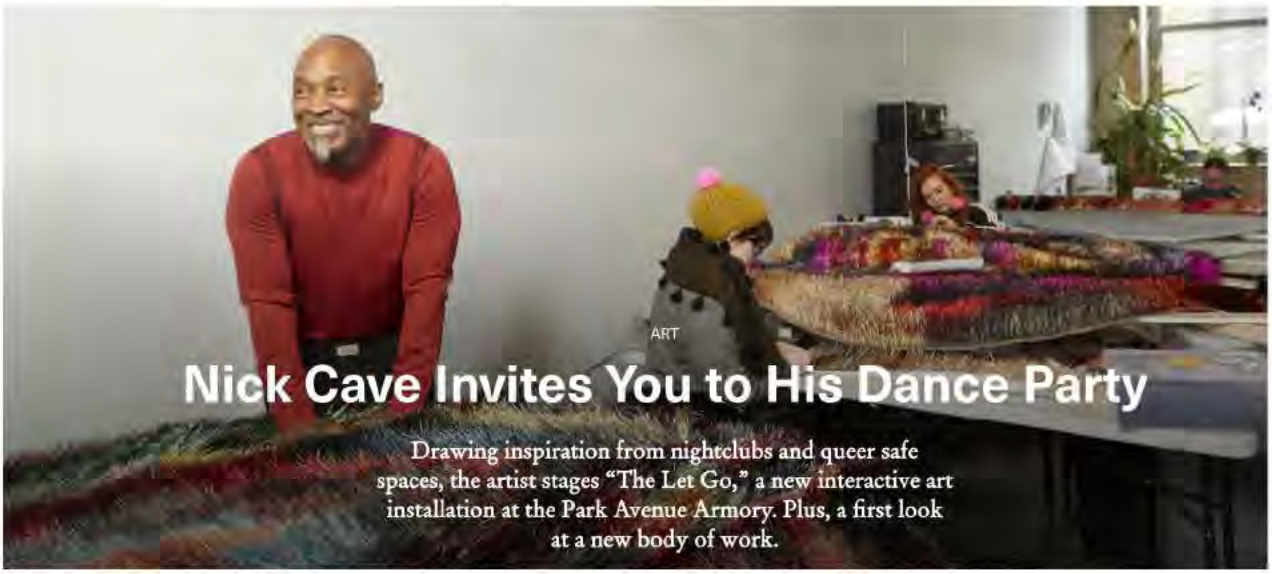
"Weather or Not" runs until 23 June at Jack Shainman Gallery, New York

Previous pages, left and right:
Tondo, 2018
Mixed media including metal, wire, bugle beads, sequinned fabric and wood
Approx 183 cm diameter

Opposite page
Soundsuit, 2017
Mixed media including buttons, wire, bugle beads, metal and mannequin
Approx 236 x 122 x 38 cm

55 Nick Cave

SURFACE



ART

Nick Cave Invites You to His Dance Party

Drawing inspiration from nightclubs and queer safe spaces, the artist stages "The Let Go," a new interactive art installation at the Park Avenue Armory. Plus, a first look at a new body of work.

BY JASON FOUMBERG
PHOTOS AND VIDEOS BY ADAM RYAN MORRIS
March 29, 2018

Nick Cave is becoming a master of the massive exhibition format. Quick on the heels of closing an 22,000-square-foot interactive forest of sculpture at Mass MOCA, he commands a space more than three times that size in "The Let Go" at Park Avenue Armory's Wade Thompson Drill Hall, beginning June 7. Visitors can dance amid custom lighting, live DJs and singers, and kinetic sculpture. The centerpiece is a 100-foot-long curtain of colorful Mylar streamers that shimmies through the cavernous space from an aerial conveyor belt. The Mylar snake is programmed to confront you. You may choose to respond by dancing.

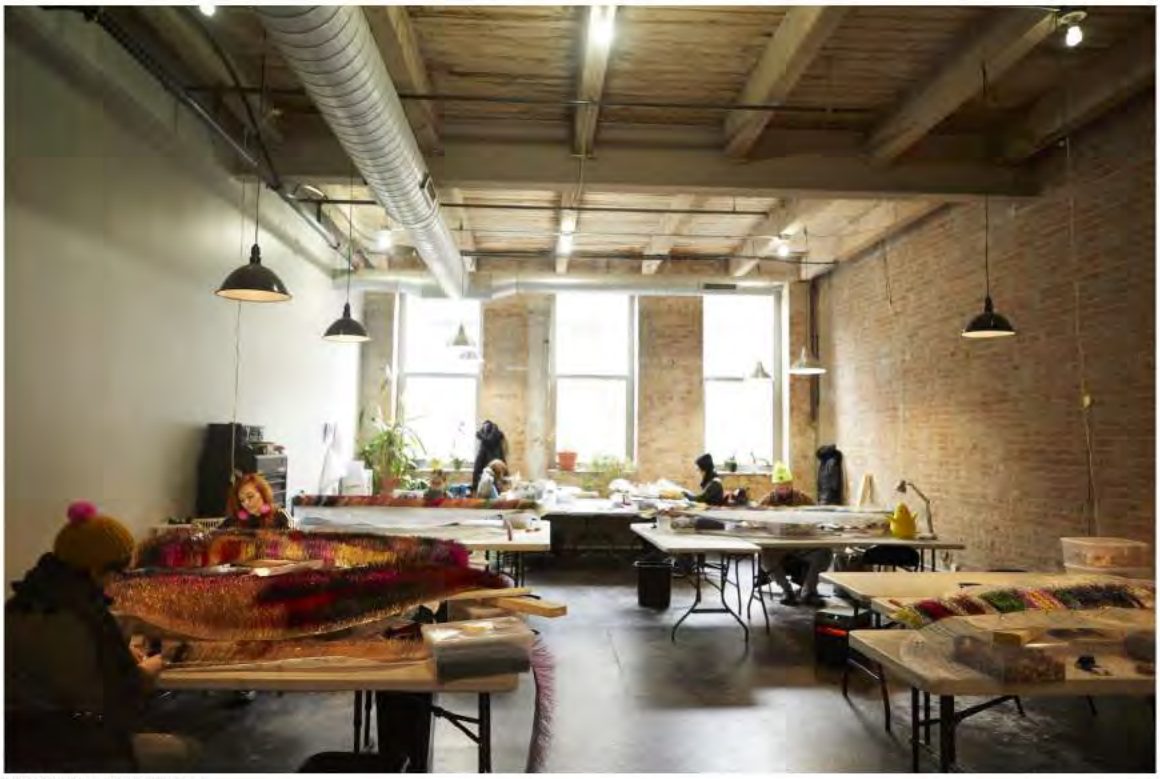
"The Let Go" is a refreshingly joyous concept for an artist whose sculptures are best known for their critiques of gun violence and racism in the U.S. and in his hometown, Chicago. Even Cave's dazzling Soundsuits, which will be activated in a performance of new, site-specific choreography during the installation, were borne as metaphoric armor in response to notorious police abuse in the nineties. "I'm thinking about ways to create space that allows us to release our frustrations," says Cave of his Armory takeover. "It's a creative platform where we can release our anger." "The Let Go" is an homage to the nightclubs and queer safe spaces that offer escape and community, where partying is a political expression.

The activation coincides with Cave's seventh solo exhibition at Jack Shainman Gallery (opening May 17). Titled "Weather or Not," the show debuts tondo (circular wall weavings), which appear like abstract patterns but that draw inspiration from catastrophic weather maps and brain scans of traumatized gun violence victims. "Those devastations affect the physical self and the psychic self," Cave says. "[They] can change your personality." On their surfaces, the 10 colorful weavings are shimmering and inviting. "They're beautiful but alarming at the same time."

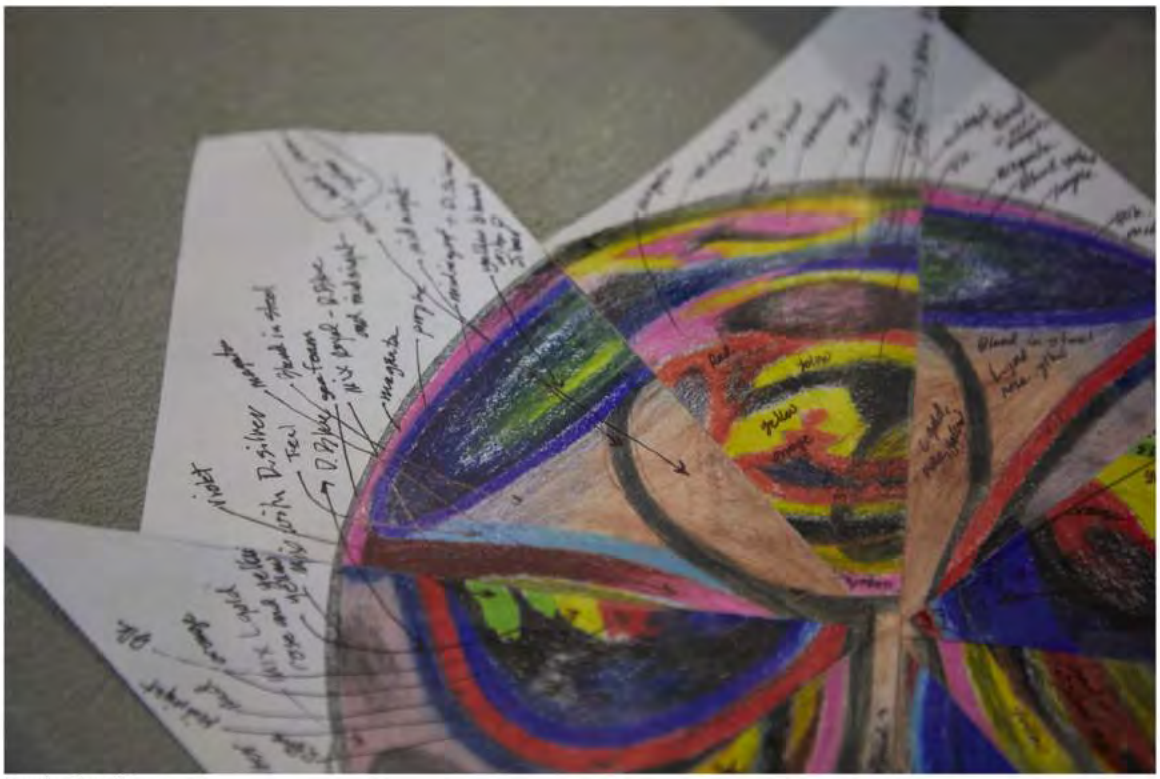
"There is an urgency right now," Cave says of his new works. "As artists we need to remain very present out here in the world. We need to find ways to unify people."

Below, peek inside Cave's Chicago studio, and get an exclusive first look at his new works for "Weather or Not," debuting in New York this May.

Mockup of Cave's mylar sculpture installation as part of "The Let Go" at the Park Avenue Armory. Photo: Nick Knight



Nick Cave's studio in Chicago.



Drawings for tondos.

An assistant weaving a tondo.

Cave with two of his wall weavings.

VOGUE

Nick Cave Hosts an Art World Bash at the Park Avenue Armory

JUNE 8, 2018 10:49 AM
by NOOR BRARA

Nick Cave and Beth Rudin DeWoody.
Photos: Da Ping Luo

In 1991, a black taxi driver in Los Angeles named Rodney King was brutally beaten by a group of white police officers following a high-speed car chase. When footage from the incident was released—as it so happened, someone had filmed the entire episode from atop a balcony nearby—it quickly picked up media attention worldwide. The officers were tried on charges of excessive force and nearly all were totally acquitted; Los Angeles, in turn, exploded in a six-day period of civil unrest and violence that left thousands of people injured or dead.

Somewhere in Chicago, the artist Nick Cave, was rattled to the core when he became aware of what had happened to King, the subsequent riots, and the fact that most of the officers had gotten off scot-free. "I remember thinking that my identity is really only protected in the privacy of my own home," he said. "That the moment I leave this space, I could be just another profile." In response, he created the first of what would become his claim to fame: a wearable sculpture he called a "soundsuit" that served as a sort of body armor or protection from the outside world. When donned, the wearer was totally concealed, and any physical indicators of race, gender, class, and sexuality were erased from view. Within this second skin, one was, essentially, freed.

It comes as little surprise in 2018, then, that the Park Avenue Armory selected Cave as their artist-in-residence this season, and on Wednesday evening, the art world gathered there to ring in his new show, "The Let Go." Comprised of two parts, the first is a viewing of Cave's new series of soundsuits made from his signature color-laden materials of raffia, synthetic human hair, pipe cleaners, and other brightly toned, fuzzy fabrics, while in the second part, the suits are donned by dancers who invite viewers to take part in a performance set to music and a collective a town hall-style dance party. Cave's premiere performance took place in the Wade Thompson Drill Hall and filled the cool, dark space with a 40-foot, rainbow-color Mylar sculpture that dazzled the audience beneath it as it swooped by on rods encircling the crowd. Here, a group of young vocalists from the Sing Harlem Choir—lead by Jorell Williams and Vy Higginsen—sang songs in gospel-style harmonies before a transfixed audience. Their reprise belted out the words "a change has come over me" as the dance performers assumed their soundsuits, and after about 20 minutes of what felt like a religious experience of calm—intended by Cave to create a moment of cathartic transfiguration in the mind and to, essentially, "let go"—the performers, singers, and space itself erupted into a full-on dance frenzy, culminating in a celebration of the collective differences of all who were there. The event opened for the audience to take part, turning, thereafter, into an '80s-inspired disco scene as a DJ took over for the singers. "Back in the day, the clubs felt like the only place I was truly safe and celebrated for being who I was born to be," noted Cave. "I am using 'The Let Go' as a way to share that feeling."

After the festivities and a special dinner, attendees—including artists Dustin Yellin, Hank Willis Thomas, and Rachel Rose, designer James de Givenchy, and playwright Lynn Nottage—made their way out into the summer night.

The New York Times

As Frieze Expands, Its New York Fair Freshens Up

By TED LOOS MAY 2, 2018

"Tondo" by Nick Cave, which is six feet in diameter and made of metal, wire, bugle beads, sequined fabric and wood.

One of those New Yorkers, the dealer Jack Shainman, said that Frieze New York created a good backdrop for his artists.

"You can show quieter things, and they can still have resonance because the fair is very beautiful," said Mr. Shainman, who is presenting a variety of artists in his booth in the main section. "We want to look like a group show, but a museum group show."

Included is a round work by the artist Nick Cave, "Tondo" (2018), that is six feet in diameter and made of metal, wire, bugle beads, sequined fabric and wood. "These pieces take him almost a year to make," Mr. Shainman said. "They undulate and change color as you move around them."

Also on view is Geoffrey Chadsey's "Kushn" (2018), an image of a top-hatted figure done in watercolor pencil on Mylar. Mr. Shainman, who is doing a show of Mr. Chadsey's work in one of his two Chelsea gallery spaces, called the artist a specialist in "cryptic, surreal and gender-fluid portraiture."

Though Mr. Shainman is presenting what could be called a mixed-grill lineup, many dealers are choosing solo presentations this time.

"I think that people are pulled in so many directions now, and dealers want to be more focused and rigorous about what they're showing, to make a more succinct statement," Ms. Randolph said.

whitewall

Natalie Frank, Nick Cave, Cecilia Vicuña, and Other Must See Shows in New York

By Pearl Fontaine

Although Frieze week has passed, there is no shortage of good shows and exhibitions opening and on view in the city. Here's our list of "must sees" that you should be sure to check out.

Nick Cave at Jack Shainman

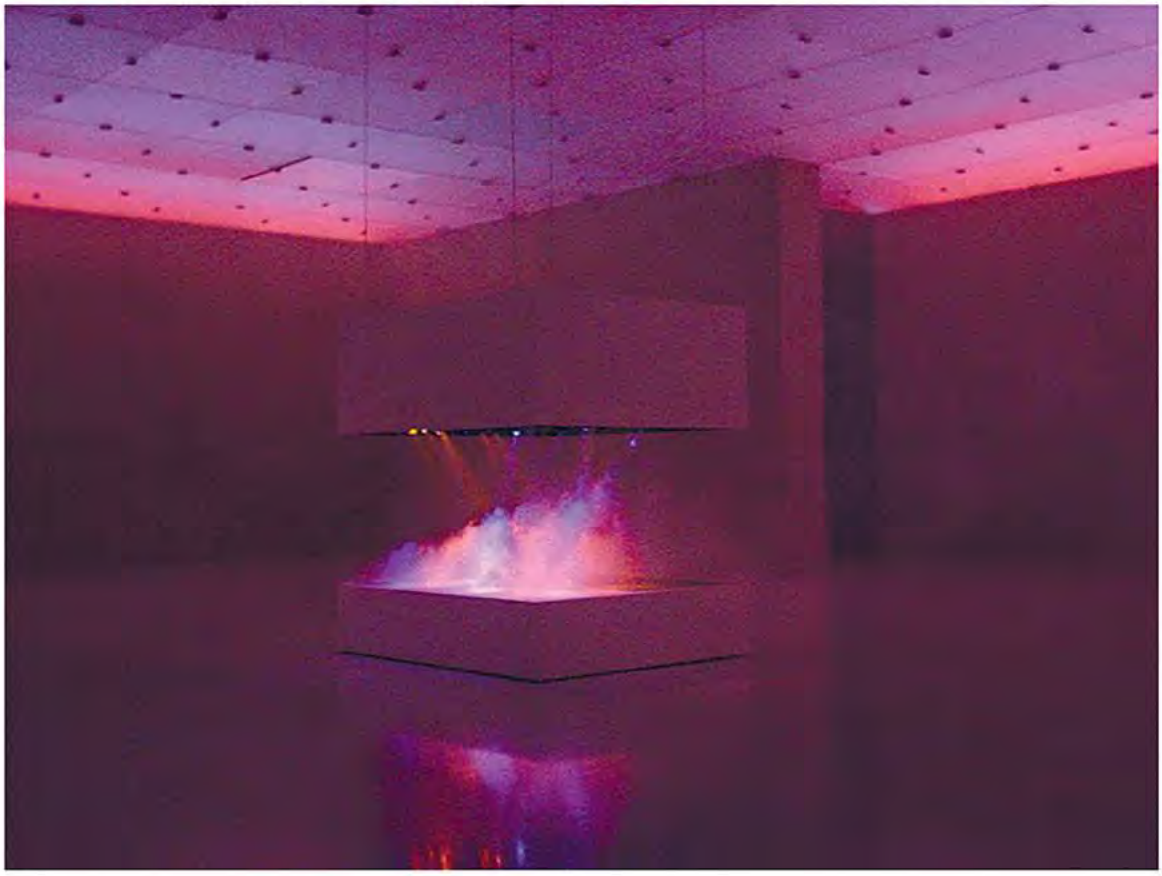
Now—June 23

Nick Cave's collection of new work, "Weather or Not," opens to the public this week at Jack Shainman. Cave's exhibition, a visual manifestation of states of mind, premiers a series of wire "Tondos," created from the layering of cataclysmic weather patterns with brain scans of black youth suffering from PTSD as a result of gun violence. While individual "Tondos" that make up "Weather or Not" are undoubtedly and brilliantly beautiful, the exhibition works as a whole to convey the gravity of issues rooted in our current social scene.

VOGUE

Here's What to Go See at This Year's Frieze Art Fair

MAY 3, 2018 3:38 PM
by HAMISH BOWLES



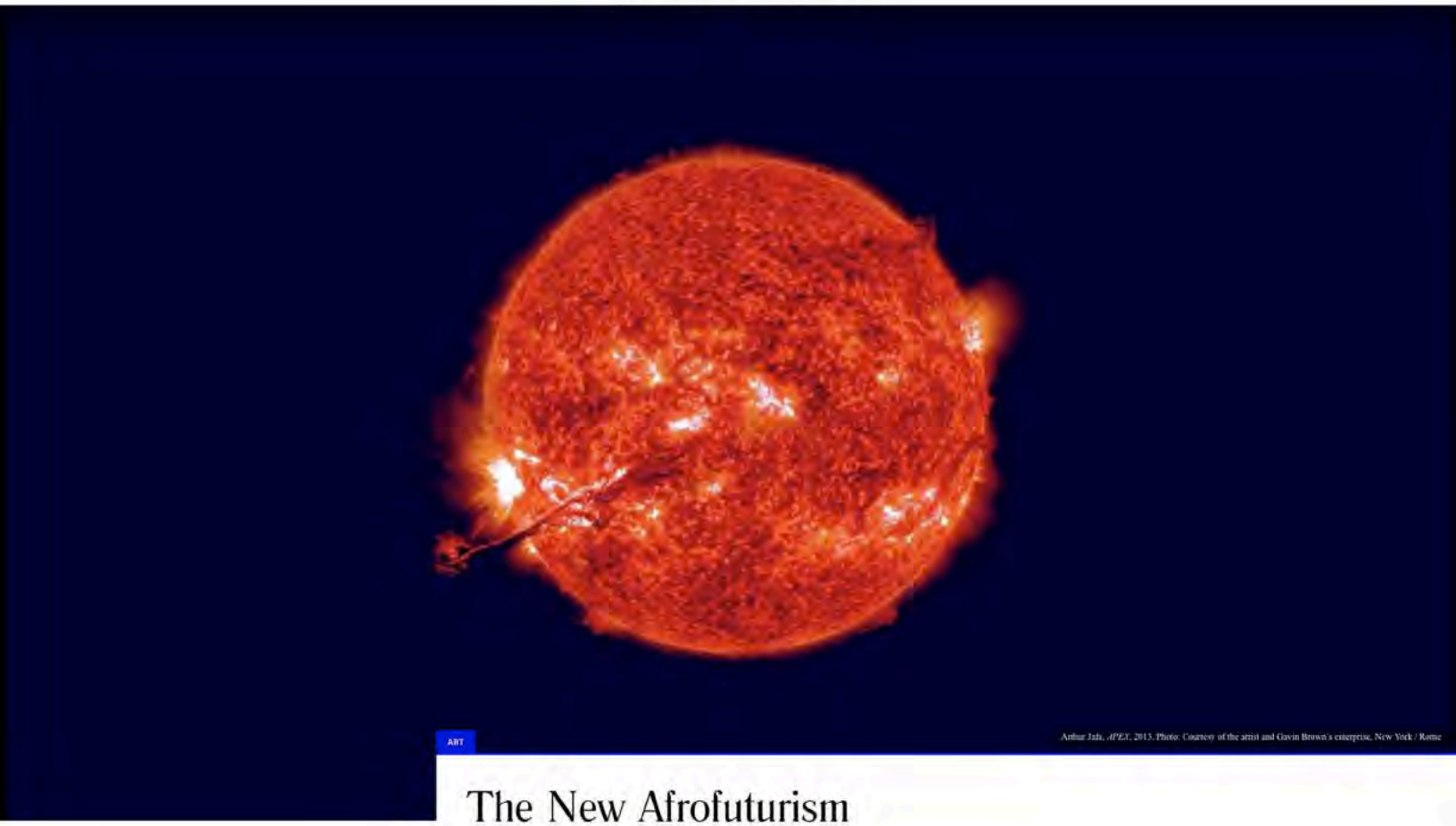
It was a perfect day for the ferry from 35th Street to the Frieze art encampment on Randall's Island, although once inside the *espace éphémère*, things became decidedly sultry. The VIP breakfast in the Saks Hospitality lounge was a genteel affair—until the clock struck 10:00 and the hard-core collectors, curators, and dealers (Maja Hoffmann, Howard and Cindy Rachofsky, Adam Lindemann, et al.) hit the floor running. I looked up and realized that I had been left practically alone in the dust, foolishly nursing a cup of coffee and a Danish pastry. I soon sped off in an attempt to take it all in—or at least as much as I could—and by 2:00 p.m., I had a wish list of pieces juggling for space in the gallery of my dreams.

The African-American experience figured large in this year's Frieze, and there were some real revelations. I was blown away by the vibrant, joyous '60s paintings of Emma Amos (Ryan Lee Gallery), and by Lyle Ashton Harris's 1989 work *Constructs, Suite of Four* (Salon 94). The great photographer Gordon Parks's *Doll Test, Harlem* (1947; Jack Shainman Gallery) is a heartbreaker, and I was frankly electrified by the eviscerating image assemblages of Arthur Jafa's 2018 *HA Crow* prints (occupying a wall at Gavin Brown's enterprise).

Lyle Ashton Harris, *Constructs, Suite of Four* (#10, #11, #12, #13), 1989
Photo: Courtesy of Salon 94, New York

There was also a preponderance of pieces that subvert, or at least harness, traditional crafts and reveal the human hand at work in this automated age. In this genre, I loved the work of the Palestinian-American Jordan Nassar, who created a convivial Arab majlis (seating area) to showcase his traditional Palestinian cross-stitch embroideries used to depict ravishingly colored landscapes (*Anat Ebgi*), along with Nick Cave's fringed *Tondo* (2018; Jack Shainman Gallery). I'm also excited by the provocative sculptures of Phyllida Barlow (*Host II*, 1986–1989, at Hauser & Wirth), and Lynda Benglis (Silly, Silver Pink, 2015; Cheim & Read).

VICE
GARAGE



ART

Arthur Jafa, *APEX*, 2013. Photo: Courtesy of the artist and Gavin Brown's enterprise, New York / Rome

The New Afrofuturism

AMAH-ROSE MCKNIGHT-ABRAMS

A cosmically inspired optimism has reappeared in the work of African diasporic artists.

In 2018, we're witness to daily political protests, social justice is very much on the agenda, and **there's a new Parliament record out**. One could be forgiven for thinking it was still 1974. Culturally, the world seems to be taking a giant step backward in order—hopefully—to achieve renewed progress. But while our collective imaginings too often fall far short of a convincing alternative future, Afrofuturism has been proposing ways forward for decades.

The self-consciously extreme, even mocking, speculative thesis of the original Afrofuturist movement, as it developed during the 1960s and '70s in the music of Sun Ra and the dense sci-fi novels of Samuel Delaney, among others, was that in order to achieve a better life, people of African descent should abandon the earth as a lost cause and relocate to another planet. Named by American cultural critic Mark Dery in his influential 1994 essay on black technoculture **"Black to The Future."** Afrofuturism has since accrued new significance with the global resurgence of right-wing and nationalist extremism.

Afrofuturism, further soundtracked by the likes of Lee "Scratch" Perry, Derrick May, and their numerous creative descendants, combines aspects of cultural history with futurologies both fanciful and technologically grounded. And while it draws on its own past, today's incarnation of the Afrofuturist tendency still poses a progressive question: What would a positive future for Africa's citizenry and disapora actually *look* like?

Artist Nick Cave, best known for his otherworldly *Soundsuits,* which meld influences from African tribal ritual with aspects of contemporary Western dance, remembers the strong impact of the first wave of Afrofuturist aesthetic philosophy: "It was such an extraordinary moment in time, and it was everything to me," he told GARAGE. "It was a melting pot of creative, eccentric energies that arose in a particular political climate, It was a dynamic that brought everyone together."

In his upcoming installation at New York's Armory Show in June, Cave will install a hundred-foot-long, four-meter tall Mylar curtain, around which he is programming performances and other events designed to give visitors an outlet for their political grievances. It's a call to catharsis, which Cave argued is needed if we're to hang on to a positive vision of America: "What should an Afrocentric futurism look like today? Based on our present circumstances, I think the idea provides a great resource of information to look back on, but we have to understand what the pivotal activities were that propelled the original movement to transform itself. Because you know what? Back then, the struggle was so different in terms of rights—voting rights, civil rights—alone. Today we live in melting pot, and we need to ask how we both diversify and come together with a more globally unified vision."

Arthur Jafa is an artist who works with assemblage in film and collage, tapping into the tradition of jazz improvisation. His extraordinary film *Love is the Message, The Message is Death* (2016) uses found footage to take the viewer on an emotional journey meditating on the black American experience. Pitching from sadness to horror to elation, it conveys in a scant few minutes the spirit of a decades-long quest for meaning. Jafa has spoken about the influence of African history on Western aesthetics, and what this complex dynamic means for black people in America today. He ponders, for instance, the ways in which this narrative has produced a particular otherness that's echoed in science-fiction film and literature—think, for example, of the genre's common linkage of alien abduction to the kidnapping involved in slavery.

Nick Cave, *Star Power*, 2016, © Nick Cave. Photo by James Prinz Photography, courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.

The Afrofuturist aesthetic reverberates now through the practices of young artists working in diverse media, including sculptor and photographer Frank Benson, new-media artist Larry Achiampong, and painter Lina Iris Viktor, the spread of the contemporary art market and the rise of the internet having made the emergent Afrofuturist sensibility far more globally evident than previous iterations. Young Ghanaian artist Serge Attukwei Clottey has been gaining traction in this context since the launch of Accra's Gallery 1957 in 2016. Currently exhibiting at Jane Lombard in New York, Clottey sees Afrofuturism as a chance for Africans to reclaim their history and, in doing so, to regain ownership of a positive future.

Struck by the Eurocentricism of his art history program at university in Ghana, Clottey began to question his intellectual milieu. "I began to look into the African history of migration, because it's strange to see people making use of your history of culture in a way that's counter to your understanding of it," he explained. Working in sculpture and performance, Clottey filters various rituals and artifacts adopted by Ghanaian tribes over time through modern objects made with modern materials, such as plastic water containers and fishing nets. "Afrofuturism for me is Africans investigating their own energies to counter Africa's representation in the West," he said. "It is a form of advocacy for a modern African perspective, for breaking away from the [accepted] history of Africa and for unifying African ideologies. It helps us look ahead."

Arthur Jafa, A Series of Improbable, Yet Extraordinary Renditions, *is on view at JSC Berlin from February 11 to November 25.* **Serge Attukwei Clottey: Differences Between** *is on view at Jane Lombard Gallery, New York, from February 15 through March 24.* Nick Cave *opens at* ***Jack Shainman Gallery****, New York, on May 17.*

GARAGE

Time Out New York

May 16, 2017

↓ Nick Cave: *The Let Go*

Interdisciplinary artist Nick Cave refers to his tinsel-curtain installation as a "dance-based town hall" that will host evenings of choreography with performers in Cave's whimsical "soundsuits" (the costume-sculptures that are the artist's signature work). Weekends feature groups of yoga practitioners, hula-hoopers, church choirs and school kids grooving to music by acclaimed DJs.

→ Park Avenue Armory, 643 Park Ave (212-616-3930, armoryonpark.org). June 7–July 1.

SAIC

School of the Art Institute of Chicago

Nick Cave to Install Dance Hall on Park Avenue

Image courtesy of Nick Knight via "The Art Newspaper"

This summer, from June 7 to July 1, Nick Cave, Stephanie and Bill Sick Professor of Fashion, Body and Garment, will transform Park Avenue Armory's Wade Thompson Drill Hall into a carnivalesque dance party.

According to the *Art Newspaper*, Cave's installation, titled *The Let Go*, will "provide a safe haven for viewers to speak their minds with their bodies, to reflect on how politics are pushing us to a cultural boil and to explore how we can work through our frustrations in ways that are healthy," the artist says. "For me, dance has always been that saviour."

A 40-foot-tall kinetic installation, called *Chase*, will be constructed of Mylar curtains suspended from the ceiling and "stream down like Tina Turner's dress," Cave says. Evoking the ideals Studio 54 as both safe haven and liberation, it'll be constructed of symbolic colors: black and silver, evoking ideas of social class and "bling-bling," while, blue, and black, to reference the ominous presence of police.

The Armory will also host performances with Cave's *Soundsuits*, and feature live music and DJ sets with public and community organizations during the day.

Nick Cave at the Frist Art Museum

If you ask my 4 year old and 6 year old if they enjoyed sitting quietly through Nick Cave's two hour performance and then going to an art museum where you cannot touch anything, they will say, "It was awesome!" I am so thankful for this opportunity to share art or life with them. They get it. They don't necessarily get art, but they get the heart of art.

Before we visited the exhibition, Nick Cave Feat., we watched a few movies about Nick Cave online. They love the clips of the soundsuits dancing. I recommend **AS IS** from Louisiana, **Feat.** in Nashville, or the **shorter doc** on Up Right in Atlanta. Before we went in, we also made a deal. I told them if they let me see the art in the exhibition (don't act crazy, etc.), then we can go play in the Martin ArtQuest Studio. They remember how fun it is and thought that was a fair deal. You can see pictures of our first visit to the studio **here**.

Nick Cave, The Frist Center for the Visual Arts, Nashville, Tennessee, installation photo by John Schweikert

After moving through the first room (which was a little crowded), we appreciated the space to sit down in front of Nick Cave's video "Blot." On the large screen, a mirrored image of a dancer in a black soundsuit references the inkblot images used in psychological testing. The looping, monochrome video is truly compelling. A tour of older youth stood quietly in the corner, while we sat in the middle mesmerized and chatting away. We debated simple questions like "Is it one or two dancers?" Even the question, "What are we looking at?" can be up for debate in an art museum.

Our disputes continued while we walked circles around Nick Cave's "Architectural Forest" in the next room. One of them declared that the collection of beaded rods hanging in tight rows were moving! Teased by the patterns, lights, and neon floor, we walked around and around in serious discussion. Jake fluctuated between sides, "It's moving...maybe." Zach, sure of himself, proclaimed, "Mom, you're wrong. It's moving." It wasn't moving. It was in fact strangely still. However, their belief that it was makes me imagine how cool Nick Cave's sculpture "chase" might be this summer! He has a new installation or performance or dance party t the Park Avenue Armory in NYC this summer. I've only see **a few pictures** of the 100-foot long mylar strands that are going to hang in the massive drill hall. **"Let Go"** will invite the audience to be more involved in the dance.

THE ART NEWSPAPER

New Armory installation invites you to just let go and dance

Artist Nick Cave will transform Park Avenue venue into a carnivalesque dance hall this summer

GABRIELLA ANGELETTI
28th April 2018 07:00 GMT

The artist Nick Cave will transform the Park Avenue Armory's Wade Thompson Drill Hall into a carnivalesque dance hall this summer. The installation, called The Let Go (7 June-1 July), aims to "provide a safe haven for viewers to speak their minds with their bodies, to reflect on how politics are pushing us to a cultural boil and to explore how we can work through our frustrations in ways that are healthy," the artist says. "For me, dance has always been that saviour."

The centrepiece of the project is a 40ft-tall kinetic installation called Chase made of Mylar curtains suspended from the ceiling that "streams down like Tina Turner's dress", Cave says. The curtain is sectioned in symbolic colour combinations: black and silver, for example, are meant to evoke ideas of social class and "bling-bling", while blue and black reference the ominous presence of the police. When planning the commission, Cave says he "thought about political urgency but, at the same time, thought about Studio 54 and these safe havens that people visited that were liberating and allowed the release and expansion of desire through physical movement".

The Armory will also host performances during which the artist and a troupe of dancers will don his Soundsuits, a series of intricate wearable sculptures that Cave sees as a "second skin" that transcends race and gender. During the day, the installation will be animated by live music and DJ sets, with the public and community organisations—from church choirs to hula-hoopers—invited to participate with the work.

MoMA

Nick Cave. *Soundsuit*. 2011
281

NICK CAVE: Hello, I'm Nick Cave. The title of the work is *Soundsuit*.

The first Soundsuit came out in response to the Rodney King incident in '92. And it was in outrage around the verdict of this individual that was violated by LA police. It was me asking myself what does it feel like to be discarded, viewed less than, dismissed as a black male?

I happened to be in the park one day and looked down on the ground and there was this twig. And I proceeded to collect all of these twigs. For some reason I found myself going back to my studio, building a sculpture. The moment I put it on and started to move, it made sound, and so that's how Soundsuit came about. And sound at that moment was my call for protest. It was a way of being heard.

After that original Soundsuit, what I found that I was interested in was this whole idea of discarded. And really started gathering materials at the flea markets and the antique malls. And so, for me, it's me sort of taking these objects and reintroducing them and giving them a new sort of role."

As you're looking at this object, you find that it's made up of many different types of bird figurines, and these for me speak about diversity.

A lot of the things that you will find in a Soundsuit are things that we all recognize. You know, how do we look at things that are devalued, discarded, and bring a different kind of relevancy to them.

I met Agnes Gund probably about 10 years ago at one of my exhibitions in New York. She was very interested in the sort of magical, transformative aspect of the work.

Aggie has really been a critical supporter for artists, for placing artists in museums, providing them with the credibility. For me she was someone that really believed in the work. That changes how you see your future.

NASHVILLE SCENE

Artist Nick Cave Leads Nashville on a Spiritual Art Crusade

See photos from Friday's *Nick Cave Feat. Nashville* performance at the Schermerhorn

BY LAURA HUTSON — APR 10, 2018 8 AM

PHOTO: DANIEL MEIGS

The Schermerhorn stage was littered with raffia leaves and flower petals by the time *Nick Cave Feat. Nashville,* presented in conjunction with the artist's current exhibition at the recently renamed Frist Art Museum, ended on Friday night. The trio of performances — "Blanket Statement," "Up Right" and "Heard" — was like a slow-moving rave pushed along by community leaders and uber-talented local musicians. The majority of the night was spent performing "Up Right," a ritual wherein community members like TSU art professor Brandon Donahue, Fisk art professor Jamaal Sheats and Frist curator Katie Delmez transformed a group of college students and dancers into half-Muppet, half-Zulu warriors in Cave's sumptuous Soundsuits. The process was filled with minor but dramatic details — like taking time to delicately brush the multicolored hair of the Soundsuits that flowed out like Martian antennae. It was a powerful rite of passage that underscored the original intention of the soundsuits: symbolically protecting young black men from police violence by outfitting them in noisy, over-the-top armor.

There were two performances of *Nick Cave Feat. Nashville* — I attended on Friday night, and our photographer attended on Friday morning. My friend called the experience "art church," and days later I still haven't thought of a better description. Everyone who participated in the event was transformed, born again as contemporary art evangelicals. It's not even a question of whether art *can* change the world, because that much is evident — it's whether or not you're going to come along.

You can watch all of the performance right here, and see *Scene* photographer Daniel Meigs' pictures below.

PHOTO: DANIEL MEIGS

PHOTO: DANIEL MEIGS

PHOTO: DANIEL MEIGS

PHOTO: DANIEL MEIGS

PHOTO: DANIEL MEIGS

PHOTO: DANIEL MEIGS

PHOTO: DANIEL MEIGS

tone

madison, wi // music, culture, and strong points of view.

Nick Cave (lecture)

Thursday, February 15, 2018
7:30 PM – 9:30 PM

Young Auditorium
930 West Main Street, Whitewater, WI, 53190, United States (map)

Nick Cave, the sculptor, dancer and performance artist, is well known for combining fashion, surreal design, and everyday objects to make his unique "soundsuits." These full-sized and wearable suits are strange-to-behold costumes displayed on stands or worn by performers and dancers, and sometimes by Cave himself. Soundsuits have been made of human hair, aluminum, wire and feather, and, like normal clothing, serve different purposes. The first soundsuit was constructed to provide armor to those threatened by the police state in the wake of the Rodney King beating. Others are celebratory costumes for rituals like carnivale or a ballroom dance. Oftentimes, these second skins are intended to block understanding of the wearer's gender, race, or class, making the identity of the wearer fluid.

Cave's sculpted objects are similarly often collages of everyday objects, which, when brought together, speak to the overcoming of trauma caused by the dominance of white men in American society. The way everyday objects can be infused with dream-like power is a central theme of Cave's work. Back in October, he gave "instigator objects" to UW-Whitewater, students who will also give presentations based on their objects at this lecture. These objects and their changing symbolic power will be forced into a dialogue between the young artists and the visiting lecturer, transforming aspects of Cave's talk that would usually exist in the ephemerality of language into physical and visual displays. —*Reid Kurkerewicz*

Source:: https://www.facebook.com/events/199058137339253/

CANADIANART

Nick Cave Makes Armour for the World's Violence

The American artist, who is included in a current group exhibition in Toronto, discusses his famed soundsuits, which he began making after the 1991 police beating of Rodney King

JANUARY 16, 2018

BY YANIYA LEE

Nick Cave's soundsuits are included in the group exhibition "The Sunshine Eaters" at Toronto's Onsite gallery.

The American artist Nick Cave made his first soundsuit following the 1991 beating of Rodney King by Los Angeles police officers. "It's amazing how something so profound can literally shift your direction of thinking and making," he says. He made a bodysuit that covered the wearer head to toe in sticks and twigs. Only after it was completed did he realize it made sound. At this point, he began to use all sorts of materials, typically found in abundance (buttons, twigs, sequins), to create elaborate suits as armour against the world's violence and prejudice.

Over time the suits have become increasingly extraordinary, and he has begun to organize large-scale, site-specific performances where dozens of locals participants wear the suits he's designed, conjuring new worlds with their collective movement.

I met Cave before the opening of the group exhibition "The Sunshine Eaters" at Toronto's Onsite gallery where he is presenting several of his signature soundsuits alongside works by Shary Boyle, Brian Jungen, Jessica Karuhanga, Ebony G. Patterson, Alanis Obomsawin and more. In person, he is warm, easy and gracious—the rare image of a mid-career artist still excited about his work—and engaged in expanding his practice to see how he might change the world through the constructive use of his imagination.

Yaniya Lee: The soundsuits are celebratory. They're big, they're colourful and they're dynamic. But there's a contradiction in there for me: while they're free, they also conceal extreme vulnerabilities.

Nick Cave: It's protecting, it's isolating, it's shielding. There's a sense of feeling liberated but you also have to understand that being in a soundsuit [means having] to surrender a part of yourself. There's a transformative moment. In order for you to be what this is, you have to be willing to transmit to something other. How are you going to convince me that you're *being* a soundsuit, not just wearing a soundsuit? That whole idea of being is all about this sort of transformative shift. How do you settle down in order to receive this other?

YL: How do you make yourself open enough to experience whatever it's like to be in the suits? How important is movement to their activation?

NC: If I'm working with you I have you sit across from the soundsuit, and I have you write about what you are encountering, what you are looking at. Then I will have you touch it and pick it up and connect with the weight, how visceral it is, and then I will have you move closer to it and again allow you to engage with this thing that you've just encountered. *Then* I will have you put it on.

I particularly like working in a space where there's a mirror, let's say a dance studio, and I will have you stand there, let's say 20 or 30 minutes and describe what is happening. You do not move! Then I will slowly allow you to move. You have to transition.

People don't understand that the suits already do 60% of the work, so you could walk to the end of the stage and just stand there and project—meaning, get your core up and don't move at all. It's always you and maybe 30 other soundsuits. So, honey, just that alone, that you are amongst a peer group of extraordinariness in the hybrid tribe [and] you all have common language and you start to build this entire narrative.

YL: What is this narrative? What typically happens in these performances?

NC: It depends. The last project we did was a performance piece titled *Upright*. It's a piece that's a rite of passage. It's a piece about and for young Black youth—particularly men—that have not been given the tools to transition from childhood to manhood.

We worked with 15 kids from an LGBT centre for runaway youth in Detroit. We'd strip them down, in front of an audience, to black shorts and a tank top. They'd fold their clothing up, stack it on the floor and put the shoes on top, then they'd proceed to sit down on a stool as we adorned their bodies and [dressed] them back up. At the end they'd have completed this entire ceremonial rite of passage, and we'd give them a certificate to tell them that they have now become warriors who are now able to go out and stand tall.

YL: People activate your suits by dancing in them or you orchestrate performances of dozens of people wearing your soundsuits . How would you describe those ways of being together? Are you creating a new social space?

NC: It starts on so many levels. Because what I tend to do is bring a project to a city then hire the city to build the project. Even before they are in contact or even see the soundsuits I ask, "Who's here? Who lives here?" And I want to know all the dancers that are there, all the musicians, vocalists, movers. I've found that I introduce a city back to itself in these collaborations where I work with a group of a hundred artists. The word "accountability" [becomes] important for people. People want to be accountable for something that matters. [So] how do we create projects where each person matters? We hire the community! [And they are] left with this imprint forever, of being a part of something that they built. That's really my sort of mission work: I want to be of service. I want to use my work as a form of service. And a form of service for me is investing and reinvesting in communities. That's what it's all about. I'm creating a platform for you to stand on and to realize that this is possible. Because I'm on it and I am blessed and I have gratitude. Why not provide an opportunity for someone [else] to go, "Wow, I am here performing!?"

YL: I can't leave without asking about sound, because again, though the suits conceal class and race and gender, the sound takes up space and creates this different presence.

NC: I am using sound as a form of alarm. Sound doesn't always have to be heard. You can hear sound through pattern, [and] how pattern is set up on a surface to create a rhythm. Colour can also create a sense of sound. Just use a police car for example: if you don't hear the siren but you see the red lights, you know what that means. Sound is signal, so therefore it may be approached that way, or it may be the sound [from the way] the object is built, you know, let's say all bottle caps. It could be a subtle sound depending on how I engage myself in the object, or it could be really aggressive, which then shifts the dynamic of the sound. Sound can operate out of a state of emergency. It can be calming; it could be peaceful. I'm thinking about being in a soundsuit and how you illustrate and express forms of anger. How am I going to communicate with you through movement without verbal communication? How is stomping my feet a powerful act of communication?

Mueller, Corey. "Artist Nick Cave and Jeanne Gang set to produce fall project at Navy Pier." *Chicago Tribune.* 28 June 2017. Online.

Chicago Tribune

Artist Nick Cave and Jeanne Gang set to produce fall project at Navy Pier

Nick Cave, artist and professor at the School of the Art Institute, stands in front of "Monument with Standing Beast" at the James R. Thompson Center Tuesday, May 23, 2017, in Chicago. (Allison Terry / Chicago Tribune)

By **Corey Mueller**

JUNE 28, 2017, 3:12 PM

Navy Pier announced Wednesday it is enlisting contemporary artist Nick Cave and architect Jeanne Gang for a fall art project on the pier.

Cave and Gang, both locally based, have been commissioned to work on "Here Hear Chicago," a series of live productions that mix art, design and performance. Performers hand picked by Cave will interact with stage objects designed by Gang and her practice, Studio Gang, during these shows.

The first production will take place Sept. 13 at Navy Pier's Aon Grand Ballroom as part of the opening of EXPO CHICAGO, the city's international exposition of contemporary and modern art.

The shows will move outdoors the evening of Sept. 16 to the pier's Polk Bros Performance Lawn as a portion of the 2017 Chicago Architecture Biennial. The full schedule for "Here Hear Chicago" has not yet been released, but will come later this summer.

All performances are free of charge and open to the public, space permitting.

Merino, Anthony. "African American Artists Reconstruct the Pastoral." *Art21 Magazine.* January/February 2017 Issue "Momentum". Online.

art21 magazine

JAN / FEB 2017 ISSUE **"Momentum"**

African American Artists Reconstruct the Pastoral

by Anthony Merino | **Jan 31, 2017**

Art does not make appetites. It can manipulate and pervert human desire, but it cannot invent what is not innate. One of the best examples of this limitation is pastoral art. Pastoralism celebrates an idealized agrarian past; it communicates a desire for a simpler, less politically fraught society. The genre and the ideology that created it may seem uninteresting or even cliché, but what often goes unconsidered is the challenge that pastoralism presents to African American artists. For artists of color, American history offers few times and places that can be viewed as utopian. Responding to this absence unifies a group of artists whose work challenges both history and art viewers.

In 2012, the Smithsonian American Art Museum displayed one hundred works from its collection in an exhibition, *African American Art: Harlem Renaissance, Civil Rights Era, and Beyond*, curated by Virginia Mecklenburg. The featured artists addressed the rural African American experience, each with his or her singular take. William H. Johnson's *Early Morning Work* (ca. 1940) and *Sowing* (ca. 1940) were the most genuinely pastoral images in the show. From Johnson's images, a viewer infers the presence of poverty, but it is an idealized state.

The pastoral elements of the exhibition changed tenor with Jacob Lawrence's *Bar and Grill* (1941). Born in Atlantic City, Lawrence depicted in this painting his first experience of Jim Crow segregation: when visiting New Orleans, he had to stay in a segregated part of town and ride in the back of city buses, in which a bar split the passengers along racial lines. In the exhibition, Lawrence's work marked a shift in attitude, from artwork that is sincerely pastoral to artwork that can only use the pastoral in a surreal or ironic manner.

Two artists, Norman Lewis and Charles Searles, created momentum within the African American community that resonates with many current artists. Lewis contributed the exhibition's most caustic image, *Evening Rendezvous* (1962). With a swirl of red, white, and blue dashes on a grey background, the work appears to be a patriotic reinterpretation of Whistler's *Nocturnes*—until the viewer realizes the white dashes are in fact hoods, and the image is of a Ku Klux Klan rally. An image that seemed saccharine turns mordant. Lewis's handling of our brutal history initiated a political momentum that continues in many contemporary works.

Two African American artists, Glenn Ligon and Kara Walker, follow Lewis's tack. In 1993, Ligon made a series of prints called *Runaways*; each featured a clip-art image of a black man with text describing Ligon as a runaway slave. Later, in a 2008 work, *Untitled (Malcolm X)*, Ligon enlarged a coloring-book image of Malcolm X, complete with red lips and dimples. At his best, Ligon refuses the viewer any room to evade accountability for his heritage.

Kara Walker employed her cultural history to create nightmarish landscapes of sexual depravity and perversions in her 2007 traveling survey exhibition, *Kara Walker: My Complement, My Enemy, My Oppressor, My Love.* The exhibition featured several panoramas composed of cut-paper silhouettes. The poses of the figures, dressed in antebellum outfits, allude to vile and violent sexual acts. Walker's use of an antiquated process and pastoral images increase the shock value of the work.

Searles's *Celebration* (1975) is one of the exhibition's most fascinating pieces. The image depicts musicians and dancing figures in a composition that demonstrates horror vacui, in which the ground, air, figures, clothes, instruments, and drums all coalesce in a kaleidoscope of pattern. Rather than refer to a particular historical source in this work, Searles constructs a utopia of the imagination. This tactic links many African American artists across disciplines.

RATHER THAN REFER TO A PARTICULAR HISTORICAL SOURCE IN THIS WORK, SEARLES CONSTRUCTS A UTOPIA OF THE IMAGINATION

Nick Cave. *Soundsuit*, 2009. Mixed media including synthetic hair; 97 x 26 x 20 inches. © Nick Cave. Photo by James Prinz Photography. Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.

Confronted by the beating of Rodney King, the artist Nick Cave created a series of *Soundsuits*. These elaborate, colorful, and flamboyant outfits became armor of the imagination. Theaster Gates created his own pastoral narrative through a multimedia project based on the invented story of Shoji and May Yamaguchi at their commune in Itawamba County, Mississippi—a tale of a Japanese master potter coming to the States and a Black civil-rights activist.

On September 24, 2016, the National Museum of African American History and Culture opened to the public. "[D]evoted exclusively to the documentation of African American life," the museum both preserves works of great artists and emboldens current and future generations to not just record but also improve the African American experience.[1]

1. “About the Museum,” National Museum of African American History and Culture.

ANTHONY MERINO

CONTRIBUTOR

Artist, curator and critic, Anthony Merino lives in Adams, MA. Merino’s first review was published in the January, 1993 issue of New Art Examiner. He currently frequently contributes to *Popmatters, Arts & Opinion, HIV+ Magazine, Ceramics Art* and *Perception and Ceramics Monthly*. In August, the exhibition he curated, *Domestic Mysteries*, will open at New Taipei City Yingge Ceramics Museum, Taipei, Taiwan.

Elbaor, Caroline. "Brighten Your Post-Election Morning With Nick Cave's Colorful Chimeras in Sydney." *Artnet.* 09 November 2016. Online.

artnet®

Art World

Brighten Your Post-Election Morning With Nick Cave's Colorful Chimeras in Sydney

His wildly popular performance piece is back with HEARD:SYD.

Caroline Elbaor, November 9, 2016

Image courtesy Instagram.

After a tour across the US—in which they hit Dallas, New York, and Detroit—Nick Cave's dancing "horses" are trotting down under to make their Australian debut.

On November 10 and 12, Cave's highly popular performance piece, HEARD—named for its sound element as well as its allusion to a herd of horses—will be publicly staged on the streets of Sydney and at Carriageworks with HEARD:SYD.

In the same format as previous iterations of the piece, the work features 60 dancers costumed in 30 of the artist's famous *Soundsuits,* which here take the form of colorful, life-size horses that dance to live music and percussion.

As described on the website of his gallerist Jack Shainman, Cave's *Soundsuits,* which take many abstract forms, are intended to "conceal race, gender, and class, forcing the viewer to look without judgment."

The horse-like *Soundsuits* seen in *HEARD* were influenced by Tibetan textiles and traditional African ceremony garbs, and are comprised of raffia and reclaimed materials. Underneath, two dancers control each puppet in its choreographed movements.

The concept for the show was inspired by Cave's memories as "a kid with my brothers putting a sheet over our backs," the artist told *ABC News.* "And then we could be horses in a matter of seconds."

"I was really thinking of getting us back to this dream state, this place where we imagine and think about now and how we exist and function in the world," Cave said in 2013 when discussing the New York City edition of HEARD.

"With the state of affairs in the world, I think we tend not to take the time out to create that dream space in our heads."

Nick Cave "Until" At MASS MoCA

By SARAH LADUKE (/PEOPLE/SARAH-LADUKE) • OCT 31, 2016

Nick Cave "Until" at MASS MoCA

Nick Cave is an American fabric sculptor, dancer, and performance artist. He is best known for his Soundsuits: wearable fabric sculptures that are bright, whimsical, and otherworldly.

In his new work, “Until,” Cave uses MASS MoCA’s football field-sized space to create his largest installation to date, made up of thousands of found objects and millions of beads, which will make viewers feel as if they have entered a sensory tapestry, like stepping directly inside the belly of one of his iconic Soundsuits.

For the piece Nick Cave and his curators and assistants have gathered 16,000 wind spinners; millions of plastic pony beads; thousands of ceramic birds, fruits, and animals; 1 crocodile; 17 cast-iron lawn jockeys -- and so much more.

We visited MASS MoCA during the installation of “Until” - which opened on October 15th and will be on view in North Adams, MA through early September of next year.

Nick Cave and curator Denise Markonish lead us through the exhibition.

Smee, Sebastian. "Nick Cave goes big at MassMoCA." *The Boston Globe.* 14 October 2016. Online.

The Boston Globe

Nick Cave goes big at MassMoCA

STEVEN G. SMITH FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

Nick Cave with his installation "Until" at the Massachusetts Museum

By Sebastian Smee | GLOBE STAFF OCTOBER 14, 2016

NORTH ADAMS — One month ago, in the middle of the Fresh Grass music festival here, a red-tailed hawk smashed through a window of Mass MoCA's vast, high-ceilinged Building 5, leaving an almost perfect circular hole in a pane of glass.

Museum curator Denise Markonish was overseeing the first intense week of the installation of a Nick Cave exhibition, "Until," which opened Oct. 15. She was standing by the stairs in the space with Cave's partner, Bob Faust, when they heard — then saw — the hawk smash through the window, about two feet from their heads.

The hawk survived the impact. It spent the day "haning out in rafters, swooping back and forth," recalls Markonish.

Cave is known internationally for his wildly inventive "Soundsuits," which have been shown, and acclaimed, around the world, including recently in Boston and Salem. But, with one exception – a dramatic video installation with footage of Cave dancing in a raffia chicken Soundsuit – Soundsuits will be absent from "Until."

The New York Times

ART & DESIGN

Nick Cave: Sculptural, and Political, at Mass MoCA

By HOLLAND COTTER OCT. 12, 2016

Nick Cave's "Soundsuits," wearable sculptural assemblages of fantastic complexity, are so compelling that it's easy to forget they began as political protest. He made the first one in response to the 1991 Los Angeles police beating of Rodney King. Mr. Cave's new installation at Mass MoCA, in North Adams, Mass., is political, too. It addresses more recent lethal incidents of racial violence — the killings of Michael Brown, Eric Garner and Trayvon Martin — on an epic scale. Titled "Until" — as in "guilty until proven innocent" — the installation (opening Saturday, Oct. 15) fills the museum's football-field-size main space, functioning as a kind of walk-in soundsuit, composed of thousands of eye-catching found objects. But Mr. Cave cuts the high spirits with images of guns, bullets and targets. Besides being sculptural, the piece is architectural, meant to serve as an assembly hall/stage, where dancers, singers and poets will perform and community groups meet during the show's yearlong run. (massmoca.org.)

THE DAILY GAZETTE
Wednesday, January 4, 2017

ARTS

On exhibit: Installation focuses on violence, race

At MASS MoCA, fixtures hang from high ceiling

Karen Bjornland/Gazette Reporter | December 28, 2016

Nick Cave's giant installation at MASS MoCA, titled "Until," features fixtures hanging from the ceiling and down among visitors. PHOTOGRAPHER: PHOTO PROVIDED

"I'm a black male. The moment I step outside of the privacy of my space, I am viewed differently."

That's what artist Nick Cave told The New York Times last summer when he was installing "Until" in MASS MoCA's Building No. 5, the gallery that's the size of a football field.

The title "Until" refers to "innocent until proven guilty" and the idea for the exhibit came about when Cave was thinking about gun violence, race and the Black Lives Matter movement.

The installation, which opened Oct. 16, is Cave's largest work ever. For MASS MoCA, it's the most expensive exhibit the museum has ever done.

I haven't seen it yet but apparently it's tschotke heaven, thick with thousands of objects: ceramic birds, fruits, and animals; plastic beads and crystals, chandeliers and 17 black-faced lawn jockeys.

"Until" will be around until September 2017, when it travels to an arts center in Australia.
MASS MoCA is open from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. today, Friday, Saturday, Sunday (New Year's Day) and Monday. During the winter, the museum is closed on Tuesdays.

Kidspace is open daily with hands-on artmaking. The current exhibit is "Here Comes the Sun," a colorful menagerie of sculptural animals by Miami-based artist Federico Uribe.

If you can't make it to MASS MoCA, consider a museum visit closer to home.

Sunday is the last day to catch the 2016 Artists of the Mohawk-Hudson Region at The Hyde Collection in Glens Falls, and during the month of December, the Hyde is doing a "pay as you wish" admission.

In Albany, Sunday is the last chance to "The Art of Seating: Two Hundred Years of American Design" at the Albany Institute of History & Art.

In Cooperstown, the Fenimore Art Museum closes its doors after Sunday until March 31.
Reach Gazette reporter Karen Bjornland at 395-3197, kbjornland@dailygazette.net or on Twitter @bjorngazette.

Scher, Robin. "Rethinking the Town Hall: Nick Cave on 'Until,' His Massive MASS MoCA Installation." Art News. 01 June 2017. Online.

Rethinking the Town Hall: Nick Cave on 'Until,' His Massive MASS MoCA Installation

BY ***Robin Scher*** POSTED **06/01/17 2:00 PM**

Nick Cave's exhibit opening at MASS MoCA.
COURTESY MASS MOCA

This year alone, Chicago has suffered more than 900 incidents of gun violence, the artist Nick Cave told me in a recent interview. "We read about what's going on in these communities, but we choose to be disconnected, to shun ourselves from it," Cave said. His latest exhibition is a visual response to the epidemic of gun violence that is too big and too bright to ignore. Titled "Until," it is an epic, multi-part installation that sprawls out through a massive hall at MASS MoCA in North Adams, Massachusetts.

The installation is a series of environments made up of a vast array of colorful tchotchkes, from a cloudscape of crystals interspersed with hanging chandeliers and dozens of traditional "lawn jockeys" to a faux garden bedecked with 16,000 wind spinners and thousands of ceramic birds, fruits, and animals amid images of guns and teardrops. Cave has described the experience of navigating the show as akin to being inside the belly of one of his Soundsuits, the colorful full-body garments he first made in 1992 as a response to the public beating of Rodney King by Los Angeles police officers. Cave saw the colorful full-body garments as statements and shields against the brutality inflicted on black bodies in the United States.

More than two decades later, he decided that the Soundsuits are no longer enough. Violence continues to afflict communities of color, and the need to confront this issue more directly, he said, has intensified.

"I'm interested in calling out this state of urgency," Cave said, "as an African American, as a citizen of the U.S., as a resident of Chicago. I'm interested in the history that is being recorded and the response to that."

"Until" is Cave's way to manifest his sense of emergency through sheer scale. "I wanted to open the show with this sensation of something extraordinary and magical and beautiful and yet, once you realize what you're looking at you're like, 'not so pretty,' " the artist said. The exhibition's images of targets, guns, and teardrops are meant to illicit a discomfort in viewers—and, through that, instigate a kind of confrontation.

Critical to that dynamic is Cave's intention to create a space where collective members of society—from "civic leaders and police commissioners to parents and their children"—can come together to share "difficult conversations" about issues facing their communities. In that way, Cave said, "Until" is an attempt to change the "social economic diversity of MASS MoCA" by creating "another way in which we think of town hall gatherings."

A number of collaborators tapped by Cave are using the space in unusual ways. In *Until*, a book about the project recently published by Prestel, the poet Carl Hancock Rux recalls one such moment when a group broke out into an impromptu gospel-style performance of the Sam Cook song "A Change Is Gonna Come." It's worth recounting the details in full: "Like Antigone burying the body of her brother Polynices against the orders of Creon's edict," Rux writes, "Brenda Wimberly asked Sereca Henderson to play a piano that happened to stand isolated against a bare wall . . . Sitting on the floor, I joined Helga Davis and Solange—organized as a spontaneous Chorus—in supporting Wimberly's solo, harmonizing the word 'change' as Bill T. Jones improvised a dance of the blind prophet come to testify to the displeasure and hope of the gods."

Nick Cave, *Until*, 2016,
COURTESY MASS MOCA

Nick Cave's installation at MASS MoCA.
COURTESY MASS MOCA

Cave sees these sort of improvised moments—which will continue in transplanted spaces when "Until" travels to its two co-commissioning venues of Carriageworks in Australia, and Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art in Arkansas—as responses to the challenge of creating work that is accessible while also amplifying "a political overtone." The key, explained Cave, is to create work "that seduces and pulls you in" while delivering the hard truths it is trying to communicate.

"At the end of the day, I'd like to talk about other things," said Cave, somewhat exasperated that he's still responding to the same grim realities that prompted his first Soundsuit. "I'm sort of like, 'OK, I just have to find ways of doing that in spite of what's emotionally affecting me. It's a lot to have to juggle," he said —"and, at the same time, having to make it all *fucking fierce*."

Loos, Ted. “The Artist Nick Cave Gets Personal About Race and Gun Violence.” *The New York Times.* 12 August 2016. Online.

The New York Times

ART & DESIGN

The Artist Nick Cave Gets Personal About Race and Gun Violence

By TED LOOS AUG. 12, 2016

Nick Cave in a studio at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art.
Nathaniel Brooks for The New York Times

NORTH ADAMS, MASS. — The artist Nick Cave was standing, with a slightly awe-struck look, in the middle of the largest exhibition space at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, a former factory known as

Building 5 that is as long as a football field.

“It’s the biggest space I’ve ever worked in, and that’s pushing me out of my comfort zone,” said the energetic Mr. Cave. He was preparing “Until,” a massive, immersive installation slated to open Oct. 16 that will also be Mass MoCA’s costliest, most elaborate exhibition to date.

Mr. Cave gave a reporter a peek when he was in residence here for a few weeks, working constantly and staying nearby. It was a chance to see how Mr. Cave’s mind works (fast, but very precisely) and how one of the most popular contemporary artists turns his serious ideas into buoyant aesthetic concepts.

Three and a half years in the making, “Until” is what Mr. Cave called his most personal work to date. It will lead visitors on a path through an enchanted but menacing landscape featuring, among other things, 17 black-faced lawn jockeys on a crystal cloudscape 18 feet in the air; 20,000 whirling wind spinners; a “waterfall” of shimmering foil-like strips; a thousand or so intentionally garish ceramic tchotchkes; and several million beads, some of which will comprise shimmering mountains. For the time being, some of those components were heaped in riotous piles in the museum’s basement, and others in Mr. Cave’s studio in Chicago, where he is based.

Looking past what he called the “bling bling, sparkle sparkle” factor of the exhibition is a grave theme: the fraught nexus of gun violence and race, in particular the deaths of African-Americans in police custody in places like Ferguson, Mo., and elsewhere. Some of those wind spinners will have bullet and target images on them.

The title has a straightforward meaning, he added: “Innocent until proven guilty, guilty until proven innocent.”

“I’m a black male. The moment I step outside of the privacy of my space, I am viewed differently.”

Objects that may be incorporated into one of the works by Nick Cave at his MassMoCA exhibition.
Nathaniel Brooks for The New York Times

He sometimes toiled alone at night in the basement rooms that hold the work's many components. "I only have to walk two blocks to get to the hotel," he said of his commute in the wee hours. "But in two blocks, your life can change forever."
Mr. Cave, 57, is best known for his "Soundsuits," the wearable, noise-making costumes that entertain while they raise questions about race, gender and identity.

Although "Until" is unusual in its lack of an aural component, the work is a next-level amalgamation of everything he knows about sculpture, performance and audience engagement.

Asked how fans of his "Soundsuits" should think about this new work, Mr. Cave, a graceful and powerful sort who once studied with the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, mimed the motion of scooping out his own stomach and raising it up as an offering.

"This is me putting you into the belly of a 'Soundsuit,'" he said. "It's me grabbing you by the hand and saying, 'Let's jump into the 'Soundsuit.'"

Mr. Cave talks with his arms — not in the way of a point-making politician, but as if he were trying to sculpt the very air around him.

Visitors are meant to be included — and implicated — in the work, as they will be able to see one another in peekaboo vistas across the vast installation. “It’s about being able to face one another,” Mr. Cave said. “We can no longer hide behind the surface.”

Nor will Mr. Cave hide. He will do a single performance as part of a once-a-month activation of the installation, although details are still being worked out.

Mr. Cave with a piece that incorporates lawn jockeys, a theme in this exhibition. Nathaniel Brooks for The New York Times

It’s been long-planned, but there’s an improvisational element in “Until” at

this stage, because its size allows for endless fine-tuning.

“I sort of water the garden,” Mr. Cave said of his evening sessions. “When they come in in the mornings, there’s something new.”

He pointed to a several small fake Christmas trees that he had attached to metal rings and topped with a cartoonish crown, the product of a recent weekend visit to the workroom. A couple of days later, Mr. Cave started to arrange colorful marbles on the back of a 10-foot fiberglass crocodile but realized bigger marbles worked better. An intern was dispatched to a local antiques market to buy more.

He admitted that the scale and scope were daunting — Building 5 stretches over nearly 18,000 square feet — as was the institution’s reputation.

“People are traveling from all over the world to come to Mass MoCA,” Mr. Cave said. “You better be damn sure you have something worth coming to.”

Many hands are involved to make “Until,” including the 10 or so assistants working in Mr. Cave’s Chicago studio, and Mass MoCA’s staff.

Denise Markonish, the Mass MoCA curator who has been coordinating with Mr. Cave on the exhibition for more than three years, said that it was a “beautiful nightmare.”

She added, “It seduces you and then punches you in the gut.”

For Mass MoCA’s director, Joseph C. Thompson, the comparison was a decadent, superabundant scene in a Dutch still-life painting.

Nick Cave with a “Soundsuit” in 2009.
Drew Kelly for The New York Times

“There’s something a little rotten,” Mr. Thompson said. “There’s a pot of honey, but there are some flies on it.”

The installation will be on view for nearly a year, until September 2017, and then travels to Carriageworks, an art center in Sydney, Australia. It may visit additional venues in the United States, too. Carriageworks is partnering to fund the piece because it is “a heavy, heavy lift by Mass MoCA standards,” Mr. Thompson said.

“Until” got its start in 2012. Ms. Markonish saw a previous piece of Mr. Cave’s at Jack Shainman Gallery in New York that involved a lawn jockey — the first time he had ever used one — and she requested a meeting with him.

At their sit-down, she pulled out a plan of Building 5 and said, “2016. It’s as big as a football field, and I don’t want you to make any ‘Soundsuits.’”

The “Soundsuits” do make an appearance in a video at the far end of “Until.” Mr. Cave wears one, made with a vintage chicken mask covering his head, as he runs around frantically. “It’s about feeling trapped,” he said of the video. “Time is running out.”

For her part, Ms. Markonish has been involved in the project in ways that go

beyond her official job description, including finding a lawn jockey on eBay and going to pick it up personally.

“It was within 45 minutes of my family’s house, so I thought I’d go get it and save money on shipping,” Ms. Markonish said.

When she arrived, the house had a sign saying “white trash,” and she had to tell the owner, “I’m here to pick up the lawn jockey.”

Objects that may be used in Mr. Cave’s “Until” exhibition at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art.
Nathaniel Brooks for The New York Times

The errand gave her pause. “Even those words coming out of my mouth was just really intense,” Ms. Markonish said.

The paradisiacal landscape where the jockeys appear — made from the

crystals that would normally go into chandeliers, on a raised platform accessible via four ladders — is the heart of “Until.”

“I had been thinking about gun violence and racism colliding,” Mr. Cave said. “And then I wondered: Is there racism in heaven? That’s how this piece came about.”

The jockeys appear to have a special symbolism for Mr. Cave, though he said he did not see a lot of them on lawns when he was growing up in Missouri in the 1960s — “thank god,” he added.

He recounted the possibly apocryphal origin of the figures: On a cold winter night, an African-American boy who served George Washington during the Revolutionary War was asked to keep watch on the horses and light the way until Washington returned. But the boy froze to death, in the familiar pose holding a lantern.

“It’s such a repressive image,” Mr. Cave said, adding that it was the element of fruitless loyalty that bothered him the most.

In his installation, however, the jockeys will be holding elaborately beaded butterfly nets, which Mr. Cave also called “dream catchers,” giving “Until” a hopeful aspect.

“There’s a lightness to them,” he said. “It’s about this state of enlightenment, and living with a sense of uncertainty in the most magnificent way.”

And with that, Mr. Cave went back to work for an evening session amid his bric-a-brac — there were still miles to go to get “Until” up and running.

A version of this article appears in print on August 14, 2016, on page AR13 of the New York edition with the headline: Getting Personal About Race and Guns. Order Reprints | Today's Paper | Subscribe

Despite The School's imposing new presence in the modest small-town setting, Shainman, who has owned a part-time home nearby for 15 years, considers use of the word "exclusive" to be a detention-worthy transgression. "We've always wanted this to be inclusive, and we especially wanted to set that tone with the opening, by welcoming the town and making this open to the public," he explained.

On the second level, former classrooms have been converted into a sprawling series of light-filled corridors to primarily house the gallery's growing permanent collection. Other individual pieces by artists such as Carlos Vega, Barkley Hendricks and Kerry James Marshall are currently installed, along with a temporary collection of newer works by Cave — a visual compendium of reworked found objects that will compromise his upcoming September show at Shainman's two Chelsea galleries.

The School is currently open by appointment. For more information, visit jackshainman.com/school.

Upstairs, a preview of Cave's forthcoming fall show — set to open in September at the gallery's two Chelsea locations — is on view. At its core is a curated set of found racist Americana objects, like the ones displayed down the middle of the room here in "Property," 2014. *James Ewing*

A piece from Cave's new show: "Star Power," 2014.

James Ewing

Some of the walls and rooms have yet to be completed at The School. On view here is one of Cave's Soundsuits.

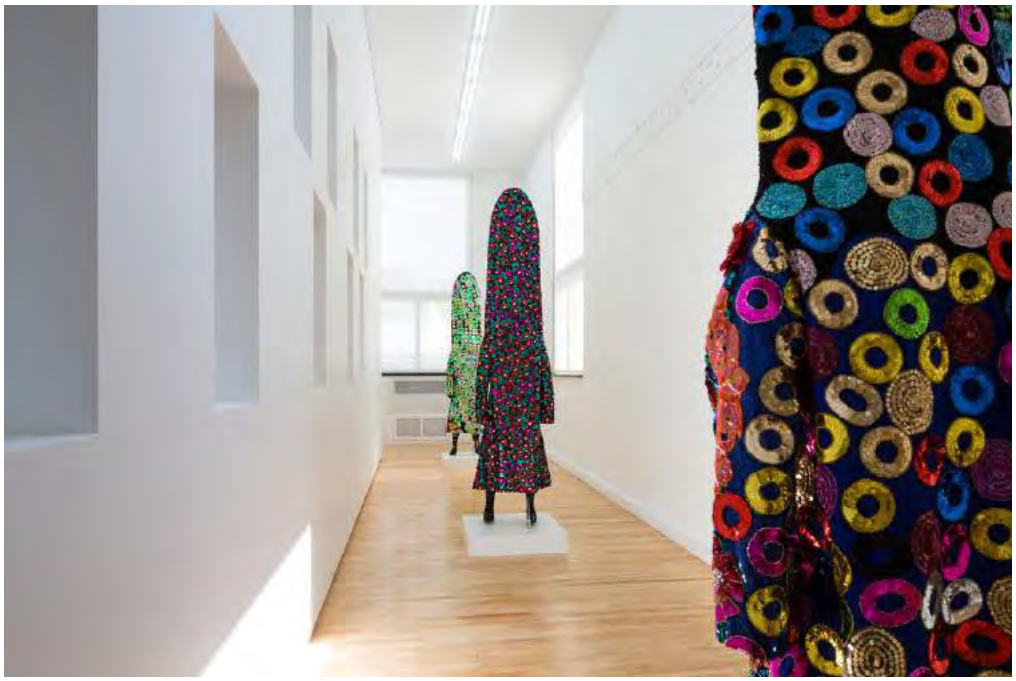
James Ewing

Downstairs, a bright, sprawling space outfitted with a small stage hosts a survey of Cave's Soundsuits.

James Ewing

The brightly colored and intensely detailed Soundsuits really pop against The School's white walls.

James Ewing



Corridors filled with Soundsuits feature the original school's gymnasium floors. The cubbies on the left were created at the request of Jack Shainman, who says he enjoys using them to collect and display objects.

James Ewing

On Saturday, the live performance took place on the front lawn of the property.

James Ewing

The performance was full of dancing set to the beat of traditional Ghanese music.

James Ewing

The drummers on stage were from the Massachusetts-based Agbekor Society Friends.

James Ewing

Just before the performance began, this crew walked through the crowd of community members and art enthusiasts who had assembled on the back lawn, amping up children and adults alike for the festivities.

James Ewing

These moving Soundsuits stopped traffic in front of Jack Shainman Gallery's new lot.

James Ewing

Not featured: all of the cheering and dancing the performance enticed from the crowd.

James Ewing

The 13 dancers were choreographed by Williams College's dance chair Sandra Burton.

James Ewing

Eventually, things calmed down and everyone in attendance retreated to the back lawn, where D.J. April Hunt played music while guests noshed on local food and festive drinks.

James Ewing