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!'"

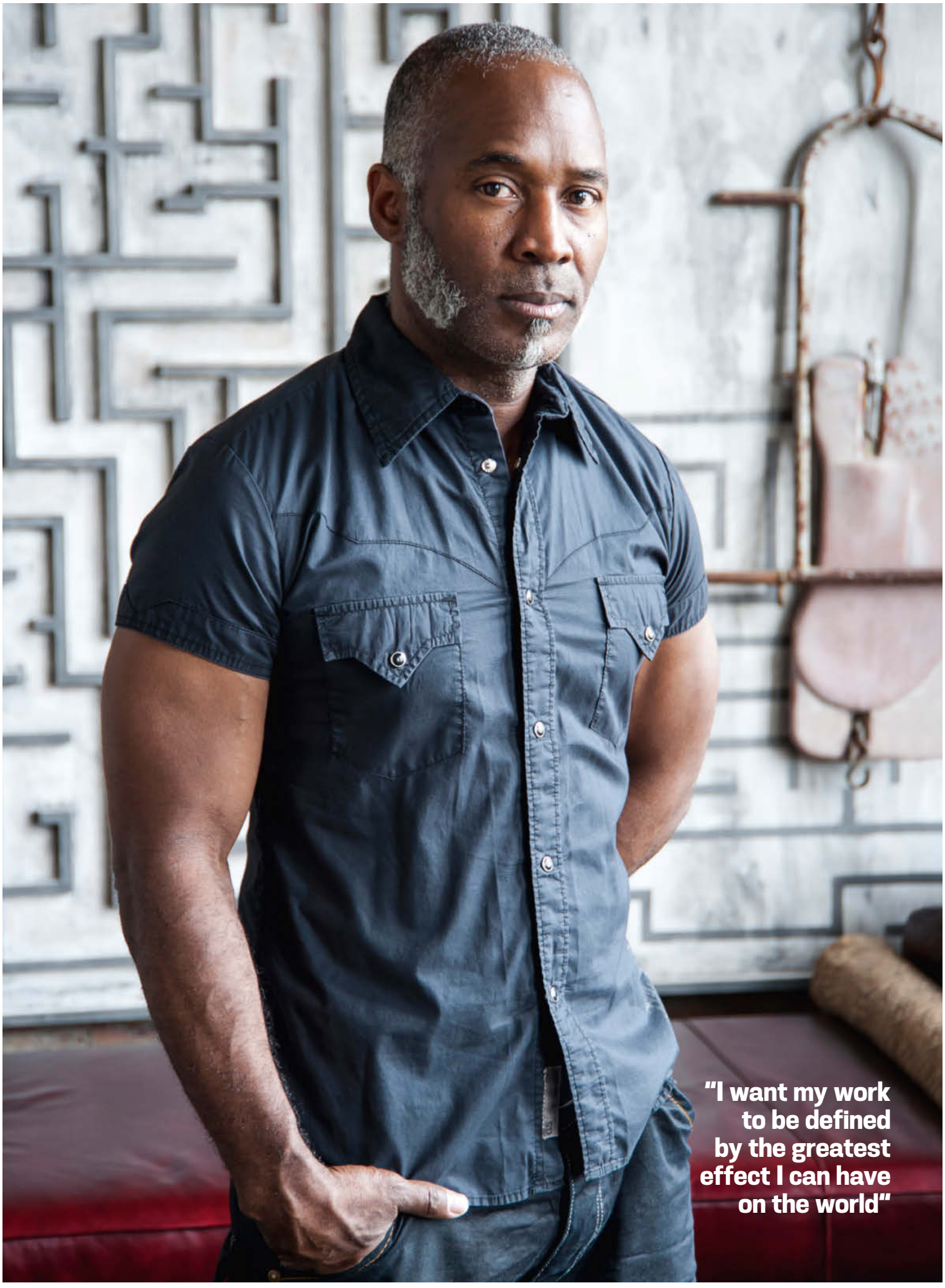
For Cave, who studied with modern dance legend Alvin Ailey's company in New York in the '80s, wearing the Soundsuits is an essential part of his artistic intention. His performances draw inspiration from ritual celebrations by Bantu ethnic groups in Central Africa. There's a lot of drumming and dancing, 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

© NICK CAVE/JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY. JIM PRINZ/JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY

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.

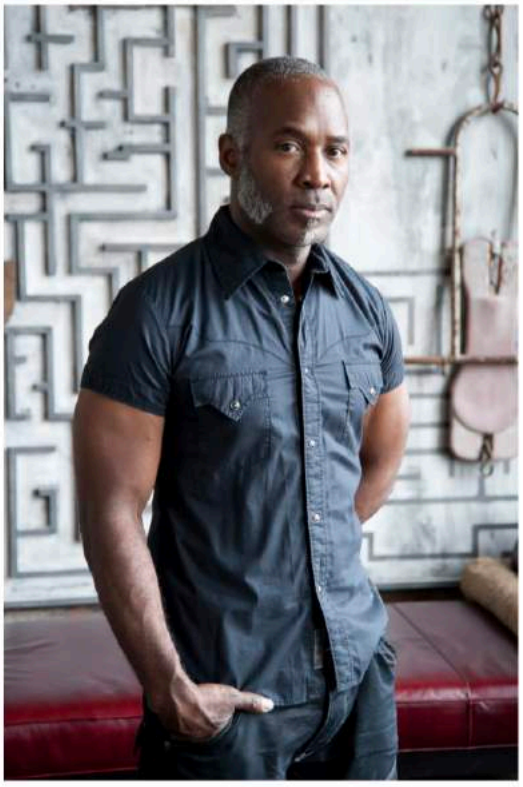


Nick Cave, "Soundsuit," 2011. © Nick Cave.
Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York

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

SPECTRUM NEWS 1

How yellow ribbons are starting anti-racism conversations in Madison

BY SAVANNA TOMEI | MADISON

PUBLISHED 1:30 PM ET JUN. 19, 2021

MADISON, Wis.— There is a new facet of an art exhibit opens on Juneteenth at the Madison Museum of Contemporary Art.



Madison's Art Cart has been around for more than 40 years. It's a mobile art program that brings free art projects to public parks every summer.

They managed to keep it going in 2020, they just handed out art kits instead of hosting families while they do their projects. For now, they're still giving out kits.

This week, kids got the materials to make sound socks. They're little sound makers created out of, you guessed it, socks.

They're inspired by the work of artist Nick Cave.

Cave first gained attention when he made "sound suits" after the violence against Rodney King. He said they were metaphorical suits of armor.



A "sound sock"

But there's a bigger project at play at the Art Cart lately. There are plastic yellow streamers flying through the air, tied to a clothesline. They're covered in writing.

The ribbons are part of a project from Cave and his partner Bob Faust called "Amends". It's a three-part interactive art exhibit, based in Madison.



One of Cave's Sound Suits. Image courtesy the artist/Jack Shainman Gallery, and photographer James Prinz

Part one includes local leaders writing deeply personal letters discussing their role in systemic racism. Those letters are written in the museum's windows on State Street.

Part two involves these streamers. Cave and Faust ask people to identify how they've contributed to systemic inequality and what they can do to fix it.

As families pick up their art supplies, the Art Cart has encouraged people to write ribbons of their own and add them to the clothesline. There have to be hundreds hanging there, flying in the breeze.

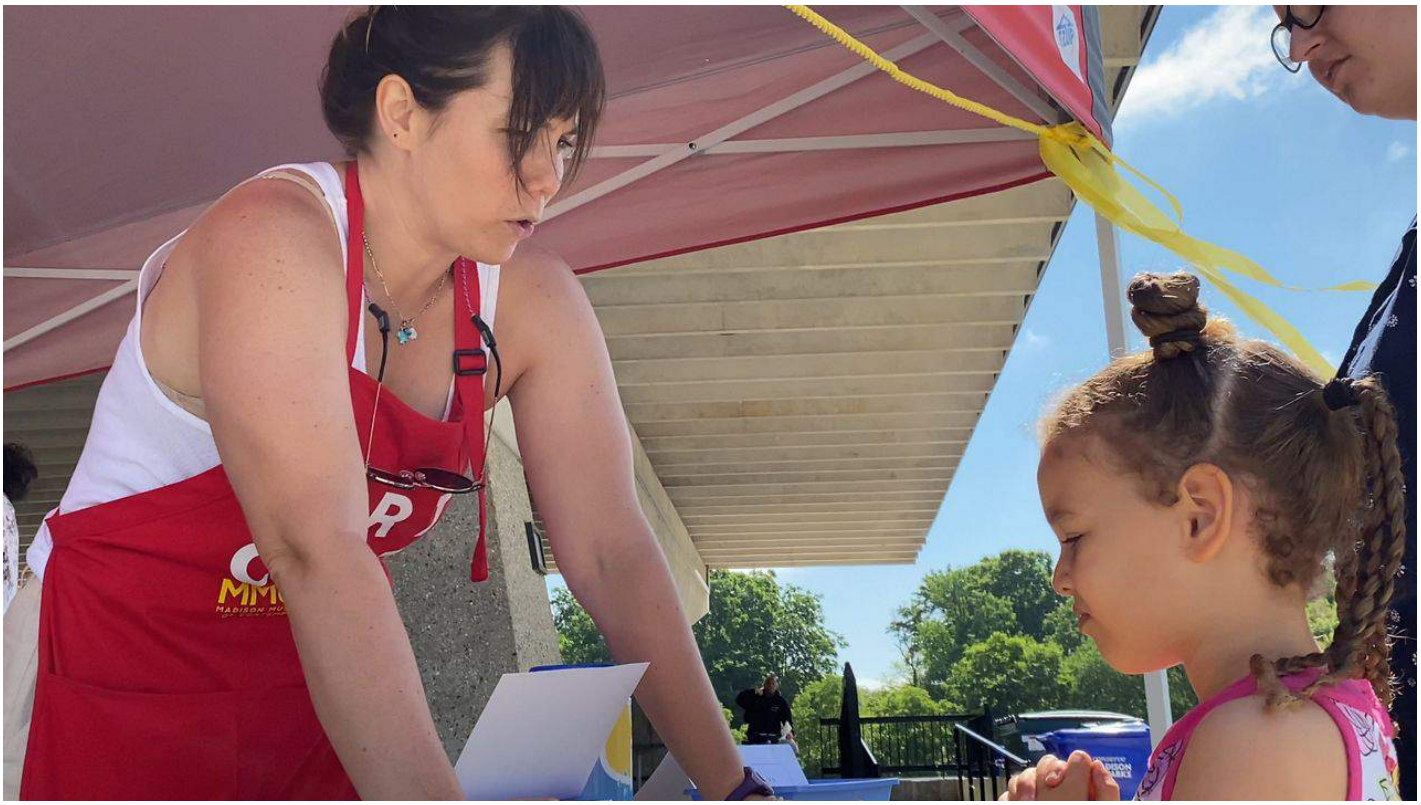
"People basically write on them and talk about ways that they could see the world as a better place with racial change," said Art Cart employee Megan Jain.

Kids often got a little lighter prompt, asking how the world can be a better place. A little girl named Hazel said "more love." Hazel's mom helped her write on the streamer.

There were lots of other responses. People wrote things like "ask my POC friend questions," and "stop passing judgment at first glance."

"We've had some really deep and meaningful reflective comments that people have written," Jain said.

The exhibit opens at the Madison Museum of Contemporary Art on Juneteenth. It will include the ribbons and people's comments about ending racism— plus, the letters in the windows.



Soon, the museum will feature performances from Black voices, where they'll read the ribbons and respond to what they say.

For more on the "Amends" project, click here.

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



Allison Glenn, the show's curator, said consultation improved curatorial quality. "It was really built on conversations about how a museum can get it right, how the art world can respond, what does it mean to collaborate in this space." Mariana Sheppard

During a phone conversation, Glenn, who is from Detroit and is an associate curator at the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art in Bentonville, Ark., shared insights gleaned in making the exhibition, which will run through June 6. The following excerpts have been edited and condensed.

This exhibition is the result of intense consultation, notably with Tamika Palmer, but many others as well. Whose advice, artist and non-artist, did you seek out?

First, I spoke with Breonna's mother, and asked how we might think of her daughter's legacy, and translated that into the three ideas: promise, witness, remembrance. Then I convened a national panel. I was very intentional in developing the panel because of my particular position: I lost my brother to gun violence, about a year and a half ago. It doesn't need to overshadow this story, but it's important to mention, because it informs a lot. I wanted a cabinet of advisers that could relate on a personal level.

[Advisers to the show also include] Theaster Gates, who has been successful in his work with the Tamir Rice Foundation. Jon-Sesrie Goff has a film in the exhibition; his father took over the Mother Emanuel AME congregation in Charleston after the murders there, and the Rev. Clementa Pinckney was a mentor to him. Hank Willis Thomas 20 years ago lost his cousin, and has made work about that. I enlisted a friend, La Keisha Leek, who was in grad school when her cousin Trayvon Martin was killed; I had helped her in some projects to work through that, including an exhibition she curated. Raymond Green, who lives here in Arkansas, is a cousin of Alton Sterling [who was fatally shot by white police officers in Baton Rouge, La.]. That experience of loss from gun violence or policy brutality — or both — brings a level of care.



A still from the Jon-Sesrie Goff film "A Site of Reckoning: Battlefield," 2016. Jon-Sesrie Goff

As a guest curator, without prior experience in Louisville, how did you develop an exhibition that made sense for the city?

I wanted to create a conversation between the local community and the national community — whether in the art world or among private citizens. Toya Northington, the community engagement strategist at the Speed Art Museum, developed a Louisville advisory committee. They gave me great feedback and suggestions. It was a different kind of curatorial process: I wasn't necessarily trying to drive a thesis based on research into an idea or an artist. It was really built on conversations about how a museum can get it right, how the art world can respond, what does it mean to collaborate in this space.

What sense of the city did you form personally as you went about the work?

I spent time in Louisville. I read everything I could. I listened to podcasts. And there's a relationship I can't exactly put my finger on, but I grew up in Detroit, I've worked in New Orleans, and Louisville is another port city with a French connection. It's the border of the North and the South. It's where Lewis and Clark started their expedition, and I'm fascinated with the ideology of Western expansion. Some loops closed for me when I visited. For example, that horrible phrase: "Being sold down the river." Down the river is New Orleans; the origin of the phrase is in Louisville.

How did community input alter the show's shape?

To tell this story, I didn't necessarily think that every artist had to be a Black artist. But after listening, I understood the importance of visibility, to the Louisville community, of presenting a show of only Black artists in this space. (Tyler Gerth, a local photographer shot and killed while documenting the protests on June 27, is the sole exception.) That was an "aha!" moment: This is the community's desire, and I can be flexible, I can be nimble in this way, without having to compromise any curatorial framework. And then it became deeper. The site of the exhibition is galleries that usually hold the Dutch and Flemish collections. We've got 22-foot ceilings, terrazzo floors, marble doorways. It became clear that an effect would be a kind of decolonizing of that museum space.

A lot of people feel that museums aren't accessible, aren't reflective of who they are. This exhibition is about a woman who lived in Louisville, whose family lived in Louisville; it's about what happened to her, and in response to these things. There will be people who may come to the museum for the first time.

Amy Sherald's portrait of Breonna Taylor will be a big draw, appropriately. Does it risk posthumous hero-izing of someone who did not ask for it? And how do you build a show around it that brings both care and insight in the wake of trauma?

That is *the* question. In layout and design, when you walk into the gallery, in your sightline will be the portrait. If that is all you are here for, you can go right there.

The first section, called "Promise," is a bit more conceptual, a conversation about ideologies of the United States through symbols that uphold them. Bethany Collins's work addresses the Star Spangled Banner, for example.



Amy Sherald, “Breonna Taylor,” 2020. Amy Sherald and Hauser & Wirth



A photograph by Jon P. Cherry (taken Sept. 24, 2020, and printed in 2021) will be part of the exhibition. Jon P. Cherry and Getty Images



Bethany Collins, "The Star Spangled Banner: A Hymnal" (2020). Bethany Collins and PATRON Gallery; Evan Jenkin

In the "Witness" section are protest photographs from 2020, as well as work that connects to a century of movements for Black lives. And there is Sam Gilliam, who grew up and studied in Louisville, protesting against the expectation that his work as a Black male painter was to carry the weight of representation, as part of a movement toward positive imagery. His resisting that becomes a protest in itself. And it sets the stage for someone like Rashid Johnson to work within conceptual art and abstraction, but more freely.

I made the decision that I wasn't going to show any work that was traumatizing in the exhibition. But I also had to be clear that I couldn't edit the archive when it came to the protest photographs.

Can the exhibition benefit the Louisville arts scene beyond the museum?

I think of Alisha Wormsley's work, "There Are Black People in the Future," which will be installed like ticker-tape in the second gallery. As part of Alisha's practice, she requires that the museum give honorariums to three local artists to respond to that idea. The Louisville steering committee will decide how to carry that out.

What is the opportunity this project offers?

The opportunity is to show what it means to listen. I don't think museums are going to get everything right. Cultural workers aren't going to get everything right. But when you listen, you provide opportunities for accessibility, for inroads, for connection. And I hope the end result provides a platform for people to feel heard, and perhaps to process the past year.

Siddhartha Mitter writes about art and creative communities in the United States, Africa and elsewhere. Previously he wrote regularly for The Village Voice and The Boston Globe and he was a reporter for WNYC Public Radio.

ARTnews

New Documentary Showcases How MASS MoCA Became One of America's Biggest Museums

BY ALEX GREENBERGER
December 18, 2020 12:26pm



A Nick Cave installation being mounted at MASS MoCA in *Museum Town*.
COURTESY KINO LORBER

The biggest museums in the United States are typically concentrated in the city centers of large metropolitan areas—with public transportation convenient, in most cases, for getting to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the National Gallery of Art, the Art Institute of Chicago, and other mega-institutions of note. That makes **MASS MoCA (https://www.artnews.com/t/mass-moca/)**, a museum with more than 250,000 square feet of space in North Adams, Massachusetts, an outlier among its peers. The museum is inaccessible by train and located in a remote post-industrial town in the Berkshires with a population of fewer than 13,000.

And yet, against all odds, it has become a veritable art-world destination for artists, curators, critics, and historians alike filled with vast site-specific works that won't fit anywhere else other than inside the museum's cavernous walls. Today, its galleries—some as big as a football field—house a selection of monumental works by the likes of Anselm Kiefer, Franz West, Joseph Beuys, and more. "You could never have a MASS MoCA in a major city," says Denise Markonish, a curator at the museum, in a new documentary from Jennifer Trainer about the storied institution called ***Museum Town (https://www.artnews.com/t/museum-town/)***.

As *Museum Town* goes to show, nothing about MASS MoCA guaranteed that it would be a success when plans for it were first announced in 1986. Massachusetts politicians worried that such a project would grow too big, too costly, and too hifalutin. Locals viewed the museum as an art-world outpost intended to woo the elite, effectively bringing with it art no one in town would understood along with a wave of gentrification. ("People in North Adams are not ready for this," a volunteer at MASS MoCA recalls thinking at the time.) Befuddled art critics looked on in wonderment as the people facilitating the $37 million renovation of a former mill complex.

The person who came up with the idea for MASS MoCA, **Thomas Krens (https://www.artnews.com/t/thomas-krens/)**, worked tirelessly to realize the museum, however. In 1986, he was director at the nearby Williams College Museum of Art when he came up with the idea of converting a newly closed Sprague Electric factory into an art museum. He'd been thinking of works by Minimalist and Land artists that museums had generally shied away from collecting in depth because of their size. What if there *was* an institution big enough to host them? Having visited the 1985 edition of the Art Cologne fair, where dealers trotted out monumental works and placed them inside a factory setting, Krens imagined he could do something similar.

Officials had other plans in mind, including one to build a prison, but Krens persisted with his vision. "It's not about the space, it's just about space," he says in *Museum Town*, which carefully plots all the adversity that he and founding director **Joe Thompson (https://www.artnews.com/t/joe-thompson/)** faced along the way.



A Franz West sculpture on the grounds of MASS MoCA in *Museum Town*.
COURTESY KINO LORBER

As construction came to a close in the mid-'90s, the first presentations began to be mounted in the not-yet-fully-opened space. In 1996, David Byrne, frontman of the Talking Heads, staged a wacky installation that involved, in part, a sound element with lewd rap lyrics voiced by pleasant-sounding elderly women. When it came to obtaining additional funding for opening the museum, Bill Weld, the conservative governor of Massachusetts at the time, stopped by—and, much to everyone's surprise, approved of what he saw, mainly on the basis that it was by a Talking Heads member who could sing "Air" on command. "Who would have ever guessed that a Republican governor in Massachusetts would be a Talking Heads fan?" Byrne says.

Since MASS MoCA's opening in 1999, all kinds of memorable works have been mounted there. A survey of Sol LeWitt's wall drawings drew crowds and acclaim from critics. James Turrell created a giant environment that allows viewers to walk into what feel like never-ending spaces tinged green and pink by lighting effects. Robert Rauschenberg created a painting that stretches on for a quarter-mile. Cai Guo-Qiang exhibited a grouping of cars speared with lighting tubes, partly as a comment on 9/11. More recently, Nick Cave, who appears throughout *Museum Town*, crafted a giant sculptural installation involving 16,000 wind spinners and thousands of trinkets, and Alex Da Corte loaded a massive gallery with mod furniture and neon lights.

There has been the occasional disaster at MASS MoCA, and wisely, a good deal of *Museum Town* is spent on a 2007 Christoph Büchel installation that only partly made it on view. Titled *Training Ground for Democracy*, it featured an oil tanker, a police car, a carnival ride, and other wreckage—but, due to the skyrocketing costs associated with showing it, the work never ended up including an airliner that was intended to be shown in the galleries. The partial work was put on view anyway, and a legal spat ensued between

the museum and the artist. *New York Times* critic Roberta Smith memorably called it a "depressing spectacle."

MASS MoCA is an epic space, and Trainer's film befits it. She's enlisted top-tier talent: Meryl Streep is brought in to read Büchel's emails via voiceover; Kirsten Johnson, an acclaimed cinematographer, lenses some memorable footage; and there are interviews with high-ranking politicians and blue-chip artists sprinkled throughout. But all this gloss cannot mask the fact that the film sometimes feels retrograde, like a relic of a different time when it seemed, for some, that the fullest way of representing an institution's significance was to explore mainly what happened within its walls.



MASS MoCA in *Museum Town*.
COURTESY KINO LORBER

To some extent, this is not Trainer's fault—*Museum Town* was completed in 2019, before a pandemic and a global movement for the recognition of structural racism began to shift the conversations around how museums should function. That means that there's little accounting for the fact that, in recent months, MASS MoCA has faced a period of tumult. Shortly after the pandemic began, the museum said it would lay off more than 70 percent of its employees and that it stood to lose $55.7 million in 2020. A few months afterward, Thompson, who has directed the museum for 32 years, said he would retire. (He currently faces a charge of vehicular homicide that took place in 2018, to which he has pleaded not guilty.)

Museum Town—an engrossing intro to MASS MoCA for the uninitiated—nods to the various criticisms the institution continues to face. Trainer, who formerly served as director of development and public relations there, does pay mind to the fact that some locals are still concerned about MASS MoCA's relationship with its community. When Wilco recently performed at MASS MoCA, locals scrawled messages outside the museum urging the

band to go home. But Trainer's film doesn't delve into the social factors that may have caused locals to protest this performance and other events like it.

These days, there is a growing sense that institutions must reconcile what takes place within museum walls with what happens outside them, both in their local communities and in the world at large. In *Museum Town*, Krens recalls that the Minimalists "had to confront the limitations of the box." The ideal MASS MoCA documentary would do the same.

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.

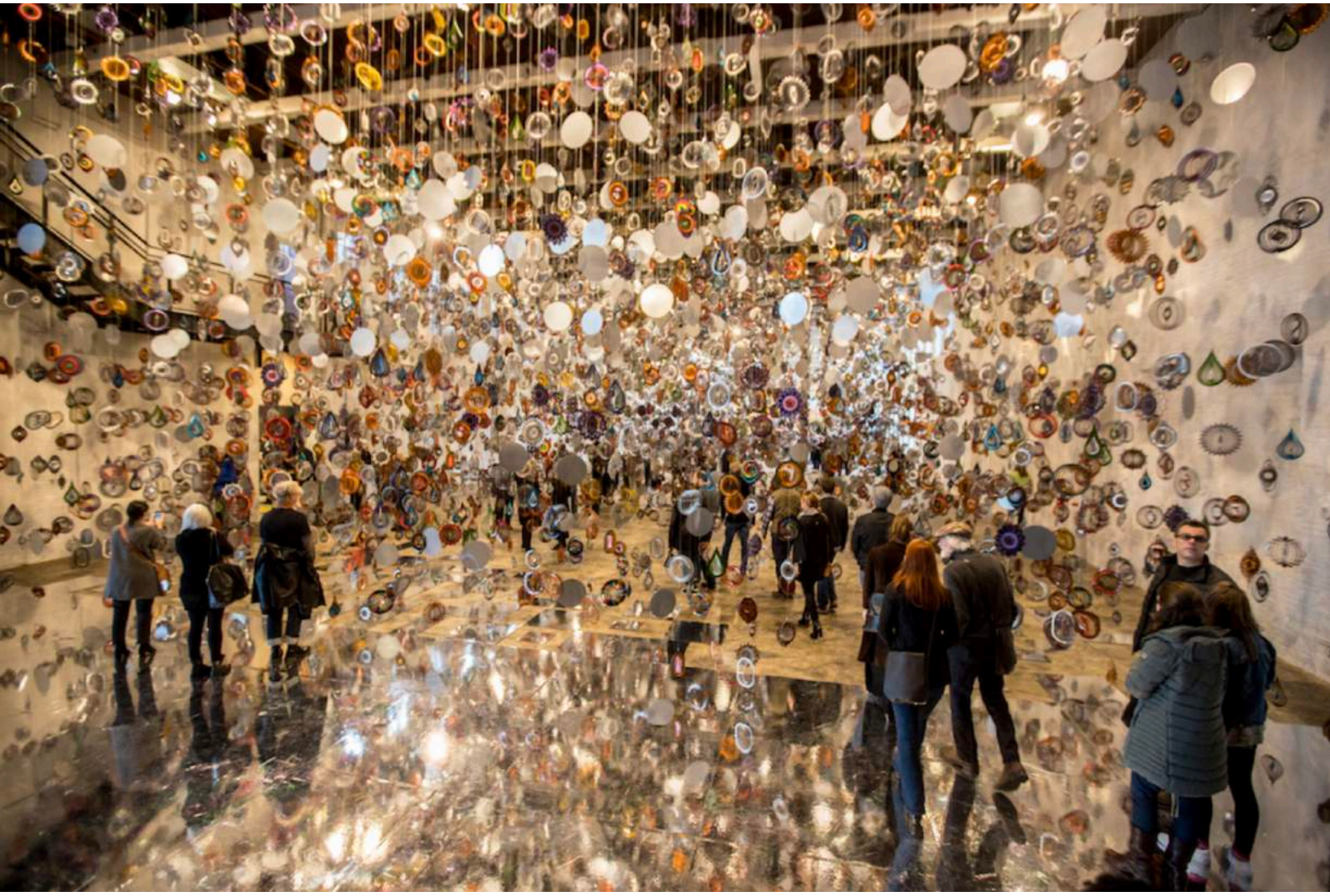
Per a report in the *New York Times*, Shainman submitted a proposal to the Kinderhook on August 13 for construction of the work. The town refused to sign off on the installation, prompting debates between the two sides over whether the text-based work qualified as public art. Speaking to the *Times*, 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.

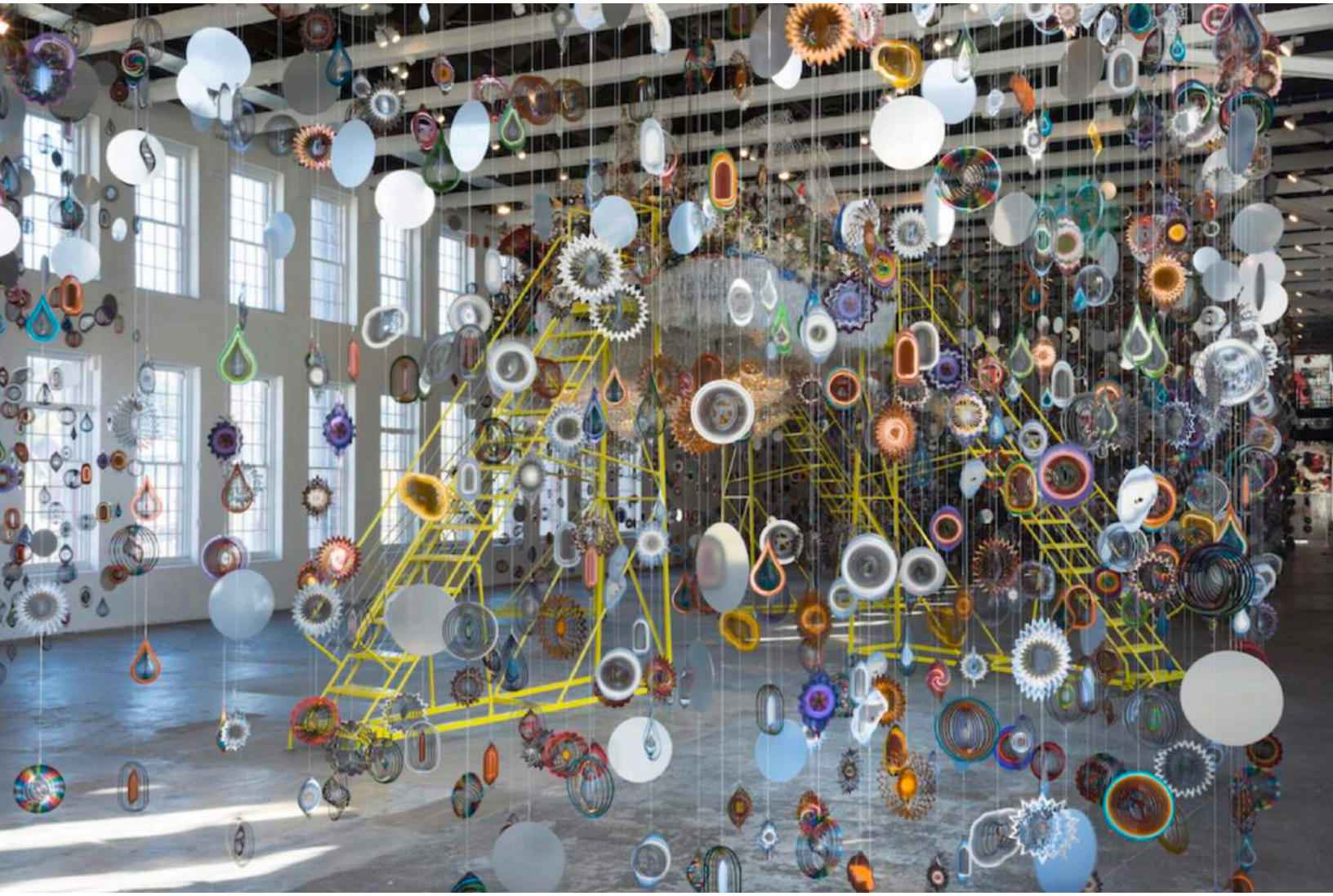
“The gallery had to go to the city and ask permission. I’m like, just fucking do it,” Cave told ***New York Magazine*** upon the work’s debut. “Like John Lewis said when he said ‘good trouble.’ To me, it’s about that. You don’t need fucking permission. It’s an art gallery, a place of expression.”

JUXTAPOZ ART+CULTURE



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

September 12, 2020 - January 03, 2021



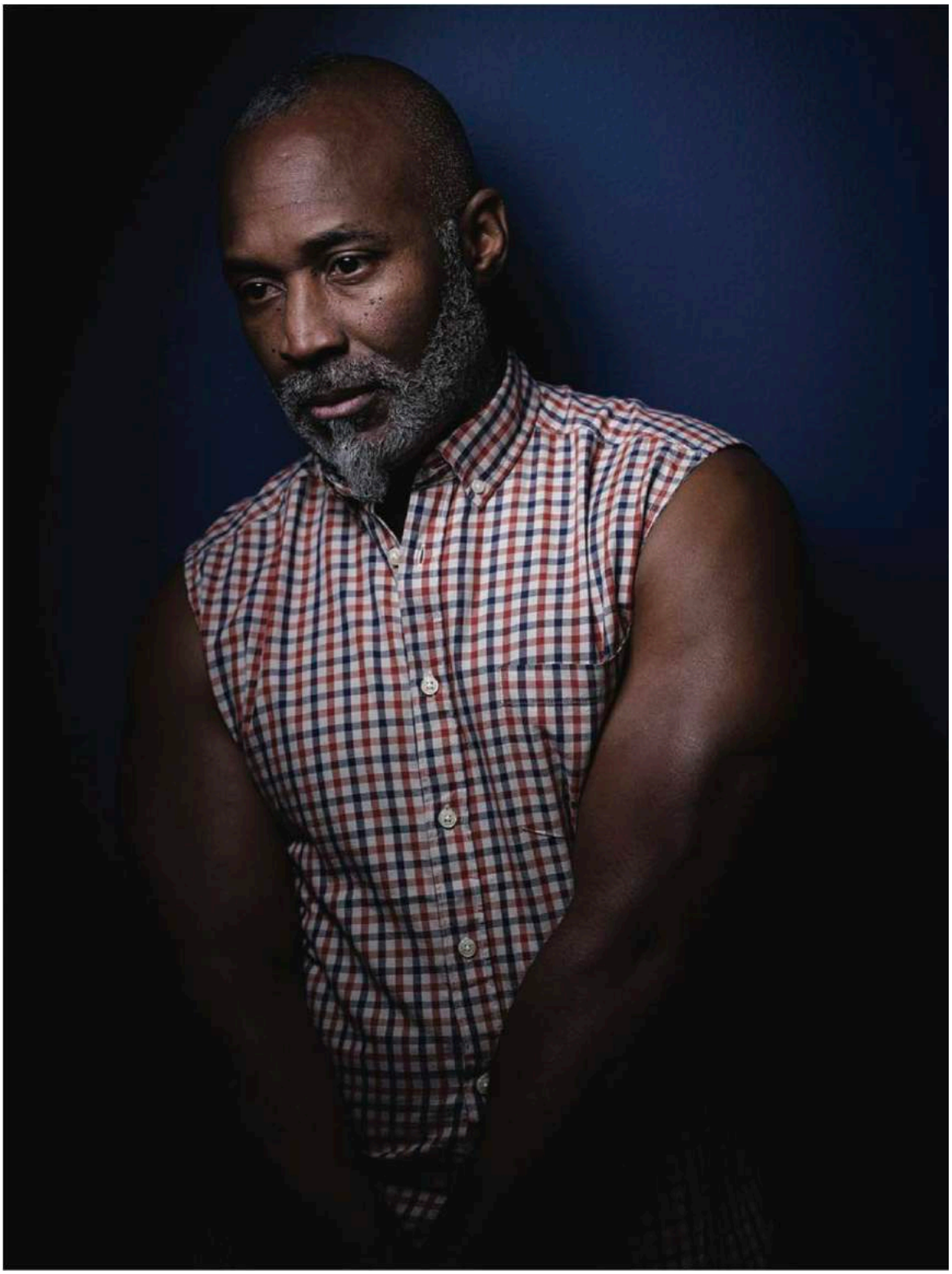
Nick Cave's famed Soundsuits feel like singular visions in the contemporary art world. True characters, and now, by way of their powerful singularity, they have become recognizable and especially "suited" to tell urgent, timely stories. With fabric serving as body armor, the handmade, textile "second 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 power. 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

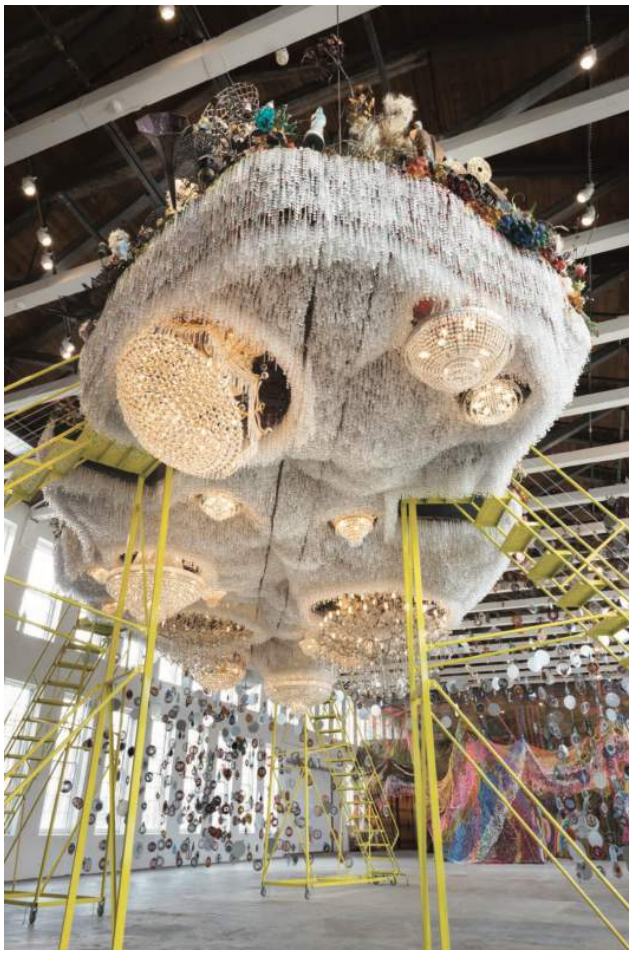


This interview originally appeared in the print edition of RAIN magazine in the fall of 2018.

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.

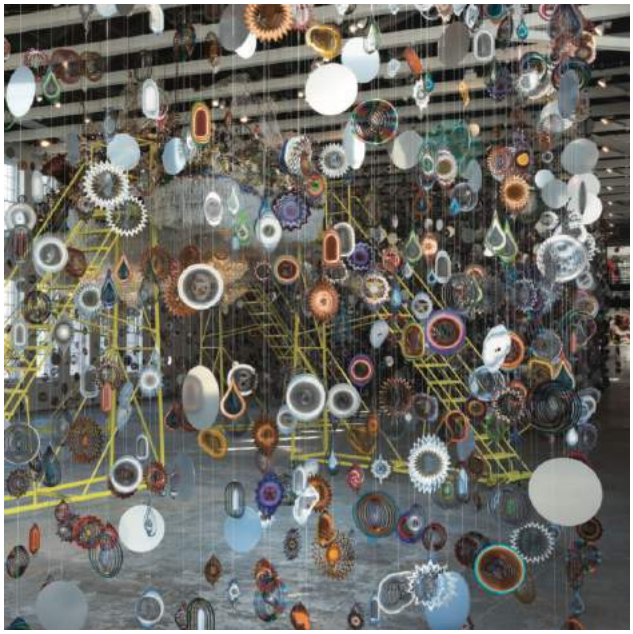
When I first saw [the suit], I never thought about any of the connotations of the creation of the Soundsuits. I just thought, "Wow, this is amazing. This is interesting. This is great." Which I think is what you wanted to achieve. Because you've said that you want to flatten class and race, and all of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

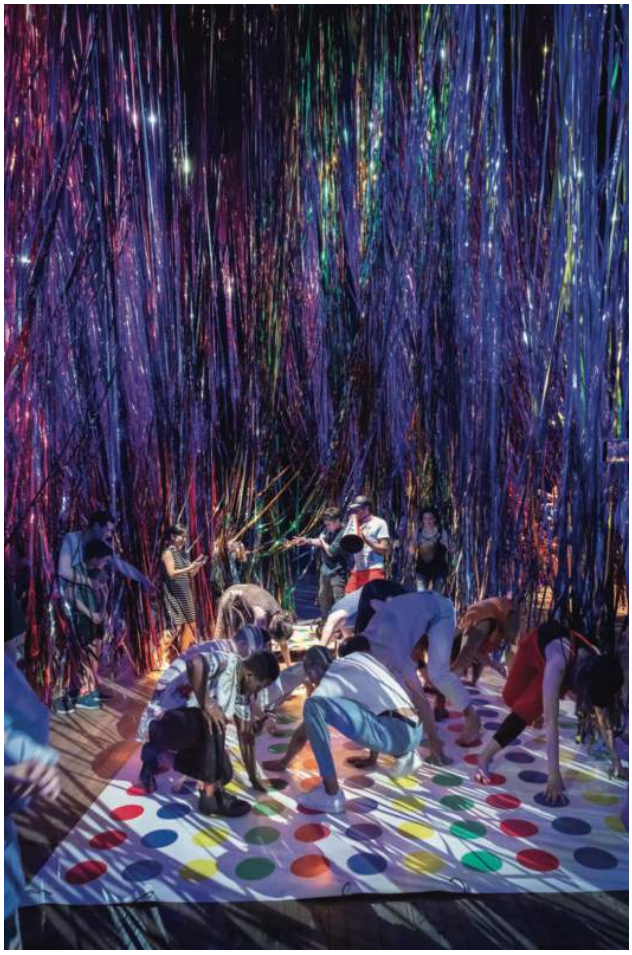
NC: Well, it needs the support of others in order for them to take action, or a project to come to life—

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.

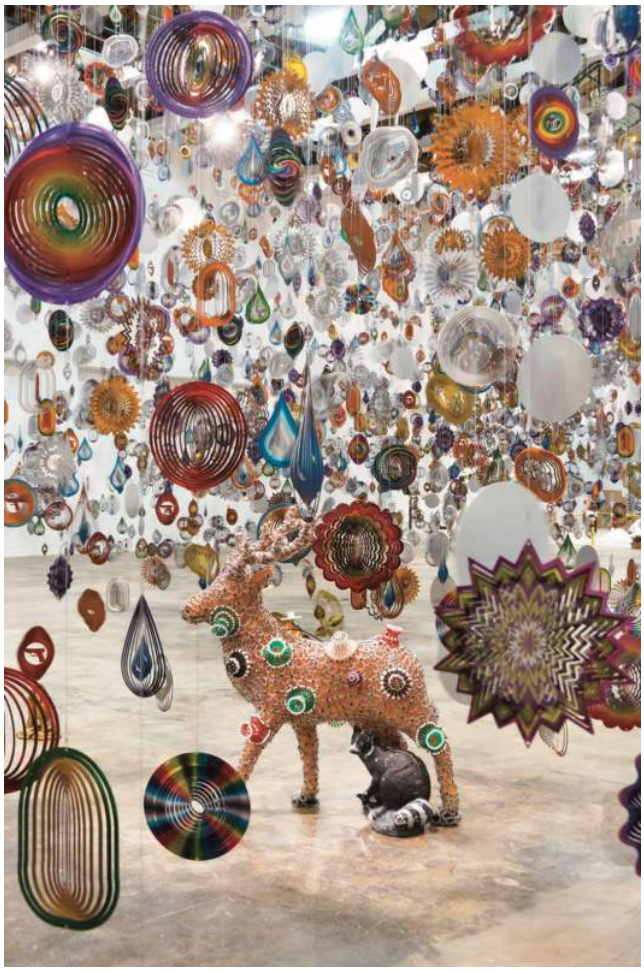
MB: Yeah, tell me about it.

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.

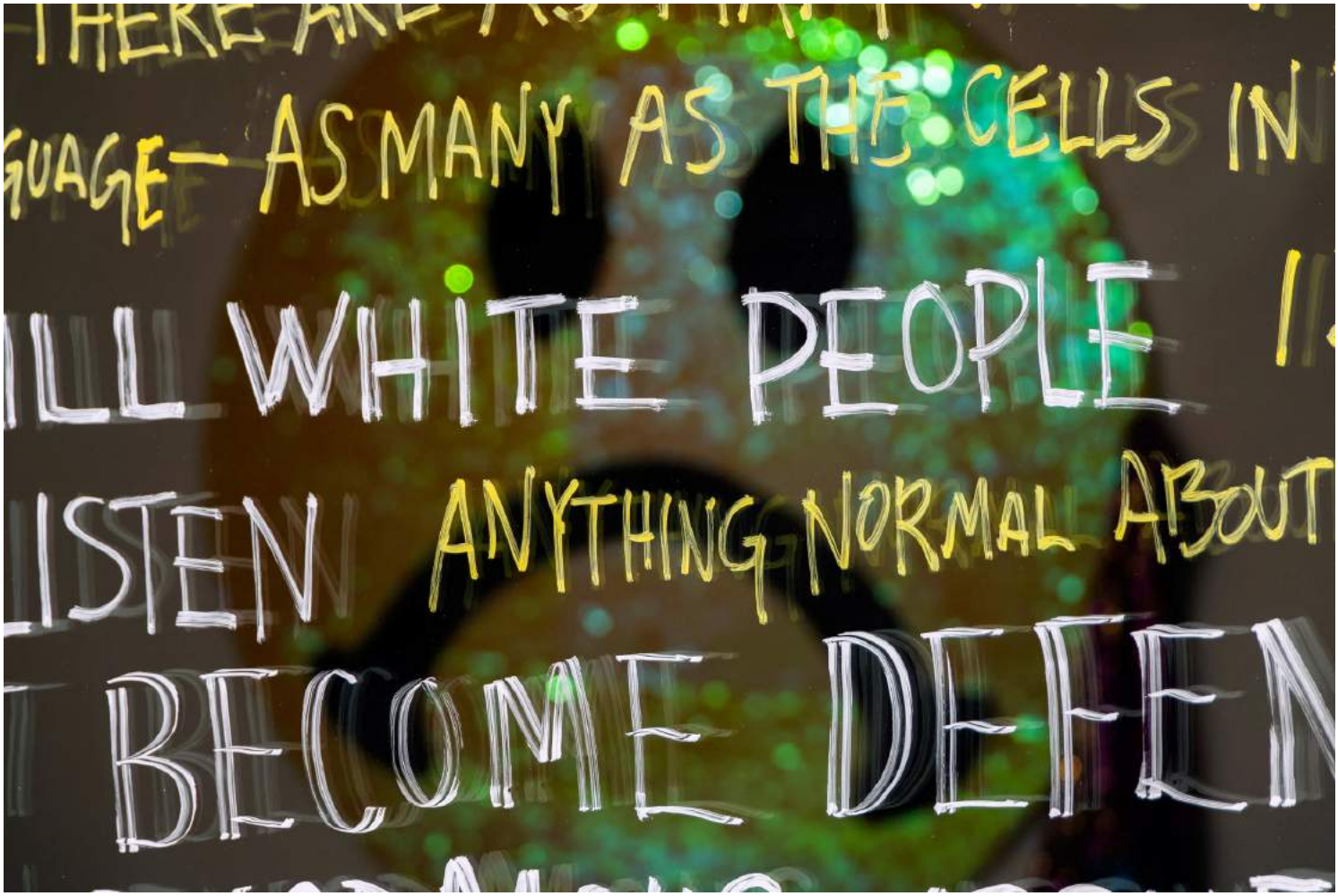
The result, "Letters to the World Toward the Eradication of Racism," ranges from inspirational mantras — Margaret Mead's quote "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it is the only thing that ever has" is printed in large caps across the storefront — 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

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 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.

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.



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.



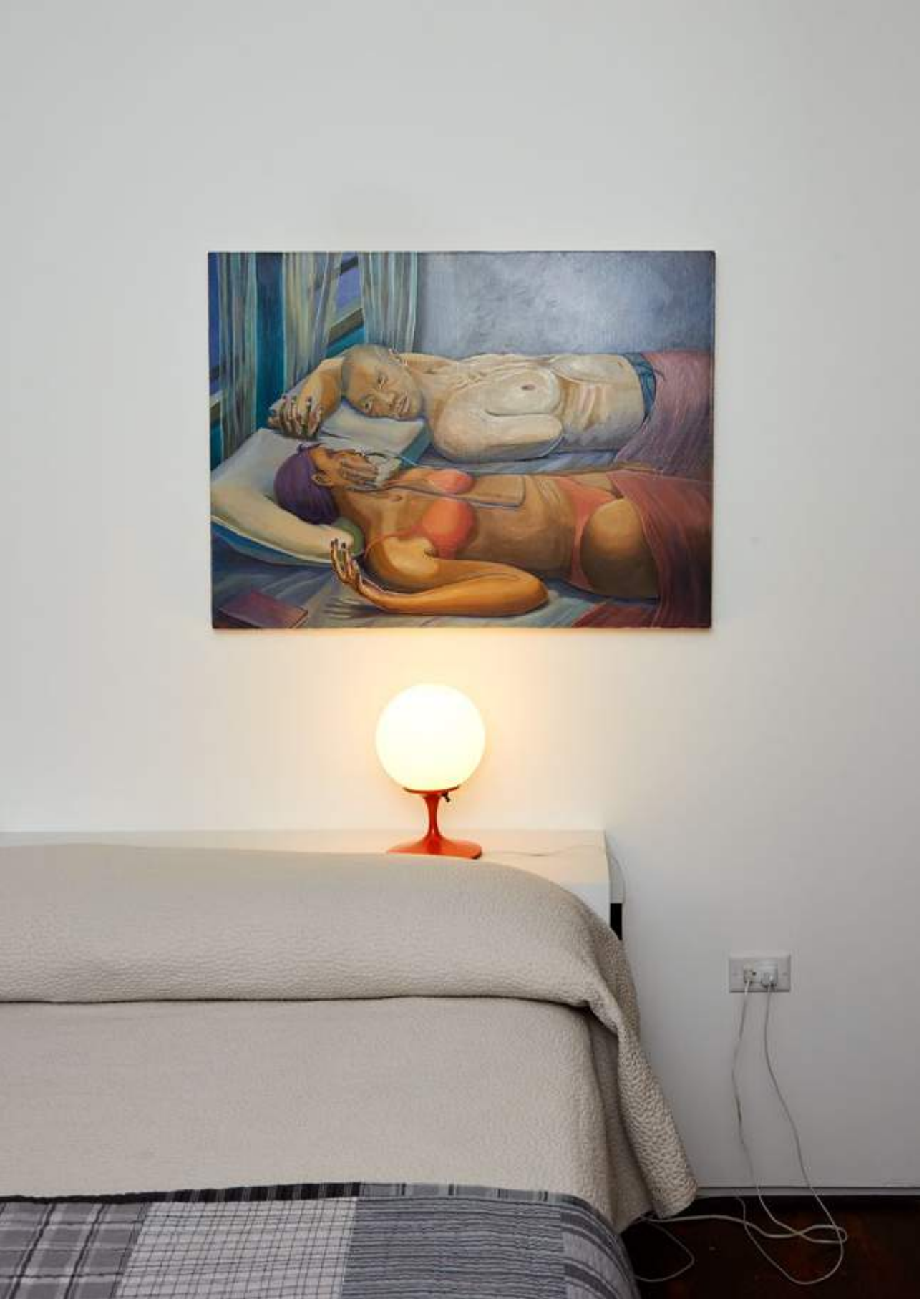
Bob: That exhibition was a new vision of what a town hall could be.
Nick: Yeah, that show and 'The Let Go' at the Park Avenue Armory in New York City: those are the new models. I've been thinking: how do we create spaces that really allow us to collectively come together? That allow us to invite performance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

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.



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: 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.

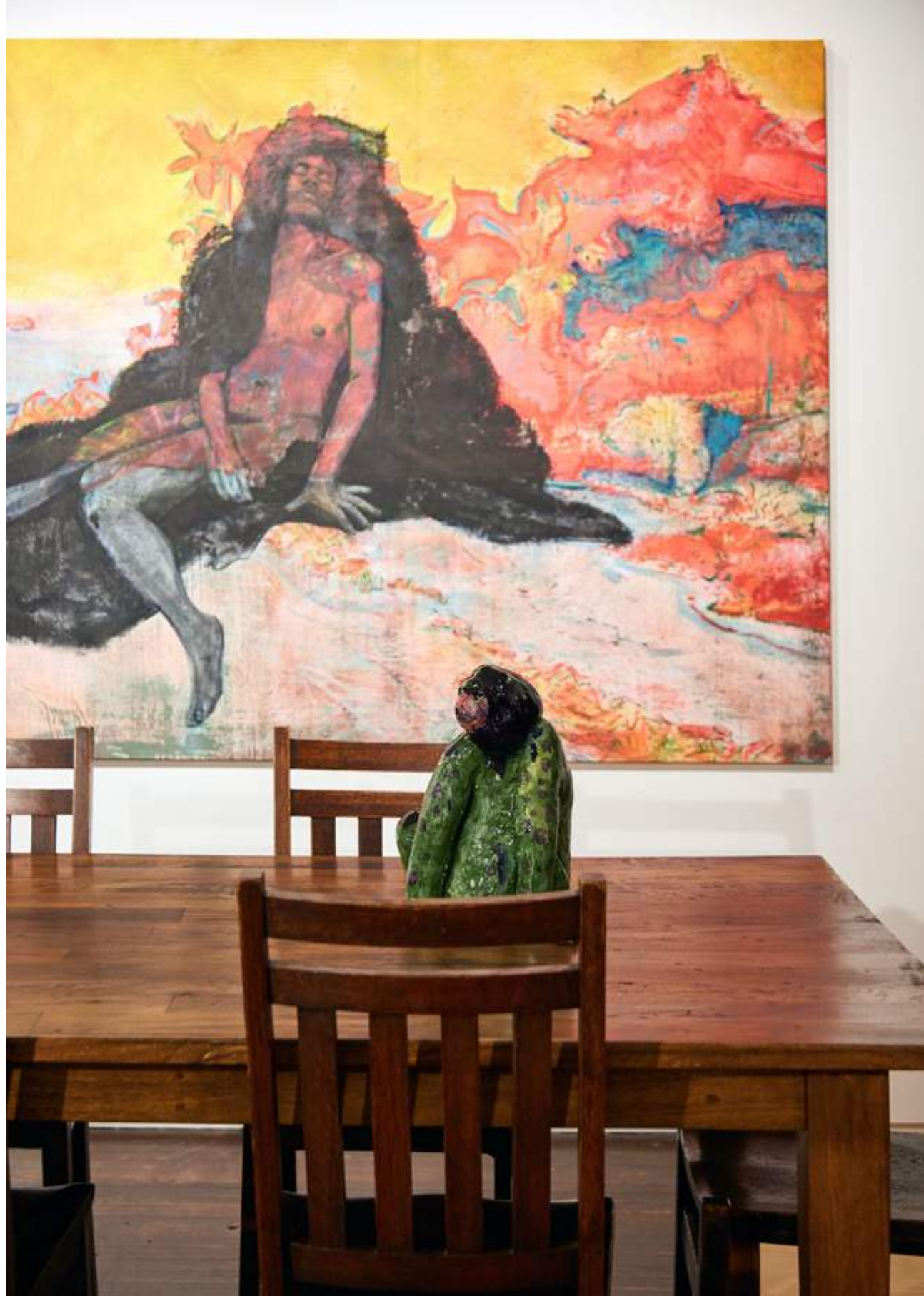
You opened with a large-scale collaborative text piece that spanned your storefront gallery windows with the words: 'Love Thy Neighbor'.
Bob: Yes. We reached out to schools and the chamber of commerce and found a few neighbours that helped out as representatives. We bought 7,000 red and white old-fashioned 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.

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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. All images © Nick Cave. Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York. Photos by James Prinz Photography



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. All images © Nick Cave. Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York. Photos by James Prinz Photography

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

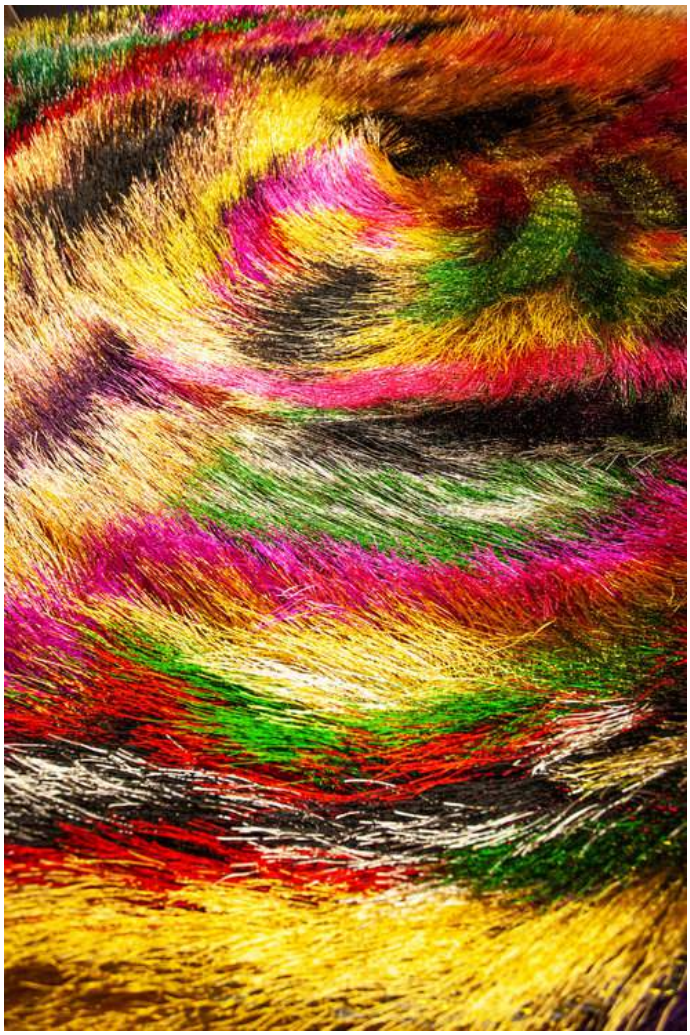
“It’s not that Nick doesn’t have a dark side,” Denise Markonish, the senior curator and managing director of exhibitions at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art in North Adams, Mass., tells me. Markonish approached Cave in 2013 about planning an exhibition for the museum’s largest gallery. “He 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

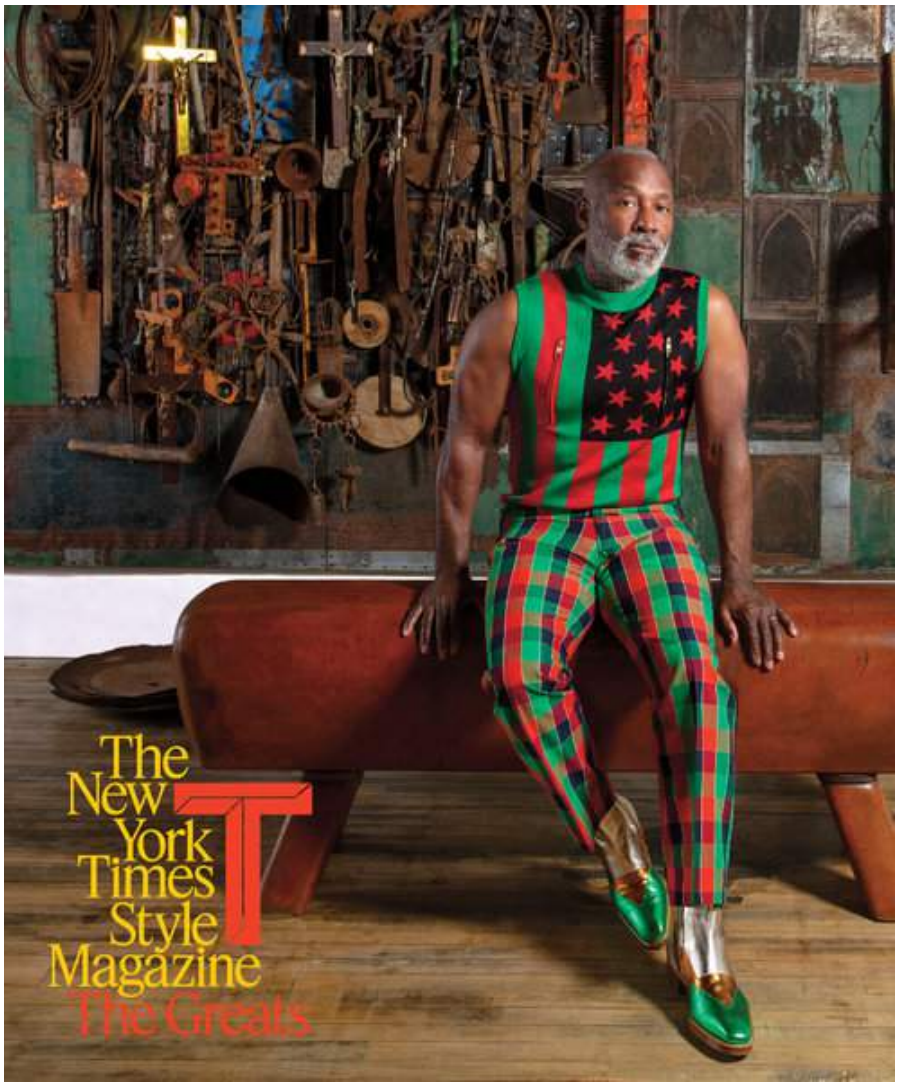


A detail of "Tondo" (2019). Renée Cox

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

Portrait of Nick Cave and interview by TATIJANA SHOAN

All artwork by NICK CAVE

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

© NICK CAVE. COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY, NEW YORK.

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. COURTESY
OF THE ARTIST AND
JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY,
NEW YORK.



NICK CAVE,
SHINE, 2014, MIXED
MEDIA INCLUDING
CAST HAND, BRUSH,
AND VINTAGE METAL
FLOWER FRAME
19 X 12 ½ X 1 ¾
INCHES.
© NICK CAVE. COURTESY
OF THE ARTIST AND
JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY,
NEW YORK.



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. COURTESY
OF THE ARTIST AND
JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY,
NEW YORK.



NICK CAVE,
SOUNDSUIT,
2010, MIXED
MEDIA INCLUDING
SYNTHETIC HAIR,
FABRIC, METAL, AND
MANNEQUIN
96 X 29 X 20
INCHES
© NICK CAVE. COURTESY
OF THE ARTIST AND
JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY,
NEW YORK.

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. COURTESY
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JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY,
NEW YORK.







NICK CAVE,
SOUNDSUIT,
2011, MIXED
MEDIA INCLUDING
DOGWOOD TWIGS,
WIRE, BASKET,
UPHOLSTERY,
METAL, AND
MANNEQUIN
87 X 27 X 35
INCHES
© NICK CAVE. COURTESY
OF THE ARTIST AND
JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY,
NEW YORK.



NICK CAVE, *SOUNDSUIT*, 2015, MIXED MEDIA INCLUDING WIRE, BUGLE BEADS, BUTTONS, FABRIC, METAL AND MANNEQUIN 89 X 47 X 20 INCHES
© NICK CAVE. COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY, NEW YORK.

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. COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY, NEW YORK.



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

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JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY,
NEW YORK.

NICK CAVE,
SOUNDSUIT,
2016, MIXED
MEDIA INCLUDING
VARIOUS TOYS,
WIRE, METAL AND
MANNEQUIN
84 X 45 X 40
INCHES
© NICK CAVE. COURTESY
OF THE ARTIST AND
JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY,
NEW YORK.





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
© NICK CAVE. COURTESY
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JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY,
NEW YORK.

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
© NICK CAVE. COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY, NEW YORK.

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

© NICK CAVE. COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY, NEW YORK.

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.

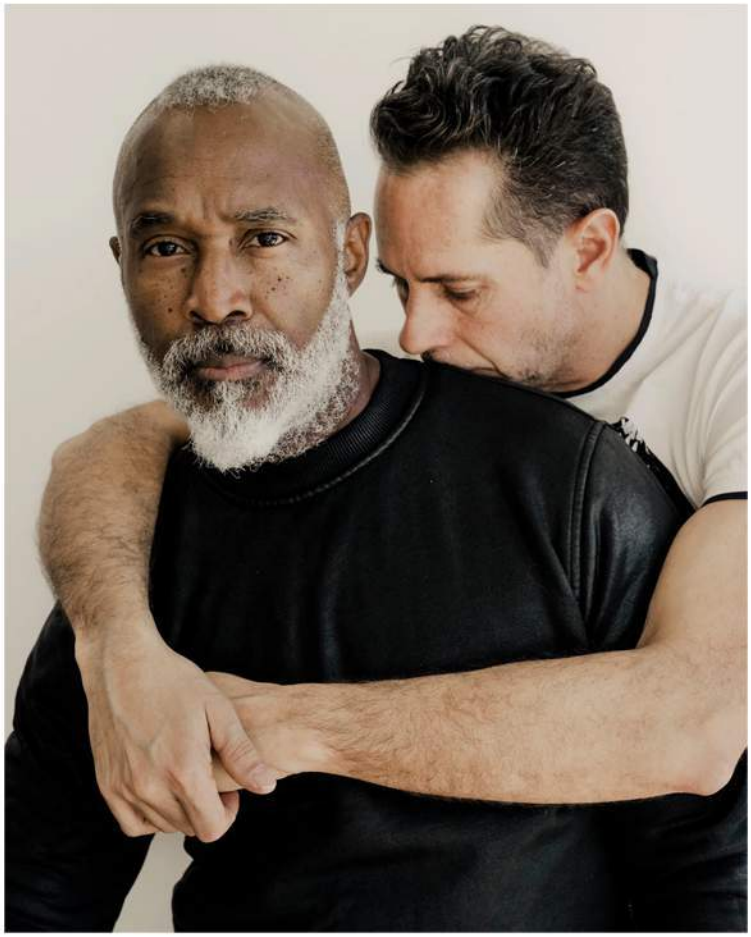
For the “Love Thy Neighbor” installation, they distributed blank name tags to local businesses, schools and block associations. People wrote in their first names or otherwise embellished them. “They are these amazing little artworks,” Mr. Faust said. In the future, those storefront display spaces will 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.

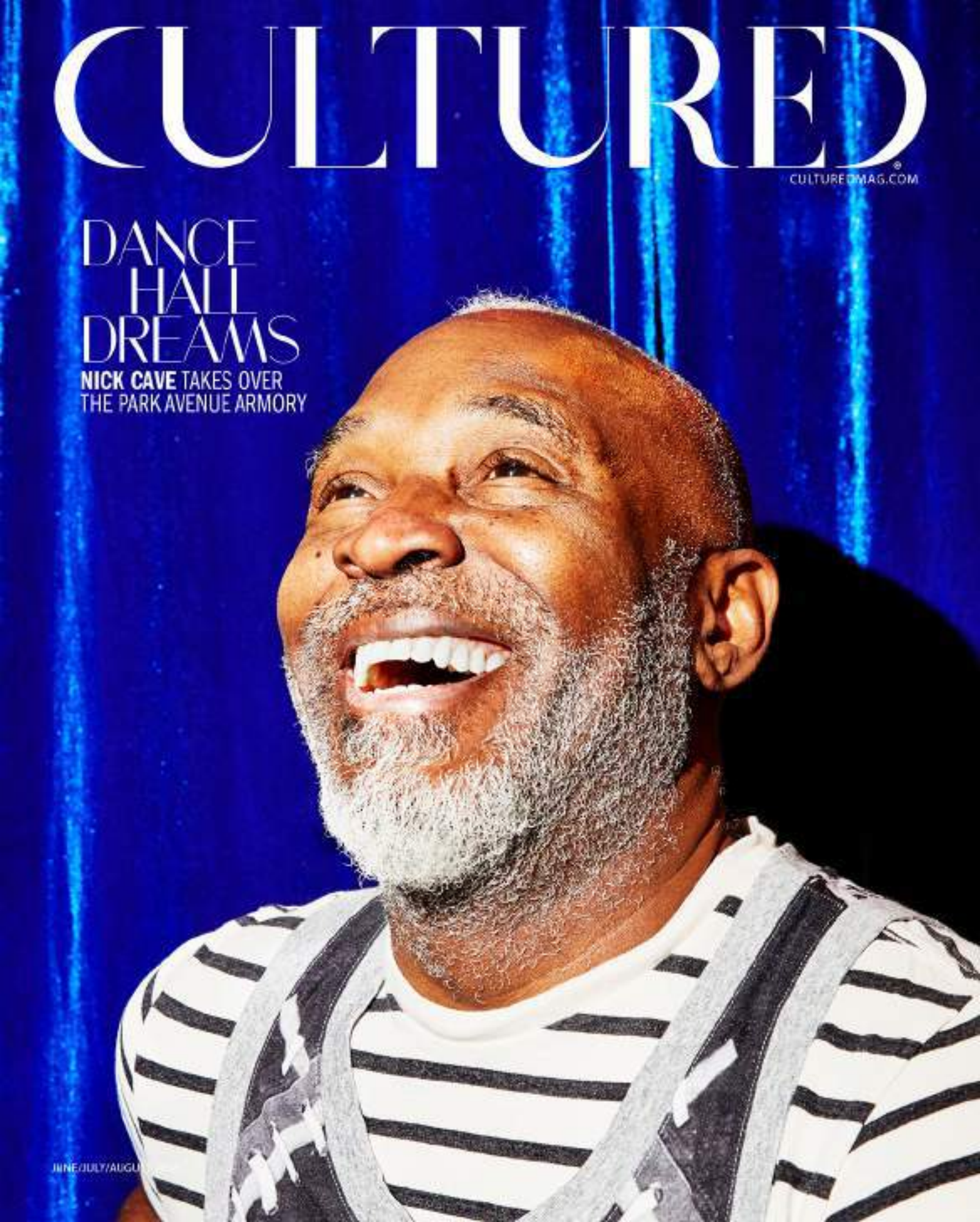
Mr. Cave now often buys work from his students. “I remember someone bought a piece of mine when I was an undergrad,” he said. “That validation and motivation — it’s just what that does to a young person.”

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DANCE HALL DREAMS

NICK CAVE TAKES OVER THE PARK AVENUE ARMORY



JUNE/JULY/AUGU

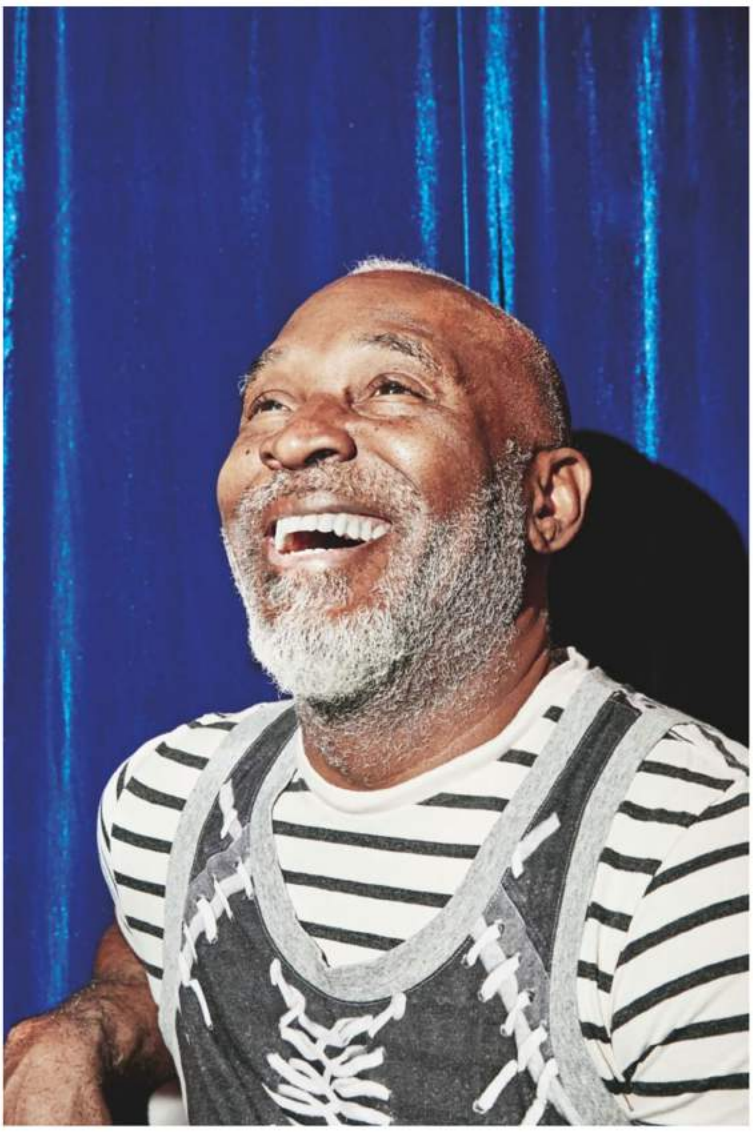
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ART

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?"

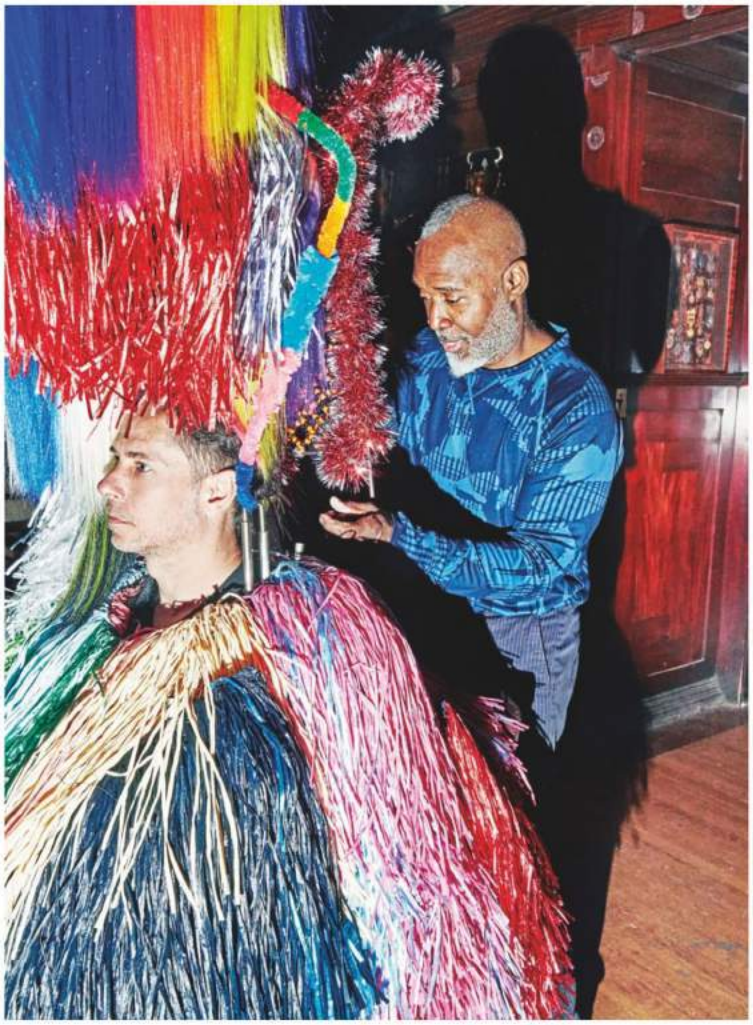
Cave, a professor at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, describes the stream of letters the school's president Elissa Tenny has issued this past academic year. "Since fall, she has had to write about six letters to the campus addressing current affairs, which is very unusual," he says. "So I'm 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."

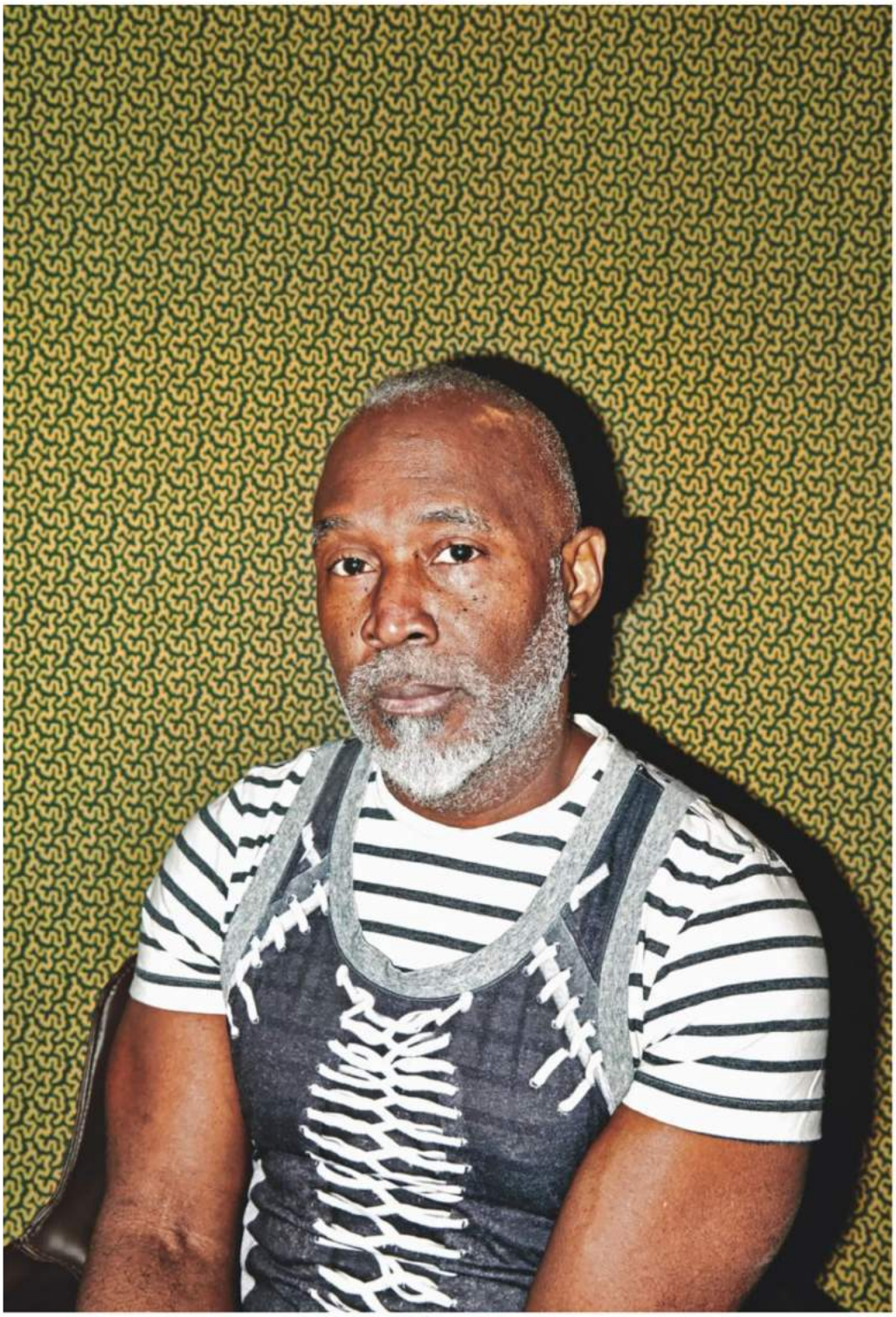
Indeed, that wonder and whimsy is perfectly encapsulated in *The Let Go*'s show-stopping centerpiece: a 100-foot-long, 40-foot-tall mylar curtain that streams across the Drill Hall dance floor and is sure to set Instagram alight. Chase, as Cave has named the metallic sculpture—as in young black men being 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

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.



Nick Cave, *If a Tree Falls*, 2018, installation view, Jack Shainman, New York. Courtesy Jack Shainman.

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



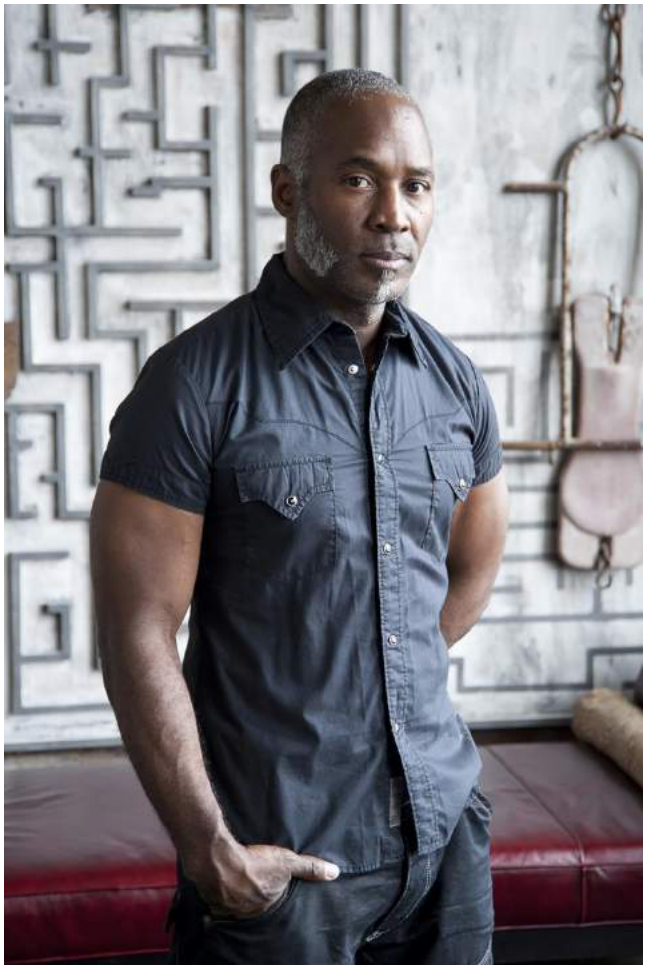
The Soundsuits in artist Nick Cave's "Drive-By Remix," minus the pogo sticks. Color, movement and playfulness are Cave signatures. COURTESY OF NICK CAVE

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.

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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

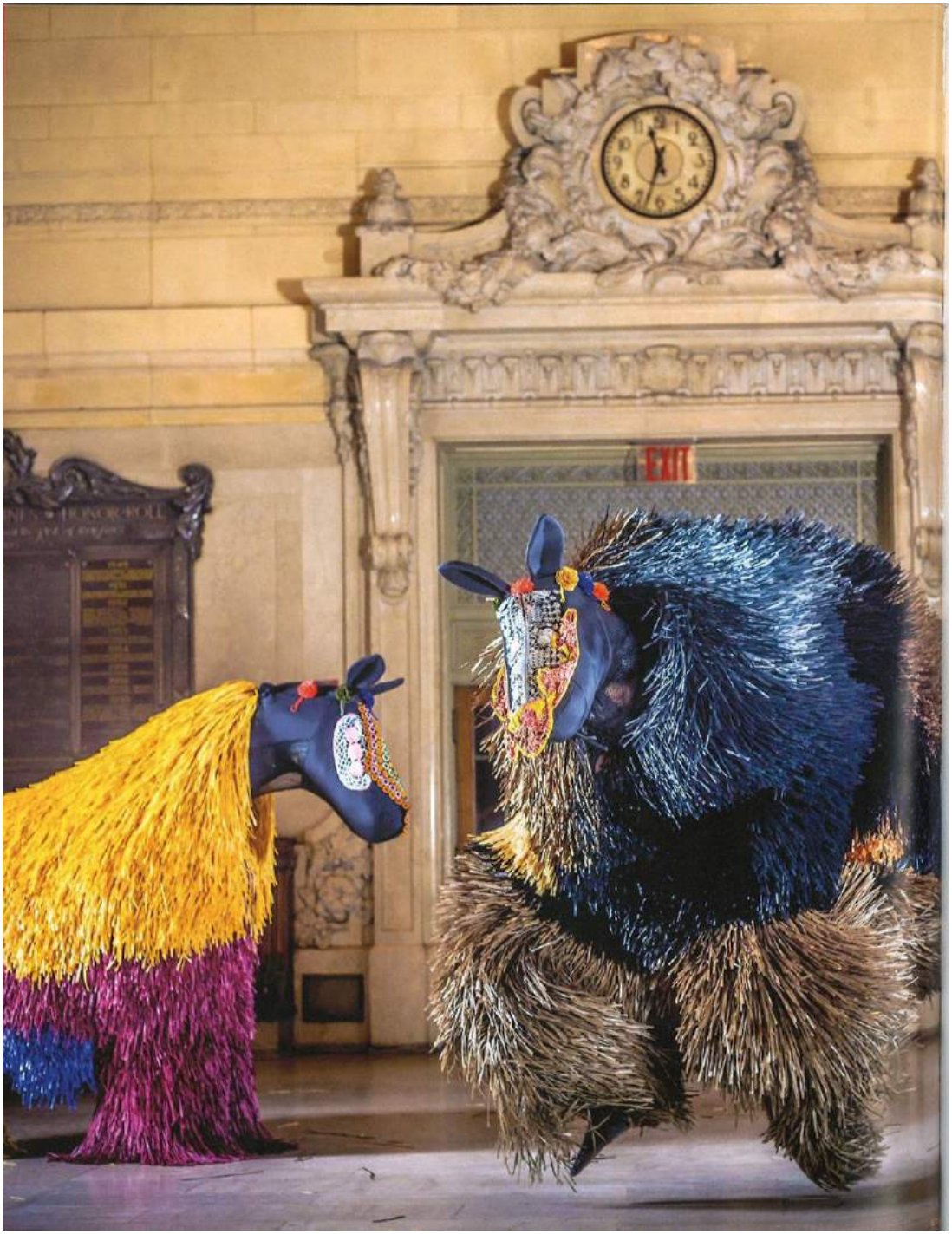
Summer 2018

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.

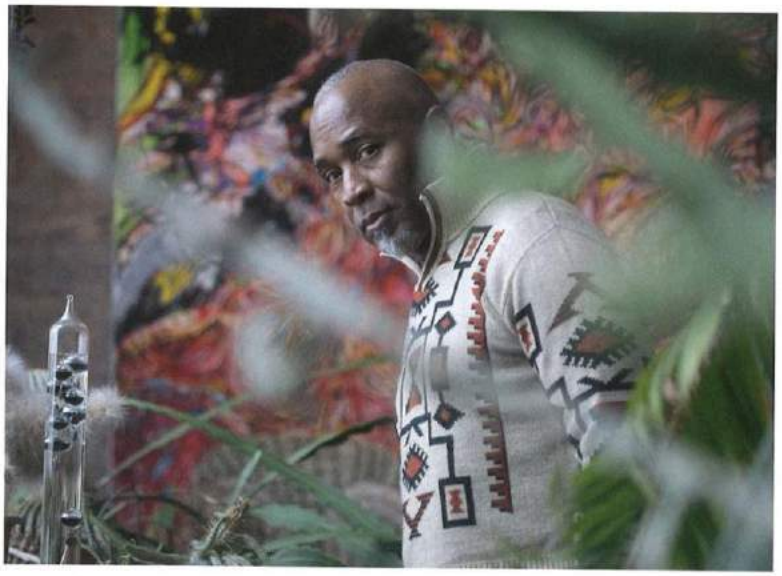



EXIT

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

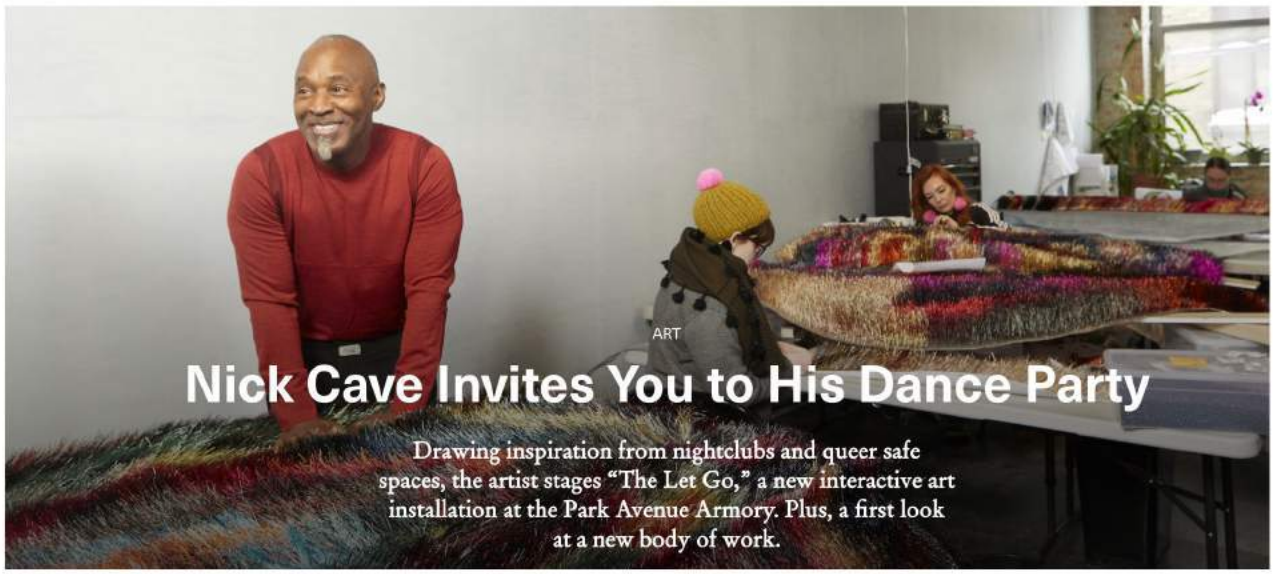
Previous pages, left and right
Tondo, 2018
Mixed media including metal, wire, bugle beads, sequinned fabric and wood
Approx 183 cm diameter

Opposite page
Soundsuit, 2017
Mixed media including buttons, wire, bugle beads, metal and mannequin
Approx 236 × 122 × 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.

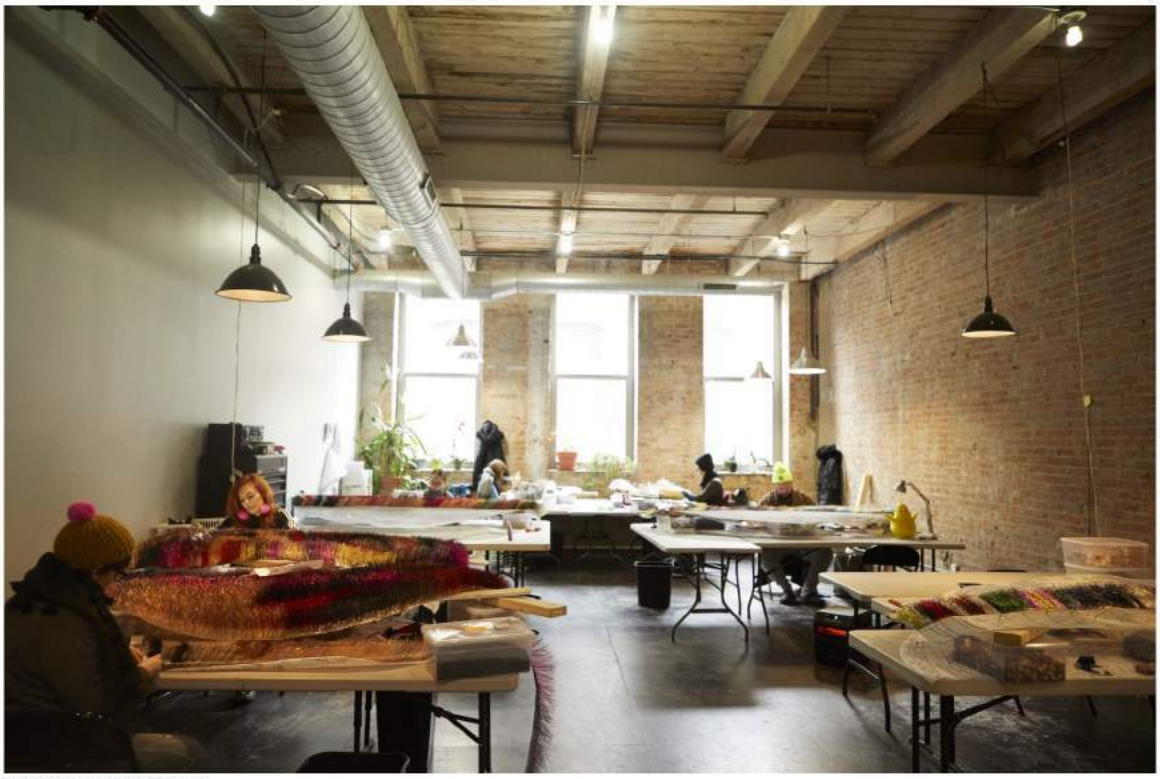
The activation coincides with Cave's seventh solo exhibition at Jack Shainman Gallery (opening May 17). Titled "Weather or Not," the show debuts tondo (circular wall weavings), which appear like abstract patterns but that draw inspiration from catastrophic weather maps and brain scans of traumatized 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."

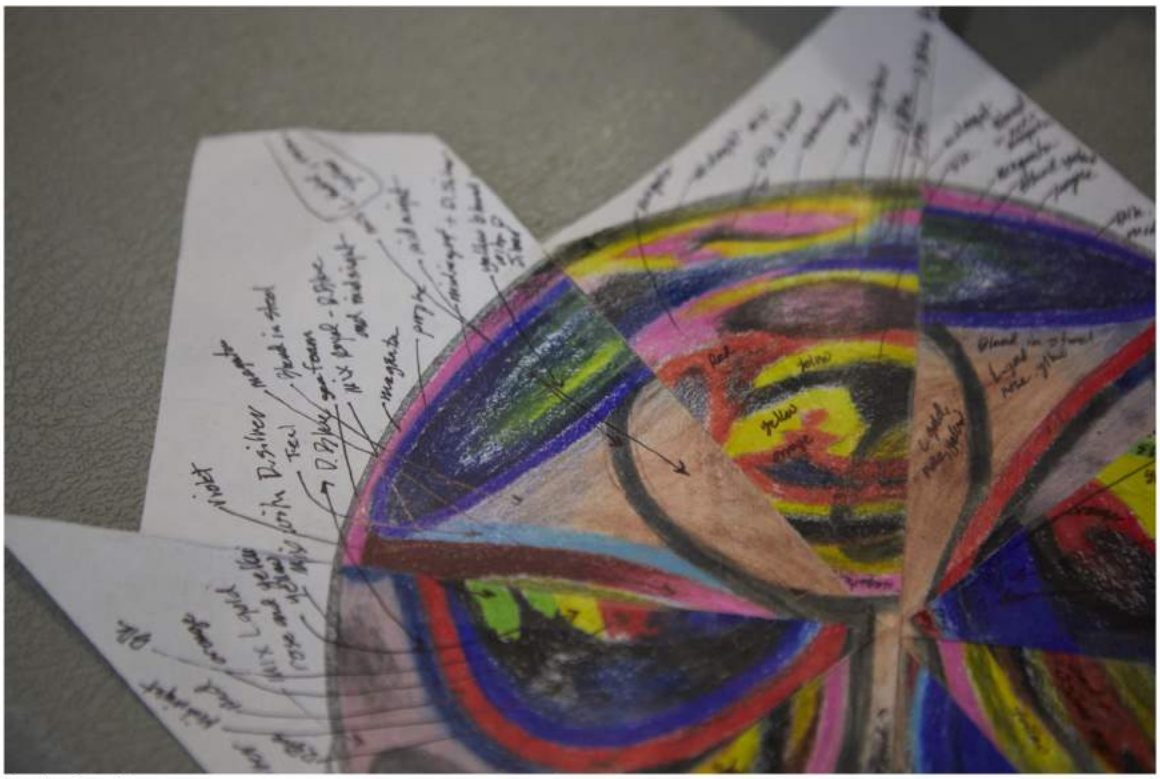
Below, peek inside Cave's Chicago studio, and get an exclusive first look at his new works for "Weather or Not," debuting in New York this May.



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. All rights reserved Nick Cave. Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York

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

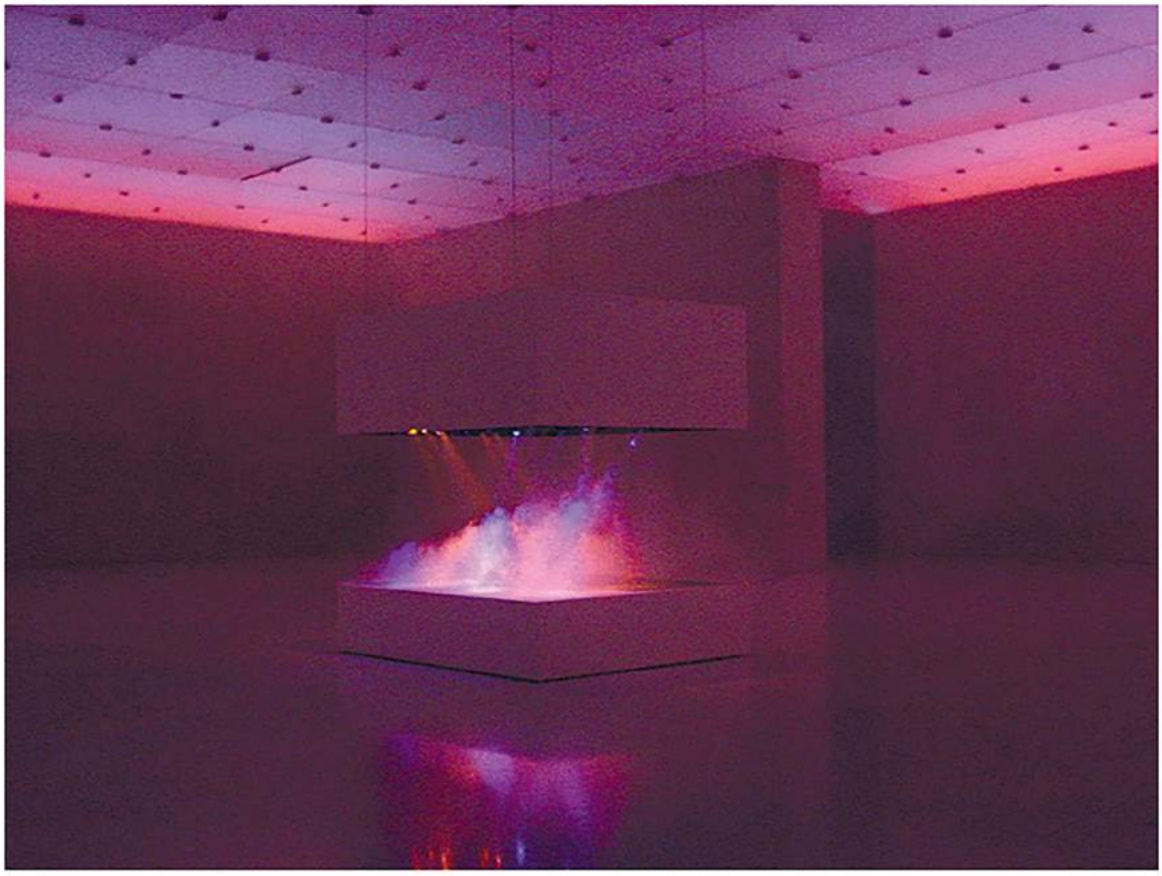
Nick Cave's collection of new work, "Weather or Not," opens to the public this week at Jack Shainman. Cave's exhibition, a visual manifestation of states of mind, premiers a series of wire "Tondos," created from the layering of cataclysmic weather patterns with brain scans of black youth suffering from 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.

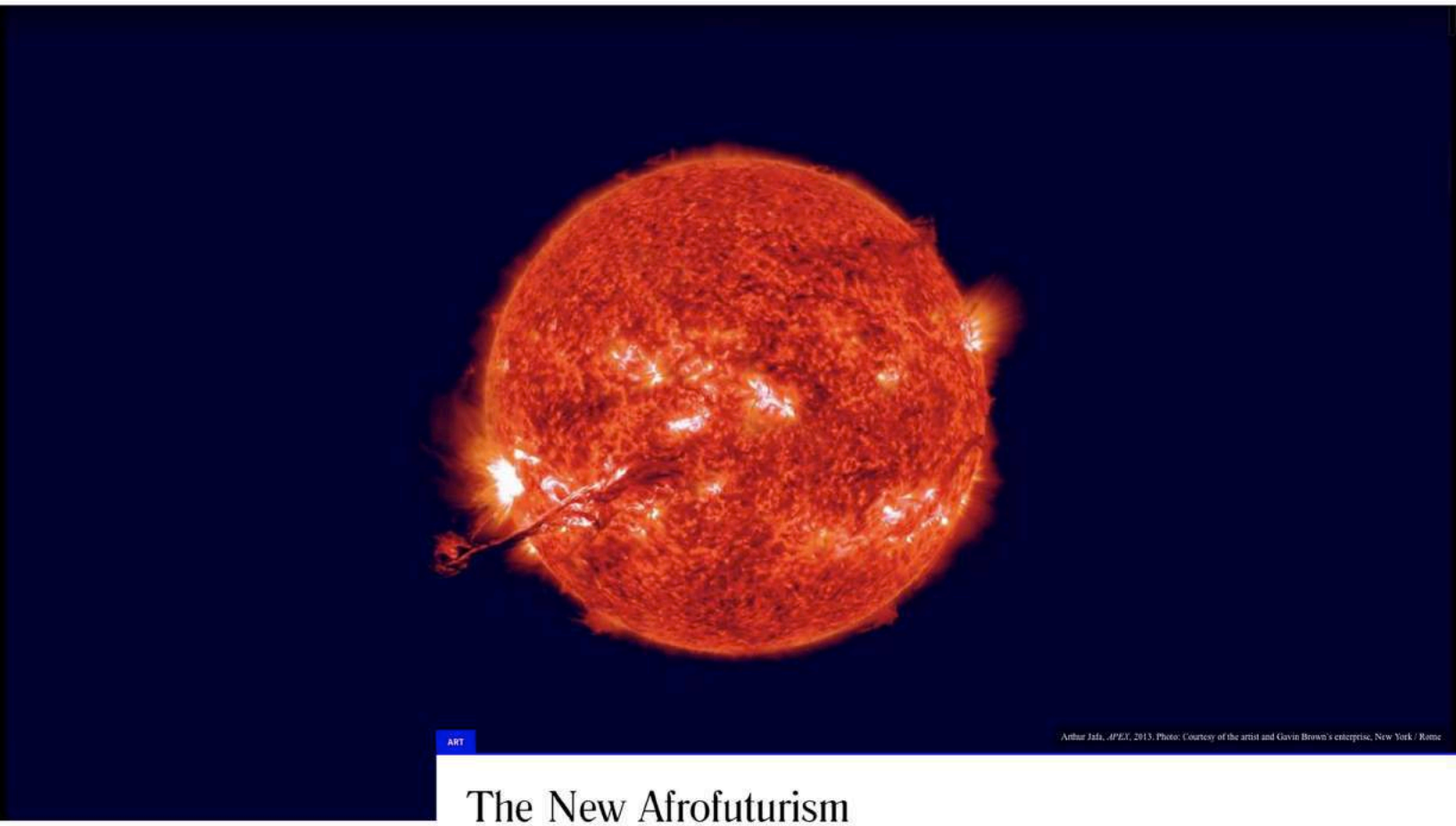
The African-American experience figured large in this year's Frieze, and there were some real revelations. I was blown away by the vibrant, joyous '60s paintings of Emma Amos (Ryan Lee Gallery), and by Lyle Ashton Harris's 1989 work *Constructs, Suite of Four* (Salon 94). The great photographer Gordon 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
Feb 9 2018, 12:08pm

A cosmically inspired optimism has reappeared in the work of African diasporic artists.

SHARE TWEET

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*, 2014. © 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, Clottley 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.*

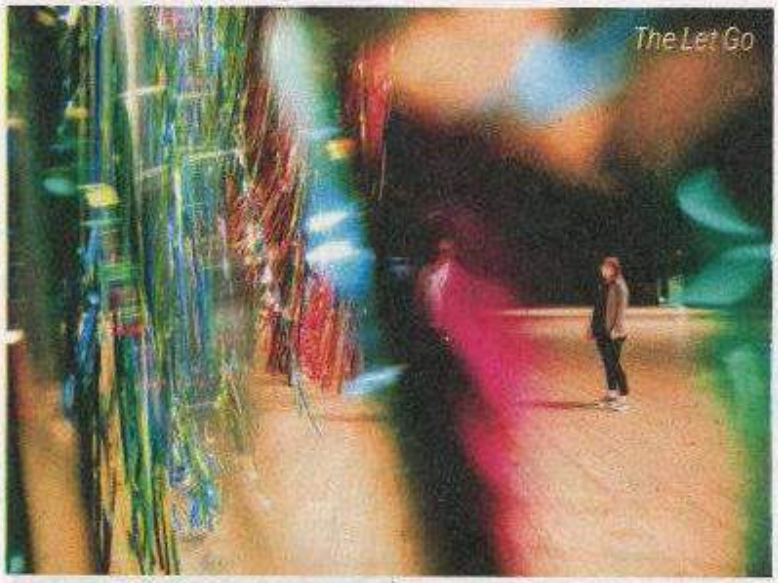
Time Out New York

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
18th 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.

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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."

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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.

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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*."

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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

ARTFORUM

DECEMBER 2015



Nick Cave wearing *Soundsuit*, 2003, Michigan Central Station, Detroit, 2015

BLOOMFIELD HILLS, MICHIGAN

Nick Cave

CRANBROOK ART MUSEUM

Nick Cave's work moves fluidly between sculpture, performance, and social practice and explores the African American body as a site of tragedy, as well as a catalyst for change. Focusing primarily on the artist's work from 2014 and 2015, the Cranbrook Art Museum presented a powerful demonstration of Cave's incisive critical take on the current sociopolitical climate, while simultaneously evidencing his efforts to assemble alternative communities.

The show, curated by Laura Mott, opened with a selection of twenty-nine Soundsuits, Cave's signature wildly decorated dreamlike armatures, whose stitched, beaded, buttoned, and toy-festooned forms simultaneously evoke African art, the costumes donned by New Orleans Mardi Gras revelers, contemporary couture by Jean Paul Gaultier, and mass-market consumer ephemera. Ranging from fragile, almost unwearable sculptural works to soft—if bulky—performance garb, Cave's Soundsuits transform their wearers into astonishing, shaman-like figures, while concealing obvious signs of gender, race, and class. Protective as well as constraining, the Soundsuits were here arranged as a sculptural ensemble, seemingly gathered into an organized group, or perhaps phalanx, poised for some kind of unidentified mission. Whether their purpose was celebration, protest, or religious ritual remained (intentionally) indeterminate.

In a second room, seven Soundsuits, predominantly white and emblazoned with various decorations—including buttons, floral appliqués, a wood and metal washboard, and industrial metal-polishing pads painted with red-and-white bull's-eyes—were juxtaposed with a massive beaded untitled tapestry (made earlier this year) evoking a star-filled sky. The installation, which also included a large wall-mounted circular sculpture, *Tondo*, 2012, ornamented with a similarly celestial theme, explored the relationship between fine art and craft. Although the suits were predominantly light and the skies largely dark, each was shot through with its opposite tone. And as one stared at the individual beads, buttons, and appliqués spread across the figures and environments, the dichotomy between black and white became a commingling, an integration of a spectrum of different hues.

A third room presented the artist's most recent sculptural output, some of which was shown at Jack Shainman in New York last year, and further emphasized the importance of contemporary black experience to Cave's work. If the Soundsuits evoke dance and celebration, the sculptures in this room struck a more static and mournful tone. They are also less unified—the appropriated mass-market and thrift-store objects from which they are made are generally not sewn together; instead the parts are allowed to retain a more singular existence. *TM13*, 2015, a humanoid form composed of sneakers, jeans, a hooded sweatshirt, plastic lawn toys, and multicolored netting threaded with pony beads, memorializes Trayvon Martin, the black teenager slain in Florida in 2012 (the *13* in the work's title references the year his assailant, George Zimmerman, was acquitted). From certain angles, *TM13* looks like a giant Easter Island head; from others, a striding figure that appears both trapped and weighed down by its constituent parts. *Hustle Coat*, 2014, hung on a wall nearby. Gold bling—chains, watches, etc.—covers the entirety of the garment's interior. Suggesting the garb of a 1970s street-corner fence, the coat, with its jagged and glittering interior, seems ready to rend the flesh of anyone brave enough to put it on. In the center of the room, a black lawn-jockey statuette stood on an antique shoeshine stand, surveying an array of boxes containing various found and made objects, including vintage ceramic birds, thistle seed, and strung beads arranged in a strict geometry on the floor. Confronting the viewer with two powerful symbols of black subjugation, the sculpture *Property*, 2014, evokes at once a flea market and an aerial diagram of a slave ship. As these works and the show's attendant wall texts suggested, although Cave mines collective aspirations for strong, supportive communities and for compassion grounded in mutual understanding, he also directly engages with the nightmares of black experience—the terrible cycles of pain, violence, and suffering that characterize not only the present moment but also our nation's long history of systematized inequity.

The exhibition concluded with a room in which one wall bore the title "Map/Action." The map in question provided the locations of the photo shoots, dance labs, film screenings, and performances that Cave organized in conjunction with local artists and communities between

THE NEW YORK TIMES STYLE MAGAZINE

Art Matters | The Hudson Valley's Newest Art Destination

CULTURE

By LAURA NEILSON

MAY 19, 2014



At Jack Shainman Gallery's The School in Kinderhook, N.Y., an exhibition of the artist Nick Cave's work fills all three levels of what was once Martin Van Buren High School. *James Ewing*

The last time artwork adorned the walls of the Martin Van Buren school in Kinderhook, N.Y., it had been commissioned at the request of elementary school teachers. On Saturday, however, both new and retrospective pieces by the artist Nick Cave were installed throughout the newly converted 30,000-square-foot building, while dancers costumed in Cave's idiosyncratic Soundsuits performed outside for a crowd of art-world cognoscenti and local residents. The early evening celebration feted both the opening of what is simply being called The School, Jack Shainman Gallery's colossal addition to two gallery spaces in Chelsea, as well as the 30th anniversary of the gallery itself.

Joining Dia Beacon, Storm King, the much-hyped forthcoming Marina Abramovic Institute and other new galleries that recently cropped up in the area, the reworked 1929 Federal Revival building and its five-acre property — situated near the main square of the quaint, picturesque village — offer yet another lure for art seekers heading north from the city.

Excluding two banners hanging on each end of The School's facade, the outside of the building remains unchanged. Inside, however, the Granada-based architect Antonio Jiménez Torrecillas oversaw a massive three-level renovation, including an excavation below the building's gymnasium and auditorium floor to open up a 3,500-square-foot, all-white space, replete with 24-foot ceilings. Certain architectural hallmarks revealing the gallery's past life — the proscenium arch of the auditorium's stage area, for example — remain intact. "I just love the building so much—especially its bones. Antonio really took it down to the basics," said Shainman, who didn't shy away from other, less visible modernizations, including geothermal heating. "We were pleasantly naive when we first took the project on," he added. "Otherwise, we'd never have done this."

In that downstairs area, an assemblage of Cave's elaborate Soundsuits currently stand on a slightly raised stage of their own in an inviting semi-circle formation, while one of the artist's large-scale beaded tondo pieces hangs upon the back wall. "The arrangement of the platform is deliberate. It's really important that you come inside so that you feel captivated by this world," said Cave, who had been at The School throughout the week to install his 44 various pieces.

That theme of immersion carried over to the pounding performance outside on Saturday. An ensemble of drummers from the Massachusetts-based Agbekor Society Friends performed traditional Ghanese music, while 13 dancers choreographed by Williams College's dance chair Sandra Burton eventually descended the stage, spastically weaving in and out of the crowd, bringing nearby traffic to a momentary halt.

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

Nick Cave on “Tackling Really Hard Issues” with Art

by **Sarah Rose Sharp** on July 31, 2015



From Nick Cave’s second Dance Lab performance at the Dequindre Cut (all photos by the author for Hyperallergic)

DETROIT — In 1989, while a postgraduate at **Cranbrook Academy of Art**, **Nick Cave** developed the first of his Soundsuits, for which he has become world-famous — sculptural bodysuits constructed from a range of found objects, which transform the wearer into a figure both highly visible and completely obscured. The Soundsuit was a means for Cave to process the intense vulnerability he felt as a black man during the **Rodney King beating**, which took place the same year he graduated with his MFA from Cranbrook, which boasts a lavish and sequestered campus in the affluent and mostly white Detroit suburb of Bloomfield Hills.

More than 25 years later, Laura Mott, curator of Contemporary Art and Design for the **Cranbrook Art Museum**, has collaborated with Cave to stage a monumental homecoming — a series of performances, installations, happenings, and publications collectively titled, ***Here Hear***. In April, Cave began a series of Soundsuit photo shoots throughout Detroit, which are now in the form of an

activity book at his astounding solo show that opened in June — his first in Michigan. *Here Hear* features more than 30 of his Soundsuits, newly commissioned works, and selections from his last show at Jack Shainman Gallery in New York (***Made by Whites for Whites***). The show's opening weekend was paired with a set of events in Detroit's Brightmoor neighborhood — a long-forsaken region of the city, currently enjoying a **fine art spotlight** on the work that neighbors and community activists have been doing for decades to stabilize the area. Now, as July moves into August, a series of Dance Labs, facilitated by Cave but developed and executed by creative communities within Detroit, are having their public debut.

The first took place on Sunday, July 18, at the Ruth Ellis Center, a facility dedicated exclusively to the support of LBGTQ runaway youth — the only of its kind in the city. A packed warehouse of people turned out to see the kids from Ruth Ellis dressed in costumes that Cave had dispatched in a box only a week earlier. Modern dancer and choreographer Biba Bell likewise only had a box of costumes and a week to work with another set of dancers to develop a performance for a crowd estimated between 800 and 1,000, at the Dequindre Cut — a biking/walking path installed along a former train track connecting the Detroit River Walk to the popular Easter Market district. The last of these **Dance Labs** will take place on Friday, July 31, at Campus Martius, dead center of the downtown business district. A final outdoor performance, "**HeardDetroit**," will be held in late September, followed by the project's culminating event, "**Figure This: Detroit**," a recapping of all the performances at Detroit's historic Masonic Temple. All these events are free and open to the public.

I was fortunate enough to get a moment with Cave, following a rehearsal out at Cranbrook, and we talked through some of the ins and outs of this ambitious year of events, the buzz about Detroit, and the fuel for his creative fire.

* * *



Installation view of Soundsuits at ‘Here Hear’

Sarah Rose Sharp: *It strikes me that when someone’s coming to Detroit who hasn’t spent any time here and sees the performance at Artist Village, for example, they don’t see Brightmoor on a day-to-day basis, so it’s hard for them to understand what it means to have all these people show up suddenly. If you’re coming from somewhere like New York, and you see groups of people everywhere, you might not get what a big deal it is to really see people coming together like that.*

Nick Cave: Yes. And also, what I think is interesting, using the Brightmoor moment, is that they’re coming to and encountering Brightmoor. How does that resonate with you as a person, as a human being? There’s a lot of experiences along the way to a destination which are transformative. You can’t wear blinders and dismiss it. You have to pass through it to see it.

SRS: *Right. By having an invitation or destination within that neighborhood, it opens up an opportunity to actually see the whole neighborhood as well.*

NC: Exactly. As we’re doing the work, there are all of these things that I wasn’t necessarily aware of from a conscious point of view, until I was in the midst of it. With Brightmoor, and then the Village next door — just being able to create that kind of opportunity, for them to have all of these people present there, and how that sort of stimulates and brings revenue to the community.

SRS: *Do you feel like being in Detroit, spending more time here, has informed the work that you’re doing right now? Or is it more about the work being generally informed by your experiences to date — sort of seeing how relevant it is in Detroit?*



From the first Dance Lab performance at the Ruth Ellis Center. The Center serves LGBTQ youth that have been displaced from their homes or families due to discrimination or abuse.

NC: My work, it's really sort of what it's doing to me, as an artist. It's honing in and being sensitive to what's important to me, and I'm interested in finding a larger purpose as a visual artist, more than what's happening between museums and galleries. That really doesn't provide me much. But you know, the civic work — where's the purpose in the way that I'm interested in working? Where does that sit? What does that mean?

SRS: *Right. I mean, galleries and museums are so interesting to me, because they are like a static field. You make this work, and it's actually very much alive — I'm an artist, I handle things, I'm wearing things, or I'm touching things, I'm walking on them — and then people come into a gallery and suddenly no one can touch the art, and you're sort of edging around it … It's like seeing a tiger at a zoo and thinking that that's where a tiger lives.*

NC: Exactly. Exactly. There's this sort of separation. Well, you know, I'm not interested in coming to Detroit and creating separations. I'm interested in coming to Detroit — providing you this opportunity [at Cranbrook] to be up close and personal with the work in this static format, but then also being able to get you into this performative experience. And working with the locals here to build it — it's so multi-layered, in terms of what it takes. And we talk about how it takes a village to raise a child — well, it takes a village to create a creative encounter.

SRS: *That's interesting, too, because when I think about the kids at the Ruth Ellis Center, who did the first Dance Lab performance, I think it's profound for a person who has worn one of your Soundsuits to be able to go to a museum and see one, and know that they were a part of that — what does it mean to really have a connection to that institution on a visceral, personal level?*

NC: Exactly. And to be able to have a personal story that goes along with the understanding of that object. That's an amazing opportunity. I mean, the kids that we were working with today for this performance had never been in a museum, period. This was the first time they'd ever been in a museum. So, how do we change the impulse of these places, these institutions, when still there are neighborhoods that don't feel that they are welcome — they are, but not knowing that …

SRS: *That it's for them?*

NC: That it's for them. Exactly. And there's still a lot of work that we can all do.

SRS: *Yeah. I think moving things out into a context where people feel more comfortable and more at home is a great first step, because it's understanding that these things [the Soundsuits] don't just live in a museum — they can be found wandering your neighborhood. There's this sense with the Soundsuits, when they enter a space, that they really electrify things. It's like a creature; you don't know what to do with it, and it opens this feeling that anything could happen. That's something you maybe experience as a child, because you don't know enough of the world to predict things yet —*

NC: Right, I think that's the thing with the work, it's that we can't really identify it. We tend to want to categorize things, we want to find its place in the world — but when you're looking at something, and it's something *other*, you really are not quite sure how to enter it. How is the form identified? Where does it come from? You're trying to find that link to something familiar. And yet, it's familiar from the perspective that it's figurative, and then that becomes where the difficulty falls in — because there's a sort of humanness to it, but yet it's not of this world.

SRS: *Right. It's almost like seeing a yeti.*

NC: Oh, yeah.

SRS: *And it's destabilizing, because you don't really know how it's going to move. How do I get out of its way? Trying to understand what the rules are.*

NC: And then, you sort of try to identify — what is your position here? How do you stand up to this object? How do you come to it, without any sort of judgment? So I think there are a lot of things that we're encountering — you can't identify a gender, race, or class, so you're just looking for that one thing.

SRS: *A signifier, yes.*

NC: And, as you're saying, the unstableness of not being able to link it to anything. It's really what I'm trying to do with the work. Or one of the things.

SRS: *And it's very empowering, right, to not be judged on your appearance? To have created a mechanism that allows you, or any wearer, to enter the space, but not be immediately pigeonholed by unchangeable aspects of who you are — it gives you a real kind of freedom to instill people with a different feeling than maybe you usually do, and what kind of an opportunity that is, on both sides.*

I was really enchanted by the whole body of [non-Soundsuit] work in this gallery, because I'm familiar with the Soundsuits, but I love what you're doing with objects, over here.



From ‘Made by Whites for Whites,’ details from some of Nick Cave’s non-Soundsuit works, which deal with found objects reflective of a racial stereotyping

NC: Well, part of the exhibition is from my last solo show in New York, *Made by Whites for Whites.* And it really is me working backwards; it’s really what has always been behind the Soundsuits. It’s looking at a particular race, and really looking at the social commentary that’s happening in the world today — police brutality, profiling, black-on-black crime — it’s me dissecting the Soundsuit, and allowing this part to have a stronger presence in my body of work. I was also wanting to move away from the Soundsuits, and move into a different kind of format. I had been thinking about it, for probably three of four years, what does that mean, to transition into a different way of working, thinking, and making? And as I continued to work through that process, I realized that as long as I could transfer the essence, then I will be fine.

SRS: *Do you seek these objects out on your own?*

NC: Oh, yes. It’s the object that becomes the catalyst for me to proceed. How I go about looking for materials is that I jump on a plane, one-way ticket, and I’ll fly to Washington State, and I’ll rent a cargo van, and then I just pull out my phone and plug in antique malls as I’m traveling back to Illinois. So that’s how I go about scouting and looking for materials. I’m learning about the culture of the Northwest, versus Southeast, and just what are the differences, in terms of excess and surplus, that are going on there. It’s just so much *stuff*. And, you know, people think that I’m a hoarder, and I say I’m not, because what I need is really outside of my door. When I need it, I can go out and get it, because it’s just available, in that sense. So these are things that I’m looking for—but it’s never that I’m blinded by a particular mission. How do I keep myself very open to other things that perhaps may stimulate my mind to sort of perform, and to think about materials in a different way?

SRS: *I like the aspect of maybe re-appropriating some of these things. If energetically these objects*

were either made or collected in the spirit of discriminating against people, or representing people in a way that enabled other people to look down on them — to take them out of the context and make them the fuel for something that forces —

NC: I think you hit it right on the nose with the word "fuel." I mean, that's really what these object provide: a level of motivation. It provides me this way of tackling really hard issues, but in a way where I'm taking you by the hand on a journey, where you and I can have a one-to-one conversation. It's not about me being angry, it's not about me filled with frustration. It's just really sort of using these objects as a teaching tool.

SRS: *Yeah. Sometimes I'm very drawn to objects as evidence of something. I'm gathering evidence — and I might not know for what yet, because it's almost like being a detective. You're picking up evidence that eventually you sort of make a case for something.*

NC: Yeah, I mean, that's exactly what I'm thinking about when I'm shopping. I have had things in my studio for, like, two or three years. Just these things that are so profound, but I tend to buy things that have multiple readings — we could read it multiple ways, if it was turned upside-down — and so I will just hold onto them until they find their way into my work.

SRS: *That sounds like so much fun.*

NC: It's really amazing.

SRS: *And then, the Trayvon Martin piece ["TM13"] is incredibly poignant. I know that you made your first Soundsuit in the wake of the Rodney King beating, as a way of reconciling some legitimate fear on your part, or vulnerability, of your own body.*

NC: Right, exactly.

SRS: *And this piece really strikes me as what would he have needed around him to make him not so threatening. Like, if Jesus was there, if Santa Claus was there?*



Nick Cave speaks to the crowd of hundreds, packed into the Ruth Ellis Center performance space (click to enlarge)

NC: And those forms are all these sort of blow-molds that are placed in our yards as a form of celebration. It speaks about an innocence; it also speaks about a certain class. And so I'm thinking about all of these things, surrounding him with these points of entry — there's a naïveness, there's an innocence there, and yet there's sort of refinement, this restraint, this repression. And not necessarily on his part — that's been placed on him. And I think about how, you know, I operate in these neighborhoods all the time. Sometimes I'm staying in someone's home, and I may be working at a museum, but I say, "I'm going to walk home tonight." And I put myself in his shoes, I literally walk home in neighborhoods that are not — it could be there's a minority family, but most likely not, and I could be placed in that situation. And what do you do? It changes how I operate in the world, you know?

SRS: *Absolutely.*

NC: To be trapped. To be tied down. To be denied life. It's so insane right now. I can't even process it. I can't even keep up with it. Because, you know, it's just — I think about the Rodney King, and I think about the Trayvon Martin, I think about Ferguson, and I just think — it's not that the story changes.

SRS: *Right. And that's shocking, that you were making this work in 1989, and that we have not made very much progress. Now maybe the only progress is that it's a more visible problem?*

NC: Because we have technology to catch things. But there is still this separation from it — “That’s not my reality. This is, over here.” So there’s still this submissive kind of detachment — I’m not sure what we’re doing at the moment, about that.

SRS: *I heard about your project coming, and knew that it was going to be unfolding over the course of this year, and then all of sudden it’s like story after story of these situations coming up, with cops and with young black people — and it seems like a very good call-to-action moment, to have all these works here, and to be interacting with Detroit in this way.*

NC: As I was saying, with the Ruth Ellis Center — it was amazing working there. It was amazing for the choreographer to be working with the kids, just that alone is amazing. You know, we all want to feel that we matter. We all want to feel that we can make some sort of contribution to the world, and not be dismissed and battered and discriminated against. It’s all of these sort of things. But we also wanted to bring awareness to the center, and it was amazing the extent of support that they received from people that didn’t know what the center was about. So there’s a lot of things happening, and a lot of outcome coming from this project that we hadn’t even anticipated.

SRS: *It stands to reason; these works are so instantly gripping. There’s this movement aspect to them, this kind of crossing of genres, this physicality to them that’s completely destabilizing — and it’s good. The world could use a little destabilizing.*

NC: Yeah, I think there’s this level of commitment, there’s a level of taking something on and really wrestling with it a bit. And not that you need to understand everything; it’s just about being heard.

SRS: *Yeah. “Here, hear.”*



Installation view of Soundsuits at ‘Here Hear’

NC: What that does for the audience, how that changes the audience, how you can be moving through this exhibition, before you know it, you’re talking to a stranger about maybe a material that’s been chosen for the work that you all can identify with. So again, there’s all these connections, nostalgic sort of memories or connections that allow us to expand on how we are operating.

SRS: *Find common ground.*

NC: This time around, the people that are in Detroit want to be in Detroit — so it’s a different type of commitment that I’m feeling.

SRS: *There’s been such a failure of city systems, in Detroit — what I respond to here is this kind of human infrastructure that has sprung up in its stead. When something goes wrong, I don’t call the cops, I call my neighbors.*

NC: Exactly. And I think that’s what I’m saying — the people that are here, that want to be here, are here because they care about the city, they care about the people on their block. They’re in it collectively, and it’s really just a different kind of mindset. You cannot be here, and not be part of

the team.

SRS: *That's exactly right. And if you do that, if you just show up and try and set up camp, your gear will be gone the next morning.*

NC: You cannot — because, you know what? People need to know that you're here to help. If you're not here to help, you shouldn't be here.

SRS: *There's this weird pioneering thing happening with newcomers — it's like, come here and do whatever you want. No. Come here and help out. There's a lot going on already. Everybody needs a hand.*

NC: Yeah. You can still do what you want, but also understand the law of the land.

SRS: *That's right. I came here and it really took me a long while of being here to understand what I could bring in — but for a while, it was just being a servant in this house.*

NC: Yeah, exactly. Standing back, listening, and looking, you're going to learn all that you need to learn — because it's all right there in your face. At the [second performance] Dequindre Cut, you look around, and it's like, wow, all these people are here for this performance, for a choreographer that lives here, that works with these dancers here — the city is really on board. People want stuff to happen. And there were so many people who had never been down there, and didn't know that even existed. And it is fabulous, I must say.

Nick Cave's final ***Dance Labs performance*** *will take place on Friday, July 31, 6:30–7:30pm at Campus Martius (800 Woodward Ave, Detroit).* **Nick Cave: Here Hear** *continues at Cranbrook Art Museum (39221 Woodward Ave, Bloomfield Hills, MI) through October 11.*

Cranbrook Art MuseumDetroitNick Cave

The New York Times

ART & DESIGN

For Detroit Artists, Almost Anything Goes

By **MELENA RYZIK** JULY 15, 2015

DETROIT — The Chicago artist Nick Cave was playing Santa Claus. Mr. Cave, known for his Soundsuits, costume-like sculptures that blend movement and noise, had enormous boxes delivered last Saturday to local dancers, a choreographer and a D.J. rehearsing here. The surprise contents would inspire their dance performance a week later, as part of "Here Hear," Mr. Cave's four-month-long exhibition and free performance series throughout Detroit. Vibrant Soundsuits emerged from the boxes. "It's wearable!" cried Erika Stowall, a dancer.

"Can you move?" the choreographer, Marcus White, asked Mike Springer, tall as a spruce in his raffia costume.

Mr. Springer spun and jumped, releasing a wave of rustles and swishes.

Mr. Cave and Mr. White's collaboration will be staged on Sunday at the Ruth Ellis Center, which serves homeless and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth. The idea, Mr. Cave said, was to get "outside of the conventional ways of how we see performance and where we go to view performance."

Public art has long had a home in Detroit, with its expansive vacated spaces and ambitious class of D.I.Y. makers. But lately, the back-lot murals, pop-up sculpture parks and boundary-crossing performances are increasing,

as old-guard artists find new outlets and resources, and younger artists arrive overflowing with ideas. Last year, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation gave a grant to Olayami Dabls — a patriarch of the Detroit cultural scene who founded Dabl's Mbad African Bead Museum, in northwest Detroit — to maintain the art park around his small outpost.

In a city with a community-minded, congenial gallery scene and relatively few collectors — where art sales, in other words, are hardly a driving force — turning a house into a canvas or a sidewalk into a stage fulfills everyone's creative appetite. In September, a mural festival will begin in Eastern Market, the historic food hall. Even a recycling center here is filled with paintings.

"We see it in new neighborhoods; it does seem to be multiplying," said Katy Locker, the program director for Detroit at the Knight Foundation, which also provided $150,000 to the Cranbrook Art Museum for Mr. Cave's own Soundsuit "invasions," as he called them, in city landmarks like the Art Deco Fisher Building. (Performances and a museum exhibition run through early October.)

Mr. Dabls is expanding his art park in the tradition of Tyree Guyton's Heidelberg Project, which transformed derelict houses into open-air sculpture. There's a three-story house covered in mirrors and a found-art assemblage, "Iron Teaching Rocks to Rust." Mr. Dabls started the project 14 years ago, illegally appropriating land and buildings; the city granted him ownership in January. There's no entrance fee; visitors come from all over the world.

"I took a different approach to art and museums, and it works," said Mr. Dabls, 66, who is also a Kresge Foundation fellow. "What it has suggested to people who come here is, you can pretty much do what you want. You don't have to start from the top."

Last Friday, he visited a fellow stalwart, Robert Sestok, who was inaugurating his new sculpture garden behind his own home and studio. Mr. Sestok, 68, installed 29 of his welded sculptures in a former empty lot in

Midtown, next to several abandoned buildings.

"In a city like Detroit that has so many challenges, in a scene of what some people would see as blight and disinvestment, public art, the expression of creativity, allows a community to take pride," Ms. Locker said. "Nick Cave's work and Dabls' work and the sculpture garden are all representative of this," she added. "Most of the art that we see being celebrated now feels really authentic to Detroit."

Mr. Sestok's park, City Sculpture, is the culmination of a career that pivoted around Detroit. Reared in its suburbs, he moved back in the 1960s, affiliating with the Cass Corridor artists, named for a then-dangerous corner of town. (Near Wayne State University, it has since been cleaned up and rebranded Midtown.) They had an artist-run gallery — a dozen partners, a dozen shows a year — and flourishing practices. Like others, Mr. Sestok briefly decamped to New York, following the artist Kiki Smith, who was his girlfriend at the time. But "I couldn't acclimate myself," said Mr. Sestok, who now lives in a rambling, art-filled house six blocks from where he was born. He refurbished it himself and added a separate studio, built in 1985 with an N.E.A. grant. Until about 12 years ago, he sustained himself by rehabbing houses. His sculptures — abstract, tall industrial pieces incorporating materials like propane tanks and shovels — dot the city and suburbs.

"In the last decade or so, he's really found his voice," said Dennis Nawrocki, an adjunct professor at Wayne State and the author of "Art in Detroit Public Places." Mr. Sestok had the idea for a sculpture park about three years ago, he said, as he was mowing the lawn in a deserted field. He bought the property for $18,000, scored a small grant and sold off some work to pay for the park, which cost about $50,000. At 17,000 square feet, it "showcases the bigness of what I can do," he said. He has started a nonprofit and hopes to exhibit other artists there; the opening party, with food trucks and a nine-piece rock band playing on a flatbed truck, drew Cass Corridor artists from New York as well as Detroit's younger generation. "You can't really be around here

as an artist and not know who Bob is," said Jonathan Rajewski, 28, a rising painter whom Mr. Sestok mentors.

Though Detroit emerged from bankruptcy late last year, and municipal services are improving, the city is still operating at a deficit. But Mr. Nawrocki said signs of the long-promised renaissance were materializing. "The city has this momentum now that kind of rolls over everyone," he said.

That's the vibe Mr. Cave got, as he visited Detroit to prepare for his exhibition at Cranbrook — a 30-minute drive away but in spirit, another galaxy — in the affluent, manicured suburb Bloomfield Hills. The clubs and art scene of Detroit sustained Mr. Cave, he said, when he was the only black graduate student at the Cranbrook Academy of Art in the 1980s. "Cranbrook provided me the intellect, and Detroit provided me the soul," he said. He credits his time there with giving him the foundation to address race: his first Soundsuit was about Rodney King; his latest is inspired by Trayvon Martin.

The free performances are his way of giving back to the city. For local artists, the attention is welcome. "People often use the word 'revitalization' in Detroit, but I think of resilience," Mr. White, the choreographer, said.

"The thing I love about Detroit — if you want it done here, you have to do it," he added. "You have to work.

W-e-r-k work."

A version of this article appears in print on July 16, 2015, on page C1 of the New York edition with the headline: Ready for a Renaissance .

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HUFFPOST ARTS & CULTURE

A Mesmerizing 'Soundsuit' Memorializes Trayvon Martin's Death

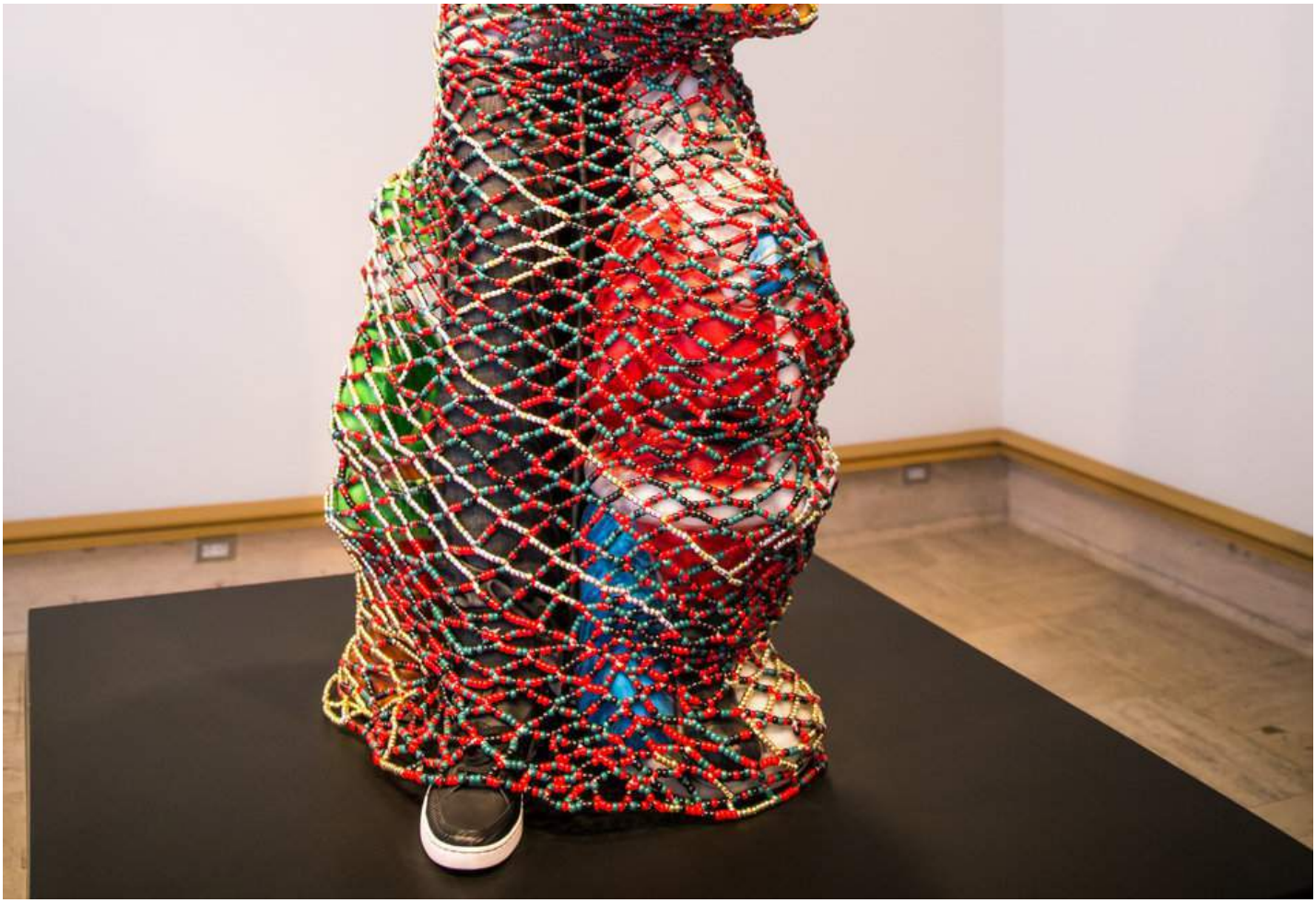
Outside Detroit, Nick Cave's "TM 13" memorializes the death of Trayvon Martin, the unarmed Florida teenager who was fatally shot three years ago.



Katherine Brooks
Senior Arts & Culture Editor, The Huffington Post.

Posted: 07/14/2015 | Edited: 07/14/2015 10:43 AM EDT





Behind what appears to be a beaded net stained the color of Skittles stands a hollow figure, made distinct by the hint of a sneaker sticking out from under the obscurity. Pan up from the shoe and there's a glimpse of a hooded sweatshirt topping off the towering statue, an unmistakeable bit of clothing loaded with meaning.

Titled "TM 13," the work -- shown above -- memorializes the death of Trayvon Martin, the unarmed Florida teenager who was fatally shot by former neighborhood watch leader George Zimmerman three years ago. Created by Missouri-born artist Nick Cave, the piece is currently on view at the Cranbrook Art Museum, located just outside of Detroit, Mich.

The sculpture echoes the artist's first "Soundsuit," a wearable work of art made in 1992 after the brutal beating of Rodney King in Los Angeles. Composed of a sheath of twigs that rustled as the wearer moved, Cave imagined the piece in a state of confusion over a tragedy that would spark riots across L.A. Decades later, and nearly 500 soundsuits since, Cave -- like much of the nation -- is again confused in the wake of the deaths of Martin, Michael Brown, Eric Garner, Freddie Gray and the mass shooting at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, S.C.

"The underlying history of my work has [addressed] the political realms of black identity," Cave said in a phone interview with The Huffington Post. "This is me now looking and responding to the state of affairs. Now we can talk about Charleston and the ongoing concern around race and identity and profiling today."



"TM 13," like many of the other suits -- not to mention tapestries and video works presented as part of the larger exhibition "Here Hear" -- beckons viewers to imagine what it would be like to don the empty shell. How would it feel to step inside the behemoth sculpture and peer out from beneath the very same rainbow-hued trap? The show's homonymous title itself hints at more than a passive audience. "It's like I'm calling court," Cave explained. "Gathering people around and isolating their attention."

Beyond the works on view at Cranbrook, Cave's own alma mater, the artist is staging a series of interventions around Detroit, including dance labs and performances meant to further gather people together in the name of art. Cave describes the city he once called his home-away-from-home (Cranbrook provided him with "intellect," while Detroit gave him "soul," he clarified) as vibrant and alive, but notably different from when he last attended school in 1989.



"This time around, there's a stronger sense of investment of individuals [in the city]," he noted. "A lot of creative individuals coming in, locating neighborhoods they want to change, coming together to reinforce the community. There's a sense of urgency about it. We're all reintroducing Detroit back to Detroit."

He likened contemporary Detroit to a forest. A forest, he said, can burn down, but after that fire, little green growths endure, peeking out from behind the ash. Of course, Detroit's fire took the form of bankruptcy in 2013. But little by little, Cave is noticing a rebirth. "The green [in Detroit] is that real," he said, crediting the city's noticeable rejuvenation to an explosion of little growths like restaurants and art endeavors. "Almost florescent."

In fact, Cave is full of comparisons. While Detroit is a forest, his show, he says, is like a collective dream. As a kid, Cave and his six brothers would lay on the grounds of their farm, looking up at the sky and identifying star patterns, letting their minds drift into an imaginative state. "Here Hear" aims to bring Detroit and its surrounding areas into one shared imagination,

"I'm always looking for individuals to engage in an exhibition. I'm trying alternative ways of talking about hard issues us as Americans are dealing with and struggling with," Cave concluded. "I'm hopefully acting as the change agent, finding a way to infiltrate a city and... talk as a collective about what's going on in the world."

"Nick Cave: Here Hear" is on view at Cranbrook Art Museum from June 20 to October 11, 2015. All photos: Sam Deitch/BFA.com. Courtesy of Cranbrook Art Museum.



Installation view of *Nick Cave: Here Hear*.



Dancers from Sidewalk Detroit perform in Nick Cave's Soundsuits at The Artist Village.





Installation view of *Nick Cave: Here Hear*



Nick Cave



View of the ‘Map in Action’ Room



Dancers from Sidewalk Detroit perform in Nick Cave's Soundsuits at The Artist Village.



Installation view of *Nick Cave: Here Hear*



View of the ‘Map in Action’ Room



The Gabriel Brass Band performing with dancers from Sidewalk Detroit in Cave's Soundsuits



View of the ‘Map in Action’ Room



The Gabriel Brass Band performing with dancers from Sidewalk Detroit in Cave's Soundsuits



Nick Cave



The Gabriel Brass Band performing with dancers from Sidewalk Detroit in Cave's Soundsuits



The Gabriel Brass Band performing with dancers from Sidewalk Detroit in Cave's Soundsuits

MORE: Nick Cave , Nick Cave Artist, Here Hear, Cranbrook Museum Of Art, Tm 13, Trayvon Martin, Detroit, Soundsuits

The Washington Post

Museums

Nick Cave dons mantle of an artist who inspires and elicits introspection

By Mark Guarino July 2

CHICAGO — Until he went to art school, Nick Cave considered himself an artist first and a black artist second.

Then he showed up at Cranbrook Academy of Art outside Detroit in 1986 to get his MFA and discovered he was the only minority student on campus. In an instant, his perspective fundamentally changed.

“I literally was in a state of shock,” he says. “It was the first time I ever had to deal with my race and to think of myself as a black male.”

As a celebrated alumni, he is returning to Cranbrook this summer and fall to rectify the isolation he felt nearly 30 years ago with hopes to inspire and influence young black artists throughout Detroit. There will be an exhibition of his work — colorful masked and wearable sculptures he calls “soundsuits” — which is serving as the first phase of a six-month series throughout the city that will involve coordination and partnerships with schools, cultural centers, dance companies, businesses and museums for performances and other events that will take place on the street, in classrooms and theaters, and along the riverfront. These are not arbitrary art events but instead will bear the signature of Cave’s work: colorful, musical, involving grand theatrical performances that address diversity through empowerment

“I’m trying to find a creative vehicle I can draw one into looking at gender, race and class,” he says at his home in Chicago. “But underneath it, it’s very dark.”

Coming out of the dark

Detroit understands dark. It is in the process of emerging from what is the largest municipal bankruptcy in U.S. history after years of mismanagement and fraud at city hall, the ushering of recent mayor Kwame Kilpatrick to federal prison for racketeering, and a systemic population loss and subsequent diminishing tax base that has left major swaths of the city barren without jobs or much hope they will return.

There are flickers of change: Gentrification is livening up areas downtown and in bordering neighborhoods with new businesses and Mike Duggan, the current mayor, has made blight eradication and improved infrastructure priorities

that are already taking shape. Local private investors are buying much of the city's decaying commercial properties and promising renewal. This includes Dan Gilbert, the owner of Quicken Loans, who has invested nearly $2 billion downtown and relocated his company there and is actively encouraging others in his position to do the same.

Affordable housing has resulted in an incoming stream of artists and other creative types who are helping nudge the city back on the creative map. Population loss is even slowing: Data from the Census Bureau show a 1 percent drain between 2013 and 2014, which is half what it was a decade earlier.

Cave's presence in Detroit this year is seen as validation that the city is once again a creatively vital place to make art. That is suggested by the investors behind the scenes: After a $150, 000 matching grant by the Knight Foundation, all the major philanthropy organizations in the area have followed suit to sign on as sponsors, including the Ford Foundation and Gilbert's Quicken Loans.

"Detroit is like a bird that has been in a cage too long," says DeLois Cooke Spryszak, the principal of the Detroit School of Arts, a public high school. "Our time was shuttered away and hidden."

Nearly 100 students at Spryszak's school will participate in a Sept. 26 event along the riverfront that will involve a processional of dancers, musicians and nearly 30 "life-size horse sculptures." Spryszak says the experience working with Cave and his staff shows her students "their creativity and talent can take them somewhere."

"Ten years ago, the name Detroit didn't open the doors that it used to. With the new economic boom, there's a resurgence of interest in what happens in Detroit," she says.

Always creating

Cave, 56, is conditioned to do things rather super-sized. Based in Chicago, he employs 10 full-time employees and is recruiting 20 more this year to build soundsuits and other objects he plans to tour in different configurations over the next five years. Next year he will move his operation from a loft building in the city's South Loop neighborhood downtown to a 20,000-square-foot building complex on the Northwest Side where he will house an art gallery, performance space, photo studio, a shipping operation, his work facility and living quarters. It already has a name: Facility.

"It will be this cultural incubator that will always be in flux," he says.

He has always been making things. He grew up in Columbia, Mo., where he was drawn to art and encouraged. "My mother always allowed us to build our identity as we were growing up and with that kind of liberation, we could slowly find our interest in whatever we were interested in," he says.

He graduated from the Kansas City Art Institute in 1982 where he already showed signs he was not interested in a single discipline, but several. There he experimented with textiles and sculpture and, outside school, studied dance at a program run by the acclaimed Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater.

Then he saw the Rodney King video. Just before his first job, teaching at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, news broke that King, a 25-year-old black man was severely beaten by Los Angeles police officers after a high-speed chase, a 1991 incident caught on tape that launched rioting in many cities and forced a conversation on race and police brutality that is familiar today.

Cave says the incident left him stunned and depressed. “The images were so profound. I could be racially profiled. Even today,” he says. He wanted to find a way to express that vulnerability, but it would take a walk in the park the next year for that to be revealed.

He moved to Chicago in 1992 to accept the teaching position at the School of the Art Institute. Sitting alone in Grant Park, he noticed twigs on the ground. He collected more of them and brought them home and built a sculpture. Once it was complete, he put it on and he started to move. Bound together, the frail materials sounded menacing. Adorned from head to foot, he looked larger than life. In an instant, Cave had created a symbol of self-protection. The wearer’s skin color, gender and even sexual identity is unrecognizable while masked, and the grandeur of the garment itself — the wild colors, sounds and discarded materials like metal toys or human hair — allows for a level of

Cave says the suits reflect his interest in being “an artist with a civic responsibility,” which he says has become more important to him in a climate when racial tensions are high because of the recent deaths of unarmed black men at the hands of police. One work, commenting on the death of Florida teenager Trayvon Martin, features a figure who resembles the boy in the now-iconic hoodie but whose movement is ultimately restricted.

“I’m an artist with a conscience,” he says. “How can we take what is negative and, rather than burning down a building or looting, how can we turn that into something positive? How can [the soundsuits] be a way of unifying?”

He sells them in a gallery in New York City but they are also used for choreographed dance performances meant to create spectacle. One of his largest was performed at Grand Central Terminal in New York City in 2013, and will be reimagined in Detroit with the Detroit School of Arts students.

Laura Mott, curator of contemporary art and design at Cranbrook’s museum, says she first saw Cave’s work in Gothenburg, Sweden, where she noticed that audiences were not just enthralled by the colors and imaginative design, they were also taken by the emotional stories they told about racial profiling and knee-jerk assumptions about race and identity.

“It didn’t matter about the people, their country, or their background, everyone had a relationship to this work,” she says. “And within conceptual art, that is always a challenge.”

When she arrived in Detroit in 2014, she went to Chicago to meet Cave and propose an exhibition. He agreed but wanted to expand the outreach to the city’s neighborhoods. Soon, the project became more ambitious and more people piled on from different quarters to participate. “We dreamed of this as a big project and said if we’re going to do something we want this to make an imprint on the city,” she says.

While his staff is busily preparing and shipping soundsuits to Detroit and he is coordinating a team that will be on site throughout the summer, he is also in the midst of preparing for a 2016 exhibition at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art in North Adams where he will create an “immersive kinetic work” in a space he describes as the size of a football stadium. He is still considering the possibilities.

“I’m thinking very differently about it,” he says. “What will I make that is going to be a draw, that people are going to say ‘I must go’?”

Correction: An earlier version of this story gave an incorrect amount for the Knight Foundation’s matching grant.

Guarino is a freelance writer.

Nick Cave: Here Hear

Through Oct. 11; Cranbrook Art Museum, 39221 Woodward Ave., Bloomfield Hills, Mich.; www.cranbrook.edu.

BLOUINARTINFO

With "Here Hear," Nick Cave Fosters Community Across Detroit

BY JULIET HELMKE | JUNE 26, 2015



Nick Cave with one of his Soundsuits at the Cranbrook Art Museum.
(Sam Deitch/BFAnyc.com/Courtesy Cranbrook Art Museum)

Detroit has a rapidly evolving new mythology. Images of a ruined urban landscape — deserted neighborhoods and derelict buildings — come to mind. So too does the much hyped promise of a new haven for creators, where space and living is cheap, with houses to be had for a hundred bucks and giant, disused industrial spaces just waiting to be turned into studios, galleries, and hubs of creative culture. But how much does this hold up to the reality of the city? Is it largely coming from the people living it, or the rest of the country looking in? "Nick Cave: Here Hear (http://www.cranbrookart.edu/museum/nickcave/exhibition/)," at the Cranbrook Art Museum through October 11, tackles these oversimplified perceptions of a city in a dramatic state of flux.

Part of the Cranbrook Educational Community — a network of schools and arts institutions situated on one campus in Bloomfield Hills, a Detroit suburb — the museum and its backdrop are well known to Cave, who completed his graduate work at the Cranbrook Academy of Art's reputable MFA program. Arriving in 1988, it was a formative place for the artist, who found himself out of his comfort zone and for the first time addressed some of the major themes of identity that have come to play a prominent role in his practice. It was also the place he says he first felt prompted to make work that specifically came from his experience as a young black man. The lush campus grounds were the location of one of his earliest performance pieces, an experimental dance work, and he held a job at the museum for his work-study. So when the offer came to mount an exhibition in this setting, it piqued the artist's interest. But he had two stipulations: it had to be deeply involved in the community of Detroit, and it had to be epically big.

The main floor galleries at Cranbrook are taken over by Cave, with 30 of his Soundsuits on view; seven newly commissioned artworks including a site-specific wall-based piece; a central focus on his recent sculptures including the very new “TM13,” 2015, a tribute to Trayvon Martin, along with a number of his other assertive and politically potent arrangements of racially charged found objects; a screening space for his films; and a “closet” for displaying the suits that will come and go as they’re used in performances scheduled throughout the run of the show. This latter slice of the exhibition is what sets this apart from any Nick Cave survey show mounted before.

The performance series takes place all across the city, in partnership with the Museum ofContemporary Art Detroit, the Detroit School of Arts, the Ruth Ellis Center supporting LGBTQ youth and young adults, a number of local dance troupes, and a host of other individuals, communities, and institutions. Bloomfield Hills is consistently ranked as one of the wealthiest small cities in the country, a stark contrast from the austerity and human devastation seen in Detroit, and the museum has often been regarded as dislocated from the larger city — worlds away in mind and location. This mammoth undertaking of an exhibition makes monumental efforts to shift those perceptions and patterns, creating relationships with residents, cultural organizations, and artists across the city. The goal, one can easily imagine, is that these relationships will be sustained in the future. With Laura Mott, Cranbrook’s curator of art and design, making this a top priority in her projects at the institution, the likelihood is promising. It’s especially apparent from the exhibition catalogue — a large format tome comprised of vibrant shots of Cave’s suits in various sites around town— that the conversation on not buying into any of the clichéd images of the city, of actually engaging with those living and working within it, was kept clearly in mind.

This has been the museum’s most ambitious undertaking to date, with funding secured from near and far in order to bring all of the elements Cave envisioned for this project to fruition. It’s the kind of show that comes about when an artist understands, intimately, the institution he’s working with, and when the people dedicated to putting it together acknowledge the realities of their region and organization, and decide to be active participants in the shaping of the rapidly changing discourse surrounding their city, while figuring out how to responsibly fit within it.

Interview

June 25, 2015

ART

NICK CAVE TAKES DETROIT

By ANTWAUN SARGENT













Like much of America, Chicago-based artist Nick Cave watched the 1991 video of the LAPD beating Rodney King. King's mortality and fragility scared Cave so much that he immediately went to the studio and began creating a form of protection. The wearable suit of armor made of twigs marked the beginning of Cave's now-renowned series of soundsuits. Prior to the L.A. riots the artist made large-scale paintings, but since then he has become a public performer who grapples with blackness, sexuality, and the idea of one's body. This weekend, Cave embarked on a series of new performances and saw the opening of his 7,000-square foot retrospective, "Here Hear," at the museum of his alma mater, Cranbrook Academy of Art, just outside of Detroit.

"The soundsuits have taken on a life of their own," Cave says of the project's 25-year duration. The bright whimsical sculptural works have grown alongside the artist's practice and are as much about creative expression as they are Ferguson, or Charleston, South Carolina; they have evolved from a form of protection to represent a type of dreamy confidence that pushes the boundaries of visibility.

With "Here Hear," Cave, who also trained as a dancer with the legendary New York-based Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, begins by showing old soundsuits and various works inside the museum. He will extend his presence into the city this summer and fall, creating videos with LGBTQ youth (which will be displayed in Detroit's Brightmoor neighborhood) and working with 60 high school dancers to put on a public procession.

The project with dancers mimicks Cave's 2013 performance, *HEARD•NY*, in which he and 30 colorful life-size horses danced throughout Grand Central Station's Vanderbilt Hall in celebration of the terminal's centennial and to engage New Yorkers as a community. As Cave was busily installing "Here Hear," we spoke with him about the works and what it means to be in Detroit after all these years later.

ANTWAUN SARGENT: First of all, why Detroit?

NICK CAVE: Detroit played a critical part in my education. Cranbrook provided me the intellect, and Detroit the soul; the city created balance for me. When I was invited to do the solo show at the museum, I said I would only do it if I could do some outreach with the kids in Detroit. It's me giving back to a city.

SARGENT: In 1991, there were a lot of reactions to the Rodney King beating. How did you arrive at the soundsuit as a possible response?

CAVE: When I made the first suit it was a lot of twigs. What I discovered was that I'm an artist of the conscious, and through that experience I realized I was an artist with civic responsibility. Prior to this I was doing large constructive paintings, but when the Rodney King L.A. riots happened, it flipped my world upside down. It made me have to address myself as a black male.

SARGENT: If you think about 1991 and all the years in between, how have your soundsuits changed in relation to

this current moment of "Black Lives Matter?"

CAVE: In the show, I just finished *TM13*—Trayvon Martin's initials—which is a new sculptural piece premiering at Cranbrook. Again, it's me wanting to take responsibility and bring these issues to the work without being dismissive.

SARGENT: The soundsuits are based on the size of your body and operate as a "second skin." Is that a comment on you being black, male, and gay?

CAVE: I think it's a comment on me looking at the soundsuits as a form of protection. It's me through a sort of armor, shielding myself from the conflict or a way of being stronger so I can take the abrasiveness. What I was responding to was gender, race, and class, and this idea of looking at the world without judgment.

SARGENT: The material history of the soundsuits has evolved. You started with twigs and have moved into beads and flowers.

CAVE: As I'm looking at materials, I always have to redefine how they are to be approached and how they are to be applied to my work. There's a hierarchy there, I'm constantly being confronted with all of the aggressiveness of racism on a regular basis and have to question my identity and I sort of handle material the same way. It may be a spinning top but if I turned it upside down and put it on the top if my head, what does that then become? So everything is always in question. I'm always renegotiating the properties of the materials. The Trayvon Material piece is all made out of pony beads, and then there's this amazing beaded web [surrounding the figure] that's like a net. From afar it looks like this sculptural form but when you get up close it's someone in a hood that's been caught. So there's this level of oppression, of surrendering and being caught or hunted, and it's where I am right now with the work. There isn't another conversation to be had right now.

SARGENT: The activation of the soundsuits, when you get into them and dance, is that as carefully considered as the materiality?

CAVE: Part of the narrative is very political. Once you enter the soundsuit space you have to get quiet, because there's a transformation that happens before you can determine the possibilities, in terms of motion, when I'm building the performance.

SARGENT: There's also this whimsical quality to them. You are drawing attention to our current social reality, but also inviting us to dream.

CAVE: Exactly! That's what keeps me in the game. At the end of the day, what's going on politically is the fuel for my fire. And shit—I want to be fucking fabulous and that becomes part of my belief because, honey, what does fabulous look like? So, I'm looking at that, and I'm looking at the [vogue] balls, the house of Thierry Mugler's parading and performing—that gives into this whole act and presentation. It's all there in the work.

SARGENT: Have you incorporated any of the ways vogue dancers move into your soundsuits?

CAVE: I think it's all there. The confidence and realness of their performance is also what you confront when you come face to face with a soundsuit, which stands there with an authority and presence that says, "Look at me."

SARGENT: There's a social practice aspect to your Detroit take over. What do you want people to take from "Here Hear"?

CAVE: What I want people to recognize is that we have to keep working together and take charge because we all have the same story. We have to keep creating fabulousness in the mist all of this—and take charge to redefine Detroit because art has always been the catalysis for a city.

"HERE HEAR" IS ON VIEW AT CRANBROOK ART MUSEUM AND THROUGHOUT THE CITY OF DETROIT THROUGH OCTOBER 11. FOR MORE, CLICK HERE.

artnet®

PEOPLE

Nick Cave Made a Soundsuit Inspired By Trayvon Martin

Cait Munro, Wednesday, June 24, 2015



Nick Cave, *TM 13* (2015).

Nick Cave has taken the Detroit area by storm with "Here Hear," a much-anticipated exhibition of his ornate Soundsuits and other newly-commissioned artworks at the Cranbrook Art Museum in the suburb of Bloomfield Hills, Michigan.

The exhibition includes a variety of summer happenings like dance labs, performances, educational programs, and a forthcoming book called *Greetings From Detroit*.

While Cave's enigmatic, otherworldly Soundsuits are as vibrant as ever, there's one that holds an especially timely message: *TM 13* was created in 2015 in memory of Trayvon Martin, the unarmed Florida teenager who was fatally shot by former neighborhood watch leader George Zimmerman in 2012.

The case again made national news when Zimmerman was acquitted a year later, and has remained a topic of discussion as police brutality, racial profiling, and systemic violence toward black men continues to crop up in headlines across the country.



Nick Cave, "Here Hear" installation view.

The sculpture takes the form of a black man in a hooded sweatshirt—a nod to Martin's much-discussed attire at the time of the attack—with blow molds of Santa Claus, a teddy bear, an angel, and other traditional symbols of childlike innocence strapped to the figure with netting.

Enclosed in the woven net, the figure resembles a hunted animal that has been captured. The toe of a single sneaker pops out from beneath the covering. The title of the work refers to Martin's initials and to the year Zimmerman was acquitted.

"Being caught in someone else's perception of one's own skin, own home, own self, makes navigating your own path infinitely more dangerous," Cave said of the work in an email to artnet News.

"The original Soundsuit was conceived in the emotional aftermath of the Rodney King beating," curator Laura Mott told artnet News by email. "At the exhibition opening, I spoke to a guest who was standing in front of *TM13*, completely overwhelmed. She explained that as an African-American she was feeling paralyzed by recent events (it was two days after the Charleston shooting), but in front of the sculpture she was able to think and grieve. Cave's artwork has proven relevant and profound in the face of these tragedies, and it speaks to the psychological boundaries of society that have real, tragic consequences."



Nick Cave.
Photo: Sam Deitch/BFA.com. Courtesy of Cranbrook Art Museum.

"Nick Cave: Here Hear" will be on display at the Cranbrook Art Museum until October 11, 2015.

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Cait Munro



Nick Cave and the Good Seeds

The artist brings his largest show to date to his alma mater.

June 17, 2015 3:51 PM | by Kat Herriman

"Detroit was such a pivotal part of my time at school," says the artist Nick Cave who attended Cranbrook in nearby Bloomfield Hills. When his alma mater approached him to do exhibition there, he told them, "I would only do the show if I could do some work in Detroit. They were really on board." The show is a monumental homecoming for the sculptor who now lives in Chicago. Partnering with a local high school, dance academies and grass roots non-profits, Cave dreamt up an entire summer of programming, which will activate seemingly every corner of the city with vibrant performances. "We're bringing the work to Detroit, but hiring the city to build the project," explains Cave. "Detroit is re-identifying itself. It's a new beginning. These supporters are imagining the future of their city. They have the power. I'm just providing a new conduit for exploration." Meanwhile, the exhibition at Cranbrook Art Museum will feature a mix of Cave's newest work including a never before seen collection of Soundsuits—sculptural full-body costumes constructed of found materials, which Cave uses for his guerilla-like showcases. For this show, they will be deployed around the city as part of Dance Labs, a series of interactive performance pieces manned by local dancers and musicians. In the fall, the festivities will continue with a parade of Cave's shaggy life-size horses, which in 2013 took over Grand Central Station, and a boisterous finale in Detroit's iconic Masonic Temple. "I wanted to create a body of work that was really reflective of my mind set," says Cave reflecting on the forthcoming show. "The Soundsuits are taking on a life on their own—and I wanted to show that evolution. Not to mention I kept thinking my professors were going to be there! I wanted to put my best foot forward."

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Cranbrook Academy Detroit Michigan

Detroit Free Press

Nick Cave Soundsuits invade Cranbrook — and Detroit

Mark Stryker, Detroit Free Press *9:42 p.m. EDT June 16, 2015*



(Photo: Ryan Garza)

When Nick Cave arrived at the Cranbrook Academy of Art in 1987, he was the only African American in his class. He felt as out of place on the idyllic suburban campus in Bloomfield Hills as a penguin on the prairie.

Cave escaped as often as he could to Detroit, where he was able to reaffirm his cultural identity within the rich texture of black life in the city, especially the dance and music scenes.

"That was the first time I had to look at myself as a black male, and it was a struggle to find my place," said the 56-year-old Chicago-based artist. "Detroit allowed Cranbrook to work for me, to find a balance."

Nearly 30 years later, Cave returns to Cranbrook as an art-world star, best known for his innovative, wearable Soundsuits that connect the dots between sculpture, fashion design, performance art and the politics of race. About 40 of them comprise the core of Cave's major solo exhibition, "Here Hear," that opens Saturday at the Cranbrook Art Museum.

Related: Artist Nick Cave launches ambitious projects in Detroit (/story/entertainment/arts/2015/04/10/nick-cave-soundsuits-cranbrook-detroit/25600393/)

But Cave has also never forgotten the strength he drew from Detroit. To repay the debt he insisted that his exhibition be accompanied by a broader presence in the city. The result is a series of artistic collaborations through October — Cave calls them "invasions" — that will bring his Soundsuits, dance-infused performances and more into the marrow of the city. These include Sunday afternoon's kick-off celebration in the Brightmoor neighborhood in northwest Detroit.

"I want to be a change agent," Cave said. "We're working with groups of musicians and dancers. I want to help the collective, to be an instigator. I'm trying to bring the diversity together instead of segregation, boundaries and division."

The invasions began earlier in the spring. On a Friday morning in May, Cave boogied to the syncopated industrial beat of a clanging assembly line at Ford's Michigan Assembly Plant in Wayne while dressed in a suit so weird and wonderful that it nearly defied description. He looked like a hallucinogenic tree, 8 feet tall, with sculpted masses of brightly colored synthetic hair and raffia — hot pinks, blues, reds, greens, yellows, grays, blacks — jutting into space like surreal branches.

A posse of about 10 accompanied Cave to the plant, including the artist's director of special projects and publications designer Bob Faust, assistants to help get Cave in and out of the 50-pound-plus suits, film and photography crews and assorted Cranbrook officials. Detroit photographer Corine Vermeulen took stills of Cave, part of a series capturing the artist around town, including spots like Eastern Market and the Fisher Building, for the book "Nick Cave: Greetings from Detroit." The book was published this week.



Artist Nick Cave wore one of his Soundsuits on the floor of Ford's Michigan Assembly Plant in Wayne on a visit in May. *(Photo: PD Rearick)*

For safety reasons, Cave wasn't allowed to wander beyond designated areas, but occasionally he would go rogue, crossing the line for a minute or so, swaying to the factory beat, before yielding to a passing industrial vehicle. Workers stopped to stare. Some were bewildered. Most smiled.

"There's an artistry to what he's doing, and there's an artistry to all of this," said plant supervisor Shanise Tucker, pointing to the workers and cars just beyond Cave.

Art and fashion

A day earlier Cave spoke about his life, art and Detroit in the basement of the Cranbrook museum. Athletically built, he stays in shape with early morning runs and regular visits to the gym. He has soft eyes, a salt-and-pepper goatee and bald pate save for a wisp of a mohawk. He was dressed in black denim and a hooded sweatshirt. Intensely self-aware, he spoke in a singsong drawl, higher pitched than you might expect.

Cave, who directs the fashion department at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, grew up in the small town of Fulton, Mo., in a family of seven boys raised by a single mother. She encouraged his interest in art, which flowered early in the form of handmade birthday cards and the like. He graduated from the Kansas City Art Institute, where he learned to sew, but he also studied dance through an Alvin Ailey training program.

Cave did graduate work at what is now the University of North Texas, before arriving at Cranbrook, where he made large-scale constructed paintings. The big bang of his career came in 1992 when he was in Chicago, in response to the Rodney King beating and subsequent riots in Los Angeles.

"That incident was so profound, and I was so affected by it. It came down to the fact that the moment I stepped outside of my home, I could be be racially profiled. ... And then I happened to be in the park one day, sitting there, reflecting, and I looked down on the ground and there was this twig. What came to mind was something insignificant, dismissed, discarded, and that's how I felt. I started collecting these twigs. Then I went home and started to build a sculpture — not realizing I could physically wear it.

"Then when I put it on, it started to move, and it made sound. That made me think of the role of protest and the courage to speak louder. ... I was creating this second skin, a suit of armor, something to protect my spirit."



Artist Nick Cave, a 1989 Cranbook graduate, talks about the first major phase of his six-month, metro Detroit project, "Nick Cave: Here Hear," at the Cranbrook Art Museum in Bloomfield Hills, Mich, in April. *(Photo: Kimberly P. Mitchell)*

Cave sensed immediately that he was onto something; the attention he quickly received confirmed his intuition. But then he slammed on the brakes. He didn't feel ready, professionally or personally, for where the art might take him. For more than a decade he concentrated on his teaching career and opened a clothing store. And then one day he woke up and said, "It's now or never."

"I knew if I committed myself to it, it would be a life change."

'A sign of protest'

Contemporary art is rarely as much fun as Cave's Soundsuits. The main gallery at Cranbrook explodes with eye candy — colorful beads, sequins, feathers, knitted doilies and endless thrift-store treasures assembled into a battalion of full-body suits. A few wink at art history with Matisse or Mondrian-like colors or patterns. Not all are meant to be worn. One stands on a base of a toy elephant with a swirl of other playthings around the head — a reindeer, drums, globes.

The hybrid nature of Cave's work — combining art, craft, sculpture, fashion design, assemblage, installation, social critique — reflects today's interdisciplinary zeitgeist. The Soundsuits also tie into ceremonial dress and ritual like the parades of Mardi Gras or Carnival. But as accessible as they are, they have a wolf in sheep's clothing quality in the way they obscure race, gender and class.

"It's not just that Nick feels like he's putting on an emotional shield," said Cranbrook curator Laura Mott. "But it actually changes the environment surrounding him and how people relate to one another. In multitude they become a sign of protest, especially as the performances start getting larger."

Cave was right that the Soundsuits would change his life. By 2006 he was represented by the Jack Shainman Gallery in New York, and his bank account quickly skyrocketed to more than $200,000. He hired full-time studio assistants to keep up with the demand for his work, and dealing with the pressure to produce was not easy. His Soundsuits are now in major museum collections from the Museum of Modern Art on down, and his recent work commands $100,000 or more in galleries, according to the Wall Street Journal.

Still, Cave looks at the world and wonders how much has changed since Rodney King. His recent interview at Cranbrook was conducted in the midst of the civil unrest in Baltimore following the death of a 25-year old black man from injuries sustained following his arrest by policemen.

A new Soundsuit in the exhibition is named for Trayvon Martin, the unarmed black teen shot to death by George Zimmerman, a neighborhood watch volunteer subsequently acquitted of murder and manslaughter charges. It appears in a gallery surrounded by other recent sculptures by Cave created from racist objects like lawn jockeys found at antique and second-hand shops.

"I don't know what to say about it anymore," said Cave. "All I can do is just keep trying to use my work as a vehicle for change and try to be as proactive as I can. It makes me look at myself as an artist with an even stronger civic responsibility."

Contact Mark Stryker: 313-222-6459 and mstryker@freepress.com

'Nick Cave: Here Hear'

Saturday through Oct. 11

Cranbrook Art Museum

39221 Woodward, Bloomfield Hills

248-645-3323

www.cranbrook.edu (http://www.cranbrook.edu)

Hours: June through August: 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Tue.-Sun. Starting in September, 10 a.m. Tue.-Fri., 11 a.m.- 5 p.m. Sat.-Sun. Closed July 4, Labor Day.

$10 adult, $8 seniors, $5 student. Free for members and children 12 and under.

'Nick Cave: Here Hear' Community Performances

Sunday: Brightmoor Community Events. 2-6 p.m. Redford Theatre and the Artists Village, 17360 Lahser, Detroit. Screening of Nick Cave video at 2 p.m., followed by music performances, dancers in Soundsuits, food, drinks. Free.

July 13-Aug. 1: Dance Labs, in collaboration with Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit. Rehearsals at MOCAD will be open to the public. Public performances include:

■ 4 p.m. July 19, Ruth Ellis Center, Highland Park. (Cave is also creating the "Up Right: Detroit" film in collaboration with the center, which works with at-risk gay, lesbian and transgender teens and young adults.)

■ 4 p.m. July 26, Dequindre Cut, Detroit.

■ 6:30 p.m. July 31, Campus Martius, Detroit.

Sept. 26: "Heard Detroit," 4 p.m. Milliken State Park, Detroit riverfront at Atwater Street. About 30 life-size horse sculptures operated by 60 high school dancers from the Detroit School of Arts. Free. (Cave staged a similar "Heard New York" at Grand Central Station in 2013.)

Oct. 4: "Figure This: Detroit." Masonic Temple, Detroit. Dance Lab performances, live performance of "Up Right: Detroit," and more. Ticket information and other details announced later.



Artist Nick Cave poses with one of his Soundsuits in front of flowers for sale by vendor Gaier Farms of Armada, Michigan at Eastern Market in Detroit in May. The photo shoot by Detroit photographer Corine Vermeulen is for a book about him and his work that will be published and released in time for Cave's exhibit at the Cranbrook Art Museum. *(Photo: Eric Seals)*

The New York Times Style Magazine

Nick Cave Revisits Detroit, Soundsuits in Tow

Culture

BY HILARY MOSS June 16, 2015 4:20 pm



An installation view of "Nick Cave: Here Hear." *PD Rearick/Courtesy of Cranbrook Art Museum*

When the Cranbrook Art Museum asked to host his inaugural solo outing in Michigan, the artist and dancer — and Cranbrook Academy of Art alum — Nick Cave agreed, on one condition: "I said, I will only do it if I can do work in Detroit." For the uninitiated, the school's campus sits about 20 miles away from the downtown area, Cave's first lesson upon his arrival in the late '80s. "Girl, thank God for the city," he says. "I got here and I was the sole black person, so Detroit saved my life. I became connected to this circle of creative people." He recalls a fearlessness to the way they came together and fed off of one another. "I don't know if I could have done Cranbrook without Detroit," he avers. "That's why this is so important; I'm reconnecting with the city that really allowed me to create a balance in my higher education."

Cave's seven-month-long project, "Here Hear," began in April — he, clad in his famed Soundsuits, popped up at Motor City landmarks like the Fisher Building, Eastern Market and the Brightmoor neighborhood — and continues at Cranbrook with the installation of 30 or so Soundsuits and a series of newly commissioned pieces. "On the surface, the work is really bright, visceral, maybe seductive, but it's very dark underneath," says the artist, whose original Soundsuit served as his response to the Rodney King beating. "I just finished a piece that's called the 'TM13' — 'TM' for Trayvon Martin — so here we go full circle." He also mentions the button-covered and bull's-eye-faced number that he brought to Brightmoor: "If I wear it, I can see through it, but you'd never think I was exposed to the outside, and that's kind of how I operate in the world — with a filter, and yet, I'm a target."

He has more reassuring things to say about his former turf. "Detroit's always been on the cusp of falling apart and rebuilding itself, but as of today, I'm feeling the same urgency and the same energy that I felt back in the '80s," Cave explains. "There's a level of awareness, and a lot of creative people are staying in Detroit and rebuilding its cultural relevancy."

"Nick Cave: Here Hear" runs from June 20 to Oct. 11 at 39221 Woodward Avenue, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, cranbrookart.edu. On Oct. 4, Cave will cap the events with "Figure This: Detroit" at the Masonic Temple, 500 Temple Street, Detroit, themasonic.com.

FINANCIAL TIMES

June 12, 2015 5:37 pm

Nick Cave at the Cranbrook Art Museum, Detroit

Emily Nathan

The performance artist returns to the scene of his artistic education for a survey of his work



'Soundsuit' (2015) ©James Prinz/Jack Shainman Gallery









Supported by a stack of storage boxes in Shed 5 of Detroit's Eastern Market one humid morning, the artist Nick Cave steps gingerly into a suit of clipped twigs, one leg at a time. Crouching at his feet, two assistants adjust the jagged hem of each trouser leg while Bob Faust, Cave's studio director and right-hand man, lifts the waist and draws the suspenders tightly across his chest. Struggling to

co-ordinate their movements, the team of three hauls the garment's top half — a towering assemblage of sticks weighing more than 50lb — above Cave's head, lowering it over his face and settling it on his shoulders. Faust takes his hand and leads him outside; like a splintery Chewbacca, Cave lumbers blindly through rows of poppies to a small grove of potted pines, the suit's improbable wooden surface clacking as he moves.

Nick Cave — the American sculptor, fashion designer and Alvin Ailey-trained dancer, not to be confused with the Australian musician of the same name — is known for hybridised artworks that defy categorisation, his aptly named "Soundsuits" primary among them. Part-sculpture, part-performance garment, part-political statement, these hand-stitched, full-body costumes integrate repurposed materials, from dyed human hair to feathers and handbags, into vibrant, wearable tapestries.

Having freshly graduated from the prestigious Cranbrook Academy of Art, 20 miles northwest of Detroit, Cave created the first Soundsuits in 1992 in response to the Rodney King race riots. Decades later, he has returned to the troubled metropolis so formative in his artistic evolution with a series of "Soundsuit Invasions" — *plein-air* shoots by local photographer Corine Vermeulen — conceived as part of *Here Hear*, a major survey of Cave's work that opens on June 20 at Cranbrook Art Museum, which is based at the academy's campus.

"At the end of the day, the Soundsuits are just puppets," Cave says, his honeyed southern drawl muffled by his headgear. A living sculpture among the trees, he poses in place before a spontaneous crowd of early-morning shoppers, extending limbs and leaning forward to emulate the gentle bend of a tree trunk.

"But what is interesting is that, for these performances, the stage is the world. And so the question becomes: 'What are our boundaries, how can we move as individuals in the constraints of a public space, and how do the principles of putting on the costume relate to our daily ritual of getting dressed, preparing ourselves to face the world?'"

Born in Missouri and based in Chicago, Cave first came to Detroit in 1987, the only black student on Cranbrook's campus in the wealthy suburb of Bloomfield Hills. *Here Hear*, which has been organised with the museum's contemporary art curator Laura Mott, includes a comprehensive overview of his work as well as an extensive calendar of satellite performances, events and workshops in neighbourhoods across Detroit, all involving foundations and communities that colour the city's creative landscape.

"When I got to Cranbrook," Cave, now dressed in sweats, says, "I was suddenly confronted by my blackness for the first time — and I was in shock. I didn't know how to deal with it. Without Detroit, I don't know if I could have done Cranbrook; the city was really very significant in my education, and in staying balanced."

He conceived *Here Hear*, accordingly, as both homecoming and homage — with Motor City, which is undergoing a period of regeneration, as the crux, context and even co-author of his show. In

“Heard Detroit”, modelled on a programme he produced in New York’s Grand Central station in 2013, Cave will recruit high-schoolers from Detroit School of Arts for a performance in September along the city’s recently rehabilitated riverfront.

A series of “Dance Labs”, organised with the Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit, pairs local dance companies and musicians with Cave-designed props, and the procession “Up Right Detroit” — of particular resonance to Cave, who is gay — will star lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender teens.

“In my art I’m working with the discarded, the dismissed, the devalued substances of our society, and wondering how we renegotiate their way back into society and give them new life,” he says. “The same thing is happening with Detroit . . . It’s fascinating that a city can completely crash and then begin to move itself into this renewal kind of space.”

Mott, who transferred to Detroit less than two years ago to join Cranbrook’s curatorial team, conceived the show as a way of bringing the institution — a 40-minute drive from downtown — into more intimate contact with the city’s residents. “There are mental barriers that exist in the landscape of this city,” she says, “but I think it’s important that people don’t fixate on that. With this show, we are engendering connections and collaborations between Detroit artists of all shades that will be lasting, even after Nick leaves. And we want everybody to feel that Cranbrook is their museum.”

To that end, museum staff will be distributing exhibition tickets in every area touched by its outreach programme, and all related events are free.

“We can bring the art to the people, but we want to get people to come to Cranbrook, too,” Mott says. “Nick’s show is about changing the choreography of how people move throughout the city — and in a city like Detroit, there is a lot at stake.”

At the museum, an entire floor is dedicated to Cave’s work, featuring a psychedelic display of his decorative Soundsuits, a site-specific wall tapestry made from his current material obsession — buttons — and a recent suite of sculptural assemblages built from overtly racist memorabilia.

“Nobody wanted to talk about the political aspect behind the Soundsuits — not ever,” he says. “So I decided I was going to have to come at it strong.”

The “Map in Action” room, the last in the show, allows a glimpse behind the scenes: a large Detroit map locates events across the city, an evolving video archive documents the happenings as they take place, and a cupboard with a semi-transparent acrylic door houses the Soundsuits used in the performances, its colours morphing as the garments come and go.

“We don’t dream any more,” Cave concludes. “And we need things that are going to uplift; we need positive influences. We’re not getting it from the news, so guess who has to do it? Us artists. I was raised to understand that I’m a black male, and there will be odds against me. But the takeaway was like, ‘OK, now you know, so get on with your life and be lovely’.”

‘Here Hear’, June 20-October 11, cranbrookart.edu/museum

Slideshow photographs: James Prinz/Jack Shainman Gallery, New York; PD Rearick

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Top 5 Summer Shows in the US and Europe



Nick Cave at Cranbrook. Photo by PD Rearick.

Posted: 06/08/2015 5:15 pm EDT | Updated: 57 minutes ago

By Brienne Walsh (http://www.artphaire.com/author/briennew/), June 8, 2015

The summer brings plenty of excuses to spend time outdoors -- but also to escape the heat in the cool, quiet galleries of a museum. Below, we round up the top five exhibitions that cannot be missed in cities across the United States and Europe in the summer of 2015.

2. Nick Cave: Here Hear
Cranbrook Art Museum
June 20 - October 11, 2015

As buzz about Detroit becoming one of the centers of contemporary art production in the United States heightens, so does focus on its exhibitions. This may explain why rather than staging a quiet show this summer, the Cranbrook Art Museum, located in a suburb of Detroit, is making a bold statement with "Here Hear," a solo exhibition by Nick Cave (http://www.jackshainman.com/artists/nick-cave/). It includes programming not only at the museum itself, but also happenings throughout the city. Best known for his Soundsuits, which are wearable sculptures made out of colorful, often flamboyant materials such as feathers, knit flowers and sequins, Cave also creates a wide variety of videos and static works. Trained as dancer at Alvin Ailey, he is deliciously aware of how the body moves -- and how it can be transformed to a vessel in which a person contained can be set free. "Up Right Detroit," for example, will be an ongoing performance staged in collaboration with the Ruth Ellis Center, a nonprofit working with LGBTQ youth and young adults in Metro Detroit. And "Heard•Detroit," held on September 26, will feature 60 high-school dancers clad in life-size horse costumes, parading down the Detroit riverfront. If you've been looking for an excuse to visit Detroit, here's your opportunity.

INTERNATIONAL EDITION

THE ART NEWSPAPER

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US NEWS IN BRIEF

Artist to lead parade through Los Angeles

There will be dancing in the streets of Shreveport, Los Angeles, with a parade led by the artist and dancer Nick Cave, which is due to take place this autumn. The Shreveport Regional Arts Council has been awarded a $40,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Arts for Cave to carry out a residency with Shreveport Common, a revitalisation programme based in a deprived neighbourhood. He will work with local performing and visual artists to produce a "highly costumed, highly choreographed parade", says Pam Atchison, the executive director of the council. Cave's work is "not only about beautiful dramatic costumes that knock your socks off, but really about how those costumes enable anonymity and a dialogue for social change", Atchison says. L.v.S.



Nick Cave (left) at work on one of his "wearable sculptures"

THE BROOKLYN RAIL
CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON ARTS, POLITICS, AND CULTURE

ART BOOKS FEBRUARY 5TH, 2015

Nick Cave: Epitome

by Holly Gavin

Nick Cave: Epitome
(Prestel, 2014)

As the title suggests, *Nick Cave: Epitome* is a carefully selected array of works showcased as exemplary pieces of his oeuvre. The book is heavy with a hardcover and thick, glossy pages—by volume alone, it may seem intimidating. But upon further looking and reading, Epitome is simply enthralling, a beautiful object that captures the essence of Cave's work in image and text.



In cataloguing Cave's work, the book is divided into four series: the Soundsuits, *HEARD*, *Rescue*, and*Made by Whites for Whites*, all documented in stunning photographs. These are accompanied by three main texts: "Out of a Riot Comes a Dream: The Public and Private Iterations of Nick Cave," by Nato Thompson, "The Right to the City: Urban Appropriation in Nick Cave's Work," by Elvira Dyangani Ose, and an interview with Andrew Bolton. Thompson's and Ose's essays provide comprehensive socio-historical contextual backdrops for Cave's work, while Bolton's interview offers the book's only direct words from the artist himself.

Flipping through the pages is an engulfing experience: beautiful photographs are periodically supplemented by texts placing Cave's work within a larger framework of contemporary influences and relevance. Contrary to those first impressions,*Epitome* is quite inviting: the work is vibrant, and there is lots of it—perhaps even too much. Little explanatory text accompanies the reproductions of Cave's empire, allowing viewers to come to their own conclusions while gracing the extensive photographic catalogue—the book's most impressive feature. Cave's work is neither singular in subject, media, nor influences spanning from Rio's Carnival and East London's Pearly Kings and Queens for the Soundsuits. Even within the texts, numerous stimuli are listed; the work is layered, providing greater opportunity for readers to connect with the work on a non-prescribed personal level.

Epitome is a beautiful object, providing a valuable demonstration of Cave's many talents, but itmerits slow consideration; its breathless inclusion of four distinct bodies of work leaves the book feeling oversaturated. This is not merely a result of Cave's pulsating rainbow color palette, although certainly his prodigiousness has presented the book's editors with a formidable task: one of Cave's largest accomplishments is his creation of an impressive oeuvre, which is distinctly, and obviously his own. Cave works in a visual language that is easily recognizable: a niche production technique I am coining "sculptural collage," which fetishizes the handmade: the work is made by hand with collectible handmade objects. Cave's sculptural collages are odes to the found object; he started building his first Twig Soundsuit in 1992 with a discarded branch found in a park, and the *Rescue* series began after he spotted a ceramic Doberman at a flea market. For Cave, the object is a holder of memory; it carries its own history, which the artist reappropriates in his own work. This practice, developed during his childhood, is part of the artist's personal narrative. In Bolton's interview, Cave recalls customizing hand-me-downs as the youngest of several brothers; breathing new life

into vintage manufactured objects by implanting them into new performative or sculptural frameworks is second nature to Cave.

The work, in other words, is distinct and identifiable, but this book is a testament to how it can suffer from excessive photographic reproductions. Cave's skill risks getting lost in the abundance of bright colors, sparkle, and shine. Cave's "sculptural collage" is excessive by nature, but the work needs space to breathe, and it isn't given much within these pages. The viewer is in danger of being overindulged: the Soundsuits are nearly too easy to wolf down. Details of different works are essential pauses to combat this gluttony; moreover, they remind the viewer that Cave's work can be valued even on the page, solely in its immaculate intricacy of craft and beyond the in-person experience or performance of which readers are deprived. Different angles, as well as the rare shots of a work during a performance or in a different setting, provide welcomed breaks.

The works presented here can be divided into two. His Soundsuits and *HEARD* are performative, while the pieces from *Rescue* and *Made by Whites for Whites* are sculptural. The performative works originate from Cave's profession as a dancer. Thompson explains that this work is both physically and conceptually loaded. "Counter-intuitive as it might seem," his essay begins, "the fantastic beauty and bewildering sensibilities of Nick Cave's Soundsuits were born in reaction to stark brutality." Cave's work comes from haunting personal experience. Rodney King's 1991 assault, captured on video, marks Cave's eureka moment in his art practice. The incident sparked several reactions in Cave about his identity as an African-American within the urban community and his growing desire for protection; he made his first Twig Soundsuit a year later. The question of identity and protection arose as a personal issue, but applies to universal concerns and practices on a wider scale. The *HEARD* performances and Soundsuits live in an exotic mythology borrowing from tribal subcultures, but are created as tools of social interaction and change. *HEARD* is about provoking social change in the urban landscape through unity against the status quo. The Soundsuits are about the relation of the individual within the community. They are armor, shields that protect their wearers and hide their genders, sexualities, and racial identities. The Soundsuits exist on a dividing line separating hidden mysteries from eye-catching, tell-all flamboyance.

Cave's Soundsuits are introduced as beautiful, intriguing art objects alive in an alternate reality. They are photographed in a stark white space, maximizing their

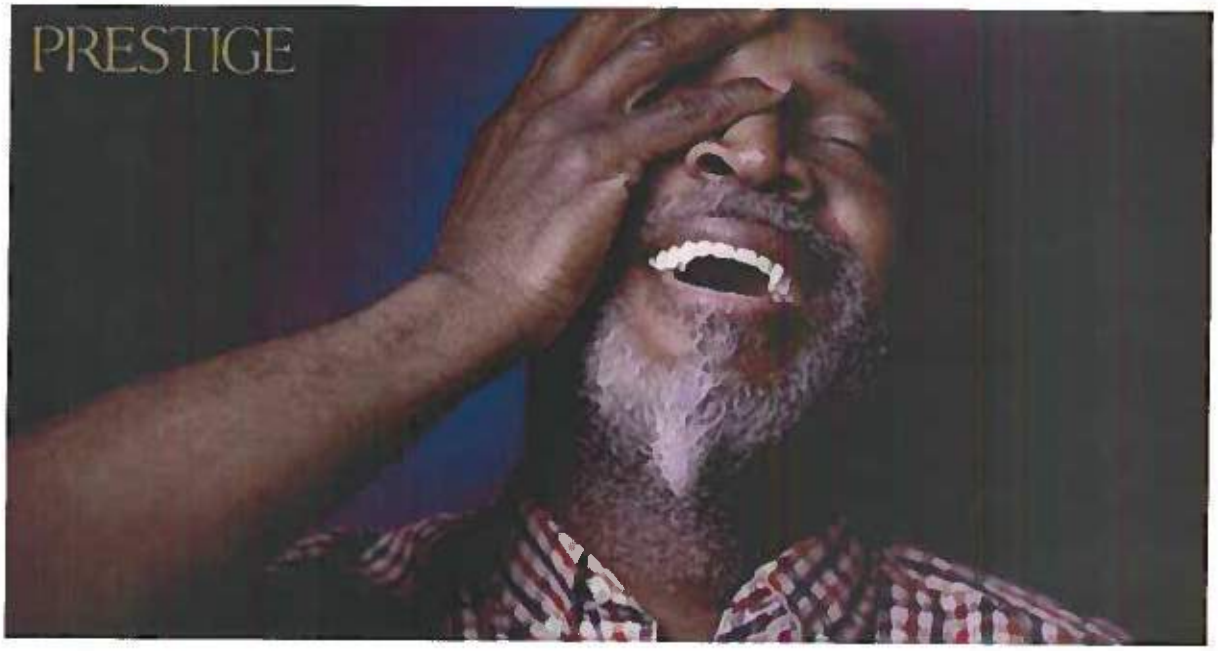
splendor. Not unlike a green screen, readers see exotic characters, static or in motion, part of a wider narrative, but devoid of context clues. Thompson's text and Bolton's interview shed light on the moral agenda of the Soundsuits. Cave defines his role as a messenger. By creating metaphorical staged happenings in an urban jungle, he instigates a model environment for change. Although visually appealing, the white-ground Soundsuits photographs suggest neutrality and universality: uncommon characteristics in today's urban milieus. Cave's work is flattened to a sculptural costume, to a dynamic photograph, to a page in a book; the Soundsuits and *HEARD*'s dynamics of social mutiny are lost in translation.

This collapse into a state of stagnation is not an issue for the second body of work: sculptures from *Rescue* and *Made by Whites for Whites*, Cave's most recent Chelsea exhibitions at Jack Shainman gallery. Apart from a few rectangular wall pieces resembling 3D paintings, the *Rescue* pieces comprise on a ceramic dog figure on a settee under an opulent arch. A majestic Doberman figure inspired Cave's series: a role reversal between dogs and their housemasters adding onto the art historical tradition of the dog as a symbol of loyalty. The work on display at*Made by Whites for Whites* is large and bold in iconography, with a vintage artifact of Black memorabilia surrounded by objects from Cave's familiar collection of flea market finds. The prefabricated collectible items sculpturally collaged in excess recall the Soundsuits, but unlike them, this newer work is more explicitly racially and historically charged. The Soundsuits are subtler in personality; they are about the identity of the wearer rather than a race, and the romanticism of exoticism acts as their saving grace. *Made by Whites for Whites* is high on shock value. Placing a spotlight on worn collectibles created out of racism successfully creates a sense of unease. Unlike the Soundsuits however, they do not provide a temporary solution for a critical issue, but rather spread awareness of it. They are paramount in function, but are not as directly engaged with our urban reality as their protective counterparts. These pieces exist within the white cube model, but not beyond. Nonetheless, *Made by Whites for Whites* remains relevant: the tattered appearance of Cave's reappropriated flea market finds is misleading; Cave is tackling an issue of the present day, and not of a nostalgic past. His works have never been more significant as benchmarks of racial brutality. The deaths of Michael Brown and Eric Garner render the protective shield-like aspect of the Soundsuits disturbing; their relevance moves toward urgency and necessity amid these instances of horrifying police brutality.

Cave's world, existing on the borderline between fashion, performance, and fine art, is multi-faceted—"counter-intuitive" according to Thompson; it is playful and grave, but remains cohesive in its visual language. *Nick Cave: Epitome* offers an outpouring of gorgeous visual material and presents interesting cross-disciplinary links drawing from the personal and the socio (not so)-historical. The book is informative, yummy, and dynamic, but with four series of works, it is also over-glutted; moreover, the Soundsuits appear much more frequently than the other series, which emerge outshone. *Nick Cave: Epitome* is a beautiful, confident object, but could be more successful subdivided into two volumes, compiled by media, or even four separate catalogues, one for each autonomous series.

PRESTIGE

ART AND DESIGN



NICK CAVE; PHOTO: SANDRO

Installations featuring racist arcana are not the only unsettling works unleashed on America by NICK CAVE. PAYAL UTTAM meets the Missouri-born artist

NICK CAVE WAS rummaging around in a flea market when he came across a container shaped like a black man's head with its mouth wide open as if letting out a scream. A description below it read "Spittoon". Cave was aghast. "I said, 'What?'," he recalls incredulously. "That led me down this road of looking for [racially] inflammatory objects that were repulsive, extreme and just really shocking." Cave rented a cargo van and googled his way through stores in various states, uncovering an abundance of racist memorabilia. After examining the objects with a historian, he reappropriated the items to create a series of installations.
When we meet, the 55-year old African American is putting the final touches to his work in a two-part solo show at Jack Shainman Gallery in New York City. Dressed in fluorescent orange sneakers, black cargo shorts and a tight black exercise top with a horizontal slit exposing his toned chest, Cave cuts a flamboyant figure. Thin-framed glasses rest on his nose and his boyish face is covered in a smattering of white stubble.

Upon entering the gallery, Cave plunges into a tour of the exhibition. Pointing at a sculpture of a crouching black figure, he says, "This was a mahogany carved piano stool, so just imagine him holding up someone's ass. Oh my God.'" Cave elevated the figure, placing it on a pedestal. "I wanted to take it off the floor and then

create this amazing wonderland around him," he says, pointing to the lush assemblage of birds, branches and glowing chandeliers that are suspended above the figure's head.

Deeper inside the gallery, Cave has installed a bronze cast of his own hand holding up a shoeshine brush on the wall. Placing a floral oval frame around the brush, the piece evokes a mirror holding up a disturbing reflection to viewers. On the wall beside it, on a stick, is a ruggedly carved black man's head made of wood. Cave added two bronze hands, which emerge from the wall cradling the head and suggesting an expression of anguish. "This was part of a carnival game. There would be a cigarette in the mouth then it would bob up and down and you would throw rings around it," he says quietly.

Is there still a big market for these types of artefacts, I ask. He nods his head. "Girl, I'm like, this is still happening?" replies Cave. "It's not that I'm smearing it in your face but I think there needs to be this conversation around the fact that a race can also be a by-product of a consumer compulsion," he says. Walking through the show, the objects leave one feeling rattled. I admit to him that looking at the images of the pieces beforehand didn't have the same effect. "You don't get the sincerity within the work [from photographs]," he agrees. "You know it's an accumulation of objects put together but there's a lot you don't feel."

Much of Cave's work relies on this visceral tug that can only be experienced by encountering it first-hand. A dancer, fashion designer and sculptor, Cave first made a name for himself with his hallucinogenic soundsuits, fullbody costumes festooned from head to toe with unusual materials ranging from sequins and sweaters to synthetic hair and vintage toys. Like a surreal body armour, the otherworldly outfits were designed to create a defiant noise when worn.

"That started in 1992 in response to the Rodney King incident," explains Cave. Shaken by police brutality against a black man, he began grappling with the implications of his skin colour and race. One day, he created a sculptural outfit covered in twigs and branches and used it to mask his body. Once he put on the ensemble, he discovered the twigs made a noise and from there the soundsuit series was born. Cave's costumes became a shield of sorts concealing his race, gender, and class, allowing him to escape judgment.

Born in a town in Missouri, Cave grew up in a large family with seven brothers and was raised by his mother, a secretary at the University of Missouri. His father, a factory worker, died when he was a teenager. Fascinated by art from a young age, it was only natural that he went on to enrol in Kansas City Art Institute. Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater was holding a workshop down the street from his university so Cave signed up. After studying further and completing a master's degree at Cranbrook Academy of Art, he landed a teaching gig at the Art Institute of Chicago.

One evening, he was at dinner with friends and the idea to open a clothing boutique was hatched. "They said 'We'll sponsor you and back you for a store,' I said 'OK.'" he recalls. Partnering with Jeffery Roberts, an architectural designer, they opened Robave in the '90s, which quickly became known for stylish womenswear and menswear: "So I had this amazing store and I was doing my artwork and showing but I was sort of like a closet artist," he admits with a laugh.

Yet, once Cave began working on his soundsuit series, he realised that he had hit upon something big. "But I didn't want to be known only for that. I was watching a lot of artists who were sort of pigeonholed and I thought there is more to me than that," he says explaining why kept a low profile. "But I could tell things were

happening with the whole experience. I was trying to keep the lid down but shit was popping off the chain. And so you just have to give in at some point and embrace it."

It took about 10 years before Cave fully surrendered to his creative impulses. "I just decided to fall into the abyss of the whole thing," he exclaims. "One day I woke up and I said it's now or never, and then my life changed literally overnight." Cave's career took off instantly. Not only did his soundsuit sculptures begin showing up in museums and galleries across the country but he also penetrated the fashion world with an eight-page spread in the September 2010 issue of Vogue and he began staging performances.

Last year, he staged one of his most talkedabout performance pieces titled Heard NY. Taking over Grand Central station in New York for eight days, he unleashed a troupe of dancers wearing vividly colourful horse costumes. "We really wanted to infiltrate that Grand Central station experience and stop those individuals in their tracks," he says. "It was really about how do we get ourselves back to this dream state. Everyone is so concerned with their well-being and their jobs. We don't think about innovation and creativity." Shaking commuters out of their everyday routine with an experimental dance piece, the work had a positive effect on the city and Cave. "It made me understand why I do what I do," he says.

Next year, Cave is planning a show at Cranbrook Academy of Art Museum near Detroit, where he will involve the local community. "Yes, I can bring in an entire troupe and a cargo van of everybody to do the performance and pack up and leave, but what does that leave behind? Just an experience," he says. "I'm more interested in leaving an imprint versus an impression and so we bring soundsuits to a city and then we hire the community to build a performance – that's really what it's about."

He's also working on an exhibition at Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art. "The space is the size of a football stadium. I'm going to create an immersive environment that will put you in the belly of a soundsuit." I ask how does it feel when you're inside one of these costumes? "When you're in a sound suit your inhibitions, your identity, everything, is hidden. There's a sort of rejuvenation. There's an ability to be more expressive. I think it's an amazing thing to be able to have that kind of permission," he replies. Is that the case with all of his art? Cave nods. "First you have to be willing to surrender, but once you do, honey, it's fabulous."

SLIDESHOW



SOUNDSUIT (2012). MIXED MEDIA INCLUDING FABRIC AND SEQUINS. PHOTO: JAM



INSTALLATION VIEW OF NICK CAVE'S MADE BY WHITES FOR WHITES EXHIBITION



PERFORMANCE OF HEARD NY AT GRAND CENTRAL TERMINAL. PHOTO: JAMES PRINZ

Chicago Tribune

How to be bold: Nick Cave's secrets



Artist Nick Cave in motion with one of his Soundsuits. (SAVERIO TRUGLIA, Chicago Tribune)

By Christopher Borrelli

DECEMBER 22, 2014, 4:29 PM

The day outside of Nick Cave's home in the South Loop was so forlorn you felt sorry for it. The sky was the color of mop water; the parking lot across the street — large, empty and evocative of nothing so much as nowhere — was especially drab. Cave did not stand out, either: He wore brown high-tops, a black sweatshirt and, above his sea-captain beard, a dark winter cap. He took a seat at his dining room table and gestured for me to sit. Music from the nail salon on the ground floor of his building wafted faintly into the room. He waited me for to say something and so I said:

"You're a bold guy."

He laughed. I explained: Creatively, he's best known for his gargantuan, vibrant "Soundsuits," wearable pelt sculptures made of furs, twigs, feathers, beads, sequins and human hair; for the past several years, his work has veered into elaborate, surreal bouquets of sorts, centered on 20th century flea-market figurines. "Plus, they, the editors of this magazine, asked me to ask you about boldness — you thought about it?"

"Boldness?" he asked. "I have?"

"Yeah," I said. "They said you were thinking about it…"

"Oh," he said, trying to remember.

"How to be bold," I said, offering help, "how to act boldly, how to dress boldly, how to seize boldly on a good idea. I'm not quite sure why 'boldness.' Perhaps because your work is bold — do you see yourself as bold?"

"No," he said, thinking.

I looked around. His apartment was a dream of an apartment. It was his home and his studio; art lined every wall and rested on every corner table. At the center of the dining-room table was an African napping bed; it was small and resembled a skateboard without wheels. Beside it were coffee-maker size spinning tops, constructed from fine china. Each piece, made by artist Cheryl Pope, sat tipped on its side, precariously.

"I prefer fearlessness to boldness," he said at last.

"What's the difference?" I asked.

"Being bold is being basically louder. Being fearless, I think, allows you to be subtle and effective. I think there is a difference. Boldness is *in your face*. In a sense, boldness, creatively, is a horn. But fearlessness, that is about taking charge, finding your ground. Fearlessness is a different action altogether from boldness. Dress, for instance: Someone could come in here and be dressed in big, bright colors and just kind of..."

"Pop."

"Pop, yes. But someone could come in here dressed in all black, too. One will be louder. And they are both bold, in a sense. But one is also subtle. The person in black doesn't necessarily have anything to prove."

He was right: Cave (not to be confused with the brooding Australian musician Nick Cave) is somehow simultaneously modest, loud, tasteful and completely his own person. He has never seemed entirely a part of the contemporary art scene — certainly not in Chicago, where he lives under the radar, works as chair of the fashion design department at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago but tends to show (and gather most of his acclaim) elsewhere. An ambitious two-part exhibit last fall at the Jack Shainman Gallery in New York City featured ceramic dogs and racial caricatures sitting among chaotic assemblages of found objects, beads and candelabra; a series of upcoming works in Detroit will feature performances in distressed areas; a 2016 show at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art will put viewers *inside* a Soundsuit.

"You haven't always been—"

"Fearless, no," he replied. "Not until I surrendered to my calling, to making what I make."

"It sounds like you're saying that to be bold, or fearless, in any part of life, you have to be willing to fail."

"Exactly what it takes, yes. I was 45 when I made that decision. About a decade ago. I wanted to know what it felt like to completely indulge myself in an art experience. Meaning, letting go of everything else. Prior to that, I was a gypsy, doing a body of work, showing it, packing up and moving to the next thing. I didn't feel committed to any thing or idea. There are millions of artists but there is a difference between those who recognize a truth about what they want and sit on it, and those willing to risk a lot for their work."

Then he got a little metaphysical, a little McConaughey-ish, so I said:

"You're from Missouri. One of seven brothers. You had to be bold to stand out?"

"You know what," he said, "I had to be bold to *come into my own*, but not to stand out. We, the family, we were all individuals. but we all had to find your own way. That's how it felt. I never felt lost in the shuffle. Maybe because,

my whole life, I have always felt I was being conditioned and handed off, mentor to mentor."

Cave's career is eclectic: Graduated Kansas City Art Institute. In the 1970s, trained with dancer Alvin Ailey. Got his MFA at the Cranbrook Academy of Art in the Detroit suburbs. Designed window displays for Macy's.

"Designing windows, that's about holding a bullhorn and drawing attention, right?" I asked.

"My first job. Kansas City. It really provided me an outlet to curate. It became these installations that supported a collection of… whatever they were selling. How do you take a space and transform it into an environment? I remember this collection in the 1980s called Parachute which had a very aviary style to it, so I remember talking to the store manager and saying I needed to somehow rent a parachute, we will hoist it into the window space and all the cords of the parachute will pull in one direction and the mannequins will stand among that and it will be a very structured. And they were, like, 'Uh, OK, Nick, whatever, go for it.'"

"You seized a chance."

"Which is an aspect of yourself you have to exercise, though. I made my first Soundsuit in response to the Rodney King beating. I made this object, not realizing I could wear it. Once I realized that, and that it made sounds when I moved, I had a language. But it blew it up overnight, so I shut that (expletive) down. I was not ready for the intensity of the reaction. I was on the cover of magazines and I was not ready for the attention."

"Having such a bold aesthetic, you might be typecast for it."

"In way, yes."

He stared out the window: "I remember a student asking me how to acquire an art-world lifestyle."

"Wow," I said, "that's either bold or naive."

"I said 'Work hard.'"

"It's not about bold dress."

"No. I mean, my dress, my *lifestyle*, subtle, not bold."

"Me, too. But my style is called mulch."

Cave laughed: "And I do mostly black," he said. "A little color, an interesting shape. I guess I am always subtle, until I am ready to so something, and then I get bold, deliver and retreat again. Because the thing about a bold gesture: The thing you create with it has to exist on its own. You're bold, and now, you're not."

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DEPARTURES

December 04, 2014

10 Must-See Works at Art Basel Beach 2014



© Art Basel in Miami Beach 2014 | Jack Shainman Gallery. MCH Messe Schweiz (Basel) AG

By Joe Harper

Dec 04, 2014

With thousands of artworks from upwards of 250 galleries on display, here's our shortlist for what not to miss at this year's fair.

Nick Cave *Soundsuit* at Jack Shainman Gallery (B21)
Nick Cave began making his signature knitted mannequins in response to the 1991 Rodney King beating, noting his hope to obscure the body from race, class or gender and thus forcing the viewer to look without judgment. The piece currently on view at Jack Shainman Gallery's booth is a brand new contribution to the extensive collection.

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ARTNEWS

November 2014



Nick Cave, *Sea Sick*, 2014
mixed media, 96" x 72" x 10½".

NICK CAVE

JACK SHAINMAN
SEPTEMBER 4 - OCTOBER 11

Two sides of Nick Cave were on view at the gallery's two Chelsea venues. They were different but also linked by a mordant humor.

"Made by Whites for Whites" at 513 West 20th Street was concerned with black history and the inception of the slave trade, which was documented by a huge mixed-media work *Sea Sick* (2014), combining paintings of sailing ships blithely plying the waves with the head of a black man, originally a humidor for storing cigars made from tobacco harvested by slaves. Cave's title is ironic: in English-speaking America, the slave was made by whites for whites, first as agricultural laborers but then in myriad roles, ranging from bathroom attendant to object: a humidor, a golliwog, or the slave-boy figurine holding his master's horse. The black man was transmuted into the white man's creation. Cave brilliantly inverts the process, making black art out of the collected wreckage of racist artifacts.

"Rescue," at 524 West 24th Street, evinced another facet of Cave's humor. Here statues of rescued dogs were posed on furniture and surrounded by halos of flowers. Cave's rescues are caught up in a world of kitsch, reminding us that we romanticize animals while treating our fellow men inhumanely. The pastoral settings Cave created for his dogs contrast with the pastoral hell of slavery. Cave touchingly dedicated this show to Claude Simard. ALFRED MAC ADAM



Roman Opalka, *Chronome No. 2*, 1963,
tempera on canvas, 24" x 24".

ROMAN OPALKA

DOMINIQUE LÉVY
SEPTEMBER 4 - OCTOBER 18

In 1965, the French-born Polish artist Roman Opalka (1931–2011) began his magisterial project *1965 / 1 – ∞* by placing the number 1 on the upper corner of a canvas using a No. 0 brush. He followed this feat up with more than five-and-a-half-million other numerals to create an "infinite" work that ended only with his death. From a total of 233 canvases, a dozen were shown for this very quietly absorbing exhibition. The paintings at first appeared to be large, grisaille monochromes, but upon closer viewing, the numbers gradually became visible and created irregular surface undulations that suggested a kind of weaving. It was as if Opalka were one of the Fates, spinning his own destiny.

The works were accompanied by recordings of the artist reciting the numbers in Polish in a neutral voice; a few of the passport-like, unblinking photographs he took of himself every day; and some vibrant, densely gestural works that were made in the early 1960s, including the entire, rhythmically inked "Etude sur le mouvement" series of drawings. Each was a way of documenting time in which beginnings inexorably lead to ends. The mark, and later the numbers, were an actualization of existence, shaping and ordering formlessness in a gesture that was at once romantic and pragmatic, realistic and utterly abstract, taking Opalka from the methodical into the miraculous. LILLY WEI

LEFT: JAMES PRINZ PHOTOGRAPHY/©NICK CAVE/COURTESY THE ARTIST AND JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY, NEW YORK. RIGHT: VINCENT LEPRINJASSE/©2014 ARTISTS RIGHTS SOCIETY (ARS), NEW YORK/ADAGP, PARIS

MISSOURIAN

'Soundsuits' on display at St. Louis Art Museum

Friday, November 14, 2014 | 6:00 a.m. CST
BY SARAH BRYAN MILLER/St. Louis Post-Dispatch

ST. LOUIS — "I spend a lot of time at flea markets," said artist Nick Cave during a recent visit to the St. Louis Art Museum. "I'll fly to Washington state, rent a van and stop at flea markets on my way back across the country. I don't know what I'm looking for."

He knows it when he finds it, though. He finds buttons, children's toys, plastic beaded baskets, lots and lots of crocheted pot holders and some rather alarming big fluffy bunnies that go into his distinctive art. An exhibition of his work is now on display at the art museum through March 8, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch reported.

Cave, not to be confused with the Australian rocker of the same name, was born 60 years ago in Fulton, Missouri. He attributes his affinity for found objects to his poor upbringing in a large family headed by a single mother.

He received a bachelor of fine arts from the Kansas City Art Institute, where he learned to sew, and studied dance through the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater company. He earned his master's degree from Cranbrook Academy of Art in Michigan. Today, he teaches at the Art Institute of Chicago and makes his own art at his studio on Chicago's South Side. He lives on the third floor of his building and works on the second with eight assistants. The first floor is devoted to storing his supplies.

Cave is best known for his "Soundsuits," costume-shaped sculptures that show a clear connection to African art as well as the New Orleans Mardi Gras tradition. The sculptures are whimsical, but their meaning is much deeper.

Galleries 249 and 250 in the East Building are filled with the suits; some of them can be viewed from all sides. On the walls are tondos, circular hangings like slices of the sky, made of satin-finished formal dresses and marked out with sequins and brocades.

Some of Cave's Soundsuits (the name comes from the swishes, jingles and clatters they make when moved) are intended to be worn; a video installation called "Drive-by," in Gallery 301, shows whirling, bounding, pogo-stick-riding dancers in suits made of colored raffia, hair and miscellaneous objects, some looking like pink Yeti, some like cheerful monsters with the power of perpetual motion.

The shapes of Soundsuits on display are set forth in chicken wire. Their "alternate skins" are a kind of armor, disguising such considerations as race and gender, and eliminating prejudice.

The first Soundsuit was built of twigs, in response to the beating of Rodney King in 1991 by Los Angeles police officers. Since then, Cave has constructed hundreds of the sculptures, built of anything that appeals to him.

When Cave discovers something he thinks will work on a Soundsuit, "I take the object and put it around the body until I locate it. The found is critical" to the art.

A suit may be covered with buttons or with plastic baskets topped off by one of those bunnies. Plastic

mesh serves as the fabric to hold all of that mass. One sculpture has a menagerie of sock monkeys and small fabric objects that Cave calls "burial mounds." It weighs 40 pounds, and its meaning is "otherness," he said. "It's an homage to a being of sorts."

A hot-pad suit is topped by a wire frame with outcroppings that Cave calls "tentacles." From the tentacles hang metal tops, toys, noisemakers and banks that are small globes of the world, shaped into a three-dimensional form.

This suit was finished at the museum, with the addition of an unusual wooden hanger on the back that drapes more fabric down the suit.

"It takes time to establish a relationship with a piece," Cave said. "It's about the shedding of the existing being. I'm interested in spirit and myth and the space around the body."

One of Cave's largest and most distinctive works is "Speak Louder," seven connected figures whose suits are covered in black shell buttons, with shapes like the bells of tubas where their heads should be, facing in different directions. It was born, said Cave, "when I was thinking about (black) youth crime in Chicago. I'm living in a city where violence is extreme, yet voices aren't being heard."

"Speak Louder" recalls both a funeral procession, bound by shared grief, and the Dixieland bands of New Orleans and Savannah that play dirges on their way to the graveyard and jazz on the way back. But an all-tuba band will never manage that distinctive peal of joy breaking through sorrow, and the weight of the shroud-like draperies speaks of the burden carried by these mourners.

The exhibition was co-curated by Nichole Bridges, associate curator in the Department of the Arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas, and Tricia Paik, former associate curator of contemporary art. Bridges selected most of the pieces in the exhibition, which also features a stand-alone Soundsuit "intervention" amid the African masks in Gallery 102.

"I wanted to bring a together a collection that talked about the breadth of the work," Cave said. The oldest piece "is probably six years old; the newest one is from today. It's a nice survey for the art."

One of the aspects of the exhibition that pleased Cave the most was the opportunity to show off his work to a very special constituency: his own extended Missouri family.

"I have a lot of cousins and relatives in the area that have never, ever seen my work in its purest form," he said. "This is for them and for the whole community here."

SURRENDER TO OTHERNESS

Text by Kate Messinger

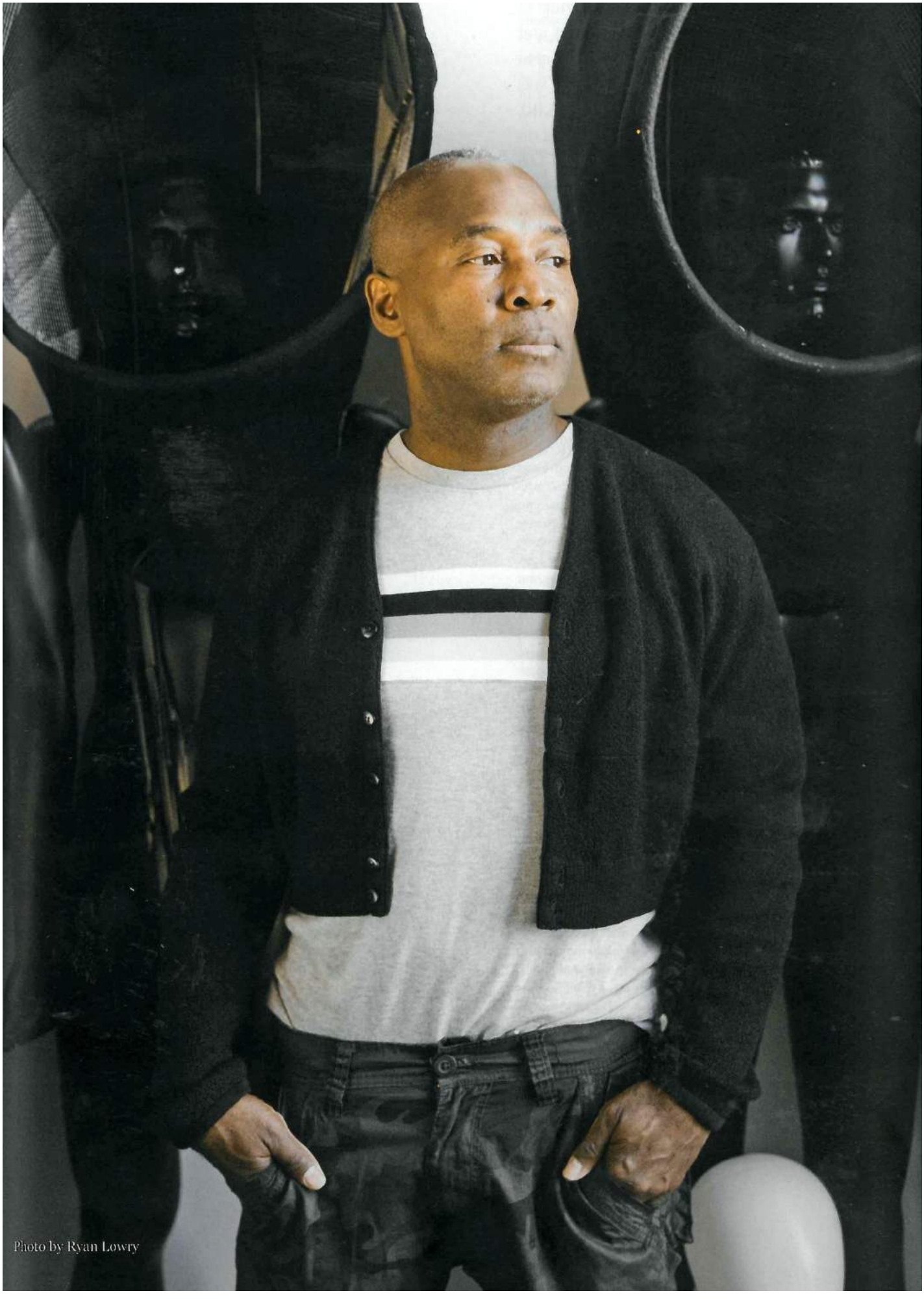


Photo by Ryan Lowry

Sitting on a park bench in Chicago, gazing at loose sticks on the grass, sculptural artist and performer Nick Cave found himself struggling to express his identity in a time of social upheaval. It was 1992. News reports announced the acquittal of L.A.P.D. officers that had been caught beating Rodney King on videotape, and riots flared through the streets of Los Angeles. Cave began collecting the disregarded twigs to use as material. "A recycling of surplus," he called it. Back in the studio he built the sculptural shell of a body with the sticks forming a rigid fringe reminiscent of a creature halfway between swamp and human. Suddenly the heap became something more: a method of disguise, a form of protection, a celebratory armor amid cultural cataclysm. "I really wasn't thinking it was something wearable," says Cave, a quarter century (and hundreds of wearable artworks) later. "I was looking at it as a sculpture, and then it dawned on me. I can put it on!"

The covering allowed Cave to reveal an inner self. "I realized my identity was hidden. I started thinking about the role of race, gender, and class," he explains. "Now the viewer is forced to look at something unfamiliar, a hybrid of sorts." Behind the mask, he was attuned to the transformative qualities of costume thanks to years spent as a dancer and performer. At that moment Cave found himself not only moving, but listening. "Once I put it on, I realized it made sound. I started thinking about the role of protest. What are the conditions and behaviors that one has to take in order to be heard?" He called it the "Soundsuit," and over the last two decades he's created an army of these sculpted costumes, which exist both as vibrant art objects and performative expressions of culture and community.

Soundsuits each take on their own characteristics, unique entities in a surrealist parade: bright synthetic furs, crocheted appendages, absurdist explosions of toys and stuffed animals. The pieces use recycled materials to call attention to the rituals of our ancestors, while pushing us into a realm of fantasy. "The impulse could come from an object. It could come from a material," Cave says of his process. "[But] I don't really sketch anything. I just build something and bring it to the body. The body becomes the apparatus. It becomes the character." After construction, the artist puts on each suit, finding new elements of its personality through movement. Jumping, dancing, stalking, Cave's physical language inside the costumes is animalistic and often inspires new species to evolve out of the original. The sculptures look alive, and it is important to Cave that they act alive, too.





The intimate and intricate construction of each Soundsuit is only one element of Cave's designs. Serving as a well-respected professor of fashion design at The Art Institute of Chicago, Cave's work has been shown in museums and galleries across the country, as well as featured in *Vogue* fashion spreads. Despite this, he has strived to find creative purpose beyond visual art. Cave is, above all, a performer and instigator of public engagement.

Cave brings his Soundsuits around the world, collaborating with local artists to create public performances, utilizing the artists of each community he visits. "For me it's important to take [my work] outside the institution, to take it outside the gallery." Whether it's building sculptures with a group of students, putting on a parade in a small town, or conducting an immersive installation in the middle of New York City's Grand Central Station, Cave's work is meant for more than looking—it's to be experienced. "I really like interfacing all of the creative backgrounds and finding a way to create this new language, finding a way to leave the mark behind."

In the case of his exhibition, HEARD NY, a multi-day performance at Grand Central hosted by Creative Time and the Metropolitan Transit Authority, local dancers dressed as swishing horse figures made from fabrics around the world. The "global herd" was created as a collaborative effort under the guidance of Cave, pushing the group to work together in an unconventional space for an audience in perpetual transit. "It's amazing, in preparing and rehearsing for a project like that, what it does in terms of building confidence or morale. You realize how many different types of people are in a city that are interested in the same types of things. It really opens up the communication and forces you to find ways to work together."

Bringing creative people together seems to be the foundation upon which Cave has built his career. "I've always known that I can't do it all myself. It's about the team, pulling together your friends, and creating a spectacle and a happening."

Given this, it's not surprising that the artist's WILD Wish would be to collaborate with the dynamic comedian and musician Reggie Watts. As Cave puts it, "He's wild, I'm wild; we could make something transcending in a whole different way."

For Cave, even the act of wearing a mask has the ability to be transcendental. From the first actors on the Dionysian stage to trick-or-treaters on Halloween night, costumes can bring us to an entirely new state of being. Cave's background in performance (he's been with the Alvin Ailey Dance Company since he was a teen) is apparent in his gift to put on a spectacle no matter the medium. At HEARD NY, tourists and commuters alike unexpectedly found themselves as part of a performance. "This work immerses us as viewers into this otherly kind of space and time," he explains. Initially, Cave was nervous about a project this vast occupying such a small space. He feared having two performances a day for a solid week would be exhausting, but each show was its own experience, dictated by the change of crowd, providing the rare opportunity to bring a group of strangers together in one place at one time. "Time stands still," he says. And in a city constantly on the move, "it is a lovely thing to be in a transition of moment."

"I've always known that I can't do it all myself.
It's about the team, pulling together your friends,
and creating a spectacle and a happening."





Whether it's embodying spirits in religious ceremony or donning the colors of our favorite sports team to conjure victory, Cave's aesthetic is an ode to the ritual of self-divergence. His work, even in its still form, feels celebratory, primal. "The animalistic sensibility comes through organic form," he says of his collection of sculptures. "These images are in between human and something foreign. You're not quite sure what they are, but you know they are of another place. At the end of the day, we are animals. And I want to camouflage or layer on top of that."

From the epiphany of the first Soundsuit to his community-driven public art, Cave often wonders: "How can I use my work as a vehicle for change?" Whether it's bringing people together in collaboration, or exploring the ways humans can be influenced by a change in appearance, each performance and each piece is a study in how to "surrender to this otherness."

"There's so much violence in the world right now," he laments. "What people need to feel is that they are a contribution. I'm looking at creating encounters that are all about empowerment, being part of a ceremony that brings a sense of balance and conditioning that's transformative."

Behind the mask or in the audience, a sense of community radiates from every facet of Cave's work. Humanoid beasts that he intricately crafts become more than the bright materials or assemblage of their skins. When the moving bodies of the performers combine with the imaginations of the viewers, the Soundsuits take on their own identity. What was a pile of sticks becomes a representation of cultural change. What was a herd of raffia horses becomes a group of New Yorkers sharing a rare collective experience. What by itself is just a visual art piece becomes a vehicle for creative expression. "It's about bringing insight to what is possible," he says. "It's about bringing us back to a dream state."









Nick Cave Unseats the Golliwog

Blake Gopnik, Thursday, September 25, 2014



This is a piece by Nick Cave, from his show called "Made by Whites for Whites" now at Jack Shainman Gallery in New York. The exhibition is built around images of blacks that have survived from the bad (or worse) old days of American racism. In some cases, Cave has dressed up his vintage objects in a decorative mass of found trinkets, to the point where the racist figures' original threat is exhausted or at least concealed. This piece, called *King of the Hill*, is by itself in a little side room, and it's properly chilling. The 1940s Golliwog costume that some whitey wore to amuse his friends now seems to come packed with all the threat that it must have had all along for black people, but which its owner was blind to (or maybe rejoiced in). There's something especially unsettling about its leering, king-of-the-castle perch atop a pile of blankets, the iconic symbol of comfort and nurture.

For a full survey of past Daily Pics visit blakegopnik.com/archive.

whitewall



NICK CAVE
King of the Hill, 2014
mixed media including Golliwog costume, afghans, mannequin and metal
Approximately 105 x 38 x 48 inches

NICK CAVE REAPPROPRIATES RACIALLY CHARGED OBJECTS

Nick Cave's "Made by Whites for Whites" and "Rescue" are currently on view at **Jack Shainman** gallery's two locations in Chelsea (some of the new work was first seen at The School over the summer). The artist began this series when he found a container at a flea market shaped like the head of a black man labeled "Spittoon." Shocked and outraged, he began to consider how he might reappropriate derogatory objects such as these, in order to "rehabilitate the problematic loaded object and find a place of reverence and empowerment through reuse."

"Made by Whites for Whites" addresses the prevalence of American racist objects that are too historically significant to be destroyed yet too offensive to be displayed. Rather than discard the objects and ignore their existence, Cave reuses and recycles the racially charged objects, transforming their negative connotation.

Known for his elaborate Soundsuits made of feathers, beads, dyed human hair, buttons, and sequins, Cave approaches his new series with the same aesthetic vibrancy. Haloed by plastic candles, beads, and Capodimonte porcelain birds, the objects are made beautiful and given new meaning. At the same time, the stereotypical representations of blacks force the viewer to confront the existence of these objects. Next to each piece is a description of the story behind the derogatory object incorporated into his work. Some are mass-produced minstrel objects, while others are symbols of black pride, such as the black power fist.

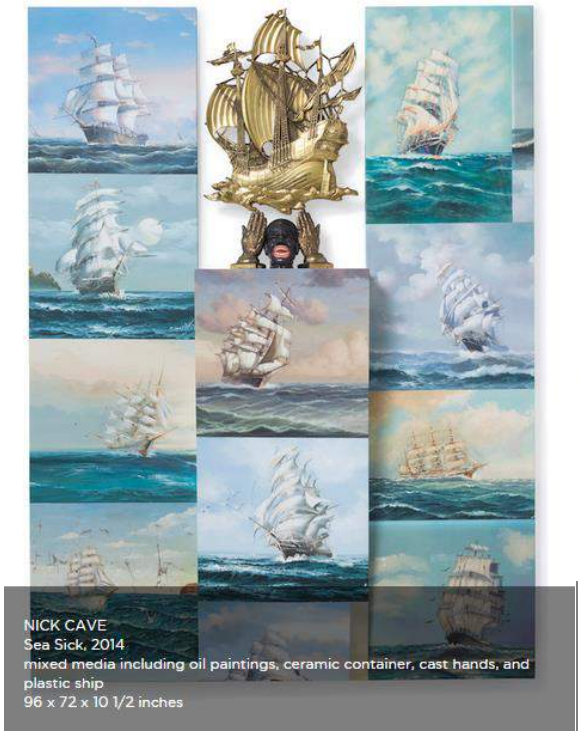
Some pieces, such as *Sacrifice* are presented as key objects that have not been significantly altered. The severed head of a black man on a stick is hung diagonally with cast hands framing his face, loaning compassion to an object that was once used as a ring toss in a carnival game.

Cave's "Rescue" series of sculptures feature ceramic dogs languishing on decorated pieces of furniture. Like the "Made by Whites for Whites" series, the found object is the central figure, enthroned by an armature of beads and figurines (something we've also seen in his Soundsuits). The canines are meant to be a symbol for black masculinity, as the term "dawg" now holds connotations of brotherhood, respect, and loyalty.

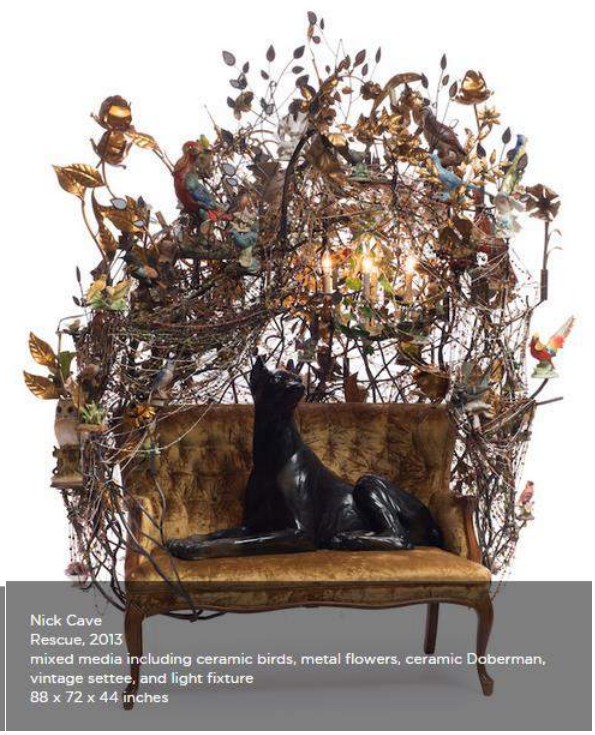
"Made by Whites for Whites" and "Rescue" will be on view at the **Jack Shainman Gallery** on 513 W. 20th Street and 524 W. 24th Street, respectively, through October 11.

SOLA AGUSTSSON | SEPTEMBER 22, 2014

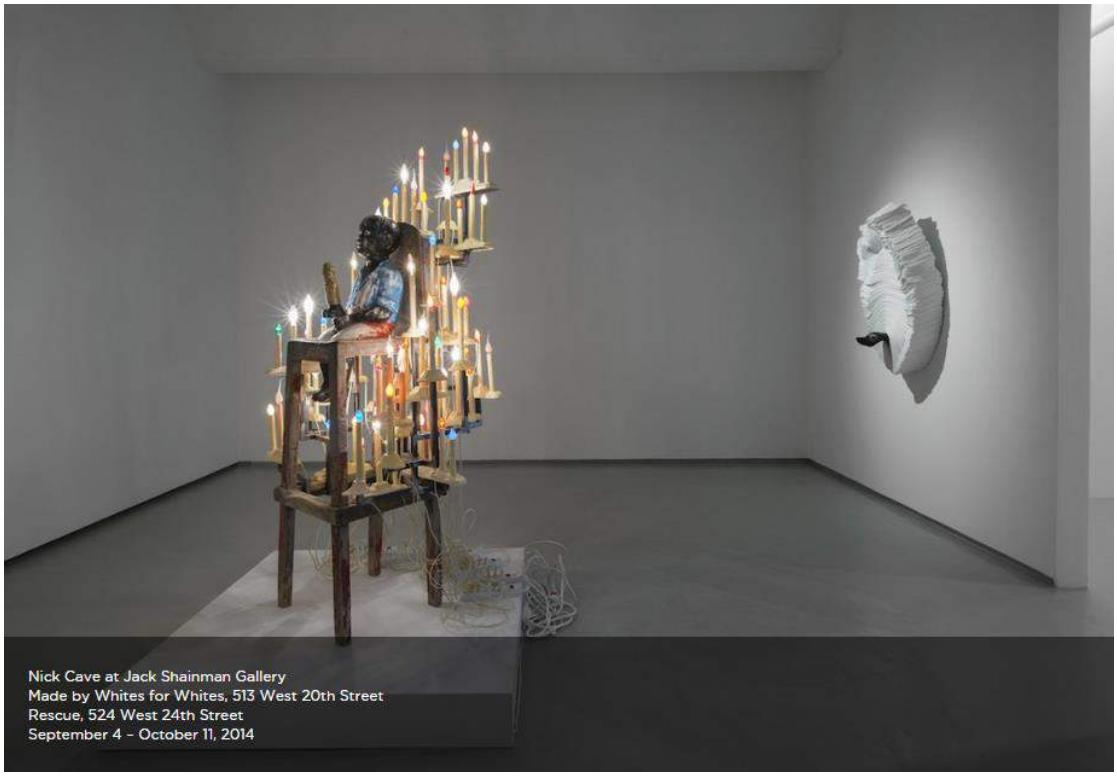
SLIDESHOW



NICK CAVE
Sea Sick, 2014
mixed media including oil paintings, ceramic container, cast hands, and plastic ship
96 x 72 x 10 1/2 inches



Nick Cave
Rescue, 2013
mixed media including ceramic birds, metal flowers, ceramic Doberman, vintage settee, and light fixture
88 x 72 x 44 inches



Nick Cave at Jack Shainman Gallery
Made by Whites for Whites, 513 West 20th Street
Rescue, 524 West 24th Street
September 4 – October 11, 2014



Nick Cave at Jack Shainman Gallery
Made by Whites for Whites, 513 West 20th Street
Rescue, 524 West 24th Street
September 4 – October 11, 2014

David Ebony's Top 10 New York Gallery Shows for September

David Ebony, Monday, September 22, 2014



Nick Cave, *Black Dog* (2013)
Sept. 8–Oct. 8: "Ever-After" at Jack Shainman

3. Nick Cave at Jack Shainman, through October 11
This two-part show of recent works by Nick Cave, occupying both of the gallery's Chelsea spaces, has two distinct themes. "Rescue," installed at 24th Street, contains a series of works featuring found ceramic dogs, each ensconced in elaborate settings, surrounded by artificial flowers and plants, glittering toys, and other found objects. In each of these pieces, Cave idealizes images of happy pups that have been saved from destruction and now reside in canine heaven. Rather than campy sentimentality, which the works' components might suggest, these sculptures effectively convey the honorable attributes of loyalty, devoted

companionship, and courage, characteristic of all cherished pets, but mere aspirations for most human beings.

The Missouri-born, Chicago-based artist is in a far more provocative mode in "Made for Whites by Whites" the second part of the exhibition, on 20th Street. Here, Cave explores the remnants of deep-seated racism that still exist in American culture, via old artifacts the artist acquired in flea markets and yard sales. Caricatures of black men in figurines and other found objects are embedded within elaborate installations that tend to neutralize the meaning of the objects by physically removing them from their original context. Nevertheless, by isolating these antique artifacts, Cave manages to underscore their vitriolic intent.

Aesthetica
Blog

September 19, 2014



Review of Nick Cave's Made By Whites For Whites, Jack Shainman Gallery, New York

Nick Cave's self-proclaimed role as a messenger is amply evident from his exhibition titled *Made By Whites For Whites* at the Jack Shainman Gallery, New York. In a recent conversation at the gallery with Denise Markonish, the curator of MASS MoCA that will host his large scale solo exhibition in 2016, Cave spoke of his social responsibility as an artist that marks a new direction and departure from his lavish, well-known Soundsuits.

Triggered by a container from the flea market fashioned to resemble a Black person's head and labeled "spittoon," Cave began to collect and investigate objects found in different parts of the USA that perpetuated racism long after Abolition in 1865. The series of works on display take on this lofty subject matter that continues to plague society today, through Cave's quintessential ability to combine playful and serious, kitsch and cerebral art while maintaining a fine balance between the two.

While the politics of representation and the significance of hiding Black identity are cloaked in the large faceless mannequins of Cave's previous sculptures, the small iconic Black figures in the current exhibition confront racism head on. Scale and identity become important points of departure between Cave's earlier performative *Soundsuits* often sized to his own body, and the diminutive static minstrel figures that deliver a tough message.

In Fear Not, Therefore (2014) and *Gone Fishin* (2014) mass made statues of young Black boys – one who purportedly froze to death while holding a lantern for George Washington, and the other of a hapless chalk figure with a pipe protruding from his mouth – showcase how these cartoonish, pitch black, red lipped figures with bulging eyes kept the myth of the ostracised other alive. Similarly, *End Upheld* (2014) presents an elaborately carved black man crouching in subservience at the base of a piano stool straining to hold the weight of the person he supports. Cave's use of collected memorabilia is an eye opener in the discourse of objects that further denigrated the perception and treatment of people of African descent. By reusing these highly charged found materials, whether it is a carnival artifact, titled *Sacrifice* (2014) in the shape of an African head, or a golliwog named *King of the Hill* (2014) whose scary black mask like face appeared in British, European and American story books, Cave contributes to the ongoing process of reassessing and undoing a long history of injustice.

Yet placed on simple bar stools, these small seemingly inconsequential figures are enshrined in elaborate arbors made of birds, flowers, chandeliers and kitschy decorative items festooned with beaded strings. By consecrating the statues with mass produced tawdry objects, Cave introduces a playful element that balances the heavy handedness of his message. Similarly, by placing the golliwog in *King of the Hill* above a stack of hand crocheted quilts, Cave gets his comeuppance by making the audience look up to the villain. In *Star Power* (2014), an installation piece concerned with the Black Power movement of the 1960s and 1970s, Cave combines the iconography of the clenched fist with words from Martin Luther Jr. and the golden net of a badminton set, to find the threshold between seriousness and humour, high and low art forms.

Never shying away from his interest in aesthetics, a trademark of his work, Cave's sculptures – regardless of whether they felicitate loyal dogs in his less potent, accompanying show titled *Rescue*, on view at Shainman's second gallery – make an equally strident presence for their enormous visual appeal.

Nick Cave: *Made by Whites for Whites*, until 11 October, Jack Shainman Gallery, 513 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011.

Bansie Vasvani

Credits
1. Nick Cave, *Star Power*, 2014, mixed media including wooden fist, vintage stools, and star quilt 84 1/4 x 88 5/8 x 1 7/8 inches © Nick Cave, Photo by James Prinz Photography, Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.

GOOD

CULTURE

Artist Nick Cave Puts Racism on Display

by Erin Joyce



For artist Nick Cave, the idea of a social consciousness has always been at the crux of his work, specifically exploring what it means to be an African American male in the 21st century. In his two-part solo exhibition currently showing at Jack Shainman's 20th and 24th Street Galleries in New York City, Cave examines the history of trauma and racism, the ideas of loyalty and trust, the objectification of the black male, and the notion of violence manifested into material objects.

Though both exhibitions, *Rescue* and *Made for Whites by Whites*, delve into themes that are congruent with previous Cave works, they are more overtly extrapolated and developed in his most recent displays. In *Rescue,* the found ceramic objects presented are indeed rescued ceramic dogs, seated on sofas and encased in elaborate cages that are fluent in the visual vocabulary of Cave, that of beads, ceramic birds, metal flora, and crystal prisms. The iconography imparted by the image of the dog is one of class and social status, breeding and the notion of superiority, faithfulness, and protection. *Rescue* delicately inspects the idea of servitude and the accompanying stigma within the black community, while also referencing the advent of the appropriation of the word "dawg" within the context of pop and hip-hop culture as a signifier of brotherhood and trust.



While *Rescue* may speak in hushed, poetic tones, *Made by Whites for Whites* is an unapologetic study of the blatant racism contained within certain material objects from the 19th and 20th centuries. During a routine flea market visit, Cave stumbled upon an enraging piece of

ephemera—a stereotypical racist rendering of a black man, with extremely dark skin, bright white eyes, and saturated red lips. While this in and of itself was incensing, the functionality of the piece was what sent Cave over the edge. “The face was labeled ‘spittoon,’” noted Cave in a recent interview. “It sent me into a fury, I was like, ‘What?’” This set Cave on a quest to find similar objects across the states. “I sought to find the most inflammatory, obscene, offensive objects I could find,” he said. The offensive commodities Cave discovered form the center of the works in the installation. Repurposed and transformed by the artist, the objects’ meaning shifts from racially-charged memorabilia to education. Cave does not attempt to tone down the objects and their intrinsically racist propaganda, nor does he eliminate the culpability of the viewer in this history of violence. Rather, he forces the viewer to see, examine, and absorb these visuals and all that is contained within them.

The arc of Cave’s career is vast, delving into different mediums, aesthetics, and forms of production; however, the narrative remains largely the same, one of the reclamation of agency in the black narrative. In addition to the installations at Jack Shainman, Cave will be featured in a major retrospective at the St. Louis Museum of Art in October, an exhibition at Michigan’s Cranbrook Art Museum in 2015, and his much-anticipated major exhibition of new work at Boston’s Mass MoCA in 2016.

Rescue and *Made for Whites by Whites* are currently on view at Jack Shainman through October 11, 2014.

Photos by James Prinz Photography. Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.

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The first part of Nick Cave's latest exhibition expands his work with found objects into "Made for Whites by Whites." Here he organizes racially loaded objects from the nineteenth century into an elaborate armature.

Nick Cave Made for Whites by Whites
Sep 4 - Oct 11, 2014

Jack Shainman Gallery | 513 West 20th Street
513 West 20th Street / +12126451701 / jackshainman.com
Tue - Sat 10am to 6pm

PRESS RELEASE



Part two of Nick Cave's latest work, "Rescue," is in the gallery's second location. Including ceramic canines the artist found and then embellished with his signature decorations, they invoke issues of pedigree and loyalty.

Nick Cave Rescue
Sep 4 - Oct 11, 2014

Jack Shainman Gallery | 524 West 24th Street
524 West 24th Street / +12123373372 / jackshainman.com
Tue - Sat 10am to 6pm

PRESS RELEASE

VOGUE

ART

Watch Nick Cave's Soundsuits in Motion at the Art World's Latest Hotspot

by Julie Bramowitz

May 19, 2014



In case you hadn't heard, upstate New York is the art world's latest hotspot. First it was the artists who, priced out of the city, decamped from Williamsburg and the East Village for the Hudson Valley's low rents and Rockwellian charms. Now the gallerists have followed. The downtown dealers **Zach Feuer** and **Joel Mesler** opened a Hudson space, Retrospective, on buzzy Warren Street in January. And on Saturday, the Chelsea-based Jack Shainman Gallery unveiled its latest outpost, The School, in Kinderhook, with a live Soundsuit performance by **Nick Cave**. Which begs the question: Is a Gagosian Catskills next?

“I don’t know,” Shainman said as a mix of gray-haired locals and slick day-trippers milled about the redbrick elementary school that he and his partner in the venture, the artist **Carlos Vega,** spent the last year and a half converting into a white-walled exhibition hall. “For me, it was a little different, because I had a weekend place here, and I just love it.” What’s not to love? This wooded stretch of Columbia County, some 20 miles from the Massachusetts border, is only an hour’s drive from a trio of formidable institutions in the nearby Berkshires—MASS MoCA, the Clark, and the Williams College Museum of Art. And the 30,000-square-foot school can display the large-scale works that much of the gallery’s roster is now producing. “Artists like **El Anatsui** need a 24-foot ceiling,” Shainman said, referring to the Ghanaian sculptor’s sprawling bottle-cap tapestries. “Sometimes we would rent space out in Bushwick, but it’s always so rushed. One morning in August, it took an hour and 45 minutes to get there. Everyone was ready to kill me! Here, if you tell them in advance that it’s a two-hour trip, and it’s really pretty, and we’ll have lunch at a great restaurant around the corner; it’s totally different.”

To create the School’s soaring ceiling heights, Spanish architect **Antonio Jiménez Torrecillas** excavated part of an old gymnasium that sat above a basement cafeteria, making for a dramatic entrée to the glittering Soundsuits installed by Cave in the main gallery. Upstairs, in alcoves called Classroom 1 and Principal’s Office, a preview of Cave’s latest series, “Rescue,” repurposes Americana bric-a-brac, often stereotypically racist, that he came across while trawling flea markets. (“Rescue” will premiere in September at Shainman’s two Manhattan locations.) Some of the assemblages—a shoeshine brush, held up to the face as a mirror—are more confrontational examinations of identity than the exuberant, shaman-esque costumes for which the artist is known. But, explained Cave, “this looking at memorabilia through the eyes of object has always been there. What’s new is working backwards and exposing what feeds the Soundsuits.”

Outside on the front lawn, a small stage was helmed by a flagpole, atop which waved **David Hammons**’s red, black, and green Stars and Stripes. The set appeared ready for a speech by Springfield’s Mayor Quimby, or, as Cave saw it, a school assembly. Instead, more than a dozen colorfully hirsute, Soundsuited performers shimmied to the percussions of West African drummers. Choreographed by the Chicago-based Cave, who trained as a dancer at Alvin Ailey, these vivid apparitions in shades of magenta, cerulean, and yellow brought a bit of the South Side (by way of Ouidah) to this sleepy hamlet, best known as the birthplace of the eighth president, Martin Van Buren. Afterward, former students surveyed the grounds of their reinvented alma mater, reminiscing about the basketball court, which has been transformed into an airy perimeter gallery, and the second-floor boys’ urinals, which now houses a sculpture selling for five figures. As one alum commented on the @jackshainmanny Instagram feed: “If you had told me in 1983 when I sat in Ms. McAusland’s third-grade class that anything this cool would ever happen here, I never would have believed it!”

The School is open by appointment at 25 Broad Street, Kinderhook, New York; for information, visit jackshainman.com.

Interview

ART

NICK CAVE'S OBJECT PERMANENCE

By ALEXANDRIA SYMONDS

May 19, 2014













It's a beautiful late-spring Saturday in Kinderhook, New York, and sculptor and performance artist Nick Cave is standing on the lawn of what used to be Martin Van Buren High School and is now a brand-new exhibition space, The School, operated by Cave's gallerist, Jack Shainman. Cave wears a black t-shirt and a pair of Nike Air sneakers; his heavily muscled arms are crossed. He's watching the rehearsal of a 25-minute performance piece incorporating more than a dozen of his signature Soundsuits, human-sized wearable sculptures. When the real performance begins a few hours later for a sizable audience of press, guests of the gallery, and members of the Kinderhook community, it will serve to inaugurate both The School itself and a sizable exhibition of Cave's work inside.

The newly-renovated School, which at present features a combination of sunny, white-walled gallery spaces and rawer, gutted ones, seems made for Cave's work. Long corridors allow for the Soundsuits to be experienced sequentially; a corner turned downstairs reveals a massive installation of them, along with other sculptural works, situated in the center of what was once a gymnasium. Upstairs, in and around the old principal's office, is newer work, a preview of what Cave will exhibit in a large solo show at Shainman's New York gallery in September.

Much of it is inspired by found objects with propagandistic racist histories: most notably, a bust of a black face, with exaggerated features and a hinged head, that had been sold as a spittoon. It is prominently featured in Cave's new piece *Sea Sick*. Next door, a cabinet on the floor houses a variety of similarly inflammatory objects. "I'm not really interested in offending anyone," Cave explains, "as opposed to bringing you on a journey and creating an experience. And through this experience, we can then start to dissect and talk about the deeper context that's sublime or hidden within the work." Cave is increasingly interested in recontextualizing these objects in order to cast a new light on their place in American history: turning his viewers into students.

ALEXANDRIA SYMONDS: To me, it makes a lot of sense to see your work in a decommissioned educational space—you perform and exhibit a lot at colleges, and you teach. When you first came here, what about the space spoke to you?

NICK CAVE: I've been up here maybe about six times as the space has been developing, and it really wasn't until maybe the first of January when Jack [Shainman] asked me if I would be interested in doing an installation in the space, and then also premiering a little bit of the work that will be shown this fall in New York City. So I thought about it and then I told them it would be fine. And then the more I came here and started to walk through the space and was thinking about layouts and creating these vignettes, these moments of splendor, let's say. As people move through the space, how do you also use art as a directional device, in terms of how a space may flow, and how does an audience move through a space, and what do they encounter as they are wandering through a space? That was important, to create —as they move through the space—these moments that continue to sort of heighten one's senses. It's really about providing that kind of insight, that vision, turning that corner and seeing that space.

SYMONDS: Were there any features of the building in specific that you wanted to explore or exploit?

CAVE: The principal's office was a really wonderful opportunity to create—I wanted to put a central piece there that really could support the space, again looking at the architecture. Then I was interested in these raw spaces, there's two sculptures in a couple of the raw spaces—to reflect on what was here before. Those spaces were like the ruins of what is now being regentrified and redesigned in terms of a different kind of sparseness. So it was really nice to land a sculpture within

those areas, to reflect. It was nice bringing contemporary meaning, sculptural form, with the historic aspect of the building.

SYMONDS: Which is something that gets explored within the pieces themselves, too.

CAVE: Mm-hmm!

SYMONDS: Now that you've been doing the Soundsuits for over two decades, speaking of history, do you feel there's a personal history to the medium at this point, that they have a narrative of their own?

CAVE: I think the medium, in this particular body of work, is always in flux. Yesterday, I just thought of a new Soundsuit structure. I created a brand-new structure for Frieze that has never been seen before. So it's always evolving; it's always rooted within the history of dance, the history of performance, costume, couture. So it remains relevant, but it's also about me expanding and seeing what continues to be an evolution. The materials continue to evolve. It's still based around a consciousness; it's still looking at the use of excess surplus, the recycling, the renegotiation of an object. And whether or not it's rooted solely in black history, it is, but yet it still has the ability to be organic.

SYMONDS: To expand in multiple directions.

CAVE: Totally. I'm always writing new ideas down, but I'm also in this sort of transitional space moment, too. This fall, my show is not going to be Soundsuits at all, in the gallery. So I'm excited about that new direction and that body of work, as well.

SYMONDS: Are you doing more of the big sculptural pieces, like the one in the lobby of the school in this show?

CAVE: It's going to be that; it's also going to be what was up in those rooms.

SYMONDS: That kind of cabinet of curiosities.

CAVE: Yes.

SYMONDS: Has that been shown before?

CAVE: That's new for the fall. All those rooms that were facing the front of the building, that's all the new work that's going to be in New York. Half of it. The other half we're still producing in Chicago. But it's still sort of influenced and inspired by a found object.

SYMONDS: I wanted to ask a little about the black history objects—how do you see their place in the contemporary art market?

CAVE: I think that exhibition is going to be quite spectacular, because what we've done is we've been traveling around the U.S. looking for—it started out when I found this bust of this black figure, face, and then I read the description, and it said "spittoon." And it just took me—I just flipped *out*, girl, I was like, *What?!*

SYMONDS: This was at a flea market? Where?

CAVE: This was upstate New York.

SYMONDS: Wow. You weren't in, like, Alabama.

CAVE: Oh, no, no. The most oppressive, obscure, demoralizing objects have mostly been found on the east part of the U.S. We've been flying to Seattle and shopping our way back, all over the country. So on the wall in the exhibition will also be a black-and-white photo of the image, where it was found, the year it was made, any information we can find that can then support it as it's now being reintroduced and re-elevated into a different way of reviewing and responding. So it's this call and response. And then as you leave the gallery, there will be newspaper that will be a take-away that will talk about the objects. There will be two essays written. And then there will be a map in the center that will have the data, where everything was located. It's really about looking at the role of propaganda within an object, and then racial consumerism through history. It really starts to be and talk about a topic that I have not really heard much about from that sort of perspective.

SYMONDS: Again, makes sense to do that in a school.

CAVE: Yeah, and also, in New York, I want to set up a different type of reading, a different presentation that is an educational sort of experience.

SYMONDS: How does it feel, when you're searching for these objects, to be deliberately looking for something so deeply problematic?

CAVE: Well, they're always out there! Maybe the salt shakers, or what have you. But it's really looking for those objects that are the extreme. I don't know where they're at, I'm just out and about. And it just happens that it shows up.

SYMONDS: Are you having conversations with the people who are selling these pieces about their histories? Do they tend to be pretty knowledgeable about the circumstances behind what they're selling?

CAVE: Totally.

SYMONDS: So there's an awareness there? They're productive conversations?

CAVE: Totally. They're very productive.

SYMONDS: But you feel like the sense of history you see in the flea markets isn't something you're finding outside that world?

CAVE: I think when we creep on the flea markets and the antique malls, again, it's always that these objects are signifiers. They're there. And whether or not one dismisses it, it's there. But for me, I'm not interested in the ones that we dismiss. I'm more interested in the ones that are really heavy in terms of the despairing quality and the message behind it. I'm interested in the message behind them all, but again, I'm sort of collecting, again, these objects that are very extreme. I can't believe that they're there.

SYMONDS: That someone spent time creating that in the first place.

CAVE: I have a stool, an amazing mahogany stool, that's a black man holding up the seat. It was a piano stool. I'm just like, *What?* So it's just not just any—it's not just a Mammy ashtray that becomes these collectibles. It's really at a different level.

SYMONDS: How do you feel about these pieces in the context of primarily white collectors in the market? Do you have any problem with a white collector buying your spittoon piece and displaying it in their home to their white friends?

CAVE: Absolutely not. Because again, I am providing—my artist's statement is all there, the newspaper is there, and it's me heightening and renegotiating the role of this object and forcing it to take on a different type of presence and respect, in a sense. I don't really care who collects my work, black, white, red, yellow. You have to also be consciously aware of, what does this mean in your home? And how are you supporting this work and the message behind the work?

SYMONDS: When you find objects, and I'm sure you must have millions of things that are in flux at any given time when you're working on pieces—that effect of combination, is that just intuitive? Do you just *know* which objects are meant to land in which order?

CAVE: It's very intuitive, the way that I approach my work. I only buy something that has a pulse. I may not know how I'm going to use it, but I know it has a pulse and it has multiple readings—if I shift it one way or another, it can be read this way or it can be read that way, but both readings are critical and very much ground the work. So that's really how I negotiate whether or not I'm going to purchase something. I may not know what I'm going to do with it—I had that rug for maybe six months. But the rug, I just knew by looking at that rug that the center was the placement of something amazing. And then this radiation or ray of light around it is what's going to elevate. So it's these sort of things. It's looking at an object, the impulse, the pulse, the implications of what's available within an object, is really critical.

SYMONDS: To come back to the Soundsuits—you've said in statements that one of their purposes is to hide race, class, gender, all these visible signifiers. But obviously you're a dancer, you work out, you're very in tune with your body, and the Soundsuits very clearly emphasize movement. How do you see those two things interacting—the movement of the body versus the body being hidden?

CAVE: The body becomes the carrier for the work. It's not really about the physical body; it really becomes the apparatus that carries and moves the work. I don't really consider the body as much; I look at it as a tool. It's really about a level of expression; using the body to heighten an expression or to build a character.

SYMONDS: I wondered whether you see the suits themselves as characters, and whether the dancer wearing one at any given time has any effect on how the suit should be received.

CAVE: Yeah! When I'm working with performers, it is a process that everyone has to go through. I really don't allow you to wear it, first. I allow you to look at it, touch it, imagine what it would feel like on. And then, because it's a transformation that one has to be willing to deliver. Once you transition in, then it's all about conviction and how you become one with the object. If there's restricted movement on your left side, how does that become full in terms of that motion? It's really not about dance, it's more about movement, and movement becomes more of an expression, for me. And I really want to dismiss and remove the wearer; therefore, it becomes one. So we're becoming a collective whole and creating this sort of complex and universal sort of experience.

SYMONDS: Hearing you say that while the drummers [*outside, rehearsing*] come together...

CAVE: I know, I'm like, *girl!* They get it! Isn't it crazy? Even this, here—I've never met any of these people, and just to come together with a group of people, I mean! Some of these guys haven't met each other, some of them came on the train from New York, and they're now, right now, creating a score. And then they're going to work with the dancers, who are coming from three different schools in the area. Again, it's, how can I create work that becomes a collective whole by the work being the central magnet that draws everyone together?

SYMONDS: Even just in the last 15 minutes, hearing them all starting in different places and come together—it's really cool.

CAVE: It speaks about, how do we really want to negotiate how we move through the world? Do we want to continue to be in these isolated pockets, or are there ways in which we can somehow come to the center and interface and overlap and integrate and be more full?

SYMONDS: That's about as much as you can ask from art, right?

CAVE: Yeah, period. Life.

NICK CAVE'S EXHIBITION AT THE SCHOOL IS ON VIEW AT 25 BROAD STREET, KINDERHOOK, NEW YORK, NOW.

VOGUE

ART

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by Julie Bramowitz

May 19, 2014



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Nick Cave

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY KRISTINE LARSEN

THE TOP FLOOR APARTMENT in the three-story building on Chicago's South Side brims with Nick Cave's personal collection of objects and art. "It's a meditative space," he says. "I'm a collector, but I also need a space that speaks a lot about my destiny."

"This piece," he continues, gesturing toward a magnificent, spindly garment from Cameroon hanging in his living room, is "my nemesis, or one of the things that speaks in terms of truth and a place that I want to get to in my own work. This vestment made out of porcupine quills—the tactile quality of it, the limited use of a color pattern—it has a purpose. It was used within a community around ritual and performance, and that's really an important part of my work right now."

Known primarily for the wearable sculptures known as soundsuits, Cave also produces vertical assemblages—all in his studio, on the second floor of his building. Some 40 new pieces, both assemblages and soundsuits, are currently on view in his solo exhibition at the Denver Art Museum. "This new body of work is based around these ceramic dogs that I've been finding. In every piece, there's a dog that I've collected at a flea market or a secondhand store. And so it's ideas of loyalty, ownership, protection," Cave says. "I'm rescuing these dogs. They're not real, but there is this sort of loyalty."

"When I need materials, I really just walk outside my door because that's where my resources are," Cave explains. One of his earliest assemblages, *I Wouldn't Bet Against It,* from 1999, hangs in his kitchen. Like his other assemblages, it's made from existing materials: an Op art canvas, a pile of dice, and a plastic statue of a person praying. "Found, found, found," he intones. "You can find anything, but it's critical how you put A with W. I just find these things and hold onto them, and I don't know what's going to happen to them. But at some point, the universe will bring these elements together." MP





FOUND ART
"This is actually a plate that I found at a flea market. To think this is a portrait of perhaps the person the artist adores and there's all this symbolism woven into the sweater. it's very romantic. I love the idea of knitting a portrait into a sweater. It's just like, Oh my God!"



PIN BASKETS
"These are all found, these pin baskets. I created this whole webbing inspired by them. You buy a kit, and it comes with pins and these plastic beads, and you just follow the instructions. It's not that they're all made different; they all come out of the same thing."



CHANDELIERS
"I'm looking to make this floral sort of garden and invade an entire mass part of it in crystal, as if a frost has come through. So I have to buy the whole damn chandelier in order to get the crystals."

BARKLEY HENDRICKS PAINTING
"Barkley was the beginning of artists mixing this floral motif with urban youth. When I was like, 29, there was an exhibition of black artists, where I saw my first Hendricks work. But I had no money, I couldn't afford it. From that day on I've been enamored with his work. Then I was able to get one."



TOY BOX
"This is inspiring to me. Putting it on top of the stool brings it right to the circus, like it's part of an act. And he has this whole world orbiting around his head. It's stacking, building, and then underneath the whole thing is this yellow and gold radiant light. It's vertical collaging."

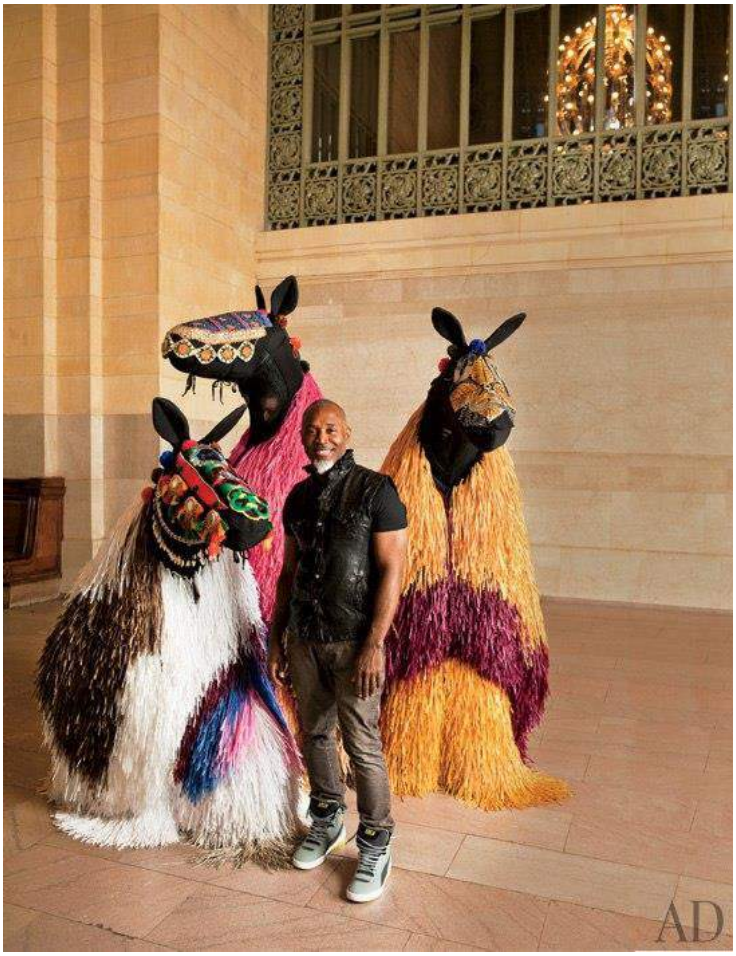
CERAMIC FRUIT
"These are nostalgic elements that become this amazing endearment. I started to think about the body and creating this tree of life, and looking at the family tree as another source of inspiration."



ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST
THE INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE OF DESIGN
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ARTIST NICK CAVE DEBUTS NEW WORKS AT THE DENVER ART MUSEUM

Text by Samuel Cochran
May 1, 2013



Nick Cave stands with his raffia horses at Grand Central Terminal. Photo: Michael Weschler

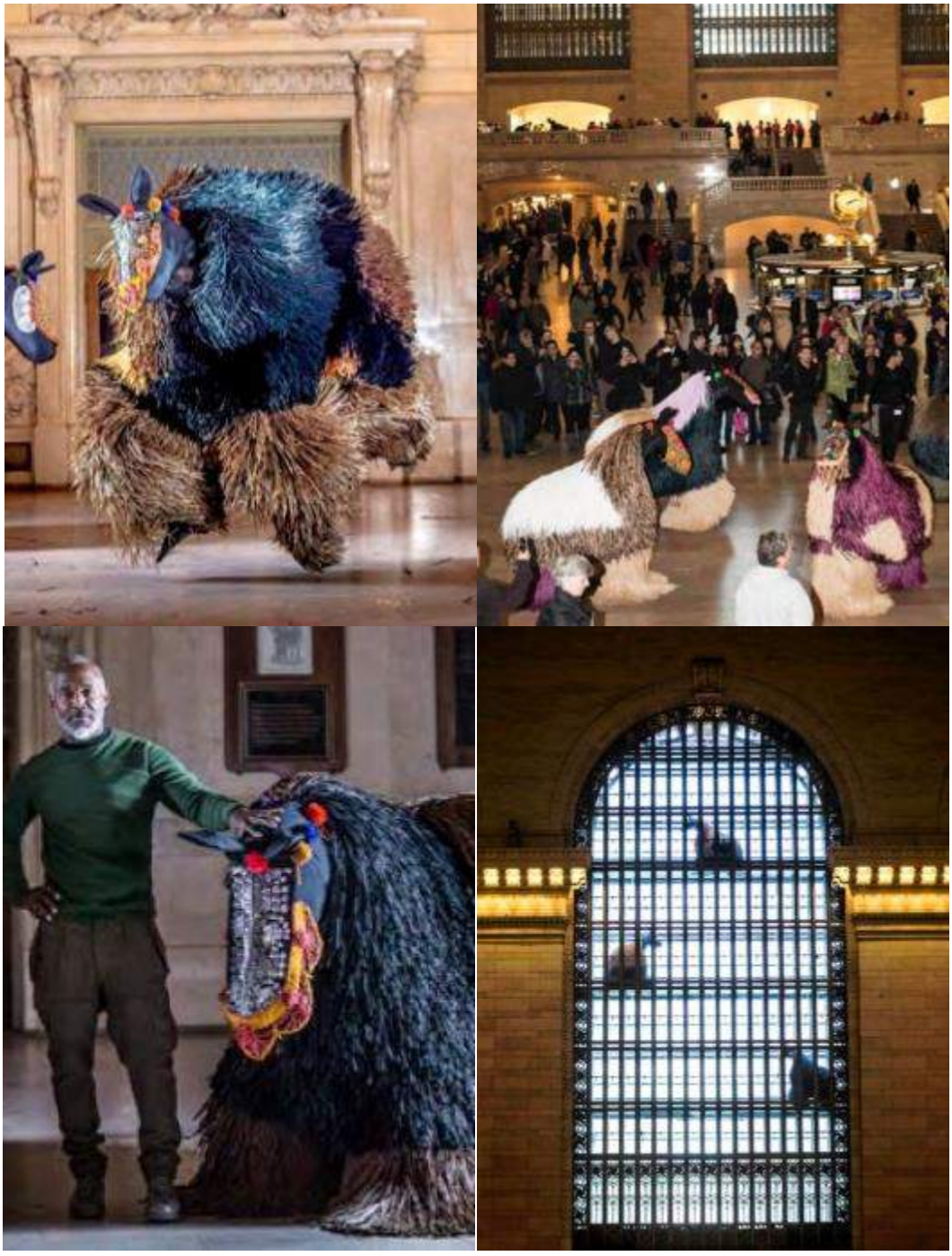
Travelers passing through New York's Grand Central Terminal earlier this spring may well have pinched themselves upon seeing a Technicolor herd of rustling raffia horses dancing to live music inside the Beaux Arts landmark. Part of an installation conceived by Chicago artist Nick Cave in collaboration with Creative Time and MTA Arts for Transit, the spectacle was meant to feel like fantasy. "We tend not to dream anymore," laments Cave, who is known for crafting fanciful works of wearable art (which he calls soundsuits) embellished with an array of natural materials and found objects. On June 9, the artist (pictured in Grand Central with three of his performers) will debut his freshest feats of imagination in an exhibition of new work at the Denver Art Museum. Titled "Nick Cave: Sojourn," the show includes 20 never-before-seen suits, dance presentations, and, in a departure, freestanding nonfigurative sculptures.*denverartmuseum.org*

Interview

ART

NICK CAVE's HEARD DANCES THROUGH GRAND CENTRAL STATION

By ANN BINLOT



Binlot, Ann. "Nick Cave's Heard Dances Through Grand Central Station." *Interview Magazine* (April 2013): illustrated.

If you've wandered through New York's Grand Central Terminal over the past few days, do not worry. You're not hallucinating. This week, from 11 am to 2 pm, Alvin Ailey dancers dressed in colorful, life-size horse costumes will dance to the beat of pounding drums in the station's Vanderbilt Hall, transforming it into a land of wonder.

Part performance piece, part art installation, *HEARD•NY* comes from the imagination of artist Nick Cave (not to be confused with the reclusive musician and author also named Nick Cave). Already known in the art world for his electrifying soundsuits, Cave teamed up with the Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) Arts for Transit and Creative Time to produce his first work of public art in the Big Apple.

Interview caught up with the artist to discuss *HEARD•NY*, what it was like to stage such an ambitious project in Grand Central Terminal, and the meaning of it all.

ANN BINLOT: You've been busy the last few days.

NICK CAVE: It's been great!

BINLOT: How was this project conceived?

CAVE: Creative Time had been talking to me about doing a project, and they were approached by the MTA (Metropolitan Transportation Authority) with Grand Central Station's 100th Anniversary. The MTA had always wanted to do a project with me as well, so it was the perfect match at the perfect time.

BINLOT: Of all the places in New York you could have staged this performance, why Grand Central Station?

CAVE: I always had thought about bringing a performance, not really sure where they would be. It's the most incredible space to work in. I'm there every day. It's so extraordinary that it's a different audience every day. You don't know what's going to happen until you do a show and just how committed they are in terms of support, and really rallying around the Alvin Ailey School. It has really been a remarkable experience.

BINLOT: Have you created horses before?

CAVE: No! With this project, I was thinking about Grand Central Station and how it functions and its role. There's all these crossings, and people passing, going from point A to point B. I was thinking about that as a point of reference. Then I was thinking about a dream state, this place of imagination in our heads. And as an artist, just thinking about what is my sense of responsibility as an artist doing public work, and how can that inform the project. I was really thinking of getting us back to this dream state, this place where we imagine and think about how and how we exist and function in the world. With the state of affairs on the world, I think we tend not to take the time out to create that dream space in our heads.

BINLOT: Why horses?

CAVE: The idea of looking at early puppetry. As a kid, you could take your sock and put it on your hand and make a puppet—it's really coming out of that headspace. Right on site, they're changing in front of the audience and the moment they make that transformation. You don't know when they got dressed. What is that moment when things shift and become believable? It was a form and image that I felt was very magical in that same sense.

BINLOT: You used materials from all over the world when constructing the costumes. Can you explain the premise behind *HEARD•NY*?

CAVE: The bodies of the horses are made of kinetic raffia. We were playing on the word "herd," but we wanted "heard," in relationship to sound. The sound is so incredible, in terms of how it's orchestrated, and this collaboration with the musicians really becomes a piece in itself; it's really spectacular. But then all of the horses have a face mask, and those are created by textiles and prints from all over the world—really speaking about the world unifying as a global whole. The interesting thing is that with the dancers partnering up as pairs, they are building their own horse characteristics. You find you're having this amazing encounter with a stallion, or a horse that may be a show horse. It's these characteristics that help support and build identity.

BINLOT: How was it to work with the Alvin Ailey School again?

CAVE: I had classes with Alvin Ailey that were affiliated with the University of Missouri, Kansas City, and then I did summer intensive in New York when I was in my undergraduate studies, so I do have a connection to that sort of practice. It was 60 students that we have to work with; and to find a company that really has that many students attending, it's sort of a big demand. It really worked out in our favor to reconnect with Alvin Ailey and return to that relationship.

BINLOT: Why did you decide to mix it up and have different kinds of performances?

CAVE: It's a performance that's very isolated, so with the MTA and its restrictions and regulations, we really had to keep that in mind.

BINLOT: You've used dyed human hair, sisal, plastic buttons, beads, sequins, and feathers in your soundsuits before. Since these costumes were meant to move, did you have to use different materials?

CAVE: Yeah. When we're doing sculptural work, then my material choices can be very broad in scope. But when it comes to performance work, we have to take a different approach. We have to look at the weight. We have to look at stress that is placed on the object. We have to design and be concerned about the physical body in these works. It was a lot of decisions that are made around the institution of the team, the material, the expanse of time that the physical body can move in these pieces in a progressive way.

BINLOT: What were the biggest obstacles you faced in producing *HEARD•NY*?

CAVE: It's really coming into a public space, Grand Central Station, and working within these limitations of where can the performance be held. The flow of traffic and the movement has to maintain itself—we cannot interfere with that activity—and so it was interesting working under those sort of regulations. It's amazing what's happening. It's more people than they had anticipated coming to the performances. They're having to shut down one of the entrances in the station because of the amount of people that keeping showing up for the performances. I'm excited about it though.

BINLOT: Speaking of that, how was it working with the MTA on the logistics? Did they have any security concerns?

CAVE: Yesterday we had a meeting where they were going to increase security within the space as well because of the volume of people. I was told that this is a terrorist target, so they really have to take all these considerations. It's amazing. They all take photographs. It's interesting to see the attention, and it is stopping people moving through to take a moment and engage.

BINLOT: How do you feel each time when you see the audience react to the performance?

CAVE: Oh, my God. It's amazing to think, because I thought, "Oh, I'm going to be at these every day, I'm going to go crazy." I am telling you, it is unbelievable, and the kids are just—oh my, God—so emotional and so involved, and so connected. It's unreal.

BINLOT: What's next for you after this project wraps up?

CAVE: Ooh! I open a solo show at the Denver Art Museum in June. It's going to be an exhibition of 50 new works. We're looking forward to that exhibition; there will be a performance component at the end of June. We will go right back to the studio and be progressively in the middle of that. We're working with three dance companies in Denver. The thing that's nice is that, when we move about the country, we work with a different group of performers. If I can provide an experience for someone, that really becomes an amazing life lesson or revelation. It's very much a part of what my beliefs are.

HEARD•NY *RUNS AT GRAND CENTRAL TERMINAL THROUGH SUNDAY, MARCH 31. FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT THE CREATIVE TIME WEBSITE.*

Art in America INTERNATIONAL REVIEW
March 26, 2013

Nick Cave’s Magical Horses at Grand Central

by tracy zwick

Nick Cave is into magic, and with the help of students from the Ailey School, he is doling it out at Grand Central Terminal twice a day all this week. "We don't dream anymore," Cave said to members of the press immediately before Monday's debut performance of his new piece, *HEARD•NY*, which involves 30 dancing horses—Ailey students costumed in Cave's signature "soundsuits." "I want to bring us back to a place where we dream, and get out of our day-day-day rituals," Cave said



Cave, a sculptor, dancer, designer and professor (in the School of the Art Institute of Chicago's fashion program), along with his collaborators, enjoyed a warm response Monday from crowds three-deep in Vanderbilt Hall. *Heard* attracted families with young children, tourists, commuters, students on spring break, and at least one celebrity (Michael Stipe was in the 2:00 crowd). The horse soundsuits themselves were the stars of the show, with bodies constructed of ecstatically hued synthetic raffia, and masks amalgamating rich Indian, African and Tibetan fabrics, trim and embellishment. Both visually arresting and aurally stimulating, the moving sculptures swooshed gracefully or thrashed convulsively depending on the movements of the dancers and the instrumentation.

The children in attendance Monday were particularly enthusiastic. "That one looks like a panda!" one young visitor called out as a performance began. "It feels like straw-like a hula skirt," said 11-year-old Sophia Modica from Portland, Ore., petting a mare who bowed her head, allowing a caress. Donovan Phelps, an 8-year-old from Eugene, Ore., left with a souvenir: a handful of raffia. "They're shedding!" he reported with glee.

The horses walk, dance, wriggle, sashay, throb and roll around in two separate rings within Vanderbilt Hall for 10 to 15 minutes each "crossing," as each performance is called. They begin calmly, as if waking up, with free-form, naturalistic movement guided by soothing harp chords and a mild conga drum beat supplied by one harpist and one percussionist per ring. The horses form a line, walking in a circle. About five minutes in, there's a momentary break in the rhythm, and the drum takes over, crowding out the harp. Tension builds. The horses become frenzied, and the choreography gives way to an orgy of unstructured movement. Think of horses break dancing. Each one actually breaks apart, its bottom half splitting off into its own alien form, suggesting a physical separation of spirit from self. But soon the mystical harp supersedes the thumping drum, and calls everyone gently back to reality. Each half rejoins its other, assuming once more its majestic horse form. The spell is broken.

Performances take place through Mar. 31, with "Crossing Times" at 11:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. Open to the public and free of charge. No tickets required.



The New York Times

ART & DESIGN

Watch Out for the Horses on Your Way to the Train



Julieta Cervantes for The New York Times

Students from the Ailey School at a dress rehearsal on Sunday at Grand Central Terminal for “Heard NY,” a performance that takes place there this week.

By MELENA RYZIK

Published: March 24, 2013

Commuters in Grand Central Terminal will encounter a new obstacle to making the train on time this week: 30 dancing horses.

It’s part of “Heard NY,” a site-specific performance by the Chicago artistNick Cave, in collaboration with dancers from the Ailey School. Mr. Cave, known for his Soundsuits — costumelike sculptures that make noise as they move — has created the life-size horses out of colorful raffia. Each fits two dancers and rustles like a corn field when the herd “grazes” in Vanderbilt Hall or suddenly breaks into choreography, set to live percussion, steps from the main concourse.

The idea was to produce a dreamlike vision worth stopping for, Mr. Cave said, as people are rushing through the terminal. “You’re stopped in your tracks,” he said, “and then you do get on the train and you get home. How do you share this, how do you describe — just imagine, coming into Grand Central and you run into 30 horses? That’s when it becomes this transformative moment.”

The piece, a production of the public arts group Creative Time and the Metropolitan Transportation Authority’s Arts for Transit program, has been in development for over a year. It is to include two performances daily, and the Soundsuits will be on view to the public as sculptures when they’re not galloping across the floor. This is Mr. Cave’s first public arts project in New York.

Nato Thompson, chief curator of Creative Time, said it fit with the group’s mission to make arresting art in unexpected places.

“Grand Central is an iconic public space not only for New Yorkers but for the world,” he said. “We wanted something magical and family friendly that captured the spirit of a city on the move.”

On Saturday Mr. Cave and his choreographer, William Gill, met their dancers for the first time and began auditioning them to be either the front or the back of a horse. Don’t be disappointed if you’re the back, Mr. Cave advised. “Don’t think technique, think character,” Mr. Gill said. Mr. Cave added, “Don’t even think horse,” as the students sashayed and rolled across an Ailey studio.

They were looking for dancers who could bring personality to the suits. “Do you want to be a stallion, or do you want to be a lazy horse, a horse that just sort of trots?” Mr. Cave asked.

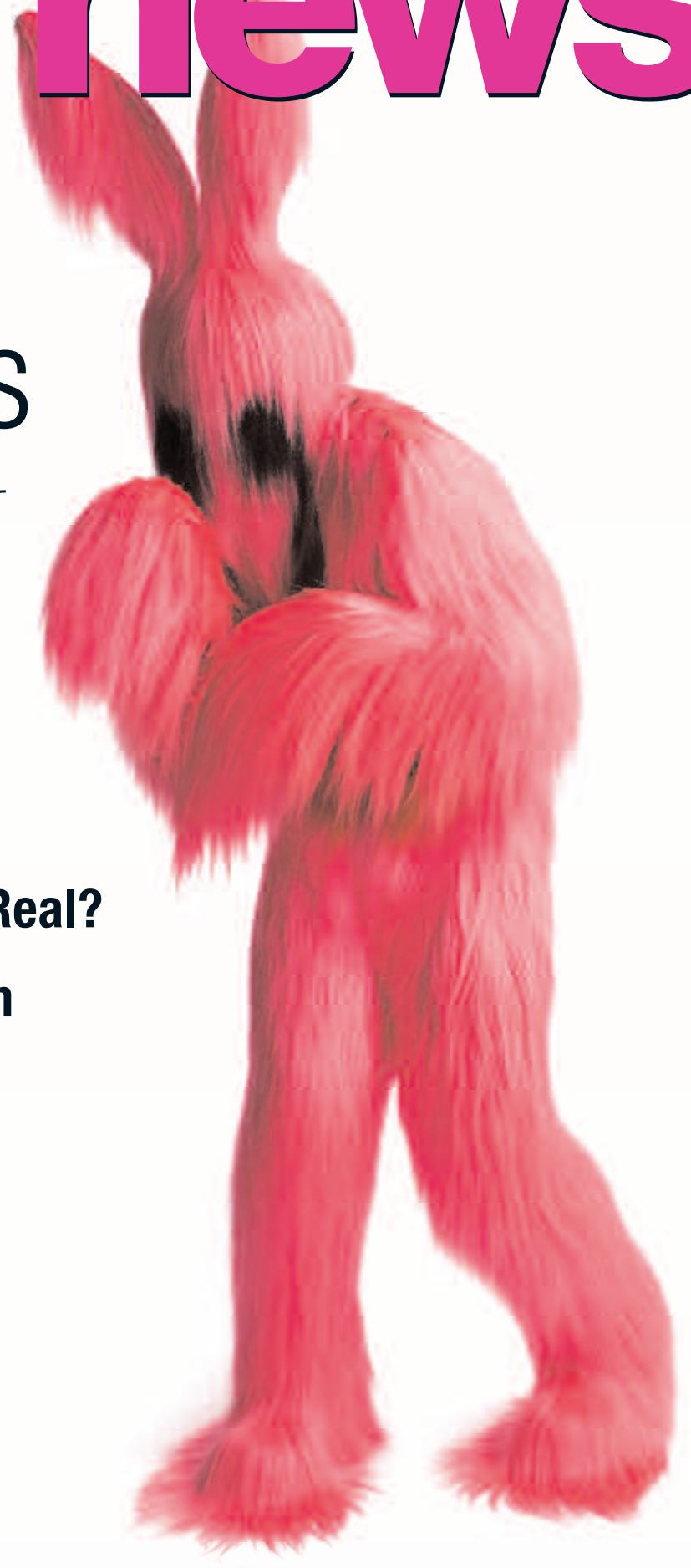
A dancer in a green T-shirt looked to his partner. “I think we should be aloof,” he whispered, “the Eeyore of the group.”

On Sunday they had their first performance, a public dress rehearsal in Grand Central. Passers-by stopped to gawk, cameraphones aloft, as the horses — heads standing eight feet high, rears bent over, yogalike — shimmied around a makeshift paddock in Vanderbilt Hall. One kicked up a little leg: a city pony, playing to the crowd.

A version of this article appeared in print on March 25, 2013, on page C3 of the New York edition with the headline: Watch Out for the Horses on Your Way to the Train.

ARTnews
JUNE 2012

Suit Up! Nick Cave's Spectacular Soundsuits



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The silver sparkle of this 2011 Soundsuit comes from mother of pearl buttons and bugle beads.

Dressing For Excess

Nick Cave's spectacular Soundsuits, adorned with sequins, doilies, toys, masks, and much more, straddle the worlds of performance, art, and fashion

BY ANN LANDI

THE GENESIS of Nick Cave's first Soundsuit, as the artist recalls it, was a turning point in a coming-of-age story.

The young black artist, enraged and baffled by news accounts of the beating of Rodney King in Los Angeles in March of 1991, retreated to the woods to ponder what he had seen and read of the police brutality toward another young black man. Officers at the scene had described King as seeming larger than life and terrifyingly "buffed out." "What does that look like?" Cave wondered. "As a black male, I started thinking about that in relationship to me and feeling an urgency to respond. I'd been in situations like King's. Luckily, I was surrounded by other people, but I wondered what would have happened otherwise.

"I was looking down at the ground and saw a twig and thought maybe I could make a sculptural piece out of twigs," recalls Cave. He fashioned a pair of pants and a jacket bristling with branches. Then he donned the "sculpture" and realized that when he moved the twigs rattled and crackled in a provocatively belligerent way. This was the first of the wearable sculptures that have since become known as Soundsuits.

Ann Landi is an ARTnews *contributing editor.*

THIS PAGE AND OPPOSITE: JAMES PRINZ PHOTOGRAPHY/COURTESY THE ARTIST AND JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY, NEW YORK (2)

"It became a kind of coating, an armor of sorts, protecting my spirit," Cave says. It was also scary to behold. "In order to be heard," Cave learned from the King incident, "you had to be loud, you had to be aggressive, and you had to compel fear."

Though his first Soundsuit was a pointed response to an episode of gross injustice, Cave has since ventured only occasionally and lightly into racially charged terrain. His natural inclination is toward whimsy, surprise, and outlandish theatricality, and the Soundsuits, which embody those qualities, have been gaining an audience over the last two decades, straddling the worlds of performance, art, and fashion. They are made from all manner of stuff: crocheted doilies, lushly sequined fabrics, hundreds of buttons, flea-market toys and tchotchkes, and even brightly dyed human hair. Many stand almost ten feet tall; some have soaring towerlike hoods that completely obscure the face and head; others have animal faces or headdresses like candelabras from a crazed funhouse. Many do make noise. In all, Cave estimates that he and his assistants have created about 500 Soundsuits, which have been used in performances nationwide and have entered mainstream collections across the country.

CAVE HIMSELF, at 52, has the sculpted face of a Benin bust and the toned physique of a dedicated gym rat. His high-ceilinged loft in Chicago's South Loop is a surprisingly serene oasis of neutral colors, thriving plants, a gleaming designer kitchen, and a collection of works by big-name artists like Kerry James Marshall and Glenn Ligon as well as talented students he has encountered in his years of teaching at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Downstairs in the same building, in three studios that can accommodate as many as 25 assistants at a time, the day-to-day business of making the Soundsuits and other sculptures proceeds. Storage spaces contain neatly shelved ephemera culled from visits to flea markets, bolts of fabric, buttons, and gaudy costume-shop frippery.

Cave was born and spent his childhood in Fulton, Missouri; the family moved to nearby Columbia when he was 13, and his soft voice still carries traces of a Southern accent. He is the second of seven brothers, one of whom died from an infection after accidentally swallowing a penny. (A sculpture called *Trust*, made up of lone gloves and mittens, commemorates the loss.) His mother, who worked as an administrator at the University of Missouri, came from a family of 16, so "seven boys was no big deal for her," Cave says. His father died when he was 17, but he describes his large clan of uncles, aunts, and grandparents as hugely supportive and nurturing. "Happiness was a big thing with us," he recalls, "not that they understand art, but they respected my ambitions."

Cave was about ten when he first saw the Jackson 5 on television, at which time Michael Jackson would have been the same age. "This group of five brothers gave me role models," Cave says. "They presented an amazing magnitude



Made of upholstery and twigs, with a wicker-basket face, this 2011 Soundsuit resembles a prehistoric animal.



Nick Cave in his Chicago loft: "I'd like to think of myself as an artist with a civic responsibility," he says.

of possibilities. I could relate to that life, for some strange reason. I could connect to it. I told my mother, 'I'm going to be famous like Michael Jackson.' I was not thinking about becoming a performing artist, but I knew that I was going to be an artist, not knowing what that meant."

Eight years later, enrolled at the Kansas City Art Institute in Missouri, he pursued multiple interests, studying performance, fiber art, sculpture, and dance. He spent summers training with the Alvin Ailey dance troupe in New York while pursuing his B.F.A. "All of my work has involved movement of some sort," Cave comments. "I've always interfaced with multiple disciplines. In grad school at Cranbrook, people said, 'You've got to find a focus, find a direction,' and I couldn't do it. And thank god I didn't."

After graduating with an M.F.A. from the Cranbrook Academy of Art, Cave accepted a teaching position at the Art Institute of Chicago and continued developing the Soundsuit concept, scoring solo shows in places like the Art Museum of Northern Illinois University in DeKalb and the Holter Museum of Art in Helena, Montana. In 2004, Greg Cameron, then deputy director of the Art Institute of Chicago, sent New York dealer Jack Shainman a packet of images of Cave's work, and Shainman was immediately intrigued. Since 2006, Cave has been showing regularly with Shainman; and a joint venture with Mary Boone Gallery last fall marked a triumphal doubleheader in New York, with works selling for $85,000 to $125,000.

A COMPREHENSIVE show of Soundsuits, called "Nick Cave: Meet Me at the Center of the Earth," has been touring the country since 2009 and is now at the Boise Art Museum (through November 4). But what really gave the artist exposure to a mass public was an eight-page spread in the September 2010 issue of *Vogue*. Fashion photographer Raymond Meier had seen the Soundsuits at the Fowler Museum in Los Angeles and decided they would make the perfect foil for a "fun fall accessories" section in the magazine. Cave posed in all of the outfits, flying in the air on specially built apparatuses while brandishing designer handbags and boots.

The full roster of Cave's activities, aside from his signature suits, is formidable. He has also been involved in fabricating sculptures that incorporate vintage figurines—most notably grinning black jockeys and minstrels—supporting treelike assemblages of ceramic and metal birds, flowers, and other accidental finds. And since the mid-1990s, he has been doing "performance labs" in such locales as the Seattle Art Museum, the University of North Texas in Denton, and the Savannah College of Art and Design in Georgia. These entail using as many as 40 Soundsuits to build a performance, calling on the talents of local musicians and working with young people, usually from underprivileged backgrounds. "I'd like to think of myself as an artist with a civic responsibility," Cave says.

After doing research into the history of early puppetry, Cave spent a lot of time this spring working on a performance piece called "Heard," which debuted in March at the University of North Texas and will be featured next fall at the Tri Postal exhibition space in Lille, France, and at the



This 2011 Soundsuit incorporates found elements—knit sweaters, sequined appliqué, a gramophone, ceramic birds—fixed in a metal armature.

THIS PAGE AND OPPOSITE: JAMES PRINZ PHOTOGRAPHY/COURTESY THE ARTIST AND JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY, NEW YORK (2)

Middelheim Museum in Antwerp, Belgium. The Denver Art Museum is planning a solo show next June. In vaudeville stage performances, a horse would typically be made up of a front and hindquarters worn by two performers. Cave is building on that idea to construct 30 horses manipulated by 60 dancers and accompanied by 50 to 100 percussionists. For another performance and video piece Cave dressed a 20-person gospel choir in Soundsuits and had them sing traditional hymns.

One ongoing project in the city of Chicago, known as "Bunny Boy," takes a slightly different path, into intimate, interactive street performance. Three of Cave's dancer friends dress up in pink, yellow, or blue bunny suits, roughly modeled after the cloying characters that



Thirty Soundsuit horses, made mostly of synthetic raffia, were featured in a 2012 performance of "Heard" at the Nasher Sculpture Center in Dallas.

show up around Easter, and hitchhike through different neighborhoods. "The project is, who picks up Bunny Boy?" explains Cave. "When you pick up Bunny Boy, we come up to your car and ask you why you did this. We only photograph and film your mouth, and we write down the time of day and the location. Then we'll produce a video piece.

"Sometimes you don't know why you do something," he adds. "It's something primal and secret."

A TYPICAL day for Cave begins at 6 A.M. with an hour-long workout in his home gym followed by a spell of reading, usually about the history or geography of venues for upcoming trips: Rome, perhaps, or Dakar. He teaches on Mondays at the Art Institute, but the rest of the time, when not traveling, he spends with his assistants, most of whom are young artists.

"Every day we listen to Shirley Horn, *Here's to Life*, a CD I've had for 20 years," he says. "After that, we usually listen to classical in the morning, and then we move on to more progressive music, then we do NPR for a couple of



hours." Cave says he thinks of the studio as a "kind of lab, an ongoing research facility," and spends a fair amount of time talking to the assistants about their projects.

He also talks to his mother two or three times a week, and his brothers—one lives in his building and another frequently does carpentry for him—just as often. "When I need to wind down, I go upstairs to my living space, because it's so peaceful up there," he says. "In the evening

THIS PAGE AND OPPOSITE: JAMES PRINZ PHOTOGRAPHY/COURTESY THE ARTIST AND JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY, NEW YORK (2)

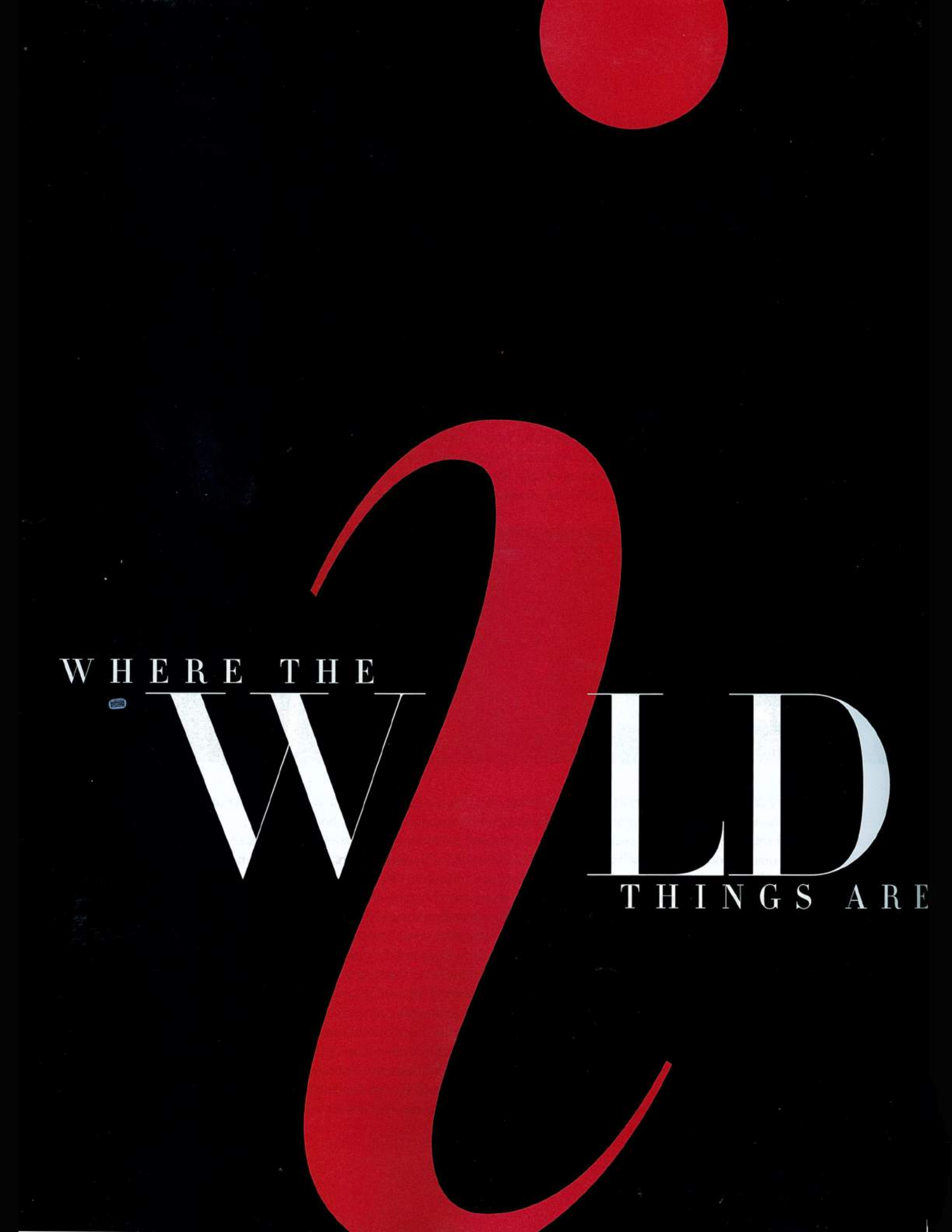


***Architectural Forest*, 2011, iridescent bamboo beaded curtains and orange vinyl adhesive.**

I often prefer to be quiet. For me to get out and about in the city of Chicago is a treat, because I'm committed to work in the studio. So I take it the same way as if I'm traveling about the world. I really want to continue to enrich it the best way I can, because it's the fuel that allows me to do what I need to do."

Of his endeavors since the birth of that first Soundsuit, Cave remarks, "We're in a time right now where we don't dream anymore. I'd like to get us back to that place where we're in a dream state, where we're thinking about imaginary ways of existing and experiencing and fantasizing what we may want to do with our lives.

"How can I facilitate that kind of engine in our brains?" he asks. "We need things that are going to uplift, that are going to bring positive influences. We're not getting it from the news, so guess who has to do it? Us artists." ■


WHERE THE
WILD
THINGS ARE

The sound and the furry. The *sauvage* coat is It in outerwear. Fur coat, and boots, $1,430, Fendi. 212-759-4646. Tights, $43, Fogal. fogal.com.

FASHION EDITOR: Karen Langley

Playful prints and fierce furs are the name of the game as artist Nick Cave models his newest Soundsuits alongside this season's wild and woolly looks

Photographs by Max Farago



Wired for sound. Powerful prints will turn heads. THIS PAGE: Coat, dress, and pumps, Louis Vuitton. 866-VUITTON. OPPOSITE PAGE: Fox fur coat, turtleneck, $1,595, skirt, $795, socks, $395, and shoes, $1,575, Michael Kors. 866-709-5677. BEAUTY BAZAAR Tame your mane with John Frieda Frizz-Ease Sheer Solution Lightweight Frizz Control ($9.99).





"I'm always interested in what's first:
Does fashion inspire art or does art inspire fashion?
It needs to work between these
two disciplines to be interesting to me."

NICK CAVE

Batman might have a hard time recognizing the kaleidoscopic suit that he inspired artist Nick Cave to make; for one thing, there are spinning globes instead of a cape. "When Batman hits someone, there are all these words and images that explode," explains Cave, 53, whose lair is in Chicago, not Gotham. "It's the space around my head, radiating ideas and thoughts and floating in space." It's a fair analogy for the quixotically creative Cave, who finds inspiration in everything from rocket missiles to tree roots and scours flea markets for the buttons, stuffed animals, and crocheted pot holders he uses to make the wearable sculptures he's dubbed Soundsuits. "You have to be willing to surrender to this otherness," he says of the experience of wearing one. "Gender, class, race become irrelevant, and you're forced to view the world without judgment." Not to mention that they're heavy. "It's really very exhausting," Cave, an Alvin Ailey–trained dancer, says with a laugh. It's good prep for next month, when he will bring 40 new pieces (including those pictured here) to the Fantastic 2012 art extravaganza in Lille, France. Next up is a dance performance in Chicago, for which Cave is making what he calls "witch-doctor suits." He's also toying with leaping to the runway. "Fashion's got everything covered, but there's still room for amazing pieces." **Elisa Lipsky-Karasz**





World beat. Fall's looks are bold and exotic. THIS PAGE: Coat, $5,700, shirt, $890, pants, $1,590, belt, and shoes, $1,083, Missoni. missoni.com. OPPOSITE PAGE: Fur coat, and pants, $1,375, Giorgio Armani. 212-988-9191. Shoes, $595, Diane von Furstenberg. 646-486-4800. See Where to Buy for shopping details. Model: Mirte Maas; hair: Tamara McNaughton for Wella Professionals; makeup: Chiho Omae for Chanel Beauté; production: John Olsen Productions.



The Noisemaker

For years, Nick Cave's Soundsuits have made a major rumble in the art world. They're wearable sculpture that can whoosh, trill and clang. "In order to be heard," Cave says, "you've got to speak louder."

By Richard Lacayo



Three of Cave's Soundsuits, from left: white shell buttons hand-sewn onto upholstery and supported by metal armature; sweaters covered with sequined appliqués, ceramic birds, metal flowers and bead necklaces over metal armature; dogwood twigs, wire, upholstery and a basket topping a mannequin

WHEN YOU'RE ABOUT TO MEET THE artist Nick Cave, you might expect to see somebody a little outlandish. His art is all wild-style camouflage: costumes so elaborate that it's hard to be sure there's a person in there. When he answers the door to the loft-style Chicago building where he lives and works, the trim 53-year-old is wearing a quilted-crepe down jacket—an elegant touch, but not exactly an iridescent purple monk's cowl, which is what one of his Soundsuits resembles. And those suits make odd noises—this one a rustling swoosh; that one a metallic clang. Cave just sounds like a nice guy from Missouri.

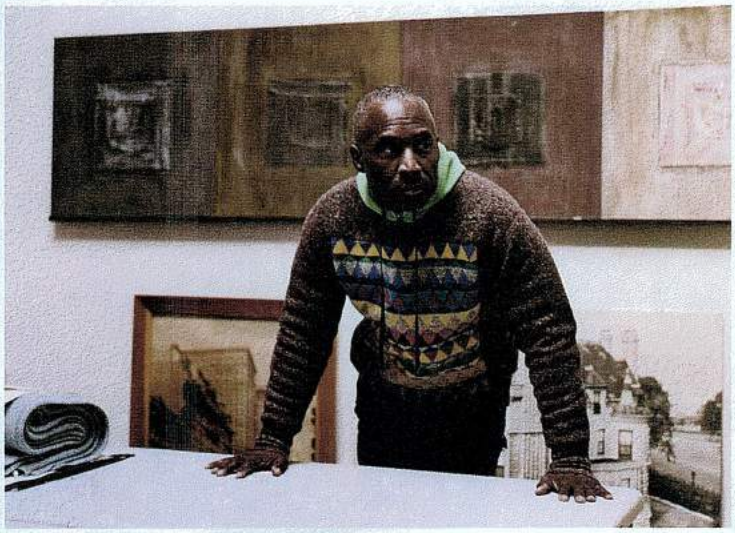
However unassuming, Cave possesses a unique mind and a powerful resolve, and over the past two decades, he has developed an art form all his own. His Soundsuits have been called wearable sculpture: they use the body as a point of departure, then push it into unfamiliar places and shapes. Stemming from a costuming tradition that stretches from Renaissance pageantry to Mardi Gras parades, they can evoke African tribal dress, shaman robes, Surrealist assemblage sculpture and the mock-ecclesiastical fashion out of *Fellini's Roma*.

But these cultural sources are merely where the Soundsuits start. Where they end up is a place beyond masquerade, where the body is engulfed and transformed altogether. Some look like burqas patched together from crocheted rugs, others like long tongues of human hair dyed electric yellow and blue. Cave has made Soundsuits from faux fur, woven rattan, clustered yarn dolls and metal toys projecting from long rods to form a nimbus of haywire antennas. A number of them are topped by something like giant tuba heads—funnels making a silent cry, like the mouth in Edvard Munch's *The Scream*.

Munch's painting, with its bellow of anguish, is an apt point of reference for Cave's work. He made his first Soundsuit in response to the 1991 beating of Rodney King by Los Angeles police officers. At the time, he had just moved to Chicago and taken a job teaching at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, where he now heads the graduate fashion program. "That incident was so traumatic for me. It flipped everything upside down," he says. "But art has been my savior. I was able somehow to translate those emotions." The endless video loop of the King beating drove Cave to thoughts about humiliation and response, silence and outrage. Having long worked with found materials, he started to realize how the most humble stuff—the fallen tree twigs and sticks he saw everywhere on the ground—could be woven into a symbolic body armor. By cutting the sticks into three-inch lengths and wiring them to a handmade undergarment, he produced a kind of Abominable Snowman silhouette on which thousands of the sticks hung loosely like bristling fur. It seemed like a defensive image, "a kind of outerwear to protect my spirit," he says. But it had an aggressive feel too, projecting "the power within the black male, that intimidation and scariness."

Better still, when he tried it on and moved around, he discovered it made noise—a whirring clatter. "I started to think about the role of protest," he recalls. "In order to be heard, you've got to speak louder. I thought about the body as an alarm system that could go off any second."

Since then, Cave has produced over 500 Soundsuits, incorporating everything from dyed feathers and sequins to plastic bags and pipe cleaners—much of the material scavenged from thrift stores and flea markets. Almost all of them were made to be worn during some kind of performance: a circle dance in a plaza, a movement piece in a gallery, an outdoor parade. For a new work called *Heard*, Cave is pairing 60 people in 30 horsey Soundsuits to gallop around at the University of North Texas, and later outside the Nasher Sculpture Center in Dallas, with scores of percussionists chasing after them.



'I was always a gatherer, collecting and assembling things, making shrines... With six brothers, I had hand-me-downs, so I'd try to reinvent my clothes.'

Over the past decade, the Soundsuits have also been entering museums and galleries as art objects in their own right. Last fall, Cave had two Manhattan gallery shows simultaneously. Three years ago, the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in San Francisco launched a traveling exhibition of more than 40 suits called "Nick Cave: Meet Me at the Center of the Earth." Now at the Cincinnati Art Museum, the exhibition moves in May to the Boise Art Museum. In October he will open a big show in Lille, France, featuring some 50 Soundsuits as well as wall and video works.

Cave was born in Fulton, Mo., one of six boys. His father, a factory worker, died of cancer when Cave was 17; his mother worked as a secretary at the University of Missouri. As a kid, he entertained himself with a world of his own devising. "I was always a gatherer," he says, "collecting and assembling things, making shrines. I would make stuff for my mom all the time. She was my critic and also my supporter. With five brothers, I had hand-me-downs, so I'd try to reinvent my clothes."

In 1982 he graduated from the Kansas City Art Institute, having also trained as a dancer in Alvin Ailey programs in Kansas City, Mo., and New York City. "I knew I was going to be a studio artist, so I looked at dance the way I looked at other disciplines—as something I could dabble in. But I felt it was incredibly important to the future of my work." (Cave hopes at some point in the future to produce ensembles of Soundsuits—90 or more—for use in collaborations with dance companies.)

The Art Institute was also where Cave learned to sew. Though he doesn't think of the Soundsuits as fashion per se, his knowledge of the field—not just silhouettes but questions of structure, of how clothing is made—informs his work as an artist. "Japanese designers like Issey Miyake and Rei Kawakubo flip structure upside down and transform the body to a point where it becomes abstract," he says. "And of course, you think of Alexander McQueen and Missoni in terms of pattern and color. But then I might also look at Haitian voodoo flags."

The idea of the human body transformed is an ancient fascination at the heart of all cultures, from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* to McQueen attaching antlers to the shoulders of a woman's gown. Cave reaches deep into that same strange psychological territory—the same pools of anxiety, desire and extravagant possibility. "What can I do to get our minds back to that dream state?" he asks. "We don't tend to dream anymore as a society. Right now, we're just trying to survive." ■

Photographs by Daniel Shea for TIME













Inside Cave's Chicago

The Moment

Highlights from the T Magazine Web site, updated daily at nytimes.com/tmagazine.

Characters Welcome

NICK CAVE is an artist who makes costumes for sculpture. Actually, the costumes are the sculptures. He calls them Soundsuits because they're loud. Pitched at a decibel the eye can hear, they armor the body in dyed feathers, brilliant sequins, bugle beads, fake flowers, thatched twigs, strips of old sweaters and gaggles of pipe cleaners. They may have tall chairs or wicker baskets for heads. There's no way to know if they're male or female, or of what race or class, but they're too dazzling for anyone to care. Yet people do, and they've been showing it by crowding the Mary Boone Gallery in Chelsea, where the latest examples of Mr. Cave's art are on display. "For Now" is like a glittering cocktail party, with each guest trying to out-spectacle the others. This is a show for Cave fans eager to see him top himself. Happily, his assemblages meet all expectations. Through Oct. 22; Mary Boone Gallery, 541 West 24th Street.

LINDA YABLONSKY



THE NEW YORKER

OCT. 3, 2011

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

NICK CAVE

By happy accident, the opening of this irresistible two-gallery show by the American sculptor and performance artist (an Alvin Ailey-trained dancer) coincided with fashion week, but Lincoln Center's runways were bare-bones affairs compared to Cave's installations of "soundsuits"—elaborate costumes that envelop their wearers from head to toe. At Boone, the look suggests Leigh Bowery as a big chief at Mardi Gras. Horror vacui has never looked better in garments covered with a kaleidoscopic array of materials: sequins, striped sweaters, crocheted blankets, pipe cleaners, porcelain birds, children's toys, voodoo dolls, globes. At Shainman, the suits themselves are more muted and monochromatic in palette, but the work is just as outlandish: one series of figures could be the offspring of Bigfoot and Elwood P. Dowd's sidekick, Harvey. Through Oct. 22. (Boone, 541 W. 24th St. 212-752-2929; Shainman, 513 W. 20th St. 212-645-1701. Through Oct. 8.)



"Soundsuit," from Nick Cave's shows at Boone and Shainman.

"Galleries—Chelsea: Nick Cave" (Jack Shainman and Mary Boone exhibition review). *The New Yorker*, 3 October 2011: 12, illustrated.

THE DAILY BEAST ART BEAST THE BEST OF ART, PHOTOGRAPHY, & DESIGN

18 September 2011

Nick Cave's 'Sound' Bodies



The “Soundsuits” of Chicago artist Nick Cave are some of the most exuberant, peculiar objects now circulating as contemporary art. A big sampling of recent ones is on view in New York in a two-part show, split between the Jack Shainman Gallery and the Mary Boone Gallery, and sampled in this slideshow. Cave’s trademark objects are bodysuits that can be made of anything from rainbow-dyed human hair to found welcome mats. They can be cut like straight-ahead enlargements of a toddler’s sleeper, or can have bizarre extra arms or giant steam funnels where the wearer’s head should be. They are called Soundsuits because some of them make noise when they are worn, but also, more metaphorically, because they change the most basic features of the environment for anyone wearing or witnessing them. They can seem almost completely cheery, but the urge to cover up and transform the person inside says something about an oppressive external world that needs to be hidden from and resisted.

– Blake Gopnik

Gopnik, Blake. “Nick Cave’s ‘Sound’ Bodies” (Jack Shainman and Mary Boone Gallery exhibition review). *The Daily Beast*. 18 September 2011. Web. 20 September 2011. <http://www.thedailybeast.com/galleries/2011/09/17/nick-cave-s-soundsuits-photos.html>.

THE DAILY BEAST

THE DAILY PIC

18 September 2011

Armor for Eccentrics

The Daily Pic: Nick Cave offers flamboyant protection in a pair of New York shows.



An artist gets mouthy (Courtesy the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, NY)

A recent "Soundsuit" by Chicago artist Nick Cave, one of many now on view in a pair of shows that recently opened in New York. There are two things to know about Cave and his wildly eccentric one-piece outfits. First, all them, whether covered in old buttons or human hair or found rugs, are sized to fit Cave. Second, he's black and gay. The first fact tells us that his objects aren't randomly wacky costumes but are about letting a particular person change his look and form. The second reminds us that that person comes at the tail end of a history of oppression that could make who someone was, and what her or she looked like, into an issue of pressing concern – literally into a matter of life and death. When you imagine Cave putting on one of the peculiar white rabbit suits on show in dealer Jack Shainman's half of the twinned exhibitions, it means something different than it would if a white man put it on. Those furry suits let Cave try on whiteness, but they also speak to the hideous old stereotype of the black man as more animal than other human beings. Imagine Cave putting on the twig-covered outfit in dealer Mary Boone's part of the project, and you immediately call to mind the ritual costumes worn in some African masquerades. You also have to recognize the yawning gap between such costumes and the ones by Cave now on show in New York. Cave's suits express a desire for a culture more freewheeling and accepting than the one we're stuck with – they couldn't be more jubilantly peculiar. But they also consign such a desire to the safe little world of strange contemporary art. (More Cave images are on view in a Daily Beast slide show.)

"The Daily Pic—Armor for Eccentrics: Nick Cave offers flamboyant protection in a pair of New York shows." *The Daily Beast*. 18 September 2011. Web. 20 September 2011. <http://blogs.thedailybeast.com/daily-pic>.

artnet®

20 September 2011

New Art

MY NIGHT IN CHELSEA
by N.F. Karlins

I think half of New York was making the rounds on Sept. 8, 2011, as hundreds -- or maybe it just seemed like hundreds -- of Chelsea galleries burst open for the start of the fall season. We could do without the humidity and the crowded, pokey elevators, but in the end it's all worth the trouble.



Nick Cave, *Mating Season*, 2011, Jack Shainman Gallery, New York



Nick Cave, *Mating Season*, 2011, Jack Shainman Gallery, New York

[…]

Another [one of this season's treats] is witnessing the Chicago artist Nick Cave (b. 1959) at the peak of his game. He has a new crop of lively "Soundsuits" on view at the Jack Shainman Gallery on 26th Street through Oct. 8, 2011, for the exhibition "Ever After," and another show, "For Now," on view at Mary Boone, Sept. 10-Oct. 22, 2011.

Cave, who is African American, makes a clear and convincing claim to New York art stardom with these two shows. His "Soundsuits" are intensely decorative costumes, many incorporating headdresses that obscure the actual head of the figure, made with every imaginable technique and material, including satin, yarn, sequins, knitting, doilies, beads, fur and macramé, along with lots of glitter, buttons, organic material like twigs, and toys and metal objects.

The cultural citations are obvious, but no less effective for it -- West African dance paraphernalia, like Dogon masquerade costumes, Caribbean Carnevale get-ups, and runway glitz. Once he has created these joyous costumes, Cave uses them to costume dancers, which is only fitting, since he started out as a dancer and fashion designer. The starting price for a single costume, and many on the checklist are marked with red dots, seems to be $85,000.

The long entry space at Shainiman Gallery is lined with a row of pale, sleek-furred Wookie-like creatures, part of a Cave work titled *Mating Season*, 2011. With their bunny-like ears, these standing male mannequins are transformed into a line of fertility figures.

Karlins, Nancy. "New Art—My Night in Chelsea." *Artnet.com*. 20 September 2011. Web. 20 September 2011. <http://www.artnet.com/magazineus/reviews/karlins/chelsea-nite-out-9-19-11.asp>.



Nick Cave, *Soundsuit* , 2011, Jack Shainman Gallery, New York



Nick Cave, *Drive-by* (film still), 2011, Jack Shainman Gallery, New York

Elsewhere in the gallery is an installation of seven standing figures, all joined together by swaths of drapery covered by a skin of glistening black buttons. Instead of heads, each figure is topped by a shape resembling tuba bells. The drapery suggests a joint racial identity while the “mouthpiece” for a head suggests the need to speak out and be mutually supportive.

Nearby are still more Soundsuits, these covered with white buttons. But the most colorful and effervescent work at Shainman Gallery is Cave’s new 16-minute film *Drive-By,* in which dancers wearing rainbow-colored fur Soundsuits move and interact against a white background.

Cave’s retrospective, “Meet Me at the Center of the Earth,” opened at the Seattle Art Museum in June, 2011, and also appeared in San Francisco -- but it has not come to New York. In addition to the show at Shainman, around the block at Mary Boone Gallery on West 24th Street is a companion exhibition of a few dozen more Soundsuits, which boasts an even greater range of this outstanding artist’s work.

[…]

Not a bad night after all.

"Minnie Evans, Paintings and Drawings," Sept. 8-Oct. 29, 2011, at Luise Ross Gallery, 511 West 25th Street, New York, N.Y. 10001.

“Nick Cave: Ever After,” Sept. 8-Oct. 8, 2011, Jack Shainman Gallery, 513 West 20th Street, New York, N.Y. 10011.

“Lee Bae: The Conceptual Formalist,” Sept. 8-Oct. 22, 2011, Nicholas Robinson Gallery, 535 West 20th Street, New York, N.Y. 10011.

NANCY KARLINS is a New York critic and art historian.

Karlins, Nancy. “New Art—My Night in Chelsea.” *Artnet.com*. 20 September 2011. Web. 20 September 2011. <http://www.artnet.com/magazineus/reviews/karlins/chelsea-nite-out-9-19-11.asp>.

BOMBLOG

ART

Nick Cave

by Krystian von Speidel Sep 09, 2011

(Q&A)

Krystian von Speidel sits down with artist Nick Cave to talk about his incredible Soundsuits and his concurrent exhibits at Jack Shainman and Mary Boone Galleries. Cave shares his thoughts on pipe cleaners and fashion week, and invites everyone to come to his playground.



Nick Cave, “Soundsuit,” 2011. Buttons, wire, bugle beads, basket, upholstery, and mannequin. 82×32 x 32 inches. Jack Shainman Gallery, New York. Photo by Jim Prinz. All images courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, NY.

In the several years since Nick Cave emerged on the scene, his signature artwork, the textile-and-found-object “Soundsuits,” have become a must for the art world cognoscenti.

Cave’s Soundsuits were initially viewed as hijacked *haute couture*. They are now highly collectible and increasingly coveted artworks, whose manufacture transcends craft, sculpture, and art. Their categorization, in fact, Cave himself dismisses as unimportant. According to Patricia Hickson, the Emily Hall Tremaine Curator of Contemporary Art at Hartford’s Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, “In the contemporary art field, it is so exciting to come across an artist with a wholly original artistic voice. Nick Cave is one of those rare artists whose work is unmistakably his own. The *Soundsuit* in the contemporary art collection at the Wadsworth Atheneum—an encyclopedic museum—bridges numerous collections with its direct connection to

African art, Modern abstract painting, performance art, contemporary sculpture, and costumes and textiles. The versatility of the Wadsworth *Soundsuit* as a collection object allows for its presentation in numerous contexts, which is a great benefit in addition to the celebratory and joyful nature of Cave's work."

With this week's opening of two collaborative exhibits at Jack Shainman and Mary Boone galleries (September 8 – October 8, entitled *Ever-After*), Cave's work enters a mature and introspective phase. Cave, a soft-spoken Professor at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, created the first Soundsuit in response to the Rodney King episode in Los Angeles. That first Soundsuit may have served as an individual, cloaked counterpoint to the explosive crowds and unmasked conflict of those weeks.

Coinciding with the *Ever-After* exhibit, Cave has partnered with online art retailer Artspace.com to release a limited edition of signed prints featuring his works that appeared in the blockbuster "Meet Me at the Center of the Earth" exhibit. Originating at San Francisco's Yerba Buena Center for the Arts over two years ago, that show is now traveling and opens next week at The Taueman Museum of Art in Roanoke, Virginia. Bomb's Krystian von Speidel caught up with Cave as the artist put the final touches on his New York installations.



Nick Cave, "Soundsuit," 2011. Mixed Media. Mary Boone Gallery, New York. Photo by Jim Prinz.

KRYSTIAN VON SPEIDEL Tell me about the collaboration with Artspace.com and what it means for you to introduce a new audience to your work through photography.

NICK CAVE This is providing a different accessibility. I'm interested in how art can be accessible. It has a lot to do with when we finish a suit and are moving it into the photography studio that provokes a different level of sensation. It is an image that speaks to me and reads emotionally as a print. I feel it has the same attention and authority. It is important to ask: does it set the tone and is it a strong image? That's true with this collaboration.

KvS Your work is so unique. Who first gave you a big break? Was it difficult to crack the visual art world with work that has its roots in multiple and disparate disciplines – fashion, performance art, costume, sculpture – so many things, but not one thing. Is what was once a challenge now perceived as an asset?

NC I think Jack [Shainman] is the individual who provided me with the greatest opportunity. I look back at myself as a gypsy. I was traveling around, looking for the right relationship. I was willing to wait. I was showing my work, continuing my studio process, feeling it out, seeing what other artists were doing. My career has always moved upward in a horizontal way. I'm in a place where I'm understood and that I understand. I like knowing how I arrived where I am as an artist. Once the first show happened, it felt like overnight.

KvS The upcoming show *Ever-After* has a new angle and takes a new direction compared to previous exhibits. What excites you about this new direction?

NC It's nice to know I can work in this abundance of materials. I'm an artist that can work in this multi-disciplined way. The show at Jack Shainman is my being more internal and stripping down to myself at its purest form and raw. That's the core of this exhibition. Everything is black and white. It represents the loss of an important person in my life. My friend Matthew came to me at a dark time in my life as an artist. It's me regaining that belief again and resurrecting. In Mary Boone's show, I'm inviting everyone to the playground. I'm working with pipe-cleaners, a material I have a repulsive feeling about, which is amazing. It's about not excluding anything. I'm going to fall into the abyss of experience.



Nick Cave, "Soundsuit," 2011. Buttons, wire, bugle beads, basket, upholstery, and mannequin. 114×32 x 32 inches. Jack Shainman Gallery, New York. Photo by Jim Prinz.

KvS By your count, how many Soundsuits have you made? How many did you make on your own, and when did you first employ additional workers to help?

NC I have no idea, I've probably made 500. There are 50 in the upcoming show. What is so critical is the detail and craft and high level of execution. I really have to think this through, how can I maintain the quality. It's about making the work for myself. It's devastating when I come home and a piece is finished. Looking at options has me in the state of mind to find a solution but it has to be appropriate: creating exhibitions three years out that will allow the work to maintain its integrity in a setting.

KvS The traveling show that originated at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts is still going strong, opening next week at The Taueman Museum of Art in Roanoke, Virginia. Did you imagine that the show would have such legs?

NC I'm not there anymore. I just have to be in the present. I think about how the work performs. How does this exhibition change the performance. How is it changing, in this sense. Then I'm interested in its responsibility. It's amazing how I'm not connected to my work. It's amazing how I can turn my back on it and keep going. I think when I give the lecture to introduce the show at Taueman, I'm only going to speak about the new exhibition in New York.

KvS As head of the fashion department at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, what are your inspirations? Being in town during Fashion Week, are there any collections you're excited about seeing?

NC A lot of my friends are designers. I don't really look at fashion. It's a small interest of mine. It all somehow filters into my work. I'm interested in couture principles. I'm interested and excited about presentation and how it informs the collection.

KvS How important is it for you to see a Soundsuit in performance? In your mind does it forego its fulfillment or mission if it remains static, like in a museum display case?

NC If I'm at MoMA looking at an African object, I'm interested in the notion that it has a function. I'm interested in the duality of its purpose. It keeps flipping. It keeps my processing or thinking very organic. Am I wearing these in a performance or in a gallery setting?



Nick Cave, “Soundsuit,” 2011. Mixed Media. Mary Boone Gallery, New York. Photo by Jim Prinz.

KvS You’ve used your Soundsuits as a means of reaching underserved arts communities.

NC There are so many amazing artists that have gone underground. To bring them up is exhilarating for me. I move into a city for two months and create a lab with 40 Soundsuits and have the city build a performance: seeing what is available in a city, what musicians are in a city. With these labs I’m curious to see if I can put on a performance. I’m building 90 Soundsuits and my focus will be that. I’ll allow them to be choreographed into performances, working with youth. For me it’s trying to see what can I do to leave an impression. By working with a city, people are shown that they matter. I’d like to think of myself as an artist with a civic responsibility.

KvS Early on in your career, the Soundsuits were described in the language of fashion—as alien *haute couture*, for example. How did the transition to the Soundsuits as high art develop?

NC Art, craft, fashion, I don’t really care. I do like that there is this broad dialogue in the art community. We can all fit together. I really avoid associations and keep going. I’ve reached a point where I make what I make. To work in the way I work I have to be fearless.

DAMN° 23

DECEMBER 2009 / JANUARY 2010

A MAGAZINE ON CONTEMPORARY CULTURE



Thomas Demand
HANS HOLLEIN
Jasper Morisson
Nick Cave
ZHANG HUAN
Moritz Waldemeyer
JDS meets Lars Von Trier
PAUL SMITH

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Shake that Thing

The sound of the other Nick Cave

If from the headlines on the cover of this magazine you were expecting to see the musings of a moustached Australian singer, then a man dancing in suits of twigs might not quite add up. The work of this Nick Cave makes a different noise, swished, stuffed and plucked with cultural references, all crafted with a fashion designer's attention to pattern and texture.

text LYLE REXER
photos JAMES PRINZ PHOTOGRAPHY, COURTESY THE ARTIST AND JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY

You can imagine how it must have looked, how it must have felt: You're a white man, say from Portugal or England or some other country indulging the fantasy of untold wealth there for the taking in the heart of the Dark Continent or Haiti or the desert of Mali or some Pacific island, and after days of stumbling through the jungle, or tramping across a burning plain, and bitten by insects as big as your hand, suffering from dysentery, dengue fever, river blindness or sleeping sickness, you come upon a clearing in which trees, plants, animals, stones, everything is alive and dancing. And you still think you're the civilised one.

Wild Abandon

In Nick Cave's art, celebration and terror are never far from each other. Not that he would put it that way. The former Alvin Ailey dancer and visual artist has no intention of terrifying anyone with his Soundsuits, as he calls them. Just the opposite. He thinks of the full-body outfits he constructs from mostly found materials - everything from sticks to hair to fabric swatches - as vehicles to dream in. And yet his uncanny amalgams of the world's tribal traditions, from Congo to the Northwest Coast of North America celebrate more than just the rhythm of dance. They recall with wild abandon the transformational ritual costumes that allow human beings to become one with the forces of the natural world and, in certain situations, with the spirits of the dead.

Cave, who was born in Chicago and directs the fashion department at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, got the idea for the suits from reflecting on his own identity as an African American after the Rodney King beating in Los Angeles in 1992. He made his first suit entirely of twigs, each of which had to be drilled and threaded so it could be hung from the suit itself. He thought of it as sculpture, a shield against the world, and it is still one of his simplest and most powerful costumes. When Cave tried it on and heard the sticks rustle, he realised that the aural experience of such a costume was as important as the visual.

Conceptions of Identity

Since then, Cave has built more than 50 of the suits. He has assistants to help him construct the complicated ones, but he himself sews the sequins and other appliqués with a fashion designer's attention to pattern

Untitled, 2009 (above)
Found woven and sequined bags and hats, vintage hot pads, shoe laces & vintage knit material

Untitled, 2009 (facing page)
Buttons & found vintage abacuses







SCAD, 14 November 14 2009

Untitled, 2009 (facing page, main image)
Found woven and sequined bags, vintage hot pads & vintage knit material

Untitled, 2009 (facing page)
Dyed human hair, found vintage toy stuffed animal bear head, knit material & found woven bags and hats

and texture. And they do get complicated – culturally as well as architecturally. Take the issue of human hair. Cave has constructed several of his suits with human hair, often dyed in an extreme range of colours. One stunning creation features long blonde hair whose wave motions during a dance are hypnotic. It adds new meaning to the old hair colouring ad that went, 'If I have but one life to live, let me live it as a blonde.' Cave remarked in an interview that one intention behind the costumes is to remove an identity and give him access to an 'other.' In that regard, the costumes, especially the hair-based versions, fit right in to contemporary art's attempts to explore and overthrow gender and race-based conceptions of identity, everything from Lyle Ashton Harris' masquerades and drag homages to Nikki S. Lee's oriental Puerto Rican girl bonding. Not to mention Rudi Gernreich's 1960s gender-bending fashion designs.

In fact, identity – rigidly experienced – is the problem and transformation is the answer. And so Cave's designs take advantage of many traditions that involve ritual opportunities to cross over. Modern art in the West has an underground history of it. The Dadaists, for example, would costume themselves in geometric shapes of cardboard, looking like brightly coloured robots or harlequins, with huge conflicting shapes and joints that would not move properly. Much later Joseph Beuys' shamanism, the wearable art movement, and Yayoi Kusama's dot costumes, to name just a few examples, all testify to an ongoing need to find ways out of the boxes that an increasingly stratified, consumer-oriented society constructs.

It might seem ironic that what began as a reflection on and an embrace of his identity should result in the transcendence of it, but that is inherent in the deeper roots of Cave's art, in the cultures of black Africa and its Caribbean diaspora. Some of Cave's most recent Soundsuits involve architectural creations that cantilever out and up from the body. They look like explosions in a toyshop, with tops, jack-in-the-boxes and Ferris wheels all held together in crazy suspension. They recall the impossibly elaborate architecture of Dogon masks, taller even than the carnival costumes of Brazil. But Cave's creations also draw on what anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss called the tradition of bricolage, in reference to myth, that is, the combining of disparate elements in structures that resolve or at least attempt to give a form to profound contradictions in the nature of things.









Untitled, 2009
Found vintage cat mask,
beads, knit sweaters,
decorative birds and beaded
circles along with metal armature.

Untitled, 2009
(facing page, top left)
Human hair, vintage knit sweaters,
taxidermy bear's head.

Untitled, 2009
(facing page, top right)
Dyed human hair

SCAD, 14 November 2009
(facing page, bottom)



Installation view Nick Cave's Meet me at the Centre of the Earth installation at the Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art, Arizona

Untitled, 2006 (facing page)
Twigs

Primitive & Futuristic

These Soundsuits constitute a fusion of worlds on the physical and symbolic levels, in which the arrangements are more important than the specific content of any element. In bringing together fragments of childhood, of games and amusement park rides that involve circular motion, Cave unites the experience of dance with flights in space (the Ferris wheel) and abandonment to trance (the spinning top). Childhood, as it's represented in these suits, is a doorway to ecstasy, and beyond it to a cosmic motion. 'Imagination is more important than knowledge,' wrote Albert Einstein. He is echoed by the Haitian artist and voodoo priest Andre Pierre. 'We are made by magic. All of us in general are magicians.' Nick Cave teaches us how to be primitive and futuristic again.



Nick Cave is represented by the Jack Shainman Gallery in New York
www.jackshainman.com

The exhibition 'Nick Cave: Meet Me at the Centre of the Earth will be at the Fowler Museum at UCLA, Los Angeles, from 10 January - 30 May 2010
www.fowler.ucla.edu



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The Washington Post



For the person who has everything: Nick Cave's "Soundsuits." (Jack Shainman Gallery)

Nick Cave, a 49-year-old artist who is chairman of the fashion department at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, doesn't make the kind of esoteric, virtually unsellable work of some of the conceptualists now showing in Chelsea. Cave's pieces seem esoteric in a quite different way. He's best known for what he calls "Soundsuits": "wearable sculptures," or costumes, that enclose their wearers, hiding every trace of their identities. For his second Shainman exhibition, Cave has presented a new series of ultra-shaggy Soundsuits, made from garishly colored hair. Anyone who wore one would look rather like Chewbacca the Wookiee, after an accident in a dye works. Other new suits are more form-fitting, sometimes looking as though they've been assembled out of crocheted pot-holders. These tighter suits are then topped with huge "masks" that conceal a wearer's head and chest behind bizarre constructions of fake flowers, plastic birds or fragments of fabric.

There seem to be clear references, in all this work, to the body-hiding masks and costumes of certain African cultures. But where those outfits reinforce a single cultural identity, Cave's seem meant to set their wearers free. For anyone who, like Cave, grew up black in the United States, there might be something to be said for a new world where every person could choose to look absolutely, unrecognizably different from everyone else.

One last, perhaps surprising note: A week into the show, Shainman had managed to sell a number of such apparently unsellable works.

BY BLAKE GOPNIK
January 24, 2009

whitewall
CONTEMPORARY ART AND LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE SUMMER 2009



NEW ARTIST

NICK CAVE

BY JESSICA SLAVEN

Nick Cave's Soundsuits create a distinctly otherworldly impression, as it's difficult to determine who or what could be responsible for their creation. With their lavishly decorated carapaces seemingly born of an alchemical, kaleidoscopic, gestational fusing process, they're surprising because they appear immediately useful. Metamorphic and shapeshifting, the Soundsuits allow space for viewers to project their own needs and desires. They can be purposeful, if you can devise a way for them to be so.

At Cave's January 2009 solo show at Jack Shainman in New York, his Soundsuits had evolved toward two main shapes: flattened obelisks or cylinders, with arms. They're faceless, worn on the body, and knee-length. Some resplendent with appliquéd patches of sequins and vintage fabrics, and others presenting a peruke of multicolored hair that is meant to become animated and confused when the wearer moves, they engage patterning and purposeful graphicality.

Some employ a wire armature to create shoulder-borne personal galaxy-trees of birds, flowers, quilts, and beads for the potential cat-masked inhabitants underneath, looking like a collision between St. Francis of Assisi and a free-form version of Duchamp's *Bottle Rack*. Others have flattened but sumptuous surfaces of brocade or tapestry and look as much like metastasized Catholic vestments as they do corpses rolled in rugs.

Spacesuits and diving bells allow the body to function beyond its natural capacities. They have definite utility, and when you see them you want to inhabit them so that you can actualize that utility and conquer foreign terrain. Cave's Soundsuits elicit a similar desire, but what differentiates them is their indefinite utility: They could make you temporarily sonorous (hence their name), taller, incognito, or beautiful, but what makes them attractive is the promise of ritual. Our contemporary culture is short on rituals, and Cave has produced a satellite group of nodes for interactive practice, one so ambiguous that it will be determined only by the constellation of people inhabiting the Soundsuits at a given time. They propose a dignified place for individualized expression within a coherent group, or healthy community.

Cave has been making the suits for a bit over 15 years, or roughly as long as he's been in Chicago. He started with twigs, and moved toward a group that bore representations of faces. The suits are complicated constructions of patched goods: flea-market hats, tulle, buttons, and things that make sounds when they are worn. And Jesus, there is tons of stuff and things and stuff, all gorgeous. Fragile, standing 100 inches tall, but meant to move and make noise, these objects seem simultaneously like relics and plans.

The variety of Cave's materials is remarkable, but his working process doesn't involve hoarding; he chooses supplies for immediate use. He also doesn't sketch before constructing; rather, he allows his materials to write their own story, creating a "new life existence" to be made manifest in his eventual forms.

Cave explains that his role is that of a humanitarian, and he means it, enriching human welfare by making his fantastic spaces and images available to people who want to experience them more closely. He presents them in performances, in videos, and as displayed objects, and he's currently developing a 90-Soundsuit performance to, as he says, "Work out there with everyday people," in Happenings and a kind of public theater that uses Chicago as its canvas. He's created a set of ritual garments that are intended to be accessible – you can experience them, and ultimately create experience and community with them. In Cave's view, participation should trump ownership. How radical and necessary a vision.

Above:
Installation view of Nick Cave's "Recent Soundsuits" at Jack Shainman Gallery, New York, 2009.

Opposite:
Nick Cave
Soundsuit
2009
Mixed media
97 x 26 x 20 inches
Courtesy of Jack Shainman Gallery, New York

Time Out New York

Issue 696 : Jan 29–Feb 4, 2009

Art Review

Nick Cave



Installation view
Photography Courtesy Jack Shainman Gallery

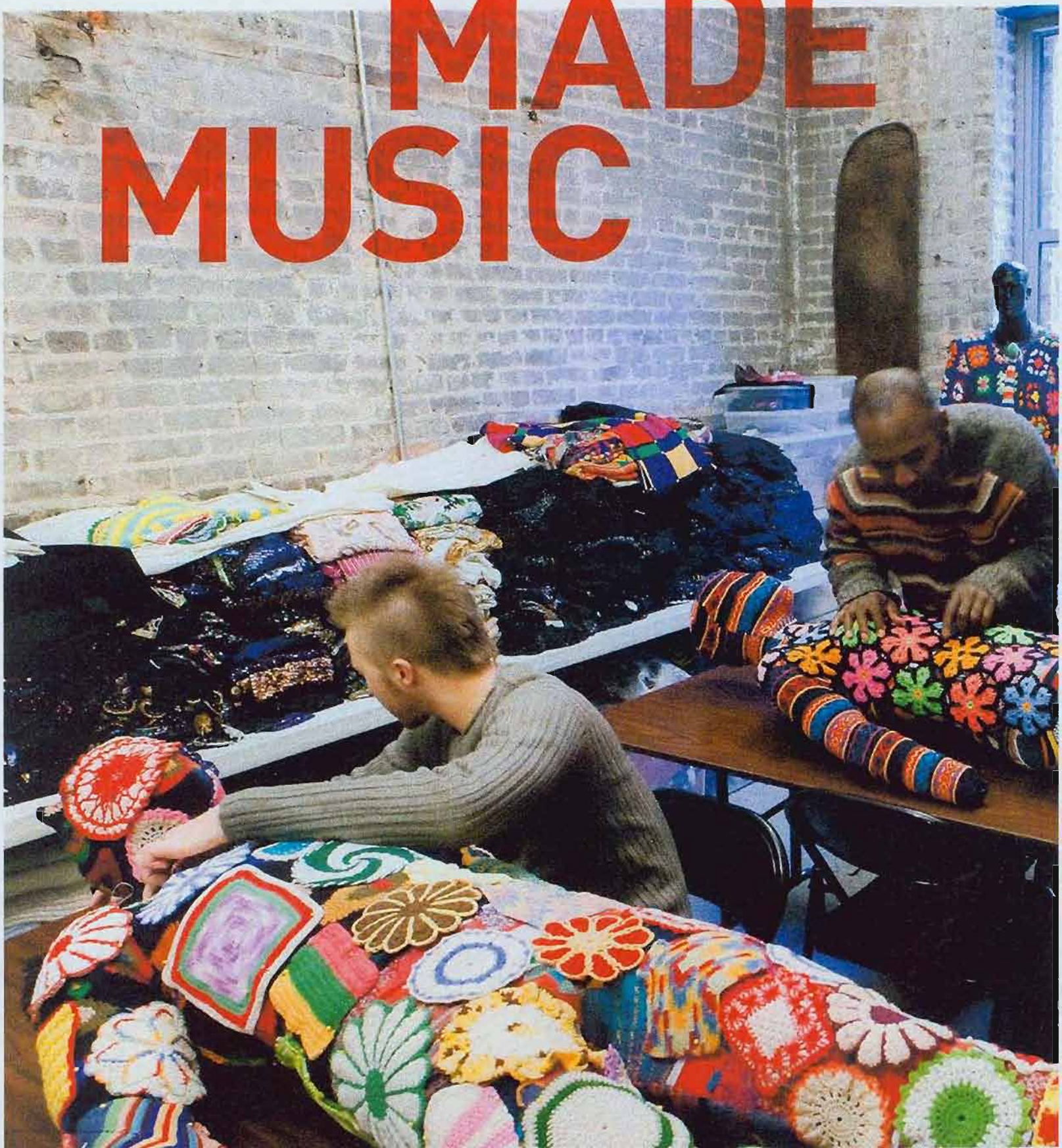
Although Nick Cave is best known for his "Soundsuits," the Memphis-born, Chicago-based artist has gone to great lengths in his latest show to reveal his range by including mixed-media sculptural objects. Noble as the effort is, it's difficult to upstage Cave's dizzyingly vibrant, life-size outfits made of found fabrics and materials like metal flowers, ceramic birds, beads, sequins, ribbons, quilts and spinning tops. The results resemble an unlikely blend of yeti, carnival reveler and religious officiate.

Named after the noise they emit when worn (usually by Cave himself), the Soundsuits are interdisciplinary hybrids that absorb the language of sculpture, installation, performance and fashion design, drawing inspiration from such sources as African-American vernacular culture and African masquerade. With so many signifiers at play, it's a mystery why they've been displayed in such a static arrangement: A U-shaped catwalk at the center of the gallery manages only to drain the works of energy, turning the show into a museological reliquary.

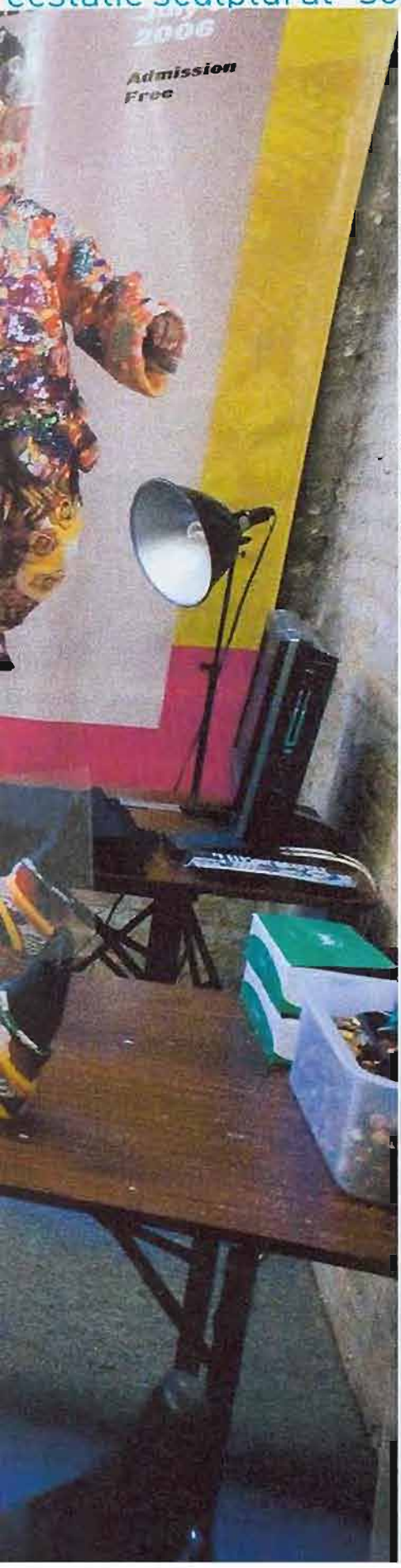
In the other pieces, Cave has refashioned objects from America's inglorious past into sculptural assemblages. Included are a black lawn-jockey holding a macramé mandala, a large cross-shaped wall-piece filled with black male-and-female salt-and-pepper shakers and a black figurine atop a shoe shiner's kit. While Cave's work communicates unresolved feelings of power and subjection within contemporary African-American identity, it also provides a crucial avenue for aesthetic and sociopolitical remixing.

Nuit Banai
January 29, 2009

TAILOR-MADE MUSIC



Piecing together thrift-store finds, **Nick Cave** outfits a troupe of San Francisco dancers with his ecstatic sculptural "soundsuits." By **Claire Barliant**





A few years ago, Nick Cave found himself picking up single gloves off the sidewalks of Chicago, the city the Missouri-born artist now calls home. Once he'd amassed a fair-size collection of lone gloves and mittens, he realized the impulse stemmed directly from the loss of his youngest brother, who died of an infection after accidentally swallowing a penny. Cave created a sculpture, titled *Trust*, using the found gloves. How do you find beauty in loss? This is the question Cave attempts to answer through his work, and he often succeeds in springing the lock on crusty old castoffs to reveal the vivid possibilities lying within.

Cave lives and works in the South Loop, just a few blocks from where the Rolling Stones, Muddy Waters, and countless other rock, jazz, and blues singers belted their hearts out in the '50s and '60s. The proximity of legendary recording studio Chess Records is appropriate, since the 49-year-old artist is known for his "soundsuits," stunningly elaborate costumes that sometimes double as instruments. Often, these suits feature a precarious headdress made from a variety of materials, such as porcelain birds or Victorian-style metal flowers, and the suits appear to writhe with artificial life—the final effect being something like a Dalíesque Las Vegas showgirl.

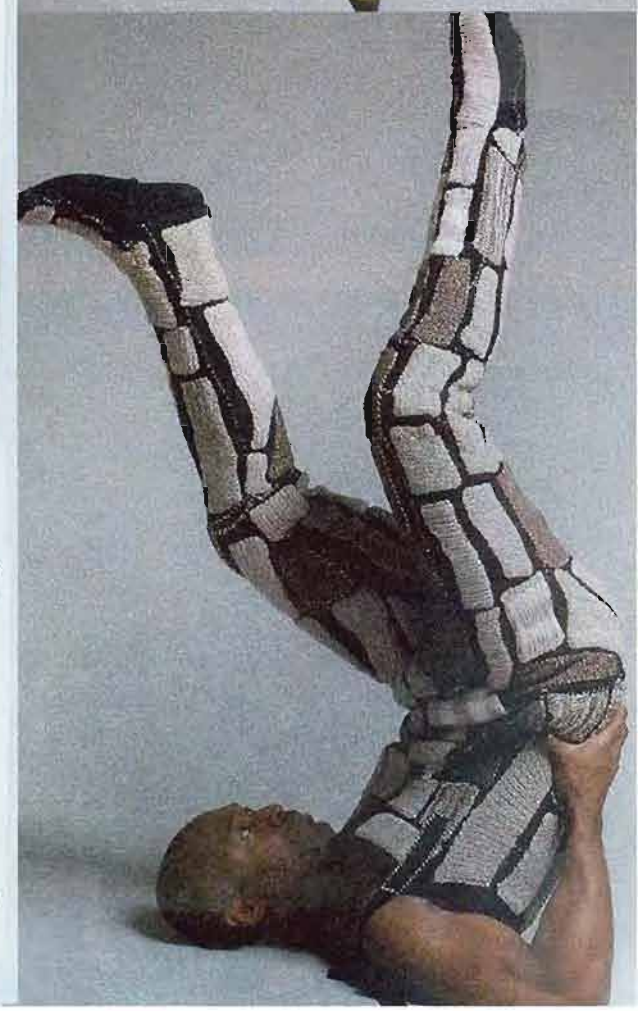
Cave made his first soundsuit while he was in art school, in response to the Rodney King beating in Los Angeles in 1991. At the time, he was studying at the Cranbrook Academy in Michigan, and Cave took advantage of the campus's wooded surroundings by collecting hundreds of twigs from the ground. Using the twigs, he began to build a figure based on the superhuman version of the man King's assailants claimed to have seen—they explained their behavior by describing King as threateningly "buffed out"—resulting in a form that looks like a cross between a woolly mammoth and Chewbacca. At first, Cave thought the twig suit would be a sculpture, but then he realized he could put it on. When he began moving, the twigs rattled like a shakere. "I started noticing the ways it affected other senses apart from sight," Cave recalls, "such as smell and sound. Then I began to see the potential in making such a suit, and it became something else, something not really related to the King beating at all."

Since then, Cave has made some 200 soundsuits, many of which function as costumes and as sculpture. He is currently collaborating with choreographer Ronald K. Brown, who will create a dance using the suits to be performed in the galleries of Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in San Francisco, where Cave's solo exhibition opens this month. Despite having danced with Alvin Ailey for several years, Cave is not involved in the actual choreography. "I would like to experience my suits as a member of the audience," he explains, rather than as someone controlling the conditions of their display.

During a recent visit to Cave's studio, two assistants were busily sewing fabric pieces in preparation for a show at Jack Shainman in New York, and as Cave leaned down to give instructions ("Make sure you stitch around the pattern"), I noticed a huge selection of thrift-store sweaters in several neat piles on a nearby table. Most were gaudily trimmed with embroidered flowers and sequins, which Cave removes and uses to decorate his creations.







For Cave, who considers flea-market scavenging part of his practice and has traveled as far as Minnesota for three-day-long flea markets, such overlooked items as plaster Easter bunnies and trashy second-hand clothes—or lost gloves—can be inspiration for raiment worthy of a peacock. "I am always looking at material in terms of potential," he says. Indeed, the artist's array of materials evokes a vast range of referents, and as a result his suits are likely to conjure myriad associations, from Alice in Wonderland to Mummenschanz to raffia tube dresses from the Ivory Coast or porcupine-quill tunics from Cameroon. Which is to say that they are more complex, both emotionally and in terms of their engagement with history, than they may at first appear. "On the surface, the suits can be fun, whimsical, and outrageous," Cave says. "But when you break it down, and start really looking at them, there's a dark side." ✦

"MEET ME AT THE CENTER OF THE EARTH: NEW WORK BY NICK CAVE," WILL BE ON VIEW AT THE YERBA BUENA CENTER FOR THE ARTS GALLERIES, SAN FRANCISCO, FROM MAR. 28 THROUGH JUL. 12.

SOUND VISION

FROM MARDI GRAS INDIANS TO BARNUM & BAILEY, THE WORK OF ARTIST **NICK CAVE** DRAWS ON A WIDE RANGE OF INFLUENCES TO CREATE A FABULOUS DREAMSCAPE.

BY **GLENN O'BRIEN** PHOTOGRAPHY BY **TERRY TSIOLIS**

NICK CAVE IS HUMBLE enough to call himself "the other Nick Cave," but in recent years his extraordinarily imaginative work has brought the African-American artist enough attention that the Australian musician Nick Cave might consider himself "the other one."

Cave the artist breaks boundaries—not out of rebelliousness, but out of a commitment to his ideas and dreams. He creates art objects that aren't just made for the eye, but for the ear and the body and the rhythms it celebrates. Though his sound suits are rooted in traditional craft, they blossom into fabulous dreams of a new world.

I first experienced the sound suit in person at the "30 Americans" show at the Rubell Family Collection in Miami last December. The 30 Americans featured were African-Americans, and Cave was in the lofty company of such artists as Jean-Michel Basquiat, Robert Colescott, David Hammons, Glenn Ligon, Kara Walker, and Kehinde Wiley. His sound suits were not sculptures in the static sense but mysterious objects waiting to come alive.













"CAVE TURNS THE HUMAN FORM INTO A FLOWER GARDEN, A CHRISTMAS TREE, OR A DAY-GLO YETI. OFTEN HIS FANCIFUL HUMANOIDS HAVE EXTENDED, TUBULAR, FACELESS HEADS, ALMOST LIKE KEITH HARING CREATURES."

IN TRYING TO DESCRIBE the sound suits, so called because they create noise when they are moved in, I found myself invoking Mardi Gras Indians, Leigh Bowery, Robert Wilson, the Muppets, Wookies, and Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey. Cave himself cites Haitian costumes and voodoo flags as inspiration, as well as a "broad range of cultural references intersecting." And always in the DNA of the work is Africa—its masks and ritual and the living art of shamanic magic.

Cave sees himself working in the shamanic tradition, but he's not being anthropological; he doesn't hesitate to place Leigh Bowery or RuPaul among his influences. Today shamanism is chic, but it's more often thought of in terms of psychedelia and the ayahuasca-brewing medicine men of the upper Amazon. But the true shaman is more than a ritual pharmacist, he is a magician and a performer.

Cave reinvents or restores the role of the artist. He doesn't make his work for the art world; he makes it for the whole world and the communities that inhabit it. In a very modern way, he is practicing the traditional role of the shaman; he is an interpreter of and communicator with spirits, a healer, a visionary, an augury, and a guardian of special knowledge. Cave is a transformer, an alchemist who takes detritus and low materials and changes them into magic tools that come alive with glamour, power, and possibility, usually in direct collaboration with the body.

Cave turns the human form into a flower garden, a Christmas tree, or a Day-Glo yeti. One of his suits is covered in buttons, like the outfits of London's Pearly Kings and Queens, but his buttons are colorful, not white, and he places an abacus where the face should be. The displacement of the face and transformation of the head is a particularly interesting component of Cave's work. Often his fanciful humanoids have extended, tubular, faceless heads, almost like Keith Haring creatures. His chimerical bipeds may resemble tadpoles as much as men, almost man as surfboard, or man as missile. They are phallic, but it's not so simple.

"The suits appear phallic, but it is really about me looking at the head of a missile or at a condom or even the miter worn by a bishop," Cave says. "We can think about these various aspects, but I look at it as a sort of high-priest vestment of sorts. I'm not thinking in terms of particular religions but just in the general sense of a higher power. These things are all objects of power."

Of his first sound suit, the one made of twigs, Cave says, "I didn't know it was a sound suit until I put it on." When he did, he realized it rustled as he moved, like a tree in the wind.

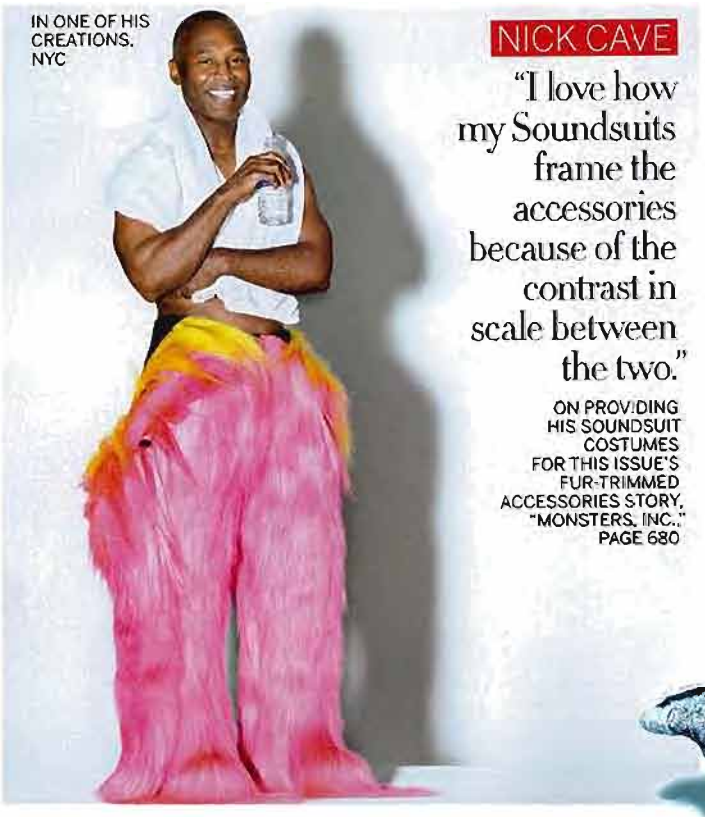
"That suit really came from my reaction to the 1992 Rodney King incident," Cave explains. "As a black male, reading about descriptions of King's character, it made me look at myself in the mirror and think about identity and profiling and how that had been part of my experience. I was thinking *Am I to be discarded?* I really started to think about myself as a humanitarian first and then an artist. I was asking myself how I wanted to approach issues of identity to achieve a new sense of direction and continue the process of evolving, challenging the conditions of the culture. I'm always reevaluating myself and who I am."

That twig suit didn't hide Cave, but amplified his presence, while connecting him to nature, even compost.

"It's armor. It's a second skin. It's creating a creature that's threatening but seductive. We're drawn to the unknown, the unfamiliar. It's a source of thrill. I don't know what the hell I'm doing in the studio. It's not work made from sketches. It's really happening through trusting my intuition and allowing materials to speak a particular sort of language—also staying independent and free and open to possibility."

It's inspiring to see an artist working as Cave does. Yes, he uses assistants in his Chicago studio to turn out such a prodigious body of work, but it all comes from his imagination and from the intimate connection he has established between brain and hand. The hand is not simply the servant of his mind, but its chief informer. And while many artists today operate huge studios and collaborate with industrial fabricators to make their work, Cave employs a more traditional master-and-apprentice model. With its concentration on found materials, it also serves as a model for how we can use recycling to achieve transcendental results. ■

VOGUE SEPTEMBER



IN ONE OF HIS CREATIONS, NYC

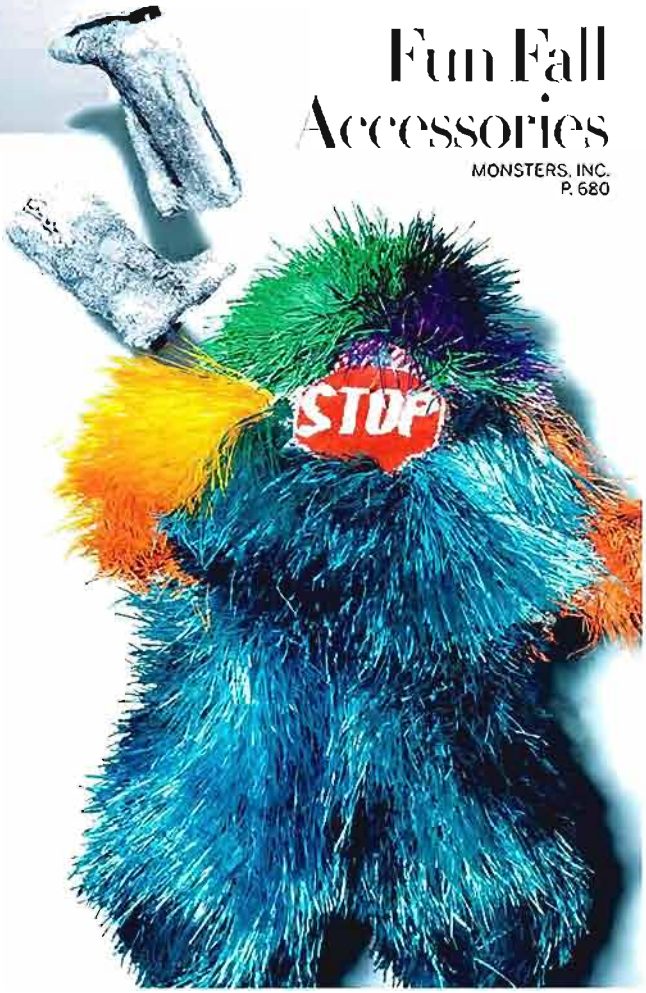
NICK CAVE

"I love how my Soundsuits frame the accessories because of the contrast in scale between the two."

ON PROVIDING HIS SOUNDSUIT COSTUMES FOR THIS ISSUE'S FUR-TRIMMED ACCESSORIES STORY, "MONSTERS, INC.." PAGE 680

Fun Fall Accessories

MONSTERS, INC.
P. 680



SIGN OF THE TIMES
Performance artist Nick Cave helped showcase the season's furry accessories, like these Jimmy Choo boots. Photographed by Raymond Meier.



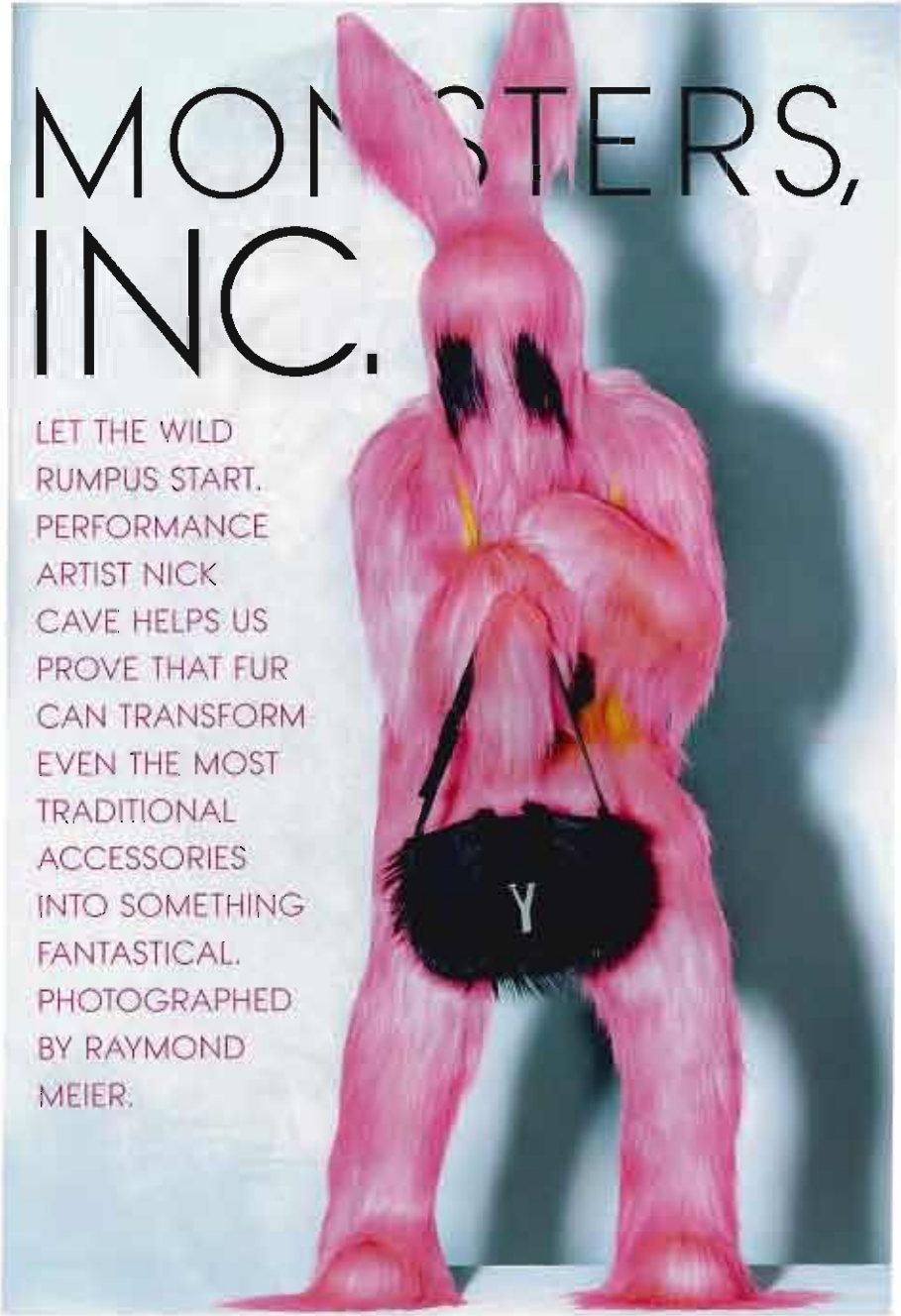
SEPTEMBER 2010



WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE
The artist created all these costumes—and that's him inside. As for the new bags and shoes? Whether it's rawhide wrapping a neutral satchel or black shag trimming a saddlebag, fur is going where it hasn't gone before. THIS PAGE: Reed Krakoff buck-hair-and-leather satchel, $1,790; (877) 733-3525. OPPOSITE PAGE: Yves Saint Laurent fox-and-suede shoulder bag, $2,195; Yves Saint Laurent boutiques. Details, see In This Issue.
Fashion Editor: Elissa Santisi.

MONSTERS, INC.

LET THE WILD RUMPUS START. PERFORMANCE ARTIST NICK CAVE HELPS US PROVE THAT FUR CAN TRANSFORM EVEN THE MOST TRADITIONAL ACCESSORIES INTO SOMETHING FANTASTICAL. PHOTOGRAPHED BY RAYMOND MEIER.





PSYCHEDELIC FURS
It's something of a hard-rock flashback when they're used like fringe on black leather. J. Mendel blue-fox mittens, $680; J. Mendel boutiques. Pierre Hardy marmot-and-calfskin boots, $2,175; pierrehardy.com.



ELECTRIC LADYLAND
Acid-blue fox takes one of the new smaller and more decorous shoulder bags on a groovy trip. Proenza Schouler blue-fox–and–leather bag; proenzaschouler.com. Details, see In This Issue.



PLUSH INTERIOR

This is a punky look—with a warm and fuzzy heart. Giuseppe Zanotti Design rabbit fur–and–leather boots with buckle strap, $1,510; Giuseppe Zanotti Design, Las Vegas.

WOOLY BULLY

Have cloud, will travel: Puffs of white mink look like a cumulus nimbus, to go. Marc Jacobs mink quilted pom-pom handbag, $2,595; Marc Jacobs, NYC.



PARTY ANIMAL
You'll be spotting leopard (and jaguar and zebra) at all the best watering holes. FROM LEFT: Dolce & Gabbana leopard-print silver-fox handbag, $2,350; select Dolce & Gabbana boutiques. Tod's sheared fox–and–leather satchel, $1,995; Tod's boutiques.



SHAGADELIC
Yeah, baby, yeah: This swinging hobo owes a debt to the sixties. Dior fox-and-lambskin shoulder hobo; Dior boutiques. Soundsuits artist Nick Cave, represented by Jack Shainman Gallery, NYC. Details, see In This Issue.



The New York Times



April 5, 2009

Art

I Dream the Clothing Electric

By JORI FINKEL

San Francisco

THE crew installing the new exhibition at the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts here had all the usual tools of the trade: ladders and dollies, levelers and tape measures, hammers and screw guns. But the artist featured in the show, the Chicago sculptor Nick Cave (not to be confused with the Australian musician of the same name), had one unusual request.

"Could someone bring me a hairbrush?" he asked.

He was using his fingertips to smooth the surface of one of his newest pieces: a mannequin cloaked head to toe with a pelt of dyed human hair. The front featured bright pink spots against a dark brown background; the back, pink and purple zebra-style stripes.

"The hair creates an animal sensibility," said Mr. Cave, who is himself bald, with a trim gray goatee. "You know it's hair, but you don't know where it comes from. It's seductive but also a bit scary."

So is a video of Mr. Cave, an Alvin Ailey-trained dancer, completely covered by the pelt. In the video he throws the electric-colored hair back and forth in a highly stylized, percussive, tribal-looking dance.

Over the last decade Mr. Cave has become known for making colorful, extravagant sculptures with this kind of double life: they can stand alone in galleries as visually compelling art objects, or they can be worn by dancers as vehicles for sound and movement. He calls them Soundsuits.

Some Soundsuits, like a bouquet of metal toys and tops perched on top of a bodysuit made of crocheted hot pads, make a clanking commotion. Others, like the Soundsuits made of human hair (bought already dyed from a wholesaler in New York), tend to fall in the quiet, whispery range. All come to life in performance.

Yerba Buena's director, Kenneth Foster, who described his institution as "deeply multidisciplinary," called Mr. Cave a natural choice for the center for that reason. "So many visual artists cross over in a way that the performance world would be aghast at," he said. "Nick is one of the rare artists as strong in his secondary field as he is in his home art form."

The current exhibition, which runs through July 5, features 40 Soundsuits, along with related photographs, videos and sculptures, prompting Mr. Cave to call it his most complete show to date. It is also his first survey on the West Coast, and will travel to the Fowler Museum at the University of California, Los Angeles, in 2010.

He said he called the show "Meet Me at the Center of the Earth" — and planted a globe sculpture at the center of the main gallery — because he hopes the fruits of his imagination will help bring strangers together, if only to compare their perplexed responses. "I've been a voyeur at other shows of mine in the past, and I've seen complete strangers talking to each other," he said. "They were saying, 'What is that?' Or, 'I remember when my mother made doilies like that.' "

Mr. Cave, 50, credits his own mother with kick-starting his career by responding so enthusiastically to his very earliest artworks, like handmade birthday cards. It also helped, he said, that he was raised in central Missouri without much money.

"When you're raised by a single mother with six brothers and lots of hand-me-downs, you have to figure out how to make those clothes your own," he said. "That's how I started off, using things around the house." (He apparently took after his oldest brother Jack, a Chicago designer. As he installed his show, Mr. Cave wore a Gaultier shirt paired with one of his brother's designs: a pair of long shorts made of conservative gray fabric with a flashy sport stripe running down the sides.)

He learned to sew at the Kansas City Art Institute, where he was a 1982 graduate. He described his first garment as "very flamboyant pants and shirt with a harlequin sensibility." He said textiles immediately interested him for their expressive potential.

But then so did dance. During college he began studying dance through an Alvin Ailey program, training in Kansas City during the year and New York one summer. "I was always interested in movement," he said, "but I knew I didn't want to devote myself exclusively to dance. I wanted to bridge dance and art."

It wasn't until 1992, after he had obtained a master's degree at Cranbrook Academy of Art in Michigan and landed a job teaching at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (where he is director of the graduate fashion program), that he took a major step in that direction. He made his first Soundsuit out of twigs.

"It was a very hard year for me because of everything that came out of the Rodney King beating," he said. "I started thinking about myself more and more as a black man — as someone who was discarded, devalued, viewed as less than."

One day, sitting on a bench in Grant Park in Chicago, he saw twigs on the ground in a new light: they looked forsaken too. He gathered them by the armful and cut them into three-inch sticks. He drilled holes through the sticks, so he could wire them to an undergarment of his own creation, completely covering the fabric.

As soon as the twig sculpture was finished, he said, he realized that he could wear it as a second skin: "I put it on and jumped around and was just amazed. It made this fabulous rustling sound. And because it was so heavy, I had to stand very erect, and that alone brought the idea of dance back into my head."

The twig Soundsuit, now in a private collection, was the first of hundreds. With the help of several assistants he has made suits out of everything from sisal ("It looked like porcupine quills") to hundreds of plastic buttons topped by an abacus ("I saw it as a face guard"), one of many flea-market discoveries. Beads, sequins and feathers — always sewn, never glued — are also favorite materials.

Some Soundsuits are made for performance; others go straight into the gallery system, mainly through the Jack Shainman Gallery in New York (where Soundsuits this winter sold for $45,000 each). Some are durable; others more fragile. But all, based on the human body, look as if they could easily spring into motion. The potential for dance is implicit in all of them.

The Soundsuits also explore themes of costuming and masquerading. Mr. Cave said he discovered this identity-altering power early on. "When 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," he said. "I was no longer Nick. I was a shaman of sorts."

The extravagant ornamentation, colors and textures also connect the Soundsuits to tribal cultures. For instance in fashioning a piece out of doilies, he said, "I might be thinking about Kuba cloths, Haitian voodoo flags or Tibetan textiles."

Still, the suits remain open to many other associations. Kate Eilertsen, the former Yerba Buena curator who oversaw the exhibition, talked about their resurrection of "traditional craft forms like macramé and crocheting," while the New York curator Dan Cameron, in an essay for the show's catalog, cites the "social sculpture" of the artist Joseph Beuys, the legacy of the drag queen Leigh Bowery in the London underground performance scene and the ornate costumes of African-American Mardi Gras Indians in New Orleans.





"I think he's picked up the threads of these — I wouldn't say outlaw but slightly marginalized — traditions and pulled them into the front and center of museum culture," said Mr. Cameron. He also praised the way Mr. Cave connects "static objects in a museum space with human movement," comparing him in this respect to the sculptor-filmmaker Matthew Barney.

The Yerba Buena show highlights the performance potential of Mr. Cave's work through a gallery of video projections, documenting the suits in action. The museum has also commissioned Ronald K. Brown, the New York choreographer, to stage performances using Soundsuits in its galleries from May 28 to 31.

Mr. Brown has one element in mind already. He plans to use a vigorous dance style from Senegal called Sabar to breathe rather explosive life into the suits. "I want to use that style," he said, "because the arms and legs are very expressive. The legs extend so far from the body."

Mr. Cave is not collaborating on these dances, but he is curious to attend them to see how the suits behave. He imagines this will inform his own long-term plan to choreograph an ambitious performance by 90 dancers wearing Soundsuits. Encouraged by a conversation with Chicago's mayor, Richard M. Daley, who saw his show at the Chicago Cultural Center a few years ago, he hopes to stage this extravaganza in 2012 in Millennium Park there. "More and more I'm thinking of using the Soundsuits as a kind of orchestra. You could take three or five and record a concert," he said. "Or you could take 90 Soundsuits and make a full symphony out of them."





Meet Me at the Center of the Earth, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco. On view March 28th through July 5th.

ONLINE: SOUNDSUIT VIDEOS
Excerpts from Nick Cave's Soundsuit performances: nytimes.com/design