

ART WORLD

Parreno's Spectacular Show at Park Avenue Armory Hypnotizes Visitors

Kathleen Massara, Thursday, June 11, 2015



Philippe Parreno, Danny La Rue (2013).
Photo: Park Avenue Armory.

The 55,000 square-foot Wade Thompson Drill Hall is illuminated this June, for Philippe Parreno's frustratingly-titled new Park Avenue Armory installation, *H {N}Y P N(Y) OSIS*. It's the largest project from the Paris-based artist in the US, and demands attention, even if it's wavering.



Artforum refers to the installation, which features 26 marquee light sculptures, five videos, and wandering performers as "a hydra-headed Gesamtkunstwerk gamelan," while the New York Times proclaims the lit marquees "look as if they were severed from their worldly theatrical origins and elevated to Platonic form," and the Guggenheim's Nancy Spector calls the exhibition, "pure potentiality, without resolution." The press release referred to an "immersive" experience featuring "mental choreography" (see Ben Davis's 30 Art-Writing Clichés).



The pianist Mikhail Rudy plays works by Ligeti, Feldman, Ravel, and others.

In other words, no one knows, exactly, what is happening. But the results are entertaining, at least. In a film titled, *The Crowd* (2015), we see a group of New Yorkers occupying the Drill Hall, also watching a film. They appear to be hypnotized, and in fact, some of them are. A Gladstone Gallery assistant told the New York Times that the artist actually hypnotized some of the extras. "I did notice that some of them seemed to be particularly well behaved," she said.

A woman with a screen-damaged smartphone filmed everything in a semi-fugue state. Nearby, four viewers huddled under a shiny marquee and took dozens of photos of themselves together. The site is a selfie machine.



Still from "The Crowd", 2015, by Philippe Parreno. Commissioned by Park Avenue Armory; this film debuts as part of Parreno's solo exhibition "H {N}Y P N{Y} OSIS" on view at the Armory from June 11 – August 2, 2015. Runtime: 24 minutes, Color, Digital 65 mm, Sound Mix: 5.1, Aspect Ratio: 1.10. © Philippe Parreno. Courtesy Pilar Corrias, Barbara Gladstone, Esther Schipper.

At the preview, a group of prepubescent girls broke off from each other and delivered soft-spoken messages to the audience in a Tino Sehgal-led performance titled *Ann Lee* (2011), an homage to Parreno's previous film, *Anywhere out of the world* (2000), which is also on view. The girls say things like "I'm probably too young..." while they moved, slowly, toward each viewer. A gentleman nearby seemed slightly terrified of a young performer, saying, "She looks possessed!"

The exhibition also features *Invisiblyboy* (2010), a short film "portrait" of a young boy in Chinatown who sees ghosts, *Marilyn* (2012), a short film about the star's last days at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel, and *June 8, 1968* (2009), concerning the body of Robert Kennedy being shipped by train from New York to Washington, D.C., following his assassination.

H {N}Y P N{Y} OSIS is co-curated by Serpentine Gallery co-director Hans Ulrich-Obrist and artistic director of the Armory, Alex Poots.