



Cheryl Pope

WATCH YOUR STEP

November 10 – December 23, 2016

Reception Thursday, November 10, 5-7pm

On the heels of this contentious election season, artist and activist Cheryl Pope returns to moniquemeloche with her much-anticipated second solo exhibition, *WATCH YOUR STEP*. A continuation of her ongoing investigation into gun violence in Chicago and the nation, Pope's latest body of work moves forward with her interest in spirituality, albeit in a more direct manner. While previous projects such as *Just Yell* provided a platform for the voices and spirits of the city to rise, the works in *WATCH YOUR STEP* – comprising sculpture, video, photography, and performance – physically embody these voices, engaging overtly with the spiritual realm to put forth new and necessary modes of healing as a means of civil protest.

Characteristic of Pope's practice, the works on view convey a multiplicity of meanings. Her interest in poetry remains, although now in a more abstract form that departs from her text-based works; this notable departure suggests the profound absence of an adequate language to discuss the horrors of the current moment. *Standing Strong*, a ladder covered in an accumulation of black boxing hand-wraps (the number of which corresponds to the number of African American men killed by gun violence in Chicago this year), evokes the urban condition of being in two worlds at once – one foot on the ground, one foot in the grave. *Caught a Chill*, a series of birdcages covered in black yarn, containing music boxes that play notes corresponding to the 6-tone scale of the Solfeggio frequencies, ancient components of sacred music such as Gregorian chants, studies of which have revealed healing properties. Here, the bars of the oppressor and the flight of the oppressed are both present. *Portrait of a Young Man* is a visual song about the life and experience of a young African American man and was recorded entirely using a police body camera. According to the artist, through her particular method of poetic journalism she probes the problematically "authoritative" voice of the camera, raising questions about the state of law, justice and surveillance in America today.

During the exhibition's opening on November 10, Pope will present the first in a series of performances meant to portray "aesthetic strategies to maintain power." The artist has invited Lady Lake Shore Drive, a former Chicago police officer turned spirit caller, to participate in a collaborative performance: Pope will ritualistically cleanse the sidewalk outside the gallery, while Lady Lake Shore Drive uses her voice to call, heal, and speak to the spirits of recent victims of gun violence. Through action and through song, the performance will engage the community outside of the gallery walls, and will attest to the ghosts – of human lives lost, of past traumas, both physical and emotional – portrayed and awakened by the work inside.

An encore performance will take place on Saturday, November 12 at 3pm, presented in conjunction with the newly expanded Gallery Weekend Chicago.

Image: Cheryl Pope, *WE LEAVE OFF THE ENDINGS*, Ink jet photo on Epson Pearl paper, 26 x 18 inches

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Cheryl Pope (American b. 1980, lives Chicago) received a Master's in Design from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2010. Her recent solo exhibitions include *Objects for Listening*, Onsite Gallery, Ontario College of Art and Design (OCAD), Toronto (2016); *Community is Built on Empathy*, Gund Gallery, Kenyon College, OH (2016); *JUST YELL: (UN)TOLD*, Central Utah Art Center (CUAC), Salt Lake City (2015); *From Within*, The Poetry Foundation, Chicago, (2015); *Just Yell: Levelling the Playing Field*, Chicago Cultural Center (2015); and Museo d'Arte Gallarate, Italy (2014). Additionally, Pope's work has been included in many group contexts, including *Broken Flag*, curated by Dr. Daniel Berger and Omar Kholeif, Iceberg Projects, Chicago (upcoming, 2016); *A Dark Matter...*, Tarble Arts Center, Eastern Illinois University, Charleston, IL (2016); *This Heat*, Weinberg/Newton Gallery, Chicago (2016); *March Madness*, curated by Hank Willis Thomas, Fort Gansevoort, New York (2016); *CHICAGO STATEMENTS*, Elmhurst Art Museum, Elmhurst, IL (2015); and *Celebrate*, Kunsthalle Osnabrueck, Germany (2015). Pope has also presented a number of public performances at events such as *Justice and Opportunity: The Power of the Arts* at the White House, Washington D.C. in October 2015 (in collaboration with the Chicago poets of JUST YELL/POETRY as SELF DEFENSE) and The Cultivist's May 2016 anniversary party, New York. In December 2016, she will present a new sound piece as part of Untitled Miami's Radio program. Pope is in the collections of the Santa Barbara Museum of Art, CA; the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, CA; the Honolulu Museum of Art, Hawaii; and the United States Embassy, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. In 2015, Pope received a 3Arts Award, as well as being named the first Mellon Foundation artist-in-residence at the Gund Gallery, Kenyon College, OH; and an artist-in-residence at the Chicago Cultural Center. Currently, she is a SAIC Tower artist-in-residence at Homan Square, North Lawndale, Chicago and teaches in the Fashion Department at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

on the wall

Cheryl Pope in collaboration with the Homan Square community at SAIC's Tower Residency

'Sometimes I think I be dreamin'

November 10 – January 1, 2016

In addition to her solo exhibition in the main gallery, Pope will present a collaborative project in the gallery's storefront exhibition space. Arising out of her time as the SAIC's current Tower Artist in Residence at Homan Square in North Lawndale, "*Sometimes I think I be dreamin'*" is an homage to the strength of community ties and its many voices. Indeed, the installation will feature *ALWAYS HERE*, a memorial quilt that expresses the personal stories of Chicago's West Side. Utilizing Batik dyeing as a technique to share with others while also building a metaphor of resistance, Pope arranges individual stories into an integrated narrative composition born out of community workshops in which knowledge and skills in a variety of crafts, such as hand- and machine-sewing, embroidery, quilting, dying, and graphic design, are shared and exchanged. After its presentation at moniquemeloche, *ALWAYS HERE* will be on display at Homan Square and given back to the community.

off the wall and porcelain projects

FOR FREEDOMS

Through November 30

This fall, moniquemeloche is pleased to present our third annual **off the wall** exhibition, featuring works from the first ever artist-run super PAC, *For Freedoms*. Scheduled over the course of the 2016 presidential election season, works by **Zoë Buckman, Paula Crown, Maria Gaspar, Nari Ward, and Carrie Mae Weems** are displayed on public bus benches throughout Wicker Park Bucktown, for this exclusive engagement with a Chicago audience.



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