

*Take a closer look at artist Pope.L's newest exhibition*



One week after the initial "opening" of his exhibition—which began while the Neubauer Collegium gallery was still closed due to COVID-19—artist Pope.L staged an intervention.

Video by  
Robert  
Heishman

By [Mark Sorkin](#)  
Mar 8, 2021

After nearly a full year of closure, the University of Chicago's Neubauer Collegium will reopen its gallery to the public—doing so with a new exhibition from acclaimed artist Pope.L. On display through May 16, *My Kingdom for a Title* features recent work by Pope.L, a scholar in UChicago's Department of Visual Arts. The show contains allusions to the COVID-19 crisis with a degree of directness that is unusual in Pope.L's work, which is often elusive and ambiguous.

Appointments to visit the gallery will begin March 9, with special hours and new visitor policies developed by the University of Chicago to protect the health of guests and staff. Visitors will enter an immersive installation under a cloud of masks, objects that have come to symbolize the pandemic. An arrangement of medicine cabinets with mirrored doors left ajar invite visitors to peek inside for a closer look at the works contained within. The subtle play of prompts and references will animate the gallery as a space where notions of access—to art, to meaning, to health care—are entangled with those of racial identity.



The COVID-19 pandemic casts a shadow over the exhibition, which contains allusions to the crisis with a degree of directness that is unusual in Pope.L's work. Visitors enter the gallery under a literal cloud of masks, and seeing the works requires opening mirror-clad medicine cabinets with blue latex gloves.

Photo by Robert Heishman

The text-based drawings and paintings mounted inside the cabinets feature elliptical aphorisms that call attention to the way color is deployed to categorize people. Created during the initial lockdown phase last spring, these are among the most recent works from Pope.L's ongoing *Skin Set Project*—and an unusually direct reflection on the experience of art at a time of quarantine. *My Kingdom for a Title* first “opened” on Jan. 21 without a public reception. Pope.L and Dieter Roelstraete, curator at the Neubauer Collegium, marked the occasion with a private ceremony and ribbon cutting. During the ceremony, Roelstraete welcomed “the public of the future” back to the gallery for the exhibition.

One week later, Pope.L returned to the Neubauer Collegium gallery to stage an intervention. In the video he produced, the exhibition serves as a backdrop for an elliptical performance that emphasizes the “steal” in stealth.