

Pope.L, American visual artist, dead at 68

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Pope.L, the American visual artist best known for his crawling work, has died aged 68.

The artist was born William Pope in Newark, New Jersey, in 1955. Pope received his formal art education as a student at the Pratt Institute during the early 1970s before going on to study at institutions Montclair State University and Mason Gross School of Arts. While as a student, Pope began to grow a reputation for his work as a crawling artist. In 1978, he commenced on his first crawl across Times Square while wearing a business suit. Over a decade later, he carried out a similar act of performance art across the edges of Tompkins Square Park, which at the time was the epicentre of wars between the police and squatters.

Pope's most notorious crawl came in 2001 when he dressed in a Superman suit with a skateboard strapped to his back. He made a 22-mile journey from Broadway to his mother's house in the Bronx with the task taking nine years to complete. During an interview with *The Guardian* in 2021, Pope explained the origin of his crawling performance art, noting: "I wanted to find a way of doing anything I wanted that didn't need anyone to support it. I didn't need a room and I didn't need objects. I just needed the opportunity, which I could create myself."

His death has been confirmed by his gallery, Mitchell-Innes & Nash, who shared on Instagram: "Pope.L fundamentally challenged and changed the last 50 years of visual art in the United States... His elegant, indeterminate, and often humorous, yet bitingly poignant criticism of our history has only recently begun to be fully recognized." Last month, Pope launched his first show for a non-commercial institution in the United Kingdom at the South London Gallery. The exhibition was titled *Hospital*, and the artist was in attendance for the launch event.

Pope passed away in Chicago on December 23rd. He is survived by his son Desmond Tarkowski-Pope.L. and his partner Mami Takahashi. No cause of death has been revealed.