

MITCHELL-INNES & NASH

ART BASEL | PERFORMANCE



PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Pope.L | *The Problem*

For Art Basel 2016, Mitchell-Innes & Nash proposes a new performance piece conceived by Pope.L for the opening of Art Unlimited.

A white stretch limo arrives at the entrance of the fair. A white gorilla steps out, spilling white plantains onto the ground, and enters Art Unlimited. The apparition wanders through the convention center, looking for something. Its mate? Its cage? Its formal organization via an enactment of a ritual? The beast drops more white things as it wanders. Eventually, the entity finds what it is looking for: an exhibition space containing a set of paintings called *Circa by the famous negro artist Pope.L*. The gorilla ignores the paintings but searches behind them finding nothing then finally extracts five fat stacks of currency. The creature exits. Then returns leaving behind a garden gnome painted completely white except for a black-faced nose.

Once again, Pope.L plays with uncertainty, incongruity, humor and sociality. Our identification of the performance's persona, the creature, is influenced by the structure of our language – our conflicting babel of languages. What is seen is understood in the same yet different ways; the reader – the spectator – becomes the very crucible in which the message is developed like a photograph or cooked like a spoonful of heroin. The *problem once inserted* remains: what is shared is a corrosive and what may be understood by all is a divisive elixir between individual interpretations, individual politics, and individual stupidities.

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Moreover, the reality of a white creature roaming the halls of Art Basel is a kind of displaced repetition – a re-packaging, a re-caging, if you will – of what is perhaps the largest, most prestigious spectacle in the art world. The question arises, then, whether the nature of the performance acts as a kind of break from the spectacle or if it serves to celebrate it or if it is simply a landlord collecting its due. But, once again, the *problem* is not the performance out there, in them, but rather the performance, in here, in us.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

- 6:00pm** A white stretch limo pulls up to the entrance of Art Unlimited.
- 6:02pm** A large, white gorilla opens the door slightly and sticks its paw out and drops several unripe plantains onto the ground. The gorilla then walks into the fair.
- 6:03pm** Wearing a satchel, the gorilla roams around the fair, and appears to be looking for something. The gorilla wanders through booths and through the crowd of visitors, dropping three or four additional unripe plantains onto the fair floor. The gorilla then finds the first part of what it is looking for – *Circa*.
- 6:12pm** While in the *Circa* exhibition space, the gorilla begins looking around, still searching, for something. In the exhibition space is a step stool. As the gorilla climbs up the step stool, looking behind the floating walls, stacks of money are uncovered. There are 5 stacks in total. Each time money is found the gorilla stuffs it into the satchel. Before leaving the exhibition space, the gorilla takes a black-face garden gnome out of the satchel and sets it down in the corner of the exhibition space. The gnome is the equivalent of a lawn jockey in the United States.
- 6:22pm** With a bag full of money, the gorilla leaves the exhibition space and heads back out to the limo, which is waiting at the entrance.
- 6:25pm** The limo drives away.