

MITCHELL-INNES & NASH

POPE.L

PROTO-SKIN SET

On view through July 14, 2017

1018 Madison Avenue, New York



Mitchell-Innes & Nash is pleased to present *Proto-Skin Set*, an exhibition of early work by Pope.L from 1979 to 1994 that explores the use of materiality and language in his practice. On view for the first time is the artist's *Proto-Skin Sets*, a selection of mixed media collages and assemblages that deal with the social constructions of language, race, and gender. The exhibition also includes a five-part document from 1979 that is part of an open-ended set of written works titled *Communications Devices*. This is Pope.L's fourth exhibition with the gallery and is accompanied by a catalogue with a Q&A between Pope.L

and Bennett Simpson, Senior Curator at Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles.

Pope.L began making *Proto-Skin Sets* and *Communication Devices* in the 1970s and 1980s while he was a student at Montclair State University in New Jersey and continued working with them throughout his teaching tenure at Bates College in Maine. Using language and writing as a starting point, these works anticipate his ongoing project "Skin Sets," text-based works that employ language to construct pointed, absurd, and layered messages about the vagaries of color.

The *Proto-Skin Sets* use found materials like local newspapers, commercial poster boards, and billboard advertisements as a point of departure to examine the possibilities of language. Pope.L interpolates the methods and uses of writing, both visually and literarily. Seeing language as image and image as language, Pope.L uses texture and mark-making to make these definitions concrete. He incorporates organic materials to speak about duration—for example peanut butter, semen, and human hair—in several of the works, something he has done subsequently throughout his practice.

Pope.L began creating *Communications Devices* in 1976 when he was navigating how to write language and text within his practice. *Communications Devices* are a wide-ranging enterprise composed primarily of written things—in the form of stories, novels, plays, song lyrics, documentation, and more—and is part of the larger *Proto-Skin Sets* series. Some of the stories in the *Communications Devices* set, for example, were published as fiction in small literary presses while others were kept in an accounting ledger (now lost) along with the majority of the oeuvre. The *Communications Device* on view at Mitchell-Innes & Nash is a project from the 1970s. For this

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project, Pope.L gathered gallery show postcards intended to promote contemporary exhibitions in SoHo, wrote on them, and mailed them out to galleries of which he was aware. In addition, he created an enlarged version of the same text, typing it out on 250 copies of standard photocopy paper before leaving small stacks in the same galleries. The total number of postcards or which particular ones were mailed for this four-part work is unknown. While a variety of postcards was originally mailed, the only one that remains is in photocopy form and advertises a group show at The Clocktower.

About Pope.L

Pope.L (b. 1955, Newark, New Jersey) is a visual artist and educator whose multidisciplinary practice uses binaries, contraries, and preconceived notions embedded within contemporary culture to create art works in various formats, such as writing, painting, performance, installation, video, and sculpture. Building upon his long history of enacting arduous, provocative, absurdist performances and interventions in public spaces, Pope.L applies some of the same social, formal, and performative strategies to his interests in language, system, gender, race, and community. The goals for his work are several: joy, money, and uncertainty—not necessarily in that order.

Current and recent exhibitions, performances, and projects include *Whispering Campaign* at documenta 14, Athens and Kassel (2017); “Claim (Whitney Version)” at the 2017 Whitney Biennial (2017); “PLAMA (The Spot),” a commercial commissioned for *On the Tip of the Tongue* at Museum of Modern Art Warsaw (2016); the 32nd Biennial de São Paulo (2016); *The Freedom Principle* at ICA Philadelphia (2016) and MCA Chicago (2015); *The Public Body* at Artspace, Sydney (2016); *Less than One* at Walker Art Center, Minneapolis (2016); *Trinket* at The Geffen Contemporary, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (2015).

About Mitchell-Innes & Nash

Founded by Lucy Mitchell-Innes and David Nash, who previously headed the worldwide Contemporary and Impressionist & Modern Art divisions of Sotheby’s, Mitchell-Innes & Nash places exemplary contemporary artists within a historical context, revealing a continuity of ideas and aesthetic virtuosity from the Modern era through the present day.

Mitchell-Innes & Nash’s renowned exhibition program, in both their Madison Avenue and Chelsea locations, fosters excellence within artistic practice, while forging an informed dialogue between emerging and established internationally recognized artists. From acclaimed surveys of 20th century masters, such as Jean Arp, Anthony Caro, Jay DeFeo, Willem de Kooning, Leon Kossoff, Kenneth Noland, Roy Lichtenstein, and Nicolas de Stael, to solo exhibitions of Sarah Braman, Keltie Ferris, Daniel Lefcourt, Pope.L, Martha Rosler, and Jessica Stockholder, Mitchell-Innes & Nash has proven expertise in both advancing the careers of emerging artists and maintaining the superior standard set by established artists.

Caption: Pope.L, *Truth and Time a.k.a. Now You Can Bring Black History Home*, 1994. Gel medium, magazine photos and peanut butter on plywood with thumbtacks in plywood container. 13 1/8 by 15 1/4 by 3 in. 33.3 by 38.7 by 7.6 cm. © Pope.L Courtesy of the artist and Mitchell-Innes & Nash, NY

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Listings Information:

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