

# ARTFORUM

## **“POPE.L: CONQUEST,” “POPE.L: CHOIR,” AND “MEMBER: POPE.L 1978–2001.”**

### **“POPE.L: CONQUEST”**

Public Art Fund

September 21, 2019

*Curated by Nicholas Baume*

### **“POPE.L: CHOIR”**

Whitney Museum of American Art

October 10, 2019–Winter 2020

*Curated by Christopher Y. Lew with Ambika Trasi*

### **“MEMBER: POPE.L, 1978–2001”**

The Museum of Modern Art

October 21, 2019–January 2020

*Curated by Stuart Comer with Danielle A. Jackson*



Pope.L, *The Great White Way: 22 Miles, 9 Years, 1 Street*, 2001–2009. Performance view, New York, ca. 2001. Photo: Lydia Grey.

IN 1991, the artist Pope.L dragged himself and a potted flower through Tompkins Square Park (*Tompkins Square Crawl*). The next year, while wearing a Santa hat, he spent three days trying to lift a bottle of laxatives with his mind (*Levitating the Magnesia*). In 2000, he gorged on copies of the *Wall Street Journal* and then puked them up (*Eating the Wall Street Journal*). In 2015, he raised a giant US flag in Chicago’s Museum of Contemporary Art, where it flew until it began to fray (*Trinket*).

Pope.L explained the motivation for his exciting failures to Cynthia Carrin 1991: “I confound black desire with white thingness. And try to find a way of transcending it through this impossible action.” Ours is an age in which the US government corrals brown infants on the southwest border and juries acquit in cases involving white police officers shooting unarmed black people; what better time to meditate on white thingness and POC impossibility than during a citywide Pope.L happening?

That’s exactly what will take place from September 2019 through January 2020 in “Pope.L: Instigation, Aspiration, Perspiration,” a three-part exhibition organized jointly by New York’s Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, and the Public Art Fund. On September 21, to kick things off, the Public Art Fund will produce Pope.L’s commissioned *Conquest*, an addition to the thirty-plus endurance crawls he has undertaken since 1978. A few weeks later, the Whitney will host Pope.L’s new installations *Choir* and *Well*, which are inspired by John Cage and by that historical site of racial oppression, the American water fountain. On October 21, MOMA will launch “member: Pope.L, 1978–2001,” documenting thirteen of the artist’s early performances through videos, photographs, sculptural elements, ephemera, live actions, and a catalogue featuring essays by Martine Syms and Adrian Heathfield. Bringing together Pope.L’s archive and his new obsessions, these three venues will offer observers a wealth of opportunities to be frustrated and thrilled by the artist’s race and class provocations.

— Yxta Maya Murray