

Cheryl Pope: *BASKING NEVER HURT NO ONE*

June 6 – August 17

Opening reception: Thursday, June 6, 5-8pm

moniquemeloche is thrilled to present *BASKING NEVER HURT NO ONE*, Cheryl Pope's fourth solo show with the gallery. Born and raised in Chicago, Pope maintains a deep-rooted practice of challenging the widespread racism that has historically defined the city. Although seemingly a departure from the performative, often sports-related projects for which she is known, this new body of work continues the artist's examination of systematic social concerns, unexpected material interventions, and simultaneously introduces a novel formal language. While she previously positioned herself as a conduit for the voices of the youth impacted by socio-political turmoil, here Pope puts forth a personal intimacy as yet unseen in the artist's oeuvre. Made of wool roving on cashmere – unspun wool needle-punched into a cashmere support – these "paintings" are textural explorations of the complicated sensuality evoked by a semi-anonymous biracial couple.

Pope's new works draw upon the motif of the leisured nude figure, a classic image woven throughout the fabric of the art historical canon. Upending the trite narrative of the male artist, who, in projecting his own ideas of the female form, creates a partisan image, Pope presents both the female and male form in sensual, insightful entanglement. In part, the work depicts the simple delights of nudity, portraying two figures as they lounge, unabashedly exposed to the viewer, at times intimately intertwined. Composed of tactile, sensual lines, their bodies sprawl across an imagined natural setting consisting of floral colors and tropical plants, evoking both an Edenic tranquility and carnality. However, a paradisiacal simplicity becomes complicated by longstanding historical and political association: what are the implications of a black and a white body lying together?

While Pope evokes her own personal reality in these works, she notably renders the bodies faceless. As in her previous works, then, she transcends specificity to address larger concepts. On both a personal and more complexly political level, these works appeal to the universal human need for intimacy, trust, and love – all-encompassing desires that bind us all.

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Cheryl Pope (American, b. 1980, lives and works in Chicago and New York) received her BFA and MA in Design from the School of the Art Institute, Chicago, where she is now an Adjunct Professor. Solo exhibitions include Rockford Art Museum, IL (2019); Galleria Bianconi, Milan, Italy (2018); Andres Guerrero Gallery, San Francisco, CA (2018); Fort Gansevoort, New York, NY (2017); moniquemeloche (2016); Ontario College of Art, Toronto, Canada (2016); Gund Gallery, Kenyon College, Gambier, OH (2016); and Poetry Foundation, Chicago, IL (2015). Her work has also been included in several group exhibitions, including *Messengers: Artist as Witnesses*, Museum of Art, University of New Hampshire, Durham (2019); *waiting for a sign*, Lubeznik Center for the Arts, Michigan City, IN (2018); *50 States, 50 Billboards, For Freedoms*, Chicago, IL (2018); *Ready? OK!*, Naughton Gallery, Queen's University, Belfast, Ireland (2018); and *Declaration*, the inaugural exhibition at the Institute for Contemporary Art, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA (2018). In 2015, Pope presented her ongoing performance projects, *TRUTH as EVIDENCE* and *JUST YELL*, at The White House, Washington, D.C. Recent and current residencies include the Camargo Foundation in Cassis, France (2019), as well as at Queenspace in New York, NY (since 2018). She has been the recipient of several awards and fellowships, including the Public Artist Award, Franklin Works, Minneapolis, MN (2017); Selected Artist, Year of Public Art, Chicago Cultural Center, IL (2017); Mellon Fellowship, Kenyon College, Gambier, OH (2016); and 3Arts Award, Chicago, IL (2015). Pope's work is in the collections of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Joan Flasche Artists Book Collection, Chicago; Seattle Art Museum, WA; Honolulu Museum of Art, HI; Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego, CA; Poetry Foundation, Chicago, IL; DePaul University Art Museum, Chicago, IL; Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, VA; and United States Embassy, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. Pope will participate in a number of upcoming projects in 2019, including group exhibitions *Stance & Fall*, Marta Herford Museum, DE; and *Small Talk*, Crystal Bridges, Bentonville, AR.