



CHERYL POPE

MARK MOORE GALLERY | *STATEMENTS*

"Pope reminds us that fundamentally, contemporary art is actionable and despite a dominant polarizing rhetoric of the Other, we do have commonalities and common experiences that can bridge the gaps in economic and therefore phenomenological experience."

—Joel Kuennen, *Artslant Chicago*, June 28, 2013

CHERYL POPE STATEMENTS

29

Mark Moore Gallery: *Statements* introduces a featured gallery artist through images and candid interview. From noteworthy early examples to present bodies, the works featured in *Statements* act as an overview of the varying practices and movements implemented by a given artist in tandem with their thoughts and interpretations.

Working in a multitude of mediums, Cheryl Pope addresses issues of connectivity and identity that inform the way in which we live our lives today. She begins with relationships and experiences in her everyday life that she finds to be confrontational or in need of examination, and manipulates their innate tensions to coerce participation or engagement on the part of the viewer. Through research and experimentation, she produces work that poses specific questions about topical social, political, and global conversations. As a result, she is interested in developing communities through her work via collaboration, relevancy, and outreach that illustrate a collective and individual plight for assertive voice in light of social and political restraint.

Pope received her Masters in Design in 2010 from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. In the past eight years, her work has been included in many group contexts, including venues in Chicago such as Evanston Art Center, Boomerang, Swimming Pool Projects, Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago and the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, as well as The Morgan Conservatory in Cleveland. Her work is included in the permanent collection of the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego (CA), Honolulu Museum of Art (HI), and Sweeney Art Gallery, University of California Riverside (CA).



CHERYL POPE

Interview by: Marielos Kluck, Mark Moore Gallery

You come from a fashion background. Do you think this affects your point-of-view? Is this perhaps why you work within multiple disciplines?

A foundation in Fashion Design definitely influences my practice in many ways. I first went into fashion because when I was young, clothing was what was available to me as a means of self expression allowing me to explore my identity and provide me with a sense of empowerment. I was able to recognize it, as so many young people do, as a tool of communication. I became fascinated with its relationship between the external and internal psychology of the self and how it would provoke performance both internally and externally. I think these early explorations very much inform my current practice in regards to my interest in identity, how objects relate to and are used by the body, and the physicality and presence of the body through performance.

As a result of this study, I approach each object and material as a body; searching for its characteristics, emotional qualities, strengths, weaknesses, tensions, and tendencies. Each object is then seen as a form to disrupt, carrying the association and weight of the original, but provoking and becoming something new.

Being trained as a designer, I am very conscious of the concept,



material, and design as it relates to the body and experience of the viewer. In my process, the research, conceptual development, and ideas ignite the dialogue between design decisions that contain, communicate, and evoke the art. The material and form the work takes is completely determined by the concept. I feel no obligation or commitment to any medium, but rather am committed to find the best solution to communicate the research/idea. In this way, I think my practice is very much influenced by my foundation in design. It is my instinct to identify a problem, conceptualize it, and search through formal solutions to better understand it, and potentially, have a positive effect on it.

In the past you worked for the Chicago-based artist Nick Cave as his studio manager. How did this experience affect your practice?

Studying under and working for artist Nick Cave for over 12 years has been the most important influence on my practice. It is from Nick that I learned what it takes and what it means to be an artist with a social conscious. Being in Nick's studio, I learned the discipline, commitment, and risk taking necessary to walk the artist's path.

The two best pieces of advice Nick ever gave me are: "DREAM BIGGER" and "FIGURE IT OUT!"



Previously your work such as *Shove* (2011) deals with domesticity and appropriates the visuals of the home. This can also be seen in *Video Stacks, 2011*. Why did this subject matter interest you?

There are two voices in my practice: One that deals with more public issues, as seen in *Hoop Dreams* or *Just Yell* and one that deals with more private or domestic issues. Though public and private are inherently entwined and inform the other, I tend to address each with a different sensibility. In the past, I have used basketball and varsity aesthetics to communicate the research of the public voice and kitchenware/domesticity for the private.

I think it is extremely important that we analyze, interrogate, and challenge our domestic relationships, environments, and roles of past, present, and future, as they pertain to identity, power, and social constructions. It is within these relationships and dynamics that we become the authors of our own time as we lay the foundation for those that follow.

With *Just Yell* your first exhibition at Monique Meloche in Chicago, you dealt with the subject matter of High School as well as issues around individual agency and having one's voice heard. You also worked with Chicago youth to realize several projects such as the video *K-I-D-S* (2013), which included a local student/collaborator. How has working with Chicago's youth shaped your practice?

I have been engaged with Chicago youth for over a decade through the arts either as a teaching artist or collaborator. For seven years, I led school tours at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago.

CHERYL POPE

It was during these inquiry based tours that I first began connecting the experiences of youth with contemporary art. Their insightful interpretations, search for relevancy, and honest, direct reactions ignited in me a deep respect for their voices and the need for them to be seen and heard. I feel that our culture denies the relevancy of their voices and so I want to use my practice as a platform not only for them to be seen and heard, but also to present it in such a manner that would enable people to experience the weight, value, and importance of young people's voices today.

Page 2: *Stacks, 2011* (Still image from video)

Opposite Page, Left: *Hoop Dreams, 2010*
Metal chain, metal shackle, velvet pillow, basketball, gold paint
28 x 28 x 49 inches

Opposite Page, Right: *THIS or THAT, 2010*
Faux gold chain necklaces, basketball rim, industrial felt, gold thread, gold paint
96 x 48 x 192 inches

You continue to work with young people for your recent work in *Chain Reaction*. Sharing your creative process and collaborating opens up your work not only as a form of resistance in terms of its message but also in its ability to provide a sanctuary and creative outlet to the young people you work with—an experience that is removed from the everyday violence surrounds them. Do you view yourself as more than an artist, perhaps as a mentor or educator? How does art provide you a platform to reach out to young people?

As mentioned, Nick Cave has been my mentor for over 14 years and continues to be to this day. Without him as a role model and listener, guiding me on my path, showing me what is possible, I definitely would not be who I am or where I am today. Through his example, I realized first-hand the importance of this role and how it can affect a young person. In response to this, I have taken on the role as a mentor to many young people, and hope that it also will impact them in such a way that they will want to continue the path and give the same to another.

In the United States, art is a place of free expression, of questioning, of debating, of challenging the norms. It is a place for many young people to feel safe to be themselves, and express their ideas and reactions to their experiences. The young people I invite to participate in projects accept the invitation, because they want to explore this framework, and recognize the opportunity to be seen, to be heard, and to be validated as an important role in making society and culture today. They seem to know, often even more than adults, the importance of expression as a means to confront and address current issues.

You often times include live performances at your exhibition openings. The exhibition, *Just Yell*, included a participatory element in which gallery-goers had the opportunity to ride throughout the city of Chicago in low-riders with students sitting alongside them reciting personal compositions (*Drive by in 5 Acts*, 2013). This type of happening or situational performance brings up issues of community as well as connecting the show to its location. Why do you feel it is important to create this type of communal/local dialogue with your work?

It is very important that the work I produce is current and relevant to people today. When I exhibit work somewhere outside of where I live, it is critical that I am aware of the current issues, politics, climate, and community concerns of that city. I can then consider and design the exhibition so that it carries the potential to connect with the people that will be viewing the work.

Opposite Page: *Drive by in 5 Acts*, 2013 (Still image from video)



In this way, the work has the potential to be meaningful to the people because they feel that the community was considered in the decision making process. In other words, that it is there for them rather than in spite of them. As a result, there is a trust established between the viewer and the work that allows the viewer to engage in deeper conversations and connections.

By designing situations, such as *Drive-by in 5 Acts*, the intention is to instigate new groupings of people and new ways of experiencing the familiar that call attention to that which is present but might be unseen or heard. By bringing the work outside of the gallery into the neighborhood, I hope to locate and position the work within the everyday, to provoke the relevancy and connections of the issues in the work with the current moment. I am continuously attempting to break down or fracture what we think we know, in order to offer the opportunity to reconstruct it into a newly questioned and considered form.

For the *Chain Reaction* opening you will be bringing in Street Poets Inc., a local poetry group that works with at risk youth in the city of L.A. as well as Chicago-based poet, Britteney Black Rose Kapri, who will be reciting prose from a recent publication. This performance seems in keeping with the theme of the show in that it draws the viewer's attention to how violence is an interrelated issue that affects multiple communities, in this case, both Los Angeles and Chicago. How did you go about deciding on this type of performance?

By inviting poets into the gallery to perform their poetry, language is ignited in the space. What is specifically important here is that the

language that is first spoken in the space, is highly considered, composed, and articulated. This disables the viewer to find comfort and familiarity in language commonly placed and used around these issues. Instead of access to an immediate verbal reaction, they are postponed, as they are first given language to consider, to build new connections with the visual work, and to be introduced and reminded of the flexibility, vulnerability, and power found in the language that is used to discuss and control these issues.

A second intention of inviting the poets into the gallery space, is to create a platform for visual work and spoken word to overlap, co-exist, and intersect. This past spring, I facilitated the opportunity for several young poets to perform at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, in a piece titled *Walk with Me*. In the structure I designed, the performance began with poets seated at desk-style folding chairs positioned in a grid structure in the atrium of the museum. The piece began with the poets carving their poetry into the surface of the desk created a choir of scratching that filled the atrium. Viewers were invited to walk through the rows, looking over the shoulder of the poets to read the text. Eventually poets would shift the position of power and look to a viewer and invite them for a walk. They would then guide the viewer to a pre-determined artwork(s) in the museum and perform a poem. As I myself experienced this with one specific poet. I was able to watch an abstract red painting represent the blood and battle between a father and son, and in the next stanza transform into her first experience falling in love. Never before had a painting so gently flowed between such drastic narratives within a matter of seconds. This experience changed my entire relationship with this painting, with the color red, and with the power of language as it relates to visual art. It was





through this performance that I experienced how poetry can act as a medium to further bring to life visual work.

Britteney Black Rose Kapri is a Chicago based poet, writing about similar issues that I am researching through visual work. She performed in *Drive-by in 5 Acts* and has come to my classes at SAIC to share her work and lead poetry workshops with students. I was aware that she was working on a collection of poems dealing with similar issues as *Chain Reaction*, and so it seemed like a perfect opportunity to bring the two together. I find it extremely exciting that at the opening she and I will experience this intersection the same time as the viewers.

After deciding that I wanted to bring the folding chair desks to the gallery for the performance called *Between the Lines*, an iteration of *Walk with Me*, I began researching youth poetry groups in Los Angeles and discovered Street Poets Inc. I was immediately taken by the mission, commitment, and effects the program was having with young people. I felt that in all aspects the organization intimately connected with the research of both Britteney's poetry and my visual work and that the coalesce of the three would not only provoke new ways for the audience to consider these issues, but that we would also influence and inform each other.

Another element of your work is that it brings attention to nationwide issues of gun violence that audiences in large part dismiss. *Chain Reaction* draws upon the idea of interconnectedness and how groups with binary difference may both be impacted by violence. How do you approach the idea of social responsibility as an artist?

My mission as a cultural maker is to make relevant work that matters; which is to say, I want to make a difference. I think it is best said by Anne Bogart that that the role of the artist is "to shed light in dark places."

Therefore, rather than approaching the idea of social responsibility, it is more that it is inherently embedded in the process and in the work. It is then my responsibility to be aware of the issues and do the research, questioning, and confronting so that the decisions being made are informed, understood, and deliberate.

Page 9: *Remember to Remember*, 2013
Metal, glass casing, light, brass name plates
36 x 47 x 2 1/2 inches

Page 10, Left: *Chain Reaction (ONE)*, 2014
Inkjet print, 30 x 43 inches

Page 10, Right: *Chain Reaction (EIGHT)*, 2014
Inkjet print, 20 x 40 inches



What is next for you as an artist? Will you continue working on current themes in your work?

Yes, I will continue to research current themes in my practice. Much of the research that guided the decisions for the works produced for *Chain Reaction* emerged from the performances *Silence the Silence*, *Walk with Me*, and *Bring in the Light* that took place this past spring at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago. Therefore I intend to continue to develop and design happenings/events that invite participants to discuss, inform and respond to these issues. Research that will emerge from these events will then guide the direction and form of new works.

Simultaneously, for my next exhibition this fall at Galleria Bianconi in Milan, I will return to the more private, personal, and internal voice that can be seen in *Matter of Fact* or *(In)Voluntary Acts*. Many of the current themes will cross over as they relate to identity, systems of power, authorship, and loss.

Opposite Page: *Urns*, 2012-13
Vintage china, Dresden figurines, and cherry wood
Dimensions vary: 9 x 9 x 28 inches

Right: *Tick*, 2011
Vintage china plates, stainless steel, motor
12 x 12 x 84 inches

CHERYL POPE



I Live Life
Like I
Want To

I AM NOT
A VERY
SENSITIVE
PERSON

I FEEL
CONTROLLED
BY THE
PEOPLE THAT
SURROUND ME

I AM THAT
ONE GIRL
WITH NO
FUTURE

I ALWAYS
DO THE
RIGHT
THING

SOMETIMES
I FEEL
REPLACE-
ABLE

on the wall
Cheryl Pope *A Silent I*

“Cheryl Pope’s practice is fundamentally a social one. “It’s about being responsible...the responsibility of being an artist today is to look at what is happening around me and react to it.”

—Joel Kuennen,
Artslant Chicago, June 28, 2013

Left: *A Silent I*, 2010 - on going
Nylon banners, 36 x 50 inches
Installation View Monique Meloche Gallery



Left: *Urn*, 2012
Vintage china, Dresden figurines, and cherry wood
12 x 12 x 15 inches

Above: *Top*, 2013
Vintage china, metal rod, 18 x 6 x 6 inches

Opposite Page: *Matter of Fact*, 2011
Installation view Emerson Dorsch Gallery



Cheryl Pope:
Matter of Fact



Opposite Page: *Yell (Varsity Patch)*, 2013
Hand-stitched wool and scrim felt, 50 x 60 inches

Above: *Just Yell PA Speaker: Yells REMixed (Audio)*, 2013
Plexi, metal, jambox speaker,
ipod – audio in collaboration with DJ Raj Mahal
12 x 10 x 4 ½ inches

Right: *#Yell_Yell*, 2013
Plastic, steel, aluminum, auto paint
69 x 54 x 27 inches



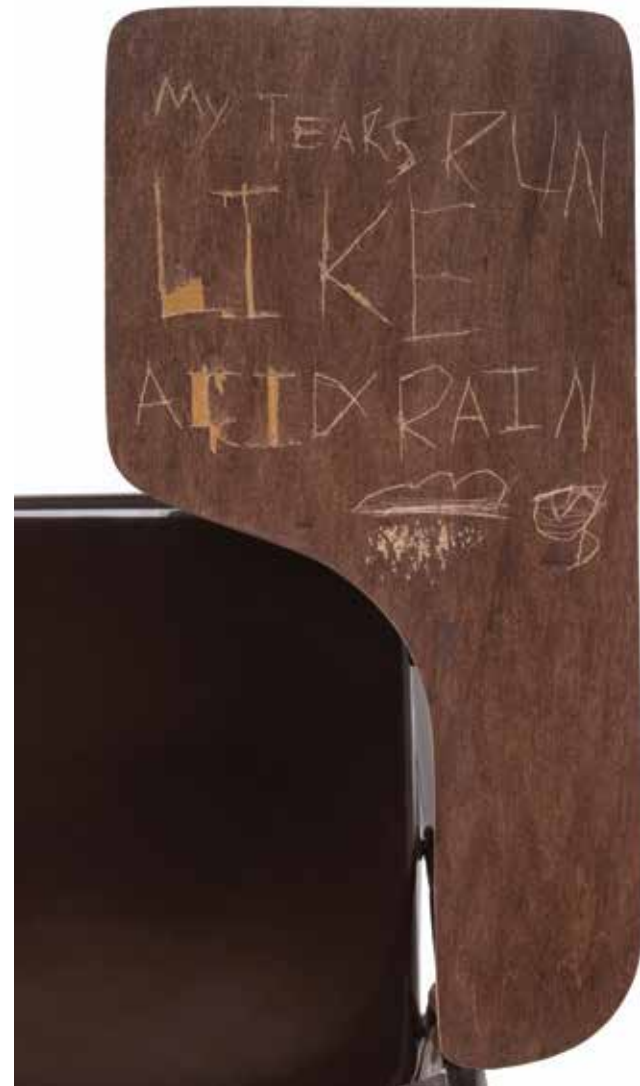


Left: *Chain Reaction (Three)*, 2014
Inkjet print, 30 x 24 inches

Above: *Chain Reaction (Two)*, 2014
Inkjet print, 14 x 24 inches

Opposite Page: *One of Many, One*, 2014
(Still image from video)





"Pope's works are provocative without being exploitative; emotionally engaging without being melodramatic; thoughtful and studied without being overintellectualized."

—Franck Mercurio, *Time Out Chicago*
July 25, 2013

Left: *Between the Lines*: Justyce Hendrickson, 2014
Inkjet print, 26 x 40 inches

Middle: *Between the Lines*: Wayne Strange, 2014
Inkjet print, 26 x 40 inches

Right: *Between the Lines*: Shaquita Louise Reed, 2014
Inkjet print, 26 x 40 inches

BIO

CHERYL POPE

Born 1980, Chicago, IL
Lives and works in Chicago, IL

Education

- 2010 Masters in Design: Fashion, Body, and Garment, School of the Art Institute, Chicago
- 2003 Bachelors in Fine Arts, School of the Art Institute, Chicago

Selected Solo Exhibitions

- 2015 Emerson-Dorsch Gallery, Miami, FL
- 2014 *Chain Reaction*, Mark Moore Gallery, Culver City, CA
Galleria Bianconi. Milan. Italy
Museo d'Arte Gallarate, Italy
Julian Navarro Projects, New York, NY
- 2013 *Just Yell*, Monique Meloche Gallery, Chicago, IL
Dorsch Gallery, Miami, FL
Contemporary Wing, Washington D.C.
- 2012 *(In)Voluntary Acts*, Julian Navarro Projects, Mandragoras Art Space, New York, NY
- 2011 *Matter of Fact*, Dorsch Gallery, Miami, FL
A Silent I, On the Wall, Monique Meloche Gallery, Chicago, IL

Selected Group Exhibitions

- 2014 *Empathy and Risk*, Columbia College, Chicago, IL
Between Me and You, Vanity Projects, New York, NY
Not So Still Life, Rocky Mountain College of Art & Design, Denver, CO
- 2013 *The American Dream: (W)holy Grail*, Chicago, IL
Landmarks: Public Art Program, University of Austin, Austin, TX

2012

- Second Street Gallery, Charlottesville, VA
- A Digital Tale*, Galleria Bianconi, Milan, Italy
- Bibliography, Dorsch Gallery, Miami
- Koffer Kunst Chicago + Detroit, Künstlerhaus Speckstrasse. Hamburg, Germany
- Mind the Gap?! Cheryl Pope and Carlo Zauli*, Galleria Bianconi. Milan, Italy
- A Silent I*, Renas Gallery, Chicago, IL
- 'NU' (= 'now', 'naked') and 'Identity', Designers Open, Leipzig, Germany
- 'NU' (= 'now', 'naked') and 'Identity', Redfish Factory. Antwerp, Belgium

2011

- This Side of Paradise, No Longer Empty*, New York, NY
- Next Generation, Contemporary Wing, Washington D.C.
- Wedding Crashers*, Deering Estate, Miami, FL
- Shift Shape*, Diefibrillator, Chicago, IL

2010

- Bubble Raft*, Dorsch Gallery, Miami, FL
- Stories of Relativity*, Sullivan Galleries, Chicago, IL
- Through the Looking Glass*, Evanston Art Center, Chicago, IL
- AIADO and Fashion Design Graduate Exhibition, Sullivan Galleries, Chicago, IL
- Storefront*, School of the Art Institute, Chicago, IL
- Curiouser and Curiouser*, Tom Robinson Gallery, Chicago, IL
- Conscious Infiltration/Intervention*, School of the Art Institute, Chicago, IL
- D'Mention*, Creative Lounge. Chicago, IL

2009

- A Silent I*, Lindblom Math and Science Academy. Chicago, IL
- War as Art / Art as War*, The Morgan Conservatory. Cleveland, OH
- Change*, South Side Community Art Center. Chicago, IL

- Robin Richman. Chicago, IL
- 2008 *Artist as Teacher / Teacher as Artist*, Museum of Contemporary Art. Chicago, IL
- Artwork 5*, Gallery 2. Chicago, IL
- 2007 Pivot, Chicago, IL
- 2004 Chicago Fashion Week, Chicago, IL
- Distribution, Public Performance, Kansas City, KS
- 2003 Bachelors of Fine Arts Graduation Show, School of the Art Institute, Chicago, IL
- Deconstruct/Reconstruct*, Gallery 2251. Chicago, IL

Public Collections

- Honolulu Art Museum, Honolulu, HI
- Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego, CA
- Sweeney Art Gallery, University of California Riverside, Riverside, CA



Above: Studio Photo

Front cover: *Chain Reaction (Six)*, 2014
Inkjet print, 30 x 24 inches

Back cover: *Up Against*, 2010 (Still image from video)

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