

# POPE.L

# CHOIR

For nearly forty years, Pope.L (b. 1955) has made art that often incorporates performance, nontraditional materials, and societal and racial concerns, as well as the absurd. His recent works explore the physical properties of water, along with its many associations; life-giving and sustaining, it is also linked to myth, destruction, and disaster. *Choir* (2019) moves more than eight hundred gallons of water through pipes, tanks, pumps, and electromagnetic valves to create a murmuring, singing, crashing circulatory system of sound. The installation features an inverted drinking fountain—a water source often associated with Jim Crow segregation—that appears to instantly gush almost half a ton of water into a massive, milky white tank. Enigmatic texts applied to the walls are intentionally abbreviated and provocative, alluding to the histories and social realities with which the work is intertwined.

The artist sees *Choir* as an “experiment.” A kinetic entity that seems to function on its own (for whom we are never told), it produces a concert of filling and draining, drips and drops that accompanies spoken words and voices sourced from Library of Congress field recordings from the 1930s and African-themed Hollywood movies of the same period. *Choir* seeks to be a riddle: loud and obvious yet ineffable, it is always in movement and ever changing.

*Choir* resonates with Pope.L’s 2017 project titled *Flint Water*. Calling attention to the crisis in Flint, Michigan, he bottled contaminated tap water from one affected home and sold the resulting works of art to raise funds to aid residents. Presented as a kind of laboratory meets pop-up shop at the gallery What Pipeline in Detroit, Pope.L framed the project as a way for one distressed city to help another, connecting different localities through the universal need for clean water. For Pope.L, *Choir* demonstrates his ongoing metaphorical, political, and material investigation of this important natural resource.

Hear from the artist at [whitney.org/guide](http://whitney.org/guide), or rent a Mobile Guide. An essay about the exhibition can be found at [whitney.org/popel](http://whitney.org/popel).



*Choir*, 2019. Thousand-gallon plastic water-storage tank, water, drinking fountain, copper pipes, solenoid valves, pumps, MIDI controllers, electronic timer module, level-detection probe, flow meters, programmable logic controller, wood, scrim, vinyl letters, graphite, microphones, speakers, wires, and sound. Collection of the artist; courtesy Mitchell-Innes & Nash, New York

This exhibition is part of *Pope.L: Instigation, Aspiration, Perspiration*, a trio of complementary exhibitions organized by The Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, and Public Art Fund. Utilizing both public and private spaces, the expansive presentation addresses many elements of the artist’s oeuvre, from singular early works to this monumental

new installation and a new large-scale performative work inspired by the artist’s iconic crawl series on the streets of New York. For more information, please visit [popel.nyc](http://popel.nyc).

#popelnyc

Pope.L received the Bucksbaum Award for his contribution to the 2017 Whitney Biennial. Established in 2000 by the longtime Whitney Trustee Melva Bucksbaum and her family, the Bucksbaum Award is given every two years in recognition of an artist—chosen from those included in the Biennial—whose work demonstrates a singular combination of talent and imagination.

*Pope.L: Choir* is sponsored by

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