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This guide is available as a large print guide, and an easy read guide. Please ask a member of the SLG team.

SLG

South London Gallery

Main Building: 65–67 Peckham Road, London SE5 8UH

Fire Station: 82 Peckham Road, London SE15 5LQ



Supported using public funding by
ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND



Freelands
Foundation

South London Gallery is a registered charity no.312160.
It is registered as company no.04720002 (SLG Trustee Ltd)

LIST OF WORKS

MAIN GALLERY

Centre

Eating The Wall Street Journal (Mother Version), 2000–2023

painted wood, metal, toilets, fishing poles, plaster, calcium carbonate, plastic sheeting, wall street journal and financial times newspapers and light

Walls

Shelf With Buckfast Bottle And Tray (Baby Doll Version), 2023

painted wooden shelf and tray, Buckfast wine bottle, Buckfast wine, isopropyl alcohol

Shelf With Buckfast Bottles And Saucers (Bit Version), 2023

painted wooden shelf, Buckfast bottles, Buckfast wine and isopropyl alcohol, saucers

Shelf With Cactus Jack Bottles, Shoulder Position (Champ Version), 2023

painted wooden shelf, Cactus Jack bottles, Cactus Jack wine, isopropyl alcohol, saucer

Shelf With Cactus Jack Bottles, Stomach Position (Killer Version), 2023

painted wooden shelf, Cactus Jack bottles, Cactus Jack wine, isopropyl alcohol, saucer

Space Between The Letter Drawing: 086, 38–39, ci/gry, 2013

mixed media on paper*

OUTSIDE

Blanket, 2023

UV printed on mesh banners

FIRE STATION

Fire Station Forecourt

Small Cup (Sink Version), 2008/2023 video, 12:51

Fire Station Entrance, Ground Floor

Mat, 2023

dried marigolds

Gallery 1, Ground Floor

Small Cup (Sink Version), 2008/2023 video, 12:51

Gallery 2, Ground Floor

Space Between The Letter Drawings (SLG Version), 2013

(26) drawings*

Gallery 3, First Floor

Shelf With Pink Hospital Carafe And Straw (Dr.Goofy Version), 2023

painted wooden shelf, pink hospital carafe, plastic straw

Gallery 4, First Floor

Shelves With Buckfast Bottles, 2023

Hospital Carafes And Saucers (Veronica Version), painted wooden shelves, Buckfast bottles, Buckfast wine, isopropyl alcohol, hospital carafes, saucers and light

Space Between The Letter Drawing: 093, 22–23, ze/th, 2013

mixed media on paper

* Courtesy Modern Art, London and Mitchell-Innes & Nash Gallery, New York.

All works courtesy of the artist.

VISITOR INFORMATION

SHOP

Browse gifts, books and prints in the SLG's shop in the Main Building and online. Every purchase supports the SLG.

CAFÉ

Enjoy delicious coffee, sandwiches, baked goods and more from South London Louie, Main Building, 65–67 Peckham Road.

CHILDREN & FAMILIES

We offer free events for children and families, and young people throughout the year. Visit the What's On section of our website to find out more.

GARDENS

The Orozco Garden is situated behind the Main Building and is open to all Sat – Sun, 11am–6pm. Pick up a free garden trail in the Fox Reception.

The Fox Garden is accessible via the café in the Main Building and is open year round.

ACCESS INFORMATION

The SLG has step-free access throughout its public spaces and accessible toilets in all three sites.

Baby change facilities are available on the ground floor of the Main Building and on the first and second floors of the Fire Station.

Large print resources and sensory maps are available.

Registered service animals are welcome in all areas of the SLG.

Chairs are available to borrow in the exhibition spaces, please ask a member of our team.

Magnifying glasses, ear protectors, ear plugs and a folding wheelchair are available to borrow, please ask a member of our team.

OUR SPACES

Main Building



120m

Peckham Road



Fire Station

POPE.L: HOSPITAL

South London Gallery

Main Gallery &
Fire Station Galleries

21 Nov 2023
– 11 Feb 2024

Cover: *Eating the Wall Street Journal (3rd version)*, 2000 performance, MoMA, New York, NY, USA.

SLG

POPE.L: HOSPITAL 21 NOV 2023 – 11 FEB 2024

“In this exhibition, the guest, the stranger (a very old meaning of the word hospital) stages and is staged in turn via nine makeshift mock-ups or artworks to memory, decay, forgetfulness, convalescence or mourning, sites where personal and institutional metaphors of care metastasize into scenes of spills, shelves with holes, fallen towers, broken bottles, dripping liquids, always something ongoing, always something undone and wanting fixed with dust or stains or trampled flowers. Hospital is that sensation of lying on your back on a stretcher in a hallway cold staring at the veins in the ceiling above while it stares right back.” Pope.L, 2023

Since the 1970s, Chicago-based American artist Pope.L's (b.1955) wide-ranging practice has explored society, politics and contemporary culture through performance, installation, video, painting and writing. His work grapples with contradictory and provocative themes in language, gender, race, economics and community, establishing him as one of the most influential artists of his generation.

Some of Pope.L's most well-known works include his absurdist and often hard-hitting performances, some of which have evolved and been presented in different versions over time. His first of more than 30 iterations of *Crawl*, for example, took place in 1978 when the artist made his way across 42nd Street in New York on his

hands and knees wearing a pinstriped suit with a yellow square sewn on the back. Passers-by inevitably had to look down at him, implicating them in the work and the social inequalities it highlighted in a darkly humorous and deeply uncomfortable way. Some of Pope.L's family members were homeless at the time so his biography was already an important impetus early on.



The use of language – and sometimes the absence of it – is pivotal in Pope.L's approach to his work. The title of this exhibition, *Hospital*, is derived from the Latin word *hospes* which means a stranger, foreigner, or guest. The show's narrative is intentionally ambiguous but its title alone is hugely evocative implying, among many other things, the combining of personal and collective, or institutional, experiences.

Pope.L often makes works in sets and the installations in this exhibition are all reworkings of past families of work. This imbues them with a sense of the vagaries of time, each piece existing in the past, present and future simultaneously. The materials used further enhance this, with many of the works gradually evolving throughout the exhibition. Dust sprinkled by visitors will accumulate on the three towers which have collapsed into each other in the Main Gallery, wine will pool in trays, and a bed of marigolds in the Fire Station entrance will be both trampled and replenished. These durational shifts chart Pope.L's interest in the human experience of time, presenting discontinuous loops of accumulation and decomposition.

Outside the Main Gallery and Fire Station, the SLG's usually brightly coloured welcome banners are replaced with white ones bearing a calamine pink cross which the artist describes as “*too pale to be red*”. A play on the numerous connotations of whiteness is significant in many of Pope.L's works. In this case the use of white at funerals in Africa and Asia, where death is not seen as the end of a life, is a key reference point. The title of the works, *Blanket*, is suggestive of the healing role of hospitals, but also ideas of secrecy or smothering or covering up, among many other possible readings. The shape of the cross is universally recognised as a symbol for medical aid and hospitals

as institutional sites of care where life can both begin and end. *Blanket* heralds an exhibition which explores ideas of both individual and institutional decomposition, and the intersection between the two.

Accessed via a red butcher's curtain, the installation in the Main Gallery is the latest reworking of one of Pope.L's best-known performance works, *Eating the Wall Street Journal*, 2000. The work was conceived when Pope.L saw an advert claiming that merely buying a copy of *The Wall Street Journal* would increase a person's wealth. The durational performance involved the artist, covered in flour and wearing only a jockstrap, sitting on a toilet on a high wooden tower whilst reading *The Wall Street Journal* and swallowing bits of the newspaper lubricated with ketchup and milk. The flour coating his partially naked body pointed at a manufactured and consumable, yet embodied, brand of whiteness. The piece operated as a send-up of capitalism in the Western world, commenting on what Pope.L calls the “*mythical allure*” of an economics and business-focused newspaper, and how it promotes consumption, wealth, power “*and magic*”.

At the SLG, three large-scale wooden towers, echoing those in the original performance, are in states of gradual collapse. The live performance element has been removed, shifting the focus to

the toppling towers which, in Pope.L's words, “*lean on each other like tired bodies*”. In this iteration the baton of performance is handed over to visitors who are invited to take a pinch of flour-like dust and sprinkle it on the structures. The ominous soundtrack of creaking wood and falling dust suggest that something dramatic but indefinable is taking place.

Four shelf works on the walls display bottles of Buckfast and Cactus Jack - cheap alcoholic drinks which Pope.L has commented are “*marketed to young people (or the child in the adult), as inexpensive means for altering one's consciousness*”. That they are titled *Champ*, *Bit* and *Killer* versions points to the complex relationship between family, commerce, alcoholism, self-medication and the cost of addiction, whilst *Baby Doll* is what Pope.L's family affectionately called his late mother.



With parallels to the ‘flouring’ of the wooden towers in the Main Gallery, the Fire Station entrance is also ‘flowered’. Each week dried marigold heads are strewn across the floor, building gradually over time. In many cultures it is believed that marigolds have a part to play in warding off evil spirits and negative energies, while also symbolising the connection between life and death. In Mexico for example, marigolds are known as ‘cempasuchil’ or ‘flor de muertos’ (flower of the dead) and play a central role in the annual Día de los Muertos (Day of the Dead) celebrations. They are also believed to have medicinal properties and are often bought as gifts for hospital patients.

A second red butcher's curtain sets an animalistic scene for the screening of *Small Cup*, 2008. This short film documents the destruction of a seed-coated model of the US Capitol building in Washington by goats and chickens who trample greedily over the miniature replica in an old textile warehouse in Maine. The work relates to Pope.L's broader interest in using food products to address social and political issues. Notably, *Small Cup* was made in 2008, thirteen years before the storming of the Capitol building by a mob of Donald Trump supporters in January 2021.

Pope.L commented that “*The use of animals and gravity make the pieces more impersonal, as if it is the most*

natural thing in the world for things like governments to fall apart”.

In the adjacent, darkened gallery, visitors have to help themselves to a torch to illuminate a grid of framed drawings entitled *Space Between The Letter Drawing*, four of which are facing the wall, three of which have been skewered with wooden stakes, and three of which have been removed. Shown on an aluminium-covered wall, the spaces between the drawings become as important as the drawings themselves. Absence is as significant as presence, and text and display are experienced as physical things in the world rather than conveyors of specific meaning.

In the first floor galleries two more shelf works display dripping bottles of Buckfast and hospital carafes. As in all the works in the exhibition, gravity is at play. In Pope.L's words: “*We are always falling. Gravity is always performing. Edgar Allen Poe would say that gravity is always calling you into the abyss*”.

Left: Pope.L. *Times Square Crawl* a.k.a. *Meditation Square Piece*. 1978.

Centre: Pope.L, *Small Cup*, 2008, video with colour and sound, 12:52 minutes. Courtesy of the Artist. © Pope.L

Right: Pope.L portrait. Photo: Peyton Fulford, courtesy of the artist.

ARTIST'S BIOGRAPHY

Pope.L (b.1955, Newark, New Jersey) studied at Pratt Institute and Montclair State College, where he received a BA in 1978. He also participated in the Independent Study Program at the Whitney and received an MFA in 1981 from Rutgers University.

His works have been exhibited at many significant institutions, including the Anthology Film Archives, Franklin Furnace, Artist Space, Museum Brandhorst, Museum of Modern Art, New Museum, Performa, The Sculpture Center, the 2002 and 2017 Whitney Biennials, the Carpenter Center in Boston and the Geffen at MOCA Los Angeles.

