

Noplace

Joel Dean
Raque Ford
Ficus Interfaith
Guadalupe Maravilla
Devin N. Morris

July 13 - August 14, 2020
Summer Hours: Monday - Friday, 12-5pm
Appointments encouraged



P·P·O·W is pleased to present *Noplace*, a physical and virtual exhibition curated by Eden Deering, which brings together artists whose practices connect in their collective utopian pursuit, their make-believe places reflecting the ills of our society, while simultaneously communicating alternative ways to exist in this world.

In *Utopia* (1516), the English lawyer, social philosopher, author, statesman and Renaissance humanist, Sir Thomas More coined the term 'Utopia' in his sociopolitical satire. Combining the Greek words "not" (ou) and "place" (topos), 16th century readers would have translated the new word to 'Not place' or 'Noplace'. More's Utopia was an imaginary arcadian paradise, off the coast of an inexact location in the 'New World'. Describing this Utopia as the blueprint for a perfect society, More conceived of a place that offered the material benefits of a welfare state, promoted religious freedom, tolerated euthanasia as well as divorce, and abolished the societal constructs of private property, monarchy, and military.

Written against the backdrop of the tyrannical reign of King Henry VIII, Utopia sat in stark contrast to its societal context, which was without freedom of speech or thought, where one man accrued vast wealth, while thousands of others starved. By naming the island 'Utopia,' or 'Noplace', More emphasized the island's non-existence, allowing him to discuss real monarchical corruption, while preserving his head (which Henry VIII put on a spike in 1535). By creating a fantastical positive ideal, More communicated the injustice of his lived reality while simultaneously making an appeal to humanity's capacity for change.

Devin N. Morris abstracts American life and subverts traditional value systems through describing the puzzle of existence, examining racial and sexual identities in collaged two-dimensional and three-dimensional objects. Creating elaborately constructed environments using commonly found household materials and fabrics, such as carpets, wooden furniture, lamps, and windowpanes, Morris's surreal landscapes combine grandparents' living rooms, church pews, funeral home parlors, and hospital waiting rooms in a puzzle of memory. For this installation Morris looks specifically at the black body, showing its matriculation through space as fragmented, filled with many dialects, and constantly rearranging and often speaking in translation.

Joel Dean creates symbols that reflect the contaminated cosmos of the American Dream. Late last year, Dean began a series of letter paintings based on drop caps, the enlarged initials of Medieval illuminated manuscripts, that are today more commonly associated with fairytales and fantasy narratives. These paintings represent the condition in which a letter, once a single unit of information, becomes an enigmatic and multitudinous pictorial vessel. Beginning each with the form of a single letter, Dean intuitively transforms the initial shape into an inhabitant of its own expanded world over several

months. Depicting each letter in an entangled mix of organic growth and man-made mechanisms of industrial expansion, Dean's paintings highlight the structural and visual parallels between written systems and the complex worlds they describe. Dean's imagined constructions give meaning to the isolated letters, just as the letters initially informed the evolution of the surrounding imagery.

Combining histories of pre-colonial Central America, personal mythology, and collaborative rituals, Guadalupe Maravilla's *Disease Thrower #4* functions as a headdress, instrument, and shrine. Through the incorporation of materials collected from sites across Central America, anatomical models, and sonic instruments such as conch shells and gongs, Maravilla describes such sculptures as "healing machines", ultimately serving as symbols of renewal, generating therapeutic, vibrational sound. Throughout the exhibition, Maravilla will perform weekly sound baths for groups of five to seven visitors.

In largescale painted plexiglass sculpture's punctuated with diaristic narrative etchings, Raque Ford envelops her audience, folding their reflections into a material and emotional drama. Exploring narratives of black female identity through constant juxtaposition, Raque Ford's work lives between abstract and personal, masculine and feminine, lightness and darkness, and timidity and aggression.

Ficus Interfaith is a collaboration between Ryan Bush and Raphael Martinez Cohen. As much a research initiative as a sculptural practice, Ficus Interfaith pursues projects that focus on their personal and collective interactions with the "natural" by way of relearning production methods that investigate ingenuity and novelty as it emerges from craft. Using terrazzo, a composite material consisting of leftover marble, glass, and other waste, used to make decorative floors since antiquity, Ficus Interfaith embraces the spirit of collaboration and reuse. In *Noplace*, the duo will present a terrazzo triptych depicting a fire overwhelming the hearth of a nonspecific domestic interior, its flames licking the frame of a generic landscape painting hanging overhead. Such works operate as metaphors for other worlds, and ultimately become portals with the potential to activate the viewer's imagination in the present.

Devin N. Morris (b. 1986, Maryland) lives and works in Brooklyn. Morris was recently in *The Aesthetics of Matter*, the first NYC curatorial project by Deux Femme Noires: Mickalene Thomas and Racquel Chevremont. He was also featured in the New Museum's *MOTHA and Chris E. Vargas: Consciousness Razing—The Stonewall Re-Memorialization Project*, and the two-person show, *Inside Out, Here*, at La Mama Gallery, curated by Eric Booker (Studio Museum, Exhibition Coordinator). Morris is the founder of 3 Dot Zine, which is an annual publication that serves as a forum for marginalized concerns and recently hosted the Brown Paper Zine & Small Press Fair with the Studio Museum in Harlem and created a site-specific installation at the MoMA PS1 2018 NY Art Book Fair. His 2017 solo show at Terrault Contemporary was listed in Artforum as the "Best of 2017," and he was named by Time Magazine in 2017 as one of "12 African American Photographers You Should Follow."

Joel Dean (b. 1986, Georgia) lives and works in New York. He graduated from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago with a Bachelor of Fine Art in 2009. He is a recipient of the Ellen Battell Stoeckel Fellowship from the Yale University Summer School of Music and Art. His work has been included in exhibitions at Tatjana Pieters, Ghent; Prairie, Chicago; Cordova, Barcelona; Alyssa Davis Gallery, New York; Species, Atlanta; Bureau, New York; ISCP, New York; Weekends, London; MX Gallery, New York; Bodega, New York; and Jancar Jones, Los Angeles. He had his first solo exhibition in New York, *The Fugitive, the Repeat Offender, and the Running Joke*, at Interstate Projects in 2018.

Guadalupe Maravilla (b. 1976, San Salvador) currently lives in Brooklyn, New York, and Richmond, Virginia, where he is an Assistant professor at Virginia Commonwealth University. He received his BFA from the School of Visual Arts, and his MFA from Hunter College in New York. He is the recipient of numerous awards and fellowships including a Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship in 2019. His work is in the permanent collections of the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid; and the Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami. Additionally, he has performed and presented his work at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami; Queens Museum, New York; The Bronx Museum of the Arts, New York; El Museo del Barrio, New York; Museum of Art of El Salvador, San Salvador; X Central American Biennial, Costa Rica; Performa 11, New York; Performa 13, New York; Shelly & Donald Rubin Foundation, New York; and the Drawing Center, New York, among others.

Raque Ford (b. 1986, Maryland) lives and works in Brooklyn, New York. She received her BFA from Pratt Institute and her MFA from Rutgers Mason Gross School of the Arts. Recent solo exhibitions include *My Biggest Fan*, CAPITAL, San Francisco, CA; *confidence*, Williamson and Knight, Portland, OR; *Karafun*, The Fort, Brooklyn, NY; *Carolyn*, Shoot the

Lobster, New York, NY; *It's All About Me, Forget About You*, Species, Atlanta, GA; *That Which We Call a Rose by Any Other Name Would Smell As Sweet*, Soloway, Brooklyn, NY; and *Raque*, Welcome Screen, London, UK. Recent two-person and group exhibitions include *Retrograde*, Deli Gallery, Brooklyn, NY; *Soul is a four letter word*, Museum Gallery, Brooklyn, NY; and *In Practice: Fantasy Can Invent Nothing New*, Sculpture Center, Queens, NY. She is the recipient of the 2017 Louis Comfort Tiffany Biennial Award, was awarded a residency at the International Studio and Curatorial Program (Brooklyn, NY), and was a resident at S1 (Portland, OR). Ford will have a solo exhibition at Martos Gallery, New York in the fall of 2020.

Ficus Interfaith is a collaboration between **Ryan Bush (b. 1990, Colorado)** and **Raphael Cohen (b. 1989, New York City)**. Their work has been the subject of solo exhibitions at Incident Report, Hudson, NY; Jack Chiles, New York, NY; Interstate Projects, Brooklyn, NY; Prairie, Chicago, IL; Proxy, New York, NY; among others. In 2018, they were artists in residence at 2727 California Street, Berkeley, CA and Shandaken: Storm King, NY. Ficus Interfaith will have a solo exhibition at Deli Gallery, New York in the fall of 2020.

To ensure the health and security of our community, P·P·O·W will be implementing enhanced safety measures in accordance with government regulations and city guidelines for reopening. With these concerns in mind, kindly note that we will be taking the following precautions:

- All staff and visitors will be required to wear masks. Masks and hand sanitizer will be provided for visitors at the front desk
- The gallery will admit a maximum of five visitors at a time and have a reduced number of staff on-site
- Prior to entry, visitors will be required to sign a log for contact tracing.
- The front desk will abide by a paperless policy. In lieu of physical copies, the exhibition press release, checklist and other details will be available via QR downloads
- All staff and visitors must maintain a social distance of no less than 6 ft