



## Barnes Foundation gets out of the gallery and into the street with its new exhibit

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**COURTESY OF WILLIAM POPE.L AND MITCHELL-INNES & NASH, NY.**

Pope.L, *The Great White Way, 22 miles, 9 years, 1 street* (Whitney version), 2001.

If looking at bowls of fruit and naked bodies painted on canvases isn't really your thing, the Barnes Foundation's latest project goes beyond the walls of the gallery and into the street.

A series of performances by Philadelphia-based and visiting artists will take place throughout the city as a part of "Person of the Crowd: The Contemporary Art of Flânerie," through May 22. Bystanders are welcome to engage, gawk, observe, and react and talk to the performers.

The exhibit pulls together work by 50 international artists spanning the late 1950s to today. Visitors will find themselves getting in the way of the video projections as they walk around the exhibit. It is an intentional move on the curator's part to have patrons' silhouettes projected onto the screen.

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You become a part of the installation.

“It is the Barnes’ most ambitious project to date,” said Thom Collins, the museum’s executive director and the curator of the show.

Highlights of the gallery include large and intrusive plywood walls of varying shades of blue taken directly from construction sites, an installation by New York-based artist Jean Shin called *Surface Tension*. With surfaces that have been continually painted over after new appearances of graffiti or scuffings, these found objects have been refashioned as art.

*Surface Tension* serves as the backdrop to a video projection of William Pope.L’s 2000 performance “The Great White Way, 22 Miles, 9 Years, 1 Street,” in which he famously crawled 22 miles of sidewalk from the beginning to the end of Broadway — Manhattan’s longest street — wearing a capeless Superman outfit with a skateboard strapped to his back.

The concept of “flânerie” originates from an 1840 Edgar Allan Poe story called “The Man of the Crowd” in which the main character aimlessly wanders the streets of London, observing its inhabitants and public activities. Two decades later, the French poet Charles Baudelaire hailed the figure of the flâneur, a stroller or a loungeur, as the engine behind the new art movement of French Impressionism.

The city observed through flânerie was central to socially engaged artists until the 1940s. While the movement experienced a brief halt when abstract expressionism emphasized the artist’s inner world instead of the outside space, influential artists like Robert Rauschenberg and Allan Kaprow reinvented the practice of flânerie. The trend continues in Philadelphia today, as more and more contemporary street artists join the crowds of the city.

As a part of “Person of the Crowd,” billboard exhibits by the Guerrilla Girls will take over space along Roosevelt Boulevard, I-75, and I-95. Dressed in gorilla masks to protect their identities, the anonymous group addresses income inequality in the art world using three vinyl billboard pieces called *Dear Art Museum*, *Dear Art Collector*, and *Dear Art Gallery*.

Among the street performers is Chicago native Ayana Evans, who will travel to touristy and iconic Philadelphia locations, from cheesesteak lines at Pat’s and Geno’s to swanky hotels to the *Rocky* steps at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Donning her signature skin-tight, neon yellow, zebra-patterned catsuit, Evans will perform mundane tasks such as jumping rope or crashing lines in 4-inch heels for over 10 hours in one day. Her work is a response to the double standard of women, and black women, who are questioned about their attire or behavior.

Even so, she claims that her physically demanding project is less about her actions than it is about the spectators watching her. Her performance includes collaborators who will film reactions and then confront them afterward for a post-encounter interview. The piece will end in a dinner party open to the public at the Barnes on Wednesday, May 10. Her edited 10-hour performance will be projected on the lobby walls as the event progresses.

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All actions performed as part of “Person of the Crowd” ([personofthecrowd.org](http://personofthecrowd.org)) will be documented online as a part of the concept of “cyberflânerie.” This goes beyond the gallery, beyond the street, and brings the exhibit into the digital realm. As another layer of the project, New York-based artist Man Bartlett will document the street performances taking place throughout the run of the exhibition and invite bystanders to become flâneurs themselves as they share their own photos via Instagram using the hashtag [#personofthecrowd](https://www.instagram.com/hashtag/personofthecrowd).

By Esther Yoon