

FORT GANSEVOORT

Vanessa German

TRAMPOLINE: Resilience & Black Body & Soul

Opening On:

Thursday, November 7, 6 – 8 PM

November 7 – December 21, 2019



Fort Gansevoort, in association with Pavel Zoubok Fine Art, is pleased to present Vanessa German, *TRAMPOLINE: Resilience & Black Body & Soul*, opening Thursday, November 7th, 2019. German's exhibition will showcase her richly encrusted sculptures, which she refers to as power-figures, alongside a series of wall-mounted altars that each act as seers or protectors carrying with them the gift of their own human technology: joy, love, and protection for the souls of Black Americans. The work is made as an act of love in response to the daily injustices and violence committed against Black and Brown people, their bodies

and their souls. Each figure confronts us with the questions, "how do we survive? How do we, as hybrid-people, keep breathing? How then do we surpass mere existence into creative champions, future makers, lovers even?"

In this newest body of work, German answers the call of the late, great Toni Morrison, who in 1993 at The Nobel Lecture in Literature invited all writers, and by extension all artists, to "make up a story... For our sake and yours forget your name in the street; tell us what the world has been to you in the dark places and in the light. Don't tell us what to believe, what to fear. Show us belief's wide skirt and the stitch that unravels fear's caul."

It is that stitch, that mark, the very act of creation that lies at the heart of Vanessa German's multi-disciplinary practice, one that combines mixed-media sculpture, installation, poetry, performance and activism. Across these media, German's work stands as a radical and unapologetic act of self-care, self-preservation and self-ease, an attempt to unfold past traumas and loosen the grip of longstanding tensions tied to her own Queerness, her own Blackness, her own struggle to live in the fullness of her physical and spiritual self. Through loving tribute and ritual, German responds to the continued graves of Black, Brown and Indigenous Humans, creating a utopian future of true liberty.

Varying yet specific contours and diverse materiality of her work highlight the intricacies of how bodies are perceived and manipulated, emphasizing self-fortitude and protection. In a series of lavishly embellished collages, German pays homage to tennis legends Venus and Serena Williams by transforming them into Madonnas. In these works, along with her tennis racket assemblages, we see how society deconstructs and dehumanizes Black women in sports instead of lifting them up as the champions they are.

German's power-figures directly confront these multiple oppositions. Overwhelming in size and material, these works are not meant to ensue comfort. The viewer is forced to question and face the realities of their own history, enabling them to retain, release or reinvent. Across these media, German gives form and voice to her own understanding of freedom, of the creative process, of love, loss, and survival. In German's own words, "I am in Love with the deep survival, elastic resilience and ordinary, creative, genius of Black People. For the ways that we make ourselves bright against the slaughter of our own names — acts of ordinary, restorative, creative insistence. The insistent force of making, seeing, playing, protection — loving — whose evidence shapes the culture of a society that never visioned the Black Body into freedom, resources, or power."

5 Ninth Avenue, New York, NY 10014 | galleries@fortgansevoort.com | (917) 639 -3113

FORT GANSEVOORT

Vanessa German is a visual and performance artist based in Pittsburgh. Born in Wisconsin and having spent her formative years in Mid-City, Los Angeles; Vanessa is largely informed by her current community of Homewood, Pittsburgh. As a citizen artist, German explores the power of art and love as a transformative force in the dynamic cultural ecosystem of communities and neighborhoods. She is the founder of the ARThouse, a community arts initiative for the children of Homewood. Her work is in private and public collections including the Everson Museum of Art, Figge Art Museum, Flint Institute of Arts, Spelman College Museum of Fine Art, Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, The David C. Driskell Center, Snite Museum of Art, Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art and Wellin Museum of Art at Hamilton College. German's work has been exhibited widely, most recently at the Figge Art Museum, The Union for Contemporary Art, The Fralin Museum of Art at the University of Virginia, Flint Institute of Arts, Mattress Factory, Everson Museum of Art, Spelman College Museum of Fine Art, Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Studio Museum, Ringling Museum of Art and Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art. Her current and upcoming solo exhibitions include Bates College Art Museum, Mount Holyoke College Art Museum, and The David C. Driskell Center at the University of Maryland. Her work has been featured on CBS Sunday Morning, NPR's All Things Considered and in The New York Times, Los Angeles Times, The Huffington Post, O Magazine, Sculpture Magazine and Essence Magazine. She is the recipient of the 2015 Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation Grant, the 2017 Jacob Lawrence Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, the 2018 United States Artist Grant, the 2018 Don Tyson Prize from Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art and most recently, the 2019 Governor's award for Artist of the Year at Pennsylvania Council on the Arts and the Distinguished Daughters of Pennsylvania award.

Image: Vanessa German, *The Runner, Run and Fight., Don't let your white friend's father touch your panties., Circle Running, Rape Proof, or Un-Rape-able?*, 2019, Mixed-media assemblage, 84 x 48 x 17.75 inches.