

# Maps Glover itnoa 19

October 22 – December 13, 2019

 ALBRIGHT  
1856 Freedman Gallery





## Maps Glover: ITNOA 19

*by Marco Aquino*

Maps Glover is a multimedia, multidisciplinary artist who draws from popular culture, dance and everyday experiences to create his unique visions exploring human behavior.

Although a former student of Delaware College of Art and Design, Maps reveals his biggest influence to be the television show *America's Next Top Model* starring supermodel Tyra Banks.<sup>1</sup> The reality competition show, which has aired since 2003, follows a familiar art school format where contestants are tasked with a nearly-impossible challenge and their creative problem-solving skills are then brutally-critiqued before their peers and a panel of "experts." While the show failed to launch the careers of any actual supermodels, it is often praised for its camp-driven concepts, entertainment value and over-the-top performances.



Here is where Maps Glover excels.

Maps best expresses himself through performance, bending and twisting his body, jumping, shouting and chanting his way through each piece of work. Maps authoritatively leads viewers through his many narratives, often moving from the comical to dead serious, and from personal matters to pressing social issues. Most recently, Maps has focused his work on the rising number of deaths from police shootings. While not overtly confrontational, Maps' performance work and immersive installations offer entry points for discussion and contemplation on sometimes difficult subject matter. And just like *Top Model*, Maps is a champion of the underdog, often presenting work outside of conventional standards.

# “I don’t want people to be angry, I want people to be moved.” – Maps Glover

In his 2018 intimate video series “Where in the Maps?” the artist documents himself interacting with his immediate surroundings as he wakes in the morning, stretches his body and wanders the streets. In one scene, Maps passionately shouts “Art is life! Art is the vibration of the people’s sight! What have you done for art lately!?” The series exemplifies Maps performance work as he experiments with movement while seeking meaning and understanding of the greater world around him.

As the video reveals, Maps is guided by his search for authenticity in both his life and work. Even the chosen name ‘Maps’ gives insight into the artist’s work process and inspiration. As he has stated before, ‘Maps’ represents a sort of spiritual path or awakening. “When I think of the name ‘Maps,’ I imagine the way in which our experiences become our own internal ‘map,” he has said.<sup>ii</sup> “Our experiences have led us to where we are right now. This can manifest itself in both physical and mental spaces.”

Since the 1960s, performance artists have used their bodies to tell narratives in lieu of the traditional canvas. Although largely under-recognized, black artists have played a significant role in performance art from the work of Carrie Mae Weems to David Hammons and Lorraine O’Grady.

For black artists who use their bodies as their primary medium, the knowledge that their bodies cannot escape certain signifiers and markers is rooted in historical precedent. From shackled to beaten, lynched or handcuffed, the representation of the black body carries within itself a multitude of narratives that are unavoidable. Black performance artists work to challenge these narratives and expand our knowledge of what it means to be black in America. Maps performance work fits into this context, occupying a space somewhere between self-expression, social critique, political protest and tribute to those who have come before us.

In this regard, Maps performance work is similar to football player Colin Kaepernick’s act of kneeling during the playing of the national anthem at televised NFL football games. What beauty lies in the simple gesture of kneeling on one knee; an act of reverence that honors our past while acknowledging our faults; a call for the allowance of dignity to the discarded black bodies that lie on our streets; and a moment of contemplation amidst the spectacle that is American life.

The exhibition “ITNOA 19” (In the Name of Art 2019) is Maps’ somber take on the topic of police brutality and the fatal shooting of unarmed people, an act which overwhelmingly affects communities of color. At the time of this writing, over 689 fatal shootings had occurred in 2019.<sup>iii</sup> Maps activates the Project Space with a series of larger-than-life murals featuring waves of intricate patterns that invoke the work of Keith Haring. On one wall: a mural that seems to reference Pablo Picasso’s 1937 “Guernica” with an open-mouth figure and outstretched arms. Exactly 689 hand-folded paper planes hang from the ceiling representing the number of people who have died from police shootings in 2019. For Maps, these paper assemblages represent “the vehicle to transport these ideas beyond the tragic moment.”<sup>iv</sup> He states: “These lives had a direction and they were stopped.”

In “Jump for da Life,” a video performance projected on the walls of this exhibition, Maps leaps into the air for every person shot down by gun violence. Here, Maps presents a joyous and uplifting gesture that honors the dead and offers hope in the face of adversity. “ITNOA 19” also commemorates the 100th anniversary of the Red Summer of 1919 which consisted of several white supremacist attacks on black communities across the country.



“Every time I’m invited to install a space, my goal is to listen to the people who occupy it,” Maps said.<sup>v</sup> “They inform the function of the space because their energy is most closely aligned.”

To accomplish this, Maps collaborated with Albright students and the XION Step and Dance Team in a performance titled “it’s a wave” during the opening night of the exhibition. Together, Maps and the dance team filled the gallery with their creative energy, transforming the Project Space into a sort of sacred space honoring the hundreds of lives lost in 2019. “TTNOA 19” aims to inspire change and an acknowledgment of a broken policing system.

“I don’t want people to be angry,” Maps said.<sup>vi</sup> “I want people to be moved.”

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<sup>v</sup>Marco Aquino. (Phone Conversation with Maps Glover) Oct. 5, 2019. <sup>vi</sup>Josh Proctor, “Maps Glover. Where in the Maps?” (Blog), accessed Oct. 15, 2019, <https://fathommagazine.com.wordpress.com/2018/03/06/maps-glover/>. <sup>vii</sup>Washington Post, “Fatal Force Database,” accessed Oct. 15, 2019, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/national/police-shootings-2019/>. <sup>viii</sup>Alana Coates. (interview with Maps Glover) Albright College, Reading, PA, Oct.6, 2019. <sup>ix</sup>Ibid. <sup>x</sup>Ibid.

The Freedman Gallery at Albright College, named after former Albright trustee and alumna Doris Chanin Freedman, is located on the ground floor of the Center for the Arts. Since its inception, the gallery focuses primarily on contemporary, living, American artists and hosts approximately 12 exhibitions each year rotating in the Main Gallery, Project Space, and Foyer Gallery. Freedman Gallery is located at 13th & Bern Streets, Reading, PA 19612. Gallery hours are Tuesday-Friday 9 a.m.-5 p.m. and Sunday1-4 p.m. The gallery is closed on Mondays, holidays, breaks and summer. (See [Albright.edu/calendar](http://Albright.edu/calendar)).

Founded in 1856, Albright College is a diverse community of learners cultivating integrity, curiosity, connection and resilience. The college's flexible curriculum encourages students to combine and cross majors to create individualized academic programs. Close faculty mentorship and numerous experiential learning options create opportunities for Albright graduates to exceed their own expectations. Located in Reading, Pa., Albright enrolls more than 1,700 full-time undergraduates, adult learners and graduate students.

### Follow the CFA and artist Maps Glover on Instagram.



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Maps Glover: ITNOA 19 exhibited in the Project Space, Freedman Gallery, Albright College, Reading, Pa., October 22 – December 13, 2019.

Installation curated by Alana J. Coates. Essay written by Marco Aquino.

Marco Aquino earned a master's degree in art history from the University of Texas at San Antonio and is an arts and culture writer based in Texas.

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Cover and Outside Flap Images: Performance of Maps Glover, "it's a wave," for Maps Glover, "ITNOA 19," 2019, Freedman Gallery, photo courtesy of John Pankratz.

Inside Image: Installation of Maps Glover, "ITNOA 19," Freedman Gallery, photo courtesy of John Pankratz.