

# MASS MoCA

## **Elle Pérez: *Intimacies* brings scenes of sensuality and sanctuary to MASS MoCA**

**Elle Pérez: *Intimacies* is on view July 22, 2023 – June 2024**

**North Adams, MA, June 15, 2022** – Beginning July 22, 2023, MASS MoCA will present Elle Pérez: *Intimacies*, an exhibition of photographs by the acclaimed Bronx-born, Puerto Rican photographer. The show will be on view in B6: The Robert Wilson Building, through June 2024.

This selection of works is an expanded presentation of a body of work titled *Devotions* shown in part in Pérez's recent exhibitions at the Carnegie Museum and at the Baltimore Museum of Art. The exhibition also features photographs Pérez made for the 2022 Venice Biennale and includes a total of 27 photographs made between 2018 and 2023, in addition to a video work, "*Wednesday, Friday*" (2022).

Recently appointed an Assistant Professor at the Yale School of Art, Pérez is known for photographs that capture the intimacies shared between friends, between lovers, between people and their environment, and between places, including New York and Puerto Rico. Pérez photographs the people and places familiar to them: the Bronx, Brooklyn, Fire Island, Louisiana, Puerto Rico, their partner, queer and trans friends, fellow artists, the boxers they train with at their gym.

Pérez first began making photographs as a teenager, documenting the underground, queer punk clubs in their Bronx neighborhood. Photographing their own social circle, they captured the gestures, dramas and relationships lived out in spaces where black, brown, and queer communities were centered. Pérez would share images online and respond to their friends' feedback on how they did or did not want to be represented. This frank exchange between photographer and subject/audience became a template for the artist's collaborative ethos – years later, the trust that exists in Pérez' relationships has lent a unique vulnerability to the images they make. Many works visualize not only their own intimate life, but intimate exchanges between friends, lovers, and athletes in order to explore the multiple forms of relationships and their dynamics.

Fluidity and connection are central themes within the artist's practice, which explores the thresholds and intersections between light and dark, surface and depth, between control and submission, between one body and another. Landscape figures prominently in the photographs, functioning as both an intimate partner in the relationship between humans and the natural world and as a metaphor for the body and its own cycles, tides, and perpetual states of transformation. While repeated images of water and liquid evoke the tides that drive us, water also figures as a destructive force in images of flooding in Puerto Rico. Depending on which way one enters the exhibition, the show begins or ends with the video *Wednesday, Friday* (2022) which Pérez filmed on two different trips to Puerto Rico the year after Hurricane Maria hit the island, capturing the complexities of the everyday experience.

Pérez has expressed that their work captures some vital force in each of their subjects. In *Intimacies*, such vital force – in turns natural, erotic, platonic, violent, tender– is generously shared.

### **Artist bio**

**Elle Pérez** (b. 1989, Bronx, New York) received a BFA in Photography from the Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore in 2011 and an MFA from Yale School of Art, New Haven, Connecticut in 2015. They participated in the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in Madison, Maine that same year. Their work has been the subject of solo exhibitions at the Baltimore Museum of Art, Maryland (2022); the Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (2021); Public Art Fund, New York (2019); and MoMA PS1, New York (2018). They were included in the 59th International Venice Biennale (2022) and the Whitney Biennial (2019) and have been featured in group exhibitions at the Whitney Museum of American Art (2022), Ballroom Marfa, Texas (2022), Renaissance Society, Chicago (2020); Barbican Centre, London (2020); and Brooklyn Museum, New York (2019). Pérez's work is in the permanent collections of the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami; the Baltimore Museum of Art, Maryland; the Brooklyn Museum, New York; and the Studio Museum in Harlem, New York. Pérez has taught at Harvard University, the Yale School of Art, Cooper Union, and Williams College. From 2016 to 2021, they were a Dean at the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture. They are an incoming Assistant Professor in Photography at the Yale School of Art. The artist is represented by 47 Canal, New York and Commonwealth and Council, Los Angeles.

### **About MASS MoCA**

MASS MoCA is one of the world's liveliest centers for making and enjoying today's most evocative art. With vast galleries and a stunning collection of indoor and outdoor performing arts venues, MASS MoCA is able to embrace all forms of art: music, sculpture, dance, film, painting, photography, theater, and new, boundary-crossing works of art that defy easy classification. Much of the work we show in our light-filled spaces, on our technically sophisticated stages, and within our lovely network of late 19th-century courtyards is made here during extended fabrication and rehearsal residencies that bring hundreds of the world's most brilliant and innovative artists to North Adams all year round. For more information about MASS MoCA, visit [www.massmoca.org](http://www.massmoca.org) or follow us on Instagram at @massmoca

**For more information, please contact:**

[press@massmoca.org](mailto:press@massmoca.org)