

ART from ESLEWHERE: Mexico City
The MOMENTUM Collection at LAGOS

CAROLINE SHEPARD



***Don't Tread On Me* (2022), Photographic print on vinyl, 230 x 230 cm**

American artist, Caroline Shepard created this provocative work as an act of resistance against the US Supreme Court decision in 2022 to revoke their landmark ruling in Roe v.

Wade (1973) that the United States Constitution upholds the right to abortion. The Supreme Court decision of 2022 marks a regressive repeal of rights and civil liberties long held to be entrenched in the very identity of progressive America. *Don't Tread On Me* is a floor installation, and the title a provocative misnomer for a work which is intended by the artist to be trodden upon. Through the difficulty of taking that first step, and with its depiction of humanity in its concurrent frailty and strength, *Don't Tread On Me* dares us all to engage in an act of resistance against the subjugation of the female body.

ARTIST STATEMENT:

In 1989 Barbara Kruger proclaimed “our bodies are a battleground” in response to the chipping away of abortion protections in the United States. In 2022, the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*, the historic decision that protected abortion access across the nation. 50 years. The course of my lifetime. What does forced motherhood mean? It means women are not autonomous. It means women in the United States are not equal citizens. But we are not alone in our move towards political extremism. From Afghanistan, to Poland and beyond, practically half the countries in the world have some form of restrictions on abortion. Why? We need only look back to the Third Reich to know that our bodies are controlled when fascism is on the rise, when power is threatened. By 1945, approximately 2 million German women were raped. Female bodily autonomy is continually violated during times of war, and yet where are the monuments? Where is the healthcare, or the compensation? Where is the recognition that we are targets in war? This isn't ancient history, this is Bosnia, the Ukraine. Think of the Yazidis, the Rohingya. The girls stolen by Burko Haram. “Culturally sanctioned” child marriage and forced marriage. Consider the murdered Transgender women across the globe. And the Tribal women in North America. When will it end? When we insist that all rape is not a justifiable byproduct of patriarchy, or war, or something that doesn't exist. Sadly, on January 6, 2022, the US witnessed more than just a right-wing rebellion as throngs of angry men waving “DON'T TREAD ON ME” flags stormed the capitol building of the United States, we witnessed Patriarchy armed and ready to fight for domination at the cost of democracy. Women's bodies have been walked over, abused

and misused throughout History. Our bodies remain a battleground. We can feel the footsteps all over us, but where is the evidence? Positioned on the gallery floor, *'Don't Tread On Me'* dares the viewer to trespass the intimate lines of bodily autonomy. In the picture series, much like a memorial, it stands as a marker of the myriad untold stories, and silenced voices.

- *Caroline Shepard*

Caroline Shepard (b. in New York, USA. Live and work in Berlin, Germany and New York, USA.)

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Caroline Shepard is old enough to have seen some things, and young enough to still be curious. Born and raised in New York City, they received a BA from Sarah Lawrence College under Joel Sternfeld and Gregory Crewdson, and an MFA at the School of Visual Arts, under Collier Schorr, Sophie Calle and Sarah Charlesworth - all of whom continue to influence. Artist, writer, professor, activist, creativ catalyst, with a practice ranging from visual art to written word, photography, installation, and interventions in public space. Their work has been published and exhibited worldwide. They are currently living in Berlin.