

CIRCA

TONY COKES' NEW COMMISSION '4 VOICES / 4 WEEKS' ON PICCADILLY LIGHTS SCREEN SPOTLIGHTS U.S. VIOLENCE AND THE STRUGGLE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS IN 2021

1-28 February, 2021

CIRCA, Piccadilly Circus, W1

American visual artist Tony Cokes will broadcast four powerful new films confronting police violence and the questions we face in the post-pandemic era, capitalizing on the Piccadilly Lights screen to put on the largest public display of Cokes' distinctive colour and text compositions.

4 Voices / 4 Weeks presents Cokes' translation of words by John Lydon, Judith Butler, US civil rights hero John Lewis and Elijah McClain, a 23-year old African American man who died after being put in a chokehold by police in 2019. The works move from punk provocation to peaceful self-sacrifice, recalling McClain's final words and expounding our deep responsibilities in the wake of violence against the vulnerable. Across four parts, Cokes' *4 Voices* emerge from contraposed positions but describe an arc and array of crucial realities we face today: mourning mass death, reclaiming the power of public gathering, and continuing the struggle for racial and social equality.

Cokes is the author of politically resonant works that appropriate and reframe diverse texts to challenge narratives in media produced under late capitalism. He is acclaimed for urgent and piercing critical works that bring together colour theory, his signature systems of coded text, and audio, which includes music in his new works for CIRCA from Manic Street Preachers, The Notwist, Joy Division and Deadbeat (Canadian musician Scott Monteith/BLKRTZ).

For CIRCA, Cokes translates texts into a code he devised and which often features in his work, filtering direct statements through a coding process made up of simple abbreviations and symbols. This approach produces striking and unsettling graphics for the Piccadilly Screen and pushes against the expected hyper-legibility of such a large public display. Cokes debuts a new part each week of February:

Part I (Week 1: 1-7 February): John Lydon "Anger Is An Energy" (NGR IZ N NRG). Music: *Casino* by The Notwist.

Part II (Week 2: 8-14 February): John Lewis "Testament B" ("2GTHR U CN RDM TH SL OF TH NATN"). Music: *Huey Lewis Dub* by Deadbeat (Blikartz).

Part III (Week 3: 15-21 February): Elijah McClain "His Last Words" (HS LST WRDZ"). Music: *Between The Clock and The Bed* by Manic Street Preachers.

Part IV (Week 4: 22-28 February): Judith Butler "Mourning Is A Political Act Amid The Pandemic & Its Disparities". Music: *Exercise One* by Joy Division.

Created by artist Josef O'Connor, CIRCA commissions a different artist each month to present new ideas that consider our world circa 2021. Each artist is invited to create a new work for Europe's largest screen that offers an innovative and exciting way for people to engage with art, both outside and online, in a safe and socially distanced way. Cokes' works will pause Piccadilly's adverts at 20:21 GMT, a new time for 2021. They make up CIRCA's second instalment of the year, following the success of Patti Smith's hopeful message of change during January's Presidential inauguration month.

For more information, please contact:
press@circa.art

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In a further extension of the CIRCA platform, Cokes will participate in a series of ‘conversations’ with Hans Ulrich Obrist, Adrienne Edwards and Peter Saville. These will be released on WWW.CIRCA.ART and in daily selections for CIRCA’s social media accounts. The conversations will explore the new commission, its global context, and Cokes’ artistic practice. Cokes will also show his work ‘Evil.80: Empathy?’ (2020) among other ‘bonus tracks’ online that exemplifies the tone of the artist’s CIRCA commission.

Visitors to Piccadilly Circus can connect their headphones to WWW.CIRCA.ART and receive a fully immersive audio-visual experience. The website also streams the artwork every evening at c.20:21GMT and hosts supporting content alongside past archives of CIRCA commissioned works from Patti Smith and Ai Weiwei.

CIRCA has been made possible by Landsec, landlord of Piccadilly Lights, who have kindly donated media space, as a helpful boost to the cultural scene in London’s West End.

Tony Cokes quote: *"The videos trace a movement from anger to non-violence, from the unfolding of an unjust death to a politicised social mourning. I "translate" three of the original texts into a code I devised – mixing dropped vowels, simple abbreviations and symbols."*

NOTES TO EDITORS

TONY COKES

Since the 1980s, Tony Cokes has developed a precise visual style marked by animated text, found images, and solid-color slides. His works combine cultural fragments, reframing the images and ideas that are designed to construct our habits and identities. By extracting source texts from their original contexts and layering elements that often clash, Cokes examines media’s operations and the ways in which it manifests power. Recent exhibitions include the Museu d’Art Contemporani de Barcelona, Barcelona; ARGOS centre for audiovisual arts, Brussels; Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts; Goldsmiths Centre for Contemporary Art, London. Tony Cokes lives and works in Providence, Rhode Island, where he serves as Professor in the Department of Modern Culture and Media at Brown University.

4 VOICES / 4 WEEKS CREDITS

Editor: Stephen Crocker

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SUPPORTERS

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Followers of Circa are invited to become supporters as part of the initiative c. YOUR NAME IN LIGHTS which is offering 1,000 people the opportunity to support free public art and have their name appear on the Piccadilly Lights screen. To find out how visit Circa.Art/Support-Circa.

For more information, please contact:
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