

Press Release

Tony Cokes

Let Yourself Be Free

26 September 2025 – 1 March 2026

Opening: Thursday, 25 September 2025, 6 pm

Press conference: Wednesday, 24 September 2025, 10.30 am

Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein, Skylight galleries

The [Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein] collection was particularly inspiring to me. I always say it's pop, minimalism, and conceptualism that are the three pillars on which I can base my practice, such as it is. –Tony Cokes

Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein has invited artist Tony Cokes (b. 1956, Richmond, Virginia, US) to engage in a dialogue with its collection, resulting in the solo exhibition *Let Yourself Be Free*. This revealing show presents a number of the artist's light boxes, text and video installations, together with a new commission and works by several artists in the collection.

A defining feature of the exhibition, and central to Cokes' practice, is the principle of (unexpected) juxtaposition, remix and reinterpretation. At its centre is a new three-channel video installation in which Cokes reflects on three figures: the gallerist and collector Rolf Ricke, who played an important role for Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein; the minimal artist and collector Donald Judd; and Harald Szeemann, the pioneering curator and collector. Cokes interweaves their texts and biographies into narratives that explore the porous relationships between making, collecting, displaying and valuing art.

Cokes is best known for his now-signature videos, which combine quotes from a range of texts with brightly coloured backgrounds and music, creating sequences that encourage viewers to rethink how images and sounds shape our understanding of politics, culture and power. He describes himself as a 'post-conceptual' artist, stressing that his practice is less about producing images and more about examining our relationship to them. Like a DJ, he samples and remixes fragments drawn from popular culture and mass media with the aim of subverting dominant codes. Since the late 1980s, Cokes has critiqued media and power relations, racism and

consumer behaviour. His sources include, but are not limited to, social media, found footage, journalistic texts and philosophical writings.

Whereas his early works often borrowed images from popular culture and current events, in the aftermath of 9/11 Cokes deliberately chose not to employ traumatic imagery. This decision gave rise to his influential *Evil series* (2001–ongoing), which considers the ideological climate of the post-9/11 era without reproducing the media's visuals. This marked a shift away from the image as medium and towards inviting viewers to recall, imagine and process the images already in their minds. He asks, "Why present the same thing when you can evoke different things in the audience because you don't use the iconic image?"

Alongside text, sound is the other element that plays a crucial role in Cokes' work and this exhibition. In order to create dissonance with the conceptual text elements, he often incorporates a variety of pop, hip-hop or electronic tracks in his installations. *Free Britney?* (2022) examines the pop star's legal battles by placing Spears' own lyrics in dialogue with ongoing media coverage of her conservatorship.

The exhibition at Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein ties in with Cokes' recently increasing focus on the history and reception of conceptual art and minimalism: he presents exclusively works from his oeuvre that engage with personalities and themes from the fields of visual art and music. Cokes combines them with works by Nazgol Ansarinia, Bill Bollinger, James Lee Byars, Dan Flavin, Dan Graham, Anne Marie Jehle, Donald Judd, Gary Kuehn, Allan McCollum, Liliana Moro, Cady Noland, Steven Parrino, Pope.L, Fred Sandback, Richard Serra and Andy Warhol. The artist chose the works himself. The structure of *Let Yourself Be Free* is informed by Tony Cokes's oeuvre and method. At the same time, the exhibition raises questions related to curating and what it means for artists to act as curators.

A production of Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein, curated by Letizia Ragaglia in close collaboration with the artist.

Publication

A publication will accompany the exhibition, featuring installation views, essays by Jordan Carter and Christoph Cox and an interview with Tony Cokes conducted by Letizia Ragaglia.

Short biography

Tony Cokes lives and works in Providence, Rhode Island, where he is a Professor in the Department of Modern Culture and Media at Brown University. He was named a Medallist (Established Artist) at the Art Basel Awards in 2025, awarded the prestigious MacArthur Fellowship in 2024 and received the Rome Prize of the American Academy in Rome in 2023. His work has been presented in numerous solo exhibitions internationally, including Amos Rex, Helsinki (2025), Haus der Kunst and Kunstverein München, Munich (2022); Dia Bridgehampton, New York (2023–2024); Memorial Art Gallery, University of Rochester, New York (2021); MACRO Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Rome (2021); Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (2020); Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts (2020). Cokes' works are held in major public collections, including the Centre Pompidou, Paris; Museum of Modern Art; New York; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

25 Years Loving Art

In 2025, Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein celebrates its 25th anniversary. *Tony Cokes. Let Yourself Be Free* marks the conclusion of the museum's exhibition programme for this milestone year. On **11 November 2025**, the museum's "birthday", celebrations begin at 5.30 pm with a performance by the Fürstliche Guggamusig Röfischrenzer (Schaan), a dance revue by Urban Dynasty, and, of course, birthday cake.

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