

EVENTS

28 Sep, 5–6pm ARTIST TALK: *TONY COKES AND KODWO ESHUN*

To mark the opening of *If UR Reading This It's 2 Late: Vol. 1*, Tony Cokes discusses his work with Kodwo Eshun (Lecturer in Contemporary Art Theory at Goldsmiths, University of London and co-founder of The Otolith Group). Eshun features directly in the exhibition as part of a new commission produced for the CCA, which quotes his 'Mark Fisher Memorial Lecture' delivered at Goldsmiths in 2018.

8 Oct, 7–9pm *POLICING BLACKNESS: MUSIC AND VISUAL CULTURE*

Dr Monique Charles, Last Yearz Interesting Negro and Dr Dhanveer Singh Brar join moderator Dr Anamik Saha to explore the nature of music under capitalism. Combining discussion and listening, participants trace the Black British experience through music, asking how sound can be a form of resistance to hegemonic forces of dominant cultures, and if commercialism absorbs those energies. In response to recent police action to shut down drill performances in London, the evening also examines how and why these musical practices are policed and contained. The event will feature a new performance by Last Yearz Interesting Negro, *Practicing listening to the subterranean murmurs*.

29 Oct, 7-8pm BOOK LAUNCH

To celebrate the launch of the first monograph on the work of Tony Cokes join Scott King and Fraser Muggeridge for an informal discussion of their practices and work on the publication. Both speakers have worked for years across the fields of art, graphic design and music, and will be in dialogue concerning the translations, slippages and stakes of moving between these fields.

30 Oct, 1.30–2.30pm *CONTAGIONS OF AFFECT*

Dr Diana Omigie, Goldsmiths Lecturer in Psychology leads a tour of the Tony Cokes exhibition, in which the affective qualities of his videos are explored from a neuroscientific perspective.

14 Jan 2020, 6–8pm PERFORMANCES *ALCHEMY X TONY COKES*

An afternoon of live performances across the CCA by participants in the Alchemy Project; young musicians and music producers from Lewisham schools who meet regularly at Goldsmiths. Alchemy have based their term's activities around *If UR Reading This It's 2 Late: Vol. 1*. Their responses to the ways in which artist Tony Cokes uses music by artists such as NWA, Public Enemy, Skream and Drake in his films to accompany found texts drawn from popular culture and theory, forms the basis for their own pieces.

For more information on upcoming events and to book tickets visit goldsmithscca.art

EXHIBITION GUIDE

TONY COKES

IF UR READING THIS IT'S 2 LATE: VOL. 1

29 Sep 2019–19 Jan 2020

'I see my work as trying to question our habits of reading, looking for the political implications in our pleasure, knowledge, and their modes of production and circulation.' Tony Cokes

If UR Reading This It's 2 Late: Vol. 1 is the first UK solo exhibition of US-based artist Tony Cokes, featuring a range of powerful artworks made since the 1990s, alongside two new commissions. Cokes' videos bring together colour theory, sound, music, and texts quoting a polyphony of voices such as Aretha Franklin, Mark Fisher, Malcolm X, James Baldwin, Edouard Glissant, Louis Althusser, Public Enemy and Donald Trump in a perfect meeting of 'pathos and politics'.

In his work Cokes' tests the limits of the constitutive elements (image, text and soundtrack) of short form media such as adverts, trailers, and music videos, viewing these as expressions of consumer capitalism. Early works such as *FADE TO BLACK* (1990) sample archival footage, but over time Cokes has increasingly replaced images with texts spliced across colour saturated frames like stanzas of poetry, and overlaid with pop music. Passages of theory, articles, speeches, UN reports, and quotes from well-known figures are heightened by vivid colour and the pleasure of tracks by bands such as the Pet Shop Boys, Nirvana, NWA, Modeselektor and Gang of Four, to provoke emotional and critical intensities. Cokes' films thus propose affective spaces within which to critique systems of power, turning the mediatic language of capitalism against itself.

Cokes engages with the ambiguities and complexities of the politically fractious times that we live in through multiple points of entry, offering analysis whilst undermining claims of truth or objectivity. Works range across subjects including representations of blackness, the birth of minimal techno in Detroit, pop music used to torture detainees during the 'War on Terror', and mainstream misogyny. Confronted solely with text, the primacy of the image in contemporary culture is undermined in recognition of both the regime of visibility that underwrites racism, as well as the political stultification produced by televised images. Cokes keeps each quotation anonymous until the final frame, maintaining suspense and challenging us to question what we are reading; be it the polemic leftist voice of comedian George Carlin in *Evil 35: Carlin / Owners* (2012) or the unsurprising revelation that the disturbing sexism articulated in *Evil.66.1*. (2016) belongs to Donald Trump.

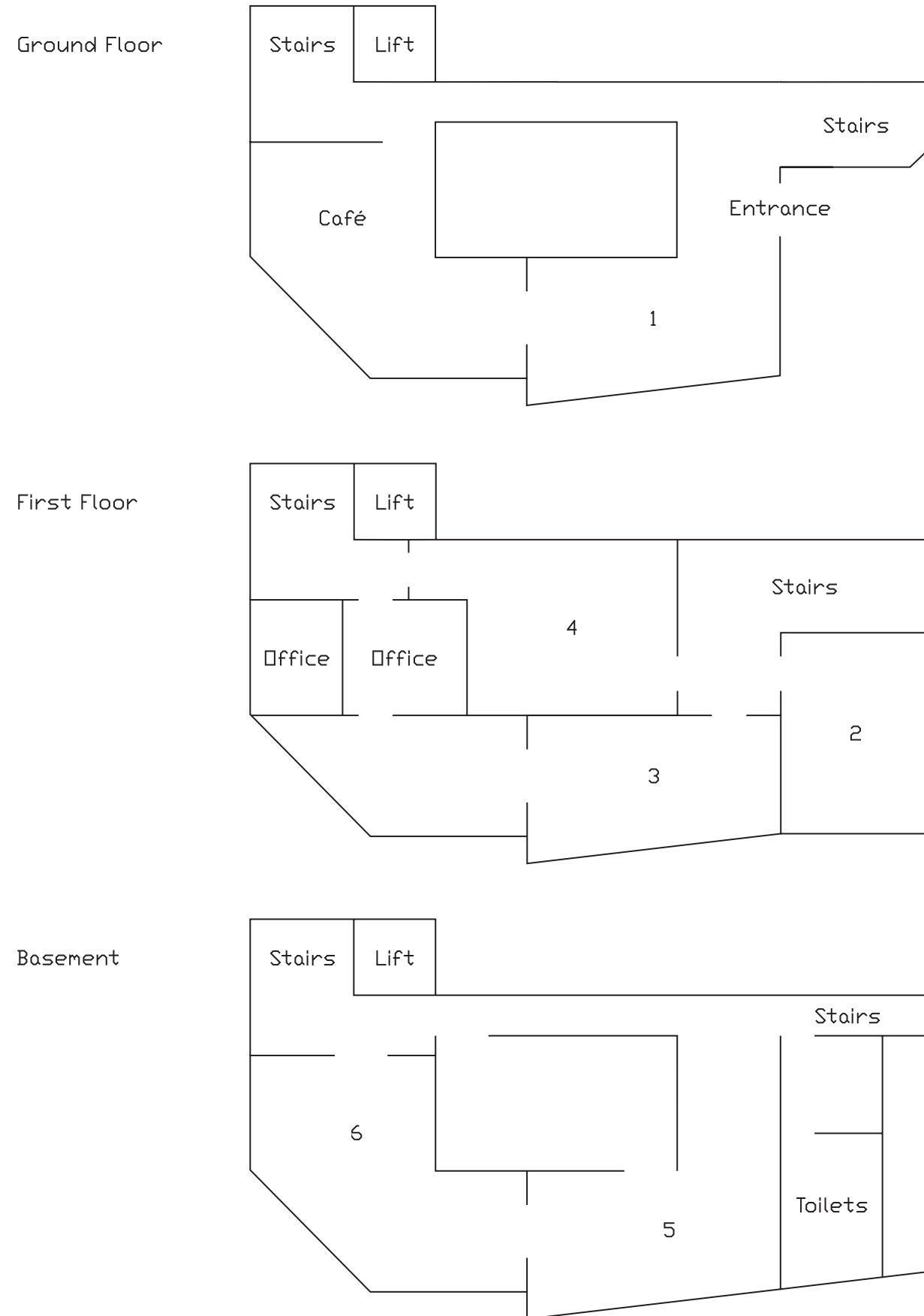
As part of a university, Goldsmiths CCA has a specific stake in the way Cokes' (himself a professor at Brown University) engages with theory. In his work Cokes exploits the potential of video to re-distribute theoretical texts beyond academia, creating conditions for powerful encounters with critical voices that provide counter-narratives to prevailing social conditions. In *Testament A: MF FKA K-P X KE RIP* (2019), a new work commissioned for the CCA, Cokes' takes as his subject Kodwo Eshun's Mark Fisher Memorial Lecture, which took place at Goldsmiths University in 2018, following Fisher's sad death. The musicality and cadence of Eshun's elegiac discussion of Fisher's work is explored through the pace and edit of the text across consecutive frames. The work stages a second act of memorialisation to Eshun's lecture, and a reiteration of Fisher's legacy.

Titled after a mix-tape by Drake, *If UR Reading This It's 2 Late: Vol. 1* foregrounds the centrality of music in Cokes' work. Like a mix-tape his films are assemblies of existing tracks that amplify and complicate, producing new meanings from unexpected juxtapositions of text and sound. Early in his career, as part of the conceptual band SWIPE, and in more recent works, music is explored both as a commodity and a countercultural medium of dissent that is at odds with our specular image-based culture. Some works map histories of specific genres, as expressive of complex interrelations of forms and histories. *Mikrohaus, or the black atlantic?* (2006-2008) explores the birth of minimal techno, uncovering its roots in Afro-American musical traditions such as soul and Chicago house. The sampling, remixing and versioning inherent to minimal techno sits well with Cokes' artistic strategy, remastering existing cultural materials to create a new flow of information and affect.

Morrissey's music has figured across Cokes' oeuvre, and his lyrics feature in *3#* (2001). *3#* was made as part of SWIPE and is part of the band's project to create promos that themselves critique the music video format as imposing an authorised set of images and constraining the aural imagination. Collected texts discuss the mechanics of repetition and mass distribution deployed in creating pop music, set to a track by Seth Price generated through analysing the structure of 80s pop songs. A new work, *The Morrissey Problem* (2019), confronts the singer's recent explicit alignment with far-Right politics, and articulates the profound anger and disappointment fans of Morrissey feel, in an era replete with fallen heroes.

FLOORPLAN

LIST OF WORKS



GROUND FLOOR

1 GARCIA FAMILY FOUNDATION GALLERY
The Morrissey Problem
 2019
 09:25 min
 HD video, colour, stereo
 Commissioned by Goldsmiths Centre for Contemporary Art, London, Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts, Harvard, and ARGOS centre for audiovisual arts, Brussels.

FIRST FLOOR

2 CANDIDA & ZAK GERTLER GALLERY
Testament A: MF FKA K-P X KE RIP
 2019
 35:22 min
 HD video, colour, stereo
 Commissioned by Goldsmiths Centre for Contemporary Art, London.

3 DASKALOPOULOS GALLERY
Mikrohaus, or the black atlantic?
 2006-08
 31:07 min
 Video, b/w, stereo

4 BRIDGET RILEY GALLERY
The Queen is Dead: Fragment 2
 2019
 15:39 min
 HD video, colour, stereo

BASEMENT

5 WESTON GALLERY
Evil.16 (Torture.Musik)
 2009-11
 16:27 min
 HD video, colour, stereo
 Credit

Evil.35: Carlin / Owners
 2012
 07:56 min
 HD video, colour, stereo

Evil.66.1
 2016
 07:44 min
 HD video, colour, stereo

6 BASEMENT 1
 3#
 2001
 04:50 min
 Video, colour, stereo

FADE TO BLACK
 1990
 32:51 min
 Video, colour, stereo

The Book of Love
 1992
 59:37 min
 Video, colour, stereo

Co-organized by Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts at Harvard University (30 January–12 April 2020) and ARGOS centre for audiovisual arts, Brussels (18 April–26 July 2020).

Supported by Malevich.io