unknown persons: Brice's loose painterly handling deflects attention from identifying details toward the immediate perception of stance and attitude. Whoever these women are, they are self-possessed, resolute. Many of them hold paintbrushes or palettes. One is setting to work on a blank canvas, though she looks away toward the viewer rather than at the surface that her brush is about to the mark. In another drawing, a woman seems to be walking in the background, but I decided—without much evidence from the work itself—that this might well be a figure from a painting by the palette-and-brush-wielding foreground figure. Likewise, the bandannaed woman sitting right up against her mirror image in another of the drawings could just as easily be contemplating her painted portrait as her reflection. One thing about the generalized rendering offered by this kind of rough, sketchy technique is that it blurs the distinction between levels of reality: People, their reflections, and their images all coexist on terms of equality. Brice's women are not only painters; they are equally—and somehow this made me laugh out loud in the gallery—smokers. That's a pretty seditious thing to be in public these days, it seems, so holding your paintbrush in one hand and a cigarette in the other, as does the subject of one drawing, must be a sure sign of intransigence.

The larger works on view here were three paintings on canvas, one on linen, and one on paper mounted on aluminum, all tall and narrow like doorways through which the body can slip in and out (think of Willem de Kooning's paintings on hollow-core doors, such as *Woman, Sag Harbor*, 1964), as well as a couple of freestanding screens, each with five panels. The mostly unclothed women who people them inhabit a world more distinctly (and virtuosically) rendered than the nebulous space around the subjects of Brice's drawings. And the women themselves, while abstracted from identity—described in blue paint, even their race is ambiguous—at least have a time frame: Haircuts and other stylistic cues seem to send us back in time about a century, to the 1920s or '30s. Theirs is a world closed in on itself, and for women only. Although these pictures may bring to mind, say, Brassaï's photographs in Paris brothels, Brice specifies in an interview, "None of my compositions are brothel scenes in my mind, but as they are left open to interpretation, it is increasingly interesting to me that a group of scantily clad feminine figures are frequently presumed to be prostitutes." In any case, Brice can surely say, as Dumas once did, "I situate art not in reality but in relation to desire." Behind the red door that cracks open in one of the paintings lies a world of indulgence in the body, in paint—and in tobacco.

—Barry Schwabsky

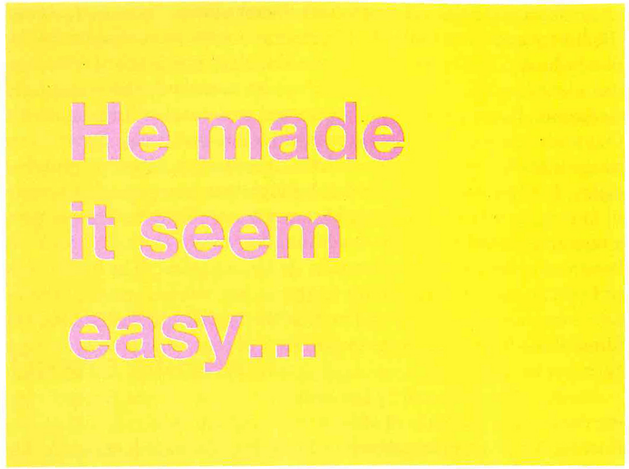
Tony Cokes

GOLDSMITHS CENTRE FOR CONTEMPORARY ART

It feels like a misrepresentation to discuss the work of Tony Cokes using complete sentences. Just as lyrics need music, dialogue delivery, and quotations context, so, too, would consideration of Cokes's videos benefit from an element of fracture and fragment, a framework of incompleteness that this paragraph cannot hope to accommodate.

Cokes employs a consistent formal template: Short phrases, clipped from essays, speeches, or reportage, slide across color-block backgrounds to the sound of hip-hop, pop, rock, or throbbing techno. But stable methodology is not synonymous with simplicity—or with legibility. For this work trades in what philosopher Christoph Cox terms "affect modulation," or what I would call a re-confusion of confused ideals that are often presented as logical.

As was evidenced by the many stand-alone monitors of "If UR Reading This It's 2 Late: Vol. 1," Cokes's videos integrate, at times



Tony Cokes, *Testament A: MF FKA K-P X KE RIP*, 2019, HD video, color, sound, 35 minutes 22 seconds.

concurrently, a cacophony of voices and viewpoints (Édouard Glissant, N.W.A., Donald Trump) as a means to reframe discussions of institutional power, state violence, and cultural production, as well as representations of race, gender, and identity. Wary of the manner in which mimetic imagery can overdetermine, and thus undermine, what it represents, Cokes invests in nonvisibility, illegibility, deficit.

His is a subversive remixing, or "dubbing," of historico-political content intent on disrupting its preformed associations. As Cox writes in his book *Sonic Flux: Sound, Art, and Metaphysics* (2018), the "dub" of a reggae record "strips away a song's melodic attractions in order to reveal its rhythmic and technological infrastructure." Accordingly, Cokes's *Fade to Black*, 1990, a potted history of black (mis) representation in cinema, and *Evil.16 (Torture.Musik)*, 2009–11, a sonically disjointed account of the US military's weaponization of music, are known-yet-new things. They are rescored stories of violence: dubbed historical narratives in which melodies of diversion are stripped back to expose the substructures of oppression upon which they were composed.

They are also dyspneic, dyschronometric, dizzy. To experience these works is to struggle to match pace: to be conscious that the prioritization of a single content stream will lead to the slippage of another. But here slippage is the key, as is the affect bleed that might well originate in the contiguity of sound, text, and form. In the artist's own words, this work is "taking a train through a landscape while reading and also listening to music."

Testament A: MF FKA K-P X KE RIP, 2019, cites the text of a commemorative lecture delivered by Kodwo Eshun at Goldsmiths, University of London, in 2018, a year after the death of the cultural theorist Mark Fisher. Set against a jarring color scheme of yellow and purple, the work is heavy with the presence of absence, thus evoking Fisher's own writing on the subject of haunting (itself an ode to Derrida's "hauntology"): "when a space is invaded or otherwise disrupted by a time that is out-of-joint." Cokes's work is haunted, also, by blackness. It floats through accounts of violence, victimization, and populism and weighs on the racial archaeology of techno that is excavated in *Mikrohaus, or the black atlantic?*, 2006–08. This is a ghostly methodology, preserved in technology. "Blackness is everywhere," Cokes wrote in 2013. "It haunts and it repeats. Or it repeats, then it haunts."

Cokes's exhibition took its name from Drake's 2015 mixtape, *If You're Reading This It's Too Late*. But how late is *too* late? Can any narrative become so fixed, finished, done that subsequent reading is untenable? For Cokes, such completionism is a false ideal; the myth of this ideal facilitates historiological coherence to ensure that dominant narratives remain unchallenged. Because, in truth, it is never too late: Things have rarely *happened*; they are only ever *happening*. While (personal, political) accounts often profess their permanence, imperiousness, and sheer imperviousness to retroactive critique, they can always be chopped and screwed, set to a new tempo and heard afresh.

—Harry Thorne

PARIS

Zineb Sedira

JEU DE PAUME

Zineb Sedira's film *mise-en-scène*, 2019, opens with a text reading, "In June 2018, after a visit to the Cinémathèque of Algiers archive, I decided to browse in bric-à-brac shops. . . . I discovered two canisters containing fragments of worn 60s, 70's and 80's films. The vendor told me the canisters came from a retired projectionist . . . so I pieced the footage together to create my own film." The result is roughly nine minutes of enigmatic footage, spliced together and colorfully tinted, that ranges from scenes of daily life in Algeria to abstract rhythmic patterns produced by the decay of the stock.

The film's preface could be read as a tidy methodological summation of Sedira's complex and wide-ranging practice, which fuses lyrical and poetic documentary with the interrogation of official historical narratives and archives. *mise-en-scène* also functioned as part of a major new multimedia installation created specifically for "*L'espace d'un instant*" (A Brief Moment), Sedira's first large-scale exhibition in Paris. *Standing Here Wondering Which Way to Go*, 2019, was an installation in four "scenes," each a discrete installation within the

Zineb Sedira, *Don't do to her what you did to me*, 1998–2001, video, color, sound, 8 minutes.

installation, each summoning—through careful arrangement of images and objects collected and found, collaged and reproduced—a different aspect of postliberation Algerian history, with a focus on the utopian moment of the first Pan-African Festival in Algiers in 1969. The most striking part was *Scene 3: Way of Life*, 2019, a life-size