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 meet. 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 banzaned 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 seductive thing to be to 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 unworlded women who people them inhabit a world more distinctly (and virtually) 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. Haunting 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 brochures, 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 music, dialogue delivery, and quotations context, too, 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 thrashing techno. But stable methodology is not synonymous with simplicity—or with legibility. For this work trades in what philosopher Christoph Cox terms “affection modulation,” or what I would call a re-confusion of confused ideas that are often presented as logical.

As was evidenced by the many stand-alone monitors of “IF UR Reading Thin It’s 2 Late: Vol. 1,” Cokes’s videos integrate, at times concurrently, a cacophony of voices and viewpoints (Edouard 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 over determine, and thus undermine, what it represents, Cokes invests in nonvisibility, illegibility, deficit.

His is a subversive remixing, or “dubbing,” of historicopolitical content intent on disrupting its preferred associations. As Cox writes in his book Sonic Flux: Sound, Art, and Metaphysic (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 dotted history of black (not “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 weights on the racial archaeology of techno that is excavated in Microsouls, or the black atlantick, 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 completion is a false ideal; the myth of this ideal facilitates hierarchical coherence to ensure that dominant narratives remain uncompelled. 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, impermanence, and sheer imperviousness to retroactive critique, they can always be chopped and screwed, set to a new tempo and heard anew.

—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 Cinématheque of Algiers archive, I decided to browse in bric-a-brac shops . . . I discovered two canisters containing fragments of worn 60s, 70s and 80s films. The vendor told me that the canisters came from a retired projectionist . . . so I picked 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 preciso 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 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