



PRESSEINVITATION

In Focus: Statements

Inside CC: 25.06.–30.08.20

Under open skies: 25.06.–30.12.20

The following artists are represented in the exhibition:

Monica Bonvicini

Douglas Coupland

Tony Cokes

Jeremy Deller

Sam Durant

John Giorno

Felix Gonzalez-Torres

Shilpa Gupta

Lise Harlev

Hesselholdt & Mejlvang

Jenny Holzer

Kahlil Joseph

Jacob Kirkegaard

Zoe Leonard

Marilyn Minter

Adrian Piper

Dread Scott

David Shrigley

Kate Tempest

Yoko Ono

‘No Justice, No Peace’, ‘I can’t breathe’, ‘Keep a distance’. These words have spread like wildfire globally, testifying to a world marked by change and consternation. COVID-19 has claimed hundreds of thousands of lives, the battle against racism rages in the wake of the killing of George Floyd, a black American, and the #MeToo wave seeks to mitigate violation against women. Humans are on the barricades.

On 25 June, Copenhagen Contemporary (CC) opens its doors to the exhibition *In Focus: Statements*, directly addressing the current global crisis. Copenhagen Contemporary is activated by international world stars indoors and outdoors in the group show *In Focus: Statements*. Works of art with political texts and messages go beyond the physical framework of CC, sending visitors on a journey of discovery in the former welding hall and outside in the Refshaleøen industrial area.

With focus directed at events happening in the world at the moment: USA's upcoming presidential election, Brexit, #MeToo, the COVID-19 pandemic, and Black Lives Matter, the exhibition presents artists who, through language, address some of the social issues topping the agenda just now.

LESS POWER LESS

The exhibition is kick-started by a live performance featuring the artist duo Hesselholdt & Mejlvang. Dressed in garb fit for Greek goddesses, they lift up tyres with their bare hands, spelling the words *LESS POWER LESS* on the slope in front of CC. A realm that was formerly white, feminine, and pure becomes a raw, dirty, masculine scene.

Contemporary linguistic highlights

In Focus: Statements aptly summarises the global crisis experienced by the world at this moment with the COVID-19 pandemic – a crisis denying us social interaction and renegotiating the relationship between citizens and those in power, individuals and groups, and the private and public sphere. While Douglas Coupland encourages us, with a pinch of humour, to stockpile all that cannot be downloaded, Sam Durant visualises, in his work *Labyrinth*, how isolation affects different groups, for example, prisoners.

In the case of COVID-19, language and rhetoric have played a crucial role in communicating the crisis in the media and public space. New words have emerged while others have taken on new meanings. Several works in the exhibition, therefore, trace the changing meanings of words from they were created until the present. An example of this is Shilpa Gupta's work from 2008-09 consisting of soaps inscribed with the word *Threat* – no longer solely associated with debates on ethnicity and identity politics, but also on hygiene and danger of infection. The same is true of Monica Bonvicini's *Hy\$teria* from 2019, a fitting epitaph to the situation facing financial markets since the outbreak of COVID-19.

Many of these works are not recent – but we interpret them in the context of the present. Jenny Holzer's marble benches with engraved texts – describing the loss of a loved one to AIDS – now brings to mind the privations and deaths brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. Zoe Leonard's text *I want a president* from 1992 is about wanting a president who embodies some of the experiences shared by ordinary people.

The artist Marilyn Minter has created gender political works for decades, subscribing to the struggle of the #MeToo movement to end the suppression of women when Donald Trump's (in)famous statement 'Grab them by the pussy' is placed on an election poster in citation marks. Adrian Piper addresses the right of people to decide on matters affecting their own bodies by formulating statements on a business card for you to take with you and hand out if anyone oversteps your personal boundaries.

In various ways, the works in the exhibition are a reminder that the language we use is not neutral, but plays a part in forming us and our understanding of the world. Language is powerful, daily defining our experience of social inequality, representation of minorities, abuse against women, suppression, racism, climate responsibility, and other big questions of concern to us at present.

The outdoor part of the exhibition is open from 25 June until 30 August whereas the indoor part can be experienced until 30 December.

Invitation to press preview on 25 June

There will be a press preview of *In Focus: Statements* on Thursday 25 June at 12.30–13.30 followed by a live performance by Hesselholdt & Mejlvang. The press preview of the exhibition *DO NOT TOUCH THE WORMS* by David Shrigley takes place at the same time.

NB: Register for the press preview by contacting Line Glavind at lineglavind@cphco.org by Tuesday 23 June at the latest.

Program:

- 12.00 – 12.30 Press preview: David Shrigley, *DO NOT TOUCH THE WORMS*. Meeting point: CC's foyer
- 12.30 – 13.30 Press preview: *In Focus: Statements* – plus sandwiches Hesselholdt & Mejlvang take part. Meeting point: CC's foyer
- 13.30– Performance by Hesselholdt & Mejlvang to celebrate the opening of *In Focus: Statements*. Explore both the indoor and outdoor exhibitions.

Download press images on CC's website here (More to follow after the press preview):

<https://copenhagencontemporary.org/en/press/>

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