

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

'til bronze flows through the streets

Wilmer Wilson IV

On view through December 20, 2020

Located at 211 W. Grace St. and at the intersection of N. 21st St. and E. Broad St.



RICHMOND — 1708 Gallery is excited to present *'til bronze flows through the streets*, a multi-site public art commission by Wilmer Wilson IV. This project destabilizes advertising platforms and systems of public communication through text, image, and performance documentation to pursue issues surrounding historical monuments, economic inequality, activism, propaganda, policing, and racial injustice. *'til bronze flows through the streets* prioritizes metal as matter and metaphor, and expounds upon the binary logic of visible and non-visible political activity. Three billboard works are located at specific sites in Richmond, Virginia.

Across the U.S., the persistent presence of bronze Confederate monuments has been a flashpoint of numerous social and political movements. In this project, Wilson proposes that the actions surrounding the recent taking down of these monuments fall short of addressing the material inequalities that hinder meaningful structural change in society. While these removals are highly visible, the way they occur establishes a non-visible maintenance of continued existence, and by extension a continued status quo of systemic racism. Wilson's billboards turn toward metallic infrastructural materials—specifically bronze and brass—as a starting point for thinking beyond a conciliatory politics of display and removal in our public discourse, as well as for re-thinking the terms of how societal change might be brought about.

'til bronze flows through the streets recognizes billboards as quasi-public spaces of circulation and exchange, and reorients their advertising role through tactical moments of ambiguity. In two billboards located on West Grace Street directly across from the Richmond Police Department headquarters, text compositions reference protest sloganeering while embedded in a number of design standards drawn from advertising, U.S. currency, and competitive awards. As text, the two phrases prompt viewers to visualize imagery that registers their own

matrix of political and cultural associations. This highly charged billboard location and its direct texts are linked to a third image-based billboard, located next to a frequented bus stop near a bustling entry to the Church Hill neighborhood. The visceral image of molten metal pouring onto the sidewalk is a performance record and respectful remembrance to Wilson's family history, and the history of prosperity of Black people and communities in Richmond. The site of the pour occurred in front of a former business run by a member of Wilson's family in the Jackson Ward neighborhood—a historic epicenter of Black economy and Black life.

The entirety of *'til bronze flows through the streets* proposes, through a hijacking of both the logic of public political gestures and advertising, a need for new forms that can hold the complexities of shared histories and political praxis. Citing bronze and brass as core components to the catalyzing of activist movements, these pronouncements and images point to many structural intersections inherent to mechanisms of racial injustice and inequality. This commission is on view throughout the 2020 election season, and positions public art as means of encouragement of civic participation.

Wilmer Wilson IV (b. 1989, Richmond, VA) is critically recognized for performative investigations into the marginalization of, and the care for, Black bodies in everyday social relation. He is the recipient of The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage Fellowship and The American Academy in Rome Fellowship. Wilson's work has been presented at The New Museum, New York, NY; Museum of Fine Arts Boston, Boston, MA; Barnes Foundation, Philadelphia, PA; Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, AR; American University Museum, Washington, DC; Birmingham Museum of Art, Birmingham, AL; National Portrait Gallery, Washington, DC; and In Flanders Fields Museum, Ieper, Belgium.

For more information, please visit 1708GALLERY.ORG.

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Image: Wilmer Wilson IV, *'til bronze flows through the streets*, 2020. Billboard, dimensions variable. Photograph by David Hale, courtesy of the Artist and 1708 Gallery.