

WASH YOUR THUMBS TOO

Jenny Holzer debuts public video installation honouring NYC's key workers

ART & PHOTOGRAPHY - NEWS

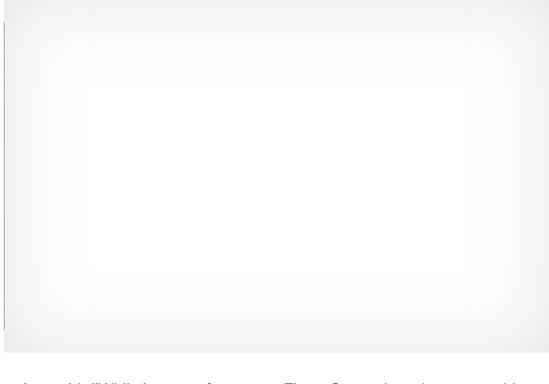
The artist is amongst 11 others who have created posters for more than 1,700 billboards across New York City's five boroughs

18th May 2020

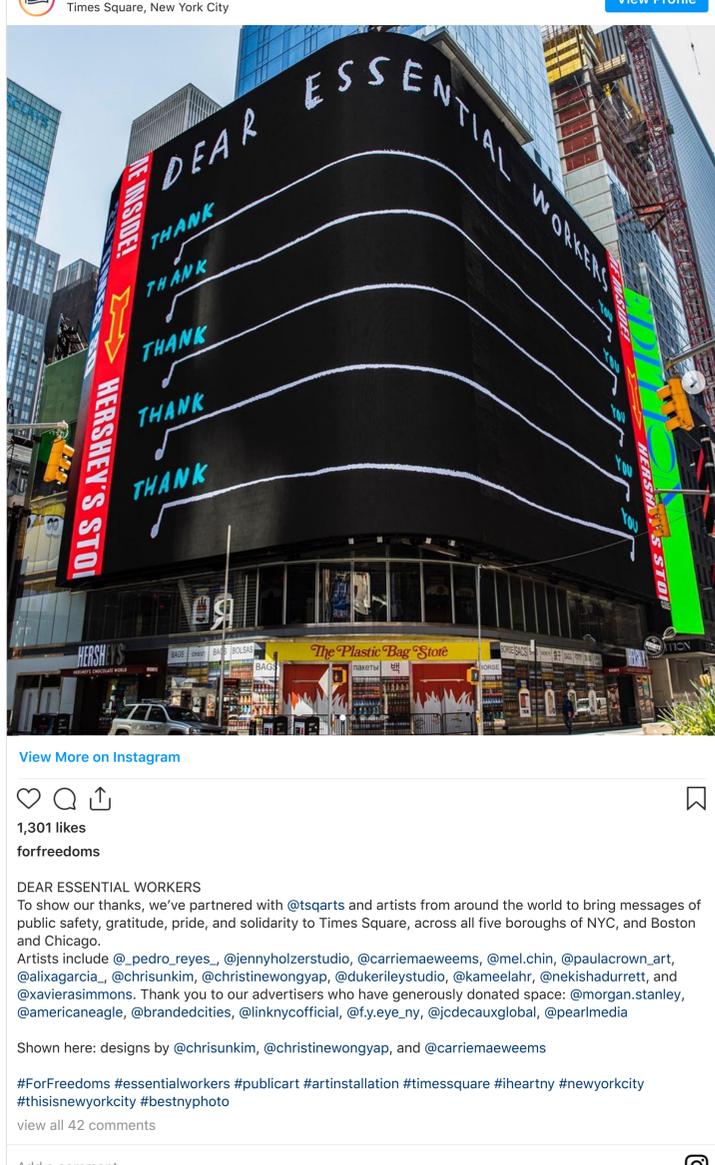
Text Ashleigh Kane

Last week, it was reported that New York had eclipsed the staggering figure of 20,000 deaths related to COVID-19. Over the weekend, 12 artist-designed posters appeared on billboards as a beacon of hope in the face of deep tragedy. Including Christine Sun Kim, Carrie Mae Weems, Mel Chin, Pedro Reyes, and Jenny Holzer, the posters have appeared on 1,774 digital billboards across New York City's five boroughs, with 300 billboards also set to display them in Chicago and Boston.

The project, titled "Messages for the City", is the second iteration of a collaboration between Times Square Arts and the Poster House, which was originally launched on 17 April with 24 artists from across the world. Joining forces with *Print* magazine and For Freedoms for the latest instalment, the posters are described as "PSAs and messages of love, gratitude, and solidarity with New York City's health care and essential workers".



Times Square Arts said: "While images of an empty Times Square have become emblematic of how swiftly public life has shifted amidst this global crisis, the streets of New York City are not in fact empty. Hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers head to work each day to sustain our city, from healthcare professionals, city workers, sanitation staff, grocery store and bodega employees, delivery people, and more."

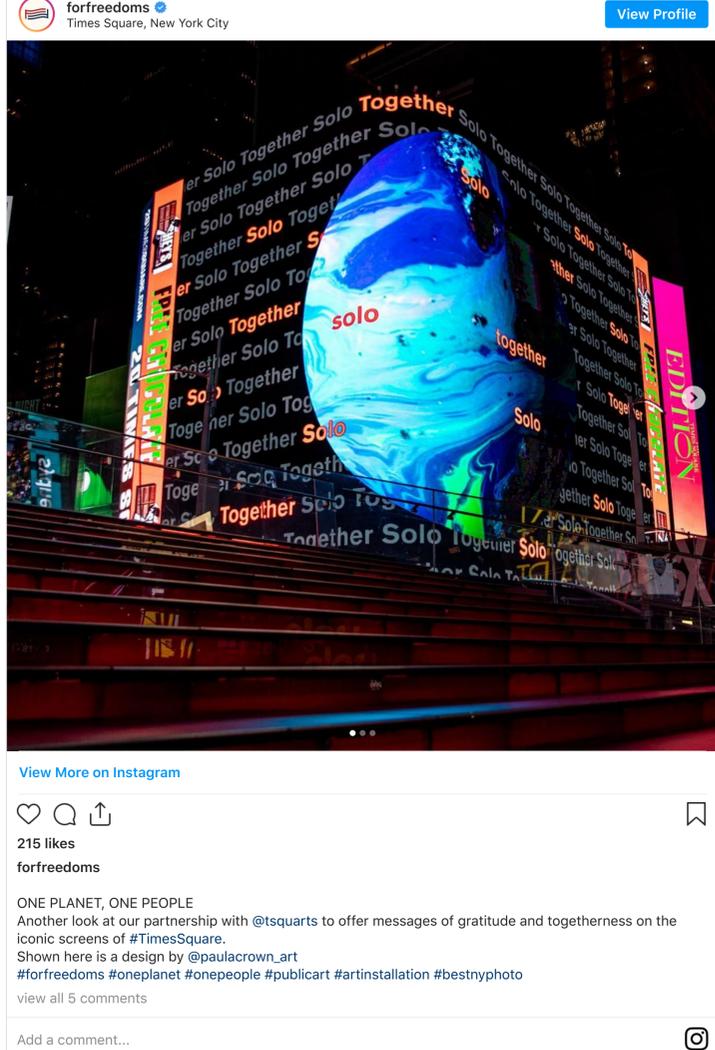


Jenny Holzer's contribution includes a scrolling video which reads "WASH YOUR THUMBS TOO" and "PROTECT NURSES DOCTORS YOURSELF". Carrie Mae Weems' billboard shares an image of a grocery store worker alongside the message "THANK THE WORKER, THE BUTCHER, THE BARBER & THE CLERK", and Pedro Reyes' poster features a fence with heart-shaped railings and the text "we will kiss again". Reyes artwork was also made available as a limited edition benefit print, with proceeds going to The New York Immigration Coalition (NYIC), but it has already sold out.

Alongside the billboards which have been taken over in Times Square, the posters will also appear on screens at senior centres, health clinics, and food pantries.

"Designers have historically been the bridge between message and audience, communicating clearly and memorably often complex ideas to huge numbers of people," Poster House director Julia Knight told *A21net News*. "Their work has inspired us to come together to confront massive challenges in the past, from wars to public health crises like the Aids epidemic, and it was immediately clear that this would be another such monumental time."

[Learn more about the ongoing project here](#)



- ART & PHOTOGRAPHY
- NEWS
- JENNY HOLZER
- CARRIE MAE WEEMS

Read Next



FEATURE
Intimate and serene photographs of women, nude in their bedrooms



LISTS
A global list of Black-owned/founded museums, art galleries, and spaces



LIGHTBOX
Rarely seen Peter Hujar photographs feature in this online exhibition



LIFE & CULTURE
Read Dazed Media's trend report on the future of youth culture