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It's lit: Tavares Strachan delivers a mountain message of social activism amid social distancing

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Rendering of Tavares Strachan's *We Are in This Together* Courtesy of the artist

A call to action will echo through the Rocky Mountains this summer as part of a forthcoming project by the Bahamian-born multimedia artist Tavares Strachan, who is preparing to unveil the site-specific installation *We Are in This Together* in Colorado this summer. Installed in National Forest Service land and visible from a gondola that ferries riders between the ski resort towns of Mountain Village and Telluride, the work provides a “prompt” for viewers to consider social justice issues, the artist says. The work unintentionally resonates amid the coronavirus pandemic as the phrase has become a kind of “rallying cry” to act on behalf of a greater good.

Commissioned by the philanthropic Telluride Foundation in collaboration with the Ah Haa School for Arts, the work is elevated from the ground at around 12 ft and is slated to be on view for 18 months beginning this summer. The work has a “cinematic quality” as one rides the gondola over the words, according to the artist, who says that “it’s not just neon text nested in the mountains”. But as Colorado extends its shelter-in-place orders until June and crowded holiday resorts remain a distant memory, it is unclear if the work is not exactly that. Following the logic of the adage “if a tree falls in the forest” concludes, if a neon sign is lit in the mountains and no one is around to see it, is it lit?

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