

## CONTACT

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## MEDIA INFORMATION

### **Wakefield arts organisations The Art House and Neon Workshops join forces to showcase the work of neon pioneer Fred Tschida**

The Art House and Neon Workshops have teamed up to bring the work of elusive neon artist Fred Tschida to Europe for the very first time. From September, the city known internationally for sculpture will put neon art in the spotlight thanks to the work of Neon Workshops - the UK's leading neon sculpture teaching workshop and fabrication studio which has made Wakefield the go-to place for acclaimed artists working in neon, including Martin Creed and Alfredo Jaar. The show will be hosted at The Art House, Wakefield's largest studio complex and visual arts charity which holds exhibitions and events and provides professional development support for artists.

The exhibition, 'CIRCLESHERE', marks the major milestone of ten years since Neon Workshops was established in the city, and 20 years since its founder – artist Richard Wheater - was introduced to University Professor Fred Tschida's alternative explorations in neon, as his student at Alfred University. It was while studying in New York that Wheater discovered Tschida's kinetic sculpture 'Sphere (2000)', which he cites as the piece that made him fall in love with neon. The exhibition is a celebration of both this moment and Fred Tschida's lifelong obsession with light and movement as an art form, as well as Wheater's determination to introduce the world to this un-sung trailblazer of neon.

'CIRCLESHERE' includes seven gas-filled glass illuminated sculptures, revolving on free-standing wooden frames which, at between 2.1m and 2.8m tall, skim The Art House gallery ceilings. They are accompanied by 'SPHERE', a huge rotating neon-clad circle, which will feature at 7A, Neon Workshops project space, filling the entire 3000 sq. ft warehouse space.

Each of the eight vibrant pieces, appears as a steadily rotating outline when viewed in real time but takes on a three dimensionality when viewed through long exposure photographs. The seven works that will be shown in The Art House's galleries, entitled 'Frederick Carder Vase Forms', are inspired by the English designer of the same name. Similarly to Wheater, British-born Carder was an experimental glass maker who travelled to New York state to explore new glass design techniques.

His work features in the Frederick Carder Gallery at The Corning Museum of Glass in Corning, New York, known as the 'Crystal City' thanks to its prolific history in the manufacturing of glass.

With Tschida's direction from his home, also in Corning, New York, each of the eight neon forms have been re-created in Wakefield by Neon Workshops, in collaboration with local carpenter Richard Wilcox and XPLOR at Production Park.

Sydney Thornbury, CEO and artistic director at The Art House comments: "Richard is renowned for his incredible neon work, not only in Wakefield but nationally. We believe strongly in his vision for the show and we're excited to be able to host it in our galleries. This is an important moment for us, as we start to see light at the end of the pandemic tunnel and begin to reopen to audiences at The Art House. Wakefield has a thriving contemporary art scene, from early career artists developing their ideas, to international names showcasing their work here and we're proud to be at the heart of this."

Richard Wheater adds: "To put it simply, without Fred there would likely be no Neon Workshops. The majority of the big and well-known neon pieces that have been seen in major UK galleries and public spaces have passed through our hands in Wakefield, so to bring the work of such an important neon innovator – not just for me personally but for everyone - to Wakefield, and to be able to give his work the exposure that it deserves, is a very proud moment. There is so much more to neon than the signs that we see hanging in takeaways and shop windows, and I'm looking forward to giving people the opportunity to truly fall for neon and its elusive magic."

Further details on 'CIRCLESPHERE' will be announced in the coming weeks. For further information, visit <https://the-arthouse.org.uk/>.

*\*Please note that social distancing measures will be in place throughout the exhibition\**

- ENDS -

For further information please contact Olivia Rhodes or Anys Williams at Anita Morris Associates / [Olivia@anitamorrisassociates.co.uk](mailto:Olivia@anitamorrisassociates.co.uk) / [anys@anitamorrisassociates.co.uk](mailto:anys@anitamorrisassociates.co.uk) / 01943 603311

#### **Notes to Editors**

##### **The Art House**

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### **About The Art House**

The Art House provides time, space and support for artists, makers and creative businesses to develop their practice. It is a place where artists and audiences of all kinds are welcome to experience contemporary visual art and learn about the practice of being an artist through a year-round programme of exhibitions and events. Established in 1994 by a group of disabled and non-disabled artists, The Art House is both a visual arts development agency and registered charity.

Alongside a programme of training, mentoring, residencies and commissions, The Art House develops a range of projects designed to engage audiences in the artistic process and contribute to an essential discourse around diversity in contemporary visual arts practice.

The Art House is an NPO (National Portfolio Organisation) with Arts Council England. It manages the Wakefield Artwalk on behalf of the city's cultural organisations, Makey Wakey - an ongoing partnership with The Ridings Shopping Centre to repurpose meanwhile retail spaces, and is home to the UK's first Studio of Sanctuary, a programme which engages Wakefield's Asylum Seeker, Refugee and Settled communities in creative projects.

### **About Neon Workshops**

Neon Workshops specialises in the development and manufacturing of neon lighting for the creative industries. The company was established in 2010 by Richard Wheeler, who studied neon at Alfred University in New York. Neon Workshops' work can be seen across the globe, from Yorkshire to Australia, Paris to Zurich. Wheeler opened its 'sister ship' project space '7A Wakefield' in 2018, on Denby Dale Road, in order to take on larger projects.

### **About Fred Tschida**

Born in Minnesota and based in Corning, New York, Fred Tschida is one of America's most celebrated neon artists, winning the 2014 Libensky/Brychtova Award, the most important artistic accolade that an artist can receive from Seattle's Pilchuck Glass School. The award jury described him as a 'leading pioneer of neon as an expressive medium' who has 'inspired new generations of artists'.

Tschida was introduced to neon as an art form by acclaimed artist Dale Chihuly, whose extraordinary 'Rotunda Chandelier' hangs in the entrance of London's V&A museum. Despite his status as a trailblazer in the neon movement, Tschida has always shied away from the spotlight, preferring to invest his skills and knowledge into the next generation of neon artists.