

# Phil Collins

7 Sep 2013 - 19 Oct 2013

*What with the rolling of the oceans and the darkening of the skies*

*What with the irrationality of your passions and the seething hatreds of everyday life*

*What with this system so effortlessly born into*

*What with our impossibility to connect*

*And this unfortunate thing between us*

*What with your revolutionary hair and the insistent movement of shit through your body*

*What with your irascible self-loathing and the tiresome humiliations you face on a daily basis*

*What with the hole in your heart so deep you could bleed with envy*

*What with life so pitilessly short and mercilessly brief*

*And nothing to fill the days*

Tanya Bonakdar Gallery is very pleased to present an exhibition of major new work by Phil Collins. Incorporating television, film, music and photography, the artist will realize three exceptional large-scale installations for his third solo presentation at the gallery.

Since the late 1990s, Collins' diverse practice has addressed the act of image-making itself, reflecting on the status of the individual and the collective in today's media-dominated society. Characteristic of the artist's approach is a close engagement with place and communities, which over the years have included disco-dancing Palestinians, fans of The Smiths across three continents, the youth of Baghdad, and teachers of Marxism-Leninism in the former German Democratic Republic. The projects are often initiated through public announcements and structured as situations

predicated on high emotional stakes. Rather than static portraits, the works resulting from these encounters articulate the nuances of relations embedded in the aesthetic regimes and economies that define our everyday existence, from news and politics to entertainment and shopping. Throughout, Collins' work upholds his commitment to myriad forms of experience across the social spectrum, and furthers his interest in the contradictory impulses of intimacy and desire within the public sphere.

In the installation *This Unfortunate Thing Between Us*, Collins probes the overlap and disconnection between reality and representation. Based on his 2011 project TUTBU.TV, an alternative shopping channel which was performed in a Berlin theatre and broadcast live on German national television over two nights, *This Unfortunate Thing Between Us* offered viewers the chance to buy an experience and enact it live on stage the following evening. Exploiting the logic and presentation of popular teleshopping programs, TUTBU.TV was hosted by a cast of actors, porn workers and musicians, with pitches and live phone-ins, telephone operators managing calls from the public, and a soundtrack by the in-house band featuring Welsh musician Gruff Rhys and North Wales surf band Y Niwl. Two complete subtitled episodes of the original event are now presented in second-hand British caravans, which for Collins epitomize both the optimism and melancholy of the consumer age, their

promise of mobility and freedom forestalled by the tedium and misery of a typical family holiday. Weaving together exhibitionism and voyeurism, authenticity and fiction, *This Unfortunate Thing Between Us* reassembles the language of reality television in a new bastardized grammar in order to describe the complex love affair between the camera and its subjects, with all its anxieties and expectations.

Like TUTBU.TV, the artist's installations sometimes recall film or stage sets – frames that allow for affective encounters between viewer and subject, as well as amongst visitors themselves. Within the upstairs main gallery, six specially designed listening booths house Collins' most recent work, *my heart's in my hand, and my hand is pierced, and my hand's in the bag, and the bag is shut, and my heart is caught*, a project conceived in collaboration with guests of a survival station for the homeless in Cologne. There, Collins installed a phone booth with a free line that anyone could use for unlimited local and international calls on the agreement that the conversations would be recorded and then anonymized. The selected material was posted to a group of musicians, including David Sylvian, Scritti Politti, Lætitia Sadier, Maria Minerva and Damon & Naomi, among others, who used these recordings as source material to produce original songs presented here inside the booths as 7" vinyl records. The installation evokes the transformative potential of pop music, its ability to create and counter distance and speak to the contemporary moment. Having worked for a homeless magazine in the 1990s, Collins has a long-standing interest in issues relating to these communities. Bringing to the fore the lyrical and narrative potential of the human voice when it stands in for subjects of city life who are purposely ignored and routinely overlooked, he dramatizes the moment of communication as an intimate and ambivalent exchange.

Installed in the side gallery upstairs, Collins's short film *the meaning of style* offers a poetic look at constructions of identity through the examination of a specific subculture. Filmed with a group of young anti-fascist skinheads the artist encountered in Malaysia, this work takes its title from British theorist Dick Hebdige's study *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (1979), an influential interpretation of the cultural styles shaped by Britain's post-war youth. Here, Collins looks at the local adoption of skinhead subculture, originally a black and white working class movement, in the form of a cinematic reverie set to an original soundtrack. Incorporating a rich collage of cultural symbols and architecture from both East and West, the film provides a delicate frame for reflection on the relationship between British colonial history and contemporary subcultures in this region of the world.

Born in Great Britain in 1970, Collins is currently based in Berlin and Cologne, where he teaches video art at the Academy of Media Arts. The artist's recent presentations include *In Every Dream Home a Heartache*, a major exhibition at Museum Ludwig in Cologne, Germany, 2013 (solo); *Artes Mundi 5: Wales International Visual Art Exhibition and Prize*, National Museum of Art & Chapter Arts Centre, Cardiff, UK, 2012-13 (group); *Revolution vs. Revolution*, Beirut Art Center, Lebanon, 2012 (group), and *Ostalgia*, New Museum, New York, 2011 (group). His work will also be included in *XL: 19 New Acquisitions in Photography*, an exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, opening this month, along with upcoming group shows at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (November 2013 – January 2014), Tate Britain, London (November 2013 – March 2014), and Kemper Art Museum, St. Louis (February – May 2014). Next year, Collins will present a major new film work and event commissioned by The Common Guild as part of the Cultural Programme for Glasgow 2014.