

March 18th - April 30th, 2016

Cold Friends, Warm Cash

A print shop for kids

Ciara Phillips & friends

Cold Friends, Warm Cash

Part I

17 March 2016

We didn't set out to do a project for kids. Though, to be honest, I'm not sure what we did set out to do. It's less a case of not knowing *what* the exhibition would be, and more about not knowing *how* it might manifest—what exactly it would look like, and who might be involved in getting to that point. And just so we're clear, I can't say for certain we know what it is just yet. After all, the exhibition is only just beginning today as I finish writing this.

What I do know is that I invited Ciara Phillips to make an exhibition at Western Front that would be an iteration of her exhibition *Workshop* (2010 - ongoing), a project which transforms a gallery into a working print studio. Though the work has taken different shapes and forms since its inception in 2010, at the heart of it is an interest in the process of making together. This particular distinction, of "making together", stood out for me against over- and misused terms like collectivity or collaboration, words that have, or at least had, a certain moment as buzzwords in everything from art circles to the tech industry. For Phillips, an artist with an ongoing practice both as an individual and as a part of collectives,

Workshop is a project that explores those parallel pursuits. It's an exhibition that doesn't proclaim the ideas of collectivity and collaboration, it enacts them in its form and structure.

For me, *Workshop* is associated with my long standing interest in the video and film production collectives of the 1970s: specifically Videofreex, People's Communication Network and TVTV in the US and Berwick Street Collective in the UK. These collectives were largely focused on using video as a medium for social documentary and activism, focusing on labour struggles, elections, prisons, and the work of political organizations like the Black Panthers. By taking advantage of the inherent properties of the medium—the portability and ease of a Sony Porta-pak video camera coupled with the possibilities for democratic dissemination through broadcast—these collectives' practices considered moving image as both an artistic medium and tool for disseminating information. As collectives, they sought to align the philosophical and political principles of the social movements they documented with both how they made work and the formal and structural qualities of that work.

Like film and video, the history and status of print situates it as an artistic medium as well as a tool for the dissemination of information and ideas. Though Phillips doesn't come to print as a political organizer, her explorations of what it means to work together with a group on a shared outcome resonates for me with these historical examples.

More directly related to print, Phillips' practice speaks to the work of Corita Kent, a Catholic nun who used printmaking and education in concert with her work as an activist in the 1960s. As an activist and educator, Kent used print as a tool to teach and organize, but her work was equally invested in a experimentation with the formal properties of the medium. For Phillips, Kent initially served as a point of inspiration for these formal considerations: from the vibrant use of color to her innovative approach to typography. Alongside this, the ongoing project of *Workshop* is one that is one that can be seen as stemming from the lineage of Kent's unique use of art and pedagogy.

Over the six years that Phillips has been mounting versions of *Workshop*, the focus has largely been on working with adults. With *Cold Friends*, *Warm Cash*, the focus of the project turns to kids. Phillips will be working with 6 to 10 year olds in the studio/gallery every week. These sessions will necessarily include some basic instruction on how to screen print, but aside from that, Phillips isn't entering into the project with a fixed idea of its outcomes. Phillips will work with the kids that attend the studio sessions to develop print projects—posters, publications, textiles—that will be realized together over the course of the show.

Integral to this exhibition is process, and as such, it will be continually made over several weeks—not solely or specifically through kids producing artwork for the space, but through the idea that the production happening in the space is

the exhibition. In that spirit, I'll use the platform of this exhibition brochure in much the same manner, and will revisit this text during that time to add more thoughts as the project unfolds.

Artist Biography

Ciara Phillips was born in Ottawa, Canada and went to Queen's University before she completed a Masters degree at the Glasgow School of Art (GSA) in 2004. She has been nominated for the UK Turner Prize 2014 and recent solo shows include *Warm Friends*, *Cold Cash*, *Konsthall C*, Stockholm; *Workshop*, *The Showroom Gallery*, London; and *Funktion / Dysfunktion*, *Neues Museum Nürnberg*. Phillips is the founder of the artist collective *Poster Club*.

Acknowledgements

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List of Works

1. *Jens*

Screen print on wallpaper, 2016

2. *Pencil Aprons*

Screen print on cotton, denim, 2016

3. *Various Untitled Wallpaper*

Screen print on wallpaper, 2016

4. *Nina Laughing*

Screen print on paper, 2016

5. *OK*

Screen print on paper, 2014

6. *Untitled*

Screen print on paper, 2014

7. *"O" from the Justice for Domestic Workers alphabet*

Screen print on paper, 2014

8. *Workshop Stools*

Acrylic paint, tennis balls, 2016

