

This fall, the Phi Foundation for Contemporary Art, formerly known as DHC/ART, presents two solo exhibitions

EVA & FRANCO MATTES *What Has Been Seen*

PHIL COLLINS

November 8, 2019–March 15, 2020



Left: Eva & Franco Mattes, *BEFNOED*, 2016. Video, screen, custom wall bracket, various cables. Variable dimensions. Exhibition view, Carroll/Fletcher, London, England / Right: Phil Collins, *Bring Down The Walls*, 2018. Courtesy Shady Lane Productions, Berlin.

Press Tour: *Thursday, November 7, 2019, at 10:30 AM, in the presence of the artists*

Opening Reception: *Thursday, November 7, 2019, from 5:30 PM to 8:30 PM*

Exhibitions: *November 8, 2019 – March 15, 2020*

Free admission

EVA & FRANCO MATTES
What Has Been Seen
451 Saint-Jean Street

Guest Curator: Erandy Vergara

With humour and irreverence, Eva & Franco Mattes have dissected, tested, and redefined the boundaries of the Internet. Since the mid-1990s, the artistic duo has also probed and engaged with the way contemporary societies have shaped the Internet and, conversely, how the Internet has shaped *us* (people, social relations, and societies). The work of Eva & Franco Mattes is a not-so-pretty mirror image of two generations: those who knew a world before the Internet and digital natives. In that sense, their work engages actively with Internet content, practices such as life sharing, and our feelings and reactions as we watch and share in our online world.

This exhibition at the Phi Foundation welcomes audiences with two works examining the feelings and reactions towards what we, as Internet users, do online. *My Generation* (2010) consists of a series of online videos of gamers experiencing crises and violent outbursts as they lose a game. *Emily's Video* (2012) presents

20 minutes of online viewers' reactions to a video that we cannot see but which seems as though it must be quite shocking.

This show also includes *Riccardo Uncut*, a recent work in which the artists push life sharing to the next level. To create this piece, the artists bought a stranger's cellular phone for \$1,000 and transformed the phone's photos and videos into a slideshow. Presented as a video installation, the work becomes a portrait of Riccardo—the phone's former owner—over the years 2004 to 2017.

This exhibition includes works that engage with Internet content such as *Ceiling Cat* (2016), a sculpture based on a popular LOLcats meme of a cat peeking through a hole in a ceiling. In the artists' words, *Ceiling Cat* is like the Internet itself: "both cute and scary at the same time"—a tension evident here and in other works in this part of the exhibition. More scary than funny, perhaps, is the work *Abuse Standards Violations* (2016), a set of panels examining the moderation guidelines of Facebook and Google, and *Dark Content* (2015), a series of video installations in which computer-generated avatars recount the stories of human beings working as Internet content moderators.

This exhibition invites audiences across generations to see others and to see themselves through the works of Eva & Franco Mattes.

Eva & Franco Mattes (b. 1976, Italy) live and work in New York. Their work has been shown at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; the Mori Art Museum, Tokyo; the 20th Biennale of Sydney; the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels; Performa, New York; MoMA PS1, New York; the New Museum, New York; the NTT

InterCommunication Center [ICC], Tokyo; Manifesta 4, Frankfurt; and the Venice Biennale. Their work *Ceiling Cat* was recently included in the collection of SFMOMA, San Francisco.

Erandy Vergara curates, investigates, reads, and writes about contemporary and media art. Her main research interests include feminism, global art histories, curatorial studies, and postcolonialism, with a particular interest in remix cultures, the strengths and downfalls of science and technology, virtual reality and artificial intelligence, and the ethics and aesthetics of participation. She earned an MA at Concordia University and a PhD in art history at McGill University. Recent shows include: *Speculative Cultures: A Virtual Reality Art Exhibition*, curated with Tina Sauerländer (Anna-Maria and Stephen Kellen Gallery, Parsons School of Design, New York, 2019) and *Art et intelligence artificielle: Explorations artistiques à Montréal* (Printemps numérique, Montréal, 2019).

PHIL COLLINS
465 Saint-Jean Street

Curator: Cheryl Sim

Since the late 1990s, artist Phil Collins has developed a rich body of work across a range of social practices, communities, and geographies to explore how we participate in and understand popular culture. Over the years, his projects have brought us closer to the youth of Baghdad, Kosovan-Albanian refugees, and Palestinian teenagers, to name but a few. What is revealed by the artist's approach, rooted in a meaningful engagement with people and places, is a nuanced complex of relations embedded in the representational regimes and economies that shape everyday existence, sometimes amidst social or political upheaval. The Montréal public was first introduced to Collins's work in 2017 with the presentation of his installation *free fotolab* as part of the Foundation's group exhibition *L'OFFRE*. This time, the Foundation dedicates its spaces at 465 Saint-Jean Street to a solo exhibition that focuses on the paramount role of music in Collins's artistic practice.

the world won't listen (2004-2007), a three-part video installation that takes as its musical text the 1987 compilation album of the same name by The Smiths, features fans in Colombia, Turkey, and Indonesia as they perform vocals to each song on the album in a series of individual karaoke sessions. Embracing, transforming, and forging new meanings from the songs' lyrics, their passionate performances gain a new urgency in the light of the continued far-right and anti-immigrant rhetoric espoused by Morrissey, former Smiths frontman.

The single-channel film *the meaning of style* (2011) features a group of anti-fascist Malay skinheads whom Collins encountered in Penang. Fascinated by their adoption of this typically British subculture, he films them in a series of languorous tableaux set to a dreamlike soundtrack by Welsh musician Gruff Rhys and the band Y Niwl, which reveal the universal desire to belong while staking out zones and modes of independence.

In 2013, Collins collaborated with guests of Gulliver survival station for the homeless in Cologne, Germany. In the centre's cafe, anyone could use a free telephone booth for local or international calls, with the agreement that conversations would be recorded and made anonymous. Selected calls were posted to international musicians, such as David Sylvian, Lætitia Sadier, and Scritti Politti, and served as the starting point for original new tracks. The project resulted in *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* (2013), a sound installation consisting of six specially designed listening booths that each contain a collection of original songs pressed on 7-inch vinyls.

Originating as a public art project, *Bring Down The Walls* explored the prison-industrial complex in the United States through the lens of house music and nightlife. The project consisted of a communal space that functioned as an open school by day and dance club by night, as well as a benefit album of classic house tracks re-recorded by formerly incarcerated vocalists and electronic musicians. For the exhibition at the Phi Foundation, Collins proposes *Bring Down The Walls* (2019), an installation version of this project, presented as a world premiere and reconfigured specifically for the Montréal context and the space at 465 Saint-Jean Street, with corresponding public programming that will build on the discussions and relationships that began in New York.

The works in this exhibition explore the emancipatory power of music to transcend time and space, disparate geographies, ethnicity, class, and language while remaining critical of its entanglement with uneven power dynamics and the political economy of culture. Through Collins's empathic lens and love of a good song, we are offered access to a deeper sense of what it means to relate to one another.

The Istanbul iteration of *the world won't listen* was commissioned by the 9th International Istanbul Biennial. *the meaning of style* was commissioned by *Open House*, Singapore Biennale 2011. *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* was commissioned by Museum Ludwig and Akademie der Künste der Welt, Cologne. *Bring Down The Walls* was commissioned by Creative Time, New York.

Phil Collins is a visual artist and filmmaker based in Berlin and Wuppertal, Germany. He is Professor of Video Art and Performance at the Academy of Media Arts in Cologne.

Phi Foundation for Contemporary Art

Established in 2007 by Phoebe Greenberg, the Phi Foundation for Contemporary Art, formerly known as DHC/ART, is a non-profit organization dedicated to the presentation of contemporary art. Housed in two heritage buildings located in the heart of Old Montréal, the Foundation offers programming that has met with critical acclaim both at home and around the world. Each year, the Phi Foundation presents two to three major exhibitions, a series of public events, special collaborative projects and a forward-thinking education and public engagement program. International in scope yet responsive to the Montréal context, the Foundation's programming is offered free of charge to reinforce its commitment to accessibility, while fostering discussion on how contemporary art is invested with the topics and ideas that reflect and touch our everyday lives.

Fondation Phi pour l'art contemporain

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Gallery Hours

Wednesday to Friday from noon to 7 PM
Saturday & Sunday from 11 AM to 6 PM

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