

News Release from Milton Keynes Gallery

9 April - 29 May 2005

Phil Collins: yeah.....you, baby you

Admission free

Preview: Fri 8 April 2005 | 17.30 - 20.00 | All press & media welcome

Open: Tues – Sat 10.00-17.00 | Sundays 11.00-17.00 | Closed Mondays
(including Monday 2 May Bank Holiday)

Milton Keynes Gallery presents the most comprehensive exhibition to date by the UK artist Phil Collins. It comprises a selection of his latest video and photographic projects including a new commission for MK G. This significant exhibition has been organised by MK G and is scheduled to tour to The National Gallery of Arts, Tirana, Albania; firstsite, Colchester; Glynn Vivian Gallery, Swansea, and Neue Kunst Halle, St.Gallen, Switzerland.

In his work Collins investigates the perils of representation, and the emotional core of photography and video, often in places where the fabric of the community is tested to the full: Palestine, Kosovo, Colombia, Iraq, Serbia, and Northern Ireland. Instinctively distrustful of the camera and its effects, yet responsive to its potential as an instigator of relationships, his works consider that which is devalued, discarded or held in contempt.

Direct engagement with his subject matter is central to Collins' practice. Despite his highly methodical approach, his art is the seemingly unintentional by-product of his travels and the relationships he establishes with strangers, lovers, friends, and new-found acquaintances. Using his camera as a "ticket" to gain access to the most profound human situations and experiences - birth, death, war, love and loss - his images though personal and intimate, deal with global issues. Throughout, Collins shows empathy with his subjects, carefully balancing the sentimental with a daring spirit of optimism and camaraderie. Although his subject matter is often starkly political, there is a humor and energy within Collins' work that creates an immediate connection with the viewer.

Collins' remarkable two-screen video installation *they shoot horses*, 2004, gets its UK première at MK G. For this work Collins went to Ramallah, Palestine, where he auditioned a number of young people to participate in an 8 hour 'disco-dance marathon'. The resulting film is by turns energetic, amusing, beguiling and moving, the dancing interrupted only by the call to prayer from a nearby mosque, power cuts, and technical problems. The work is about survivalism and collapse, heroism and exploitation and the cabin fever mentality generated by eight hours of repetitive action.

Made during a recent trip to Colombia, *the world won't listen* (2005) is a karaoke machine made for fans of The Smiths in Bogotá. Working with local musicians, Collins re-recorded the backing tracks of the entire album (from 'Panic' to 'Golden Lights') and after a city-wide campaign filmed sixty singers over three days. The resulting film will be shown alongside

an installation of the karaoke machine itself. Collins' use of popular music will be explored at an 'In Conversation' event at MK G on Weds 20 April when the artist discusses the impact of popular culture on artistic practice with Anthony Wilson. TV presenter, writer, journalist, and nightclub entrepreneur Wilson is remembered as being the co-founder of Factory Records and the promoter of Joy Division, New Order and The Happy Mondays.

An added dimension to the show at Milton Keynes will be the future inclusion of photographs contributed by MK residents. Collins will be inviting them to seek out any undeveloped camera film and bring them to 'free fotolab' based at the gallery. *free fotolab* will develop the films free of charge in exchange for the exclusive universal image rights for their photographs, some of which will be exhibited in the gallery as part of his own work. Collins, who has a passion for snapshots, and who worked as a technician in a high-street photolab, conceives that the project will evolve by its repetition in subsequent tour venues, resulting in an intriguing final body of work.

Collins has exhibited widely in venues such as Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus, Ohio; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Espacio la Rebeca, Bogotá; Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin; Modern Art, Oxford; Tate Britain, London; Barbican Centre, London; Ormeau Baths Gallery, Belfast; The Wrong Gallery, New York; Museum of Contemporary Art, Belgrade; and PS1 Contemporary Art Center, New York. This year Collins will be participating in the 9th Istanbul Biennial.

Visitors may learn more about Collins' work at the free, Saturday lunchtime 'Look Who's Talking' series of informal gallery talks. This includes an opportunity to meet the artist on Sat 9 April for his guided tour of the exhibition. On Sat 30 April, the writer and cultural theorist Sadie Plant will be talking about the political and technological dimensions of Collins' work and finally, on Sat 21 May, Clare Graffik, Programme Organiser at The Photographers' Gallery, London, and Photography Editor of Contemporary Magazine, will be discussing the concept of community in Collins's work. MK G also provides free activities every Saturday morning for accompanied children aged 4-12, linked to the exhibition content. And on Sat 14 May people of all ages can participate in a range of free exhibition-related activities at the Family Day. For full details of all events ring the gallery during opening hours on 01908 676 900 or visit the website at www.mk-g.org.

Collins' 13 minute film *how to make a refugee* (1999) will be shown at MK G's regular free Sunday Film screenings throughout the exhibition. It explores the impact of war on a Kosovan refugee family. Shown all day (looped) in the 1st Floor Events Room at MK G.

A fully illustrated catalogue, co-published by firstsite and MK G accompanies the exhibition. Special exhibition price £18. Order forms available at www.mk-g.org.

Press Information | For interviews, images or further information please ring 01908 558 302, or email Katharine Sorensen at k.sorensen@mk-g.org.

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