

# Art Review:

REVIEWS: UK

WITH's 'life enhancement solutions' are as conceptually slippery as the art faction itself claims to be. This artist-collective-cum-commercial-enterprise has developed some 50 'experiential offsetting' packages to date. Whether 2007's *Justkidin'* ('we create evidence that your family are an anti-social nuisance') or 2010's *Serendipping* ('in the right place at the wrong time'), each benevolently marketed deed (executed for a fee on the client's behalf) parodies the highly influential yet largely meaningless languages of media, politics and corporate communication. The collective has consistently flirted with art and design history, in ways that bring to mind both the influence of artists' ideas on the mainstream and the conceits of particular artistic positions – a range of references from advertising to performance art, then. This new body of predominantly text-based works, however, appears slickly moulded from a wealth of familiar high- and low-cultural graphic languages borrowed back and forth across genres, between the gallery, institution and shop.

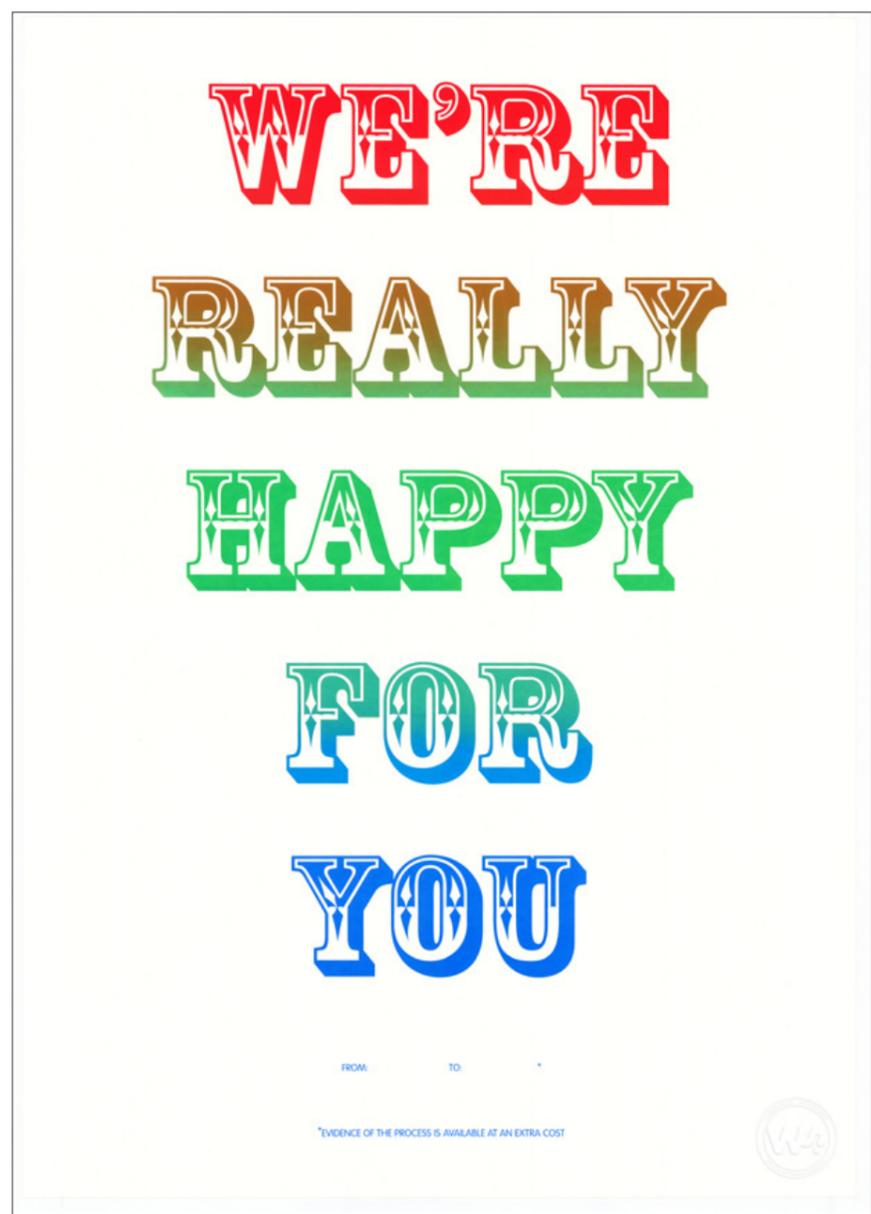
The titular puns and aesthetically savvy designs of WITH's solutions translate well online, at withyou.co.uk, with trademark symbols dotting each page like flies in the virtual ointment. And for the majority of its eight-year existence, WITH has invited the public to imagine specific contexts for exchange via the Web and installations of props. *WITHSTORE\_001 Off the Shelf: Promises, Intentions, Actions and Objects from the WITH Collective* extends the gallery territory explored by the project and the commercial footprint of last year's *A New Fund for New Times* – a temporary pyramid-scheme office in Artprojx's former Knightsbridge shop, selling WITH multiples as increasingly risky hedge-fund-style art investments. While one has never needed to see WITH agents fulfilling their commissions – though it would make a great TV series – the process of negotiating the 'documentation' (from conceptual-art contracts to crime-scene photography) as product (and the performative rites of the transaction as client) emphasises the oddly weighted nature of each potential exchange.

*WITHSTORE\_001*, sounding like an artwork in storage and showcasing *limited-editionism* to full visual and commercial potential, appears the *Big Brother* other of the pop-up shop/gallery phenomenon. For however aesthetically pleasing these clinically installed prints may be, their primary function is that of an agreement: elaborate IOUs that require faith and varying amounts of cash. This show is built on the tension between language and image, and the majority of the 'pictures' on display consist of words or symbols, save a Baldessari-esque wall of RGB-coloured photos of people in the street in the process of missing appointments (*Some Meetings We Missed on Your Behalf in Zurich, London and New York, 2007–2009, 2010*). In the *Promises* series (2010), perhaps the most bizarre point of associative crossover occurs at the curatorial meeting of concrete poetry and *The Price Is Right*: outsize playing-card motifs offering Pop-styled empty promises, and a list of future dates which WITH either 'Like' or 'Don't Like' resembling an Ian Hamilton Finlay design for a platform game while also bringing to mind Bruce Nauman's statement stacks: a 'Brucie Bonus' moment like no other.

But while WITH's experiential 'solutions' trade in the impossibility of verifying that they ever actually take place, they are nevertheless sometimes enacted. Having a glass broken on my behalf was an odder experience than one might imagine; me, in Rokeby, peering from behind a safety partition while a suited figure wearing a blacked-out motorcycle helmet wandered blindly until knocking a pint glass off a plinth. This performance consolidated WITH's uncanny ability to situate the viewer in and out of the joke simultaneously. For all the deliberate artsy pretensions and precautions, it felt genuinely strange: like being given a private dance during a *Blue Peter* science experiment by an intoxicated Stig at the Frieze Art Fair. *Rebecca Geldard*

WITH  
*WITHSTORE\_001*

Rokeby, London  
2 September – 2 October



*We're Really Happy for You*, 2010, screen print on Heritage White Archival Paper, 84 x 59 cm, edition of 10. © the artist. Courtesy Rokeby, London

theguardian

Saturday 4 September -  
Friday 10 September 2010



# ENGLAND'S DREAMERS

## exhibitions

### \* Pick of the week

**Rachel Whiteread** *Tate Britain, SW1* A rare chance to see drawings by the sculptor renowned for vast works filling negative space.

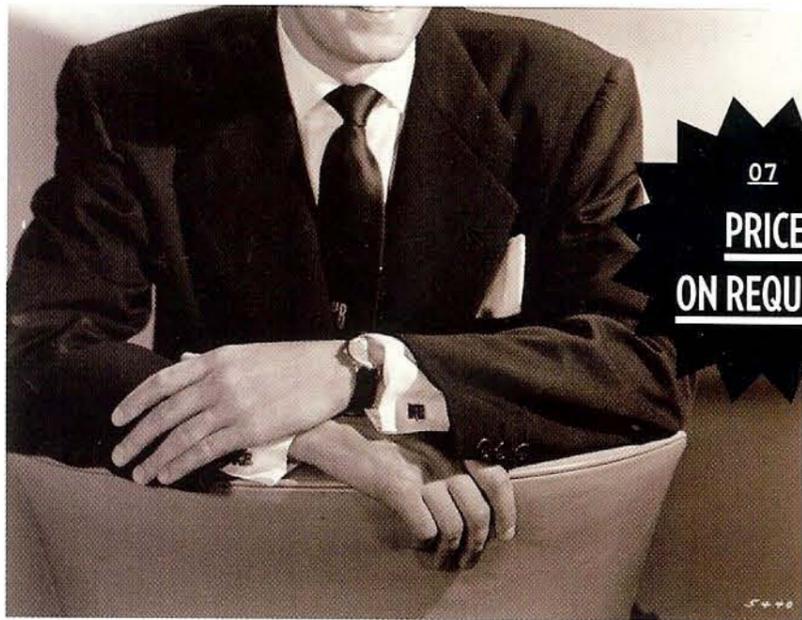
**Withstore\_001** *Rokeby, EC1* Another batch of darkly witty "lifestyle solutions" exploring the artist's role from the British collective.

**In Dreams** *Timothy Taylor, W1* Surreal hermetic worlds conjured by artists including Kiki Smith and Armen Aloyan.

**Raphael** *Victoria & Albert Museum, SW7* Includes 500-year-old tapestries created for the Sistine Chapel by the Renaissance master.

**Hussein Chalayan** *Lisson Gallery, NW1* The high-concept designer-turned-artist's latest installation explores culture through music.

# Art Review:



has come in on London art-fair multiplied fair, suggests, will lively in prints s - marking it ieze and its en the nature of , specialists nter Editions ffering John s 2009 edition ! (With Seascape ee) (pictured) blue-chip (White Cube), rts (Bearspace) its (the ICA and emporary Arts). ddition to the carnival.

iedartfair.com

**06**  
The Whitechapel's annual art book fair mixes books about art with independents offering books that are art. In the latter camp sit the likes of Böhm Kobayashi - presenting their range of subject-themed fanzines; and the p's & q's press, who are selling *City Cypher: Berlin*, the third instalment of Leonie Lachlan's ongoing linocut relief guides to major cities. Her previous two assiduously crafted creations, concentrating on Paris and São Paulo (pictured), won the Birgit Skiold award at last year's fair.

www.whitechapelgallery.org

**07**  
Michelle Cotton is coming to the end of her 18-month curatorial bursary at Cubitt gallery. This bursary has provided the launch platform for many a talent over the last ten years: Munich Kunstverein's Bart van der Heide, the British Art Show's Tom Morton and the Showroom's Emily Pethick are all alumni. To celebrate its decennial anniversary, these and more have nominated an artist each to create an edition for a new boxed print portfolio. John Stezaker's contribution, as put forward by Matthew Higgs, is pictured.

www.cubittartists.org.uk

**08**  
We all know that the UK doesn't produce anything anymore: it's all service industry. Yet artists persist in turning out objects. Not the WITH collective. For a fee, they provide Life Enhancement Solutions: whether it be staying a constant age on your behalf (through a yearly rotating roster of collective members); undergoing sex fantasies for you (a lot less messy with a stand-in); or, for £100, taking the blame for your misdeeds (invoice pictured). Visit Rokeby for a range of options to suit you.

www.rokebygallery.com

# DAZED

B CONFUSED



## WITH

### LIVELIFE VICARIOUSLY

Fancy paying someone to take the fall for you? Or perhaps they could be really happy on your behalf? If you like the sound of that, perhaps art collective WITH are just your thing. On their website, and at their new exhibition at Rokeby, WITH commission "solutions" – life experiences invented or lived out on their clients' behalf. The documented proof of the act is then presented to the purchaser and becomes the "product" of the exchange. Check out this weird and wonderful list of what WITH has to offer.

### SIMFALL

**We accidentally break a glass on your behalf.**

You receive the broken glass cast in a wax brick, a personalised certificate of authenticity, an invite to your individual glass breaking performance and the security of knowing that you'll never break a glass again.

### ABSENTS

**We don't turn up on your behalf.**

Evidence is displayed in the form of received text messages and photos of those stranded by your delegated tardiness.

### RELAYGE

**We will be 25 for 300 years on your behalf.**

You receive 300 years' worth of birthday cards that read "Twenty Five Today" on the front. The dates will correspond to the birthday of whoever purchases the work.

### MYMORY

**We remember on your behalf.**

We remember what was in the room on the day of purchase. This is presented as a screen-printed list of items individually covered with scratch-card removable ink. You then remove your choice of panels thus revealing a selection of the remembered items.

### IMPEDIMENTALISM

**We develop offensive opinions on your behalf.**

A list of offensive opinions developed on your behalf is screen-printed in a unique indecipherable code in white ink on white paper.

Text JACK HUTCHINSON

WITHSTORE\_001, Sept 2 – Oct 2,  
Rokeby Gallery, 5-9 Hatton Wall,  
London EC1N rokebygallery.com,  
withyou.co.uk

Above: *Only Ten Available*, 2010,  
courtesy of ROKEBY

## Dialogue

Dialogue – Review

**Bloomberg New Contemporaries 2010 at ICA**

The old lady of 'new artist' awards returns to the ICA this year with outstanding film and video...

Posted: Dec 03 2010 | [More...](#)

Dialogue – Review

**Zigelbaum + Coelho at Riflemaker**

Riflemaker exhibits the Miami Basel Designers of the Future award-winners, running until 31 March

Posted: Dec 01 2010 | [More...](#)

Dialogue – Review

**Dirty Kunst at Seventeen**

Seventeen's latest

## Archives

## Search This Section



murmurART

art advisory – looking for something specific or help in finding work by early career artists. contact [info@murmurart.com](mailto:info@murmurart.com)



## Review Sep 15 2010

« | »

**WITHSTORE\_01 at Rokeby**

"Off the Shelf: Promises, Intentions, Actions and Objects from the WITH Collective"



Yinan Zhang

WITH were created in 2002 by Alasdair Hopwood, and seem to resolve the philosophical quandary of "if a tree falls in a forest..."; WITH nullify the hypothetical and offer to realize the situation, and in so doing, present a host of questions addressing the fears, anxieties and economies of our technologically and results-driven society.

WITHSTORE\_001 is an exhibition that includes a number of "solutions" (for a full list, visit its website). For example, qualms about aging and mortality may be resolved by purchasing *25 for you for 300 years*, which will provide a birthday card proclaiming "WE ARE BEING TWENTY FIVE FOR YOU" every year for three centuries. This and other proposals are accompanied by a disclaimer that evidence may be provided at additional cost, bringing to mind the absurdity of imagined experience, the appeal of vicarious experience, and a nostalgia for one's own lived experience.

Highlighting these sentiments is *we accidentally break a glass on your behalf*, an act (in an edition of 50 in London) witnessed by the commissioner inside a curtained-off section of the gallery, through peepholes in a folding screen. During the opening and in the presence of an audience, the act met a quiet that enveloped the gallery, as well as the collective anticipation of the sound of shattering glass. It was not unlike getting a shot at the doctor's and turning one's head to avoid the sight, knowing all the while that the act was imminent.

In provoking anxiety associated with the inevitable, WITH also activate the seduction of the unknown. The *Promise* series comprises 52 screen prints of the backs of playing cards, each a different promise to be carried out upon purchase. The intimacy of the promise coupled with a desire to know together present a strain of fulfillment that the promise's specific realization perhaps, never could.

WITH's utilization of the colors red, green and blue (and the occasional gold) allows its solutions to appear slick and graphic within the gallery space. Of course, the logic of the R G B color model lies within its potential to produce a broad range of colors through technological devices, and when properly balanced, white. It is with this in mind that although WITH's solutions involve detailed, literal descriptions and documentary evidence of real and imagined scenarios, they remain cloaked in a provocative opacity.

Philippa Warr

This new exhibition at the Rokeby Gallery comes with the subtitle 'Off the Shelf: Promises, Intentions, Actions and Objects from the WITH Collective'. The pieces are transactions where you pay a fee and the Collective fulfils a promise or creates a solution. The transaction requires input from the client either in the form of belief that an action has taken place or in a specified reaction to the solution. Extra proof that the Collective have fulfilled their promise is available but always at extra cost.

The solutions on sale at Rokeby are by turns amusing, sinister and provocative. One promises to turn 25 on behalf of the client for 300 years with three hundred 'Happy 25th Birthday' cards ready to be printed with the client's birth date. Another work offers to take the blame for any of a selection of crimes or shortcomings ranging from mundane shortcomings to corporate manslaughter. For the private view of the exhibition guests could order a glass to be accidentally broken on their behalf over the course of the evening.

A piece which caught my attention was one promising that the Collective would work for free for you on the dates listed in the work, the catch being that you had to pay £500 for this free labour and more for additional evidence. It's a wry comment on the cultural sector's expectation of unpaid work and the value of artists' time (and one which I suspect will resonate with more than a few visitors).

The Collective tap into fantasies of avoiding negative experiences and live risky ones out vicariously. If someone accidentally breaks a glass on your behalf does that mean you will no longer break that glass yourself? Will some future restaurant visit now be untainted by that embarrassing and noisy experience? Does the universe recognise the transaction?

The type of belief involved is not always metaphysical but varies from solution to solution. For example, the Collective being happy for me continuously for a decade is something that I would not be able to convince myself of, but the concept still definitely has power and value.

The works at Rokeby are without doubt a thought provoking mix but there's also a current of humour running throughout which prevents them seeming pompous or dry. A word of warning though: you'll find yourself pondering the pieces long after you leave

WITHSTORE\_001 runs at Rokeby until 2nd October. For more information see the [Rokeby website here](#), [withstore online here](#), and [WITH's own website here](#).