

# 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.

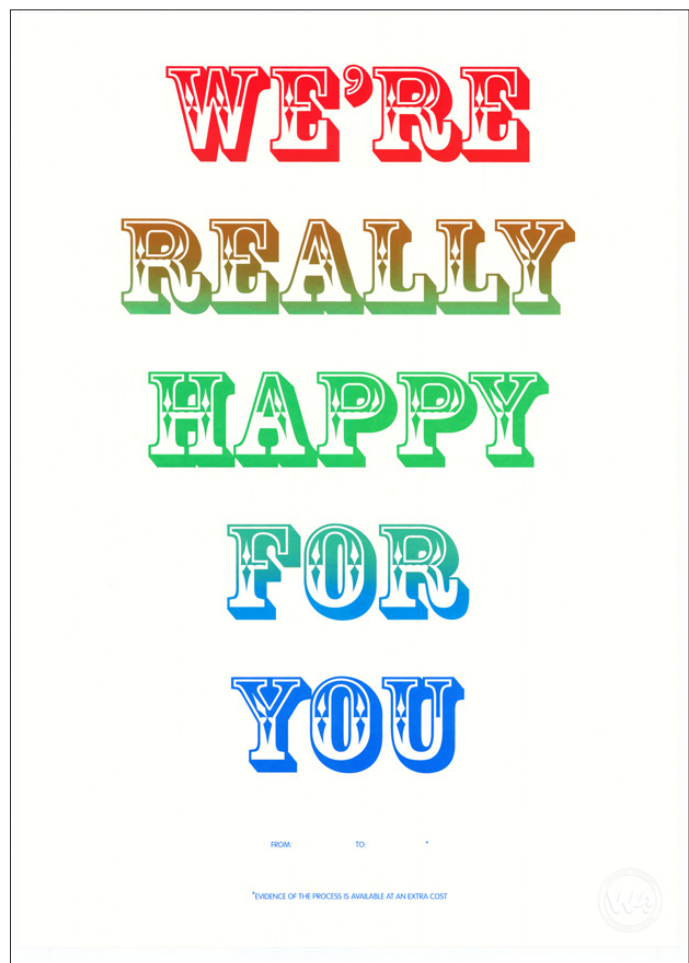
The titular puns and aesthetically savvy designs of WITH's solutions translate well online, at withyou.co.uk, with trademark symbols dotting each page like flies in the virtual ointment. And for the majority of its eight-year existence, WITH has invited the public to imagine specific contexts for exchange 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