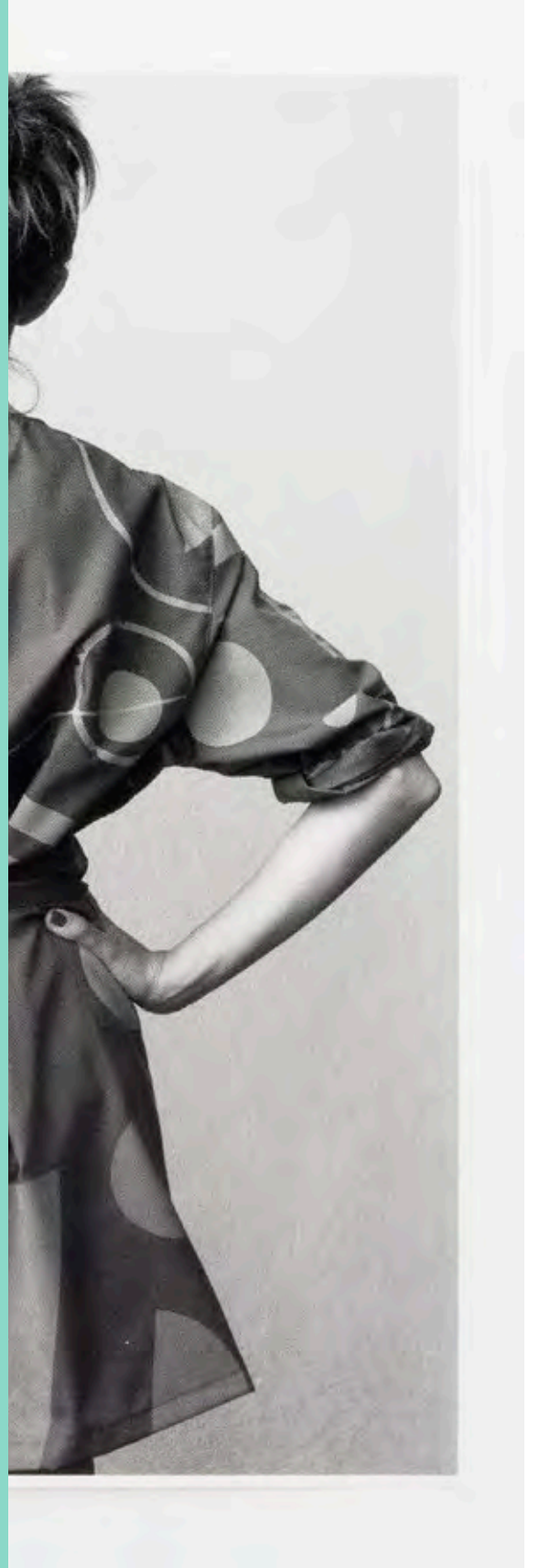


Ciara Phillips Just You



Just You

Melissa Gronlund
August 2014

In 1920s Soviet Russia under the New Economic Policy (NEP), a number of Constructivists expanded their artistic efforts into the realm of making useful items for purchase by consumers. Aleksandr Rodchenko teamed up with the poet Vladimir Mayakovsky to produce advertisements for tea biscuits, matchbooks and baby pacifiers, and together they formed a successful graphic design business. Vladimir Tatlin made novel wood-burning stoves that would heat the home and cook food more safely and efficiently. Liubov' Popova and Varvara Stepanova designed new clothes and textiles for the Soviet woman, in styles accentuating freedom of movement, similar to flapper dresses, and with patterns echoing Constructivist geometry – though the cost of such clothing meant they were never produced on a mass scale. These projects were part of a general move for all workers to be involved with augmenting and improving daily life, but they also formed part of an attempt to recontextualise one's relationship to commercial objects. As the art historian Christina Kiaer has written in a survey of this moment (*Imagine No Possessions*), the artists involved in these endeavours were trying to create a relationship not structured by a capitalist desire for possession, but rather a 'socialist' relation, where one could be a 'comrade' to the object. The writer Boris Arvatov was a major theorist of the conceptual shift. 'Although mordantly opposed to capitalism and vehemently Marxist in his training and sympathies,' Kiaer writes, 'Arvatov recognized the affective power of the mass-produced objects of modernity, proposing instead the idea of a socialist object as a "co-worker" as a response to the power of the commodity fetish under capitalism.'¹

Thus though it is well known that the Constructivists made these applied objects, the full scope of the experiment is often overlooked – even though its concerns resurface, organically, throughout twentieth century art and in today's. Transplanted into the art world, the idea of making a 'socialist' or 'comrade' object is nothing less than an affront to the entire economy of art as it has solidified in the West: it suggests not an economy of scarcity but one of access; not one of possession but of participation. The idea of a 'comrade' object is also one way of thinking into the practice of Ciara Phillips, whose work entails buoyant and raucous or quietly seductive screen-prints and photography; as well as activities such as a Poster Club in which a group of artists collaborate in the design and making of screen-printed posters; the use of the exhibition as a site of production; and even, like Popova and Stepanova, the design of wearable clothes that ultimately prove too expensive to produce. Phillips navigates the world of commercial and institutional exhibitions, but also, perhaps because since

graduating from her MFA, she has been based in Glasgow – a city that has kept alive the spirit of artistic collaboration and has a strong non-commercial artistic infrastructure – she has also worked to reconsider the way that art can exist among people. 'What I like about the screen-print,' she has said, referring to one of her signature media, 'is that it's a democratic art form. It's a process that can be shared, and you can use the process to develop ideas for the work.'

In the project 'Workshop' (2010–ongoing), for whose iteration at the Showroom in London Phillips was nominated for this year's Turner Prize, she uses the exhibition site as a temporary print studio, making prints in collaboration with invited artists and other guests who wanted to participate in or learn about screen-printing. ('Workshop' was also previously realised at the Hamburg Kunstverein and at Spike Island, Bristol.) The making becomes the product, and the process itself is put on display. The idea of process being legible in the final product can also be glimpsed in Phillips's tendency to reuse different images and motifs in different forms, such that one can see threads of her thinking running throughout her practice. The central image of the exhibition 'Just You' is a photograph taken by Phillips of a woman with her hair up and her back turned to the camera, her hands on her hips. It shows up a number of times in the show, cropped at different heights – just above her waist, just below her neck – as if the images were part of a film reel which has been cut up and displayed. (Phillips designed the woman's dress as a uniform for a bar in Zürich, in collaboration with the graphic designer Marie Lusa and dress designer Kathrin Baumberger – this was the dress, sadly for the Zürich bar, deemed too expensive to produce on a larger scale.)

Other, earlier works of Phillips's also engender this film reel effect, such as the collage *Things put together* (2013). The work repeatedly shows a close crop of a hand dangling down, and again an image – though another – of a woman from the back with her hair up, arms also slightly akimbo. Interspersed with others and cropped at different heights, these images appear in seven columns along the length of the wall, while coloured streaks run down and across the collage, as if flares of light exposure on film. Shown in black-and-white, the fabric pictured in the image of the sleeve appears rough – underscoring the sense of this being an older image, belonging to a different time, of pre-mass manufacture clothing and celluloid film strips. The impression, however, is false. While I would venture to say it's the norm among artists to use found photographs, Phillips takes all of her images herself, and they often feature her friends. This suggests something important about the work: it is about the spirit of making in the now, of things coming together across a picture field or via processes of manufacture.

1 Christina Kiaer, *Imagine No Possessions: The Socialist Objects of Russian Constructivism*, Cambridge, MA: MIT, 2005, p.27.

In 'Just You', the collage *Things I associate with you* (2014) repeats elements from *Things put together*, particularly of the weathered black-and-white photograph – here of the top of a bottle – which is given, via the inclusion of a real woven woollen blanket, a more direct sense of tactility. The blanket imparts not only a depth to the work in terms of texture, but again suggests the human element of making that precedes these final products. This is heightened by various clues to its making that remain palpable: the image has been printed onto a piece of canvas that has been taken off its frame, so that the fabric falls unstretched – not taut, like a normal canvas – with the staples that held it to the frame still visible. And in the same way that a film reel shows a succession of many moments, *Things I associate with you* gives the impression of being both a before and after: a document of its making as well as a finalised, carefully considered portrait – perhaps even closed off to the viewer – of items that link Phillips to the 'you' of the title.

But just who is this 'you' of the title? The exhibition 'Just You' has a quieter, more intimate quality than some of Phillips's previous work, signalled above all by the title with its understated but exhortative quality, singling out a 'you' from the many people whom an exhibition might be for. Phillips says the exhibition title is meant to address the viewer as a dedication, which is fitting for a show that is very much about a close-knit interaction among different images and textures: the abstract patterning made by repeating a mistake in the screen-printing process that created both the black-and-white and green wall hangings; the blindingly bright circles of the image overlaid on one of the hangings – a ceiling light photographed directly from below – which is echoed in both the circles on the pattern of the woman's dress and in the round splotches of ink from the printmaking process; and the use of texture across all of the images. 'Just You' ties its elements together so that they function almost as a single work. This extends even to the media – screen-printing and photography have much in common with each other: they are both mechanical means of mass reproduction, and both are now archaic, artisanal processes attached to, perhaps ironically, economies of scarcity. It is interesting to see an artist well known for her collaborative work in posters and other means of mass production switch tack, with many of the same materials, to conjure a sense of contemplation and quietly achieved intimacy: the illusion – and it is an illusion – that the exhibition is speaking just to, of all people in the world, you.

If the title 'Just You' connotes a sense of personal address, the title *Springtime will never be the same* (2011) conjures some of the riotous qualities of other works of Phillips's – which often use a bright palette of blues and pinks, marshaled in bold shapes and squiggles. *Springtime will never be the same* is the second part of the slogan 'Sisterhood is blooming: Springtime will never be the same', borrowed from the Chicago Women's Graphics Collective in 1968, which Phillips used for a screen-printed poster in a Frankfurt show. This reference to the revolutionary history of screen-printing was also at play in the show organized at Spike Island in which Phillips worked with the estate of the late artist Sister Corita Kent, who was famous for her bright, graphic screen-prints that turned corporate slogans into messages of peace and love. The exhibition, at Spike Island in Bristol, showed seventy

of Kent's posters, and Phillips set up a studio and printing workshop in the gallery to create a print project inspired by *Irregular Bulletin*, the publication Kent worked on when she was the head of the art department at the Immaculate Heart College in Los Angeles.

Through exhibitions and references such as these, Phillips thus draws an alternative history of art-making: one that is about collaboration and use-value as much as possession and display. If, for the Soviet Constructivists, the move to participate in the production of commercial objects – the NEP signaled a pause in the march towards communism and a brief, strategic return to commerce – was motivated by a desire to turn their hands and abilities towards the production of a new socialist way of living, one that redeemed many of the failures of life in the past (poverty, poor health and hygiene, sexism), the history, particularly of radical screen-printing, that Phillips taps into is oppositional. Poised so in organization – working as members of collectives rather than individuals – and content, the history of screen-printing in the West is countercultural; screen-printing machines – which were at once simple to operate and capable of mass reproduction – were often used in the service of leftist, anti-capitalist or civil-liberty causes. Today, however, that role of dissemination has been taken up by the internet, with sites such as MoveOn.org and the widespread use of social media. Screen-printing, again like analogue photography, has quickly moved from an emblematic process of modernity and industrialization to its opposite, a craft – an outdated, labour-intensive mode of producing what can now be more easily produced elsewhere.

It is in this change that the idea of the comradely object returns: one that channels the desires of capitalism into that of mutual affection – 'Things take on meaning, become friends and comrades of the person, and the person learns how to laugh and be happy and converse with things', as Rodchenko wrote about the workers' club he designed in Paris.² Socialist objects were things brought down to human scale – brought, notably and contradictorily, out of inscrutable industrial production and into a legible mode of mechanical production – that could speak with, engage and aid the person on their path towards a better existence. (The motivations behind the anti-industrial stance glimpsed in Rodchenko's conception of the socialist object can also be seen in his sculptural constructions, which open up their inner mechanical workings for the viewer to see and understand.) A similar gesture to 'make it clear' and 'open it up', as Rodchenko wrote about the socialist object,³ is found within Phillips's desire to stage her own processes of working as the exhibition itself, as she did in 'Workshop' or her collaboration with the work of Sister Corita Kent. This mode of divulging not only demystifies the final product but also allows viewers to touch, feel and use the art object in a way they would not typically. The use of errors as generative modes in her process of working also allows viewers into her work, scaling it down from slick, high-value production to something where her hand and her decision-making process can clearly be seen. Rodchenko's declaration that the comradely object should

2 Letter from Rodchenko, 4 May 1925. Quoted from C. Kiaer, *op. cit.*, p.236.
3 *Ibid.*, p.238.

somehow speak back reverberates particularly in the works that make up 'Just You', and the idea of the exhibition as a 'dedication' to the viewer. Phillips's use of text in her posters and screen-prints means that her work often does literally 'talk back' to the viewer, sometimes in the form of snippets of advice ('the only rule is work', 'start with a practical idea'). Phillips thus twins the history of print-making, with its use of mass-reproducibility for political ends, with the contradictory relationship towards mass production that the Constructivists championed in their comradely objects, which only sometimes achieved the scale of mass reproducibility and more often privileged a human scale that was inherently opposed to mass production in any case. In today's art world – a predominantly commercial endeavor – Phillips retains a mode of art-making that recalls other possibilities for the relationship between art and its viewer (or user), and mines the particular historical moment of the obsolescence of her medium to instill in her work the sense of a personal relationship between maker and object, and between object and viewer ('just you'). Intimacy appears with a low tremor in a medium that was about reaching the mass. This exhibition, with its soft colors, seductive imagery and recognisable, homelike textures, creates a personal space of reflection within a history that so often catered the other way.





CIARA PHILLIPS JUST YOU

29. AUGUST – 19. OKTOBER
NO.5

Åpner 29. august kl 20:00
Omvisninger hver søndag kl 14:00
Tours every Sunday at 2pm

B E R G E N
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CIARA PHILLIPS
JUST YOU

29. AUGUST – 19. OKTOBER
NO.5



Ciara Phillips, *Just You*, 2014. Screenprint on canvas and cotton applique

Åpning / Opening

29.8. 20:00

Omvisninger / Tours

Hver søndag / Every Sunday 14:00

28.8. 18:00 Medlem / Members

31.8. 13:00 Barnefamilier / Families

Den Glasgow-baserte, kanadiske kunstneren Ciara Phillips arbeider med grafisk trykk i videste betydning; fra silketrykk, tekstil og fotografi, til stedsspesifikke veggarbeider. Hun samarbeider ofte med andre kunstnere, designere eller grupper i lokalsamfunnet, hvor hun aktivt utnytter det arbeidsfellesskapet som trykkteknikken inviterer til. Med inspirasjon fra ulike tradisjoner, håndverksdisipliner og historier, kombinerer Phillips grafikkens demokratiske og kritiske potensiale med en elegant, formal utforskning av trykkekunstens spesifisitet.

«Just You» kombinerer effektivt ulike grafiske strategier, og understreker trykkets materialitet og håndverket i arbeidsprosessen. I flere av utstillingens silketrykk er lerretet bevisst «slurvete» montert til underlaget, slik at lerretsstoffets materialitet trer frem som tekstil. Stoffligheten forsterkes ytterligere av at andre tekstilelementer i bomull eller tweed er applikert på bildet. Et fotografi som viser en kvinnelig modell avbildet bakfra, ikledd en abstrakt mønstret kjole, går igjen i flere av arbeidene. Foldene, draperingene og det grafiske mønsteret i kjolen glir sømløst inn i lerretets egen materialitet, og overlappes samtidig av de applikerte tekstilene og de trykte abstrakte formene som overlapper og omgir fotografiet.

Denne selvrefleksive tendensen er gjennomgående i utstillingen. I verket *Things I Associate With You* (2014) vises to

fragmenter av tilsynelatende samme motiv, som om lerretet har fanget mellomrommet mellom to avtrykk i trykkpressen. Motivet ligner et utsnitt av overgangen mellom to enkeltbilder på en

I NO.5 re-presenterer Bergen Kunsthall kunstverk og utstillinger som tidligere har vært vist de siste 5–50 årene. Programserien er et motsvar til den økende akselerasjonen av både produksjon og resepsjon av kunst det siste tiåret, og en anledning til å skru ned tempoet, komme tilbake til og fokusere på utvalgte verk, utstillinger eller utdrag fra utstillinger. Bergen Kunsthall vil bestille en ny tekst skrevet spesielt for hver av utstillingene.

analog filmrull, og understreker slik det serielle ved trykketeknikkens mulighet for mangfoldiggjøring. I en vegginstallasjon er dette potensialet for masseproduksjon aktivt utnyttet i en serie med silketrykk hvor samme motiv dekker en hel vegg, og fungerer som et tapet-lignende underlag for andre arbeider i utstillingen.

Ciara Phillips, «Just You», ble først vist ved Galerie Praterstrasse i Berlin, 1. mars–4. april, 2014. Utstillingen følges

av en ny tekst av Melissa Gronlund. **Ciara Phillips** (f. 1976) bor og arbeider i Glasgow. Hun er nominert til Turner-prisen for 2014. •

Glasgow-based Canadian artist Ciara Phillips works with printmaking in the broadest sense: from serigraphy, textiles and photography to site-specific wall works. She often collaborates with other artists, designers or groups in the local community, where she makes active use of the working collectivity that printing techniques invite. Drawing inspiration from various traditions, disciplines and histories, Phillips combines the democratic and critical potential of graphic art with an elegant, formal investigation of the specificity of the art of printing.

“Just You” effectively combines a variety of graphic strategies, underscoring the materiality of print and the craftsmanship of the working process. In several of the exhibition’s silk-screen works the fabric is deliberately ‘shoddily’ mounted on the underlay, such that its materiality as textile is made evident. This materiality is further stressed by the way other textile elements in cotton or tweed have been appliquéd to the picture. A photograph show-

ing a female figure from behind, dressed in an abstract-patterned dress, recurs in several of the works. The folds, drapes and graphic pattern of the dress merge seamlessly with the materiality of the canvas itself, as well as the appliquéd textiles and the printed

abstract forms which overlap and surround the photograph.

This self-reflexive tendency is a general feature of the exhibition. The work *Things I Associate With You* (2014) shows two fragments of what appears to be the same motif, as if the canvas has captured the space between two impressions in the printing press. The motif resembles a segment of the transition between two frames of an analog film roll, and thus underscores the serial aspect of printing’s capacity for re-

In NO.5 Bergen Kunsthall revisits selected artworks and exhibitions, previously presented over the last 5–50 years. Initiated in response to the increasing acceleration of both the production and reception of art over the last decade, NO.5 provides an opportunity to slow down, focus on, and re-visit particular works, exhibitions or fragments of exhibitions. Bergen Kunsthall will commission a new critical text to accompany each of these re-presentations.

production. In a wall installation this potential for mass production is actively exploited as a series of silk-screen prints with the same motif covers a whole wall, functioning as a wallpaper-like underlay for other works in the exhibition.

Ciara Phillips, “Just You”, was first shown at Galerie Praterstrasse in Berlin, March 1–April 4, 2014. The exhibition is accompanied by a new text by Melissa Gronlund. **Ciara Phillips** (b. 1976) lives and works in Glasgow. She is nominated for the 2014 Turner Prize. •

CIARA PHILLIPS

JUST YOU

ENGLISH

29 AUGUST — 19 OCTOBER
NO.5

In NO.5 Bergen Kunsthall revisits selected artworks and exhibitions, previously presented elsewhere in the world. Initiated in response to the increasing acceleration of both the production and reception of art, NO.5 provides an opportunity to slow down, focus on, and look again at particular works, exhibitions or fragments of exhibitions. Bergen Kunsthall will commission a new critical text to accompany each of these re-presentations.

For the exhibition "Just You" art critic Melissa Gronlund has written a new text on Ciara Phillips.

Ciara Phillips, "Just You", was first shown at Galerie Praterstrasse in Berlin, March 1 – April 4, 2014.

Tours:

Every Sunday at 2pm

28 August at 6pm for Members

31 August at 1pm for Families

B E R G E N
K U N S T H A L L

Glasgow-based Canadian artist Ciara Phillips works with printmaking in the broadest sense: from serigraphy, textiles and photography to site-specific wall works. She often collaborates with other artists, designers or groups in the local community, where she makes active use of the working collectivity that printing techniques invite. Drawing inspiration from various traditions, disciplines and histories, Phillips combines the democratic and critical potential of graphic art with an elegant, formal investigation of the specificity of the art of printing.

From autumn 2014, Bergen Kunsthall's gallery NO.5 will be used to re-present existing artworks and exhibitions previously shown elsewhere in the world. Ciara Phillips' exhibition "Just You" begins this new programming strand and is re-presented here in its entirety, as it was first shown in the Berlin gallery Praterstrasse earlier this year.

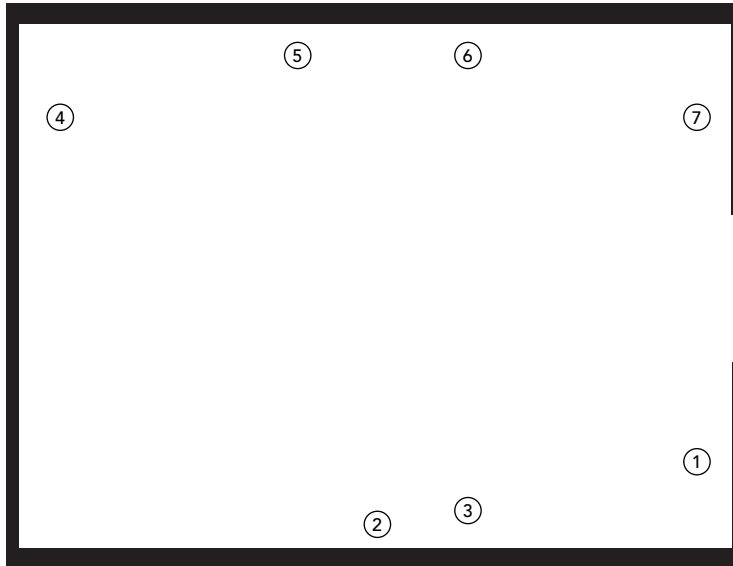
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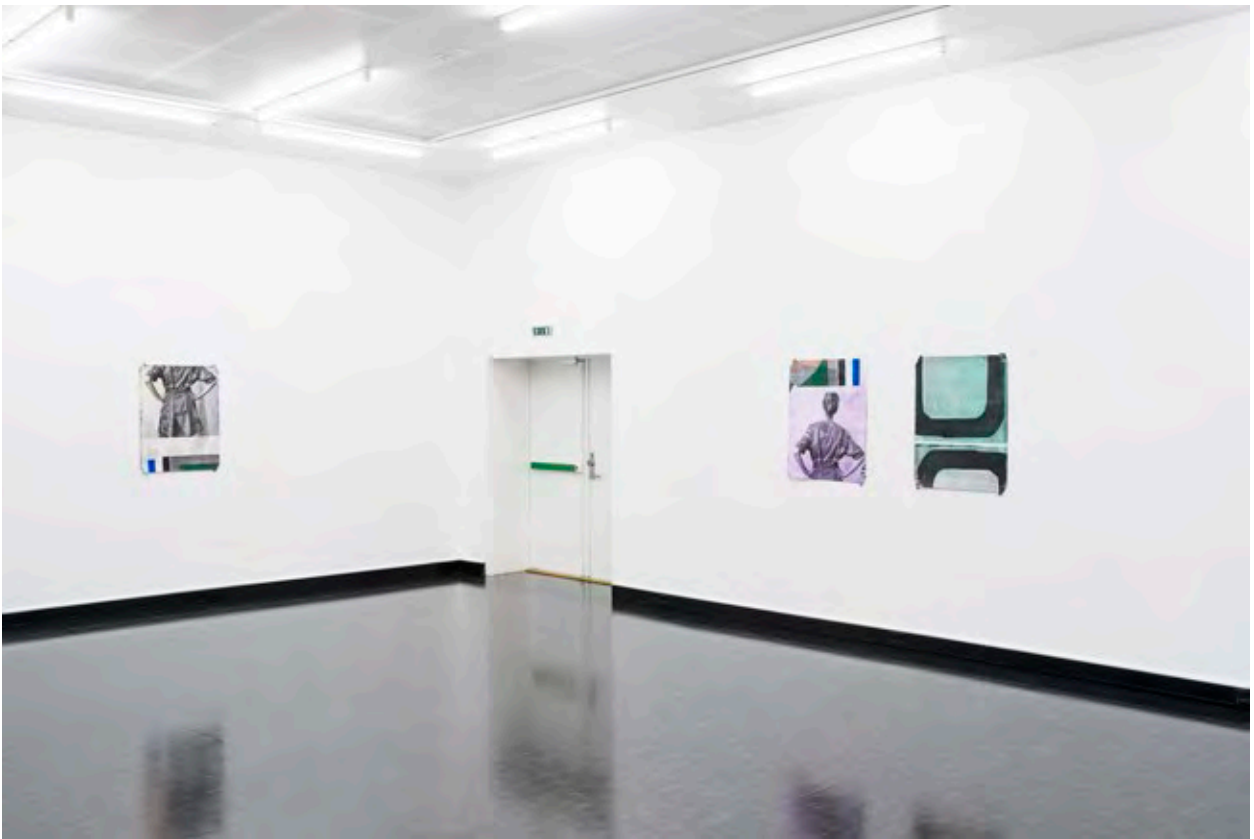
Ciara Phillips (b. 1976) lives and works in Glasgow. She is nominated for the 2014 Turner Prize.

NO.5



- 1 **Things I associate with you**, 2014
Screenprint on canvas with cotton appliqué
88,5 x 66,5 cm
- 2 **Untitled**, 2014
Screenprint on newsprint
10 m x 3,63 m
- 3 **Untitled**, 2014
Screenprint on paper
90 x 68 cm
Edition 1/3 + AP
- 4 **Just you**, 2014
Screenprint on canvas, with cotton appliqué
88,5 x 66,5 cm
- 5 **Just you**, 2014
Screenprint on canvas, with cotton appliqué
88,5 x 66,5 cm
- 6 **Things I associate with you**, 2014
Screenprint on canvas
88,5 x 66,5 cm
- 7 **Untitled**, 2014
Screenprint on canvas
2,14 m x 1,64 m



















Just you

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Ecke Wassertorstraße
10969 Berlin

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mail@praterstrasseberlin.com

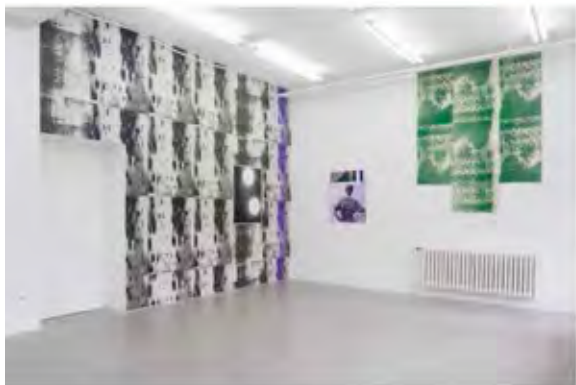
Praterstraße Berlin

CIARA PHILLIPS

Eröffnung
27.02.14, 19 Uhr

Ausstellung
28.02.14 – 04.04.14

Öffnungszeiten
Dienstag – Freitag 10 – 15 Uhr
und nach Vereinbarung



Bergfriedstraße 20
10969 Berlin

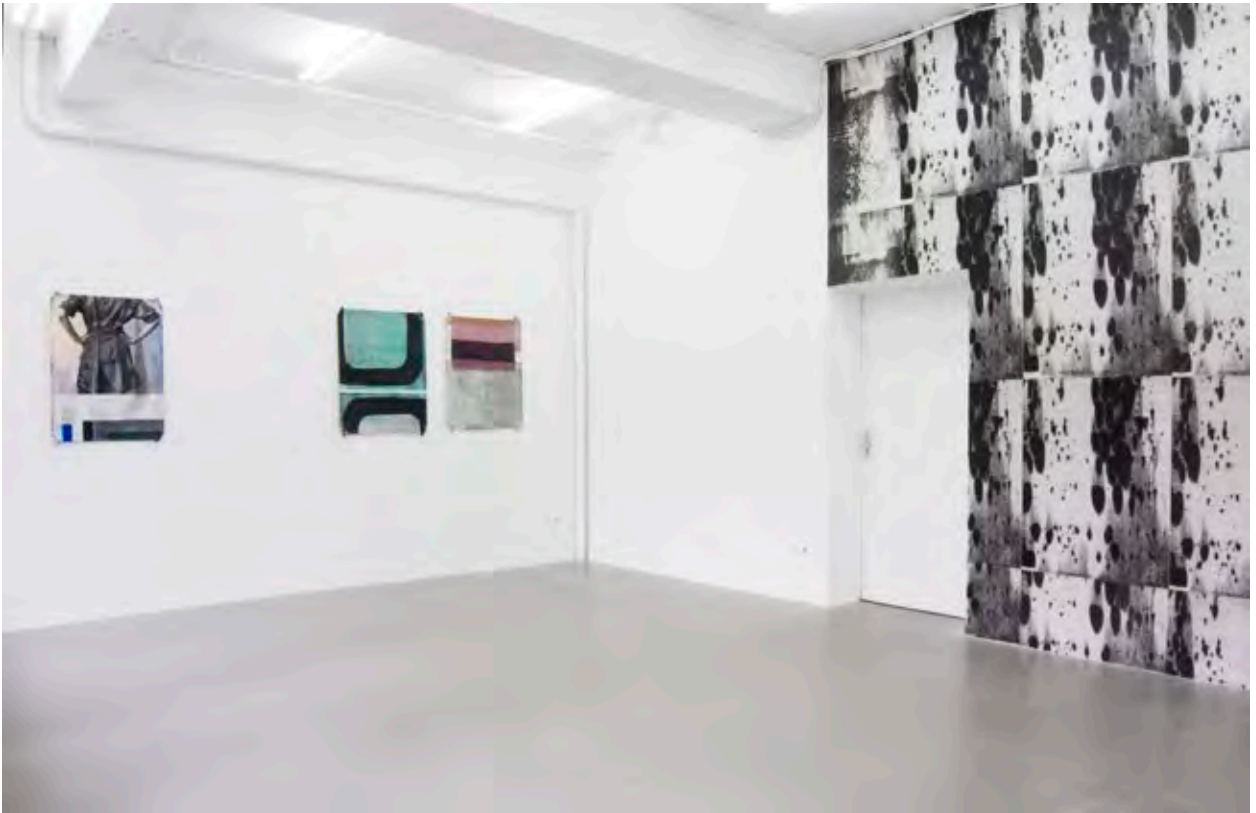
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Praterstraße Berlin

Just you

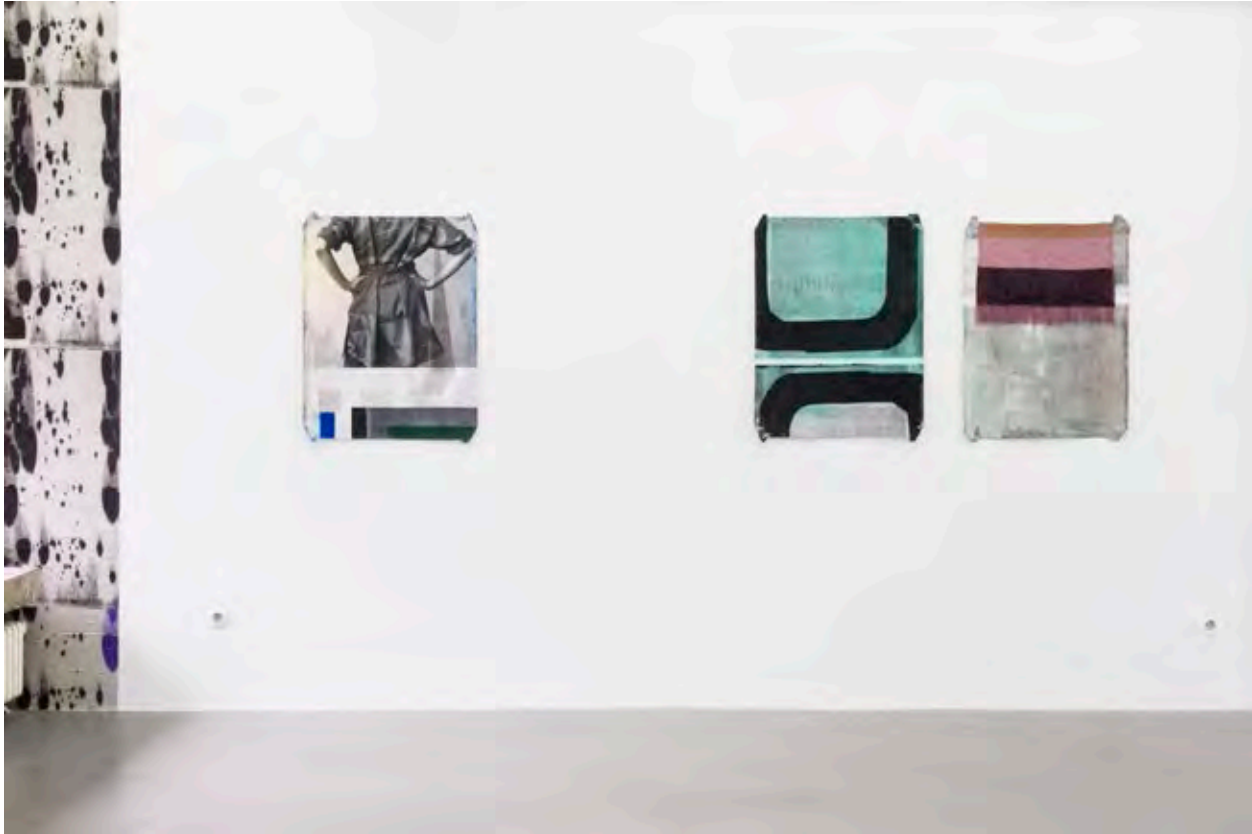
CIARA PHILLIPS
Ausstellung / Exhibition
28.02.14 – 04.04.14













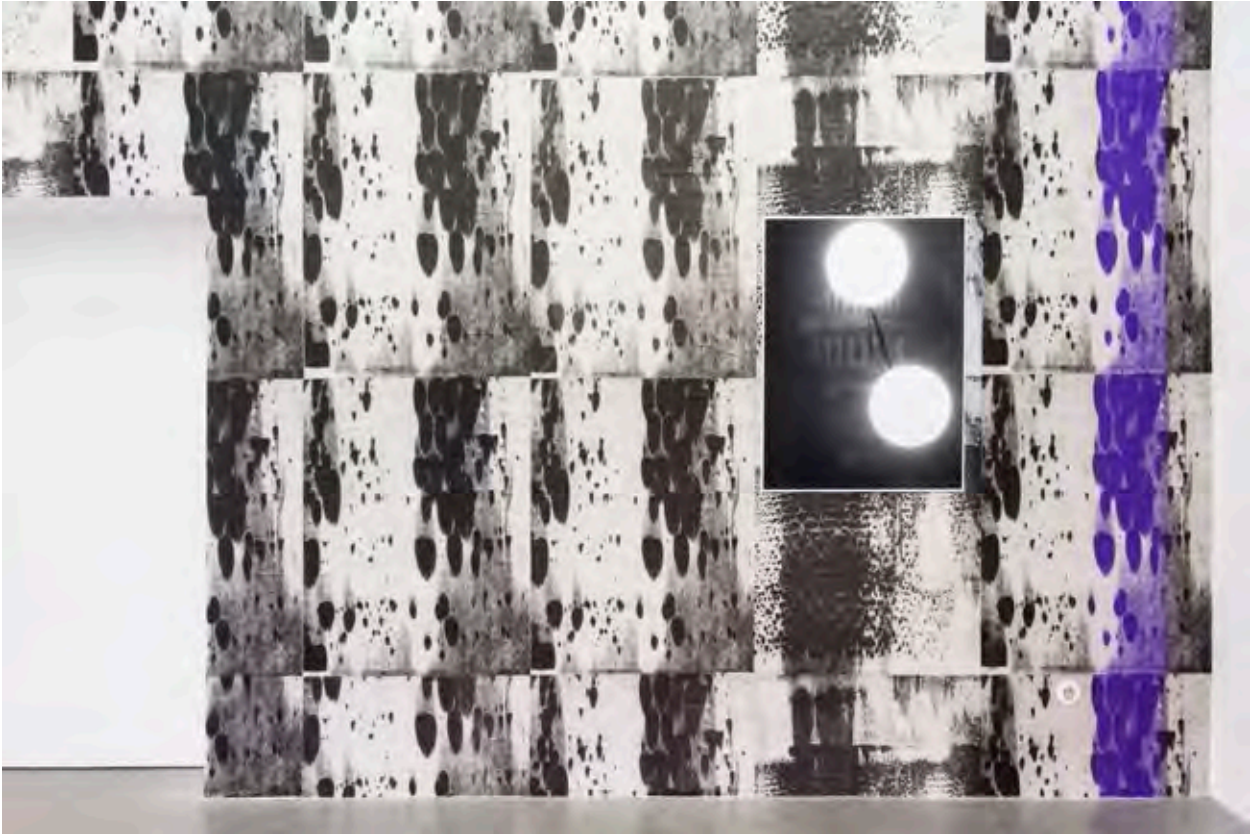








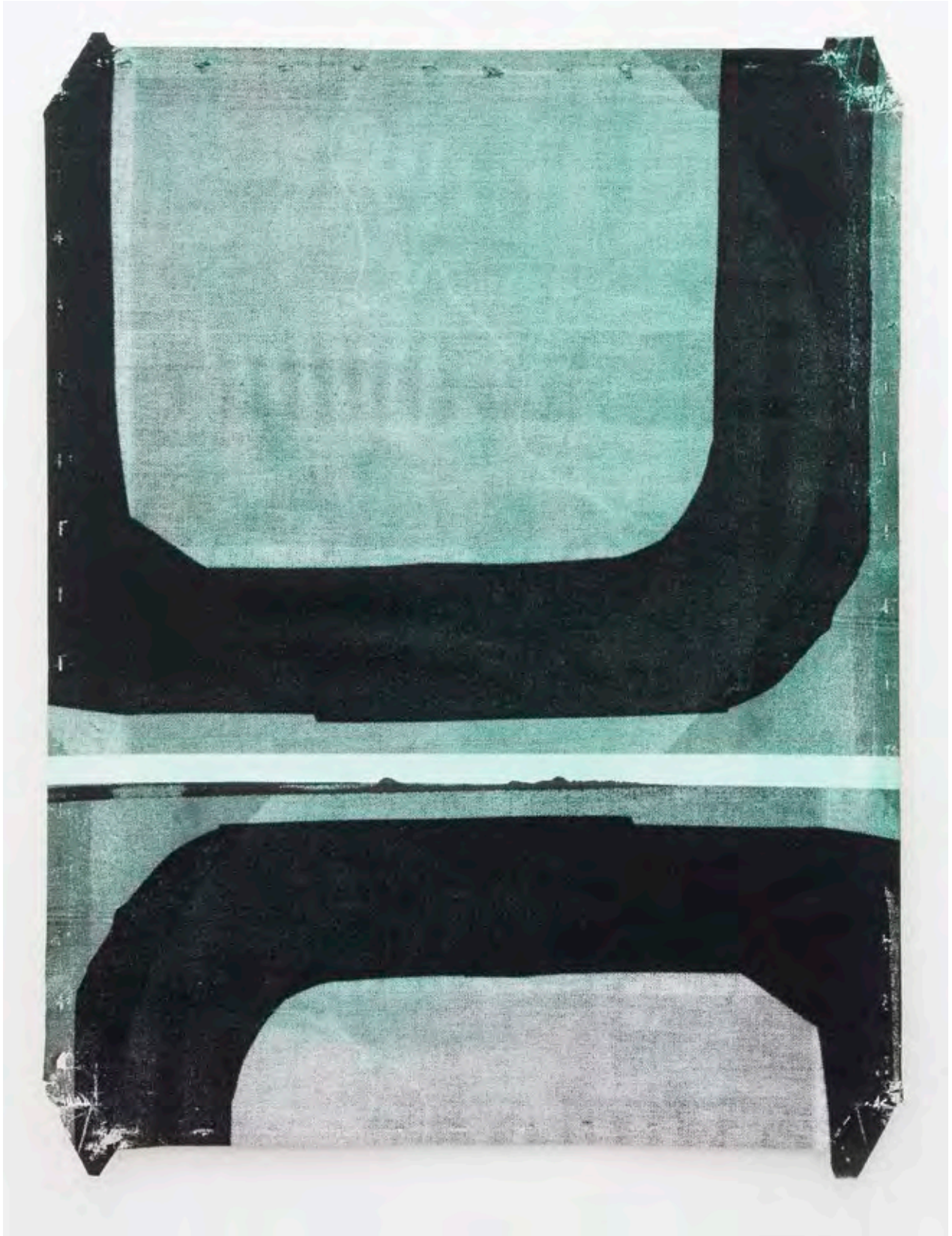








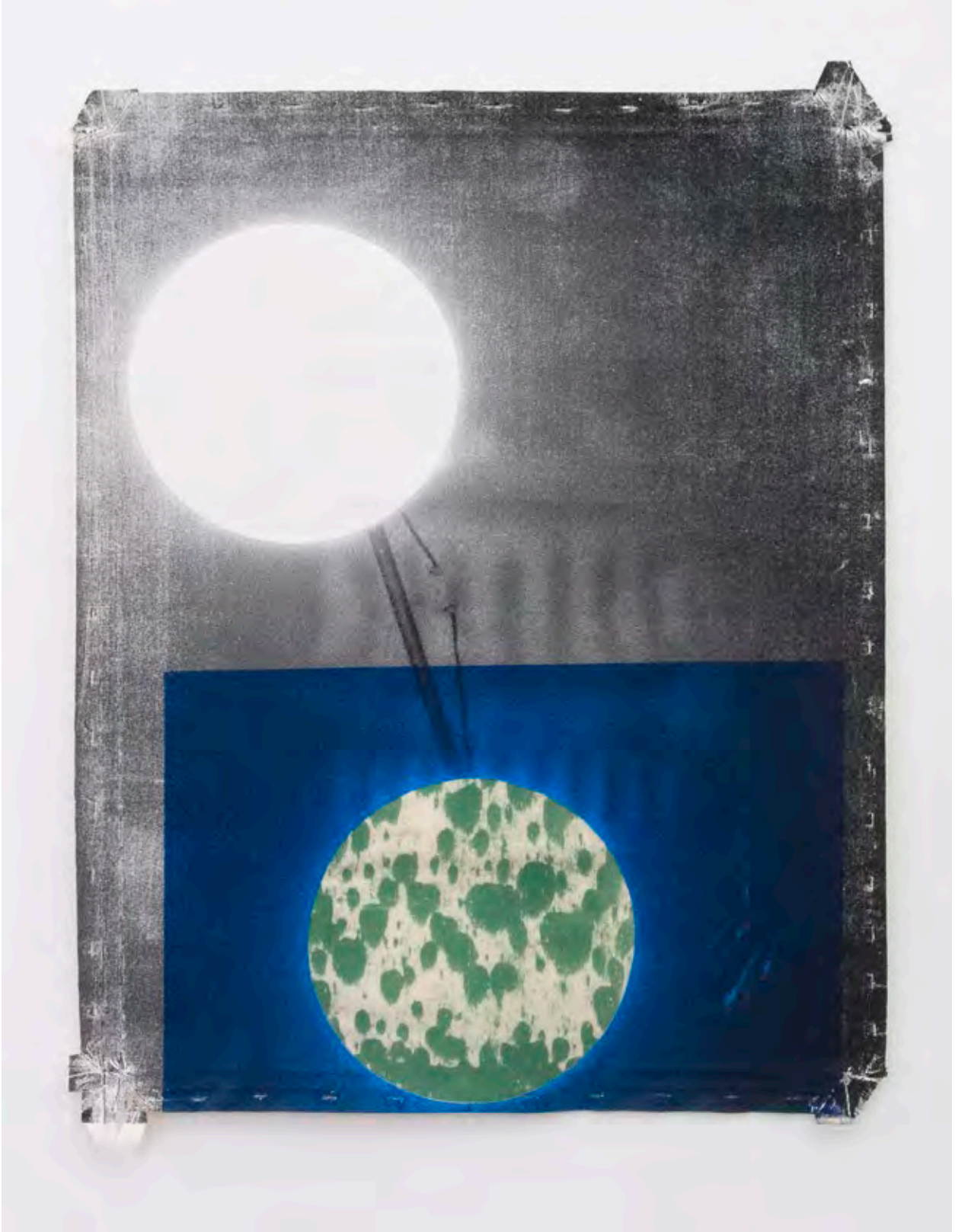


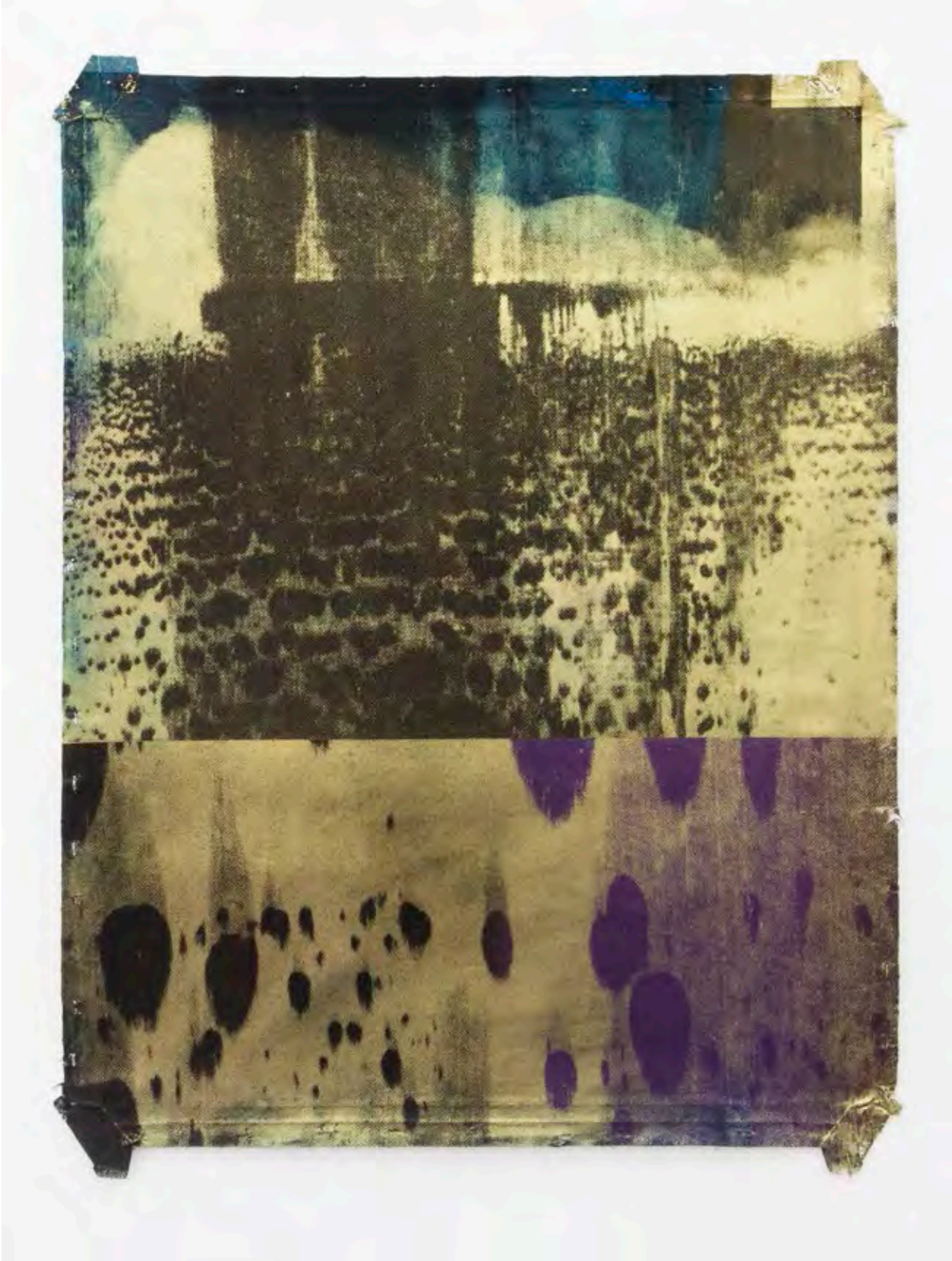


















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Just You

Ciara Phillips

Bergen Kunsthall
August 29 – October 19, 2014

Ciara Phillips, "Just You", was first shown at Galerie Praterstrasse in Berlin, March 1 – April 4, 2014.

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