

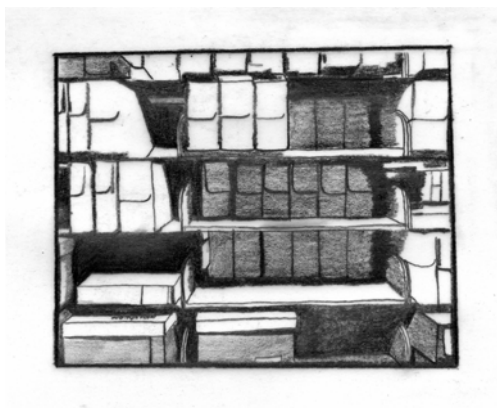


For Immediate Release

September 2008 – New York, NY

Carla Herrera-Prats Addresses Democracy Through History of Standardized Testing

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Carla Herrera-Prats
Prep Materials
September 27-December 13, 2008

Public Program:
Friday, October 24, 2008
6:30-8:30

Democracy and Bureacracy

A panel discussion with artists Carla Herrera-Prats and Carlos Motta discussing ideas about democracy and access, archives, and standardization with Tim Rollins, artist and co-founder of Group Material, Nato Thompson, curator of the Creative Time exhibition *Democracy in America: The National Campaign*, and Eva Díaz, curator of Art in General.

The first New York solo show by Carla Herrera-Prats will be realized as ***Prep Materials***, a project commissioned by Art in General. Opening September 26, and running through December 13, 2008, ***Prep Materials*** is a timely exhibition presented as a series of pictures, drawings, and a slide show documenting the politics and competition that have been a part of the technological development of standardized testing, which has led to modern ballot machines and desktop scanners.

In 1926 Carl Brigham developed the SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test) that has since been administered to millions of students every year in order for them to begin their college educations. The SAT is only the first of a long list of standardized tests that

Images: **Left**, Carla Herrera-Prats, *Photo of technologies from 1960, 1956, 1960-70 at the Special Collections and University Archives*, Inkjet archival print, 2008.
Right, Carla Herrera-Prats, *Drawing of shelves from the Special Collections and University Archives, Iowa University, Iowa*, Pencil on paper, 2008.

have been designed according to the Jeffersonian principle of providing equal opportunity in education to all citizens of the United States.

Hailing from Mexico City, Carla Herrera Prats began *Prep Materials* as an investigation into the academic necessity of learning English to study in increasing numbers of career fields around the world. As many people come to the U.S. for their education, and the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) is required for most foreigners to apply or be accepted to most U.S. institutions of higher learning.

In Herrera's opinion, "The assimilation of a second language on an academic level not only requires the students to familiarize themselves to grammar structures, but in so doing, forces them to absorb U.S. culture. Through the education of foreigners, the U.S. expands its ideals and aspirations. Manufacturing the TOEFL and surrounding prep materials is a negotiation between linguistics and ideology." *Prep Materials* is an exhibition presenting the history and contradictions in the system Herrera-Prats has discovered through her archival research into the three institutions that launched the system of standardized tests we know today.

Effective implementation of standardized tests requires the appropriate technology to print and distribute the tests, and most importantly score the answer sheets. In 1934 three companies in particular raced to patent an efficient solution, to accurately correct more tests more quickly. In doing so IBM, Educational Test Service (ETS), and the Measurement Research Center (now part of Iowa University) developed technology that, in the 1970s, would facilitate the invention of the ballot machine as well as our contemporary desktop scanners.

In 1962 the patent for the first high speed test-scoring machine was granted to the very same company that patented a ballot-counting machine 14 years later, using essentially the same technology. Herrera-Prats moves beyond the common criticism against standardization and its supposed translation into better education by focusing on the fallacy of relying on more "efficient" technologies in order to realize the principles of democracy.

About the Artist

Carla Herrera-Prats completed her MFA in photography at California Institute of the Arts in Valencia, California (CalArts), and her BFA in Mexico City at National School of Painting, Sculpture and Engraving, La Esmeralda. Co-director of the Galeria Acceso A in Mexico City from 1999-2000, Herrera-Prats is an alumnus of the Whitney Museum Independent Study Program in New York and is currently on the Photography faculty at CalArts. She has received grants including the Van Lier Foundation Fellowship, the LEF Foundation Fellowship and support from the Fondo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes as well as the Jumex Collection.

Support

The New Commissions Program is made possible by The Institute of Museum and Library Services, an independent federal grant-making agency dedicated to creating and sustaining a nation of learners by helping libraries and museums serve their communities; the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts; the Jerome

Foundation; The Greenwall Foundation; and Agnes Gund and Daniel Shapiro. Additional support for Carlos Motta's project was provided by the Puffin Foundation.

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About Art in General

Founded in 1981 in Lower Manhattan, Art in General is a nonprofit organization that assists artists with the production and presentation of new work. It changes in response to the needs of artists and engages the public with their work. In 26 years the organization has emerged as one of New York City's leading nonprofits devoted to supporting and stimulating the creation of contemporary art, providing an environment in which artists may exhibit unconventional work and exchange ideas with their peers.

Art in General is located at 79 Walker Street, NYC, one block south of Canal Street between Lafayette and Broadway.
Subway directions: take the 6, A-C-E, N-Q-R-W, or J-M-Z subway to Canal Street.
Gallery hours: Tuesday-Saturday 12-6 pm.
Office hours: Monday-Friday 10am-6pm.