

## NEWS RELEASE

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### PARSONS PRESENTS TIMELY EXHIBITION ON GLOBAL BRANDING OF DEMOCRACY

#### "OURS: Democracy in the Age of Branding"

**New Commissions, Workshops and Performances by International Mix of Contemporary Artists  
On View at the Sheila C. Johnson Design Center: October 16, 2008 – February 1, 2009**



Ariel Orozco, *Contrapeso*, 2003

NEW YORK, September 5, 2008—Parsons The New School for Design will present a timely exhibition exploring democracy as a global brand in OURS: Democracy in the Age of Branding. On view October 16, 2008 through February 1, 2009, the exhibition inaugurates the first fall season at The Sheila C. Johnson Design Center, Parsons' new venue for art and design exhibitions and public programming. The exhibition is curated by Carin Kuoni, the director of the Vera List Center for Art and Politics at The New School, and features work by an international roster of emerging and established contemporary artists including Yael Bartana, Paul Chan, Aleksandra Domanovi , Sam Durant, Liam Gillick, and Judi Werthein. OURS also features an online gallery of works curated by Rhizome Curator-at-Large Marisa Olson, and a series of workshops, performances and new commissions. **An opening reception will be held on Wednesday, October 15, from 6–9 pm.**

"The Sheila C. Johnson Design Center was conceived as a place where art and design would inspire dialogue on some of the most important issues of our times—reflecting the broader philosophy of The New School," said Parsons Dean Tim Marshall. "With the upcoming elections, we felt it was important to address some of the political, economic, social and cultural issues that go hand in hand with democracy in this day and age. The interactive nature of this exhibition will engage both our students and the general public in this dialogue."

OURS: Democracy in the Age of Branding examines the desires generated and promoted by democracy as a brand—such as choice, participation, freedom of expression, a sense of belonging, and the promise of individual success, all embodied in the notion of "liberty"—and looks at how and where these desires find fulfillment or are displaced. The exhibition also investigates both aesthetic and political systems of representation developed in response to these desires, as well as those power structures that run parallel to a democratic government.

"When the United States began its war on terrorism, it also announced a 'war of ideas', a campaign to disseminate American values of democracy overseas," said exhibition curator Carin Kuoni. "This exhibition explores what this global brand stands for and how it is interpreted both here and abroad. It investigates both the illusion and the promise of democracy."

Acknowledging the recent convergence of design and art, the exhibition brings together artists in this hybrid field who employ a range of media—from video to photography, performance, sculpture and installation. All these works are anchored and grounded by a site-specific installation by the British artist Liam Gillick consisting of an expansive platform with four circular benches, which occupies a central space in the gallery. It serves as a stage for participatory gatherings, performances, lectures, a student lounge, and the set for a series of charrettes (solution-driven workshops) led by many of the participating artists.

Other commissioned works include Production Site by the Mexican artist Erick Beltrán—whose work explores the way language and meaning are formed through structure. Here, in cooperation with gallery visitors, ideas of artistic radicalism in relation to political ideology are branded and re-branded through a series of graphic devices involving 300 rubber stamps and historic propaganda images. Israeli artist Yael Bartana presents her first live performance piece on October 19, which translates her 2005 video piece Wild Seeds from its original context in Israel to New York City at the time of the elections. Parsons and The New School also have commissioned new works by Alexis Bhagat, Kota Ezawa, Runo Lagomarsino, Dave Muller, and Nadine Robinson. Live performance pieces will be presented during the course of the exhibition by Andrea Geyer and Carey Young, in addition to ones by Bartana and Bhagat. Other featured artists include Paul Chan, Sam Durant, Sharon Hayes, Susan Hiller, Ashley Hunt, Emma Kay, Komar & Melamid, Asaf Koriat, Miguel Luciano, Aleksandra Mir, Timo Nasserri, Ariel Orozco, Trevor Paglen, Anri Sala, Hank Willis Thomas, Johan Tiren, Brian Tolle, Judi Werthein, and The Yes Men.

The exhibition includes an online component curated by new media artist and Rhizome Curator-at-Large Marisa Olson and accessible in the gallery and remotely. Works on view capture the energy of the Internet as a new frontier of the democratic process, and question whether traditional forms of democratic expression are as valid as new participatory communities. Among the participating artists are Joseph DeLappe, Aleksandra Domanovi , I Approve This Message, Institute for Infinitely Small Things, Steve Lambert, Les Liens Invisibles, Ligorano/Reese, Michael Mandiberg, Emery Martin, Carlos Motta, PETLab, and Wooloo Productions. The gallery will be accessible online starting October 1 at [www.newschool.edu/johnsondesigncenter](http://www.newschool.edu/johnsondesigncenter).

### **Related Programming**

A central element of the exhibition is the series of charrettes taking place within the Gillick installation, where New School students are asked to engage one another on a series of topics. Each one is moderated by an artist in the exhibition in collaboration with a faculty member, and activates a work in the show. The goal of these charrettes is to come up with solutions to some of the issues explored in the exhibition, which will then be presented at an evening presentation with the artist for the general public. Among the artists leading these charettes is Miguel Luciano, whose installation piece, Cuando las Gallinas Mean (When Hens Pee), considers self-censorship and self-imposed silence. Luciano asks participants to submit statements expressing opinions, secrets, and beliefs they would not dare express publicly, which will then be transformed into prizes that take the form of desirable merchandise such as buttons, pins, temporary tattoos, and stickers. Other participating artists include Bhagat, Durant, Hunt, Lagomarsino, Pagien, and Werthein. A full list of charrettes and other related programs is accessible at [www.newschool.edu/johnsondesigncenter](http://www.newschool.edu/johnsondesigncenter).

**About Parsons The New School for Design**

Parsons The New School for Design is one of the most prestigious and comprehensive institutions of art and design in the world. Located in New York City, Parsons prepares students to creatively and critically address the complex conditions of contemporary global society. Combining rigorous craft with cutting-edge theory and research methods, Parsons encourages collaborative and individual approaches that cut across a wide array of disciplines. For more information, please visit [www.parsons.newschool.edu](http://www.parsons.newschool.edu).

**About the Vera List Center for Art and Politics at The New School**

Founded in 1992 and named in honor of the late philanthropist Vera List, the Vera List Center for Art and Politics embodies The New School's historic commitment to the arts. It is the site for public discourse on the role of the arts in society at large and on the relationship of the arts to the socio-political climate in which they are created. For more information please visit, [www.vlc.newschool.edu](http://www.vlc.newschool.edu).

Project Projects, a design studio in New York, created the exhibition design and accompanying gallery guide.

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**General Information:**

Sheila C. Johnson Design Center

Parsons The New School for Design, 66 Fifth Avenue at 13th Street, New York

**Gallery hours:** M-F, 10 AM-8 PM; S-S, Noon-6 PM, closed all major holidays and holiday eves.

**Admission:** Free

**Info:** Please contact 212.229.8919 or visit [www.newschool.edu/johnsondesigncenter](http://www.newschool.edu/johnsondesigncenter).