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18th Street's Visual Art Residencies Two Fellowship Artists Activate 18th Street's Galleries

Santa Monica, Ca- Artists Carla Herrera-Prats and Matthias Merkel Hess were awarded 18th Street Visual Arts Fellowships, tied to 18th Street's 2010 programmatic theme, *Status Report: The Creative Economy*. The awards include a three-month residency in the 18th Street galleries, and a project budget. Beginning April 1, 2010 Prats and Hess will take over the galleries to create a visual arts laboratory fostering experimentation and investigation. Previous 18th Street Fellows Robert Sain and Andrea Bowers recently concluded the first highly successful and visible first *Status Report* project commissioned and funded by 18th Street.

"Prep Materials"

For her fellowship and residency, Herrera-Prats' is debuting her project, "Prep Materials" in the main gallery at 18th Street. It explores the role creative processes play in pairing standardized education and democracy. Herrera-Prats looks closely at the history, design and fabrication of the first standardized test-scoring machines and investigates their accuracy as resources for evaluating student competency. Her installation consists of a slide projection, a wall drawing, a series of photographs and scanned prints from three different archives: IMB, IOWA University and ETS. Herrera-Prats installation also includes various panel discussions, opened to the public, presenting different voices regarding the challenges of contemporary standardized education and the issues currently facing California's education system.

"Fine Art (626) 394-3963"

Matthias Merkel Hess will conduct a public access project investigating what the public wants from artists. Hess has already installed "bandit" telephone pole signs around Los Angeles that say "Fine Art (626) 394-3963." Aligning his status as a young artist with that of the fly-by-night businesses usually advertised on telephone poles, the signs are an invitation to the public to call him at his personal number and discuss art. The outcome of the conversations will be an art object, experience or consultation that Merkel Hess gives to callers for free. The project's overall goal is to comment on the economic status of artists and how our society values artistic labor, and at the same time bring Merkel Hess recognition as an artist.

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About 18th Street's 2010 Artistic Theme

Carla Herrera-Prats and Matthias Merkel Hess are two of the eight artists fellowship winners for 18th Street's 2010 theme, *Status Report: the Creative Economy*. The artist fellowship winners were chosen to create projects that explore and promote ideas through works in progress. The artists' projects are structured to stress processes that stimulate a maximum amount of public engagement and shared critical inquiry that are manifested in the 18th Street galleries. According to 18th Street's Artistic Director, Clayton Campbell, "The economy was selected as a theme prior to the worldwide banking contraction, and therefore becomes even more relevant as artists proactively develop new strategies to address a host of issues. In the past decade theorists such as Richard Florida have championed the rise of a creative class and as a result have had a major impact on some sectors of the arts and culture field. In his view, a creative economy is characterized by the key economic factors of talent, innovation and creativity. As the notion of a creative class is widely discussed, promoted and debated, it is apparent that recent research demonstrates these factors are not distributed evenly across the economy. Instead, they seem concentrated in specific locations characterized by environment, class and ethnicity.

Our artist fellows will be examining this dislocation of resources and entitlement, and responding to a market system that privileges some while discarding many others. The residencies are designed to be a platform for ideas and exchange. Los Angeles is often described as having a dynamic creative economy. Yet after a turbulent economic year in which markets for consumption of art have radically changed, they are asking key questions such as; where do we stand? Are we on the way up, on the way down, or stuck in neutral? Who are the players and mediators in a creative economy, and how is it changing? Who is included and who is excluded? How are artists responding to seismic changes in the arts and culture market, and what are the new models they are developing to support the production of their work, and the dissemination of their ideas? How should our cultural institutions, both non-profit and for profit, be responsive to the overall health of the Los Angeles creative economy?"

For more information on *Status Report: Creative Economy* and the artists involved, visit: www.18thstreet.org

Gallery hours are Monday – Friday 11am-6pm. 18th Street Arts Center is located at 1639 18th Street, Santa Monica.

18th Street Arts Center programs are generously funded by the City of Santa Monica, the Santa Monica Arts Commission, the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, California Community Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the James Irvine Foundation, the Los Angeles County Arts Commission, Public Allies and the Getty Foundation.

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