

PASSAGES

## CARLA HERRERA-PRATS (1973–2019)

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Carla Herrera-Prats. Photo: Nate Harrison.

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**VIVACIOUS** is a wrenching word to use about someone no longer alive, but Carla had immense energy. She was someone you wanted to spend more time with—you'd go to a party and end up talking only to her. She had a disarming magnetism that came from a rare mix of honesty and kindness, and she never pretended; talking with her was like being enveloped in an emotional warmth scarce in New York.

Kids, husbands, jobs. You start to see less of people in your thirties and forties. Carla was away from New York most summers leading SOMA's Summer Program in Mexico City, and her teaching jobs at Cooper Union, Cal Arts, Harvard, Columbia, and the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, kept her on the road. Carla was utterly committed to exploring collaboration as a form and process, particularly how issues of labor relate to art production. With Camel Collective—which she cofounded in 2004 with Benj Gerdes, Lasse Lau, and Anthony Graves, working as a duo with Graves in recent years—Carla organized a massive performance project in Denmark called “The Second World Congress of Free Artists” (2010), based on Asger Jorn's proposal for such a meeting, teasing out the contradictions of collectivity, leftist politics, and economic power in the fields of contemporary art and higher education.

She had a sparkle in her eyes and a big broad smile. That smile could get you into trouble. I once lost a job defending Carla's work, and at times we lamented at how social justice chafes against art institutions' tendencies toward self-preservation, and how challenging it is to uphold professional and personal ethics when self-censorship on the part of cultural producers is naturalized in the precarity economy. Carla, who focused so much of her practice on labor, was an indefatigable force who fought cancer with a no-bullshit attitude, upbeat when most would be ground down by the horror of mortality. I looked up to her fierceness and her integrity. I will miss her grace and generosity, her ability to look at something and ask, “It's bullshit, no?”

*Eva Díaz is a writer and art historian.*

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