

Catalina Parra  
In Retrospect Catalog  
Lehman College Art Gallery  
Jane Farver 1992  
Exhibition Catalog

*What's it to you?* Emerging from behind a gauze veil, these words challenge the viewer to think about Nicaragua in a work made by Catalina Parra in 1982.

*What's it to you* This provocative question is implicit in all of Parra's works.

The answer to just what Catalina Parra's work is to us may be found in the titles of some of her other works: *Testimony: Options; To tell you the truth; We're Not Afraid to Say It*. Parra finds these words and the other raw materials for her art in the pages of *The New York Times* and in advertising images taken from magazines, subways, and bus stops. She recognizes the power in words and their configurations, and uses them much as they are used in advertising and the media: as catchphrases to gain our attention. Combining words with images from the same sources, she darns and stitches them together in patchworks to construct or uncover new realities. She asks that we really see what we are looking at, and comprehend what we are reading.

Wrapped up in Catalina Parra's works are her own influences and experiences: indigenous America, European, Spanish, north American. Her art reflects the manner in which she binds them all together to make her life as an artist. Life is a daily process, and the quotidian aspect of Parra's work is essential. Each day she finds new sources for her art in daily newspapers and journals. A work by Parra from 1977 is titled *Diariamente* – "Daily", The image is of a loaf of bread made of newsprint, and it refers to the daily disappearances of people in Chile during the early 1970's, a period when Parra lived there. She learned then first-hand about life under censorship and repression, and has continued since that time to use new sources to make artworks that exhort us to keep watch daily with her.

