PSYCHOTECHNE:
ASSESSMENT, TESTING, CATEGORISATION

Sasha Bergstrom-Katz and Tomas Percival

PELTZ
GALLERY

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Psychotechne: Assessment, Testing, Categorisation is a two-person exhibition of works by Sasha Bergstrom-Katz and Tomas Percival. The artistic research-based projects on view examine how individuals are assessed through tests, forms, and databases that utilise psychometric technologies. A variety of institutions—including educational, medical, and legal systems—utilise such assessments to inform decisions about the people they manage and use these techniques to categorise and move individuals. For example, the outcomes of tests can transfer children into different classrooms based on test-taking abilities; assessments are used to issue diagnoses which have the power to change how people are viewed and how they view themselves; and behavioural and mental health screenings are used to assign categories of "risk" within carceral and penal systems. The two artworks in this exhibition focus on particular case studies to explore how assessment, categorisation, and testing play an active role within institutional decision-making structures.

Bergstrom-Katz presents one aspect of an ongoing series of works examining intelligence testing. For this exhibition, she presents *On the Subject of Tests: Test as Archive*, a two-sided desk that provides space for exploration, engagement and interaction with an array of materials related to intelligence testing. Each desk contains objects from commonly used intelligence test kits (one desk is organised around the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children and the other the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scales). Within each desk drawer is an object from the test kit accompanied by objects, images and articles that directly connect these test objects to other fields and activities including play, education, military recruitment, eugenics movements, and psychology.

For this exhibition, Percival developed a new installation emerging from his ongoing research into systems of assessment within the field of security. This work investigates the Offender Assessment System (OASys), a risk assessment tool used within British prisons to assess and manage incarcerated individuals. The project examines how such digital tools are used to make decisions about individuals within the prison estate and the effects of such carceral technologies more broadly. For this project, Percival is collaborating with previously incarcerated people to access their OASys files and staging a series of conversations about the results. The work in this exhibition displays redacted versions of David's* file, along with three audio pieces based on their

conversations, which provide a counter-narrative to the dominant account produced by such punitive technical systems.

Finally, the exhibition connects these two technologies to various other methods of assessment, including psychological and medical assessments, by including forms from a variety of settings, many of which might be familiar. *Psychotechne* asks what it means for individuals' internal lives and outward behaviours to be recorded and organised, whether by the people themselves or by others. How do institutions use tests and assessments to categorise people? How do these assessments affect peoples' lives?

* David is a pseudonym

Sasha Bergstrom-Katz is an artist and researcher working at the intersections of the history of science, psychology, cognitive sciences, and perception studies through artistic, historical and affective methods. She is currently pursuing a practice-based PhD at Birkbeck, University of London in Psychosocial Studies. Previously, she was a fellow at BS-Projects, Hochschule für Bildende Künste Braunschweig, Germany. She has exhibited at the Inter Arts Center, Malmö, Sweden; Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery, Los Angeles; In Lieu, Los Angeles; AWHRHWAR, Los Angeles; Human Resources, Los Angeles; and the Torrance Art Museum, Torrance.

Tomas Percival is an artist and researcher. His work examines the conjunctures of space and security, with a particular interest in regimes of assessment, risk governance, prison infrastructures, criminal justice data, asylum administration, and forensic bordering. He holds an MFA from the University of California, Los Angeles. Percival was a resident at the Jan van Eyck Academie and visiting fellow on 'Security Vison' (ERC-project) at Leiden University. He is currently a lecturer and PhD candidate in the Centre for Research Architecture at Goldsmiths, University of London.

Dr Sarah Marks is a historian of the psychological disciplines, Director of the Birkbeck Centre for Interdisciplinary Research on Mental Health and editor of the journal *History of the Human Sciences*. Her research focuses on historical context of psychology, psychiatry and psychotherapy and the political and social impacts of these practices in the 20th and 21st centuries. Marks holds a UKRI Future Leaders Fellowship, which enables her to work with researchers Becka Hudson and Rachel Starr to understand how cognitive and behavioural therapies are experienced by service-users across a range of settings, including criminal justice.

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