

Petzel

STEPHEN PRINA

English for Foreigners (abridged: the sequel)

October 24 – November 1, 2025
520 W 25th Street

Petzel is pleased to present *Stephen Prina: English for Foreigners (abridged: the sequel)*, on view from October 24th through November 1st. This focused presentation coincides with Prina's survey exhibition of musical compositions and performances *Stephen Prina: A Lick and a Promise*, currently on view at The Museum of Modern Art, New York, through December 13th.

For nearly five decades, Stephen Prina has explored the dynamic intersections of image, sound, and language, developing a richly layered practice that blends autobiography, translation, and historical consciousness. Prina stages and embodies visual and musical structures to construct a compelling dialogue between personal narrative and broader cultural frameworks. This special one-week exhibition offers a concentrated encounter with works selected from Prina's series *English for Foreigners*, which has been exhibited at Museo Madre, Naples (2017) and Museo Tamayo, Mexico City (2020). While the MoMA survey explores Prina's wide-ranging engagement with musical performance and cultural citation, this smaller presentation turns toward a more intimate register, framing appropriation not only as a conceptual strategy, but as a personal act of assimilation: a way of navigating identity, language, and inherited systems of meaning.

English for Foreigners takes as its point of departure a slim grammar book once owned by the artist's father—*Second Book in English for Foreigners in Evening Schools* by Frederick Houghton (American Book Company, 1917). The book was given to Pietro (Pete) Prina upon his arrival in the United States after emigrating from the Comune di Canischio, Piedmont, in 1923. It served as both guide and emblem of assimilation. The book became a tool for navigating the new world he had chosen after refusing to play "Giovinezza," the anthem of the Italian Fascist Party, with his local band.

From this intimate family history, Prina constructs a layered narrative of migration, translation, and belonging. The lithographs—each meticulously reproducing Houghton's didactic illustrations of domestic scenes—reveal both the pedagogical language of early 20th-century America and the personal story embedded within it. The project also includes a listening station that plays a series of musical recordings in which Prina reinterprets songs significant to his father's life, singing "Bella Ciao" and Bruno Filippini's 1964 hit "Sabato Sera," while performing "Giovinezza" as an instrumental, with clarinet, the instrument of Prina's father, voicing the melody. It also features an original composition by the artist that uses his father's own annotations as a lyrical source.

Stephen Prina: A Lick and a Promise is MoMA's first in-depth survey dedicated to Prina's performance and musical practices, staged across multiple museum locations and underscored by eighteen live events. The exhibition includes the world premiere of a new orchestral work, *A Lick and a Promise* (2025), restagings of earlier performance pieces like *Beat of the Traps* (1992) in collaboration with Mike Kelley and Anita Pace. Throughout the museum, installations drawn from MoMA's collection, including *The Top Thirteen Singles from Billboard's Hot 100 Singles Chart for the Week Ending September 11, 1993* (1993), *Untitled / "The history of modern painting ..."* (1991) and an example from the ongoing series *Exquisite Corpse: The Complete Paintings of Manet* (1988) are installed.

About Stephen Prina

Stephen Prina is an American artist, musician, and composer, born in 1954 in Galesburg, Illinois. He currently lives and works in Los Angeles, California. He is a professor emeritus, Department of Art, Film, and Visual Studies, Harvard University. He received his B.F.A. from Northern Illinois University and M.F.A. from California Institute of the Arts.

Stephen Prina has had solo exhibitions both nationally and internationally including: 2025: *A Lick and a Promise*, Museum of Modern Art, New York; 2020: *English for Foreigners*, Museo Tamayo, Mexico City; 2017: *English for Foreigners*, Museo Madre, Naples; 2015: *galesburg, illinois+*, Kunst Halle Sankt Gallen, St. Gallen; 2013: *As He Remembered It*, LACMA, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles; 2011: *As He Remembered It*, Secession, Vienna; *He was but a bad translation.*, Kölnischer Kunstverein; 2010: *Stephen Prina: Modern Movie Pop*, Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis, St. Louis; 2008: *The Second Sentence of Everything I Read is You*, Staatliche Kunsthalle Baden-Baden, Baden-Baden; Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo (CAAC), Seville; 2000: *To the People of Frankfurt am Main: At Least Three Types of Inaccessibility*, Frankfurter Kunstverein, Frankfurt am Main; 1992: *It was the best he could do at the moment*, Museum Boijmans-van Beuningen, Rotterdam.

Petzel is located at 520 West 25th Street New York, NY 10001. Gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday from 10 am – 6 pm. For press inquiries, please contact Karolina Chojnowska at karolina@petzel.com, or call (212) 680-9467.