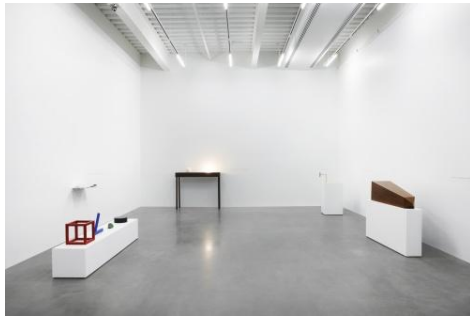


February 28, 2012

AFRICA IS A COUNTRY

The Ungovernables

February 28, 2012 By [Orlando Reade](#)



It seems rather arbitrary to pick out the African artists from ‘The Ungovernables’, the New Museum’s triennial show. The first thing that appears (if, like me, you start on the fifth floor and work your way down) is a neat stack of Zimbabwean billion dollar bills, put there by Thai artist Pratchaya Phinthong. The show brings together thirty-four different individual artists and collectives. All the artists were born in the 70s and 80s, but beyond this the curation refuses to place the diverse works in any categories.

Two Egyptian artists were, for me, among the show’s highlights. Against much of the Egyptian contemporary art recently discussed here, this is art which scrupulously rejects ‘revolutionary kitsch’. I’d seen pictures of Iman Issa’s work before – colourful shapes like wild prostheses out of a Mondrian painting – which didn’t communicate much. But in the white cube gallery space (see above) the clear lines and planes of these inscrutable monuments have a peculiar impact.

It’s difficult to know what to say about Hassan Khan’s film “Jewel” (still below) – which shows two men dancing to a Sha’bi soundtrack – it’s great. Seriously, hypnotically playful.



Lynette Yiadom-Boakye’s portraits achieve a drama which reminds me of Manet’s ability to illuminate darkness with a point of light.

On the ground floor the work of the Invisible Borders Trans-African Photography Project covers one wall. We are keen to see more of this ambitious organisation, recently established in Lagos. See their blog on [OccupyNigeria](#) here.

In the same room, Nana Oforiatta-Ayim's film 'Nowhere Else But Here' presents a writerly account of a roadtrip with the Invisible Borders group:

