



**reviews**

## 'The Ungovernables'

New Museum  
Through April 22

For the latest edition of its Triennial, the New Museum concentrates on worldwide movements of civil disobedience, extending from Occupy Wall Street to Coppi's Tahrir Square protests. Titled "The Ungovernables," an ironic appropriation of a derogatory term from apartheid-era South Africa, the exhibition features 24 artists and collectives, with only four from the United States. Participants range in age from 20 to 98. It is a truly international and diverse array of artists—who nonetheless share an iconoclastic approach to political ideas and materials.

According to Triennial curator Eungie Joo, the museum's director of education and public programs, this generation has a skepticism born out of post-colonial and post-Communist independence movements that began ideologically but often deteriorated into new authoritarian regimes, religious fundamentalism, and rampant capitalism. That said, the art on view aims not to be overly political or overly didactic, or visually unappealing. Rather, although it may not be extremely revealing, "The Ungovernables" is packed with moments of vivacity, humor, and experimentation. These works remain difficult to generalize despite a common call to flout the rules.

Many of the projects were barely able to outrun their youthful

enthusiasm. The best example of this are Toronto-born artist Julia Dalry's sculptures made of heavy rolls of Plexiglas held together by a single string or band. *Ungovernable Artist Dalry*'s large installation *We the People* (2011) features abstract forms of pounded copper, remnants of a full-scale model of the Statue of Liberty waiting to be assembled. The sprawling piece is situated near the street-stopping *A Person Loved Me* (2012). This towering form of spiraling and satellites was made from Styrofoam and clay by Argentine artist Adrían Villar Rojas just days before the exhibition opened. All of these works have a commonality under duress by impermanence, making them apt metaphors for the state of political regimes in much of the world today.

Crafting a balance between fiction and reality is another theme that can be found in many of the strongest works. A Ho Chi Minh City/Los Angeles collective called the *Propulsive Group* created a makeshift installation by filming a focus group at a real advertising firm as it confronts the fictional challenge of coming up with a new brand for *Communism*. Brazilian artist Jonathan de Almeida assembled a faux archive by pairing maps from a found diary with vintage photographs and topographic maps of Brazil in *Tropical Navigator* (2009). Lebanese artist Mounira Al Solh displays a wall full of analogical collage and watercolors, which she says are the works of her

fictional alter ego, an outside artist named *Rosam Barlow*. Joo correctly points out that this generation has a unique voice and is asserting a vocabulary all its own. This well-thought-out exhibition makes it clear that these artists will not be dominated by a single esthetic movement or philosophy. Nor are they represented by or catering to the art market. Laying up to their issue, the "ungovernables" may be new to many people in the United States, but they are worth keeping an eye on.

—Barbara Pollack

*David La, We the People*, 2011, powdered copper, installation view.