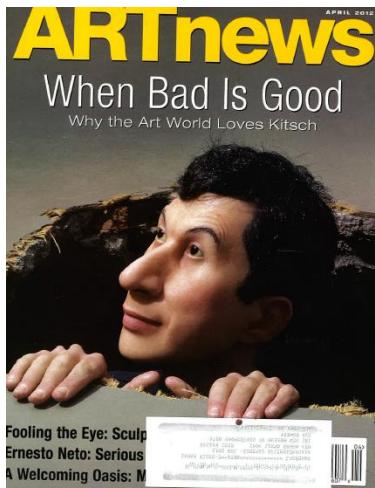


April 2012



**reviews**

**'The Ungovernables'**

Bow Museum  
Through April 22

**F**or this latest edition of its Triennial, the New Museum concentrates on worldwide movements of civil disobedience, extending from Occupy Wall Street to Cairo's Tahrir Square protests. Titled "The Ungovernables," an ironic appellation of a diverse group of artists from around the world, the exhibition features 34 artists and collective, with only four from the United States. Participants range in age from 20 to 38. 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 Banagi Jon, the museum's director of education and public programs, this generation has a desire to challenge the status quo, particularly in the United States and post-Communist independence movements that began ideologically but often degenerated into new authoritarian regimes, religious fundamentalists, and rampant capitalism. That said, the art on view tame the revolutionaries' politics, ever so slightly, or even completely opposing, rather, although it may not be extremely revolutionary. "The Ungovernables" is packed with moments of violence, humor, and expense. Many of these works remain difficult to pigeonhole despite a common call to "break the rules."

Many of the projects seem barely able to contain their youthful

enthusiasm. The best example of this are Toronto-born artist Julia Dault's sculptures made of heavy rods of Mexiglas held together by a single string or band. Vietnamese artist Danh Vo's huge 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 shoe-stepping *A Person Loved Me* (2012), this towering form:

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**Danh Vo, We the People,**  
2011, pounded copper,  
installation view

**of** friendships and satellites was made from Styrofoam and clay by Argentine artist Adrián Villar Rojas just days before the exhibition opened. All of these works have a commanding immediacy by emphasizing materials and craftsmanship 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 Rio Chi Mihi City/Los Angeles collective called the Propeller Group created a makeshift installation by filming a focus group of a real advertising firm as it discusses the fictional challenges of creating a new campaign for a nonexistent artist. Josepha de Andrade assembled a fax archive by faxing pages from a found diary with vintage photographs and topographic maps of Brazil in *Tropical Hangover* (2009). Lhasane artist Moumia Al Sadi displays a wall full of magical collages and watercolors, which she says are the works of her

fictional alter-ego, an outsider artist named Bessma Benbow. I too directly point out the difference between the range and depth of the exhibition's art in its own. This well-thought-out exhibition makes it clear that these artists will not be dominated by a single aesthetic movement or philosophy. Nor are they represented by or catering to the art market. Living up to their name, the "Ungovernables" may be new to many people in the United States, but they are worth keeping an eye on.

—Barbara Pollack