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## ARTLOG

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# New Museum Triennial: The Ungovernables

Grace-Yvette Gemmell



*The Ungovernables* (installation view). Photo: Grace-Yvette Gemmell.

New Museum curator Eungie Joo has assembled an impressive array of new works from over fifty artists and collectives for [The Ungovernables](#), this year's edition of the museum's triennial. While civil dissent and social criticism emerge as central leitmotifs, some sub-themes are beginning to surface in the show. Entropy seems to be on several of the artists' minds. Many of the works draw on ideas of collapse and decay, or the failure of monumentality and inflated cultural mythologies. In its position as both site-specific installation and automatic ruin Adrián

Villar Rojas' massive clay sculpture *A person loved me* hints at the inevitable collapse of civilization and its architectural feats. Iman Issa's *Material* series offers ad hoc antidotes to obsolete civic monuments, while Minam Apang's *How the wind was born* series points to the malformation of elaborate cultural mythologies.

Complementing this thread is a focus on the ephemeral with several artists incorporating transient, or overlooked materials into their pieces. Mariana Telleria has created an exquisite homage to the found object and the quotidian in her *Días en que todo es verdad / Days of Truth*. Abigail DeVille's *Dark Day* and Cinthia Marcelle and Tiago Mata Machado's *O Século [The Century]* both deal with the afterlife of material glut, while the useless stack of Zimbabwean currency in Pratchaya Phinthong's *What I learned I no longer know; the little I still know, I guessed* draws on a similar idea of ruptured decadence.

While some eyes may roll with regard to the show's implied recalcitrance within the museum framework, the Triennial's commitment to representing a cross-section of international emerging artists who are actively working to construct culture, rather than merely commenting upon it, is readily apparent. Many of the works in *The Ungovernables* underscore Ernst Fischer's sentiment that "in a decaying society, art, if it is truthful, must also reflect decay. And unless it wants to break faith with its social function, art must show the world as changeable. And help to change it." More themes are certain to surface as collaborative projects, public programs and site-specific installations and actions are introduced into the show.



Installation view *The Ungovernables* 2012. Photo: Benoit Pailley.



Cinthia Marcelle and Tiago Mata Machado, *O Século [The Century]*, (still) 2011. Photo: Benoit Pailley.



Mariana Telleria, *Días en que todo es verdad / Days of Truth*, 2012. Photo: Benoit Pailley.



Minam Apang, *He wore them like talismans all over his body*, from the series "War with the stars", 2008. Photo: Benoit Pailley.



Pratchaya Phinthong, *What I learned I no longer know; the little I still know, I guessed*, 2009. Photo: Grace-Yvette Gemmell.



Abigail DeVille, *What Happens to a Dream Deferred...Supernova*, 2009.  
Photo: LaToya Ruby Frazier.



Iman Issa, *Material for a sculpture representing a bygone era of luxury and decadence*, 2012.  
Photo: Grace-Yvette Gemmell.