

WHITNEY BIENNIAL 2012 + DAMIEN HIRST at the TATE

KILLER TEXT ON ART

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OUT- SIDE THE FRAME

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Osline's

MASCULINE
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Shooting
IN CYBERSPACE

Thomas
Demand's
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S&M Décor
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GUEST LECTURE

Jo Ann Callis



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CIRRUS GALLERY: TALKIN' 'BOUT THAT PST GENERATION

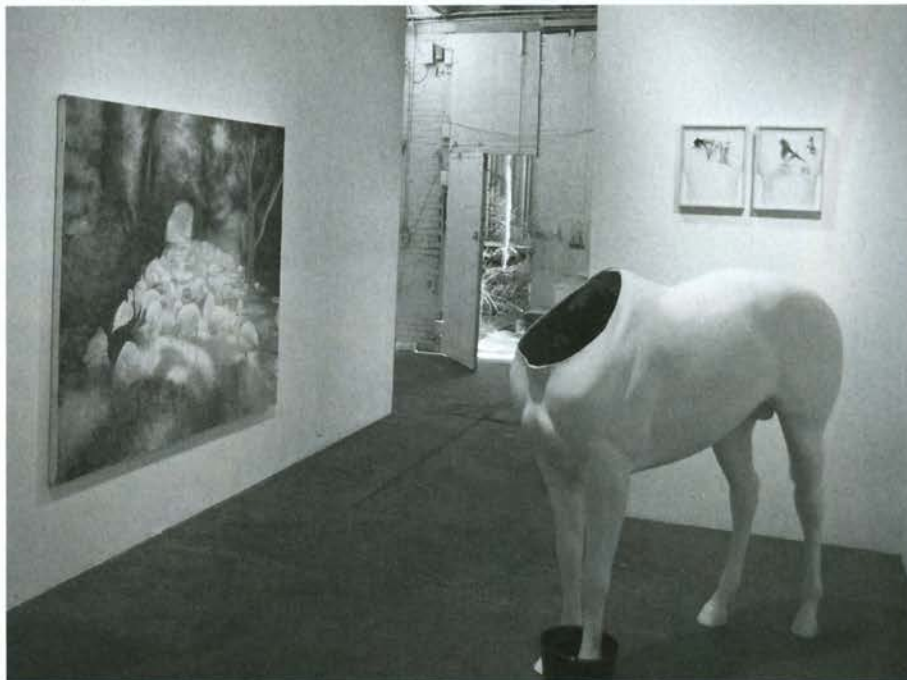
BY JOHN DAVID O'BRIEN



THE "ONCE EMERGING, NOW EMERGING" series that has been presented at Cirrus Gallery throughout Pacific Standard Time (PST) was essentially built around two questions. The first was: What relates an historical archive (in this case, Cirrus Gallery and its print shop, Cirrus Editions) to contemporary practices? The other was: How do artists converse with each other through artwork over different generations? Additionally, the series integrated the ways in which printmaking, with its translation of single, rare works into multiples and its collaborative nature, found its way into this process. All three of these approaches were meant to echo, ratify and amplify the work that has been created and/or exhibited at Cirrus since its inception.

The four-part exhibition spanned the entire PST calendar and each section delved into a different decade from the Cirrus' archive. Concurrently each focused on exhibiting specific works by artists involved with the gallery early in its history and placed that art in juxtaposition (conjunction really) to new works by international and local emerging artists of today. So artworks by artists emerging throughout the '60s, '70s and '80s were exhibited with works by artists emerging now and while there were definite overlaps in attitude, it was hard to see what conclusion was supposed to be drawn from the comparison. Are these emerging artists the newly anointed? Is the cycle of emerging to established artist simply a normal process in the art world that Cirrus was a part of? It was certainly fascinating to recall how Ed Ruscha or Lynda Bengalis were once unknown, emerging artists.

In its first section "Now & Then," the focus was on the archive as an example or compendium of post-studio practices. Work by artists emerging in the '60s such as Eric Orr, Barbara T. Smith and Ruscha were flanked by more recent forays into art-making by Fiona Connor (photos of archive documents) or Vincent Ramos (drawings reacting to the archive). After that came "Livin' L.A.," where the archive was mined for works related to the SoCal landscape or that had a tangible connection to Los Angeles as a site. Alongside works from the '70s by artists such as Doug Edge, Vija Celmins and Terry O'Shea, there were freshly minted videos and mixed media works that implicitly compared the generational shifts of perspective about living and working in LA. How artists were (very loosely) connected through travel and exchange is examined, imagined and extrapolated in "The Visitation," part three of the series. Archival works by Vito



Acconci, Bengalis and John Baldessari were placed in the company of recent paintings and photo works by Milton Stevenson and Minami Haynes, among others. Lastly, part four, "Open Network," concentrated on technology, community and performance. Fewer archival works were surrounded by a multitude of sound and projection works, some created by collectives. As part of its "Open Network" finale, Cirrus sent out an open call inviting contemporary artists to react to the archival information through a specially created website, thereby "integrating the once emerging with the now emerging." Adding to the final confusion, a second exhibition was hosted within this one: "Print Imprint," in which "Actual Size" (a collaborative of four artists and curators) is producing a limited edition book to document the exhibition.

If all this sounds rather densely packed and jumbled, even hard to follow at times, that, I believe, was the point. Printmaking, artist-run spaces and cooperatives all surfaced around the start of the period documented in PST, and most were fueled by an anti-establishment and anti-status quo attitude hard to imagine in the art world today. Prints were pulled to counter the enforced rarity of art and reach a broader public. The art world was a world of non-commercial, purely symbolic exchange,

and being an artist meant to resist assimilation into the dominant culture. (Didn't quite work out that way, did it—think how contradictory the idea of a countercultural hero is.) So, even if individual artworks were still fundamentally center stage in the "Once Emerging, Now Emerging" series, the ultimate emphasis was to show how group efforts create the art world from which these objects and images emerge.

Relationships and exchanges between people in each subset of the art world are a lived process. The convergences and collaborations are difficult to chart and transactions take place on multiple levels in rapid and unpredictable succession. The art world rotating around Cirrus was and is part of that larger chaotic setting. The dynamic jumble traced in "Once Emerging, Now Emerging" does present a core to hew to: how to celebrate the autonomy to which art once aspired. The material objects of the art world may well be co-opted and monetized quickly (even more in a late-consumerist, post-industrial America), but hope for ways and modes to keep misbehaving can be rekindled by investigating the practical disordering of its archived historical flow. ☺

Above: Rachel Kessler and Margaret V. Haines, "Livin' L.A.," installation, photo by Andy Weymouth

THE UNGOVERNABLES

2012 NEW MUSEUM TRIENNIAL

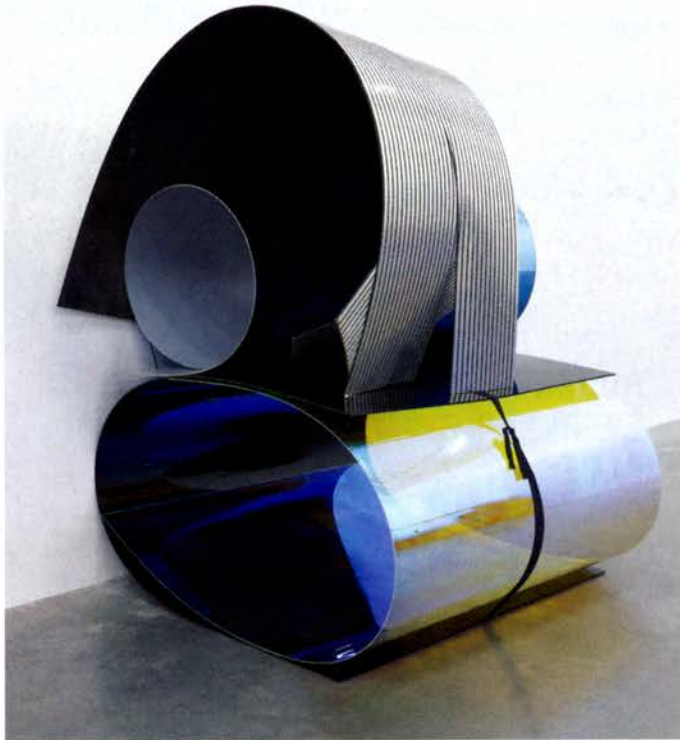
BY JOHN DAVID O'BRIEN

CURATOR FOR THE NEW MUSEUM'S 2012 TRIENNIAL, "The Ungovernables," Eungie Joo, describes the exhibition as being "about the urgencies of a generation who came of age after the independence and revolutionary movements of the 1960s and 1970s." A broad objective that has over 50 participating artists and collectives, there are some significant developments in curatorial practice/exhibition formulation and correlations among the art works that emerge from the rather dense museum installation. For example, the hypertrophic globetrotting described in all the supporting exhibition documentation is both testament to the seriousness of Joo and her assistant Ryan Inouye, and an open question about globalizing curatorial practices. (Related to this endeavor and worth noting is the New Museum's multi-country cooperative curatorial project "Museum as Hub.")

Joo's and Inouye's trip around the world was to more than 20 countries with hundreds of artist studio visits over 18 months—certainly proof of a global reach and something Joo has been working on for years. But the question remains as to how the search coordinates for "The Ungovernables" were originally configured. How did they decide where to start and where to keep going? Is this a mirror to the parade of art fairs currently making their way around the world? The net results are that the exhibition draws extensively on art and artists who are not from the U.S.A.

Another issue keyed by the title is the difficulty to see how the art in the show is related to the ungovernable. In fact, the basic paradigms for conceiving of this exhibition and completing it mesh perfectly with eastern art standards elaborated in the '70s and '80s, particularly in the area of conceptual practices. The array of text and image works, impromptu installations and hand-held moving images differ in their sources from earlier canonical works, but instead of having the U.S. or Europe as the backdrop and foil for the art, there are places like Egypt, Vietnam, Columbia or Jordan. Whether or not these artists came from ungovernable places, the majority appear extremely well versed, well educated and therefore in direct lineage with "the governable"—in terms both artistic and commercial. In some cases, the work almost appears to be a kind of cultural tourism: artists go back and revisit places they once came from; it is notable how many of the artists list two locations in their bios for their practice, one lesser known, and the other one often in a main art center.

To highlight a few of the most interesting works, a large-scale



Julia Dault, *Untitled 19 (3:00 pm - 8:30 pm, February 4, 2012)*, 2012

sculpture *A Person Loved Me* (2012) created by Adrián Villar Rojas (and a team) at the museum is a hulking floor-to-ceiling sculpture that resembles a cross between outlandishly designed industrial parts and components from discarded giant robots. Made of unfired clay over a Styrofoam core, it began literally falling apart upon completion. Another wonderfully weird and forceful work was Pilvi Takala's projection, *The Trainee* (2008). In this she documents how she feigned being an employee in a corporation, while never actually participating in any work activities. Watching her sit inertly in the corporate cubicles or riding the elevator for up and down for hours, as those around her collectively move from mild disbelief to outrage, is downright uncanny.

There are also the rather offhanded but convincing assemblage works by Julia Dault. She also worked on-site and created each group of industrial materials in a single performance. Forcing the material into folds, rolls and bends with her strength alone, she then secured the work to the gallery wall to keep it from collapsing. The film *Jewel* (2010) by Hassan Khan, focuses on two men in separate side-by-side projections, performing dance moves to a loud Shaabi beat. Facing each other from the different projections, in very different attire and waving their arms furiously, the interaction looked both antagonistic and collaborative.

Minam Apang's *How the Wind Was Born* (2010) consists of graphite and ink works on paper where the artist explores the intersection between the world of myth and her own personal lexicon of mark-making. The frenzied array of molecular marks coalesces into an almost golem-like presence, alluding to how chaos and order are interlaced. For her installation, *Días en que todo es verdad*, [*Days of Truth*], (2012) Mariana Telleria has set a series of found and manipulated objects very simply on wood shelves. She uses a combination of discarded everyday objects festooned with small various appendages and additions that effectively drag them out of the prosaic into the imaginative.



Benjamin Butler, *Autumn Forest (Sixty-Three Trees)*, 2012

Physical disarray and dystopian daydreams emerge as themes and are revisited throughout. Whether taking the form of installations or projections or accumulations of paint and objects, "The Ungovernables" seemed animated by a kind of subterranean nostalgia. Generally, most of the artworks are light-handed in technique and disinterested in any specific genre. The artists tended to explicitly acknowledge their socio-spatial context. This implicit sociological dimension—taking the viewer to places unknown—was a compelling part of the exhibition, in spite of the large quantities of words dedicated to meting out where and why artists are producing these works.