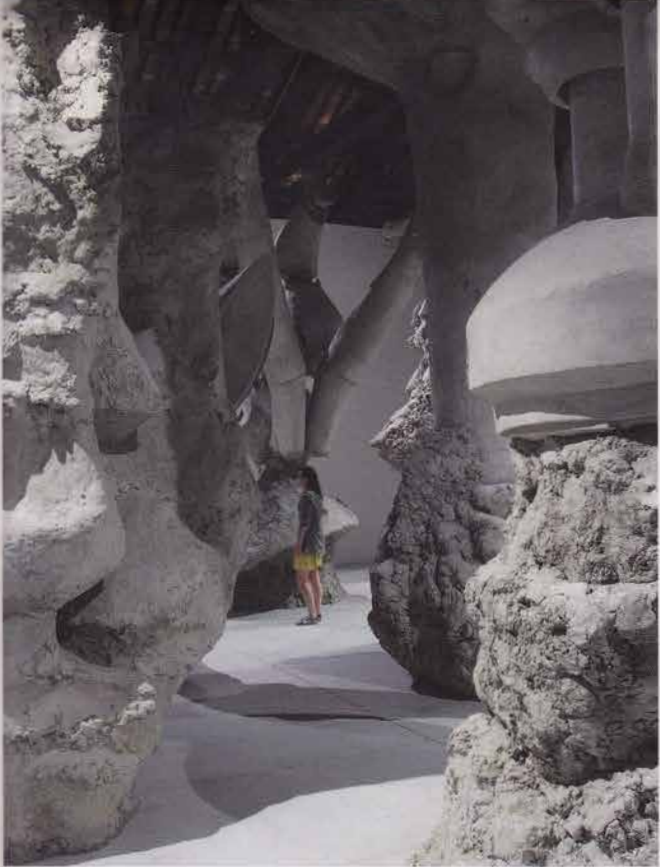


THE UNGGOVERNABLES

2012 NEW MUSEUM TRIENNIAL

"The Ungovernables," the 2012 New Museum Triennial, seeks to capture the perspectives, preoccupations, and experiences of an inventive and informed generation born from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s—a generation who came of age in the aftermath of the independence and revolutionary movements that promised to topple Western colonialism but became mired in military dictatorships, the emergence of integrated world capitalism, regional and global economic crises, the rise of fundamentalism, and international interventionism and failures to intervene. Faced with this somewhat bleak inheritance, artists in "The Ungovernables" embrace their complex relationship to history and assert a remarkable patience and pragmatism, and resolve in their work. The exhibition features thirty-four artists and artist collectives working in painting, sculpture, drawing, performance, video, and other activities. Through explorations of form, objecthood, material, and temporality, artists in "The Ungovernables" negotiate time and their experience of the contemporary, often demonstrating profound mistrust of permanence. Many of the works are provisional, site-specific, and performative, reflecting an attitude of possibility and faith in the contingent nature of this moment.



THE UNGOVERNABLES
NEW MUSEUM
FEBRUARY 15–APRIL 22, 2012

EUNGIE JOO

LYNETTE YIADOM-BOAKYE

HASSAN KHAN

CAMP

MIGUEL A. LÓPEZ

KEMANG WA LEHULERE

IMAN ISSA

EMEKA OKEREKE

SEBASTIÁN VILLAR ROJAS AND ADRIÁN VILLAR ROJAS

GABI NGCOBO

RAYYANE TABET AND JOHN GREENBERG

INVISIBLE BORDERS

**MOUNIRA AL SOLH
JONATHAS DE ANDRADE
MINAM APANG
CAMP
JULIA DAULT
ABIGAIL DEVILLE
HOUSE OF NATURAL FIBER
HU XIAOYUAN
INVISIBLE BORDERS
IMAN ISSA
HASSAN KHAN
LEE KIT
CINTHIA MARCELLE
DAVE MCKENZIE
NICOLÁS PARIS
BONA PARK
GARY-ROSS PASTRANA
PRATCHAYA PHINTHONG
AMALIA PICA
RITA PONCE DE LEÓN
THE PROPELLER GROUP
PUBLIC MOVEMENT
GABRIEL SIERRA
SLAVS AND TATARS
RAYYANE Tabet
PILVI TAKALA
MARIANA TELLERIA
WU TSANG
JOSÉ ANTONIO VEGA MACOTELA
ADRIÁN VILLAR ROJAS
DANH VÕ
KEMANG WA LEHULERE
LYNETTE YIADOM-BOAKYE
ALA YOUNIS**

THE PROPELLER GROUP

FOUNDED 2006, HO CHI MINH CITY

The Propeller Group was established in 2006 as a cross-disciplinary structure for creating ambitious art projects. With backgrounds in visual art, film, and video, Phunam Thúc Hà, Matthew Lucero, and Tuan Andrew Nguyen created the collective to harness the synergetic spirit encountered in large-scale production efforts. Through multi-platform work, collaborations with other artists, and dual headquarters in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, and Los Angeles, California, the Propeller Group is able to integrate many resources and idiosyncrasies in their practice, which echoes the strategies of the type of global agency their name suggests.

Described by the Propeller Group as a “rogue nation-rebranding campaign,”¹ *Viet Nam The World Tour, 2010*—, creates an opportunity for street dancers, graffiti artists, and muralists from a variety of backgrounds and nationalities to encounter Vietnam and ultimately present their impressions on stages in multiple countries. Because of the legacies of colonialism and war, the project considers Vietnam as a “historically saturated icon,”² and contributors are challenged to build new associations and relationships to renew this identity. The Propeller Group chose to collaborate with hip hop dancers and street artists—ostensibly marginalized creators who have been embraced by the advertising industry—as an examination of the ways in which these low-culture forces inform high-culture agents. Mitigating the gulf between high and low culture is a theme throughout the Propeller Group’s practice, particularly the opportunities embedded in this in-between space: “The dichotomy between high and low is interesting because we feel we can cross-pollinate and overlap to communicate complex ideas in a simple way, in a third space, a middle culture.”³

This “third space” utilizes the immediacy and constant flux of forms such as outdoor murals and online video platforms to discuss profound ideas. The insertion of critical, often labyrinthine issues into popular media is a key project for the Propeller Group. According to Tuan Andrew Nguyen, “Media controls every aspect of our lives today, it is the single most powerful form of engagement.”⁴ Nguyen’s further declaration that “if used strategically, you can do unimaginable stuff with it”⁵ explains the Propeller Group’s attempts to further explore this middle culture.

In 2011, they initiated a daring and potentially contradictory manipulation of media with *TVC Communism*. This five-channel video work provides an opportunity for viewers to step into the creative process of a marketing agency. Filmed over a three-week period in the Ho Chi Minh City offices of TBWA, an international advertising firm that represents multinational corporations including Pfizer, Apple, and McDonald’s, the work documents a series of strategizing sessions for a campaign proposed by the Propeller Group. As described by an employee of TBWA in the video itself, the firm was asked for “a political campaign . . . not for any one particular person; it’s actually to brand the idea of Communism. Or at least rebrand it, give it a new face, give it a new skin. How will we sell the idea?”

For nearly six hours, the video follows a series of meetings in which staff from TWBA/Vietnam attempt to divine the core elements of Communism in order to better realize this rebranding. Their discussions range from the theoretical (what sacrifices must be made to foster a truly egalitarian society?) to the aesthetic (why do Communist flags always take the colors of yellow and red?). Rather than relying on the irony of marketers discussing the divide between the rich and the poor, *TVC Communism* illustrates the depth of conversation required by such projects, and provides a surprisingly impartial ideological and historic assessment.

— Ethan Swan

1. The Propeller Group, “Viet Nam The World Tour,” 2010: <http://www.the-propeller-group.com/vntwt/> (accessed December 17, 2011).

2. *Ibid.*

3. The Propeller Group, interview with Vu Thi Quynh Giao, “Viet Nam the World Tour: The Propeller Group,” *diacRITICS*, October 9, 2010: <http://diacritics.org/2010/vietnam-the-world-tour-the-propeller-group/> (accessed December 16, 2011).

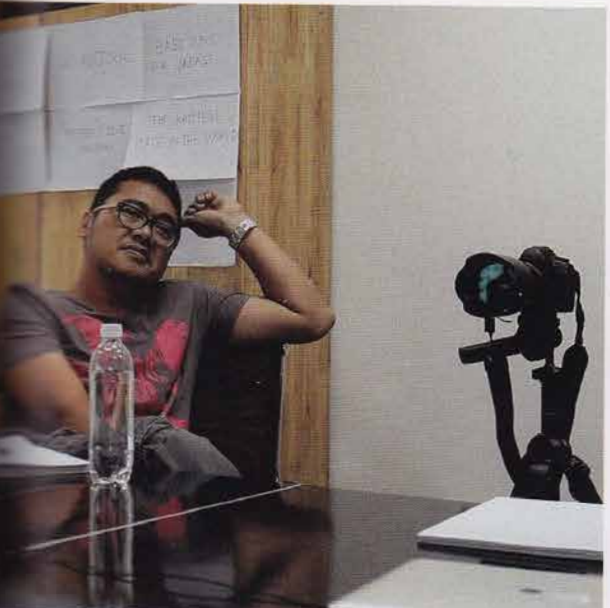
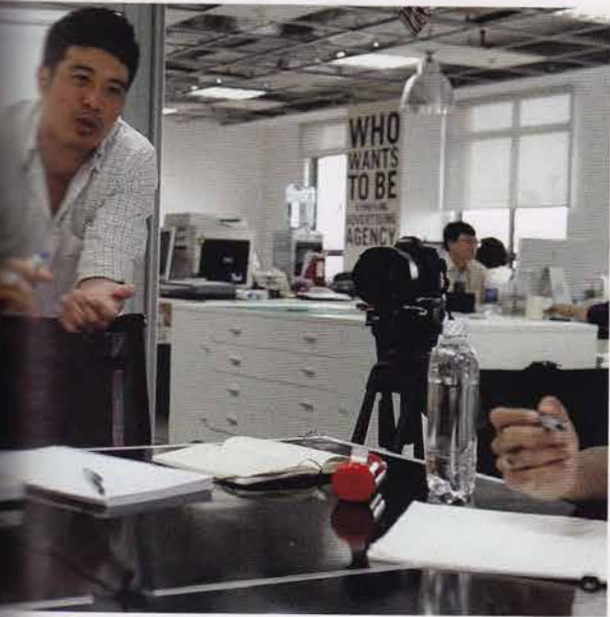
4. Woon Tai Ho, “Singapore Biennale 2011—Life as Art,” *The Green Orange*, March 31, 2011: <http://greenorange.com.sg/WoonTaiHoBlog/2011/03/31/singapore-biennale-2011-life-as-art/> (accessed December 16, 2011).

5. *Ibid.*





The Propeller Group, TVC *Communism*, 2011. Stills from a five-channel video installation and LED monitor, dimensions variable



The Propeller Group, *VNTWT*, 2009-. Mural painting, dimensions variable





clockwise from top left: The Propeller Group, VNTWT, 2009–. Video installation and T-shirts, dimensions variable

The Propeller Group, *Uh...* (stills), 2007. Color video; sound, 7 min (loop)

The Propeller Group, VNTWT, 2009–. Dancers at Recognize Studios, Singapore, 2010. vntwt.com