

D O R S K Y  
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Curatorial Programs



## CONTESTED TERRITORIES

INBAL ABERGIL, DANIELLE ADAIR, FRANCIS ALÿS, TANIA CANDIANI,  
CARABALLO-FARMAN, MOUNIR FATMI, TAKASHI HORISAKI, JOÃO LOURO,  
CARLOS MOTTA, CELESTINO MUDAULANE, SRESHTA RIT PREMNATH,  
NADA PRLJA, ROSANA RICALDE, AND ALEJANDRO VIDAL

Curated by Miguel Amado

September 23 – January 6, 2013

Opening reception: Sunday, September 23, 2:00–5:00 p.m.

## Contested Territories: Dissensus and the City

Philosopher Jacques Rancière considers that *dissensus*—“the putting of two worlds into one and the same world”<sup>1</sup>—rather than *consensus* is at the core of politics. Therefore, dissensus is not a contention over “interests, opinions or values; it is a division inserted in ‘common sense’: a dispute over what is given and about the frame within which we see something as given.”<sup>2</sup> Dissensus is thus a key enterprise in the dynamics of undermining consensus as “the process underlying today’s continual shrinkage of political space.”<sup>3</sup>

For Rancière, politics is the sphere in which subjects, rather than being individuals, are members of a group, and that this group, by means of becoming conscious of its unequal position within the social order, forms a community whose collective agency challenges that social order, disrupting it. Such disruption takes place not only within the power structures of the social order, but also the ideological framework that underpins the social order itself.

The social order is regularly disrupted in times of war. The 21st century is marked by “permanent war”<sup>4</sup>—e.g., the “War on Terror” among others—as philosophers



**caraballo-farman** *Contours of Staying*, 2004

Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri put it: war is currently “both global in scale and long lasting, with no end in sight.”<sup>5</sup> This phenomenon leads governments to exercise extraordinary force, eroding long-held legal protections of civil liberties.

This state of permanent war has evolved into a reality in which military engagement is no longer the defining aspect of conflict. Indeed, conflict increasingly encapsulates other modes of strife, from religious violence in India to drug smuggling between Mexico and the U.S. or migration from North Africa to Southern Europe. Such modes of strife disrupt the social order in the sense that Rancière refers to as *dissensus*.

This circumstance elicits a new understanding of conflict, one without spatial limit, in which the enemy is no longer a nation-state but an abstraction—terrorism, autocracy, etc. The sites of conflict thus are no longer geographic battlefields but rather ideological contested territories. These contested territories manifest themselves in various strategies of authority imposition and resistance, from personal empowerment to collective agency.

*Contested Territories* is an exhibition that explores the interaction of the city and the social order in an age of dissensus. The rationale behind the exhibition is that the disruption of the social order finds its locus in the city: the urban space as a key feature of modern society is where manifestations of contention take place, thus establishing contested territories.

The exhibition brings together a diverse group of artists from across the globe whose output is informed by or is a response to discord, both historical and contemporary. In this sense, the exhibition encapsulates the lived experience and the research on pressing topics carried out by the participating artists. The checklist is based on the principle that the works allude to or evoke contested territories through allegory.

The exhibition’s thesis is set forth by **Carlos Motta**’s video and **Mounir Fatmi**’s sculpture. Both works address New York as the epitome



**Carlos Motta** *Ivory Tower*, 2011



**Mounir Fatmi** *Save Manhattan 02*, 2005



**Inbal Abergil** *Rai'ha a'l shuk (On My Way to the Market)*, 2012

of a contested territory. They consider 9/11's impact on recent history, suggesting that the feelings that it still elicits nevertheless do not permit one to forget the political mismanagement that caused it.

Motta's video, shot ten years after the event, is a personal account of the event. It consists of a grainy, black-and-white sequence of aerial views of lower Manhattan—particularly of “ground zero,” as the former World Trade Center site became known—accompanied by a melancholic soundtrack.

Fatmi's sculpture is part of a series in which the artist designs the skyline of Manhattan, including the “Twin Towers,” with objects as diverse as books (the Koran among them), VHS tapes, and speakers. In this version, VHS tapes sit on top of a makeshift table and the spectral nature of the stacked pieces speak to the collective outcry that followed the event.

New York is also the subject of **caraballo-farman's** work. The action of their video takes place on 42nd street, in front of the Chinese consulate. It is there that they filmed the protest of practitioners of Falun Gong, a spiritual group that emerged in China in the 1990s and that the Chinese government has been persecuting in the last decade. On that night, there was a blizzard, and one sees the protesters continuing to meditate for as long as they can until resistance to the elements becomes futile.

**Rosana Ricalde's** works belong to a series inspired by writer Italo Calvino's 1972 novel *Invisible Cities*. The artist draws maps of various metropolises, from New York to her native country's Rio de Janeiro, with cut-outs of pages from the book, creating a lyrical image of these cities. The works are dedicated to Athens, London and New York, all cities in which there have been recent demonstrations: from the ongoing Occupy movement to the London riots of 2011 to the strikes in Athens, the epicenter of the European financial crisis.

In the Northern Hemisphere, turmoil is provoked by the economic meltdown,

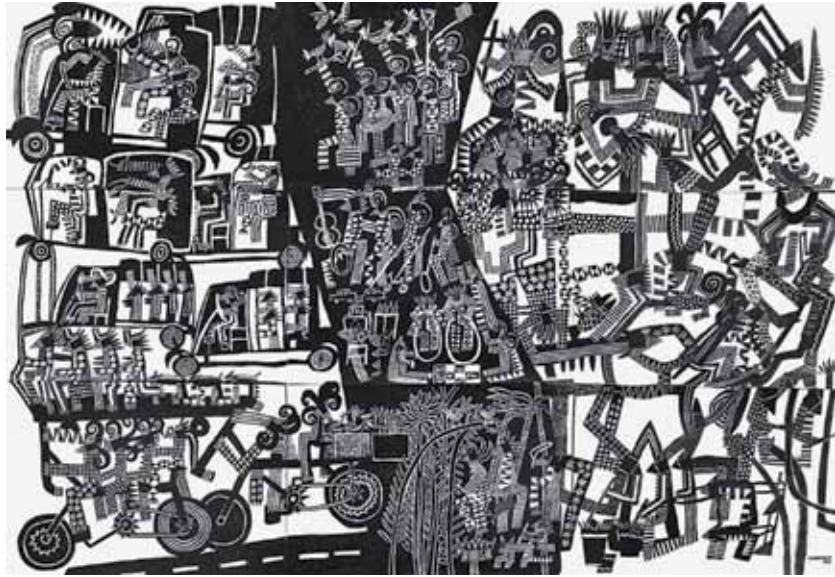


**Alejandro Vidal** *An Uncontrollable Accumulation of Unintended Consequences*, 2011

but in other parts of the world its reasons are apparently different. In **Inbal Abergil's** photograph, she encapsulates the essence of a market in Cairo during Ramadan. The energy she captured echoes the demonstrations of Tahrir Square, perhaps the most iconic of all that took place during the “Arab Spring,” as the recent wave of protest in the Middle East and North Africa has become known.



**Rosana Ricalde** *Invisible Cities (London)*, 2012



**Celestino Mudaulane** *The Shadow of the War*, 2012

Imagery of insurrection is the focus of **Alejandro Vidal**'s work. He examines the relationship between media and civil unrest by creating a series of photographs taken from footage found on the Internet. Although the images depict an unknown city marked by turmoil, with smoky skies being just one of many of its symptoms, one can only think that the footage originally posted online refers to the "Arab Spring."

In **Francis Alyš**'s video, the artist mixes the waters of the Red Sea and the Black Sea, which he collected in the towns of Aqaba in Jordan and Trabzon in Turkey. The work addresses the ideology behind mainstream representations of the Middle East, calling attention to the colonial attitudes towards the region that pervade the Western media landscape.

**Celestino Mudaulane** also deals with otherness and history, in this case in Mozambique, a former Portuguese colony in southeastern Africa. His drawing depicts various scenes of Maputo, heavily populated with refugees, who left Mozambique's countryside to live in the capital. The work examines the effects of the war—both colonial and civil—that marked the country from the mid-1960s to the early-1990s.

Immigration and colonialism is also the subject of **Takashi Horisaki**'s work, which is part of a series of community-driven projects that the artist has been leading in various U.S. cities. His sculptures, which resonate utopian architectures, are made of colorful latex skins cast from derelict dwellings usually found in abandoned neighborhoods. The work explores the relationship of gentrification and ghettoization, a typical process within the U.S. urban space.

**Tania Candiani** addresses the marginalization of the urban space by looking at graffiti as an outsider language. Her hand-made tapestry reproduces tags painted on the facade of a building somewhere in Eastern Europe, although such aesthetics is conspicuous in metropolises. The work considers the



**João Louro** *In God We Trust*, 2005-12

concurrent flourishing of underground expressions and the repression that they suffer from the authorities.

The starting point of **Sreshta Rit Premnath**'s work is M. S. Ramaiah, a property developer from Bangalore, an extremely fast-growing Indian city. In the video, the pages of a flipbook animate a builder raising a sledgehammer to strike a dome that was part of an



**Francis Alyš** *Watercolor*, 2010



**Takashi Horisaki** *Social Dress St. Louis: Learning and Unlearning*, 2012

architectural complex built by Ramaiah in the 1960s and that has been demolished and reconstructed on multiple occasions over the last decades. The work calls attention to the progression of urban space to a self-destructive mode and to the role played by power structures in this process.



**Tania Candiani** *Stitched Graffiti*, 2009

**João Louro** elaborates on this subject by looking at the “twin” cities of San Diego and Tijuana. His work expands a previous project in which he bought a smashed-up car in Tijuana, covered it with gold leaf, and auctioned it in a private collector’s mansion in San Diego. Then, he took the money he earned back to Tijuana, where he asked school kids to draw their perception of the U.S. on it. The modified dollar bills are presented in a way that reminds one of illegal settlements, speaking to the ongoing transformation of the San Diego/Tijuana border area in a traumatic region.

**Danielle Adair** looks at the Belfast Wall, a “peace line” between neighborhoods of nationalist/Catholic and unionist/Protestant populations. She focuses on dusty bluebells, a popular children’s street game common in West Belfast, a center of resistance to the British presence in Northern Ireland. In the historical quarter of Belfast, she enacts the dusty bluebells with a group of performers to a soundtrack that recalls the contentious nature of the region.

The expression “peace line” was employed by **Nada Prlja** in a work installed in Berlin’s Friedrichstrasse in the spring of 2012. A wall was built between an affluent area next to Checkpoint Charlie, in which tourists are conspicuous, and a poor neighborhood.



**Sreshtha Rit Premnath** *I Will Die When I Stop Building*, 2012



**Danielle Adair** *Dusty Bluebells Belfast*, 2011-12

Despite its association to the historical Berlin Wall, the work intended to call attention to the segregation that marks present gentrified Berlin.

The set of preparatory studies that Prlja made became a stand-alone work that allows the understanding of the multiple features of a separation barrier. The drawings visualize the partition of Berlin, a city

that remains marked by the fragmentation of the urban space, and that illustrates all divided cities across the globe.

The intellectual background of *Contested Territories* comprises two key narratives: on the one hand, New York’s ubiquity in the collective imagination as a location of discord; on the other, wall-building as the physical embodiment of separation barriers. These two key narratives discuss the splitting of communities in present times, a subject that is at the core of the exhibition’s organizing principle.

The works in the exhibition also examine other subjects that look at the relationship between humans and culturally constructed land, including civil unrest and protest or gentrification and ghettoization. *Contested Territories* thus addresses the disruption of

the social order focusing on the city to explore themes that represent the current age of dissensus. ■

— Miguel Amado, *New York*, 2012

#### NOTES

1. Rancière, Jacques, *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, London: Continuum, 2010, p. 69
2. *Id.*, *ibid.*, p. 69
3. *Id.*, *ibid.*, p. 72
4. Cf. Hardt, Michael and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*, New York: Penguin, 2004
5. Hardt, Michael and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*, New York: Penguin, 2004, p. xi

#### BIOGRAPHY

**Miguel Amado** is the curator of the Portuguese Pavilion at the 2013 Venice Biennial. He has been a curator for institutions such as Tate St Ives and Lisbon’s Fundação PLMJ. Other curatorial positions include New York’s Rhizome at the New Museum, the Abrons Arts Center and the International Studio & Curatorial Program. Amado has been a guest curator at institutions such as Lisbon’s Museu Coleção Berardo and events such as Frieze Projects at London’s Frieze Art Fair. He is a critic for *Artforum* and his writing has also appeared in magazines such as *Flash Art*. Amado is an auditor at the Ph.D. Curatorial/Knowledge at Goldsmiths, University of London and a graduate of the MA Curating Contemporary Art at London’s Royal College of Art.

## CHECKLIST

### INBAL ABERGIL

b. 1976, Israel; lives and works in New York

*RAPHA A'L SHUK (ON MY WAY TO THE MARKET)*, 2012

Chromogenic print and vintage frame

8 x 10 x 2 in

Courtesy of the artist, New York

### DANIELLE ADAIR

b. 1981, U.S.; lives and works in Los Angeles

*DUSTY BLUEBELLS BELFAST*, 2011-12

Single-channel video, color, sound, 4 min 34 sec

Courtesy of the artist, Los Angeles

### FRANCIS ALÿS

b. 1959, Belgium; lives and works in Mexico City

*WATERCOLOR*, 2010

Single-channel video, color, sound, 1 min 19 sec

© The artist and David Zwirner Gallery, New York

### TANIA CANDIANI

b. 1974, Mexico; lives and works in Mexico City

*STITCHED GRAFFITI*, 2009

Cloth and sewing thread

63 x 590 in

Courtesy of the artist, Mexico City

### CARABALLO-FARMAN

b. 1971, Argentina/b. 1966, Iran; live and work in New York

*CONTOURS OF STAYING*, 2004

Single-channel video, color, sound, 10 min 50 sec

Courtesy of the artists, New York

### MOUNIR FATMI

b. 1970, Morocco; lives and works in Paris and Tangier

*SAVE MANHATTAN 02*, 2005

VHS tapes, table and sawhorses 18 x 48 in

© The artist and Lombard Freid Projects, New York

### TAKASHI HORISAKI

b. 1974, Japan; lives and works in New York

*SOCIAL DRESS ST. LOUIS: LEARNING AND UNLEARNING*, 2012

Latex, cheesecloth, acrylic paint, bamboo, wire, and detritus from surface of objects

Dimensions variable

Courtesy of the artist, New York

© David Johnson

### JOÃO LOURO

b. 1963, Portugal; lives and works in Lisbon

*IN GOD WE TRUST*, 2005-12

Plastic sheets with dollar bills painted by 10-year old children, steel cable and metal

Dimensions variable

Courtesy of Cristina Guerra

Contemporary Art, Lisbon

### CARLOS MOTTA

b. 1978, Colombia; lives and works in New York

*IVORY TOWER*, 2011

Single-channel video, black and white, sound, 10 min 54 sec

Courtesy of the artist, New York

### CELESTINO MUDAULANE

b. 1972, Mozambique; lives and works in Maputo

*THE SHADOW OF THE WAR*, 2012

India ink on paper

85 x 118 in

Courtesy of the artist, Maputo

### SRESHTA RIT PREMNATH

b. 1979, India; lives and works in New York

*I WILL DIE WHEN I STOP BUILDING*, 2012

Single-channel video, color, silent, 10 min

Courtesy of the artist, New York

### NADA PRILJA

b. 1971, Bosnia and Herzegovina; lives and works in London

*NEW WALL*, 2011-12

Ink on paper

Dimensions variable

Courtesy of the artist, London

### ROSANA RICARDE

b. 1971, Brazil; lives and works in Rio de Janeiro

*INVISIBLE CITIES (LONDON)*, 2012

Cut-out pages from Italo Calvino's book *Invisible Cities* on paper

39 x 43 in

Courtesy of 3 + 1 Arte

Contemporânea, Lisbon

### ALEJANDRO VIDAL

b. 1972, Spain; lives and works in Berlin

*AN UNCONTROLLABLE*

*ACCUMULATION OF UNINTENDED*

*CONSEQUENCES*, 2011

Chromogenic prints

(8) 8 x 12 in

Courtesy of Galería Horrach Moya, Palma de Mallorca

Cover: **Nada Prilja**, *New Wall*, 2011-12

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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