

Sheets, Hilarie M. "Meet Six Disrupters at the New Museum Triennial," *The New York Times*, 2 February 2018.

**The New York Times**

## Meet Six Disrupters at the New Museum's Triennial

By HILARIE M. SHEETS FEB. 2, 2018

When Gary Carrion-Murayari showed up in 2015 at Bikini Wax, a funky living-cum-exhibition space for emerging artists in Mexico City, everyone there put out the call to friends: "There's a curator from the New Museum interested in meeting some young artists — do you want to come down?"

Over the course of the day, about 10 artists, including Manuel Solano, streamed through the gallery with portfolios and laptops to show to Mr. Carrion-Murayari, who, with Alex Gartenfeld, had just been tapped as the curators of the 2018 New Museum triennial and were beginning a worldwide hunt for the next generation of important voices. Mr. Solano, a transgender artist who was denied access to medical care in Mexico while in the early stages of H.I.V. and went blind from the infection, offered painted self-portraits — and was among the first of 26 artists or collectives from 17 countries selected for "Songs for Sabotage," opening on Feb. 13 in New York.

When the New Museum kicked off its first triennial in 2009, titled "Younger Than Jesus," some critics raised their eyebrows at the ageist premise. Yet the focus on international youth has come to distinguish these triennials from a slew of rival shows. And the current news cycle makes this a potentially more interesting moment to consider the new generation's sensibility. The fourth version includes artists ages 25 to 38 whose work often pushes back against social or bureaucratic power structures and sounds the call for change.

The personal risks can be high. Song Ta, from Guangzhou, in southern China, makes videos that undermine the government's authority and have been banned from exhibitions. Anupam Roy has displayed his paintings as banners at student protests in New Delhi. For those working in Athens or Mexico City, with hardly any commercial galleries to support them, a different kind of "resourcefulness, collaboration and commitment to be an artist" is required, Mr. Carrion-Murayari said.

This triennial "isn't about making art stars," said Lisa Phillips, the director of the New Museum, "but looking at whether there are similarities and affinities across cultures among an emerging generation of artists." Of course, in years past some stars have risen: Danh Vo, for example, whose survey at the Guggenheim Museum opens on Feb. 9, and Adrián Villar Rojas, who transformed the Cantor Roof Garden at the Metropolitan Museum of Art last year, both gained from exposure in the 2012 triennial, "The Ungovernables."

"When all of us are feeling the fire of youth, young people's voices have really come to the fore, particularly in the last year," said Tom Eccles, the executive director at the Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College, who is not affiliated with the New Museum. The challenge of the triennial, compared with surveys like the Whitney Biennial and the Venice Biennale, where most of the participants are already known, is to find "artists we ultimately can believe in," he said.

That will be determined by time. Mr. Carrion-Murayari, 37, and Mr. Gartenfeld, 31, the deputy director and chief curator at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Miami, made nearly two dozen trips around the world, to places where artist communities weren't digitally accessible. "We

Sheets, Hilarie M. "Meet Six Disrupters at the New Museum Triennial," *The New York Times*, 2 February 2018.

really made a focus of looking at artist-run and alternative spaces as ways of questioning how global art markets have been growing," Mr. Gartenfeld said.

A shared mind-set that emerged among the chosen — many showing in the United States for the first time — is "the recognition that what we're experiencing today is the continuation of colonialism that has never truly ended," Mr. CarrionMurayari said. Artists like Daniela Ortiz from Peru and Cian Dayrit from the Philippines speak in very similar ways about "ethnic and racist divisions that were put in place" during the colonial period, the curator said, and they are responding with subversive gestures.

Ms. Ortiz has proposed replacements for monuments to Christopher Columbus in Madrid; Lima, Peru; and New York, including a ceramic sculpture of a refugee wearing a shirt that says, "The migratory control system is the continuation of colonialism." In Mr. Song's comical video installation called "Who Is the Loveliest Guy?" the artist persuaded Chinese naval officers to ride a highspeed roller coaster, then videotaped their efforts to stay stern and composed — although ultimately their authority and restraint broke down. "That's sabotage, and that's also song," Mr. Gartenfeld said. Here is a preview of six of the triennial's activist-artists.

## **Wilmer Wilson IV**

**AGE** 28

**BORN** Richmond, Va.

**LIVES/WORKS** Philadelphia

In his mixed-media work and live performances, Mr. Wilson investigates "the way that blackness is represented in the city space," he said — specifically the treatment of black bodies as objects of labor or desire, and the ever-present threat of violence. "I'm interested in producing a different possibility of representation" for African-Americans, the artist said, "one that's divergent from a pervading global advertising style." For the New Museum, he gathered fliers and posters for church plays, strip clubs and concerts that he found stapled to scaffolding and telephone poles or stuck to windshields in his neighborhood in West Philadelphia. Mr. Wilson enlarged the photographic portraits to life-size and affixed them to plywood panels using thousands of reflective staples that screen part of the portraits, revealing just hands, feet, mouths and ears. The subjects are protected, Mr. Wilson said — even as the artist is locking them in.

A version of this article appears in print on February 4, 2018, on Page AR1 of the New York edition with the headline: Six Artists, Pushing Back.