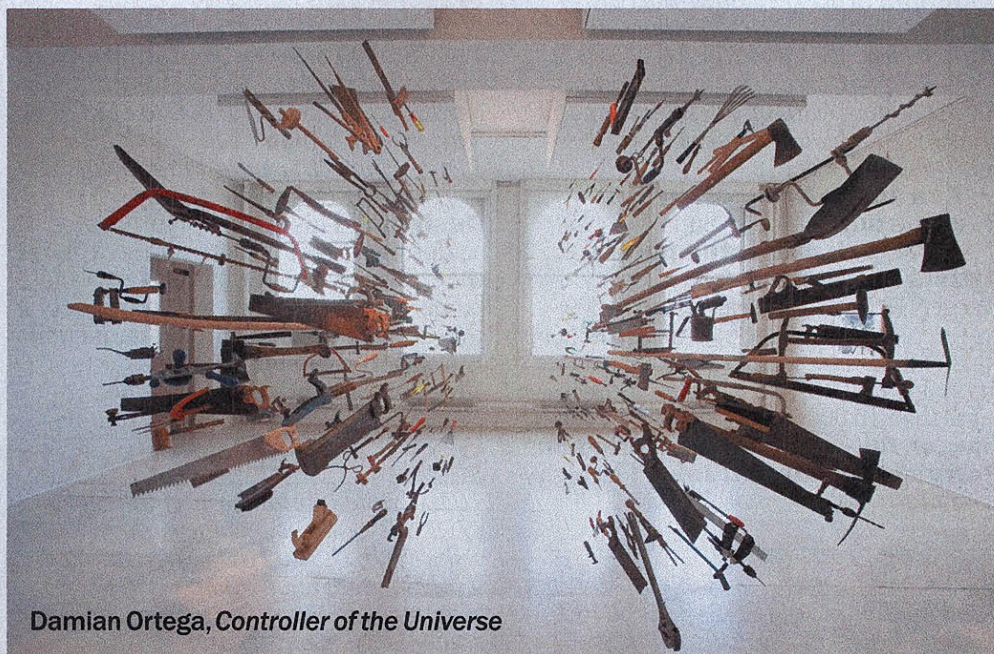


GLADSTONE GALLERY

Carlin, T.J., “‘That Was Then... This is Now’”, *Time Out New York*, September 11-17, 2008

“That Was Then... This Is Now”



Damian Ortega, *Controller of the Universe*



P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center,
through Sept 22 (see Museums)

While “That Was Then... This Is Now” offers much in the way of good-looking work, it’s also one of the most timely and effective surveys on art and political activism in a long time. The show is divided into three sections (“Dreams,” “Flags” and “Weapons”), each drawing on a tradition of art as protest to assemble a collection spanning the ’60s to the present.

“Weapons” is the least effective of the three parts, perhaps because the subject matter is so overwhelmingly disturbing. The most powerful pieces incorporate absurdity and humor, or subsume frightening content to aesthetic effect, as in Alfredo Jaar’s photographic print *Index: Landmines*, which lines up the deadly items in an impassive visual

catalog that recalls an appealing display of market wares. The “Flags” room cannot avoid being a potent reminder of our current election season. Pieces such as Gardar Eide Einarsson’s *Untitled, American Flag*, which features the phrase YOUR MESSAGE HERE printed below an outline of the states imprinted with the Stars and Stripes, resonate with all sorts of implications, not the least of which is how quickly patriotism can be hijacked for ill purposes.

Finally, “Dreams” offers Josephine Meckseper’s *March for Peace, Justice and Democracy, 4/29/06*, in which she remixes video footage using the simple manipulation technique of split-mirrored framing. The result is haunting, transcendently ominous and exhortative. Anyone wondering about the state of political art in the 21st century should definitely see this show.—*T.J. Carlin*