

ARTFORUM

New York

PICK

"Things Fall Apart"

WINKLEMAN GALLERY
637 West 27th Street
January 16–February 21



Christopher Lowry Johnson, *Implosion (6)*, 2008, oil on linen, 16 x 22".

This exhibition, curated by artist **Joy Garnett**, culls its title from a poem by W. B. Yeats. The show responds to a variety of political issues, including Hurricane Katrina, which is loosely referenced in a series of unframed drawings, prints, and photographs by **Paul Chan** and the New Orleans–based artist collective **the Front**. Most striking from this group are the architecturally inflected images, such as **Jonathan Traviesa's** *Sculptural Awareness #7*, 2005, a photograph of a house covered with peeling strips of canvas, and **Megan Roniger's** precise pen-and-ink drawing of vine-covered houses precariously resting on tilted poles.

Recovering such lost histories rather than “brushing them under the rug” is taken literally by **Mounir Fatmi**, who affixes the flags of G8 nations to large brooms that lean against the gallery's central pillar. Whereas Fatmi's installation is playfully literal, **Stephen Andrews's** drawings are abstracted beyond recognition. **Carlos Motta's** broadsheet listing US interventions in Latin America communicates an explicitly anti-US agenda, while **Yevgeniy Fiks's** black-and-white painting of a film still, *Songs of Russia #20*, 2007, based on the titular 1944 movie, poignantly reminds viewers of the short-lived government and Hollywood support for the former Soviet Union.

Rather than stake out a political position, Croatian artist **Renata Poljak** focuses on personal responses to the Serbian war in two videos accompanied by a subtle, droning sound installation. One depicts a Croatian woman who feels trapped in bourgeois exile, while the other presents a drive through an uninhabited, sunlit Croatian landscape, narrated by, alternately, a Croatian woman and her Austrian companion. While the overall politics of the exhibition are diffuse, the individual pieces unearth the creative possibility embedded in official history.

— Lori Cole