

## GAGOSIAN GALLERY

# ARTnews

### UP NOW

## Chris Burden

### New Museum

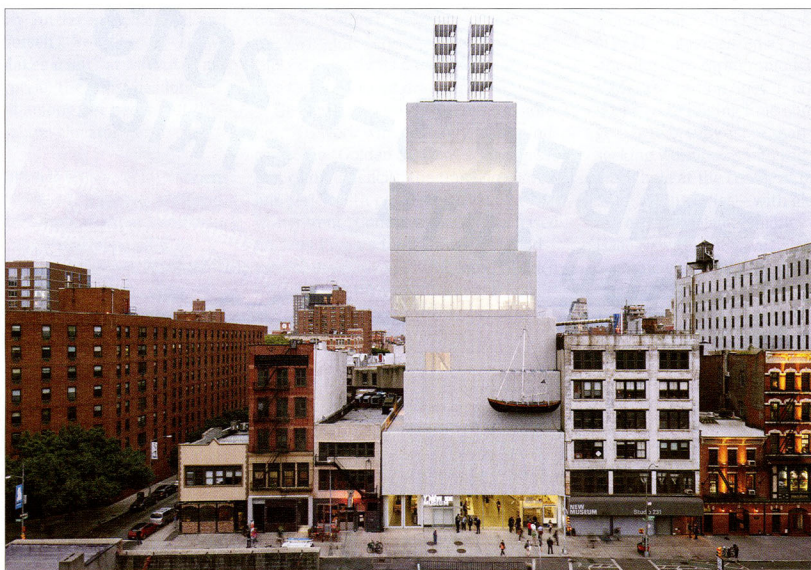
**Through January 12**

Chris Burden's 40-year retrospective at the New Museum, his first New York survey and first major U.S. exhibition in over a quarter-century, moves the dial on his art-historical profile from body artist to sculptor, architect, and mechanical engineer. In so doing, the museum reconfigures the artist as a seasoned innovator whose wit

Described by the artist as a "kind of Neanderthal atomic bomb," the wheel could smash through the walls of the museum and neighboring buildings if accidentally released from its protective trestle. Spinning in the gallery, the "bomb" reads as a meditative kinetic sculpture and companion to a nearby 365-pound meteorite conjoined with a 1974 Porsche sports car. Both are suspended a few feet above the floor with steel cables rigged to a simple post and lever, demonstrating, perhaps, a peaceful equilibrium of heaven and earth, the crafted and the natural.

displayed on a topographical field of sand and rock, surrounded by live plants. Binoculars are provided (and necessary) for viewing details in time and space. Like the submarines, these boy toys offer guilty pleasures, even while we recognize them as surrogates for military conflict. Massive construction on an intimate scale is also a technique Burden uses to craft detailed replicas of mighty bridges—structures that metaphorically link here and there, my side and your side.

The installation of the show is refreshingly spare, with four or five works



Facade and roof of the New Museum with Chris Burden's *Ghost Ship* (2005) and *Twin Quasi Legal Skyscrapers* (2013) as part of "Chris Burden: Extreme Measures."

and sagacity will probably come as a surprise to many viewers. This show was organized by museum director Lisa Phillips with associate director Massimiliano Gioni, former associate curator Jenny Moore, and assistant curator Margot Norton.

The exhibition, titled "Extreme Measures," features several installations with visualizations of large metric units (weights, numbers, statistics), rendered as displays of military might, feats of engineering, or fearsome mechanical forces. An eight-foot, three-ton, industrial flywheel revved up periodically by a 250cc motorcycle stores enough energy in three to four minutes to rotate on its own for almost two hours.

Inversions of scale—epic sagas and structures rendered in miniature—is a strategy linking several apparently disparate installations, among them a collection of 625 eight-inch cardboard submarines hovering between floor and ceiling. This whimsical little fleet stands in for all the submarines launched by the U.S. Navy up to 1987, each listed by name and date on the adjoining wall. *A Tale of Two Cities* (1981), an 800-by-1,200-square-foot tableau weighing 53,000 pounds, depicts two city-states at war for, ostensibly, centuries. The conflict is played out with approximately 5,000 toy warriors, buildings, machines, animals, and battlefields,

featured in each of the galleries on the second, third, and fourth floors. Documentation of Burden's notorious and influential body-art performances of the 1970s is sequestered separately on floor five. The exhibition also includes two structures affixed to the outside of the New Museum's cubic architecture: a 30-foot sailboat that sails without a pilot, and two miniature skyscrapers originally designed to circumvent Los Angeles building codes. In this setting, the ghost ship and twin towers inevitably conjure memories of recent natural and man-made disasters, extremes no one has been able to calibrate. —Patricia Failing