

OCCUPY

MUSEUMS



Occupy Museums approached this booklet as an opportunity to collaboratively reexamine and explore our underlying principles. We developed a list of questions together and gave each member the time and space to answer two or three of their choice autonomously. From the very beginning, with roots deep in Occupy Wall Street's process and ideals, Occupy Museums has been committed to both group process and the autonomous self-expression of group members. Members of Occupy Museums show an individual voice in this booklet, sometimes agreeing with others and sometimes not, and it is exactly within this dialogue that OM finds its coherence.

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**Art is not a mirror
to hold up to the world
Art is a hammer
to shape the world**

- Bertolt Brecht

Gold & Silver is not money! Aristotle understood that money is a form of social exchange. The artist Joseph Beuys called this process social sculpture and proclaimed that all people are creative in the way that they live their lives. Art is an intensified form of social exchange: more specific, at times poetic. But intensity and creativity are not limited to artists, it belongs to all People; it cannot be separated from our daily activities. Creativity is our Commons, Art is our Commons. Limiting creativity is limiting social exchange; limiting creativity is denies liberty. It is a form of oppression: the tyranny of the 1% over the 99%. If a person is not creative in their job then they are a wage slave. If a person lives in poverty, then their creativity is limited to subsistence shopping.

The people of Iceland know that money is a social exchange

The people of Iceland are enlightened

The revolution has started in Iceland

The people of Iceland refused to pay their debt
instead they arrest bankers

be enlightened google Iceland



We call on the spirit of the Illuminati
Ben Franklin, Voltaire, Rousseau
the spirit of the Enlightenment
the spirit of the American & French Revolutions
the first revolution for
Universal Human Rights
Now in the 21st Century we call
For a Renaissance of the Enlightenment
Occupy Society, Occupy the Economy,
Occupy Sustainability Environmental
Our planet in balance, our world harmony
The spirit of all things universally
all people equally - JIM

How does art function in today's society?

Art has been colonized by powerful interests since the 1970s. The world of aesthetic experience, especially the visual domain, has provided a powerful tool for corporations to ensure consent among their client-base of potential customers. Surface and spectacle can instantly capture the imagination of millions of individuals plugged in to the latest media technologies, and thus they stand at the front lines of a war over our ideas, values, and practices. Eric Schmidt, the former CEO of Google, speaks of today's "attention economy" in which corporations compete for "eyeballs." This entails the heightened importance of marketing strategies focused on image and design that have effectively monopolized artistic innovation, and secured its powers of influence in the seductive realm of advertising. A poor artist using paint on canvas hardly stands a chance to capture the attention of an audience in the face of the ubiquitous and endless stream of images flowing from the Jumbotron in Times Square to the smartphones in our pockets. To speak of 'art' is to speak of the 'cool,' the 'fashionable,' the 'marketable.' Once upon a time art held a critical sway, staving off 'culture' from 'commerce.' Now the two are indistinguishable, united in the hegemony of corporate chic. Art and culture, part of the dwindling last remnants of our commons, are in a state of crisis. - Ben



OUR CULTURE IS PRESERVED, PROTECTED, ALIENATED, COMMODITIZED, PROFESSIONALIZED, AND COMPARTMENTALIZED BY "PUBLIC" INSTITUTIONS AND THE PRIVATE MARKET. POWER, ESTABLISHED IN THE PROFIT-DRIVEN ECONOMY, MANIPULATES VALUE AND CONTROLS EXCHANGE. AN ART WORLD BUBBLE, OF OWNERSHIP AND FALSE SCARCITY SURROUNDS US.

HOW CAN WE

BEGIN TO EXPERIMENT WITH THE BOUNDARIES CREATED BY THIS HERMETICALLY SEALED SELF-REFERENTIAL SYSTEM?

CAN WE PUSH UP AGAINST, GENTLY PROD, OR KICK THROUGH, TO ACCESS THE ABUNDANCE THAT HOVERS JUST ON THE OTHERSIDE OF INTANGIBLE BARRIERS?

ART IS SOLD, OWNED, AND SAFEGUARDED, AS IF IT SHOULD BE STOLEN AND PROTECTED. RATHER THAN SHARED, CHANGED AND BUILT UPON.

ART, PRODUCED AS PLAYTHINGS FOR THE POWERFUL, FOCUSES ON THE DESIRES OF THOSE SEPARATED OUT FROM THE FLUX AND FLOW OF EVERYDAY LIFE. ART IS PASSIVELY CONSUMED, HUMBLY ACCEPTED, SELECTED FOR US BY THOSE COMPLICIT WITH THE SYSTEM, AND POSSIBLE ONLY THROUGH THE GENEROUS BENEVOLENCE OF THE PREVAILING DOMINANT.

WHAT WOULD ART BE IF THERE WERE NO ARTISTS? WHAT IF ALL THAT WE CREATE WAS NOT SEQUESTERED, EXPLOITED OR COLONIZED? THE WEALTH OF ALL GENERATIONS, IN LARGE OVERLAPPING SYSTEMS OF IDEAS AND REALIZATIONS, BELONG TO US ALL.

ART AND CULTURE IS ALWAYS COLLABORATIVE AND COLLECTIVE.

DIVISIONS BETWEEN PEOPLE AND OUR IDEAS DISMANTLE, DEPOLITICIZE AND CO-OPT OUR POTENTIAL.

ART IS POWER.

HOW CAN ART AND CULTURE BE CARED FOR, INTERACTED WITH, AND EXPANDED UPON, AS A COMMONS?

MAKING ART IN PUBLIC, AND MAKING ART COLLABORATIVELY HAS REAL TRANSFORMATIVE POWER TO RE-EDUCATE ARTISTS WHO HAVE BEEN TRAINED AS COMPETITIVE INDIVIDUALS IN THE ART ACADEMIES. WE CAN LEARN TO WORK AS COLLECTIVES, TO PROVIDE MUTUAL AID TO ONE ANOTHER, AND TO BECOME A COMMUNITY, EVEN IF WE CHOOSE TO CONTINUE MAKING ART AS INDIVIDUALS. WE CAN CREATE AN ART COMMONS THAT IS NOT DEPENDENT ON THE GALLERY SYSTEM OR THE DESIGNATION BETWEEN ARTIST AND NON-ARTIST. —MAX



CAN ART CHANGE

REALITY IN THE POLITICAL ARENA?

The Museum of Modern Art



Our relationship with Teamsters Local 814 (the Sotheby's art handler union) grew from the mutual struggle against a decade of abuse by the elite/wealthiest small group of people, the 1%, who are co-opting our national cultural treasures and exploiting artist's labor for their personal financial gain.

By teaming up together with Teamsters we were able to empower each other to be a much stronger voice in this ongoing struggle. Art is often misrepresented to stand for some kind of bourgeois utopian concept where only privileged and rich can enjoy and fully 'understand' it's true meaning and value. However, both Occupy Museums and the Teamsters knew that the true meaning of cultural heritage actually derives from social and cultural exchange and the work of many people, which must be respected.

Our mutual stand with the Sotheby's art handler union evolved from noise makers, picket lines and loud GA's into a creative visual expression, where teamsters created artifacts --- artworks symbolizing their demand that the MOMA cut ties with Sotheby's. In our collaborative process we exchanged our social, political and cultural values, we influenced each other and we empowered each other --- which is the influence of art in politics.

We are all coming from different walks of life in solidarity to support and express our common goal --- our struggle and dissatisfaction with the current social, economical, political and cultural systems:

"Ten people who speak make more noise than ten thousand who are silent."

-JOLANTA

WHAT DOES ART HAVE TO DO

ART AND CREATIVITY

HAVE BEEN PART OF BUILDING NEARLY EVERY SOCIAL MOVEMENT IN HISTORY. OWS IS NO EXCEPTION. THE FRAMING OF THAT CREATIVITY AS ART DOES NOT SEEM IMPORTANT UNTIL WE WISH TO PACKAGE IT IN SOME WAY. I THINK PART OF WHAT OCCUPY MUSEUMS IS DOING IS CHALLENGING HOW ART AND CULTURE ARE PACKAGED, BOUGHT AND SOLD IN OUR CURRENT SOCIETY. AS FAR AS I AM CONCERNED SOME OF THE MOST PROVOCATIVE CREATIVE ACTION IN THE LAST TEN YEARS HAS BEEN A RESULT OF THE LAST SIX MONTHS AT OWS.

WILL THAT BE FRAMED AS ART? SOME OF IT WILL (AND HAS), BUT MOST OF IT WILL NOT BE. AT THE END OF THE DAY, WHO CARES? WHAT MATTERS IS THAT IT HAPPENED AND THAT WE GOT TO LIVE IT.

-BLITHE

WITH OCCUPY WALL STREET?

How foolish to speak

of a right to art and culture when
there is no basic right to health care and food and shelter
and water. How bourgie. How offensive even—so they
say, and so I say, too...sometimes.

But then I think: really, how privileged are we who grew
amongst color and trees
and texture and patterns and blue sky days.
who built communities in gardens
and were raised in museums...

and were encouraged to create our own meaning in the world
and who saw flowers elsewhere than on roadside memorial plaques.

and, really, if we know that our flesh is as impenetrable as cheesecloth
strained between our innards and our surroundings...
and, really, if we know that our becoming is informed by our environment...
and if we have some vague, unsubstantiated inkling that the color yellow makes us
happy and that grey is the color of cemeteries...

...this is just to say that: well, we can calculate the physical health consequences
of spending life in poor urban zones
where the rich build their coal plants and chemical plants and waste-incinerating plants
and where not an oxygen-bearing leaf from bloomberg's million trees falls
and where the air is heavy with the perfume of dog shit and mcdonalds
and where midsummer night runs are punishable by stop and frisk

but what of the incalculable consequences for the mind, and for the soul
(or is it trite to enquire after the soul)
oh yeah, and what about one's sense of self-worth?
and what becomes of developing eyes that adjust to shades of grey?

one thing that ghettos and detainment centers have in common is the dull,
grey landscape.
and the near impossibility of escape.
and there is surely a reason why ghettos—from new york to joburg to gaza to
warsaw—have always been shit holes. - Imani

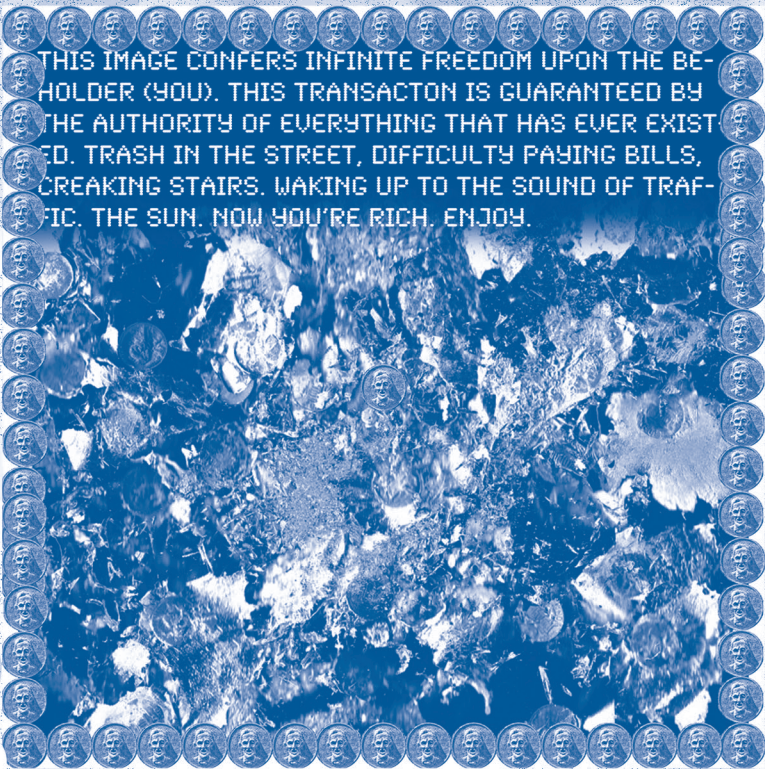
What is gold?

gold is the earth like the human body is the earth
the human body is mostly water
water is ancient and transforms constantly into different forms
Gold is the make-up of of the human body too
people decided that gold had more value than some other things
partly due to its flexibility of transformation - it is pretty too
and that is maybe why people thought of "owning" it
'ownership' is not reality - ownership is a lie
if people think they can own things they will buy things
but what is not mentioned in the final equation
=
if people commodify they will be commodified
but life has much more to offer than just some stuff to buy

people are gold
maybe they can figure that out

- Cari





-NOAH

OCCUPY MUSEUMS IS AN ONGOING PROTEST THAT CALLS OUT
CORRUPTION AND INJUSTICE IN INSTITUTIONS OF ART AND CULTURE.

PAST ACTIONS:

**7TH BERLIN BIENNALE
JUNE 1-14, 2012**

**UN-FRIEZE ART FAIR
RANDALL'S ISLAND, NY
MAY 2012**

**OCCUPY MUSEUMS AND OCCUPY 477
AT THE MUSEUM OF AMERICAN FINANCE
MARCH 12, 2012**

**FREE ART FOR FAIR EXCHANGE
2012 ARMORY SHOW
MARCH 10-11, 2012**

**OCCUPY MUSEUMS RETURNS TO MOMA
JANUARY 2012**

**TEAMSTERS 814 SOLIDARITY
NOVEMBER 2011**

**AMERICAN MUSEUM OF
NATURAL HISTORY
NOVEMBER 2011**

**BRING YOUR OWN MANIFESTO
MOMA (1ST ACTION)
OCTOBER 2011**

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