

# Collecting Activism: Archiving Occupy Wall Street and Museums in Focus

In the wake of the global financial crisis of 2008, the Occupy Wall Street (OWS) movement emerged as a powerful force for social change. Rooted in grassroots activism and fueled by widespread public discontent, OWS sought to challenge the excesses of capitalism and fight for economic justice. Today, the movement's legacy continues to inspire and inform activism worldwide.

One crucial aspect of preserving the legacy of OWS is the collection and archiving of its materials. From posters and banners to tents and documents, these artifacts provide a rich source of evidence that sheds light on the movement's tactics, strategies, and impact. In recent years, museums have played an increasingly important role in collecting and exhibiting OWS materials, recognizing their historical significance and potential for educating future generations about the power of activism.



## Collecting Activism, Archiving Occupy Wall Street (Museums in Focus) by Kylie Message

★★★★☆ 4.2 out of 5

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## **The Collection and Archiving of OWS Materials**

The collection of OWS materials began spontaneously during the occupation of Zuccotti Park in Manhattan. Participants and supporters alike contributed posters, signs, and other materials that reflected the movement's message and ethos. As the occupation grew, so too did the collection of materials, which were eventually stored in a makeshift archive on site.

Following the end of the occupation, various organizations and individuals took steps to preserve the OWS materials. The New York Public Library's Manuscripts and Archives Division acquired a significant portion of the collection, which included posters, banners, and documents. The Museum of the City of New York also collected materials related to OWS, focusing on its impact on the city's culture and politics.

In addition to these institutional archives, numerous smaller collections and archives have been established by individuals and groups involved in the movement. These collections often contain unique and personal items that provide valuable insights into the experiences of OWS participants.

## **Museums and the Exhibition of OWS Materials**

Museums have played a crucial role in exhibiting OWS materials and educating the public about the movement's significance. In 2012, the Museum of the City of New York presented the exhibition "Occupy Wall Street: Posters from the Movement," which featured a collection of posters and signs from the occupation. The exhibition highlighted the creative and powerful ways in which OWS participants used visual art to express their message and mobilize support.

In 2014, the Smithsonian National Museum of American History acquired a collection of OWS materials from the New York Public Library. The museum has since exhibited these materials in various exhibitions, including "American Democracy: A Great Leap of Faith" and "Objects of Protest: Art, Activism, and the Civic Imagination." The Smithsonian's collection includes iconic OWS artifacts such as the "We Are the 99%" banner and the "People's Mic," a device used to amplify the voices of participants in the General Assembly.

### **The Significance of Collecting and Exhibiting OWS Materials**

The collection and exhibition of OWS materials has several important implications for the preservation of the movement's legacy and its continued relevance in contemporary society.

First, these materials provide a valuable historical record of the movement's origins, tactics, and impact. By preserving and exhibiting these artifacts, museums and archives ensure that future generations will have access to firsthand accounts of the OWS movement.

Second, the exhibition of OWS materials can help to raise awareness of the movement's goals and ideals. By educating the public about the causes and consequences of the 2008 financial crisis and the subsequent rise of social inequality, museums can contribute to a broader understanding of the challenges facing society today.

Finally, the collection and exhibition of OWS materials can inspire and empower future activists. By showcasing the power of collective action and the creativity of social movements, museums can encourage individuals to become involved in the fight for social justice and economic equality.

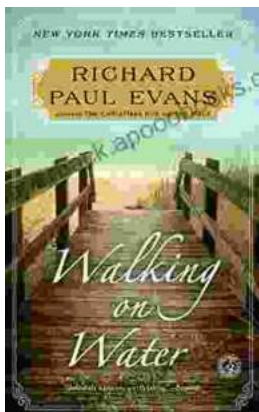
The collection and archiving of Occupy Wall Street materials is an essential step in preserving the legacy of this important social movement. Museums play a crucial role in this process, ensuring that the movement's artifacts and stories are available to the public for study, education, and inspiration. By exhibiting OWS materials, museums contribute to a broader understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing society today and empower future activists to fight for a more just and equitable world.



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