

Collecting Activism: Archiving Occupy Wall Street I Museums in Focus

The Occupy Wall Street (OWS) movement, which erupted in 2011, marked a watershed moment in contemporary activism. Its decentralized, leaderless structure, and focus on economic inequality resonated with millions worldwide. In the years since, museums and cultural institutions have recognized the profound historical significance of OWS and have undertaken significant efforts to collect and archive materials related to the movement.



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

★★★★☆ 4.2 out of 5

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Preserving the Legacy of Activism

The collection and archiving of activism is vital for preserving the legacy of social movements. By documenting the events, ideas, and individuals involved, museums and archives create a rich repository of knowledge that can be used to:

- Educate future generations about important historical events
- Inspire future activists and empower social change
- Provide scholars and researchers with primary source material

The Role of Museums in Archiving OWS

Museums have played a crucial role in collecting and preserving materials related to the Occupy Wall Street movement. By acquiring artifacts, documents, and digital records, museums ensure that these materials are available for research, education, and public engagement.

For example, the Museum of the City of New York has assembled an extensive collection of OWS artifacts, including protest signs, tents, and clothing worn by participants. The museum's collection also includes oral histories from key figures in the movement and a comprehensive digital archive of OWS-related materials.

Challenges and Opportunities

While museums and archives have made significant progress in collecting and archiving OWS materials, several challenges remain.

- **Ephemeral Nature of the Movement:** OWS was a decentralized, fluid movement that often left few physical traces. As a result, capturing the full scope of the movement's activities poses a challenge for collectors.
- **Copyright and Intellectual Property Concerns:** Many OWS-related materials are protected by copyright or intellectual property laws. This can complicate the acquisition and use of these materials by museums and archives.

- **Preservation and Accessibility:** Preserving and providing access to OWS materials requires careful consideration of storage, conservation, and digitization strategies. Museums and archives must also balance the need for preservation with the importance of making materials accessible to researchers and the public.

Despite these challenges, museums and archives continue to find innovative ways to collect and preserve OWS materials. For example, the University of California, Berkeley's Bancroft Library has partnered with the Occupy Research Archive to create a digital repository of OWS documents, images, and videos. This repository provides researchers and the public with unprecedented access to a wealth of primary source materials.

The collection and archiving of activism is an essential undertaking that ensures the preservation of our collective history and empowers future generations to understand and learn from past social movements. The Occupy Wall Street movement, with its profound impact on contemporary activism, is a prime example of the importance of such work.

As museums and archives continue to collect and preserve OWS materials, they play a vital role in preserving the legacy of this movement and ensuring that its message of economic justice and social change continues to resonate.



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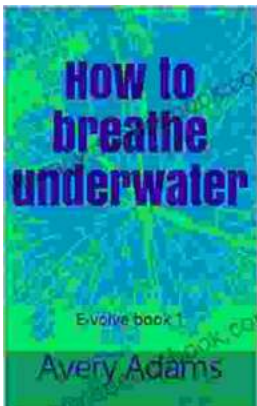
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