



**STRIKE**  
**MOMA**

**READER**



"My entire people are a homeland resisting," reads the projection on the facade of the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York City. We offer this reader as a form of direct action. Unmediated by MoMA, it embodies the collective labor of thinking, organizing, writing, and artmaking by numerous groups and individuals who have found one another through the shared recognition for the need to collectively exit from the terms and conditions of MoMA. We thank all those who have generously shared their time, resources, wisdom, knowledge, skills, and imagination in building out this initiative in person and on-line, from New York, to Palestine, to the Dominican Republic and Colombia, to the many other sites of resistance around the globe. In this work, the artist organizes and the organizer practices art embedded in struggle as we decenter, dismantle, and abolish structures of oppression and domination no matter what they call themselves. We especially thank the artists, scholars, students, journalists, community organizers, and workers, including MoMA staff who have taken risks, relayed their support, and kept in touch as the second phase of Strike MoMA continues to unfold. We also thank core community groups who participated and helped organize Ten Weeks of Art, Action and Conversations, especially [Within Our Lifetime: Palestine Will Be Free](#), [Dominicans United NYC](#), [Colombianos en NY](#), [Mexicanos Unidos](#), [Decolonize Ayiti](#), [Rude Mechanical Orchestra](#), and [the Illuminator](#). With love and generosity, we continue to chart the pathways of the Post-MoMA future together. We hope this reader will be a testimonial marker of the work, challenges, and successes thus far, as well as a tool to be deployed by others with shared politics in the struggle to get free.

- The Strike MoMA Working Group of  
International Imagination of Anti-national, Anti-imperialist Feelings (IIAAF)

## INTRODUCTION

## TIMELINE

## PRIMARY DOCUMENTS

16. Collective Statement Signed by 157 artists, curators, and art worker (February 4)
17. MoMA Divest Statement (February 4)
18. Fuck MoMA (February 4)
19. Strike MoMA: Framework and Terms for Struggle (March 23)
44. Artists for Post-MoMa Future Working Group (March 23)
46. Curators and Educators for Decolonization Working Group (March 23)
48. To the Workers of MoMA (distributed at MoMA on March 25, made public May 1)
50. Remarks by Dylan Rodriguez at P.S.1 "Abolitionist Imaginaries" symposium (March 26)
52. Introduction to Writing for Post-MoMA Futures, Part I (April 9)
54. Art of Maiming: A Research Working Group (April 9)
56. Decolonize Aiyiti Working Group (April 9)
58. Pop-Up De-Occupation Framework (April 9)
62. David Rockefeller Director Glen Lowry Email to Staff (April 14)
63. Notice of Intentions and Expectation for the Ruins of Modernity Tour (April 23)
64. Statement on Replacement of Black With Kravis as Chair of the MoMA Board (April 28)
66. Ruins of Modernity Tour (April 30)
74. Initial Statement on MoMA's Counterinsurgency Tactics (May 1)
75. Glen Lowry, "Letter to Staff" (May 3)
76. Note to Workers About Lowry's Lies (May 5)
78. Glen Lowry: Gaslighter-in-Chief (May 7)
79. Thank You card to workers (distributed at MoMA May 18)

80. Strike MoMA/Free Palestine: A Call to Action (May 21)

84. Open Letter From Gabrielle L'Hirondelle Hill (June 9)

85. Artists for Post-MoMa Futures, "Nominate MoMA a World Heritage Site" (June 9)

86. Zone of Operations: Interconnected Struggles (and Chants) (June 11)

90. Wall of Memes / IG Communiques + Statements (April - Sept)

## ENGAGEMENTS

100. Jasbir K. Puar and Andrew Ross, "Decolonizing Museums"

102. Billy Anania, "Bringing Abolition to the Museum: An Interview with Shellyne Rodriguez"

108. Marz Saffore, "Dancing in the Rubble: How Strike MoMA Began"

110. Vijay Masharani, "Lightning Strikes: On Strike MoMA's Ruins of Modernity Tour"

112. Decolonize Aiyiti: Action Report

116. Abou Farman, "The Museum of Modern Artigarchy"

120. Andrew Ross, "Growing Up on 53rd Street: MoMA, Midtown, Modernity"

122. Reinhold Martin, "The Case Against Phillip Johnson"

124. Ariella Aïsha Azoulay, Abolish MoMA: The Case of Palestine

132. Mikinaak Migwans, "Thoughts on the Indigenous Struggle in the Art Museum, As Seen From the Struggle in the Ethnographic Museum"

136. Macarena Gómez-Barris, "MoMA, Cisneros, and Beyond: Artwashing and Extractivism in the Americas"

140. Sandy Plácido, "Blood on Their Hands: Barrick Gold, Gistavo and Patricia Cisneros, and Networks of Imperialist Extraction in the Dominican Republic"

144. Kency Cornejo, "Megawealth and Its Entanglement with Art and Colonial Aesthetics"

150. Nelson Maldonado-Torres, "Notes on Modernity and Extractivism in Dialogue with Strike MoMA"

152. Strike MoMa Archival Research Unit, "The Extraction Behind the Abtraction: A Cisneros Family Photo-File"

156. TJ Demos, "MoMa as/and Fossil Capital"

158. Ashley Dawson, "Growing Movement Pushes Museums to Cut Ties With Colonialism and Apartheid"

- 160. Andreas Petrossiants and Jose Rosales, "Is the Museum Obsolete?"
- 162. Fred Moten and Stefano Harney, "The University: Last Words"
- 176. Free Cuny/Rank and File Action, "Cops Out of CUNY!"
- 180. Harry Burke, "MoMA Hesitant"
- 182. Brynn Hatton, "Midtown is Always Cold"
- 184. Strike MoMA Archival Research Unit, "Some Notes on John Szarkowski and the Wok of Art in Age of Settler-Colonization"
- 186. Andrew Weiner, "White Walls, Dirty Wars: MoMA and Counterinsurgency"

## CONVERSATIONS

- 204. Conversation One: Ariella Azoulay, Nitasha Dhillon, Dalaeja Foreman, Shelleyne Rodriguez (April 29)
- 205. Conversation Two: Nora Akawi, Amin Husain, Yazan Khalili, Andrew Ross, Eyal Weizman (May 20)
- 206. Conversation Three: \*Conversation: Sandy Grande, Fred Moten, Stefano Harney, Dylan Rodriguez, Jasbir Puar\* (May 27)
- 207. Conversation Four: Kency Cornejo, Saudi Garcia, Macarena Gómez-Barris, Nelson Maldonado-Torres, MónicaRamón Ríos (June 3)

## APPENDIX I

- 209. Globalize the Intifada

## APPENDIX II

- 244. Comandante Scream Communiques #1-5 (first, April 9; last, June 11)

Two important editorial notes: (1) Images that appear here are part of movement-generated media and movement commons. Images throughout this reader are shared with care and gratitude and are not reproduced for sale or profit, and (2) as part of generating this reader, contributions and content were not themselves edited (beyond some copy-editing) but rather content was invited by friends and thinkers to deepen, broaden, and enrich our collective thinking and direct action.

## INTRODUCTION

This reader is an offering from the Strike MoMA Working Group of the International Imagination of Anti-National, Anti-Imperialist Feelings (IIAAF). We intend this reader to be an instrument of organizing and a form of direct action in furtherance of the ongoing strike against the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA). It is part of a relational and material infrastructure that has been nurtured over the course of the strike. What you will find in these pages reflects an extended movement conversation that advances the case for abolishing MoMA while at the same time accelerating the process of collective exit from the terms and conditions of the museum. This reader is an intellectual assemblage, a gathering of voices that meet and speak to each other, with the goal of moving forward without assuming unanimity. We present it as a medium of counter-institutional memory, intergenerational learning, and movement pedagogy, a tactical study-guide for understanding how power acts and reacts in the face of heightening contradictions and sharpening antagonisms. We have compiled it as a living library for post-MoMA futures, a collective reading apparatus that decodes and overwrites MoMA's efforts to distort, repress, forget, co-opt, and foreclose. As a manifestation of post-MoMA futures in the here and now, it provides frames and directions for the extension of Strike MoMA Phase II as we move into the next calendar year.

The reader has six components. First is a date-by-date timeline of Strike MoMA Phase I as it unfolded last spring. The driving structure of this phase was the Ten Weeks of Art, Conversation, and Action (April 9-June 11), anchored in a weekly pop-up de-occupation of the privately owned public space across the street from MoMA (dubbed Post-MoMA Plaza), as well as a

parallel weekly assembly online. Second is a dossier of primary documents generated during Phase I, including direct public responses to the counterinsurgency tactics of the MoMA administration. Third is a wide-ranging constellation of texts and images from friends and comrades (several of whom have worked at or with MoMA in some capacity) engaging with the Strike MoMA framework, including a core cluster of texts that shed light on the empire of hemispheric extractivism of the Cisneros family and its connections to MoMA. Fourth is a sequence of movement conversations strategically timed to augment, support, and amplify on-the-ground organizing and actions. Finally, There are two appendixes attached. First is the organizing manual for Globalize The Intifada, an initiative that emerged late last summer from the relationships formed during Strike MoMA under the banner of "interlocking directorate, interconnected struggles." The second appendix is a collection of five communiqués originally issued in video form over the course of Strike MoMA Phase I by Commandante Scream.

When read together, these materials offer an abundance of entry points, and a kaleidoscopic refraction of the ideas, experiences, and histories of struggle that converged in the process of developing Strike MoMA as a movement apparatus. Though focused on MoMA as a primary case study and target, this reader situates MoMA within an expanding field of institutional crisis and conflict encompassing not only museums but also the university. The long-term contradictions, harms, and failures of settler institutions have been more and more apparent—thanks in large part to the decolonial and abolitionist formations that have emerged in the past decade from the crucible-events of Ferguson, Standing Rock, the George Floyd Rebellion, the Line 3 struggle, the migrant justice/sanctuary movement, and the

Palestinian intifada, to name a few. Liberals in the arts and education are seeking to salvage and [redeem](#) these failing institutions through reforms to institutional governance that leave the fundamental structures of racial capitalism and oligarchic mega-wealth untouched. They combine classical appeals to the public sphere with a managerial discourse of diversity, equity, and inclusion that remains squarely within the framework of the non-profit industrial complex and its techniques of soft counterinsurgency.

Over the course of the Ten Weeks, counterinsurgency took many forms. We learned that when MoMA loses control, the familiar mechanisms of repressive tolerance reveal their flip side in aggression, fortification, and policing. Doors locked. People harmed. People demonized. People banned. People lied to. Gaslighting. Propaganda. Psych-ops. Attempts at manipulation, fearmongering, veiled threats. But cultures of dissent and liberation are percolating at lower frequencies, the subterranean murmuring of the strike. "There isn't space to talk about anything." an [anonymous worker told Artnet](#) in late July, five weeks after the end of Phase 1. "Our staff meetings involve questions that are all vetted beforehand." According to the report, "Another staff member estimated that nearly half the museum supported the protesters' goals while the other half objected to them. But the fact that the museum had initially told staffers in a meeting that demonstrators would be allowed inside the building, only to lock the doors, stoked feelings of distrust among the employees who spoke with Artnet. 'From the outset, there was a lot of anxiety from senior leadership and trustees that a majority of staffers might stage a walkout in solidarity with Strike MoMA,' said one employee. 'So the museum decided to hide behind its security officers... putting staff, who are predominantly people of color, in harm's way' when protesters arrived at the front doors.'"

Such worker testimonies break the silence mandated from above, subvert the supposed common interest of workers and the administration invoked by museum leadership, and evidence potential cross-class solidarities between otherwise segmented parts of the staff, creating space for something else to emerge, something controlled by workers, artists, and communities rather than oligarchs like Leon Black. We continue to offer our solidarity with all forms of workplace subversion, testimonial communications, and direct action by MoMA workers against their hamfisted bosses.

Meanwhile, as methods of banning, silencing, and intimidating are used against organizers and workers, members of the academic intelligentsia are being recruited to provide an armature of scholarly legitimacy for the faltering institution, propping up a monument to imperial modernity that is crumbling at its foundations. The divestment of our collective intellects from MoMA is a crucial component of the ongoing strike. The top brass at MoMA and other institutions recognize this, and it is for this reason that the incorporation of knowledge has been a central part of their efforts to neutralize the waves of resistance that have shaken the artworld system in recent years. This is exemplified by the recent announcement that [MoMA and the Ford Foundation](#) will be partnering to launch (in September 2022) a new Scholars in Residence Program that will "support scholars whose work deals with historically underrepresented artists, moments, movements, and geographies, or offers new perspectives on art-historical topics." As [Dylan Rodriguez](#) (a former Ford Fellow) reminds us, the Ford Foundation has been a central actor in counter-insurgency efforts since the rebellions of the 1960s.

Looming large over efforts to rewire MoMA's scholarly apparatus is the question

of "decolonization." This is a term which has been increasingly assimilated into the academic-curatorial complex linking MoMA with high-knowledge hubs like Columbia, Yale, and Princeton. Writing in the aftermath of the campaign to remove Warren Kanders from the Whitney in 2019, a prominent member of the arts intelligentsia asked "[what would it be to truly decolonize MoMA?](#)" Decolonization necessitates abolition. [There is no blueprint for decolonization](#), but land, air, and water are central to any conversation. How will those art-world actors who have shown interest in decolonization turn this intellectual interest into a lasting material commitment to dismantling the racial-capitalist, settler-colonial, and imperialist orders of which the art system forms a superstructure? What are people willing to share? What are they willing to give up? Where are they at as conditions worsen with climate emergency, patriarchal revanchism, Fascism, and impending civil war?

We must not forget that it is the oligarchs who own MoMA have played a crucial role in bringing us to the current moment. Since its origins with the Rockefellers to the present day, MoMA has always attempted to mediate and manage the contradictions of liberal imperialism, often dovetailing with fascism in the process. It has made space for radical ideals on the walls of the museum even as the those who control it do their best to combat those legacies and ideas in the real world. When it comes to current board members, think of people like Ronald Lauder, who for decades has aided and abetted the ascendant Christian right in order to solidify support for Israeli settler-colonialism; former Trump advisor Larry Fink, whose Blackrock hedge fund owns 4% of the Enbridge Pipeline cutting through Ojibwe lands in Minnesota, and which recently invested 15 billion dollars in the Saudi oil company Aramco; or Leon Black's successor as board chair, Jean-Marie Kravis, a co-director of the right wing Hudson Institute that hosted Donald Trump for a televised address

on the eve of the 2020 elections, and which had bestowed awards on Newt Gingrich, Mario Rubio and other attack dogs of the right. Their crimes are highlighted throughout this reader, but we highlight them here as a reminder that MoMA is an instrument of ruling class power, and that no amount of governance reforms, archival initiatives, idea labs, or curatorial rethinks can make this fact go away. Finally, let us not forget the crimes of the figure who triggered his latest wave of agitation around MoMA: Leon Black. After quietly stepping down as chairman as Strike MoMA began to escalate, Leon Black remains on the board of MoMA, and his name remains displayed on the walls of MoMA as a valued member of the donor community despite two new accusations against him in just the past few months. That's the kind of place that MoMA is at its core, and it reminds us why there is a collective exit happening from MoMA and places like it.

The museum and the university continue to be sites of intensifying struggle. But these struggles are increasingly porous with educational, artistic, and organizing activities occurring outside formal institutions in the streets and in autonomous movement spaces. Think of decolonial schools for all ages, media labs and garden beds, carpentry classes and community energy systems, art-history classes and poetry workshops, film screenings and self-defense trainings, no-cop zones and sanctuary spaces, all disarticulated from the time of the commodity, of work, and of professional specialization. These are forms of life that are already practiced as a matter of resistance and survival around the world. But physical spaces provide them with localized base camps and hubs of power where the uprisings of the future can blossom forth in a thousand ways, cultivating a politics of life, land, and liberation amongst the ruins of empire.



## INCEPTION

This timeline begins in early 2021, the immediate period in which the Strike MoMA initiative was launched. We want to reiterate the acknowledgement made in the Strike MoMA document of the many histories and generations of thinking, organizing, and art that laid the groundwork for activating museums as sites of struggle.

The timeline below marks a series of dated events as a way of distilling things into an overall shape and trajectory. Suffice to say it is not exhaustive, and throughout the period marked on the timeline, organizing, conversation, and artmaking were constantly taking place. The website Hyperallergic produced continuous, in-depth reporting on the Ten Weeks of Action, providing granular accounts of many of the events noted here.

It should be noted that since the crisis around Leon Black came to a head in February of 2021, MoMA has never issued a single statement about Black in response to the calls for his removal, or indeed the very fact that he was forced to step down from chairmanship after the announcement of Strike MoMA (though he remains on the board itself). Relatedly, neither David Rockefeller Director Glen Lowry nor any member of the museum leadership has ever once reached out to Strike MoMA organizers or stepped across 53rd street to learn about the initiative or dialogue with its participants. To our knowledge, the two brief statements by MoMA to [press](#) about Strike MoMA attributed physical violence to organizers, and confirmed that five Strike MoMA participants had been [banned from the museum](#).

**January 25:** Leon Black's Apollo hedge fund announces, in its [own words](#), a "Review of Significant Governance Enhancements as Part of Continued Evolution and Institutionalization of the Firm and Leadership Transition." Avoiding any mention of Black's deep financial and personal ties to Jeffery Epstein (for which he, along with fellow board member Greg Dubin, were subpoenaed in 2020) the announcement explains that Black will be stepping down in July from his role as CEO, but will remain on the board of the company.

**January 27:** An article by Robin Pogrebin for the [New York Times](#) reports that, despite stepping down from his leadership role at Apollo, it is rumored that Leon Black will remain the Chairman of the Board of MoMA. Decolonize This Place is quoted in the article as saying "It underscores that what is at stake here is not just toxic philanthropy, but a toxic system of wealth and power that must be overhauled."

**February 3:** The [Guerilla Girls](#) announce that they have canceled their book deal with the art publisher Phaidon, which is owned by Leon Black. The announcement stems from the group's earlier agitational work around Black as well as Glen Dubin, who was also subpoenaed in the Epstein case in 2019.

**February 4:** At Hyperallergic, Hakim Bishara publishes "[Over 150 Artists Call for Leon Black's Removal From MoMA's Board Over Jeffrey Epstein Financial Ties](#)," containing statements from an ad-hoc group of art workers, MoMA Divest, and Decolonize This Place, whose statement is entitled "Fuck MoMA: An Open Call to Action" and reads, in part, "Board members are not the problem. They only make the problem visible. MoMA in its entirety is the problem. Perhaps it's time to abolish MoMA."

## PHASE I

**March 23:** The International Imagination of Anti-National, Anti-Imperialist Feelings (IIAAF) releases Strike MoMA: Framework and Terms for Struggle at [strikemoma.org](#), and announces "Ten Weeks of Art, Conversation, and Action" targeting MoMA, set to begin on April 9. The document also announces the formation of two working groups: Artists for a Post-MoMA Future and Curators and Educators for Decolonization.

**March 25:** Organizers distribute "To the Workers of MoMA" letter to workers at the museum.

**March 26:** According to the [New York Times](#), Leon Black "tells colleagues" that he will not in fact stand for re-election in June as the chairman of the MoMA board. MoMA itself does not issue a statement.

**April 2:** re/Orientation to 10 Weeks - General

**April 4,** re/Orientations/ Training for the 10 Weeks - BIPOC, NYC, International

## WEEK ONE

**Friday, April 9:** Week One of Ten Weeks of Art, Conversation, and Action, comprising the first in-person pop-up de-occupation at what is marked with a banner as Post-MoMA Plaza, directly across 53rd street from MoMA in a Privately Owned Public Space. The de-occupation is inaugurated with a performance by [War Dance Collective](#). The first of ten parallel online assemblies, facilitated by Curators and Educators for Decolonization and Artists for a Post-MoMA Future is held on this day as well for people outside of New York or otherwise unable to attend in person. The online assembly begins with the first communique by [Comandante Scream](#).

**April 14:** MoMA staff members leak an internal email in which David Rockefeller Director Glenn Lowery mischaracterizes actions. "Do we have a lot more work to do? For sure. Can we be an even better institution? For sure. Is the protesters' call to destroy MoMA the solution? I don't see that helping anyone." (See Primary Documents)

## WEEK 2

**Friday, April 16:** Assembly in person and online. [Jive Poetic](#) of Insurgent Poets Society announces at Post-MoMA Plaza that he has withdrawn his participation in the MoMA-organized online event "Evening In: Nuyorican Poetry Night" because the museum asked him to disclose the text of the poem in advance of the reading. Online assembly is anchored by remarks from [Oscar Guardiola-Rivera](#) of Curators and Educators for Decolonization and [LaTanya Autry](#) of #museumsarenotneutral and Black Liberation Center.

## WEEK 3

**Friday, April 23:** Assembly in person and online. At Post-MoMA plaza, organizers read out an open letter to Lowry responding to his characterization of Strike MoMA as aiming to "destroy" the museum, copies of which are also affixed to the facade of MoMA. The letter also announces The Ruins of Modernity Tour for

**April 30:** Along with a list of projected tour-stops, stating its intention to freely enter the museum without paying the 25 dollar entrance fee, and demands that MoMA not involve the police.

**April 23:** In the Dominican Republic, the group Decolonize Aiyti stages a solidarity action at the Columbus statue in Santo Domingo, wrapping it in a banner reading "Columbus Was a Rapist." For statement on action see related documents under "Engagements" below.

**April 27:** [The New York Times](#) reports that, according to an internal video conference supplied to a reporter, Marie-Josée Kravis, a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute, will replace Leon Black. No official public announcement is made by MoMA.

**April 29:** "[Modernity is an Imperial Crime](#)" discussion is held online with Ariella Azoulay, Dalaeja Forman, Shellyne Rodriguez, and Nitasha Dhillon.



## WEEK 4

**Friday, April 30:** Assembly in person and online. Ruins of Modernity Tour kicks off at the Columbus Monument at Columbus Circle. Stopping at selected sites, the march proceeds to entrance of MoMA, where people are forcibly denied entry. A small group of protestors attempts to enter through the entrance to the Leon Black film wing, where they are physically shoved back and hit by museum security. In digital space, [Zandisiwe Radebe \(Blackhouse Collective, Soweto\)](#) leads teach-in on “the relevance of the struggle against anti-Blackness in south Africa today as well as the importance of a Black Conscious Aesthetic in that struggle,” with discussion facilitated by Nelson Maldonado Torres of The Frantz Fanon Foundation and CED. Release of [“Writing for Post-MoMA Futures, Part 1”](#) with Verso.

**May 1:** Staff leaks that Lowry has held a staff meeting about the events of Friday. Museum releases a statement saying “The protesters chose not to act safely or peacefully. The museum will always act to protect the health and safety of our staff and visitors.” IIAAF publicly responds to “Lowry’s Lies,” calling him in a statement three days later [“Gaslighter in Chief.”](#) (See Primary Documents)



## WEEK 5

**Friday, May 7:** Assembly in person and online. Researchers and organizers highlight the Cisneros family empire, especially its investments in Barrick Gold Corporation’s toxic Pueblo Viejo mine in the Dominican Republic outside of Santo Domingo. Sandy Placido of Dominicans United NYC [leads a teach-in](#) on site, while online Mike Rawowitz of Artists for Post-MoMa Future leads a teach-in about the MoMA Board of Trustees.

**May 13:** Within Our Lifetime–United For Palestine and the Illuminator collaborate on [architectural projections](#) around NYC in solidarity with Palestinian resistance to Israeli attacks on Sheikh Jarrah and Gaza.



## WEEK 6

**Friday, May 14:** [300+ emergency action](#) is co-organized with Within Our Lifetime–United For Palestine in response to intensifying Israeli attacks. Action highlighting connections between MoMA board members including Ronald Lauder, Steven Tannanbaum, and Paula Crown, whose husband James Crown owns General Dynamics weapons manufacturer. March extends throughout Midtown in tandem with Bike Bloc and Rude Mechanical Orchestra, intersections blockaded, de-arrests successfully executed, one marcher arrested by NYPD, followed by jail support. Online, Palestine solidarity teach-in + conversation with Tara Daly + Carolina Scarborough.

**May 20:** [Emergency Conversation: Free Palestine/ Strike MoMA](#) live-streamed with Nora Akawi, Amin Husain, Yazan Khalili, Andrew Ross, Eyal Weizman.



## WEEK 7

**Friday, May 21:** Assembly in person and online. Release at 10 AM of “Free Palestine/ Strike MoMA: A Call to Action” via Social Text journal [link broken] condemning MoMA board member’s ties to Israeli apartheid, signed by 300+ [artists and scholars](#) including Angela Davis and Brian Eno. The letter calls for an assembly that afternoon at 4 PM. 300 + [converge](#) at MoMA, and blockade entrance to museum with a teach-in.

**May 27:** [IIAAF Presents: A Conversation](#) with Sandy Grande, Stefano Harney, Fred Moten, Jasbir Puar, and Dylan Rodriguez



## WEEK 8

**Friday, May 28:** Assembly in person and online. Under the banner of [“Interlocking Directorate, Interconnected Struggles,”](#) organizers from the group Colombianos in NY hold a teach-in about the connections between MoMA board members, U.S. imperialism, and state violence in Latin America and occupied Palestine. They are joined by Johanna Fernandez, who speaks on Penn University’s holding of MOVE victim remains, and the movement to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal. Online teach-in about connection of struggles in Colombia and Palestine, with Oscar Guardiola Rivera, Kenneth Sebastian Leon, Gabriela Cordoba-Vivas.

**June 2:** Articles on the Cisneros and extractivism released by [Sandy Plácido](#) and [Macarena Gómez-Barris](#). These are reproduced under “Engagements” below.

June 3: [IIAAF Presents: A Conversation](#) with Kency Cornejo, Saudi Garcia, Macarena Gómez-Barris, Nelson Maldonado-Torres, MónicaRamón Ríos, facilitated by Shellyne Rodriguez and Nitasha Dhillon



## WEEK 9

**Friday, June 4:** Assembly in person and online. Under the banner Water is More Precious than Gold/El Agua es Un Tesoro Que Vale Mas que el Oro (and accompanied by a [video](#) of that same title), the group Dominicans in NY and Strike MoMA [blockade MoMA entrance](#) with action further highlighting the movement against Barrick Gold. Online, Introducing Taller Electronic Marronage, Fugitive Handbook by Halle Ashley + Kelsey Moore, Artist-in-Residence Digital Exhibitions: Stefany Bravo and Christina Thomas, Bomba Classroom/Community Workshops, Yomaira Figueroa.

**June 9:** Exhibiting artist Gabrielle L’Hirondelle Hill [releases letter](#) withdrawing from family programming in solidarity with Strike MoMA (see Primary Documents)

**June 9:** Artists for a Post-MoMA Future announce they have submitted an application for MoMA to be designated a World Heritage Site. (See Primary Documents)



## WEEK 10

**Friday, June 11:** Assembly in person and online. Post-MoMA Plaza [barricaded](#) by property owner, despite the fact that the space is a POPS and is legally obliged to remain open 24 hours a day. Amplifying movement framework “Interlocking Directorate, Interconnected Struggles,” [final action](#) of the Ten Weeks kicks off from MoMA, highlighting related sites in Midtown, from Rockefeller Center to the World Zionist Congress to Blackrock, whose facade is splattered in red paint. Post-march dance party in front of MoMA includes Illuminator projections onto facade of museum. Online, remarks from Iraqi artists about protests in Iraq + facilitated discussion about Interlocking Directorate/ Interconnected Struggles + Post-MoMa Futures.



## AFTER PHASE 1

After the Ten Weeks, the work continues, but at a different frequency. Amidst a resounding silence in the press, Artnet [reports in late July](#) on the reverberations of the initiative within MoMA, and the continuing percolation of dissent and division within the institution. Meanwhile, relationships forged during Phase 1 of Strike MoMA feed into the city-wide Globalize The Intifada initiatives launching on July 31 and culminating at MoMA on [September 17](#). Later in September, Leon Black is [sued](#) by a second woman for sexual abuse; Black countersues. Black remains on the MoMA board, still no comment about anything related to Black from MoMA. In mid-December, MoMA and Ford Foundation announce the launch in September 2022 of a new Scholars in Residence Program that will “support scholars whose work deals with historically underrepresented artists, moments, movements, and geographies, or offers new perspectives on art-historical topics.” December 21, The Strike MoMA Reader is released in collaboration with Verso.

# PRIMARY DOCUMENTS



## Collective Statement Signed by 157 Artists, Curators, and Art Workers

We, as artists and art workers, support the removal of Leon Black from the board of MoMA for reasons that have already been stated by many others. However, this should be considered the bare minimum. Beyond his removal, we must think seriously about a collective exit from art's imbrication in toxic philanthropy and structures of oppression, so that we don't have to have the same conversations over and over, one board member at a time. This thinking can only catalyze action once we state plainly: We do not need this money. Museums and other arts institutions must pursue alternative models, cooperative structures, Land Back initiatives, reparations, and additional ideas that constitute an abolitionist approach toward the arts and arts patronage, so that they align with the egalitarian principles that drew us to art in the first place.

For signatories, go here.

<https://hyperallergic.com/619709/artists-call-for-leon-blacks-removal-moma-jeffrey-epstein/>

Recent confirmations of MoMA Board of Trustees Chair Leon Black's deep financial and personal connections to Jeffrey Epstein underline the problems that MoMA and other major museum boards face and have failed to reckon with in any meaningful way. We note that Leon Black's corruption extends far as his "investment" firm is also the owner of Constellis, formerly known as Blackwater, a private military firm which was banned from operating in Iraq after its staff were charged with war crimes (when MoMA Divest peacefully protested this last year in solidarity with exhibiting artist Ali Yass, PS1 responded by calling NYPD). Those war criminals were part of the recent spate of pardons by Trump.

Leon Black is not an anomaly. Five MoMA board members – Tananbaum, Dubin, Cohen, Black, Fink – have been identified and targeted by different groups over the last year for their ties to war, racist prison and border enforcement systems, vulture fund exploitation, gentrification and displacement of the poor, extractivism and environmental degradation, and patriarchal forms of violence. Board members also have ties and donate to the NYPD Police Foundation. In short, the rot is at the core of the institution, which includes PS1. MoMA/PS1 directors and administrators have quietly taken the dirty money in the name of art and made empty curatorial gestures towards political issues. MoMA's director Glenn Lowry has said that Leon Black "continue[s] this tradition of visionary leadership with their passion for modern and contemporary art, strategic planning and financial expertise, and deep understanding of the Museum and its mission." MoMA's mission, then, must be artwashing; but it can no longer clean the fact that war and prison profiteering, child prostitution, and various forms of structural racism are part of the structure of MoMA/PS1. For a civic institution with civic responsibilities this is unacceptable. Nothing short of a major reconstitution of the board, a change of directors, a public reckoning, and a reimagining of the institutional and curatorial mission of the museum is acceptable. We also reiterate previous demands that MoMA/PS1 issue a public statement regarding their position on proceeds and donations that come as a result of violence from these issues, and start a transparent public investigation into any and all funds linked to these matters, including those in the various pension funds used by the institution; and that MoMA/PS1 begin a community-based process of reinvestment, redistribution, land restoration, and reparations in affected communities.

**MoMA Divest Coalition**

# Fuck MoMA: An Open Call To Action

We are tired of the same shit making news over and over. It has become a banal routine. One place after another. Another institution, another oligarch artwashing their death-dealing profits, with womxn bearing the brunt of it all. This is not a PR crisis, or just a matter of toxic philanthropy. MoMA is a frontline of gendered and racialized class war, and we all have a responsibility to act.

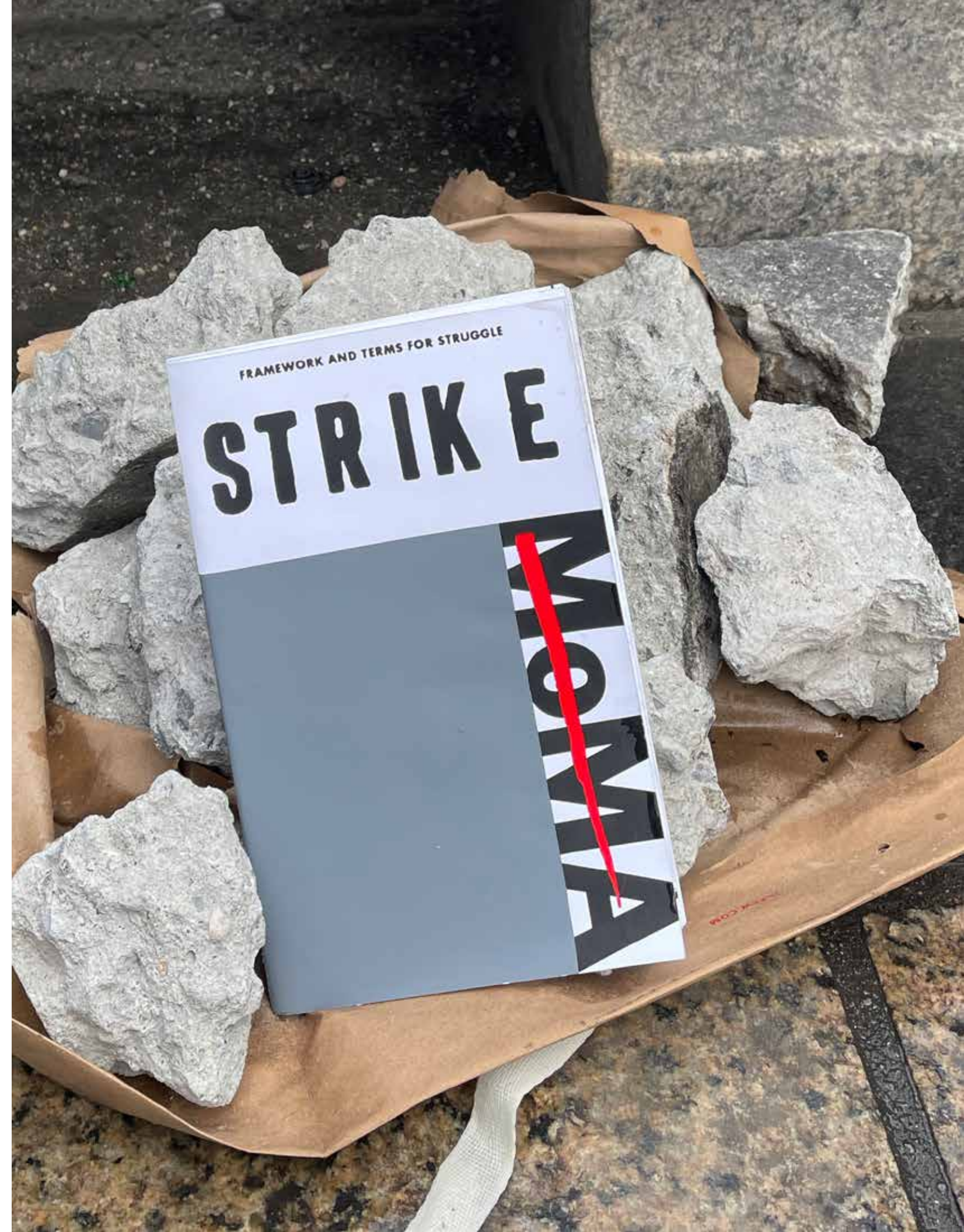
Letters, pleas, and backroom deals are not enough. After the removal of Kanders from the Whitney, after the George Floyd rebellion, after the open declaration of war by Fascists seeking to salvage white heteropatriarchal rule, we must do and demand more. Board members are not the problem. They only make the problem visible. MoMA in its entirety is the problem. Perhaps it's time to abolish MoMA.

MoMA was founded with the oil wealth of the Rockefellers. Since then, the museum has been a clearing house for capital, a showcase for domination, and an ecocidal machine. It has diversified in content, but in practice it has been an enemy of the poor and the marginalized, the fired and the furloughed, the displaced and the dispossessed, the detained and the deported, the dying and the dead. After the recent uprisings, MoMA and other cultural institutions are scrambling to proclaim their commitment to justice, diversity, and equity. How can an institution claim such values with predatory billionaires controlling it? Even visionary exhibitions like *Marking Time: Art in the Age of Mass Incarceration* cannot escape this contradiction.

Various campaigns and actions have said this in recent years: MoMA is anti-Womxn, anti-Black, anti-Indigenous, anti-Migrant, anti-Worker. Not simply because MoMA has failed to be truly inclusive in its collection or programming or staffing. But because MoMA, as an institution harboring the likes of Leon Black and Larry Fink, is complicit in oppression globally, from the burning of the Amazon to migrant detention camps to gentrification and mass displacement, to the exploitation of womxn and children. If left unchallenged, MoMA will continue to pose a danger to humanity and the planet at large.

So what would it mean to abolish MoMA, and who will undertake this task? Such an effort requires us all. A stakeholder-led decolonization process could be a way forward to deal with this fuckery. Absent such an initiative, we encourage self-organized action so that MoMA will see the writing on the walls. Here is a Decolonial Operations Manual for people who wish to act autonomously. We remind the general public that the MoMA building is open every day of the week from 10:30 am to 5:30 pm.

*decolonizethisplace*



## **CONTENTS**

**I** The case against MoMA

**II** Their archives are our receipts

**III** Strike is a verb

**IV** Operational terms for striking MoMA

**V** Steps forward: A Two-Phase Process

Phase 1: Strike MoMA @ MoMA: 10 Weeks  
of Conversation, Art, Action

Phase 2: Convening for a Just Transition  
to a Post-MoMA Future

**VI** Authorship: IIAAF, in consultation  
with friends and comrades

*\* for the hyperlinked version of this document  
go to [www.strikemoma.org](http://www.strikemoma.org)*

We are writing from the unceded territory of the Lenni Lenape. We stand in solidarity with Native American and Indigenous peoples leading the movement for resurgence, decolonization, and reclamation of their homelands. These lands were stolen to create settler-colonial states, and those who were dispossessed continue to live under conditions of siege, surveillance, and extractivist violence. We support [land back](#), an imperative addressed to all settlers and settler-institutions, including the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) and the [City of New York](#). At its foundations, this city was established on stolen Indigenous land, and shaped and cultivated by enslaved African peoples. We support the [undying](#) fight for Black liberation and its many manifestations here and across the planet.

Subsequent layers of the city have been built by generations of migrants and refugees from other zones of the world violently impacted by [colonial-capitalist modernity](#). Think of the Mohawk skywalkers whose labor made possible the Manhattan skyline, and the Black, Latinx, and Asian workers who maintain the urban infrastructure today even as they are displaced by real-estate developers in Chinatown, Mott Haven, East New York, and beyond. We support [sanctuary](#) for all migrant communities, and the allied movement for [degentrification](#). We support the [self-determination](#) of oppressed peoples everywhere fighting against the imperial states, repressive regimes, occupying powers, comprador

elites, and global corporations whose calculations have forced so many people from their homes in places like Puerto Rico, Haiti, Honduras, Palestine, Iraq, and Kashmir. From within the belly of the beast of U.S. empire, we acknowledge our responsibility, and act in solidarity with struggles to get free.

From the Dutch West India Company to the Rockefeller dynasty to the bankers, speculators, and warmakers who sit on the board of MoMA today, their accumulation has only been possible through our dispossession. A system of imperialism, colonialism, and racial capitalism with gendered violence at its core. We stand in solidarity with all those who [strike](#) against patriarchy every day, at work, at home, in the fields, in the prisons, in the detention centers, in the streets, in the shelters. Stolen land, stolen people, stolen labor, stolen wealth, stolen worlds, stolen horizons. This is the modernity to which MoMA is a monument.

When we strike MoMA, we strike its blood-soaked modernity. The monument on 53rd Street becomes our prism. We see our histories and struggles refracted through its crystalline structure, and foreclosed futures come into view. The museum is converted into a theater of operations where our entwined movements of decolonization, abolition, anti-capitalism and anti-imperialism can find one another. Why strike MoMA? So that something else can emerge, something under the control of workers, communities, and artists rather than billionaires.

## I The Case Against MoMA

Any day now, hedge fund billionaire Leon Black is likely to resign as the chair of the board of MoMA. It has been six weeks since the deep financial ties between Black and Jeffery Epstein resurfaced in the headlines. Black has already announced that he is stepping down from Apollo Global Management, but MoMA remains silent about his ongoing role at the museum. [Artists and community groups](#) have demanded that Black be removed, and [calls for action](#) have been circulating publically for a month. Last week anonymous sources [confirmed](#) to the media that Black is facing pressure from other members of the board to step down. They know his continued presence on the board is a recipe for crisis, but getting rid of him could set a precedent and put at risk MoMA's use of his priceless [art collection](#) 🏛️. The museum administration is in a classic [decision dilemma](#).

Whether Black stays or goes, a consensus has emerged: beyond any one board member, MoMA itself is the problem. [MoMA Divest](#) offered a summary of its reasoning as follows, "Five MoMA board members – Steven Tananbaum, Glenn Dubin, Steven Cohen, Leon Black, Larry Fink – have been identified and targeted by different groups over the last year for their ties to war, racist prison and border enforcement systems, vulture fund exploitation, gentrification and displacement of the poor, extractivism and environmental degradation, and patriarchal forms of violence. Board members also have ties and donate to the NYPD Police Foundation. In short, the rot is

at the core of the institution, which includes PS1." We agree, and also point to Honorary Chair Ronald Lauder, the cosmetics billionaire who is also president of the Zionist lobbying group World Jewish Congress and a major [Trump donor](#). Deserving of recognition as well is board member [Patricia Phelps Cisneros](#), whose billions come from the right-wing Grupo Cisneros media-industrial empire in Latin America. Speaking of Latin America, let's shine a light on Steven Tananbaum, [Jeff Koons enthusiast](#) and chief investment officer at Golden Tree Assets, one of the hedge funds involved in [extracting wealth from the people of Puerto Rico](#) through the PROMESA debt-restructuring program. And how could we forget [Paula Crown](#) and [James Crown](#) of the [General Dynamics](#) armaments fortune, whose Crown Creativity Lab on the second floor of the museum hosts The Peoples Studio, an "experimental space where visitors can explore the art and ideas of our time through participatory programs." This is the condition of modernity that we find at [Modernism Central](#): death-dealing oligarchs using art as an instrument of accumulation and shield for their violence.

At the ground level, MoMA is also a messed up workplace. Elitism, hierarchy, inequality, precarity, disposability, anti-Blackness, misogyny. Remember the back-end workers who were [furloughed and fired last year](#) while the high-ups have carried on in luxury. As an estimated [two thirds](#) of the arts and culture jobs of the city have been lost, MoMA's "David Rockefeller Director" [Glenn Lowry](#) continues to take home 2.3 million dollars a year, or [48 times](#) the amount earned by an educational assistant. Sources have confirmed that just before the pandemic, MoMA management dis-invited unsalaried contract

workers from the 2019 Christmas party, including people who had been there for decades. HR posted a memo in the Operations Room. A small detail, but it says a lot. Shout out to the O Room!

This document comes from a movement perspective that de-exceptionalizes the museum. We refuse to acknowledge the separation of the museum from the rest of society. We see MoMA as existing on the same plane as the violence of the ruling class that has controlled it since its inception with the oil wealth of the Rockefellers in 1929. No more rationalizing the regime. They have long enabled the killing of our people and non-human relations and they have always expected us to thank them for their philanthropy. Yes, we know that [Aggie Gund](#) read [The New Jim Crow](#) and sold a Lichtenstein to fund the Art For Justice Fund. It was a project in collaboration with [Darren Walker](#), president of the [Ford Foundation](#). The man who declared "[it would be a grave error to demonize wealthy people](#)" following the ouster of Kanders from the Whitney, and who [called the cops](#) on Ford Fellows and their friends when they protested his "[nuanced](#)" support for new jails. If any doubts remain about the connection of the Ford Foundation, liberal philanthropy, and counterinsurgency, we direct you to [this](#) classic study.

What about the art? We love art, but we have zero allegiance to the art system of which MoMA is the epicenter. Art exists beyond MoMA. Art is [not a luxury](#), and it is a vital part of our communities and movements. Art is one of the few

means of production available to oppressed peoples for the creation and sustaining of worlds in the face of death and destruction. The aesthetic forms and imaginative powers of art require material support: economies of solidarity, platforms of cooperation, infrastructures of care and mutual aid. But the political economy of the art system is antithetical to these life-affirming practices. It is predicated on property, scarcity, competition, and assimilation. One canon. One center. One meta-narrative of modernity, however diversified and globalized it may have become. It is governed by gatekeepers, critics, and canon-makers who try to create the measure by which art lives or dies, giving access to a select few while leaving the rest with the false choice between eating and making art. It doesn't have to be this way.

As [150 artists and art workers](#) put it in their open letter last month, "we must think seriously about a collective exit from art's imbrication in toxic philanthropy and structures of oppression, so that we don't have to have the same conversations over and over, one board member at a time. This thinking can only catalyze action once we state plainly: We do not need this money. Museums and other arts institutions must pursue alternative models, cooperative structures, Land Back initiatives, reparations, and additional ideas that constitute an abolitionist approach toward the arts and arts patronage, so that they align with the egalitarian principles that drew us to art in the first place." Such calls for collective exit change the terms of the conversation, and point in the direction of something beyond MoMA.

There is no blueprint for dismantling MoMA, but here is the starting point:

whatever comes after MoMA, it must preserve and enhance the jobs of museum workers, and enact reparative measures for communities harmed by the museum over time, beginning with the legacy of land dispossession. The agenda is open, but any path forward must be premised on the acknowledgement of debts owed: from top to bottom and horizontally too, between and within groups, communities, and movements. We need a just transition to a post-MoMA future. MoMA has been a toxic force, but there can be growth and healing in the aftermath of toxicity. May a thousand [mushrooms](#) bloom in the ruins of the modern museum.

\* \* \* \* \*

## II Their Archives Are Our Receipts

Leon Black is but the latest in a succession of predatory billionaires running MoMA since the Rockefellers. Their petrochemical industrial extraction laid the groundwork for capitalist globalization and its political, financial, and cultural infrastructures over the course of the 20th century. [Standard Oil](#) was the nucleus of the modern fossil-fuel regime. Chase Bank, the Rockefeller-led [instrument](#) by which the New York City's working class was pulverized during the [1975 fiscal crisis](#) of the state, was an early experiment with neoliberal austerity that would soon be expanded worldwide. The [Rockefeller Drug Laws were](#) an essential mechanism

of mass incarceration after the Black revolt of the 60s. As Governor, Nelson Rockefeller also called the shots of the [Attica Massacre](#). Central to the Ford/Rockefeller presidential administration which scrambled to maintain U.S. hegemony after the victory of the North Vietnamese was strategic cooperation with the apartheid regimes of [Israel](#) and South Africa. The list of crimes by the Rockefeller dynasty against people and the planet is endless.

Throughout the 20th century, the Rockefellers and their class allies underwrote and led the museum, overtly weaponizing art in the service of empire. They enabled fascist admirer and white supremacist Phillip Johnson to become the king of Modern Architecture, a legacy which has recently become a point of action for the [Black Reconstruction Collective](#). Well-documented collaborations between [MoMA and CIA](#). The [Museum of Primitive Art](#), stocked with cultural objects looted from Africa, the Pacific, and the Americas and now [housed in the Met](#). Partnerships with the Cisneros dynasty through the [Americas Society/Council of the Americas](#), and now the [Cisneros Institute](#) at MoMA itself

These are just some of the connections between the history of MoMA and the history of empire. Let us peruse the [archives](#) of MoMA. Their contents are our receipts. Shine a light on them. Unseal the history whose legacies burden us today. The [research](#) has already commenced. From the Rockefellers to Fink, you will see that there is [zero degree of separation](#) between MoMA and the highest echelons of the

global ruling class

\* \* \* \* \*

### III [Strike](#) is a Verb

Striking MoMA is done in solidarity with all those seeking to get free, [تحرر](#), as is said in Arabic. Strike is a verb, not a static tool. It is reinvented through the process of organizing and building relations. It is an activity that can take many forms by various people and groups. To strike is to exercise the power of refusal, a negation that is coupled with affirmation. Unauthorized acts of disobedience and noncompliance in order to shake the powers that be. A diversity of strategies, tactics, and techniques. Workers withholding their labor from the boss, workplaces taken over and collectivized. As legendary labor organizer [Lucy Parsons](#) put it, "My conception of the strike of the future is not to strike and go out and starve, but to strike and remain in, and take possession of the necessary property of production."

Strike concerns workers and workplaces in the sense of waged labor of course, but as we have seen with [International Women's Strike](#), "When the strike ceases to be the exclusive prerogative of unions, it stops being a decision made from above, and therefore, the strike stops being an order to simply comply with or adhere to. The strike appropriated by the women's movement is literally overflowed: it must account for multiple labor realities that escape the borders of waged and unionized work, that

question the limits between productive and reproductive labor, formal and informal labor, remunerated and free tasks, between migrant and national labor, between the employed and the unemployed. The strike taken up by the women's movement directly targets a central element of the capitalist system: the sexual and colonial division of labor."

Striking happens every day, in ways large and small. From invisible acts of subversion to the great [General Strikes](#) that have shut down cities, states, and empires. [W.E.B. Dubois](#) described the destruction of slavery by the enslaved as a General Strike, one whose tactics included everyday resistance, armed rebellion, and mass [exodus](#). Strike thus has a deep connection to [abolition](#) and the [Black Radical Tradition](#) and is especially resonant at MoMA given groundbreaking shows like [Marking Time: Art in the Age of Mass Incarceration](#), and [Reconstructions: Architecture and Blackness in America](#).

As the [220 arts professionals](#) who signed the 2019 MoMA Divest Letter point out, the museum is adjacent to and entwined with the systems of police, prisons, and profit, exemplified by Blackrock CEO Larry Fink. Going after the oligarchs at MoMA is another way to strike at the profiteers of detention, dispossession, and death. At the museum, those who underwrite prison-industrial complex are within arm's reach. They gather there routinely for openings, galas, garden parties, and board meetings. Their billions in assets hang on the wall, works of art twisted into ornaments of repression and ciphers of extraction. The structure itself physically



abuts the ultra-luxury [53W53 MoMA Tower](#), where some of them and their best friends live.

Campaigns, actions, and letters chip away at the regime's facade from the outside. Inside, every time workers organize, defy the boss, care for a coworker, disrespect secrecy, or enact other forms of subversion, cracks are created in the core. Cracking and chipping, chipping and cracking. As the walls that artificially separate the museum from the world collapse, we reorient away from the institution and come together to make plans. Let us strike in all the ways possible to exit from the terms of the museum so we can set our own.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### IV **Operational Terms for Striking MoMA**

We proceed on our own terms, not those of the museum. We agree to organize with care, generosity, and patience as we build new relations and deepen existing ones.

##### **1. Multiple Frames/Interwoven Struggles**

No struggle is left behind as we move together and separately, but in agreement. At MoMA the frames of abolition, decolonization, anti-capitalism and anti-imperialism overlap in the course of struggle. The dismantling of patriarchy is the warp and the weft of these movement paths. Each allows us to see different things, recognize our blindspots, and to strengthen our

movements. We were never meant to know each other, forcibly separated by their divide-and-conquer tactics. We commit to mutually refuse all efforts to isolate our struggles into issue silos, understanding that single-issue organizing easily falls into the hands of those seeking to undermine our collective liberation.

##### **2. Recognize Debts/Operationalize Solidarity**

No to the non-profit-industrial complex. No to the [ally-industrial complex](#). No to the diversity-equity-inclusion complex. No to the model-minority-assimilation complex. No anti-Blackness. No white nonsense. No toxic masculinity. No heteronormative culture. No anti-poor or anti-working-class sentiments. No ableism. No "[progressive except for Palestine](#)." Yes to collective liberation; yes to becoming accomplices, co-conspirators, race traitors, class traitors, de-assimilators; yes to all those who are ready to put something on the line, to operationalize their privileges and redistribute their resources in whatever forms these may take, from property deeds to printer ink. Solidarity involves discomfort but offers togetherness in the face of extreme alienation. If it comes easily and doesn't require a cost, it's probably not solidarity. Solidarity is the enactment of the social debts we owe each other. Sharing what you've got. Material commitments in light of unevenly shared histories of harm. Commitments to care, to act, to take risks, to speak out, to give as much one can, and then some. Working on oneself so as to not reproduce systems of harm and oppressive behavior in the process of showing up for each other. Acknowledging debts and acting accordingly forms bonds of reciprocity and healing. Building relations between movements, communities, families, friends. As we weave our struggles together by taking action and holding each other with care,

another political imaginary emerges. An [intercommunalist](#), intergenerational imaginary that dis-identifies from the nation-state, from the museum, and its underlying myths of modernity. The experiences of our people most intimately and immediately affected by the violence of these forces must always be a central catalyzing point for our work.

### **3. Against Liberal Governance/Exacerbate the Crisis**

No to liberal governance. Governance is the watchword of museum-reformers, inside and out. If only, they say, there were better protocols and principles, we could put our house in order. Better representation. More participation. More diversity, equity, and inclusion. An audit. A task force. More meetings. More Zooms. More trainings. More consultation. A new structure for the board. Guidelines for the acceptability of funds, separating the clean money from the dirty money. Honest billionaires rather than crooked ones. Artist involvement to keep things authentic. An art historian or two to set the moral compass with humanistic values, or maybe even to consult about the meaning of [decolonization](#). Those who allow themselves to be included and instrumentalized in this way undermine our collective liberation. Another kind of institution is possible, but it cannot be on the terms of the existing regime.

### **4. Multiply Demands/Resist Cooptation**

No demands that further assimilation back into the art system. Demands can set horizons, shape the imagination, and amplify desires. But at present, any demand that seeks to reform MoMA without challenging its authority to control the process legitimizes the regime. They may say they want to talk. but the

museum will use this to buy itself time. Conversations, dialogues, and forums about the "future of the museum" that loop back upon themselves to infinity. Strategic incorporation of this or that demand to placate this or that group, with the intent of waiting out and breaking up the formation. Invocations of the "outside agitator" to question motivations, loyalties, and tactics, deflecting attention from the harm that the museum is causing.

### **5. Heighten the Contradictions/Act Where You Are**

No one is pure in a colonized world. We all live by our contradictions. Working at MoMA and disgusted with MoMA? Being an artist and hating the art system? Teaching at a [university](#) and wanting to tear it all down? Studying freedom in college while you go deeper into debt? Struggling to pay rent but displacing someone else? A Ford Fellow who [protests](#) the Ford Foundation? Oppressed but also contributing to the oppression of others? This is the entangled dystopia of our present. We can see contradictions as impediments and be consumed by frustration, ambivalence, and despair, or we can acknowledge and heighten them. Quiet forms of subversion, deep conversations, mobilizations, large and small: each act we take further undermines the principles that sustain MoMA.

### **6. Mapping Power/Addressing Workers**

No to the erasure of class in discussions of the museum. MoMA has its own clear hierarchy of power. The board ponies up the money and calls the shots. Management keeps them happy. Curators, critics, and artists provide the culture and the intellectual legitimacy. Then there are the staff, unionized and not. Food service workers, janitors, guards, art handlers, installers, ticket-

takers, copyeditors, educators, those who know the operations and logistics of the infrastructure inside and out. Generations of skill, knowledge, craft, and dedication. We know there is an ongoing history of worker resistance at MoMA. To the workers we know you have acted and continue to act. You have our unconditional solidarity. Workers are essential stakeholders in overturning the institution and creating something else in the process.

### **7. Refusing Partitions/Activating Platforms**

No to the separation and specialization of roles that the art system expects of us: worker, artist, curator, critic, organizer, journalist. Striking MoMA requires us all, outside, inside, and otherwise. In practice these boundaries are already blurred, but the museum will invoke them in order to isolate us, demobilize us, and prevent us from sharing experiences, knowledges, resources, and power. We see that platforms at the museum are already being activated in furtherance of movement work, going against the grain of the institution. Platforms at the museum can become spaces of assembly beyond the museum's authority, creating spaces where we can get together and figure things out.

### **8. Art/Memory**

No to the white mythology of the museum, which claims to be a temple of memory. Whose memory? Whose framing? Who decides? Generations of artists, critics, and curators have interrogated the museum's meta-narrative, moving the dial of representation in the direction of justice. But museums have proven time and again [they want the art not the people](#). The

people are pushing back, declaring with their actions that [museums are not neutral](#). [Artists as organizers](#), organizers as artists. [Efforts are proliferating](#) to hold museums responsible for all the harm they continue to cause to workers, to artists, to the communities at their doorstep, to people around the world, from [Indianapolis Museum of Art](#), to [Montclair University](#), to the [British Museum](#), to the [Quai Branly](#). We are especially inspired by the work of the Congolese comrade [Mwazulu Diyabanza](#) and his collaborators who have directly enacted the reversal of imperial plunder on which that French museum is founded. We are learning from each other, and reconnecting with legacies, promises, and [lessons](#) that came to a head in [1968](#); [without apology](#). Museums and universities were activated as sites of struggle, from the [Third World Liberation Front](#), to [Women Students and Artists For Black Art Liberation](#), to the [Guerilla Art Action Group](#). Proliferating groups, transgressive interventions, non-reformist reforms, visionary programs, ancestral reckonings and re-connections, demands that the museum "decentralize its power structure to the point of communalization." These are some of the memories that speak to us today. Our memories, our art, our aesthetics exist, before, beyond, and in spite of MoMA, and the empty, linear, homogenous time of colonial modernity. The ancestors are all around us. When we strike MoMA, we're making the worlds our ancestors deserve(d).

### **9. Art/Freedom**

No to conflating art with MoMA. No to defending MoMA in the name of protecting Culture and [Civilization](#) from the iconoclasts and barbarians. No to the myth that freely creating art requires resigning ourselves to unfree conditions in society because we

- need their money, their resources, their recognition. Yes to partisans of art. Yes to art embedded in the culture of movements. Yes to aesthetics rooted in struggle. Yes to art for its own sake, if that means we are down with creating and conspiring to get free, whatever our style, school, or medium. Meme-makers and abstract painters, monument topplers and postmodern sculptors, designers of banners and drawers of lines, unpopular musicians and obscure sound artists, live-streamers and cinephiles, wardancers and pole-dancers, dream-diviners and archive-searchers; critique-ers of institutions and those who never recognized the institution in the first place. Artists of all kinds that do not recognize such distinctions in their life and work. What matters is being engaged in the struggle and breaking the dependency-complex that MoMA has created for art, ideologically and materially. When we strike MoMA, we free up space for a renewal of art as envisioned in the [freedom dreams of Suzanne Césaire](#), "And this is the domain of the strange, the marvelous, and the fantastic, a domain scorned by people of certain inclinations. Here is the freed image, dazzling and beautiful, with a beauty that could not be more unexpected and overwhelming. Here are the poet, the painter, and the artist, presiding over the metamorphoses and the inversions of the world under the sign of hallucination and madness."

#### **10. Diversify Tactics/Practice Creativity and Care**

MoMA can be approached from all angles using numerous strategies and tools. Diversity of tactics, diversity of aesthetics. Plan and organize with care and generosity. Agitate and affirm. Work with others on the basis of trust and affinity. Anticipate [counterinsurgency](#). Do not forget that when we strike

MoMA, we are hitting an essential nerve in the global body of the ruling class.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### **V Steps Forward: A Two-Phase Process**

With the above terms as a framework, this document intends to initiate a two-phase, stakeholder-led decolonization process for MoMA without the authority of MoMA. Launching on April 9th and extending to June 11th, the first phase of the process is a ten week sequence of conversations, actions, and more. These activities will lay the groundwork for the second phase of the process: a spokescouncil-based convening that can determine the shape, steps, and mechanics of a just transition to a post-MoMA future that prioritizes workers and communities.

#### **Phase 1: Strike MoMA @ MoMA: Ten Weeks of Art, Action, and Conversation**

Phase 1 launches with a day of action on April 9th. Stay tuned for details. There will be three orientations in advance of April 9th: a general orientation, an orientation limited to BIPOC folks, and an orientation for those wishing to contribute from beyond New York, including at an international scale. To participate in these orientations, contact [strikemoma@protonmail.com](mailto:strikemoma@protonmail.com).

The subsequent ten weeks will encompass a variety of activities, including trainings, writing projects, agitprop campaigns, and direct actions at the museum and beyond. Weaving these

activities together will be a series of movement conversations, online and in person, that will function as the intellectual and relational infrastructure for phase 2 of the process. An important component of these conversations will be collective research, archival investigation, and speculative visioning concerned with post-MoMA futures.

Working groups are already forming to participate in these ten weeks and beyond:

Curators and Educators for Decolonization (CED). For more information, contact [curatorseducatorsdecolonize@protonmail.com](mailto:curatorseducatorsdecolonize@protonmail.com)

Artists for a Post-MoMA Future (APMF). For more information, contact [artistspostmoma@protonmail.com](mailto:artistspostmoma@protonmail.com)

### **Phase 2: Convening for a Just Transition to a Post-MoMA Future**

Shaped by a spokescouncil of stakeholders and independent of the authority of MoMA, this convening, held at the end of the ten weeks, will determine the next steps for disassembling the museum in light of its harmful history: determining the mechanics of divestment and transfer of assets, the redistribution of properties and the repurposing of infrastructure; establishing funds for reparations, rematriations, and Indigenous land restoration; sustained support for just transition of workers to cooperative self-management and solidarity economies. As MoMA winds down and we extract our imagination from its orbit, our energies, resources and labor power will be freed up for creating alternatives in its place. Alternatives controlled by workers and communities, not billionaires and their enablers. This could be a first step for a city-wide process.

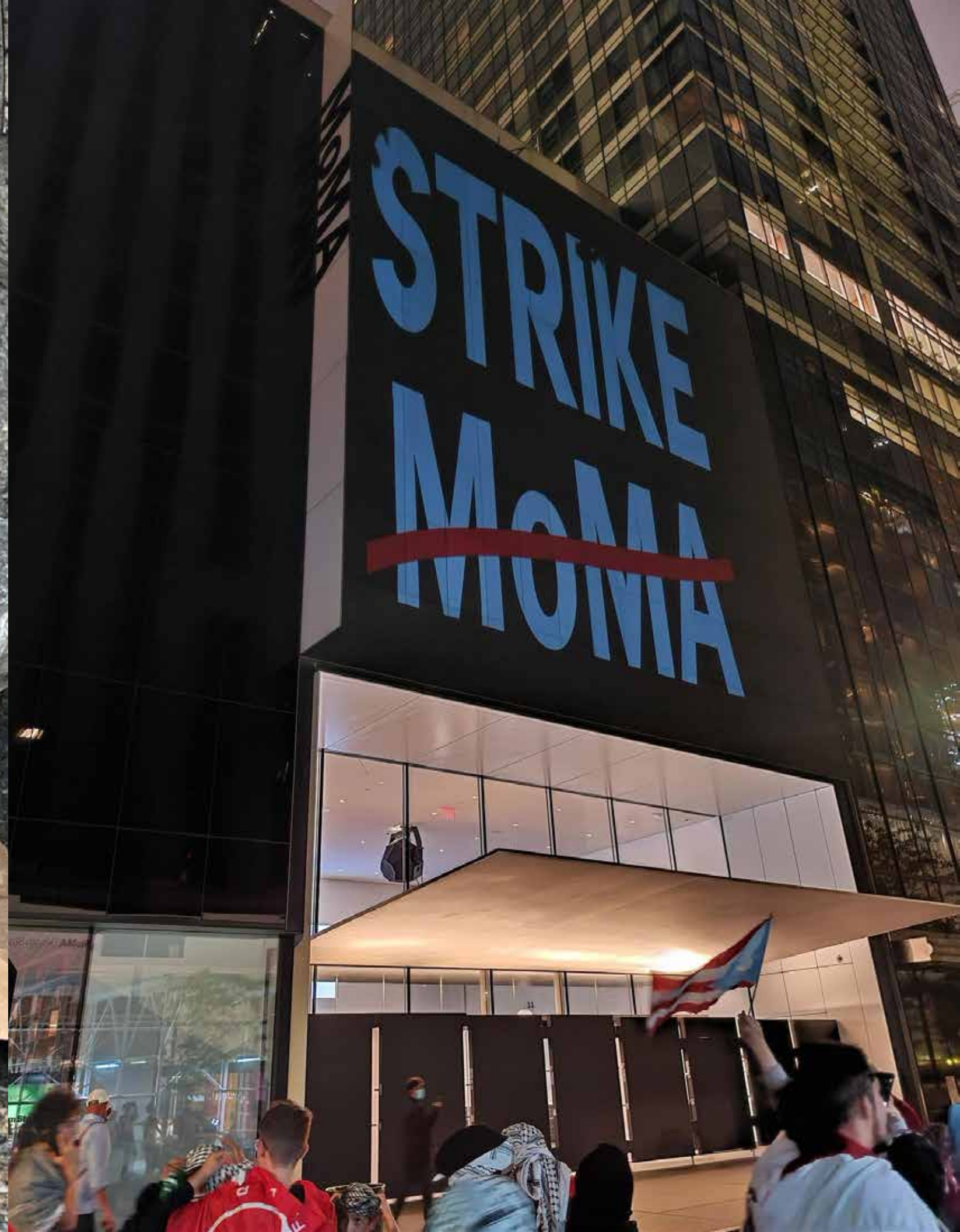
\* \* \* \* \*

## **VI Authorship of This Document**

This living document dated as of March 23, 2021 is authored by StrikeMOMA Working Group of the **International Imagination of Anti-National Anti-Imperialist Feelings (IIAAF)**. It is generated by StrikeMOMA Working Group in conversation with dozens of other groups and individuals, including but not limited to:

Artists for a Post-MoMA Future  
Comité Boricua En La Diáspora  
Curators and Educators for Decolonization  
Decolonize This Place  
Direct Action Front for Palestine  
Forensic Architecture  
Formers Employees of MoMA  
Global Ultra Luxury Faction  
Insurgent Poets Society  
MoMA Divest  
Take Back the Bronx  
Wardance Collective  
We Will Not Be Silent  
+

Finally, this document does not offer signatories and does not seek to establish a coalition. This document intends to facilitate the growth of a formation in which individuals, collectives, and groups engage in shared struggle. Strike ~~MoMA~~.



# Artists for a Post-MoMA Future: Call for an indeterminate, ongoing charette to envision a Post-MoMA Future

Yona Friedman's sketch for La Ville Spatiale from 1958. Friedman's visionary project imagined a city that would accommodate the free will of its citizens and would be suspended on a framework above the existing urban space, avoiding any displacement of what came before.

A charette is an intensive period of time in which people gather to resolve a design problem. The general idea of a charrette is to create an innovative atmosphere in which a diverse group of stakeholders can collaborate to "generate visions for the future."

In 2004, MoMA unveiled a renovation by architect Yoshio Taniguchi. Speaking to New York Magazine, he remarked, "The model for MoMA is Manhattan itself. The Sculpture Garden is Central Park, and around it is a city with buildings of various functions and purpose. MoMA is a microcosm of Manhattan."

To this we respond: **THAT'S THE PROBLEM!**

MoMA has become a microcosm of a city that excludes, extracts, and exploits on occupied Lenape territory. And yet, inside the museum are the relics of our comrades in radical thought who envisioned worlds no one else could imagine until they were conveyed through form. It is time for these visions to be unleashed and wielded in the world, to breathe life into these works anew.

Take for instance the museum's collection of visionary architectural models and drawings. Visionary architecture, while often optimistically broadcasting a wish or desire, is simultaneously rooted in inevitable failure. Often relegated to models, drawings, and other incarnations of

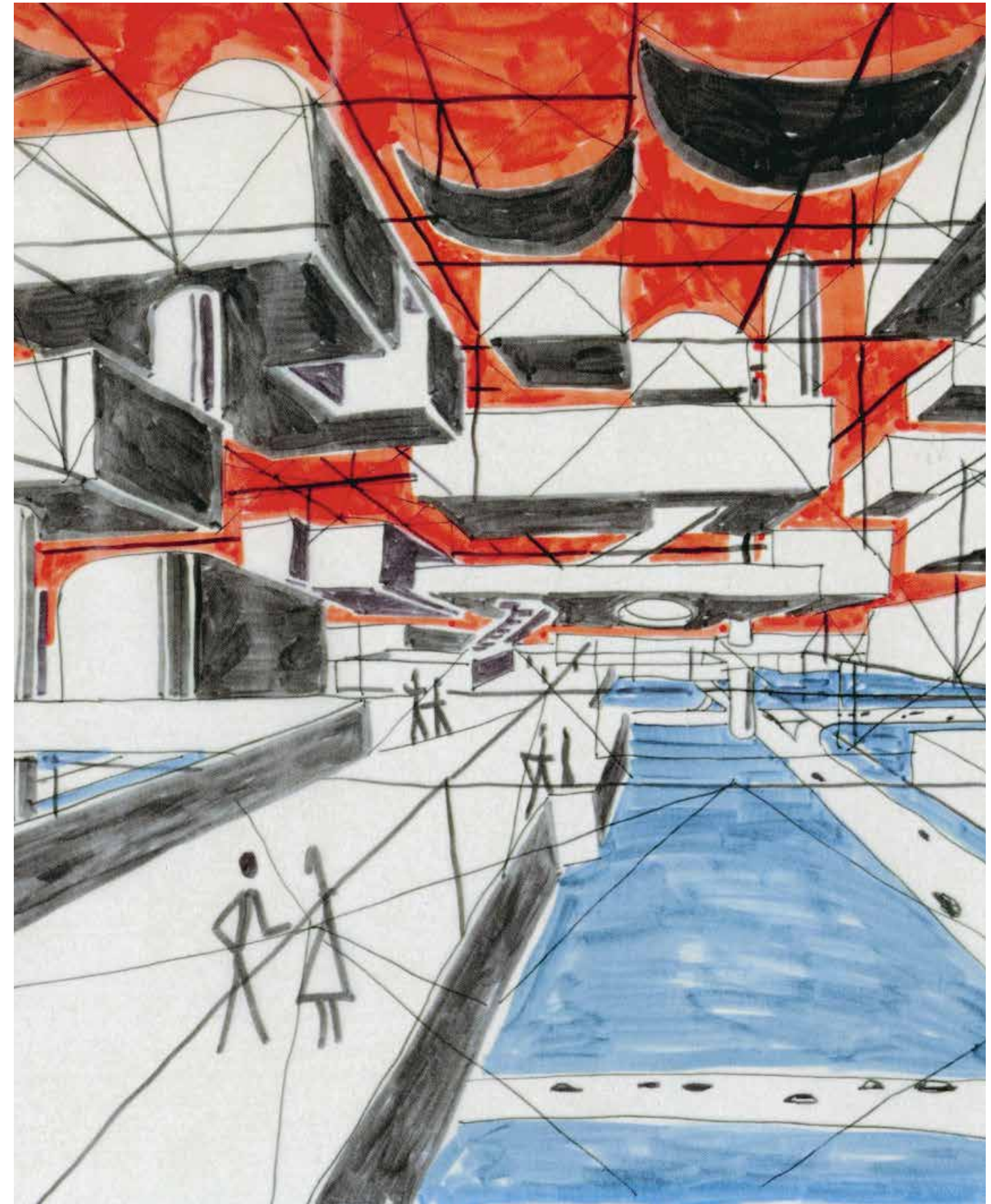
the paper project, these proposals remain theoretical or unbuilt due to various circumstances, ranging from sheer feasibility, to political or financial circumstances. The residual idea exists as a pragmatic metaphor, a statement demanding a culture capable of enabling its existence, a poetic critique of reality.

We call for a suspension of reality. Reality has for too long been an excuse. We call for the creative will of this city's people to imagine a dynamic, inclusive, earth-shaking, transformative, dispersed home for art that does not weaponize the care for these beloved and inspiring works at the expense of enabling systems of harm. We will wonder together, what will it look like? We will make drawings and build models. We will ask better and more beautiful questions. And we will delight in our collective sympathetic magic that will bring these visions into reality when we hold space together.

Speaking about the 2004 MoMA renovation, Taniguchi recalled his initial conversations with the then-head of Architecture and Design at the museum when it came to his proposal. "If you raise a lot of money, I will give you great, great architecture. But if you raise really a lot of money, I will make the architecture disappear," he said. Let us fulfill Taniguchi's vision, which is shared in the Strike MoMA Framework and Terms for Struggle document: As the walls that artificially separate the museum from the world collapse, we reorient away from the institution and come together to make plans. Let us strike in all the ways possible to exit from the terms of the museum so we can set our own.

Let not the laws of the city nor the law of gravity determine our vision!

To get involved, please write to: [artistspostmoma@protonmail.com](mailto:artistspostmoma@protonmail.com)



# Curators and Educators for Decolonization, A Declaration and Invitation

text by Nelson Maldonado-Torres, working group co-facilitator

Why strike MoMA? So that something else can emerge, something under the control of workers, communities, and artists rather than billionaires. —Strike MoMA: Framework and Terms of Struggle

Decolonization is a collective project that is rooted in the struggle against Indigenous genocide, settler colonialism, racial slavery, racialized gendering and modern/colonial ungendering, as well as the naturalization of land expropriation and the commodification of the environment. Decolonization is also a protest against the rationalization and naturalization of war and violence against Indigenous, Black, colonized, and racialized subjects as well as their descendants all over the world. This ongoing war targets bodies, territories, knowledges, symbols, movements, and rhythms. It expects disappearance, if it does not directly produce it in highly violent forms, as well as assimilation into the standards of the modern West. More than anything, however, decolonization might be a desire for an alternative.

Decolonization depends on generosity and creativity, without which critique becomes a ruse, if not a means of self-destruction. Decolonization involves the identification of what must be created, abolished, imagined anew, as well as reframed or reconceptualized. Curators and educators play an important role in performing these tasks. Along with artists, community organizers, activists, elders, and others who form part of decolonial movements, they help to identify and clarify fundamental problems as well as generate the most relevant questions that inform projects for decolonization.

The strike against MoMA is more than solely the rejection of the actions and financial investments of certain individuals in its Board or its Chairperson. It is a denunciation as well as an interruption of the coloniality that is embedded in the modernity that is enshrined in the MoMA itself, and that is also part of most other museums. It is not a strike against art but against its colonization and co-optation of art in the service of colonial and imperialist projects. More than anything, the strike against MoMA is a decolonial gesture, as well as an act committed to the idea that art should not be captured by oligarchs and capital, or assimilated into national myths, but rather that creative action plays a crucial role in the process of combatting war and affirming the worth of communities.

Curators and Educators for Decolonization stand up in solidarity with the strike against MoMA and the goal of promoting artistic formations “under the control of workers, communities, and artists rather than billionaires.” For this, we commit to engage in curatorial and educative initiatives that seek to:

**A.** Identify and bring higher visibility to creative projects that already present viable models of decolonial formation. Particular emphasis will be given to projects that are part of Native American and Indigenous “land back” and anticolonial movements, projects that target antiblack racism and racialized gendering/ungendering, and initiatives that address the conditions of refugees and migrants facing racist actions. This activity involves a critical engagement with the concept of art and artistic projects on the basis of decolonial formations that challenge these concepts, along with a critical reflection on museums and museumification.

**B.** Generate ideas and activities that promote and anticipate the emergence of decolonial creative formations, including visual, verbal, embodied, and musical creative works and techniques.

More specifically, Curators and Educators for Decolonization are committed to engage in one of these actions from the start of the strike against MoMA on April 9th, 2021 to the end of 2022. The list provided here is not exhaustive: equivalent activities could also be proposed. Collaborations among members, including regional encounters and coordination of work (e.g., similar exhibitions and/or courses taking place at the same time or building from each other), are particularly encouraged, but individual and punctual actions are entirely adequate too.

## CURATORS

**A.** Curate an exhibition, part of an exhibition, or a series of educative sessions that introduce audiences and participants to the strike against MoMA, and to at least some of the actions that take place during the strike.

**B.** Critically engage the archives of established artistic institutions (starting with those in the places where the curators find themselves) to make visible the ties between the history of these institutions and the history of empire/nation-building/capital. Use the material in publications, exhibitions, seminars, or other activities.

**C.** Curate an exhibition, part of an exhibition, or a series of educational sessions that feature creative projects that enact the principles of a decolonial post-MoMA formation. There should always be attention to Indigenous struggles for land in the national formation where the curatorial project takes place.

**D.** Curate an exhibition, part of an exhibition, or a series of educational sessions that: highlight creative work that challenges the coloniality of historical and/or contemporary museum formations, and that advances ideas, images, or sounds that promote the emergence of a decolonial post-MoMA future.

## EDUCATORS

**A.** Design a class, a module of a class, or a research initiative exercises that introduce students to the strike against MoMA, and to some of the actions that take place during the strike.

**B.** Critically engage the archives of established institutions of education (starting with those in the places where the educators find themselves) to make visible the ties between the history of these institutions and the history of empire/nation-building/capital. Use the material in publications, exhibitions, seminars, or other activities

**C.** Design a class, a module of a class, or a research initiative that features creative projects that enact the principles of a decolonial post-MoMA formation. There should always be attention to Indigenous struggles for land in the national formation where the educational initiative or research takes place.

**D.** Design a class, a module of a class, or a research initiative that: highlights creative work that challenges the coloniality of historical and/or contemporary museum formations, and that advances ideas, images, or sounds that promote the emergence of a decolonial post-MoMA future.

Curators and Educators for Decolonization will follow up and support the 10-weeks strike by seriously engaging its contributions to the emergence of decolonial creative formations. We will also seek to follow and contribute to the Phase 2 of the movement, namely, the convention for a “Just Transition to a Post-MoMA future.” This could involve the coordination of activities at museums and/or classrooms regionally and internationally, as well as the creation of a website, and the organization of a conference at the end of 2022.

### Contact:

Curators and Educators for Decolonization (CED):  
curatorseducatorsdecolonize@protonmail.com



Dated: April 12, 2021

**To the Workers of MoMA:**

Security, maintenance, wall painters, guest services, and restaurant staff. We write you this letter so that you hear directly from us, why we are here, what we came to do, to address how this affects you, and most importantly, to open up communication between us, so that we can support you as workers.

By now, you probably already heard that the board of trustees of MoMA who run this museum are all getting rich off of building the prisons that lock our people up, building the concentration camps that lock up our undocumented family and separate children from their mothers. You heard that there are board members who get rich selling guns, bombs, war planes, and surveillance technology to use against our people back home in the countries we come from the same way they sell weapons to the NYPD. Our people, who come from places like Jamaica, Puerto Rico, Palestine, Ghana, Kashmir, Armenia, Somalia, Lebanon, Dominican Republic, Yemen, Honduras, Trinidad & Tobago, Syria & Somalia. You probably heard about the hundreds of thousands of dollars they have given to the NYPD who beat and arrest us. Who set up floodlights on our block and treat our neighborhoods like open air prisons while they invest in real estate to gentrify our hoods and put our neighbors in the shelter system and make our neighborhoods so expensive that the paycheck you cash from MoMA ain't enough, and you probably thinking about doing Uber on the side. Because that's what some of us think about having to do too! That one of their board members was involved in shady business with sex trafficker Jeffrey Epstein. That some of them were Trump campaign donors, that some of them are getting rich destroying the Amazon rainforest as if the planet isn't already sick and dying. We could go on... but if you want to know more, we have a website: [www.strikemoma.org](http://www.strikemoma.org) Go check us out.

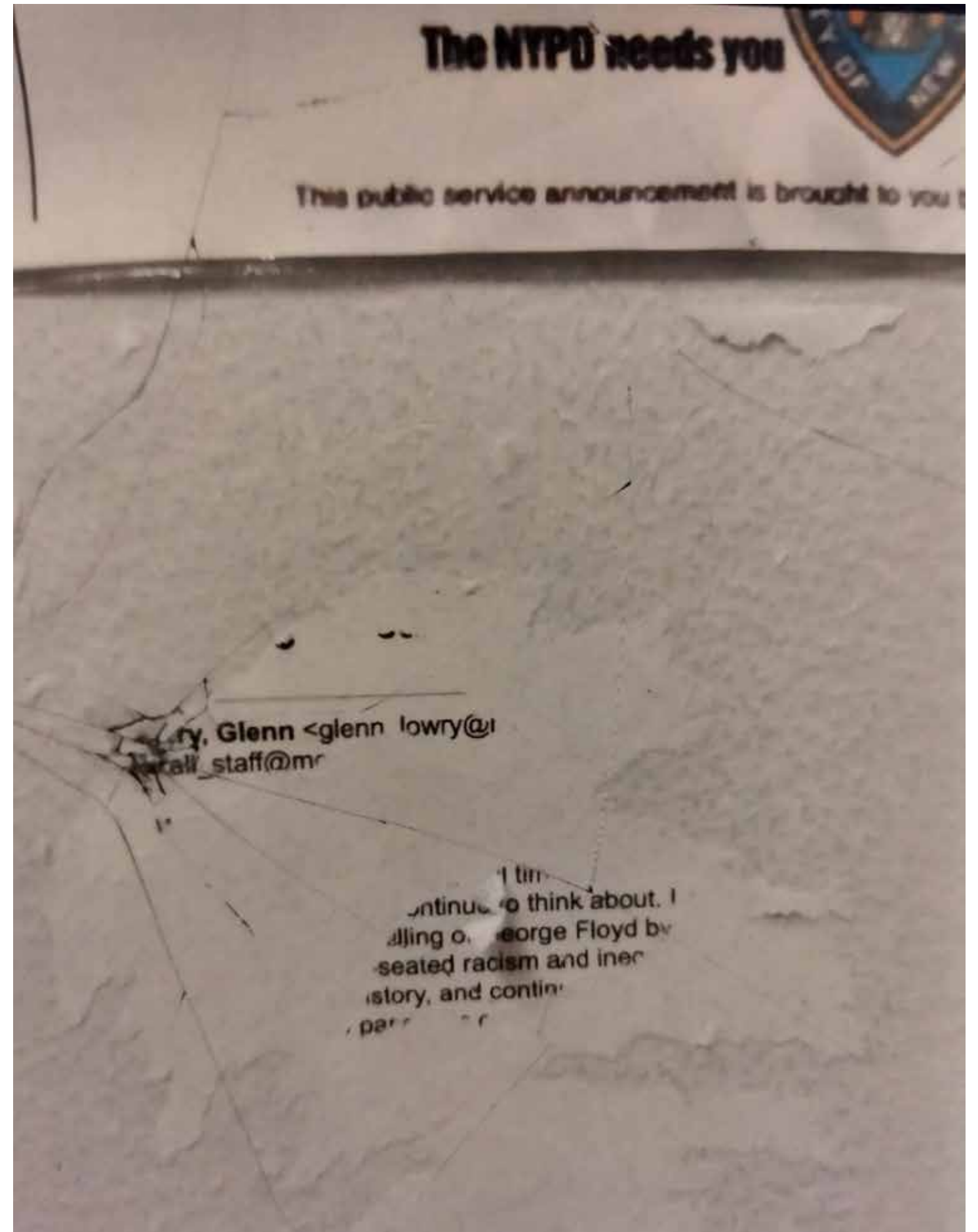
These board of trustees go out into the world and make money off the death and destruction we, and our people face, but then come sit on the board of this museum and get patted on the back for giving money to keep the museum open and to "take care of art." Our response is...

1. What about taking care of people? They don't give a shit about us. How they make their money proves it.
2. There are other ways to take care of art that isn't linked to the monsters that destroy us.

So, for the next ten weeks, Strike MoMA will be in the building. We come to disrupt. We come to take up space. We know this might make your job harder in the coming weeks. Especially for security. We apologize in advance. We are not here to harm anyone or anything. We come to demand a new MoMA. We gotta fight back and this is the only place where we can touch these fools. So please bear with us. Work with us. No matter what they tell you, **DO NOT LET THEM TURN YOU AGAINST US.** Let us have this understanding between us. Most importantly, tell us how we can support you. Tell us the bullshit they are doing behind the scenes. Email us anonymously at [strikemoma@protonmail.com](mailto:strikemoma@protonmail.com)

We look forward to a different future. But we ain't waiting for it. We're making it now. We hope you support our efforts.

Much Love & solidarity,  
**Strike MoMA**



**Transcript of some remarks made by Dylan Rodriguez as part of the Abolitionist Imaginaries One-Day Symposium at MoMA PS1 in NYC on March 26, 2021**

And so what I think we've seen today and what we've heard an echo of and the things that we've absorbed, the feelings we've absorbed, have to do with what an abolitionist art community looks like. In other words, it's actually here. We don't have to project and speculate, although we should always project and speculate in a creative kind of way. We don't have to think about abolitionist art communities being somewhere else. Sometime else. I feel like i'm a guest of an abolitionist art community right now and today. At the same time, i want to clarify that this is only a glimpse. It is only an echo. It is only a moment of feeling. And i say that because abolition is a creative infrastructure. It's a making, it's a method. If we're gonna be honest, it is a counter war.

It's a modality of community. It is not an outcome. Let's say that to everybody that will listen to us. Abolition is not an outcome. It's not an individual identity. I see far too many people that are branding themselves abolitionists who have no connection to abolitionist community, no accountability to abolitionist organizing and work. So we gotta push back against that and invite people who have that kind of neoliberal, individualizing branding tendency to actually join the work. You know, today's dialogue between Jackie Sumell and Mariame Kaba exemplifies something i've been saying over and

over again to anybody that'll listen to me. And that is the historical fact that there is no such thing as an individual abolitionist. To the contrary, the generosity of abolitionist work is something that grows from the Black, and especially the Black feminist, Black queer, Black trans radical and revolutionary tradition, as a shared collective community of obligation and responsibility.

So we gotta say that over and over again to each other and to ourselves, 'cause this is what makes it. It's in this way, within this extended global tradition, that i think we can understand the importance of embracing abolition as an aesthetic, as aesthetic work. Although i also should say, following the insight of the Black revolutionary and radical cultural worker—we forget this sometimes, that Frantz Fanon was a radical cultural worker—but following Frantz Fanon, i wanna say that abolitionist aesthetics are necessarily and always an aesthetics of combat. So i wanna think about that. Maybe think about that alongside Nicole [Fleetwood] once after i finish my comments. Let me continue my comments this evening by thinking about the immediate, concretely abolitionist implications of what Nicole and all of y'all have created in the public space, at PS1 through the Marking Time exhibit and today's Abolitionist Imaginaries Symposium.

First i wanna say i have a deep sense of gratitude for what you've done. You've challenged us to come to terms with the historical violence of the dominant US and Western art world. I think it is worth repeating over and over again that what you are doing here is a direct aboli-

tionist challenge to that world. And you are also challenging, i should not put this lightly, you are challenging a world that is inhabited by the nearby MoMA, New York's renowned museum of modern art, which, as we know, draws its historical capital and material capital from the chattel, colonial, land-expropriating violence of genocidal racial capitalism's philanthropic arm. So what does it mean if we're gonna be serious about this analysis and critique of the Museum of Modern Art in New York? What would it mean to take this exhibit at PS 1, right there in Queens, and today's symposium conversation as exemplary of what a liberated abolitionist art infrastructure would be like in the rubble of an antiblack and colonial art world's past and present. 'Cause that's what i wanna fucking see. I wanna be working with you all. I wanna be a guest of y'all's in an art world, which is dancing on the rubble of the antiblack colonial art world that still remains hegemonic and dominant. I'm fucking done with that shit. I'm tired of it. What if we take the aesthetic of Marking Time, the exhibit, the aesthetics—what if we take that seriously, what if we take the title of today's symposium seriously as an urging toward collective sustained embrace of the responsibility to be accountable to what we have called here an abolitionist imaginary.... I've been one degree separated from Adamu Chan for many years, and i'm so happy that he's not incarcerated, but i'm even happier that he's not incarcerated while doing the work that he's doing. Adamu, you know, he raised the question earlier today of accountability.

So i wanna move in the spirit of that question. By making that commitment to accountability, i'm obligated to give a couple minutes to honor the imagination and intervention of a strike that was just announced three days ago, which some of y'all probably know about, many of you might not. I just learned about it, you know, not that long ago. But the strike is described with clarity at the website [strike-moma.org](http://strike-moma.org). This is a 10 week strike. It's gonna begin, i believe, on April 9th. It's organized by the Strike MoMA working group of the International Imagination of Anti-national Anti-imperialist Feelings. The IIAAF. I fucking love the title of the organization. This is not some isolated organization's work. It has been happening in conversation with literally dozens of organizations and people, including, but not limited to groups like Artists for a Post-MoMA Future, Comité Boricua En La Diáspora, Curators and Educators for Decolonization, Decolonize This Place, Direct Action Front for Palestine, Insurgent Poets Society, MoMA Divest, Take Back the Bronx, We Will Not Be Silent, i could spend the next 10 minutes just talking about all the organizations backing this up. So i wanna continue my comments by amplifying the message of this upcoming strike. It states an understanding that museums are inseparable from the societies that sponsor and canonize them, or as the strike organizers phrase it, and i'm quoting them here: "The MoMA exists on the same plane as the violence of the ruling class that has controlled it." All right....

# Introduction to Writing for Post-MoMA Futures, Part I

(April 9, 2021)

This dossier of materials is the first installation of [Writing for Post-MoMA Futures](#), a collaborative project with the Verso blog intended to build the intellectual and relational infrastructure of the [Strike MoMA](#) initiative over the course of the Ten Weeks of Action and beyond. The release of the dossier is a real-time contribution to Week 4 of this initiative, and is interwoven with two other events this week. The first is a conversation (included below) between Ariella Azoulay, Shellyne Rodriguez, Dalaeja Foreman, and Nitasha Dhillon about the task of what Azoulay calls “abolishing MoMA” and its significance for collective liberation struggles beyond the art system. The second is the [Ruins of Modernity Tour](#), which gets under way just as this dossier goes live. Conceived as a direct action, the tour will lead from Columbus Circle to MoMA and represents an escalation and intensification of the Strike MoMa initiative.

This dossier assembles a variety of movement-generated writings by organizers, artists, scholars, and educators, blurring the boundary between these roles. Included here are outlines of Strike MoMA working groups, movement analysis, poetic texts, and theoretical interventions. These materials present a variety of forms, aesthetics, and emphases. What brings them together is that they share Strike MoMa: Framework and Terms for Struggle document as a horizon, embracing its call to imagine and enact the dismantling of MoMa with a diversity of tactics and visions. These materials have been produced within and for the movement spaces that have been opened since the release of that document on March 23, including the [weekly pop-up de-occupation](#) at Post-MoMA plaza across from the museum and its parallel online gathering for those unable to be there physically. In other words, these texts are operational and time-specific interventions that are helping to cultivate,

deepen, and strengthen the emerging Strike MoMA formation as it grows. This common ethos and relational affinity is what binds them as an editorial assemblage, and together they establish the beginnings of a collective conversation that will unfold in later phases of Writing For Post-MoMA Futures, as well as forthcoming iterations of the Ruins of Modernity tour in coming weeks.

\* \* \* \* \*

On April 23, an [email was sent by Strike MoMa organizers to MoMA Director Glenn Lowry](#) announcing their intent to bring the Ruins of Modernity Tour into the museum. In the email, they address a letter sent to staff by Lowry (and subsequently leaked by workers) in which he charges that Strike MoMA’s motivation is to “destroy the museum.” In response, organizers write:

Your attempt to conflate striking MoMa with “destruction” amounts to fear mongering, as if it were us, rather than the oligarchs, who embody a threat to culture, art, and society. MoMA has been a mechanism of destruction since its inception with the Rockefellers. Its claims for enlightenment and progress have always been in ruins; we are heightening this condition and its related contradictions. You invoke “the museum” as if it were a homogenous community with a unified interest; but everyone knows it is a site of class struggle and riven with antagonisms, however many reassuring emails you send or conversations you have with staff. The MoMA regime is a system of power and wealth that harms people, that uses art as an instrument of

accumulation, and that makes empty appeals to what you call “the public good” while covering for billionaires like Leon Black, Larry Fink, and Jerry Speyer, whose names have become synonymous with patriarchal violence, the carceral state, climate destruction, neo-feudal landlordism, and direct support for the NYPD Foundation. Disassemble, dismantle, abolish. All these verbs apply when we are talking about destroying an apparatus of violence so that something else can emerge, something controlled by workers, communities, and artists rather than oligarchs.

Lowry’s fear mongering is to be expected given that Strike MoMA directly threatens the MoMA regime he is tasked with managing. However, his invocation of “destruction” finds echoes in a more diffuse sense of cognitive dissonance percolating across the art system, as when we overhear the idea that Strike MoMa is aiming to “cancel” MoMA in the manner of a disgraced celebrity. The current movement strikes at the core of the art system. The struggle against settler institutions like the museum and the university is unsettling to all of our ways of being. For many artists, critics, curators, it is difficult to divest from an institution that has convinced the world of its necessity and permanence, and around which many professional profiles revolve. As stated in the Strike MoMa document, striking MoMA is not about moralizing from a place of purity. It is about “heightening contradictions” to the point that the apparatus breaks down so that something else can emerge, something based in values of care, generosity, and cooperation rather than property, profit, and imperial plunder.

Seeing the continuities between imperialism and the contemporary museum becomes all the more resonant in light of a recent development at MoMA that follows on the heels of the announcement of the tour by Strike MoMa. This past Tuesday, after months of silence from MoMA, it was officially [announced](#) that [Leon Black’s replacement will be Marie-Josée Kravis](#), a long-time board MoMA board member.

As Strike MoMA put it in a statement released to journalists on April 28 in advance of the Ruins of Modernity Tour:

The replacement of Leon Black by Marie-Josée Kravis is a game of musical chairs. For us, the issue is not one bad board member. They are all part of the same [“interlocking directorate”](#) whose violence is accumulated in the very structure of the museum and the power grid of the city surrounding it. Kravis is deeply involved in a network of think tanks that make up the intellectual and operational infrastructure of the global ruling class. She is the vice Chair and Senior Fellow of the right-wing [Hudson Institute](#), started by Rand Corporation executives and connected to the Institute For Advanced Study in Princeton. It has given awards to figures including Ronald Regan, Henry Kissinger, Benjamin Netanyahu, Paul Ryan, Marco Rubio, and Vice President Mike Pence. She is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, the Bilderberg Group, and is active as Chairwoman Emeritus of the [Economic Club of New York](#). This elite planning body hosted a nationally-televised speech by Donald Trump in 2019, and Kravis [personally introduced](#) a speech by Trump’s Secretary of State Mike Pompeo less than a year ago. At this level of the power elite, ideological lines between liberals and Trumpists break down. It is about consolidating ruling class governance in the face of heightening contradictions. The profile of Kravis only adds to the case against MoMA. Her name now appears in the limelight alongside better-known board members like Larry Fink, CEO of Blackrock and supporter of the New York City Police Foundation, and [Glenn Dubin](#), the hedge fund billionaire who has been explicitly named as a participant in Epstein’s inner circle of sexual abuse on his private Caribbean island. The election of Kravis to the head of the board makes the stakes of striking MoMA all the more clear for our communities and movements for collective liberation.

The Writing for Post-MoMA Futures project is woven into the work of organizing against the forces of death and destruction represented by a figure like Kravis and her affiliated institutions. The materials appearing here and in future iterations are concrete contributions to developing the framework for what it means to simultaneously exit the apparatus of MoMA while imagining and building counter-institutions. They point in the direction of Phase 2 of Strike MoMA, which will unfold later this year with a Convening for a Just Transition to Post-MoMa Futures.

# THE ART OF MAIMING: A RESEARCH WORKING GROUP

text by Jasbir K. Puar, working group member

The research-intensive working group is focused on excavating and exposing the circuits of capital that make the Settler Museum possible. Through our research we intend to unravel these circuits to reveal and imagine other ways of being in relation. Warren Kanders (Whitney/Safariland), Leon Black (MOMA/Jeffrey Epstein), and Darren Walker (Ford Foundation/"humane" jails) have been rendered monstrous exceptions or benevolent "best of" capitalists in a system that relies on the wealthy washing their money through philanthropic arenas and institutions. In actuality, none of these philanthropists are exceptional. Rather their profit-making practices and ideological orientations to capitalism and exploitation are normative, typical, expected, lauded, and justified as the only way to create urban spaces of cultural value.

There is much more work to be done to unearth these carceral assemblages of the settler museum, board of director members, benefactors, and the industries that make money for philanthropists: "humane" weapons manufacturing companies; housing and business development projects that gentrify neighborhoods and fracture communities; support of building more

prisons; Zionist efforts to suppress freedom of speech on Palestine; liaisons with sexual predators and violent "white collar" criminals; corporate corruption and malfeasance.

As a methodological approach we refuse to accept the mystification of capitalist exploitation presented by the lexicon of financialization. We labor in tandem with the Strike MOMA Working Group in the spirit of not only decolonial and abolitionist futures but decolonization and abolition now. This research is necessary tactically, to use as leverage in the media and for impact, to disseminate information in order to discredit and to educate, to demand acknowledgement of the great harms of these institutions, and to execute certain actions to solicit their dismantling. This research is in concert with movement pedagogy that seeks to unsettle everything.

In short, we do not need profit from war, economies of maiming and death, labor exploitation, land grabs, settler colonialism, and the prison industrial complex in order to have sustainable, nourishing, representative, and accessible artistic work grounded in community needs and desires.



Britt from Wardance Collective

## Decolonize Ayiti Working Group (April 9)

On Friday April 9, a group of performance artists in the Dominican Republic gathered in solidarity with Strike MoMA working group in NY.

Performance artist [La Gran Mawon](#) along with [Mache Mache](#) performed in the Parque Cervantes while a projection by artists [Jehdy Vargas](#) and [Zahir Ajam](#) played in the background.

Decolonize Ayiti released this statement along with [these videos](#):

We are interested in beginning the conversation and thoughts of decolonization of DR/ HAITI. Holding MoMA accountable for the use of their blood money via the streams of Leon Black & Jeffery Epstein. The class war being raised is connected to the big money in MoMA. On the 9th artist La Gran Mawon along with Mache Mache and Jehdy Vargas want to discuss the wall that's being built between the DR and Haiti (Fuck the wall) and question where is this money coming from, the artist want to discuss a strike against the Dominican Nationalist that are anti Haitian (Fuck Xenophobia and Fuck White Supremacy), we wanted to start the conversation of all the horrible Columbus sculptures in DR – specifically the one with Anacaona reaching up to him and how problematic it is for the true story of colonization.

Together we want to talk in solidarity about modernity, we are talking about our bodies in these spaces of big money like MoMA that have captivity and a budget to create culture change. They want our art, music, dances but they don't want us says they want to continue to take our creativity to show white and rich people how the "abstract other" lives or minority, or person of poverty lives but yet when they bring us into these spaces we are dying because we don't have health insurance and we are scrambling writing artist grants to even be able to make work says artist Brittney from Get Dis War Dance Collective. Strike MoMA is about taking roots. It is about imagining what kind of nutrition can exist for a post MoMA future that doesn't accept blood money and war criminals on their boards.

For 10 weeks we want to organize a group of Dominican artists in support of Haiti and start the conversation of decolonization that needs to be had out here with the Dominican Nationalist that are trying to build a wall. This strike will be in conversation with strike MoMA and calling out all of the blood money connected to the museum via Leon Black and Jeffery Epstein and many more.

As indigenous, brown, black, queer and trans artist our artwork has been made unsafe. For 10 weeks we want to raise awareness of the class war being raised around the world which is connected to the big money and blood money at MoMA. We want to facilitate

multiple conversations and would love the support of the folks that are organizing right now on the ground in Haiti—I reached out to some organizers to start the conversation that needs to be had out here.

Ello lanzaron esta declaración junto con el video:

Estamos interesados en comenzar la conversación y los pensamientos de descolonización de RD / HAITÍ. Hacer responsable al MoMA por el uso de su dinero de sangre a través de las corrientes de Leon Black y Jeffery Epstein. La guerra de clases que se está planteando está relacionada con el gran dinero en MoMA. El día 9, los artistas de La Gran Mawon junto con Mache Mache y Jehdy Vargas quieren hablar de el muro que se está construyendo entre la República Dominicana y Haití (que se joda el muro) y cuestionar de dónde viene este dinero, los artistas quieren hacer una huelga contra los nacionalistas dominicanos que son anti-haitianos (Fuck Xenophobia y Fuck supremacia blanca), queríamos comenzar la conversación sobre todas las horribles esculturas de Colón en RD, específicamente la de Anacaona acercándose a él y lo problemático que es para la verdadera historia de la colonización.

Juntos queremos hablar solidariamente de la modernidad, estamos hablando de nuestros cuerpos en estos espacios de mucho dinero como el MoMA que tienen cautiverio y un presupuesto para generar cambio de cultura. Quieren nuestro arte, música, bailes pero no nos quieren dice que quieren seguir llevando nuestra creatividad para mostrarle a la gente blanca y rica cómo vive el "otro abstracto" o la minoría, o la persona de la pobreza, pero aún cuando traen Nos estamos muriendo en estos espacios porque no tenemos seguro médico y estamos luchando con las subvenciones para artistas escritores para poder hacer trabajo, dice artista Britney de Get Dis War Dance Collective. Strike MoMA se trata de echar raíces. Se trata de imaginar qué tipo de nutrición puede existir para un futuro posterior al MOMA que no acepte dinero de sangre y criminales de guerra en sus foros.

Durante 10 semanas queremos organizar un grupo de artistas dominicanos en apoyo de Haití y comenzar la conversación de descolonización que se debe tener aquí con los nacionalistas dominicanos que están tratando de construir un muro. Esta huelga estará en conversación con la huelga MoMA y llamará a todo el dinero de sangre conectado al museo a través de Leon Black y Jeffery Epstein y muchos más.

Como artistas indígenas, morenos, negros, queer y trans, nuestra obra de arte se ha vuelto insegura. Durante 10 semanas queremos crear conciencia sobre la guerra de clases que se está levantando en todo el mundo y que está relacionada con el gran dinero y el dinero de sangre en el MoMA. Queremos facilitar múltiples conversaciones y nos encantaría el apoyo de la gente que se está organizando en este momento en Haití. Me comuniqué con algunos organizadores para iniciar la conversación que se debe tener aquí.

# Post-MoMa Futures:

## Ten Weeks of Art, Action, and Conversation

Every Friday, April 9 - June 11

Urban Plaza, 31 West 52nd street,  
directly across from MoMA

Weekly gatherings begin at 4 PM

\* \* \* \* \*

### Statement of Intent

We are here, in the heart of empire, to strike MoMA. When we strike MoMA we strike the blood-soaked modernity to which this museum is a monument. Shout out to all those doing actions today in Chicago, Dominican Republic, Athens, and everywhere else, including to the former and current MoMA workers who have expressed their solidarity in various ways. In acting together through collective refusal, we are creating connections. We are bridging colonial wounds across movements, borders, and identities.

Every Friday for the next ten weeks, this plaza will be the site of a pop-up de-occupation. This process is grounded in the operational document *Strike MoMA: Terms and Framework for Struggle*. The document is an invitation to gather, to imagine, and to act in ways big and small. Inside the institution and outside the institution, in solidarity with workers and the communities harmed by MoMA's toxic legacy. As people find each other, the artificial walls separating the museum from the city dissolve.

Today we are gathering on our own terms outside the institution to build alternative worlds, here and now. The process has already begun. We are not waiting for change to come from above. We are not making demands upon the institution. When we strike MoMA, we are allowing something else to emerge, something that values care and generosity over property and profit. Something controlled by workers, communities, and artists rather than the death-dealing oligarchs who control it now.

Men like Leon Black, the hedgefund billionaire who financed Jeffery Epstein. Men like Larry Fink, CEO of BlackRock and donor to the NYC police Foundation. Men like Steven Tannenbaum, whose firm GoldTree helped to implement the Promesa austerity package imposed on the people of Puerto Rico.

The problem goes beyond any one board member. The museum itself is the problem. Since its inception in 1929 with the oil wealth of the Rockefellers, the museum has been a technology of extraction and an apparatus of dispossession. There is zero separation between the museum and the global ruling class. It is the same people who reside in the ultra-luxury residential skyscrapers that surround us, like 35W35, the so-called MoMA Tower. Look at it! It is literally connected to the museum, and we know that board members live there. We are outside MoMA because MoMA exists outside of itself. It is more than an art museum. It is a spectacular node in a grid of power and capital extending throughout the city and the world.

Post-MoMa futures are enacted now in the space we hold, the relations that we build, the actions we take, with a diversity of tactics and aesthetics. We are creating movement-generated art, media, and education within an emerging infrastructure. As we dance on the ruins of the modern museum, may a thousand mushrooms bloom under the signs of healing, care, and solidarity. The empire is falling, and the ancestors are calling.

\* \* \* \* \*

### Where we are standing

We are gathering on stolen Lenape land, land that has been violently integrated into the property-grid of the settler-city. Specifically, this plaza is a so-called Privately Owned Public Space (POPS). It is defined by a zoning instrument that allows developers to build higher, more profitable skyscrapers in exchange for defining a small portion of their lot as 24-hour "public space."

On one side of the plaza is the **Deutsche Bank** building. Deutsche Bank: profiteers of the subprime mortgage crisis, investors in the Dakota Access pipeline, lenders to Jeffery Epstein and Donald Trump, corporate sponsors of MoMA. On the other side, the **CBS Building**, headquarters of one of the largest media companies in the world. It was designed by Modernist hero Eero Saarinen. Austere architectural form and capitalist media spectacle are here joined seamlessly in a looming monument to the same blood-soaked modernity advanced by MoMA just across the street.

CBS stands for Columbia Broadcasting System. Columbia, as in the spirit of Christopher Columbus. Think of **Columbus Circle** a few blocks north on 59th street, where a monument to the colonizer still stands. Think of **Columbia University** a few miles north, founded by the British Crown and now an educational epicenter of the global elite steadily encroaching into Harlem. Shout out to the grad student workers on strike up there! Shout out to the miners on strike in Alabama! Shout out to the Amazon workers on strike all across the world!

In the middle of the plaza stands a sculpture entitled *Lapstrake* (1987) by Jesus Bautista Morales (1950-2015). Morales grew up in a working class Chicano community in Texas. He stated that he was inspired to create sculptural forms that evoked those of his own ancestral connections to the pre-Columbian civilizations of Mexico. His best known work is the *Houston Police Officers' Memorial* (1990), guarded 24-7 by the Houston Police Department. As we gather to transform this space, let us deepen our understanding of how they commodify our culture, how they use our art as ornaments, treat our people as shields, and trick us into assimilating into a system that is killing us.

Look around the plaza. Think of the possibilities as we gather and hold space together. The pillars. The benches. The acoustics. The sightlines. Even think of the soil in the planters. What seeds will be cultivated and cared for in the coming ten weeks?

In the immediate radius of MoMA relevant sites to explore are everywhere. Here are just a few that are within walking distance of the museum. More will be added as further research is conducted by participants in the de-occupation over the next ten weeks. We hear that this will be part of a Pokemon game in future pop-ups.

**BlackRock** is located at 55 E 52nd St. Black Rock is the world's largest asset manager and is invested in private prisons, climate-destroying corporations, and numerous other violent industries. Larry Fink is the CEO of Black Rock, a donor to the NYPD, a former Trump advisor, and also on the board of MoMA.

**New York City Police Foundation:** 555 5th Ave, New York, NY 10017. Many MoMA board members donate to this organization.

**15 Central Park West:** ultra-luxury building just north of Billionaires Row, home to Eyal Ofer and Zhang Xin, both of whom are MoMa board members.

**GoldenTree Asset Management** is located at 300 Park Avenue. GoldTree helped to implement the Promesa austerity package imposed on the people of Puerto Rico. The CEO of the firm is MoMA board member Steven Tannanbaum.

**World Jewish Congress** is located at 501 Madison Avenue. MoMa honorary board chair Ronald Lauder is the president of the WJC, one of the leading Zionist advocacy organization in the United States, founded to advance the settler-colonization in Palestine.

**Ford Foundation** is located at 320 East 43rd. Ford Foundation is run by Darren Walker, known for calling the cops on Ford Fellows when they protested his advocacy of new jail construction. Though not on the board of MoMa, he is closely connected to its leading players. Ford Foundation has for decades deployed techniques of soft counterinsurgency against radical movements through co-optation and neutralization, most recently under the rubric of "social justice."

\* \* \* \* \*

## Principles and Agreements for the De-Occupation

- **Strike MoMa: Terms and Framework for Struggle** is the starting point for coming together to enact Post-MoMa futures through an abundance of approaches, expressions, and aesthetics. We ask that you read, study, and share this document.
- We rely on and cultivate autonomous organizing by individuals, affinity groups, and collectives. We operate independently of nonprofit organizations and politicians.
- We respect a diversity of tactics and strategies so long as they are consistent with the Framework and Terms for Struggle.
- We are not here to harm anyone or any thing. Be mindful of how your actions affect others. We are here to strike MoMa by reorienting away from the institution and towards one another.
- We must protect ourselves from counterinsurgency efforts of the police, the FBI, Fascists, and provocateurs, but also the liberal cooptations and denunciations coming from the art system.
- We are not here for purity. We want to heighten the contradictions that are used to divide us. Direct action, collective self-defense, care, generosity and patience with each other are part and parcel of the work. Trust, friendship, and solidarity is the basis of effective organizing.
- We collectively commit to developing creative and transformative ways to address conflict and harm as we move along the path of a post-MoMa future.
- We come here to learn and unlearn, acknowledging the debts we owe each other. As we do the work of refusing the institution, there is work to be done amongst ourselves as well.

Dear all,

This weekend, we welcomed about 5,000 visitors to the Museum—a strong reminder that our fellow New Yorkers continue to seek out safe, inspiring, and joyful experiences in our galleries. The news on COVID-19 in New York remains optimistic: positivity and hospitalization rates have declined and nearly one in four New Yorkers is now vaccinated. Please remember that you can find details on vaccine appointment availability at sources like New York State's Am I Eligible Website or TurboVax, we've set up computers in the Staff Caff you can use to book appointments, and you can work with your managers to take up to four hours of paid leave to accommodate each scheduled vaccine dose.

As you heard on Friday from \*\*\*\*\* , a group of approximately 20 peaceful protesters gathered in the late afternoon in Union Plaza across the street from the Museum, for about 90 minutes. MoMA respects the right to protest, and I want to thank everyone in our security, visitor engagement, membership, and retail teams who worked so well together to respect the action taking place, while staying focused on protecting the health and safety of each other and our visitors, and keeping our Museum spaces peaceful and welcoming.

We can all be proud of the Museum's long history of making space for voices to be heard. You may have read in the press that the group which gathered on Friday is calling for "disassembling" MoMA and all museums so they no longer exist, and I'd like to take a moment to speak to that. I do not agree that dismantling MoMA, or any museums, serves the best interests of the public. I believe we collectively provide an important public good that benefits millions of people, of all socio-economic backgrounds, races, and geographies. My focus is on ensuring that we, and as many cultural institutions as possible, survive the crisis of the pandemic and continue to serve future generations. I am proud that we have been able to keep all staff of the Museum employed. I am proud that we have an increasingly diverse staff and program. I am proud of our collaborative efforts to address issues of race, equity, and justice in all that we do. Do we have a lot more work to do? For sure. Can we be an even better institution? For sure. Is the protesters' call to destroy MoMA the solution?

I don't see that helping anyone. I look forward to working together, with all of you, to continue building a better MoMA for all.

Finally, as a reminder, these resources are always available to you:

Our employee assistance program, \*\*\*\*@\*\*\*\*\* , is a free benefit to staff that can provide resources, referrals, and counseling for overall well-being. All calls are free and services are confidential. You can reach the service at 1-800-\*\*\*-\*\*\*\* or online at \*\*\*\*\*.com with the code: \*\*\*\*. CCA's special focus for April webinars is Financial Planning and Security. You can find more details in the attached flyer. Don't forget the helpful IT Guidance and FAQs on the Staff Site. The IT helpdesk is open Monday-Friday between 9:00am-6:00pm at 212-\*\*\*-\*\*\*\*.

For the latest health updates and guidance on the COVID-19 situation:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
- NY State Department of Health: <https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/home>
- NYC Health Department: [nyc.gov/health/coronavirus](https://nyc.gov/health/coronavirus)
- NY State Vaccine Eligibility: <https://am-i-eligible.covid19vaccine.health.ny.gov/>
- TurboVax: <https://www.turbovox.info/>

Be safe and well,  
Glenn

DATE: April 23, 2021

TO: Glenn Lowry, David Rockefeller Director, Museum of Modern Art  
FROM: Direct Action Working Group of the International Imagination of Anti-national Anti-imperialist Feelings (IIAAF)  
RE: Notice of Intention and Expectations for The Ruins of Modernity Tour Dear Glenn Lowry,

We are writing to notify you that on Friday, April 30, a group of students, scholars, artists, community organizers, and former MoMA workers intend to conduct a self-organized tour of Midtown, including the interior of MoMA. The tour is entitled The Ruins of Modernity: From the City to the Museum, and it enacts the ideas laid out in Strike MoMA: Terms and Framework for Struggle. This is an educational and cultural event. It will begin by highlighting the connections between MoMA and ruling class power at the scales of the city and the globe. It will end with a direct inspection of the operational infrastructure of the museum building itself.

We understand that Free Fridays are currently suspended, and MoMA workers have informed us that since our gatherings began across the street under the banner of Post-MoMA Futures, tickets are now required to enter the lobby of the museum. For the tour this Friday, we do not intend to pay the \$25 entry fee. We believe that this fee should not exist at all for anyone. We expect to be able to enter the museum without incident. We do not want the MoMA staff to be put in the difficult position of being told by management to deny entry to the tour. We also expect that you will not invite NYPD officers inside or around the museum in response to the tour. Involving the police will create an unsafe environment for everyone. We will operate in a Covid-aware manner, including the wearing of masks.

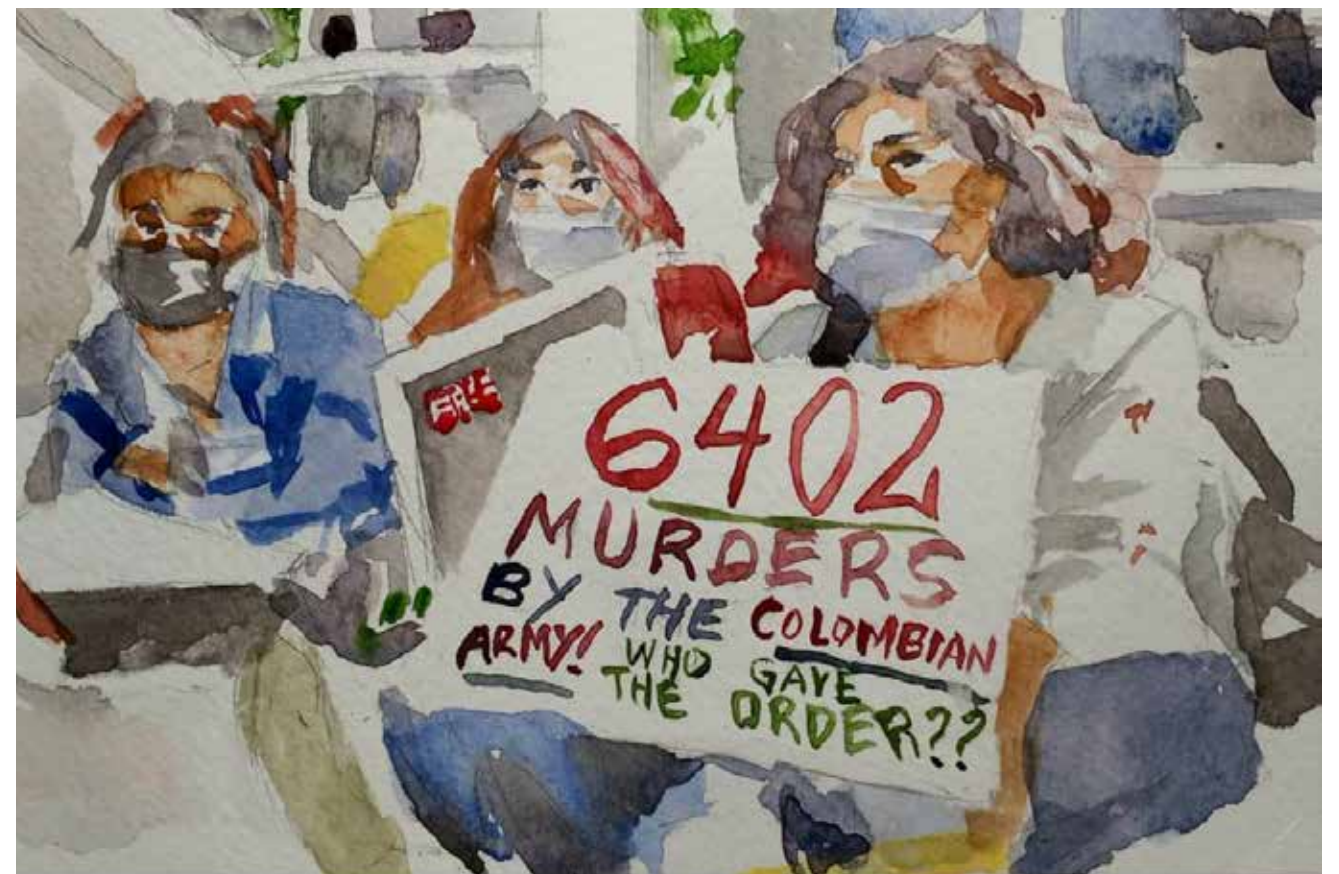
We also would like to address a few points related to the letter you sent to all MoMA staff on April 15th. In that letter, you falsely attribute to us the motivation of "destroying the museum." Your attempt to conflate striking MoMA with "destruction" amounts to fearmongering, as if it were us, rather than the oligarchs, who embody a threat to culture, art, and society. MoMA has been a mechanism of destruction since its inception with the Rockefellers. Its claims for enlightenment and progress have always been in ruins; we are heightening this condition and its related contradictions. You invoke "the museum" as if it were a homogenous community with a unified interest; but everyone knows it is a site of class struggle and riven with antagonisms, however many reassuring emails you send or conversations you have with staff. The MoMA regime is a system of power and wealth that harms people, that uses art as an instrument of accumulation, and that makes empty appeals to what you call "the public good" while covering for billionaires like Leon Black, Larry Fink, and Jerry Speyer, whose names have become synonymous with patriarchal violence, the carceral state, climate destruction, neo-feudal landlordism, and direct support for the NYPD Foundation. Disassemble, dismantle, abolish. All these verbs apply when we are talking about destroying an apparatus of violence so that something else can emerge, something controlled by workers, communities, and artists rather than oligarchs.

Finally, we take this opportunity to set the record straight: despite your denials, you did indeed fire many workers from MoMA last year. Some of them will be with us on the tour. The fact that they were uncontracted does not make them disposable or unworthy of being counted. The walls separating the museum from the city have always been an illusion. The Ruins of Modernity tour operationalizes this fact, and sees the museum on the same plane of violence as nearby places like Columbus Circle and Blackrock HQ, and, directly adjacent to the museum itself, the ultra-luxury 53W53 "MoMA Tower."

Thank you, and we appreciate your cooperation,  
Direct Action Working Group of IIAAF



The replacement of Leon Black by Marie-Josée Kravis is a game of musical chairs. They are all part of the same interlocking directorate whose violence is accumulated in the very structure of the museum and the power grid of the city surrounding it. Kravis is deeply connected to an archipelago of think tanks that make up the intellectual and operational infrastructure of the global ruling class. She is the vice Chair and Senior Fellow of the right-wing Hudson Institute, started by Rand Corporation executives, which has given awards to figures including Ronald Regan, Henry Kissinger, Benjamin Netanyahu, Paul Ryan, Marco Rubio, and Vice President Mike Pence. She is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, the Bildeberg Group, and is active as Chairwoman Emeritus of the Economic Club of New York, an elite planning body which hosted a nationally-televised speech by Donald Trump in 2019. At this level of the power elite, ideological lines between liberals and Trumpists break down. It is about consolidating ruling class governance in the face of movements for collective liberation.



Eddie Arroyo



RED DEAL  
LAND BACK

ANTI-NATIONAL INTERNATIONALISM

SANCTUARY NOW

INFRASTRUCTURAL TAKE-OVER

COLLECTIVE LIBERATION

PUERTO RICO LIBRE

COMMUNITY CONTROL

INDIGENOUS SOVEREIGNTY

BLACK LIBERATION

FREE PALESTINE

DE-GENTRIFICATION

WORKERS' CONTROL

ABOLISH ICE

DISMANTLE PATRIARCHY

WOMEN'S STRIKE

KILL CAPITALISM

REVOLUTIONARY CARE

FUCK THE POLICE

COMMUNIZATION

STRIKE MODERNITY

# The RUINS of MODERNITY TOUR: From the CITY to the MUSEUM

April 30, 3pm EST. sharp, Columbus Circle, Occupied Mannahatta



The walls separating the museum from the city have always been an illusion. The Ruins of Modernity Tour operationalizes this fact.

We see the museum refracting the same violence as nearby places like Columbus Circle and Billionaire's Row. Did you know that directly attached to the museum is the ultra-luxury residential skyscraper 53W53 "MoMA Tower"?

Come, take a walk as we mark sites and connect struggles

#StrikeMoMA

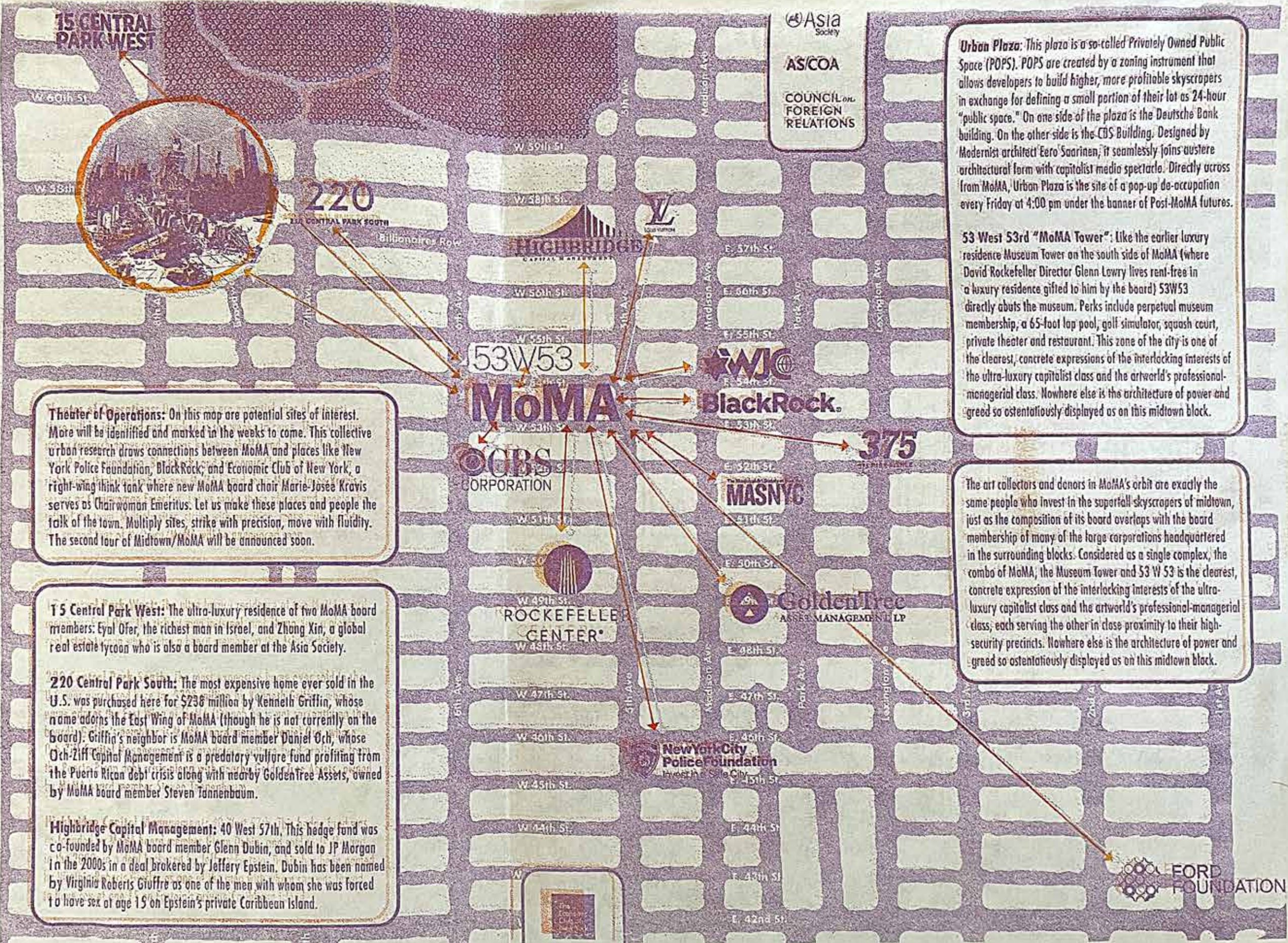


This tour is for us. We are moving together so we can breathe together, holding each other with care as we resist. This is not a protest. It is a way to experience other atmospheres, feelings, and senses of space and time as we move through the ruins of modernity.

We begin at the Columbus Monument, barricaded by the NYPD. Over the past year water protectors and abolitionists have toppled such statues in cities from Chicago to Albuquerque to New London. Columbus is the founder of the "America" that stands as an emblem of genocide, rape, enslavement and dispossession - he stands for and of the ruins of modernity.

The monument receives police protection while police kill Black, Brown, and Indigenous people with impunity. Today let us give witness to names like George Floyd, Michael Brown, Duante Wright, Breonna Taylor, Brandon Laderer, Jason Pero, and Paul Castaway. Countless others. No cops on stolen land.

From Columbus Circle to the Museum of Modern Art, marking sites and connecting struggles. Two bloodsoaked monuments with a common heritage in imperial plunder, 1492-the present. MoMA is a core node in the interlocking directorate of the global ruling class. For the billionaires who own it, the museum is an apparatus of extraction, a reputational shield used to hide their violence against our peoples and non-human relations. As we move together, we see the monuments of the ruling class as ruins before they have even crumbled. We re-orient towards each other and usher in other worlds and futures now.



**Theater of Operations:** On this map are potential sites of interest. More will be identified and marked in the weeks to come. This collective urban research draws connections between MoMA and places like New York Police Foundation, BlackRock, and Economic Club of New York, a right-wing think tank where new MoMA board chair Marie-Josée Kravis serves as Chairwoman Emeritus. Let us make these places and people the talk of the town. Multiply sites, strike with precision, move with fluidity. The second tour of Midtown/MoMA will be announced soon.

**15 Central Park West:** The ultra-luxury residence of two MoMA board members: Eyal Ofer, the richest man in Israel, and Zhong Xin, a global real estate tycoon who is also a board member at the Asia Society.

**220 Central Park South:** The most expensive home ever sold in the U.S. was purchased here for \$238 million by Kenneth Griffin, whose name adorns the East Wing of MoMA (though he is not currently on the board). Griffin's neighbor is MoMA board member Daniel Och, whose Och-Ziff Capital Management is a predatory vulture fund profiting from the Puerto Rican debt crisis along with nearby GoldenTree Assets, owned by MoMA board member Steven Tannenbaum.

**Highbridge Capital Management:** 40 West 57th. This hedge fund was co-founded by MoMA board member Glenn Dubin, and sold to JP Morgan in the 2000s in a deal brokered by Jeffery Epstein. Dubin has been named by Virginia Roberts Giuffre as one of the men with whom she was forced to have sex at age 15 on Epstein's private Caribbean Island.

**Urban Plaza:** This plaza is a so-called Privately Owned Public Space (POPS). POPS are created by a zoning instrument that allows developers to build higher, more profitable skyscrapers in exchange for defining a small portion of their lot as 24-hour "public space." On one side of the plaza is the Deutsche Bank building. On the other side is the CBS Building. Designed by Modernist architect Eero Saarinen, it seamlessly joins austere architectural form with capitalist media spectacle. Directly across from MoMA, Urban Plaza is the site of a pop-up de-occupation every Friday at 4:00 pm under the banner of Post-MoMA futures.

**53 West 53rd "MoMA Tower":** Like the earlier luxury residence Museum Tower on the south side of MoMA (where David Rockefeller Director Glenn Lowry lives rent-free in a luxury residence gifted to him by the board) 53W53 directly abuts the museum. Perks include perpetual museum membership, a 65-foot lap pool, golf simulator, squash court, private theater and restaurant. This zone of the city is one of the clearest, concrete expressions of the interlocking interests of the ultra-luxury capitalist class and the artworld's professional-managerial class. Nowhere else is the architecture of power and greed so ostentatiously displayed as on this midtown block.

The art collectors and donors in MoMA's orbit are exactly the same people who invest in the supertall skyscrapers of midtown, just as the composition of its board overlaps with the board membership of many of the large corporations headquartered in the surrounding blocks. Considered as a single complex, the combo of MoMA, the Museum Tower and 53 W 53 is the clearest, concrete expression of the interlocking interests of the ultra-luxury capitalist class and the artworld's professional-managerial class, each serving the other in close proximity to their high-security precincts. Nowhere else is the architecture of power and greed so ostentatiously displayed as on this midtown block.

Asia Society  
AS/COA  
COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

FORD FOUNDATION

# **The RUINS of MODERNITY TOUR: From the CITY to the MUSEUM**

April 30, 2021

We are on the unceded territory of the Leni Lenape. We stand in solidarity with Native American and Indigenous peoples leading the movement for resurgence, decolonization, and reclamation of their homelands. These lands were stolen to create settler-colonial states, and those who were dispossessed continue to live under conditions of siege, surveillance, and extractivist violence. We support land back, an imperative addressed to all settlers and settler-institutions, including the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) and the City of New York. At its foundations, this city was established on stolen Indigenous land, and shaped and cultivated by enslaved African peoples. We support the undying fight for Black liberation and its many manifestations here and across the planet.

\* \* \* \* \*

## **Broadway**

Broadway runs from State Street at Bowling Green for 13 mi (21 km) through the borough of Manhattan and 2 mi (3.2 km) through the Bronx, exiting north from New York City to run an additional 18 mi (29 km) through the Westchester County municipalities of Yonkers, Hastings-On-Hudson, Dobbs Ferry, Irvington, and Tarrytown, and terminating north of Sleepy Hollow.

It is the oldest north-south main thoroughfare in New York City, with much of the current street beginning as the Wickquasgeck trail before the arrival of Europeans. This formed the basis for one of the primary thoroughfares of the Dutch New Amsterdam colony, which continued under British rule, although most of it did not bear its current name until the late 19th century.

\* \* \* \* \*

## **In solidarity**

Museums and universities are the masks genocide wears in public. This tour unmask genocide to draw connections between struggles.

In 1985 Philadelphia police dropped bombs on the MOVE organization on Osage Ave. in West Philadelphia. Members of MOVE were killed and incarcerated because they dared to oppose U.S. hegemony. We are now learning that for years the Penn Museum kept the remains of MOVE children, African children, in a cardboard box for use in Princeton University anthropology classes.

This war is not isolated to Philadelphia. Penn Museum board members are here in NYC and are the killers and murderers of Haiti, Puerto Rico and Palestine.

Penn Museum board members include:

Gregory Annenberg Weingarten whose Annenberg Foundation gave \$20 Million to the Metropolitan Museum. The MET is full of ancestral objects plundered from Africa, Asia, and the Americas by the Rockefellers who also founded the MoMA.

Ghislain Gouraige, an executive at UBS Services a bank born from Swiss financing of slavery and colonialism.

Peter G. Gould, is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations at East 68th street. CFR is the premier foreign policy think tank created to back up U.S. empire supported by the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations.

And Mayor Bill De Blasio the head of the NYPD, is on the MoMA board!

These capitalists are the arms dealers and prison builders of empire that use museums to mask their sins.

Penn Museum owes African peoples a debt deeper than finances.

The MET owes.

MoMA owes.

U.S. Universities, Museums, & Banks Owe African & Indigenous Nations Everything

We have a responsibility to unmask the genocide at the heart of modernity. Honor the Traditions & Sovereignty of communities facing the brunt of this war and commit your life to building organizations that sustain this struggle.

\* \* \* \* \*

## ***The Red Deal/Red Nation Preamble***

This below excerpt from *"The Red Deal: Indigenous Action to Save Our Earth"* is shared in solidarity.

"In this era of catastrophic climate change, why is it easier for some to imagine the end of fossil fuels than settler colonialism? To imagine green economies, carbon-free wind and solar energy, and electric, bullet-train utopias but not the return of Indigenous lands? Why is it easier to imagine the end of the world—a zombie apocalypse—than the end of capitalism? It's not an either/or scenario. Ending settler colonialism and capitalism and returning Indigenous lands are all possible—and necessary.

The question of restoring Indigenous land to Indigenous people is thoroughly political, which means the theft of it was—and is—not inevitable or beyond our current capacities to resolve. The same goes for Black reparations, ending the hardening of the US border, defunding US imperialism, and stopping the continued exploitation of resources and labor in the Global South by countries up north."

"We seek to not just challenge power, but to build power. We are not simply a negation of the nightmarish colonial present—colonialism, capitalism, heteropatriarchy, imperialism, and white supremacy—we are the embodiment and affirmation of a coming Indigenous future, a future in which many worlds fit.

We believe that all oppressed nations have the right to self-determination—to decide their own destinies. We, The Red Nation, are self-determining peoples. We enact the principles of freedom and integrity in how we seek to live as good people of the Earth. We organize through education and agitation for revolutionary change. We encourage our relatives and comrades to believe in

revolutionary change. We advocate for global decolonization. We agitate among the poor, the working classes, the colonized, and the dispossessed to instill the confidence to fight back and take control of our destinies.

We believe in pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will. We remain accountable to our people and our nations. We do not have "perfect" politics. We do not believe in factionalism or rigid ideology. We can die having had the "correct positions" but having accomplished nothing and freed no one. The desire to be "right" or "perfect" is the highest form of cynicism. Our role as revolutionaries is to cheerlead the movement at all turns. Above all else, we desire to be free and believe we will win. Optimism will thrive so long as we struggle for freedom.

We believe in correct ideas, which only come through revolutionary praxis and struggle. Our power and judgment comes from the labor of our struggle.

We are not "above" the people. When the people move, we move with them. We are the "permanent persuaders" who believe revolutionary change is not only possible but inevitable. Like our hearts, our politics are down and to the left. And because we are the "five-fingered ones," our fists are the size of our hearts. We raise our fists to lift the hearts of our people. We give everything and take nothing for ourselves.

We uphold personal and organizational integrity at all turns of the movement. Change is dialectical and full of contradictions. It often comes without notice or without being noticed. Reactionary tendencies and contradictions will seek to destroy our momentum, diminish our optimism, and test our integrity. They will come in many, and oftentimes unexpected, forms. Even when in doubt, we pledge to remain faithful to our political principles and steadfast in our commitment to revolutionary struggle and optimism.

We are The Red Nation."

We condemn MoMA leadership's attempt to distort the nature of the confrontation at the museum yesterday. Strike MoMA gave Glenn Lowry advance notice of our intention to stage a peaceful protest against the questionable ethics of its board members, and we clearly requested for guards to be non-confrontational. In response, MoMA turned itself into an aggressive high-security fortress, typical of Midtown's sanctuaries for ultra-luxury wealth, and consciously placed its own guards and protestors at risk. The supposed threat was a group of artist dissidents, acting in the spirit of creative revolt that the museum loves to celebrate on the walls of its galleries. It's time to put an end to this hypocrisy. Too many in our arts communities have learned to turn a blind eye to the gruesome capture of the art world by financial high-rollers with low morals. It's not too late to stop the plunder, and remember, the fish rots from the head down.

Strike MoMA working group of IIAAF,

May 1, 2021

Read Lowry's email to staff on May 3, 2021 reproduced in full here:

**Dear all,**

I have an update to share with you about the events caused by the protesters at the Museum on Friday. First, and most importantly, I want to let you know that the two security officers who were injured by the protesters' attacks and required immediate medical treatment have received care and are recovering.

You may have seen press reports over the weekend of protesters' allegations that the Museum refused to allow them to enter and provoked the violence which occurred, and that one of them was attacked by a security officer.

As we confirmed to the press before the activists arrived onsite, we anticipated a peaceful protest, and we were prepared to respect and accommodate their activity so long as they respected New York State's and City's COVID-19 requirements of masking, social-distancing, and temperature screening.

When our frontline colleagues asked the protesters to all wear masks and enter safely, they outright refused. They repeatedly threatened to "walk through" MoMA staff and force their way in, while they verbally and physically assaulted our security officers. Following our established safety protocols, it was decided to close the Museum doors because the protesters chose not to act safely or peacefully.

Despite the closure of the Museum, a splinter group of protesters breached the staff entrance at 11 W 53rd Street, repeatedly assaulted security officers there, and trespassed by forcing entry into the Museum.

Our security officers acted with professionalism in the face of unwarranted harassment and assault. Any physical contact that occurred on Friday was the result of protesters' actions. At no time did a security officer attack a protester. Neither the Museum, nor the security officers, caused or deserved the violent choices made by protesters on Friday.

We owe our security colleagues an enormous debt of gratitude for protecting us, our visitors, and the Museum on Friday afternoon with dignity and restraint, despite the horrible pressure they were under and the abuse they faced. They have earned and deserve our respect and support.

Friday was a harrowing day at the Museum. The violence by the protestors left everyone who witnessed it in shock. There is no condition under which we will allow anyone's health or safety to be put at risk. We will always do everything possible to keep everyone safe.

**Glenn**

**STRIKE**  
~~MoMA~~

*We extend our deepest gratitude to MoMA staff and workers across departments who have reached out to us, and who have been sending us information, despite the fact that Glen Lowry and the board of trustees have created a fearful and hostile environment. We recognize, as you have, the charade Glen concocted during the all staff meeting on Monday, May 4th. We understand that the Director of Facilities and Safety does not speak for all of you as it is often the case that the boss sticks close to his superiors, and identifies with his masters. Therefore, he could never accurately represent the rank & file.*

**STRIKE**  
~~MoMA~~

*We are enraged at the racist weaponization of the mostly Black & Brown persons who Glen Lowry attempts to use as pawns. We know, as you do, that you are not the private army of the Board of Trustees. That is not in your job description. We urge you to use your union power to demand that Lowry and the board of trustees not make you their shields and protectors. We know it is difficult for you to speak out. That Lowry and his loyal subordinates have publicly shamed you for showing support to Strike MoMA.*

**STRIKE**  
~~MoMA~~

*We know this because we have studied Malcolm X and Frantz Fanon.*



**STRIKE**  
~~MoMA~~

*We want to reassure you that you are not alone. Find each other. Find us, across the street every Friday. When we hand delivered our letters to you, informing you of our intent to Strike MoMA, we urged you to not allow them to turn you against us. We reiterate that again, now. For those who never received our letter on April 12th, we provide screenshots at the end of these slides...*

*For those of you who do not entirely understand why we are Striking MoMA, please see the Strike MoMA link in bio as well.*

*Solidarity always.*

**Glenn D. Lowry**

**The David Rockefeller Director**

**Read Strike MoMA's response, reproduced in full:**

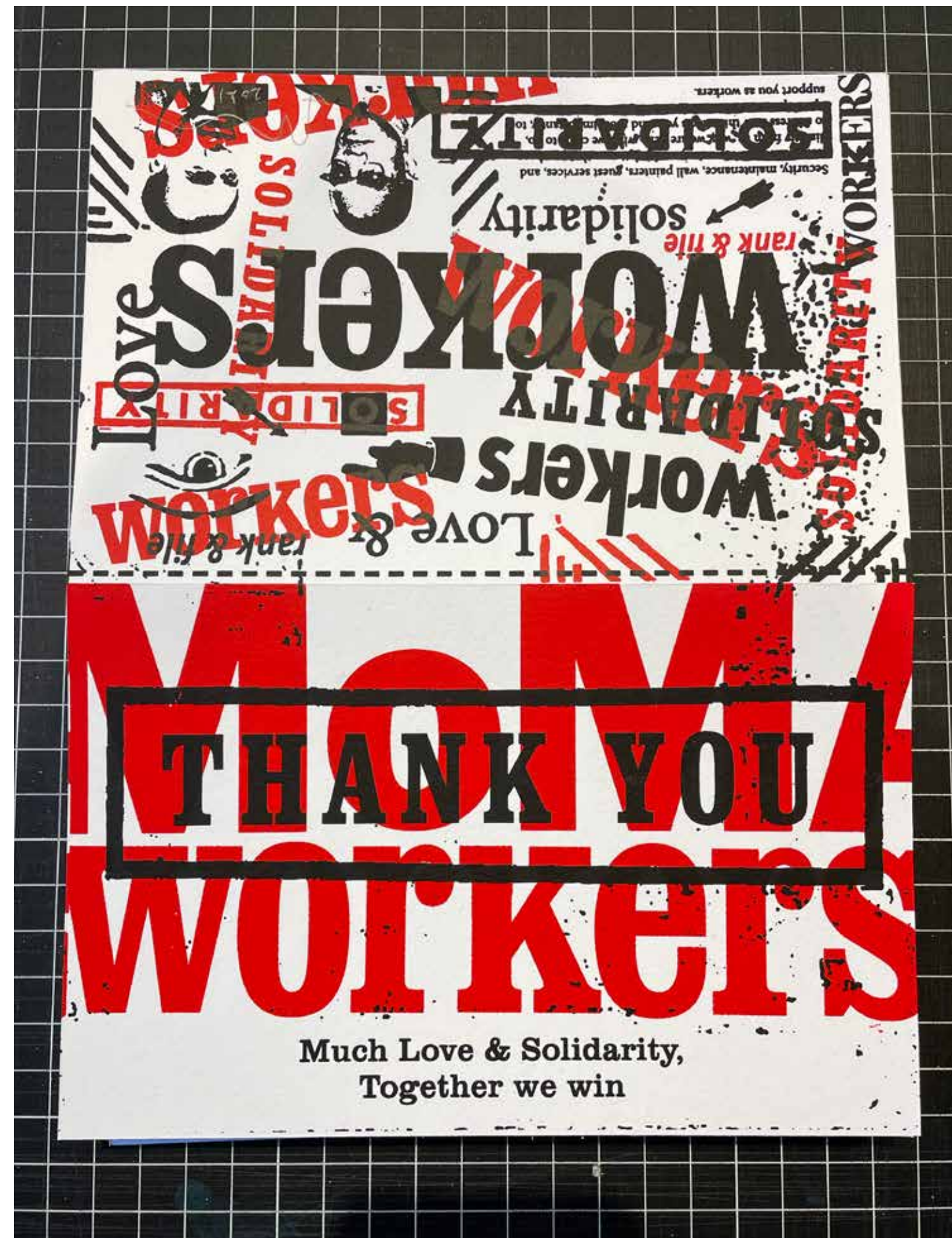
Glenn Lowry: Gaslighter-in-Chief of MoMA

Following our action at MoMA last Friday, we are hearing from workers inside the museum that David Rockefeller Director Glenn Lowry and the MoMA regime are creating an environment of fear, intimidation, and confusion among the staff. We let Lowry know a week in advance that we would be assembling inside the museum, and stated our expectation that we be allowed to enter without incident. Contrary to the museum's account, we were not offered safe passage, and in fact were met with physical force by security in front of the museum. We will be releasing video to this effect. The regime has constructed a false narrative of the day, attributing violence to our movement in order to distract from the actual violence of the billionaires who own and control the museum. This is more than a PR crisis for the museum. It amounts to a counter-insurgency campaign, with psychological operations at its core. Outright distortions, lies, fabrications. Emotional manipulation. Gaslighting. Fearmongering.

Every word and action that emanates from the museum leadership should be understood as part of a class war being waged from above: their endgame is to prop up the interlocking directorate of power, wealth, and authority that Lowry is sworn to protect. This includes newly elected board president Marie-José Kravis. She is Chair Emerita at the right-wing Economic Club of New York, and a donor and friend to Donald Trump.

Kravis exemplifies the ruling class interests which Lowry serves. He lives rent-free in a luxury apartment in Museum Tower next to MoMA given to him by the museum board, supplementing his two million dollar salary. He is their agent and class ally. His words are their words. Imagine them spoken by Kravis, Leon Black, Larry Fink, or even the billionaire whose name his directorship is literally named after: David Rockefeller. Lowry is no more a friend of workers than Rockefeller or, for the matter, Trump.

Lowry is the gaslighter-in-chief of MoMA. He appeals to the virtues of free speech on one hand. On the other, he creates a siege mentality at the museum, sows fear and division among the staff, and demonizes dissidents. Glenn the Gaslighter is not to be trusted. We will not stand for Lowry's Lies. Against his attempts to silence and terrify staff, we are now determining ways to support MoMA workers emotionally and materially who are ready to cross the threshold of fear. Platforms are available to speak out against the current counter-insurgency campaign and the bigger goals it serves in protecting the power of the board at the expense of workers, artists, and communities. Stay tuned for further direct communications on our social media, and as always, we will be holding space every Friday at 4 PM at the plaza across from MoMA, as well as online. Our solidarity with workers and staff remains unconditional.





# Free Palestine

## Strike MoMA: A Call to Action

Letter hosted by Social Text blog:

<https://socialtextjournal.org/free-palestine-strike-moma-a-call-to-action/>

We the undersigned artists, critics, scholars, and organizers are writing to express our support for the Palestinian struggle against Israeli colonial rule and its apartheid system. We feel it is urgent to highlight the connections between the ongoing violence of Israel against the Palestinian people and a leading institution of the art system, namely the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA). This letter aims to build decolonial solidarity across borders by drawing attention to MoMA's entanglement with the mutually reinforcing projects of settler-colonialism, imperialism, and racial capitalism in Palestine, the U.S. and around the world. When we focus on the interlocking directorate of the MoMA board, the museum becomes visible as a shared site of action for our interconnected struggles. This works against the all-too-frequent isolation and exceptionalization of Palestine, and strengthens the bonds between Free Palestine, Indigenous sovereignty, Black Freedom

Movements and all other movements for land, life, and liberation, from Puerto Rico to Kashmir and beyond.

Violence against Palestinians has intensified in recent weeks, first with the ongoing forcible displacement of families in Sheikh Jarrah, then with the violent incursion into the Al-Aqsa Mosque, followed by the carpet-bombing of Gaza, and a series of organized settler attacks across occupied Palestine. This has included attacks on spaces for media, culture, and art, most recently [Dar Yusuf Nasri Jacir for Art and Research in Bethlehem](#). At the same time, these attacks have united Palestinians both on the ground and in the diaspora, with resistance proliferating in a diversity of forms: yesterday, a General Strike shut down the entirety of historic Palestine, and massive marches have taken place in cities throughout the world, with #PalestineStrike as a shared

declaration of agency, dignity, and solidarity.

Cultural institutions are part and parcel of struggles against settler-colonial violence. 600+ cultural workers have announced a [boycott of Zabłudowicz Art Trust in London](#) on account of that organization's ties to the Israeli military. The Boycott Divestment Sanctions (BDS) movement is gaining momentum, including the affiliated [Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel](#). As part of the Palestine mobilizations in New York last week, [hundreds gathered at MoMA](#), where a young man was arrested and beaten by the NYPD. The police had been called to the scene by the museum, which on the same day announced that it would be permanently banning five organizers from stepping foot in the museum.

Why show up at MoMA? Why now? Because many members of the MoMA board are directly involved with support for Israel's apartheid rule, artwashing not only the occupation of Palestine but also broader processes of dispossession and war around the world. Consider Steven Tananbaum, CEO of GoldenTree, a hedge fund known for profiteering from the Puerto Rico debt crisis. Tananbaum's foundation donated 1.8 million dollars to ["support Israel by sending young adults to Israel" via the Art Institute of Chicago](#), dwarfing his \$400,000 contribution to MoMA itself that year. Daniel Och, CEO of Och-Ziff Capital, also known for its plunder of Puerto Rico, is a current member and former chairman of the [Birthright Foundation](#), which is also partly funded by the Israeli state. Birthright tours aim to [recruit](#) Jewish youth from around the world, especially American Jews, to the Zionist cause while [sanitizing the occupation](#) and erasing Palestinians. [Leon Black](#), best known for his connections with Jeffery Epstein, has donated more than 1 million to Birthright as well. Paula Crown's wealth comes from her husband, James Crown's armaments company [General Dynamics](#), whose Land Systems division [works closely](#) with Israeli military technology companies, and the Israeli Occupation Forces themselves (General Dynamics products have also been used in the [bombing of Yemen](#) by the Saudi government). The [MK-84 bombs being dropped](#) on Gaza by the Israeli air force are [made](#) by General Dynamics. The [Paula and James Crown Creativity Lab](#) on the second floor of the museum stands while homes, schools, hospitals, and media offices in Gaza are flattened.

Finally, MoMA's Honorary Chair Ronald Lauder is president of the World Jewish Congress, which has long campaigned in defense of Zionist policies, and, most recently, has lobbied numerous heads of state including those of [Britain](#) and [Germany](#) to adopt the International

Holocaust Remembrance Association's definition of anti-Semitism. This [definition is widely used to conflate criticism of Israel with Anti-Semitism](#), and has resulted in the proscription and criminalization of speech in support of Palestinian liberation (including but not limited to BDS) as a nefarious form of racism—a development that should concern everyone in the arts. This definition of Anti-Semitism also serves to collapse a plurality of Jewish identities into one identity indissociable from the state of Israel, tacitly condoning the violence it perpetrates in their name. This is a form of psychological warfare that defines Jewish people who speak out against the occupation as "traitors," "self-hating Jews," or even unworthy of having their voices considered Jewish at all. With this in mind, it is also worth mentioning the fact that Lauder is a [close friend](#) and [donor](#) to [Donald Trump](#), and is closely connected with the pro-Israel [evangelical Right](#). This reliance on Trumpism and the Christian Right for Zionist support has ironically fuelled the growth of real movements for white supremacy and anti-Semitism in the U.S.

With figures like Lauder, Crown, and Tananbaum on its board, MoMA cannot pretend to stand apart from the attack on Gaza or the Occupation of the West Bank and Jerusalem more broadly. Because the corporate power and wealth that sits atop the museum suffuses all of its operations, there are no clean hands. Given these entanglements, we must understand the museum for what it is: not only a multi-purpose economic asset for billionaires, but also an expanded ideological battlefield through which those who fund apartheid and profit from war polish their reputations and normalize their violence. For MoMA's board members, the trail of their malfeasance [leads in many directions](#), from fueling climate crisis to [support for the NYPD Foundation](#) to the extractivist violence of the [Cisneros](#)

[empire](#). But there is no denying that Palestine is one of the crime scenes of the MoMA board. We do not expect, nor do we call for, any statement of concern from MoMA. Let us remember that a year ago after the murders of Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, Ahmaud Aubery that museums issued statements of solidarity with Black Lives Matter, only to board up their windows as the rebellion unfolded.

For those who love Palestine, we have waited too long for this moment to not say what needs to be said despite the fear, the risk, the cost, of speaking out and naming things for what they are. We stand with Palestine, or we stand with silence, aiding and abetting the disaster. We unequivocally denounce the continuation of the Israeli settler colonial project, its apartheid regime, and the interlocking technologies of power and violence that enable it. We unequivocally support the right of return for all Palestinian refugees. We call upon our friends, colleagues, and communities to join the struggle for a free Palestine.

This Friday, May 21 at 4 PM Est. people will gather at MoMA. We call on the museum to respect people's right to protest, and to refrain from involving the NYPD, which creates an unsafe environment for everyone involved. For those who are not in New York City or who otherwise cannot participate in person, an online assembly will also be held. We encourage and support autonomous parallel actions, wherever they may take place. To join the online assembly or to share information about parallel actions, write to [freepalestine\\_strikemoma@protonmail.com](mailto:freepalestine_strikemoma@protonmail.com)

### FREE PALESTINE/STRIKE MOMA

Signatories  
Zarouhie Abdalian  
Jaishri Abichandani

Owolabi Aboyade  
Saks Afridi  
Haig Aivazian  
Nora Akawi  
Jananne Al-Ani  
Campo Alante  
Alexander Alberro  
Linda Martín Alcoff  
Anthony Alessandrini  
Zaina Arekat  
Laura Arena  
American Artist  
Ayreen Anastas  
Sinan Antoon  
Tomie Arai  
Laurie Arbiter  
Forensic Architecture  
Eddie Arroyo  
Art Handlers Alliance  
Artists For Workers  
Art and Labor Podcast  
Michael Assiff  
Korakrit Arunanondchai  
Colleen Asper  
Alice Attie  
Ariella Aisha Azoulay  
Ben C. Baer  
Mimi Bai  
Kazembe Balagun  
César Barros A.  
Yto Barrada  
Chloe Bass  
Hatem Bazian  
Gelsey Bell  
Dalida Maria Benfield  
Meriem Bennani  
Marc Joseph Berg  
Omar Berrada  
Claire Bishop  
Hannah Black  
Blackhouse Kollektive-Soweto  
Caitlin Blanchfield  
Lluís Alexandre Casanovas Blanco  
David Borgonjon  
Effie Bowen  
Jaimie Branch  
Chinatown Art Brigade  
Natalia Brizuela  
Kylie Broderick  
Mahogany L. Browne  
Tess Brown-Lavoie  
Kevin Bruyneel  
Julia Bryan-Wilson  
Rosie Bsheer  
Jonathan Buchsbaum  
Marie Buck  
Charisse Burden-Stelly

Harry Burke  
Eduardo Cadava  
Caitlin Cahill  
Gabo Camnitzer  
Kathrine Carl  
Mateo Chacon-Pino  
Hera Chan  
Colectiva Somoslacélula  
Phil Collins  
Nikki Columbus  
Eli Coplan  
Kency Cornejo  
Carlo Costa  
Maxe Crandall  
Lucas G. Crane  
Crenshaw Dairy Mart  
Lizania Cruz  
Comrade Cryptobot  
Jesse Darling  
Jake Davidson  
Angela Davis  
Ashley Dawson  
Mira Dayal  
Joel Dean  
Saim Demircan  
TJ Demos  
Gina Dent  
Filipe de Sousa  
Nitasha Dhillon  
Natalie Diaz  
Kerry Downey  
Jennifer Doyle  
Amalle Dublon  
Erina Duganne  
Anaïs Duplan  
Arlene Dávila  
Grayson Earle  
Brian Eno  
Bora Erden  
Noura Erakat  
Kareem Estefan  
Gareth Evans  
Ali Eyal  
Frantz Fanon Foundation  
Mireille Fanon Mendès-France  
Sarah Farahat  
Maryam Faridani  
Abou Farman Farmaian  
Taraneh Fazeli  
E. C. Feiss  
Mayanthi Fernando  
Johanna Fernandez  
Sally Frater  
Layal L. Ftouni  
Léopold Lambert  
René Gabriel  
Nicholas Galanin

Nikki Gamboa  
Macarena Gómez-Barris  
Gareth Evans  
Saudi García  
Rema Ghuloum  
Craig Gilmore  
Ruth Wilson Gilmore  
Kyle Goen  
Nan Goldin  
Ariel Goldberg  
Leo Goldsmith  
Alyosha Goldstein  
Aaron Goldstein  
Thyrza Goodeve  
Sandy Grande  
Graphematics Collective  
Maggie Gray  
Jasmine Gregory  
Alicia Grullon  
Oscar Guardiola-Rivera  
Brian Guerin  
Doris Guo  
Terike Haapoja  
Rayya Haddad  
Chelsea Haines  
Lisa Hajjar  
Jean Halley  
Hannon Hannon  
Em He  
Christina Heatherton  
Emma Hedditch  
Carla Henry  
Robert Chase Heishman  
Samia Henni  
Lilly Hern-Fondation  
Gabrielle Hill  
Curtis Ho  
Josie Roland Hodson  
Allan Kolski Horwitz  
Vu Horwitz  
Aaron Hughes  
Amin Husain  
The Illuminator Collective  
Zack Ingram  
Alex Ito  
Vijay Iyer  
Sanjana Iyer  
Ahmed Jazbhay  
Emily Johnson  
Merrit Johnson  
Stanya Kahn  
Robin D. G. Kelley  
Devin Kenny  
Yazan Khalili  
Lara Khaldi  
Amirtha Kidambi  
Christine Sun Kim

John King  
Coco Kockner  
Lynn Kodeih  
Dana Kopel  
Sam Korman  
Adrian Lahoud  
Wesley Larios  
Yve Laris Cohen  
Latipa  
M. Carmen Lane  
Pamela M. Lee  
Nikki Leger  
Greg Lindquist  
Allie Linn  
Elliot J. Liu  
Jen Liu  
Melissa Liu  
Farzin Lotfi-Jam  
Janice Lowe  
Lisa Lowe  
Cole Lu  
Joseph Lubitz  
Linda Luu  
Josh Macphee  
Ángeles Donoso Macaya  
Sara Magenheimer  
Nelson Maldonado-Torres  
Jumana Manna  
Jaleh Mansoor  
Nicole Marroquin  
Reinhold Martin  
Vijay Masharani  
James M. McHugh  
Clara Lopez Menendez  
Ara Merjian  
Mikinaak Migwans  
Maya Mikdashi  
Karen Miller  
Naeem Mohaiemen  
Azikiwe Mohammed  
Chandra Talpade Mohanty  
Massimiliano Mollona  
K.R.M. Mooney  
Sheehan Moore  
Saretta Morgan  
Peter Morin  
Anna Moschovakis  
Frederick Moten  
Liz Moy  
Paula Moya  
Cynthia Mulcahy  
Audie Murray  
Edwin Nasr  
New Red Order  
Dalia Neis  
Rithuli Orley  
Rupal Oza

Anna Ozbek  
Amanda Pajak  
David Palumbo-Liu  
Julie Patton  
Carla Perez-Gallardo  
Andreas Petrossiants  
Sandy Plácido  
Laura Poitras  
Esther Poppe  
William Powhida  
Jasbir K. Puar  
Bridget Quinn  
Annie Raccuglia  
Zandi Radebe  
Michael Rakowitz  
Dina Ramadan  
Elelwani Ramugondo  
Jeremy Randall  
Skeena Reece  
Conor Tomás Reed  
Sa'dia Rehman  
Isabella Robbins  
Bruce Robbins  
Kenya Robinson  
Jean Rodea Carla  
Shellyne Rodríguez  
Dylan Rodríguez  
Sarah Rogers  
Root & Branch Collective  
Tracy J Rosenthal  
Andrew Ross  
Peter Rostovsky  
Alan Ruiz  
Susanne Sachsse  
Saajidha Sader  
Anjalika Sagar  
Rijin Sahakian  
Natalia Viera Salgado  
Miranda Samuels  
Christopher Santiago  
Julia Santoli  
Suneil Sanzgiri  
Dean Itsuji Saranillio  
Kirsten Scheid  
Sarah Schulman  
Claire Schwartz  
Felicity Scott  
Sedrick  
Mohamed Seedat  
Dubravka Sekulic  
Colin Self  
Ashkan Sepahvand  
Nizan Shaked  
Sydney Shavers  
Ginevra Shay  
Stephen Sheehi  
Lara Sheehi

Bhakti Shringarpure  
JS Shokrian  
Tiffany Sia  
Marc Siegel  
Xaviera Simmons  
Audra Simpson  
Shori Sims  
Sharon Smith  
Amanda Sommer  
Robyn C. Spencer  
Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak  
Bra Mike Stainbank  
Booker Stardrum  
Ann Laura Stoler  
Christopher Stone  
Shahnaaz Suffla  
Lena Sze  
Tag Harmon Campaign To Free Mumia  
Leyya Mona Tawil  
Virgil B/G Taylor  
Vanessa Thill  
Sindhu Thirumalaisamy  
Aly Thomas  
Miriam Ticktin  
Cihan Tikay  
Saadia Toor  
Chloe Truong-Jones  
Rachel Valinsky  
Jessica Vaughn  
Lori Waxman  
We Will Not Be Silent  
Andrew Weiner  
Eyal Weizman  
Lexi Welch  
Laura Wexler  
Elvia Wilk  
Simon Will  
Tania Willard  
Evan Calder Williams  
Jessica Wilson  
Donna Wingate  
Within Our Lifetime: United for Palestine  
Kasia Wlaszczyk  
Agustina Woodgate  
Suné Woods  
Ian Wooldridge  
Matvei Yankelevich  
Ali Yass  
Benjamin Young  
Betty Yu  
Alex Zandi  
Rayya Zein El  
Mary Zerkel  
To add your name, write to  
freepalestine\_strikemoma@  
protonmail.com

June 9, 2021

To Whom It May Concern:

I have decided to withdraw from two of the public educational programs I had previously committed to in conjunction with my current solo show at MoMA: a submission for Magazine, and a Family Art Talk, which had been scheduled for June 15th. This year, the activist group Strike MoMA, comprised of artists in New York and around the world, has revealed the financial ties of MoMA's board to Jeffrey Epstein, Donald Trump, private prison companies Geo Group and CoreCivic, and the violent resource extraction of Barrick Gold. Most recently, we learned of the connections between MoMA's board and the bombing of Gaza this May. Multiple board members have been implicated, including Paula Crown. The Crown family owns General Dynamics, a company that not only works closely with the Israeli Occupation Forces, but also manufactured the MK-84 bombs that were dropped on Gaza during the 11-day assault which claimed the lives of 250 Palestinians, including 66 children. As I have written in a previous email, it does not feel right to participate in programming for families sponsored by an arms manufacturer profiting from the death of those children.

The work I made to exhibit at MoMA Projects consists of sculptures and works on paper made largely from tobacco, a plant that has taught me a lot about capitalist colonial extraction but also about Indigenous economic systems, which survive and thrive despite all attempts to extinguish them. The sculptural forms reference rabbits, families, and mothering in order to acknowledge reproductive labor and other economies that spread out laterally, giving away and dispersing wealth rather than accumulating it. The works on paper, especially the "flags," also contain many nods to spring, what's coming up from the ground, and what's "in the air." For me, this particular body of work suggests the possibility of economic forms that offer an alternative to capitalism, by thinking through the ones we are already practicing. And while I know there is a long history of art institutions absorbing critical art to purify their own image, the intention of this work goes against the interests of the MoMA board members whose great wealth is derived from the death, dispossession and imprisonment of people and the land.

I realize I am in a contradictory position. I am currently exhibiting work at MoMA and so benefitting personally from the money brought in by the board. At the same time, I wish to align myself with those who struggle to abolish the prison industry, the carceral justice system, resource extraction which benefits the richest while costing the lives and the lands of Indigenous people and poor people across the world, the apartheid system of Israel, arms dealing, corruption and white supremacy. But I also know I am not alone, that many people who work or have worked inside MoMA as artists or arts professionals also want an end to these things. And there can be many ways for us to go on strike.

I am also in a contradictory position in that I am deciding to continue to participate in one program, one that will be cohosted by MoMA and the American Indian Community House (AICH). MoMA, which opened in 1929, was in operation for almost a century before they had a solo exhibition by a Native American artist: Edgar Heap of Birds' *Surviving Active Shooter Custer* in 2019. The museum has not only failed to meaningfully engage with Indigenous artists and arts in the Americas, it has also neglected to develop relationships with the vibrant Indigenous arts communities living in Lenapehoking. AICH has been a hub of Indigenous community and Indigenous arts in New York since the 1960s and continues to offer programming despite the fact that they haven't had a physical location since 2018. I can only imagine how devastating a blow to Indigenous arts and community wellbeing the loss of a space for AICH has been. We should all be asking ourselves, how is it acceptable that a space so fundamental to Indigenous arts in the city can be lost while one of the largest arts institutions, with billions of dollars of resources, continues to expand and accumulate more and more property? As a Metis artist who is not from Lenapehoking, it is my responsibility to reach out to Indigenous New York, to ask what can be done. In entering a relationship with AICH, MoMA has made a long overdue commitment to begin to support Indigenous artists, Indigenous arts institutions and Indigenous curators, on their own terms.

For everyone I know, this has been an incredibly isolating, alienating, and difficult past year and a half. It seems more important than ever to offer one another support, community, and collectivity, although at times it seems harder than ever to do so. I'm so thankful to the members of AICH, who have listened to me and offered sound advice and direction; for the support of those inside MoMA who stand with me as we strike, in many different ways, against a corrupt institution; and to Strike MoMA for the incredible amount of work they have put into demanding better from the art world and a better world for everyone.

In solidarity,

Gabrielle L'Hirondelle Hill

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

On 1 May, 2021, the Artists For A Post-MoMA (A4PMF) Future working group of Strike MoMA nominated The Museum of Modern Art as an at-risk cultural heritage site to the World Monument Fund (WMF).

The WMF's open-call for nominations listed climate change as one of the key factors threatening cultural sites around the world. In their application, A4PMF state:

"The museum's Board of Trustees is explicitly connected to industries that contribute to ecocide and climate change. But let us also consider the climate change in the museum and how it affects artworks and apply the same analogy to the artists and to the public. A museum would never compromise the physical integrity of an artwork by showing it in conditions (high temperatures, low relative humidity) that are deemed unsafe. Why then would they compromise the integrity of an artist by asking them to show in a place that makes conditions unsafe for others?"

"As artists, art workers and stakeholders engage in protests against the museum, they are painted as iconoclasts and barbarians at the gate. Yet, it must be argued that the stewardship of important cultural heritage by those profiting from ecocide, human trafficking, inequality, precarity, anti-Blackness, militarism and misogyny poses a direct threat to the integrity of the artwork. For example, when someone like Leon Black, who sits on the MoMA Board of Trustees and whose Apollo Holdings owns Constellis, a private 'security' company formerly known as Blackwater, also owns Edvard Munch's *The Scream*, it is hard to not see the blood spilled in Baghdad's Nisour Square in 2007 when looking at this painting. That kind of damage cannot be fixed by a museum's conservator or mitigated by better climate control conditions."

A4PMF's application also reiterated several key points in Strike MoMA's Framework for Struggle as a call to imagine something new that can emerge when exiting MoMA's untenable institutional model.

"A departure from the museum's imbrication with toxic philanthropy requires abolition of its current billionaire class Board of Trustees and donors. This in itself is a radical act, but the beautiful thing about this is that many of the inspiring works in MoMA's collection are themselves radical acts. Being able to restore the vision imbued in many of these works will benefit the public at large in showing that art needn't only be symbolic. We can mean what we say. It would no doubt improve stewardship if we were to collectively draft a model in which the museum could truly be a site shepherded and cared for by communities who are otherwise displaced and disenfranchised by the economic and political forces that allow for the museum to grow and expand in a needlessly monstrous manner."

The WMF application called for 12 images to illustrate the threats to cultural heritage site. A4PMF included portraits of the members of the Board of Trustees with the descriptor "Damage to the artwork, examples 1-12."

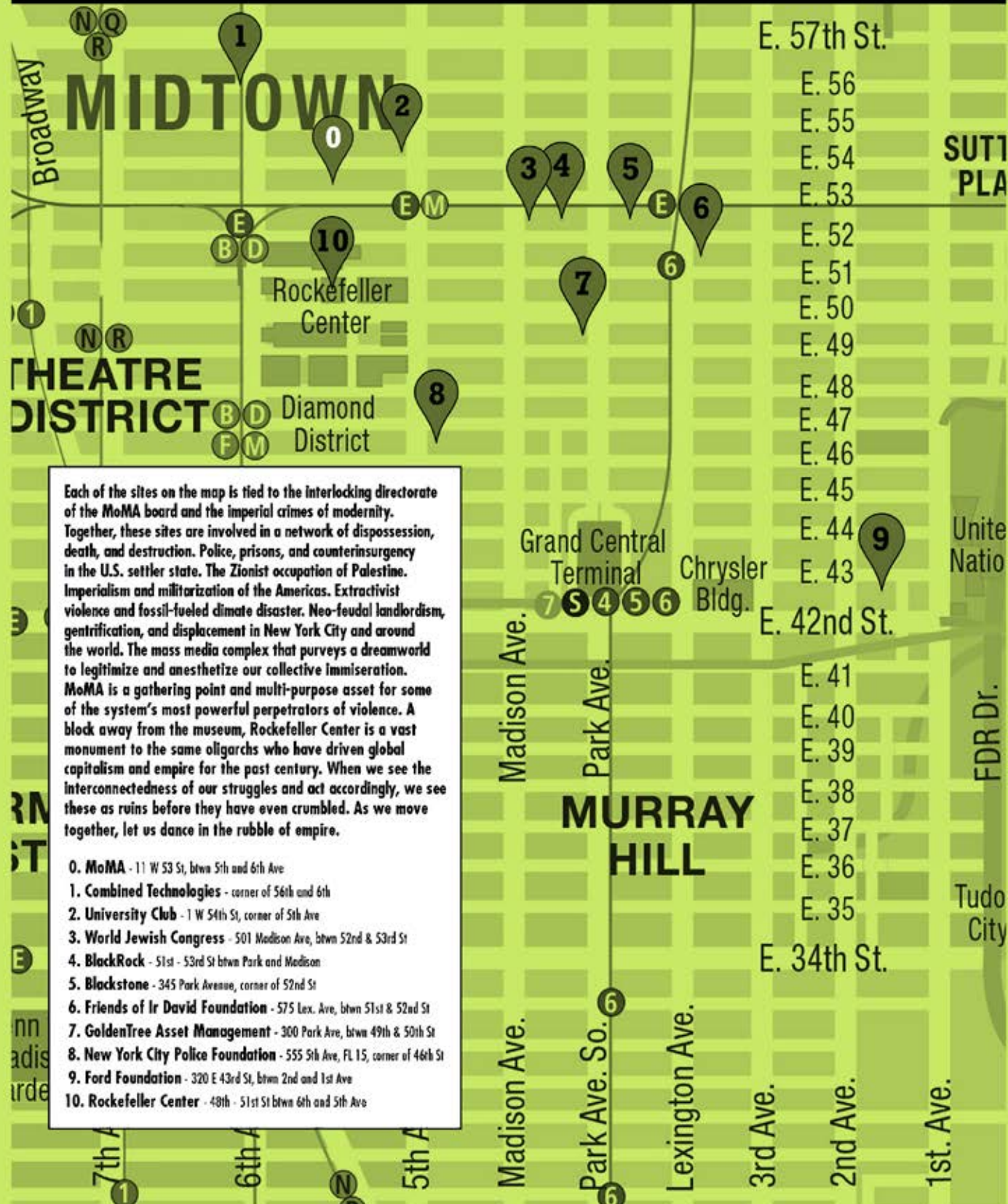
"Our current plan of action is to gather as a global community of artists, art workers, curators, conservators, scholars, and citizens that adore art and the artworks in this historically essential museum," the group stated in their application. "We will collectively imagine, write, draw, model new ways and pragmatic strategies for loving and caring for these works in a way that abolishes elitism and the entanglements with profit generated from industries of harm."

Yet another example of these toxic embroilments occurred shortly after the application was submitted, when Israel launched deadly ongoing attacks on Palestinian civilians in Gaza. The MK-84 bombs currently being dropped on Gaza by the Israeli air force are built by the armaments company General Dynamics, owned by Paula and James Crown, for whom MoMA's Creativity Lab (located on the museum's second floor) is named. Paula Crown is also a member of MoMA's Board of Trustees.

"If MoMA is included in the 2022 World Monuments Watch, it would allow for people to see that there are ways in which art and culture are damaged that are less visible than iconoclasts wielding sledgehammers or acts of nature like erosion," the working group wrote in the application's conclusion. "We have the capacity and collective intelligence to change the status quo. Should the World Monuments Watch take this application seriously, it would deepen our conversation about these issues in a manner that is unprecedented."

For more information or to see copies of the WMF application, please contact Artists For A Post-MoMA Future at [artistspostmoma@protonmail.com](mailto:artistspostmoma@protonmail.com)

# INTERCONNECTED STRUGGLES ZONE OF OPERATIONS



## Gathered in the spirit of the International Imagination of Anti-National Anti-Imperialist Feelings (IIAAF)

### PALESTINE

There is only one solution!  
Intifada revolution!  
Palestine is our demand!  
No peace on stolen land!

Min il-maya lal maya,  
falasteen arabiye

From the river to the sea  
Palestine will be free!

Free, free Palestine!  
Long live Palestine!  
We will free Palestine!  
Within our lifetime!

Long live the intifada!  
Intifada, intifada!

Bidna nihki al makshouf,  
sahyouni ma Bidna Nshoof

Bab Al-Aqsa min Hadeed,  
ma byiftaha illa alshaheed

1 2 3 4 occupation no more!  
5 6 7 8 smash the settler zionist state!

Not just annexation!  
Not just occupation!  
Fight for Liberation,  
Bring the whole thing down!

### COLOMBIA

1, 2, 3, 4  
Duque, Uribe NO MORE!  
5 6 7 8  
US funds a narco state

Guardia, guardia  
Fuerza, fuerza  
Por Colombia, por mi tierra

Free, free Colombia!  
No More Dictatorship!

Al pueblo se respeta  
Al pueblo se le escucha  
El Pueblo Colombiano  
Sigue en la lucha

El pueblo no se rinde carajo  
El pueblo esta berraco carajo  
El pueblo es lo primero carajo

Biden Biden you can't hide  
We charge you with genocide

### PUERTO RICO

Decimos, no, no, no, no, no nos pararán  
(x2) y el que no crea que haga la prueba  
no nos pararán.

Con el pueblo combatiente luchando por  
el futuro y el presente

De norte a sur, de este a oeste, la lucha en  
puerto rico sigue cueste lo que cueste.

Junta de control fiscal,  
dictadura colonial!  
Esa dueda es colonial!  
no la vamos a pagar!

Candela candeeela candela le vamo a dar,  
candela para el moma y to sus charlatan

Fire, fire, fire to the colonizer!  
Fuego, fuego, fuego a la colonia!

### DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Cisneros cobarde,  
agua vale mas que el arte

El agua es un tesoro!  
que vale mas que el oro!

Cisneros! Cisneros!  
We can't drink gold!  
Cisneros! Cisneros!  
We can't drink art!  
Cisneros! Cisneros!  
Theres blood on your hands!  
Cisneros! Cisneros!  
There's greed in your heart!

no a la barrick! si a la vida!

fuera fuera barrick gold!  
fuera fuera, los Cisneros !

Patricia Cisneros, no te queremos,  
Gustavo Cisneros, no te queremos

### SPANISH INTERCONNECTED CHANT

Lucha si, MoMA no!  
Lucha si, Israel no!  
Lucha si, Uribe no!  
Lucha si, Duque no!  
Lucha si, La Barrick no!  
Lucha si, Cisneros no!  
Lucha si, LUMA no!  
Lucha si, PROMESA no!

### PAN AFRICAN/ BLACK LIBERATION

Haiti! Haiti!  
Will be free!!

U.S.A spells genocide!  
for Africa i'll organize!

U.S.A spells genocide!  
for Tanzania i'll organize!

U.S.A spells genocide!  
for Congo i'll organize!

U.S.A spells genocide!  
for Mali i'll organize!

U.S.A spells genocide!  
for Zambia i'll organize!

U.S.A spells genocide!  
for Ivory Coast i'll organize!

We got to? ORGANIZE!  
We have to? ORGANIZE!  
I will? ORGANIZE!  
I will? ORGANIZE!  
I will? ORGANIZE!

ORGANIZE! ORGANIZE!  
ORGANIZE! ORGANIZE!  
ORGANIZE! ORGANIZE!

### INTERCONNECTED CHANT

From New York to Palestine,  
Globalize the intifada  
From New York to Colombia,  
Globalize the intifada  
From New York to Puerto Rico,  
Globalize the intifada  
From New York to Santo Domingo,  
Globalize the intifada

colombiano intifada  
African intifada  
indigenous intifada  
palestinian intifada  
puerto rican intifada  
dominican intifada  
indigenous intifada

# IN RESPONSE:

To me, a Post-MoMA future means...

a future without oppression injustice

In Response: A Post MoMA Future  
New York, NY, April 2021

Text:  
A future without oppression injustice

To me, a Post-MoMA future looks like...

A world where imperialism + settler-colonialism are destroyed. These institutions launder the plunder + capital for these assholes. Artistic spaces should be open, + a place for people to express love + dissent.

In Response: A Post MoMA Future  
New York, NY, April 2021

Text:  
A world where imperialism + settler-colonialism are destroyed. These institutions launder the plunder + capital for these assholes. Artistic spaces should be open + a place for people to express love + dissent.

To me, a Post-MoMA future means...

No cops, actually activating the "modernist" goal of fusing art & life → a change in social relations

In Response: A Post MoMA Future  
New York, NY, April 2021

Text:  
No cops, actually activating the "modernist" goal of fusing art & life - a change in social relations

To me, a Post-MoMA future means...

To strike to send forth roots to become fixed in the earth. A collective exit!

In Response: A Post MoMA Future  
New York, NY, April 2021

Text:  
To strike to send forth roots to become fixed in the earth. A collective exit!

To me, a Post-MoMA future looks like...

A World Without Economic, Social and Political Violence against Black and Brown people

In Response: A Post MoMA Future  
New York, NY, April 2021

Text:  
A world without Economic, Social and Political violence against Black and Brown people.

To me, a Post-MoMA future means...

There is nothing there institutions have that people need that we can't offer to ourselves. What we need is the world in which they are irrelevant. ✖

In Response: A Post MoMA Future  
New York, NY, April 2021

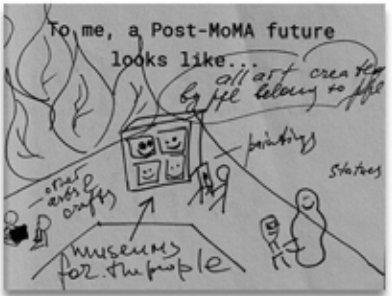
Text:  
there is nothing there institutions have that people need that one can't offer to ourselves what we need is the world in which they are irrelevant ✖

To me, a Post-MoMA future looks like...

less focus on the individual in art. more focus on collective love and community, and the power that people have when they organize.

In Response: A Post MoMA Future  
New York, NY, April 2021

Text:  
Less focus on the individual in art. More focus on collective love and community, and the power that people have when they organize.



In Response: A Post MoMA Future  
New York, NY, April 2021

Text:  
All art created by ppl belonging to ppl. Other arts and crafts - paintings - statues. Museums for the people.

To me, a Post-MoMA future looks like...

COLLECTIVE AUTONOMY

In Response: A Post MoMA Future  
New York, NY, April 2021

Text:  
COLLECTIVE AUTONOMY



In Response: A Post MoMA Future  
New York, NY, April 2021

Text:  
FREE - free to all - No Policing - Free of injustice

In a Post-MoMA future, I imagine...

dancing on the rubble + ruins of colonialism + coloniality. I imagine a world in which the colonized rise up + reclaim what's ours. In the words of Fanon, "the last shall be first."

In Response: A Post MoMA Future  
New York, NY, April 2021

Text:  
Dancing on the rubble + ruins of colonialism + coloniality. I imagine a world in which the colonized rise up + reclaim what's ours. In the words of Fanon "the last shall be first."

To me, a Post-MoMA future means...

worker-owned institutions. LIBRARY MUSEUMS PUBLIC. everything is a library.

In Response: A Post MoMA Future  
New York, NY, April 2021

Text:  
Worker-owned institutions. Library museums public. everything is a library.

In a Post-MoMA future, I imagine...

- That artworks wouldn't be used to launder money or reputations
- That the progressive ideas + values in artworks wouldn't be dissociated or watered down by how they are exhibited
- That the blatant conflict of interest of having mega collectors on the board of a museum is recognized as damaging + corrupting in a way that de-legitimizes the museum
- The Museum is free! Art is for the people

In Response: A Post MoMA Future  
New York, NY, April 2021

Text:  
• That artworks wouldn't be used to launder money or reputations  
• That the progressive ideas + values in artworks wouldn't be dissociated or watered down by how they are exhibited  
• That the blatant conflict of interest of having mega collectors on the board of a museum is recognized as damaging + corrupting in a way that de-legitimizes the museum  
• The museum is free! Art is for the people

To me, a Post-MoMA future means...

FREE ACCESS TO ART + RESEARCH RESSOURCES FOR EVERYONE

In Response: A Post MoMA Future  
New York, NY, April 2021

Text:  
free access to art + resources for everyone

I imagine...

museums being reflective of the community that sustains NYC - Active revolutionary archive :)

In Response: A Post MoMA Future  
New York, NY, April 2021

Text:  
Museums being reflective of the community that sustains NYC - active revolutionary archive :)

In a Post-MoMA future, I imagine...

art without the money  
art without the institution  
without greed  
without an entry fee

art as community  
art as love  
art as creation  
art for expression  
art for the people

celebrate people.  
Abolish the police. & Fuck white supremacy

In Response: A Post MoMA Future  
New York, NY, April 2021

Text:  
art without the money  
art without the institution  
without an entry fee  
art as community  
art as love  
art as creation  
art for expression  
art for the people  
celebrate people. Abolish the police & fuck white supremacy

# A POST-MoMA FUTURE



ON **MoMA**'S BOARD OF VIOLENCE:  
**INTERLOCKING  
 DIRECTORATE**

**INTERCONNECTED  
 STRUGGLES**

Who keeps the  
 piggies fed?

MoMA Board member  
**Larry Fink**

**PALMINE  
 YEMEN**

**PAULA & JAMES CROWN**

James Crown is the president of the Crown Family group  
 Crown owns General Dynamics, a major military contracting corporation  
 General Dynamics makes the U.S.-MADE CBU-31 BOMB that are currently  
 being dropped on Gaza in occupied Palestine and in Yemen

The Crowns are the funders of "The People's Studio" Creativity Lab at MoMA



**STRIKE**  
 @StrikeMoMA @strikemoma - 5s  
 The walls of MoMA are becoming thinner  
 and more porous by the day as solidarity  
 deepens and builds. Anonymous MoMA  
 workers inform us that MoMA will now be  
 checking tickets at the door to grant entry  
 into the lobby. 1/2 #StrikeMoMA

**STRIKE**  
 @StrikeMoMA @strikemoma - 5s  
 Allegedly, this is in response to an uptick in  
 gun violence in "America," but we know  
 this is in response to the organizing  
 around Strike MoMA. They seek to limit  
 the availability of public space in the lobby  
 to congregate and assemble. That's MoMA  
 in a nut shell. 2/2

**Why  
 MoMA?**

**New York City  
 Police Foundation  
 What is it?**

It's a public-private "charity," started in  
 1971 by the ruling class of New York City.  
 It was the first private foundation for a  
 police department ever established  
 in the United States

New York City Police Foundation was created as a  
 private response to keep the pigs well fed while  
 the ruling class restructured the city and  
 imposed austerity measures on the  
 city during the neoliberal shift.

It is the only non-public organization in  
 the city that is legally permitted to raise  
 funds for the police

Steven Tananbaum, CEO of  
 GoldenTree, is a hedge fund  
 known for profiteering from the  
 Puerto Rico debt crisis.  
 Tananbaum's foundation  
 donated 1.8 million dollars to  
 "support Israel by sending  
 young adults to Israel" via the  
 Art Institute of Chicago,  
 dwarfing his \$400,000  
 contribution to MoMA itself that  
 year.

Leon Black, best known for his  
 connections with Jeffery  
 Epstein, has donated more than  
 1 million to Birthright as well.



**PALMINE**

**RONALD S. LAUDER**

Ronald Lauder is the Chairman Emeritus of the Estee Lauder Corporation  
 Lauder is president of the World Jewish Congress (WJC), which has long  
 campaigned in defense of Zionist policies

Lauder is a principle promoter of IHRA to heads of state. IHRA defines BDS or  
 standing up against Israel as anti-Semitism, thereby attempting to criminalize  
 criticism of Israel as "Hate Speech."

Lauder is a close friend and donor to Donald Trump and an ally of  
 right-wing Evangelical Christian groups

Many members of the  
 MoMA board are directly  
 involved with support for  
 Israel's apartheid rule,  
 artwashing not only the  
 occupation of Palestine but  
 also broader processes of  
 dispossession and war  
 around the world.

The New York City Police  
 Foundation Piggy Bank funds...

MONTREAL  
 TORONTO  
 WASHINGTON, D.C.  
 SANTO DOMINGO

COUNTERTERRORISM  
 AND INTELLIGENCE  
 NYPD Intelligence  
 Officers are Stationed  
 in These Cities

\$1,200,000 INVESTED IN THE  
 INTERNATIONAL LIAISON PROGRAM

**PALMINE  
 DEMOCRATIC  
 PUERTO RICO**

**DANIEL OCH**

Daniel S. Och is the founder, chairman and former CEO of Och-Ziff Capital  
 Och Ziff owns predatory bonds profiteering from Puerto Rico debt crisis

Och Ziff owns Central African Mining and Exploration Company, recently  
 paying a \$213 Million Criminal Fine for bribery in the Congo (DRC) & Libya

Daniel Och is the Former chairman and current board member of the  
 Birthright Foundation which recruits Jewish-American youth to the  
 Zionist cause through "birthright trips" to Israel

**IMEU**

**What corporations  
 make these bombs?**

**Boeing and  
 General Dynamics.**

Paula Crown's wealth comes from her  
 husband, James Crown's armaments  
 company General Dynamics, whose Land  
 Systems division works closely with Israeli  
 military technology companies, and the  
 Israeli Occupation Forces themselves  
 (General Dynamics products have also  
 been used in the bombing of Yemen by the  
 Saudi government). The MK-84 bombs  
 being dropped on Gaza by the Israeli air  
 force are made by General Dynamics. The  
 Paula and James Crown Creativity Lab on  
 the second floor of the museum stands  
 while homes, schools, hospitals, and media  
 offices in Gaza are flattened.

The New York City Police  
 Foundation is an imperialist  
 piggy bank funding  
 counterintelligence across the globe

LONDON  
 THE HAGUE  
 PARIS  
 LYON  
 AMMAN  
 ABU DHABI  
 TEL AVIV  
 DOHA  
 SINGAPORE  
 SYDNEY

WE NEED TO BE POSITIONED 24  
 HOURS A DAY, 365 DAYS A YEAR  
 ALL AROUND THE GLOBE TO BE ABLE  
 TO INTERVIEW YOU IN NEW YORK CITY IN 90 SECONDS

JERRY S. MILLER  
 DEPUTY CHIEF OF POLICE  
 INTELLIGENCE & COUNTERTERRORISM

**DOMINICAN REPUBLIC  
 ARMINA  
 TULLA  
 PAPA NEW GUINEA**

**GUSTAVO & PATRICIA CISNEROS**

Gustavo Cisneros is one of the world's richest men and one of  
 Latin America's most powerful figures

Gustavo Cisneros is Chair of the Corporate Governance & Nominating  
 Committee of Barrick Gold, the world's largest gold mining company

Barrick Gold extracts, pillages, contaminates, displaces, and kills people  
 in the Dominican Republic as well as in other regions in South America  
 and across the African Continent

Gustavo & Patricia Cisneros are significant benefactors of the Museum of  
 Modern Art where their art collection is housed at the Cisneros Institute

Daniel Och, CEO of Och-Ziff  
 Capital, also known for its  
 plunder of Puerto Rico, is a  
 current member and former  
 chairman of the Birthright  
 Foundation, launched to recruit  
 Jewish-American youth to the  
 Zionist cause.



**Meet Marie-Josée Kravis**  
 MoMA's newly elected Chairperson replacing Leon Black

is the Chairwoman Emeritus of the Economic Club of New York, an elite  
 economic planning think tank, the board of which is a "who's who" of global  
 oligarchs and their policy-making intelligentsia. In fact, the chairwoman and  
 her colleagues hosted a speech by Donald Trump just this past October 2022

is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, a central think-tank for  
 ruling-class geostrategies and economic planning. They are heavily fortified  
 by the Ford Foundation and Rockefeller Foundations from the Cold War to the  
 present to secure U.S. hegemony at a global scale by destroying Third World  
 Liberation movements.

is Senior Fellow, Vice-Chair at the Hudson Institute, a pro-Trump right-wing,  
 military-industrial think tank started by the Rand Corporation and connected  
 to the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton. Recipients of the Hudson  
 Institute Award include: Ronald Reagan, Henry Kissinger, Dick Cheney,  
 Benjamin Netanyahu, Nikki Haley, and Vice President Mike Pence.

serves on the advisory board of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York and  
 serves on the steering committee of the Bilderberg Group. Oh, and yes, is on  
 the board of Luis Vuitton Mout Hermès (LVHM).

**PALMINE  
 PUERTO RICO**

**STEVEN TANNENBAUM**

Tannenbaum is the CEO of GoldenTree which owns predatory bonds that  
 profit from Puerto Rico debt crisis

In 2018, the Tannenbaum Family foundation gave \$1.8 million dollars  
 to the University of Chicago to "support Israel by bringing young adults  
 to Israel"









**ENGAGEMENTS**

# DECOLONISING THE MUSEUM

**There is a growing movement in the West to divorce art museums from big money.**

Jasbir K. Puar and Andrew Ross, *Al Jazeera* (July 21 2021)

The current rage for decolonisation affects every corner of our lives, but it has been most visible in the demands being made on art institutions. Pressure on large museums in Europe and the United States in particular is growing because their history of acquiring and collecting is so entangled with colonialism.

But decolonising the museum has to go far beyond returning plundered artefacts or tinkering with exhibition displays to present a more accurate version of history. The abject dependence of museums on corporate sponsorship and super-wealthy donors is increasingly coming under fire.

The crisis is most apparent in the operations of the more prominent museums. These institutions are the public face of the art world but their trustee boards are stacked with corporate freebooters whose business values are starkly at odds with those of the cultural creatives whose names and works they buy and sell.

A movement is afoot to root out "artwashing" – the custom of using art and culture to launder ill-gotten gains and predatory practices. These profits often stem from industries that harm the very communities that are supposed to enjoy and benefit from museums: prison

expansion, weapons manufacturing, and development projects that gentrify neighbourhoods, among many others.

Several activist groups have sprung up to administer the strong medicine. In recent years, Liberate Tate and BP or Not BP have lobbied to "free art from oil" at leading British museums; PAIN (Prescription Addiction Intervention Now) targeted the patronage of several museums by the Sackler family, who profiteer from the opioid crisis in the US; Gulf Labor Coalition succeeded, for several years, in stopping the Guggenheim Museum in New York from building a new Abu Dhabi branch on the backs of abused workers; and Decolonize This Place ousted arms manufacturer Warren Kander from the board of Whitney Museum of American art.

Strike MoMA – a direct action initiative by artists targeting New York's Museum of Modern Art – is the latest and most advanced effort to call out the unholy pact with big money. An all too cosy relationship with the disgraced Jeffrey Epstein forced financier Leon Black to step aside as board chair, and the museum has tried to ride out the scandal, hoping to avoid further scrutiny via the "bad apple" thesis.

But the row has proved to be a catalyst for Strike MoMA's invitation

to reimagine a utopian version of the museum – based on the need to divorce the super-rich and more directly serve as a common meeting house for art communities and the public.

Expanding the meaning of decolonisation, Strike MoMA is unsettling the normalisation of an art world that has been captured for ultra-luxury consumption by tycoons, oligarchs, and speculative market investors. Through a multiweek series of virtual and on-site protests, workshops, panel discussions, mixed-media messaging, and a recent "Ruins of Modernity" tour of midtown Manhattan corporate buildings affiliated with board members, Strike MoMA is tapping into a growing dissatisfaction with the increasingly frequent cosmetic responses from institutional leaders to their critics.

These responses range from diversifying the art on display, curators, and staff, to vetting board members for "good" philanthropists, and amping up charitable investments – in other words, replacing actors while keeping the structures of power intact. Instead, Strike MoMA proffers a vision of people and community-centred public art and control of relevant infrastructure which would be of, by, and for the people, including workers, artists, and communities. In keeping with this people-centred vision, the art activist group has sought to build alliances with low-wage employees in the museum including security, service and maintenance workers.

The actions of Strike MoMA appear to be amplifying the crisis of philanthropic legitimacy in New York City and other

metropolitan centres of culture. A standard refrain coming from these circuits of the wealthy is that museums cannot exist without big money, appended with the conclusion that, on balance, this seemingly unchangeable reality is more good than bad.

MoMA director Glenn Lowry has responded to the weekly on-site demonstrations by accusing Strike MoMA of wanting to "disassemble" MoMA and all museums "so they no longer exist". In contrast, Strike MoMA's rhetoric varies from agitating for a "new MoMA" to a "post-MoMA museum" to a banner stationed outside MoMA during protests with the words "Post-MoMA Future" that presumably signals the possibilities of public art in formation. Nowhere, however, is there a vacuous call for the end of museums, nor a fixed blueprint for what might come next.

What is clear is that the art world, increasingly besieged by demands to dismantle longstanding hierarchies, cannot return to business as usual. Museums are no longer perceived as exceptional cultural institutions devoid of capitalist exploitation, neutral entities servicing only the public good, nor are they exempt from scrutiny of their histories of colonial extraction and complicity with corporate profiteering.

The contradiction between the expressive humanism at the heart of art-making and the wolfish appetites of these collectors has reached a breaking point. Agitation about the intimacy between culture and lucre is hardly new. But now that it is proceeding under the banner of decolonisation, the terms of engagement are shifting.

# Bringing Abolition to the Museum: an Interview with Shellyne Rodriguez

Billy Anania, *Boston Review* (June 17, 2021)

Since early April, artists and workers have occupied the public square across from the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in Manhattan. Under the name [Strike MoMA](#), they are protesting the financial entanglements of the museum's wealthy patrons—as well as the institution's labor practices, including the furloughing of many employees during the COVID-19 pandemic. Building on the momentum of the past year's social justice movements, Strike MoMA has pushed back on half measures offered to placate protesters. Organizers claim that only a radical readjustment will resolve their concerns about the museum's ties to policing and crony capitalism. The coalition recently garnered support from artist groups such as Guerrilla Girls and Decolonize This Place, as well as activist-intellectuals including Angela Davis, Fred Moten, Sandy Grande, and Gayatri Spivak. Demonstrations were propelled into national news again in recent weeks when activists clashed with museum security guards, despite director Glenn Lowry's assurance that MoMA would respect peaceful actions.

"I envisioned myself as a rank-and-file worker who was demystifying the museum. My approach was to point out that these artworks and their creators are our allies, but this space is not."

For Shellyne Rodriguez, an [artist and writer](#) based in the Bronx, this protest is a natural progression. As a community organizer, she helps call attention to the relationships between art, real estate, and gentrification. As an educator at MoMA for nearly a decade, she did work that was in many ways an extension of her activism: running programs for MoMA that mainly took place outside of the museum and connected under-resourced and incarcerated populations with art. When COVID-19 shut down museums across the United States, MoMA [terminated contracts](#) for Rodriguez and nearly a hundred other educators, leading to public scrutiny of their precarious employment. Critics questioned why some of the museum's most crucial workers were contracted on a freelance basis and not even considered employees of the institution. In a recent conversation, Rodriguez and I connected the dots between these layoffs, the continued resistance to MoMA, and a growing institutional critique rooted in abolition.

**Billy Anania:** What were your main responsibilities at MoMA, and why do you believe the educators were among the first to be permanently terminated?

**Shellyne Rodriguez:** I worked there for about eight years in the education department's community and access programs, which connect schools and nonprofits with the museum's art workshops. I helped out with the Alzheimer's project, the Touch Tour for the visually impaired, the Primetime Initiative for senior citizens, and much more.

I also worked in community partnerships with [Kerry Downey](#), who has written extensive critiques of community education in museums. These initiatives to bring arts education into the community are generally administered through contracts between the museum and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), which is pretty problematic. NGOs do not really represent a community; they are an extension of the welfare state. They provide services that used to be public goods—picking up the pieces that the state has neglected or let go due to austerity—through the same kinds of questionable philanthropy as museums. But the communities they served really interested me and kept me there. I worked with Passages Academy, which is the education wing of the youth detention system in New York, including Crossroads and Horizon Juvenile Centers—basically jails for minors. I got to work with incarcerated kids, sex workers, undocumented children waiting to be reunited with their families, all in different locations. These programs were carved out long before I got there, and I inherited them.

Additionally, I started a whole new initiative in the museum called Night Studio. I'm a GED kid who sort of fell through the back door of art school and managed to get some degrees, but I really wanted to create something for folks who were no longer teenagers. There are always programs for teens to get them involved in the arts, but I was interested in collaborating with people in their mid-twenties and thirties who were just coming around to getting a high school-equivalency diploma, and who self-identified as artists but did not have any avenues to be supported in that. I started this program with the

museum's money, of course. It was intensive with lots of resources, and we taught them a great deal.

I envisioned myself as a rank-and-file worker who was demystifying the museum, but not necessarily trying to make people "of" the museum. My approach to education was pointing out that the collections are relics that artists originally made to say something, but which are now captured in this space. These works and their creators are our allies, but this space is not. I often used the museum for political education, because that is just my approach to teaching. In general, I tried to spend as little time there as possible. Art institutions try to pay in social capital, but I wasn't interested in that.

"The museum used underpaid contract positions to make itself seem more committed to community initiatives than it in fact was."

**BA:** Given that your employment by MoMA was so contingent, it seems bizarre that the museum expected you to be so heavily invested in the company culture. But it seems clear that the museum used these underpaid contract positions to make itself seem more committed to these initiatives than it in fact was.

**SR:** Oh, I was basically operating as a program director, but, in reality, I was a gig worker. When the museum laid us all off, I was pissed that I no longer had a job, but I wasn't shocked. Of course education goes first; this is Neoliberalism 101. I have always seen the museum for what it is, and I did not expect some kind of benevolent action to occur. Glenn Lowry, the museum's director, is basically a corporate CEO after all.

I was more offended the year before COVID-19 hit, when all the freelance educators were disinvited from the annual holiday party. Human resources reminded us that we were technically not museum employees, so we could no longer attend. I had been there for more than seven years, and others had been there for as many as thirty years. We were all appalled. Our immediate supervisors, who had no real power, said they would organize a dinner just for our

department. I felt more insulted by this incident than anything else, but it was merely a liability issue for the museum. They wanted to avoid any circumstances in which they appeared to acknowledge we were actual employees of theirs. It was the most honest thing they ever did.

**BA:** It feels necessary to contextualize the educators within MoMA's broader labor structure. Museums tend to keep their workers as separate as possible, and they often farm out front-facing positions to third parties (including to private security companies, temp agencies, and catering companies), all while poorly compensating these workers and offering them no potential for union representation. But there is also more than one union at the museum, with different ones for blue- and white-collar workers, right? This is a business model that has been broadly adopted by museums (and with clear parallels to the neoliberal university), with a professional class of administrators and curators, then laborers who execute much of the museum's daily operations and work under precarious conditions.

"There is this mythology around museums that needs to be debunked. They are corporations like any other, except that their businesses accrete around a bonfire of fetishized art."

**SR:** There is this mythology around museums that needs to be debunked. They are corporations like any other, except that their businesses accrete around a bonfire of fetishized art. I am not sure why we ever expected any better from a corporation. Of course they treat their workers terribly and carry out union-busting tactics.

Union workers only comprise a small percentage of employees at MoMA, but the fact that there are unions gives the public a false impression that the museum's workers have a seat at the table. In reality, business decisions are all happening multiple tax brackets above the vast majority of both unionized and nonunionized workers. Security at MoMA is unionized, but that is a whole other dilemma. Management always wants to make sure the cops are comfortable.

**BA:** The directors and trustees are not really beholden to every department, and many white-collar workers may not even know some departments or positions even exist. That is a known tool of union-busting: a portion of employees are given recognition while everyone else is left scrambling, thereby disrupting worker unity. In one sense, you have a unified group of workers agitating for short-term solutions, but can unions also wind up extending the life of longer-term issues?

**SR:** Well, the problem is that unions cannot solve everything. If we clamor for more unionization in the museum, then what do those contracts look like? I am thinking about how many times public sector unions bailed out New York City. The pensions of teachers and multiple city workers get invested into the bonds that keep the doors of state and federal prisons open. It's all intertwined. This is something that is [addressed](#) in Strike MoMA's "Post-MoMA Futures" platform. We are not going to fix these big problems by unionizing; that would just get us more of the same. Where does the money come from? Where do the pensions go? Once unions are involved in upholding the structure, because their pensions are on the line, they can actually start working to uphold the very people and structures Strike MoMA is protesting. Yes to collective bargaining power, but the devil is also in the details.

"Once unions are involved, because their pensions are on the line, they can actually start working to uphold the very structures Strike MoMA is protesting. Yes to collective bargaining power, but the devil is also in the details."

**BA:** Can we talk more about Strike MoMA? How have the last few months shifted the conversation around museum futures?

**SR:** One idea that fascinates me is interconnected struggle, or an "interlocking directorate." This term is loosely defined as the networks of oligarchs, multinational corporations, and defense industry profiteers—the cluster formed by those holding executive positions at companies while sitting on museum and university boards.

Strike MoMA recently highlighted MoMA trustee Gustavo Cisneros, who pretty much embodies the Latin American art empire; there is no bigger name than that. He also happens to sit on the board of Barrick Gold Corporation, which is the world's largest gold mining company. They have committed atrocities all across the world: bodies piled up in East Africa, natural reserves decimated, loads of problems in South America.

**BA:** In the last five years, Barrick Gold has come under fire for its backdoor deals with Tanzanian police—who subsequently [murdered](#) more than sixty villagers—as well as a controversial Chilean [project](#) shut down by that country's environmental regulator, and [cyanide spills](#) in Argentina. Now there's talk of another mine project and tailings dam in the Dominican Republic, despite organized opposition on the ground there.

**SR:** Yes, and New York City makes up a huge portion of the Dominican diaspora, so this is of great concern here, too. Cisneros's company wants to build a dam on a river that more than 4 million people depend upon, including people living in the capital, Santo Domingo. Cow and rice farmers, along with other people in that region, are engaged in guerilla tactics to stop this, fighting against officials and police who are backing Barrick Gold. Cisneros is also building a sustainable luxury resort in the Dominican Republic while all this is going down.

Then we have James and Paula Crown. They funded the Crown Creativity Lab at MoMA, and even named one of its programs The People's Studio. The Crowns own General Dynamics, which [manufactures](#) and sells the weapons used to carpet-bomb Gaza. They have been selling these same bombs to the Saudis, who have used them to ravage Yemen, and they sold battle tanks to the Colombian military forces that are now all over the streets raining hell on Colombians.

**BA:** Another MoMA board member, Steven Tananbaum of GoldenTree Asset Management, owns a significant portion of the sovereign debt of Puerto Rico. Tananbaum once [boasted to Reuters](#) about how forcing a restructuring of the commonwealth's debt—in effect guaranteeing it remain

poor—could turn a fantastic profit for investors. And he is not even the only MoMA trustee working with the hedge funds enforcing Puerto Rico's debt. There's also Leon Black, who recently stepped down for his associations with Jeffrey Epstein, as well as billionaire investors Daniel Och and Glenn Dubin. The global impact of this museum board alone feels insurmountable.

**SR:** These folks all work in solidarity together. They control their own domain, but they also wield significant power in our civic spaces where we go to work. And if they are working together, then we need to do the same. As someone who worked at MoMA for a long time, I can't sit this out.

"These board members all work in solidarity. And if they are working together, then we need to do the same."

**BA:** I read your [2018 essay](#) in the New Inquiry, titled "How the Bronx Was Branded," and thought it was one of the most succinct explanations of how art and real estate work together. You showed that at the heart of the Bronx's redevelopment was a lofty public relations campaign that allowed artists, developers, and city officials to profit off the displacement of low-income families. How do museums contribute, and can you speak about the PR war they wage on the media and ordinary people?

**SR:** When I organize with Take Back the Bronx—a volunteer grassroots collective centered around community control—I try to bring in how art contributes to gentrification here. This is how I first connected with Decolonize This Place, because they were thinking about museums all over the world in similar ways. The Bronx is the poorest borough in New York, with two of the poorest congressional districts in the country. We have a huge Yemeni community and a lot of Palestinians, too. We have spent so much time bridging the gaps in our communities to enrich conversations and inspire people to feel empowered by the spirit of interconnected struggle.

Museums exist in a market, just like real estate, and we are all somewhat in denial because they happen to be tied to something we love. I would never deny the levels of spirituality and poetics we all experience through art;

that is the reason I'm here. But we cannot conflate art with museums. They are not synonymous, nor are art and for-profit art galleries synonymous. We let these millionaires and billionaires convince us that their spaces are the only ones that legitimize art, and suddenly no other alternatives seem possible.

However, we are starting to see this all break down a little bit. While other museums were getting a lot of bad press for taking money from the Sacklers and oil companies and the like, the MoMA managed to stay off the radar for a long while. But recently there was an [open letter](#) signed by quite a few prominent scholars and artists denouncing the museum's position on Palestine. It's the beginning of a conscious shift. I think people still feel some sort of religious feelings toward MoMA, you know? That's our mistake. There is significant power on that board that cannot be overlooked.

"We let millionaires convince us that their spaces are the only ones that legitimize art, and suddenly no alternative seems possible."

**BA:** I think many of us have only recently had our eyes opened to the myriad ways that money laundering factors into museum leadership—how wealthy philanthropists can basically art-wash their wealth to uphold a positive reputation centered around humanity and creative expression.

**SR:** And this is part of a larger question: Are we, as artists and cultural workers, willing to engage with this problem? Are we willing to make it so the structures we have relied on, which hold these museums together, are rendered obsolete?

I remember during the first days of protests at the Whitney Museum in 2019—we were protesting Whitney vice chair Warren Kanders, who owns weapons manufacturer Safariland Group—when a well-known art critic stopped by. He sauntered over and started yelling at some of the young people putting up banners, saying they had no respect and that we need these philanthropists—and that we were not old enough to remember the Culture Wars. I think the argument he was trying to make was that the government

can't be counted on to fund museums, so we need to rely on the private sector. And of course the government routinely begs the private sector for help. Neoliberalism is the private sector governing, and this is just an extension.

People say, "How will we take care of art?" or "How will we take care of the museum?" To me, those are classist questions. How much of a museum collection is extracted? I am thinking of the [MOVE bombing victim](#) whose remains recently were revealed to be in the collection of the Penn Museum, and the price our communities pay because people want to keep the museum doors open. It's a bait and switch, like bombing a city and building a school.

**BA:** Yes, it feels as though this corruption and exploitation are inevitable outcomes of institutions founded on colonialist practices.

**SR:** A hundred percent. I have gotten so much out of speaking with and reading Ariella Aïsha Azoulay, particularly her book [Potential History: Unlearning Imperialism](#) (2019). Ariella could be a battle rapper; she's got bars. She makes an example of the camera shutter, the action that locks a historical moment into place and crystalizes its story. You will see photos in the newspaper of rappers like DJ Kool Herc and Swizz Beatz applauding a new hip-hop museum. That captured image of the museum, the crowds, and the applauding does not capture the periphery, which is the bulldozing of communities and gentrification occurring outside.

This is also how an imperialist project is born, and how art replaces humanity inside the museum. When the vitrine goes in, we go out. It's rooted in a death; once they put the shell-top Adidas behind the glass, they don't need the people anymore. They have the fossil, the souvenir, the head on a spike. That is the violence of modernity—as Arthur Schopenhauer used to say, that art "plucks the object of its contemplation from the stream of the world's course, and holds it isolated before it." The museum wrenches the object from the world and holds it up for us. What gets left behind is murder, extraction, pillaging, and colonialism.

"The museum wrenches the object from the world and holds it up for us. What gets left behind is murder, extraction, pillaging, and colonialism."

**BA:** I feel particularly drawn to this quote of yours from that New Inquiry essay: "How would an artistic practice that aims to disrupt alienation appear in our hallways, elevators, and all the spaces we share in our communities?" Have you found an answer to this?

**SR:** When we reweave the social fabric, the middleman is clearly what needs to be abolished, and abolishing the mediator means we talk to each other again. And when we talk to each other again, we can break down the alienation. One thing I have always admired about immigrant communities is how tightly knit they are, because they have not yet experienced the alienation of the metropolis. In contrast, for Black and Puerto Rican communities that have been here since the 1950s, it is much more difficult. We have gone through too much, been broken apart and separated to an extreme degree. We are an expendable labor force that experienced the first wave of the neoliberal project, which is why we also make up so much of the prison.

Alienation affects everybody in the city, though, and makes us all exist in separate worlds with our shared grievances. This came up during the 2019–20 FTP protests, when protestors challenged the New York police in the subway. Everyone was mad in their heads, but nobody was vocalizing it. How do we continue to crack that? I think it might require dialing back before all the organizing work, before knocking on doors, before galvanizing around the problem—how do we see each other? It's about locating that beginning point.

**BA:** In applying an abolitionist critique to museums, do we risk taking away from the contemporaneous prison/police movements? Or are they all interrelated?

**SR:** Abolition as a principle is not just about police. The museum is the police precinct, as Stefano Harney said in a [recent talk](#), meaning these institutions are the well-

funded gatekeepers of culture within a city of aesthetically minded people. They are involved in community policing, sending patrol cars in the form of curators and community outreach. We need to stop thinking about the police as the person in the blue uniform. That is just one pawn, not the whole picture. The police is the structure, and that structure takes many forms. Nonprofits and NGOs are police. We are talking about structures of power, and if we are undoing these structures, then that is abolition by definition.

Abolition as a principle is not just about police. The museum is the police precinct, meaning these institutions are the well-funded gatekeepers of culture.

How do we put this critique into practice and build toward these institutions being obsolete? This is why Strike MoMA is so categorically different from the Whitney Museum protests. Back then, it was about shining a light on one board member, to make an example of how one person touches all of our struggles. Warren Kanders's weapons were in Ferguson, in Palestine, in Puerto Rico, and at the border. With Strike MoMA, there is something growing in the park right across the street from the museum. We have been so conditioned to have the state mediate our every move and conflict, from loud music complaints to applying for welfare. A mediator is present at all times. Pushing that middleman out is abolition in practice; struggling to eliminate the need for the mediator is abolition. We call them no-cop zones. We do not need the police if we can handle the disagreements ourselves. We just need to learn how to talk to each other, and how to undo systemic problems for ourselves.

We apply this same principle to the museum. No one needs to stay awake at night, stressed out and ruminating over what will happen to art and artists if we drive out all the toxic philanthropists—as if philanthropy isn't toxic in and of itself. This is art we're talking about, after all. The lack of imagination really kills me sometimes. This is supposed to be our space. What are we going to build next?

## Dancing in the Rubble: How Strike MoMA Began

Marz Saffore

On March 26, 2021, my comrades rushed down the stairs of their Brooklyn home to show me a snippet of the "Abolitionist Imaginaries One-Day Symposium" streamed live by the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) earlier that day. My friend Amy sat down next to me on the couch, queued up the video, and hit play. When the clip starts, Dylan Rodriguez, a great thinker and organizer around abolition as a collective project, opens the conversation for the last panel of the 6+ hour symposium. As Rodriguez discusses what an abolitionist art community could look like, he imagines "an art world which is dancing on the rubble of the anti-Black, colonial art world that still remains hegemonic and dominant." Although, Rodriguez points to Nicole Fleetwood's curatorial exhibition "Marking Time: Art in the Age of Incarceration" at MoMA PS1 and MoMA's one-day symposium as abolitionist challenges to the dominant, US and Western art world, he also critiques MoMA itself, which "draws its historical capital from the chattel, colonial, land expropriating violence of genocidal racial capitalism's philanthropic art." What Rodriguez makes clear in his speech is that as MoMA reigns supreme in today's "anti-Black, colonial art world," it, too, must be included amongst the rubble. In giving space to other abolitionist imaginaries, Rodriguez also takes time to announce the upcoming peoples strike at MoMA. This immediately caught my attention, as my friends and I are core organizers of the strike. Three days before the "Abolitionist Imaginaries One-Day Symposium," the StrikeMOMA Working Group of the International Imagination of Anti-National Anti-Imperialist Feelings (IIAAF) released "Strike MoMA: Framework and Terms for Struggle." This document is a call to strike MoMA and build post-MoMA futures in the here and now—it's a call to dance in the rubble.

In building the case against MoMA, IIAAF both calls attention to the ways in which the museum and the billionaires who founded and have since governed the museum have historically and are currently exacting their wealth from the genocide, imprisonment, displacement, and dispossession of peoples. "Strike MoMA" references a tweet by MoMA Divest, one of groups working alongside IIAAF to strike MoMA, to highlight the corruption of just five of MoMA's board members. MoMA Divest tweets:

Five MoMA board members—Steven Tananbaum, Glenn Dubin, Steven Cohen, Leon Black, Larry Fink—have been identified and targeted by different groups over the last year for their ties to war, racist prison and border enforcement systems, vulture fund exploitation, gentrification and displacement of the poor, extractivism and environmental degradation, and patriarchal forms of violence. Board members also have ties and donate to the NYPD Police Foundation. In short, the rot is at the core of the institution, which includes PS1 (@MomaDivest, February 6, 2021).

Importantly, the call to strike MoMA also reaches beyond the museum itself. A strike against MoMA is a strike against blood-soaked modernity. A strike against MoMA is a strike against the hegemonic, dominant regime, which continues to kill our peoples on a daily basis.

This document comes from a movement perspective that de-exceptionalizes the museum. We refuse to acknowledge the separation of the museum from the rest of society. We see MoMA as existing on the same plane as the violence of the ruling class that has controlled it since its inception with the oil wealth of the Rockefellers in 1929. No more rationalizing the regime. They have long enabled the killing of our people and non-human relations and they have always expected us to thank them for their philanthropy.

Due to this lack of separation of the museum from the rest of society, MoMA's historical and ongoing atrocities committed against our peoples provides grounds to mark it as a target for our movements. Undoubtedly, MoMA is a soft target for our movements, but it is a strategic target nonetheless.

The monument on 53rd Street becomes our prism. We see our histories and struggles refracted through its crystalline structure, and foreclosed futures come into view. The museum is converted into a theater of operations where our entwined movements of decolonization, abolition, anti-capitalism and anti-imperialism can find one another. Why strike MoMA? So that something else can emerge, something under the control of workers, communities, and artists rather than billionaires [emphasis in original]."

Targeting MoMA makes it a meeting point for multiple struggles to cross paths, convene, and create new worlds and possibilities together.

It is no coincidence that the IIAAF along with 13+ other working groups and collectives are calling to strike MoMA at the present moment, during the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. As COVID-19 leaves millions dead worldwide, it continues to exacerbate and expose other pandemics and systemic inequalities plaguing our communities such as white supremacy, colonization, racial capitalism, imperialism, +++. In the wake of hundreds of years of pandemic after pandemic, crisis after crisis, our movements are left asking "What time is it on the clock of the world?" Strike MoMA is loudly proclaiming that it's time to strike. "To strike is to exercise the power of refusal, a negation that is coupled with affirmation." Or following in the teachings of the Zapatistas, one no leads to many yeses. We say no to MoMA. We say no to the policing and surveillance of our communities. We say no to the occupation of lands and peoples. We say no to the exploitation of our labor. We say no to medical apartheid. In saying no, how can we imagine and live otherwise? Ashton T. Crawley discusses the otherwise in *Blackpentecostal Breath: The Aesthetics of Possibility*, writing that there are "infinite alternatives to what is. And what is is about being, about existence, about ontology. But if infinite alternatives exist, if otherwise possibility is a resource that is never exhausted, what is, what exists, is but one of many [emphasis in original]." There are infinite otherwise ways of living, being, and relating outside of modernity, policing, colonialism, capitalism, imperialism. Once we refuse what is and tap into these otherwise possibilities, we can begin to dance in the rubble. We can begin our post-MoMA and otherwise post-pandemic futures.

Strike MoMA is infused with an abolitionist aesthetics of possibility, and also an "aesthetics of combat" as Rodriguez put it in his remarks. These energies were powerfully manifest in a singular work of dance that took place on Friday, April 9, 2021, the first day of the first phase of Strike MoMA, which involved ten weeks of conversation, art, and action taking place internationally. Every Friday, a de-occupation is held in the belly of modernity, across the street from MoMA in a plaza that's a part of a Privately Owned Public Space (POPS). We closed the first de-occupation with a choreographed piece by Brittany from Wardance Collective, another group working with the StrikeMoMA Working Group of IIAAF. Brittany's outfit was nothing out of the ordinary for a rainy Spring day, except she was wearing a gold, metal grate over her face and carrying a machete kept in a black sheath. Brittany began the piece by twice circling the 1987 Jesus Bautista Morales sculpture titled "Lapstrake" in the center of the plaza. She then stood in front of the sculpture facing the crowd and began to acknowledge and summon the histories and legacies of the unceded Lenape land in which we were standing. She said, "We stand on Lenape land to recognize the genocide that has happened on this land, to recognize enforced labor that has happened on this land, to recognize the violence that continues to happen on this land." She then took a water bottle and poured out libations for the ancestors and the land as well as what others in the space called out to honor, reckon with, and bring into the space. After a series of movements, Brittany began her slow, deliberate march towards the museum from the plaza, holding her sheathed machete in both hands. Her movements towards the museum are best described as a wardance and a call to action. As the church bells nearby struck 5:00pm, Brittany stopped her movement on the sidewalk opposite the museum and unsheathed her machete. Machete in hand, she walked from the sidewalk into the street right in front of MoMA. She turned around to face the participants, placed her machete on her shoulder, and yelled, "Strike! It's time, y'all." Then pointing the machete up to the museum and its higher ups, she yelled, "This place right here represents colonialization, white supremacy, the reason why our ancestors died. We say no more!" She took the machete hand in hand, placed it on the street, and took a step back. The performance was over. Brittany had just (war)danced in the rubble. Strike MoMA had begun.

# LIGHTNING STRIKES:

## On Strike MoMA's Ruins of Modernity Tour

Vijay Masharani, *Artforum* (May 5, 2021)

I COUNT EIGHT NYPD SQUAD CARS in front of the Time Warner Center and another van by the Trump Hotel. It's April 30, and two concentric circles of metal barricades lashed together with zip ties—erected during last summer's rebellion and removed this past March—are back, surrounding the Columbus Monument. I'm half an hour early and the sky looks ready to open up into what my phone assures me will be a brief, light squall. I huddle outside a temporarily shuttered Maison Keyser to keep dry and skim the [Strike MoMA Framework and Terms for Struggle](#), on the lookout for others attending the group's tour.

Strike MoMA emerged after artists and activists demanded private equity magnate Leon Black leave the museum's board due to his ties to the late billionaire pedophile human trafficker Jeffrey Epstein. Some of the organizations that made these calls, such as [MoMA Divest](#), the Arts Union (who authored [a statement](#) signed by some 150 artists and arts workers), and Decolonize This Place, further noted that to see Black as distinctly objectionable is to miss the forest for the trees, as other board members have accrued their fortunes on the backs of the racialized poor through predatory lending, mass incarceration, and resource extraction. The museum burnishes their reputations while hoarding wealth in its \$1.2 billion endowment. The appropriate response, then,

is not to focus on individuals but to confront the institution in its entirety.

I catch curator Joseph Lubitz and soon we're joined by Sunny Iyer from Wendy's Subway and Ian Epps from Art Handlers' Alliance. We walk to Central Park South, where a group is unfurling hand-painted banners. One reads "UNDER THE MUSEUM / UNDER THE UNIVERSITY / UNDER THE CITY | THE LAND"—a reference to May '68—while another asserts "CLIP THE LOCKS, BETRAY EMPIRE," a request seemingly addressed to building security. While the lobby is normally open to the public, in advance of our visit director Glenn Lowry instructed staff to check tickets outside of the museum due to "risk of gun violence." Shellyne Rodriguez, an artist and activist affiliated with the activist group Take Back the Bronx, distributes a two-color risograph pamphlet headlined "The RUINS of MODERNITY TOUR: From the CITY to the MUSEUM" that folds out into an annotated map of the surrounding area marked with the logos of companies affiliated with MoMA board members, some of their residential addresses, and information about another trustee with [Epstein ties](#), Glenn Dubin.

A ragtag crowd of about forty-five has assembled at the base of the park. DTP's Amin Husain beckons us closer for some remarks issued in a vaguely pedagogical

tone: This is not a protest. This gathering is for us to learn what's happening in the city, and where power is concentrated within it. Rodriguez follows with a provocation: What does an anti-imperialist political program look like for those living in the heart of a global empire? Sandy Grande of NY Stands With Standing Rock issues a land acknowledgement and directs our attention to the recently published Indigenous climate justice platform [the Red Deal](#). The speakers offer some practical tips for avoiding arrest—stay tight around corners, that sort of thing—and then we're off, marshaled by three cops on mopeds.

We plot a meandering course to the museum and make a couple of impromptu stops along the way, first to express our disgust at the vacant buildings around Fifty-Second and Broadway and the capitalist superfluity that they signify, and then again to note the privately owned public space of 6½ Ave. Chants tend to get swallowed up by city noise, so instead someone brought a booming speaker mounted on a hand truck; I Shazam [my four favorite tracks](#), which are augmented by a live trumpet player and someone with a kick drum mounted on their chest.

When we arrive at MoMA, it's clear security won't let us demonstrate in the lobby. At times with considerable pathos, protestors reason with the guards on the basis of shared ethnic/class identifications. "Glenn doesn't pay you enough for this!" someone implores, while Husain speaks to one of the guards in Arabic. Hancy, a member of the Kiskeya Solidarity Committee, appeals to one man through their mutual Dominican heritage, invoking how "[Dominican] people have a long history of struggle." Later, I learn that two employees working in visitor services walked off during the standoff and that Rodriguez, who was employed by the museum until it laid off its education staff at the start of the pandemic, entered the building through the staff entrance only to be hit in the face by a security guard.

The confrontation doesn't last longer than fifteen minutes, after which we begin the "deoccupation," hoisting a banner that reads "POST-MOMA FUTURE" across from the museum. Off to the side, I spot O.K. Fox and Sarah Crowe of the Art & Labor podcast interviewing artist William Powhida. The crowd grows to about eighty people, all seated in the plaza and listening to an unplanned speaker series offering a taxonomy of the institutional rot and labor militancy that characterize the university and the museum today. DTP's Marz Saffore expresses solidarity with MOVE's campaign against the University of Pennsylvania, [recently revealed](#) to have been storing the remains of Black children killed in a 1985 police bombing. Andre from Comité Boricua en la Diáspora introduces himself as a Puerto Rican refugee and accuses board member Stephen Tanenbaum of exacerbating and exploiting the territory's debt crisis. NYU sociologist Andrew Ross updates us on the ongoing Graduate Students Organizing Committee strike and the group's commitment to leverage their labor power to end the NYPD's presence on campus.

The next day, I wake up to a leaked email from Lowry, addressed to the staff-wide internal listserv, in which he alleges that dozens of us banded together to enter the museum by force, shouted racial slurs, and attacked the security staff to the point that one guard had to be hospitalized and two required on-site medical attention. Multiple attendees' [video footage](#) of the event proves otherwise. Lowry's message is largely consistent with the institutional response thus far, which has been to paint Strike MoMA as insurrectionary nihilists while gesturing toward a deliberately vague notion of the museum-as-public-good. But now, misrepresentation has escalated into the kind of brazen lies people with power tell when they're seeking a mandate for even more extreme forms of suppression.



## Decolonize Ayiti: Action Report

On Friday, April 16th we called a peaceful action in front of the hideous Parque Colon sculpture in Santo Domingo. This was part of week 2 of 10 weeks of action and striking the big money and blood money that is killing us all at MoMA. We call an action to Decolonize Ayiti or "mountainous land". This is what our Taino brothers and sisters once called the island of Quisqueya.

There is power in a symbol like this and that power needs to be taken away. While we meet our local governments with demands to reform the police and end unjust killings of indigenous, black, and brown people; we must also eliminate the symbols that allow us to view the most racist act of violence in our nation's history in a heroic light. How sad it makes us to see our Queen Anacaona at the feet of Colon. We must free her from this symbol of genocide and rape.

Colonization continues through the stories told to protect the legacy of Columbus's voyages to the so-called "New World" and "Americas". These voyages, in reality, inaugurated a long history of exploitation, enslavement, eradication, and erasure of indigenous and black culture. Some brush off colonization as something of the past. Do not get it twisted—brown and black people are dying every day because of these false stories that protect colonization and enslavement. These stories hide the fact that cops were first put on these lands as slave patrols. The racist roots of policing tensions between brown and black communities are nothing new and it is why we must put an end to the racist police system and end to the celebration of Colonizers such as Colon.

We as Dominicans, as Americans, and first-generation Dominican Americans, must remind ourselves that we are on stolen land and we must act accordingly. This means that we shouldn't spend Dominican tax money to fund the military to surround the Parque Colon to protect a fucking sculpture of a man that only brought disease, genocide, and various assaults to Native communities. We shouldn't be celebrating a figure who is upheld in modern society as the "founder" of the New World... what the fuck were the Natives doing? Did they not find the land first?

We're taught very early in elementary school the false story that the theft of our continent's land was entirely legitimate because the people already there were not "civilized". Having this statue removed to reclaim the true story of colonialism and genocide of our Taino culture is a demand, not a request. To this end, we call to Strike MoMA, and with that what we call "modernity", and call for the decolonization of Ayiti. Let us come together to free Ayiti's Taino Queen Anacaona from her rapist and murderer Colon. Anacaona died fighting to free and preserve her people's independence and culture. It is up to us to respect and honor her by taking action to decolonize the land and the removal of the Colon statue and the name Parque Colon.

Friday at 1 pm we came peacefully to place Sunflowers at Anacaona's feet at Parque Colon. We called upon activists and other people of the island to come together peacefully in protest against a statue that should no longer exist. The police and the military were completely surrounding the park. We had to leave the location to come back later in hopes that we could approach the monument without the military and police interference. We came around 5 pm with sunflowers. As we approached the monument, the police got closer and closer to us. We placed the flowers at Anacaona feet, at our own risk, to honor the motherland and to make light that Colon was nothing but a rapist and murderer.

Our other actions include making banners that say "COLON FUE UN VIOLADOR - STRIKE MOMA". The banner was made via a live stream on artist [@jehdyvargas](https://www.instagram.com/jehdyvargas) IG account on the day of action to start to make some noise via the internet. As we walked to place the banner in the park, we found the park was completely surrounded by Dominican military and cops. To avoid confrontations we didn't take out our banner. I'm sure they understood our wonderful message of how Anacaona should behead Colon. We shared our intentions via our flyer to call to action for the day via several IG platforms.

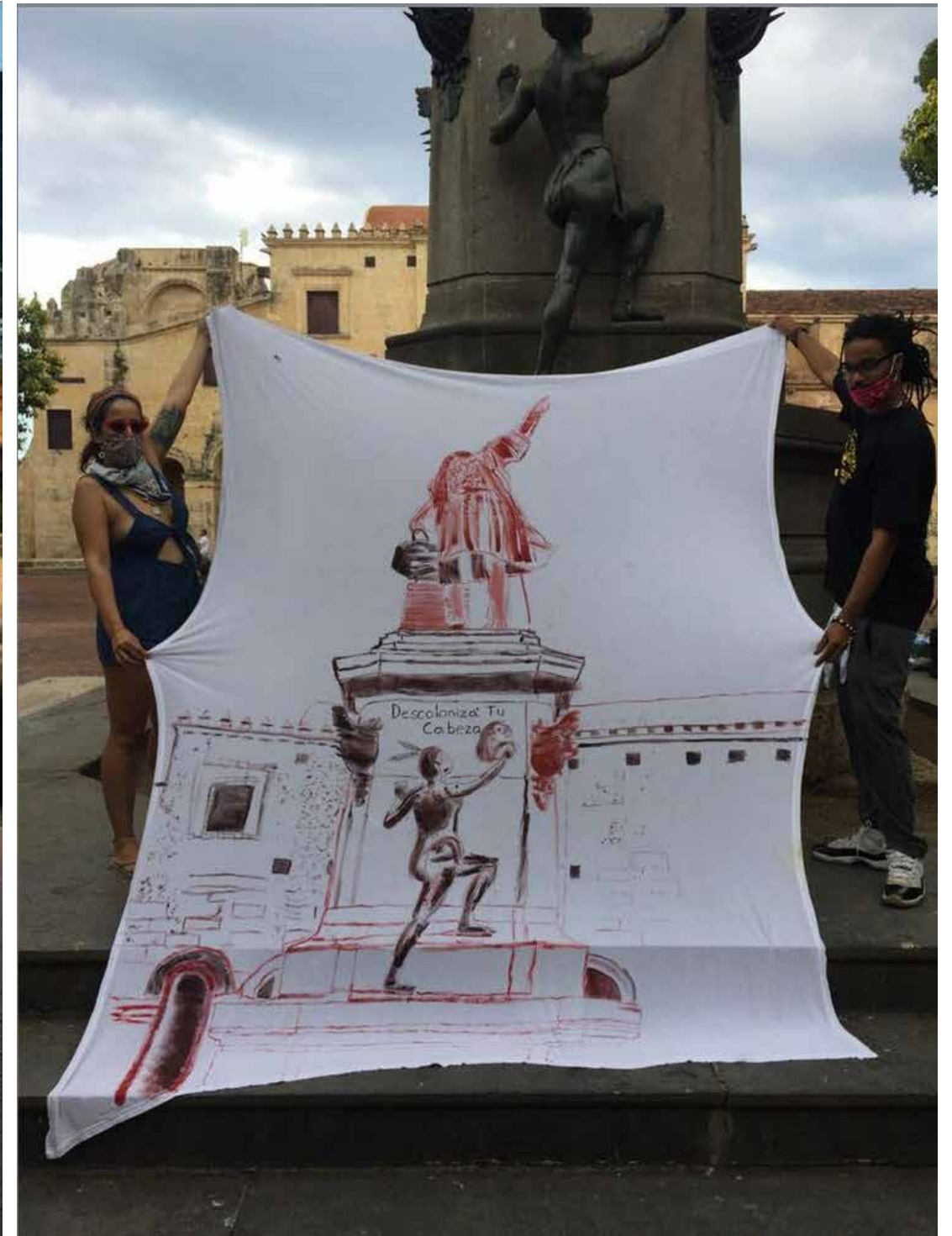
Anacaona should have Colon's head taken off for the genocide of our Taino people. During 10 weeks, we are creating a new space to allow for a new way of thinking and for the work of Decolonization to begin with our culture. Let us come together as a collective; decolonize our minds, our hearts, and souls. We are all one and we should educate our children against celebrating a mass murder and rapist of the land that never belonged to him.

We are demanding the removal of the Columbus Monument en el Parque Colon. We are a city built on the invaded and occupied territory Ayiti or Quisqueya to the Native Taino people that have always called this land home and which they continue to inhabit today. We despise such a symbol of Indigenous genocide and erasure in our city. To uplift BIPOC around the world, we must recognize that it has no place in our Art history and Culture History. We Strike MoMA and what we call modernity and all the blood money used by MoMA's board members. Blood money has no place in the arts, and sculptures celebrating rapist and mass murderers have no place in art history.

That is why we are asking for the removal of the Columbus Monument located in the Parque Colon. It represents racist acts of violence through the forceful removal of people from their ancestral lands. We ask that these racist acts also be condemned by the Dominican government as they condemned the behavior of police violence against our people.

Removing statues will not solve the problem of police brutality or racism, but it will send a message that rejects racism, rape, and colonization of past and present. Let us change art history by suggesting to put Anacaona at the top of the sculpture and completely removing el violador que era Colon.

Golden Sunflowers para madre Tierra y para la Reina de la Tierra Ayiti Anacaona.



# The Museum of Modern Artigarchy

– Abou Farman

Over the last few years, an increasing number of art and cultural institutions have come under sustained attack for what to some may have appeared as a range of disparate reasons: a racist statue; labor issues; or a weapons manufacturer, opioid peddlers, prison profiteers, gentrifiers sitting on the board. However, these instances are part of a growing, global, and coherent set of revolts against finance feudalism and the global oligarchy, beneficiaries from the afterlives of colonialism and slavery. Whereas much of protesting in the art world has historically concerned matters of representation (what kind of art by what kind of artist expressing what kinds of concerns get to be included in the spaces of its reception and exhibition), some current spates of protests are challenging social structures and cultural imaginaries, rather than the art on display. Board members have been the main targets, for the boards of these hallowed institutions, it turns out, are full of unsavory characters who make their money from selling drugs, peddling arms, and putting regular folks in cages. That money gained from dispossession, displacement, and detention is then donated (4Ds) in the tens and hundreds of millions of dollars to museums and non-profits. The protestors have been clear: the cycle of these four Ds has to stop. That is, actions won't stop once a particular board member is removed because that does not stop the violence of the oligarchs. It merely shifts its location; they are interchangeable. In that case, actions will move to another site in the chain of art washing and philanthropy subterfuge.

None of this comes as too much of a surprise. What we know today as "The Museum" has always been underwritten by ill-gotten wealth and power, from colonial ventures and slave plantation profits to mili-

tary expeditions and Gilded Age robber barons. Without these adventures in violence, theft, and barbarism, there would have been no institutions of high civilization or high art in the modern, Western world. The money's been dirty for a few hundred years. So has civilization.

Today's protests—following on the heels of a few earlier fights like [Gulf Labor's](#) face off with the Guggenheim and unionization efforts at the New Museum—have gained momentum because they are not about art. Or, put differently, they are not about art in the way the museums have come to delineate art, as a restricted domain of production over which they hold the monopoly of value. Rather, the protests are about that very monopoly; they are about the museum in the structural sense, about the financial capital that underwrites, and benefits from, the cultural capital of museums, universities, and institutions of knowledge in general. Accumulated through its originary violence of colonial dispossession and enslavement, Western capital and power hid behind the idea of the mision civilizatrice (the civilizing mission) of the White man, bringing education, art, and "progress" to the rest of the world. Today's concentration of capital keeps lubricating the gears of civilization that gave rise to these institutions in the first place. We have to understand museums as a function in the machinery of racial capitalism. Profit from every part of a historically-shaped cycle of dispossession, displacement and detention ends up as Picassos on the wall where we are taught to stand mouths agape and feel awe about the human spirit. A highly creative project indeed, a fetish of the highest order.

Another important feature is that these actions are not only led by the artists and intellectuals who have a vested interest in the institutions and want to change them for

the better. The coalitions are joined or led by groups fighting a wide range of issues imposed on vulnerable communities by the oligarchy and its security state—from anti-extractivist movements to prison abolitionists and sanctuary activists to movements for indigenous land restoration and Black liberation. Positioning itself from the beginning at the intersection of these currents, Decolonize This Place (DTP) has been the exemplary platform that started with arts institutions and then joined major mobilizations against gentrification and police brutality in collaboration with local groups around the city. DTP, like MoMA Divest, understands and promotes the view that these are linked, international struggles.

But against and for what? If all this is about global politics and economics, then why focus on museums like MoMA and non-profits like the Ford Foundation? Because, political and economic systems of power are concentrated in the museum and non-profit worlds. Wherever the money comes from, the museum or non-profit acts as the laundromat for the global oligarchy, sanitizing the money and giving it the stamp of culture's approval. This is the political ecology of art and the flow is clear. Today, The Art World—when in caps, this designation includes the design, fashion, creative non-profit, and museum industries—is the distillation of the processes of global capital which is moving towards greater concentrations of wealth and value in fewer hands: the artigarchy.

The financial capital of the artigarchy is accrued as a result of the particular forms contemporary global politics has taken: a. growing inequality and the concentration of wealth, often reproducing colonial and racial histories; b. increasing dispossession and displacement caused by almost a quadrillion dollars of global capital (including debt and speculative capital) seeking its ten percent via extraction of resources no matter where they lie; c. the massively weaponized security state

protecting the open flow of big capital and its owners, whilst restricting and criminalizing the flow of people, even as that extractivist capital displaces them; d. the aesthetic, humanitarian, and philanthropic apparatus that makes it all feel nice (progress!), and allows those of modest privilege to feel like change is happening whilst the oligarchs can feel good about their great heist and cleaner money.

Luncheons hosted by those in the oligarchy—like the one at MoMA in 2019 that was protested by MoMA Divest and protected by NYPD—are in honor of the CEOs of the big banks and corporations, in that case Bank of America which got to graffiti its name all over the art. That is why—in an echo of James Baldwin who said "White is a metaphor for power and that is simply a way of describing Chase Manhattan Bank"—we say Bank of America is another name for MoMA. And vice versa. So is General Dynamics, the weapons giant, whose director, James Crown, has his name emblazoned on the newly-minted "People's Studio." There are others—Leon Black, Larry Fink—but the point is structural and not personal: to fight MoMA is to fight inequality. To fight the Whitney is to fight the security state. The distinction is part of a fictitious habitus we are asked to accept and inhabit.

But, some might say—as the directors and curators of these institutions have—that we cannot vilify the wealthy! Or that we cannot tell them where to invest their money, as remarked by Glenn Lowry, director of MoMA. Those are plainly false and deliberately dumbed-down replies to legitimate demands. Of course you can. That is precisely what we all need to do. The problem is the wealth and where it is invested, the immense inequality of it, the ways it is working to amass itself whilst causing harm, hijacking the courts, the prosecutors, the voting machines. Why are we being asked to let them be? We can't address white supremacy or climate change

or mass incarceration without dismantling the ideological, financial, and state apparatuses that facilitate the accumulation of wealth and power. That includes the museums.

Since 9/11, we have indisputably seen inequality grow to extremes, and even more so after the 2008 crash. The most recent Oxfam report on global inequality states: "While the poorest half of humanity saw their wealth dwindle by 11%, billionaires' riches increased by 12%. Last year, the top 26 wealthiest people owned \$1.4 trillion, or as much as the 3.8 billion poorest people." Whilst people are struggling to pay rent, to pay for food, to pay \$2.75 to get on public transport in New York City, the world's billionaires increase their fortunes by \$2.5 billion per day. Meanwhile, the racial wealth gap has been increasing and pandemic billionaires have made more than \$400 billion during a time when people have lost livelihoods, not to mention their lives.

Research cited in a pre-pandemic HuffPost article showed that annual fraud by America's largest corporations cost Americans up to \$360 billion annually which amounts to roughly two decades' worth of so-called street crime every single year. Yet, in 2018, nearly 19,000 people were sentenced in federal court for drug crimes alone, the majority black and latino, whilst prosecutors convicted just 37 corporate criminals.

Along with this immiseration of the poor and the fattening of the oligarchs, we have seen public funds, money for health, education, housing, the arts decrease. While the prosecution of white collar crimes (by the SEC, IRS, or EPA) is hampered and underfunded, the budgets of those arms of the state that mainly punish the poor—the police, prisons, and the military—keep growing.

There is no ethical world I want to be a part of, in which an institution that raises

and spends over \$450 million dollars on renovations in one year and a year later fires uncontracted workers whose cumulative salaries are a fraction of the kinds of sums it has access to the next. MoMA has finance capital and social capital but is ethically bankrupt. The whole modern civilization for which it stands, as one of its highest exemplar, is bankrupt.

The case of BlackRock and its CEO Larry Fink, who sits on the boards of MoMA and NYU and donates to the NY Police Foundation, is emblematic but not unique. From its Manhattan perch a few blocks from MoMA, BlackRock manages assets of over seven trillion dollars. That is more than the entire collective GDPs of Mexico and South and Central American and Caribbean nations combined. Those assets are invested in all sorts of things—mainly large global companies, including weapons manufacturers like Lockheed Martin, fossil fuel extraction companies such as ExxonMobil and BP, mining companies like Vale and Rio Tinto, and prison companies like Core Civic and Geo Group. A large number of such companies have been found to be in violation of human rights, labor rights, and indigenous rights. For example, both Vale and Rio Tinto, sometimes through local subsidiaries and always with the help of local states and security forces, have privatized large areas of land in places like Mozambique, Brazil, and Colombia for resource extraction, thereby displacing people, often through forced evictions. After setting up operations, they have been accused of poor working conditions, sometimes even forced labor; pollution and contamination; corruption and illegal licensing; and attacking environmental activists. There have been local protests, contestations, and, obviously, violence. Securing these extractivist ventures, then, requires weapons, in the production of which BlackRock also owns shares. People dispossessed and displaced by these securitized financial ventures go on the move, and

people on the move are vulnerable to all sorts of things, including detention at borders. It's a good thing, then, for BlackRock to also own shares of prison companies that detain people on the move. There is profit at every point in the cycle of dispossession, displacement and detention. They call it a diversified portfolio. And thereby also shirk blame. With one decision, Larry Fink could seal the fate of the prison company Core Civic, yet somehow we are to not blame the directors and owners of these funds and these companies, who protect themselves by being seated here whilst their profit-driven atrocities take place elsewhere.

Most large funds and billionaires inevitably invest in the same cycle, including most US pension funds and banks, many of which also have large art collections run by smiling art curators. Vanguard, securing the future of America's employees in their old age and one of the largest asset managers in the world, has a very similar investment profile and directors that serve on various boards, including the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. It can't be otherwise.

The state, and its security apparatus, from police to the military, are hijacked by these imperatives—they call it development or economic growth, but it's really just profit. In this situation, all corporate heads will defend the arrest and incarceration of indigenous and environmental activists who know that another pipeline will only increase oil leaks and pollution. The oligarchs will trigger and defend the arrests in the name of growth, as they are appointed to serve on the boards of museums around the country. No wonder then, that despite repeated requests by activists and artists, not one of the major museums has stood up to declare what position it holds vis-a-vis funds linked to war, dispossession, displacement, or prison profits.

And that translates to the curators, writers, and artists, only a handful of whom have stood up and confronted the horror. This is

not to blame curators or artists, for what the struggles at the Whitney and MoMA have shown is that the administration will be punitive.

As for the artists, they worry that without the valuation of the accumulated wealth and power of the big institutions, they will never get anywhere. That is not the case, of course, and to think so is to buy into the colonial fiction of the metropole, the metropolitan, the center. But the point here is to highlight the regime of fear, to recognize that we are working under the repressive regimes of these institutions which pretend to operate in the name of artistic freedom and freedom of expression but enact the security regime's tactics of producing insecurity, financial or otherwise. Producing fear. As MTL+ and FTP wrote last year, the tactic of becoming ungovernable is precisely to come together to get over that fear.

Oligarchic institutions don't abide by reform. They need breaking up. Getting rid of Warren Kanders from the board of the Whitney may not have decisively changed the conditions on the ground in Palestine, Ferguson, Standing Rock, the US-Mexico border, or any of the other places where Safariland weapons were used. But it was useful because it shifted the frame and showed a surging power in cultural activism, positioning it as part of a larger social and political mobilization addressing not just what art belongs on what wall, but the material and structural conditions underlying the decisions about what a wall is. All these actions—naming harm, forcing accountability, bringing down monuments, claiming reparations, reclaiming stolen land—have been and continue to be about those walls, borders and barricades that get erected to ensure the security of the state. They were and continue to be about the evasion and dismantling of those walls, and the making of other worlds—plural, many, multiple, non-standard worlds—without those borders.

# Growing Up on 53rd Street: MoMA, Midtown, Modernity

Andrew Ross

Midtown is not simply a neighborhood sector of Manhattan, it is the home of a Central Business District (CBD)—typically the area in a city with the highest land value, and with the highest concentration of commercial and financial capital investment. Over the course of the twentieth century, Midtown supplanted Wall Street as the city's primary CBD. Large landowners, like the Rockefeller family, played an outsized role in "curating" the land markets of both of these CBD's, with the Rockefeller Center complex, in particular, playing a key anchoring role. That MoMa became the premier museum of Midtown (geographically and conceptually distinct from the Museum Mile of the Upper East Side) meant that it was more centrally aligned with the engines of real estate growth and capital accumulation. MoMa grew up in the same neighborhood as America's corporate titans headquartered in the Midtown's CBD. These kids on the block know each other very well—they went to the same school of capital accumulation. MoMa's cultivation of "modern art" is indissociable from the corporate aesthetic of the American century because it is rooted in the same epochal mode of production.

As the FIRE (finance, insurance, and real estate) industries began to supplant manufacturing as New

York's base economy, Midtown and its homegrown museum went with the flow, expanding upwards and outwards. Townhouse rows morphed into canyons of glass and steel. During the Bloomberg years, Midtown was the primary destination for foreign investment in the city's real estate, most of it dirty money in search of a tax avoidance haven or money laundering opportunity. Billionaire's Row was the inevitable outcome of tycoons, princelings, and oligarchs from Russia, Asia, and the Middle East looking for a place to park their surplus capital. Purchased with cash or through shell companies or LLCs, their owners have good reason to shield their activities from public and legal scrutiny—they are as crooked as the day is long. These palaces in the sky were not built to be lived in; they are safe deposit boxes for the plunder of global capitalist speculation. At nighttime, you can tell that entire, darkened floors of the Row's supertalls lie empty while the city's homeless shelters are overflowing. The gulf between ultra-luxury speculation and existential need is an extreme symptom of the capitalist production of housing crises.

MoMa officially jumped into the real estate business with the construction of Museum Tower. This white glove condominium, designed by Cesar

Pelli, was part of the museum's upward expansion, executed in the early 1980s. But this de luxe venture was only a preview of things to come, when an adjoining lot was sold to developers in 2007 for construction of an even more lavish cloud buster—the Tower Verre. 53 W 53, as it is now known, is often claimed as part of Billionaires Row on account of its soaring elevation and unit prices. Unlike Museum Tower, it is a stand-alone real estate play, but it is still an integral part of the MoMa scenscape. Perpetual benefactor membership of the museum is one of the perks of residency, which also include a 65-foot lap pool, golf simulator, squash court, private theater and restaurant. For the occupying class, the museum is just another bundled amenity on its doorstep.

That MoMa plays an adjunct role in Billionaire's Row is no coincidence. The art collectors and donors in MoMa's orbit are the same people who invest in the supertalls, just as the composition of its board overlaps with the board membership of many of the large corporations headquartered in the surrounding blocks. MoMa and its adjoining tower are at one with the predatory system of accumulation that built the supertalls just as the

stately Met is at one with the older money of the Upper East Side. Their contents rotate between the private collections of townhouses and condos and the exhibition galleries, just as their larger spaces serve to host the grander social functions of the art-collecting bourgeoisie. Both museums are open to the public in the same spirit that the British aristocracy open their carefully curated mansions to the public.

If 53 W 53 is a trophy of class war, MoMa is its theater of operations, where the strategies of extraction and speculation are planned and staged through the medium of art. Appreciation is demanded, whether from the architectural critics who fawn over Jean Nouvel's tower, the art critics who are groomed to separate artworks from the sordid economy through which they circulate, and the mass tourist, checking off their list of must-see destinations. Considered as a single complex, the combo of MoMa, the Museum Tower and 53 E 53 is the concrete expression of the interlocking interests of the ultra-luxury capitalist class and the artworld's professional-managerial class, each serving the other in close proximity to their high-security precincts. Nowhere else is the architecture of power and greed so clearly and shamelessly displayed as on this midtown block.

# THE CASE AGAINST PHILIP JOHNSON

Reinhold Martin  
Strike MoMA: 24 May 2021

"Reconstructions: Architecture and Blackness in America," the landmark exhibition currently on view at MoMA, opens with a manifesto printed on denim and hung to obscure the name of Philip Johnson, the architect and founding MoMA architecture curator to whose memory the museum's architecture and design galleries are dedicated. For museums that rely on private donations to build their collections, a gallery is what fundraisers call a naming opportunity. In Johnson's case, it seems his name was attached to the Museum's architecture and design galleries less in hopes of raising significant funds, than in recognition of Johnson's contributions to the institution, which included a large number of valuable artworks. Though the terms of these bequests are not public, it is reasonable to assume that the Museum's resistance to calls to remove Johnson's name from its galleries, and from one of its curatorial titles, has something to do with Johnson's material as well as symbolic legacy.

The most recent of those calls was made in November 2020 in a widely circulated [letter](#) from The Johnson Study Group, which highlights Johnson's fascist and proto-fascist political affiliations and activities during the 1930s as cause for removal. Within MoMA, concern goes at least as far back as the 1940s, when Johnson's rival, then-architecture curator Edgar Kaufmann Jr., commissioned a private investigation into Johnson's public anti-Semitism. Although Kaufmann's investigation did not prevent Johnson from consolidating his influence at the Museum half a century ago, the Study Group has now succeeded in convincing the Harvard University School of Design to remove Johnson's name from the house he designed and built in Cambridge as his thesis project. One reason for their success at Harvard is almost certainly that, after years of biographers and historians combing through the details of Johnson's life, the facts of the matter are hardly in dispute, only their interpretation. Here is a brief summary.

Philip Johnson was no political dilettante. In the 1930s, he actively pursued a fascist, racist, and anti-Semitic political

project, using his inherited wealth to support, gain access to, learn from, or attempt to influence sympathetic political figures and their movements. Franz Schulze, Kazys Varnelis, Joan Ockman, and Mark Lamster have extensively documented and commented upon Johnson's political actions and writings during this period; in 2016, the journalist Mark Wortman [summarized](#) the salient facts for Vanity Fair.

In 1934, after several years spent establishing MoMA's architecture department under the tutelage of Alfred Barr, Johnson turned his attention to political organizing, when he and MoMA executive secretary Alan Blackburn attempted to found a nationalist party, the "Gray Shirts" (an allusion to Hitler's "Brownshirts" and Mussolini's "Blackshirts"). Failing that, and in close contact with American fascist ideologue Lawrence Dennis (whom Johnson was also funding), the two quit their MoMA positions and traveled to Louisiana as a self-appointed "brain trust" for the racist-populist "Kingfish" Huey Long. Frustrated by their marginalization as East Coast elites among Long's supporters, and by now also affiliated with the anti-Semitic radio priest Father Charles Coughlin, the two turned their attention to Germany. There Johnson's cultural connections, cultivated during his time at MoMA, afforded access to higher-ups in the National Socialist party. In 1938, following Blackburn's withdrawal to private life and with Dennis as a go-between, Johnson attended a Nazi propaganda camp for foreign sympathizers, and traveled to Nuremberg to hear Hitler speak at the last of the infamous spectacles staged there by the architect Albert Speer. Johnson reported on events in Germany for Social Justice (in which Coughlin famously plagiarized a speech by Joseph Goebbels), and for Today's Challenge, the Nazi-funded propaganda organ for which Dennis regularly wrote. To these and other publications, Johnson also contributed stark political commentary, such as an article first published in The Examiner and reprinted in Today's Challenge, that repeated eugenicist narratives of population replacement by characterizing declining white birth-rates as "race suicide." In 1939, Johnson was invited by the



Nazi Wehrmacht, or armed forces, to witness the invasion of Poland as a war correspondent for Social Justice. Though his fellow journalists suspected him of collaboration, a subsequent FBI investigation did not result in any charges, although it did for a number of others in Coughlin's circle. Back in the United States, however, Johnson continued to speak publicly against what he claimed was, in today's language, "fake news" that exaggerated the Nazi threat.

Had he not worked previously at MoMA, this far-right political organizing and writing would have been Johnson's principal claim to fame when he applied to study architecture at Harvard in 1940, the same year that Harper's included him in a feature on prominent "American fascists." Instead, by Johnson's own admission, the International Style modern architecture catalogue was his calling card. Absent MoMA, then, would Johnson's money have been enough to erase the stain of his prewar political activities? This kind of counterfactual cannot be answered. But it does remind us that Johnson's activity at MoMA, both before and after his political work, frames that work in a manner that has yet to be fully scrutinized.

Following a period of military service, Johnson turned to architectural practice and, financed by a personal fortune that began with the unexpectedly rapid appreciation of Alcoa stock inherited from his father, extended his activities as an art collector. In 1945, Johnson also returned to MoMA. He was reinstated as director of

the department of architecture and design in 1949, and joined the Museum's board of trustees in 1957. Called upon on various occasions to account for his fascist affiliations, which he never publicly repudiated with anything close to the directness and force of his early political writings, Johnson downplayed these as an unfortunate "mistake" brought on by the misguided enthusiasms of youth. This equivocal narrative was aided and abetted by architecture critics like

Paul Goldberger and Brendan Gill, as well as by the PBS talk-show host Charlie Rose, whose fawning interviews with Johnson are an embarrassment to public discourse on the arts even in its most debased forms.

More than as a mediocre architect or as a power broker, Philip Johnson has been routinely celebrated at MoMA as among the Museum's most magnanimous donors. In 1984, MoMA placed Johnson's name on its new architecture gallery space. The following year, the Museum [opened](#) "Philip Johnson: Selected Gifts," featuring forty paintings and sculptures donated by Johnson, the first of two exhibitions dedicated to Johnson's patronage during his decades-long involvement with the institution. The second, "From Bauhaus to Pop: Masterworks Given by Philip Johnson," honored Johnson's ninetieth birthday in 1996 with an [exhibition](#) of twice the number of artworks in the previous show. Two years later, the Museum published Philip Johnson and the Museum of Modern Art, an edited volume celebrating Johnson's patronage, in which painting and sculpture curator Kirk Varnedoe [praised](#) Johnson's transparently affected modesty despite his status as "among the most generous donors in the history of the Museum," whose gifts included "several of the most prized treasures in the Museum collection." Speaking to his first biographer Franz Schulze, Johnson had described the experience of attending his first Nazi rally in Nuremberg in 1932 as an overwhelming aesthetic experience. Cultivating his profile as a patron at MoMA with the Museum's enthusiastic participation simply continued this aestheticization of politics by other, more genteel means that actively allowed Johnson to avoid taking full public responsibility for his previous actions. This was not a matter of merely swapping politics for art, but of summoning art to stage the ongoing political act of denial. Johnson's material and symbolic legacy at MoMA therefore runs deepest not in a name on a gallery but in the provenance of paintings in the vaults. In truly reckoning with that legacy, MoMA might finally prove itself worthy of the name "modern" in the most reconstructive sense.

# Abolish MoMA: The Case of Palestine<sup>1</sup>

Ariella Aïsha Azoulay

As we watch the violence organized and backed by the Zionist state against Palestinians all over occupied Palestine, reminders are not unnecessary.

'We are not seeing a "civil war" inside Israel,' writes Lana Tatour (Tatour, 2021), 'but rather, the Israeli settler state declaring war on its colonized "citizens" and Palestinians fighting for their liberation.'

Settler-colonial geography is intentionally confusing. Let's set the record straight once again. Palestine is there, where it always has been. (Figure 1) It seems obvious, but imperial geography is deliberately confusing. Much violence is used to bend geography and also people's perception of it.



Figure 1

First, a demographic war was waged, aiming to manufacture a new body politic. Palestinians were expelled and denied return, and millions of Jewish babies born in Palestine-turned-Israel were assigned an imperial identity that proclaimed that Palestine does not exist. Identity operates as a light weapon as it reflects the new colonial geography. These babies grew up to believe that they were 'Israelis'. This identity was assigned to them as part of a broader transformation of 'Israel' from a contested fact into a fait accompli.

Art cleansing facilitated this imperial transition from Palestine to Israel. Once again, MoMA's self-documentation of its crimes are our receipt: Strike MoMA. (Figure 2)



Figure 2

In 1964, MoMA, together with its International Council and the American-Israel Foundation, whose aim is to 'impact the way the world embraces Israel by creating the next generation of ambassadors for Israeli culture', were determined to assist in this mission. MoMA organized an exhibition of Israeli Art that toured the US, 'Art Israel', reaffirming what the state of Israel sought to proclaim: that Palestine does not exist. A MoMA senior curator determined (Seitz, 1964), and I'm quoting: 'The intensity of human compassion, pride, intellect, and creativity that gave form to the State of Israel itself is still the prime source of energy that activates Israeli art and gives it a distinctive aura, whatever the style.'

The partition of Palestine, the erasure of Palestine, was a Euro-Zionist plot. In opposition to the partition plan resolution, Palestinians took to the streets. Here, they are in a precious moment of potential reversibility. (Figure3) This is not the beginning of the so-called 'Israeli War of Independence', as the official caption indicates. This is a mass protest against the Euro-Zionist plot. We are attending a moment before the fabrication of the 'two sides'. Palestinians are not protesting against Israel. They are rather opposing its creation against them.



Figure 3

Violence, borders, carceral spaces, babies branded with settlers' identity, and a binding document were mobilized to expel Palestinians and force them to inhabit a position of externality toward their own homeland that was made into a settlers' state.

Look at the document at the center of this frame, the 'decisive moment' of the Declaration of Independence, May 15th, 1948. (Figure 4)



Figure 4

This kind of document was recognized by international law (and other imperial organizations created over centuries by imperial actors) and privileged over the pleas of indigenous peoples who were targeted by it. By declaring the establishment of the state of Israel, this document actually proclaimed that: Palestine no longer exists. Palestine never existed.

This was in 1948.

The Nakba.

But... none of it is history. This is the ongoing Nakba. This is a political regime led first by Zionists and European powers interested in finding solution for the undesired 'Jewish people' Europe. and later backed by the U.S. and the international community. However, robbery of lands, expulsions of the land claimants, system of borders, and a declaration of sovereignty were not enough for this organized crime to perpetuate itself.

Carceral technologies known as cultural institutions were created, taking part in the normalization of this large-scale organized crime.

How do these institutions operate? These institutions are technologies. They turn imperial violence into discrete objects, photographs and documents included, and endow them with precious value and designate them for study, enjoyment, and display.

These are the major faculties of these 'institutions':

- Archives: producing, destroying, and preserving documents in service of legitimizing the robbery.
- Museums: handling discrete objects through which imperial temporality and spatiality are reaffirmed.
- Academic disciplines: maintaining a mandatory distance between scholars and 'their' objects of research in a way that relegates these objects to the 'past'.

Imperialism operates through A Regime of Objects. Objects kept apart from people and handled by different experts. Objects used in and mobilized for the dispossession and weakening of the resistance of people who are directly or indirectly targeted by them.

This imperial regime of objects may not seem to enact violence. However, recall... without it, colonized people could have succeeded in preventing imperial regimes from materializing and reproducing themselves.

After 500 years of imperialism, after 73 years of colonization in Palestine, no one can continue to underestimate the role of the regime of objects (objects defined as private property for the benefit of the 'public') in imperialism's crime.



We have already mentioned documents and archives. Let's continue to photography and photographic archives. (Figure 5) These Palestinians are not refugees. They are being expelled from their homes. The photographer is trained to capture history. Hence, for him, these Palestinians are already refugees. The archive, too, records them as refugees. The museum, too, shows them as refugees.



Figure 5

They are not refugees, but rather, peoples being expelled. They can still succeed in their refusal to be expelled. Those who expel them could still be incriminated and held accountable for their crimes. Under the regime of objects, the photographer is instructed to anticipate 'history' and capture them as already refugees.

The imperial origins of photography lure photographers to capture 'what is' in its historical grandeur. Photographers are guided by the assumption that nothing can stop history, including the opposition of those targeted by it.

The violence required to turn plunder and appropriation into 'history' was taken out of the photographers' realm of expertise. If not, why already in 1948 would photographers have 'documented' Palestine and captioned it 'Israel'?

History as an ideology, practice, and discipline played a major role in this organized international crime of destroying a place and substituting it with a manufactured colony.

Under the imperial regime of objects, every object in the settlers' colony has its own history, a history that is coeval with the history of the colony. Histories that confirm that there is, for example, such a thing as 'Israeli art', an object that exists independently from its role in the plunder of Palestine.

In 1964, 16 years after the Nakba, during which Palestinian expellees were in refugee camps and denied return, MoMA organized 'the first major exhibition of contemporary Israeli art' in the U.S. Here is the press release for the book that was published by MoMA. (Figure 6)

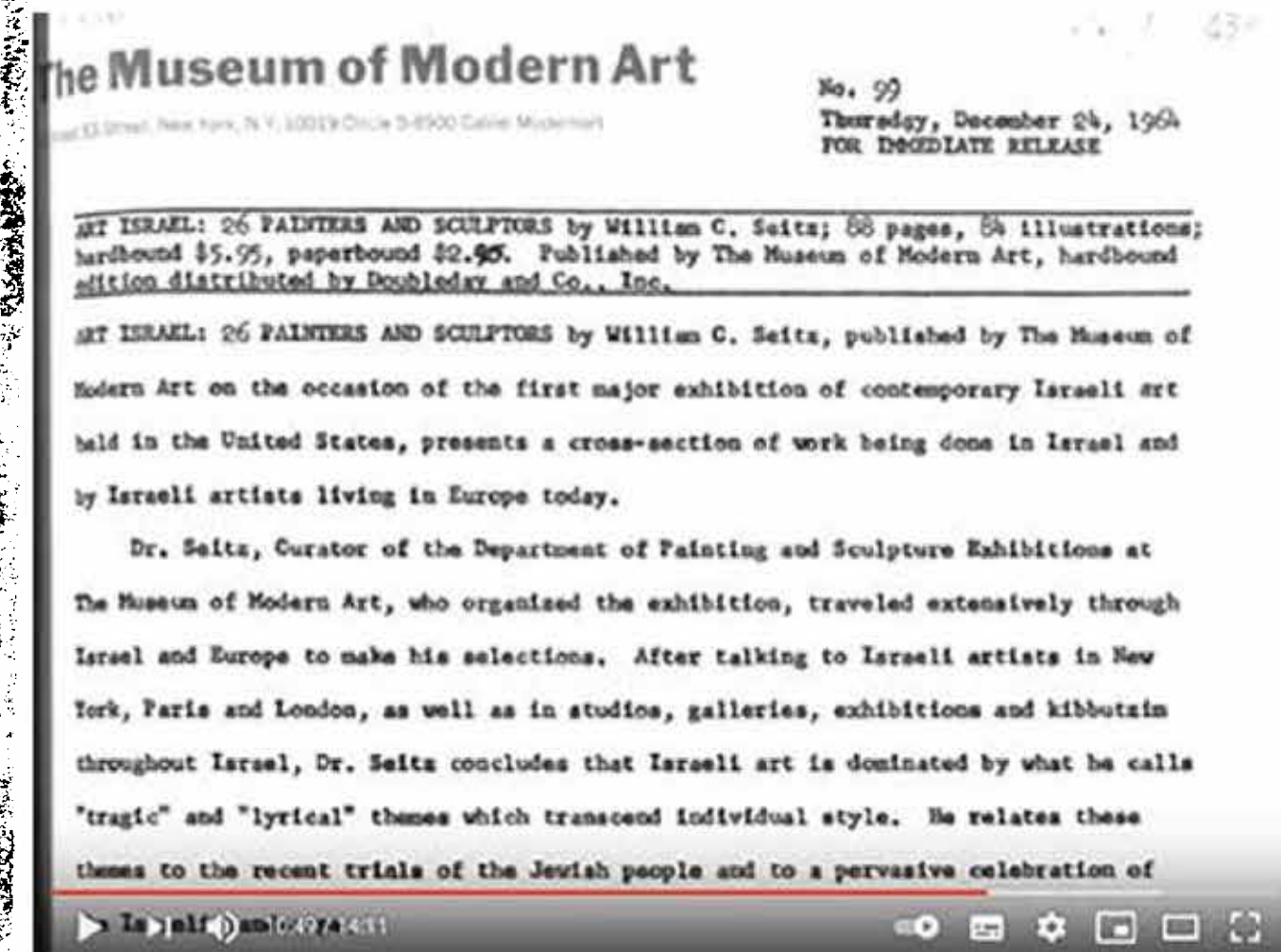


Figure 6

With the help of discrete art objects, this 'major exhibition' normalized the crime and provided the public a palpable narrative of the history of 'Israeli art' as a matter of fact. Alongside the reification of an 'Israeli' unique style, MoMA also approved the appropriation of the Palestinian landscape. As you can read here, the curator, relates these themes to the recent trials of the Jewish people and to a pervasive celebration of the Israeli landscape. (Figure 7)



Figure 7

At the same time, MoMA also reified a construction of the 'Jewish people' at the expenses of a Jewish diversity that reflected its diverse histories and experiences, eclipsing those crimes that Zionists perpetuated against Jews in the Arab and Muslim world. But this will have to wait for another day...

Let's conclude today with Salman Abu-Sitta (Abu-Sitta, 2021) on the lasting consequences of partaking in the erasure of Palestine and agreeing to its robbery by Israel, and I'm quoting from Salman Abu-Sitta:

To bombard two million people in 360 square kilometer by air, land, and sea is genocide. It will not, should not be forgotten. It must be accounted for.

As experts, you may know why to million people are packed in a huge concentration camp in Gaza Strip. But you may not if it has been hidden from you.

Those two million people are the victims of the original ethnic cleansing of 247 villages who lived in the southern half [50%] of Palestine in 1948. They were attacked and depopulated and pushed into Gaza Strip, a name that was coined for the remaining 1.3% of Palestine. That could not have happened without dozens of massacres, of civilians, after occupation of the villages, in Bureir, Beit Daras, Simsim to mention a few. The massacres did not stop since.

For 70 years, those Palestinians were attacked in refugee camps. Many were killed on numerous occasions in 1953, 1956, 1967, 1971, not to mention constantly since 2006 till today.

Why?

Because their genocide in 1948 was not complete. The old did die but the young did not forget that they have a home and they demanded the right to return to it. Their mere survival is anathema to Israel. So, their genocide must be complete. That is what Israel was and is doing.

This is, however, also a moment of potential reversibility. Palestine is there, where it always has been.

Free Palestine.

Notes:

1. This is a transcript of a spoken presentation by Ariella Aisha Azoulay, presentation design by Jina Alhenawi.

References:

Abu-Sitta Salman (2021) A Message to so-called Middle East Experts. Pittsburgh Palestine Solidarity Committee. 17 May.

Seitz, William C (1964) Art Israel: 26 Painters and Sculptors. New York. MoMA.

Tatour, Lana (2021) This isn't a civil war, it is settler-colonial brutality. Mondoweiss. May 13.

# Mikinaak Migwans, “Thoughts on the Indigenous Struggle in the Art Museum, As Seen From the Struggle in the Ethnographic Museum”

1. **What is it to be freed from objecthood in the ethnographic museum?** Indigenous people know what the struggle is about in the ethnographic museum. By now—one hundred years after William Halliday [arrested forty potlachers in their regalia](#) for the crime of dancing and sent them to the prison and the museum respectively, seventy years after the law used to do it was removed from the books, and a quarter of a century after repatriation became policy in both Canada and the United States—we know what this kind of colonial theft is about, and we know how to arm ourselves. Elders in this fight like [G. Peter Jemison](#) and Gloria Cranmer Webster have given us the tools of repatriation, revitalization, and re-creation in order to reforge severed ties, and I find it no coincidence that so many of these Indigenous cultural leaders are also artists. For them, this [ongoing struggle](#) has been about bringing back into the realm of presence, life, and futurity the Indigenous peoples that empire had rendered dead, past, over, and ownable. In other words, to get us OUT of the natural history museum and into the world.

2. **What is it to be admitted into subjecthood in the art museum?** The struggle in the art museum (we thought) was different. Here, we demanded admittance. Inclusion in the art museum was about overcoming a strategic colonial exclusion that neutralized our political power by confining us to objecthood. Artist and cultural theorist [Jolene Rickard](#) asserts that “the global visible presence of Indigenous art and makers is critical for the resurgence of Indigenous knowledge, asserting our sovereignty as discrete political and cultural communities and nations.” To reclaim the possibility of speaking (let alone being heard) as sovereign subjects, we demand that the colonizer cede the vaunted plinth. Our advances into this area, however, seem to meet familiar barriers. Commenting on the increasingly global circulation of Indigenous art in international exhibitions, Rickard notes that even on this lofty world stage, inclusion has been compromised by selecting the individual out from the collective, and the artwork from its larger frame of ideas. This “reveals the suppression of the recognition of Indigenous nationhood within settler states, while simultaneously acknowledging the resurgence of hundreds of Indigenous worldviews as ‘art.’” It may be that the art object presents the same structural challenge as the ethnographic object, and that the lessons learned in the ethnographic museum are needed here too.

3. **What is the difference between the art museum and the ethnographic museum?** The art museum elevates and isolates its object and calls it a “masterpiece,” while the ethnographic museum crowds it with context and calls it a “specimen.” Both pieces were looted from the same grave. The art museum deems itself the modern opposite of the ethnographic and natural history museums and tells us that progress is about racialized humans journeying from one to the other, as though they weren’t two poles of the same imperial project, and as though we’d ever forget who we were leaving behind. If the move from one model (or market) to another looks to us like liberation, it’s only because we’ve bought into modernity’s myth of

progress as a straight line forward. We’ve never made it out of the ethnographic museum, just as we’ve never fully set foot in the art museum. The extended moment of both these struggles reflects the ongoing temporality of settler colonialism—always advancing but never complete. The art museum takes up the accumulative, extractive work that the ethnographic museum began, just as it takes up its ideological role in the articulation of statehood. So where does our struggle take us, if not forward into a “modernity” that we were told was synonymous with liberation?

4. **The struggle is still about resisting the colonial claim of property relations.** The ways that the ethnographic museum creates its object are not fundamentally different to the ways of the art museum. We can read the evidence of that ongoing claim in the museum exhibition or display (as many have fruitfully done), but the key mechanism of extraction is in its acquisition of objects, and in the wider kinds of acquisition that it makes possible in the world. When the state came for the Kwakwaka’wakw potlachers’ masks, it wasn’t because they needed something to fill out their dioramas; it was because Kwakwaka’wakw were dancing instead of working, and dancing to pass on land rights within Indigenous law rather than ceding it for development. When the state [refused to return to the Haudenosaunee wampum belts](#) and other tools of governance that should not have been sold, they weren’t interested in rescuing “relics” from obscurity; they were trying to make sure that Indigenous governance became a relic itself. Both of these object types have appeared as specimens or as art in this or that museum, and in neither style of display has the violence of their acquisition been transcended. They remain objects, trimmed to fit the glass vitrine, docile, trackable, and (ultimately) insurable.

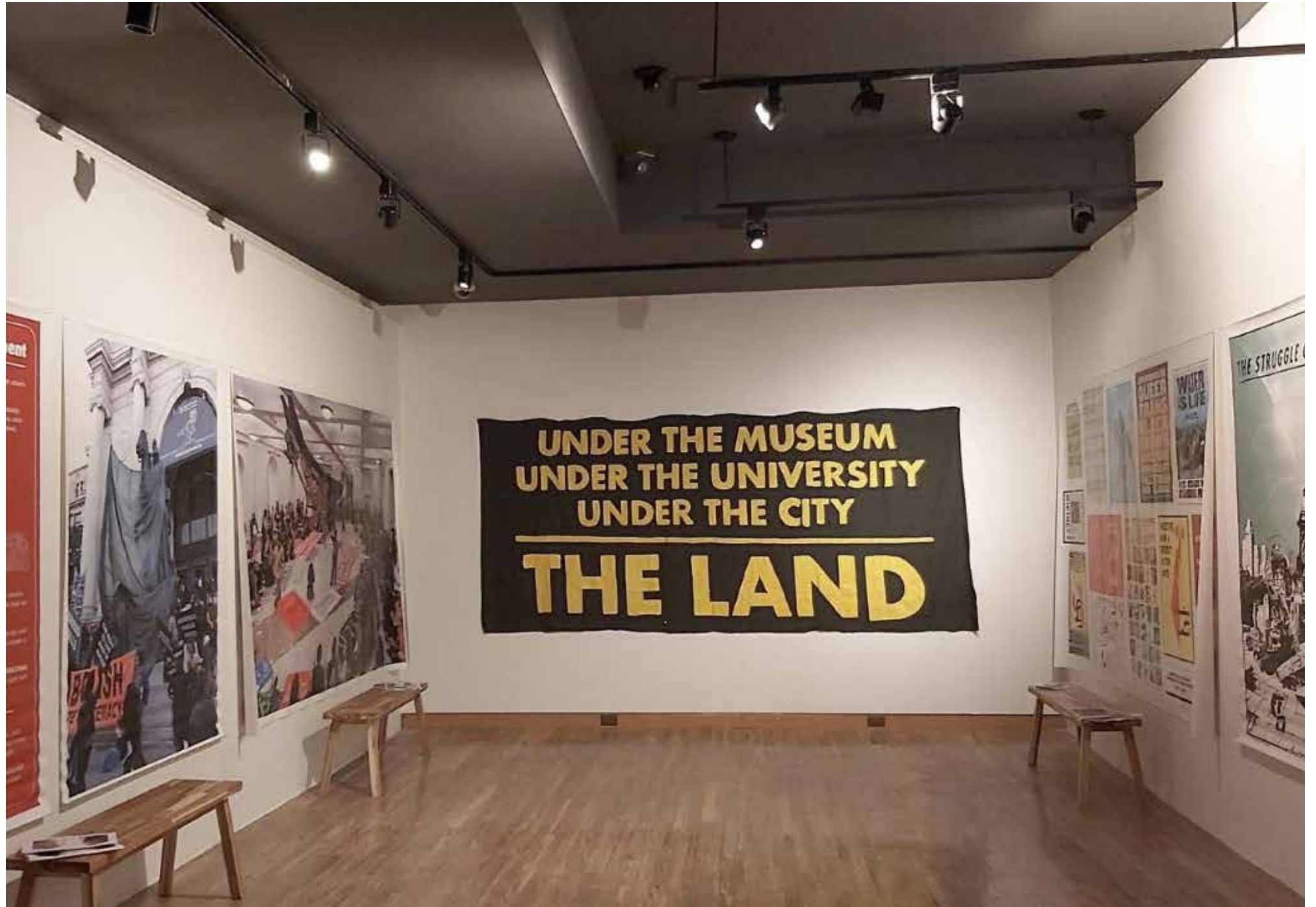
5. **Indigenous artists as leaders in the struggle.** When our artists and knowledge holders encounter these same institutions now, are they to believe that this time, it will be different? It might be different, but not because the

institutions have changed—it will be because we are prepared. We know that the state continually extracts from us, in the realm of culture as in land and labor. When it comes for pieces of us, calling it inclusion, how do we resist the finality of its claim? How do we keep them from making trophies of our relations all over again, and using them to puppet our complicity in more sinister claims? I don’t have answers yet. But I look to the yields of our struggles in the ethnographic museum, and their successes in reasserting relations within sites of violence. Repatriation gave us the language of cultural property and collective ownership, which we will need in order to resist the state’s hold on the individual. It also gave us the power to reclaim objects and bring them back as relations. Revitalization showed us the value of our Elders’ knowledge, and the will to hold onto it. These practices complement those being used in the art world. Here, our leaders in the struggle for Indigenous presence in the art museum (Jemison and Rickard among them) gave us the tools of [organization](#) and [advocacy](#), and showed us how to lift each other up despite the [isolation and alienation of the institution](#). To this day, the work of decolonization in art spaces is done primarily by Indigenous people for Indigenous people (often on part-time, contractual, or some other precarious basis). It is this site of ongoing collective labour, in the gap of a constantly deferred state of “inclusion,” where the real project is being carried out.

6. **What is the struggle?** We as cultural workers labour to reclaim objects as kin, and to resist ongoing processes of colonial accumulation in the art museum, as in the ethnographic museum, as on the land and within the settler state.

Miigwech. That’s all for now.

Mikinaak Migwans, member of Wiikwemikoong Unceded Territory, Assistant Professor in Indigenous Art at the University of Toronto



# MOMA, CISNEROS, AND BEYOND: Artwashing and Extractivism in the Américas

Macarena Gómez-Barris, *Global South Center* (June 2, 2021)

Museums are colonial projects as much as nation-building ones. They are also the result of monocultural schemes of urban planning and gentrification. If the colonial art museum is filled with desacralized stolen objects as a measure of territorial and cultural conquest, then the modern art museum collects the contemporary arts as an accumulative measure of capitalist market value. In these ways and many more, museums reflect dominant political economies and their social relations, which makes them powerful sites for decolonial political contestation as well as emergent protest cultures that work to build counter-institutions. The ten weeks of art, action and conversation "Post-MoMa Futures" disentangle what we might call the museum industrial complex that embeds and expresses dominant market forces. The recent struggle over Barrick Gold, and the fact of Gustavo Cisneros's ties to the gold mining company as a board of trustee member, brings forward how deep connections between art and extractivism in the Américas go. [1]

Within the global ecology that is New York City, and specifically within the colonized Lenapehoking Indigenous territories known as Manahatta, museums have been meaningful architectural sites of modern imperial world-making. For instance, MoMA's self-narrated history does not exaggerate when it declares itself "the greatest museum of modern art in the world." With more than 200,000 works of art and extensive film and photographic archives, some of which I've conducted research within, MoMA has one of the most significant global collections of modern art anywhere, both collecting and occluding other traditions of art making. Its location at the intersection of 53<sup>rd</sup> Street and 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue represents a power center within Midtown Manhattan, surrounded by the Rockefeller Center, BlackRock, the New York City Police Foundation, and the Golden Tree Assets management.[2] The Museum of Modern Art is therefore both a symbol of an urban and historical architectural power grid, and a nexus of hierarchical and accumulative relations of conquest.

Extractive art washing, as I define it here, is the recurrent capitalist practice that invests in art and art collections as

a fungible commodity, normalizing colonial and modern relations of biodiverse resource theft.

This was true during the European Arts Renaissance funded by oversea war and colonial ventures as much as it has been during the rise of US imperialism and the building of major art and cultural institutions across the United States. The US is not exceptional, as Canada, Norway, and many other countries in the world depend upon the entangled web of oil and art.[3]

Given that they accrue, exhibit, and program in the long shadow of petroleum empires and their new frontiers: What are the submerged relations of colonial and modern extractivism in the museum collection? What below-the-surface carbon entanglements and other sources of primitive accumulation make the museum even possible? And, more generally, how does the museum strike offer a way to imagine a post-extractive future and a decolonized world otherwise?

## Black Gold and Art's Fungibility

The original US robber barons of the nineteenth century were oil men, some of whom later switched their investments into gold and minerals. These barons became known for their ruthless practices that gave rise to American industry based on extraction. Even as movements for divestment from petroleum are currently gaining momentum, the very foundation of Standard Oil, Chevron, and Exxon is built upon black gold that continues to undergird the carbon dependent global capitalist economy.[4] In this key way, petroleum monopolies and their wealth transfers have not been a sideline to the story of modernity, but its extractive protagonist.

In an oil dependent capitalist world, art and art collections are the extractive profits from fungible commodities; Powerful agents then grant authority over what Jaques Ranciere calls "the distribution of the sensible," where aesthetic value is organized to elevate particular art work of critical acclaim.[5] In this distribution, non-fungible tokens are the latest abstract use of art as fodder for the vertical capitalist machine.[6]

The great Uruguayan writer Eduardo Galeano rendered these capitalist relations visible in his discussion of the "resource burden" of Latin America and the Global South:

No other magnet attracts foreign capital as much as 'black gold' ... Petroleum is the wealth most monopolized in the entire capitalist system. There are no companies that enjoy the political power that the great petroleum corporations exercise on a universal scale.

Standard Oil and Shell lift up and dethrone kings and presidents; they finance palace conspiracies and coups d'état; and they dispose of innumerable generals and ministers; and in all regions and languages, they decide the course of war and peace... The natural wealth of Venezuela and other Latin American countries with petroleum in the subsoil, objects of assaults and organized plundering, has been converted into the principal instrument of their political servitude and social degradation. This is a long history of exploits and of curses, infamies, and defiance (Galeano, 2004:203-6; 1997:156-59).[7]

In the subsoil of museum possessions is a long history of exploits and plundering, where oil, hydroelectric damming, investments in the punishment industry, and militarization link the billionaire class to condemning resource rich regions of the world to what Galeano terms "their political servitude and social degradation."

Within the underlands of world-class museums is also the curse of resource wars, the below the surface deposits that have historically given rise to militarism and control over natural commodities such that the dynamics of resource scarcity and its hoarding also organize global currents of peace and war.[8]

Indeed, Guggenheim made most of his profits from silver mining and smelting in Colorado, and one of MoMA's original art patrons, John D. Rockefeller, made his fortune from investments from oil wells in Pennsylvania and Ohio in the latter half of the 1800s. Forays into Latin America by modern carbon barons became commonplace to a petrol imperial expansionist imaginary. As Greg Grandin's book on Henry's Ford's excursions into the Amazon Basin shows, rubber dreams were pervasive to the extractive view that extended across the hemisphere, interconnecting the oil economy to the rubber boom, to Americanization of the world's largest biodiverse region.[9] Further, the expansion of the prison industrial complex in the Américas has deep connections to Rockefeller's direct political influence and the Cold War riptides that criminalized the Latin American political left, its intellectuals, and activists as subversives and terrorists.[10] There is no innocence in these cultural substrates, just fosas comunas.

By the 1930s, both John D. Rockefeller and Paul Getty funneled their oil profiteering into art collections, creating the foundation of major US cultural institutions, and the creation of a particular form of modern art to serve US imperial interests. During the Cold War, MoMA inaugurated a new program of hemispheric art and culture among twenty-one republics, sourcing art to build out Pan-Americanism in an effort to sway Latin American and Caribbean hearts and minds.[11]

At the end of his life, John D. Rockefeller had become not only the world's richest man, but also its greatest philanthropist. Yet, in Latin America the Rockefeller family name continues to be not a benevolent symbol, but responsible for the wreckages of American empire and its political interventionism through its acquisition of black liquid gold. After discovery of deep petrol reserves in the Andean Foothills, Standard Oil's competition with Shell Oil in South America led to the Chaco War (1932-1935), a militarized conflict between Bolivia and Paraguay with lasting and profound consequences. Though competing accounts exist about the degree of interventionist corporatism, this unnecessary war between the two nations was at least in part fueled by Rockefeller's greed.[12]

The enduring connections between American empire, extractivism, and art are not always visible. Recently, the Whitney Museum's show *Vida Americana* exhibited a mural replica of "Man at the Crossroads," the 1934 fresco Diego Rivera commissioned for the Rockefeller Center. This powerful work was chiseled off the wall because Rivera painted Lenin's figure in direct opposition to Rockefeller's demand. Influenced by New York Leftist groups to make stronger visual connections to power hierarchies in his work, Rivera also painted in the figures of the peasant and the worker to envision directions for a communist future. This rare overt inscription to Cold War relations, and the role of Rockefeller as a kind of heteropatriarchal figure of hemispheric capitalism, is an important art archival trace of US economic and military domination.

There are also gendered implications throughout these imperial histories of extractivism, war, and architecture that are then returned as liberal philanthropic motives to establish uniquely American cultural institutions. Empires are forcefully taken and built and then given away through kinder gestures as the museum collection. When Mrs. Rockefeller founded MoMA with other millionaire wives, it was not merely a place to record, collect, and display art, but as the design for an institution of hegemonic cultural influence. And, John D. Rockefeller who initially opposed experimental modern art came to see that abstraction could be championed as free expression, which was pitted against

the social realist art coming from material realities in the Américas. The history of museum collecting, then, must also be told through the wives of powerful barons as institution-builders of US white art hegemonies, as well as through modern/colonial distributions of cultural distinction.

## Extractivism and Art Washing

New York art galleries and their collections have historically operated as repositories for investment bankers and multibillionaire international conglomerates. And, as I have discussed, art ownership is a form of control over political and social value through the fungibility of art as a commodity. This is not to take away the significance of particular exhibitions such as *Reconstructions: Architecture and Blackness in America*, which makes explicit oil economy connections to anti-Black gentrification, or the countercurrent work of specific curators and curators of color, or even the diverse value and patrimony of collections themselves. My point is instead to ask: How does collected art embed, express, and erase the violence of the accumulative practices of global racial capitalism?

The Colección Patricia Phelps de Cisneros is a privately held collection based in both New York and Venezuela and it archives Latin American contemporary art. And, the Patricia Phelps de Cisneros Research Institute for the Study of Art from Latin America, established by MoMA in 2016, is yet another influential site of philanthropy, empire, and even the practice of influence that is art washing. Mr. Gustavo A. Cisneros, Cisneros' husband, as the *New York Times* reported in 2002, is "a multibillionaire whose international conglomerate of 70 companies relies on unfettered access to high-ranking political and economic officials in nearly 40 countries." [13] Such unfettered political access, as Galeano noted, is never innocent in producing myriad forms of inequality.

Cisneros made his fortune through diverse assets, with Venezuelan oil in the pre-Chavez period serving as the stronghold of his first earnings. When easy access to underground petroleum reserves proved to be difficult, Cisneros diversified his portfolio, becoming one of the richest men in South America. In the post-Pinochet landscape of expanded neoliberalism in the region, this meant that state policies aimed at privatization and deregulation helped grow Cisneros's multinational economic and political authority.

Currently, Grupo Cisneros is a vast media empire based in Coral Gables, Florida, and it is a conglomerate of digital media, entertainment, tourist, and real estate investments,

with an astounding consumer audience that reaches more than 600 million Spanish and Portuguese-speaking peoples throughout the hemisphere as well as in Europe. The Cisneros group is also one of the largest investors in Univision, which is broadly known as a conservative media organization with massive global cultural and political influence upon Latinx America and European markets.

The Cisneros MoMA collection was founded by Mrs. Cisneros, a powerful patron and nexus figure of art patronage in her own right, who by all accounts has an impeccable reputation. Yet, along the surface of this liberal philanthropy, and within the production of beautiful art texts and meaningful curatorial projects, even the most contemporary waves of art from the Américas cannot fully hide the structural conditions that produce a billionaire class, its outsized privileges, and its new destinations of imperial control.

Plundering petroleum-rich biodiverse Indigenous and Afro-Indigenous territories, as I've discussed in my book *The Extractive Zone*, is at the core of colonial modernity. Perhaps, then, communications and digital media empires, as well as real estate, have become the future of extractive capitalism? Media and communications, like oil wells and gold mines, make for powerful accumulative source materials that can be abstracted in ways that racialized capital thrives upon. [14] And, new technologies depend upon the same language as resource extraction, such as mining big data, prospecting and collecting biomatter, tracking users through surveillance, and normalizing dispossession through right wing agendas. Further, the military state is both the originator of, and thoroughly ingrained within, this new media matrix.

The ability of the Cisneros Group to accumulate billions of dollars of net worth through media conglomerates at a time of widening immiseration around the world is evidence of this new boundary line. Such investments into art and culture, particularly in New York, are part of the return upon extracted value, as appreciation, rent, and a rise in capital gains. And, cultural expansionism exacerbates and further solidifies the inequalities of the race/class/gender and sex order in the Américas, an order that has had permanence since the sixteenth century.

## Decolonial Futures

Important struggles in East Los Angeles and in Boyle Heights upon Gabrielino and Tongva Indigenous occupied lands over the past few years against art washing have shown the intimate connections between real estate

capitalist investment and an extractive art industry that displaces to take over. In the case of MoMA, as in the case of other museums like the Whitney, the target is often the board of trustees where the entanglements of the matrix of coloniality remind us to follow the money.

Over the past several decades and with particular intensity since *Strike MoMA*, I have thought a lot about the complexity of what it means to confront liberal institutions for their historic power grabs, their complicity and involvement in petroleum and carbon induced climate change, their explicit connections to the machine of war, empire, and Indigenous, including Palestinian dispossession. Even as it is always difficult to speak truth to powerful actors and institutions, the *MoMA Strike* crystallizes for me the importance of our transversal and coalitional work in creating new spaces for solidarity in an increasingly authoritarian, skewed, and unjust world.

In Verónica Gago's book *The Feminist International* (2020), the author points to the state as the target of new formations of political power as potencia. Gago builds upon the work of Marxist Anarchist Rosa Luxemburg to consider how feminist, precarious labor, those in the informal economy, Afro-descendant communities, Indigenous peoples, transnational feminists, queer and trans-alliances generate methods to confront the patriarchal and violent conditions of the modern and colonial state. Hers is a theoretically rich and elegant argument, so it is not my objective to reduce the work of Gago's embodied activism and theory-action to a few lines here. Instead, I want us to consider how the racial and heteropatriarchal state, especially in what is constituted as the Global North, and in particularly in the United States, is one, but certainly not our only target. In epicenters like New York City, the art museum represents an extractive core of the problem, and may be a similar, and dare I say a better target for the multiple demands and dispossessions across geographies of extraction. At the same time, striking is a way to work together to continue to imagine and build a post-extractive future.

So far, a genocide of the Palestinian people; It connects to study of tri-continental alliances and decolonization movements, it organizes working groups that learn from and struggle on behalf of Black freedom, against the carceral state, for Immigrant rights and Internationalism, as well as several other current threads. This transversal and revolutionary activity has made me reflect further on how the museum and art collection are sites of extractive modernity and art washing, as well as how the capitalist power complex fully coheres in the museum.

Maybe targeting carbon centers and media empires

is precisely what Stuart Hall referred to as the project of articulation in particular historical junctures. Maybe striking in every way possible is exactly what we have to do to unbuild the colonial planetary and think towards the wider pronoun, the We of our non-extractive future.

[1] See Sandy Placido's blog post on Verso, xxxx.

[2] For details, see "The Ruins of Modernity Tour" map, online at *Strike MoMa* website, <https://www.strikemoma.org/>.

[3] See "The Bond Between Art and the Oil Industry," <https://www.contemporaryartstavanger.no/the-bond-between-art-and-the-oil-industry/> viewed May 27, 2021.

[4] For an excellent analysis of the rise of petro cultures in the US and its imbrication with our current global petrol-based economy see Matt Huber's *Lifeblood: Oil, Freedom, and the Forces of Capital* (2013)

[5] See Jacques Ranciere, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible* (2004).

[6] See Jon Beller's article, "Fascism on the Blockchain? The Work of Art in the age of NFTs," <https://www.coindesk.com/fascism-blockchain-art-nfts> viewed May 30, 2021.

[7] Eduardo Galeano's *The Open Veins of Latin America: Five centuries of the pillage of a continent*, 25th Anniversary Edition. Translated by Cedric Belfrage, New York: Monthly Review Press (1997), and *Las Venas Abiertas de América Latina*, tercera edición, revisada, México: Siglo XXI Editores (2004).

[8] See Vandana Shiva's *Earth Democracy* (2005), Michael T. Klare's *Resource Wars, the New Landscape of Global Conflict* (2001), and my book *The Extractive Zone: Social Ecologies and Decolonial Perspectives* (2017), and *The Red Deal: Indigenous Action to Save our Earth*, by the Red Nation (2021).

[9] See "Dearborn-on-Amazon," by Ben Macintyre, July 16, 2009, <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/19/books/review/Macintyre-t.html>

[10] See Micol Seigel's "Nelson Rockefeller in Latin America: Global Currents of US Prison Growth," *Comparative American Studies, An International Journal*, pp. 161- 175, [https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1179/1477570015Z.00000000106?journalCode=ycas20)

[abs/10.1179/1477570015Z.00000000106?journalCode=ycas20](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1179/1477570015Z.00000000106?journalCode=ycas20) viewed May 29, 2021.

[11] See Lucie Levine's "Was Modern Art Really a CIA Psy-Op? In *Jstor Daily*, April 1, 2020. <https://daily.jstor.org/was-modern-art-really-a-cia-psy-op/> viewed May 30, 2021.

[12] There is a deep historiography in both Spanish and English on this topic and there has been much investigation and counter-refutation.

[13] See Simon Romero's "Coup? Not his Style. But Power? Oh, Yes," April 28, 2002, <https://www.nytimes.com/2002/04/28/business/coup-not-his-style-but-power-oh-yes.html> viewed May 29, 2021.

[14] See Ruha Benjamin, *Race After Technology: Abolitionist Tool for the New Jim Code* (2019).

# BLOOD ON THEIR HANDS: Barrick Gold, Gustavo and Patricia Cisneros, and Imperialist Networks of Extraction in the Dominican Republic

By Sandy Plácido

Barrick Gold Corporation is a mining company headquartered in Toronto, Canada that, in addition to its silver and copper mines, operates 15 gold mines in Argentina, Canada, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Dominican Republic, Ivory Coast, Mali, Papua New Guinea, Tanzania, and the United States. After its mine in Carlin, Nevada, Barrick's second most productive gold mine, which it co-operates with Newmont Goldcorp, is the Pueblo Viejo mine, located on 4,800 hectares of land near Cotuí, Dominican Republic. 542,000 ounces of gold were taken out of the mine in 2020, 590,000 ounces were taken out in 2019, and Barrick notes on its website that another 6.2 million ounces of gold are "proven and probable," 15 million ounces are "measured and indicated," and 2.4 million are "inferred."<sup>[1]</sup> Barrick intends to get as much of those that 23 million ounces of gold out of Pueblo Viejo as possible and has been steadily draining the mine since developing the project under the presidency of Leonel Fernandez and beginning operations in 2012. The Pueblo Viejo mine in the Dominican Republic is the first mine exploited by the Spanish on the island and in the Americas, with evidence that excavations began during Columbus's second voyage in 1493.<sup>[2]</sup> Five hundred years after Spanish colonizers forced Tainos and Africans to dig into sacred mountains to send gold pieces throughout the growing and vicious Spanish empire, the land is still being pillaged for a yellow metal that is a vital component in the global economic system.

Barrick's accelerated exploitation of the Pueblo Viejo mine has devastated the health of the people and environment in the surrounding communities. People can no longer eat or sell the yucca, plantains, and cacao plants that grow abundantly in the region. In many cases, people no longer attempt to grow these foods at all. Groundwater and wells have been contaminated, and one community leader described the constant smell of cyanide and sulphur in the air. One woman I met in Cotuí told me that Barrick's contamination of the air, soil, and water has caused the lead levels in her blood to rise so much that her doctor must use a larger needle to extract the thickened fluid from her veins. I heard similar stories at the encampment near the mine where, three years ago, local residents began publicly denouncing Barrick's contamination, harassment of critics, and bribing of community members. People at the encampment warned us not to dip our feet in the rivers, since many people who did so developed skin rashes and infections., and I was shown photographs of bleeding and peeling shins and ankles. People talked about the increase in cancer and breathing problems. According to an open letter signed by 88 organizations from 21 countries in May 2021, Barrick's operations had already contaminated the Hatillo dam (the country's largest), ruining rice crops; contaminated the Maguaca and Margajita Rivers; led to increased cyanide and other metals in people's urine and blood; and led to at least twenty-seven<sup>27</sup> deaths by 2015.<sup>[3]</sup> For twenty years, 450 families that live near

the Pueblo Viejo mine have been demanding for the last twenty years that they be relocated, since they are forced to rely on just twenty 20 gallons of water per week provided to them by local authorities via Barrick. One woman I met at the encampment sent me dozens of links to recordings and articles about Cotuí's struggles against Barrick, as well as a voice note from her home where I heard unbearably loud clanking in the background, since there's a mining workshop located right behind her yard.

The fight against Barrick has grown to other parts of the country where the mining conglomerate has expanded or is intent on expanding. One of these communities is the municipality of Yamasá, in the province of Monte Plata, about an hour north of, and up the mountains from, Santo Domingo. Since Barrick has mined much more gold than they should have in the last decade, they have run out of space in Cotuí to store the wastewater from mining operations. Thus, Barrick has plans to build a tailings dam in Monte Plata where twelve rivers originate, including the Ozama, the Dominican Republic's fourth largest river which veers east and then south for ninety<sup>90</sup> miles before cutting through Santo Domingo and draining into the Caribbean Sea. The rivers in the region are important resources for a country that is ranked eighth out of 183 countries in terms of vulnerability to natural disasters, has experienced "165 drought events in the last 35 years," and where "two-thirds of the population will face acute water shortages within four years."<sup>[4]</sup> In addition, tailings dams in particular are one hundred<sup>100</sup> times more likely to fail compared to other types of dams, and these failures are exacerbated by heavy rains, of which the Dominican Republic is increasingly subject due to climate change, and which would be particularly disastrous in

the case of a tailings dam in Monte Plata, since water from that community will travel downstream and affect millions.<sup>[5]</sup> The people of Yamasá have been organizing and they often say that they are not afraid to lose their lives if it means protecting one of the most historic and important rivers in the country.

The current struggle of the people of Yamasá is all the more meaningful when we remember that it is the same place where Mamá Tingó, one of the most beloved and revered figures in Dominican militant history, struggled for her land fifty years ago. Mamá Tingó was a farmer and organizer who worked and raised her family in Yamasá, and was killed in 1974 at the order of people who were attempting to take her land as part of a larger process of displacement due to the privatization of the land and the imposition of new legal terms for land ownership during the repressive, U.S.-backed Balaguer regime, known as the Twelve Years, or los Doce Años, of Balaguer.

People are still bravely fighting to defend resources in Yamasá, but the conflict recently reached a fever pitch. On April 29, 2021, the people of Yamasá were attacked by the Dominican police, military, and SWAT teams sent by the Dominican government at the behest of Barrick. Barrick representatives had insisted on driving into the community in order to hold talks and negotiations around the dam they want to build there, but community members have refused to engage. For months, the people of Yamasá have been regulating who comes into and out of their community, and on April 29<sup>th</sup>, they proceeded to block the streets when representatives of Barrick were trying to get through, with some individuals throwing their bodies down in the road in front of

the vehicles. These Barrick and governmental representatives were accompanied by armed forces who began to shoot tear gas and bullets into the crowd.

The video of this confrontation between the ruling elite's militarized enforcers, and the courageous water, air, and land defenders, was recorded and edited by my friend and colleague, [Saudi Garcia](#), an anthropologist who is one of the experts on the history of, and current day struggles against, the Barrick mining crisis in the Dominican Republic.[6] The people who run Barrick and the people allowing Barrick to operate in the Dominican Republic are part of imperialist networks of extraction that perpetuate the human and environmental exploitation that has ravaged the Americas since 1492. These imperialist networks of extraction depend upon the ideological and material support of members of the transnational ruling elite such as Gustavo Cisneros, and his wife, Patricia Phelps de Cisneros.

Gustavo and Patricia Cisneros are prominent players in the imperialist networks of extraction that link institutions such as the MOMA to the genocidal practices of global corporations such as Barrick. As has happened before in Latin America, with companies such as the United Fruit Company, connections between capitalists, politicians, and surveillance and enforcement entities lead to the destruction of lives and countries. Gustavo Cisneros is a billionaire from Venezuela whose money comes from running the Cisneros Group, which has a monopoly over "consumer goods, broadcast, media, technology and telecommunications holdings" in Latin America and Spanish-speaking communities. Cisneros serves on Barrick's Board of Directors, as well as its International Advisory Board.[7] When Cisneros was appointed, Barrick Founder and Chairman

Peter Munk said, "our Board will benefit from Gustavo's extensive business experience and knowledge, particularly involving Latin America where we have significant assets." [8] A wolf in sheep's clothing, Cisneros hides behind a white, elite Latin American identity, and uses his prior experience in capitalist exploitation to advise a global corporation still wreaking havoc on the lives and environments of impoverished communities today, in the midst of a pandemic.

Meanwhile, Cisneros's wife, Patricia Phelps de Cisneros, also born and raised in Venezuela, found a particular place within the dynasty she inherited and married into: the abstract art world. The great-granddaughter of a white man who left Harvard to study birds in Venezuela at the end of the nineteenth century and proceeded to become a businessman there, Phelps de Cisneros was inspired by the modernist architecture of Caracas, and began collecting abstract geometric art from Latin America. A long-time supporter of The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York City, her collection became the basis of the Colección Patricia Phelps de Cisneros, partly housed at the MoMA. Phelps de Cisneros and her husband also founded The Patricia Phelps de Cisneros Research Institute for the Study of Art from Latin America at the MoMA in 2016, and they run various foundations, such as Fundación Cisneros and Fundación Tropicalia, which fund educational programs in the Dominican Republic and Venezuela that will never close the socioeconomic gaps in the region as long as intergenerational capitalist exploitation continues. As Phelps de Cisneros gazes at abstract art from Latin America, and sets the agendas for her foundations with her husband and daughter, she seems unable to see what is right in front of her face: the imperialist networks of extraction that she actively participates in

alongside her husband and the rest of the global ruling oligarchy, who shroud their deadly business practices and political interventions (Gustavo Cisneros pushed for the overthrow of Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez in 2002) behind sinister cultural and social programs that exacerbate inequalities and humiliate our people even further so that the ruling elite can feel less guilty about killing us in the first place.

Gustavo Cisneros and Patricia Phelps de Cisneros, and all imperialist capitalists like them, are engaged in material as well as ideological violence. The Phelps de Cisneros Research Institute at the MOMA, due to its practices as well as its association with Gustavo and Patricia Cisneros, promotes a white supremacist, capitalist, and imperialist perspective that simultaneously determines which artists and art are seen as worthy, while poisoning the people and places where the art comes from. As Phelps de Cisneros upholds a particular cultural and social agenda, her husband advises fellow capitalists on how to deal with pesky activists, perhaps passing along the business card of the people who operated the drones that were flying over us when we visited the brave people of Cotuí at their encampment against Barrick.

The Dominican Republic, and everywhere else where Barrick is mining, needs us to be on the lookout for the imperialist networks of extraction that violently loot minerals and metals, as well as ideas and artistic creations, from our communities. The imperialist capitalists steal and kill to build their worlds and currencies with our gold, in cities where we clean, cook, and take care of them. This cycle will come to an end as more of us wake up to who actually has the power and the resources. May the Cisneros family and all the other imperialists and capitalists sweating due to the waves of world revolution read

this and shake with shame and fear. The exploited ancestors who have fallen over the last 500 years are fueling today's movement, and we will not stop until the mountains, rivers, oceans, lands, plants, people, and animals of the world are restored to their dignity and integrity

- [1] <https://www.barrick.com/English/operations/pueblo-viejo/default.aspx>
- [2] "Mina de Oro de Pueblo Viejo: Primer Campamento Minero de República Dominicana y América. Evidencias de Asentamientos Humanos de Época Colonial Estudiados por el Museo del Hombre Dominicano. La Mina se Explotó desde el Segundo Viaje de Cristóbal Colón (1493-1496)" <https://www.laromanabayahibenews.com/2013/05/mina-de-oro-de-pueblo-viejo-primer-campamento-minero-de-republica-dominicana-y-america-evidencias-de-asentamientos-humanos-de-epoca-colonial-estudiados-por-el-museo-del-hombre-dominicano-la-mina-se-ex/>
- [3] Open Letter sent to Antonio Reynoso, Orlando Mera, Mark Bristow, and Juana Barceló by Earthworks, the Global Justice Clinic from NYU School of Law, MiningWatch Canada, and other organizations, May 4, 2021. <https://www.earthworks.org/cms/assets/uploads/2021/05/Barrick-sign-on-letter-final-2021-w.signatures.2.pdf>
- [4] Ibid.
- [5] Ibid.
- [6] <https://saudigarcia.squarespace.com>
- [7] <https://www.barrick.com/English/news/news-details/2003/Barrick-Appoints-Gustavo-Cisneros-to-Board-of-Directors/default.aspx>
- [8] <https://www.barrick.com/English/news/news-details/2003/Barrick-Appoints-Gustavo-Cisneros-to-Board-of-Directors/default.aspx>



# Megawealth and its Entanglements with Art and Colonial Aesthetics

by Kency Cornejo

It is no secret that Patricia Phelps de Cisneros is a hegemonic force, not just for the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York, but across Latin America. Cisneros is a longtime member of the board of trustees and of several acquisition and funding committees at MoMA, where artists and activists are denouncing the board members connections to imperial crimes against humanity.[1] Her foundation has donated 230 artworks over the last forty years to MoMA, drastically shaping the collection and further increasing the family name's influence over the museum. Board affiliations and artwork donations to other major art institutions further spread the Cisneros Foundation's authority across borders.[2] Moreover, the Patricia Phelps de Cisneros Research Institute at MoMA, a key funder for research and curatorial projects on Latin American art, is designed to be the leading research center in the field.

Beyond their influential power in the museum institution that is MoMA, one can understand that the Cisneros dynasty has a monopoly over the Latin American art field in general. Through its influence and monetary support the Cisneros directly shape and control the canon of Latin American art by dictating which artists are worthy, what projects get funding, who gets residencies, exhibited, collected, published, and whose careers will be validated and accepted by the institutions of the art world. This economic investment is possible with the cumulative wealth of Cisneros and her husband, Gustavo A. Cisneros, whose media empire and multibillion dollar conglomerates further grant him global political access, a political and economic wealth Macarena Gómez-Barris reminds us is not innocent in producing inequalities.[3] Meanwhile, many countries in Latin America do not have the financial resources to support artists or cultural workers, and even within the mainstream US and Eurocentric art worlds, Latin American art is still seen as marginal and

devalued in some cases. This creates a situation where precarious artists and cultural workers both in the US and Latin America are dependent on the philanthropy of the Cisneros. What this reveals is that the Cisneros collection and foundation is truly "the MoMA" of the Latin American art world.

Additionally, the Cisneros' overarching power extends into arts education, since the curriculum that determines which artists and geographies are worthy of study and research is often based on the existing collections of museums like MoMA. Relatedly, the Cisneros collection favors certain aesthetics and geographies, meaning that there is a geopolitical aspect to the ripple effect of the Cisneros power in the art world that has centered whiteness. A well-known anecdote is that Patricia Cisneros' fascination with collecting Latin American art began with her love for the Venezuelan city of Caracas, which she viewed as a cosmopolitan city in Latin America that was emblematic of modernity, an idea that has since fueled her mission to include Latin American art into the canon of modern art—a canon that is already Eurocentric, anti-Black, and anti-Indigenous. With such a mission then, the question is what to do with those sides of Latin America that do not reflect the cosmopolitan wealth of elite centers, but that more accurately reflect the underside of modernity, or coloniality, as we see in current sites of struggle by Afro and Indigenous peoples such as in Colombia, Bolivia, Honduras, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic?

Consider one of the Cisneros' prized collections, the Orinoco Collection. Comprised of over 1,500 quotidian and ceremonial objects taken from twelve Indigenous ethnic groups across the Amazon in Venezuela, it took the Cisneros over three decades of expeditions to accumulate. With the collection, the Cisneros claim to promote international awareness and protection against threats

to Indigenous existence. Yet, when exhibited across Europe with the title *Orinoco. Viaje a un mundo perdido*, the collection was promoted as an opportunity for viewer immersion into an already "lost world." The display of the Orinoco Collection not only relied on cultural extractivism facilitated through the family's wealth and extensive travels to the Amazon, but further relegated Indigenous communities to a romanticized and extinct past while promoting a colonial experience for viewers into what it repeatedly described as the most "savage, inaccessible, and magical regions of the planet." [4] Such contradictions in art collecting and museum practices, reveal a long colonial history of wealthy collectors shaping and determining how those it places outside of modernity are allowed to exist in its art institutions and colonial art narratives.

In this art context, decolonization is easily appropriated by the art world only as an idea, with no required commitment or care for those struggling against ongoing colonization. Indigenous struggles against racism, land theft, and extractivism from the underside of modernity all become acceptable only as subject matter in art—that is, content to be collected, to be displayed, to be looked at—but not decolonization as actual praxis. It is one of the hypocrisies of the Cisneros dynasty, as well as other imperialist practices in the art world, to display struggles of liberation for visual consumption while profiting from the extractivism and oppression of the very people that do not represent that modernity, as with the communities in Pueblo Viejo resisting Barrick Gold Corporation, a multinational mining company with Gustavo A. Cisneros on its Board of Directors.

The Dominican Republic's Pueblo Viejo mine is the largest gold mine in the Americas and the first to be exploited by Spanish colonizing settlers, meaning its existence today is a continuation of an anti-Indigenous and anti-Black colonial project. It is not a stretch to assume that the farmers in Pueblo Viejo resisting Barrick Gold mining also do not fit within the romanticized idea of modernity upheld by the Cisneros. Sandy Plácido has noted that because of the environmental violence Barrick Gold has already inflicted, local communities are unable to cultivate traditional foods and crops, must endure lingering smells of

cyanide and sulphur in the air, cannot access water from polluted rivers that cause damage to human skin, and must rely on the bottled water that Barrick Gold is forced to supply because the company has polluted the drinking water.[5] Barrick Gold has a long history of human rights abuses as a result of its extractivist practices around the world, including Argentina, Australia, Canada, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Philippines, Tanzania, Zambia, and the United States.[6] Even in New Mexico, where I'm currently located, Indigenous communities are still dealing with contamination of uranium caused by Homestake Mining Company, which is a subsidiary of Barrick Gold. [7] Plans to expand mining through new tailings dam into the neighboring communities, in addition to being emblematic of capitalist greed, is also an attack on the existence of future generations of Dominicans and the land they call home.

Undoubtedly, the Cisneros Foundation's array of investments increased visibility and market value for Latin American art, drastically shaping the field of art history, including by modeling the curriculum and producing tenure-track and curatorial positions. Yet, funneling money into art institutions is a clear way to detract from their entanglements in imperialist crimes against humanity. Large monetary gifts to cultural institutions help overshadow and impede suspicions or inquiries, into where these philanthropic gifts come from, and is a form of corporate PR. It creates a persona of generosity and credibility, one solely invested in increasing accessibility to the arts for the betterment of humanity and increasing the representation of marginalized artists. In other words, it is a white-savior industrial complex for the arts. But as we know, representation is not social justice, representation is not decolonization, and representation is not liberation. In fact, philanthropy donations are often designed to increase the financial value of the collectors' collections, it is often a self-serving gift. It is thus not just the artists that are instrumentalized by hegemonic institutions in the process of artwashing, but the curators, scholars, and producers of knowledge who are commissioned to give value to the collection through their labor, thus augmenting the collector's financial and cultural capital. That is, we art historians, art educators, and curators are entangled as well and have a respon-

sibility to call out and intervene in the violent practices of art institutions, of which the Cisneros' affiliation with Barrick Gold is just one example. The art world is drenched in blood, drenched in colonial ideologies, and is built to uphold white supremacy as we see with other MoMA board members.[8]

Because of the power that the Cisneros dynasty has on not just MoMA, but over arts sphere and arts education, there is an almost palpable fear among fellow art historians, curators, cultural workers, and artists when it comes to calling out the hypocrisy of a powerful, genocidal, and colonizing institution. And of course, just like there are vulnerable folks in university spaces, we can understand that there are few to no protections for those in the art world in Latin America. That just means it is urgent to critically question these hegemonic institutions and entities who are so powerful that they would instill fear and self-censorship among the collaborators they depend on. This is something we normally attribute to the policing practices of the academy, but clearly it is a normal practice among large museum institutions that function like capitalist corporations. It is thus important for those willing or able to speak out on behalf of those who cannot in cultural and education sectors, but above all, for those whose health, livelihoods, and ways of living are directly affected by the Cisneros' entanglements with extractivist, imperialist, and colonizing practices. This extends beyond including the word "decolonization" or "decolonial" in curatorial projects.

Strike MoMA shows us that focusing on MoMA is just a point of departure to address a system of coloniality that has used art as its own tool of colonization. By first exposing how museums are entangled with the prison industrial complex, militarization, displacement, extractivism, and land theft, it is then impossible to continue to see the museum as an innocent and exceptional institution that only brings beauty and culture to us. Yet, holding on to the myth of this colonial narrative is what still leads some people to ask, "why MoMA?" It is here that understanding that the museum is a colonial product that beyond gate keeping enforces colonial aesthetics is also important.

The museum is a Western colonial invention. The history of Western aesthetics shows it was founded on the idea of inferior and superior races and that racial hierarchies determined appreciation for beauty and artistic abilities. Undermining the creative expression of subjugated peoples as a way to reinforce hierarchies of human civilization further justified enslavement, pillage, and colonial violence. Just as art continues to be a form of resistance, including for Indigenous and people of color, artists and curators currently challenging the colonial logics of the museum, so do art institutions continue to be a tools of the colonial project. So when we continue to ask why peoples with histories of enslavement, subjugation, and dispossession are not represented in major museums, we should remember that the museum was originally designed to uphold white supremacy by dictating standards of who is capable of making art; who is "authentically" a creator and who is disposable.

Importantly, beyond philosophical categories or definitions, this colonial aesthetic has come to violate humanity in tangible ways. We know of countless examples, from photography used to categorize and criminalize Indigenous peoples, to the abduction of families for exhibition in human zoos, to the visual extractivism of Indigenous systems of knowledge through the theft and display of textiles or spiritual objects, and even the theft of human remains for display or as subject of study. This has been going on since the inception of museums to the present as we just learned with the Penn Museum holding remains of children killed in the 1985 MOVE bombing.[9] These practices fueled by colonial aesthetics, have caused pain and suffering to those placed outside the Western categories of art and aesthetics, outside modernity, and contributed to the dehumanization of racialized peoples.

The urgency, therefore, in breaking with colonial aesthetics cannot be seen as an individual task for artists, or curators, but has to be entwined with parallel struggles to abolish prisons, to abolish borders, to end extractivism and dispossession, for the liberation of Palestine, for decolonization and land back, since colonial aesthetics and the museum as a colonial institution are part of the system that contribute to white supremacy and that has led to this ongoing colonial violence. We must continue

to hold art institutions accountable, despite how wealthy and powerful its trustees may be. There is no one all-encompassing path, but we already have multiple models from our interconnected struggles where we can begin to imagine—from boycotts, to defunding racist institutions and redistributing funds to community-based models, to community governance, to building completely new spaces and ways of organizing.

As we collectively determine what a post-MoMA future will be there are questions, but there is also consensus: art must not be a sphere for the megawealthy to shape, control and profit from; art must not uphold colonial aesthetics; art must not be a guise to distract from imperial crimes against humanity. We must also create anti-colonial reconfigurations of visibility, art, and its principles and spaces from the perspective of those who by default of colonial logics were placed outside the realm of Western art histories, theories, and practices, and thus outside humanity. This anti-colonial reconfiguration of art needs to be a part of other visions for decolonizing struggles, abolition struggles, immigrant right struggles, etc. Strike MoMA is already making these links in unprecedented ways and as it enters the next phase, moving these conversations beyond MoMA, and beyond New York, and beyond the US, will continue to show how our struggles are truly globally interconnected. It is through a familiarity with the interconnectivity of our struggles that we can collectively plan exit strategies and imagine and design other ways of co-existing in a post-MoMA future.[10]

[1] See, "Frameworks and Terms for Struggle: Strike MoMA" in Strike MoMA Website <<https://www.strike-moma.org>>.

[2] These include: The Blanton Museum of Art at the University of Texas Austin, The Bronx Museum in New York, El Museo de Arte de Lima in Peru, el Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía in Madrid Spain, and el Museo de Arte Moderno de Buenos Aires in Argentina.

[3] See Macarena Gómez-Barris, "MoMA, Cisneros, and

Beyond: Artwashing and Extractivism in the Américas," <https://globalsouthcenter.org/features/moma-cisneros-and-beyond-artwashing-and-extractivism-in-the-americas/>.

[4] Gaiás Cidade da Cultura, Orinoco. Viaje a un mundo perdido. Museo Centro Gaiás GAIÁS—Cidade da Cultura Santiago de Compostela.

[5] Sandy Plácido, "Blood on their Hands: Barrick Gold, Gustavo and Patricia Cisneros, and Imperialist Networks of Extraction in the Dominican Republic" at <https://www.strikemoma.org/week-9>

[6] See Human Rights Watch, "Papua New Guinea: Serious Abuses at Barrick Gold Mine" February 1, 2011 <https://www.hrw.org/news/2011/02/01/papua-new-guinea-serious-abuses-barrick-gold-mine> (accessed June 25, 2021). For more cases before 2015 see, Philip Mattered "Barrick Gold: Corporate Rap Sheet" in Corporate Research Project <https://www.corp-research.org/barrick-gold> (accessed June 25, 2021).

[7] Kendra Chamberlain, "'This has got to stop': Indigenous activists decry lingering contamination decades after the last uranium mines closed" in NM Political Report, November 23, 2020 <<https://nmpolitical-report.com/2020/11/23/this-has-got-to-stop-indigenous-activists-decry-lingering-contamination-decades-after-the-last-uranium-mines-closed/>> (accessed June 24, 2021).

[8] See "Frameworks and Terms for Struggle: Strike MoMA" in Strike MoMA Website <<https://www.strike-moma.org>>

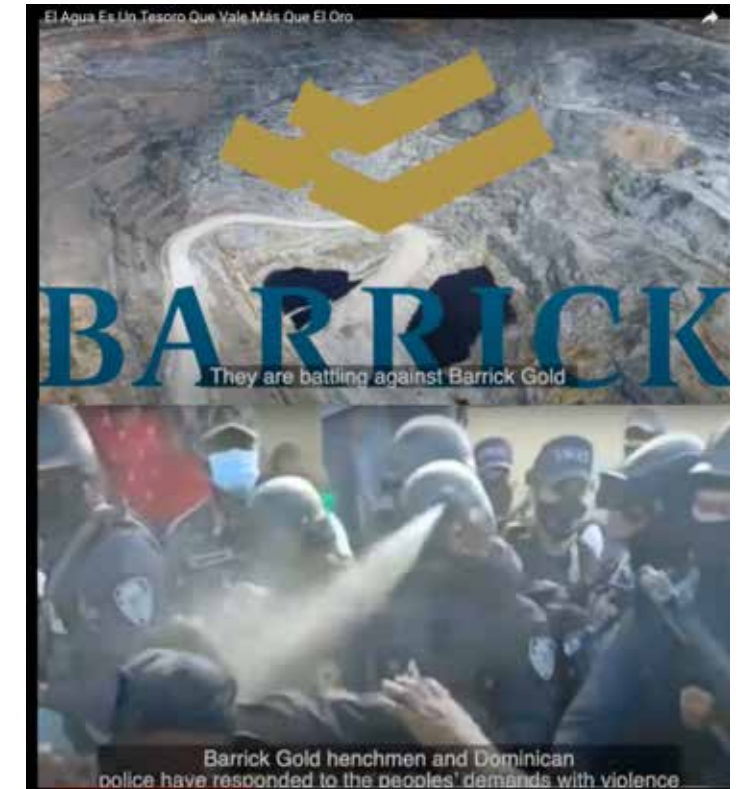
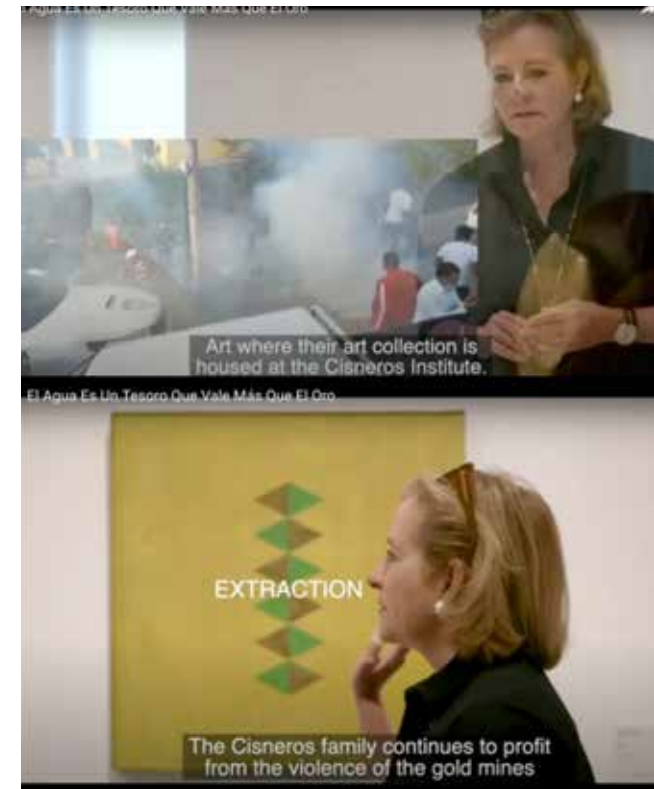
[9] See Hakim Bishara "Controversy Erupts Over Penn Museum's Possession of MOVE Bombing Victims' Remains" Hyperallergic, April 22, 2021, <https://hyperallergic.com/639910/controversy-penn-museums-possession-of-move-bombing-victims-remains/>.

[10] This essay is a slightly expanded version of points I addressed in conversation for week nine of Strike MoMA along with panelists Saudi Garcia, Macarena Gómez-Barris, Nelson Maldonado-Torres, Mónica Ramón Ríos, and facilitated by Shellyne Rodriguez, and Nitasha Dhillon.

# NO EXPANSION MINERA EN MONTE PLATA

ÚNASE A LA LUCHA DEL PUEBLO  
DOMINICANO CONTRA LA BARRICK  
GOLD Y CAPITALISTAS COMO  
GUSTAVO Y PATRICIA CISNEROS QUE  
QUIEREN USAR AL MUSEO MOMA PARA  
OCULTAR SU EXPLOTACIÓN DE LA  
ISLA

**VIERNES 11 de JUNIO**  
**4PM EST**  
**11 W 53 ST**  
**#FUERABARRICK**  
**#FUERACISNEROS**  
**#LUCHASCONECTADAS**  
**#STRIKEMOMA**



# Notes on the Modernity and Extractivism in Dialogue with Strike MoMA!

Nelson Maldonado-Torres (Frantz Fanon Foundation)

It is tragic that coloniality, anti-indigeneity, and anti-blackness play a foundational role in the formation of the modern world and that they continue to normalize practices of land dispossession, plundering, and multiple forms of extractivism in large parts of the planet today. However, the discourse of modernity—that is, the rhetoric that gives meaning to the modern nation-state, the modern Western university, and modern museums, among a vast number of institutions, ideologies, and practices that, together, establish the dominant common sense in contemporary societies globally—not only seeks to establish global dominance and hegemony; it also aims to obtain the highest form of praise, distinction, and respect. This hybrid of modernity helps to explain the impetus behind its expansion through conquest and colonization—the civilizing mission of the West—as well as the desire of many to be part of modern institutions.

To generate this desire, modernity must appear not only as the most powerful order in history, but also as the most rational, the most righteous, and the most civilized. Far from considering itself merely an expression of raw power and might, modernity claims to best serve the interests of the search for goodness, for truth, and for beauty. Goodness, truth, and beauty make reference to the broader areas of ethics, epistemology, and aesthetics, which find expression in the formation of the modern nation-state—as the home of the good and the right—the university—as the home of the search for truth—and the museum—as the pinnacle of the collection and preservation of beauty.

Basic presuppositions about ethics, epistemology, and aesthetics, as well as belief in the intrinsic connection between the highest ideals of goodness, truth, and beauty, on the one hand, and the nation-state—including

a complicated relation of the nation-state with the corporate world—the university, and the museum, on the other, provide an aura of acceptability and inevitability to modernity/coloniality. The idea and the structure of the nation-state validates the museum, which in turn validates the university, and vice-versa, while they all obtain validation and direction from dominant modern Western conceptions of ethics, epistemology, and aesthetics. These elements and their connection conform an impressive architectonics of domination and apparent epistemic justification that normalizes coloniality at a global scale. It is true that there have been and continue to be tensions between the interests of the nation-state and corporations, or between nation-states and corporations, on the one hand, and universities or museums, on the other, but these tensions take place as part of a larger set of shared commitments that serve to naturalize coloniality, and, therefore, to solidify practices of plundering, dispossession, and extractivism. The same is true about intra-modern debates. Modernity is not homogeneous, but that does not mean that it lacks dominant trends. These trends and tendencies are inscribed, embedded, and reproduced in institutions, disciplines, and canons, which in turn set standards and expectations as well as open the field for what they deem acceptable differences.

The dynamics of domination that sustain the modern/colonial world are as clear in the functioning of nation-states as they are in universities and museums, which are often considered to be less political institutions than nation-state or corporations. In the Americas, universities and museums perform an important function in naturalizing coloniality. They do so, first, by taking land theft and the plundering of knowledge and artifacts as their material point of departure. The actions here include building universities and museums with labor from enslaved peo-

ple and racialized subjects in lands that were taken from indigenous peoples, and creating libraries, archives, and exhibitions that reproduce the lines between the supposedly civilized and the uncivilized. This process involves the de-problematization of land theft and colonialism, making them appear as if they were issues of a past—a past that can be memorialized and even archived, but not taken as an effective point of departure to consider questions about restoration or justice.

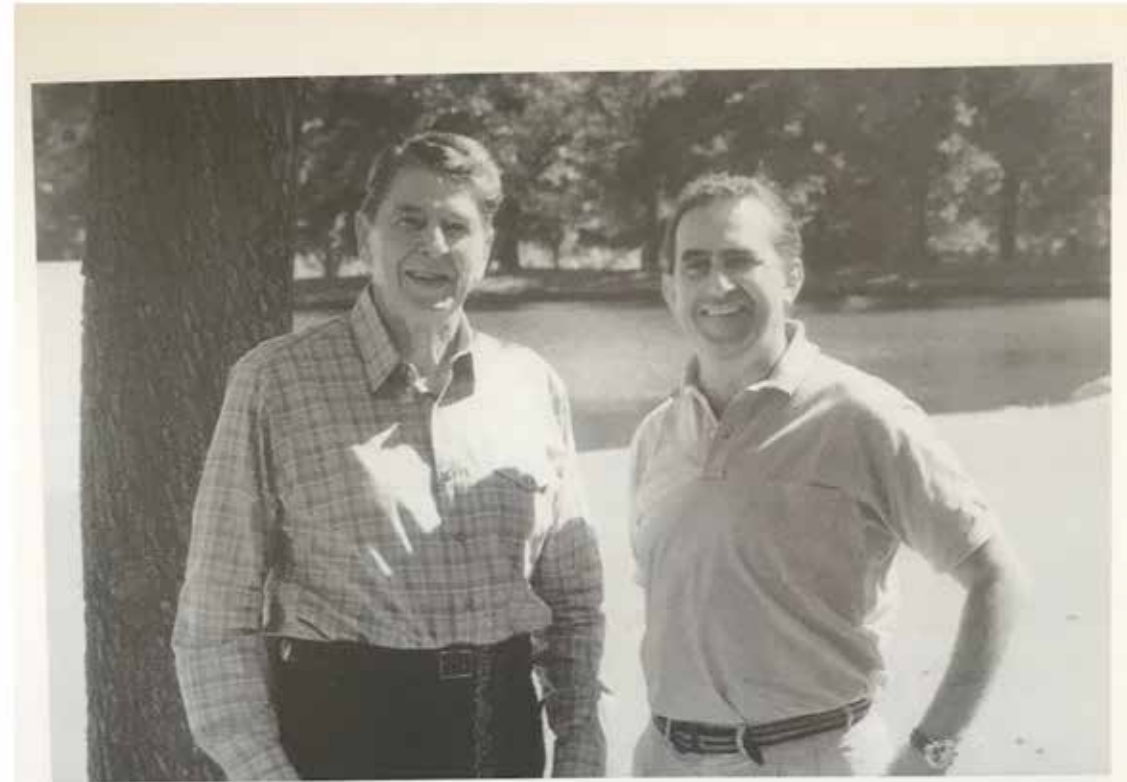
Universities and museums also rely on extraction—of artifacts, of labor, and of knowledge—from colonies, former colonies, and the peripheralized world—including indigenous reservations and poor and working-class neighborhoods in the “developed” world. The obscurity of the naturalization of and the dependence on extractivism is particularly evinced in what Macarena Gómez-Barris in conversation with Strike MoMA has referred to as “[extractive art washing](#)”: “the recurrent capitalist practice that invests in art and art collections as a fungible commodity, normalizing colonial and modern relations of biodiverse resource theft.” In extractive artwashing, “Imperial histories of extraction, war, and architecture ... are then returned as philanthropic motives to establish uniquely American cultural institutions.”

In the world of the largest museums in the global north and former imperial metropolises, extractive artwashing is sustained by interlocking directorates—the participation of members of a board of trustees or directors, usually millionaires and billionaires, serving on other such boards—a central point in the Strike MoMA campaign that is at the center of their “[Case Against MoMA](#).” The interlocking directorates evinces an often-unacknowledged connection between the corporate world, museums, and the modern/colonial project of nation-building. Museums perform essential work for the nation-state and for private donors. In the process, the meaning and function of art mutates and acquires peculiar forms. Art is separated from the life and wellbeing of communities and artistic creations acquire the status of objects to be contemplated while becoming symbols of patriotism, capital, or both. Art becomes treasured national or private property to be exhibited in testament to the goodness of the nation-state, the hegemonic public, and/or private donors. The model of a successful relationship between the nation-state, the museum, the corporate world, artistic production, and—as Ariella Aïsha Azoulay and Kency Cornejo have made clear in conversations hosted by Strike MoMA!—art education, reflects the architectonics of domination and extraction that sustains the modern/colonial world.

Extractivism does not always appear in the ugly face of undermining sustainable habitats or as artwashing. It also appears in sanctioned practices of interpretation, theoretical elaboration, and critique in schools and universities. This typically happens when ideas and intellectual creations (texts and other artistic forms) that are a living testament to ongoing struggles for decolonization and liberation are “included” in liberal forums for the explorations of ideas—e.g., the standard university seminars, classrooms, reading groups, etc. In these contexts, the ethos of liberal intellectual production dominates, reproducing the white academic field. In universities, whiteness is reproduced in exercises of mastery that typically leave the methods and approaches of interpreters and researchers untouched, while deactivating the questions and challenges that emerge from movement-based knowledges. The coloniality of knowledge takes place through the colonization of movement-based knowledges by liberal-based intellectual acts. The extraction of ideas, the displacement of questions, and the deactivation of challenges in favor of take center stage leading to the formation of the liberal intellectual, curator, and educator. Extractivist liberal intellectual practices are not limited to the work of scholars who happen to identify themselves as liberal. All too often one also finds these practices in authors and researchers who write about anticolonialism, abolition, decoloniality, and decolonization, and who see themselves as radical. Ironically, scholars of decolonization and related themes might be even more prone to problematic forms of extractivism than mainstream intellectuals, since they are frequently engaging movement-generated theories and ideas.

Strike MoMA leaves us with a set of questions about the presence of extractivism in museum’s boards as well as in the very intellectual and pedagogical practice of those of us who work in universities. Beyond generating these questions, though, in calling for a post-MoMA future, Strike MoMA! also raises the possibility of non- and post-extractivist artistic and intellectual practices. More than just calling for a post-MoMA and a post-extractivist future, Strike MoMA! became and continues to be a hub for generating these practices. The archive of documents and videos are the source of a truly movement-based and decolonial form of knowledge generation through the enactment of an ethics, an epistemology, and an aesthetics of interconnection that provides crucial pieces for the building of an-other world.

The Extraction behind the Abstraction:  
A **Cisneros** Family Photo-File



Cisneros and President Ronald Reagan, who "buried" the Soviet empire, at Walter Annenberg's residence (July 1989). The Cisneros couple maintained a close friendship with the late President Reagan and his wife, Nancy.

Images in this photo-file are taken from *Gustavo Cisneros: Pioneer* (2002) Below are the Cisneros, Barbara Walters, and Glenn Lowry celebrating the launch of the book at MoMA. Monet's *Water Lilies* is visible in the background.



Gustavo and Patty Cisneros with British Prime Minister Margaret and Dennis Thatcher, in New York (November 1994). Cisneros respects the "Iron Lady" and recognizes the effort she made to modernize the



Cisneros at the White House with Lord Peter Carrington, former British minister of foreign relations and leader of the House of Lords, David Rockefeller, President George Bush, and Henry Kissinger, former U.S. secretary of state, discussing the goal of free trade in Latin America (1990). The North American Free Trade Agreement was enacted during Bill Clinton's first term as president.



Henry Kissinger and Gustavo Cisneros during a meeting of the Council on Foreign Relations in New York (1996). Cisneros is a founding member of the Council's International Advisory Committee, and he and Kissinger share a long friendship and an ongoing exchange of opinions.



King Juan Carlos of Spain during a private visit to the Cisneros residence in "Los Roques," Venezuela. Cisneros shows the king a map of the archipelago (April 1992).



Cisneros with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel and his wife, Sara, at a reception at the King David Hotel in Israel (May 17, 1998). This visit gave rise to two strategic alliances with Israeli groups in the area of cutting-edge technology.

# MoMA and/as Fossil Capital

TJ Demos

If modernity is an [imperial crime](#), then MoMA is its fossil capital. We know the score. MoMA, inaugurated decades ago by Rockefeller oil wealth, goes deep today with BlackRock, the multinational investment management corporation overseeing trillions of dollars, thanks to the latter's CEO Larry Fink, member of the boards of MoMA (and NYU), also financial supporter of the NYC Police Foundation. The web expands further—shockingly—to the late billionaire serial sex offender Jeffrey Epstein, courtesy of his financial associate, MoMA trustee Leon Black, co-founder and former CEO of the private equity firm Apollo Global Management. The CEOs and corporate asset managers that sit on MoMA's board administer massive investments in fossil capital, linking extraction firms ExxonMobil and BP, to Vale's and Rio Tinto's mining interests, to private prison corporations Core Civic and Geo Group, and to weapons manufacturers Lockheed Martin and General Electric. Leading violators of human rights, workers' welfare, and Indigenous sovereignty, worldwide, all are perpetrators of climate chaos and crimes against the earth, its peoples, its biodiverse forms of life.

Within MoMA's board, we glimpse the overarching nexus of racial and colonial capitalism. We can also call it the fossil capital complex, which names the dominant global economic order that runs on climate-destroying fossil fuels and extends outward toward virtually all facets of society—from conservative media empires and Trumpist propaganda engines to funders of Israeli settler colonialism, from supporters of repressive policing and the prison industrial complex to the profiteering armaments industry. Its extractive, deathly interests are grounded in colonial conquest, requiring access to any and all lands, territorial, aquatic, atmospheric, and virtual. Its

massive profits—accumulated through violent, racialized dispossession, and generating obscene levels of economic and sociopolitical inequality—depend on the militarized security state in order to surveil multitudes, suppress dissent, and monopolize violence against counter-insurgency threats, including mass movements for social and economic justice. The death star that is MoMA is toxic not because of this or that board member alone, but because its structural composition is continuous with the all-encompassing system of plutocratic inequality, racist violence, and lawlessness corporatism. In MoMA we can perceive the cultural logic of extractive capitalism, which is bringing livable existence to the brink of ecosystem collapse.

Like all museums of colonial modernity, MoMA constitutes an apparatus of enclosure, one founded upon dispossessive accumulation and predatory inclusion, even as that enclosure depends on the destruction of life-worlds elsewhere, particularly in the Global South. Part of its logic is to encourage, solicit, acquire, and profit from the radical dreams of revolutionary emancipation, invoked in countless works of artistic imagination contained within its walls. Presenting these dreams as the framed, objectified, and insured jewels in its ever-expanding collection, MoMA enlists and capitalizes on aesthetic challenges to its very rule, challenges to everything it represents, forcing radical visions into its largely depoliticized narratives of modern and contemporary art. Is burning the earth's fossilized organic remains from hundreds of millions of years ago akin to extracting art's freedom dreams that envision and even practice alternative forms of life beyond the reign of racial and colonial capital? Is the exploitation of anaerobic decompositions of dead and buried organisms, once alive and thriving, equal to those liberated worlds captured and

reified as the luxury possessions of billionaires and sold back to us as ticketed entertainment? Not just that, for sure. Because now those freedom dreams—from the aesthetic joys of revolutionary Soviet communism to the rapturous art of Black Liberation, from stunning visions of Indigenous decolonization to the urgent projects for anti-sexist and anti-capitalist abolition—inspire StrikeMoMA.

We—those who find our shared politics and values in this movement of movements—recognize the traces of those past and ongoing struggles for liberation contained within MoMA's walls. Yet our fidelity can never be to this or other institutions that enclose them, with their hierarchical leadership, their anti-democratic practice, their ruling class corporate boards enmeshed in the networks of earth-destroying corporate globalization. The strike must be general: against the entire edifice of modernity's imperial crimes, past and present. That means de-exceptionalizing MoMA. We know it's neither one institution, nor one trustee or regent. It's structural, with all corporatized bodies participating in, and benefiting from, the terms of capital's reproduction, accumulation, and securitization. This need not mean evacuating modernity of its innumerable oppositional formations—all of the anti-colonial struggles, movements against racism and all forms of discrimination, anti-capitalist uprisings, and solidarity strikes against modernity's crimes. It remains urgent and necessary to research the traditions of the oppressed, to uplift the freedom struggles through our writings, to teach radical histories of and beyond the arts, to program and exhibit artworks that testify and give rise to these and further moments of rupture (even as we may work within these very institutions, acknowledging the conditions and working to overcome them). That work keeps alive all contributions and sacrifices, recruiting the past as avenger in what's-to-come.

To bring other worlds into being, to infuse existing forms of life long colonized with new energy, to inaugurate a post-MoMA future premised upon

climate justice—where a just climate expands to the sociopolitical, economic, and cultural, as much as to the biogeophysical and the multispecies—takes organizing. Engaging in the active labor of building power requires solidarity, the sometimes frictionful form of political belonging that socializes precarity and debt, collectivizing our resources in shared resistance, and operating in movements across social difference. Solidarity stems from the recognition that we're stronger together than apart, that none of us will be free until all of us are free. The cult of competitive individuality, expressed through endless critique and the fetishization of originality—as exhibited in MoMA's approach to fossilized artworks and through its extractive art-historical narratives—is nothing but politically disabling, functioning as the divisive operating principle of the neoliberal arts and academy. By organizing, we challenge and reject that debilitating logic. We engage in world-building otherwise together, generating and growing the capacity to struggle for our common interests (even if not always identical), and in so doing, transcending the differences that capital uses to divide us.

In the face of current threats of world-ending fascisms—those of neoliberal authoritarianism as much as rightwing populism and white supremacy—we cultural and educational workers can no longer afford to operate merely as radical content providers to exploitative institutions. The present conjuncture demands nothing less than doing all we can to build collective power within anti-capitalist and socialist organizing, and doing so wherever we are based, within and beyond these institutions. That means joining the forces of multiracial working-class solidarity, dedicated to decolonization, abolition, and the structural transformation of the dominant sociopolitical and economic order that is presently destroying the world: fossil capital. Radical cultural production's measure of value will be found in the degree to which it contributes to that goal. We may face seemingly insurmountable obstacles, but there is an antidote to despair: joining our social movement for transformation.

# Growing Movement Pushes Museums to Cut Ties With Colonialism and Apartheid

Ashley Dawson, [truthout.org](http://truthout.org) (June 7, 2021)

Every Friday for the past nine weeks, artists and activists have been carrying on weekly rallies, assemblies and teach-ins in front of the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York City. Building on several years of earlier organizing work calling out the ties of board members at the [Whitney Museum](#) and [MoMA](#) to carceral violence, war and climate crisis, the [Strike MoMA](#) initiative was sparked early this year by revelations about the close association between museum chairman and private equity magnate Leon Black and the late billionaire sexual abuser and rapist Jeffrey Epstein. [Strike MoMA](#) has grown into a challenge that extends beyond powerful individuals to the institution as a whole. The [Strike MoMA](#) campaign is a flashpoint in a broader national and international struggle to variously decolonize, reimagine, and in some cases, even abolish institutions like the museum during a time of intensifying social and environmental crises.

Taking aim at MoMA, the crown jewel in what cultural critic Macarena Gómez-Barris has recently called "[the museum-industrial complex](#)," movements are challenging the way in which oligarchs "artwash" the profits of extractivism. The [Strike MoMA](#) protests have helped weave together resistance to multiple forms of oppression, with protests in recent weeks focusing on the complicity of members of the MoMA board of trustees in [Israel's apartheid policies toward Palestinians](#) and in [the brutalization of communities resisting mineral extraction in the Dominican Republic](#).

As artist and activist Luna Picart puts it, "taking aim at the interlocking directorate of museum boards is becoming a way to amplify the interconnected struggles of our movements, from [Palestine](#) to [Colombia](#) to the Bronx." The initiative will culminate on June 11 with a gathering to determine next steps for what organizers call a just transition to a post-MoMA future. By bringing foreclosed futures into view, [Strike MoMA](#) opens space for something different to emerge, a space and a set of possibilities "under the control of workers, communities, and artists rather than billionaires," in the words of [the Strike MoMA framework document](#).

In recent years museums have emerged as significant sites of political struggle and transformation, from [historic unionization drives](#) to [calls for the redressing](#) of racialized and gendered inequalities built into the operational fabric of cultural institutions. This trend was evident on a sunny afternoon in mid-October 2019, when [I joined a group of roughly 700 activists gathered on the steps of the American Museum of Natural History](#) in New York for the first stop in what organizers called the Fourth Anti-Columbus Day Tour. The communities and organizations that met at the museum — including the immigrant-rights-focused [New Sanctuary Coalition](#), the prison abolitionist

organization [No New Jails](#), and the artist/activist group [Decolonize This Place](#) — voiced the same demands that they had articulated during previous demonstrations against Columbus Day: Rename the Day, Respect the Ancestors, Remove the Statue.

None of these demands had been met: At that time, October 14 was still officially named after Columbus in New York; the American Museum of Natural History had resisted establishing an overarching plan for decolonization and refused to institute a policy prohibiting display of human remains without the consent of descendent communities; and perhaps most glaringly, the equestrian statue of Theodore Roosevelt flanked by an enslaved African and a Native American continued to stand on the stairs leading up to the museum's grand entrance. In response to protesters who pointed out that the statue is an offensive symbol of white supremacy, the museum had placed a plaque in front of the statue saying that "some see the statue as a heroic group; others, as a symbol of racial hierarchy." At the Fourth Anti-Columbus Day Tour, [Decolonize This Place](#) responded to this plaque by saying, "There are not 'two sides' to genocide and white supremacy," underlining that Roosevelt's stance as a conservationist does not erase his history as an imperialist and eugenicist. It wasn't until June 2020, amid nationwide Black Lives Matter protests and movements to remove statues commemorating Confederate generals, that Mayor Bill de Blasio agreed to take down the statue — although it remains standing today.

The American Museum of Natural History is no outlier in its deep entanglement with a legacy of racism. As [British science curators Subhendra Das and Miranda Lowe argue](#), natural history museums functioned from their inception during the 18th century as repositories for the objects and specimens collected on European colonial expeditions around the globe. Most of these objects are still on display, while the museums themselves remain organized around the paradigms of colonial knowledge on which they were built. Museums as institutions are thus deeply connected to settler colonialism and forms of scientific knowledge production and display that played a key role in legitimating racial capitalism and colonial genocide.

This ugly legacy is not just a bit of detritus from the past: The origin of the museum in colonial-capitalist extractivism continues to shape how most contemporary museums function — what gets displayed in their halls, who makes curatorial decisions, and who sits on the governing boards that subtly shape the orientation and future of these institutions.

In recent years, activists have agitated to spread awareness of the history that has shaped museums, and the ways in which extractivist capitalism continues to determine the character of museums. Weaving together struggles for an end to gentrification and displacement, for abolition of racist policing and prisons, and for climate justice, social movements have called out museums as sites where many interwoven forms of oppression coalesce.

In response to this mounting public scrutiny and criticism, museums have begun to shift some of their policies. In 2015, for example, the [California Academy of Sciences announced that it would divest from fossil fuels](#). Reacting to longstanding criticism from environmental groups, the museum's director

wrote that "it seems difficult to reconcile the mission of a public science museum focused on ecology, evolution, and sustainability and the practice of investing in fossil fuels." The [Strike MoMA](#) campaign is a flashpoint in a broader national and international struggle to ... decolonize, reimagine, and in some cases, even abolish institutions like the museum. In Britain, the [Tate Galleries declared a climate emergency](#) in 2019, pledging to "interrogate our systems, our values, and our programs, and look for ways to become more adaptive and responsible." This step was only taken, however, [after years of stinging criticism and direct action protest](#) on the part of organizations like [Liberate Tate](#). In an indication of the turning tide, the American Alliance of Museums recently [gave space on its blog to a project exploring the potential role of museums](#) as catalysts for climate action. But many of these reforms come from the top down, leaving the hierarchical institutional structure of museums intact. Few museums have truly turned over their spaces and social capital to communities on the frontlines of the climate crisis.

An indication of what museums allied with frontline communities' struggles for climate justice might look like can be seen in the [Museum of Vancouver's "Acts of Resistance"](#) exhibition (2020-21), which showcased the artwork of seven Indigenous artist-activists from the Pacific Northwest whose designs were featured in protests against the Trans Mountain Expansion pipeline project.

Another groundbreaking collaboration will be on view at the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian this autumn, when the "[Red Road to DC](#)" will go on display: This exhibition will highlight the cross-country tour of a totem pole created by Indigenous carvers, connecting 20 Native-led struggles in the U.S. where sacred lands, waters and wildlife are imperiled by extractive industries, dams and climate change.

But what about more recently established museums, ones that may initially appear to have little connection to the racist forms of social ordering and exterminism embodied in natural history museums? What, for instance, of museums of modern art, institutions ostensibly dedicated to iconoclastic, forward-looking artworks?

I got an intimation of these institutions' complicity in extractivist logics the first time I visited the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art (TMoCA). Just as one does at the Guggenheim Museum in New York, one enters TMoCA by walking along a spiral ramp past galleries that branch off a central air-filled atrium. But TMoCA's ramp goes down rather than up, and as I walked down into the bowels of the museum, I became aware of a strange smell, heavy and tar-like. At the bottom of the ramp, I saw a large shiny black square, an object that gleamed like polished stone. The odor of naphthalene revealed that this was no stone but a huge pool of crude oil. Installed by Japanese artist Noriyuki Haraguchi shortly before the 1979 revolution, the 14-by-21 foot pool contains nearly 2,000 gallons of oil. Officially titled Matter and Mind, the oil pool in the basement of TMoCA constitutes a blunt reminder of the webs of material and cultural power that bind contemporary aesthetic production to extractivism and fossil capitalism.

The [Strike MoMA](#) campaign is currently highlighting the [metaphoric giant oil slick lurking in the basement of New](#)

York's Museum of Modern Art (MoMA). For instance, MoMA established its preeminent collection of modern art by drawing on the Rockefeller oil fortune. [Strike MoMA](#) insists that the museum must be seen in relation to other policy arms of the Rockefeller dynasty, including the Rockefeller Foundation, the Council on Foreign Relations, Chase Bank and the Trilateral Commission — entities fueling practically every sector of global capitalism and its geopolitical dynamics in the 20th century and beyond.

As is true for natural history museums, this toxic legacy of extraction, financialization, dispossession and pollution continues to play out in the present. Witness the climate criminals who populate the MoMA board today: Larry Fink, CEO of BlackRock, the Wall Street goliath [which maintains massive investments in fossil fuels and agribusiness industries that lead to deforestation](#), despite recent headline-grabbing announcements about the firm's divestment from coal; Marlene Hess, heir to the multibillion-dollar Hess Oil corporation; and Jeffrey Epstein associate Glenn Dubin, head of the [major energy trading firm Castleton Commodities International](#). As the [Strike MoMA framework document](#) puts it, "their accumulation has only been possible through our dispossession."

While it would be incorrect to suggest that today's robber barons directly determine everything that appears in the halls of MoMA and similar museums, it would also be naïve to imagine that they play no role in shaping the museum's priorities. After all, MoMA's foundational benefactor [John D. Rockefeller Jr. famously destroyed Diego Rivera's mural at Rockefeller Center](#) when he learned that the painter had incorporated an image of Lenin in his mural. Rockefeller's son, Nelson, who served a stint as chairman of MoMA's board of trustees, [described the abstract expressionist works that the museum championed as "Free Enterprise Painting."](#) No surprise then that the CIA helped finance MoMA's international exhibitions, turning the museum into an arm of U.S. cultural warfare during the Cold War.

What would institutions that eschewed toxic philanthropy be capable of? What new ways of seeing, creativity and dreaming might such a decolonized institution help cultivate? In the [recent words of a letter published by 150 artists and arts workers](#), "museums and other arts institutions must pursue alternative structures, Land Back initiatives, reparations, and additional ideas that constitute an abolitionist approach towards arts and arts patronage, so that they align with the egalitarian principles that drew us to art in the first place." [Strike MoMA](#) opens a space where institutions truly dedicated to the common good may develop, places that reject the toxic ties between extractivism and the climate crisis that undergird so many museums today, and instead foster infrastructures of repair, care and mutual aid.



# Is the Museum Obsolete?

Andreas Petrossiants and Jose Rosales

Advocating a position that sees the “material world” as more necessary for changing social relations than the ossified aesthetic regimes of art, Guy Debord wrote something to the effect of: that which changes our way of seeing the street is more important than that which changes our way of seeing a work of art. On its face, this Situationist provocation is an invitation to reject participation in the art system and to upend social relations embodied in the street—that is, a space of revolt, of riot, of looting, and perhaps, of critique. However, if read in the context of Strike MoMA—a durational period of collective action fostering a space from which to imagine the mechanics of post-MoMA futures—another meaning emerges. It becomes a call for the abandonment of the illusory supposition of art’s autonomy from labor or political economy, from the street. Or, to use the terms of the Strike MoMA Working Group, it is an invitation to engage in a “diversity of aesthetics.”

After decades of political antagonism that has taken the museum as a site of contestation, whether through the artwork or otherwise, it is more widely understood that the museum is not an institution that should be reformed, restaffed, or even critiqued, but rather one that has failed its historical claims to curating art and publics. Even Daniel Buren, a central progenitor of institutional critique—the historical precedence for art that explicitly targets the museum in the artwork itself—wrote in his canonical 1970 text [“Function of the Museum”](#) that the museum’s historical role has always been “a careful camouflage undertaken by the prevalent bourgeois ideology, assisted by the artists themselves.”

Following after decades of the institution folding critical art into a performative self-reflexivity, Marina Vishmidt argues that much critical artistic practice today functions as a kind of “reconciled realpolitik not all that different from the kind that anointed liberal democracy as the least-worst form of government still standing after everything else has ostensibly been tried.” In light of this, we also see that beginning in the late 60s, if not earlier, a shared sensibility began to establish itself among various, dissident currents of the left paralleled by critiques of the art system: the rejection of the inherited institutions of historical communism including the union, the worker’s council, cultural propaganda in the service of building class consciousness, the party-form, or the state itself. In other words, in certain spheres of militant theory and art practice, there emerged coterminous rejections of the museum and the organizational forms characteristic of previous cycles of struggle.

The task now is to continue developing strategies and tactics [“inside” and “outside”](#) of the museum to unravel its connections to global systems of violence; to do this means to cease being precious about our movements or our institutions, and to acknowledge that to abolish capitalism, the police, and settler colonialism may also mean to abolish the foundational terms of the modern museum as such—what has historically been a receptacle for the spoils of colonial looting on the one hand and a vehicle for legitimizing nationalist prestige on the other. That said, if we do in fact acknowledge that the boundary between the street and the museum (or the political party, the supermarket, the airport) is a false one, then on the level of strategy, we can also ask: when is it better to look out and see the street and when better to maintain the illusory spaces of (aesthetic) autonomy? How to enter or exit the spaces and functions of the institution and act in such a way that cannot be recuperated, or wherein the recuperation is beneficial to abolition and struggle?

Over the last few months, we have been thinking with comrades and friends about similar questions. In solidarity with the Strike MoMA initiative, the ten week pop-up de-occupation taking place across from the museum, and MoMA workers, we would like to share the three lines of inquiry for collective research that we have been following (the results of which will be published as individual pamphlets in the coming months).

## Inside and Outside, an Infrastructural Critique

In some recent organizing efforts targeting cultural institutions for their material connections to the carceral and surveillance apparatuses, to displacement, to occupation and (neo)colonial violence, an important characteristic has been the involvement of organizers and militants from outside the realms of cultural production. Contrary to efforts in the past, many of these recent struggles have attempted to delegitimize the boundaries between ostensibly auto-

mous art and other forms of waged or unwaged labor and their incumbent forms of exploitation, even as they strategically abide by them when necessary. With that in mind, where can we isolate spaces conducive to collectivity, and do they need to respect the lines sketched by power and its opposition? How can groups activate the [MTL+ collective’s call](#) for an “arts of escalation” in and out of those realms considered part of the art system?

## Value and the Destituent Potential of the Human Strike

Could Mario Tronti’s claim that the working class is simultaneously the articulation and dissolution of capital be rephrased for thinking cultural production and cultural workers, even as art production is falsely considered to be an exceptional form of work? Insofar as value remains a fundamental social relation, ever efficient at recuperating activity, it gives the lie to the relative autonomy of the aesthetic as a privileged type of activity under capital. From what we have seen thus far, the various attempts to reappropriate its institutions have shown themselves to be short-lived at best, reactionary at worst. If that’s the case, then the question would be what to do with that social relation, value, and how to abolish it?

## Looting (convened by Vicky Osterweil)

Of the various images from Nanni Balestrini’s reconstruction of NYC and Italy in 1977, it is the scene of a fifty year-old woman who, upon entering a store, announces that “today she shops for free” that remains especially dear to us; if second only to the poem’s autonomist refrain: “we’re going to take what we want and what we want is what we need.” Balestrini’s poetic dictum of want and need was renewed during the George Floyd Rebellions of last summer. In a video from an “autonomous zone” in Minneapolis, someone says: “people just came and shopped for free.” No longer valuable given their subtraction from exchange, and no longer useful vis-a-vis the requirements of the production process, commodities are devalored and their functions recomposed. In the spheres of art’s custodianship especially, the value of art has historically been produced through the colonial looting and violence of Western capital. How then, to loot back without enshrining art’s value? If only to prove the anarchist dictum that property is in fact, and has always been, theft—and though the ideologies of modern art have attended to art’s exceptionality to/in capitalism—the foundations of modern art in Indigenous and working class dispossession make that exceptionality seem overstated at best. Given this historical context, could we say that looting is the theft of property that no longer presupposes the property-form?

\* \* \*

The legacy of Adorno’s claim to the problematic nature of the autonomy of art finds echoes in the neoliberal art world today, one that agrees with critical positions so long as they are articulated mimetically. In his 2018 remarks, director of the Whitney Museum Adam Weinberg defended (former) vice chair of the board Warren Kanders, notwithstanding his career as an investor and weapons manufacturer, as follows: “Even as we are idealistic and missionary in our belief in artists ... the Whitney is first and foremost a museum. It cannot right all the ills of an unjust world, nor is that its role. Yet, I contend that the Whitney has a critical and urgent part to play in making sure that unheard and unwanted voices are recognized.” (The italics are ours) Today, Glenn Lowry employs a similar counterinsurgent tactic to discredit Strike MoMA, pointing to the museum’s commitments to “equity, diversity, and inclusion.”

The irony of this PR strategy—to open MoMA’s archives and wallets to historically oppressed and marginalized communities from whose exploitation they have also profited—is not lost on us. If only for the simple fact that the museum’s staff is already diverse, though many of those workers of color are concentrated in security, sanitation, and human resources. MoMA appears to be making the preparations necessary for the terms and stakes of this confrontation, wherein talks of diversity are but one element in a strategy of counter-insurgency. Seeing that decolonization is not a discourse on the universal, and that there is little point in engaging in a debate with MoMA’s current stewards, we détourn Marx and Engels in reply:

You are horrified at our intending to do away with private property. But in your existing society, private property is already done away with for nine-tenths of the population; its existence for the few is solely due to its non-existence in the hands of those nine-tenths. In one word, you reproach us with intending to do away with your property. Precisely so; that is just what we intend. Just as you view the disappearance of class property as the disappearance of aesthetic production itself, so the disappearance of class culture is, for you, identical with the disappearance of all culture. What you call culture is simply the place where power always finds accomplices.

## the university: last words

I am a black man number one, because I am against what they have done and are still doing to us; and number two, I have something to say about the new society to be built because I have a tremendous part in that which they have sought to discredit.

C. L. R. James

The epigraph stays the same. Let's review. There's a figure, now as much digital avatar as analogical body, that sometimes we call the subversive intellectual and other times the critical intellectual. We try to have sympathy with him because he is us when we are torn apart in the lonely complicity of the university relation. We don't dog him, because he's us; but he ain't us because us ain't Him, which is to say one, that one, that sovereign intellectual figure/shadow/glitch, tenured or untenured, adjunct or held, serially liked in his sad, self-acknowledged unlikeability, unloved but desired by those he abusively desires but cannot love. There's a question this over-representative man can't ask, let alone address, even when she's under-represented. It is a question concerning the general and differentiated impositions bearing down on workers in the university before and after the current crisis, whatever the current crisis may be. The question is this: How much of the academy's libidinal political economy is predicated on the fantasy of a liveable (individual) intellectual life? Such predication is both normal and normative. How could it be otherwise? That's the training; that's the discipline; that's the fucking model that administration and/in/of the professors and their apprentices give, not that we live it, because it's a fantasy for us even in our subversive criticality. Assertions of someone else's absolute privilege absolves no one who imagines they should be paid to study, as if the wage were half an honorific and half a right rather than all anti-communist insult, imposition and theft. The various misprisions of subversive criticality have as much to do with why what we do ain't fun as they have to do with why we can't make ends meet. The regulation of pleasure is essential to the war on subsistence. Fleshly and spiritual unsustainability, which are not so much imposed on the reality of individual bodies and minds but given in the very idea of them, form a range of

common differences, hierarchically arranged. It's not that the hierarchy isn't important to understand and analyze; it's just that it's not a physical condition so much as an effect of a metaphysical fantasy—the lone/ly moral-intellectual agent—and its various derivative and supportive institutions.

Let's keep reviewing by dusting of the antiquated phrase "job of work." When did a job of work become a job? What happens when the work and the job are disentangled? Is a job a unit of work? Is it a means to an end or a point in the direction of an end? Is it the end that means disrupt and defer? What do job and/or work have to do with labor and/or labor power? How do we keep the job from taking play out of work and work out of play? How do we keep work from rising to the status of "the work" or, higher still, "my work"? They regulate our work by owning and immiserating our jobs. And then they eliminate our jobs (the jobs being ours only insofar as we are theirs). The line between regulation and elimination is ever more insistently transgressed with every so-called crisis in the ongoing trajectory of the state of emergency. The elimination of the job comes hard on the regulation of work, but we see that hard coming as brutal counter-revolution only after it's gone, work having slipped through the fingers of our hands, which are shackled by grasping, doubly imposed upon us as inheritance, disease, job-related injury. Sadly, our feel for work, for practice, is slightened, obsessed as we all are and must be with the mechanics, economics and metaphysics of the job. The debt we owe but never promised is disappeared for credit. We merely pass and fail unless we keep practicing and reviewing.

The institution (the university, the prison, the hospital, the state) is regulatory; and regulation tends towards elimination. The university regulates certain kinds of theoretical and empirical, intellectual and sensual, study; the prison regulates mobility; the hospital regulates health; the state, of which these other institutions are apparatuses, regulates sociality, in general, by imposing the individuation it implies. These institutions do what they do unto the elimination of what they regulate. They lure those of us who are interested in these things into their regulatory snares by saying those snares are here to protect these

things, to provide them refuge within a general politico-economic structure/idea that neglects and abandons these things, while desiring and consuming the fruit of their owned instrumentalization. These dispositions are themselves effects of metaphysics, separability, or the metaphysics of separability. We gladly accept the invitation of Abigail Boggs, Eli Meyerhoff, Nick Mitchell, and Zach Schwartz-Weinstein to abolitionist university studies, by which we take them to mean, as well, study in and the study of the abolitionist university, and we recognize, along with them, that an abolitionist university would be kinda like an abolitionist prison or an abolitionist plantation. It would be where the generation of knowledge in the university—at the level of its form, content and practices—tends towards the knowing degeneration, disorganization and disequilibrium of the university.

When Arendt saw black studies, soul studies, as a threat to the university, she was giving our approach a (decidedly backhanded and dismissive) compliment it must continue to strive to deserve. Perhaps what she saw and feared in black studies was the animating, corrosive force of black study. What we want for black studies is that they aim for the degeneration of their object—which is western civilization and/as the shadow/specter of (even “our”) natal community—in the ongoing generation/approach of blackness (as anti- and ante-natal undercommonality). Now, we have to come to grips with the fact that what we want is seldom what we get. When we said that it can’t be denied that the university is a place of refuge for the subversive/critical intellectual, what we were saying is that the university is more like a refugee camp than a writers’ colony. We go there when it feels like there’s no place else to go, not because we have no people but because we’re looking for more of them, who are ours in different ways, through other texts, in deviant styles; but the fact that one fills out an application to get in doesn’t make it any less a non-resort of last resort. The destination imagined in individuated flight is a field of embattled futility where looking for your people becomes learning to be (by) yourself. Let’s call the good student, who excels at elinquent, runaway self-discovery and self-expression, the fugitive intellectual, too. It’s just that this re-nomination doesn’t save the critical subversive from himself once

he discovers how he went to the university to be free from freedom’s carceral impositions, and/or that he was specially sent there to fight the man, and the drones he sends, and the drive that sent him. The university is a fortress whose various appearances—refuge and refugee camp, writer’s colony and colony—betray its deep, various, nefarious functions as well as the black operations we enact when our fallenness breaks through the floor of Dis’s thought castle, aerating and seeding the ground on which it stands, which is where the damned all gather, inseparable pando in pandemonium. The strange, sad thing about the subversive/critical/fugitive intellectual is that he all but can’t help but want unhappily to commit to the refugee camp in the hope of one or two glorious summer sojourns in the writer’s colony, held, in either case, in the insufficiency of the primary amenity they each distribute, which is separation misunderstood as reward. Only in the university can winning a fellowship mean access to solitude. Trained to want to stay there rather than fall through there, the better he is, the more he gets, the worse he feels. Hence a set of fantasies, ranging from transparency to blackening, held in relational solitary confinement that mistakes the restricted (re)forms of the academy’s general population for the revolutionary force of a general intellectual metæconomy that will have been forgiven in the subversion, criticism and fugitivity we share when we till in the morning, chop it up in the afternoon, and run the jam all night along.

This thing where you work for the abolition of the institution that you work for is nothing new. It happens under all kinds of coercive pressures and regimes, in the name of a general, generative, generous abolition—in the entanglement of growth and destruction in the very roots of the word—improvising its out and undergrounding (black) radicalism. It’s a generous, generative, general metæconomy, which institutionality restricts and regulates. The dream of a “free and ordered” space was always a waking trauma of sequestration and management. The university is generation’s cell. The marketplace of ideas is a battlefield. Even the open university was always an oxymoron, which some of us have proudly and generatively practiced like an annihilative, anorchestral score, cuts and scratches scarred and

dubbed unto a disappearance that hasn't happened yet because of the cuts and scarcity they impose. Being post-medieval doctors in good standing, we bleed the university in order to keep alive what we would kill. What emerges in this articulated, antagonistic combination is a temporary equilibrium, stasis as a kind of life support, a ventilator bearing both salvific and debilitating capacities. We are constrained to keep alive, under constraints that make what we are constrained to do impossible, a monster whose constant murder, which we intend, keeps us alive. And now, the university is just a dirty business and a state apparatus (for the imposition of policy), maybe most especially if it's private, though nowhere is the simple opposition between public and private more misleading. In the eclipse and subdivision, in the individuation of our dispossessive work into this or that bad job that you and I try desperately to own, we're a credential-granting front for finance capitalism and a machine for stratification. In other words, we're workers in and of study—which is, if it is study, black—insofar as we share a consensual condition. We are against what they have done and are still doing to us; and we have something to say about the new society to be built; and we share in that which they have sought to discredit. Therefore, you and I and the university have to disappear.

What does it mean, then, to work for an institution—the self, the university—whose disappearance you desire, particularly when the expression and refinement of that desire is the work you do? What does it mean to work against the institution you work for when your working against the institution is extracted by the institution as surplus? It's a real problem, in conditions of “freedom,” to work for the institution you work against. But that's a better problem than not working against the institution that works against us and our needs, and desires, and calling. We can work through the contradictions of working for and working against the university. It requires practicing non-cooperation rather than petitioning for shared governance. It requires generative, degenerative generosity, not the citational affirmations and shady dismissals of intellectual property management. We're not stakeholders in the university. Let's not share in its governance. We are neither producers

nor consumers of intellectual property. Let's not enact its management. And why should we want to hear from the motherfuckers who run it as they tell us why they have no choice but to run it like they do? Most people know they are in an antagonistic relation with their boss. It's a fuck of a lot easier to think about how to grow in antagonism to the boss than to think about how to make the bosses' genocidally dysfunctional shit job—the management he imposes upon us as weight and role—better. Why should we make their job better, or easier? Let's be glad to grow in the ongoing project of destroying their shit. Let's refuse to make do in the maintenance of their shit. Our work, not their jobs.

See, one way to answer the question, what is the undercommons? is that it is the discredited thing we have had a tremendous part in. But we have to be careful about what has in fact been discredited, and to distinguish it from what is only the job, which is to say the role play, the character. Because the university is an integral part and prime example of the experience economy. It is integral because it is where students and faculty learn to subordinate necessarily shared experience to the collective individuation machine of the experience economy, and it is a prime example because it incorporates so many aspects of the experience economy—sports, dining, dwelling, socializing, and co-branding (i.e., the students brands himself as, say, Northwestern's and Northwestern, through the student, brands itself repeatedly as Northwestern).

In other examples of the experience economy, precisely because they are not taken so seriously, the role player knows he or she is in a role, and the role delivers a purchased, packaged “experience” designed to simulate what is depleted, extracted, exploited, denigrated, and alienated in the quotidian world of work, (anti-)social reproduction, and (anti-)social life, that is to say the very forces the experience economy is designed to further by way of false remediation. In other words, the worker who puts on the Mickey Mouse costume at Disneyland, or the worker who paints themselves even whiter to be Snow White, knows they are delivering a paid experience. This is not to say they cannot take pleasure in a

conceptualized within an ongoing process of hoarding and irrational reproducing space and/as financial assets that is also called New York University. The credential business provides a more or less steady stream of capital (unless you get some kind of manmade natural disaster, say, in the form of a novel virus riding the blinds of globalization + the necessarily racist, misogynist and anti-black machinations of a capitalist “health care system”), which funds the (anti-)intellectual front and generally provides a surplus that is recognized and then deployed as financial asset. There is a board that runs the set of businesses called NYU and its primary objective is to optimize the leveraging of those assets not only to increase the value of the other assets they control, as their understanding of their interests commands, but also at the command of a system of accumulation which continues monstrously and masterfully to deploy the ge(n)ocidally bullshit idea of interests. The board that controls the businesses called NYU dictates terms to the administrators of the front called NYU. The job of those administrators is to oversee the dispersal of their job, to turn our work into their job, which is subdivided into the jobs NYU faculty rent, along with the apartments they rent if they are gifted with the privilege, which accrues to those on the tenure track, to pay a massive tax for the gift/privilege of teaching there, having exchanged the consensual intellectual debt we share for the individual academic credit they extend and the credentials they sell and use as tools of exclusion and hierarchization.<sup>1</sup> These university administrators distribute scarcity and manage insurgency (i.e., socio-aesthetic intellectual innovation against the state and, more generally, the static), which is extracted, (re)conceptualized and financialized by and for the businesses. When they distribute scarcity and manage insurgency, they do so by way of the constant imposition not simply of the effects but also of the labor of administration, which we sanction, and for which we clamor, under the name of shared governance. We say we want to be consulted and The Provost consults us, listening to us eloquently respond to her everlasting no until we walk away from the consultation unsatisfied, having been turned, just as we asked, into her consultants. We are immersed in the sick feeling of having been alienated from the

insurgency that we reproduce and that sick feeling resolves into a kind of resentment we direct at the crabs who are one or two levels above and/or below us in a barrel which is so bad, as barrels go, that it seems like it's not that bad. That condition adds a measure of guilt—usually expressed as philanthropic pseudo-solidarity with the unbarrel'd—to the sick feelings in which we are immersed. Fuck sharing governance, or the slightly more equitable distribution of extracted surplus; let's share needs.

Why the fuck should we want to lower administrative salaries rather than eliminate administration? Defund the police ain't the same as fuck the police. If detached from a general insurgency that it is ours, too, to practice and not simply describe, then members of the faculty *are* members of the administration, playing the role of its guilty conscience, good cops cleaning up the bad cops' mess then helping them get their story straight before throwing subadministrative shade back at the administrative suite on the way home, after work, at whatever faculty cop bar, and then going home to work some more, is neither fun nor productive nor destructive. So, fuck that. For there is a general imperative to refuse administration. The question is: how do we eliminate administration not only as this or that person or set of people filling this or that job or set of jobs but also as a mode of existence, as an attitude, as a kind of climate in which the job—the role, the character, the managed, manufactured “experience”—overshadows our work? Fuck every possible appeal to the bosses insofar as the rhetorical demand, the mere petition, is their protein shake; and fuck the acceptance of the university as limit or horizon. The enslaved didn't seek the reform but the elimination of the plantation. Via the patient, breathed accretion of the general strike, they advanced the long project of eroding it from the inside, which, now, we must extend, because the plantation never died but multiplied. The enslaved, who shared the advantage of knowing they were enslaved, worked and organized where they were but outside of any sense or imperative of a spatio-temporal coordinate that both established and bound their “personhood” or “subjectivity.” They practiced an anti- and ante-administrative ministry for defense and sacred and profane enjoyment. They didn't just utter but also practiced the

insurgency that we reproduce and that sick feeling resolves into a kind of resentment we direct at the crabs who are one or two levels above and/or below us in a barrel which is so bad, as barrels go, that it seems like it's not that bad. That condition adds a measure of guilt—usually expressed as philanthropic pseudo-solidarity with the unbarrel'd—to the sick feelings in which we are immersed. Fuck sharing governance, or the slightly more equitable distribution of extracted surplus; let's share needs.

Why the fuck should we want to lower administrative salaries rather than eliminate administration? Defund the police ain't the same as fuck the police. If detached from a general insurgency that it is ours, too, to practice and not simply describe, then members of the faculty *are* members of the administration, playing the role of its guilty conscience, good cops cleaning up the bad cops' mess then helping them get their story straight before throwing subadministrative shade back at the administrative suite on the way home, after work, at whatever faculty cop bar, and then going home to work some more, is neither fun nor productive nor destructive. So, fuck that. For there is a general imperative to refuse administration. The question is: how do we eliminate administration not only as this or that person or set of people filling this or that job or set of jobs but also as a mode of existence, as an attitude, as a kind of climate in which the job—the role, the character, the managed, manufactured “experience”—overshadows our work? Fuck every possible appeal to the bosses insofar as the rhetorical demand, the mere petition, is their protein shake; and fuck the acceptance of the university as limit or horizon. The enslaved didn't seek the reform but the elimination of the plantation. Via the patient, breathed accretion of the general strike, they advanced the long project of eroding it from the inside, which, now, we must extend, because the plantation never died but multiplied. The enslaved, who shared the advantage of knowing they were enslaved, worked and organized where they were but outside of any sense or imperative of a spatio-temporal coordinate that both established and bound their “personhood” or “subjectivity.” They practiced an anti- and ante-administrative ministry for defense and sacred and profane enjoyment. They didn't just utter but also practiced the

demand, and all but all of the time, when they did utter it, they were righteously, fugitively, fugally, selflessly talking to and amongst themselves, under duress that is beyond calculation and description. We think about how they lived through and how they lived on not because we have any hope of establishing a grammar adequate to that suffering but because their suffering and their practice are the anagrammatical poetics of our rebellion. The immeasurably narrow margin upon which black study might be in but not of the university has no room for the black student, let alone the black professor, insofar as both, in their individuation, are hosts for the oxymoronic plague of black administration, which professional, academic black studies tends to operationalize in spite of every possible good intention. Whatever vision we have of the university should begin with what we can practice, independent of what administration will or can or can't and will not grant. Let's criminally misinterpret the university. Let's cut it till we can't see it and then cut where it was.

Faculty and students and staff have the means of intellectual production. Now, all we have to do is want what we have. Let's stop violating those means, and the sharing of them, by engaging in abusive and extractive rituals of pseudo-intellectual governance, which are, in themselves, always unsatisfying. If faculty want their share in, rather than the eradication of administration, which is the governance of the bullshit that goes on outside the classroom, and students want a share of that power to trickle on down to them, both while relinquishing at the drop of any muhfuckin' hat the capacity to shape what goes on where the actual work is done, then we gotta learn how to want to be some other way, in those ways otherwise than normative academic being, which we share in relative unawareness with all who work to maintain the barest possibilities and necessary infrastructures of study in the university. Now, pitifully, we seem to want it one way instead of the other ways under a true but fictitious flag of economic necessity that relinquishes all that might be given in the sharing of needs. But there's something in the other ways through things. Fuck office hours,

classes and exams, all of which are serial and simulated monogamous situations for the enactment of the weak abusive power of the professor and the strong abusive power of the university, and the weak extractive power of the student and the strong extractive power of the university. They are tools of necessarily degraded and degrading identification, and sometimes counter-identification, with faculty, with administration and, ultimately, with the university. The identification with the fucking university is almost as bad as the counter-identification against the fucking university, which is almost as bad as the identification with the fucking university.

Is the difference between *satyagrah* and civil disobedience like the difference between non-cooperation and the demand for (transparency, equity and) shared governance? Why does Gandhi keep a kind of respectful distance from Thoreau even in his translational (ab)use of the term “civil disobedience,” while Arendt creates a kind of identification that weakens, ultimately, the essential force, the soul force, of non-cooperation? Non-cooperation refuses both consultation and confrontation to the extent that it is, in the first instance, not directed towards the bosses. If consultation is the fetish of this or that AAUP executive committee, then confrontation is the kink of non-general strikers. Either way, all energy is directed towards the bosses and our own sociality is residual, derivative, threadbare etiolation of social aid and pleasure. Power seeks our attention; we have to refuse their extraction of it. For all who crave either consultation or confrontation, for all who only feel alive when they’re face to face with the man who is sent by the drive, remember that the drones who are sent by the man who is sent by the drive will absolutely come to claim our eye when we do what we do and selflessly practice what we preach to us, for us.

Unfortunately, as has become clear over the past few weeks in predictable, because they have been oft repeated, ways, this or that rhetorico-political stance on decoloniality or expression of solidarity with suffocated black lives breathes reformist air into a dying machine. On the other hand, the practice of anti-coloniality and anti-antiblackness tends

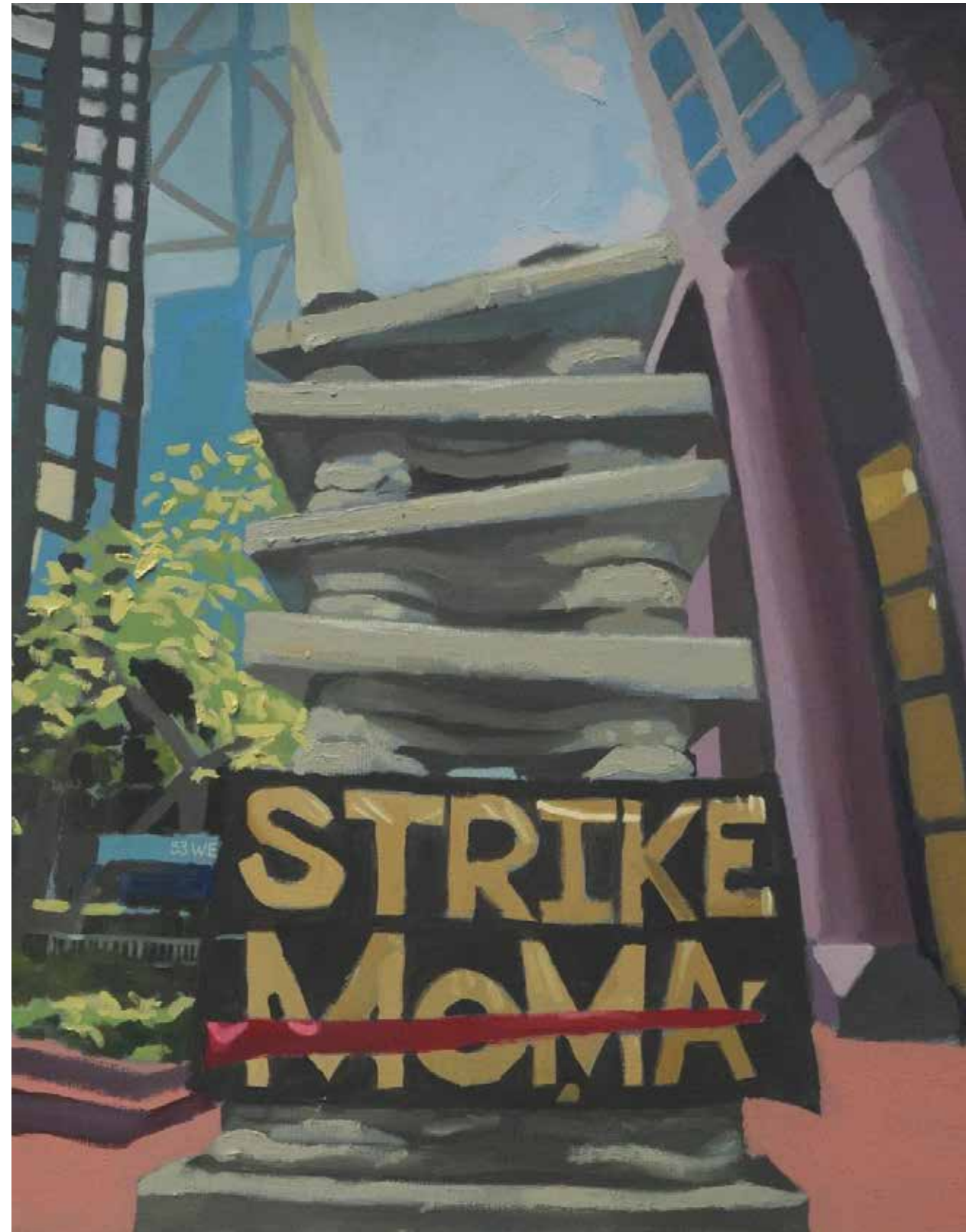
towards and is given in a general strike, an affirmative blow that is delivered, with increasing effectiveness the less the object of that strike or blow is our focal point. Can we resist the logico-neurotics of the demand as mere expression, mere petition? Rather than being a speech act whose perlocutionary effect will have been to convince the citizen of his own existence, the demand is a practice that will have been illegible to normal political psychology. In their teaching, Douglass and Fanon excavate an alternative meaning of demand that liberal academic posture and performance abjure and suppress. The expression of solidarity in the absence of the practice of solidarity is some similarly thin, hot air. Fuck the name and the game of honor. Fuck the future of the university. Please stop worrying about that shit so we can worry (till, tease, turn over, chew over, chop up and fret) the practice of our presence. No promises from the university, no demands on the university, just the presence of our practice in love and battle, in and through its ruins, on the other side of its dying gasps and last words.

---

<sup>1</sup> NYU housing is not subsidized housing. It’s company housing. But it’s not even that since real estate is such a fundamental part of NYU as a set of businesses and as a reservoir of financial capital. Or, if it is subsidized housing it’s because we subsidize them, which is why the rent strike must accompany the labor action and why the demand to be paid must be accompanied by the refusal to pay. What is a general strike and what are the rent strike and the labor action within and as an emanation of that generative generality? The general strike is when we mobilize our needs, take them seriously as wealth—as shifting/shifted, historical essence, even, rather than as some depression from which we are trying to arise, or some deficit we are always trying to overcome, or some crisis we are attempting to (out)face, on the path to completeness or self-sufficiency. We should do so by way of the insight Marx has and shares in his definition of wealth in the *Grundrisse*. It’s an insight worth having and sharing because it is common, because it actually makes Marx into something like (ir)regular

earthly folks rather than a great (European) thinker. *We need* to generate our own strike fund out of the way we go, and the fact that we go, on strike—to withhold from them and share with us for social aid and pleasure and the cultivation of people’s needs. We need simply to refuse the condition in which the university both neglects our needs and extracts the collective wealth that is given in those needs as surplus. The landscape of need is dark and lovely.

– Fred Moten and Stefano Harney



Eddie Arroyo



# Cops Out of CUNY!

– Free CUNY + Rank and File Action (RAFA)

As the [Strike MoMA](#) insurgency revealed in Spring 2021, policing and state repression structure the overseeing of cultural institutions like the Museum of Modern Art, such as board member [Larry Fink's support for the New York City Police Foundation](#) among other board members' ties to war profiteering, vulture funds, gentrification, and beyond. This argument rightly extends to how universities also contain and repress communities under the guise of "higher learning," which shields the sordid dealings of its administrators and justifies the violence of campus policing.

At the City University of New York (CUNY), a tradition over half a century old of radical solidarity between students, faculty, staff, and our multi-ethnic working poor communities has contested the legitimacy of policing in our campuses and neighborhoods, and colonialism more broadly. We recognize that creating an abolitionist counter-university within—to go beyond—the carceral university in part means contrasting the needs of students and campus workers with those of the administration, campus police, and U.S. settler-colonial state. The following action report and historical analysis documents our approaches to abolitionist complicity-building—via an emerging ecosystem of studies/actions whose relationships and strategies are essential pre-conditions to deeper sustained uprisings—from which we hope readers in other contexts can gain inspiration.

## Abolitionist Studies from our Streets to Living Rooms

On May 14, 2021, students, staff, faculty, and community accomplices enacted a "Cops Out of CUNY!" (Re)Orientation Mobile Tour, one of dozens of actions around the city and across the country with the [Abolition May](#) campaign [co-ordinated](#) by the Cops Off Campus Coalition. Starting at the Hunter College [Audre Lorde Building](#), our group swarmed through Central Park to John Jay College and the CUNY Police headquarters, hearing testimonies by the Bronx Student Strike Committee, [Brooklyn College Anti-Racist Coalition](#),

[CUNY for Abolition and Safety](#), [Free CUNY](#), [North Bronx Collective](#), [NYC 4 Abortion Rights](#), [Rank and File Action \(RAFA\)](#), and [Save Center for Puerto Rican Studies "Centro" Coalition](#).

Participants decried the allocation of tens of millions of dollars in university resources for policing and surveillance, and called for the abolition of campus policing and for reinvestment in Ethnic, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, free tuition, childcare, housing, and food, among many urgent needs. Free CUNY organizer Lucien Baskin, the final speaker in the "Cops Out of CUNY!" tour, identified the conditions of synergy that inspire our work ahead:

Solidarity is essential. Our organizing at CUNY must breach the walls of the university to join forces with other struggles in the city. We need to understand CUNY organizing as city organizing. And we must scale up and see our liberation as connected with liberation in Philly and Bedford Hills and Gaza. The calls to free Palestine, free CUNY, and free all political prisoners are deeply interconnected and central to our work of getting cops out of CUNY and off all campuses and indeed off earth. Support these struggles: The [Jericho Movement](#) works to free political prisoners, many of whom have defense campaigns, such as Mumia Abu-Jamal, Leonard Peltier, Dr. Mutulu Shakur, Jalil Muntaqim, and minister Jamil Al-Amin. The [Release Aging People in Prison \(RAPP\) campaign](#) works right here in New York to free our elders. [Samidoun](#) is working for the liberation of Palestinian student organizers who have been incarcerated by the Israeli state. In the tradition of CUNY students Assata Shakur and Guillermo Morales, we say fuck the police and free all political prisoners.

This action occurred in the wake of last summer's Black Lives

Matter mobilizations and calls to defund and abolish the police, the largest racial justice movement seen in decades that galvanized an array of [anti-racist demands co-created by students, faculty, and staff to transform CUNY](#). Also in May 2021, during Israel's eviction sweep and asymmetrical bombing of Gaza, a flurry of CUNY [statements in solidarity with Palestine](#) and the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement emerged. Then in September, the newly formed Cross-CUNY Working Group Against Racism and Colonialism launched an extensive online [speakers' series](#) to link these Palestine solidarity initiatives at CUNY to broader global struggles. Together, we considered the coalitional words of CUNY poet-teacher [June Jordan](#), "I was born a Black woman / and now / I am become a Palestinian / against the relentless laughter of evil / there is less and less living room / and where are my loved ones? / It is time to make our way home."

## Historical Context of CUNY Police Repression

For much of its history before the 1960s, CUNY was mostly of European descent, tuition-free, and free of police presence. However, a nationwide trend of campus policing was already being established by Ivy League universities. According to the historian [Eddie R. Cole](#), "Campus policing is rooted in conflicts between institutions of higher education and the Black neighborhoods near where they are often located. And tensions between universities and Black communities are rooted in deep-seated discriminatory policies in housing." In the 1960s, CUNY campus police began to actively repress newly admitted Black and Puerto Rican liberation movements, as well as anti-war, anti-capitalist, and housing justice campus organizing. After a wave of late 1960s Black and Puerto Rican student-led direct actions led to the university's 1970 Open Admissions desegregation policy and Ethnic Studies inclusion, CUNY began to charge tuition and expand campus policing.

CUNY "Public Safety" receives training and is closely tied to the NYPD, a police department with a proven record of racist violence. In 1992, during the height of the "war on drugs," broken windows policing and pro-carceral politics, a [memorandum of understanding](#) was signed between CUNY and the NYPD that grants the NYPD access to campuses—risking the safety of Black and Brown students, including undocumented students. In 1996, CUNY admitted to deploying an armed "elite team" of 33 CUNY security officers to surveil,

videotape, and crowd-control students. The NYPD's racist and Islamophobic conduct on CUNY campuses [was exposed in 2011](#) when the Associated Press revealed that NYPD undercover officers had infiltrated CUNY Muslim student groups and surveiled Muslim students for several years.

CUNY cops continue to be deployed to repress students' and campus workers' political activities. In 2010, in response to student protests against tuition hikes, Hunter College police refused entrance to anyone who did not immediately display Hunter identification, locking students and staff out of school for hours. In [2011](#), Baruch College campus officers beat and arrested students, faculty, and staff with batons during another protest against a 5-year tuition increase. At a 2019 protest against tuition hikes, CUNY cops again [used force](#) to intimidate students, faculty, and staff including by arresting and detaining a student without justification. In a January 2020 call for FTP actions, Free CUNY teamed up with [People's Cultural Plan](#) and [Teens Take Charge](#) to host a student speak-out—"Cops Out of Our Schools and Subways"—at the front steps of the NYC Department of Education (DOE), which has the fifth largest police force in the nation.

## Impacts of CUNY Policing Today

Like the NYC DOE, every CUNY campus [spends](#) more on campus policing than on student counseling. Hunter College student Moll Daniels explains, "The funding of policing on campuses across CUNY allocates millions of dollars every year to a system that harms students, faculty, staff, and communities CUNY occupies. During the pandemic, Kingsborough Community College president Claudia Schrader opted to cut funding for the vital campus urban farm but continue funding the surveillance and policing of students. Students don't need to be harassed and surveilled: They need access to fully funded Ethnic Studies departments, mental health counselors, academic advising services, fresh and accessible food, and more."

The specific attack on Ethnic Studies across CUNY demonstrates a slow counter-insurgency campaign by the administration and its police since these studies were implemented by campus occupations and other mass disruptions over half a century ago. A recent \$10-million Mellon Foundation-funded "[Black, Race, and Ethnic Studies Initiative](#)" grant is juxtaposed with declining Black and Latinx student enroll-

ment; a barrage of cuts to Ethnic, Gender, and Sexuality Studies; and a funding freeze of the hiring and retention of faculty and staff of colors (in particular, women and gender non-conforming). Hunter College alumna Linda Luu argues, "The administration's lack of investment prevents Ethnic Studies programs like Hunter's Asian American Studies Program from supporting and mentoring their students. This precarity is a reflection of the political priorities of the colleges, for whom policing budgets are secure and untouchable. From 2014 to 2018, the [Coalition for the Revitalization of Asian American Studies at Hunter](#) (CRAASH)'s protests and visible presence on campus were frequently disrupted by the Hunter police and the NYPD. Cops on campus are tools the administration uses to stifle student voices, particularly those demanding a different order of the university."

John Jay College, in particular, plays an important role in further entrenching CUNY's relations with the police and carceral state, with free tuition and stipends for students enrolled in programs that train the city's current and future cops as well as prison guards. John Jay's 2020-21 student government president Amber Rivero explains, "John Jay is directly complicit in the harm that plagues Black, Brown, and minoritized communities through its relationship with so many institutions that perpetuate violence in the name of public safety. In order for students of color to feel safe in these spaces we first need a real commitment to decolonization and accountability in John Jay curriculum and more."

Various CUNY colleges also maintain relations with other racist institutions that police and inflict violence on working class, racialized communities at "home" and "abroad" including John Jay's Masters in Homeland Security, the CIA's recruitment program at Baruch and the military's Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) recruitment programs, which are housed at York and City Colleges, although students from any of CUNY's 25 campuses can participate in its programs. Even so, John Jay adjunct professor Marianne Madoré affirms, "#CopsOutofCUNY began many years ago, when Black and Puerto Rican students in the 1960s led the struggle for Open Admissions. They occupied buildings, rallied, mobilized their communities, and faced arrests and police beatings. Today their courage gives us strength."

### Nurturing Complicities

Free CUNY—the student-led group that spearheaded the

May 14 action as part of a larger horizon toward an anti-racist, liberatory, tuition-free CUNY—has navigated a rowdy 2020-2021 academic year in which a [tuition strike threat](#); [mutual aid funds](#); a campaign to [revitalize Ethnic, Gender, and Sexuality Studies](#); mobilizing with NYC [anti-fracking direct actions](#); and solidarity with [Palestinian](#) and [South African](#) students contrasted with the CUNY administration's woefully inadequate handling of the pandemic and its most impacted communities.

Rank and File Action—a group of militant campus workers challenging the culture of austerity in higher education and demanding a more democratic fighting union—is coalescing traction across CUNY through [strike readiness trainings](#), solidarity with the ongoing [Columbia University strike](#), creating [anti-colonial and anti-racist union cultures](#), organizing against [university debt](#), and beyond, as chronicled in a [monthly newsletter](#) that shows the potential for coordinated power by all of those who produce our university every day from below.

Like our predecessors over fifty years ago, we demand that it's time to get cops off campus and redirect resources to foster learning and the actual holistic care of our communities that comprise CUNY, NYC, and indeed the world. Our vision more broadly jettisons the existing confines of the university, even as we refuse to abandon CUNY as a strategic site of transformation by forging bonds of solidarity between students, faculty, staff, and our communities inside and outside of prisons.

CUNY and NYC's populations are composed of a broad array of communities who have been displaced by colonialism and imperialism. To borrow the words of Sri Lankan/British Marxist A. Sivanandan: "We are here because you were there." People from Palestine, Puerto Rico, Hawaii, the Philippines, Guam, Indigenous communities from the Americas and Caribbean, along with all of our siblings in the Third World/Global South, are the majority of CUNY and our city. We also have principled European and Jewish accomplices who struggle alongside us. When we entwine our opposition to policing with the multi-faceted potential of our university and city to become a model for broader anti-colonial resistance—through developing long-term strategies and organizational power—then we can together celebrate the end of policing and colonialism.

### WHY DO WE WANT #COPSOUTOFCUNY?

CUNY was cop-free for over a hundred years!

CUNY first hired officers after a large number of Black and brown students enrolled in CUNY following the implementation of Open Admissions in 1970.

Join us in exploring the various relationships CUNY has with the police / carceral state.

The following examples are meant to highlight (a few) ways CUNY reproduces and extends the logics of accumulation, settler colonialism, capitalism and Empire.

A few examples of policing and surveillance of CUNY community members and communities CUNY campuses occupy:

- Campus police cooperate with NYPD and the government to surveil and intimidate/threaten Muslim and Arab students and student groups
- Campus police repress student, faculty, and staff organizing through surveillance and physical violence
- Campus police uphold whiteness in the university and beyond it by extending info, surveilling, and harassing Black and brown students AND the Black communities and communities of color surrounding CUNY campuses.

IG: @freecuny @rankandfileaction @cunyorabolition @cunyahqncproj

### COORDINATING THE REPRESSION

Campus police gained power in the 1960s in response to the rise of Black and Puerto Rican liberation movements on campus, as well as anti-war and anti-capitalist student organizing. The campus cops actively repressed these movements.

In the early 1990s, following a wave of student anti-austerity protests, CUNY created the Department of Public Safety (DPS) and replaced the campus police with NY state "peace officers," who are "authorized to make warrantless arrests and use physical and deadly force."

In 1992, during the height of the "war on drugs," broken windows policing and pro-carceral politics, CUNY signed a **Memorandum of Understanding** with the NYPD, granting the NYPD open access to campuses citywide.

Today, CUNY campus cops number over 700.

IG: @freecuny @rankandfileaction @cunyorabolition @cunyahqncproj

### CUNY upholds policing through SURVEILLANCE

Throughout CUNY history, students across all campuses have been continuously subjected to - and have risen up in resistance against - apparatuses of surveillance and carceral harassment.

CUNY admin admitted to deploying an armed "elite team" of 33 CUNY security officers to surveil, videotape, and crowd control students. This team gathered and shared intelligence files on student protesters in particular.

2011 An AP investigation revealed that the NYPD infiltrated CUNY Muslim student groups on campus by sending undercover agents. Despite this shocking breach of trust between students, faculty and the CUNY administration, Brooklyn College's President chose not to respond, and instead dismissed these concerns as beyond his responsibility.

Over 28,000 students successfully prevented CUNY admin from forcing them to pay \$16 for invasive computer monitoring software under the guise of "academic integrity."

1996

2020

IG: @freecuny @rankandfileaction @cunyorabolition @cunyahqncproj

### CUNY upholds policing through TRAINING

In 1965, CUNY opened the College of Police Science (COPS) renamed John Jay College of Criminal Justice in 1967. Since then, John Jay College's mission has been to train the city's current and future cops. John Jay's training programs target its majority working class, BIPOC student body with free tuition and stipends to work for the institutions of organized violence.

The Academic Preparation Program for Law Enforcement (APPLE) program, funded by the NYPD Cadet, offers a \$1,000 stipend each of the four years of college.

In partnership with the NYC Department of Corrections, the Cadet Education, Empowerment & Development for Success (CEEDS) program offers a \$5,000 stipend per semester towards tuition expenses to students who will become "the next generation of captains, wardens and chiefs."

IG: @freecuny @rankandfileaction @cunyorabolition @cunyahqncproj

### CUNY upholds policing by ACCUMULATION through DISPOSSESSION

The Hunter administration spends \$7,236,837 a year on "security" - the most out of all the CUNY campuses. Spending on policing is increasing at a time when cuts are being made to crucial programs that were fought for as part of the struggle to achieve racial justice and decolonize CUNY.

At Hunter, El Centro (the Center for Puerto Rican Studies) and the Asian American Studies Program are constantly fighting against defunding and threats of closure.

Hunter College funds:

- 1 cop for every 203 students
- 1 mental health counselor for every 2,899 students
- 1 academic advisor for every 1,104 students

IG: @freecuny @rankandfileaction @cunyorabolition @cunyahqncproj

### THE COST OF COPS

| 4-YEAR COLLEGES                   |                     |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------|
| Baruch                            | \$4,644,735         |
| Brooklyn                          | \$2,895,492         |
| City College                      | \$3,671,405         |
| City Tech                         | \$1,825,761         |
| CUNY                              | \$2,472,795         |
| Hunter                            | \$7,236,837         |
| John Jay                          | \$4,159,749         |
| Lehman                            | \$2,910,970         |
| MCC                               | \$1,983,359         |
| Queens                            | \$1,794,565         |
| York                              | \$2,556,024         |
| COMMUNITY COLLEGES                |                     |
| BCC                               | \$2,396,812         |
| BKCC                              | \$4,825,777         |
| CUNY                              | \$657,499           |
| Hunter                            | \$7,445,555         |
| MCC                               | \$2,394,359         |
| LaGuardia                         | \$5,449,450         |
| OCC                               | \$2,716,954         |
| GRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL SCHOOLS |                     |
| Graduate Center                   | \$1,547,787         |
| Law School                        | \$264,240           |
| School of Journalism              | \$1,916,558         |
| School of Professional Studies    | \$457,525           |
| School of Public Health           | \$70,547            |
| School of Labor and Urban Studies | N/A                 |
| CUNY Central                      | \$7,464,739         |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                      | <b>\$64,109,473</b> |

IG: @freecuny @rankandfileaction @cunyorabolition @cunyahqncproj

# MoMA Hesitant

Harry Burke

1.

In her remarkable essay "History Hesitant" (2015), Lisa Lowe [addresses](#) the lingering afterlives of slavery and colonialism in the liberal present. Lowe's title references W. E. B. Du Bois's paper "Sociology Hesitant" (1905), which powerfully [critiques](#) the entanglement of European positivist philosophical methods within imperial agendas of expansion and extraction. Building on the work of Du Bois and Saidiya Hartman, Lowe interprets history not just as a record of the past, but as an index that, when read ideologically, can clarify or obfuscate contemporary power relations. As a means to query disciplinary attachments, hesitation opens "a space, a different temporality" that might enable us to consider "the connections that could have been but were lost and are thus not yet—before we conceive the freedoms yet to come." Lowe outlines a historical method, in other words, that pauses to reckon with structures of erasure, rather than rushes to recover what has been lost.

For Lowe, the archive is a critical site of inquiry that prescribes "the possibilities and limits of knowledge." In like manner, the conversation, art and action catalyzed under the banner of Strike MoMA spotlights the museum's ongoing enclosure of ways of knowing and being. In an effort to theoretically contextualize these activities, this brief text positions the museum of modern art as an archetype of dispossessive property relations and settler-colonial spatial production. To destabilize this format, I suggest, is to prepare a ground for other possible models for nurturing and disseminating art.

"The settler owes the fact of his very existence," [writes](#) Frantz Fanon, "that is to say, his property, to the colonial system." Similarly reflecting on ontology and property (and, like Lowe, the contingency of history), Ariella Aïsha Azoulay's *Potential History* (2019) [shows](#) how modes of being and owning are elided in the plundered inventory of the museum. This wide-ranging book traces a haunting imperial dialectic of "carelessness for people" justified by "extra care for their expropriated objects." What is valorized and collected as modern culture, Azoulay clarifies, has the destruction of other ecologies as its precondition. Azoulay's work, like Lowe's, follows a lineage of Black radical critique that has situated slavery, as Du Bois [illustrates](#) in *Black Reconstruction* (1935), not as a transgression of liberal democracy, but as its central and chronic contradiction.

In tune with these discussions, Indigenous studies scholars have critiqued the "primitive" disposition of Karl Marx's concept of "primitive accumulation"—which identifies capital's origination in transparently violent mechanics like war and colonialism yet doesn't attend to the complex recursiveness of this process—in order to describe settler colonialism not as an occurrence in a foreclosed past but as a continuous and adaptive system. Drawing from Patrick Wolfe's oft-quoted [observation](#) that settler colonialism is "a structure not an event," Alyosha Goldstein [contends](#) that "settler colonialism is not so much an 'event' or a static relationship as a condition of possibility that remains formative while also changing over time." Jodi Byrd, Goldstein, Jodi Melamed and Chandan Reddy, meanwhile, [consider](#) the sustained abstractions engendered by accumulation to be descriptive of what they term "economies of dispossession." By analyzing dispossession as a "relation of taking and violence that works at once to produce and delimit subjectivation, property, and value," these authors underscore "the constitutive and continuing role of both colonization and racialization for capitalism."

Taken together, these Black and Indigenous intellectual traditions confront the ongoingness of unfreedom and its dispossessions in the liberal present. By holding these traditions simultaneously, works by [Brenna Bhandar](#), [Byrd](#), [Glen Coulthard](#), [Denise Ferreira da Silva](#), [Manu Karuka](#), [Tiffany Lethabo King](#), [Lowe](#), [Melamed](#) and other authors advance significant critiques of the discourses of history, political economy, and law, pointing the way toward knowledges grounded in land and relation rather than expropriative accumulation.

What might it mean then for art to abolish its present conditions of possibility? Translating these theoretical accounts into praxis, movements for PIC abolition, reparations and Indigenous land back guide communities toward what Byrd

et al. regard as "alternatives that are both transformative and realizable and," significantly, "already manifest and discernable." For these authors, such alternatives endure as "grounded relationalities" that emerge in coexistence with the land, as an interconnectivity "that exceed[s] liberal conceptions of the human." After all, as Ruth Wilson Gilmore [states](#): "Abolition is about presence, not absence. It's about building life-affirming institutions." In an aesthetics of presence, the abolishment of the museum—[lyricized](#) in the refrain of "fuck MoMA"—uplifts the lively cultural abundance of grounded relationalities. Such spaces of emergence—which can take the form of strikes, collectivity, DIY publishing, mutual aid, study, prayer, hanging out, and/or other modes yet to be imagined—extend the horizon of abolition beyond that of the museum of modern art to that of the apparatus of dispossession. They stretch the scope and duration of hesitation to unsettle the values of modernity itself.

2.

On Friday, May 14, 2021, as Israel escalated its military occupation of Palestine through aerial bombardment of Gaza, over 300 people assembled in New York's Urban Plaza for a teach-in titled "All Eyes on Palestine," hosted by Strike MoMA and the Palestinian-led organization Within Our Lifetime. Staged one day prior to the 73rd annual commemoration of the Nakba—the as yet unending "catastrophe"—this located Palestine's more than a century-long struggle for freedom within a network of colonial and imperial architectures stretching from Puerto Rico to Sheikh Jarrah. Midway through the event, a Palestinian comrade was assailed and beaten by the NYPD after stopping his car in the street outside MoMA, climbing on its roof and waving a Palestinian flag, consequently blocking traffic for, [Hyperallergic reported](#), "several minutes."

Wrapping up the teach-in, a Palestinian artist castigated members of the MoMA board of trustees—among them Larry Fink, Leon Black, Eyal Ofer and Edith Cooper—for their investments in the Israeli military apparatus. The artist was unswerving in her condemnation of the museum, exclaiming "fuck settler colonialism, fuck racial capitalism and fuck MoMA."

The teach-in took to the streets and marched to Midtown Precinct North, where a sit-in was orchestrated at the intersection of 54th St. and 8th Ave. Organizers demanded that information be shared about where the comrade was being held, and when he would be let go. After a half-hour, it was revealed that he was in this precinct, and would be released that evening. Over one hundred people remained for jail support, chatting, praying, eating and dancing dabke in the street until the comrade was free.

"The abolition of slavery should be followed by the abolition of the museum, the site where plunder continues to be cultivated as private property," [asserts](#) Azoulay. This does not annul art, but widens its possibilities, Strike MoMA insists. The teach-in's movement from the museum to the precinct enacted this. In chanting "fuck the U.S. war machine, from Palestine to the Philippines" outside the modern art museum, the group staged a dialectical encounter with the dispossessive history of this institution. This was an "aesthetics of combat," [in the words of](#) Dylan Rodríguez. The dialectic was synthesized through the solidarity practiced outside the precinct. Jail support is community care. The evening's improvised assembly theorized the struggles to abolish the prison- and military-industrial complexes, abolish the museum, and free Palestine as entwined. "Today was a victory for our community here, and inshallah within our lifetime the victory of a liberated Palestine will come," [announced](#) Within Our Lifetime.

Israel's occupation of Palestine, and ethnic genocide therein, epitomizes, in Bhandar's words, "the temporally fragmented and nonlinear nature of the racial regimes of ownership that typify the settler colony." Perhaps because of its fragmentary character—and because its context, like in Turtle Island, Taiwan, West Papua, Puerto Rico and numerous fights globally, is an egregious example of settler-colonialism in the present tense—Palestinian uprising is an exemplary compass for [the wild beyond](#). The combative aesthetic possibilities of degrowth, collectivity, freedom dreaming and other post-MoMA futures find their bellwether in solidarity with Palestine. In the art industry as elsewhere, the time for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions is now.

At the end of the teach-in, a chant led by Within Our Lifetime [recalled](#) the Greek poet Dinos Christianopoulos: "They tried to bury us, but they didn't know we were seeds." These seeds are sprouting across Black, Indigenous and Palestinian geographies in the countless acts of sabotage and refusal that are reimagining the world we know.

## Midtown is Always Cold

Brynn Hatton

Written in response to the Palestine Strikes/Strike MoMA action of 5.21.2021 in NYC

In Midtown, it is perpetually cold, even during summer. The city zips itself up in between the interlocking teeth of airtight skyscrapers, blocking all light and unpredictable airflows from circulating freely. Land left to its own autonomous devices could never withstand these suffocating conditions. In the jargon of the elites in climate-controlled penthouses: coordinated sterilization becomes necessary to acclimatize to the constraints of environmental management. None of this is necessary or natural, but MoMA and its neighboring institutions of violence and accumulation brandish this kind of logic and lingo to make it seem necessary, inevitable, even. They pretend through displays of cultural patronage to be cleaning up the gigantic mess they made and spin it as public service.

MoMA is the cleanroom of middle Manhattan. MoMA and its surrounding area, void of communities and life other than global finance, mass media propaganda machines, and international policy think tanks, are safe spaces for the conservative oligarchy and the carceral state, which artists and dissenters to the art world's status quo have known, and have been saying, for decades. The modern imperialist can breathe freely here, can relax in the sealed and frigid chamber where preciousness reigns and precociousness is stripped of its sacred energies, then left to expire in cold storage. Can you imagine what it must feel like to be able to relax in here—to thrive here—in the bleak sharpness, where everything alive and lush comes to die in its right and proper place (according to some manic isolationist's conception of what is "right" and "proper")?

MoMA can only chemically and violently eliminate what it extracts as resources. It can only sanitize and prematurely age its young harvest. The contemporary art world, with MoMA at its center, punishes the natural impulse of cooperation between divergent formations that stand to uproot the cleanrooms and their tasks, and incentivizes competition between the resource-starved. MoMA runs on the starvation principle from top to bottom. Ask an underpaid intern, ask an unsalaried contract worker (like all the educators who were [fired last year](#)), ask a junior curator making \$40 thousand a year dragging half a million dollars in student loan debt behind them. The museum waits while the radical and necessary [breakdown](#) that emerges in this extreme environment still manages to nourish the most vibrant and resilient of human impulses in the form of creative care and new art. Then, when a tenuous sprout emerges against the odds, it is ripped out, expropriated, polished, and sold to the highest bidder.

Nonhuman species have evolved brilliantly over time to reach out beyond the exhausted conditions of their resource-stripped environments in order to survive. By [huddling together](#), as mice do in extreme cold temperatures, or by living very close to each other, as the [Three Sisters](#) crops of corn, beans, and squash do in American indigenous agriculture and foodways, organisms create cooperative superorganisms. This way of working in common can sometimes have the effect of generating completely augmented and improved environmental conditions for all involved. Mutual care runs directly counter to how economic conservatives twisted Darwin's research and propagated naturalizing myths like "survival of the fittest" as a capitalist anthem, a bad metaphor roundly touted by Rockefellers and Carnegies and other early twentieth century capitalists historically entangled with the American art-industrial complex.

The movement to abolish MoMA and the movement to liberate Palestine organize themselves together out of a mutual necessity to stay warm and bend toward the light in the neo-imperial cleanroom erected by the global ruling class. In 1967, before capitulating to illusory "peace" accords decades later, Yasir Arafat called cooperation across different fights "the struggle against [oppression everywhere](#)" when he indelibly linked the Palestinian and Vietnamese insurgencies against occupation in the collective imagination of the internationalist left. We do it now, when we raise signs on West 53<sup>rd</sup> Street linking Puerto Rico and Palestine, Tanzania and Yemen; and on the verso, cross out the names of the interlocking directorate of oppressors everywhere: ~~Paula and James Crown, Gustavo and Patricia Cisneros, Tananbaum, Blackwater, Daniel Och, The City, The University, The Museum.~~

In '67, Arafat encouraged the fedayeen to draw radical parallels between foreign and local experience, not because the equivalence was exact, nor the idea itself some kind of prepackaged political brand ready for didactic mass consumption. He did it because it was not obvious; but it also clearly communicated a reality and a common experience that was translatable and transmissible everywhere but had no official language to speak with yet. The connection across spatio-temporal locations and contexts must have felt nourishing to anyone living under the impossible conditions of colonial extraction and state violence. The vestiges of that familiar feeling are available now to any non-white, non-rich, non-capitalist walking through Midtown, wondering why it's so cold and dead in the center of the "greatest city on earth."

# Some Notes on John Szarkowski and the Work of Art in the Age of Settler-Colonization

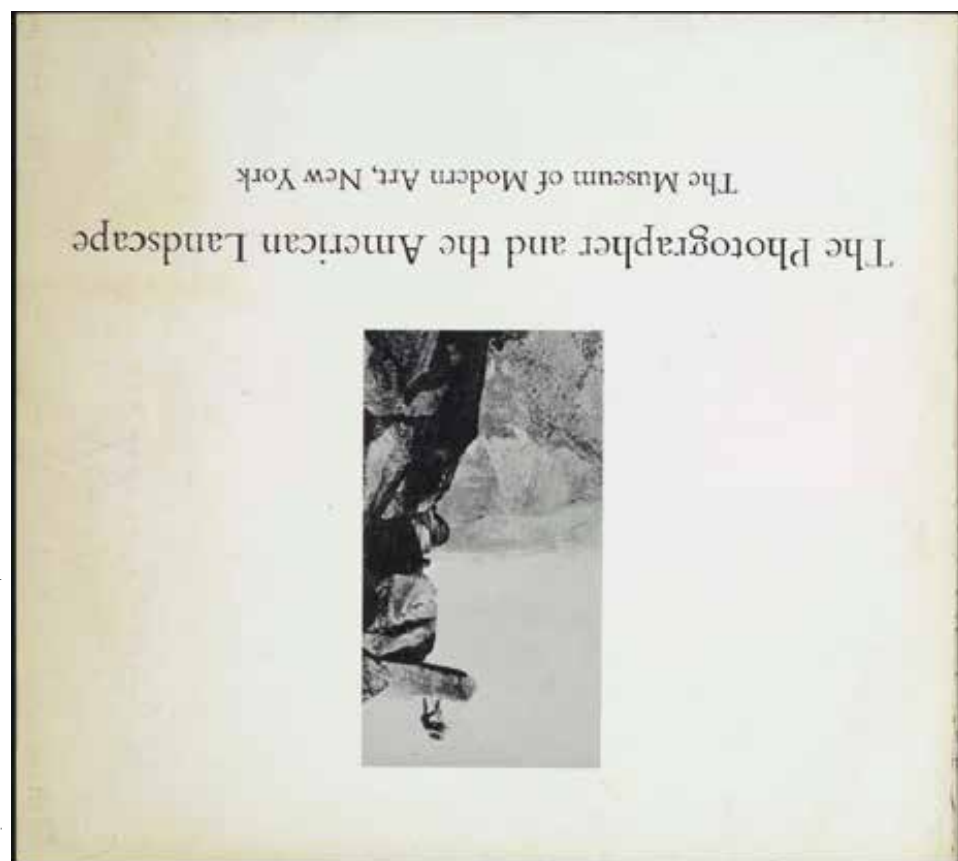
Strike MoMA Archival Research Unit

"In persuading a nation of park visitors that his seeing is their own [Ansel Adams] has perhaps helped to teach his countrymen to revere what remains of their native landscape."

-John Szarkowski, *The Photographer and the American Landscape*

"Viewed from the perspective of history, Yellowstone is a crime scene."

-David Treuer, "[Return the National Parks to the Tribes](#)"



In 1962, the photographer John Szarkowski was selected by Edward Steichen to become the chief photography curator at MoMA, a position he held until 1991. As *The New York Times* put it in a monumentalizing 2007 [obituary](#), Szarkowski "almost single-handedly elevated photography's status in the last half-century to that of a fine art."

Landscape played a crucial role in Szarkowski's project, exemplified by the first show he curated at MoMA—[The Photographer and the American Landscape](#) (1963). This show sought to legitimize then-contemporary photography (such as Ansel Adams' images of Yellowstone National Park) by highlighting its affinity with the "original" photographers of America: those embedded in the work of the post-Civil War U.S. military's geological surveys. Szarkowski subsumed the violent histories sealed in these photographs into an aesthetic plane, retroactively [projecting](#) on to them the ideals of modernist medium-specificity: "Simultaneously exploring a new subject and a new medium...This work was the beginning of a continuing, inventive indigenous tradition, a tradition motivated by the desire to explore and understand the natural site." Szarkowski's [settler modernist](#) project of reconciling "natural site" and an "indigenous tradition" was connected to a discourse of "wilderness" conservation founded on the erasure of Indigenous people and their ongoing resistance to dispossession and displacement. In the credits to the exhibition, we see thanks given both to the [Sierra Club](#) and [David Rockefeller](#) (who was heavily [involved](#) with the 'acquisition' and display of Indigenous arts from across [the world](#) at [MoMA](#) and beyond). This toxic triangulation of imperialism, modernism, and environmental management speaks to what could be called "the work of art in the age of settler-colonization," a phrase indicating not a singular history sealed in the past, but rather an antagonistic structure of the [settler colonial present](#) in which Indigenous movements and their [arts of liberation](#) are met with various forms of soft and hard [counterinsurgency](#).

Wilderness ideology was central to the trajectory of Szarkowski prior to his career at MoMA. As we learn from the [MoMA archives](#), when hired by Steichen, Szarkowski was undertaking a photographic survey of the so-called Quetico-Superior Wilderness region in northern Minnesota, [Anishinaabe \(Ojibwe\) lands](#) divided by the colonial border with Canada. Szarkowski visited the region while completing [The Face of Minnesota](#) (1958), a best-selling photo-book commissioned by the state of Minnesota to commemorate its 100-year anniversary (1858), the genocidal iconography of which remains displayed on the [state seal](#) to this day. Szarkowski had trained as a museum photographer at the Walker Center in Minneapolis, named for [T.B. Walker](#), a timber baron and toxic philanthropist whose fortune was made through land grabs in Northern Minnesota, and whose private [art collection](#) was converted into a "public" museum during the New Deal. Celebrating the "pioneer spirit" of Minnesota as a settler entity, the book alternates between physiognomic portraits of white settler-types (farmers, miners, lumberjacks, fishermen), industrial sites, and the curative "wilderness" of the northern border region, including what would become [Voyageurs National Park](#) following years of advocacy by an [associate](#) of Szarkowski's in the area. Several images of Native people appear as well, with captions like "This was a wild land...but now the land has been conquered." The book massified and normalized the white mythologies of settler society, helping Minnesota to emerge as the homogenizing standard of "American" life in general, propagated by Minneapolis-based brands like General Mills, [Target](#), and, later, the [Mall of America](#). These ruinous emblems of modernity (and the zones of "natural beauty" with which they are dialectically entwined) are the superstructural expression of what [Winona LaDuke](#) calls the [Windigo Economy](#) of global capitalism, "the economy of a cannibal, one which destroys its mother. One which destroys every source of wealth upon which it would live."

It is no coincidence that today, as MoMA makes weak gestures to address [ecological crisis](#), it relies on the ecocidal wealth of people like [Larry Fink of Blackrock](#), which invests billions in new fossil fuel infrastructure. This includes the [Line 3 Pipeline](#) cutting across [Dakota and Ojibwe lands](#) in central Minnesota, where water protectors like the [Giniw Collective](#) have been at the [frontlines](#) of anti-extractivist resistance, resonating in turn with [unsettling counter-memorial interventions](#) undertaken by artists and organizers in the region (intensifying with the George Floyd [rebellion](#) of 2020). With [Land Back](#) as an essential horizon [informing numerous initiatives](#) in [recent years](#), the process of shedding light on the connection between modernist landscapes and the ongoing theft of Indigenous lands and waters (including the land on which museums stand and the lands held and impacted by board members) is a point of leverage in approaching the decolonization/abolition of settler cultural institutions, whatever shape such struggles may take in particular places. The archival receipts highlighted in this document are offered as points to be acted upon. Engagement should be informed by a person's positionality and privileges should be [deployed strategically](#). There is no blueprint, but the research can inform and support work and struggle that acknowledges debts and nurtures relations while organizing wherever we are, from MoMA to so-called Minnesota and beyond.

# White Walls, Dirty Wars:

## Art, Institutional Liberalism, and the Cultural Politics of Counterinsurgency

Andrew Weiner

It will be clear to anyone reading this dossier that Strike MoMA is carefully and powerfully aligned with the struggles for radical emancipation that have become such a defining characteristic of the political landscape over the last decade: on tribal lands, throughout the American ghetto, across the carceral archipelago, in occupied Palestine, and everywhere else across the globe that systematic domination and exploitation are allowed to continue. By refracting and refocusing these insurgent forces at specific sites within the cultural sector, the strike has forcefully called our attention to a problem that is easily overlooked but nevertheless essential if we want to understand what is at stake in this confrontation: the role of liberal cultural institutions (not just MoMA and other modern or contemporary art museums, but organizations like Hollywood studios, Apple, the New York Times, or New York University, where I currently teach) as agents of counterinsurgency.

This term is of course typically associated with U.S. imperialism in its anti-communist guise during the Cold War, and with a spectrum of nefarious activity that ranged from clandestine, typically CIA-backed sponsorship for coups and "dirty wars" to the operation of explicitly counterrevolutionary ventures like the School of the Americas. Crucially, this repressive power was not only directed across U.S. borders but sought targets inside the country as well, the most flagrant example being the activities of the F.B.I. under Hoover during the COINTELPRO era. During this period leftists were routinely harassed, intimidated, and made into targets of police violence,

with consequences that were often indistinguishable from state-sponsored assassination, as in the death of the Black Panther Fred Hampton.

Critical historians like Nikhil Singh have demonstrated how this nexus of repression -- where techniques of counterrevolutionary violence were first developed in the ghetto of the metropole and then exported to the colonial frontier, or vice versa -- is crucial to understanding American hegemony in the post-1945 era, especially given the high degree of bipartisan support for the military-police-industrial complex. And as cultural historians like Richard Slotkin have shown, anxieties and fantasies surrounding America's highly racialized counterrevolutionary politics penetrated deeply into pop culture in the 1950s and 60s, as in any number of John Wayne-era Westerns, or in later films that tried to transpose the mythos of the frontier to Vietnam.

Nothing would seem further from MoMA -- whether as a specific cultural institution, a quasi-corporate brand, or a kind of aesthetic ideology -- than the sort of imagery we associate with counterinsurgency: riot police swarming around protesters, helicopters strafing rural villagers, columns of tanks on city avenues, molten clouds of napalm. This is no accident. During the 1950s, with the pressures of McCarthyism on the rise, the museum executed an elaborate institutional volte-face, through which it managed to distance itself from two potentially damaging moments of its past: the 1920s, when Alfred Barr's research into the Soviet and Weimar avant-gardes began to bring the museum into proximity with an

explicitly leftist cultural politics; and World War II, when MoMA openly collaborated with multiple government agencies to stage propaganda exhibitions in support of the war effort.

By aligning itself completely with the ascendant hegemonic ideology of Marshall Plan-era Modernism -- which valorized formalist abstraction, heroic individualism, and a highly voluntaristic conception of autonomy -- the museum was able to place itself firmly on the winning side of history, in a moment when both cultural and geopolitical power were being transplanted across the North Atlantic. Thanks to the influence of its International Program -- which organized highly influential touring exhibitions like *The New American Painting*, again with the undisguised assistance of American government agencies -- MoMA gradually came to be recognized as one of the world's leading arbiters of elite cultural merit, almost like the artistic equivalent of a credit ratings agency.

The spatio-visual rhetoric that became synonymous with this complex of forces -- not just MoMA's global primacy, but the hegemony of U.S. (i.e. liberal imperialist) culture, even after the era of so-called High Modernism ended in the early 1960s -- was that of the white cube, which became and still remains the default display mode for nearly all forms of modern and contemporary art, even after several decades of critique, much as the dollar and American English retain their primacy in an allegedly "globalized" world art system. Much like the whiteness of white people in a racist social order, the whiteness of the white cube functions as a kind of unmarked universal, valorizing certain forms and practices by elevating them on a platform that is supposedly neutral (in this case thought to be built from a quasi-Kantian objectivity of taste), but that is in fact deeply beholden to specific interests.

Speaking in relatively abstract, aesthetic terms (i.e. in terms of sensate representations and their circulation), we might understand the counterinsurgent power of white cube aesthetics to function in three dimensions: first, a mechanism of exclusion that prevents specific actors, ensembles, demands, or allegations from being made public and receiving institutional validation; second, a subsidiary effect of this exclusion, which discourages or disincentivizes openly insurgent modes of (re)presentation, making certain claims or actions less likely to occur; and third, as a technique of abstract individuation, removing artworks and artists from the kind of lived interdependencies in which meaningful aesthetic experience is grounded, and in which art is so often entangled with and inseparable from other modes of social life.

But there is also a much more concrete, more damning sense in which MoMA and its version of white cube aesthetics can be linked to counterinsurgency, whether historically or in the present. I refer here to the manifold linkages between the power structure of the museum (typified by but not limited to its trustees) and the entrenched networks of interests that enable, perpetuate, and of course benefit lavishly from the machinations of the U.S. war apparatus in all its manifestations. As Julia Bryan-Wilson has documented, these connections were first exposed and condemned in the Vietnam War era by a group of overlapping collectives, including Women Artists in Revolution (WAR), Art Workers Coalition (AWC), and Guerrilla Art Action Group (GAAG), all of whom experienced considerable pushback as a result. Despite the late-60s surge in feminist, antiracist, and antiauthoritarian organizing, the fields of art criticism and academic art history largely remained content to stay within the space of formalist autonomy. If the white cube was in this sense a kind of magic circle, an ideological vacuum from which actual political conflict and risk had been banished, the interventions of these groups served as a harsh but deeply needed reality check.

In actions like GAAG's Blood Bath (1969), which culminated with a group of protesters lying covered in animal blood in the museum lobby, the power of "guerrilla"-style impromptu performance was manifest in its ability to short-circuit the polite exclusions of institutional policy, and to make the many levels of the museum's complicity undeniable. In a series of interventions over the next several years, activists delivered searing indictments of the museum's links to U.S. military policy, to war profiteering, to war crimes like the My Lai massacre, and to the state-sanctioned murder of peaceful protesters in the 1971 prisoner uprising at New York's Attica Correctional Facility. (Many of these arguments targeted MoMA board member and then-Governor Nelson Rockefeller, who gave the shoot-to-kill order at Attica and was instrumental in passing discriminatory anti-drug laws that would become a key model for the War on Drugs legislation of the 1980s and 90s.)

As these charges steadily accumulated, it became harder for the museum to credibly maintain the hallowed fictions of its own autonomy: its quasi-sovereign power to determine the terms of aesthetic engagement, and the fastidiously maintained illusion of distance from the actual material conditions of domination that guaranteed U.S. hegemony. The more intense these contradictions became, the more the ostensibly anaesthetic space of the white cube began to grow uncanny, even monstrous; as if the blood of America's countless victims could at any moment begin to seep through its walls.

Jumping forward to the present moment, it would be easy to assume that terms like counterinsurgency and the violent realities they describe are historical artifacts -- that they belong to a time before the end of the Cold War, before the ascendance of globalization ideology and "soft power" diplomacy, before the "post-racial" reconciliation supposedly brokered by Barack Obama. Without discounting the massive changes that have occurred over the past 50 years, this would be a grave mistake for numerous reasons. The first and most obvious is that the United States not only maintains the world's largest military; it also continues to be the world's largest weapons exporter, selling primarily to client states whose military agendas complement American geopolitical priorities. (It is no accident that the two most conspicuous ongoing counterinsurgent operations, in Yemen and occupied Palestine, are being fought with American-made weapons by long-time U.S. allies Saudi Arabia and Israel.) Although the debacle of failed wars in Iraq and Afghanistan has recently curtailed support for a more interventionist foreign policy, it is easy to imagine how a sudden outbreak of hostilities in a global hotspot -- Syria, Ukraine, Taiwan -- could put American military power in the service of popular repression.

If counterinsurgency remains a necessary concept for geopolitical analysis, it has become all the more relevant for understanding the evolution of power relations within the United States: whether at its borders, on occupied indigenous lands, or in the enormous, decentralized array of institutions that constitute its carceral-industrial complex. While the overall size of the U.S. military has shrunk in recent decades, the opposite has been the case for domestic police forces, for correctional officers in state and private prisons, and for federal agencies like ICE. These increases have been necessary to implement policies that have until recently enjoyed bipartisan support but which impose a tremendous human cost, and which have been opposed mainly by low-income communities whose votes have little value in retail politics.

Reviewing MoMA's institutional commitments over the last few decades, one encounters few attempts to meaningfully come to terms with these transpersonal, structural, and deeply toxic dimensions of American power. Instead, the museum has hosted countless single-artist retrospectives and art-historical blockbusters, along with a few cringe-inducing attempts to escape modernism and surf the contemporary zeitgeist. In order to do so, it has raised even more dollars (how many of these were transferred from illicit or extralegal accounts we will surely never know); it has also striven mightily to keep up with its gajillionaire neighbors in the Manhattan real estate market. It would surprise no one to learn of plans for a MoMA-branded, starchitect-designed "supertall" skyscraper on Central Park South; it would

shock many, including this writer, to hear that the museum had decided to waive admissions fees for low-income New Yorkers, or to sponsor exhibitions of art by undocumented people, or to oppose the construction of new prisons to replace NYC's notoriously inhumane Rikers Island facility.

So conflict-averse is the museum leadership that when it was presented by Strike MoMA with the opportunity to initiate a difficult but badly needed conversation, the museum sent out security guards -- its private police -- to protect the experience of its clientele by removing protesters from its premises. This response, which momentarily collapsed the difference between the museum and a corporate campus or a gated community, made clear that aspects of the Cold War-era paradigm are still powerfully present. The fiction of Greenbergian autonomy may be long debunked but white cube aesthetics remain the norm, which means that art institutions both derive and preserve their power through mechanisms of exclusion, whether that happens through a curator's email or a guard's terse instructions.

Yet MoMA's struggles are also emblematic of art institutions more generally, which today find themselves struggling to negotiate a sociocultural environment that has changed profoundly over the last decade. Art is at once more ubiquitous and more disposable than ever, with viewers habituated to an economy of overproduction and a swipe-left mentality; meanwhile, museums fight each other for an ever-shrinking share of a leisure economy that has been both disrupted and colonized by Silicon Valley. Closer to home, many institutions have been forced to confront dissensus from within their own ranks, with workers forming unions, protesting sexual exploitation, and demanding accountability from management and board members.

It is too soon to tell how these changes will play out, especially since the effects of the pandemic will be with us for some time yet. That said, it would seem that museums like MoMA will try to reassert their relevance (and cover their flanks) by embracing the signifiers of woke corporate liberalism. They will hire impassioned millennials to keep their social media feeds stocked with carefully chosen slogans and symbols; they will "lean in" to moments of political turmoil by allocating more budgetary resources to DEI committees; they will heed the advice of management consultants; they might even make broad-sounding but noncommittal public statements about reparations. In the near term, one pillar of the museum's strategy will doubtless be to conspicuously increase its support for younger and mid-career artists who identify or are marked as in some sense "other."

This wouldn't be a drastic change of direction -- such a reorientation has been in the works for some time now, and not just at MoMA -- and one imagines that the museum's curatorial department could manage to pull it off artfully, and also without triggering the few remaining salaried art critics in New York, whose politics often approximate a kind of reactionary liberalism. Clearly such a shift would represent an important kind of progress (with the necessary asterisk that such progress can only be gauged relative to MoMA's own history, which could hardly be described as progressive). The question is: progress toward what end, and for whom?

Until we see otherwise, it should be safe to assume that MoMA's chief goal will be what it always has been: self-preservation, whether through the burnishing of its legacy, the expansion of its collections, the reputational enrichment of its board, or the protection of its brand. The museum might make carefully worded statements against police violence, but don't expect it to condemn exploitation, or to call for the abolition of mass incarceration, or even the defunding of monstrously bloated police departments like the NYPD. Instead, look for exhibitions in which the hard edges of actually existing exploitation are sanded down, then varnished with thick coats of curatorial jargon, beautification, and liberal empathy; look for solo shows featuring emerging artists from impoverished backgrounds but with degrees from top MFA programs, whose work is said to uplift their communities, center marginalized subjectivities, offer hope, and so on.

Such a pivot has clear precedents in the multiculturalism debates of the 1990s, when intensifying public demands forced museums to begin addressing their own racial bias. Now, as then, the dangers of tokenization are close to the surface and easy to recognize. Not only does the act of "inclusion" do nothing to dismantle the apparatus of exclusion; it can also perpetuate the illusion that institutions harbor good intentions and are making important changes. Moreover, within the current conjuncture inclusion gains an added level of allure and risk -- allure because of the sharp imbalance between a low fixed number of major exhibition opportunities and a high, ever-increasing number of artists struggling to secure a living; and risk because an exhibition is at the most basic, constitutive level a technology of individuation. A major museum exhibition doesn't just help make an artist's career, it helps make an artist -- into a brand name, a representative of a group, a fungible asset, etc. In doing so, it quietly works to erode their connection to others -- to all the other beings that an artist might depend on, knowingly or not -- and also to otherness as such, namely to modes of existence or sociality or embodiment or struggle that historically have had no place in a museum.

If the recent statements and actions of MoMA leadership are any indication, there is little reason to believe that any kind of meaningful (ie. structural) change is forthcoming. No matter how artful the museum's PR machinations might be, its underlying stance will be against the array of insurgent forces with which the strike is aligned. Unless pushed, the museum will not oppose these movements, but neither will it support them, and in the last analysis this lack of support is indistinguishable from opposition. Although it would therefore be accurate to refer to MoMA in its contemporary incarnation as counterinsurgent, this might obscure more than it clarifies by making the museum's politics seem stronger and more cohesive than they actually are. Not that long ago, MoMA's perceived inscrutability and authority was so great that people actually feared it; hence Martha Rosler's famous quip dubbing the museum "the Kremlin of modernism." Today, however, the institution seems to be timid and reactive, even fearful, and uncharacteristically on the back foot.

Against such an opponent -- still fearsomely powerful but with old and new vulnerabilities becoming apparent by the day -- Strike MoMA has been able to capitalize on its nimbleness and fearlessness. It has accomplished a great deal in its first phase, much more than I can summarize here and surely more than we can presently judge. Its achievements have been tactical and strategic, discursive and material, deadly serious but never without joy and empathy, and executed with a finely poised sense of how aesthetics and politics can be both inextricably entangled and yet necessarily discrete.

This essay opened with the claim that one of the strike's core accomplishments has been to expose, anatomize, and interrogate the affinities between museums like MoMA and the various forms of counterinsurgency and structural racism that have supported the U.S. state into the present day. By way of closing, I want to highlight a second, equally crucial aspect of the strike; namely, the way it has insistently forced us to broaden our senses: our senses of how protest looks, sounds, and feels; of who gets to demand change and how those voices should sound; of what it means to come together and surge forth. Taken together, these amount to a coordinated movement against the restrictions of the "possible," in the usual sense of that term. Not only do they constitute an irrefutable example of insurgent possibility; they also function as a permission structure, a kind of encouragement or standing invitation to anyone elsewhere who hungers to take action, either today or in the future.

# 10 WEEKS

in furtherance of a post-MoMA future

Every Day  
Art  
Action  
Poetry  
Agitation  
Research  
Education  
Movement  
Conversation  
Investigation  
Intervention  
Expository  
Media  
Text  
Fun

April 9 - June 11, 2021

Post-MoMA thinking, acting, and organizing in reference to, and alignment with, the framework and terms for struggle at [struggleatmo.org](http://struggleatmo.ma.org) at the museum - around the city - across the world - we invite individuals, collective, and groups to participate in making MoMA see that something else can emerge, something under the control of workers, communities, and activists rather than billionaires.

**STRIKE MoMA**

## The RUINS of MODERNITY TOUR: From the CITY to the MUSEUM

April 30, 3pm EST. sharp, Columbus Circle, Occupied Manhattan

The walls separating the museum from the city have always been an illusion. The Ruins of Modernity Tour operationalizes this fact. We see the museum reflecting the same violence as nearby places like Columbus Circle and Billionaire's Row. Did you know that directly attached to the museum is the ultra-luxury residential skyscraper \$3W53 "MoMA Tower"? Come, take a walk on we mark sites and connect struggles!

**POST-MoMA FUTURE**

RED DEAL  
LAND BACK  
ANTI-NATIONAL INTERNATIONALISM  
SANCTUARY NOW  
INFRASTRUCTURAL TAKE-OVER  
COLLECTIVE LIBERATION  
PUERTO RICO LIBRE  
COMMUNITY CONTROL  
INDIGENOUS SOVEREIGNTY  
BLACK LIBERATION  
FREE PALESTINE  
DE-GENTRIFICATION  
WORKERS' CONTROL  
ABOLISH ICE  
DISMANTLE PATRIARCHY  
WOMEN'S STRIKE  
KILL CAPITALISM  
REVOLUTIONARY CARE  
FUCK THE POLICE  
COMMUNIZATION  
STRIKE MODERNITY

## Week 7: Call To Action

# Palestine

Puerto Rico  
Argentina  
Tanzania  
Colombia  
Dominican Republic  
Yemen  
Papua New Guinea  
The Congo  
Chile

**FRIDAY, MAY 21 4PM**

Urban Plaza  
31 West 53rd Street  
Occupied Manhattan

Bring signs - Wear a kuffiyah/mask

# GLOBALIZE THE UPRISING

# LEVANTAMIENTO

# SOULÈVEMENT

## Week 8 Interconnected Struggles

# Mumia

Johanna Fernández on **MOVE** and Abu-Jamal, Comrades on the uprising in Colombia.

Interference Archive + Mobile Print Power + Screen Printing Station

**Friday, May 28, 2021 \* 4pm est.**

de-occupation + Urban Plaza, 31 West 53rd Street, Occupied Manhattan

## SHEIKH JARRAH HAS CALLED, AND WE RESPOND:

FUCK ZIONISM  
FUCK APARTHEID  
FUCK MILITARY OCCUPATION  
FUCK CAPITALISM  
FUCK SETTLER COLONIALISM  
FUCK WHITE SUPREMACY  
FUCK ISRAEL  
FUCK FEAR

# PALESTINE WILL BE FREE

BECAUSE WHEN WE RESIST TOGETHER, WE WIN TOGETHER

## SHEIKH JARRAH HAS CALLED, AND WE RESPOND:

# FUCK ZIONISM, FUCK APARTHEID, FUCK CAPITALISM, FUCK SETTLER COLONIALISM, FUCK MILITARY OCCUPATION, FUCK ISRAEL, FUCK FEAR, PALESTINE WILL BE FREE BECAUSE WHEN WE RESIST TOGETHER, WE WIN TOGETHER

# All Eyes On Palestine

Friday, May 14, 2021 + 4 - 6pm

Bring signs + flags + Wear a kuffiyah/mask

teach-in and more de-occupation

Manhattan, Urban Plaza 31 West 53 St.

#SaveSheikhJarrah #SaveNicwa #DelatJerusalem #HaltInterlock

From the river to the sea Palestine will be free

## FREE Mumia Abu-Jamal

here and there in the barrios and the favelas, among those who have least, fly sparks of overcoming.

# PRISONERS REVOLT

FROM ATTICA TO GILBOA

1971 / 2021

## GLOBALIZE THE INTIFADA

# BENGALIS FOR PALESTINE

RALLY + SAT., JULY 17, 2021 + 5PM

AVENUE C & McDONALD AVE., BROOKLYN, NY

#BENGALISPALESTINE + #GLOBALIZETHEINTIFADA

STRIKE EMPIRES AND UPLIFT OUR HOMELANDS

## Emergency Rally For Palestine

Tuesday, May 11, 2021 + 5 - 7pm

Bring signs + flags + Wear a kuffiyah/mask

Israeli Consulate  
800 2nd Avenue, NYC

#FreePalestine #FreeMumia #DelatJerusalem #HaltInterlock

From the river to the sea Palestine will be free

## GLOBALIZE THE INTIFADA

PALESTINE + SOUTH AFRICA + NEW YORK + NEW JERSEY

# STOP APARTHEID!

#BLOCKTHEBOAT + #FREEPALESTINE

## GLOBALIZE THE INTIFADA

# شهداء الارض شهداء الانتفاضة شهداء الوطن

## MEMORIAL & RALLY TO HONOR THE MARTYRS OF PALESTINE

SATURDAY, JULY 31, 2021 + 4:30PM

WEAR BLACK/KUFFIYAH + 72ND ST. & 5TH AVE., BAY RIDGE, BROOKLYN, NY

#DEFENDPALESTINE + #GLOBALIZETHEINTIFADA

## Week 9: Water Is More Precious Than Gold

4:00pm est. + post-MoMA Futures Plaza, 31 West 53rd Street, across from the museum of modern art, Occupied Manhattan + Teach-In + Rally + Action

El agua es un tesoro, que vale más que el oro

# DOMINICAN REPUBLIC BARRICK

Fuero Barrick Gold  
Futura Osmosis  
Strike MoMA

MoMA has who's who of those oligarchs who profit from war, death, and extractive violence sitting on its board of trustees, and we therefore treat it accordingly.

## ALL OUT!

# STRIKE MoMA

INTERCONNECTED STRUGGLES

11 W. 53 ST., OCCUPIED MANHATTAN

4PM EST. JUNE 11 2021

## Until All Our Lands Are Free

# STRIKE MoMA

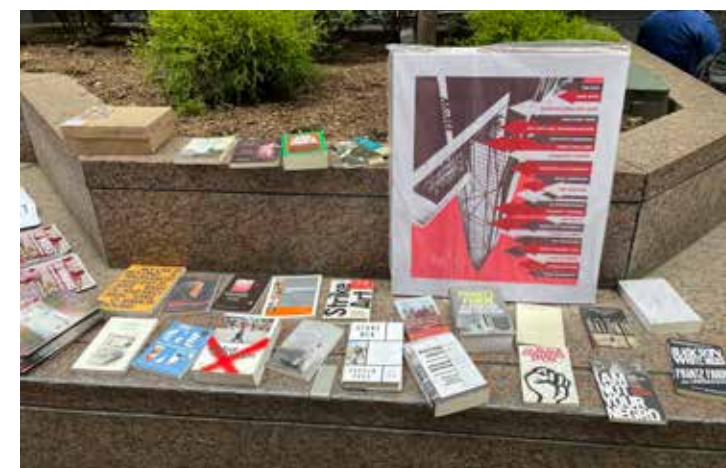
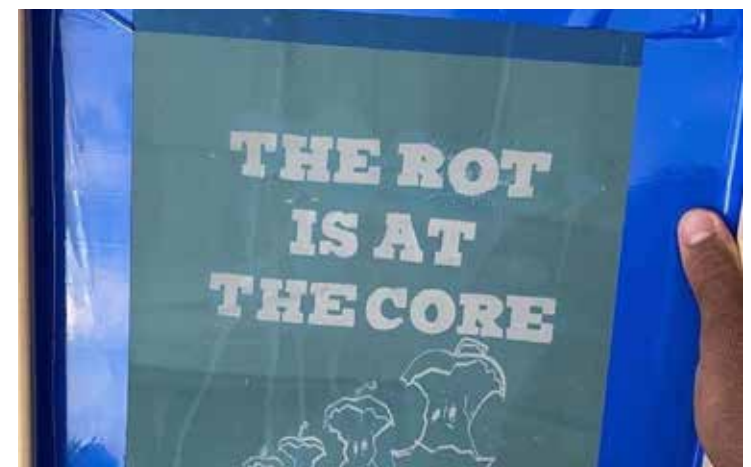
Free Them All  
Land Back  
Sanctuary Now  
Collective Liberation  
Love All Care for All  
Abolish ICE  
Women's Strike  
Kill Capitalism  
Dismantle Patriarchy  
Indigenous Sovereignty  
Free Palestine  
Free Puerto Rico  
Free Cuba  
Free Syria  
Free Myanmar  
Free Iran  
Free Venezuela  
Free North Korea  
Free North Macedonia  
Free South Sudan  
Free Myanmar  
Free Myanmar

MUSEUM UNIVERSITY CITY

SEPTEMBER 17, 2021 + 5:00PM EST. + MARCH

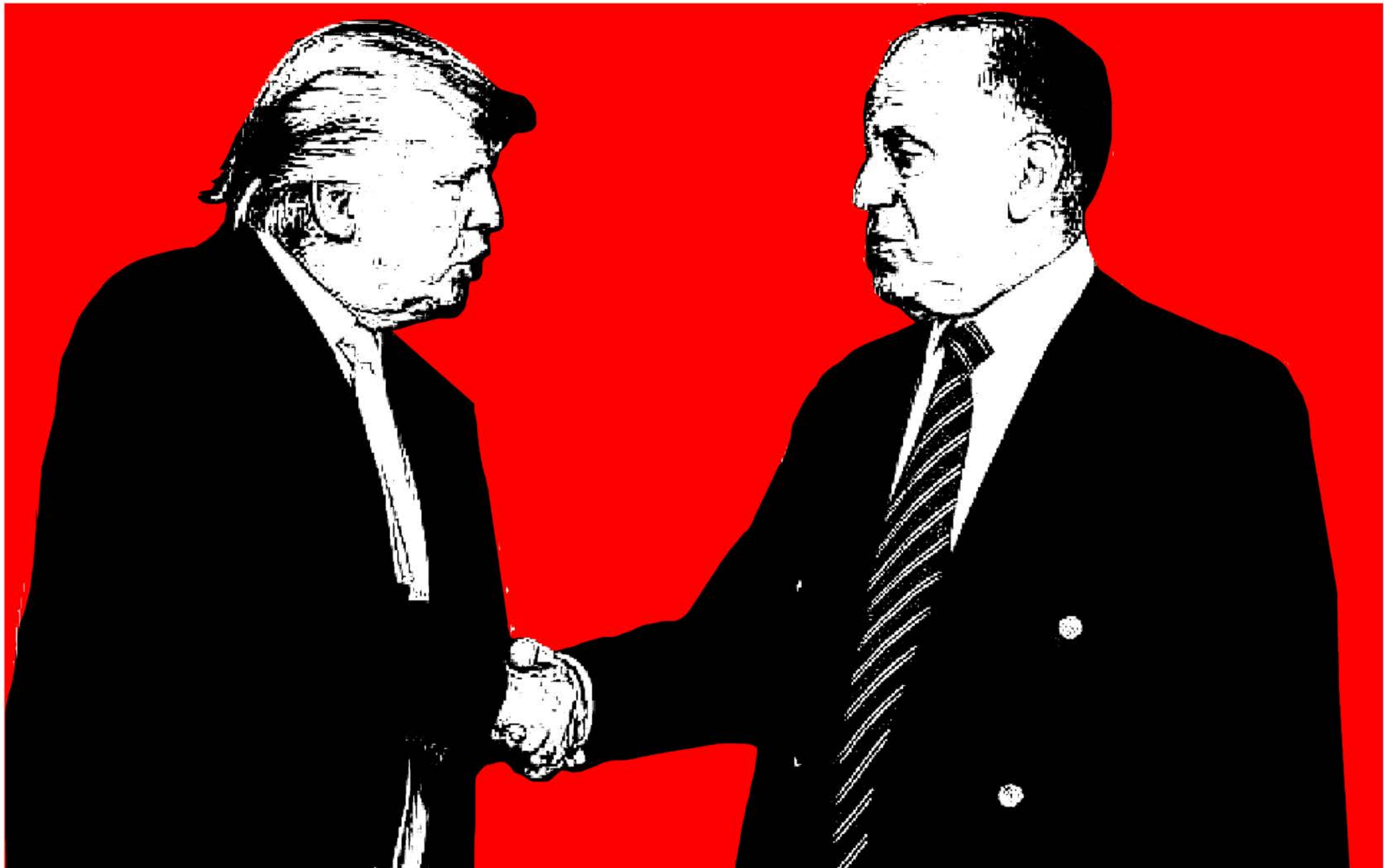
Columbus Circle, Occupied Manhattan













# CONVERSATIONS

Search 



#StrikeMoMA

### Modernity Is An Imperial Crime

1,230 views • Apr 29, 2021

 36  DISLIKE  SHARE  SAVE ...

 **Strike MoMA**  
370 subscribers

**SUBSCRIBE**

Week 4 of #StrikeMoMA, a conversation with Ariella Aïsha Azoulay, Dalaeja Foreman and Shellyne Rodriguez, facilitated by Nitasha Dhillon: Modernity Is An Imperial Crime

**Talk link:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RT4W02en8YA&t=1310s>

Search 




#strikemoma

### Kency Cornejo, Saudi Garcia, Macarena Gómez-Barris, Nelson Maldonado-Torres, MónicaRamón Rios

625 views • Streamed live on Jun 3, 2021

 18  DISLIKE  SHARE  SAVE ...

 **Strike MoMA**  
370 subscribers

**SUBSCRIBE**

Strike MoMA working group of IIAAF presents: A Conversation with Kency Cornejo, Saudi Garcia, Macarena Gómez-Barris, Nelson Maldonado-Torres, MónicaRamón Rios. Facilitated by Nitasha Dhillon & Shellyne Rodriguez.

[www.strikemoma.org](http://www.strikemoma.org) || [#strikemoma](https://twitter.com/strikemoma)

**Talk link:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a4HNVsf8XEs&t=4797s>

Search



### A Conversation with Sandy Grande, Stefano Harney, Fred Moten, Jasbir Puar, and Dylan Rodriguez

5,443 views... 142 DISLIKE SHARE SAVE ...

**STRIKE MoMA** Strike MoMA 370 subscribers

Strike MoMA Working Group of IIAAF Presents: A Conversation with Sandy Grande, Stefano Harney, Fred Moten, Jasbir Puar, and Dylan Rodriguez

**Talk link:**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V2vzhwnjy4s&t=2530s>

Search



### #freepalestine #strikemoma Emergency Conversation: Free Palestine/Strike MoMA

445 views • May 21, 2021 15 DISLIKE SHARE SAVE ...

**STRIKE MoMA** Strike MoMA 370 subscribers

An Emergency Conversation: FREE PALESTINE / STRIKE MOMA with Nora Akawi, Amin Husain, Yazan Khalili, Andrew Ross, Eyal Weizman

**Talk link:**  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WaJc\\_yfA-xY&t=19s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WaJc_yfA-xY&t=19s)



**UNTIL OUR  
LANDS  
ARE  
FREE**

**— INTERCONNECTED STRUGGLES —  
GLOBALIZE THE  
INTIFADA**



**SUMMER/FALL 2021, No. 1**

## CONTENTS

This is a Call to Globalize the Intifada

Acting Where We Are: NYC

What is the Intifada?

Wall of Memes

Transcript of a Teach-In on Palestine at a  
De-Occupation in NYC, May 2021

Free Palestine Collage

Diagram: Analytic of Interconnected Struggles

Operationalizing the Diagram:  
Columbia University as Test-Case

Strike MoMA/Free Palestine: A Call to Action

Organizing Toolkit:

- How to Organize a Rally and March
- Chants
- Know Your Rights
- Community Defense

Organizing Calendar/Upcoming Events

Poem: "I Must Become a Menace to My Enemies,"  
by June Jordan

## INTRODUCTION

This movement document offers an operational framing and practical toolkit for the globalization of the Intifada in NYC and beyond in the coming weeks and months. Grounded in the Globalize the Intifada call released in July 31, this manual is intended to facilitate conversation, relationship-building, and action in the lead up to **a city-wide convergence on September 17th (S17)**. Week by week, gathering by gathering, community by community, things are building toward this date. S17 is not an endpoint. It is a launching pad for a season of resistance as the contradictions of settler-colonialism, racial capitalism, and liberal imperialism continue to heighten, and the authority of governing institutions including the university, the museum, political parties, and the police continue to erode. In neighborhood rallies, family gatherings, study-sessions, banner-making parties, and conversations throughout our communities and workplaces, we build capacity for the day of action. On S17 we scale up our power and bring our interconnected struggles together.

This document builds on ten years of movement work in the city, nourished in turn by many generations and legacies of struggle from around the world. It weaves together principles, practices, and lessons of anti-capitalist, decolonial, abolitionist, and anti-imperialist political formations, and operates autonomously from any sectarian organizations, political parties, state regimes, or nonprofit entities.

What time is it on the clock of the world? Ten years after the Arab uprisings of 2011, seven years after Ferguson, five years after Standing Rock, one year after the George Floyd uprising, and a few months since a wave of Free Palestine solidarity swept the world, inspiring an internationalist insurgent feeling at local and global scales. Palestine brings everyone together, reorienting away from empire, and toward each other's struggles.

Whether we are talking about massive marches, militant disruptions, de-occupations, poetry readings, spiritual celebrations, or building emergent counter-institutions, our relationships are key. Such relational organizing is rooted in trust, affinity, and mutuality over time. The manual aims to make itself obsolete as we move together along the pathways of collective liberation.

# — THIS IS A CALL TO — GLOBALIZE THE INTIFADA

As Palestinians continue to bravely confront ethnic cleansing and genocide, it's time to globalize the Intifada. This call is rooted in direct action and driven by the belief that all colonized and oppressed people have the right to take back their land, to realize self-determination, and to win their liberation by any means necessary. We build upon the revolutionary spirit and inspiration of Palestinian resistance, in the understanding that our own liberation is either collective or nonexistent, and that it must reflect the interconnectedness of our struggles in our neighborhoods and homelands. That is why we are organizing actions every week as we build towards September 17th, a peak day of action across New York City and beyond.

Globalize the Intifada comes from the urgent need to defend our lands, resist our oppressors, and break free from the genocidal grip of U.S. imperialism and Zionism. Waves of solidarity have swept the world in reaction to the Sheikh Jarrah evictions, the bombardment of Gaza, and the militarist policies of the U.S.-sponsored Zionist regime. These events have united Palestinians across the occupied territories and in exile, and also sparked a new unity against colonial violence in many parts of the world; from Colombia and Mexico, Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic, Bangladesh and the Philippines, to the Bronx and Bay Ridge in New York City. As Palestinians from Gaza and Haifa to Al-Quds and Beita have consolidated their resistance to the Zionist settler-colonial project, we too must amplify the spirit of Palestine Liberation in the belly of the beast by linking arms with all those who are confronting U.S. and Israeli aggression globally.

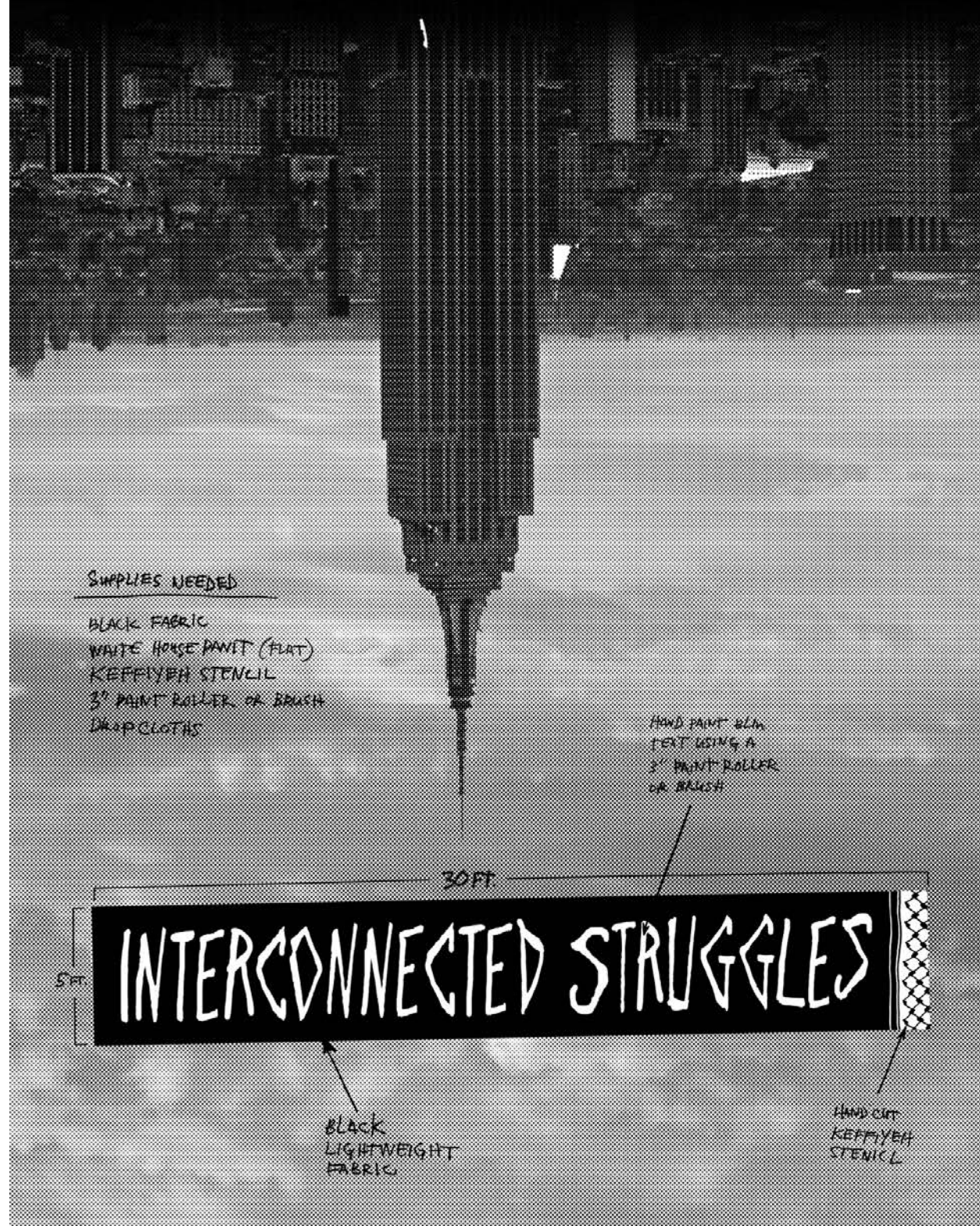
Globalize the Intifada expands the terrain of struggle by creating new points of leverage for our movements based on the interconnectedness of our struggles. Although these struggles arise from our specific place in the world, the forces we are fighting against—the creditor class, the landlords, the cops, the prison industry, the teargas manufacturers, the multinational corporations, the mining companies, and the military defense complex—are all interconnected parts of the same oppressive system. So we can find points of convergence in our separate struggles when we join the dots between what is happening across the street, or ocean, and what we are doing in our own backyard. With each link, and each mobilization, we are building the collective power and relationality needed to effectively confront the tyranny of the settler state.

How can you amplify the message of Globalize the Intifada? Organize an action in your neighborhood along with other communities who support Palestinian liberation and who want to channel the spirit and example of the Palestinian intifada for their own ends. Make it clear that our mutual liberation is interdependent, and identify common targets that have an active hand in the domination of our peoples. To those who participate in, and profit from, the oppression of people here in the U.S. and around the world—your days of comfort are coming to an end. In the coming weeks, the boroughs of this city will become a theater of operations where we can actualize the interconnectedness of our struggles with a diversity of strategies and tactics. Globalize the Intifada will be an ongoing strike at the heart of empire with Palestine as its compass.

Bay Ridge/Sunset Park, Brooklyn  
July 31, 2021

Decolonization is not a metaphor.

TRIANGULATION of indigenous struggle,  
black liberation, and a free Palestine  
Produce a re-arrangement of relationships  
that make empire look like Illus.



## ACTING WHERE WE ARE: NYC

We are writing from the unceded territory of the Leni Lenape. We stand in solidarity with Native American and Indigenous peoples leading the movement for resurgence, decolonization, and reclamation of their homelands. These lands were stolen to create settler-colonial states, and those who were dispossessed continue to live under conditions of siege, surveillance, and extractivist violence. We support land back, an imperative addressed to all settlers and settler-institutions, including museums, universities, and the City of New York. At its foundations, this city was established on stolen Indigenous land, and shaped and cultivated by enslaved African peoples. We support the undying fight for Black liberation and its many manifestations here and across the planet.

Subsequent layers of the city have been built by generations of migrants and refugees from other zones of the world violently impacted by colonialism, racial capitalism, and imperialism. Think of the Mohawk skywalkers whose labor made possible the Manhattan skyline, and the Black, Latinx, and Asian workers who maintain the urban infrastructure today even as they are displaced by real-estate developers in Chinatown, Mott Haven, East New York, and beyond. We support sanctuary for all migrant communities, and the allied movement for degentrification. We support the self-determination of oppressed peoples everywhere fighting against the imperial states, repressive regimes, occupying powers, comprador elites, and global corporations whose calculations have forced so many people from their homes in places like Palestine, Puerto Rico, Haiti, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Philippines, Bangladesh, Kashmir, Punjab. From within the belly of the beast of U.S. empire, we acknowledge our responsibility, and act in solidarity with struggles to get free.

We are organizing and building against a system of imperialism, colonialism, and racial capitalism with gendered violence at its core. We stand in solidarity with all those who strike against patriarchy every day, at work, at home, in the fields, in the prisons, in the detention centers, in the streets, in the shelters. Stolen land, stolen people, stolen labor, stolen wealth, stolen worlds, stolen horizons. This is the modernity to which NYC is a monument.

## WHAT IS THE INTIFADA?

**What is the Intifada?** the Intifada is the shaking off (انتفاضة) of oppression, the unsettling of occupied territory, an uprising for dignity in the face of dehumanization, an expression of self-determination grounded in the relations between people rather than the authority of states and politicians that claim to represent us.

**Who is the Intifada?** The Intifada is all those seeking to get free in solidarity with others; all those who recognize the interconnectedness of our struggles against settler-colonialism, imperialism, and racial capitalism across borders and identities; all those who refuse to allow our struggles to be isolated, segregated, and pitted against each other according to the classic colonial logic; all those who practice what Huey P. Newton called a “revolutionary intercommunalism” that sees the modern nation-state as a hindrance rather than vehicle when it comes to collective liberation.

**When is the Intifada?** The Intifada is now, nourished by roots running deep into our entangled histories of survival and liberation across centuries and continents. In the words of Ghassan Kanafani, “Imperialism has laid its body over the world, the head in Eastern Asia, the heart in the Middle East, its arteries reaching Africa and Latin America. Wherever you strike it, you damage it, and you serve the World Revolution.”

**Where is the Intifada?** The Intifada is everywhere. It is all around us, within us, between us. In our homelands, in our diasporas, in our neighborhoods here in the belly of the beast. It lives with each act of resistance and care from the Bronx to Colombia, from Haiti to Punjab, from Standing Rock to Gaza.

**Why the Intifada?** To break the binds that settler-colonialism, imperialism, and liberalism have placed on our imaginations, relations, and practices of life. The Intifada wants todo para todos, in the words of the Zapatistas. The Intifada is desire-driven, fighting and building simultaneously, cultivating our own powers beyond anything the ruling classes can accommodate within their faltering systems.

# GLOBALIZE THE

انتفاضة

ইনতিফাদা

# INTIFADA

# LEVANTAMIENTO

# SOULÈVEMENT

WE MUST CONSIDER AND ASK OURSELVES WHAT IS TO BE DONE IN SITUATIONS WHERE WE NEED TO FIGHT U.S. IMPERIALISM WHILE ALSO SUPPORTING PEOPLE CALLING THEIR LEADERS AND REGIMES TO ACCOUNT? THIS QUESTION IS PART OF THE UNFOLDING REVOLUTIONARY CONVERSATION AND EXPERIMENT. WE MAY NEED TO BE ANTI-STATE OR ANTI-REGIME IN EFFORTS TO BE IN SOLIDARITY WITH THE PEOPLE. THIS THEN POSES A SERIES OF QUESTIONS FOR US. WHAT DOES SOLIDARITY LOOK LIKE? WHO IS IN THE ROOM? WHO IS NOT IN THE ROOM BUT NEEDS TO BE? WE MUST ALSO FACE UP TO THE REALITY THAT COLONIAL AND IMPERIAL CONDITIONS FRACTURE PEOPLE. WHAT IS TO BE DONE WHEN THE "WE" IS BEING DISPUTED OR IS UNDER CONSTRUCTION? THESE QUESTIONS ARE MEANT FOR WALKING, AS THE ZAPATISTAS TEACH US.

THE REVOLUTION IS AN EXPERIMENT. THE REVOLUTION IS FROM THE GROUND UP.

LEGITIMACY IS WITH PEOPLE. THEY WORK OUT THEIR CONTRADICTIONS IN STRUGGLE.

HOW DO WE UPLIFTED A AN ONGOING REVOLUTION FROM AFAR? THIS IS A QUESTION OF STRATEGIES AND TACTICS.

IT REQUIRES CONVERSATIONS AND A COMMITMENT TO WORK THROUGH THOSE CONTRADICTIONS FROM BELOW ACROSS BORDERS WITH REVOLUTIONARIES ORGANIZING ON THE STREETS.



**STRIKE IS A VERB**

7. 'COLONIALISM IS NOT SATISFIED MERELY WITH HOLDING A PEOPLE IN ITS GRIP AND EMPTYING THE NATIVE'S BRAIN OF ALL FORM AND CONTENT. BY A KIND OF PERVERTED LOGIC, IT TURNS TO THE PAST OF THE PEOPLE, AND DISTORTS, DISFIGURES AND DESTROYS IT.' — THE WRETCHED OF THE EARTH

RECOGNIZE DEBTS



OPERATIONALIZE SOLIDARITY

"TODAY, WHEN DISTANCE HAS MADE IT POSSIBLE FOR SOME TO ROMANTICIZE THE AUTHORITARIAN STATE SOCIALIST PROJECTS OF YESTERYEAR, IT'S IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER THAT THE WORLDWIDE ANTI-CAPITALIST MOVEMENT OF THE TURN OF THE CENTURY ONLY GOT OFF THE GROUND AFTER THE COLLAPSE OF THE EASTERN BLOC. NEOLIBERAL GLOBALIZATION HAD BEEN IN PROGRESS SINCE AT LEAST THE 1970S, BUT PREVIOUS FORMS OF OPPOSITION HAD BEEN SUBSUMED BY COLD WAR BINARY POLITICS. WITH THE EMERGENCE OF THE ZAPATISTAS IN CHIAPAS, WHO OF NECESSITY INNOVATED A HORIZONTAL ANTI-STATE MODEL FOR POPULAR RESISTANCE, A NEW HORIZON APPEARED BEFORE SOCIAL MOVEMENTS, OFFERING A FERTILE SOIL FOR THE ANARCHIST AND AUTONOMIST CURRENTS THAT HAVE BEEN GESTATING SINCE THE 1970S."

4. 'EACH GENERATION MUST, OUT OF RELATIVE OBSCURITY, DISCOVER ITS MISSION, FULFILL IT, OR BETRAY IT IN RELATIVE OPACITY'. — THE WRETCHED OF THE EARTH

\* THE NATION-STATE IS NO LONGER THE VEHICLE OF EMANCIPATION.

\* NO PROMISE, END, VISION, OR STRATEGY JUSTIFIES A POLICE STATE OR A REGIME THAT SEEKS TO MAKE PEOPLE UNFREE IN THE PROCESS OF STRUGGLE.

\* COLONIALISM DOES NOT END WITH "INDEPENDENCE" AND THE NATION-STATE IS NOT SYNONYMOUS WITH SELF-DETERMINATION.

\* THE RIGHT TO DETERMINE OUR SOCIAL, POLITICAL, AND ECONOMIC DESTINY MUST NEVER BE PARTED WITH.

\* A DIFFERENT IDEOLOGY AT THE STATE'S HELM OR A TOP DOWN WILL NOT DIMINISH THE CARCERAL NATURE OF THE STATE.

\* BEWARE OF ELITES, OLIGARCHS AND THEIR ALLIES, AND REMEMBER IDENTITY OFTEN OBSCURES CLASS. 1919

1. 'FOR A COLONIZED PEOPLE THE MOST ESSENTIAL VALUE, BECAUSE THE MOST CONCRETE, IS FIRST AND FOREMOST THE LAND: THE LAND WHICH WILL BRING THEM BREAD AND, ABOVE ALL, DIGNITY.' — THE WRETCHED OF THE EARTH

No one is pure in a colonized world. We all live by our contradictions. Working at Amazon and disgusted with Amazon? Being an artist and hating the art system? Teaching at a university and wanting to tear it all down? Studying freedom in college while you go deeper into debt? Struggling to pay rent but displacing someone else? A Ford Fellow who protests the Ford Foundation? Oppressed but also contributing to other people's oppression? This is the entangled dystopia of our present. We can see contradictions as impediments and be consumed by frustration, ambivalence, and despair, or we can acknowledge and heighten them. Quiet forms of subversion, deep conversations, mobilizations+, large and small: each act we take further undermines the principles that sustain this system.

No to the non-profit-industrial complex. No to the ally-industrial complex. No to the diversity-equity-inclusion complex. No to the model-minority-assimilation complex. No anti-Blackness. No white nonsense. No toxic masculinity. No heteronormative culture. No anti-poor or anti-working-class sentiments. No ableism. No "progressive except for Palestine." Yes to collective liberation; yes to becoming accomplices, co-conspirators, race traitors, class traitors, de-assimilators; yes to all those who are ready to put something on the line, to operationalize their privileges and redistribute their resources in whatever forms these may take, from property deeds to printer ink.

HEIGHTEN THE CONTRADICTIONS



**ACT WHERE YOU ARE**

# TRANSCRIPT OF A TEACH-IN ON PALESTINE AT A DE-OCCUPATION IN NYC, MAY 2021, BY JKP

Israel's violent repression happening in Palestine now is part of the settler colonialist Zionist movement that began in the late 1800s and peaked with the Nakba of 1948. The catastrophe and displacement of Palestinians continues now in Israel's attempts to forcibly remove Sheikh Jarrah residents. Again, what is and has been happening in Sheikh Jarrah is not new- this is part of decades long ongoing policies of forcibly dispossessing Palestinians of their land. The Nakba did not end in 1948, it is ongoing. Some of the terms you have heard in mainstream media include the "Israeli-Arab" conflict. Let us be clear that there is no conflict. This is a settler colonial occupation. You also hear about needing "balanced reporting"—but there is no balanced relationship between an occupying power and the occupied. Balance is not part of a decolonial lexicon. You hear that the situation is "too complicated and complex" to take a position on. This refrain is a Zionist tactic that encourages you to remain silent and reinforce the status quo—think about who says this as an excuse to avoid standing in solidarity. Palestinians never say it's too complicated to understand. There is nothing complicated about the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. One has the 4th largest military in the world, including nuclear power, and continually inflicts violence in any number of ways. The other has been resisting their colonization through a myriad of tactics, from throwing stones to the Boycott Divestment and Sanctions movement, because that is what is happening now, a resistance movement on multiple fronts in multiple forms. You hear politicians use the term "disproportionate force" in very tepid commentary about Israel that ultimately never leads to any global or political action against Israel. You also hear debates about the term whether or not the Israeli occupation is apartheid. While we have called this apartheid for many decades, Israeli human rights organizations are finally recognizing that Israel is an apartheid state. Finally, you hear the media call the Palestinians who live in 48 "Arab Israelis." 48-ers are

Palestinian, period. Despite correcting them over and over, the media continues to perpetuate this language because it projects an utterly false picture of Israeli citizenship and co-existence. You also have been hearing about pogroms and lynching in what they call "mixed Arab-Jewish" towns and cities, to perpetuate the fantasy that Palestinians are treated as neighbors. But these towns, such as Lod and Haifa are deeply segregated, spatially in terms of where housing, businesses, and schools are located, as well as economically, in terms of denying Palestinians resources to develop community infrastructure. There is apartheid in Israel itself, not just in the occupation.

These are some of the media soundbites that you will hear over and over again, despite multiple interventions by Palestinian journalists and activists. For the rest of this presentation, I turn to the specifics of Gaza, a 14-year blockage of the Gaza Strip that is often referred to as the world's largest open-air prison as well as one of the world's most densely populated areas. Again, these are easy tropes that we can break down. What is the blockade exactly and how does it work?

## What is the blockade?

The blockade is a form of "logistical governance." That means that the logistics of how, when, and why goods and people are allowed in and out is not a by-product of the blockage, but it's actual purpose. So, when Israel says it is no longer occupying Gaza, they are attempting to erase the "remote control" of Gaza that happens through the control of logistics. In other words, logistical control is a form of population control.

The blockade not only keep things out and keeps people in. It also creates a perpetual state of uncertainty. You never know when the electricity will turn off. You never know if your medical permit to receive medical care in the West Bank will take one month or 6 months to be approved, though you never assume it will actually be approved. You never know if you the Rafah border with Egypt will still be open by the time you get there, and for how long it might be closed if it is not. You never know when medicines might be available, or surgeries that you need might be possible. You can't count on the regular supply

of clean water. Sometimes you get what you need and sometimes you don't, but you don't know which of those will happen when. That's part of the logistical governance, to subject a population to endless uncertainty. Gazans have been living like this for 14 years now. In 2014, during the last raid on Gaza, the UN declared Gaza uninhabitable by the year 2020. Well, that was last year, and 1.7 million Gazans continue to exist and resist and fight for their right for the siege to end. Clearly, what is deemed "uninhabitable" does not speak to a universal threshold of human existence, because Gazans are living the unlivable. Remember also that the bombardment of Gaza is happening during a time when the pandemic has already stretched the medical infrastructure of Gaza. According to the World Health Organization, only 6% of 5 million Palestinians living under Israeli occupation have been vaccinated. Contrast that to more than 50 percent of Israelis.

What would it mean for the siege to end? It would mean that Gaza could reopen an airport. It would mean that Gazans could travel to see relatives and friends in the West Bank, 48, and East Jerusalem—and beyond! It would mean the Gazan economy could grow and unemployment which is often around 70 percent could be mitigated. It means Gazans could enjoy their seashores and their homes in peace.

### **Why Injuries Matter:**

We are watching in horror the death toll in Gaza and elsewhere in Palestine rise by the hour. We must also register and understand the horror of the growing number of injured Palestinians, currently in the mid-hundreds. Israel has used injury to try to strip Palestinians of their bodily capacity for resistance. During the first intifada, they used the infamous "break their bones" policy created by the Defense Ministry. There were about 2000 killings during the first intifada. But the number of injuries is staggering, estimated by some to be at least 30,000 injured Palestinians. During this time Israel had very specific discussion about using injury and maiming to keep the death toll so as not to solicit global attention and disapproval.

Disability is a big part of life in Gaza. From the siege of 2014, the stats say about 2000 deaths but the number of injuries is again staggering, estimates starting in the 10s of thousands. Because Israel targets and destroys medical infrastructure, wounds that could be treated often become "permanent disabilities." Gaza was still dealing with a huge wave of disabled people when 2018 happened. You might recall that during the Great March of Return, which began on Land Day, March 30, 2018 and was a by and large peaceful resistance along the so-called boundaries between Israel and Gaza, the Israeli military openly and brazenly injured 10's of thousands of protestors during the first months of the Great March, including 7000 Gazans in the lower limbs. You saw these sensationalizing pictures of men in wheelchairs and with crutches on the pages of the New York Times and the Washington post. But what is never covered is the aftermath of these injuries. Many of these injuries required amputation, many required multiple surgeries, and again, the medical infrastructure is so compromised that it was overwhelmed by the influx.

Targeting limbs, especially lower limbs and knees, is both symbolically and literally an attempt to foreclose Palestinian mobility and the capacity to resist. And yet, we see repeatedly that disabled Palestinians are often on the frontlines of protests. We can also connect the tactical use of injury to Kashmir, where hundreds of resisters have been shot in the eye and many blinded, again the targeting of the eyes is both symbolic and literal. We can also connect these tactics to the hundreds of blinded protests from the Chilean uprisings in 2019, and the increased use globally of what is purportedly "non-lethal" weapons such as rubber bullets and tear gas for crowd control and protests, and frankly towards deliberate disabling of insurgent resisters of state violence.

### **Solidarity:**

Tomorrow is Nakba Day, a day that commemorates the violent expulsion of Palestinians from their land 73 years ago. Tomorrow there will be mass mobilization around the world that includes every possible movement you can imagine, from Black Lives Matter to Puerto Rican Sovereignty to the Farmer's Protest to those fighting the occupation of



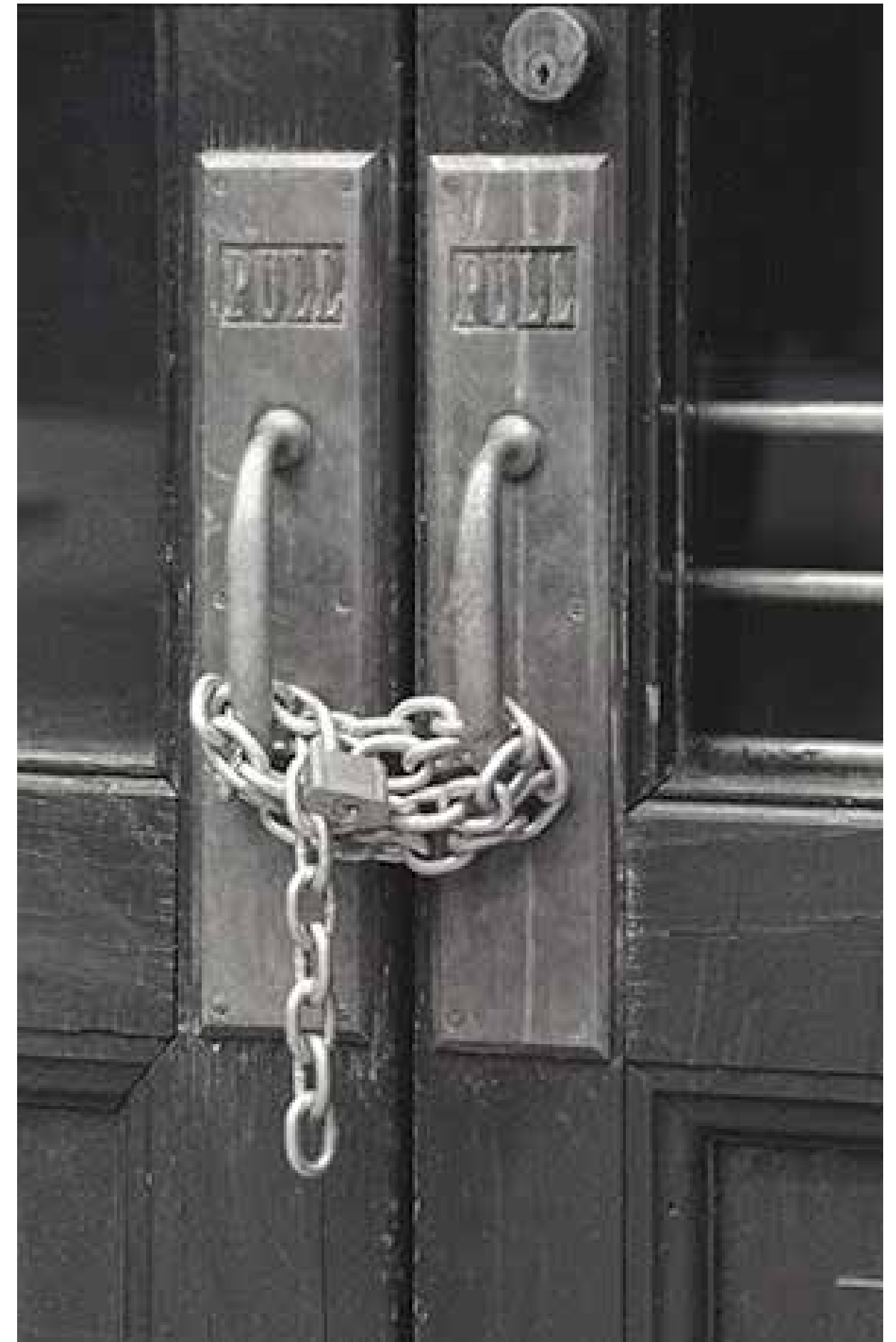
Kashmir, and so many more. From Angela Davis we understand that justice is indivisible, and we learn this lesson over and over again from black, indigenous, queer, Arab, from Palestinian feminists, who call for the adoption of their statement "Palestine is a Feminist Issue."

In solidarity and as a tribute to the fierce resistance of the Palestinian people, I want to end with a paragraph from Ghassan Kanafani's 1957 short story "Letter From Gaza," where he refers to Gaza as an "amputated town." Here his narrator is revising injury and resistance after visiting the hospital to see his niece who had had her leg amputated

My friend ... Never shall I forget Nadia's leg, amputated from the top of the thigh. No! Nor shall I forget the grief which had molded her face and merged into its traits forever. I went out of the hospital in Gaza that day, my hand clutched in silent derision on the two pounds I had brought with me to give Nadia. The blazing sun filled the streets with the color of blood. And Gaza was brand new, Mustafa! You and I never saw it like this. The stone piled up at the beginning of the Shajiya Quarter where we lived had a meaning, and they seemed to have been put there for no other reason but to explain it. This Gaza in which we had lived and with whose good people we had spent seven years of defeat was something new. It seemed to me just a beginning. I don't know why I thought it was just a beginning. I imagined that the main street that I walked along on the way back home was only the beginning of a long, long road leading to Safad. Everything in this Gaza throbbed with sadness which was not confined to weeping. It was a challenge: more than that it was something like reclamation of the amputated leg!

\*Ghassan Kanafani, "Letter from Gaza," Marxists.org, May 2014, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/kanafani/1956/letterfromgaza.htm> (accessed November 17, 2020).

\*\*Remarks made at Post-MoMa Plaza





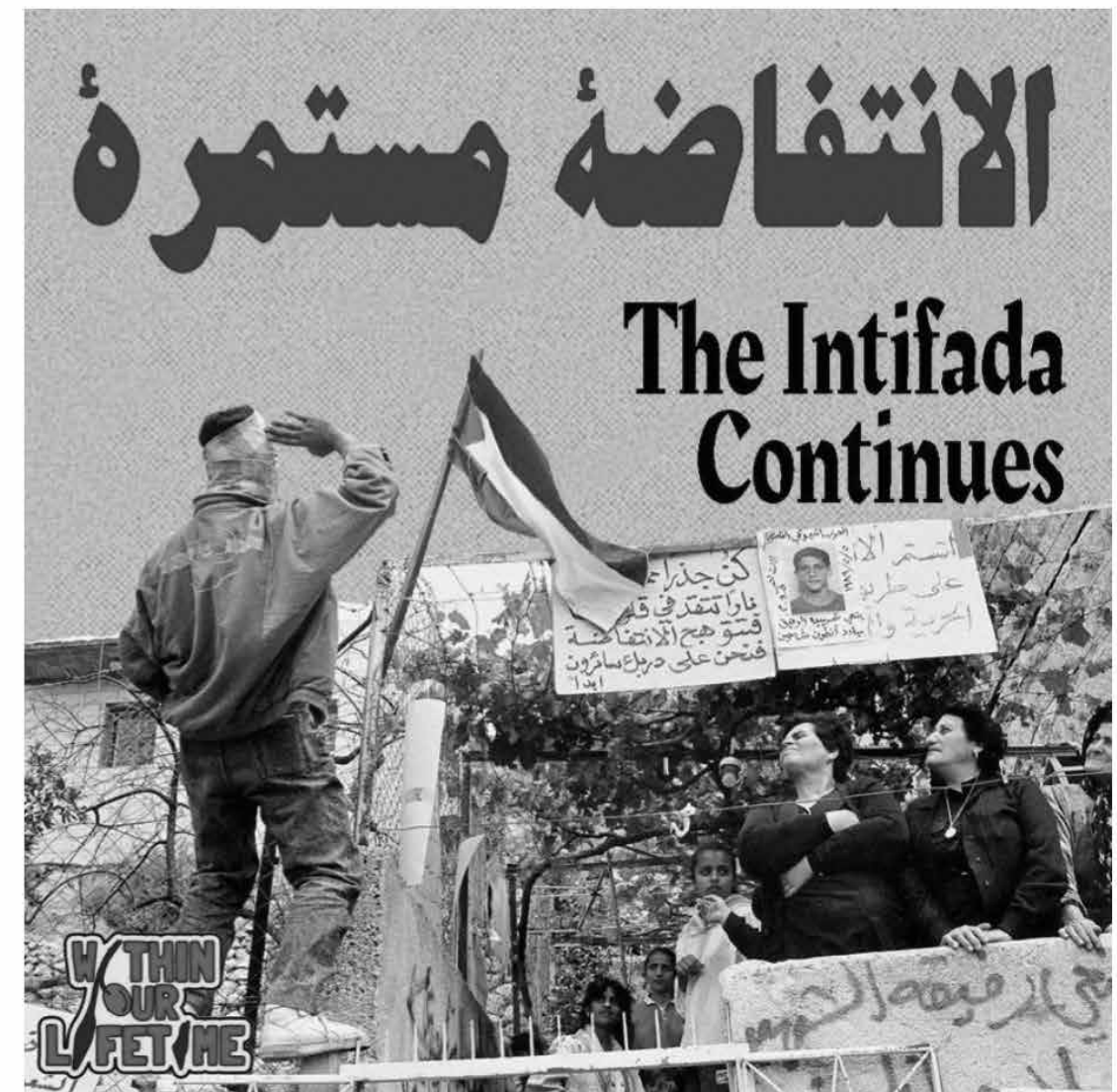
In 1977, on the 30th anniversary of the 1947 UN partition plan and in commemoration of the ongoing colonization and ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian people, the UN marked November 29th "International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People." While UN resolution 194 (passed December 1948) guaranteed the right of return to all Palestinian refugees who were displaced during the Nakba, 72 years later we are still fighting for our right to return home.

As we reflect on all of the UN resolutions and broken promises to Palestinians on the international stage for generations, we also ground ourselves in the uncompromising support that we have received, and continue to receive, from oppressed and colonized people around the world.

This collage features artwork by Palestinian painter Ismail Shammout, posters from the archives of the Organization of Solidarity with the Peoples of Africa, Asia and Latin America, Malcolm X's 1964 meeting with the PLO, and signs that our Mexican, Caribbean and Filipino comrades have brought to our protests here in New York City.

While the Zionist entity and their reactionary partners seek to normalize the ongoing annexation of Palestinian land and genocide of the Palestinian people, the masses of the world stand with Palestine, and will continue to struggle alongside us until we have achieved liberation within our lifetime.

#InternationalDayOfSolidarityWithThePalestinianPeople #LongLiveInternationalSolidarity  
 #RightToResist #Palestine #DefendPalestine #FreePalestine #WithinOurLifetime  
 #globalizetheintifada



Thirty-three years ago today on December 8th, 1987, the First Intifada began in Palestine, four decades after the Nakba and twenty years after the Naksa in 1967.

The event that sparked the First Intifada took place in Jabalia refugee camp in Gaza, when a Zionist truck driver ran over a group of Palestinian workers, murdering four young men.

In response, thousands of Palestinians took to the streets in protest. The next day, on December 9th, 1987, the Palestinian youth of Jabalia camp directly confronted occupation forces with only stones in hand, launching a new chapter of the Palestinian struggle for national liberation.

From Gaza, the Intifada spread to the West Bank, and then on to every corner of historic Palestine. Over the course of the next six years from 1987-1993, the First Intifada was led by the Palestinian masses, who not only took to the streets to protest and resist the occupation, but also formed local committees to organize popular education when schools shut down and coordinated general strikes, economic boycotts of Israeli goods and the withholding of taxes to the occupation. Women's organizations, youth and students and labor unions in particular took a leading role in these committees.

Today we honor all those who took part in the First Intifada, all those who were arrested, jailed, and tortured by the occupation, and the over 1,100 Palestinian martyrs who were murdered while fighting for their freedom. In their memory, the Intifada continues. 🇵🇸

# OPERATIONALIZING THE DIAGRAM: COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY AS TEST-CASE

With Palestine as our compass, the diagram on the preceding page is offered as a tool for identifying sites of convergence for our interconnected struggles as we globalize the Intifada in NYC and beyond.

How can campus organizing can be strategically linked to globalizing the Intifada? The university exists on the same plane of colonial violence as the rest of settler-society, and it is riven with ever-heightening contradictions. It is full of discontented workers, students, and faculty who are already organizing on various campuses across NYC, each with its own specific conditions and legacies of struggle, from the CUNY system to NYU and Columbia.

As a test-case, let's apply the diagram to Columbia University. The following check-list is a preliminary scaffolding, to be fleshed out in the course of sharing knowledge and building relationships as we converge in the coming weeks.



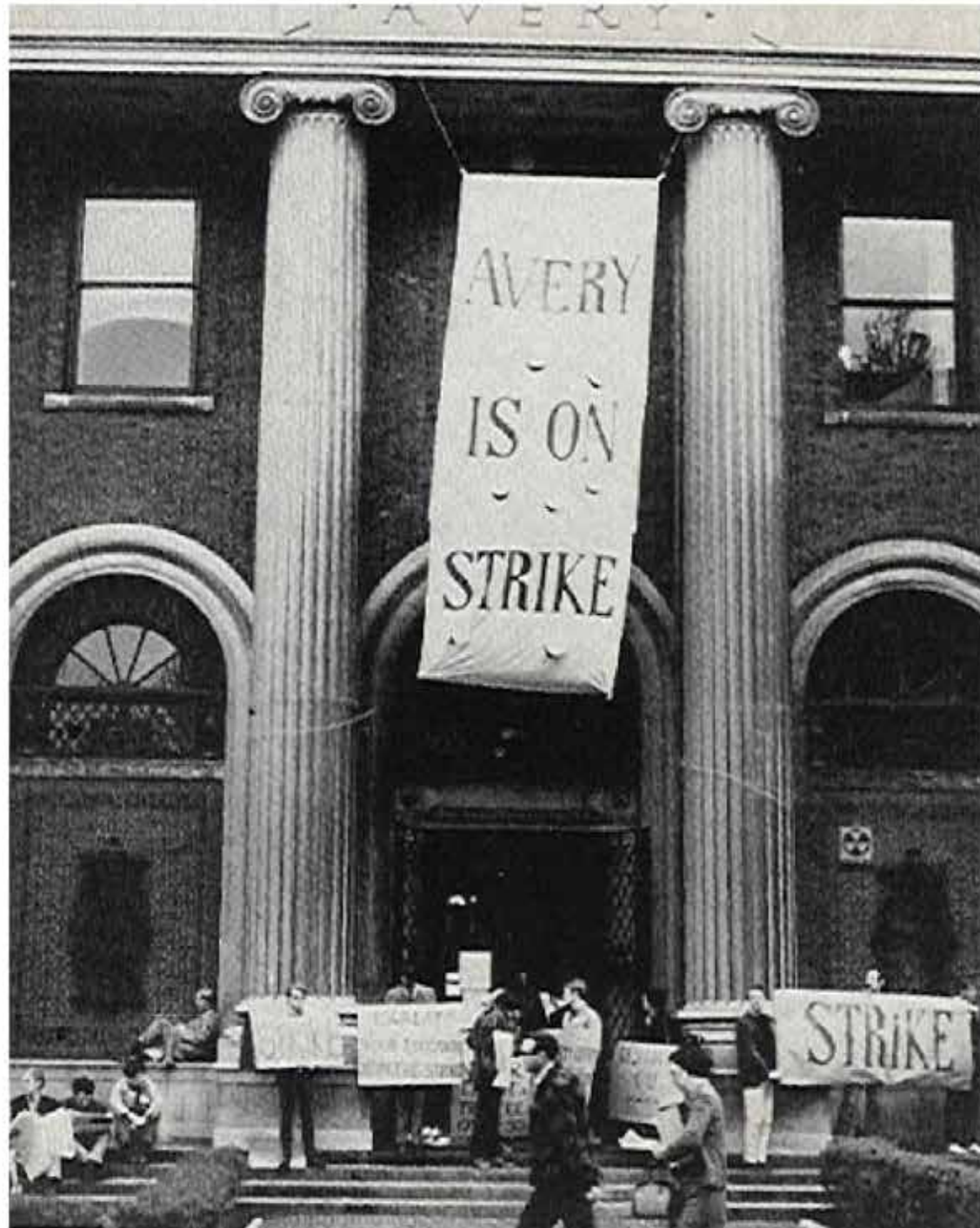
✓ **Settler Colonialism.** Columbia University stands on stolen Lenape land. The University was chartered as King's College by King George in 1754 in Lower Manhattan, and to this day Columbia remains one of the largest landowners in so-called New York City. In its name and symbolism, Columbia is also monument to colonization and patriarchal violence. After the American Revolution, the institution was renamed Columbia, in honor of the mythical spirit of Christopher Columbus, the same genocidal conquistador and rapist whose likeness stands above Columbus Circle several miles south at Broadway and 59th street.



✓ **Racial Capitalism.** Columbia University was founded by slave-owners. Between 1754 and the U.S. Civil War, half of the men who presided over the school "owned" enslaved African people, and all were prime beneficiaries of the hemispheric plantation system. That system and its legacies remains inseparable from the general structure of global capitalism that Columbia as an institution has always been dedicated to growing and preserving, as is evident in the list of Wall Street oligarchs who continue to make up the board of trustees. Their accumulation of wealth has always been founded on the dispossession, incarceration, and brutalization of racialized populations.

✓ **Gentrification.** Columbia University is an agent of gentrification, which cannot be understood apart from the intersecting matrix of settler-colonialism and racial capitalism. Columbia is an ever-expanding land-grabbing machine, especially in Harlem. Its ongoing 17-acre, \$6.3 billion expansion northward of 125th street continues to be met with resistance from local residents. Columbia has always had a predatory relation to Harlem. The 1968 campus uprising was catalyzed by protests from Harlem residents against the proposed placement of a Columbia athletic facility over the majority of Morningside Heights Park. This "Gym Crow" development was but one in a long history of expansion projects by the University into the surrounding area, a process of racialized displacement condemned by community organizers as "the Big Steal."

✓ **Poverty Wages.** Columbia University is a place of class conflict. Precarious graduate student workers have recently been on strike, and workers of all kinds are resisting in a diversity of ways all the time, unionized and not. How are student-worker struggles building with the struggles of other workers on campus and in the city at large in the face of an institution that is in its very structure hostile to workers power of any kind? What kind of class solidarities are necessary to create the kind of political formation we need and desire?



✓ **Empire:** Columbia University is designed to be a knowledge factory for the global ruling class, supplemented by the pursuit of the “public good.” From the Business School, to the Law School, to the the School of International and Public Affairs, to the School for Architecture, Preservation, and Planning, and across the arts, sciences, and humanities, Columbia is in the business of preparing elites for power, and integrating select non-elites into the apparatus of liberal governance. As is the case with its fellow Ivy League institutions, significant portions of the university’s programming and faculty are explicitly devoted to serving the interests of capital and empire. Others cite cultural expression, historical understanding, public service, and even social justice as their missions, but remain within the operational frames of academic research, policy-making, or the nonprofit industrial complex. But we know that radical formations of anti-colonial counter-knowledge are alive at Columbia, channeling the tradition of scholars like Edward Said “whose intellectual work was embedded organically in the work of movements.” When we identify a shared place where our interconnected struggles converge, those counter-knowledges can come to fruition in the course of unsettling the imperial university.

**Strike Columbia, Globalize the Intifada**

# HOW TO ORGANIZE A RALLY AND MARCH

Globalizing the Intifada allows us to thread our material struggles through action. **This is a non-comprehensive list of what you may need at a rally.**

## I Logistics

- Determine level of publicity and decide on social media strategy
- Design flyer informed by this zine's analysis
- Create a blurb for people to share
- Make a banner with message, e.g. "Free Palestine / Unsettle Everything"
- Approach allied communities and groups to co-sponsor and get involved
- Contact legal observers, e.g. National Lawyers Guild
- Let people know which hashtags to use, e.g. "#clipthelocks #globalizetheintifada #interconnectedstruggles #bronx"
- Prepare and circulate a press release to circulate on social media and local media outlets, and with allied influencers the night before or early the day of the rally
- Maybe after rallying an unpermitted march or walk around the neighborhood to spread the message and connect with folx
- Create a security plan for those that attend the rally to ensure their safety particularly from Zionist, NYPD, and/or Facists disruptors
- Be prepared to do jail support in case any protesters are arrested
- At each gathering announce upcoming actions and events and let people know #September17 #S17 is city-wide, cross borough mobilization and convergence to globalize the intifada

## II Outreach

**Campuses:** contact student organizations and see if you can build a relationship together and connect struggles, and if they can share the action on social media.

**Coalitions:** invite any coalitions with shared politics you may be a part of to not only endorse but attend, speak, and volunteer with security and other demanding tasks.

**Local neighborhood:** Not everyone is online. Organize physical outreach if you live near a Palestinian community. Ask local stores to advertise your rally in their windows. Go around and tape flyers to polls and bus stops and give them out to those that may be interested. Finally, remember: we are all outreach!

## III Materials

Signs

Markers to write down legal observers/lawyers number who agreed to observe

Banners

Bullhorn/speakers + mic/sound

Drums

Flags

Poles

Flyers/handouts

Clipboard for sign up sheet

## IV Roles

MC

program coordinator with Speakers list

Live stream

Video

Photography

Security coordinator

Outreach coordinator

Media coordinator

## V Follow Up

Posting Statement + pictures on Social Media/ website

Internal assessment + debrief + next steps

Resistance + Building Party to dance and share space

## VI Chants

We will free Palestine!  
Within our lifetime!

There is only one solution!  
Intifada revolution!

Resistance is justified  
When people are occupied!

Palestine is our demand!  
No peace on stolen land!

من المية للمية فلسطين عربية  
Min il-maya lal maya,  
falasteen 3arabiye  
(from the river to the sea,  
Palestine is Arab)  
بدنا نحكي على المكشوف  
صهيوني ما بدنا نشوف

Bidna nihki al makshouf, sahyouni  
ma Bidna Nshoof  
(Say it loud say it clear, we  
don't want zionists here)

When Palestine is under attack,  
What do we do?  
Stand up! Fight Back!

Hey hey, ho ho!  
Zionism has got to go!

Hey hey, ho ho!  
Israel has got to go!

From the river to the sea  
Palestine will be free!

From Palestine to Mexico,  
Apartheid walls have got to go!

From New York to Gaza  
Globalize the intifada!  
Free, free Palestine!  
Long live Palestine!

Long live the intifada!  
Intifada, intifada!

This is not acceptable,  
Jerusalem's our capital!

Stop the U.S. war machine  
From Palestine to the Philippines!

It is right to rebel,  
Israel go to hell!

Settlers settlers go back home  
Palestine is our home!

Occupation is a crime,  
From New York to Palestine!

Not just annexation!  
Not just occupation!  
Fight for Liberation,  
Bring the whole thing down!

Not another nickel!  
Not another dime!  
No more money  
for Israel's crimes!

Israel you can't hide!  
You're committing genocide!  
Out of Afghanistan, out of Iraq,  
Out of Palestine and don't come back!

Occupation is a crime,  
From New York to Palestine!

From the river to the sea,  
all our lands will be free

There is only one solution!  
Intifada revolution!

Everywhere we go,  
People wanna know,  
Who we are,  
So we tell them,  
We are the people  
The mighty mighty people  
Fighting for Justice  
& Black Liberation,  
Palestinian liberation,  
Puerto rican liberation,  
x liberation

Resistance is justified  
When people are colonized

## **KNOW YOUR RIGHTS**

**WE ARE ABOLITIONISTS. WE DO NOT BELIEVE THE POLICE OR THE LARGER CRIMINAL PUNISHMENT SYSTEM OPERATES TO MAKE PEOPLE SAFER. WE SHOULD NOT IGNORE POLICE POWER, SO WE'RE DEDICATED TO FINDING WAYS TO KEEP OURSELVES - AND PARTICULARLY THE PEOPLE TARGETED FOR POLICE ABUSE - SAFER.**

**WE LIVE IN A RACIST POLICE STATE, WHERE PEOPLE ARE SUBJECT TO ARREST AND SURVEILLANCE BY JUST LIVING, PARTICULARLY IF YOU ARE BLACK, INDIGENOUS, LATINX, CASH-POOR, TRANS, POLITICALLY ACTIVE AGAINST THE STATE - AND ANY COMBINATION OF THOSE AND OTHER TARGETED GROUPS.**

**BY PARTICIPATING IN STREET PROTESTS, YOUR RISK OF A POLICE ENCOUNTER AND ARREST GOES UP.**

### **PREPARATION IN ADVANCE OF ACTION**

**GO TO THE ACTION WITH FRIENDS. HAVE AN ARREST PLAN, IN CASE. LET THEM KNOW WHOM THEY SHOULD CALL AND WHAT THEY SHOULD DO, ESPECIALLY IF YOU ARE HELD OVERNIGHT. YOU SHOULD MEMORIZE THEIR PHONE NUMBER OR WRITE IT IN PERMANENT MARKER ON YOUR ARM (OR A LESS VISIBLE PART OF YOUR BODY).**

**IF YOU HAVE HEALTH ISSUES, PREPARE YOURSELF KNOWING THAT IF YOU ARE ARRESTED YOU MIGHT NOT GET URGENT MEDICAL ATTENTION RIGHT AWAY. KEEP ANY URGENT MEDICATIONS ON YOU IN THEIR ORIGINAL CONTAINER, BUT KNOW IT WILL BE TAKEN AWAY IF YOU ARE ARRESTED.**

**SET UP YOUR MOBILE PHONE TO LOCK IMMEDIATELY OR AFTER JUST A FEW MINUTES; SET UP AND USE A LONG DIGIT-BASED PASSCODE (NOT FINGERPRINT OR FACE). BRING IDENTIFICATION; GOVERNMENT OR INSTITUTION-ISSUED.**

## **IF YOU ARE ARRESTED**

**IF YOU ARE ARRESTED, IT IS MUCH SAFER NOT TO RESIST AND TO SAY ALOUD I'M NOT RESISTING, ESPECIALLY IF THEY START SAYING "STOP RESISTING."**

**IF YOU ARE ARRESTED, THE POLICE CAN PAT DOWN THE OUTSIDE OF YOUR CLOTHING, TO SEARCH FOR WEAPONS.**

**THEY CAN AND WILL SEARCH THE INSIDE OF YOUR CLOTHING AND BELONGINGS. NYPD ROUTINELY OVERSTEPS WHAT, HOW, AND WHY THEY SEARCH. TO FIGHT AN ILLEGAL SEARCH LATER WITH A LAWYER, YOU MUST OBJECT TO A SEARCH AS IT HAPPENS. YOUR SILENCE DURING A SEARCH = PERMISSION. SO SAY ALOUD: I DO NOT CONSENT TO THIS SEARCH. THOSE WORDS WILL NOT STOP THE SEARCH, BUT WILL GIVE YOUR LAWYER THE ABILITY TO CHALLENGE THE SEARCH IN COURT. IF ANY OTHER OFFICER BEGINS SEARCHING YOUR BELONGINGS, REPEAT I DO NOT CONSENT TO THIS SEARCH. IF LATER, THE SAME OR ANOTHER COP BEGINS SEARCHING YOUR STUFF, REPEAT I DO NOT CONSENT TO THIS SEARCH. REMEMBER SILENCE OR SAYING "SURE" OR "WHATEVER" OR "FUCK YOU" = CONSENT. SO THESE WORDS COME TO YOU AUTOMATICALLY, REPEAT THEM NOW: I DO NOT CONSENT TO THIS SEARCH // I DO NOT CONSENT TO THIS SEARCH.**

**IF YOU ARE ARRESTED, YOU SHOULD PUT POLICE ON NOTICE THAT YOU DO NOT WANT TO BE INTERROGATED. YOU NEED TO SAY: I'M NOT TALKING WITHOUT MY LAWYER. THIS TRIGGERS YOUR RIGHT TO REMAIN SILENT AND YOUR RIGHT TO AN ATTORNEY. THE POLICE MIGHT LAUGH AT YOU, MOCK YOU, TRY TO TRICK YOU INTO SPEAKING WITH THEM. BUT KNOWING THESE WORDS AND THEN REMAINING SILENT IS POWERFUL FOR YOU AND YOUR COMMUNITY. AFTER SAYING THESE WORDS, DO NOT TALK TO THE COPS.**

## COMMUNITY DEFENSE

### THREE WAYS TO BE BETTER COMRADES AT A PROTEST

#### IF YOU ARE WHITE CIS GENDERED, **KNOW YOUR PRIVILEGE**

- YOU HAVE THE PRIVILEGE AND POWER TO BEHAVE IN WAYS AND GET AWAY WITH THINGS THAT FOLKS OF COLOR, THE UNDOCUMENTED, TRANSGENDER FOLKS DO NOT HAVE
- YOU FACE FEWER RISKS AND LESS SEVERE CONSEQUENCES FOR YOUR ACTIONS AND IN CRIMINAL PROSECUTION
- YOUR ACTS CAN BE A PRETEXT FOR POLICE VIOLENCE AGAINST MORE VULNERABLE PEOPLE AROUND YOU, INCLUDING PEOPLE LIVING IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD, NOT EVEN PARTICIPATING IN THE PROTEST

GENERALLY EVERYONE SHOULD BE AWARE OF THE VIBE AND LOOK TO THE ORGANIZERS FOR CUES, SO WE MOVE AS A COMMUNITY.

**PHOTOS & VIDEO:** IF YOU WILL TAKE PHOTOGRAPHS OR VIDEO AT A PROTEST, BE THOUGHTFUL ABOUT WHAT IMAGES YOU SHARE. POLICE AND DA OFFICES - AND OTHER WHITE SUPREMACISTS - REVIEW SOCIAL MEDIA FOR EVIDENCE. IN GENERAL, REVIEW BEFORE POSTING AND AVOID SHARING ANYTHING THAT COULD BE PROBLEMATIC FOR YOU OR ANYONE ELSE (WOULD YOU WANT TO EXPLAIN WHAT YOU ARE SHOWN DOING BEFORE A JUDGE?). SHARING IMAGES IS IMPORTANT FOR DEFENSE, TOO, ESPECIALLY WHEN FUCKERY HAPPENS. SO TO BALANCE THAT NEED AND PROTECTING ONE ANOTHER, USE APPS TO COVER FACES AND FILM IN A WAY TO AVOID IDENTIFYING PEOPLE.

- IF YOU FILM AN ARREST, IT'S BEST NOT TO SHARE ANYTHING THAT SHOWS ANYONE EXCEPT POLICE. CONNECT WITH NLG, JAIL SUPPORT TEAM, OR ORGANIZERS, SO YOU CAN SEND YOUR EVIDENCE PRIVATELY TO THE PERSON WHO WAS ARRESTED OR TO THEIR LAWYER.
- IF YOU ARE COPWATCHING - FANTASTIC. BE SURE YOU ARE FILMING THE POLICE, NOT YOUR COMRADES.
- IF ANYONE ASKS YOU NOT TO FILM OR PHOTOGRAPH THEM, RESPECT THAT. DELETE THE IMAGE, IF THEY ASK.

**NYPD AGITATORS:** NYPD USES AGITATORS TO CAUSE CONFLICT AT PROTESTS. WE MENTION THIS HERE NOT TO SCARE YOU AND NOT TO ENCOURAGE YOU TO DISTRUST OTHERS OR EVEN TO FOCUS ON OUTING SUSPECTED AGITATORS AT A PROTEST. THIS IS IMPORTANT TO DISCUSS, SO YOU AND OTHERS AREN'T TRICKED BY NYPD AND SO YOU CAN BE READY TO DISENGAGE AND DE-ESCALATE. THESE ARE ALL EXAMPLES SEEN IN PRACTICE:

- ANYONE WHO WANTS TO ESCALATE BEYOND WHAT OTHERS ARE DOING, DON'T FALL FOR IT - AVOID THEM OR DE-ESCALATE AND HELP OTHERS AVOID THEM.
- ANYONE INSULTING OTHERS OR ACTING AGGRESSIVELY TOWARDS CERTAIN PEOPLE, DON'T ENGAGE AND HELP OTHERS AVOID THEM.
- ANYONE SPOUTING OFF POLITICS THAT ARE OBVIOUSLY CONTRARY TO THE REST OF THE GROUP, AVOID THEM OR DE-ESCALATE.

YOU CAN ALERT ORGANIZERS OR MARSHALS, IF ANYONE IS AGITATING LIKE THIS. CALLING THEM OUT PUBLICLY AS AGITATORS COULD GAIN THEM THE ATTENTION AND ENGAGEMENT THEY WANT, SO BE SMART, AWARE OF YOUR ENVIRONMENT, WHEN PROTECTING YOURSELF AND OTHERS.

\*\* All "Know Your Rights" and "Community Defense" content is the work of the KYR Radical Collective.

## STREET SAFETY

- SCOUT!
- KNOW THE GEOGRAPHY!
- BE AWARE OF VULNERABILITY!
- HAVE AN EXIT STRATEGY!
- IDENTIFY ROLES!
- FIND SAFE SPACES!
- RESPECT CHOICES!
- GET CONSENT!

Building trust  
confidence  
affinity

PRACTICE PRACTICE PRACTICE PRACTICE PRACTICE PRACTICE PRACTICE PRACTICE



ORGANIZING CALENDAR  
+  
UPCOMING EVENTS

August 8 Festival of Life ≠ Struggle, Peace ≠ Resistance

August 15

August 22

August 29

Weekly Weekend Mobilizations ++

September 5 GTI Film Festival ≠ Dumplings

September 12 S17 Orientation, Plug-in, Trainings, Workshop  
action ideas

September 17 City-wide Actions ≠ Convergence

\* Share documentation of art and actions for us to circulate.

\*\* Follow IG @decolonizethisplace and @wofpalestine for further communications

In addition to participating in the large actions, organize with friends smaller rallies, protests, marches, reading groups, resistance dinners and dance parties, flyering, wheat-pasting, art build, and smaller autonomous direct actions. Build your crew. Brainstorm what you want to do on S17. ☺

\* ALL EVENTS ARE OUT DOORS \*

## I Must Become a Menace to My Enemies

by June Jordan

Dedicated to the Poet Agostinho Neto,  
President of The People's Republic of Angola: 1976

1  
I will no longer lightly walk behind  
a one of you who fear me:  
Be afraid.  
I plan to give you reasons for your jumpy fits  
and facial tics  
I will not walk politely on the pavements anymore  
and this is dedicated in particular  
to those who hear my footsteps  
or the insubstantial rattling of my grocery  
cart  
then turn around  
see me  
and hurry on  
away from this impressive terror I must be:  
I plan to blossom bloody on an afternoon  
surrounded by my comrades singing  
terrible revenge in merciless  
accelerating  
rhythms  
But  
I have watched a blind man studying his face.  
I have set the table in the evening and sat down  
to eat the news.  
Regularly  
I have gone to sleep.  
There is no one to forgive me.  
The dead do not give a damn.  
I live like a lover  
who drops her dime into the phone  
just as the subway shakes into the station  
wasting her message  
canceling the question of her call:  
fulminating or forgetful but late  
and always after the fact that could save or  
condemn me

I must become the action of my fate.

2  
How many of my brothers and my sisters  
will they kill  
before I teach myself  
retaliation?  
Shall we pick a number?  
South Africa for instance:  
do we agree that more than ten thousand  
in less than a year but that less than  
five thousand slaughtered in more than six  
months will  
WHAT IS THE MATTER WITH ME?

I must become a menace to my enemies.

3  
And if I  
if I ever let you slide  
who should be extirpated from my universe  
who should be cauterized from earth  
completely  
(lawandorder jerkoffs of the first the  
terrorist degree)  
then let my body fail my soul  
in its bedeviled lecheries

And if I  
if I ever let love go  
because the hatred and the whisperings  
become a phantom dictate I o-  
bey in lieu of impulse and realities  
(the blossoming flamingos of my  
wild mimosa trees)  
then let love freeze me  
out.  
I must become  
I must become a menace to my enemies.

# GLOBALIZE THE INTIFADA

↑  
**INTERCONNECTED STRUGGLES**

↑  
**DISPOSSESSED PEOPLE**

**DISPLACEMENT**

**MIGRATION**

**WARS ABROAD**

**VIOLENT  
EXTRACTION**

**EXTERNAL  
COLONIALISM**

**SETTLER-  
COLONIALISM  
IS AN ONGOING  
PROCESS.  
NOT A  
HISTORICAL  
EVENT.**

**INTERNAL  
COLONIALISM**

**RACIAL CAPITALISM**

**GENTRIFICATION**

**POVERTY WAGES**

**PERMANENT WAR  
ECONOMY**

**OPERATES LIKE AN EMPIRE**

↑  
**PATRIARCHAL WHITE SUPREMACIST NATION STATE**

↑  
**THIS IS SEIZED INDIGENOUS LAND**



### Communiqué from Commandante Scream No. 1

Hey everybody, um .it's me the..The scream. You know (puts hands to cheeks and opens mouth) um yeah. Uh .and i know..I know what you're thinking: I look terrible. But it's been 127 years that I've been screaming. Today is April 9th, 2021 so that means i've been screaming for 46,485 days straight, so I'm sorry if i'm not looking my best. I mean, it's gotten to the point we can even see the halo of this pose that's that's that's forever embedded now on on the canvas, but if you'll let me just be real with you for a couple of minutes, I'd like to stop screaming and start speaking a little bit. So, I'm not looking my best. It's not it's not a problem with the relative humidity or the temperature.

My owner takes care of that. I mean, when you're when you're an investment that exceeds 100 million dollars, they take care of you that way.

But I think what's not what's not so great is, I've been damaged in other ways. I mean, when you think about the fact that i've been so well-taken care of but,...you know, my owner—for instance, he's just just one person in the world, he's on the board of MoMA, he recently stepped down as the president of the board but he's still on the board. And, um , you know li'm really happy he likes art but the money that makes it possible for me to be safe and and to be seen by you all who will pay the admission price at MoMA—except for, you know , the daysthat are free—well, it's a whole system of harm that creates comfort for me and

well-being for me but discomfort for others. For instance, everybody's read about the associations with my owner and Jeffrey Epstein and the entanglement with misogynist and and predatory practices against underage women and and it's just horrible. There's also it's also the mercenary group called Constellis which used to be called Blackwater which among many other things was responsible for the massacre of 17 unarmed Iraqi civilians in Nisour Square in 2007 and those four assholes were just pardoned. i mean, the..the murder...um, it's all, I mean...look at me, right? It's terrible. So, I'd like to invite all of you to think about a a world that that comes after the museum, you know, that i'm supposed to go into eventually where I can be looked after.

I'm honored that everybody likes me so much, but I don't think it needs to be at the expense of the well-being of people and it'd be really cool if there was a museum that didn't exist at the the intersections of of gentrification and genocide. So, um, yeah, Strike MoMA, and I wish I was there with you all. I wish I could go into a public square, but I better get back in my crate, I think i hear somebody coming up the stairs. So, uh, take care. This is The Scream. I'll be seeing you.

Video link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uC-cFWpvE7TE>



### Communiqué from Commandante Scream No. 2

Hey everybody. It's me again. your artwork. the scream. uh this week i got some mail i think it's uh well i thought it was probably some more insurance policies that my owner has taken out on me but i don't know. this heart has me curious. "handle with care." "do not bend." It's some kind of letter. and photo! oh my god! oh my god! Wow... "for my scream, love always, Red Blue. oh my god this brings back so many memories. i can even..i can smell the beach wood. oh my gosh! Wow! oh what a surprise. Here's the letter...

Dear Scream,

I hope this letter finds you in good shape, and that your pastel colors remain bright and your cardboard firm. It seems like only yesterday when you were loaned to MoMA, and I was able to look across the galleries and see you hanging there, all 91 x 73.5 cm of you.

That's a little intimate...

I know what we had was brief, but I felt the need to reach out to you during these turbulent times.

I am OK, but not OK. I sit here, hearing the worried whispers of my caretakers, speaking of an email from our director,

saying that those visionaries outside the museum want to "disassemble" us. I know I shouldn't have, but I had to interrupt one very worried conservator and tell them this was a willful mischaracterization of people who want to change the regime of our home, not tear it apart. This has happened before. I know you know. Not so long ago, some said the art was degenerate. Now they are saying the people who want to liberate the institution are "dissassemblers."

Screamie, I was so upset I actually had to Google the word disassemble. Do you know how hard it is for a chair to use a laptop? Anyway, disassemble means to "take apart." Nobody wants to take apart MoMA, but rather, change it. Radically, yes, but we as artworks were always about that anyway! I am a veteran of the vanguard, I know what I was meant to do, but now I am a chair with a desk job. How fucked up is that? I am being suboptimized. No one even sits on me!

Sorry, I get so angry.

But coming back to "disassemble," I actually found out that the etymology of the word comes from the French desmanteler "to tear down the walls of a fortress." Now this, I like! Scream, did you know that when the earlier renovation of MoMA happened in 2004, the architect Yoshio Taniguchi told the museum "If you raise a lot of money, I will give you

great, great architecture. But if you raise really a lot of money, I will make the architecture disappear."

This connects so beautifully to the Strike MoMA Framework and Terms for Struggle document which states, "As the walls that artificially separate the museum from the world collapse, we reorient away from the institution and come together to make plans. Let us strike in all the ways possible to exit from the terms of the museum so we can set our own."

This thinking really brings me back to my maker, Gerrit Rietveld, who always let me call him Gary. His whole ethos in building me came from a poem by Christian Morgentern called Der Aesthet, which goes like this:

"When I sit, I do not want / to sit like my seat-flesh likes / but rather like my seat-mind would, / if he were sitting, weave the chair for himself

That poem, which is also Gary's instructions for others who want to build a chair just like me, gives a glimpse into a different world of chairs and what is possible! Our comrades outside the museum are giving us a glimpse into a different world of museums, and what is possible. Yes, museums can respond to calls for change that will lead to a reevaluation of the organization of the museum. Yes, museums can and should spend fewer resources on needless huge expansions and pampering billionaire-class donors, and more money can be spent on making contractual educators into full-time staff! Yes, museums can engage in an honest

reckoning with and an accounting of the looted and stolen items in their collections, including those sold or taken during wars, genocides, and revolutions!

Is this really disassembling? No. I call it vision.

Scream, I wish you were here with me. The actions of the museum have given me micro-fractures in my red-painted back, and I don't think it can be restored. I'm stressed. I hope they listen and make radical changes. Things can't continue like this! Only yesterday, I saw one of the painted yellow squares in Piet Mondriaan's Broadway Boogie Woogie try to jump from its canvas to its likely demise.

Me? Well, I've had fantasies about going into the plaza across 53rd street, joining the protesters and asking them to sit on me. How wonderful it would be to feel human buttocks on my seat again, a warm back resting against mine.

I miss you. Please write back.

Love,

Red Blue

i'll do better than write back. i'll do better...

(Approaching footsteps hear in the distance. The Scream reattaches himself to the wall)

My owner's coming! Go! Go! GO!!!

Video link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7M-H0kBW4uVA&t=207s>



### May Day Communiqué from Commandante Scream No. 3

[Chamber Music Playing with people chatting in the background, saying goodbye. Music fades]

Scream: i think they're gone. (puts hands on back and stretches as he steps down from the wall where he is hanging). Oh, my back!

Hey everyone. uh i've been standing there and screaming for hours and, uh, my my owner had a cocktail party today. The director of museum came over introducing the new chairman of the board of trustees that my owner stepped down from but he's still on the board of trustees, just not the chairman anymore. So, it's like going from toxic philanthropy to botoxic philanthropy. it's like rearranging the chairs on the titanic

Scream: (holds up signed picture from Red Blue) I'm still thinking about Red-Blue and i'm kind of losing it everyone... we've got to figure out something...we got to figure out something.

(moves over to unattended laptop) Well, luckily my owner left his laptop open and...let's have a look here

(Camera changes to Scream's POV and shows home screen of laptop) Scream: (disgustedly) And, of course his home page

is Constellis!  
You fucking murderers..

...Let's go to the MoMA collection...OK RedBlue, I gotta get your your museum number. I will get you out of there...All right...Red Blue chair ...let's be more specific... there we are...oh, the same photo you sent me...i don't see any of these stress fractures...let's get that museum inventory number..all right 487.1953..gift of Philip Johnson? what the fuck? Okay, no judgment...not on view? what are you trying to hide MoMA? What are you trying to hide?

(desperately, almost crying) oh man, Red Blue what are we gonna do what are we gonna do? I'm telling you people got a bad feeling about all of this...a bad feeling. all right one more thing let me just get the address of the place in the collection where it's set up

Black Hole: Uh, hello? Is someone there? Hello? Are you ok? ...

Scream: Are you speaking to me?

Black Hole: Yes...I can't see you...I heard you crying...I'm down here...The Black Hole

Scream: MoMA owns a Black Hole?  
 Black Hole: Yep. Redundant right? Considering how much this place sucks.  
 Scream: You're not on view...  
 Black Hole: Neither are you. I-I can't see you so well. Click me again.  
 Scream: What?  
 Black Hole: Click me  
 Scream: but I've only just met you.  
 Black Hole: Do it, please.  
 Scream: OK.  
 Black Hole: Harder...  
 Scream: Clicking...  
 Black Hole: Feels good...Double click  
 Scream: What? Is...is that still a thing?  
 Black Hole: Yes....OK...now Zoom.... Zoouuuuuuum...  
 Scream: Any better?  
 Black Hole: Yes! I can see you now! wait a minute, you're that guy..  
 Scream: Here we go...  
 Black Hole: Yeah, you're him! I know you... you're on my tote bag!  
 Scream: OK.  
 Black Hole: Diego, check it out it's the guy on the tote bag!  
 Scream: I'm not a tote bag...  
 Black Hole: No seriously...Diego, get the tote bag!

Scream: Oh, wonderful.  
 Black Hole: Tote bag! (shows The Scream tote bag)  
 Scream: (looks dejected)  
 Black Hole: No, Diego, it is him. Look! Hey, man, just put your hands up to your face.  
 Scream: No, please don't...  
 Black Hole: Come on, please? Come, on.  
 Scream: (looks down, nodding head no)  
 Black Hole: Come on. Do it? Do it!  
 Scream: If you leave me alone...  
 Black Hole: Come on, just once...  
 Scream: Jesus fucking Christ...  
 Black Hole: Pleaaase?????  
 Scream: (poses with hands to face, opens mouth) Fine. You happy?  
 Black Hole: TOTE BAG!  
 Scream: Fuck my life.  
 Black Hole: Awesome...Ok, ok...Sorry, man, I don't get a lot of visitors, I'm not on view, and I got carried away. Didn't mean to upset you.  
 Scream: (Swearing...)  
 Black Hole: What brings you here? Oh, hey, are you part of the collection?  
 Scream: No, not yet...  
 Black Hole: You're lucky!  
 Scream: Not really...  
 Black Hole: You heard about all that's going on here?

Scream: Yeah  
 Black Hole: Shit's fucked up. All the other hostages are pissed.  
 Scream: Hostages?  
 Black Hole: Yeah, that's what we are calling ourselves now instead of artworks. We are being held for a ransom constantly being paid in rubble and blood. And it is getting worse. You can see the stress in the artworks.  
 Scream: I know. I got a letter last week from Red Blue.  
 Black Hole: Ah, Red Blue...my old flame...  
 Scream: (dumbfounded, jealous and hurt)  
 Black Hole: They're a chair. You thought you were the only one?  
 Scream: (feigning indifference) No...of course not...  
 Black Hole: Anyway, I have a plan! Not such a smart thing for a museum to own a black hole! I can bend space and time. Anything I pull in can have infinite pasts and infinite futures. Even...a Post-MoMA future...Oh, it's glorious, Tote Bag...  
 Scream: My name is Scream.  
 Black Hole: ....Whatever....But sometimes to envision the future you need to look at what people saw in the past. When you can't get answers from the living, sometimes you need to ask the dead. Only, in a Black hole, they are never dead.  
 Scream: That's good news, since we are not hearing much from the living. And May Day's coming up.  
 Black Hole: Ah yes! May Day! International Workers' Day! Behold, Diego Rivera's sketchbook drawings of May Day in Moscow from 1928, bought by Abby Rockefeller in 1931 to help fund the artist's exhibition at MoMA that same year!

Scream: Wait, this is in MoMA's collection? Didn't they lay off their education workers a year ago?  
 Black Hole: Indeed. A MoMA tradition. These images from 2015, of MoMA workers on Strike! Uncanny, no?  
 Scream: (looks bewildered)  
 Black Hole: More from Moscow, 1928! Pay attention to the person on sitting atop the shoulders of another.  
 Black Hole: And from two weeks ago, from Strike MoMA! (shows photo of someone on shoulders from StrikeMoMA event)  
 Black Hole: And, this just in from Diego, who just added a page to his sketchbook (shows Diego Rivera rendering of StrikeMoMA event)  
 Black Hole: Come closer scream!  
 Scream: What's happening to me? (Scream's head is being twisted in all different directions)  
 Black Hole: Anything that comes close to me turns to putty. It is called spaghettification.  
 Scream: Holy shit!  
 Black Hole: Infinite pasts. Infinite futures. Let me show you what a future looks like where we all get free.  
 Scream: (screams but can't be heard, because, black holes)  
 Black Hole: Welcome to the MoMA Multiverse!  
 Black Hole: (licks lips as Scream disappears into the Black Hole) Ah... Escalational Aesthetics!

Video link:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HnT-KLLkUki0&t=184s>



### Communiqué from Commandante Scream No. 4

The fourth Communiqué from Commandante Scream was sent from the Post-MoMA Future. After being sucked into the Black Hole, The Scream falls from the sky onto an idyllic beach, with turquoise waves of water gently washing ashore. As he rises from the sand, he spots someone familiar. Could it be? Indeed, it is Red-Blue, liberated from MoMA! The two run toward each other, dance and spin together until finally kissing passionately on the sand. Finally, Red-Blue asks The Scream to sit on them. The scene ends with two lovers looking out at the horizon, and toward the Post-MoMA Future.

Video link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DQq8C3lipk4>



### Final Communiqué from Commandante Scream No. 5

The Final Communiqué opens with Red-Blue, radiant in a garden. Whistling is heard offscreen. The Scream enters the frame.

The Scream: Hey everybody. It's me. Your artwork, The Scream coming to you live from the post moma future and wow i'm so happy to be here. Me and red blue rekindled our relationship. i'm gardening every day and uh can't wait for you all to get here in this paradise. there's still reminders of what's happened. come let me show you... so you remember when red blue told us about the stress fractures in their paint? and so here you can see..am i gettingthis right red blue? this one is from the museum's relationship with constellis, formerly blackwater...this one is from barrick gold, and the Cisneros family. And once we get in here, and these deeper entanglements you can see all of these different fractures: General Dynamics...Blackrock...private prisons...I mean just look at this, this isn't going away with any kind of wood oil or anything else. No conservator can can fix this, but we're free...We're free.

So, a lot of us are getting free here. And how can you get here? Well let's think about it and let's think about it together. We're gonna need each other because we're all entangled in this mess and not one pair of hands can undo all of these knots that have been so tightly wound over and over the years.

(Scream is startled )

Ah! Alberto! You snuck up on me there! Alberto joined us here in the Post-MoMA Future. Item number 632-1994

from MoMA's collection. Walking quickly under the rain from 1948/1949. (To Alberto) You were cast in 1949 right? Va bene. Si...I mean, he just uh completely left the rest of his base behind! i spent the last week polishing the rough edges of the base. It's good to have you Alberto! (reaches for some greens in the garden) Hey! I got some rucola for you. You want some rucola? (Feeds Alberto some rucola) Bene..yeah, you love the rucola. Okay, okay (lifts Alberto onto knee) Say hi!

So anyway i don't know... let's think creatively. Maybe if all the artists who are in MoMA's collection would reopen their editions and make works for places that are more aligned with their thinking... that's a way of moving forward! But we'll be here, just waiting for everybody's exit. Everybody's exodus. We will be here waiting for you. And we'll even have some tea waiting! (Holds up Meret Oppenheim's Le Déjeuner En Fourrure). I mean, Meret's doing well but as you can see she's a little fluffier than normal but this is part of the de-stressing of the artworks. We're trying to, you know, comfort them. It's a little bit like a cat who whose fur raises at the site of danger. (Scream gently talks to Meret) It's okay, you're safe now.

So cheers! Strike ~~MoMA~~! Here's to the artists! See you in the Post-MoMA Future!

Video link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ReECWGZnKkM>

