



## MANIFEST OF *OCCUPY MUSEUMS*

**WE OCCUPY MUSEUMS TO RECLAIM SPACE FOR MEANINGFUL CULTURE BY AND FOR THE 99%. WE BELIEVE THAT ART AND CULTURE ARE THE SOUL OF THE COMMONS. ART IS NOT A LUXURY!**

On September 17th, 2011, we occupied Wall Street because the wealthiest 1% who control banks and big corporations broke trust with the American people. Motivated by a quest for power they robbed the national treasury, bought off our democracy, and made a mockery of the justice system. They left us little choice but to step out in the streets, find each other, and begin imaging and building a new system.

We saw a direct connection between the corruption of high finance and the corruption of "high culture." For example, MoMA shares board members with Sotheby's auction house, where the value of art is synonymous with speculation. Sotheby's auction house is now locking out unionized art handlers, refusing to pay them health care during a year of record profits. As art workers, we stand in solidarity with this struggle. Our labor will be truly valued only when we kick the addiction to obscene wealth that characterizes the American and international art world today.

So we began to occupy museums in New York City. We danced and chanted at their doors, and held open assemblies on museum steps to free up a space of dialogue and fearlessness for the 99%. More and more people joined us. Museums must be held accountable to the public. They help create our historical narratives and common symbols. They wield enormous power within our culture and over the entire art market. We occupy museums because museums have failed us. Like our government, which no longer represents the people, museums have sold out to the highest bidder.

This struggle will not be easy. We are beginning to unmask a cultural system of inequality and exploitation which has ancient roots. But we will not wait for future generations to take up this struggle. We are working together to replace the exchange of capital with a creative exchange for and by the 99%. As we seek horizontal spaces for dialogue and collaboration, we begin to fill the hollowness of the capitalist art market with the warmth of meaning and the conviction that art is a necessity, not a luxury.