

# THE COMPLEXITIES OF OBLIGATION:

THE ETHICAL, LEGAL AND  
FINANCIAL RISKS OF  
DOCUMENTING PROTEST ART

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Tbilisi, Georgia

# INTRODUCTION

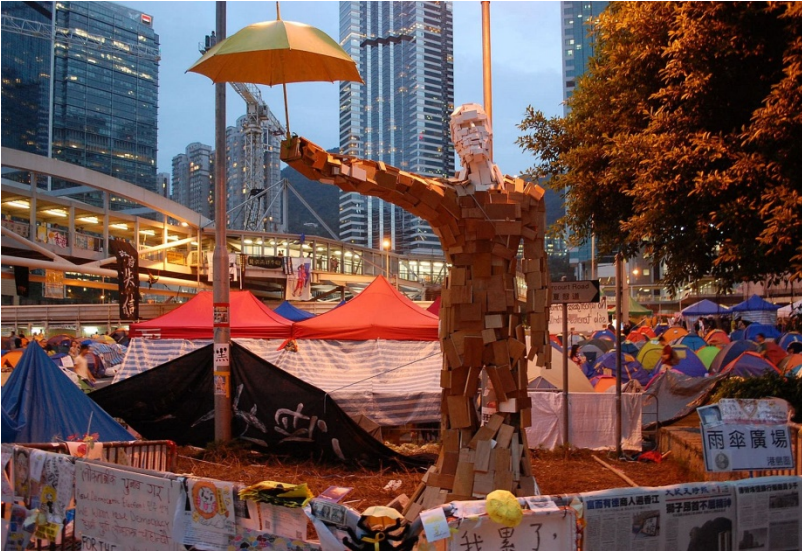
## **Documenting and Displaying Protest Art Can be Beneficial to Institutions:**

- 1. ability to attract constituents who might not normally attend a museum and stimulate dialogue**
- 2. allow museums to fulfill their missions and obligations to remain relevant to society.**

## **Documenting and Displaying Protest Art Reveals Ethical and Legal Dilemmas in Museum Administration:**

- A core value of traditional museum practice is that museums have an obligation to document various perspectives on an issue without advocating for one side or the other.**
- Problems can arise when these perspectives are perceived as lopsided or one sided, or if the societal debate surrounding the subject of the protest art is overheated, inflammatory, or provokes violence.**
- Protest art has been largely ignored by museums because it is often created anonymously from easily accessible materials.**

# WHAT IS PROTEST ART?



- 1. Used in protest action**
- 2. Often made from available materials**
- 3. Created anonymously**
- 4. Abandoned at site of protest**
- 5. Meant for to be destroyed or for one time use**

# PROTEST ART AS CULTURAL HERITAGE

Protest art is valuable cultural property. Cultural property “helps tell us who we are and where we came from” (John Merryman 1989).

Protest art can be a powerful tool documenting authentic resistance to social and political orthodoxy, providing a visual representation of moral values in conflict, creating a national and individual cultural identity that can ground a society in its own history, and promoting shared experiences that can serve as a basis for dialogue.





# RISKS AND CHALLENGES OF DOCUMENTING PROTEST ART



# RISKS OF DOCUMENTING AND DISPLAYING PROTEST ART

- **Attendance**
  - **Attendance can increase or decrease based on whether the constituent identify or agree with the protest art**
- **Financial**
  - **Government and corporate funding**
  - **501(c)(3) status in US for non-profits**
  - **Self-censorship**
- **Legal**
  - **Visual Artists Rights claims**
  - **Berne Convention claims**
  - **Copyright violation claims**
  - **Valid title**

# ICOM CODE OF ETHICS, SECTION 2.20

## ***2.20 Documentation of Collections***

***Museum collections should be documented according to accepted professional standards. Such documentation should include a full identification and description of each item, its associations, provenance, condition, treatment and present location.***

**To comply, extensive research on protest art is required. This necessitates funding, staff, and convincing your museum leaders that protest art is valuable cultural heritage. These are challenges that cannot be easily overcome.**

# ISSUES RELATING TO CIDOC STANDARDS 1.2.5

**Artist name?**  
**Provenance?**  
**Associations?**  
**Materials?**  
**Treatment?**  
**Specific Date?**  
**Intellectual  
Property Rights?**





# CASE STUDIES



# VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM, "DISOBEDIENT OBJECTS", JULY 2014- FEBRUARY 2015



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## The Advantages Of Being A Woman Artist

Object:	Print
Place of origin:	USA (made)
Date:	ca. 1985-1990 (made)
Artist/Maker:	Guerrilla Girls (maker)
Materials and Techniques:	Offset lithograph
Credit Line:	Given by Margaret Timmers.
Museum number:	E.623-1997
Gallery location:	Prints & Drawings Study Room, level C, case TECHS




Image in copyright



# VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM, "DISOBEDIENT OBJECTS", JULY 2014- FEBRUARY 2015

The Advantages Of Being A Woman Artist

Guerrilla Girls

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## Explore related objects

### Category

- Prints ▶
- Posters ▶
- Feminism ▶

### Material

- paper ▶
- material ▶

### Subject

- sex discrimination ▶

### Technique

- offset lithograph ▶
- technique ▶

### Name

- Guerrilla Girls ▶

### Place

- USA ▶
- place ▶

### Gallery


- Prints & Drawings Study Room, level C ▶

### Collection

- Prints, Drawings & Paintings Collection ▶

More information

Map

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## Physical description

A print depicting black writing on a white background. The larger text in the upper part of the poster reads 'THE ADVANTAGES OF BEING A WOMAN ARTIST'.

## Place of Origin

USA (made)

## Date

ca. 1985-1990 (made)

## Artist/maker

Guerrilla Girls (maker)

## Materials and Techniques

Offset lithograph

## Marks and inscriptions

'THE ADVANTAGES / OF BEING / A WOMAN ARTIST'

'Working without the pressure of success / Not having to be in shows with men...'

'A PUBLIC SERVICE MESSAGE FROM GUERRILLA GIRLS CONSCIENCE OF THE ART WORLD'

## Dimensions

Height: 44.4 cm, Width: 57.1 cm

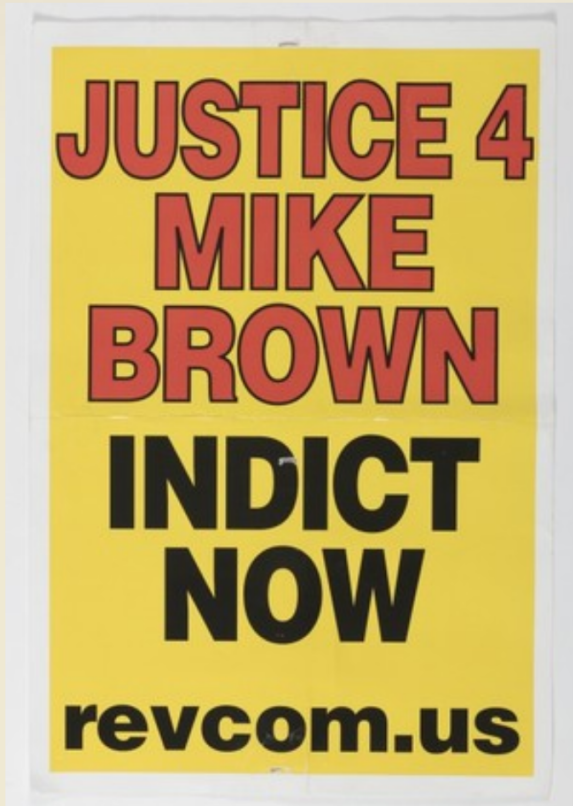
## Object history note

One of a series criticising sexist and racist policies and behaviour in society and the art world in particular.

# MISSOURI HISTORY MUSEUM, FERGUSON PROTESTS, 2014

Home

## "Justice 4 Mike Brown" Ferguson Protest Sign



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**Identifier:** 2017-030-0002

**Title:** "Justice 4 Mike Brown" Ferguson Protest Sign

**Description:** "Justice 4 Mike Brown" Ferguson protest sign used by Larry Miller. This sign was carried by Miller, a local activist, during protests following the fatal shooting of Michael Brown in August of 2014. It documents a significant event in the region's history, sparking a reinvigorated movement focusing on issues of social justice that resonated throughout the nation and attracted international attention.

**Rights:**

**Place:**

**Dates:** 2014

**Type(s):** Sign

**Maker/Creator:**

**Subjects:** Ferguson Collecting Initiative, 2014-  
Protest movements

# UMBRELLA MOVEMENT, HONG KONG, 2014



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