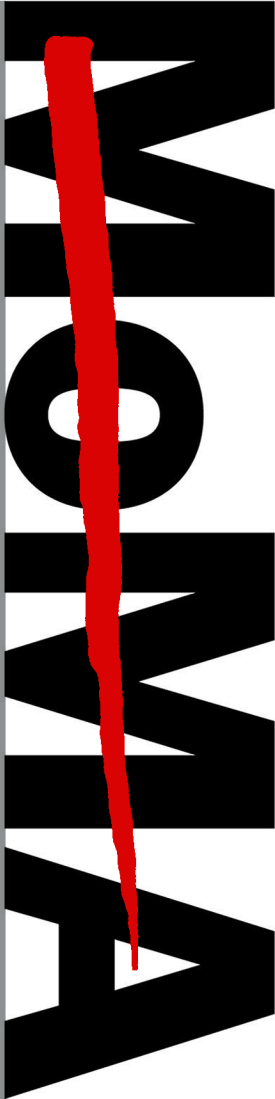


STRIKE



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go to 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 toppers 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.

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

Artists for a Post-MoMA Future (APMF).
For more information, contact
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 by StrikeMoMA Working Group of the **International Imagination of Anti-National Anti-Imperialist Feelings (IIAAF)** is generated in conversation with the following groups:

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