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超越藝術破壞：

A22 網路成立以來的博物館生態活動探討

Going beyond Art Vandalism:

An Inquiry on Museum Incidents of Ecological Activism

Since the Formation of the A22 Network

陳小風

Audrey Champion

指導教授：劉好迪 博士

Advisor: Adrian Rauchfleisch, Ph.D.

Co- Advisor: Eric Macé, Ph.D

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本論文係 AUDREY LUCIE CHAMPION (R12322038) 在國立臺灣大學政治學系完成之碩士學位論文，於民國 113 年 9 月 25 日承下列考試委員審查通過及口試及格，特此證明。

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指導教授 Advisor



Content



CONTENT	III
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	VI
SUMMARY – KEYWORDS.....	VII
INTRODUCTION.....	1
A) RESEARCH TOPIC	1
1. <i>The Soup Shower Trend: An International Threat to Artworks?</i>	1
2. <i>Art, Activism or Vandalism? The Debate over Modern Iconoclasm</i>	2
3. <i>Art in the Crossfire: The Role of Art in Radical Ecological Activism</i>	4
B) RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES	6
1. <i>Research Questions</i>	6
2. <i>Results</i>	7
C) METHODS AND DATA	9
1. <i>Mobilizing Qualitative Methods and Literature Review</i>	9
2. <i>The Use of Case Studies</i>	11
3. <i>The Key Role of Semi-Structured Interviews</i>	13
4. <i>Data Analysis</i>	14
D) STUDY LIMITATIONS.....	15
E) OUTLINE.....	16
CHAPTER 1: THE CHALLENGE OF CHARACTERIZING INCIDENTS OF ECOLOGICAL ACTIVISM IN MUSEUMS	17
A) RADICAL ECOLOGICAL ACTIVISM: ART VANDALISM ACROSS A SPECTRUM OF TACTICS?.....	17
1. <i>Evolution and Radicalization of Ecological Activism</i>	17
2. <i>The Repertoire of Radical Ecological Tactics</i>	19
3. <i>Radical Eco-Activism in the Art Worlds: Can I Speak About Art Vandalism?</i> .	20
B) ARTIVISM: MERGING ART AND ACTIVISM IN ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENTS	24
1. <i>Redefining Art and Activism: The Emergence of Artivism</i>	24
2. <i>Historical Roots and Evolution of Artivism</i>	25
3. <i>Artivism Discussed as a Tool for Ecological and Social Transformation</i>	26
C) ARTIVISM WITHIN THE ART WORLDS: BALANCING INTEGRATION AND SUBVERSION 30	
1. <i>The Integration of Artivism into Mainstream Cultural Institutions</i>	30
2. <i>Artivism as a Catalyst for Challenging Institutional Norms Both Inside and Out</i> 31	
3. <i>The Tension Between the Subversion of the Art Worlds and Co-optation</i>	33

D)	ARTIVISM AND ART DISRUPTION: TOWARD A COUNTER-HEGEMONIC CULTURAL LANDSCAPE	36
1.	<i>Art and Activism as Counter-Hegemony</i>	36
2.	<i>Artivism and Art Disruption as Tools to Challenge the Center-Periphery Hierarchy</i>	38
3.	<i>The Trajectory of Art from Local to Global Activist Movements</i>	40
CHAPTER 2: THE RIPPLE EFFECT OF INCIDENTS OF ECOLOGICAL ACTIVISM IN MUSEUMS.....		43
A)	CASE STUDIES: INCIDENTS DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS.....	44
1.	<i>The Mona Lisa Incident on January 28, 2024</i>	44
2.	<i>The Van Gogh Peach Trees in Blossom Incident on June 30, 2022</i>	47
3.	<i>The BP Portrait Award Protest on October 20, 2019</i>	51
4.	<i>Comparing and Discussing Case Studies</i>	54
B)	STRATEGIC DISRUPTION AND PUBLIC IMPACT: HOW ACTIVISTS LEVERAGE MEDIA POTENTIAL	57
1.	<i>Creating Buzz: Activists' Strategic Use of the Media</i>	57
2.	<i>Digital Platforms and Traditional Media: A Dual Approach</i>	58
3.	<i>The Risk of Public Alienation: The Double-Edged Impact of Radical Strategies</i> 60	
C)	THE ROLE OF MUSEUMS IN MITIGATION AND PRESERVATION: RESPONSES AND COMMUNICATION FROM CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS	61
1.	<i>Museum Missions: Between Preservation of Cultural Heritage and the Quest for Neutrality</i>	61
2.	<i>Evolving Dynamics and Tensions Between Activism and Core Museum Missions</i>	63
3.	<i>Museums' Dilemma Between Security and Engagement in Response to Eco-Activism</i>	65
D)	TRANSNATIONAL RESONANCE OF LOCAL INCIDENTS OF ECO-ACTIVISM IN MUSEUMS	67
1.	<i>The A22 Network and its Role in the Cross-Border Coordination of Art Disruption Actions</i>	67
2.	<i>Local Contexts and the Differential Impact of Transnational Tactics</i>	68
3.	<i>Global Amplification: The Role of Media and International Organizations in the International Resonance of Local Activist Actions</i>	70
CONCLUSION.....		71
A)	SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS	71
B)	DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS.....	72

C) OUTLOOK	73
BIBLIOGRAPHY	75
SOURCES.....	77
A) SCIENTIFIC ARTICLES, PUBLICATIONS AND BOOK CHAPTERS	77
B) REPORTS	86
C) PRESS ARTICLES	87
D) OFFICIAL SOURCES.....	92
E) INTERNET RESOURCES	92
F) ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE	95
APPENDIX 1: RECAPITULATORY INTERVIEW GRID	96
APPENDIX 2: ASTRID’S INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT.....	99
APPENDIX 3: LORRY’S INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT	109
APPENDIX 4: VERONIQUE’S INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT	123
APPENDIX 5: RACHEL’S INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT.....	134
APPENDIX 6: LOUIS’ INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT	151
APPENDIX 7: JASPER’S INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT.....	173
APPENDIX 8: INFORMATION SHEET AND CONSENT FORM SENT TO PARTICIPANTS	183

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Summary – Keywords



摘要：

本碩士論文探討了全球博物館中近年來環保行動主義事件的趨勢，特別是自 2022 年 A22 網絡成立以來的情況。在科學文獻、政治、媒體及行動主義領域中，各種概念被動員用來描述這些事件。通過分析“藝術破壞”、“藝術行動主義”和“藝術干擾”等不同概念，本研究檢視這些術語如何形塑大眾對激進環保行動的認知及政治話語。研究結果顯示，主流媒體和文化機構使用的“藝術破壞”一詞是有缺陷的，因為它忽視了這些動員形式的表演性和象徵性維度。“藝術行動主義”呈現了藝術與行動主義的融合，似乎更具相關性，但這個新詞往往會稀釋這些行動的顛覆性特質。最終，本研究引入了“藝術干擾”這一概念，因為它更準確地反映了行動主義在制度化文化空間中的特殊性。分析總結認為，對博物館中的環保行動事件的定性，不僅僅是研究問題，而是對這些事件的政治框架設定。我們接著探討所研究行動的有效性問題。行動者透過向著名藝術作品潑灑湯、油漆或馬鈴薯泥等物質，引發醜聞，藉此吸引媒體關注其社會和環保運動。然而，本論文揭示了這種策略的風險和局限性，如隨著行動的重複，其媒體影響力逐漸下降，或可能疏遠目標受眾。此外，行動者將博物館置於遺產保護與社會政治參與之間的兩難境地。儘管面臨這些挑戰，這些事件仍成功吸引了國際關注，尤其是透過如 A22 網絡組織的跨國運動。

關鍵詞：

行動主義；藝術行動主義；藝術干擾；藝術破壞；藝術漂白；藝術界；反霸權；生態；媒體；公眾認知；激進性；集體行動的表現形式；策略。

Abstract:

This Master Thesis looks at the recent trend of incidents of environmental activism in museums worldwide, particularly since the formation of the A22 network in 2022. Various concepts are mobilized to name these events in scientific literature and in the political, media and activist spheres. By analyzing various concepts, such as “*artistic vandalism*”, “*artivism*”, and the notion of “*art disruption*”, this study examines how these terms shape public perception and political discourse around radical environmental activism. This characterization proves that the term “*art vandalism*” used by mainstream media and cultural institutions is flawed, as it neglects the performative and symbolic dimensions of these forms of mobilization. Illustrating a fusion between art and activism, “*artivism*” seems relevant, but the neologism tends to dilute the subversive nature of these actions. The concept of “*artistic disruption*” is finally introduced, as it more accurately reflects the specificities of activist actions within institutional cultural spaces. This analysis concludes that the characterization of eco-activist incidents in museums is not just a research question, but an issue of political framing of these events. I then turn to the question of the effectiveness of the actions studied. Activists cause scandals by targeting famous works of art with substances such as soup, paint or mashed potatoes, to draw media attention to their social and environmental campaigns. This thesis, however, brings to light the risks and limits of this tactic, such as declining media impact as actions are repeated, or the possibility of alienating the target audience. Additionally, activists push museums into a dilemma between heritage protection and socio-political engagement. Despite these challenges, these incidents are successfully attracting international attention, notably via cross-border campaigns like the ones organized by the A22 network.

Keywords:

Activism; Artivism; Art Disruption; Art Vandalism; Art Washing; Art World; Counter-hegemony; Ecology; Media; Public Perception; Radicality; Repertoire of Collective Action; Tactics.

INTRODUCTION



A) Research Topic

1. The Soup Shower Trend: An International Threat to Artworks?

“What is worth more: art of life? Is it worth more than food, worth more than justice? Are you more concerned about the protection of a painting, or the protection of our planet and people?” (Gayle, October 2022).

These rhetorical questions posed by Phoebe Plummer when she – and Anna Holland – threw soup on Van Gogh’s *Sunflowers* at London’s National Gallery on October 14, 2022, have sparked a range of responses that are more mixed than they might initially appear. Indeed, the environmental activist group Just Stop Oil received international media coverage for this action, but public opinion was mostly critical. The tension the activists are trying to present between preserving art and climate change doesn’t seem obvious at first glance and raises multiple questions about the methods used by civil resistance groups in today’s globalized world, and the porosity between the worlds of art and social movements.

Building on these acts of protest, the creation of the A22 Network in April 2022 has marked a significant shift in the frequency and visibility of nonviolent civil disobedience demanding strong actions on climate change. It has proven to be an effective method for drawing attention and securing media coverage to advance the activists’ discourses (Badullovich et al., 2024). The transnational network of twelve climate projects of civil resistance known as A22 Network and aims in their words *“to say we will create a new world... While there remains breath in our bodies, we will not stop”* by promoting social and ecological strategic campaigns (A22 Network, 2024). It includes groups such as Just Stop Oil (UK), Återställ Våtmarker (Sweden), Liberate Switzerland, Climate Liberation Aotearoa (New Zealand), Riposte Alimentaire (France) and Letzte Generation (Germany and Austria). Even if they assert in their declaration that they are *“open and nonviolent”* (A22 Network, 2024) the groups making up this network are considered radical on the spectrum of ecological activism. Indeed, they use direct action for environmental goals, and they often bypass the framework of legality within their countries when engaged in civil disobedience.

As part of this new wave of activism, non-violent protests such as sit-ins, blockades, sabotage, or hunger strikes have gained prominence, but it is the highly visual and often misunderstood acts characterized as art vandalism – such as throwing soup or paint on world-famous artworks – that have captured the most media attention. This kind of event has been increasingly recurring in the world – but primarily in Europe, starting with the United Kingdom – in a context marked by the development of the Network A22 (Kinyon et al., 2023), with the following common features: a group of climate activists carrying a message, targeting a well-known work of art in a museum, throwing food like soup or mashed potatoes without really damaging the work, and leveraging the visual power of their action to create a media buzz. For instance, from May to December 2022, Lily Kinyon, Nives Dolšak, and Aseem Prakash (2023) documented 38 cases, of museum vandalism, with a notable peak occurring around the time of the COP27 conference. Moreover, groups belonging to the A22 Network were behind 58% of the actions. Even if the Mona Lisa like Les Meules, the Sunflowers, or The Scream weren't really harmed by the activists as they were kept behind glass, the activists who targeted them have been designated as vandals in the public sphere. Terms of museum or art vandalism, art destruction and attacks have been utilized in the media worldwide.

2. Art, Activism or Vandalism? The Debate over Modern Iconoclasm

This raises critical questions: Are these artworks in actual danger or does throwing soup on them serve as a symbolic gesture? This inquiry leads me into a deeper exploration of the semantic battle that underpins these actions, which reveals a broader narrative struggle between dominant and counter-hegemonic narratives. On the one hand, dominant narratives often frame these actions as irrational or harmful, focusing on the tangible aspects of art damage and public reaction. On the other hand, counter-hegemonic narratives argue that these acts are strategic and symbolic, designed to highlight urgent issues like climate change and environmental degradation by using storytelling (Erwin, 2020). This ongoing semantic and narrative battle emphasizes deeper normative struggles over the value of art and the efficacy of radical activism. To put it differently, the debate over whether these acts are symbolic or genuine vandalism extends beyond mere terminology, it reveals broader tensions between conventional and unconventional approaches to social change.

The study of art vandalism lacks standardized definitions and research, and these incidents – the term incident is here used because it contains a disruptive dimension that seems

particularly interesting but many synonyms are also mobilized during this study for the sake of fluidity – are often labeled senseless (Williams, 2008). But according to Christopher Cordess and Maja Turcan, art vandalism – this thesis does not tackle art vandalism as a war crime or the result of action by hegemonic groups – by non-owners “*encompasses an act which ‘destroys or damages’ a material object in contrast to an act of violence against the person. Art vandalism may be seen as an intermediate form between an attack on a thing and an attack on a person in so far as it entails an attack on a particular image — for example, of the Madonna and Child — or on an idea or concept depicted by an image*” (Cordess and Turcan, 1993, p. 95). Though being widely used to the extent that the concept of art vandalism is adopted when speaking about this phenomenon, this definition seems unsatisfactory for the militant actions that take place in museums since it prevents me from considering the possible artistic dimension of militant actions targeting works of art, and focuses solely on the degradation of works, even though the artworks are generally intact. Therefore, the term activism is also considered in this research because its meaning is broader and less negative than art vandalism. It could potentially fill the gaps that the concept of vandalism alone cannot explain. According to Emily Wilcox, activism could be considered as a fusion between art and activism. It uses artistic activity to trigger social intervention (2009). As such, this neologism illustrates how artistic practices can intersect with and enhance activist goals, reshaping the boundaries between cultural expression and political engagement (Golańska & Kronenberg, 2020).

Today’s activists carry forward a long-standing tradition of iconoclasm, or “*image breaking*”. It entails destroying images for political or religious reasons (Goes, 2022). Iconoclasm has a rich history with notable examples. During the Byzantine Iconoclast Controversy of the 8th and 9th centuries, the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century, or during the French and Russian Revolutions, symbols of former regimes were destroyed to signify ideological shifts. In contemporary times, the scope of iconoclasm has expanded to include other cultural artifacts (Goes, 2022). Moreover, the iconoclast has become a powerful tool for modern activism, degrading symbols to denounce perceived injustices or dominant cultural narratives. In March 1914, the suffragette Mary Richardson slashed Diego Velázquez’s famous painting *Venus at Her Mirror* at the National Gallery in London before being arrested. The painting was swiftly restored, and while the attack generated significant media coverage and some public backlash, it also led to further vandalism of artworks by other suffragettes (Cohen, November 2018). Inspired by the suffragette movement, today’s eco-activists have adapted these iconoclastic tactics to draw attention to environmental and social issues (Louis, 2024, see



3. Art in the Crossfire: The Role of Art in Radical Ecological Activism

“But in studies on political protest, artistic intervention has long been treated as something marginal. In such works, art essentially manifests itself in its contributions to shaping and disseminating the cause, and in the figure of engaged artists and their ties to partisan apparatuses. The social and political sciences have, however, recently seen a re-evaluation of the challenges of situating the place of art within politics, which has essentially followed two lines of reflection.” (Larzillière, 2023, p. 1).

In this instance, Pénélope Larzillière alludes to the novelty of scholarly work that connects politics and art, particularly environmental activism. This change in scholarly emphasis shows how art is becoming more and more acknowledged in social and political movements, like the environmental movement. Yet, as this reevaluation takes place, issues concerning the efficacy of art vandalism or art disruption, and activism as forms of activism and artistic expression continue to be raised by the imprecise and frequently disputed conceptions of these concepts within the art world.

What is the point of art vandalism? From which context did it develop? To understand the value of art vandalism, this thesis considers the concept of the collective action repertoire created by the historian Charles Tilly (1984), which accounts for the different parties involved in developing the strategies of protest groups. The collective action repertoire refers to the limited range of methods and tactics available to protest groups at a particular time and place. It includes the learned, shared, and executed routines of action chosen deliberately by these groups. Tilly’s notion emphasizes the constraints on choice faced by protesters due to factors such as historical experience, available resources, and prevailing repression tactics. Over time, these repertoires are subject to change in reaction to changes in society, technology, and political structures (Péchu, 2020). As older repertoires were predominantly localized and dependent on patronage, contemporary ones have expanded to encompass national, modular, and autonomous features. Additionally, scholars propose the emergence of a potential third repertoire in the 20th century, characterized by new issues and methods. Some academic works also perceive the globalization of repertoires as indicative of a significant transformation. Erik Neveu (2015) speculates that in a contemporary era marked by the growing impact of

globalization, a third-generation repertoire may be emerging on a supranational scale to address highly technical issues while prioritizing expertise.

That is why the notion of collective action repertoire partly explains why today's radical ecologist networks and groups have concluded that art vandalism and activism are potentially effective strategies, when other forms of protest are seen as ineffective or when traditional avenues for change are blocked. These acts are offensive because they specifically target respected artworks and spaces that hold cultural and historical worth. Activists leverage the symbolic power of art to amplify their message, in order to ensure a high level of visibility and emotional impact because they intervene in these protected cultural domains. This observation further opens spaces to think about the issue of radicality, which adds to the relevance and controversy of the topic, making it both topical and divisive (Baum, September 2023; De la Garza, October 2022).

Besides, Neveu's analysis clarifies why civil resistance strategies involving acts of art disruption or vandalism are not just local phenomena. Since social and environmental issues become more interconnected and global, the strategies employed by activists have also evolved to reflect this new reality. Because these actions are taking place in different countries and using similar strategies to address global issues and challenge established conventions within the globalized art world, it is important to pay attention to the transnational character of these actions. Likewise, the impact of ecological activism occurrences at museums on the media is particularly globalized.

In light of this analysis, this thesis discusses the intersection of ecological activism and art spaces. It defends that the recent incidents of ecological activism in museums, often labeled as art vandalism, strategically leverage the emotional and symbolic power of art to amplify urgent social and environmental messages. These actions challenge the status quo, spark public discussion around the globe and elicit responses from cultural institutions. Nevertheless, they also prompt significant concerns about the viability of non-violent civil disobedience tactics, their possible influence on cultural heritage, and how urgent it is to address the world's environmental challenges. Lastly, the studied incidents question the boundaries between artistic expression and activism.

B) Research Questions and Hypotheses

1. Research Questions

Discussions above reflect broader tensions about the role of art in ecological activism and the characterization of what is a legitimate protest tactic – for the public and activists. Specifically, two challenges are of interest in this thesis. On the one hand, the issue of defining the incidents of ecological activism in museums, and on the other, understanding what determines their success.

Firstly, how can I characterize the recent incidents of ecological activism in museums? Do they hold an artistic dimension? To what extent are they radical? Is it activism? Is it rather a method of publicizing denunciatory action? In exploring the repertoire of collective action as defined by Charles Tilly (1984), the focus on art vandalism and ecological activism reveals a diverse landscape of actors and rationalities. Activists take part in acts such as museum vandalism – or art disruption from their point of view – to protest against environmental injustices and trigger public but also institutional responses. Critics argue that while such strategies broaden the scope of protest tactics, the alleged use of vandalism blurs ethical lines, particularly because it threatens the cultural heritage. This tension prompts a reevaluation of art vandalism and activism's definition and relationship with violence, questioning whether such acts can be justified within the broader discourse of social and environmental justice.

Secondly, to assess the success of the activists' actions, it seems necessary to ask: how is their deliberately scandalous dimension managed in terms of communication and impact? What critics, internal and external to political activism or even activism, contest or discuss this intervention method in the public sphere? Indeed, the intersection of transnational activism and international climate policies underscores the global impact of environmental activism. Acts depicted as vandalism targeting iconic artworks as a protest that resonate internationally, compelling public opinion and media attention. These actions challenge hegemonic narratives and advocate for more stringent environmental protections on a global scale. States grapple with the security implications of such actions, balancing responses to protect cultural heritage while addressing underlying environmental grievances. Cultural institutions, tasked with safeguarding cultural and natural heritage, confront dilemmas posed by activist activities, which highlight tensions between conservation imperatives and advocacy for systemic change. Therefore, limitations could undermine the efficiency of activism and art disruption as tactics.

The goals of challenging the existing structures could be minored by the fact that they may primarily reach audiences already interested in social issues, potentially limiting its impact on broader social change and may hardly reach marginalized groups (Setyawan et al., 2021). Moreover, their direct influence on policy-making and systemic change may be limited without broader advocacy strategies and collaborations (Setyawan et al., 2021). Alternatively, when integrated into the mainstream cultural institutions, they could merely address the public of the dominant classes, who fund and benefit from the museum and art market, which is done only in anecdotal terms, mirroring their involvement in financing, and profiting from the carbon economy. Thus, some boundaries may also be related to the constraining political structures and their risk of undermining the strength of activism by notably involving some commercial interests which could dilute into mere aesthetic expressions the political goals of the artworks and projects, detracting from its original social justice goal or undermine the activist groups by imposing heavy legal proceedings on them (Setyawan et al., 2021). Finally, the impact of art disruption and activism can be questioned due to their often-temporary nature and the risk of being quickly forgotten in a media landscape flooded with information. In other words, there exists a risk of banalization of these subversive modes of action.

2. Results

Regarding the first set of questions – dealing with the characterization of the recent incidents of ecological activism in museums – I have found that it remains difficult to characterize these actions in research as limited as that I have been able to carry out. Each concept has its own strengths and weaknesses when analyzing the events I have studied, although some – like art disruption – seem more interesting to us.

The concept of art vandalism is flawed and is used by stakeholders such as the media and cultural institutions to discredit militant direct action in museums, rather than to give an accurate account of its nature. Besides, it neglects the performance dimension of these actions – which is assessed during research, notably through interviews and literature review. This term stresses the radical and provocative dimension, as well as the iconoclastic, symbolic aspect of the militants' attack on works of art. *De facto*, the use of this term indicates that these actions are perceived as radical within the current spectrum of environmental activism; the qualifier radical depends on a contingent political frame of reference.

Moving on to the concept of activism, this contraction aptly captures the relationship between art and activism, but also between the worlds of art and counter-hegemonic attempts

to subvert relations of domination via art. Artivism exists on a spectrum that includes both conventional and unconventional forms of artistic proposition. Moving on to the concept of artivism, this contraction aptly captures the relationship between art and activism, but also between the worlds of art and counter-hegemonic attempts to subvert relations of domination through art. Artivism exists on a spectrum that includes both conventional and unconventional forms of artistic proposition. Nevertheless, it seems too simple to use artivism to dissolve the militant actions studied into a larger whole. Moreover, artivism seems, to some extent, to dilute the subversive purpose of certain militant actions. In fact, the primary goal of these actions is to publicize denunciatory actions rather than to create art for art's sake – suggesting a utilitarian use of art spaces to amplify ecological messages –, but the artistic dimension of these actions is secondary to their function as tools to challenge specific players in the art world's operations harming the environment – they notably target sources of funding for museums, exhibitions and patronage that come from economic sectors that destroy the ecosystem.

Therefore, I concluded this characterization discussion with the concept of art disruption that has been used by the Just Stop Oil activist Louis during the interview (Louis, 2024, see Appendix 6). Although not being studied by the literature, this notion opens the possibility of considering the subversion of mainstream cultural spaces from the outside by means of performance-based militant acts.

At the end of this discussion, characterizing incidents of eco-activism in museums is a political struggle that goes beyond the question of scientific accuracy, but chooses to focus on certain realities rather than others. It appears that these incidents of eco-activism in museums challenge traditional boundaries of both art and activism.

The second, and more empirical, discussion concerns the success of the trend of eco-activism targeting artworks since the formation of the A22 Network.

Firstly, it appears important to note that this thesis does not argue for the superiority of art disruption and artivism over other forms of activism. Instead, it is argued that these phenomena should be understood as one part of a more complete approach to activism. I put forward that the interest of these actions for activists is the way they harness the emotional impact of staged attacks on well-known works that allegedly have nothing to do with social or ecological crises. Activists seek primarily a platform to defend their campaign in the media and put forward ideas following their actions. These elements help the strategic communication of activists to be particularly efficient for these actions. Activists design scandalous actions to counteract the biases of traditional media outlets, which tend to either neglect or delegitimize counter-

hegemonic groups. This analysis also drew out the particularities and complementarity of media amplification through traditional and new channels, in terms of impact and room for maneuver for activists. Nevertheless, I came to a mixed conclusion about the effectiveness of this communication strategy, explaining that there is a risk of alienating the public, leading to a potential reactance (Bitschnau, 2024) of supporters to the cause due to the methods used. Finally, there exists a substantial issue of routinization of these actions with high media potential, leading to a decline in their media impact despite the use of new targets. Shaped tactics are subject to the rules of the media field and are therefore bound to fall into disrepair if they are not renewed by fresh creativity.

Critics of the eco-activists' strategies to target museums argue that they may harm the cause's credibility due to the perceived endangerment of cultural heritage and illegitimacy of the targets. To better understand the position and criticisms of museums about these militant actions, I also looked at the essential missions of museums, particularly concerning the preservation of cultural heritage and its challenges. This discussion helped me prove that activist actions are at the heart of a dilemma for museums between security and political and social commitment, which could reshape the function of museums. To put it differently, the friction between activists and museums stems partly from this growing tension.

Furthermore, I have found that the studied incidents effectively draw international attention to environmental issues, compelling media coverage, and public positioning. This international dimension is interesting in the case of the A22 Network because it coordinates cross-border actions of art disruption that are adapted to each local context to fulfill the goals of the campaign strategically. In addition, the media and international organizations amplify – or condemn – globally the campaign of eco-activists which reinforces their efficacy.

Finally, this second discussion has helped me put forward the strategic strength and limits of actions of art disruption, stating that they are well-designed to defend activists' demands and shake up the art worlds. Yet their efficiency remains temporary and relative because of the risk of a negative reaction from public opinion and the growing indifference of the mainstream media to these issues.

C)Methods and Data

1. Mobilizing Qualitative Methods and Literature Review

To answer these research questions and test the hypotheses related to the characterization

and success of ecological activism in museums, this thesis involves a multi-method qualitative approach, primarily utilizing semi-structured interviews, case studies, and documents but also a comprehensive literature review of the key notions of the topic. Using these methods helped me to develop a stronger framework for analyzing the concepts of activism, ecological activism, and art vandalism.

The literature review first served as a key ground for this thesis, allowing for a critical assessment of existing research, and debates surrounding the topics of ecological activism, art vandalism, and activism. To understand the motivations behind the activists' tactics, this thesis drew notably on the contributions of Charles Tilly (1984), but also Karin Bäckstrand and David Schlosberg (2020), and Kinyon et al. (2023). Scholars like Dorota Golańska, Anna Katarzyna Kronenberg (2020), and Raphaela Raaber (2022) also help study the transformative power of art in social and environmental movements. Referencing specifically the works of Chantal Mouffe (2007), Eric Neveu (2015) and Lyudmila Bulavka-Buzgalina (2022), who examine how art fosters systemic change and subverts dominant cultural narratives, I have discussed the counter-hegemonic dimensions of these acts in more detail. Finally, Jaime Teixeira da Silva's (2023) legal and ethical criticisms of art vandalism were interesting in bringing contradiction to this work. Additionally, authors like Marco Bitschnau (2023) bring key inputs to this research on the new wave of radical eco-activist's strategic approach to communication. Lingran Zhang (2022), Ferika Özer San and Murat Nazli (2018), and Pinar Durgun (2023) published key articles that are central to the appreciation of the missions of the museums, particularly regarding the preservation of cultural heritage. Finally, the transnational resonance of the recent incidents of activism in museums is studied for instance with the 2021 article of Shelley Boulianne and Jakob Ohme who analyze "*Pathways to environmental activism in four countries: social media, environmental concern, and political efficacy*" (p. 771).

As put forward by Janice M. Morse and Peggy Anne Field, "*Qualitative research enables us to make sense of reality, to describe and explain the social world and to develop explanatory models and theories*" (Morse and Field, 1996). To put it differently, qualitative research has the asset of gaining a deeper understanding of a topic through experience. This approach facilitates a thorough grasp of the artistic dimensions, communication strategies, ethical considerations, and broader implications of these actions.

Thus, I aimed to gather qualitative data from activist groups from the A22 Network that

advocate art disruption actions in museums such as Just Stop Oil, Letzte Generation, Riposte Alimentaire, or Ultima Generazione. Interviewing activists who carried out actions in museums and who took part in the reflection and coordination of these strategies of civil disobedience was central to this research. This allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of their strategies, assess their perceptions of the effectiveness of these actions, and evaluate the feedback from the public and cultural institutions. Besides, I was also interested in gathering data with activists who are not part of this network but who carry out actions of vandalism, to compare their perceptions and the role of vandalism in their actions.

Meanwhile, I had the ambition to get qualitative data within museums directly targeted by these actions like the Louvre, the Picasso National Museum-Paris, the Museum of Modern Art of New York, London's National Gallery, and the Prado Museum in Madrid. Furthermore, I planned to focus on certain cases of ecological activism in museums to grasp their features. I did not want to neglect the analysis of key documents like museum press releases like the open letter denouncing attacks on masterpieces in the name of climate change written by 92 museum directors on November 9th, 2022. Signatories encompass prestigious international institutions such as the Louvre, the British Museum, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Hakoun, November 2022). This has provided additional context and helped triangulate the findings from the interviews and the case study.

2. The Use of Case Studies

Three notable case studies are selected for their significant media coverage, occurrence in different countries, and the way they illustrate dimensions of ecological activism actions in museums.

Three dimensions of activist actions in museums have been identified for the sake of clarity and in order to provide a structured framework to analyze the motivations, methods, and impacts of the incidents of ecological activism in museums. Yet, it must be noted that – like all the attempts to categorize social phenomena – the proposed categorization is non-exhaustive and remains rather theoretical. Some actions may encompass elements from multiple classification dimensions, while others may fall outside these defined levels. This categorization should therefore be seen as a flexible tool for conceptual clarity, rather than a definitive framework for all forms of activism.

The three defined dimensions are as follows:

1. **The actions that take advantage of the notoriety of a work of art, an event, or a museum.**
2. **Actions that engage with art and its symbolic meanings, targeting representations and cultural imaginations.**
3. **The actions related to the sources of funding for museums and art that denounce the complicity of the art world with the carbon economy and ask cultural institutions to make ecological commitments.**

This categorization is essential to test my hypotheses since it enables me to delineate the goals of the activists. Additionally, they are useful to assess how much these actions involve artistic expression versus purely activist objectives. *De facto*, the first and second levels involve less artistic expression than the third. Less obviously, this classification provides information on the impact of the incidents of eco-activism in museums depending on their nature. For example, I could analyze whether criticisms are more prevalent or the different reactions of the public and museums for certain categories.

Then, I have selected three relevant case studies that attempt to illustrate the different dimensions of activist actions:

1. **The Mona Lisa Incident on January 28, 2024**
2. **The Van Gogh Peach Trees in Blossom Incident on June 30, 2022**
3. **The BP Portrait Award Protest on October 20, 2019**

The first two case studies could be easily included in the wave of eco-activist actions in museums. At the same time, the last one appears relevant because it differs from the first two, highlighting the particularities of actions organized by A22 network groups, compared with an action that attacks the funding sources of cultural institutions, mobilizes different groups and has a more obvious performative aspect.

Data for these case studies are gathered from a variety of sources – such as media reports, museum press releases, official statements, social media posts by activists and museums, and video recordings of the incidents.

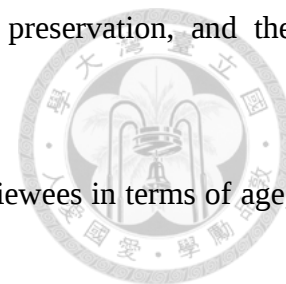
3. The Key Role of Semi-Structured Interviews

To provide a thorough understanding of contemporary instances of ecological activism within museum contexts, semi-structured interviews are a key methodological tool in this research. Participants are selected to encompass diverse perspectives: activists directly involved in acts of art vandalism, museum curators, and staff responsible for affected collections, as well as those from non-affected institutions. Other people representing the art sphere – including art critics, art curators, art restorers, historians, and gallerists – are also seen as relevant participants as they can offer insights into how museum activism is perceived and interpreted within the broader art community.

To find people to interview, I have mobilized my network and sent interview requests to people who could give valuable input to my research. The approach adopted was challenging due to the need to infiltrate two distinct communities. In total, after contacting and re-contacting 14 ecological activists, I obtained three interviews with activists who had carried out art vandalism actions, including two members of A22 network groups – namely Just Stop Oil and Riposte Alimentaire. At the same time, penetrating the art world has been more tedious. After contacting the press and communications managers of 17 museums targeted by militant actions or having signed the letter from the International Council of Museums in November 2022 denouncing attacks on masterpieces in the name of climate change (International Council of Museums, November 2022), only one museum responded positively but wished to remain anonymous in this study. I also contacted galleries, art restorers, art historians, artists' agents, art critics, and creators of art content on social networks. I obtained an interview with a restorer of painted art and another interview with an artist's agent, art critic, and content creator. Thus, I conducted 6 interviews with French, British, and German participants, lasting from 28 minutes to 1 hour 43 minutes, evenly divided between activists and art world workers.

Each interview has followed an interview guide designed to elicit comprehensive responses aligned with the participant's role and knowledge. For activists, questions delve notably into motivations behind their actions, perceptions of their artistic and symbolic impact, strategic considerations for maximizing visibility, and reflections on the effectiveness, risks and legal repercussions associated with their methods. If they are active within a group, the group's organization and links with other national and international groups are also addressed. Members of the art worlds are particularly asked about their opinion on activism in museums, but also on

the tension between engagement with societal issues and heritage preservation, and the institutional responses to activism.



Below is a table summarizing the main characteristics of the interviewees in terms of age, gender and status:

Name	Age	Gender	Status
Astrid	40-50	Female	German head of Press and Communications for a German Museum that has signed in November 2022 an open letter on “ <i>Attacks on artworks in museums</i> ” by the International Council of Museums
Lorry	28	Female	French independent artist’s agent, art critic and social network content creator
Véronique	64	Female	French freelance restorer of painted works of art for private individuals and volunteer for Urgence Patrimoine
Rachel	22	Female	French full-time activist involved in the Riposte Alimentaire campaign, who participated in direct actions targeting artworks
Louis	23	Male	British full-time activist involved in the Just Stop Oil and Animal Rebellion campaigns, who participated in direct actions targeting artworks
Jasper	27	Male	German student and software developer, who carried out actions that could be characterized as vandalism or political graffiti

4. Data Analysis

The objective of data analysis is to assess sources with distance and critical thinking. I have first made use of thematic analysis to common identify themes, then I concentrated on recurring themes and key takeaways from the papers and interviews. This method helps to reveal trends and commonalities. What is more, a discourse analysis concentrates on the language and narratives that the public, media, activists, and museums employ. Comparative analysis, on the other hand, evaluates the common points and differences between the case studies, assessing how various contexts – such as cultural, geographic, political, media, and institutional factors – shape the development and reception of the incidents. To ensure the strength of my findings,

a cross-verification of the data from multiple sources – such as interviews, media reports, and document analysis – is also done. This multi-dimensional approach provides a comprehensive understanding of the research questions and hypotheses and ultimately ensures the relevance of the study's conclusions.



D) Study Limitations

There are several limitations to this research that need to be highlighted, as they remind me of the difficulty of the subject and the ongoing debates on the interaction between eco-militancy and the political and artistic worlds.

Firstly, out of intellectual honesty, I must present my own biases due to my social position and my *a priori* positive opinions regarding radical ecological activism. I don't write from a neutral point of view; my work is influenced by my experience as an activist and trade unionist, as well as my previous works on eco-activism, in particular my research paper "*Violence and Eco-Activism: A False Debate?*". Going further, this bias was a determining factor in the choice of this subject for this research thesis. In the book *Professional Ethics for Research and Development Activities*, Dag Slotfeldt-Ellingsen reminds us: "*No researcher is completely neutral, impartial or independent in all contexts*" (Slotfeldt-Ellingsen, 2023).

I am furthermore aware of certain limitations of this study, primarily due to the methodologies used and the restricted time frame imposed by academic constraints.

Relying on existing literature and theoretical frameworks can inherently bias the study in favor of dominant narratives and perspectives, potentially overlooking emerging or alternative viewpoints. The scope of available literature on ecological activism within art spaces remains quite limited, which could lead to an incomplete theoretical foundation. Besides, because the research is interdisciplinary, pertinent ideas from each domain might not integrate smoothly, which could leave the theoretical framework with gaps or inconsistencies. These limitations highlight the need to recognize the temporary nature of the theoretical foundations and encourage more research to develop a deeper and more detailed understanding of the phenomena being studied.

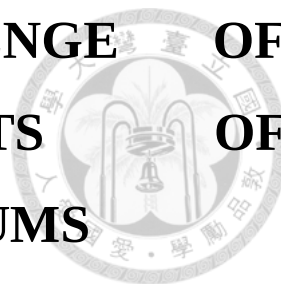
What is more, the qualitative research approach used in this study carries its own set of

biases. A first limit could be my lack of neutrality as a researcher during the interviews – even if notable works question the imperative of neutrality in qualitative research (Skovlund, Lerche Mørck and Celosse-Andersen, 2023). Since most interviews were conducted online, information can be lost due to virtual format. In addition, language barriers may weaken the quality and depth of the findings, especially because of the complexity of some concepts. Sample bias is also a concern due to the limited number of interviews conducted. Moreover, having only managed to obtain one interview with a museum that takes a position on acts of art vandalism, I seem to lack the qualitative data to analyze the role of cultural institutions in such actions. Finally, my conclusions might not be easily generalizable to all trends in activism and artivism.

E) Outline

The following thesis is articulated into two main chapters to answer the research questions presented above. The first chapter aims to characterize the recent incidents of ecological activism in museums (1). It explains how art vandalism fits into radical militant tactics before introducing the concept of artivism to go beyond the limits of the first concept to illustrate recent incidents of museum activism. Then, the chapter further examines how artivism navigates the dual forces of integration and subversion within the art world and advances toward understanding both artivism and art vandalism as tools for creating a counter-hegemonic cultural landscape. For its part, the second chapter offers a more empirical analysis of the success of the actions of art disruption (2). Starting with the examination of three recent case studies, it delves into the strategic communication of the ecological activists before addressing the responses and communication from museums, the impact these incidents have on public perception, and stakeholder relations, and finally the transnational resonance of activist campaigns.

CHAPTER 1: THE CHALLENGE OF CHARACTERIZING INCIDENTS OF ECOLOGICAL ACTIVISM IN MUSEUMS



“With compassion, we ask you to change. Oil means the end, but art means the beginning.” (Green, October 2019)

During the BP Award Protest, Eden Rickson expressed the deep connection between art and activism. Her words perfectly capture the idea behind many radical ecological acts that have been taking place at museums lately, which don’t just have an aesthetic function but constitute a powerful leverage for social and environmental change. In the first chapter, I will attempt to qualify the recent incidents of ecological activism in museums. These events are rooted in the tactics of radical ecologist groups (A). The chapter also aims to address the significant, yet complex, link between activism and art (B), the tensions within the art world (C), and the role of activist art disruption as a counter-hegemonic cultural tool (D).

A)Radical Ecological Activism: Art Vandalism Across a Spectrum of Tactics?

1. Evolution and Radicalization of Ecological Activism

The recent incidents of ecological activism in museums are often classified as belonging to the category of radical eco-activism (Vuong et al. 2023). To clarify this point, I had to take a diversion into ecological activism.

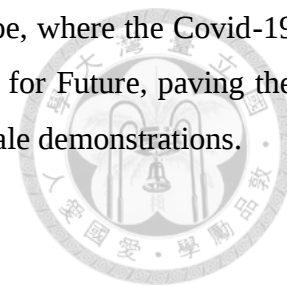
In this thesis, the term ecological is used instead of environmental to picture this form of activism – although the latter is more employed both in the public sphere and the academic sphere – because the concept of “ecology” encompasses the interactions between the living organisms and their environment, and thus describes more completely way the world view of the activists. Following Karin Bäckstrand and David Schlosberg: *“Between environmental and ecological democracy: theory and practice at the democracy-environment nexus”* (Bäckstrand and Schlosberg 2020, p. 1).

In the framework of unprecedented contemporary environmental upheavals which are often denoted by the concept of Anthropocene – recent scientific findings further validate the pressing nature of the situation, with evidence indicating that several critical tipping points have been surpassed – social relations have been transformed (Macé, 2022) and ecological activism has gained strength to shift the political narrative on climate change, raise awareness, propose an alternative model of society to capitalism, and challenge governments and polluting companies. Eco-activism can be defined as a group of individuals and organizations taking collective action against the causes and effects of climate change and environmental degradation in general.

Eco-activism gained momentum in the 1970s, especially following the first Earth Day in 1970, which announced the so-called “*environmental decade*” (Kaufman, 2023). At this time, NGOs like Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace became central to the movement, adopting both direct and indirect non-violent action strategies (Chartier & Ollitrault, 2025). The 1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm further institutionalized environmental mobilization. This led to the development of international environmental policies (Jackson, 2007). Using direct actions and, occasionally, sabotage, radical organizations just as Earth First! and the Earth Liberation Front (ELF) also arose (Trujillo et al., 2005). The rise of these radical movements, alongside the continued evolution of green parties and international agreements, reflects the growing diversification and intensity of the environmental movement.

In recent decades, eco-activism has further broadened in the same way that awareness of climate change has increased. This development has contributed to the massification and further institutionalization of eco-activism in Western countries, with new forms of activism emerging, based on collective action, everyday activism, and civil disobedience (de Moor et al., 2021). In recent years, the environmental movement in Western countries has undergone a significant shift towards more radical forms of eco-activism, driven by the perceived unsuccessfulness of the institutional and moderate approaches – which managed to gain a foothold over the last three decades. Conservative journalist Jamie Bartlett has even described this evolution as a “*new wave of environmental extremism*” (Bartlett, as cited in Trujillo et al., 2005). Some eco-activists have therefore turned to more direct tactics like sabotage (Fiala, as cited in Trujillo et al., 2005). The emergence of new radical environmental organizations like Plane Stupid in the UK (2005), Ende Gelände in Germany (2015), and Extinction Rebellion in the UK (2018), alongside the radicalization of established groups like Friends of the Earth and the Earth Liberation Front, has further accelerated this trend. The scope of environmental activism has

changed, as Bitschnau (2024) points out, particularly in Western Europe, where the Covid-19 pandemic has led to a decline in youth-led campaigns such as Fridays for Future, paving the way for more radical groups that favor civil disobedience over large-scale demonstrations.



2. The Repertoire of Radical Ecological Tactics

Radical ecological activists use a diverse range of tactics to challenge political and economic power structures. These strategies reflect activists' perception that the pressing concerns posed by climate change have not been sufficiently addressed by conventional legal frameworks and moderate environmental groups. Hence, they resort to more disruptive and sometimes illegal means of accomplishing their objectives.

Radical ecological activists are defined here by their willingness to take part in confrontational and sometimes illegal activities to push for environmental change. This can integrate a spectrum of actions such as sit-ins, blockades, hunger strikes, boycotts, peaceful marches, and other forms of civil disobedience. According to the Britannica Encyclopedia, civil disobedience is defined as “*the refusal to obey the demands or commands of a government or occupying power, without resorting to violence or active measures of opposition; its usual purpose is to force concessions from the government or occupying power*” (2024). Additionally, radical tactics frequently extend to art performances, art vandalism or art disruption, and even the destruction of property, such as fossil-fuel installations and machinery (Fritsvold, 2009).

These tactics are not only designed to disrupt but also to attract media attention. According to Rachel, there are two main types of actions employed by activists of the Network A22: those with high media potential, like throwing paint or food on famous artworks, and routine disruptive actions such as road blockages. The first are designed to generate significant media coverage to acquire a grandstand to defend their ideas, while the second aims to sustain ongoing pressure (Rachel, 2024, see appendix 5).

This strategic use of tactics corresponds to what Charles Tilly defines as a “*repertoire of collective action*” (Tilly, 1995). The scholar's framework brings out that while there is a preexisting structure of available actions that constrain activists' options, there is still space for creativity within these constraints. The repertoire is shaped not only by activists' internal organization and accumulated experience but also by external factors such as state repression,

legal standards, and daily routines (Tilly, 1978). In this context, the strategic selection of tactics by radical environmental groups can be seen as both a response to the limitations imposed by their environment and an exercise of their agency within those boundaries.

De facto, Louis explains that such tactics are often assessed to be necessary given the limited resources and influence available to radical ecologist groups. He claims, “*It felt like if I want to live by my own ethics, that was the only choice. But I could have chosen not to do it, yes. But it would have felt like a betrayal of my own ethical values and my generation, and all life on this planet, really*” (Louis, 2024, see Appendix 6, p. 172). This quote illustrates the ethical imperative that many activists feel, and that drives them to adopt radical measures despite the potential risks. The Just Stop Oil activist also justifies his actions using the “*positive radical flank effect*”. Simpson et al. (2022) found that while such actions can decrease overall support for the activists, they can simultaneously bolster support for more moderate factions within the same movement. This “*positive radical flank effect*” occurs because the public perceives the tactics of the moderate faction as less extreme by comparison, thereby increasing its appeal. However, a recent poll contradicts this theory because it found that 46% of American adults believe that NVCD actions diminish their support for efforts to combat climate change (Badullovich et al., 2024). This raises the critical question of whether such protests are effective in building the broad coalition necessary for systemic change. The potential alienation of the public remains a significant concern. As Jasper observes, “*I wouldn’t say they’re more efficient, without the asterisks at the end, you know, because first of all, like, some people are just, you know, alienated by that from the cause where they’re like, oh, these idiots are throwing paint at these beautiful things*” (see Appendix 7, p. 189). The issue thus concerns the delicate balance radical eco-activists must strike between establishing a balance of power in the struggle they are waging and alienating potential allies and not being taken seriously.

3. Radical Eco-Activism in the Art Worlds: Can I Speak About Art Vandalism?

Radical ecological activism has increasingly affected the art worlds, particularly through acts referred to as “*art vandalism*”. Nonetheless, this concept is contentious and raises important questions about the nature and legitimacy of these actions. To understand these phenomena, I use the study by Kinyon et al. (2023) based on 2022 events. According to the scholar, the actors involved in climate-related art vandalism in museums are mostly new and radical ecological

groups – none of the established environmental organizations like Greenpeace are participating. Their research reveals that out of sixteen groups involved in such incidents, three groups – Ultima Generazione in Italy and the Vatican, Just Stop Oil in the UK, and Letzte Generation in Germany – were responsible for 58% of the events in 2022. These groups are part of the A22 network, which coordinates disruptive activities on an international scale, bringing to light a shift toward more radical, attention-grabbing tactics within the climate movement. This stands in striking contrast to the more traditional methods employed by established environmental organizations.

Rachel, a member of the A22 network working for the Riposte Alimentaire campaign, explained in her interview the strategic thinking behind these actions. She notes that high media potential actions, such as the defacement of famous artworks, are designed to generate significant media coverage and provoke public debate (Rachel, 2024, see Appendix 5). And indeed, these actions often provoke strong reactions. Activists involved in such actions may face different degrees of legal consequences, depending on the local legal and political context, as well as their social, economic, gender, and racial positions within society. For instance, Fair Trials – an international NGO – reported in 2022 that marginalized groups often face harsher penalties when taking part in activist actions (Fair Trials, May 2022).

This context complicates the public perception of such acts, particularly when they are labeled as “*vandalism*”. Public perception is indeed a critical factor in the effectiveness of these tactics. While many Americans view non-violent civil disobedience (NVCD) as appropriate when targeting entities responsible for exacerbating climate change, they often disapprove of actions that are violent or directed at less obvious targets (Badullovich et al., 2024). This distinction underscores the delicate balance radical activists must navigate to maintain public support.

The term “*vandalism*” itself is highly debated within the activist community and the art world. Some museum professionals like the head of Press and Communication of a German Museum, Astrid (her name has been changed to preserve her anonymity), acknowledge that while these actions may be classified as activism, they do negatively impact the museum experience by influencing the collection. That is why she believes that the term “*vandalism*” remains appropriate to characterize them (Astrid, 2024, see Appendix 2). From her side, the painted art restorer Véronique is convinced using the concept of art vandalism and draws a comparison: “*you could say that unsightly overpainting is similar to vandalism because it*

involves people who have damaged an artwork. When you think about it, there's a connection." (Véronique, 2024, see Appendix 4, p. 137) Lorry, another respondent, emphasizes that these actions are symbolic, targeting the "aura" of museums and artworks rather than the institutions themselves. She explains, "*Militants aren't attacking museums themselves, but the aura of the museums and the artworks displayed. They're attacking symbols*" (Lorry, 2024, see Appendix 3, p. 123).

Jaime A. Teixeira da Silva considers that destroying or trying to destroy art cannot be considered a peaceful means of protest and could even be deemed criminal. Such actions, he argues, could threaten permanently culturally significant icons and potentially alienate the public (Teixeira da Silva, 2023). In addition, these actions might alter how art is appreciated because they could contribute to a reinforcement of security in museums and finally limit public access. Yet, this perspective is contested by both scholars and activists. Activists from Ultima Generazione, who glued themselves to the glass protecting Botticelli's *Primavera*, claimed that they consulted art restoration experts beforehand to ensure that the painting would not be damaged (Gayle, July 2022). This approach suggests that the term "vandalism" may not be appropriate to describe these acts, given that they are not intended to cause permanent damage. Additionally, climate change itself poses a significant threat to art and cultural heritage, as highlighted in a 2023 report by the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Foundation for Advancement in Conservation, which could revert the moral debate on the preservation of heritage and call for immediate action to protect these assets from environmental degradation (American Institute for Conservation, June 2023).

The geography and ecologist Andreas Malm (2021) argues that eco-activists who target property rather than living beings should not be labeled as violent, especially given the current environmental crisis. Malm's argument underscores the idea that the definition of violence is politically situated. What is more, Laurence Delina and Kellan Anfinson defend hybrid or complementary strategies: "*Ultimately, the division between violence and nonviolence in the fight against climate change is a false one. A new approach is called for, requiring hybrid strategies of both violence and nonviolence*" (Anfinson, 2021, p. 151). The strength of the environmental movement can be assessed through its ability to defend the natural world and living beings and address the violence related to climate change and human damaging activities. In that respect, every tactic that can have a positive impact on the environment can find its place in eco-activism. The corollary is that tactics are not fixed tools mobilized by eco-activists according to principles, they are numerous and perpetually redesigned and adapted to the

evolution of the context (Delina, 2022). Interestingly, the degree of violence of a tactic is often linked to the marginalization of the group that employs that tactic on the political stage (Raleigh, 2010).

Therefore, Rachel states that the media uses the term “vandalism” to discredit their actions, even though they take steps to avoid actual damage to artworks. She argues: *“The term ‘vandalism’ is interesting because it’s used by the media and people on the right to discredit us, even though we don’t actually vandalize the artworks – there are protective glass cases”* (Rachel, 2024, see Appendix 5, p. 153). Louis adds on the risk of damaging art pieces: *“This is something we thought a lot about. So yes, of course, our beliefs are genuinely what’s, the what is this piece of artwork worth? If all the people who will see the beauty of it will be dead? Why should the art outlive any observers? But yeah, the public perception of it, is fascinating. For instance, with my one, courts and the art restorer experts they got in did say yes, it was damaged and will never be the same. However, several expert art restorers in the art world disagree with that and say that the Court was incorrect. We designed those actions specifically so nothing would be permanently damaged. And the frame as well. They even admitted that nobody but basically an art restorer would be able to tell the difference between how it is now and how it was before.”* (Louis, 2024, see Appendix 6, p. 171). Therefore, some activists prefer to use the concept of “art disruption”, or simply mobilize the terms of actions and performances, which have fewer negative connotations, to depict museum activism.

Hence, artistic tactics are considered as legitimate for activists in their repertoire of actions. Works on the complementarity of militant tactics should also be studied to understand the reassessment of art’s role in political protest. Specifically, art complements existing strategies by engaging with the public through creative and emotional means (Perovich, 2018). Laura Jones Perovich adds that art is powerful in influencing cultural norms, imagination, and social practices of large, different audiences. Yet, it is worth noting that the question of whether I can speak of “art vandalism” in the context of radical ecological activism remains controversial, and thus difficult to answer. While some view these actions as criminal or counterproductive, others argue that they are necessary, symbolic acts that challenge the *status quo* and draw attention to urgent environmental issues. For instance, the German activist Jasper considers that the messages conveyed by activists outweigh the value of the cultural heritage they are targeting (Jasper, 2024, see Appendix 7).

The definitions of violence, vandalism, and the place of art in society are at the center of this debate, and opinions on these topics vary considerably depending on one's position. Regardless, this conversation challenges me to expand my thinking to encompass activism and to only refer to anything as “*art vandalism*” when it serves a purpose. Otherwise, the idea of “*art disruption*” seems more neutral and appropriate for the activist activities of museums.

B) Activism: Merging Art and Activism in Environmental Movements

1. Redefining Art and Activism: The Emergence of Activism

Radical activists are not the only ones to carry out actions that have been labeled as art vandalism; the practice of certain artists – and even the categories of artists and activists could become confused – has already been described as art vandalism like the Danish Situationist and artist Asger in 1962 to share the message: “*The avant-garde won’t give up*” (Kurczynski, 2008, p.1). This illustrates that acts of art vandalism can transcend mere political expression and be employed as expressive artistic gestures. Davatkhah reports on these actions in terms of performance (Davatkhah, 2024). As a result, the qualifier of art vandalism seems flawed or at least incomplete. It gives an inadequate account of the link between activism and art. Do these acts hold transformative consequences for the art worlds? To what extent do they reflect a dialogue between art and politics? What is their legitimacy?

Activism represents a confluence of art and activism, where artistic expression is employed as a direct tool for social and political change (Duncombe et al., 2018). The difficulty with this neologism is to articulate two notions that do not a priori produce the same thing. Whereas activism aims for effects, art aims for affects (Ducombe, 2016). This definition makes activism more than a reactionary force, it becomes a proactive approach to social and ecological issues, where the medium of art becomes as important as the message it conveys. The concept of activism blurs traditional boundaries between art seen as a purely aesthetic endeavor and activism as a merely political act. Rather, it combines the two into a dynamic practice that seeks to bring about change and raise awareness.

Rachel, an activist who is involved in the Riposte Alimentaire campaign, sums up well the philosophy behind activism: “*we use art to convey a message, and in doing so, we are creating*

art. *This fits entirely within the definition of activism.*” (Rachel, 2024, see Appendix 5, p. 152). Activism resists strict categorization and may be adapted to a diverse range of situations and goals. This adaptability allows ways of expression merging art and activism to exist in multiple forms, from visual arts to performative arts. Jasper, another activist, adds depth to this understanding by differentiating between vandalism and activism: *“I think there’s like, a lot of factors that make it differ between just like, plain old vandalism and a form of art somewhere. What do you spray on? Do you put thought into it? Do you make it look nice, like all those kinds of things?”* (Jasper, 2024, Appendix 11, p. 185). Jasper’s *de facto* suggests that activism involves intentionality and creativity, two dimensions that go beyond vandalism and introduces the interest of art as equally important as the message it conveys.

When traditional forms of protest, such as marches and petitions, encounter difficulties in capturing public attention or influencing policymaking, activism offers a creative alternative (Stammen & Meissner, 2022). This combination of the emotional power of art and the strategic strength of activism can be particularly effective in addressing complex – and somehow abstract issues – like climate change, where data and scientific arguments alone may fail to resonate with the public. In the words of Stammen and Meissner: *“activism creates an aeffect, combining activism’s instrumental effect with art’s emotional affect”* (Stammen and Meissner, 2022, p. 20).

Lorry, who takes an activist approach to his work as an artist’s agent and art critic, adds on activism, *“The term is pretty broad, but frankly, it would be great to see it more in the media and public debate in the near future. But I think the term is well suited to these actions and should include several aspects. Of course, there are actions for the ecological cause, but it should also encompass all demands related to the visual art sector”* (Lorry, 2024, see Appendix 3, p. 125). Lorry’s view suggests that the scope of activism could be expanded to include various forms of artistic and activist engagement, reflecting its potential as a versatile tool for both ecological and broader social causes.

2. Historical Roots and Evolution of Activism

Raphaella Raaber reassures the existence of a historical connection between activism and art: *“In the past, Activism has played a significant role in transforming society and systems to improve human and social conditions. However, the merely positive impacts of these already*

existing agents for change seem to be mostly overlooked. Activists have always been substantial drivers in major human and environmental rights movements. History illustrates a wealth of efforts and movements involving art and an abundance of examples of artists that have created a connection between political battle, societal change, and artistic creation” (Raaber, 2022, p. 2-3).

Although the term was first invented among Chicanos and Zapatistas in Los Angeles and Mexico in the late 1990s (Fortes, Porsani and Lalander, 2023), the roots of activism go back a long way in art history – from the painters of the French Revolution to the Chicano, feminist and black and Queer movements of the 70s and 80s, and the alignment of the Dadaists, Russian Futurists and Surrealists with Communism. These art counter-hegemonic movements laid the foundations for contemporary activism since they proved how art could be a vehicle for struggles waged by marginal groups on the political and social scene (Lemoine, 2010). Doing so, they rooted in a tradition of activism in a number of artistic and political movements (see figure 1).



Figure 1: Guerrilla Girls. (1985). Reinventing the “f” word - feminism! [Poster].

3. Activism Discussed as a Tool for Ecological and Social Transformation

Activism can be considered as interesting approach when it comes to tackling difficult global issues like social justice, sustainability, and climate change in an emotionally charged way.

The Anthropocene has expanded the temporal and spatial boundaries of environmental

effects. Benjamin J. Richardson brings to light in the *Research Handbook on Transnational Environmental Law* (2021), that these shifts have led artists and activists worldwide to engage deeply with environmental issues, making use of their tools to facilitate public understanding of the Anthropocene's evolving aesthetics. Ólafur Eliasson's "Ice Watch" installation (see figure 2), which took place during COP 21 in Paris, is a notable illustration of activism. Large blocks of ice were brought from Greenland to Paris, and they gradually melted in front of the public. Eliasson aimed to make the abstract concept of global warming concrete, and he declared, that the goal was to "*bridge the gap between the data, the scientists, the politicians and heads of state and how normal people feel*" (Lengkeek and Marques, 2022, p. 102). Despite being criticized due to the carbon footprint of the project, the installation successfully sparked public debate. Notable insights regarding the capacity of art to advance the experience and portrayal of the Anthropocene are also provided by Bruno Latour. According to him, the environmental crisis challenges our representation of the world and requires a shift of representation (Latour, 2011). In that sense, artistic sensitivity is a powerful means of shaping representations. A pertinent study from Burke et al. (2017) actually shows that individuals who already hold firm beliefs, whether in support of or against climate change, tend not to be influenced by the artwork. In contrast, those who lack a strong preexisting opinion are more likely to be affected by it. Consequently, the effectiveness of ecological activism highly depends on the audience itself.



Figure 2: Eliasson, O., & Kleist, K. V. (2018). Ice Watch, la nouvelle installation signée Olafur Eliasson à Londres [Photograph].

In other words, activism's effectiveness lies in its ability to relate individual experiences with broader issues. Art should be considered not just as an individual act of creation but as

collective a project involving many actors. According to Becker, art as a collective action implies a strong connection between these structures and the attributes of the works themselves (Benghozi and Becker, 1990). This collective dimension of art is realized through shared values and conventions within a common lived world, which is increasingly shaped by the globalized status of art today.

As Beatriz Rodríguez-Labajos (2022) notes, activism is increasingly recognized for its role in ecological activism, particularly in educating audiences, reflecting on environmental controversies, and promoting creative solutions across different sectors. She declares: *“Artivism is a growing constituent of environmental activism, articulated around three major topics. The first one is the education of audiences through performative expressions of today’s global environmental crises, especially climate change. The second one involves ecocritical reflections on environmental controversies and conflicts towards creative emancipatory practices. The third one positions art practice as an avenue for environmental improvement across different sectors (e.g. water, mining, urban) with involvement of citizens, governments, and corporate actors”* (Rogriguez-Labajos, 2022, p.1).

Because it makes complicated issues more accessible and engaging, activism can inspire action and deepen the understanding of the multifaced ecological crisis. That said, activism’s interest extends beyond raising awareness; it also has a significant impact on the cultural narratives and imaginaries around the environment. Damien Delormes (2019) considers that the poeticization of the ecological transition through activism enables a combination of criticism and invention. It transforms individuals and collectives and opens new possibilities for a more sustainable future. This transformative potential is further analyzed by the work of Golańska and Kronenberg (2020). According to them, integrating eco-sensitive art into educational projects can mobilize audiences on the matter of sustainability. According to Lara Stammen and Miriam Meissner (2022), activism is not just about public understanding of environmental degradation, but also about supporting collective action to build an inclusive community. This approach aligns with the concept of *“regenerative culture”*, a practice central to movements such as Extinction Rebellion, which encourages the validation, sharing, and collective addressing of difficult emotions related to environmental degradation (Westwell and Bunting, 2020). The authors draw the conclusion that social and ecological movements have both internal and exterior interests in activism (Stammen and Meissner, 2022).

Additionally, art seems to be a subversive form of expression in countries where counter-hegemonic groups are marginalized and human rights are threatened (Nossel, 2016). In that

matter, the work of João Carlos Figueira Martins and Ricardo Marnoto de Oliveira Campos provides interesting insights into how activism manifests itself by involving young people's bodies (Martins and Olivera, 2023). Their starting point is that structures of power control and regulate the body, leading to historical stigmatization based on attributes like skin color, gender, or sexual orientation. Nonetheless, the body also functions as a tool of resistance, opposition, and disruption to prevailing norms. The authors state: *“the body might be seen as a political element in two distinct ways. It is a site of oppression, linked to the ranking and classification of individuals and to established rules of conduct that define the limits of the socially acceptable. At the same time, the body becomes a mechanism of struggle through multiple forms of resistance, protest or rebellion, in opposition to specific forms of oppression”* (Martins and Olivera, 2023, p.233). In the context of activism, the body can be both a “theme” for artistic content that reflects bodily experiences and a “tool” for creative acts of resistance. For example, 25-year-old illustrator Plant Boy documents his identity transition from lesbian to trans man through artworks posted on social media. His activism stems from his daily experiences of transphobia and his commitment to discussing significant gender identity-related issues.

Activism's strengths lie in the ability of art to shape the political and social imaginaries of its subjects as suggested by Girma Negash (2004, p. 185): *“There are several reasons why the arts, in all their forms and productions, provide a site from where we can observe and experience aspects of political life that we cannot possibly do in any other way”*. This creative ability is especially important in movements such as ecological activism, when the stakes are global, and the obstacles can seem overwhelming. Activism provides a means of visualizing these challenges and imagining solutions. Lorry reminds me in his interview of the bridges between the activist and artistic worlds: *“Artists who take this kind of action, or even associations that create projects in museums, are often very close to the current activist mentality. Many artists want to emphasize ecological and activist dimensions in their work. I think there's always a link to be made between these different causes, whether it's for the artist or not.”* (Lorry, 2024, see Appendix 3, p. 131)

C) Artivism within the Art Worlds: Balancing Integration and Subversion

1. The Integration of Artivism into Mainstream Cultural Institutions

Stepping out of their objective of neutrality, cultural institutions have become increasingly aligned with social struggles, and reciprocally, activists have gradually found their way into these spaces. *De facto*, over the past decade, pressing issues such as police brutality, racism, gender inequality, ecological crises, immigration, and war have been particularly addressed within institutional settings (Stucki, 2022). This evolution exemplifies a larger trend in which organizations that used to strictly follow traditional norms and tried not to position themselves are now interacting with activist viewpoints more and more. Two of the key benefits of this process of integration could therefore be the amplification and legitimization of activist messages among the public.

The exhibition “*Anthropocene*” can serve as a powerful example of how ecological activism may be effectively incorporated into mainstream spaces (see figure 3). Originally shown in Canada, this exhibition toured globally from 2020 to 2023, reaching audiences in Italy, Sweden, the Netherlands, Argentina, and Taiwan. The Anthropocene Project is the result of a four-year collaboration between Edward Burtynsky, Jennifer Baichwal, and Nicholas de Pencier. Together, they used a mix of contemporary and classic photography and film techniques to represent the effects of human-induced geological change on a global scale –especially the overexploitation of resources, the dumping of chemicals in natural areas, the loss of biodiversity, and rising sea levels. The exhibition’s popularity was increased by the diversity of issues addressed and artistic expression mobilized, which also demonstrated how radical ecological concepts could coexist peacefully with the elite world of international art institutions. The fact that this project was a fruit of the cooperation between cultural institutions on a global scale clearly shows how these mainstream entities have seized on concepts and discourses that are nonetheless the subject of strong debate and often described as militant – despite being grounded in scientific research – and activists or artists with militant discourses have reached the mainstream institutions. Nonetheless, Upton-Hansen et al. (2020) analyze that this integration into spaces that are part of the cultural and economic elite could reduce and even neutralize the critical edge of these artworks and discourses. So, I might ask, does this exhibition serve as a Trojan horse challenging mainstream institutions, or does it depoliticize the concept

of the Anthropocene and constitute a tool for the greenwashing of mainstream institutions?



Figure 3: Burtynsky, E. (2016). Oil Bunkering #1, Niger Delta, Nigeria [Photograph].
Courtesy Robert Koch Gallery, San Francisco / Nicholas Metivier Gallery, Toronto.

In fact, one of the essential forces of capitalism is to absorb its criticisms, and this applies to the art world – to the point that it is imbued with authoritarian and capitalist logic. According to Broz (2022), capitalism has a unique ability to absorb and commodify its critics. Thus, when activists enter established institutions, their actions run the risk of being transformed from acts of resistance into commodities that reinforce the very structures they aim to challenge. This commodification process can dilute the subversive intent of activism, reducing it to another marketable product within the capitalist economy. The features of the art worlds – although heterogeneous – question activism in its abilities to subvert norms and institutions, and *in fine*, the mainstream discourse.

2. Activism as a Catalyst for Challenging Institutional Norms Both Inside and Out

Chantal Mouffe understands activism as “*art that foments dissensus, that makes visible what the dominant consensus tends to obscure and obliterate*” (Mouffe, 2007, p. 4). Her point of view interests me because it opens the way to a closer examination of how activism operates within and outside traditional cultural institutions and manages to subvert them. Activism could function as both an internal and external critique of social and institutional norms. Precisely, M. J. Williams distinguishes conventional – like institutional exhibitions – and unconventional

means – such as art disruption or art vandalism – of activism aiming to drive social and political change (Williams, 2008).

From inside the art worlds, activism manifests through artworks and exhibitions that question established values that govern cultural institutions. Starting for instance with labor conditions in cultural institutions, Pires (2023) analyzes Joshua Schwebel's works, and argues that artistic activism can subvert capitalist labor practices by raising awareness of hidden exploitation within art institutions and fostering real change. She highlights how Schwebel's interventions expose the contradictions of neoliberal art institutions, which often claim to be progressive while relying on unpaid labor and precarious working conditions. This subversion operates within the institutions themselves, using their structures to critique and challenge the hegemonic norms that perpetuate inequality.

An interesting example on the subject then concerns feminism (see figure 4). The art worlds started to become interested in feminist art in the 1970s, coinciding with the rise of the feminist movement and the emergence of the feminist art movement (Agerstoun and Auther, 2007). While feminists criticized the foundations of art worlds, their sexism, and the myth of individual artistic genius, they were able, to a certain extent, to integrate it. This demonstrates the adaptability of art worlds as a flexible structure. Since the 1970s, feminist art activism has expanded all over the world to question established power structures and create something that is not only aesthetically interesting but also politically and socially impactful. This can be depicted as a visibility strategy implemented by both activist groups and artists (Freire Smith and Miranda, 2023). Mary Jo Agerstoun and Elissa Auther summarize well the goals of feminist activism: *“Feminist activist art is characterized here as simultaneously critical, positive, and progressive. By critical we mean work that seeks to expose underlying ideologies or existing structures that have a negative effect on women and their lives; by positive we mean work that takes a stand, expressing its maker's faith in achieving results or positing alternatives; by progressive we mean a belief in the feminist tenets of equality and inclusiveness, a better world free of sexism, racism, homophobia, economic inequality, and violence”* (Agerstoun and Auther, 2007, p. vii).



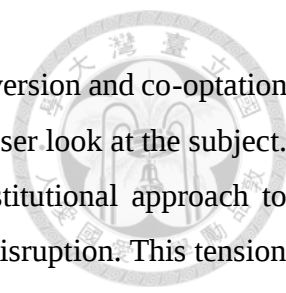
Figure 4: Ringgold, F. (1969). Black Light Series #12: Party Time [Oil on canvas]. Glenstone Museum, Potomac, Maryland. 2023 Faith Ringgold / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Courtesy ACA Galleries.

This shift shows that the appreciation of culturally oriented artworks has evolved from criteria of critical recognition, reach, acquisition value, and aesthetic success to consideration of real-world impact. Perovich (2018) declares that the traditional methods of evaluating art are inadequate for describing the new forms of socially engaged art that are emerging. Indeed, curators increasingly collaborate with activist projects, which has changed their function from merely guiding viewer experiences to actively mediating between institutions and marginalized communities (Albarrán Diego, 2018).

From outside the art worlds, the confrontational approach of eco-activists who target art pieces in museums emphasizes the inherent contradictions within museum spaces, which are frequently positioned as inclusive and democratic yet maintain practices that alienate or exclude certain populations (Sandell, 2012). Choudry (2020) notes that such activist strategies compel museums to confront their complicity in broader socio-political and environmental injustices, and return them to their role as normative, not neutral, actors in the shaping of cultures.

3. The Tension Between the Subversion of the Art Worlds and Co-optation

“When an artwork goes in mainstream institutions, it’s as if it dies. The radical energy that it once had, is diluted. It becomes just another piece in the collection, without the power to disrupt and provoke.” (Lorry, 2024, see Appendix 3, p. 120)



Even if the previous paragraphs touched on the conflict between subversion and co-optation of activism in relation to the art worlds, it seems interesting to take a closer look at the subject. Indeed, the present discussion informs me about the limits of an institutional approach to activism and the interest of actions outside these structures, such as art disruption. This tension is at the heart of the ongoing debate within activist and artistic communities about the effectiveness of activism when it becomes part of institutionalized art spaces. Lyudmila Bulavka-Buzgalina describes an “*increasing subordination of culture to the market and capital as the evolution of modern society goes ahead and sets out the reasons for this development*” (Bulavka-Buzgalina, 2022, p. 645). What is more, Chantal Mouffe (2007) warns of the capitalist co-optation of critical art, in the case where it enters the commercial sphere of museums and galleries. Boltanski and Chiapello (2005) share this concern, stating that capitalist structures have stolen countercultural approaches of the 1960s to promote new kinds of production and control, though they were originally intended to challenge the existing status quo. The act of bringing radical ideas and practices into established institutions often results in their depoliticization, since these artworks are fashioned to correspond with the cultural and economic frameworks of the institutions themselves (Broz, 2022). Stamenkovic explains that it gets worse: attempts to subvert neoliberal structures from within can reinforce those very structures (Stamenkovic, 2008).

Museums are not only places of reflection where different perspectives collide (Giroux, 2020), they are spaces of norms and authority in the art worlds because they are established institutions considered as sites of power-knowledge and upholding societal values and norms (Cain, 2008). Sofie Scheen Jahnsen adds that throughout history, museums have been seen as institutions that present objective facts and truths about the world, defining what is “*high art*”, and shaping visitors’ perceptions of what is valuable and important. This historical role has given museums a sense of authority in defining cultural values and norms (Jahnsen, 2019). In her short essay published in January 2024 *A qui appartient la Beauté?* (Who owns Beauty?), Bénédicte Savoy explores this argument, demonstrating that the beauty of a work is situated, and staged by people in museums that erase certain elements such as the violence and looting that led to their acquisition of certain works (Savoy, 2024). That is why it is not surprising that museums contribute to the perpetuation of societal inequalities through their collections and practices. According to a thorough analysis by Topaz et al. (2019), there is an obvious lack of diversity at major US art museums, with white men making up 75.7% of the artists represented

in these institutions. In addition, museums often have some links with the carbon economy and reproduce and safeguard structures of domination. These dimensions are thus constitutive of the escalation of the environmental damage. Besides, Albarrán Diego adds that while curators may engage in activist-oriented projects, these efforts are often still subject to the pressures and expectations of the institutions they operate within (Albarrán Diego, 2018).

This tension between subversion and co-optation also helps understand the reluctance of some activists to embrace the label of “artivism”. Louis argues: “*I’ve heard the term before, in terms using a lot of different ways. I think art can definitely be a form of activism. However, I think a lot of people use that label, as an excuse to not take more radically impactful, but also more risky forms of activism.*” (Louis, 2024, Appendix 10, p. 170). Rachel, another activist from the A22 network adds that the groups in this network resist being confined to any single concept, including artivism. She explains, “*we avoid being confined to certain terms because we might not always engage with museums, depending on the circumstances*” (Rachel, 2024, see Appendix 5, p. 152). According to this viewpoint, activist strategies should be more flexible, choosing their mode of engagement based on factors like efficacy and context rather than rigidly adhering to a specific label. In fact, these criticisms bring me back to the question of radicality in activism: the need to balance popular, and more or less consensual approaches like artivism with rather confrontational forms of direct action. In this sense, the debate on artivism draws attention to the variety of tactics used by artistic and activist groups and the continuous dispute over the best means of bringing about social and environmental change.

Yet, it is worth noting that the symbolic or partial attack of well-known artworks in major museum institutions seems difficult for the art world to absorb because art disruption or vandalism by activists is seen as a threat to museums (Williams, 2008). According to Jaime A. Teixeira da Silva, “*It gives the impression of, and is in fact, an affront on culture as well as a desecration of socio-cultural values. And when the destruction of culture and art is used as a tool to advance ideologies about an unrelated or indirectly related theme or struggle, such as climate change or environmental awareness, then such destructive actions – and the message they send – become highly misguided.*” (Teixeira da Silva, 2023, p.74). Therefore, such practices often impose a human, economic, and cultural burden on art galleries and museums that may hurt the art worlds in general. In response to acts of vandalism targeting masterpieces in museums since the 2000s, institutions like the Louvre have notably increased security measures around their artworks. This includes enhanced barriers and surveillance systems

designed to protect these valuable pieces. However, as the restorer of painted works of art Véronique points out in her interview, this increased security can detract from the visitor experience: *“It is indeed unfortunate to put security measures around the artwork because it spoils the perspective when one visits an exhibition to see a piece”* (Véronique, 2024, see Appendix 4, p. 138). The restorer’s insight highlights a tension between ensuring the safety of masterpieces and preserving the aesthetic and immersive quality of museum exhibitions. The institutional response to radical actions, such as increased security measures in museums, hence, proves the difficulty of the adaptability of how the art worlds can adapt to prevent activists from changing the existing balance of power through actions of art disruption. Stated differently, activism’s potential as a vehicle for social and ecological transformation is further complicated by the fact that, these measures aim to preserve artworks, but they also help maintain the legitimacy and stability of the institutions (Moreau, 2024).

Acknowledging these tensions helps to demonstrate the argument that museums are not neutral spaces. Rather, they are arenas of ideological struggle where conflicting interests intersect (Pittas, 2022).

D) Artivism and Art Disruption: Toward a Counter-Hegemonic Cultural Landscape

1. Art and Activism as Counter-Hegemony

“The existing global art world models rules and standards by homology on that of the current hegemon” (Mackay, 2022, p. 1). Indeed, in the Gramscian understanding of hegemony – defined *“as a social condition in which all aspects of social reality are dominated by or supportive of a single class”* (Mayo, 1994, p. 235), culture and the arts are neither impartial nor anodyne. Instead, they inherently exist within systems of domination and power (Haghighat, 2020) and participate in shaping social norms.

Firstly, activists and artists operate within a constrained repertoire of collective action in the hegemonic system; their methods range from legal to illegal and from mainstream to radical (see figure 5). For Mouffe (2007), the concepts of antagonism and hegemony are essential to understanding the function of art within democratic politics. She argues that every social order is contingent and hegemonic, that is to say, sustained by efforts that implement power relations

while excluding other possibilities. Hence, artistic practices can be seen as either hegemonic or counter-hegemonic and take part either in the maintenance or disruption of these power structures. In that matter, Pénélope Larzillière adds that artists balance local expectations with international demands, navigating the tension between artistic integrity and the need for external funding and recognition. Artists increasingly find themselves in a dynamic art market where socially engaged art is in demand (Larzillière, 2023).

In spite of these risks of co-optation and the routinizing tendencies of capitalism to neutralize its opponents, the academic remains optimistic. For her, the emancipatory potential of art is internal to its capacity to resist the domination of capitalism. According to Mouffe, *“Artistic practices can contribute to questioning the dominant hegemony... by subverting the dominant hegemony and by contributing to the construction of new subjectivities”* (Mouffe, 2007, p. 5). She bases herself notably on André Gorz’s findings that posit that with capitalism increasingly exploiting subjectivity, opportunities for resistance emerge in areas such as everyday life and cultural practices. In this way, resistance does not entail a return to *“modernist avant-garde notions”* for Mouffe, but rather an extension of artistic interventions across different social spaces to challenge the capitalist imaginary and promote alternative ways of living. In line with this, she defends an agonistic framework of democracy, where public spaces are viewed as battlegrounds for competing hegemonic projects rather than arenas for rational consensus. Critical artistic practices should aim to create dissensus by giving voice to marginalized perspectives (Mouffe, 2007). Through alternative narratives and perspectives, they work to transform the social landscape toward greater equality between people. According to Shereen Abouelnaga, *“in an age controlled by silence, imposed by far-right regimes, activism has become one of the most efficient means of expression, committed to the pursuit of justice”* (Abouelnaga, 2020, p. 164). These efforts raise significant public and media interest and thus increase awareness about pressing environmental and social problems.

In that framework, activism and art disruption – often dismissed as vandalism – have emerged as powerful tools in the global struggle against hegemonic structures as they question the *“common sense”*. These manners of expression and activism blur the thin line separating legality from illegality and mainstream approaches from radical ones. In so doing, they can contest and even subvert dominant discourses that justify existing structures of power. Activists and activists – depicted as *“organic intellectuals”* (Haghighat, 2020, p. 12) – can contribute to the development of counter-hegemonic discourses and practices that disrupt the prevailing

social order. This process, described by Gramsci as a “*War of Position*” entails the gradual permeation of innovative concepts and cultural expressions within civil society and state apparatuses, with the objective of modifying the ideological underpinnings of society (Haghighat, 2020).

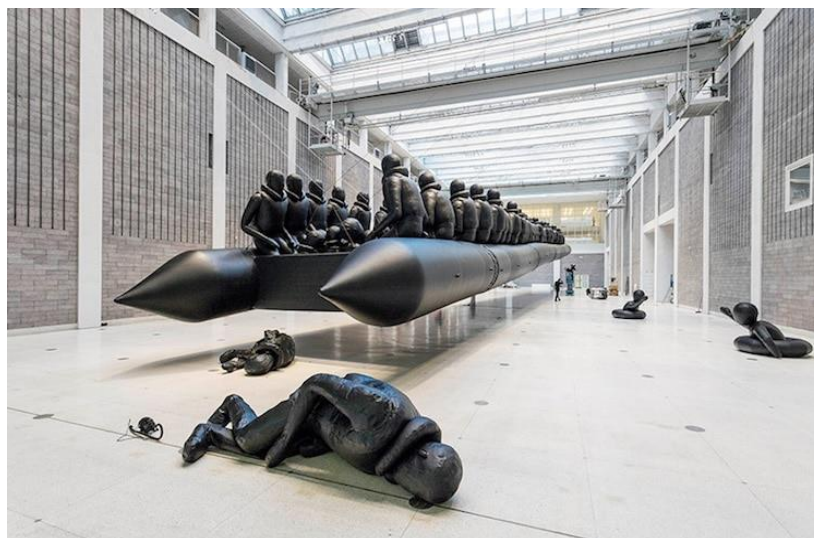
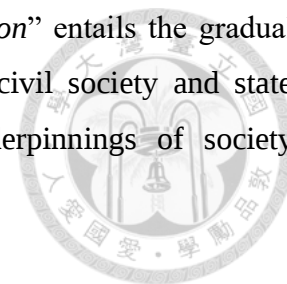
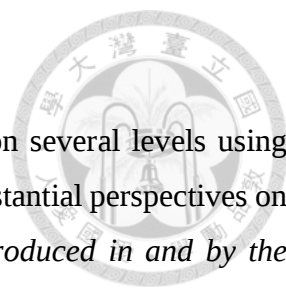


Figure 5: Weiwei, A. (2017). Law of the Journey [Installation]. National Gallery of Prague.

2. Artivism and Art Disruption as Tools to Challenge the Center-Periphery Hierarchy

Given that the notion of artivism is fundamentally grounded in critiques of the central authority’s colonial practices (Fortes, Porsani and Lalander, 2023), it must be recognized that the communities endeavoring to challenge the dominant hierarchy via artistic and activist means frequently emerge from marginalized contexts. These groups oppose the dominant power structures, which leads to a struggle against the entrenched “*center*” that dictates cultural, political, and social norms. Their efforts are not just acts of defiance, they are driven by a need to challenge the status quo and assert their own narratives, identities, and rights in a landscape that often marginalizes or silences them – and this is specifically the power of art. For example, the countries of the global South and the most discriminated communities are the most affected by environmental injustice. According to Maantay (2022, p. 31), these communities often suffer from “*disproportionate exposure to pollution and its concomitant effects on health and environment*”, a situation exacerbated by unequal environmental protection and legal enforcement. This situation has led some eco-Marxist theorists to consider climate change as an extension of class struggle, where the violence of environmental degradation mingles with

social and economic inequalities (Anfinson, 2021).



In this context, the center-periphery hierarchy can be challenged on several levels using activism and art disruption. Tatiana Moura and Linda Cerdeira offer substantial perspectives on the role of art from peripheral communities, emphasizing that *“art produced in and by the periphery, while frequently not recognized as ‘art,’ has the potential to destabilize the discourse constructed by actors who are economically, socially, and racially privileged”* (Moura and Cerdeira, 2021, p. 3). Art originating from marginalized communities focuses on affirming agency and creativity to counter media-driven narratives of victimhood and invisibility. Scholars like Hughes and Déa (2012) highlight how local and subaltern artistic expressions can assert a reimagined cultural authenticity that both engages with and resists the influences of global economic and political pressures. Intersectional movements like Passinho and Slam Poetry, for example, try to resist violence and challenge stereotypes by occupying spaces that promote inclusivity and making use of gender dynamics while confronting systemic inequalities. What is more, a substantial body of research within activism explores gender struggles, with a particular focus on feminism (Serra, Enríquez, and Johnson, 2017) and queer narratives (Ribeiro and de Moraes Franco, 2021). These studies show that activism is a powerful tool in challenging patriarchal structures and advancing gender equity. Besides, Medrado, Rega, and Paulla (2022) discuss the potential of activism in building solidarities among people with experiences of oppression and marginalization. This ability to foster alliance-building is crucial in sustaining coordinated efforts across different movements, whether they are focused on gender struggles, environmental issues, or social rights. Consequently, activism and art disruption have increasingly been employed at a global level by radical ecological and counter-hegemonic groups (Kinyon, Dolšák, and Prakash, 2023).

Yet, the links between marginalized people and activism are not as simple. The forms of these actions and artistic expressions vary significantly across different political and cultural environments. A study by Kinyon et al. (2023) documented 38 incidents of museum activism in the year 2022, involving 16 groups, which goes to show that 36 of these incidents were done by organized groups in Western countries. In this context, many activists feel motivated to act because of their privileges. Rachel, an activist, speaks to this responsibility: *“I feel a duty to act because I recognize the privileges I have. It’s not enough to be aware of the issues; those of us who have the means and the platform need to take action and use our voices for those who can’t”* (Rachel, 2024, see Appendix 5, p. 146). This sense of responsibility, while genuine, may

also reflect a certain degree of disconnection from the experiences of marginalized communities, where the barriers to activism could be higher.

In non-Western contexts, where political repression and economic instability can make it even more difficult to raise contradictory voices, activism and artivism must adapt to local conditions. Performance arts are for instance seen as a way out by Wang and Liu to create public spectacles that suggestively expose state repression and promote alternative values (Wang and Liu, 2020).

The intensity of legal repercussions also varies from one context to another, even within Western countries, and they are influenced by the activists' social, economic, gender, and racial positions. Gulliver et al. (2023) find that, in Australia, the government systematically criminalizes climate protests through mass arrests and new laws that expand police and corporate discretionary power. Although these have failed to deter protest movements, such measures disproportionately affect the most marginalized groups. These disparities not only impact the personal lives of activists but also fragment activist networks.

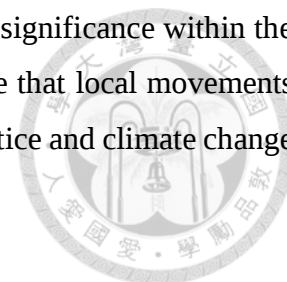
Confronted with these challenges, some activists and groups go subtler or more indirect; others redouble their campaigns to challenge the very legal regimes that make them illegal. This diversity of strategies evidences the versatile and contextual nature of artivism and activism, revealing both the potential and the limits of these movements in different parts of the world.

Nevertheless, it must be considered that a key limitation for artists and artivists from the margins is the risk of cultural appropriation and commodification of their ideas and symbols. Martin Zeillinger's thesis on the "*Arts and Politics of Appropriation*" shows that appropriation – defined as both creative and critical practice that involves a re-use of already existing cultural materials in ways challenging established notions of originality, authorship, and ownership (Zeillinger, 2009) – constitutes a major issue for radical and marginal groups as it can transform their counter-hegemonic cultures into mere aesthetic objects within the global capitalist system.

3. The Trajectory of Art from Local to Global Activist Movements

In this thesis, I argue that art constitutes a nexus that connects movements at different scales because it is both a common means of expression and an effective strategy. This approach coincides with Pablo Marsal Baraldi (2023) assessment of a shift from transnational to transcalar advocacy – that puts forward the growing significance of connecting local, national,

and global efforts. In discussing the duality of local action with global significance within the Oakland anti-coal movement, Sanz and Rodriguez-Labajos (2021) note that local movements play an important role in linking global discourses on environmental justice and climate change with activism.



The role of transnational action networks – like the A22 network – becomes particularly significant for the international coordination of activist groups. These networks facilitate the exchange of ideas, strategies, and resources across borders, and enable activists to collaborate and amplify their impact. Beyond tactical elements, these networks are also driven by principled ideas and values that motivate their formation (Keck and Sikkink, 2014) such as “*protect our generation and all future generations*” (A22 network, 2024). In areas like environmental justice and human rights, these networks forge new connections that expand access to the international system, providing domestic activists with resources and support for their local struggles.

Additionally, studies on activism, such as those by Weij and Berkers (2022), emphasize the innovative forms of expression utilized in both physical environments and digital platforms. Public spaces are first essential for artists to resist dominant narratives by directly engaging with the public – as put forward by Hanan Toukan (2019) on the topic of Contemporary Middle Eastern performance art. Secondly, the digitalization of activism has become increasingly important, particularly in regions where physical protest is met with state repression. Sila and Maia (2022) provide an ethnographic account from the Complexo do Alemão favelas in Rio de Janeiro, illustrating how Black activists leverage digital platforms to participate in broader political arenas. Their work highlights the creative and cooperative use of language and technology as survival strategies in the face of violent securitization, offering promising avenues for antiracist education and comparative studies of grassroots activism.

Art is therefore a potent tool in counter-hegemonic struggles since it may intervene on many scales and adapt to various formats.

In the first chapter, I explored the cultural, political, and historical contexts that shape the intersection of art and activism. I have demonstrated that the recent incident of ecological activism in museums could be characterized to a certain extent as radical activist actions that introduce a performance dimension to activism. The concept of art disruption seems moreover interesting in this thesis since it appears as a convenient mix between art and activism, which

makes it possible to think about the subversion of mainstream cultural spaces from the outside through militant actions involving performance dimensions. In Chapter 2, I shift the focus to the practical impact of these ideas, examining how art disruption and activism succeed in challenging and dismantling entrenched power structures using the case of recent ecological activist incidents in museums. This transition from theory to praxis will attempt to demonstrate how the challenges of activism and art disruption in challenging hegemonic norms can effectively be addressed.

CHAPTER 2: THE RIPPLE EFFECT OF INCIDENTS OF ECOLOGICAL ACTIVISM IN MUSEUMS



“We thought about what kind of actions would get the public interest the most. And we came up with cultural disruption. It takes a lot less resources to disrupt a cultural icon or something culturally significant... It requires the action to be controversial... something, an action that half the country would love, and half the country would hate, but everybody would be shocked by.” (Louis, 2024, see Appendix 6, p. 164).

With these words, Louis, an activist with Just Stop Oil, encapsulates well the strategic thinking behind the rise of art disruption as a form of ecological protest which is the topic of this chapter. It delves into the ripple effect of incidents of ecological activism in museums, exploring how these actions are designed to challenge and disrupt societal norms. Thanks to case studies (A) and data from the six interviews that have been conducted for this thesis, I will empirically analyze the effectiveness of these actions in leveraging media coverage and sparking public debate. After having assessed how activists use strategic disruption to leverage media potential (B), this chapter will study the role of museums in preserving cultural heritage while responding to these actions (C). Eventually, I will explore the transnational resonance of these local incidents of eco-activism in museums (D). If assessing the success of these actions seems difficult to date, this analysis will provide ways of understanding their impact.

A) Case Studies: Incidents Description and Analysis

1. The Mona Lisa Incident on January 28, 2024



Figure 6: Riposte Alimentaire, and Lanot, C. (2024, January 28). Moment protesters throw soup at Mona Lisa in Paris [Video]. *The Guardian*.

This first case study deals with the most recent of the three incidents (see figure 6). Despite being one of the most protected artworks in the world, da Vinci's Mona Lisa continues to face various attacks from individuals with diverse motivations (Ekabouma, January 2024). Since its famous theft in 1911, the world's most precious painting – valued between 1 and 2 billion euros – has been the target of regular attacks. In 1956, a young man damaged the left elbow of the Mona Lisa by throwing a stone at the painting. From 2005 on, a new era of protection was inaugurated for the Mona Lisa, with an investment of 5 million euros dedicated to its security. This foresighted precaution proved its worth during an incident in August 2009 at the Louvre. A woman threw an empty cup towards the Mona Lisa. In 2022, a man attempted to smear the Mona Lisa with a cream cake in the name of environmentalism. The 2024 incident is the one that of interest because the method, actors, motivations, and media coverage of the incident are indicative of a trend toward environmental activism targeting museums.

Regarding the key actors of the incident, one should first consider the two protestors from the French civil resistance collective created in the spring of 2022 Riposte Alimentaire – which was formerly called “*Dernière Rénovation*”. It is part of the A22 network. During the Mona Lisa Incident, Sasha – a 24-years old French activist – and Marie-Juliette – a 63-years old French activist – threw soup on the glass protecting the masterpiece at the Louvre before positioning themselves on the sides of the painting to declare slogans. Among the actors of the incident could also be found the Louvre employees who responded to the situation by installing black panels to conceal the stage, evacuating the crowd, ensuring the artwork's safety, and

cleaning the glass. The Louvre's board of directors also set up a crisis unit in the immediate aftermath and filed a complaint against the activists (Marianne and AFP, January 2024). Besides, the Police took part in the incident because the two activists were arrested and placed in police custody for damaging classified property. The media are also actors because the incident sparked widespread media coverage and prompted notable debates on the ethical implications and effectiveness of such protests. The public whose' reactions were polarized should also be taken into account: while some expressed support for the activists' message regarding environmental and social issues, others criticized the method as well as what they perceived as disrespect toward cultural heritage. Discussions on social media – particularly involving politicians – underscored the conflicting priorities between the preservation of art and the urgency of addressing pressing social and environmental challenges. For instance, the government spokeswoman Prisca Thevenot declared on France 3 Television: *“I’m not sure the Mona Lisa is France’s biggest polluter. What’s the point?”* (François Becker, January 2024). Meanwhile, French Culture Minister Rachida Dati wrote on X: *“The Mona Lisa, like our heritage, belongs to future generations [...] “No cause can justify it being targeted!”* (Halasz, Liajos, Holland, January 2024).

The activists from Riposte Alimentaire's primary goals were to highlight the right to a *“healthy and sustainable diet”* and to draw attention to the negative effects of the current agricultural system. They stated, *“We love art, but our future artists will have nothing to paint on a burning planet”* and *“our farming system is sick”* (Vermelin, April 2024). The strength of their slogans framed Riposte Alimentaire's discourse as a choice between cultural preservation and human well-being. Thus, by targeting an iconic painting, they sought to provoke thought about the relative importance of art versus fundamental human needs.

They questioned, *“What is important? What is more important? Art or the right to a healthy and sustainable diet? Our agricultural system is sick. Our farmers are dying at work. One in three French people does not eat all their meals every day”*, as reported by an AFP journalist. Additionally, Riposte Alimentaire called on people to *“join the farmers in their mobilizations”* in France the following week and *“refused to be labeled as enemies of the farmers”*. This call was also supported by Greenpeace, Alternatiba, Les Amis de la Terre, France Nature Environnement, Les Soulèvements de la Terre, Attac, Youth for Climate, Extinction Rebellion, and several other associations and personalities (L'Obs, January 2024). Therefore, this incident falls into the category of actions unrelated to art that take advantage of the notoriety of a work of art because the activists' actions were motivated by environmental and social issues rather than a direct critique of the artwork itself or the art institution.

Indeed, this deliberately controversial act triggered mixed responses. Mainstream media and right-wing politicians presented the incident as shocking and controversial, balancing the activists' messages with implications for art conservation and public disruption. *Le Point* – a right wing magazine –, for example, headlined the event: “*Les attaques stériles, ‘La Joconde’ en a soupe!*” (The Mona Lisa has had enough of fruitless attacks!) (Ono, January 2024). Moreover, the cultural magazine *Connaissance des arts* chose to humanize the painting in the headlines of the article covering the happening: “*Musée du Louvre : la Joconde victime d’une attaque à la soupe par des militants de l’agriculture durable*” (Musée du Louvre: Soup attack on Mona Lisa by sustainable agriculture activists) (Hakoun, January 2024). The article’s last part even takes a stand against art vandalism by militant environmental groups, citing the risk of media overkill, which could lead to further damage, and the ineffectiveness of using art as a target to denounce climate issues, according to the author. Left-wing and ecologist media like *Reporterre*, focused on explaining the reasons for such actions (Quentel, January 2024).

Various immediate and more mid- to long-term effects ensued from the activists’ actions. First, the Mona Lisa remained unharmed because it remained protected under bulletproof glass. The incident then received immediate media coverage and sparked extensive discussions on social media. This helped amplify the activists’ message about food insecurity and the environmental impacts of agrobusiness. Less than four months after Mona Lisa’s “*soup shower*” on January 28, 2024, there was a 330% increase in media mentions of social food security, according to Riposte Alimentaire (June 2024). The event also reanimated debates on the intersection of art and activism and prompted reflections on improved security measures for museums to prevent similar incidents.

To conclude, the Mona Lisa soup throwing incident is a valuable example of ecological activists using high-profile targets to amplify their messages about urgent social and environmental issues, notably the detrimental impacts of the current agricultural system, and promote the right to a healthy and sustainable diet. This incident not only disrupted the Louvre temporarily but also sparked widespread media coverage and public debate, effectively amplifying the activists’ message. The event highlighted the symbolic power of art in public discourse and the effectiveness of using high-profile cultural artifacts to draw attention to broader issues. Yet, it also raised concerns about the potential for increased security measures in museums and the risk of misunderstanding the use of certain works as targets for activism since they are not directly related to the message of the activists.

2. The Van Gogh Peach Trees in Blossom Incident on June 30, 2022

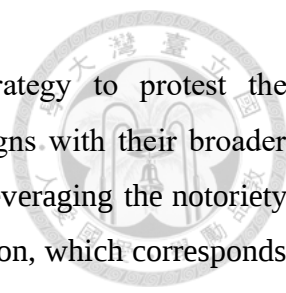


Figure 7: Buus, K. (Photographer). (2022, June 30). Just Stop Oil activists Louis McKechnie and Emily Brocklebank glue themselves to Van Gogh's Peach Trees in Blossom at the Courtauld Gallery [Photograph]. In Pictures. *The Guardian*.

The second case study concerns another notable incident of ecological activism targeting artworks (see figure 7). On June 24, 2023, the Peach Trees in Blossom by Van Gogh kept at the Courtauld Gallery in London became the object of a protest staged by the activist group Just Stop Oil. Louis McKechnie, 22, and Emily Brocklebank, 24, glued themselves to the frame of the painting and declared. Louis declared: *“my generation has no other choice but to take this kind of actions”* and Emily added *“normal cannot continue”* (Just Stop Oil, June 2022). This action caused approximately 2,000 pounds in damage to the 18th-century frame, which is older than the painting itself. The damage was described as *“substantial”* and permanent by District Judge Neeta Minhas, who found the activists guilty of criminal damage (Dubreil, November 2022). Yet, in interviewing Louis McKechnie on his action, he puts into question the damage to the frame: *“with my one, courts and the art restorer experts they got in did say yes, it was damaged and will never be the same. However, um, several expert art restorers in the art world disagree with that and say that the Court was incorrect. We designed those actions specifically so nothing would be permanently damaged. And the frame as well. They even admitted that nobody but basically an art restorer would be able to tell the difference between how it is now and how it was before. But that was unintentional. We did not intend to cause that level of damage. We picked out the type of glue and the methods and where we were attaching ourselves to it to minimize that risk as far as we could”* (Louis, 2024, see Appendix 6, p. 171). The specific choice of this masterpiece enables me to illustrate the second level of the classification – dealing

particularly with actions that directly engage with art and its symbolic meanings, targeting representations and cultural imaginations – and the controversy on the alleged damage caused to the frame is interesting to study in relation to the happening’s media, judicial and public responses.

The key actors in the event were first the Just Stop Oil young activists who glued themselves to the painting, and maybe Xavier Gonzales-Trimmer who was originally accused of “*distracting the guards*” before charges were dropped (PA News Agency, November 2022). Member like Riposte Alimentaire of the A22 Network, the group defines itself as a “*nonviolent civil resistance group in the UK*” (Just Stop Oil, 2024) and has started to take action in 2022 to initially demand that the UK Government halt the approval of all new oil, gas, and coal projects. After Prime Minister Keir Starmer committed to ending all new North Sea oil and gas exploration licenses (Sharma, July 2024), they shifted to the new demand “*that the UK Government sign up to a Fossil Fuel Treaty to Just Stop Oil by 2030*” (Just Stop Oil, 2024). This movement is famous for hard-hitting actions such as organizing a month of disruption at oil terminals across England in April 2023 or disrupting football matches, the 2022 British Academy of Film and Television Arts, and targeting artworks in museums like the Sunflowers by Van Gogh. These actions notably resulted in more than 2000 Just Stop Oil activists arrested, and indeed, the activists involved in the Peach Tree in Blossom Incident were arrested in the first instance for having damaged the painting’s frame, even if the damage was not intentional. Emily Brocklebank in fact declared during the trial: “*I didn’t think I would cause much damage. Glue comes off.*” (Quinn, 2022). During the trial, the judge declared, “*I find you both guilty of criminal damage*” (Quinn, 2022). Brocklebank was given a 21-day sentence, was suspended for six months, and was required to follow a six-week electronically monitored curfew. McKechnie was sentenced to three weeks of incarceration, and Gonzales-Trimmer was fined for his absence at the initial court proceedings (Quinn, 2022). Furthermore, London’s Courtauld Gallery, where the incident took place, experienced direct repercussions as the protest led to an immediate disturbance of the gallery’s operations, and the frame, valued at approximately 22,000 pounds, faced potential damage. Legal authorities also played a valuable role in the incident because they enforced legal consequences to uphold the law and protect cultural heritage. Ultimately, the media was crucial in framing and amplifying the protest. The activists’ strategy involved creating a spectacle that the media would be compelled to cover. As one of the activists mentioned, “*By gluing, it gives a story which the media chooses to follow*” (Dubreil, 2022).



Obviously, the activists' motivations were rooted in their strategy to protest the government's ongoing approval of new oil and gas projects. This aligns with their broader strategy of utilizing high-visibility actions to amplify their message. Leveraging the notoriety of the Van Gogh painting was therefore a key determinant for their action, which corresponds well to the first level of the categorization. Even if Louis McKechnie criticizes cultural institutions for being accomplices in the ongoing natural disaster, the protest did not explicitly target the funding sources of the museum or art institutions. The activist *de facto* argues: *"It's not actually about the art institutions themselves... we choose this tactic because the media in the UK specifically, more than other countries, will only cover climate protesters if they can vilify us"* (Louis, 2024, Appendix 10, p. 166). Finally, there was a degree of symbolism which tends to validate the second level of the given classification. The choice of a Van Gogh painting, depicting natural beauty – and particularly a scene of an expansive plain near Arles, France during early spring –, subtly underscored the theme of preserving the environment, though this was not the main driver. In a press release, the activist movement *de facto* states: *"The action comes amid warnings that the Provence region painted by Van Gogh may soon be experiencing drought. After a dry winter and Spring in which rainfall levels were 45% below historic averages followed by an extreme heatwave in May and June, France is running desperately low on water. As of June 15th, 124 water restriction orders were in place across a total of 39 of France's 96 mainland départements. Extreme weather, coupled with strikes and civil unrest has prompted the Foreign Office to issue warnings to holiday makers about potential evacuation orders"* (Just Stop Oil, June 2022). Indeed, McKechnie argues that he chose this specific painting as a target because he had an emotional connection with it (Louis, 2024, see Appendix 6). As a result, the protest discourse juxtaposes the value of art with the necessity of environmental action.

To demonstrate the legitimacy of his action, one of the activists stated, *"Any good human would agree with trying to sustain life on Earth."* (Quinn, 2022). Nonetheless, external critics argue that this tactic may harm the credibility of the cause and delegitimize the act. The permanent damage to the painting's frame has added fuel to the fire of criticism concerning the endangerment of cultural heritage and the ethical implications of such vandalism. In that sense, the legal system responded by focusing on the illegality and irreversible damage caused by the protest, imposing legal consequences to deter similar actions. Public and media responses were mixed. Some supported the environmental message but criticized the method, while others

condemned both the message and the method. The media played a crucial role in disseminating the message and framing the protest. As one media outlet noted, “*Just Stop Oil eco zealots risk ten years in prison after targeting Van Gogh’s Peach Trees in Blossom in latest superglue stunt*” (Terry, June 2022).



The incident had significant immediate and mid to long-term impacts. Initially, it was reported that the 18th-century frame was damaged. However, the extent of the damage remains disputed. Some art restorers downplay the severity of the destruction and offer that any impact on the frame would go undetected but by a handful of professional experts. The legal repercussions imposed upon the activists, like their conviction for criminal damage, are moreover elements that give rise to public condemnation of these actions. The incident may have influenced public opinion and policy regarding environmental protection and potentially played a role in the success of the Just Stop Oil campaign. Conversely, the trial of the activists could help set precedents for the sentencing of what is considered as “*art vandalism*”, possibly leading to changes in the law. It may also have led to increased security measures in UK museums and galleries. What is more, the uncertainty surrounding the damage to the frame raises questions about the relevance of paintings as fragile targets for activists. It is interesting to note that this incident may have unintentionally raised the painting’s value. Francesca Cociani, defending the activists at Westminster Magistrates’ Court, questioned Karen Serres, a curator at the gallery, suggesting that “*it’s possible that this very painting has now increased in value because of the protest it was subject to by the defendants*” (Hennessey, November 2022).

To summarize, the Van Gogh Peach Trees in Blossom incident is a key case study to understand how artworks could be both a medium for activism and can go beyond the stage of simple support for activism, illustrating the message of environmental activists and offering the spectacle of a fragile ecosystem to be protected. Besides, the damage recognized by the court and asserted in the media tends to justify the appellation of “*art vandalism*” in the public sphere when most ecological activist actions in museums cause unambiguously no damage to the works. These consequences have tended to exacerbate criticism of the militant action and increase the judicial response to it. Paradoxically, the potential increase in value of Van Gogh’s painting after the happening of the work raises questions about how the art world perceives and values alterations or disruptions to artworks over time.

3. The BP Portrait Award Protest on October 20, 2019



Figure 8: Nicholls, H. (Photographer). (2019). One activist said: “It’s atrocious that BP can try to cover themselves up by investing in art” [Photograph]. *Reuters*.

The third case study regards the BP Portrait Award Protest on October 20, 2019, at the National Portrait Gallery (NPG) in London (see figure 8). Considered the most prestigious portraiture competition in the world, this prize was annually held at the National Portrait Gallery in London from 1980 on. First named the John Player Portrait Award, it became the British Petroleum Portrait Award after the company took over the sponsorship of the competition in 1989. After several waves of protest against this sponsorship, the prize stopped in 2020 and resumed in 2024 under the new sponsorship of the international law firm Herbert Smith Freehills. Although it happened before 2022 in 2019, the BP Portrait Award Protest interests me in this part since activists from various environmental groups took part in an artistic performance targeting British Petroleum’s funding of the award. This action’s link with art and museum institutions is particularly interesting.

The protagonists of the incidents are first activists from Extinction Rebellion with affiliated groups like BP or Not BP? and Culture Unstained. Extinction Rebellion is a global environmental movement founded in 2018 and known for its non-violent civil disobedience direct actions that aim at compelling governments to act on the climate emergency (Extinction Rebellion, 2024). The activist group BP or not BP? took also part in the protest. This network of activist-performers uses guerilla performance – which could be defined as “*political protest in which a group of activists perform satirical skits, sing songs, engage in playful pranks, etc. in the midst of a public event or activity*” (Webster’s New World College Dictionary, 2010) –

denounce BP's sponsorship of cultural institutions. Finally, the non-profit organization that aims to pressure cultural organizations to cease accepting funding from environmentally harmful industries Culture Unstained founded in 2016 also took part in the protest (Culture Unstained, 2024). *De facto*, these three groups have become famous for their direct and symbolic actions notably targeting cultural institutions. What is interesting in this case, is that the image of the groups outshone the individual names of the activists performing – for some half-naked – in the National Portrait Gallery. The groups also pooled their strengths to take charge of the various dimensions of the action. Indeed, on the afternoon of October 20, 2019, protestors staged a performance piece titled “Crude Truth” in the main hall of the Ondaatje Wing of the National Portrait Gallery (Busby October 2019). During this performance, three semi-naked activists assumed the fetal position on a plastic sheet while others poured fake oil over their bodies. Meanwhile, Eden Rickson delivered a poem calling on arts organizations to sever ties with companies “*funding extinction*” (Gant, October 2019) – in which she notably recited “*Who will there be left to see, who will there be left to paint, if we have no earth and no people?*”; “*We cannot be artists on a dead planet. Oil means the end, but art means the beginning.*” (Busby, October 2019). Besides, activists sang “NPG, drop BP” and distributed literature criticizing BP's environmental record. The National Portrait Gallery also took a great role both because the funding for the prize it was organizing was targeted, but also because of its handling of the incident and its communication. This institution hosted the BP Award. The institution's communication evolved before, during, and after the incident, from the defense of the partnership to its conclusion, showing that it was not without consequences (Taylor, June 2019). Moreover, there was no interference from the gallery staff during the protest, although they briefly closed the doors to the room. Security arrived after the protestors had already left, and the activists were not arrested. Through its partnership, its influence on the art world, and its communication over the event, the multinational oil and gas company British Petroleum must also be seen as a player in this incident. The Climate Accountability Institute's 2019 dataset reveals that BP ranks 6th among the top 20 companies contributing to the climate crisis. Since 1965, these companies have collectively emitted 480 billion tonnes of CO₂ and methane, accounting for 35% of global fossil fuel and cement emissions, which total 1.35 trillion tonnes of CO₂ equivalent (Climate Accountability Institute, October 2019). Therefore, BP is the regular target of environmental groups and movements for its climaticide activities (Stallard and Thomas, April 2023). What is more, the company is engaged in various partnerships with major cultural institutions like the British Museum which received in April 2023 one of the largest donations in the UK cultural sector's history (Brown, December 2023), or the London

Science Museum and the Aberdeen Art Gallery. In a 2011 press release, the company wrote about its strategy towards British cultural institutions: *“Providing secure funding and building long-term relationships with partner institutions is a key approach in BP’s support of the arts and culture in the UK. This helps underpin the institutions’ long-term development of programs of exhibitions and performances, helping them to secure performers, artists and works of art well into the future”* (BP, December 2011). Finally, the public present in the museum is one of the protest’s key players. Here, the journalist Mattha Busby points out that the protest was met with applause from onlookers (Busby, October 2019).

Through shocking scenography and the use of poems, activists and performers called for the end of the sponsorship of the Portrait Award by the fossil fuel company. Instead, they ask the National Portrait Gallery and the major British cultural institutions to seek funding from more ethical sources. They argued that BP’s sponsorship of the arts serves as a form of art washing – it involves contributors disguising their unethical wealth-generating activities, such as earnings from war, governmental aggression, and environmental degradation, in order to appear like philanthropists (Evan, 2015) –, providing the company with a veneer of social responsibility while it continues environmentally damaging operations. According to Mel Evans, *“Oil companies claim affection for the arts because doing so establishes their position as heroes rather than parasites”* (Evans, 2015, p. 69). Besides, its aim was to draw attention to the activities of the various groups taking part in the event. This action fits well into the classification presented earlier. Unambiguously, this happening is related to the sources of funding of museums. Denouncing the direct complicity of the art world with the carbon economy, activists ask cultural institutions to make ecological commitments. Additionally, the use of dramatic scenography and poetic performances not only serves as a method of protest but also contributes to reshaping public perception and narrative regarding the role of fossil fuel companies in cultural sponsorship. This aspect thus corresponds with the second level of the classification. Ultimately, if this action isn’t directly related to a specific work of art, it takes advantage of the notoriety of the British National Gallery Portrait Award, which to some extent ties in with the first level of the classification.

The protest elicited varied responses and had significant impacts on the institution and on the art worlds in general. Prior to this protest, leading artists already called on the National Portrait Gallery to end its partnership with BP, which shows that the controversy was already strong by then. Yet, the gallery stated: *“The sponsorship of the portrait award by BP is now in its 30th year and this support directly encourages the work of talented artists and helps gain*

wider recognition for them and enables free admission for the public, over 275,000 visitors in London last year,”. They add that: “since 2010 BP has also given special support to the BP portrait award: next-generation program which encourages 14 to 21-year-olds to become involved in painted portraiture.” (Taylor, June 2019). After this wave of protest, the gallery issued a statement acknowledging the debate around BP’s sponsorship, emphasizing BP’s role in supporting the arts and providing free admission to the exhibition (Busby, October 2019). Yet, concerned that his reputation might be further damaged, the National Portrait Gallery ended its partnership with BP in February 2022 (Villa, November 2023). In reaction to the protest, the company reaffirmed its commitment to the arts and to a “low-carbon future”, but it did not respond to the activist groups (Green, 2019). The protest raised significant public awareness about the political and ethical issues of some sponsorship in the arts and influenced other institutions like the Royal Shakespeare Company and Tate to end their BP sponsorships (Busby, 2019). In the same vein as the other case studies, this action led to mixed responses.

The BP Portrait Award performative protest had major consequences, marking a turning point in the debate on sponsorship for cultural institutions. This action – among others – incentivized major cultural institutions to get out of their alleged neutrality, and re-evaluate their sponsorship agreements, which led to a wave of institutional change across the sector. *De facto*, the protest reinforced the need for cultural institutions to adopt more sustainable and ethically aligned funding practices.

4. Comparing and Discussing Case Studies

The three events I have attempted to analyze cover a wide range of issues and modus operandi for environmental activism in museums. Although these actions cannot be studied in isolation, because they are part of wider campaigns, they can be used to dissect this type of protest and assess their effectiveness.

Regarding the actors and used methods, it is relevant to bring up that the Mona Lisa and Van Gogh Peach Trees in Blossom incidents were perpetrated in very similar ways because they were carried out by two branches of the A22 Network: activists in pairs targeting high-profile paintings shown in renowned museums, carrying out direct actions with the use of glue or soup, and declaiming similar speeches pointing at the responsibility of the governments to take action on social, economic and ecological issues. These acts were characterized by their

strategic execution: the activists aimed to attract significant media attention and amplify their message by choosing iconic artworks displayed in world-famous institutions. This approach underscores a pattern within the Network A22, where well-coordinated, high-visibility actions are employed to maximize impact and public discourse. Meanwhile, the BP Portrait Award protest involved more groups, and methods used by activists involved more artistic aspects – a performance and a poem. All three actions are deliberately shocking because they attack works of art, at least symbolically, and through the shocking scenography of half-naked activists huddled over themselves covered in a black liquid reminiscent of oil. These actions dramatize their struggle and provide powerful images for the media, which cannot leave anyone indifferent.

The motivations of the activists then differ slightly from one incident to another since the Peach Tree in Blossom incident aimed to draw attention to the climate crisis whereas the Mona Lisa focus was on food insecurity. Finally, the activists behind the BP Portrait Award incident criticized the financing of culture by the carbon economy and the issue of art washing. These events also combine the levels of the classification in various ways. The Mona Lisa protest mobilizes only the first level of the categorization of actions that take advantage of the notoriety of a work of art, an event, or a museum. Then, the Peach Tree in Blossom action leverages both the first and second levels of the classification – on actions related to art and its representations that act on representations and imaginations. Finally, the BP Portrait Award protest illustrates the second and third level of the categorization – on the actions related to the sources of funding for museums and art that denounce the direct complicity of the art world with the carbon economy and ask cultural institutions to make ecological commitments –, and to some extent the first level as well.

What is more, the first two incidents had legal repercussions for the activists, albeit of a different nature and scope, whereas the BP Award protesters were not arrested. At the level of cultural institutions, the first two cases did not lead to a radical change in the policies of the Courtauld Gallery and the Louvre in the activists' direction. In contrast, the third incident triggered a significant and concrete change: the gallery finally decided to end its sponsorship contract with BP for the Portrait Prize. Nevertheless, it's worth mentioning that each of these protests attracted considerable media attention, helping to give activists a platform to talk about their demands.

The three case studies give possible answers to the first research question since they

show how recent incidents of ecological activism in museums can be characterized as radical actions with varying degrees of artistic dimension. The Van Gogh's *Peach Trees* and the *Mona Lisa* protests both demonstrate that these actions are driven more by the activists' goals of getting a platform to raise awareness about climate change and food insecurity rather than a desire to reflect on art, although art plays a greater role in the incident at the Courtauld Gallery. In these cases, art is used to amplify the protest's message. Besides, the BP Portrait Award protest uses performative art and poetry to represent the problem of oil companies and draw attention to corporate sponsorship issues. This reveals that artistic dimensions exist but are secondary to the activists' main objectives.

In addition, each of the cases highlights a systematic effort that attempts to enhance the effectiveness of the activists' current campaigns in terms of visibility and effect. Just Stop Oil and Riposte Alimentaire both took use of the high-profile nature of their targets to maximize the media coverage of their actions. Public and media reactions to these acts concerning the possible damage to the credibility of the cause due to the endangerment of works of art and the perceived illegitimacy of the targets reflect the skepticism towards these tactics. Despite these criticisms, the protests succeeded in drawing international attention to environmental issues – since they were reported by media from different countries. The BP Portrait Award protest further illustrates this dynamic, as its performative elements aimed to provoke a reaction and challenge institutional sponsorship practices. Thus, it has contributed to public discussion and changes in sponsorship policies.

In substance, a comparison of the three case studies stresses the diversity of strategies and impacts of environmental activism in museums. All three incidents illustrate a pattern of high-profile disruptive actions, designed to maximize media coverage and public attention to environmental issues, while their artistic dimensions are secondary to their activist aims. Assessing the effectiveness of the tactics used in the three case studies is complex, as the immediate impact of individual events can be challenging to quantify. The damage inflicted on the Van Gogh painting's frame, the legal repercussions faced by activists, and the criticisms from the art world may have diminished the perceived efficacy of these actions. On the other hand, the political and media coverage and the institutional decision of the National Portrait Gallery can be seen as concrete proof of the success of these actions.

B) Strategic Disruption and Public Impact: How Activists Leverage Media Potential



1. Creating Buzz: Activists' Strategic Use of the Media

After the COVID-19 pandemic, radical ecological activism has increasingly focused on highly mediatized disruptive action to garner international attention – unlike the previous mass mobilization efforts led by groups such as Fridays for Future (Bitschnau, 2023).

This shift towards provocative tactics – such as road blockades and art disruption – shows that activists have become more and more aware of how the media amplification works. They understand that, to capture public attention their actions must be visible and controversial. Indeed, in a market where media tend to favor professional, formalized groups that use routine advocacy tactics as demonstrated by Andrew and Caren (2010), more confrontational and novel approaches may struggle to gain attention. What is more, Shoemaker (1982) discusses how media can delegitimize certain political groups by portraying them as ridiculous or eccentric, thus supporting centrist parties at the expense of more radical ideas. This suggests that while media attention is crucial for visibility, it can also shape public perceptions in ways that may not always align with the activists' goals. In this framework, radical eco-activists have concluded that they need to craft actions that are strategically designed to engage media outlets and sustain public interest. Riposte Alimentaire has thus developed “*high media profile actions*” – seen as more efficient than traditional means of activism like petitions or press releases. Rachel explains: “*we aim to create a media buzz with actions like these so that we can explain the action and talk about our demands in the media. It's a means to achieve visibility and communicate our message to a broader audience.*” (Rachel, 2024, see Appendix 5, p. 149).

Art disruption appears to be one of the most effective strategies they have developed. Louis acknowledges that, although he has taken part in a variety of actions – such as petrol station sabotage, road blockades, or oil terminal disruption – he finds the disruption of cultural icons particularly efficient because it creates lasting images that resonate with the public. The activist considers that the shock value of these actions strongly amplifies their message, making them more impactful than other forms of activism he has undertaken. What is also interesting about art disruption actions is that they originally create a false narrative of permanent damage, only to later reveal that the artwork was protected, thereby flipping the public narrative and

maintaining the media's focus. Louis states, *"It requires the action to be controversial, at the very least in the UK, where we have the least free press for all of Europe. And so, we needed to do something, an action that half the country would love, and half the country would hate, but everybody would be shocked by"* (Louis, 2024, see Appendix 6, p. 164-165).

Rachel acknowledges that Riposte Alimentaire has never generated a *"good buzz"*. But for her, a bad buzz is simply evidence that their strategy is working. This is consistent with the concept of the radical flank effect (Simpson et al., 2022), where public misperceptions and controversy are seen as acceptable trade-offs for advancing the cause. Additionally, she points out that the intensity of the repression could be an indicator of the effectiveness of the activism itself: *"The increased repression is often a sign that victory is approaching; we know that. It's terrible to think that even the media or political leaders react immediately to these types of actions. The fact that these actions generate such a strong response shows that they are effective"* (Rachel, 2024, see Appendix 5, p. 154).

2. Digital Platforms and Traditional Media: A Dual Approach

In the digital age, activists employ both digital platforms and traditional media outlets to increase their impact. This dual approach has several implications for how activist messages are communicated, interpreted, and eventually influence public opinion and political decision-makers.

New media, or social media platforms, have become effective instruments for influencing public opinion, especially among younger generations (Calibeo, 2024). With the use of these platforms, activists can work globally, get their message in front of big audiences, and bypass traditional gatekeepers. The immediacy and visual nature of social media make it an ideal medium for staging and disseminating images and videos of activist actions, which are often designed to shock and provoke a strong emotional response (Van Laer & Van Aelst, 2010). In that matter, Lorry brings to light that the power of art disruption actions lies in their ability to create visually compelling and emotionally charged images that could be easily communicated on social media (Lorry, 2024, see Appendix 3). Yet, social media's potential for facilitating collective action can be double-edged. While it makes it easier to organize and share information, it can also result in a superficial engagement with the ecological and social issues, and *in fine* reduce the long-term political impact of activist actions. Additionally, activists must

continually modify their tactics to preserve their relevance and efficacy due to the fast-changing nature of digital platforms (Van Laer and Van Aelst, 2010). It must also be kept in mind that if, at first glance, it seems that activists have understood the benefits of social networking, Louis reminds me that while social media holds the potential to rival traditional media in influencing public consciousness, activists often struggle to utilize these platforms effectively due to the rapidly changing nature of social media algorithms and the emergence of new platforms (Louis, 2024, see Appendix 6). In addition, Rachel notes that social media dynamics also introduce vulnerabilities at personal and organizational levels, such as potential harassment of activists (Rachel, 2024, see Appendix 5). Therefore, as presented by Dumitrica and Felt in their article, the barriers to digitally mediated mobilization could be technological, interactional, and personal (2019).

Digital platforms are also central to the organization and coordination of activist groups. Platforms, such as Signal and Telegram, are chosen by activists because they promise to provide secure communication channels that help activists plan actions with greater efficiency and discretion. Jasper puts forward how these tools are central to contemporary activism, helping with everything from the action's logistics to the in-the-moment coordination required for its effectiveness. (Jasper, 2024, see Appendix 7). The use of digital platforms allows for decentralized organization, making it possible for activists to operate across different regions and even countries.

New and traditional media have distinct stakes and impacts for radical activists (Hunt & Gruszczynski, 2019), though playing complementary roles in shaping public opinion. Despite the growing influence of social media, traditional media – such as print, television, and online journalism – continue to play an important role in shaping public opinion, particularly among older people. According to a 2022 Eurobarometer survey, 75% of participants cited television as their major information source, followed by 43% who regularly accessed information on websites and 39% who mostly listened to the radio. Because of this, traditional media frequently reaches a larger audience and is considered more reliable by some demographic groups. Nevertheless, Louis points out that traditional media tend to focus on aspects of activist actions that may cause negative reactions from the public, presenting these acts frequently in a way that, rather than communicating the activists' intended message, serves to further prejudices (Louis, 2024, see Appendix 6). This selective coverage – often considered a “*media bias*” (Rodrigo-Ginés, Carrillo-de-Albornoz, and Plaza, 2023) – stresses the imperative for activists

to understand and engage strategically with both traditional and digital media to ensure that their message is communicated effectively.



3. The Risk of Public Alienation: The Double-Edged Impact of Radical Strategies

If radical eco-activists feel that their first challenge is not to be understood and supported by the public, the question of public reaction to highly publicized radical actions needs to be examined in depth for the sake of accuracy. This section concerns the risks of alienating the public through militant action.

The public reaction to radical tactics is multilayered and often contradictory, which suggests deep-seated tensions between the goals of activists and the values of those they aim to persuade. In their 2020 article, Feinberg, Willer, and Kovacheff study how radical protest actions – such as road blockade, art disruption or vandalism – can backfire by reducing public support for the cause, as these actions are often seen as immoral or overly disruptive, which alienates potential supporters. This perception of immorality and harm can lead observers to distance themselves from the cause and become less inclined to join or support it. This dynamic creates what the article authors call an “*activist’s dilemma*” because the actions that are intended to draw attention and exert pressure can simultaneously undermine public support (Feinberg, Willer, and Kovacheff, 2020). For example, the discourse of Véronique – a 64-year-old restorer of painted works of art – demonstrates well the public’s complex relationship with such actions. Despite understanding the context and explanations provided by activists, Véronique characterizes several times their actions as “*vandalism*”, which shows a significant disconnect between the activists’ intentions and public perception. She states: “*I’m sorry, but for me, I just can’t get past it; for me, it’s really vandalism*” (Véronique, 2024, see Appendix 4, p. 138). Véronique moreover acknowledges the strength of media in shaping public discourses – and, as Louis noted, the mainstream media tend to cover radical militant actions in ways that might discredit them (Louis, 2024, see Appendix 6). Thus, the restorer’s reaction is emblematic of the general climate of public opinion, where the shock value of such actions can eclipse the intended message, leading to a focus on the disruption rather than the cause.

Furthermore, in his analysis of the strategies mobilized by radical climate activists post COVID-19, Bitschnau (2024) critically evaluates the approach of pursuing attention at all costs.

He maintains that even though these strategies might bring about instant visibility, they frequently fail to create significant or long-lasting change. According to the author, the temporary nature of public interest and media attention diminishes the impact of such radical activities and may decrease their perceived relevance. This analysis echoes Véronique's concerns because she wonders if such acts actually help the cause or just drive away possible supporters. One of the key contributions of Bitschnau's work is also the exploration of the concept of reactance, which refers to the public's resistance to being forced to adopt certain beliefs or behaviors. The author stresses how radical activism can cause reactance among the public. This resistance arises because some feel that their personal freedoms are threatened, hence people would start rejecting both the activists and their cause (Bitschnau, 2024). This concept of reactance could help understand why even those who could have sympathized with the cause could be turned off by the methods used.

This contradictory dynamic between public attention and alienation is further illustrated by the reinforcement of security following activist actions in museums. Astrid, a communications head at a German museum, explains that the increased security measures affect the visitor experience and create tensions between museums and the public.

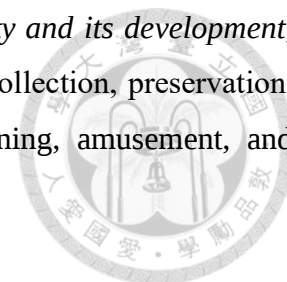
In conclusion, the mixed reactions to high media profile actions – from outright rejection and characterization as vandalism to reluctant acceptance of the need for such tactics – emphasize the double-edged nature of these strategies.

C)The Role of Museums in Mitigation and Preservation: Responses and Communication from Cultural Institutions

1. Museum Missions: Between Preservation of Cultural Heritage and the Quest for Neutrality

For UNESCO, museums are essential to the preservation of global cultural heritage since they constitute sites for social cohesion, learning, intercultural exchange, and cultural transmission. The organization emphasizes that museums have a critical role in preserving the material and immaterial records of human cultures and nature, but they also have a responsibility to safeguard and promote cultural and natural diversity. This guarantees that cultural heritage is conserved, studied, and transmitted to future generations. Museums are

described as “*permanent non-profit institutions at the service of society and its development, open to the public*” (UNESCO, 2015) whose main functions are the collection, preservation, study, and exhibition of cultural artifacts for the purposes of learning, amusement, and education.

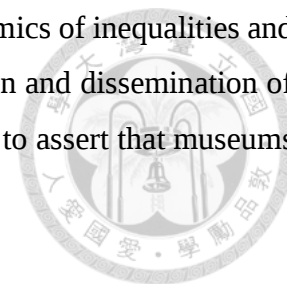


The main functions of museums are also characterized by the International Council of Museums which is “*an international organization of museums and museum professionals which is committed to the research, conservation, continuation and communication to society of the world’s natural and cultural heritage, present and future, tangible and intangible*” (ICOM, 2024). The head of Press and Communication for a German museum Astrid declares in that matter: “*The responsibility of museums is according to the ICOM definition and, according to their understanding, to protect and to preserve artworks. So, it doesn’t really go along with our mission what activists do and did in museums.*” (Astrid, 2024, see Appendix 2, p. 109).

That said, Zhang provides an interesting work that goes against the traditional approach of museums’ role. The scholar stresses that conventional top-down approaches, like those supported by UNESCO, frequently lead to a rigid understanding that may overlook that cultural values are always changing. Other forms of cultural expression that do not properly fit into these specified categories may be marginalized by this vision of cultural institutions. The author proposes that heritage should no longer be seen as a set legacy that needs to be passively preserved for future generations, but rather as a process of ongoing interaction and reevaluation. Heritage should be recognized as a dynamic and inclusive process of preservation (Zhang, 2022).

“*We as museums we try to not be political in the sense of supporting any political messages but being for a democracy within society. [...] Museums are not in the tradition of demonstrating or being strongly political. [...] We discuss and we invite people to talk, but museums are much more, on an intellectual level, discussing problems, but not on this activist level.*” (Astrid, 2024, see Appendix 2, p. 109-110). I now bring up a major topic for the discussion on museums’ roles thanks to this comment: the subject of museum neutrality. It can be summed up as the notion that museums provide knowledge objectively while upholding an authoritative position free from prejudice, fads, and special interest group influence (Janes and Sandell, 2019). While she presents the role of museums as mediators who do not take part in political battles, it would nevertheless seem that museums are not disconnected from the social,

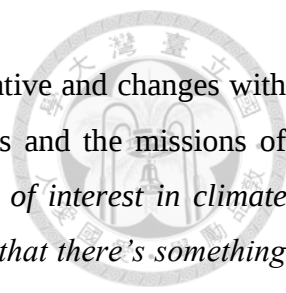
economic and political world and that they remain involved in the dynamics of inequalities and power relations, since cultural institutions play a role in the construction and dissemination of dominant social narratives (Sandell, 2002). Thus, it seems complicated to assert that museums are neutral, even if they tend to be.



The controversy surrounding the neutrality of museums has intensified in recent years, not least because museums are increasingly dependent on private and corporate funding – which poses the risk of certain companies, such as BP, influencing the cultural sector in a way that *de facto* contradicts this idea of neutrality. Pittas (2023) explains that the current museum governance model has been associated with what some academics refer to as a “*post-democratic order*”, in which the corporate elite rules and real political participation are suppressed. Further, museums are not static organizations; rather, they are made up of a variety of conflicting hegemonic projects and interests, such as those of the public, artists, staff, and leadership. Because of their inherent diversity, museums could be central venues for social discourse and political protest (Mouffe, 2007), though it necessitates a large discussion on the matters of cultural heritage and neutrality.

2. Evolving Dynamics and Tensions Between Activism and Core Museum Missions

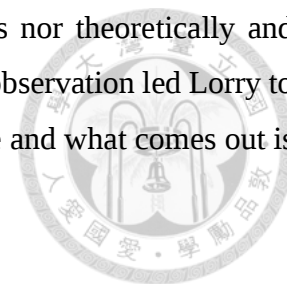
The role of museums in contemporary society has evolved, with some scholars emphasizing the need for them to act as active participants in social and political discourse. According to Özer Sarı and Nazlı (2018), museums are responsible for encouraging creativity and supporting cultural and creative industries. Therefore, they contribute to the material and cultural well-being of citizens worldwide. There is a growing emphasis on bringing people closer to museums through education and community involvement. Durgun for instance states, in a paper that discusses the issue of protest for museums, that: “*ICOM’s new definition of a museum underlines the importance of ethics, communities, accessibility, inclusivity, diversity, and sustainability. Slowly, more museums are embracing “interventions” into their exhibits, bringing in voices that have been excluded from museum spaces*” (Durgun, 2023, p. 23). To put it differently, museums are increasingly shifting from their primary mission of conservation and protection of cultural heritage to incorporating general social and political concerns (Özer Sarı and Nazlı, 2018). In that matter, Stucki (2022) discusses the importance of democratizing art institutions and engaging in socially and politically active practices.



Yet, interest in topics like climate change is growing. Still, it is relative and changes with society. Astrid expresses well this complex link between social issues and the missions of cultural institutions: *“I think museums are a placeholder for the lack of interest in climate change. And I think in the way, I understand the idea, it’s more to say that there’s something which we protect more, but which is not the world we live on”* (Astrid, 2024, see Appendix 2). Lorry notes that presenting radical ideas inside the institutional framework of museums can be difficult since it frequently results in the sanitization of content to fit the institution’s public image. More generally, the institutionalization of art is seen by some as detrimental to its transgressive nature. The French artist’s agent, art critic, and social media content creator argues, *“An artwork becomes “dead” once it enters a museum. In other words, as soon as an artwork or a concept is institutionalized, it loses its ability to transgress or bring something truly new, because it’s now embedded in the collective unconscious and accessible to everyone”* (Lorry, 2024, see Appendix 3, p. 120). This viewpoint calls into question whether museums are effective settings for social change and whether other locations might be more appropriate.

What is more, tensions arise between ecological activists and museums when activist actions target cultural institutions. Museums, which prioritize their core missions of heritage conservation and artistic and cultural education, often perceive such actions as a threat to their efforts. When activists engage in acts of art disruption or vandalism in museums, they promote a counter-hegemonic discourse that opposes, among other things, the very mission of museums. From a technical and conservation point of view, art restorer Véronique expresses unease about militant actions targeting works of art on conservation efforts, noting: *“Honestly, I don’t understand these actions. Even if it only affects the glass, it’s still damaging to the preservation efforts of cultural heritage. [...] Any intervention on a painting has an effect on it. Even removing a little yellowing or natural dirt has an impact, it’s not nothing”* (Véronique, 2024, see Appendix 4, p. 137). This conflict between activism and conservation has led to widespread condemnation of what they consider to be activist “attacks” on artworks from museum professionals, as evidenced by the open letter signed by 92 Museum Directors worldwide in November 2022, organized by the International Council of Museums (ICOM). Referring to this letter, Astrid – whose museum, where she is Head of Press and Communications, is one of the signatories – asserts: *“I think it’s important for museums to declare that they are not fond of vandalism within museums, no matter for what reason there is vandalism within the museum. Even if the idea behind this action is a good one.”* (Astrid, 2024, see Appendix 2, p. 113).

Consequently, museums are neither completely open to militant ideas nor theoretically and physically capable of accepting militant action within their walls. This observation led Lorry to believe that activism must go beyond museums, as what happens inside and what comes out is often transformed and controlled (Lorry, 2024, see Appendix 3).



3. Museums' Dilemma Between Security and Engagement in Response to Eco-Activism

In recent years, however, museums have come under the crossfire of eco-activism. Pittas postulates that when museums are confronted with activism, they often face a “*decision dilemma*”. To avoid damage to their reputations, institutions have to choose between addressing activists' demands and strengthening the security of their collections (Pittas, 2023). Responses of museums to activism could be sorted into two categories: reactionary measures like the repression of activists and tightening security, and more proactive strategies that involve engagement with the activist's discourse.

The institutions' first and most direct response to activists' protests of art disruption is to implement reactionary measures. Their purpose is to preserve public order and safeguard their collections. Based on Durgun's work (2023), protests in museums destabilize the status quo and the “*normal*” functioning of cultural institutions. Museum authorities may make severe decisions when facing actions of disruptions – with activists facing more or less severe charges ranging from fines to prison sentences (Small, July 2023). Yet, it must be noted that museums don't respond with force systematically – in cases like the BP Award protest, security services do not intervene during the actions. However, repressive measures differ depending on the kind of activism. According to Hiatt et al. (2015), museums may decide to increase security or make policy changes in response to formal forms of activism such as petitions. In contrast, more direct actions, such as vandalism or disruption, may force museums to make public statements or engage in external framing that aims to mitigate reputational damage. This dichotomy doesn't seem to take proper account of the new features of museum activism, but it remains interesting to add to that analysis.

In the context of the current wave of eco-activism in museums, cultural institutions have moreover increased their security expenses. For example, following an incident in November 2022 where activists sprayed a Gustav Klimt painting with black liquid, the Leopold Museum in Vienna has seen a rise in operating expenses of more than \$40,000 due to the hiring of

additional staff and the implementation of new security measures (Small, July 2023). These measures are criticized because they negatively impact the visitor experience. Véronique gives her opinion on that matter: *“I think it’s a shame to add security around artworks because it ruins the perspective when you visit an exhibition. It’s unfortunate that people still manage to get through despite these measures”* (Véronique, 2024, see Appendix 4, p. 138). This quote highlights the tension that exists between the desire to preserve artworks and the goal of giving the public access to an open environment, where people can best experience the works. It should be mentioned that a number of museums, such as the Louvre and the British National Gallery, have been cautious when talking about their safety procedures and frequently decline to speak in public about their strategies to avoid compromising the safety of their collections. This cautious stance reflects a broader trend among institutions to prioritize the protection of their collections over engaging with the public about activism.

Some institutions have also reacted more proactively to the actions of activists in museums. This interplay represents the capacity of museums to function as discussion platforms and areas of cooperation. Durgun (2023) considers that museums should embrace their role as platforms for public discourse, particularly in the case of issues like climate change. She suggests that museums could integrate activist perspectives into their programs thereby transforming protest into a form of collaboration. The director of the Climate Museum, Miranda Massie, adds: *“If museums want to protect themselves against these interventions, then they can do that very effectively by actively engaging with the climate crisis in their programming”* (Funes, July 2023). This approach suggests that by aligning themselves with activists’ concerns, museums may not only reduce the risk of being targeted by disruptive art actions but also enhance their relevance in contemporary society.

Reputation management (Pittas, 2023) is another core aspect of how museums respond to activism with a view to strategically navigate between preserving their authority and adapting to the social and political pressures exerted by activist movements. Hiatt et al. (2015) emphasize the value of press releases and public statements, which portray museums’ actions in a favorable light and often align them with the values advocated by activists. In that matter, Astrid explains: *“I think it’s important to distinguish between institutions that are supportive but unhappy with the execution and those that are not behind the initiative at all”* (Astrid, 2024, see Appendix 2, p. 113). This tactic not only serves to protect the institution’s reputation but can also position the museum as a proactive player in environmental policy. The case of the BP Award Protest illustrates this dynamic well. Faced with simultaneous pressures from public opinion and direct

activist actions, museums in the same way as the National Portrait Gallery were driven to engage in more open dialogue about the ecological implications of their partnerships.

Finally, museums are faced with a dilemma while they attempt to reconcile the preservation of cultural heritage with the increasing need for social and political engagement.

D) Transnational Resonance of Local Incidents of Eco-Activism in Museums

1. The A22 Network and its Role in the Cross-Border Coordination of Art Disruption Actions

Dealing with the transnational issue that is environmental degradation, and against entities that operate across borders, such as multinational corporations and international institutions, eco-activists understand the necessity to operate globally. The ability of the climate justice movement to bring different social groups together around a shared cause is a crucial element in incorporating local actions into a global narrative, thereby enhancing the interdependence and assets of environmental struggles across the globe (Almeida, 2019).

Since 2022, the A22 Network has been a key player in the transnational coordination of art disruption acts – and radical eco-activists' actions in general –, bringing together eco-activist groups from different countries in a shared effort to increase the effectiveness of their campaigns. The Riposte Alimentaire activist Rachel explains that weekly meetings are held to connect representatives from various countries in order to make sure that all the local branches are aligned in their philosophy and efforts. She adds: *“This regular communication is key to maintaining the strength and unity of our network.”* (Rachel, 2024, see Appendix 5, p. 157). The use of digital communications tools appears as an indispensable part of their cooperation. Indeed, Vizzoto et al., develop the necessity of effective information flow and strong relationships within transnational advocacy networks for them to be efficient (Vizzoto et al., 2021).

Then, the strength of the actions carried out by the activists from the A22 Network lies in their similarity in different regions. Especially in Western countries, the same tactics are employed to send a unified message of solidarity and collective struggle. Rachel describes how

eco-activist groups in various countries, such as Germany, Italy, and the United States, have coordinated actions on statues and other cultural symbols in 2022, thus showing the network's ability to synchronize efforts across time zones and geographical boundaries (Rachel, 2024, see Appendix 5). This well-coordinated campaign illustrates the A22 Network's strength in advancing a global climate justice agenda through the incorporation of small-scale protests into a transnational campaign.

Besides, the fact that the A22 network groups target world-famous works and heritage sites (Davatkhah, 2024) reinforces the strategic dimension of this transnational coordination. Taking the example of the Just Stop Oil action on Van Gogh's "*Sunflowers*", Lorry explains that targeting such globally significant symbols generates a powerful reaction that transcends local contexts and enhances the efficacy of art disruption tactics (Lorry, 2024, see Appendix 3).

In other words, the A22 network relies on local groups, tactics, and shared symbols to lead an international campaign of civil resistance. As claimed by Rachel, *"I find it powerful that the same types of actions are being carried out by eco-activist groups around the world, especially in Western countries. It shows the strength of the A22 network in promoting these actions globally. It's a strong message that we are all united in this struggle."* (Rachel, 2024, see Appendix 5, p. 158).

2. Local Contexts and the Differential Impact of Transnational Tactics

The global reach of the A22 Network is defined by its adaptability to varied local settings, rather than a standard approach. Each country in the network has distinct environmental and social concerns that require customized approaches to effectively address them. Because of this diversity, specific concerns in France like building renovation and food security, can be understood in relation to more general environmental issues, like the struggle against the oil and polluting industries. This strategic framework testifies to the network's ability to adapt. The Just Stop Oil Activist Louis ensures: *"This fundamental idea, driving every group in the A22 Network, is picking the demand which will be most strategically effective for getting the effective required action taken to reduce the damage from the climate emergency the fastest [...] But the demand was picked strategically not because of true intersectionality. Now, this is true in every single group in the A22 Network. This is not said publicly."* (Louis, 2024, see Appendix 6, p. 173).

However, there are additional variables than demands that may impact both the shaping of strategies and their consequences in specific contexts. The strategies are also introduced throughout all A22 Network groups with respect to the political and legal framework of each country. The cultural significance of certain symbols or actions can further influence the strategies. In the case of Stonehenge, the historical significance of the 5,000-year-old site gave the protest organized by Just Stop Oil a particular resonance (see figure 9). The famous stones of Stonehenge were doused with orange corn flour in June 2024. Because of the site's cultural and historical significance, the protest caused a large opposition, with opponents pointing out the necessity of shielding such heritage from harm in all forms (Kerr, 2024). This reaction demonstrates how the public's emotional response can be amplified by the cultural context. In addition, in a study comparing the role of social media, political efficacy, and environmental concern in influencing environmental activism in Canada, France, the United Kingdom, and the United States, Boulianne and Ohme find that while social media plays a key role in facilitating activism across countries, the influence of mobilization factors such as political efficacy and environmental concern depends on local contexts. For instance, in the UK, young people who express strong environmental concerns may not always participate in environmental marches because of a sense of precarity or a belief that the effectiveness of these demonstrations is declining (Boulianne & Ohme, 2022). Louis summarizes these factors of influence taken into account when fashioning strategies in a given society as “*pillars of power in each society*” (Louis, 2024, see Appendix 6, p. 166).



Figure 9: Just Stop Oil. (2024, June 19). Just Stop Oil protesters spraying orange powder on Stonehenge [Photograph]. Just Stop Oil.

3. Global Amplification: The Role of Media and International Organizations in the International Resonance of Local Activist Actions

Media coverage serves as a critical mechanism for amplifying local activist actions, which turns them into worldwide events that impact public opinion and the reactions of political, cultural, and economic authorities (Andrews and Caren, 2010). The media actively participates in this process by framing these protests and often changing their original message to suit larger narratives or commercial goals. The emphasis placed in mainstream articles on the potential damage caused to paints by soup or spray paint cans is one such example. Rachel emphasizes throughout the interview the considerable impact that media attention can have on the A22 Network's campaigns' worldwide awareness. She points out that some of Riposte Alimentaire's actions frequently receive more attention from the worldwide media than from the domestic one, reaching far beyond the boundaries of France where they took place. Rachel then reflects, *"There was a huge media buzz. It didn't necessarily work as well in France as it did internationally, and the articles were also interesting. And both times, the ministers in office at the time reacted"* (Rachel, 2024, see Appendix 5, p. 149). In addition to increasing the impact of these actions, widespread media attention also incites political figures who would otherwise have remained indifferent to react.

International organizations such as the International Council of Museums (ICOM) have also played a significant role in the global amplification of the recent incidents of eco-activism in museums. The open letter of the ICOM – the only global organization of museums and museum professionals – denouncing attacks in the name of climate change indicates that these actions have not only generated public attention but also major institutional responses.

In conclusion, the global reach of eco-activist actions demonstrates how effective international cooperation can be in advancing the climate justice agenda. The A22 Network's campaigns among others attract worldwide attention and reactions as they adapt strategies to local situations while keeping a consistent message. To go further, the second chapter provides possible answers to the second research question. Indeed, it supports that the scandalous dimension of the activists' strategy is amplified through strategic communication to maximize visibility and emotional impact at a global scale. Yet, I have balanced my findings, demonstrating that critics argue that such tactics may harm the credibility of the cause due to the perceived endangerment of cultural heritage and illegitimacy of the targets.

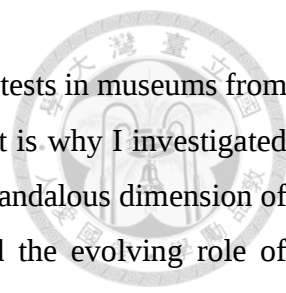
CONCLUSION



A) Summary of the Findings

This inquiry aimed to get a better understanding of the incidents of ecological activism in museums, particularly since the formation of the A22 Network.

I sought to characterize these events by examining the activist and artistic traditions from which they spring, their underlying motivations, and their relationship with traditional cultural institutions. This first discussion has provided useful contributions for the understanding of these actions, stating that they are a form of radical ecological activism, though holding an artistic dimension, their primary goal is to publicize denunciatory actions rather than to create art for art's sake. The concept of activism suggests an equality between the militant and artistic dimensions, which is not the case here. Moreover, these incidents help fashion a counter-hegemonic landscape. Yet naming these types of action with precision proved more complicated than it might seem. The concept "*art vandalism*", so widely used in the media and traditional institutions, doesn't seem appropriate at first, as it only poorly reflects two elements: firstly, the fact that most of the works targeted by activists are not damaged and that their aim is not to damage them; and secondly, the concept of vandalism does not allow to think about the artistic dimension of ecologists' protests in museums. In addition, the concept of activism seems relevant in the face of these limitations, but remains too broad, taking into account activities carried out by artists in institutional settings. Thus, this study has shown that the concept of "*art disruption*" mobilized by Just Stop Oil Activists (Louis, 2024, see Appendix 6) appears as an interesting alternative because it offers a relevant mix of performance and activism, highlighting a disruption of art exhibition spaces. This term better captures the unconventional aspect of militant action than activism. Nonetheless, it appears difficult to conclude on the use of a single term, as activism, art vandalism, and art disruption are all intended to focus on particular aspects of the incidents under study. Thus, art vandalism focuses on the risks posed by activists' actions on targeted works, while art disruption presents the activists' perspective on these acts, and activism integrates these actions into a continuum of artistic and activist more or less conventional manifestations.

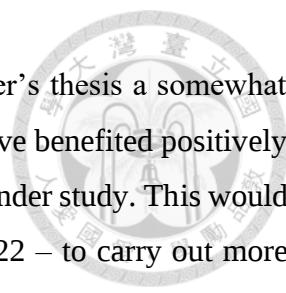


In the second chapter, I aimed to discuss the trend of eco-activist protests in museums from a rather empirical viewpoint, assessing the success of such events. That is why I investigated how these actions fit into strategic communication which exploits the scandalous dimension of these actions through the new and traditional media. Then, I studied the evolving role of museums – from the preservation of cultural heritage to educating the public – with the view to understanding why they condemn the activists’ actions. Ultimately, I prove that ecologist groups that engage in acts of art disruption effectively draw international attention to environmental issues notably since they coordinate globally and manage to adapt to local contexts. This analysis aimed to prove the interest of such actions but remained mitigated. Although these acts have reached a broad audience and have contributed to the success of some campaigns of the A22 Networks, they risk alienating the general public and have started to become routine, which *in fine* decreases their impacts. According to Louis: “*The art actions aren’t creative anymore. Everybody’s seen somebody glued to a painting now. Like doing it now is relatively pointless.*” (Louis, 2024, see Appendix 6)

De facto, this analysis has contributed to the broader discourse on the intersection of art and ecological activism, defining the boundaries of a particular protest method and exploring the tensions between cultural heritage preservation and environmental advocacy. The study thus provided a better understanding of the role of art in global environmental movements and, similarly, the role of ecological activism in art.

B) Discussion of the Findings

This study brought to light some interesting results, which often went beyond the hypotheses initially formulated for this research. My conclusions were not reached all at once, but took shape as I reviewed the literature, analyzed the case studies, and, above all, conducted the qualitative interviews. This multi-faceted approach to my research was thus decisive in reaching these conclusions. What was also interesting, given the topicality of the subject, was that some of the literature on the topic was published during my investigation, while new acts of museum activism were carried out – like the Stonehenge incident by Just Stop Oil activists last June (Boobyer and Harcombe, June 2024) –, which repeatedly challenged my arguments and analytical biases, or strengthened my results.



Nonetheless, it seems to me that these elements make my master's thesis a somewhat patchwork work that sometimes lacks a clear guideline and could have benefited positively from a little more hindsight on the social and political phenomenon under study. This would have helped me to have more data – and not just a database for 2022 – to carry out more precise data analysis. These pitfalls are linked to the fact that the trend studied is not yet complete and the time constraints of this study. Furthermore, my sample size remains insufficient and quite unequal because I was only able to interview six people, three from the activist milieu and three from the art world, with very partial access to the museum milieu. That is why my findings are hardly generalizable and it appears complicated to draw larger conclusions from them. My own bias as well as my lack of research experience may also limit the strength of my findings.

C) Outlook

This thesis sought to contribute to the literature on the intersection between social and ecological movements and art. It also holds practical implications, reflecting on the roles of museums, not only as custodians of cultural heritage but also as platforms for political discourse. In addition, I critically assessed the limits of activists' practices, suggesting that they should innovate in their methods of public engagement. Nevertheless, I only scratched the surface of several key issues that deserve further research.

First, this study has highlighted a tension between innovation and stagnation in activists' tactics. A strategy is only effective for a short period, which does not rule out art disruption. Research could focus specifically on the impact of repetitiveness on the effectiveness of political protest tactics. This would enable a deeper understanding of the mechanisms that make a tactic interesting in each context and that condition both the media attention of counter-hegemonic groups and public engagement.

Then, this thesis dealt with the counter-hegemonic dimension of activism, highlighting how social groups from the margins manage to subvert hegemonic norms of exclusion and domination through art. Yet, a further discussion could address the intersection of ecological activism with other social justice movements – such as racial justice, gender equality, and

indigenous rights –, that could reveal key dynamics in how the various movements influence each other. How do these intersections affect both the tactics employed and the public reception of campaigns? This may draw attention to connections between wider oppressive systems and ecological degradation.

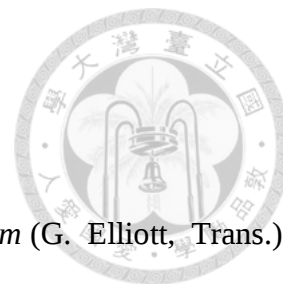


Similarly, while the question of the legal repercussions faced by eco-activists involved in disruptive artistic actions is a major element that has been considered, the complexity could be increased by a closer examination of the legal consequences faced by activists in different countries and legal systems. Such an examination could focus on how the legal framework varies between “*vandalism*” and “*activism*”, how jurisprudence has evolved about the beginning of the wave of eco-activism in museums, and what implications this has for future strategies.

The use of alternative research methods to the one selected for this dissertation, such as quantitative surveys, could also yield new and relevant results on the subject, which would be of interest to future research.

In conclusion, if disruptive artistic actions as such are part of a tactical trend that will fade and probably return in a few years’, the use of art seems essential for social movements in the current context of protean crises, in that it contributes to a struggle of the imaginary that subverts the dominant order.

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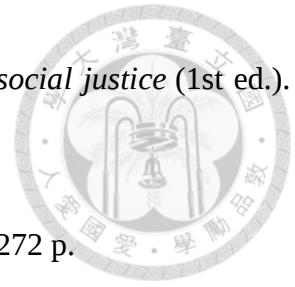
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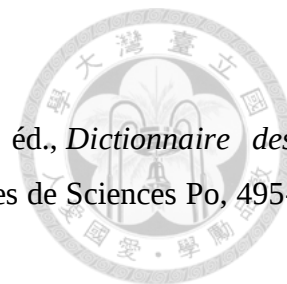
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F) Artificial Intelligence

I used AI models such as ChatGPT, Quillbot, Happy Scribe, and Grammarly to structure some ideas in the thesis, reformulate sentences, help me with the transcriptions, translate some elements in the interviews that were conducted in French and correct orthograph and grammar mistakes in my writing.

Appendix 1: Recapitulatory Interview Grid

The interview grid below summarizes the main themes, questions and objectives of the semi-structured interviews with members of the art world and activists. Obviously, this grid was created prior to the survey and remains indicative. Depending on the interviewees, certain questions were addressed, and others completely avoided.

Topic	Questions	Objective
<i>Socio-demographics of the Participant</i>	How old are you? Where do you come from? What is your profession and level of study?	To understand the socio-demographic background of the participant.
<i>Role in relation to activism in museums or related actions</i>	Can you describe your role within your organization (museum, art institution, activist group, etc.) or your activity in relations to the art worlds? What motivated you or your organization to engage (or not engage) with actions or discussions about activism targeting artworks?	To understand the participant's role, their motivations, and level of involvement in decisions or actions related to activism targeting art.
<i>Perspectives on Activism Targeting Artworks</i>	Do you perceive activism targeting artworks as having an artistic dimension? Why or why not? How would you categorize the nature of the tactics used by activists (artivism, vandalism, or something else)? What do you believe were the primary objectives of the activists?	To gather perspectives on the artistic or disruptive nature of activism targeting art, and to assess how the respondent classifies such actions.
<i>Impact on Institutions, Art, and Cultural Heritage</i>	What impact do you think incidents of activism targeting artworks have on museums, art institutions, or the broader art sector? Do you believe that activism targeting artworks affects the preservation of cultural	To explore the impact of activism on the institution, the art sector, and heritage preservation, as well as to understand the potential need for increased protection.

	and artistic heritage? If so, how? In your opinion, is there a need to strengthen the protection of artworks against potential damage caused by activist actions?	
<i>Communication and Media Strategies</i>	How does your organization (or group) communicate its stance on activism targeting art (which channels, which media, etc.)? What role do you believe media coverage plays in shaping public perception of such activist incidents?	To understand communication strategies used by the participant and their perception of the media's role in influencing public opinion.
<i>Public and Professional Perception</i>	What feedback has your organization received from the public or the professional community regarding the stance or actions taken in relation to activism targeting art? How do you think your position on activism (whether supportive or critical) affects relationships with the public, stakeholders, or your professional peers?	To assess the reaction of the public and professionals to the participant's stance or actions regarding art activism.
<i>Controversy and Criticisms</i>	How do you respond to criticisms or challenges regarding activism targeting artworks, such as the argument that these actions are counterproductive or damaging to cultural heritage? Do you think there is a misunderstanding between the art world and activists? Why or why not?	To explore how the participant responds to criticism and to uncover any perceived disconnect between activists and the broader art world.
<i>Outcomes</i>	What do you believe are the consequences of activism targeting artworks for the art world and society at large (repression, increase of security measures, engagement of museums with activists demands)? Are these actions overall effective?	To understand the participant's thought on the implications of art activism and the potential for collective responses.

	Do you believe a unified response from art institutions or society is needed to address such actions? If so, what would it look like?	
<i>Transnational Cooperation of Museums and Activists</i>	Have you observed or been influenced by activist actions targeting artworks in other countries? Do you believe that international visibility of these actions strengthens the climate or activist movement globally? How does this impact local actions or strategies? Does the A22 network play a role in defining activist tactics internationally? If so, how does this translate into the actions you undertake? How do you see the role of international museum organizations, such as the International Council of Museums (ICOM), in promoting a collective response to activism targeting works of art?	To understand the role of transnational cooperation in the development of activist strategies targeting works of art, and the transnational response of cultural institutions.

Appendix 2: Astrid's Interview Transcript



Date: August 5th, 2024

Duration: 33 minutes

Place: Online with zoom

Interviewee: Astrid, 40-50 (the interviewee and the institution where she is working in had been anonymized at the interviewee's request and an age-range has been given) is a German head of Press and Communications for a German Museum that has signed in November 2022 an open letter on "Attacks on artworks in museums" by the International Council of Museums. This statement includes the signature of 91 museums coming from 21 countries. Regarding the recent "*attacks on artworks in museums*", the directors argue that: "*The activists responsible for them severely underestimate the fragility of these irreplaceable objects, which must be preserved as part of our world cultural heritage*" (ICOM, November 2022).

Spoken language: English

This is a verbatim transcript of Audrey's interview with Astrid, following a call with a quick explanation of the search and sending some questions beforehand.

Audrey: So, first of all, how old are you? And can you describe your profession, please?

Astrid: My age. I don't know if that is of importance, but I'm in the museum world since about 15 years, and I'm head of press and communications.

Audrey: All right. Your age is important because I have a little reflection on generations. And, for instance, I interviewed a 64-year-old art repairer, which has, of course, a different view than the 22 years old activist I interviewed.

Astrid: Okay, I'm 40-50.

Audrey: All right. Have you been involved into the decision to sign the open letter? You know, on the attacks of masterpieces climate activists?



Astrid: No, I have not been involved.

Audrey: And do you know what has motivated the museum to sign the open letter which denounce attacks on masterpieces in the name of climate change?

Astrid: Well, I would suppose that it's obvious why our museum and others signed it. Because they felt or they feel threatened by the actions of climate activists. And the responsibility of museums is according to the ICOM (International Council of Museums) definition and, according to their understanding, to protect and to preserve artworks. So, it doesn't really go along with our mission what activists do and did in museums.

Audrey: I get it, but the thing is, most of the time, the artworks aren't damaged by the activists. And so, the term of attacks remains pretty strong, whereas sometimes they even ask for counseling by repairers to make sure that they won't damage the artwork. But accidents sometimes occur. For instance, in a museum in Great Britain, there was a frame which has been damaged and the reparation cost, was approximately 2,000 pounds, which is not that much compared to the reparations cost they get for some actions. But it's still significant, you know. So, do you perceive activism targeting art in a museum as having an artistic dimension? Why or why not?

Astrid: No. We don't. Can I comment on what you said before?

Audrey: You can bounce back on everything I say.

Astrid: I think the problem with these attacks is complex for museums. On the one hand, there is the possibility of damaging the artworks, which even, when the juices can sink into the can and damage it in that way. Another thing is that the museums are being used for a political message, which is not connected to the museum world or the industry itself. So, I think museums understand themselves as a placeholder for everything which is taken more seriously than climate change. And we as museums, we try to not be political in the sense of supporting

any political messages, but being for a democracy within society. And the third thing I wanted to mention is that since we as a museum, we felt threatened. Yeah. Since we're threatened by these actions, we, strengthened our security at the entrance. And this created some tensions with the visitors. So, this influences the museum experience in a negative way. And since we understand ourselves as a museum of education and positive experience, it influences our offer in a negative way because it changes the interaction with other visitors where we had more security checking the bags and people have not really a lot of understanding for that.

Audrey: I definitely understand, I mean, like there are many interesting things in what you said. First thing is that, uh, an art curator, stated that, um, museums should just take into consideration more the climate change, not to be, targeted by activists. So, what do you think of this?

Astrid: You mean on a curatorial content way?

Audrey: Yeah.

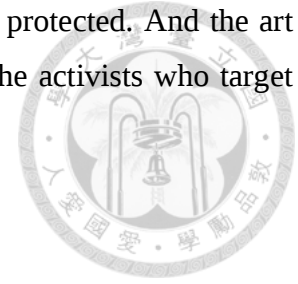
Astrid: I feel that's absolutely legitimate because museums try to connect their content to contemporary questions. So, as we do exhibitions on women in society or, diversity or inclusion. So, climate change should be or could be a subject to exhibitions as well, but it would always be on a more theoretical and, um, conceptual level.

Audrey: It's okay, and before I will continue to bounce back on what you said, I wanted also to ask my regular questions and notably on a semantic viewpoint. So, according to you, how we can categorize the nature of the tactics used by activists? I don't know, as activism, vandalism, or something else.

Astrid: I would use the word they use, which is activism. And regarding our understanding, it's probably also vandalism because it influences negatively the core of the museum, which is a collection.

Audrey: All right. And then, some activists I interviewed told me that the primary goal wasn't to target directly museums, or despite some cases, like, you know, the BP financing of the Portrait Award at the British National Portrait Gallery. So, in spite from these cases, or the Pinault Foundation in France, museums aren't, most of the time, the target. And they told me

that they acted because they care about art, and they wanted art to be protected. And the art world to change. What do you believe are the primary objectives of the activists who target artworks?



Astrid: Uh, you mean what would be an argument?

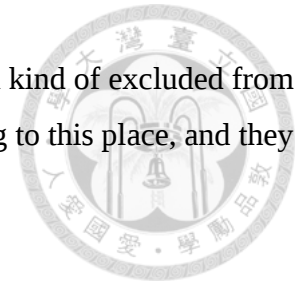
Audrey: Why do you think they do this? Do you think you, as museums, are the target or not?

Astrid: Yeah. I think museums are a placeholder for the lack of interest in climate change. And I think in the way, I understand the idea, it's more to say that there's something which we protect more, but which is not the world we live on. So, we are very protective of art, but it will not save us because we need a wholesome earth to live. And so, in this sense, we are placeholder because you could use many other institutions to visualize this idea. And so, they could have targeted any other institutions which protects or takes a lot of care of something, which is not specifically connected to nature.

Audrey: And so, what impact do you think such activist incidents have on museum and also the broader art sector, maybe beyond the fact that they lead to an increasing security trend at the entrance of museums?

Astrid: I think it's a mix. It's probably more security at the entrance. Also, insecurity within the institution, sort of stress and tension, whether an institution is the next target. And skepticism towards young visitors because it's the young generation which takes part in these actions. This is quite counterproductive because museums try to attract young people and because museums try to open to a younger generation and be open to discussions with them and offer events which appeal to a younger generation. So, if all of a sudden, a museum is more skeptical towards younger people because they feel in every bag they bring, there's a tomato sauce in it, it creates a strong complexity all of a sudden. And I don't know if a consequence would be that a museum would do an exhibition about climate change, because that's not what they call for. You know, they want political actions. And I think, it's political actions that are needed. And we as a museum feel, we don't have to talk more about climate change. It's obvious. And there are other multiple creators who talk about the problems of climate change. We could add to the to this discussion, but there's no real added value for what activists want, because it wouldn't solve anything, but it just would make awareness.

Audrey: But the fact that sometimes activists or young people who feel kind of excluded from the museum go to the museum and lead actions to show that they belong to this place, and they can have a discourse on art, isn't it interesting to you?



Astrid: Hold on. Who is excluded from the museum?

Audrey: I mean, young people who sometimes feel excluded from a museum that addresses their content to a much older generation, and which entrance ticket isn't free, they can feel that they don't belong to these places. On a symbolic viewpoint do you think that what they do is try to open the doors of the museum?

Astrid: Yeah, but, I mean, we do that by discussing with them and offering them a place to also present their ideas. We have different programs where we offer them space to express their thoughts and emotions and what their generation is thinking about. But, I mean, I don't know, if it's possible to characterize or categorize this, but, museums and theaters, for example. Museums are not in the tradition of demonstrating or being strongly political. Theaters are much more into hanging up banners and declaring clearly political position. It's just not in the tradition of museums to be strongly political like that. We discuss and we invite people to talk, but museums are much more, on an intellectual level, discussing problems, but not on this activist level.

Audrey: And do you think that in certain level, we should change the tradition of museum and to include more people? Or do you think that it's working, how museum handle the climate crisis and the kind of generational gap between people to access museums?

Astrid: I think you're mixing two things. On the one hand, it's about how to reach new target groups. And the other thing is being occupied with important issues of society. I think these are two different elements. And museums decide which subjects they focus on within exhibitions, whether they focus on more classical subjects because their job is to take care of art. And each museum decides how far it wants to go from history and how close it wants to relate art history with what happens in society. So, this is on the content level, and then you have the level of the audience, and there I think, if museums want to attract young people, they need to involve them in their work. And we, as a museum, for example, we do that already, but it might be true that,

it's not very established as a system to integrate younger people in the processes of the program making, for example.

Audrey: I get it. So, do you support the initiatives like the open letter on the attacks of masterpieces? Do you think that we should develop a kind of unified response on the international scale to such incidents, or do you think, you are handling this kind of issues pretty well?

Astrid: I mean, the open letter is already international. Is it?

Audrey: Oh, yeah. So, do you support this kind of initiatives on the international level, or do you think we should do better?

Astrid: We should do better. What?

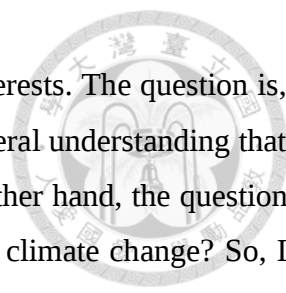
Audrey: I mean, if you should do something else than publishing an open letter. Do you think that the international scale matters, in handling this kind of international climate activism movement targeting museums?

Astrid: I think it's important for museums to declare that they are not fond of vandalism within museums, no matter for what reason there is vandalism within the museum. Even though if the idea behind this action is a good one. I don't know if it is in this open letter but there was a statement where museums said we do understand the worries of the younger generation and we support it, but we don't support that it's at the cost of artworks or like that. So, I think it's important to distinguish between institutions that are supportive but unhappy with the execution and those that are not behind the initiative at all.

Audrey: All right. Very interesting. And so, did you receive any feedback, from the public or the professional community regarding the decision to sign the open letter, or not at all?

Astrid: No. Nothing at all.

Audrey: All right. Do you think that the museums' stance is supported by the media and the political elite, or do you think that they stand with activists more?



Astrid: That's a tricky question because, I think there's a conflict of interests. The question is, who's responsible for? It's tricky because, I would say that there's a general understanding that museums want to protect their artworks on the one hand. And on the other hand, the question is, who would want to point a finger at someone who's responsible for climate change? So, I don't feel there's a real dialog within society. It's more a shock of, okay, museums are being used for making people aware of climate change. But I mean, who would stand up and say, oh, that's not a good idea take another industry? And who would point a finger at another one. Do you understand what I mean?

Audrey: I mean, kind of, but I don't follow your point quite clearly.

Astrid: Perhaps, let me rephrase it. There was no real discussion about whether it's awful that this happens at museums and whether it should happen elsewhere.

Audrey: But it happens also elsewhere as well you know, like planes that have been painted by activists belonging from the network A22 like Letzte Generation or just Stop Oil. So, the same activists who pursue action against artworks do this against other kinds of buildings belonging to polluting companies or planes, so it's quite related.

Astrid: I mean, your question was whether there were reactions from the art world.

Audrey: Yeah, that was my question.

Astrid: I can say that there was as far as I know no official or big dialog within society on that. I think everybody understood the position of museums and I feel not commenting it is agreeing. That's what I would say.

Audrey: You know, sometimes the position of museum changes. For instance, when it came to the BP financing, of the National Portrait Gallery, they changed position, and decided to stop the funding of their prize. So also, like, there are some reactions from that.

Astrid: Yeah, but I feel on a semantical level these actions don't work. You know, it's not consistent. On the one hand, when museums are attacked, it's difficult for museums to

understand. Why did they choose museums? Yeah. There is no specific reason why museums would be chosen. It's just a placeholder for other potential institutions or industries. But there is no there is no clear connection where they say this industry is especially responsible or museums are especially responsible, but it's just a philosophical argument they use when they say you protect artworks more than Mother Nature. So, we are on a philosophical level. Museums are used, I feel for this action, but the moment they attack a museum for having a certain sponsor, which they see as responsible for climate change, this has a different level. I don't feel you can mix these two kinds of actions because one is with a specific responsible, they point at, and the other one is just a general momentum of where they try to make people aware of the necessity to be more sensitive towards nature.

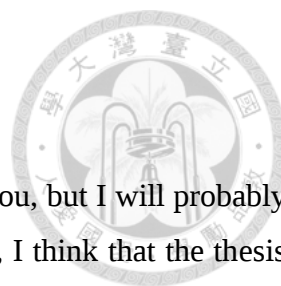
Audrey: Yeah, definitely. I think I wanted just to make you react to some aspect I discovered, but I introduced a classification with three levels of motivations. So, the first one is the actions that target specific outward because of their notoriety. The second one is the one that targets artwork not only because of their notoriety but because of the representation of the artworks. And the third one is the action which targets some artworks because of the links between artworks or museums with the carbon economy. So, I divided the three different sections.

Astrid: I think the first one and the third one I agree on, I think the second is not very specific and I didn't understand it that climate activists tried to use artworks which represent on the canvas level, what is shown and what is connected to nature. I feel the notoriety is an argument that that it makes them heard but a painting...

Audrey: The selection of some artworks is really made because of the notoriety most of the time but the representation part adds a layer. If you choose a Monet painting of a beautiful landscape, you do an action to say with plus four degrees, this landscape will be completely destroyed. So, it is the one that introduced more art in the discussion and performance. And that's also why I ask you earlier if you will categorize these actions as activism. Because for some activists claim that their action in a museum is performance and, there is a dialog between the art selected and on the other side of the message they want to promote.

Astrid: Mhm are you of one or the other sides?

Audrey: Why do you ask this question?



Astrid: You seem biased when you argue.

Audrey: I mean, I will argue on this side because I'm discussing with you, but I will probably argue on the other side if I'm discussing with an activist. But of course, I think that the thesis overall supports more the activist side, to be honest, because I found maybe more content on the shaping of their tactics. But it changes, of course.

Astrid: I mean, since you're writing a scientific paper about it, I'm asking you because I feel or I would expect you to be as a scientist. I would expect you to be neutral and like analyze it from a very neutral point of view. But I understand that when you discuss with one or the other position that you would take the other stand.

Audrey: Definitely. But, uh, do you have something to add on the issue?

Astrid: Perhaps only I mean, the second category you mentioned about showing paintings, which would look different with plus four degrees, I have to admit that it's not a message I understood. But I would say, I didn't know that this strategy was known in Germany, so sometimes I feel their public relations could be revised.

Audrey: Yeah, definitely. I think like that there is really a misunderstanding between all the stakeholders. That's what I'm searching about. Why do actors from the art worlds and activists don't understand each other this much? Even if in the letter you signed, it was written that museums get the cause, I think there are still many misunderstandings.

Astrid: It might be because those which go viral of these actions, the phrases they say usually, as far as I remember, mostly refer to the problem of climate change. And as far as I remember, I don't remember videos where they referred to the artwork but were more about saying something and being heard because of the notoriety of the artwork and behind them. So it might be that the main words they say in the camera when they film it, it's about a political message or about a message about climate change. But it's there is usually, as far as I know, no connection to the artwork.

Audrey: All right. Thank you very much. So, I think I'm pretty much done with my questions, and it's already like more than 30 minutes, so we can stop there if you want.

Astrid: You don't have any more questions?

Audrey: No, I'm done with my questions.

Astrid: Alright thank you!



Appendix 3: Lorry's Interview Transcript



Date: August 9th, 2024

Duration: 52 minutes

Place: Online with zoom

Interviewee: Lorry, 28 years old, is a French independent artist's agent, art critic and social network content creator

Spoken language: French

This is a verbatim transcript of Audrey's interview with Lorry, following a quick call with an explanation of the search and questions were sent in advance.

Audrey : Du coup, est-ce que tu peux d'abord me donner ton âge et me décrire ta profession et tes études ?

Lorry : Oui, alors pour mon âge j'ai 28 ans. Je suis agent d'artistes et critique d'art, c'est-à-dire que je propose des services d'accompagnement pour les artistes dans les arts visuels. Et au niveau de mes études, alors moi j'ai fait deux licences. J'ai fait une licence d'histoire Sciences Po, une licence d'histoire de l'art et d'archéologie. Et j'ai fait un master spécialisé en critique d'art et commissariat d'Expo.

Audrey : Tu viens d'où géographiquement ?

Lorry : Alors, moi géographiquement je viens du sud-ouest, donc j'ai fait mes études à Pau au niveau de mes deux licences et j'ai été sur Strasbourg vers mon master.

Audrey : Ok, très bien. Et du coup, est-ce que tu considères que dans ton travail, notamment au niveau du fait que tu sois critique d'art, il y a une dimension militante dans les œuvres que

tu choisis, dans les artistes que tu propulses ? Et voilà, est-ce que tu as une visée politique dans ton travail ?

Lorry : Oui, j'ai très clairement une orientation politique et militante. C'est évident. Dans mes collaborations avec les artistes, la dimension militante n'est pas aussi prononcée que dans d'autres aspects liés à l'organisation. Ils viennent vraiment du monde de l'art. Cela dit, c'est pas rare. J'ai travaillé sur des projets avec une forte dimension féministe et d'autres qui abordent le handicap et son intégration dans la société et le monde de l'art. Ce sont deux grands axes de travail que j'ai déjà explorés.

Audrey : Ok, très bien. Du coup, toi tu as un objectif aussi de vulgarisation, d'éducation, ou de mise en avant de tes idées parce que tu penses que ça manque dans le monde de l'art ?

Lorry : Il y a plusieurs aspects à prendre en compte. D'un côté, certains artistes et œuvres abordent des questions sociales importantes de manière générale. Ces projets sont souvent le fruit d'une recherche assez poussée. Mais parfois ils peuvent rester théoriques et un peu déconnectés de la pratique artistique directe. D'un autre côté, y' a des œuvres qui ne sont pas forcément chargées politiquement, mais qui sont créées par des artistes qui sont très engagés dans le monde de l'art. Ces artistes luttent pour la reconnaissance de leur statut, contre les problèmes administratifs et pour une rémunération juste, que ce soit pour les critiques, les commissaires ou les artistes eux-mêmes. Leur militantisme, il se manifeste souvent dans leurs actions et revendications. Enfin, il y a ceux qui font le pont entre ces deux mondes. Ils bossent pour améliorer les conditions des artistes dans les coulisses tout en utilisant leur art pour mettre en lumière ces problématiques. Ils créent des expositions et des œuvres qui sensibilisent le public aux défis auxquels les artistes sont confrontés. Donc, en gros, on a ces trois niveaux d'engagement, qui peut être théorique, militant dans le secteur, et les deux combinés, qui coexistent et se croisent dans le monde de l'art.

Audrey : Et ce que je me demandais c'est est-ce que tu trouves que les institutions culturelles dominantes, elles sont poreuses ou pas du tout, avec ces idées militantes, le féminisme, l'écologie, le handicap et aussi le racisme structurel.

Lorry : Pour être honnête, c'est un peu compliqué. D'un côté, y' a effectivement une certaine ouverture des institutions à ces questions, mais tout est une question de forme. Y'a une manière

de présenter les choses qui est, je trouve, souvent dictée par l'image qu'on veut renvoyer, et parfois, il faut en quelque sorte, si tu veux, « conventionner » les choses pour que ça passe bien. Par exemple, j'ai trouvé une situation assez révélatrice à Amsterdam, même si ça pourrait être assez paradoxal si on le transpose en France. Une artiste, j'ai oublié son nom, avait réalisé une installation dans une salle permanente d'un musée d'Amsterdam, je ne me souviens plus du nom du musée non plus. Cette installation mettait en lumière les difficultés auxquelles un artiste fait face lorsqu'il doit jongler avec de nombreux appels à projets et adapter son projet pour pouvoir l'exposer dans des institutions ou des entités publiques. Si une cette installation était exposée en France, on se retrouverait avec une œuvre qui critique le fonctionnement des appels à projets en institutions, tout en étant elle-même exposée dans une institution. C'est un peu ironique, non ? Donc, pour que ces critiques passent bien en institution, il faut souvent les alléger ou les adapter. Et c'est quelque chose que je rencontre assez souvent.

Audrey : Y' a une conservatrice d'art Américaine qui a dit, de manière très franche et très forte aux musées, : si vous voulez arrêter d'être la cible de groupes militants écologistes, vous avez qu'à faire des expositions sur le changement climatique et mettre en avant des postures un peu moins traditionnelles, un peu moins hégémoniques sur la consommation, le consumérisme. Et là, qu'est-ce que tu penses de ça ?

Lorry : Qu'est-ce que je pense de ça ? Je suis plutôt d'accord. En fait, c'est logique de mettre en avant des propositions qui reflètent mieux la réalité et la colère du militantisme d'aujourd'hui, en écoutant vraiment ces voix sans les transformer ni les adoucir. Mais, y' a une difficulté réelle à prendre en compte : pour moi, et peut-être que c'est un peu catégorique, mais une œuvre d'art devient "morte" une fois qu'elle entre dans un musée. Si une œuvre ou un concept est institutionnalisé, il perd de sa capacité à transgresser ou à apporter quelque chose de vraiment nouveau, parce qu'il est inscrit dans l'inconscient collectif, parce qu'il est accessible à tout le monde. Si on prend le street art par exemple. À l'origine, le street art, c'était une forme de transgression. Mais dès qu'on retrouve du street art dans les musées, est-ce que ça reste encore de la transgression ? La question reste toujours en suspens pour moi.

Audrey : Et du coup, toi, comment est-ce que t'essayes de résoudre ce paradoxe ? Est-ce que tu l'acceptes comme en état de fait ? Ou est-ce que t'essayes de trouver d'autres scènes alternatives pour promouvoir tes idées ?

Lorry : Alors les scènes alternatives, ça existe en fait. Pour moi, c'est un peu, tout ce qui est en dehors des sentiers battus, je parle pour l'art visuel. Genre les expos dans des ateliers d'artistes, dans des lieux un peu, enfin, abandonnés ou parfois même des expos financées par des fonds publics. Il y a aussi des interventions institutionnelles, mais souvent gérées par des associations ou d'autres groupes indépendants. Cette scène alternative, c'est elle qui apporte une vraie valeur et qui traite les questions importantes de manière plus directe, sans filtre. Les réseaux sociaux, c'est une autre scène à part. Ce n'est pas vraiment une question d'exposition d'œuvres, mais plus de création de contenu. Pour ma part, je travaille sur la sensibilisation et la compréhension du secteur, surtout pour les professionnels mais aussi pour le grand public. Mon but, c'est de faire ressortir ces paradoxes et de chercher des solutions ensemble pour mettre en avant cette scène alternative dans le monde de l'art. En gros, j'aimerais que les gens découvrent d'abord toutes ces associations et structures alternatives qui sont cruciales pour le monde de l'art, avant de se concentrer sur les aspects plus institutionnels et lissés des musées. C'est un pari un peu fou, mais c'est ce que j'aimerais réussir à faire.

Audrey : Je comprends, je comprends. Je discutais cette semaine avec une directrice de communication d'un musée qui m'expliquait que pour elle la fonction des musées c'est de sensibiliser et d'être sur un format plus éducatif mais qui en tout cas c'est une éducation qui est beaucoup plus lisse. Et que du coup les militants ils faisaient juste pas exactement ça et ils venaient dans un espace qui aussi fait de la sensibilisation mais en faisant une action qui était beaucoup plus disruptive et donc qui ne laissait pas forcément au musée la place pour faire leurs actions de sensibilisation à leur rythme. Qu'est-ce que tu penses de ça ?

Lorry : Y-aurait peut-être un juste milieu à trouver je trouve que l'opposition elle est assez forte entre d'un côté les artistes dans les lieux plutôt de regarder ou faire des actions fortes mais vont moins se concentrer sur la médiation, je simplifie mais on est un petit peu là-dessus et tous les centres d'art, les institutions avaient à mettre en avant la médiation du coup pour des publics populaires ce genre de choses. Je pense que le simplifier des propos sans enlever toute la complexité de la situation ou en ayant un propos plus fort. Après moi l'autre question, je vais taper sur les centres d'art, c'est pas bien, est-ce que la médiation dans les structures est suffisante aussi est-ce qu'on peut pas avoir un propos de médiation qui peut être un petit peu plus complet ou complexe en dehors et qui est accessible. Donc je trouve que pour être honnête c'est un argument un petit peu facile et une opposition un petit peu dure.

Audrey : Du coup tu trouves qu'ils sont pas assez accessibles les centres d'art actuels et que les institutions culturels sont conservatrices davantage que progressistes ?

Lorry : ok oui alors ça dépend desquels, on va pas tout mettre dans les mêmes paniers parce que y'a des centres d'art qui sont extrêmement progressifs je pense et qui sont vraiment axés sur une médiation assez complète et sur vraiment diffuser l'art au plus grand nombre, c'est un petit peu comme les fraques. L'objectif des fraques, leur but, c'est de diffuser l'art contemporain au plus grand nombre. Je trouve que ça limite dans une série ou plusieurs aussi au niveau de l'acquisition des pièces au niveau des thématiques, au niveau des lieux des expositions choisis au niveau de certaines œuvres acquises qui finalement ne sont pas diffusables en dehors des murs des fraques. Je pense, c'est le principal problème aujourd'hui dans la vision de l'art contemporain qu'on est néophyte en tout cas ce n'est plus de faire comprendre le propos d'un artiste c'est aussi de faire venir de nouveaux publics dans ces centres-là alors il y a des activités pour enfants, etc. pour des familles est-ce qu'on peut aller plus loin ? moi je suis assez offusquée de voir que quand je parle des problématiques des artistes aujourd'hui, le 3 quart des néophytes ne comprennent absolument pas les rouages, le fonctionnement du secteur et ce que ça implique. Il y a un besoin de s'émanciper là-dessus pour qu'il y ait une visibilité dans le paysage politique et qu'on puisse défendre ces besoins-là. C'est nécessaire.

Audrey : Du coup je me pose des questions sur la mission des musées. D'un côté, ils doivent préserver le patrimoine culturel, mais, ça peut en fait freiner l'évolution des œuvres. Je pense à une expo très cool de Galas-Poras Kim que j'ai vu et qui montrait comment la poussière, genre la saleté, et la pourriture, ça fait partie de la vie des œuvres. Elle a un propos super intéressant sur comment on peut à la fois préserver et accepter l'évolution des œuvres. On entend souvent que c'est que la priorité des musées de préserver le patrimoine culturel. Mais du coup l'éducation et l'inclusion, bah ça passe au second plan. Genre ça peut parfois exclure des groupes, comme les jeunes ou les gens issus de milieux défavorisés. T'en penses quoi ? Est-ce que t'es d'accord avec la vision traditionnelle de la préservation du patrimoine, ou t'as une approche différente ?

Lorry : C'est un sujet vraiment complexe. Ce qui me vient à l'esprit, c'est l'action de vandalisme récente au Centre Pompidou par l'artiste, j'ai noté son nom, Deborah Roberti. La directrice du musée a réagi avec une certaine indignation, estimant que cela portait atteinte à la conservation du patrimoine. Pour moi, les musées pourraient parfaitement remplir leur mission

de conservation tout en laissant place à un espace d'expression intermédiaire. Ce serait un espace où les artistes, surtout ceux engagés, pourraient exprimer leurs idées et préoccupations avant que le public ne les voie. Les musées pourraient se concentrer juste sur la conservation. Je pense que la notion de préservation du patrimoine, elle est, elle est parfois trop rigide. Le patrimoine, c'est aussi une histoire en évolution, donc accepter sa destruction ou son changement, c'est quelque chose qui fait partie de cette évolution. Vouloir conserver en arrêtant le temps, c'est un peu limité je trouve. Je crois que cette idée de « on est là pour préserver le patrimoine » peut servir de prétexte aux musées pour éviter de vraiment écouter les problèmes actuels. Les actions de vandalisme, comme celles de Deborah Roberti, c'est pas simplement des actes iconoclastes. Elles sont, je pense, symboliques et visent à attirer l'attention sur des problèmes, comme le sexisme dans le monde de l'art. Y' a un besoin urgent d'écouter ces actions et les critiques qu'elles soulèvent. Tant qu'il n'y aura pas un vrai espace de dialogue entre les musées et les sujets des artistes, la préservation du patrimoine, elle restera un peu en décalage avec les enjeux contemporains.

Audrey : C'est pour ça que, du coup, tu penses que les musées, ils peuvent être des cibles légitimes pour les militants ? Y'a une étude que j'ai lue sur les États-Unis et qui disait que quand les militants écolo s'en prennent directement à des institutions ou à des bâtiments qui incarnent l'économie du carbone et la pollution, les gens trouvent plutôt ça, je sais pas, légitime. Tandis que quand ils s'en prennent à des musées, qui ne sont finalement pas concernés par l'économie du carbone, il y a un énorme écart. Donc tu penses qu'il a raison de frapper les musées, ou dans le combat écologiste, il faudrait surtout s'en tenir à des trucs plus flagrants, comme les multinationales, les milliardaires, les avions ou d'autres industries particulièrement polluantes ?

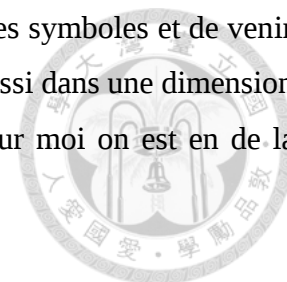
Lorry : Les militants n'attaquent pas aux musées pour moi c'est pas les musées qui sont ciblées c'est l'aura des musées et des œuvres qui sont exposées. On s'attaque aux symboles, je reprends l'exemple des Tournesols de Van Gogh, on est sur une œuvre qui a un symbole et qui a une aura extrêmement forte qui implique un respect. Une forme sacrée, ça fait réagir c'est extrêmement fort de s'attaquer à un symbole, ça offusque, en fait ça fait réagir. Est-ce que le bon message parvient au grand public ça c'est autre chose, je crois que malheureusement le propos peut être déformé. Mais ça fonctionne, donc pour moi effectivement choisir de s'attaquer à des symboles, c'est puissant. On travaille avec des images, on travaille avec de la matière mais on travaille avec des valeurs symboliques qui sont extrêmement fortes et des notions, il y a tout un point

immatériel qui est extrêmement puissant, vraiment je pense qu'on peut mettre le mot puissant dessus quand on s'attaque à ça évidemment qu'on a de la visibilité donc et on le voit dans les propos je crois que c'est Joëlle Zask qui disait qu'on n'a plus d'intérêt envers le réel, ce qui est réel pour nous on en entend tellement parler que c'est quelque chose qui ne nous touche plus, qu'on ne voit plus la cause écologique y' a quand même encore une fois un paradoxe qui est assez intéressant c'est que vandaliser une œuvre c'est outrant, c'est choquant ça nous met en colère. Par contre, voir que globalement aucune mesure réelle n'est prise d'un point de vue mondial et même d'un point de vue national sur le changement climatique, je pense qu'on peut dire que pour vraiment défendre les causes écologiques et appuyer sur le fait qu'on est en train de tout pourrir ça nous choque pas. Y' a un moment où, je crois, on est obligés de trouver des solutions alternatives pour attirer le regard et dire : « mais regardez, il faut qu'on ait votre attention » donc je pense que c'est ce que représentent les musées qui sont juste attaquées.

Audrey : Un militant m'expliquait très bien qu'il pouvait s'attaquer à des pipelines ils avaient une couverture médiatique qui était, en fait, moindre comparée à celle qu'il avait quand il visait des œuvres d'art. Après il y a d'autres soucis qui peuvent émerger par rapport à ça, mais j'aimerais revenir sur des questions un peu plus sémantiques si ça te dérange pas. En fait te demander très clairement est-ce que tu considères que ces actions militantes dans des musées-là, qui ciblent des œuvres en jetant de la peinture, du coulis de tomate ou de la purée. Est-ce que ces actions-là c'est du vandalisme ? Est-ce que tu trouves que c'est un terme qui est approprié puisque c'est le terme qui est utilisé dans les médias et le plus généralement, ou tu penses qu'il faudrait inventer ou promouvoir un autre terme ? Hier j'ai eu le terme de perturbation artistique qui peut être intéressant parce qu'en fait dans la plupart des cas c'est des œuvres qui ne sont pas endommagées de façon permanente. Qu'est-ce que tu penses de cette utilisation de termes et ce combat sémantique ?

Lorry : pour moi le terme n'est évidemment pas approprié. Il est super péjoratif « vandalisme » un point de tout de suite qui a une effraction qui a de la dégradation qui a de la désobéissance civile voilà on est vraiment dans des termes extrêmement péjoratifs pour moi l'utilisation de ces termes font qu'au niveau du grand public on va retenir que vandalisme. Donc on va juste être outré, on va retenir destruction, on n'entend pas forcément la suite. Si la personne ne veut pas chercher plus loin ça s'arrête là donc effectivement ce terme vient desservir les causes qui sont défendues, c'est un petit peu embêtant. Pour moi, on est dans de la performance on est littéralement la performance à chaque fois et on est dans une dimension artistique l'objectif de

cette manière de la création contemporaine c'est de venir questionner ces symboles et de venir questionner tout le fonctionnement général des sociétés. Donc on est aussi dans une dimension artistique bien ce ne soit pas toujours revendiqué comme tel. Oui pour moi on est en de la performance.



Audrey : Est-ce que tu penses aussi que cette utilisation des images qui tire à la fois de notre système médiatique, le fait de créer une image choc pour ensuite pouvoir défendre une cause, ça aussi ça a une valeur artistique cette image en soi ? Ou est-ce que tu penses qu'il n'y a pas de dimension artistique ?

Lorry : Je pense qu'il y a une dimension artistique, et j'irai même plus loin. Le fait de créer des images choc et de créer des scandales, c'est aussi quelque chose qui est très inspirant, plutôt dans le marché de l'art que dans le côté institutionnel. Mais les artistes les plus transgressifs c'est ceux qui vont monter plus dans le marché de l'art en termes de prix donc c'est aussi quelque chose qui colle au fonctionnement du secteur et c'est quelque chose qui colle complètement au sein de nos sociétés aussi, c'est le seul moyen qu'on a véritablement aujourd'hui de sortir de la masse et d'attirer l'attention.

Audrey : Finalement dans mon mémoire je suis partie beaucoup du terme d'artivisme pour mener mes recherches. Est-ce que tu trouves que ce serait un terme qui collerait très bien à ce qui se passe, même si l'artivisme c'est en soit beaucoup plus large que ça, ou tu penses qu'il faudrait inventer un autre terme.

Lorry : Non, je pense que ça colle bien. Le terme est assez large mais franchement, ce serait génial de le voir davantage dans les médias et dans le débat public dans un futur proche. Mais je crois que ce terme est bien adapté pour ces actions et qu'il doit inclure plusieurs aspects. Bien sûr, il y a les actions pour la cause écologique, mais il faudrait aussi qu'il englobe toutes les revendications liées au secteur de l'art visuel. Il doit y avoir du militantisme mais aussi dans les expositions accessibles au grand public. Ce serait super que ce terme puisse couvrir toutes ces causes et serve d'outil de revendication à travers l'art, tout simplement.

Audrey : Selon toi, pourquoi est-ce que le grand public est très contre ce type d'action, ou en tout cas a une réaction forte ? Ce que je trouve assez intéressant, c'est que les deux Ministres de la culture qui ont fait face à du militantisme dans les musées depuis 2022, Rima Abdul malak

et Rashida Dati. En fait, elles sont réagies direct à l'action sur la Joconde et aussi au jet de peinture sur statue de la Fondation Pinault. Est-ce que tu penses que c'est grave que le grand public ne comprenne pas ces actions et pour toi à quoi c'est lié. Est-ce que c'est aux médias ou c'est quelque chose qui est plus ancré dans notre rapport à l'art et la culture ?

Lorry : Je pense que c'est je pense que c'est assez complexe et que les raisons sont mixtes. Globalement déjà, ça c'est clair qu'au niveau du grand public y' a un rapport extrêmement particulier à l'art visuel. Il y a une glorification du patrimoine artistique alors que c'est pas du tout le cas avec l'art contemporain. Il y a une grosse défiance au niveau de la création artistique actuelle alors qu'il y a vraiment une starification totale des impressionnistes et des autres classiques. Donc de ce côté, cette question du patrimoine, peut-être sans qu'il s'en rende compte, prend une place énorme dans l'esprit du grand public. Ça c'est la première chose. Et puis, ce qui me dérange vraiment, c'est ce paradoxe qu'on voit tout le temps. Quand des œuvres célèbres comme les Tournesols de Van Gogh sont attaquées, la réaction est souvent : « Ah, on s'attaque à une peinture précieuse juste pour faire parler d'elle ! ». Les gens ont du mal à comprendre ce geste et voient ça comme une opposition claire. En plus, on n'est pas vraiment éduqués à l'impact des images. On ne nous apprend pas à mesurer le pouvoir des images et leur rôle dans notre perception du monde. C'est un pouvoir énorme qu'on ne reconnaît pas assez. Et puis, il y a les médias. Trouver des médias qui parlent d'art de manière sérieuse, c'est compliqué. On a des magazines comme Beaux-Arts Magazine qui, depuis un moment, se contentent de répéter les mêmes infos, ou des médias très spécialisés qui ne touchent pas le grand public. Dans les médias traditionnels, quand on parle d'art, c'est souvent pour des sujets sensationnalistes : une banane collée au mur vendue à des prix fous, ou des actes de vandalisme sur des œuvres célèbres comme celles de Van Gogh. Ça me met vraiment en colère, parce qu'on a besoin des médias pour mieux comprendre l'art, mais on ne reçoit pas le soutien nécessaire. On peut trouver des articles intéressants dans des journaux comme Libération, mais je trouve que ces articles n'ont pas assez de visibilité.

Audrey : Est-ce que tu penses que c'est grave comme état de fait, que les messages soient incompris, ou est-ce que ça fait partie du paysage médiatico-culturel conservateur actuel et qu'il faut faire avec, et c'est aussi pour ça que toi tu as lancé ton Instagram.

Lorry : Je pense que ça fait partie du paysage actuel je pense on est noyé de toute manière, il y a trop d'infos on peut pas en plus forcer les gens à se faire un avis là-dessus. Mais je pense que

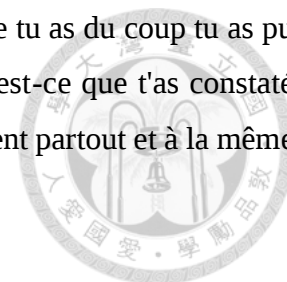
c'est des codes qui sont inscrits dans les manières de communiquer aujourd'hui dans les médias. C'est ce qui fonctionne et c'est vrai que c'est ce qui fonctionne, donc c'est ce qu'on doit faire. Et il y a un côté prise de risque que moi je découvre, qui est assez amusant. Moi dans ma prise de parole j'ai beaucoup de confrères et de consœurs qui m'ont dit : fais attention, tu te mets en danger, et la mise en danger je pense que je suis en train de la vivre, moi je sais que dans mes propos je me ferme des portes avec des institutions et avec des galeries d'art clairement, parce que je sais que non je suis pas prête de dire un propos qui va aller dans le sens du Quai Branly par exemple. C'est pas quelque chose que je ferai quoi. Alors que potentiellement au vu que mon parcours, et étant donné que je travaille aussi avec le continent africain et principalement d'Afrique de l'Ouest, je pourrais prétendre un contrat ou une collaboration avec ce type de structures. Mais c'est hors de question, c'est complètement contraire à mes principes, donc je ne le ferai pas. Donc je me ferme des portes mais il est dur de se mettre en danger alors qu'on communique sur quelque chose qui pour nous est juste, en essayant d'être le plus neutre. Il faut essayer d'être juste sans être trop dur ou insultant, même si c'est un sujet qui peut vraiment mettre en colère. Dans le monde de l'art, il y a des hauts et des bas, et certains trucs sont vraiment frappants. Pour te donner une idée, j'utilise souvent l'exemple de Claude Lévêque. C'est un exemple qui me fout encore les nerfs. Tu en as peut-être entendu parler.

Audrey : Peut-être ça me dit quelque chose.

Lorry : Claude Lévêque c'est quelqu'un qui a été extrêmement mis en avant sur la scène artistique et on présentait ses travaux sous un propos enfantin, se reconnecter à l'enfance etc. qui a fini par être accusé par plusieurs victimes de viols et de pédophilie. Très clairement, il reprenait des éléments de ses victimes dans ses travaux artistiques donc on a vraiment des œuvres d'art qui sont des pièces à conviction. Tout le monde le savait, personne n'en parlait et c'est toujours ça qui est extrêmement violent par rapport à d'autres secteurs. Au niveau artistique, on vient sensibiliser les autres mais nous ça va. Il y a toujours ce côté-là qui est extrêmement violent et dans les musées on parle de féminisme mais ce qui se passe derrière, on en parle pas trop. Et je pense que c'est aussi ça qui amène des actions extrêmement violentes qui sont directement liées au secteur artistique, mais dans l'écologie, c'est la même chose. Combien d'expositions ont défendu la planète à quel moment on s'aligne sur les propos qu'on a envie de diffuser ? Les actions et positions restent très floues au final.

Audrey : Je vois, et j'aimerais du coup revenir sur ce que t'as dit par rapport au fait que tu

travaillais avec des artistes ou galeries en Afrique de l'Ouest. Est-ce que tu as du coup tu as pu travailler avec des acteurs et actrices culturelles dans d'autres pays et est-ce que t'as constaté que la France était un cas particulier, ou qu'au final ça bouge énormément partout et à la même vitesse ?



Lorry : Non, ça bouge pas partout à la même vitesse. Et là le rapport est différent, on va dire que en France la présence institutionnelle et son pouvoir d'intervention, c'est assez fort. Tant mieux, on en a besoin clairement, c'est pas parfait, mais la DRAC a une importance capitale au niveau local le CNAP a une importance nationale, pour tout ce qui est musée, centre d'art, dont les critiques et les commissaires ont besoin. On doit travailler maintenant c'est un petit peu difficile mais on finira peut-être par s'en sortir. Je prends l'exemple du Sénégal et en Afrique de l'Ouest tout ce qui va être Mauritanie, Mali, Sénégal pour prendre ces trois pays, la présence institutionnelle elle n'est pas là et elle n'est pas assez puissante, donc on va seulement avoir des associations, des galeries, on va avoir tout un secteur privé ou underground qui va fonctionner ensemble. Parfois il y a une perte de vitesse parce qu'il y a des manques de subventions et des risques qui sont plus forts par exemple avec une cliente on vient de renvoyer un artiste LGBT parce que le Sénégal vient de statuer sur une loi où toute association qui met en avant des personnes proches de tout ce qui va être la scène queer ou enfin lgbt est passible d'une peine qui peut aller loin. Donc on est dans des enjeux qui sont beaucoup plus tangibles et forts, c'est-à-dire que, pour te donner un exemple, on a fait une exposition sur l'avortement y' a quelques années. L'avortement est illégal au Sénégal : comment on apporte ce propos sans que la directrice de la galerie soit potentiellement punie soit de la prison soit d'une amende extrêmement grosse ? Donc on est obligés de faire converger nos actions, voir d'autres partenaires et vraiment travailler ensemble pour justement avoir le plus d'appui possible et protéger les artistes et autres acteurs et actrices pour éviter qu'il y ait problèmes. C'est un enjeu qui n'a strictement rien à voir et le discours est complètement différent.

Audrey : Quand tu dis converger nos actions, c'est converger nos actions à l'échelle locale nationale, supranational ?

Lorry : Et bien c'est ça qui est intéressant, c'est qu'on va sur l'international extrêmement vite, c'est-à-dire on commence à trouver d'abord de soutien local, très vite on va travailler avec des curateurs en Allemagne on va demander un avis d'une conservatrice aux Etats-Unis, et en fait il y a tout un gros groupe international qui d'un coup se retrouve sur l'un projet lié au territoire.

En fait, y' a des luttes qui vont être belles, mais qui en même temps sont extrêmement complexes. Ces luttes, elles sont souvent enracinées directement dans le milieu artistique, plutôt que de venir de l'extérieur et ensuite de se connecter avec le monde culturel. En gros, c'est le secteur artistique qui se saisit directement des questions qu'il veut aborder. Par exemple, il y a eu un gros travail sur la restitution du patrimoine culturel en Afrique de l'Ouest. Là, ça a été mené en collaboration avec des associations afro-descendantes qui travaillent sur ces questions. Elles ont porté leur demande dans le milieu artistique, et ça a donné une expo qui mettait en avant des œuvres comme celles des tirailleurs sénégalais. C'est un peu comme ça que ça se passe, l'art s'en empare et le traduit dans des projets concrets.

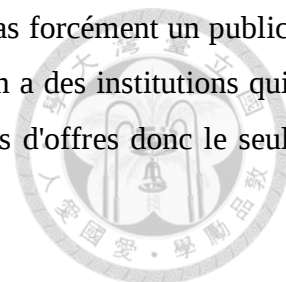
Audrey : Est-ce que tu vois des différences entre la manière dont la société civile s'empare des causes, en tout cas le milieu artistique assimile des causes venues de la société civile, entre les différents pays avec lesquels tu travailles ? Est-ce que tu trouves que du coup en France comme les institutions ont un pouvoir beaucoup plus grand au final elles sont moins enclines à assimiler les causes de la société civile, et au final, ça finit par passer par la scène underground ?

Lorry : voilà je pense qu'il y a de ça. Alors, pour comprendre le fil de la pensée ici, revenons sur la complexité des appels à projets. Aujourd'hui, pour qu'un projet artistique soit présenté dans les institutions, il faut passer par des appels à projets. Autrement dit, il faut que le projet réponde aux attentes des centres d'art et des décideurs pour avoir une chance d'être exposé. Ce système peut poser problème. Par exemple, si le projet est purement philosophique ou plastique, comme une réflexion sur le corps et l'architecture, il peut ne pas avoir un impact fort sur les causes sensibles. C'est souvent là que le bât blesse. Pour aborder des causes plus critiques ou sensibles, le processus est plus compliqué : il faut passer par ces appels à projets, ce qui peut être un frein. Le système peut souvent étouffer les projets qui ne cadrent pas parfaitement avec les attentes des institutions. Donc, même si le projet a du potentiel, il peut se heurter à des obstacles parce que le processus est rigide et les décideurs ont le dernier mot. Et une fois que la cause est acceptée, elle se retrouve cantonnée aux milieux contemporains et artistiques traditionnels.

Audrey : Ok je comprends.

Lorry : Je pense qu'on ne veut pas fonctionner autrement mais un artiste en galerie malheureusement doit faire des pièces destinées à la vente, donc il y a une limite dans la création

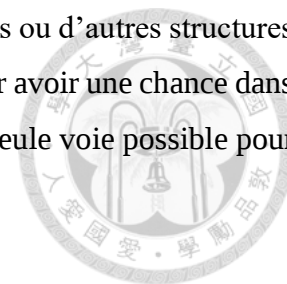
et une limite dans le propos aussi, parce que les collectionneurs sont pas forcément un public très sensible à l'écologie ou au statut artiste auteur, et de l'autre côté on a des institutions qui vont bloquer ou trier les propos avec des appels à projet et des appels d'offres donc le seul espace qui reste c'est un espace en policé.



Audrey : Hier ce qu'on se disait aussi avec le militant que j'interviewais, c'est que la tendance des militants et militantes qui font du vandalisme d'art dans les musées va décliner forcément parce qu'elle va avoir un impact médiatique de moins en moins fort, et c'est ce qu'on est en train de constater par exemple en 2022 il y a eu 30 actions de militantisme dans les musées et au final on en a retenu une qui était la première, les Sunflower. Et cette année on a retenu beaucoup et seule la Joconde a eu une forte couverture médiatique. Au final, ces actions qui sont censées avoir un impact très fort médiatique, comme le public s'habitue, elle pourrait avoir un impact moins fort. Est-ce que tu penses aussi que ces tendances-là d'aller dans les musées et d'investir les musées comme des lieux d'expression par des militants et militantes c'est quelque chose qui est amené à décliner ou à être transformé si on y ajoute un peu de créativité ?

Lorry : C'est inévitable, juste la répercussion médiatique d'actions qui sont faites à l'encontre d'un regard plus y'en a, moins y'en va de sensibilisation. J'ai un autre exemple, je pense aux images qui étaient diffusées pendant la guerre du Vietnam aux Etats-Unis. En fait, il y en avait tellement que la sensibilité à ces images a diminué, aussi là on est vraiment dans du processus humain, donc oui il va falloir que ça se transforme il va falloir que ça évolue et il faut que ça sort des musées il faut qu'on sorte de ça. Pour moi, c'est comme si on était face à un mur avec les institutions culturelles : tout ce qui se passe à l'intérieur et ce qui en ressort est souvent transformé et contrôlé. Il faut vraiment sortir des musées et se réinventer. Je me demande si ce n'est pas un problème pour l'artivisme en général de vouloir trop investir les institutions culturelles dominantes. Certaines personnes ne veulent pas du tout y aller, elles en ont assez de ce système et disent : « Je ne veux pas jouer le jeu. » Mais pour l'instant, on n'a pas trop le choix ; il faut essayer de passer par là à tous les niveaux, même si ça peut être frustrant. Le souci, c'est que beaucoup d'artistes me disent qu'ils ne veulent pas travailler avec des galeries, qu'ils ne veulent pas jouer le jeu. Mais pour vivre et réussir, il faut parfois faire avec ce système. Certains choisissent de refuser complètement, mais ça peut mettre leur carrière en danger. Ils sont coincés entre leur éthique et les exigences des institutions. Moi, j'essaie de suivre la méthode du Cheval de Troie. On entre dans le système avec un projet qui colle aux attentes, puis une fois qu'on a cette légitimité, on essaie de prendre plus de liberté. Tant qu'on n'a pas

de nouveaux espaces ou acteurs qui arrivent, comme les agents d'artistes ou d'autres structures qui pourraient changer la donne, on est un peu obligé de se déguiser pour avoir une chance dans ce milieu contrôlé par les galeries. Malheureusement, c'est souvent la seule voie possible pour l'instant.



Audrey : Est-ce que tu as de l'espoir par rapport à ça ?

Lorry : Oui carrément, j'ai beaucoup d'espoir parce que je vois qu'au niveau des nouvelles générations, de ma génération principalement il y a des envies de se renouveler qui sont très fortes, il y a pleins de choses qui émergent. Je pense notamment aux collectifs La Buse qui a beaucoup dénoncé toutes les agressions de racisme de sexisme qu'il y avait en école d'art. Il y a un besoin d'aller chercher le grand public, par exemple avec les réseaux sociaux de réunir tous les artistes et de leur faire prendre conscience qu'ils sont tous dans le même bateau et d'essayer de réunir pour justement trouver des solutions intermédiaires ensemble. Et moi je suis pas du tout pessimiste, je pense que si on en a marre ça finira par changer, enfin j'espère, parce que sinon ça va être compliqué. Oui c'est clair il faut garder l'espoir.

Audrey : Merci, j'ai à peu près terminé avec mes questions mais du coup je voulais te demander quand même si t'avais des choses à rajouter à ce niveau-là pour l'enregistrement ?

Lorry : Est-ce que j'ai quelque chose à ajouter ? Peut-être juste un détail important : les artistes qui font ce genre d'actions, ou même les associations qui créent des projets dans les musées, sont souvent très proches de la mentalité actuelle des activistes. Beaucoup d'artistes veulent mettre en avant des dimensions écologiques et militantes dans leur travail. Je pense qu'il y a toujours un lien à faire entre ces différentes causes, que ce soit pour l'artiste ou non. À part ça, je crois que j'ai tout dit.

Audrey : Merci beaucoup !

Lorry : Merci à toi.

Appendix 4: Veronique's Interview Transcript



Date: July 30, 2024

Duration: 35 minutes

Place: Véronique Moreau's painted art restoration workshop in Paris

Interviewee: Véronique Moreau, 64 is a French freelance restorer of painted works of art for private individuals for the past 5 years, and a volunteer for Urgence Patrimoine.

Spoken language: French

This is a verbatim transcript of Audrey's interview with Véronique, following a telephone conversation in which the main questions asked in the interview were sent to her beforehand.

Véronique : Je disais que je travaillais bénévolement pour Urgence Patrimoine, donc c'est une association similaire à Stéphane Bern, mais moins connue. Et vous avez peut-être vu sur mon profil LinkedIn, non, ce que je faisais avec eux, pour eux, donc l'idée c'est que quand y'a des communes en France qui ont pas beaucoup de moyens, mais y'a des œuvres d'art, des tableaux, sculptures. Moi je fais que tableaux mais Urgence Patrimoine couvre tout type d'œuvres d'art en train de mourir. Et donc moi je m'occupe des tableaux et là j'avais deux tableaux d'église, qui vont repartir dans l'église.

Audrey Ok je vois, ils ne vous fournissent aucune contrepartie ?

Véronique : Alors ils me payent la partie coût des produits chimiques, des produits que j'utilise, et je donne de mon temps. Je trouve que c'est normal parce que c'est le patrimoine et c'est vrai qu'il y a des communes qui ont pas beaucoup. Y'a des œuvres d'art même si ce que j'ai fait là c'était pas très beau, y'en a quatorze dernière, c'est des chemins de croix, c'était une peinture du 19ème mal peinte.

Audrey : Et donc vous travaillez aussi pour des particuliers ?

Véronique : Le reste de particulier, voilà, tout à fait.

Audrey : Et comment vous évaluez dans votre activité la part entre particuliers et Urgence Patrimoine ?

Véronique : Urgence patrimoine vous voyez j'ai eu ces deux tableaux y'a un an. On a un contrat, c'est-à-dire qu'on les fait quand on a le temps. Bon on essaye de faire en sorte que ce ne soit pas plus qu'un an. Les deux je les ai réceptionnés l'année dernière. Les deux je les ai faits sur une année.

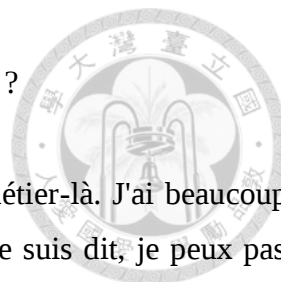
Audrey : Une année ? En général ça vous prend combien de temps ?

Véronique : Là le deuxième, en un mois il était fait. C'est parce que moi j'ai traîné. C'est pas un travail pour un client avec un deadline. Voila. On fait quand on a le temps. Je m'y suis mise avec une stagiaire qui était là. Donc toutes les deux et ça double notre rapidité, et puis avait pas beaucoup de finitions à faire, et c'est souvent les finitions qui prennent le plus de temps. Donc il est fini et emballé, je suis contente.

Audrey : Ça fait combien de temps que vous travaillez dans le domaine de la restauration ?

Véronique : Moi ça fait pas énormément d'années. Moi, ça fait juste 5 ans. Je suis chimiste de formation et j'ai travaillé dans l'industrie. D'abord j'ai travaillé en tant que chimiste dans un laboratoire, pendant trois ans pour le groupe Sanofi, et puis bon ça me plaisait pas tant que ça. Et donc je suis allée de l'autre côté de la barrière, du côté vente de produits chimiques dans des laboratoires. J'ai fait deux carrières dans deux sociétés différentes. Dans une société allemande et une société américaine. Dans les entreprises dans lesquelles j'ai travaillé, j'ai eu beaucoup d'opportunités. Donc je vraiment mon petit chemin. J'ai fait responsable d'une gamme, cheffe produit d'une gamme, responsable de former des vendeurs. Voila ! Puis au bout de 19 ans je trouvais que je végétais et surtout, d'un point de vue salaire je trouvais que ça évoluait pas comme je voulais. Donc je suis allée dans une boîte américaine et j'ai recommencé en tant que vendeuse et j'ai fini responsable marketing à l'international, pour une gamme de produits chimiques.





Audrey : Qu'est-ce qui vous a motivé à vous diriger vers la restauration ?

Véronique : Un Burnout. J'avais pas d'idées préconçues de faire ce métier-là. J'ai beaucoup travaillé dans ma carrière et j'étais focus sur ce que je faisais. Et je me suis dit, je peux pas m'arrêter de travailler. Je me suis remise dans des études. Donc je fais trois années d'étude, et j'ai surtout voulu pratiquer, la partie théorique je connaissais un peu. Comme tout métier d'artisanat il faut pratiquer. C'est ce qu'on appelle aujourd'hui de l'alternance. Je suis pas allée jusqu'au mémoire mais j'ai fait un mini mémoire et j'ai obtenu un certificat de technicien du patrimoine.

Audrey : Pourquoi spécifiquement le patrimoine et les œuvres d'art. Qu'est-ce qui vous a intéressé le plus ?

Véronique : Moi j'aime bien la précision, la rigueur et là c'est extrêmement varié comme métier. C'est-à-dire que là voyez j'ai des réparations de toile. Donc, je fais beaucoup de couture, je suis très coutière, donc ce sont des choses qui me plaisent. Voilà là c'est du mastic, c'est du particulier, c'est la première fois que j'ai un masque. Et puis y'a un côté très protocole, on recherche. Quelle colle, quel vernis, quel ceci ?

Audrey : C'est très expérimental.

Véronique : Voilà c'est ça qui m'a plus. La seule partie qui me gêne toujours, c'est la partie retouche, maintenant ça va mieux. Le dessin c'est pas inné, ça s'apprend, moi-même j'étais bluffée. Finalement ce qu'on apprend c'est que dans toutes les restauratrices, et dans l'atelier c'est ça qui est très bien, y'en a une qui est bonne en dessin, moi je suis la chimiste de l'équipe, et y'en a une autre qui est très bonne en compréhension des colles. Et donc voilà on est complémentaire, c'est pratique.

Audrey : Vous avez fait cet atelier ensemble ?

Véronique : Alors moi je suis arrivée après coup dans l'atelier, ça tombait au moment où je finissais mes études et une place s'est libérée donc j'ai saisi l'occasion. Quelqu'un est parti, en province. C'est sympa.



Audrey : Pour ma retranscription qu'elle âge est-ce que vous avez ? Vous avez moi ?

Véronique : Moi j'ai 64 ans, donc je suis à la retraite, ça me fait un complément de retraite mais c'est bien parce que c'est la passion.

Audrey : Vous donnez un point de vue différent dans mon enquête par rapport à mes autres enquêtés qui sont beaucoup plus jeune. J'aimerais vous posez quelques questions que vous avez déjà commencé à répondre. De quel type de dommages vous êtes habituellement amenées à réparer dans les œuvres ?

Véronique : De tout type, donc ça peut être des déchirures, des toiles complètement détendues, des toiles encrassées ou oxydées, parce que les gens en ont pas pris soin. Donc c'est ça les quatre principales activités.

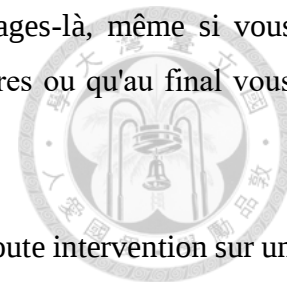
Audrey : Okay, est-ce que vous avez entendu parler d'actes de vandalisme d'art dans les musées et est-ce que vous êtes amenées à réparer des dommages similaires ?

Véronique : Tout à fait, et ça peut arriver. Dans le sens où l'autre jour j'ai eu un tableau et je me demande s'il n'a pas été stocké dans une cuisine parce qu'il y avait du gras, c'était très bizarre ce qu'il y avait dessus. Donc là, il faut trouver un protocole pour enlever le gras sans retirer la peinture. C'était une œuvre contemporaine. On a beaucoup d'œuvres plutôt anciennes. C'est pas fréquent.

Audrey : Aussi le panel d'œuvres anciennes est quand même plus grand.

Véronique : Plus grand mais à la fois, on pense que tout ce qui est nouveau, avec tous les nouveaux matériaux qui sont utilisés dans le moderne aujourd'hui, c'est pas être facile. Donc on dit toujours qu'on préfère restaurer l'ancien parce que le future ça va pas être facile. Parce que les artistes mélangent différentes matières, sans prêter attention au support. C'est un petit peu fait à l'arrache. Avant il y en avait une plus grande attention au protocole dans les œuvres. Et sur le moderne, moi j'en ai fait très peu et on est bien contents de pas trop en faire. Tout ce qui est peinture acrylique on en a très peu et maintenant c'est la majorité.

Audrey : D'accord. Ok. Est-ce que vous considérez que ces dommages-là, même si vous arrivez à les réparer, ont des conséquences au long terme sur les œuvres ou qu'au final vous arrivez à leur redonner une seconde jeunesse ?



Véronique : Le but c'est de leur redonner une seconde jeunesse. Mais toute intervention sur un tableau à un effet sur le tableau. Mais je parle pas des interventions qui consistent à retirer un peu de jaunissement, ou de saleté naturels y'a toujours un effet. Après ça dépend de comment est-ce qu'on arrive à l'ôter de la toile. Quand ça doit pas arriver naturellement sur un tableau, y'a toujours un effet, c'est pas anodin.

Audrey : Est-ce que vous considérez que c'est toujours nécessaire d'ôter ces effets du temps ou des actions humaines sur les tableaux ?

Véronique : Bah ça abîme quand même la vision de l'œuvre si on la nettoie pas. Alors moi je parle de la nettoyer de la crasse, je parle pas de ce que peuvent lancer les activistes. C'est comme ça que vous les appelez ?

Audrey : Oui activistes, militants.

Véronique : Nous on trouve ça dommage quand on ne voit plus ce que le peintre a voulu faire. Oui c'est ça que j'ai oublié. Il nous arrive des tableaux qui ont déjà été restaurés sur lesquels les restaurations ont été mal faites avec des repeints débordants. C'est-à-dire que voilà un trou, un petit trou. Et le restaurateur il a comblé. Il y a eu une vague de restaurateurs qui comblait les trous il y a 80 ans et qui après repeignait. Et puis nous on fait quand même attention, on a une éthique. C'est pas vieux l'éthique pour la restauration, la déontologie de la restauration ça date de 1956, avant les gens ils restauraient comme ils voulaient. Donc il nous arrive de défaire, ce qu'on appelle des repeints disgracieux, souvent réalisés avec des peintures à l'huile, qui sont extrêmement difficiles à défaire, y'a des restaurations qui parfois cachent des mains, qui sont extrêmement aberrantes et donc nous on essaye de redonner corps à l'œuvre. Vraiment, de retrouver ce que le peintre voulait faire.

Audrey : Ok, donc c'est vraiment retourner à l'essence de l'œuvre.

Véronique : Voilà ! Ce qu'on veut c'est retrouver ce que le peintre a fait et pas ce que les 35 personnes qui sont intervenus entre les deux ont fait. Quand on a une grosse lacune, là y'a deux techniques dans notre déontologie. Dans les musées, ils font ce qu'on appelle des retouches illusionnistes ou neutres, qui, on voit qu'il s'est passé quelque chose et on refait pas. Nous pour des particuliers, en général on essaie de refaire ce que le peintre a voulu faire. Donc ça les repeints ça arrive très souvent. On pourrait dire que c'est comme le vandalisme parce que c'est des personnes qui ont saccagé une œuvre. En réfléchissant un petit peu, on peut faire le rapprochement.

Audrey : Je vois mais la plupart de des actes de vandalisme artistique dans les musées ne touchent pas l'œuvre mais la vitre. Après, il peut y avoir des gouttes qui giclent ou y'a des cas ou c'est les cadres de l'œuvre qui ont été affectés parce que des militants se sont englués au cadre.

Véronique : Oui bah oui. Je vois pas l'intérêt de ces gens qui font ça.

Audrey : Et donc vous considérez que ces actes militants là comme les mauvaises restauration affectent les efforts de préservation que vous pouvez avoir, comme les restaurateurs et les musées, du patrimoine culturel ?

Véronique : Oui. Moi je comprends pas ces actes-là. Si ça ne touche que la vitre c'est comme ça mais je sais qu'il y a des cas différents et les rares fois où j'entends parler de ces actes, je les comprends pas.

Audrey : Est-ce du coup la réponse à ces actes serait de renforcer la protection de ces œuvres d'art. Pour Le Louvre par exemple, la réponse a été sécuritaire. Après des actions contre la Joconde, le musée a investi plusieurs millions d'euros dans sa sécurisation après des actes de vandalisme dans les années 2000. Du coup, est-ce que c'est une bonne idée de renforcer la sécurité des œuvres ?

Véronique : La sécurité, quand ? Au passage ? Quand on rentre dans le musée ?

Audrey : La sécurité, soit passage soit au niveau des œuvres. Par exemple, parfois juste une ligne qui, qui est inscrite sur le sol "ne pas dépasser" et des gens peuvent quand même les dépasser.

Véronique : C'est vrai que c'est dommage de mettre des sécurités autour de l'œuvre parce que ça gâche la perspective quand on va dans une exposition pour voir une œuvre. Moi, je pense effectivement que c'est au passage. C'est-à-dire quand on vient au Louvre on passe au scan. Je comprends pas que y'a des gens encore qui arrivent à passer.

Audrey : Pour la Joconde cette année la soupe était cachée dans une gourde d'eau, on trouve toujours des techniques, c'est pour ça que c'est difficile d'empêcher les gens de faire ça.

Véronique : Dans les avions c'est ça. On peut plus rentrer avec son liquide, parce qu'il y avait des explosions à l'époque.

Audrey : Par rapport au militantisme dans les musées. Est-ce que vous pensez que ces actes, ils ont une dimension artistique, par exemple, si c'est de l'artivisme, ou si ça fait bouger le monde de l'art ?

Véronique : Je vois pas pourquoi ça ferait bouger le monde de l'art. Donc...

Audrey : Parce que l'objectif des militants c'est de se demander, le musée c'est une entité qui est intouchable, qui préserve en fait le passé et la y'a des bouleversements écologiques qui sont grands, et donc, des militants ou des militantes, veulent montrer que le plus important c'est de préserver la vie d'abord. Ça fait partie des justifications. Après j'ai pas envie d'influencer votre jugement.

Véronique : Je comprends pas. Honnêtement je suis désolée mais je comprends pas qu'on puisse penser ça parce que je vois pas quel est l'impact que ça produit aux gens de préserver le passé.

Audrey : C'est pas uniquement ça, le but il est très publicitaire, c'est juste une question de se dire ça va permettre d'avoir beaucoup plus de publicité et puis l'idée je crois c'est de critiquer l'aspect figé des musées et dire que le monde de l'art doit s'adapter au temps contemporain.



Véronique : Mais pourquoi en détruisant une œuvre ancienne ?

Audrey : Parce que dans la plupart des cas, l'œuvre est pas détruite, après y'a des errements de communication, par exemple, les activistes au Royaume-Uni qui se sont glués au cadre du 18ème siècle ne pensaient pas causer du dommage à l'œuvre, mais d'autres sont allés jusqu'à demander à des restaurateurs et restauratrices si leur action pouvait endommager l'œuvre. Donc y'a pas toujours une volonté de vandaliser l'œuvre. Mais vous, qu'est-ce que vous emploieriez pour décrire ces actions. C'est vraiment du vandalisme ou autre chose que du vandalisme ?

Véronique : Je suis désolée pour moi, je bugge, pour moi, c'est vraiment de vandalisme. Y'a d'autres choses à faire ?

Audrey : Comme quoi ?

Véronique : Non mais s'ils veulent faire de l'art, s'ils veulent faire avancer les choses. Je sais pas quelles sont les idées. Quelles sont leurs idées de militantisme. Oui. Le monde de l'art il bouge. Mais pourquoi est qu'on devrait faire bouger le monde en détruisant ou abimant des œuvres anciennes ? Je comprends pas ça.

Audrey : Dans la plupart des cas, elles sont ni détruites ni abimées et c'est un mouvement perpétuel de destruction et de recommencement.

Véronique : Et pourquoi ils créent pas quelque chose de complètement différent.

Audrey : Peut-être parce qu'ils ne sont pas des artistes eux-mêmes mais des militants ou qu'ils n'auraient pas autant de visibilité.

Véronique : Je vois pas d'objectif ou je comprends pas leur objectif plutôt, ils en ont un mais, ouais, je comprends pas.

Audrey : Est-ce que vous considérez que les médias influencent la perception publique de ces incidents, là on a eu des titres chocs de médias comme Le Point par exemple ou de ministres. Donc est-ce que vous pensez qu'ils peuvent influencer votre vision des choses ?

Véronique : Non, pas du tout. Je prends l'acte par lui-même, après je regarde par les médias. Après les médias, ils font de tout, ils font un rien de tout. Donc je suis pas spécialement influencée par les médias. Moi peut-être en termes de restauration, je trouve ça dommage, je me dis mince, il va être compliqué de retrouver ce que l'artiste a vous faire là.

Audrey : Vous êtes connectée au mouvement international de restauration ? Ou vous êtes beaucoup plus connectée à ce qui se fait en France. Votre déontologie elle est active au niveau global ?

Véronique : Oui puisque qu'elle a été faite en Italie parce que c'est quand même le siège, et donc cette déontologie dont je vous parlais, elle a été créée en 56 par Cesare Brandi et donc, cette déontologie-là, tous les restaurateurs qui travaillent, et qui sont vraiment des restaurateurs. Parce qu'on voit beaucoup de gens qui se considèrent restaurateurs qui ne le sont pas. On voit arriver des tableaux avec des pansements.

Audrey : Non c'est pas possible.

Véronique : Si bien sûr. On voit arriver de toute chose. Il y en a toujours des restaurateurs qui font des restaurations à la papa, comme on dit, dans leur garage. Mais maintenant, tous les produits qu'on utilise sont réversibles, réversible, c'est-à-dire que le prochain restaurateur pourra l'éliminer. Tout a été fait pour que ça puisse être enlevé et restauré. Nous on arrive à un moment où il y a eu une grosse déontologie. Au 19ème siècle y'a beaucoup de choses qui se sont faites mal, mal restaurées. Parce qu'au 19ème siècle c'était la révolution de l'industrie, on a sorti beaucoup de nouveaux produits. On a commencé à utiliser des peintures à l'huile, les toiles ont changé, y'a des artistes qui ont voulu peindre sans préparation. Donc tous les tableaux qu'on voit arriver du 19ème, on grince des dents, parce qu'on sait que ça va être beaucoup plus compliqué à restaurer. Un tableau du 18ème est beaucoup plus facile. Parce qu'avant la révolution industrielle, les peintres avaient des bonnes pratiques, ils utilisaient des bonnes toiles, des pigments de bonne qualité, et voilà, tout était vraiment de qualité. Quand la révolution industrielle est arrivée, ça a amené sur le marché des produits moins chers et plus facile d'utilisation. C'est comme le vêtement, avant c'était de très bonne qualité.

Audrey : Oui c'est vrai qu'on est au paroxysme de ce qu'avait commencé la révolution industrielle.



Véronique : Donc au 19ème les tableaux étaient mal restaurés avec des mauvais produits.

Audrey : C'est quoi actuellement les enjeux de la préservation de patrimoine pour vous ? C'est quoi les risques qu'on encoure ?

Véronique : Les risques à quels niveaux ?

Audrey : Au niveau des toiles, et peut-être niveau des institutions, des musée, sur les plans politiques.

Véronique : Les musées ils ont la même chose que nous mais ils ont des matériaux beaucoup plus sophistiqués et des protocoles plus lourds. Parce qu'on travaille pas sur les mêmes toiles. C'était quoi votre question déjà ?

Audrey : Sur les enjeux de la préservation du patrimoine. Et des risques au niveau politique, au niveau des peintures. Moi ce que j'ai vu aussi c'est des mouvements d'artistes qui remettent en cause l'obligation de restaurer. Par exemple, je suis allée voir une exposition en Corée du Sud sur le sujet de la moisissure et des altérations du temps en général sur les œuvres. Et comment le temps et la moisissure et la poussière étaient des parties prenantes des œuvres. En gros ça remettait en cause la vision dominante de la préservation des œuvres et se dire que la poussière, la moisissure, ça fait partie du patrimoine. Il me semble que c'est Galas Poras-Kim.

Véronique : Oui. Pourquoi pas. Le problème c'est que c'est pas notre déontologie. Je reviens à ça. Nous on dit toujours que notre métier c'est comme un médecin. Dans le sens où quand on voit arriver le tableau, on tâtonne, on examine, on respire, on fait des tests. Et puis après on établit un diagnostic. Ce tableau là il a tel problème. C'est comme si un médecin il voit arriver quelqu'un de malade et il dit bah on va voir comme ça va continuer, comme vous allez devenir encore plus malade. Voilà. Donc après voilà, c'est de l'art moderne. C'est comme si ici je laissais la moisissure. Bon, nous on est là pour soigner.

Audrey : D'accord. Je comprends



Véronique : On nous appelle des médecins de l'art. Mais c'est vrai que c'est un vrai diagnostic, on fait un protocole, on fait des soins, comme des médecins. On n'est pas du tout des artistes, on est là pour que les œuvres ne pourrissent pas.

Audrey : C'est belle réponse et j'aurais une dernière question. En fait j'étudie aussi des cas de performances artistiques qui sont à la croisée du militantisme et de l'art pour dénoncer des entreprises climaticides. Comme par exemple le financement d'un prix de portraits au Royaume-Uni par BP, British Petroleum. C'est des performances qui sont organisées par des groupes militants qui prennent place dans l'espace public. Vous pensez de ce type de performances ?

Véronique : Pourquoi mélanger l'art à ... pour moi je mets vraiment l'art à côté de la politique ou à l'environnement. Bon c'est vrai que nous on utilise des produits chimiques, on est pas très écolos. Mais je peux pas comprendre ce genre de choses.

Audrey : Okay je vois.

Véronique : Et pourtant j'ai pas été éduquée dans une famille d'artistes. Rien de tout. C'est important de savoir que ma mère n'a jamais travaillé et mon père était petit comptable. Niveau social c'est pas ras des pâquerettes mais bon j'ai travaillé toute ma vie, dur. Et donc je peux pas comprendre ce genre de choses. Je pense que ma génération fait que.

Audrey : Mais votre réponse reste intéressante en elle-même parce que vous faites partie des gens qui ont une opinion tranchée sur le sujet. Est-ce que vous avez quelque chose à ajouter sur le sujet ?

Véronique : Non, non, non. C'est intéressant. Quand vous m'avez appelé j'ai essayé de faire des recherches sur internet, parce que je lis dans la presse des choses sur les œuvres d'art qui sont détruites. Mais je connaissais pas grand-chose.

Audrey : Dans ce cas merci m'avoir accordé un peu de votre temps pour l'entretien !

Véronique : Pas de problème, pas de problème.

Appendix 5: Rachel's Interview Transcript



Date: July 31st, 2024

Duration: 54 minutes

Place: Online with zoom

Interviewee: Rachel, 22, is a French full-time activist involved in the Riposte Alimentaire campaign, who participated in direct actions targeting artworks.

Spoken language: French

This is a verbatim transcript of Audrey's interview with Rachel, following a quick call with an explanation of the search but no questions sent in advance.

Audrey : En tout cas merci beaucoup d'être là, je sais pas si t'as pu parcourir le document que je t'ai envoyé et comprendre un peu mieux ma recherche et en quoi ça m'intéresse de m'entretenir avec toi ?

Rachel : Je l'ai regardé mais je t'avouerais que je l'ai parcouru mais je t'avoue que j'ai pas tout lu avec attention, je suis désolée.

Audrey : Du coup, tu veux que je te fasse un petit rappel ou ça ira ?

Rachel : Ouais, je veux bien. Comme ça je suis sûre de répondre à tes questions et de bien t'aider quoi.

Audrey : Super. Alors du coup, moi ce qui m'intéresse, c'est la porosité entre les questions de vandalisme d'art et d'artivisme. C'est de savoir si le vandalisme d'art et plus globalement le militantisme qui s'attaque à l'art apporte quelque chose au monde de l'art et pourquoi est-ce que c'est une technique utilisée ? Parce que j'ai fait pas mal de recherches sur la radicalité militante et notamment des papiers sur les questions de violence dans les mouvements écologistes et en

quoi ça peut avoir un intérêt d'utiliser la violence dans la complémentarité des tactiques. C'est du Andreas Malm que tu dois connaître probablement. Et voilà, c'est à peu près le cœur de mes recherches. Et du coup, dans ce cadre-là, moi j'interview à la fois des acteurs et actrices du monde de l'art pour un peu connaître leurs points de vue sur les questions du vandalisme d'art mais aussi directement des militants et des militantes pour savoir si elles ou ils se reconnaissent avec les titres des médias, sur les mots très forts de vandalisme qui sont utilisés, alors que par exemple les Riposte Alimentaire se contente d'utiliser les mots d'action ou de campagne. Ce qui m'intéresse un peu le décalage au niveau du discours mais aussi du coup tout ce qui est façonné. Ces tactiques-là et un peu les retombées transnationales de ça par exemple les postes alimentaires qui fait partie du réseau A22. Donc voilà un peu dans les grandes lignes, c'est très compliqué de résumer une recherche qui commence à être un peu longue déjà mais j'espère que tu comprends mieux un peu pourquoi est-ce que je suis intéressée pour m'entretenir avec toi.

Rachel : Oui bien sûr et je pense que j'ai pas mal de trucs là que j'ai envie de te raconter déjà du coup.

Audrey : Ok, super. Bon mon objectif c'est que l'entretien il soit semi-directif mais d'un autre côté j'ai pas envie de te prendre trop de temps, et je sais que les entretiens semi-directifs peuvent être assez long. Donc mon objectif c'est de rester assez focus sur mes questions mais quand même de pas trop intervenir. Donc je peux commencer très rapidement par des questions socio-démographiques qui m'aident en fait pour répertorier mes recherches et mes interlocuteurs et interlocutrices du coup si tu peux me décrire ton âge, ta profession et ton niveau d'étude.

Rachel : Bien sûr, j'ai 22 ans, dans la vie ce que je fais c'est que je travaille pour la compagnie Riposte Alimentaire. Là j'ai bientôt terminé mon travail donc je suis aussi en recherche d'emploi à côté mais c'est ce que j'ai fait ces derniers mois et surtout depuis un an à temps plein. Et moi j'ai fait le choix de pas faire d'étude pour me consacrer à mon militantisme qui à qui de base n'était pas forcément la résistance civile mais plutôt un parti politique.

Audrey : Et du coup ton militantisme, enfin toi il vient d'où ? Comment tu as découvert les thématiques du militantisme social et écologiste et voilà ça vient d'où plutôt de ta famille, de l'école, de ton entourage ?

Rachel : Alors moi je suis issue d'une famille de profs du coup assez politisée à gauche, et

assez tôt notamment au collège. Mes parents, c'est pas qu'ils m'ont politisé mais ça parlait pas mal notamment de sociologie à la maison, de politique, de philo, et donc forcément ça m'a intéressé et j'ai voulu militer à partir de la fin du collège, aussi parce que j'avais un prof d'histoire géo en troisième qui était politisé. Et en terminale, du coup moi j'ai passé mon bac en 2020, il y a eu un mouvement contre une réforme des retraites qui est la réforme par points à l'époque. Et du coup, moi ça m'a beaucoup intéressé et j'ai voulu aller en manifestation, à ce moment-là j'ai rencontré un parti, que tu dois sans doute pas connaître, c'est la gauche révolutionnaire, qui est dans la France Insoumise en gros. Et du coup j'ai commencé à militer quand j'avais 17 ans. Ensuite j'ai rejoint Dernière Rénovation.

Audrey : Et tu viens d'où géographiquement ? Plutôt milieu urbain ou Rural ?

Rachel : Moi je suis Rouanèse. Aussi entre temps j'ai rencontré Extinction Rébellion avant la création de Dernière Rénovation parce qu'il y a eu dans la ville un incendie d'une usine qui s'appelle Lubrizol et en fait XR a fait pas mal d'actions au niveau national mais à Rouen pour dénoncer le drame écologique et social que ça représente et du coup, y'a eu des grosses actions de résistance civiles dans ma ville. Rouen c'est pas non plus une petite ville mais y'avait pas forcément eu d'actions de résistance civiles arrestations. Y'en avait pas beaucoup. Si en manifestations, mais pas plus que ça. Du coup ça m'avait un peu piqué, je sais pas trop pour en penser, et donc j'avais décidé de rencontrer les militants d'XR et leur poser la question de pourquoi ils faisaient ça. Et ça m'avait pas mal convaincu, et du coup j'avais rencontré pas mal de gens qui avaient beaucoup de choses à raconter sur le militantisme, et je comprenais mieux en quoi à ce moment il fallait faire de la résistance civile. Pourquoi est-ce que ça suffisait plus de faire des manifestations légales et voilà aussi quand j'étais au lycée il y avait tous les trucs, des marches pour le climat le vendredi, c'était vraiment aussi ma génération au lycée, donc forcément c'était un peu un terreau fertile à me permettre de découvrir à mon rythme ce type de militantisme.

Audrey : Ok trop je crois et du coup ça a commencé tôt. Toi du coup ton premier engagement c'était plus dans le parti la gauche révolutionnaire ?

Rachel : Oui et après j'ai rencontré XR et après, via XR j'ai découvert notre campagne sœur à Dernière Rénovation mais en Italie qui s'appelle Ultima Generazione et je trouvais ça hyper stylé de voir des gens qui étaient vraiment très déterminés à faire des grèves de la fin jusqu'à

se faire hospitalisées, à bloquer la route, en s'attachant. XR faisait ça mais pas que. Et du coup après vu Alizée sauter sur le filet de Roland Garros, et je me suis dit ok, ça existe en France et du coup comme ça j'ai rencontré Dernière Rénovation et depuis, je n'ai pas quitté cette campagne. Elle a changé de nom et s'appelle Riposte Alimentaire. Mais j'y suis toujours.

Audrey : Du coup je t'ai rendu compte que la résistance civile était plus utile que l'action dans les partis et c'est ça qui t'a fait un peu virer le bord quoi ?

Rachel : Il y avait un peu de ça d'un point de vue assez égoïste, dans le sens que moi je me suis présentée à des élections municipales et départementales avec la France Insoumise et du coup ça marchait pas trop. Et du coup je continuais de me politiser et j'avais conscience de mes privilèges. En étant une jeune femme blanche française, ça me permettait de me faire arrêter sans avoir trop de soucis. Il y a beaucoup d'autres personnes qui voudraient faire ce type d'action mais qui peuvent pas parce que c'est OQTF direct ou alors c'est une garde à vue atroce parce que ce sont des personnes racisées et qui vont avoir beaucoup plus de violence que moi. Déjà pour moi c'est pas une partie de plaisir mais ça va. Du coup je me suis dit que c'était aussi un peu mon rôle de prendre ce genre de risque puisque pour moi, avec les privilèges que j'ai, c'est plus simple donc c'est un peu dans l'ordre des choses que de faire ça comme ça.

Audrey : Non mais tout à fait moi j'avais interviewé des militants d'XR il y a quelques années qui m'expliquaient que les personnes qui venaient aussi d'une catégorie socioculturelle plus aisée étaient beaucoup plus en proie à faire des actions radicales et se faire arrêter. Alors que les personnes avec moins de ressources ou qui avaient encore à payer des amendes étaient plus réticentes avec la radicalité ou à recommencer. Donc ça peut faire une transition pour discuter de tes actions et celles que tu mènes à Dernière Rénovation et maintenant Riposte Alimentaire. Toi concrètement comment est-ce que tu agis, et à quelle fréquence ? Même si c'est aussi ton job.

Rachel : Ouais mon job c'est pas d'aller en action, je pense que ce serait très bizarre que ce soit formulé de cette manière.

Audrey : Pas uniquement les actions, aussi l'organisation et la vie du mouvement.

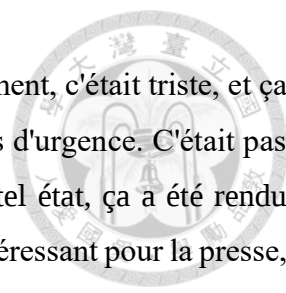
Rachel : Ouais mon travail c'est plus l'organisation du mouvement et aussi du juridique, et du

porte-parolat, du coup organiser un peu la com du porte-parolat par les gens. En tout cas ouais, moi j'ai commencé Dernière Rénovation par une action, en fait on a un parcours à Dernière Rénovation qui est de faire une réunion publique, pour mettre tout le monde sur le même niveau de connaissance pour s'assurer que les gens sont bien alignés quand ils rentrent en action avec la campagne et pour éviter des regrets et des incompréhensions. Y'a aussi une journée d'équipe et de formation à l'action de résistance civile avant de faire des actions pour être sûr que les gens sont bien informés, que soit sur l'action ou sur le juridique, le droit. Du coup j'ai commencé par faire une action en juillet 2022.

Audrey : Et la décision des actions, elle est prise comment ? Collectivement ?

Rachel : la campagne organise plusieurs dates d'actions et après il y a un formulaire où on peut s'inscrire et en fait on peut s'inscrire à une action si on a fait une journée de formation à l'action. Sans quoi c'est pas possible, on peut pas prendre un rôle arrêtable, parce qu'on considère que c'est trop risqué juridiquement. Et du coup après on s'inscrit à une date qui nous va. Donc on s'inscrit à une date proche des week-ends. Y'a différents rôles. Donc pour les blocages de route il y a des rôles de bloqueur, y'a aussi des rôles de personnes en désescalade qui vont aller parler aux automobilistes pour expliquer que ce qu'on fait que c'est pas du tout contre eux, c'est pas contre la voiture il n'y a rien, ça n'a rien à voir genre on comprend que c'est chian d'être bloqué et que ça va durer maximum une demi-heure et qu'après y'aura plus personne parce qu'on sera tous en garde à vue. En gros ça et voilà, et après des gens vont prendre des images des actions et voilà et après on fait la veille de l'action, un brief action et là on va se mettre d'accord sur typiquement qui va rentrer en premier sur la route, qui va entrer en dernier. Comme ça tout est cadré. Le but est d'avoir très peu de charge mentale le jour de l'action parce que c'est déjà très stressant. Et aussi, on fait ce qu'on appelle les consensus, par exemple si jamais une ambulance arrive qu'est-ce qu'on fait ? Là il y a une part de consensus parce que tout le monde est d'accord. Mais en vrai on est un peu directifs sur des questions si graves où là l'idée c'est de partir vite pour laisser passer l'ambulance et c'est aussi le rôle des personnes en désescalade qui ne sont pas assises sur la route mais qui vont aller checker plus loin si y'a pas un véhicule d'urgence bloqué pour lui permettre de passer le blocage.

Audrey : Je sais que Letzte Generation ils avaient fait débat parce que justement ils avaient pas laissé passer une ambulance. Est-ce que vous du coup vous avez appris de ces erreurs d'autres groupes du réseau A22 ?



Rachel : Ce qu'il s'est passé c'est que la personne était morte effectivement, c'était triste, et ça dans le réseau A22 c'est pas une question, on laisse passer les véhicules d'urgence. C'était pas une question. Ce qu'il s'est passé c'est que la personne était dans un tel état, ça a été rendu public après, dans un communiqué de presse, seulement c'était moins intéressant pour la presse, ça allait pas dans le sens de criminaliser les militants écolos. Mais en fait la personne est dans un tel état qu'elle serait morte avant d'arriver à l'hôpital, même s'il n'y avait pas de blocage. En fait le trajet entre le lieu et l'hôpital le plus proche était déjà trop long. Et en fait il y a eu un blocage de route mais ça a rien changé au fait qu'elle serait morte avant d'arriver. Ça a été rendu public que c'était trop tard.

Audrey : Mais ça a quand même été utilisé pour décrédibiliser Letzte Generation.

Rachel : Évidemment que ça a été utilisé comme ça, mais c'est pas vraiment ce qu'il s'est passé et c'est aussi pour ça qu'on met en point d'honneur d'avoir des personnes qui vont checker les ambulances. En fait les ambulances y'a des sirènes au loin. Et parfois on a un doute, peut-être que c'est des sirènes de polices. Mais tant pis si le blocage aura duré moins longtemps. C'est quoi 10 minutes de moins sur un blocage, nous on fait ça pour sauver des vies humaines. Évidemment que la question ne se pose pas. Et donc c'est sûr qu'on laisse passer les véhicules d'urgence. Après y'a d'autres niveaux de consensus, par exemple si un automobiliste devient violent et commence à taper quelqu'un, qu'est-ce qu'on fait, comment on réagit. Du coup on met aussi en place des protocoles. On a à chaque fois un binôme en action qui prend soin de nous, et on prend soin de lui. Voilà avec des mots d'urgence pour lever le blocage, avec tout un tas de process concrets entre nous, de base des process précréées par la campagne. Après si les gens ont de meilleures idées dans une équipe d'action, c'est aussi libre à eux de les utiliser, l'idée c'est que ce soit le plus safe possible et qu'il n'y ait pas de blessés. D'ailleurs ça arrive rarement, cela dit c'est déjà arrivé qu'un policier sur un blocage de route arrête un automobiliste et le place en garde à vue pour des faits de violence envers les militants mais aussi envers un journaliste.

Audrey : Ah bon ?

Rachel : Ouais un automobiliste qui avait jeté par terre un journaliste de Brut, Rémi Busine il me semble. Donc les violences commises sont plutôt du côté automobilistes et policiers que

militants parce que dans tous les cas nous on est non violents.

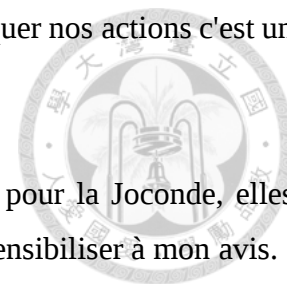
Audrey : Oui et l'idée c'est que les personnes soient pas ciblées. C'est très intéressant mais ma question initiale c'est comment vous décidez des campagnes à mener. Pourquoi est-ce que vous décidez de viser la Joconde ou de faire des blocages de route ? Comment est prise la décision initiale ?

Rachel : Ça c'est la campagne qui décide. C'est vrai que quand on décide d'une action, il y a deux types d'actions les actions. Celles qu'on dit à haut potentiel médiatique, donc par exemple l'outrage de la Joconde. Toutes les actions où y'a des œuvres d'art, les perturbations d'événements sportifs, là qui vont être des actions uniques. On va pas les répéter plusieurs fois, ou rarement, mais pas le même jour au même endroit par exemple. Et qui vont avoir pour but de nous inviter sur les plateaux télé pour qu'on puisse parler de la revendication et ensuite du coup de pouvoir accueillir de nouvelles personnes en réunion publique. D'un autre côté, on a des actions, qu'on dit, de *Rinse and Repeat*, qui sont des actions de perturbation par exemple des blocages de route, et donc là c'est des actions où en fait les gens quand ils s'inscrivent sur des formulaires d'action, c'est plutôt ces actions-là qu'on va faire là où les autres sont plus confidentielles, du coup c'est un peu différent comme procédure de recrutement. Et ça du coup, c'est l'organisation qui décide de comment sont faites les choses. Mais après, évidemment que les gens sont souverains de ne pas faire l'action, et ce jusqu'au dernier moment, avant l'action même pendant l'action on peut la quitter. Par exemple pour une action style Joconde c'est difficile de la quitter à la moitié du jet de soupe. Mais pour les autres, on sait qu'on peut partir à tout moment, parce qu'on sait que ça peut être effrayant et le but c'est que les gens soient à l'aise avec leur décision et ne regrettent pas. Donc ça c'est quelque chose d'important.

Audrey : Ok je vois merci pour ta réponse. Pour les actions type Joconde, c'est quoi les buts ? sensibilisation ? mobilisation ? dénonciation ?

Rachel : là ça va plutôt être de chercher un buzz médiatique pour ensuite aller sur les plateaux et ensuite expliquer l'action et pouvoir parler de la revendication et la résistance civile. En soi nos actions, on fait très peu de travail. Bah si on a des discours mais ça s'arrête là en termes d'explications. Parfois ça nous arriverait quand on faisait des blocages de route en centre-ville parisien de tracter auprès des passants. Mais ça c'est plus marginal. C'est vrai qu'on l'a fait ça marchait bien mais sur le périphérique on peut pas faire ça. L'idée c'est pouvoir nous donner

un boulevard médiatique pour qu'après dans les médias on puisse expliquer nos actions c'est un moyen plutôt en deux temps.



Audrey : Je vois, mais du coup Sacha et Marie-Juliette par exemple pour la Joconde, elles avaient quand même porté un message choc qui ont aussi pour but de sensibiliser à mon avis.

Rachel : Oui mais ça s'arrête là sur l'action. Évidemment qu'on fait un discours et on envoie en même temps un communiqué de presse, on fait des postes sur nos réseaux pour expliquer un peu plus dans des détails. Mais là où il y a des actions par exemple d'Extinction Rébellion qui fait limite des conférences sur des lieux de l'action. Nous on va pas jusqu'à ce niveau-là. L'idée c'est vraiment de faire des actions courtes, chocs et en fait tout le reste de ce qu'on va faire entre les actions va être d'organiser des réunions publiques, de parler dans les médias pour expliquer un peu plus en détails, c'est vraiment plus en deux temps mais c'est sûr qu'on fait des discours avec des messages, avec des t-shirts pour expliquer quand même ce que c'est et qu'il y a un lien logique entre l'action et les revendications. Parce que juste deux personnes jettent de la soupe sur la Joconde, je pense que ça ne marche pas les gens ne comprendront pas et c'est sûr qu'il faut quand même avoir un minimum d'explications.

Audrey : C'est clair. Mais toi tu as déjà participé à ce type d'actions qui a impliqué du vandalisme d'art ?

Rachel : Oui plusieurs fois.

Audrey : Est-ce que tu pourrais me décrire l'une d'elles et ce qui t'as motivé à y participer.

Rachel : Alors en novembre 2022, juste après les Tournesols de Van Gogh de Just Stop Oil, j'avais jeté de la peinture sur une statue à la fondation Pinot. Donc c'était vraiment dans la même mouvance. Et plus récemment, au musée d'Orsay, j'ai collé un auto-collant sur les Coquelicots de Monet. En fait ça représentait le même tableau mais dans une version à + 4°C pour montrer l'horreur du réchauffement climatique. C'est aussi pour ça qu'on avait choisi un tableau impressionniste sublime, on va dire, la nature pour montrer qu'avec +4°C ce sera plus qu'un bon souvenir cette nature si verdoyante. Et voilà. Du coup, oui, j'ai fait ces 2 actions et ce qui motivé à les faire c'est que ce sont des actions très parlantes. Et notamment la première que j'avais faite à la fondation Pinault. On était deux. L'idée. C'était un cavalier. L'idée c'est que

la première personne escaladait le cavalier et lui mettait un t-shirt que nous on porte habituellement et la deuxième jetait de la peinture sur la statue. Et ensuite on s'est attachés à la statue. La police est intervenue mais ils savaient pas trop quoi faire pendant un temps et il y a plein de gens qui sont venus nous poser des questions, et là on a pu vraiment discuter avec les gens et c'est cool. C'était le premier arrondissement de paris en pleine journée, et on a quand même eu beaucoup de soutien. Moi après pendant mon procès, vraiment, la manière dont on l'a amené avec mon avocate, c'était vraiment aussi de parler de performance artistique, et de le voir comme ça. Et en entre-temps, à cette période-là j'étais suivie par une réalisatrice qui faisait mon portrait et en fait on me discutait quand même beaucoup du rapport à l'art et tout et c'est vrai que, voir ça comme une performance artistique, c'est quelque chose qui a intéressé aussi pas mal d'artistes. J'avais fait aussi une interview pour Arte Radio au Palais de Tokyo et c'est vrai que c'est aussi un peu orienté comme ça, l'utilisation de l'art, et comme quoi l'art est politique. Et en fait je trouve que c'est aussi très intéressant parce que d'une part ça s'inscrit dans un courant qui fleurit parce que les suffragettes faisaient déjà ce type d'actions. Mais c'est sûr que ça fait aussi écho à certains combats réussis passés mais aussi à l'utilisation de l'art comme moyen politique. C'est là que je trouve que c'est très intéressant parce que moi je trouve ça beau et en plus je trouve ça intéressant purement parlant de faire ce type d'actions. En plus d'être pour moi une réussite puisque ça fait parler de nous, on a un espace médiatique pour s'exprimer qu'on a pas quand on fait des pétitions, quand on fait des marches pour le climat.

Audrey : C'est clair, j'avais vu en fait les retombées de l'action de la Joconde ça fait plus de 330 % de mentions de la sécurité sociale de l'alimentation durable en l'espace de 3 à 4 mois, ce qui est énorme en termes honnêtement. Tu devances complètement mes questions et aussi tu fais partie des personnes qui ont un point de vue tranché sur l'existence d'une vertu artistique dans les actions qui ciblent des œuvres d'art. Mais concernant l'acte précis de mettre un autocollant sur la peinture de Monet, ça a aussi une dimension artistique ? Ou pour toi c'était uniquement l'action que t'avais fait sur la statue de Pinault qui avait une dimension artistique ?

Rachel : ça aussi évidemment ça avait une dimension artistique, parce qu'après j'ai aussi déclamé un discours où là toutes les autres salles se sont vidées pour venir dans cette salle-là, et il y avait même des gens qui sont venus me parler. Aussi, il a fallu appeler les pompiers parce que j'avais la main collée au mur. Mais en soit j'aurais pu me décoller toute seule. Et en fait c'était hyper intéressant parce que j'ai l'impression que là où c'est sûr certains conservateurs vont crier au scandale, les gens qui étaient au musée, qui n'étaient pas des jeunes bobos écolos,

étaient quand même très intéressés de savoir pourquoi je faisais ça. J'ai déclamé le discours une fois et après j'ai discuté avec les gens et je trouve ça vraiment très intéressant parce qu'en vrai il n'y avait pas de dégradation commise parce qu'il y avait une vitre de protection évidemment, je me suis collée au mur, mais c'était en fait très léger. Et du coup c'est vraiment choc, et c'est drôle parce que quelques semaines avant, il y avait une artiste qui s'en était pris à L'origine du monde en taguant #MeToo. Et c'était rigolo parce que nous on continuait de faire ce type d'actions et il y avait d'autres courants militants et artistiques qui se mettaient à la même chose. C'était un peu, alors on se rejoint.

Audrey : Ouais même les jeunes des Banlieues Climat qui avaient infiltré le Palais de Tokyo. En mode, on est exclu de ces espaces, donc on va les investir. Ça c'est trop intéressant. Et du coup le terme d'artivisme, est-ce que toi ils te parle, et est-ce que c'est un terme que tu peux revendiquer ?

Rachel : Ben le terme d'artivisme, il est beaucoup utilisé pour des choses très différentes de ce qu'on fait. Mais en fait, oui effectivement dans le sens où on utilise l'art on utilise l'art pour faire passer un message, mais aussi en faisant de l'art. Ça rentre tout à fait dans le cadre de cette définition, c'est de l'artivisme. Mais après nous aussi on va faire autre chose, c'est pour ça qu'aussi on évite de se cloisonner à certains termes, parce que si ça se trouve on n'entrera plus jamais dans les musées si l'occasion se représente pas. Ou peut-être que si. Mais en tout cas c'est sûr que oui ça fait partie de ça.

Audrey : Et une dernière question sémantique. Du coup moi j'utilise un peu le terme vandalisme d'art qui est utilisé dans les médias même s'il peut être revendiqué par certains militants, militantes. Qu'est-ce que tu penses de ce terme ? Est-ce que tu penses qu'il est à propos quand tu parles d'action sur des œuvres ou que dans la mesure où dans la plupart des cas, c'est pas des œuvres qui sont touchées mais uniquement des vitres. Même s'il existe certains cas comme le cadre du 18^{ème} siècle abîmé après une action de Just Stop Oil. Dans la plupart des cas, les œuvres sont pas vandalisées et pourtant on retient ce terme. Est-ce que tu trouves que ça peut être intéressant de se le réapproprier ou toi tu le rejettes ?

Rachel : Bah en fait dans le sens où c'est un terme qui est beaucoup employé, et d'ailleurs. En ce moment y'a 3 réalisatrices qui veulent faire un reportage sur le vandalisme dans l'art, et du coup leur porte d'entrée c'est Riposte Alimentaire. Mais aussi nos campagnes sœurs à

l'international emploient ce terme. Donc je me dis que c'est un terme hyper intéressant parce que justement les médias et les gens de droite ont employé ce genre de termes pour nous décrédibiliser, alors qu'encore une fois ce n'est pas du vandalisme comme ça parce qu'il y a des vitres. Et après sur la question du cadre pour les militants de Just Stop Oil, nous aussi on a eu un problème avec un cadre à Lyon suite à un jet de soupe sur un tableau de Monet. Oui on aime beaucoup Monet. Et en fait les militantes ont été relaxées parce qu'en fait c'est pas grave. Pareil c'était 2000 euros qui étaient demandés. Et du coup, je me dis en vrai c'est pas une question de cadre, pour en vrai des dommages et intérêts assez légers, là où par contre on a parfois des dizaines de milliers d'euros qui sont demandés pour des actions en dommages et intérêts. Franchement, je pense que c'est beaucoup trop léger pour parler de vandalisme à proprement parler. Mais justement c'est intéressant de parler de ça pour montrer que ce n'est pas du vandalisme. Tout comme, on parle de violence quand on s'en prend à des bâtiments, quand on jette de la peinture sur des bâtiments, alors que la violence dans le Code pénal, c'est s'en prendre à des personnes physiques. En aucun cas un ministère n'est une personne physique, c'est un bâtiment. Et encore une fois les suffragettes qui posaient des bombes dans des bâtiments, une fois y'avait une personne c'était un accident, on était pas au courant. Mais à part cet accident-là, ce n'est pas de la violence, parce que le but n'était pas de blesser des personnes. Et en fait moi je trouve ça hyper intéressant quand on vient de nous parler de ça, parce que c'est le moment de se servir de textes qui sont choyés par ces mêmes détracteurs pour leur dire : regardez dans le Code pénal. La loi nous donne raison. Donc en vrai ça va aller je pense.

Audrey : Par rapport à la violence du changement climatique, à la violence contre les personnes directement. Parler de violence contre des biens, c'est super marginal. Après j'ai l'impression qu'il y a deux écoles entre les personnes qui revendiquent quand même le concept de violence et d'autres qui le rejettent complètement. En tout cas les termes de violence et vandalisme sont très intéressants pour ça aussi. Mais toi comment t'as mesuré l'efficacité de tes actions sur la statue et le tableau de Monet ? C'est plutôt en discutant avec des gens directement ou au niveau plus des répercussions médiatiques ?

Rachel : à titre perso, sur les deux actions que j'ai pu faire. Je parle même par de la Joconde parce que là c'est sans appel. Mais en fait il y a eu énormément d'articles pour parler de ce qu'on avait fait, et pas que des articles déconnant parce qu'en fait les journalistes un peu sérieux se rendent compte au bout de deux secondes qu'il y a beaucoup plus matière à essayer de discuter avec nous, et de comprendre pourquoi on me fait ça que d'essayer de dire que c'est de la merde

et qu'on a juste saccagé une œuvre d'art. Du coup, c'est assez ouf parce que juste après l'action avec la statue, il y a une réalisatrice qui a voulu faire mon portrait, j'ai été invitée sur plusieurs plateaux télé. Y'a eu une Une de *The Guardian* qui a été fait. J'ai refait la Une avec l'action du Monet quelques années plus tard. Y'a eu un énorme buzz médiatique. Ça a pas forcément autant marché en France qu'à l'international et les articles étaient aussi intéressants. Et les deux fois, les ministres en poste du moment. Pour le Monet c'était Rachida Dati et pour la statue et.

Audrey : Rima Abdul Malak

Rachel : C'est ça, les deux ont pris la parole. La première s'était rendue à la statue pour dire que l'écovandalisme montait d'un stade. Parce qu'il y avait pas de vitre autour de la statue, mais bon c'était une statue qui était dehors, donc sensée résister à la pollution parisienne. Et c'était une peinture qui était faite à l'eau, qui se dissolvait dans l'eau. Donc on avait bien sûr fait attention à ça parce que l'objectif c'était pas de dégrader. Et Rachida Dati a pris la parole sur X juste après l'action du Monet pour dire qu'elle voulait créer un délit spécial pour ce type d'œuvres. En vrai l'augmentation de la répression c'est souvent signe que la victoire se rapproche, on le sait. C'est terrible de se dire que même les médias ou les dirigeants politiques, ce type d'actions ça les fait réagir tout de suite. Et pour Dernière Rénovation en novembre 2022, l'Assemblée nationale avait voté 12 milliards pour la rénovation des bâtiments qui était notre grande revendication texto. Mais les réussites de ces actions ne vont pas toutes seules. Faut jamais prendre une action toute seule. Même si pour les actions à haut potentiel médiatique, y'a des retombées médiatiques, mais c'est aussi voir le tableau dans son ensemble, avec toutes les autres actions qu'on a pu faire. Mais là c'est clair que ça fonctionne très bien. Enfin ce serait de mauvaise fois que de ne pas voir ça.

Audrey : Mais du coup pour toi la réponse sécuritaire et la dénonciation médiatique et politique extrêmement virulente par rapport à ces actions-là, c'est signe qu'elles ont un impact qui est fort. Et du coup que *bad buzz is good buzz*.

Rachel : Ah non mais en fait moi je crois qu'on a jamais fait de good buzz. On bloque des routes et on jette de la peinture sur des œuvres d'art ou de la soupe, évidemment que ça va faire un *bad buzz*. Et on n'a jamais voulu forcément être consensuels. Tout à l'heure je me disais que c'est aussi important de la complémentarité c'est aussi important, d'avoir des partis, d'avoir des assos qui vont faire du plaidoyer. C'est aussi ça, avant avec Dernière Rénovation, on travaillait

avec l'association Abbé Pierre. Là maintenant on travaille avec le collectif SSA pour une sécurité sociale de l'alimentation et aussi d'autres partenaires qui ne font pas de résistance civile mais qui, parce que certaines personnes font de la résistance civile, vont obtenir des rendez-vous dans des cabinets pour faire avancer la revendication. Et donc c'est aussi ça, de dire que nous on va prendre le rôle clivant, bad buzz, comme ça va faire aussi avancer les autres acteurs. Pour nous que ce soit un bad buzz, c'est juste que ça marche. Effectivement un bad buzz qui serait compliqué c'est effectivement s'il y a une personne qui va dans une ambulance sur la route, même si ça c'est pas la faute de nos camarades allemands, ou aussi jamais effectivement il y a des violences qui sont commises qu'on n'a pas choisi de faire. C'est pour ça qu'on ne peut pas faire ça, ce serait très problématique.

Audrey : C'est pour ça que vous avez des réunions préalables vraiment avant l'action, pendant l'action et après l'action pour vraiment vérifier qu'il n'y a rien qui déborde, que rien ne pourrait entacher votre communication

Rachel : oui et aussi quand ce sont des choses où des personnes vont être très médiatisées bah on discute aussi avec ces personnes. On leur dit que là c'est aussi ton visage qui va être associé à ce type d'action et Sasha par exemple qui a jeté de la soupe sur la Joconde a perdu son travail après, s'est fait insulter sur X. Par contre il y avait plusieurs personnes qui s'appelaient Sasha dans la campagne et il y a eu un truc de dire que c'était la même personne depuis le début. Certains sont aller à @ les parents des Sasha pour les insulter sur X pour les insulter. Y'a un niveau. Et en l'occurrence, ils ont @ quelqu'un qui n'est même pas la mère d'une des Sasha en question.

Audrey : Toi est-ce que t'as vécu du cyber harcèlement ou des préjudices de ce type dans les médias ou sur les réseaux sociaux. Est-ce que du coup tu te sens plus vulnérable en ligne ou dans la vie après ces actions ?

Rachel : Bah oui ça m'est arrivé. En fait, il y a les commentaires de méchants sous les articles ou tous les postes, parce qu'évidemment on poste sur nos réseaux. Mais il y a aussi d'autres réseaux alliés ou pas qui postent nos actions et en fait c'est sûr qu'il y a des commentaires méchants et des trucs vraiment pas ok. Il y a aussi des gens en MP et souvent ça me fait plus rire qu'autre chose parce que je mets pas mal de distance entre ce que je fais en tant que militante et ces gens-là qui sont aussi distants parce qu'ils utilisent l'anonymat des réseaux. En vrai je

fais une campagne avec des gens. Si jamais ça va pas, je peux leur parler. Et en vrai la peur des gens, pas trop. Parce que ceux qui sont venus me voir directement dans la rue, c'était positif, vraiment des retours directs de gens que je connaissais pas forcément ou d'anciens collègues que j'avais vite fait croisé dans la vie professionnelle, qui étaient très contents. Les gens qui font la démarche de venir voir les gens, c'est souvent plutôt positif parce que les insultes ils les gardent surtout pour l'organisation.

Audrey : Est-ce que vous avez du mal à recruter pour les actions à haut potentiel médiatique ? Pour toutes les questions ou risques potentiels qu'on a évoqué ou en vrai ça va ?

Rachel : Ben ça va être compliqué parce qu'il y a un peu de courants de pensée et je pense que les deux courants de penser qui peuvent se chevaucher chez une même personne : à la fois je peux me chauffer à faire une action à haut potentiel médiatique mais d'un autre côté j'ai aussi envie de garder une forme d'anonymat, qui est plus possible avec un blocage de route en vrai. Et du coup il y a un peu les deux pensées on va dire. Après est-ce que c'est dur de recruter ? Ben en fait moi je pense que comme on en a fait de plus en plus, c'est difficile de savoir à partir de quel niveau c'est difficile de recruter pour faire ce genre d'actions. Mais il y a quand même pas mal de gens qui sont prêts à faire ce type d'action. Et c'est pour ça qu'on a pu en faire de plus en plus. Et aussi, je préfère annuler une action parce qu'une personne n'est pas sûre et a besoin de murir un peu la question plutôt que de voir une personne qui va faire en full sacrifice. Oui c'est important c'est la lutte, mais si je vois qu'il va y avoir une souffrance, ça sert à rien en fait. Et une action toute seule, c'est pas ça qui va changer le cours de la revendication. C'est sûr que c'est mieux d'annuler une action si c'est pas un oui franc je crois où la personne est à l'aise avec ça. C'est aussi une question et c'est pour ça que je dis qu'on essaye de préparer un peu les gens pendant le plus longtemps possible, pour que la réflexion ait le temps de bien murir.

Audrey : Est-ce que les musées ou les institutions comme la fondation Pinault c'est aussi des cibles concrètes de vos actions ? Par exemple leur financement ou leur manque de considération par rapport au changement climatique ?

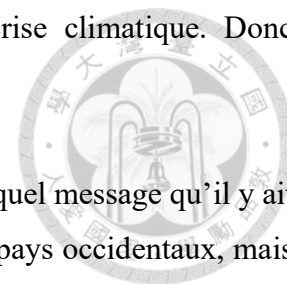
Rachel : Alors c'est drôle parce que pour la fondation Pinault, le choix de la cible c'est la personne et moi qui avons choisi la statue. Et c'est clair que Pinault ça nous allait quand même vachement bien et ça pesait dans la balance. Après, le musée du Louvre par exemple, c'est tellement facile qu'on a fait trois actions là-bas. Quand même j'ai l'impression qu'ils nous

laissent rentrer tranquillement quoi. Parce que c'est pas possible autrement. Sasha qui a réussi à faire l'action de la Joconde avait fait une action sur la pyramide du Louvre quelques semaines avant. Les gars, vous nous laissez rentrer en fait, vous nous attendez avec un café limite. En fait on a envie de choquer avec l'art parce qu'on a envie de vivre dans un monde où l'art est accessible qu'à des vieux bourgeois parisiens, certainement tout le contraire. Et du coup nos actions c'est pas du tout de dénonciation ou d'être contre les musées, au contraire, et ça c'est sûr que ça rentre dans notre démarche. Donc quand on s'en prend au Louvre ou au Musée d'Orsay, qui est encore plus tradi, on va quand même agir pour qu'ils continuent d'exister, pour que les gens puissent continuer à s'y rendre. C'est clair qu'après on va s'en prendre à d'autres musées. Par exemple le musée du Quai Branly si on voulait avoir un point anti-colonial par exemple. Mais on a jamais fait d'actions là-bas et on en fera jamais je pense. Mais non ce ne sont pas vraiment des cibles. Des cibles parfois on en a quand on fait des ministères ou autre, mais vraiment pas les musées. Ou plutôt on a un discours qui n'est pas vraiment contre les musées mais plutôt pour.

Audrey : C'est intéressant parce qu'à la National Portrait Gallery à Londres, les militants et militantes de Just Stop Oil ciblaient directement le Prix du Meilleur Portrait parce que BP le finançait depuis les années 80. Donc c'est intéressant parce que la cible peut aussi évoluer en fonction du contexte. J'aimerais te questionner en fin, si je peux tirer un tout petit peu sur ton temps. Au niveau international, est-ce que vous avez des discussions avec d'autres militants et militantes issus de d'autres pays au-delà du réseau A22 et dans le réseau ?

Rachel : Oui oui on discute beaucoup entre nous, on a des rendez-vous presque hebdomadaires avec certaines personnes et on se retrouve régulièrement. Et aussi on fait des séminaires plusieurs fois par an pour échanger autour des actions mais aussi des questions de gouvernance, de levée de fonds, comme on fait en gros pour partager un peu l'expérience, Et après en termes de partage d'expérience, avec d'autres mouvements internationaux par tant, mais avec d'autres mouvements en France. On discute beaucoup avec Stop Total, Extinction Rébellion, les Soulèvements de la Terre, Bassines non merci. On fait partie de la même team quand même. On a pas la même organisation. Et juste, y'a un truc qui m'est revenu sur la question d'avant. Ce que t'as dit pour la National Gallery ça m'a fait pensé à la perturbation de la cérémonie des Césars qu'on avait fait en 2023. Une de nos militantes avait interrompu la cérémonie en arrivant sur la scène. En fait elle est artiste, elle disait qu'elle était pas du tout contre l'art. Mais faire une cérémonie de remise de prix autour de l'industrie du cinéma, c'est pas cet art-là qu'on veut

promouvoir, c'est un comportement plutôt criminel au vu de la crise climatique. Donc effectivement il peut y avoir une partie de cible dans nos actions.



Audrey : C'est trop intéressant merci beaucoup ! Et pour toi ça envoie quel message qu'il y ait des actions qui se ciblent des œuvres à l'international, surtout dans des pays occidentaux, mais en Australie, en Allemagne en Angleterre, au Canada. Ça envoie quand même un message le fait que ce soit des actions assez similaires qui soit qui soit perpétrées par des groupes militants écolos partout dans le monde ? Tu trouves ça fort ou pas particulièrement ?

Rachel : Je trouve ça fort et c'est vraiment l'ADN A22, parce que c'est A22 qui a promu ce type d'actions, en tout cas dans la période actuelle. En fait je trouve ça fort d'un point de vue purement terre à terre, parce que ça fonctionne médiatiquement ça remplit les objectifs qu'on veut remplir avec une action essentielle médiatique. Mais aussi je trouve ça beau que ce soit ceux qu'on appelle les écoterroristes qui vont essayer de sauver l'art, et sauver des trucs culturels plutôt attribués à la bourgeoisie, et de montrer que non ce n'est pas ça la question. Nous on ne veut pas un monde où on meurt, on veut un monde de vie. Moi je trouve ça très fort. Et par exemple l'action que j'avais faite avec la statue, c'est une action qui était coordonnée à l'international et en fait on avait prévu ce jour-là, selon nos fuseaux horaires, de faire ce type d'action toujours sur des statues tous en même temps. Just Stop Oil avait pas pu le faire parce qu'ils avaient une grande partie de leur organisation qui était en prison, du coup c'est un peu chian pour coordonner une action d'être en taules. Mais, ça était fait aussi en Allemagne, en Italie, aux Etats-Unis, dans pleins de pays. Et ce qui était drôle c'est que les Etats-Unis ils l'avaient fait quelques heures avant nous puisqu'il y a une question de fuseau horaire. C'était fou parce que nous, avant de partir faire, l'action, on avait vu leur action à eux. Ça nous donnait quand même beaucoup de force aussi de ce jour-là particulièrement, qui était l'un des derniers jours de la COP 27 je crois de se sentir à l'international très liés et de se dire : aujourd'hui on agit tout ensembles.

Audrey : Wow, merci beaucoup, en plus de terminer sur cette touche-là et en plus t'as répondu à toutes mes questions dans un sens qui correspond à ma thèse donc trop contente honnêtement. J'ai plus trop de questions maintenant et puis l'entretien il est assez long et assez fourni du coup le temps que je le digère et que je le retranscris, je pense qu'on peut s'arrêter là-dessus. Est-ce que t'as d'autres choses à ajouter sur le sujet ?

Rachel : Non pour moi c'est tout bon.

Audrey : En tout cas je te remercie beaucoup

Rachel : Hyper intéressant, j'aime beaucoup faire ce genre d'interviews !



Appendix 6: Louis' Interview Transcript



Date: August 8th, 2024

Duration: 1hour and 43 minutes

Place: Online with zoo

Interviewee: Louis Mckechnie, 23 is a British full-time activist involved in the Just Stop Oil and Animal Rebellion campaigns, who participated in direct actions targeting artworks.

Spoken language: English

This is a verbatim transcript of Audrey's interview with Louis. It follows a series of email exchanges and Instagram conversations, along with a brief overview of the search process that led to the interview.

Audrey: Louis can you first tell me a bit about who you are? Can you tell me, how old are you and what's your profession and level of study?

Louis: Sure. I'm 23 years old. I'm from originally Weymouth in Dorset, which is a medium sized or large town in the southwest of the UK. I've been a full-time climate and animal rights activist. For four years now, and I was studying mechanical engineering at university as an undergraduate degree. But I was kicked out before finishing the degree. I believe I got the level four certification the first year of that degree, but I was kicked out for bringing the university into disrepute for not doing the Insulate Britain campaign, not going to prison for it, but going on the news and talking about it and that I was a student at that university.

Audrey: That's gross.

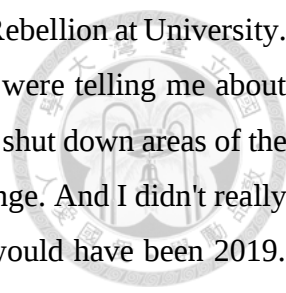
Louis: Yeah, it makes sense. It was a conservative area. Is there anything else you'd like for that bit?

Audrey: Yeah, it's all right. Then I was wondering, where did you learn about activism, animal rights and ecology?

Louis: growing up, my mother was a Green Party County councilor, and the county I grew up in was very right wing. Green party in the UK doesn't get a lot of votes, doesn't have a lot of seats. I think we might have one or 2 or 4 in Parliament, but at a local level, it's a similar percentage of compared to the national level. And my mother was Green Party County councilor, which is the most left wing of the publicly accepted political parties. And it focuses a lot about climate change. She was studying a master's degree in climate change and its effects on the Third World. I think she got her master's degree when I was four years old. So I guess that nowadays that would be called International Development. But it meant growing up, she was teaching me about climate change and making sure I understood the world that I was growing up in. And my aunt taught me about the suffragettes from a very young age. Every month or so when I saw her, she'd tell me about the suffragettes who were her heroes and how they got women to vote in the UK by doing disruptive protests. Some of them included burning down buildings and slashing paintings, destroying artwork. At three years old, my parents took me to the biggest protest in UK history, 1.7 million people. At ten years old, I was taken on a march in my hometown that my mom had organized. It was against them building a local incinerator because it was bad for the environment, and it was going to poison all the children in the area due to the pollution from it. And she'd organized that march, and it was the biggest march that had ever happened in that town. And so, from quite a young age, I was around these ideas of disruptive protests and its effectiveness.

Audrey: All right. So, both the struggles and also the methods associated with and all right. And so, what changed. Like what was the turning point for you really becoming an activist? Was Just Stop Oil the first group you were involved in, or have you been involved in other groups before?

Louis: Yeah, I was involved before that. So, my first year of my bachelor's degree when I went off to university. I was really angry with the government because we had the right-wing party in government for most of my living memory at that point, and the living conditions in the



country had gotten worse and worse. I saw the local group of Extinction Rebellion at University. And I'd never heard of them before, but I met some of them, and they were telling me about how they'd recently come back from London, where 10,000 of them had shut down areas of the capital for several days by blocking bridges to protest about climate change. And I didn't really read the news at that point. At this point, I was 18 or 19 years old. It would have been 2019. And then I looked online, and I researched about them, and I finally felt hopeful for my generation's future. Somebody was actually doing something to stand up for us, when before all I'd felt was like it was hopeless. And then over the next 2 or 3 months, I got more involved with the local group, met all the people, and I realized actually none of them were that radical or doing that much action. You know, I thought back to what my aunt had told me about the suffragettes, and I saw the local group, and all they were doing was marching through town. And one day I got a call from one of them saying, there's this action that's going to happen called Rebellion of One where all over the country there will be a one person roadblock. So, a single person sitting in a road blocking it on their own, one with a sandwich board, saying why they're doing it. I ended up doing it and my sandwich board ended up saying "I'm terrified to have children because of the climate crisis". But they asked me if I'd be a support role, but they didn't have anybody in the county willing to do it, so they get somebody in from outside. And I got quite annoyed at them because they didn't even ask me if I wanted to do it. So, I told them, no, I will do it, even though I'd not been involved as long as any of them had. So, I got arrested for that. That was my first arrest in Bournemouth. Then I went to G7 where all the world leaders met in the UK about climate. And I had gotten a lift from a friend.

Audrey: Sorry. Uh, which year was the G7?

Louis: G7 would have been 2020, I think so, yeah, I think it was 2020.

Audrey: All right.

Louis: Well, 2019, 2020, it was one of them. It should be online. I'm not very good with dates. But halfway on the drive there, I was told there's actually no space on the Extinction Rebellion campsite. But there is a group called Animal Rebellion who is based on their campsites, and I had no idea who they were. I'd never met any of them. I'd never even heard of them. But I was told, yeah, you can camp there with them. They're cool. And so I show up to this campsite. I put my tent up, I start meeting people, and it turns out there they were a group protesting about

animal agriculture's impacts on the climate crisis. But also animal rights as well. And within two hours of meeting them, I was in handcuffs. They'd raided the whole camp, arrested everybody, and held us all overnight and bailed us out of the county. Um, so we weren't able to attend G7 itself and Extinction Rebellion, they basically left alone. And, you know, I spent the night in a cell for nothing. Just show up to a camp that I didn't even know. I lost my phone. I lost my backpack and a lot of my possessions because they just took them. And I got sent home. A day later, I thought if this is what they're doing to this group, Animal Rebellion while they're ignoring Extinction Rebellion, these people are a much larger threat to the states and to this government and the powers. So I joined them. I wasn't even vegan yet, but I joined an animal rights activist group just because the states treat them a lot more harshly and treated them like a bigger threat. So I assumed they were working.

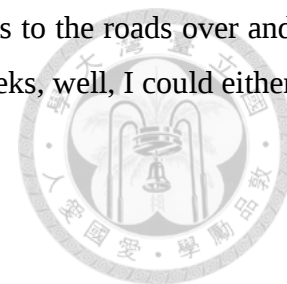
Audrey: Repression could be seen as a sign that it's working at least from an activist and also theoretical perspective.

Louis: Yeah, correct. A few months later, I did four arrests over eight days with them. But the trial for one of them is about a week's time, it got delayed again. But the big one was Buckingham Palace Fountain. We got into just outside the Queen's house or the King now with red dye, made it look like a blood bath. I was released at 5 a.m. from the police station. And by midday the same day, literally seven hours later, I was arrested again for breaking bail. Some stupid rules, the police said that I broke that I didn't even know. Well, I went in disguise so they wouldn't realize who I was, but they recognized me anyway. Then the final arrest of the four was blocking the biggest dairy factory in the country for a day. We brought siege towers and just shut down the roads so they couldn't. I mean, that one place provides 10% of the country's dairy products to supermarkets, and we shut it down for a day.

Audrey: You have already an important record.

Louis: Yeah, I had a bit of a criminal record after all of that. And then after that, I was still in university at that point, but I'd just spent the last two weeks having this crazy life experience where I'd been with these new people who I thought were some of the most inspiring people I'd ever met and felt like I didn't really see the point in going back to university. And one of the people I'd done the previous action with had told me when we were getting ready for the action that he was going to do a campaign starting in a few weeks called Insulate Britain, where they

were all going to block the motorways around London, glue themselves to the roads over and over again until they go to prison. Um, and I thought during these 2 weeks, well, I could either go back to university or I can do this. And it felt like, sort of...



Audrey: More valuable?

Louis: You know, like I'd felt there was a greater value I could give to all life on the planet. And so, I did it, and I got arrested seven times gluing myself to motorways for that campaign. I went to prison for six weeks, was released from prison. I was sentenced to prison on my 21st birthday. Actually, I was released New Year's Eve, and then I was homeless because at the start of the period when I did the Animal Rebellion stuff, my student accommodation ran out. Um, so I was sleeping on friends' sofas. Then got out of prison. A friend from Animal Rebellion that I met in those two weeks offered me his spare room for free. Um, and that was really kind of him. And within six days of being released, I was working full time for Just Stop Oil. Uh, Just Stop Oil hadn't publicly done anything yet, but it was internally the continuation of Insulate Britain, and it felt like the best good I could do. And that was January 2022, I guess.

Audrey: Yeah, the A22 network was created in April 2022. So basically, like it was just a few months before. And so, which types of actions and also task do you usually do for Just Stop Oil? Was it the same you did for Animal Rebellion, or you were much more into speaking out loud and doing some stuff for the campaign?

Louis: Yeah. So, before I guess joined Just Stop Oil, I was more participating, getting involved in the community. I wasn't organizing. As soon as January 2022, I started working for Just Stop Oil. In terms of what I'm okay admitting publicly, let's just say a full-time organizer and coordinator. I guess what I'm happy being public that I did was I was a community organizer full time helping create the youth wing of Just Stop Oil at the start, first for the youth branch but then the mainstream and youth branch merge. We thought about what kind of actions would get the public interest the most. And we came up with cultural disruption. It takes a lot fewer resources to disrupt a cultural icon or something culturally significant. To get the most influence over public consciousness and to propagate or to get an idea through into the heads of the most people in the society to get something most into the public consciousness. It requires the action to be controversial, at the very least in the UK, where we have the least free press for all of Europe. And so, we needed to do something, an action that half the country would love and half

the country would hate, but everybody would be shocked by. So, we came up with the football actions, uh, where I locked my neck to a goalpost. That was the second justifiable action. The first one was actually two weeks before that, where we disrupted the BAFTAs, which is like the UK's film and TV awards event that happens once a year. So, it was people gluing to the red carpet. Many of us were storming up to the front, getting tackled by security, gluing to the ground. It was great fun. But that didn't get any press coverage.

Audrey: Oh, yeah, continue with it. And I will ask the first question related to that after.

Louis: Yeah. I guess like what we learned from the BAFTAs is if people don't get arrested and if there is no mechanism that leads to cultural amplification, then it won't get widespread in the public consciousness and online, on social media. So, celebrities being there and it being a big event wasn't enough because there weren't cameras on us and we weren't interacting in an unusual way, with anything in the public consciousness, that would have amplified its own scale. Which led us to the football actions where all the required amplification is set up. There are already cameras on it and half the country watching. Arguably, football is the biggest religion or cult or whatever you want to call it in the UK. It has more cultural significance than any other phenomenon in the country. It feels like. Or maybe the royal family, but close to it. And by disrupting that in a way that creates a picture, one single picture is the important thing. It's not the video, it's not the speech. It's that one picture that will make something go exponentially more viral and reach so much more people. Football actions then led to the art actions because they were also of heavy cultural significance. And if we wanted to get a single picture, it felt like the thing we can have in a single picture of the most cultural significance, that would reach the most people's emotions, by leveraging some of the most famous works of art that exist.

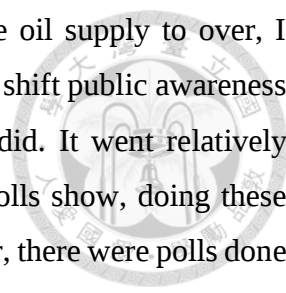
Audrey: So, these actions of cultural destruction and disruption, they came from the UK. And then, they were globalized through all the A22 network. So, you are really the source, you and also your comrades of this type of action? That's what you're saying. But your experience contributed to the adoption of these tactics in Germany, France, Switzerland, and beyond?

Louis: Yeah, it happened here first and then it inspired similar actions in other countries. Of course, we didn't come up with it. A hundred years ago, the suffragettes were doing it when they were slashing paintings. I guess we were the first to do it with the A22 network and of the

modern era of climate protests. But, you know, our inspiration from it was from, I guess, the suffragettes and what they did, slashing a painting 100 years ago. We live in a much different socio-political landscape now than the suffragettes, Gandhi did. And so, we looked at all of those tactics and the mechanisms for action using I wouldn't say destruction because we never caused intended to cause permanent damage, but disruption, definitely. Although the suffragettes did destruction actions when they slashed a painting. Using a cultural phenomenon as a medium for amplifying a protest, I guess we were inspired by that suffragette action specifically. And then, it spread through Europe, happening similar things in a lot of other countries, but because their sociopolitical landscapes were different, you can't copy and paste tactics across into other countries and expect them to have the exact same results. It depends on what we call pillars of power in each society. So, the press is a much stronger limiting factor in the UK than any other European country.

Audrey: But I wanted just to come with also a counterargument for that, because the fact is with climate change is we have a target, you know, we have a carbon economy, and we have all these industries that you also targeted with animal rebellion. And the thing is, I've read a study which says that like most American think that the activists who target some industries or some buildings related directly to climate change and so, to the problem directly are appropriate. Conversely, the one which are targeting entities which are not seen as being responsible for climate change, like museums are seen as inappropriate. So, in which ways do you perceive that museums are right targets? Do you believe that it's efficient to do cultural disruption when you can just disrupt polluting industries?

Louis: This is a discussion I ended up having quite a lot of time with a lot of people. It's quite a commonly held belief, as you explained. You're right, it's not actually about the art institutions themselves. Like, you know, we said it was about BP's link to the art gallery. We always have to say those things because it helps in terms of framing publicity, but really, we choose this tactic because the media in the UK specifically, more than other countries, will only cover climate protesters if they can vilify us. So in terms of disrupting industry, we did two after the football disruption and before the art actions, we spent two weeks breaking into oil terminals and shutting them down with Just Stop Oil and I believe we had 600 people arrested. I have spent almost 100 hours up in the pipelines of these oil terminals. We break in, we climb up the pipe works, and once we're up there, they have to get a special safe Heights removal team to get us down over those two weeks. We cost specifically shell 4 billion pounds from how much



they lost from having shut down those places. And we shut down the oil supply to over, I believe, a quarter of the petrol stations in the country. However, it didn't shift public awareness or public opinion anywhere near as much as the football disruption did. It went relatively unnoticed in the media and in the public consciousness, as YouGov polls show, doing these cultural disruption actions make us less popular with the public. However, there were polls done by a group called Social Change Lab that measures the popularity of a group doing these actions in specifically us Just Stop Oil, but also animal rebellion and Animal Rising. They've done these polls for what they think about us as a group and as people and our actions. And what they think about the message we're trying to convey about the severity and the need for urgency for action on climate crisis, or in Animal Rebellion's case, factory farming and veganism. It turns out that the more controversial, higher publicity cultural disruption actions we do, the wider the differentiation in public opinion between what they think about us and what they think about the message that we're trying to get into the public consciousness. Now, people here in the U.S., they don't realize this effect. It's subconscious. But basically, the statistics showed that for the urgency for climate action, on the let's say, ending fossil fuel licenses, the demand of just Stop Oil getting to shift the public's belief in the necessity and urgency for that demand being met. And therefore, the pressure they put on their politicians and on the government increased the most when we were being the most controversial. So, when we did, let's say the art actions, public support for Just Stop Oil dropped. And, well, recently the new government met the demand and has now stopped all new fossil fuel licenses from being issued. So, it did work.

Audrey: And so, you shift also your demand. But my question is, so then is it also meaningful to do rinse and repeat actions, on the side, you know, to do like a really high media profile actions, but also to do some actions like blockade that you repeat often. And, I was wondering if this kind of art disruption actions have not become also rinse and repeat actions because they were repeated a lot. And you know, the first time Just Stop Oil threw soup on Van Gogh's sunflowers, it got an international media coverage, but like in the single year of 2022 there was 38 similar actions that were undertaken. And I think that most of them didn't get a media coverage, or they got a worse coverage. But I'm just wondering if, since you're repeating this kind of actions, they could not lose their impact because people are just get used to them.

Louis: You're absolutely correct. Yes. Tactics become obsolete extremely quickly. I've stepped away from being a full time organizer for Just Stop Oil a year ago because I burnt out and I ran out of energy, but also, partially because I saw this kind of thing. Exactly what I was saying

happening. Like, the more we repeat these tactics of cultural disruption on the same targets, uh, without any new creativity brought to it, the less they worth the cost benefit um, becomes. Analysis shows that, uh, they become less valuable, and less worthwhile, per repetition. But this whole time, we have also been doing the material disruption as well, like blocking roads in London, sabotaging petrol stations. After the two weeks of blockading the oil terminals, we organized an action where we destroyed or disabled all the petrol stations on the M25, which is the most used motorway in the UK. It's a ring road around London, there was four petrol stations. And they are the four biggest service stations in the country, and we disabled two of the largest four on the M25 by taking glass, breaking hammers and the safety hammers you get for escaping vehicles into in crashes, and we smashed up the screens on the pumps. The electronics inside the pumps get destroyed as well. We had health and safety. People checked our plans to make sure we wouldn't be risking any sort of reaction. And we successfully disabled the two biggest petrol stations of the country for three days. They were closed. Actually, one of them was disabled for four days, not three. But I guess that's one of the examples of we have continued. And all throughout there has also been the sabotage and the material disruption, but it doesn't get reported by the press here because the press only covers what they think they can get the public to hate us for. So, all of the tactics which the public wish we were using, we are using, they just don't hear about it because the mechanisms for which they hear about our protests don't convey the messages, if it's not a message that they will invalid our action.

Audrey: Definitely.

Louis: But yeah, repeating the same actions is, I don't believe it's as worthwhile as it once was. I think with new bits of creativity added to it in terms of maybe changing the targets or modifying the tactics and the methods, it can be, for instance, I guess the snooker is a good example because it was a new type of visual that got a lot of coverage, like the Formula One action, for which I ended up doing seven months in prison because we didn't get the impactful image we needed. Even though we had a creative idea, the unique picture element we needed just wasn't there. The art actions aren't creative anymore. Everybody's seen somebody glued to a painting now. Like doing it now is relatively pointless.

Audrey: But I was also like a wondering about the fine. Because the fine you got from throwing paint or soup or mashed tomatoes on a painting is much lower than the fine you can get from sabotage actions or even blockades, I don't know. So, is it also an element you consider?

Because if you have like a financial burden which is too high, you can also be tempted to do something less risky. But it can also lead to one of my other questions, which is like that you damaged, um, the frame of Van Gogh painting, the Peach Tree in Blossom and I think got a 2000 pounds fine from it. So, is it also more effective in a financial way that you disrupt art?

Louis: This is one of the things that is different in every single country where these actions are happening. In the UK, fines are not the primary concern in terms of legal risk. Like I was fined 10,000 pounds for doing a campaign. And yeah, that has been the highest fine I've had since my fines for when we were shutting down the oil terminals, even though we cost them 4 billion pounds, my fines were each conviction, probably between 3 and 600 pounds each. In the UK we worry a lot more about prison sentences because with fines, you can get a sort of pay monthly of an amount within your means. So, people can pay if they don't have a lot of money 10 pounds a month for until it's paid, even if that's going to be the rest of their lives. And we can crowdfund, when money is needed to pay fines. So that's not really a decision-making factor for us. Prison sentences have become much harsher recently, especially due to significant legal changes over the past three years. These changes have increased penalties for protests that involve direct disruption of infrastructure, leading to lengthy prison terms. In contrast, actions targeting symbolic or less disruptive forms of protest generally face much lighter consequences.

Audrey: All right. What is the longest prison sentence you got?

Louis: I've gotten several different prison sentences. I have a 18 month suspended prison sentence for smashing up petrol stations. Now, a suspended prison sentence means that I don't have to actually go into prison if I prove that I am no longer engaged in illegal activism and promised not to be engaged for the next two years, and if at any point in the next two years after that conviction, I get break the law, then I am put in prison and have to serve those whole 18 months. Now, it's the judge's discretion whether they do a suspended sentence or not. There is no way of knowing ahead of time whether you will get a suspended sentence or not. It's up to which judge you get and how they're feeling on the day. So, 18 months for that. I got 12 months for the formula one action which was for the petrol stations. The people involved got between 12 and 18 months for the Formula One. Two people didn't even get prison sentences. I got the most 12 months because they said, uh, that I was a key organizer. And if they identify you as a key organizer, they can give you a much higher sentence. But others who weren't key organizers or weren't identified as key organizers, I should say, received, six months sentences suspended

for the Formula One. I was given, a six-week prison sentence for the football action. I was given three weeks for the art action, and I was given 12 weeks for the Insulate Britain protests.



Audrey: All right. Thank you for answering.

Louis: But right now, people have gotten five years sentences a couple of weeks ago for being on a zoom call. Four of my friends got four years prison sentences, immediate sentences. One of them got five years for conspiracy to block the airport as a material disruption. They only sat on a zoom call over a year ago, and they've gotten four and five years in prison for that.

Audrey: That's crazy. I've heard that you were unable to just participated in international actions against statues within the A22 Network two years ago because too many of you were in prison at this time. And so, this was like really a just stop oil specificity, often going to prison. And so, I really want to also get back to the theme of art vandalism a little bit to understand if there is also an artistic dimension in cultural disruption or if it's just a media campaign, using the power of images to just convey ideas and to just get a platform. So, is there an artistic dimension into it. And if you kind of identify with the term of activism as well.

Louis: Yeah. I've heard the term before, in terms using a lot of different ways. I think art can definitely be a form of activism. However, I think a lot of people use that label, as an excuse to not take more radically impactful, but also more risky forms of activism. Um, yes, there's definitely an element. I mean, a lot of us are artists ourselves. We don't see these pieces of art as just things like that painting that I glued to. Honestly, there are a few options that would have been strategically justifiable. And I picked that one because I had an emotional connection to it. One example of these actions was when my friends Hannah and Abby did something really impactful. They covered a painting with a material to temporarily transform it, showing how climate change might alter the landscape depicted in the artwork. I can't recall the painting's name right now, but the idea was to illustrate the potential effects of environmental damage. Similarly, there was the incident where soup was thrown at Van Gogh's Sunflowers. Both actions aimed to provoke thought and raise awareness about climate change through visual art. Basically, the idea for that was come up with by somebody who will remain anonymous but is largely influential in the art world in the UK and in the art world. Quite well known and well respected. They create a lot of amazing works which are in several museums. And they designed that action. Came up with the idea as I guess a living art performance piece. And the people

who did the action, did it as that person. That artist saw it in their mind. Um. But yeah, some of it derived from connection with art. Some of it is more mechanical or utilitarian. Generally, they're less worthwhile and don't produce as many results when these actions don't come from places of true emotion. There seems to be a connection with them having less success or less impact.

Audrey: All right. And if you damaged some artworks, like what happened with the frame you damaged, do you think it can be counterproductive because it's even more divisive? So, I don't know if you get what I'm asking, but.

Louis: Yeah, this is something we thought a lot about. So yes, of course, our beliefs are genuinely what's the what is this piece of artwork worth? If all the people who will see the beauty of it will be dead? Why should the art outlive any observers? But yeah, the public perception of it, is fascinating. For instance, with my one, courts and the art restorer experts they got in did say yes, it was damaged and will never be the same. However, um, several expert art restorers in the art world disagree with that and say that the Court was incorrect. We designed those actions specifically so nothing would be permanently damaged. And the frame as well. They even admitted that nobody but basically an art restorer would be able to tell the difference between how it is now and how it was before. But that was unintentional. We did not intend to cause that level of damage. We picked out the type of glue and the methods and where we were attaching ourselves to it to minimize that risk as far as we could. With the soup on the Van Gogh, that was designed with the express purpose of making the public think that we had done permanent damage, and then making them realize after a day or two when the public narrative changed, that we hadn't, that there was glass over it. It was the shock value of, oh my God, they've destroyed a Van Gogh, to then have the turnback effect in their minds the next day when everybody's arguing about it was protected by glass. The painting wasn't damaged after all. But it's emotionally divisive.

Audrey: You know, if people try reestablishing the truth afterwards, sometimes I feel it's not working because, the media are looking for what could discredit the activists. For instance, I didn't know that during one of the first blockade Letzte Generation did in Berlin, the death of a person wasn't caused by the blockade, because the media didn't publish the truth after vilifying the activists.

Louis: Well, that's the thing we are. Whenever we take these actions, we are accepting that we will be misperceived by the public. We are perfectly okay with being seen as villains. If overall it's the most beneficial thing we can do, we believe to help the most people, we'll do it. The media also said that in Insulate Britain when we were blocking roads, that we'd stopped ambulances and killed people. The ambulance service came out publicly and said that wasn't true, but the media barely reported it. And most of the public never heard that until over a year later. Still, to this day, about 40% of the public believe that we did kill people by blocking ambulances. However, we anticipate, when we plan these types of actions, that they will be misperceived, and the media strategy is planned accordingly. It brings it back to the study I mentioned earlier from the Social Change Lab, which you can find online, which evidence is the differentiation subconsciously in the people's heads about what they think about us as a group and the levels of support for our demands.

Audrey: All right. I can see and understand that. I have also one more question related to what you said when you glued yourself on the Van Gogh. You said that your generation doesn't have any other choice. So, do you think that taking radical and creative actions is the only way to push political powers to act?

Louis: Well, thinking back on it, I did have a choice. It didn't feel like a choice at a time. It felt like if I want to live by my own ethics, that was the only choice. But I could have chosen not to do it, yes. But it would have felt like a betrayal of my own ethical values and my generation, and all life on this planet, really. The thing is, I think there are other ways of doing it. If you have more influence, money, and resources, and leverage than we do. But with the resources, money, leverage, influence we have at our disposal, this is what we believe to be the most effective utilization of that leverage. We don't have the resources companies have. If Elon Musk wanted to change this stuff, he could do it in far more popular and less disruptive ways. But evidently, the billionaires don't want to. So, if it's left to us to do it, then we have to do it by the means available to us. Every other means, that were nice or kind or whatever, we tried, we were exhausted, and they failed. As resistance movements continue, tactics they use continue. From a historical precedent, it's happening over and over again to get more radical and more provocative until they are successful because all other options have been exhausted.

Audrey: And, speaking with a French activist, she told me that was their duty because they are white and female and young. So, they could afford getting involved physically into this struggle.

Is this also something you reflected on? Did you think about it in your choice, if you were privileged?

Louis: Yeah. Well, the whole privilege argument is commonly held in our circles, people who do this commonly believe that. I personally do not. I don't think I don't act because I have the privilege to do so, because I have a lot less privilege than many other people who do this. When I was doing a lot of this stuff, I was homeless. I didn't have a safe place to sleep at night. I didn't have any money. I was eating out of bins a lot the time. The whole purity politics thing, the left has about people should only do it if they have the privilege of their skin color and their age and their social class, whatever, I think is a divisive distraction tactic that splits the 99% against itself. We see it with the media in the UK, they use all these things: class, primarily, to divide the 99% against each other. We're so busy fighting each other in a cultural war, we don't see who's really attacking us. No, I do it because in my belief system, I'm a Buddhist, I believe in what you'd call collective consciousness, or unity consciousness, basically that all life, all existence is really one being. We're not true individuals, so acting in self-interest instead of collective self-interest is collective suicide.

Audrey: Have you heard of the feminist materialist critic of class struggle that some sub-struggle can also exist within a bigger struggle. And that's also the point of all the intersectionality movement. So, do you think that other struggles can still exist within a bigger one? Because I also felt that it was in the DNA of A22 Network there are different countries, different activist groups, different struggles. For instance, for us in France, it was about building renovation, and then it was about food security. And in the UK, it's more about oil and just polluting industries. But there are also smaller struggles that can be diluted in a bigger one. I don't know what you think of it.

Louis: Definitely, yeah. I mean, it is an intersectional crisis. There's a lot of different societal issues all existing simultaneously, and all of them are valid. I show up and support all the struggles I could. I go to Black Lives Matter, stand up to racism, anti-war stuff, stuff about Palestine. But with the groups you mentioned, let's say, Dernière Rénovation, and then it switched to Food, it's the same with every other A22 group, this fundamental idea, driving every group in the A22 Network, is picking the demand which will be most strategically effective for getting the effective required action taken to reduce the damage from the climate emergency the fastest. The Insulate Britain demand was picked for strategic reasons. True I grew up in a

house that didn't have insulation. We were freezing in the winter. There wasn't always enough food. But the demand was picked strategically not because of true intersectionality. Now, this is true in every single group in the A22 Network. This is not said publicly. We do not say this in our press releases. But that is the strategic driver behind every single group in the A22 Network. Every group has a different demand because there were different socio-political landscapes, different demand will be the fastest vehicle within that landscape to get to the required destination, which is why demand are changed. But tactics depends on political situations, social situations as it plays out in each country.

Audrey: All right. I see. But also I feel that still the tactics are similar and it has a powerful dimension that just groups from different countries belong to the same network. I mean, in today's globalized world, it's using the media platform and also globalization for organizing the new activist movement. And I just wanted to know if you're in touch with the other groups belonging to the A22 Network. And if you believe to this international struggle and that the A22 Networks is meaningful in scope and power?

Louis: I believe it is, yeah. I know a lot of people from other A22 groups. I used to be a lot more connected with a lot more people from a lot more A22 groups two years ago and one year ago. Last year, I've taken a step back. But I think every single one of them is meaningful and heartfelt to a certain extent. Every different individual in every different group will have different motivations, of course, but they come together because the goal or the mechanisms are shared values. Now, all of them will have different societal issues, which they care about more. Every A22 group, every country in it, will have different mechanisms available and different energy and feelings amongst the population of that country to be harnessed. But the people harnessing that are the people in those countries who are most connected to the issues happening there. So, these mechanisms that sound a bit cold-hearted of how the A22 network and its subsequent groups operate, isn't a cold-heartedness felt by the organizers of every single group. Every single group feels what they're doing is right. My explanation for the previous element was why it is different in every country, why there are different demands.

Audrey: I just wanted to ask you, but it's okay if you don't want to answer this question, why did you step back a little bit from the group organization and cultural disruption actions? Is it only because you believed that these strategies have to change direction to become more

creative or was it related to any of the consequences of your activism, would it be cyber stalking, legal repercussions or need to find a place to stay and a job? I don't know.

Louis: Well, it was both of those simultaneously. It was a combination. Yes, after spending seven months in prison, I was psychologically in a worse state than before, and I didn't feel I would be able to do the work to required, I guess, the level of due diligence that is owed to the people taking actions and partaking. I felt like because of my mental state at that point. That I didn't have the clarity required to act both simultaneously out of true ethical reasoning and sound strategic logic at the same time. But also, none can or should hold those roles for a significant length of time. They need to be rotated and passed over. The longer that somebody holds one of those, I guess, action coordinator or designer roles, the less creative they get, the less effectively they work, and the less they function in terms of valuing and connecting the other people taking actions. Part of being a coordinator is upskilling and training up the people who are going to take your job next. I trained up a lot of action coordinators, all of which I taught them all the skills that I could but made it clear that to really make good actions happen, it's not just a mechanical process. I can't teach them creativity. That comes from them. Some of them made some incredible actions happen. Some of them made some messy, potentially counterproductive actions happen. I'm not sure I'm in a place where I can differentiate clearly at this point. Between which actions were and which weren't for every single action. But then, those action coordinators trained up their replacements. People coordinating actions nowadays aren't the people who were coordinating the actions two years ago, and in general, aren't even the people that they trained up. It's two or three or even four generations of coordinators onwards who are running the show now. I hold, I guess, a full-time position as an organizer for significantly longer than the average person in Just Stop Oil does. But it's still compared to normal societally respected careers, is a very short period of time. The new people with new ideas coming in and making it their own is what keeps these movements alive.

Audrey: I was wondering if you believed the organization of Just Stop Oil is horizontal, because if you're speaking about coordinators, do you think it's necessary to have people taking a little bit more responsibilities. Or do you manage to make the organization a bit horizontal to avoid this hierarchical functioning? Did you suffer from being a coordinator and just taking more responsibilities to a point, but it was maybe not the right way to function for you, or do you still believe that it's the right way to function for a group?

Louis: Yes, it's not the right way to function. Nobody really likes being a coordinator. It's felt and seen as a burden. Nobody wants to do it. It's stressful. It's an unfair weight of responsibility to have, to hold. But these roles need filling, and if nobody else steps up, we feel that nobody feels capable of it, so who else is stepping up, then we will step up into those roles? The whole idea of these organizations being horizontal, practically, I don't believe that anybody is better than anybody else. I don't believe that long-standing hierarchy is valid, but temporary functional hierarchy is a requirement for the effective operation of these larger campaigns and projects works. Without it, effectively, nothing ever really gets done at an organized level that a single person can't do themselves. Horizontal organizing, practically, a lot of groups have tried it, and it doesn't provide results. It feels good, but it doesn't give the outcomes we need. What we do is we actively mitigate full power and make it as temporary as possible so that no one ends up in control of an organization for extended periods of time. By rotating it, the temporary hierarchy balances itself out over time. But with operational security, it's a necessity in terms of Police informants, and leaks, because a lot of people aren't careful about what information they share. A lot of information is only shared on a need-to-know basis, which If it isn't shared only on a need-to-know basis, then the actions never happen, or gets leaked to the press, and police are waiting, basically for a need-to-know basis. So, there's needs to be a functional hierarchy.

Audrey: I definitely get your point.

Louis: Even since there was a social hierarchy, it claimed to be horizontal, but that claim actually made it arguably more hierarchical. That's true. Because social hierarchy actually ended up being a stronger hierarchy than a formalized one like you see in Just Stop Oil, internally formalized, externally, it's important that the state doesn't know who were in that organizational structure, because they will strategically take them out, as they have done repeatedly with the many people in prison on conspiracy charges at the moment. They have gotten years and years sentences because the state gained intelligence that they were active organizers rather than just participants.

Audrey: That's true, because legal systems are obsessed with picking the leader. If you have the leader, you can dismantle the whole organization. But that's why the informal hierarchy is maybe more effective. But why informal? Because if you say something is horizontal, then a

person can take a significant scope of action. And this way, they will just take more power than if just everything is formalized. So, I think this is how I understand your point.

Louis: Yeah. I guess a more effective solution I'd like to see implemented is the splintering of groups. Extinction became ineffective due to its organizing structure and hierarchy dynamics. It splintered into a bunch of different groups with each group where people could go to actually pursue the thing that they're most passionate about and created incredibly effective splinters like Animal Rebellion in Interstate Britain, which if they hadn't splintered and if they had stayed as one organization, never would have gotten any results. I would argue at this point, splintering of Just Stop Oil into different cells or subgroups, while still talking with each other and being connected, would increase overall effectiveness of operations and results. But nobody really wants to do it because leading a splinter is even more responsibility and burden and people don't want to take on or feel they're competent enough to. Despite most people internally see the benefits and potential need for it.

Audrey: It could help also to just be more connected with local areas. You started local and now you moved. I mean, being connected to the people is also just thinking local as far as I understand. And I also wanted to ask you something on the channels. And if you think that now, social networks outpace the traditional media in terms of scope and the number of people you can reach.

Louis: Yes. As a medium for influencing public consciousness, social media has a massively high potential. Mainstream traditional media, both print media and TV news and online journalism articles, are relatively decreasing in their influence and value. However, for over a massively large subsection of population, they are still the primary influence. Amongst young people, social media is a stronger primary influence than mainstream media. Yes. But the secondary influences or indirect influence through social connections comes from traditional media. People's parents will watch the news on TV and they'll talk to you, and you'll listen to what they have to say, and you're being influenced by what the mainstream media is saying, and what Rupert Murdoch generally wants you to be influenced by, even though you're never actually reading these newspapers. Other people are. Because the editors of these newspapers are so proficient at psychological manipulation, they can effectively manipulate people's ideas through other people who read it. Now, with social media, it's a tool that we have not utilized to its highest effectiveness. It does have the potential to be maybe equally as influential as

mainstream media as a medium for getting our message into the public consciousness. But the utilization of it is a lot less predictable, I guess. It's less widely understood mechanisms for utilizing it. And there's a general lack of experience and skill sets amongst our campaigns and how to effectively utilize it. Because the mechanisms of its operation, how to most effectively use it changes far more regularly than with mainstream media. New social media platforms pop up and die and become more popular, less popular all the time. They all have different mechanisms. They work different ways. So effectively using it means that you, repeatedly over time means you need to have a really clear and deep understanding of how they work. And they keep changing their algorithms, making it a much rarest skillset that's certainly lacking in our movement to be able to most effectively utilize it. We're doing more and more, the campaigns are, but most activists aren't very good at social media and don't know much about it, which is an issue that we have known we've had for a long time.

Audrey: But how do you feel about slacktivism? Do you know this term? Slacktivism?

Louis: Can you explain it to me?

Audrey: If you influence people on social media, it has much more chances of becoming slacktivism for them. Do you think that slacktivism is counterproductive or if it's a door for real activism and engaging people more effectively? And so there is more a continuum of you publish some really powerful images on social media or people repost some powerful images of your actions, and then it can be translated into people doing slacktivism and just reposting just stuff online. And then it could be a door for activism or if you're critical about slacktivism much more.

Louis: Oh, okay. I think I understand what you mean. In UK, we call those people keyboard warriors. Even though they use their phones, not actual keyboards these days, it's a term for internet activists that feel like they're doing their bit by sharing or posting something when, practically, the only people seeing it are people in the same echo chamber as them

Audrey: The same bubble.

Louis: So with the same people who already agree with what you're saying and will not do anything practically useful with that information. It's an issue that we have. But I think, really,

most people doing that know that they're not really doing enough. I don't think these people are under a massive illusion that they are doing enough just by sharing stuff on social media. I don't think it massively detracts from the pool of people we have willing to take more radical action. But yeah, it does create a lot of people who care more about other people's perception of what they care about rather than actually enacting what they care about, which I guess, as a philosophy, if they practice it enough, it will program them to care so much what other people think about their actions that they'll never engage in something that will make the general public not like them, even though it actually follows the values they like to share when they make these posts. But on social media in general, the people who use it the most consume so much content that they're desensitized to each individual post. The more time somebody spends a day on social media, the less they will emotionally connect with any individual thing or post they see. Even if they're a social media warrior or a slackivist, they're not going to emotionally connect with the things that we do as effectively as people who haven't messed up their brain's dopamine receptors by spending all day on TikTok.

Audrey: Do you have trouble recruiting in Just Stop Oil? Or do you think that in the two years you've been involved in the group, you have seen the group getting more and more attention, and more and more people joining the group? Or do you think that since people are leaving and people are getting in, it's linear and there is no evolution or positive evolution in the way people are getting involved in just Stop Oil?

Louis: Yeah, the turnover of people full-time, people engaged to that level, is high enough that we don't think we have more people full-time committed to it now than we did two and a half years ago. However, I don't necessarily think that's a bad thing. The more an organization grows, the less efficient it functions, and the less everyone full-time engages, the less efficiency each individual's full-time contribution has towards the overall result and outcome due to the inefficiency of bureaucracy in general. Organizations get more bureaucratic because they become less efficient. We saw that with Extinction Rebellion with Just Stop Oil, it's happening as well. We always said at the start that this model of organizing structure has a shelf life of about two years. We're now over those two years. It does mean that decision making is not as effective or efficient, and the organization as a whole is not as efficient in terms of energy in compared to results it was two years ago. At a certain point, a lot of us question whether it's reduced level of efficiency in terms of how much we must give, how much we have to sacrifice. Legal repercussions is worth the diminishing results, per action and per consequence, This

effect can be seen over probably every single group and organization in the A22 Network, but also outside of the A22 Network. It's a relatively universal phenomenon in the A22 world. The groups that last the longest, Green Peace, for example, especially in the UK, in terms of number of people full-time and money and resources, versus practical results and outputs, are incredibly inefficient now. I think the problem is that due to working at it until I ran out of energy and being burned out, I'm jaded, and I can't see completely clearly whether it is still efficient enough to keep being worth continuing or not. I'm not sure I'm actually able to even quantify that due to my negative person experience I had of the repercussions from the state. Right now, I can't even go through London without being followed by police. I haven't been active in Just Stop Oil in over a year, and yet still, in the last month, there were five house raids looking for me. Intimidation tactics and state repression are increasing massively, and they work. That's partially responsible for the high turnover rates.

Audrey: Yeah, we see also this in France, the repression from the state. The repression is getting more and more intense, which can be also a sign that it's working and maybe it's disrupting the state and the carbon economy this much, but the repression is higher. But I can understand that on an individual level, it could be really difficult to bear. And I have maybe one more question. Do you think that the trend of people doing art disruption, doing art vandalism in museum will just stop as fast as quickly as it became something that activists pursued a lot? Do you think that it's come down and it will maybe resume in 50 years?

Louis: It's a trend. It will come and it will go, but it will come back again. It's like fashion. Fashion goes in cycles of what? Thirty years? Something will come in and out of fashion. It's the same with these tactics, I believe. I don't think they will stop entirely. But I think that either the ones art actions continuing at this point will either be done out of a place of desperation and not be effective and potentially be a waste of time and resources and energy, or they will have new creativity elements added to them to make them effective. I don't know what the next generation of action coordinators are going to come up with, whether it's art or whether it's not. I do faith in them. I think they'll come up with something brilliant. I think they'll come up with a bunch of stupid stuff as well. There's always a mix of both. But whether the art continues or not is up to them. I think in its current form, as you've seen it before, repeating it at this point, will happen a lot less or will happen in countries that it hasn't happened in before, which will have an effect nationally, but not an international effect like it used to. But in some countries that have we haven't had climate movements and actions like that happening, it would still

potentially have value at a national level and still might happen there. But I think you are right. The thing you said about state repression. At the start, we just said, first they ignore us, then they laugh at us, then they fight us, then we win. Right now, they're fighting us. That's uncomfortable for everybody involved, but it is a mark that it's working. They wouldn't bother fighting us if it wasn't effectively challenging their genocidal system.

Audrey: All right. Thank you so much. I think I'm pretty much done now with my questions, but do you have something else to add on the topic or I don't know, something that you want to mention for the record?

Louis: No, I think I rambled a lot, honestly. I'm not sure how much of this will actually be practical use for you. Thank you for listening. Sorry, I didn't stay on topic all the time. I struggled to stay on one topic.

Appendix 7: Jasper's Interview Transcript



Date: August 1st, 2024

Duration: 28 minutes

Place: Online with zoom

Interviewee: Jasper Vogel, 27 is a German student and software developer, who carried out actions that could be characterized as vandalism or political graffiti. He started to get involve in activist actions during summer 2023 and he has carried out actions that could be characterized as vandalism or political graffiti. Notably, he wrote on a wall a quote from Bertolt Brecht Book: “*Was ist ein Einbruch in eine Bank gegen die Gründung einer Bank?*”

Spoken language: English

This is a verbatim transcript of Audrey's interview with Jasper, following a WhatsApp conversation with a quick explanation of the search and sending some questions beforehand.

Audrey: So first I want to ask you, how old are you and what's your profession and level of study?

Jasper: I'm 27. I'm German. I'm writing my master's thesis right now in Austria, and I work as a software developer. Um, part time, like, parallel to my studies.

Audrey: All right. Thank you so much. So, this is, uh, interesting for me, for the sociodemographic part, because people have different background usually. And then, um, because you're more, um, interviewed because of your activist kind of experience. I want to ask you, where did you learn about activism and ecology? Was it in your family or work or school?

Jasper: Um, well, you know, on the internet for sure. I've heard about it before, but then in real life, like through friends.

Jasper: All right.

Audrey: Yeah. So, when did you start to really get involved in activism? And, just participated in actions.

Jasper: Last summer, I think, like the one before this summer, um, when I met, like friends and then their friends, and they would organize camps and stuff, and I would participate in that.

Audrey: All right. So, it's more in your, uh, social, um, sphere that people are involved and they just, like, convinced you or you were already convinced by the cause?

Jasper: No, I was. I was curious for sure.

Audrey: Your friends, um, they come more from, I don't know, they have Uni background. Are there some patterns in their sociology?

Jasper: Well, I'd say generally, of course, most of them are still students or have studied, but compared to the rest of my social bubble, a lot of them, like they study a lot less. There's a lot more people who don't study and instead decide to, like, be farmers or just work. Generally.

Audrey: Yesterday I interviewed, an activist who actually didn't study after her baccalaureate to just get involved into activism. So, I mean, like, they choose a path like that?

Jasper: Yeah. They quitted for some university during their bachelor.

Audrey: Definitely. Because direct action could be viewed as more worthy for these people. So, are they involved in a specific group and are you involved in a group or do you more act on your own?



Jasper: Well, no, I'm not really organized in activism. This is for me still is like, an occasional thing. It's also been a while because I've been on an exchange in Taipei, and then nothing really happened at all.

Audrey: Yes. But how often do you get involved? Like once a year or a bit more?

Jasper: Oh, I think last summer was spent like for three, maybe four occasions of it.

Audrey: All right. And so in which types of action do you usually participate. What is marches or more direct actions, civil disobedience as well. Like which type of action?

Jasper: I'd say it's the whole the whole spectrum. Well, like we had camps, and we would put up posters and stuff, obviously protests here and there. Um, some vandalism as well. But that's like, that happened maybe once or twice.

Audrey: And, uh, which type of action do you believe are the most effective?

Jasper: Um, effective? I don't know, probably speaking to people, I suppose, just like, political discourse. I think if you want to make a change, probably is very effective.

Audrey: And was your action related to art at some point? I'm thinking of vandalism, or they were like completely something else.

Jasper: Yeah, there were like 1 or 2 occasions of that where I would like, think of something to put up on a wall where I would know a lot of people would pass it, and then I'd see to like, find something I am interested in sharing with the world basically, to shout out.

Audrey: Can you just describe one of his actions, that kind of connect to vandalism and art?

Jasper: Yeah. Like what exactly we were putting on the wall, basically?

Audrey: I mean, yeah. What was the process of decision, to do this? Was it spontaneous or something you planed. And did you did it. Did you do it alone? Uh, at noon night? I don't know.

Jasper: I think I was reading, like, a book about basically just, like, poetic critique of capitalism. I don't know the English title, but it's like a German book. The point is that there was like a quote I really liked, and then I was thinking about doing this kind of stuff anyways. Right where it's fun, it's exciting, it's expressive and stuff, you know? And then I would just work out how to how to do it. I would make the stencil and then get a friend and put it up on a wall basically. So, we would like to go at night, check out like where's the next police station and stuff? How loud is it? Plan it all out. Yeah. And then we did that.

Audrey: All right. And how do you describe this action?

Jasper: I wouldn't call it so much activism. Like, I feel like that's a big word for what it is. It's more like just graffiti or street art. Call it what you want. It was definitely political, though. Like it wasn't just for it to look nice, you know, there was a message behind it.

Audrey: All right. And do you connect a little bit with the term of vandalism? Often used in the media to describe such actions. Or do you think it's maybe too big and it doesn't represent the reality well enough?

Jasper: Uh, what do you mean? Can you explain?

Audrey: Sometimes or like, most of the times, this type of action of just like, uh, doing graffiti on the walls could be called vandalism. Which is kind of a hard word. And I was just wondering if you think that this word describes your action or not.

Jasper: Well, yeah, in a way, yeah. I think there's like, a lot of factors that make it differ between just like, plain old vandalism and a form of art somewhere. What do you spray on? Do you put thought into it? Do you make it look nice, like all those kinds of things? Like, if I just put my my name or if I like, draw a penis on like a memorial, I would that's like, obviously that's just vandalism. But then there's so much out there which is just like, you know, that makes the wall a lot prettier than what it was in the first place.

Audrey: So, do you think that painting something on the wall with a political message kind as an internal artistic dimension in it?

Jasper: Yeah, definitely. For sure. But.

Audrey: Oh, sorry. I don't want to interrupt.

Jasper: Well, I don't know. It really. I think it also depends on what the person doing it wants it to be like. To me, everything is art. Art just exists if declare it as art. Like there's toilet somewhere in the modern arts museum. Somewhere. And so. Yeah. Yes, or no? I suppose.

Audrey: I want to add one other semantic question and then it will be a bit more, straight to the point. So, I don't know if you heard of a concept of activism. It's the practice of using art, as a form of activism, but also using activism as a form of, art and to promote social, political and environmental change. And do you consider the action you've done as part of this definition of activism, or do you think, it's maybe too big of a word as well?

Jasper: I haven't really heard about it before, but I think. Yeah, for sure. The intention was definitely artistic.

Audrey: All right. And have you heard of actions of climate activism in museum? When activists throw soup or whatever, mash potatoes on paintings or on the glass protecting paintings. Do you think that the definition of vandalism is appropriate to depict these types of action? Especially because most of the time, the paintings weren't damaged during the process. Or do you think that same for what you did? It's also a type of activism and expression which own a kind of artistic dimension. But, I mean, it's not vandalism.

Jasper: I think it's still a kind of vandalism. right? In my opinion, a justified one. And it would also be art, for sure, if it's like, performative and expressive.

Audrey: Do you think activists should fear the term vandalism, or they should reclaim it.

Jasper: No, I don't think they should fear it. I think it's like at times appropriate. If it's like, well thought through and considered. Right. But yeah, I think it's something that should be claimed.

Audrey: All right. I was just wondering, did you communicate about your actions of vandalism or did you keep it secret? Because of the fear of legal repercussions, of course.





Jasper: Yeah, I did fear repercussions, for sure. I didn't want to get, like, fined for it.

Audrey: And at the end you didn't get fined at all.

Jasper: No no no, no, we weren't caught. We did it at night.

Audrey: Did you achieve your outcomes with it and people were happy about what you did or if you heard people condemning what you did?

Jasper: It was like, on my commute to university, and I would drive by there every once in a while, and I would see people like stopping there and reading the quote. And, you know, I would like to think that they would also, identify with what it says, you know, and that I like a lot to have this feeling of like it having an impact on somebody and then maybe thinking about what, moves me so much in this book. That's really nice.

Audrey: Yeah, this small-scale impact goes beyond a large scale impact for you? For you it's more effective to try to have an impact on people in university than trying to convince all at once people in a country?

Jasper: It wasn't so much about convincing. I think it was just about a nice mixture of being able to express myself and then also maybe, putting the thought into people's head, at times.

Audrey: Do you think you can do this again?

Jasper: Yes of course, I hope so. But the guy I've been doing it with has been a little unreliable. But, you know, I'd be happy.

Audrey: Nice. How do you address the criticism, about your actions potentially damage the public space, the cultural heritage or being counterproductive?

Jasper: I didn't feel either of those. I think that's something I would like to be careful in this that I don't damage anything that I see as valuable, you know? It was like, for me, under some

concrete bridge, right? It really didn't get much uglier from what we did to it, you know? So, I don't feel like that really applies to me. I wouldn't spray a statue.



Audrey: Why?

Jasper: Because I could just spray something that's not as valuable to me, I suppose. But then again, also this, I feel to me this isn't as intense of a thing as it would be. Like the example you mentioned was the museum thing. I don't really condemn that, because the point that they're making, the way I understand it, is that: hey, climate change is going to wreck anything everywhere anyways, right? What's the point in keeping the heritage? And then that's the point I really like to agree with. And that resonates with me as well.

Audrey: But still, like if you won't do it and if you kind of value cultural heritage, you're a bit critical towards this kind of action still, for which reasons?

Jasper: Yeah, I don't know. Of course, it's not good to vandalize cultural heritage, and I do value it, but I value their point more than I value the cultural heritage.

Audrey: But saying what is good has a moral dimension. Why do you have such a strong point on morality of damaging cultural heritage?

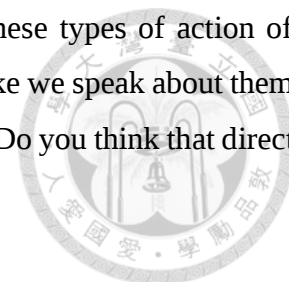
Jasper: Because I feel that the point they're making is even more valuable. And then, making the point in this extreme way also has more value than the cultural heritage, whereas it's more important for them to bring across their point than it is to keep the cultural heritage, you know.

Audrey: All right. But there is something still important in keeping the cultural heritage.

Jasper: Oh, yeah. For sure, for sure. Definitely. Sure. It's a thin line and I wouldn't want them to burn down the Louvre just to make a point. But the things that have been done with the tomato soup and you mentioned as well that the paintings themselves never really were damaged.

Audrey: I mean sometimes the painting, or the frame has been damaged, but unintentionally. Like in Great Britain, a frame costing 22,000 pounds was damaged because activists glued

themselves on this frame of Van Gogh painting. Do you think that these types of action of vandalism in themselves are one of the most efficient actions because like we speak about them quite often in media from different country. They can reach a big scale. Do you think that direct actions and actions that just target goods are more efficient overall?



Jasper: I wouldn't say they're more efficient, without the asterisks at the end, you know, because first of all, like, some people are just, you know, alienated by that from the cause where they're like, oh, these idiots are throwing paint at these beautiful things. And, instead of actually doing something about climate or something like that, but because it's so drastic, it like resonates with me. And I think it's also, if not effective, at least, um, efficacious, I think is the word or whatever. It does a lot, you know.

Audrey: All right.

Jasper: I'm not deep enough into it to like really say it's the best way to go about it. But I like it. You know I'm all for it.

Audrey: But I'm just wondering if using art and telling people they can go back to museums and do stuff there is a good idea, especially since museums are kind of stuck in time. They can also change things from within the museum and reclaim what art means. Yesterday, I interviewed an activist who said that even though it's old, they're trying to save art activism by being present and demanding action on climate change. Because, if there's no planet, how can we enjoy art? That's the main point, but it's not the only thing they can do. And do you think that the fact that there is kind of an international visibility of, art vandalism strengthens the climate movement because we see actions in museums in Germany, Canada, UK, Australia, France. In many countries activists use the same tactics and do similar stuff. Notably, there is the Network A22 with notably Letzte Generation in Germany, Just Stop Oil in the UK and Ultima Generazione in Italy. I don't know if you heard about this. So, the groups from this network in different countries use almost the same tactics and they are closely related. And so, do you think this is powerful?

Jasper: If I think of it's powerful in a way where it fuses the international community together?

Audrey: Yeah.

Jasper: Oh, yeah, for sure. For sure. Maybe like, I don't know, I haven't thought about it, but maybe it gives them some heroes to look up to and an ideal to be like, this is this is us. This is what we're doing. And it might actually work. Like a bit of hope. Maybe in that way. Yeah. For sure, for sure.

Audrey: And have you been inspired in your activism by activists outside of Germany or Austria?

Jasper: For sure, partially. I wouldn't say I'm like inspired by this art vandalism movement. Very much. I don't know, I've always been into that kind of stuff. But yeah, sure, it's like it's definitely a factor where I'm like, yeah, okay, this is what people do and this is what I also want to do for sure, to an extent, you know.

Audrey: All right. And what kind of channels did you use. To gather and to just act?

Jasper: What kind of channel? Should, like, signal, I suppose. Signal. Telegram. Word of mouth. You know where in Austria, where I live, it's very small. So, you kind of just, like, run into each other oftentimes.

Audrey: So, I think I'm pretty much done with my questions. Have you something to add?

Jasper: I saw the Letzte Generation thing where they would paint private jets. Would that also count into it? Is that like is that also a performative art? Right.

Audrey: Yeah. we can say it's performative art. And I mean, like they just use like the word like campaign and actions. But at the end, when you dig a little bit like the term performative art comes quite, quickly. And so, what do you think of, um, these types of actions? Targeting private goods and paintings in museums? Do you think it's more powerful to shift a bit the target from museum to like pollutant companies or goods belonging to billionaires?

Jasper: I mean, in a way, it's less morally ambiguous to paint private jets, for sure, but then also, it doesn't make the same point, right? Where you're saying, fuck the paintings, the planet's burning. This point isn't made when you paint the private jets. I don't know, I still like the

private jets more for sure, because it feels more, vindictive. You know, where these people actually fucking deserve it. I'm assuming I don't know.

Audrey: Yesterday the activist I interviewed actually did an action on a statue, belonging to Pinault, who is, a French billionaire who owns many companies. So, this really connects what you were speaking about, like with private jet, but also with, like, just targeting the statue.

Jasper: Was the statue depicting Pinault as well?

Audrey: No, no. The statue just belonged to Pinault. It wasn't depicting him.

Jasper: Yeah? Difficult, I don't know. In a way it hurts to see, if it's beautiful art. Sure. It's sucks a little to destroy it, but then also I think if there was a better way to vandalize private property of people that are like the deplorable, I suppose, then I would prefer that for sure.

Audrey: But I mean, like most of the time they don't damage it. They just like glue themselves to it. Or I mean, some things could happen like I told you, but it's not like the main goal, and most of the time the goal is not to vandalize purely to vandalize. So, it's more a strategy of communication.

Jasper: Yeah. No. That's great. I was thinking that the statue is good, apart from it being property of somebody who is to be criticized, you know. And I don't know, I think this would be something that I could talk for forever about. And it's very it's very tricky here and there.

Audrey: Yes, that's also the point. Do you think that overall, it's a relevant topic? Or if it's a minor issue, I don't know.

Jasper: I think it's very relevant. I mean, obviously, especially if it's, you know climate change protests. Right? It's never been any more relevant.

Audrey: Thank you very much, then.

Jasper: Yes of course!

Appendix 8: Information Sheet and Consent Form Sent To Participants



Title of Study:

Going beyond Art Vandalism: An Inquiry on Museum Incidents of Ecological Activism Since the Formation of the A22 Network

Researcher:

- **Audrey Champion:** Dual-Degree Master's Student in International Relations between Sciences Po Bordeaux and National Taiwan University, specialized in East Asian Studies

Supervisors:

- **Eric Macé:** Professor of Sociology, Vice-President of Bordeaux University
- **Adrian Rauchfleisch:** Associate Professor at National Taiwan University, Graduate Institute of Journalism

Purpose of the Study:

This research explores recent trends in ecological activism within museums, often labeled as art vandalism or activism. The study aims to:

- Understand why stakeholders resort to these actions.
- Examine the underlying rationale and artistic dimensions of such incidents.
- Evaluate the legitimacy and impact of these actions on the art world and public perception.
- Assess whether radical tactics can drive meaningful change and transform the art worlds as counter-hegemonic tools or if they alienate the intended audience.

Background:

- Recent incidents like the “Soup Shower” trend involve activists targeting famous artworks in museums to draw attention to social, economic, and environmental issues.

- These actions, often seen as provocative, use the emotional impact of art to highlight urgent concerns, raising debates on their legitimacy and impact.
- The concept of “artivism” merges art and activism, aiming for social intervention and reflecting a dialogue between art and politics.



Research Questions:

- How can recent incidents of ecological activism in museums be characterized, and do they qualify as “artivism”?
- How radical are these acts of museum vandalism, and what drives them in critiquing power structures and addressing environmental issues?
- How do critics perceive and discuss the ethical implications of using vandalism as a protest tactic?
- How is the scandalous nature of ecological artivism managed in terms of communication and public impact?
- How does ecological artivism intersect with transnational activism and international climate policies?

Methodology:

The study employs a qualitative approach, including:

- Literature review
- Case studies
- Semi-structured interviews with stakeholders
- Document analysis

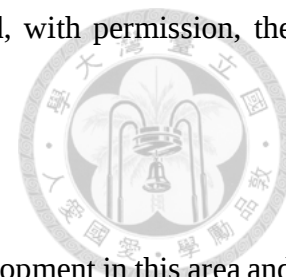
Expected Outcomes:

The research aims to provide an understanding of the motivations and impacts behind incidents of ecological activism in museums and their impact. More broadly, the goal is to enhance the understanding of art’s role in global environmental movements and the reciprocal influence of ecological activism on art.

What will you do in the interview?

You will be invited to a private room or in a visio-conference for an individual interview with

the researcher. The interview will last no more than 60 minutes, and, with permission, the researcher will audio record the interview.



What happens to the information?

The information gathered will be used to inform other support and development in this area and a summary of the anonymized findings will be made available to all Sciences Po Bordeaux and National Taiwan University students and staff. You have up until seven days after the interview to withdraw and we will destroy the interview data.

Who can access the information?

Only the research team will have access to the full data, which will be securely stored on the university server. The audio files will be destroyed once the interview has been transcribed, anonymized, and checked.

What happens next?

Participation is entirely voluntary. If you would still like to take part, please read and complete the consent form below. Thank you for your consideration.

Principal Investigator & Researcher contacts:

- Audrey Champion (audrey.champion@scpobx.fr)
- Eric Macé (eric.mace@u-bordeaux.fr) and Adrian Rauchfleisch (adrian.rauchfleisch@gmail.com)

Consent Form for Interview Participant

- I confirm that I have read and understood the information above.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time, without having to give a reason and without any consequences.
- I understand that I have up until seven days after the interview to contact the research team to exercise my right to withdraw and have my interview data removed and destroyed.
- I understand that the interview data will remain confidential.

- I understand that information which suggests that there is risk of serious harm to myself, or others cannot be kept confidential, and a joint decision will be taken regarding who to tell.
- I understand that the anonymized transcript of the interview will be stored at Sciences Po Bordeaux and National Taiwan University.
- I consent to being a participant in the project.
- I consent to the interview being audio recorded as part of the project.

Signature of Participant:

Date: