



DISOBEY! AT THE V&A

When considering the Disobedient Objects Exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum in Relation to Post-Modern Critique of Protest and Museums, What Questions Does It Prompt in Working Towards A New Political Aesthetics?

“Protests have formed a kind of carnivalesque background noise to capitalist realism”

Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?*

Within the past five years, a phenomenon has occurred within mainstream art museums – The Victoria and Albert Museum; Tate; The Hayward Gallery; Barbican, to name a few – which is a wave of retrospective, group exhibitions displaying explicitly political art works and ephemera. It is curious that this wave of interest has taken place **post-2010** – a year that, with the inauguration of the **Con-Lib coalition government**, saw a rise in wide-spread anti-austerity demonstrations on the streets of London by student, teacher, and NHS groups, amongst many others.

The role of the non-profit British art museum is to provide an accessible, cultural, learning experience for a diverse audience, making it an educational tool through means of **classification** and **collection**. What does this mean for the **future of political objects**, now that they have arguably been confined, through the architecture of the museum, to the canon of compartmentalized history?

The Carnival: A theory developed by Russian theorist Mikhail Bakhtin in the 1950s which saw the carnival model as a subversive form of resistance against the prevailing social orders.

Referencing the writings of Mark Fisher, Mikhail Bakhtin, and Tony Bennet, my research will focus on the exhibition **Disobedient Objects** at the V&A (2014–15) - a survey of objects appropriated and crafted in political activism from the 1970's onwards - including those created in the 2010 demonstrations.

The curators of the show Gavin Grindon and Catherine Flood worked collaboratively with activists to make collective decisions on how they were presented within the museum space. Once the exhibition was over, the pieces were put back into activist circulation, giving the objects a unique status and providing an interesting space for debate on the ontology of the museum artefact.

The objective of my project is not to design and call for a new set of political aesthetics, instead, it is a curiosity in **discovering, creating and debating new questions about the future of political aesthetics**, in order to **promote new critical discourse and independent areas of research**.

