

# Soup on Van Gogh and graffiti on Warhol: climate activists follow the long history of museums as a site of protest

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Andy Warhol's Campbell's Soup Cans at the National Gallery of Australia are just the latest artistic target of climate protesters, who have been throwing soup, mashed potatoes and cake at art worth millions of dollars.

The actions have received a muted response from some museum directors, but the protesters know exactly what they are doing.

As the activists who threw soup on Van Gogh's Sunflowers said: "We know that civil resistance works. History has shown us that".

Indeed, there is a long history of museums and art being used for political protest.

## For women's suffrage and women artists

In 1914, suffragette Mary Richardson slashed the canvas of Velázquez's Rokeby Venus at London's National Gallery.

Richardson wanted to attract publicity to Emmeline Pankhurst's imprisonment for her suffragette actions. Richardson selected this painting in part because of its value, and because of "the way men visitors gaped at it all day long".

First part of headline is dramatic and descriptive. Second part of the headline highlights the topic of the article - museums as sites of protest.

Expert author's professional position and affiliation.

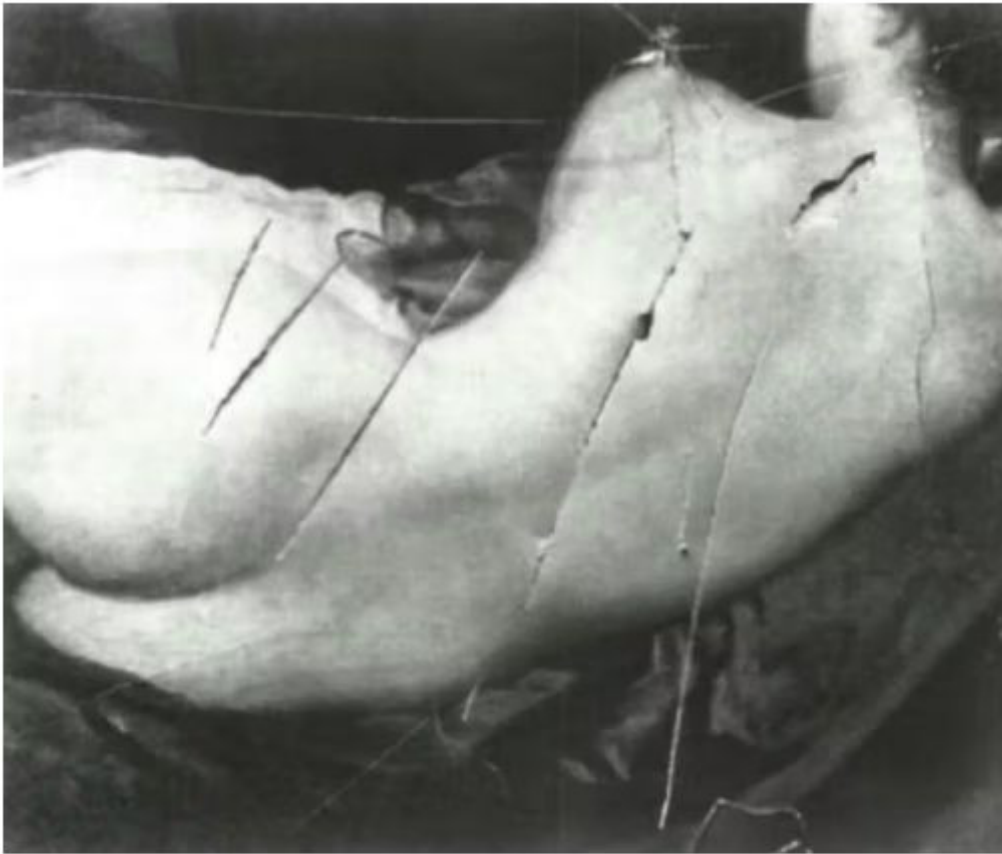
Dramatic anecdote about recent events is a 'hook' for the reader. This allows your readers to connect with your stories better. Notice the one-sentence paragraph.

Quote focuses on the topic to be elaborated in the article. Quotes must be relevant. 'The protesters' are established as the key characters – or protagonists – in this story about civil resistance in museums.

The focus and direction of the article is clearly stated. The introduction section is a series of short, one-sentence paragraphs.

Subheading to signpost next stage of the article. This is a chronological reference.

Concise historical evidence and quote from 'the protester', the main character in these two short paragraphs.



Damage to the Rokeby Venus by Mary Richardson's attack. The canvas was later restored. Wikimedia Commons

The effective use of an image in the body section adds clarity to the text and attracts readers' attention.

Her tactics are credited as motivating Extinction Rebellion and Just Stop Oil.

General link to current activist movements.

Since 1985, the Guerrilla Girls have been exposing sexual and racial discrimination in the art world.

Inclusion of familiar language to highlight issues – 'sexual and racial discrimination'.

Their actions have usually occurred at the outskirts of museums: in museum foyers, on nearby billboards and on New York City buses. Perhaps their most famous work asked: "Do women have to be naked to get into the Met Museum?"

Recent short historical anecdote and quote linking with earlier feminist/suffragette protests.

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### 'Direct action works'

The past two decades have seen a surge of art-focused demonstrations.

This is a succinct recap of the background problem.

In 2019, Decolonize this Place and Goldin's anti-Sackler coalition met with members of 30 other groups in front of Andy Warhol's "The Last Supper" (1986) at the Whitney.

They were there to celebrate the Tate Museum in London and the Guggenheim Museum in New York, who had announced they would stop taking funding from the Sackler family. One participant cried “direct action works!”

← Effective use of quote to present a reason for the art-based demonstration case study.

Even when protests at museums and art achieve less concrete outcomes than this, they remain central tools for building public awareness around political and social issues.

It is unlikely actions against museums and art will subside anytime soon.

← The last two paragraphs clearly present the stance of the author. Notice that a one sentence paragraph is quite effective to add a final punch of the author’s argument about the topic.