



AARON HUGHES *AUTONOMOUS DEMOCRACY*

To mark 20 years since the largest demonstration in British history against the 2003 illegal invasion of Iraq and coinciding with Peoples' Coalition occupation of Parliament Square from Friday April 21st, Arcade is pleased to present *Autonomous Democracy*, a project by Aaron Hughes exploring the history of experiments in collective action and direct democracy.

Autonomous Democracy consists of a series of vibrant posters that celebrate agitprop traditions in disseminating radical political messages. You can find them around the streets of Peckham, London (SE15)

Resource Wars, the climate crisis, economic collapse, growing inequality, systemic racism and corruption represent a crisis for representational democracy and the need for large-scale political reform. This poster series was originally conceived to inspire people during the turmoil following the last US general election by celebrating direct democracy and direct action of people's movements. The first print highlights the Wisconsin uprising in February 2011, against the undemocratic actions of then Wisconsin Governor, Scott Walker. Thousands of people occupied Wisconsin's State Capital Building in Madison to defend workers' rights and protest against the tax cuts intended to dismantle the public resources. This uprising followed numerous other popular mobilizations around the world including the Jasmine Revolution in Tunisia and the wider Arab spring which saw the occupation of Egypt's Tahrir Square and overthrow of the Hosni Mubarak dictatorship. Later that year, after the Wisconsin uprising and inspired by what was happening in north Africa and the middle east, people began occupying Zuccotti park near Wall Street in New York launching the Occupy Movement.

Aaron Hughes is an artist, curator, organizer, teacher, anti-war activist, and Iraq War veteran.

Working through an interdisciplinary practice rooted in drawing and printmaking, Hughes works collaboratively to create meaning out of personal and collective trauma, transform systems of oppression, and seek liberation. He develops projects that often utilize popular research strategies, experiments with forms of direct democracy, and operates in solidarity with the people most impacted by structural violence. Hughes works with a range of art and activist groups, including Justseeds Artists' Cooperative, About Face: Veterans Against the War, emerging Veteran Art Movement, and Prison + Neighbourhood Arts/Education Project.