#FloodWallStreet's Artist-Inspired Protest Descends On New York

Ben Davis, Saturday, September 20, 2014

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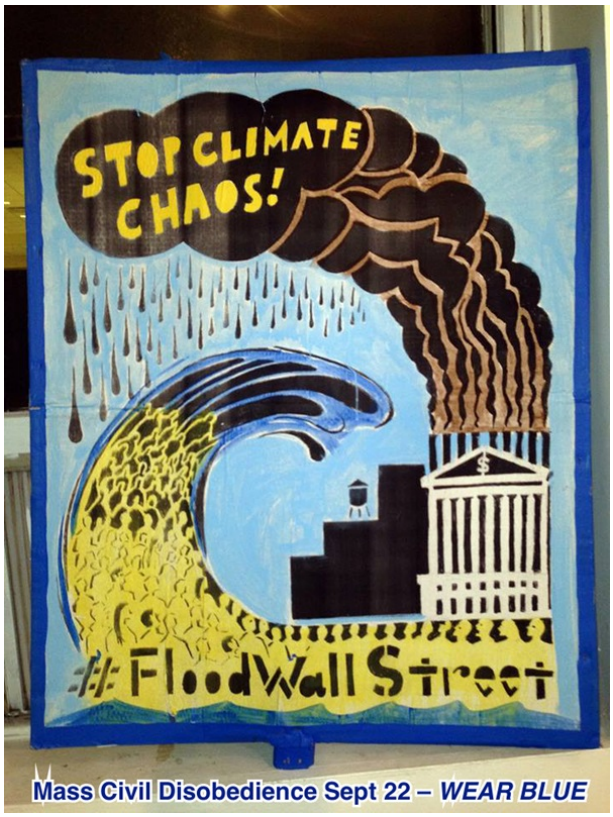

Seth Tobocman's graphic for the #FloodWallStreet
Image: Courtesy #FloodWallStreet

Tens of thousands of people are already converging on New York for Sunday's People's Climate March, timed to coincide with the lead-up to the United Nations Climate Summit. A good portion of those in town for the giant environmentalist march will stay to participate in a second, artistically inspired direct action the day after, on Monday. The event is dubbed #FloodWallStreet, and features speakers including Naomi Klein —whose new book *This Changes Everything* is already serving as a manifesto for the radical wing of the environmentalist movement—and San Francisco–based activist and art critic Rebecca Solnit, among others.

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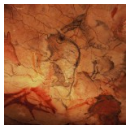
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The call for a direct action came from Climate Justice Alliance and promises to be led by "frontline communities," that is, indigenous groups and others most directly impacted by the struggle against polluters. But artists have been enthusiastically involved, and according to critic and activist Yates McKee the "guiding image" of the event will be an artistic one. (McKee was recently in the news for a creative protest of the Metropolitan Museum's embrace of David H. Koch, a major funder of climate denial groups; see "NYPD Detains Activists for Anti-Koch Light Graffiti at the Met.")

Participants are being asked to wear blue to represent the rising seas, and the protest will feature a massive 200-foot-long banner of a blue wave, which will be visible from the air as it sweeps the Financial District. The choreographed image is inspired by a graphic created for the event by radical comic artist Seth Tobocman (co-creator of *World War III Illustrated*), itself inspired by Hokusai's *The Great Wave Off Kanagawa* (1829–1832). Tobocman's spin on the iconic image has a massive wave, formed of human silhouettes, rearing up to consume a bank which belches smoke from its roof.

Another graphic for the event is inspired by the well-known Adbusters poster for Occupy Wall Street of a ballerina perched atop the Wall Street bull sculpture. In the new version, bull and ballerina alike are underwater, and the dancer sports a snorkel mask.

Image promoting #FloodWallStreet
Photo: Courtesy #FloodWallStreet

In an extensive article on the background of the action for Waging Nonviolence, McKee talks to various artists who have been building for this week's actions. Among them is David Solnit, known for welding art and protest through the theater troupe Art and Revolution and many other initiatives. Solnit describes #FloodWallStreet as a "counter-spectacle" designed to "intervene and disrupt the hollow public relations spectacle of Obama and the United Nations with the simple

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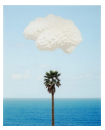

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Exact details of #FloodWallStreet are still being kept under wraps—those interested in participating can sign up online via the event's website. Participants are asked to meet in Battery Park on Monday at 9 a.m. The "flood," whatever it might bring, goes down at noon.

To see the #FloodWallStreet banner under construction, click on the video below:

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