



Subscribe Newsletters

THE ART NEWSPAPER

Search Profile

The Year Ahead Art market Museums & heritage Exhibitions Books Podcasts Columns Adven

US politics
News

Smithsonian continues Capitol insurrection archival project

The museum initiated the project last year in the aftermath of the violent far-right riot on 6 January, and has added artefacts originating not only with the rioters but also those who acted against the mob

Gabriella Angeleti

6 January 2022

Share



The Capitol insurrection on 6 January 2021.

Photo by Blink O'Fanaye, via Flickr

On the heels of the Capitol

insurrection on 6 January last year, in which far-right extremists stormed the US Capitol building in protest of Joseph R. Biden's procedural presidential election, the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History began collecting and archiving ephemera related to the violent riot, starting with protest signs and banners that were discarded on the National Mall.

Frank Blazich, the museum's curator of political and military history who spearheaded the project, spent several hours on the day that followed gathering artefacts he hoped would "one day offer some insight into the political turmoil that had shaken the nation", he writes in an [article](#) on the museum's blog today.

As the project gained momentum, the museum also began receiving objects that symbolised the efforts of people who acted against the pro-Donald J. Trump mob, including a vast number of

objects collected by veteran groups as part of a grassroots clean-up effort to sweep the area of white nationalist and alt-right signage, and insignia donated by National Guard troops and police officers who guarded and continue to monitor the Capitol premises.

The latter objects will serve to denote how the insurrection has changed life in Washington, DC, according to Blazich, such as the drastically heightened police and military presence on Capitol Hill. “The insignia are a reminder that the same people who for the past 20 years have been on the front lines of the War on Terrorism abroad [...] found themselves in early 2021 having to clean up or defend the nation’s capital from the actions of fellow compatriots,” he writes.

He adds, “This reality is sobering—that after two decades of investing blood and treasure in response to an attack by non-state actors of Al-Qaeda on the nation, some Americans who previously supported

the War on Terrorism, or fought in it, now find themselves directing their anger and rage against the seat of their national government.”

The process of collecting and contextualising the objects is “still developing and coming into focus”, Blazich writes. Objects abandoned inside the Capitol building could not be collected due to the ongoing federal investigation into the event, but the museum hopes to work with the Capitol to acquire some of these objects at a later date. Contributions from the public, including photographs and other objects, can be submitted to the Smithsonian via 2020electioncollection@si.edu.

US politics

US Capitol riot Protest

National Museum of
American History

Share

