

Vance Petrunoff

Bulgarian-American Documentary Photographer

Vance Petrunoff is a Bulgarian-American documentary photographer born in Sofia, Bulgaria. He left communist Bulgaria in 1985 and built a new life in the United States.

Between October 2011 and May 2012, Petrunoff traveled from one Occupy encampment to the next, documenting 18 camps as the movement spread from New York to California and Hawaii. His photographs record demonstrations and public assemblies, but they also concentrate on the less visible life of the camps: volunteers preparing meals, community libraries, medical and information stations, musicians, artists, handmade signs, portraits, conversations, and the everyday labor required to sustain temporary communities in public space.

Petrunoff was equally interested in the people and in the handmade slogans that gave voice to the movement. His archive preserves hundreds of signs and banners as primary visual documents of Occupy's humor, frustration, political critique, hope, and collective imagination.

During the journey, he carried prints from earlier locations to later encampments. Taped up, passed from hand to hand, or displayed on the ground, the photographs allowed participants to see how Occupy was taking shape elsewhere. This evolving project, titled *Occupying Occupy*, turned the documentation into a mobile part of the movement itself.

On September 18, 2012, Petrunoff presented a solo first-anniversary exhibition at Fort Mason Center in San Francisco. The installation embraced Occupy's do-it-yourself ethos, using cardboard, duct tape, packing tape, and string to create an immersive environment that echoed the camps. In September 2026, the archive will be exhibited at ONE Gallery in Sofia, bringing the project back to his country of birth.

His Occupy archive is preserved through chronological Flickr collections, the website **occupywallstreetphotos.org**, exhibitions, and the publication *Occupy USA*.

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