



American Federation of Arts

The Seventh Annual Directors Forum

Tried and True / Unknown and New: Forging a Dialogue
Made possible by The Liman Foundation

About the AFA

The American Federation of Arts is a nonprofit art museum service organization that provides traveling art exhibitions and educational, professional, and technical support programs developed in collaboration with the museum community.

Through these programs, the AFA seeks to strengthen the ability of museums to enrich the public's experience and understanding of art.

Goals:

To make art accessible to a broad range of people through a program of traveling fine arts exhibitions

To provide educational experience for diverse audiences as an integral part of AFA exhibitions

To promote scholarship and research through exhibitions and publications

To provide professional training and development opportunities for museum leaders

To facilitate communication and collaboration within the museum community

To assist museums with exhibition preparation and circulation by offering a broad range of technical support services

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Introduction

The Directors Forum, a program of the American Federation of Arts, is designed to provide the directors of not-for-profit art museums an opportunity to exchange ideas and information on issues of common interest. The program consists of a conference organized to benefit primarily the directors of small and medium sized museums. However, large institutions are not discouraged from participating, since many of the themes are universal. A two-tier registration fee allows the Directors Forum to include those from institutions that are not members of the AFA.

To participate in Directors Forum individuals must be full-time, paid professional directors of not-for-profit art museums or galleries open to the public on a regular schedule.

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Foreword

Over the last seven years the American Federation of Arts' Directors Forum has hosted hundreds of directors of small to medium-size museums and reached many more through these transcripts of the proceedings. The panel discussions and workshops by outstanding experts have covered a wide range of practical subjects, among them: leadership challenges; relations with boards; staff service providers; patrons; fundraising; marketing; earned income; budgeting; asset management; issues of stolen art; social, political, and cultural change; expansion of programs and facilities; entertainment versus education; corporate support and sponsorships; intellectual property and the internet; and living artists' place in museums. This year the topics included: *Building Effective Collaborations*, *Museums and the Media*, *The Productive Uses of Conflict in Teams*, and *Creating a Confident Audience*.

In addition, the New York City venue affords an opportunity to visit our museums and to meet, network, and share ideas with their leadership and other New York professionals in the field.

Interest in and attendance at museums are at an all time high nationwide and museums of all sizes have become valuable additions to America's cultural landscape. The Joe and Emily Lowe Foundation and The Liman Foundation have been honored to underwrite the Forum since its inception and to play a tiny role in helping directors deliver new services and programs to this growing public, especially our children.

Ellen Liman, President
The Liman Foundation

Opening Address

Lowery Stokes Sims

**Director
The Studio Museum in Harlem**

As Julia Brown mentioned, I recently assumed the directorship of The Studio Museum in Harlem, which has as its mission the promotion of the work of artists of African descent in the United States, the Americas, and the world. Before that, I worked at The Metropolitan Museum of Art for 27 years, primarily as a curator in the 20th Century Art and then in the Modern Art department. So it might be said that I spent the first part of my career attempting to infiltrate the art mainstream to make a place for artists of color and women, and will spend the next part of my career reaffirming the focused mission of The Studio Museum in Harlem.

What I want to share with you tonight are some random thoughts on that transition. When I look back I realize that my course in life was set in the mid-1960s when I decided on a major in art history at Queens College of the City University of New York. Almost immediately, I became an activist challenging my art history professors about the absence of any people of color in the standard art history curriculum.

One of my professors rationalized their exclusion, presuming that all art by African Americans was “retarditaire” social realism. Actually, quite a few of these artists were abstractionists, and there was nothing retarditaire about the political, social, and economic issues that surrounded the perception of the work of African-American artists. As I learned more and more about African-American artists, I found that they would be accessible to me: Benny Andrews, one of the most prominent leaders of the black art movement in the 1960s and 70s, was a teacher at Queens College.

After finishing my masters degree in art history at Johns Hopkins in 1972, I joined the staff of the Community Programs Department at The Metropolitan Museum of Art. At this time I was thrust onto the front lines of the institutional politics of the black art movement, navigating the needs of the so-called community—read minorities—and the institutional imperatives of the Museum.

Despite the challenges from the outside, the community, and the resistance on the inside, from the Museum, we in the Community Programs Department viewed our jobs as a mission and carried on our mission outside the museum walls. We purloined exhibition materials for Andi Owens, who was organizing Genesis II gallery on 110th Street. We laid floor and conceived public relations strategies with Linda Bryant, who opened the first commercial gallery dedicated to African-American artists on 57th Street.

By this time the Studio Museum was also in full operation. It had opened to the public in a loft on a 125th Street and Fifth Avenue in 1968. The original intent of the founders was to provide an uptown contemporary art space focused on experimental art. They wanted to avoid a traditional museum with a permanent collection, and rather concentrate on an innovative exhibition and film program, and a strong artist-in-residence program that would provide a studio experience for community artists. Needless to say, the project soon became completely eclipsed by the vitality and excitement of Harlem and the then well-publicized agitation of black artists for a place in the art world.

This agitation soon yielded results—specifically, the ritual of the black art show at mainstream museums. One of the first, and certainly the most notorious, was *Harlem on My Mind*, organized by The Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1969. It was notorious not only because of a controversial introduction to the catalog by Candice Van Ellison that was perceived to be anti-Semitic, but also because it was not an exhibition of the work of black artists, but rather, a multimedia documentary exhibition on Harlem, which largely featured the work of photographer James VanDerZee.

Although this resulted in a rather rancorous exchange between the Metropolitan Museum and New York City's black artists and representatives of the Harlem community, some interesting dialogue came out of this project. The transcript of the symposium, “The Black Art in America,” held at the museum in conjunction with *Harlem on My Mind* summarizes a discussion of a panel of artists which included Romare Bearden, Jacob Lawrence, Tom Lloyd, Sam Gilliam, William T. Williams, Hale Woodruff, and Richard Hunt. Among the issues they debated were the relationship of African-American artists to their community, their role within the contemporary social, political and economic climate, and their place within the history of American art.

This all continued my education in art world politics. Schools of art criticism such as formalism, which excised political, social, economic, personal considerations from art, disadvantaged African-American artists, for whom,

as Robert Colescott has noted: image was never incidental. In the 1960s and 70s, the presumption was that, given the political situation of the times, all art by African Americans was political by nature, regardless of the fact that individual artists demonstrated a stylistic compatibility with the mainstream.

Within the African-American artist community such issues of criticism were enfolded into a myriad of related issues, also articulated in the Metropolitan Museum symposium: what is the appropriate kind of art for African Americans to make: What is the relationship of the artist to the "community"? What are the responsibilities of the art mainstream to the African-American artists? Artists took positions around these issues—individual stances, reflecting an awareness of the mainstream as the locus of acceptance or rejection; i.e., economic viability.

When I was appointed assistant curator in the 20th Century Art Department at the museum in 1975, I knew my prime objective was to promote African-American artists in the mainstream context, and to acquire their work for the Museum. I was in constant dialogue with individuals who were prominent in the community and black arts movement, so much so, that I gradually developed an alternate career to that which I pursued at The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

I continued to be involved with the Studio Museum as a visitor, as a member of a community of artists and aspiring curators, critics and art historians, who are friends to this day. I also began to serve as a guest curator, to lecture, to participate in panels. The Studio Museum served as an emotional anchor for me as I slugged my way through the art world, slowly but surely establishing my credentials and fighting for the causes I believed in. One constant concern has been the persistent challenges African Americans have faced institutionally in the art world.

On the one hand, the challenges facing museum professionals in ethnically focused museums reflect their origins. A study done in the mid-1980s by Joan Sandler on the situation of minority art museum professionals in the northeast noted that there was a need for training and development, since most of the museum professionals in African-American museums were primarily artists or community activists.

On the other hand, there was the challenge of attracting young African Americans with college degrees to the low-paying positions in the art world. I remember when Thelma Golden came to talk to me about working in a museum. She faced resistance from her parents, who preferred that she pursue a more lucrative line of work. We made arrangements for me to meet her father at a benefit for the Children's Art Carnival, so that Mr. Golden could see that it was possible for an African-American woman to pursue a career in the arts, feed and clothe herself, and be able to afford adequate shelter.

If you're able to hang on in a situation, you may be able to see changes. I did by the mid-1990s. I began to notice that the situation of African Americans was changing with regard to the field of art history and museums. There were many more young people coming into the field, apparently with parental approval, and I enjoyed the opportunity to mentor new generations coming into the field from the comfort and luxury of the Metropolitan Museum.

I had completed my doctorate, had been promoted to the rank of full curator, and was ready, frankly, to coast towards retirement, finding interesting projects to amuse myself along the way. But the cosmos and the search committee at The Studio Museum in Harlem had different ideas. The reactions to my decision to leave the Metropolitan Museum have understandably been mixed. The enthusiasts postulated how the move would be good for the museum, even though many had never visited the Studio Museum. The nay-sayers just felt I was out of my mind to leave the cushy confines of The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

What really made the proposition to assume the directorship appealing to me is that, at last, I get to focus on the issues in the art world that have always been important to me as an integral part of my job, rather than an outside interest. It also allows me to deal with a great deal of unfinished business about African-American and other artists of color that seem not to have been addressed by more recent critical trends in the art world.

This is not to overlook the important progress achieved in the exhibiting, collecting, and writing about African-American artists in the artistic mainstream in the 1980s and 90s. However, in order to ensure the market, critical, and institutional viability of these artists beyond the critical fad of the moment, a reexamination of the situation of African-Americans within multiculturalist and postmodernist propositions is imperative. It is also important to consider African-American art from its own internal integrity outwards, so that it is not just being considered according to criteria established on the outside.

These conditions impact the current situation of an organization like The Studio Museum in Harlem today. Having been a pioneer in the exhibition and promotion of African-American artists, it finds that it and

institutions like it have succeeded in their original mission all too well. Their promotion of African-American artists has been also taken on by the mainstream, which has developed a strong appetite for the work of African-American artists.

So the Studio Museum has to come to grips with the fact that it is competing for the allegiance of African-American artists who might perceive that they do not need the Museum to advance in the art world. It is also competing with museums that have many more resources at their disposal in terms of staff and money. So one of the things that attracted me to the job as director of the Studio Museum was the challenge of redefining, refining, reconstituting the mission of the museum in the context of the postmodern, post-multicultural world, and in the context of the new Harlem.

In this context, the museum still has as its primary role the promotion of African-American art and artists. What it offers artists, and by extension, art historians, critics, collectors, students, and aficionados, is a context in which African-American art can be judged by its own criteria in tandem with overarching critical constructs. It offers a site where African-American art is the sole focus, not one in many priorities, and where artists may find a primary presence within museological practice—which, however inadvertently, fosters the notion that the deader the artist the better, and the less likely [they are] to interfere with institutional machinations.

It also offers Harlem. Harlem is certainly undergoing a revival these days. Being there allows me personally to recapture the passion and the commitment that were pervasive in the art world when I entered it, in terms of engaging the public around issues that were significant to them.

I recently came across an essay by Amalia Mesa Bains on the Galeria de la Raza, which has been one of the most important vehicles for Latino and Chicano artists in San Francisco since 1970. Mesa Bains writes: "A key aspect of the aesthetic of 'el movimiento' was the emphasis on everyday lived reality. Motivated by a sense of collectivity and the community's need for education and political survival, emerging centers sought to provide an art that would inform and a presentation strategy that was anti-elitist and publicly accessible."

What struck me about these words is how they resonate with the situation even today. Despite the fact that the Studio Museum has evolved into a viable visual arts institution and mounts exhibitions and produces catalogs that are comparable to those produced by a mainstream art organization, what we do still has to stand up in the face of what is happening in the community outside our doors.

That fact struck me when I was passing through Harlem on the way to a meeting at the precise moment that the verdict in the Amadou Diallo trial was announced. It was very different hearing it on 125th Street than in my office at 82nd and Fifth in The Metropolitan Museum of Art. I may not retool our exhibition program to focus on police brutality, but it certainly puts the scope and the context of what we do at the Studio Museum in a specific light.

In summary, I look forward to the challenge of serving the needs of African-American artists in light of the thrust to recognize the potential of the arts within economic development, specifically in Harlem. I look forward to the challenge of creating a museum for artists, creating a collection to reflect that priority.

I look forward to reasserting the Museum's presence within the community in which it sits, and to bat about the questions of community, artistic expression, education, and expression. I look forward to developing a staff and infrastructure that affirms the Museum's mission, so that we can become a unique resource for the visual art production of African Americans. I look forward to reexamining the nuances of terms like "fine arts," "black," "African-American," and "Diaspora" in light of the realities of today's global perspectives. I look forward to examining the meaning of what it is to be African and American, perhaps finding more resolution than the dualistic concept of W.E.B. Du Bois, so that my two souls will not be separate within my being.

I look forward to reasserting the intimacy of community in tandem with that global perspective. And I look forward to projecting the Studio Museum as a place where African American artists can have a sense of their uniqueness on this planet, and where people know that their culture is being promoted and preserved, and where they can always go and feel at home.

Common Ground: Building Effective Collaborations

Frances Hesselbein

Chairman of the Board of Governors
The Peter F. Drucker Foundation for Nonprofit Management

Five hundred years ago, Renaissance Man discovered that the world was round. Three hundred fifty years later, Organization Man developed the practice of management. But as this practice evolved, he forgot that his world was round, and he built a management world of squares and boxes and pyramids. His world had a special language that matched its structure: the language of command and control, of order and predict, of climb the ladder, of top and bottom, up and down.

In every large organization for the next 100 years, rank equaled authority. And for the most part, the old hierarchy that boxed people and functions in squares and rectangles, in rigid structures, worked well. It even developed the famous pyramid with the CEO sitting on the pointed top, looking down as his workforce looked up.

And then a period of massive historic change began, of global competition and blurred boundaries, of old answers that did not fit the new realities. In all three sectors of public, private, and social organizations there grew a new cynicism about our basic institutions. With government, corporations, and voluntary or social sector organizations trying to ride the winds of change, a different philosophy began to move across the landscape of organizations, and with it came a new language, a new approach, and a new diversity of leadership.

In the 1970s and 1980s, some leaders in the private and the voluntary sectors saw that the hierarchies of the past did not fit the present they were living or the future they envisioned—so they took people and functions out of the boxes and, in doing so, they liberated the human spirit and transformed the organization.

Today we begin to see the new leaders, the leaders of the future, working in fluid and flexible management structures; and we hear a new language from these leaders—they understand the power of language.

“Mission-focused, values-based, demographics-driven”

“Learning to lead people and not to contain them”

“Management is a tool—not an end”

“Followership is trust.”

We hear corporate leaders using more felicitous and inclusive language. For example, Jack Welch of General Electric: “Ten years from now, we want magazines to write about GE as a place where people have the freedom to be creative, a place that brings out the best in everybody, an open, fair place where people have a sense that what they do matters, and where that sense of accomplishment is rewarded in both the pocketbook and the soul. That will be our report card.” A powerful corporate leader speaking of soul? The times are changing!

From my own experience from 1976, when I left the mountains of western Pennsylvania to begin my work as CEO of Girl Scouts of the USA, the largest organization for girls and women in the world, I knew that the old structures were not right for the next decade, let alone the next century. So volunteers and staff together unleashed our people through a flat, circular, fluid management system. In the new organizational structure, people and functions moved across three concentric circles, with the CEO in the middle looking across, not at the top looking down. Five minutes after it was presented, a colleague dubbed it “the bubble chart” and an observer, “the wheel of fortune.” Our people moved across the circles of the organization—never up and down—and the result was high performance and high morale.

I am often asked by management students and middle managers in organizations I work with, “How can we free up the organization and make the changes you talk about if we are not at the top?” I reply, “You can begin where you are, whatever your job. You can bring a new insight, new leadership to your team, your group.”

That advice applies equally—or especially—to senior executives. As Peter Senge points out in *The Ecology of Leadership*, when it comes to sustaining meaningful change, senior executives have considerably less power than most people think. But one place where they can effect change is with their own work groups and everyday activities.

With the return of a more fluid, circular view of the world, the days of turf battles, the star system, and the Lone Ranger are over. The day of the partnership is upon us. Leaders who learn to work with other corporations, government agencies, and social sector organizations will achieve new energy, new impact, and new significance in their organization's work. But to manage effective partnerships, leaders will have to master three imperatives—managing for the mission, managing for innovation, and managing for diversity.

Managing for the mission. Understanding one's mission is the essence of effective strategy, for the small nonprofit enterprise or the Fortune 500. Consider the power of three questions that Peter Drucker offers those who are formulating an organizational mission:

What is our business / mission?

Who is our customer?

What does the customer value?

An effective mission statement must fit on a T-shirt, and it must give people a clear, compelling, and motivating reason for the organization's existence. For example, "To serve the most vulnerable," the mission of the International Red Cross, satisfies both criteria and succeeds brilliantly; "To maximize shareholder value," the de facto mission of many corporations, satisfies only the first, and fails miserably.

Managing for innovation. Peter Drucker defines innovation as "change that creates a new dimension of performance." If we build innovation into how we structure the organization, how we lead the workforce, how we use teams, and how we design the ways we work together, then innovation becomes a natural part of the culture, the work, the mind-set, the "new dimension of performance." At the same time, we must practice "planned abandonment" and give up programs that may work today but will have little relevance in the future.

Managing for diversity. Perhaps the biggest question in today's world is, "How do we help people deal with their deepest differences?" Every leader must anticipate the impact of an aging, richly diverse population on the families, work organizations, services, and resources of every community. Headlines and TV tell us that governance amid diversity is the world's greatest challenge.

Those headlines also remind us of the grinding reality that no single entity—whether, public, private, or nonprofit—can restore our cities to health or create a healthy future for all our citizens. But in the emerging partnerships across all three sectors, we see remarkable openness and results. We need thousands more such partnerships. All of us are learning from one another. Thousands of dedicated public sector employees overcome daunting odds every day to improve their corner of the world. A huge social sector—with over a million voluntary organizations in the United States and over 20 million worldwide—shows what dedicated people can do, even on woefully inadequate budgets. And the incredible resources, energy, and expertise of the private sector reminds us that behind every problem there really is an opportunity. It is the leader's job to identify the critical issues in which his or her organization can make a difference, then build effective partnerships based on mission, innovation, and diversity to address those issues.

We need to remember that we can do little alone and yet much together. To be effective, leaders must look beyond the walls of the corporation, the university, the hospital, the agency—and work to build a cohesive community that embraces all its people—knowing there is no hope for a productive enterprise within the walls if the community outside the walls cannot provide the healthy, energetic workforce essential in a competitive world.

Elizabeth Wright Millard
Executive Director
Forum for Contemporary Art

I was brought into this discussion perhaps to talk about the smaller museum and smaller programs—art that is much more locally based. Frankly, I was encouraged that somehow, somehow, we have been using the Drucker model. Its common sense approach seems to have infiltrated all the way through the system into small institutions in places like St. Louis. So, thank you Frances, somehow we are doing this right.

Our big problems in St. Louis have begun with frustration and were solved with collaboration. Our frustration stemmed from trying to figure out how to get something done in a contemporary art space that has a limited budget in a town not known for contemporary art. One of our earliest programs is called "New Art in the

Neighborhood” and was born out of this frustration. In the 70s and 80s, as you all know, the public school system started to drain its art programming. We were extremely frustrated when trying to attract public school kids to our shows, because we had no money for buses, and the public school system really did not like contemporary art. We are a non-collecting institution, so the exhibitions are always changing. The schools in St. Louis have a very strong program with the St. Louis Art Museum and felt much more comfortable taking students into a well-known collection with pre-planned activities. They liked to know years ahead of time what was happening.

So rather than continuing to beat our heads against that wall, we decided that we would start an educational program in our own neighborhood. As Lesley mentioned, we are in an interesting transitional neighborhood in St. Louis. We are part of the Grand Center Arts and Entertainment District, an area that holds the Symphony Hall, the Fox Theater, a wonderful small concert hall, and a small theater that houses the St. Louis Black Repertory Company and a Cabaret series. We are the visual arts component of the District, and we are two blocks from the largest housing project in St. Louis. We started recruiting for our program at the local Catholic Church—a very progressive church, dedicated to strengthening the neighborhood.

Believing that our strength as an institution lay in the support and exhibition of living artists, we began to question where the next generation of artists would come from. The Art School at Washington University in St. Louis was also asking this question. They had tried to start a graphic design program for high school students, but couldn't get funding for buses. The bus situation ended up being a great impetus for us both. They decided to partner with us on this program and provide curriculum development for us. We had the desirable inner-city location, and they had the faculty and graduate student expertise.

Working with the faculty at Washington University, we developed a pre-professional training program for high-school aged youths. We started with a small group of about eight kids. In 1995, The Nathan Cummings Foundation sponsored a seminar to encourage universities with museums and art schools to go beyond their campus borders and make change in their communities. This program was presented at the conference and allowed us the time to work on the details of collaboration. It was a perfect partnership between the large university and a small institution.

From the very beginning, we realized that for this program to succeed it could not duplicate anything currently offered by St. Louis cultural organizations. So, while others were offering tours, weekend programs, or four- to six-week workshops, we created a program that would be up to a five-year commitment for the student. This is an ongoing program designed to take students from the 8th grade through the 12th grade. These kids are with us for five years—every Saturday during the school year, from noon to five, and in the summer they stop by to see what new shows we have. The program has grown over the last six years to almost 20 students.

There have been many successes with “New Art in the Neighborhood.” The students have taken ownership of the museum, since they are right in the neighborhood and now feel comfortable stopping in. Our goals are to foster young artists and promote the notion that art might be the answer to their career needs. We want to keep and encourage that idea, because it's not, frankly, encouraged by their school and often not encouraged by their parents. By meeting artists who make a living from their work, and by working with artists at the university level these students have become comfortable with their talent and have given serious attention to their professional goals. Our graduates have gone on to the Maryland Institute, Spellman College, University of Missouri, the Kansas City Art Institute, and to the St. Louis Community Colleges. It's been a wonderful program, I think, for everybody involved and has solved many problems for this small group of people.

One of the interesting challenges facing this program was how to fund it. Six or seven years ago most of the corporate funders were looking at numbers—how many people are you reaching? They wanted large numbers and were looking for programs that produced them. We were very fortunate to have a corporation in St. Louis, Emerson Electric Company, who became interested the idea and liked our collaborative partnership. We told them that it's eight kids and we wanted \$20,000, as there is no tuition for these kids. It was great commitment on their part, and one they have continued. Emerson Electric also has partnerships with two high schools in St. Louis, and we are now able to bring in kids from these high schools.

So, for the Forum for Contemporary Art, filling niches has been successful. I have gone on too long, but wanted to briefly mention what lies ahead for us in the way of collaboration. We have the opportunity to build a new building in St. Louis, which is next to, and will share a courtyard with, the Pulitzer Foundation for the Arts. This partnership is born of the leadership of Emily Rauh Pulitzer, who has chosen to build a significant Tadao Ando-designed building in this arts district. We believe the synergy between the Forum for Contemporary Art and the Pulitzer Foundation is an interesting model for the United States. It will unite a private foundation housing one of the best private collections with an edgy contemporary institution dedicated to the art and artists of our time.

I believe the opportunities offered by this new collaboration will greatly enrich St. Louis and its surrounding region.

Gregory F. Harper
Executive Director
Cape Museum of Fine Arts

I would like to just begin by saying that Laura Willumsen, who did want to be here this morning, is very disappointed that she cannot be here. She is really a wonderful leader of one of the two consortium projects that I work with, and I hope that sometime you do get a chance to meet her and become involved with the leadership ideas that she promotes through the Pittsburgh Center for the Arts.

As Lesley Wright mentioned, I have been with the Cape Museum of Fine Arts for eight years. I have been involved in two particular collaborations. Before I settled into my office at Cape Cod, I received a call from Barry Dressler, who was the director of the Berkshire Museum in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, to say "you know, Greg, I am glad you're coming up, and I want to tell you that there are 18 small museums up here. If we all get together, we constitute the largest American art museum in the country." I thought about that for the two months that I was getting settled in, and in February of 1993, we got together, about 18 of us, in Fitchburg, [Massachusetts], and we began to explore the idea of creating a regional collaborative. We started with a marketing effort that was basically just to combine our membership rosters to offer reciprocal arrangements—just a way to try to get to know each other, build a working relationship, at first.

We began to look at what really makes us a potentially viable collaborative, and that was the combining of our resources. We do have some magnificent collections, individually, and as a group. So the first thing we thought was that we would like to try to develop some exhibitions together. We would like to get to know each other's collections. We involved our curators in the discussion and so forth. The first thing that came up though, as information technology is changing as it is, is that these 18 curators aren't going to truck around to 18 different museums and look at physical collections, records, things of that nature. Instead, we pooled our resources and we went to the Bay Foundation and received funds to get all of us up to speed computer-wise, so our collections can not only be recorded, but also accessible via the internet. We will be in that position soon.

Each of our curators and registrars will have access to each other's information via the internet. That is pretty much Step 2, along with building our collaborative. Step 3 now is that we are planning exhibitions. Jeffrey Anderson, who is here from the Florence Griswold Museum, helped to get this particular project on the road. One of the interesting things about this particular collaboration is what we learned from each other beyond just these very basic organizing concepts. I will get into that in a moment.

The second collaboration involved CINAUSE Network. This is an actual collaboration among non-profit museums and for-profit corporations here in New York City, called the CINAUSE Company in the Tribeca Film Building. The organizing principle behind this is to take a relatively new technology—that being high-definition film making—and apply it to development of educational programming that, because of digital format, affords some interactivity down the road. But the technology itself affords the best way possible at this time to photograph visual artwork in an incredibly clear format and also a very color-true format. We have been exploring this for about two years. Laura Willumsen's museum, the Pittsburgh Center for the Arts, is the organizing manager, so to speak.

Each of our two collaborations has some staff involved to help keep us on track. I will talk about those characteristics in a moment. The Pittsburgh Center for the Arts is the leading force behind the CINAUSE Network. The idea is that we get to the group of museums and, again, using our resources, beautiful visual art resources, among others, coupled with technology to create content that we can all share.

Basically it's an IMAX format. CINAUSE will install feeders, in this case, an inexpensive installation in auditoriums and dance recital areas, things of that nature. It's very flexible. Then we are able to pool financial and staff resources to create programming that will then be used by all participating organizations and actually license to other organizations. Initially in our investigation, we thought we could deal with the content side. What about the production side? We contacted the Corporation for Public Broadcasting in Washington. We met with them. They funded a conference in Pittsburgh about a year ago where ten museum directors and ten PBS station managers got together to initially explore a collaborative that goes across organizations, which is very interesting. We learned a great deal about each of our working formats during that session.

Since we have organized under the idea that, as museums, we're already in the business of collaboration, we are going to take our model and develop it for preparing content and work with various stations or other for-profit production companies to create the programs that will eventually circulate throughout the museums.

The initial idea with PBS was based on the fact that by 2003 they have committed to convert to a digital format in terms of their broadcast presentation. This is a great format. In fact, much of their work is being filmed in high-definition. We would create the content that PBS would use. We are talking about program content, primarily using the model of going into artists' studios instead of doing typical documentary format. The high-definition format is basically ten times the clarity of our own television sets at home, a very true color. It's a wonderful sense of being there, whether you're going through a museum gallery or art studio, as it's being filmed. It's a wonderful presentation technology that also affords, as in the case of the Cape Museum of Fine Arts, the ability to offer programs for artists working in other digital formats. It worked out beautifully for us.

The characteristics I think that are similar in both collaborations are that each of them has a very succinct mission—they are mission-driven. We each have a small staff that is involved in keeping the engine running for the collaboratives. It's primarily volunteer-driven. In both cases, the directors of the museums. When particular issues in marketing and curation come up, we bring along the staff and then that gets communicated back to staff at the museum. The Cape Museum of Fine Arts has a staff of eight and 125 volunteers. So that connection to our own volunteer involvement becomes important. In fact, I have a committee at the museum that focuses specifically—a volunteer committee—on implementing a new media program work within our own program structure and our regional community.

The communication technology connects the members of each collaborative over broad geographic areas. Sometimes we communicate very easily with one another. Both collaborations use specific ideas to focus our organizational missions. As in any collaborative effort, the network of institutions and ideas offers some side benefits—learning opportunities. For example, the Fitchburg Art Museum just opened a charter school in the state of Massachusetts. It's an incredible model that we can look at and learn from.

The Cape Museum of Fine Arts is a young organization, and we have found these collaborations in particular to be very cost-effective ways for us to use a broad range of people, talent, and their ideas to develop a higher profile for the museum in the museum community, as well as in our own region. It brings more benefits from a broader use of our resources.

Infatuation, Apprehension, and Misconception: Museums and the Media

Susan Lubowsky Talbott

Director
Des Moines Art Center

It's nice to be here and see so many old friends. I would like to take the liberty of starting my comments very personally, beginning with the theme of infatuation.

My own learning curve about working with the press began when I was director of the Visual Arts Program at the National Endowment for the Arts during the early years of the "culture wars." There was of course, a great deal of attention from the press and at a certain point, when publicity was becoming increasingly negative, the edict came from the chairman that we weren't allowed to speak to reporters. So when I was invited out on a date by a very, very nice journalist—a political reporter from the Washington office of the *Chicago Sun-Times*—I was absolutely convinced that he was just trying to get inside information. Although I was somewhat infatuated, I barely said a word and sat there like a mummy. He didn't ask me out again, and only by the grace of God did we run into each other a few months later, and eventually marry.

Since my marriage, I've learned a lot about dealing with the press. In all the years I was in New York—a large part of my working career—I really had a good relationship with the press because there was nothing particularly controversial going on. So really the press wasn't an issue for me until the shock of going to Washington and being in the middle of a national firestorm.

After the NEA, I went to North Carolina to head the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art (SECCA) and I had my ups and downs there. Some of the work that we showed was quite controversial. SECCA had been at the center of the Andres Serrano controversy, and during my tenure we presented a number of shows that dealt with social politics, race, and sexual orientation. For a small North Carolina town, that was a lot to bite off. After a rocky start, we were able to present these exhibitions with full community support and much of our success was due to the good advice of my husband and some savvy local public relations professionals. The basics they taught me began with the realization that we do have some control over our relations with the press, and that there is a way of telling a story to get our point across. Most critical is developing a good relationship with both your community and your local press at the outset, so that you have a mutually trustful relationship even during difficult times.

First, I think is important to always be straightforward with the press and to never lie. Now I think that is a very hard lesson that the field learned somewhat recently during the Brooklyn Museum's *Sensation* controversy. Recently, I hired a new PR director who came from the PR field rather than the art museum field. On his first day at work we had lunch and talked about some of my priorities. When I said to him, never lie, he started laughing because he had just come from the PR world.

Next, avoid getting caught in situations that require you conceal something. For example, the Des Moines Art Center, like many museums had a long-standing policy that the price paid for a work of art is never revealed. I decided when I came two years ago that we were getting into more trouble not talking about how much we paid than we would if we just gave the press the information they wanted. With board approval I changed the policy. I based my decision on past problems the institution had in this domain.

For example, a major Jeff Koons piece comprising three stacked vacuum cleaners was the first acquisition of my immediate predecessor, Michael Danoff. The press was aghast at such a purchase and everyone wanted to know how much Mike had paid. Because museum policy dictated that the price couldn't be publicly revealed, the press went to the auction catalogs and decided that the museum had paid almost a million dollars for the piece—way more than the actual price. On his first acquisition out of the barn Mike had a firestorm on his hands that would have been much less dramatic if the truth had been known.

So I do believe, whenever it's possible, in the concept of transparency. And I have to say that transparency has served me well so far. If anything, I have been congratulated by the community for opening up this information. The policy change also established an early, positive relationship with the local press.

I also think it's important in relationship building to be available to the press. When I first came to Des Moines, I invited the editors, publishers, and arts writers of the local papers to have lunch with me. In New York, they

might not accept your invitation, but for those who come from smaller cities the press does want to have access to you and your institution, especially if you're the largest game in town.

Ned Rifkin, director at the de Menil, once said that as a museum director, you're always running for office, but the election never comes. It's absolutely true, because you're always out there and you're a public figure, particularly in the eyes of the press. And not all people want to slam you. Some people just want to get to know you. I think it's very, very important to allow people, including the press, to do that.

Most important, identify your own personal agenda for your institution, and deliver it clearly, consistently, and often. And of course for it to be effective, your message has to be backed up by reality.

When I came to Des Moines two years ago, I was very interested in opening up the institution, which had long been perceived as somewhat elitist. My personal agenda was to attract a new audience—one that might not normally go to a museum. Most of the programs that we do reflect the notion that art—even difficult contemporary art—can positively engage a community. At its most effective, this art can even change the way a community sees itself. The staff and I have worked very hard to get this message across and the results have been good. It's my consistent message every time I talk to the press.

Now, sometimes controversy can't be avoided. For example, we mounted an exhibition at SECCA entitled *Civil Rights Now*. Winston-Salem is an old, conservative community where race is a hot button, and it was always a challenge to bring the kind of contemporary art that SECCA to this community. The exhibition also dealt with sexual identity and the Klan, issues that turned out to be difficult in the first instance and painful in the second for some of the African-American leaders whose support we wanted.

About three weeks before the show opened, I started thinking, gee, this might be more than I'd bargained for, and I started talking to some very, very smart people in the community. I actually got the best advice from a PR firm run by an ex-Marine—and you're never an ex-Marine. He plotted out for me a plan of action that I have essentially used as my model ever since then. It involved building the support and involvement of a diverse range of community leaders, including those who would normally be our critics. We brought them into the project before it opened and followed their advice on presenting the didactic material. Most interestingly, issues came up that I hadn't anticipated, and we were able to avoid any controversies without changing the artistic content of the exhibition. Press coverage was solely positive and we were commended on our inclusive approach.

Recently at Des Moines, we presented the hard-hitting work of Kara Walker. It was mostly brand new work, had never been seen before, and probably the most difficult work that Kara has done so far. I used the same formula and before the show opened we called a meeting of community leaders, including some high-powered politicians, religious leaders, and educators, many from the Black community. We invited them to come and just talk to us about the presentation of this exhibition, the importance of the work, and the effect that the work might have on the community. They even were able to discuss the work with Kara as she installed it. By the time the show opened, there was real community support from these people who felt a part of its creation. The project went off without a hitch, and press was so good that we had unusually large attendance.

I would like to believe that I never shy away from controversy. Maybe what I really mean is that I don't think we shouldn't show really, really good art just because it's controversial. I sincerely believe that it is our job to establish a positive relationship the press and to build community support. Doing both these things allows the press to report on the positive impact your institution is having on the community rather than on the perceived offensiveness of difficult art.

András Szántó, Ph.D.

Deputy Director

National Arts Journalism Program, Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism

I have two headlines for you. One is, "Don't Shoot the Messenger." The other is, "It Takes Two to Tango." Susan has already addressed what it means to tango with the press. But what about "Don't Shoot the Messenger"?

Under current conditions, the media is doomed to fail in reporting about the arts. Let me tell you about how it looks from other side of fence, based on what we learned from our study, *Reporting the Arts*, which is a comprehensive report on how art is covered in newspapers around the country.

Some findings are probably already familiar to you. The so-called Arts-and-Living sections of newspapers, as expected, are the smallest of the various sections. They take up no more than six to seven percent of the total

pagination of an average newspaper. So you are dealing with a very tight real estate. When you break that down, most of the high-brow material loses out to the low-brow material—popular culture—and no area loses out as severely as visual art.

Visual arts comprise six percent of that already very little space that I mentioned a moment ago. Six percent: that is only half of the amount of space newspapers give to performing arts, and about a third of the space they give to books, and about a sixth of the amount space that newspapers give to TV and movies.

These numbers reflect bedrock priorities. These priorities arise from business decisions having to do with advertising as well as the specific culture of newsroom decision-makers. Typically, a newsroom manager is a kind of person who reads books and attends the theater. But he or she will rarely understand the kinds of material that we discussed a moment ago. That may change, but it won't change soon.

Furthermore, the staffing situation in most newsrooms is absolutely abysmal. The fifteen newspapers that we looked at had, on average, exactly one half of an art critic. Most medium-size newspapers do not have a single dedicated visual arts writer on their staff.

It's amazing to learn about some of the newspapers that do not have a full-time dedicated art critic. For example, the *Chicago Sun-Times* (Sunday circulation 410,000), the *Denver Post*, and the *Miami Herald*—all major cities—had zero dedicated staff for visual art at the time of the study. In cities like Cleveland and Portland, where there are significant arts institutions and galleries, art critics split their assignments, often with architecture, sometimes with dance, sometimes with music.

I saw a senior critic in one of the major dailies whose situation illustrates the challenges. He was transcribing an interview that he had done earlier that day with a musician, and he had already in front of him, at five o'clock in the afternoon, an exhibition catalog of a show he was to review the same day. Meanwhile, he was listening to a piano concerto through headphones for a review he was going to file of a CD the next morning.

The bottom line is this: If your community has a newspaper with a Sunday circulation of less than half a million, it is unlikely to have a dedicated writer for visual arts.

That is a pity, because at the same time, as you all know, there is a fantastic explosion of culture taking place all around the nation. Managing editors will say, "We have actually maintained our commitment to art in our newspaper." But that is merely playing with statistics, because, in fact, the amount of material that needs to be covered is growing exponentially. So even if you maintain a steady staffing commitment, you are, in relative terms, reducing the amount of resources being dedicated to the arts.

Everything flows from this.

For the most part, newspapers see art coverage as a local undertaking. It's part of the arsenal for competing with national news media. As a result, many of the big national cultural stories get short shrift. You are not going to be educated about the big issues.

Nor do newspapers get relief from the wire services. Wire service coverage—which fills up as much as a third of weekday arts pages in an average newspaper—is quite spotty. They, too, are severely understaffed.

Finally, there is an inherent internal conflict that exists in the newsroom: Art, simply put, is not considered newsworthy. It is not "hard" news. It is fair to say that the standards applied to arts coverage tend to be lower than the standards expected of general news coverage.

Because of all of these severe constraints on the enterprise of arts journalism, it's not easy for journalists to figure out what museums are for and what their economical and ethical codes of conduct ought to be.

A last word of advice: As museum directors, you should be aware that it is not the journalist's job to figure out why contemporary art is important. That it is a message for you to communicate. The better job you do of making a case for the cultural significance of visual art, the better job the news media will do communicating that message, and the less likely that museums will come under attack.

Michael Brenson

Art Critic, Curator, and Associate Professor,
Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College

For years I have been thinking and fretting about the relationship between museums and the media. I have worked within the media. I wrote for *The New York Times* for nine years and this fall am writing the art column for *New York* magazine. I've also written for many museum publications and lectured in museums all over the country.

Just as important to my remarks, I teach students who enroll in Bard's Curatorial Studies program in contemporary art from Asia, Africa, Latin America, and Eastern Europe, as well as from Spain, Italy, Scotland, and throughout the United States. They believe in art and see the power of the media, and spend a lot of time trying to understand both the confusing and sometimes dismaying state of art museums and the formidable and at times demoralizing mechanisms of journalism. Most of them will work in museums, where their projects will probably be judged by journalists who will frame them in the ways in which many members of the public will see them. As critical as the students may be of museums, they believe in them. They see that journalism has a different agenda but don't quite know what it is and what to make of journalism's extraordinary power.

Museums need the media. Without its attention, inspired projects can come and go with little chance to touch people and become part of a larger debate. Media attention can ensure some funders, particularly the increasing number of them that measure success by gate, that a project, or an institution, is worthy of their support. It can prove to some artists, particularly ones for whom many museums are competing, that an exhibition was worth doing and that an institution is worthy of their attention. If an exhibition of work by a name artist gets no media attention, the museum may have trouble attracting others with comparable reputations. So when it was made clear to me that one of the reasons I am here is to offer practical advice to museums on dealing with the media, I said I would be glad to provide whatever help I could.

But art museums and the news media are different, and the media needs to be approached with care. Not just because it can hurt as well as help you but because the media is part of a spectacle system that I think museums should be in the business of resisting. One of the purposes of art museums is to propose and foster ways of thinking and experiencing that encourage the human capacity for insight, imagination, and attention that a glib, self-important, tabloid-ized media can, at best, only partly nourish. When museums, like the media, allow themselves to become increasingly and uncritically complicit with the entertainment industry and popular culture, they project art as just one more high-class diversion. We know that the media has become even more inescapable now that it is a vital cog in the entertainment industry-internet industry-news industry mergers that are so instrumental to the new global corporate network. I really want to know how the museum directors here think about themselves in relation to this massive consolidation of economic and political power.

By and large, media arts coverage confirms this power. Look at the limitations built into it. In the newspaper and weekly magazine world, deadlines are tight. Judgments are made and expressed quickly. At a newspaper, critics write their 1,000 to 1,500-word lede reviews in a day, perhaps in two days. Editors want images that look good on the printed page, which means they prefer paintings and photographs. In addition, journalism, whose ethos is still primarily defined by its understandably adversarial relationships with political power, still prides itself on the myth of its own independence that depends upon a tough, skeptical stance. Some critics may indeed be open to what does not look like established art, but on the whole, journalism, as an industry, is not. In addition, in some of the most important publications, arts sections receive substantial money from gallery and museum advertising, whose ads often appear nearby, if not on the same pages, as the arts reporting and reviews.

What I am saying is that the news media is structurally predisposed toward certain kinds of art and away from other kinds. In a journalistic publication, market-based work, like painting or photography, seems natural. Conceptual Art, which often does not reproduce well, is not as well-backed and does not carry with it a hand-made aura, does not. The review format has enormous trouble accommodating art that unfolds outside museums, in real time, often in neighborhoods far from urban art centers—art that proposes an exchange and communication model very different than the one advocated by the market. When newspapers and weekly magazines do take seriously this kind of art, it is usually not a critic, but a reporter who writes about it because he or she has made a particular community his or her beat and therefore appreciates how it works. More often than not, after a reporter other than an art reporter writes an art story, critics won't touch it. The news media vigorously maintains destructive hierarchies between art insiders and art outsiders, between art that succeeds in the market and art that measures success in other than market terms.

The media is not designed to be introspective. Succeeding within it, like succeeding within the stock market, depends upon an ability to assimilate and act with authoritative speed and decisiveness. The media can and

sometimes does ask itself questions, and it certainly includes within it some of the most gifted, serious, humane, and intelligent people anywhere in the world. But I have never seen journalists confront the kinds of questions many artists struggle with all the time. Such as, why am I doing what I am doing? Whose interests am I, and the forms and forums in which I communicate with the public, serving? How does my past, my history, affect the ways in which I see and work? What does it mean to make a painting, video or an installation now, at this particular postcolonial, post-Cold War, globalized internet moment? Journalists have to function in a high-pressured world that obliges them to embrace the conventions of their institutions if they are going to succeed. Their foundation and conditions are different from those of artists.

On the other hand, why should journalists believe museum directors? What is the news media to make of the fact that many museums, certainly the big ones in New York, where I live, often begin the exhibition process not with ideas for shows their curators believe they must do, but with the desire to attract crowds? What is the news media to make of the fact that many museums now pay members of its marketing department more than curators? Or of how demeaning museum marketing ploys can be to artists? Last summer, the Whitney Museum of American Art's bus stop ads for its Alice Neel retrospective included the words: "Summertime and the looking is easy."

Or of the museum's increasingly dependence on the media, to the point where some of the most powerful museums in this town measure the success of an exhibition solely on the basis of a positive or negative review in *The New York Times*? So if museums need to raise questions about journalism, and which ones are doing that, journalism needs to ask profound questions about museums, and I don't see much of that either. Do museums have shapes and edges? Can we talk about the possible partnerships between the media and museums without allowing ourselves to be controlled by the seamless, smoothing, morphing pressures of the new global network that takes its lead from the new technology. What defines a productive conversation between museums and the media? Where does it begin?

The relationship between the media and museums is one of profound imbalance. The media is far removed from the actual conditions and concerns of art and artists and yet it has frightening power to decide the success and failure of your involvements with them. When critics write negative reviews, attendance can be affected, sales canceled and artists can be thrown out of galleries, even if the reviews are thoughtless; I've seen it. There is no accountability. I know artists who are fearless in challenging critics when their work is written about with ignorance, but not museums. Many museums are afraid of the media. The media is not afraid of museums. How do we think about this?

To a degree that I find unprecedented, both museums and the mass media now feel themselves controlled by forces over which no one has any control. Is there a way for smaller museums to program in ways that at least allow for the recognition of a mutual predicament?

Some art projects have functioned outside both museums and the media. I worked with the freelance curator Mary Jane Jacob on two of them. The first, in 1993, called "Culture In Action," commissioned eight community-based projects throughout Chicago. It unfolded over many months, and in two instances over many years, and is the kind of program that takes so much time and energy to understand that it mitigates against media coverage. It received almost no reviews. To his credit, Michael Kimmelman did review it in *The New York Times* but his review appeared the last weekend and had almost no impact on the way the program has been perceived. The second project, in 1996, was called "Conversations at the Castle: Changing Audiences and Contemporary Art," in collaboration with the Arts Festival of Atlanta. Jacob brought in artists from Eastern and Western Europe, Japan and Africa, none of them art stars, and they worked in various ways with groups and communities in Atlanta. The project ended with a series of dinners, each with a theme, for example, "Audience and Institutions," "International Exhibitions," and "Youth, Art and Society." The dinners were decided and designed by two artists, who also chose the cook. The only review I am aware of appeared in the *Atlanta Constitution*, which trashed us.

The programming, however, created networks. As she had done for "Culture in Action," Jacob invited many people to Atlanta to investigate the artworks and participate in the dinners in the freest ways possible. Both projects culminated in books, with publishers, Bay Press and MIT press, committed to public art. These projects have received only slightly more art magazine coverage than they did journalistic press. Among my friends in museums and the media, these projects never, to this day, come up. But in 1996, when I visited Riga, Latvia, my father's city of birth, for the first time, critics there knew me from "Culture in Action." When I was asked to give two keynote addresses in Brazil, it was because of a connection made by Susan Talbot, who was familiar with "Culture in Action," with a Brazilian artist who had read that book. When I met a group of curators from Eastern Europe two years ago, they knew me only from "Conversations at the Castle." If I hadn't been involved in those projects, I would probably not be teaching in the Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard.

I am absolutely not holding up these projects as models, just reminding everyone here that there are multiple circuits of cultural information, of which the news media is just one part. Intelligent and visionary projects can originate almost anywhere and if they are thoughtfully exposed to engaged and articulate artistic and intellectual voices, each with his or her own constituency, and then given form in smart and ambitious books, they can take root in ways no one can predict. When we talk about the media, I think we are referring to a centralized nexus of journalistic power, and none of us can avoid thinking about that. But this nexus only becomes bearable to me when I keep in mind that it is not as omnipotent as it, and the global corporate network it serves, want us to believe, and that the different ways in which all of us, everyday, in our offices and classrooms and galleries, are committed to developing ways of thinking and relating that do not depend for validation on this media nexus really do matter. I don't want to sound naive or Pollyanna-ish here, but I really believe that what we do to engage one another, every day, in a hundred different ways, has never been more important.

Jeanne Collins

President

Jeanne Collins & Associates, LLC

While I was reflecting on how to approach this large topic, *Infatuation, Apprehension, and Misconception: Museums and the Media*, I was informed by a friend of a consumer poll taken towards the end of the last century. The poll revealed that going to museums was the third most popular leisure activity in the United States—after using cellular telephones and driving sport utility vehicles. If this is true, people are impatient about their culture these days. Impatience may be the product of infatuation, but it may also lead to misconception.

The title of today's panel brackets "infatuation" and "misconception" around the word "apprehension." I think we can safely assume that these feelings exist on the part of both museums and the media in relation to what each does. What I want to do today is to speak on the relationship between museums and the media from my very specific perspective. This includes, for the last two years, running my own arts and cultural public relations firm, focusing primarily on work with museums and foundations, and, for twenty years before that, heading museum public relations programs at a range of institutions. These were a university art museum, where I was the sole member of staff dealing with press relations; a regional modern art museum, where I had a small staff; and two large New York City museums, The Museum of Modern Art and the American Museum of Natural History, where I increasingly had the resources not only to build strong communications teams, but also to develop the complementary marketing efforts that have become essential to museums today. As the sole member of this panel who has worked as a museum communications officer, I will not only provide a general perspective on the subject, but will also offer some practical advice on how museums might work with the media.

This talk therefore has two parts: first, *getting the museum's story told accurately*; second, *building a strong communications team*.

Getting the museum's story told accurately

We have heard a lot today about the popularity of museums; this has been confirmed in numerous polls taken over the last few decades. It would seem that it should be relatively easy, then, to interest the media in stories related to museums. However, this is not the case, as every museum director knows and as we have heard from others on this panel. So, the first rule in working with the media is that museums cannot be passive, but must be proactive. They need to ensure that the media is kept well-informed about their activities.

The second rule is that it is important to differentiate between working with art and cultural writers and critics, on the one hand, and working with more general members of the press, on the other. Journalists who are knowledgeable about art are, with rare exceptions, inherently interested in the kinds of projects that museums present, and the kinds of issues that they are dealing with today. Museums are understandably more comfortable working with these journalists, because staff-members (from the director to the curators to the communications staff) have had an opportunity to build relationships with them over time.

The "apprehension" and "misconception" in the title of this panel especially come into play when museums receive calls from editors and writers who have been assigned to cover cultural stories that have crossed over into the metro and national news arenas. And, of course, in many parts of the country, news-outlets cannot afford the luxury of having writers and editors specifically assigned to the arts, and museums may also be apprehensive when they find themselves working with journalists who have no background for the topic at hand.

Museums are apprehensive under such circumstances because they feel vulnerable, particularly when confronted with "hard-news" media. They are concerned about being misunderstood in a very public arena, where there is clearly a lot at stake. This is particularly true when issues or controversies spill out beyond the arts pages. It has been said today that, under such circumstances, museums do not know how to get the media to tell the museum's side of a story. However, museums should keep in mind that journalists are not there to tell the museum's side of a story. They are there to tell a particular story as they see it. What the museum can do, however, is to ensure that the journalist will be given all the information needed to tell the story accurately, and to make sure that the museum's story is presented in a cogent, balanced, and straightforward way. In my experience, the following six factors are essential to keep in mind:

1. Provide well-researched, clearly written press materials, and target them appropriately for the media: I might not provide the same documents for someone like Michael Brenson or David D'Arcy, who would use such materials as a reference, but are going to bring the breadth of their own experience to a subject, as I would for a general member of the press who is without a background in the arts. Know the difference between press releases, fact sheets, media alerts, and backgrounders, and when to use each.
2. Build strong bridges with the media at various levels—trustees and directors with publishers and editors-in-chief; directors, curators, and communications staff with critics and writers; communications staff with assignment desks, etc. Ideally, such relationships should be in place as a matter of course. The media who are important to you should know that they are valued by the institution; then, when an issue arises, you will already have in place a strong foundation from which to begin discussion.
3. Don't refuse to deal with the press. They must get both sides of the story. You do not necessarily have to offer opinions about controversial topics, if you feel it is not in the museum's best interests to do so; but you do have an obligation to make available to the press facts related to the controversy. And be aware that while most journalists feel a sense of responsibility to tell a story fairly, others do not really care about the facts and are more interested in creating sensation.
4. Don't turn over all of the control to a reporter who is asking questions. If there is information that you think is important for the reporter to have, make sure that you present it. Answer the reporter's questions briefly, but do not restrict your answers to the questions. Bring up the issues you think are important. If you do not present the museum's side of the picture, there is no way that your point of view is going to be represented in the story.
5. Provide basic media training for staff who might need to be spokespersons for radio or television. Very few of us are initially comfortable having to respond on the spot when we find ourselves in front of a camera or microphone. A little practice in advance can give individuals an opportunity to observe their own performances and determine what kinds of adjustments they might need to make in order to become effective communicators in the medium. There are professionals who provide such training, or you can simply practice together in advance.
6. Be prepared. Museums cannot anticipate every issue that might arise, but they can develop a laundry list of potential problems, which should be reviewed several times a year, and then make sure that they have the information at hand that would be necessary to respond to questions about them. Identify your spokesperson(s) for various issues—most often your director or the communications director, but perhaps another member of the staff for certain topics—and keep them informed. Consider developing a standing advisory team on press relations; this might include curators and administrators, in addition to the director and the head of communications. Also have avenues in place for informing key Board members of important breaking stories.

Building a strong communications team

It is important for museums to be conscious of how the press works and to be respectful of the work of the press, and it is also important for those who represent the museum to the press to be conscious of how the museum works and respectful of the work of the museum. This means having a communications staff—whether a department of one or a dozen—who are informed about the museum's subject matter, who know how to communicate the museum's values and messages, and who make it a point to get to know the interests of individual members of the press and how they like to be kept abreast of projects.

Equally important to the quality of the staff who are assigned to work with the press is the relationship between a museum's communications officer and its president or director. A close association with other staff is critical as well, particularly with each curator or program-head around a special project; but it is endorsement from the top—recognition that the communications team is a valued and essential part of the museum's program—that empowers it and makes it possible for it to function well on behalf of the institution. When a

communications officer is viewed as a core part of the team, and has direct access to the director, it conveys the message to other members of the staff that the museum's communications efforts matter. It also conveys to the press that the communications office is a reliable source of information about the institution.

In my role as consultant, I am often asked by arts organizations about what to look for in hiring communications staff. I always say that I can best respond by explaining my personal experience. I was trained in the humanities, writing, and art, and earned a masters in education. I found myself in orbit in the adult world with little sense of how to combine supporting myself with doing the things that I found most fulfilling. Like everyone here today, I had a great love of museums, which I traveled widely to visit; but I had no advanced degree that would qualify me to become a curator, and I had never even heard of museum public relations (The terms marketing and communications were not even used in the context of museums at that time). I was working as director of a diagnostic and counseling center when someone mentioned that I might be a fit for a cultural public relations post, and as I explored what that meant, I realized that I was indeed a good candidate: That I was a committed "consumer," with a genuine love of the subject matter, was a good start; having a broad-based humanities background, combined with strong writing and communications skills, and even my education training, gave me the basic skills needed for my first museum job. The knowledge of the media—getting to know its various categories and learning how to work with them most effectively—I learned on the job.

In the mid-1980s, as cultural institutions in this country realized that they needed to become more business-like in their operations, museum public relations began a gradual shift in focus. As a result, a strong knowledge of cultural marketing now also plays a critical role. But whether hiring communications or marketing staff, what I look for first are people with a humanities background and strong written and verbal communications skills who can present themselves in a positive, optimistic, vital way both inside and outside the institution. They must also demonstrate a genuine interest in, and understanding of, the institution's subject-matter (In the case of marketing staff, a mastery of the principles of cultural marketing is also essential.). This is because it is critical that such staff reflect the core messages and values of the institution—in press materials or conversations with journalists; in marketing tools or advertisements—and to do so effectively, a knowledge of the principles of working with the media or of marketing is only a beginning.

Finally, although the focus of this panel is on the media, I have referred to marketing as well, because I strongly believe that the two must work in tandem. But the marketing program must complement the museum's communications activities, because it is an aspect of communications. For marketing to be effective in the long run, it must, like communications, express without any misconception the core messages of the institution.

David D'Arcy
Correspondent
The Art Newspaper

I have covered museums and a lot of other subjects and institutions for, I suppose, fifteen years now. I am not so sure that the relation between media and museums necessarily has to be so adversarial. Art critics and curators tend to have common social and educational backgrounds, and common interests, and they spend a lot of time together.

I notice that museums are doing a lot more paid advertising. Maybe that's what they think is going to build audience. Usually a sponsor who comes in and funds a special exhibition designates a certain part of that funding to getting the word out. It's understandable. If not, most museums would not have funds for advertising. Sponsors want attention for what they are sponsoring. In fact, exhibition funding is perceived by the sponsor as a form of media buying. With that attention, you can expect critical scrutiny on the economics of art museums from the press. That's our job, and those economics have a lot to do with the art that goes on display.

Michael Brenson noted that museums are more than a curator, they are also a communications strategy and a merchandising strategy—let's hope not in equal parts. Museums themselves are media. Museums are trying to create an institutional profile to compete with journalism or the dearth of journalism.

Obviously, there are really important divergences between museums and the media. I am a journalist, and I know I am not there to tell the museum's story. I don't know any journalists who perceive that they are. I think that if a journalist or critic does see himself as a promoter or booster of a local museum, that person has a serious problem. I can imagine that you might have such a conflict in relatively small towns where you have a 10 percent critic or half-critic, and he or she might be reporting on an event that is very important to the town,

and there might be museum sponsorship by a television station. The editor of his newspaper might be a trustee of the museum. By the way, this can also happen in a place like New York. Wherever it is, it's a problem.

The journalist is there to tell his or her own story about what is happening. As museums become much more complicated institutions, they are more and more frequently going to be written about by journalists who have no art background, covering with a hard news perspective, covering building projects, covering censorship issues, covering whatever problems there are with lawsuits, the cost of a work of art. Just look at the appalling coverage of museum issues in *The Wall Street Journal*, and you'll see what I mean. It's hard to imagine reporters being more petty and missing the point more often. My view of this general field is that in most cases, both sides have missed the ball, the museums and the media.

Some examples—*Sensation*, the Brooklyn Museum debacle, itself was a victim of a media gambit that went terribly awry. Brooklyn tried to package art that many critics had seen before in the galleries in London. It went so badly for the Brooklyn Museum, as you know, that it put their funding from New York City in jeopardy. It distracted attention from the quality of the art that was there. The museum's pitch to the media of shock brought in the hard news guys and women to cover it in newspapers, all looking for a new Mapplethorpe to stigmatize. I think the greater harm that was done is the effect that it stigmatized contemporary art, once again. Arnold Lehman thought he had the opportunity to draw a crossover audience, with shock as the attraction. That's how he pitched *Sensation* to the media, and it backfired on him. I don't think he would want to relive that again.

The problem with the Guggenheim motorcycle show, was the coverage of Tom Krens as an impresario, and the lack of coverage of the show as a design exhibition. Could they pull it off, not pull it off, what was the attendance, what was the merchandising? Those were the questions the media asked. If any of the people who covered that show read the exhibition catalog, they would have written about its mediocrity. I barely saw anything that covered that subject.

The Barnes Foundation. I have a lot of experience with the Barnes Foundation. I think that story has been misreported for years. Since most of you represent small museums, it would be important to you that what was distinctive, what was unique about Barnes, besides the amazing collection, was that it was not created to be everything for everybody. Not every museum has to be a Wal-Mart. I don't think you will get too many people to argue about that.

What the new leadership brought in by the now-discredited Richard Glanton did to Barnes in the late 80s, early 90s was something quite different than the mission Barnes had for it. Glanton was finally shamed out of selling \$200 million worth of art. I haven't seen that figure in too many press reports. The problem is the press has a common mantra called access.

The Philadelphia Inquirer had originally led the struggle to open up the Barnes to crowds. No wonder local coverage of the Barnes is so uncritical, and that it always seems to focus on a notion of liberating the place, which has nothing to do with the institution's mandate. The Barnes Foundation is nearly broke. *The Art Newspaper* has tried to explain why that happened—lawsuits, overspending, mismanagement—and the Barnes's new director has reacted with the kind of hyperbole that should make her board worry.

Getty Leadership Institute Workshop: The Productive Uses of Conflict in Teams

David Bradford

MMI Faculty Member, Getty Leadership Institute,
and Senior Lecturer, Graduate School of Business, Stanford University

David Bradford's workshop was an engaging and challenging introduction to successfully managing and harnessing the benefits of organizational conflict. It featured a high level of spontaneous audience interaction, as well as a short video clip that dramatized conflict in the workplace. Unfortunately, such elements do not typically lend themselves to direct transcription. Much of the source material from Dr. Bradford's thought-provoking session was drawn from his upcoming work Power Leadership: A Manual for Releasing Your Organization's Potential [To be published in 2002]. Excerpted here is a draft chapter from that book. We hope it will convey, at least partially, some of the key concepts from his presentation.

Building a "Conflict Positive" Organization

A high degree of task conflict will become a hallmark of productive organizations. We have entered a world characterized by new problems and new opportunities—old solutions will no longer apply. And being uncharted waters, it is not clear beforehand what the right answer will be, so there need to be multiple perspectives and dissenting voices to develop different alternatives.

Disagreements also tend to increase the quality of the outcome. Research shows that groups in which the leader values conflict, and where there is a dissenting voice, produce solutions that are more creative than when the leader suppresses conflict and forces minority opinions into silence. These results occur *even when the dissenter is wrong*—it turns out that the very act of questioning drives the thinking deeper and guards against unexamined assumptions.

The question is, how can the leader promote conflict that leads to rich discussions and win-win outcomes without degenerating into win-lose stalemates, or worse, open a Pandora's Box of personal attacks?

The problem may be less, *how can conflict be produced* and more *how can the leader be sure that dissent isn't suppressed?* Too many leaders (and members) are fearful of conflict. Will it get out of hand and escalate? Will it turn personal? At the first sign of raised voices, does the leader come in and say, "let's not get emotional—we need to be professional about this," or send non-verbal signals of discomfort that lead members to suppress dissenting points of view?

Surfacing Conflict

The best way to make sure that differing voices are raised is for the team to deal with the major issues. This may sound obvious, but the agendas of most meetings are marked by the mundane (or worse, consumed with transmitting information and not even making decisions). The second way is to just let dissent happen and not move in quickly to smooth over differences. These two steps can go a long way to producing the rich discussions that organizations need.

The following are other actions that can be taken to get the issues out on the table.

Setting norms that legitimize conflict—As mentioned, leaders who value conflict are more likely to have teams that produce creative solutions. Talking about the value of disagreeing and setting expectations that members will voice opinions that differ, can go a long way to making people feel that it is appropriate to raise dissenting points of view.

Alfred Sloan, who built General Motors, would ask in executive committee meetings, "are there any objections to this proposal?" and if there were none, would add, "since the issues we are dealing with are complex enough that there can be multiple viewpoints, no objections means that we haven't studied this enough so we are going to put off the decision until next meeting."

Supporting minority points of view—One individual dissenter will quickly go silent if they have no support. However, it takes only one other person providing support to give the minority position full voice. This support doesn't have to be agreement with the dissenter's position; only support for them to be fully heard. That support could just as well come from another member or the leader and requires nothing more than saying, "I don't think we have heard Roger's point of view, and we can't really disagree until we understand it. Roger, what is it that you are saying?"

Listing the pros and cons of different positions—Especially when there is one dominant position, it is important to equalize the debate. Simply list on the board the pros and cons of the various options. That makes sure that each position gets fully stated (and has the added advantage of cutting down on people repeating their points).

Demanding more than one option—Bob Haas, when he was CEO of Levi Strauss & Co. would say, "I don't want any single-point solutions; bring us at least two viable alternatives." In addition, are there viewpoints that you know aren't being expressed and without putting that individual on the spot, can you encourage them to speak. ("James, my guess is that this proposal would meet with some resistance from your area?", "Claire, you have been quiet, do you have any qualms about this way of proceeding?")

Encouraging people to be more direct—Especially with people who have difficulty with conflict, there can be an indirectness in their dissent that is dysfunctional. Phrases like, "not that I really disagree," "Let me put a slightly different spin on the discussion," and "We could live with that approach, but" are clues that there is more beneath the surface that might need a little support to be more directly stated.

Examining the downside—Especially when there have been strong arguments supporting one position and a groundswell is starting to develop in favor of that option, it can be useful to say, "before we select this suggestion, let's spend a few minutes and think of all the things that could possibly go wrong." That can provide a more thoughtful exploration of whether the preferred position really has covered all the necessary contingencies.

Supporting the value that opposition brought—Those on the side whose position was not accepted can feel chagrin that they raised the issue in the first place. Just saying, "thanks for keeping us honest and making sure we thought through all the possibilities" can be very helpful.

Beware of having a Permanent "NaySayer"

The "Devil's Advocate" role can also be a useful function to make sure the dominant idea isn't uncritically accepted. The danger is when the same individual consistently fulfills that role. In doing so, they can get labeled as the constant blocker and lose their effectiveness. Be careful that the rest of the group doesn't "rely on Joe to raise the opposition" and thus shirk their responsibility to dissent. The questioning function ought to move around the group with different members taking up that responsibility at different times.

Even though each of these approaches can be of value in different situations, what we would want to stress is that the most important determinant in utilizing conflict is seeing that it has real value, and communicating that one wants direct and open (but not attacking) disagreements. One may never be fully comfortable with conflict, but it is important to see how crucial it is. How many disasters in the past could have been avoided if conditions had been set where it was easier to point out that the emperor had no clothes?

Moving Toward Resolution

Strongly stated positions have the danger of causing members to lock into their positions and dig in their heels. But that is neither inevitable nor insurmountable when it occurs. The following are some of the ways to move toward resolution once the issues are fully out on the table:

Stressing objectives over positions—When the team is aligned around the same vision and strategic goals and it is clear what the desired end state is for the issue being discussed, then stressing that can unblock the log jam. ("Remember, our purpose is X; that's what is important. It's achieving that which is crucial.")

Is there agreement on what the problem is?—Often discussions are around the symptoms, not the basic cause. "Attendance is down" is a symptom, but what has caused that? The desired solutions can differ widely, depending on what the core problem is.

Is there need for objective data?—Not infrequently when people get into a heated debate, they rely more on opinions than on facts. It can be useful when everybody has made their case and can take a breath to step

back and ask, "what assumptions are we making for which there is objective data?" (such as market surveys, visitor trends, etc.). Coming back the next session with that information can lead to a more objective discussion.

Humor: a Double-Edged Sword

Humor can be very useful in situations where there is strong conflict. Under those conditions, it is too easy to lose perspective and think that this is a life-or-death situation. Few issues are really ones that will sink the enterprise. A joke can cause people to realize it isn't the end of the earth, and can lighten the tone while providing the necessary perspective.

However, humor can also be dysfunctional. In addition to the danger of deflecting the discussion away from the topic at hand, it also can be an indirect way to attack. Humor at another's expense that puts them down or makes them look foolish can cause one to "win the battle and lose the war." The other is trapped because if they take umbrage at the joke, then they are vulnerable to a second put-down. "Oh, lighten up; I was just kidding. You are too sensitive." So they often laugh along, but plan their revenge.

Effective teams do use a lot of humor, but it's to help the group over the rough spots, not to score points. If there is a pattern of humor being used at other's expense, it is time to call time out and explore what is happening. Is there an underlying conflict between the parties, or is this a sign that members don't think they can be direct when they are upset at one another?

Identifying the positive points in the other's position—When two camps have developed, it is very easy for each party to believe that they are holders of The Truth. Having each side identify the good points in the other's case can start to break the deadlock. Another step would be to form new subgroups composed of a person from each position with the instruction to find a solution that both can live with. There is a good chance that one of the subgroups will come up with an integrative outcome.

Searching for a creative third alternative—Since each side is likely to have "part of the truth," look at the list on the board of the pros and cons of each position and ask, "is there a third alternative, that isn't a compromise, but is a creative option that contains the positive points of each option?"

Activity: Examining how conflict is and should be handled

Because of the important role that conflict plays in organizations (and because of the difficulty that most people have with it), it can be useful to explicitly discuss the issue. In general, we would not recommend that this be early in the group's life because at that point, members are likely to want a too constraining set of parameters. The group isn't a safe place yet, so conflict feels especially dangerous.

It can be useful to have this discussion when you sense the group has developed to the point where conflict is emerging. Better yet is when there has been some serious dissention. Even if it has been resolved, it can be useful to set aside 30 minutes and ask the questions:

"How do we feel about how we are or are not dealing with conflict?"

"What procedures do we want that would facilitate our surfacing and resolving disagreements?"

This also shouldn't be a one-time discussion. As the team grows in maturity, it will need fewer and fewer constraining rules and be able to handle "letting it all hang out."

What If the Conflict Turns Personal?

This is the great fear for most leaders (and members). What if the discussion is centered around whether to expand the educational programming into reaching new audiences, and one member says "you're not competent to do that" or "that's the stupidest thing I have ever heard"? Attacks on another's intelligence, race, gender, or age can create irreversible damages and have no place in organizational life.

Because of the damage that personal attacks can cause, this fear can cause members to water down their disagreement around the task ideas and even pretend that they are supportive when that is not the case. Statements like, "I wonder if there would be some difficulties in getting Marketing's acceptance" are usually a cover for, "I am very concerned about this proposal, because I think Marketing will fight it." Doesn't the latter cut to the chase more quickly? (The other problem with the former statement is that the listener might think it really was a question—rather than a statement in question form—and answer the question, which could cut off further dialogue.)

There are two problems here. One is the fear that conflict around task issues will be heard as personal attacks—“love me, love my ideas.” So disagreeing with the latter is taken as devaluing the former. This is most likely to occur when members don’t know where they stand with each other, so each comment is carefully scrutinized for signs of acceptance or rejection. Insofar as you can build an organization where people can be direct when they are bothered by another’s behavior *and* be supportive of what they bring, then there is less chance that people will read larger messages into task disagreement.

But we are all human, and there will be times when we feel that our ideas are being too consistently shot down or prematurely rejected. This is one of the advantages of building norms where the team can stop and process how it is operating. But really high-performing teams are ones where it doesn’t have to wait until the formal, every-fourth-meeting processing time, but members can raise it as it is occurring, which actually saves time. What you want are people making comments like, “Jack, you seem to have dug in your heels on this issue; is anything else going on—are you feeling unheard?” Or Bill can say, “what’s happening here? This is the fourth comment that got ignored—is it my deodorant, or is something else going on?”

The second reason people tend to be indirect in their disagreements is that the issue is not with the content of the solution being proposed for this task solution, but instead due to doubts about whether the implementer will successfully carry it out. That limitation may not be due to some inherent deficit in the other’s core abilities (in which case, it is speaking to their *person*), but to other things, such as how they tend to carry out their job.

Role-Performance Conflict

In addition to task conflict (which should be encouraged) and personal attacks (which should not be allowed), there is a third form of conflict, which is disagreement with how you are carrying out your job. Remember that a solution is only as good as its ability to be implemented. Maybe, objectively, there would be a greater payoff to move into the South American market, but if Juan, the VP of South American Operations has difficulty in moving quickly and in getting the right foreign nationals to head up local operations, it just won’t work.

It may be that Juan’s difficulties are due to a phobic fear of risk-taking (in which case, he is clearly the wrong person for the job), but it is more likely that these problems are due to things *under his control*. It might be that his background in the financial area has trained him to be cautious and that his tendency to place too much emphasis on academic credentials has led to hiring mistakes. Or he has a tendency to over-rely on search firms rather than using his own judgment (or vice versa). These are all things that the Juan’s of the world can deal with and correct.

For high performance to occur, it is crucial that it be legitimate for peers to comment on how others carry out their job. The difficulty is that this can be felt as a personal attack. Will Juan think that others don’t believe he is basically competent and respond with such umbrage that the discussion is stopped?

There are many ways to deal with this issue—and in most cases most of them are needed.

1. One has to be clear that the issue is around *behavior*, not about *personality* (which may require nothing more than saying that).
2. It has to be legitimate to talk about these issues.
3. The recipient has to know where they stands with colleagues and the boss; that they are seen as having assets and any warts don’t cause them to be written off. In other words, criticisms of how one goes about doing one’s job have to be taken as that—not as something larger.

Even with all of these approaches, it is still difficult to have role-performance conflict. All we can say is that the more one does it, the less each comment becomes a BIG DEAL. The trouble is that we so rarely give clear feedback that we over-react to the one time it occurs. We need to realize that “sometimes a cigar is just a good cigar.”

Feedback at GE Credit

Sue, one of our MBA students, told the following story:

I worked for 2 years at GE Credit. The practice there was every month for the team to get together and to give each other feedback on what they had done well and what they needed to work on. The first couple of times

was very upsetting and I went home wondering if I could make it. But after three or four months this became old-hat. It wasn't that I ignored what was said—it actually was very useful. But I stopped treating it as a reflection of my total competence.

"But we have a personality conflict"

This can be a scary comment, because it implies that the problem is so deeply buried in the other's psyche that it is unsolvable. We know how difficult, if not impossible, it is to change one's personality so the only recourse appears to be accepting this dysfunctional situation or leaving. However, we have looked at scores and scores of these cases over the past decades and our conclusion is that in the vast majority of cases, what are described as "personality conflicts" are really differences in work styles. By work styles we are referring to how people go about getting work done. Everybody has their own style or manner in how they respond to risks and opportunities, in how they approach and solve problems, and in how they influence others (and like to be influenced in return). For example, some people like to collect a lot of information before acting whereas others are more prone to take action quickly and then learn from the outcome. There are a variety of such dimensions and Table 1 gives some examples. There are three important implications of this way of viewing an issue:

1. These are more *behaviorally* focused (and less *personality* caused). Yes, how we go about doing work may be partially influenced by our personality (whatever that is), but is more likely to be influenced by our past work experience, training and the job we are presently in. (Is it that Hank is very cautious and risk-adverse or does the fact that he is head of production and is measured on keeping cost down have anything to do with his work style?)
2. Being more behaviorally focused, it is more under one's control. For example, whereas introversion/extroversion is a personality dimension, and I may not have control over whether I need time by myself to recharge my batteries, I do have control about how social I act in a certain situation.
3. Even though each individual is likely to think that his approach is "best," one could argue that each end (and all points between) of these continuums is appropriate under some situations and inappropriate in others. In certain start-up ventures, it might be important to have members who "seek risk," but that is not what one desires in the pilot on your next flight!

Sometimes these differences can be very compatible, such as with a boss who views the "large picture" and has a direct report who likes working with the details. *But this is likely to work less well the other way around!* When there is incompatibility, not only can this cause strain in the working relationship, but the following downward spiral is likely to occur.

The frustration can lead to polarization, with each person moving more and more extreme along their preferred pattern. So, the situation of a "divergent thinker" working with a strong "convergent" may cause the former to keep raising new issues out of fear that the other will push to premature closure. And that behavior is likely to cause our convergent to want to "cut to the chase or we will be here all day."

When this repeatedly happens, the parties move from commenting on the difficulty in the interaction to starting to make attributions about the other's motives ("all he wants to do is dream up new ideas," "she has no patience and will settle for the first thing that comes down the pike").

Then, over time, they start to make attributes about the other's personality ("he's flaky, a dreamer, and can't make a decision", "she's a rigid anal-compulsive"). That's what leads to the conclusion that "we have a 'personality conflict.'"

So what can one do about this problem? First of all, it isn't a problem. If your goal is to build a strong team, part of the strength comes from the diversity of styles held by the membership. If all are divergent thinkers, the planning will be wonderful, but you'll never get to market. There is a time in any project to brainstorm new ideas, but there also comes a time when members need to say, "enough already; let's decide." You need risk-takers and you need others who raise the caution flag. So the first conclusion is can you build a group that honors the diversity? And one of the ways to do that is to discuss the various preferences people have and the conditions where they are appropriate. The following can be an activity that people enjoy and find useful.

Activity: Sharing Styles (and Perception of Others' Style)

1. Pass out copies of the *Interpersonal Styles Dimensions* and have people rate themselves on which side they see themselves.

2. Then have them pick 5 or 6 of the dimensions that are most important to them; that most “characterize them.”

3. (Assuming you are sitting in a circle), have each person, “2nd from your left and 4th from your left and write down the 3 or 4 dimensions that you think most characterize them.”

4. Then taking each person in turn, give that individual feedback on how others perceive their style (more than the two assigned raters can share their perception). Then have that person give their self-assessment.

Additions

5. Then go around again and for each person, talk about when and how their chief characteristics have been useful to the group. When you would want that individual to use them.

6. For the third cycle, discuss either:

When and how have their characteristics gotten them in trouble, been a limitation for the group?

How would others like the individual to expand their characteristic ways of interacting?

This activity achieves several objectives (in addition to being a valuable source of feedback). It legitimizes the differences that people bring. But it also can provide a valuable insight. In many cases, we get into trouble, not out of our faults or limitations, but because we overuse our strengths. Jane has a very critical mind—that’s valuable in keeping the team from making faulty decisions. But it is giving others the impression that she can never be satisfied and throws cold water on every project, no matter how good. Sam is a fountain of creative ideas—the group needs that. But it tends to prolong discussions long after it’s useful. This insight moves people past just labeling each other “good” or “bad.”

One of the ways that a group can limit its effectiveness is to “use” members to play certain roles. Are others relying on Jane to raise all the concerns, thereby protecting themselves from having to face possible annoyance from colleagues if they were to express doubts about that project? Can others avoid the effort of having to think up new ideas because Sam will always come through? Teams are more effective if *several* members pick up the various functions, rather than it being the sole domain of one individual. And if the goal is to fully utilize everybody’s potential, then the objective should be to expand the range of what each person brings.

Differences Could Be Useful; Not Troublesome

Let’s take our *convergent* working with our *divergent* that was previously discussed. Yes, they could polarize so that each became more extreme in style and drive each other crazy, or they could use these differences productively.

Assume they had six weeks to finish a project. Couldn’t they agree that for the first three weeks they would think of every possibility and the converger would try to join in. But on Day 1 of Week 4, there would be no new ideas, *unless they hit a dead end*, and instead would work on getting the project finished. That would use the talents of each.

In addition to legitimizing different approaches, thinking in terms of “different work styles” can provide a way to raise the issues without attacking the other’s personality. With these ideas on the table, it is now possible to discuss them when there could be a potential problem. You need two people with very different backgrounds and orientations to work on a project—and it is these differences that can make for a creative outcome. In addition to making that point, can you add, “but you also have different work styles, so I want the two of you to talk about ways these differences could get in the way *and* how you could use them in a positive creative way.”

To Summarize

For most people, conflict will never be easy. Most of us haven’t been raised in a way that allowed us to see how disagreements could be directly and non-destructively raised. We either experienced it as personal attacks, as out of control, as guilt-inducing, punishing statements, or as something to fear and avoid.

Even if it remains personally difficult, and may cause our pulse to race when we express disagreement to others or have others confront us, it doesn’t mean that we can’t learn to handle it. Doing so actually can reduce the potentially destructive aspects. When it feels difficult, then we hold back, and in that holding back, the

frustration and anger builds so when it is expressed, it comes out with such force—accompanied with personality attacking labels—that it can damage. “Raise it early and raise it often,” to paraphrase the late Mayor Daley of Chicago.

Setting team norms that conflict is both necessary and desired also helps, having the skills in giving behaviorally specific feedback is important, having members aligned around the same goals can keep disagreements task focused, and having avenues where people can give each other developmental feedback decreases the chance that members will inappropriately use task issues as the vehicle for role-performance issues. All of these can help and still it won't be easy. It is just necessary.

INTERPERSONAL STYLE DIFFERENCES

Focus on Problems [see the glass as half-empty, hasn't been accomplished, what failed] Focus on Successes [see what has been what accomplished]

Divergent Thinking [expand what is being exploring new options] Convergent Thinking [cutting down considered; options; pushing quickly to solutions]

Want Structure [like rules, and routines; want – do not like surprises] Like Ambiguity [where few rules and predictability regulations]

Analysis, then Action [want to study options from that, collect data] Action before Analysis [quickly act; before acting] .

Focus on the Big Picture Focus on the Details

Logical/Rational [want facts/data, do not intuition in self or others] Intuitive [rely heavily on hunches, own trust “gut” – place less reliance on facts/data]

Seek Risks [like to take chances, willing to fail, like to try new approaches] Avoid Risks [tend to be very careful, prefer the “tried and true”]

“Respect” Authority [tend to support established defer and not push back] Discount Authority [disagree, push authority, may back on authority]

Building Good Relationships [sometimes willing to sacrifice task quality for good feelings] Task Success [place greater emphasis on task success than good relationships]

Seek/value/encourage Conflict [and disagreements] Avoid/suppress Conflict [and disagreements]

Competitive [like to compete, tend to turn personal win-lose tests] Collaborative [prefer to collaborate; situations into seek win-win outcomes]

Respond Primarily to Own Needs [and concerns] Take Account First of Others [needs and concerns]

Like to be in Control [like to determine direction, nature of activities, want to approve all decisions] Like Others to Take Control [and determine direction, nature of activities]

Optimistic [about the future, about how things out; see high probability of success] Pessimistic [about the future, how things will turn out; see likelihood of failure]

Like Working Alone [on projects] Prefer Working with Others

Fear of Art: Creating a Confident Audience

Philip Yenawine

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Visual Understanding in Education (VUE)

As is his hallmark, Philip Yenawine delivered a lively and inspiring presentation that addressed the frequently complex subject of audience development and museum education. The session was marked by a great deal of interaction with his audience of museum directors, which unfortunately cannot be captured by a direct transcription.

Consequently, Mr. Yenawine kindly agreed to combine the key elements of his presentation with a talk he previously gave at a conference on "Aesthetic and Art Education: A Transdisciplinary Approach," sponsored by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Service of Education in Lisbon, Portugal. Also included is information from the Visual Thinking Strategies curriculum, published by Visual Understanding in Education. It is our hope that the synthesis that follows below will be of greater use to the wider audience reached by these transcripts.

Museums are the primary sites for interacting with visual art in most communities. They are therefore the places to redress the disconnection of people from art, one of the most unfortunate conditions of modernity. Unfortunately, museums are rarefied environments that seem neither welcoming nor comfortable to many people. As a consequence, museums engage educators, who through all manner of teaching, writing, and activities, try to engage people with diverse art, capturing and keeping their attention.

In my thirty years as a museum educator, certain questions have nagged at me, leaving me feeling frustrated at the end of many days. Did I enable my audience: did I help museum visitors operate independently and move toward self-sufficient viewing? Did I increase their capacities to find meaning in a range of art without my guidance? Or did I simply share my own insights and information, directing their experience through tools available to me because of my expertise, but still remote from them? Was I modeling behaviors that could not be adopted by those with less experience?

Twelve years ago, I finally found out what I needed to know to answer these questions: a body of data that provided the basis for creating educational programs that actually make a difference. From which viewers grow.

The epiphany came in 1988 when I was head of education at The Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) in New York. Howard Gardner, education's reigning guru, was on the Trustee Committee on Education, and he introduced me to the work of a former colleague of his at Harvard's Graduate School of Education, Abigail Housen. Housen had made it her life's work to understand aesthetic thinking—what goes on in the minds of viewers when they examine works of art. Howard thought that this research would help us at MOMA as we tried to understand and teach our audiences.

We had, on our own, determined that MOMA audiences were not fluent and flexible in their approaches to understanding works of art, that they in fact did not grasp key concepts by which the museum operated, they had small working vocabularies, and had little factual knowledge. But what did we know when we knew that? The challenge was overwhelming. Clear about the holes in their knowledge, where did we start? How were we to create interfaces with audiences that were meaningful, given the informal learning environment of the museum, the few tools at our disposal, the short duration of most museum visits, and infrequent contact with our "students"?

After being introduced to Housen's research, I realized that we were seeing the empty half of the glass. We had identified what was missing—experience and knowledge—but she was able to show us what viewers' strengths were, what motivated their viewing, what sense they made of what they saw. Knowing that, we turned a corner. We knew where to begin constructing educational programs that would build on existing foundations.

This was an exciting moment, though I do not wish to make it seem an easy one. We, like many others, were used to working certain ways, and so were our audiences. And we had in the past mostly received positive, even glowing, reviews for our work. Even if some of us were convinced that we were engaging people more than enabling them, we nonetheless had many satisfied patrons. The flaw was that visitors continued to need us as mediators of their experience; without us, the complicated ideas, messages, symbols, and other meanings

in art were not discovered. Our popular lectures, courses, even some of our better printed messages, did little or nothing to produce self-sufficiency: people who could flexibly and deeply examine what they saw, and derive a sense of real communication from the experience.

In the mid-1970s, Abigail Housen began studying what people think and say when looking at art. Noting differences between people without experience and those with a great deal of it, she set herself to the task of coming to understand the changes in thinking that occur given experience with art over time.

As she did this, Housen was able to document the array of thoughts that art provokes, discovering it to be a very rich fabric. Even beginners use a range of observations to draw conclusions that are full of associations, memories, facts, and emotions. The complexity of the thinking elicited by art also intrigued Housen, because of the concern in education for developing critical and creative thinking. She saw a deep correspondence between aesthetic thought and the skills that educators sought.

Housen began her research by observing the behaviors of museum visitors, and soon decided she wanted to know what thoughts motivated the behaviors she witnessed. As her interest built, she realized that understanding the spectrum of viewing would involve studying people of diverse ages, backgrounds, education, and economic levels, not just those who go to museums.

Over time, she developed her primary data collection tool: a non-directive interview. Participants are asked to simply talk about anything they see as they look at a work of art, saying whatever comes to mind. There are no directed questions or prompts to influence viewers' process. Called the Aesthetic Development Interview (ADI), this tool provides Housen with a window into viewers' thinking.

In order to analyze ADIs, Housen breaks them into thought units that are then examined. During her initial research, Housen had found 144 different kinds of thoughts expressed by the universe of people interviewed. She organized these thoughts into thirteen domains, each containing precisely-described subcategories. Each interview can therefore be coded, unit by unit, according to kinds of thoughts contained. Interviews are often examined by two independent coders to ensure reliability and consistency, and the coding is then charted graphically by computer to enable a representation of all thoughts, as well as the depiction of their overall pattern.

Housen also studies each interview as a totality to see how individual thoughts flow and fit together. Finally, she cross checks all of this with demographic, attitudinal, and biographical information about each subject, as well as their responses to specific questions.

To date, Housen and her associates have analyzed over 6,000 ADIs, taken from individuals ranging from six-year-old children to eighty-something adults of both genders. These people run the spectrum in terms of art experience, race, ethnicity, education, and economic status, and a wide variety of art has been used in the interview process. The categories of thoughts Housen defined in her early research are found in interview after interview, including her studies of the visually-impaired, of urban and rural Americans in the United States, and of viewers in Russia, Lithuania, and Kazakhstan. Her original coding manual holds up robustly.

During twenty years of data collection and analysis, Housen examined many other scholars' writings on aesthetics and perception, and found that her insights resonated with the findings of others, although her data were more comprehensive. She concluded that a stage theory (often resulting from research focused on human development) could be applied to aesthetic change. She identified five distinct patterns of thinking that occur in the trajectory of growth when looking at art, which she describes as Aesthetic Stages. Therefore, as a result of the coding of an ADI, each interview is assigned to one of the following patterns:

Stage I

Accountive viewers are storytellers. Using their senses, memories, and personal associations, they make concrete observations about a work of art that are woven into a narrative. Here, judgments are based on what is known and what is liked. Emotions color viewers' comments, as they seem to enter the work of art and become part of its unfolding narrative.

Stage II

Constructive viewers set about building a framework for looking at works of art, using the most logical and accessible tools: their own perceptions, their knowledge of the natural world, and the values of their social, moral, and conventional world. If the work does not look the way it is "supposed to"—if craft, skill, technique, hard work, utility, and function are not evident, or if the subject seems inappropriate—then these viewers judge

the work to be “weird,” lacking, or of no value. Their sense of what is realistic is the standard often applied to determine value. As emotions begin to go underground, these viewers begin to distance themselves from the work of art.

Stage III

Classifying viewers adopt the analytical and critical stance of the art historian. They want to identify the work as to place, school, style, time, and provenance. They decode the work using their library of facts and figures that they are ready and eager to expand. This viewer believes that, properly categorized, the work of art’s meaning and message can be explained and rationalized.

Stage IV

Interpretive viewers seek a personal encounter with a work of art. Exploring the work, letting its meaning slowly unfold, they appreciate subtleties of line and shape and color. Now critical skills are put in the service of feelings and intuitions as these viewers let underlying meanings of the work—what it symbolizes—emerge. Each new encounter with a work of art presents a chance for new comparisons, insights, and experiences. Knowing that the work of art’s identity and value are subject to reinterpretation, these viewers see their own processes subject to chance and change.

Stage V

Re-creative viewers, having a long history of viewing and reflecting about works of art, now “willingly suspend disbelief.” A familiar painting is like an old friend who is known intimately, yet full of surprise, deserving attention on a daily level but also existing on an elevated plane. As in all important friendships, time is a key ingredient, allowing Stage V viewers to know the ecology of a work—its time, its history, its questions, its travels, its intricacies. Drawing on their own history with one work in particular, and with viewing in general, these viewers combine personal contemplation with views that broadly encompass universal concerns. Here, memory infuses the landscape of the painting, intricately combining the personal and the universal.

Significant to understanding aesthetic development is the fact that growth, while related to age, is not determined by it. In other words, a person of any age with no experience with art will necessarily be in Stage I. An adult will not be at a higher stage than a child simply by virtue of age or education. Exposure to art over time is the only way to develop. Without time and exposure, aesthetic development does not occur.

Over the course of her studies—including ones undertaken at our request at MOMA—Housen has found that most interviewees are beginner viewers, ranging from Stages I to II or II/III (which is a transition between two stages, II and III). Even among frequent museum goers, there are relatively few people who have had sufficient interaction with art to have developed beyond the understandings of Stage II/III.

Most people who work in museums are, on the other hand, in the thrall of Stage III: art history’s way of knowing art by means of information and rational argument. Perhaps because of this, most communications produced by museums—from labels, brochures, gallery talks, docent trainings, and audiovisual devices, to member newsletters, press releases, and even fundraising proposals—are full of information. Sometimes, but not always, these are appealingly presented or written, but they are designed for people like us, not our less-than-ideally-capable audiences. Listening to their voices as collected by Housen, I recognized different kinds of people I had actually encountered in the museum, both children and adults. She shed the most light on those I wanted most to affect: beginner viewers—those for whom the ability to find meaning in a range of art is not yet in place, those lacking in functional, flexible “visual literacy.”

Housen and I decided to work together to develop a system of teaching based on her data called the Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS). Given the desire to teach people at their current level of operations, and challenge them appropriately, her very detailed and nuanced descriptions of a beginner’s aesthetic cognition told us not only where to begin but also where to direct our efforts to help them grow. To date, the VTS addresses the two early stages of development, getting viewers to the point where art history and other kinds of information become their preoccupation.

Over ten years of research, practice, and revision have gone into the development of the VTS, which is now used in a number of museums and schools, both in the United States and elsewhere. Part of the challenge for me was unlearning earlier teaching practices. I had to detach myself from old habits and learn a new paradigm, one that put people ahead of art, one that focused on enabling—not just engaging—people. I had to step back from what I thought people should know and embrace instead what they brought with them to the

museum. Only then could I start creating practice that let them both be “the best they could be” and grow appropriately—in the same way that sensitive teachers and parents bring young people along the path from not reading to readiness to basic functionality to the appreciation of literature.