Museum Funding as Critical Practice

OMA Annual Conference Changing Directions: Practice Over Permanence

Nov. 21, 2022

About us







Samantha Summers (she/her) Manager of Individual Giving, TIFF

Big idea

museum

It should therefore be practiced, critiqued, and reformed according to the critical frameworks that help shape museums.

Funding is a fundamental practice.

Defining key terms



Grants

Sponsorship/ Corporate Partnerships

Membership

Earned revenue



Philanthropic giving; tax-receiptable gifts from individuals or organizations

Funds given by an external body for a particular purpose or project

Corporate financial support in exchange for certain perks: audience reach/access, name visibility, etc.

A series of organizational perks for which an individual can sign up with an assigned cash value

Ticket sales, gift shop revenue, concessions, school trip bookings, etc.

Audience poll: Does your institution have a funding ethics policy?

How did we get here?

RESEARCH

Samantha Summers. Divestment in Times of Change: The Loss of Major Donors in Art Galleries. (2021). MMSt thesis

Camille-Mary Sharp. Decolonize and Divest: The Changing Landscape of Oil-Sponsored Museums in Canada. (2022). PhD thesis

+ writing and presenting about fundraising in the arts and museums

Samantha worked in fundraising for Toronto's First Post Office, the Railway Museum of Eastern Ontario, and TIFF

Samantha also serves on two film boards, with a focus on fundraising policy

PRACTICE





Photo by Derek DeBono, 1976. Re-printed in K. Robertson, *Tear Gas Epiphanies* (2019) NEW

• CRITIQUES OF MUSEUM **SPONSORSHIP ARE NOT**

• THERE IS A GAP IN THE **ACADEMIC LITERATURE RE: HOW WE APPROACH FUNDRAISING IN MUSEUMS**

Research



Rebecca Belmore, Artifact #671B, 1988

• MUSEUMS AND WEALTH ARE DEEPLY ENTANGLED

- CORPORATIONS PARTICIPATE IN NON-PROFIT SPACES TO ENABLE THEIR SOCIAL LICENSE
- DIVESTMENT IS AN IMPORTANT STRATEGY, BUT NOT A LONG TERM SOLUTION

Practice

NOBODY FEELS PREPARED FOR THEIR OWN "SACKLERS" PROFESSIONALS ARE HAVING THESE CONVERSATIONS

But there are no established frameworks for having them.

CUTTING OFF ALL SOURCES OF FUNDING THAT COULD BE ETHICALLY COMPROMISED ISN'T A REAL OPTION

Because there is no source of money that everyone will agree *isn't* ethically compromised.

Practice

ASKING THE QUESTION: WHAT SOURCES MAKE SENSE, AND WHAT SOURCES CROSS THE LINE?

PUBLIC-FACING REVENUE SOURCES THAT DO NOT ALIGN WITH MANDATE/MESSAGE THREATEN TO DERAIL PUBLIC LEARNING

Where the "line" is often extremely contextual and changing.

Collective brainstorm: What does "ethical funding" mean to you?

Click the Google Jamboard link in the chat to participate! shorturl.at/dFISO

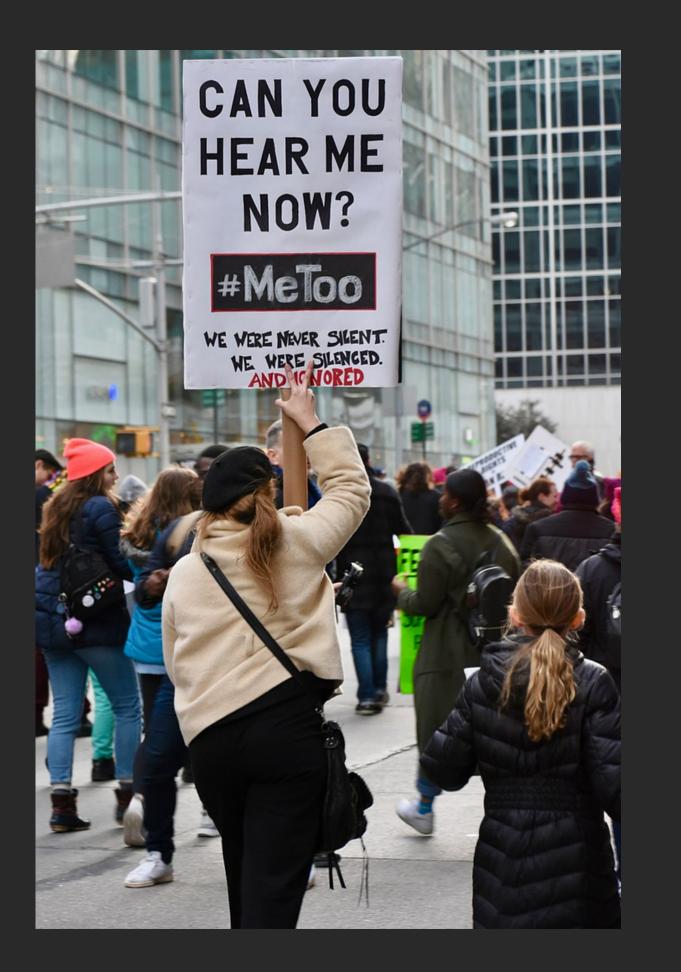
Pathways forward



DO WHAT MAKES SENSE FOR YOUR ORGANIZATION

HAVE INTERNAL CONVERSATIONS ABOUT WHERE THE LINE IS

MAKE IT CLEAR TO DONORS WHAT IS EXPECTED OF THEM, AND WHAT YOU'RE WILLING TO **DO (OR NOT) FOR THEM**



ACROSS THE FIELD

LISTEN TO ACTIVISTS: WHAT THEY'RE CALLING FOR NOW IS **OFTEN THE SOCIAL STANDARD TEN YEARS FROM NOW**

LET THE PUBLIC KNOW WHAT YOUR STANDARDS ARE

THIS IS A MESSY CONVERSATION, **BUT ONE THAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN**

Gaining p the field

Bridging practice and academic literature, and making research accessible to practitioners

Continuing to develop our framework and recommendations

Developing our article and submitting for publication

Next steps for our research

Gaining perspectives from professionals in

Our questions to you

- What would you like to see in funding-focused discussions in the museum field?
- What is your plan for protecting your institution's reputation if a donor is publicly called out for being problematic, and if your institution's integrity is called into question?
- Where is the line for you personally? Where is the line for your organization?

Thank you!

If you have any insights or experiences you would like to share with us (confidentially or otherwise) to be included in our in-progress article, please get in touch!

> camille.mary.sharp@nyu.edu samanthasummers@hotmail.com