Is Creativity a Matter for Cultural Leaders?

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Introduction

This paper contrasts two perceptions of creativity in art museum management. The first is based on the traditional prime function of art museums: to gather, preserve and study objects (Noble, 1970; Weil, 1998). Here, the director is perceived as a keeper of objects, as one who cares for the cultural capital of the institution — its creative works. Creativity is wholly centred in the object and its creation. We contemplate its existence, study its characteristics, catalogue its critical attributes. The second perception reflects an increasing interest in the managerial dimension of the director's role: creatively managing the museum, directing personnel, and educating and entertaining the public (Edson, 1995; Gorr, 1980). Here, directors are perceived as playing a creative role in that they foster change in the management of arts institutions (Rentschler, 2000; Rentschler and Geursen, 1999). The question this paper poses is whether this new managerial dimension in the role of the director has overturned the traditional view of creativity. The answer proposed is that it has extended rather than overturned the traditional view. The art museum director must pursue strategies that balance artistic creativity with management creativity.

Since the 1970s, a climate of change has heightened tensions in the role of museum director, as has been recognized in the conceptual and empirical museums literature (DiMaggio, 1987; Griffin, 1987; Lee, 1972; Lindsay, 1966; Markham and Richards, 1933; McQuade, 1974; Missingham, 1973; Shesnick, 1978; Weil, 1987). Six extra-organizational change factors exert collective pressure on art museums. These are worth listing at the outset because they provide plausible reasons for the existence of different managerial roles among art museum directors and also because they influence the demand for creativity in art museum management.

First, there has been a change from a focus on creative production to a focus on the cultural consumer (Australian Commission for the Future Limited, 1992). This has triggered a search for creativity in management and a broader consumer base for cultural products. Second, there has been a change in funding, from a reliance on government subsidy to the development, by necessity, of diverse funding sources to support creativity in programming (Commonwealth of Australia, 1986; Rentschler and Geursen, 1999). Third, directors are being pressed to develop more structured programs and to assume greater accountability to patrons (Peterson, 1986). Fourth, new patrons are seeking more socially diverse audiences, and grants and sponsorships are being awarded to stimulate new programming and attract new audiences (Rentschler and Geursen, 1999). The resultant increased mobility of art.
works has, in turn, created logistical challenges. The high cost and high risk of touring exhibitions have created the need to target audiences methodically and to calculate the break-even point for each venue on the tour (Ingram, 1997; Robertson and Migliorino, 1996). Fifth, the move from monocultural to diverse audiences has necessitated a purposeful redirection of exhibition practice towards either niche or global programming and, consistent with audience demand, a focus on the spectacular rather than on scholarship and research. Sixth, there are tensions in the mission of art museums (Ames, 1985), an example being that between the narrow economic-rationalist perspective and the broader view that considers social purpose (Rentschler and Potter, 1996). In summary, the art museum is being reconceptualized from a focus on the collection to a focus on people, both within the museum and outside it, in the community and the wider world.

This paper is organized as follows: first, the literature on the theoretical construct of directors and creativity is reviewed; second, the research approach is outlined; third, the findings of the survey of art museum directors are discussed; and finally, the findings are interpreted within the construct developed.

Art Museum Directors and Creativity

The two perceptions of creativity are to be found in debates in the cultural field. There is no universally accepted definition of creativity. Traditionally, art and art presentation have been viewed as the only form of creativity in art museums. Such creativity is a balance between innovation – creating new forms – and tradition. The traditional view sees creativity as residing in the art work. A more recent view holds that management also encompasses creativity. Creativity may be demonstrated by the strategy of the organization, reflecting the vision of its leader (Drucker, 1999; Westley and Mintzberg, 1989). This view is much discussed in the general management literature (Henry, 1991; Henry and Walker, 1991; Ladd, Kanter and Wigan, 1980; Pierson, 1983; Rothenberg and Hausman, 1976; Sinetar, 1985; Wallas, 1926) and is also of interest to a number of key museum writers (Griffin, 1996; Janes, 1997; Johnson and Thomas, 1998; Kirchberg and Göschel, 1998; Lindsay, 1994; Shestack, 1978). For a perceptive analysis of these views in the arts management literature, see Evrard and Colbert (2000). Evrard (1997) and Rentschler (1999) discuss the difference between creativity residing in the object and innovative problem-solving, or creative management. However, the more recent view sees creativity as residing in management and embodied by the art museum director. This creativity is the specific function of entrepreneurial directors. The term refers to a certain kind of activity whose purpose is to create change in the museum. There is a small but growing body of work on creative change pursued by museums (Emery, 1990a, 1990b).

ABSTRACT

A climate of change in the arts in the 1990s, including a growing recognition of the need for creative management, has raised the issue of how not-for-profit art museum directors use creativity in their managerial role. Traditionally, the prime function of art museums has been to gather, preserve and study objects. The perception of directors as keepers of collections and creativity as residing in the object has evolved. Creativity is increasingly seen as residing in the managers of organizations. A survey of Australian and New Zealand art museum directors revealed six strategic responses to change, indicating the extent to which they used creativity in their leadership role: economic emphasis, market orientation, audience development, collaboration, accessibility and community relations. The question this paper poses is whether the change in the director’s role has overturned the traditional view of creativity as focused on the art work rather than on management initiatives. The proposed answer is that it has been not so much overturned as extended: directors now balance the development and preservation of creative art works with creative management of the art museum as a market-facing organization.

KEYWORDS

Art museum directors, not-for-profit management, creativity, roles
Art Museum Directors and Their Roles

Research on directors and their roles has been sparse, reflecting their scholastic reluctance to explore a topic which does not readily yield to methodological measurement, or perhaps reflecting a keener interest in broader politico-philosophical issues such as the societal purpose of art museums. Tension in the role of the art museum director was recognized early in the conceptual Australian and New Zealand museums literature (Lindsay, 1966; Markham and Richards, 1933; Missingham, 1973; Saunders, 1984). Some studies have concentrated on the traditional role of the art museum director as preserver of cultural heritage. The "heritage" role is isolationist, inwardly focused, and not concerned with new programming or the managerial challenges of funding diversity (Saunders, 1984). Other studies have considered the art museum director as impresario, to use Peterson's (1986) term, driven by a passion for creative programming but less interested in funding challenges. Still other studies have considered directors as managers, motivated to preserve the economic viability of the organization, sometimes at the expense of creative programming (Palmer, 1997). Finally, some studies have considered the director's role as holistically balancing creative and managerial functions (Suchy, 1997).

Towards a Theoretical Framework

The main thrust of this research is more exploratory than confirmatory, but general directions are supported by the statistical analysis of the population of art museum directors. While the purpose of this paper is to establish directions from statistics, other papers on art museums and their directors go beyond statistics and move into the area of contextual application of knowledge (see, for example, Rentschler, 2000; Rentschler and Geursen, 1999).

In order to research the relationship between creativity and leadership, a survey was administered to the population of directors of Australian and New Zealand not-for-profit art museums between September 1995 and May 1996. This was the first survey in these two countries on the manner in which

RÉSUMÉ

Dans les années 90, un climat de changement dans le monde des arts, caractérisé par une prise de conscience progressive de la nécessité d'une gestion créative, a soulevé la question de savoir comment les directeurs de musées d’art sans but lucratif usent de créativité dans leur rôle de gestionnaire. Traditionnellement, la fonction première d'un musée d'art a été de réunir, de conserver et d'étudier des objets. La perception du directeur comme étant un conservateur de collections, et de la créativité comme résidant dans les objets a évolué : celle-ci est de plus en plus recherchée chez les gestionnaires. Un sondage mené auprès de directeurs de musées d’art d’Australie et de Nouvelle-Zélande a révélé six réactions stratégiques différentes au changement, indiquant la mesure dans laquelle les gestionnaires usaient d’imagination dans leur fonction : accent sur l’aspect économique, orientation commerciale, élargissement du public, collaboration, accessibilité et relations avec la communauté. La question posée dans l’article est de savoir si le changement dans le rôle du directeur a modifié la conception classique de la créativité, centrée sur l’œuvre d’art plutôt que sur les initiatives de la direction. L’auteure suggère qu’il n’est pas de modification mais d’élargissement : de nos jours, les gestionnaires maintiennent un équilibre entre le développement et la conservation d’œuvres d’art et la gestion créative d’un musée d’art en tant qu’organisme orienté vers le marché.

MOTS CLÉS
Directeurs de musées d’art, gestion d'organismes sans but lucratif, créativité, rôles
art museum directors apply creativity to their managerial role. For the purposes of the study, not-for-profit art museums are institutions which have a director on staff, are wholly or partly funded by government, have a permanent collection and are open to the public. A total of 105 Australian and New Zealand not-for-profit art museums met these criteria. Seventy-nine useable responses were received (75% response rate). Respondents rated the activities which were important to them on a seven-point Likert scale. The questionnaire was adapted from creativity and museum questionnaires (Australia Council/Museums Australia Inc./QE11 Arts Council of New Zealand, 1994; Covic and Slevin, 1986; Rosheim, 1993) and modified slightly for country differences, taking into account professional affiliations and art museum type. The construct and validity of each measurement scale is broadly supported by the research literature from which it is derived. The construct validity of the measurement scales was confirmed by 15 independent advisors who had museum, management and research expertise and who provided advice at the exploratory, pilot and primary phases of the research program. The experts’ opinion on the unremarked nature of comments on activities, funding and creative programming was that respondents had been honest. It is recognized that, as directors completed a self-assessment questionnaire, the data are limited to the individual’s perception of his or her role and activities.

Not-for-profit art museums in Australia and New Zealand do not constitute a homogenous body. They vary widely in size, longevity of operation and complexity of management structure. They range from large, old, multi-collection art museums to small, new art museums highly specialized in period, region, subject matter and medium. Annual budgets range from hundreds of thousands of dollars to tens of millions.

Findings

This section identifies and analyses four director role types, then discusses six generic strategies of significance to directors of all types.

The purpose of role analysis is to establish the nature of directors’ roles, then identify differences in leadership approaches among role types and how these differences affect the functioning of the art museum. The creativity construct consists of two variables, each representing museum functions that are either emphasized or not emphasized by the director. The director, as leader, facilitates creative programming and also generates income from diverse sources while meeting the goals of the museum’s aesthetic mission. The two variables yield four distinct groups, reflecting the director’s particular orientation: managerialist, creative manager, heritage manager and impresario (Figure 1). Thus the conceptual model has four components based on role theory.

RESUMEN

Con los cambios que se dieron en las artes en la década 1990, entre ellos el reconocimiento cada vez más agudo de la necesidad de recurrir a la gestión creativa, surge el interés de saber cómo los directores de museos sin fines de lucro utilizan la creatividad para desempeñar su papel de gestión. Tradicionalmente, la función primera de los museos de arte ha sido recolectar, conservar y estudiar objetos. Ha evolucionado la percepción según la cual los directores son los guardianes de colecciones y la creatividad reside en los objetos. En la actualidad, se considera cada vez más que la creatividad reside en los administradores de las organizaciones. Una encuesta realizada entre directores de museos de arte de Australia y Nueva Zelanda reveló la existencia de seis respuestas estratégicas al cambio, que indican el grado en el cual recurren a la creatividad en sus papeles de líderes: enfasis en el ámbito económico, orientación hacia el mercado, aumento de audiencias, colaboración, accesibilidad y relaciones con la comunidad. En este artículo se plantea la cuestión de saber si el cambio del papel de director ha transformado la percepción tradicional según la cual la creatividad se concentraba en las obras de arte y no en las iniciativas de la dirección. Según el autor, esa percepción no se ha transformado, sino ampliada: en la actualidad, los directores buscan el equilibrio entre el desarrollo y la preservación de obras de arte y la administración creativa del museo en tanto organización que funciona en un mercado.

PALABRAS CLAVE

Directores de museos de arte, gestión sin fines de lucro, creatividad, papeles
The number of respondents falling into each of the four role types appears in parentheses in that quadrant of the model. The emphasis of creativity and funding diversity can vary substantially with the director’s orientation.

There is a temptation to be judgemental about which role is superior. Yet the managerial function is fulfilled not by a single role type but by a range of types. Some roles nurture activity directly responsible for the generation of funds from diverse sources, while others concentrate on creative programming. There is no one best role. Directors may reflect a variety of role types during their careers, under different circumstances and in art museums of different sizes; in a small art museum, for example, the director’s role may include a curatorial function. Over time, however, a balance of emphases will emerge along the two dimensions of creative programming and funding diversity, in response to external pressures. There will always be a need to focus on some functions to the exclusion of others, but, at the same time, contextual challenges will reward adaptive, flexible, indeed creative functioning which balances the two dimensions.

Directors must contend with the demands of the organization and the context in which it operates without compromising its aesthetic mission. Given the tension in museums between the curatorial function and external pressures to raise money and increase attendance figures, the director must strike an appropriate balance, making aesthetic and managerial choices in the course of managing the museum as an organization (Alexander, 1990). The art museums studied were considered not-for-profit, but in the current climate they were expected to operate from diverse revenue bases and to keep their expenses to a level compatible with their revenue-generating capacity, the point being that diverse revenue bases require creative management. It is the director who leads the organization towards a refocusing of its vision and who acts as agent of change. The tensions that are evident in the director’s role need to be studied if they are to be understood.

Six questions relating to creative programming and funding diversity were used to explore the creative management processes. It was found that art museum directors take four different approaches to leadership, using
creativity in management to varying degrees. Figure 2 illustrates the six questions and shows that the four roles are different and are significant at $p = .01$ to $p = .001$. The questions concern each director's attitudes to "breaking new ground even when it is considered risky" (Q 1b), "introducing new programs aimed at people who do not normally go to art museums" (Q 10e), "activity in cultural tourism" (Q 11b), "canvassing new sites to expand programs, services and/or exhibits" (Q 12a), "identifying major donors for your art museum in conjunction with your trustees" (Q 8a) and "personally contacting all major donors for your art museum" (Q 8b). The spread of responses to these role-defining questions suggests that they are useful and statistically defensible for distinguishing directors by role type. The differentiating factor in programming creativity is taking risks to diversify programming, audiences, accessibility and experiences. The differentiating factor in funding diversity is cultivating and developing other funding sources in an age of static or declining government funding. There is considerable variety in the scaled responses on creative programming and funding diversity, suggesting that the population surveyed is diverse.

Analysis of all questions on the seven-point Likert scale identified significant differences in attitudes to six strategic areas: economic focus, change orientation, audience development, collaboration, accessibility and community relations. This suggests that art museum directors use these strategies to a greater or lesser degree when confronted with the need to respond strategically to the changing context (Figure 3).

![Figure 3: Significant Differences in Six Strategic Areas: Mean Scores by Profile](image)

- Develop efficiency measures* (Q 8d)
- Assess local economic environment* (Q 11e)
- Favour management background* (Q 12k)
- Believe changes are expected* (Q 12f)
- Believe you can influence events**** (Q 12g)
- Believe competition distracts**** (Q 12h)
- Survey non-visitor**** (Q 9d)
- Introduce programmes with wide appeal* (Q 10c)
- Encourage goers to become members and donors** (Q 9g)
- Increase access through exhibit locations and times* (Q 10g)
- Speaking to outside groups* (Q 11a)
- Values of people* (Q 1a)
- Value public praise* (Q 1c)

* $p \leq .05$  ** $p \leq .01$  *** $p \leq .001$  **** $p \leq .1$
The first strategic area, "economic focus," consists of using efficiency measures (Q 8d), assessing the local economic environment (Q 11e) and favouring a management background over an artistic background (Q 12k).

The second, "market orientation," reflects the value attached to organizational change, influencing events and responding to the competitive nature of the context (Q 12f, 12g, 12h). Attitudes to economic focus and market orientation show a movement away from an artistic focus and towards a management focus for the manager and creative manager role types. Art museum directors are distinguished by cultures which either embrace or resist change. It is not surprising that managerial focus and market orientation are distinguished by role type, as the manager and the creative manager are more attuned to managing the museum organization than seeing it as a repository for art works, as do the heritage manager and the impresario. Note, though, that the heritage role is a valid one and respects the inherent value of the collection to the art museum, and as such is valued by a significant number of directors.

The third strategic area, "audience development," reflects attitudes to non-visitors (Q 9d) and a broad cross-section of the public as visitors (Q 10c). Attitudes to audience development distinguish role types: the manager and the creative manager pay more attention to visitors and visitor services. This accords with current attitudes towards visitors which recognize that a fulfilling exhibition experience requires different interpretive approaches (Ravelli, 1996).

The fourth, "collaboration," consists of developing long-term relationships with visitors and donors (Q 9g). The movement away from a competitive focus and towards a cooperative one has received much attention in the management literature (Borys and Jemison, 1989; Hamel, Doz and Prahalad, 1989; Kanter, 1990) and is emergent in the wider cultural literature (Janes, 1999; Scheff and Kotler, 1996). Creative managers are more likely to enter long-term cooperative arrangements vis-à-vis visitors, members and donors. This raises the interesting issue that managerial and creative managers, who are more interested in change and audience development, are also more likely to behave cooperatively in relation to long-term audience needs.

The fifth strategic area, "accessibility," includes instituting new exhibition locations, times and touring exhibitions to increase visitor numbers (Q 10g). Accessibility can reflect diverse management motivations. Neglect of this function suggests a reactive organizational response associated with downsizing, possibly driven by limited funding. Conversely, an emphasis on accessibility can lead to more funding and thus a greater degree of freedom in programming. Economic rationalism, taken to extremes, can lead to neglect of the museum's aesthetic mission. Data suggest that a balanced approach to change achieves positive outcomes in line with the goals of the mission.

The sixth strategic area, "community relations," consists of networking with groups and soliciting input from the public (Q 11a, 1a, 1c). Orientation towards the community is a key indicator of difference in role type: four items in the questionnaire deal with influencing broader stakeholders. Numerous authors have noted the growing importance of community to art museums (Besterman, 1998; Karp and Levine, 1993; Marginson, 1993). This interest in the community has developed from simply an interest in audiences to the formation of a political lobby group (or set of groups) for funding purposes (Palmer, 1997; Schuster, 1991). One dimension of political orientation involves the use of boards of trustees to influence context. Researchers have found this to be important to museum directors (Griffin, 1991).

Analysis also identified a number of core competencies pursued by most directors, irrespective of role type. The significant questions can be mapped on the model framework, together with the different role types discussed above (Figure 4). These core competencies are: the need for a mission (Q 6), the constraining function of trustees (Q 2b), annual budget pressures (Q 7m, 8a, 21b, 21d), the importance of cooperation in programming (Q 11c, 12c) and interpretation of works for the public (Q 10a). This suggests that art museum directors may have developed their professionalism to the point where certain activities are common to nearly all art museums. Such competencies are necessary for survival in a climate of change.
**Managerialist**

Creativity is a consequence of fundraising to ensure the financial viability of the organization.

- focuses on changing exhibitions (Q 6d)
- identifies donors (Q 8b)
- personally contacts major donors (Q 8c)
- prepares market analyses (Q 9a)
- does not extend exhibit locations or times to increase access (Q 10g)
- is not active in cultural tourism (Q 11b)
- does not canvass new sites to expand programmes, services, exhibits (Q 12a)

**Creative Manager**

Fundraising is a consequence of the creative process, the purpose of which is the furtherance of the organization.

- focuses on changing exhibitions (Q 6d)
- identifies donors (Q 8b)
- personally contacts major donors (Q 8c)
- develops efficiency measures (Q 8d)
- uses consultants strategically (Q 8h)
- expects changes (Q 12f)
- prepares market analysis (Q 9a)
- engages in relationship marketing (Q 9f)
- develops programs to encourage visitors to become members and then donors (Q 9g)
- broadens target groups (Q 10e)
- extends exhibit locations and times to increase access (Q 10g)
- speaks to outside groups (Q 11a)
- is active in cultural tourism (Q 11b)
- assesses context (Q 11e)
- considers management background important (Q 12k)
- values public praise (Q 1c)

**Common Characteristics**

- focuses mission on education, inspiration or enjoyment (Q 6)
- prefers that trustees rely on directorial views (Q 2b)
- develops annual budget (Q 8a)
- believes in cooperative programming (Q 12d)
- if conflict occurs, acts in interest of own art museum (Q 11c)
- achieves imaginative results with scarce resources (Q 7m)
- identifies sources of loans to plan for impending shortfall (Q 21b)
- does not appeal to trustees for financial rescue (Q 21d)
- thoroughly interprets works (Q 10a)

**Heritage Manager**

Often strapped for cash, engages in isolated creative activities but focuses more on traditional activities around research and collection.

- arts competition interferes with business operations (Q 12h)
- does not use consultants (Q 8h)
- does not prepare market analyses (Q 9a)
- does not survey non-visitors (Q 9d)
- does not engage in relationship marketing (Q 9f)
- does not develop programs to encourage visitors to become members and donors (Q 9g)
- does not broaden target groups (Q 10d)
- does not develop programs with wide public appeal (Q 10e)
- does not speak to outside groups (Q 11a)
- does not canvass new sites to expand programmes, services, exhibits (Q 12a)
- does not consider management background important (Q 12k)
- does not make decisions based on local population (Q 1a)
- does not break new ground (Q 1b)
- does not value public praise (Q 1c)

**Impresario**

Often strapped for cash, engages in creative programming in order to survive.

- expects change (Q 12f)
- does not believe competition interferes with business (Q 12h)
- surveys non-visitors (Q 9d)
- broadens target groups (Q 10d)
- introduces programmes with wide public appeal (Q 10e)
- is active in cultural tourism (Q 11b)
- canvasses new sites to expand programmes, services, exhibits (Q 12a)
- makes decisions based on the values of the local population (Q 1a)
- breaks new ground even if considered risky (Q 1b)
- values public praise (Q 1c)
Discussion

The role differences follow a pattern. As expected, creative managers and impresarios prefer to break new ground even when this is considered risky, whereas managerialists and heritage managers are more conservative on this indicator (Q 1b). As expected also, creative managers and impresarios are interested in introducing programmes for people who do not normally go to art museums, managerialists and heritage managers less so (Q 10c). Concerning the wider community, creative managers and impresarios are active in cultural tourism, managerialists and heritage managers less so (Q 11b). Regarding service to the public, creative managers and impresarios canvass new sites to expand programmes, services and/or exhibits, whereas managerialists and heritage managers are less likely to do so (Q 12a). Concerning funding diversity, managerialists and creative managers express a significant interest in identifying donors (Q 8b) and personally contacting donors (Q 8c), whereas the attitudes of heritage managers and impresarios suggest little interest on this indicator.

The identified role differences have three implications. First, directors need to adapt to funding pressures and develop strategies to diversify their funding sources (Palmer, 1997; Rentschler, 2000). Second, directors need to move beyond imitation despite isomorphic pressures in the field: they need to develop creative programming. Third, directors cannot rely on traditional preservation matters, as government funding is declining and other sources of funding are imperative for survival. They need to develop a marketing edge to their artistic output, which requires a reliance on more complex managerial skills. The strategic balancing act calls for a holistic approach to management that will extend core competencies. If the organization is to prosper and grow, it will need to focus on financial needs and on identifying new areas of creative programming (Delahunty, 1997; Hamel and Prahalad, 1994; Palmer, 1997). These implications argue for acknowledging the risks inherent in an era of change and demonstrating a readiness to adapt to a more competitive context. There is no one best way to manage nor one best managerial role. Both the managerialist and the creative manager demonstrate integrated elements of creative programming. However, the heritage manager and the impresario also demonstrate isolated elements of creative programming, as found in case studies of art museums which included interviews with directors, trustees and staff and examination of strategic documents and other records (Rentschler, 1999); if this were not the case, these directors would not survive.

In summary, the data support the proposition that specific roles apply to a cross-section of art museum directors. Creative managers are risk-takers who develop sound diversified funding bases, interact with the community through cultural tourism, and broaden accessibility by canvassing new sites to increase the number of services and exhibits. Managerialists are more conservative and less inclined to participate in cultural tourism but do place an emphasis on sound diversified funding. Heritage managers place little emphasis on funding but function well as custodians of the past. Impresarios are innovative risk-takers but often lack the emphasis on funding that is necessary to implement ideas.

There is evidence in Australian and New Zealand art museums of an almost uniform reliance on significant government funding for organizational viability, while at the same time a recognition of the need to diversify their funding base. This is similar to the model in Britain, which shares a common heritage with Australia and New Zealand. Yet the art museums studied pursue different approaches to quality outcomes. Other data (such as annual reports – see Rentschler and Geursen, 1999) show a decline in government funding and the necessity to diversify funding sources in order to maintain creative programming. This shift is recognized by the questionnaire respondents. For art museum directors the juggling act is very real. The changing face of the art museum is one of shifting priorities as well as new challenges, one in which only the most flexible directors will retain their positions. Whether these conditions are favourable only to creative managers is a matter for further investigation.
Conclusion

Though creativity in the art object and creativity in management traditionally are regarded as functionally separate, they are both critical to the role of art museum director. Most directors recognize both the increasing importance of the public to their role as interpreter of works of art and the increasing demand for cooperative programmes and services. However, managerialists and creative managers are more open to the demands of the changing art museum and have a greater appreciation for the balance of skills (managerial and curatorial) needed to lead their organizations.

The perceived threat to creativity as residing in the object comes from a traditional belief system which harks to the past and is change-averse. Creativity as based in the object rather than in the art museum as an organization is an evaluation that is too narrow. Yet there is evidence that a significant number of art museum directors still favour the traditional roles of those of managerialist and creative manager. As suggested by the theoretical and conceptual literature on the various roles of the art museum director, and confirmed by this research, the heritage manager and the impresario are finding it increasingly difficult to maintain their funding base in the changing economic circumstances. In addition, the rapid pace of industry change is challenging the art museum director to balance the needs of populism with the needs of scholastically sound programming. Creativity, then, blends diversity in programming with diversity in funding.

The suggestion in this paper is that art museum directors should be judged on their strategy rather than on the objects they manage. This requires a clear idea of just what strategy entails. This research has provided a starting point. Creativity is a matter of concern for cultural leaders. The domain of creativity is changing from a focus exclusively on the object to a focus both on the object and on management. Art museum directors must not believe traditional rhetoric which asserts that creativity is not a leadership issue. Their challenge is to respond to the demands of change in a balanced way and thereby make a contribution to the cultural community.

References


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