

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru / National Assembly for Wales
Pwyllgor Diwylliant, y Gymraeg a Chyfathrebu / The Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee
Cyllid Celfyddydau nad yw'n Gyhoeddus / Non-public Funding of the Arts
CWLC(5) ART02
Ymateb gan Mission Gallery, Abertawe / Evidence from Mission Gallery, Swansea

As part of a *Wales Arts International* funded residency with *Residency Unlimited* in New York last November (2016) Amanda Roderick, Director of Mission Gallery, Swansea and Bella Kerr, Chair of the Gallery's board, interviewed several organisations regarding organisational structures and issues such as fundraising and non-public funding.

The residency proposal outlined our intentions as:

A collaborative investigation of the visible and invisible structures and infrastructures centred on and around cultural organisations, considering the role of partnerships, dialogue, learning, opportunity and engagement.

We used these questions to initiate discussion:

- How are location, site and architecture important when defining a gallery/other space and its artistic philosophy?
- For galleries/other, what are the connections to the city and wider community?
- How does partnership work and feed into an organisation's programming and strategy?
- How do the smaller galleries, grass roots organisations, studio groups and collectives, work alongside each other in collaboration with the larger established venues?
- Are genuine creative partnership formed to the benefit of each organisation and the artists/others involved?

Below is an edited extract from a key interview (anonymised). We are currently processing the material gathered during the residency with the possible intention of publishing, and have made several presentations about this work.

BK & AR Interview with X, Director of Development, XX

X has 30 years of experience as an arts administrator and non-profit fundraiser.

Early on I had a series of not very good jobs, I mean for organisations that if they didn't exist you wouldn't have to invent them. It was always a criteria of mine; if it didn't exist, would you have invented it?

Basically, in America, if you're an arts administrator, you are, at some level, a fundraiser because the real problem with the American model is that so much of an institution's resources are devoted to fundraising rather than programme delivery.

I think it's a big drag on institutions. Here, things are very lean. Nationally, the team are well connected and well respected. They've built a model that is very efficient in its fundraising efforts. Major institutions will have tens of people in their fundraising department and, if you're looking at getting a whole bunch of different gifts from different sources, each takes a level of maintenance and servicing to keep going.

I think if you're confident of a big chunk of your money coming from the government or from a quango, then it allows for a much more efficient organisation, and quite often for a more risk taking organisation. I think there's an inherent conservatism in an organisation that's heavily dependent on individuals. They like what they like and that's why they're supporting it.

There are a number of things that have been done a little better here over the past few years. Just the training and development that people running organisations need is very important. I think the whole issue of capacity has come to the fore a little bit more in recent years here. The large institutions like the Met and MoMA and the Lincoln Centre have these big departments and they have very professional people working in each of the departments.

The perception of the organisation within the community, not with the general public, but within the arts community, including the funding community, is very much tied to the perception of the director. The most important thing therefore is to be very visible, to be out and about. For your organisation the thing that really drives funding for the most part – a certain amount of it is just connections – is quality. People are really interested in supporting quality programmes. It's about being out and about and creating a very strongly perceived view of someone representing an organisation that is doing good work.

Whatever community or organisation you're working for, I think it's very important for the director to be visible, because you're the principal ambassador for the organisation.

Dealing with foundations and government, it is reputation and those people are very much, usually, part of the world, of the art world. They engage in it. They want to hear about new things. Their job is to give away money. Fundamentally that's what they do, so it's straightforward to ask them.

They will look to the field to be guided about who is impressive and who is not. Again, that's really why having this kind of very strong reputation, why this perception of the leadership is needed – obviously in the media – and within other public venues. Also the views of artists count for a lot, the people that you actually work with directly. A sense of openness, particularly if you're dealing with young, emerging artists, can really help.

I think a lot of work is important for fundraising, it's also important just for organisational profile, because you want to have a sense of openness, approachableness, and competence – but not arrogance – just to succeed in the community. You need it to also to succeed with fundraising – there is an overlap.

Marketing has to be exactly in parallel with your mission. Having talked a lot about the quality side and the visibility, you also have to establish a sense of need. I think that's one of the things and that's a real issue because your focus is so much on quality, which includes quality presentation or suggests financial stability – and you never want to say, "We're going to close. We're dying. It's awful." You have to balance that.

What's fundamental to the health of an organisation, is that you have a clear, strategic vision. Everybody hears, "Innovation, innovation, innovation," and it's like, "Why, you idiots." You're doing something well, of course you're going to want to improve and strengthen that, but if you're doing something well, why do you need to innovate?

You just need to do what you do and do it well. If you're educating kids, you don't need to stop educating kids and start building cars. What you need to do is keep up with trends in education. You don't need to innovate, you just need to be good at what you do. That said, I think just having a sense of the direction, a clear internally generated sense of the organisation and where it's going is key, because if your leadership can't generate a strategic plan for the organisation, maybe they shouldn't be your leadership.

If you don't have a vision for the organisation, then maybe you shouldn't be in a leadership role. I think that kind of internal articulation of what you are and how that is going to play out over the next three to five years is very important. I think to document that is also very healthy and a useful and very stimulating thing to do. To have somebody from the outside come and make a very pompous \$90,000 strategic plan, that is then a rigid thing that you're being told off about by your stupid board, is a wholly other project.

My dislike of strategic planning is this notion that some expert will come in and guide you, because it's such a denial of the competence that exists within the organisation, or that should exist within the organisation. Too often people think that people on the outside are going to have more, be better, than the people you have on the inside. I think that's a wretched way of thinking.

The kind of strategic planning I do is more one of listening to the organisations, bringing everybody together and creating that space and forcing that discussion. I think somebody who is competent can moderate and manage and facilitate those conversations and document them and add in their own ideas and their own experience. But fundamentally it is to give you the kind of structure and opportunity to talk through the issues that you're going to have to address over the next years, and generate with you, driven and guided by you, the solutions to that problem.