

means. And to any applicant, because he or she can expect a fair hearing based solely on the quality of his or her project.

However, this solution is not infallible and incorruptible—but what and who is? Compared with all other current models, this one is the least likely to involve moral problems and the possibility for a misdirection of funds, as long as there is some competent legal control in place. And after all, foundations can deliver high standards for the practice of sponsorship, which is not necessarily a bad thing, as I have tried to point out, as long as it is discussed openly and in detail. To conclude, there are a number of different solutions and variations that I can recommend, but all of them are governed by one general principle: *think liberally, act responsibly*.

## The Pertinence of Dialogue

Ery Camara

First of all, I want to express my thanks to all the individuals and institutions that have made this significant exchange of ideas possible. In particular, I want to thank our director, Ivo Mesquita, for giving us the opportunity to discuss these issues that are in such urgent need of our attention.

All the debate over the past few days has either clarified or clouded our perception of the relationships and transformations occurring in art practices; their promotion; the narratives that are constructed for their processes of assimilation, legitimization and integration into a system of values; and the policies designed to develop the cultural sector in a market society. In our current situation, the economic measures established by globalization mold the standards of production and consumption while at the same time create networks in which the flow of transactions and the transfer of values and images project and design new identities. Indeed, before the government's progressive retreat in terms of subsidies and significant investments in culture, the need to find new allies in the realization of projects has become an international practice fomented by fiscal policies and agreements which, by means of multiple reforms, are reconfigured and reformulated according to public and private priorities. The omnipresence of the State in the management of cultural policy has given way to a plurality of supply.

Our round table's theme is *Public/Private*, and its objective is to reexamine the complexities of this relationship as it affects the artistic and cultural sphere: how the transfer of responsibilities from the State to private initiative in terms of the financing of cultural projects has affected the investigation and production of art today, but also its promotion and consumption. Economic reforms driven by neoliberal policies have forced governments to gradually cut back on subsidies to the cultural sector, and at almost the same time, cultural industries have begun being promoted as a new tourist attraction and fuel for development. All this has meant that the administration of projects and institutions now has access to a mixed economy with a renewed interest in cultural management. This phenomenon has caused concern in art criticism, cultural studies and what is now known as visual studies, marking the divisions between its detractors (who are not frightened by the inherent dynamic between art and the market) and those who intentionally or unintentionally point out the ways in which the power of a particular market or excess and frivolousness in speculative practices can change the functions and responsibilities of institutions and cultural activists. When economic power becomes the most sought-after lubricant to ease culture's conversion into an industry, the situation lends itself to all kinds of speculation. In the worst cases,

a lack of ethics and scruples alienates both the practices and the individuals. Currently, the society of the spectacle and the power of the media have been created to amuse and entertain, sometimes with no concern for the degree of cultivated alienation or exacerbated consumption among the population. Other than scandal and provocation, simulacra, appearances, illusions and models are the raw material for the news and other media, though the front page used to be reserved for substance, erudition and critical analysis. In such a situation, professionals need to use the proper tools when dealing with their reality, in order to protect themselves from contamination or deviations that detract from their work. More than a moralistic shroud meant to shield art from the insatiable seductions of the market, or the greediness of political power, what is required here is reflection on the strategies that may benefit the people involved and the larger public with no need for sacrifice or submission, while requiring projects to respect values that cannot be subjected to economic or political negotiation.

The coherence of this debate which extends to promotion and sponsorship should allow us to perceive the nature of recent, highly visible contributions to a diversity of cultural spheres: for instance, the leading role of architecture that has been so prevalent in art museums in recent years, at times turning the art itself into a secondary concern; or the frantic acquisition of collections in every region and at every fair or biennale, tours planned by promoters and gallery owners, as well as the frequent organization of temporary exhibits that must run the gauntlet of legitimization and consecration required for acceptance into the mainstream. To all this must be added the commission of work by corporations, patrons and diverse institutions who thus secure publicity for themselves and for the artists, without ever neglecting their impact on our consumption of cultural offerings.

Technological progress in transportation and communications has permitted greater mobility of individuals, products, brands, mass media and corporations throughout the world. Fusions, the disintegration of borders between art, fashion, design and publicity—all these readjustments that diversify our approach to artistic and cultural expression—are not exempt from the influence of this new driving force that in some cases can lead to great creativity, while in others, it is exhausted very quickly and begins to flag due to the inconsistency and volatility of its proposals.

The purpose of this symposium is to exchange experiences; it does not claim to exhaust every aspect of this theme. It is merely a catalyst that can incite us to respond to an unavoidable reality which requires more careful analysis.

Rather than a return to the philanthropy and patronage of the past, or condemning the sponsorship that proliferated in the late twentieth century, we will try to refocus them as a resource that permits the realization of a project, while at the same time providing visibility, positioning, leadership, image and credibility in a competitive environment. When such support is only available from the State, it can often conceal some kind of coercion or corruption—thus invalidating any kind of subversion.

How and when do these values yield something in economic and political terms? Do the featured artist or curator; the gallery, museum or event promoting them; and the sponsors all have similar objectives? Clearly they do: certain ambitious individuals want to be highly visible and project themselves as the metrosexual model to be emulated, or the revelation or revival of the extravagant or irreverent erudite, sheltered by the exclusivity of a registered trademark that has different adaptations on every continent. These days, it is unusual for any project of considerable scope to be realized without the benefit of a grant, funding or sponsorship. Corporations, foundations, individuals and public and private institutions have found the object of their desire in cultural financing. To figure among the list of sponsors at an important event helps to clean up and exalt the image of whoever provides the funding. Finally, art has extracted itself from its immaculate conception and the asepticism which gives it the aura or “presence” that everyone talks about, and agreed to coexist with logos and brands. In sponsorship, artists and institutions have found a solution that will guarantee the viability of their projects and how influential their production or image will be. Culture is apparently becoming an industry, and in the current situation, this allows for a convergence of multidimensional interests and speculation that can either benefit or harm the feasibility and credibility of projects. How can such alliances be forged without ever succumbing to abusive tendencies? How can funding be negotiated without exposing the institution or the individual to manipulation that places its credibility in doubt? To what extent do artists and institutions allow sponsors to interfere and manipulate, and who defines the limits of this influence? The answers to these questions will have to come from the people involved in these agreements. And we should be including the viewpoint of sponsors at this round table in order to form an educated opinion.

The divisions between the social, cultural and political—apparently so important to sponsors—are blurred in negotiations to the point that they are indiscernible in practice. Sponsors try to legitimize their contribution to social development and their interest in a model that suits their plans for expansion and social welfare. The culture of publicity offers all sorts of benefits and tributes with the transference of cultural capital; the familiar and the alien are cemented together in a concoction of myths and stereotypes that stimulates the consumption or reproduction of the model. The quality of acts and of products is submitted to marketing monitoring dictated by unrelenting competition. Museums, galleries and events become multipurpose centers combining entertainment, education, consumption, information, representation and assimilation of a power that promotes the transformation of its own functions. Even so, this rough portrait cannot be generalized: many actions that are worthy of more discreet sponsorship, genuinely concerned with the quality of cultural development, stand as memorable acts of disinterested generosity. This same scheme can be adapted to actions performed by present-day artists, curators and cultural institutions. They have to resort to measures that go beyond erudition to attract the generous donations of

corporations, foundations, institutions and individuals. Marketing acts as a gauge of the viability and promotion of their activities. In the end, the entrepreneurial artist today displays all the shrewdness of a businessman or a politician.

The delimitation of the space assigned to each of the aspects mentioned here depends on the power relationships established between applicants and sponsors. What do the established conditions for receiving a grant imply? Can artistic and cultural promotion be in any way exempt from sponsorship? Does abstaining from the offer of sponsorship guarantee a higher quality work? Many have wondered about the costs of an artist entering the mainstream—which I think is quite irrelevant. Nevertheless, I believe many artists are overly anesthetized by grants and patronage: atrophied, they prefer to flirt with power in order to retain what remains of their prestige. Answering these questions probably requires us to reconsider everything that Walter Grasskamp has emphasized in the marriage between art and money, in addition to the aesthetic syndrome that prevents its victims from recognizing the true dimensions of art. Being liberal and acting responsibly is not possible for everyone. All one has to do is look at reality to see the contamination.

An examination of the modalities of sponsorship as a product of negotiations and accords or agreements between public and private sectors allows us to see new alliances and opportunities for collaboration in it. The co-production of a very diverse and determinant symbolism in the economy and socio-cultural politics may be a wise move, provided that the market's priorities are not confused with those of culture and art. It is not enough to refuse sponsorship; nor does blindly demonizing or censoring practices help us to overcome doubt. Remember that the artistic community does not permit any censorship; nor is its place to dictate a sponsor's duties. But through mutual understanding, together we can carry out more and better projects. Obviously, transparent cooperation can lead to initiatives that will act as catalysts for development. Nevertheless, it is up to artists, curators, intellectuals and institutions to guarantee some quality control over the content and services offered to different publics, without being infected by mercantile fervor or demagogic discourse.

Artists and cultural institutions receive public and private funding that hold them to certain agreements and concessions that are becoming more and more prevalent in the promotion of cultural projects and artistic events. At the same time we see governmental cultural policies that are still in need of major restructuring in order to satisfy public expectations. Their imprecision and lack of resources lead to improvisation and empiricisms that further deteriorate the functioning of the art community. For that reason, in our local context it is even more urgent to revise the procedures for fomenting a more rationalized participation that will be more beneficial to qualitative development.

From corporations with their own collections to those that sponsor different cultural projects, we know that their degree of involvement may no longer be limited to their logo's presence in the campaign. Their methods become more and more diversified as the attribution of funds is conditioned. In what ways can sponsorship benefit or impair contemporary art promotion? I believe that in this debate, one might recall the position of artists and spaces that have denounced insurmountable contradictions and dubious records among corporate sponsors, which has led to questions about the credibility of their acts. Funds proceeding from the drug trade or the exploitation of minors among well-known brands, as well as phantom enterprises involved in money laundering have been detected in the sponsorship of questionable cultural projects.

Finally, in this globalized context, we will be faced with the need to find mechanisms that permit dynamic collaboration in an atmosphere of mutual respect, and to catalyze the challenges and opportunities presented by the discernable relationships and new gaps between the public and the private in cultural management. With the growing interdependence dictated by the prevailing economic order and the dissolution of certain divisions to connect the transnational or the multinational, it makes sense to find a good partner with whom to take on projects—under clearly defined rules—that aspire to something more than positioning, visibility and tax incentives, or the ubiquity of the corporate image or brand, logo proportion or mere leadership.

In Mexico, the times we are living in allow us to become aware of the similarity of electoral campaigns, product and event publicity, and the launch of new trends in order to illuminate a dissolution of divisions which characterizes the promotion of our present age. Falling somewhere between a debate and a reality show, we can fabricate *telenovelas* or news programs and forget poverty, war and all forms of exploitation that injure human rights. Anything goes as long as you hang onto the power. Governmental preferences tend toward monumental projects and white elephants that act as mausoleums, while private enterprise actively promotes its own interests. This state of affairs, which has been degraded by the absence of clear concepts, trivializes and perverts everything it touches. Because of that, reflection on the public and the private must be able to believe in the determination of citizens, organizations, institutions, corporations and communities to not only ensure the feasibility of projects but also to commit to their insertion (as appropriate) into a circuit that is progressively rupturing the insularity of the artistic discourse and including more and more marketing, economic and political indicators whose impact on the promotion and consumption of contemporary art cannot be disdained.

Translated by Michelle Suderman.

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## “...these days I'm feeling very confused”

Corinne Diserens

I would like to thank Ivo, Viviana, Patricia and everybody working with SITAC. I've learned so much, and I've enjoyed this conference. Even if we are in Mexico City—a wonderful place to be—I don't regret not being able to see much of it, because we can perhaps draw energy from some of the things that have been said here. What I would like to speak about is energy when we work and where we work.

First of all, I do like museums. I felt it needed to be said because museums have been discussed and put into question a lot over the last three days. I like being in museums, I like working in museums, I like discussing museums, I like rethinking museums but at the same time I'm always fighting with museums—not with museums directly, but with the public administrations that control them, and with politicians who exploit culture as a platform for their populist campaigns.

I spent seven years directing museums, not in Paris, but in what we call *villes de province* in France. Before that I was in Spain, at the IVAM in Valencia, then with the Carta Blanca cultural association in Madrid, although we mostly worked in Bilbao, before the Guggenheim was built. We initiated dialogues with certain artists, architects and politicians about the situation in the city of Bilbao.

I believe we need to actively consider what a modern and contemporary art museum should be today and what its needs are. It can't be a traditional museum or art center. A museum has to enrich its collections at the same time as it produces temporary exhibits and art projects, and develops educational programs and research laboratories in collaboration with local and international partners. It must be an active institution that thinks, works the present day with artists and different publics. In doing so, it activates its collections and new modes of communication.

The lecture by Walter Grasskamp was extraordinary and it brought many questions to mind, because these days I'm feeling very confused about the relationship between the public and the private—and perhaps much less positive about our realities than Grasskamp is. I think that France, at this point in time, is in some sort of crisis in terms of public representation, public policies, believing in the need to delegate certain areas of cultural policy to the private sector, etc.

Let's take a very media-based example: the billionaire François Pinault and the whole Executive Life affair. Pinault made part of his fortune from his holding company Artémis, which made major capital gains in connection with the fraudulent acquisition of a Californian insurance company on the part of the then nationalized bank Crédit Lyonnais—all of which led to a highly publicized trial between the French government and the State of California. In the end, the French government was forced to pay an enormous fine.