

## Highlights from the Spring Meeting and AGM Vancouver, May 3rd and 4th, 2012

"Our vision of CAMDO is this: a professional network of peers, the directors of art museums and galleries, that expands knowledge and the expertise of its members, that has national significance and a vision to be a current and relevant organization, a dynamic evolving forum for dialogue among its members."

- Stephen Borys, Vice-President, presenting the Strategic Plan 2012-15

"While there is no change in how much money Council received this year, that doesn't mean that everyone will get the same level of funding in the next three-year round. Council has to show movement. Juries will be looking for signs of movement, things that even if raw, imagine new possibilities, show vitality."

- Doug Sigurdson, Head of Visual Arts, Canada Council for the Arts

"I've seen this happen. You get business people from different countries together with Canadians and they talk about hockey, but maybe also about Vancouver artists. Contemporary art can be highly legitimizing in person-to-person interchanges. So Canadian business people need to know the Canadian artists who have currency overseas. The public sector can help get the business sector up to speed."

- Ian Wallace, panel on Working Internationally

"A broader conversation is needed if the livelihood of artists is to increase or if we want to ensure that art is collected and loved by all Canadians.... If we want to be treated like an economy, then we have to act that way and talk about ourselves that way. We need to look at things in terms like supply and demand, consumer confidence (boyancy), robustness."

- CAMDO President Josephine Mills, session on the Art Economy

"We need to be proactive about collaborating; coming from positions of strength not fear; collaborations should support expertise and should be used strategically to strengthen organizations."

- Alexandra Montgomery, Gardiner Art Museum

"There are three pillars to advocacy: the role of art, the role of public institutions; and public policy including matters like copyright."

- Robin Metcalfe, in the Leadership task force group discussion

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The notes below attempt to capture the flavour and some of the highlights of the excellent presentations and discussions at the Spring meeting. More detailed notes from the sessions are being posted to the CAMDO website as completed. - RL

- May 3rd
1. Doug Sigurdson – On Canada Council’s fixed funding; evaluations in the next three-year funding cycle, and the need to advocate on behalf of the Visual Arts section budget
  2. Special topic sessions:
    - the art economy
    - regional issues
    - fundraising
  3. Panel on “Working internationally in the current economic climate”
- May 4th
4. Adoption of the Strategic Plan
  5. Strategic planning task force break out groups
    - member engagement
    - best practices
    - leadership
  6. Consultation with Mela Constantanidi on touring exhibitions
  7. Annual general meeting, reports of the task forces

### 1. Doug Sigurdson on the forthcoming applications for Council three-year funding

There is a new orientation at Council, influenced by the current government, towards demonstrable results. “There is a very particular language at work now: ‘management by objectives,’ ‘strategy,’ ‘performance indicators.’ The Board and Council have to evaluate all of Council’s activities and point to results, cost savings, improved market access, etc.”

This means that within programs there are changes in what juries will be looking for. While there is no change in how much money Council received this year, Council has to show movement. Juries will be looking for signs of movement, things that even if raw, imagine new possibilities, show vitality.

In response to questions:

Although “public engagement” is a priority for Council, as yet there are no criteria to measure it. Public engagement is hard to define: institutions come into being because communities imagine them into being, like arenas or symphonies.

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With respect to new technology, the key is how a gallery is adapting and engaging in the technological changes that are happening all around us.

With respect to program, it is up to curators to shine.

In conclusion, returning to the opening comments about how the visual arts are surging in popularity, competing now with theatre for example, it was noted that the visual arts section receives less proportionally than some other sections and it may be time to look to Council for some movement on this as well.

### **2. Special Topic Sessions**

#### **The art economy**

**Moderated by Josephine Mills and Gabrielle Peacock**

This topic was one of three identified as priorities for the visual arts at the Kingston Colloquium staged by the Visual Arts Alliance last September. The idea is to involve everyone working in the visual arts to look at the bigger picture. A broader conversation is needed if the livelihood of artists is to increase or if we want to ensure that art is collected and loved by all Canadians.

Subsequently, there was an "art economy" meeting in March in Toronto, where there was a good combination of different perspectives.

Among the things we are looking at is wording, we use the word economy and market; the focus should be on how to create a healthy market. So some of the questions we are asking are:

What would the indicators of health be?

What can museums do?

What can the Visual Arts Alliance do?

From conversations so far, we know lack of transparency is a problem.

If we want to be treated like an economy, then we have to act that way and talk about ourselves that way.

We need to look at things in terms like supply and demand, consumer confidence (boyancy), robustness.

Another thing we need is better information: access to data. The questions here are what kind of data and who will gather it, how might this happen, e.g. should CAMDO commission surveys of the members?

#### **Regional issues**

**Moderated by Jennifer Woodbury and Darrin Martens (with input from Catharine Mastin)**

Regionalism is not geographic so much as about context; even larger institutions work within the "region" of each other. How do these regional identifications affect how organizations collaborate or work collectively? How are we to collaborate while protecting the best interests of our individual organizations?

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We need to be proactive about collaborating; coming from positions of strength not fear; collaborations should support expertise and should be used strategically to strengthen organizations.

Assumptions about professionalism and who will work with whom are often made based on geography, the more remote and smaller the community, the greater doubt there is about the professionalism of the staff and the quality of the program. Program quality is an issue in smaller communities where there are few local artists working to highest standards.

Today's economic challenges are creating pressure to collaborate, not necessarily a bad thing.

It is challenging for smaller institutions to collaborate with larger ones because the larger ones work so far in advance. Larger institutions have wider national, international networks but still are not touring exhibitions. Large institutions here may be considered "regional" by institutions in the biggest centres.

Possible initiatives:

- establish a forum to look at what shows we have on and how we can work together on them
- consider synchronized exhibitions around common themes (e.g. G of 7 project organized by OAAG)
- look at alternatives such as on-line programming, which can extend and conserve exhibition investments

### **Fundraising in the current economic climate** **Moderated by Shirley Madill and Tony Luppino**

The following were among the topics discussed:

We need a new approach to philanthropy because the old one is not working.

It's essential to connect and network with individuals who are connected to the money who can then sell the gallery story.

A huge effort is needed in the area of education about the benefits of art galleries.

Is there more that can be done for members besides discounts?

The nature of your marketing messaging is key – awareness campaigns are critical.

Selling special events requires distinct approaches – sponsors want to know what the proceeds will go toward specifically.

The question we find ourselves asking is What do corporations want today?

### **3. Panel: "Working internationally in the current global climate"** **Moderated by Nigel Prince, with panelists Louise Déry, Stephen Waddell, Ian Wallace and Scott Watson** (Kathleen Bartels was called away and sent her regrets)

Louise Déry:

Where is the international art scene today? It could be limited, like NY - London, or to 15 artists, wherever you can find them. Is there an international scene here? Yes, whenever someone from outside is brought in. "Canada" doesn't exist any more. True or false? Some kind of exoticism has been lost, is increasingly rare. Other small countries aren't necessarily producing "jet set" artists either. The challenges are the same whether it is big or small institutions. The question is always Where is the ambition? What do we do to give artists international experience? If you look at Tibet or Pakistan, contemporary art there has different caché / sense of importance.

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Stephen Waddell:

For an artist, the important framework isn't exhibition but production, so residency programs are important. It's important to be outside of the institutions but it is very risky for artists, working without supports. Canada is a good place because exhibitions can happen here that wouldn't elsewhere.

Scott Watson:

While the world turns to Cuban art or Swedish art, that will never happen here because Canadian art doesn't have that kind of coherence. Even older nations are not so coherent anymore, Italy, France. The project of "Canadian art" may no longer be possible, not just here but anywhere. We make too much of internationalism. It can happen anywhere. And we make too little of what we need to operate at a global level (citing the Stan Douglas retrospective in Germany that occupied 34 galleries across two institutions). But what can we expect when we have so little support, e.g. compared to France where the cultural budget is \$24 billion.

Ian Wallace:

Art is a global meta language. This idea surprises people because avant gardes have been mystified so people think it's just "crazy stuff" that doesn't affect anything. Once you get traction abroad or in the US, where you are from never comes up. A kind of reverse colonialism can happen: a young artist from Vancouver doing something in Germany: the language of the periphery taken into the centre. The antipode to the international situation is the personal situation; the language being spoken to broad audiences remains rooted in the individual; every authentic work has to be authentic to the self.

Discussion:

It is interesting that artists are thinking independently while institutions are thinking about markets and networks. We hear this argument everywhere, nobody is happy about institutional support. The question might be what are the cultural projects that we are interested in supporting? It is interesting that the panel title did not have the word "Canada" in it.

### **4. Adoption of the Strategic Plan**

Presented by Stephen Borys

Moved by Matthew Teitelbaum

Seconded by Carol Podedworny

Adopted unanimously

### **5. Strategic planning task force break out groups**

Summaries of these meetings were given during the AGM, notes further below.

### **6, Discussion: Mela Constantinidi: Assessing the state of touring contemporary art exhibitions/consultation commissioned by the Canada Council for the Arts**

The purpose of the study is to look at the situation for touring exhibitions, what are the trends, what has been the impact of the closure of certain federal programs. Council is looking at galleries that are part of the three year funding program. The Visual Art section is not saying that with this research they'll create special funding, but they would have good arguments for distinguishing visual arts and museums for assistance.

Comments/discussion:

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We need some sort of clearinghouse, a place dedicated, perhaps via electronic media, where we put our information, an information exchange and clearinghouse for traveling exhibitions.

No, we already have the means through the CAMDO website and list-serve to circulate information, to make sure our colleagues know about exhibitions we want to tour. The real issue is money. It is remarkable how Heritage has drawn a line between historical and contemporary work.

That is a false barrier between historical and contemporary art. Increasingly we see shows include both contemporary and historical works. There is a need to rethink support for realities of current practices and build in an assumption of increasing flexibility in the future.

The US market for circulating exhibitions is quite different. Here the scale is smaller. We need to develop strategic ways to see what exactly that entails, to be able to pitch it. US fees can be absolutely huge, thousands for one painting or one group show and difficult to get the same value in return.

The requirements about retrospectives are not workable: that 90% be in private collections. Why can't an artist be considered as having his own private collection? Otherwise, it is saying that the term "collection" belongs to people in offices, disconnected from reality. Your report needs to consider things like this. And things like artists' fees. The US won't pay artists' fees, but we have to stay committed to that as part of any initiative we're doing there.

Mela: I have observed from my research the work the public galleries are doing toward education and learning. Gone are days of the old-style tour. There are fantastic projects out there and initiatives, connections with schools and communities. There is a bigger context of sharing works of art and sharing with artists. That is so important. Such things have to be part of this too, to think of the museum in a broader sense.

What makes a good gallery is organizing the shows that can tour. What makes a bad one? Taking them on. Now most galleries are very careful about what they borrow—looking closely at what is pertinent to their communities/milieu. Touring a show isn't a given good: something goes somewhere and gets plunked down. Borrowing exhibitions doesn't risk that lack of relevance. Sometimes borrowed exhibitions make sense.

## **7. Annual General Meeting – Michael Ames Theatre**

### **Strategic Planning: Reports from the morning Taskforce meetings**

#### **Member Engagement Taskforce**

**Janet Brooke**

At the November 2011 meeting a temporary moratorium was put on membership.

Bullet point questions were sent to a subcommittee:

1. What do we agree is the optimal definition of an art museum/gallery for the purposes of membership, how broad or narrow should it be?
2. Is the minimum operating budget requirement still appropriate at \$250,000? Should it be raised since hasn't changed, since possibly 1982. Should it be replaced by another criterion, e.g. programming?

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3. How will we address anomalous members? Is there a better way to respectfully embrace their participation? Should they be grandfathered under any new criteria?
4. Given the increasingly complex definition of museums/galleries, how do we reasonably establish boundaries that reflect those dimensions, while maintaining clarity of voice, strength, solidarity?
5. Do the current by-laws properly reflect the “face” of CAMDO?

The most important conclusion of the task force discussion of the morning were:

There is a need to embrace a more broad definition of museum/gallery; this was the general consensus among the group.

The minimum required operating budget should be changed to \$350,000 to reflect the values, similar interests, and holding size of the organization.

### Leadership Taskforce

**Peter Thompson**

The task force continued deliberations started last November.

The foundational question is what are we advocating for? Advocacy is front and center in everyone’s mind. We began by identifying three things we are aiming to do:

1. Advocate for the role of art
2. Advocate for the role public institutions like ours
3. Advocate for specific effects on public policy as they relate to the arts.

We have to consider ourselves within a broader ecology of the arts.

We spent the morning considering the best way to proceed and then brainstorming the issues that need addressing. Rather than go through them now, they will be reflected back through email.

### Best Practices Taskforce

**Stephen Borys and Shauna McCabe**

We would like to building an archive of best practices and value statements that CAMDO approves.

There are five areas—clauses and ideas useful to different situations, different ideas, different contents:

1. code of ethics and professional practice policy
2. museum board ethics and guidelines
3. director-artist museum protocol (highest level)
4. visitor photography in galleries statement
5. bigger collections policy, template of collections policies

The idea is to create a CAMDO seal of approval.

Documents useful for all members is challenging because of the range of institutions.

It would be a good idea to talk with policy analysts, could be a museums person or someone outside, to give us a good sense what should be integral to CAMDO as related documents and policies.

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We identified certain people within the taskforce to look for templates, some more academic institutions, with a view to starting a library.

Discussion: We should be looking into censorship and things like that. To expand what is meant by working with artists of the highest caliber, we'd be looking to develop protocols for new directors, etc., a statement that would represent to others how we deal with artists in ways that are respectful, appropriate, how our curators work with artists, how our boards work with artists. This could come out of the code of professional practice.

There isn't a document like that anywhere other than in ethical guidelines for museums. We want something specific to a director and other people, and artists, something instructive and useful when talking to staff, boards and artists.

### **President's Report**

Josephine Mills reported that it had been excellent year for herself and for CAMDO. Working on the strategic plan was sometimes challenging but there was a healthy airing of differences about things that are important and it was key to work through them.

Among the priorities:

- Membership criteria—has not been examined in decades.
- Advocacy—it is important to do effective, proactive things but difficult to get a sense of what we should be doing and also what's possible.
- Renewed emphasis on being a "member-driven" organization. In the short time that we've had funding from Canada Council, we've realized it is not healthy or feasible to just have a central admin. This is something the Sustainability Taskforce will be looking at.
- We are a volunteer organization and the bulk of the work done is volunteer work. We can't just sit back and look to the Executive Director to do the work. We're finding that people are able to bring forward things they want to talk about.

Looking ahead:

- The Board will be working on the sustainability plan, including bylaw review, and she herself is looking forward to working with the Visual Arts Alliance art ecology group.

### **Treasurer's Report**

Peter Thompson presented the 2011 financial statements and 2012 budget and called for two motions:

Motion to accept the December 31, 2011 financial statements  
Moved by Nemiroff, seconded by Tupper. None opposed.

Motion to appoint Ray Folkins CGA as auditor for the 2012 period  
Moved by Brooke, seconded by Eichhorn. None opposed.

### **Executive Director's Report**

Rather than read the report, which was in the meeting packages, Robert Labossiere gave a Powerpoint presentation of short quotes from minutes and other documents in the CAMDO archives, showing some recurrent themes and issues, and concluded by asking that members check their offices for older

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CAMDO documents and to send anything they find to the office contribute to the building of an organization history.

Matthew Tietelbaum addressed the President and Vice-President thanking them for their work on the strategic plan and their extraordinary leadership. "This is great moment for CAMDO," he said.

The President thanked everyone for attending and called for a motion to adjourn.  
So moved by Peter Thompson .  
None opposed.