CENTER FOR CURATORIAL LEADERSHIP

NOW WHAT?

NOW WHAT?
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2022

FOREWORD

The Center for Curatorial Leadership (CCL) is pleased to offer our second publication, *Now What?*, the sequel to our first, *Know Before You Go*, as a resource to the museum field and beyond. The first pamphlet—written by Kim Rorschach, CCL Trustee and Former Illsley Ball Nordstrom Director and CEO of the Seattle Art Museum—was intended, in part, to help our alumni prepare for the kinds of questions they would need to consider when being recruited for leadership jobs. We often heard that it was only after their acceptance of a directorship that they would discover institutional and financial concerns. The issues addressed in *Know Before You Go* helped prepare a roadmap for a candidate on their way to a new position.

We have found the 2017 publication highly in demand, not only by our alumni, but also by staff members and trustees of museums and other non-profits across the country. Requests soon followed for a second volume to tackle the issues directors face once they walk in the door of their new institution. We turned back to Kim, who drew on her twenty-five years of experience as a museum director to explore issues at this next step with the same concise rigor as the first.

Kim drafted her text before COVID-19 caused the world to shut down in 2020. To make this volume resonate with the sweeping changes in museums since then, we asked another CCL Trustee, Courtney Martin, Director of the Yale Center for

British Art and CCL 2019 alumna, to have a conversation with Kim about topics that have emerged over the past two years that are critical to consider when leading an organization today. An edited text of that conversation appears at the end of this volume. We hope that together these two volumes will be as helpful to anyone beginning a new job in an institution as they are to new museum directors.

We are grateful to Kim and Courtney for sharing their knowledge, just as we are grateful to the myriad museum directors who lecture to our Fellows, who host them for week-long residencies, and who provide lifelong mentorship. CCL would not flourish without the support and full engagement of the field at large. We also thank The Kaleta A. Doolin Foundation for its generous support of this publication. We hope that in making these volumes available to anyone, free of charge, we will give something back to the field that it can use constructively to make museum leadership vibrant and robust in the years to come.

Stay tuned for volume three!

ELIZABETH EASTON
Director & Co-Founder
Center for Curatorial Leadership

NOW

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WHAT?

1 THE CHARACTER OF THE PLACE: WHAT MAKES IT UNIQUE

A	Are you familiar with the history of the city/ region/university?
B	What is the economic basis of the region? How is the local economy, and what is the trajectory? Key factors?
C	What is the culture of the place? What are the key communities? What are the demographics and how are they shifting?

STRATEGIES

- Research local history and read local news.

- Talk to thought leaders, community leaders, and local elected officials. Some but not all of these will already be associated with the museum as trustees, volunteers, supporters, etc. Be sure you consult communities that are not well represented among current supporters.

- Consider how *this* city/university is different from your previous experiences.

2 THE MUSEUM'S CULTURE: FIGURE IT OUT

A	What is the museum's history, both since its founding and recently?
B	What is the work culture?
C	How does the institution approach equity and inclusion? What needs to be done?
D	Has the museum suffered any major traumas lately (e.g., budget, layoffs, rapid expansion, unexpected leadership change)?

STRATEGIES

- Talk to insiders and outsiders about the museum and its history and how it is perceived in the community. Past directors and current/former senior staff are key, as well as board members and volunteers, but consult outsiders too.

- To learn about work culture, make sure to get information from all levels, even those with whom you do not regularly interact. And listen carefully to younger staff as well as more seasoned staffers.

- Equity work should be central to the museum's mission, vision, and values. The director must be deeply engaged in moving the institution forward, monitoring progress, and holding the institution accountable.

- To assess recent trauma, try to learn accurate details of what happened and how it was perceived by different stakeholders. Recognize that there will be different versions of what "really" happened.

- For the university museum director: realize that in a large university, it is likely that you are not a member of the institution's leadership team. Consider how you will get information about the university's broader culture, key strategic issues, and direction. Is there a leadership body (Dean's Council, Faculty Senate, etc.) that you can join?

3 THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES: IT'S THEIR IDEA

A	Who are they, and what is their history with the institution?
B	How do they work together? How do they make decisions?
C	What are the power dynamics? Any factions?
D	Do they represent the community appropriately? Are they diverse?
E	How do they see the director's role in governance?

STRATEGIES

- You cannot communicate too much. Get to know them all and communicate as much as you can, especially with key board leaders.

- Seek their advice on all important matters. You don't always have to follow it, but you must seek it. Follow up on key issues and let them know how you decide to move forward and why.

- If a trustee is unhappy, address the matter with them directly, as soon as possible. Don't let it fester. Listen closely to their concerns.

4 **THE STAFF:** LEADING FROM BEHIND?

A	Who is on the leadership team and what is their history with the institution?
B	How diverse is the staff? Consider gender, race, and ethnicity at all levels and position types.
C	How does the director interact with staff in general? How does the director get information from all levels?
D	How does the director communicate with all staff?
E	What leadership style are they accustomed to? Are you similar or different? What do they need?

STRATEGIES

- Learn what the staff are accustomed to and how well it's working. If change is needed, and it may well be, consider what pace of change is best. Different situations require different strategies. Take your own leadership style into account. Every leader must lead in their own way.

- Regarding equity and inclusion, identify and implement steps that will lead to real, measurable progress, sooner rather than later. Involve yourself personally in this important work.

- Benefit from the staff's valuable experience and expertise. Listen carefully to their concerns and suggestions—then make your decision about what is best to be done.

- Know that in order to be effective, staff members need you to make key decisions in a timely manner and communicate clearly.

- At some point you will need to make staff changes. Discern how quickly this can and should occur. Recognize that a new person in a given role may or may not do the job better, or may create different challenges. Consider whether moving people to different roles, rather than dismissing them, can be effective in some situations. Consider the very powerful positive message the promotion of deserving staff members will send early on.

- Build your team carefully. Figure out which current staff members can become valuable members of your team, and which cannot.

5 R-E-S-P-E-C-T

A	Why does the staff think you got the job?
B	Can you rest on your laurels, or do you have much to prove?
C	Are you prepared to set an example of the behavior you want to see?

STRATEGIES

- Always remember that respect must be earned; it will not be instantly accorded just because you are the director.

- Trite but true: lead by example. It is the most powerful way to model and encourage the behavior you want to see.

- Be as lavish as you can with praise for good work. When you need to criticize, start by praising the good aspects, then move to the criticism.

6 MOVE FAST & BREAK THINGS (OR NOT?)

A	What were the major accomplishments of your predecessor?
B	What were the major failings and mistakes?
C	Have you considered the drawbacks of referring too much to the mistakes of the past?
D	What, if anything, must be changed quickly? What is best changed over time? What should not be changed?

STRATEGIES

- Although there are exceptions, usually a very rapid pace of change does not work out well. Even if key trustees urge you to move quickly, be somewhat cautious until you assess the situation. It is worth investing time to bring everyone on board as much as possible before forging ahead on big changes. Consider how urgently the needed changes must be made.

- No matter how tempting, try to resist the urge to criticize your predecessor or blame the museum's problems on past leadership. This makes board and staff feel bad and is usually counterproductive. Confide these feelings to a very small circle only.

- Beware the predecessor who remains too actively involved and invested in maintaining the status quo. Assess the politics and move carefully. Enlist key trustees to help manage this situation, which is rarely beneficial.

7 THE NATURE OF THE PROBLEM: CAN IT BE SOLVED?

A	Can you tell the difference between the problems that must be solved and those that cannot?
B	How will you solve the problems that must be solved, and how will you celebrate those achievements?
C	How will the institution live with those problems that cannot be solved?

STRATEGIES

- It's OK not to fix everything quickly. Try to discern what is most critical and focus on that initially. Sometimes, issues that seem very problematic at first will recede with a bit of time or if related issues are addressed.

- Some things, however, must be dealt with as quickly as possible. Consider the advice of senior staff—they may be in the best position to advise you on what is most urgent. Issues that put staff at risk or are perceived as creating an unfair, inequitable, or untenable situation usually require prompt attention, as will critical financial issues.

- Administrative reorganizations, significant changes to volunteer groups and their functions, and sweeping policy changes are best implemented after more time for fact gathering, consideration, and groundwork with key constituencies.

8 POLITICOS AND COMMUNITY ALLIES: FRIENDS IN NEED

A	City, county, state—what are the key political entities and players? What do they care about? Are the arts on their radar?
B	What and who are the key community organizations, leaders, and connectors you must engage?
C	How do you create robust, win/win partnerships?
D	Beyond the museum, how will you be involved in the local community?
E	For the university museum director: what are the critical internal political issues?

STRATEGIES

- Seek advice from key board and staff members to identify critical partners. Make systematic efforts to meet them and build relationships. Understand the history of their relationships with the museum. Again, go beyond the obvious relationships to reach out to new and diverse communities and those that have not previously interacted with the museum.

- Be prepared to show how the museum can help them achieve their goals. This is key to establishing authentic and fruitful relationships and partnerships.

- For the university museum director: Understand that universities are intensely political places. Key issues include how resources are allocated. Often those you most need as allies (e.g., faculty and administrators in arts and humanities) see you as a threat to their own advocacy for university resources and support. How will you counter that? Diplomacy is critical.

- You may also be perceived as a threat to or distraction from other university fundraising efforts, and your claims on donors may be resented. Consider how will you address this issue, because you must have access to donors.

9 THE STRATEGIC PLAN: IT'S A PROCESS

A	Where is the museum in the planning cycle?
B	What difference have previous plans made to the institution and what have they accomplished?
C	What is more valuable to you: the process of planning, or the plan that results?

STRATEGIES

- Consider how the planning process, and the plan itself, should reflect the museum's values.

- Beware the expensive consultant with the cookie-cutter approach. Carefully select a consultant with your specific objectives and the museum's values in mind.

- Realize that a new strategic plan will probably lead to a related capital campaign, to provide the resources necessary to realize the vision articulated in the plan. Consider accordingly as you scope out where you want the plan to land.

10 THE VISION THING

A	What will you say when asked about your vision for the institution?
B	What inspires you?
C	Why did you take this job?

STRATEGIES

- Again, realize that every leader must lead in their own way. Some are more comfortable and persuasive talking about pie in the sky visions, and others take a more grounded approach. Either can be very successful.

- Consider how soon to roll out a distinctive detailed vision. It's hard for a new leader to do this right away because they don't know enough. You may not be able to put real flesh on these bones until you have undergone a strategic planning process. That said, you should be able to articulate a high-level vision for what the institution is and can be—and how it can most impactfully serve the community—on day one or very shortly thereafter.

11 **THE ASK:** WORK HARD FOR THE MONEY

A	Why do donors give to your museum?
B	How will you engage them with the museum's mission?
C	Have you done your homework on your donors before soliciting them?
D	Are your fundraising skills up to the task? Have you learned from working with experienced fundraisers operating at a high level? If not, how can you access that wisdom?

STRATEGIES

- Few art museums, even very large ones, have historically operated at the highest level in developing a sophisticated advancement operation. Look to leading universities and medical centers for best practices. Consider recruiting advancement staff who have this kind of experience.

- Successful and sustainable fundraising depends on working systematically, methodically, and consistently at all levels. Beware the tendency to focus only on key major donors (trustees) and a grassroots annual fund (members) without tending to the levels in between. Concentrate on the cycle of engagement, cultivation, solicitation, and stewardship, rather than too much on the Hail Mary pass of the big one-time ask. Don't forget the importance of research, prospecting, and data building.

- Greatest fundraising insight ever: when you ask for money, you get advice. But when you ask for advice...you get money!

12 IMAGINING THE UNIMAGINABLE

A	Does the museum have a comprehensive disaster plan?
B	What kind of insurance coverage does the museum have for disasters and business interruptions?
C	How is a crisis—like the recent pandemic or other long-term business interruption affecting the nation and the entire world—different from other kinds of disasters?
D	Who are the key staff and other players to take first action in various kinds of crises and disasters?
E	How does a crisis or disaster affect the museum's long-term mission and vision as well as its short- and medium-term operations?

STRATEGIES

- Review and understand the museum's existing disaster and crisis plans. Many will be inadequate or outdated. Make it a priority to update plans in collaboration with relevant staff and advisors. Consider the value of engaging in regular tabletop exercises.

- Review all insurance coverages, which can be complex. Consider what role, in addition to resolving claims, your insurer can play in a disaster. Often they can deploy resources not otherwise available to protect their investment in your valuable assets.

- Consider what role the government—local, regional, state and federal—is likely to play in the wake of a disaster or crisis and how you can be best prepared to leverage.

- Utilize community resources including your own and other institutions' security and life safety staff to stay abreast of best practices and develop resource-sharing strategies. Work closely with local law enforcement, fire, and emergency management agencies.

- In planning, consider the differences between short-term emergencies and longer-term disasters and crises. Consider also the differences between an incident that is localized, such as a hurricane, and one that is widespread or global, such as a pandemic.

- In a lengthy or ongoing crisis, the museum's very mission and vision may come under pressure. The institution's values will help guide the way. Flexibility in budget allocation and planning will be key. Give thought to how this might play out re: fund restrictions and long-established customs and habits.

13 IT'S STILL ALL ABOUT THE ART

A	Why do you love art?
B	What art do you love the most and why?
C	Do you make art the priority, without making it the excuse?

STRATEGIES

- Don’t be afraid to let them see how much art means to you, and why you feel it contributes so significantly to our humanity and the greater good. Let them know it’s why you are in this business. Your passion is inspiring to your constituents and supporters.

- The director must know enough about art to provide effective artistic leadership of the institution, including detailed planning for acquisitions and exhibitions. That said, a successful director cannot also be a curator, unless the institution is very small and well-funded, with virtually no complexity. Resist the urge to curate, or proceed at your own risk!

IN CONVERSATION: COURTNEY J. MARTIN, KIMERLY RORSCHACH, & ELIZABETH W. EASTON

ELIZABETH EASTON: Thank you so much for agreeing to participate in this conversation. Courtney, you probably have read *Know Before You Go*, the bible written by Kim Rorschach.

COURTNEY J. MARTIN: I did read it before I started my position. Whenever I see Kim on calls, I immediately think of it. In rereading it over the last few days, I realized that I should have reread it in the middle of the pandemic, because emerging from this time requires many of us to start our jobs again.

EE I was just going to add...everybody reads *Know Before You Go*, especially when they are being recruited. Then they walk into the job the first day and need the sequel. But so much has happened. I think *Now What?* is very relevant, but Kim, you don't touch on a lot of what people want to know now, which are new issues that arose after you drafted it over two years ago. So that's why we thought you, Courtney, would be the perfect interlocutor. Both of you are CCL trustees, and you are both so well poised at different moments in your careers to address the current moment. And Courtney, obviously you have had to deal with all the issues that Kim happily escaped, so you will be the voice for those. So let's begin!

KIM RORSCHACH: Courtney, thank you for being willing to have this conversation now. As you both know, I retired in 2019, right before the pandemic. So I do not have the experience of leading through this incredibly transformative time: the pandemic, the Black Lives Matter movement, the sea change in terms of what "work" is and people's relationship to work—entry-level, lower-wage work in particular. All these issues that have arisen are distinct but related. I don't have that experience myself, so I want to ask you some wide-ranging questions about these issues and see where our conversation will go.

I first wanted to ask—from your perspective as a leader and as a manager—what has changed most about your job since 2019?

CM The first is the obvious thing that we all experienced: this global trauma. The immediate effect, of course, was that we moved out of our offices and had to shift to remote work.

I never thought that it would go on for as long as it has, and I did not understand what we would have to do. On some level, I thought we would have full-scale closure of the museum—like in World War II, where basically you batten down the hatches, get the whole collection out, and then the doors are closed and everybody is furloughed. I could not imagine personally that I would transition to being so adept at online work. I couldn't see it.

Another thing that has changed for me is that I had to be away from the collection for several months before I began to use my capacity as an essential worker for the museum to come in and be alone with the collection. This lack that I felt in March and April of 2020 felt so dramatic. I'd never spent that much time without art. And I could not understand what I was supposed to be doing in this job without seeing the collection.

The disconnection from physical contact with other colleagues, not just inside the museum, but everywhere…I had lived, from my perspective, a connected life. I traveled constantly; I went back and forth to museums across the country; I met with people frequently. The sudden cutoff from that life felt dramatic, as if I was saying goodbye to people for some extended period of time without understanding how long it would be.

I started doing things differently—first, with technology. And then I committed to having conversations with people. With many of the people that I previously saw regularly—at openings, running around to galleries, or in meetings—I felt like we shifted into more substantial relationships. For those who were willing to have a Zoom call with me once a month, we started talking about things that we had never talked about before. I may have known someone as an acquaintance for twenty years, and we became friends, or deeper colleagues, within a year and a half. This is also true of much of my staff. We probably talk more about things that are perhaps outside of the professional world, but that

are important to building a relationship.

I also made a commitment to the artists. I benefit personally from being connected to living artists. Many of the artists that I have worked with for a number of years are of an age where I was scared that I might not see them again. Some of them do not use Zoom; others do. But with every single artist that I have worked with deeply, I committed to having a phone call with them at least a once a month. We talk about all kinds of things. I have not seen any of their artwork, but I know what they are doing in their personal lives.

KR It has deepened your beneficial relationships, both personally and professionally, in ways that would not otherwise have happened.

CM Absolutely.

KR Are you all back in-person now, or are you still meeting virtually? Is that morphing now?

CM On August 1, 2021, we largely returned to onsite work. Then in mid-December when we would have closed for winter break, the university asked that all units close for remote work until February. We, however, were going to install a major exhibition on two floors of the building, so I extended that closure until the end of February to accommodate the installation staff. Most of our staff is onsite and we are spread across three buildings.

KR Are these new connections informing your work? What is different from before the pandemic, in terms of the new relationships that you built in this weird time, as you go back in-person?

CM I have written about many of the living artists in ways that are informed by the things that I learned in our conversations that are more personal in nature. They gave me a deeper understanding of very specific questions that I may have had

about that artist at some earlier time, but never got around to asking or never had the kind of platform to ask.

In the case of my colleagues, absolutely. Because I was not a director before, and I have started to meet people that I did not know in-person, we have developed relationships by way of Zoom. There are a few museums we have loaned to and from or shared resources with, largely because I built camaraderie with the director. In almost all cases, these have been women.

KR Let's turn to HR, personnel, staff issues. Maybe you didn't have much of this during the pandemic? It sounds like you didn't need to lay anyone off, but workforce issues, including racial equity and pay equity, have come up for many museums and the directors have been grappling with these issues in ways that they weren't before. Did those issues arise for you? How did you deal with them?

CM Financial equity has not been the same kind of conversation for us because, by and large, we are well-paid and have incredibly strong benefits across the board. More than half of our staff are unionized in a union that is not a cultural union, meaning not connected to the kinds of unions that most other art museums are moving into, but connected to the structure here at Yale. More like a university union. We probably look more like Berkeley, for example.

KR I'd imagine all your job levels are across the whole university as well, and salary ranges are probably published. There is a lot of transparency there already.

CM A lot of transparency, a lot of checks and balances, and I think a lot of equity as well. If there is ever a moment to be frustrated by it, you must then be consoled by the fact that you won't be disenfranchised by it either. I do think it is an incredibly fair system. When I heard the conversation coming out of so many museums about the lack of benefits during a health crisis, I turned back to look at the things we received.

We were heavily supported for the first two years of this in ways unimaginable in most institutions.

KR Interesting. What about your role as a manager and leader of your own staff? How has that changed?

CM This has been a roller coaster. When I arrived, I managed five members of the senior management team plus an executive assistant. That felt reasonable and manageable. It was fewer people than I had managed previously.

Each time one of those staff either left or retired, I took on managing that area of work and their staff. There was a point in early 2021 where I was managing the IT department and co-managing our financial and operations areas, including security, which is our largest department by numbers. Here, I was focused on stretching the definition of what it means to be an essential worker, because I wanted those staff members who had to be here every single day, no matter what happened, to understand that I was making a commitment to them. This is also why I moved to New Haven full-time.

KR I see. Courtney, were you on that recent AAMD call where there was a lot of talk about how much time and energy people are having to devote to HR issues, and how a lot of boards are not understanding why that is and why it is important? Did that resonate with you? It sounds as if it manifested for you in having to step in to manage all these areas as people left.

CM It did. Our internal HR person also retired in the spring of 2021, and we were then given an interim person from Central HR. Working remotely during a global health crisis and social upheaval changes the needs of even the most stable organizations. This period has seen a complete collapse of personal and professional existence and the workplace has had to readjust to this new expectation. HR has consumed not only more time in managing, but also more time in

strategizing how to make the circumstances under which we are living and working less precarious.

KR Is there anything that you want to say about working with the supporter side of the equation during this period? How has that changed? Or has it remained very similar to what it had always been?

CM When I arrived, there was an advisory board of about twenty-five people. They were almost exclusively faculty, most of them from the humanities at Yale. We had our first meeting in the fall of 2019, and in that meeting, I disbanded the board. I did so because I thought it was too large and unfocused.

This is where I would say that the pandemic got in the way of my plans. I thought I would disband that board, and by the summer of 2020 I would reform it as a working board with specific positions, priorities, and tasks. For example, I wanted an architect versed in Louis Kahn, an alum and someone representative of the city of New Haven, in addition to those interested in British art, on the board. But as soon as the pandemic hit, I did not have time to think. It felt like conceptual work, not actual work, and from my perspective I had actual work to do.

On top of that, I found that even though I knew many of the people who I wanted to ask, people were so overburdened with their own lives and jobs that I did not feel comfortable asking for more of their time or resources. So, I put it off until recently. I have now returned to working on the board again.

KR Interesting. So you didn't disband the board because the pandemic provided the opportunity, you thought you would bring it back in a different form. And in fact, the pandemic and everything that was going on caused you to put it on hold.

CM Yes. I remained in contact with patrons and other constituents (alumni, living artists in the collection, lenders, advisory board prospects). I wrote notes anytime something happened in the

world that I could comment on that had an actual relationship to them. If one was a J.M.W. Turner collector, I would say, "look at this Turner show." I would write to them or reach out and make contact, but I suspended actually asking for anything.

KR That's very interesting. And that is a general lesson, that you used that time for cultivation in a very significant and meaningful way. You sensed that was what was needed and wanted, and what would build the relationships at the time, rather than asking for something specific that they might not have been able to do.

CM There was a point in March and April of 2020 when we did not know what the larger financial picture was going to be. We received an unexpected, unrestricted gift from a donor who wanted to help in some way at the onset of the pandemic. I used those funds to support a new position for an intern to have continuous employment. The external money allowed me to create a job that I am now back to funding out of my own budget.

KR How are you thinking about planning in general now, as opposed to how you might have thought about it in the past? Shorter-term? Planning seems useless? Planning seems essential? How do you think about strategic planning in general, given all that you've been through?

CM I thought that I was going to launch a strategic plan no later than January 1 of 2020. I had grand plans, not only for a strategic plan, but also for all the infrastructure we needed to put in place to embark upon a plan. I thought I was well on my way, but then the pandemic hit. We had an emergency management plan that I thought was very well thought-out, except that it had no proviso for a pandemic, as many did not. I realized that I had to decide what the larger priorities were for the institution.

I asked myself, what are the things that I should be working on every single day? What are the things that I should put

off until we're not actively worried about whether we're keeping our jobs, or whether we're ever returning to the office? I did not want to feel so out of touch that I was having conversations about something that had no real relevance to staff's lives. Instead, I wanted to double down on the things that I thought *did* have relevance. Like, if you're out of the office, let's use the time to think about whether the spaces we work in are actually functional.

KR If and when things get back to full steam ahead, do you see yourself undertaking a broader planning process? Or maybe working on a shorter timeline?

CM Yes, and it will probably be a better plan than I would have envisioned when I first started, largely because I know the staff and the institution better. It's as if I am starting over, but with more knowledge about the institution that I am entering. We have already made some material steps I would have put in my original strategic plan. Now at least I can say, "that's the right idea." Or in some cases, "I don't think that's the right idea at all. Let's turn the corner here." I was able to do full reorganization, though, in the middle of the pandemic.

KR You did what had to be done. Again, like your cultivation of key people, you do what is important to do and possible to do and essential to do at the time. This makes me wonder: Are you thinking about artistic programming in a different way, or just restarting things that had to be postponed?

CM One of the things I knew coming into this position is that the director should not curate. And I hold that as a truth.

KR I agree.

CM The director should set a vision that can be carried out across the entire institution, and programming should fit into that vision. I've completely revamped our public programs.

EE Your programs now must reach a global audience. I mean, they are phenomenal.

CM We had a talk with the director of the Hong Kong Museum at 9 AM on February 11 that reached four hundred people. Who would get up at 9 AM to come to that talk? This was the shift, that's the kind of thing that we previously had not done. Much of our success was that programming could happen online. Given the success of remote programming, do we shift back to meeting in person?

EE This is what transformed CCL as well. Zoom reconnected us with our alumni in a way I never thought of before. And it was immediate.

But Courtney, think about how a director is identified with their institution. There were directors before you, but I would say that your lecture series identified you with the Center for British Art, apart from what the curators are doing, what the program is. Your imprimatur shifted the Center for British Art into the place that you are now running. As directors, do you feel conscious of that? Kim, when you went to Seattle, you knew the budget was in crisis and you had to fix it, and you knew you had to build the Asian museum. That was your mission. It was urgent and important, and you had to do it. Courtney, before you give that up…I mean, you can't do everything, but your programming has transformed the Center into something new and *you*, which is a good thing.

KR To get at this idea more generally, it seems like a lot of institutions—including CCL as well as museums—are asking, "do we shift everything back to in-person? How much of our virtual platform do we retain?" You can reach a much bigger global audience and have a much wider scope of possible participants virtually. What's the right balance as things shift back? How are you thinking about that?

CM I don't have the answer just yet, because I can't quite figure out when to pull the plug…If you'd asked me this question in

October, I would have said we'd be having in-person events by January. I'd never heard of Omicron. Every time I think we're ready to set a semi-fixed date in the future I get new information that says, "no, it isn't the time just yet." I also think that we can tell where the audiences are coming from. I can tell you that of that four hundred, x came from the East Coast, x came from wherever. Maybe we always want some aspect of our programming to be online because we want an audience that may never visit this museum.

I take that from MoMA. MoMA's launch of Leah Dickerman's strategic digital work spoke to this idea that the museum needed to offer an experience before, during, and after an actual visit. I remember thinking, "other than checking hours on the website, what do you need from an online presence before and after a visit to a museum?" I could not conceptualize that before the pandemic, but now I think it is a visionary idea. Maybe I am looking for a new audience that is never going to come here. And then the programming happens with the people who *are* here.

KR I don't know if you think of it this way, but your subject matter is quite specialized. That doesn't mean it can't have a very broad application and resonance, but there is no other institution that does what you do. That gives you a unique global opportunity that the generic museum of art in such and such a city might not have in quite the same way.

CM Absolutely.

KR You've touched on some of this, but let's talk a little about the advantages, disadvantages, ways it has been necessary to navigate as a Center with quite a significant degree of independence, yet still as a part of a much larger institution —"Mother Yale," as we used to call it.

CM I now have a very different understanding of the university. This would be true of anyone. What I do understand is that there are things that I value as an alum, that if I had come to

this position *not* having been an alum, I might not think this way about. There are conversations that I'm willing to have, there are problems that I'm willing to resolve. I'm willing to think through what our museum is relative to the university because I think that the two are important together. That comes out of my own experience as an alum who had the opportunity to work here as a student.

In some ways we were insulated from those conversations, but on the other hand, the conversations about museums being racist or being colonial have always been lodged against us. In fact, I entered that conversation perhaps a bit earlier. When I started in 2019, everyone wanted to know how I was going to change this institution because of its supposed problematic past. As an art historian and someone who'd worked here previously, I had my own opinion about what I thought the museum was or how I thought it functioned. But I also had to listen to what other people said, and I was fascinated by this sense that the museum was necessarily problematic because there was so much figurative art, and that figurative art did not show people of color primarily, or when it did, the people of color were marginalized.

That is a conversation that I've been having since I began interviewing for the job. I don't know that I could have figured out what to do institutionally until we got to the summer of 2020 and the murder of George Floyd. There were ways that we needed to actively tackle the issue.

EE Courtney, many of the people who are going to read this booklet may be brand-new directors who are just beginning their jobs. You talk about facing these ethical crises that nobody has ever dealt with before. It's not like the experience of being a director informs how you deal with the unknown. I'm curious, did you reach out to anybody with whom you could share your dilemma? Was there a group of other university art museum directors, or do you have a posse of people, even people unlike you, who you've known

through the course of your life, to give you advice? I'm always curious about how people find people to talk to.

CM There are people that I talk to regularly. Some are art people, some are not. I would say personally, in terms of my own substance, that is why I turned to the artists that I know. I wasn't asking for something, and I don't know that they know this, but they gave me a lot by talking about art as opposed to other things. I would say that I often had the opposite experience—many colleagues called me to ask how to deal with the racial complications that they were observing in their own institutions.

I saw it for what it was. It's not an uncomplicated situation to sit in at times. But what is more interesting to me is that for everything that has happened in the public conversation around race and inequity in the museum, I have more so been a witness and critic of an unchecked system of sexism that is not enough of a public conversation in museums, or even at all.

EE I agree with you, and I am surprised by the number of women who have lost jobs, sometimes very quickly. Their inability—unlike many men—to bounce back into another job is of great concern to me.

CM Exactly. I have noticed a few words that have been floating around for the past few years that I've never heard so often—"toxicity" being one of them. I have found that with women who seem to have been in difficult situations in their institutions, there is a blanket idea of toxicity in the culture, but it is undefined.

EE Right.

I know so many women who have recently, or are about to, take on these roles. How can they prepare and protect themselves against this specific issue, when *everybody* steps into a complicated position as a new director? You don't want to tell women not to take these jobs, but

I am very concerned. I know someone who is about to take on a job where the three previous directors were women and were fired, and you think, "what can you do to ensure a different path?"

KR Courtney, do you think that women are more inclined than men to take things personally? Even this issue of the unionization of museum staffs. I remember we had a situation in Seattle where it seemed like it might happen and there was a lot of anxiety around it. I remember thinking to myself, "I'm not going to take this personally." Thinking about remarks I've heard from other directors, and maybe this is a terrible generalization, but it seems like women, out of a greater honesty or whatever it may be, more often do feel hurt and do take it personally. Whether that is a good thing or bad thing I don't know, but it can make things more difficult for women if they are perceived doing that. That is just my own experience.

CM Your question about the taking it personally, I wonder if it's not so much taking it personally as it is becoming too personally involved with it. That is true of all personnel issues. Women are set up to need to put their hand into everything in an institution, while men understand that there are other roles defined to work through it. I think some of that is about mentoring and learning that not every problem has to be solved by you individually.

KR I agree.

CM And that is not about the size of the institution either. It might be culturally driven because I think, on the other side, staff expect female leaders to engage with them directly.

KR Yes, to be more empathetic and show more personality.

CM Absolutely.

KR Again, maybe my view is flawed since I'm not in it right now,

but I see this traditional hierarchical (often older, white, male) model of the director being much less respected now. And that model is not helping us in our world today, but maybe the field and the donors aren't seeing it that way? But I feel we are ready to move on from this model of leadership.

CM Despite recent hires, the largest American institutions are still being run by majority men. That is not a critique; it is the state of the field. In all those positions, there is a person who is at stake. If I know them personally, I also know something about the complexity of their institution, how it is run, what their senior leadership might look like, and who the work really falls to, which can be a radically different conversation. The greater proposition to uncover is funding.

We come back over and over again to the model for funding the museum. If you're worried about the history of the money that you received, okay, what is another option? Very few have offered workable recommendations for what would replace those funds that pay salaries.

KR No other option has yet been identified.

CM Maybe we're moving passively into one option, which is that many museums have asked for voluntary retirements. Some people have resigned of their own accord. Furloughs, job freezes, not filling vacancies—perhaps museums will exist with fewer people in the short term, but that is not a stated strategy for the field.

KR Right. We had to make do with less and saw that it was possible. Can we continue to do that?

EE I always wonder how we can help these people with such energy who are being recruited into situations that are so complicated. It has been wonderful to talk to the two of you because you are survivors of this world.

KR Courtney, your remarks about how you've operated during the pandemic, what you've learned, what you've done and decided to wait on doing, and how you viewed things, are very nuanced and complex. That will be helpful to people.

EE And saying that you get a lot from artists, that's beautiful thing and something that is inspiring to everybody. There is no book you can read that's going to give you all the answers but talking to the people who make the art is helpful. Thank you both. I think it will add immeasurably to *Now What?*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: KIMERLY RORSCHACH



Kimerly Rorschach served as the Illsley Ball Nordstrom Director and CEO of the Seattle Art Museum from 2012 until her retirement in 2019. Previously, she was director of the Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University (2004–2012) and the David and Alfred Smart Museum of Art at the University of Chicago (1994–2004).

At the Seattle Art Museum, Rorschach built and diversified the collection and exhibition program, presenting groundbreaking exhibitions including *Disguise: Masks and Global African Art* (2015), *Chiho Aoshima: Rebirth of the World* (2015), and *Figuring History: Robert Colescott*, *Kerry James Marshall*, and *Mickalene Thomas* (2018), among many others. She also established an increased focus on local and regional artists within the context of global collections and programs, and built wide-ranging partnerships in Seattle's fast-growing and increasingly diverse communities. Under her leadership, the museum also centered and elevated its work around equity and inclusion, a

top priority in the museum's strategic planning and board and staff recruitment. She led a $150M campaign to strengthen the museum's endowment, and to fund a major renovation and expansion of the historic Seattle Asian Art Museum, one of SAM's three sites.

At Duke and the University of Chicago, Rorschach provided transformational leadership, raising the profile of these university museums and advocating for the unique value of the arts in higher education. She was the founding director of the Nasher Museum at Duke, quickly establishing it as a top university art museum with a distinctive program and supporting the creation of a groundbreaking contemporary collection focusing on artists of color. Throughout her career, she has made it a priority to mentor students and first-time museum directors.

Rorschach holds a bachelor's degree from Brandeis University and a PhD in art history from Yale. She is a past president of the Association of Art Museum Directors, and serves on the board of the Center for Curatorial Leadership in New York. She is the author of *Know Before You Go*, a handbook for new art museum directors published by CCL in 2017. Rorschach also serves on the advisory board of the Rose Art Museum at Brandeis University, and is the current Board President of the American Federation of Arts in New York.

COURTNEY J. MARTIN



Courtney J. Martin is the sixth director of the Yale Center for British Art. Previously, she was the deputy director and chief curator at the Dia Art Foundation; an assistant professor in the History of Art and Architecture department at Brown University; an assistant professor in the History of Art department at Vanderbilt University; a chancellor's postdoctoral fellow in the History of Art at the University of California, Berkeley; a fellow at the Getty Research Institute; and a Henry Moore Institute research fellow. She also worked in the media, arts, and culture unit of the Ford Foundation in New York. In 2015, she received an Andy Warhol Foundation Arts Writers Grant.

In 2012, Martin curated the exhibition *Drop*, *Roll*, *Slide*, *Drip*...

Frank Bowling's Poured Paintings 1973–1978 at Tate Britain. In 2014, she co-curated the group show *Minimal Baroque: Post-Minimalism and Contemporary Art* at Rønnebæksholm in Denmark. From 2008 to 2015, she co-led a research project on the Anglo-American art critic Lawrence Alloway at the Getty Research Institute and was co-editor of *Lawrence Alloway: Critic and Curator* (Getty Publications, 2015, winner of the 2016 Historians of British Art Book Award). In 2015, she curated an exhibition at the Dia Art Foundation focused on the American painter Robert Ryman. At Dia, she also oversaw exhibitions of works by Dan Flavin, Sam Gilliam, Blinky Palermo, Dorothea Rockburne, Keith Sonnier, and Andy Warhol. She was editor of the book *Four Generations: The Joyner Giuffrida Collection of Abstract Art* (Gregory R. Miller & Co., 2016), surveying an important collection of modern and contemporary work by artists of African descent.

Martin holds a bachelor's degree from Oberlin College and a doctorate from Yale University for her research on twentieth-century British art. She is the author of essays on Rasheed Araeen, Kader Attia, Rina Banerjee, Frank Bowling, Lara Favaretto, Sam Gilliam, Leslie Hewitt, Asger Jorn, Wangechi Mutu, Ed Ruscha, and Yinka Shonibare CBE (RA). She was a 2019 Center for Curatorial Leadership Fellow, and has served as a CCL Trustee since 2021.

MISSION

The Center for Curatorial Leadership (CCL) trains curators to assume leadership positions in museums in the rapidly evolving cultural climate of the 21st century. CCL identifies individuals who have the potential to become leaders and helps them shape themselves into professionals who not only take charge of the art in their care but are also capable of assuming the leadership responsibilities essential to high performance in today's art museums. CCL believes that there need be no contradiction between these two sets of obligations—indeed, that there must not be.

WHO WE ARE

Co-founded in 2008 by Agnes Gund and Elizabeth Easton, CCL is located in New York City and runs programs at home and in other cities, drawing upon the diverse resources of museums and academic institutions across the United States. It has transformed the model for developing leaders in art museums with a singular program that involves a combination of teaching and doing, including mentorships with top museum directors and exposure to a wide network of trustees, philanthropists, business leaders, and innovators. Throughout the five-month fellowship, CCL gives curators the tools to manage teams, connect with diverse audiences, mentor emerging professionals, and understand the finances and inner workings of their organizations. As a result, CCL graduates are able to effect change at the institutional level, leading technology initiatives, fundraising campaigns, audience development programs, and strategic planning. In 2014, CCL expanded the arc of training provided by the core fellowship, launching new programs designed specifically for art history doctoral candidates and international curators of modern and contemporary art.

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