Community Engagement: Myths, Motivations, and Means
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Engagement: Myths, Motivations, Means
Community and Engagement

Audience Development
A marketing strategy, artcentric
Improve results near-term

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Audience Engagement
A marketing strategy, artcentric
Deepen existing relationships & Increase reach long-term
“Outreach”

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Community Engagement
A mission strategy, focused on mutual benefit
Develop deep relationships of trust and understanding through which reach can be expanded
Arts and community as equal partners

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Community Engagement
A mission strategy, focused on mutual benefit
Develop deep relationships of trust and understanding through which reach can be expanded
Arts and community as equal partners

The art grows out of or is a response to the relationships
Programs and projects are of mutual benefit
Expertise of art and community leaders is essential for success

It is a new way of thinking
Community
Any group of people with common interests or characteristics defined, for example, by place, tradition, intention, or spirit. Based on a definition created by Alternate ROOTS.

Why Engage?
• Economics
• Demographics
• Education
• Social Expectations
• Competition

Engagement Is Good for
• Art (Vitality)
• Organization (Viability)
The Myths

- A Fad

- Charity Work

- "Only" Code for Diversity

- Expensive

- Expensive

If the things you are doing are not working, is it reasonable to continue doing all you are doing the way you are doing them?

- Pandering
Community engagement is *not* “giving them what (we think) they want.”

Rather, it demands learning enough about communities to know what work of the international cultural canon will be meaningful to them and then programming that *with them*.

**Multiple Criteria, Complex Issues**

- **Whose Cultural Expression?**
- **What Is Quality?**
  - Spectators or Participants?
  - Technical Excellence
    - The Value/Merit of Homemade
    - Access to Resources?
  - Deeply Valuable to the Community?
- **Quality for Whose Sake:**
  - Art/Artists or Community?

If we do not connect our communities with the excellence pursued, is it indeed excellent?

**The Myths**

- **A Distraction from Mission**

**Diversity and Cross-Cultural Engagement: Why is this important?**

- Diversity vs. Cross-Cultural Engagement
- Relationship to Community Engagement in St. Louis
- Social and Moral imperative (Funders increasingly requiring evidence of this)
- Source of Innovation
- Pathway to Relevance
Engagement: Myths, Motivations, Means
Diversity and Cross-Cultural Engagement

What are we willing to do to achieve it?
What are we willing to change?

We should be seeking to improve the lives of members of those diverse communities we hope to have in our audiences.

The Challenges of Community Engagement

Engagement 101
Mission

Mission ≠ Art

Engagement 101
Mission

Mission = Intersection of Art & Community
Engagement 101

Steps

Internal
Believe
Commit
Prepare

External: Engage
- Develop Relationships
  - Current External Stakeholders
  - New Communities
- Maintain Relationships

Engagement 101

The Programming Timeline
Existing works have already been selected without consideration of specific community interests
- Presentation details have already been decided
- Presentation details are still TBD
Selected with community interests in mind
- Works have not been selected but will be chosen from existing work with consideration of specific community interests
- Work will be commissioned.

Engagement 101

Operating Principles
- Care for the community, those who are served through the art.
- Love the art but don’t let it become more important than the people whom the art will inspire.
- Pursue (and achieve) excellence, not for its own sake but for the sake of the community. They deserve it.
Thanks for your attention!

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