

DISCOVERY Ep. 11 - English

[00:02:49] Hello and welcome to Discovery Knight Foundation weekly series that looks at the creation of informed and engaged communities through the lens of artists and the arts. I'm Victoria Rogers, V.P. of Arts here at night. Today, I'll be joined by Liz Curtis, president of TDC, a Boston based nonprofit research and consulting firm. And Franklin Sermon's director of the Perez Art Museum here in Miami. We're going to be talking about what conditions have to be in place to support transformational change in organizations. Please submit your questions through the show. The Zoom using the Q and A button at the bottom of your screen through Twitter using the hashtag Night Live and in the comments section of the Facebook live stream. We'll get to as many of them as we can throughout the conversation. Liz and Franklin, welcome to Discovery. Thank you, Victoria. Welcome, Victoria. I'm so happy to have you both with me. So in twenty nineteen Night Commission TDC to conduct a study with two overarching questions in mind, have art institutions supported by night changed over time? How had Neitz investment aligned with and supported that change? And the second big one was how should night excuse me, adjust how it funds and arts institutions into the future. This was focusing on what were the lessons we could learn about how best to support our arts organizations as they respond to the evolving demographics, audience behaviors, funding practices and community values. As a note, the study was done before the onset of covered nineteen, as well as the largest movement for social justice and equity in the country. That said, what we've learned here we think is applicable to how best to support the changes required to respond to the current environment in the best ways possible. So, Liz, let's start with sort of this review of what the study is, what it was, and what has to be in place to fund transformational change.

[00:04:54] So, as Victoria said, the study was really designed to take a look at the evolution of eight arts organizations that night had supported for probably more than a decade, in some instances in very substantial ways. And we looked at the Akron Art Museum, the Barnes Foundation, the Detroit Art Museum, the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, the New World Symphony and Miami Opera, Philadelphia and the Philadelphia Art Museum. We did finish the research. It happened mostly last year. In December, we finished. And in the process, we really looked at a tremendous amount of grant documentation. We looked at secondary sources about each community and spoke with over 60 organizations representing the arts organizations, as well as people in the communities that they're serving. And what we were trying to understand was how change had occurred and how the foundations investment had really leveraged or accelerated that change. One of the really important things that I think we found is that change is accelerated when the goals of the organization are aligned with the foundation's goals. So the foundation is actually supporting the things that the organization wants to achieve. So given that we think that the results really can be useful for other organizations seeking a particular impact, to look at the example of these aid organizations and understand what the results of an investment and change have been.

[00:06:40] And also when you're really thinking about change over time, how long transformation actually can take. For both funders and donors, two takeaways are really useful. And the first is really this point I made a moment ago is that outcomes are better when both the funder and the grantee are aligned on the purpose. Sometimes I think we found that funders come up with their own purpose, an agenda, and organizations try to fit themselves into it. And I think that doesn't always work as well as the alignment that we saw here. That there are the other thing that I think we found is there are different parts of a change process. We can talk more about that later. Each has its own timeline and

scope. And we found that the most impactful investments were also those that were aligned with the key dimensions of the grantees strategies, but that were also scaled appropriately to the need at that particular moment during the transformation. We've laid some of this out in the conclusion of the report. But this was I think this was very confirming of things that we had seen in our work with individual organizations over time. So I'll stop there.

[00:08:06] So, Franklin, you were obviously interviewed. You and your staff for this and a number of your board member board members. But talk to me about the changes. You've seen it, Pam. And the key things in the institutions that make it possible to change and maybe some issues around change that you would like to do and haven't been able to do.

[00:08:29] Thank you, Victoria. I mean, I would start by that interesting point that Liz focused on a little bit, which is where there is an alignment of goals. And if I think about the sort of general pretext of a lot of the support, especially as it relates to Knight Foundation, as it relates to Miami, has been this desire to make art in the broadest sense of the word general.

[00:09:01] And so I come from that specifically and very personally from a curatorial strategy that I would say is rooted back in 2001 and doing an exhibition like One Planet under a group of contemporary art and hip hop where we want to bring in the space of outside the museum. And I'm going to use just that in quotes for now, or to think about exhibitions that are sport related that potentially allow us to think of a conversation, that I can facilitate the idea of making art more general. So I would say that there is an alignment right there. And when we talk about not only the synergy of having an alignment and goals, but also with the desire for change, the desire to leverage momentum, I come admittedly from an auspicious place in this conversation in that I only began at the museum in the fall of 2015. And as you know, and it has been part of the conversation that we're talking about, which is around 2017, 2018, that our institution changed dramatically in that period of time. We went from the Miami Art Museum, a much smaller space to our grand and I think almost at tie monument, but full of beauty and grandeur and all these other adjectives that we can use that are about making art. General Howard Herzog and the Murrah Building created in 2013 on Biscayne Bay. No Greco Roman steps to walk up. Nothing that makes you feel small, surrounded by glass. So the idea of transparency, of communication, of providing a space in which one might feel welcomed before one even gets in is built into the architecture of the place. So that happened. And as I mentioned, I came in 2015, which is also another change, for better or worse. It's going to be a change. And so to have that opportunity and then to engage, I think for us, most importantly, was we did a new strategic plan.

[00:11:37] And rather than start that strategic plan in the fall of fifteen, when I arrived, we did it in 2016 so that it began in 2017. And that really you have these elements, these very decisive elements that highlight the alignment of goals and the alignment of it being a moment for change, so to speak frankly.

[00:12:00] Also on top of that worth noting, before I even arrived in Miami. I had had conversations about one of the significant grants that that that was looked at, which was the two thousand five grant for five million ready to start or 2015, of course. And that was you know, that that does so much for us. And I can go on. So tell me where to pause. But when I think about that moment, that moment was about recognizing collections and recognizing the ability for a collection to symbolically more than symbolically, but to move

forward an idea of the museum and create its mission based upon the collection that has been absolutely 100 percent integral to everything we've done ever since.

[00:12:56] So, Franklin, you made a comment earlier, and it is true. Our strategy for art in Miami is making art general meaning making it accessible, accessible is different than relevant. And I think one of the things that you've done so well at PAN is not only making people welcome. So there's no threshold barrier to coming inside, both by the brilliant design that HARTZOG and the more debt, but also by what you see on your walls when people come in. So I do think in lives, I think when we get back to talking more generally about the study is especially in today's day, what is relevant to me, you know, in these things that you're trying to do now, what do you do? That really looks at making art relevant and an active part of people's lives. To talk to me a little bit, what you guys specifically do at here.

[00:14:00] So what we've tried to do is take our lead. I think from our founding we were founded in a time not unlike today, that was quite divisive. Our founding director came to Miami from an experience in Europe and an experience in the Midwest with large encyclopedic institutions. Came here in 1980. Mariel boatlift is happening. The officers who killed Arthur McDuffie were acquitted that summer. And this is the environment in which he comes into this is not a safe environment that engender something that is not art for art's sake. But what can art do inside of people's lives? And so we've tried to pick up off this idea that we can be a place where people can come and have difficult conversations, the kind of things that you would not have any other place for. We don't do this in our respective religious places of worship. We don't do this certainly in our stadia. So where can we have these kind of conversations that lead potentially to a better world? And that is in the space of the museum. So what we've tried to do is double down on this. I believe a humanist approach to what a museum can be. Since we only started as a museum in nineteen in the mid 1980s, we don't wish we didn't come with a lot of baggage. We didn't have a collection that defined us. In fact, we had no collection at all, at all. So we had to be dynamic. We had to be relevant, at least in people's lives, so that they would be curious because they were not going to come back and see the Picasso every time we started collecting in the mid 90s. And at that moment, we tried to be reflective of here. And I say that by you know, we have a propensity toward presenting the work of Latin America and the Caribbean, unlike any other place. And yes, because of our geographic location, we got to be the best at doing that. We also look toward the African diaspora in this conversation. So that put us in a unique position, I think, to address what can be relevant in the 2000 mid 2010s and into the twenty twenties is reflecting Miami and making sure that everyone comes into this museum and sees a piece of themselves. So we've just amplified and really doubled down on those goals. We've created a Latin American and Latin next art fund. We've created a we have the ambassadors for the Fund for African-American Art, which began in 2013. So we've tried to really use these positions of specificity to tell a more general story that could be relevant to our immediate community and beyond the lives in the broad study.

[00:17:07] How does this being relevant? How does that factor in to what you saw and what we've learned? But I know that in rereading the study, it was you did take into consideration sort of the geographic locations and what was going on in each city and how these museums were functioning within the environment that they had. I was wondering if you could speak a little to that and then look at this. Really talking about understanding different stages of change and how funders can target their funding to meet that. Because I think that's that's what those across all institutions.

[00:17:49] But I think that's right. And, you know, what's been interesting is if you look at all of the eight in some way, shape or form they were trying to. Either expand their audience, expand the reach of who they were trying to serve, but also their relevance in and I would say the majority of them were really grounded in what was going on in each of their communities in such a way that it wasn't the ivory tower and it wasn't, you know, a large building to which maybe only some were welcome. The whole notion was really trying to open the doors and expand the programming and find different formats and ways of reaching different audiences. I think what was very interesting was we know Knight has made a number of technology grants as part of these investments. And what I think we saw was that people really were using technology in very innovative ways in the New World Symphony, the DEA, the DEA. So all of them were really trying to increase their reach and relevance through the use of technology. Creative uses. So what's been interesting is, as we've experienced this pandemic, is that those folks who I've spoken with and go back to who have who did invest in those initiatives have found that it's been really helpful for them and they've been able to leverage that and turnaround in a very quick way to not only serve their community, but serve an even broader audience than they probably were before. And I can see Franklin's nodding.

[00:19:56] So I must be absolutely what you did a session last night with Blanken right now in the name of your artist, George Clinton. George Clinton. Yes. From Parliament Funkadelic. So how did that last night. Right. That name. Anything.

[00:20:17] It was it was really a treat. And, you know, we have had the good I guess the good silver lining in these in this challenging time is what we've been able to do in the digital sphere. And I can not I cannot imagine having to confront this moment without that ability. And specifically that last rap, which I have to mention, because it's in the report.

[00:20:48] It has allowed us to pivot to meet this challenge in a very broad way. Specifically, it's some you know, we have great programs like our Local Views program, which is all about supporting Miami artists. And how we do that is we normally bring them into the museum. They come in, they do a tour. They talk about their own work in relation to what's going on in the museum's collection or shows. And that's awesome. You have an intimate experience, a walk around about thirty five minutes with an artist on a Thursday evening. You know, we generate probably about 30 people for that. We had 15 times that number last night and have continued to do local views in such a focused way that we turned it into a weekly program rather than as a monthly that it was in the physical space. I just I don't know what will we do, what we would be doing if we were in a position to take some advantage of new technology in the digital sphere at this point in time. And we have been incredibly fortunate in that space. And part of the silver or another part of the silver lining was I had the great fortune to have hired a wonderful director of digital engagement who started on March 30th.

[00:22:15] Good timing. Perfect, perfect timing for that, frankly.

[00:22:20] Another thing that you've I think you guys have done incredibly well and we see that in some of the other state institutions that we're looked at is the focus on education. And how, you know, especially in a world today where there's so little arts education in schools that talk a little bit to the audience about what you're doing to make art really available to kids, both through curriculum visits and how you guys pivoted to doing it online as well.

[00:22:52] Oh, gosh. Me, remind me, one of the things I would love to see is like I would love to walk into the museum, say, for 15 years from now and see all of these little kids, these eight year olds now 15 years later, who have had art as a part of their life for that long. And to see hopefully how that changes the way we all function and see each other. It's been like I say, it's 85 percent of what we do. You know, we have a major program. Thanks tonight. Thanks to our Miami-Dade County public school system and not just public, but private schools. We've been able to bring in hundreds of thousands of children through the museum to have arts based learning. And as you mentioned, Victoria, that has not been the priority within the educational system. So museums have had to pick up that role in people's lives. You know, I always think in this context that, no, we're not teaching people to be artists. We're teaching people to be good human beings. And just to think about how the study of an object or just the conversation around an object can give us different sides of the same conversation or the same thing and leave us open or perhaps more open to new ideas and two different ideas and seeing things from another side. It's like Jasper Johns says, take something, do something to return or do something else to it. And we keep doing that through conversation. And that's the amazing thing. One of the great programs that has come out of the emphasis on education, because, you know that that first real endowment gift that we really ever have is the large 10 million from night. That sets up as an education endowment. And so for us to have that emphasis, emphasis, emphasis is something that brings us to where three years ago we were in a position to start a program like Art Detectives. One of those unique programs, I think, within museum spaces where we have Miami-Dade County police coming into the museum and sitting with kids and talking about art work together, like why do I see this differently from you? And being able to have that space facilitated by our great teaching artists? Has, I think, created it in open minds, in ways that, you know, we just hope that we can replicate and replicate and replicate. So those are a few of the things that we've touched on in the education space specifically. But it's absolutely integral to everything that we do.

[00:25:44] So, Victoria, I wanted to just add a couple of things in case what Franklin's been saying, you know, I think is he's made it abundantly clear that leadership. I've been in an institution is truly important and more so than ever today. And what we found was that in all of the instances and all of the organizations we looked at, it was critical not only on the staff leadership side, but also on the boards and the boards and the staff needed to be aligned about that, where the organization was headed, whether it was change on an incremental basis or transformational change if without that alignment and support on both sides. It just wouldn't have moved as effectively. And the other piece you mentioned, your new leader on the digital technology side. We also found that when we looked at and talked with folks, the infrastructure, the organizational skills, all of that was there had been change there, too. There then. And all of that change was aligned with the strategy and where folks were trying to move towards. So it's really been it's interesting that it's not just a strategy. It's not that the funding is aligned with it. All of these things are necessary. The leadership, the board alignment. All of these things are necessary to actually make the change that folks are looking for. And so increasing the relevance.

[00:27:27] Yeah. And so let's talk about what the study really showed or actually how you all took that information and created a grid, if you will, that looks at the process of change. You know, different moments of change. And then the types of funding that individuals Zauner or foundations like Knight might think about giving that would really best suit what the institution is trying to do as it serves its community.

[00:28:00] You know, we thought about the fact that there was a relationship between what you desire to change and an appropriate time horizon for that change. So you might want

to make something happen simply from an infrastructure perspective or from a planning perspective. But there's long term change and transformational change as well. And those things have very different time horizons. And so what we realized is that the grant, the kind of grant that is made, whether it is a single purpose or a multi year or an endowment grant for that matter, that matters. And simply structuring simply we also realized that simply giving an endowment. Because it's intended to be permanent. It's not always the best solution for an organization that is trying to change. And it might be that a multi-year operating support grant works better.

[00:29:12] So let me let's let me interrupt you, because we've got two questions that relate to this. One from Michelle Scanlon, and she's saying, Did all eight of the institutions embark on new strategic plans? That was, I'm assuming, related to the type of change or just strategic plans in general.

[00:29:32] I think most of them had a strategic plan, but it was not. Some of the change had been happening over a decade. And so there was an original plan that was an original desire to change and a set of strategies put in place and then a refresh. So it wasn't just one strategic plan. And over time, those ideas built momentum. You know, I'm thinking in particular of one that you know well, the New World Symphony. I mean, that's something that is significantly invested in over time.

[00:30:08] But it's part of a long term vision, which is interesting now is they rethink what is a training academy. I mean, in Cauvin 19, when you really can't convene an orchestra, I would conversation was relayed to me the other day that Frank Gehry had had, I think with empty tea, with Frank being really excited with everything that's going on now, because he said you literally can reimagine anything that you want. It's almost like there's no there no limits or bounds to that. Well, you would expect that kind of imagination, Frank Gehry, and you get that all the time. But there's another question here that relates to this as well, says Grant's more impactful if they're made when a project idea is still in its sort of infancy or early stages or when a project has already been pilot tested.

[00:31:06] I think both are useful. Both are incredibly useful to an organization. Sometimes a grant is appropriate when folks want to do some design work and plan for the change. And then there's funding that's really helpful to pilot and test, test and learn. And then along the way, and that's really what's in this. What we outlined at the very end of the study that particularly if you think of change, it doesn't happen overnight. And that as an investor, if you will, you want to think about moments where you can step in with the right kind of money. To help move the change forward. And, you know, I would just emphasize that night was not the only funder of these aid organizations. There were lots of others that participated in or partnering. But I think. Knight's example was very helpful, and I think the work that was done by night to ask about these important milestones or points, if you will, has helped other supporters to come along with to just say, yes, this is where we're focused right now. Linda Franklin, if you experience that.

[00:32:29] Absolutely. You know what? We if I look at the documents and I look at some of the charts and you see the you know, the support from Miami specifically, we are fortunate to be one of the two hometown folks in here. And in a way, and that support, as has been noted, goes all the way back to our founding. Even before that, I believe the first thing was in nineteen eighty three. So the support has been there for a long time and we've been really fortunate in the last couple of years to have also garnered support from other foundations that has been pivotal. And together it has allowed for us to do many of the

good things that we're doing and also puts us and I think a position to be attractive to more investment and more support, which is what is so necessary in this moment.

[00:33:28] We used to kid around that when I was on your side, Franklin, and getting grants from whichever city I was in. It was like the Good Housekeeping seal of approval. You know, all of a sudden you're your stature was elevated and your worth was identified. And just to say to the folks that are listening, this study particularly focused on sort of those larger institutions, night funds, many smaller, growing and mid-sized institutions. But I think it's more about being sure that a foundation can match its funding to the time and place and interests. The entity doing the work that not we are not prescriptive in it. And many foundations aren't. But it's how do we work together to really create and eat and eat. An arts ecosystem that welcomes people makes art available to people. And as we have seen of late. Art is helping us to see ourselves in the other. It is reflecting, you know, this country in really innovative and incredible ways, whether people are integrating technology into the work that they're doing and truly rethinking dance and opera and spoken word and how we connect with poetry, that its technology is an amazing tool that we can use to expand our reach. But I told you guys this would go quickly and it did. We are. We are out of time. And I just really want to say thank you to both Liz and Franklin. I enjoy working with you both. I think this is an important study that we can learn a lot from as we go forward, regardless of which side of this table we sit on. We're all on the other side. Always trying to figure out as we were talking early. What's that magic thing that you can do to grab an interest? And I think this is helpful for that. I really want to thank the Knight crew, our production crew, for working with us today. The beat you heard at the top of the show were designed by created by Chris Bar here at night. And those that are played out will be our winner. Scuse me. Choking on here. We're created by jazz pianist Theran Brown, a phenomenal musician up in Akron. Next week on Discovery, Preus car director of arts. We'll be in conversation with John Jarboe, the amazing founder and artistic director of the Bedard Ladies Cabaret in Philadelphia, talking about how artists and organizations are leveraging their adaptive capacity. And if we know anything today, you have to have adaptive capacity to figure out where you're going and to really be successful in these times. So next week, 1:00 p.m. Eastern Standard. Hope to see you here. Thank you so much for being with us today.

[00:36:22] Thank you, Victor. Bye, guys. Bye.