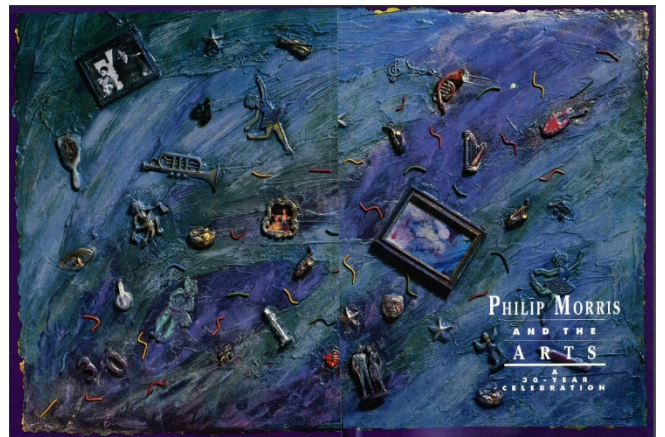


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**University of Alabama Center for the Study of Tobacco and Society releases *Museum Malignancy: Tobacco Industry Sponsorship of The Arts*, the first exhibition about cigarette company-sponsored art exhibitions
<https://csts.ua.edu/museum/>**

Protests this year at New York City's Metropolitan Museum of Art and Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum over their acceptance of donations from the family that owns the company accused of fomenting the prescription opioid crisis has led these and other museums to reject such payments. In contrast, the arts community has remained virtually silent about art museums' solicitation and acceptance of funds from the nation's largest cigarette manufacturer, Philip Morris, throughout the five decades since the publication of the landmark Surgeon General's Report that indicted cigarette smoking as the major preventable cause of lung cancer, emphysema, and heart disease.



The toll taken by prescription opioid addiction is horrific. More than 200,000 deaths from overdoses involving prescription opioids have been reported since the introduction of the prescription opioid OxyContin in 1995 by the Sackler family-owned Purdue Pharma. It is predicted that more than 47,000 prescription opioid deaths will occur in the U.S. in 2019. Yet this is less than one-tenth of the 480,000 U.S. deaths a year from cigarette smoking.

Museum Malignancy: Tobacco Industry Sponsorship of the Arts, an exhibition newly released online at <https://csts.ua.edu/museum/> by the University of Alabama Center for the Study of Tobacco and Society, explores the collaboration between art museums and the maker of the world's top-selling cigarette, Marlboro. It is also the first in-depth look at the ethics of the solicitation and acceptance by art museums of tobacco industry funding since the publication in 2002 of *Privatizing Culture: Corporate Art Intervention Since the 1980s* by Chin-tao Wu.



The payments that Philip Morris has made to nearly 200 art museums in the U.S. over the past sixty years, the most of any corporation, began as a way to burnish a nicotine-stained image and deflect attention away from the growing number of

research studies implicating cigarettes as a leading cause of death and disease.

“The money that the maker of Marlboro cigarettes has given to art museums has paid off by buying their complacency,” notes Alan Blum, MD, the Center’s director and curator of the exhibition. “To put this funding into perspective, the \$12.8 million that Philip Morris handed to art museums and cultural groups in the U.S. at a high point of corporate charitable giving in 2002 represented just .001% [or one one-thousandth of

one per cent] of the nearly \$12 billion in profits from the company's cigarette sales that year. Moreover, donations to art museums are tax deductible, so it didn't cost shareholders a cent.”

The exhibition, designed by the Center's collection manager Kevin Bailey, focuses on three of the nation's most-visited museums, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Whitney Museum of Art, and the taxpayer-supported Smithsonian Institution, each of which continues to solicit and accept sponsorship money from Altria, the parent of Philip Morris. A current exhibit at the Smithsonian National Museum of American History, *More Doctors Smoke Camels*, comprised of several cigarette advertisements from the 1940s and 1950s with a slogan that gave one brand a clean bill of health, does not acknowledge the Smithsonian's ongoing acceptance of money from Philip Morris or the cigarette company's ongoing worldwide marketing of Marlboro.

The University of Alabama Center for the Study of Tobacco and Society, founded by Dr. Blum in 1998, holds the nation's largest collection of original documents related to the tobacco industry, cigarette marketing, and the anti-smoking movement throughout the 20th century to the present. Blum began saving cigarette advertisements, promotional ephemera, and news stories on smoking as a high school student following publication of the Surgeon General's Report on January 11, 1964. Since the 1970s he has attended and photographed more than 200 Philip Morris-sponsored art



exhibitions and cultural events, amassing more than 1500 art exhibition-related items-- catalogues, press packets, brochures, advertisements, newspaper and magazine coverage, and promotional videos--from which this exhibition is drawn.

This is the twelfth tobacco-related exhibition created by Dr. Blum. The first, *When More Doctors Smoked Camels': A Century of Medical Claims in Cigarette Advertising, 1888-1988*, debuted at the Texas Medical Center Library, Houston to coincide with the first National Conference on Tobacco Use in America, held at MD Anderson Cancer Center on January 27, 1989. The Center's recent exhibitions include *Big Tobacco in the Big Apple: How New York City Became the Heart of the Tobacco Industry...and Anti-Smoking Activism* <https://csts.ua.edu/btba/> and *Of Mice and Menthol: The targeting of African Americans by the Tobacco Industry* <https://csts.ua.edu/minorities/>.

Blum wonders whether tobacco sponsorship money for the arts is an even stronger addiction than prescription opioids. "Why else would already wealthy museums need more and more of it?" he asks. "Then again, Philip Morris and the arts have more in common than we may have realized. By selling more Marlboros, Philip Morris can sponsor more art. By sponsoring more art, Philip Morris can buy more complacency. And by buying more complacency, Philip Morris can sell more Marlboros."

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