

## Special Report

## Funding matters: dispatches from our archives

30  
YEARS

First appeared in print

October 1994

In spite of intense scrutiny from Congress, a management shake-up, pressure to isolate its tobacco operations in the US from its other businesses, and concerns about the ethics of marketing a lethal product, Philip Morris Companies remains one of the most important private funders of the arts in the US.

Projects in 1994 include exhibitions of the works of Horace Pippin, Jacob Lawrence and Louise Bourgeois, as well as the *Origins of Impressionism* show this autumn at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. Philip Morris sponsored the exhibition programme and activities for the inaugural year of the American Center in Paris and the year-long festival of Korea that toured the US.

Any doubts about the extent of that sponsorship are put to rest by a glossy 135-page volume celebrating Philip Morris's largesse over the past 35 years and listing the many awards the firm has been given. The report did not include figures specifying the amount that the company had paid out. Those sums are not public, but in an interview last year, Stephanie French, Philip Morris's vice-president for corporate contributions and cultural affairs, pointed out that the firm's policy has been to devote some 1% of its pre-tax profits to philanthropy. In recent years, that has amounted to some \$15m annually.

The cultural and political range of those contributions is broad. While the firm sponsors car and motorboat races for one tier of its market, it also targets innovative arts projects for funding. It is the sole funder of a midtown Manhattan branch of the Whitney Museum of American Art. In recent years, the company has paid special attention to Black and Latino artists (Lawrence, Pippin, Frida Kahlo, and many others). Researchers call this strategy target-marketing, and point out that Black Americans smoke

in disproportionately high numbers and suffer disproportionately high rates of tobacco-induced cancers.

That philanthropic division is part of Philip Morris's advertising and marketing arm, but French insists that the firm isn't funding the arts to sell products. Critics argue, however, that the company is buying legitimacy with that support, a legitimacy it needs desperately given the overwhelming evidence linking its most profitable product, cigarettes, with lung cancer, heart disease and other ailments.

Lawrence White, a lawyer who has written extensively about the tobacco business, calls Philip Morris's philanthropy "image enhancement" or "innocence by association".

"People don't believe the cigarette companies, and so ordinary advertising is not really good enough for the tobacco industry," White says. "They have to find lots of other ways to build their credibility. Every time they have their money accepted by an arts institution or university, a certain amount of that institution's credibility goes to them".

Over the years that it has been supporting the arts – the first Philip Morris-funded exhibition was the 1965 *Pop and Op* show at New York's Museum of Modern Art – the firm has noticed no reluctance among arts organisations to accept its money. In fact, each year the firm has to turn away dozens of organisations that are lining up for funds. In

times of recession, those lines inevitably get longer.

According to White, any scarcity of funds for the arts works to Philip Morris's advantage. Heads of arts organisations in the US, White says, "have the same sentiments as most other people in this country, which is basically anti-tobacco. And they would rather get funding from somebody else, but they can't". For example, when the National Archives of the US approached 50 corporations for a campaign to restore and tour the original Bill of Rights of the US Constitution, only Philip Morris agreed to fund the project. Not coincidentally, an implicit message in the firm's advertising is that smoking, like freedom of



Grim message: protesters outside Philip Morris's headquarters in New York in 2001

## The smoking dilemma: will Philip Morris's art support outlive its critics?

The tobacco giant remains one of the most important private funders of the arts in the US. **By David D'Arcy**

### 2020 vision

// Alan Blum, director, University of Alabama Center for the Study of Tobacco and Society

Philip Morris's funding of the arts was fashioned as a marketing strategy aimed at opinion-leaders, no less than the company's cowboy icon ad campaign for Marlboro was aimed at consumers. The cost was pennies on the dollar compared to conventional cigarette advertising. When Philip Morris's successor company Altria moved its headquarters from New York—America's arts capital—to Richmond, Virginia in 2008, its support of the arts dropped precipitously. Today, its most visible cultural sponsorships mainly include the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts and the Smithsonian Institution. But because art museums and other cultural institutions are reeling from long-term closures during the pandemic, I anticipate that Altria will be only too pleased to revive and expand its identity as a major supporter of the arts. The timing is also propitious for the company as it tries to burnish its image by promoting "non-combustible alternatives" such as e-cigarettes.

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## The Tate should take BP's money—and ask for more

Protests about lack of transparency over the company's sponsorship miss the point of how big business and the arts interact. **By Tiffany Jenkins**

First appeared in print

February 2015

Last September, the art collective Liberate Tate filed into the Turbine Hall of Tate Modern, flung open a 64m square of black cloth, and held it aloft for a performance intended as a reinterpretation of Kazimir Malevich's *Black Square*. This political protest made reference to the Tate's decision to redact information in minutes from an internal meeting about its sponsorship deal with BP, which the gallery is being asked to disclose after legal action brought by the group.

The protest accompanies a three-year legal battle to compel the Tate to reveal details of its dealings with BP. In December, a tribunal ruled that Tate must divulge sponsorship figures dating from 1990 to 2006; but also that it did not have to publish as much of the minutes as stated in one of the decision notices. In other words, some of the black squares



Activists used black paint to protest against BP's sponsorship of the Tate

might stay. The Tate was considering whether to appeal as we went to press.

The case began in 2012 when the environmental campaigner Glen Tarman, supported by Liberate Tate, subjected the Tate to FoI requests to reveal the total sponsorship the gallery had received from BP; minutes from ethics committee meetings where the renewal of the sponsorship agreement had been discussed; and any requests BP may have made for confidentiality. London's National Portrait Gallery, National Gallery and the Natural History Museum received

similar requests and complied. But the Tate dragged its heels, citing various legal exemptions, withholding the figures and blacking out parts of the documents.

The campaigners aim to end arts funding by oil companies. Such sponsorship benefits the corporations, providing them with a veneer of respectability, while they are busy trashing the planet, activists argue; it is "greenwashing". But cutting such funds is an alarming aim – one that ignores the realities of funding and poses a danger to the arts.

Art thrives on the money of the rich, the immoral and the powerful. The Medici family was partly responsible for the flourishing of Renaissance Florence. Without their money and that of their enemies the works of Michelangelo, Fra Angelico and Leonardo might never have been created. The Guggenheims became philanthropists after running mining interests that would, conceivably, today be considered criminal. Yet the Guggenheim museums benefit every visitor.

That is not to suggest that every museum is funded by "dirty" money, more that it is difficult to identify money

### 2020 vision

// Ben Luke, Review editor

Ethical concerns about sponsors have grown exponentially in Britain. Much has changed, yet much remains the same. Campaigners have had big wins: the Sackler saga has seen one of the biggest donor dynasties brought to its knees by the artist Nan Goldin, who highlighted some members of the family's links to the US opiate crisis. The Tate ended BP sponsorship in 2016 as did the National Galleries of Scotland in 2019. Yet BP maintains a huge presence at the British Museum. Before the pandemic, the screw was tightening. The arguments for continuing with fossil-fuel support—But the Medicis! But everyone uses oil!—looked evasive and flimsy. However post-coronavirus economic conditions will bolster the "take the money and ask for more" argument; activists will have an even tougher fight on their hands.

that is good and clean and money that is not. BP is a legitimate company and we all use oil. And art needs lots of money, regardless of whether it's from the Holy See, Big Oil or the state. If it is from a legal corporation, the arts should take it, especially in this economic climate.

This is not simply about pocketing the cash and running. The demand made was that the Tate should reveal all details about a sponsorship deal from internal meetings. Lawyers argued that museums should be exempt from revealing the funds because it was information

provided in confidence and could be prejudicial to commercial interests. They argued that withholding information from the minutes was supportable because disclosure would inhibit provision of free and frank advice, and that it could be a threat to public safety. Most of these arguments are sensible; the final one is questionable.

There are good reasons why the Tate should not have to reveal every penny: sponsorship deals are commercial. As all fundraisers know, you ask for more than you get and this requires a certain degree of smoke and mirrors. It is conceivable that the Tate does not want to reveal the amount because it is not as much as other sponsors think. This is what campaigners believe. Liberate Tate estimated that the Tate receives from BP about £500,000 a year—0.3% of Tate's overall operating budget—and that oil money is not as essential as is suggested. But does it? After all, every penny counts. The museum should take the money and ask for more.

There is no doubt that funders want something for their money and it is crucial that they do not interfere in curatorial decisions. It is therefore sensible to draw on a mix of sources—public and private—so as not to become overly dependent on any one. But museums should accept all cheques—large or small. Let the sponsors have their logos brandished about and have their parties in the museums' galleries; and by all means flatter their egos and be effusive in thanking them: they deserve it.

• The writer is the author of *Contesting Human Remains* in Museum Collections  
• This article has been edited for length



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speech or religion, is an activity safeguarded by the spirit of the constitution. Philip Morris's funding of *The Greek Miracle*, an exhibition of objects on loan from Greece which opened in 1992 at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC, another Philip Morris grant recipient, suggested that the freedom to smoke had its roots in Athenian democracy.

For now, arts groups concerned about the health risks of tobacco seem to be holding their noses silently as they accept the donations. This response differs noticeably from the shrill call for accountability in society at large that one hears at the many museum exhibitions devoted to Aids. Some of those shows on Aids-related themes have been supported by Philip Morris, which gave more than \$2m to Aids research three years ago in response to pressure from Aids activists.

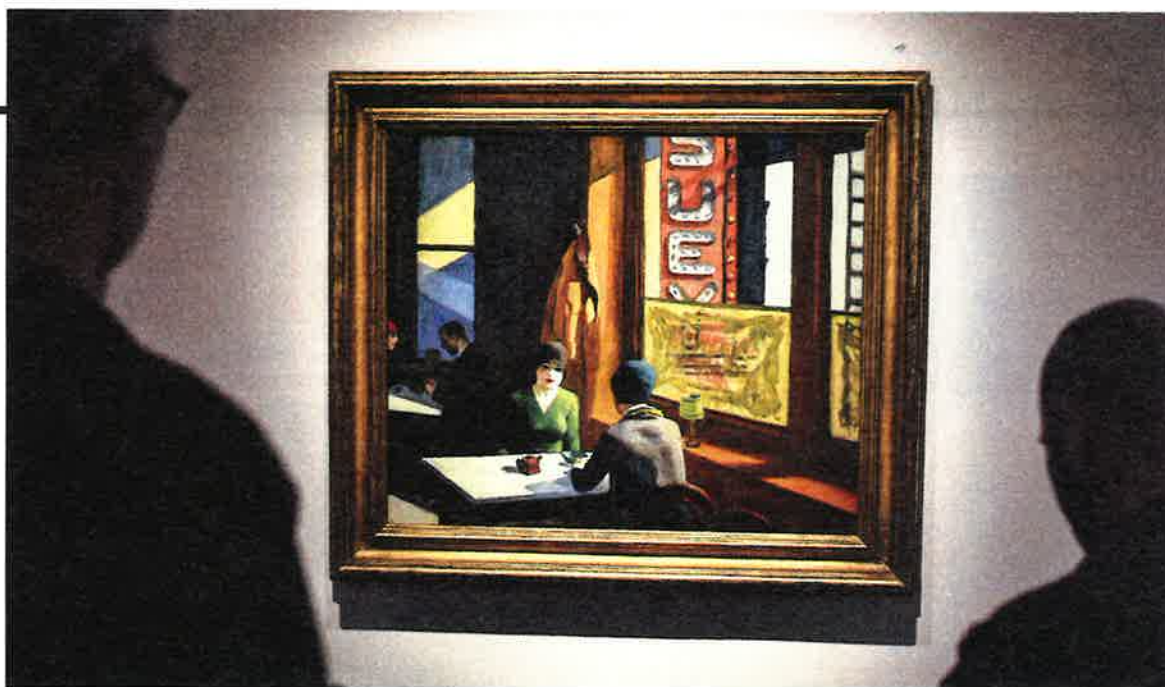
The firm's funding of the arts has grown so important, Stephanie French maintained in one interview, that "we feel a tremendous responsibility. We have been integral to the field, I think." So integral, some argue, that the firm's funding in certain areas may be more dependable than public monies, which have been slashed almost everywhere in America over the past three years.

Several new anti-tobacco initiatives may test Philip Morris's commitment. This year, Infact, a Boston group which monitors corporate activities, has called for an international boycott of Philip Morris products. It launched its campaign to oppose the firm's promotion of tobacco to the youth market, according to its director, Elaine Lamy, who characterises Philip Morris's arts sponsorship as an effort to buy "goodwill". An executive at the firm dismissed the boycott as the work of a small activist group.

But in the US, at least, goodwill toward tobacco firms may be in decreasing supply. In hearings before Congress last spring, tobacco executives testified that they did not believe cigarettes were addictive, and then fidgeted in their seats when presented with evidence from their own laboratories which indicated just the opposite.

Another annoying development for Philip Morris and other tobacco firms is the publication of *Thank You for Smoking*, a satirical novel by Christopher Buckley, whose hero, a cynical tobacco lobbyist, endows charitable organisations to distract attention from the health risk of smoking. The book has been a huge success, and the likelihood of its next incarnation as a film may be keeping tobacco executives up at night.

• This article has been edited for length



Hopper's *Chop Suey* was a highlight of the 1,000 works given to the museum

\$400m. The Seattle campaign rivals or surpasses all of these gifts.

## Trustees lead the way

When first considering ways to mark the anniversary, the SAM board considered a less ambitious undertaking. "We were thinking how busy everyone was with the expansion campaign, so we thought about trying to encourage the donation of a mere 75 new works for the anniversary," recalls Chiyo Ishikawa, the museum's deputy director for art. "We quickly abandoned that and decided that to do something piecemeal would be a mistake."

"Dallas was very much a model for what we're doing," says museum president Susan Brotman, noting that the board invited Dallas Museum director Jack Lane to give "a pep talk to spur things on". But the vision and inspiration for the Seattle campaign came first from trustee Virginia Wright. "We were encouraged by Virginia to think of ourselves as a community of collectors and to think of our individual collecting in relation to what others were collecting, and with an eye toward giving things to the museum," Brotman says.

But the windfall would not have occurred without the building expansion, she adds. "Many people said if the museum had space they would like their collection to go there." Brotman says.

## More space for gifts

The museum's new galleries are in a 16-storey glass-and-steel tower built in an unusual joint venture with Washington Mutual Bank (whose headquarters is next door) which owns the top four storeys and rents another eight from the museum. SAM has raised \$200m to pay for the galleries, sculpture park and related costs, but fundraising needs will increase with the new building; Gates says the annual budget will grow from \$17m to around \$22m.

The first four floors of the new tower connect on three levels with SAM's existing building. The new spaces are dedicated to Modern and contemporary art, beginning in the lobby with Cai Guo-Qiang's installation of nine suspended automobiles, and continuing upstairs in a gallery that features a giant black rat by Katarina Fritsch.

The museum's new Olympic Sculpture Park has attracted more than 200,000 visitors in its first three months. The sculptures donated for the anniversary include Richard Serra's five-part steel piece *Wake* and a "vivarium" designed by Mark Dion. A Claes Oldenburg type-writer eraser – on loan from Microsoft billionaire Paul Allen – is positioned as if it is rolling down a hill. Neither Allen nor his fellow Microsoft billionaire Bill Gates have donated works to the campaign, but the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has given \$25m.

• This article has been edited for length

## \$1bn donations put Seattle on the map

The gift to the Seattle Art Museum from 53 collectors is one of the largest in the history of institutional donations. **By Jason Edward Kaufman**

First appeared in print

May 2007

**T**he Seattle Art Museum (SAM) has received more than 1,000 works from 53 donors as part of an acquisition campaign to mark its 75th anniversary in 2008. The donations are one of the largest gifts to a museum in the history of US philanthropy.

They have come from the region's top private collections, including those of 23 museum trustees such as Virginia and Bagley Wright, Jon and Mary Shirley, Barney A. Ebsworth and Susan and Jeffrey Brotman – all of which focus primarily on Modern and contemporary American and European art.

Marc Porter, the president of Christie's Americas, says the gifts are "certainly worth more than \$1bn. This is an incredibly devoted group of collectors who have been assembling the finest works in their fields for decades. They are collections you simply can't put together anymore."

Highlights include a brass version of Brancusi's *Bird in Space* (1926), Edward Hopper's *Chop Suey* (1929), a German-period Marsden Hartley, 1914-15, and works by virtually all the major Abstract Expressionists and post-war American artists. There is also a broad range of international contemporary artists and photographers.

There are several works by Franz

Kline, David Smith, Mark Rothko, Philip Guston, Willem de Kooning, Sigmar Polke, Gerhard Richter, Anselm Kiefer and Ed Ruscha, among many others.

In addition, there are paintings by Bartolomé Esteban Murillo and Balthasar van der Ast, John Singleton Copley, John Singer Sargent, and groups of modern Japanese, Native American, African, and Aboriginal Australian works.

The donations have been announced as the museum prepares to open a suite of galleries in a new building by Brad Cloepfil of the firm Allied Works just three months after opening its waterfront Olympic Sculpture Park.

"We built the Sculpture Park and the expansion to catch the local collections and make sure they stay in town," explains director Mimi Gardner Gates, who is Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates's stepmother. "Suddenly the Seattle Art Museum is a major art institution," she says. "It's no longer space-constrained, circulation is easier, and we have received these major gifts."

The gifts have their precedents. The Annenberg collection of Impressionist and Modern art bequeathed to the Metropolitan Museum in New York in 2002 was valued at around \$1bn, and Paul Mellon's gifts to the Yale Centre for British Art in New Haven in the 1980s have since been valued in that range.

Successful acquisitions campaigns by US museums include the National Gallery of Art's 50th anniversary drive in 1991. Led by J. Carter Brown, the initiative led to the donation of more than 2,000 works with a cumulative value,

## 2020 vision

// Nancy Kenney, Senior editor, museums and heritage

Not all of the gifts promised to the Seattle Art Museum materialised. Most notably, after Barney A. Ebsworth's death in 2018, his family chose to sell Edward Hopper's *Chop Suey* at Christie's rather than give it to the museum: the iconic painting brought \$91.8m including fees, shattering the previous auction record for the artist. And despite the munificence of the \$1bn-plus in art gifts, the museum has since had its hiccups, like a budget shortfall after the loss of a bank tenant in 2011. Currently, of course, the institution is closed because of the pandemic, but it has been able to preserve its 271 staff jobs through June by cutting executive pay and securing a \$2.8m loan via the federal Payroll Protection Program.

although not officially appraised, in the hundreds of millions of dollars.

In 2002, the trustees of the Whitney Museum gave dozens of valuable Modern American works, most of them from chairman Leonard Lauder. And more recently, three couples have promised the Dallas Museum of Art their entire collections of Modern and contemporary art, including future acquisitions. The museum valued the gift at around

## Step by step

The Dulwich Picture Gallery organises sponsored walk to meet £100,000 shortfall in annual budget. **By Elspeth Moncrieff**

First appeared in print

March 2003

The Dulwich Picture Gallery, in south London, is facing a deficit in its annual budget due to falling stock market revenues from its endowment fund. Its director, Desmond Shawe-Taylor, says, "We cannot afford so much as a small deficit, even for one year; we have no intention of raising entrance fees or compromising the quality of our conservation, education or exhibitions programme so the answer is a sponsored walk". He will be sporting Clarkes walking shoes

and filling his pockets with his favourite Kendal mint cake.

Shawe-Taylor, the museum's chairman, Wilf Weeks, and the chairman of the Friends, Barbara Richardson, will walk the 150 miles David Garrick and Dr Johnson walked in 1737 when they set off from their hometown of Lichfield to make their names in London. They start at Johnson's birthplace museum in Lichfield and end at Johnson's House in the City, just off Fleet Street.

Friends of the museum, (including our own hearty editor, Anna Somers Cocks) and Dulwich staff will join the trio for the last ten miles into the City on 23 March meeting at the gallery at 10am.

Like the Dulwich Picture Gallery

team, Garrick and Johnson were forced to walk to London because they needed money. The two were firm friends before either of them became famous. Although poor, they took a horse with them to carry their belongings, something the latter-day trio will not be doing. Nor will these follow the same route, but they will walk along the Canal side paths to London, avoiding the busy roads. "We have plenty of time for long-term planning on the way and how to avoid a deficit in the future", comments the director.

The gallery has an annual operating budget of £1.5m and at the very worst will face a deficit of £70,000 to 100,000 this year. It receives no public funding

except that the Borough of Southwark pays the salary of its education officer. Entrance fees are an important source of revenue and the gallery has been hit by competition now that access is free to all national museums and galleries.

The Lichfield walkers aim to raise £75,000 with a further £25,000 being raised by the mass walk on the Sunday. "All *The Art Newspaper* readers are truly welcome on the Sunday walk," Shawe-Taylor says. "We are expecting 200 people and it will be an architectural ramble, taking in as many interesting Georgian buildings as possible". The walkers will return to the gallery, via London Bridge station for free Elastoplast and a celebratory tea.