

Functional Labyrinth, 2015. Museum of Fine Arts, Montreal, Canada.

OUTWARDLY FOCUSED INFRASTRUCTURE

COMMUNITY-CENTERED GOVERNANCE THROUGH RESPONSIVE RESPONSIBILITY

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OHIO MUSEUMS ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE, MARCH 27, 2023

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Illumine Creative Solutions, LLC

- Studied Medieval & Renaissance Collegium and Anthropology
- CWRU Weatherhead School of Management
- 25+ years in GLAM, arts, and cultural heritage
- President of Ohio Museums Association +15 years on the statewide board
- Interim Development Director at Art Therapy Studio



Dunham Tavern Museum





WHAT WE'RE STRIVING FOR TODAY

Goals:

1. Prepare you to evaluate your museum's essential documents to ensure the organization serves the needs of your community and staff and instills confidence among constituents.
2. Learn how to craft policies and strategies that embrace change, build trust, and forge relationships to move your institution forward.

Outcomes:

1. This group will embrace the concept that museums are not neutral, no matter their size or circumstances.
2. We will discuss ways to engage constituents and increase external focus during internal planning
3. You will leave ready to:
 - evaluate existing guiding documents, policies, and plans
 - identify opportunities for change
 - craft museum policies that confront contemporary local and global issues

AAM JUST RELEASED 3/16/2023:

WHAT MUSEUMS LEARNED LEADING THROUGH CRISIS



Peace on the Hilltop is a mural painted by Columbus, Ohio-based artist Shelbi Toone. It was commissioned by the Columbus Metropolitan Library during the pandemic for the revitalization of its Hilltop Branch. Recognizing that libraries are essential community assets that reflect the unique characteristics of the neighborhoods they serve, the city selected Toone for her work including murals and art panels that are grassroots and community-based.

Over the past several years, museums have faced widespread and systemic challenges that have fundamentally changed the way our institutions serve their communities.

We're pleased to share the release of **Reopenings: What Museums Learned Leading through Crisis**, a special series of in-depth reports with case studies and multimedia examining some of the long-term lessons, mindsets, and practices museums have learned and adopted from their handling of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Explore the series' first report, titled [Reboot](#), and its accompanying case studies, to discover how museums accelerated their digital transformation over the past several years and the lessons they will carry forward into our hybrid future.

Part two, titled [Reflection](#), examines those museums who used the pandemic crisis as an opportunity to work with their communities to become institutions that have social impact.

The third and final report, titled [Responsibility](#), highlights those museums whose embrace of human-centered leadership practices during the pandemic offer a new way for museums to manage their most valuable asset: their people.

– American Alliance of Museums

Special thanks to the [National Endowment for the Humanities](#) for its support of this project through its Sustaining Humanities through the American Rescue Plan (SHARP) program.



NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT
FOR THE
HUMANITIES

When proposing this session, I asked...

Now, we have an industry-wide mandate.



This created an opportunity for reflection, a “pandemic pause” if you will, to ask:

What do museums exist for?

Whom do museums exist for?

Museums have long been powerful spaces for exploring knowledge and finding inspiration, but these purposes alone may not make them essential in society. Our communities are looking for tangible solutions to real problems, and museums can contribute to those solutions by changing how they think about their work. They can use their considerable resources, and the functions they excel at, to aid social goods like physical and mental health, economic equity, and inclusive attitudes.

~~This report is designed to help museums make these shifts in their culture and practice and find ways to create measurable impact with and within their communities.~~

session



AUDIENCE = ~~MUSEUM~~ COMMUNITY

IT'S TIME TO VIEW CORE DOCUMENTS
THROUGH A NEW LENS AND REFOCUS

WHY LOOK OUTSIDE FOR INTERNAL POLICIES ?

Authenticity requires that if we make public statements in support of contemporary issues in our local and global communities, our core documents, guiding principles, institutional plans, and workplace standards must be explicitly aligned.

Challenges may come from:

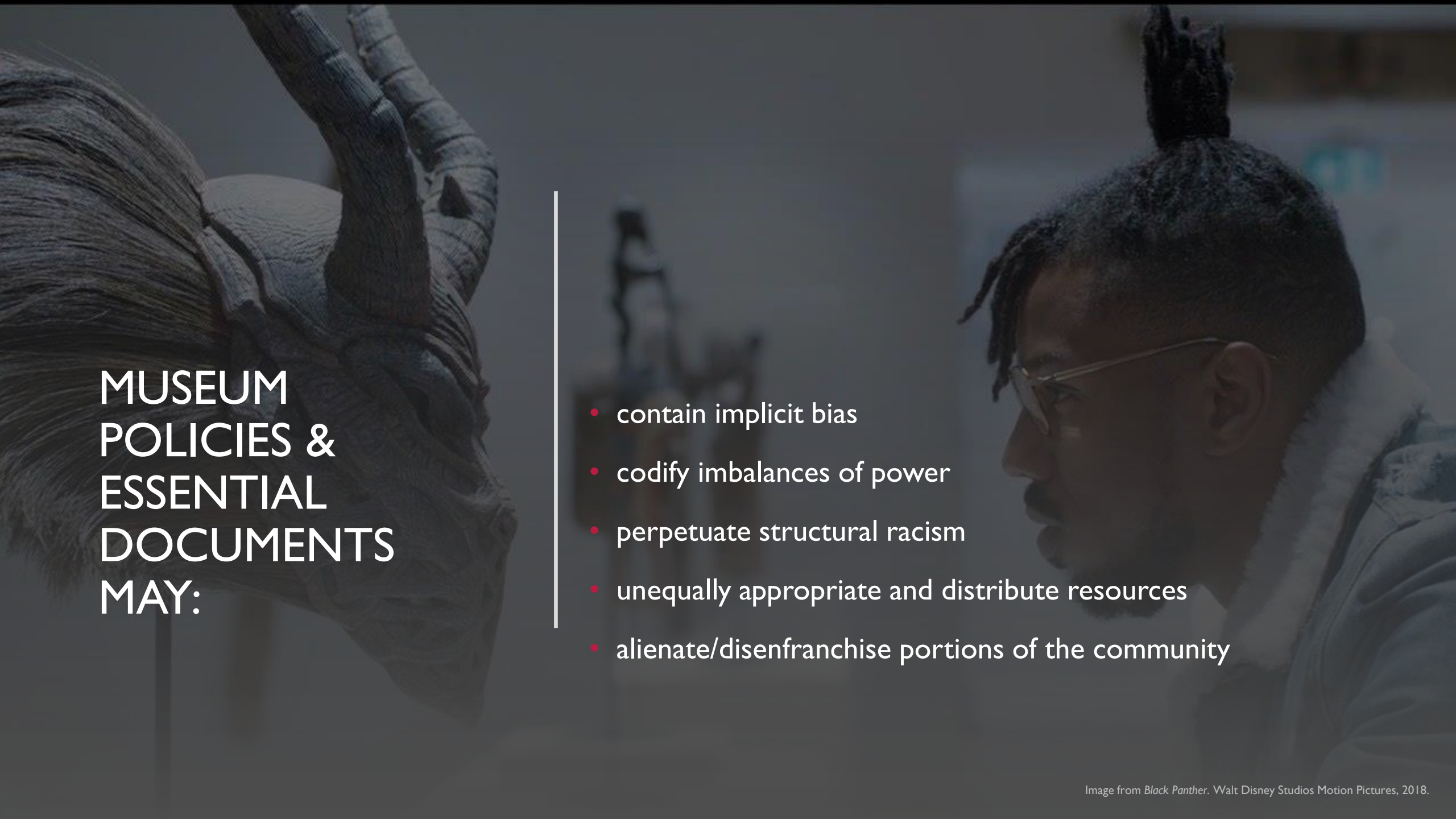
- Board Members
- Donors
- Staff

Support may come from:

- Foundations & institutional funders
- Community partners
- Staff from outside our industry



**MUSEUMS
ARE NOT
NEUTRAL**



MUSEUM POLICIES & ESSENTIAL DOCUMENTS MAY:

- contain implicit bias
- codify imbalances of power
- perpetuate structural racism
- unequally appropriate and distribute resources
- alienate/disenfranchise portions of the community

This work will be **HARD**.

The museum community must:

1. Embrace change.
2. Humbly and genuinely **listen** to the community, accepting **input** and **criticism**
 - Accept that we are not the experts on everyone else's artwork and culture
3. Be accountable and **make amends** where harm was done
4. Be **patient**, earn **trust**, and then build lasting relationships and **equitable** partnerships
5. Understand this is a **necessary** process to **authentically commit** to remaining relevant
6. When possible, remove jargon and impenetrable language

CORE DOCUMENTS

Mission + Vision statements:

- Are they about what's inside your museum or your museum's role in its community?

Strategic Plan:

- Does it reinforce or challenge the status quo?
- Who was at the planning table?
- Who isn't invited to be a decision-maker?

Ethics Policy:

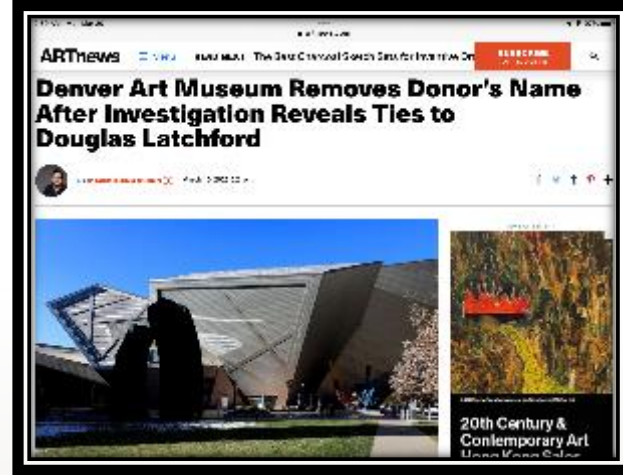
- Examine for implicit bias
- Apply a social justice lens

Exhibitions Plan/Policy

- Outline a balance of community-centered, if not community-curated, exhibits and programs
- Require ethical funding sources
 - Who are the donors/sponsors?
 - Be prepared to respond
- Define guest curator protections
- Address structures favoring White voices and perpetuating cultural appropriation

The Repatriation Project

**America's Biggest
Museums Fail to Return
Native American Human
Remains**



COLLECTIONS POLICY

- Accessions must be aligned to reflect community demographics
- Activate deaccession process to support accession goals — [See Walker Art Center sale at Sotheby's](#)
- Review provenance from donations and acquisitions
- Prioritize repatriation for any NAGPRA artifacts as well as undocumented or loosely attributed cultural material
 - undertake cultural collection reinterpretation **only** with representation



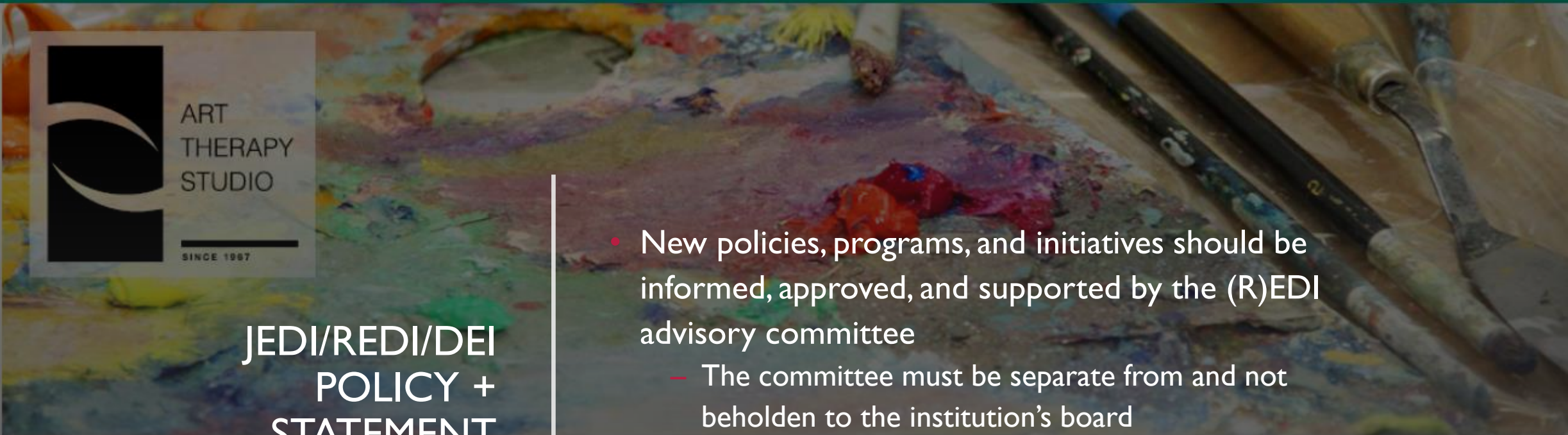
ANNUAL BUDGET

- What priorities can be read in or between the lines?
- How are limited resources allocated to the initiatives outlined in your institutional plans and core documents?
- How's your Triple Bottom Line?
 - ✓ People
 - ✓ Planet
 - ✓ Prosperity
- [Equitable Budgets for Nonprofits](#) from the [Nonprofit Finance Fund](#)

POSITION DESCRIPTIONS & JOB POSTINGS

- Evaluate for actual experience and education required removing arbitrary barriers to diversity
- Are hiring requirements limiting the pool to highly educated whites?
- Share with DEI Committee for feedback and editing
- AAM's Tip Sheet: [Designing an Equitable Recruiting Process](#)





JEDI/REDI/DEI POLICY + STATEMENT

- New policies, programs, and initiatives should be informed, approved, and supported by the (R)EDI advisory committee
 - The committee must be separate from and not beholden to the institution’s board

Art Therapy Studio Is Committed To Racial Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

Art is a universal phenomenon and holds the power to heal us mentally and physically. Art Therapy Studio is dedicated to bringing the healing power of art to our entire community regardless of culture, race, ethnicity, socio-economic class, gender identity, sexual orientation, mental health diagnosis, and disability. We are committed to providing art therapy to historically marginalized and underrepresented populations and elevating art therapists from historically marginalized and underrepresented populations.

Art Therapy Studio is committed to racial equity and inclusion in our programming, staff, and board while adhering to our mission and core values of creativity, quality of care, empowerment, inclusiveness, collaboration, and accountability.

- The committee is drawn from where and represents which (diverse) constituencies?
- Policy should protect staff members, visitors, stakeholders, and community partners



CLOSING THOUGHTS

- Change is the only constant.
Museums remain intractable at their own risk.
- If core documents define our museums and our work, are these not also relevant to our communities?
Should they not be community-responsive?
- Which tenets of our profession are most essential, *most relevant, NOW?*
- Are there policy standards we hold onto because, *"We've always done it that way" ?*
- *How long before we respond* to external pressure on our institutions with substantive change?

QUESTIONS?



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