

# Inverting western business models: Why museum practices are key to a new management paradigm

Theresa McNICHOL

## **Abstract**

Museums have long been maligned by the private sector for inefficient business practices. In response, museums have adopted corporate strategies and measures of success. Meanwhile, however, economists and business school academics have begun to worry that orthodox Western management theories, in their drive to quantify success, have overlooked the unquantifiable value of sustainable corporations: Tideman estimates 80% of a company's worth is "intangible" --brands, good will, and human capital.

This paper proposes an inversion of common management wisdom. It argues that, as a new paradigm for creating "knowledge economy" organizations, the museum model of stewardship and innovation has much to teach corporations about long-term survival. Museum leaders have been adept at harnessing internal creativity and inspiring supporters. Their humanities backgrounds have prepared museum leaders to deal with the "phenomenon of organized complexity" (Ghoshal) by recognizing emerging patterns.

As a metaphor of the need to re-think our assumptions, I use a masterpiece by a 13th century Chinese scholar-bureaucrat Chao Meng-fu (Taipei Museum collection). His inversion of classic landscape forms symbolized the strength of traditional Confucian values in a time of social crisis. Today it reminds us that the sustainability of nonprofits and corporations alike may depend on the humanistic values represented by museums.

*Keywords: Metaphor, inversion, organized complexity, humanism, stewardship*

## **Introduction**

This paper proposes an inversion of common management wisdom. It argues that, as a new paradigm for creating “knowledge economy” organizations, the museum model of stewardship and innovation has much to teach corporations about long-term survival. Museum leaders have been adept at harnessing internal creativity and inspiring supporters. Their humanities backgrounds have prepared museum leaders to deal with the “phenomenon of organized complexity.” (Ghoshal, 2005, p. 81)

At the beginning of this century, the nonprofit social sector in the United States was very large, well-developed and diverse. It was also becoming adept in commercial nonprofit enterprises. In addition to museums and universities, this sector also grew to include institutions such as churches, synagogues, health centers and hospitals. In the past two decades, with the increased focus on “backward” business practices, the nonprofit world, including museums, has undergone a “fundamental process of re-engineering related to strategic planning, marketing, performance measurement, organizational restructuring, partnerships and professionalization.” (Salamon, 2003, p.3)

In the past, the soon-to-retire museum director mentored a curator to prepare him or her to eventually assume leadership of the museum. These days, however, with the increased presence of corporate executives on nonprofit boards, curators are being overlooked as individuals with MBA's or backgrounds in finance are recruited to meet the complexity of operating today's museum. This trend continues despite corporate scandals and the demise of Enron, Tyco, Arthur Andersen and Worldcom-and is reflected in Jim Collin's findings in *Good to Great*, that of all the persistently good companies he studied; only one was led by an MBA- CEO. (Lancaster, 2002) Likewise, the proliferation of business models continues

to seep into the nonprofit sector. Robert Birnbaum, author of several books on higher education management, writes of these business models or “management fads as the “widespread, zealous and short-lived application of techniques or practices in colleges and universities imported from government or the private sector often after being abandoned by both. (Birnbaum, 2000, p. 55) Ranging from Program Budgeting (PPBS) and Management by Objectives (MBO) in the 1960's to Total Quality Management (TQM) and Business Process Reengineering (BPR) in the 1990's, these models, according to Birnbaum, were all promoted as a solution to higher education's problems. They turned out instead to be short-lived fads with significant costs and few benefits.

Meanwhile, however, economists and business school academics have begun to worry about the orthodox Western management theories that they are teaching and promoting. In his article, “Towards a New Paradigm in Economics and Development,” Sander G. Tideman (2005) lists mainstream economists who are now criticizing their own orthodoxies and are instead searching for alternatives to the prevailing model of capitalism, which they see as lacking in indicators for corporate social responsibility, corporate citizenship, sustainability and business ethics. (p. 1)

In their drive to quantify success, those who promote Western business models for the most part have overlooked the unquantifiable value of sustainable corporations. Tideman estimates that 80% of a company's worth is “intangible” and encompasses such “unmeasurables” as brands, good will, and human capital. (p. 4)

Similarly, in 1994, the Americans for the Arts mounted a nationwide economic impact study designed to demonstrate to funders that jobs and tax revenues are valid returns on the arts. In 2004, however, after examining

copious economic and educational studies required for arts funding, Rand Corporation researchers reported that the numbers don't make a persuasive case after all. Instead they recommended that arts advocates emphasize intrinsic benefits that make people cherish the arts-such intangibles as enchantment, enlightenment and community-building. (Boehm, 2005, p. E7)

The Rand findings align with that of the late American museum authority, Stephen Weil, who long cautioned museums that applying indicators for success focusing not on ends but on means-such as the size of their endowments, charitable intent, public programming and mainly their management strategy-would ultimately divert museums from fulfillment of their missions. In a similar vein, business academics are speaking out against their own business school programs. In his article, "Bad Management Theories Are Destroying Good Management Practices," Sumantra Ghoshal (2005) of the London Business School calls for reversing the trend that has marginalized the pluralistic approaches to scholarship in business schools, which he views as having become restricted to one type of inquiry such as (discovery). Ghoshal would instead prefer to see the scholarship of integration (synthesis), practice (application), and teaching (pedagogy) pulled back into the mainstream. (p. 82)

Moreover, recent findings in neuroscience-a loose federation of cognitive science, neurobiology and psychology-are contradicting the West's deeply held notion of the split between the brain and the emotions. These findings show that the mind is after all embodied, that thought is mostly unconscious, and that abstract thoughts are largely metaphorical. As linguist and cognitive scientist George Lakoff explains "For two millennia [in the West] we have been progressively devaluing human life by underestimating the value of human bodies."

Lakoff counsels that reconsidering central parts of Western philosophy will require reassessing the logic of our approach to systems thinking. (Brockman, 1999, pp. 1-3)

### **The painting as metaphor**

As a metaphor of the need to re-think our assumptions, I use a masterpiece titled "Autumn Colors on the Ch'iao and Hua Mountains (1295)," (Taipei Museum collection ([http://www.npm.gov.tw/en/collection/selections\\_02.htm?catno=15&docno=62&pageno=2&fp=true](http://www.npm.gov.tw/en/collection/selections_02.htm?catno=15&docno=62&pageno=2&fp=true))) by the 13th century Chinese scholar official Chao Meng-fu. (Scholar official in this context will refer to learned individuals educated in the Confucian tradition and groomed to serve at court). I use this particular painting because I see the inversion of the mountains and river by the painters as a metaphor for the kind of humanistic re-arranging of management assumptions that the corporate world needs and how museums can contribute to that new paradigm.

According to Lakoff, (2003) metaphor is a fundamental mechanism of mind, one that allows us to use what we know about our physical and social experience to provide understanding of countless other subjects. Because such metaphors structure our most basic understandings of our experience, they are "metaphors we live by," metaphors that can shape our perceptions and actions without our ever noticing them. In other words, through metaphor, our minds allow us to carry information from one sense domain to another. Therefore, I will be referring to this particular painting as a concrete object whose history, composition and multiple layers of meaning allow me to illustrate more abstract and aesthetic concepts. Sherman Lee, former director of the Cleveland Museum of Art, once remarked in reference to the uniqueness of the museum when it came to business practices that align practice more with art, that:

*...a museum should not be run inefficiently. But you must realize that there is hardly any decision that is not, one twice or three times removed-an aesthetic decision...A museum is not in business to be efficient. It is in business to be the best possible museum it can be.* (McQuade, 1977, pp. 368-9)

Looking at the painting will help to uncover and bring to the surface the layers of meaning and sense-making that museum professionals try to balance and reconcile on a daily basis. This balancing act reflects what Ghoshal would refer to as the “phenomena of organized complexity.”

### **The painting: First impression**

Based on a real scene, the painting shows a Chinese idyllic setting with small vignettes of rural life flanked on either side by two somewhat large mountains. Yet first impressions can be deceiving for the Yuan Dynasty (1279-1365), the period in which this painting was executed, was a particularly chaotic period in China's history. What looks like a peaceful country scene to us was likely more in keeping with a line from Tang Dynasty (618-907) poet Tu Fu's poem Looking Forward to Spring, which reads, “The nation is broken: only the mountains and water remain.”

The painter and Confucian scholar-official Chao Meng-fu is using the familiar forms of traditional Chinese landscape painting—mountains and water—as a means of self-expression to make sense of the chaos during his lifetime. As we are about to see, the painting can be read on several levels.

### **The painter and his subject**

Even as a young man, Chao Meng-fu, a recognized “talent” and member of the elite descended from the imperial family of the Sung Dynasty (979-1279) had a most promising future at court as a Confucian scholar official just at the time the dynasty collapsed. The downsizing at court forced

scholar officials like Chao into early retirement, during which he devoted his time to the Confucian classics as well as music, history, poetry and painting. A decade later, going against the prevailing conventions of protest and resistance to the foreign regime, he instead accepted an offer to be a minister for the court.

While serving as a magistrate in the Shantung region, Chao Meng-fu visited two famous mountains in his friend Chou Mi's ancestral home. Upon his return home, Chao Meng-fu painted the scene from memory as a memento for his friend. Using a horizontal scroll format, the painting is viewed a section at a time. The viewer unrolls the composition from right to left. The first section shows Mt. Hua, with its sharp peak; the central section, a riverbed; and the third and final section, the softly curved Mt. Ch'iao.

We can make a beginning of some of the multiple layers of meaning in Chao Meng-fu's work. On closer examination of the painting, we know (from past studies) that Chao Meng-fu has applied artistic license by bringing the mountains closer together which is not an unusual device in either poetry or painting. (Li, 1965, p. 27) He takes some additional liberties, however, in that he documents in his colophon on the painting that he has placed Mt. Ch'iao east of Mt. Hua. When the painting was compared to the actual site, though, it revealed that the artist had inverted the mountains: Mt. Ch'iao is west, not east of Mt. Hua. Now you may be thinking that because Chao Meng-fu painted the scene from memory he may have forgotten the actual orientation of the two mountains. Yet there is one more inversion, which indicates that Chao Meng-fu's changes were intentional: the riverbed that he shows in the central section of the painting flowing between the two mountains is the Yellow River. During Chao Meng-fu's lifetime, however, the Yellow River did not flow between the two mountains for it had reversed its course before he was born.

### **A brief historical context**

Over several millennia, the rise and fall of dynasties would temper traditional Confucianism by incorporating concepts with Taoist cosmology, and later, the spirituality of Buddhism. These developments gave rise to the syncretic philosophy of Neo-Confucianism around the 11th century. At that time, gaining a high position at court required an individual to be well educated, to demonstrate a record of achievement, and to be viewed as a pillar of society who embodied deeply held values and strong moral convictions.

While learning was one path for an individual aspiring to this Confucian ideal of chun-tzu, translated as “sage,” or “profound person,” Neo-Confucianism encompassed both moral and aesthetic subjectivity and emphasized the metaphysical aspect of man's co-creative role as a bridging of Heaven and Earth. However as Confucian scholar Tu Wei-ming (1976) explains, this was by no means an unattainable abstract norm; rather, it was a “standard of inspiration” whereby the cultivated person embodies such symbols of human perfection as goodness, truth, and beauty. (p. vii)

Concurrent with the rise of Neo-Confucianism was the new school of “scholar painting,” which was embraced by amateur painters and emphasized the process of self-cultivation as a basis for artistic creativity. In the West, we are inclined to think the opposite: that artistic creativity makes one more cultured. For the scholar-official “the sagely way is a point of orientation that directs the Confucian to humanize himself so that the world around him can be also humanized.” (vii)

Earlier in this paper, I listed the dehumanizing aspects of the work place that Ghoshal described in his article on questionable Western management theories. What follows now is a purely speculative effort on my part both to provide a possible context for Chao Meng-fu's painting and to

show why I see it as a metaphor for rethinking the work place.

What if the founding of this new school of scholar painting came about in reaction to the disturbing developments within the Sung court at the time? What if these scholar officials witnessed practices that were becoming overly regulatory and restrictive thereby undermining the abilities and talents of their peers at court, and impeding their individual imaginations, innovative abilities and creativity? What if it were left to a select few to participate in a “strategic planning process,” while those in the lower court had to wait months and even years for the processes to “trickle down” so that these individuals could execute them at the local level? Corruption was also on the rise at the time, and the prevailing attitude was that middle ministers were not trustworthy and needed to be more closely supervised. Ghoshal's (2005) research of the corporate workplace demonstrates that mistrust and close monitoring of employees is in actuality self-fulfilling; that corruption follows on the predilection of mistrust, rather than the other way around. (p. 77) What, then, if the corruption with the Sung court spilled out into the entire kingdom bringing hardships upon the people that ran counter to the cherished cultural norm of benevolence and altruism? Though Imperial lip service was paid to innovation and creativity, those processes were hopelessly stymied because learning had become mechanical due to system-wide standardized tests, which left no room for dialogue and exchange or collaboration, consensus, philosophical and creative speculation, or lively moral debates. (Tu, 1976, p. 8) The challenge then for these insightful scholar officials, as they saw it, was to invert the situation and re-institute the values that had been lost. Looking back in their history, they rediscovered the true premise for learning, eloquently described by Mencius in true Confucian tradition, as “the

quest for the lost heart,” (Tu, 1985, p. 101) and decided to try to reinstate that “standard for inspiration.”

In reading this paper, I have relied on the logic of discursive language, and the succession of words that have gathered into a whole following the process of discourse. However, to explore further meaning in Chao Meng-fu's painting, there is a point that words are no longer adequate. In order to know more about the painter's mind and his reaction to the time he lived in as expressed through his landscape painting, we must suspend language and instead observe the principles of painting. Where language is linear, sequential and has a syntax and vocabulary, painting has no vocabulary. According to Philosopher Suzanne Langer (1964) it has neither a defining dictionary nor translating dictionary. (p. 88) Because it is nonlinear and its meaning is contextual, painting's elements appear within a simultaneous and integral presentation. (p. 89) By that I mean, we see it all at once within the entire structure of the painting; we see both the compositional challenge that the painter set for himself as well as its resolution.

In keeping with my metaphor, I must take artistic license and ask you, the viewer, to dispense with looking at the painting as a Chinese horizontal scroll meant to be viewed section by section. Instead, I ask that we view it as a vertical scroll to be seen all at once in its entirety, just as a western painting is seen typically within a single frame.

Looking at Chao Meng-fu's painting in its entirety through this different lens may shed some light on comprehending complexity, which defies discursive ways of explanation. “Complexity (Chaos) refers to the condition of the universe, which is integrated and yet too rich and varied for us to understand in simple, mechanistic or linear ways. We can understand many parts of the universe in these ways, but the larger and more

intricately related phenomena can only be understood by principles and patterns -- not in detail. Complexity deals with the nature of emergence, innovation, learning and adaptation.” (Michael Lissack, private correspondence) As Birnbaum acknowledges in his study, social organizations cannot be run on formulaic science; they are too complex and varied to fit into a “one size fits all” business model.

Returning to the painting, in China both looking at a landscape and painting a landscape are communal acts that reconnect humans with nature. The Ching Dynasty (1644-1911) dramatist Li Yu describes this attunement by explaining that, “landscape is the intellectual and emotional expression of the universe, while intellectual and emotional expression is the landscape of the human mind.” (Chen, 2006, p.37)

In what way then are we to understand Chao Meng-fu's relationship to his world, to his time and to the way he understood his scholar-official role during his lifetime? In an attempt to answer this question, we return to the painting one last time.

I have established that Chao Meng-fu has applied artistic license by doing more than just bringing the mountains closer together on the painting and by making inversion the theme of his painting. In order to understand the work's symbolic meaning, we must first comprehend a fundamental underlying principle that has to do with the brush, namely, that the brush pairs painting with calligraphy which together are considered the “twin arts.” Calligraphy's origins lie in divination, and though the initial mark of the brush is literally made on a blank page, the blank space stroke- for the first stroke, for the brush signifies the creation of the world. The act of painting is one whereby the brush is a centering force-painter and brush are one. (Wen Fong, private correspondence) It is also a visceral feeling of universal energy emitting from the suspended wrist

incorporating body movement. Thus the saying “one character creates a universe.” And if the world is not as it should be, then as Tu Wei-ming (1985 ) says “ a profound person transforms where he passes, and works wonders where he abides. He is in the same stream as Heaven above and Earth below.” (p. 103)

Symbolically, one reading of the painting is that Chao Meng-fu is inverting the calamity of this painful time in China's history by literally redirecting the flow of the Yellow River and reversing history. Looking at it from the Mencian viewpoint, the overflowing river could represent the expansive quality of the human heart that has been recovered through sustained self-cultivation and now knows no bounds (Tu, 1985, p. 102).

What I have done is give an interpretation of a painting that has been examined numerous times in the past. Though executed by an amateur, this painting, like all masterpieces will continue to be the subject of interpretation in museums for generations to come and will speak to each era's unique sensibility. Chao Meng-fu's painting reveals to us the universality of humankind inherent in all museums' missions which is to collect, preserve and interpret the products of culture as it reflects people and their communities. Phillipe de Montebello (2005) describes the museum's role as “showcasing mankind's awe-inspiring ability to surpass itself so that even in the bleakest times, one cannot wholly despair of the human condition. (p. 18) As trustees of the qualities that matter, museums showcase excellence, transcendence and genius, the qualities that tip the scales in favor of man.” Likewise, for our visitors, museums play an essential role by giving passage to “islands of humanity” for an entire culture “trapped at the surface level.” Michael Gallagher (1998), cultural historian, writes “reconnection with depth is a central issue... to connect one with the ‘capacities of the heart’ in its strivings for wonder, searching, listening and receptivity.” (p. 139)

### **Museum model**

I believe that museums can take the lead in instructing corporations about long-term survival through their stewardship model, intrinsic brand, organized complexity, and humanism. By nature of their philanthropic model museums can instruct on stewardship locally and globally.

While stewardship theory exists in business literature (Davis, et al. 1997), adherence to the “agency model” persists. According to Ghoshal, (2005) “agency theory” underlies the entire intellectual edifice that supports shareholder value maximization, the increase in director numbers who sit on the board for policing, the split of the roles of the chairman of the board and the chief executive officer to decrease the latter's power, and paying managers in stock options to ensure that they too relentlessly pursue the interests of shareholders (p. 80). Stewardship theory, on the other hand, instructs “that companies survive and prosper when they simultaneously pay attention to the interests of customers, employees, shareholders and perhaps even the communities in which they operate.” (Ghoshal, p. 81) Yet despite increasing of the stewardship the model effectiveness, agency theory continues to prevail. (p. 80)

### **A model for a way of being**

Museums have a long history in stewardship. In his writings, John Cotton Dana, (1856-1929), visionary and museum pioneer, documented best practices in museums' stewardship model that were based on New Jersey's Newark Museum, which he founded. Dana's writings show a sensitive understanding of the people of the Newark community and his inclusive intention of forming reciprocal relationships. His perception was that the “idea” of the city museum existed first in the minds of the citizens of the city of Newark, long before the

museum's physical plant came into being. (Penistan, 1998, p. 205) Dana's job, as he saw it, was to help his community members articulate their unique story through "looking with interest at the thousand and one handiworks of man that come hourly under our observation." (p. 205) Perhaps one of Dana's most valuable "best practices" was his use of the community as the museum's starting point and in doing so that they apply to the process the best skills they can-*that of infinite tact and constant sympathy.* (p.183) (Emphasis added)

The Philosopher of Education and proponent of Progressive Education, John Dewey, one of Dana's contemporaries, was particularly concerned that children in the public education system were not receiving adequate exposure to the arts of democratic participation. He proposed a "child-centered" approach as a way of preparing future engaged citizens. Dewey wrote widely on the importance of experience, particularly its intergenerational aspect, in transmitting knowledge from the old to the young. The relevance of museums is their key role in sustainability, which aligns with what Dewey wrote in 1916 in *Democracy and Education*:

*If humanity has made some headway in realizing that the ultimate value of every institution is its distinctly human effect-its effect on conscious experience- we may well believe that this lesson has been learned largely through dealings with the young.* (Chapter 1)

Emlyn Koster (2003), geologist, and CEO of the Liberty Science Center, writes about this important aspect of societal interconnectivity in museums, noting that in nurturing the foundations of knowledge and skills in children, museums connect the generations by expanding horizons for the children while allowing adults into their children's world of wonder. (p.8)

While developing critical and creative thinkers who are socially engaged is one

outcome of Dewey's progressive education, it would never stand alone particularly without its pluralistic vision whereby each individual is valued in recognition of his/her unique ideas, needs, and cultural identity. (Chapter 11) In 2004, Ron Chew, the third executive director of the Wing Luke Museum in Seattle, Washington, and its first Asian-American director, was selected by The Ford Foundation's Leadership for a Changing World as an outstanding community leader. Recognized for his pluralistic collaborative approach grounded in community benefiting both the common as well as global good, Mr. Chew's style sharply contrasts with the prevailing model of the leader as hero, a holdover from the Industrial Age. Mr. Chew has given voice to the museum's surrounding Asian American communities by inviting them to participate in the planning and mounting of groundbreaking exhibitions that have encouraged dialogue and promoted personal identity as well as cross-cultural understanding. Once completed, the projected Wing Luke Museum and Community Center now in its capital campaign when completed will be looked not only as a national model but also an international model of an exciting cosmopolitan center for innovation and creativity.

In my introduction I quoted, the economist Tideman, who stated that a company's worth is tied to its brand, 80% of is intangible. A brief discussion of brands follows based on an article titled *Branding Positioning Museums in the 21st Century* by Carol Scott (2000, pp. 35-9). In her article, Scott further differentiates the museum brand from other branding categories:

*Museums fall into the category of values. A value brand has an enduring core purpose, which creates a long-term bond with those sectors of the market sharing the same values. There are two other important dimensions of a value brand. First, there is a*

*desire for a lasting future for the brand because of customer allegiance to the brand's underlying values. Second, the permanence and stability of a values-based brand does not preclude flexibility. The brand is free to move into other areas as long as the core principles can be discerned in any new ventures. (p.36)*

In the case of museums such as The British Museum, the Louvre, The Metropolitan Museum of Art and the National Palace Museum all of which are perceived as extraordinary quality institutions have stood the test of time a quality that is crucial when considering the strength of a brand.

In a way, all museums, despite their size or locations share in this “elite” brand recognition by association, based on simply being a museum. Generally, museums are perceived as quality institutions that possess unique attributes, such as trustworthiness and continuity. If anything positive could have emerged in the aftermath of September 11, it was a demonstration of the “intrinsic” value brand (Ind, 2004, p. 1) of museums as gathering places or as Elaine Heumann Gurian says “congregant spaces,” for connecting human beings with comfort and replenishment.

In the past decade, museums have been focusing outward on the community as well as how they impact their visitors' experience. There is a growing expectation for nonprofits to both demonstrate the good they bring to their communities, and educate themselves about how they can capture, describe, and measure their impact. Where previously museums focused on institutional outcomes, such as programmatic excellence, attempts are now concentrated on identifying how individuals are changed as a result of a museum experience. Positive-related individual outcomes are defined specifically as “increased, changed, or created skills, knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, life condition, or status for individuals, especially

those that the individual recognizes as benefits.” (Karen Motylewski, personal correspondence)

Museums at times underestimate the knowledge that their visitors bring to their museum experience, and in doing so they tend to think that they are competing with leisure time activities such as sports. Yet research demonstrates that visitors are perhaps more clear on their intentions than once thought. For example, from her research on visitors, Carol Scott cites the findings of a survey that investigated how museums fare when considering what patrons seek in leisure venues. On a scale of most popular to least popular, respondents cited the following: restaurants and cafes; playing sports; shopping; visiting pubs; going to parks; attending theatre/movies; going to the beach and attending sporting events. Respondents then identified ideal leisure attributes with descriptions such as “relaxed atmosphere,” “entertaining,” “good place to take family and friends,” “friendly,” “fun,” “an exciting place to be,” and “a great value for money,” and “plenty of room to move.” How did these same respondents view museums? As Scott points out, they cited an entirely different list of descriptive phrases, which included such words as educational, places of discovery, intellectual experiences, challenging, thought provoking, absorbing, fascinating, innovative, and places where you can touch the past (p. 37).

While we are inclined to look at the management structure of museums, which features a governing board of trustees, as similar to that of corporations, the following distinction made about colleges and universities could apply to museums as well. Robert Birnbaum (1998) quotes Baldrige, Curtis, Ecker, and Riley (1978, p. 9) writing:

*the organizational characteristics of academic institutions are so different from other institutions that traditional management*

*theories do not apply to them. Their goals are more ambiguous and diverse. They serve clients instead of processing materials. Their key employees are highly professionalized. They have 'fluid participation' with amateur decision-makers who wander in and out of the decision process. As a result, traditional management theories cannot be applied to educational institutions without carefully considering whether they will work well in that unique academic setting.* (p. 28)

This notion of "fluid participation" is the strength of a museum and contributes to our understanding of how the phenomena of organized complexity function in museums, from the small museum to the large, more complex museum. I would like to propose two hypothetical examples of entrepreneurial leaders to illustrate Henry Mintzberg's distinctions of visionary leadership in both types of organizations. The first is that of a small museum director who sees herself as much as an executive as an "editor," giving both guidance and freedom. This director would fit Mintzberg's description as one "in intimate (soft) touch with the operations following events closely so as to respond quickly to unanticipated changes." (p. 287) The larger and more complex museum such as the Louvre, could be an example of what Mintzberg describes as management implementation that is "inverted." That is, because executive management is too far removed from the actual workings, the strategy could both be made and effectively implemented instead by the 1200 employees who are in closer contact within their given departments. (p. 287) Instead of an organizational chart that shows the hierarchy of management, the following description of a documentary on the Louvre is a fitting metaphor for the phenomena of organized complexity:

*The documentary film, Louvre City plunges the viewer into the bowels of a great museum, moving from its vast subterranean*

*network of storage rooms and offices to its sunlit ateliers for art restoration and frame gilding, where curators, archaeologists, installers and night guards all participate in the intricate ballet of the Louvre's functioning. The works of art, revealed in a new context, come alive as fragile and exotic creatures captured in a web of human labor* (Camhri, 2003, p. 11).

In his study of the distinct leading styles of university presidents, Birnbaum (1998) quotes Smirich and Morgan, writing that "leadership is about the 'management of meaning,' and that leaders emerge because of their role in framing experience in a way that provides the basis for action; that is, by mobilizing meaning, articulating and defining what has previously remained implicit or unsaid, by inventing images and meanings that provide a focus for new attention and by consolidating, confronting or changing prevailing wisdom." (p. 78)

In their article, *How American Business Schools Lost their Way*, leadership gurus Warren G. Bennis and James O'Toole (2005) take American business schools to task as well for their "overly narrow approach to business education (p.104)." Their key finding is that business schools curricula are completely lacking in multidisciplinary research and the humanities. How would a humanities background inform leadership style? What insights can leaders of some of the most prestigious museums in the United States provide from their art history backgrounds to inform leadership? In a 2004 interview, Glenn Lowry of the Museum of Modern Art tells how he started Williams College as a medical student and was deflected from that course forever after just one art history class. He explains, "All of us, I think, came out of Williams College with a way of looking and an interest in looking that was very powerful. For me, it was so powerful that I couldn't imagine living another kind of life." (p. G-10)

Mr. Lowry, I believe, is referencing the aesthetic and interpretative functions of decision making often overlooked in the business world in favor of the more logical method, which is seen as well-structured, deliberative, and quantitative. Ordinary common sense should show that this approach is flawed in that it assumes that one part of the mind is logical and the other illogical. Instead as Kerry S. Walters (1990) explains, however, both types of thinking depend on each other; they cannot operate independently.

*Critical thinking and creative thinking are not incomparable with one another or mutually exclusive...Logical inference, critical analysis, and problem solving are fundamental qualities of good thinking, but only if they are complemented by the cognitive functions of imagination, insight and intuition-essential components of the pattern of discovery. The latter serve as necessary conditions for innovative speculations, intellectual and artistic creativity, and the discovery of alternative conceptual paradigms and problems. They facilitate flexibility and adaptability of new ideas as well as novel situations and are thereby essential to the nurturing of responsible, free, and reflective adults and citizens. (pp. 456-57)*

Moreover, the fact that reason is “embodied,” an idea supported by neuroscience demonstrates convincingly that emotions are vital to reason and rational thinking.

In a lecture from his Mellon series a few years ago titled, “Thinking, Talking and Looking,” the late curator, Kirk Varnedoe, one of the most prominent voices of modern art in the last two decades, advocated that looking at artworks, modern as well as ancient, from various cultures and done by primitives, provided both newness and freshness by “peeling the skin and crust away from training and familiarity.” (Varnedoe, personal communication) Current

theories have created what Mintzberg (1994) explains, as the “fallacy of Formalization.” While it is tempting to model the approaches of a “genius entrepreneur” no amount of check lists or strategic plans will do the job. (p. 294)

Rather an entrepreneur's intuitive approach and process for success defies linear and formalized rules. Just as there is no formula for doing a painting, no two workplaces are the same. As we discussed while looking at Chao Meng-fu's painting, just as compositional forms are relational within their framework, there is no set rule or a ‘one-size-fits-all’ formula. A cohesive resolution is dependent on how the elements relate in its given framework. In his extensive research, Mintzberg (1994) demonstrates how formal planning discourages creativity despite the presence of creative individuals, and that managers internalize ‘soft’ data because ‘hard’ data often loses its richness clearly emphasizing that the “process is till mostly an art.” (66) In the case of painting, while many preparatory studies for a painting can result in a technically perfect execution, it can leave the viewer ‘cold’ because it is lacking in spirit and its life given over to craft, rather than art. In the same way, informal and dynamic strategy making is violated as soon as it gets formulaic. Hence the proverbial volumes of strategic plans sitting on thousands of bookshelves gathering dust.

Michael Kimmelman was referring to Kirk Varnedoe when he said the following about artistic innovation:

*[Innovation] consists of events that unfold not according to a strategic plan, but patterns that come into focus gradually like art. These patterns are perceived rarely as the inevitable unfolding of progressive events but as a variety of inspired inventions by remarkable and imaginative people (Klinkenborg, 2003, p. 24).*

This paper proposed a new paradigm for creating ‘Knowledge economy’

enterprises with museums as models. The discussion was informed by Chinese painter Chao Meng-fu and the Confucian tradition, which instructed his aspiration toward humanistic ideals. Key to the learning process, which is equated, with the living process, was the quest for the lost heart. As neuroscience opens the path for the reuniting of the body and the emotions, we in the West have preserved the capacities of the heart-at least in our museums. In the Confucian tradition, the complete human being possesses a 'heart-mind' --that aspect of a human being that is continually evolving, learning and developing the intuition. Ultimately, each museum has to assess its unique community and make aesthetic decisions based on reciprocity. By inviting and authenticating the participatory involvement of its community members, it will

model the worthy museum (Weil, 2000, p. 4) Perhaps it needs a new name for the traditional tools at its disposal-that of imagination-tools of creativity and innovation to accomplish this locally and globally in an imagination field that knows no bounds. (McNichol, 2004, p. 245)

If it can be said then that the aim of the museum is said to reconnect visitors with their deepest selves, then museum management can inform Western business models on the aesthetic "way of being" which encompasses the artist, scientist, historian and philosopher all in one. It would then be an individual who is continually in the dynamic process of lifelong learning, which requires participants to be deeply respectful of all humans and the earth, and, ultimately to co-cooperate in co-creating a better world. (Tu, 1976, pp. 140-1)

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### About the author

Theresa (Terri) McNichol is president of Ren Associates, a company specializing in creative collaborations dedicated to urban cultural renewal. An award-winning artist, art historian, and former director of a historical house museum, she has first-hand experience in developing community projects primarily in New Jersey, is a workshop facilitator, and has made conference presentations in the U.S., Europe, and Asia. After the September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center, she assisted in the facilitation of town meetings in the five boroughs on the rebuilding of Lower Manhattan. Ms. McNichol's company has performed cultural assessments for government agencies and libraries, and has developed brand-marketing strategies for healthcare facilities. International partnerships include an advisory role to Northern Ireland Museums through The British Council, and a publication on museums as anchors for city revitalization for the Tokyo Foundation.

Ms. McNichol's publications and presentations reflect her interests in organizational development, prompting her to serve on the leadership team for a worldwide initiative on The Global Future of Organizational Development and on the advisory board of The Institute for Sustainable Enterprise at Fairleigh Dickinson University. As a member of the Enterprise Sustainability Action Team, she is contributing to two chapters of a fieldbook on organizational development. She is currently revising a well-received paper on Williams College art historians and museum directors, and their art of leadership that was presented last summer at the Critical Management Studies Conference, Cambridge University, England. Her research interests lie in examining the backgrounds of arts leaders, and analyzing effective management of institutions related to the arts. She is passionate about arts education, and has been teaching both watercolor painting and a survey course on Asian art history for over 15 years. She is a member of AAM, ICOM, INTERCOM, University and College Art Educators Association, Association for Asian Studies Educators, New York University's Alumni Mentor Network, and Princeton Research Forum for Independent Scholars. She is listed in the 1995 edition of "International Who's Who of Professional Women."