

Purple circle change model

I thought that what I could really share with you today
is some of the harder stuff that we're dealing with
and some of the lessons that we've learned.

And so the first of these lessons is this

this is kind of a math lesson

that when you embark on an

institutional revolution

basically, change is not easy.

We have had mostly effusive response

to the changes we've made here

but we've also gotten our knocks.

I never thought I would be the subject

of a political cartoon in our Sunday paper

but here I am yelling at Michelangelo

that he should make the Sistine Chapel

more participatory and at the end it says, "You know,

dumb down your work."

I think all of us who work with community know this complaint.

That when we invite people to participate,

when we do things on their terms

it's going to dumb down the work

and I think all of you probably share

with me that feeling that it does not dumb it down.

It opens up the work, it opens up

the content for people to engage with

but that doesn't mean that everybody will like it.

And I think that going back to this idea
of this revolution what I really noticed was this:
I think about normal growth looking like this;
you've got some resources,
you've got some people,
you've got some energy
and then you just expand what you have.

To me, this kind of growth is very safe
because the centre of this experience stays the same.

You don't need to change your programming
you don't need to change who your engaging,
you're just doing more.

In contrast, when you have a revolution,
you have something more like this.

This is where we were,
we started with this purple circle
we had some resources, some people
some money, some stories
but not enough to sustain the museum.

And now we kind of look like this
we have a lot more going on,
and it has shifted from where we were before.

There's both a safe way to look at this
and a scary way to look at this.

The safe part is this, most of the purple circle people stayed.
Most of the purple circle is inside the yellow circle
most of these people decided,

"Wow, I love seeing so many different
kinds of people at the museum,
I love all the energy at the museum,
even though this is not the museum I started with
this is a museum that I still want to be part of."

That's the safe part. But the scary part is this:
to accomplish this transformation
we had to completely re-centre
our programming outside
of anything we had been in
as the purple circle museum.

And for us, that required a real leap of faith
a belief that there were those people
out there who wanted to participate
there were those artists and stories
and energy out there and money out there.

And that we were willing to jump
off the cliff to get there.

I think a perfect example of this kind
of disconnect is this programme:

What you're looking at here is a flyer
from one of the first pop-up museums that we ever did.

A pop-up museum is a very simple programme
where people bring an object on a theme to a place
and share stories and objects around that theme.

This one is from one we did
before Valentine's Day two years ago

the theme was 'f my ex'.

And you can kind of see from this poster, very irreverent.

It engaged a totally new kind of audience for us

but some of our traditional members

were very offended by this.

And let me tell you, I don't know if this rings true

in Britain as well, but I have learned that here in California

you should just not put the letter 'f' on any posters.

This is one of the minor lessons I've learned.

But one of the things we heard

from our traditional members

was not only was the kind of irreverence of this problematic

but they felt that it was offensive

to the sanctity and seriousness

of what a museum really is.

And so, we held this event, it was very successful

it was held at a bar, lots of people came

and then we also got these complaints.

So I asked the woman who runs this programme

to write a blog post about that.

And she did, and we got

this very interesting comment

that came into the blog,

from somebody who said,

"I'm closer to the stodgy traditional

museum supporter than to the audiences

you're currently trying to reach,

but I strongly support your outreach
and attempts to involve new communities."

"It's precisely because of that outreach
that I finally became a member last year.

There was no reason to do so before,
since the museum was doing nothing."

"I still have little occasion to go
to the museum, but I'm willing
to support it as an important community resource."

So here you have a guy, who is identifying
as a purple circle person
but who didn't like that old museum
who only cares about it, and gives money
to it, and feels that it's relevant
because of the yellow circle work that we're doing.

And so we're constantly bridging
these communities and these challenges
around how you look at this shifted museum,
how you involve people across the sides.

Not that we're not going to do it
but that we're going to involve and engage
those voices as we do so.