

Bus Riders – “Incorporating Art as Part of the Business”

Bus Riders’ fourth session focused on the topic “Incorporating Art as part of the business”. The evening consisted of an introduction by Deutsche Bank’s Global Art Director **Friedhelm Huette** who presented how the Bank has collected the world’s largest art collection. This was followed by a panel discussion consisting of **Lars Bertmar**, Carnegie Art Awards, **Jan Widlund**, MAQS law firm and **Ulrika Lövdahl**, Global Art Manager at Absolut and moderated by **Karolina Bertorp**, Moderna Samlare. The discussion focused on how art can be used as a way to strengthen the corporate identity using different initiatives. Friedhelm talked about Deutsche Bank’s art collection, which is one of the most extensive corporate collections



in the world, and how the bank’s focus on art is part of their corporate social responsibility.

As opposed to many other corporate art collections, 95% of Deutsche Bank’s collection is actually on display permanently. Huette further told the listeners that he identified early on that the collection needed some sort of logic, which in this case is that it only consists of photography and paintings – things that can be displayed on a wall and which can easily be hung in different offices. Furthermore, Huette pressed on the fact that the collection does not only exist for the representative areas or the headquarters – but for all offices.

The bank aims to have the contemporary art on display for all employees to see and enjoy. The company works a great deal with **making the art available for everyone** as “*art is a window to participate in all parts of the world – contemporary art reflects our world; what happens in Africa, Asia etc.*”

Lars initiated the panel discussion by sharing the fact that when he took over at Carnegie the company was in a bad place, in many ways due



to cultural and corporate value aspects. Lars felt that he required more instruments to connect co-workers. As opposed to many of his peers **he chose culture as a social instrument – instead of sports**. Lars noted that not all employees were convinced as to why the office was suddenly decorated by contemporary art. But as clients started to show genuine interest in the art, even the most stubborn minds became increasingly interested in the concept. **The cultural concept was for internal purposes** only at the beginning – client relations improved or created thanks to the art was just a plus!



Ulrika added to the discussion by confirming **that the management needs to have a genuine interest in art** for the concept to really work.



Absolut began its cultural investment by treating 230 employees to a trip to the modern art exhibition **Documenta** in Germany – something that was widely appreciated among the employees. This first trip resonated with Ulrika’s statement that the company needs to do something **radical** initially, to get the cultural investment going.



Jan explained that Vinge’s art venture first began as a consequence of an office move which resulted in a colleague pointing out that **the walls**

looked rather empty. This led to Vinge’s first art purchase. After a while, Vinge felt it was better to distribute the money to the owners rather than putting it all in contemporary art – and that is when Jan assumed the role of the collector himself.

At first, he told the listeners, **he mostly viewed the art as decoration** and the idea was not nearly as structured and planned as Lars’. However, in 1990 Jan received a request to display the collection to employees which occurred with the assistance of a curator from Moderna Museet who presented the collection. From this moment on, **Jan’s idea of his art changed** from viewing it mostly as decoration, to regarding it more as a collection of pieces.

In regard to the topic of Customer loyalty and PR, Ulrika added that Absolut definitely are active sponsors but that the sponsorship mostly has been **focused on a certain segment of**

clients, rather than hosting events directed to a wider audience.

In terms of customer relations, Jan shared with the group, he has always been anxious to show the collection to those who wish to see it. Up until now he has had 150 to 200 viewings and says he has always lent out the art to museums and galleries whenever there was an interest for it.

Furthermore, regarding his own relationship to purchasing art – he has always kept two main set of rules; **never bargain** and try to keep your distance to the artists in case you wish to update your collection and need to sell off one or more pieces.

All in all the evening included the participation of four very different paths of making art a part of the business. Despite different opinions regarding motivation for initiating collaboration with the art world and how to utilise it, they all had one common denominator – it needs an ambassador to wholeheartedly drive and be convinced of the initiative in order for it to become successful.

