RE → MUSEUM

New Report Reveals Underinvestment in Marketing by Art Museums, which spend 3% or Less of their Budgets to Attract Visitors

Remuseum's third case study report offers new models for understanding target audiences and investing in public engagement and relevance

Bentonville, AR — November 19, 2025 — Today, museum think tank **Remuseum** releases the third installment in its **Case Studies in Innovation** analysis, a series of reports designed to highlight research and successful examples of American art museums expanding access, relevance, and sustainability across the field. The new report offers insights into audience engagement and institutional norms, together with examples of institutions that are attracting new types of public engagement and visibility through direct marketing efforts and targeted audience analysis.

Drawing on insights from a convening of museum leaders focused on access, audience development, and marketing and co-hosted by Remuseum and Art Bridges Foundation . Building on the earlier Case Study in Innovation Reports on Access and Audience Development, this third report highlights research and research-based approaches, together with case studies of museums that are reimagining their marketing strategies to improve their relevance, audience engagement, and likelihood of success.

"Engaging new audiences is essential to museums missions and sustainability. But most museums do not invest in understanding or engaging new audiences on anything like the levels applied in other fields that seek to attract and engage the public. This report documents that underinvestment, and shares examples of museums that are working first to understand what motivates the public, then to adapt their offerings and messages accordingly," said **Stephen Reily, Remuseum's Founding Director**. "Just as the art that museums collect and exhibit must respond to and reflect the interests of their communities, so do the ways and methods they use to talk about it. This is not as simple as a marketing rebrand or tagline, and our report highlights the work of University of Michigan Progressor and bestselling author Marcus Collins, who reminds us that culture is not made by cultural institutions, but by people - and museums need to reflect the public's culture if they want to earn a place in it. This report is meant to be both a wake-up call and a toolkit for cultural institutions seeking to better serve their mission statements, the public, and their bottom lines."

The report reveals that **American museums spend, on average, less than 3% of their operating budgets on marketing**, a level on par with the mining industry, and far less than other cultural offerings. , Despite its potential to advance their mission and deepen audience relationships, museums are underutilizing marketing as a tool for public engagement. This report **highlights ways that museums can be more strategic in getting more people to care about their offerings, not only in allocating dollars but also in identifying the right audiences and methods to target**.

Among institutions approaching this work in new ways, the Peabody Essex Museum (PEM) approached engagement through research and the lens of visitor behaviors, mindsets, and interests. By identifying three target personas based on motivations to visit a museum rather than demographic attributes, PEM then began tailoring its marketing and operating practices to specific personas, thereby delivering what its visitors actually value.

Similarly, the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO) applied a more data-driven and tactical approach to tailored marketing. In order to target its audience engagement and optimize its visibility, the AGO analyzed data from its membership alongside external datasets to identify target personas within its visitor demographics. It then implemented changes across its programming, exhibitions, admissions, and membership programs, which resulted in a measurable increase in audience engagement and a more inclusive, relatable visitor experience.

Both of these multi-faceted approaches demonstrate how **thoughtful, insight-driven strategies can directly translate into stronger audience engagement and growth**. They require data, money, and a realization that what the museum itself values may not be the same thing the public values. By employing these insights into their marketing structures, museums have an opportunity to broaden and multiply the audiences they serve, generate the revenue their missions require, and allow art to support a stronger and pluralistic society.

To read the full report and learn more about this ongoing work, please visit Remuseum's website.

About Remuseum
Remuseum is a museum think tank seeking to promote innovation among American art museums with a focus on relevance, financial sustainability, and governance. Inspired and supported by entrepreneur and arts patron David Booth, powered by the disruptive spirit of Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, and with additional support from the Ford Foundation and the Draper Richards Kaplan Foundation, Remuseum uses research and support for innovative leadership aiming to help U.S. museums fully embrace their missions and succeed.

Press Contacts
Rachel Roberts
Senior Account Executive, Cultural Counsel
rachel@culturalcounsel.com

Colleen Rodgers
Account Coordinator, Cultural Counsel
colleen@culturalcounsel.com