

# GIRLFORUM

MONTHLY

ISSUE 04.5

MAY 2019

A bimonthly round-up  
of focused articles & information

This month's issue takes the form of an annotated reading list, which develops and contextualises some of the thinking around funding and institutional structures that appeared in the April edition. We are cutting it more than a little fine to call this a May issue, having had a busy month writing applications and focussing on Tate's renewal of their relationship with Anthony d'Offay (which became public just as we released the last issue). Going forward, every other month of GIRLFORUM Monthly will be a reading list 'half issue', hopefully giving us a bit more time for action as well as speech. We have chosen six texts, one podcast, and one video this month (as well as a few other sources mentioned in our commentary for each one). It's a lot of reading but we've tried to keep the format and tone varied, so please pick and choose whatever suits you.

The list starts with two texts on Anthony d'Offay. To recap, Tate and the National Galleries of Scotland severed ties with him in January 2018 after three allegations of sexual assault were made against him, along with a further allegation of 'malicious communication.' Tate trustees have since resumed working with him despite an ongoing police investigation – a decision which came to light in early April.

A week later, we submitted Freedom of Information requests to Tate and NGS, seeking to find out more about the processes that led to this decision. Through this, it has become clear that the board constantly pushed to have the cutting of ties overturned. We now know that the decision to re-connect with d'Offay was actually made on 11 January this year – two full months before it reached the press. We have appended the resulting document from the Tate at the end of this issue, but apart from meeting dates and vague outlines of some discussions, GDPR has been called in to avoid answering to the majority of the request. We were particularly struck by the way the sections from Ethics Committee meetings highlighting 'Areas of Possible Concern' cited newspaper reports of allegations, rather than the allegations themselves. It reads as a distancing tactic that we would equate to an institutionalised kind of gaslighting. Importantly, there is no mention at all of the ongoing Metropolitan Police investigation. Since it has been widely alluded to in the press, we can only assume this is a disturbingly wilful omission. We will be doing what we can to re-evaluate our requests to try and get more information.

In the meantime, we wanted to situate the relationship between d'Offay, Tate, and NGS within a wider, structural look at the undoubtedly plutocratic nature of the 'art world' and its funding. Our feeling is that a (some argue inevitable) focus on big-money donors leads institutions to pander to them, regardless of the economic or environmental violence, racism, or misogyny that this might excuse. The texts on d'Offay are followed by a 2015 overview of the money and morals at work in the Tate/BP funding scandal at that time – an analysis we can usefully extrapolate to their decision-making in the current situation.

Mark Lawson's writing on Sackler funding in the Guardian (again, referenced in the last issue) is included for the way it exemplifies strategies used to curtail complaint around ethics. Andrea Fraser's ArtReview interview, meanwhile, offers the perspective of an artist who has made institutional critique her work. Next, a podcast follows some of the key issues unfolding at the Whitney Museum in New York, and a Frieze round table gives a series of artists and art workers much needed space to unfold ideas around the very real personal-political dangers of an unmediated commitment to 'freedom of speech' at all costs.

The list is rounded off with a filmed lecture from Sara Ahmed. 'Complaint as Diversity Work' is painful, pointed, poetic, and contemplative in equal measure – and very much worth watching.

Before we go on to the reading list, a reminder that the open letter to Tate written by Jane Lawson with GIRLFORUM and a small group of other artists is also still in circulation. You can read the letter here, or via our website: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1CRH1RZ14HF1csBQ5s2T-4Px-tgRGaQ-mxtAY9SQQMLRY/edit#>

If you'd like to add your signature, please send us an email at [info@girlforum.org](mailto:info@girlforum.org)

We'd also like to say a huge thank you to everyone who has supported us on Patreon so far. The support towards covering our basic running costs is a big help and we are so grateful for your generosity. As we start to use the money, we will publish all our accounts online.

If you'd like to donate so we can grow our activities, please head to our Patreon account: <https://www.patreon.com/GIRLFORUM>

Finally, for those just joining GIRLFORUM Monthly, to highlight the privileged perspectives we may reinforce, we would like to restate that this issue has been put together by two white, cisgendered, heterosexual, non-disabled, young London-based women artists (one of whom is also an art worker) from mixed working class and middle class backgrounds.

TEXT BEN QUINN AND CRISTINA RUIZ, *UK ART DEALER ANTHONY D'OFFAY FACES SEXUAL HARASSMENT ALLEGATIONS*, THE GUARDIAN (ONLINE), 14 JANUARY 2018

↪ <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/jan/13/anthony-doffay-denies-historical-allegations-sexual-harassment>

TW: sexual assault and harassment. This article by Cristina Ruiz and Ben Quinn from the Guardian in 2018 details the original accusations made by several women against d'Offay. The allegations were never reported to the police, but we all know the deep structural problems that are likely to have deterred them. One of the women has been gagged under a Non Disclosure Agreement by d'Offay. Meanwhile, another woman who reported receiving 'malicious communications' from him to the Metropolitan Police is unable to reveal any details about her case while the investigation is ongoing. When the Tate are misleadingly claiming that they are 'unaware of any ongoing investigations' into d'Offay's conduct, it is crucial to revisit the clarity and detail of the women's accounts.

TEXT SOFIA SILVA, *THE WAY COLLECTORS 'GIFT' US WITH 'THE LYNCHING PHOTOGRAPHS' (OR SHOULD THEY EVER)*, NIHILSENTIMENTALGIA.COM, 15 MARCH 2015

↪ <https://nihilsentimentalgia.com/2015/03/15/%E2%89%A1-the-way-collectors-gift-us-with-the-lynching-photographs-or-should-they-ever-%E2%89%A1/>

Information around the police investigation into d'Offay's alleged 'malicious communications' cannot be disclosed in order to protect the investigation. Keeping this ongoing investigation in mind, however, there is other material to be examined in relation to the structural implications of d'Offay's own whiteness, the way he mobilises it, and the glaring whiteness of the 'Artist Room's' collection itself. We are indebted to one of our friends for sending us this text by Sofia Silva relating to a 2011 lecture by d'Offay at Glasgow School of Art. It has been brought to our attention that d'Offay has slave-owning ancestors (presumably one of the several d'Offay's living in Mauritius during the 17-1800s) and that this is a history he has weaponised and manipulated. The historicising and objectifying lens of the video and lecture mentioned in the text consigns white violence to an historicised (but in reality, so very recent) and conspicuous American past of lynchings and the KKK, when racism is an ongoing, often insidious, and ever-present reality.

We would like to consider d'Offay's presentation of these images alongside the actual demographics of Artist Rooms (his 'gift' – read: tax-dodging sale – to the nation) which includes just one POC (Ellen Gallagher) amongst 40 artists. Despite this appallingly unrepresentative statistic (we also counted only 8 women\* in the collection), the Tate continues to insist on its relevance and generosity. In their most recent financial report, they mention it 17 times <https://www.tate.org.uk/download/file/fid/121884> . In spite of this celebration, it seems utterly at odds with recently adopted mission statements which include the aim to 'pro-

vide excellent public programmes by presenting a range of different perspectives and voices on art.’ Artist Rooms represents, self-evidently, a focus on the narrow interests of one white man. Tate’s continued lauding of it alongside their renewed collaboration with (and protection of) d’Of-fay reads to us as part of a serious structural investment in a white, plutocratic dominance within the museum and beyond. We are indebted to another friend for showing us these statistics. In her words, it is ‘vital to point out that the value of Artist Rooms depreciates in the face of [Tate’s] stated aims’ and the comparison of their rhetoric with the content of the collection is ‘a brilliant way to skewer their value systems and the tangle of moral and economic values at work here.’

\*we are using the binary terms and values of the collection and Tate here

TEXT PLATFORM, *MIND THE GAP: CONTRADICTIONS IN TATE’S ETHICAL DECISION-MAKING OVER BP*, PLATFORMLONDON.ORG, JUNE 2015

↵ <http://platformlondon.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Tate-BP-ethics-committee-mind-the-gap.pdf>

Platform London and three experts on funding, governance, and ethics tease out the difference between ethics, reputation management, and legality. Whilst it was written in 2015 in reaction to the BP funding controversy at Tate for a symposium on funding in the arts, it’s a useful insight into the actual practice and purpose of Tate’s ‘Ethics Committee.’ Bridget MacKenzie, a former education officer at Tate concludes that ‘Tate’s ethical decision-making on this matter is far too driven by narrow self interest and reputation management.’

TEXT MARK LAWSON, *HOW WILL BRITISH MUSEUMS SURVIVE IF THEY SUBJECT EVERY DONOR TO AN ETHICAL AUDIT?*, THE GUARDIAN (ONLINE), 23 MARCH 2019

↵ <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/mar/23/how-will-british-museums-survive-if-they-subject-every-donor-to-an-ethical-audit--sackler>

We’ve included this as an example of the kind of exaggeration that seeks to shut down conversations about the human cost of ‘dirty money’ in the arts. Lawson appears to wilfully forget the fact that constituents of the ‘art world’ ask difficult moral questions out of an optimism that things can be better.

TEXT ANDREA FRASER/ J.J. CHARLESWORTH, *FOLLOW THE MONEY: ANDREA FRASER ON ART, POWER AND PATRONAGE AFTER DONALD TRUMP*, ART REVIEW (ONLINE), FROM ART REVIEW APRIL 2019

↵ [https://artreview.com/features/ar\\_april\\_2019\\_feature\\_andrea\\_fraser/](https://artreview.com/features/ar_april_2019_feature_andrea_fraser/)

Performance artist Andrea Fraser discusses her recent work and research around institutional structures. She covers the voting practices of ‘plutocratic’ museum chairs and donors who apparently voted for Trump for tax breaks alone, assuring themselves that their abandonment of those

directly endangered by his policies is ‘worth it’ in exchange for lining their own pockets and a little extra money donated to their favoured cultural causes. For Fraser, representation within art institutions is often used as a lightning rod to divert attention from questions of how economic capital dominates and coincides with cultural capital to reproduce its dominance. Fortunately, J.J Charlesworth doesn’t detract too much from Fraser’s analysis with his own views, which are shown to broadly contradict Fraser’s structural understanding in this Spectator article: <https://blogs.spectator.co.uk/2019/03/art-institutions-should-stop-virtue-signalling-about-funding-and-focus-on-what-theyre-showing/>.

PODCAST **THE BRIAN LEHRER SHOW WNYC RADIO, *WHITNEY HEADS UNDER FIRE FOR BUSINESS TIES*, WNYC RADIO, 9 MAY 2019**

↪ <https://www.wnyc.org/story/whitney-heads-under-fire-business-ties>

We wanted to include a podcast as an easier way to catch up on events in New York, where the Whitney continues to be central to discussions of ethics around museum boards and sponsorship in the USA. Zachary Small (staff writer at Hyperallergic) discusses their reporting on the connection of Warren Kandors and other board members to arms dealing and the provision of tear gas and other weapons used in state violence that has predominantly hit people of colour. The cover of this month’s reading list uses a section of an image of clouds of tear gas used against Black Lives Matter protestors in Ferguson in 2014 – the canisters of which were produced by Kandors’ company Safariland. Since the podcast was recorded, the Whitney Biennial has opened amid ongoing protests. Whitney staffers have been central in trying to hold the museum, Kandors, and other board members to account, alongside Decolonize This Place.

TEXT **HANNAH BLACK, HOWIE CHEN, JAMILLAH JAMES, AJAY KURIAN AND SUHAIL MALIK, *A ROUNDTABLE ON FREE SPEECH: AS THE WORLD TIPS TOWARDS MORE REACTIONARY AND FASCISTIC REGIMES, WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO CALL FOR ARTISTIC FREEDOMS THAT IMPLICITLY REPRODUCE OPPRESSION?*, FRIEZE (ONLINE), 19 MARCH 2019**

↪ <https://frieze.com/article/roundtable-free-speech>

Since we first read this article (and quoted Hannah Black from it in last month’s newsletter), the apparent attempt of right-wing agendas to co-opt the project of artistic freedom has become clearer to us as we’ve seen heated discussions develop around Nina Power’s repeated appearance in conjunction with (and apparently in defence of) ‘alt-right’ ideologies. Transphobic comments and a decision to renounce contemporary feminism while appearing supportive of (or at the very least ambivalent to) people who appear to have anti-abortion/ Men’s Rights Activist / anti-semitic/ white supremacist agendas, makes her continued appearance under the banner of contemporary ‘feminist’ theory appear untenable. Whatever has happened here feels undoubtedly dark, and it is important

that Power is not singled out when there are clearly wider structural and political forces at work. It has been useful to read Linda Stupart's thoughtfully structural response, which has the generosity to bring the author's articulate questioning of their own position to the table <https://www.thewhitecube.co.uk/on-trauma>. Segments of the 'art world' that have chased 'controversy' over antisemitic and 'alt-right' motifs and rhetoric appear to be capitalising on Power's previous feminist credentials. This has included a recent appearance alongside Mathieu Malouf in a Spike magazine round table on 'Cancel Culture' in Berlin. The talk can be watched on YouTube here [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=An4Ai2s\\_Q80](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=An4Ai2s_Q80). We have seen it widely identified online as a counter to the Frieze article we are focusing on here. The Frieze round table cycles through the violent consequences of unbridled support for 'freedom of speech' and un-nuanced translations of that phrase, to the dominance of institutions, their boards, and the freedoms they really structurally infringe – especially for people of colour and those with non-binary identities.

VIDEO *SARA AHMED, COMPLAINT AS DIVERSITY WORK,*  
CRASSH CAMBRIDGE VIA YOUTUBE, 22 MARCH 2018

↵ [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JQ\\_1kFwkfVE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JQ_1kFwkfVE)

In this recorded lecture, Sara Ahmed speaks about the value and importance of complaint and how it treads a path for others to follow. The talk examines how institutions block complaint by making it a depleting and exhausting process, or acknowledge it publicly only to absorb and silence it all the more easily. Thanks again to a friend for sending it to us – it has been galvanizing, comforting, and important to us in testing our own thinking around how structures (especially structural whiteness) absorb and diffuse complaint. It is an invaluable reminder that complaint is optimistic, brave, and necessary to allow others to follow in the paths we slowly make through it.

# Freedom of Information Request: Feedback from Tate

23 May 2019

GIRL FORUM  
By Email to: [info@girlforum.org](mailto:info@girlforum.org)

Dear GIRL FORUM

## **Freedom of Information Act Request – Case 784**

Thank you for your request under the Freedom of Information Act received by us on 11 April 2019.

For clarity, please see responses to each of your questions in turn, below.

1. *The date the decision was made by Tate Trustees to recommence ties with Anthony D'Offay.*

Trustees reviewed the situation on 21 November 2018. Trustees noted that Mr D'Offay had retired from all roles in respect of ARTIST ROOMS and the Artist Rooms Foundation and there had been no further developments. They agreed that the status of the relationship, in particular in relation to the works in the Artist Rooms Collection, should be further discussed and resolved.

With the support of Trustees and following discussion with the National Galleries of Scotland, on 11 January 2019 Tate informed ARTIST ROOMS partners that the suspension of contact with Mr D'Offay and the ARTIST ROOMS office was no longer in effect. The future business plan for ARTIST ROOMS was discussed by Trustees on 20 March 2019.

2. *The minutes of the meeting of the Trustees at which this decision was taken and the minutes of any other meeting at which the Tate's relationship with Anthony D'Offay was discussed along with any other record of the deliberation(s) taken by Trustees on this matter.*

The minutes of these meetings contain personal information and so remain confidential. Taking into account the reasonable expectation that a party would have to fair processing of this information, this confidentiality should be respected and is therefore withheld under section 40 (2) of the Freedom of Information Act (2000). Disclosure of the information to a member of the public would also contravene Article 21 of the GDPR. Material is also

withheld under Section 40 (5B) (b) of the Freedom of Information Act (2000). In this case, disclosure would breach data protection with regard consent and the lawful and fair processing of personal data. It is the fairness aspect of this principle, which, in our view, would be breached by disclosure. In such circumstances, s.40 confers an absolute exemption on disclosure. There is, therefore, no public interest test to apply.

Information is also withheld under Section 36 of the Freedom of Information Act, which pertains to the efficient conduct of public affairs. Section 36 is a qualified exemption: any public interest in the information being common knowledge must be balanced against maintaining confidentiality. Tate's Freedom of Information Group has considered this and hold that the discussion would have been materially prejudiced and frank exchange impeded by the possibility that the detail of deliberations and debate would be made public knowledge. The information should therefore remain confidential.

3. *The minutes of the Tate Ethics Committee(s) at any time between 2017 and the present at which the Gallery's relationship with D'Offay was discussed and the recommendation(s) and any associated report by the Ethics Committee, or any other body, made to the Tate Board on or related to the matter of this relationship.*

Beyond the meeting just mentioned, the relationship with Anthony D'Offay was discussed or updates given in the following contexts.

- A meeting of the Ethics Committee of 12 December 2017
- A meeting of the Ethics Committee of 23 February 2018
- A meeting of the Board of Trustees of 21 March 2018
- An update at the Board of Trustees of 23 May 2018
- Reference to the donor in the Annual Review of major donors by the Ethics Committee (21 February 2019)

At two of these meetings, Mr D'Offay was mentioned as part of the general annual review of major donors and we have disclosed those mentions below. At the meeting of the Ethics Committee of 23 February 2018, the report was as follows:

**Tate Relationship:** [*Here, information relating to the sums of specific donations is withheld under Section 40 (2) of the Freedom of Information Act (2000)*]. Anthony made a major gift of his collection, ARTIST ROOMS, to Tate and the National Galleries of Scotland in 2009. As of December 2017, there have been 165 exhibitions shown in 78 venues across the UK, with over 3.5 million visits to Associate exhibitions. Since 2009, when the touring programme was established, ARTIST ROOMS exhibitions around the UK have seen almost 41 million visitors, including visits to Tate and the National Galleries of Scotland. Anthony stepped down as ex-officio curator to ARTIST ROOMS on 19 December 2017.

**Profile:** Anthony began dealing contemporary art in the late 1960s. In 1980 he opened the Anthony d'Offay Gallery, representing artists such as Gerhard Richter, Gilbert and George, Richard Long and Richard Hamilton. He also represented many of the Young British Artists including Rachel Whiteread. The gallery closed in 2002.

In 2010, Anthony and Anne received the Prince of Wales Medal for Arts Philanthropy, while he received the UK Montblanc de la Culture Art Patronage Award in 2009.

**Areas of Possible Concern:** In January 2018, *The Observer* reported that Anthony d'Offay is facing a number of allegations of sexual harassment and inappropriate behaviour from three women with whom he has previously worked. The allegations date from 1997 to 2004. Tate and

National Galleries of Scotland issued a joint statement announcing that they have suspended further contact with Mr d'Offay until the matters have been clarified.

Similarly, Mr D'Offay was mentioned as part of the following annual review of major donors at the meeting of the Ethics Committee of 21 February 2019. The report was as follows:

**Tate Relationship:** [*Here, information relating to the sums of specific donations is withheld under Section 40 (2) of the Freedom of Information Act (2000)*] Anthony made a major gift of his collection, ARTIST ROOMS, to Tate and the National Galleries of Scotland in 2009. Anthony stepped down as ex-officio curator to ARTIST ROOMS on 19 December 2017.

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**Areas of Possible Concern:** In January 2018, *The Observer* reported that Anthony d'Offay is facing a number of allegations of sexual harassment and inappropriate behaviour from three women with whom he has previously worked. In February 2018, the campaign group We Are Not Surprised called on Tate to sever all ties with d'Offay, including removing his name from the Turbine Hall plaques and ARTIST ROOMS project. Tate replied that it was unable to discuss the matter.

In each of these two cases, the report of annual donors was noted by members of the Committee.

The relationship with Mr D'Offay was more specifically discussed as an item elsewhere in the agenda and in the other meetings mentioned above. We have given careful consideration to the request for minutes of these discussions. They include personal information; taking into account the reasonable expectation of fair processing of this information, its confidentiality should be respected and is therefore withheld under section 40 (2) of the Freedom of Information Act (2000). Disclosure of the information to a member of the public would also contravene Article 21 of the GDPR. Material is also withheld under Section 40 (5B) (b) of the Freedom of Information Act (2000).

As above and for the reasons identified, information is also withheld under Section 36 of the Freedom of Information Act, which pertains to the efficient conduct of public affairs.

*4. Any other assessment of accusations against D'Offay in relation to the Tate's Ethics Policies and any information or reports regarding reputational or similar audits and investigations conducted by Tate (or parties contracted by Tate) relating to D'Offay, Artist Rooms, and the Artist Rooms Foundation, including any assessments with regard to impacts on fulfilment of Tate's mission.*

In light of allegations made in the press and on social media, Tate undertook due diligence in line with its dignity and respect policy. As detailed above, the personal information involved is withheld.

As above and for the reasons identified, information is also withheld under Section 36 of the Freedom of Information Act, which pertains to the efficient conduct of public affairs.

If you are not satisfied with this response to your request for information, you may seek an internal review of this response by replying in writing to this letter. Tate will respond to your request for a review within 20 working days of the receipt of your request.

If you remain dissatisfied with Tate's response following an internal review, you may seek an independent adjudication on the matter from the Information Commissioner, who can be contacted at:

Wycliffe House  
Water Lane  
Wilmslow  
Cheshire SK9 5AF

Or you may telephone on:  
Tel: 01625 545 745

Yours sincerely,

Samuel Jones  
On behalf of Tate's Freedom of Information Group

# GIRLFORUM Monthly Issue 04.5



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GIRLFORUM is applying for Arts Council funding, but is currently completely unfunded. If you can help us work towards this, please visit our Patreon page:

[patreon.com/GIRLFORUM](https://patreon.com/GIRLFORUM)

or get in touch if you'd like to lend us space, time or advice.

#### Cover image:

Crop from 'A protester takes shelter from billowing smoke during demonstrations in Ferguson on Aug. 13, 2014. Such scenes were relatively common during the first week of protest'. David Carson - St. Louis Post-Dispatch/AP

#### Back cover image:

'One of the tear gas canisters the US used on migrants at San Ysidro on Nov. 25.' (via @patrickwtimmons). Tear gas manufactured by Safariland, the 'law enforcement product' company owned by Warren Kanders - Chair of the Whitney Museum board