

Will the Rose Art Museum Achieve Fifty Years?

The first sentence of the *History* section of the Rose Art Museum of Brandeis University's official website reads: "2011 marks the fiftieth anniversary of the Rose Art Museum at Brandeis University." A few weeks ago, art aficionados would happily note this fact and continue reading on about the birth of the leading collecting museum of modern and contemporary art in the region. Today, however, this apparent fact could be mere wishful thinking. Since its founding in 1961, the Rose Art Museum has been collecting, preserving, and exhibiting the finest of art while abiding by Brandeis University's overall mission of embracing its values of "academic excellence, social justice, and freedom of expression." In a time of great economic hardship, however, the Rose Art Museum may not be able to accomplish the supposed fifty-year milestone. Throughout media coverage of the possible selling of the museum's collection, the regional *Boston Globe* and the world renowned *New York Times* have divulged facts and opinions alike, although it is clear that in Boston, this story hits closer to home.

On Tuesday, January 27th, both *The New York Times* and *The Boston Globe* ran introductory articles presenting the new development that in order to deal with struggling finances, Brandeis University may have to sell-off the entire collection of its Rose Art Museum. In the National Section of the newspaper, a relatively short article entitled "Brandeis Says It Plans to Sell Art Collection" is the first piece published in *The Times* concerning the present-day Rose Art Museum situation. The content of the article is concise and succinct. In simple language, the reader

discovers the main facts and little more. The museum was founded in 1961 and is best known for its collection of modern art. More than 8,000 pieces can be found in the museum, including works by Andy Warhol, Jasper Johns, and Roy Lichtenstein. A quotation from Brandeis President Jehuda Rehinartz is included. While disclosing little emotion, he expresses that the driving force behind the possible selling is the harsh economic times. The article continues with a description of the plan of a late summer closure with all of the proceeds from the sale going back into the university. The article is concluded with a statement explaining the budget shortfall that Brandeis is facing that could go up to \$10 million and an already instated hiring freeze at the university. In this strictly informative initial article, the reader gets an unbiased perspective of the current situation surrounding the Rose Art Museum. Although *The Boston Globe* has the same factual approach, expressive language used in the article makes more of an attempt to capture the emotions of the reader.

“Ailing Brandeis will shut museum, sell treasured art...No other choice, says president” is the big, bold-lettered headline of the preliminary article located on the upper fold of the front page of January 27th's edition of *The Boston Globe*. It is already evident from the word choice of the title that this article is unsupportive of the selling of the Rose Art collection. The piece goes on to reveal similar fact-based information uncovered in *The Times* piece but does so in a more passionate manner. *The Times* says that the museum is “best known for its collection of modern art, including works by Andy Warhol, Jasper Johns, and Roy Lichtenstein.”

The Globe discloses the same information but instead reports that the museum collection “includes work by such contemporary masters as Roy Lichtenstein, Andy Warhol, and Nam June Paik.” As influential as these artists may be, by simply using the phrase *contemporary masters* the reader is aware that the reporter of this story is in favor of the arts. The article goes on to report that the director of the museum, Michael Rush “only learned of the decision late yesterday afternoon, hours after the university’s board of trustees voted unanimously to close the 48-year-old museum.” Although *The Globe* gives the facts, it is clear that *The Times* reports the key information in a more professional manner, without bringing personal inquiries into it. The *Globe* article also includes a quotation from President Reinharz similar to *The Times*, however, *Globe* author Edgers additionally incorporates a quotation from chairman of the Rose’s board of overseers, Jonathan Lee, that places Brandeis in a negative light. The *Globe* article goes into greater detail than *The Times* when it comes to explaining what will happen to the museum after the selling and what Brandeis plans to do with the money. The article discloses crucial facts and information needed to fully understand the situation surrounding the museum and Brandeis University but also does so in a manner that will likely sway the reader into choosing to support one side or the other.

The next segment of *The Times* coverage of the Rose Art Museum collection selling was published on the front page of the Arts Section on Wednesday, January 28th. Appearing on the upper fold of the section, a large photograph of the director of the museum introduces the article. In this piece, *The Times* gives a more detailed

account of the possible museum closure than its preliminary article from the day before. The author digs deeper into the financial situation surrounding the museum and Brandeis University and an explanation of the logistics behind the legal matters of the closing is introduced. Compared to Tuesday's report, more emotion shines through in the Arts article but by means of quotation excerpts from the likes of the director of the museum at Randolph College, Karol Lawson, who compared her forced selling of a Rufino Tamayo painting in 2007 to "a mugging" and thus resigned. The article gives the reader a better taste of the bitter financial situation that Brandeis currently finds itself in, mentioning the many hard hit university donors who had been linked to Bernard L. Madoff and his connection to the \$50 billion Ponzi scheme. This piece does a fine job of giving the necessary background information and key details of the case in order to fully inform its audience. One can interpret that not all are in favor of the selling of this art collection, however, *The Times* gives its readers the full story, allowing them to formulate his or her own opinions.

Appearing once again on the upper fold of the front page, coverage of the Rose Art Museum collection sell-off continued on in *The Boston Globe* on Wednesday, January 28th. Reporter Peter Schworm goes into deeper detail in describing the reactions of the people regarding the selling, museum donors in particular. He mentions alumni petitions, angry students and faculty members, and a possible sit-in by students at the museum. In this article, most of the sentiments conveyed are done so through direct quotations versus the use of expressive

language as with Tuesday's report. Among the major donors mentioned is a widow of a former Brandeis trustee, Lois Foster. In 2001, a wing of the museum was funded by the Fosters with a \$5 million donation. She is passionately quoted in the article by saying that to her, the Rose closing is "like a death." Also mentioned are the criticisms being made by officials in the museum world of the Brandeis administration and a Brandeis alum who is quoted saying, "But for the Rose Art Museum, I would not be an art dealer today." Although it is once again clear that *The Globe* is bringing to surface the outrage felt by museum supporters, in this article they also shed light on the museum donors who are supportive of the possible sell-off. Through a statement made by spokesman Dennis Nealon, it is discovered that although donors are "dismayed" by the closing, they understand the difficult circumstances that Brandeis is facing. *The Globe* appears to be driven to not just give its readers the facts of current events but also show how the news affects them and their community members. As a regional newspaper reporting on a local event, *The Globe* is given more of an opportunity to show the reaction and emotion of the people. In their first article published on the subject of the Rose Art Museum they gave their readers a fairly narrow view on the situation. In Wednesday's follow-up, however, emotions are only communicated by fair means of direct quotations and statements, giving readers of *The Globe* a clearer outlook into the situation at hand.

When considering the news source one wants to receive their current events from, one must realize the differences amongst media sources. As we digest the

news, we decide to formulate our own opinion on a subject and depending on the source, facts and views may vary. The way a story is conveyed can either shape or diminish our original thought-process and we must be aware of possible distortions in the news delivery process. Although people all over the country may feel the impact of the selling of the Rose Art Museum collection, when it comes to the local paper of Waltham and the Massachusetts region, this story makes front-page headlines. Local news sources delivering this story will be more inclined to get a reaction from the audience and thus will use language and examples that will likely be in agreement with their readers' views. In a national paper, catering to a much larger and diverse population, this topic directly interests a more specific niche of people. In both cases, the news sources meet the needs of their target audience, whether it is through the placement of news articles or the use of colloquial language. No means of news delivery is better or worse than the other and through the comparison of articles published by *The Boston Globe* and *The New York Times* one is able to observe the similarities and differences between a regional and a worldwide news publication.

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