

Case 7

Carl Y is the Director of Z Museum, a major art museum on the east coast of the United States. Carl badly wants to bring to Z Museum an exhibit of works by young British artists that recently concluded a very successful show at a museum in London. Carl is familiar with the works of many of the artists, and considers them among the most interesting on the contemporary art scene.

Unfortunately the transportation and installation costs are immense. One piece of sculpture in the London show, for example, weighs several tons. Government support for the arts has declined substantially in recent years, so Carl concludes that in order to bring the show to Z Museum he needs to find a private donor who will help him cover the costs. All the works in the show in London belong to a British art collector named Jeremy Q. Carl proposes to Jeremy that he make a large donation to help the Z Museum put on the exhibition, and Jeremy agrees to do so.

After agreeing to support the exhibit at Z Museum, Jeremy persuades M's, a prestigious auction house, to co-sponsor the exhibit, as it did in London. To persuade M's Jeremy tells Henry P, President of M's British division, that he plans a major sale of works in his collection later in the year after the exhibit at Z Museum has concluded, and that he might use M's as the auctioneer. At about the time that Jeremy says this to Henry P., Carl Y has a lunch meeting with Anne S, President of M's North American division. Carl tells Anne that Z Museum is considering a significant program to sell its holdings in all collection categories, especially modern art, which happens to be M's specialty. As planning for the show at Z Museum proceeds, Jeremy Q proves to be very demanding and opinionated with respect to artistic details. He insists that the paintings be hung low, and he doesn't want labels affixed too closely to them. The Museum staff wants to eliminate some paintings from the show, but Jeremy strongly urges their inclusion. Some of Jeremy's requests are expensive. He wants Z Museum to use special shipping crates, he insists that the galleries be repainted, and he wants Z. Museum to pay \$20,000 for bringing his special installation consultant to the Museum for several weeks.

Carl Y and the Z Museum staff go along with most of Jeremy Q's wishes. They consider him, after all, as probably the most knowledgeable person in the world about contemporary British art. Jeremy, however, is also interested in attracting corporate sponsorship for his collection. In this regard consultants tell him that a successful show at Z Museum would be highly advantageous. When the exhibit opens, Jeremy Q's financial support is not made public.

The Code of Ethics for Museum Directors says that Directors should "assiduously avoid" activities that compromise their institutions. On the subject of exhibition financing, the Code only contains two vague sentences that say a Director should not compromise standards for the sake of revenue.

Question: Assume that Musuem Z's exhibit of works by young British artists takes place, and it is now one year later. The Ethics Committee of the Museum Director's Association is meeting to consider revisions in the Museum Director's Code of Ethics. You are a member of the Ethics Committee. Do you have any recommendations to put

forward for revising the Code of Ethics in connection with the subject of exhibition financing? If so, what are your recommendations, and why? If not, why not?