

Lorrie Meyercord

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Gino Borges:

Lorrie is coming to us as a good friend in the impact investing space. She's been featured in *The New York Times* on a couple occasions back in 2016 and 2018. These featured articles are centered around utilizing impact investing to support artistic & aesthetic entrepreneurship. We'll move forward to not only Lorrie's outward impact investing life, but also her journey inside to how she's made the journey to who she is today. We'll touch on how she is looking at all the different angles of what it actually means to have a relationship with resources, to be a steward of money, and to be in service to the world.

Lorrie Meyercord:

One of the big draws is that few people talk about the connection between impact investing and actually supporting artists. Rather, it's often talked about as a non-profit phenomenon. I have found a way to make that transition from non-profit. It may not be a high-yielding experience, but in general, it's a way of supporting arts in a much different way.

Gino Borges:

How did you come to that point in your life, transitioning into saying "I want to do more with my resources," and in particular "I want to support artists in this particular way."

Lorrie Meyercord:

It started out as a joke. I had hired Jed Emerson to be a consultant. My brother, Jack, manages my money, and the two of us were pretty new to this space. We hired Jed to give us the landscape and help connect us to people that might be aligned. As we sat together in a strategy meeting, Jed asked, "what are your top values?"

I majored in Art; my first career was in the Arts as a graphic designer and art director. I've always loved the Arts. So naturally, I would love to invest in the Arts if that was possible. We all got a chuckle out of it, but it's turned out to not be a joke at all. It's so possible and has been really rewarding to see that it's viable. The further we've gotten into it, the inspiration has amplified because we need creativity in order to face some of the issues we're facing today.

The arts, in my mind, expands to the creative economy and how to support creativity, not necessarily where I started in a Liberal Arts course. That too, of course, but the Arts encompasses a much wider range now.

Gino Borges:

Where are you moving resources and through what kind of instrument? What's the shape of that type of investment?

Lorrie Meyercord:

There's a group called Upstart Co-Lab led by Laura Callanan. She was one of the first people that I connected with years ago. That situation was a non-profit, set up with a three-year grant to basically explore this exact topic. How can we invest in the arts and creativity? One of the first deals she brought to me was the deal featured in the article around Art Space. That had a more real estate-play, creating housing for artists and their families, but also a community aspect where each apartment building is required to have, as part of the model, community classes and events. I really loved it, but again, the investment took more of a real estate angle. It was through Calvert; it was an investment in a fund they covered.

Other examples are OneDome, right in San Francisco, and Meow Wolf in Santa Fe. Both of those are immersive art experiences where you're buying a ticket to go experience it. They're able to create revenue from ticket sales, merchandise, food and beverage. They've both had great success from the start. Now, Meow Wolf is 10 years old, an incredible success over the years. They're now about to expand to Denver, Las Vegas, Washington, D.C., and Phoenix, just about to explode. Those are some examples of different ways it can look.

My latest opportunity is here in Kauai. There's an old guava manufacturing facility that myself and two other people have gone in together. It's been sitting vacant for years. It's a ghosted building, but it's on stunningly beautiful land, 40 acres. We also leased another 40 in addition to that. It'll be a combination of a farm and a restaurant where I'll be leading the art. We'll do a sculpture garden, we'll have resident artists, and we will eventually do classes for the community and the kids. It's a big project, but that's another example of how I'm investing in the arts, but not with an intention to just give away my money. It's still an investment and smart, but it's supporting creativity.

Gino Borges:

Is this creating critical mass? Have you had others that have reached out to you about what you are doing?

Lorrie Meyercord:

I've had some people reach out and want me to speak on a panel. It hasn't worked out yet for me to attend since I live in Kauai and have two young kids. It can be difficult. One was in Portugal and the other one was in Colombia. I would love to, and that's what I'm hoping for next: to come together with other like-minded investors at the 100% network event in Big

Sur. There seemed to be some interest there. That's what I'm trying to build now. I have felt a bit on my own as an investor collaborating with entrepreneurs, but now I'm trying to find other investors to team up with.

Gino Borges:

You make a connection that some of the issues we're dealing with now would benefit by being approached artistically and aesthetically. There's all these traditional categories—climate change, human rights, and so forth, and they often get reduced down into only using one part of the brain. A large part of the brain and the communal experience about being alive in the world is just not a part of that vantage point. What have you seen as a result of this? How are the aesthetic communities that you're supporting addressing this in ways that the traditional paradigms and traditional thought processes have been unable to access until this point in time?

Lorrie Meyercord:

That's a great question. I don't know if I can speak to exact changes. It's part of the trust within myself that those changes are seen when we are deeply listening to that creative life force within us. My experience in my own life and my belief is that these artistic perspectives and experiences help us get in touch with the wisdom within ourselves. We are often stuck on one side of the brain where there maybe something we're not hearing, and we're missing something.

I just went to San Francisco to go to OneDome. I was blown away by the level of diversity there. There was every single race and age group represented. You had grandparents with little kids... You had teenage kids... You had everything represented. There was joy, playfulness, and the spark of creativity and inspiration. I can see it in their eyes. I don't know how that's going to translate in their community. But I just trust that that spark is essential for what we're facing.

Gino Borges:

I say the same thing about our work in terms of community resiliency at OpenPath. The best outcomes we have are largely invisible, and it's a very visceral sense of knowing that it's less attached to traditional metrics. The impact space really loves to consolidate phenomena into little pockets. Yet, we know intuitively from our own families and life experiences that often the best parts of life, joy and fulfillment, are largely beyond linguistic categories and socialized metrics. There has to be an inward-trusting, faithful moment.

Where did you begin this journey? You have a past in alternative medicine. I only say the term "alternative" because although it's mainstream to me, it's alternative to most. Share with our audience on how your relationship to money evolved.

Lorrie Meyercord:

It's funny because I grew up in New Jersey in a suburb of Manhattan surrounded by finance—my dad, brother, sister, uncle, and cousins. I always had a little bit of judgment. I was the youngest, a flower child kid. I moved to California, was first an art major, then an Italian major, and later ended up in Chinese Medicine school.

My ex-husband was the first employee of GoPro. We were on that journey together from the very beginning. I had my acupuncture practice and two small kids. We were in debt from student loans and put our whole wedding on a credit card. My relationship with money had long revolved around judgement as starving artist and the youngest in my family. Then, GoPro turned out to be a success. All of a sudden we had this impending IPO, and my ex-husband didn't have any interest in the investing side of it. He said, "I don't have the time or the interest. I'll leave this up to you."

I called my brother Jack, who had his own hedge fund in Asian markets. He was having an existential moment. We had just started to collaborate when he mentioned this conference called SoCap. "Why don't you just come with me because you're in San Francisco?" So, I went with him and it was a very "aha!" moment. "This is what I could do!" We still hadn't had the IPO so I didn't have actually any money to invest. However, I was already sold. Once the IPO happened, we started to explore. With an IPO, you're basically locked out for six months – so we were just exploring things for a bit, but again, my ex-husband wasn't totally comfortable. He'd been working his ass off for 10 years and was like, "it sounds great and all that, but..." He was coming from that place of "don't screw up," which I understand. Then, just as fate would have it, our marriage ended.

Jack and I looked at each other. I'm like "well, I guess this makes things efficient" in terms of what we wanted to do investment-wise, and I sold my portion. That really kicked off my journey to have full freedom to put all of my resources to work.

It was a pretty surreal experience of going from being in one place with money to then all of a sudden in the finance world. I'm right back where I grew up, but this time I'm really feeling connected to it. You've talked about stewardship before. This experience seemed clear to me that, for some reason, the universe wanted me to steward this money. I never imagined this for my life. A lot of the GoPro years were difficult and trying times. I was just ready to throw in the towel, but it just ended up the way it did. Now, it's been a transition into the absolute privilege and honor to be able to direct this energy capital towards things that I love and things that I feel will support humanity and the planet.

Gino Borges:

Have you noticed any connections between acupuncture and your journey on impact investing?

Lorrie Meyercord:

When I had my acupuncture practice, there was a voice that would literally say to me “this is inefficient,” and it would drive me nuts. There’s only so many ways you can have an acupuncture practice, even if you have a hundred patients in a day. I kept inquiring “what is this voice,” and then, years later I’m in impact investing. “Oh my God, this is what that voice was leading me towards,” because this is obviously way more globally powerful versus treating one person at a time. But all of a sudden, I saw this opportunity to move life force energy towards areas that need nourishment.

In Chinese Medicine you’re basically looking for areas of stagnation and areas of deficiency. You’re trying to open up areas of stagnation and nourish the deficiencies. We’re still trying to do that right now.

There’s the people and animals that are experiencing inefficiency, not they themselves, but given the resources available. Then, there’s the areas where it may be stagnant – a constriction or a holding. Looking at that landscape, I picked up impact investing with that same acupuncture-lens of looking for patterns and looking for balance. It’s been quite fun.

Gino Borges:

To keep that metaphor alive – would the needle of acupuncture be the equivalent of what impact investing is?... Putting a little pressure on where it’s stuck in order to open up the energy in a particular space? Rather than the Earthly body that we walk around with, you’re essentially looking for stuck energy in community bodies. Impact investing becomes the needle point where you find the therapeutic pulse, a place where all of a sudden there’s that little throbbing going on and you’ve hit it. The beauty is watching the throbbing just diminish slowly as a result. When you’re funding these aesthetic communities, there was probably an immense amount of stuck blood in some cases, right?

Lorrie Meyercord:

Essentially, as a result of the bodies of those communities, you start to feel more alive because we’re sending energy to more nodes within them. You trust what needs to self-organize and reorient.

Essentially, the cosmological order does its dance with you as long as we’re constantly in a sense of creating flow for both, not only the body that we’re in via acupuncture, but also this body is working within the sphere of money and communities as well. It just builds on that idea that we are all connected. The five elements in the body all need each other, but they have to be in harmony. If one isn’t, it affects the whole system, and eventually, that same element. It’s looking at the globe as this living organism and really recognizing where things are needing support and what type of support. The interesting thing about a needle is you

can communicate to the body different messages at the same point. Some points in general are more sedating and some are more tonifying, but it's really this dance with the body of listening and then supporting it with what it's saying it needs.

So, it feels like the same thing with the body of the world. It's great to come to those moments of complete disorientation like "I don't know what I'm doing," where all of a sudden shadow emotions start to come in, whether it's fear anxiety and so forth.

Gino Borges:

Can you touch on your latest confusion or something new that you currently started confronting on your journey with impact now?

Lorrie Meyercord:

There's a couple – first, the guava facility. It's a big thing to take on with a lot of excitement mixed with fear as well. Living in the Hawaiian Islands, originally from the mainland, it's important to be aware and sensitive to the history of these islands and the energy and wisdom that the indigenous people have to offer. I'm really trying to be mindful. I know that things will probably be misconstrued or projected upon me incorrectly. It's sensitive, and it brings up fears for me.

Another is that my brother and I are starting a new fund together – a big risk amidst excitement all at the same time. We are seeing a need for a fund in the public equities market that we don't feel exists and we want to create it. But, at the same time, it's really daunting with the instability of the market right now.

Again, I find myself just trying to listen to that voice that is guiding us, and continue on. But, it's daunting to take these things on not knowing. You need collaborators and players, and it's challenging starting this process before they appear. But, it's beginning to appear already. The collaborators and players are out there, but what I'm noticing is that I have to take that step forward first for them to come. Both with the Kauai project and with Jack, I feel I'm walking blindly.

Gino Borges:

What do you use during these moments in the fog of impact? How do you move forward serving in the catalyst role to set in motion some form of materialization?

Lorrie Meyercord:

You're balanced. You're centering. When you find yourself in these situations, it's important to hold faith, to be true to yourself, and to be able to honor intentionality. I have a deep meditation practice. I have a specific meditation. I do The Sacred Heart meditation where I journey inside and it becomes a visual journey. Maybe since I'm an artist, I end up getting

wisdom in the form of images. I literally bring questions in there and sit with them. That's always my most powerful place for guidance. Also, just listening to my body when things are feeling tight and constricted. You've got to have the tools. I support my body whether it's through yoga, acupuncture, meditation, or journaling, allowing time to take everything in.

For me, impact investing has been one of the ultimate personal growth vehicles. A lot of money can be overwhelming and shakes relationships. We need to learn to put it to work. It's just providing ample opportunity to bring things in, sit with them, and come back to the truth of abundance. My biggest challenge in this space is to get out of a place of urgency when I find myself in there. It's so easy with everything happening in the age of global warming to feel so urgent. But, in my experience that's usually my ego talking to me. When I feel that physiology come up, I try to come back to this place of trusting abundance, knowing there's nothing to screw up. It's all going to be perfect no matter what happens, even if it fails. I try to live my life constantly coming back to abundance.

Gino Borges:

Impact investing is largely still a cerebral and miserable journey for many. You have demonstrated to me that it's more of an embodied approach. It's a vehicle for social transformation.

How do we share the potentiality of the body wisdom, the other side of the brain, or alternative realities? Aside demonstrating it ourselves, how do we get that out there? Toniic has a culture within it that I think is attracted to these principles that you're referring to. We're really talking about this work where there are opportunities to confront things and to go inside. Part of what draws me into the space is the potential to look at my whole person. It encompasses not only the head but the heart. And you, you're also talking about the ethereal body around you. You're in touch with the Earth.

How do we get the word out there about more of a holistic way of approaching our relationship with resources and money stewardship?

Lorrie Meyercord:

Life is always giving us these opportunities. Investing with your money is just one. Your question leads me back to the arts.

Think of experiences you have with the arts: you go to a concert, you go to see a really moving film, or you read that poem that just knocks you right. These are the most efficient ways into the heart. That is why I love the arts. It can reach people beyond you.

We get these emails to sign up for a retreat that would be about impact investing and personal growth. Who wouldn't absolutely delete that email? However, we would be impacted by a powerful movie, or a moving song.

When I went to New York for the launch of Upstart Co-Lab 2.0, Yo-Yo Ma was there telling us about the Bach Series he's working on. The Bach Suites are, he says, the best a cellist could bring. Playing the Bach Suites is the most complex. It pulls from his emotions in ways that are most challenging. So, he's giving you the best of him. He came up with this idea to go around the world to different cities, play the Bach suites, and then encourage a dialogue. Previous to attending, they will have collaborated with people, and the topics that as a community they need to face, hearing diverse perspectives. He's done five already and continuing for the next two years. He's using his art to crack people's hearts wide open, lay the groundwork, and then have this incredible dialogue.

He went to Flint Michigan and they were like, "we don't want to talk about water actually." He asks "what *do* you want to talk about?" Then, up to Montreal, where they want to talk about AI – it is so fascinating to hear the diverse issues that meant something to different people. What I love most is he's using his art to really spark that connection to the full creative self.

Gino Borges:

You mention "cracking your heart open." It shook up your relations a bit when all of a sudden you came into material abundance. Long-held relationships obviously got colored and shaped as a result of this awareness around the material abundance that came to you that you are now stewarding. How have you navigated those relationships that were in flux?

Lorrie Meyercord:

The biggest one was my marriage. I say it was like watching a train wreck in slow motion. I could see what the intoxication of success and money was doing, but there was really nothing I could do to stop that from happening. It finally just became apparent that it wasn't a match to be married anymore.

It's been an amazing journey to see what can actually be possible when you're free to play out your life, and there's no judgment there. It was nice to let him go "do him" and play out his life. We have an incredible friendship now and a beautiful co-parenting arrangement. We've been navigating that process for four years now, but that's probably the biggest situation where I watched money have a very hypnotic intoxicating hold on him.

I'm sure other people go through this too, but when you have all this material abundance and there's this feeling of "I need to give it all away." I need to help this person and that person. I have to wonder where is that coming from within me. What's the intention behind it for me? What am I really trying to get from buying this person something they need? I've had so many opportunities to practice that one. As you see someone struggling, you think "I can help," but is that really what is going to be the highest good for that person's spiritual growth to just solve or fix it? It doesn't mean you don't help in certain instances. That part of us that wants to "fix" can be really amplified and tested when you have a lot of resources. That's been a big journey: listening to what is the highest good here.

Gino Borges:

Hypnotic attachment to abundance: you mentioned it as a symptom. You saw the hypnotic power of it along with a train wreck in slow motion. Besides the divorce as a way of separating, you became free to play out your life without judgment. “He can be him. You can be you.”

It can be hypnotic to also be the person that receives all of the incoming needs of the world. It can make you feel like, “I’m front and center.” You mentioned that you go inward, but I’m more interested how you manage the ego during those moments. You ask, “is this the highest and best use for this particular person?” That obviously puts us in a position of assessing whether we think it’s the highest good as opposed to simply asking that person. I see this on numerous occasions in philanthropy and in charity work where you can see a predisposition to think that we know what’s best for others. How do you navigate the ego aspect?

Also, I love what you’re doing with the arts. It seems like you are supporting the conditions for the artists to be artists. How are you creating conditions for Lorrie to be Lorrie? How are you investing in yourself?

Lorrie Meyercord:

Creating more alone time to be creative myself and saying “no” to more things in the impact space. It’s so tempting to always be going to conferences and trips. I think one of my biggest practices has been saying “no” to a lot of things, staying grounded, staying home with my kids, painting, and doing the things I know nourish me. But again, the ego is so slippery. The ego will come in and say “you need to be doing more. There’s so much stuff you could be helping with.” Again, it’s a dialogue. What’s this about here? Where’s this coming from?

We were talking about going to Tel Aviv – I would love to go to Tel Aviv. I know you’re going to have an incredible time, but when I check-in with myself, there isn’t space there. It feels like more of a clinging or fear of missing out. That’s what I look for.

Sometimes I get invited to something, and “boom.” There’s an open, spacious feeling. Then, I think, “okay.” Other times, there are other feelings I get that are obvious red flags.

Gino Borges:

I love that idea of connecting to whether you feel spaciousness or constriction.

You mentioned how some people are starting to form around the arts and supporting artists.

Where do you see those investments in supporting aesthetic communities looking like five to ten years from now? Or, hope that it looks like?

Lorrie Meyercord:

The first thing that pops to mind is the idea of getting artists in the room. It isn't just about supporting their entrepreneurial endeavor, but this idea of appreciating that an artist spends their entire life connecting very deeply to that creative life force that is moving through them, a force I believe holds the most wisdom. That's their practice, to continually open up and reach their edges and push through, to be a vessel in a conduit for that energy to come through.

If enough people value that, knowing they have different strengths, they have different skills, but they'll want them in the room.

There will be this recruitment of and a real desire for those people to be present on boards, to be facilitating off-site for various companies. There will be this bridge between the artists, being this thing over 'there' that you go and enjoy their finished product to then be seen as a powerful collaborator. An artist perspective—that's needed.

Gino Borges:

I was talking to a good friend of mine that has been on many boards, venture boards in particular. There's always the founders, the venture firm, and then they have to have one independent, a very old person. You have to have an Elder in the room. Everyone is still bent to the same metrics, the same way of seeing the world, but it's an elder that's able to keep the calm. I've always suggested that every board should have a trickster on it. Just like the king and queen used to always have a joker as part of the courts, we need a trickster to always be rubbing up against the edge of uncomfortability and just showing people the other side, or the opportunity cost, of going one way versus another.

It's a very difficult thing to get buy-in on when you have a particular goal. I struggled early in my 20s, mostly just trying to rage against the machine. I didn't know where to turn with my energy. Wherever I would go with this energy, I felt I was constantly being reduced and commodified. It's interesting that we *create* business communities and, then separately, artistic communities. The irony is that both of these communities would benefit tremendously by being on the same dance floor together; they can help each other out so much.

On the other hand, I have quite a few artist friends; none of which would I think to even put in charge of a candy store, knowing how they operate. So, wouldn't it be nice if both of these groups could get together? The equivalent of when the East meets the West – the beauty of culture meeting.

Why not meet up with people that are channeling different energy? We have one body that's channeling optimization efficiency strategy and are great at it, too! They'll fly all across the country. They hold meetings and they're talking about the dance. The other side is talking

“flow” and aren’t attached to outcome: wanting to play with color, potentiality, freedom and body. Wouldn’t it be beautiful if we got everybody in the room?

Thank you for being out in front doing that work because I think my 20s would have been much different if I too would have had the moment to play in both worlds. That’s who I am. I’m at my best when I’m migrating between the East and the West rather than being stuck. It’s in migration where my power emerges.

All the talk more recently surrounds having a gender-lens, but no one is talking about the artist-lens. It would be great to bring this perspective into the business side of things and have not just an elder on the board, but also artists to bring in a diverse concepts.

Do you have anything to share that came up that either I didn’t ask you or that percolated as a result of what came up?

Lorrie Meyercord:

I appreciate that question of how do we use impact investing as vehicle for personal growth, and how do we get that out there. I’m sure there’s tons of people who share that perspective, and I would love to encourage anyone who resonates with that to reach out. I’m not sure how we’d all gather and build that movement, but I would love to be a part of it because I do think it’s starting to take shape.