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LETTERS TO THE EDITORS

40 Comments from members of CAN SA, QCAN and CAN WA on the Community Partnerships Scoping Study: Creative Communities, June 2006 published by the Australia Council.
We currently have no funding for Artwork for next year so this is the last edition in the current format. We have been working as a National editorial team for just over five years, but Artwork has been around since 1988. And as this is Artwork 65 you can see we have 64 earlier editions on the library shelf. They tell an important history of community arts practice in Australia. CAN SA is currently exploring options to continue Artwork but at this stage we are calling it quits as a National editorial committee. Consequently there will be contributions to this editorial from each of the remaining members of the National editorial team.

I started the last Artwork editorial with a description of walking along a beach. I went walking again recently trying to figure out how to start this Artwork but I was walking along a very different beach ... far from home. I had just met with the other editors Pilar Kasat and Bronwyn Jewell. We had all been at the Pacific Edge Regional Arts Conference in Mackay Queensland which gave us a chance, after our presentations were over, to network with our regional peers and have a national partners meeting or two. The beaches are very different from in my neck of the woods ... The sun comes up over it, which is a foreign concept for those from SA, the colours are different and the water temperature is warmer. And after a couple of delightful swims someone kindly showed me the sign (covered with green undergrowth) with the crocodile on it! Local knowledge is really important. I usually have an understanding of the local threats but not on this beach.

The conversations at the conference and our meetings also examined the threats. Well that may be a bit rash, maybe I should say ... we discussed the possible consequences of change on areas (geographic and artform) of our practice. We are all waiting with baited breath for a better understanding on how the Australia Council Community Partnerships section will roll out the recommendations of the Community Partnerships Scoping Study report Creative Communities which was passed by the Australia Council in June 2006. In this Artwork 65 we publish a number of responses to the Scoping Study drawn from the members of the Community Arts Networks in Qld, WA and SA.

It is a complex context we are currently operating within and as such, an opportunity to contemplate the future with a wider reflection of arts and cultural policy and practice. This edition has adopted a different approach to Artwork. We have a key article from an international writer looking at cultural value. John Holden examines the view that it is necessary to find new and convincing methods to validate public funding. He shows how alternative ways of valuing culture are possible, by drawing on disciplines as diverse as brand valuation by accountants and the language of sustainability used by environmentalists. We have commissioned four responses to this article from across Australia and from a variety of aspects of our practice. The writers’ brief was to respond to any relevant aspect of the key article in relation to their understanding of policy and practice in Australia today.

We have also taken a different approach to images in this edition. The Warrnambool Art Gallery in Victoria recently had an exhibition called New Social Commentaries 06. A range of images from that exhibition are throughout this edition with information about the artists and the exhibition and the catalogue essay by Alex Gawronski called Contemporary Art and Social Justice; How soon is Now?

I have delighted in being part of the National editorial team. Identifying crocs is always easier when you have partners to watch your back. I will miss working with all the members of the team over the years that I have been involved. I thank them all for their support. Before we get into the articles I am going to hand over to Bronwyn and Pilar for their last words ...
Artwork has been very important in the life of QCAN as I imagine it has in other membership based Community Art Networks. It has been the replacement for the organisation’s own publications Network News and then Culture Matters which ended in 2001. As such, Artwork has had a huge brief: to satisfy the loss of a locally relevant publication to the individual state memberships and constituents, whilst also addressing national issues. A recent survey of QCAN members showed that our members were extremely happy with the content, design, thematic choices and relevancy of Artwork to their work. The survey response was unusually high so it is worth mentioning that it was over 30% of our 300-plus membership. I now feel for the Artwork readership of Queensland and hope to represent their dismay about the magazine’s demise.

Having come into this company late in the history of QCAN’s involvement with the publication, I am not completely familiar with the ins and outs of the funding arrangements. BUT it seems to me that it has been given a tenuous line of funding from the Australia Council right from the start. It has been therefore very easy to dump it unceremoniously without review or recourse. Flap, flap, BANG!! shot straight out of the sky.

The scoping study recommends that there be a national voice, a vehicle for a national forum in print and on line. The Scoping Study also picked up that we (the sector) wanted and needed a national platform for issues, debate and resource sharing. I can hear the sounds of the wheel being invented again: newer looking, with more debate and of course with better writers and so on and so on. AND then where will this new publication be in five years’ time? Will it be hanging on the thread of uncertain and unsustainable funding?

Through the Scoping Study we (the sector) were unofficially informed that the Australia Council was not continuing the support for Artwork and ccd.net. CAN SA was informed when they received a smaller than requested grant for Artwork for 2006 that they could not expect any future monies for this publication.

The Scoping Study assumes that because we did not make particular reference to these projects that they were not relevant to our practice or the future of ccd in Australia. What else did we not mention that will now not exist because of a lack of illumination? CAN SA have conducted a national survey of Artwork readership and we will be interested to see the results. (If you have not filled out a survey and are still willing please download a form www.cansa.net.au)

QCAN has been supporting its involvement in Artwork through the subscriptions from our members and there is no other funding line from either of our major funders that is allocated to it. In 2004 and 2005 our income from membership barely covered our costs to Artwork. The Directors of the CANs each edit at least one edition per year, which creates significant extra work for those positions. Postage and distribution is also covered by the CANs which creates work and costs for the whole organisation. CAN SA has the lion’s share of responsibility and administers the production and distribution nationally. We should be happy to be rid of an extra-curricular activity of such cost in time and money. Why we have continued the support is because we know that Artwork gives us all a vital picture of the practice, creates a valuable archive of our work and resources the national sector.

I hear there is a column in Arts Hub dedicated to ccd practice?

**Bronwyn Jewell**
Director, QCAN

It is a sad day for WA: Artwork will no longer travel to the West. Artwork brought to its readers images and articles in its pages that encapsulated community arts-based practice. Artwork has been an important vehicle, a way of documenting part of our history - a history that has been made across the continent.

Artwork came only too briefly to the West; to me, it was an obvious decision when I agreed to contribute financially and to be part of the editorial team for this magazine.

I am still wondering if this publication will be easily replaced. I do not think so. Artwork has been, for some time now, a collaborative effort between the national partners, namely CCDNSW, QCAN, CAN WA, with CAN SA at the helm. This partnership grew out of goodwill and the recognition of our similarities and the desire to have a publication that truly reflected the practice across the continent. One of the most valuable aspects of the magazine is that it has covered the diversity of voices across Australia.

It is with sadness I say goodbye to Artwork coming West. I hope in the future we can have a similar initiative. After all it has been about partnerships! Isn’t that what it is all about?

**Pilar Kasat**
Director, CAN WA

![Pilar Kasat. Photo: Helen Le Gresley](Image 215x75 to 310x186)

![Bronwyn Jewell](Image 410x74 to 512x204)
In Australia, those artists aware of the significant alterations to the contemporary cultural climate have had much to contend with from a social perspective. Recent changes to Australia’s border and refugee policies, to homeland security, to Aboriginal land-rights and to the economy have all highlighted the radical nature of these shifts. At the same time, environmental problems have likewise been brought into the foreground, with growing evidence of the destructive effects of global-warming and climate change becoming increasingly impossible to ignore.

Globally, the terrorist attacks on New York’s World Trade Center towers on September 11, 2001 have undeniably affected the climate for artistic production in one way or another as well. On occasion, the indirect consequences of these have provoked a climate of fear and growing outbreaks of racial and religious intolerance and violence. Domestically, this was especially apparent in the infamous Cronulla Beach riots of 2005 when local Anglo-Australian youths pitted themselves against those of middle-eastern appearance only later to have to confront the inevitable reprisal attacks. The blatant reappearance of such ugly demonstrations of the seeming breakdown of Australia’s oft celebrated multiculturalism further reflect much wider trends that have beset the present global era, particularly post-September 11.

For artists facing, and sensitive to, multiple social manifestations of this nature, the challenge can seem daunting as the question is raised again and with urgency: what (if anything) can contemporary art do to successfully redress, even partially, the often alarmingly regressive injustices of today? Such a question is especially pressing considering that the idea of art’s political and/or social instrumentality has long been held to ridicule as an outdated remnant of the defunct avant-garde. After all, can art realistically be expected to function on activist terms, or should it?

The answer is both yes and no, or rather potentially and possibly; even if there is no proof that art can in fact concretely change societies there is equally no more proof to the contrary. Arguments denying contemporary art’s social impact, in any case, often rely far too heavily on a type of causal logic that such art usually seeks to question from the start. Besides, surely it has always been the artist’s task to think-through evidence of the contemporary realities of his or her age no matter how unpalatable and even if today the nature of such ‘realities’ are increasingly open to speculation, due to their ceaseless mediation.

The exhibition New Social Commentaries 06 at the Warrnambool Art Gallery testifies to contemporary art’s ongoing, if not currently reignited, engagement with its broader social contexts. Not surprisingly, the past ten years have also witnessed dramatic changes, internationally and in Australia, to the way we view the world and our relationship to core institutions like politics and the economy. Indeed, with the advent of what is now, generally referred to as ‘globalisation’, the latter has effectively usurped the former globalisation’s favoured neo-liberal form of economics representing the dominant discourse of our global age.
Freelancing is a film by Patrick Jones and Jason Workman. It documents a range of physical interventions made by Jones and Workman in public spaces within Melbourne between April and June 2006. The interventions seek to infuse social space with a sense of humour, poetics and ambiguity, to practice what is, in a sense, a form of physical graffiti.

Workman and Jones met in 2003. As children each had taken much pleasure in dressing in women’s clothes and dancing and singing on tables. Punk, heavy metal and folk bands were thrown into the art school mix as post-adolescence trauma amplified, which all paved way for the practice they practise today, here in this room.
Clearly evident in the exhibition New Social Commentaries 06, is the fact that this question “how?” may be answered widely and in a diversity of ways. Such diversity however does not deflate but actually enhances, the socially critical aspects of the contemporary work produced. Evident in the show too, is the interrelatedness of many of the perspectives presented. Therefore, work about social concerns like racial intolerance emerge but in distinctly various forms; one artist ironically transcribes racial brutality into the exquisite format of Persian court painting, (Mark Hilton, Champion), while another adapts such language from popular culture to craft a symbolically barbaric type of jewellery, (Tiffany Parbs, abash). Many artists question the rationale of the neo-liberal economics upheld by globalisation processes; for instance, the use of global capital for the paradoxically conjoined pursuit of dual contemporary cultures of privilege and death, leisure and war, (Alexander Seton, Unite [The Claymore Apartments]) or global capitalist manufacturing’s generally excessive wastefulness, (Sarah Goffman, Refuse).

Related questioning of current economic fixations is raised by additional artists who contest a contemporary aspirational vision of the Australian Dream founded primarily on the exaggerated value of private property and unending urbanism, (Grant Hill, Curloo Crescent; Greer Honeywill, If as dreams are saleable real-estate and Marion Manifold, Ticky Tacky). Other works indicate the toll excited from the natural environment by such currently prevalent attitudes, (Brigid Cole-Adams, Addicted Landscape and RaquelOrmella, 130 Davey St). Elsewhere, debts of another kind, regarding the status of Australia’s Aborigines and their relationship to the land, are present as openly collaborative photo-narrative storytelling, (Chris Barry, Encountering Culture: A Dialogue) and as anti-monumental meditation on the history of Aboriginal and European co-habitation, (Tom Nicholson, After action for 2pm Sunday 6 July 1835).

Finally, another major concern for artists included in New Social Commentaries 06 is issues of free-speech versus rigid media control and the accelerated dissemination of political propaganda. Such concern is particularly heightened in a local and global atmosphere of intensified and often manipulative paranoia encouraging self-protection and self-interest, (Louisa Burfadeci, 13 captured conversations – all one minute long; Penny Byrne, In the Land of the Free they call David a Terrorist. At home he was just a Hick: Kris Reichl, Silenced and Bernie Slater, We know who we are). Following from such considerations are still others relating to the contemporary artist’s critical negotiation of, and – occasionally ambiguous and humorous – participation in, the world of political activism (Zanny Begg, Glass Half Full and Patrick Jones and Jason Workman, Freelanding).

Overall, the intensity, variety and complexity of the works presented in New Social Commentaries 06, firmly attest to contemporary Australian artists’ invigorated commitment to addressing the primary social and political challenges of our present, equally challenging, age. Collectively, and despite their significant differences, the individual works in this exhibition raise more questions than they answer. In fact, this is an added part of their strength; a signifier of the voracity of a contemporary culture in which questioning the nature of the society we live in, is considered crucial to its continued vitality. Of course, engaged in the process of such inquiry are suggestions of different worlds supporting more equitable relationships between individuals, races, genders and nations. Actually, contemporary artists are central to imagining these relations and possible future negotiations. This is because such practitioners are acutely attuned to the fact that, while it may not always be obvious, the culture surrounding us, rather than organically pre-ordained, is at every point, actively created. As a result, artists like those selected for this exhibition, play an undeniable role in actively shaping the nature of the contemporary culture surrounding us. The joint effects of their practices are regularly felt in subtle ways that most would not immediately be conscious of. Indeed, it is this subtlety, arising from a willingness to confront creatively the dominant social ills of our time, that simultaneously provides resistant and instructive indications of how contemporary societies might change for the better.

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Gawronski writes widely on contemporary art and contributes regularly to Broadsheet, and numerous essays and reviews to magazines like Eyeline, Photofile, Art and Text, Natural Selection and Log Illustrated. Recent catalogue texts include, Shane Haseman; Mistaken Identities, for The Adelaide Biennale of Australian Art, 2006, and Against the Centre: the Political Autonomy of Artist-Run Spaces, for Situation: Collaborations, Collectives and Artist Networks from Sydney, Singapore, Berlin, at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, 2005.

Gawronski is currently joint-director of Loose Projects, 168 Day Street, Sydney, www.looseprojects.net
Introduction

In the UK in June 2003 Demos organised a conference called ‘Valuing Culture’. The event started a debate about the degree to which cultural organisations should be obliged to use instrumental arguments to justify their public funding. We need a language capable of reflecting, recognising and capturing the full range of values expressed through culture. Some of those values may be covert and naturalised, they may coexist or conflict, but only with clarity about what they are can we hope to build wide public support for the collective funding of culture. Such a language, we argue, will have to:

- make explicit the range of values addressed in the funding process to encompass a much broader range of cultural, non-monetised values
- view the whole cultural system and all its sub-systems, and understand how systemic health and resilience are maintained
- recognise that professional judgement must extend beyond evidence-based decision-making
- see the source of legitimacy for public funding as being the public itself
- overturn the concept of centrally driven, top-down delivery and replace it with systemic, grass roots value creation.

In short, we are proposing Cultural Value as an overarching principle for cultural funding. In this definition, Cultural Value:

- recognises the affective elements of cultural experience, practice and identity, as well as the full range of quantifiable economic and numerical data; it therefore locates the value of culture partly in the subjective experience of participants and citizens
- seeks a forward-looking model for assessing the broad public value (or loss of value) that can result from the decisions both of publicly funded organisations and funding bodies
- adopts unchanging public goods such as equity and fairness, enhancing trust in the public realm, health and prosperity, as long-term objectives, thereby creating a context where more specific goals such as social inclusion and diversity can be more easily understood
- promotes a ‘strong’ culture, confident in its own worth, instead of a ‘weak’ culture dedicated to the production of ancillary benefits
- challenges policy-makers, cultural organisations and practitioners to adopt a new concordat between funders, funded and the public; Cultural Value gains legitimacy from public support and from the exercise of professional expertise; each part of the settlement is given due weight within an overarching framework that seeks to maximise public good and to promote the vitality of culture
- integrates culture with the rest of public policy; rather than being an add-on, existing in its own space, culture is seen as an integral and essential part of civil society. This argument has radical implications for policy, funding institutions and cultural providers.

The problem

All around England, cultural organisations – museums, theatres, arts centres and the rest – are holding away days to update their business plans. They all need money, and they are competing for the attention of those who take decisions within that amorphous beast, the ‘funding system’. Further up the food chain, the funding bodies are updating their own plans on the basis of the latest three-year Spending Review from the
Treasury. All these organisations have become more familiar, in recent years, with the experience of setting their activities against formal objectives, and seeking to justify activity and expenditure against ‘outcomes’. But a growing sense of unease pervades the cultural sector as it sets about justifying its consumption of public money. Instead of talking about what they do – displaying pictures or putting on dance performances – organisations will need to demonstrate how they have contributed to wider policy agendas such as social inclusion, crime prevention and learning. The problem is particularly acute in the relationship between local authorities and the cultural organisations that they fund. Even where targets refer to cultural activities, they are often expressed in terms of efficiency, cost-per-user and audience diversity, rather than discussed in terms of cultural achievement. In turn, the funding bodies and the DCMS will have marshalled statistics on the social outcomes of the activities that they fund, and deployed arguments about how culture helps social integration, economic regeneration and health. The attempt to make the effects of culture transparent and manageable, in order to support it effectively, has somehow obscured the true nature of the activities and experiences themselves. Meeting the targets of funders is now the main issue.

There is increasing disquiet and frustration on both sides of the funding equation because neither funders nor funded seem able to talk about what they really do. Many artists feel that they are made to jump through hoops and that they create art in spite of the funding system. Their ability to ‘play the game’ and write highly articulate funding proposals is more important than the work that they make or facilitate. In turn, people inside funding bodies feel themselves ever more remote from the work they are funding. They spend far more time on bureaucracy than they do engaging in critical debate with artists and practitioners. In sum, the identifiable measures and ‘ancillary benefits’ that flow from culture have become more important than the cultural activity itself: the tail is wagging the dog.

**Why has this happened?**

In England in the 1980s the Conservative government decided that culture should be the handmaiden of the economy. Public funding had to rest on foundations of ‘economy, efficiency and effectiveness’, and cultural organisations justified their existence by showing that they increased tourism, regenerated cities and helped businesses to succeed. With the advent of New Labour in 1997 new priorities were added, but still on the basis of instrumental outcomes. While New Labour was committed to supporting culture for its own sake, it sought various ways in which to justify this commitment, assume managerial control over cultural spending, and audit the results. In parallel, a growing range of instrumental arguments were employed for culture’s contribution to other kinds of good. This approach is typified by the Social Exclusion Unit’s Policy Action Team 10 on the role of culture in renewing deprived neighbourhoods:

> Art … can not only make a valuable contribution to delivering key outcomes of lower long-term unemployment, less crime, better health and better qualifications, but can also help to develop the individual pride, community spirit and capacity for responsibility that enable communities to run regeneration programmes themselves.

These assertions may be true, and few would question that they are desirable outcomes – but are they the central purpose of culture?

**The problem of measuring instrumental value**

Current methods of assessing impact and outcomes are increasingly being questioned, both in terms of the utility of the methodologies employed and the extent to which the results illuminate our understanding.

The issue is not confined to the cultural world. Right across the public sector there is disquiet that ways of demonstrating benefit have become tortuous, employing ‘complicated and contested assessments of causation’. Worse still, ‘those things that are easy to measure tend to become objectives, and those that are not, are downplayed or ignored’. This presents a particular difficulty for the cultural sector, where much of what is done is not ‘easy to measure’.

If the methodologies of measurement are inadequate, the results flowing from them are bound to be unconvincing. One reason that the evidence base is only partly convincing, and is likely to remain so, is because funder priorities keep changing, so that the historic data are always out of sync with current priorities. Nobody is really sure what the central outcomes are supposed to be so there is confusion at the heart of the debate.

More importantly, mass social outcomes cannot be predicted from the evidence because:

- the consequences of cultural engagement are too remote in time and space to be a matter of simple cause and effect
- cultural engagement is part of a complex mix of factors affecting people’s lives, so again, there is no straightforward cause and
- systems of data collection have no way of measuring things that don’t happen (if, for example, someone is saved from suicide by hearing a piece of music, this nonoccurrence doesn’t get counted)
- responses to culture are personal and individual; some people are radically transformed by a particular cultural experience while others are left unmoved, and capturing the subjective response is difficult; evidence of subjective effect gets dismissed as ‘anecdotal’.

For all these reasons it is hard to make a convincing case that investment in $x$ will produce $y$ outcome. One reaction to this is to produce better evidence – not just data, but knowledge that people can act on. This is happening and it is welcome. Existing methodologies of measuring outcomes need to be refined and properly applied, and indeed are becoming increasingly
Tiffany Parbs  
b. 1971, Nuriootpa, South Australia

abash 2005  
sterling silver, patina  
3.8 x 9.0 x 1.2 cm (x2)

abash forms part of a recent body of work investigating abuses of power and the modes of authority exerted over the body from those in a position of control. The constructed knuckle-dusters are tools conceptualised to purposefully impart bruising in the form of text onto the skin, drawing influence from retribution based objects such as brass knuckles, the hulking appearance of gangster rapper jewellery and forms prevalent in early medieval torture equipment.

As a practising jeweller Parbs draws from a conceptual base, constructed as a result of intensive periods of research. The main directive of her practice is aimed towards broadening and augmenting public awareness of expanded definitions of jewellery, to challenge and extend the medium in the public arena and entice examination of articles allowed into intimate space.
supple and sophisticated. For example, it is increasingly recognised that crude transpositions of ‘learning points’ and ‘best practice’ from one context to another often fail, and that the knowledge that needs to be garnered from projects is about reflective and dynamic processes rather than about prescriptive methodologies. But there is another problem: the concentration on instrumental ‘impacts and outcomes’ has produced organisational and systemic distortions:

- The cultural aims and practices of organisations have been subverted. Energies have been directed into chasing funding and collecting evidence rather than achieving cultural purposes. In the search for outcomes and ancillary benefits, the essence of culture has been lost.
- Measuring impacts and outcomes tends to produce bureaucratisation. In order to be useful, data must be consistent over time. Systems of collection, ordering and recording are needed, and these have a habit of becoming rigid, whereas culture itself is fluid.
- The funding system does not have the confidence to take risks and to make judgements. This has lowered professional morale and tended to encourage stasis in funding patterns – borne out in complaints about funders rewarding failure and neglecting innovative success.
- Artists and practitioners have become discouraged from spending part of their careers within the funding system. This healthy interchange, which used to encourage mutual understanding between funders and funded, is far less frequent than it was twenty years ago.
- Data and evidence about instrumental impacts have been produced in a context where organisations need to obtain funding. Whatever the merits or otherwise of individual pieces of research, from a systemic point of view, the objectivity of the information commissioned and produced must be questioned.
- Over a period of time, the need to demonstrate instrumental outcomes has tended to make funders more prescriptive and directive. Rather than responding to funding applications and enabling cultural practice, funders require organisations to adopt particular forms, policies and practices.

When these trends are combined, the danger is that the institutional and measurement properties of the administrative system exert far too much influence over the nature of the cultural activity itself. In this sense, the tail truly is wagging the dog, and the long-term, cumulative impact is to separate both what gets funded and who gets funded from the most innovative, creative, dynamic or publicly engaging work.

The danger is that, unintentionally, these pressures will institutionalise cultural mediocrity by encouraging both funders and funded to take safe bets, while the most successful applicants will be those best able to ‘work the system’ through the processes of lobbying and proposal-writing. We should not be satisfied with criteria or decision-making processes that act as proxies for Cultural Value; rather, we should be seeking to design the institutions around the creation of Cultural Value.

There is one further difficulty with the language of outcomes: artists and institutions do not see themselves as creating outcomes. Cultural experience is the sum of the interaction between an individual and an artefact or an experience, and that interaction is unpredictable and must be open. To take a concrete example, it is the job of a gallery to put a painting on a wall, but it is not their job to determine what happens next. They cannot, and should not, require that 40% of viewers will have a spiritual experience in front of it. There are, then, problems with the instrumental argument for culture both because the evidence is weak, and because of the systemic effects that the concentration on outcomes and impacts has produced. With an ever growing body of evidence we seem to have lost sight of two things: one, that data is not knowledge; and two, that even the best objective data fails to account fully for why culture should be funded. The value of culture cannot be adequately expressed in terms of statistics. Audience numbers and gallery visitor profiles give an impoverished picture of how culture enriches us. Current forms of impact measurement are necessary, and they need to be improved, but they can never be sufficient.

The difficulty with intrinsic values

Attempts to express the ‘missing ingredient’ in the debate have often rested on an appeal to recognise the ‘intrinsic value’ of culture. There have been nods in the direction of intrinsic value from the highest quarters.

Those arguing that culture has an intrinsic value, and deserves funding on that account, face media hostility and charges of mystification. They are attacked for being ‘elitist’ and for neglecting issues of access and accessibility. But they have a further problem: they have lost the vocabulary to make their case. The postmodern questioning of concepts such as beauty, truth, delight, transcendence and the like, coupled with the insight that these ideas are temporally and geographically specific, have made using them in debate an embarrassment at best, contemptible at worst. The use of the word ‘culture’ itself now begs the immediate response ‘whose culture?’: All judgements have become relative, suspect and tainted. A further problem in talking about intrinsic value is that the cultural sector is diverse. The organisational aims of a visual artists’ cooperative are radically different from those of a literary archive. A public library has a different attitude to its stock than does a museum. Although the borders are fuzzy, some organisations are essentially concerned with the preservation or replication of an existing culture, and some on creating a new culture. Some are preoccupied with objects or buildings, while other are focused on process. How can we talk about the same concept of intrinsic value across such a broad spectrum? It cannot mean the same thing in all cases, and if ‘intrinsic value’ is shorthand for a variable ‘something else’, then why not articulate it more clearly?

A further difficulty with intrinsic value is that cultural experiences are subjective. ‘Cultural policy’ addresses people en masse, but ‘culture’ is often a personal, private encounter. Those encounters include works that challenge the emotions and/or the intellect, where commercial or private funding for the work is least likely to be forthcoming, and where state support is most unlikely to find general acceptance.
The diversity of producer aims and consumer responses in the cultural sector clouds the picture for those involved in taking funding decisions. Yet funders do have to take real-life decisions about who gets money and who doesn’t, and in the real world choices have to be made about quality, values and morals. This highlights a final difficulty with intrinsic value. The concept is open to challenge on the grounds that it is a reversion to patrician and patronising attitudes. We will decide what has intrinsic merit and you will take two teaspooons a day. Whether wrapped in the language of ‘excellence’ or ‘complex culture’, the Arnoldian, mandarin flavour is undistinguishable and must be confronted. When used as an argument for more funding, or for less restricted funding, ‘inherent value’ can appear as a form of defensiveness by cultural institutions and their leaders; an attempt to assert the value of their own judgement above that of others. A confident assertion that such judgements are unavoidable will not be sufficient. Although the administration of judgements are unavoidable will not be sufficient. Although the administration of public funding for culture necessarily involves decisions about excellence and quality, the judgements of funders need stronger foundations than subjective opinions and an appeal to ‘intrinsic value’.

Framing a solution

The arguments seem to have got stuck in the old intellectual tramlines very quickly: instrumental vs. intrinsic value, floppy bow ties vs. hard-headed ‘realists’, excellence vs. access. Worse still, the instrumental/intrinsic debate has tended to polarise on class lines: aesthetic values for the middle classes, instrumental outcomes for the poor and disadvantaged.

What is the way forward? What is the answer to Tessa Jowell’s question: ‘How, in going beyond targets, can we best capture the value of culture?’ One approach is to say that culture is about both intrinsic and instrumental values. Arts Council England, in its recent public spending-round bid, adopts the ‘not only, but also’ approach. It argues that ‘the arts transform people and places’ giving ‘spiritual and personal sustenance’, and that ‘the arts are also instrumental in meeting public policy objectives’. But the risk here is that both arguments get dismissed, for the reasons given above. Two flawed arguments do not add up to more than the sum of their parts.

Furthermore, both instrumental outcomes and intrinsic values fail to create a healthy relationship between the producers and the potential consumers of culture. Too much concentration on impacts and outcomes downplays the role of artists and curators in favour of audiences and non-attendees. But a concentration on intrinsic values tends to put the artist or curator in a central position to the neglect of audiences. In the former case audiences can feel that they are the objects of policy delivery, and in the latter that they are patronised by a superior cultural establishment. Having lost both a critical language, and also the Arnoldian, and indeed Fabian, idea that Culture improves People, how can we find a way of justifying state spending on the arts, museums, libraries and historic buildings? Can the idea of ‘intrinsic value’ be articulated in a new way that avoids the taint of either patrician judgement or mystification and yet allows us to take account of factors beyond the easily quantifiable?

A convincing solution must not only be intellectually satisfying, but have practical effects. It must produce a conceptual framework that will both permit a conversation about culture in convincing language, and also enable us to identify where and how organisations should change their behaviour. It must treat audiences and nonattendees as grown-up beneficiaries of culture, while acknowledging the central importance of cultural practitioners. Above all, it should create a confident cultural system that addresses the concerns and needs of all concerned – funders, funded and the public. The language currently adopted in the cultural sector, by the funding system, and in the media is defective not just because it fails to provide an adequate means of talking about culture, but because it is a language of supplication and dependency that fosters relations of inequality. The vocabulary of culture reinforces the notion that money given to the arts, museums, libraries and heritage is a hand-out. The National Theatre and the army are paid for by tax, but only the arts are described as a subsidised sector.

Theatres submit grant applications (every word needs weighing), whereas farmers receive top-up payments. Business schools use case studies, but culture puts together anecdotal evidence. The negativity of the language is startling. Culture is ‘not for profit’ – as long as profit is defined in a particular way. The notion of ‘not for profit’ tends to reinforce the tendency of the cultural sector to reward those who don’t make a profit and to penalise those who do. Many cultural organisations are charities, where the professional management have to be governed by non-executive Trustees. When Government pays commercial private sector companies for R&D, it enters into a contract resulting in experimentation, but in the cultural sector the same thing is called upholding the right to fail. Terms such as state patronage and private philanthropy conjure images of subservience and the begging-bowl. This language may not be surprising, since historically private patronage preceded state funding, but the master/servant relationship is perpetuated by its use. It is little wonder that many publicly funded cultural organisations lack confidence.

Principles of investment

All cultural funding bodies are essentially involved in taking investment decisions. They have to decide between competing claims on their resources with the aim of maximising their effects. So what is different about their decisions compared with those of other investors? There are a number of characteristics that need to be examined. These relate to the nature of the investor, the process of decision-making, the object of investment, and sometimes to the time-scale of the investment.

In the first place, the funding bodies are in the public sector and thus motivated by considerations other than profit. In common with other public institutions they seek to maximise their own operational efficiency, and aspire to get value for money from the investments that they make. But as trustees of the public interest, funders respond to what they understand to be the public’s interest in culture, and that interest extends beyond maximising financial return. Funders are directed and influenced by Government to achieve a shifting series of explicit and
Implicit public policy goals. Funding bodies thus look for a range of outcomes from their investments beyond economic return, and may reasonably decide to invest in a less economically fruitful project that nevertheless has substantial social benefits. In other words, they can target funding to achieve their own and the Government’s desired policy objectives.

Secondly, the public nature of funding bodies has implications not just for what they decide but for the way that they take decisions. They both desire and are obliged to adopt processes that reflect their public status. They embody a collective, state-funded process that demands justice, transparency and equity. They function in ways that are both political – they are governed by Government – and political – they necessarily adopt priorities formed by and reflected in the wider culture. This affects the way that they encourage, decide and administer grant applications, the way that they provide information to the public, and the methods that they employ to evaluate the results of their actions.

Thirdly, cultural funders invest in assets that have significance beyond their economic value. The assets – whether a painting, a performance or a historic building – are often unique and almost always incapable of being replicated, replaced or exchanged. Furthermore, cultural assets and activities have a worth beyond cost or realisable value and that worth is difficult to articulate, let alone calculate. Competing investment claims do not rest on straightforward comparisons; funders are rarely comparing like with like.

Finally, the time period of investment for some cultural funding bodies is radically different to that of other investors. The preservation of a historic building or the purchase of a painting for a national collection assumes that the asset will last in perpetuity. Thus the notional ‘payback’ period is beyond the funders’, and the individual administrator’s, time-limited interest.

What tools, then, do these funders need in order to make good decisions? Like bankers looking at annual reports and business plans, they are trying to allocate funds based on a combination of past performance and future prospects. Both are looking for the creation of maximum future value. here, however, the analogy ends. By their nature, public sector funders take into account the broad public interest, not merely short-term financial considerations. Their capacity to accept risk might be expected to be different. Most importantly, the ‘value’ that they look for is not the same as the ‘value’ that a financial investor seeks. The issue, therefore, is to clarify and make visible the values that do in fact, or should in future, determine funders’ investment decisions.

It is essential to examine the concept of value in order to understand why the benefits of cultural investment are so difficult to measure and express. Some values can be monetised, some cannot, but in both cases, we need to tease out what values we are talking about, and to understand the relative ease and difficulty of articulating each of them. That way, we may understand why some values are given more weight than others (because they are easy to measure and discuss), and why some are neglected through a simple failure of language or of nerve.

The language of economics

Economic value is determined by the extent to which something enhances or detracts from our well-being. Something has economic value if its benefits to the well-being of society (including future generations) are greater than or outweigh its costs. Though it encompasses commercial value – as expressed through monetary exchange within markets – economic value is not restricted to values that are revealed through markets. The full schema of economic value incorporates commercial (or market) value; use values not captured within markets; and non-use values.

Commercial values

Commercial values that can be monetised are use values in the form of tangible financial returns, delivered through the operation of markets. In some cases this is relatively certain and easy to measure, but in other cases it is less predictable. In most cases future use values (such as the number of jobs that will be generated directly and indirectly by a landscape park, or the ticket income that will accrue to a gallery) are based on the expectations, experience and beliefs of experts. The experts are not always right. How many projects – of all types – have been funded on the basis of business plans that have proved to be incorrect assessments of future performance? If the predictions of use values are incorrect the sustainability of the project and the achievement of its wider aims will be undermined. (Use value is of course only one factor in determining sustainability; it may also be undermined by other factors such as organisational capacity or lack of leadership.) Commercial or monetised value contains both certain and uncertain financial flows, but is relatively unproblematic. The concept is easily grasped, and while there may be argument about a particular predicted flow – how many visitors will pay an entry fee, for example – there is no dispute about the fundamentals of the methodology.

Use values not captured within markets

Not all use values are captured in markets. For instance access to beaches or the countryside, free entrance to museums, heritage streetscapes and public art all have economic value that is not captured by exchange.

Non-use values

In cultural and heritage investment there is a further category of economic value, namely non-use value. Non-use values are understood to be:

- existence value: people value the existence of a cultural facility or heritage item regardless of whether they wish to take part in it or use it themselves
- option value: people want to keep open the possibility of using or enjoying something in the future, even though they don’t use it today
- bequest value: people value leaving something to future generations.

These values accrue not only to tangible assets such as a statue or a building. They
Images of riot police surging towards crowds are now ubiquitous in the media. Riots seem to be occurring in every place, even Australia. The riot shield is an icon of contemporary conflict, both global and domestic. Over the last two years, we have been using the form of the shield as a sculptural unit and a carrier for differing content. Our ‘riot shield’ is an uncanny doubling of a ‘real’ riot shield. The decision to make and present the shield from the carrier’s side makes it both abstract and strangely physical. The piece works with extreme condensation and this contributes to the totemic effect of the sculpture.

Janet Burchill and Jennifer McCamley have been working as artists both collaboratively and individually since the mid ‘80s. They work across a number of different areas including sculpture, painting, neon and photography. Recent solo exhibitions include NEON at the Art Gallery of New South Wales in 2005 and All That Rises Must Converge at Anna Schwartz Gallery in 2004.


Janet Burchill/Jennifer McCamley are represented by Anna Schwartz Gallery, Melbourne.
apply equally to such things as opera and Shakespeare. Some of these values can be observed in the form of market transactions.

However non-use values are more often ‘not observable in market transactions, since no market exists on which the rights to them can be exchanged’. Attempts to quantify non-use values therefore have to rely on normative questions – what do people say they would pay – rather than objective observation of what people actually pay. Inevitably, this introduces a further level of uncertainty.

These non-use values are highly significant for the funding of culture, given that so much cultural value rests on the preservation of assets, practices, knowledge or locations through which it can or could be created in the future. Non-use values provide one set of reasons for supporting forms of culture that do not command instant, widespread popularity or commercial return. As we know, many funders already use these considerations. But our current funding frameworks do not often make it easy to see how such criteria can be set alongside others to guide specific decisions.

So far then, we have shown different types of economic value: commercial use values; non-monetised use values; and non-use values. It can be seen that some display reasonable certainty through contractual arrangements, that others are quantified by reference to expert predictions, while non-use values are generally quantified by sampling opinions. Taken together, these values are the economic values expected to flow from a cultural investment decision.

**Other values and other languages**

In reality, public funders take into account factors other than the strictly economic when taking decisions. This may be a statement of the obvious, but the natural tendency to justify decisions on purely rational, objective, evidence-based grounds obscures the fact. Funders are reluctant to talk about many of the values that come into play. How can they express an Internal Rate of Return for cultural value? Here the language and techniques of economics begin to stretch and break down. The analogies become so remote as to become meaningless.

Culture is not the only arena in which seemingly intangible or innate or inherent values need to be taken into consideration. Anthropologists have for decades managed to describe how communities, societies, tribes and nations value their cultures. Ecologists and environmentalists have developed a language to discuss the value of ‘the environment’ that goes beyond considerations of short-term economic utility and into the territory of the spiritual. Businesses are grappling with how to value brands, patents, knowledge and morale. And in public service the shortcomings of New Public Management are being challenged in the emergent discourse of Public Value. In all these places we may find clues that will help us to create a new language for culture.

**Anthropology**

Reference to cultural values is commonplace in the literature of anthropology and material culture studies, but is rarely applied explicitly in discussions of the cultural context in which we currently exist. Cultural values have been characterised in different ways by different writers but they often include:

- **Historical value**: a special relationship with the past; a concept resting on particular viewpoints of history
- **Social value**: places or things that tend to make connections between people and to reinforce a sense of unity and identity
- **Symbolic value**: repositories of meaning
- **Aesthetic value**: a highly problematic area of enquiry involving dispute not only about what is beautiful but also about who has the power and authority to take decisions about what is beautiful
- **Spiritual value**: addressing aspects of the religious, the numinous and the sublime.

We see that economic value cannot completely express the ‘worth’ of a cultural asset. Funders must somehow determine and value cultural flows and cultural capital when assessing competing claims for resource allocation. Just as economic assets yield future economic flows, so cultural assets yield future cultural flows that in turn accrue a greater stock of cultural capital – those shared assets and experiences that change over time and that make us who we are. Cultural values undoubtedly play a major role in decision-making, and they do get discussed in the media, but they play a curiously small role in the discourse of the cultural funding system.

**Environmentalism**

Non-renewable natural resources and some of our common cultural assets, such as the contents of museums and folk dances, share a common characteristic. They are finite resources, and once destroyed they cannot be remade. This fundamental fact has implications for the way we treat both, and it follows that concepts used in debates about the environment are useful in discussing aspects of culture.

- A special duty of care attaches to finite resources, often expressed through the language of sustainability. The notions of preservation, conservation, care and maintenance apply.
- A natural consequence of the idea of sustainability is that of intergenerational equity. There can be no value-free, objective answer to the question of how we should calculate a monetary figure for the worth of finite assets to future generations.
- Moral judgements are unavoidable, however much economists may find them uncomfortable. The type of culture that we pass to future generations is a moral issue.
- Finite resources imply not just intergenerational equity but also fairness of present access, and perhaps more importantly fairness of distribution of benefit. In other words, if there is public investment in cultural assets, then there should be a high degree of equality of benefit across social classes, geographical areas, income groups, etc.
- The precautionary principle demands that a great deal of caution should be exercised when contemplating irreversible change. This is useful in the context of culture in deciding between the relative importance of competing claims.
- The importance of biodiversity is recognised in environmental discourse for a number of reasons. The resilience of whole systems depends on there being a rich diversity of individual elements, so that if part of the system disappears, the systemic gap can be filled by the adaptation of other parts of the system.

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Funders must pay attention not just to diversity in the sense of social diversity, but also cultural diversity. The small, experimental, emergent practices that seem to lie at the margins of current concerns about culture need to be economically and socially useful are vital for the sustenance of our cultural health.

Environmentalists recognise that intangible assets can be made. The parallel between Estelle Morris and Baruch Lev both calling for a new linguistic approach in the realms of culture and financial accounting could hardly be clearer, so what new approaches are suggested in the field of intangibles?

First, there is the issue of definition. What should fall within the class of intangibles and what should not? In the cultural context, what should be the shared definition, or if definition is impossible, then the recognisable characteristics, of Cultural Value? The funding system has so far avoided this question, though an answer has inevitably emerged through practice. We can observe Cultural Value not through definitions (the Heritage Lottery Fund has no definition of heritage, Arts Council England has no definition of art) but by seeing what gets funded (landscape is now heritage, circus is now art, though neither used to be).

Second, the question of consistency. In the business world there needs to be common agreement across companies, accountants, regulators and investors about the meaning of terms such as ‘customer satisfaction’ and ‘research and development’. In the cultural field there needs to be broad agreement (in order to promote opposition as much as consensus) across cultural organisations, government departments and public ‘consumers’, about the way phrases such as ‘social value’ and ‘cultural value’ are used.

Third, disclosure. In the field of intangibles, a distinction must be drawn between recognition and disclosure. The former refers to items that have to be included on a balance sheet or profit and loss statement, and the latter to items where information must be disclosed in a footnote. In terms of the cultural sector, the above would imply a more open disclosure of how decisions are taken. No doubt funders do have conversations about the relative quality of the organisations and projects that they fund, but those conversations are not disclosed. We have no idea whether consistent language and criteria are applied in these types of discussion.

Recognising Cultural Value

The categories of cultural value, the language of environmentalism, the practices of financial accounting for intangibles, and the idea of Public Value have been discussed briefly. To summarise what may usefully be taken from each of these other discourses:

From anthropology, the notion of cultural value:
- the explicit recognition of non-economic values
- a language that allows discussion of historical, social, symbolic, aesthetic and spiritual values.

From environmentalism:
- a duty of care in relation to finite and threatened resources, allied to the idea of sustainability
- the concepts of intergenerational and intragenerational equity, involving fairness and equity
- the understanding that diversity is required to produce a resilient whole system
- the precautionary principle that irrevocable change demands a higher degree of caution
- the recognition of creativity and fecundity as signs of systemic resilience.

From intangibles accounting:
- the need for a shared definition/explanation/characterisation of things that are difficult to value
- consistent usage of terms
- a common approach to disclosure.

The question is, can these ideas be synthesised to provide a set of broad principles and useful tools for people
working in the cultural sector? The sector is in search of a convincing narrative to validate its activities – a narrative that must convince the world at large. A new language is needed to develop both a cast-iron case for public funding of culture and the systemic and organisational forms and practices needed to deliver continuing public support. This will only come about if we can find ways to recognise why people value culture, and if we can find ways to articulate how public institutions – funders and funded cultural organisations – create value. This in turn will only be achieved if we can:

- make explicit the range of values addressed in the funding process to encompass a much broader range of cultural, non-monetised values
- view the whole cultural system and all its sub-systems, and understand how systemic health and resilience are maintained
- recognise that professional judgement must extend beyond evidence-based decision-making
- see the source of legitimacy for public funding as being the public itself (without privileging the interests of today’s public over that of the future public)
- overturn the concept of centrally driven, top-down delivery and replace it with grass roots and systemic value creation.

There are tensions in this synthesis. For example, the idea that value must be recognised by the public may be at odds with the notion of systemic health through diversity. Additionally, and importantly in the context of culture, the recognition of what the public values today may compete with the idea of intergenerational equity. But the key to reconciling these and other tensions lies in confident professional administration, resting on firm foundations of widely recognized public goods. This in turn creates a further tension: the exercise of professional judgement may not sit easily with short-term public preferences.

What might this mean in practice? How is the value inherent in and created by the cultural sector to be recognised?

The authors of the Cabinet Office paper on Public Value make no mention of culture, even though their arguments apply as much to the cultural sector as to other areas of publicly funded activity. In fact culture is a particularly rich area of value creation, because value is created in three ways.

- However unsatisfactory the notion of instrumental outcomes may be, and however defective and slippery the historical measurement of those outcomes, there are clear instances of culture producing benefits, even for people who have not directly engaged with the cultural artifact or activity.
- Direct involvement in cultural production and consumption – from volunteers who give up their time to heritage projects to pupils learning through museum visits – also has beneficial results. The processes of culture produce value.
- Engagement with culture is a way of ‘voting with your feet’. The very fact that people go to theatres and galleries, visit country houses and museums, make music and write poetry is proof enough that they value culture. In this sense culture does not simply produce value, it embodies value.

Creating Cultural Value in practice

We need a clearer understanding of what Cultural Value might be, and the range of values through which we can recognise it. But the ability to act on such recognition is equally essential. The first step for any organisation that wishes to start using this new paradigm of Cultural Value is to consider the underlying public goods that it seeks to generate. At present these flow from the policy directives that it has been given both explicitly and implicitly. These directives may be internalised into the organisation’s own strategic plans. Under the new paradigm it would be up to the organisation itself to determine its objectives, and to express how those objectives create value of one sort or another. But to stick with the status quo, in the case of one typical but anonymised funding body, the public goods that underlie its strategic objectives, as expressed in its strategic plan, appear to be:

- maintenance of inherited culture
- enhanced trust in public institutions
- equity and fairness
- resilience in the organisations and system they are funding

- value for money
- health
- prosperity
- learning
- resilient local communities.

These are the positive outcomes that the funding body is looking for, some from its own operations, and some from the grants that it awards. But these goals are only partly expressed in these high-level conceptual terms. It is more common to find second-order goals articulated.

So step one in recognising and producing value is for institutions to articulate the higher order public goods that they are pursuing, and to place their goals within that framework.

The second step is to appreciate that value is created as much through the way that organisations carry out their functions as through what they do. Processes can create or destroy value, as much as can content. Different sorts of value can be created within organisational processes, and it is important that the calculation of Cultural Value takes account of this. A major source of frustration, for everyone involved in the cultural system, is the way that in practice doing is separated from being in the realms of policy, funding and evaluation. This is one reason why practitioners feel that they are being judged on criteria that are not fully relevant to them. Outcomes are not in reality separate from the processes or from the systems that produce them.

The third step is to understand that value creation is essentially a subjective phenomenon (albeit a collective one) rather than an objective one. In other words, a community cannot be told that it is benefiting from an increase in value, rather that value only exists when it is experienced broadly within the community. Attempts at capturing, recording and feeding back the recognition of Cultural Value must therefore be based on what the public themselves perceive.

Fourthly, the creation (and destruction) of value can be unpredictable. Take, for example, the case of an education space in a gallery: the space is supported by a funder whose main objective is to encourage schoolchildren to visit, and thereby to
Happy Buddha is a universally recognised face of traditional eastern culture. The spirit of the Buddha is one of love, kindness and mercy. With this work I am seeking to represent the Buddha in a new way: to give an ancient image a contemporary look; to bring the symbol into a new technological context. The modern printing process and digital technologies use the dot to produce images. I use a hand-painted dot to create my work, contrary to my formal training, I choose colours which have the strongest contrast to create tension in the work – old technique vs new technique – traditional vs modern – colour vs colour. But still, I want to create paintings of beauty.

Song Ling was born in 1961 in Hangzhou, China. He received a Bachelor of Fine Arts in 1984 from the China National Academy of Fine Arts and was one of several important artists involved in the New Wave ’85 art movement in China. In 1988 Song Ling came to Australia and participated in some of the first exhibitions of contemporary Chinese art in this country. He has held regular exhibitions in Australia and overseas and is represented in many private collections. As Australia seeks to re-define itself through the social and artistic diversity of an increasing multiculturalism, it is timely that Song Ling is exhibiting some new and challenging works. Further information at www.niagara-galleries.com.au

Song Ling is represented by Niagara Galleries, Melbourne.
improve the pupils’ curriculum performance. It then transpires that the place is not used by schools at all – the teachers cannot find the time – but it is adopted by a large number of art classes in the local community.

If the funder measures the gallery in terms of the expected outcome and benefits the gallery may be deemed a failure, but it would have created a different sort of value. Instead of a ‘learning outcome’ it would have produced a more cohesive social structure among a different community of interest. That would be recognized and applauded under a system that recognizes the existence of Cultural Value.

In summary, organisations must articulate the broad themes of value that they wish to encourage and create, and align their ethos, practices and processes to meet those aspirations. They must then adopt ways of discovering from those they deal with and those who are affected by their decisions what value has in fact and in perception been created. The calculation of Cultural Value represents a profound shift in underlying thinking, with far-reaching and by no means predictable consequences.

Yes, but ....

It may be argued that in practice the recognition of Cultural Value merely replicates existing ways of measuring performance. It is simply the emperor’s new clothes, since we will still have to measure such things as visitor numbers, tourist spend, audience diversity and educational activity in order to establish the existence of Cultural Value. Worse still, this may look like cultural-funding-by-focus group.

It is true that some, indeed many, measures will remain unchanged, and that new ways will need to be found to assess public satisfaction, but that misses the point. First, the measures would be organised and used differently (and organisational capacity would need to adapt in order to do that) so that systemic processes themselves create value, rather than seeing value as a product. In addition, Cultural Value calculations have several features not shared by current methods of target- and outcome-based measurement systems:

- The concept of Cultural Value extends the range of factors that can be taken into account. It expands the range of the discourse by welcoming the inclusion of factors such as the cultural values that have been described above: the historical, social, symbolic, aesthetic and spiritual values that lie at the heart of culture but which bureaucracies and organisations find the hardest of all to articulate and defend.
- Casting performance measurement in the new conceptual framework of Cultural Value both changes and clarifies why the existing measurement is taking place. Goals such as education programmes and increased diversity are understood in terms of the public goods that they embody and create, not just as ends in themselves.
- Cultural Value calculations also extend the boundaries of evaluation and ask questions about the best methods of measuring things so that the measures themselves promote, rather than destroy, value creation. To take a concrete example, funders record the geographical distribution of grants. They started to do this partly as a defensive measure against potential criticism from government and the media that the spending of funds fails to match their origins. If looked at through the lens of Cultural Value, the point of this measurement changes, and a new set of positive outcomes can be identified. Using the new framework, geographical distribution is measured in order to assess the development of public goods such as social equity, public trust and the legitimacy of institutions. This in turn raises the question of the best method of recording and communicating geographical distribution. Rather than being based on Government regions, would it also be useful to look at areas of deprivation, investment ‘cold spots’, city regions and so forth?
- Further, in order to generate trust and legitimacy, how should funders communicate what they are actually achieving in terms of geographical distribution? Rather than having to convince their own funders about their legitimacy (in order to achieve devolved budgets and responsibilities – top-down authority), should they now also be pursuing a strategy of wider public buy-in by using such methods as seeking local press coverage (in order to generate broader and convincing public support for their activities – bottom-up democracy)?
- The acknowledgement of Cultural Value addresses the issue of the legitimacy of institutions. The activities of funders cannot simply rest on devolved authority from Government. Legitimacy must be earned through practices and processes and a record of good decisionmaking rather than being conferred from above. Underpinning faith in public institutions are notions of fairness, equity and transparency. Funders must show through the way that they interact and communicate with the organisations that they fund and with the public that these principles are being upheld. They must therefore be able to demonstrate that they have invested across their whole portfolios in ways that are equitable between citizens.
- Concentrating on public perceptions of Cultural Value helps with the issue of creating trust in public institutions. Current concerns about a gap between often objectively improving services and public dissatisfaction with those same services may be addressed in part through concentrating less on the achievement of narrowly defined quantitative targets, and more on capturing the positive and negative expressions of public satisfaction with their own experience of those services.
- By recognising the legitimacy of professional judgement, supported by a system that takes account of many types of value creation, Cultural Value calculations restore the ability of professionals to discuss cultural work. This reintroduces reality and also fresh air into the discussion between funders and funded and it restores morale. However, professional confidence cannot be rebuilt overnight, and one of the questions that flows from this analysis is how to build that confidence.
- The exercise of professional judgement in pursuit of systemic cultural vitality restores the capacity of funders to support experimental, edgy work undertaken by people who are not adept at filling in forms. Why can’t dance
Australia has a history of planning ugliness and suburban sprawl and now the possibility of higher density which should bring to the forefront debate on population size, environmental and cultural landscape threats, species extinction, national identity, natural resources, waste and pollution, but too often economics is considered before the environment. The little coloured boxes made of ‘ticky-tacky’ and paper clips are literally insubstantial, ordinary, like today’s buildings, but because of their imaging of a lived social commentary of determined and disillusioned people who insist on being part of the planning process, they simultaneously have a resonant discourse. Hats off to these people who rallied on the front line of Parliament steps!

Manifold is renowned as a printmaker and was winner (2001) and runner-up (2000) of the prestigious Shell Fremantle Print Award. In 2005 Manifold was a Print Council of Australia commissioned artist and guest artist in an RMIT residency. Manifold works in both digital and traditional methods and is represented widely in major Australian public collections.

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1. Words from Malvina Reynolds song Little Boxes
groups submit videos, or galleries paintings? As the singer Mike Heron once responded when asked to explain his songs, ‘If I could say them in words I wouldn’t have to write them’.

Conclusion

The types of measurement that may be used in the calculus of Cultural Value will display wider and more holistic characteristics than current measurement systems. They will tend to include a greater emphasis on qualitative measures and pay more attention to public perception. They will also tend to be more open-ended and future-focused rather than being engaged in tracking outcomes against predetermined expectations.

The present paradigm of evidence-based, target-driven decision-making is based on a technocratic world view which

- sees linear patterns
- excludes unforeseen outcomes
- discounts things that are difficult to measure
- concentrates on product and outcomes not process.

Within this paradigm, funders give policy direction explicitly and implicitly, the funded respond by doing things, and then measure those things to demonstrate their compliance with the funders’ wishes. They focus on the outcomes and the product.

The new paradigm of Cultural Value

- recognises the affective elements of cultural experience, practice and identity, as well as the full range of quantifiable economic and numerical data
- seeks a forward-looking model to understand the broad public value (or value destruction) that can result from the decisions both of publicly funded organisations and funding bodies
- adopts broad and unchanging concepts of public goods such as equity and fairness, enhancing trust in the public realm, health and prosperity, thereby placing goals such as social inclusion and diversity in a context that can be easily understood
- promotes a ‘strong’ culture, confident in its own worth, instead of a ‘weak’ culture dedicated to the production of ancillary benefits, but it does not rest its case on the assertion that culture has ‘intrinsic value’
- challenges policy-makers and organisations to adopt a new concordat between funders, funded and the public.

Cultural Value gains legitimacy from public support and from the exercise of professional expertise. Each part of the settlement is given due weight within an overarching framework that seeks to maximise public good and to promote the vitality of culture. By according status to cultural values, taking into account professional expertise, and seeing that institutions gain legitimacy through public support, the recognition of Cultural Value will enable the cultural sector to achieve a working concordat between funders, funded and the public. Each part of the settlement is given due weight within an overarching framework that seeks to maximise public good and to promote the vitality of culture. But the agenda requires bravery. It offers fundamental challenges to the way that funders and funded work together, and how they in turn engage with the public. If the foregoing analysis is correct, attitudes to governance, accountability and workforce development need to change. Above all though, the practices of everyone involved in the public funding of cultural activity would be radically different. Funded organisations will need to accept a new form of challenge, to scrutinise themselves on the basis of what multiple sources of feedback can tell them about their own ability to enact their goals. Funding and policy organisations face equally demanding challenges: to re-examine the processes and criteria through which they take decisions, and their implicit assumptions about evidence and impact, from a completely different perspective, and then to involve a wide constituency in their redesign. The implication of our analysis is not, however, that the current system must be thrown away in order to start again. Many existing practices have value if they are put in the proper context. The gains of recreating that context around the goal of Creating Cultural Value should be enough to motivate all concerned.

FootNotes


About Demos

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The two main points which I would like to contribute to the debate are: firstly, that arts practice itself can provide the key to converging the ‘old intellectual tramlines’ of instrumental versus intrinsic values. Secondly, consistent with Holden’s vision, arts organisations need to show leadership in redefining culture as well as their own relationships to communities and the economy.

Holden addresses the apparent hemispherical, left brain/right brain, dichotomy of the current funding paradigm from the perspective of institutions, governments and academies – the axis of culture, so to speak – and proposes a ‘wholesale reshaping’ of how culture is funded based on the development of a language which captures both instrumental and intrinsic values; a language drawn in part from the discourses of anthropology, economics and environmentalism. This will be a language which will enable those who administer, govern and theorise the arts to talk to, and about, each other more effectively. And that’s fine.

But Holden stops short, perhaps judiciously, of describing or critiquing contemporary arts practice itself. In doing so he lets the art world off the hook at the very moment when a thorough-going philosophical overhaul could turn crisis into opportunity. While arts institutions may have to ‘scrutinize’ and ‘demystify’ themselves in the light of the new language, I am suggesting that they should also take some of the responsibility for the situation that they are in and acknowledge that contemporary culture is about a lot more than ‘displaying pictures or putting on dance performances’. And if museum administrators consider that installing a crèche is ‘radical’ then they really do need to get out more.

And I have always thought that my local shopping mall is already a One Stop Cultural Shop! At Brookside (yes, really) I can buy books, music, technology, fashion (after a fashion) and get multicultural stuff for dinner parties (food). I can happily spend a Saturday morning shopping there alongside my lower-middle-class neighbours, safe in the knowledge that there is no way in the world I will ever run into anyone from the art world. I dread the prospect of a One Stop Culture Shop. I shudder at the thought of gaggles of arty types, nervous about being so far away from the inner city suburbs, out looking for tickets. ‘Oh, look, there’s Jock with his shopping trolley. Maybe he knows where the Culture Shop is!’ ... ‘Yes, it’s over there between Vodaphone and Billabong. They’ve got some good specials this week – the Malouf play is nearing its use by date, but you better be quick, there’s a queue!’ ... Oh, Please!!

Art, creativity and the economy

In attempting to counter the academic and theoretical perspective with an empirical and subjective one, I am not seeking to refute the vision of a new language, but, on the contrary, to endorse it, to balance it and to insert practice into the debate. Contemporary arts practice looks different at the coal face than the view from the academy or the institution; the notion that that axis is the authority and arbiter of cultural value is a patrician delusion. It denies that it is what Holden calls ‘the small, experimental, emergent practices that seem to lie at the margins’ that actually drive the arts. That’s where the innovation is and where the new
language will come from. My work in the field leads me to believe that it is precisely the small and emergent practices and arts organisations which are not big enough to be called institutions that will lead.

There is a growing international debate within the arts questioning art’s social engagement (or lack thereof), its relations to communities and, increasingly, the relationship between art, creativity and the economy. Many artists are exploring this landscape and state, federal and research funding is already beginning to flow to arts organisations which are developing exploratory and speculative models of engagement.

This coincides with the historical moment at which the corporate sector is increasingly conscious of its ‘corporate social responsibility’ and recognising that environmental and social outcomes are as important as purely financial ones. Social services and community organisations are also seeking efficiencies in the delivery of services and new ways of working. The environment in which we live and operate is more fluid and complex than ever before. The boundaries between traditional sectors such as community, commerce and the arts are becoming increasingly blurred. As they converge, the need that is common to all, and is increasingly being expressed, is the need for creativity. Artists understand that often the space between things is as important as the forms themselves. Artists and the organisations which service them can, and should be, central to finding new ways of working across the sectors – in the space between the new economy and communities. This is the opportunity to deliver both sustainability (instrumental) and define new models of engaged arts practice beyond the institution (intrinsic).

Navigating complexity

But few arts organisations have made explicit connections between their core business and the opportunities the new environment presents. Fewer still are prepared to radically realign their activities to take advantage of it. The organisations which will survive and flourish in this complex operating environment will be those that don’t shy away from the complexity but who specialize in navigating it. They will include in their strategic planning and skills auditing a whole new set of criteria. We are in transition from a left brain economy to a right brain economy, from the information age to the conceptual age; the skills which will be at the greatest premium will be conceptualization skills, communication skills, people skills, sensitivity, team building, facilitation, scholarship, pattern recognition – confident imagination. These are the stock which will underpin the new models of practice, partnerships and the future sustainability of our sector. In this scenario artists and community cultural development (ccd) workers will be at the nucleus of projects which deliver multiple outcomes for diverse stakeholders. Such projects are already underway.

But the ability of artists to see juxtapositions, draw inferences and conceptualize unexpected relationships is not sufficient in itself – the ability to translate and broker these ideas, to shape them into cross-sector projects with multiple outcomes will need to be developed. Thus, current models of professional development and training will need to be re-thought. While the training of artists workers and the incubation of creative businesses is important, it addresses only one side of the equation – the supply side. We need to meet and further stimulate the demand for creativity.

We need to learn not just the language but the methodologies of other disciplines like anthropology in our relationship building with the social and economic sectors – small steps, building of trust, small but achievable and mutually beneficial projects at a local level. These will be even more possible in non metropolitan areas, ‘the regions’, where the communities, the industries and the influential individuals are more closely connected and more accessible. While it might be argued that that is what the community arts sector already does in communities, the practice has not been widely explored in the economic or corporate environment.

The customizing of projects to deliver corporate and social outcomes which also stand up as art transgresses the politically correct orthodoxies of where art can and should be, what we expect art to look like and to deal with. Issues such as ethnicity, gender, sex and the environment are indeed important, but they are no longer dangerous subject matter or unfamiliar territory. But when art questions its own relationship to the economy or seeks to work collaboratively with the corporate sector it is seen by some to be treading on the taboo. As Holden cautions, we will need to be brave in going there, confident in our imagination, our integrity and our ability to drive the debate.

The boundaries between traditional sectors such as community, commerce and the arts are becoming increasingly blurred. As they converge, the need that is common to all, and is increasingly being expressed, is the need for creativity.

The new order

The new organisational models which will evolve in this environment may be museums; they may be libraries, they may be contemporary art spaces, community arts centres, private consultancies, creative entrepreneurs – or hybrids that don’t exist yet, entirely new business models. But to the potential collaborators and clients from the communities and the industries seeking to engage with our creativity, it will not matter whether you are a ccd organisation, or a contemporary art space or a library or a museum. What will matter is that you are flexible, lateral, intelligent, professional, and above all relevant to them.
... in inviting the debate, John Holden confirms that a window of opportunity exists for arts practice itself and the organisations which service it in the field to impact positively on those who administer, govern and theorise the arts.

But what will they see when they come looking? Will they see community arts organisations whose vision has been limited not just by funding anxieties but by dull dogma; or contemporary art spaces servicing tiny exclusive cliques of inner city trendy and theory snobs? Will they see art schools lost in self absorption and insularity, marginalized even within their own universities? Will they see consultants who can review a city’s cultural plan without ever mentioning contemporary art or the creative industries?

Or will their attention be drawn to organisations that innovate, initiate dialogue, scholarship and projects across arts disciplines and other sectors and that know how to engage with communities and their corporate citizens in new, intelligent and mutually beneficial ways. It will be those organisations who will not only get the gig but will do so in mutually beneficial ways. It will be those organisations which service it in the field to impact positively on those who administer, govern and theorise the arts.

Meanwhile back up the food chain, we need to encourage government agencies and peak bodies to include the development of skills appropriate to the new order in the services they provide and to facilitate access to the other sectors where the opportunities are. We need to throw a bucket of cold water over the institutional/governmental/academic conga line to make them look around at what is actually happening out here.

We need also to address that other grand furphy – the Arts Marketing Debate. We do, of course, need to be clever about how we compete for the public’s hearts and minds and disposable income. But many people in the arts seem unhealthily preoccupied with the notion that as soon as those marketing people get their act together the general public will suddenly understand how wonderful art is and fall over themselves to get some. Belief in this myth allows us to hide behind marketing’s skirts and deny that there is any other problem with the relevance of what we do. It encourages intellectual laziness and perpetuates the paternalistic myth that ‘culture’ is good for you despite, as Holden and other commentators point out, a disturbing lack of evidence to that effect. To be sure, a proletarian shopper from the Brookside One Stop Culture Shop could well be moved and uplifted by a piece of ballet, but equally an eastern suburbs curator could have a profound emotional experience at the footy. We may be too cool to go to church, but I do think that if spiritual uplift is what you are after, then your local Samoan choir is a better bet than a contemporary art space.

Engaging with the world

Adherents of politically correct orthodoxies challenge the idea of engaging positively with business, as do some cultural conservatives from the right. Ironically, the old left is united with the top end of town ‘elites’ in agreeing that culture should not be sullied by grubby commerce. There is no denying that we live in an age of profound conservatism and meanness of spirit and I am not suggesting for a moment that art should not provide a critical intellectual and philosophical counterpoint to that – of course it should. Nor, at the other extreme, should we deny those who can afford it the right to use the status and elevation which culture confers to set themselves apart from the rest of us if they feel the need to. But it seems to me that in co-opting culture for their own self interested ends, both the left and the right exhibit an instrumental attitude to the arts which is far more problematic than any arts department politely asking you to count bums on seats in the interests of public accountability. So let’s get over it; the corporate sector is not the enemy, nor is government – they are clients. The enemy is dull institutional thinking, atrophy of the imagination, risk aversion and uncritical acceptance of tired old definitions of art and culture.

The idea of engaging in dialogue designed to assist the machinery of institutional art grease its own creaky wheels at first seems ironic when seen from the perspective of ‘the small, experimental, emergent practices that seem to lie at the margins ...’. But in inviting the debate, John Holden confirms that a window of opportunity exists for arts practice itself and the organisations which service it in the field to impact positively on those who administer, govern and theorise the arts. The language that they seek can be achieved by developing models of arts practice which engage with communities and businesses in new ways, rendering the ‘old intellectual tramlines’ of values obsolete. Artists and organisations of the future will look quite different to today’s models and their purpose will be redefined. To paraphrase Harold Pinter, the job of the arts is to engage with the world.

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A New Australia is the result of my increasing despair and frustration at recent changes the government has brought to Australia by allowing economic imperatives to dominate those of humanity. I believe this and other governments around the world have used the events of September 11, 2001 to encourage fear and distrust of other nationalities, partly to retain their own power. These concerns are highlighted in the work, which I have tried to present as a tongue-in-cheek ‘government’ document, complete in its document frame, using descriptions which emphasise the use of ‘spin’. I hope to amuse as well as disturb.

Pullum has recently begun to work in two dimensions, digitally manipulating images and photographs, computer technologies having opened up to her a myriad of creative possibilities. For more than 20 years, her art practice has been primarily three dimensional, making sculpture in clay, bronze and other materials, but for the moment she is enjoying the new media. Her work themes are many, but mostly vary from highlighting the position of animals in our society to reflecting on current events. Her fascination with ancient societies and a love of humour are also evident in her work. Further information at www.ozemail.com.au/~elainesp
The recent past

The framing of government support dictates how it is evaluated and allocated. Cultural commentators in the 70s and earlier saw it as a government responsibility in an enlightened social democratic state, to provide support for arts activity that would not happen without that support. In Raymond Williams’ view for instance, government support of the arts was there to ameliorate the impact of the market place, thereby allowing or enabling activity to occur that would not or could not occur otherwise (Williams 1989: 143). Williams and others saw that it was a government responsibility to support or provide for alternative cultural voices other than activity that was commercial and popular.

Artists have always had patrons. The Renaissance period in Italy is a classic example of this where the Medici family provided financial support for many notable artists. Alternatively the all-powerful Catholic Church commissioned artists to undertake commissions such as the Sistine Chapel. While sometimes commercial success as an artist did occur during their own lifetime (such as with Michelangelo), most artists struggled to receive adequate recognition and appreciation of their work. Patronage kept the ‘wolf from the door’ for many artists and while doing commissions for their patron, some artists also managed to do their own work. At times the commissioned work became a masterpiece. Mozart, aside from his very early work, only did commissioned work for most of his short life. So a patron is not necessarily a bad thing for an artist, because they may still be able to express their individuality. But perhaps it is the framing of the patronage that is crucial and of course there is a power relationship in any form of ‘patronage’.

In Australia the Australia Council and state arts funding bodies were established in the 70s. In the case of the Australia Council there was an attempt to structure it so that it was at ‘arm’s length’ distance from government, replicating the model offered by the Arts Council of Great Britain. While the council and board members were appointed by government, there was not direct ministerial involvement in grants to artists and organisations. Nevertheless, in the late 70s there was a review of direct government funding for performing arts organisations (the Industries Assistance Commission Inquiry to the Performing Arts). It was argued in this review that direct funding for performing arts organisations should be phased out over a period of time and that they should learn to survive in a commercial context (Gardiner-Garden 1994: 13-14). The then government rejected the Commission’s findings, affirming the importance of direct subsidy to the performing arts. In addition, in 1977 the Prime Minister (Malcolm Fraser) established the Community Arts Board at the Australia Council seeing it an opportunity to ‘... encourage groups like local government authorities, trade unions and so on to become more involved in the education of the community through the arts’. (Gardiner-Garden 1994: 15)
It could be argued in fact that this reflects the notion of a so-called civil society which encourages arts activity as part of the mandate of being socially advanced and democratic.

In the United States though, government support for the arts has always been a contested field. This is largely because of the tradition of free enterprise that dominates the American culture, a fear of big government, a distrust of so called social welfare engagement of any kind and the influence of religion. The US has seen itself as representing capitalism at its most developed and everyone, including artists, has to be competitive in this marketplace (Cowen 2000). For this reason, the notion that government should provide support to enable artists to do their work is not widely adhered to. There is also suspicion of government motives when it directly intervenes in any activity. In fact, there is an assumption that citizens should be protected from government.

Another important facet of American society is the influence of religion. Any form of artistic activity that has been seen as profane, anti-religious, experimental and controversial has been subject to direct attack by the religious right and their elected supporters in government. Government support of arts activity has therefore been seen as an official condoning of anti-Christian propaganda in its crudest interpretation.

Australia has had a different history. Until recently, Australia has followed more closely the European model where the state is seen to have some responsibility for ensuring people are looked after, and for providing services and infrastructure to maintain a civil society. So supporting the arts and enabling artistic activity to occur, that would otherwise not happen without that support, has been broadly accepted by both sides of politics for the past 30 years. However the McLeay Report in the mid-80s (Gardiner-Garden 1994:26-28) started the process of reframing the arts into an industry.

The publication of Creative Nation in 1994 saw this become a mantra for governments at both state and federal levels. ‘This cultural policy is also an economic policy. Culture creates wealth. Broadly defined, our cultural industries generate 13 billion dollars a year. ... Around 336,000 Australians are employed in culture-related industries.’ (Creative Nation 1994: 7)

This document also signified a shift by government from the producer (that is the artist) to the audience. Large amounts of funding at the Australia Council were directed by the federal government to be shifted towards audience development schemes away from artistic practice (Creative Nation 1994:13). Arts organisations had to use language based on economic outcomes such as performance measures, products, business plans, strategic plans and so on. So direct funding of the arts continued, but it was now prefaced by accountability measures and performance contracts that were based around measurable outcomes such as earned income, audience development and pre-determined strategic goals; not necessarily related to the making of art.

The present Australian context

So in the current scenario in Australia, the role of government towards the arts has been largely framed within an economic context and, more recently, strongly...
influenced by the American model. The industry paradigm has been dominant now for around 15 years and the notion that all arts organisations are in fact businesses, has been part of this paradigm. This means that the arts are seen as creators of employment, producers of income and generally creators of economic benefit, if they are worthy of being funded. The evidence of the dominance of this approach can be seen at the highest level. The current and previous chairs of the Australia Council are both business people. The present membership of the Australia Council is largely dominated by corporate individuals. All arts organisations are expected to have several business people on their boards, and to receive funding, must sign off on an agreed business plan. So the arts are seen just like everything else. They need to prove that they are contributing to the economy if they are going to receive support from government to exist.

However if the Australia Council is about supporting the arts, where are the artists? For some reason the present federal government has determined that artists do not belong in the front row of decision-making about their field. It would appear that the government believes they cannot be trusted. Instead business people, who understand the real world, have been brought in to teach artists how to run themselves and their organisations. Is there a basic contradiction here however? If the arts are ‘businesses’ then why do they need funding? Is the logical conclusion of this approach to the arts, an eventual withdrawal of government direct support? Does it also mean that arts activities that are not ‘economic generators’ are of no ‘value’ and therefore not worthy of government ‘investment’?

The recent retiring CEO of the Australia Council in fact speaks of the government engagement with the arts as being about ‘investment’ not ‘subsidy’ (Bott 2006). Certainly the use of business terms dominates the funding discourse. But what does this mean for arts activity and particularly arts activity that is not ‘commercial’? Where does this leave experimental art and community cultural development which are not framed around making money? Where in fact does this leave public funding of the arts?

Holden’s view

In John Holden’s view the framing of culture in the United Kingdom has become entirely instrumental, servicing the needs of government rather than necessarily the needs of artists or society. Holden describes a scenario where cultural activity is there as a means to an end and not an end in itself. The funding of arts activity then is done in the context of what conforms to the government agenda of the day. This is, of course, quite different to the notion of ‘arm’s length funding’, but instead, is more reactive to government priorities and potentially servicing of a government-decreed agenda. In a democratic society it could be concluded that this is highly problematic because it does not allow for pluralism of any sort. So it would follow that if you want to do artistic work which is critical of a government’s agenda or not in agreement with its protocols, then it is unlikely you will receive any government funding to support your activity.

While it is not a constitutional right to receive government funding, there has been a convention in this country, for instance, that government funding for the arts at a federal level is not bound by ministerial approval, but is peer approved. It is also meant to support work of high artistic merit rather than work which fulfils a government agenda but has no intrinsic aesthetic merit. In the case of community cultural development, there may be the direct possibility that the work being undertaken is critical of government. This is, of course, potentially problematic if it is dependent on ministerial approval to receive its funding.

Holden also notes that, ‘Outcomes are not in reality separate from the processes or from the systems that produce them’. (Holden 2004:51)

This is interesting for community cultural development because so much of the work is about process rather than product. If the
Holden has made an important attempt to shift the arts funding discourse away from instrumental outcomes and economic arguments and address the reason the activity takes place in the first place.

evaluation of work is done only on the outcomes, then the purpose of community cultural development becomes questionable. This point also suggests that work based on particular values will reflect those values in its outcomes. Thus Holden argues that recognising the values which inform the work is critical.

Holden argues for a different way of evaluation of culture that is related to its purpose and what it is doing, rather than to mechanistic measurement of outcomes. He notes that, ‘The value of culture cannot be adequately measured in statistics.’ (Holden 2004:21)

In Holden’s cultural values approach there are several characteristics that are significant. These include historical social, symbolic, aesthetic and spiritual elements (Holden 2004:35). While he notes that some critics would view his approach as just another method of measuring performance, he argues that the forms of measurement would be used differently and would consider the process as well as the product (Holden 2004:56). He argues that:

By according status to cultural values, taking into account professional expertise, and seeing that institutions gain legitimacy through public support, the recognition of Cultural Value will enable the cultural sector to achieve a working concordat between funders, funded and the public. (Holden 2004:60)

Holden’s overall aim is to ensure that, ‘... culture is seen as an integral and essential part of civil society’. (Holden 2004:11)

**Conclusion**

Holden has made an important attempt to shift the arts funding discourse away from instrumental outcomes and economic arguments and address the reason the activity takes place in the first place. He rightly notes that the current approach of government funders (in both the UK and Australia) does not necessarily support a diversity of cultural activity. It also does not value culture for its own sake but expects it to justify itself in terms of narrow mechanistic frameworks. Therefore Holden tries to find a language that expresses both the meaning and outcomes of cultural activity that is not mechanistic in nature. Certainly many arts practitioners would welcome an approach that places intrinsic value on their work as opposed to making it fit into other irrelevant paradigms. Nevertheless it could also be argued that Holden has merely changed the language, but not the approach. As he acknowledges himself, he is still looking at forms of measurement (albeit more qualitative than quantitative) and ways of justification for government financial support of the arts. So is the term ‘cultural value’ itself just another form of economic framing? Perhaps, but Holden is essentially trying to find a way through the jungle of government agendas that suits the needs of arts practitioners as well as their government patrons. He is also trying to find a pathway for ensuring adequate financial support of diverse cultural activity.

**References**

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Penny Byrne
1965, Mildura, Victoria

In the Land of the Free they call David a Terrorist. At home he was just a Hick 2006 altered vintage porcelain figurine, metal, epoxy resin, powder pigments, retouching medium 37.0 x 16.0 x 19.0 cm

Penny Byrne’s work is an amalgamation of vintage ceramic figurines/objects, and uses her skills as a ceramicist, ceramics conservator, and social and political observer. These works subvert the ethical considerations of art conservation and restoration, which value the integrity of the original object. Overt references to popular culture and politics give the objects a new, subversive, and often darker level of meaning.

Penny Byrne has graduated in both Law (1997 La Trobe University, Melbourne) and Ceramics (1990 Grad Dip (Ceramic and Glass Conservation and Restoration), West Dean College, U.K., 1987 Bachelor of Art (Fine Art Ceramics), RMIT, Melbourne). Solo and group exhibitions include Sullivan+Strumpf Fine Art; Linden Centre for Contemporary Art; Montsalvat. Awards include Pat Emery Award for Emerging Ceramicists. Residency includes Meat Market Craft Centre Ceramics Studio. Further information at www.ssfa.com.au

Penny Byrne is represented by Sullivan & Strumpf Fine Art, Sydney.
My work is about our interaction with the environment. I like to raise questions rather than assert answers. Crops are addicted to water. We humans feed the addiction to feed ourselves. After rain, the creek fills from upstream catchments. On the cultivated slopes veins of water collect below the surface and flow downhill. Dams are sited to intercept the flow before it reaches the waterway, or to suck it back later with pumps. Who cares for the creek?

Brigid Cole-Adams is a sculptor and painter who has exhibited throughout Australia as well as overseas. Born in Brisbane, she trained in Occupational Therapy before beginning informal art studies in London in 1973 as a mature-age student. In 1984 she graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts from the Corcoran College of Art in Washington DC, USA, winning graduation prizes in painting and sculpture. She has a postgraduate diploma in Sculpture from the Victorian College of the Arts. In 1993 and 1999 she spent time in Malaysia, as part of the Asialink Residency program. She has lived in Canberra for ten years where she had a studio at ANCA (Australian National Capital Artists). In 2002 she returned to live in Melbourne. Further information at www.judithpughgallery.com

Brigid Cole-Adams is represented by Judith Pugh Gallery, Melbourne and Helen Maxwell Gallery, Canberra.
When Artwork magazine approached Arts Access Australia to write a response to the 2003 Demos Foundation article ‘Capturing Cultural Value – how the arts have become a tool of government policy’ by John Holden, I struggled to see its relevance. While it is, at times, an interesting summary of UK debates I questioned its usefulness and potential application to Australia.

One of the problems with projects that attempt to articulate new paradigms and promote shifts in valuing culture is that, like most of the theoretical ruminations concerning the funded arts, they miss the point. Each new paradigm is an attempt to find the magic bullet – the right jargon – to convince the politicians once and for all that the arts are good thing, and therefore worth throwing buckets of money at. Where they commonly fail is in articulating the political context of the funded arts and the processes through which political decisions are made, never mind moving beyond narrowly defined and often transparent arts sector self interest.

Arts Access Australia’s primary area of work is federal though the arguments presented here are broadly applicable to other tiers of government. The key driver to engage with government is limited or patchy growth in arts funding for an expanding sector. A key constraint on government funding is concern about the public benefit of arts support combined with sensitivity to some of the more kooky arts projects that are created or toured using taxpayer dollars. Anything a government does with taxpayer money can reasonably be expected to receive some public scrutiny. This is as true for the arts as it is for the more obscure Australian Research Council grants or the latest Defence Department procurement bungle. It is also true that in a country without a strong tradition of philanthropy there is understandably greater attention and pressure on government funding for the arts.

The challenge

The challenge then for ‘the arts’ is to build a constituency and find a common rallying point that avoids the temptation to argue that one artform is better than another. A rallying point capable of bridging the divide, that means so little to the general public, between the funded and commercial arts. A rallying point that can support freedom of expression knowing such freedom can result in grants for projects that will make an arts ministers life that little bit harder. The challenge is a difficult one though not impossible.

A constituency that can be recognised politically is important if the arts are to have a cohesive identity and a voice decision makers can respond to. A starting point to support the intrinsic value of the arts can be demonstrated by the rising number of people identifying as artists, despite more financially rewarding career options being open to them. Then add people attending and participating in the arts and there is a base for making a case to government for arts funding and industry assistance. It is
easy at this point to disappear in the defini-
tional quagmire between arts and culture as
we seek to be inclusive to the point that
meaning, and our ability to build a
constituency, is lost.

The definitions provided by the National
Centre for Culture and Recreation Statistics
within the Australian Bureau of Statistics
provide a starting point that is recognised
by government including the Cultural
Ministers Council. Making these statistics
useful to the arts sector does mean
engaging with some, at times, dry
discussions papers and issues. As a sector
the arts can’t rely on government authorities
to do all of this work. The value of having
an effective peak body that can collect data
and develop useful advocacy strategies that
make the case is significant. The Live
Performance Australia 2004 report on Ticket
Attendance and Revenue found the
performing arts sector was twice the size
captured by Australian Bureau of Statistics
figures. It’s an example that other artform
areas, and the arts as a whole, might learn
from when seeking greater government
leadership and support for the arts.

Building a constituency

Building a constituency provides a platform
from which to engage with government.
Government can have a tendency to divide
and rule, breaking a sector up into
manageable or non-cohesive groups that
can in effect compete against one another.
David Throsby’s recent work asking
Can in effect compete against one another.


The arts sector needs to be more active in
building this constituency. There are clues
available to indicate how we might start to
go about such activity. The Department of
Communication Information Technology
and the Arts (DCITA) arts funding contracts
require that the Minister for the Arts and
Sport be invited to open funded events in
addition to inviting the local federal
Member of Parliament to attend the
opening. Australia Council funding
contracts contain details of the recipient’s
local federal Member of Parliament.
Similarly the Australia Council Key
Organisations section recently distributed a
government communications guide to
support government relations activity. In a
similar vein the Confederation of
Humanities Arts and Social Sciences
(CHASS) organises an annual meeting at
Parliament House where its members are
not only skilled up in talking to politicians
but actually get to put their skills to use by
meeting with politicians. It begs the
question: How many of us have ever,
whether required to or not, contacted our
local parliamentarian to promote our work
and by implication public funding for the
arts? In encouraging contact with local
federal Members of Parliament our two
government arts bodies may, within
their own limitations, actually be trying to
support the arts sector to help ourselves.
Forming relationships with Members of
Parliament, including inviting them to arts
events, allows them to see and relate to the
constituency that already exists which in
turn may serve the arts well when seeking
further support or in responding to a crisis.

While we’re at it let’s occasionally recognise
the good things that the current
government has done for the arts sector,
including through the Australia Council, and
that this has happened while the 2004
Uhrig report into the governance of
Statutory Authorities led to the absorbing of
many into portfolio departments bringing
their functions more directly under
Ministerial control. For those Authorities
remaining independent, like the Australia
Council, there are additional tensions to
negotiate between strengthening their
independence and being part of a ‘whole of
government’ ethos that may regard their
existence as a needless example of bureau-
cratic proliferation. Such concerns could be
particularly acute for the Australia Council
given there is an existing Arts Department,
DCITA, with a senior minister at the helm.

Strategically speaking

In this context the Australia Council’s move
to appoint political advisors on staff, create
a strategy section, articulate whole of
government priorities and attempt to re-
integrate the major performing arts organi-
sations into the artform Board structure
start to make some sense. In particular the
new Creative Communities strategy is a
bold attempt to address many of the
challenges identified through the 2000
Australians and the Arts research. Left to
their own devices artists and organisations,
driven by the urge to produce work that
isn’t purely commercial, may not place a
high value on engaging with the broadest
possible range of people. By driving the
Council back to its foundation document,
the 1975 Australia Council Act that provides
the rationale for its continued existence, the
2004 restructure may yet provide a greater
level of support for community arts,
including community cultural development
practice, than was previously available.

... the ongoing challenge will
be to make art that is popular
while still supporting the
virtuosity of artists.

The goal tension between art and
community, that has played itself out
through the 30 year evolution of support for
community arts, will still be there and the
ongoing challenge will be to make art that
is popular while still supporting the
virtuosity of artists. While arguments in
support of the intrinsic value of art as part
of a civilised society are largely accepted
by government it would certainly help the arts
sector if this public good was directly
experienced by a greater diversity of people.
If the arts are then to make their case for
relevance in non-arts portfolio areas, as part
of a whole of government approach, it is
reasonable to expect instrumental
arguments for arts support to follow as the
arts positions itself in a way that those
departments understand.

In Arts Access Australia’s own experience
Departments like Family and Community
Services and Indigenous Affairs and the
Department of Health and Ageing do not
have an arts policy or an ability to aggregate
their support for cultural activity precisely
because they view the arts as a tool that
achieves an outcome, be it in employment for people with intellectual disabilities or indigenous mental health. It follows that approaching these Departments requires that the approach be framed in a way they can justify making decisions on.

For Arts Access Australia there are still arguments to be made, and won, across government for arts inclusion as part of human rights and social inclusion for people with disabilities, providing policy advice demonstrating the vocational employment and enterprise potential of creative activity and demonstrating that arts activities can reach those not engaged by other forms of intervention. In the meantime we continue to argue strongly for artists with disabilities to be supported, where necessary, to achieve excellence as the common assumption that arts participation for people with disabilities only takes place in a community setting is a form of exclusion. The level of overall arts inclusion is itself a measure of the intrinsic worth society has for people with disabilities, as it is for other interest groups.

As an arts and disability organisation we have much in common with any arts, or indeed disability, organisation in that we frame our work in ways that highlight the items of interest to the funder. This ‘instrumental’ approach may not be the problem that many imagine where it is supporting and building on the existing arts budget.

Engaging with the government of the day

The task for the arts sector is to engage with the government of the day not sit back and wait for a supposedly friendlier government to appear over the horizon. They will still have party room, never mind election battles, to win. Engaging with the government of the day does not mean selling out or compromising on principles. There is still room, and it can be argued a greater imperative, to make arguments in favour of social justice and big picture statements like why, for example, Australia should not have been one of only four countries to abstain from voting on the UNESCO Convention on Cultural Diversity.

Don Watson in his portrait of the Keating government Recollections of a Bleeding Heart notes that;

It was true, as their advocates said, that participation in the arts was far more general than people realised, but it was not participation of the kind that showed up in opinion polls and elections, and therefore it was not something to carry much weight in cabinet, caucus, the Expenditure Review Committee, or for that matter with the Prime Minister, nine days out of ten.... It was a political office and the coins of value were those that counted politically.

The overarching issue in the cultural value debate is the limited overall growth in arts funding for an expanding sector that necessitates looking for non-traditional forms of support and their associated instrumental arguments. It is also up to us in the arts sector to create our own constituency and make the intrinsic worth argument for core arts funding in a way that supports arts ministers in their party room. Hopefully we are sophisticated enough to make our argument relevant to the listener so that arts or creative industry talk doesn’t necessarily mean a change in the core business of arts organisations. What it can do is position the arts in a way that allows government to justify support in terms that it understands while linking the arts to broader debates.

It is worth noting that instrumental arguments can also carry risks as there are no comparative studies that demonstrate whether the arts are more or less effective in achieving non-arts outcomes that other forms of intervention. Who will be the first to point out that improvements in maths ability for young people might be better achieved by investing in skilled maths teachers rather than providing music classes?

What is interesting is that some current targets for whole of government support for the arts, like education and health, are areas that also carry intrinsic value assumptions with them. So the arts sector may initially be successful across government in aligning itself with other portfolio areas that carry intrinsic worth arguments. The arts can then be positioned as part of what it means to be healthy and can be an effective complement to existing health services. Similarly an arts rich educational environment complements other educational strategies without having to overwhelmingly prove its intrinsic effectiveness.

Confidence in the knowledge base

In the meantime, in a system of representative democracy, numbers and relationships matter. If the arts sector, as a whole, could learn from successful examples of lobbying on how would we do things differently? Finding ‘new’ ways of valuing culture is just muddying the waters as the key issue is the arts sector’s overall lack of ability to make effective representations to government about the work we do and our confidence in the knowledge base we have. This is a key task for Arts Access Australia and it is also here that the work of Arts Peak, CHASS and NACA may offer some hope. An arts sector-led policy may be an effective rallying point that leads to a more cohesive picture of our worth while greater political engagement may help mitigate the impacts of politically sensitive funding decisions. In ultimately seeking bipartisan support for arts and cultural activity dare we say; it’s time, to value the contribution the arts make, for all of us.

Reference

Does Australia Need a Cultural Policy

Gareth Wreford is Executive Director of Arts Access Australia and represents the national arts and disability sector as a member of Arts Peak, the National Arts and Culture Alliance and Confederation of Humanities Arts and Social Sciences. Prior to this Gareth worked for the Australia Council in Community Cultural Development and Audience and Market Development.
Kris Reichl
b. 1963, Melbourne, Australia

Silenced 2006
type C photograph, 1/6
48.0 x 75.0 cm

Silenced offers a sense of the artist’s frustrated rage at attacks on public voice and diverse media. It is a work which expresses both grief at the loss of diversity in media and a powerful redemptive anger which shares with the protestors depicted a determined expression of that voice, even in silence. The artist is clearly identifying with, as well as representing, the silenced ones.

Kris Reichl is a Melbourne based photographer and photojournalist. She works for News Limited, as well as for freelance commercial clients. Kris is also a practicing artist including media such as Polaroid transfer, pin hole photography, ‘painting with light’ and environmental portraiture. She has held three solo exhibitions as well as contributing to numerous group and selected exhibitions. In 2004 she completed a Diploma in Photography at NMIT and also studied photography at RMIT University in the early 1980s.

Further information at http://reichlphotography.alphalink.com.au
In the context of managing an arts agency in Western Australia, (Community Arts Network WA), I find myself arguing for culture on the basis of the value it has in relation to other ‘very important things’. We have become good at arguing the ‘value adding’ capabilities of the sector we broadly define as the arts and cultural sector.

I have this feeling which is very similar to stage fright. For weeks I have wanted to write a commentary on John Holden’s article, Capturing Cultural Value, as I agreed to do; however nothing has come out! It is a frustrating feeling when you have a deadline. I have been wondering why it has been so difficult to write this commentary; writing is something not that foreign to me and I have contributed to this publication and others before … so what is it?

John Holden articulates that culture has an intrinsic value, which is a value in itself, (rather than its associations or consequences). I agree, I think that cultural practices have intrinsic value that goes far beyond our ability to dissect them.

For those of us who are chasing the dollar to continue the work we passionately believe in but also feel the need to justify our existence, the news is: I think we will have to continue to find the language that will support our claims.

I do not think that, in the short term, we will be free from having to dance with the funding wolves. So, we will have to continue to cleverly and convincingly argue for the good things that come as a result of cultural development. Some of these are improved health outcomes, crime reduction, sense of belonging, strengthening of social capital, community harmony, tourism development, economic development, sustainability, better education outcomes, community engagement, and … the list is long.

It is worth asking ourselves, if culture is so good for all of the above reasons why do we have to continue to justify its support and existence?

There is something fundamentally out of ‘wack’! Holden asks us to rethink the way in which cultural value is expressed; he argues that we need a new language to articulate its intrinsic value. He also suggests that a new relationship between the agencies that fund cultural activity and those who receive it, ought to be developed.

This is an important debate. It is essential to articulate the intrinsic value of culture and the relationship between it and other spheres such as economics, environment and social. However when we look at the political backdrop in which we find ourselves at present, one wonders!

Are we ready to even contemplate this debate?

This is why it has been so hard for me to write a critique to Holden’s article, this is why I have had stage fright!

On September 19, The Australian published an article by Louise Evans: ‘Tolerance is cheap takeaway when Strine comes at face value’. I had a giggle and sometimes even laughed out loud, but afterwards I was left with a sense that what is happening in Australia right now is fundamentally out of ‘wack’.
... whose culture, I wonder?

now – in regards to how we define who we are and our cultural values – might not be that funny.

At this point and for the purpose of clarifying why I have taken this leaning in my response to John Holden’s article I have to confess, I am a ‘Wog’, a true blue Wog who stills has to think twice when people ask me ‘and where are you from’?

In her article Louise Evans starts with giving the reader what she calls:

... a quick guide to Australian values for all those freeloaders flooding into our lucky country. ‘Our idea of multiculturalism starts and ends with our stomachs’. ... As far as adopting other aspects of different cultures is concerned, unless it comes with rice or in a bottle clearly marked ‘beer’, you can pretty much forget it.

... The greatest Aussie experience is when we draw our most cherished values together. It’s called cricket. It brings together mates, drinking, sledging and winning. Plus you can get a barbecued snag and a beer for under five bucks. Now that’s value. Is it?

But whose values, who is left out? Sorry folks, I do not understand cricket and I believe football (soccer) is not a sport but a ‘religion’, and I am a vegetarian (part-time) ... I wonder if that would qualify as my Aussie trait?

I wonder how wide spread these comments are or is it all just tongue in cheek? However even if these are in the main, understood by the wider public as a humorous description of Aussie culture and therefore harmless, there is a distinct possibility that those comments might resonate with some people. The key issue that concerns me is the way in which culture is viewed and represented. By the virtue in which those idiosyncrasies are dealt with, the diversity of cultural elements and experiences that are shared in Australia today are left unrecognised.

How do Australian cultural institutions, especially those that have the mandate to articulate cultural policy, deal with this backdrop of mainstream mentality? Or is it not that widespread? Do we Aussies have the language to articulate our cultural values in a way that they would truly represent who we are and acknowledge our past?

Is there a consensus on what constitutes ‘Australian cultural values’? If so, is that congruent with how cultural organisations define their purpose and their response to the way we challenge some of the Australian cultural values?

Cultural organisations have the challenge to affect Australian cultural values and this ought to be one of our greatest contributions.

The value of culture

The reality is, I believe, that culture in itself is not and should not be a ‘sacred cow’. In the name of culture there have been atrocities committed and human rights violated. Culture is not necessarily ‘good or nice’ per se, as we tend to use it, as in ‘Arts and Culture’. Augusto Boal, Brazilian founder of the Theatre of the Oppressed, nicely puts it ‘culture is everything, the truth and the lies’.

So does culture have an intrinsic value? The question that keeps coming to my mind and for which I am more inclined to want to find answers is: whose culture do we value and who gets to say what we should value? The other question I have is: how would cultural

Cultural organisations have the challenge to affect Australian cultural values and this ought to be one of our greatest contributions.
organisations, especially those working at the coalface and in a community context, respond to these questions?

Governments, which are in most instances entrusted to develop policies, simply are not able to reflect what happens at the coalface. Their job, at best, is in developing policy to serve the interests of those who elected them, but more often than not, policy is handed down telling us ‘our’ interest.

Community based cultural organisations are far better placed to reflect the complexities and the diversity of values associated with many cultural practices. It is those cultural agencies, the ones that have to continue to channel the voices of the communities, where all the real manifestations of culture happen, the good and the bad, the truth and the lies. For example, the hard and difficult truths about Aboriginal kids fighting with African kids in the northern suburbs of Perth in their quest for cultural affirmation. Is that somehow cultural expression? I’d say yes, it is (however sad and in no way do I condone it). Is it cultural expression when another Aboriginal young person, who did an arts based training program with CAN WA, was able to claim his creative talent by saying ‘I am a musician’. Is this an example of cultural expression? Definitely yes!

Cultural organisations need to engage with contested Australian cultural values as the ones expressed, for example, in the West Australian on October 7, 2006. A poll was conducted to source Western Australian’s views on the landmark decision to recognise Noongar people and their native title claim over Perth. According to this news poll, 31% of people agree with the following statement: ‘Do you agree with the Federal Court decision recognising Noongar people’s native title rights over Perth?’ Whilst 51% of the people polled disagree.

Whose culture do we value?

What does this poll tell us about the cultural value placed in Noongar culture and history in Western Australia?

I agree with him, and alongside searching for new languages we must also challenge the existing ones, especially when it comes to defining whose culture we are talking about. We cannot talk about culture in a vacuum or in a way that is disconnected from the context in which it is expressed.

I also agree with him when he invites us to create a new paradigm. So we must continue to ask whether Louise Evans, even with tongue in cheek, speaks the ‘truths’ of Australian cultural values.

Footnote

I would like to thank my friend Dr Christopher Sonn from Victoria University for his invaluable insight and input into this article. He is a gem!

Reference

Evans, Louise The Australian, September 19 2006.

Pilar Kasat was born in Santiago, Chile and arrived as a political refugee in Australia in 1987. Her experiences of oppression and migration fuelled Pilar’s passion for advocating for cultural freedom and creating opportunities for communities to mobilise, express and grow their unique cultures. Pilar Kasat is Managing Director CAN WA.
Two objects of very different purpose as one. The M18 Claymore Antipersonnel Mine – the directed façade makes this nasty object an exception to the classic ‘set and forget’ mine prohibitions, and is used by most military nations around the world. Set up with a trip wire, the weapon has caused countless indiscriminate carnage. Unite d’Habitation, by Le Corbusier, 1947 – generously proportioned modern living design given a bad name by later mean developer imitations. Now stripped of its famous façade, its form and function distorted. Two different functions collide in one form. The beautiful hideous, in cold monumental marble.

Alexander Seton is a Sydney-side artist who has a few chisels, video camera, computer and a lot of dreams. A graduate of COFA, UNSW in 1998, Alex has exhibited in numerous exhibitions over the years, including Sculpture by the Sea ‘04, the McClelland Sculpture Survey ‘05 and The Helen Lempriere Sculpture Award ‘06. Seton is currently participating in exhibitions The Green Zone by the 1/2dozen group and Flaming Youth at the Orange Regional Gallery. Further information at www.alexanderseton.com

Alexander Seton is represented by Jan Murphy Gallery, Brisbane.
Hanging Garden is a visual protest at the homophobia of fundamentalist Islamic Iran. Mahmoud Asgari depicted here was executed, while still a minor, for having gay sex. The ‘crime’ was reported to police by a family member, his motive: a state-sanctioned honour killing. Anonymous photographs of his detention and execution show the event being recorded by many, seemingly as entertainment. Being gay in Iran is seen as western decadence; therefore for me Asgari is a gay martyr. Rather than being anti-Islamic however, my work references aspects of Persian/Iranian culture: Sufism, carpet weaving, geometric patterning. Image courtesy Peter Tatchell and Outrage UK (Gay and Human Rights Campaigns) website.

Anton Veenstra has contributed to Sydney GLBT Mardi Gras visual events including Age of Consent 1999, Object Gallery and Material Boys Unzipped 2000, Object Gallery and toured nationally. He completed a Master of Design (Hons) degree at COFA, exhibiting at the Ivan Dougherty Gallery, Masters of Design 2003. He was a finalist in the Blake Prize for Religious Art exhibition 2004, Sir Hermann Black Gallery. Born at Cowra migrant camp into two very different cultures, his current interests are overlapping diasporas and queer and feminist studies, visual censorship by religious fundamentalism, and fibre arts/craft in post-industrial society.

For further information antonveenstra@hotmail.com
A book made in bronze that keeps the images and words of the author imprisoned in its own sculptural nature. It is a conceptual/evocative artwork, imagined on the borders of the categories of the artist book and the sculpture/installation. My translation of the world tries to destroy the imitation of the ideas, by transposing them into other ideas: sculpture-installations, paintings and artist books to testify a subjectivity that is creative, transitory and not defined.

Tommaso Durante was born in Baronissi, Italy in 1956. From the beginning he focused his artistic production on the relationship between art and philosophy. Durante works around the definition of art as characterised by complex linguistic themes and resolutions, which go beyond the polarities of telling and reflecting, narration and concept. Before moving from Italy to Australia in 2001, he also taught history and theory of art at the State High School for Classical Studies in Amalfi, Italy. His artworks have been exhibited in solo shows and group exhibitions worldwide and are part of prestigious public and private collections.
Dear Editors...

The Community Partnerships Scoping Study is a highly comprehensive document. The report recognises the Australia Council (Ozco) as a leader. Ozco has been instrumental in developing and supporting Australian Indigenous culture and recognising the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and culture and communities.

However, the report has failed to acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts as the oldest living form of community arts practice. While the report has put Indigenous people and remote Indigenous communities in the priority areas, there is no real strategy for the inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists and communities.

The employment of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander artists as community workers as well as participants is a potential economic benefit as well as the social benefit to that particular sector of the community. The study fails to comment on current issues that impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and how this particular report will work with the Indigenous communities to achieve successful outcomes.

Nancy Bamaga
Indigenous Programs Manager
SpeakOut
Member of Murri Artworkers Network (MAWN), Queensland

Working in a physically isolated community it is vitally important to make a big effort to keep abreast of all that is happening within our sector at a state and national level. You make this effort as you are not likely to go to a meeting, have lunch with a colleague, or run into anyone socially who has the latest information and opinions on things like the Australia Council’s Community Partnerships Scoping Study. It is also important to grab any opportunity to have your say on these matters so that your voice is heard.

We found the Scoping Study report very easy to read. A little too easy in fact, as we found ourselves trying to read between the lines, this term ‘key producer’ seems to mean so much more than the explanation given. A six year contract, how wonderful this sounds at first but then you think how much scope does this give organisations to respond in meaningful and immediate ways to the changing needs of communities?

The more we read this document the more questions we have, and what at first seems clear, upon further reflection just turns into more questions. What this report needs is time and the kind of strong sector response that saw this scoping study commissioned in the first place, to ensure positive outcomes.

What concerns us most of all is that the organisation that we work for will still be that round ball trying to fit neatly into a square fashioned by bureaucracy. Here in Mount Isa, OutBack Arts is the corner store in the middle of nowhere. We produce work in our own right, undertake partnerships to produce work, provide services and information and generally respond to whatever people need. It appears from the scoping study that we need to be a producer or a service provider, but cannot be both even though that is what is needed in our region.

We don’t want to be too critical of this report as it makes so many progressive points and provides practical suggestions that we think, in the long term, will help provide a more concise set of parameters to define the type of work we do.

We thank the editors of this most valuable publication for giving us space to voice our opinions. We look forward to reading the opinions of others on this most important paper.

Annette Gordon and Sari Sihvola
Co-Executive Officers
OutBack Arts, Mt Isa, Queensland
Firstly I would like to take the opportunity to thank NACA [National Arts and Culture Alliance] and the major players from the community cultural development (ccd) sector who have worked so hard to support the future of ccd in Australian arts practice. Given their significant contribution, upholding the values and principles of ccd, we have expectations of a strong and empowered future for ccd.

With the results and implementation of the Scoping Study our concern is that the needs of ccd practitioners in isolated and unique regional communities, such as ours, may not be adequately taken into consideration, nor how to best support the particular needs of grass roots ccd practice in regional and rural Australia. As a ccd youth arts organisation providing programs in the Central Australia region we have extremely limited access to debate and discourse about our practice. Also significant is that the NT does not even have a ccd service organisation. These isolations we experience may well preclude us from impacting on the Australia Council restructure and the future support for our practice. We, however, continue to seek to be heard and supported in our practice.

Jenine Mackay  
Co Artistic Director/Manager  
InCite Youth Arts, Alice Springs, NT/WA

Policy documents aren’t my preferred reading choice but, with encouragement, I recently made time for Creative Communities (June 2006), the Community Partnerships Scoping Study Report. And I was glad I did because it appears to be a significant historic turning point in the practice and future delivery of community cultural development (ccd) in which I’ve worked since the 1980s. My overall impression while reading this document was a sense of anticipation for the Creative Communities Strategy (in place next month), and pride that I belong to such a resourceful, dedicated, creative community who’ve re-shaped the turmoil and despair (caused a year ago by that bombshell announcement of the ccd Board disbandment) into meaningful pathways to the future. Cutting through the politics, getting to the heart of issues, national consultation meetings and clear-headed, intelligent purpose has resulted in a resource document worth keeping for future reference. I’m looking forward to increased opportunities for national partnerships, career development and remuneration, with new support structures to help attract additional resources so I can continue to work with communities eager to express themselves and increase their understanding of the value of art and culture in daily life through its production. Many thanks to the Scoping Study Reference Group, and those who assisted them, for their clarity within constraint.

Catherine Murphy  
Writer/community artist  
Adelaide, SA

One of the most exciting aspects of the report on the Community Partnerships Scoping Study is the plan for a network of ‘Partnerships and Community Support’ organisations.

I know from working across Councils in the Wide Bay area that this networking of information, brokering of partnerships and resource sharing is a crying need. This need has been verified through community consultation processes and forums in both Bundaberg and Hervey Bay recently.

Being a regional practitioner can be very isolating. As a member of QCAN and Arts Nexus I value the access to information, good ideas and on-line training that these organisations offer. I hope that the sub-text of this plan for networks is not a reinvention of the wheel, which is currently quite well oiled in my experience, and the doing away with structures that represent years of blood, sweat and tears.

Being distant from both these organisations’ bases of operation however, I also recognise that this may be the time to put up our hand in Central Queensland if the plan is for increasing networks rather than collapsing or centralising them.

Dr Judy Pippen  
Regional activist in community arts, cultural policy development and arts funding advice.  
Woodgate, Queensland

Continued page 43
Glass Half Full combines transcripts of interviews with several people from across Australia, who have been full-time activists in campaigns for social change for a long time (over five or so years) with their portraits on placards. The participants were asked a series of questions about how they felt about their commitment to social change and how they balanced this with other pressures of work, relationships, money and so forth. Is the glass half empty or is it half full? In this work I explore how ideas of optimism and Utopian ideas of a better society are often sustained through an ‘optimism of the will’ and a ‘pessimism of the intellect’. In this work I deliberately use an obvious protest form – the placard – but place on it portraits and the most personal or reflective comments about motivations for activism – thus questioning the distinctions between the public and the domestic, the private and the political. The political protest is often objectified and ritualised as a moment of conflict. This work seeks to explore people’s emotional relationship to being an activist and the hopes and doubts caught up in the process.

Zanny Begg was born in Melbourne, went to the Queensland College of Art and now lives in Sydney. She has been very active in a variety of campaigns such as addressing the United Nations meeting on ozone depletion and travelling to Indonesia to meet with democracy activists before the fall of the Suharto dictatorship. Begg combines her interest in social change with her art practice. Begg has exhibited widely across Australia and at the Third Asia Pacific Cultural Forum (Taiwan) and has an upcoming exhibition at the National Centre for Contemporary Art, Moscow. She is short-listed for the 2006 Helen Lempriere Travelling Art Prize.

Zanny Begg is represented by Mori Gallery, Sydney.
For a start we’re not administrators, we’re community artists, formerly community cultural development (ccd) artists, recently renamed Intra-arts artists, but to most people we work with we’re simply called artists. So getting our heads around the Scoping Study was akin to having root canal treatment.

We couldn’t help wonder as we read it how many great ccd projects could have been funded with the money involved in creating this boring piece of jargon.

(3.3) Writes that the community lacks understanding of what ccd actually is and some (expensive) new descriptive language for the artform should be developed. It seems so elementary to us that if ccd projects were funded, then many, many people in the community would find out first hand what community arts is. These people, albeit participants, audience members or pleased parents would become the new promoters of the artform as they proudly spoke of their experience.

(3.2) Economically, community arts is such a good investment. The scoping study writes time and time again how each dollar invested by the government was matched, doubled, tripled by other sectors. How can you put a dollar value on the money saved from mental health, hospitals, welfare organisations, law and order departments etc, as the wellbeing of ccd participants increases and their dependence on services from these agencies diminishes?

The community needs leaders with vision who can inspire and act as conduits of information. In a time of ultra conservative values changing our day to day lives we need to be reminded of how to dream, how to celebrate with our neighbours, how to trust one another and how to live with less – reconciliation between differing organisations is one of the keys to the success of the new vision. The Scoping Study isn’t about art it’s about administration – every grant round – it’s servants in the Australia Council should be devising strategies to lessen this appalling discrepancy.

Like Alice said, ‘What is the use of a book without pictures or conversations in it?’

Kalyna Micenko and Bob Daly
Artists
Port Adelaide, SA

The publication in June 2006 of the outcomes of the Australia Council’s Community Partnerships Scoping Study with the title of Creative Communities was a refreshing and mature response to the original ‘big on rhetoric, short on detail’ announcements made in December 2004 by the Ozco, especially in relation to the Community Cultural Development Board and its programs.

Much hard work by the Reference Group for the Scoping Study has been done, along with great contributions from ‘the field’ to shape this new vision. As a freelance artist I have been involved since 1982 in the evolution from community arts to community cultural development, and see much from this evolution in what is now ‘creative communities’. It is great to see that this wealth of knowledge and achievement is being drawn on and then built on for this new phase.

However there is still a lot to be put in place in order to realise ‘creative communities’ both in terms of resourcing by the Australia Council as well as it being truly taken up by all the Ozco artform boards, which will be one of the keys to the success of the new vision.

Also, to work in partnership between differing organisations is very challenging and takes time to develop – it is certainly not a quick fix or one that can be put in place and then left to develop. Let’s hope that ‘creative communities’ is given this time, and leads to the creation of further new art works with a community base, which should still be at the heart of the vision.

Robert Petchell
Composer/Musical Director
Adelaide, SA

The Community Partnership Scoping Study has indeed provided an insight into the strengths and achievements of the sector and acknowledges areas for improvement. We are making good of a not so great situation, and the Scoping Study recommendations provide a framework to move forward.

The implementation of the recommendations outlined in the Scoping Study will be an opportunity and no doubt high risk for the Australia Council to develop innovative funding models that support and are reflective of the diverse practices on the ground. There is of course risk for existing clients and space for new clients – who stays and who goes? It’s a highly competitive business and I hope the implementation strategies are fair and equitable and have the greatest impact for the sector as a whole.

Initiatives and strategies that engage and acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists and communities as active participants is an area that the Scoping Study has not fully outlined, this is an area for further consideration.

It’s a call to focus on multi-layered practice, for organisations like Contact Inc it’s a case of juggling sector development, strategic partnerships, research and development whilst ensuring and maintaining vital work on the ground with young people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, recently arrived refugee and migrant backgrounds and their communities. The recommendations suggest that producer organisations will receive more support to do both effectively, this is a step in the right direction.

Zoe Scrogings
Artistic Director
Contact Inc – youth arts and cultural development
Queensland
We know who we are refers to propaganda images from China’s Cultural Revolution. Just as the idealised posters from Mao Zedong’s regime asserted a particular view of cultural identity, this work looks at perceptions of culture and politics in John Howard’s Australia. Mass media is one element which not only provides cultural content in the form of mindless entertainment, but is also used by politicians to fuel the flames of discrimination in this country. The Australian Government has also used mass media as propaganda to promote such legislation as Work Choices and Medicare ‘reform’. As we know, Mao Zedong’s images of equality, harmony and prosperity were far from the truth. Similarly, Howard’s assertions of a free, fair and tolerant Australia are also highly dubious.

Bernie Slater studied Printmedia and Drawing at Canberra School of Art, graduating in 2003 with Honours. He currently teaches art and printmaking at the Canberra Institute of Technology. His work has been seen regularly in Canberra since 2003, both in gallery settings as well as in public settings. His work has also been shown in Sydney, Melbourne and regional galleries. He currently resides in Canberra.
To be continued ...