



THE ART OF LIFE  
UNDERSTANDING HOW  
PARTICIPATION IN ARTS  
AND CULTURE CAN  
AFFECT OUR VALUES

Mission Models Money &  
Common Cause

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# INTRODUCTION

## SHELAGH WRIGHT

### MISSION MODELS MONEY

More and more people are coming to the realisation that we are coming up against the limits of our planet's capacity to support us, and that we are living beyond our means. Key natural assets that we depend on are getting scarcer and our climate is changing. Our current model of economic growth, which has encouraged our over-consumption, is broken. Our wellbeing is declining and inequality is rising, fuelling conflict, mass migration, poverty and many other social problems.

Things have to change, and we need to act fast if we are to find new economic and social paradigms that recognise the limits of our finite planet and enable all lives to flourish. Can we transition the values of our society and economy within a generation? Our belief is that we can, because our customs, behaviours, and values are byproducts of our culture. No one is born with greed, prejudice, bigotry, patriotism and hatred; these are all learned behaviour patterns. We need to find more and better ways to learn from and understand each other, disrupt vested interests, and imagine and create more sustainable ways of living.

Arts as cultural practices are some of the most participative, dynamic and social forms of human behaviour, are, in our view, integral to this process of transition. The capacity to trigger reflection, generate empathy, create dialogue and foster new ideas and relationships offers a powerful and democratic way of expressing, sharing and shaping values. By helping to create an environment, experience, and state of mind directly conducive to the understanding of others, and through the creation of new ideas, arts and culture challenge the power dynamics of the status quo and provide spaces where anything becomes possible. They can help us to build new capabilities to imagine and rehearse a different way of being and relating. They can enable us to design useful and meaningful things, and are increasingly the basis of livelihoods and enterprises that are motivated by much more than profit.

“Arts and culture are integral to the process of transition.”

But to fully release this potential, we need to deepen our understanding of how arts and culture impact on us and rethink how and why we value them, how we develop them and who with. In the last three decades, arts and culture have been promoted as crucial to the model of economic growth that we know we now need to change. The association of art and culture with up-market consumption, real estate development, global de-regulation and new sources of 'creative human capital' has positioned large areas of cultural policy and practice as an accomplice to an unsustainable growth agenda. At the same time, the work of arts and culture in impacting on our deep values has been less explored except in the limited context of social policy instrumentalism.

“Our values represent our guiding principles, our broadest motivations, influencing the attitudes we hold and how we act.”

They shape the way we look at and understand the world and the mental structures that order our ideas. They are the frame through which we construct the stories that we tell ourselves and others about what is important.

The core article of this pamphlet is by [Tim Kasser](#), Professor of Psychology. Tim's article sets out the evidence base for the shaping of values and explores the potential of engagement with art and culture to affect:

- > self-acceptance,
- > affiliation, and
- > community feeling,

as well as values that are known to affect higher levels of personal, social, and ecological well-being such as:

- > freedom,
- > creativity,
- > self-respect,
- > equality and
- > unity with nature.

A number of people have offered their responses to the ideas that Tim explores in his article, these include an artist ([Ellie Harrison](#)), a playwright ([Mike Van Graan](#)), a campaigner ([Tom Crompton](#)), a designer ([Dan Russell](#)), a director of a cultural organisation ([Donald Smith](#)), and two academics from very different disciplines ([Eleonora Belfiore](#) and [Ed Deci](#)). Their generous contributions and critiques, sometimes fierce, follow. A foreword was offered to us by the former Danish Minister of Culture ([Uffe Elbaek](#)).

“In the last three decades, arts and culture have been promoted as crucial to the model of economic growth that we know we now need to change.”

This pamphlet is the beginning of a dialogue about how arts and culture impact on our values, what that might look like in practice, and how we might foster new collaborations between artists, cultural institutions and the third sector to create new ideas for development. The final chapter ([Shelagh Wright](#), MMM) offers some insights into what this could mean for artists and creative practitioners, those who educate them, policy makers and funders working with health, wellbeing and culture, and third sector campaigners for change and development.

# FOREWORD

**Uffe Elbæk**

**Former Minister for Culture, Denmark**

We need art and culture to fuel the social innovation that we, our societies, and the planet so desperately need. We need new ideas, we need new ways of doing things and we need a whole new way of approaching each other with much more empathy and understanding. While new ideas can come from a lot of places, I think that arts and culture are vital to stimulating our creativity and our way of thinking about solutions. This means that the rest of society really needs to focus on the world of art and culture as a vital source for not only solutions, but also ways of finding solutions.

Presently, we are facing three big challenges that are going to define our societies for the foreseeable future:

1. We have a crisis of empathy that blocks us from really putting ourselves in the other's place, and which fuels xenophobia, nationalism and narrow-mindedness.
2. We have a structural crisis that makes it difficult for us to renew our welfare societies, and we are structurally discovering that neither the market, the public sector nor the NGOs can solve the problems within their own closed systems, but really need to find new ways of collaborating across sectors.
3. And finally, and perhaps most importantly, we have a resource crisis that means we are approaching the limits of how many "western" lifestyles our planet can sustain. All this means that we need to find radically new ways of communicating, of living, of working, travelling and creating value.

“We need a gigantic influx of hope, resourcefulness & social innovation.”

The good thing, in my perspective, is that we have been through all of this before: When our societies went from agricultural to industrial production we also went through immense social challenges, but we found new ways of organizing ourselves, for example through the worker's movement, unions, and (in Denmark) a whole movement of locally organized folk high schools. Central to this process was the creativity and uplifting hope fuelled by art and culture. I am confident that art and culture once again will play a pivotal role in the positive transformation of our societies towards more empathy, more focus on sustainability and a whole new concept of what a valuable life really means.

# PROVOCATION

**Tim Kasser Ph.D.**

Professor & Chair of Psychology  
Knox College, Illinois, USA

## **The potential of engagement in arts & culture to encourage values that support well-being, social justice, and ecological sustainability**

Over the last three decades, psychologists have conducted studies on thousands of people in dozens of nations around the world in an attempt to understand what humans value and how they prioritise different aims in life. These studies converge on the conclusion that the human value system is composed of about a dozen basic types of values, including aims such as having fun, understanding one's place in the universe, being healthy, and having close relationships.<sup>1,2</sup> People in every corner of the globe appear to care about and be motivated by each of these basic values, although of course to varying extents.

### **The Organisation of Values**

Not only is it the case that people have the same fundamental types of values, but these values are organised in similar ways in people's minds.<sup>1,2</sup> Specifically, the data strongly suggest that the organisation of the human value system is such that some values are relatively consistent with each other (and easy to pursue simultaneously), whereas other values are in relative conflict (and relatively difficult to pursue at the same time).

Psychologists have statistically represented the extent of compatibility or conflict between values via circumplex models such as the one presented in Figure 1. When the pursuit of one value facilitates success at another value, those two values are placed adjacent to each other; thus, the values of image and status are nearby each other, as buying an in-fashion handbag or automobile is quite compatible with the enhancement of both one's image and status. When the pursuit of one value interferes with success at another, those values are placed on opposite sides of the circumplex; thus, the values of spirituality and hedonism are due north and south, respectively, as it is rather difficult to party late on Saturday night and then pray early on Sunday morning.

Additional evidence that the human value system is organised in this circumplex fashion comes from studies which show that briefly mentioning one set of values creates ripple effects on other values.<sup>3</sup> For example, if a person thinks about the importance of image, then there is likely to be a *bleed-over* effect, such that popularity and financial success will become more important (as such pursuits are compatible with the desire for an



appealing image). Further, thinking about image is also likely to cause a *suppression* effect, such that being self-accepting will become less of a priority (as that aim generally conflicts with the desire to have an image that depends on appealing to others).

### **Values, Well-being, Civility, and Sustainability**

The scientific evidence also shows that people's values bear consistent relationships with outcomes such as people's well-being, the care with which they treat others, and the extent to which they live in an ecologically sustainable fashion. Two sets of values in the circumplex are especially relevant here. First there are the *extrinsic* values of financial success, image, and popularity, each of which involves a strong focus on rewards and other people's opinions. Second there are the *intrinsic* values of self-acceptance, affiliation, and community feeling, which tend to be more focused on helping to satisfy people's inherent psychological needs.<sup>4</sup>

Dozens of studies now make it clear that people's prioritization of extrinsic values is associated with lower levels of well-being and higher levels of distress.<sup>5</sup> As extrinsic values for money, image, and status rise in importance, people experience less happiness and life satisfaction; fewer pleasant emotions (like joy and contentment), and more unpleasant emotions (like anger and anxiety) in their day-to-day lives. They also tend to be more anxious and depressed, to experience more physical problems (like headaches, stomachaches, and backaches) and to use substances like cigarettes and alcohol more often. Placing higher importance on intrinsic values (and successfully pursuing these values) is, in contrast, consistently associated with being happier and healthier.

People's relative focus on extrinsic versus intrinsic values also influences their social behaviour. For example, people act in more empathic, cooperative, and caring ways when they prioritise intrinsic values, whereas an emphasis on extrinsic concerns is associated with being more manipulative and competitive, and with acting in more unethical and antisocial ways.<sup>6</sup> In addition, those who consider material belongings and image as relatively important more often express prejudice toward other ethnicities and believe that disadvantaged groups deserve what they have (or don't have).<sup>7</sup> The "suppression" effect on values noted above also occurs here. One set of studies showed that very brief and very subtle reminders of the extrinsic value of money lead people to behave less helpfully and generously moments later.<sup>8</sup> Put in terms of the dynamics of the circumplex, the activation of the extrinsic value of financial success suppressed the value of caring for others, which lies in the intrinsic quadrant on the opposite side of the circumplex.

Similar dynamics occur for ecological behaviours and attitudes. People who prioritise extrinsic values have been shown to care less about the environment and other species, whereas a focus on intrinsic values promotes more ecologically sustainable attitudes and behaviours.<sup>9</sup> As with social behaviours and attitudes, brief reminders of values can affect ecological behaviours and attitudes. One study that focused particularly on people for whom material possessions and social status were quite important found that thinking for

a few minutes about the intrinsic values of affiliation and being broadminded caused these individuals to express stronger care for the environment.<sup>10</sup> Put in terms of the dynamics of the circumplex, activating intrinsic values caused a “bleed-over” which led them to express stronger desires to support the larger community of people, other species, and future generations.

## **How Arts and Culture might Encourage Intrinsic Values**

Given the consistent and robust relationships between people’s relative prioritization of intrinsic vs. extrinsic values and their well-being, social behaviour, and ecological behaviour, strategies which attempt to encourage intrinsic values and discourage extrinsic values may hold promise for addressing many of the problems contemporary humans face. Elsewhere I have reviewed a variety of personal interventions, civil society campaigns, and policy approaches that derive from a values-based perspective.<sup>11</sup> For the remainder of this essay, I would like to suggest that engagement in arts and culture might also be a way to help people orient away from extrinsic values and focus more on intrinsic values. There are three main reasons for suggesting that arts and culture may contribute successfully to this effort, and each of these rationales has both theoretical and empirical support.

First, it is notable that some of the specific values that researchers include among the intrinsic aims are directly relevant to engagement in arts and culture. For example, the survey on which the circumplex in Figure 1 is based (i.e., the Aspiration Index<sup>1</sup>) includes among the “self-acceptance” values items such as “I will follow my interests and curiosity where they take me”, and “I will feel free.” Similarly, another well-validated value circumplex<sup>2</sup> also reflects the fact that the extrinsic values of “power” and “status” stand in relative opposition to values such as “creativity,” being “curious”, and desiring “a world of beauty”. If we accept the sensible proposition that engagement in arts and culture activates values such as “curiosity” and “creativity,” then the implication from research on the value circumplex would be that the intrinsic portion of the human motivational system could be encouraged and strengthened, while the extrinsic portion could be suppressed, as a result of participating in arts and cultural activities.

Second, decades of research on the closely-related field of intrinsically vs. extrinsically motivated activities have shown that the feelings of flow, creativity, play, interest, and curiosity that characterize intrinsically motivated activity can be undermined when people become focused on extrinsic factors such as rewards, awards, and how one looks to others.<sup>12</sup> Such studies are another way of documenting the fundamental opposition between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation that is reflected in the circumplex. But if extrinsic rewards can undermine intrinsic pursuits, it might also be that intrinsically-oriented, flow-conducive activities like arts and culture can suppress a strong focus on extrinsic concerns.<sup>13</sup> After all, arts and cultural activity are realms of human life in which people frequently report strong feelings of flow and engagement, and in which people often engage for the solely intrinsic reasons of self-expression, creativity, and exploration.

As such, it may be that the more that one engages in artistic activity for these kinds of intrinsic reasons, the more the intrinsic portion of the motivational system will be strengthened, and thus the weaker extrinsic values will become.

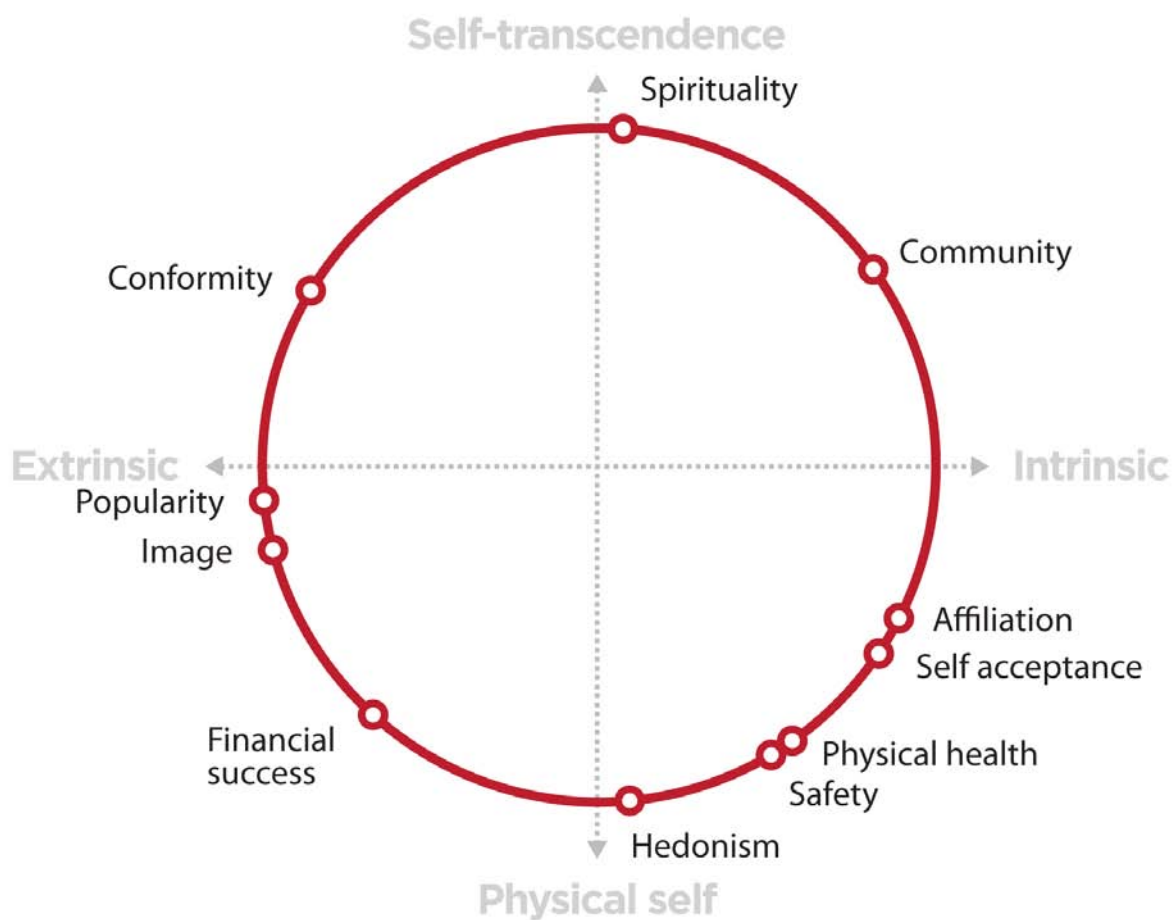
My third reason for believing in the potential of engagement in arts and culture is admittedly more complex and conjectural, but still rather intriguing, I think. One consistent set of findings shows that when people are reminded of their own death, they increase the priority they place on extrinsic aims such as wealth, image, and status.<sup>14</sup> People seem to undergo this shift primarily as a defensive strategy to cope with the unpleasant thoughts that arise from considering their inevitable demise; by shifting awareness and values towards these extrinsic, culturally-sanctioned aims, they can at least temporarily feel that they have been successful in life.<sup>15</sup> Interestingly, however, a second set of findings has shown that people shift towards intrinsic values and away from extrinsic values when they must continue to face thoughts about their own death and have little opportunity to be defensive. Such results have been obtained in laboratory studies where participants engage in deeper, more sustained reflections on their own deaths.<sup>16,17</sup> What's more, other studies show that when people who have undergone significant traumas (including near-death experiences) use such events as opportunities to reflect on their lives and reconsider their paths forward, they consistently reject values for money, image, and status (i.e., the extrinsic values) and instead focus their lives around their own personal growth, their family, and helping the world be a better place (i.e., the intrinsic values).<sup>17-19</sup> Thus, it seems that whereas brief reminders of death lead to a defensive stance, sustained reflection on death acts as a type of "disruptive experience" that shakes up an individual's personality and value system. Although this shake-up may cause mental health problems for some, and while most people probably gravitate back to their baseline personality and values systems over time, such disruptive experiences can sometimes act as catalysts to help some people identify the truly meaningful and satisfying values around which to orient their lives.<sup>19</sup>

While the types of disruptive experiences that research has examined thus far are rather extreme, the same principles may hold for milder (though still significant) disruptions. For example, WWF-Scotland has been experimenting with a "Natural Change" project in which individuals undergo several months of deep engagement in nature, culminating with a sunrise-to-sunset solo experience in the wilderness; fascinatingly, the participants seem to consistently orient away from extrinsic and towards intrinsic values after participating in the project.<sup>20</sup> Could sustained engagement in arts and culture followed by deep reflections have a similar disruptive effect? After all, two of arts and culture's primary purposes are to shake up one's typical ways of perceiving the world and to encourage inward reflections on one's own life. And therapeutic traditions that make use of engagement in arts and culture seem to be effective ways for some people to explore their psyches and improve their lives.<sup>21</sup>

## Conclusion

I hope to have shown that there is solid scientific evidence supporting the idea that encouraging intrinsic values and discouraging extrinsic values is a promising strategy for promoting personal well-being, a more just and civil society, and a more ecologically-sustainable world. There are a number of admittedly speculative but potentially tantalizing reasons why engagement in arts and culture may be able to contribute to such efforts, and my further hope is that this essay, combined with the commentaries that follow, will provide impetus for testing these ideas both empirically and practically.

**Figure 1 – Circumplex Model of Goals (from Grouzet et al., 2005).**



*Reprinted from "The structure of goal contents across 15 cultures," Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 89, 800-816, with permission from the American Psychological Association. The figure is based on circular stochastic modeling procedures applied to the goal-importance ratings of approximately 1800 college students in 15 cultures. Values adjacent to each other on the circumplex are experienced as relatively compatible whereas values on opposite sides of the circumplex are experienced as in relative conflict.*

# RESPONSE 1

**Eleonora Belfiore Ph.D.**

**Associate Professor in Cultural Policy,  
University of Warwick, UK**

Tim Kasser's short essay is a compelling read which builds on the empirical observation of how individuals operate and how values drive their relation to the world in order to propose ways in which engagement and participation in the arts and culture might be employed for the purposes of nurturing the intrinsic values that can help us lead a more co-operative, empathic and sustainable life.

I will get back to this point, but for the moment, I would like to focus on the fascinating 'suppression effect' that Kasser describes, according to which the more one set of values – either the extrinsic or intrinsic ones – are developed and cultivated, the more the opposite set will wilt and be, indeed, 'suppressed'. It seems to me that the psychological mechanisms that Kasser is placing at the heart of individual human behaviour can also be seen at work when applied to society as a whole.

For what we have witnessed over the past thirty years is effectively the progressive suppression of what Kasser identifies as the intrinsic values of community, empathy and sharing, spirituality, etc. at the hands of their opposites in his 'circumplex' - the 'extrinsic values' that have to do with fame, success, power and money. The dominance of the value frame that is predicated on an obsession with the pursuit of wealth, power and status, both at the level of the individual person and that of the state has made it increasingly difficult to even articulate alternative kinds of value, never mind trying to promote and nurture them in the public realm.

There are several scholarly and journalistic accounts of such worrying developments. Recently, F. S. Michaels has dubbed this phenomenon as 'monoculture' in a book by the same title.<sup>1</sup> Michaels observes that one particular idea and the resulting values tend to dominate different historical times creating a master narrative that shapes the beliefs, values and assumptions that guide both individual and institutional action. He writes that '[i]n these early decades of the twenty-first century, the master story is economic; economic beliefs, values and assumptions are shaping how we feel, think, and act. [...] In a monoculture [...] that single perspective becomes so engrained as the only reasonable reality that we begin to forget our other stories, and fail to see the monoculture in its totality, never mind question it'.

Already in the late 1990s, perceptive scholars such as Pierre Bourdieu had defined neo-liberalism as an 'uncrossable horizon of thought', as an all-pervading form of economic fatalism, which is 'becoming a sort of universal belief, a new ecumenical gospel'.<sup>2</sup> In the intervening 15 years things have only gotten worse, so that, if we are genuinely concerned for the health of the planet and the civilizations that inhabit it, the compelling question we must all try to address is: when market logic is transformed into 'a universal common sense' - to borrow Bourdieu's words again<sup>3</sup> - is there any space in public policy for values beyond economic value?

The only possible constructive and non-defeatist answer to this question amounts to nothing less than a call to arms: we need to reclaim the value debate from the 'econocrats' who operate on the basis of 'the belief that there exist fundamental economic tests or yardsticks according to which policy decisions can and should be made'.<sup>4</sup> We need to reframe the language of public discourse and reject the extant and taken for granted equivalence of value with economic value. This reframing of the concept of 'value' is a necessary precondition to any serious attempt to reverse the 'suppressing effect' that the economic frame is imposing on the values of sharing, sustainability, empathy and generosity. We need to reframe the language of public discourse so that we can start recuperating, reconstituting and redeploying a language that allows for a different story to be told and worked towards: a story about positive human emancipation.

This line of reasoning then leads me to pose what I believe to be crucial questions for those of us who work within academia: how can we, as researchers, contribute to a genuinely emancipatory social and political agenda? How can we begin to address the challenges posed by the current focus on the extrinsic values of money, power, status and image that is at the centre of our bankrupt existing model of economic and social growth and develop ways of thinking otherwise? For those of us who work in the field of the arts and humanities an additional question beckons: what can this field of research and practice contribute to the dismantling of the economic monoculture?

### **Fighting the monoculture: can participation in arts and culture do something about it?**

Kasser's piece makes a bold statement in favour of the potential of arts engagement to confront and defy the monoculture. Whilst I'm broadly in agreement with the general argument, some of the claims made need to be problematized if we are to devise a genuinely innovative theoretical and empirical approach to understanding engagement with the arts and culture as a route to the good society. Kasser suggests that 'engagement in arts and culture might also be a way to help people orient away from extrinsic values and focus more on intrinsic values'. In making this claim, Kasser echoes a very entrenched and deep seated belief in the ameliorating powers of the arts which is still going strong, even in the monoculture. In my previous work I have indeed attempted to show how this belief can be traced back to the very origins of Western civilisation.<sup>5</sup>

But is Kasser's statement really true? I suggest it needs to be qualified: the notorious example of the art-loving Nazi officer, which aesthetic philosophers have expounded at length, is a good reminder that things are in fact more complicated than the simple equation of arts engagement with 'good' implies. Any exploration of the potential of arts engagement to 'encourage values that support well-being, social justice, and ecological sustainability' will have to encompass this moral grey area, and the very real possibility that arts engagement might in fact nurture not just intrinsic but also extrinsic values. French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu deserves another mention here, for his pioneering work in providing empirical evidence for the mechanisms through which taste formation and cultural consumption are linked to social domination and class distinctions in ways that are incompatible with progressive social change.

However, I would also suggest that, rather than invalidate Kasser's broader argument, these observations might in fact open up interesting possibilities for the identification of a specific role for academics and researchers. There is certainly a need for fresh scholarly investigations of the different forms that participation and engagement in the arts can take, and also for an examination of different artistic and cultural forms and the different values that might be attached to them, both in an aesthetic sense, but also in terms of the kind of values that they promote. This is a tricky task, of course, which would open one to the accusation of implicitly suggesting that only arts that encourage 'good' values should be promoted and endorsed. Indeed, although as we have seen, this 'pragmatic' approach to valuing culture has a very long history in Western culture, the notion of only encouraging participation and engagement with forms of culture that push forward 'desirable' values can be seen as problematic: a paternalistic and patronizing approach at best; cultural and social engineering and sinister manipulation of the mind at worst (and of course, the question of who should decide on what values count as 'desirable' will only open a new series of thorny issues).

Surely though, we should by now be ready to move beyond the critique of high vs. mass culture (with the implicit opposition of their respective positive v. negative effects) towards a more intellectually sophisticated understanding of how different forms and levels of participation and engagement in different cultural/artistic forms might affect different people, in different places, at different times, in different social, cultural, religious or age groups in different ways? There would certainly be much to be gained from a better understanding of whether it is possible to identify forms of engagement or forms of cultural production that allow for a better society to flourish. Much of my work has been about bringing to light the ways in which vested interests of various types have hindered efforts to investigate the ways in which people interact, respond, and might be affected by their encounter with the arts and culture. Perhaps now is the time to go back to that debate, and to renew the effort to understand, both theoretically and empirically, how we as humans relate to aesthetic forms as part of an explicitly emancipatory political and cultural project? I certainly believe this to be the case, and Kasser's provocation paper is an excellent place to start from.

# RESPONSE 2

**Edward L. Deci Ph.D.**

**Gowen Professor in the Social Sciences, Department of Psychology, University of Rochester USA**

## **ART AND WELLNESS**

When I think about the relation of art to human wellness what comes to mind are two primary aspects of human functioning that are integral to both making and experiencing art. For the sake of parsimony in these comments, when I speak about art I will be referring to painting—whether with oil, egg tempera, watercolour, or acrylic—although I believe the comments are pertinent to other arts as well. The aspects of human functioning that come to mind are perceptions (in this case, *seeing*) and emotions (viz., whichever ones gets stimulated), for both of these psychological processes are centrally important for the painters who create art and for the observers who are moved by it. My intent in making these comments, which I believe to be consistent with the overall perspective contained in the target article<sup>1</sup>, is to be quite concrete in addressing actual processes that might link the arts (in this case, painting) to human wellness.

### **Perception**

Perception is a process in which people use their senses to allow elements of their inner or outer worlds into their present experience. When they perceive something in a relatively pure way, they minimize the cognitive interpretive processes—the processes of thinking about, judging, or evaluating their sensations. Instead, they simply take interest in the sensations and allow that which is being perceived to just be what it is.<sup>2</sup> Perceiving in this more pure way necessitates being more innerly open and quiet, and it involves people taking interest both in the process of sensing—of seeing—and in that which is being seen. Such openness follows from experiencing a sense of autonomy and freedom from controlling pressures, both of which support the individuals being intrinsically motivated for their involvement with the art.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, it is important to note that many people who make art are intrinsically motivated to do so. With the interest, flexibility, and openness of intrinsic motivation, these individuals are more able to let what they see be just what it is.

Experiencing relatively pure perception with an open and interested attitude is sometimes referred to as being *mindful*, which can be defined as an attribute of consciousness in which people are aware of what is occurring in the present.<sup>4</sup> The concept of mindfulness<sup>5</sup>, which is closely related to intrinsic motivation and to the experience of autonomy, is being empirically investigated quite actively within self-determination theory<sup>6</sup> and various other



theoretical perspectives.<sup>7</sup> Intrinsic motivation, autonomy, and mindfulness have all been found to promote creativity—obviously a central element in the creation of art—for they allow fuller and more open engagement in the process.

Makers of art, when they are interested and mindful, perceive objects, places, phenomena, or inner images that are there, without having any psychological agendas that pressure or interfere with the seeing. With open perceiving, for example, people will see colours, shapes, forms, variations in light and dark. That which is seen—the patterns of shapes and colours, for example—may remind the perceivers of things. Perhaps what they are looking at is a house or a rock, so they might think about the concept of house or rock; and perhaps on the wall of the house or in the face of the rock is some pattern of colours and light that reminds the perceivers of, say, an alligator or a ghost. However, it is not the house or the rock that is important; nor is it the alligator or the ghost that matters. Were the artists to be focused on the house or the rock, the alligator or the ghost, they would all too likely be working to reproduce a concept rather than to convey what was mindfully experienced.

The starting place for making art, then, is to have truly seen by being open to what was there to be seen. Of course, a painting need not convey a realistic image of what was seen; indeed, the painting might look very different from the motif encountered. But the process nonetheless begins with mindfully perceiving what is there because that allows the artists' experiences and creations to proceed from perceptions rather than concepts. From there, the artists may be unconventional in how they extrapolate from their perceptions to create products, but that is part of the process of creativity, of producing something that is new and novel, something that pushes the boundaries, something that may even take courage.

## **Observers**

For the observers and experiencers of art, like the makers of it, the starting place is perception. Observers, too, open themselves to what is before them to be seen. Ideally, they will be mindful as they perceive and take interest in their perceptions and in that which is sensed. For observers, as for artists, the experience involves letting in what is before them so they actually see it, and then taking interest in what is seen. Interest, being at the core of intrinsic motivation, energizes this process of exploration<sup>8</sup>, which can, in turn, lead the individuals to be more mindful, to see more fully, and to respond to what they have seen.

## **Wellness**

Substantial research has confirmed that both mindfulness and intrinsic motivation are strongly associated with psychological wellness.<sup>9</sup> Thus, the processes of truly perceiving and moving forward from the perceptions to create a piece of art, would be expected to facilitate human wellness for those processes are characterized by mindfulness and interest. As well, being mindful and intrinsically motivated has also been linked to satisfactions of the basic psychological needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness,

which are strong predictors of psychological health and well-being.<sup>10</sup> And for the observers as well as the creators, the process of openly perceiving—of being mindful and interested when encountering the art—is expected also to facilitate well-being.

## **Emotions**

When artists or observers sense what they encounter, they frequently also experience emotions that are prompted by that which is sensed. The emotions may be contentment or excitement; enjoyment or fear; anger or exhilaration. Whatever the emotions, they will be central parts of the perceivers' experiences. For artists or observers to truly experience their emotions they must also be open and receptive to them, just as they were open and receptive to what they perceived. And they will take interest in the emotions, rather than filtering them through evaluations and judgments. For the artists, their emotions will become part of what is created when they transfer their experiences onto the paper or canvas. For the observers, their emotions will be part of what they experience and will influence how they interpret the art works. In the observational process, people who are more interested in the art may speculate on what the artists intended, but even more importantly they will let their emotions have meaning for themselves personally, perhaps tying them into past experiences, perhaps having wholly new experiences, but whatever, the more the people are open to the emotions and to the interpretations they give to the experiences, the more meaningful and powerful the art is likely to be.

## **Conclusions**

The process of creating and experiencing art involves perceiving motifs and experiencing emotions. Optimally, this will be done when people are both mindful and intrinsically motivated, but the processes of perceiving and feeling when creating and observing art may actually prompt people to become more mindful and interested. That is, it can involve bi-directional relations that are linked to the satisfaction of the basic psychological needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness and that allow a synthetic process of creating and observing in a full way. This all can facilitate psychological wellness. In short, when artists engage motifs and emotional experiences mindfully and are intrinsically motivated to explore and create art from those experiences—and, in a parallel fashion, when observers take interest in the art that has been created and the emotions expressed in it and/or in themselves—the more psychologically healthy all parties are likely to be.

# RESPONSE 3

**Ellie Harrison**

**Artist, UK**

You may be pleased to hear that as well as being an 'artist' – a supposed creator of the 'arts and culture' in question – I am also a human being. Even though on good days I convince myself that I've finally cracked it, my life, like yours, is an ongoing battle against the barrage of consumerist propaganda that surrounds us, to remind myself what I really care about, what I actually need and what makes me happy.

It certainly hasn't helped growing up and being educated in a system which evidently prioritises all the wrong things. Recently I listened with some horror to an interview given by my younger self in 2002.<sup>1</sup> Just one year out of art school, I was quizzed by a perky local radio show host, about what I wanted to do with myself in the future. "I want to be a famous artist!" I replied, with no hesitation or sense of irony. I seem to recall that it wasn't the money I was after, so much as the 'glory'. I had graduated from a system that prioritised the 'popularity' and 'image' of the artist rather than the values of creativity itself.

Unfortunately, it took me until I was nearly 30 to realise that this 'careerist mentality'<sup>2</sup> was not necessarily the healthiest way of approaching life. Not only did it isolate me by pitting me against my peers, but it also appeared wholly unrealistic (not to mention irresponsible) in a dawning age of environmental and financial crises, to base my life's future on the petty reward structure of today's art world. But, crucially, it made me realise how this narrow-minded vision of what I could 'do' was restricting the skills, dedication and energy that I did have, from being put to good use.

It was a moment of enlightenment that's for sure. But what is important to reflect on here, is that this moment came not from being lectured to about the error of my ways or from being told how I should behave by the powers-that-be, but from finally allowing myself the **time** and **space** to study and analyse the world around me and to critically reflect on the place I had assumed within it. I suddenly began to notice the glaring inconsistencies between what I had been taught to aspire to and what would actually be better for my mental health, society as a whole and, of course, the environment. But, most importantly, I began to feel empowered about what I could actually 'do' to try to change things.

I began to reimagine my role in the world, both as 'artist' and as human being. I set about attempting to remove as many contradictions as I could, by creating a more holistic

approach to living and working that could support a very different value structure. I had to start by living by example, “to be the change I wanted to see” as Ghandi so wisely advised. And so, with a cheeky re-appropriation of corporate jargon, I launched my own ‘environmental policy’<sup>3</sup> on my website to outline all the day-to-day actions I vowed to take responsibility for and limit my own impact on the world. This was the foundation on which all my other activity could be built.

“Disturbed by the elitism and institutional limitations of the art world, I then began to re-channel some of my time and energy into direct political action.”

My concerns for the environment, for the provision of public services and our increasing inequality and atomisation as individuals, began to coalesce in a *passion for public transport*. And so, in 2009, I set up the Bring Back British Rail<sup>4</sup> campaign (which I continue to run today) – as an attempt to create awareness about the continued privatisation of our public services and to popularise the idea of renationalisation as a policy motivated by moral, rather than financial, imperatives.

And finally, without wanting to discount all I’d learnt at art school, I began to analyse the key benefits of my creativity and to work out how these might best be used to develop my own and others’ well-being and encourage social justice:

- > By paying attention to how I was spending my time, I began to notice how creativity (and the ‘flow’, ‘play’, ‘interest’ and ‘curiosity’ that came with it) really could improve my own quality of life. The best days were those when I did not engage in consumerist society at all and instead allowed myself the **time** and **space** in my studio to just read, write and have ideas.
- > Then, if I was going to continue to allow ‘art works’ to result from this creative process, I felt they must be about all the new things I was studying. Projects such as A Brief History of Privatisation<sup>5</sup> and Early Warning Signs<sup>6</sup>, attempt to use playful and inclusive language to engage a broader audience and to draw attention to the negative side affects of the free-market system, which big-business would rather we did not notice at all.
- > As well as these more conventional ‘art works’, I also chose to invest time and administration skills in creating frameworks, situations or experiences which would

bring people together. The Work-a-thon for the Self-Employed<sup>7</sup> and Artists' Lottery Syndicate<sup>8</sup> attempted to create temporary (or long lasting) convivial spaces or communities, which would allow people to notice our similarities (rather than our differences) and to realise the real power we have when we come together to affect real positive change.

OK, so I might now be a shameless counter-hegemonic propaganda machine, but hey ho! But, my new multi-faceted approach is perhaps proof that I do believe that 'arts and culture' can and should function alongside those all important 'personal interventions', 'civil society campaigns' and 'policy approaches' as a tool for enabling people to learn how to reject the pressures of the market and focus on the good things in life. However, this can only be 'arts and culture' which is intellectually autonomous and uncorrupted by commercial (or other) interest. Art that is *free* in both senses of the word can only result from (bottom-up) grassroots organisation or, in some cases, (top-down) public funding.

If we are going to offer this position of 'responsibility' to our artists, then we must first make sure that they are not in it for all the wrong reasons themselves. Changing the way art is taught would be a good place to start – breaking down that entrenched myth of the 'famous artist'. We need to remove the stigma attached to not fitting this mould when leaving art school, so that young graduates have the confidence to use the skills they have acquired beyond the art world, where they can best become useful members of society and fulfilled human beings. This battle is huger than it sounds as it must also resist the continual marketisation of higher education and the insistence on sidelining 'arts and culture' altogether.

“But, as my opening sentence may suggest, it is actually wrong to think of artists as being in an elevated position at all.”

What we all need, regardless of our occupation, is not 'arts and culture' per se, but simply the **time** and **space** beyond the realms of the market, where we can each access knowledge, critically reflect and feel empowered change our lives for the better.

# RESPONSE 4

**Tom Crompton Ph.D.**

**Common Cause**

## **ART, HOPE AND THE MARKET**

In the first article in this report Tim Kasser laid out a social psychologist's understanding of values. Our values exert an important influence on our behaviour – including the concern that we express about social and environmental problems. Decisions about how to vote, or whether to engage in various forms of civic activism, or what to buy, are all found to be influenced by the values that we hold to be important. To the extent that we hold 'intrinsic' values to be more important, we are more likely to vote for politicians who say that they will take steps to address social and environmental problems, more likely to campaign to hold these politicians to account, and more likely to buy ethical goods and services.

Kasser's account of recent research on values lead him to advance several suggestions.

His first suggestion is that participation in the arts may serve to engage – and over time strengthen – 'intrinsic' values. Kasser advances the "sensible proposition that engagement in arts and culture activates values such as 'curiosity' and 'creativity'". These values are themselves probably associated with greater social and environmental concern. This leads him to conclude that those of us who are concerned about social and environmental problems probably also have an interest in safeguarding and extending public participation in the arts – because of their role in promoting intrinsic values.

But intrinsic values are held in tension with 'extrinsic' values – values associated with wealth, competition, achievement and image. To the extent that a person attaches greater importance to these extrinsic values, he or she is also likely to show lower concern for the needs of other people and other living things. This leads Kasser to a further suggestion: the arts, he suggests, may be important because arts and culture activities "may suppress a strong focus on extrinsic concerns".

It certainly seems to be the case that the public sphere is increasingly geared to engaging and activating extrinsic values. Some estimates suggest that we each see, on average, some 3000 advertisements a day - most reminding us of desirable things that we can buy; our media increasingly invites us to think of ourselves as consumers rather than as citizens; ethical decisions are increasingly made in the context of market transactions.

This creeping advance of the extrinsic values of the market is likely to have profound cultural consequences. Showing people pictures of luxury consumer products, subtly reminding them that they are consumers (rather than individuals or citizens), or presenting people with ethical dilemmas within the framework of market interactions have all been shown experimentally to increase the importance placed on extrinsic values and diminish concern for other people and for the natural world.

It is difficult to foresee the emergence of public demand for adequate responses to today's social and environmental problems without a stronger public commitment to intrinsic values.

Take, for example, education. Education policy ought properly be underpinned by an appreciation of values such as self-direction, curiosity, broadmindedness, and meaning in life. And yet, in 2010, David Cameron and Nick Clegg wrote a joint foreword to *The Importance of Teaching: Schools White Paper*.<sup>1</sup> In laying out the priorities for their new government's education policy, neither politician felt moved – or compelled – to draw attention to such intrinsic values. Rather, their foreword opened with these words: “So much of the education debate in this country is backward looking: have standards fallen? Have exams got easier? These debates will continue, but what really matters is how we're doing compared with our international competitors. That is what will define our economic growth and our country's future.”

Or take the environmental sphere. Environmental protection is premised increasingly on the economic case for conservation. In 2011, DEFRA launched the UK National Ecosystem Assessment with a press release entitled “Hidden value of nature revealed in groundbreaking study”<sup>2</sup> It continued: “The true value of nature can be shown for the very first time thanks to ground-breaking research... which reveals that nature is worth billions of pounds to the UK economy.” Unfortunately, this is an argument which many mainstream environmental organisations have uncritically embraced. Although there may at times be tactical advantages to making the economic case for conservation, the long-term impact is likely to be the subjugation of environmental imperatives to the demands of the market.

This process of the colonisation of the public sphere by the values of the market is of course also underway in the arts. In her speech at the British Museum on 24 April 2013, the UK Culture Secretary now infamously urged arts executives to: “help me reframe the argument: to hammer home the value of culture to our economy.”

Her choice of words is important. She is not simply making the case for considering the economic case for the arts. She is urging leaders within the sector to make this case for her: to help ‘reframe the argument’. And they obliged. Within a fortnight, Arts Council England had published *The Contribution of the Arts and Culture to the National Economy*: their assessment of the economic return that the sector provides on government spending.<sup>3</sup>

But despite the acquiescence of the sector, public debate about the arts is probably still difficult to pursue without acknowledging the wider social and spiritual value of the arts. Perhaps as significant – although less widely reported – were the acknowledgements that Maria Miller made about the non-economic benefits of the arts to her audience at the British Museum: “It goes without saying,” she said, “that culture’s value to our society is immeasurable.” Perhaps this can be taken as indication of the persistent political dangers of failing to acknowledge such non-economic value?

The arts, it seems, is perhaps one of those areas of public debate at the leading edge of the creeping colonisation of the public sphere by the rationale of the market. Withstanding this colonisation is important not just for the arts themselves, but for civil society as a whole. Kasser builds the intriguing argument that pursuit of the arts may serve to deepen public commitment to values that underpin social and environmental concern. This may be the case. But it also surely the case that the arts still provide something of a foothold for beginning to reconstruct a case for limitations of the markets in many other areas. Those of us, therefore, who are concerned to help build a more sustainable and just world are also well advised to help hold off the marketization of the arts.

But this is a task that necessarily falls foremost to artists themselves. Artists must bear particular responsibility for determining the value that citizens place on art. Of course, this is a responsibility that should be expressed not just in terms of how they talk about their art, but also in terms of the nature of this art itself. If, as Kandinsky argued, art – viewed in the broadest sense of the word – often helps to shape our culture, then it is the proper role of artists to ask with what cultural values their art connects. In *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* Kandinsky writes:

*“It has been said... that art is the child of its age. Such an art can only create an artistic feeling which is already clearly felt. This art, which has no power for the future, which is only a child of the age and cannot become a mother of the future, is a barren art. She is transitory and to all intent dies the moment the atmosphere alters which nourished her. The other art, that which is capable of educating further, springs equally from contemporary feeling, but is at the same time not only echo and mirror of it, but also has a deep and powerful prophetic strength.”<sup>4</sup>*

Two years ago, the Scottish philosopher Alastair McIntosh curated a conference on Kandinsky in Govan – a part of Glasgow that ranks among the most economically deprived areas in Europe. “When I ask hard-pressed folks [in Govan] what they want of art I don’t hear calls for the likes of Damien Hirst’s ‘For the Love of God’ with 8,601 diamonds glued to a human skull”, McIntosh wrote in *The Guardian* at the time of the conference. “I hear people yearning for what Kandinsky saw as prophetic art. Art that reveals hope. Art that breathes the flow of life into the veins.”<sup>5</sup>

To continue to produce such art, and the hope that it reveals, is surely the greatest contribution that any artist can make in helping to draw forth a more sustainable and humane world.



# RESPONSE 5

**Mike van Graan**

**Playwright and Executive Director: African Arts Institute, Cape Town, South Africa**

## **BEFORE SHARING VALUES, A NEED TO SHARE A COMMON HUMANITY?**

I'd like to begin my commentary on Tim Kasser's essay, *The Potential of Engagement in Arts & Culture to Encourage Values that Support Well-being, Social Justice, and Ecological Sustainability* with three stories.

The first is of Laura Bush, wife of then USA President, George Bush, who, in speaking in 2003 at the USA's re-joining of UNESCO after a nearly two-decades period of absence, stated "We believe in working with the nations of the world to promote values shared by people throughout the world." "UNESCO", she said, "...can now help achieve peace by spreading the values that will help defeat terror, and lead to a safer and better world..."

Eight years later, the USA once again withdrew its funding from UNESCO after the latter body granted Palestine full membership status.

Spreading values "that will defeat terror and lead to a safer and better world" were now deemed less important than other – primarily political – considerations.

The second story has to do with my drama studies at the University of Cape Town where I was taught that great plays were those that were universal (speaking to the human condition in a manner that could be understood worldwide) and timeless (speaking truths unbound by any period in history). This would be achieved through believable characters engaging with the complexities of their lives.

When I conducted research for a post-graduate dissertation into political theatre in Asia, Latin America and Africa, I discovered what was "universal" (or at least similar) to the slums of Mumbai, the favelas of Rio and the townships of Johannesburg were elements such as caricature, simplicity of message and slapstick humour: what was "universal" (in theme and form) to the bourgeois audiences of New York, London, Paris and indeed Sao Paulo and Cape Town, were not "universal" to the working class or peasant audiences of theatre that spoke to the lived realities of these latter audiences. What some may consider "universal values" may very well simply be those values shared particularly by people from a similar class position, who have access to similar media, education and life experiences.

My third story is about four fathers in my play, *Brothers in Blood* that explores the theme of prejudice in a religious setting, with characters from the three Abrahamic religions: Islam, Judaism and Christianity. Abubaker Abrahams is a school principal whose family has been devastated by violent crime, his wife and granddaughter having been killed in the crossfire of gangsters fighting over drugs. Rev Lionel Fredericks is a pastor in a poor community who has experienced the loss of a son to drugs. Dr Brian Cohen has a young family and volunteers to do guard duty outside his children's school when inter-religious tensions in the city of Cape Town are rising. Fadiel Suleiman is a refugee whose family flees the civil war of Somalia only to have his father killed in a xenophobic attack in a South African township. All four of these are motivated by exactly the same value: to promote and protect the well-being of their families (or, in some cases, what's left of their families). And yet, it is precisely their pursuit of this core – similar or shared - value that brings them into varying degrees of conflict with each other.

While values may be shared within and across cultural, class, racial, religious and other divides, and individuals may be prepared to recognise and stand together on the basis of such values within their particular "group", more profound divisions of class, culture, "race" and religion often deny them the ability to recognise these with or in those who are less like them. Before sharing values, a more fundamental challenge may simply be to have the "other" recognised as a human being, as an equal.

Tim Kasser makes a case for the arts as a means for exploring and sharing particular values, probably with a view to achieving a critical mass of citizens across the globe who internalise these values, and who then, in giving expression to these, are able to help build the better, safer, ecologically sustainable world that Laura Bush so desperately desires.

While the pursuit of common values is a laudable – if naïve – goal, and an affirmation of the arts in doing so is commendable –ultimately useless as an argument to achieve greater support for the arts (better arguments have fallen on the hard soil of politicians and accountants), the more fundamental challenge is that of structural (and growing) global, regional and national inequality.

The gap between the rich and the poor in material terms on a global level is huge; a relative few enjoy exceedingly comfortable lifestyles, while nearly a billion of the world's population (one in seven people) experience hunger. It is difficult to see how those on these extremes would share the same values. According to [www.worldhunger.org](http://www.worldhunger.org), the world produces enough food for every human being on the planet but structural inequities and the systemic maldistribution of political, economic and military power, ensure that the divides remain and are exacerbated, rather than addressed.

Just over 3000 people died in the terror attack in New York in 2001, yet, since then, more than 30,000 people have been killed in the subsequent "war on terror" in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iraq. The Millennium Development Goals - adopted in 2000, the year

before 9/11, 2001 – were intended significantly to reduce global poverty by 2015. But, since 9/11, an estimated \$3,2 trillion have been spent on the so-called war on terror, while less than a third of that has been spent on the Millennium Development Goals. Last year, the USA reneged on its annual commitment of \$1,3bn to the Global Fund to fight AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria – one of the MDGs - but spends \$1,9bn *a day* on the military.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights – adopted in 1948 – has all the values that we as human beings should share, and, if we did and sought to make this Declaration a reality, we would not need to search for new values to share.

Article 1 states that “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights”. Article 25 states “Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care...” and Article 28 declares “everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realised”.

The reality of course, is quite different. In our prevailing international order, the life of an American is worth far more than that of a Pakistani; a Palestinian is of less consequence than an Israeli, a black person is of minor value compared to a white human being.

Before it seeks to explore or share crucial values, the arts – accessible mainly to the moneyed classes of the world – perhaps have a more fundamental role to play: to humanise (for the rich and the powerful) the many millions who exist on the underside of history, who “are born equal in dignity and rights” (at least theoretically) to the rich and the powerful. If only this one “value” were to register and change the way people think, act and pursue their own interests, then the world would be a different place. This would be a place in which the arts could celebrate and affirm our common humanity rather than search for that which may unite us towards some nebulous end.

# RESPONSE 6

## **Donald Smith**

**Director of the Scottish Storytelling Centre, a novelist, playwright and performance poet, UK**

### **IMAGINE THAT**

Tim Kasser's work grounds our understanding of human fulfilment through a comparison of extrinsic and intrinsic values, and underlines the potential of arts and culture to nurture, inform or satisfy the latter.

The nub though is - what kind of arts environment can contribute to such intrinsic satisfaction? Much contemporary culture follows the commercial market and feeds exactly the kind of desire for external goods and status Kasser delineates as 'extrinsic' and unfulfilling. Moreover such instantly fashionable quick-change consumerism replaces aesthetics with public relations, and critical debate with advertising. Even arts development agencies prioritise short term 'economic benefits' and publicity over intrinsic values. The launch overtakes the performance; the blog replaces the essay, a pitch the story.

If the arts could stimulate and nourish a motivating impulse or energy towards changing our global situation, then they have to be informed in content, method and aesthetics by a radical humanism, a transformative cultural anthropology that is broad, deep and inclusive.

"We have to be shaken, inspired and drawn into a creative passion for something other than possession of dwindling arid selfhood."

One pointer towards this would be Patrick Geddes - 'think global, act local'- who transferred his dynamic understanding of biological evolution into the social and cultural spheres. In this way he moved through and beyond his Scottish Enlightenment inheritance to delineate a biodynamic process of constant growth, decay and renewal at the centre of human life, both personal and collective.

Geddes is known globally for his pioneering restorative approach to city planning (which saved Edinburgh's Old Town for people). But his underlying driver is that a healthy cultural and social ecology must respond creatively to change and intervene creatively to shift the environmental dynamic in the direction of organic life rather than mechanistic death. This in Geddes' view has to be achieved by heart, hand and mind working together. Gardening, experimental science, poetry, early years education, sustainable fishing, drama, and architecture all have their part in the constant dialogue and interplay that constitutes human development in and through natural process - 'by leaves we live'.

Another Kasser insight is the capacity of artistic activity to foster empathy. Never was there a more pressing need in the face of ideological, religious, racial, economic, political and cultural polarisation. It is as if the planet's shrinking resource base and increasingly numerous and consumptive population makes every interest shriller and more aggressive. Again I would argue that something more radical than mutual tolerance and understanding may be required.

Maurice Godelier's recently expansive and insightful 'The Metamorphoses of Kinship' reconnects us with an important anthropological discourse. He reminds us that culture is about identity and difference as well as the common experiences that make us human. His central argument is that kinship - for Godelier the pivotal anthropological concept - is social rather than biological. In other words we learn to form bonds, relationships and attachments; they are not determined by blood, race or genetic inheritance. Culture can therefore express, negotiate and help create patterns of identity and solidarity that transcend conflict and tribalism. We can choose difference with connection.

Here the languages and practices of art have a path finding role. Whether by giving voice to the alienated and oppressed or by fashioning new sensibilities and spiritualities of human belonging, artistic activity could seed vital patterns even amidst destructive chaos. But if we are to move in that direction then we need to stop talking about 'the arts sector' or 'the creative economy' as if imagination was primarily a tool for economic growth. Instead we have to start singing, acting, writing, designing and dancing about what moves us most deeply and matters most to our common humanity.

Kaiser outlines a psychological context through which what we truly need and actually desire can coalesce. We can imagine a different time, a different space, and invite others in to play. What if that which we deeply and intrinsically desire taps the sources of life itself? Imagine that. Dream. Story. Dance. For millennia this is how humankind remembered what is most important about being human. Now we have to re-source to create our future.

# RESPONSE 7

**Dan Russell**

**Designer, The Ultimate Holding Company, UK**

I'm writing this response to Tim Kasser's provocation having just read an article about co-operatives and the alternatives to capitalism. Surprisingly, the benefits were being quantified in terms of economic growth and their values defined by a contribution to the traditional financial model, one that *they are meant to be the alternative to!* This is totally erroneous! The "oh, that's just the way of the world" argument doesn't wash anymore. That *was* the way of the world, and it has failed. Playing by their rules means the game is already lost.

Infinite growth is totally unachievable, set as it is against the backdrop of a finite planet. Measuring things solely in terms of money is inconvenient, and makes people less helpful. Measuring success against contradictory values doesn't work. Using the same language to describe incompatible approaches may be convenient, but it is wrong.

One of the questions posed by this introduction to this report is: can we transform the values of our society and economy within a generation? I'm an optimist, so I say yes. I also believe that art can and must be a vital tool for this. Unfortunately the values promoted in the way art is currently taught and bought are entirely at odds with those that should be at the forefront.

I have a strong belief that the arts can help bring about the shifts needed in civil society, away from extrinsic values and towards the intrinsic ones that will help humanity tackle the many crises it faces. Even art that isn't explicitly socially engaged can still act with personal, social and ecological wellbeing by reinforcing self-direction over self-promotion, broadmindedness over detachment and equality over wealth.

Unfortunately there's a stranglehold on the arts. In much the same way that co-operatives are being judged in terms of existing financial models confuses the issue, so too the way we currently think and talk about art severely hinders its ability to catalyse change. Both are examples of looking at the future through the familiar frame of the past, and in doing so they directly contradict the values that should be promoted.

I see two main barriers to creativity helping achieve social change. Art is being squeezed into a misleading, unhelpful straitjacket by education at one end and by funding at the other.

## **How art is taught**

The plan for English schools to neglect the arts within the new baccalaureate is unsurprising. The value of the arts is motivated by more than profit and as such cannot truthfully be monitored or accounted for via financial goals or in terms of value added to other areas. Whilst it continues to be thought of in such terms the perception of art as a soft subject and creative graduates as unemployable wasters will remain.

The problem persists though higher education, which measures success and sells itself via employability, high-profile alumni, awards, riches and shiny aspirational new buildings. These departments and Art Schools could be focusing on equipping students with the skills they need to better understand the world, make change and help humanity to survive but they seldom have curricula shaped by this purpose.

It has been proven that promoting extrinsic values diminishes thinking about intrinsic values. If the educational machine is geared up to promote extrinsic values, how will arts graduates produce work that promotes intrinsic values? It will still be confined to the minority rather than the norm.

## **How art is bought**

The funding bodies that artists often rely on, justify the distribution of their funds and grants using criteria that includes ticking boxes for visitor numbers rather than meaningful engagement, overemphasis on social recognition and a preoccupation with high-profile names, media attention and fame. Perhaps this is unsurprising as it after all relates to the procurement of money, but the finance in the case of the arts is a means to an end, not the end itself and needs to find new value systems.

How can an arts project expect to truly embed intrinsic values in its audience if it must comply with an extrinsic value monitoring system in order to exist?

The crises humanity faces are best tackled through promoting intrinsic values, but the handle of the machine that promotes extrinsic values is still being cranked by the language and criteria of education and funding.

Values in direct conflict are hard to pursue simultaneously, so suggesting that a project can encourage intrinsic values like self-acceptance and harmony with nature whilst being measured against the extrinsically-oriented system of power, popularity and rewards poses a conundrum.

Trying to facilitate an education that encourages intrinsic values when all the messages point towards the current broken system will surely lead to artists bent on self-promotion, fame and wealth? Not least when the funders that make projects viable also enforce these values.

We must move away from bending art to fit the traditional language of extrinsic value promotion and change the way we talk about the benefits of creativity to reinforce intrinsic values. That way the art itself won't be the product of contradiction.

# CONCLUSION

**Shelagh Wright**

MMM, UK

## **ARTS & CULTURE FOR OUR SAKE**

Our intent with this provocation and collection of ideas is to renew thinking about how art and culture impact on our values and understand what new collaborations with artists and creative practitioners could do to create the 'influx of hope, resourcefulness and social innovation' that [Uffe Elbaek](#) describes.

Mission Models Money connected with [Professor Tim Kasser](#) and his ideas through the work of the Common Cause network. This work had developed as a critical tool and provocation to third sector campaigning for behaviour change, but it seemed to us that the core concepts had as much to do with art as with campaigns - the understanding that our emotions – rather than factual evidence – plays the predominant role in shaping our decisions. That how we respond emotionally to something depends on and affects our values, that our values frame how we look at the world, and that our world-view determines how we in turn shape the world.

Arts and culture carry what the American folklorist Bill Ivey calls 'expressive' value, the making and remaking of identity and meanings. Sometimes this may be holding up a magnifying glass to reveal what is not obvious, and sometimes a kaleidoscope to create new and different ways of seeing the world. The arts are, by their very nature, an emotional experience. Unlike third sector campaigning, they are not a 'tool' to affect values and behaviour change, they are an embodiment of values and often a challenge to recognize and review them.

## **Developing and Recognising Artistic Practice**

This is a challenge to artists and creative practitioners to take responsibility for this power in their practice. A few of the respondents in this pamphlet have talked about this. From [Eleanora Befiore](#) suggesting we need 'a better understanding of whether it is possible to identify forms of engagement or forms of cultural production that allow for a better society to flourish' to [Tom Crompton](#)'s call for 'the proper role of artists to ask with what cultural values their art connects'.

We suggest that it is time for a more public discussion both within artistic practice, research and policy and with the public about what kinds of art matters to us and what kinds of practice public subsidy supports. What are the forms of practice and engagement with this creative process that can help us understand better how to bring together the different



intrinsic values? And what kind of art and artists do we recognise and validate through awards and 'prizes'?

“Is it time for a new prize, backed by a coalition of campaigners and change makers, that artists and people value as having greater relevance and deeper meaning for them in their everyday lives?”

### **Working with Human Health and Wellbeing**

There are new coalitions and collaborations to be made between art and other areas of our social infrastructure, if we believe that artists working with their audiences can ensure 'the more psychologically healthy all parties are likely to be' as [Ed Deci](#) suggests. We are not necessarily talking about art as therapy in remedial medical settings, but more about the role of art in creating what [Ellie Harrison](#) describes as 'simply the **time** and **space** beyond the realms of the market, where we can each access knowledge, critically reflect and feel empowered to change our lives for the better'.

We suggest developing the empirical work on values in relation to arts and culture in order to find ways of evidencing increases in our individual and collective sense of wellbeing. As local authorities, foundations and other funders look for new and better means to promote increases in wellbeing, be it through planning regulations or community projects, might there be a more sophisticated recognition of the way in which arts and culture can animate potential and resilience?

### **Schooling Art with Values**

There are deep implications in these ideas for why and how we help artists and creative practitioners to learn. While we have in the UK a higher education system for art and culture which has an international reputation for excellence, there is more we could do to be 'equipping students with the skills they need to better understand the world, make change and help humanity to survive' but, as [Dan Russell](#) observes 'they seldom have curricula shaped by this purpose'.

There are some brave experiments around the world in developing creative, values-based learning with artists and makers. How can art and culture with educationalists and

campaigners for change create more social learning and innovation? What would a curricula look like that created a framework for artists 'to analyse the key benefits of [their] creativity and to work out how these might best be used to develop [their] own and others' well-being and encourage social justice' as [Ellie Harrison](#) describes it?

### **Shaping a Radical new Human Story**

Artists and creative practitioners are often looking for the places and patterns where alternative stories, motivations and meanings can be discovered and developed. In the language of [Tim Kasser](#), the creative process itself involves values that engage 'intrinsic' values through flow, affiliation and engagement. It also encourages curiosity, freedom, self-acceptance and self-direction. Or put more simply, the ability to understand something other and the possibility you can act to do or say something about it.

“So if art and culture have the ability to create frameworks that bring people together and help them to find new ways of seeing and being together, then can we recognize their vital role in social innovation?”

[Donald Smith](#) talks of a 'radical humanism' that is broad, deep and inclusive. The aesthetics, languages and practices of art having paths to 'affirm our common humanity' as [Mike Van Graan](#) puts it, by giving recognition to the oppressed and articulating what a valuable life really means. But how can we shape a new policy discourse and find the connections with other sectors and disciplines that are not just 'economic' or 'moneyed'? Who are the agents for change that can come together as part of an 'explicitly emancipatory political and cultural project' as described by [Eleanora Belfiore](#)?

Mission Models Money with Common Cause offer this short contribution to stimulating our thought and action to find ways to work with art and culture to deepen intrinsic values and lessen extrinsic values thereby promoting personal well-being, a more just and civil society, and a more ecologically-sustainable world. The provocation by [Tim Kasser](#) suggests a number of 'admittedly speculative but potentially tantalizing reasons why engagement in arts and culture may be able to contribute to such effort'. We hope that these contributions that were so generously given, and the questions they have raised, provide impetus for testing these ideas both empirically and practically.

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