

# EXPLORING CULTURAL VALUE

Contemporary Issues  
for Theory and Practice



Edited by  
Kim Lehman, Ian Fillis, Mark Wickham

# Exploring Cultural Value

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# **Exploring Cultural Value: Contemporary Issues for Theory and Practice**

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United Kingdom – North America – Japan – India – Malaysia – China

Emerald Publishing Limited  
Howard House, Wagon Lane, Bingley BD16 1WA, UK

First edition 2021

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**British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data**

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-78973-516-1 (Print)

ISBN: 978-1-78973-515-4 (Online)

ISBN: 978-1-78973-517-8 (Epub)



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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

*To Fiona, always... (KL)*

*To Adelina (IF)*

*To Ryan, Amy, Matthew, Kade, Erin and Meredy Brook (MW)*

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**Abbey MacDonald** is an arts-based researcher, teacher and Senior Lecturer in Arts Education at the University of Tasmania. She brings to all aspects of her work a strong personal focus upon art making, Arts advocacy, teacher professional learning, community engagement and multi-stakeholder collaboration. She enjoys working with Arts industry and philanthropic organisations looking to collaborate with education transformation stakeholders and is recognised for her contributions to enacting interdisciplinary curriculum, pedagogy and online teaching. MacDonald is Vice President of Art Education Australia and the Tasmanian Art Teachers Association.

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**Özge Gökbulut Özdemir** graduated from Hacettepe University Department of Economics in 2004 and completed her MBA in 2007 and PhD in 2011 in Ankara University Business Administration Department with her thesis on the Turkish Art Industry. She became Associate Professor in 2017 in Marketing. She has various academic researches on art industry, cultural value, art entrepreneurship and the contributions of art to business. As an artist, she handles with various themes such as duality, contrast, co-creation, existence and survival. Her art works were exhibited in more than 40 national and international exhibitions including United Kingdom, France, Italy, Japan, USA and Greece. She is working on various art industry and cultural value projects in Liverpool John Moores University Business School as a visiting scholar.

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

*Kim Lehman, Mark Wickham and Ian Fillis*

The impetus for this book stems from a recent growth in cultural value research that challenges the predominant approaches to its definition and measurement.<sup>1</sup> Certainly, there has been a level of frustration relating to a reliance on the quantitative measurement of value in the arts and cultural sector by governments and other stakeholders, with qualitative insight being either dismissed or moved to the periphery in decision-making and policy formulation. This book does not seek to denigrate other work in the field, but rather to promote alternative ways of thinking about cultural value, its measurement and how qualitative insights can benefit stakeholder engagement in the sector. In so doing, the book provides a forum for researchers around the world interested in strengthening our understanding of cultural value and to celebrate the vital role the arts and cultural sectors have in society. We see this as even more crucial as we work towards a post-COVID-19 world.

### Understanding Cultural Value

The conventional interpretation of how culture is expressed is through systems of production and dissemination of cultural messages in products or services. [Walker and Chaplin \(1997, p. 177\)](#) discuss cultural value as being both individualised and shared:

...understanding culture requires that the socio-historical circumstances of cultural production and consumption have to be taken into account, and also the position of cultural consumers and those who observe them...

In a broader sense, there have also been moves to instil a co-production ethos between the public and institutions in terms of designing services (e.g. [Borg & Vigerland, 2013](#)). Until recently, cultural value tended to adopt a mainly instrumental, economic position in order to satisfy government concerns over funding and the ‘measurement’ of the value of culture more generally, while marginalising its intangible, qualitative dimensions. Methodological and definitional concerns

surrounding the understanding of cultural value have stimulated more analytical work that questions existing underlying assumptions (Belfiore, 2002; Holden, 2004; Mulcahy, 2006; Oliver & Walmsley, 2011; Throsby, 2003). Although there is a lack of consistency on how we define it, Crossick and Kaszynska (2014, p. 124) view cultural value as:

...the effects that culture has on those who experience it and the difference it makes to individuals and society.

There is also agreement on its active role in making change happen (O'Brien & Lockley, 2015). Cultural value can be conceptualised as a triangular relationship of intrinsic, instrumental and institutional values (Holden, 2006, pp. 14–18):

Intrinsic values ... relate to the subjective experience of culture intellectually, emotionally and spiritually ... [They] are better thought of ... as the capacity and potential of culture to affect us, rather than as measurable and fixed stocks of worth ... Instrumental values relate to the ancillary effects of culture, where culture is used to achieve a social or economic purpose ... Institutional value relates to the processes and techniques that organisations adopt in how they work to create value for the public...The responsible institutions themselves should be considered not just as repositories of objects, or sites of experience, or instruments for generating cultural meaning, but as creators of value in their own right.

Cultural value has the potential to impact on our quality of life through its aesthetic context and related social and psychological aspects of cultural capital (Geursen & Rentschler, 2003). Walmsley (2018) also echoes the importance of assessing cultural value from aesthetic, experiential perspectives, rather than solely from endeavouring to understand and rationalise value. It is apparent, then, that taking a predominantly economic approach to understanding cultural value will result in the marginalisation of important contributing factors.

The need for a broader and more inclusive approach to cultural value was recognised in the initial United Kingdom Arts and Humanities Research Council funded Cultural Value Project (CVP). The CVP was established at the end of 2012, ran for two years, and involved 70 different research teams. Its purpose was:

...to make a major contribution to how we think about the value of arts and culture to individuals and society. The project establishes a framework which will advance the way in which we talk about the value of cultural engagement and the methods by which we evaluate it. The framework will be, on the one hand, an examination of the cultural experience itself, its impact on individuals and its benefit to society, and on the other, articulate a set of evaluative approaches and methodologies appropriate to the different ways in which cultural value is manifested.<sup>2</sup>

The project built on existing valuation methods, while also developing alternatives, grounded in qualitative, quantitative and case study approaches, in order to understand the value of cultural engagement and the nature of the experience at individual and collective levels. The collection of chapters in this book which were subject to a robust peer review process, moves the debate even further forward and sets out the current research agenda on an international front, developing insight into a range of creative projects which challenge long-held assumptions and develops new insights for theory and practice. The book is organised in three parts: the first part deals with contributions relating to ‘Ways of Thinking about Cultural Value’; the second part builds on this in order to consider ‘Current Developments in the Field’; and the last part culminates in the consideration of ‘Challenges for the Future’.

## **PART 1 – WAYS OF THINKING ABOUT CULTURAL VALUE**

In this first part, Victoria Rodner and Chloe Preece consider the role of authenticity in the art market in stimulating cultural value. They examine and deconstruct the space within which the authentication of art takes place in order to appreciate the structural underpinnings of value and its ideological foundations. They utilise a three-part model as a means of demonstrating how socially constructed authenticity in the art market is dependent on the interpretation of cultural brokers who determine recognition of the artist’s vision in the work by placing it within an art context and then legitimising it as culturally valuable. Through their spatial analysis, the authors visualise the complexity of visual art products and their valuation and reveal how authenticity functions in multiple dimensions.

Julian Merrick and Tully Barnett’s chapter investigates the inter-relationship between cultural value and the value of culture in their assessment of arts and cultural experience. They draw on the findings of their research project Laboratory Adelaide: The Value of Culture as a means of assessing evaluation methods in the arts and cultural sector in Australia. Their approach does not conform to long-held methods of measuring value and instead offers a more contemporary way of assessing public value. They argue for more contextualised, inclusive and expansive assessment processes, together with improved policy coherence relating to the importance of primary cultural experience in evaluation. They discuss the role of proxies in assessment processes and their relationship to the cultural experiences as representative indicators. Merrick and Barnett identify how arts and culture are more than the sum of their parts.

In their chapter on consumerism, destruction and ephemeral art, Chloe Preece and Finola Kerrigan discuss how value needs to be conceptualised as multi-dimensional and temporal. In acknowledging the ongoing cultural value debate, they note how recent arts marketing research has problematised the economic interpretation of value, while also widening the debate in aesthetic, cultural and social terms. Through their focus on ‘destructive’ art involving a creative process

which contains an element of destruction in making the artwork, they consider the tension between transience and permanence and unpack a series of dematerialisation factors which dispute conventional models of value. Preece and Kerrigan utilise the lens of object-oriented ontology (OOO) in calling for further focus on the artwork itself beyond, for example, the originator's intentions and the audience's responses.

In the last chapter of Part 1, Boram Lee and Ruth Rentschler evaluate cultural value in times of conflict through a case study analysis of an artist on the frontline. During the Spanish Civil War, the Basque city of Guernica was bombed by the German and Italian armies. Pablo Picasso's large-scale painting of the event, *Guernica* (1937), has become one of the most famous political anti-war statements in the world. This chapter explores examples of the different ways in which the effects of cultural engagement are manifested and articulated in the depiction of armed conflict, identifying three stages in the cultural value life cycle in armed conflict: universal value, aesthetic value and social value. A conceptual framework is also developed.

## **PART 2 – CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE FIELD**

In the opening chapter of Part 2, Patrycja Kaszynska examines cultural value as practice by reflecting on the AHRC Cultural Value Project and identifying its legacies and future directions. There is evidence that the field of inquiry into cultural value has been repositioned, moving away from policy constructs and measuring the outcomes of cultural engagement, and towards the experiences of participants and understanding the 'process of valuing'. However, the challenge remains as to how to produce and develop a practical account of cultural value. The reconceiving of cultural value has profound methodological implications, including the identification of suitable approaches that can deal with historical and geographical concerns. The proposed shift will not only enable an improved understanding of questions of power, voice and representation, it may also help to deal with the dichotomy between the 'aesthetic' and the anthropological conception of culture.

Özge Gökbulut Özdemir's chapter then examines cultural value within a cultural engagement context, investigating purposeful co-creation acts in the art industry. Referring to the complexity of defining and measuring the 'cultural value' concept, the author focuses on the role of place and atmosphere in the cultural engagement process of art in society. As the gap between art and society is the focus of the chapter, the existence of different cultural frames is considered as the reason behind the inequality of access to the arts and culture. The case study analysis discusses evidence surrounding the following questions: What is the role of place and atmosphere for actors in the practice of cultural engagement? How does cultural engagement occur in different places and cultural frames for artists and the public? How is cultural value created by and for these stakeholders? Besides traditional art platforms such as museums, galleries, art

fairs and biennials, there is an emerging trend of the use of alternative spaces for art such as workshops and art colonies that result in profound interaction and co-creation.

Marnie Badham, Kit Wise and Abbey MacDonald examine how the *24 Carrot Gardens Project*, initiated by artist and curator Kirsha Kaechele of the Museum of Old and New Art (Mona), has resulted in cultural value creation and exchange of diverse values. The focus is on initiating lifelong learning in health, well-being and sustainability across Tasmanian school communities. It raises crucial questions about sustainability, opportunity and the cultural value assigned to introduced species in relation to consumption and nutrition surrounding kitchen-garden produce. The chapter provides an update on the theoretical, practice and policy debates on cultural value and develops a new framework for understanding cultural value.

Charlotte Carey's chapter explores the role of entrepreneurship within the careers of fine artists as part of the discourse of cultural value. The fields of entrepreneurship and the creative industries have received a large amount of attention from both policy makers and researchers, and the way in which entrepreneurial artists manage their artistic, and sometimes conflicting, entrepreneurial identities is assessed. The authors discuss a study that evaluated the career histories of a cohort of Fine Art graduates who had graduated in 1994 from the same institution. Taking a narrative approach, detailed career stories were charted; the relationship to and tensions surrounding entrepreneurship and artistic practice are prescribed in detail. Although artistic identity emerges as a strong factor, this is sometimes at odds with entrepreneurial identity. This presents a conflict for some artists in aesthetic and emotional terms, and this chapter explores what this means in the context of cultural value.

The final chapter of Part 2 by Can Seng Ooi investigates the creative reputation dilemma in the professional and emotional negotiation of cultural value. His chapter is based on more than a decade of art world research in Singapore, focusing here on the analysis of a single case of a composer who has composed a work for an orchestra. The study identifies the creative reputation dilemma faced by many artists who attempt to be more entrepreneurial. Many countries promote their creative economy, resulting in the generation of a class of artist entrepreneurs or 'artpreneurs'. These professional artists are encouraged to be economically independent but for many, maintaining their creative reputation has resulted in emotional costs. This chapter uses rich and thick description to demonstrate how an artist negotiates with the patron in finalising a new piece of commissioned music. The required creativity necessitates experimentation and the creation of new things, but these may not be well-received.

### **PART 3 – CHALLENGES FOR THE FUTURE**

The first chapter of Part 3, by Kim Lehman, Ian Fillis and Mark Wickham, investigates whether cultural value can be a context for urban and regional development. This chapter investigates the extent to which cultural value has

utility as a framework for urban and regional development strategies. It proposes a conceptualisation of ‘cultural assets’ that encompasses both tangible and intangible resources, as well as resources existing and yet to be created. The conceptualisation establishes a framework within which we can better understand how cultural value can be activated or generated in urban and regional areas and so become a context for developmental strategies. Importantly, further insight is developed into the notion of cultural value itself and its utility in other areas of theory and practice. The authors take the position that by utilising cultural value as a context for development, a more holistic, and ultimately more strategic, approach can be taken.

Chiara Carolina Donelli, Michele Trimarchi, Lorenzo Pratici and Simone Fanelli’s chapter assesses the value of culture in building resilient cities. Many cities face a variety of social issues (such as high unemployment, increasing crime rates, migration flows, shifts in types of social interactions and lifestyle). Increasing the number of cultural offerings within a city helps address the inhabitants’ general sense of well-being while, at the same time, helping to increase the city’s attractiveness for investments. Often, policy makers assume that enhancing and supporting the cultural and creative industries will address inherent urban socio-economic crises (and the stress of the urban fabric) without effectively taking their historical-geographical and socio-political conditions into account. This can then lead to unwanted side-effects (such as attracting socially and economically unsustainable mass-tourism; the risk of cementing the city’s own cultural heritage and history as an obstacle to progress and innovation; and the risk of gentrification, resulting in the loss of traditions and social relationships which have characterised the urban area).

Ayşe Collins’s chapter investigates how disability impacts on being able to attend arts events, raising issues of inequality of access to performing arts participation. Scholars mostly emphasise the social inclusion of people with disabilities; however, disability is often perceived as something that should be overcome rather than accommodated. The few disability studies to date have tended to focus on issues such as employment, education, accessibility to health care and accessible tourism. The qualitative study evaluated in this chapter explores social inclusion of audiences with disabilities regarding inequalities in attending performing arts events from multiple perspectives and their impact on cultural value. The most important impact from this work is that it is the first study conducted on the participation of people with disabilities in performing arts events in Turkey.

The last chapter in Part 3, by Ludovico Solima, assesses the impact of museums operating outside the boundaries placed on them by the physical constraints of their buildings. It focuses on the Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli (MANN, National Archaeological Museum of Naples), one of the most important archaeological museums in the world. In 2017, MANN launched several projects including *Father and Son*, the first video game made by an archaeological museum, and *Ancient Present (Antico Presente)*, five short films produced by the museum, each based on a different artwork selected from the museum’s permanent collections and produced in five different languages. Both projects represent a first attempt to use new digital and cinematographic languages in order to begin a

dialogue with new audiences and to address museum accessibility issues in novel ways by bringing the museum outside the museum walls.

Overall, this book illustrates the breadth of interest in the arts and cultural sectors within the academic community that ranges across disciplines. Similarly, the nuances teased out of the various cases provide evidence that qualitative approaches to research on cultural value provide valuable insights into a facet of human endeavour all of us believe to be vital to society. We have gathered together research on the growing use of the cultural value lens to explain and investigate those areas of social ‘life’ where art and culture can have an impact or add value, beyond (but not excluding) the economic. Our overall aim is to advance the thinking around cultural value and thus provide a deeper understanding of the notion. If we also stimulate interest and further research explorations in the arts and cultural sectors, all the better.

## Notes

1. See Fillis, Lee, and Fraser (2015); Lee, Fraser, and Fillis (2017); Lee, Fraser, and Fillis (2018); Behr, Brennan, and Cloonan (2016); Edelman, Sloboda, and O’Neill (2016); King, Stark, and Cooke (2016); Oancea, Florez-Petour, and Atkinson (2018); Scott, Rowe, and Pollock (2018); Walmsley (2018); Snowball (2020).
2. <https://ahrc.ukri.org/documents/adverts-flyers-and-posters/the-cultural-value-project/>.

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