

SPACE TO BREATHE - NURTURING AN INTEGRATED HERITAGE

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Abstract

The European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018 made a strong commitment towards collaboration between those working in the heritage sector and those working in the creative arts, as evidenced in the criteria for the associated Creative Europe funding calls. The question of cross-sectoral and interdisciplinary working across the sub-sectors has also been considered in initiatives like the European Commission's OMC working group on participatory governance in cultural heritage. This paper considers the obstacles to collaboration and explores them through a number of Scottish case studies linked to the author's research practice. It then goes on to suggest approaches that would support a more integrated practice, including proposals for dedicated funding criteria.

Keywords

Culture, Heritage, Arts, Collaboration, Cultural Heritage

1. *The case for collaboration*

I always struggle with the classifications of arts, culture and heritage. When I look at the mosaics in Pompeii or watch Yasmine Naghdi dance the Firebird at Covent Garden am I looking at heritage or art? The truth is both. They are as closely intertwined as the lovers in Pompeii's Lupanar or Fokine's ballet. So I was quite excited when the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018 (EYCH2018) directly addressed this embrace.

Creative Europe dedicated a strand of its Co-operation sub-programme (my favourite cultural funding envelope) to EYCH2018. Co-operation projects offer applicants the chance to imaginatively respond to a small number of priorities rather than just conform to a prescriptive framework of criteria. Partnerships can be of many shapes and sizes, crossing disciplines, sectors, industries and continents. Projects of any scale can be 4 years long, allowing time, like a good play, for a beginning, a middle and an end.

There is nothing to prevent collaboration between a micro-business in Estonia, a university in Greece, a museum in Poland and an arts producer in Portugal. All in all this seems like a perfect platform for heritage and arts

professionals to work together.

In the case of the EYCH2018 call one of the two primary objectives was 'to promote cultural heritage as a source of inspiration for artistic contemporary creation and innovation and strengthen the interaction between the cultural heritage sector and other cultural and creative sectors'.

There is no doubt that this is a well crafted priority. The reference to inspiration acknowledges the artist at work, and 'contemporary' switches our attention away from traditional tropes associated with art and heritage.

The pointer to cross-sectoral collaboration could not have been more direct. Factor this into a heritage net that was cast very wide, embracing 'skills, practices, knowledge and expressions of human creativity' alongside tangible and film heritage and you have a remarkable opportunity for a step change in the relationship between heritage and the arts, the curator and the artist.

The call attracted a wide range of applications from partnerships straddling the whole of Europe. There were 29 successful project applications with the first on the list fittingly called 'young art(ist)s refreshing heritage sites'. They have made, and will continue to make, an impact given the switch of focus which the call's criteria represents.

So far, so good, but there are so many challenges to overcome by those looking for longer term and deeper collaboration between heritage and the arts. Are they still a minority among peers who view art as primarily decorating their heritage offer, or consider heritage as one more arts commissioning opportunity?

Heritage and arts administrators may find themselves competing for the same pots of money. There is a public perception that heritage will always prioritise sites and buildings, whereas the arts is only concerned with what goes on inside them.

2. Economics rule (most of the time)

The most obvious interface between heritage and the arts in today's economically driven strategic thinking is tourism. I live in Edinburgh and cannot show any international visitor under the age of 35 around the city without them pointing and exclaiming 'Harry Potter!' at any vaguely gothic piece of architecture.

Research for Scotland's Year of History, Heritage and Archaeology 2017 identified that heritage tourism is worth £1.34bn to the economy and supports 8 million annual visits to heritage attractions. Outside the city the Scottish visitor economy professionals set great store by the drawing power of film and television.

The Netflix historical drama *Outlaw King* benefited from £1m of public funding, but has already generated £17.5m for the Scottish economy. When the film 'Outlander' featured Doune Castle visitor numbers increased by 91%. This is significant in a country where the visitor economy generates £11bn of economic activity and a new job is created for every £60,000 spent by tourists.

As far back as 2007 a major report referenced the strong association between the films *Braveheart*, *Da Vinci Code*, and *Harry Potter* with heritage attractions and a legacy of tourism products and offers. In 2012 the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) estimated that more than half of the world's tourists are motivated by a desire to experience a country's culture and heritage and predicted a 15% annual growth in this figure. Research into Arts Council England's Cultural Destinations programme in 2017 found that by connecting contemporary culture to more orthodox or traditional visitor attractions new visitors were attracted, and the

perceptions of existing visitors changed. Anecdotal evidence from my own work also suggests that some heritage managers see attracting a high-spending arts audience as having direct income benefits.

Increasingly, tourists want to participate in cultural heritage, not just observe it, but heritage tourism is also seen as bringing both pros and cons to its major destinations. This point was made clear to me when attending the 2017 Creative Tourism Network event in Melilla. I was there to talk about Northern European perspectives, and particularly the growing tension between mass tourism and maintaining the fabric and communities of heritage destinations.

A tourism sustained by co-creation does seem like part of the answer, and the Network's call for realising the value of existing intangible cultural heritage immediately knocks on the door of local artists and creatives to work with visitors and the curators of physical heritage.

3. Mixing things up in Scotland

The potential for cross-sectoral collaboration can also resonate strongly with local people, and the following section explores this with examples from Scotland, the sector that I know best and where the call from Scottish Victorian geographer, Patrick Geddes, to 'think global, act local' is ever-present. Scotland is one of many countries looking to bend the parallel lines of heritage and the arts so that they can connect, overlap or conjoin to the benefit of both. Museums Galleries Scotland which represents 400 museums in Scotland introduced an online portal for communities to enter the intangible cultural heritage (ICH) that is most important to them to provide a dynamic record of Scotland's ICH practices.

Historic Environment Scotland's motto is 'Heritage for All' and the organisation has a new plan to deliver this that includes the word 'creative' in its five priorities.

The new priority arises from a situation where consultation evidenced that the public sees the relationship between arts and heritage as important in their lives, but this remains undocumented.

HES were preparing the new plan at the same time as being heavily involved in the 'Rip It Up - The Story of Scottish Pop' exhibition in the National Museum of Scotland. Alison Turnbull

(HES Director of Development and Partnerships) talked about how the exhibition was at the forefront of their minds: "People were saying 'this is my life - but it's in an exhibition'. Contemporary collecting should be about this". This is leading to partnership between the lead agencies and some of the key institutions of arts and heritage in Scotland. There is no shortage of other examples where action and strategy are mutually reinforcing.

The Sensing Place project in the Scottish Borders explored the relationship between local people, their creative ambitions, and local heritage. Our starting point was local film archive material sourced from national archives, and a team comprising a contemporary artist (Anne-Marie Copestake), storyteller (Jean Edmiston), and film curator (Lydia Beilby) worked with local communities.

We found that there is already a very active localised culture of screen and photography archiving that is linked to contemporary issues and practice. But we also found that local institutions have neither the capacity or skills to support this effectively.

Local moving image archives were fragmented, and when we teamed up with the Scottish Borders Heritage Hub we found an untapped appetite for working with film archive material from both the curators and the public. It just needed professional artists to bring this to life. This was the opposite of prescriptive commissioning, and a rare situation where artists, curators and local people could form their own approach to collaboration.

A key partner for Sensing Place was TRACS (Scotland's National Network for Traditional Arts and Culture) hosting our final plenary in its annual international festival, and providing advice and support concerning the storytelling dimensions of the project.

The TRAC's People's Parish project was inspired by the 200 year old statistical account of Scotland, and aims 'to explore the creative culture and heritage' of every one of Scotland's 871 parishes, 'empowering communities to shape and share their own stories of place'. A set of community resources supports the process and their team backs this up with local action research.

Stories, songs, dance, fiction and the visual arts figure strongly and the initiative forms part of TRACS work to ensure traditional arts are also

contemporary - aesthetically, culturally and socially. This is not only an exercise in preservation - at the heart of this approach is the commitment given to artists, musicians and storytellers

Just over the border the Berwick-upon-Tweed Film and Moving Image Festival has its roots in local heritage and contemporary international art. The town is the most northerly in England and a long way from a major urban centre. It is best known for its Elizabethan city walls, and, from its inception some 12 years ago, the historic fabric of the town has been used as the venue for a wide range of moving image arts installations and screenings. This has, on the one hand, helped the festival attract international audiences and artists interested in the distinctive platform, and on the other involve local people to work they would normally never encounter - a case of heritage and challenging contemporary art combining to mutual advantage.

4. *The real thing? Questions of authenticity.*

The combining of contemporary artistic practice and heritage can have profound impacts that influence the work of artists and the perceptions of audiences. An increasing number of artists enjoy combining their work with classical art or with the curation of collections. Outstanding examples from my own gallery experiences range from Grayson Perry's work with the British Museum, Anselm Kiefer at the Rodin Museum, and sculptor Daniel Silver's current work with the New Art Gallery's Epstein collection in Walsall.

Artists working in the performing arts can also be deeply affected by encounters with their profession's heritage. As I write this the Royal Shakespeare Company is presenting a revival of Thomas Otway's Restoration 'thriller' *Venice Restored*, directed by Prasanna Puwanarajah. While these long and wordy plays place huge demands on the actors, they also make unusual demands on the audience.

The Swan Theatre uses the same thrust stage as theatres from the Elizabethan 'golden age' of theatre. Actors brush against you and perspire over you. This is an intensely physical experience for audiences used to the action being safely behind a proscenium arch. But it is the amount of words that is most challenging in our heavily edited world. You have to concentrate and listen intently for almost two and a half hours, to

dialogue that is sometimes alien to the point of absurdity. But immersion in an unfamiliar and seemingly irrational society was, to me, interesting and important in keeping perspective in today's unfamiliar and irrational political environment.

In June 2013 the full text of Sir David Lyndsay's *A Satire of the Three Estates* was performed at Linlithgow Palace as part of the 'Staging and Representing the Scottish Renaissance Court' project. Lyndsay's play is a highly regarded commentary on the emergence of the reformation in Scotland and is enormous, at over 4,600 lines. The project was a collaboration between academics, curators, and theatre practitioners.

The idea was partially to explore whether the old Scots language that seemed impenetrable on the page to the casual reader would come to be intelligible and meaningful in performance. I interviewed a number of the cast, many of whom talked of their trepidation when confronted with the original text. But then, through the rehearsals and performance, the language came to life. Some described how this intimate encounter with their theatre heritage and language had impacted on their contemporary work, from their approach to physical theatre, to the language that comes out of the characters that they write, to the way they direct their own work.

The point here is that the arts are heritage. A living heritage. A ballet heritage without choreographers with direct experience of previous productions, and dancers without the associated technique, is just a documentary of something from the past. The same argument can be applied to opera and orchestral music. Without the trained performers, they simply don't exist. Heritage here has to be embodied, not just digitised or notated.

5. *The big squeeze. Space for the new.*

One area where the heritage and arts are collaborating in new developments is the use of new technologies. From the heritage perspective, arts and technology has revolutionised interpretation. Exhibition curators make imaginative use of presentational and audience engagement technologies. Virtual and augmented reality are continually developing for use both on-site and off-site. Many of the skills needed to make these technologies attractive are those of the artist. Similarly, from the arts perspective, the

digitisation of work and the streaming of performance are also revolutionising how audiences engage.

Websites like Open Culture or Europeana offer us an access to artistic heritage that would have been unimaginable at the turn of the millennium.

The Creative Europe-supported opera-streaming project OperaVision can point to a vast increase in opera engagement both in and outside of Europe arising from its output. But there is an issue here, particularly given the voices advocating for digital presentation as an affordable alternative to live touring. At what point does the record or dissemination of art become documentation, rather than the art itself?

6. *Ties that bind*

There is, quite rightly, a growing concern that the subsidised arts are out of sync with many people. This has led to accusations of elitism against the art forms themselves, rather than the way they are presented. Somehow the intrinsic properties of, for example, a Stravinsky score, are the problem, even though they may be acknowledged as direct influences by a range of popular artists. For those of us that do not subscribe to this view, we see the exclusivity of the host venues, the lack of arts education in state schools, and ticket prices as more direct issues.

Our view is that arts rooted in a classical heritage, be it romantic ballet or Khattak dance, is as relevant and important today as it ever was.

Issues around the democratisation of cultural heritage clearly exist.

A 2016 analysis in England found that only 2.7% of the museums and libraries workforce comprised black, asian, and ethnic minority people, and around 18% of the music, performing, and visual arts workforce was of working class origin.

This pattern may not be so dramatic in other countries where education has kept more faith with culture and the humanities, and where higher education is less market driven.

However, the lesson is clear for both heritage and the arts, that inequalities and exclusivity are a direct result of a failure of care to push back against them. It is hard to conclude that both sub-sectors collaborating and advocating on equalities and opportunities in education and in delivery would not yield better results than pursuing their own agenda in isolation.

The heritage of community arts is also a challenge, and is sometimes almost invisible.

This practice goes under many headings and guises (community arts, participatory arts, local arts development etc). My own arts career began during the heady days of local arts development when every local authority was expected to invest in, mediate and sometimes lead arts activity in their area.

There was an expectation of universality akin to expectations of access to libraries or museums. However, this approach was never embedded in terms of mandatory service requirements or a public entitlement. This kind of provision, as a consequence, became an early victim of austerity politics.

There is a strong argument that the failure of those working in both the heritage and arts to consider the backstory of participative arts as heritage has led to a pattern of 'boom and bust' in local arts provision as dramatic as that of Wall Street. It tends to wax and wane depending on the politics and public sector budgets at work at any one time.

Take the case of Corby, an industrial town in the East Midlands of England. I recently worked with the Made in Corby project which formed part of Arts Council England's Creative People and Places programme, designed to stimulate activity and participation in the areas of England with least arts engagement.

Made in Corby's mission includes supporting communities to take the lead through a firm commitment to co-creation, and empowering local groups and artists to run their own activities. All key decisions are led by local communities, in partnership with artists and organisations. Unsurprisingly this has led to a range of initiatives that engage with local heritage, including the industrial heritage that came so abruptly to an end at the end of the C20th. More surprisingly this work happened without many of those involved being aware of its hidden roots in the 1960's and 1970's when Corby Community Arts was set up to oppose the closure of the town's steelworks. Francois Materasso documented this movement and went on to prescribe a number of good practice principles.

Yet arts funding organisations can struggle here. Their role is not primarily about heritage, and there are clearly demarcations between them and the agencies, NGOs, or even government

departments that invest in heritage.

The argument that living heritage should be accessible to everyone is not always as powerful as the case made for universal access to tangible heritage.

While an artist may appreciate the heritage that has led to their particular practice and skillset, they may also look at the huge grant awards for its institutions such as galleries, opera companies and orchestras as inhibiting new developments in the wider creative economy. But heritage funders rarely support the companies that maintain and develop arts heritage outside of thematic projects, such as the recent WW1 commemorations.

Arts funders seem to pay less attention to embedding good practice than their heritage equivalents, such as free museums access or established working methods for reminiscence activities.

The opportunities to forge long term collaborations between arts and heritage funders to develop and maintain the whole cultural ecology underlying, for example, a theatre or early music group are limited. Heritage initiatives that capture learning from participative art activities are much less common than those that preserve tangible cultural relics.

Another obvious point is that heritage and the arts are part of the same sectoral family with an age old set of shared traditions. But like many families, the 'ties that bind' can be obscured by the immediate priorities of each member.

In the arts, these have been increasingly cross-sectoral rather than sub-sectoral co-operation. Arts and health is an international priority as the evidence base of benefits of arts participation on health and wellbeing has grown. Countries like Norway, Ireland and France are also prioritising arts in education, implementing schemes that directly connect artists to schools and curriculum.

As a consequence, EYCH2018 was, and is, a massive step towards a collaborative approach between arts and heritage. It gave clear pointers to support cooperation between heritage professionals, artists and cultural operators, such as: exploring cultural heritage through contemporary perspectives; helping communities to experience, understand and enjoy their surroundings anew; re-inventing abandoned or forgotten heritage; and creating new stories. However, what my entire professional

background screams to me is that the relationship between heritage and the arts is one of interdependency and a two way process. You can't have one without the other. There is intimacy and inter-dependence that goes much deeper than these guidelines.

7. *The incremental imperative*

In 2016 I was part of a Creative Europe Voices of Culture transnational group looking at participative governance and cultural heritage, co-authoring the final report and presenting it the relevant OMC (Open Method of Co-ordination) group of the European Commission. The experience was informative. A group of experts quickly arrived at a set of recommendations for a commitment to a holistic approach to participatory governance underpinned with an equal status of the various involved parties (institutions, organisations and community).

The barriers to implementation were, of course, uppermost in the minds of the OMC group, tasked with reconciling a newly energised movement for participation and bottom up approaches with embedded institutional structures.

The OMC method has yielded results in many areas, such as the Cultural Awareness Handbook and associated Annexes published in 2016. This included great examples of work to reconcile artists, heritage, education and community. I was particularly struck by the Irish Arts in Educational Portal where the arts and education sector come together to create an on-line resource for teachers and artists. It is based on an Arts-in-Education Charter involving both the Department of Education and Skills, and the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

However, the 'Voices' experience demonstrated that there are many areas of custom and practice to be considered if we are to increase the amount and depth of collaboration between art and heritage.

Almost all organisations have had to face up to the challenge of removing silos and the 'silo thinking' that underpins them. Local government has been working for decades to introduce 'joined up' thinking, or integrated service delivery. But these divisions are stubborn and embedded. It takes time and a consistency of effort over years to break them down.

Furthermore, the key challenge for a more integrated approach to heritage and the arts lies

with the people who work in each sub-sector. Anyone who has attempted to trigger cross-sectoral or cross-disciplinary working knows that the best collaborations often don't arise from top-down approaches, but from letting collaborations form through allowing professionals to interact and develop relationships.

8. *Space to breathe*

There are lessons here from arts and science projects (from CERN to, in my case, ASCUS, a much smaller Edinburgh initiative) where putting artists and scientists together and allowing collaboration to emerge yields exciting results. That said, artists and curators need training and support to work effectively in an integrated environment.

Too often they are assumed to have magical properties arising from the creative and flexible qualities they bring to their work. Like any other interdisciplinary endeavour, however, those looking to collaborate across heritage and the arts use different languages, methods and reference points.

There are standards and ethical procedures that need to be adhered to. Artists and curators need skills and learning to work effectively with each other and with the audiences and communities they serve.

This is a challenge for education and training institutions, particularly as the philosophies underpinning training in heritage have tended to be more orientated towards accreditation than the arts.

There are also projects where artists have directly subverted or even attacked cultural heritage and the values they consider it represents. The infamous defacement of Goya prints by Jake and Dinos Chapman in 2003 probably still sends shudders down the spines of some museum curators.

Perhaps the most important issue that needs to be addressed is the status of integrated working between heritage and the arts. We ask each professional to leave their professional and disciplinary home when they collaborate. This is an endeavour full of risk as your work is now being judged by people from outside your professional and intellectual milieu.

It is as if you are being sent out 'on point duty'. For this to change, integrated working across the sub-sectors needs to be treated as a priority in itself. People working in this space are not

absconding from their day job, but are developing a new and independent area of work that is embedding collaboration into an integrated practice.

It is difficult to think of a more perfectly formed mechanism to support this approach than Creative Europe.

The programme has evolved into a sophisticated 'machine' for supporting dialogue and exchange. The long-term commitment to inter-cultural dialogue has had a profound effect on practice, inspiring organisations and professionals to new ways of working.

I recently interviewed a range of UK based organisations and practitioners involved in

Creative Europe and found that involvement introduced them to ways of working that were previously unfamiliar to them, and to partnerships they would have never considered.

This effect applied as much to individual artists and administrators as to the project leaders.

Creative Europe is well placed to develop inter-sectoral dialogue through its programmes. Similarly to the EU's commitment to inter-cultural dialogue, establishing heritage and arts cross-sectoral dialogue as a long-term priority would lead to a response from artists and curators that would be characterised by passion, imagination and creativity.

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