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FUTURE FORECAST | OUTER SPACE | £5

The interface between artists' practice and the socio-political domain.

CREDITS

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FUTURE FORECAST OUTER SPACE

To mark our 25th year, we're producing the *Future forecast* publications that focus on some of the key issues for artists and their practice as we move into the next decade.

Future space (May 05), *Social space* (Aug 05), *Curated space* (Nov 05) and *Outer space* (Feb 06) are about raising questions to stimulate and focus discussions on the pros and cons of future support frameworks and expectations for artists. Their aim is to keep artists' developing practice high on the agenda.

Alongside, we're holding invited think-tanks, involving artists, arts and cultural professionals, educators and others, to explore implications, and define or propose key actions and future directions. Findings are published on www.a-n.co.uk for consideration by all who are active participants in contemporary visual arts practice.

Outer space investigates the interface between artists' practice and the socio-political domain. Devised and conducted by Esther Salamon, the interviews are also available on our website. See www.a-n.co.uk>Publications> Future Forecast>Outer space

We welcome contributions in response to these issues and comments, through the Future forecast think tanks.

See www.a-n.co.uk>Future forecast think tanks.

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INTRODUCTION

"Art is a way to speak and a way to ask questions."
Christian Boltanski

Interviews for *Outer space* were conducted in order to examine the interface between artists' practice and the cultural, research, social and political domains. It is important to understand the perceptions and expectations of key professionals and thinkers who, through their positions in society, are capable of impacting on artist's lives and practice. Such understanding can only enable contemporary artists to better position themselves, both now and in the future.

It is safe to say that a great passion for the arts was uncovered. Although some contributors do not specifically focus on the visual arts, their comments still have wide application and so are included here.

"Talking about different art forms is like counting raindrops: there are rivers and streams and oceans, but it's all the same substance."
Don Van Vliet of the band 'Captain Beefheart'.

We asked each of them:
(1) In what ways do artists contribute to your life and your work?
(2) In order to remain relevant, do you think artists will need to change in the future?

In answer to the first, respondents believe the key contributions to their personal lives and work can be summarised as:

- Inspiring imagination and creativity
- Releasing emotions
- Providing an antidote to boredom and despair
- Strengthening notions of shared humanity, through civic and communal experiences
- Providing challenges that question our assumptions
- Contributing ways of getting to grips with an increasingly complex world

An equally wide range of observations and suggestions was posited in response to the second question. Some of the recommendations include:

- That artists need to be actively involved in shaping the future, as well as responding to it
- "Remain *curious*" and "alert to the world"[1]
- Consider how artist's work is received and understood by others – "help people understand the language that's being spoken"[2]
- "Keep up with global changes and technological developments"[3]

It is our hope that artists and their collaborators and champions will find the commentaries in *Outer space* informative, thought-provoking and illuminating. By providing a platform for discourse, this publication and others in the Future forecast series are intended to bring fresh ideas and insights to the debates around visual arts development and cultural planning in the 21st century.
Esther Salamon
Editor
I would like to thank the contributors to *Outer space* who gave so generously of their time.

[1] Sian Ede.
[2] Chris Batt.
[3] Camilla Canellas.

Michael Goodey, image from *The View Finder Trail*, 2005.

This reflective vinyl sign, mounted on aluminium panel, depicts a view of the town of Colchester, Essex, with Jumbo, the distinctive Victorian water tower, and the Town Hall spire in the distance. The image is constructed using a collage process based on the lexicon of international road traffic signage – trees, the symbol for corn, cars, water, etc. The figure shown in the foreground holding a tennis racket refers to the municipal sports ground just off-picture to the right towards which he is evidently walking.
The sign is one of ten, all depicting similar well known views, on the 17-mile-long *View Finder Trail*, a new cycling route around Colchester.
The project was funded by Arts Council England and developed in partnership with firstsite: contemporary art Colchester and Colchester Borough Council.
"The project combined art and cycling and tourism. Partnership working was a culture shock. It took several months just to get used to working with a team that included local authority officers and cycling enthusiasts but the end result was extremely satisfying.
"One of the local authority park rangers we worked with said he had worked on the edge of Colchester for several years but had never bothered to look at the view, he had never made that connection.
"I was able to make him see that what he was doing with the management of the land is part of a landscape tradition that has other connotations. Because of this project he started to see the world around him with different eyes."
Michael Goodey is currently working on new series of signs based on Constable Country beginning with the nationally iconic *The Haywain*.

In what ways do artists contribute to your life and your work?

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Artists have interesting, unique and non-formulaic ways of looking at the world, which makes us question our assumptions and changes us, socially, intellectually and, to take an evolutionary metaphor, it stimulates our ability continually to adapt to new circumstances. It enables us to look at things afresh, it opens our eyes to what's going on around us. Art wakes me up.

I enjoy learning about visual art and accumulating visual knowledge, and believe people need to talk to artists, engage with and see art frequently.

I think the visual arts have a youthful energy and don't feel it's as stodgy as other artforms. It is always on the move and is exciting, exhilarating and always changing. It is more in tune with the speedy consumption of our time. **Sian Ede**

Art inspires me to be creative, both at work and outside of work. It enhances my management skills and helps me become a better person. Artists' views of the world, and the way in which they interpret and express themselves, are of particular interest and inspiration. Artists add a richness to my life. In particular, I would find it impossible to work without music, as it helps me think. I find it a powerful mechanism to flesh out the activities of the day and it helps me cope with my stressful and hectic life... music is like fresh air and sunlight.

Art is a necessary ingredient in society. It enables a personal experience to be shared collectively, during a concert or play, for example. Sharing an arts experience with others is a central element of social interaction and importance. **Chris Batt**

I find the terms of the question slightly guarded. I do not see art and artists making a 'contribution' to my life. It is rather that I cannot imagine my life without art. The forms that speak most to me are music and literature, including theatre. I go to them for a different view – non-rational, aesthetic, intuitive, multi-layered. I also go to them for spiritual renewal and exploration – for their ability to communicate the deeper mysteries of human existence. One of my favourite quotations at the moment is from Oliver Wendell Holmes: "I would not give a fig for the simplicity this side of complexity, but I would give my life for the simplicity on the other side of complexity." It is this quality of simplicity on the other side of complexity that I find most often in the work of creative artists, particularly the mature, reflective, late works.

In my work I look to artists for 'other ways of knowing'. My work involves trying to get to grips with the complex modern world. We talk about the need to restore effectiveness in action in a world we no longer understand and cannot control. In such a world I draw on the work and the sensibilities of artists to provide other ways of 'understanding' the complexity, and their capacity to evoke latent capacities in others to grasp the world in non-rational ways. We ran a three-day workshop some years ago on 'the power of the arts in an age of complexity'. It is a power that I think is under-appreciated.

I also draw on arts and artists for two other qualities that can be in short supply in a world full of great challenges and looming issues. It is very easy to give in to fatalism and despair. So I look to artists for inspiration and imagination where they are in short supply. The arts tap into the wellspring of hope and aspiration. I have written elsewhere about this, quoting George Steiner: "The arts are more

indispensable to men and women than even the best of science and technology (innumerable societies have long endured without these). Creativity in the arts and in philosophic proposal is, in respect of the survival of consciousness, of another order than is invention in the sciences. We are an animal whose life-breath is that of spoken, painted, sculptured, sung dreams." For me the phrase 'sung dreams' is haunting (combining music and literature); and I like to regard my work as, at least partly, 'creativity in philosophic proposal'.
Graham Leicester

How long have you got?! I am a constant reader, visit galleries regularly, and try and see as much dance and as many films as I can, with music and theatre also part of my life. Why do I do this, what does it offer me? A defence against boredom and despair, a connection with other people, a delight in beauty and grace, an insight into how people live, amusement, entertainment, challenge. In my work in bioethics and science, artists help me connect to wider audiences, and illustrate difficult questions about which sometimes we need a different way of thinking. Art can be a mirror and a lens.
Tom Shakespeare

Art is about what it is to be human, rather than about about profit. Art can uplift, stimulate and enlighten. I suspect artists make the greatest impact when their work is situated outside the gallery or the studio – as it enables families and the general public to engage with it, and each other, in communal civic spaces. Public life, and public spaces that are not about commerce, are necessary for our very humanity. **Jonathan Freedland**

Their commentary on everyday issues and the way they deal with cultural concerns keep me thinking and questioning the way we live, what we do and why we do it! Their varying cultural perspectives enable us to understand, to have a window on different lives and values and ensure that we understand the world through culture not just politics!
Artists enrich my family life enabling my small children to visit gallery and museum exhibitions, which provide a stimulus and a pleasurable and educational outing for both parents and children! Without the cultural life that artists provide our lives would be very one-dimensional.
They are the lifeblood of my work – without them I wouldn't have my current profession and would cease to explore boundaries, both geographical and intellectual. They make sense of our multi-cultural society and through their work touch us, move us and change us. **Camilla Canellas**

The visual arts in UK contemporary culture have never been more accessible and celebrated than now. Visual arts in the public realm form a celebration across the diaspora of cultures who inhabit and embrace communal spaces. Artists create points of communication, a key focus for communities to engage and challenge perceptions of aesthetic and form. As the Chief Executive of a Sector Skills Council, I recognise the importance of this practice and the ever-growing economic contribution of a skilled workforce bringing world-class art to new audiences daily. **Tom Bewick**

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The arts are a great motivator. They tap a depth within one. They release emotions, develop self-confidence and self-awareness. Art recharges my spiritual batteries.

I am interested in the contribution that the visual arts bring to communities and neighbourhoods, in particular those areas that are undergoing physical, social and cultural changes. The impact that the visual arts have had on the East End of London to date has been quite profound and invigorating. This has resulted in the arts expanding its sphere of influence and, linked to this, the contribution it makes to our daily lives.

An artwork as powerful as Antony Gormley's *Angel of the North* can unlock a door and release emotional responses, eg love and acceptance, which can lead local people not directly involved in its creation or installation investing in and owning the work and the statement it is purporting to make, nonetheless. This in turn fosters pride in an area, its people, communities and neighbourhoods.

Art permeates through every element of our lives and is part of our everyday – it can be seen in shops, in parks and on the street. It has a profound personal and economic impact and relevance.

Making and creating something is a fundamental human need that is deep-rooted, which manifests itself in different ways. Art unlocks and satisfies this basic human need.

Guy Nicholson

Artists have been a completely integrated part of my life over the past twenty years supplying friendships, challenges, interest in any number of ways. How can I possibly answer this question without going into numerous specific examples!? All I can say is without artists, I can't imagine having either a meaningful life or a job that would interest and involve me. By way of just one recent instance, I have just come back from a four-day visit to Ghana. By going with artists the experience was hugely expanded by their observations and the possibilities of developing an effective exchange project have been made possible. My objective is to support artists to do work which extends best practice.

Michaela Crimmin

The arts contribute hugely to my life, in particular film, sculpture, painting graphic design and of course architecture. As an architect I suppose that it's a cliché that I would nominate 'Blade Runner' among my favourite films. I think film is a powerful medium because of its ability to present the world and the cities we live in, in all of its extreme forms, often in accessible, creative and exciting ways. It can be enormously influential and perhaps more relevant now than ever before. Over the past ten years, the graphic arts seem to have become increasingly significant with important impacts on the visual quality of cities, both positive and negative. This is possibly due to the rise of the Internet and the culture of magazines that developed from the 1980s. The graphic content of a magazine can often be as powerful, if not more so, than what is written in its pages...

CABE is currently working on PROJECT – Engaging Artists in the Built Environment, which we are running in partnership with Arts

and Business and is being run for us by Public Arts South West. This aims to develop the relationship between artists and the built environment and, as part of its brief, examines the influence that they have on multi-disciplinary design teams. We are in the process of evaluating the findings of PROJECT, but I think there really could be a bigger role for artists to work with design teams as their insights and interventions can greatly contribute to our understanding of the built environment, how places and spaces are used and should inform the way in which the built environment is seen in the future.
Jonathan Davis

Fine artists make intersections with mainstream broadcasting in a range of arts programming from documentaries to features. In journalistic terms broadcasting can bring visual artists' work to a wide audience to explore.
Broadcasting would be very poor if it didn't reflect visual artists. If broadcasting is to be a window on the world and reflect back to the audience, visual artists must be included.
In terms of making a direct contribution to broadcasting, visual artists are on rare occasions invited to make a work of art, or commissioned to do a title sequence (for example Damien Hirst). In a wider sense, visual artists are engaged as graphic designers and set designers, in fact a vast amount of contemporary design is incorporated within broadcasting. **Roland Keating**

I was lucky to grow up with art and artists. I currently work with artists from all disciplines – including, musicians, visual artists and architects – by commissioning new work, ie operas, new art and new buildings. Artists are fundamental to my work here.
I believe the arts are a way of communicating views of our lives and the world and, in particular, aspects of life that we can't talk about. I am convinced the arts, especially music, are absolutely essential to people.
Jan Younghusband

Artists contribute to my life by demanding that I respond to their ideas whether it is via painting, literature or whatever. They provide intellectual focus and maintain me in interrogative mode. They keep me questioning. **James Boyle**

Artists make a significant contribution to my work on a professional level. As Minister for Culture, I am responsible for the arts, and a sizeable part of my diary is devoted to working on legislation affecting artists and visiting events and exhibitions. I am involved in the art world on a personal level too: I am married to the artist Nicola Green so we tend to move in artistic circles. **David Lammy**

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I wake up and I am surrounded by art, every object in my home is influenced by artists – shapes, colours, textures, music, architecture, fashion, books – from paintings to dressing gowns. Art's influence can be seen everywhere – in design, in the advertising of products and the branding of organisations.

Artists' influence on culture is cyclical; their work influences culture, which in turn influences artistic production. In this respect, their impact is great. Artists create and articulate ideas and can turn their political, social and economic observations into profound statements.

I think artists should have equal status to that of other professions. Their impact on society needs to be appreciated and deserves to be respected alongside others who make positive contributions to society.

Creative artists, like creative scientists and other creative people, need to share their knowledge and skills with others. Artists, and other creative people, have enquiring minds. They also possess skills that enable ideas to be realised.

Creative Partnerships aims to encourage young minds to imagine and realise possibilities. Working with artists to develop the ability to consider and ask open questions and enhance their skills will strengthen self-confidence and ensure the realisation of ideas, both in the short-term and in the future as adults. Whether the manifestation of the idea is successful or not is, to some extent, irrelevant. It is the ability to question, to imagine possibilities and have the courage and tenacity to realise ideas that is critical.

Paul Collard

I consider myself a non-practising artist, with the sensibility of a practitioner. I was a dancer and actor working freelance until I was twenty-seven. I must admit it was quite painful to have to leave this profession and take a 'proper job', to support my family commitments, but I have re-invented myself as an enabler and when I'm working with artists, I think of myself as a producer: I'm on their 'side', to be convinced by their ideas and at the same time offering constructive feedback.

When I was first an arts officer I was struck at how little my colleagues talked about art. This made me determined to do things differently and when, in 2000, I took up the reins at the Esmeé Fairbairn Foundation as Programme Director – Arts & Heritage, I worked hard to ensure that the trustees had plenty of opportunities to meet artists – discuss their ideas and get to know them as people over working lunches, as well as visit them in their studios to see the working conditions – my aim was to demystify the process of making art and show the contribution that artists make to society.

I'm energised by my new role as Director of Programmes at the Louise T Blouin Foundation which has an internationalist outlook and will focus on developing cultural exchange programmes with China and the Middle East. In addition, the Foundation is creating an exciting new space – the Louise T Blouin Institute – in Notting Hill, which will open in Autumn 2006. As well as a programme of exhibitions, talks and symposia the Institute will enable us to offer artists' residencies. **Shreela Ghosh**

I work in the arts in order to bring artwork into a context that encourages debate and/or forces a reaction. Art is a good way to be confronted with inspirational ideas, enter into interesting conversations and find new ways of seeing the world.
I expect artists to produce work that inspires me and has the potential to inspire the BFI's audience. It is a privileged position to be a curator, as I get to make links between artists and audiences. **Michael Connor**

Artists have provided me with a reason and focus for entering higher education and then the museums/art gallery/exhibition profession. To be fair, it is the work that they produce rather than the support of them as individuals which has informed most of my career and one of the greatest pleasures of my life. This has been matched with a desire to communicate ideas about art to the maximum number of people. However, I am aware of artists' needs, their difference to the rest of us and the vital role that their approaches and thinking plays in a confident and worthwhile society: if I had to fight for a choice between artists' survival and the survival of their work – meaningless though this distinction may be – it's artists I'd want to protect. It's their work that I love, though. I am not a professional artists' groupie. **Gill Hedley**

The artists whose work I have enjoyed most are those that have stirred in me an interest in subjects or in viewpoints that I had not previously given much thought to. **James Peto**

While art is not there to solve the world's problems, artists certainly provide new insights and fresh representations that challenge, provoke and enrich understanding of issues both existential and political. For me, they and their work spark off, frequently in unpredictable ways, ideas, connections and avenues, which other modes of expression do not. **Richard Smith-Bingham**

Artists contribute to my life and work by being the commentators, challengers and enrichers of my worlds. In my 'life' I seek out people who reflect on the world and our place within it. Artists' *raison d'etre* is to do this. I visit galleries when on holiday, I go to see plays – new plays as well as established pieces to see how social commentary is filtered through drama, I appreciate architecture and am highly influenced by the built environment and will always go to a jazz club when alone in a big city.
I have spent over twenty-five years working in the arts and it has meant that artists are fundamental to my work. I would have no job without them. Even if I did not work in the arts, I would ensure that my offices had artworks within them, that my Board would have the opportunity to work with artists to develop creative approaches to the arts and I would entertain clients through theatre, opera, gallery openings etc, I cannot imagine a working life without contact with artists since they provide the creative spark that is vital in all fields of endeavour. **Yvette Vaughan-Jones**

In order to remain relevant, do you think artists will need to change in the future?

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Artists need to embrace new challenges and opportunities. They need to become involved in redefining the interface and interaction of communities. Through their creativity, logic and intellect, artists are ideally placed to imaginatively contribute to changing environments, neighbourhoods and communities.

By exploring the relationship between the built/urban environment and open spaces and by creating new, bio-diverse communities, artists will be involved in developing 21st century cities. A new type of urban planning is called for, one that acknowledges a balance between the built environment and the natural environment. We don't want empty spaces, we want something that's alive and fluid. We want work that is subtle, multi-layered and is sympathetic to our current ecological imperatives – environmental, economic, personal, social and cultural.

This will require new thinking. The challenge for artists is to develop new forms. There is currently a great opportunity to bring the arts into the forefront of contemporary society, actively participate in its development and realise its aspirations. **Guy Nicholson**

Artists occupy a valuable place in society as their work reflects and provides insights into the world we live in. Those in power – including politicians, business leaders, and others – need to listen to what artists in the community are telling them, as they can articulate, even define, the state we're in.

If art can break out of the gallery and embed itself in public life, than it will ensure its own relevance. If art continues to be a largely minority interest, one that is the province of a small group of the economically comfortable cognoscenti – the rich, the collector or the expert – then its relevance will be limited. Art will be supported and its future assured if it weaves itself into our collective, public life.

Jonathan Freedland

Artists must respond to everyday life by observing and commenting on notions of beauty, as well as major world events and issues, ie the impact of globalisation and environmental degradation. Through their work, artists need to put issues in front of us and we need to contemplate these issues.

I don't believe art is a form of social work, but do think it is good for you. You can either love a work of art or you can hate it. The purpose of art is to get a reaction and to make us think, to stop us in our tracks.

I think artists are often ahead of their time, they show us the future. If people don't immediately understand new or contemporary art, it's us that need to catch up. It's not the artists who need to change; it's the public who need to be more aware of the value of art.

Artists need to create work that is inspiring, imaginative and surprising.

Jan Younghusband

‘Relevant’ is an inappropriate word. Artists need to remain curious, as opposed to relevant, and produce work that stands things on its head. I am particularly interested in exploring how artists make an impact on key global issues in a world that is often frightening and sad.
But artists don’t go out and do agit prop, they need to respond and remain true to their practice, to think, to read, to question and be alert to the world. **Sian Ede**

The position of artists will be the same in the future as it was in the past.
The artist’s role is to question, to provoke and challenge us, to make us think and help us see things differently. Each time we see great art we are changed by the experience.
In terms of value and position, I place artists in the same sphere as philosophers and scientists. Not all scientists are in the top echelon, of course some of them are doing cutting-edge research, but you also need the layers of scientists below doing the necessary background work. It’s the same for artists: there are many different kinds, serving different purposes. They range from those I would describe as ‘respected researchers’ whose work is a challenge to society, to skilled craftspeople and makers, as well as artists whose enabling skills help others to learn about or be transformed by the experience of making art. Whatever the situation, the art practice must be ‘engaged’: good art emerges from this. **Shreela Ghosh**

The phrasing of this question too suggests, perhaps, a set of assumptions. I am working at the moment with a group of artists and arts organisations in a discussion about the future. One of the challenges in that work is to balance two views about ‘relevance’ in the future. One way of thinking about the future environment would be to think ahead to the ways in which the world might change in the years to come and then consider the ways in which the value of the arts might be articulated in these different environments. That would pose the test of relevance. But it would also ignore the power of the arts to shape the future, not merely to ‘respond’ to it. Part of the challenge and complexity of thinking about the role of artists in the future is that we need to hold both these senses of responding to and shaping the future in play at the same time.
I personally am tired of the ‘use or ornament’ distinction – as if the arts can only be either useful for the achievement of other purposes, or ornamental alone and therefore of no utilitarian value. The International Futures Forum’s work describes a present world of information overload, rapid change, unprecedented levels of interconnectedness. It is an age of confusion, an age of boundless complexity. We diagnose a ‘conceptual emergency’ – in which the ideas, the frames, the mindsets and models that we once used to get a grip on the world and make sense of it are no longer effective (a ‘con-cept’ is literally something we use to ‘grasp with’).
In conditions of conceptual emergency it strikes me that artists have a hugely important role to play. They are the makers of meaning; and the people who can remind us of the depths and the capacities of our own humanity. I am not sure that artists necessarily need to change in the future in

order to play this role more effectively. My experience in dealing with artists and arts organisations in recent years suggests only that, like the rest of us in challenging times, they will need to draw on their reserves of fortitude and courage.

We see typical social psychological responses to confusion and challenge as either neurotic (reasserting old certainties, fundamentals, denying the complexity) or psychotic (tuning out, giving up on making meaning, eat drink and be merry). But there is another way – a more painful and difficult, but ultimately more rewarding way. To adopt the growth or transformational response (acknowledge the challenge, lean into it and grow through it) is something that we will all need to do, and artists can show us how.

I am reminded of an exchange in a recent seminar in which a creative organisation was complaining that it could not do the imaginative and innovative work that it wanted to because it needed more support from the arts council, because of the relationship with local government, because the audience would not appreciate it etc etc. A familiar litany. Then another arts director asked the simple, challenging question: why don't you just do what you want to do? I think to fulfil their potentially critical role in the future we need more artists willing to do what they want to do, to bring to consciousness their articulation of the nature of the times we are living through, and to help us towards the transformational response. My own experience suggests that the two critical virtues in these times are therefore patience and integrity. Patience because the world may not yet recognise what it needs, and integrity because in times of little recognition we must go on producing only quality work that we ourselves believe in. I think these are two pretty good rules of thumb also for artists navigating the future – but I do not think that for the arts this constitutes any 'change'.
Graham Leicester

Although artists produce work because they want to, they need to understand the relationships/contracts they have with society. If artists want to communicate their view of the world and make people think, they need to consider how their work is received and understood by others. It is the responsibility of artists and curators to help people understand the language that's being spoken. When art is too obscure it has a tendency to be misunderstood and misses a great opportunity to impact on people and society. Therefore, mechanisms need to be developed that enable people to access artwork, understand it, learn from it and develop personally and professionally as a result of it. **Chris Batt**

I don't really know enough about artists now to have good insight into how they should change in the future. But I am committed to accessibility in both art and science. Some contemporary art seems so esoteric, so uninterested in audiences or making connections, that it frustrates me. I would like to see more discussion and debate about artwork. I want art to look at difficult and deep questions, but in ways which are clear and engaging. Sometimes I worry about the emperor's wardrobe: that actually, not much is being said, if only we could see past the jargon. I also think, as a social scientist and ethicist, that sometimes artists – playwrights, visual artists in particular – are just providing bad sociology or shallow philosophy or unmediated ethnography. I turn to the arts for something different, and not a wodge of semi-digested academic theory.

I think there are two challenges: first, how can

we enable more people to create art of high standard – I'm talking amateur, part time artists – democratising arts production – but second, and sometimes in conflict, how can we support the careers and financial security of full time professional artists. Part of that is about enabling artists to be more entrepreneurial – raising money, selling work, or selling their unique approach to the world in contexts where previously artists may not have ventured. The arts as a service industry? **Tom Shakespeare**

Artists always experiment and test ways of communicating their views of the world, and will continue to do so. It can be predicted fairly accurately that the continual changes to materials and technologies that artists use will mean that it is highly likely that what is considered to be an object will also continue to change.
Subject matter and arts practice will continue to be guided by public/private patronage, and whether an artist is able to make a living through the sale of their work. It stands to reason, that if an artist doesn't have a patron, they will not be able to practice their art. This has, and will continue to have, a profound and fundamental impact on what an artist produces and what an artist is.
We treasure artists' ability to see the world differently. Artists must always question their work and avoid complacency in order to move their practice forward. I hope the originality of an artist's work, its content and form, will continue to be valued. **Paul Collard**

Artists lead a semi-endangered existence even if they are successful, as they are subject to political and economic forces that are beyond their control. The artist's job is to continue changing and responding to what's around them.
The biggest factor that has affected artists' practice over the past ten years is the number of tools and platforms that are at their disposal. Artists need to move quickly to assimilate new skills and understand new political/economic priorities in order to appreciate the formal constraints that might arise from these.
Artists need to accept that people are becoming more innovative about how they sell content to others, ie there are many ways of buying video, audio and text. The positive impact of these developments could include new markets for their work. The negative impact on artists' practice is likely to include new constraints on the use of historical back catalogues which could be subject to more stringent copyright control, thus limiting the potential for creative re-use of work.
Although artists can't predict changes with any certainty, society can be assured that they will always continue to be responsive, vital and dynamic. **Michael Connor**

If you're asking whether artists need to change to stay relevant, I would respond by first of all asking whether we think artists have become too dependent on commerce? Some artists have always used their work to question society's values and prompt us to reflect on the human condition, whatever we think that might be at any particular time or place. If artists don't maintain that role then we would lose an important element of the social purpose of art. The use of artwork in commerce and the media might be more prevalent than ever, but to stay relevant artists must continue to reserve

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a certain portion of their energies to challenge us all to reflect on the way we are living our lives and our relationship to the environments we create and inhabit. **Jonathan Davis**

I think artists are the best interpreters of and responders to the world of culture as it develops. [In the future] artists will tend, or need, to engage ever more generously and with more disciplines.
The traffic between photography and the visual arts has been the great story of this century, so too the traffic between broadband and the visual arts will grow and grow; music and art will become evermore seamless.
As the emerging generation, in terms of their musical tastes, is more open-minded, so it will be with the visual skills and talents that they expect to access. Fine artists must not close off from the dynamic world. **Roland Keating**

Artists are consistently evolving their practice and outlook in order to respond to current events, engage new audiences and to inspire new minds. With the visual arts being one of the most skilled of creative workforces, employers and artists must focus on continued professional development to ensure their inspiration and creativity is underpinned by good working practices and a keen awareness of new advances within their respective art forms. **Tom Bewick**

It depends on your definitions of change and relevance. The best art stands above straightforward market pressures and political commentary. Similarly, while techn(olog)ical advances give rise to new possibilities in terms of modes of expression and the communication of ideas, artists will always need to have something to say, rather than just a different medium through which to say it. **Richard Smith-Bingham**

Some very strong artworks have been made in response to urgent issues, but we should recognise that some of the best art is made by people who don't feel any pressure to be 'relevant'. Changes will come about anyway as new technologies subtly shift the way we look at the world. This is bound to affect the way art looks and is looked at. **James Peto**

Artists do not need to change what they produce in order to remain relevant: art always has been and always will be a product of its time, and all forms of artistic expression are valid. However, artists are missing a trick if they don't take advantage of technology to encourage discussion and promotion of their work and ideas: whole exhibitions are now managed and shown on the internet with no physical space being used at all. An awareness of rapidly developing modes of communication can only benefit the artist. **David Lammy**

Artists may have to change in the future to keep up with global changes and technological developments but they have already shown that they are often the quickest to adapt to change and particularly global developments. They are flexible and adaptable and will change according to society's needs and demands. Examples of this are the artists in Eastern Europe who missed out on a technological step during the early nineties with no access to fax and travel and were using the internet as their medium at a time when artists in Western Europe were only just beginning to see the potential of the web. Often isolation and geographical boundaries (ie artists in Middle East not being able to visit each other due to visa restrictions) create a freedom of thought and an ambition. **Camilla Canellas**

I don't like using the word relevant because it's rather vague. To what, when and whom? Will artists have to change? Try and stop them. Artists will always change and we depend on them to stay ahead of our game. **Gill Hedley**

Underpinning all high-falutin' answers about the future for artists is the simple business of gaining the highest craft skills whether in writing or in painting and drawing or music. My real concern is that too much contemporary art lacks basic skills though it may gain acclaim and establish a locus across continents. The education institutions need to teach skills and discrimination and cherish talent. Skill before mystique and novelty.
James Boyle

Artists aren't a single group that you can make a generic answer about or who you could in any way direct. That's their strength. They should be independent, embrace any number of issues and interests, but in doing this they must be well supported by continuing and ideally increasing public funds and by really good curators.
I suspect artists won't work so much in isolation but will increasingly collaborate and be involved in issues beyond the gallery – for example, addressing the big environmental challenges of our time. But they shouldn't be coerced into this.
I think arts institutions will need to change, rather than artists. The education system, for one, is a huge and important infrastructure which needs strategic reassessment.
Michaela Crimmin

In order to remain relevant, artists will need to become more visible and more valuable in the future. This need not mean a change in artistic practice – though some artists might do this as a result. Artists are a disparate group and some will work in isolation while others will work very closely with the zeitgeist and be savvy operators within the art market. Both are needed and necessary.
I believe though, that there is a real opportunity for artists to increase their visibility and value by articulating the transformational nature of their work, by seeking out opportunities to work with non-arts agencies on creativity, on tolerance and intercultural understanding and in developing skills and aspirations for disaffected young people. This would benefit society, young people and the artists community as well as the individual artists. However, for those artists who choose not to engage, there needs to be some provision for 'pure research' as there is in any industry, in order that new ideas and directions can be discovered. **Yvette Vaughan-Jones**

MATTERS ARISING

Although largely agreeing with Graham Leicester's assertion that the power of the arts and artists as "makers of meaning" are critical in an age of complexity, and with Tom Shakespeare's belief that artists are mirrors as well as lenses, several contributors identified additional key issues that, although they might be considered to lie outside of artists' direct control, need to be addressed. Those challenges can be summarised as: money, power and education.

"That the artist works for enjoyment – or because of some personal urge to paint – does not alter the fact that he has to live and enjoys getting money for the work he has done. Money means just the same to the artist as it means to anyone else when it comes to paying the rent and buying the odds and ends of food and clothing he needs. It probably means a good deal more, since it makes it possible for him to go on painting."[1]

Paul Collard reminds us that arts practice will continue to be guided by public and private patronage, for the only way artists will be able to make a living is through the sale of their skills, knowledge and work. If an artist does not have a patron, they will not be able to practice their art. He acknowledges that this will continue to have a profound and fundamental impact on what the artist produces and what an artist is.

Similarly, although Michaela Crimmin believes that artists need to maintain their independence, she concedes that they must also be well supported by the continuation of, and an increase in, public funding.

This theme is also taken up by Tom Shakespeare, who asks how artists' careers can be supported and their financial security strengthened and secured? Is it about "enabling artists to be more entrepreneurial – raising money, selling work, or selling their unique approach to the world... The arts as a service industry?"

Looking more to the future, Michael Connor predicts that since people are becoming more innovative about how they sell content to others – including, video, audio, and text – there could be new markets for artists' work. However, the caveat he offers is that there are likely to be new constraints, particularly on the use of historical back catalogues which could limit the potential for creative re-use of work.

Regardless of product, however, Yvette Vaughan-Jones believes that artists are a disparate group, working to different degrees with the zeitgeist and in isolation during their careers: "For those artists who choose not to engage, there needs to be some provision for 'pure research' as there is in any industry, in order that new ideas and directions can be discovered."

Few people would associate artists with power, yet Jonathan Freedland argues that "those in power – including politicians, business leaders and others – need to listen to what artists in the community are telling them, as they can articulate, even define, the state we're in".

As for education, Michaela Crimmin proposes that a strategic reassessment of arts institutions needs to be undertaken in order to support artists' development and enhance their capacity to thrive.

Finally, Boswell's plea is as relevant today as it was sixty years ago. It is the artist's responsibility

"to demand the right to paint for the community. It is the community's responsibility to demand that its representatives make it possible for the artist to paint and to carve those dreams and visions which enrich the present and predict the future."[2]

We welcome contributions in response to these issues and comments, through the Future forecast think tanks. See www.a-n.co.uk>Future forecast think tanks

[1] James Boswell, *The Artist's Dilemma*, The Bodley Head, 1947
[2] Ibid.