

Our manifesto

Making research and evaluation count

Everyone values culture: human beings have told stories, danced, sung, played music and made art since the beginning of time. Many people argue that art and culture define what it means to be human. But this doesn't mean that everyone shares the same idea of what culture is, nor that we all value in the same way the things that different forms of art and culture bring to our lives. The Centre for Cultural Value recognises that there are diverse perspectives about culture and cultural values. We believe that *everyone* values culture of one kind or another, even if they don't always have equal opportunities to take part in the sort of cultural activities that they value the most.

The Centre for Cultural Value will inject fresh energy into questions of cultural value and engagement. The Centre's approach is primarily pragmatic: we want empirical research to drive decisions about cultural funding, policy, management, engagement, and evaluation. Our approach will be participatory and collaborative: we will work alongside our key stakeholders – cultural practitioners and organisations, academics, funders and policymakers – to explore the timeliest questions of cultural value. We will act as a bridge between these partners – a conduit for research into cultural value and a recognised centre of leadership and expertise.

There is a huge body of research that illustrates how different kinds of cultural activity bring meaning to people's lives and exert powerful impacts on our society. The role of the Centre for Cultural Value is to help cultural practitioners and policymakers become more aware of consistencies and gaps in *evidence*. We do this by synthesising robust research into what kinds of arts, cultural and heritage activities bring value for whom, how and why, and in which particular conditions and contexts.

We will make high quality research in the timeliest areas of cultural value *accessible and relevant* to its key stakeholders. By summarising, synthesising, visualising and revitalising the wealth of existing evidence that is currently under-utilised in public and policy debates, the Centre will enable more meaningful exchanges between cultural practitioners, academics, policymakers, and audiences.

We will stimulate debate about the role of national and local funders and governments in supporting and enabling cultural value. We will enrich the work of practitioners, many of whom are driven by the desire to invoke pleasure and meaning through arts, culture, heritage and screen-based cultural activities in the lives of their audiences and wider communities.

We will support self-reflection and advocacy by building the skills and confidence of cultural workers to enable them to capture and interpret the right data for the right reasons with the right people in the right contexts.

In order to address gaps in knowledge and areas of current policy concern, we will focus particular attention on how arts, cultural, heritage and screen experiences impact on people's wellbeing. We will break this down into the following core themes:

- Culture, health and wellbeing
- The evolving social role of arts, culture, heritage and screen in the context of COVID-19
- Cultural participation
- Community, place and identity

These themes will be prioritised in all of our activities, but we will remain open and responsive to emerging ideas and priorities. In exploring them through our engagement activities we hope to develop a richer and more polyvocal vocabulary of cultural value.