

19 October 2004

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REQUEST FOR VIEWS

Thank you for inviting Graven Images to put forward its views about Scotland's cultural future from a business and personal perspective.

As requested, our response accommodates the citizen's perspective, radical thinking and our own point of view.

Using your suggested headings our response is as follows:

Education: How do we develop artistic, cultural and social skills and provide cultural knowledge?

It is extremely important to define the language and terms used in order to develop meaningful negotiations with citizens, educationalists, businesses and artists. What is meant by the terms 'artistic', 'cultural'? They suggest worthy, sometimes useful but overwhelmingly peripheral activities. We suggest focusing on the 'creative process' which is the common thread that binds many disparate activities together, rather than talking about 'art'.

The creative process should be valued, taught and embedded in every aspect of education - it's not exclusive to 'art'. The creative process demands incorporation of cultural, social, aesthetic skills and other transferable skills and can be used as a tool to analyse or create cultural artefacts.

Through education we create not only cultural and creative producers but future consumers, clients, patrons, sponsors. Sustainability is at least as much about working in an environment where the audience, or market, is prepared and able to challenge the creators to be ambitious. We must make more and better risk-takers. Creativity cannot exist without risk and this idea is fundamentally connected to entrepreneurialism. Let's start educating people to survive and prosper using their own creative skills instead of relying on 'employers' or grant-givers. Most successful artists and designers are entrepreneurial. Government has done much to create a climate that's risk averse and should redress the balance to encourage risk-taking. If the Cultural Commission achieves one thing it should be to get investment in creative education at all levels and in all subjects.

Internationalise.

The value and place of art in Scottish life (and elsewhere) continues to change. There's an urgent need for revaluation and redefinition of what is meant by 'art' and 'artist'.

It is more valuable to use creative and social skills to create useful knowledge within a cultural context. I'm not sure what 'cultural knowledge' is - we are a product of Scotland and of the cultural knowledge we've developed through our own creative practise. This ensures we are unique, distinctive and successful in a world market.

The institutional infrastructure: How best to organise and support the cultural sector in Scotland to deliver the maximum value in the most effective manner?

Institutionalising creativity is never a good idea as it is by its nature risk-averse.

What is meant by 'cultural sector'? Is it a sub-sector within the Creative Industries Sector? As architects and designers our creative output has both economic and cultural imperatives and reaches citizens every day of their lives. Why not support us?

Defining what Scotland is might be useful in defining what would be right to expect from its cultural institutions - if we are indeed a fully-fledged Nation then we should expect to have the furniture of Nationhood, including a National Orchestra, Ballet and Theatre. These organisations are the first and last items on the itinerary of every international governmental event and we wouldn't be dressed without them, and they should aspire to be the very best. If we can't afford to express ourselves in this way we should do something different but of unquestionably high quality.

Nationhood is valued and is also beyond value. What is meant by 'value'? Some forms of creativity, such as design and architecture, can directly convert creativity into monetary value and other measurable benefits. The best art usually doesn't make money and has a limited audience. Again, there's a need to define 'value'. Art is not necessarily beneficial and it's certainly not about providing therapy. We should support talent and high quality and be able to communicate why we support one thing over another.

The delivery of services and access to them: How best to provide cultural facilities and ensure the widest access?

Don't centralise them. Get on the road and provide as much information as possible on-line. Forget endless committees and time-consuming, risk-averse procedures that waste everyone's resources. Focus, prioritise, plan and deliver. Develop certain aspects over longer periods of time - grow capability, and deliver. Delivery should be through partnerships with existing successful infrastructures and networks.

Marketing and promotion: How to increase and broaden the profile of the audience and the public engaging with cultural activity in Scotland?

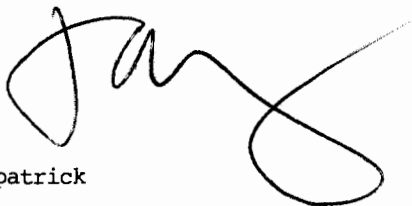
It would be very easy to chuck money away trying to create audiences where none exist. Start with education and plan to create future audiences. Focus on education and forget quick, politically expedient, but ineffective, solutions.

Encouraging creativity: What is the best way to maximise the creative potential of the people of Scotland?

Demonstrate how creativity has a direct impact on peoples' lives and play to our strengths. Show how creativity is embedded in everything and is not exclusive to 'art' and 'culture'. Show how creativity creates jobs and lifts the spirit. It's not about art or design, it's about both of these and more. Borrow from Scotland's unrivalled creative legacy in design, science and architecture - citizens are proud of this and it's a good place to start. Challenge us to do our best work. That's the most important thing.

I hope this is useful.

Very best wishes,



Janice Kirkpatrick
Ross Hunter
GRAVEN IMAGES LTD