

Global Agenda Council on the Role of the Arts in Society 2012-2014



Understanding/Context

The arts continue to gain recognition as a vital part of society. In education, the arts develop the creativity and alternative thinking skills required to interpret the world and more fully participate in it. New technologies are allowing unique and hybrid art forms while changing conventional relationships between the art maker and the consumer, empowering the rise of the “citizen artist”. The hot spots of arts and innovation are shifting to emerging countries such as India and Brazil and the African continent. Despite the benefits of the arts to society, many governments continue to severely reduce financial support for the cultural sector as part of austerity measures. Conflicts, for example in Mali and Syria, are also destroying important heritage sites.

Shaping the Agenda

The Council believes the lack of recognition of the arts’ critical role in society is a key challenge. As artist Mallika Sarabhai has stated: “Art is not the cherry on the cake, it is the yeast.” During its first year, the Council’s main objective was to communicate to leaders that the arts are not a marginal aspect of society, and that artists can contribute to addressing important issues. To do so, the Council has helped develop arts programmes at World Economic Forum meetings. The Council has also published a blog post on the arts as a basic human need and broadcast a live interview with the Chair, Caroline Watson.

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