

**Summary notes in preparation for Session 3**  
***Capturing the evidence of engagement and impact: Threat or opportunity?***  
**The University of Melbourne Impact Forum**  
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The creative arts, as an experience-based activity, by default involves engagement through its ability to interact and combine the sensory with the interpretative. The presence of interpretation and direct communication with the sensory have always been a problem regarding traditional research paradigms. Experiences generated by the creative work's ontology are fundamental to its formation and reception. Furthermore, much of the creative and performing arts is inextricably bound with the entertainment industry (music, dance, theatre, film, etc). With the emergence of methodologies based in creative practice, applications of creative work to other contexts, and its role in the entertainment industry, the creative arts can sit quite easily within engagement and impact discussions. However, there is not one genre that can denote the creative arts due to the various roles of (to name a few): time and space, diverse media, people processes and interactions, and use of materials. Furthermore, the various types of creative practice (defined here as domains) need to be addressed regarding their continual interaction with, and reliance and impact on, each other.

Underpinning the engagement/impact nexus is value creation. Value can be cultural or economic. While economic value is quantitative, cultural value is qualitative. Throsby (2001) identifies cultural value as being one of the following: symbolic, spiritual, historical, social, authentic, or aesthetic (artistic).<sup>1</sup> Depending on the community linked to these values, cultural value will have a particular significance. Value creation can be achieved when the value linked to a particular community is able to transcend beyond that community to other communities, or, if the value includes one or more of the other cultural values. The challenge is to map cultural and economic value found in all the communities (audiences, stakeholders, etc) involved in the engagement /impact journey. These preparatory notes discuss some possibilities that can make this challenge not so foreboding.

### **Creative arts and Knowledge**

- Knowledge generation
- Knowledge exchange
- Knowledge transfer
- Knowledge translation

The creative arts generate knowledge through its materiality. To oversimplify, this materiality can be physically or digitally base. For example: sound, words, texts, images, natural or synthetic objects, technologies, bio matter, shapes, gestures, the body, colour, or substances. This list is by no means exhaustive. For the creative artist, if something exists, it can be used to generate knowledge and understanding. Understanding can be explained or experienced.<sup>2</sup> Explanation has been an important component in all research. With the emergence of practice-based research and associated methodologies, knowledge generated and embodied though experience is now included in the research discourse (as exemplified in the term NTRO, non-traditional research output). The focus on engagement and impact beyond the university domain begs the question as to whether distinctions are still needed between an NTRO and professional practice. This presents an exciting opportunity for the creative and performing arts

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<sup>1</sup> Throsby, D. (2001). *Economics and Culture*. Cambridge University Press

<sup>2</sup> For a more informed discussion on understanding and explanation see: Ricoeur, Paul (1981). *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, Thompson, John B. (ed.), Cambridge University Press.

Knowledge exchange occurs with the multiple interactions existing between the different parties involved. There are many examples of this process in the creative arts: group devised projects, improvisation, audience and community feedback, collaborations, etc. Knowledge transfer is the application of a particular knowledge into new contexts. A simple example of this is the repurposing of a song into an alternative format such as a dance mix. Because the creative arts is fundamentally interpretative, its applications to other contexts can also exemplify knowledge translation. An audience can apply their experience or understanding of a particular creative work to their own contexts, or a creative work can be used as a basis or inform a new work or context.

### **Engagement – Artist (academic) as entrepreneur: networking, promotion, audience development.**

The artist as entrepreneur has much in common with strategies required for an engagement and impact strategy. In this case, the artist as entrepreneur can be renamed to be the academic as entrepreneur. Networking and identifying all the cultural and economic gatekeepers are crucial. A discussion on impact necessitates the presence of an audience. Engaging that audience involves: audience and/or fan development; diverse social media platforms; loyalty strategies; establishing inclusive and immersive experiences; constant communication and interaction.

These are fundamental to the artist entrepreneur as they can lead to monetisation. However, these entrepreneurial strategies are also applicable to creative arts academics wishing to engage and have impact. Monetisation (economic value) can lead to changes in cultural values associated with behaviour and attitudes. In some art forms it can take a very long time to raise finances for a project such as film in which stakeholder engagement is fundamental. In many instances the money raised is in bits and pieces. As with other academic disciplines the strategies are usually federal/state grant application, sometimes crowd funding, sponsorship, submissions to established arts organisation, or philanthropy. There is a lot of in-kind support and, involving, in a majority of cases, personal investment (in-kind or economic).

### **Creative arts making domains**

There are many approaches to creative arts practice and research. Each has its own trajectory towards potential impact and engagements with audiences/communities. Creative arts practice can be generally grouped into the following four domains.<sup>3</sup>

- Intrinsic
- Instrumental<sup>4</sup>
- Interdisciplinary
- Interventionist

These domains are not *sui generis* and can intersect in a variety of ways. I am sure the categories can be debated or redefined in more discrete ways, but for the purposes of the panel session, here are the very general domains.

*Intrinsic* - refers to the artwork 'as an end in itself'. Other words that can be used for describing the intrinsic are: fine art, formalism, abstract, experimental, pure research, discovery, aesthetic, or art for art's sake. This area refers to creative work that is concerned with form, experience, vocabularies and materiality.

*Instrumental* – refers to 'means to an end. Other words that can be used are applied research; pragmatic art; functionalism; utilitarianism; well defined social forms; works created for entertainment and popular mediums.

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<sup>3</sup> The categories have been developed for the purpose of this presentation.

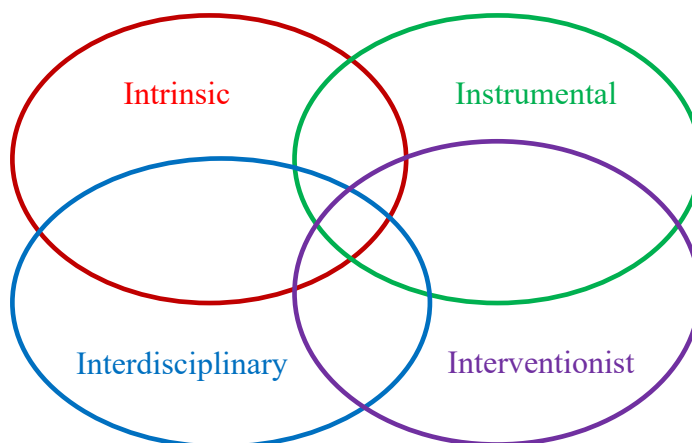
<sup>4</sup> The terms *intrinsic* and *instrumental* have been taken from their use in philosophy.

In many situations, the instrumental and intrinsic overlap. One example is in medieval and renaissance liturgical music which originally was instrumental in its intent, but is now perceived more so as intrinsic. Alternatively, there are many popular entertainment forms which are celebrated for their aesthetic, formal intrinsic attributes.

*Interdisciplinary* – this domain refers to: hybridity; the combination of two or more discipline areas in order to solve a problem; or seeing a problem through the lens of a different discipline. It is fundamentally collaborative and interactive in that the disciplines engage with each other on equal terms.

*Interventionist* – this domain refers to contexts when creative practice is used to address a social or political issue or solve a problem in another area such as the social or health domains. Research in music and dementia is one example. Other examples of an interventionist approach are site-specific installations, graffiti art, or some types of public art. An interventionist approach can also be identified when an artwork is consciously located or programmed within a specific context to create a disruption, reaction, or make a critical statement.

The four domains of activity are not independent. They can share commonalities or morph to another domain. For example: the use of intrinsic aesthetics in an interventionist domain; the celebration of an instrumental domain work because of its intrinsic qualities; or the commissioning of an intrinsic work for a specific context such as a string quartet. Key is understanding the role of cultural value and its significance to the various communities aligned with each domain.



Depending on one of the above creative practice domains (artistic, instrumental, interdisciplinary intervention), research impact will have a different timeline, audience and/or stakeholder. The concept of community is common to all. Key issues to discuss are access to infrastructures, dissemination, and communication strategies.<sup>5</sup> All can be tracked regarding engagement and impact be it short-, medium-, or long-term impact. However, as intrinsic arts practice is usually associated with the solo artist (for example, the art music composer, painter, sculptor, or poet), access to various infrastructures is not so easily achieved. The other three domains, to varying degrees, involve collaboration, partners and stakeholder. It can be argued that it is much easier for the artist to operate in these domains as there is more opportunity for financing, partner support, and the tracking of impact on audiences and community. The instrumental domain can have links with the creative industries which can identify audiences, markets, industry partners and investment. For the artist who makes intrinsic work, impact will usually take longer as the support on the local or national level is limited. For example: government outlets such as the ABC, grant organisations, private art galleries,

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<sup>5</sup> Many universities offering the creative and performing arts already have in place resources from which leverage can be made in order to address these issues.

etc. It is for this reason the artist (academic) as entrepreneur is one viable approach for the artist working in intrinsic domain.

### **Indicators showing potential impact: The 4 Rs**

- Repetition
- Referencing
- Repurposing
- Revenue

We can equate significance with cultural and economic value. Cultural value will have different significance depending on the community, demographic or other stakeholders. These can be small or large. Irrespective of size, the four indicators listed above provide insight into the potential impact of a creative work. All of the examples for engagement provided by the ARC can be categorised into these categories.<sup>6</sup> Importantly, they refer to different types of value creation. The four indicators can be defined as:

*Repetition* refers to the recurrence of an event, activity or object. This can refer to the: remounting of a performance; reprints or second editions; number of recordings of the same composition taken up by different performers; number of downloads or streams; number of web views; touring of a performance or exhibition; social media/peer to peer sharing of files; inclusion into specially constructed editions, compilations, or exhibitions.

*Referencing* refers to attribution to the original creative work such as: citation; quotation; acknowledgment; criticism; scholarly publications; revues; social media influencers; reports; and publicly accessible articles (for example *The Conversation*).

*Repurposing* is the recontextualisation of previous material for a new creative purpose. Examples are many such as: parody; co-creation in social media such as Tik Tok; homages and allusions; remixes and mashups; appropriation.

*Revenue* is the income generated (monetisation) from the above activities. For example: box office, grants, sponsorships, copyright, merchandising, streaming, downloads, licensing, royalties, patents, or crowd funding. Some of these are not as effective as others such as the current status of streaming payments on Spotify or YouTube. However, in due course the use of blockchain technologies will greatly help more equitable redistribution of incomes received when a digital transfer is involved.

These four indicators can often morph into one other. For example: repetition can lead to revenue (for example number of sales). One indication of potential impact is repurposing. This shows the value creation made when the original work of art is referenced and recontextualised for a new audience or context. For example: co-creation in Tik Tok.

Most importantly, impact can be most likely achieved if there is more than one of the four indicators. In this way one could even identify whether a creative work has low, middle, or high impact. Repetition and repurposing exemplify value creation as new meanings are created with the repurposing.

### **Putting it all together**

#### *Identifying the creative practice domain*

As already stated, each of the domains will have its own timeline and relationship to audience, community, stakeholder, or partner organisation. However once these are identified, it is possible to articulate significance (value) and its relation to impact with the use of the 4 Rs.

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<sup>6</sup> Australian Research Council —EI 2018 Submission Guidelines [https://www.arc.gov.au/sites/default/files/2022-07/era\\_ei\\_2018\\_submission\\_guidelines.pdf](https://www.arc.gov.au/sites/default/files/2022-07/era_ei_2018_submission_guidelines.pdf)

### *Identifying the audience, community, or stakeholder.*

Many freelance artists outside of the university adopt entrepreneurial strategies to promote their work and develop audiences and fan bases. These directly feed into engagement and impact regarding identifying stakeholders. Similarities with the artist as entrepreneur involve marketing and promotion strategies used by artist managers with the ways they create and maintain audiences, manage risk, use data analytics, network, and create various narratives to promote their artists.<sup>7</sup>

### *Identifying the time frame for evidence.*

The capturing of evidence for engagement and impact will be dependent on an effective time frame. This will most likely require a prospective strategy, retrospective review and assumptions to enable progress from one stage to the next. It is generally accepted that impact can sometimes take years, even decades, to take effect. Therefore, one possible approach would be to have a 5-year time frame within which the creative artist can identify expected goals, achieved goals and, importantly, unexpected goals and outcomes. It is often the case, that the unexpected produces more interesting results. All these can be addressed with an annual progress report

Due to a creative work being open to interpretation, the identification of a research problem in the creative arts, to varying degrees, can be a vexed issue. This is not the place to discuss in detail the relationship between a research question, the research problem, and a creative work. However, one can safely say that in interventionist art making, the problem can be more readily identified. The problem in the instrumental art making domain can be identified by the context or purpose. This may also can be the case in some collaborative works in the interdisciplinary domain. However, there are many intrinsic works, and some interdisciplinary works, that are based on: pure discovery; reliant on group devised strategies; or use improvisation, indeterminate or generative approaches, In these cases, the identification of the research problem may not be so immediate.<sup>8</sup> It is for this reason that retrospectivity must be included in the timeframe so that the unexpected can be accounted for. It is also the case that in much intrinsic art making, a retrospective review enables the artist to make a research claim based on a problem uncovered through the process or identified in hindsight.

An appropriate time frame could be mapped out based on the theory of change. This is very similar to the impact templates various universities have used which are based on inputs, activities, throughputs, outputs, and outcomes. The New York based Centre for Theory of Change defines the theory of change as:

...a comprehensive description and illustration of how and why a desired change is expected to happen in a particular context. ... It does this by first identifying the desired long-term goals and then works back from these to identify all the conditions (outcomes) that must be in place (and how these related to one another causally) for the goals to occur. These are all mapped out in an Outcomes Framework.<sup>9</sup>

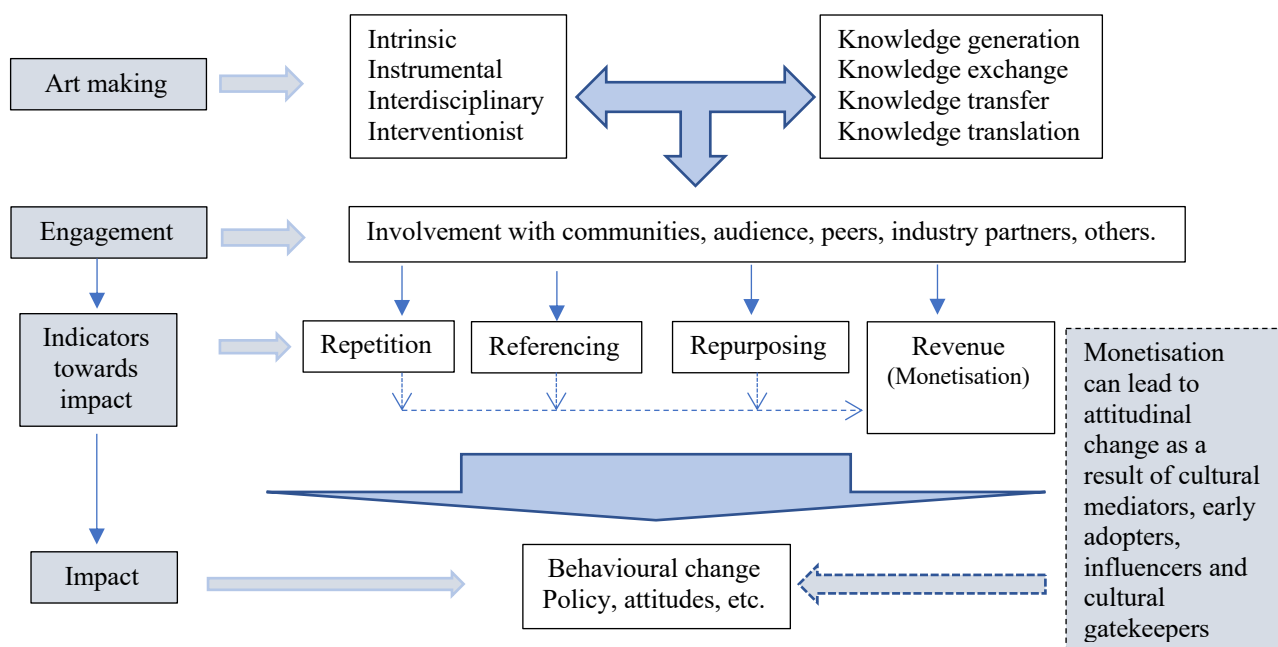
The four creative practice domains and indicators of potential impact can be schematically represented as the following:

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<sup>7</sup> For example, see chapters 3 and 4 in: Chen, S., Homan, S., Redhead, T., and Vella, R. *The Music Export Business: Born global*. Routledge, 2021.

<sup>8</sup> It must be stressed that this is not always the case. An intrinsic work can be concerned with a specific research problem such as discovering ways to use new technologies or vocabularies.

<sup>9</sup> The Centre for Theory of Change (New York) - <https://www.theoryofchange.org/what-is-theory-of-change/>



The schematic shows that while cultural value can lead to economic value (monetisation), economic value can lead to cultural value.

### Impact literacy

The above discussion on the creative arts making domains and reception indicators can be used to inform the reporting of engagement and impact for the university. They can be used to support artist/academics' involvement with the *Real Impact Institutional Health*<sup>10</sup> and *Impact Literacy* workbooks<sup>11</sup> by Phipps and Bayley. These two workbooks provide an excellent and comprehensive breakdown of all the components involved in managing engagement and the identification of impact at all levels of the project's journey.

**Richard Vella**  
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Richard Vella's career embraces music composition, the music industry, and various professorial positions. His creative output includes compositions for orchestra, large ensemble, choir, film, chamber music, music theatre, site-specific performances, and popular music. Vella currently holds professorial adjunct positions with the Universities of Newcastle Conservatorium of Music, and Western Australia. In 2022 he was appointed Chair of the Academic Board for the SAE Creative Media Institute. From 2008 to 2013 he was Head of School of Creative Arts and Chair of Music at the University of Newcastle.

Vella's book *Musical Environments* (Currency Press, 2000), was republished internationally by Boosey & Hawkes (2003) with the new title *Sounds in Space Sounds in Time*. In 2021, he co-authored *The Music Export Business: Born Global* (Routledge, UK). Based on an ARC Linkage grant, the book has been referred to by policy makers and academics involved with the music industry.

Richard Vella has supervised a wide range of PhD students in music, performance, composition, art-science, music and phenomenology, music technology, and interdisciplinary arts practice. His interest in art, science and interdisciplinary relationships began in 1992 when he devised and implemented a pioneering interdisciplinary postgraduate and undergraduate music program within the School of Mathematics, Physics, Computing and Electronics at Macquarie University.

<sup>10</sup> Bayley, J., Phipps, D. *Real Impact. Institutional Healthcheck Workbook*. (Emerald Publishing)  
<https://www.emeraldgrouppublishing.com/sites/default/files/2020-06/Institutional%20Healthcheck%20Workbook%20Final.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> Bayley, J., Phipps, D. (2019) *Impact Literacy Workbook* (Emerald Publishing)  
<https://www.emeraldgrouppublishing.com/sites/default/files/2020-06/Impact%20Literacy%20Workbook%20Final.pdf>