

Self publishing and the arts

Views on the opportunities
and challenges of the digital age



Contents

- 4 **Introduction and foreword**
Fiona Morris, Chief Executive and Creative Director, The Space
- 6 **In with the old... In with the new! Art and technology, coexistence and innovation**
Matt Clark, Founder, UVA
- 10 **Networks and the new marketing**
Damian Spandley, Director of Programme, Curzon
- 13 **Constraints, and the problem of art on digital platforms**
Leila Johnston, Artist and digital curator
- 16 **New for new's sake?**
Freya Murray, Programme Manager, Google Cultural Institute
- 19 **What is 'content'?**
Efe Cakarel, Founder, MUBI
- 22 **Creation and legacy in the digital era**
Akram Khan, Dancer and choreographer
- 25 **The case for public investment in online arts**
Peter Bazalgette

Introduction and foreword



Fiona Morris

Chief Executive and
Creative Director,
The Space

Do we need a new word? The breadth of topics encompassed by the term 'digital' in 2018 is such that it sometimes feels like it's no longer fit for purpose; or at least not without the attendant string of clarifiers and caveats we often see attached to it. Perhaps, instead, we simply need to accept it as an ever-present, silent pre-suffix, given its centrality to all aspects of the arts in the 21st Century; to paraphrase David Foster Wallace, in many respects digital is now 'water'.

Whether within the context of digital technology enabling new expressions of artistic intent, the democratisation of the means of production of work through the meteoric rise of the smartphone, or the web enabling artists and audiences to find each other across the physical world, there is no aspect of artistic practice which hasn't been redefined or revolutionised by 'digital' (whatever that may be).

This breadth of meaning and scope is reflected in the essays which follow, compiled by The Space to offer a snapshot of some of the questions and considerations raised in the minds of artists and institutions as the relationship between the arts and digital becomes ever-more symbiotic. From the marketing and audience-development opportunities at our fingertips, as seen by Curzon's Damian Handley, to the question of when digital platforms *really* add value, explored by artist and curator Leila Johnston, these pieces by a selection of practitioners from across the arts landscape address some of the central issues cutting across areas of praxis in the UK today.

At The Space, we support the UK arts and cultural sector to make great art and reach new audiences using digital media, content and platforms. We provide commissioning support for arts and cultural

organisations, and the artists they work with, plus training events and online resources, as part of the Government's commitment to harnessing the creative potential of technologies for arts organisations in the UK. As outlined in the recent DCMS *Culture is Digital* report, over the coming years we are committed to working in partnership to help arts organisations navigate the new landscapes of digital rights, audience engagement, and associated issues, whilst continuing to help them deliver innovative projects in new digital spaces.

What is clear is that, whatever the answers to the questions posed in the essays presented here, the coming three, five, ten years of interaction between digital technologies and the arts are set to see a continuation of the excitement and innovation I have been privileged to see in my two years at The Space—I am thrilled to see what they bring.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our contributors to the collection for their words—I hope that you find them stimulating and thought-provoking. We envisage these essays as the first set in what we hope will be a regular series of essay collections on the evolving relationship between technology and the arts—if you have thoughts on where you would like to see the conversation evolving, comments on the essays here collected, or would like to contribute to future collections, please do get in touch with us at contactus@thespace.org.

Fiona Morris, Chief Executive and Creative Director, The Space

Fiona is Chief Executive and Creative Director of The Space, the organisation founded by the BBC and Arts Council, England to support artists and organisations to make great art and reach new audiences digitally. Her expertise in producing content that straddles the arts and technology, is leading the organisation into its next phase of development, following its move to Birmingham in January 2016.

Fiona has extensive experience working with arts organisations and artists from around the UK producing films for UK broadcasters, online and cinema and since joining The Space has commissioned a wide range of projects including Complicite's The Encounter (winner The Stage Innovation Award 2017), Artichoke's London 1666 and the award-winning VR experience from 59 Productions My Name is Peter Stillman (Best Expanded Animation, British Animation Awards).

She delivered the world's first live 3D opera, Mike Figgis' Lucrezia Borgia, a 3D worldwide cinema release of Matthew Bourne's award winning Swan Lake, co-produced the first live museum broadcast from the National Gallery Leonardo exhibition and produced a two-part documentary following the creation and presentation of Michael Sheen's Port Talbot Passion.

In with the old... In with the new! Art and technology, coexistence and innovation



Matt Clark

Founder, UVA

Artistic opportunity—to reflect on the world, to create, to engage—has always been the consequence of some form of technology, or, more broadly, of mechanical innovation. It is impossible to extricate the two. If an artist’s endeavour is both to find a way of interpreting or commenting on our existence, as well as to engage in an act of making, then mechanical innovation is always evidential in art’s conceptual and practical application; either through its presence, or its absence.

Without technology, art would have remained at a point of stasis. The colour blue, for centuries a sought-after pigment, only became a staple of the painter’s palette due to the industrialisation of mining. Alchemical experimentation led to the refinement of oil/pigment composites, mathematical engineering led to the camera obscura and eventually the invention of the modern-day camera lens. These technological innovations, among myriad others, revolutionised artwork production. They facilitated realism but also unlocked the potential of abstraction. Even the humble pencil, the most archaic of technologies, reimagined nature’s silhouettes! Beyond material or formal concerns, the artistic mind has always availed itself of industrial mechanisation. Whether artists are seduced by its charms or acting in defiance of its progress, it is there to some degree. In some cases, it premises an entire artistic movement—we only have to look as far as

Futurism and the subsequent 'return to order' as manifest examples of this.

What is really interesting is how artists position themselves in relation to technology, and how this is played out.

My fascination with technology as a tool for expression began around 1981, when I was seven years old. My father had just finished hand building our new hi-fi stereo and, although he was more of a rhythm and blues fan, he would play Kraftwerk to 'test' the sound quality. I remember listening to *Trans-Europe Express* blasting out in pure stereo and being struck by how something so electronic, so mechanical, could simultaneously carry such emotional authenticity.

Today we find ourselves in a world where the emphasis is placed on technology replacing humans, therefore replacing human input; colonising that most sentient of impulses: imagination. In response, art has explored this concept; of creativity being led by the machine. I think there is a place for appropriating these processes, but it only becomes intriguing when there is a dialogue, where something is brought to the debate. For me, it is more interesting to think about the idea of synthesis and the threshold of the human/machine interface. Therefore, in my own practice, the idea and the medium always emerge simultaneously.

"Art should always continue to build on what has come before and what is concurrent; it has a responsibility to mediate and to pioneer."

This idea of generative or collaborative art-making between man and machine has been a constant source of inspiration in my work. As we rapidly approach human-AI coexistence, it is imperative to consider how we approach these technologies and the significant consequences of integration. It is possible that subconsciously, I try to impose some restrictions on technological input in my art

as a premeditative act of resistance! However, I do find the act of co-creation, exploring artistic ideas through the new technological mediums available to us, to be a critical, discursive process as well as a compelling device for artistic exchange.

It's interesting to note that there are certain fields—most notably high-level chess play—where it is now acknowledged that a man/machine symbiote can be more effective than the very best human or machine players; these pairings, known in the game as 'centaurs', combine the best of computational brute force and human ingenuity and unpredictability to currently unbeatable effect.

A curator recently invited me to create a new work using VR technologies. The technology-centric approach incited some reticence; to date, my hesitation in using VR before has been due to the somewhat cumbersome headgear involved, which presents an obstruction to a truly immersive experience. Also, as a relatively new product, you are bound to the preset modes and resulting aesthetics, which limits artistic intervention. Until now I have primarily used VR to pre-visualise an installation ahead of fabrication, to simulate the experience, so I appreciate the potential of being able to navigate through an imagined space.

This new project presented an opportunity to explore a long-held fascination; the interlocutory possibilities which arise between a neurotypical mind and that of someone whose senses are impaired—in this case, those of my son who is autistic. I cannot see the world as Oliver does, and his verbal disposition means he cannot describe it to me. But watching him observe the world, I know he sees things very differently. In modern times, the autistic mind is not often cast positively, but rather as belonging to someone who is beyond approach, confused or terrifying. Through this new project, working with other experts in the field, I am attempting to comprehend Oliver's overwhelming but fascinating imagination, and offer that experience to other neurotypical people, as a way of understanding and perhaps expanding our perceptions of beauty. In doing so, I also hope to build a further dialogue with my son.

Art should always continue to build on what has come before and what is concurrent; it has a responsibility to mediate and to pioneer. In the case of technology, innovation offers opportunities to reimagine the familiar. Ultimately, the tools an artist decides to use is up to them—there are no rules after all.

Matt Clark, Founder, UVA

Matt Clark is the founder of United Visual Artists. He provides the conceptual and artistic direction for the studio's output. UVA's broad body of work encompasses wall-based artwork, sculpture, large-scale site-specific installation and performative projects.

The practice examines our relationship with technology and the integrity of knowledge; creating artwork which often transcends the purely physical and questions the relativity of our experience.

UVA has been commissioned worldwide by institutions including the Barbican Curve gallery, Manchester International Festival, Royal Academy, Serpentine Galleries, The Wellcome Trust, Victoria & Albert Museum, YCAM, Japan. It has also had works acquired into the collections of the Fondation Cartier, France and MONA, Australia.

Additionally, the practice has an open and inclusive approach to collaboration, which has led to a diverse range of projects with artists like choreographer Benjamin Millepied and the Paris Opéra Ballet, filmmaker Adam Curtis and musicians Massive Attack, Battles and James Blake.

Networks and the new marketing



Damian Spandley

Director of
Programme, Curzon

In 2009, the year he negotiated a deal to buy Icon from Mel Gibson, I heard distribution veteran Stewart Till give a talk on digital and entertainment commerce. Playing the role of an avuncular Doubting Thomas, Stewart saw the excitement around the onset of digital as a flaming chip pan that urgently needed a wet tea towel thrown over it. Digital would democratise content and ignite an explosion of product, but it wouldn't solve the major problem: marketing is expensive and essential, said the former studio head. *Paranormal Activity* cost just \$15,000 to make; without the millions spent on promotion, though; crossing \$100m at the US box office would have been a crazed fever dream.

Of FAANG, (the five most popular and best performing tech stocks in the market, namely Facebook, Apple, Amazon, Netflix, and Alphabet's Google) only Apple were monetising digital video online at that time, and Twitter had just 18 million users (vs 330 million at the time of writing). The scale of digital content and its consumption continues to expand like a soufflé: 300 hours of video is uploaded to YouTube every minute; Netflix has 125 million subscribers. In theatrical, the number of cinema properties on release has risen from 10 to 17 a week in the past year. We have films shot on iPhones in cinemas now, the entry barrier of 35mm costs has lifted, and "binge watching" is now an official phrase in the Oxford Dictionary.

Studios still spend heavily on mainstream media; but whether you market online because of a luxury of budget or a lack of it, digital is perhaps where the future of film marketing lies. The savvy marketer has an array of new tools and performance-related analytics that allow them to target, join and create online networks, run with trends, and grow campaigns in alignment with budget ("some people spend more

on coffee each day than they do on [our] advertising campaigns"—Facebook). You can pickpocket competitor or influencers' news feeds, because Facebook own them and can sell you access. You can set up advertising against key searches in geographical locations on Google Adwords in minutes; or employ agencies with expertise in pinpointing advocates and orchestrating chain interactions, to spread influence and social network (of course, we're talking about arts marketing and nothing as contentious as politics...).

"The customer is no longer two steps away, they're on the end of an email or a tweet."

Network and advocacy is a two-way street: consumers interact and engage, in a way that allows them to curate the content they access as well as be 'curated to'. We subscribe to channels on YouTube, react (positively and negatively) to suggestions made by Netflix or Amazon algorithms, and refer to aggregators of opinion, like Rotten Tomatoes. Consumers spread opinion across social media, enjoying direct contact with filmmakers and stars, and that connection is reciprocal, redefining the role creators take in the promotion of their product. The customer is no longer two steps away, they're on the end of an email or a tweet. At Curzon, we have touch points to film consumption across cinemas, distribution and On Demand—and the new 'B2C' era is re-defining our business and our relationship with our advocates, Curzon members. We strive to build trust by aligning customer experience in the cinemas, including film acquisition taste and programming, with a curated service in the home. As word trickles through that transactional VOD numbers are reflecting the challenge of Netflix and Amazon, we're confident that brand value explains the upward rise of our digital streaming figures.

The digital end goal might be to go direct to the public. Monologist Daniel Kitson is agent-less, preferring to promote his gigs via witty emails with typos sent to thousands of fans who've opted in—like Glastonbury, the tickets sell out within an hour. Graphic artist Mr Bingo

took the viral success of his *Hate Mail* project to build an Instagram following of 54.6K and now sells his work and personal services via his website. In my home town of Blackpool, adolescents as young as 12 turned to YouTube to post offensive rap videos to each other, literally from the playground. Now Blackpool has a world-renowned 'grime scene' and their controversial BGMedia channel has 404,000 subscribers with videos streaking past 4-million views. As far as I know, neither 'Little T' nor Soph Aspin (Google them if you're not familiar, but at your own risk) has yet to record a track, in the traditional sense.

Do-it-yourself On Demand services, like YouTube and Vimeo, have failed to create meaningful ecommerce for filmmakers; that said, Kitson, Bingo and BGMedia are advocates that work with low overheads and IP they already own. Filmmaking is a team sport where even 'microbudgets' run into five figures; and independent film commerce requires a certain level of distribution machinery just to recoup costs. The final challenge to traditional film marketing has yet to come, but you sense change and that digital network and audiences' sensitivity towards curation will be at the heart of it. Perhaps the strongest indication yet of shifting tides was Netflix's extraordinary display of digital power when they released, with two hours' notice, *The Cloverfield Paradox* in February. We're not quite there yet, though—as Stewart would point out, they also bought a Super Bowl TV commercial to advertise the fact, at a cost rate of \$5 million per 30 seconds.

Damian Spandley, Director of Programme, Curzon

Damian joined Curzon Cinemas as Head Of Programming & Events in 2016 in a new role responsible for the acquisition and scheduling of films, events and alternative content across Curzon and partner cinemas and the Curzon Home Cinema on demand platform.

Previously Damian had spent 9 years as a distributor, most recently heading up Metrodome Distribution's theatrical and TV & new media divisions since early 2013. At Metrodome, Damian managed the UK release of a diverse slate of award-winning and critically acclaimed theatricals that included Frances Ha, What We Do In The Shadows, The Falling and Terence Davies's Sunset Song; and in the TV & new media space, Damian oversaw the sale for broadcast and digital placement of over 50 Metrodome titles a year.

Prior to 2013, Damian was Head of UK Distribution at The Works for 6 years and had previously worked as a Senior Programmer at Picturehouse Cinemas, as a projectionist and a cinema manager.

Constraints, and the problem of art on digital platforms



Leila Johnston

Artist and
digital curator

The best work is forged under the pressure of constraints. We love that idea, don't we? It conjures images of toothpick galleons, Joan of Arc, that scene in the cave in Afghanistan from the first *Iron Man* film. Greatness feels tantalisingly within our grasp if we don't need extensive resources to achieve it.

This trope persists into the digital realm. As modern-day Wildes spin gold out of character limits, and algorithms play hilarious havoc, it's possible to believe this awkward and nascent medium is somehow *helping* art. And why not? After all, digital is the saviour of everything else.

The problem is, the constraints aren't what we think they are. Art on digital platforms is *not* like the great punk explosions of the past. In general, work that 'does well' online promotes its platform. We all, as they say, work for Google (Facebook, Instagram and Twitter) and as these giants define success metrics, it stands to reason that the most 'successful' work made on, and out of, the internet, is whatever best feeds the digital culture status quo.

We should be aware of misdirection. We love a story of triumph against adversity, but digital evangelism is telling us the main limiting factor on our creative achievement is *the entire material world!* What happens to art when or if we see madness in this? If we view digital culture itself as the constraint?

The digital world's authority, money, and starry-eyed utopianism ought to make it just as ripe for creative probing as politics, but by defining itself as the ultimate 'disruptor,' it steals art's best weapon. Rather than thrashing out fresh paths, the arts walk politely in digital's footsteps.

Where's digital's *Spitting Image*? Why aren't we allowed to laugh at Elon Musk?

Clearly, artists working on these platforms are up against it – and it's the perfect crime, because we go so willingly to our captors. No one 'just becomes' a digital artist. A number of conscious choices are necessary to get us here; and if we critique the culture one day, then by some baffling sleight of hand, we'll find ourselves acting as representatives of the medium the next.

But maybe digital is useful to artists after all, just not for the reasons we think. The artist's power lies in her lack of a boss, and great technology work is possible when the forces of authority are declawed. There is potential within digital to create the kind of magic that reflects the ingenuity of the creators, but in order to find it, we must be prepared to question, and laugh at, claims like 'limitless potential'. We must seek out and show up its weaknesses, and we must re-connect with the wonder of all the things it *cannot* do.

"It's not art's job to get clicks"

Just as the 19th Century turn from the subject to the paint empowered artists, great digital art must trouble its medium's core values and expectations. If shareable is the name of the commercial digital game, the art response must be to make something unshareable – otherwise one might as well be a painter, painting adverts for oil paint. Or, if the medium values interaction, as Facebook does, then the artistic challenge could gain power from being consciously non-interactive.

Better still, one could escape the medium entirely. It's not art's job to get clicks, but I've seen online art strategies that set minimum audience goals, as though art should be subject to the SEO and stats of an Innocent Smoothie ad campaign, simply because it exists in an online space.

The approach I advocate is problematic for funders, I appreciate, but we ought at least to be talking about it. I appeal that we support work which:

- Does not benefit commercial digital platforms.
- Exposes and critiques the prevailing authority of digital culture by seeing digital as a constraint, not a liberator.
- Explores an approach to tech based in a kind of formalism.

Here are some examples of work which I feel acknowledge and play positively with digital's limits.

- Kelli Anderson is a master of paper and many other things. Her *Powers of Ten* flip books are a physical response to an internet phenomena that is, crucially, much more satisfying when rendered in the real world.
- Created back in 2010, but timeless (like all these examples) Caleb Larsen's *A tool to deceive and slaughter* is a box that sells itself constantly on eBay, neatly poking fun at both online selling, and the art world. A relief, in the form of art.
- Subversion doesn't have to be aggressive. Designer Sandy Noble quietly draws out the beauty of raw tech. Without the gloss of consumer culture, tech is as intricate and alive as a human nervous system. His circuit board portraits are a fine example.

In closing, if we treat digital platforms as benevolent patrons who've opened up artistic frontiers through their beneficence, we're probably not going to be questioning them enough to make good work about them (or indeed, perhaps, at all).

Leila Johnston, Artist and digital curator

Leila is an artist and writer working critically with technology culture. She is the Digital Curator at the Site Gallery in Sheffield. Her work often addresses fundamental themes through humour, participation and improvisational elements. Her creative collective, Hack Circus, produced a publication, immersive events and podcast from 2013 to 2016. In 2015, her Life Extension Booth experience and documentary looked at the trade-offs of the immortality bid, and was commissioned as the New Work Award for the Brighton Digital Festival and the British Science Festival. She was the first digital artist-in-residence at Rambert, the UK's leading contemporary dance company, and her resulting LED and thermal video exhibition, Dance With Me, was installed at The Lowry from October 2016 until February 2017. Leila has also authored several books and contributed to a number of publications, including New Scientist, Creative Review and WIRED UK. leilajohnston.com

New for new's sake?



Freya Murray

*Programme
Manager, Google
Cultural Institute*

With the boom—and hype around new technologies (VR, AR, Mixed reality, haptics and the like), to what extent do these advances represent opportunities for artists rather than simply gimmicks, and how should practitioners decide which is which?

Art has both influenced and been influenced by technology throughout history. As technology becomes ever more sophisticated, and central to our daily lives, this relationship continues to evolve.

As new technologies develop, the artist's palette expands, offering new possibilities for both how artists create and how we experience art. That said, my connection with a work of art has never been driven by the technology used to create it—instead, the impact is felt through the content of a work or works.

When I first started working in this field, my mantra was that technology should never be the starting point for artistic projects. Whilst I still believe this is partially true, some of the most interesting artistic works I have seen that use new technologies began through simple experimentation—with artists exploring a technology's utility, boundaries and potential. Technology can be more than an enabler; it can provide the germination point for an entirely new creative idea, taking an artist in unexpected and unprecedented directions.

Beyond the wow of the tech

At the Google Arts and Culture Lab, we bring together artists and engineers to experiment at the intersection of art and technology. We recently collaborated with Jonathan Yeo, a British artist curious about new technology and open to experimentation. Yeo worked with Google engineers and the virtual reality painting tool, Tilt Brush, to create his first sculpture—a painted self-portrait—and I think surprised even himself with how the work evolved.

Through his experimentation and collaboration with Google engineers, Yeo pushed both the capabilities of the technology and his own

creative process, applying a series of processes that had never been brought together before: combining new innovations such as 3D scanning (his own head), virtual reality (painting in Tilt Brush) and 3D printing (direct from Tilt Brush for the first time) with traditional sculpting and casting techniques which brought the virtual process into the physical world. The final work was exhibited as part of the Royal Academy's *From Life* exhibition—you can find out more about the process in a 360 film short [*From Virtual to Reality*](#).

“It is a truism of sorts that the increasing pace of technological development can mean that platforms can often find themselves in search of a reason to exist”

This is just one example of the artistic opportunities presented by new technologies, which the team at the Google Arts and Culture Lab are helping to facilitate. At the Lab we ask ‘what’s next’? What are the next tools for artists, and how can technology help us connect with culture in new ways? However, an equally important question that we ask is ‘why’? Why should this film be in 360? Why is Augmented Reality better for this experience than another reality? It is a truism of sorts that the increasing pace of technological development can mean that platforms can often find themselves in search of a reason to exist, whilst they wait for the mainstream to catch up (a position Augmented Reality has seemingly found itself in for a decade, perhaps to be rescued by recent advents in built-in technology on Android and iOS).

Jason Farago of the *New York Times* has said of virtual reality that the ‘challenge is to put [it] in the service of something more complex, for it would be a pity if wonder was all we got.’ This captures why it is important to consider the value that technology adds. If the technology provides a value to what the artist wants to express then the risk of gimmick is unlikely. However, it is important that practitioners continue to ask these questions, and with the rapid advancement of some technologies, a growing challenge will be how to master the tool and go beyond the ‘wow’ of the tech.

A tool or a collaborator? Creative process or outcome?

In Jonathan Yeo's process, the technology became a tool that was critical to his creative process. However, it was Yeo, rather than the technology, that defined the outcome. When we worked with set-designer Es Devlin and the Serpentine Galleries, Devlin collaborated with Machine Learning to realise her idea, asking: can an algorithm bring together a disparate set of words to form a growing cumulative poem? The answer was yes; Devlin's interactive installation, *Poem Portraits*, worked with an algorithm created by creative technologist Ross Goodwin. The algorithm was trained on millions of words from 19th Century poetry, and generated a personalised poem for each participant, which illuminated their face based on a word they had shared. Devlin's concept came first, the technology then enabled her vision to be realised.

As technology develops in the years ahead, from machine learning—a defining technology for years to come—to storytelling tools and platforms such as virtual and augmented reality, we may see the emergence of new art forms, just as we saw with the invention of photography. For some practitioners, tools such as virtual reality and machine learning may only be a part of the creative process. For others these tools may be more central to the outcome of the work. The artist will drive if and how they use such tools, just as they have done throughout history. Cross sector collaboration is as important as ever—if arts and tech communities communicate, new avenues of artistic expression can flourish.

Freya Murray, Programme Manager, Google Cultural Institute

Freya Murray is Creative Lead at the Google Cultural Institute Lab. The Lab is a place where tech and creative communities come together to share ideas and discover new ways to experience art and technologies.

Prior to Google, Freya ran Stamp-House, an arts development consultancy, working with artists, arts organisations, brands and broadcasters to develop and produce a range of creative projects. Clients included, Sky Arts, Sky Academy, BFI, The Space (BBC / Arts Council), Hellicar & Lewis. Before then, Freya was an Arts Manager at Sky working on Sky's off air investment in the arts, where she set up the Sky Academy Arts Scholarships to support emerging artists aged 18-30.

What is 'content'?



Efe Cakarel
Founder, MUBI

Not since the shorthand “app” rocketed into being default and everyday nomenclature has a word so taken hold of digital culture like “content.” Content, as we understand it in this moment—and hopefully for not much longer—is the intentionally generic term for the effluent creation, remixing, and/or resurrection of multi-media specifically for the intention of bald profit-seeking and near-immediate expiration. This designation is without a doubt a tremendous denigration to good work—done by artists, craftspeople, and laborers alike—and to the works themselves: the journalism that informs and the art that challenges and moves us. The world should not be like this.

When content is created, it is being done so as content. Not as a powerful film. Not as investigative journalism. Not as a hilarious podcast. Not as a soaring song. Not as an intimate personal confession. Not an surprising photograph. It is being created as content, and nothing more: a piece of media with which to capture and keep consumers from whom money is to be made. This is an overwhelmingly cynical perspective to take on our culture, brutally and cruelly simplifying the fact that those who create culture for the rest of us to enjoy should be justly compensated for their work and our pleasure.

Content should no longer be the default, infinitely malleable term we use for nearly all valuable (or supposedly valuable) cultural creation in a digital economy—we must be firm that the term, and its use, implies the cold quality of computer algorithms dastardly conflated with the inhuman need to exploit people on both sides of that creation, the creators and the consumers. Content is good work and bad treated as advertisements for advertisements, an untenable attitude that disrespects and condescends both its audiences and its creators.

The creator matters. The subject of the creation matters. The perspective the creator takes with the subject matters. The publisher

of the creation matters. The perspective the publisher takes on the creator, the subject, and his or her perspective matters. But when you describe the creation as content, all of this seems extraneous, if not non-existent. "Seems" being the operative word: Uncoupling the density of meaning, motivation and implication in any given cultural object from the context of its creation takes us to a dangerous place. It takes us to a place where it doesn't matter who made what, when—or why. It robs the culture of its crucial specificity for the sake of clickbait, quotas, CPAs, and so-called virality. It is in this place where fact and expertise blurs ever-so-imperceptibly—and then very perceptively, indeed—with fiction—with the fake.

"...those who create culture for the rest of us to enjoy should be justly compensated for their work and our pleasure."

I therefore stand by the term content, but only as seen for what it is: cultural exploitation. More importantly, I stand by what is not content: All the cultural interchange—both creation and enjoyment—that involves inspiration, ingenuity, artistry, perspicacity, pleasure, risk-taking enlightenment, and a mutual sense of community. News reporting, novels, movies, albums, painting—these things and more are what we should support, encourage, enjoy and share. They are made by people who share a part of themselves and their work with us—and what an honor that is!

To this end, and since I work in the film industry, here are some of the art I was honored to encounter and share last year: the generous inquisitiveness of Agnès Varda and J.R.'s documentary, *Faces Places*; the cinematography by Sayombhu Mukdeeprom in *Call Me By Your Name*; the taste and sense of hope engendered by American production and distribution company A24 (the folks this year behind *Lady Bird* and *A Ghost Story*); the reporting on Harvey Weinstein by the *New York Times* and *New Yorker*; Oneohtrix Point Never and Jonny Greenwood's scores for *Good Time* and *Phantom Thread*, respectively; the stunning jump to feature filmmaking by Jordan Peele; the overwhelming emotional force

of *A Quiet Passion*; Tiffany Haddish's performance in *Girls Trip* and Elizabeth Moss in *The Square*; seeing the first film by Lucrecia Martel in almost a decade; and, finally, the groundbreaking risks and surprises of *Twin Peaks: The Return*. These are not content—and that you know—you feel—when you experience them.

Efe Cakarel, Founder, MUBI

*Efe founded MUBI, a film streaming service, after he discovered that he couldn't watch *In the Mood for Love* in a café in Tokyo. Previously, Efe was with Goldman Sachs in London and New York, where he worked on IPOs, mergers and acquisitions, and private equity investments. He earned his B.S. in Electrical Engineering and Computer Science from MIT, and MBA from Stanford.*

Efe ranked 3rd in the 1994 European Math Championship in Geneva, Switzerland. If he were to give you directions, you'd never get lost, and you'd arrive at least 5 minutes early.

MUBI is a hand-curated cinema streaming and download service.

It is also the home to the world's largest community of film lovers with over 8 million registered users.

Instead of offering thousands of films, MUBI proudly present just 30. Every single one chosen by a human, not an algorithm.

Cult classics to award-winning masterpieces, forgotten gems to festival-fresh independent releases, from the hard-to-find to the never-heard-of-that-before.

Every day new selection is added to the 30, and every day the oldest one is removed.

All 30 films are available to watch or download for 30 days.

MUBI is available globally. And there are no ads. Ever.

Creation and legacy in the digital era



Akram Khan

Dancer and choreographer

As I come to the end of my career as an active dancer, it's fascinating to me to look back at the manner in which the advent of digital technologies and methods has altered both the manner in which I create, and, to an extent, the legacy of the work I make.

My practice, from choreography to performance, has evolved dramatically with the advent of mass-market digital tools. Most significant has been the impact on the process of creation; whereas in the past an artist might document aspects of the creative process through photography or diaries or similar, the almost infinite storage capabilities afforded by digital video and cloud storage mean a kinetic artist such as myself is able to look back at the creative process from beginning to middle to end, to look at it while we're still engaged in the process of creation, to look back at it. The effect on the finished work can often be profound; if I'm in the middle of a project and I look at the first trailer or teaser or first part of the process online, it provides a concrete reference point for the project as a whole, even in its incomplete state—an anchor, if you will.

On a more personal level, as I make the transition from performing dancer to non-dancing artist, the digital aspect of my work has become very sacred to me; the legacy it provides not only of my work but of myself. Because my children are very small, they will never see me dance really on-stage, and digital affords me a powerful means of bridging that divide; this aspect of strange permanence in what is an oddly ephemeral media is a fascinating one to me, the way in which a work can be captured in such a rich, nuanced and multidimensional way which can be experienced by generations to come.

When I am making work, I see the first trailers, the rushes, the digital scraps and fragments accrued during those moments

of creation, as being part of the finished work itself in a way, building blocks or perhaps a breadcrumb trail from genesis to completion. The sketches, the fragments, all form part of the finished piece—and they are crucial to my ability as an artist to iterate and develop ideas. The ability to almost freeze a moment of creativity in time—say, through recording video of early choreography sessions—affords me the opportunity to *return* to those moments almost seamlessly throughout the creative process, and to do so at a speed and with a degree of convenience which would have been unthinkable in my early career. It's almost like a form of time travel, one might say—the digital records of the process act as a temporal anchor, enabling me to reach back and interrogate, develop, add and subtract at all stages of creation.

From the point of view of the final work and how it lives on, one might think of it in these terms: the difference between observing, for the sake of argument, a tree in one dimension, versus the ability to look at it from all sides, but also cut through it and see the rings.

“...the digital records of the process act as a temporal anchor, enabling me to reach back and interrogate, develop, add and subtract at all stages of creation.”

There is, of course, a corollary to this—I feel strongly that it's important that the tradition of oral history of the arts is not lost, for it is through this that innovation and brilliance emerge. I am trained in Kathak [Indian classical dance], a tradition passed from person to person through non-technological means (or, if you will, human technology), carried in the memory, the body, the brain, the mind, and so each time we share it, it's evolving. It's like telling a story—no one ever tells it the same way twice; it changes each time you say it, because you are human, because you are alive. By contrast, digital preservation of work and its perfect, infinite reproducibility—freed, of course, of necessary context—creates a potentially more sterile transmission mechanism for ideas and art.

Given the fact that things will exist in theoretical and infinite perpetuity as a result of their digitisation, whether it be through video or however else, one might almost argue that there is a new and renewed sense of artistic responsibility in considering the perspectives that will be shown in the post-launch legacy phase of your work, and to ensure that its propagation and dissemination occurs in an analogue, as well as digital, manner.

Akram Khan, Dancer and choreographer

Akram Khan is one of the most celebrated and respected dance artists today. In just over 18 years he has created a body of work that has contributed significantly to the arts in the UK and abroad. His reputation has been built on the success of imaginative, highly accessible and relevant productions such as Until the Lions, Kaash, iTMOi (in the mind of igor), DESH, Vertical Road, Gnosis and zero degrees.

As a choreographer, Khan has developed a close collaboration with English National Ballet and its Artistic Director Tamara Rojo. He created the short piece Dust, part of the Lest We Forget programme, which led to an invitation to create his own critically acclaimed version of the iconic romantic ballet Giselle.

The case for public investment in online arts



Peter Bazalgette

We're about two decades into what will be a digital millennium. The internet has ripped like a typhoon through everything. Up to the end of the last century the arts did their physical stuff—in theatres, in cinemas, in galleries, in concert halls. And TV and radio had these things called 'arts programmes' providing normally pretty sterile coverage of the goings-on.

Now there's no limit on spectrum so anyone can distribute whatever content they like. A mobile phone makes you a one-person auteur and a laptop is your personal post-production suite. Theatre or opera production can jump from a five hundred audience to one of fifty thousand with a live transmission. But is this new content any good? Is it well executed? Can the plethora of material, short or long form, find a genuine audience?

"It's the means by which we define our society and make sense of our lives."

We invest public money in arts and popular culture because it enables our national conversation. It's the means by which we define our society and make sense of our lives. We build physical spaces and fund the productions therein. If we're now online for up to third of our time, we can say the internet has now become an integral part of that society. Why shouldn't it also have a publicly invested space too? So well done The Space for getting this far. For helping aggregate content so it finds an audience. For capturing and distributing live events so many can enjoy them wherever they are. For improving production

skills and for commissioning new art (digital video is a new medium in its own right). This is a tradition stretching back to Henry VIII and his court musicians, to Lorenzo Medici and his sponsoring of Leonardo da Vinci and Michaelangelo and to Maynard Keynes when he set up the Arts Council in 1946.

So some things don't change, however new the times. Like the way an artist should always seek an audience or their work becomes meaningless. And they need to know where to find it, so search optimisation skills are the new marketing. But this is just the beginning. For instance, smartphones are less than ten years old—the greatest arts portal ever invented. Our creators are just at the threshold of imagining what VR, as an entirely new, highly empathetic medium, can do.

Just as in all other areas of arts and popular culture, there needs to be a judicious blend of the commercial and the publicly invested. And the latter normally build the talent base for the former. So as well as The Space and BBC Arts Online we welcome an app like the recently launched Marquee. As we know, if it's internet revenue you're after to support creative endeavour, it comes down to subscription or advertisements. The experimental, the cutting edge, the radical departure...all by definition do not have a mass following to start with, whose attention can be monetised. So I hope we can continue the public/private nexus going forward. And The Space has an important role to play.


Peter Bazalgette

Sir Peter Bazalgette is former chair of Arts Council England and of English National Opera. He has raised funds for arts and media organisations, notably as chair of The Crossness Engines Trust (a steam museum) and as deputy chair of The National Film and Television School.

Sir Peter also has a number of media interests, serving on the boards of market researcher YouGov and digital advertiser MirriAd as well as being on the Advisory Board of BBH. He is the president of The Royal Television Society and a non-executive director of ITV. He previously served as the Chief Creative Officer of Endemol where he devised several internationally successful television formats.

He was also a non-executive director of the Department of Culture, Media and Sport. Sir Peter also writes a regular food column for the Financial Times.

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