

Speaker 1 ([01:42](#)):

[Inaudible] we'll start when he gets here. Thank you for joining us professor. Welcome everyone

Robert Phiddian ([02:36](#)):

To this session of the headlight Festival of Ideas, launching the book that my colleagues, Julian, Tully and I have been working on for the last couple of years in the laboratory Adelaide project. I'm Robert Phiddian. I teach Flinders English in Flinders University. And we welcome you on behalf of the, about Festival of Ideas. I know I'm only supposed to do this at the beginning of the day, but I think it's particularly appropriate on this occasion. So I've wished to acknowledge that we are today. We gathered on the traditional country of the Ghana people or the Adelaide Plains. We recognize and respect their cultural heritage, beliefs and relationships with land, with knowledge that they are of continuing importance to the garner people living today, and we respect their elders past and present. So please have your phones on silent and and by all means by all means tweet and and the other format Y on ado IFR or on IDEO, I F I Y and so we're going to w we are launching the book today.

Robert Phiddian ([03:52](#)):

And so we're each going to talk I'm going to introduce him and and do the do the MC then Richard Morphy. Yeah, mentor we'll, we'll talk about the book, but just quickly. Why am I here? Why am I on this is the same reason I am here in that I have been involved in the festival of ideas since 1999. When that one there drew me with black hair and lots of it. It's a while back. And I've, I, I Ted three sort of three, three festivals, and it's one of the best things I feel I've done. And how much do I value it? Well, according to my donations, the festival it's \$8,000. What does that mean? This project is all about what the numbers mean and how we understand it. How do I value it?

Robert Phiddian ([04:42](#)):

Is it the hundreds of thousands of hundreds of hours that I've spent voluntarily working? Maybe, maybe over a thousand or it didn't quite work. Yeah. Great. Do you have an opinion, possibly. It is over a thousand by this day on, on various boards since last century. And the crucial thing to understand is that this has been yeah, is an event that builds public value and the value is very hard to measure, and it's very real, and this is the case. Yeah, it's in culture. I think there are many other areas as well and education and so on. That value is a thing that we build it together, that we co-create rather than something that we consume. And that is sort of obvious, but all of our ways of accounting for value for the last couple of decades have focused, focused much more on the image of the individual as a consumer of cars, consumer of value and, and work and, and and treating it as some sort of a commodity.

Robert Phiddian ([05:52](#)):

And that's only true of some of it. It's not all wrong, but only true of some of it. So what are the contributions of the festival that I feel I've helped with the contribution to civil and intelligent device debate, a commitment to an ethic of democracy, equality, prosperity the life of the mind bringing people here is, as I've said, or don't dozens and dozens of times if citizens, rather than his customers. And so we are building something here and it exists largely in the room, no algorithm we'll do we'll, we'll tell you what this is. No algorithm will do your thinking for you. And so the image that we have that we are very grateful to have for free on the cover of the book from the cartoonist John Codelco I think is a great way of it is, is a great way of illustrating what it is, what it is we do.

Robert Phiddian ([06:53](#)):

And, and, and what it is that we're trying to put some, and we'll talk more about this, but we're trying to put some real, real, real strengths and categories around this was from last year when the liberal Senator from Victoria Patterson responded to the evaluation of blue poles at, I think it was \$450 million and said, well, why don't we sell it? And yeah, it's both a logical and an avionics thought it's, it's its meaning to the nation is crucial, is huge. And so Kudelka just took it a stage further, and it's particularly good imitation of blue poles as well. He's really worked on it carefully I don't know much about art, but we ran the numbers and it's worth more if we sell it one pole at a time and the world is full of this instrumental thinking, which has its uses, but it has its limitations.

Robert Phiddian ([07:57](#)):

And I think in so many ways in our public life, in the last few years, we are reaching those limitations. And we in, in laboratory Adelaide are working on ways to, to push back, to get a bit of balance between the meaning. You can only get, you get to in words with the meaning that you connect with the meaning that you can, you can appear to think is objective in numbers. So now I invite Richard mopey, professor rich Richard Maltby, who really got the band together in his capacity as, as the executive Dean of education humanities in law offenders university. So, Richard, thank you.

Richard Morphy ([08:40](#)):

Thank you, Rob. And, and thank you all for coming out on. What's turned out to be such a nice day. So I'll do my best to keep you entertained for not very long, which is my brief I some wrong responsibility. As Robert said for encouraging Julian, Robert, and Tully, to begin a conversation about what has variously been about valuing culture, cultural value and the value of culture. And since that conversation began about five years ago, I've also had the opportunity to sit in on bits of it and make the occasional irresponsible contribution much like the one I'm going to do now. As I say, the conversation began actually over a lunch about five years ago, a few months after Julian had joined Flinders, we'd invited some of Adelaide's cultural leaders and over dessert, we asked them what, by way of a practically oriented research project we could do with him.

Richard Morphy ([09:47](#)):

By the time we got to coffee, we had a remarkably clear answer, find it way for them to talk truthfully about what they do. When they talk to government and funding agencies, they were, they said, unable to incorporate their real motivations and experiences into their reporting. Instead, they were required to express their value through purely economic measures that were ill connected to their core purposes and to launder their reporting through a nebulous abstract nouns, passive verbs, and claims the strategic positioning. Could we, they asked, find a new better way of communicating the actual value of arts and cultures culture in ways that intersect with government decision-making processes yet we're true to their own cool missions. Simple.

Richard Morphy ([10:51](#)):

All the team had to do was drum up a few partners, right? A successful grant application to the AARC resolved the dichotomy between intrinsic and instrumentalist value and convinced treasury departments across the country of the validity of qualitative assessment problem solved and do all this in the face of the metrics in army of big data, the early 21st centuries version of Taylor isms time and motion, the belief that anything can be measured and everything must be measured in order to be managed, what David beer has described as the neoliberal desire to measure as an instrument of

governance through competition. Not simple of course, but a seriously interesting and important question to address, particularly for humanities scholars. I think that the first thing that the team discovered was that Adelaide was an ideal place to try to do this big enough to have one of every cultural institution you might want to consider small enough that they actually talk to each other and a place where culture is a distinguishing part of the city's self-definition as the author say in the book, a Petri dish of the right scale, hence the project's descriptive title of laboratory Adelaide.

Richard Morphy ([12:17](#)):

And I'd like at this point to acknowledge the, the three partner cultural institutions that the project team worked with the state library and south Australia, the south Australian state theater company, and the Adelaide festival, my own interest in listening to the conversation was encapsulated in two quotations that have haunted me for much of the past decade. One is Oscar Wilde's description in *Lady Windermere is Fan* that a cynic is someone who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing. The other comes from a book by Roger Birnbaum called *Management Fads in Higher Education*, where they come from, what they do, why they fail. And it is that if we cannot measure what is valuable, we will come to value what is measurable distorting organizational efforts by prizing and over producing, what can be measured neglecting what cannot Birnbaum's book.

Richard Morphy ([13:21](#)):

Interestingly enough was written in 2001, several years before the publication of the first of those endless university ranking lists, all of them rely on, on spurious metrics. It should have earned a first year statistic student of fail. So burn bones was an extremely prescient observation where higher education went from where he wrote the book to where it is now, wilds aphorism haunted me. When I contemplated how long it would be before there would be no one left on the planet who could have had any idea of what he might possibly have meant. The semantic opposition of value and price is evacuated. A meaning when the only evaluative questions we may ask are those of the market and the evacuated vaccination of meaning, particularly the evacuation of the meaning of abstract nouns like excellence, innovation, creativity. There is a long list, is both a consequence of the desire to replace judgment with measurement and an enabler of its implementation theory, Theodore Adorno and Max Horkheimer called their 1941 book, *The Culture Industry*, because it was an inescapable oxymoron, but for the last 30 years with only a minor modification, that's been the normative descriptor for a sector of the economy, as well as the unembarrassed name of too many university departments.

Richard Morphy ([14:56](#)):

Metrification assaults the opposition between quality and quantity and the arts council of England jazz has just last week announced its adoption of a compulsory quality measurement system for evaluating and benchmarking the impact of the artistic work produced by the major organizations that supports. I'm sorry to say that the system in question is a proud piece of Australian entrepreneurial-ism. So quality metrics has now joined by collection of reformed oxymorons.

Richard Morphy ([15:36](#)):

Although this book is a, an outcome of quite local conversations about the specific conditions of cultural life and its governance in south Australia, it is about large questions that do not stop at state or for that matter national waters. It addresses anyone seriously interested in the value of arts and culture, but particularly those with an operational interest in them, arts practitioners, managers of cultural organization and policymakers, it seeks to engage rather than have the final word, but its aim is to

change the conversation around the evaluation of culture, especially with government. It identifies the problem of value and describes the outline of an alternative approach with an enhanced sensitivity to language and narrative that would let that conversation be more honest and make more sense a conversation that would be spoken in what Don Watsons called the other way of speaking. The one in which you try to say what you mean beyond that it joins an increasing body of work that shares its core contention that metrical modes of analysis are claiming conceptual control over domains of human existence.

Richard Morphy ([16:55](#)):

They have a limited capacity for understanding, as we continue to discover the social lives, that metrics are replete with unintended consequences. And it's politically naive to believe that a metrics of cultural equality would be used only with care by practitioners and policy offices and the society of surveillance and audit in which we find ourselves they would be used as weapons just as those in higher education have been. And their spirits in validity will in the process be rendered invisible, the ideas and arguments in what matters offer us much saner safer or more palatable alternatives. So I welcome it into the public world and look forward to what I hope will be the many conversations that will follow from it starting this morning. Thank you.

Speaker 4 ([17:57](#)):

[Inaudible]

Tully Barnet ([18:02](#)):

My turn. Just to say a few words to talk a little bit about where we went with that set of problems. So you've heard from Richard, the set of problems that we inherited, which was the idea that we might solve the whole cultural sectors problems with numbers with over metrification of in, on not sensible methods, methodologies for, for understanding the value of arts and culture. And we blindly gallantly throw ourselves into that project, into that problem to try and come up with a few things that we might do to say about it. So you've heard about the problem from Richard. So we've our key focus was that numbers. Weren't going to be the solution that the, we needed to understand better the rhetorical power of a number that they appear neutral, but aren't that we needed to maybe say a few things about how cultural organizations are, you know, through no fault of their own I'm addicted to growth cycles because the numbers make that a requirement that you have to have better numbers than the year before.

Tully Barnet ([18:59](#)):

And so we needed to think about what was going to happen when cultural organizations got a bad number and how that might help them to push towards a better sense of value. And we had a few things to say about that, and we wanted to think about, you know, how we might tell the story of the problem of numbers. So I came at the Julian and I were at the science communicators conference a few years ago. And there, we heard the number that, you know, 97% of scientists believe that climate change is the biggest issue that's facing us today. And we thought, well, that's, you know, that's about as big a number as you can get. You can get a little bit bigger than that is empathy, but not much, not much bigger. That's a big number. And yet there's still no meaningful action on climate change in our, in our, in our society.

Tully Barnet ([19:41](#)):

So clearly the size of the number is not the answer to getting meaningful action. We had to find another way we had to figure out what happens between the number or the evidence and action and see if we could intervene into some of the issues. And inside of that gap between number or evidence and action are a whole range of problems, but we can only go a little bit of a way towards starting to figure out some, some solutions towards one of them is time. You know, we've got a problem with the timescale that arts and culture operates on that doesn't work to a one-year annual report, a three-year electorate or four year election cycle, even a five year plan, strategic planning you know, the, the, the time of value in culture does not operate in that, in that scale. There's the problem of history and memory versus innovation that we needed.

Tully Barnet ([20:34](#)):

We were also addicted to the, to, to the new in arts and culture and that our grants systems and our funding mechanisms are inevitably push us in that direction by always seeking to find the new thing to fund and never providing a mechanism for continuing to support the, the work, the brilliant work that arts and cultural arts and culture does the problem of narrative that we think in arts and culture and in the humanities that we're experts in narrative because it's our, it's our core skill. And yet we don't really have enough of an understanding about how it operates in these kinds of ways and the retreat of the notion of intrinsic value. So intrinsic value, it's something that is not very cool to talk about because it has been relegated to the high cost, high art, low art divide. It's seen as something that is used to make arguments for the funding of opera and in, you know, instead of you know, a sport for example, or other forms of arts and culture that entertainment that, that more easily get fit into the entertainment bucket.

Tully Barnet ([21:38](#)):

So I'm wondering, can we figure out how to inflect the notion of intrinsic value by which, I mean only, not any kind of essential this kind of understanding of the value of arts and culture, but only something that's not instrumental because if we're continuing to focus only on the instrumental value for arts and culture, then our funding bodies are going to fund that outcome, but the instrumental purpose for that, for that funding, they're going to fund that in a different way. Artists are pretty pretty challenging creatures artists make a lot of trouble in the world. We saw that when the brand has the fair happened, when groups of artists got together and had submission writing parties, when they made a w the brand is live art experience, where they imposed Senator George Brandis is a face on top of the Venus de Milo and circulated that around the world.

Tully Barnet ([22:28](#)):

So the, you know, artists are quite troubling for F for government sometimes. So the minute that an arts that, that an instrumental outcome for arts and culture, be it well-being be it economic, be it you know, social cohesion be it a vibrant city, the minute that can be achieved by some other mechanism, that's not quite so challenging, you know, governments might take that option. And so we've got to find ways of talking about the value of arts and culture that isn't stuck inside inside the instrumental category. And so in the book, which I'm not going to talk about now, but you'll find a few things such as our star starting tips and tricks about how to communicate value, what kind of writing skills are required to start to talk about it, what kind of things to avoid. And so there's an indication that we might that, that there might be something useful. We wanted to make sure that it wasn't just us talking academically about the problem of value, but that there was a real world tips and ideas that were going to be of use to the arts and culture sector, because everywhere we were going, we were asked, okay, that's great, but what

what can you actually do for us? You know, how can we intervene into this problem? And so now I'll hand over to Julian, thank you for

Julian Meyrick ([23:44](#)):

Giving me some instructions on what to do. And apart from that saying, be very quick, he said, charisma and wrap up. So I got one quote too. First time you've listened to me. It's one quote, quotes, transmit, and then something to show you my study economics before I went into the theater. And it was a discipline that left me quite cold, except for one particular problem that value, which I didn't think that after I was in my graduated in my early twenties. And when it came back, it was a bit of a return of the repressive. The more you look at the problem of value in the abstract, the harder it is to talk about or to communicate what it is that you mean. And in way, it's easy to just show you. So I've got something to show you.

Julian Meyrick ([24:45](#)):

18 months ago, my mother was diagnosed with Alzheimer's and I don't have to clear up her flat. And in her class, I found this it's her travel diary as a young Australian traveling in Europe for the first time in the 1950s. And I get it, it's about her experiences as a young woman, encountering many of the cultural institutions and artists and art that she had up until that time. So this is a book I think I'm a fan of, and it's a value because it has meaning it has meaning to me, of course. And so a particular value to me because she's my mother. But if I communicate that meaning to you, it will have meaning to you as well. It won't have the exact thing because she's not your mom. But you do have mothers and maybe you're a bit like her and you had these kinds of experiences.

Julian Meyrick ([25:51](#)):

So this is the object. This is what as it is, value really looks like here's the quote, it's from a book called man's search for meaning, which you may know. It's written by a man called Victor Frankl, who was a psychiatrist in Auschwitz for three years. He was an inmate there prisoner. And his problem, I realize when I was reading the book was what kind of family do things have when you're in an environment that has no value at all, or puts more value on anything. I'm not gonna paraphrase the book, but this particular quote caught my life.

Julian Meyrick ([26:39](#)):

The other conditional meaning is paralleled by the unconditional of each. And every person is that which warrants, the indelible quality of the dignity of man justice life remains potentially meaningful under any conditions, even those which are the most miserable. So to just the value of each and every person stay with him or her. And it does. So because it is based on the vans that he or she has realized in the past and is not contingent on the usefulness that he or she may or may not pertain to the present. Most specifically, its usefulness is usually defined in terms of functioning for the benefit of society. But today's society is characterized by achievement orientation and consequently, the doors to people who are successful and happy. It virtually ignores the value of all those who are otherwise and in, so doing blurs for decisive difference between being valuable in the sense of dignity and being valuable in the sense of usefulness, if one is not cognizant of this difference and holds that an individual's value stems only from that present usefulness, then believe me one over, is it only to personal inconsistency, not to plead for euthanasia along the lines of Hitler's program.

Julian Meyrick ([27:58](#)):

That is to say mercy, killing of all those who have lost their social usefulness because of old age, incurable illness, mental deterioration, or whatever handicap and I suffer. And you can imagine how much those words mean to me because of my mother's present condition. And this time I said to Robert, some tally richer to that answer is here in a bit when we began this project that we would lose, we weren't going away. And that's because I felt the forces that we were up against were hideous strong. But that's not our job. Our job is not to win a debate. Our job is not to come in and say, this is the solution you're wrong. Our job is simply to start a different kind of conversation. And that's what I hope this book will do.

Speaker 4 ([29:03](#)):

[Inaudible]

Robert Phiddian ([29:03](#)):

Well, we have, we thank you, everyone. We have, as we intended, which is a bit of a shock 15 minutes of the conversation. So we, so we would we invite you know, specific questions about the book. We haven't really talked, talked in detail about it all questions and in the brief observation from, from, from, from, from people here. So as we're recording at, I'll try and rush around

Speaker 4 ([29:30](#)):

With,

Robert Phiddian ([29:32](#)):

With this hand handed to you. Do we have, do we have a question or not

Speaker 7 ([29:44](#)):

With big businesses now, increasingly running the world, how can we make our lives more meaningful? Very good question.

Julian Meyrick ([29:56](#)):

I'll secretary I'll say project.

Robert Phiddian ([30:00](#)):

Yeah, I think we need to say that. Probably I should hang on to it. Sure. Yeah. Occupationally and wide up. Okay. Oh, okay. That was great. Thank you. Do you want to observe?

Speaker 8 ([30:21](#)):

Yeah. interestingly enough, in the book, the second half of the book there's a chapter on new corporate reporting frameworks. And I think partly those frameworks arise out of new tendencies in the very businesses that you're alluding to, you know, the, the big businesses. One of them is the effects on the climate, on the environment in which these businesses do ultimately depend. The other is the changing nature of our wealth and increasingly the importance of intact, what they call intangible capitals, which is intellectual capitals and so forth. So weirdly enough, at the very moment that the high tide of metrics seems to be touching culture in other areas, they're actually letting it go. So I think there is at least in some segments of the corporate world a desire to get away from the balance sheet thinking, and we lay that out. It's, it's difficult in a short book to lay it out in detail, but, but we lay it out in essence. And we

give lots of links for those who might be interested in going forward, because it's absolutely not true that the only way forward is through these metrical ways. So that's just a lie. And if you look out there, there are some interesting alternatives. So yes, there's some hope.

Robert Phiddian ([31:49](#)):

And, and, and I guess the, the particular thing I would, I would say about that is that we have had no success finding an economist. Who's willing to talk to us intelligently, but we've had lots of success with accountants because they understand that in the real world values and 2007 with a great wake-up call the, the, the global financial crisis, th th th th the idea that somehow these, the, the, these new cool metrical ways of doing things would just endlessly create wealth. Well, it B it was the bubble, but it was always going to be, and, and that recognition, so, and companies can have companies can have their reputations disappear in no time. And they've discovered just outsourcing, outsourcing their, their, their, their ethics to an ethics [inaudible] and ethics business hasn't worked terribly well. The banks have all been employing ethicists, and they realize that. So, so the problems that, again, the problem is a judgment or about actually having to go to judgment. And we have a question on here. Oh, sorry.

Tully Barnet ([32:56](#)):

Just to say that I think language plays a role in that as well. And so insisting on the use of sensible language, around value with cultural institutions and in the public space in order to ensure that we're not talking about how innovative or vibrant that arts experience was, but to actually talk in more meaningful language about what it did. And that requires us to do a bit of work as well. I think as, as citizens, as, as, as people who work in, who, who live in circulate in this cultural sphere to always be pushing ourselves, not to slip into that easy language, to talk about the value of that to us, but to push it beyond those limits towards something more meaningful.

Robert Phiddian ([33:41](#)):

And that's something that has to be lit out of the humanities, but we have to do it better than we have done. Kathy

Speaker 7 ([33:54](#)):

Julian is brilliant, but he's technically used volume and up. So first of all, I'm on. Okay. I'll try it now. Yeah. Yep. Okay. I guess I'm going to look at the other element of a narrative and, and taking up your point about language. You talk about culture, but you also talk about cultural institutions, art organizations, and, and maybe the answer to my question is read the book, which has to do, but what do you mean by culture? Because in a sense, everything is culture. And, but you usually get in a kind of capital C it's clear that there some implicit reification of culture or, or scope of culture that you're talking about. And, and I'm not entirely sure what that is because the sport is culture. I mean, you know, one may or may not be excited about the Adelaide oval, but it is called sure. Yeah, no, I think

Tully Barnet ([34:44](#)):

I'll just say a comment and then I'll pass the Julian who has more intelligent things to say about this. But when I started working on this project, I used to say, I'm working on a cultural value project that's culture as in arts and value as in worth. And it was not long at all before I had to go hang on a minute, I have to reassess that whole thing, because not only is the space of art inside culture, a complicated one, but so is the relationship between value and values. And that's, I think something that we actually need to pay a bit more attention to. So we are living the tension between those, those definitions of culture

and trying to be as open as possible to the, to, to that broader definition. But all the while realizing that we are working very hard on behalf of the cultural institutions that we're partnering with, the large ones in this project. But on behalf of the small to medium sector as well, who are the ones don't have the funds or the political power to be pushing back against this. And then I'll on that, on behalf of the meaningful language of value for the other kind of culture in society.

Speaker 8 ([35:50](#)):

Yeah. Read the book. There's, there's a chat before you buy them. Yeah.

Robert Phiddian ([35:57](#)):

We've only just seen them for the first time. We're a bit excited. Yeah.

Speaker 8 ([36:01](#)):

So, so there's a chapter in a chapter three where we talk about the definitions of culture and value. And when I was looking at the book in draft, I thought, oh, do we really need that chapter? Shouldn't we just get on with it? And your question reminds me that we did. So I think that there's a kind of an easy mix in the authors here, if I include Richard really, cause he's kind of like the synoptic gospel but between those, those who are a little bit more kind of popular culture and those a little bit more arts culture. So for us, it's a pragmatic debate. And in the book I talk about we talk about really the definitions and how definitions work because there's, there's two ways in which things get defined. One is by the Oxford dictionary of definitions, but the other is by what you might call traffic of use.

Speaker 8 ([36:53](#)):

And so we have a look at that and I think the take home just to be really kind of quick about it is look, that's an important conversation, but don't let it stop having the conversation about value. Because I think that we began this investigation thinking that the problem with value in culture was culture. It was so tricky. Oh, look at all the different things. But the real story here is the degeneration of our idea of value. And that is a huge story that affects many different areas. And in a way it's sucked in arts and culture. We're not alone here. We're not the only ones kind of going, oh, please look at us more intrinsically. There's lots of different areas. There's been a collapse of our notion of value, particularly public value in the last 50 years. And I think we've even got some economists to say that, which is in a pretty good going. So that's, that's where we, we have a pragmatic approach to

Robert Phiddian ([37:51](#)):

The question that you talked about and it's particularly value over time, including the past. Not just the future way of specifically futuristic society and valued institutions, which have, which have great difficulty explaining it, which have had increasing difficulty explaining why they shouldn't just have their money taken off them and outsource to somebody else. So we have a question here and then why not?

Speaker 7 ([38:17](#)):

I just want to share my observation, talking to artistic artistic directors or a leader of cultural organizations for, I mean I'm talking about who's measuring what value, because for them it's their rule. They have to keep talking to funders government and their reporting values because it is especially in instrument devalues because it's mandatory for them. They do all their, they create intrinsic value, but

there's no time to measure them because nobody actually wants to hear about it. Yeah. I mean, not asking too much to art practitioners to do everything,

Speaker 8 ([38:55](#)):

To capture yeah. Much too much, but, but just to back up a bit, you can't measure intrinsic value, full stop. Don't do it, but you can understand it. Right. We can talk about it, but if you're going to think that you can measure the value of the book that I took out of my bag, which is a simple end of it, isn't it really, you're already in a sort of false register. So, I mean, I guess part of the book, and it's not toothy in that respect, but when does this stop, when do you stop trying to do that and start having a different kind of conversation. And perhaps it's not entirely true that arts organizations have no power. They may have only a little power, but they certainly have some power to influence the debate.

Tully Barnet ([39:46](#)):

And it's also a bit of a watch this space kind of answer because the phase two of, of archery Adelaide is working with art south Australia. And in order to have that kind of conversation with the people that do have the power to change those things rather than just with the cultural organizations that are already under the pump, as he saying,

Robert Phiddian ([40:06](#)):

And the thing I'd add to that is if you actually look at the way the decisions are made, yes, arts organizations spend fastener is three hours of their time filling in forms and giving data. But the decisions are very filled in may and not made objectively on the data. The decisions are still made politically, and these mechanisms are often ways. These mechanisms of algorithms are often ways of laundering. The fact that someone has to make a judgment somewhere and they don't, and it's best they'd be judging that something that they had some understanding of because I, I can't think of any brands with a classic example of this. We all thought in the arts and culture sector that things were getting, we were just getting better and better organized. And the, and the methodologies of the Australia council would work. When the brand has come along and took 40% of it and said, put it over here and said, I'm going to play with that. And he could write because that's actually a political event that that's where the decisions the decisions are made, they're made, and they're often made by you, you're often made by your, your peers as well. Anyway, we have another question up here.

Speaker 7 ([41:20](#)):

I'm, I'm just thinking of the way people that some people value culture, different different group of people, perhaps for, and Julian. When we were that talk in the hits all the other day, there was the, you should only produce art, which is politically engaged and changes the world. That's another one that I have problem with, because most of what I do, doesn't change the world in that sort of way. W how do you, how do you talk to those people?

Robert Phiddian ([41:59](#)):

There needs to be an ecology of culture and range of things.

Speaker 8 ([42:04](#)):

If, if you want to I can't believe I'm even talking like this, but you kind of got to got to really in a way, obstruct yourself and go, would you like to live in an successful evaluative environment? Sure. Why not?

Yeah. I'll, I'll go for that. It needs a lot of trust. You need a lot of trust. You know, I've, I've, I'm a theater director I've worked on plays and including lots of not very good ones. And but the concept of not very good play is, is, you know, you have to be reasonably flexible about it because I'm a, you can't tell, you don't know. And, and B it's, it's part of a larger thing that you might kind of go, well, that's the body of work. So you know, when I'm working on plays, sometimes I say the most important is when not, not do judge, of course, but when, when do you judge, you know, cause if you're, if you're always breaking down time into smaller and smaller units and becoming obsessed with evaluating those smaller and smaller units, then you are losing the shape that things have.

Speaker 8 ([43:19](#)):

You know, if you had measured, I mean, the books full of examples, and one of the examples is Patrick White. And if you look at Patrick White in 1968, he's a failure. And if you look at Patrick White in 1978, he's the greatest playwrights Australia is produced. So, so which, which do you choose? You, I think the only way you can get through that is, is if you have a bit of trust I drink decaffeinated coffee and the fellow who sold it to me this morning said, it's got no caffeine in it, but it's made with love. And, and you, you have to love your culture that you, you know, you can't just expect something from it. And out of that love comes trust. And out of that, trust comes value. It doesn't mean you constantly trust it to do anything without evaluating it at all, but it does mean that you are judicious in deploying your sense of judgment and sensible about what you extrapolate from those judgments.

Robert Phiddian ([44:18](#)):

And you don't have to do the judging all the time and constantly, yeah. There were many forms of evaluation that really only hadn't made to happen. Occasionally for organizations, you know, in a healthy state of trust. Yeah. Is you're going to find the same thing this time next year, it's three years down the track. Maybe that you should be checking to see how things are going rather than let alone the constant monitoring possible in,

Speaker 7 ([44:42](#)):

You're also evaluating your own art practice all the time, you know, for yourself and to see if it's, if it's doing what you, what you hoped, but it's, it's this sort of outside. Well, not, I mean, evaluated, you're judging yourself, you, as you write, you read and think, oh, that didn't work and change it, you know? So it's there's that? Yeah, but that's different. Yeah.

Speaker 8 ([45:11](#)):

She wasn't master chef. We don't constantly need to be giving it points. That's not what it's about. Oh, one last question.

Speaker 9 ([45:23](#)):

I I was just wondering how useful or this book would be to for Aboriginal Australians and for their particular difficulties in communicating their culture. You know, which I feel like is almost, I mean, I don't, I was going to say an elephant in the room. I don't think he deliberately not talking about it, but it's big, you know,

Speaker 8 ([45:52](#)):

I'll say briefly in the past, not useful enough in my dear

Tully Barnet ([46:02](#)):

To come up with a good answer to that while Julian talked. No, I th I think that it is useful to that set of issues that, that entangles set of problems. And we work as closely as we can with the your Grandy morbid Flinders university because, and particularly the Unbound collective women of Allie banker and net Harkin and, and Simone to, because that, because that their set of issues is so particularly emblematic of you know, of that, of both of those two questions, that the problem of value and the problem of, of being beholden to always being politically engaged and politically charged. And so there are a set of issues in there that in our book that are informed by conversation there and relevant to that, that community and the set of problems. But we, we, oh, we w we recognize that we are a great debt to them.

Robert Phiddian ([47:04](#)):

We're very aware that there are cognitive sets of issues in the Aboriginal area, but also many other areas in, in local government in health, in education where w w w where the w w where the, the, the consumer model only catches part of it extremely the case, of course, with indigenous people, because they, because of the market economy is not a very good way of, is a terribly bad way of framing the way value circulates in those communities. But we don't presume to speak for them because we can't. And we shouldn't.

Speaker 8 ([47:42](#)):

Yeah. You may find that conceptually speaking the book, even though it doesn't have many examples from indigenous culture, and that's because we're not indigenous, so it would have been disrespectful to take those as examples, I think, but the concepts that we talk about, particularly the deeper sense of time that the need for meaning before you have value that meaning is central to value. It's not just sort of a little side effect and the importance of narrative and language. I think that they offer in important ways for engaging, you know, again, the evaluative environment that we've got for those who do not find what they do reflected in the metrical mode.

Robert Phiddian ([48:29](#)):

Well, we are not dangerous. We, over time,

Julian Meyrick ([48:35](#)):

Culture is really brilliant evolution concept. We'll leave you to write that book.

Robert Phiddian ([48:46](#)):

So I'd just like to finish by thanking people. Obviously the people here at the front also [inaudible] people who've hooked people. Who've helped us enormously at various stages. Heather Robinson and Matt Russell our partners, the state library, the state theater and the Adelaide festival, and all the dozens of institutions and people and human beings that we've talked to cause very important in this project. So to speak from where you come from to to, to, to, to to understand the value in situ. And I'd just like to conclude by saying, we, I give this session a 37 and you can work out what that means later. [inaudible] Thank you, Richard. That was exactly, it was exactly [inaudible].