

Intro ([00:00:01](#)):

This session of the 2013 Adelaide Festival of Ideas was recorded by Radio Adelaide through the support of the Vast mid library, University of Adelaide, The University of South Australia library and Flinders University library. Thank

Kristy Anthony ([00:00:16](#)):

You, you so much for coming out on this rather warm day and understand that the temperature we are in here now is as we will be for the rest of the afternoon, which I think is quite adequate and perfect. So welcome. I'm Kristy Anthony, I'm the chair of the session and the creative director of the Adelaide College of the Arts TAFE essay, which is that hands on training facility in light square. We have one of the most amazing advisory boards headed up by Robyn Archer over here. And the privilege is mine. Let me tell you welcome to the Adelaide Festival of Ideas session today. Titled Art Costs: Entertainment pays intriguing. This session is proudly presented by Flinders University and we thank them for their ongoing support. And I acknowledge today that we're gathered on the traditional country of the garner people of the Adelaide Plains, and we recognise and respect their cultural heritage beliefs.

Kristy Anthony ([00:01:09](#)):

In relationship with this land, we acknowledge that they have continuing importance to the garner people living today, and we respect their elders past and present little bit of housekeeping. I'm sure many of you have been in many sessions over these last fabulous few days, and I'd like to congratulate the organisers on yet. Again, another extraordinary Festival of Ideas has been an awful lot of thinking going on, please switch off your mobile phones. Well, indeed switch them to silent because we are encouraging people to tweet if you wish to do so. The tweet handle is at ADL FOI and the hashtag is the same hashtag ADL F O I. It's also an Instagram with those same hashtag and at symbols, unauthorised recording of this session is not permitted at all. So please don't record it because today's session is being recorded by Radio Adelaide and will be broadcast in the future.

Kristy Anthony ([00:02:02](#)):

There will be time in this session for questions from the audience, and we'd like you to please participate as much as you wish to there's microphone in the center of the room. And if you have a question I'll ask you to come and line up so that we can keep it rolling. We only have an hour. You'll notice that we are without Mr. Andrew Deval Devel. And I'm sorry to tell you that the festival have asked me to pass on his sincere apologies to you because he just simply can't be here today, logistically. So therefore we have more time for these two great lines, which I'm sure you'll agree as a pleasure. So it's my pleasure to introduce them both to you. First of all, is Mr. Is professor Julian Meyrick. Professor Julian is passionate about his contribution to Australian Theatre. He's contributed for more than 20 years.

Kristy Anthony ([00:02:52](#)):

He's been a practitioner, a historian, a theorist, and a critic as well as an administrator. And he's been the associate director and literary advisor at the Melbourne Theatre Company, directing many award-winning productions in Melbourne and around Australia. He's a researcher. He has been a research fellow at the Trobe university and is now the inaugural strategic professor of creative arts for the faculty of humanities at the at Flinders university fabulous position, fabulous to have him in south Australia contributing as he does to so much. Robyn Archer AAO is a singer writer, director, artistic director, and public advocate for the arts in all these roles. Her reach is global. She's currently deputy chair of the

Australia council, creative director of the centenary of Canberra, which must be coming to a close in now and the artistic director of the lighted winter, which he created fed square Melbourne.

Kristy Anthony ([00:03:45](#)):

Robyn has performed worldwide and been an artistic director of the national festival for Australian Theatre in Canberra is Adelaide Festival of Arts. Of course, this will fondly remember the Melbourne international festival of arts, 10 days on the island, which he created for Tasmania and for two and two years at the European capital of culture, Robyn continues to rack up awards on an annual basis. And we'd like to congratulate you for your recent help and help an award for cabaret and adding this to the many orders and awards that you have. Robyn is a holds an honorary doctorate from Flinders University. So there's certainly Flinders binds us all here today is indeed even the Adelaide College of the Arts is now proud to actually run a couple of bachelor programs with Flinders. So I would like you to join me in making them welcome

Julian Meyrick ([00:04:45](#)):

And now ask Julian, please, to take the stage. Thank you very much, Chrissy. And thanks for turning out on this warmish day to have a listen. I've been away directing in Sydney. So I haven't been participating in the events associated with the festival of ideas, and this is my first time with the festival. So I wasn't entirely sure how to pitch, where, where to kind of land my ideas. So I thought the best thing to do was to just simply talk about what's on my mind. And like Robyn, although in a much less illustrious way, I am both a practicing artist and somebody who's very involved in the cultural policy process. And I guess those two experiences have defined both my professional life and some of the thoughts that I'm going to share with you today. So one of the many illustrious people who said that art doesn't pay is my mother.

Julian Meyrick ([00:05:44](#)):

When I was 16 years old, I told her I wanted to go into the theater and she wept. She was a hard bitten documentary producer and tears didn't come easily to her. It's to define art, but one way is to study the reaction of others. When we think we are in the presence of it, or believe we have created it ourselves. If I told mum I wanted to go into TV or Broadway musicals, I doubt she would have responded in the same way. Money is part of that. Going into the theater can be profitable, but usually isn't musicals and TV pull a bigger crowd. So there's a living to be had out of them, or that's the received wisdom. The division between art and entertainment has been around for 150 years. It was Matthew Arnold's book, anarchy and culture published in 1867. That took the fateful step of framing, popular entertainment in a positive way until then it had been a 100% social, bad and incitement to political disorder without intellectual or artistic merit, Arnold wasn't for entertainment over art, but he talked about culture in a broader way as a whole way of life and not just something Oxbridge graduates could appreciate.

Julian Meyrick ([00:07:01](#)):

It is ironic that one of his legacies has been to soundless with the entrenched conceptual opposition between entertainment and art, throw a rock in a library and you'll hit a book that takes out one position or the other recently a third view is emerged, which is more nuanced in his book, dancing with empty pockets. Australia's Bohemia. Tony Moore makes the practical observation that all supposedly impermeable art form, an industry boundaries are crossed by creative people all the time with things that are called art one day becoming entertainment, the next and vice versa today in an age of user created content instant, electronic replication and constant market innovation. This seems nothing less

than the bald truth. Does that mean that the distinction between art and entertainment has ceased to hold? I don't think so. The category is still say something about the different ways in which we respond to culture, different structures of feeling as Raymond Williams would say my mother's tears like her support for me later through some tough years in the theater business, with the result of a perception that some cultural activities are high risk, but potentially high value.

Julian Meyrick ([00:08:11](#)):

And that while professionally committing to them was not something appearance should welcome in a sun. It was a cogent choice on a human level. Art has about it. A quality of intractable presence that carries its own justification by contrast entertainment is defined by its acknowledged purpose. And while it may do many things, it is the entertaining function. It must address first, if it is to qualify for the category, I'm tempted to say bad art is still art, but bad entertainment is just bad. I don't want to take up a position in the art versus entertainment polemic. The ground has been well fought over, and it's hard to imagine a further useful contribution to it. What I do want to suggest, however, is that these two different ways of looking and talking about culture have grown separate antipathetic value discourses. This estrangement is neither useful nor in a world marked by technological and aesthetic convergence, convergence viable, bringing them together is hard, but it is absolutely what is required.

Julian Meyrick ([00:09:14](#)):

Let me explain a little what I mean all cultural activities have what we might call a general and a singular side to them. They have aspects that make them relatively easy to engage with, to interpret into enjoy. And they have unique aspects, individual properties. They insist on as part of their understanding and appreciation. All cultural activities have both characteristics, but the balance is particular in every case. And it is along this spectrum of difference that the art versus entertainment opposition digs in clearly both aspects are important. If cultural activities contained only singular properties, they would be so Maverick as to fall outside the zone of our common understanding. If they contained only general ones, they would barely exist as a set of specific forms. The reason art costs costs mentally, spiritually and financially is that it contains a higher proportion of singular properties and makes more demands upon us.

Julian Meyrick ([00:10:14](#)):

As a result, entertainment is the name we give to those activities that make fewer such demands. And so are more readily accessible. Think about going to a school fate or the footy, compare this to going to a gallery exhibition by William Turner. If we were asked what we were doing, we might say going to a fate or a footy match, but probably not going to see some paintings. The named quality of Turner's work is what marks out, viewing it as a more individual and demanding experience. We call our relationship with this kind of activity art, and it has some important psychological consequences. None of this map would matter beyond the level of the descriptive. However, if it had not left led to two warring discourses of value, art has been the preserve of what is sometimes called the critical humanities, where the focus is on the singular qualities of cultural experiences, their formal complexities and meanings entertainment has that been the domain of cultural studies and its cousin disciplines, cultural policy studies and the creative industries where the emphasis is on industrial processes, social mobilization and economic relations, both discourses are capable of rhetorical access for humanities critics.

Julian Meyrick ([00:11:31](#)):

There can be an obdurate insistence that only restricted number of things have the right to be considered culturally valuable. This was the position for example, of Marxist theory. It's like Theodore Adorno and Max Horkheimer for cultural studies scholars. The boot is on the other foot and the work of Tony Bennett or John Hartley shows a resolute refusal to admit aesthetic into the value realm. The category of art and its attendant distinction making is dismissed as a class based device for the accrual of cultural capital. I massively fall short in a debate that has gone now gone on for too long, without getting anywhere interesting. It is the moment for arts and entertainment to bring their value discourses into alignment, into alignment. I think this is partly a methodological problem, and this is where my experience of the cultural policy process comes in entertainment and art have different ways of publicly counseling for what they do.

Julian Meyrick ([00:12:28](#)):

The general dimension of cultural activity lends itself to aggregate measurement and broad social and economic indicators are a preferred and useful measure of culture. As entertainment. The singular dimension requires singular responses and the critical review remains. The standard measure of assessment for culture is art. These different instruments of accounts bring with them different skews, but this gets lost in the prelim mix. There is no way to jump from a league table or a set of benchmarks to qualitative impact, no amount of knowing how well a book has sold will tell you whether it's worth reading. Likewise, the only way to assess the aggregate effect of something is to count it. A five-star write-up of a Jim Buckley CD is no guide to its broader social use. It's hard to overstate how much confusion this antipathy has created, particularly at a policy level like cats in a sack.

Julian Meyrick ([00:13:27](#)):

These two value discourses have sat in public consciousness without usefully usefully cooperating on the one hand. And most obviously it breeds a market fundamentalism that will tolerate no critical distinction making. I once suggested to a treasury official that Australian TV programs should be subject to quality review. If they were found to be crap, they should be taken off the air, no matter how many people watch them on the other. It leads to willful naivety about economic structures, particularly among artists as a theater director who works mainly with Australian playwrights. I must deal with the impact not having access to a commercial sector and the rewards that come with it has on attracting writing talent to the art form. It's as if our brains have been permanently cleaved into leaving us unable to take a rounded view of our cultural experience as if the idea is something that both costs and pays were unimaginable or an algorithm unworthy of computation, the division goes beyond methodology and strikes the heart of what it means to be a participant in Australian culture at any level.

Julian Meyrick ([00:14:36](#)):

Why can't Australia make a program like the Killing? My mother asked me recently, who is retired now, but maintains her professional interests as a country. We earn four times Denmark's GDP and have five times its population. The Killing is a low cost political crime drama whose merit lies in its narrative and character complexity and not inexpensive locations or cinema graphic effects. It is not a one-off either, but part of the cluster of successful and awarded dramas that have come out of Scandinavia in the last six years, Australia could make a series of similar quality, but does not do so. The reason does not lie in industrial structure and aggregate measures, but then the lack of a climate of critical discrimination within Australian TV, as a creative unit, the failure to internalize norms of quality and risk appertaining to the relationship we have with art in Australia, TV is entertainment.

Julian Meyrick ([00:15:34](#)):

However, constricting that view may be of its imaginative and social possibilities closer to my own field. I prefer not to read another media interview with another great hope of Australian playwriting or vicarious celebration of one winning and overseas award or meretricious comparison between classic and Australian drama. What Australian theater needs right now is not more critical introspection, but better economic modeling, such that more and better career paths that are achievable within it yet talk to most people in theater and use the word industry, and you will get a pained or uncomprehending look, it is only when artists reach middle age and the true costs of their choice of profession make themselves felt that financial return is seen as integral theater is an art. Even if that label deprives you of your right to make a living from it. We can talk more about where to go from here, but the art versus entertainment divide clearly needs kicking into a more fruitful orbit. The value debate line behind it is stuck in the intellectual equivalent of Groundhog day. And that is now costing all of us more than it pays. Thank you.

Kristy Anthony ([00:16:50](#)):

I, I won't even begin to sum up, I think we'll just stop. Keep moving. Let's keep going. Robyn, may I ask you to join and we'll have a good proper discussion in due course.

Robyn Archer ([00:17:00](#)):

I think I'll just sit here because I haven't written anything formal. So I'll just spin a spin, a few things that was terrific Chilean, very, very stimulating. I suppose there are very useful conversations that I'm in very intelligent ones that have been about entertainment versus art as you've summed up Julian. And I think that there are some useful hours to be spent in comparing them, but I find flaws in the question because fairly clearly there are, there are probably as many broke and out of work entertainers as there are broke and out of work artists. Similarly one could say that they're, I mean, I guess in the entertainment, there are more multi-millionaires than have come from the arts. Nevertheless, there are many people who we would consider artists who do make in the sort of multi-millions as there are entertainers. So for me, the question's always been, or for some time has been not so much about whether art costs, which it does and entertainment pays.

Robyn Archer ([00:18:17](#)):

Then the intent behind the people who were producing these things. So for me, if somebody's main aim is to entertain you, a lot of their thought will go into what does the audience want? What does it like? What does it already know? What does it love and how can I give it to them in a way that will give me more work and possibly more celebrity and therefore more money. Now, if that were the basis of judging entertainment V art, probably 95% of opera and ballet is entertainment because essentially there's only a fraction, certainly in Australia, there's normally only, although I think companies do their very best. There is only a fraction of their repertoire, which were be devoted to new Australian experimental opera and ballet it's it happens fairly rarely and therefore the whole on a Julian you'd be wiser on this, but the whole economy of those large exercises tends to be predicated on getting a good bottom line through your box office for having good books, not making a loss, et cetera.

Robyn Archer ([00:19:30](#)):

And therefore the argument will always be well in that case, we have to put on things that the audience will come to. There's sort of no question. I had a very interesting conversation with both David Atkins at one point, and Richard, Tonya Yeti saying we would do more Australian works. It's just that the fact is

when we do an Australian program, very few people come to it. They will turn out for Beethoven and Mozart and all those things. So there's a, there's a kind of chicken and egg in there. So for me entertainment, if we think about a producer getting ready to do a musical, for instance you know, a revival of south Pacific, for instance and that can be an opera company as much as it can be a commercial producer at the moment. They will say what hasn't been seen for a while who are some great singers and designers, how can we please, our public, to me, this has sent attainment.

Robyn Archer ([00:20:22](#)):

It involves a lot of artistry. There's no question that somebody who's conducting Rodgers and Hammerstein or Stephen Sondheim needs to be very musical, really know their work. It's a lot of very skilled musicians and singers, et cetera. But the ultimate aim is kind of to give pleasure with known repertoire and to entertain the audience. Art to me sits in a slightly different box. I could be wrong and I'm happy to have the conversation with both of you about this. But art for me is always that thing, which is an individual is more or less compelled to do. It's it's it has no in its purest form, I would say, and we could argue about that as well, but it tends to be something that people have to do. Just, just like you saying, I'm going to go into the theater because there is a passion you've seen it.

Robyn Archer ([00:21:15](#)):

You want to get into it. There's something driving you. And at the extreme end of contemporary art, it's people making things that are what I call the ugly, the unknown, and the young loved work, which I believe still should be supported either philanthropically or by the state, but they're actually making this work because they're driven to do so. There is, there is no profit motive in it. It is not even just about self-expression it's out. It's actually saying I've got to deal with these materials, their words, or their visual materials or it's music. And I just have to do what's coming out of my creative process and there isn't, now there's nothing to say that that might not eventually end up paying. You might eventually, but it's not the motive. It's not the intention of the work. And that's kind of more where I do the divisions.

Robyn Archer ([00:22:06](#)):

I found it very interesting. I did an interview at the Sydney festival a few years ago with the great theater maker, Robella pouch and Robbins. You know, he brought, he brought some terrific shows to Adelaide, into Australia and has been considered for a long time, a great theater make-up he was at that time. And he, he was amused at my delight in his involvement in Las Vegas, because he went to do one of the Cirque de Solei shows. And they sort of were neighbors in, in Quebec and part of the whole revitalization of downtown the Wharf area in downtown Quebec. And during this conversation, Robert just said good art always sells. And he had no embarrassment about this whatsoever. His belief was that if something was making a lot of money and it was considered artistic, it was probably just really good art at the time, his budget for the new Cirque du Soleil show in Las Vegas, and now insert the Solei, do a new show in Las Vegas.

Robyn Archer ([00:23:09](#)):

They pretty much always build a new casino for it, but his, his budget for the show alone was \$150 million. But I have no, no doubt that. And I mean, he, he was very forgiving about Las Vegas. He said, you can't, you can't just call them. It's a bit like this discussion. You can't now just call us Vegas as sort of entertainment, gambling, fantasy joint, which it is and marvelous for that reason. But there are a whole lot of really interesting businessmen who are interested in their young entrepreneurs, interested in the development of technology and how that can used in entertainment. But then I guess, you know, an

artist like him learns it through that very commercial avenue and then can take it into his own art. So it was it was it was a bit of a give and take. And I have no doubt that that 150 million investment and Lord knows what the casino actually costs will eventually make its return.

Robyn Archer ([00:24:03](#)):

So it's an entirely commercial operation. It's got entertainment in mind, and yet there's kind of art involved. Another example just last night in Canberra, we've got these weekends going on at the moment as part of the centenary program called spin. And it's absolutely everything on wheels. It's you can't imagine how many wheels are roaring around that city at the moment. And last night there was a, something had a great big old hangar and a workshop, and it was meant to be it's intent was entertainment. It was really meant to be not, not a high brow cultural program, but there was a, and it was definitely not high brow, but there was a car crushing demonstration, which was very exciting. And a lot of artists I know, got very excited about seeing cars being crushed. It was fabulous, but there was a fashion parade. Donald Jackson is a community artist of some repute and she got a fashion parade happening.

Robyn Archer ([00:24:59](#)):

And all the fashions were designed by local designers and the, and the dresses were made out of car parts. Everything came from car parts from the seats. There was a bustle with a steering wheel and there was rubber and leather and lights flashing. And it was so fantastically invented and it was followed by a performance by a mob called John Brown. Have you heard of them to two amazing people who get on a trapeze? And you're saying, are they a girl? Are they a boy? What are their muscles look at all that? And then they take their tops off. And it's revealed that they're women, nobody was quite expecting that they would take their tops off, not even the organizers. It's a, it's a very highly entertaining act they're doing. And that was followed by a performance by the rock and roll singer, mark Seymour, who had put a band together called the Petro sexuals.

Robyn Archer ([00:25:47](#)):

And they only sang songs about cars and a wonderful female singer from Tamworth joined them. And it was truly one of the best sets of rock and roll I've ever heard. Now, interestingly, the intent was entertainment, but I found a lot of art in it. You know, I found a lot of certainly a lot of art in the costume design and the way in which there were notes that mark Seymour hit, that seemed to me, absolutely. I mean, not notes that any artist would have been proud of, even with the sort of rough throat. So as you suggested Julia, and there is so much crossover between the two, but the way mark had put together this wonderful set of songs, beautiful slides behind it, coming back to his, one of his own cars, quite poignant in a way. And so there was something about that that was actually not just an intent to come in and have a gig, make money. And I think they'll do that concert again, but there was something I don't know, this, there's something about art that, that intends to move you and does move you and makes it a bit different from sometimes the brash experience. And the minute I say that who has not been moved by a great pop singer from time to time look, I could go on for forever, but there are just random thoughts. So why don't we start the conversation?

Kristy Anthony ([00:27:06](#)):

So, you know, when you're going into produce program or direct something, does the intent strike you initially that it needs to be entertaining straight up or that it is entertainment? Or are you always pursuing art? Well,

Robyn Archer ([00:27:21](#)):

If you don't entertain the audience one way or another, there's probably not much life in it, you know, but, but I don't, I'll just give an anecdote of when I was growing up in Adelaide because it also involves Flinders being the daughter of an entertainer. I was only an entertainer until I was about 26 and I had no motive in my life except to be famous and get lots of money. That's what I wanted to do. And there are interviews in the advertiser where I say that kind of thing. And I basically saying whatever would make me famous in some way, folk music to rock and roll to. I had a band once called Robin Smith and the heavy piece, which was, we were singing led Zipline for God's sake. You know, I was really desperate, you know, just doing, doing whatever I wanted until I met wild cherry, the founder, the late wild cherry, the founder, and first professor of drama at Flinders university who brought out John Willis, my late mentor, John being the principal translator of bricks into English.

Robyn Archer ([00:28:28](#)):

And he came out as the dramaturge for the threatening opera. And I, we did the seven deadly sins. We opened the space in the festival theater. It was the first production in there. And then they started to feed me this other material from that Weimar repertoire. And I did a concert at the art gallery of south Australia. And I can recall real, a really heated argument between me and John and wall when I was saying, but you know, these songs are really hard for people and they're not entertaining the audience. And I know how to sell a song. I know songs with big finishes and happy lyrics, and that's what we should be giving audiences. And it took quite a long time. I mean, I then remained working with Wal and certainly with John for another 20 years. But it was amazing that that instinctively as a singer, I wanted to please the audience and I wanted to pick songs that would please the audience and suddenly the experience of Brecht and those theater, a dramaturg and and a director convinced me that my life would actually be better if I didn't just keep selling popular songs, but I did something that would activate the, that was worth something more.

Robyn Archer ([00:29:43](#)):

I mean, it couldn't be a more obvious, obvious moment in my life at sort of 26 or 27 when somebody persuaded me away from entertainment and into the arts. Now, if I try and put the money factor into that, it's very interesting because, okay, maybe if I had pursued popular singing, I might've been incredibly rich and famous and a celebrity and you're not famous now. No, well, well, no. I mean, but, but it had a different level, you know, a young person with a good, strong voice, you know, I would have spent more on facelifts and teeth and there would have been a lot more money that kind of went into keeping me in a place where I could have, you know, I could have maybe put, maybe I could have, you know, there's a, there's another side to all that, which is, you know, I know that I've got the same vocal ranges as Marilyn Horne.

Robyn Archer ([00:30:36](#)):

If I'd had different training as a kid, I could have been that kind of wonderful singer, I think, but I didn't. So what's interesting is that that choice, which I don't regret for a second has given me the most amazingly rich, I think not only intellectual but moral life. I actually think that I've been doing things that the thoughts, the thoughts of which the core of which are important. And so every now and then I dare to call myself an artist, but I'm a little bit careful. I really presenting the arts internationally, globally, Edith Piaf. I'm probably an entertainer, but I always took a bit of politics in there. So it's okay. As, as for intense Christy, it's the intent for a long time has really been to stimulate the audience rather than entertainment. We are hope that you entertain them at the same time. You hope that they're either

deeply moved or amused, but you also want them to go away with a fresh view of the world, make them think stimulate curiosity and that's. And that I think is about a festival as well.

Kristy Anthony ([00:31:46](#)):

I, I understood from from what Julian was saying, that really the measure as you understand of art versus entertainment is the complexity in which it's measured that the levels or layers of, of accessibility and measurement that go into it. Yeah. So I mean, what, we've what we, this often happens. I think the conversation turns into entertainment or whether art should be entertaining, which we really need to move away from because we, you know, that that really isn't the proposition, is it in terms of it is entertaining and, and and should be, but really we're talking about what pays, where, where did this distinction come from? You touched on it. And you're suggesting that the simpler, the layers, the more potentially reward there is financially monetary, is that what I understand

Julian Meyrick ([00:32:36](#)):

Kind of source of that there forms that can be complex, but they're still relatively accessible in social terms because they're well known. I mean, you can take, I mean, a classic example of this is TV genres. So you can look at a TV genre, but because it is established as a genre, you can, you can work it as a writer and as a producer to good and general effect. It's very hard to do that with an experimental novel that the forms just aren't there in people's minds. So you have to kind of grow the market. You have to grow the understanding. And as I said, it's, it's a spectrum. It's not like, you know, there's, there's a clear box there, which God called art on the third day of creation and then got up the next day. And for all, now we need another word for it, entertainment for that stuff.

Julian Meyrick ([00:33:22](#)):

That's like art that people like it doesn't quite work like that. But, but I mean, I suppose those thoughts come from me looking at how drama scripts work and drama is an intensely interesting art form because it does span the popular high art divide. Yeah. It is one in the same time. It can be the most accessible art form, almost more accessible than any other art form because you don't even need to read. And on the other hand, it can be the most weird thing in a kind of off, off, off Broadway lock. So, so you get to see where these things land and how our culture, which is a commercial culture construes that so art and entertainment has always done that span. It's only because we have the economy that we have that we're having this discussion about. Indeed.

Kristy Anthony ([00:34:15](#)):

And I wondered whether or not it is, you know, it's talk about the money. Are there fallacies, does entertainment pay? I mean, why, why do people believe that this is, you know, it is really the way I tell me, do, does art pay you

Robyn Archer ([00:34:32](#)):

For some people? Of course it does. You know, there are, there are, let's look at opera there's conductors and singers and designers who make a very, very good living. There are, there are many other visual artists who Koons in his John poodles. Well,

Kristy Anthony ([00:34:49](#)):

Well, you know, and it's a fallacy or is it just that it's, it's understood that entertainment. Maybe

Robyn Archer ([00:34:56](#)):

It's a little bit more about not pays, but art costs. Yes. Okay. You know, cause I think Julian was right in saying, you know, I was thinking on the way from the airport here about Kylie Minogue, for instance, I think Kylie started with clearly a bit of what spa, not a huge amount of natural vocal talent, but an incredible amount of persistence and a kind of really good business sense in a way that allowed her to choose some terrific songwriters producers designers in which she's, she's been able to produce something that has its own integrity within its form, incredibly successful. I think she's a woman of great character. She really fantastic. And she wouldn't pretend more than that. And there is a great career path about just being persistent, working very, very hard and making a lot of money. You know, there is a sort of career path now at any time, if anybody had suggested to Kylie that maybe she takes part in an experimental theater show for two Bob or takings on the door, her business sense would probably have said, no, the or her business manager might've said, that's probably not the best idea.

Robyn Archer ([00:36:11](#)):

I mean, as she became a gay icon, she did start making little appearances in gay clubs in Sydney for which the community were very, very thankful, but there's a very acute business sense. I think one of the reasons why artists sometimes appear to end up with no money or art forms have no money, is that there isn't that clear career path because they're actually pushing the envelope. And if you're pushing the envelope, you, you don't know now, alternatively, it might just be a raggy theater show or a really funny recording that nobody ever even puts on YouTube because they don't care about it. Or she saw an experimental novel that nobody cares about or a piece of public art that everybody in the neighborhood really hates and would rather pull down. But there are some of those completely out there practices that are only about, this is the way I see the world.

Robyn Archer ([00:37:03](#)):

This is what I'm going to do that will suddenly find a connection in the digital world, suddenly explode you know, a kid pouring their heart out in their bedroom, just using just using a computer music mix and suddenly it's out there in the world. So I don't know that you can, I, I don't know that we can actually make the case. What we do know. We can't really talk about justice. We can't tell in a hundred years what was actually successful, which is the very best reason for funding, all kinds of experiment, because you just, just have a, a, an infrastructure whereby everybody feels as this, that as if they can have a go at doing their stuff, because we don't know in a hundred years, what was good or bad. I think that's the territory where we also can't quite tell whether it's going to make money or not. Because particularly at the moment in the digital age, I think there are so many ways in which things can be picked up transformed into other forms. And had Andrew been here, I think there would have been a very interesting dimension to that form about how many people saw, what was the original play of Lantana. Speaking in tongues, speaking in tongues, I saw it here in Adelaide, but how many people saw speaking in tongues and how much money that made converses the rights to Lantana?

Julian Meyrick ([00:38:25](#)):

I think that's a very good example because speaking in tongues started off as two separate fringe plays, which I can remember seeing in Melbourne in 19 94 95. So the lowest and the wackiest of the lot. So I think the point that you make that, that this world is only getting more complex is absolutely right. But what is also true is that our way of valuing those things is still stuck in the dark ages. So let's shift it into that because that's the real problem. The root of the problem is not art versus entertainment. We all know that art can be entertaining. We also know that entertainment can be art and long mate

considered to be that. But when you deal with things at a policy level or administrative level, you find people are resolutely the Protestants or Catholics. They are either driven by quantitative criteria and economic modeling, or they are driven by artists opera. And I don't go anywhere else.

Kristy Anthony ([00:39:17](#)):

It's, it's, there's an enormous truth in that. And it is a time in which we need to take the next step. I mean, I I'm privileged, no doubt. You both have huge experience too. I'm on the board of the LA festival and we do have to consider what is the intent? You know, who's looking at this. If the government's looking at it, is it about audience numbers and box office. If we're really looking at it in a critical, artistic sense, how can it be the best and how do we measure that? Very, very tricky.

Robyn Archer ([00:39:47](#)):

And, and, and there is, there is a really extreme kind of position that you can take, which is if a company or an artist is doing work, that the audience already knows and loves that this is an entirely commercial transaction and therefore the user should pay. Yes. Why, what is the argument for supporting? I mean, there are lots of arguments for supporting art forms that don't do many different things, and that is training practice, how you maintain a cult, a mainstream culture, unless you keep supporting it. But equally there needs to be an argument which is about supporting, as I said, the unknown, the ugly and the unloved, because that's the way we simply say, have a go at this stuff. We just don't know where it will lead. And if you don't do that, like any business, like any industry, if you don't keep investing in the own, the unknown and those things, which don't already have a paying audience, you will go nowhere

Kristy Anthony ([00:40:49](#)):

Policy here to make sure all government investment or meant much government invested men is in premier work predominantly, is that what we're saying? No, it's

Julian Meyrick ([00:40:59](#)):

At the moment, the government processes this a little bit different at the Australia council. They, they manage art purely by aggregate categories. So if you talk to a treasury official about sustainability of opera or ballet, it's very unlikely that you will enter into a discussion about a particular opera that they have seen that that's not going to come. They will sit there with a sheet of numbers and they will make inferences from those numbers. And that's not always the best guide to how to proceed. So I'll give you a practical example. In the 1980s, there was a company called Anton theater. They came to the Adelaide festival a couple of times, 1984 with a production of a Molly airplay. And they were a tremendously successful small theater company that fell over in remarkably ugly ways with both funding bodies at a state and Australia council level in the early 1990s.

Julian Meyrick ([00:41:52](#)):

And that's that falling over is a process that I looked at in some detail and partly was because they wanted more money than the government was able to give. But the real reason that they fell over is because the government at that stage had no notion of touring. They didn't understand the how to sustain an alternative business model. So at that time there was a sense of which if state government was giving you money, all the work had to be in the state, the notion of sustaining your work by going into state and internationally was not around now either. Well, even 10 years later, that looks like lunacy. And you kind of go, well, we crucified a fees company because we were as stupid as the mud God made us from. So what are the mistakes we currently making? That's my interest.

Robyn Archer ([00:42:38](#)):

Okay. That was a great connection then because Sean Kim [inaudible] was the founder of anthill. And in watching one of my favorite Australian television dramas up came, Sean peer's name is directing an episode and very well, very competently. But, but again, that's, I suppose that's the other face of many, many artists as if you don't get the support for the absolute things that you want to do, you have to find other, if you have a family, you've got to feed your family. You've, you know, in the end, you've got to find a way to, to keep living and keep your family living in. So people may find related related exercises, so suddenly to enter into a place of any television entertainment, but quality entertainment is an option for some people. And I think increasing, I dunno, Christie, at the, at the Adelaide college of the arts, you must encounter a lot of young people thinking about their futures and where they want to go.

Robyn Archer ([00:43:36](#)):

And I, I feel that there are a number of young artists at the moment who don't resent having another kind of income, the way my generation might have. We had to be artists in the Garret pure. And you know, you might wait on tables, but you wouldn't do something else. But now, particularly in the areas of things like visual art, somebody might be perfectly happy to get a job in a graphic, a commercial graphic design company, do their art on the side, crowdfund to support their art, et cetera. This does seem to be a bit of a sea change in all that production manager is a YouTube star. It's true.

Kristy Anthony ([00:44:16](#)):

You're right. Robin you've touched on it. Certainly my, what I've saved over the last few years is that there are a lot of young people now coming into the arts with actually a market in mind, in order to make a living, you know, whether it's a craft and that they're actually producing something that they know has got manufacturing, mini manufacturing artists in possibilities, to be the best of that's their intent. So do you

Robyn Archer ([00:44:37](#)):

Think that that compromises their idealism about being artists or is it just being very practical?

Kristy Anthony ([00:44:44](#)):

Well, this is back to that. I think it's very practical. I think they, they are still driven. So if the intent is to make something, make art, the fact that they have an audience in mind, I don't think necessarily detracts from the fact that it's still art an audience for whether it's craft manufacturer. This is obviously another semantic problem with, with word art is that it is so encompassing, isn't it? You know, we've obviously taken it to, to mean sort of festivals and sorry, theater predominantly performing arts in this discussion. But yeah, we've now thrown over the net over visual arts as well and film and television. Yeah. It's broad.

Robyn Archer ([00:45:22](#)):

And Julian, would you think that that would be returning to something more like a Renaissance moment in which you know, the great sculptors of Florence were entirely dependent on doing gigs for the, for the, for the rich, if you didn't get a commission and you didn't do what they want you couldn't live well.

Julian Meyrick ([00:45:47](#)):

I think it's an interesting comparison to look at that. I haven't done a detailed study of Renaissance patronage. I think it was more competitive than we think it is. I mean, from a patrons point of view, that there were more options for artists and we give credit for what I don't think. And I've said this a few times is I don't think the bureaucratic model of provision works. I don't think you can leave the Petronel relationship out with it. I don't want to have another discussion with an arts bureaucrat who knows nothing about art. My, my, my first impulse is to kind of go, even if you're grinding the figures, even know I trained as an economist. So I have nothing, no problems with figures whatsoever. If, if you are charged with say the economics of the performing arts in Australia, learn something about the performing arts and at the moment, the economic modeling that goes into some of those micro areas of our sector are an excuse for not knowing.

Julian Meyrick ([00:46:43](#)):

And I'll give you an example of some of the problems that that leads to you get entrenched views. So when I was at the MTC as a sort of a good buy present for the company, I looked at the last 11 years of attendances from 1996 to 2007, to see which place attracted most audiences. And I broke them down by traits and so forth comedies, you know, ideas plays, and it was quite interesting, some of the results, but when you do that kind of repertoire analysis, the three foundational categories are classic drama, overseas drama and Australian drama. That's their three categories. And because I've done this sort of thing before as a historian, I know the order in which they come it's overseas drama first classic second on Australian third. So I did the grinding of the figures for 1996 to 2007 and 2006.

Julian Meyrick ([00:47:39](#)):

And there was a change. It was overseas drama, first Australian drama, second classics, third. So I got a call from the age and they were like, oh, what are you doing? And I said, oh, well, I've done this thing. And they said, oh, what did it show? And I said, Australian drama second. And they were like, no. And I was like, yes. And they were, no, no, that can't be, I was like, yes, really, really? It is. And I went to the board and said, you know, this is a major sea change. This is a huge change in 50 years of behavior. And I had no uptake on that shift at all, none at all. And, and that's amazing. So even with the figures running in my favor, I couldn't change the perception.

Robyn Archer ([00:48:22](#)):

And it's, and it's a little bit, it's a little bit like the, the art sport argument as well. The figures have been around for a long time at the moment, the stats are that more Australians attend arts and culture events than they do sporting events. And yet still on our news bulletins, 10 minutes of include, including the IVC, you'll get 10 minutes of sport. You'll even get three minutes of weather, but you certainly don't get even three minutes of arts. And mostly the art stories tend to be another angle than art. It's the different angles, soft story. It's very interesting that in a culture, if it's in, it's in a culture where we rely so heavily on expert opinion and statistics to back everything up that we've got the expertise and the arts, we punch well above our weight and in Australia and the us, we've got the expertise and we've got the stats. And yet the public that the face of the arts to the public still doesn't reflect the realities.

Kristy Anthony ([00:49:19](#)):

I want to ask you both good. We've got someone I'd like to ask a question and I'll open it up in just a second, but do you think we're in an ism at the moment and what would it, what is it, do you know what I mean?

Robyn Archer ([00:49:32](#)):

Are we in expressionism or yes.

Kristy Anthony ([00:49:35](#)):

Is there, it's a broad question, I guess, but I just wonder whether through all your analysis, particularly Julian, you know, what, what isn't working. Yeah. Presentism.

Julian Meyrick ([00:49:50](#)):

Yeah. I think we're marking time. That's what I think to be honest. I mean, that's a very broad statement to make because fields go up and down and, you know, you see some amazing things wherever you turn. But everything has, you know, we're a very self praising era. That's what I feel. There's lots of talk and we create awards and we ward each other, all these awards and that's all extremely pleasing of course, but I suspect in the longterm, neither here nor there

Robyn Archer ([00:50:23](#)):

Christie, so that if it's not an ism, I reckon one of the fundamental challenges at the moment is the place of the expert. We, we, we kind of we, we debated this in Canberra last week and in an age where, you know, everyone has always had an opinion, but now everybody's opinion can be instantly published online. You can all have blogs, you can all have opinions. And so in the arts there's, there's there is something that I've referred to in the past as a sort of new revolution in cultural democracy. And all this means is that you can vote for popular dance and popular singing and the television stuff you can vote. And indeed there are now theatrical questionings of this voting for everything. But the only measure in that is whether a lot of people like it, it's only a numbers game. And in that it makes it even more difficult to express different values. Suddenly if a lot of people like it, it must be good. And that in the arts is certainly not, not the point is it, it

Julian Meyrick ([00:51:28](#)):

Can lead to some cause things that start off as art can end up entertaining and sort of a good example of that is the hand funeral that was kept out of the Adelaide festival in 1960, heated by everybody. And then 20 years later, post Nobel prize considered to be the greatest Australian player for 20th century. And you kind of go, well, how did that work? Exactly.

Kristy Anthony ([00:51:51](#)):

Thank you. I'll ask you, thank you too. Hello. Is this working say, is it if you mind saying your name and Julian is my name payments and costs. We've been talking about dollars our people and on the accounting side, looking at ways to assess the payments from art that are not easily measurable in dollars. I'm thinking about the payment that comes from taking theater to a rural or depressed area, or indeed into a, into a depressed workplace or visual arts come to that. I'm thinking about the social cohesion that might come from running a visual arts or sculptural workshop in a, in a particular area or amongst a particular demographic. Okay. Thank you.

Julian Meyrick ([00:52:39](#)):

Yeah. That's very interesting that you would raise that. I've just finished Jane Gleason White's book on the double entry accounting system, which is not an academic book, but a kind of an airport page Turner, really. And she's an art historian and an economist, and she's looking at bookkeeping basically in

its growth into accountancy. And she talks about the present moment is being defined really by accountants and what they will include and not include on their asset sheets. But

Kristy Anthony ([00:53:09](#)):

These things, the social cohesion, things, they are actually monetarily valuable. If somebody wants to make the effort,

Julian Meyrick ([00:53:16](#)):

You can grow the economics for it, you have to grow the model. And so she's talking about that predominantly in environmental economics, but I think that the cultural debates in the value debate in culture is an adjunct to that. So it is it's about shifting the numbers and expanding the categories.

Kristy Anthony ([00:53:33](#)):

Okay. Is anybody doing it?

Julian Meyrick ([00:53:35](#)):

Yes, you can say it. They are slowly that that's my impression. And it's also happening at it has almost has to happen at an international level first because so many of these things are governed by standards and procedures.

Robyn Archer ([00:53:49](#)):

I mean, there's, there's no question that people are taking other other values into account. I mean the whole moment, in fact, it, it borders on the dangerous in which utilitarian value of the arts is valued to the extent that you've got to have an education program and a whole lot of other, you know, there, there are some absolutely essential things that most artists and companies would pay mine do anyway, accessibility in terms of regional outreach, disability, Aboriginal, and Torres Strait Islanders, et cetera, there are a whole lot of things, but it also comes into wellbeing. For instance, health is better when you use the arts, et cetera. I think all of that is really acknowledged. I understand that the Australian bureau of statistics has just put out a whole lot of stuff about, about how we value arts and culture, because they said some years ago that in fact, the abs had some of the best evaluating processes in the world, but they still found it the most difficult thing to value. So they've just recently put something out on that. So as Julian, Julian said, I think, I think people are moving to, there's no question that they, that there is a valuing of the other things that go into the assets, but it's that slow process of how do we quantify that in a way that will make it meaningful and have

Kristy Anthony ([00:55:11](#)):

A basic account? I think one of the issues that you touched on is internationally shared the methodology needs to be ruthlessly applied across everything. So that, so something

Robyn Archer ([00:55:20](#)):

Like the company Julie's bicycle, for instance the founder member of Julie's bicycle came out to Australia a couple of times, and they have simply been an arts production company who just looked to sustainability. And that's why it's called that. And they are getting real results. And because of the results they're getting by being environmentally conscious about the events that they have and the advice they give they're being asked to do more and more advice on that basis, because they can

actually measure the outcomes. So if you, if you've got a search engine and just go to Julie's bicycle, she even has a kind of how to, on how to do arts events in a sustainable way. So it's, it's starting,

Kristy Anthony ([00:56:01](#)):

There's also through Flinders university, some significant the study now on, on cultural yeah, insignificance, isn't there through, through tourism as well. I know Steve brown

Julian Meyrick ([00:56:10](#)):

And shift that mindset have a look at Jane Gleason White's book and particularly the last chapter, because that goes through the present state.

Kristy Anthony ([00:56:18](#)):

Thank you. Hi. my name's Bronny PS I'm entering arts industry, and I'm curious, I'm curious, Julian, who are the academics and critics that you admire and why?

Speaker 5 ([00:56:33](#)):

Oh yeah.

Kristy Anthony ([00:56:36](#)):

Well, the fact that they have good methodology that you think you sound. Yeah,

Julian Meyrick ([00:56:39](#)):

I think, I mean, you can always take something from everything that you read. There are two people at the moment who I liked very much. One is a man called Ben Elfin who writes a lot for Crikey and another is a man called Justin O'Connor. Who's now at Monash university, but was with Stuart Cunningham at Queensland university of technology. And Justin in particular was part of an advisory group that constructed what I could consider to be an extremely flexible and applicable cultural policy model for the city of Manchester.

Kristy Anthony ([00:57:17](#)):

Stop you there. Sorry. Do you lean back? Thank you, Bethany. We're going to try and get through a couple more questions. We've come to the end of an hour. Sorry. Okay.

Speaker 6 ([00:57:26](#)):

Hello. My name is Nathan Rogers. Earlier this year I S a grade chain star, a music and cultural of MRI names. But I found it very difficult to find a musical performance. He plays certain instruments in south Australia. It was physically impossible. So I'm just wondering if, how the cultural shortfall in south Australia. And I also tried to make the event very cheap. Web paper would only have to pay a gold coin. She got in the door and when I was contacting a lot of musicians, they found that as that I was trying to rip them off. Whereas when I was trying to be, as I played piano myself, break down the barriers in terms of music and get people more interested because a lot of people out there they've never been to a classical music concert. Apple,

Kristy Anthony ([00:58:15](#)):

I think is the question. So the question there is, are we, is there enough cultural capital? Are we investing in enough people Adelaide?

Robyn Archer ([00:58:22](#)):

I just I can give you a contact for a guy called David [inaudible], who is a visual artist, but he produced in Canberra. Canberra's a series apart from the big iconic buildings, a lot of little villages and they're like little suburbs, but they've all got their own little shopping centers. And for a couple of years he did something called the Hughes festival and he got each of the shop owners, the pizza bar, the pharmacy, et cetera, et cetera, all to make a little contribution. The ticket money went through the tools of the businesses. So he didn't have to do any of the administration. And he put on classical music concerts and all the shops link, you know, though the pizza bar had chairs, the pharmacist didn't, they linked each other cuts and pieces. And he just got a group of musicians and worked out a budget in which he could pay them a little bit that satisfied them. Now Canberra's a city of 370,000 people. he made it work. He made it, made it work very successfully, very intimate performances. I'm sure that you would find them, but you probably just need a bit of methodology behind your attempt. So if you like, I'll give you, I'll find a way to get you [inaudible] number and he could show you how to do

Kristy Anthony ([00:59:35](#)):

It. We have two more questions. I'm going to ask you the organizers if that's okay. Yes, no, yes. Okay. Thanks. My name's

Speaker 6 ([00:59:43](#)):

Tulsa. I'm just wondering if looking at it from the other perspective that you think the problem with artists, especially the unknown, the ugly as you would put it comes from the fact that there's a generation that aren't being educated on the importance of art, therefore their, their will to part, with money to experience it, not just in generation, that just has real low barrier entertainment that thrust upon them. And every angle through internet media is the importance of real art. Like your, your, your older visual art, you're really mentally stimulating stuff that really makes a difference to the world. Isn't being shown important from a primary school that all the way through to public, like you said, with the news that barely gets any, any time at all, do you think that is a major problem for artists being able to get income? Yes. Great.

Kristy Anthony ([01:00:29](#)):

I think can, I'm gonna, you know, take that quickly answer in Adelaide. We've been so lucky to have festivals and to grow up through, come out and all of that experience, but, but,

Robyn Archer ([01:00:38](#)):

But it does in education, it does rise a fascinating other side that you've raised. That is how there are so many opinions that art is so expensive and yet people will pay \$150 to go and see their favorite rock band. So actually we, I always, I always think there's a price barrier to the arts, but when I look at the prices of popular concerts, I think people are willing to spend. It's just, again, it's, it's about how to value it, challenging it's about your value and you can put it

Julian Meyrick ([01:01:07](#)):

In a pithy way. You know, I could say something like that. Entertainment is about options and art is about decisions and you know, that opposition doesn't quite work, but it alerts you to the different challenges that are involved in both of those equations. But

Robyn Archer ([01:01:20](#)):

Education is key. That's pretty much a wrap back, isn't

Kristy Anthony ([01:01:22](#)):

It? But we have one more question. Thank you.

Speaker 7 ([01:01:26](#)):

My name is Mihayla and on, I was interested when you the question is going to be more on the entertainment side, cause I'm immediate student and I consume a lot of TV and digital stuff. Throughout the last five years, there's been a lot of explosion on people watching stuff from America stuff. Well, HBO stuff, and premium cable stuff. And often there's been then a perception that the stuff that a story creates isn't isn't as good. My question is towards the budgeting side and how the government basically funds that, and there are certain requirements which have to be made for you to get funding often has to be, I think, an Australian and historical stuff. And I think that's kind of boring. And I think why can't we have something more of a, some, something interesting, something more thought provoking than some of the same old stuff? Or do we, do we already have that? And I'm not, I don't know about it or,

Kristy Anthony ([01:02:40](#)):

Well, I guess the, the wrap-up question there might go to the deputy chair of the Australia council are the are the funding methods

Speaker 7 ([01:02:49](#)):

Too restrictive basically because they have to be certain away or why can't we create something like house of cards or I don't know.

Kristy Anthony ([01:02:58](#)):

Okay. Actually, we might take that on notice because that's a very good question. It's a broad question. We barely don't have time to answer it right now because we have run out of time. But thank you for taking the, the, the opportunity

Julian Meyrick ([01:03:09](#)):

To please change the question though. You say why can't and I would say, why don't we make it because the budget of the killing is comparable with any TV series we make here so that, well that's, we can discuss that with a cup of tea. And I would,

Robyn Archer ([01:03:24](#)):

I would just say, although I don't think the Australia council was focus will ever change from Australian work. They have actually loosened up so that it is not impossible these days to do a Shakespeare and be automatically disqualified from funding. I think that's loosened up. And the recent change, the new Australia council act has actually changed things so that it can be, it hadn't changed for 40 years. And I know that at the moment, there is a revision of the grant programs. And I think you'll probably find it's

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going to take a little while, but probably a year or two years. I think you will find the Australia council will take the lead in being a bit more flexible, a little bit more able. It's not that there's not been the willingness before, but a little bit more able to fund more and more experiment, new forms, multimedia, et cetera like that. I think you'll start to notice a few changes in the future. Now that's not speaking for state up departments, but quite often what the Australia council does when it does something good is taken as a bit of a sign. And we might find that there is a bit of opening up in the future, a bit of simplification in applying for grants, et cetera. And that would be a great thing.

Kristy Anthony ([01:04:30](#)):

Well, thank you very much for your attendance. I think to sum up that this has been a very entertaining discussion for me, certainly, but a very, very important topic and the arts absolutely matter have a wonderful afternoon for the rest of last day of the festival ideas. And let's take the organisers.

Intro ([01:05:02](#)):

This session of the 2013 Adelaide Festival of Ideas was recorded by radio Adelaide through the support of the vast myth library, University of Adelaide, The University of South Australia library and Flinders University library.