



Cultural Value Project Launch Event, March 21st 2013

Audio Transcript

Rick Ryance

Good evening everybody and a very, very, very warm welcome to a long-anticipated event, which is the launch of the cultural value project.

The birth of the cultural value project is, in a sense, an interesting tale and it sets the remit for it. I've often been struck by the division between the very high instinctive estimate of the value of British culture: the way it has presence internationally and the way it contributes in such significant ways, to not only our way of life but also our economy at the moment. Creative economy is the fastest growing part of our economy. It's on a par, it's estimated, with something like pharmaceuticals and so on. I've always been struck by that very considerable presence and the ways in which it's quite hard to defend. It's in public discourse and how you try and bring those two things together across that chasm struck me as a very interesting challenge, which was going to be set for research and that's really in the genesis of the cultural value project.

How do we find ways of articulating the value of culture in such a way that's it's evidence-based, in such a way that it produces dramatic case histories, in such a way that it demonstrates to all-comers that we really have something very, very, very special indeed here, in the UK: in our cultural life, in our economy, in our ways of belonging and relating to each other, in the presence of our history and the use we make of that history? And that's really the genesis of it. It's trying to tap into the great unconscious, the things we take for granted here, which are so powerful and so positive, and trying to find ways of making those articulate. And that's really where we begin.

So the project is about - Geoff will talk about it in more detail in a moment - but the project is about rendering what we take for granted, what we know in our marrow to be the case, and making that articulate and visible. And that's the challenge we've set ourselves. And the dramatic rate of interest we've had across the country, borne out by the attendance tonight, is something which indicates this is tapping into a moment. It's

something which is so widely felt and I hope you'll enjoin us in trying to make this project a great success.

So, welcome! Thank you for coming. And the very final thing I've got to say is that, with regret, I'm not Melvyn Bragg, and alas, Melvyn is unable to attend tonight because of a prior commitment, so if you came along to see him, tough!

[laughter]

What we do have, however, is the very glamorous David Willetts.

[applause and cheers]