

Management Information: Defining the Visual Arts for Managers and Policymakers

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Abstract

There are international assumptions by managers and policymakers the visual arts are definable, understandable and, a shared commodity. These assumptions are brought into sharp focus when consideration is given to the increasing global interest in creative industries as an economic policy driver and management tool for funding, advocacy and social development.

This paper sets out to draw attention to the confusion over the visual arts definitional framework, a contorted and contested history, (Roodhouse, 2003) at regional national and international levels and the implications for cultural managers of such a fundamental fault line which is scarcely recognised in their day to day operations. Simply, at best the data collected and used to inform management at micro and macro levels and provide evidence for policymaking is inaccurate and seriously unreliable at worst.

It also illustrates a fundamental structural failure of the creative industries concept as defined generally by DCMS and others; in that the visual arts are not represented, but, instead demoted and primarily located in the arts and antiques trade as products. In other words, this “industrial activity” is referred to and classified as out puts, such as sculpture, painting, prints and ceramics, that is product, but not as a creative activity or business, the creative process. This runs counter to the “creative individual” argument enshrined in the DCMS definition which the Government through the Creative Industries Taskforce set about defining as it developed and commenced the implementation of the creative industries policy in the UK. The concept was derived from an interest in the knowledge economy, and the definition employed largely pragmatic;

“Those activities which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent, and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property”.
(Creative Industries Task Force 1998)

The sectors, which have been identified within this definitional framework, are:

“advertising, architecture, the art and antiques market, crafts, design, designer fashion, film, interactive leisure software, music, the performing arts, publishing, software, television and radio”.
(Creative Industries Task Force 1998)

It is hard to conceive of the creative industries without individual artists clearly identified as creative businesses, the content makers, but this is the case when detailed examination of the sub sectors and how they are defined is undertaken.

The activity can however be found subsumed in the arts and antiques trade referred to earlier and also to some extent in the crafts sub sector. The paper illustrates the confused conceptual analysis of the visual arts found in the DCMS creative industries mapping document definition. It is at best a description of outcomes from a creative process which may or may not be recognised by the producers.

Consequently this paper not only provides an analysis of these problems but an alternative approach based on defining the visual arts as an occupation and what collecting data on this basis implies. An advantage in adopting this classificatory attitude is that there is no need to define activity such as sculpture because this is captured by producer and purchaser interactions that is the public and private market. An approach of this kind enables accurate data to be collected based on a definitional framework which is consistent and can be applied universally. More significantly however it recognises the importance of the individual creative business rather than the product which after all is and should be the heartland of the creative industries concept.

Keywords

Visual arts, creative industries, definitions, confusion, management

A Contorted and Torturous Definitional History

Successive United Kingdom (UK) national governments and their agencies have defined and redrawn boundaries, resulting in continuous public cultural policy and practice turbulence since 1945, commencing with the establishment of the Arts Council of Great Britain (Pick, J., & Anderton, M., 1999). The pragmatic determination of these boundaries that is definitions, with no obvious rationale for inclusion or exclusion lends itself to an interpretation of a public sector domain engaged in restrictive practice. This ensures the boundaries are constrained enough to match the level of available resources at any given time.

It is, perhaps, more to do with the government administrative machinery responding to national policy by providing a manageable and controllable framework for the allocation of public funds rather than a rational empirically informed inclusive system, hence measurable, thus conforming to the requirements of evidence based policy (Solebury, W., 2001). Urban regeneration (Roodhouse, S., and Roodhouse, M., 1997) and the introduction of creative industries (Roodhouse, S., 2003) by the New Labour administration are examples of this practice.

This intrinsic public structural framework works against interaction and connectivity. It encourages isolationism between national, regional, local government and agencies by relying on departmentalisation and compartmentalisation as the organisational means of delivery.

As an illustration, culture resides within the Department of Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) and is also found in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office who fund the British Council, (British Council, 1998, 2004) the Ministry of Defence which resources a substantial number of museums, galleries and musical bands, the Department of Trade and Industry which supports creative industries through the Small Business Service including the export effort of these businesses; the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) (Allen, K., Shaw, P., 2001) and the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) which provides entry to work and workforce development in the cultural field (North West Universities Association, 2004). This excludes the devolved arrangements for Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales.

This complexity and fractured nature of cultural provision and practice combined with definitional fluidity, found at national level and is a major contributor to the lack of policy cohesion in the field.

It is equally confusing, at regional level, with DCMS sponsored Cultural Consortia, the Arts Council, the Museum. Libraries and Archives Council (MLA), the Sports Council, the Tourist Boards, Sector Skills Councils (SSCs), and local authorities along with the Regional Development Agencies (RDAs), Small Business Service, including Business Link, not to mention the plethora of sub-regional intermediaries funded from the public purse, all pursuing differing cultural agendas (Hamilton, C., Scullion, A., 2002).

In practice, there is little cohesion between these organisations sometimes resulting in duplicated effort in for example collecting data which leads to additional public resource allocated to coordination. This may be more effectively utilized in direct intervention to assist the growth of cultural businesses (Roodhouse, S., 2004).

Although attempts are made at overarching regional strategies, there is not as yet a shared understanding of and agreement to a definitional framework to operate and evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies.

Reflective learning based on evidence has yet to establish itself as an effective mechanism for reviewing policy, management and intelligently informing future actions. There is a continual desire to invent new models and schemes without understanding and learning from past practices (Roodhouse, S., 2004).

A relatively recent example of this was the international interest aroused in the UK largely, stimulated by the 1997 “New Labour” government engagement in the creative industries concept, a significant contributor to the UK knowledge economy, as a contemporary reinvention of “Old Labour” GLC oriented cultural model. The Labour controlled Greater London Council (GLC) instigated a significant challenge to the definitional status quo in the early 1980s at a time of high unemployment, significant industrial decline, and diminishing public funds for the arts. These circumstances gave rise to a re-appraisal of the role and function of the ‘traditional’ arts, in economic terms, and in relation to the introduction of new technologies such as instant printing, cassette recording and video making (O’Connor, J., 1999).

For the first time, the concept of culture as an industry in a public policy context was introduced. The arts, described by the GLC as the ‘traditional arts’, were subsumed into a broader definitional framework which included ‘the electronic forms of cultural production and distribution – radio, television, records and video – and the diverse range of popular cultures which exist in London’ (London Industrial Strategy 1985). The eventual successor body, the London Assembly and the executive Mayor of London have picked up the theme again (London Development Agency, 2003) with a focus on intervention in the creative industries networks and linkages.

Chris Smith, Britain’s first “New Labour” Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, confirmed early in his Ministry that the creative industries were a growth sector of the UK economy:

“It is incumbent on the government, in partnership with industry, to take active steps to promote economic growth in the creative and cultural sector. If we do not do so, then others will reap the economic reward” (Creative Industries Task Force, 1998).

The creative industry concept generated by DEMOS (Leadbetter, C., & Oakley, K., 1999) constructed as a component of the knowledge economy model, as a result has been enshrined in one of four key policy themes for the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), that is, economic value. The other three themes, access, excellence, and education, are the predictable interests of any Labour government. It does seem however that the theme of economic value is a maturing of the Thatcherite ethos, that is efficiency, effectiveness, value for money, and market forces. Smith reinforces this interpretation:

“as ensuring that the full economic and employment impact of the whole range of creative industries is acknowledged and assisted by government” (Smith, C., 1998)

The Department’s interest and engagement with the Creative Industries, through the establishment of the Creative Industries Task Force (CITF), chaired by the Secretary of

State for Culture, Media and Sport, with Ministers and officials from the Department of Environment, Transport and Regions; the Foreign and Commonwealth Office; the Department of Trade and Industry; HM Treasury; and the Department for Education and Skills, cannot be seen as than a direct engagement by government in creative activity for economic gain.

The government through the Creative Industries Taskforce set about defining the boundaries what it understood as being the creative industries. The concept was derived from an interest in the knowledge economy, and the definition employed largely pragmatic (Roodhouse, S., 2003):

“those activities which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent, and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property” (DCMS, 1998).

The sub-sectors, which have been identified within this definitional framework, are:

“advertising, architecture, the art and antiques market, crafts, design, designer fashion, film, interactive leisure software, music, the performing arts, publishing, software, television and radio” (DCMS, 1998).

It is worth noting here that the sub-sectors identified as the creative industries would not recognise themselves as such, for example architecture has much more in common with construction than it does with the arts and antiques trade. This is indicative of an emerging policy construct, which has yet to embed itself both intellectually and practically in the consciences of those working in the field. The creative industries concept, at present, has more in common with the developing global economic interest in the knowledge economy (Leadbetter, C., & Oakley, K., 1999; Howkins, J., 2001; Caves, R., 2000; Florida, R., 2002) than the DCMS designated constituent activities (the sub-sectors).

Of particular note in the creative industries proposition is a mechanism for engaging both public and private sectors on a more equitable basis; establishing cultural activity as new industries; and engaging with convergence arguments generated through advances in technology (Flew, T., 2002; Cunningham, S., Hearn, G., Cox, S., Ninan, A., and Keane, M., 2003). Fundamentally this growing conceptualisation facilitates a reassessment of the traditional forms of policy intervention in support of the arts and culture (Roodhouse, S., 2002). It is after all a market approach.

The creative industries development is derived from a longer history associated with defining and redefining the arts as an industry sector (Roodhouse, S., 1997; Calhoun, C., Lupuma, E., Postone, M., 1993) and the relationship of the arts and media as cultural industries for example which others have addressed (O'Connor, J., 1999; Throsby, D., 2001; Pratt, A., 1997; Garnham, N., 1987).

Data and Definitional Quantification Issues arising from such a National Policy

Attempts have been made, by cultural economists, statisticians and cultural geographers largely since the early 1980s, (Myerscough, J., 1988; O'Brien and Feist, A., 1995; Pratt, A., 1999; and Jeffcut, P., 2004), to arrive at suitable categorisations for the sector. Pratt for example argues that value chain and domain categorisation is a useful mechanism whilst Jeffcut, from a knowledge management perspective suggests that the only way to understand the industry is as a cultural ecology. Cunningham and Hearn (Hearn, G., Pace, C., Roodhouse, S.) take this further by engaging with a value chain ecology which relies on a thorough understanding of networks. What seems to have emerged from this work is

recognition that the Office for National Statistics' (a UK government agency) Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) and the Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) provide a common but imperfect mechanism.

The data and quantification issues are acutely problematic for economists and statisticians (Barrière, C., & Santagata, W., 1997; Evans, G., 1997). The weakness and inconsistencies of definitional frameworks become more apparent when used to quantify and determine the value of artistic and/or aesthetic activity. Authors such as Baumol (Baumol, W., Baumol, H., 1994) and Heatherington (Heatherington, P., 1992) have attempted to clarify this, with assertions that aesthetic pleasure has at least as much value as the difference in returns between works of art and financial assets. This leads, for example, to the question of how to define a work of art. Another issue for economists studying the cultural industries is the differentiation between artistic and industrial goods. Part of the difficulty is that the total assimilation of art to commodities creates serious problems because art goods escape the standard rules of utilitarian market exchange (Barrière, C., & Santagata, W., 1997). The weakness here for cultural economists is the lack of clarity and consistency in the defining of cultural practice. For Davies and Lindley (Davies, R., and Lindley, R., 2003) who have attempted to quantify artists, there remains a conditioning of the definitions employed. Any number of cultural economic impact studies such as the economic importance of the creative industries in Plymouth (Plymouth City Council, 2002); the impact and values – assessing the arts and creative industries in the South West (Kelly, A., and Kelly, M., 2000) and the economic impact of the arts and cultural industries in Wales (WERU and DCA, 1998) all utilize differing classifications and typologies. Not only does this demonstrate the confused conceptual landscape but highlights the unreliability of collected and analysed data.

The DCMS have attempted to rescue the situation by developing a regional data framework (Wood, I., 2004). This has yet to be accepted, not least because it does not universally conform to the national data collection classifications, relies on generalised notions of domains and a limited interpretation of value chains. This can only be perceived as a fundamental structural weakness, when increasing emphasis is placed on evidence based cultural policy and comparative international benchmarking. Despite spasmodic attempts (O'Brien, and Feist, A., 1995; Davies, R., Lindley, R., 2003), the paucity of empirical evidence available and the structural weakness of the definitional frameworks to inform cultural policy, management or practice particularly in the fields of museums, galleries and the creative industries (Roodhouse, S., 2003) to support the formulation and development of policy at local, regional (Devlin, N., Gibson, S., Taylor, C., Roodhouse, S., 1998; Devlin, N., Gibson, S., Taylor, C., Roodhouse, S., 1999; Roodhouse, S., and Taylor, C., 2000) and national levels continues.

The Visual Arts - An Enigma?

This is painfully illustrated in table 2 which provides a summary of the inconsistent and unrelated definitions currently applied to the visual arts in Europe and Australia. This may be in part because these definitions are not drawn up by practitioners in the field concerned but rather economists, statisticians and administrators. It is also the case that these descriptors rarely refer to their source or assumptions or draw from visual arts organisations with a direct interest such as national artists associations. Incidentally there is an additional contortion that is, function and occupation. So visual arts is, nationally and internationally, classified in terms of industrial activity which sometimes includes process but often refers to product, or function that is for example trading. This places greater emphasis on process as activity and use of product to define the activity. There is an emerging international interest in establishing a product classification system to complement existing arrangements. Nevertheless, the visual arts are a complex and fast moving arena which the classificatory systems cannot respond to as revisions occur infrequently, generally, every six years.

The consequences of this failure to engage in establishing a common workable visual arts definition is summed up by Towse (1996, p7);

“The main point is that whichever definition is used, it is bound to produce different research findings.”

This has led over time to “the paucity of alternative data sets with which to test the assertion(s) in practice” (Arts Council England research report 31, p2). In other words not only have we definitional confusion and inconsistencies at every level but also as a result inconsistent, unreliable data and little comparative research. Other industrial sectors would not tolerate such a position nor would managers who rely on high quality management information to aid operational and strategic decisions.

This questions the reliability of an evidence base for cultural policy making at regional, national and international levels when we cannot complete a fundamental exercise and hence accurately count the number of visual artists in the UK or Europe, as the Eurostat, LEG visual arts definition is equally confusing.

Internationally, UNESCO struggles with similar structural weaknesses and tends to define the visual arts as trade in cultural goods, an economic framework (UNESCO, World Culture Report, 1998) although it has broken the visual arts down as follows in table 1. Noticeably architecture is included here yet in table 2 there are no references to this domain with the exception of the Arts Council, England. It can be found as one of the subsectors in the DCMS definition of the creative industries and is included in the UK standard cultural industrial/occupational classifications along with amongst others artists, archivists and musicians. And yet it does not go far enough, for example how are we defining the work/activity of an architect to justify it's location in the visual arts as opposed to construction sector? Where is the line being drawn, on what basis and does the profession recognise itself as an integral part of the visual arts construct?

**Table 1:
UNESCO Definition of the Visual Arts**

Architecture Narrower Term NT1 Buildings NT1 Monuments NT2 Historic monuments <i>UF Historic sites</i> NT1 Palaces NT1 Traditional architecture <i>UF Bioclimatic architecture, Vernacular architecture</i>	Fine arts Narrower Term NT1 Painting NT2 Paintings NT3 Miniature paintings NT3 Murals <i>UF Frescoes</i> NT3 Rock paintings <i>UF Rock art</i> NT1 Sculpture
Graphic arts Narrower Term NT1 Calligraphy NT1 Drawing NT2 Technical drawing NT1 Illustration	Decorative arts Narrower Term NT1 Furniture NT1 Interior architecture <i>UF Interior design</i>
Handicrafts Narrower Term NT1 Engraving NT1 Jewelry NT1 Mosaics NT1 Textile arts NT2 Carpets NT2 Tapestry	Photography Narrower Term NT1 Aerial photography NT1 Holography <i>UF Holograms</i>
Plastic arts Narrower Term NT1 Art glass NT2 Stained glass NT1 Art metalwork NT1 Ceramic art <i>UF Porcelain, Stoneware</i> NT2 Pottery	

Table 2 provides a comparative analysis of the current European and Australian definitions and illustrates the spectrum of interpretation employed in describing the visual arts. It is unsatisfactory in that there is no attempt to provide detailed descriptors of products such as sculpture or activity such as sculpting nor is it clear what the distinctions are between fine or public art and sculpture or sculpting. There are strong arguments to support the view that another level of descriptor is now needed which transcends the local, regional national and international definitional soup where the visual arts are sometimes used a definitional vehicle or entirely ignored .

Table 2:
European and Australian Visual Arts Definitional Table

OFFICE OF NATIONAL STATISTICS STANDARD INDUSTRIAL CLASSIFICATION CODE	DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT	AUSTRALIAN BUREAU OF STATISTICS ALC CODING SYSTEM	EUROSTAT LEG REPORT DESCRIPTOR
Code 92.31/9 Artistic and Literacy Creation and Interpretation	Included within definition of Arts and Antiques Market Trade in arts and antiques including Painting Sculpture Works on paper Other fine art (tapestries) Furniture Collectables (mass produced ceramics and glassware, dolls and dolls houses, advertising and packaging) Couture (including jewellery) Textiles Antiques Books, bindings, signatures and maps Arms and armour Metalwork	Code 241 Visual Arts Class consists of the creation of one- off or limited series visual arts or crafts in either traditional or contemporary styles. Primary activities include Art photography Artwork creation Cartoon drawing Ceramic work creation Digital Art work Creation Illustrating or drawing Installation (art) creation Jewellery design Painting (art) Pottery creation Sculpting Textile design	The visual arts domain includes Design Photography Multidisciplinary In the following areas, Creation Inclusive of the creation of visual works Production The production of visual arts (production of printed reproduction, productions of casts etc) Dissemination Exhibitions of visual works Organisation of festivals Event organizing and awareness raising Trade Trade and sales in visual works in galleries, reproduction and restoration

Source: Roodhouse, S., and Johnstone, I., 2004

A similar picture emerges when consideration is given to UK cultural agencies and professional organisations illustrated in table 3. The Arts Council, England, the primary support agency of the arts sub-sector in England, defines visual arts activities as the creation, dissemination, exhibition and education of those practicing in a number of fields such as crafts, contemporary visual arts and fine art, film and video as well as architecture. However, just to make life more difficult, architecture and film and video are designated sub sectors within the DCMS definition. In addition the Arts Council classifies the visual arts as a specific practice in its own terms – yet more conceptual confusion for the cultural manager.

Table 3:
UK Cultural Agencies and Professional Organisations

ARTSENGLAND NORTH-WEST DESCRIPTOR	THE VISUAL ARTS AND GALLERIES ASSOCIATION	AN - ARTIST INFORMATION COMPANY
<p>The visual arts sector includes the creation, dissemination, exhibition and education of those practicing in the following areas.</p> <p>Crafts Contemporary visual arts Fine art Public art Architecture Photography Artists work in new and emerging media, Film and video.</p>	<p>Activities included within the visual arts sector include,</p> <p>Painting Sculpture Drawing Photography Installation Performance Multimedia (or new media) Public Art Film Video Printmaking</p>	<p>Anything that is visual and you appreciate through viewing.</p>

Source: Roodhouse, S., and Johnstone, I., 2004

An economic alternative to the visual arts definitions referred to in tables 2 and 3 which are largely focussed on product and activity is occupation and this has been addressed by Towse (1996), Frey and Pommerehne (1989) who between them determine what an artist is by applying eight criteria:

Table 4:
An Economic Definition of the Visual Artist

1. The amount of time spent on artistic work
2. The amount of income derived from artistic activities
3. The reputation as an artist among the general public
4. Recognition among other artists
5. The quality of artistic work produced
6. Membership of a professional artists group or association
7. A professional qualification in the arts
8. The subjective self-evaluation of being an artist

Source: artists in figures, a statistical portrait of cultural occupations
Arts Council England research report 31, 2003

At an international level, a definition of visual or indeed any artistic occupation is provided by The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO),

“Any person who creates or gives creative expression to, or recreates works of art, who constitutes works of art to be an essential part of his life, who contributes in this way to the development of the arts and who is or asks to be recognised as an artist, whether or not he is bound by any relations or association” (UNESCO 1980)

This is an imprecise tool when it comes to measuring the visual arts as an occupation although the SIC system does attempt to quantify the occupation of the artist as described in table 5.

**Table 5:
Occupational Definitions of the Visual Artist**

UNESCO Definition	SOC Definition
“Any person who creates or gives creative expression to, or recreates works of art, who constitutes works of art to be an essential part of his life, who contributes in this way to the development of the arts and who is or asks to be recognised as an artist, whether or not he is bound by any relations or association” (UNESCO 1980)	Code – 3411 – Artist Workers within this group create artistic works by painting, drawing, printing, sculpture and engraving, design artwork and illustrations, Restoration of damaged pieces of art

All these approaches ultimately take us back to the need to define the “practice” that is, sculpture, painting, crafts, video or media installation which is in itself problematic contested and uncharted territory – to be avoided if at all possible because it is a constantly changing field. It is after all to be expected that the creative output of creative individuals will continually challenge convention and regulation as this is the very nature of the business (Wind, E., 1963). But if this is not complex enough there is overlap with other sub sectors found in the creative industries such as film, and performing arts, how they are defined and broken down into their component parts. So where is the rationale for explaining distinctions between video and media installation activities of a creative sole trader with film and video as described in that the DCMS creative industries definitional framework? For example the core and related activities of film and video are as follows;

**Table 6:
DCMS Description of the Film and Video Subsector of the Creative Industries**

CORE ACTIVITIES	Screenwriting, production, distribution and exhibition
RELATED ACTIVITIES	Music soundtracks, promotion, set design building, catering, equipment manufacturer, video rental, photography, lighting, sound recording, costume design, selling of film and video distribution rights, film and tape delivery and storage, videos on demand, digital film distribution, film web sites, post production/special effects, computer games, multimedia and digital media
RELATED INDUSTRIES	Television, TV film production, music, publishing, advertising, digital media, performing arts, merchandising, and training

Source: creative industries Mapping Document 2001

For statisticians, the problem seems to lie in how to categorise the creative and cultural industries. Given the difficulties of definition referred to earlier, and the ‘fluidity’ of the sector, it is predictable that the conventional categories used in the UK and Europe, standard industrial classifications (SIC) and standard occupational classifications (SOC), have proved imprecise tools for measuring the creative industries (Roodhouse, S., 2004; Wood, I., 2004.). This is reinforced when consideration is given to a related activity and occupation, graphic design, illustrated in table 7.

Table 7:
Graphic Design Comparative Occupational Definitions

THE DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT	THE DESIGN COUNCIL	THE OFFICE OF NATIONAL STATISTICS STANDARD OCCUPATIONAL CODING SYSTEM	THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF GRAPHIC DESIGN
<p>Core activities</p> <p>Design consultancies Design component of industry</p> <p>Main services include</p> <p>Corporate ID Corporate literature Packaging and branding Consumer literature Exhibitions Multimedia Advertising Interiors Product Retail Information Design Architecture Structural Packaging Furniture design TV graphics</p> <p>Related activities Graphic design Fine art Fashion design Multi-media design Crafts</p>	<p>Graphic Design is included in Graphic Communication sector And includes the following activities,</p> <p>Typography, Illustration, Packaging, Corporate Identity, Magazine design, Television and video graphics, Digital/new media graphics</p>	<p>SOC code 3421</p> <p>Graphic Designers, to include, Designer Graphic Designer Multi-media Designer Web Designer Typographical Designer Exhibition Designer Advertising</p>	<p>Graphic design is an intellectual, technical and creative activity not simply concerned with the production of images with the analysis, organisation and methods of presentation of visual solutions to communication problems.</p> <p>Activity includes Illustration Typography Calligraphy Surface Design for Packaging or the design of patterns, books, advertising, and publicity material or any form of visual communication</p>

Source: Roodhouse, S., and Johnstone, I., 2004

Implications

This paper focuses on the visual arts as an activity and occupation which has received consistent public financial support since 1945 through a succession of government cultural agencies and is recognised as the “home” of individual creators. However, it remains the case that in the United Kingdom, Europe and Australia there is no consistent definitional framework and resultant verifiable and reliable data available to assist cultural managers and policy makers. This for example calls into question the accuracy of the claims made for the creative class (Florida, R., 2002).

The more recent UK inspired policy initiative, the creative industries, which places significance on individual creativity as an economic wealth generator and contributor to the development of knowledge economies, fails to recognise the specific visual arts contribution within the current DCMS creative industries sector definition and if to make matters worse the government quango the Arts Council England has additionally confused the picture by defining visual arts as a specific practice alongside crafts, architecture and fine art. There is equal confusion when economic and occupational definitions are considered as these do not marry with each other or the market approach found in the DCMS creative industries definition. The visual arts are indeed an enigma.

What is required is the identification of criteria by which judgements can be made derived from the commonalities to be found in the international visual arts definitional landscape involving practitioners, economists, statisticians, cultural managers and policy makers. This points ultimately to “biting the bullet” and engaging in establishing criteria to define activity such as sculpture.

Unless we are consistent with definitional frameworks the data used by cultural managers will always remain unreliable, suspect and partial. Are cultural managers satisfied with this and the reliance on questionable data to inform policy, advocacy and management decisions? For example, measurement of performance relies on a definitive baseline to start from, in other words if we do not have a common understanding of what the visual arts are or what an artist is, how can we measure success as managers?

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