

To See Ourselves

Cultural Assets and Attributes of Scotland

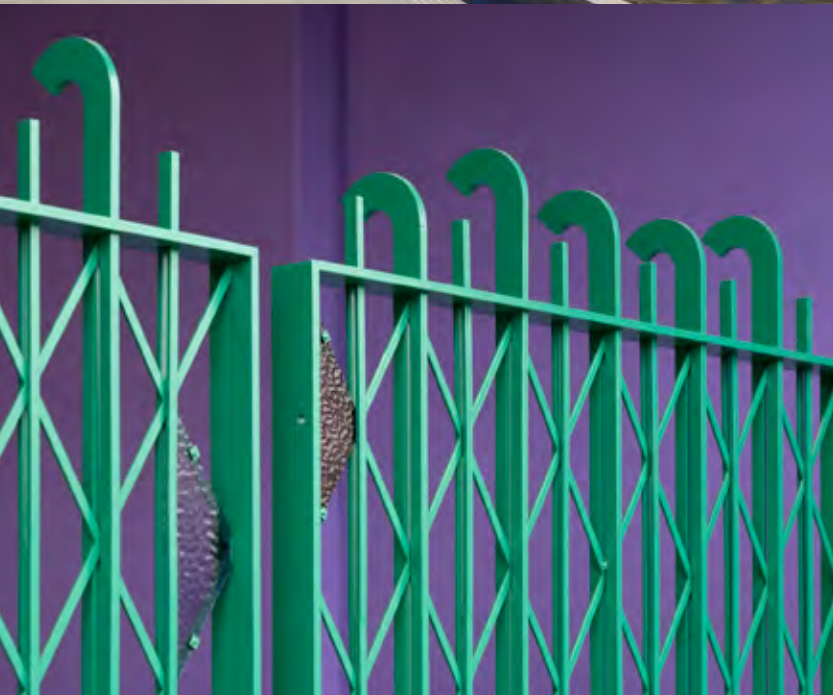
An enquiry by the British Council Scotland and Creative Scotland,
researched by Creative Services (Scotland) Ltd and
Queen Margaret University

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ALBA | CHRUTHACHAIL





IMAGES: (clockwise from top left) *Pop* by Vince Virr at the Edinburgh International Children's Festival [photographer Ruth Armstrong], *Gateway*, Joana-Vasconcelos, 2019 [Photo Allan Pollok-Morris, Courtesy Jupiter Artland], *Bothy Project*, *Inshriach Bothy*, Cairngorms National Park [photo Andrew Ridley], *V&A Dundee* [photographer Hufton+Crow], *deep dive (pause) uncoiling memory*, 2022 Installation shot [photographer Cristiano Corte], © Alberta Whittle. Courtesy the artist, Scotland + Venice, *Thomas Kilpper: The Politics of Heritage vs the Heritage of Politics*. Installation view, Edinburgh Printmakers, Edinburgh, 27 April – 13 July 2019. [photographer Jim Stephenson Architectural Photography]

Introduction



Creative Scotland and British Council Scotland have worked in partnership for over ten years to identify and invest in strategic initiatives and multi-year programmes that further international cultural relations and help create new opportunities for the Scottish arts sector. This has resulted in strong international connections being established; Scottish projects within major seasons and events (e.g. *UK in Japan*); nurturing collaborations emerging from Momentum; valuable briefings and sector development opportunities on themes, countries and changes (e.g. visa); and addressing sector concerns (e.g. EU exit).

Experiencing first-hand the level of sector engagement with these programmes, it would be easy to take for granted how international the Scottish arts and cultural sector is in its outlook and sense of place in the world, but the pandemic forced us all to pause and helped inform the final brief for this report.

The report in two parts, *To See Ourselves* and *As Others See Us*, provides analysis of the Scottish arts and cultural sector's distinctive assets and attributes. It feeds into how we tell the story of the sector internationally and puts a spotlight on the areas where the sector has a distinctive contribution to make. It's the first of its kind for the sector, and complements existing research in Creative Scotland and British Council Scotland's 'A strategic analysis of the Scottish higher education sector's distinctive assets: An update'.

The development of the report has been underpinned by a series of rich, thought-provoking conversations that allowed us, with contributors, to lift our heads, reflect, and discuss something much more than the challenges of the pandemic, and to consider the strengths of the sector and hear how it is perceived by others.

'O wad some Pow'r the giftie gie us, to see oursels as ithers see us!'
'O would some power give us the gift, to see ourselves as others see us!'

From 'To a Louse' by Robert Burns, 1785

Our aim is for the report to be widely used by those here in Scotland with an interest in the internationalisation of the sector, who are contributing to recovery from the impacts of the global pandemic; and internationally by those interested in or yet to discover Scotland. It is a resource for national campaigns and a practical tool to inform, spark curiosity and support engagement with a diverse range of international stakeholders, including governments, policy and funding bodies, and art professionals and organisations.

We look forward to using the insights that it offers to support our work with and on behalf of the arts and cultural sector in Scotland.

Norah Campbell
Head of Arts
British Council Scotland

Laura Mackenzie-Stuart
Head of Theatre
Creative Scotland

Milds?

*(It wasn't the word we
were expecting).*

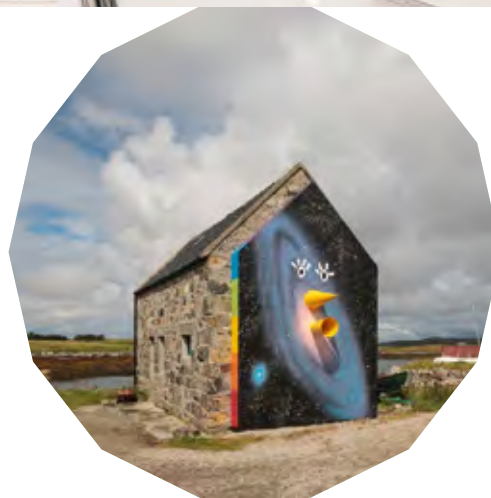
When we asked people to describe what they felt was distinctive or unique about Scotland's culture we received a lot of thoughtful words, phrases and examples. Some of these we anticipated, many we didn't. But they all had a personal rationale and were an expression of a deeply felt relationship. That was the one aspect that bound all the contributions together.

Whether you felt the distinctiveness was mild or wild (and we got both), no one was indifferent. There were themes that emerged, words that became more frequent, challenges to perceptions that arose, and familiar tropes that began to appear more substantial.

This document aims to do justice to the many hours people spent reflecting on the question 'What are Scotland's cultural assets?' – talking to us or writing their thoughts down. Ultimately, each person will have their own view on what the country's cultural assets are – this document and its companion, *'As Others See Us'*, aims to find common ground, as well as to reflect the spectrum of views.

Our sincere thanks go to all who contributed to the process, in whatever capacity.

How do you describe a country's culture?



IMAGES: (clockwise from top left) *Edinburgh Printmakers* [photo Jim Stephenson Architectural Photography], *Ode to Joy (How Gordon Got to Go to the Nasty Pig Party)*, *Stories Untold Productions* and *James Ley* [photo Tommy Ga-Ken Wan] part of *Made in Scotland* showcase 2022, *The Polar Bears Go Up!* by Ivor MacAskill and Fiona Mason, *A Polar Bears/Unicorn Production* [photographer Richard Davenport], *Elephant Session* at the Old Fruitmarket for Celtic connections, [photo Gaelle Berli], Alberta Whittle, [photographer Matthew A Williams], *'Are You Locationalized'* by Joanne Tatham & Tom O'Sullivan, North Uist and Isle of Skye: Commissioned by ATLAS Arts [photo Ruth Clark]



A better starting point might be, *why* would you describe a country's culture? It wasn't until we started our first face-to-face discussions that we began to realise that although many of those we spoke to had spent a professional lifetime in one of the creative industries, few had taken the time to consider the question, at least from the angle of identifying a country's cultural assets. But when given the opportunity to discuss this with disparate colleagues across the sector, it catalysed a range of thoughts and views that many found revealing about their own practice.

When the written submissions arrived it was clear that, given that opportunity and a catalytic question, people were willing to devote a generous amount of their time and experience to consider the matter thoughtfully and candidly. So, the 'why describe' question was as much about stimulating individual reflection and creative wellbeing as it was about establishing outputs for the client.

The 'how to describe' question became a fascinating tapestry of perspectives informed by individuals' experience, knowledge and enthusiasms. We invited people to be broad in their conception of a cultural asset – from people, places and events to institutions, policies and networks; and to consider cultural attributes too with an equally broad spectrum, from language and reputation to tradition and history.

The last challenge we gave was to invite examples that were distinctive to, or quintessentially of, Scotland. This was perhaps the hardest element. As soon as one was identified, such as the diaspora, we realised that many more countries enjoyed something equally strong, and similar. This began to become reassuring – that Scotland was kin with a range of global siblings.



What we did



IMAGES: (Top) Report co-author Rachel Blanche filming at Collective, City Observatory, Edinburgh [photographer Neil McGuire], (Bottom) [photographer panitaphoto]



We gathered three strands of data to inform this report:

- ◆ Eight discussion groups with 28 strategic leaders across the creative industries in Scotland and from the international British Council network, and one sounding-board group at the operational end of cultural delivery.
- ◆ 111 long-form questionnaires from creative industries professionals, comprising 63 from international contacts and 48 from Scotland.
- ◆ Desk research that assessed over 40 policy and strategy documents and sector reviews, informing 15 case studies and 18 position papers.

This document is, therefore, a distillation of a large amount of data, much of it qualitative. We've aimed to be as faithful as possible to the actual words of those who contributed, so quotes appear throughout the text to better illustrate the various points. Any slight amendments to these are for grammatical or clarity reasons. All contributions are unattributed; however, we have identified all those who took part in Appendix A.

Where relevant, we have included names of projects, organisations or events that were identified to us as exemplifying a certain cultural attribute or asset – these are illustrative and representative of an area of Scottish cultural life, such as festivals or disability arts, rather than definitive.



IMAGES: 'To See Ourselves' and 'As Others See Us' - companion reports authored by the Creative Services (Scotland) Ltd, and Queen Margaret University, published by the British Council and Creative Scotland.

This report has five principal sections:

- ◆ Background – outlining the starting point and assumptions that informed the approach and who was invited to contribute.
- ◆ Context – summarising some of the broader themes and trends that emerged, including historic and philosophical context.
- ◆ Attributes – a distillation of the qualities, positive and negative, suggested by Scottish and international colleagues.
- ◆ Assets – identifying key areas that can be identified as providing something particularly special to the national and international scene.
- ◆ Evolution – what happens next with this information, and how it can be used.

Importantly, this report has a sister document – '*As Others See Us*' – a longer report that provides the detail of survey submissions with accompanying analysis. Some of this is referred to, and included in, the text here. Its appendices hold more detailed information from the submissions, and these are identified throughout the text. We have provided the client with an electronic database that holds all the original source material, and it may be that this forms the baseline for future, related studies.

For both documents and the supplementary material, we're grateful to Caitlin McKinnon and Kevin Geddes for their superb research throughout.

Dom Hastings and Norah Campbell (British Council) and Laura Mackenzie Stuart (Creative Scotland) provided the best type of light-touch guidance, sounding board, and fount-of-knowledge combined. Sincere thanks for this, and for the opportunity.

Bryan Beattie *Creative Services (Scotland) Ltd*
Rachel Blanche *Queen Margaret University*

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IMAGE: *The Not So Ugly Duckling: A Play for Grownups*, Jo Clifford and Maria MacDonell [photographer Robin Mitchell], Made in Scotland showcase 2022



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NOTE:

We hope this document will be of interest to an international audience, as well as a domestic one; as such, we have included footnotes intended to clarify terms that may be less familiar to those from outside Scotland.

IMAGES: (Left to right) Young people taking part in a Ba' game [photographer Rob Gray], The HebCelt Festival, Stornoway [photo Colin Cameron]



1 Background

The half-full glass

People want to please you. If you ask them how many times they'll visit a new cinema in their area they'll invariably overestimate the frequency because they want the thing to happen, because it's 'a good thing'. This optimism bias is something we were conscious of when asking our principal question, 'What are the distinctive cultural assets and attributes of Scotland?' It's a glass half-full question as: a) it assumes the country has assets and attributes, and b) the words focus on positive qualities – we didn't ask, 'What are the principal challenges to Scotland's culture?'

People were critical – this is Scotland after all (and being critical was one of the 'attributes' identified) – but they were principally focused on identifying elements of the national cultural psyche that were 'good things'. We've included the challenges as well as the positives, but this was not a piece of work charged with assessing the state of the country's cultural sector, although there is certainly scope to do that.

In the final section we consider what to do with the data collected, and what should happen next. The law of unintended consequences suggests more will come out of this than originally intended. The British Council and their co-sponsors, Creative Scotland, commissioned this research to establish ways in which international contacts could more easily establish an understanding of, and a connection to, the Scottish cultural sector, and to demonstrate within the UK the range, depth and richness of the Scottish sector.

Definitions

Throughout this report we refer to the **cultural sector**. This is a catch-all term for a range of disciplines more commonly bracketed as the creative industries, and while we did have input from sectors such as broadcasting and fashion, we believe our term is a more accurate description of the majority of those who took part.

At the outset we proposed a definition of assets and attributes that we invited each focus group to challenge – this established common ground for considering the two concepts.

Essentially, it was agreed a **cultural asset** has value because of its contribution to a community's creativity, knowledge, traditions, culture, meaning and vitality. It can be tangible, such as cultural facilities, international networks or national policy; or intangible, such as shared stories, perceptions and attitudes.

Cultural assets, we felt, sit within a broader context of national **cultural attributes** – the set of beliefs, customs and values shared by the population of a nation. Attributes also refer to specific characteristics such as language, and cultural history and traditions.



For this research we felt the categories for asset/attribute definition should be sufficiently broad to capture a more distinctive and complex national cultural ecology. We invited contributors to consider that the principal elements for research include:

- ◆ institutions
- ◆ networks (internal and international)
- ◆ intangible cultural heritage
- ◆ language/dialect
- ◆ creative individuals
- ◆ government/governance
- ◆ activities/events
- ◆ education
- ◆ reputation
- ◆ commercial enterprise
- ◆ finance/funding
- ◆ policies/legislation
- ◆ diversity
- ◆ buildings/facilities.

The table in Appendix 2 gives some tangible examples of assets and attributes; for example, long-standing cultural traditions may be an attribute, whereas the Border ballads, step dance and the Ba' Game¹ would be assets.

Distinctiveness

Our additional challenge was to identify those assets and attributes that are **distinctive internationally**. We noted from the outset that what may be distinctive nationally (e.g. Doric or Shetlandic²) may not be distinctive internationally (as all countries have regional dialects). Scots baronial architecture may be distinctive within the UK but, again, many countries can point to architectural styles that are characteristic of their nation.

Contributors that commented on this were quick to identify that we should avoid searching for anything 'unique', preferably aiming for aspects that are *quintessentially* Scottish, that is, either characteristic or typical of a Scots style; and we were happy to run with this distinction.

The **porous nature of culture** was evident in our contributions, with traditions and cultural practice crossing geographic and political boundaries in both directions. Scots folk song idioms can be found in Beethoven, Dylan and Appalachian music. Scots step dance has enjoyed a revival in the last two decades largely because it was 'found' and 'recovered' from Nova Scotia, where Scots emigrants from the 18th and 19th centuries took it, along with traditional instruments and tunes. The tradition remained unchanged in the host country but withered, almost to extinction, in the home country, where it has now been replanted.

You can talk about visual traditions in Scotland going back centuries, those were always formed in dialogue with the outside world. Artists have always travelled. Artists have always developed in comparison to what's been going on in Europe or around the world. You can't talk about a nation's culture being in some way as defined and neat within its borders. It's much, much messier than that.

Related to this, we were advised by some contributors to be wary about the notion of **indigenous culture**. This is perhaps a harder element to pin down – we have tried to avoid it as a term because, in general, the international understanding is associated with Indigenous Peoples, which is not relevant for Scotland. It does, however, pose an interesting question – when does something become considered indigenous to a country? Is it about longevity, or about being the only place where it could develop? The Gaelic

¹ A long-standing annual tradition in Kirkwall, Orkney featuring a ball and hundreds of players.

² Dialects from the North-East and Shetland, respectively.

language has been a vital element of Scotland's linguistic and cultural heritage since its arrival (from Ireland) 1,600 years ago, displacing an earlier Celtic language (which, no doubt displaced another before it). So, which of them is indigenous? In some parts of Scotland, you are not deemed to be a 'local' until the third generation of your family live in the same location. In looking for a slightly less precise middle ground, we've chosen a more subjective criterion – if something feels *of* Scotland. Residents of a country have an innate sense when something feels authentically *of* their country, even if that something is a language or a tradition that has been borrowed decades or centuries previously from another location and adapted over the years. It has been assimilated, and some things do that quicker and more readily than others.

Contributors, particularly those from outside the country, found it hard to avoid what we in Scotland might consider (often pejoratively) **national tropes**, in much the same way we would if asked to identify the cultural assets of Australia, or India, or Wales. It is natural to rely on images/text that have been reinforced through films, books, and popular media outlets for generations as shorthand descriptions for particular nations and peoples. That said, it is worth noting that Scotland is seen to have a disproportionate number of internationally recognised 'cultural tropes', from high-profile film stars such as Sean Connery and Ewan McGregor to music (bagpipes), landscape (the Highlands), events (Highland Games and the Military Tattoo), myths (Nessie), notable historic figures (Wallace, Bruce, Bonnie Prince Charlie and Mary, Queen of Scots), writers (Burns, Scott and JK Rowling), food and drink (whisky, haggis, shortbread) and design (tartan, paisley pattern), as well as one of the world's anthems, 'Auld Lang Syne'. Many nations of a similar size and larger, it was felt, would be delighted with a list half as long.

It also became evident in some of the focus groups that it was difficult not to acknowledge the importance of these tropes in establishing an early reference point in conversations with international colleagues, despite their perhaps clichéd nature within the country. The provenance of some of the tropes may be contested – whisky, bagpipes, haggis and tartan among them – but they have become synonymous with Scotland, whatever their original origin may have been, and therefore have been assimilated into the country's actual and perceived culture.³

Approach

We spent four months researching and writing – this included inviting people to participate in focus groups and others to complete long-form questionnaires, and undertaking desk research of existing objective and comparative data. The sister document to this paper – '*As Others See Us*'⁴ – provides the detail of our approach and the results. It can be located here. [add hyperlink, or remove sentence]

Contributors

We identified our contributors in conjunction with our client team. The nature of this work required input from those who are familiar with the cultural sector in Scotland from first-hand experience and, therefore, were people who

³ Scotland even shares its patron saint, Andrew, with a number of countries and cities across the world, including Barbados, Romania, Russia, Ukraine, Sarzana, Pienza and Amalfi in Italy, Esgueira in Portugal, Luqa in Malta, Parañaque in the Philippines and Patras in Greece.

⁴ The title of both documents comes from the Robert Burns poem 'To a louse': 'O wad some Pow'r the giftie gie us / To see oursels as ithers see us!'

had either worked in the sector from within the country, or come from outside to work in or visit Scotland.

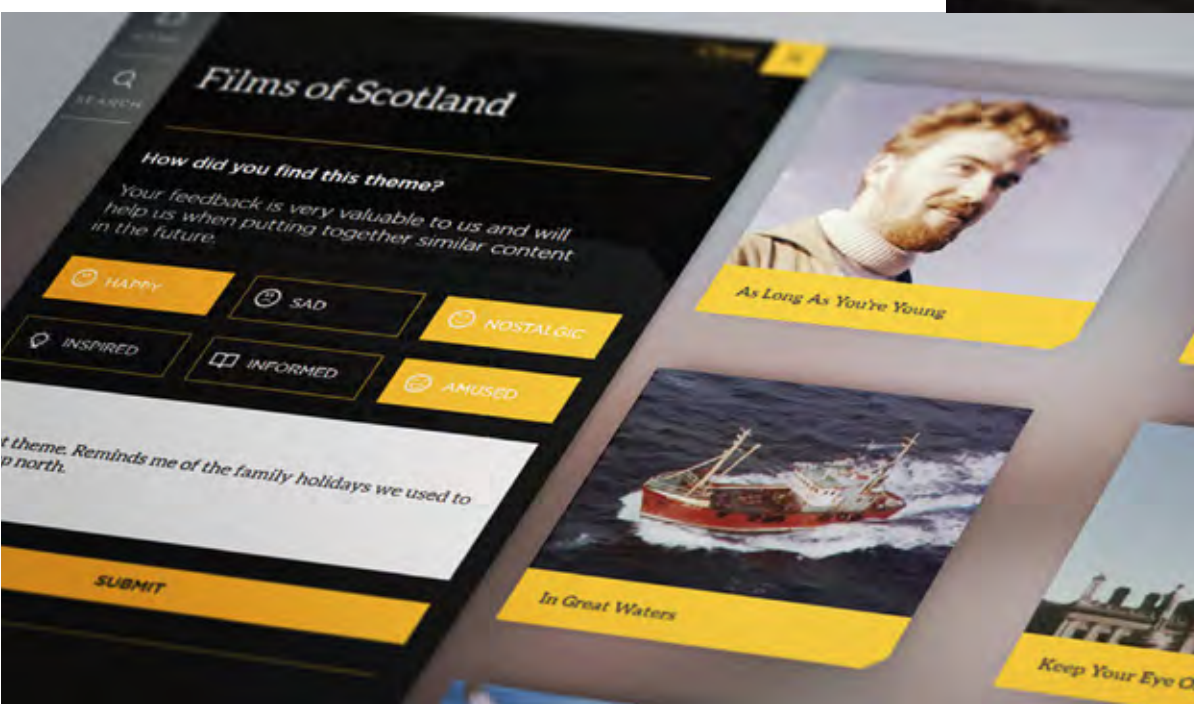
We felt a **long-form questionnaire** (45–60-minute completion) would allow an in-depth, considered response for what is, as can be seen from the text in this section, a complex set of concepts, caveats and agreed common understanding. This suggested that a public questionnaire aimed at the non-specialist would not be appropriate (although it would be interesting to see a parallel piece of work that asked the same research question, cold, to a cross section of the public). The questionnaire was, therefore, made available to cultural organisations and individuals that are already known to the clients, for example Creative Scotland’s Regularly Funded Organisations, and international companies/individuals that have worked in Scotland that are known to British Council. Also, additional international input was sought from the overseas alumni of Queen Margaret University. For the purpose of analysis, we have streamed their responses into two datasets representing:

- ◆ people who are based **in Scotland** and work in the sector: ‘the Scottish dataset’, 48 respondents (n48)
- ◆ people offering **external and international perspectives** on the basis of their professional engagement with the sector in Scotland: ‘the international dataset’ (n63).

Similarly, with the **focus groups** we approached over 60 senior personnel across all disciplines in the cultural sector – people with responsibility for the strategic overview of their organisation and also a good understanding of both their discipline and the sector generally. This included representatives from national collections and performance companies, the tertiary academic sector, British Council offices overseas, broadcasting, libraries

and heritage. We held eight focus group meetings with 28 people attending. To test some of the summary conclusions from these sessions, we convened an additional focus group of eight front-line cultural sector managers and workers and invited them to comment on how realistic or not, from their experience, the summary conclusions were.

In addition, we undertook **desk research** that sought to supplement the qualitative data we gathered with quantitative data from previous relevant studies and reports commissioned by government and the sector nationally and internationally. This was used to inform additional background case studies that provided a deeper context for the preparation of the two reports.



2 Context

IMAGES: (Left to right) *Howlin' Fling Music Festival*, Isle of Eigg [photographer Stephanie Gibson], *The Bush*, Alice Mary Cooper [photographer Tace Stevens] part of Made in Scotland showcase 2022



Some themes and words regularly appeared in our conversations and submissions, and in this section we have gathered and summarised some of the more frequent ones.

Perceptions

It may be instructive to start with some of the, largely external, perceptions of Scotland's cultural assets and attributes, of which this is a typical example:

Most significantly, Scotland's cultural assets to me would be its history, its geographical landscape and architecture, its festivals, its universities and conservatoires, and its flair at live events. These would be the assets that from the top of my head I would say bring the most traction, both financially and reputation-wise.

That is probably the definitive one-paragraph summary of responses from those living outwith the country, which helpfully outlines the main assets as immediately perceived. Others dug a little deeper:

Well-documented and preserved heritage sites alongside the most contemporary of venues. Gorgeous vistas and the welcoming communities that assist you in exploring them.

This notion of welcome shouldn't be underestimated – its frequency in response may, in part, be due to a sizeable proportion of overseas questionnaire respondents having been guests of exchange programmes hosted by the report's commissioning agencies; however, there was a sufficient correlation from others who had not been guests to suggest this is a key perception.

Respondents from within Scotland also explored relatively consistent perceptions:

Our intangible cultural heritage; our indigenous languages of Gaelic and Scots; our traditions and lore; our archaeology; our people and stories; our arts – especially music, song, dance, visual arts.

It was felt in the focus group discussions that perceptions, whether representative or not, were a valid and indeed important consideration when considering assets and attributes. This is partly because sometimes a local audience can take for granted what we see every day, and partly because a genuinely held perception holds true for that person.

International

Given the nature of this research brief it was inevitable that Scotland's international role, reputation and opportunity were frequent references. Sometimes this was viewed in a macro context:

There is a challenge coming which is 'what is the role of Scotland on the world stage' when there is a need for hyperlocal at this moment.

And the implications of COVID and, in particular, Brexit on the international scene were also noted:

A significant number of musicians are leaving the country and there is not enough Scottish talent being retained. There is a challenge here.

The practical challenges were underlined further by another contributor:

Coming out of COVID it is hard to be as international because, as a national company, we have a specific responsibility to employ Scottish talent ... There is a feeling that you need to drive these things in a local way. There is a challenge of wanting to be on the parapet and looking outward whilst prioritising employment opportunities on a really basic economic level for Scotland.

So, the desire to be international is balanced by the practicalities of ability/

capacity to do so, and also a responsibility to prioritise the livelihood of national talent.

Interestingly, despite several references to international collaboration and a strong international presence at many high-profile Scottish festivals, contributors often considered internationalism as an ‘export’ issue: taking Scotland’s cultural creators and product *to* rather than *from* other countries. This was seen more as a consequence of historic patterns from public funders that often find it easier to fund Scottish-based companies than visiting ones, and not as a lack of interest or demand for such international exchange and partnership. The commissioners of this report were both noted for their support in this area.

England

The relationship with England came up frequently, with England often used as a comparative measure but also in a broader societal sense of shaping a national psyche. The adjacency of a much larger ‘sibling’ was seen as a cause of trying to outdo or ‘prove yourself’, but also as creating opportunities not possible within Scotland. There is, of course, considerable complexity in the relationship between the two countries, and it is dynamic rather than static, informed by current as well as historical events. However, the relationship is an inescapable, and for some defining, element of Scotland’s culture.

Places [elsewhere in the UK] like Cornwall struggled and were subsumed [within an English identity by successive UK governments] but Scotland was always given permission to sustain its traditional folk culture and its heritage of its industrial working class. The [other] aspect is Scotland’s approach to education and the historical approach to public education

– free at the point of delivery – that saw people engage with [culture] throughout their schools and into university.

One discussion group contributor reminded us:

Scotland has a very particular nation-within-a-state identity that has a sense of always needing to define that identity. Scottish people draw on this creatively and this in itself is relatively unique. 300 years or so ago there was an agreement that said you are both ‘part of’ and ‘separate from’ and, in that, Scotland was required to be ‘Scottish’ in our cultural aspects in some sense. There is this balance that is not necessarily unique but pretty rare (nation within a state) – you can simultaneously be British and Scottish.

Empire

The discussions often led into the role of imperialism in Scotland’s culture historically and how that legacy has shaped current provision. At its most visible, the consequence of enrichment through imperial conquest and trade, either nationally or individually, can be seen in some of the cultural buildings commissioned during the high period of Empire: Kelvingrove, the various buildings occupied by the national galleries and museum in Edinburgh, Dundee’s Caird Hall and McManus Galleries, Aberdeen Art Galleries, the Albert Halls in Stirling, Paisley’s Town Hall and many more examples in communities across Scotland. One of the most significant built legacies from this period is the 40 ‘Carnegie libraries’, primarily in smaller communities from Jedburgh to Tain, built on the proceeds of Andrew Carnegie’s philanthropy. While the provenance of this wealth is questioned from a contemporary viewpoint, the buildings created a significant built cultural asset across the

country, establishing centres of cultural provision for well over a century. It is this established tradition of provision and cultivation of easy (and local) access that contributors found to be the true asset today, rather than the buildings themselves.

Care

This notion of care as a Scottish [attribute] is part of our identity. There is some sort of intersectionality in our ability to care and our size. We care deeply about our culture, and we are small enough to care. Don't know if it's because we are constantly striving to find our identity but there is a caringness about us in the sector as opposed to a competitiveness. The whole sector has bought into the success of the whole sector.

There will be objective evidence somewhere that shows Scotland's position in a ranking chart of the most/least caring nations, and, like most nations, we like to think we have traits of compassion and concern that translate into financial support and open doors to those in trouble. In this report's context, though, it is interesting to see care cited as an important element of what defines and/or influences Scotland's cultural sector. In discussion, it became clearer that what was being discussed was often empathy – an understanding of another's plight or challenge, and a willingness or even obligation to find some way of addressing it positively. This extends into the instrumental nature of culture – its ability to help influence or change thinking and activity beyond its own sphere, for example in social or economic domains, particularly health and tourism. The nature of recent cultural funding policy in Scotland (particularly over the past 20 years) has seen a greater emphasis placed on support for activities and organisations that demonstrate instrumental value, often in ways that

could be described as 'care'. There is, as ever, some debate about whether artists led the way and funding policy followed, or vice versa, and the truth, as ever, will be a bit of both. But, for example, Scotland's focus on disability arts (a much-cited area of excellence) has a history that extends into the 1970s and, to that extent, has been relatively pioneering in international terms. Similarly, performance by and for young people was frequently referred to as a particular Scottish strength – this too can chart its contemporary incarnation to origins in the 1960s and '70s with the growth of the youth theatre network and Scottish Youth Theatre, for example, and to more recent innovations in exploring performance for under-5s and festivals like Edinburgh International Children's Festival. Importantly, the broader context of the Scottish Government's National Outcomes⁵ references *fairness* as one of the key measures with a specific commitment to *respect, protect and fulfil human rights and live free from discrimination*.

History

You are a *product* of your history and you are *part* of your country's history; you both reflect and create it. You are a synthesis of your country's culture, bringing together the heritage and the now, and creating a direction for its future.

This was, in summarised form, the position of several contributors who found it impossible to distinguish the contemporary cultural individual from their historic cultural inheritance, while noting that each person's cultural inheritance could be quite different depending on how, where and when they were born and raised, and then lived: the lived cultural experience of a young Dundonian Sikh from the Ardler

⁵ <https://nationalperformance.gov.scot/what-it>

estate would likely be quite different from a middle-aged Christian from Bearsden, or a Goth from Portree. This suggests a number of parallel cultures existing within Scotland, not just expressed through racial or religious diversity, but also shaped by familial, economic and geographic circumstance.

There is a danger, we were told, in characterising lived cultural experience by broad genres. Better, rather, to assume a ‘fingerprint’ approach, with each person assimilating a unique cultural background through their myriad interactions with family, friends, the media, and their beliefs and experience. This assumption of the bespoke cultural life was felt to be an important philosophical attribute of the country’s cultural sector.

Environment

Many international contributors recognised the natural environment – landscape – as one of the enduring and endearing Scottish characteristics. In broad terms, environment was seen to be a significant cultural factor irrespective of origin – big city, small town, leafy suburb, rural farm, congested urban estate – but that this would be the case in every country. Scotland’s distinction is in the quality and nature of its non-urban environments – extensive coast, mountain massif, island archipelago, woodland, river network, loch, peatland – an exceptional diversity with some unique habitats in Europe. These have, in turn, been both a direct and an indirect influence on the nation’s cultural life.

The Gaelic language has words and phrases that reflect the relationship of the individual to the land with much greater complexity and nuance than English. The visual and filmed arts have long found rich subject matter in the Scottish environment, as have poets and novelists, and it is

notable that all Scotland’s native musical forms – the puirt-a-beul,⁶ strathspey,⁷ pibroch,⁸ Gaelic psalm precenting and òran luaidh⁹ – originate from the Highlands and Islands, where the landscape is arguably at its starkest and most beautiful (and perhaps most inspirational?).

This has its impact on the audience as well as the cultural creator. Can you divorce the environment from the event – how much impact does the location have? Does a theatre performance in Poolewe Village Hall have a different ambience or impact from the same performance given at the Tron?¹⁰ Is an open-air screening at Stromness harbour different from experiencing the same film at a multiplex, or in the touring Screen Machine? Audiences and promoters believe that it is. This accounts in part for the extraordinary growth in festivals in Scotland in recent decades; these are as much a reflection of place as they are of the festival’s content.

Duality

Throughout the conversations, each of which was stimulating, a duality emerged in many of the discussions and the examples offered. This was perhaps illustrated best when talking about the characteristic of ‘welcome’ and ‘community’ at a time when Glasgow had witnessed within a matter of days both a gathering to prevent asylum seekers being arrested and the rampaging of football supporters in George Square. Others pointed to artistic testaments

⁶ Mouth music (literally, tunes from a mouth).

⁷ A slow graceful dance or musical form, e.g. ‘The Bonnie Banks o’ Loch Lomond’.

⁸ A form of music for the bagpipes involving elaborate variations on a theme.

⁹ Waulking songs (traditionally sung by women while fulling [waulking] cloth).

¹⁰ A theatre in Glasgow.

to duality, such as Jekyll and Hyde or the Justified Sinner,¹¹ and a common thread of darkness and light expressed in creative work. Often, for every instance of a beneficial quality a counter-example could be found, for example in networking and nepotism. This in itself might be a characteristically Scottish thing. It even extends to institutions, such as the National Theatre of Scotland:

The duality of being part of the national performing companies but also part of the theatre sector.

One contributor suggested that duality was a good attribute. It creates a creative tension that constantly challenges and, in doing so, propels innovation and reflection – both of which are seen as healthy attributes. This positive assertion seems an appropriate way to consider a cultural attribute that is likely to remain a part of the national cultural psyche.

Central Belt¹²

Often our questions engendered answers that took us in different directions. One conversation began by considering what special features in our cultural ecology encourage ambassadorship, creators and cultural leaders. One contributor suggested the creative environment might not be unique in that sense, however:

There are questions about our geography, the extent to which we have a stonking Central Belt that is half the population and has about eight or nine universities – what you end up with is a mini-London. That is unique to Scotland and links back to

¹¹ James Hogg's 1824 novel, *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner: Written by Himself*.

¹² A broad geographic band of central Scotland stretching from the east to the west coast and including Edinburgh and Glasgow.

the idea about connectedness. It allows people to stay in that space; however, this can also cause frustration and challenges because people are not able to move on.

Again, we found this positive–negative dualism – the benefits of the Central Belt's scale also causing potential imbalances in provision elsewhere in the country. This tension was not considered unique to Scotland; in fact, most regions within a country are accused of their main city swallowing up the bulk of resource while its catchment area struggles. The difference in Scotland's case, and the consequent asset, is the extraordinary richness of provision within the Central Belt, particularly Glasgow and Edinburgh, each of which enjoys the cultural and academic assets of a major European capital city, so Scotland wins out (and the rest of the country gets to sit back and enjoy the, usually goodhearted, rivalry between the two great cities).

Authenticity

The sector appears to be 'of a place', rooted in its cultural heritage yet forward-looking and ambitious; there is a can-do attitude, a sense of independence, embracing what is real with an honesty, openness and a sense of both belonging and welcoming.

This notion of authenticity and new voices [is fine, but] the really exciting thing about Scottish culture is that it is constantly new and inventing. We have a traditional culture that itself isn't set.

That last line conjures a lovely image of a dynamic culture with roots. However, the whole notion of describing, or ascribing, 'authenticity' was a challenge for one contributor:

Individuals, institutions, histories, context, cultures are all interweaving – they exist

in this intersubjective¹³ space. If we see these things as assets, how do we use these to bring benefit to Scotland? What is authentic for us, what does that mean in terms of history and where we are going?

Egalitarianism

The word ‘egalitarian’ was frequently used by contributors, usually synonymously with equality or in the sense of classlessness:

One of the things that is fascinating and brilliant about Scottish culture is the equal value placed on ‘elite arts’ and ‘egalitarianism’. This idea of ‘art for everyone’ and ‘accessibility’. That ability to hold the orchestra and other national companies and something like a theatre show being brought to rural areas in the back of a van at the same level.

The truth of this was contested to a certain extent by our reference focus group of front-line workers and managers, who recognised the ambition but not always the practice. As ever, historical precedent was cited, suggesting that the egalitarian impulse could be charted from the 16th century, the early days of the country’s Reformed church, which wanted everyone to be able to read the Bible, and the subsequent 1696 Act, which looked to create ‘a school in every parish’. This was a democratisation of education unusual for its time, part of whose legacy is the sense that there should be universal access to public services that are deemed beneficial, such as cultural provision.

The conversations frequently referred to the accessibility of cultural activity, and often contributors used *egalitarian* as a synonym for *accessible*. While they are

related, it’s perhaps worth distinguishing between the two: ‘*Arts and culture for all*’ was a phrase used by several overseas contributors as one of the perceived attributes. Also:

Ensuring accessibility to all, providing an equal platform for artists of diverse talents and talent-levels, a strong focus on arts education.

This suggests the practical outcome of an egalitarian approach, of which another much-referenced example was the National Theatre of Scotland, a company specifically created not to have a building base to ensure that it works collaboratively and geographically across the country.

There is a certain fluidity between high culture and low culture that seems quite particular. While there are some top-down approaches, there is also culture from the ground up that emerges from communities and there is a fluidity to how they operate. Might not be unique but makes Scotland quite special.

Democratic intellect

Related to egalitarianism, several contributors saw the current national cultural mindset as a consequence of ‘the democratic intellect’¹⁴ – the generalist tradition of education in Scotland, a tradition in which a philosophical underpinning of interdisciplinary education links the intellectual traditions of the Scottish Enlightenment¹⁵ to those of today.

¹⁴ A concept first outlined by George Davie in his influential 1969 book *The Democratic Intellect: Scotland and Her Universities in the Nineteenth Century*.

¹⁵ A period in 18th- and 19th-century Scotland characterised by an outpouring of intellectual and scientific accomplishments, including work by David Hume, Adam Smith and Robert Burns.

¹³ Shared by more than one conscious mind.

I wonder how many national identities have that equity; equity of status and scale. It has something to do with Scotland defending its education – this isn't a change or something new – this has always been, and is, what Scottish identity is about.

It was noted by some that this was another optimistic reading of a situation in which the reality was often more mixed on the ground, and perhaps had more substance in (even recent) historical context rather than reflecting the contemporary situation.

Scale

The other thing [is] collaboration and the degree of separation that is very, very small. It is really easy to meet people.

For a nation of five million, some contributors felt Scotland to be disproportionately well served in terms of world-class institutions that wouldn't normally be found/expected in a country of this size (print workshops and art schools were frequently referenced). It was also noted that, even at large-scale, a symbiosis can occur, largely due to the scale of the country and size of its population.

The most obvious example is the binary of the Edinburgh Fringe being the platform of all artists, from established to up-and-coming (having debuted some now-established playwrights and stand-up comedians), and the Edinburgh International Festival featuring high-end budgeted productions and exhibitions. The remarkable point being that these two festivals create a symbiotic business relationship whereby audience members attracted by one festival are exposed to the marketing of the other, resulting in cross-pollination of markets.

The creative approach generally responds to change more easily than other sectors – some felt Scotland's scale ensures it is particularly adept at this:

The attribute is this notion of flexibility – Scotland responds and alters its approach.

Largely, though, when scale was discussed it was in terms of how easy it is to connect and be connected with other creators and producers, with funders and educators, and with audiences:

It's small enough that there's networks ... which means you can have meaningful connections and partnerships which lead to new forms of production. It's also small enough that you can do something on a nationwide scale so you can showcase what a nation does in a way that you couldn't in other countries.

Values

There can be a tendency to generalise when looking at values that might imbue a wide range of creative disciplines, and exceptions will always be found; however, *'Scotland's arts and culture sector is extremely open-minded. People, topics or art forms, everything always gets a chance. The sector therefore is very welcoming and makes it very easy to participate or simply enjoy'.*

In a world where many countries share similar levels of cultural infrastructure, societal values become an increasingly significant factor in establishing distinctive characteristics. These include values imputed by reputation, such as:

A sector that is proud of its traditional heritage, an industry that has kept up with the pace of its time, an arts council that is committed to fund and support artists.

The veracity of some of these assertions might be challenged by those on the ground; however, perceptions are valid, particularly when assessing the international view of the country's cultural assets, as the quotes below illustrate:

The arts are very much alive and refined in Scotland; the country hosts some of the best-quality art I've seen.

Excellent support for the arts and culture sector from the whole society.

I expect something that is rooted in the history of the land and its people, but also forward-thinking, innovative and collaborative.

Statistics tend to back up these positive views, particularly when considering how much people value cultural activity. One discussion group contributor informed us:

There is a real belief in the country. 84 per cent of people in Scotland agree that Scotland is a creative country. 96 per cent of people have turned to culture and creativity during the pandemic more than they have done before. 86 per cent believe that it's right that there should be funding for arts activity in Scotland. These figures are consistently high.

Inclusive

This was one of the words most used by questionnaire contributors both within and outwith Scotland. For some, it had historic resonance and roots:

That melting pot of working-class, industrial individuals, various different people being in those spaces ... they are the assets that we are now – the people that you're talking about are the very last vestiges of that education system that actually wasn't so hierarchical, wasn't so

divided up and just saw these melting pots of activity going on, and I think again that that has been a very strong asset.

For others it suggested a culmination of a series of historic social and economic events and opportunities:

All [our] history has led us to a certain point with a very international, global perspective that is not parochial 'Scottishness'. It is well-informed, very deep-rooted despite the ongoing issues of racism and so on that persist, but there is a real sense of Scotland in the world that has fuelled the culture and creativity of the country as part of those conditions. This creates a backdrop and confidence that people can draw on. As a seafaring country, historically [we are a] people connected to the world.

These two quotations provide the broader societal context. More specifically, from a cultural perspective:

People in the arts community and libraries in Scotland are very keen to listen and learn – sharing knowledge and discussions with colleagues elsewhere is a real strength. It's obvious which countries are like this. This is a characteristic of the cultural sector.

Inclusion was often used synonymously with what we have outlined earlier as *egalitarianism*, and one might usefully be considered a subset of the other. They do suggest a fairness and meritocracy that sometimes is at odds with what our sounding-board group believed is the reality. But one observer suggested these types of statement can become self-fulfilling:

There is an aspect of 'we say these things and we want to believe them' so, therefore, they become more true – because we're trying to live up to it. For example, it's a

good thing to think you are working in a country that values culture – if it is stated and repeated then people will start to act that way.¹⁶

Diversity

Diversity was another word that appeared frequently from the questionnaire contributors; often this was used to indicate the range of creative endeavours in the country or the geographical breadth of cultural reach, both of which were deemed to be impressive. However, it was also used to underline some of the points made regarding both Empire and egalitarianism:

It is very important to preserve this diversity, avoiding stereotypes and really base the research on actual profound knowledge and ask questions about who does it represent, who does it leave out? Looking at the history and the provenance of things and making sure there's a view of all the voices involved.

When the word was used in its more contemporary understanding – a representation of the country's range of ethnicities, genders and often unheard voices – there was less confidence about how effectively Scotland achieved this. It was perhaps best summarised in the sounding-board group discussion. Group members noted that diversity and inclusion in Scotland had become far better over the past decade (with some recalling further back, in the 1970s and '80s), but that it was still a work in progress. An aspiration rather than a conclusion, about which there should be no complacency:

¹⁶ The words 'Work as if you live in the early days of a better nation' are carved on the wall of the Scottish parliament building (attributed to the Scots author Alasdair Gray – although he found it in the work of Canadian writer Dennis Lee).

How national conversations around what we are actually doing seem to have an impact in terms of what people's attitudes are, for example towards migrants ... and I am by no means saying that Scotland is not a racist country ... just trying to understand why nationalism is developing in different ways north and south of the border. We have to pay attention to what's happening in the national conversation around these notions.

There was also a sense that the issue was one that was quickly becoming better understood, with greater profile and an awareness that positive action was required:

A distinctive characteristic that has been and is evolving quite rapidly over the last couple years is 'self-reflection' ... the last year has made a lot of organisations go through an awakening to acknowledge the impact and contribution of migrant cultures. It is both an understanding and an owning up to the history of colonialism ... seeking diversity in programming but also at the policy level.

‘A sign of cultural confidence is being able to absorb, experience and be inspired by other influences.’





IMAGE: Glass Nexus Forum, Alastair Pilkington Studio, North Lands
Creative Lybster [photographer Angus Mackay]

3 Attributes

Cut to the chase: what are the national cultural attributes?

Media interviews demand concise answers that provide headlines, and there's an understandable temptation in an exercise like this to do the same – just tell me what the attributes are and we can move on ... We've resisted that until now, because the context of the exploration is too nuanced and inter-related to provide simple one-word answers. However, the time has come to reveal Scotland's national cultural attributes, because it's helpful to start the conversation, and that is one of our key findings: people are keen to consider and discuss the whole notion of 'cultural attribute and asset', not because there's a specific empirical answer, but because the discussion itself involves issues whose complexity and importance is often overlooked, and which can feed back into their cultural or organisational practice.

In general, our discussions focused away from the listing of physical assets and looked for broader, more generalised characteristics, for example an unusually large number of festivals at all scales, rather than a focus on specific festivals. The following six examples that summarise the conversations are, therefore, composites of a range of characteristics (and which relate to the six areas identified in Section 7 of *'As Others See Us'*):

- ◆ Rooted
- ◆ Egalitarian
- ◆ Dynamic
- ◆ Connected
- ◆ Supported
- ◆ Spiorad/spirit

Rooted:

an international outlook with a grassroots approach

Survey contributors felt Scotland's cultural sector work and practice is:

- ◆ risk-taking
- ◆ innovative
- ◆ experimental
- ◆ boundary-pushing
- ◆ forward-looking
- ◆ progressive.

Scotland is seen as outward-looking with many contributors noting that Scots take pride in their culture (in a different way than England, for example) and suggesting there is a coherence and confidence in the way that Scots present themselves and the identity of Scotland.

Scotland is seen as having a bottom-up approach to creating culture that reflects what people and communities actually want. This grassroots element also stems from actively bringing young people into the creative sector.

One contributor suggested creators start with a sense of trying to please the community and that this is one reason the country's grassroots approach has become internationally known. Examples of this included Deveron Arts' 'The Town Is The Venue' approach and Dumfries *'buying the town square for the community, led largely by the success of The Stove's approach'*.

In contrast to England, for example, the cultural sector is perceived to be well-integrated from national level to community level with a mutual respect between national, civic and voluntary institutions. There is equal value placed on 'high arts' and 'low arts'. Scotland gives great importance to local collections and sees the significance of small places. Many contributors noted that there is something

interesting about the way people celebrate culture in Scotland, highlighting the range and extent of both formal and informal spaces that have always been about coming together.

Within this, there is significant value placed on sharing expertise and knowledge. A contributor told us they regularly get comments from other countries that Scotland works really well together: it is integrated in how it approaches and operates within the cultural sector. Some of this stems from size and being well-networked, but it also comes down to the people and the structures that are in place. However, this can also lead to cliquishness, *‘with a kind of revolving door of who’s going to be in charge/involved, which can make it a difficult environment for people to join’.*

Egalitarian:

a population that values culture for everyone

Survey contributors felt Scotland’s cultural sector is seen as world-leading in its:

- ◆ diversity of artforms
- ◆ representation
- ◆ audiences
- ◆ inclusivity and accessibility (recognising that these are ongoing, evolving processes).

Our conversations consistently demonstrated a warmth of rhetoric about culture in Scotland and frequently highlighted an egalitarian aspect to Scottish culture. Several contributors highlighted the quality, depth and breadth of collections beyond central Scotland and a consequent sense of commitment to cultural delivery to the entire nation. This commitment is reflective of widely held values, from national collections (galleries, libraries, operas, orchestras etc.) to local galleries, festivals and smaller performing arts venues.

There is a confidence that underpins the Scottish cultural sector – confidence in the celebratory nature but also the confidence in culture being embedded as to how we see ourselves.

Scots don’t necessarily see the need to talk about the economic value of art and culture because there is a quite genuine feeling that they know the value (especially in contrast to other parts of the UK).

It feels very natural within the culture sector that we don’t have to make that special pleading.

Another contributor said, *‘in Scotland culture is valued in and of itself*, suggesting there isn’t a need to justify culture economically. This wasn’t a universally held view, contextualised by the fact that for many decades (since the 1980s) the sector *had* needed to make the economic case for culture. However, now that case seems to have been accepted there is a new emphasis on supporting culture for its social benefits.

Political stability in the cultural sector is seen as part of the reason Scotland does not need to make the case for culture. The most recent Cabinet Secretary for Culture was in that role for 13 years, a period in which they were able to get to know and understand the cultural sector. This consistency was felt to be quite different to other countries.

Dynamic:

a culturally varied country

Survey contributors felt Scotland's cultural outputs are:

- ◆ vibrant
- ◆ dynamic
- ◆ contemporary yet rooted in tradition
- ◆ able to fuse tradition and modernity
- ◆ deep, thoughtful, relevant and universal
- ◆ reflective of place and landscape
- ◆ rooted in communities and strong social values
- ◆ culturally distinct from the rest of the UK
- ◆ high quality.

Scotland has a nation-within-a-state identity that has a sense of always needing to define that identity. Contributors felt we draw on this creatively and that as Scots we often feel the need to stand for something, and that is a very dynamic part of the culture.

It is hard to think of creatives in Scotland where you don't think of their values and their backgrounds included in their work.

If you go to different parts of Scotland, you are going to have very different cultural experiences. The country is culturally dynamic because of these differences, often celebrated in local festivals and events that reflect the characteristics of that area and its people.

Connected:

a small but beautiful and well-networked country

Survey contributors felt the way of working in Scotland's cultural sector is:

- ◆ connected
- ◆ collaborative
- ◆ highly professional and proficient
- ◆ admired for its skills
- ◆ a source of internationally renowned expertise
- ◆ of a high standard
- ◆ highly organised and efficient
- ◆ resourceful
- ◆ ingenious and inventive
- ◆ open-minded
- ◆ welcoming
- ◆ generous in sharing its expertise.

Scotland's size and geography was noted by many contributors. In terms of its scale, the relationship to Scotland psychologically is interesting because it is both accessible and remote at the same time. It is seen as many different things including: '*a place of escape, a place of romance, a place to find work*'. In terms of geography, people in Scotland have a special relationship with the landscape. It was noted that Scottish people engaging with the landscape is very distinctive: '*Its beauty – it is a magnet ... it stirs imaginations – it stirs passions ... It is built for creativity.*'

Many highlighted that the country is small enough to have strong networks, which allows meaningful connections and partnerships within the sectors, which lead to new forms of production:

It's also small enough that you can do something on a nationwide scale so you can showcase what a nation does in a way that you couldn't in other countries.

Supported:

a home for artists' production

Survey contributors felt Scotland's cultural work and practice is:

- ◆ risk-taking
- ◆ innovative
- ◆ experimental
- ◆ boundary-pushing
- ◆ forward-looking
- ◆ forward-thinking
- ◆ progressive
- ◆ a source of knowledge, and best practice models.

Contributors felt there were several reasons that allowed, or encouraged, artists to have this level of risk-taking and experimentation – these ranged from support from national and local funding bodies to the more practical:

One of the factors that make it possible is the affordability of places to live in Scotland that makes graduates want to stay in Scotland, and because of the creative networks and opportunities that are here.

The affordability of places to live in Scotland is one aspect that helps retain creatives. Glasgow in particular is seen as a cheaper place to live and be an artist than locations like London. However, our front-line focus group felt that this was relative – Scottish cities can feel just as unaffordable to early-career creatives as anywhere else.

Another highlighted factor was excellent access to high-quality institutions that support artists, for example the four art schools. Contributors suggested Scotland is well-known as a centre of production. It was noted that British Council delegates are always amazed by how many print studios there are (five). One contributor said artists can train and then live here and have viable careers because of the density

of visual arts education and opportunity. It was suggested that other countries do not have the same level of publicly funded and open-access production facilities.

One participant used the word 'mild' to describe the visual arts sector in Scotland – it is a supportive environment. They noted that many international artists come to Scotland from highly competitive environments elsewhere '*and what you have in Scotland is almost a second-city phenomenon*', suggesting that '*the pressure is off*'. They also noted Scotland has '*a reputation for producing really high-level art and artists*'. This can be seen in measures such as Turner Prize success, for example, even although other indicators show that graduates from English art schools can be earning much more than those from Scottish ones within five years of graduation.

Spiorad:

a spirit rooted in valued education and diaspora

Survey contributors felt Scotland has a distinctive cultural voice that comes over as:

- ◆ authentic
- ◆ honest
- ◆ bold
- ◆ challenging
- ◆ saying what needs to be said

In conversation, this distinctiveness was seen more as a spirit among the cultural sector – a swagger, some suggested, or gallousness ¹⁷as it might be identified in Glasgow – with one contributor saying there never seems to be a shortage of aspiration within young people and

¹⁷ Noun: swagger, confidence, with a hint of mischief

suggesting there is a sense of confidence to engage with creativity.

Some suggested there is a warm rhetoric towards the arts and cultural sector that persists, even from those that don't regularly participate in it. Others related this to the Scottish education system, which is seen to have been valued traditionally and is, at all levels, largely still accessible to everybody. However, it was also noted this can sometimes lead to frustration and the loss of creative individuals to other places if their passion and expectation isn't met with a commensurate commitment from institutions and funding sources.

Many participants felt that there was something special in how Scots cared for their diaspora, noting, *'the relationship we have with Scots abroad is unusual ... I don't know other countries that have quite that same relationship'*. This notion of a cultural hinterland, spread across the world and evidenced in clan gatherings and Burns nights globally, was felt to suggest a cultural heft and presence internationally. This, while not unique, certainly struck participants as rare and distinctive – and, in the case of Burns Suppers, combined a range of Scottish cultural references/tropes: dress, tartan, poetry, song, food and whisky.



IMAGE: Fireworks Display at Stirling Castle, Hogmanay,
[photographer PK Perspective]



Often, contributors related a palette of assets.

Scotland's cultural assets to me would be its history, its geographical landscape and architecture, its festivals, its universities and conservatoires, and its flair at live events.

The conversations recognised that there is a nexus where these cultural assets intersect for the individual, constructing their 'fingerprint' view of the country's culture.

This section briefly summarises those elements that contributors in the conversations and questionnaires consistently identified as assets. These are explored more specifically in Section 9 of the Survey Findings Report ('As Others See Us'), but can be summarised as:

- ◆ Edinburgh in August
- ◆ Festivals
- ◆ Artists
- ◆ Landscape
- ◆ Tradition
- ◆ Social values
- ◆ Infrastructure

Edinburgh in August

Living in Scotland, it can become easy to become complacent about the extraordinary cultural presence and impact of the high-point of the festival season in Edinburgh. Without doubt this is the one thing that all contributors mention, and Edinburgh in August is truly a global cultural phenomenon.

Several festivals co-exist during the month, most noticeably the Edinburgh International Festival, the Edinburgh Festival Fringe (the world's largest festival), Edinburgh Book Festival, Edinburgh Art Festival and the Military Tattoo. The scale and content of any one of these would be a significant cultural asset in itself; however, when they are combined it creates an extraordinary cultural presence that might fairly be described as unique.

This impact is also due in large part to the city itself, which is a key performer in the visitor and participant experience. Most performances take place within a relatively small area around the centre of the city, whose topography and architecture become a key ingredient in the success of the overall visitor experience. If you transplanted all the Edinburgh festivals to Glasgow or Aberdeen they would still be impressive, but would lack the special ingredient that the backdrop of Edinburgh Old and New Towns provide.

Edinburgh in August is an economic lifeline for many non-cultural businesses within the city, but it also helps sustain the cultural infrastructure in the city for the rest of the year. Venue rents, equipment hire, food and accommodation all support small cultural businesses that would not be able to exist without that one hectic month.

Festivals

Festivals predominate in the survey responses from international contributors, with many individually name-checked by multiple respondents as well as more generic comments about 'amazing festivals' and the number of platforms available to the sector in Scotland.

Over 200 festivals of significance take place annually with a geographic, thematic and calendar range that makes them,

collectively, a significant cultural asset for the country. Cited events included Cryptic's Sonica, the St Magnus Festival, East Neuk Festival and Celtic Connections – significantly, each of these has strong international content.

Artists

Perhaps the most obvious asset is people – some participants identified 'the Scottish People' directly, but most specified the contemporary creative workforce. Internationally, this was seen as:

In Scotland the community of artists is a valuable asset in terms of mentorship and sharing the unique style of Scottish art ...

Scotland's living (and dead) artists are its most important cultural asset.

The inventiveness of its artists and managers. Their pride and respect for the Scottish culture.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the Scottish cultural sector perceives its greatest asset to be people: practitioners, the cultural workforce, artists, producers, curators and managers:

The artists who get together, rent studios, then open up things to other artists.

This is not self-serving: it reflects the reality that without a motivated and supported cultural workforce, the other elements of cultural infrastructure don't work as well. The success of the sector, it was felt, should not be measured in awards alone (although it was felt this was a useful indicator), but in numbers attending culturally related further education, the range of non-professional cultural organisations and events, and the levels of participation and attendance at professional cultural events and venues across the country. These levels

were instinctively felt to be high when compared with other countries.

Landscape

We noted earlier the impact, and influence, of landscape on creators and visitors – its variety and quality being genuinely exceptional by international comparison.

This can work well both as inspiration for the creative impulse – the subject of artworks, the backdrop to films – and to suggest a deeper relationship between the land and the people. This relationship has historic roots and helps shape the national psyche. Even for urbanite Scots there is an awareness of a shared environmental inheritance that is something quite special.

This extends into the built environment as well, and Scotland's six UNESCO-designated World Heritage Sites include examples of both types of landscape: Edinburgh's Old and New Towns and New Lanark, as well as St Kilda and the Heart of Neolithic Orkney.

Tradition

The folk music and dance music traditions are what I know best. They have had a big impact on the cultural circles I engage with.

International contributors were impressed that children growing up in Scotland learn to ceilidh dance. In terms of traditional music, internationally there is an impressive reputation for innovation and extremely high standards, particularly in instrumental performance, with 'virtuosity' often remarked upon in international contexts. Celtic Connections is seen as a key international showcase for this. Pre-COVID, touring traditional bands/musicians were considered great

ambassadors for the country and its musical culture.

Intangible cultural heritage also featured regularly in both survey and conversations, with contributors noting that story and storytelling has a particularly central role, as well as song, recitation and dance; and that this heritage was entirely integrated into the whole cultural offering in the country:

Creating a civil culture which should be nurtured and accessible; sustaining, modernising and interpreting Scotland's history; Scotland has wonderful architecture presenting a story, it is tangible; it also has a spirited source of intangible storytelling in dance, song, narrative.

Social values

While *cultivating* social values was seen as an attribute, the actual values are seen as significant assets: egalitarianism, equality, inclusivity and diversity were all cited as assets. Social values, political values, capacity for critique, and the desire to push boundaries were also identified. For example:

How art is used to combat social exclusion and improve the wellbeing of the locals, as I worked with organisations doing activities such as art therapy and advocating that it should be recognised by the NHS as an official prescription, training programmes in technical jobs in theatre to combat youth unemployment, audience outreach programmes, etc.

Infrastructure

Scotland's cultural infrastructure as an asset is brought into more explicit focus through a wealth of specific contexts and examples. Contributors noted:

- ◆ producing organisations (theatres, touring organisations, performers)
- ◆ freelancing artists and cultural practitioners in general
- ◆ Scottish heritage sector (e.g. national parks, historic buildings)
- ◆ cultural development organisations that help the cultural sector to remain sustainable.

This infrastructure, it was felt, is key to the cultivation of expertise and skill, with many noting that the four major art schools are an exceptional provision for a population of Scotland's size.

As noted earlier, Scotland effectively has two capital cities: the cultural facilities in Glasgow are of a scale and quality that are exceptional for a 'second city'. These include new and old performance facilities (the SEC Armadillo and the Theatre Royal; the Concert Hall and the Pavilion Theatre; Tramway), and museums and galleries (Kelvingrove, Burrell, Riverside, and the Museum of Modern Art), as well as a plethora of smaller-scale venues. Glasgow is also the main centre of broadcasting in Scotland and an important player in the UK's film and TV industry. Significantly, Glasgow also has a mechanism – the Convention Bureau – that actively seeks to attract and host major events, cultural and otherwise (such as the 2021 international COP26 Conference).

Even during a period of economic stagnation nationally over the last 10 years the country has continued to see investment in its cultural infrastructure, most notably the remarkable V&A at Dundee, Aberdeen's refurbished and

extended art galleries, and the current renovation of Paisley Museum and Inverness Castle. The Wasps network of artists' studio provision has also continued to grow, with additional facilities being created in Orkney, Glasgow, Inverness, Perth and Skye in the last decade.

While Scotland has no direct equivalent of the European *kulturhus*, contributors reminded us it does boast a large array of local cultural provision through an extensive network of libraries, museums, comedy venues and independent cinemas. In many areas, the community centre provides a home for a range of touring performances and is, ostensibly, a small arts centre – the Lochgelly Centre in Fife was offered as a good example, as was the extent of the provision in Shetland, with even very small communities having access to excellent local multi-purpose halls.

Other assets are available ...

During the conversations, and from the various survey submissions, we gathered many individual recommendations for specific assets – people, venues and events. The fact that this list was reassuringly long speaks to the depth and variety of the Scottish cultural sector, and we felt it would be helpful to group some of these as they illustrate a richer trove of cultural assets, including:

- ◆ innovators
- ◆ influential models
- ◆ international connectors
- ◆ place
- ◆ Edinburgh and Glasgow
- ◆ game changers
- ◆ Spiorad na'h'Alba

Innovators

Scotland's **Disability Arts** providers were often referenced, both by Scots and overseas contributors, as an area where the country continues to innovate. Birds of Paradise were mentioned several times, and there was recognition for the recent work of Indepen-dance, Drake Music, Claire Cunningham, Janice Parker and Curious Seed, as well as recognition for the pioneering (and continuing) work of longer-standing companies such as Artlink, Artlink Central and Project Ability.

Work with and for **young people** was another frequent reference point. Again, the contemporary provision was well-recognised, particularly the work of the Edinburgh International Children's Festival (formerly Imagine), but also developing areas, such as Starcatchers' work with under-5s. Companies such as Catherine Wheels regularly tour internationally, building on and complementing work over the last 30 years by the likes of TAG, Wee Stories and Firefly.

Significantly, in 2020 the Scottish Government passed **legislation on the rights of the child** – this provides a legal basis for their protection but underlines the status of the child in Scottish society that, culturally, is likely only to develop further.

‘It comes back to
Scottish identity
being both within
and outside’





Influential models

Scotland has, contributors felt, provided some significant cultural models that have been adapted internationally. The most frequently cited was festivals generally and the Edinburgh Festival Fringe in particular, which has spawned several international versions. Similarly, the Edinburgh International Festival provided a mid-20th-century blueprint for what is now a well-established major festival format, with versions elsewhere in the UK.

The National Theatre of Scotland – a ‘theatre without walls’ and with no permanent performance base – was mentioned by several contributors as establishing a model for similar provision at national level.

On a more modest scale, it was noted that Room 13 International, a visual art-in-education initiative begun in Caol Primary School in Fort William, has quietly influenced the creation of 18 similar student-run, primary school-based studios worldwide since 1994.

In one conversation, a contributor reminded us that the UNESCO City of Culture programme was devised and started initially in Edinburgh, which achieved the designation of City of Literature, literally by designing the scheme from the outset. There are now more than 200 cities from 72 countries in the network, including Dundee (Design) and Glasgow (Music).

International connectors

The importance of individuals was revealed in the various suggestions of people as cultural assets. This was often related to the notion of ambassadorship, with Claire Cunningham’s work within dance and disability arts in Germany cited as a great example by several people. It was suggested

these ambassadors are a major asset in and of themselves, as they take with them a sense of place. Scottish graduates were also considered to be ambassadors in the sense that when you have studied in Scotland you will take ‘Scottishness’ with you.

Others pointed to the indefatigable impresario Richard Demarco, who remains a cultural catalyst in his 90s, and has been a champion of connecting Scotland internationally for seven decades. Cathie Boyd’s Cryptic was seen as another significant Scottish-based company that has dedicated itself to engaging internationally, often at the cutting edge of a variety of artforms, visual and performance-based, both with its own productions and through its curated international festival, Sonica.

Place

Several companies were identified that, for some, embodied the sense of place through their focus on the local or hyperlocal while still maintaining an international presence. Of these, Deveron Projects based in Huntly was often cited. Their ‘The Town Is The Venue’ philosophy has seen an extraordinary range of international artists’ residencies working with local individuals on projects involving food culture, displacement, regeneration and celebration for over 25 years.

The Highland-based Fèisean (music tuition festivals for young people) is another powerful example of a community-led movement. It started in Barra in 1981 and now has almost 50 community-run festivals taking place annually. An independent umbrella association, Fèisean nan Gàidheal, supports them as well as organising the annual Blàs festival and supporting ceilidh trails, working with 6,000 young people annually and attracting audiences of 80,000.

The Stove Network in Dumfries is another asset that was often identified: operating initially out of a former retail unit in the town's High Street, The Stove Network uses cultural activity as means of bringing people together and now has a diverse membership of over 600 artists and other active citizens, ranging from café owners to wild food chefs, and video artists to DJs, who care about a wide range of issues: culture and the arts, heritage, community activism, regeneration, and the environment.

Edinburgh and Glasgow

Earlier, we discussed the importance of the Central Belt as a driver for creativity and an immense national cultural resource, and that area is anchored by the twin presence of two great cities less than an hour apart. Few contributors did not reference at least one of the cities; many noted the influence of both as assets:

The festivals like EIFF, the Fringe, EIF of course, the fact that your national museums and galleries are FREE for all, Calton Hill and the new home of Collective in the City Observatory, always loved visiting Kelvingrove Museum, CCA and Glasgow Film Theatre. Edinburgh Castle, Holyrood Castle. And the smaller arts orgs like Dovecot Studios, Talbot Rice Gallery and Edinburgh Printmakers.

Game changers

During our conversations, several seminal moments were cited that in retrospect were game changers for the cultural sector, and could, therefore, be considered as assets:

Abertay University established the world's first computer games degree in the early 1990s. Since then, Dundee has played host to a significant games sector,

disproportionate to a city of its size, and with exceptional successes such as *Grand Theft Auto*, *Lemmings*, and, more recently, *Minecraft*.

The Traditional Music Course at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland was established as the first wave of 'fèis graduates' appeared and remains the UK's only Bachelor of Music degree dedicated to traditional and folk music. The flowering of professional traditional music in the country in the last 15 years is in no small part due to this course.

For many, Glasgow 1990, the city's year as European Capital of Culture, remains a pivotal moment in not just the city's but the country's view of itself as a significant international cultural player. At over 30 years' distance, it is hard for some to recall the incredible shot of confidence it gave the creative sector in Scotland and the way it instilled a level of ambition that still resonates today.

In the 1990s, Dundee was at an economic nadir after years of population drift. Faced with endemic social problems across the city, it chose, counter-intuitively to some, to invest in a new centre for contemporary art, the **DCA**, and this act of faith in the creativity of its citizens resulted in a vote of confidence in culture-led regeneration as a key part of the city's social and economic recovery – a journey that continues and which has seen the arrival of the V&A and Dundee's designation as a UNESCO City of Design.

The awareness of Burns' work internationally was also felt to be a remarkable asset and, though it may appear trite, the creation of the Burns Supper in 1801 (mentioned in our conversations) has led to Scotland's regular annual cultural presence in many countries, including those that have no detectable Scots diaspora, notably Russia.

Spiorad na h-Alba

The Gaelic language. Take care of this, and the arts that spring from it will flourish.

The Gaels – the people rooted in a place, culture, and worldview expressed through Gàidhlig; the land; the rich aspects of Gàidhlig cultural expressions – song, music, storytelling, bàrdachd, history, cosmology, worldview, wisdom system.

The spirit of Scotland (Spiorad na h-Alba) may be another way of describing the country's quintessential nature (or assets and attributes?). Several of the suggestions we had for assets appeared to fall into this broad category, including the **Gaelic** language. There is, clearly, something much more lasting and significant about a language than there is about an event or building, for example. While Gaelic is used by a comparatively small number as a living language, it remains a very real and present part of contemporary Scotland. It has had a seminal role historically over the past 1,600 years and, importantly, a symbolic role as something that helps define and distinguish Scotland from the rest of the UK (and, for some, align it with the Republic of Ireland, whose Gaelic is the root of Scots Gaelic and still shares around 80 per cent of meaning).

Contributors found it harder to pinpoint distinctive aspects of Scottish broadcasting than other cultural disciplines. They noted that the establishment in 1990 of a Gaelic TV Fund, administered by a Gaelic Television Committee, was a seminal moment in the development of distinctive programming strands. Of these, *Eòrpa* (Europe) is seen as an excellent example of Scotland adapting a familiar format to create something individual and of high quality within a crowded broadcasting marketplace. The series has been running since 1993 and covers political and social issues affecting Europe and Europeans, as

well as issues affecting the Western Isles. It is broadcast weekly in Scottish Gaelic with English subtitles by BBC Alba, itself a distinctive addition in 2008 to the country's broadcasting networks.

In a country with a large rural and island hinterland, some contributors noted the importance of mobile facilities to ensure all communities are reached. In the 1980s and '90s the (then) Scottish Arts Council ran a Travelling Gallery (a double-decker bus converted to host arts exhibitions and small education workshops). This was subsequently adopted, and is still run, by City of Edinburgh Council to reach communities outwith the city centre. Similarly, the Screen Machine is an 80-seat air-conditioned, digital mobile cinema service that has been bringing the latest films to over 40 communities of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland since 1998.

Our conversations observed that Scotland's smaller and more geographically distant communities, especially the islands, often remain remarkably well-served by cultural venues, of which several were noted. At time of writing, the new **Cnoc Soilleir** Gaelic cultural centre is being built on South Uist. This will complement the now well-established museum and arts centre **Taigh Chearsabhagh** on North Uist. Further north, Stornoway has enjoyed the **An Lanntair** arts centre and gallery since the late 1980s, and in a magnificent new building for the last 15 years. **An Tobar**, the arts centre on Mull, was the first capital project in Scotland to be funded by proceeds of the National Lottery in the 1990s, and this source resulted in the creation, or refurbishment, of a number of other significant island-based developments, including the Pier Arts Centre in Stromness, which houses a collection of 20th-century UK art of national significance, and, more recently, the impressive waterfront development in Lerwick that

has seen the arts centre and cinema, Mareel, developed alongside a fine new Shetland Museum and Archives.

No less impressive, albeit on a different scale, are the Bothy Project interventions: a network of small-scale, off-grid art residency spaces in Eigg, Cairngorm and Edinburgh.



5

Evolution

IMAGE: Scotland+Venice 2022 Professional Development Programme [photographer Matthew A Williams]



Culture is not static. It evolves and is continually refreshed, reinterpreted and added to by new voices and perspectives.

Though this evolution may take place within the geographic and political boundaries of a nation, it is instigated by the people who live there – some will have been born there, others will have chosen to make it their home, and others still will have a more transient presence.

This polyglot collective development cannot be controlled or regulated; it will happen in some form irrespective of the strength, or lack, of support mechanisms in place from public institutions and private investment. So, what do we do? Let culture take its course? It will anyway, regardless of obstacles or helping hands, because creative expression is an innate part of being human.

In Scotland, we can recognise this dynamic, help those who look to contribute to its evolution, and be aware of the arc of cultural development from which it springs. Our cultural family tree connects Blind Harry to Denise Mina, and the MacCrimmons to Julie Fowlis,¹⁸ each standing on the shoulders of successive generations. We can also continue to appreciate that ours is a mongrel culture and as we welcome an increasingly diverse number of nationalities to live as Scots, they bring their cultural heritage that in turn influences and changes ours, from the rhythms of Salsa Celtica and the Afro Celt Sound System to the Indian music fusions of Yorkston/Thorne/Khan and Simon Thacker.

A sign of cultural confidence is being able to absorb and experience and be inspired by other influences.

¹⁸ Blind Harry was a minstrel and writer from the 15th century whose lengthy poem on William Wallace is one of the oldest known works of Scottish literature; Denise Mina is a contemporary crime writer; the MacCrimmons were a family of pipers to successive clan chiefs from the 15th century; Julie Fowlis is a traditional musician who sings primarily in Gaelic.

Some countries, for political or economic reasons, do not encourage such cultural evolution, so this aspect of the Scottish experience should perhaps be more celebrated. A strong culture is one that can accept the principle and process of evolution and considers it an enhancement rather than a dilution of its cultural offer. If culture is a wall, then every added brick is sustained and given its contemporary profile only by that which has gone before.

Burns asked for a divine gift

‘to see ourselves as others see us’, clearly aware how challenging self-reflection can be:

It's difficult to see ... distinctiveness from within – ultimately there are certain things which we do 'give' to the international cultural sphere, but these are dependent on a certain set of situations. In other words, there is a reliance on a 'nexus of conditions' which produces something distinctive and unique.

The word ‘nexus’ was often used during our discussions as it became clearer that so many facets of society were required (and overlapped) to reach some recognisable cultural identity. Nexus is variously defined as a connected group, or a causal link, or a central focus – and a combination of all three seems appropriate in this instance.

We mentioned at the outset that many of our contributors found it rewarding to allow themselves a little time and space to reflect on the notion of cultural assets and attributes in a Scottish context. If one thing is certain, it appears that there can be no absolute consensus on what they might be, but in discussing the concept and exploring contemporary and historic cultural practice and practitioners from the country there were often remarkable areas of similarity and overlap. However, this is one set of perspectives, and it is inevitable

that different groupings of people will find other examples and emphases.

We would encourage this report's commissioners and readers to consider how they might incorporate such discussions into their professional (and personal?) lives. At the outset of this report, we suggested that the reason for exploring the question was as much about stimulating individual reflection and creative wellbeing as it was about establishing specific outputs.

It is important to remember that these kinds of cultural assets are being decided upon by small groups of people – not necessarily a history of culture but a history of power. Its documentation of a few people's views rather than a broader sense, that then doesn't speak to the true nature and diversity of our nation, communities, localities.

That last comment is a salutary reminder of the nature of reports like this, however objective we aim to be.

Everyone has their list of assets:

Canongate publishers; Glasgow Women's Library; the Scottish Crannog Centre; Moniack Mhor; Cove Park; Dance Base; Bookbug; Traverse Theatre; Fèisean nan Gàidheal; Lynne Ramsay; the Youth Music Initiative ... just some of the many names we were given, and therein lies the challenge and the joy: no report can reflect the diversity of five million souls' interpretation of cultural assets and attributes. Nor does it need to. We can celebrate the fact that it is so.

And it wouldn't be right not to include contributors' own thoughts on the difference between the two ...

The distinction between attributes and assets is important. A lot of people have the assets, but it is the attributes that makes it very distinct.

... or whether it is even helpful to consider it in this way:

I'm not sure that 'assets' exist – they are just something that someone chooses to put value into. What someone in Scotland values might not connect with that of a person who is visiting – something that we might think is incredibly important may not match with outside perspectives. We need to match the internal valued assets and the external valued assets.

But how do you make meaningful comparisons with other countries? One contributor pointed us towards the Nation Brands Index¹⁹ where Scotland is '*sitting at 15 in the world for its contemporary culture. This is the only measure that has moved up two places*'. However, comparative tables based on objective data do not necessarily capture or reflect the subjective perceptions of a visitor or a resident: if I think Scotland has the best festival in the world, or the most impressive writers, or the most stirring traditional music, then, for me, it has.

¹⁹ The Nations Brand Index (NBI) is an analytical tool which attempts to measure and rank the broad international reputation of 50 nations, across six dimensions of national competence: Exports; Governance; Culture; People; Tourism; and Immigration and Investment.

Ultimately, context is king.

Talking about the framing from an assets and attributes [perspective isn't enough] ... This framing should take place in the context of bigger picture elements like cultural rights, digital poverty, issues of climate change. Because without this context it becomes a relatively meaningless list.

If you are looking at cultural assets – it is important to look at what we are risking losing in terms of climate change and cultural rights, in terms of lack of will to invest. Looking at equality is important. These are some fundamental questions.

As we've attempted to show in our commentary, context is everything, whether in the macro picture outlined in the quotes above, or the micro picture at hyperlocal level. Culture doesn't exist in a societal vacuum, and many would argue it is the element around which all other aspects of society cohere.

There are two other contextual elements worth noting, as they help explain an environment that allows the creative spark to be encouraged. The first is an ethos, shaped in part by successive generations of cultural and social policy:

There is something about there being a cultural feeling of permission to be creative. It is all those historical characteristics coming through, but we're not as regimented as other countries.

That permissiveness is something not all nations enjoy, either in legislation or in more intangible societal terms, and it may sometimes be taken for granted – an innate sense that it is alright to experiment, to try, to fail, and to succeed.

The second is something that feels as though it is more in the DNA of the nation – it is the extent to which we can be curious and have an inclination to create or invent.

We're still excitable and curious culturally speaking – this feels interesting. We don't think of our culture as something that we can define because it is new and interesting, and we're willing to be challenged.

The Scottish backstory is full of examples of notable invention and discovery in the fields of medicine, engineering, geology, broadcasting, economics – from *The Wealth of Nations*²⁰ to Dolly the sheep.²¹ This trait is something that is accepted, and expected, by Scots. We are a nation that will use creativity in the widest possible field. So, when it comes to our cultural sector, this element is already baked in to the mindset. Perhaps that is the greatest asset and attribute a country can have – the confidence to allow its children to create.

It's appropriate to leave the last word with one of the many contributors:

'It comes back to Scottish identity being both within and outside.'

This sense of it is always being a resistance. There is a sense of 'we are apart', and this is something to be expressed, and that's there from the outset. You have to explain that to people. You have to explain you are of the UK and of Scotland. There was always that sense there was something else – something extra – and that it wasn't settled, and it was something that had to be defended. There was a sense of excellence and uniqueness in Scotland. It feeds into people in a way that says we're a bit different – whether it's true or not – it becomes part of the psyche.

²⁰ Adam Smith's seminal book on economics.

²¹ The first cloned animal.





Appendices



IMAGES: (Top) Rachel Humphries, Director of Montack Minor, Scotland's Creative Writing Centre [photographer Neil McGuire]. (Bottom) *Collective Gallery*, Calton Hill and Arthur's Seat, 2018. [photo Anna Henly]

Appendix A

Contributors

Clare Brennan	Elke Ritt	Chris O'Neil
Chris Breward	Sanne Jehoul	Mariem Omari
Bridhde Chaimbeul	Esme Kennedy	Joan Parr
Marie Christie	Jonathan Kennedy	Chiara Ronchini
Kate Clayton	Alistair Mackie	David Stevenson
Lucy Conway	Morhan Njobo	Robbie Synge
Isabel Davis	John Leighton	Tako Taal
Saada El-Akhrass	Florence Lambert	Anita Taylor
Amy Ferguson	Kirsten Lloyd	Jackie Wylie
Clive Gillman	Donna McMillan	
Bobby Hain	Craig Manson	
Janette Harkness	Iain Munro	

Appendix B

Attributes and assets: An illustration

Attribute	Asset
Universal language – English	Dialects: Doric, Shetlandic
Active native languages	Gaelic, Scots
Multilingual communities	Ethnically diverse events and customs
Democratic devolved government	Cultural policy; arms-length agencies
Well-established system of local gov't	Development officers; funding
Broad-based tertiary education system	Conservatoire; specialist courses
Deep-rooted intangible cultural heritage	Bardic tradition
Diverse events ecology	Festivals of all scales
Long-standing cultural traditions	Border ballads; step dance; Ba' Game
Reputation for entrepreneurialism	Publishers; games developers
Reputation for innovation	Children's theatre companies; Room 13 International
Internationally known broadcaster – BBC	Scottish-based broadcasters; producers
Imperial history	National collections; built institutions
International brand awareness/profile	High-profile individuals in screen/arts

Creative Services (Scotland) Ltd
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This study was commissioned by:



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A NOTE ON THE TYPE:

The typefaces used in this publication are *Scotch Modern* by Shinn Type, *Marr Sans* by Commercial Type and *ES Nein* by Extraset. *Scotch* is a name given to American types associated with the work of the Scottish type foundries of William Miller and Alexander Wilson during the late 1700's and early 1800's. *Scotch Modern* is a contemporary reimagining of the *Scotch Roman* genre, and is a demonstration of the way cultural ideas (including typefaces) are interwoven and translate and transform between geographies and cultures.

The influence of Scotland in typefounding belies the nation's small size. *Marr Sans*, a characterful grotesque design, was inspired by a typeface from the 1870s found in the work of James Marr & Co. in Edinburgh, successors to Alexander Wilson & Sons.

GHOST TUNES

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FOREWORD

Alasdair Campbell

I suppose an introduction should tell us what Ghost Tunes is, who made it and why it exists. The work inside this publication is only one aspect of Ghost Tunes and I think it really speaks for itself.

Sitting in a wooden house in a large open field in rural New South Wales, near Cootamundra, as the flash floods drove water and red soil under the foundations of the house, that's why it's on stilts. I was taken by how very different the landscape was to my home in Scotland. In many ways this is where Ghost Tunes germinated. Thanks to the initiative run by Wired Lab and Sarah Last, who invited a group of artists and myself to Cootamundra to immerse ourselves in the farming community and indigenous communities of the area, I found myself deep in rural Australia, a very different experience from the metropolitan living in Sydney and Melbourne. What was also interesting to me was Scotland's colonial relationship to Australia. All these Scottish place names which seemed to crop up around every bend, brought to Australia by the invading settlers, presumably to make themselves feel at home in a strange land. They obviously had names before the settlers arrived.

The two Scottish artists that embraced the project are two people I have known for some time now. Cass Ezeji performed at Counterflows when she was singing with Glasgow band Golden Teacher but it was a fortuitous meeting with Cass at the Women's Library in Bridgeton that allowed me to get to know her a little better. She was researching and writing an article about being of mixed race in Glasgow and it was also then that I found out that Cass was a Gaelic speaker. Cass's interests in language and race, her indomitable drive to speak out and her unshakeable drive for human justice made her ideal for the project. I got to know Josie through her artistic nom de plume Quinie, when I first heard tracks she had made for the independent tape label GLARC. Josie's interests in Scots' song and especially the singer Lizzie Higgins made me think about my own relationship with traditional Scottish cultures. Josie's exploration of the rights of the travelling community of Scotland with the Nawken Davie Donaldson addresses many of the issues related to Ghost Tunes.

Ghost Tunes looks at ideas around language and landscape in the context of Australian and Scottish cultural resonance. The six artists who ideas about place and where they find themselves living. This is especially pertinent during the last couple of years of our pandemic lifestyles. The CD accompanying the publication soars with the sound of the human voice with the rattle of different languages bouncing off each other. Even the instrumental tracks have a deep human resonance with the sounds of nature swirling around at the edges and slowly taking over as nature does.

As well as the CD and publication, Ghost Tunes will be presented at Counterflows 2022 as a sound and language installation. Initially of course the idea was that we travel to each other's countries to share and experience each physical space. The plan is that when we can we will do this.

Any project only works if we approach the ideas and proposals honestly and openly and begin a dialogue with respect for others and with integrity and a willingness to share. I would like to thank all the artists who have done just that: Madeleine Flynn, Tim Humphrey, Cass Ezeji, Cass Lynch, Josie Valley, and Mei Swan Lim.

6

FOREWORD

Madeleine Flynn and Tim Humphrey

We first became aware of a meeting of minds of some kind when Madeleine met Alasdair in Yokohama, Japan, in 2017. Then we travelled together when Alasdair came to Australia and was able to come with us to Itravita (Tasmania) and to the district around goudhamaangudhura (Cootamundra) in Wiradjuri Country in early 2019.

Then Alasdair came to us with a proposition that we create a joint UK/Australia project using funds from the British Council supported season. We agreed that we should aim for the project to be a useful thing. Perhaps political. It set us to thinking.

We are both from the Anglo-settler community in this country, a diminishing majority that nonetheless still dominates the power structures here, and the Australian state remains established on that basis. Our focus, in making creative work in this place, is on striving to be allies in the struggles as identified by the First Nations for sovereign recognition, treaty, reparations, et al. Apart from the pursuit of basic principles of human justice, this struggle links to all of us literally being able to survive in the face of climate catastrophe.

When the UK/Australia initiative surfaced onto the funding scene in the wake of Brexit, we asked ourselves, how can we navigate this? How to project a decolonising narrative into a project that, at least on the surface, seems propelled by a re-kindling of the Anglosphere?

The Anglosphere is a gigantic fiction, apart from the power structure that maintains this extractive privilege. A privilege placed in the hands of a few rich people who enjoy a stupendous and grotesque advantage: dominant international trade, tax haven status and extractive industry. How farcical, in this age, that we find ourselves living under the ridiculous spectacle of a head of state based in England. As artists, we work with the potency of symbols. This is a potent symbol of a destructive power structure imposed on unceded land and people.

So then, what is beneath this surface? Who actually has been or will be the toiling masses beneath the smarm of official UK/Australia relations? In the UK context, perhaps we can look to the likes of Gilroy, Hooks, and many others to

give a better picture of the real human story beneath the ideology of empire. The true histories of peoples dispossessed, enslaved, cleared, moved on, erased. In the Australian context, we see waves of indentured and enslaved labour, beginning and continuing with the First Nations peoples when they were first forced to give over their carefully-maintained country. Who were then worked as slave labour to establish the Australian pastoral industry.

In our quest for usefulness, in thinking about artists from the Australian continent, we were interested in the survival, reconstructions and vigour of the non-English languages, one place where resistance to Anglophone hegemony resides. A multitude of languages, maintained, and re-built in the face of prohibition, cultural genocide and other erasures, that still and will continue to thrive across the UK and here. They are precious knowledge maps of landscape and heritage, of sovereignty.

Alasdair asked us to think about some artists from Australia who might be making work that engages with the themes of language and landscape. We always think first about those artists with whom we have worked before, and whose work we deeply respect. Cass Lynch and Mei Swan Lim are artists and researchers living on unceded Noongar Country in the west of the continent. Their delicately powerful work is grounded in place, yet resonates generously across cultures with a nuanced and intersectional complexity.

We were honoured to work in 2020-21 with Theresa Sainty, a Palawa elder who has spent decades reconstructing the composite First Nations language of palawa kani through the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre, milaythina tunapri (Country Remembers) is a kind of proclamation. For us there is a sense of, and plenty of fervent wishing for, a groundswell across all communities here that is reclaiming the landscape in the name of the oldest continuing culture on Earth.

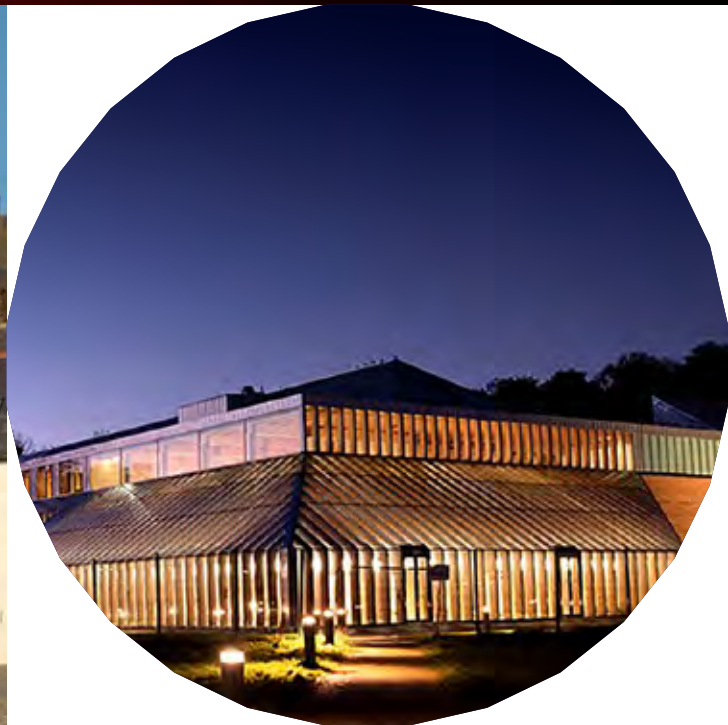
We are humbled to work with these artists, and with the Scottish artists Cass Ezeji and Josie Valley, and of course, to create something special with our dear friend from Stirling.

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IMAGES: (clockwise from top left) *Glasgow Women's Library*, *The Gorbals Youth Brass Band & Tom Mudd project*, *Counterflows* [photo Duncan Marquiss], Isaac Julien, *Lessons of the Hour*, 2021. Installation view at the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Co-commissioned by Edinburgh Art Festival and the National Galleries of Scotland [photo Sally Jubb Photography], *The Burrell Collection* exterior image at night [photo © CSG CIC Glasgow Museums Collections], *Pier Arts Centre*, Stomness, Orkney [photograph courtesy of the Pier Arts Centre], *St Magnus Festival* [photo Tom O'Brien]



I welcome the publication of the Art & Cultural Assets Report, commissioned by British Council Scotland and Creative Scotland - Artists have always looked beyond borders to collaborate, share, be inspired...

I invite you to help us shape our place in the world by contributing to the global conversations that will be happening around this report.

Angus Robertson MSP

Cabinet Secretary for the Constitution, External Affairs and Culture