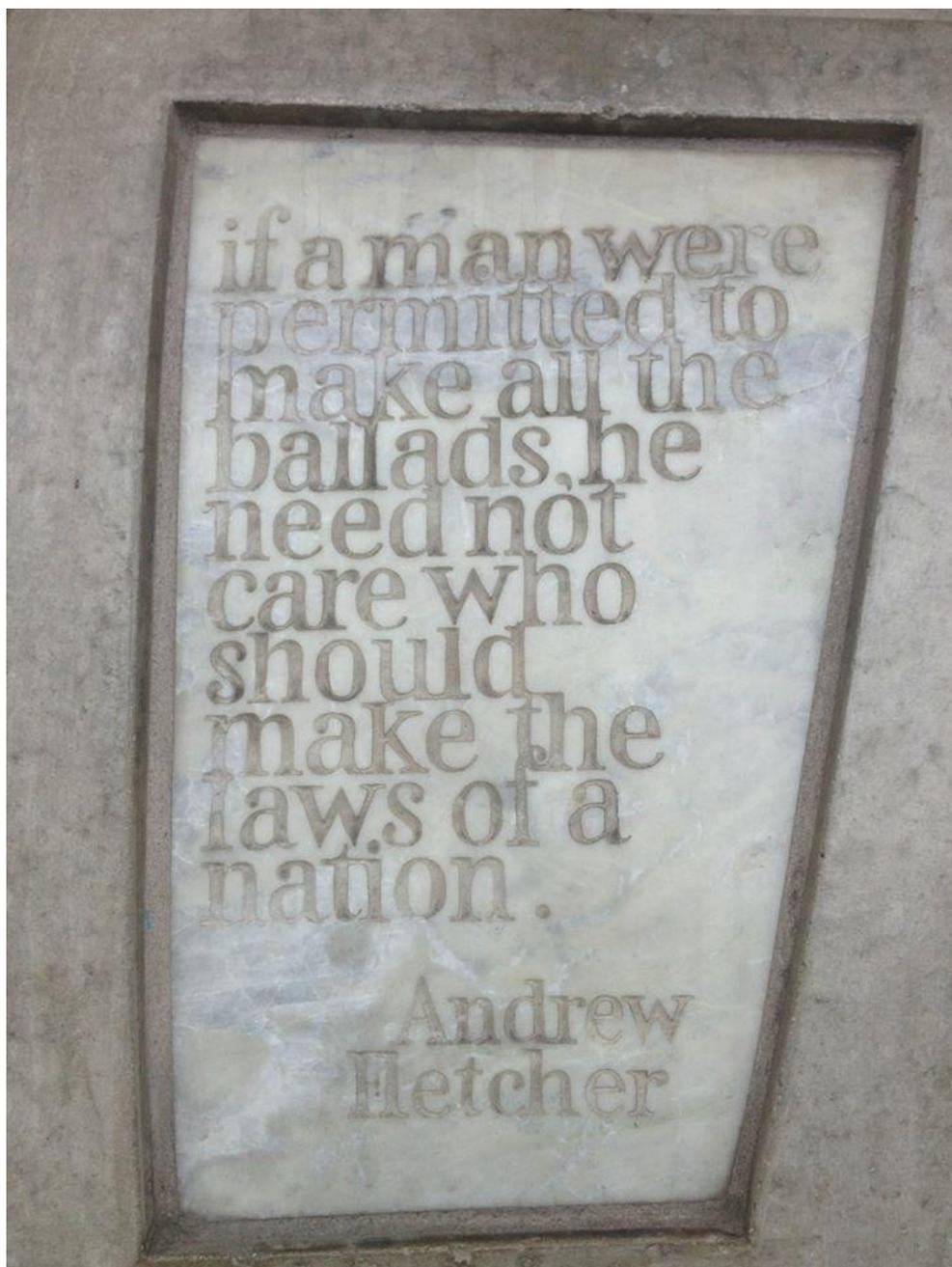


Key Change:

The role of the creative industries in climate change action

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Cover photo – quote from Scottish writer and politician, Andrew Fletcher

Abstract

The role of the creative industries – arts and artists – in helping to drive the changes in laws and behaviours that are necessary to tackle climate change, while not superficially obvious, is a deep one. Arts and artists of all kinds, as cultural practitioners, have been closely entwined with social change and social control since time immemorial, in large part because they help shape our understanding of the world, framing ideas, prefiguring change, and opening hearts and minds to new ways of thinking. They have played a major role in campaigns for law reform on many issues, and climate change should be no exception.

Indeed, with climate change increasingly being seen as a deeply cultural issue, and its solutions as cultural ones to do with changing the way we understand our world and our place in it, the role of cultural practitioners in helping to address it should also increasingly be seen as central.

It is curious, then, how comparatively little artistic engagement with climate change has taken place, how little engagement with the arts the climate movement has attempted, and how little theoretical and critical analysis has been undertaken on the role of the creative arts in climate change action.

Through a literature review and a series of interviews with individuals working in relevant fields in Australia, this study examines and evaluates the role of the creative industries in climate change action and places it in a historical and theoretical context. It covers examples of the kind of artistic and activist collaborations that have been undertaken, the different roles in communication, campaigning for law reform, and deep culture change that arts and artists can play, and the risks and dangers inherent in the involvement of artists, both to climate change action and to the artist.

It concludes that, despite the risks, a deeper and more thoughtful engagement of and by the creative industries in climate action would not only be useful but is perhaps vital to the success of the endeavours.

This research project on ‘the creative industries and climate change’ is undertaken as part of Associate Professor Matthew Rimmer’s ARC Future Fellowship on Intellectual Property and Climate Change.

Dr Rimmer’s research stretches across issues from patent law to copyright to trademark law and beyond, examining how these legal disciplines and the industries they regulate contribute to or constrain action on climate change. It covers issues as diverse as technology transfer and access to technologies, greenwashing and culture jamming.

This research project is intended to fill a gap by examining the role of the creative copyright industries – the arts – in contributing to climate change action, considering the interaction between law, politics, culture, society and art. By providing a theoretical and empirical analysis of copyright industries and climate change, this work hopes to make an important and relevant contribution to the broad study of the complex interplay between intellectual property and climate change.

Introduction

In early 2014, an internet video was released of people in the Typhoon-ravaged Philippines dancing to Pharrell Williams' pop hit, "Happy". While it would be hard to find a song less 'political' on the surface, the power of this video idea, with people showing happiness, strength and humanity amidst the devastation of Typhoon Haiyan, was such that it was soon replicated. Dancers in Tunis, Moscow and the Ukraine used the format to convey their struggle for freedom and what happiness means to them. The online youth current affairs magazine, PolicyMic, wrote of this phenomenon: "'Happy' came into the world apolitical, but it's something more now — it's a song of resilience and resolve under incredible hardship."¹

By tapping into emotions and opening up new ways of understanding the world for new audiences, and by building resilience and group identity in the dancers themselves and those around them, Pharrell Williams' song is helping to create social and political change and may lead to changes in law and legal institutions. In the same way, often indirectly, sometimes unintentionally, usually obliquely, arts and artists can help pave the way to legal and institutional action on climate change. This paper seeks to understand and explain key aspects of this role.

The involvement of arts and artists in working towards climate action sits in the context of a long and proud tradition of helping to drive change. Artists have been centrally involved in campaigns for civil rights in the USA and Indigenous recognition in Australia, for freedom in Communist Eastern Europe and apartheid South Africa, for women's rights, gay rights and peace and disarmament. While rarely focussed on specific law reform targets, artists' work in shifting debates and values has on many occasions contributed to change at that more specific level. As creators of intellectually stimulating and emotionally powerful works, and as culturally influential people who can lead by example, artists find themselves in a position full of potential when facing the need to drive action on global warming. But the path is also fraught, both in its impact on art and in working most effectively towards a social and environmental goal.

With climate change coming to be seen more and more as a cultural issue rather than purely a scientific or technical one,² the role of the arts in this cultural arena is crucial. While artists have been reticent to engage in legalistic or policy-focussed debates around carbon pricing or regulating renewable energy, a broader focus on social and cultural change to enable such law reform is more firmly in their field. This study examines the intellectual grounding for creative artists to most successfully engage in and help drive climate action. Starting with reflections on the cultural aspects of social change, it looks at the role of arts and artists in politics and social movements, how arts and artists can aid in difficult communications tasks, how they help define and create cultural movements for change, and what the risks inherent in this process are.

Considering the depth of research into both communication of climate change and the role of the arts in social movements more broadly, it is notable how little published academic work exists explicitly on the role of creative artists in the climate change debate. This may be a reflection of the

¹ Wang, S, "How This Became the Surprising Protest Song of Our Generation", PolicyMic, March 18, 2014, <http://www.policymic.com/articles/85423/how-this-became-the-surprising-protest-song-of-our-generation>

² See section 1.2 for discussion and references.

oft-commented on dearth of artistic work related to climate change,³ or may reflect the same challenges faced by artists grappling with the problem.⁴ Regardless of the cause, it is by necessity, as well as in order to examine the underlying theory, that this research takes a step back and attempts to provide an overview of the theoretical grounding for arts and artists engaging with social change more broadly before focussing on climate change.

Such a broad approach opens up a quantity of literature and an array of issues too vast for the remit of a study such as this, particularly on the history and role of visual arts, music, theatre, film, literature and other artistic practices in driving social change. For the purposes of this study, then, music has been taken as a focal point and Australia as locus for discussion of specific examples.

After a methodology, the study starts (Part 1) with a broad discussion of culture, art and social change, from Gramsci and Adorno's theoretical underpinnings, through recent analysis of the cultural aspects of climate change and the wider linkages of art, culture and the environment, to a brief historical overview of the use of arts in social change.

Part 2 contains a detailed examination of the various roles arts and artists can play in driving climate change action, from simply drawing attention to the issue and spreading information, to framing it and priming people to accept new frames, from its role in identity formation, to actively prefiguring and modelling different views of the world, and finally to its ability to fundamentally shape and reshape culture.

Part 3 looks at the dangers and risks inherent in artistic involvement in climate change action, from containment of political activity to the negative impacts of greenwashing and tokenism, from its immeasurability to the risks to the artist of being "labelled" and the risk to the cause of the clumsy use of "celebrity", from whether the artist's role in helping us "prepare for the worst" undermines the desire for action to whether the pro-consumerist nature of much mainstream art cancels out any message of change, and finally to specific legal risks such as those involved in direct action and encouraging boycotts.

Insights from the literature and interviews are incorporated throughout the text.

Methodology

The study involved a literature review and a series of eleven semi-structured interviews, under ethics approval from the Australian National University, with Australian musicians, activists and others involved in aspects of both or their overlap. The interviews teased out questions surrounding the place of art and culture in driving change, the roles for artists in climate change action, the risks to both action and art from the relationship, and discussion of specific examples that can be learned from.

The interviewees were all selected as practitioners with relevant experience and expertise, with a deliberate attempt to find a broad cross-section of artists in particular. While an attempt was made

³ See for example William McKibben, 'Imagine That: What the Warming World Needs Now is Art, Sweet Art', *Grist Magazine*, 21 April 2005; Paul Downton, 'The Art of Climate Change' (2012) 32(4) *Artlink* 20.

⁴ Simon Boxall et al, interviewed by Hannah Bird, 'The Beauty of What We Stand to Lose: Voices from Cape Farewell' (2008) Spring *Engage* 21 38; Tipping Point Australia, *Greening the Arts: Thinkpieces for Zero Carbon Future and A Survey of Sustainable Arts Practices* (October 2010).

to find differing perspectives and experiences, the project was in no way viewed as seeking a representative sample, nor was there an effort to engage those who did not see a role for artists in climate action.

Four musicians were interviewed, across a broad range of genres and ages.

Shane Howard is a singer/songwriter who shot to prominence with his band Goanna in the early 1980s with two songs tackling political themes: “Solid Rock” about Indigenous affairs and “Let the Franklin Flow” about the battle to stop the damming of the Franklin River in Tasmania. He has continued to engage with political and environmental themes in his music, and campaigns in his extra-musical life, throughout his 30 year career.

Tim Levinson is an MC and key player in Australia’s hip hop business. Performing as Urthboy, he is a founding member of the hip hop collective The Herd and co-founder and manager of the record label Elefant Traks. Political and environmental engagement have been part of Levinson’s musical and public persona, on issues from climate change to refugees to racism, since he first entered the public eye in 1998. He has been quoted widely for his politics as well as his music, and has appeared on ABC TV’s political panel show, Q&A, among others.

Charlie Mgee is a musician, permaculture gardener and environmentalist whose dance band, the Formidable Vegetable Sound System, is rapidly becoming world famous, travelling to festivals from Glastonbury (one of the world’s biggest music festivals) to Woodford Folk Festival in Queensland via local permaculture events across the globe. While the message in the lyrics is unmistakable, the high quality of the music is attracting large audiences.

Martin Wesley-Smith is an Australian composer and teacher of composition, well known for the political content of his work, from environmental pollution to East Timor’s fight for freedom to the war in Afghanistan. His compositions have been performed around the world.

Also from the music industry, but not a musician, is Mat Morris, a sustainability consultant who has worked extensively in the music industry. Having worked closely on the Australian ‘Live Earth’ concert as part of the global campaign following the release of Al Gore’s film, *An Inconvenient Truth*, Morris set up Sound Emissions, Australia’s first resource for musicians seeking to reduce their environmental impact. He has since established the North Byron Parklands as a sustainably managed site for music festivals and run environmental initiatives for mainstream music festivals there and elsewhere.

Five interviewees fit broadly into the category of ‘climate activists’ – individuals working in various ways specifically to tackle global warming. All are engaged to a greater or lesser extent with art and culture in their work, including as professional practitioners.

Guy Abrahams is a lawyer and art consultant who, after becoming deeply concerned about global warming, co-founded CLIMARTE: Arts for a Safe Climate. This is a non-profit organisation which “harnesses the creative power of the Arts to inform, engage and inspire action on climate change.” CLIMARTE’s Executive Director, Bronwyn Johnson, was also interviewed. Johnson was previously Director of the Melbourne Art Fair and CEO of Melbourne Art Foundation.

Deborah Hart spent many years working in development for some of Australia's leading arts and cultural organisations (including Opera Australia and the Bell Shakespeare Company) before leaving to dedicate herself to climate change activism. She founded LIVE, Locals Into Victoria's Environment, a local climate change action group in Melbourne, and co-founded CLIMARTE with Guy Abrahams before recently starting a more direct artistic engagement with climate activism – ClimActs. ClimActs is essentially a political theatre troupe using spectacle and comedy to engage audiences, usually in public or at events, with climate change related issues such as coal mining and science denial. Their four different acts are the Climate Guardians, guardian angels bearing witness to global warming, and the confronting comics of the Coal Diggers, Frackers' Guild and Flat Earth Institute, tackling vested interests, the power of wealth, and climate science denial.

Anna Rose is one of Australia's most accomplished and respected young climate change activists. She co-founded the Australian Youth Climate Coalition, an organisation which engages young people in climate campaigns through a broad range of activities, many of them cultural such as music and dance. She currently manages Earth Hour, and has written a book, *Madlands: A Journey to Change the Mind of a Climate Sceptic*.

Angharad Wynne-Jones is a theatre and dance practitioner and producer who has worked extensively across Australia and the UK, including co-founding the performance company Chunky Move, being Associate Director of the Adelaide Festival in 2002 and Director of the London International Festival of Theatre 2005-08. She is listed here as an activist due to her role as Producer of TippingPoint Australia, an international network which seeks to bring together artists, scientists and campaigners in order to engage with climate change and draw it into their practice. TippingPoint organises forums and events, performances, and direct engagement to bring the practices together.

For over-arching perspective, globally respected climate scientist Graeme Pearman was also interviewed. Pearman was Chief of CSIRO Atmospheric Research between 1992 and 2002, has published over 150 scientific papers and received numerous Australian and international awards including a UNEP Global 500 Award and a Medal of the Order of Australia. Some years ago, he shifted the focus of his studies from the physical basis of climate change to psychological research into why we are failing to act on the scientific warnings.

The interviews were undertaken either in person or over the telephone and audio recorded, except in two cases where they were conducted by email correspondence, between March and May 2014. The interviews were not fully transcribed, but quotations used were checked with interviewees.

1. Culture, art and change

This study begins with culture, because it is in the broadly defined cultural arena where the creative industries, law and social change, and global warming intersect. Culture is a word with many meanings and each of these disciplines understands it quite differently. It is by drawing these together that the role of the arts and artists in driving climate action can best be explored.

The legal discipline of intellectual property narrowly defines cultural works as “literature (books); dramatic works, (film); music (classical, modern); visual art (paintings) and more [which] can... be protected by copyright”,⁵ with an additional active debate on the protection of indigenous culture through intellectual property. A deeper conception of culture, as defined by the Oxford English Dictionary, is “[t]he ideas, customs, and social behaviour of a particular people or society” and “[t]he attitudes and behaviour characteristic of a particular social group”. Arlene Goldbard defines it more poetically as “the fabric of signs and symbols, customs and ceremonies, habitations, institutions, and much more that characterize and enable a specific human community to form and sustain itself.”⁶ It is this broad understanding of culture which climate scientists are exploring when discussing the culturally driven “social practices... [and] norms”⁷ which lead to our difficulty in reducing emissions and tackling global warming.

If we consider culture, then, to be about the complex web of meanings and relationships by which we individually and collectively understand our world and our place in it – meanings often embedded in works of art, literature or music – social change, legal change, climate change, and the arts must be seen as inextricably interwoven, impacting on each other in a myriad ways.

The role of culture, and art within that, in social and legal change is an enormous field of study and theory. This paper can only scratch the surface of it, but it is important to do so in order to set the context for the specific question of arts and climate change. This section starts with a brief discussion of culture in social control and change before looking at how art, culture and environmental issues overlap and how climate change is seen as a cultural issue, concluding with a brief historical overview of the role of arts and artists in movements and fights for social change.

1.1. Culture, art and change

Culture, according to the conceptions of key political philosophers, frames the way we understand our world and our place in it, limiting or expanding our social and political discourse. In societies where force is no longer the primary means of social control, cultural power comes to the fore. It becomes an immensely powerful a tool of social and political control and change – a tool that can enable or block legal reforms.

Italian Marxist philosopher and linguist, Antonio Gramsci, for example, considered culture central to his conception of “hegemony”, and another linguist philosopher, Noam Chomsky, wrote that “[t]he smart way to keep people passive and obedient is to strictly limit the spectrum of acceptable

⁵ World Intellectual Property Organisation, *WIPO Draft Guidelines on Assessing the Economic, Social and Cultural Impact of Copyright on the Creative Economy*, September 2013, 13.

⁶ Arlene Goldbard, *The Culture of Possibility: Art, Artists and The Future* (Waterlight Press, 2013), loc 113

⁷ Rowson, Jonathan, *A New Agenda on Climate Change: Facing up to Stealth Denial and Winding Down on Fossil Fuels*, A report for The RSA, December 2013, 25.

opinion, but allow very lively debate within that spectrum.”⁸ From a less politically charged perspective, Arlene Goldbard writes that “our capacity to act is conditioned on the story we tell ourselves about our own predicament and capabilities.”⁹

This conception of the importance of culture in social change is central to the approach taken by many of the interviewees in their work driving climate change action and seeking law reform to make that action happen. CLIMARTE’s Guy Abrahams, for example, reflected these ideas in telling this study:

Most of the time we’re not even aware that we’re enmeshed in a cultural fabric that is... both persuasive and sometimes restrictive in terms of where we think we can go. And so if you can move that net, move along that net, or put in new threads, that’s when you give people the opportunity to move along.¹⁰

Climate scientist Professor Graeme Pearman notes that “for each of us, the vast majority of our understanding of how the world is based on culture, is based on religion, is based on hearsay. These are story lines that are very powerful and hard to move.”¹¹

Anna Rose, co-founder of the Australian Youth Climate Coalition, says, “[c]ulture is so crucial... in shaping the way people think about things, and normalising certain ways of being and certain ways of thinking.”¹²

Indeed, culture, for TippingPoint Australia’s Angharad Wynne-Jones, is “the base line. [It is] where change happens.”¹³

Within this understanding of the cultural aspect of social change and control, the relationship between arts and politico-legal activities is long, complex and multi-directional. Those in power use the arts for social control and censor arts they believe challenge their control; those seeking power use the arts as a means of challenging those in power; and artists themselves use their art in order to express their view of how the world is, could be or perhaps should be. As Abrahams reflects, “big C culture... really informs and creates a lot of the atmosphere – the small c culture – that we live in.”¹⁴ In other words, the arts, by helping to mould social culture, have a real impact on our ability or otherwise to change laws.

Gramsci similarly draws culture-as-art and culture-as-political change together in making the point that “cultural projects are a field of political struggle, a site where counterhegemonic artists and intellectuals can also prefigure a new society and join with others to create it.”¹⁵ The German artist and philosopher, Joseph Beuys, saw art as not just part of political change but “the only

⁸ Noam Chomsky, *The Common Good*, Odonian Press, 1998, 43.

⁹ Arlene Goldbard, *The Culture of Possibility: Art, Artists and The Future* (Waterlight Press, 2013), loc 193.

¹⁰ Guy Abrahams, interview, 14/03/14.

¹¹ Graeme Pearman, interview ??/05/14.

¹² Anna Rose, interview, 12/04/14.

¹³ Angharad Wynne-Jones, interview 14/03/14.

¹⁴ Guy Abrahams, interview, 14/03/14.

¹⁵ Nancy S Love and Mark Mattern, *Doing Democracy: Activist Art and Cultural Politics* (SUNY Press, 2013), 8, referencing Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971).

evolutionary-revolutionary power. Only art is capable of dismantling the repressive effects of a senile social system.”¹⁶

While Bertolt Brecht is widely reputed to have said “Art is not a mirror to reflect reality, but a hammer with which to shape it”,¹⁷ for Wynne-Jones, the analogy is more organic: “Artists are searching for meanings that haven’t been made overt in our culture – that’s the value – the ... turning over of our unconscious, reviewing and reflecting on the existing relationships we have across the culture.”¹⁸

Nancy Love and Mark Mattern suggest that art and politics may, in fact, be different aspects of the same fundamentally cultural activity – engagement: “Power is potentially rendered accountable through arts and cultural practices in the same way it is rendered accountable through more traditional political avenues: that is, through the political engagement of citizens.”¹⁹ Their perspective is informed and inspired by John Dewey’s writings on aesthetics and the power of art to create shared experience,²⁰ as well as Martha Nussbaum’s view that “the arts and literature develop our ability to empathize.”²¹ This plays out in the roles of engagement, empathy and identity that this study explores.

One important strand of political theory in this area takes its lead from Theodor Adorno, whose seminal works such as *On Popular Music*²² bring a Marxist critique to the role of popular music in society. He argues that, through standardisation both in its content and production, popular music becomes a commodity rather than a tool for liberty and democracy, and that the “appearance of opposition in... popular music masked its latent pacifying role.”²³ While Adorno has been critiqued as elitist and not particularly informed about the music he criticised,²⁴ the dynamics of power and capital in the music ‘business’, for example, remain an important thread in this field of study, through to Garofalo’s dialectical critique of mega-events²⁵ and Buxton’s linkage of rock music and the rise of consumerism.²⁶

In the context of this study, it is also worth noting that it is this tradition, and its neoliberal counterpoint, which most clearly characterises popular arts as “the copyright industries”, whose aim is the production of goods for consumption. That is the thread which ties this study most directly to the specific issue of intellectual property and climate change.

¹⁶ Joseph Beuys, quoted in Caroline Tisdall, *Art into Society, Society into Art* (ICA, London, 1974), 48.

¹⁷ Quote attributed to Brecht but not appearing in his published works.

¹⁸ Angharad Wynne-Jones, interview, 14/03/14.

¹⁹ Nancy S Love and Mark Mattern, *Doing Democracy: Activist Art and Cultural Politics* (SUNY Press, 2013), 9.

²⁰ Nancy S Love and Mark Mattern, *Doing Democracy: Activist Art and Cultural Politics* (SUNY Press, 2013), 128.

²¹ Nancy S Love and Mark Mattern, *Doing Democracy: Activist Art and Cultural Politics* (SUNY Press, 2013), 10.

²² Theodor Adorno, ‘On Popular Music’ (1941), as republished in Simon Frith and Andrew Goodwin (eds), *On Record: Rock, Pop and the Written Word* (Routledge, 1990) 301.

²³ Rob Rosenthal and Richard Flacks, *Playing for Change: Music and Musicians in the Service of Social Movements* (Paradigm Publishers, 2012), 16.

²⁴ Rob Rosenthal and Richard Flacks, *Playing for Change: Music and Musicians in the Service of Social Movements* (Paradigm Publishers, 2012), 14-5; John Street, ‘“Fight the Power”: The Politics of Music and the Music of Politics’ (2003) 38 *Government and Opposition* 113, 116.

²⁵ Reebee Garofalo (ed), *Rockin’ the Boat: Mass Music and Mass Movements* (South End Press, 1992).

²⁶ David Buxton, ‘Rock Music, the Star System, and the Rise of Consumerism’, in Simon Frith and Andrew Goodwin (eds), *On Record: Rock, Pop and the Written Word* (Routledge, 1990) 427.

From a very different perspective, Rob Rosenthal and Richard Flacks define political music through its role in driving change:

political music [and art more generally] implies that existing arrangements are not natural... [and are] susceptible to change... if opposed... [Music / art] is also political if it helps achieve the tasks necessary for mobilising such opposition, whether or not it helped spark the original ideas behind that opposition.²⁷

Tim Levinson, Australian hip-hop MC Urthboy, argues that, rather than artistic culture being central or otherwise to the process of social change, the two go “hand in hand... If there is such a volume of community feeling, and there’s such a weight of pressure that is applied by a social movement, then the artists of the day are going to document it.”²⁸ Indeed, speaking from personal experience, he sees art as being secondary to, or supportive of, an existing process of change. “The cultural movement,” he says, “is for the most part impotent if it’s not there to support what is already happening at a social level.”²⁹ Similarly, composer Martin Wesley-Smith contends that “[t]he arts can certainly help, but by themselves will change little.”³⁰

CLIMARTE’s Bronwyn Johnson sees a more active, pre-emptive role: “[t]he arts has always been ahead of the general discourse around these things because they are engaging with the ideas of the world.”³¹ Her colleague, Guy Abrahams, further, contends that artists are early adopters who drive further awareness and concern:

The broad arts community... are generally sensitive to social and environmental issues. They perhaps become some of the people who are early adopters of the awareness, if you like. Given... information, they are the people who think about it and look at ways of feeding it back to us. In a way, it’s a bit of a feedback loop, and they can be very early on in that feedback loop.

Regardless of whether artistic engagement comes early or later in the process, it is widely agreed that, without cultural involvement of some kind, change will not be deep and long-lasting. Wynne-Jones encapsulates this in her comment that “in terms in sustaining change, I think culture is absolutely essential.”³² Activist Deborah Hart, who uses theatrical engagement such as the Climate Guardians and the Frackers’ Guild, reflects this in the metaphor of a tree: “If those roots aren’t really embedded well, there’ll be trouble.”³³ Abrahams contends that “If you’re looking for social change which is broadly based rather than some sort of imposed top-down directive, then the way to engage people is through culture.”³⁴

The Culture Group, an organisation established in the USA to help coordinate artistic and cultural engagement with activism, uses the metaphor of a wave. Culture, they argue, is the suite of mostly

²⁷ Rob Rosenthal and Richard Flacks, *Playing for Change: Musicians in the Service of Social Movements* (Paradigm Publishers, 2012), 20.

²⁸ Tim Levinson, interview, 13/03/14.

²⁹ Tim Levinson, interview, 13/03/14.

³⁰ Martin Wesley-Smith, interview, 5/05/14.

³¹ Bronwyn Johnson, interview, 14/03/14.

³² Angharad Wynne-Jones, interview, 14/03/14.

³³ Deborah Hart, interview, 31/03/14.

³⁴ Guy Abrahams, interview, 14/03/14.

invisible underlying processes which drive the swell, leading to the final crashing of the wave in legislative or governance change.³⁵

Perhaps most telling of all is the frequent use of metaphor to explain culture's role. We appeal to cultural ideas even in explaining what we mean by the term culture. By guiding, limiting or expanding the way we see the world, it enables us to more deeply grapple with questions of how we want the world to be. If we are not satisfied with the world as it is, it enables us to tell new stories and paint new pictures of how it should be and how to get there.

While the perspectives on the relationship between art, culture and political change are many and varied, what is clear is that many philosophers and practitioners agree that artistic engagement with issues can certainly have an impact on broader culture, and thus contribute to, delay or even block changes in the law.

1.2. Culture, art and environment

While it is relatively self-explanatory that the arts play a central role in creating and shaping culture (indeed, to many, arts and culture are words that can be used interchangeably) the relationship between nature and culture is more contested.

While Goldbard explicitly defines culture as “[w]hatever you see or hear that doesn’t fit the category of nature,”³⁶ others emphasise the critical element in culture that is the relationship between humanity and our environment, from how we understand it to how we alter it. Gabriella Giannachi, for example notes that: “Culture... is not only a means to represent, perform and understand nature but also a way of changing nature. Likewise, nature is a fundamental axis for cultural change. A change in nature is a change in culture.”³⁷ In that conception, a phenomenon in the natural world such as climate change is deeply cultural, in that it is a change in nature driven by human factors and the changes it wreaks will inevitably have deep impacts on our culture, changing the way we lead our lives and the way we understand our world and our place in it.

Indigenous Australian art and culture are a place where the relationship with nature is deeply expressed. From that perspective, Wesley Enoch beautifully explores the complex relationship between all three – art, culture and nature:

Art is a way of mapping our landscape, story is a way of placing ourselves in the continuum of time, dance teaches us to be the animals and plants we live with. Art has a purpose that is beyond distracting you from your life. Art is about personal connections to the world around you... expressing what you have at stake.³⁸

Singer/songwriter, Shane Howard, an Australian of Irish ancestry who has long been fascinated by and passionate about Aboriginal culture and rights, reflects on these ideas when discussing the title of his band, Goanna's, album, “Spirit of Place”. The title comes, he says, from a philosophy that “the

³⁵ The Culture Group, *Making Waves: A Guide to Cultural Strategy* (theculturegroup.org, January 2014), 4.

³⁶ Arlene Goldbard, *The Culture of Possibility: Art, Artists and The Future* (Waterlight Press, 2013), loc 125.

³⁷ Gabriella Giannachi, ‘Representing, Performing and Mitigating Climate Change in Contemporary Art Practice’ (2012) 42(2) *Leonardo* 124, 129.

³⁸ Tipping Point Australia, *Greening the Arts: Thinkpieces for Zero Carbon Future and A Survey of Sustainable Arts Practices* (October 2010), 4.

land, the spirit, the air, all these things will determine who we become as a people,” interweaving concepts of nature and culture.

Environmentalist and author, Bill McKibben brings a culturally very different perspective to the role of art in shaping our cultural response to climate change:

Art, like religion is one of the ways we digest what is happening to us, make the sense out of it that proceeds to action... We can register what is happening with satellites and scientific instruments, but can we register it in our imaginations, the most sensitive of all our devices?³⁹

Going back in history, it is important to recognise that the early environmentalist philosophy of Henry David Thoreau, for example, coincides with the fascination of romantic poetry and art with the beauty of the natural world. In a sense, the two ‘cultural’ movements went hand in hand. Julien Knebusch, in an editorial in the arts/sciences journal *Leonardo*, persuasively draws that earlier arts/culture interaction into our present circumstances:

Art could help us to question our perceptions and relationships to the climate and its changes. Artistic explorations should not be restricted to illustrating our scientific discoveries, as is done in contemporary climate-change showcases. Art should instead help us to experience and reveal our inner participation with climate, the rupture of its balance and its meaning for our inner world, in the same way that landscape artists reframed the relationship of humans to their environment.⁴⁰

From ancient traditions through romantic painting to contemporary art, culture plays a central role in helping us understand and relate to our environment, grapple with the changes we are wreaking upon it, and awaken us to the need to change.

1.3. Climate change as a cultural issue

The view of Gabriella Giannachi, placing climate change firmly within a cultural conception of the world, sits superficially at odds with the existing mainstream conception of climate change as an issue which has come to our attention because of the complex technical work of scientists. For many years, it has been seen as, and presented as, a technical issue involving parts per million of carbon dioxide and percentage targets for emissions reductions, with technical legal and economic solutions such as carbon taxes and gigawatt hour targets for renewable energy.

Increasingly, climate scientists, technologists and activists are recognising that this approach is failing to build engagement, interest, priority and action at a community, business or government level. This is unsurprising given what we know about how social change happens at a cultural level. Yet it remains challenging, from both perspectives, to draw the technical field of science together with the ineffable, immeasurable world of culture.

Climate scientist, Mike Hulme, in his book, *Why We Disagree About Climate Change*, recognises that “climate change has moved from being predominantly a physical phenomenon to being

³⁹ William McKibben, ‘Imagine That: What the Warming World Needs Now is Art, Sweet Art’, *Grist Magazine*, 21 April 2005.

⁴⁰ Julien Knebusch, ‘The Perception of Climate Change’ (2007) 40(2) *Leonardo* 113, 113.

simultaneously a social phenomenon”⁴¹ and that “[t]he full story of climate change is the unfolding story of an idea and how this idea is changing the way we think, feel and act.”⁴²

Kevin Anderson, another climate scientist, quoted in The RSA’s report, *A New Agenda on Climate Change*, says that the numbers are so stark that what we have to do is “develop a different mind-set – and quickly.”⁴³ Similarly, Australian climate scientist, Graeme Pearman, told this study that “Climate change is really a human question, it’s not primarily a physical science question at all. It’s about what humans perceive they want or need.”⁴⁴

It is in examining what drives these perceptions of need that this analysis leads to a directly cultural context. The RSA follows that lead, noting that:

[E]nergy demand is driven by perceived ‘need’, but this sense of need is highly contingent from a historical or cultural perspective. Global perception of energy demand is driven by the social practices ... we come to view as normal (eg two hot showers a day, driving short distances, regular flying), features of life relating to contingent norms of cleanliness, comfort and convenience rather than inherent features of human welfare.⁴⁵

If what we perceive to be necessary in our lives is culturally driven, then any solutions must also grapple with culture and seek to change it. A psychological study into the possibilities for climate action by the German Foundation for Cultural Renewal takes that step. “It has long been clear now,” they say, “that technological innovation and organizational efficiency gains alone will not make our societies sustainable. Over and above this, a cultural transformation is necessary, one which includes changes in human experience and behaviour.”⁴⁶ Further, “[a] cultural transformation requires psychologically sound measures to be adopted by a majority... The promulgation of abstract political or economic blueprints for sustainability is not an effective strategy for this purpose.”⁴⁷

Most pertinently for the purposes of this study, The RSA sets out how the broad climate change effort needs to shift its understanding:

to recognise that human behaviour is much less individualistic and conscious, and much more socialised and automatic than we commonly imagine. More broadly, we are embodied and constituted by evolutionary biology, embedded in complex social networks, largely

⁴¹ Mike Hulme, *Why We Disagree About Climate Change: Understanding Controversy, Inaction and Opportunity* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), Loc 275

⁴² Mike Hulme, *Why We Disagree About Climate Change: Understanding Controversy, Inaction and Opportunity* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), Loc 315

⁴³ Rowson, Jonathan, *A New Agenda on Climate Change: Facing up to Stealth Denial and Winding Down on Fossil Fuels*, A report for The RSA, December 2013, 18.

⁴⁴ Graeme Pearman, interview...

⁴⁵ Rowson, Jonathan, *A New Agenda on Climate Change: Facing up to Stealth Denial and Winding Down on Fossil Fuels*, A report for The RSA, December 2013, 25.

⁴⁶ Marcel Hunecke, *Psychological resources for sustainable lifestyles*, A report for Denkwerk Zukunft – Foundation for cultural renewal, June 2013, 9.

⁴⁷ Marcel Hunecke, *Psychological resources for sustainable lifestyles*, A report for Denkwerk Zukunft – Foundation for cultural renewal, June 2013, 11.

habitual creatures, highly sensitive to social and cultural norms and more rationalising than rational.⁴⁸

If climate change is, then, a cultural issue, driven by cultural norms and requiring cultural transformation, that places the arts and artists in prime position to help lead the way. This is a position the arts have a long experience in, as the following section shows.

1.4. Historical role of arts in social movements

The social role of the arts goes back millennia. According to William Danaher, “[m]usic and rhythm have been central to human history, in part, by motivating humans to act for the benefit of the group over and above themselves.”⁴⁹ As John Street notes, “From Plato to the Frankfurt School and beyond, the case has been made for regarding music (especially popular music) as a source of power”.⁵⁰ Michael Kantor argues, for example, that:

The Greek tragedies were... performed to reinforce the resilience and openness that Greek society needed to be able to cope with uncertainty, both through reminders of the limits of the human condition, and the always-present potential for the Gods to render humanity secondary.⁵¹

In an article entitled “The Politics of Music and the Music of Politics”,⁵² Street traverses examples from the use of campaign songs in contemporary election campaigns⁵³ to the banning of all music in Afghanistan under the Taliban.⁵⁴ He discusses how the CIA’s Voice of America, as well as national anthems such as “God Save the Queen”, can be considered “a form of state propaganda”, before moving to the more explicit use of militaristic and/or folk music by the Soviet, Nazi and South African apartheid regimes.⁵⁵ In each of these cases, the internal justification for this propaganda art appears to be around issues of identity politics, branding or the simple abiding belief that music has the power to exercise or undermine social control.

The corollary of the promotion of certain *desirable* art as propaganda is the direct legal intervention of censorship of *undesirable* art. Street notes the prohibition of jazz and Jewish music under the Nazis and the banning of Fela Kuti’s music in Nigeria, amongst other examples, and highlights that, “in 1998, the journal *Index on Censorship* devoted a special issue to music censorship.”⁵⁶

⁴⁸ Rowson, Jonathan, *A New Agenda on Climate Change: Facing up to Stealth Denial and Winding Down on Fossil Fuels*, A report for The RSA, December 2013, 23.

⁴⁹ William Danaher, ‘Music and Social Movements’ (2010) 4(9) *Sociology Compass* 811, 813.

⁵⁰ John Street, “‘Fight the Power’: The Politics of Music and the Music of Politics’ (2003) 38 *Government and Opposition* 113, 116.

⁵¹ Tipping Point Australia, *Greening the Arts: Thinkpieces for Zero Carbon Future and A Survey of Sustainable Arts Practices* (October 2010), 11.

⁵² John Street, “‘Fight the Power’: The Politics of Music and the Music of Politics’ (2003) 38 *Government and Opposition* 113.

⁵³ John Street, “‘Fight the Power’: The Politics of Music and the Music of Politics’ (2003) 38 *Government and Opposition* 113, 113.

⁵⁴ John Street, “‘Fight the Power’: The Politics of Music and the Music of Politics’ (2003) 38 *Government and Opposition* 113, 119-120.

⁵⁵ John Street, “‘Fight the Power’: The Politics of Music and the Music of Politics’ (2003) 38 *Government and Opposition* 113, 114-115.

⁵⁶ John Street, “‘Fight the Power’: The Politics of Music and the Music of Politics’ (2003) 38 *Government and Opposition* 113, 117.

Many authors⁵⁷ have noted that censorship invests art with a power it may not have possessed or intended until the act of censorship itself. Shane Howard notes the banning of the “Devil’s interval”, or augmented fourth, by the mediaeval church as an example of this.⁵⁸ However, Howard and others reflect that these kinds of clumsy interventions reveal a very real power of art that those seeking social control and fearing art understand. Abrahams fascinatingly reflects that it may be the very uncontrollable nature of the arts and how they convey meaning that strikes fear into the heart of totalitarian regimes:

because they recognise that it’s not something that can be controlled. They realise the power of this cultural movement, and they’re scared of it. And that’s why there’s this backlash. ... a realisation that if culture is allowed to become political in an overt way, that’s a really difficult thing to battle.

Rosenthal and Flacks, in their thorough examination of the role of music in social movements, covering issues such as recruitment, conversion and mobilisation, diffusion vs containment of ideas and activity, experience and participation, and collective identity, outline key historical examples:

music accompanies political struggles in much of the recorded and oral history of most of the world’s societies: protest broadsides in Europe throughout the Middle Ages, a long tradition of travelling singer/poets in Latin America, singers of calypso in Trinidad arising in the 1920s, the pervasive mass singing in the South African struggle against apartheid, the nationalist songs of the Irish rebellion, the *twoubadou* tradition in Haiti, *rai* in Algeria, and on and on.⁵⁹

The arts can be used by political forces to help drive opposition and resistance, and, on the other hand, artists can of their own accord exercise their political voice. In some cases, these desires and aims are consistent; in others, there is a clear decision by political forces to co-opt artists; in yet others, it is unclear where the line lies.

The adoption of Bruce Springsteen’s “Born in the USA” by Ronald Reagan’s 1984 presidential campaign is among the most famous examples of co-option, the songwriter being deeply unhappy that his music’s intended critique of his country’s treatment of Vietnam veterans was used as a simplistic patriotic anthem for a campaign he did not support.⁶⁰ A perhaps less confrontational approach is the co-option of Pharrell Williams’ song “Happy” discussed in the introduction. Both cases raise the question of moral rights, a live issue in the ongoing development of intellectual property, regarding the right of an artist to control the use of their work. A stricter interpretation of moral rights would enable an artist like Springsteen to prevent his song from being used by a campaign he did not support.

⁵⁷ John Street, “‘Fight the Power’: The Politics of Music and the Music of Politics” (2003) 38 *Government and Opposition* 113. See also Rob Rosenthal and Richard Flacks, *Playing for Change: Music and Musicians in the Service of Social Movements* (Paradigm Publishers, 2012); Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison, *Music and Social Movements: Mobilizing Traditions in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge University Press, 1998).

⁵⁸ Shane Howard, interview, 26/03/14.

⁵⁹ Rob Rosenthal and Richard Flacks, *Playing for Change: Musicians in the Service of Social Movements* (Paradigm Publishers, 2012), 5.

⁶⁰ Rob Rosenthal and Richard Flacks, *Playing for Change: Musicians in the Service of Social Movements* (Paradigm Publishers, 2012), 92.

A more cooperative approach was taken by early union organisers and the Communist Party in the USA, bringing in non-involved musicians to recruit supporters. The advent of radio, which spread songs beyond the reach of the musicians themselves, helped radicalise millworkers, becoming an alternative form of information from papers and mill owners.⁶¹

Taking this approach to perhaps its logical conclusion, the Highlander Centre, one of the first activist training centres in the world, involved a substantial focus on music, recruiting and training musicians and workshopping campaign songs.⁶² “We Shall Overcome” is the most famous of many protest songs of the 1960s that had its origins there. The recent emergence of “Tipping Point” projects in the UK and Australia, which bring together artists, scientists and campaigners to work on issues to do with climate change, might be considered to follow a similar approach.

On environmental issues, the *Live Earth* concerts of 2007 saw musicians brought in to help climate change campaigning, following the lead of Live Aid, Rock Against Racism and similar mega-events of the 1980s (examined and critiqued at length by Garofalo⁶³). *Live Earth* helped lift the profile of climate change even higher on the wave of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Fourth Assessment Report and Al Gore’s *Inconvenient Truth*, but had questionable impact beyond those already engaged.⁶⁴ More successfully, the Cape Farewell project “brings artists, scientists and educators together to raise awareness about climate change”. Perhaps thanks to its more cooperative approach, it is “widely acknowledged to be the most significant sustained artistic response to climate change anywhere in the world.”⁶⁵

The phenomenon of artists choosing to use their voices for political purposes is a tradition that goes back to minstrels and beyond. Historically, the politics of Shakespeare has been the subject of much discussion,⁶⁶ and it is perhaps no coincidence that the Nazis took art so seriously both for propaganda and as the subject of censorship when the Weimar cabaret scene was so explicitly political,⁶⁷ composer Hanns Eisler declared he wanted to use “music as a weapon” and Bertolt Brecht, with whom Eisler worked, said “Art is not a mirror held up to reality but a hammer with which to shape it.”⁶⁸

⁶¹ Rob Rosenthal and Richard Flacks, *Playing for Change: Musicians in the Service of Social Movements* (Paradigm Publishers, 2012), 75.

⁶² Rob Rosenthal and Richard Flacks, *Playing for Change: Musicians in the Service of Social Movements* (Paradigm Publishers, 2012), 205. See also Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison, *Music and Social Movements: Mobilizing Traditions in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge University Press, 1998), 3.

⁶³ Reebee Garofalo (ed), *Rockin’ the Boat: Mass Music and Mass Movements* (South End Press, 1992).

⁶⁴ Yale, Gallup, ClearVision, ‘Surveying the Impact of Live Earth on American Public Opinion’ (Yale Project on Climate Change Communication, 2007) <<http://environment.yale.edu/climate-communication/article/surveying-the-impact-of-live-earth-on-american-public-opinion>>.

⁶⁵ Simon Boxall et al, interviewed by Hannah Bird, ‘The Beauty of What We Stand to Lose: Voices from Cape Farewell’ (2008) *Spring Engage* 21 38, 38-39.

⁶⁶ See eg Allan Bloom, *Shakespeare’s Politics* (University of Chicago Press, 1981).

⁶⁷ See eg Peter Jelavich, *Berlin Cabaret* (Harvard University Press, 1996).

⁶⁸ Both quoted in Rob Rosenthal and Richard Flacks, *Playing for Change: Music and Musicians in the Service of Social Movements* (Paradigm Publishers, 2012), 8.

The second half of the 20th century saw an explosion of artists becoming involved with political campaigns, from anti-Vietnam war protests to Live Aid, from white power punk to Billy Bragg's Red Wedge, from civil rights campaigns to urban African-American rap and hiphop.⁶⁹

The same period saw the advent of environmental campaigns, and the immediate involvement of artists. Without analysing their impact, Wehr enumerates some of the more famous songs, from Joni Mitchell's "Big Yellow Taxi", Pete Seeger's "Sailing Up My Dirty Stream" and John Denver's "Rocky Mountain High", through to the more recent Dave Matthews Band's "One Sweet World" and Bad Religion's "Kyoto Now".⁷⁰

In summary, artists and activists have both long recognised the potential power of cultural engagement to drive change or hold it back. Political science and philosophy have grappled with the overlapping meanings of culture and how they weave together to enable or block legal and institutional change. Yet cultural engagement with perhaps the biggest social, environmental and cultural issue humanity has ever faced – global warming – is still in its infancy, and little has been written about it.

⁶⁹ Historical examples given throughout John Street, "'Fight the Power': The Politics of Music and the Music of Politics" (2003) 38 *Government and Opposition* 113; Rob Rosenthal and Richard Flacks, *Playing for Change: Musicians in the Service of Social Movements* (Paradigm Publishers, 2012); Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison, *Music and Social Movements: Mobilizing Traditions in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge University Press, 1998); Reebee Garofalo (ed), *Rockin' the Boat: Mass Music and Mass Movements* (South End Press, 1992); Andrew Ross and Tricia Rose, *Microphone Fiends: Youth Music and Youth Culture* (Routledge, 1994).

⁷⁰ Kevin Wehr, *Green Culture: An A-to-Z Guide* (SAGE Publications, 2011).

2. The roles artists can play in climate action

“Activism at its best,” says Anna Rose, “serves to highlight the gap between what is and what should be. And it does that through really dramatising that issue and forcing powerholders to respond, which in itself is a form of theatre.”⁷¹

In saying this, Rose is tapping into the point that Love and Mattern make that, in some senses, art and politics are both essentially involved in a process of engagement. They are different methods of and approaches to the communication and dissemination of ideas, and the practise of engaging people in and with those ideas.

The various roles artists can play, then, in driving climate action and law reform to address global warming are all broadly related to the communication and dissemination of ideas. This can be as simple as drawing attention to an issue and passing on information about it. More deeply, it can involve interpreting that information, presenting ideas in a way which engages the audience at an emotional level, involving people in participatory engagement with the ideas, or, most deeply of all, shifting the way the audience perceives the world, and therefore behaves, in relation to those ideas.

Effective communication is, of course, critical in all social change movements, but it has taken on particular importance in the hotly contested arena of climate change. There is now an extensive literature, indeed almost a distinct discipline, on communicating climate change, with leading figures including Susanne Moser and Anthony Leiserowitz.

Given this contestation, the role of the arts as a medium for communication and artists as communicators about climate change is an obvious one. Author Jay Griffiths writes, “The issue of climate change needs persuasion rather than propaganda and art understands the psychology of persuasion”.⁷² Alison Tickell, founder of UK green arts organisation Julie’s Bicycle, writes that “[a]rt can shape and shift perceptions”.⁷³ Professor Tim Jackson, economist and playwright, writes:

It’s clear that any attempt to change people’s lives must... speak a language people understand. Science can sketch the nature of the problem. Technology can facilitate the solutions. Economics can point out the costs and the benefits. Art engages the soul... Art looks like the perfect addition to our instruments of change.⁷⁴

Yet it is notable once again how little specific published research there is on the topic. Indeed, Moser notes that “[t]he role of the arts—while increasingly involved in making climate change accessible and used in attempts to increase public involvement—has... not been critically evaluated to date.”⁷⁵

Communications theory looks at how meaning is constructed and passed on. In recent years, the study of political communication from a progressive perspective has been led by linguist George Lakoff. His central insight is that political campaigns are not won through rational argument, but

⁷¹ Anna Rose, interview, 12/04/14.

⁷² Julie’s Bicycle, *Long Horizons: As Exploration of Art and Climate change* <britishcouncil.org/longhorizons>, 7.

⁷³ Julie’s Bicycle, *Long Horizons: As Exploration of Art and Climate change* <britishcouncil.org/longhorizons>, 3.

⁷⁴ Julie’s Bicycle, *Long Horizons: As Exploration of Art and Climate change* <britishcouncil.org/longhorizons>, 19.

⁷⁵ Susanne Moser, ‘Communicating Climate Change: History, Challenges, Process and Future Directions’ (2010) 1(1) *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change* 53.

through appeals to values with well-framed language. “Frames,” Lakoff says, “are mental structures that shape the way we see the world... Reframing is changing the way the public sees the world”.⁷⁶

This has tremendous implications for the communication of climate change by arts and artists, particularly the school of thought, sceptical of the role of the arts, that says “[a] song, however powerful its performance, cannot win an argument”.⁷⁷ If driving climate action isn’t about “winning an argument”, that objection, however astute, is irrelevant.

Moser’s practical communications advice, rooted in the theoretical and psychological work of Lakoff and others, brilliantly summarises the challenges of communicating climate change: “[t]he distant problem must be brought home; the invisible causes and impacts must be made visible; the inconceivable solutions must be illustrated; perceived and real barriers to action must be shown as something ‘people like me’ have overcome.”⁷⁸ These are all challenges that the arts can assist with, in order to “find clearer, simpler metaphors, imagery, and mental models as well as compelling framing”.⁷⁹

Moser also articulates three main goals of climate change communication that are useful for examining the role of the arts: firstly, to educate and provide motivation to act; secondly, to “depict an ‘all hands on deck’ situation”; and, thirdly, “[aiming] even deeper by trying to foster not just political action or context-specific behavior modification, but to bring about changes in social norms and cultural values that act more broadly”.⁸⁰ The goals have alternately been characterised by the Climate Change Action Group as “to motivate both (i) widespread adoption of ambitious private-sphere behaviour changes; and (ii) widespread acceptance of - and indeed active demand for - ambitious new policy interventions”.⁸¹

No categorisation of the goals, tasks and challenges is perfect, and there will always be overlaps. Bearing that in mind, this study takes the approach of peeling back layers of the onion, starting with the most basic and, in a sense, superficial and working its way deeper. Taking examples from the literature and interviews, this section examines the role of art and artists in drawing attention to the issue of climate change, framing the ideas and priming people to accept those frames, aiding the process of identity formation that is critical to building movements for change, prefiguring and modelling new worlds and behaviours that will support climate action, and finally assisting a process of cultural change that is necessary in order to tackle this ecological crisis.

2.1. Raising awareness, drawing attention, and ‘educating’ audiences

When many people think of artistic involvement in climate change, or any social change or political issue, the first thing they think of is generally the role of art or artists in drawing attention to the issue. This may be through song lyrics, participation in events, or explicit campaigning.

⁷⁶ George Lakoff, *Don’t Think of an Elephant* (Scribe, 2004) xv.

⁷⁷ John Street, *Rebel Rock: The Politics of Popular Music* (Basil Blackwell, 1986) 60.

⁷⁸ Susanne Moser, ‘Communicating Climate Change: History, Challenges, Process and Future Directions’ (2010) 1(1) *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change* 53, 40.

⁷⁹ Susanne Moser, ‘Communicating Climate Change: History, Challenges, Process and Future Directions’ (2010) 1(1) *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change* 53, 36-7.

⁸⁰ Susanne Moser, ‘Communicating Climate Change: History, Challenges, Process and Future Directions’ (2010) 1(1) *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change* 53, 38.

⁸¹ Climate Change Advisory Group, ‘Communicating Climate Change to Mass Public Audiences’ (Working Document, September 2010), 1.

While this is, on one level, the most superficial role for the arts, it is nevertheless both a vital and ancient one. As Shane Howard points out:

I think it's ever been thus. In our European culture, the bards, the song people, were almost the media. It was the poets and the bards who travelled and disseminated information, and I don't think that role has changed all that much, even in this digital age.⁸²

Bearing in mind Lakoff's advice, the goal of attention and education through music and art is not about "rational" debate. It is more about raising awareness and providing a trigger and a forum for further discussion, and this is an area artists have long excelled in. Suzanne Vega reflects this when discussing her famous song about child abuse: "[y]ou write a song like *Luca* and then people have a tool to talk about it with."⁸³ Perhaps the prime Australian example of the power of music to provide a trigger in this way is the people who "never would have been at a pub talking about Indigenous land rights, but... were singing along to Midnight Oil."⁸⁴

Charlie Mgee is a musician whose band The Formidable Vegetable Sound System performs and records catchy dance tunes explicitly about climate change, ecological limits and permaculture. He explains his role, at the most basic level, as "someone who can translate fairly dry or dense theory and concepts into a more acceptable form. I really feel like music has.... that ability to really get messages across to people in a digestible way."⁸⁵

The hope, on the part of artists seeking to drive change, is that, by engaging audiences and creating a trigger and a space for discussion, they will encourage people to learn more and get involved. As Mgee says, "inspiring the enthusiasm is more important than giving the answers, and if people have the enthusiasm then they'll go and find the answers."⁸⁶ Discussing his own experiences through the Formidable Vegetable Sound System, Mgee reflects:

I've tried to use a combination of uplifting dance music that inspires people to just dance and have a good time, and not having the lyrics as the focus of the music. So while I've put a lot of thought into the lyrics, and there's a lot of science and principles and theories within them, it's not what I'm trying to get across to the audience. The aim is to just really engage them through music that they want to dance to, and then later maybe they'll sit down and listen to the words. Or some might get hammered home through repetitive lyrics [laughs].⁸⁷

Composer Martin Wesley-Smith engages in a similar process with some of his work addressing environmental and social issues. Discussing performances of his works around the planet with clarinettist Ros Dunlop, he explains:

The usual format is that I introduce each work, Ros plays it (I handle the projections, sound balance etc), then we discuss it with the audience. We often get some amazing responses,

⁸² Shane Howard, interview, 26/03/14.

⁸³ Rob Rosenthal and Richard Flacks, *Playing for Change: Music and Musicians in the Service of Social Movements* (Paradigm Publishers, 2012), 154.

⁸⁴ Anna Rose, interview, 12/04/14.

⁸⁵ Charlie Mgee, interview, 17/03/14.

⁸⁶ Charlie Mgee, interview, 17/03/14.

⁸⁷ Charlie Mgee, interview, 17/03/14.

with not everyone agreeing with my viewpoint (some vehemently disagreeing). It's a great way to air the issues yet still provide an aesthetic experience, one that's often quite moving.⁸⁸

A closely linked issue is the role of art in galvanising pre-existing support for an issue. As Guy Abrahams notes about the impact of Pablo Picasso's painting depicting the horrors of the bombing of Guernica during the Spanish Civil War in 1937, "[t]here was an anti-war movement before Guernica, but that certainly galvanised and created a focus. They sent the painting around the world."⁸⁹

This role for art in tapping into existing concern is an issue Tim Levinson, Urthboy, feels very strongly about. Contrary to Vega and Mgee's perspective, in his experience, music does not have the power to "kick start something". An issue-based song, even if the writer cares very deeply about it, will "live the life of the hookiness of the song... if the movement in the community isn't working in a parallel fashion." However, if the song taps into something that is already growing in the community, it can transcend its pure musical catchiness. This was his experience with The Herd's song about racism in Australia, 77%:

When The Herd did 77%, none of us thought that anyone would play the song. Ozibatla, who wrote it, was angry... When the band got together... all of a sudden it had this force to it. We still thought "this is a song that's going to go nowhere," but it got an opening with JJJ. [At the time] the accumulation of a fairly popular public sentiment – against government policy at the time – was not being reflected in much art... If anything it was brushed over or it was spoken of in such ambiguous and abstract terms that people couldn't quite feel the connection with what their political opinion was in any of the music or any of the art that they were listening to. So... 77% slotted in with something that was already bubbling in the community, and there was a frustration there, so that's for me why the song worked.⁹⁰

Shane Howard had similar experiences with his two most famous issue-based songs, "Solid Rock" and "Let the Franklin Flow". The first, a song about Aboriginal rights, became a tremendous commercial success, but, according to Howard, it took a long time for its message to penetrate into the broader culture which, in the early 1980s, was still not ready to hear it: "I think every Aboriginal person in Australia who heard that song when it came out got it first time what was going on lyrically in the song. And I think, for a lot of mainstream Australia it took a lot longer for it to sink in."⁹¹

"Let the Franklin Flow" was written both on the back of the commercial success of "Solid Rock" and in the midst of a very high profile campaign to stop the damming of the Franklin River in Tasmania. "Some things have their time," Howard says. "'Let the Franklin Flow' was adding a little bit of fuel to a fire that was already burning. It was able to move quickly to the centre stage."⁹²

While these examples suggest that art can both trigger and create space for new discussions and, perhaps more easily, galvanise and support pre-existing campaigns, Guy Abrahams points to a third

⁸⁸ Martin Wesley-Smith, interview, 05/05/14.

⁸⁹ Guy Abrahams, interview, 14/03/14.

⁹⁰ Tim Levinson, interview, 13/03/14.

⁹¹ Shane Howard, interview, 26/03/14.

⁹² Shane Howard, interview, 26/03/14.

role for the arts in this field – keeping discussion of ideas going in new and innovative ways when they are being actively suppressed:

Historically, at times when there was pretty active suppression of discussion of certain ideas, it has been up to the arts to come up with ways to have those discussions in ways that perhaps are a bit tangential or coming from underneath or from the side, but to maintain those conversations and to keep that area of thought alive.⁹³

In the current context of climate change, where there are deliberate attempts to sideline the issue, to destroy the credibility of science and scientists, when the mainstream media and commentators refuse to countenance discussion of the role of climate change in making bushfires worse, for example, this role for the arts is highly relevant and extremely important. Perhaps through artistic engagement, these conversations, suppressed in the overtly political discourse, can continue and gain a firmer, deeper hold in our culture.

One critical question for artists attempting to draw attention to climate change and raise awareness of it is their role as messengers. As Moser says:

Messengers are integral aspects of the framing; they are also critically important in establishing the credibility of the information conveyed. Messengers give ‘seals of approval’ to information that an audience might otherwise have a hard time assessing as ‘right’ or ‘trustworthy’... Trust in messengers, however, is context dependent. Religious leaders may be trusted as climate change communicators if the issue is framed as a moral one, but not necessarily if the issue is framed as a security, scientific or energy issue.⁹⁴

The question then becomes “what kind of messengers are artists?” How can they be trusted or credible messengers on an issue such as climate change? They have neither scientific credibility nor moral standing. But they do have cultural credibility, and it is in their role shaping and guiding culture that they become powerful messengers.

This cultural role is what Billy Bragg, among the world’s most celebrated ‘political’ songwriters, is tapping into in his response to this question:

I think you have to reveal to the audience that you don’t have all the answers and that you yourself are not completely sure that you know what you’re doing, you’re just trying to make the best of it, same as everyone else... It’s not about offering answers, it’s asking the right questions... It’s the audience that has the answers.⁹⁵

Bragg, whose perspective gels directly with Mgee’s, that the role of the artist is to inspire the audience to engage more deeply themselves rather than tell them what to think, is perhaps instinctively reflecting the Climate Change Action Group’s recommendation for cultural messages to

⁹³ Guy Abrahams, interview, 14/03/14.

⁹⁴ Susanne Moser, ‘Communicating Climate Change: History, Challenges, Process and Future Directions’ (2010) 1(1) *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change* 53, 40-1.

⁹⁵ Billy Bragg, quoted in Rob Rosenthal and Richard Flacks, *Playing for Change: Music and Musicians in the Service of Social Movements* (Paradigm Publishers, 2012), 214.

be carried by “people ‘like me’.”⁹⁶ This is a process which Tim Levinson beautifully characterises as “an authenticity exchange between the listener and the artist.”⁹⁷

Levinson also reflects that what an artist says publicly is seen through the prism of their art and vice versa. He notes African American hip hop artists touring Australia and visiting The Block in Redfern or wearing Aboriginal flags on their clothing, but it is just as relevant to an artist singing about climate change and acting (or not acting) in an ecologically sustainable manner. This is vital to the artist’s authenticity and to the credibility of their message:

If you build up a reputation over a period of time to stand for something, your actions outside the pure act of song-writing and performing live do affect that reputation. They do build to either give your words weight or to take that weight away.⁹⁸

In drawing these strands together, it is worth noting that, in the field of study specifically into the role of artists in social *movements*, as opposed to in the process of social change more broadly, there is an effort made to translate the roles of art into traditional activist roles. Reebee Garofalo, for example, does so in his (unflattering) analysis of mega-events such as “Live Aid, Farm Aid, Sun City, the Amnesty International tours, the Nelson Mandela Tributes, and the Greenpeace project”.⁹⁹ He articulates their role as fundraising, consciousness raising, artist / celebrity involvement and agitation/mobilisation,¹⁰⁰ all aspects concerned largely with bringing an issue to greater public attention, motivating people to act and creating an “all hands on deck” situation, as Moser puts it.

Rob Rosenthal and Richard Flacks similarly discuss the role of arts and artists in terms of recruitment, conversion, mobilisation and retention of activists.¹⁰¹ They give examples such as Sting drawing attention to Amazon deforestation, Madonna’s strong image empowering young girls, and Rage Against the Machine’s Tom Morello noting that Amnesty International and the Revolutionary Communist Party found fertile ground for grassroots recruitment the morning after the band had played. Their powerful conclusion from the success of these activist artistic engagements is that:

Music carries suggestions of new ideas and identities, fixes others as something to be considered, ties these to other ideas and identities in ways that suggest they belong together, and does all of this with an emotional power that other forms of education only rarely achieve.¹⁰²

These elements of emotion and identity, and how they work to build the simple role of attracting attention and raising awareness into a powerful tool for social and cultural change, are the subject of the following sections.

⁹⁶ Climate Change Advisory Group, ‘Communicating Climate Change to Mass Public Audiences’ (Working Document, September 2010), 8.

⁹⁷ Tim Levinson, interview, 13/03/14.

⁹⁸ Tim Levinson, interview, 13/03/14.

⁹⁹ Reebee Garofalo (ed), *Rockin’ the Boat: Mass Music and Mass Movements* (South End Press, 1992), 7-8.

¹⁰⁰ Reebee Garofalo (ed), *Rockin’ the Boat: Mass Music and Mass Movements* (South End Press, 1992), 26-34.

¹⁰¹ Rob Rosenthal and Richard Flacks, *Playing for Change: Music and Musicians in the Service of Social Movements* (Paradigm Publishers, 2012), Chapters 7-9.

¹⁰² Rob Rosenthal and Richard Flacks, *Playing for Change: Music and Musicians in the Service of Social Movements* (Paradigm Publishers, 2012), 155.

2.2. Framing and priming

Framing is, of course, a word that comes from the arts. The word itself paints a picture of a work of art within a frame which directs the viewer's focus, providing a specific perspective. And the arts play a key role in both framing ideas and priming audiences to accept new frames.

Susanne Moser acknowledges this role, noting that “[f]rames are triggered by words, imagery, symbols, and non-verbal cues such as messengers, music, tone of voice, and gestures”.¹⁰³ Karen Raney, in the editorial of *engage 21*'s superb special edition on “Art and Climate Change”, writes that “[o]ne reason art can work so powerfully on our perceptions is that artists tend to link different spheres and orders of experience.”¹⁰⁴ Further:

Metaphors are essential in this shift, as it is metaphors by which we live and through which we understand experience... Changing perceptions is something that art has always been in the business of... ‘Art is a framing device’ writes Lucy Lippard, ‘for visual and/or social experience’. Art ‘changes frames on the spot, offering views of the ways a space or place can be or is used’.¹⁰⁵

Rosenthal and Flacks, in discussing the role of the arts in the “construction of political meaning”, note that the arts “may reinforce or disrupt common assumptions and the “schemas” or framing we use for understanding the world around us”.¹⁰⁶

While Lakoff does not explicitly address the use of arts, two specialists in the field who have followed him, political scientist Brendan Nyhan and neuropsychologist Drew Westen, do draw attention to it. Nyhan's most relevant contribution in this area arises from his practical examination of Lakoff's revelation that “[i]f the facts do not fit a frame, the frame stays and the facts bounce off”.¹⁰⁷ He has conducted studies into such “disconformation bias [and]... resistance to corrections”¹⁰⁸ to identify appropriate ways to help people to accept new frames. The results of these studies show that both graphical representations and “priming” can be effective in shifting the frames of debates sufficiently to alter people's understanding of certain “facts”. Graphical representation can involve mathematical graphs and tables or more artistic works representing the issue in question. Priming can be anything from smiling or actively boosting the self-confidence of the subject to playing music that triggers certain feelings, making the subject more receptive to new frames and messages.

Rosenthal and Flacks note that “music can serve as a ‘prime’ that triggers a complex interpretive schema in which specific situations are linked to a framework of more general beliefs.”¹⁰⁹ Whether it be hearing “Respect” triggering frames about gender roles, or simply the positive social atmosphere

¹⁰³ Susanne Moser, ‘Communicating Climate Change: History, Challenges, Process and Future Directions’ (2010) 1(1) *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change* 53, 39.

¹⁰⁴ Karen Raney, ‘Editorial: Art and Climate Change’ (2008) *Spring Engage 21* 2, 3.

¹⁰⁵ Karen Raney, ‘Editorial: Art and Climate Change’ (2008) *Spring Engage 21* 2, 5.

¹⁰⁶ Rob Rosenthal and Richard Flacks, *Playing for Change: Music and Musicians in the Service of Social Movements* (Paradigm Publishers, 2012), 115.

¹⁰⁷ George Lakoff, *Don't Think of an Elephant* (Scribe, 2004) xv, 17.

¹⁰⁸ Brendan Nyhan and Jason Reifler, *Opening the Political Mind? The Effects of Self-affirmation and Graphical Information on Factual Misperceptions* (Dartmouth College, 2011).

¹⁰⁹ Rob Rosenthal and Richard Flacks, *Playing for Change: Music and Musicians in the Service of Social Movements* (Paradigm Publishers, 2012), 124.

of a gig and emotions triggered by the music itself, art can act as the kind of prime Nyhan identifies and thus help the process of shifting frames.

Drew Westen's neuropsychological studies into the way the brain makes political decisions have very clear implications for the use of arts in political communications. His central relevant conclusion is that emotions are the most powerful political communications tool, since political decisions are not made "rationally", but subconsciously. Westen specifically addresses the role of imagery, sound and music as critical to emotional engagement around political messages. He notes, for example, that it has been "shown in a series of experiments that something as subtle as varying the musical score in a political ad can alter its power to persuade", something that has long been known by advertisers and film makers.¹¹⁰

Leiserowitz also highlights the role of emotion, noting that Americans' perception of the risks of climate change has been understated because "researchers have analyzed how people make inferences about the causes of climate change, but not how risk perception and behavior are guided by emotion and affect".¹¹¹ He goes on to discuss the power of imagery, sights and sounds in this affective process of risk perception. Explicitly acknowledging a key role for the arts, Leiserowitz has studied the impact of the Hollywood blockbuster *The Day After Tomorrow* through opinion polling, concluding that "across the board, the movie appears to have had a strong influence on watchers' risk perceptions of global warming",¹¹² and that movie-goers reported an increased willingness to change their behaviour, including their vote.

Shane Howard is convinced of music's "emotive force". He believes it is "possibly the most powerful of the arts for doing that," pointing, like Westen, to the fact that "[f]ilms use music all the time to heighten the emotive power of a scene."¹¹³ His analysis of the impact of "Let the Franklin Flow" is that the message was carried more powerfully because of the music's "capacity to open the soul, and in a way prepare us for a transformative message."¹¹⁴

For Charlie Mgee, the role of music in priming audiences is central to the philosophy behind the Formidable Vegetable Sound System. The music is "a way for people to get together as a group and enjoy themselves. And when they're transformed to that state of enjoyment it's really a lot easier to get messages through about more serious issues."¹¹⁵

The Climate Change Advisory Group's excellent working document, *Communicating Climate Change to Mass Public Audiences*, also relates the role of emotion to climate change communication, noting that "[b]elief in climate change and support for low-carbon policies will remain fragile unless people are emotionally engaged".¹¹⁶ Rather than simply triggering powerful but undirected emotions, they also discuss the "need for emotionally balanced representations of the issues at hand. This will

¹¹⁰ Drew Westen, *Political Brain: The Role of Emotion in Deciding the Fate of the Nation* (PublicAffairs, 2008).

¹¹¹ Anthony Leiserowitz, Anthony, 'Climate Change Risk Perception and Policy Preferences: The Role of Affect, Imagery, and Values' (2006) 77(1-2) *Climatic Change* 45, 47.

¹¹² Anthony Leiserowitz, Anthony, 'Climate Change Risk Perception and Policy Preferences: The Role of Affect, Imagery, and Values' (2006) 77(1-2) *Climatic Change* 45, 74.

¹¹³ Shane Howard, interview, 26/03/14.

¹¹⁴ Shane Howard, interview, 26/03/14.

¹¹⁵ Charlie Mgee, interview, 17/03/14.

¹¹⁶ Climate Change Advisory Group, 'Communicating Climate Change to Mass Public Audiences' (Working Document, September 2010).

involve acknowledging the 'affective reality' of the situation, eg "We know this is scary and overwhelming, but many of us feel this way and we are doing something about it".¹¹⁷

Moser links the use of imagery and music to the emotional content of messages. She notes that

[m]essages are accompanied by, and inseparable from, imagery, the tone of voice, and the emotions that are being evoked by pictures, symbols, color schemes, and music. Their emotional impact on the audience must be considered carefully as it can be far stronger than the impact of words alone.¹¹⁸

Theatrical activist, Deborah Hart, has first-hand experiences of the emotional power of art to make climate change "real" for people through her work making the issues "beautiful and humorous and loving and sometimes frightening".¹¹⁹ The performance art protest group she co-founded, ClimActs, catalyses all these emotions in bringing acts such as the Frackers' Guild, the Coal Diggers, the Flat Earth Institute and the Climate Guardian angels to public and private events, engaging and confronting people directly in a way which draws on the ancient tradition of court jesters speaking truth to power.

With the more humorous acts, Hart has found that those whose values and behaviours are the target of the act often "couldn't help laughing. [They are] wanting to be disapproving but actually thinking oh this is really fun."¹²⁰ In the case of one specific conservative person, Hart knows that the humour of the Coal Diggers "reframed in her mind that the whole issue is about vested interests"¹²¹ in a way that hours of conversation could not. Similar to Mgee's dance music and Howard's emotional tug opening people up to new ideas, the disarming use of humour can be a tremendously powerful entry point for more serious issues.

Hart recalls one event which gets to the essence of how humour can prime people to radically shift frames and change their view of the world in a deeply serious way. In this particular case, the Frackers' Guild had successfully made their way – uninvited – into a corporate symposium being held in a board room in Melbourne's Rialto Towers, intended to promote the positive environmental credentials of coal seam gas.

We just completely took over and had a field day and they were all just standing staring. These were all people who think that they're green. And [there was] this one man, who was really charming and funny and clever – in his mind, he's a good guy, because he's making these projects not as bad. We had a bit of fun with him. As we were leaving I turned around and looked at this man and his face haunted me for quite a few days. He really looked like what he had constructed to help himself sleep at night was in pieces on the floor. He couldn't pretend that the role that they were playing in this industry was anything but profiting from a really destructive, base industry.

¹¹⁷ Climate Change Advisory Group, 'Communicating Climate Change to Mass Public Audiences' (Working Document, September 2010), 4.

¹¹⁸ Susanne Moser, 'Communicating Climate Change: History, Challenges, Process and Future Directions' (2010) 1(1) *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change* 53, 40.

¹¹⁹ Deborah Hart, interview, 31/03/14.

¹²⁰ Deborah Hart, interview, 31/03/14.

¹²¹ Deborah Hart, interview, 31/03/14.

Reframing is of paramount importance in shifting views and priorities around climate change and thereby enabling legal reforms, but it is also tremendously difficult due to the hotly contested nature of the debate. If, as these examples suggest, art and artists can prime people to accept new frames, using beauty, enjoyment, humour and other emotional appeals, that alone would be enough to make their engagement worthwhile.

2.3. Identity formation

“There are few influences more powerful than an individual's social network,”¹²² contends the Climate Change Action Group in highlighting the importance of identity in communicating and campaigning on climate change.

Networks are instrumental not just in terms of providing social support, but also by creating specific content of social identity - defining what it means to be “us”... Encouraging and supporting pre-existing social networks to take ownership of climate change (rather than approach it as a problem for “green groups”) is a critical task.¹²³

And identity is one of the most critical aspects of culture that art has a strong influence on. Art can help define the identity of a broad national or ethnic culture, as with bluegrass, Jewish klezmer music, and so many other forms of traditional music, dance and more. But it can also help new and emerging subcultures define themselves in a way that can strengthen their internal coherence.

“Identity processes are inherent in all movements,” Rosenthal and Flacks explain, “[a]nd musicking, we’ve been arguing, is the way many first try on that identity... Indeed, music is a major resource for identity construction in contexts that are remote from the political”.¹²⁴ “Music and group identity,” they say, “may become so intertwined as to be synonymous in the minds of group members and outsiders”.¹²⁵ They draw this in to the explicitly cultural context, noting that “[m]usic, as Frith says, is a basic tool, especially for young people, in the ‘cultural map-making’ that all people must do.”¹²⁶

One of the important roles for music in this identity process is as a social legitimiser. “While the music creates the bond, the listeners of punk may then be motivated to carry out their political ideals not because the music ‘says’ they should but because many others feel the same way and that it is acceptable to express those opinions.”¹²⁷

Charlie Mgee has found this very process at work in his audience engagement:

I think it’s essential to the movement, in fact I think it’s essential to any kind of group action, in that it creates an identity among people, and a sense of belonging. It makes them feel

¹²² Climate Change Advisory Group, ‘Communicating Climate Change to Mass Public Audiences’ (Working Document, September 2010), 8.

¹²³ Climate Change Advisory Group, ‘Communicating Climate Change to Mass Public Audiences’ (Working Document, September 2010), 8.

¹²⁴ Rob Rosenthal and Richard Flacks, *Playing for Change: Music and Musicians in the Service of Social Movements* (Paradigm Publishers, 2012), 165.

¹²⁵ Rob Rosenthal and Richard Flacks, *Playing for Change: Music and Musicians in the Service of Social Movements* (Paradigm Publishers, 2012), 94.

¹²⁶ Rob Rosenthal and Richard Flacks, *Playing for Change: Music and Musicians in the Service of Social Movements* (Paradigm Publishers, 2012), 95.

¹²⁷ Rob Rosenthal, unpublished work extracted in Rob Rosenthal and Richard Flacks, *Playing for Change: Music and Musicians in the Service of Social Movements* (Paradigm Publishers, 2012), 165.

validated as part of a group. If everyone's there listening to music about climate action or permaculture or whatever, just them being there, having a good time together, enjoying that, is bonding them in a way that validates what the music or the art is about. That was the idea behind my project... to actually take something that not many people were talking about and just make it fun without pressing the actual ideas too heavily onto anyone, and then through that really drive it home and try to bring that enjoyable positive context into what you're talking about. Which is an interesting experiment, but it seems to be the way that it works. And I really think that music is the most powerful tool we have for bringing people together.¹²⁸

Similarly, Tim Levinson nominates building a sense of shared identity as one of the few incontestable outcomes of his experiences recording and performing. In the case of the anti-racist song 77%:

I do know for a fact that it brought together a bunch of people. It really felt, from being inside the band, that there was a sense of relief from people who were that way inclined, who felt similarly, that there was a great sense of relief that they could jump up and down and yell it and express it at an event. I do know that that was some way of unifying people to feel like they were not alone, which definitely progressed a sense of what they were going to do about it.¹²⁹

As well as building a broad sense of shared identity, music plays a critical role in helping create, maintain and cement internal movement identity amongst campaigners. Anna Rose says music is key to "maintaining morale" in the present climate movement, just as it was vital to giving people "strength and courage" in the civil rights movement.¹³⁰ Shane Howard recalls the large number of songs written to support the Franklin River campaign which never reached the level of popularity of "Let the Franklin Flow" but "on the ground, those songs are lifting people's spirits, they're galvanising the intention, and reminding people why those issues are important."¹³¹

Tim Levinson finds the perfect metaphor for this role, speaking passionately about the importance of "preaching to the choir":

which I have no qualms with whatsoever. It's one of those condescending comments ... that dismisses all this value, that misses the point of how vital it is to preach to the choir, to support what the damn choir is singing, to be the band behind the choir!¹³²

Youth culture and identity – a case study of the Australian Youth Climate Coalition and flash mobs
Identity is something the Australian Youth Climate Coalition (AYCC) have worked hard to build, and music and dance simply made sense in their search for activities "that would be attractive for young people to get involved in [because]... so much of youth culture is about music."¹³³ Indeed, Andrew Ross, writing on youth music and culture, notes that:

¹²⁸ Charlie Mgee, interview, 17/03/14.

¹²⁹ Tim Levinson, interview, 13/04/14.

¹³⁰ Anna Rose, interview, 12/04/14.

¹³¹ Shane Howard, interview, 26/03/14.

¹³² Tim Levinson, interview, 13/03/14.

¹³³ Anna Rose, interview, 12/04/14.

the level of attention and meaning invested in music by youth is still unmatched by almost any other organised activity in society, including religion. As a daily companion, social bible, commercial guide and spiritual source, youth music is still the place of faith, hope and refuge. In the forty-odd years since “youth culture” was created as a consumer category, music remains the medium for the most creative and powerful stories about those things that often seem to count the most in our daily lives.¹³⁴

And yet it was almost by accident that the AYCC stumbled on perhaps their most powerful tool for building shared identity – the flash mob. The first flash mob they organised was to close their 2009 national Powershift conference with a bang. They brought together 2000 young people in a dance choreographed by cast from the television program “So You Think You Can Dance” on the forecourt of the Sydney Opera House. Anna Rose says:

The idea behind that was external initially. We certainly didn’t say “let’s give everyone a transformative experience and help shape their identity into being more closely aligned with the AYCC”! It was about, well, “what can we do that will get us some media attention in a different way?” If we’d had a rally it just would have had no media coverage, it wouldn’t have been very empowering for people to take part in. We wanted to do something more iconic, that used the Opera House, the symbol of Australia, do something that would visually symbolise the kind of thing that we were creating.

It was about media attention, and something that would be colourful and youthful. And it did get media attention, but more than that it got shared, huge shares on social media and people were really proud that they were part of it, learning the dance moves themselves, teaching each other the dance moves.... People felt that it was something that allowed them to express how they felt about climate change and the hope of solving it in a different way.¹³⁵

Having recognised the potency of this tool, and learnt important factors such as that filming and uploading to social media is vital to its success so that people could share and identify with it, AYCC made flash mobs a central part of their work. Rose frequently teaches the “It’s Getting Hot in Here” dance to school children she addresses, so they can take the catchy and slightly rebellious dance back to their schools and “spread... the message in a way that’s a bit more fun and creative... than going around with a megaphone chanting ‘stop climate change now’.”¹³⁶

Rose recalls a particularly poignant moment where a flash mob brought together music and dance’s ability to reframe events, build internal morale and draw others into a growing movement:

After the Copenhagen negotiations failed, everyone was really depressed at being really ineffective and AYCC decided we would try to cheer everyone up. We had all learned [a dance from Slumdog Millionaire] on the plane over... and we got up on stage and performed it for everyone... And suddenly everyone cheered up. And then we made this amazing video... called “We’re not done yet” and ... started to make plans for what we were going to do ... to make that sure this kind of deal isn’t politically acceptable in the future. And the

¹³⁴ Andrew Ross and Tricia Rose, *Microphone Fiends: Youth Music and Youth Culture* (Routledge, 1994), 3.

¹³⁵ Anna Rose, interview, 12/04/14.

¹³⁶ Anna Rose, interview, 12/04/14.

music and the dance and the hope that it gave people was tangible in turning around the mood from depressed to determined.¹³⁷

In this way, the use of a youth cultural mode of self-expression helped a large group of people overcome a political and legal failure and continue to work for change.

The AYCC's approach begins to tap into art's deepest role in identity formation – the power of artistic work infused with that sense of identity, sometimes work which both reframes the world and helps to prime audiences to accept those new frames, to spread ideas wider in an almost viral way without people quite realising what they are spreading. As Rosenthal and Flacks explain:

The ethos developed in scenes and subcultures also functions powerfully to spread a worldview beyond their boundaries, particularly when there are avenues of communication, like modern mass media, that carry these outward... What begins percolating isn't a coherent ideology, but... "structures of feelings", part emotional, part rational, a heady brew of social ideas, fashions, music, and so forth, both precursor to a developing ideology and more than simply an ideology, involving "meanings and values as they are actively lived and felt" by each individual.¹³⁸

This connects the question of identity with the next, deeper aspect of change. Alongside the framed ideas and shared identity that music and art can convey and build is its role in actually creating a picture of a new and different world and leading the way there.

2.4. Prefiguring new worlds and modelling behaviour

Modelling behaviour for others to follow and actively representing new possible worlds are both vital to creating change, especially for an issue as broad and deep as global warming. In a sense, the two are the same, with prefiguring being the more philosophical and cultural aspect of the practical behaviour modelling.

This area is where Susanne Moser's articulation of the challenges of communicating climate change becomes particularly pertinent: "[t]he distant problem must be brought home; the invisible causes and impacts must be made visible; the inconceivable solutions must be illustrated; perceived and real barriers to action must be shown as something 'people like me' have overcome."¹³⁹ While drawing attention to issues and framing them thoughtfully is useful in overcoming these challenges, the role of art in making the invisible visible cannot be overstated. According to Love and Mattern, "[t]he arts and popular culture have a prefigurative capacity that rivals or exceeds other areas of human experience."¹⁴⁰ As Bridget McKenzie puts it:

In our profession we have to acknowledge and communicate this difficult future, even through dystopian visions, in order to help people imagine and design solutions. We are

¹³⁷ Anna Rose, interview, 12/04/14.

¹³⁸ Rob Rosenthal and Richard Flacks, *Playing for Change: Music and Musicians in the Service of Social Movements* (Paradigm Publishers, 2012), 100.

¹³⁹ Susanne Moser, 'Communicating Climate Change: History, Challenges, Process and Future Directions' (2010) 1(1) *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change* 53, 40.

¹⁴⁰ Nancy S Love and Mark Mattern, *Doing Democracy: Activist Art and Cultural Politics* (SUNY Press, 2013), 11.

perhaps one of the few groups who can do this in a way that can make sense of the contradiction.¹⁴¹

Prefiguring is an area where visual art particularly excels. Gabriella Giannachi cites examples of art projects that effectively bring the distant problem home because they “are able to capture attention and produce strong instinctive reactions while also being informative and generating important and possibly impactful debates on one of the most controversial and yet pressing imperatives of our time”.¹⁴² These include painted on flood marks on façades of buildings in Bristol, the creation of a Global Warming Survival Kit, and a live broadcast of the sound of a melting glacier.¹⁴³ As she says of this last example:

Laar’s work, which broadcasts a live phenomenon, succeeds in bringing a remote occurrence close by, thus also dealing with one of the biggest difficulties in climate change communication: the rendering of something occurring over time, often in remote environments, to diverse and distributed audiences.¹⁴⁴

However, it is not only visual art which can make the invisible visible and challenge views of the world by presenting and prefiguring a different world. Music and musicians, as cultural leaders and influencers, have a critical role to play in their behaviour, both on stage and off.

Rosenthal and Flacks highlight the example of British multi-racial “2-Tone” bands presenting a reality in which “race divisions were not inevitable.”¹⁴⁵ The same process took place on the edges of the civil rights movement in the USA, with black and white jazz musicians, for example, sharing stages and working together. This modelling is also central to Tim Levinson’s point about the authenticity of African American hip hop artists supporting Australian Indigenous struggles while on tour in this country.

Returning to climate change, the importance of modelling behaviour has major implications for the lifestyles of conspicuous consumption that some celebrity artists lead. It is also a key driver for efforts to practically “green” the arts, such as by Julie’s Bicycle, Green Music Australia, the SLOW BOAT conference,¹⁴⁶ and others. While an artist is, perhaps unconsciously, modelling excessive consumption, any work they do to promote sustainability cannot succeed as it lacks authenticity. By consciously shifting their behaviour to modelling greener lifestyles and business practices, artists can effectively contribute to changing cultural norms and thereby amplify their individual actions by, in some cases, several orders of magnitude. This is at the heart of Green Music Australia’s goal, for instance, to help put the music scene on a more sustainable footing practically in order to drive the deeper cultural change needed to address global warming.

¹⁴¹ Bridget McKenzie, ‘Cultural Education for a Changed Planet’ (2008) Spring *Engage* 21 19, 20.

¹⁴² Gabriella Giannachi, ‘Representing, Performing and Mitigating Climate Change in Contemporary Art Practice’ (2012) 42(2) *Leonardo* 124, 131.

¹⁴³ Gabriella Giannachi, ‘Representing, Performing and Mitigating Climate Change in Contemporary Art Practice’ (2012) 42(2) *Leonardo* 124, 127.

¹⁴⁴ Gabriella Giannachi, ‘Representing, Performing and Mitigating Climate Change in Contemporary Art Practice’ (2012) 42(2) *Leonardo* 124.

¹⁴⁵ Rob Rosenthal and Richard Flacks, *Playing for Change: Music and Musicians in the Service of Social Movements* (Paradigm Publishers, 2012), 115.

¹⁴⁶ Tipping Point Australia, *Greening the Arts: Thinkpieces for Zero Carbon Future and A Survey of Sustainable Arts Practices* (October 2010), 9.

Artists do not, of course, model behaviour simply as individuals, or even as celebrities. Their art plays a key role in their ability to influence, thanks to its emotional pull, its ability to “prime” us for accepting new frames, and its cultural power create coherent meaning out of disparate elements. As Rosenthal and Flacks explain:

In this role as soundtrack of our individual and collective lives, music not only takes part of its meaning from its setting, but also organises our memory of that setting, the symbol that ties it together in an accessible package, thus contributing to the meaning we attribute to it in later recollections.¹⁴⁷

In this sense, AYCC uses flash mobs as a modelling exercise, both for the practice of activism and for normalising caring about climate change. As Rose says: “People are watching [a video of an AYCC flash mob] because it’s a cool video and then seeing the message at the end, and normalising the fact that young people are doing things because they care about climate change.”¹⁴⁸ While there is no clear evidence of causation, Rose sees a possibility that the flash mobs can also provide an entrée, in a sense, to deeper involvement in civil disobedience: “A lot of the people who were at Powershift in 2009 are now at the Maules Creek blockade [of a proposed coal mine in NSW].”¹⁴⁹

A critical factor in this area is drawing audiences into participation. Active participation, whether by attendance at a performance, singing along, contributing in some way to the creation of an artistic work or to an activity held in parallel with the performance, “tends to encourage, as well as reflect, more active participation in the political struggle itself.”¹⁵⁰ The role of live performance is crucial for turning invisible support for social change or political action into visible support, even if audience members do not initially attend with that in mind. “Many come primarily for the music and social bonding. But recruitment is encouraged when the event frames the music as movement related”.¹⁵¹

The interviews turned up some fascinating examples of participation in artistic events as both behaviour modelling and prefiguring of a different world deliberately aimed at addressing climate change.

Practical modelling – a case study of environmental programs at music festivals

Mat Morris is a sustainability consultant and Environmental Scientist who has worked closely with music festivals over many years to institute environmental practices and activities, both in order to reduce their own direct impact and to involve and influence their attendees. He detailed two particularly successful programs: a tree planting program run during Splendour in the Grass at North Byron Parklands, and container deposit recycling programs run at several festivals over a number of years. The tree planting program, he says, involved:

¹⁴⁷ Rob Rosenthal and Richard Flacks, *Playing for Change: Music and Musicians in the Service of Social Movements* (Paradigm Publishers, 2012), 88-89.

¹⁴⁸ Anna Rose, interview, 12/04/14.

¹⁴⁹ Anna Rose, interview, 12/04/14.

¹⁵⁰ Rob Rosenthal and Richard Flacks, *Playing for Change: Music and Musicians in the Service of Social Movements* (Paradigm Publishers, 2012), 200.

¹⁵¹ Rob Rosenthal and Richard Flacks, *Playing for Change: Music and Musicians in the Service of Social Movements* (Paradigm Publishers, 2012), 168

a lot of people that maybe hadn't had much camping experience, maybe hadn't had a lot of experience being on a very large property, and certainly had not had experience planting endemic native species. It was overwhelming, the response to that. People really took a lot of pride in what they did there... They had a community feel about them, the people that got involved engaged with each other as much as with the program. At that level I see vehicles like festivals, those sorts of bringing together of people, as being very effective... in actually starting to physically... move to the next stage of experiencing as well as trying to put together in their own mind the meaning of what they were doing.¹⁵²

At festivals including Splendour in the Grass, Homebake, Field Day and others, Morris has organised container deposit recycling schemes where attendees pay a little more for canned drinks and can reclaim this "deposit" by returning the can to recycling centres located around the festival. "Invariably," he says, "the event site maintained a level of cleanliness that it otherwise would not have." All the festivals saw substantially increased recycling, and one recorded a remarkable 90% recycling rate. Morris observed the reaction closely as part of his monitoring of the program.

People who had sat down and had a meal, generally speaking, when the site was deteriorating, would just get up and leave their waste where it was. What was happening when this program was in place was that they felt embarrassed, or they felt a responsibility to maintain what they saw around them. There was this communal level of pride which took place. Secondly, the people who were taking part were excited about the program. It generated a lot of talk, a lot of friendly banter and competition.

In both cases, Morris believes that the atmosphere of a music festival, combined with the "natural high" of the communal physical activity, creates a mix of memory, values and feelings that "almost stamps something in their brain... that will probably help to influence their decision-making process well into the future."¹⁵³ In this way, running participatory environmental programs at music festivals can be an immensely powerful approach to effectively train young people in sustainable practices that will stay with them through their lives beyond the festival.

Prefiguring change – the Home Art project

A radically different approach is the Home Art project run by Angharad Wynne-Jones' Tipping Point Australia. The genesis of this innovative prefigurative work was:

thinking about how to create a live performance experience with as little emissions as possible, then thinking that that can happen in people's homes, using what they have already. So you're not travelling to a theatre, not setting up lights.¹⁵⁴

What it became was revelatory as much for Wynne-Jones and her collaborator, choreographer Lucy Guerin, as it was for the people who opened their homes for them and took part. Walking around North Melbourne, knocking on doors, Guerin and Wynne-Jones introduced themselves and offered to come and work with the householder in developing a very personal, private work, to be performed in their own home to their own community of friends, family and neighbours. Although

¹⁵² Mat Morris, interview, 18/03/14.

¹⁵³ Mat Morris, interview, 18/03/14.

¹⁵⁴ Angharad Wynne-Jones, interview, 14/03/14.

they had their fair share of door slams, they found enough openness and involvement to be preparing to replicate the project in another suburb.

This very small scale exercise in creativity became a very large scale exercise in generosity, trust and community building. Wynne-Jones says it “changed the way that I thought about what a successful art project might be.”¹⁵⁵ She sees in the growth of this kind of participatory art a deliberate exploration and building of ideas around community resilience that can help us deal with the more challenging world we have created by triggering climate change.

Shane Howard calls prefiguring “future-dreaming” and he sees the role for “the artist to psychologically prepare people for change, or to explain change” as “very subversive at times.”¹⁵⁶ This is because art can be and is used not simply to challenge certain behaviours but to actively change very deeply held views of the world. As Love and Mattern say, “the arts and popular culture ultimately present “form as content” by modelling new ways of doing and sometimes undoing democracy.”¹⁵⁷

Wynne-Jones fascinatingly reflects that this “comes back to the inherent value of art-making in and of itself as an activity that resists the economic pressures, that can be done outside or alongside or subvert the... dominant economic paradigm.”¹⁵⁸

This is where the role of prefiguring and modelling dovetails with the deepest layer of all – shaping and reshaping the very culture through which we understand our world and our place in it.

2.5. Shaping culture

Culture is the deepest layer influencing and inhibiting change. Guy Abrahams pointed out that it is, often subconsciously, “both persuasive and sometimes restrictive in terms of where we think we can go.”¹⁵⁹ As was discussed, the role of culture has already begun to be understood as vital for change by climate scientists such as Kevin Anderson, who called for us to “develop a different mind-set – and quickly,”¹⁶⁰ and Graeme Pearman and The RSA, who raise the importance of changing perceptions of “need” for our new conditions.

Susanne Moser puts culture at the deepest level of her goals of climate communication, the third of which is “to bring about changes in social norms and cultural values that act more broadly”.¹⁶¹ It is worth quoting Moser more extensively as she explores this concept:

through efforts to influence behavior not just situationally, but fundamentally—via early education, effective interventions later in life, and pervasive modelling of certain behavioral norms—it is possible to set new or change existing social norms, portray less consumption-oriented, energy-intensive lifestyles, promote new values and ideals around family size and

¹⁵⁵ Angharad Wynne-Jones, interview, 14/03/14.

¹⁵⁶ Shane Howard, interview, 26/03/14.

¹⁵⁷ Nancy S Love and Mark Mattern, *Doing Democracy: Activist Art and Cultural Politics* (SUNY Press, 2013), 7.

¹⁵⁸ Angharad Wynne-Jones, interview, 14/03/14.

¹⁵⁹ Guy Abrahams, interview, 14/03/14.

¹⁶⁰ Rowson, Jonathan, *A New Agenda on Climate Change: Facing up to Stealth Denial and Winding Down on Fossil Fuels*, A report for The RSA, December 2013, 18.

¹⁶¹ Susanne Moser, ‘Communicating Climate Change: History, Challenges, Process and Future Directions’ (2010) 1(1) *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change* 53, 38.

reproduction, and lay a foundation for broad acceptance of policy interventions... Supportive, if not essential, here are dialogic forms of interaction, which can be used to involve audiences in shaping the new lifestyles and visions of a more sustainable society rather than simply 'deliver' them from some external, higher authority to the public for implementation.¹⁶²

This latter point, on dialogue with the audience, would appear to support Billy Bragg's characterisation of the artist's role as one of asking questions rather than as an expert with the answers. It is also reflected in artistic ventures into the question of climate change, such as The Civilians' theatrical project, *The Great Immensity*,¹⁶³ and Out-of-Sync's *Talking About the Weather*,¹⁶⁴ both of which engaged the audience and general public in development and creation of their work. One of the few successful novels grappling with climate change, Barbara Kingsolver's *Flight Behaviour*, while not involving readers in its creation, actively engages readers by posing more questions than it answers.

If we consider Goldbard's definition of culture as "the fabric of signs and symbols, customs and ceremonies, habitations, institutions, and much more that characterize and enable a specific human community to form and sustain itself,"¹⁶⁵ the role of artists in helping to weave that fabric becomes easily apparent. Shane Howard evokes several layers of meaning here when he says that "the song men or the song women have a vital role to play in terms of reinterpreting changing realities".¹⁶⁶ He explores them more fully in terms of paradigm shift:

Change is slow and mindful of its heritage. It takes a lot of people adding their bit of light to the sum of light to shift the dominant paradigm. And I think that is one of the essential roles of art and creativity, is basically to incrementally shift the dominant paradigm. [This] requires the artists to push the vision of the future forward, and then the legislators to show leadership and legislate for structural change... and what seemed problematic ten years ago is just common sense in the present... In the same way that legislators change law, the artists change thinking.¹⁶⁷

Angharad Wynne-Jones contends that art "can open up questions of meaning and value in a way that... can get into places that other things can't".¹⁶⁸ It can do this through the emotional appeals, for example, and through triggering memories and values associated with the experience of the art.

Charlie Mgee has an intriguing theory related to these ideas that is worth exploring – that music can perform a mnemonic function, placing an idea or set of behaviours into people's "cultural repertoire that acts as a reminder and a pointer". In coming to this theory he draws on:

¹⁶² Susanne Moser, 'Communicating Climate Change: History, Challenges, Process and Future Directions' (2010) 1(1) *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change* 53, 38.

¹⁶³ Sherri Wasserman and Marion Friedman Young, 'The Great Immensity: A Theatrical Approach to Climate Change' (2013) 56 *Curator: The Museum Journal* 79.

¹⁶⁴ Janine Randerson, 'Between Reason and Sensation: Antipodean Artists and Climate Change' (2007) 40(5) *Leonardo* 442, 446.

¹⁶⁵ Arlene Goldbard, *The Culture of Possibility: Art, Artists and The Future* (Waterlight Press, 2013), loc 113

¹⁶⁶ Shane Howard, interview, 26/03/14.

¹⁶⁷ Shane Howard, interview, 26/03/14.

¹⁶⁸ Angharad Wynne-Jones, interview, 14/03/14.

the ancient roles of music which were aimed towards direct action – I’m thinking along the lines of the work songs, the sea shanties. In a way, musicians are the shanty people, guiding us along this course of change. Sea shanties were traditionally work songs that were mnemonics to help people engage in action that would get them somewhere they were trying to go, or to achieve a particular function in their community or culture.¹⁶⁹

Mgee compares this to the modern use of jingles by advertisers, using catchy, simple and repetitive music to, as he puts it, “encode public mnemonics” that can trigger certain decisions and behaviours in a given situation. He is experimenting with that approach in order to hopefully trigger environmentally sustainable behaviour:

so that when people are put in particular situations that are challenging to their lifestyle or particular circumstances arise, a song is inspired to come into their head that helps in that situation... [In that way] music is just a way that you can set people up to have the answers available when their troubles arise.

Deborah Hart makes a similar point harking back to the ancient roles of art – in her case the power of myth and allegory to embed values and archetypes into our consciousness. “There’s that whole deeper, subliminal aspect of our tales and our traditions and our stories, because they were all designed initially to communicate important values.”¹⁷⁰

A central element of culture is the stories we tell ourselves and each other through which we understand the world and our place in it. This is what Arlene Goldbard means when she says “our capacity to act is conditioned on the story we tell ourselves about our own predicament and capabilities”.¹⁷¹ If that is the case, it is hard to imagine a more fundamentally cultural approach than Hart’s appeal to mythology and Mgee’s attempt to encode new mnemonics to guide behaviour.

Just as artistic culture can influence and shift broad culture, the broader cultural environment can have an impact on art, creating a fascinating and potent interweaving of the two. Eyerman and Jamison suggest that cultural changes driven by political movements can have a quite specific impact on the arts. For example, “the resurrection of bluegrass music, as well as many other traditional musics, was inspired by the civil rights movement, and its actualisation of history, its linking of the past with the present”.¹⁷²

More specifically, they argue that the participation by artists such as Brecht and Weill, Dylan and Baez, in social movements not only helps create our cultural understanding of those movements, but also had an impact on their art, engendering a creative feedback loop. Indeed, their “engagement was objectified in their art, and the movement thus came to be embodied in them.”¹⁷³

¹⁶⁹ Charlie Mgee, interview, 17/03/14.

¹⁷⁰ Deborah Hart, interview, 31/03/14.

¹⁷¹ Arlene Goldbard, *The Culture of Possibility: Art, Artists and The Future* (Waterlight Press, 2013), loc 193.

¹⁷² Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison, *Music and Social Movements: Mobilizing Traditions in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge University Press, 1998), 4.

¹⁷³ Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison, *Music and Social Movements: Mobilizing Traditions in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge University Press, 1998), 12.

This is central to Eyerman and Jamison's case that the two way, interactive arts/cultural change relationship is one of the most crucial aspects of social movements for change, as it is a "source of cultural transformation":¹⁷⁴

Our claim is that, by combining culture and politics, social movements serve to reconstitute both, providing a broader political and historical context for cultural expression, and offering, in turn, the resources of culture - traditions, music, artistic expression - to the action repertoires of political struggle... [T]he collective identity formation that takes place in social movements is a central catalyst of broader changes in values, ideas and ways of life.¹⁷⁵

Those three aspects of culture – values, ideas and ways of life – are vitally in need of change if we are to head off ecological catastrophe, as Anderson, Pearman and others tell us.

In terms of "big C" and "small c" culture interacting and leading to change, Angharad Wynne-Jones reflects on a shift in how climate change is perceived that she has picked up among artists she works with. Whereas for many years, artists struggled to come to grips with it, she feels that has recently changed because:

it's not an issue anymore – it's a condition of the world we live in. And so, in that sense, it becomes everybody's. I feel like that's a tipping point that's happened in the last few years. Now people are writing about it as part of the human condition in a sense. It's something that we're living with and dying from.¹⁷⁶

A slow and almost imperceptible shift in the cultural perception of climate change from "an issue" to "part of the human condition" may enable not only greater artistic engagement but also the opportunity to further shift values and behaviour towards sustainability.

The deepest layer of cultural communications and campaigning currently being researched is that of values mapping and how activating certain values can support or repress other values. The Climate Change Advisory Group notes one aspect of this strand of research:

Undue emphasis upon economic imperatives serves to reinforce the dominance, in society, of a set of extrinsic goals (focused, for example, on financial benefit). A large body of empirical research demonstrates that these extrinsic goals are antagonistic to the emergence of pro-social and pro-environmental concern.¹⁷⁷

Wynne-Jones posits that, on this level, the arts are in and of themselves presenting a different set of values, prefiguring a different world, "not unrelated to the fact that it doesn't make financial sense as an industry". In this way, artists, other than the tiny number of hugely successful celebrity artists,

¹⁷⁴ Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison, *Music and Social Movements: Mobilizing Traditions in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge University Press, 1998), 4.

¹⁷⁵ Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison, *Music and Social Movements: Mobilizing Traditions in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge University Press, 1998), 7.

¹⁷⁶ Angharad Wynne-Jones, interview, 14/03/14.

¹⁷⁷ Climate Change Advisory Group, 'Communicating Climate Change to Mass Public Audiences' (Working Document, September 2010), 6.

present quite a different picture of “what it is to be successful in a society that pretty much values economic success over anything else”.¹⁷⁸

Perhaps the most fascinating concept of all, and filled with opportunity for the role of the arts in driving climate action, is raised in a recent paper published by Common Cause suggesting that “engagement in arts & culture... [in and of itself can] encourage values that support well-being, social justice, and ecological sustainability”.¹⁷⁹

This is an idea that has been instinctively noted before. For example, arts educator Bridget McKenzie writes that “the skills of critical thinking, empathy, imaginative problem-solving and resourceful making will be essential in helping humanity rise to the many challenges climate change presents. These are the very skills that can be fostered by cultural education.”¹⁸⁰ Guy Abrahams also notes, from his experience, that “[b]eing artistically active, even for people who aren’t artists, is a way of accessing ways of thinking which they normally don’t.”¹⁸¹ Wynne-Jones extends her point about art not making financial sense into this deeper context:

One of the things I see artists that I work alongside doing brilliantly is opening up spaces of meaning that are different to the transactional meanings that we have in the economy that’s driven by material gain and capital. Really just the very presence of art and creativity can create a different understanding of the world and currency within the world which feels to me fundamental... In that sense I think that all art, no matter whether it proclaims itself to be socially motivated or politically motivated, has that capacity and makes that offer if it’s engaged with.¹⁸²

The evidence base in the values mapping work is takes this to a fascinating new level. The values of creativity and curiosity sit on the map amongst the values collectively referred to as “intrinsic”, close to the values of care for the environment, social justice and universalism, and opposite “extrinsic” values, such as desire for more material possessions, wealth, social status and power. Professor Tim Kasser writes that:

If we accept the sensible proposition that engagement in arts and culture activates values such as “curiosity” and “creativity,” then the implication from research on the value circumplex would be that the intrinsic portion of the human motivational system could be encouraged and strengthened, while the extrinsic portion could be suppressed, as a result of participating in arts and cultural activities... [A]rts and cultural activity are realms of human life in which people frequently report strong feelings of flow and engagement, and in which people often engage for the solely intrinsic reasons of self-expression, creativity, and exploration. As such, it may be that the more that one engages in artistic activity for these

¹⁷⁸ Angharad Wynne-Jones, interview, 14/03/14.

¹⁷⁹ Professor Tim Kasser, in Mission Models Money & Common Cause, *The Art of Life: Understanding How Participation in Arts and Culture Can Affect our Values* (2013) <<http://valuesandframes.org/download/reports/The%20Art%20Of%20Life%20-%20MMM%20and%20Common%20Cause.pdf>>, 8.

¹⁸⁰ Bridget McKenzie, ‘Cultural Education for a Changed Planet’ (2008) Spring *Engage* 21 19, 19.

¹⁸¹ Guy Abrahams, interview, 14/03/14.

¹⁸² Angharad Wynne-Jones, interview, 14/03/14.

kinds of intrinsic reasons, the more the intrinsic portion of the motivational system will be strengthened, and thus the weaker extrinsic values will become.¹⁸³

There is more research to be done in this area to confirm the link in practice, but it may well be that, beyond their role in helping to most effectively communicate messages, frame new ideas and prime audiences to accept new frames, build identity and prefigure a new and better world, the arts may in and of themselves be able to change our culture to one more conducive to tackling the climate crisis.

¹⁸³ Professor Tim Kasser, in Mission Models Money & Common Cause, *The Art of Life: Understanding How Participation in Arts and Culture Can Affect our Values* (2013) <<http://valuesandframes.org/download/reports/The%20Art%20Of%20Life%20-%20MMM%20and%20Common%20Cause.pdf>>, 10-11.

3. Dangers, risks and pitfalls

While there is a strong theoretical basis for, and many opportunities inherent in, artistic engagement with climate action, it is important not to lose sight of the fact that there are also risks, dangers and pitfalls in taking these steps.

This part divides these into three broad categories. Risks surrounding the messenger traverse issues such as the perils of using celebrity to draw attention, the importance of authenticity, and the risk to the artist of being labelled as an activist. Additionally, there is a range of legal risks to artists becoming deeply involved in climate change campaigning, such as getting caught up in moves to ban environmental boycotts and even potential arrest during direct action. Dangers surrounding the message include the risk to the art of being too overtly ‘political’, the problems of greenwashing and tokenism, and the challenge of consumerism. Finally, the risks around the process, the very use of art in making change, go from the deep philosophical critique led by Adorno that art can contain and suppress political activity to the activist process issue that the impact of art is often by its nature immeasurable.

3.1. Risks surrounding the messenger

As discussed, the messenger is critical to how audiences receive messages. In a sense, they become part of the message, as they frame it and influence its credibility. Artists seeking to get involved with climate action, or campaigners seeking to involve artists in their work, need to grapple with a “minefield”¹⁸⁴ of risks to do with their role as messengers. Some of these are risks to how the message will be received, while others are risks to them, potentially both professionally and personally, from impacts on their career to legal risks surrounding boycotts and direct action.

Mat Morris neatly summarises the issues faced by high profile musicians in particular in considering whether to commit to and support causes and, if so, which causes:

One is this pigeonhole effect – that they can be known as the guy who supports this or doesn’t agree with that. The second is that there are so many demands on them that their cachet or their impact can really be watered down by spreading themselves too thin. ...[Thirdly, as celebrities, their views] can be discounted.¹⁸⁵

Celebrity is an obvious communication tool for those seeking to draw attention to an issue since, as Tim Levinson observes, “success travels in a much more confident way than knowledge does in our society.”¹⁸⁶ However, simply drawing attention is only one small part of the process of social change. When considering the other aspects, celebrity becomes a more complex and less unequivocally beneficial tool.

Maxwell Boykoff, Michael Goodman and Ian Curtis note the power of celebrity voices to communicate with vast numbers of people about climate change, but they ask an important question: whether “‘celebrity effects’ inspire and foster grassroots, democratic movements and responses to climate change by and for ‘the people’, or are... plutocratic, unique and extraordinary

¹⁸⁴ Tim Levinson, interview, 13/04/14.

¹⁸⁵ Mat Morris, interview, 18/03/14.

¹⁸⁶ Tim Levinson, interview, 13/04/14.

elite behaviours of distraction”.¹⁸⁷ While setting out the “potential promises, pitfalls and contradictions”¹⁸⁸ of celebrity engagement, they do not, however, come to a conclusion, instead stating that “this question... should, perhaps be one of the fundamental considerations concerning the ‘effectiveness’ of the current tactics that have and continue to form the contemporary cultural politics of climate change.”¹⁸⁹

Some research has been conducted in Australia into the persuasiveness of celebrities in climate change campaigning. At least one major environmental organisation has chosen to discontinue using celebrities in response to it, according to Anna Rose. Nevertheless, Rose points out that there are “ineffective and effective ways of using celebrity” which have to do with who the celebrity is and the nature of their relationship with the target audience:

So, you have to find the right celebrity. It can backfire if it’s not a celebrity that ordinary people can relate to. People relate to people who they feel they have things in common with. If you find celebrities who appear too remote, too A list, it can backfire.¹⁹⁰

A key issue that Moser highlights in relation to celebrities as messengers is that of trust and credibility. If the celebrity does not add to the credibility of the message in the way it is framed, they can detract from it. Many artists are deeply concerned about this in relation to climate change, wondering “What right do I have to say this?” This concern is no doubt increased by the hotly contested nature of the climate change debate.

Charlie Mgee has found a neat way around this problem, firstly by not pretending to be an expert, as Billy Bragg suggested, but secondly by effectively using a text book he can point people to for more information:

I find it challenging as well to sing about this kind of stuff because you get questioned all the time about the details and the more intricate nooks and crannies of the science that I might not have personal experience with. But, having based my project around a book and a course, I feel like I just covered what I learnt to the best of my abilities and the rest is just inspiring people to learn for themselves.¹⁹¹

Guy Abrahams, interestingly, turns the question on its head. “Why shouldn’t we use platforms that we have, the spheres of influence that we have, to speak about things we care about it?” he asks. “Should artists be disqualified?”¹⁹²

¹⁸⁷ Maxwell Boykoff, Michael Goodman and Ian Curtis, ‘Cultural Politics of Climate Change: Interactions in Everyday Spaces’, in Maxwell Boykoff (ed), *The Politics of Climate Change: A Survey* (Routledge, 2010) 136, 149.

¹⁸⁸ Maxwell Boykoff and Michael Goodman, ‘Conspicuous Redemption? Reflections on the Promises and Perils of the “Celebrization” of Climate Change’ (2009) 40(3) *Geoforum* 395, 395.

¹⁸⁹ Maxwell Boykoff, Michael Goodman and Ian Curtis, ‘Cultural Politics of Climate Change: Interactions in Everyday Spaces’, in Maxwell Boykoff (ed), *The Politics of Climate Change: A Survey* (Routledge, 2010) 136, 150.

¹⁹⁰ Anna Rose, interview, 12/04/14.

¹⁹¹ Charlie Mgee, interview, 17/03/14.

¹⁹² Guy Abrahams, interview, 14/03/14.

It is yet to be seen, but it may be that Angharad Wynne-Jones' feeling that the perception of climate change is shifting from "an issue" to "part of the human condition" will lead to more artists feeling able to grapple with it. If we treat global warming as a cultural issue, cultural players such as artists have every right to talk about it.

Risks surrounding authenticity

A related aspect of the artist as messenger is the question of authenticity, raised by a number of the interviewees and discussed in relation to Tim Levinson's concept of "authenticity exchange".

Mgee says he does get challenged on the issue, and it becomes a key part of his musical act that he does have this authenticity and integrity. His involvement in action both at home and on tour both informs his music and increases its effectiveness. Mgee told this study:

I sometimes get questioned about my integrity with regards to how much I am actually doing towards putting into practice the things I'm singing about. As a touring musician singing about permaculture, it can be challenging to keep that balance. While it's often essential for musicians with a cause to be on the road touring and getting their messages out there, I think it's important that they can somehow demonstrate involvement beyond the music. This could be as simple as becoming involved in action happening wherever you are, finding out what's happening in the community, engaging and empowering those groups to keep doing what they're doing. It really gives people a lot of inspiration, to see someone who's a messenger in these things actually come and be involved or be supportive of local action.¹⁹³

There is a warning here not only for artists themselves but also for activists seeking to work with artists, to ensure that the artists are able to communicate authentically. Deborah Hart takes Mgee's point that the artist's job is to inspire the audience to learn more and flips it around, arguing that the activist's job is to inspire the artist, not tell them what to do and say: "We [have to be] very very careful not to be proscriptive and not to try and demand artists to make eco art or make climate art, but more to challenge them. If they've got something to say, they're likely to be the best at it, really getting to people's emotions, to think really creatively."¹⁹⁴

Levinson's point about the "authenticity exchange between the listener and the artist" actually links the question of integrity and independence to the risk to the artist and their art of being "labelled" as political. He sees it as vital that the audience does not feel like the artist is trying to "push an agenda" onto them, "which is sometimes a very obstructive occurrence if you're a listener and you've got some appreciation for an artist and they throw something down on you. It can get in the way."¹⁹⁵

Risks to the artist's career

Levinson notes a particular reticence in Australia on the part of major artists to "talk about anything political... because I think instinctively they understand that their audience is not going to cheer them on and chant alongside them when they do this."¹⁹⁶ Part of what is driving that, he feels, is the

¹⁹³ Charlie Mgee, interview, 17/03/14.

¹⁹⁴ Deborah Hart, interview, 31/03/14.

¹⁹⁵ Tim Levinson, interview, 13/04/14.

¹⁹⁶ Tim Levinson, interview, 13/04/14.

unpleasant way in which mainstream media has treated those who do take a stand. “There’s a lower chance that artists are going to get on board when,” he says, “it’s become so politically toxic.”¹⁹⁷

Martin Wesley-Smith believes that, while his music that dealt with environmental themes did not lead to him being disadvantageously labelled as a composer, his pieces about West Papua and East Timor did. While he admits this may be to do with his becoming “more strident”,¹⁹⁸ he does also believe that there are issues to do with funders, board members, audiences, financial pressures and thus administrators and programmers for classical music:

They are very wary of anything that challenges, that provokes, that asks questions about the world, and the society, in which we live. As a result they rarely program it. As a result, audiences rarely hear it, and have become used to standard classical repertoire.¹⁹⁹

He believes that, with some notable exceptions, little contemporary music in the classical tradition is written in Australia on explicitly political or environmental themes because:

most composers know that retribution (dried-up commissions and performances) would be swift. There's not a Grand Inquisitor directing things but a system where self-censorship (by performing groups, commissioners, broadcasters, etc) does the job very effectively.²⁰⁰

This is, of course, neither a new nor uniquely Australian experience, Shane Howard reminds us, noting in particular that “Bob Dylan... had to fight very hard to confound the perception of himself as a political songwriter.”²⁰¹ Howard himself, at times, fought against the label:

You have to spend a lot of your time trying to confound your own mythology and that can be very hard to do. There was a time for me, in the 90s, when I tried to run as far as I could from something like “Solid Rock” and going “there’s more to my life and my career than this single issue and this song”.²⁰²

Personal risks

Guy Abrahams draws attention to the fact that, in the context of bitter debate on an issue like climate change, the impacts on artists of becoming involved can be personal as well as professional. “Different people have a different capacity to stand up and deal with the consequences, and that applies across the community. It’s a personal decision, and anyone can do it; artists just happen to be in the 'business' of communicating, so they often have a broader reach.”²⁰³

As with the issue above of the artist feeling as though they have the right to speak on climate change, it may be on this question, too, that the shift in how climate change is perceived will make it easier. Indeed, Eyerman and Jamison would argue that the more artists get involved sooner, the more it can become a site of “cultural transformation” that can help both the art and the cause.

¹⁹⁷ Tim Levinson, interview, 13/04/14.

¹⁹⁸ Martin Wesley-Smith, interview, 05/05/14.

¹⁹⁹ Martin Wesley-Smith, interview, 05/05/14.

²⁰⁰ Martin Wesley-Smith, interview, 05/05/14.

²⁰¹ Shane Howard, interview, 26/03/14.

²⁰² Shane Howard, interview, 26/03/14.

²⁰³ Guy Abrahams, interview, 14/03/14.

Legal risks

Among the most serious risks to artists who engage very deeply with campaigns for climate change action are the legal risks surrounding involvement in secondary boycotts and direct action such as protests or blockades.

One of the most frequently used tools for environmental and social campaigning is the promotion of boycotts of goods and services that are deemed to have a substantial negative impact, and climate change is no exception. The current divestment campaign of organisations such as 350.org and Market Forces, encouraging people and institutions to move any investments away from fossil fuels, is perhaps the most high profile of these specifically related to climate change. Felix Riebl, singer with Australian Band The Cat Empire, is one musician who has already publicly engaged in this campaign, telling *The Age* newspaper that “I think it’s a really worthwhile thing for people to consider where they invest their money and what the environmental and ethical ramifications of that are.”²⁰⁴

Australia’s *Competition and Consumer Act 2010*, which, at s.45D, prohibits the organisation of secondary boycotts, currently includes an exemption, at s.45DD3(a), where “the dominant purpose for which the conduct is engaged in is substantially related to environmental protection”. However, the Abbott Government is actively considering removing this exemption. Senator Richard Colbeck, Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture, is one member of the government who has said that environmental groups “should not be able to run a specific business-focused or market-focused campaign”.²⁰⁵

Should the Government repeal this exemption, substantial civil and criminal penalties would apply to any musicians engaging in such boycott activity.

A deeper step again into climate change activism is involvement in direct action, from protests to blockades of fossil fuel infrastructure. The recent Bentley Blockade in northern New South Wales, attempting to prevent development of a coal seam gas field, is one which attracted the involvement of a number of high profile Australian musicians such as Ash Grunwald, Xavier Rudd and Andrew Stockdale.²⁰⁶ While no musicians were arrested in this protest action, it is not inconceivable that there will be cases in the increasingly volatile environment surrounding coal and coal seam gas developments in Australia where arrests will be made. Musicians who feel particularly strongly about these issues may follow the lead of religious leaders²⁰⁷ and doctors²⁰⁸, for example, who chose to face arrest at the Maules Creek blockade of coal developments further south in NSW. Charges and conviction for trespass, and potentially more serious criminal matters, may follow such arrest, making it a very serious decision for an internationally touring musician, for example, to make.

²⁰⁴ Goya Dmytryshchak, “Customers Switch Banks in Day of Divestment”, *The Age*, May 3, 2014, <http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/customers-switch-banks-in-day-of-divestment-20140503-zr3wj.html>.

²⁰⁵ Lenore Taylor, “Australian government may ban environmental boycotts”, *The Guardian*, April 3, 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2014/apr/02/coalition-review-of-consumer-laws-may-ban-environmental-boycotts>.

²⁰⁶ Sarah McVeigh, “The Bentley Blockade”, *JJJ Hack*, May 16, 2014, <http://www.abc.net.au/triplej/hack/stories/s4005976.htm>.

²⁰⁷ 350.org, *Religious Leaders Arrested at Maules Creek Coal Mine, Australia*, March 12, 2014, <http://350.org/religious-leaders-arrested-at-maules-creek-coal-mine-australia/>.

²⁰⁸ Australian Associated Press, *Doctors arrested at NSW coal mine blockade*, May 3, 2014, <http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/2014/05/03/doctors-arrested-nsw-coal-mine-blockade>.

3.2. Risks surrounding the message

The dangers around the message itself as carried by art revolve around questions of the risk to the art (whether it makes it boring, whether there are differences between art forms) and the risk to the cause (from potential greenwashing and tokenism, for example). The challenge that mainstream art tends to be embedded in consumerist culture is also relevant, leading into Theodor Adorno's theory, which mostly fits into the subsequent section.

Possibly the most consistent challenge for artists seeking to use their voice for political, social or environmental aims is to keep their art interesting. Some of those involved with Cape Farewell, the British organisation which links artists with scientists to challenge each other's thinking and practice, have discussed how "you can't be seen to be producing art as propaganda", "you have to be careful for work not to be seen as preaching", and highlighted the "drawbacks associated with tokenistic involvement".²⁰⁹ Street is not alone in pointing out that protest songs are often "worthy... but musically uninteresting"²¹⁰ and that "[i]f singers say exactly what they mean, the musical form will collapse beneath the weight of their words. The price of accepting the constraints of the musical form, however, is that performers can never convey quite what they mean."²¹¹

From the opposite perspective, Peter Gingold of TippingPoint UK writes:

we find, incidentally, that though some might interpret this as a pejoratively instrumental approach to the arts, this is very rarely a response from practising artists who seem to regard that attitude as being one of missing the point: the subject [climate change] is so compelling that one simply cannot ignore it and to hell with the niceties of the last century.²¹²

Rosenthal and Flacks cut through these views to conclude that whether or not the art is interesting is not about its subject but about the quality of the art: "Political music making, like all passionate music making, is not inferior *because* it necessarily subordinates musical ends to political ends; it's inferior *when* its political passions subvert the impact of the piece rather than contributing to it".²¹³ Their exploration of this "blending of entertainment and enlightenment"²¹⁴ includes fascinating reflections on the subject from artists such as Stevie Wonder, Bruce Springsteen, Suzanne Vega and Billy Bragg.²¹⁵

²⁰⁹ Simon Boxall et al, interviewed by Hannah Bird, 'The Beauty of What We Stand to Lose: Voices from Cape Farewell' (2008) Spring *Engage* 21 38, 41.42.

²¹⁰ John Street, "'Fight the Power": The Politics of Music and the Music of Politics' (2003) 38 *Government and Opposition* 113, 128.

²¹¹ John Street, "'Fight the Power": The Politics of Music and the Music of Politics' (2003) 38 *Government and Opposition* 113, 157-8.

²¹² Tipping Point Australia, *Greening the Arts: Thinkpieces for Zero Carbon Future and A Survey of Sustainable Arts Practices* (October 2010), 5.

²¹³ Rob Rosenthal and Richard Flacks, *Playing for Change: Music and Musicians in the Service of Social Movements* (Paradigm Publishers, 2012), 230. Emphasis in original.

²¹⁴ Rob Rosenthal and Richard Flacks, *Playing for Change: Music and Musicians in the Service of Social Movements* (Paradigm Publishers, 2012), 235.

²¹⁵ Rob Rosenthal and Richard Flacks, *Playing for Change: Music and Musicians in the Service of Social Movements* (Paradigm Publishers, 2012), 213-4, 234-5.

This captures the essence of Tim Levinson’s concern that, if a song does not tap into an existing social movement, it “lives the life of the hookiness of the song”.²¹⁶ It is also parallel to the reflection by a number of interviewees that the “nervousness around didacticism”²¹⁷ does not and should not prevent artists from exploring the issues to create challenging and interesting art – it is simply a risk that has to be managed, like any part of the creative process.

Another central part of the creative process that must be considered is the choice of art form, some of which may be more naturally suited to engagement with climate change.

Street’s contention that “[i]f singers say exactly what they mean, the musical form will collapse beneath the weight of their words,”²¹⁸ may not apply, for example, to hip hop. As Levinson explains:

[Hip hop] lends itself to a greater level of self-expression, because we deal with literal matter, and we deal with quite well-explored ideas. I mean you’ve gotta fill a goddamn verse with however many words versus a singer-songwriter. You can’t just come up with a nice neat little metaphor and then come up with a little bit of imagery around it and develop a beautiful melody – which I’m not belittling! I’m so envious of it. Not to say that either is easier... [but] this necessity to fill a song with more detail... lends itself to rolling your sleeves up a little bit more with issues and with politics.²¹⁹

Levinson also points to hip hop’s often aggressive sound, as well as its proud political history which cannot be divorced from its present form: “We have the likes of Public Enemy who laid the foundations, particularly for older hip hop artists who have some kind of memory of when Public Enemy were really relevant. That’s almost like a challenge to honour that era.”²²⁰

Martin Wesley-Smith, from his perspective within quote a different art form, reflects that “[t]he “classical” music world is conservative by nature.”²²¹ While he says there are remarkably few contemporary classical composers effectively grappling with political or environmental themes, he believes that is more to do with cultural influences than the form itself:

Saying that classical music can’t express particular political attitudes can be a cop-out that relieves composers of what some would say is their responsibility, as artists, to deal with the issues of their time. Add a voice, and the music can be as political as you want it to be. Add visual images: ditto.²²²

Nevertheless, Wesley-Smith acknowledges that the form does pose particular challenges which require an effort to overcome:

[I]f one is using music to tackle the political and social themes of one’s era then it helps, surely, if the audience knows what those themes are. Having said that, I have no problem at

²¹⁶ Tim Levinson, interview, 13/04/14.

²¹⁷ Bronwyn Johnson, interview, 14/03/14.

²¹⁸ John Street, “‘Fight the Power’: The Politics of Music and the Music of Politics” (2003) 38 *Government and Opposition* 113, 157-8.

²¹⁹ Tim Levinson, interview, 13/04/14.

²²⁰ Tim Levinson, interview, 13/04/14.

²²¹ Martin Wesley-Smith, interview, 05/05/14.

²²² Martin Wesley-Smith, interview, 05/05/14.

all with a piece requiring an extra-musical manifesto in order for its meaning to be conveyed.²²³

Greenwashing and tokenism

The question of greenwashing and tokenism is closely linked to that of authenticity, but generally at a larger scale. Tokenism, for example, is a criticism often levelled at large events or major acts who engage a little with climate change but have not internalised it in their business or behaviour sufficiently to make a significant difference. There is not, of course, a clear line to cross here, although the accounting and accreditation processes of Julie's Bicycle, for example, may lead to the adoption of standards which can make it clearer.

Mat Morris, who has worked to improve environmental practices across the music industry, notes the difference between "events like Peat's Ridge" which consider themselves festivals of both music and sustainability, and more mainstream events like the Big Day Out or SoundWave:

One is always pulling itself back towards its mission statement of reducing its footprint while raising environmental awareness, while the other is more 'for the music' and the experience but with some environmental programs as add-ons... The more commercial events are more numerous and more financially stable.²²⁴

There are a handful which do achieve the best of both worlds, specifically the very large and popular festivals such as Woodford Folk Festival and WOMADelaide, which have engaged deeply with environmental practices from their inception but nevertheless remain primarily music festivals.

Morris also makes the important point that even initial low level engagement can lead over time to ever deeper engagement if encouraged, giving the example of Splendour in the Grass:

In the early days, they took a stance with respect to ensuring that they had environmental programs. So they got on that bandwagon. It started in a very modest way, but it's ended up now that they have a very significant environmental budget in terms of the overall budget, which I think is fantastic. And they've realised that, because they've put their toe in the water, they're committed to keep on doing that.²²⁵

While tokenism can be a problem if it leads attendees or fans to believe that minimal action is all that is needed to address an issue like global warming, the far greater problem is greenwashing, where artists use their cultural credibility to help companies pretend to be acting sustainably. As Charlie Mgee says:

The kind of music that hinders the most is that that poses as doing something positive but is actually doused in greenwash. Those ideas are doing more damage than good really because it's staying in the same paradigm that got us into this problem in the first place and isn't really achieving anything... That comes back to integrity. If artists aren't actively doing what they are singing about, it has the risk of descending into greenwash.²²⁶

²²³ Martin Wesley-Smith, interview, 05/05/14.

²²⁴ Mat Morris, interview, 18/03/14.

²²⁵ Mat Morris, interview, 18/03/14.

²²⁶ Charlie Mgee, interview, 17/03/14.

Mgee takes particular aim at US artist will.i.am's involvement with Coca Cola's Ekocycle product range. Selling clothes made out of recycled plastic bottles while continuing to be one of the largest producers of plastic pollution in the world and lobbying against the introduction of container deposit recycling schemes is, in his opinion, greenwash, and will.i.am's support for it unwise.

Greenwash is a legal grey area, with consumer protection laws failing to keep pace with the development of corporate advertising strategies. Matthew Rimmer has noted that the area "requires a robust, integrated approach to law reform to discourage the practice that makes it harder for legitimate voices to be heard", in particular "law reform and tougher legal sanctions to stop greenwashing are critical".²²⁷

Outside the legal sphere, accusations of tokenism and greenwash are essentially matters of opinion. They are also avoidable when a considered approach is taken by artists, music industry and activists. However, at their deepest level, they raise the contradiction at the heart of the entertainment industry – that art is not 'material', but the mainstream industry is. While the artist wishes to engage, entertain, challenge, even make their audience cry, the industry wishes to sell products.

Shane Howard reflect on this: "I think for some reason "Solid Rock" got under the wire [of commercial industry] but I don't think I was ever going to get a second chance to do so."²²⁸ For Angharad Wynne-Jones, "[i]t's only those artists that are not invested in the system financially that are able to have those discussions in a way that is really authentic."²²⁹

Clearly, this is a much more difficult issue to address, as it goes in a very real way to the heart of our culture. It will take cultural change to overcome this particular challenge for artists seeking to drive change.

3.3. Risks surrounding the process

Theodor Adorno believed that popular music, by its nature, has a pacifying effect, regardless of any message of social change it might claim to contain.²³⁰ While many have critiqued this sweeping claim, including Bronwyn Johnson paraphrasing the artist Tony Schwensen's work which states that "art is not entertainment, but it can be entertaining",²³¹ there are nevertheless related risks that must be examined.

A subtler reading of Adorno, that art can "reconcile people to their domination",²³² is highly relevant to art about global warming. It raises the question: does art which prepares us for the worst potentially suppress action by helping the audience to deal with it? If, through art, we can come to grips with the idea of mass extinctions, sea level rise forcing us to move whole cities, and other devastating visions, do we then become less moved to act to prevent them?

²²⁷ Matthew Rimmer, 'Sorting out the Green From the Greenwash', (2012) WME – Water Materials, Energy – Environment Business Magazine.

²²⁸ Shane Howard, interview, 26/03/14.

²²⁹ Angharad Wynne-Jones, interview, 14/03/14.

²³⁰ Theodor Adorno, 'On Popular Music' (1941), as republished in Simon Frith and Andrew Goodwin (eds), *On Record: Rock, Pop and the Written Word* (Routledge, 1990) 301.

²³¹ Bronwyn Johnson, interview, 14/03/14.

²³² Sanna Inthorn and John Street, in Nancy S Love and Mark Mattern, *Doing Democracy: Activist Art and Cultural Politics* (SUNY Press, 2013), 179.

Guy Abrahams, intriguingly, says “[t]he answer is yes – but that’s not all the arts do.”²³³ He points out that this is but one of many functions and roles that art can play and that, together, they can be highly effective.

There is a therapeutic aspect to being involved in the arts. It makes us feel better, makes us feel happy, sad. It can act as an emotional balm... If you’re in a state of complete constant anxiety about something, that’s not a very good state to act in, either. It’s a balancing act. I don’t think it’s about preventing action, but it can be about keeping us in a reasonably balanced state of being so that we can take action.²³⁴

Angharad Wynne-Jones acknowledges that “[i]t might actually enable us not to take action because we’re looking at such a long time frame.”²³⁵

She notes that art operates on an utterly different scale from the political world. The political world tends to focus on such minutiae that if you try to talk about something as grand as climate change, people can’t grapple with it. The world of the arts is almost the inverse.

A lot of artists take the really long view. By the nature of their practice and the reflection that comes with it, it’s almost inevitable that they conceive of humanity and its trajectory, the inevitability that we will disappear from this planet at some point.²³⁶

If you are picturing the grand universality of everything, a little thing called climate change impacting on humanity is almost irrelevant. Nevertheless, art is still critical in building resilience in communities as we face up to what we have wrought. “It’s about how you live your life with all those potential impacts for yourself, for your kids.”²³⁷

Returning to a more practical scale, the second process-related risk is the paradox that arts can not only help educate and recruit activists, but can also “become *containment* of political activity”,²³⁸ where attendance at a performance or listening to an album replaces necessary additional action. In these situations, the arts have provided education, but not met Moser’s goals of providing motivation to act or creating an “all hands on deck” situation. This is an accusation that has often been levelled at high profile events such as the Live Earth concerts organised around the world following the success of Al Gore’s film *An Inconvenient Truth* – that the bulk of attendees simply came for the music and left without contributing further to or engaging more with the cause. Their attendance was their action.

Deborah Hart sees this as simply a function of human nature: “I think it’s always going to be a situation with anything that’s voluntary. We can’t force people to do the right thing.”²³⁹ However, she believes that, reminiscent of Charlie Mgee’s mnemonic theory, something of the experience and

²³³ Guy Abrahams, interview, 14/03/14.

²³⁴ Guy Abrahams, interview, 14/03/14.

²³⁵ Angharad Wynne-Jones, interview, 14/03/14.

²³⁶ Angharad Wynne-Jones, interview, 14/03/14.

²³⁷ Angharad Wynne-Jones, interview, 14/03/14.

²³⁸ Rob Rosenthal and Richard Flacks, *Playing for Change: Music and Musicians in the Service of Social Movements* (Paradigm Publishers, 2012), 185.

²³⁹ Deborah Hart, interview, 31/03/14.

its meaning will be retained by people and return to them at relevant moments. “Some people will just be entertained and they’ll walk away, but maybe the next time they see some propaganda, they’ll go ‘oh, yeah’. Maybe.”

Shane Howard notes that this is a criticism that can be applied to any activism. “There is a degree of “I gave to Greenpeace so I did my bit” or “I signed my name to an email petition from GetUp so I’ve ticked the boxes”.”²⁴⁰ Each of us does what we are able, he believes, and some will always do more than others.

Anna Rose, whose fledgling AYCC recruited many new members at Live Earth, reflects that the degree of containment depends in large part on organisers putting in the effort to engage people, follow up, and ensure that those who want to get involved have every opportunity to do so.

There’s effective ways to do cultural protesting or cultural work, and there’s ineffective ways of doing it, just like all tactics. An effective way of doing it would include ladders of engagement for people who are interested in getting more deeply involved to get more deeply involved, recognising that not everyone will... If you’re doing effective cultural engagement, you should have the option for people to get more deeply involved afterwards, which is resource intensive, but is really important.²⁴¹

A final critique to do with the process of artistic involvement in climate action is to do with its immeasurability. As Guy Abrahams says, “[t]he response to art is unpredictable. The arts is still not a science. You don’t actually know what’s going to happen.”²⁴²

Tim Levinson is confident that The Herd’s song 77% did draw people together around a shared feeling, but he is quite honest that, beyond that, he cannot know its impact:

As to what they did go and do about it, I can’t be certain... Those things are only ever going to be anecdotal. And I certainly don’t know what kind of impact that song had on people who were not of that way of thinking.²⁴³

However, he also says that “[a]s a musician it’s almost like not my responsibility to know.” While for activists it is important to understand what impact their actions have, artists can teach them the value of the immeasurable, as culture is always immeasurable. “You don’t want to be caught up on the statistics of how your music has impacted on people’s actions,” Levinson says, “because it’s a bit of a lost cause.”²⁴⁴

Shane Howard is similarly philosophical about the impact of his work:

Would it have mattered if the song existed or not? Possibly not... Does it have the capacity to change hearts and minds? That’s a really hard question to answer. I have to say yes

²⁴⁰ Shane Howard, interview, 26/03/14.

²⁴¹ Anna Rose, interview, 12/04/14.

²⁴² Guy Abrahams, interview, 14/03/14.

²⁴³ Tim Levinson, interview, 13/04/14.

²⁴⁴ Tim Levinson, interview, 13/04/14.

because I wouldn't do it otherwise. All these things feed into consciousness raising or consciousness changing. I do think they have a cumulative force as well.²⁴⁵

Anna Rose makes perhaps the critical point in saying “[i]t’s very very hard to measure, like most activism.”²⁴⁶ A deep understanding of activism as an attempt to shift cultural norms, tell new stories that shape the world, alter the weave that creates the patterns of our society, will recognise that it is immeasurable. We can, over time, measure changes in behaviour such as energy use, voting and waste streams. But we will never know what impact any individual action had.

In summary, the risks and dangers involved in artistic engagement with climate action can all be managed with care, and many of them are risks which apply equally to any form of activism.

²⁴⁵ Shane Howard, interview, 26/03/14.

²⁴⁶ Anna Rose, interview, 12/04/14.

Conclusion and lessons

Despite the paucity of academic research into the role of the arts and artists in tackling climate change, there are a number of clear conclusions that can be reached.

Firstly, the arts have already played a role in this movement for change, albeit one which is surprisingly limited. Secondly, there is an important function for the arts in framing climate change and climate action, priming people to accept those frames, triggering emotional engagement with the issue, and bringing the distant problems and inconceivable solutions close to home. Thirdly, the arts can assist through their long practice of bringing issues to public attention in such a way as to recruit and mobilise support for action, building identity amongst people in a way that helps create and maintain a strong movement for change. And fourthly, there is a critically important role for the arts in helping to reshape our culture so it can face up to the challenge, in leading by example and embodying cultural change, as well as simply by embodying values that support and buttress care for each other and the environment which sustains us.

On the flipside, it is also clear that there are risks related to artistic involvement. One is that art can become a placebo for, or contain, more important personal and political activity. Another is that there are difficulties surrounding the role of artists, particularly celebrities, as messengers, and a third is that artists face potential legal risks from deep involvement. Finally, the problems of greenwash and tokenism must be avoided.

Fundamentally, the risks to both art and cause can be managed, and the benefits to both increased, by thoughtful engagement with the theory and practice.

Rosenthal and Flacks in *Playing for Change*, the most comprehensive analysis of the role of music in social movements to date, raise a critical point – that we must be honest about its limitations. They acknowledge that the arts alone “like any factor alone – is limited in its ability to change minds and actions”, adding that:

What is crucial to see is that music itself is a part of that context, not a separate entity that arrives after our context and thoughts are set and then finds a welcoming or hostile reception. Music, as all culture and indeed all activity, helps to create, sustain, and alter the social world as well as reflect that world.²⁴⁷

‘Big C Culture’ and ‘small c culture’ are not separate meanings for the same word – they are different aspects of the same concept. By bringing together our understandings of culture as it pertains to social change, legal change, climate change and the arts, it is possible to create an extraordinarily potent brew. Only with that brew can we drive the cultural shift needed in order to prevent climate catastrophe while making society more resilient and able to cope with changes that are coming.

²⁴⁷ Rob Rosenthal and Richard Flacks, *Playing for Change: Music and Musicians in the Service of Social Movements* (Paradigm Publishers, 2012), 141.

Appendices

Interviews

Tim Levinson / Urthboy (musician), by telephone and audiorecorded, 13/03/14

Guy Abrahams and Bronwyn Johnson (CLIMARTE), in person and audiorecorded, 14/03/14

Angharad Wynne-Jones (Tipping Point), in person and audiorecorded, 14/03/14

Charlie Mgee (musician), by telephone and audiorecorded, 17/03/14

Mat Morris (North Byron Parklands), by telephone and audiorecorded, 18/03/14

Shane Howard (musician), by telephone and audiorecorded, 26/03/14

Deborah Hart (Climate Guardians), by telephone and audiorecorded, 31/03/14

Anna Rose (founder, Australian Youth Climate Coalition), by telephone and audiorecorded, 12/04/14

Martin Wesley Smith (composer), by email correspondence, 05/05/14.

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