

Cultivating Digital Trust in the Creative Economy

DIGITAL TRUST is increasingly valuable—and questionable—in a rapidly digitized world. Questions abound: How do we trust digital sources and content? How do we manage, authenticate and safeguard digital identity? How do humans express and define digital identity, and how might that evolve over time? Digital artists, entrepreneurs, philosophers and inventors continue to wrestle with these issues in the creative economy, attempting to prevent what Roger Malina refers to as “backing into the future.” Given the pace of digitization, forward-facing and emerging “digital trust-builders” require a strong creative economy in which they can thrive.

Recently, the first-ever G20 Rome Declaration of Culture Ministers (29–30 July 2021) called for increased investment in culture-driven activities. The Declaration urges G20 governments, whose collective economy represents 80% of global GDP, to integrate and support artists, creators, and culture into policies for near-term recovery and longer-term socioeconomic development. This is good news for the creative economy and good news for building digital trust.

Centering culture and the creative economy in public policies and private portfolios would yield high-impact returns. Creative economy resilience is recognized as a key driver of postpandemic recovery, progress and well-being, providing a boost for socioeconomic development and growth. Aligned with the United Nations’ 2021 International Year for Creative Economy for Sustainable Development, creative enterprise is one of the largest on-ramps for women and young people. Advancing creative economy industries and related cultural activity contributes to digital innovation and trust, international dialogue and exchange, greater inclusion and respect for diversity, economic growth and workforce development. The creative economy contributes \$2.25 trillion to the global economy, representing up to 3% of GDP, employing approximately 30 million people, mostly young, diverse and highly entrepreneurial. The G20 Declaration serves to “conjugate memory and vision,” steering the course for a New Creativity Agenda and future gatherings including

the UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development (MONDIACULT 2022).

How does the creative economy benefit all and build digital trust? As artists push and play with boundaries in finance, workforce development and digital platforms, they reveal unexpected outcomes and prime the path for trustworthy, digital-based economic systems. In financial innovation, creative experiments with Nonfungible Tokens (NFTs), cryptocurrency, and blockchain technologies upended the art world, expanding access, authenticating origination and protecting artist interests. Experiments with Universal Base Income (UBI) for artists and launch of a Creative Corps contribute to creative workforce development and expansion. Emerging digital platforms and immersive environments showcase net-native, new media and adapted art experience creating new public spaces and “digital commons” previously restricted to exclusive—and excluding—physical buildings. This creative restructure from analog to digital space helps break through barriers, laying the groundwork for new systems to manage and shape the future of digital identity.

To explore how creative industries help build “Digital Trust in Education and Work” Arizona State University hosted a panel session moderated by Leonardo executive board member Timothy C. Summers. Trying to keep pace with the future of work, art practitioners constantly upskill, reskill, reinforce and cultivate creative development. Future digital identity management systems need to establish trust that can verify this lifelong learning and professional growth. Embedding artists as “digital trust-builders” into digital system development helps humanize technology design protocols. Artists bring courage and creativity to build digital platforms, generating trust and trustworthiness, whether applied to higher education, work credentials or the broader scope of human experience and identity.

DIANA AYTON-SHENKER

*Chief Executive Officer, Leonardo/ISAT
Executive Director of the ASU Partnership*