

# **Six ways Governments can support cultural sustainability globally**

**A COP26 Briefing**  
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***We need to act – fast – on climate change. Covid has hit culture hard – in Glasgow where the 2021 COP26 is being hosted, half of the city’s 160 cultural organisations have no plans to reopen due to financial distress. We need to work together to create a plan to save the arts.***

# Travel

## 1

As we rebuild, together, the good news is both the public and private cultural sectors have started taking sustainability seriously and are increasingly working together to find solutions. And more so than ever before, technology is facilitating this collaboration.

In order to drive real change, the cultural sector needs a global approach.

For example, **90-95% of collection material in the average museum doesn't need the rigorous environment that has become the default standard.**

We now have the technology to place that 5-10% of objects in micro-environments in display cases and frames, and turn down the air conditioning everywhere else, so why are museums not implementing this? We have the ability to digitise entire collections and make these resources available for all, but why are we still not creating this access?

We need to work collaboratively, with governments, business, cultural professionals, and artists. This is a global issue that needs global voices and change. **Culture helps us think, enables us to tell different narratives and engage with other cultures and stories.** The global story of how we will build a more sustainable world today, will be told in tomorrow's museums and galleries.

Tech can enable creativity and confidence.

**There are six actions governments can enable the cultural sector to collectively take across the world to make the arts and our cultural institutions more sustainable.**

## ***Investing in cross-institutional working and remote collaboration***

Business trips with museum staff or artists travelling internationally to oversee the transit of artwork personally was not a viable option during the global pandemic, so the cultural industry was forced to improvise. Working across institutions, utilising the international network of knowledge and expertise to oversee transit and installation remotely via ad hoc tools such as Zoom, WhatsApp and others enabled greater trust and collaboration between organisations and individuals. Using technology to lower costs and carbon footprint and tapping into the international shared cultural community should be adopted as an industry standard. In recent case studies, an estimated **50-110 tons of CO2 were saved per project by reducing staff travel.** Ad hoc tools are not secure enough for the long run, and Government Indemnity Schemes vary in their acceptance of these solutions. However, now third party secure platforms, such as Virtual Courier, have been launched and could be assessed and provided by governments to their funded museums as a standard.

## 2

## ***Using alternative shipping methods***

The art fair calendar pre-pandemic has exploded over the last decade, with **almost 1000 art fairs reaching international recognition.** With so many events and exhibitions taking place each year, **the quantity of art being moved around the world is far greater than ever before.** In a recent case study, Cadogan Tate oversaw the shipping of 31 paintings and sculptures by Gary Hume, from London to New York. **By choosing to ship by sea, rather than by air, they calculate that almost 24 tonnes of greenhouse gas were saved – the equivalent of 16,500 people driving 2 miles each way to visit an art gallery.** Although figures will vary depending on the circumstances of individual moves, the 96% reduction in carbon footprint of this case study demonstrates how there are huge savings to be made across the industry.

## Spaces

3

### ***Embedding sustainability into teams***

As the cultural sector works towards a more sustainable infrastructure, technology and training can alleviate fear of change. By collaborating across disciplines to provide museums and institutions with training, mentors, technology, tools and an online community with social proof, and if possible, funding. This kind of accelerator program has worked well for entrepreneurs, and could probably apply to many industries that will be reluctant to make necessary changes.

**Sustainability lead roles such as at the V&A and Ki Culture's Sustainability Ambassador programme show what can be done** with embedding sustainability roles into teams to build confidence and trust in change.

4

### ***Investing in buildings management***

**Museums could save around 24-35% on energy costs by making minor adjustments to temperature and humidity.** Considering that, by some estimates, a museum uses 8-9 times as much energy as a similar sized office building, these figures represent a not insignificant monetary saving for museums. Green building protocols have been around since 2008 but have not been widely adopted yet. According to a Getty Conservation Institute study, this is because people are afraid to be the one to turn down the dial in case of damage, even though most artworks in the average museum don't require such rigorous conditions. Widening the allowable temperature and relative humidity ranges, with different ranges for summer and winter, has the most significant energy saving.

## Digitisation

5

### ***Support digitisation***

Support for the global digitisation of the arts and cultural sector can ensure that the days of culture organisations building in-house software are gone and that cultural organisations do not expect their audiences, partners, or staff to deal with learning outdated technology. **Governments need to invest in the digitisation of cultural practices to enable global access, shared knowledge and worldwide discussion and discourse on how to transform cultural conversations.**

6

### ***Encourage shareability***

The fragility of art, culture and collections has been tested through the global pandemic with closures and political unrest. However, there is an opportunity for governments, NGOs, institutions, and businesses to enable the global shareability of our cultural assets and narratives.

**Technology can ensure that everyone has access to cultural institutions, artists, and galleries through online exhibitions, searchable digital collections and increased online public engagement. The digital exhibition of Karl Lagerfeld by the Kunstmuseum Moritzburg Halle (Saale) is an example of such an approach** and The Vienna State Opera House has been offering reduced rate tickets for streamed content for several years.

## Case Studies

### **Reducing emissions**

In 24OreCultura's Frida Kahlo exhibition case study, presented at the Art/Switch sustainability conference, emissions from couriers made up 74.8% of the travelling exhibition's total carbon footprint. That means **49 couriers, travelling across 2 continents, generated 109 tons CO2 – almost three times more emissions than the air and road freight required to ship the artworks themselves.** It's clear there is both a need to reduce emissions and that there are significant carbon savings to be made by reducing staff travel through remote oversight and cross-institutional collaboration.

### **Sustainability at the V&A**

Last year, the V&A created a sustainability lead role, making it one of the first in the UK museum sector to do so. **Sara Kassam is responsible for ensuring the organisation's carbon footprint is properly captured, working across departments to analyse where reductions can be made and produce a plan of action to meet the 2030 Paris Agreement goals.** The publication of sustainability blogs also helps raise awareness with the public.

### **Supporting sustainability**

Ki Culture is a non-profit organization that is supporting the heritage sector via a new sustainability ambassador program. **It is geared towards organisations that cannot afford to have an entire role dedicated to sustainability,** but would rather elect an existing employee to take on this area of responsibility in addition to other duties. The program should be properly funded in order to provide this service to every museum globally.

## Let's collaborate

We want governments to support our collective efforts to ensure that technology can enable the arts and cultural institutions to confidently forge a global sustainable future.

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