

LECTURE

Culture is not an Industry: One year on.

Prof. Justin O'Connor
University of South Australia

Monday 5 May 2025
4:00 PM CEST

Ca' Dolfin,
Aula Magna Silvio Trentin
Dorsoduro 3859/A, Venezia

The event is open to the
public. Free admission
subject to availability



Photo credits: Culture is not an industry: Reclaiming art and culture for the common good (Manchester Capitalism)

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Abstract:

In my book, published in early 2024, I suggested the creative industry policy paradigm, in place for the last quarter century, was no longer valid. On the one hand it had left arts and cultural funding in a worse position, whilst hollowing out the cultural sectors own self-understanding and distinct identity. On the other hand, I suggested that the neoliberal framework out of which the creative industries paradigm emerged was in crisis, and that we had to develop a new narrative for culture, responding to the many currents of post-neoliberal economic, social and political thinking. Culture is not an industrial sector. There are many 'industries' in culture, some of global proportions, but culture itself is NOT an industry. Rather, I argued, culture must be placed alongside education, health, social services and essential infrastructure as part of the social foundations of any decent, just society.

Yet, the last year has seen a rightwards shift all across Europe, and beyond, culminating in the immense global turmoil following the inauguration of the Trump presidency. *E in questo chiaroscuro nascono i mostri.* In this lecture I will re-assert my positive cultural vision, but do so while directly confronting some of Gramsci's *mostri*. Most importantly, I will suggest that this is not the time to retreat from the radical promises given by art and culture, but to open them out as crucial to all our democratic futures.