

Does arts and culture have value? And which is it?

Should art be considered as a luxury and should artworks be considered as luxury goods? And, at the other end of the spectrum, should popular culture be understood as a scarce – and, therefore, costly – good?

In general, we shy away from using the terms “goods and services” when applied to the arts and culture.

Nevertheless, today, we might want to reconsider this perception: is it not only an expression of the ill-conceived idea that art and culture have a stand-alone signification in society and that they have a value that, per se, justifies their existence and recognition?

Before the Romantic revolution no one would have dared not consider the artworks as goods and the work of artists as services.

Rather, artists were considered as professionals who carried out a very specific task the result of which was given recognition – or not – by society thus directly establishing its value.

Furthermore, many of the masterpieces that have survived until today are the result of, also, a taste for betting on this or that artist’s work. This down-to-earth notion has, in the last two centuries, been disrupted in favor of an approach by which artists and their work is understood as, primarily, the expression of their creative power and the fruit of a tormented existential process with a value of its own, irrespective of its recognition and acknowledgement by society.

This conception has brought us to think that there are artistic and cultural expressions which have either a higher or a lower status and, consequently, value.

And, also, to think that “high” arts and culture have an intrinsic value, that beyond a mere market-value, should be recognized as such whereas “lower” arts and culture are the expressions of popular traditions which have to be defended to be duly recognized by society but which have very little or no market value at all.

But, as Picasso rightly stated, the output of an artist’s work is the result of ninety-percent hard and systematic work and, ten-percent, the result of inspiration.

Without questioning the possibility that the work of artists might have a social and political meaning, we might have to reconsider the perception that we, as end-receivers, have of their work.

Be it an elitist expression that appeals to only a small segment of society or a more popular expression that appeals to a wider segment of the same society, we might need to give some thought to the possibility that art and culture actually produce goods and services and that they are the result of hard work, for which work they should be duly recognized, by whoever is their author and that, finally, they also are for use by whoever wishes to benefit from their existence, independently of their intrinsic value.

Tafter Journal

Esperienze e strumenti per cultura e territorio

Tafter Journal

scritto da Mercedes Giovinazzo il 15 Gennaio 2018

Defending and accepting that arts and culture actually produce “goods and services” might positively and effectively contribute to their recognition as elements of the overall economy but also move them up our current scale of values to be duly considered by any public or private policy and by society at large.



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/)