

Edinburgh International Culture Summit 2020 – special edition begins on Monday

There is a webinar edition of the Culture Summit which will be online from 5.00pm on Monday 24 August 2020 hosted by the Presiding Officer of The Scottish Parliament, Ken Macintosh.

There are two other sessions on Tuesday and Wednesday of this week. In these Summit Webinars the conversation will expand the engagement with the core themes, responding to the material presented in the Summit's Special Edition 2020 films, to explore the ideas in different international contexts, and to discuss potential solutions and approaches to each topic for the future.

Mr Macintosh will be joined by Architect and Professor at Harvard University Rahul Mehrotra, Chief Executive Officer of Sistema Scotland, Nicola Killean, and Alejandra Frausto, Minister of Culture Mexico, in Monday's event.



[More information on the Culture Summit here.](#)

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a huge impact on our sense of community. Encouraged to keep our distance from both each other and the spaces in which we are used to congregate and socialise, the importance of such spaces to the fabric of our society is thrown into relief.

The Culture in Vibrant Communities introduction and welcome video will provide a backdrop for the webinar:

Rahul Mehrotra is an architect, urbanist and educator, and he will discuss the opportunity afforded by the Covid-19 pandemic to re-address the balance of equality by creating solutions via the design and planning of our cities. In a world that is rapidly changing, in part due to the inequalities caused by globalisation and climate change, Rahul believes there is a need to explore new urban formations.

You can view Rahul's video here: <https://youtu.be/DUt4DdGAeGw>

Farrokh Derakhshani, Director of the Aga Khan Award for

Architecture at the Aga Khan Trust for Culture, agrees that we need the built architecture of our cities and communities to reflect the needs of those living in them and that if architecture overtakes culture, for example, it will become obsolete as quickly as it appears. Farrokh will discuss the need to talk about responsible, rather than simply sustainable building, where the cultural infrastructure of a space or city is valued as highly as other components.

You can view Farrokh's video here: <https://youtu.be/PNgh5fw8L20>

Another member of the Aga Khan Trust for Culture is Cameron Rashti, Director of the Aga Khan Historic Cities Programme. At this year's Culture Summit he will discuss the transformational power of architecture and city planning on the quality of life of communities of all sizes. Cameron posits the need for architects and city planners to work closely with local authorities, developers and planners to help preserve and promote the culture of a society, while allowing it said culture to grow in a way that reflects the community at large.

You can view Cameron's video here: <https://youtu.be/VzRoGJ6Ivz0>

In terms of how the spaces we create are used, Tristram Hunt, Director of the Victoria and Albert Museum, will discuss the importance of cultural institutions, such as museums, galleries and libraries, as places of congregation and social interaction.

You can view Tristram's video here: <https://youtu.be/vG5BLwFHRWo>

Like Tristram, Dr Carla Hayden, Librarian of Congress at The Library of Congress, will describe the role of libraries as far more than simply repositories of information. Carla states that libraries are important to equality within communities,

as they give everyone, regardless of background, access to information and cultural knowledge, although they are equally important as community hubs.

Both Tristram and Carla will also discuss the positive role that the Covid-19 pandemic has had in accelerating the speed and extent to which cultural institutions are engaging with the digital sphere. In an increasingly digital world, making art and culture available online increases the ability to reach the largest number of people, wherever they are in the world. That said, they also agree there is a need for such venues to evaluate and evolve their physical presence in the post pandemic world.

You can view Carla's video here: <https://youtu.be/WyIF7NagHGY>

Another advocate for 'bricks and mortar' libraries is Ismail Serageldin, Emeritus Librarian of Alexandria and Founding Director, Library of Alexandria. Although Ismail says the role of libraries as home to trusted sources, particularly important in this era of social media and fake news, we are in a period transition and libraries need to evolve to become spaces where people can meet to share ideas and be creative.

You can view Ismail's video here: https://youtu.be/wmJ0Aj_8XVY

Clara Miller is President Emerita of the Heron Foundation, an anti-poverty foundation based in NY and at this year's Culture Summit she argues that the 'invisible architecture' of society is failing, leading to an increase in inequality and a loss of social cohesion. By 'invisible architecture' she refers to the likes of banks and other financial institutions, which she says have become too big to reflect the need of the majority. By thinking globally, but acting locally, and by looking to those at the forefront of their fields – be it the arts, science or economics – to help reimagine the future of society, we have the opportunity to re-shape these systems and our communities to create a more equal and prosperous society.

You can view Clara's video here: <https://youtu.be/loWl31P2Hew>

This conversation about the role of Culture in Vibrant Communities brings together a distinctive group of Architects, Historians, Librarians, Museum Directors, Philanthropists and Urban Planners and invites them to consider a holistic approach to architecture and reflect on the post-pandemic power of arts institutions to rebuild trust and preserve cultures.

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Webinar begins at 5.00pm preceded by special viewing of Summit Film Culture in Vibrant Communities (from 4.25pm)