

**ANDREW NICOL
PRINCIPAL, ARTS AND CULTURE LEADER AUSTRALASIA, ARUP**



**Creating globally connected, free thinking and creative behavioural spaces
(Retaining the next gen artist and audience)**

Arts buildings define the fabric of a city, providing place and space for communities, students and artists to meet, learn, inspire, explore and delight. Through our multi-disciplinary work at Arup we are fortunate to have worked with many of the world's most iconic and loved institutions, city-shaping venues and artistic learning hubs. What is recurrent across these projects, both in Melbourne, and more broadly overseas, is that it is the people, the users, which form the epicentre of the design.

To remain ambitious and relevant, the future Arts space must wear many hats. It needs to be smart, healthy, flexible, inclusive, socially conscious and connected. It needs to be well-designed around the intrinsic needs of its users, and whet the appetites of its visitors enough to encourage them to re-visit and promote their experiences through personal networks.

Progressive programming and global reputation are one element of this, but once the user is 'inside', it is the immersive nature and self-experience of these spaces which can inspire current artists, attract new artists, and critically, encourage new generation artists to make it a destination of choice.

We see that universities are at the forefront of this thinking - driving innovation into their assets - creating globally connected, free thinking and creative behavioural spaces which enrich, excite and inspire young talent. They are actively creating spaces which challenge pedagogical norms and blur the lines between learning and performance. The ambitious nature of these buildings helps 'sell' the institutions – attracting and creating a connection with our local talent, as well as global artists already accustomed to this level of facility.

Next generation students and audiences are quick to harness new technologies and arts institutions are leveraging this to reach new audiences, and promote a connection between performance, place and the community – broadening the user experience, widening networks, and challenging worldviews.

But should we confine the perceived opportunity of attracting new audiences to purpose-built arts institutions and learning environments only? No. With one of the world's most recognisable sporting precincts nestled within the world's most liveable city, Melbourne is well placed to harness the economic benefits of bringing arts and culture and sport together.

Within one centrally located, easy to access precinct, our sports infrastructure regularly plays host to numerous concerts and fit for purpose performances for larger audiences to enjoy. These events act as a catalyst for the wider community to connect with venues, through a shared passion - to witness displays of creativity, fortitude and expression. They bring together in the one place a cohort of sports fanatics and arts lovers from around Melbourne, interstate and overseas. These can also be the untapped, and un-traditional audiences of all ages, who are looking for the next new experience.

And beyond the stadiums, our footpaths, river, city squares and green spaces also provide a ready-stage with which to attract and excite new audiences to experience free programs accessible to all.

The opportunity to leverage this into the future, to capture a wider audience is being driven digitally - from how audiences first engage with an experience and purchase a ticket – to how they share and provide feedback through social media channels. Organisations and institutions are collecting data on their audiences and leveraging this to shape future plans around programming, advertising and audience engagement. And this of course is not just confined to the arts, but all forms of social intercourse.

So with people at the centre – how can we influence, through design, the engagement of these future cultural ambassadors - the visitors, the artists, audiences and students - in a connected, meaningful way to ensure the decisions we make today benefit the Melbourne of tomorrow.