

How does Tate support resilience and creativity in the contexts and times that we live in.

Abstract by Maria Balshaw CBE

Since its foundation in 1897, Tate has had a national responsibility to not just present the work of artists to the public, but to represent the interests of artists in shaping society. Tate has, for instance, always had artists as Trustees to support and guide the work of the Director. In 2000 the role of Tate changed dramatically when it opened Tate Modern. This vastly increased our reach, but also had a major regenerative impact on a run-down part of London on the south bank of the Thames, and we had to recognise our responsibilities as a driver of urban change. We have also taken on unique and important regenerative roles in our non-London locations in Liverpool and St Ives. I will touch on the different challenges and opportunities these situations present.

Tate Modern opened at a time when there was an exponential increase in public interest in visual art, and the nature of that art was changing. We have responded to that challenge physically, with the further expansion of Tate Modern in 2016, and intellectually, by reaching out beyond Western contemporary art to Asia Pacific, Africa, Latin America and the Middle East.

We have also deliberately shifted our relationship with communities through the creation of Tate Exchange – which has profoundly changed the nature of our relationship with artists and audiences. I will explore the sometimes difficult but always illuminating questions that the Tate Exchange experience is opening up for us. It is an ongoing action research experience for us. This autumn, Tate Exchange extends beyond its own institutional boundaries to become part of the Turbine Hall commission, by welcoming Tania Bruguera as the Tate Exchange artist in residence, as well as being the artist at large in the Turbine Hall.

My presentation will explore how a national institution like Tate can support resilience and creativity in the contexts we operate in. We do this by being inclusive in our exploration of artistic practices past and present and by opening ourselves up to the cultural challenges of our moment. This is our ongoing challenge.