

Kulturkraft24

Cultural Commerce with Purpose

# A Practical Introduction to Aligning Purpose, Culture and Commerce

” Culture is as pulsating as the world around us. The cultural sector should not just tag along with its pulses, as much as it should create pathways for the world we live in. We have to come together to solve some of the issues we face as a society.

— Christian Engel Brund, Head of Partnerships, Forstå

” Community is key. Community is not just about helping them be or build their tribes. They know how to do that by themselves. That is not the problem. What they are asking is that you take the time to know and understand them. We need to be true to them, and not think we already know exactly who they are. Let them come back to us with their truth.

— Deborah Marino, Co-head of Strategy & Deputy General Manager, Publicis Luxe

## Cultural Commerce with Purpose

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# BARC Community

## Unlock New Opportunities in Culture and Commerce

BARC Community is a network of cultural leaders and professionals, offering exclusive insights, tools, education and networking, where you can form your next partnership or take on your next commercial development.



Learn more at [barcscandinavia.com](https://barcscandinavia.com)



# Introduction

## Cultural Commerce with Purpose

By Thore Davies  
Partner & Advisor, BARC Scandinavia

In a time where the cultural sector faces increasing demands to demonstrate value within strained societal contracts, while working against stagnating public funding, the need for practical, purpose-driven strategies has never been greater. That is why we want to support the conversation about how cultural institutions can align commercial sustainability with their purpose – enabling them to offer more relevant, inclusive, and lasting contributions to society.

Since 2021, Kulturkraft has been the meeting place for this conversation, inviting international thought leaders to provide us with new openings and keep this conversation going. As an effort to collect and further distribute some of the knowledge produced and presented at Kulturkraft24 we have made this booklet available for everyone, and distilled some key themes from these conversations into a practical horizon model – a tool to help cultural institutions navigate current societal pressures and develop purpose-driven strategies.

Under the unifying themes of *Commerce, Communication, and Community*, Kulturkraft24 explored how cultural institutions can unlock new revenue streams while staying true to their mission and values.

This is a place where the cultural sector has a unique advantage: Most institutions are inherently purpose-driven. The challenge – and opportunity – lies in aligning that purpose with sustainable business models, strategic partnerships, and societal impact.

Better yet, today, audiences actually expect more than just consumption; they seek meaningful engagement with cultural institutions that reflect their interests and values – the cultural institutions owe it to them. As one of our keynote speakers, Colleen Ritzau Leth, said during Kulturkraft24:

” The cultural sector is ultimately about people = serving and championing the communities that sustain the work, whether as practitioners or consumers. So, whether we are talking about bringing in new audiences locally or engaging investors internationally, I think it all has to go back to supporting people. In our effort to envision and deliver ever more ambitious, larger projects, it will be key that we don’t lose sight of the human element of our work - how it relates to and benefits individuals.

— Colleen Ritzau Leth, Strategic Advisor

This call to serve both people and purpose runs through every conversation featured in this booklet. The insights shared by our contributors highlight not only the urgency of the moment, but the practical possibilities for action.

Their perspectives point to concrete areas where cultural institutions can respond to societal shifts, engage new generations, and build sustainable practices across sectors.

To visualise these shared pressures and opportunities, we have developed a horizon model that gathers key themes from the interviews – from the systemic pressures cultural institutions face, to the practical responses already taking shape.



# Why The Time is Now

We live in a time marked by profound challenges—from the loneliness crisis and mental health issues to a societal contract under pressure. Yet, these very challenges present opportunities for cultural institutions to lead. By being open to cross-sector partnerships, embracing innovative revenue models, and amplifying community voices, the cultural sector can be a driving force in maintaining the societal contract.

The horizon model in this booklet is designed to map out a set of these societal pressures or shifts and cultural responses – as they are articulated by the contributors in the following interviews. They are not abstract ideas or future forecasts. They are lived realities, expressed through concrete practice and deep expertise, and drawn from the intersection where culture meets commerce with purpose.

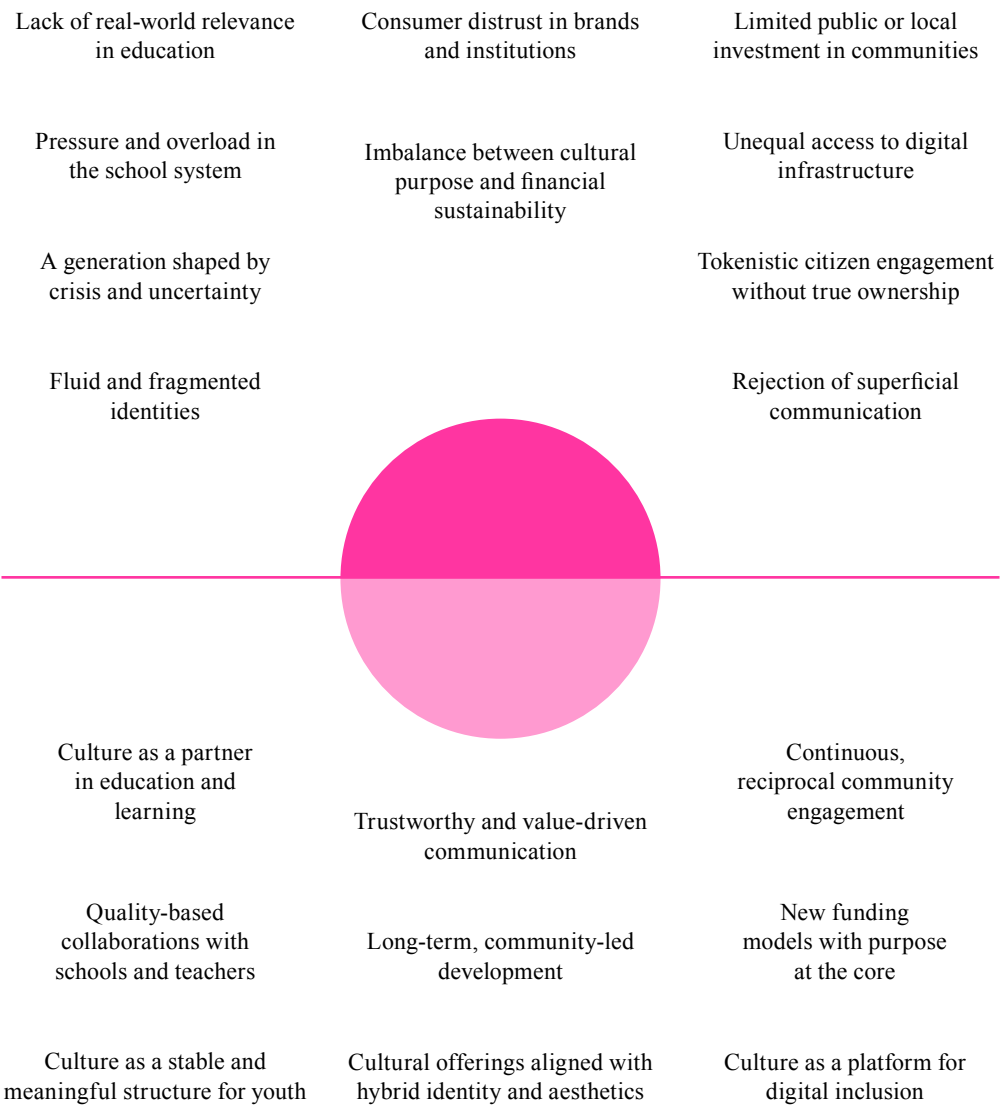
The challenges listed *above the horizon* reflect structural pressures that cultural institutions are increasingly expected to address: From educational disengagement and institutional distrust to fragmented identities and digital inequality. These are some of the new societal responsibilities that frame the work of cultural organisations today, and that institutions increasingly are expected to tap into.

The responses *below the horizon* are not theoretical ideals – they are drawn from actual strategies and approaches shared by practitioners in this publication. They illustrate how cultural institutions can develop purposeful business models, build lasting partnerships, and serve as infrastructure for social cohesion, identity, and learning.

As part of *Kulturkraft24: Cultural Commerce with Purpose*, the horizon model serves as a bridge between reflection and action. It connects the insights of the interviews with a broader framework for cultural and business development, offering a practical tool for those who seek to navigate change – and shape it.

It is our hope that this booklet will serve as inspiration and a practical guide for cultural leaders and institutions working to align purpose, culture and commerce – today and into the future.

# The Horizon Model





# Engagement Starts with Insight

## On Purpose-Driven Partnerships and their Impact Across Culture and Education

Interview with Christian Engel Brund,  
Head of Partnerships, Forstå – Egmont

By Thore Davies, partner &  
rådgiver hos BARC Scandinavia.

In recent years, the link between cultural institutions and the education sector has, figuratively speaking, moved well beyond just excursions. Increasingly, it is becoming a strategic connector to relevance, outreach, engagement and – not least – sustainable business development. At Kulturkraft24, Christian Engel Brund, Head of Partnerships at Forstå – Egmont, helped shape a conference track focused on education as a lever for cultural institutions' long-term value creation.

In this interview, Brund expands on his call for cultural organisations to play a more proactive role in societal transformation – especially through their engagement with children and young people. With experience from large-scale, purpose-driven projects and cross-sector collaborations with clients such as Røde Kors, Det Kongelige Teater, LEGO and Danske Bank, he offers a sharp perspective on how purpose-driven partnerships can both respond to educational and institutional needs, and reinforce the societal role of culture.

During Kulturkraft24 you have mentioned that “culture is pulsating as well as the world around us”, how do you see cultural institutions playing a proactive role in not just following societal changes, but rather actively shaping them?

” I see it as a core task for cultural institutions to inspire and engage the population, each with their own unique starting point. Cultural institutions have a unique position to engage children and young people in a school context. There is a long tradition of this in Denmark and we see many different examples of the deployment of this. I see special

opportunities in emphasising children and young people's perspective when cultural institutions design their programs and offerings. For one, in the form of involving children and young people in the creation process, but also creating a stronger focus on the cultural products being inclusive in their form. For this to succeed, children and young people must be involved systematically.

It is the coupling between the cultural institution's unique expertise, knowledge and position, and the involvement of children and young people, that can inspire and contribute to cultural and social change.

Primary school and youth education are completely unique social arenas, where more than 680.000 children and young people spend perhaps half of their waking time. Here, cultural institutions have a long tradition of getting involved. But I do not see the opportunities being exhausted in any way. Students call for more connection to the outside world.

Students call for more connection to the outside world in our student survey *Forstå.Viden*. If cultural institutions manage to engage in a two-way manner, with offerings where students come to the cultural institution, but also focus on engaging students with outreach activities where they come to school, the possibilities for impact are significantly increased.

At Forstå, you've worked on many big cross-sector collaborations. What do you believe are the key ingredients for partnerships that can go beyond a one-eyed focus on either commercial success or societal impact?

” In order to succeed as a cultural institution in partnerships with involvement in primary and secondary education, it is my clear recommendation to go far beyond an agreement that the partnership is a good idea among the partners themselves.

I think it would be very helpful, to move away from this rather self-centered starting point, and instead, fundamentally start with the problem, and maybe ask yourself the question, “*what is the demand in*

*the educational context?*”, supplemented by a strong involvement of key actors in the educational world. Here it is Forstå’s mantra, that you start by involving the end user and make them a key stakeholder in the creation of the partnership.

You have a lot of experience bringing the surrounding society into a school context, speaking from this experience, do you have any tactics you would like to pass on to the culture sector?

” The education sector, from primary school to upper secondary education, is a saturated market. The whole of society wants something from the education sector. The surrounding society, and here I am thinking in particular of cultural institutions, must focus on what their unique possible contribution is and then focus everything on quality offerings. Specifically, teachers do not demand quantity, but quality. It can be both a unique visit, but also a unique learning product that the teacher himself can unfold and engage the students with, in their own way.

How can cultural institutions integrate new revenue models without compromising their mission and values? Can commerce and purpose truly coexist in the cultural sector?

” My own mantra is this: *Think purpose before business*, and find the unique balance point that makes a product sustainable. The education sector from primary school to youth education has financial limitations, and it is often this limitation that prevents educational institutions from visiting cultural institutions. Here, foundations, but also companies, play a possible role. This can be both as a grantor, but also as a partner, which can then be completely or partially available for free.

In the face of society-wide challenges like loneliness, how can cultural organisations give way to deeper community engagement and strengthen the societal fabric?

” Depending on the unique position of any cultural institution, social themes such as loneliness, community, diversity can be developed in

other ways than what children and young people experience in their schooling, where the subjects have primacy. For example, the Red Cross has worked together with a theater on the theme of loneliness, where two actors engaged students in the classroom with dramaturgical methods. This broke with the ground rules of the classroom, and that can itself be very engaging. Engagement in an educational setting like this, is developed with creativity, insight into the students' life world and the conditions of the school's system world.

Transparency and trust-building has become crucial in both corporate and cultural sectors as consumer trust currently is on the decrease. How can institutions engage in trust-building and transparency?

” Trust between the school and the surrounding society is absolutely critical. Therefore, full transparency is the key to success with school engagement. As the most essential gatekeeper, the teacher must have full transparency, beyond just being able to see who is behind a learning product and what the purpose is.

How do you see young people influencing the cultural sector's future? What can we learn from the reports you have produced at Forstå? What are some innovative ways institutions can engage younger audiences meaningfully?

” Our *Forstå.Viden* report, which we conduct every year, fundamentally maps out that students from grades 0 to 10 demand a much stronger connection to the outside world than what the school itself can offer. This is a crucial point.

It is also significant that the students demand variety and authenticity. This is what the students are looking for and that is truly good news. But the school's conditions do not necessarily make this possible. If the students' wishes are to be met, it is crucial to have just as much insight into the teachers' conditions and relevance criteria and the conditions and possibilities of primary schools in general. And this is not just only the subject didactic and general didactic dimensions, but also time pressure, demands and the school's rhythm in general.





# Christian Engel Brund

## Head of Partnerships, Forstå

Christian Engel Brund is Head of Engagement for Partnerships at Forstå – Egmont, where he works at the intersection of culture and education.

He has over 15 years of experience with strategy and concept development for children and young people, including as Head of Education at Save the Children. Christian has been a driving force in a number of national partnerships and projects that connect culture, learning and social development.

# Community-led Cultural and Economic Development

## A Model for Cultural Investment

Interview with Gretchen Coss,  
Senior Vice President, Strategic Partnerships, G&A

By Thore Davies, partner &  
rådgiver hos BARC Scandinavia.

As cultural institutions increasingly look for ways to anchor their work in community realities, *Destination Crenshaw* stands out as a bold and visionary example of what place-based development can become when it is led by, and created for, the community it serves. Stretching 1.3 miles along Crenshaw Boulevard in South Los Angeles, the project combines public art, infrastructure renewal, workforce development, and digital equity to create a lasting cultural impact.

At the heart of the initiative is a commitment to *creative placekeeping* – a form of urban and cultural strategy that goes beyond design to ensure cultural permanence, economic opportunity, and deep community ownership. In this interview, Gretchen Coss, Senior Vice President/Strategic Partnerships at G&A, reflects on the role of co-creation, the importance of sustained engagement, and the strategies that have helped translate outreach into real-world impact.

To us, Destination Crenshaw represents a powerful response to the new societal responsibilities increasingly placed on the cultural sector – especially when it comes to local anchoring, representation, and long-term community building. Can you give us an overview of Destination Crenshaw—its origins and the vision behind the project?

” Destination Crenshaw, a community-led initiative, focuses on transforming a 1.3-mile stretch of Crenshaw Boulevard into the largest Black-centered public art display in the United States, featuring infrastructure improvements, community spaces, and economic development, all while celebrating Black culture and history. Destination Crenshaw is a groundbreaking reparative development initiative that will showcase over 100 works by Black artists with deep ties to the local community. This unique outdoor experience seeks not only to beautify Crenshaw Boulevard but to create a vibrant cultural imprint akin to other cultural enclaves in Los Angeles, such as Chinatown and Koreatown. Through this lens, G&A and Perkins+Will worked alongside the client team to foster community engagement and co-creation, while reinforcing trust and pride in a community long impacted by limited public investment and neglect.

What separates Destination Crenshaw from most other Place-Based projects is that it is not only an urban design and interpretive installation but a dynamic impact-driven organization committed to community planning through creative *placekeeping*.

Destination Crenshaw is rooted in Black culture and history—but how have you worked to ensure the project is community-driven rather than just ‘community-located’?

” The project has been driven by community input from the very beginning of the process. The outreach did not end in the initial stages, it has continued for the full length of the project. There are real challenges and opportunities for community-based projects, including building a supportive framework that elevates and relies on the voices and leadership of local residents.

Our journey included developing a clear, authentic narrative that reflects the diverse perspectives of the community, emphasizing equity and accessibility throughout the project. By initiating discussions on how to co-create spaces, programming and interpretive content that resonate with community accomplishments, we hope to inspire other institutions to rethink their engagement strategies and forge deeper connections with disenfranchised communities.

G&A and Perkins+Will employed best practices for authentic listening and stakeholder identification. Our outreach methods were based on genuine collaboration - translating community trust into tangible actions and meaningful outcomes.

What are some of the most impactful community-led initiatives that have emerged from the project?

” One of the most visible and meaningful initiatives is the Public Art Program. Destination Crenshaw was created to preserve and uplift South LA’s Black culture, and that commitment is reflected in our open-air museum along 1.3 miles of Crenshaw Boulevard. Destination Crenshaw will be commissioning an unprecedented number of public artworks by Black artists – including the 800-foot mural on the Great Wall of Crenshaw by the Rock the Nation Crew, and sculptures by artists such as Maren Hassinger, Artis Lane, and Kehinde Wiley. This work tells the story of Black Los Angeles and anchors Crenshaw as the “heart of Black LA.”

In addition, we’re transforming the corridor through community-centered design. The project includes five architecturally distinct community spaces – or pocket parks – and hundreds of newly planted trees. These spaces create natural gathering places for events and everyday interaction, while supporting a thriving commercial corridor.

From an infrastructure standpoint, the project aspires to implement new sidewalks, landscaping, and culturally stamped street furniture. These improvements will enhance the pedestrian experience and make the area more welcoming and walkable for residents and visitors alike.

Destination Crenshaw goes way beyond being a ‘cultural landmark’—it also fuels economic opportunity. How do you see the connection between cultural investments and economic development?

” Economic development has also been central from the beginning. Destination Crenshaw is building platforms that allow Black artists and businesses to thrive – from public art to targeted communications strategies that celebrate Black culture. While the client recognizes the challenges that can come with infrastructure investments, they are actively working to support and preserve existing businesses and residents.

What strategies have been most successful in ensuring that local businesses and job opportunities are strengthened through the project?

” A major but upcoming initiative focuses on workforce development. Destination Crenshaw is developing a creative sector *career pipeline* that will train and place Crenshaw community members. The aspiration is to keep talent in the Crenshaw neighborhood and to bolster the local businesses. The client is also looking ahead by building pipelines in broadband infrastructure, hospitality, and public art maintenance.

How are you working with digital equity?

” We’re proud of our progress on digital equity. Between 2023 and 2024, our work contributed to LA City and State-level investigations into longstanding digital discrimination in the Crenshaw area.

In partnership with the Bureau of Street Lighting and Council District 8, we’ve launched the *Connecting Crenshaw* campaign – a pilot that will install fiber optics and city-provided Wi-Fi from 67th Street to Stocker Street. This initiative will give the community greater access to educational and economic opportunities.

What are the biggest challenges in ensuring that a cultural development project like this remains relevant and impactful for generations to come?

” Ensuring lasting relevance and impact for projects such as Destination Crenshaw lies in fostering and reinforcing trust and pride in a community long impacted by limited public investment and neglect. Developing an intentional process of co-creation to capture the important, and often untold, stories from the past, present and future is challenging, but will result in a narrative that resonates with the individuals who “own” this history.

Projects such as these also have a better chance of remaining relevant and impactful for generations to come if they integrate creative programming, provide ongoing opportunities for community gatherings and employ methods for translating community outreach into visible, impactful initiatives that resonate with local residents. This is also a challenge, as it requires an ongoing commitment from the staff and the community to implement/maintain.

Ultimately, the project is a celebration of Black culture, designed to secure cultural permanence for South LA. Much like Chinatown, Koreatown, or Mariachi Plaza, Destination Crenshaw is a place where identities are made visible and lasting. Our work is rooted in sustainability, cultural ownership, and honoring the legacy and ongoing contributions of Black Los Angeles.

If you could advise other cities or organizations looking to replicate elements of this model, what would be your top three recommendations?

- ”
1. Continual Engagement: Community input should be incorporated before, during and after.
  2. Foster True Collaboration: Understand the essence of co-creation and the importance of designating community stakeholders to maintain ownership and leadership throughout the project.
  3. Transform Outreach into Action: Employ methods for translating community outreach into visible, impactful initiatives that resonate with local residents.



# Gretchen Coss

## Senior Vice President, G&A

Gretchen is a visionary leader, educator, and designer with over 35 years of experience in brand management, experience design, and placemaking.

Prior to G&A, Gretchen was Vice President/Director of Graphics for Gensler LA and had her own successful business for over a decade. She has been instrumental in building G&A as an international design firm by bringing both an entrepreneurial spirit and unparalleled relationship-building to the firm. She is a passionate educator and active industry leader, serving on the board of the Society for Experiential Graphic Design for six years, where she was a past president. She is also an Adjunct Professor at the Corcoran College of Art + Design and sits on the National Board for the Fashion Institute of Technology.



# What Institutions Can Learn from Gen Z

## The why, what, and how of successful cultural alignment with Gen Z

Interview with Deborah Marino, Chief Strategy Officer & Deputy General Manager, Publicis Luxe

By Thore Davies, partner & rådgiver hos BARC Scandinavia.

In a time marked by crisis, acceleration, and profound generational shifts, connecting with young audiences goes way beyond just marketing tactics – rather, it’s a matter of cultural alignment.

At Kulturkraft24, luxury brand strategist Deborah Marino delivered a keynote that struck a nerve. Under the title “*Cool Kids & the Crisis – How to Connect with Gen Z*”, she unfolded a compelling narrative about a generation that doesn’t just consume culture – it remixes, makes demands of, and meets the world through culture.

Marino brings a rare combination of deep strategic insight and academic depth. Drawing from her work with global luxury brands at Publicis Luxe, as well as her teaching at Sorbonne and Sciences Po, she explores how Gen Z navigates identity, creativity and purpose in a world where uncertainty is the only constant.

Your keynote at Kulturkraft24 focused on culture and community's role in an era of crisis. How do you see Gen Z's relationship with culture in this context?

” Gen Z breathes culture – they make it, influence it, stress it as much as they are moulded by it. It is their true passport to reach the world and other generations, it is the way they evaluate brand, ideas, and identities. With the notion of experience, it is certainly one of the pillars of their life – in terms of belonging, definition of themselves and attention given.

It is no surprise that the first question they ask to each other, the first signs they search in a style, a consumption or a conversation are the cultural anchors. What do you fancy? Who is your favourite designer? What is the soundtrack of your life?

My conviction is that in a world made of uncertainty and disturbance, where the future doesn't hold its fair share of hope, Gen Z focuses on what the present has as the best to offer: Culture.

You describe Gen Z's approach to identity as modular. What does this mean for brands and cultural institutions trying to engage them?

” The key words for Gen Z are hybridation and co-creation. They are a generation of the fluidity, at several levels, almost liquid, as Zygmunt Bauman could have said. They don't belong to one culture, sub-culture or community. They are cultural travellers and pursue their curiosity. That makes them the equivalent of chimeras and that is probably why they are so fascinating, for us, older, who have been loyal to our crew. Like the post-modernists they are, they mix, change the meaning, and take what they find interesting among other groups. And that is how they put creativity in all things – not consuming passively but always reinterpreting.

For the institutions and brands, it is a great challenge – it means that you need to collaborate, follow the flow of ever-changing cultural references, understand micro-communities, and forget about preconceived ideas when it comes to the youth.

Thinking through Kulturkraft25's theme Culture & Commerce, how does Gen Z navigate this intersection between cultural authenticity and commercial engagement?

” Gen Z are not naive. We think about them as a generation born at the peak of technical transformation, we forget that they were also born in the era of the marketing-everywhere. They behave themselves as brands, promoting their image and creating content (sometimes to hide their real self). That's why seducing them implies to go further traditional recipes of vendors and come a bit more undone – with the daring will to take risks, to choose a cultural fight and stick to it, to be ready to sacrifice comfort for truth or creativity, to act concretely. Authenticity and convictions are highly valued when plain marketing generates something worse than opposition: Indifference.

You highlighted five key drivers: Consistency, Culture, Community, Creativity, and Conscience. What should cultural actors take away from that?

” Cultural actors already own a lot of credit, when it comes to Gen Z – their only prejudice (because they are not perfect) is that they fear to be given lessons and maintained in the passive status of audiences. Their fantasy, if not their will, is to be taken seriously, as partners and be listened carefully as cultural contributors. Cultural actors have the meaning, and the content – those values are connecting the dots to share those treasures, in a creative, positive, coherent way.

In other words, those values are the point of departure to define the experiences, the programming, the tone of voice and even the co-curation/co-creation to encourage between two populations (the youth and the cultural stakeholders) who have a lot to share.

If you had to give three pieces of advice to cultural organisations that want to stay relevant with Gen Z, what would they be?

- ”
1. Be curious – and listen more than you speak.
  2. Co-create with young people, don't just market to them.
  3. Think in moments, mood and energy – not just messages.





## Deborah Marino

# Chief Strategy Officer & Deputy General Manager, Publicis Luxe

Deborah Marino is a strategist at Publicis Luxe and a lecturer at Sorbonne, Sorbonne Abu Dhabi and Sciences Po Paris. Her work explores the intersection of cultural identity, consumer behavior and strategic communication – particularly through the lens of Gen Z.

At Kulturkraft24, she presented “*Cool Kids & the Crisis – How to Connect with Gen Z*”, offering a deep dive into how brands and cultural institutions can stay relevant in a time shaped by systemic uncertainty.



At Kulturkraft25, we explore how culture creates value—socially, strategically, and commercially.

This year's theme frames every conversation: From LEGO's global efforts to empower children as changemakers, to Wrexham FC's grassroots revival of a town community through the local football team, and the V&A's digital strategies for connecting cultural heritage with younger audiences worldwide.



Learn more at [kulturkraft.dk](https://kulturkraft.dk)

Kulturkraft is the annual event where the cultural sector comes together to address the challenge of achieving economic success while preserving and promoting cultural and societal missions.

Kulturkraft is a unique opportunity to gain concrete knowledge and international inspiration to manage the complex demands and opportunities facing the contemporary cultural sector.