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Kristin Danielsen: Culture Is a Method, Not a Product

CREATIVESUNITE

Co-funded by the European Union

Nordic Culture Fund chief Kristin Danielsen — a former professional dancer turned arts director — argues that culture is foundational infrastructure, not an optional layer, and that human imagination remains our fiercest tool in an AI-shaped world.

"It is a paradox that the culture sector, which is so experimental and innovative, sometimes also is so persistent to change. I struggle to get my head around that!"

Kristin Danielsen has spent nearly three decades running cultural institutions—from the Black Box Teater in Oslo to Arts Council Norway, where she served as Director for nine years, to her current role as Chief Executive of the Nordic Culture Fund since August 2025. Before all of that, she was a professional dancer.

That arc — from performer to strategist, from embodied practice to institutional policy — shapes the way she argues. In this conversation, conducted ahead of the Creative FLIP conference, Danielsen makes a deceptively simple case: culture is not an optional layer on top of society, not a nice-to-have when budgets are generous. It is infrastructure. Like roads. Like energy. Like the digital systems we can no longer live without.

She is equally direct on the pressures now bearing down on that infrastructure: the EU budget negotiations in Brussels, the structural precarity of creative workers, the concentration of cultural power in a handful of digital platforms, and the question

of whether human imagination can hold its ground in an age of artificial intelligence.
