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PAU WAELDER | **SELLING AND COLLECTING ART IN THE NETWORK SOCIETY**



PhD Dissertation

**SELLING AND
COLLECTING ART
IN THE NETWORK
SOCIETY**

INTERACTIONS
AMONG
CONTEMPORARY ART
NEW MEDIA
AND THE
ART MARKET

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To my brother David, who taught me
what computers can do.

Cover image: Promotional image of the DAD screen displaying the artwork *Schwarm* (2014) by
Andreas Nicolas Fischer. Photo: Emin Sassi. Courtesy of DAD, the Digital Art Device, 2015.



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INTRODUCTION

I. PREFACE

On September 7, I walked into the O.K. Centrum für Gegenwartskunst in Linz, on the first day of the 2002 edition of the Ars Electronica festival on art, technology, and society. In the entrance lobby, a large grey machine with the word “Painstation” written on its side attracted visitors as they entered the building. I noticed that the type was similar to that of Sony’s Playstation video game console. The machine was emitting low, grumbling sounds. A young man was showing several attendees and journalists how the machine worked.: It was a table game console where two players competed against each other playing Atari’s *Pong* (1972), one of the earliest arcade video games. Unlike the original game, missing the ball resulted in the painful experience of receiving electroshocks, a blast of heat, or the lash of a whip on the back of the hand. The first player to remove his or her hand from the machine lost the game. After receiving my first electric shock, I asked the young man about the machine, if he considered it an artwork. The question seemed funny to him.

Painstation,¹ by Volker Morawe and Tilman Reiff, was the first artwork I saw on my first visit to the Ars Electronica festival. For almost a decade, I attended the festival every year, learning about an aspect of contemporary art that I had only briefly explored on the Internet at home. What I saw at the festival made me think that all the art I had seen in museums and galleries was old and boring. Instead, I was discovering really innovative art, the art of the future. It took me about two years to restore my interest in “traditional” contemporary art. At Ars Electronica and other festivals and symposia I met other artists, young scholars, and curators, and began to build my network.² I wrote several papers about the Painstation at a time when all the attention was put into computer games (a trend that later on switched to software art, locative media, augmented reality, bio art, and so forth). I also began to write about contemporary art and digital art in several art magazines and realized how little interaction there was between these two worlds. Later on, I started curating group shows of digital art in contemporary art exhibition spaces such as museums, art centers, and galleries with the intention of showing to an art audience what I had seen at the festivals. I also worked on contemporary art projects, trying to find a connection between these different types of artworks, which, by then, were all “contemporary” to me.

As for Morawe and Reiff, they had a big success with the Painstation. It was presented in many festivals, club parties, and exhibitions related to computer games, as well as TV shows, press, and magazines. Eventually, they received a cease-and-desist letter from Sony demanding that they change the type and name of the machine. They developed a second, upgraded version and called it “The Artwork formerly known as Painstation.” The demand for the game led Morawe and Reiff to consider commercializing their creation, but the legal issues derived from selling an entertainment device that could cause bleeding

1. Painstation. See <http://painstation.de/>

2. Later on, in 2004, I was able to see part of this network as a graphic visualization at the Ars Electronica festival, thanks to W.Bradford Paley and Jefferson Y. Han’s project TraceEncounters.

hands and burns cancelled the operation. Later on, they built a series of machines that have been kept as a “working archive” of the project, for future exhibitions. As *//////////fur////* art entertainment interfaces, they have developed a large range of projects, taking their work to the Museum of Modern Art in New York and the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, among other venues. In 2015, a retrospective exhibition of their work is traveling to several cities in Europe. They have never sold their work in an art gallery.

Morawe and Reiff's trajectory and work can be considered unusual from the perspective of the contemporary art world—to the point of being seen, by some, as “design” or “entertainment” instead of “art.” Yet they are among the many artists who have developed a set of creative practices that move in the intersection between art, science, technology, and society, high and low culture, contemplation and interaction, fun and seriousness. Operating in a particular field where they seem to have ample space for experimentation and research, many of them have developed fast-paced careers in the context of a close-knit network that spreads globally. They have received awards, their work being featured in mass media as well as in specialized websites, magazines, and academic publications. They are part of an active and growing community that includes curators, scholars, writers, journalists, museum and festival directors, scientists, engineers, and many other professionals, some of whom have also developed particularly accelerated careers, reaching international recognition within their field. However, most of them are barely known in the “mainstream” contemporary art world, which is dominated by the most prominent art galleries, museums, biennials, and art fairs, renowned curators, multimillionaire collectors, and blue chip artists. This sector of the multifaceted world of art in our time shapes the most widespread perception of what contemporary art is. Names like Damien Hirst, Jeff Koons, Ai Weiwei, Gagosian, Saatchi, Hans Ulrich Obrist, ArtBasel, or the Turner Prize are considered synonymous with contemporary art. Indeed, they are personalities and institutions that have made deeply influential contributions to the way art is made, experienced, discussed, and collected today, but these names are but one aspect of a larger picture. The *Painstation* is a small, grumbling dot in this picture (to some, it would be anecdotal) despite the interesting issues that it raises, both as an artwork and an entertainment device.

Artworks such as Damien Hirst's diamond-studded skull *For the Love of God* (2007) and Morawe and Reiff's *Painstation* (2001-2004) are both necessary to understand art today. In their respective contexts, through different forms, and with different intentions, they embody ways in which art and society, the artwork and the viewer can establish a dialogue. They both also address the human compulsion for competition and the frailty of our mortal flesh. The fact that they are perceived as worlds apart is one of the reasons that motivate this research, although my intention is not to try to place them on equal levels nor dismiss the whole contemporary art scene to focus solely on “the art of the future.” In my opinion, it is more interesting to examine how the contexts in which these artworks are created and presented shape their perception and value, what discourses surround them, and how they can interact or influence each other.

II. CONTEXT AND OBJECTIVES OF THE DISSERTATION

The present dissertation aims to explore and analyze the interactions among contemporary art, new media, and the art market in the context of the significant shifts taking place since the late 2000s.

In order to clarify the perspective from which these interactions are observed, it is necessary to specify what these three elements— contemporary art, new media, and the art market — mean in the context of this research. Although they are widely used and rarely questioned, these terms may be misleading; for this reason, they are described below. The definitions do not intend to dictate how these terms should be understood in general; they are meant to establish how they are applied in this dissertation.

Contemporary art refers to art created in the present of period³. Criticized for its vagueness (Aranda, Kuan Wood & Vidokle, 2010, p.6), the term is generally used to indicate art made since the 1970-1980s, when, according to Arthur Danto (1997 [1999]) the end of the main art historical narratives led to a context in which anything could be art (p.34). Danto's assertion also indicates a particular situation in art history, when the artwork is more dependent than ever on the context in which it is presented. Therefore, contemporary art also indicates a moment in which the art world plays a significant role in the perception of the artwork as such (see 3.3). For the purposes of this dissertation, contemporary art will be understood as the art produced since the 1970s. This implies that art created with computers and electronic, digital, or bio technologies is also considered contemporary art. The circle of renowned artists, curators, galleries, collectors, museums, art fairs, and events (biennales, manifestas, documentas) predominantly featured in the mass media and leading contemporary art magazines (such as Artforum, Art Review, or Frieze) is referred to as ‘mainstream’ contemporary art.

New media is also a vague term that roughly refers to electronic and digital technologies introduced since the 1990s, although most of them had been developed from an earlier date. The personal computer, the Internet, and a wide range of technologies used today, as well as the devices that include them (computers, smartphones, tablets, and wearable devices, among others) are related to this term. Lev Manovich (2001a) refers to new media in the context of the “computerization of culture,” which has brought new cultural forms (such as computer games) and redefined others (such as photography and cinema). He enumerates the following areas of new media: websites, virtual worlds, virtual reality, multimedia, computer games, interactive installations, computer animation, digital video, cinema, and human-computer interfaces (p.8-9). In the context of this dissertation, new media refers to these areas but focuses predominantly on content distributed on the Internet, particularly when referred to the contemporary art market, in chapter three.

3. As reminded by Maurizio Nannucci's neon sign *All Art Has Been Contemporary* (1999), which has been exhibited in several classic art museums.

The art market is, basically, the market in which artworks are sold; artworks may be antiques, works of art from different periods of history, or contemporary artworks by living artists. This dissertation focuses on the contemporary art market, particularly in the primary market where galleries sell artworks provided directly by the artists (Moulin, 1997, p.45). However, the secondary market will also be mentioned in the examples related to auction houses.

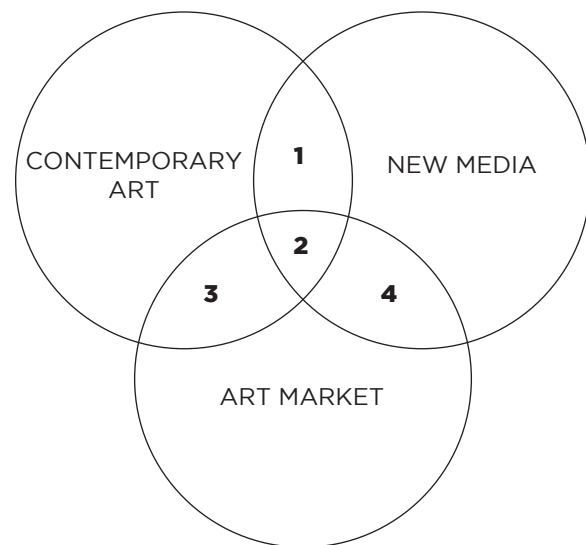


Fig. 1. Interactions among contemporary art, new media and the art market.

The interactions between these three elements are expressed in the following Venn diagram (fig. 1). The intersections define four additional elements, which can be described as follows:

1. New media art: contemporary art related to the new media created with computers and electronic, digital, or bio technologies. . This working definition does not substitute definitions suggested by other authors (see 1.1). The term will be used alongside other commonly used terms such as digital art or media art. However, in order to avoid considering new media art as a single entity, a group, or a movement, it will not be capitalized, as authors like Edward Shanken (2011a) do differentiate the spheres of new media art and contemporary art. In acknowledgement of the inadequacy of the term, it will be used as a means to refer to these artistic practices in a way that is commonly used in most literature (minus the capitalization).
2. New media art in the contemporary art market: new media art sold at galleries, art fairs, auction houses, online platforms, and digital frames.
3. Contemporary art market: mainstream contemporary art sold at galleries, art fairs, and auction houses.

4. Contemporary art market and new media: online platforms and digital frames that sell mainstream contemporary art, as well as services that provide images from art history archives.

These intersections will be addressed in the following chapters, particularly elements 2 and 4, which refer to the shifts taking place in new media art and the contemporary art market since the late 2000s. These shifts can be briefly outlined in terms of the perception of digital technologies in the contemporary art world and the economy of art in the wake of the Global Financial Crisis.

The circuit of festivals like Ars Electronica—in which artworks such as the Painstation are presented and distinguished with awards—alongside the network of institutions and professionals which contributes to study, disseminate, exhibit, collect, and sell them has been usually described as a separate art world. This perceived separation has, at times, allowed for the development of artistic and professional trajectories, events, and institutions independently from the structures and hierarchies of the contemporary art world; at other times, it has been denounced as a lack of recognition. Digital technologies (the use of computers and other devices to make art, as well as the culture around them) have been among of the main causes of this divide, alongside different perceptions of art, and the clash of two different hierarchical systems. As the use of digital devices and the Internet becomes commonplace, the prejudices against technology are fading, the mainstream contemporary art being increasingly open to include digital culture to its discourse. Additionally, the medium in which the artwork is created ceases to be a central issue, its specific qualities dissolving in a mixture of formats and approaches. In this sense, many artists feel that their work does not belong to a specific field, separated from contemporary art, but that it should be integrated into it, since all artists work at some level with computers and digital technology (see 1.4, 1.5, 2.1).

The economy of the new media art scene has been generally based on private and institutional funding: festivals and museums build their budget from contributions by governments and sponsors; artists receive grants and awards, and they charge production or exhibition fees; curators and other professionals usually charge their fees to institutions and festivals. The economy of art and the validation of artists are influenced by the art market, which plays an increasingly predominant role in the structure and activities of the contemporary art world. The financial crisis of 2007-2008 profoundly affected both economies, diminishing art and culture funding in European countries (where a large part of the festival circuit is located), lowering the profits of most companies—including those that sponsored cultural events—and reducing sales in the contemporary art market. This has contributed to a change of perspectives among the members of the new media art and contemporary art worlds. On the one hand, new media artists see how their activity is increasingly less sustainable in the circuit of festivals and look towards the art market. On the other hand, contemporary art galleries are seeking different distribution channels, directing their activities towards online platforms, and looking for new formats inspired

by the commercialization of cultural goods such as books, music, and films on digital devices (see 3.8, 3.9).

The new media art and mainstream contemporary art scenes find a common ground in the art market. This must be seen as an intersection, not as an assimilation. Even if some artists working with electronic and digital technologies are interested in participating in the art market, many others conceive their work in ways that are not compatible with it or do not intend to sell their work (see 2.3). Additionally, the art market has expanded its operations on the Internet, but is not necessarily more attentive to new media art (see 3.8). As fairly recent developments (mostly taking place between 2010 and 2015), these interactions between contemporary art, new media, and the art market have not been properly studied. In the present dissertation, they are examined based on participant observation, collection of quantitative data and interviews with different agents of the art world.

II. RESEARCH QUESTION

As previously indicated, the main research question focuses on the intersection between contemporary art, new media, and the art market, while observing shifts that have implications for the development of new media art, mainstream contemporary art, and the contemporary art market. The question can be phrased as follows:

How do contemporary art, new media, and the art market
currently interact with each other?

The way in which the question is formulated aims to avoid any assumptions on the relation between these elements. However, the use of the verb 'interact' already implies both reciprocity and direct influence among the three elements. By 'currently', I refer to events taking place in recent years, up to the moment of writing, which as previously stated sets a chronological period around 2010-2015, although many references date back to the 2000s, 1990s and even 1960s.

In relation to this main question, several other enquiries are made:

- How is new media art defined in the context of the contemporary art world?
- Is new media art being transformed by its interaction with the contemporary art market?
- Are new media art works being transformed in any way in order to be sold in the contemporary art market?
- Is the contemporary art market being transformed by its interaction with new media?

These questions point towards the possible consequences of the reciprocal influences

exerted by new media, contemporary art, and the art market. These interactions could lead to a change in the way new media art defines itself, as well as the assimilation of new media art into mainstream contemporary art. The adoption of different formats by new media artists can entail a partial abandonment of certain types of artworks, such as interactive installations. Finally a democratization of the art market is possible, as new formats of selling artworks are adopted, similar to those used for other cultural goods, in the format of digital files.

The aforementioned questions relate to four main objectives, which are described below:

- O1. To examine the concept of the art world and its workings as a social context, how an art world is created, and how it defines itself.
- O2. To understand the functioning of the contemporary art market in the context of the network society.
- O3. To describe the process of recognition in the context of mainstream contemporary art and the art market.
- O4. To analyze the interactions of new media art and the art market in the modes of presentation, distribution, and selling of new media artworks.

These objectives will be pursued by applying the methodology outlined in the following section.

IV. METHODOLOGY

The present dissertation stems from my observation of the art world during the last twelve years. In my professional experience as an art critic and curator, I have participated in the presentation of new media art works and have contributed to the discourses around them. The way in which new media art has defined itself and my own perception of it have shifted over the years, as the impact of digital technologies in society has raised new issues and artists have developed new ways of expressing this relationship. In my opinion, this subject cannot be addressed in a purely theoretical way; it has to be observed from different points of view, collecting information from ongoing events and those involved. I have therefore followed the Grounded Theory method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), by working with the data collected from interviews and documents directly related to the main agents of the contemporary art world and participating in some of the events that are being analyzed. Grounded Theory has provided an adequate method of research for the present dissertation, since it presents several advantages regarding the main problems posed by the subject that I have addressed:

- It is used in areas where there is not much knowledge or theory to work with (Goulding, 1999, p.6): new media art has not yet developed a consensual theory or definition, and is rapidly evolving at a pace that makes it difficult to establish a canon.
- The method works from experience to theory rather than from theory to the validation of that theory (Goulding, 1999, p.8-9): this is a key aspect of the present research, since analyzing the current interactions between contemporary art, new media, and the art market has required direct observation of the phenomena.
- The researcher becomes an interactant in the research process (Annells, 1997, p.123): since I work as a curator and art critic, my involvement in the contemporary art world is direct; therefore, I have consciously observed this condition rather than pretending to be an external observer.
- The main criteria for judging the adequacy of the emerging theory are that it *fits* the situation and that it *works*, which means that it helps to make sense of the situation and manage it better (Dick, 2005): the subject under study being a dynamic process, it has been necessary to confront the theory with the actual developments taking place.
- Academic literature has the same status as other data (Dick, 2005): the theories being developed around new media art are not found exclusively in the academic domain but also in artists's statements and other sources. The artists's role in developing the theory is vital (Shanken, 2011a) and therefore their contributions have been included alongside those of academic researchers.

Following the Grounded Theory method, I have collected data from different sources directly related to the events under study. The main sources of information are the following:

- Interviews with artists, gallerists, curators, and other agents of the art world: the testimony of those directly involved has been a fundamental source of information directly connected to the real situation subject of my research. Since the art market tends to be secretive of its procedures, the data collected in these interviews has been compared with evidence from other sources and direct observation.
- Artist's statements and essays: artists increasingly tend to write about the conceptual background of their works. This material has been crucial to understand their motivations and the way they conceive the art work, particularly in the development of Post-Internet art (see 1.4.2).
- Participant observation at art fairs, festivals, and exhibitions: the way in which art is presented and experimented in art events has provided a source of information about the actual conditions in which artworks are sold.
- Literature: examining different contributions from other researchers has been central to the analysis of the discourses around new media art and its structure as an art world. The literature also provides information about the process of recognition in the art world, and the ways in which art and commerce collide in the art market.
- Other sources: documents usually considered of lesser importance, such as art fair catalogues, gallery websites, or even Facebook posts, have provided relevant information for the elaboration of this dissertation.

The process of collecting data has been carried out as an iterative process that facilitates a more precise selection of the information sources and the individuals who have been interviewed. The initial steps of the research generated a panoramic view of the subject that was developed in greater detail as more data was collected. The data collection process was structured based on my personal observations and my implication in the art world as a working professional, as well as on an initial review of the current academic literature and other sources. Following the initial collection of data, I conducted a survey among new media artists (see 2.2). Artists are the most numerous type of individuals in the population under study, and also the ones who are usually located at the lower level of the hierarchy in the art world, which made them easier to contact and usually more willing to collaborate. The purpose of this survey was twofold: on the one hand, it tested initial concepts and conceptions by exposing them to a set of agents in the art world while collecting an initial set of data; on the other hand, it helped identify those individuals who were more willing to collaborate and who could be addressed in the next step. Alongside the elaboration of this survey, participant observation took place at exhibitions, festivals, and art fairs, allowing both for the collection of data and establishing direct contact with individuals who were interviewed in the next steps.

The interviews were conducted following a semi-structured model that allowed the interviewees (IEs) to introduce their own perceptions, concepts, and expressions in their account of the subject under study. Questions could not be completely open-ended, since this would have been perceived by IEs in this population as a lack of information or focus. IEs responded positively to specific questions that implied insight and an informed approach on the side of the interviewer (IR). Considering Roulston's (2010) "six conceptions of interviewing" (p.205-214), using a combined "Neo-positivist" and "Romantic" method was deemed appropriate. This combination was chosen because, to begin with, as an IR I had to adopt a neutral position in the interview in order to allow IEs to express their own views, which might contradict those of other individuals. However, due to my personal implication in the art world as a working professional, a personal relationship had already been established with some of the individuals in the population under study. Most interviews we carried out via Skype using videochat, given that IEs were located in different cities around the world and had busy schedules that would not have allowed programming a trip to a city in order to interview a group of people. The interviews were recorded, permitting the elaboration of precise transcriptions and the observation of IEs's gestures captured on video in those cases in which non-verbal communication was relevant. Several interviews were later on published as articles in the art magazines *art.es* and *ETC Media*. Publishing the interview was an incentive for IEs to participate in the first place, since many of them were too busy to dedicate their time to an activity that would not entail a certain benefit, in this case in the form of exposure. Other interviews were carried out in the framework of my collaboration with the *VIDA Art and Artificial Awards* (see 2.3), allowing me to contact artists, curators, and other professionals involved with this prize. The transcriptions of selected interviews (quoted in the main text) have been reproduced in Addenda A1, in the form of excerpts. During

the interviews, some time was allocated to small talk in order to facilitate the interview process and on the occasions in which the IE digressed, I did not push him or her to return to the main subject. These fragments have been eliminated from the transcriptions.

The analysis of the collected data has been structured into three main parts, which constitute the three main chapters of this dissertation. In chapter one, I review the main discourses surrounding new media art and its perception as an art world which is separated from the contemporary art world. The concept of artification (Heinich and Shapiro, 2012) has allowed me to consider the process by which new media art has defined itself as an artistic practice and an art world. The tensions generated by different views of new media art are reviewed in several case studies. The notion of habitus (Bourdieu, 1998) is suggested as a possible tool to understand how professionals from the new media art and the mainstream contemporary art scenes express irreconcilable differences. An apparent merging of both art worlds is examined in the case study of Post-Internet art; the way a young generation of artists has constructed its own conception of the artwork and developed a network that aims to gain recognition for its members in the mainstream contemporary art world is also examined. Chapter two focuses on the artists and their leading role in the transformations that are taking place in the interactions between contemporary art, new media, and the art market. Data collected in an online survey and personal interviews are used to sketch a profile of new media artists, along with their challenges and expectations. The process of recognition and the paradoxical situation of some new media artists is reviewed, indicating that this process has been altered by new media, the current policies of museums and art institutions, and the art market. Interviews and direct observation also provide a basis for an analysis of the environments in which new media artists develop their careers, and how these shape their artistic practice. Finally, a large amount of data collected from academic literature, direct observation, quantitative analysis reports, personal interviews, and active involvement was used to build the analysis of the interactions between new media and the art market. The structure of the art market and its dependency on scarcity and exclusivity is confronted with the nature of digital files, while the strategies carried out by artists in order to sell net-based artworks contrast with the online platforms that expand the reach of the contemporary art market on the Internet. A more direct involvement was carried out in the case study of the online platform Seditio (see 3.8.3). As a user of the platform, I bought several editions in order to experience first-hand the logic of their model and produced a publication, *\$8.793 Worth of [Art]* (Waelder, 2014g) that prompted a dialogue around the concept of ownership in the digital age.

1. CONTEMPORARY ART AND NEW MEDIA

1.1 NEW MEDIA ART: AN UNFORTUNATE TERM

1.1.1 A TAXONOMICAL TRADITION

On February 5, 1965, the exhibition *Computergrafik*, showing algorithmic drawings by mathematician Georg Nees, opened at the Institute of Technology from the University of Stuttgart, in a room where philosopher Max Bense had his seminar. Artist and mathematician Frieder Nake (2010) recalls that Bense gave a speech at the opening and Nees explained how he made the computer draw. Several artists attending the presentation were irritated by the idea that artistic creativity could be recreated with a machine. They left the room infuriated, while Bense called after them: “Gentlemen, we’re talking about artificial art here!” (p.40). The philosopher intended to clearly differentiate art made by computers from art made by artists, whether that meant placing computer-generated art one level below traditional art or on a different realm altogether. The algorithmic drawings of Nees, Nake and other pioneers came to be known as Computer Art, a term that, according to Nake, most of them considered “pretty stupid” (p.41). A few years later, the artist wrote an article provocatively titled “There should be no Computer Art” for the *Bulletin of the Computer Arts Society* in London. In this text he expresses his disappointment for the reactions of the art scene to the creations made with computers, which he finds “pleasing and stupid” (Nake, 1971, p.18), and denounces that Computer Art had become a simple fad in the ever-changing landscape of the art world. He concludes that computers should not be used to create shallow, decorative art:

“Reiterating the argument: I don’t see a task for the computer as a source of pictures for the galleries. I do see a task for the computer as a convenient and important tool in the investigation of visual (and other) aesthetic phenomena as part of our daily experience.” (p.19)

This confluence of misunderstandings, prejudices, and frictions has remained a constant in the evolution of artistic practices based on emerging technologies. The apparent inadequacy of the terms used to categorize them has also been repeatedly stated by artists, theorists and curators: if Computer Art was the result of what Nake (2015) has described as “an unfortunate choice of terms” (p.12), according to curator Christiane Paul (2008) “everyone seems to agree that the term [New Media Art] is unfortunate” (p.2).

Since the 1960s, the developments in technology and particularly in computer science have allowed artists to increasingly introduce new tools in their work, from early computers and plotters to handheld devices and 3D printers. As technology has entered all levels of the post-industrial society, a cultural framework has been developed around the use of technology, which has been used by artists as a content for their work. Gradually, an increasing number of artworks developed with new technological tools and focused on a reflection about the impact of technology in society has created a corpus of artistic

practices that has been consecutively labeled with different denominations, each of them a testimony of a particular understanding of the interaction between art and technology at a given time. Following Computer Art, many other labels have been applied to identify and categorize a myriad of artworks resulting from the intersection between art, science, technology, and society, such as Electronic Art, Digital art, Media art, Multimedia Art, Intermedia Art and New Media Art. Additionally, the translations of these denominations into other languages have led to adopting slightly different terms in some countries. For instance, in France the most popular term is “art numérique” which translates as digital art, the term being used in all instances that refer to the digital, such as “appareil photo numérique” (digital camera) or “culture numérique” (digital culture). As such, it is widely used in academic literature as well as in festivals and exhibitions, although lately the term “nouveaux médias” (a translation of “new media”) is also commonly used (see Moulon, 2011). In Germany, the term “medienkunst” (media art) is well established and is frequently used to refer to artistic practices related to electronic and digital media, including video and film.¹ The terms are usually considered synonymous, as they usually refer to the same artworks. However, “art numérique” and “medienkunst” entail a different perception of the same object, since the first emphasizes the fact that the artwork is the result of a finished or ongoing process of calculation, while the second one indicates that the artwork is related to electronic or digital media and the culture that emanates from them.

These brief examples illustrate the difficulty in assigning a unique, unequivocal, and all-encompassing definition to a broad field of artistic practices that reaches many different areas of knowledge and is subject to a continuous and fast-paced development. As the use of electronic and digital technology in art grew in popularity, being exhibited in group shows at museums and particularly in festivals devoted to electronic and digital art, numerous authors have written monographs on the subject, making it their task to provide a definition for this kind of artistic practice. Stephen Wilson's *Information Arts: Intersections of Art, Science, and Technology* (2002) was the first title to develop a comprehensive taxonomy of art and scientific and technological research. Structured from the perspective of the sciences, it presents a large number of artistic projects related to Biology, Physics, Mathematics, Geology, Astronomy, Robotics, Telecommunications, Computer Science and other disciplines, as well as a list of resources including exhibitions, festivals, institutions, and research labs. Wilson's hefty volume is an illustrative example of the wide spectrum of artistic practices that is usually compressed under a single term. A year later, French scholars Edmond Couchot and Norbert Hillaire (2003) adopt a different perspective in their book *L'Art numérique*, where they develop an analysis of the ways in which technology enters the art world and focus on the artistic practices related to new media. The authors comment on previous and outdated terminology, which they consider limiting, and present a definition based on the type of tools used to create the artworks:

1. See, for instance, the media art database Medien Kunst Netz or the ZKM | Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie in Karlsruhe, famous for supporting new media art with large exhibitions and a museum collection, as well as the numerous study programs using this term in most German universities.

“Alors que les appellations «art à l'ordinateur» ou «art informatique» renvoyaient à une technologie dont l'emploi restait limité, «art numérique» renvoie à un état de la société où cette même technologie, considérablement développée, contrôle la quasi-totalité des activités humaines. Ainsi, toute oeuvre d'art réalisée à l'aide de dispositifs de traitement automatique de l'information appartient à l'«art numérique».” (p.38)²

Couchot and Hillaire clarify that this definition cannot avoid being technical and generic, but it belongs to a “taxonomical tradition” that focuses on the technical aspect of artistic practices, as is the case of painting, photography, or video art (p.38). The publication of their book coincides with Christiane Paul's *Digital Art* (2003). Both monographs are included in the collections devoted to art by respected publishers Flammarion and Thames and Hudson, which can be considered an indicator of the interest raised by these artistic practices in the art world in the early 2000s. Since these books are addressed to a general public interested in art, the authors feel obliged to provide a definition of digital art (or something close to it), briefly outline its history and draw a map of its current manifestations. While not providing a precise definition, Paul describes the problems involved in the terminology used until that date, which can be understood as a way of justifying her decision to choose the term “digital art” over “new media art”:

“The terminology for technological art forms has always been extremely fluid and what is now known as digital art has undergone several name changes since it first emerged: once referred to as ‘computer art’ (since the 1970s) and then ‘multimedia art’, digital art now takes its place under the umbrella term ‘new media art’ [...]. The qualifier of choice here –‘new’– points to the fleeting nature of the terminology. But the claim of novelty also begs the question, what exactly is supposed to be considered ‘new’ about the digital medium? Some of the concepts explored in digital art date back almost a century, and many others have been previously addressed in various ‘traditional’ arts.” (Paul, 2003, p.7)

The author also introduces a “crucial distinction” between the use of technology as a tool or as a medium, which implies that only in the latter case can the artwork be described as digital art:

“One of the basic but crucial distinctions made here is that between art that uses digital technologies as a tool for the creation of traditional art objects –such as photograph, print, sculpture or music– and art that employs these technologies as its very own medium, being produced, stored, and presented exclusively in the digital format and making use of its interactive or participatory features.” (Paul, 2003, p.8).

2. This quote can be translated as follows: “While the designations «computer art» or «information technology art» referred to a technology of a limited use, «numerical art» refers to a state of society in which this same technology, considerably developed, controls almost all of human activity. Therefore, all artworks made with the use of devices of automatic processing of information belong to «numerical art».”

This distinction is particularly telling of a moment in which the use of digital technologies had become commonplace. They ascribed a separate category for a set of artworks that had been, for instance, created with a computer (as the term “computer art” indicated) did not make sense anymore. At the same time, Paul stresses the condition that digital art is “presented exclusively in the digital format” and furthermore interactive, two conditions that, in the early 2000s, were widely considered to be distinguishing features of digital art. Referring to the technical aspect of these practices is a common factor in other definitions proposed at the time in many books about art and digital media. For instance, in *Internet Art*, Rachel Greene (2004) provides a medium-centric definition of these artistic practices:

“Internet art is buoyed by the technological, economic, and social specifications of its medium. Though still evolving today, dominant tools are email, software, and web sites.” (p.31)

Greene is quick to mention that there is no “viable or stable” market for net art and that, due to this isolation, artists have strengthened their connections through online communities (p.31). Stressing the separation from the mainstream contemporary art world, she also describes Internet art as “a more marginal and oppositional form” (p.12), while also being part of a “continuum within art history” (p.9) that links net art with conceptual art and other avant-garde movements. A few years later, Mark Tribe and Reena Jana (2006) define New Media Art with a similar attention to the medium and place it in the context of previously used terms and the wider context of art and technology:

“New Media art and older categorical names like “Digital art,” “Computer art,” “Multimedia art,” and “Interactive art” are often used interchangeably, but for the purposes of this book we use the term New Media art to describe projects that make use of emerging media technologies and are concerned with the cultural, political, and aesthetic possibilities of these tools. We locate New Media art as a subset of two broader categories: Art and Technology and Media art.” (p.7)

Tribe and Jana also draw connections with established art forms such as performance, collage, readymades and art movements such as Conceptual and Pop Art. Embedding these artistic practices in art history while stressing their differences with mainstream contemporary art is a common denominator in most texts about new media art. Its specificities are described mainly in terms of the introduction of subjects related to computer and digital culture, the use of networked technologies, the interaction between the viewer and the artwork, and its complex preservation issues.

An influential contribution to the definition of these artistic practices was given by curator Steve Dietz at a talk in 1999,³ in which he stated: “what I consider to be the distinctive characteristics of new media are simply computability, connectivity, and (perhaps)

3. Steve Dietz, “Why have there been no great net artists?” November 30, 1999. The original text of this talk has been published on several print and online publications (Dietz, 2005).

interactivity” (Dietz, 2005). The three characteristics of new media were subsequently identified as distinctive characteristics of new media art, which to some authors attain such a degree of authoritativeness that they can be included in the very definition of the artistic practice. In the introduction of their book *Rethinking Curating. Art after New Media*, scholars Sarah Cook and Beryl Graham state:

“So, in this book, what is meant by the term new media art is, broadly, art that is made using electronic media technology and that displays any or all of the three behaviors of interactivity, connectivity, and computability in any combination” (Graham and Cook, 2010, p.10).

The definitions described hitherto exemplify a gradual switch in the focus on the factor that differentiates the artistic practices related to electronic or digital technologies, from the technologies themselves (Couchot and Hillaire) to their use as a medium (Paul) and finally to their distinctive behaviors (Dietz, Graham and Cook). As an epilogue to this briefly outlined evolution, it is interesting to add the opinion of art critic and curator Ed Halter (2014), who writes in the preface of the book *Art after the Internet*:

“Terms like ‘new media’ and ‘net art’ today sound hopelessly antiquated, clunky, uncool. Stressing what’s new about the relationship between art and the internet allows us to distance ourselves from this past.” (p.17)

In a volume dedicated to reflections about the New Aesthetic and Post-Internet Art (see 1.4), the younger generation of artists and critics banishes to the past the terms that described the intersection of art, science and technology and prefer to focus on the intersection of art and internet culture.

It is not within the objectives of this research to offer a thorough examination of the development of the terminology of new media art. However, it is deemed necessary to provide this brief overview of the difficulties that these artistic practices, and the art world that has generated around them, are still experiencing to reach a consensus in the way they are defined and categorized. As will be described in the following sections, several aspects of these definitions have an effect on the way new media art is understood and what is considered to be “acceptable” within its terms, as it will be discussed in relation to the commercialization of new media artworks in the art market (see 3.2, 3.5).

1.1.2 ART OF THE FUTURE

Since 1979, the Ars Electronica Festival has taken place⁴ at the city of Linz (Austria), presenting the latest developments in the intersection of art, science technology and

4. The festival was initially biennial, between 1980 and 1987. Since then it has taken place every year.

society in symposia and exhibitions. Progressively becoming an international meeting point for artists, researchers and scholars from different disciplines, the Austrian festival sets the model for a growing number of new media art festivals that emerged during in the decades of 1980 and 1990⁵, as well as those that came after. These festivals established an influential network of sites for the presentation and discussion on electronic and digital art, as well as the impact of new technologies on culture and society. In this blooming period, particularly since the beginning of the 1990s, the popularization of the use of computers and the innovations that Information Technologies introduce in the consumer industry lead to the so-called Digital Revolution. The proximity of the new millennium generates a global expectation that is translated into a growing attention towards emerging technologies as a promise of a better future (Waelder, 2010b). Just as the industry takes advantage of this attention to lead consumers into a spiraling cycle of newness, in the cultural industry producers follow the trend by generating events that focus on innovation and promises of the future of art, culture, and society.

Ars Electronica provides a driving example of this trend by focusing each edition on a main subject that addresses emerging or future issues related to art, technology, and society.⁶ The word “future” is regularly used in these events as a distinctive and identifying factor. It can be found in the names of several festivals, such as Art Futura (Barcelona, Spain, since 1990), Future Everything (Manchester, United Kingdom, since 1994), Futur en Seine (Paris, France, since 2009), art and technology centers such as Oi Futuro (Rio de Janeiro, since 2001), and numerous publications. In other events, the idea of the future is expressed in more subtle terms, sometimes using other synonyms, or addressing events and issues that have not happened yet.⁷ Ars Electronica has frequently identified itself with this concept of innovation and visions of the future: its Research and Development department is named “Futurelab”; its edition of 2001, welcoming the beginning of the new century, was titled *Takeover. Who is Doing the Art of Tomorrow?*; and in 2004 it celebrated its first 25 years of history with a debate on the future developments in art, science and technology in the following decades (Waelder, 2005). Moreover, in a leaflet published in 2000, the Ars Electronica Center is described in the following terms:

“Since its opening in September 1996, the Ars Electronica Center has constituted a definitive symbol for the path of the City of Linz into the 21st Century—a one-of-

5. Some of the festivals that were started during this period are the European Media Art Festival in Osnabrück, DE (1981); VideoFilm Fest in Berlin, DE (1988), which will later on become Transmediale (1998); ISEA in several cities (1988); Art Futura in Barcelona, ES (1990); DEAF, Dutch Electronic Arts Festival in Rotterdam, NL (1994); Futuresonic in Manchester, UK (1994); VIDA Art and Artificial Life Awards in Madrid, ES (1999); and FILE, Festival Internacional de Linguagem Eletrônica in São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and Porto Alegre, BR (2000). In the early and mid-2000s, a large number of festivals were organized in cities around the world, most of them continuing until today. According to Oliver Grau, director of the Department of Image Science at Danube University (Krems, Austria) in 2015 there are more than a hundred media art festivals worldwide (Waelder, 2015c, p.68).

6. Since 1982, each edition has focused on a main subject, including the Internet, life sciences, globalization, open source software, privacy, ecology and many more. See <http://www.aec.at/festival/en/archiv/>

7. The Transmediale festival addressed this issue with a critical perspective in its 2010 edition, titled *FUTURITY NOW!*. See <http://www.transmediale.de/past/2010>

a-kind digital media center right in the heart of the city. The Ars Electronica Center is a prototype for a museum of the future situated at the interface of art, technology, and society. It offers visitors the opportunity to try out key modern technologies, and to familiarize themselves today with the developments of tomorrow. WWWelcome to the Future!”

The permanent space of the Ars Electronica festival in the city of Linz is not only a “museum”—with the connotations of authority, validation, and preservation of culture that the word implies—, but also a “digital media center”—it displays digital technology—and a “prototype,”—possibly not having reached its final form yet, thus promising future developments. , But, most importantly, it is a “definite symbol for the path of the City of Linz into the 21st Century,” which implies that it has become a monument to the new era. In short, the Ars Electronica Center is a “museum of the future,” a somewhat oxymoronic definition that aims at providing the building with the authority of a seasoned institution as well as the dynamism of a research lab, incorporating the promises of the future in the mix. It is presented as a place where visitors can become familiarized with the technologies that will shape their lives in the coming years, an idea that responds to the angst generated by living in a society that is driven by the IT industry and the competitiveness fueled by late capitalism. Participating in traditional manifestations of culture, such as art exhibitions, theatre plays, opera, or classical music concerts is a cultural imperative to some (Bourdieu, 1969 [2003], p.56). Attending events related to art and technology is not only described as a necessary means to understand the world around us, but a must in order to be able to contribute to society, or find a proper job. The last sentence of the fragment quoted above playfully combines the word “welcome” with the acronym of the World Wide Web in an invitation to discover the future by means of what, at the time, was a widely popular but still not commonplace technology.

In a text written in 2006, Gerfried Stocker, artistic co-director of the Ars Electronica Festival, further emphasizes this connection between art, technology, and innovation, while introducing a separation from other forms of contemporary art:

“The art of tomorrow is the art of the media. [...] What once could have been subsumed under the heading of media art has since branched out into a multiplicity of new artistic genres, symbiotic forms whose definitions are rather more oriented on scientific and technical disciplines, on interface development and information architecture or on net culture and the lifestyle of gaming communities than on the isms of the artistic discourse” (Stocker, 2006, p.7)

New media art is described by Stocker as the art of tomorrow, and more tellingly as a “test-drive of the future” (p.7). The latter definition connects with the description of the Ars Electronica Center: in both texts, it is clear that new media art is a way to prepare for the changes that emerging technologies will introduce in the coming years. In this sense, new media art is endowed with the task of responding to the impact of technology in

our society, by using this same technology. It must lead the viewer into reflecting on how technology influences, shapes, or even revolutionizes different aspects of the current social, economic, cultural, or political environment. When considering how the art of tomorrow will be, Stocker asks: "How will art respond to crucial social issues? What answers and impetus can it provide?" (p.8). According to this view, artistic research is expected to be akin to scientific research, in the sense that it must provide answers to a set of issues. A new media artwork cannot restrain itself to purely aesthetic considerations, it must be a tool for the understanding of our technology-driven society, and even participate in its development. Considering art as a tool for the transformation of society is anything but new. However, in Stocker's perspective, this specific function of art necessarily implies a separation from the mainstream contemporary art world, where it loses its strength and purpose:

"Will media art become a part of the art establishment and recede into the confines of galleries and museums, will it dissipate its energies in the vast expanses of commercial media design, or will it be able on a longterm basis to live up to its promise to constitute an open, dynamic artform able to thrive and assert itself as a critical investigator and catalyst of social and cultural transformations?" (Stocker, 2006, p.9)

It is interesting that Stocker considers entering galleries and museums as a form of retreat, and that media art may become lost in its "confines," while in the art world this is seen, on the contrary, as a form of exposure and recognition. The media industry is also considered from a negative point of view, as an environment where these artistic practices "dissipate its energies," which probably refers to the way in which innovative uses of technology by artists are translated into consumer products, retaining their functions but losing their conceptual or symbolic value. Media art, according to the co-director of the Ars Electronica Festival, finds its true purpose in its critical analysis of contemporary society and culture, as well as in the possibility of facilitating transformations in the socio-cultural environment. Once more, this implies that new media art shares the same purpose of the festival itself, which on one side contributes to separate the former from other forms of contemporary art and on the other reinforces the festival as the proper environment for the presentation and discussion of new media art.

In fact, as curator Piotr Krajewski (2006) asserts, new media art festivals emerged as alternative spaces, distanced from traditional art institutions, that progressively became spaces of recognition and definition of the wide range of artistic practices related to electronic or digital media (p.223). While festivals filled the void left by cultural institutions that were not interested in the developments of electronic art, they gradually became institutions on their own, with the power to determine what is interesting and how it should be named and categorized. This is markedly the case of the Ars Electronica Festival, which has grown from a local event focused on electronic music into an institution globally recognized as the forum of reference for new media art. The

popularization of digital technologies and the globally widespread use of the Internet have gradually shaped a new international scene for these artistic practices in which the model of the Ars Electronica has been replicated and expanded. If, at the beginning, festivals allowed a reduced number of fans and specialists to get together and exchange information, it was reasonable to think that the Internet would eliminate the need to organize these meetings (since the information is already online) and make festivals unnecessary. Yet, on the contrary, the enormous amount of information, and the growing numbers of artists and projects spawning all over the globe make it necessary to go beyond organizing events that provide a physical space and visibility to these emerging artistic practices. It is also necessary to establish points of reference in the form of a taxonomy and a way of determining which artists, artworks or projects are worthy of attention. In this sense, Gerfried Stocker (2005) describes the festival as a "platform" and a "catalyst," an organization that facilitates the development of the artistic practices and the reflection about them:

"I think the role of the festival has changed very much in the last ten years, due to the Internet. Ten years ago, the festival was a place to find new things, discover new things, and now it is more a place to compare things. The festival becomes more an intermediary, a catalyst. [...] Being a platform, a place for ideas is what Ars Electronica as a festival will try to develop even more in the coming years."

As a place to "compare things," the festival creates a specific environment for new media art that can be compared to the environment created by art institutions for works of art. The discourse of the festival, as well as the discourse of the museum, establishes a context and a way of understanding the artworks, which are primarily identified as artworks or projects that are worthy of attention and secondly distributed in different spaces according to a categorization and hierarchy that responds to the institution's own criteria. In 2004, on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Ars Electronica festival, an exhibition of award-winning projects in the Interactive Art category took place the recently built Lentos contemporary art museum. According to the organizers, this marked a change of status for new media art, which "finally entered the museum"⁸ and also motivated a reflection of the museum's director, Stella Rollig (2004), about the inadequacy of the museum to host these artistic practices (p.354).

1.1.3 THE ROLE OF AWARD CATEGORIES

Most prominent new media art festivals have created awards for artistic projects in different categories. These awards have the double purpose of attracting the most recent projects being developed each year and reinforcing the authority of the festival as an institution that legitimates the artistic practices in the field. The Prix Ars Electronica, a yearly award

8. Gerfried Stocker in a press conference at the Ars Electronica Festival in Linz, September 2, 2004.

established in 1987 at the Ars Electronica festival, has become the most prestigious prize in the festival circuit. The highest prize in each category is the Golden Nica, which takes the form of a golden statuette representing the Winged Victory of Samothrace. Frequently described as “the Oscar of new media art,” it embodies the highest form of distinction that an artist can receive for his or her work in the context of the festival, and also in the new media art scene in general. While the awards honor “creativity and innovativeness in the use of digital media,”⁹ the categories in which they are included are no less important. Over the last 27 years, the Prix Ars Electronica has been distributed among a varying number of categories (between three and eight) that have been created, eliminated or renamed following the quick developments in technology and the shifts of attention they subsequently generated (fig. 2). The categories clearly exemplify how a taxonomy can influence the development of the artistic practices themselves.

The Prix initially awarded projects in the Computer Graphics and Computer Animation categories, as well as the Computer Music category. The use of the word “computer” clearly indicates the relevance of the tool in a time in which personal computers were starting to be widely distributed and refers to the already historical label Computer Art (see 1.1.1). Computer Graphics and Computer Animation were kept as categories until the mid-1990s, and were even fused into a single category on a single edition of the awards in 1990. In 1994, the Computer Graphics category had disappeared. The Computer Animation category—fueled by a growing number of art and design schools producing short animated films—has continued until today, albeit with several additions. In 1998, the category included Visual FX, following the growing use of digital special effects in movies, and ten years later, it added Film as a form of recognition of the many feature-length films that were being produced at that time. The Computer Music category has been the longest lasting in the history of the awards, with a single hiatus in 1991 and a change of name to Digital Musics since 1999. Electronic music has been a forerunner of new media art and it can be considered a welldefined artistic practice with its own context and for this reason the category has not been subject to major changes, except replacing term Computer Music, which at the end of the century already seemed obsolete. In 2014, the Prix Ars Electronica introduced the Visionary Pioneers of Media Art award and changed the periodicity of two pairs of categories (Hybrid Art and Digital Musics & Sound Art; and Interactive Art and Digital Communities) which now alternate every two years.

Introduced in 1990, the Interactive Art category is the only one that has never been eliminated or renamed over the course of more than two decades. In the jury statement of the Prix Ars Electronica, scientist Roger Malina (1990) welcomed this “new emerging art form” and confessed that the lack of a complete set of criteria to define this category led to “a great deal of discussion [...] about the nature of interactive art” (p.156). Interactive art has come to be considered the most relevant category in the new media art scene and

9. Prix Ars Electronica. *Ars Electronica Center*. Retrieved from <http://www.aec.at/prix/en/>

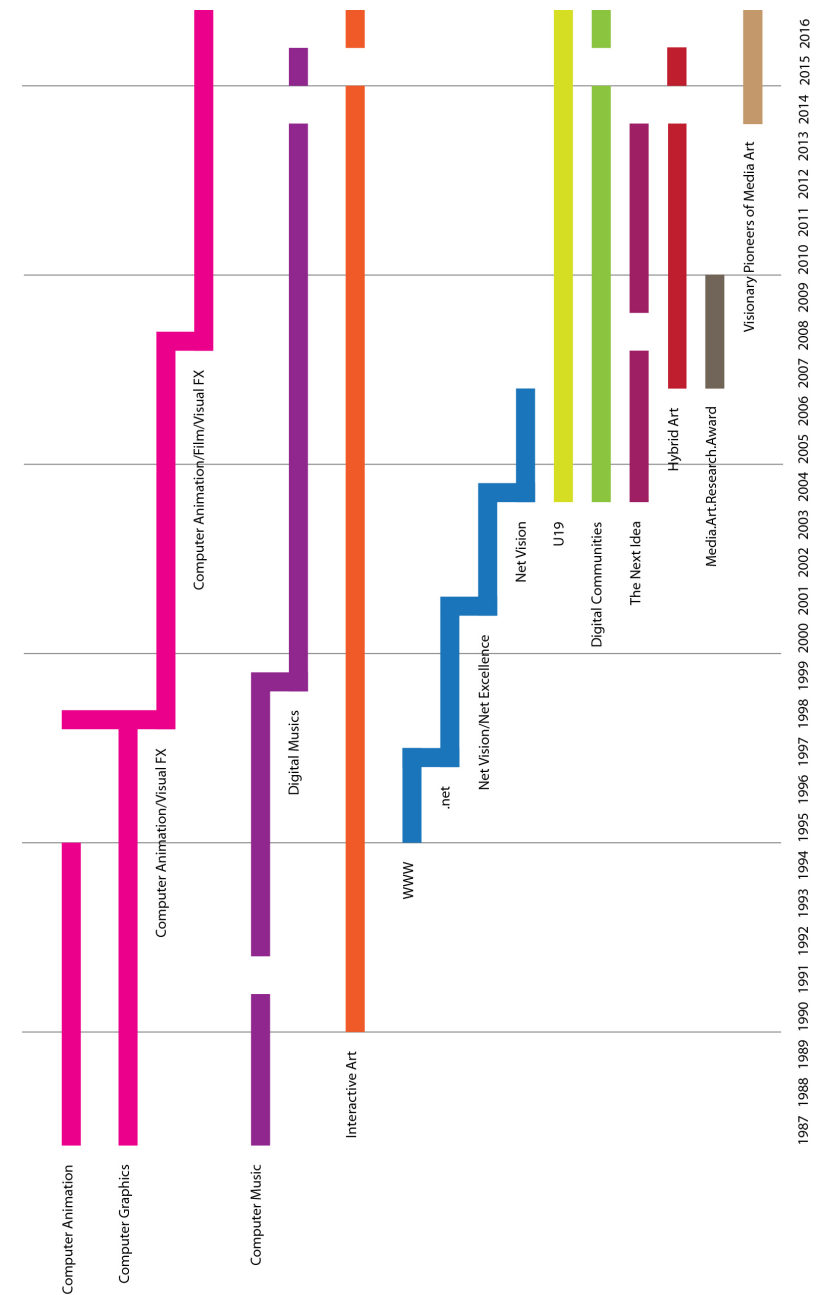


Fig. 2. Prix Ars Electronica Categories, 1987-2015. A prediction of the awards in 2016 has been included in order to show that some categories now alternate every two years. Graph elaborated by the author Source: Ars Electronica Festival Archive.

even the type of artwork that best defines new media art and distinguishes it from other forms of contemporary art. Just as painting has become the dominant form of modern and contemporary art—and as such is constantly scrutinized, questioned, proclaimed dead, and celebrated as more alive than ever—interactive art plays the same role in the new media art world. It has subsequently been the focus of numerous studies and some controversies. One of these controversies took place at the Ars Electronica festival, in 2004, when the Golden Nica in Interactive Art was awarded to *Listening Post* by Mark Hansen and Ben Rubin, an installation consisting of 231 electronic displays that constantly shows messages culled from chat rooms starting with certain words such as “I am,” “I like,” or “I love.” The artwork does not directly interact with the viewer, a condition that was generally assumed indispensable of any interactive piece, to the point that the members of the jury felt it necessary to justify their decision. In their statement, they refer to an “expanded definition of interactivity” that “does not require the active audience participation that was so crucial in the earlier stages of the development of the genre” (deLahunta et al., 2004, p.110). Scholar Erkki Huhtamo (2004) openly criticized that the jury had stretched the definition of interactive art in this manner and called for a re-definition of the categories in the Prix Ars Electronica:

“It looks like it is time again to re-define categories. [...] As already stated, it might be suggested that “interactive art” as a category would be reserved for works where the issue of user interaction plays a significant role. Perhaps a new category should be created for works like *Listening Post*.” (p.7)

The interactive art category sets a notorious example of the importance given to the taxonomy of awards as being, in fact, a taxonomy of the art itself. Another category reflects the changing relevance of a particular medium, the World Wide Web, as an environment that quickly shifts from being innovative to being commonplace. Artworks and projects developed on the web have been awarded in a category that has been renamed four times over a decade. Created in 1995 as simply WWW, this category was aimed at giving recognition to creative uses of the nascent web. Only two years later, it was renamed .net, following the trend introduced by net.art (later net art or Internet art). In 2001, the category was renamed Net Vision/Net Excellence to showcase projects that predicted innovative uses of the web or made the best out of its present resources. In 2004, Net Excellence disappears and the category is solely focused on Net Vision. The possibilities offered by a soon to be developed web 2.0, meanwhile, prompted the creation of a new category, Digital Communities, which is more directed towards the social aspects of the web and particularly towards the introduction of innovative social changes in underdeveloped countries by using digital technologies. Three years later, Net Vision is eliminated¹⁰ as Digital Communities is maintained as the category whose content is more directly related to web-based projects. In 2004, two other categories were introduced:

10. Tellingly, scholars Dieter Daniels and Gunther Reislinger (2009) consider that the discontinuance of the Net Vision category is “the final indication that Net-based art was not to become another genre in the contemporary art canon” (p.5).

U19, addressed to projects by teenagers (under 19 years old) using digital technologies, and The Next Idea, focused on projects in innovation on the industry. Remarkably these two categories have preceded and outlived the short-lived Media.Art.Research.Award, which was presented alongside the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute. Dedicated at awarding outstanding theoretical essays on art and new media, it lasted only three years. At the same time that this award was introduced in the Prix Ars Electronica, the last category to enter the awards has quickly become as relevant as the Interactive Art category. The Hybrid Art category, introduced in 2007, is initially based on a rather fluid definition that allows for any kind of artwork to be included. This may solve the controversy that raised over the Interactive Art category, but noticeably the Hybrid Art category has given a particular space for artistic projects related to biology and living matter.

Another clarifying example of the crucial role of award categories in the new media art scene is to be found in the short but dynamic history of the awards at the Transmediale festival in Berlin. In 2000, the Transmediale Award was introduced with an open call that received 900 submissions in the categories of video film, net.art, CD-ROM, and installation. The jury issued a statement that clearly states the difficulty in establishing categories and strives for a definition of the kind of artistic practices that will be awarded:

“Over the last three days we, the jury, have deliberated how we should categorize and evaluate such a disparate range of submissions from film, video, installation to CD ROM and websites. [...] Medienkunst” as we defined it, necessarily comments on the medium (idiosyncratic elements) and extends our experience through intelligent appropriation of it.”¹¹

The Transmediale Award is created 13 years after the first Prix Ars Electronica and therefore the organizers of the German festival are in a position of being critical about the need to establish categories, since they have been able to examine the development of the Austrian awards. It is also telling that the need to establish a definition of the term “Medienkunst” coincides with similar efforts by scholars, curators and other agents of the art world at the same time. The following year, the Transmediale Awards included a category dedicated to Software Art, which had never received this distinction in other festivals. This was underscored by the jury in their statement of that year.

“To our knowledge, this is the first award given and solely dedicated to software art [...]. The mere fact that the Transmediale artistic software award is the first of its kind proves that algorithms have a longer history of being overlooked in the perception and criticism of digital art.”¹²

11. Press release from the Transmediale 2000 edition. Retrieved from http://pastwebsites.transmediale.de/00/e_frame.html

12. Jury statement of the Transmediale Awards in the Software category, 2001. Retrieved from <http://pastwebsites.transmediale.de/01/en/software.htm>

As in the case of the Interactive Art category in Ars Electronica back in 1990, the creation of a specific category is described as a proof of recognition of Software Art as a “valid” form of new media art. Beyond the context of Transmediale, this recognition spurred some attention towards Software Art and the role of software in all creative uses of digital technology, which can be found in the work of scholars, symposia, the Readme festival¹³ and an online database and community devoted to software art, Runme.org.¹⁴ For the following three years, Software was maintained as one of the three categories of the Transmediale Award, with Interaction and Image. However, in 2005, the organizers decided to eliminate all categories in the Transmediale Award. The statement of that year undoubtedly reflects the controversy over the Golden Nica in the Interactive Art category in Ars Electronica the previous year, while it also reflects a growing interest towards contemporary art that hints at a certain dissatisfaction with a technology-oriented approach to art:

“The collapse of categories opted for by this year’s transmediale had effectively removed for the jury the border anxieties that many of us face when deliberating on some works that sit in between categories or prove to be better examples of some categories than others. [...] In general, the jury would be interested to see more photographic work or work in other ‘traditional’ media submitted to the transmediale awards. Artworks addressing issues surrounding art and technology obviously do not need to heavily rely on the technology itself.”¹⁵

This statement indicates a double shift in the direction of the festival. On the one hand, by removing all categories it dismisses the task of setting up and enforcing a particular taxonomy. On the other, it begins to move away from a conception of new media art as being separated from other forms of contemporary art and from the distinction established by curator Christiane Paul a few years earlier between art that uses technology as a tool and art that uses technology as a medium (Paul, 2003, p.8). The Transmediale Award continued in this relatively unspecific format during six more years, until 2011, when the award was discontinued for unexplained reasons that are probably related to budget difficulties. Spanning a decade, the Transmediale Award provides an illustrative case of the unstable nature of award categories and the implications derived from creating or eliminating a particular category. As in the case of Ars Electronica, an award for theoretical work was created, the Villém Flusser theory award, which lasted three years, and was transformed into a residency program.

Many other new media art festivals have resorted to giving awards as a way of achieving two main objectives. First, facilitating the selection of newly developed artistic projects, since the projects are submitted by the artists themselves, and in many cases can be presented at

13. The Readme festival took place four times in different cities between 2002 and 2005. It is closely related with the software art repository Runme.org. See <http://readme.runme.org/>

14. Runme.org – say it with software art! Retrieved from <http://runme.org/>

15. Jury statement of the Transmediale Awards 2005. Retrieved from <http://pastwebsites.transmediale.de/05/page/award/award.0;jurystatement.2.html>

the festival for the first time. Second, attracting the attention of the media and the public by announcing the presentation of a “best of” selection of new, innovative artworks, some of which have never been seen before and being able to offer an attractive sum that also becomes an incentive for production. Through the award, the festival becomes a site for the presentation of new artworks and also a patron of these innovative artistic practices, thus reinforcing its position as a key player in the new media art scene.

Finally, a particular case must be considered: the VIDA Art and Artificial Life International Awards¹⁶, which took place in Spain between 1999 and 2014. Co-created by artists Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, Nell Tenhaaf and Susie Ramsay in 1999 with the support of the Telefónica Foundation in Spain, VIDA was an award without a festival. According to Lozano-Hemmer, the original purpose was to find a way to fund the production of artworks by allocating the larger part of the budget to the awards themselves (Waelder, 2014, March 10). By relinquishing a full-fledged event with exhibitions, concerts, symposia and so on, all the costs that would be derived from these activities were derived to offering larger amounts of money in each edition of the awards. Significantly the VIDA Awards had no categories in the sense of other festivals, the award itself being a category, since it focuses on a particular (yet broad) subject. “Artificial life” becomes an umbrella term that encompasses all sorts of artistic practices related to living matter (be it humans, animals, plants or bacteria), simulations of living beings (from cellular automata to robotics) and behaviors that are usually identified in living beings (such as self-sustainability, intelligence or independent motion). Lozano-Hemmer indicates that it was more interesting to focus on this subject than new media art. The artworks distinguished with this award therefore belong to a certain field in the new media art scene that can be identified by a set of common themes. The existence of this field can be traced in the fact that many publications, exhibitions, and symposia focused on subjects related to artificial life include the active participation of artists who have received a VIDA award.

As these examples show, new media art festivals have had a defining role in the configuration of the artistic practices in the field, not only by providing venues for its presentation and discussion but also defining a discourse and a taxonomy that is presented as a statement in the categories of their awards. In the next section, the role of festivals will also be analyzed in the context of the process of artification.

16. VIDA. Concurso Internacional Arte y Vida Artificial. Retrieved from <http://vida.fundaciontelefonica.com/>

1.2 THE ARTIFICATION OF NEW MEDIA ART

While the complex taxonomy of new media art shows how this set of artistic practices has been defined as how its relationship with contemporary art is perceived (see 1.3), it is useful to observe the processes that take place in the formation of new media art as an art world. A sociological perspective is deemed necessary for this purpose, since it detaches itself from the discourses and focuses on the actions taken by individuals, groups, and organizations. In this section, I will discuss the artification of new media art and how this process can help us understand the way in which these practices gain recognition within the contemporary art world.

1.2.1 WHAT (AND WHEN) IS ARTIFICATION?

The term *artification* has been used by several authors to refer to the production of art, or the transformation of something that is not art into art, as well as into something that adopts some features of art.¹⁷ I will refer to this term as it has been developed by Roberta Shapiro and Natalie Heinrich since 2004 in the context of sociology. Shapiro proposes the following definition:

“L’artification, c’est la résultante de l’ensemble des opérations, pratiques et symboliques, organisationnelles et discursives, par lesquelles les acteurs s’accordent pour considérer un objet ou une activité comme de l’art. C’est un processus qui institutionnalise l’objet comme oeuvre, la pratique comme art, les pratiquants comme artistes, les observateurs comme public, bref, qui tend à faire advenir un monde de l’art.” (Heinrich & Shapiro, 2012, p.21)¹⁸

We find here echoes of George Dickie’s Institutional Theory of Art, in the sense that a certain collective agrees to consider something as art, although the authors state that their objective is not to define what art is, but under which circumstances it comes about (Shapiro & Heinrich, 2012). According to Shapiro, artification is always met with resistance, as it implies a durable displacement of the demarcation between art and non-art, which can be achieved on different levels. Depending on its success and duration, the sociologists identify four types of artification: durable, partial, ongoing, and unattainable (Shapiro & Heinrich, 2012). These types indicate that the process of artification may be

17. Psychologist Ellen Dissanayake has used this term since 1992 to refer to the ability of producing art within the context of an evolutionary theory of behavior (Heinrich and Shapiro, 2012, p.18). Finnish scholars Yrjänä Levanto, Susann Vihma and Ossi Naukkarinen have used the term since 2005 to refer to “processes where art becomes mixed with something else that adopts some features of art [...] but does not turn into art in the traditional sense of the word.” (Naukkarinen, 2012).

18. English translation: “artification is the result of all operations, practical and symbolic, organizational and discursive, by which actors agree to consider an object or activity as art. This is a process that institutionalizes the object as an artwork, the practice as art, the practitioners as artists, the observers as public, in short, that brings about a world of art.”

conceived as a tendency that does not always attain its full realization. It refers to a set of actions carried out by a group of individuals on the fringes of the art world, and therefore must not be confused with legitimation, which concerns the degrees of value *inside* the art world (Heinich & Shapiro, 2012, p.23). Even so, both concepts are causally related, since the artification of a certain practice necessarily implies its legitimation within the art world in which it is valued (p.273).

Artification is carried out by the same actors that can be found in the art world. The authors refer to Alan Bowness’s four circles of recognition (see 2.1) in the grouping and order of these actors: first and foremost, there are the producers themselves (who aim to be considered artists), followed by dealers, gallerists, curators and publishers. Once the field of practice is established, critics and theorists, as well as governments and institutions, participate in the process, which concludes with the recognition of the practice by the general public. Heinrich and Shapiro identify a number of indicators –also referred to as “operators” (*opérateurs*)– that point to an ongoing artification. While this is not explicitly affirmed, it can be inferred that the presence of a larger number of these indicators entails a more accomplished artification. Still, as previously stated, this process tends to be unstable and may be only partially achieved or simply become unattainable. The main indicators can be summarized as follows:

- **Terminological:** the words used to describe an object or activity are indicators of its identification as art, while the establishment of a lexicon marks the formalization of a certain practice.
- **Legal:** governmental laws as well as legal documents affect the status of professionals, activities, institutions, and objects as pertaining or not to the art world.
- **Cognitive:** modes of classification and categorization.
- **Time-related:** the duration of an activity, as well as the durability of an object and its conservation.
- **Spatial:** the spaces in which activities are carried out and objects are displayed are indicators in terms of visibility and context.
- **Institutional:** administrations, museums, academies, schools, festivals, awards, and the like contribute to the process of artification and indicate its level of accomplishment.
- **Market-related:** the introduction of certain objects in the art market, as well as the appearance of a specialized sector within this market.
- **Semiotic:** the existence of a signature is one of the most reliable indicators of a successful artification.
- **Media-related:** image reproductions that facilitate the distribution and commercialization of practices and objects, as well as channels of distribution (such as websites, online platforms).
- **Organizational:** the individualization of labor indicates a higher degree of recognition of a certain role, particularly when the artistic conception is separated from administrative tasks.

- Discursive: manifestos, histories of the discipline, symposia, biographies, essays and other forms of critique and commentary lead to an intellectualization of the practice. (Heinich & Shapiro, 2012, p.281-288)

The authors condense these indicators into ten constituent processes: displacement, renaming, recategorization, institutional and organizational change, patronage, legal consolidation, redefinition of time, individualization of labor, dissemination, and intellectualization. Although Heinich and Shapiro do not provide a full description of each process, using the indicators outlined above we can discern how they apply to the artification of a given practice.

Furthermore, several factors intervene in the development of this process, either obstructing or facilitating it. Table 1 lists the factors pointed out by the authors:

Obstacle	Facilitator
Utilitarian activity	Luxury activity
Mainly manual labor	Low amount of manual labor
Highly technical	Technical requirements are low
Mass production	Scarcity [not explicitly mentioned in the text, but implied –see below]
Labor division (production is divided in such a way that it is not possible to isolate an artistic moment)	Promotes individuality
Technical difficulties favor prowess over aesthetics	Not subject to technical prowess
Weight of tradition	Open to innovation
Producers belong to a low social status or activity is addressed to a young audience	Activity is addressed to an adult audience on a middle to high social status
Dependency on a client's patronage	Autonomy over clients
Amateurism	Relatively professionalized
Immovability	Transportable
Ephemerality	Relatively permanent
	Visibility
	Relative marginality, avant-gardism
	Administered economy

Table 1: obstacles and facilitators in the process of artification, according to Natalie Heinich and Roberta Shapiro (2012, p.293).

Again, the authors only briefly enumerate a series of factors that require longer explanations. They will be discussed below using one of the case studies included in their book. Lastly, the effects of artification are considered by the authors, who outline the following seven main outcomes:

- Legitimation: the activity is consecrated as art and therefore ranks higher in the hierarchy of creative practices.
- Autonomy: after being associated with other, more valued, practices, the activity affirms its specificity and vindicates its independence.
- Expansion of the boundaries of art
- Aesthetics: the activity develops an attention to aesthetics, a certain search for beauty.
- Individualization: the product of the activity has an author, her signature being an important indicator of artification.
- Authentication: the activity and its products follow a requirement of authenticity.
- Scarcity: individuality and authenticity imply a certain limitation of production, both in terms of the number of copies of a single product and the repetition of the same theme, element, or idea. (Heinich & Shapiro, 2012, p.294-296)

1.2.2 FROM GRAFFITI TO STREET ART

Before attempting to identify a process of artification in new media art, it is useful to illustrate the concepts presented by Heinich and Shapiro in the case study of graffiti in France carried out by Marisa Liebaut (2012, p.151-169). Remarkably, graffiti not only accesses the status of an artistic practice, but in doing so also acquires the consideration of a legal one. Its nature as an unauthorized activity, taking place in the public space, carried out by amateurs who in most cases never reveal their real identity, make graffiti an unlikely contender for the status of artistic practice. On the other hand, the long history of mural painting and the success in the 1980s of graffiti artists such as Keith Haring or Jean-Michel Basquiat –whose work went from the streets to galleries and museums– have facilitated a process of artification which arguably hasn't been fully attained yet.

Following the increasing popularization of graffiti art in New York during the 1970s and early 1980s, the first article dedicated to this practice in France is published by the newspaper *Libération* in 1981 under the title: "American Graffiti: Tag." These two terms, probably due to the influence of this article, were used indistinctly by the French media, although they refer to different practices. Around 2000, all forms of graffiti, tagging and interventions in the urban space are put together under the umbrella term "Street Art" or "Urban Art" (*art urbain*). Liebaut stresses that there is a progression from more specific terms ("graffiti," "tag") to more vague ones that designate general categories ("Street Art") and allow to move away from the negative connotations of an activity that has always placed itself on the fringes of legality. The emergence of a network of galleries, publishers and certain amateurs who take photos of the interventions and maintain blogs on which these are documented contribute to the artification of Street Art. Galleries introduce this art into the market, attracting collectors who will later on provide the works that are exhibited in museum shows. In order to enter the art market, the artworks have gone

through a significant transformation, changing the surface of a wall for a canvas or a wooden panel in order to be exhibited and sold in art galleries and auctions. Furthermore, galleries contribute to artification by distributing texts (on their websites or in press releases) that emphasize the specific qualities of Street Art as an artistic practice while connecting it with the wider contemporary art scene. Similarly, publishers edit coffee table art books that stress the importance of graffiti as an art form and deliberately use terms related to art, such as “artist,” “urban artist,” “street artists,” “frescoes,” “calligraphy,” “aesthetics of the street,” “creation,” “quality,” “innovation,” “post-graffiti art” or “artist’s book” (translated from Liebaut, 2012, p.166). Despite the use of these terms, books about Street Art favor the documentation of the work over any theoretical or historical discourse: images are far more important than text, the book itself being “a noble object that perennates and elevates their work: it consecrates it” (Liebaut 2012, p.168). Since the mid-1990s, the Internet has introduced a new distribution channel that has profoundly altered the evolution and the making of street art. In his book *Viral Art*, RJ Rushmore argues that, nowadays, the documentation of the artwork has become more important than the artwork itself, and that artists conceive their work to be seen both on the street and online:

“Today, the expectation for street art and graffiti, particularly top-tier work, is often that it will be seen by few people in person and by many more people online. Documentation of outdoor art, and the distribution of that documentation, has become the norm. As they say, «pics or it didn’t happen.»” (Rushmore, 2013, p.71)

An illustrative example of this trend can be found in Banksy’s graffiti art in Gaza, which will obviously only be seen on site by the survivors of the bombings but will be seen by many others on Banksy’s website and on YouTube.¹⁹ Rushmore concludes that what graffiti artists have always intended to do is make viral art, that is, art that connects with an audience without an established form of mediation, and therefore the future of street art is to be found on the Internet rather than on walls or trains (Rushmore, 2013, p.344).

In conclusion, we can observe how the main processes of artification apply to the growing (albeit unstable) recognition of Street Art in the contemporary art world. Table 2 presents in a summarized form the outcomes of these processes, according to the analysis of Marisa Liebaut.

19. Banksy. See <http://banksy.co.uk>

Process	Outcome
Displacement	In many cases, artworks have been moved from the street to art galleries, museums, and collections.
Renaming	Vague terms such as “Street Art” or “Urban Art” have replaced “graffiti” and “tag,” thus avoiding the negative connotations of these practices, often associated with vandalism.
Recategorization	By moving onto the category of art form, Street Art intends to avoid being classified as an illegal activity associated with the lower social classes.
Institutional and organizational change	Art institutions and authorities (such as the Ministry of Culture) have supported exhibitions of Street Art in museums and public spaces (although in designated supports such as large canvases or wooden boards).
Patronage	Specialized art galleries and collectors have contributed to create a niche for Street Art in the contemporary art market.
Legal consolidation	While graffiti is still illegal, local authorities have on occasion permitted this practice as a temporary intervention, an intervention on a designated, removable support or a commissioned wall painting.
Redefinition of time	Strategies of preservation have been carried out in order to collect and sell graffiti artworks.
Individualization of labor	Many graffiti artists have ceased to be anonymous, revealing their real identity and claiming authorship of their works.
Dissemination	Photography and blogs have largely contributed to the visibility and popularization of a site-specific practice such as Street Art.
Intellectualization	Art galleries, blogs, and publishers have contributed to the development of a discourse around Street Art as an artistic practice.

Table 2: the ten constituent processes of artification applied to Street Art, according to the observations of Liebaut (2012, p.151-169).

Street art presents numerous similarities with new media art in terms of its recognition in the contemporary art world. Both state their independence from established forms of contemporary art, and both have developed their own communities. At the same time they seek the recognition of the contemporary art community, and in many cases participate in the art market, even if that implies adapting the original format of the artwork or creating artworks that are suitable for selling and collecting (see section

3.5). Street art and new media art also share a relative ephemerality that leads to giving particular attention to documentation and developing strategies to enhance the visibility of the artworks. The street and the Internet constitute public spaces that are occasionally the site of manifestations of mainstream contemporary art, but remain on the outskirts of the art circle. An artwork created for the street or the Internet must necessarily be sanctioned by an influential museum, gallery, curator, or institution in order to be recognized by the mainstream contemporary art world: this has created tensions and controversies among new media and graffiti artists and the contemporary art institutions, often leading to rebellious attitudes on the part of the artists.²⁰ Prestigious art museums have occasionally supported new media art and street art through commissions and exhibitions (for instance, the net art commissions of the Guggenheim Museum and TATE Modern in the early 2000s or the exhibition *Street Art* at TATE Modern in 2008), but have not showed a sustained interest in these artistic practices. Finally, both street art and new media art have developed their own lexicon, as well as aesthetic and conceptual values that are unfamiliar to a large part of the mainstream contemporary art community (as demonstrated by the controversies discussed in section 1.4). These brief remarks indicate that, besides the usual comparison between new media art and photography or video, it is interesting to explore how street art and new media art are similarly perceived from the perspective of mainstream contemporary art.

1.2.3 TEN PROCESSES OF ARTIFICATION IN NEW MEDIA ART

As we have seen in section 1.2, new media art is usually placed in a hybrid context that includes art, science, technology, and society. In this sense, it cannot be said to belong exclusively to the art world nor can it be identified with non-art, but, since it is strongly tied to non-artistic disciplines and has evolved in an art world of its own, we can speak of an ongoing process of artification. Following Heinich and Shapiro, we will analyze how new media art is going through the ten processes that constitute artification, the factors that hinder or facilitate this transformation and its current outcomes. First, each process will be discussed in the context of new media art, with several examples.

Displacement: the early pioneers of Computer Art created their first works in research labs, using machines intended for purposes other than artistic creativity. Most of them had a background in mathematics or engineering and were interested in the possibility of creating aesthetic compositions with the technology at hand. They created these works not with the traditional techniques of the visual arts, but writing programs that provided the computer with a set of instructions that generated a visual output. These compositions, created in a non-artistic environment with tools that had never been used in the arts before, were exhibited in art galleries. Three exhibitions taking place in 1965 gave birth to Computer Art: *Computergrafik*, a selection of algorithmic drawings by

20. For instance, net artist Vuk Cosic famously copied the website of documenta X, while Banksy has hung his own pieces in several museums, such as TATE Britain or the Louvre, without permission.

Georg Nees that were exhibited at the Institute of Technology from the University of Stuttgart (February 9-19); *Computer-Generated Pictures*, showing works by Michael Noll and Bela Julesz at the Howard Wise Gallery in New York (April 8-24); and *Computer Graphics*, a selection of works by Frieder Nake and Georg Nees hosted by the Wendelin Niedlich Gallery in Stuttgart (November 5-26). These exhibitions provided visibility to the experiments carried out by these mathematicians and engineers, who as artists had to defend their creations from the criticism and outright hostility of other artists (see 1.1.1). In the history of new media art over the last 50 years, many artworks have gone through a process of displacement from their original setting in a non-artistic environment into an art gallery or museum. For instance, in 2003 net art pioneers Eva and Franco Mattes (previously known as 0100101110101101.org) set up a fake Nike advertisement campaign in Vienna, intended to draw attention towards the colonization of cities by large companies. Titled *Nike Ground*,²¹ the project included a fake website that informed visitors of the upcoming erection of a monument in the shape of the Nike logo and the renaming of the Karlsplatz as Nikeplatz. Following the heated reactions of citizens, local officials and the Nike group, the campaign was unveiled as an artistic project. Since then, it has been shown in art exhibitions as a sculpture and a collage of the project, inspired by the preliminary drawings created by the artist Christo Javacheff for his own projects. Additionally, as the creative use of technology pervades every aspect of society, the very concept of a “displacement” from non-art into art spaces becomes blurred. An illustrative example can be found in the work of London-based studio *Field*,²² whose projects shift seamlessly between different contexts: advertisement campaigns for fashion brands, interactive installations for large companies, iPad apps and artworks for art gallery exhibitions.

Renaming and re-categorization: the multiple denominations of new media art have already been discussed in section 1.2. Remarkably, while the case study of graffiti and street art by Marisa Liebaut shows the adoption of increasingly vague terms denoting general categories, in new media art there has been a steady tendency to use all-encompassing terms (such as “electronic art,” “media art,” “digital art,” and even “post-Internet art”), alternating with more specific terms to designate a defined set of practices, usually based on the type of technology being used (“locative media,” “Augmented Reality art”), the discipline they stem from (“bio art”), or the behavior of the artworks (“interactive art”). The Ars Electronica festival has had a major influence in the development of this taxonomy. The categories of the Prix Ars Electronica (see 1.1.3) have been constantly evolving since the award was introduced in 1987, reflecting the changes in the creative uses of technology. But they have also imposed a set of defining words on all the artists who, year after year, applied to this international competition and had to decide to which category belonged their project. Some categories have introduced a certain re-categorization in the sense that a non-artistic practice received recognition in a context where artistic projects

21. Nike Ground. Eva and Franco Mattes. Retrieved from <http://0100101110101101.org/nike-ground/>

22. FIELD. See <http://www.field.io/>

were also being awarded. While this is not the same as affirming that a certain activity belongs to the field of the arts, it does bring them closer to a consideration akin to that of the artistic practices. For instance, the Net Vision category has awarded projects that introduced innovative uses of the web, while the Digital Communities category has focused on projects aimed at the social development of certain communities, particularly in developing countries. This re-categorization can also be found, for instance, in the creation of the Software Art award in the Transmediale festival (see 1.1.3). Also in the way that these practices are usually designated: a discipline, technology, or genre not belonging to the art world has the suffix “art” added to it in order to differentiate the artistic practice from the context where it has been created and insert it into the realm of the arts. Thus, to name only a few examples, “bio art” designates artistic projects using biotechnologies, “video game art” denotes the development of a video game with artistic purposes or the use of a video game environment to create an artwork, and “Tumblr art” aims at differentiating blogs created by artists as artworks on Tumblr from any other blog on this platform. While the process of renaming indicates the constant variations in the mode of artistic creation within new media art, re-contextualization implies that these practices are constantly bridging the gap between art and non-art.

Institutional and organizational change: the most salient example of this process can be found in the evolution of festivals since the 1980s, from marginal and ephemeral events into institutions with their own art centers. Ars Electronica boasts since 1996 its own “museum of the future” in Linz, the Ars Electronica Center, which was renewed and expanded in 2009. It also dominates the cultural agenda of the city, elected European Cultural Capital in 2009 thanks to the worldwide attention gathered over the years by the festival. Other festivals have established themselves as de facto cultural institutions, while museums such as the ZKM | Center for Art and Media in Karlsruhe have gained international recognition for their support of new media art. On the other hand, established art museums such as the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) and the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, Centre Pompidou and Jeu de Paume in Paris as well as TATE Modern and Barbican Gallery in London, among others, have exhibited and commissioned (albeit intermittently) digital art exhibitions and projects. Despite the growing recognition of new media art among art institutions, this process is far from being achieved. In a conference held in Murcia during the Media Art Futures festival in 2015, Oliver Grau, Director of the Image Science Department at the Danube University of Krems, lamented the lack of presence of new media artworks in most museums:

“Our museums and archives have almost completely excluded the possibility of reflecting on our era through art... and are unprepared for art produced in the realm of new media.” (Waelder, 2015, p.68)

Since museums and art institutions constitute the highest level of recognition in the art world (as proposed by Bowness, 1989), it can be expected that the process of institutional change may take a long time to be fully attained.

Patronage: since the emergence of the festivals in the 1980s, new media art has developed a relatively self-sustaining economy based on the budgets of these events, supported by local and regional governments as well as sponsors, and also on grants, commissions and other sources of income from governments, institutions and foundations. This is particularly the case of the Ars Electronica festival, which receives funds from the city of Linz, the government of Austria and a long list of sponsors that includes large companies such as VoestAlpine, Mercedes-Benz, and Hewlett-Packard. While the type of funding is very different among the festivals and institutions that have supported new media art over the last decades, it has allowed a number of artists to produce their works and sustain their careers without entering the art market. Usually, artists have charged fees for the exhibition of their artworks and received awards, grants and commissions that provide the necessary financial support (this will be further discussed in section 2.3). Since the beginning of the financial crisis in 2008, the budgets of festivals and cultural institutions have diminished, as well as the grants and commissions (some have simply disappeared), and the budgets of corporate sponsors. This had led to a different situation. Artists, particularly the younger generation, do not see in festivals or grants a sustainable form of income and are increasingly interested in entering the art market. According to the survey that I carried out among new media artists (see 2.2), the income obtained from selling artworks in the art market is still low, compared to institutional funding, exhibitions fees and personal resources. But the growing interest on new media art in the contemporary art market, that has led to an unprecedented emergence of specialized galleries as well as the inclusion of digital artworks in the program of contemporary art galleries, makes this an attractive option. If institutional funding has facilitated the development of new media art within a separate art world, the inclusion of this art in the contemporary art market certainly leads to its artification in the sense that it becomes part of the mainstream contemporary art world. The existence of a reduced number of galleries selling digital art, as well as some art fairs and auctions does not imply achieving a high degree of recognition within the contemporary art world, but it is a step in this direction.

Legal consolidation: Ars Electronica is currently a legal entity under the name Ars Electronica Linz GmbH and defines itself as “a cultural, educational and scientific [sic] institute of the City of Linz.”²³ As previously stated, this legal status indicates that Ars Electronica is not anymore an ephemeral cultural event, but a long-standing institution, which in turn denotes its recognition as a cultural entity by the local and regional governments. Other institutions devoted to new media art have a similar legal identity. For instance, FACT (Foundation for Art and Creative Technology), in Liverpool, is a registered charity supported by the Liverpool City Council and the Arts Council of England,²⁴ while the ZKM | Center for Art and Media Karlsruhe is a foundation registered under the regulatory authority of the Ministry for Science, Research and Art of Baden-Württemberg. As with Ars Electronica, the legal status of these art centers and

23. About Ars Electronica, Ars Electronica. Retrieved from <http://www.aec.at/about/en/partner/>

24. About. FACT (Foundation for Art and Creative Technology). Retrieved from <http://www.fact.co.uk/about.aspx>

foundations reflect the support of their respective governments, which in turn indicate that the production and exhibition of new media art is not considered amateurish or marginal, but rather a professional line of work, officially sanctioned as a cultural activity and supported with public money. Legal documents, such as certificates of authenticity regularly issued by artists who sell their artworks at art galleries, also contribute to the process of artification since they declare the artwork as such, as well as stating the identity of the artist. Particularly interesting, in this sense, is the automatic issuing of certificates by online platforms such as Sedition²⁵ or Daata Editions,²⁶ which provide the buyer with a “digital certificate” in the form of an image file (this practice is commented in section 3.8.3). Finally, another relevant example can be found in the *Art Website Sales Contract*,²⁷ a legal document developed by artist Rafaël Rozendaal for the purpose of selling his web-based artworks to collectors (see 3.5.1). The contract stipulates the rights and obligations of both artist and collector in terms of the preservation of the artwork, thus formally stating that the website and its code are to be considered a work of art.

Redefinition of time: although many of the first algorithmic plotter drawings for the 1960s are still in good condition, preservation has been a long-standing issue for new media art in the last decades. The accelerated obsolescence of software, computers, and all sorts of devices has condemned a large part of these artistic practices to an ephemeral existence, which in many cases can only be counteracted by means of documentation. The development of projects such as the Variable Media Initiative,²⁸ launched in 1999 by the Guggenheim Museum in New York with the support of the Daniel Langlois Foundation for Art, Science, and Technology, indicate that consolidated art institutions are interested in the preservation of new media art, as well as other process-based art forms such as performance. In addition to this, most artists are increasingly aware of the need to update their artworks and follow strategies of preservation and documentation. Selling artworks in the art market also leads in many cases to developing more stable formats or derivative pieces such as videos and prints. In general, it can be stated that artists intend to preserve their artworks beyond the usual scope of duration of a festival (7 to 10 days) or a temporary exhibition (up to three months). The joint effort of artists, galleries, collectors and institutions in finding ways for the preservation of these artworks denotes their perception as cultural artifacts whose artistic value make them worthy of a prolonged existence.

Individualization of labor: many artistic projects based on new media have been developed by a team of collaborators. This shared authorship (alongside the limited life span of the artworks or their interactivity) has been used as an argument against the consideration of these practices as art. Still, since the 1960s onwards most artists

25. Sedition. See <http://www.seditionart.com>

26. Daata Editions. See <https://daata-editions.com>

27. Art Website Sales Contract. See <http://www.artwebsitesalescontract.com>

28. The Variable Media Initiative. *Guggenheim*. Retrieved from <http://www.guggenheim.org/new-york/collections/conservation/conservation-projects/variable-media>

have signed their works, often as a duo (for instance, Christa Sommerer and Laurent Mignonneau, Erwin Driessens and Maria Verstappen) or as a collective, in which case the artists tend opt for this identity as part of a work addressed towards activism and social or political criticism (etoy.CORPORATION, Ubermorgen, RTMark, Mediengruppe Bitnik). Artists who initially worked anonymously have gradually adopted real names, particularly when reaching a certain level of recognition (for instance, net art pioneers 0100101110101101.org presently identify themselves as Eva and Franco Mattes). Since a large number of artworks, particularly large installations, often require the work of several engineers, programmers and assistants, some artists have founded studios that operate as small companies, with a fixed staff dedicated to technical and administrative tasks. The authorship of the artworks and projects created within these studios is usually credited to a single artist or to the studio, under the artist's name. For instance, Rafael Lozano-Hemmer works with his own company, Antimodular Research, in the production of his artworks and installations, collaborating with several software programmers, designers and engineers. While all those involved are rightly credited in each artwork's file on his website, it is Lozano-Hemmer, who is considered the author of all of his projects. This is a common division of labor in the contemporary art world (found in the studios of renowned artists such as Olafur Eliasson, Jeff Koons or Takashi Murakami) and therefore a powerful indicator of artification.

Dissemination: as an art form closely connected to digital technology, new media art has been widely disseminated on websites, blogs, mobile apps, social networks and online platforms as images, videos, texts and also as artworks that must be experimented on a computer, web browser or digital device. It can be stated that dissemination is a second nature to this type of art, which tends to favor massive distribution and sharing over scarcity and secrecy, as well as participation and community over passive observation and exclusivity. An international community has been quickly built since the 1990s on the Internet, facilitated by the technological literacy of its proponents. A myriad of mailing lists and online communities (among which Nettime, Rhizome, Furtherfield, or CRUMB) have contributed to give visibility to the work of artists, curators, institutions and galleries as well as to the formation of a shared lexicon and the development of an ongoing debate about the interconnections between art, science, technology and society. Among the younger generation of artists, dissemination has attained a predominant position, as their work is consciously addressed towards its presentation on websites, blogs and online platforms, usually in the form of an installation shot (see 1.4.2). They follow the commonly stated assertion that the largest part of the art we see and experience nowadays is actually a form of documentation (image, video or sound) displayed on a screen, and accordingly consider that their work can simultaneously be presented on a website as well as on a physical space. On May 28 2015, XPO gallery in Paris presented a solo show by Rollin Leonard,²⁹ which included works displayed inside the gallery as well as on the website of the online community Cloaque.org. The exhibition space and the online

29. New Portraiture. XPO Gallery. Retrieved from <http://www.xpogallery.com/exhibition/new-portraiture/>

community are thus placed on an equal level, dissemination of the exhibition being as important as the exhibition itself.

Intellectualization: since its beginnings, new media art has been related to the context of academia and research environments. This has led to a constant theoretical approach to the artistic practices that stem from the intersection between art, science and technology. Many art projects have been developed as part of a research in the context of a Master's degree or a PhD dissertation. Additionally, researchers from different fields of knowledge such as computer science, sociology, biology, media studies, philosophy, psychology, art history and many others, have studied new media artworks from the perspective of their specific discipline, contributing to a large amount of academic literature. A rich, albeit fragmentary, theoretical corpus has been built around these practices, complemented by the numerous texts published in specialized magazines, websites, blogs, artists' monographs, press releases and exhibition and festival catalogues. An outstanding community effort aimed at establishing a consensual history and theory of media art is the series of conferences Media Art Histories,³⁰ which take place every two years in different cities on the planet. This organization has issued an International Declaration demanding the establishment of a global organization that supports research and preservation of media art.

New media art has attained most of the constituent processes of artification, but since it has done so mainly within the context of its own art world, it still needs to gain recognition inside the mainstream contemporary art world. A review of the obstacles and facilitators identified by Heinich and Shapiro (2012) may shed light on this situation. Since the authors have grounded their observations of the acceptance of a certain practice within the parameters of the mainstream contemporary art world, in the case of new media art they address the issues that prevent or facilitate its recognition within this context and not just as art. The obstacles and facilitators are analyzed on Table 3 below.

Obstacle	Facilitator
Utilitarian activity: new media art is closely related to devices and environments related to work or entertainment.	
	Low amount of manual labor: new media art tends to be considered a form of conceptual art.
Highly technical: by its own nature, new media art usually depends on a complex technical apparatus.	
Mass production: new media artworks are often created as digital files, which can be endlessly copied and shared.	

30. Media Art History. See <http://www.mediaarthistory.org>

Labor division: the production of artworks usually requires a number of collaborators	Promotes individuality: a single artist (or artist duo) is usually credited as the author, despite the contributions of collaborators
Technical difficulties favor prowess over aesthetics: new media art has often been criticized for being "infatuated with technology" and lacking content.	
	Open to innovation: new media art is frequently associated with innovation, although it is technical and not aesthetic innovation that is emphasized.
Producers belong to a low social status or activity is addressed to a young audience: new media art has been identified by some with younger audiences and "low culture" products such as videogames.	Activity is addressed to an adult audience on a middle to high social status: new media art addresses an adult audience interested in the impact of digital technologies.
Dependency on a client's patronage: the fact that many new media artists work in advertising or installations for large companies alongside their artworks can be criticized in the art world, although this is also common among other artists.	
Amateurism: many new media art projects favor the participation of the audience or work with the products of amateur culture. This may not be understood inside some circles of the contemporary art world.	
	Transportable: new media artworks are usually transportable, although some may be deemed "too transportable" in the sense that they are online and therefore accessible to anyone.
Ephemerality: some artworks are ephemeral by nature and most entail a certain process that needs to be maintained. The issues surrounding preservation usually intimidate museums and collectors.	
	Visibility: given its multiple means of dissemination, new media art can be quite visible, although in specific contexts.
Relative marginality, avant-gardism: although Heinich and Shapiro consider this a facilitator, it remains unclear that new media art can benefit from its marginality and avant-gardism.	

<p>Administered economy: the economy of new media art is mostly based on institutional funding, while the mainstream contemporary art world is more often based on the art market. Paying artist's fees, which is common in new media art, is still rare in the contemporary art world.</p>	
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Table 3: obstacles and facilitators in the recognition of new media art in the mainstream contemporary art world.

At present, it seems that there are more obstacles than facilitators in the process of the contemporary art world recognizing new media art.. While this preliminary conclusion adheres to the main discourse that perceives a separation between the contemporary art and the new media art worlds (see section 1.3), it can be argued that most of these obstacles can be easily surmounted when an artist working with digital media attracts the attention of the contemporary art world, and subsequently the art market.

1.2.4 RISE OF THE YOUTUBE CAM-GIRL

An illustrative example can be found in the work of Petra Cortright:³¹ this young artist (born in 1986) has quickly become well known in the contemporary art world with a series of YouTube videos in which she plays with several video editing effects in front of the camera.³² In 2012, her work was featured in the prestigious contemporary art magazine *Artforum*³³ in an article by Bruce Sterling titled “Data Mine” (Sterling, 2012). In 2013, one of her videos, titled *RGB, D-LAY* (2011) was offered at the *Paddles ON!*³⁴ auction that took place at the online platform Paddle 8 and the auction house Phillips in New York. This auction received considerable attention from the media (see section 3.8.5), which contributed to generate interest on the work of young artists such as Rafaël Rozendaal, Addie Wagenknecht or Cortright herself. The same year, Cortright was selected to participate in the Frieze Art Fair in London and, in 2014, she collaborated with fashion designer Stella McCartney creating several videos in which she models McCartney's designs.³⁵ She has worked with the Steve Turner Contemporary art gallery (Los Angeles)³⁶ and is now represented by Foxy Production (New York).³⁷ Cortright's work has caught

31. Petra Cortright. See <http://www.petracortright.com/hello.html>

32. Petra Cortright's YouTube profile includes a catalog of these videos. YouTube. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/user/petracortright/videos>

33. Sterling's article was published in the much-discussed 50th Anniversary issue of *Artforum*, which generated a heated debate among new media art scholars due to an article by Claire Bishop (see section 1.3).

34. Paddles ON!. Paddle 8. Retrieved from <http://paddle8.com/auction/paddleson2013/>

35. Hyland, Véronique (2014, August 5). Stella McCartney Collaborated With the Internet's New Favorite Artist. *New York Magazine*. Retrieved <http://nymag.com/thecut/2014/08/internets-fave-new-artist-takes-on-fashion.html>

36. Petra Cortright. *Steve Turner Contemporary*. Retrieved from <http://steveturner.la/exhibition/petra-cortright-5#1>

37. Petra Cortright. *Foxy Production*. Retrieved from <http://www.foxyproduction.com/artists/3054>

the attention of the contemporary art scene with a consciously amateurish aesthetic that brings Internet pop culture into the world of art. Bruce Sterling describes the setting of her videos as a “twentysomething Millennial cam-girl universe” and stresses that her relationship with technology is different to that of other artists working with new media:

“Unlike most new-media artists, who are as fussy about their precious hardware as any touring synth band, Cortright will work on almost any gadget available. [...] It's truly new and unusual for Net art to carry such an intimate stamp, such a trackpad full of smudgy fingerprints. [...] This work offers the precise opposite of the steely minimalism that Steve Jobs hoped for from his user base. It reflects, however, the true native attitude of Millennials.” (Sterling, 2012)

In her work, Cortright takes advantage of this identification with Internet culture and the stereotype of the Millennial YouTube cam-girl, as well as her own physical attractiveness. She models in videos and photographs in a way that has had her described as “a Mariko Mori figure, although younger, blonder, suntanned, down-market, and with a subjectivity thoroughly fractured by social networking” (Sterling, 2012). Contrary to what would be expected according to the observations of Heinich and Shapiro, in this case amateurism is not an obstacle, nor is the fact that Cortright's videos can be found and distributed online. Her collaboration with a fashion designer does not put into question the value of her work, since this is an increasingly common practice among well-known artists in the contemporary art world. Finally, a remarkable feature of Cortright's work since 2013 is her move from net-based art towards digital prints (usually described as “digital paintings”). In these works, which are obviously better suited for the art market than her YouTube videos, the artist expresses her interest in a classical conception of painting. As *Artforum* critic Chinnie Ding points out:

“[T]he allure of Cortright's tactile, lyrical images, which revisit landscape, portraiture, and still life, may be their classicism more than technostalgia. While amenable to “post-Internet” speculations, their preoccupation with coming to life was painting's all along.” (Ding, 2015)

This new format in Cortright's work can be compared to the change of support medium in graffiti art described by Marisa Liebaut, which contributed to its artification by making artworks more stable, transportable, and suitable for selling and collecting. Arguably, digital prints are more effective than YouTube videos in facilitating the development of a presence of the artist's work in the market and its incorporation into art collections, as well as generating revenue from sales –her digital paintings are currently being sold on auction at Phillips for up to \$40,000 (see section 3.8.7). While this fact may be criticized by some in the new media art world, it certainly does not hinder the artist's recognition in the contemporary art world. Actually, Cortright's work can be said to have attained the full process of artification, given that it shows signs of the seven main outcomes outlined by Heinich and Shapiro (2012, p.294-296):

- **Legitimation:** Cortright's work is legitimated by influential agents in the contemporary art world, such as the Frieze Art Fair or Artforum magazine. It must be stated that she receives attention as a promising young artist, and therefore the process of recognition is still in its initial state.
- **Autonomy:** while initially identified as a "new-media artist" (Sterling, 2012) who had developed her work with digital media, she is increasingly identified as an artist, independently of the medium she uses. Her interest in painting can be interpreted as a way of gaining autonomy from net art and the YouTube cam-girl cliché.
- **Expansion of the boundaries of art:** arguably, her use of the YouTube platform and digital painting techniques has contributed to expanding the boundaries of art (without being a pioneer).
- **Aesthetics:** her digital paintings denote an increased attention to aesthetics and visual composition.
- **Individualization:** while always being the author of her work, her authorship could be diluted in YouTube, but becomes more prominent in her paintings.
- **Authentication:** the paintings can be interpreted as a search for authenticity, since they imply a type of work that contains more personal gestures and is based on an artistic discipline with a long tradition.
- **Scarcity:** Cortright's paintings allow for artificial scarcity, since they can be printed in limited editions.

As will be discussed in section 1.4.2, Petra Cortright's career is illustrative of a path being followed by the younger generation of new media artists. The fact that her work has attracted the attention of the contemporary art world and has been incorporated into the art market despite its technical and aesthetic characteristics, indicates that other factors besides those outlined by Heinich and Shapiro must be taken into consideration.

1.3 DIGITAL DIVIDES

The previous sections have provided different approaches to the way in which new media art has developed its own art world and attempted at finding the proper terms to define itself. In this section, an additional perspective will be developed by analyzing how new media art has been described as a separate art world and how the different views and beliefs of artists, curators and critics have led to controversies and misunderstandings that have further enlarged the perceived gap between new media art and mainstream contemporary art.

1.3.1 DIVERGENT DISCOURSES

The discourses that reinforce the concept of the new media art scene as a separate art world focus on the differences between the discourses on each side. Scholar Lev Manovich (1996) pointed out these differences in an article titled "The Death of Computer Art," which was labeled by the author himself as "provocative." Manovich lays out the key differences between what he calls "Duchamp-land" (the contemporary art world) and "Turing-land" (the new media art world) in a series of aspects that can be summarized as follows:

Duchamp-land	Turing-land
1) Oriented towards the "content."	1) Orientation towards new, state-of-the-art computer technology, rather than "content." Turing-land functions as a place in society where the people from the worlds of culture and art play with latest computer technologies.
2) "Complicated." evocation of a multitude of cultural codes requiring to read the object as well as a particular, "post-modern" ironic attitude.	2) "Simple" and usually lacking irony. See below.
3) Ironic, self-referential, and often literally destructive attitude towards its material, i.e., its technology, be it canvas, glass, motors, electronics, etc. Perhaps the best and most relevant example is the first exhibition of Paik where he screwed technology.	3) Most important, objects in Turing-land take technology which they use always seriously. In that, computer art functions exactly like computer industry.

Table 4: differences between "Duchamp-land" and "Turing-land" (Manovich, 1996).

This three-point comparison must be read in the context of the 1990s, at a time when the attention given to technological progress outweighed other considerations in many

artistic projects and festivals. Writer Steward Brant (1993) famously criticized the fact that artists working with new media had no tradition to overcome and were led to develop a fast-paced career that would soon end as they are left aside once technology continues to evolve and someone else introduces the next “cutting edge” contribution. Brant asks if technology has swallowed art, which is what Manovich seems to suggest in the first point of his comparison between Duchamp-land and Turing-land. In the same vein, the predominant attention to technology leads to points 2) and 3): there is no irony or criticism, just a celebration of the latest developments in technology under the shape of an artistic project. On the contrary, Duchamp-land is already adopting a postmodern perspective towards its traditions and materials. Given these irreconcilable positions, Manovich (1996) concludes that these art worlds will always be separated:

“What we should not expect from Turing-land is art which will be accepted in Duchamp-land. Duchamp-land wants art, not research into new aesthetic possibilities of new media. The convergence will not happen.”

Additionally, the author points out that in the mid 1990s artworks made using computers had begun to be presented in the context of mainstream contemporary art, but they were usually photographs or sculptures that used, in Christiane Paul’s (2003) terms, digital technology as a tool and not a medium (p.8). Therefore, while the use of digital media was increasingly commonplace in the different areas of society, it also entered the art world but not as an artistic movement or a content, simply as a way of creating an artwork that, in its final form, resembled other artworks created in “traditional” formats such as painting, photography, sculpture or drawing. Remarkably, Manovich states that the mainstream contemporary art world (“Duchamp-land”) is not interested in research: although every artwork is assumed to be part of the “artistic research” of an artist, “research” is understood in terms of aesthetics, not as the scientific or technological research that can be found in many new media art projects. This is particularly observable at the end of the 90s, when most artists working with new media had a background in engineering or computer science and carried out their projects as part of a range of interests in which the conceptual and aesthetic were just a part of a larger set of objectives. In the mainstream contemporary art world, art is the main subject and the artwork serves the only purpose of being exhibited, commented, sold, collected, and admired. An artwork cannot be an output of a research on interface design, or illustrate the possibilities of 3D modeling. “Duchamp-land wants art,” as Manovich points out, and it is the assumed definition of “art” in the mainstream art world that relegates most of new media artworks to a marginal status, be it as experiments, projects or even not as art, but as a somewhat aesthetic output of a scientific or technical development.

Manovich’s text provides an illustrative example of how a separation between mainstream contemporary art and new media art is perceived by most scholars, critics, curators and artists involved in the new media art world. With a markedly avant-gardist spirit, the demand for recognition in the mainstream contemporary art world is at times presented

as the common mission of the whole media art community. In the introduction to the book *MediaArtHistories*, a collection of essays that trace the historical roots of digital art, Oliver Grau (2007) presents the following call to arms:

“Over the last thirty years media art has evolved into a vital factor of the contemporary artistic scene. Digital art has become the art of our times, yet it has not «arrived» in the cultural institutions of our societies. [...] To change this is our goal!” (p.3)

While Grau rightly points to the fact that media art is still not well represented in institutional collections, it is interesting to see how this observation leads to an appeal to correct this situation. Similarly, in the preface of his book *The World of Digital Art*, gallerist Wolf Lieser (2010) underscores the relevance of new media art at a time when digital technologies are shaping society and culture, while stating the purpose of the publication:

“Paintings and photos still achieve premium prices in the art market, but are they really sources of inspiration for today and tomorrow? Compared to other forms of artistic expression, the computer is a rather new tool and a medium that has changed our culture and society like nothing else in the last few decades. [...] This book is a credo for a fresh new genre, which is still treated unfairly and with a lot of scepticism” (Lieser, 2010, p.8)

Lieser uses the word “credo” to refer to this collection of texts, which aim at convincing the reader of the importance of the “new genre” of digital art, a set of artistic practices that innovate the current landscape of art-making and incorporate the cultural framework that has been developed around the use of digital media. Furthermore, he judges that new media art is “still treated unfairly” and deserves to be recognized as a relevant contribution to contemporary art.

Bridging the gap between contemporary art and new media is also the main objective of art historian Edward A. Shanken’s (2009a) book *Art and Electronic Media*, a volume that is particularly relevant due to the context in which it was published. Shanken’s essay was published as a large format book in the Themes and Movements series by respected art publisher Phaidon. The series is presented as an examination of “twentieth-century and recent art” and includes established movements in art history such as Land and Environmental Art, Minimalism or Conceptual Art, alongside themes such as “The Artist’s Body,” “Art and Photography” or “Art and Feminism.”³⁸ The books aim at providing the reader with a scholarly essay and a selection of artworks and texts that constitute the essence of a certain theme or movement in the manner of a museum exhibition. That is, both determining which are the most relevant works and sanctioning the tendency as an established (official, we may say) movement in art history. In the context of this series, *Art and Electronic Media* is expected to settle the “canon” of new media art, establish its

38. Themes and Movements. Phaidon. Retrieved from <http://uk.phaidon.com/store/art/themes-and-movements/>

roots and describe its most prominent examples. It is a challenging task for Shanken, who states that his goal is to “enable the rich genealogy of art and technology in the twentieth century to be understood and *seen*, not just as a quirky and marginal activity, but as central to the history of art and visual culture since the early twentieth century” (2007, p.60).³⁹

The book, too, is presented as a “credo,” a tool aimed at achieving the deserved recognition of new media art in the context of the mainstream art world. Shanken (2009) chooses to describe seven broad “streams” that allow him to establish the links between artworks over a period of a century (p.16-51). For instance, in “Motion, Duration, Illumination” (p.55-77) he puts together artworks such as László Moholy-Nagy’s *Light-Space Modulator* (1923-30), Olafur Eliasson’s installation *The Weather Project* (2003-04), and Rafael Lozano-Hemmer’s interactive sculpture *Pulse Spiral* (2008). These artworks establish a genealogy between the avant-garde movements of the early twentieth century, a well-known project from a valued contemporary artist, and a piece by an artist who is appreciated both in the new media art and in contemporary art worlds. While Shanken’s essay constitutes a notable effort towards achieving the recognition of new media art in the contemporary art world, grounded on the prestige of the publisher and the context of the book itself, it does not seem to have achieved a significant change. A few years later, the author describes new media art and contemporary art as having “divergent discourses” and underscores the difficulties in finding a common ground for understanding:

“Rarely does the mainstream art world converge with the new media and art-sci art worlds. As a result, their discourses have become increasingly divergent. [...] these worlds do not see eye-to-eye, no matter how much they may share the rhetoric of interactivity, participation, and avant-gardism.” (Shanken, 2011a, p.1)

Shanken’s remarks are based on his experience of a talk at the Art Basel International Contemporary Art Fair (June, 2010) in which he invited art critic Nicolas Bourriaud and artist and theorist Peter Weibel.⁴⁰ Bourriaud, whose essay *Relational Aesthetics* (1998) has marked a profound influence on contemporary art in the late 1990s, and Weibel, a prominent and influential figure in new media art and director of the ZKM Museum in Karlsruhe, had never met before. As Shanken pointed out, this can be interpreted as a sign of the lack of connections and dialogue between these two art worlds. The encounter between Bourriaud and Weibel showed basic disagreements on the concept of media and misunderstandings about how it applied to New Media Art. Bourriaud criticized the attention given to the medium and referred to Rosalind Krauss’s (1999) “postmedium condition” (p.296) to indicate that art should not be conceived in terms of media, adding that the computer or the Internet do not constitute a medium but are to be understood as tools. He also stated that video art was seen as “new media” in the 1980s but is now simply

39. This statement is also reproduced in the introduction of the book. An extended description of *Art and Electronic Media* can be found in Waelder, 2010a.

40. Salon | Art and Technology | Contemporary Art and New Media: Towards a Hybrid Discourse. *YouTube*. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9p9VP1r2vc4>

part of contemporary art, suggesting that new media art will probably follow the same path. Weibel criticized that the effects of new media art are celebrated (for instance, the influence of photography in painting or sculpture at the beginning of the twentieth century) while the medium itself is devaluated. He called this “media injustice” and underscored that the indirect influence of new media in contemporary art was in fact the “triumph of new media.” Bourriaud and Weibel finally seemed to agree in considering the present time as “post-media,” although this term has different meanings for each of them.

Precisely the different meanings or references attached to certain terms have been also a source of disagreement. Edward Shanken and Christiane Paul have criticized Bourriaud for his use of metaphors related to digital technologies and their influence on contemporary art, while ignoring artworks created with these technologies. For instance, Bourriaud (1998) asserts that “the liveliest factor that is played out on the chessboard of art has to do with interactive, user-friendly and relational concepts.” (p.8) and mentions in passing “the emergence of new technologies, like the Internet and multimedia systems” (p.26) to underscore the increasing importance of new spaces for human relations. To new media art experts like Shanken and Paul, the mention of terms such as “interactive” and the reference to new technologies should lead to addressing the work of the artists who are actually experimenting with these technologies and creating interactive works. However, Bourriaud does not mention new media art and furthermore incurs in an apparent contradiction, according to Shanken (2011a), as he “generally opposes the use of digital technology as artistic media, while relying on it metaphorically and symbolically in his argument” (p.10). Christiane Paul (2011) sees in the contradictions in Bourriaud’s text a symptom of a common approach to new media in most art institutions, since they use digital technologies for their activities but prefer to address the digital culture in a “non-technological way.” She refers to this phenomenon as the “Relational Aesthetics Syndrome” (p.103), expanding her criticism on Bourriaud to the mainstream art world.

Following the encounter at Art Basel and the disagreements with Bourriaud, it is not surprising that Edward Shanken arrives at similar conclusions and a similar antagonistic separation as the one described by Lev Manovich fifteen years earlier. Instead of assigning “lands” (with a touch of irony), Shanken describes the “discourses” of the art worlds that he defines as “New Media Art (NMA)” and “Mainstream Contemporary Art (MCA).” His observations can be summarized as presented in Table 5.

By capitalizing the names of both artworlds, Shanken strengthens their perception as monolithic, opposed entities, just as Manovich’s division made it clear that two defined territories can have nothing in common but frontiers. Likewise, Paul’s categorization of the disregard of new media art as a “syndrome” suggests conceiving the lack of recognition of these artistic practices in art institutions as the result of a single cause (a certain “illness”) which seems to be unavoidable.⁴¹ Other authors have addressed the

41. Paul, however, briefly points out that the challenges that new media art presents to art institutions in terms of its aesthetics, “immateriality”, preservation, and reception by audiences are the causes of this situation (p.105).

perceived gap between new media art and mainstream contemporary art in related terms. For instance, curator Domenico Quaranta (2013) compared both worlds, underscoring their differences in the definitions of art and artist, how value is attributed, and their role in the art market (p.85-105). In his view, New Media Art has approached contemporary art over the last twenty years in the form of a ritual dance, “mixing seduction and scorn, offer and refusal, before finally giving in” (p.123). With this metaphor, Quaranta intends to indicate that New Media Art has alternatively approached and distanced itself from contemporary art, with the intention of finally being integrated into it. Again, this view characterizes the new media art world as a single entity that behaves according to opposing forces of attraction and repulsion towards another defined entity. The merging of the two, that Quaranta (somewhat mockingly) dubs “the Consummation” (p.170) is generally described as something that is about to happen but has not arrived yet. In sum, it can be stated that the analyses of the divide between the two art worlds reinforce this separation, as well as the assumed objective of reestablishing the role of new media art in art history.

Mainstream Contemporary Art discourse	New Media Art discourse
MCA literature typically lacks a deep understanding of the scientific and technological mechanisms of new media, their critical discourse and the interdisciplinary artistic practices.	NMA and its discourses often display an impoverished understanding of art history and recent aesthetic and theoretical developments in MCA.
Dismisses NMA based on its technological form or immateriality.	Often refuses to adopt the formal languages and material supports of MCA.
Primary arbiter of artistic quality and value through its control of the market.	Autonomous and isolated art world, has all the amenities found in MCA, except its legitimacy.
Representative theorist: Nicolas Bourriaud.	Representative theorist: Peter Weibel.

Table 5: differences between the discourses in Mainstream Contemporary Art and New Media Art (Shanken, 2011a, p.3-7)

1.3.2 CONTROVERSIES AND BLIND SPOTS

The positions taken by curators and theorists, the description of new media art and contemporary art as two separate territories, groups, or even armies (as Weibel’s proclamation of “victory” suggests) leads to conceiving the relations between both art worlds as a sort of “battle for recognition.” In this section, I will address several controversies that further illustrate the misunderstandings generated by different perceptions of art. The reactions of contenders in each “battlefield” provide an indication of the set of beliefs and conventions that are usually assumed in each professional field.

As outlined in section 1.2.1, the early artistic experiments with computers were already met with rejection, particularly among artists. This was not just an initial reaction: according to Wolf Lieser (2010), for many years artists considered it “almost degrading” to create artworks with computers (p.25). While there are many examples of the lack of acceptance of new media art, I have chosen several recent cases involving critics and scholars, in the context of publications and exhibitions.⁴²

In December 1998, the German contemporary magazine *Texte zur Kunst* dedicated its 32nd issue to the subject of “Media.” The publication included an article by art critic and director of the magazine Isabelle Graw, titled “Man sieht, was Man sieht. Anmerkungen zur Netzkunst” (“One sees what one sees. Notes on Net Art”). The text elaborated on the idea that net art could not be considered art because the context of the art world is lost in it:

“[With net art one deals] with a phenomenon, wherein first of all the traditional art context is avoided and secondly the difference between artwork and context is liquidated.” (Translated from Graw, 1998)

Art critic Tilman Baumgärtel (1999) replied to Graw’s position by stating that it is not net art that avoids the art world context, but rather the opposite. He accuses Graw of “simplistic criticism,” and states that she “fails to see” the contributions of net art in the context of contemporary art practice. According to Baumgärtel, “the traditional art scene out of habit excludes artists who experiment with new media,” in what he describes (quoting media theorist Geert Lovink) as a clash between “the conceptual art mafia and the media art mafia.” The choice of words indicates a confrontation between two antagonizing parties, based on different perceptions of the value of certain artworks.

This combination of apparent disdain from the contemporary art critic and heated reaction from the media art theorist escalated in the case of an article by art critic Claire Bishop in the respected art magazine *Artforum* in September 2012. The magazine celebrated its 50th anniversary with a special issue titled “Art’s new media” and dedicated to “the past fifty years of media, technology, and art, from the Plexiglas and Porta-Paks of the ’60s to the

42. Some of these cases have also been discussed in Waelder, 2013h.

networked art of the present” (Kuo, 2012, p.66). Titled “Digital Divide,” Bishop’s (2012) article attempted at exploring the influence of digital technology on contemporary art, but in doing so she consciously eliminated new media art, dismissing it as “a specialized field of its own.” Bishop added that new media art “rarely overlaps with the mainstream art world (commercial galleries, the Turner Prize, national pavilions at Venice)” (p.436) and therefore chose to ignore it on the grounds that it is not a part of mainstream contemporary art, which is the focus of her essay. The position taken by the art critic reminds of what Christiane Paul calls “Relational Art Syndrome” (coincidentally, Bishop is particularly versed on Bourriaud’s theories), in the sense that it manages to address the relationship between art and technology while ignoring the media art field. The article quickly generated a wave of heated reactions among the new media art community, due in part to being freely available on Artforum’s website and to the commentaries spread on the mailing list of CRUMB, a platform for discussion on curating new media art.⁴³ In a few days, the comments section of Artforum’s website was filled with long replies to Bishop’s article by many new media art curators, artists and scholars.⁴⁴ Remarkably, besides criticizing the author for ignoring new media art, most of them added links to their websites, described their professional careers or included a signature stating their professional position in this field. This indicates their need to underscore both the existence of the field and their status in it, as a demand of recognition that was placed on the website of the leading publication in mainstream contemporary art. The reaction amounted to an open letter by New York-based curator Lauren Cornell and writer Brian Droitcour (see 1.4), which was published in the letters section of the January 2013 issue of Artforum, alongside a counter-reply by Bishop. Cornell and Droitcour (2013) accused Bishop of limiting her view to mainstream contemporary art due to a “critical blind spot.” Bishop replied that her purpose was not to write about new media art and (with a certain sarcasm) stated that she was sorry to disappoint those who expected her to take the opportunity to “celebrate the unsung creative forces in digital arts.” Furthermore, she described new media art as a “self-marginalizing alternative,” that created a “structural blind spot.” Apparently, this dialogue did not approach positions, both parties criticizing each other’s set of values.

Two additional examples set the disagreements in the context of exhibitions in public institutions, in both cases in London. Between December 8, 2009 and April 11, 2010 the Victoria and Albert Museum hosted the exhibition DECODE: Digital Design Sensations,⁴⁵ a group show resulting from the collaboration between V&A and onedotzero, a “cultural leader curating and producing memorable and engaging events,

43. New Media Curating Archives. September 2012. *JISC Mail*. Retrieved from <https://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/cgi-bin/webadmin?A1=ind1209&L=new-media-curating>

44. Talkback. Digital Divide: Contemporary Art and New Media. *Artforum.com*. Retrieved from <http://artforum.com/talkback/id=70724>

45. The exhibition was featured in a microsite at the Victoria and Albert Museum’s website but has been removed. Information about the show can be found in <http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/p/past-exhibitions-and-displays-2009/> and <http://onedotzero.com/projects/vandadecode>

exhibitions and experiences.”⁴⁶ According to the organizers, DECODE showcased “the latest developments in digital and interactive design [...] by established international artists and designers such as Daniel Brown, Golan Levin, Daniel Rozin and Troika.”⁴⁷ The exhibition explored three themes: Code (pieces that use computer code to create new works), Interactivity (works that are directly influenced by the viewer) and Network (works that comment on and utilize the digital traces left behind by everyday communications). Remarkably, these themes coincide with Steve Dietz’s defining characteristics of new media art (computability, interactivity, and connectivity). The exhibition can therefore be interpreted as a showcase of new media art, but it must be noted that this term is not used in any of the texts related to the exhibition, but is replaced by the term “digital design.” Among the reviews of the show, an article written by prominent art historian and critic Edward Lucie-Smith (2013) starts by diminishing the value of the show on the grounds of a perceived connection to popular culture and massive entertainment:

“DECODE, subtitled ‘Digital Design Sensations’ [...] is a landmark show. [...] It’s populist, accessible, entertaining and right up to date. People who play the latest computer games and queue up to see James Cameron’s new blockbuster movie ‘Avatar’ will feel completely at home with it.” (p.31)

It seems that art that uses digital technologies or displays interactive features is meant for an audience seeking entertainment in video games and sci-fi movies. The connection that Lucie-Smith establishes between interactivity and video games and between technology and futuristic fantasies is quite telling of a world vision in which technology has not permeated all aspects of society. The art critic also finds questionable the fact that interactive installations displace the attention from the artwork to the viewer, indicating that “much of what is on view is an invitation to narcissism” (p.31). From the perspective of a traditional art exhibition, the attention cannot be placed anywhere else but in the artworks themselves. The viewer is usually relegated to a passive role and must not be the center of attention. Lucie-Smith also admits that the exhibited artworks raise a few doubts: on the one hand, there is the fact that some works are created not by an individual programmer but by a collective. Following traditional notions of art making, an artwork is the output of a single artist (or a small group of artist), who may work with other professionals but in the end claims the authorship on the artwork. To the art critic, it is therefore difficult to accept that an installation developed by a large number of programmers can be considered an artwork. Another doubt is raised by the fact that “limited life span” of computers. While art performances have a more limited life span, it is expected of new media artworks to have the same life span of other object based works such as painting or sculpture, or even video, which is actually surviving its technical obsolescence by being transferred to the newest format time after time. Finally, Lucie-Smith does not adhere to but still enunciates a common complaint that “an interactive

46. About. Onedotzero. Retrieved from <http://onedotzero.com/about>

47. *Decode. Digital Design Sensations*. Exhibition booklet published by the Victoria and Albert Museum, 2009.

art work can't really be art, but must, instead, be only some kind of toy or game" (p. 32). This last complaint summarizes a very common view that has separated new media art from contemporary art during decades: interactivity causes a greater problem than is usually admitted, since it breaks down the traditional relationship between the viewer and the artwork. By moving the attention to the viewer, it generates a narcissistic experience that can distract from the original content or purpose of the artwork. And while the contemporary art world is wary of interactive installations, these become the main art form with which new media art is identified. A last remark by Edward Lucie-Smith criticizes new media art as ephemeral but, at the same time, describes it as a somewhat promising art form:

"In fact, one of the best things about this exhibition is [...] that it will go out of date quite soon. Digital technology is advancing so rapidly that in ten years' time much of what is now at the V & A will look unbearably primitive. Yes, in the long term this is a virtue, not a fault. This is an art that has room to develop – which is not true of too many other aspects of today's avant-garde." (p.32)

Probably Lucie-Smith is even more disappointed with contemporary art than with new media art. In any case, his writing exemplifies some of the prejudices against these artistic practices. DECODE was a major exhibition of digital art, although it was consistently presented as "digital design" and focused on spectacularity, as well as the "sensations" experienced by visitors, which as Lucie-Smith indicated, invited narcissism. During the summer of 2014, another spectacular show took place in London, this time at the Barbican Centre. Curated by Conrad Bodman, *Digital Revolution*⁴⁸ put together an ambitious program of art, design, cinema, music, and videogames on the premise of exploring the ways in which creativity is manifested through digital media. The project was commissioned by Barbican International Enterprises as a blockbuster touring show, addressed to a wide audience that included "digital natives, gamers, movie fans, retro geeks, family groups, and art fans."⁴⁹ With more than 200 participating "artists and designers" (including such diverse figures as Charles Csuri, Nolan Bushnell, JODI, Steve Jobs, Björk, Christopher Nolan, Radiohead, Matt Pyke, or Andy Warhol) the exhibition aimed to present the wide spectrum of creative uses of technology from the 1960s to the present day, ranging from the works of computer art pioneers to the latest Hollywood blockbusters, such as *Inception* (Christopher Nolan, 2010), or *Gravity* (Alfonso Cuarón, 2013). In this case, the controversy is not to be found among contemporary art critics but within the new media art community. On the one hand, the all-encompassing and populist approach to digital art was not well received by specialized scholars and curators. On the other hand, the exhibition included a section dedicated to Google's Dev Art⁵⁰ project, which commissioned interactive artworks by Zach Liebermann, Varvara Guljajeva & Mar

48. Digital Revolution. *Barbican*. Retrieved from <http://www.barbican.org.uk/digital-revolution/home/>

49. Press section of the Digital Revolution microsite. *Barbican*. Retrieved from <http://www.barbican.org.uk/digital-revolution/press/>

50. Dev Art. Art Made with Code. Retrieved from <https://devart.withgoogle.com>

Canet, and Karsten Schmidt. These artworks were created with technologies developed by Google, as well as open source software and other resources. The code of the artworks was made public to engage other artists to develop their own artworks. On its website, the organizers described art made with code as "a new movement in art,"⁵¹ a statement that ignores the long tradition of algorithmic art since the 1950s and was criticized by a group of artists in an open letter to the founders of Google, Larry Page and Sergey Brin, under the title "Hack the Art World."⁵² The artists expressed their disagreement with Google for their historical omission as well as the conditions of a competition that allegedly forced artists to use Google technologies⁵³ and work on a project before receiving the funds for a commission. Additionally, they stated that Google should buy art at the digital art auction *Paddles ON!*, which was taking place at that time (see 3.8.5), instead of launching a project such as DevArt. This shows a different form of disconnection, not between contemporary art and digital art, but between a technology corporation and a group of artists who consider themselves hackers. It is telling that the artists would rather support a sale at Phillips, an established auction house, than participate in a competition sponsored by Google.

The complaints of the artists grouped in the Hack the Art World project indicate the multiple angles from which controversies and misunderstandings involving art and technology can generate. These are not reduced to the simple confrontation between new media art and contemporary art as two monolithic entities, but also within each community in relation to other players, such as Google in this case. The digital divides are therefore diverse, closer to the differences between agents in a social space (as described by Bourdieu, 1998, p.6) than to a single, tectonic rift.

1.3.3 A MATTER OF HABITUS

The differences between new media art and contemporary described by Manovich (1996), Shanken (2011a), and Quaranta (2013), among others, as well as the lack of recognition of media art denounced by Grau (2007), Baumgärtel (1999), Weibel (2006), and Paul (2011) in the examples described above, indicate the existence of a set of shared assumptions and values among professionals involved in art and new media. Obviously, the issues pointed out by these authors are real: on the one hand, the different discourses in each art world can be traced in publications, the evaluations made by critics, and the selections of curators, as the previous examples show. On the other hand, it is certainly true that media art is almost absent from the collections of museums and institutions and that its history is still being written. The point, therefore, is not to question whether their

51. About. Dev Art. Retrieved from <https://devart.withgoogle.com/en#/about>

52. Hack the Art World. Retrieved from <http://hacktheartworld.com/index.html>

53. According to artists Varvara Guljajeva and Mar Canet, this condition was not a priority for Google (Waelder, 2014e, p.69).

observations are true, but rather how they contribute to creating a “master narrative”⁵⁴ around new media art, and how this narrative is confronted with other points of view from professionals outside the new media art world.

One part of the narrative involves the perception of the new media art community as a separate art world. As previously discussed, new media art has developed its own network of professionals (artists, technologists, curators, critics, theorists, gallerists), institutions (universities, foundations, museums), production and exhibition spaces (research labs, festivals, art centers), and channels of discussion and dissemination (symposia, mailing lists, blogs, magazines). Most professionals have developed their careers within this network, reinforcing the identity of their activities with the network itself. Identifying one’s work with new media art was seen as an advantage, particularly in the early 2000s, when widespread attention to digital technologies seemed to bring these artistic practices into the mainstream. For some, specializing in new media implied a direct access to major art institutions (as will be discussed in section 2.1). Therefore, the existence of the new media art world is not only the consequence of an established network of agents but also a statement that reinforces the authority of those agents. Asserting that the new media art community constitutes a separate art world allows to look away from the structures of the contemporary art world, and to focus exclusively on those of the network in which these agents participate. This network is therefore constituted as a field of its own. In this way, for instance, the recognition provided by an award such as Ars Electronica’s Golden Nica has a much higher status, since it is located at the top of the hierarchy in the new media art world and not in the periphery of the contemporary art world. By creating a new field, the agents are consequently placed at more convenient positions. A visible way of asserting that the new media art community constitutes an art world is by capitalizing its name. As Shanken (2011a) suggests, New Media Art is different than Mainstream Contemporary Art.

Directly linked to the first part of the narrative, the second part addresses the lack of recognition of new media art as a whole in the contemporary art world and in art history. Many professionals within the new media art community have developed successful careers at an accelerated pace (as previously discussed, this was criticized by Brant, 1993). This has been particularly the case of artists whose work has toured the festival circuit, receiving the attention of critics, curators and scholars. Many of them have received awards and grants, allowing them to pursue their artistic research without even glancing at the art market. However, most of these professionals have realized that their work and recognition stays within the confines of this network. Their status in the new media art community was not recognized in the contemporary art world, given that they had followed different paths and participated in events that were not part of the contemporary art agenda. This situation has led to questioning and analyzing what generates this lack of recognition. The texts analyzed in the previous sections exemplify the attention given to

54. In a similar way to how Arthur C. Danto (1997 [1999]) refers to a master narrative of art history, this expression is used here to indicate a shared and commonly accepted description of the evolution and position of new media art in the contemporary art world.

this matter and the answers provided by researchers. However, at the same time that the lack of recognition has been observed, a feeling of injustice has pervaded the reflections on this matter. Therefore, the general assumption that new media art has been unfairly treated and marginalized has been added to the narrative. As an unjust situation, it calls to everyone involved in the community to take action in order to achieve the level of recognition that New Media Art deserves.

By describing this set of assumptions as a narrative, I do not intend to say that they constitute a fiction; rather that they are accepted without questioning. This observation leads to considering the main beliefs of the new media art field as a class of habitus. According to Pierre Bourdieu (1998):

“Habitus are generative principles of distinct and distinctive practices [...] But habitus are also classificatory schemes, principles of classification, principles of vision and division, different tastes. They make distinctions between what is good and what is bad, between what is right and what is wrong, between what is distinguished and what is vulgar, and so forth, but the distinctions are not identical.” (p.8)

As a set of principles of classification and division, habitus seems to apply to the shared assumptions within the new media art community that I have described. The distinction between right and wrong, for instance, would be found in the belief that it is unfair that new media art has not been more prominently featured in art historical discourse. Bourdieu further describes the habitus as “a mental structure which, having been inculcated into all minds socialized in a particular way, is both individual and collective” (p.66). As a mental structure, it determines the way in which values and situations are perceived, but it is at the same time invisible, it is not consciously manifested or overtly expressed, but rather implied and assumed. The socialization that leads to the collective structure takes place in the context of festivals, but also in online communities, symposia, mailing lists and other forums of discussions. The concept of a mental structure implies that beliefs are deeply rooted, to the point that they are not part of a structured, conscious discourse, but rather constitute ways of seeing or understanding certain situations. The expressions used by the confronted parties in the controversies outlined in section 1.3.2 provide telling examples: Baumgärtel states that Graw “fails to see” the value of net art; Shanken asserts that the new media art and contemporary art worlds “do not see eye-to-eye”; Bishop and Cornell accuse each other of “blind spots.”

Besides these particular situations, the habitus structures the way situations are understood and dealt with. For instance, artists, curators and scholars attending new media art festivals do not hesitate to interact with artworks and do not get upset if an artwork does not work, because it is assumed that some artistic projects are experimental in nature. However, they may feel infuriated if an article published in an art magazine shows ignorance or disdain for new media art and consider it their duty to write a reply in order to set the record straight. This can lead to situations in which the participants focus on the

aspects that reinforce their beliefs and fail to see the whole picture. When Claire Bishop's article in *Artforum* circulated on mailing lists, the main perception among those who commented about it and wrote a reply on the magazine's website was that the authoritative publication from the mainstream contemporary art world had once again failed to give proper recognition to new media art. However, most people focused on Bishop's text, ignoring that the same issue of the magazine included articles about the work of writer and curator Jack Burnham, media theorist Friedrich Kittler, and artists Cory Arcangel and Petra Cortright. In a more recent discussion around an article that misinterprets digital art, scholar Nicholas O'Brien commented that sometimes negative representations draw more attention and comment from the community than positive views.⁵⁵ These examples illustrate how preconceived assumptions can determine perceptions and actions in an almost unconscious manner.

Another useful concept for this discussion is that of the *Illusio*. Bourdieu (1998) describes it as "the fact of being caught up in and by the game, of believing the game is «worth the candle," or, more simply, that playing is worth the effort." (p. 76-77). He also asserts that every social field requires those who enter it to relate to the field in terms of the *illusio* (p.78), therefore to assume the beliefs that make the field work. Since the *illusio* is specific to each field, the things that seem obvious to those participating in the field appear as a simple illusion to those outside of it (p.79). This concept can be applied in examining the differences and controversies between new media art and contemporary art, since the participants in each field can assign different values to certain situations. For instance, when Claire Bishop stated that she did not "celebrate the unsung creative forces in digital arts," she was implying that the claim that digital art has to be dutifully mentioned in every discussion about digital culture makes no sense to her.

Disconnection and misunderstandings are not exclusive of the encounter between digital and contemporary art, but can also take place when professionals from the art world and the technology industry meet. In an article for *The New York Times*, Alice Gregory (2013) reports the difficulties found by contemporary art galleries in New York when they intend to convince IT industry investors to collect art. Dennis Crowley, the founder of the social network Foursquare, states: "I'd never call myself a collector. And if I did, my friends would make fun of me. They're all so business-minded. It would be like saying I was a wine connoisseur. I'd be mocked." Crowley's words indicate the different perceptions that participants from different fields have of a certain activity. In the field of technology, collecting art can be seen as snobbish, since it is viewed as intending to take part in "high culture." The *illusio* of the art world is certainly not shared by Crowley's colleagues, who have their own prejudices about the art world and find it hard to understand its unwritten rules.

While only briefly sketched here, the concepts introduced by Bourdieu facilitate a different approach to the issue of the "divergent discourses" and controversies that seem to lead to

55. [NEW-MEDIA-CURATING] article which mis-understands internet art, again?. Message sent to the CRUMB mailing list on June 20, 2014.

a dead end. They also serve to remind that, as Bourdieu states, discourse about an artwork is not simply a complement, but a stage in the production of the work, that contributes to determine its meaning and value (p.110). As will be discussed in the following sections, new conditions for the production and distribution of art as well as a more prominent role of digital culture will lead to new frameworks of perception and appreciation of art and new media.

1.4 ART AFTER THE INTERNET

1.4.1 FROM POST-MEDIA TO DIGITAL CULTURE

As the encounter between Nicolas Bourriaud and Peter Weibel showed (see 1.3.2), the perceived media-specificity of new media art has been one of the aspects that set it apart from the mainstream contemporary art discourse. However, as the use of computers and digital devices began to pervade every aspect of daily life, increasingly becoming commonplace, the initial attention given to the medium in the 1990s started to be questioned. Lev Manovich, who had been critic with the orientation of art towards computer technology in "Turing-Land" (1996), explored the obsolescence of the concept of medium already in 2001. Indicating that, since the 1960s, the traditional concept of medium (painting, sculpture, drawing) had been threatened by new art forms such as assemblage, happening, installation or performance, Manovich (2001) suggests that it does not make sense to think in terms of mediums in relation to "*post-digital, post-net culture*" (p.4). As artists create art with technologies that allow for mass reproduction and distribution (photography, film, video, digital media), the artwork approaches mass media and breaks with the traditional model of distribution in the art world, based on unique or limited editions of objects (p.2). Additionally, it becomes easier to create several versions of the same artwork for different mediums and audiences (p.3). These reflections, that will influence some artists related to Post-Internet art (see below), lead Manovich to propose a "Post-media aesthetics," in which the concept of medium is substituted by new concepts from computer and net culture (p.5). Although the latter suggestion leads to an arguably more confusing way of describing artworks in post-digital culture, Manovich introduces an early criticism of medium-specificity in a moment when digital art was still heavily invested in it. As has been discussed in section 1.1, a specific attention was given to define digital art and differentiate it from contemporary art created with digital tools (Paul, 2003, p.8), while festivals favored the continuous creation of new categories based on emerging technologies (see 1.1.3).

If Post-media means the obsolescence of the concept of medium for Manovich, Peter Weibel sees it as the culmination of a long struggle. According to Weibel (2006), media

arts have fought to achieve the same recognition as painting or sculpture since the avant-garde movements of the early twentieth century introduced new art forms (p.93). The first phase of this struggle centered on the equality of photography and film, followed by that of video and digital art, leading to what the author considers, tentatively, the “equality among all the media and genres” (p.95). Weibel considers, at this point, that the effects of the media on the traditional forms of art have been more successful than new media art itself (p.96), given that now every art form can be considered under the notion of media:

“All of the artistic disciplines have been transformed by the media. The impact of the media is universal. The media paradigm embraces all of the arts. [...] The impact of the media is universal and for that reason all art is already postmedia art.” (p.96-97)

Therefore Post-media, in Weibel’s terms, does not mean that the concept of medium no longer applies to art but that no single medium is dominant (they are all equivalent) and that they influence and determine each other (p.99). In a way, this is similar to Rosalind Krauss’s “postmedium condition,” although Weibel asserts that it is new media that has finally embraced all art forms. The computer has proved able to simulate all media, from painting and sculpture to photography and video, even introducing new ones. New media also emancipates the viewer, who now becomes a user and participates with her own content on the Internet, a space where, “for the first time in history,” stresses Weibel, “the lay public can offer their works to others with the aid of media art, without the guardians of the criteria” (p.100).

These words were written on the same year that TIME magazine chose the Internet user as “Person of the Year” (Grossman, 2006), in response to the growing popularity of YouTube and the recently launched social media platforms Twitter and Facebook. Since then, the interactions between users and social networks, the use of digital devices, and the importance of user-generated content have all increased exponentially. Photos, videos, texts and other contents made by users rival those of the entertainment industry (Howe, 2009, p.76), as consumers become producers and sharing is the norm. These new platforms not only allow for user participation, but also introduce a change of paradigm. As observed by media theorist Henry Jenkins (2006 [2008]), content is not specific of a medium anymore; it flows through different media channels, leading to a growing interdependence of communication systems and multiple modes of accessing media content (p.241). In this way, the concept of medium loses its importance, since all media have to be considered as part of a mesh and, in a similar way to how Weibel asserted it; no single medium is entirely dominant. Writer Clay Shirky (2008) indicates that the growing participation of users also leads to changing the way we understand media. Before the Internet, the only two forms of media were broadcast media (sending messages from one to many) and communications media (sending messages from one to one). Now, blogs, social networks, and online platforms allow for sharing content in a structure of many to many, in which everyone can be sender and receiver (p.86-87). Welcoming this new paradigm in the relation between the viewer and the media, Peter Weibel curated an

“exhibition in progress” between 2007 and 2009 at the ZKM in Karlsruhe titled *YOU_ser: The Century of the Consumer*.⁵⁶ Here Weibel takes the emancipation of the audience to the museum by putting together a series of interactive and participatory artworks and placing the visitor at the center of the exhibition as user. As he asserted in *The Post-Media Condition*, the lay public can now generate works of art and share them. The profound transformations in the media landscape, the rise of the amateur as user and producer and the concept of post-media are therefore closely interconnected. They all lead to another way of conceiving the impact of new media in society, as a form of culture.

Clay Shirky (2008) asserts that “communications tools don’t get socially interesting until they get technologically boring” (p.105). When a technology is so widely used that it becomes commonplace is when it produces changes. Sociologist Manuel Castells (2001) described Internet culture at a time when these transformations had not been effected. He saw it as a set of values and beliefs shared by those who had created the Internet: technologists, hackers, virtual communities, and entrepreneurs (p.57-58). This culture has been expanded with the introduction of a wide spectrum of users, which have contributed to approach Internet culture and popular culture. Beyond the context of the Internet, and as the Internet itself pervades every aspect of daily life, the ubiquity of technology leads to considering, as art historian Charlie Gere (2002) points out, the existence of a distinctive digital culture (p.12). Digital culture is the consequence of the influence of digital technologies in the current socio-cultural context and the fact that, as Pau Alsina (2010) observes, there has been a shift from the digitization of culture to the production of culture in digital environments. This implies that the concept of media ceases to be the central issue of the reflection around new media art and the impact of new media in society. The specific characteristics of each medium are less relevant as all media blend into each other and enter all aspects of post-industrial societies. By moving from the post-media condition into a relationship with digital culture, new media art will become emancipated from the media themselves and adopt forms that do not necessarily require digital technologies nor display the behaviors identified by Steve Dietz (see 1.1). “We are no longer «becoming digital.» We’re in the midst of the network paradigm,” asserts media theorist Geert Lovink (2012, p.27). As the attention to the digital itself gives way to exploring the culture that digital technologies have contributed to shape, new artistic practices cease to make differences between “traditional” media (painting, sculpture, drawing) and “new” media (video, software, digital photography). The ubiquitous Internet is, too, left aside as a medium in these artistic practices, while paradoxically its importance as a cultural environment grows to the point of providing a new definition of art. For some, their work is not new media anymore, but rather art after the Internet.

56. YOU_ser: the Century of the Consumer. ZKM. Retrieved from <http://zkm.de/en/event/2007/10/youser>

1.4.2 POST-INTERNET ART

The Ullens Center for Contemporary Art in Beijing hosted between March 1 and May 11, 2014 a group exhibition titled *Art Post-Internet*. Curated by Karen Archey and Robin Peckham, the show presented works by more than forty artists, most of them in the early stages of their careers. The large number of artists and the title of the exhibition indicate the curators' intention to map a trend in the work of the younger generation of artists that had been labeled a few years earlier as "Post-Internet." Hailed by some as a "revolutionary art movement" (Wallace, 2014) and criticized by others as "a term to market art" (Droitcour, 2014), Post-Internet art has attracted the attention of the media and the art market, prompting the need for a definition of the term and the identification of its members. Archey and Peckham aim to fulfill both needs by curating an exhibition that they describe as:

"a broad survey of art that is controversially defined as "post-internet," which is to say, consciously created in a milieu that assumes the centrality of the network, and that often takes everything from the physical bits to the social ramifications of the internet as fodder." (Archey & Peckham, 2014, p.8)

While being inspired by Internet culture, none of the forty-five artworks on display required an Internet connection: there were thirty-one object-based works and fourteen videos. Most of the artworks consisted in colorful assemblages of prints and found objects, either hung on the wall or displayed as sculptures or installations (fig.3). The exhibition was therefore very similar to other shows of contemporary art, both aesthetically and technically: the artworks had been made in the formats usually found in contemporary art spaces (photography, sculpture, installation, video). Only by sharing a set of references to Internet culture do these works seem to belong to a specific category within contemporary art practices. As the curators put it: "post-internet describes an art object created with a consciousness of the networks within which it exists, from conception and production to dissemination and reception" (Archey & Peckham, 2014, p.8). While this particular condition of the artwork in Post-Internet art will be further discussed below, it must be stressed that this "controversial" label has had a greater acceptance in the art market and among the younger generation of artists than any other form of digital art, partly due to its attention to the art object. The factors that have shaped Post-Internet art, as well as its (somewhat elusive) definition will be addressed in this section.

1.4.2.1 Towards a definition of Post-Internet art

On December 29, 2009, New York based art critic Gene McHugh wrote the first post on a blog titled "Post Internet," which he developed until September 2010 thanks to a grant of the Creative Capital | Andy Warhol Foundation Arts Writers Grant Program. In this blog, McHugh (2011) regularly posted notes and reviews on art and the Internet and suggested several definitions for the term "Post Internet art," as well as establishing a certain



Fig. 3. "Art Post-Internet", installation View. Photo: Ericg Powell. Courtesy of UCCA

genealogy that originates in a conversation with artist Marisa Olson "somewhere between 2007 and 2009" (p.5). In one of his first posts on this blog, McHugh already connects Post Internet to a willingness of integration into the mainstream contemporary art world:

"Post Internet art leaves the Internet world. It goes to the art world and mutates itself to correspond to the conventions of the art world. It is art world art about the Internet. A deeper goal, though, is that as the work mutates from the conventions of the Internet to the conventions of art, the work catalyzes the conventions of art to mutate to those of the Internet." (McHugh, 2011, p.9)

McHugh assumes that the "Internet world" and the art world are disconnected, and therefore Post Internet art "leaves" the former and "goes to" the latter. Going into the art world also implies "mutating" the artwork in order to comply with its conventions, which turns the art originated on the Internet but exhibited in an art gallery into a different form of expression, which does not belong to the "Internet world" anymore but rather refers to it. It is now "art world art," bound to the same conditions of any other artwork that is not related to the Internet, but can be differentiated from these other artworks in its use of the Internet as subject matter. McHugh does not want to limit the relationship between the Internet and the art world to a one-way process of assimilation and suggests the possibility of a transformation of the art world generated by the conventions of the

Internet, although this has not been observed to happen.⁵⁷ As previously indicated, McHugh sets the origin of the term “Post Internet” in the work of Marisa Olson, whom she quotes in a 2006 interview with Lauren Cornell published in *Time Out* magazine. In this interview, Olson states that her work is “less art ‘on’ the Internet than it is art ‘after’ the Internet.” (McHugh, 2011, p.11). Therefore, Post Internet art can be initially defined as art created under the influence of the Internet, inspired by or based upon content that the artist has seen or downloaded from the web, or more broadly, connected to a set of references and values that have been adopted by certain communities on the Internet. In a later post, McHugh summarizes five possible definitions of Post Internet art:

“Five ways that one can talk about ‘Post Internet’:

1. New Media art made after the launch of the World Wide Web and, thus, the introduction of mainstream culture to the Internet.
2. Marisa Olson’s definition: Art made after one’s use of the Internet. “The yield’ of her surfing and computer use, as she describes it.
3. Art responding to a general cultural condition that may also be described as ‘Post Internet’—when the Internet is less a novelty and more a banality.
4. What Guthrie Lonergan described as ‘Internet Aware’—or when the photo of the art object is more widely dispersed than the object itself.
5. Art from the Internet world that mutates to the conventions of the art world. As the work mutates itself to become more like art world art, the work mutates art world art to become more like the Internet.” (McHugh, 2011, p.16)

Adding to already discussed notions of the term, it is interesting to point out that, according to the author, Post Internet art is located in a certain time frame, “when the Internet is less a novelty and more a banality.” McHugh further elaborates this statement by indicating that the rise of social networking contributed to a larger and socially more diverse user base that shifted the Internet from a specialized world to a mainstream world (McHugh, 2001, p.5). This shift can be identified with the term “web 2.0,” which began to be popularized in 2004⁵⁸ but can be said to reach the mainstream in 2006, when *Time* magazine selected the mass of Internet users as the “Person of the Year” (as discussed in section 1.4.1). This time frame is particularly relevant since it relates Post Internet art to a specific generation of artists.

McHugh also introduces the term “Internet Aware,” which he attributes to artist Guthrie Lonergan. In an interview by Thomas Beard published in *Rhizome* in 2008, Lonergan describes his art practice as growing out of “intense Internet surfing, collecting and trading links on del.icio.us” (Beard, 2008) and mentions his interest in creating “offline

57. As will be discussed in chapter 3, while many art galleries, auction houses and other art businesses have widely adopted web-based platforms, they have not paid particular attention to web-based or digital art.

58. The O’Reilly Media Web 2.0 Conference introduced the term stating that the web was initiating a “second wave” that “enables a new generation of services and business opportunities”. Internet Archive Retrieved from <http://web.archive.org/web/20040602111547/http://web2con.com/>

art,” less focused on the Internet and technology, that would use “objects that aren’t objects.” Lonergan coins the term “Internet Aware Art” to describe this practice, but does not elaborate on it. Both Olson’s and Lonergan’s fortunate use of words when trying to describe their artistic practice based on browsing the Internet generate terms that seem self-explanatory and precise but are vague enough to encompass any form of artistic creation that is inspired by or thematically connected to any content on the Internet. Remarkably, in both cases the main keywords are “Internet” and “art.” But, since “Internet Art” has been used to designate artworks created for a web browser or generated by data gathered from the Internet in realtime, these “offline” practices need to add a distinctive word that indicates that the art relates to, but not pertains to, the Internet.

Not pertaining to the Internet on a technical level implies that the artwork:

- does not have to be freely accessible online,⁵⁹
- does not require an Internet connection,
- is not necessarily in digital format and thus
- does not require specific software or hardware in order to come into being.

All of these aspects facilitate the presentation of the artwork in the context of the art gallery and exemplify the “mutation” described by McHugh. The art critic’s blog reproduces a fragment of an interview from 2006 between renowned, artist Cory Arcangel and curator Karen Verschooren (McHugh, 2001, p.13) in which the adaptation of the artwork to the requirements of the art gallery is further illustrated. Reading the original text, we find out that the fragment is extracted from a conversation on the ways in which Internet Art has been presented in the gallery context. Cory Arcangel asserts that artists “have to somehow acknowledge that [the artwork] is in a gallery, for better or worse.” And he adds: “Internet art has a different series of concerns, but we’ll have to start dealing with the question: ‘what does the gallery do to that work?’” (Verschooren, 2006). Bringing that part of the conversation to a conclusion, the curator asks:

“Karen: So, if I understand you correctly, you are saying that it is the responsibility of the artist to transform his Internet art piece in that way that it fits into the gallery space. It is not the gallery that has to change its economic model of exhibiting because of their mission statement or whatever.

Cory: Yes.” (Verschooren, 2006)

Apparently, a seasoned artist such as Arcangel, who has had a positive reception in the contemporary art world and the art market, considers that the conventions of the gallery space are immutable and therefore Internet art pieces must adapt to them. The market-readiness implied in Arcangel’s resounding “yes” is one of the main aspects that has been

59. It can be argued that not all Internet Art pieces are freely accessible on the web (see, for instance, Mark Napier’s *The Waiting Room*, discussed in section 3.5.2), but there is an implicit norm that dictates that Internet Art should be freely accessible, as stated by Rafael Rozendaal in his *Art Website Contract* (Rozendaal, 2011).

identified in Post-Internet art, but there are other aesthetic or conceptual aspects which must be considered and which also refer to an adaptation to the gallery context.

1.4.2.2 The artwork on the Internet and in the gallery

Artist Seth Price has developed since 2002 his essay “Dispersion,” which can be said to inspire many of the ideas related to Post-Internet art, particularly in its relation with the gallery space. Price (2002) states that artworks can only be legible when they are presented in the framework of an institution and quotes artist Dan Graham, who in the 1960s made the following observation:

“It seemed that in order to be defined as having value, that is as ‘art’, a work had only to be exhibited in a gallery and then to be written about and reproduced as a photograph in an art magazine.” (p.5)

While Cory Arcangel’s statement that the artwork must adapt to the art gallery seems motivated by an interest in selling or at least taking part in the art market, Price points out that the artwork must be presented in the gallery and featured in an art magazine in order to be considered an artwork at all. Evading the institutional system is deemed “futile” by the author (p.6), who nevertheless advocates for a possible change by adopting the strategies of mass media in the distribution of the artwork:

“The problem is that situating the work at a singular point in space and time turns it, a priori, into a monument. What if it is instead dispersed and reproduced, its value approaching zero as its accessibility rises? [...] Perhaps an art distributed to the broadest possible public closes the circle, becoming a private art, as in the days of commissioned portraits. The analogy will only become more apt as digital distribution techniques allow for increasing customization to individual consumers.” (p.10)

An artwork that is massively reproduced and can be customized escapes the constraints of the art gallery and the museum, since it exists not as a single object, but as a multiplicity of versions of the same idea. Price illustrates this conception of the artwork with Marcel Duchamp’s readymade *Fountain* (1917), which becomes “a palimpsest of gestures, presentations, and positions” (Price, 2002, p.14), and applies this model to his own artistic practice, by creating artworks that take on a multiplicity of different formats, appropriating content from different sources. The Internet as a “mass archive” and a platform that “allows thousands of authors to simultaneously develop various parts of the work” inspires a work based on fragmentation and appropriation, since “anything on the internet is a fragment, provisional, pointing elsewhere. Nothing is finished.” (p.13). As will be discussed below, the idea of the artwork as a multiple, based on appropriation of content from any source and expanding into other areas of creativity, is addressed by other authors and reflected on the work of most Post-Internet artists.

While Price describes his own essay as “a disjointed series of naïve propositions lacking a thesis” (p.17), it has exerted influence on many artists and has been translated into Polish, Spanish, Basque, French and Italian, a fact that speaks for its popularity. Price’s ideas reverberate in Artie Vierkant’s (2010) essay “The Image Object Post-Internet.” This text, in the artists’ words, intended “to serve as an extended statement of artistic purpose and critique of our contemporary relation to objects and images in Post-Internet culture” (p.3). The author gives credit to Olson and McHugh for correspondingly coining and developing the term, while also mentioning Lev Manovich’s article on “post-media, post-net” culture (see above). Vierkant, however, is not as interested in the precise definition of the term but rather in its implications for the artwork as an object. According to the artist, Post-Internet has been associated with New Media Art, which is focused on the specificities of new technologies, and Conceptualism, which tends to conceive the artwork as an idea or instruction. He concludes that:

“Post-Internet art instead exists somewhere between these two poles. Post-Internet objects and images are developed with concern to their particular materiality as well as their vast variety of methods of presentation and dissemination.” (p.3)

Vierkant connects in this way Post-Internet art with the notion of a “Post-Medium Condition,” as described by Rosalind Krauss and asserts that the artwork is not limited to a specific medium, but rather states that:

“Everything is anything else, whether because any object is capable of becoming another type of object or because an object already exists in flux between multiple instantiations.” (Vierkant, 2010, p.4)

These words remind us of Price’s statement about the Internet, and in fact, Vierkant illustrates this current condition of the art object by mentioning the work of Price and Oliver Laric⁶⁰, both of whom create “versions” of the same object (a sculpture can also be an image, a PDF, a film, and so forth). By adopting this strategy, the artwork can originate on the Internet but adopt any form depending on the context in which it is presented, be it a blog or an art gallery, without losing its integrity. In this manner, Vierkant apparently solves the controversial relationship between Internet art and the gallery space, while providing a theoretical justification for the “mutation” of the artwork that complies with the conventions of the art world, as previously described by Gene McHugh. Vierkant asserts:

“In the Post-Internet climate, it is assumed that the work of art lies equally in the version of the object one would encounter at a gallery or museum, the images and other representations disseminated through the Internet and print publications, bootleg images of the object or its representations, and variations on any of these as edited and recontextualized by any other author.” (p.5)

60. Oliver Laric. See <http://oliverlaric.com/>

Remarkably, the author describes Post-Internet as a “climate”⁶¹ in which the condition of the artwork as a multiplicity of objects or representations is assumed, and therefore not questioned. Vierkant further states that “for objects after the Internet there can be no ‘original copy’” (p.5). Paradoxically, denying the possibility of an original work of art does not imply that Post-Internet art cannot be sold in an art gallery, but rather facilitates creating a version suitable for sale that has the same “substance” as the “source object.” In Internet art, it is assumed that this “source object” is necessarily located on a website or server and can only be experienced by accessing the network. Any object related to it but not online is considered derivative: for instance, a printed image culled from a website or a video extracted from an online performance. Even exhibiting the artwork in a browser on the screen of a computer placed inside the gallery is considered by some artists as a deviation from the original purpose of the work.⁶² However, following Vierkant’s argumentation, it could be asserted that any object derived from the original artwork is a version of it and therefore is equally an original. The art object exhibited in the gallery is necessarily produced as a unique piece or a limited number of editions, it has an identified author and certified authenticity, while the online object is freely reproducible and mutable, defying any stable authorship or ownership. Therefore, the quality of being “original” is finally transferred to the object sold at the gallery, the online object being a reference that provides a context for the former.

The context is none other than the endless stream of images, videos, sound and text on the Internet, as well as the common user interfaces and virtual environments that form our daily interaction with digital devices. This content is the source matter for a range of artistic practices that carry out a process of selection in order to elevate elements of the ordinary to the status of cultural objects. As Vierkant puts it:

“The goal of some Post-Internet practices is to engage with this proliferation of images and objects—‘general web content,’ items of culture created without necessarily being described as art—and proclaim an authorial stance by indexing / curating these objects.” (p.8)

If one of the objectives of Post-Internet artists is to take the everyday of Internet culture and bring it into the contemporary art world, it can be assumed that they are particularly interested in exhibiting their work inside the gallery, since it is in this space that artworks are officially sanctioned as such by the art world. In the closing remarks of his text, Vierkant states that his strategy as an artist (as well as that of others) is to move “seamlessly” between the physical object and the content posted on the Internet. The way in which the artwork is presented becomes the main concern of the artist, as well as the awareness of the context in which it is presented:

61. Vierkant’s use of the word “climate” brings to mind Arthur Danto’s (1964) definition of the art world as an “atmosphere of artistic theory” (p.580).

62. Net art pioneer Vuk Cosic has continuously argued that the Internet art is out of place in the gallery space and also Cory Arcangel has stated that Internet art in the gallery is not “pure Internet art.”

“...the representation through image, rigorously controlled and edited for ideal viewing angle and conditions, almost always becomes the central focus. It is a constellation of formal-aesthetic quotations, self-aware of its art context and built to be shared and cited.” (p.10)

The attention to a rigorous control of the representation, as well as the awareness of the art context are criticized by writer Brian Droitcour, who states in an article published in *Art in America* that “Post-Internet is embarrassing to say out loud” (Droitcour, 2014). While acknowledging the “good intentions” in the usage of the term by Olson and McHugh, the author considers that Post-Internet has simply become “a term to market art.” His criticism focuses precisely on the strategy of presentation described by Vierkant:

“Post-Internet art is about creating objects that look good online: photographed under bright lights in the gallery’s purifying white cube (a double for the white field of the browser window that supports the documentation), filtered for high contrast and colors that pop. [...] Post-Internet defaults to an art about the presentation of art, playing to the artworld audience’s familiarity with the gallery as a medium or environment for art, as well as with the conventions of presenting promotional materials online.” (Droitcour, 2014)

Droitcour and Vierkant jointly describe the conditions under which Post-Internet art adapts to the conventions of the art world, as indicated by Gene McHugh. Artists conceive the artwork as a mutable object, which can exist both online and inside the art gallery. Conscious of the fact that any image, animation, video, or text posted on a blog simply becomes “web content,” they stress the condition of the object as an artwork by adopting the formats usually found in galleries (sculptures, prints, installations, and so forth) and presenting the objects inside the white cube. Furthermore, they are aware that most of their audience will nevertheless view these objects as installation shots posted on blogs and social networks, and therefore carefully stage their presentation.

An illustrative example can be found in Elisa Giardina Papa’s *Brush Stroke* (2012),⁶³ a digital print on laser cut PVC that emulates a zigzagging brush stroke, covered with the default pattern of an empty background layer in Photoshop (fig.4). When seen in the gallery space, the piece looks like a checkered, abstract sculpture. Hung on a narrow column, the flat PVC projects its shape onto the space behind it, so that, when it is seen from the right angle, it looks as if the gallery is an image that someone has partially erased using a tool in Photoshop. This effect is enhanced when the sculpture is seen as an installation shot on a website: it reminds the viewer that what she is seeing is actually an image, as the *trompe-l’oeil* trick eloquently connects the real space in the gallery and the way reality is perceived through the use of software. *Brush Stroke* is, therefore, aimed at the Internet user as well as the gallery goer. It complies with the conventions of the art

63. Elisa Giardina Papa, *Brush Stroke* (2012). Retrieved from <http://www.elisagiardinapapa.com/EGPbrushstroke.html>



Fig. 4. Elisa Giardina Papa, *Brush Stroke* (2012). Installation view. Courtesy of the artist.

world while nodding at the technology-savvy digital natives from the artist's generation. Arguably, Giardina Papa's piece would also be effective if placed in another environment, such as a the slope of a hill covered in green grass under a blue sky or any other setting that could serve the purpose of the optical trick when seen as a photograph. It is, telling that the artist chose an art gallery as the proper setting for her piece, as it clearly identifies the object as an artwork. Previous works of the artist took the form of street performances or interventions on web content (modifying websites or YouTube videos and collecting images found online)⁶⁴, but her later projects more closely reflect an attention towards the physical object displayed in the context of a gallery. This might be interpreted as a move towards making her art more "saleable" (as is implied in Droitcour's criticism), but it is also related to the need for recognition.

The art gallery provides a context for the recognition of the work of an artist: it states that the work is good enough to be part of the art market (it is backed by the investment of the gallery and is potentially acquired by collectors) and endorses the status of the artist as a professional. It is also, obviously, the space in which the artist's activity can become profitable, and therefore sustainable as a real professional practice. Therefore, the focus given by Post-Internet artists to the gallery space is as much a way to identify their work as contemporary art and comply with the conventions of the art world, as it is an expression of their need to be part of the art market and develop a profitable career as professional artists.

64. See Elisa Giardina Papa's projects *De-zer*, *Rooms*, *Need ideas?! PLZZ!* or *Archive Fever*, all made in 2011. <http://www.elisagiardinapapa.com/EGPworks.html>

1.4.2.3 Promoting Post-Internet

The growing popularity of the term "Post-Internet" is due to a series of debates, events, and exhibitions that have taken place around 2013 and 2014, although most of its proponents locate its origins around 2007 and 2008. Gene McHugh credits Marisa Olson with coining the term around 2007, while Artie Vierkant mentions both an interview between Olson and Régine Debatty from 2008, as well as Hugh's own blog from 2009-2010. In October 2013, curator Karen Archey and Rhizome organized a panel at the ICA in London titled *Post-Net Aesthetics*⁶⁵, which brought together Harm van der Dorpel, Josephine Berry-Slater, Rozsa Farkas and Ben Vickers to discuss Post-Internet in a moment when, according to Archey, there is an uncertainty about the use of the term and the acceptance of its "market-readiness." Archey considers the year 2008 to be a defining moment for Post-Internet, because at that time artists began to show less interest in net-based work and increasingly focused on making objects. From 2008 to 2014, a series of exhibitions, sales, and projects mark the milestones of the development of Post-Internet art, shaping its identity and contributing to its integration in the mainstream contemporary art world.

In 2008, a particularly influential exhibition took place at the New Museum in New York: *Unmonumental. The Object in the 21st Century*,⁶⁶ curated by Richard Flood, Massimiliano Gioni and Laura Hoptman. Aiming at an investigation of "the nature of collage in contemporary art practices," the ambitious project developed into four exhibitions, which explored sculpture, collage, sound, and Internet art. The latter was presented in a selection of works that took place online at Rhizome,⁶⁷ under the title *Montage: Unmonumental Online*.⁶⁸ Curated by Lauren Cornell and Marisa Olson, this exhibition featured the work of fourteen artists (among them, names associated with Post-Internet such as Petra Cortright, Oliver Laric or Guthrie Lonergan) who appropriate content from the Web to create "Internet-based montage," by mixing images, sounds, texts, video or code and posting their compositions online. *Unmonumental* displays the main aesthetic and conceptual traits identified in Post-Internet art. On the one hand, the use of found material (be it Web content or objects) that is reconfigured in a form that reveals its heterogenic sources, as a collage or assemblage. On the other hand, the attention to the physical object, mostly everyday objects combined in unusual ways, forming installations that give an appearance of a certain precariousness. The attention that this exhibition brought to sculpture and object in a moment dominated by conceptual and image-based art can arguably be considered an inspiring influence on the generation of emerging artists.

65. A video of the panel was posted on Rhizome on October 21st. All quotes have been extracted from this footage. <http://rhizome.org/editorial/2013/oct/21/video-post-net-aesthetics-now-online/>

66. The exhibition took place between December 1, 2007 and March 30, 2008. See the digital archive of the New Museum: http://archive.newmuseum.org/index.php/Detail/Occurrence/Show/occurrence_id/918

67. The exhibition was hosted at rhizome.org/montage from February 15 to April 6, 2008. It is currently unavailable.

68. See the digital archive of the New Museum: http://archive.newmuseum.org/index.php/Detail/Occurrence/Show/occurrence_id/922

The popularization of Tumblr, the microblogging platform and social networking website founded by David Karp in 2007, has also had a significant influence in the young generation of artists and particularly in Post-Internet art. Tumblr allows users to quickly post images, videos, links, and texts to a personal blog, as well as to follow and re-blog the content of other users. In this manner, it facilitates collecting content from the Web, predominantly images, videos and animated gifs (which have become very popular on this platform), as well as editing the html code in order to customize the blog. Currently hosting 234 million blogs,⁶⁹ the platform has grown rapidly and become a popular tool for artists and creatives as it facilitates distributing content, following others and being followed, in a manner that combines the openness of access of Twitter and the flexibility for posting content found in Facebook. As with Twitter, the enormous number of posts being published at any time forces each user to follow a limited number of other users and still be unable to cope with all the content made available on the platform. When artists choose Tumblr as a platform to share their work, they face the problem of competing for the user's attention with a large amount of miscellaneous content. In an article titled "Tumblr as Art" that was published on the blog *Hyperallergic* in 2012, Ben Valentine states:

"This quick and easy spreading of content is great, but it creates an issue: sustained attention on a single work is hard to come by, causing a devaluing of authorship. This is problematic, at best, for a traditional artistic practice." (Valentine, 2012)

The artworks posted on Tumblr necessarily become collages of images, which in turn depend on those images being available online. In time, many suffer from link rot, as indicated by Valentine (2012), and are stored in an archived version. This is the case of *Echo Parade* (2011), created by Jonathan Vingiano and Brad Troemel⁷⁰, a bot that was programmed to follow 200 art-based Tumblrs and reblog their most popular posts, generating an endless succession of images related to popular culture. Troemel commented on this use of blogs based on images (also called image aggregators or IAs) that they provide a chance to see beyond the field of art and value other forms of culture:

"With IAs we have a chance to gain a greater art-informed appreciation for worthy cultural relics long deemed non-art and perhaps a chance to forget about the endless garbage heaps of forgettable art only present in our discourse because it has been contextualized as such." (Troemel, 2011, p.59)

While it is usually user-generated content on the Internet that is described as "endless garbage heaps of forgettable [things]," Troemel considers most of the art presented in contemporary art venues as equally dispensable. In this sense, art created in the context of Tumblr deals with the overwhelming amount of information that is not only present on this platform, but in our globalized society as a whole. It relates to the notion of a

69. As of April, 2015. Retrieved from <https://www.tumblr.com/about>

70. Echo Parade. jonathanvingiano.com Retrieved from <http://jonathanvingiano.com/work/echo-parade/>



Fig. 5. Joe Hamilton, *Hypergeography* (2011). Book version, published by Jean Boite Éditions.

distributed artwork, as proposed by Seth Price and further elaborated by Artie Vierkant, which can take on different forms. An illustrative example can be found in Joe Hamilton's *Hypergeography* (2011)⁷¹ a set of a hundred images creating a collage about natural and built environments that was originally set up as a Tumblr blog, but has also been put on sale as a video and turned into a book that unfolds as a 4-meter-long collage⁷² (fig.5).

In 2010, artist Katja Novitskova initiated a project titled *Post-Internet Survival Guide*.⁷³ Initially it was a Tumblr blog⁷⁴ which has been further developed as a book, an installation,⁷⁵ and several exhibitions and presentations. These have involved art galleries (Gentili Apri, Future Gallery, W139), other artists and curators (Mike Ruiz, KERNEL, Lucky PDE, Yngve Holen, Anne de Vries, Harm van den Dorpel), and a BYOB event (Bring Your Own Beamer, an open curatorial format conceived by artist Rafaël Rozendaal) in cities around the globe (Berlin, London, Amsterdam, Bucharest, Tokyo). The contents of the blog were edited in a 272-page book that features texts and artworks by almost 50 artists and critics, including Artie Vierkant, Constant Dullaart, Gene McHugh, Jaako Pallasvu, Jon Rafman, Kari Altmann, and Anne de Vries, among others. The project is based on the idea of collecting content from a number of sources on the Web and trying to establish a narrative (or narratives) that illustrates the current *Zeitgeist*. In this sense, Novitskova's project follows the practice of creating "Internet-based montages," a defining trait of Post-Internet art. The author also stresses the fact that, by extracting the selected content from

71. Hypergeography. Retrieved from: <http://hypergeography.tumblr.com/>

72. Hypergeography. Jean Boite Éditions. Retrieved from <http://www.jean-boite.fr/box/hyper-geography>

73. Post Internet Survival Guide. katjanovi.net. Retrieved from <http://katjanovi.net/postinternetsurvivalguide.html>

74. Survival tips 0-∞. Retrieved from <http://survivaltips.tumblr.com/>

75. The installation FORMATS (2010) was part of Novitskova's graduation show at the Sandberg Instituut, Graphic Design department, Amsterdam. Retrieved from <http://katjanovi.net/formats.html>

its original source, it is “elevated” to a new status in which it acquires a certain meaning and purportedly contributes to provide guidance in the context of a society dominated by complex networks and incessant flows of information.

“Throughout the year 2010 the blog survivaltips.tumblr.com has been tracking and contributing to the ‘post internet survival’ theme. Following more than a hundred interconnected blogs and sources, it harnessed the network and exchanged the findings from its own online presence. [...] *Post Internet Survival Guide* elevates selected content from its original fragmented online environment and solidifies its temporary values and meanings in a collection of guiding narratives.” (Novitskova, 2010)

While Novitskova’s project seems ambitious, its apparent pretentiousness must be understood as a tongue-in-cheek approach to understanding the overwhelming amount of (mainly visual) content with which every person must cope on a daily basis, as well as the assumed responsibility of the artist in managing that content and making sense of it. The *Post-Internet Survival Guide* is also particularly illustrative of the concept of a mutable artwork, as postulated by Artie Vierkant in “The Image Object Post-Internet”: it can take the form of a Tumblr blog, an installation, a book, or a talk. It can be integrated into an exhibition or be presented as part of an ephemeral event. Furthermore, it is made of elements taken from different sources and implies in its making a large number of actors, which in turn contribute to its dissemination. The fact that this project has been so widely distributed (from Novitskova’s graduation show to the MoMA library in New York and the aforementioned venues) speaks both of the popularity of Post-Internet and the international network of actors (critics, curators, artists and galleries) that can be said to have emerged around it or been strengthened by this term. For Novitskova, this project has implied taking a position in this network, by developing collaborations and drawing attention to her work, as can be deduced, for instance, from her participation in the group exhibition *Art Post-Internet* at the Ullens Center in Beijing in 2014.

The *Post Internet Survival Guide* book was displayed in 2011 at the bookstore of the Spazio Contemporanea in Brescia (Italy), on the occasion of the group exhibition *Collect the WWWorld. The Artist as Archivist in the Internet Age*,⁷⁶ curated by Domenico Quaranta. The concept of the exhibition is connected to the same subject that was explored in *Montage: Unmonumental Online*, namely, the accumulation and recombination of content from online sources. In the introductory text of the exhibition’s catalogue, Quaranta embeds this practice in the history of contemporary art by establishing a connection with Conceptual Art and identifies it with the “digital natives”: the young generation for whom the Internet is their natural habitat.

“Collect the WWWorld wants to demonstrate how the Internet generation is

76. Collecting the WWWorld. The Artist as Archivist in the Internet Age. Link Center for the Arts of the Information Age. Retrieved from <http://www.linkartcenter.eu/events/collect-the-wwworld>

implementing and developing a practice started in the Sixties by Conceptual Art, and further developed in the next decades in the forms of Appropriation Art and postproduction: the practice of exploring, collecting, archiving, manipulating, reusing huge amounts of visual material produced by popular culture and advertising.” (Quaranta, 2011, p.6)

The curator focused in this project on a set of artistic practices that relate to amateurism and explore the creative potential of found images without paying attention to distinctions between “high” and “low” culture. Despite explicitly referring to the younger generation, the show combined the work of net art pioneers JODI, Olia Lialina and Eva and Franco Mattes with that of younger artists such as Kari Altmann, Constant Dullaart, Elisa Gardina Papa, Oliver Laric, Jon Rafman, Ryan Trecartin, Petra Cortright, Harm van der Dorpel or Clement Valla, among others. After its presentation in Brescia the show traveled to the House of Electronic Arts in Basel (2012) and to 319 Scholes in New York (2012), slightly changing the roster of participating artists in each venue. As with Novitskova’s project, the exhibition was based on a visual research project carried out by Quaranta on a Tumblr blog⁷⁷, which is in itself a collection of images –the curator asserts that the inspiration for the exhibition came from realizing that he (and everybody else) is a “systematic collector of digital data” (Quaranta, 2011, p.7). *Collect the WWWorld* therefore explores the current impulse of collecting and archiving content, facilitated by the digital tools at hand and the Internet, as well as stressing the change in the status of the image. Once the image becomes a digital file, it can be endlessly copied and manipulated; once the digital file is stored on a publicly accessible server, it can be endlessly distributed and re-contextualized. The curator links this new condition of the image to the artist’s practice, implying that they naturally tend towards re-using existing content, rather than creating *ex-novo*.

“There is no way around it: whatever is digital is copyable and can be manipulated by whomever gets possession of it. The artists featured in this exhibition are well aware of this; it’s part of the contract, as Price says. They get their hands on any and everything that attracts their attention and invite others to do the same with their own works. And while they lose the rights to their own creations, they acquire an unprecedented power over the creations of others.” (Quaranta, 2011, p.12).

In this show, the main focus is placed on how Internet content is collected and re-used as collages of images or videos, and actually most works take the form of video projections and prints. But there is remarkably less interest in how the practice of collecting visual material generates object-based artworks, as in the installations *Hellblau* (2010) by Kari Altmann and *My Generation* (2010) by Eva and Franco Mattes. The connection between the new status of the images and growing attention to the artwork as object in the younger generation of artists seems to be missing. According to Karen Archey, the ease of

77. Collect the WWWorld. See <http://collecttheworld.tumblr.com/>

distributing images made them less powerful and prompted an increased attention towards objects. While this conclusion seems to simplify excessively the shift towards the object, it can be affirmed that the rise of social networking has brought a “different” web, as stated by Gene McHugh, and that the proliferation of images has made them interchangeable in a constant remix in which there is no “original,” as asserted by Artie Vierkant.

While Internet Art was received with waning interest, a young generation of artists was finding their means of expression on the Web and looking for opportunities to present their work. In this context, many artists look towards the gallery and consider producing objects as a way of going beyond the screen. At the same time, young galleries emerge in response to these concerns: TRANSFER is an art gallery in Brooklyn (New York) founded by Kelani Nichole and Jereme Mongeon in 2013 to support artists working on the Web by offering them a physical space to exhibit their work (see 3.7.2). The gallery’s objectives seem to adhere perfectly to the principles of Post-Internet art – actually, Marisa Olson is one of its represented artists. The directors have also stated being “quite inspired” by the exhibition *Art Post Internet*, but express their reservations towards the use of the term:

“...we are sympathetic to why these labels are being applied to today’s avant-garde but believe it is limiting when they function as fad-ish indicators for work that deserves much more serious critical discourse.” (Waelder, 2014b, p.55).

It seems that, as Brian Droitcour has stated, Post-Internet is actually embarrassing to say out loud, while at the same time the artists following its aesthetic and conceptual principles seem to be succeeding in getting the attention of the art market. A notable example can be found in the *Paddles ON!*⁷⁸ auction that took place in 2013, the same year that TRANSFER opened its doors (see 3.8.5). Curated by Lindsay Howard, this benefit auction was organized to collect funds for Rhizome and hosted at Paddle8, an online auction platform owned by Phillips (the third most important auction house after Christie’s and Sotheby’s), with support from Tumblr. Taking place both online and at Phillip’s office in New York, the sale drew considerable attention, being publicized as the “first digital art auction.” Its apparent success prompted a second auction, *Paddles ON! London*⁷⁹, presented by Phillips and Tumblr at the auction house in London the following year. Both auctions have brought together several young artists whose work has attracted the attention of the art market, particularly in the case of Rafaël Rozendaal and Petra Cortright. The majority of the works on sale are either prints or sculptures and a few videos. Only three process-based artworks were included in the first auction (a generative animation by Casey Reas, a website by Rafaël Rozendaal and a Tumblr blog and video by Joe Hamilton), while the second one only featured prints, sculptures and videos. Looking at these auctions, it would seem that the art market requires artworks which are either object-based or videos.

78. Paddles ON!. Paddle 8. Retrieved from <http://paddle8.com/auction/paddleson2013>

79. Paddles ON! London!. Paddle 8. Retrieved from <http://paddle8.com/auction/paddleson>

Post-Internet art fulfills this requirement while providing a reference to Internet culture, associated to the younger generation and the idea of the “new.”

The attention generated by the first *Paddles ON!* auction in New York and the apparent success of Post-Internet artists inspired other initiatives, such as *Born Digital*⁸⁰, the second digital art auction held at Paddle8, in April 2014. A benefit auction in support of the Link Art Center, it was curated by its director Domenico Quaranta and brought together a large selection of works by European artists working with digital media (see 3.8.5). More eclectic in its selection, it featured work by well-known names in the new media art field alongside emerging artists, some of whom have been related to Post-Internet, such as Constant Dullaart, Jaako Pallasvuo or Harm van der Dorpel. While being less successful in its sales, this auction achieved a collaboration with the art galleries XPO (Paris), 22,48m2 (Paris) and DAM (Berlin), which saw in it an opportunity to draw attention towards their artists, as the auction curated by Lindsay Howard had apparently done. Founded in 2012, XPO has been particularly linked to Post-Internet art (see 3.7.2) and has recently partnered with TRANSFER to develop joint projects. *Hypersalon*⁸¹ has been the latest of these projects: presented in Miami on the occasion of the Art Basel Miami art fair, the event brought together the work of the artists represented by both galleries as well as talks, presentations and discussions with collectors, curators and institutions. The event has also generated a collaboration with Hyperallergic⁸² (a blog about art and culture which has partnered with Tumblr to create a *Tumblr Art Symposium* in 2013), Cloaque.org⁸³ (a Tumblr-based curatorial platform), and Electric Objects⁸⁴ (a startup that has developed digital frame for art, see 3.9.2), as well as Eyebeam,⁸⁵ a renowned center for art and technology in New York. *Hypersalon* represents an effort in presenting a range of work related to technology and Internet culture in a series of events that aim at attracting the attention of the contemporary art audience. The time and location of the exhibition coincides with one of the major art fairs in the mainstream contemporary art world.

1.4.2.4 Post-Internet as a professional network

Exhibitions (from *Montage: Unmonumental Online* to *Art Post-Internet*, *Collect the WWWorld*, and many others taking place in galleries such as TRANSFER and XPO), auctions (an uncommon forum for an emerging art practice), and talks (for instance, those taking place at *Hypersalon* or the ICA panel), shape a multifaceted picture of Post-Internet. This picture is further completed by a myriad of blog and magazine articles, as

80. Born Digital. Paddle 8. Retrieved from <http://paddle8.com/auction/linkart>

81. Hypersalon. See <http://hypersalon.net/>

82. Hyperallergic. See <http://hyperallergic.com>

83. Cloaque.org. See <http://cloaque.org/>

84. Electric Objects. See <http://www.electricobjects.com/>

85. Eyebeam. See <http://eyebeam.org/>

well as by other texts published online. Post-Internet is a loosely defined group of artists, an artistic movement, or simply an attempt at gaining acceptance in the mainstream contemporary art market. While the numbers of Post-Internet artists are growing (the Ullens Center exhibition brought together 40 artists under this label, while there are more than 100 artists who have participated in at least one of the exhibitions mentioned in this section), a closer inspection reveals the prominence of a reduced number of professionals as the main proponents of this movement. Artists, curators, critics, and gallerists form an interconnected group whose collaborations can be found in most of the events related to Post-Internet art, which are usually supported by certain online platforms and companies. Table 6 enumerates a selection of the names most frequently mentioned in articles and essays, as well as those related to at least two of the exhibitions, auctions and projects mentioned in this section:

Artists	Curators and critics	Galleries	Platforms and companies
Kari Altman	Karen Archey	TRANSFER	Art Fag City
Cory Arcangel	Lauren Cornell	(NY)	Cloaque.org
Petra Cortright	DIS (Lauren Boyle,	XPO (Paris)	DIS Magazine
Oliver Laric	Solomon Chase,	390 Scholes (NY)	Electric Objects
Katja Novitskova	Marco Roso, David		Hyperallergic
Marisa Olson	Toro)		Paddle 8
Jaako Pallasvuo	Lindsay Howard		Rhizome
Lucky PDF	Gene McHugh		Tumblr
Seth Price	Marisa Olson		
Jon Rafman	Domenico Quaranta		
Rafaël Rozendaal			
Clement Valla			
Harm van der Dorpel			
Artie Vierkant			

Table 6: most active artists, curators, critics, galleries, platforms and companies related to Post-Internet art. Names displayed in alphabetical order.

While this list is far from exhaustive (as previously mentioned, the number of artists and other professionals involved in Post-Internet art has grown as the term itself has gained popularity), it serves the purpose of examining the connections between the different agents of the art world and their involvement in the introduction of Post-Internet in the mainstream contemporary art market. A simplified graph (fig.6) shows some of the interactions between these agents: along the horizontal axis formed by the exhibitions, auctions and projects mentioned in this section (ordered chronologically from left to right), the aforementioned names are displayed according to the categories on Table 6 and linked between each other with lines that indicate three possible interactions:

- **Collaboration:** two professionals (usually, curators), platforms or companies collaborate in a particular project or exhibition. Examples include: Marisa Olson and Lauren Cornell co-curating the exhibition *Montage: Unmonumental Online* at Rhizome, or Hyperallergic and Tumblr co-organizing the *Tumblr Art Symposium*.
- **Production/support/representation:** when referred to exhibitions or projects, it indicates that a curator has organized that exhibition, or that a company or platform has provided support or produced the project. When referred to artists, it indicates that a gallery is representing that artist. Examples include: TRANSFER gallery as co-producer of the exhibition *Hypersalon* and artist Clement Valla being represented by XPO gallery.
- **Participation:** a link established between artists and exhibitions or other projects, it indicates that the artist has presented her work in the exhibition, contributed a text to a project or participated in a panel. Examples include: artist Harm van der Dorpel participating in the exhibition *Art Post-Internet*, the auction *Paddles ON! London* or the panel *Post-net Aesthetics* at ICA London.

By observing this graph, it is possible to follow the interactions between professionals, as well as between professionals and institutions, and delineate their corresponding influence and involvement in Post-Internet art. Some examples are discussed below. Names are emphasized in bold typeface in order to stress their recurrence:

- Artist **Marisa Olson** has been widely credited with coining the term “Post-Internet art.” She works on a double profile as artist and curator, being a member of the staff at **Rhizome**. She co-curated with **Lauren Cornell** the exhibition *Montage: Unmonumental Online*, organized by **Rhizome** and the **New Museum** in New York, which included the work of **Petra Cortright** and **Oliver Laric**, among others. As an artist, she has participated in the group exhibition *Art Post-Internet*, which also featured the work of **Cortright** and **Laric**. She has also presented her work in a solo show at **TRANSFER** gallery in New York and is now represented by that gallery. When **TRANSFER** co-organized with **XPO** gallery the exhibition *Hypersalon* in Miami, they included Olson’s work. Recently, the artist has curated a group show at **XPO** in Paris.
- **Lindsay Howard** is the Curatorial Director of **319 Scholes** and former Curatorial Fellow at **Eyebeam**. In **319 Scholes**, she has curated and hosted several exhibitions featuring the work of Post-Internet artists, such as *Collect the WWWorld*, curated by **Domenico Quaranta**, which included the work of **Harm van der Dorpel**, **Oliver Laric** and **Constant Dullaart** among others. Howard has curated two digital art auctions at **Paddle 8**, an online platform from the auction house **Phillips**. The auctions, titled *Paddles ON!* and *Paddles ON! London*, were presented jointly by **Phillips** and **Tumblr** and dedicated a percentage of the sales to the non-profits

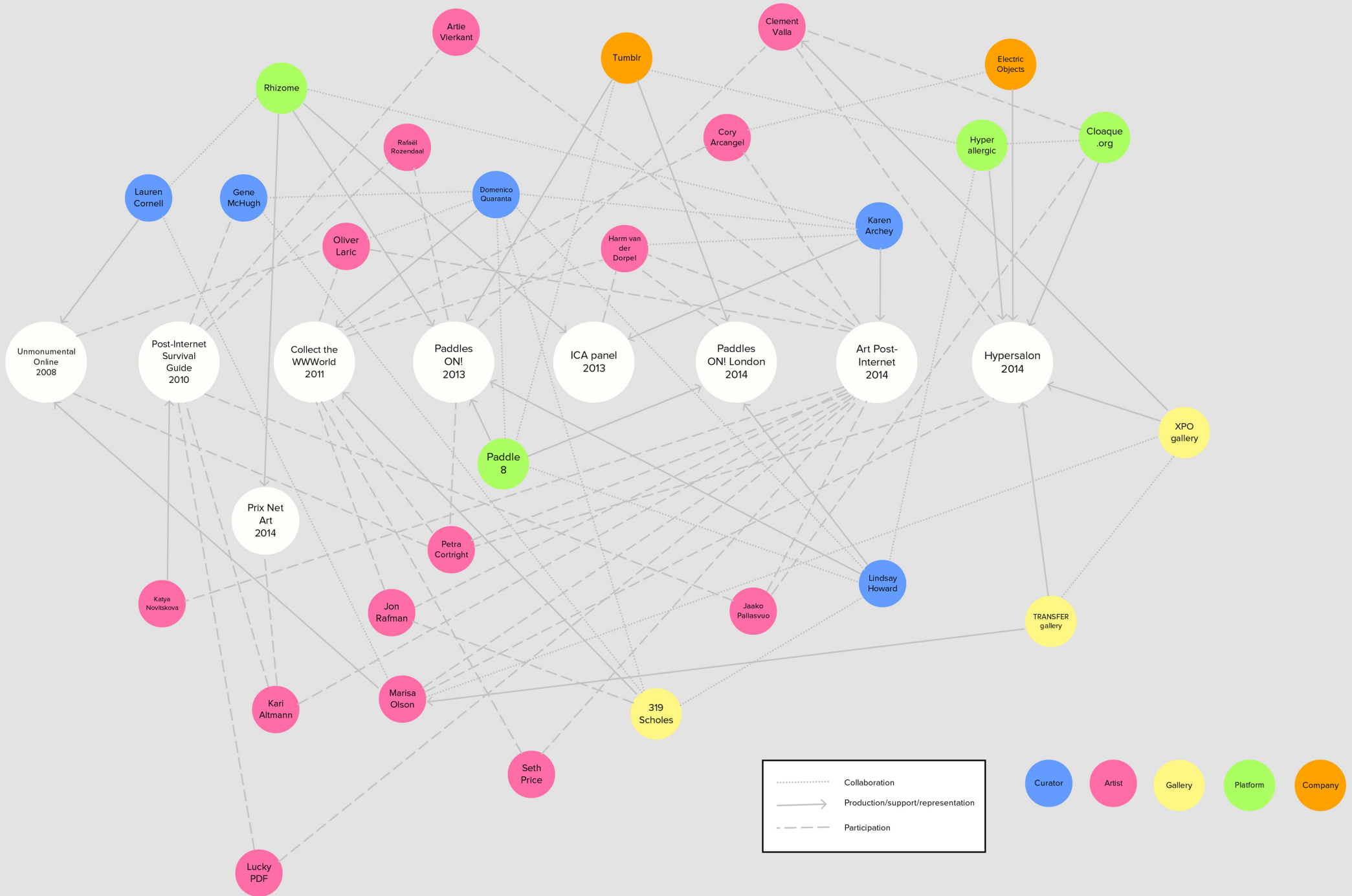


Fig. 6. Post-Internet Art as a network of professionals and institutions. Graph elaborated by the author from different sources.

Rhizome (auction in New York) and *Opening Times* (auction in London). **Quaranta** followed on the steps of Howard by curating a digital art auction at **Paddle 8** to support the activities of his organization **Link Art Center**, which involved artists such as **Harm van der Dorpel** and galleries such as **XPO**, among others.

- *Art Post-Internet* is a group exhibition curated by **Karen Archey** and Robin Peckham at the Ullens Center in Beijing that brought together a large number of Post-Internet artists, such as **Petra Cortright**, **Oliver Laric**, **Harm van der Dorpel**, **Marisa Olson** and **Kari Altmann**. Archey and Peckham also intended to establish a definition of Post-Internet in a questionnaire that was addressed, among others, to artists **Marisa Olson** and **Cory Arcangel** and to curators **Domenico Quaranta**, **Michael Connor** and **Ben Vickers**. Archey had previously co-organized with **Rhizome** a panel titled *Post-net Aesthetics* at ICA in London that included **Ben Vickers** and **Harm van der Dorpel**.
- **Rhizome** is a non-profit platform and community devoted to Internet art. Currently an affiliate in residence at the **New Museum** in New York, it actively participates in the contemporary art scene in the city. Current and former members of its staff include **Lauren Cornell**, **Michael Connor** and **Marisa Olson**. It has been the recipient of a percentage of the sales generated by the digital art auction *Paddles ON!* at **Paddle 8**, curated by **Lindsay Howard** with the support of **Tumblr**. It also co-organized the panel at ICA in London with curator **Karen Archey** and has recently launched the **Prix Net Art**, which granted an Award of Distinction to **Kari Altmann**.
- The microblogging platform **Tumblr** has been actively involved in contemporary art since its launch in 2007. As previously stated, it can be argued that its interface has facilitated the practice of accumulating images, which is commonly identified with Post-Internet art. Many artists use **Tumblr** as the platform for the development of their projects and the presentation of their work (be it related or not to Post-Internet or Internet culture), among which **Joe Hamilton**, whose Tumblr-based artwork was included at the *Paddles ON!* Auction curated by **Lindsay Howard** at **Paddle 8**. This auction and the following one taking place in London resulted from a partnership between **Tumblr** and **Phillips**. In 2013, **Tumblr** co-organized with **Hyperallergic** *The World's First Tumblr Art Symposium*, which featured the work of Tumblr-based collectives and artists such as **Cloaque** and **Joe Hamilton** and invited curator **Lindsay Howard** to one of its panels. The event took place at **319 Scholes**. Late in 2014, **Hyperallergic**, **Cloaque** and **Eyebeam** have recently participated in the exhibition *Hypersalon*, organized by the art galleries **TRANSFER** and **XPO** in Miami, which included, among others, the work of **Marisa Olson**.

In these examples, I have carefully selected the names that are mentioned in order to emphasize the connections between a small selection of individuals and organizations. Some relevant names have been left out in order to avoid a longer explanation (for

instance, curator Christiane Paul is frequently invited to participate in debates related to new media art, such as *Hypersalon*, *The World's First Tumblr Art Symposium* or the *Art Post-Internet* catalogue). It is not the purpose of this dissertation to map the complete network of relationships between the different agents of the art world in relation to Post-Internet art, but rather to stress, by presenting the sample described above, that such a network exists and is deeply influential in the popularization of a certain set of artistic practices. It must be noted that almost all of the activity described in this section takes place in New York: the platforms and blogs that have supported Post-Internet art are based in the city and some of them focus mainly on the New York art scene (*Art Fag City*, *Hyperallergic*, *Rhizome*, *DIS Magazine*). Most curators also work in the city and are linked to organizations based in New York (*Lindsay Howard*, *Lauren Cornell*, *Marisa Olson*, *Gene McHugh*, *DIS*, *Karen Archey*). The companies supporting the most notorious events are also located in this city (*Paddle 8*, *Tumblr*) and so are the spaces that have hosted most exhibitions and exchanges (*319 Scholes*, *TRANSFER*, *Eyebeam*, *New Museum*). While some activities have taken place in other cities (such as Paris, London or Beijing), it is telling that actors from outside the New York art scene have partnered with those in the city (as for instance, *Domenico Quaranta* taking the exhibition *Collect the WWWorld* to *319 Scholes* or *XPO* gallery partnering with *TRANSFER*).

It must be noted that, while an effort has been made to identify the most relevant names associated with Post-Internet art, this list is subject to change according to the evolution of each artist's career, their involvement with Post-Internet art and the development of Post-Internet as a label or an identifiable community. While the label is still attractive to the art market, it can be expected that a large number of artists will be interested in being identified with it and that other clusters of professionals will develop in different locations, more or less connected to the above described group.

At present, it is uncertain whether Post-Internet will become an established term or group, as even its own promoters usually put its definition and use into question. The questionnaire carried out Archey and Peckham and published in the catalogue of the exhibition *Art Post-Internet* reveals the term's controversial nature, partly due to the misleading assumption that Post-Internet implies that the Internet is over, but also due to its unprecedented insertion into the contemporary art market. Curator Christiane Paul finds it "unfortunate and confusing," art critic Brian Droitcour disparages its "vagueness" and artist Constant Dullaart describes it as a "conventional, perhaps even nostalgic object-oriented art practice, based on commercial aesthetics propagated on social networks and in advertising" (Archey & Peckham, 2014, p.89-96). Despite these negative views (which are countered by other positive opinions by curators, critics and artists such as *Domenico Quaranta*, *Gene McHugh* or –obviously– *Marisa Olson*), all respondents in Archey and Peckham's questionnaire agree in providing a list of artists and curators that they identify with Post-Internet art (Archey & Peckham, 2014, p.100-104). Tellingly, the roster of names is large: 16 respondents mention a total of 70 names, mostly artists, several curators, and some institutions such as *Rhizome* or *Eyebeam*, both in New York.

Among these 70 names, only six are mentioned by at least one third of the respondents: art critic Gene McHugh and artists Cory Arcangel (usually mentioned as a predecessor), Petra Cortright, Oliver Laric, Marisa Olson and Artie Vierkant. While being the most mentioned person, Olson appears in only half of the respondents' answers. Arguably, these numbers describe an unstructured group defined by a term that is vague enough to be applied to the work of a large amount of artists. Most of these artists are mentioned by only one respondent, which implies that friends and acquaintances are added to the list in order to drive attention to their work. In this manner, Post-Internet art could fail to achieve recognition in the contemporary art world as its identity is diluted in the work of a myriad of creators, unless the art market reacts by supporting only a limited number of successful artists who are identified with this label. On the other hand, Post-Internet can also serve as a temporary platform from which the careers of a few professionals are launched, to be discarded afterwards. In the endnote of the *Art Post-Internet* catalogue, Karen Archey concludes in a funerary tone:

“Perhaps it is because post-internet was catalyzed by artists, writers, and curators who sought to combat a lack of internet awareness within artistic discourse and through a rhetoric tied to art history and gallery practice that it became subsumed by the market. By not challenging art at its most basic principles and social constructs, we have changed little.” (Archey & Peckham, 2014, p.134)

Archey's words imply that Post-Internet should be considered a somewhat failed art movement, in the sense that it has not challenged the status quo of the art world, as the avant-gardes in the twentieth century did. She states that its purpose was to bring the attention of the art world towards the Internet, but it was finally integrated in the art market. Paradoxically, the catalogue of what is probably the most multitudinous exhibition of Post-Internet art already contains an epitaph, as if the subject was laid out and settled once and for all. While probably the debate has already been exhausted, several artists have made a dent in the art market, as indicated by the ArtRank Index. During 2014 and up to the first quarter of 2015, artists Petra Cortright, Artie Vierkant, and Katja Novitskova have been included in the list of the top 10 emerging artists, their artworks valued between \$10,000 and \$100,000. Cory Arcangel and Ryan Trecartin have been included in the “early blue chip” category, which indicates higher values for their works. It remains to be seen if Post-Internet will consolidate or if it will be forgotten, but it can be asserted that it has brought unprecedented attention to artists working with digital media in the context of the art market.

1.5 THE NEWCOMERS

Post-Internet art represents the coming of age of a young generation of artists, curators, and critics who introduce a different approach to new media art, to the point that their work moves away from the commonly accepted definition of this term. The differences between new media art and Post-Internet art—not just in terms of the artwork itself, but also in the theories that surround it, the professionals who support it, and the context in which it is presented—can be described as a generational change in which younger artists introduce new art forms that challenge the assumptions of established artistic practices. Pierre Bourdieu (1993) sees this as a constituent aspect of the field of cultural production, in which different groups of producers struggle for legitimation, the struggle itself being what creates the history of the field (p.106). To achieve recognition, the first and most important act is that of creating a distinctive mark that identifies the “newcomers” and their work, in the form of a name or label. This explains the attention given to establishing a definition of Post-Internet art, paired with the contradictory criticism towards it: while artists, curators, and critics see the advantages of being associated with a term that is gaining popularity, they fear being trapped by this identification and consequently ghettoized. Unsurprisingly, Post-Internet Art has also been considered an unfortunate term (see 1.1), useful, but at the same time inconvenient, due to the suspicions that it raises among experts. Moreover, since the term is also being used in the constantly evolving context of Internet culture—which, as art critic Michael Connor (2014) points out, is increasingly being identified with popular culture at large (p.61)—its definition and implications are continuously being questioned.

Bourdieu asserts that the newcomers, in order to gain legitimacy, must “necessarily push back into the past the consecrated producers with whom they are compared, ‘dating’ their products and the taste of those who remain attached to them” (p.107). The term “Post-Internet” in itself seems to imply this move, as it can be understood that the younger artists identify their work with something that happens after, or leaves behind, all the developments in art, technology, and culture embodied by the Internet. Since the global network has long been identified with the themes and values on which new media art, and in a wider context the encounter of art, science, technology and society are based, banishing the Internet to the past can seem almost like a heresy. It also seems absurd, since it contradicts the obvious fact that the Internet is more present than ever, and far from being over. The negative reactions among established critics and curators, instead of leading the main figures of Post-Internet art to stand against them (as it would happen in an avant-garde movement), have led to the contradictory situation of exhibiting these artistic practices while expressing disapproval of the term. In this sense, it can be argued that although Post-Internet artistic practices push back into the past most new media art (in terms of their adaptation to the context of the contemporary art market, and its adoption of references, that go no further than the mid-2000s). Its proponents have still sought the recognition of both the established new media art world and the contemporary art world. However, as Bourdieu indicates, the network of professionals

is established among those who are in a similar position (p.107). This means that young artists partner with emerging galleries, as is exemplified in the case of Transfer and XPO in their collaboration to present the work of Post-Internet artists in their respective spaces and on the occasion of the ArtBasel Miami contemporary art fair (see 1.4.2, 3.7.2). Post-Internet artists also seem to move away from the context of media art festivals and address their work towards the contemporary art world and the art market. This change of context for the presentation and commercialization of their work is likely to create a *de facto* separation from the new media art community.

Another notable difference from Bourdieu's description of the struggles in the field of cultural production is the fact that consecrated authors do not dominate the market (p.108). Therefore, Post-Internet artists do not compete for legitimation with established artists in the new media art world; they are actually contending with those of the contemporary art world, who are the ones that dominate the market. This situation displaces the whole generational struggle described by Bourdieu, since the emerging artists are seeking to exploit a niche in the market where there are arguably no competitors. Their introduction in the contemporary art market has been facilitated by the fact that the major players in the market are paying renewed attention to the Internet and digital technologies (see 3.8). Quick to grasp new opportunities in an uncertain and competitive market, they have welcomed the works of these young artists in experiments such as the *Paddles ON!* online auctions (see 3.8.5). Additionally, young companies such as Tumblr have seen the potential of supporting these artistic practices and branding them as a way of promoting their product and attracting a specific audience. Although this kind of support is likely to be short-lived, as it was for new media art among the major art museums in the early 2000s, it has contributed to drive a young generation of artists towards a different approach of art and technology. An art created with digital tools that does not focus on the specificity of the medium and does not shy away from adapting to the requirements of the art market. An art that is not "new media" but "contemporary," and that looks for recognition not in the festival but in the gallery.

2. THE NEW MEDIA ARTIST'S PERSPECTIVE

2.1 PATTERNS OF RECOGNITION

In the previous chapter, I have discussed the discourses around new media art, its differences with contemporary art, and the controversies that have arisen between professionals from both fields, as well as the emergence of a group of young of artists with a different approach to art and new media. These different issues relate to the search for recognition and legitimation, both within the new media art world and the mainstream contemporary art world. In this chapter, the focus is placed on the artists, how their work is presented and followed by critics, curators and researchers, how it reaches the public, as well as the artists's expectations regarding the development of their professional trajectory.

2.1.1 ARTISTS AS PAWNS

Artists play a key role in the art world, yet most of them do not hold a prominent position in its hierarchy. Artist and researcher Pablo Helguera (2007) describes the art world as a chess game in which the artists are pawns, "the least and most important piece of the game" (p.5). There are numerous emerging artists, their number diminishing as they advance in their trajectory or get older, who have relatively small power in the structure of the art world. They produce artworks but depend on the other actors of the art world to give them value and present them to the public and art professionals. However, as in the chess game, they can advance to higher positions, reach wider recognition and attain a powerful status: artists like Damien Hirst or Jeff Koons hold an influential position in the art market and, consequently, in the mainstream contemporary art world. Gaining recognition is therefore a crucial element in the career of an artist, given that her position can change drastically, entailing better possibilities for producing her art and achieving economic sustainability. The particular position of the artist is due in part to the fact that her professional identity is independent from any specific education or academic title, and is finally determined by the recognition provided by the art community (Moulin, 1997, p. 256). This social form of recognition becomes a professional identity for the artist. In the new media art world, festivals, awards and grants have had a decisive role in establishing this identity: recipients of Golden Nicas (see 1.1) and honorary mentions, whose work is exhibited and presented as "cyberart" or "digital art" are de facto considered artists. Interaction designer W. Bradford Paley (2006), whose project TextArc¹ was exhibited in Ars Electronica in 2004, once commented that an application he created for data visualization in trading markets was seen as an artwork, while an artistic project was viewed as a data visualization tool. The definition of artist becomes more dependent of this validating environment in the context of multidisciplinary practices, in which scientific research, technological developments and artistic concepts meet. The artist must in all cases actively engage in

1. TextArc is a tool that creates a visual representation of a text and displays the connections between certain words. Paley showed the software and sold prints of the visualisation in museum-quality watercolor paper. Retrieved from <http://www.textarc.org/>

obtaining recognition for her work in a constant negotiation with other professionals of the art world. As Helguera (2012) points out:

“Today it doesn’t suffice to simply make art in the studio and send it out into the world: artists have to be active agents who advocate for their work, engage socially with those who may support them, and help shape the discourse in a way that will favor their artistic perspective.” (p.45)

This negotiation is embedded in a structure that presents, as artist and economist Hans Abbing (2002) asserts, no formal barriers (p.261). Anyone can become an artist, since there are no official titles or requirements to fulfill (this also applies to gallerists, curators and, to a certain extent, art critics). This entails that, particularly in the new media art community, professionals from different backgrounds (engineering, computer science, biology, graphic design and so forth) can become artists by developing artistic projects. As Paley’s anecdote shows, an interaction designer can present his work as an artist in a prestigious new media art festival. However, there are several barriers are not overtly stated and remain relatively invisible. Abbing describes them as informal barriers (p.268) and enumerates a series of characteristics, such as the fact that access to the different hierarchies of the art world is regulated by gatekeepers, which are professionals with an influential position on the discourse of recognition (for instance, curators, critics, as well as certain gallerists and collectors). Circles of recognition are usually developed around certain groups, institutions, influential galleries, curators, or artists (p.269). In the new media art community, new categories and labels related to emerging technologies and platforms or concepts, such as Augmented Reality Art, Software Art, or Tumblr Art can generate their own circles of recognition. Within each circle, artists share with their peers similar levels of recognition, although the whole circle has to be validated in turn within the art community. This signals, for instance, the importance given to the establishment of the Software award category in the Transmediale new media art festival (see 1.1): by creating this category, the festival organizers validated Software Art and therefore all artists within that circle (those who create software art or describe their artistic practice as such) are instantly given recognition. It must be noted, however, that these forms of recognition are quite relative and can be ephemeral, subject to the dominating trends at each moment.

Another aspect of the role of the artist in the art world is her relative autonomy: it is assumed that the artist works with total freedom, but this is not so. She must play the role of the innovator or transgressor, developing new, groundbreaking ideas and challenging established ideas. However, this transgression is constrained by the structure of the art world and the market. Nathalie Heinich (1998) states that the “game” of the art world is determined by a set of specific rules are not perceived by the players. The artist participates in this game by breaching frontiers but does not break the rules of the game itself; if she did, she would be excluded from it (p.56). In the new media art scene, many artists develop a strand of their work in the contexts of hacker culture, activism, and unauthorized interventions in the public space, which connects with the role of the

transgressor. In some projects, large corporations, governments and brands are criticized, legal restrictions are breached and controversies are generated, but usually the targets fall outside the structures of the art world and do not question its hegemony. In this way, they are included in art exhibitions and sold in the art market. Examples of these practices can be found in the work of Eva and Franco Mattes, Ubermorgen, Paolo Cirio, Aram Bartholl, and Julian Oliver, among many others. Whereas the festival context allows for (and tends to promote) transgressive practices, the art market frames them as objects with a particular history. As will be discussed in section 2.3, artists engaged in this kind of practices have to find a balance between their performative and activist work and the pieces presented in the context of the gallery. As with other informal barriers, the limitations imposed on the artist’s work are not always visible, but have to be constantly negotiated.

Given the importance that the process of recognition has in the career of an artist, in the following section it will be discussed based on Alan Bowness’s four circles of recognition and the transformations that have been applied to their structure by the developments in the contemporary art world and the new media art scene.

2.1.2 FOUR CIRCLES OF RECOGNITION

Art historian and former director of the TATE Gallery Alan Bowness (1989) asserts that artistic fame is predictable (p.7). Bowness sees two types of artists: “journeymen” who produce work for the art market, and “artists of genius,” who are few in number (p.9). The latter will inevitably find their way into the art museum and the recognition of the great public. Denying the widely held assumption that chance and other unfathomable circumstances play a major role in this process, Bowness describes the “four successive circles of recognition through which the exceptional artist passes on his path to fame” (p.11). The first circle is that of peers: the most intimate surroundings of the emerging artists, where friends, colleagues and particularly other artists of the same generation provide the first level of recognition of the artist’s work. The second circle is that of the recognition of art critics, who evaluate the artist’s work and make it available to others. Their judgments are not final, but sustained by consensus (p.25). However, once a consensus is reached among the critics, there are minor changes in the career of the artist (p.29). In the third circle, art dealers, collectors, and museums integrate the artist’s work into the art market and thereby into private and public collections. Finally, once the artworks have been validated by the professionals and institutions of the art world, they achieve the recognition of the great public, which in turn ensures the artist a place in the history of art (Peist, 2012, p.177). According to Bowness, the whole process takes approximately twenty-five years (p.47). He also considers that artists have “ten (or even five) good years” of artistic production, which takes place in a “fiercely competitive environment” (p. 50). This environment is judged positive, since it is group activity that generates original art, according to the author (p.51). This idea is supported by the observation of the history of art in the twentieth century, in which most renowned artists

have been part of a certain collective. The circles of recognition, as Bowness describes them, can be pictured as follows (fig.7).

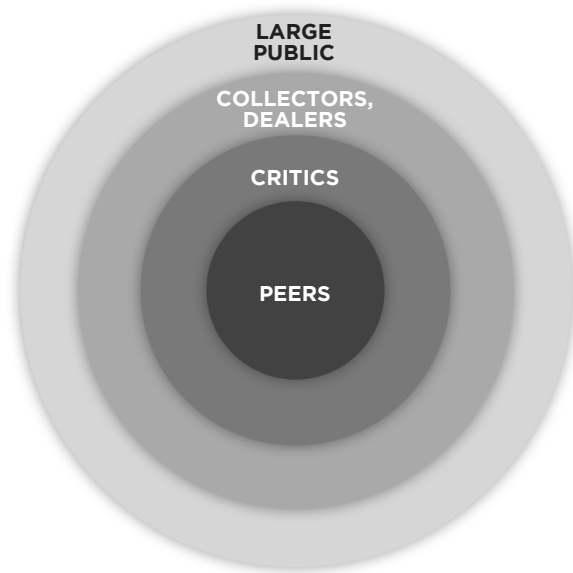


Fig. 7. Visual representation of the four circles of recognition (Bowness, 1989).

The four circles of recognition can be applied to the conditions in which the careers of artists evolved during the twentieth century, until approximately the 1960s. Avant-garde artists such as Picasso or Matisse have attained recognition in a manner that is, to some extent, akin to Bowness's structure, and accordingly they are among the creators that the art historian describes as "artists of genius." Still, the four circles of recognition need to be reconsidered when addressing contemporary art. In the 1960s and 1970s, a transformation took place in the art world as artists tried to escape the white cube of the art gallery and created artworks that refused to adhere to the conventions of the art market. Museums gradually approached artists directly by commissioning work, which in turn originated the emergence of what Raymonde Moulin (1997) describes as "museum-oriented art." According to Moulin:

"Le musée-mécène, intervenant en tant que commanditaire d'oeuvres ou de services artistiques, soutient la création à son émergence et suscite de nouvelles recherches. La sanction du musée précède ici celle du marché." (p.69)²

2. English translation: "The museum-patron, intervening as a commissioner of artworks or artistic services, supports creation when it emerges and promotes new forms of research. The sanction of the museum precedes, in this case, that of the market."

By establishing a direct connection with the artist, the museum shifts from the third circle to the second, replacing critics or working alongside them and preceding art dealers and collectors. An artist can therefore achieve the level of recognition provided by the museum without the sanction of the art market or the validation provided by the incorporation of her work into private and public collections. This does not mean that dealers and collectors are completely absent in the process, only that it is accelerated and does not always require their approval. Furthermore, the recognition attained from a direct commission by a museum may be short lived in some cases, or its relevance may be lessened by the fact that museums increasingly support the work of younger and emerging artists, as well as artists working in experimental disciplines, in a specifically defined space or program. This space or program, usually described as a "laboratory" or "project room," emphasizes its experimental nature and draws a clear separation between its contents and the works exhibited in its permanent collection or temporary exhibition rooms, where the proper validation of an artist's career takes place. It may be argued, even, that museums host exhibitions of experimental works as a form of stressing the institution's commitment to emerging art forms rather than actually stating an official recognition on the level of the museum's reputation.

An example of this situation can be found in the support manifested by several museums towards web-based art in the early 2000s. The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, as well as TATE Modern in London prominently launched commissions of net art works between 1999 and 2008. Significantly, the web itself had become globally widespread, reaching all levels of society with the promise of new channels of distribution, new forms of commerce, and new market niches in this period. Incorporating net art became a trend in major art museums and institutions that had until then ignored this emerging art form. Starting in 1999, The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum commissioned a total of three Internet Art projects: *Brandon* (1997-1998) by Shu Lea Cheang, *Net flag* (2002) by Mark Napier, and *Unfolding Object* (2002) by John F. Simon Jr.³ The Whitney Museum of American Art launched in 2002 Artport, the museum's "portal to Internet art and online gallery space for commissions of net art and new media art."⁴ By 2006, Artport ceased temporarily its activities; it was newly integrated into the Whitney's website around 2010. TATE Modern initiated a series of net art commissions in 2000, which ran intermittently until 2008, to be finally integrated in the Intermedia Art project, which closed in 2010.⁵ An additional project was commissioned in 2011, but neither the Intermedia Art project nor the net art commissions have been developed any further. These discontinued programs speak of a temporary interest in web-based art that emerged when the web started to become a prominent aspect of society and waned as it became integrated in daily life. For the artists who developed these net art commissions, being supported by a major museum has not

3. Internet Art. *Guggenheim Collection Online*. Retrieved from <http://www.guggenheim.org/new-york/collections/collection-online/artwork-types/195197>

4. Artport. Whitney Museum of American Art. Retrieved from <http://whitney.org/Exhibitions/Artport>

5. Intermedia Art. TATE. Retrieved from <http://www2.tate.org.uk/intermediaart/>

meant crossing the last of Bowness's circles of recognition and reaching consecration in the art world. In some cases, it has not even benefited the artwork itself (see 2.1.3).

Another way in which Bowness' four circles have mutated is the connection between the artist and the public. The circle of the public can become the second circle when the work of an artist is distributed on the Internet to become popular through blogs and social networks. This is particularly the case with the younger generation of artists (for instance, Rafaël Rozendaal or Petra Cortright), as well as net art pioneers, who achieved a considerable level of recognition (within the specific audience of the new media art community) by distributing their work online. Rozendaal has stated his interest in reaching a wide audience through the Internet, which gives him "a feeling of empowerment" (Waelder 2013e, p.68). Finally, it can also be considered that the new media art scene, as constituting a separate art world from mainstream contemporary art, should be inserted in the first of Bowness' circles, that of the peers. According to this view, other artists working with new media, the festival circuit, publications devoted to new media art, galleries devoted to new media art, and the part of the public that is more interested in new media all constitute the circle of peers. The new media artist, therefore, has to cross the four circles within this first circle of peers, but once she has reached the recognition of this particular scene, she still has to enter the circle of critics, collectors, and finally the large public of mainstream contemporary art. It may be argued against this vision that the border between the new media art scene, its professionals and its most dedicated public cannot be cleanly delineated and that many artists who have had a successful career in the new media art scene have also had their work presented in the venues of the mainstream contemporary art world. But it is also true that recognition in the new media art scene does not run parallel to a recognition in the mainstream art world, where the work of most new media artists is ignored, as explained in section 1.3. Artists are currently seeking the recognition of the mainstream contemporary art world through the art market, having already developed their career in festivals and specific media-related exhibitions, which some of them do not consider interesting for their careers anymore. In an interview published in the booklet of the exhibition *DECODE: Digital Design Sensations* at the Victoria and Albert Museum in 2009 (see 1.3), artist and engineer Golan Levin posited that, as the computer is used at some stage in almost every artistic practice, all artists are now computer artists. Levin concludes the interview by stating "Soon, hopefully, we will all just be 'artists' again" (Shannon, 2009, p.35).

2.1.3 AFTER THE AWARD CEREMONY

"New Media: term promoted in the 1990s as part of an effort to create a new artistic genre based on programming and software. The rise of the Internet gave way to his new genre, and toward 1999 every other artist was a new media artist. But due to the boredom caused by not being able to see (or buy) interesting physical objects, the contemporary fatigue caused by scrutinizing a monitor, and the anxiety

of new media artists not being treated as real artists in museums, the artists started abandoning their new media definition and lobbied to be accepted again as simple «artists.»" (Helguera, 2007, p.98)

Pablo Helguera's satirical definition of new media art summarizes with surprising accuracy the process that has been described in the previous sections. However, the lack of recognition and the drive towards contemporary art is not a phenomenon of the last decade but goes back to the early experiments with computers in art. One of the first artists to create artworks with a computer, Manfred Mohr (Pforzheim, 1938)⁶ experienced the rejection of the art scene soon after his solo exhibition at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris in 1971 (Waelder, 2011f). Mohr recalls that after the show, which was met with mixed reactions⁷, his status as an artist changed drastically:

"Before the computer, I was pretty known in Paris, with my geometry, I had shows and critics, there are a lot of texts about my work, Catherine Millet she wrote about it. But the thing is that as soon as I touched the computer, everybody closed the doors and the windows. Nobody knew me anymore. I was completely finished." (Addenda A1.7)

Mohr's work was nevertheless widely accepted in engineering schools, where he presented his algorithmic drawings, but decided to go back to the art world and after some time found representation in an art gallery in Cologne. The artist was afraid, back then, to explain that his work was made with a computer, and tended to distance himself from Computer Art in a similar way to how younger artists nowadays express reluctance to be identified with new media art.

Aram Bartholl (Bremen, 1972)⁸ is an artist whose work explores Internet culture through performance, installations and objects, as well as curatorial projects. He has exhibited his work at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) and Pace Gallery in New York, and the Hayward Gallery in London. He is represented by DAM gallery in Berlin and XPO in Paris. He considers himself "in between" the new media art scene and the contemporary art market (see A1.1), having curated projects in *Ars Electronica* and *Trasmediale*, as well as exhibitions such as *OFFLINE ART: new2* (2013), which presented net art in local networks inside the XPO art gallery (see 3.7.2). Moving away from the festival scene, he considers the discussion about the separation between new media art and contemporary art "tiring." The connection with technology, its implications of innovation and promises of the future (see 1.1.2) has also lead some artists to feel that they do not belong to new media art.

6. Manfred Mohr. See <http://www.emohr.com/>

7. A wall panel was installed at the hall of the museum, inviting the public to write their opinions about "aesthetic research made with a computer". Some comments were supportive and others derogatory. Retrieved from http://www.emohr.com/ww1_out.html

8. Aram Bartholl. See <http://datenform.de>

Nicolas Sassoon (Marseille, 1981)⁹ is a young artist who creates web-based artworks in the form of animated GIF images, as well as sculptures, prints, textiles, and installations. He has exhibited his work in the US and Canada, as well as in the Victoria & Albert Museum in London, the Berlin Fashion Week and the New York Fashion Week. He has also collaborated with the New York startup Electric Objects (see 3.9.2) creating artworks for its digital frame. Sassoon belongs to a generation who has been taught in art school by the artists who participated in the digital revolution of the 1990s, and feels distanced from their line of work:

“I identify new media art with a lot of the teachers I’ve had. A lot of my teachers in school were identifying themselves as new media artists, [...] [They] were dealing with video, interactivity, programming, and they were emerging from the 1980s or the 1990s up to the early 2000s and where you work in a laboratory, sometimes you work with technicians, or it requires a team... that is my conception of new media art. I don’t feel like I’m a new media artist at all.” (A1.10)

Artists who work nowadays with technology that is available to anyone do not feel that they are taking part of an art of the future, but rather exploring digital culture as it is today. Sassoon indicates that he seeks his references in art history, tracing connections with Op Art, Kinetic Art and the tradition of painting.

The reaction to the discourses established in new media art festivals is not exclusive of young artists who work with commonly available digital tools, but can also be found among artists who have worked extensively in festivals and use state-of-the-art technology. Rafael Lozano-Hemmer (Mexico City, 1967)¹⁰ is one of the most successful artists working with new media (Waelder, 2012b). He has created large-scale interactive installations in numerous cities around the world, and has exhibited his work in many art museums and received a large number of awards. His studio Antimodular in Montreal manages the production and maintenance of his pieces, many of which are developed with custom technology. Despite his success in both the new media art scene and the contemporary art world, Lozano-Hemmer considers that it is more interesting for him to leave behind the festivals and focus on the contemporary art institutions to achieve proper recognition:

“Entonces yo soy, digamos, un ejemplo del típico artista que sale de V2, de Ars Electronica, del ZKM, etc. pero que ahora, la verdad, no tengo gran interés en volver a esos sitios. Por más que los respete, y que creo que deben mantenerse. A mí me parece el reto ahora cómo re-presentar la obra para que pueda tener un discurso con las grandes narrativas de intelectuales, de artistas, de críticos... que al final, si tu obra no está en el TATE, va a ser olvidada, Pau. Se va a olvidar lo que hiciste.” (A1.6)¹¹

9. Nicolas Sassoon. See <http://nicolassassoon.com>

10. Rafael Lozano-Hemmer. See <http://www.lozano-hemmer.com/>

11. English translation: “Then I am, let’s say, a typical example of the artist who came from V2, Ars Electronica, ZKM, etc. but now, to tell the truth, I am not particularly interested in coming back to those places. As much as

However, many artists working with new media have realized that participating in group shows in the most prestigious contemporary art museums or even having their work acquired for their collections does not entail a consecration in the way that Bowness described. An illustrative example can be found in Shu Lea Cheang’s *Brandon*, a web project developed between 1998 and 1999 that invites the user to explore the story of Brandon Teena, a transgender teenager who was raped and murdered in Nebraska in 1993. For the space of a year, the artist created an open space for discussion with chat rooms and organized events that were broadcast online. Initially presented in the Netherlands, in conjunction with the Society for Old and New Media (DeWaag), *Brandon* was the first web art project to be commissioned by the Guggenheim Museum.¹² Curator Caitlin Jones underscores the relevance of Cheang’s artwork in art history:

“Notable for being the Guggenheim Museum’s first official engagement with the then-emerging medium of Internet art and one of the first works of this medium commissioned by a major institution, *Brandon* is often cited as a watershed moment for the movement and for its important place in the history of contemporary art.”¹³

The web project is, however, offline since 2012 for reasons unknown to the artist (Ho, 2012). Shu Lea Cheang expressed her disappointment after trying to bring the artwork back online for two years, stating that “the high hope in the 90s for the virtual museum seems to have vanished” (A1.2). With these words, the artist describes both the technical difficulties that museums have had (and still have) to preserve digital art works and their fading interest in this kind of art. Cheang herself admits having lost interest in gaining recognition from the institutions in the art world:

“I was very much part of the museum system, but i finally give up on the gallery scene, working more in the open fields....surely any art needs museum endorsement in certain form, this I cannot deny or resist. [...] but yes, my work is really processing, durational work, it is very hard for gallery presentation/sale. [...] I am interested in the museum as the effective public interface, but i am not seeking art market’s certification.” (A1.2)

Having a seminal artwork in the Guggenheim’s collection does not seem to have propelled Cheang’s career, nor that of the other artists whose work was bought by the Guggenheim, Mark Napier, and John F. Simon Jr. According to data obtained by the market analysis platform Artfacts in 2014, none of these artists has increased their ranking or number

I respect them, and believe that they must continue. What seems to me to be a challenge now is how to re-present the work so that it can have a discourse alongside the main narratives of intellectuals, artists, critics... because in the end, if your work is not at TATE, it’s going to be forgotten, Pau. What you did will be forgotten.”

12. *Brandon* was produced in association with the Waag Society for Old and New Media, The Institute on the Arts and Civic Dialogue at Harvard University, and The Banff Centre, with additional funding from The Bohen Foundation, The Rockefeller Foundation, the New York Foundation for the Arts, and the Mondriaan Foundation.

13. Jones, C. (2009). Shu Lea Cheang. Guggenheim Collection Online. Retrieved from <http://www.guggenheim.org/new-york/collections/collection-online/artwork/15337>

of exhibitions since the year their artwork was acquired by the museum¹⁴. Although the quantitative data from a market analysis firm must be interpreted cautiously when considering the recognition of an artist, it can be stated that the trajectories of these artists are remarkably different from the path described by Bowness.

This situation is clearly expressed by artist Evan Roth (USA, 1978),¹⁵ whose work explores digital culture with a particular connection with street art and hacker communities. As a member of the Graffiti Research Lab, he was very successful with projects such as *L.A.S.E.R. Tag* (2006) in new media art festivals, and later on participated in the project *EyeWriter* (2009), which won a Golden Nica in the Interactive Art category in 2010 and was exhibited at the MoMA in New York in 2011. Roth expressed his disappointment when, after attaining these career achievements, he realized that his position as an artist had not improved:

“And so, after winning Ars Electronica, and getting all these great awards, after those events closed and I flew back home, I wasn't in a more empowered position as an artist. We're still scrapping for 500€ artist fees, and really having to send lots of emails to get them. So it wasn't a position of empowerment.” (A1.8)

Achieving recognition is a complex process. It bears mentioning again that, according to Bowness (1989), it takes twenty-five years to complete, and although this stretch of time has arguably been shortened, it is still longer in the contemporary art world than in the new media art festival circuit. Artists who have developed their careers in this network have to re-position themselves in the larger context of the contemporary art world. As previously mentioned, even a renowned artist like Rafael Lozano-Hemmer notices that the path to consecration is more complicated than it seems. It would require that new media art be really integrated into the program of large art institutions, as well as to the main discourses of art history. Initiatives such as the DDAA Digital Art Award,¹⁶ promoted by DAM gallery between 2005 and 2010 (see 3.7.1); the Prix Ars Electronica Visionary Pioneers of Media Art,¹⁷ introduced in 2014; and the Prix Net Art,¹⁸ introduced in 2014, have sought to provide recognition to those artists whose groundbreaking contributions in art and new media have been overlooked. These awards, particularly in the case of Ars Electronica, have not been without controversy, given that they have opened the discussion on who deserves to be recognized and who decides it. And in any case, as Roth indicates, after the awards ceremony closes, it is still questionable whether the artist has really achieved a better position in the hierarchy of the art world.

14. Data obtained on May 1, 2014. Retrieved from <http://www.artfacts.net/>

15. Evan Roth. See <http://www.evan-roth.com>

16. DDAA Digital Art Award. See <http://www.ddaa-online.org/>

17. Visionary Pioneers of Media Art Award. See <http://www.aec.at/prix/visionary-pioneers/>

18. Prix Net Art. See <http://prix-netart.org/>

2.2 SURVEY: ARE YOU A NEW MEDIA ARTIST?

In their careers, artists face difficult choices related to the type of work they produce, where they present it, if they try to make a living from their artistic practice or if they carry out a different professional activity and dedicate their spare time to create art. Collectively, these individual choices contribute to shape the development of new media art and the discourses that surround it. In order to obtain an overview of the perspectives and expectations of new media artists, a survey was deemed an adequate tool, enabling the collection of a large amount of data and establishing an initial contact with a large pool of artists who could be contacted later on for a personal interview.

Between March 15 and June 15 2013 I elaborated an online survey that was sent to 800 artists and artists collectives in 42 countries. The survey was conducted using the QuestionPro online survey software tool,¹⁹ which produced the statistics and reports used in this section. QuestionPro was selected among other options due to its range of professional services that included a highly customizable template, real-time reports and emailing services, as well as the possibility of exporting data to many formats (including Excel, SPSS, or CSV). The survey (see section 2.2.2) was not publicly announced. Instead a personal email was sent to each artist in order to minimize the risk of obtaining false responses by other people, be it artists not related to new media art, curators, researchers or any other person who may answer the questionnaire with the sole intention of finding out which questions are posed. In order to determine the target group and gather contact details from each individual, a census was carried out during the months of February and March 2013 (see section 2.2.1). The census was considered complete once a notable redundancy of names was appreciated in the sources being consulted; a total of 800 names (778 individuals and 22 artists's collectives) was reached. Each individual and collective was contacted via email or through an online form on their website. A formal letter of invitation was sent to each member of the target group (see section 2.2.2), as well as a reminder in the 10-15 days that followed the initial message. The last question in the survey asked participants if they agreed to be interviewed; this led to several semi-structured personal interviews that have been included in this dissertation. In the following sections, a detailed description of the survey process is presented, as well as an analysis of the results.

2.2.1 CENSUS OF NEW MEDIA ARTISTS

In order to carry out a survey among new media artists, it has been necessary to identify them and collect information about their work as well as contact details. Completing this objective proved less straightforward than what it could be expected. As outlined in section 1.1, attempting to define “new media art” or “new media artist” is a Sisyphean

19. Question Pro: <http://www.questionpro.com/>. A Corporate plan was contracted for the duration of the survey in order to access all of the features of this tool, including data segmentation and cross-tabulation.

task, since the term “new media art” is unstable and subject to constant questioning by the same professionals involved in its making, distribution, and study. Therefore, I decided to apply a definition of this term that encompasses the type of artworks that are generally discussed in literature about new media art (and related terms digital art, bio art, computer art and electronic art) and presented in festivals and exhibitions devoted to this type of artistic practice. Initially, the definition suggested by Beryl Graham and Sarah Cook (2010) based on the three behaviors of interactivity, connectivity, and computability (see 1.1) seemed applicable to all new media art. Still, this definition cannot be applied to most bioart works, since the artistic practices dealing with living tissue do not necessarily imply any form of interactivity, connectivity, or computability. Thus, a different definition was needed, that not only refers to the technology being used but also the concept behind the artwork. The working definitions applied in the context of this research project are, therefore, the following:

- new media art: art made using electronic, digital, and bio technologies that reflects on the implications of the use of said technologies in contemporary culture and society.
- new media artist: a person who creates artworks using electronic, digital, and bio technologies with the purpose of reflecting on the implications of the use of said technologies in contemporary culture and society.

While these definitions may seem redundant, it is important to underscore the intentions of the artist, since nowadays most artists use computers or other devices in different stages of their working process, even if the resulting artwork does not refer to the impact of technology in our society. Beyond the use of these definitions as criteria for the selection of the artists in the census, other considerations were made in relation to the specific objectives of the current research project. Seeking to apply the results of the survey to the current interactions among art, new media, and the art market I also focused on artists who are currently actively involved in the art world by participating in exhibitions, festivals, and awards, as well as those being represented by an art gallery. Also, since the institutions and events, as well as the academic literature devoted to new media art contribute to define it in terms of applying categories and choosing which artworks are being shown or studied, their criteria for selection was included. Finally, Graham and Cook’s definition was taken into account as an additional criterion. In summary, the following criteria were used:

- C1: the artist is presently active (has had exhibitions in the last two years, and/or has upcoming shows).
- C2: the artist has been shortlisted or awarded in new media festivals (Ars Electronica, Transmediale, FILE, and others).
- C3: the artist’s work is mentioned in essays on new media art and directories (Rhizome, Media Art Net, and others).
- C4: the artist is represented by one or more galleries focused on new media art (bitforms, DAM, Postmasters, and others).

- C5: the artist creates artworks that present Dietz’s three main characteristics of new media art (interactivity, connectivity, computability).
- C6: the artist identifies him or herself as a new media artist.

As these criteria do not constitute a definition of what a “new media artist” is or should be, the selected artists did not have to meet all criteria, but meeting at least two of them was deemed necessary. Due to the focus of this research on the art market, where mainly works of visual art are distributed, artists working exclusively with sound installations and digital musicians (who are also present in most new media art festivals) were not included in the census.

The criteria were chosen for several reasons. In order to obtain an impression of how artists see the art market, they had to be currently active (C1): some artists who have developed a career decades ago have quit or focused on academic positions, and therefore they may not be up to date with the current developments of the art market. Artists working within the new media art scene can be considered new media artists, as they are identified as such by the context in which their work is presented. Therefore, participating in new media festivals (C2), being mentioned in essays on new media art (C3), or being represented by a gallery focused on new media art (C4) can be considered indicators of this identification. Some artists do not necessarily identify themselves as new media artists; however, they create artworks that share the same characteristics of those considered new media artworks. Therefore, the characteristics proposed by Steve Dietz (C5) have been used to identify the work of a possible “new media artist,” although in every case artists who matched C5 also matched other criteria, such as C2, C3, C4. Finally, the fact that the artist identifies him or herself as a new media artist (C6) has been considered sufficient cause for considering the inclusion of the artist in the census, although in all cases the work of the artist has been examined previously.

The census includes 800 artists from 50 countries (Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Colombia, Chile, China, Denmark, El Salvador, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Japan, South Korea, Lithuania, Mexico, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Perú, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Singapore, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, Turkey, United Kingdom, Uruguay, USA). The countries with most artists included in the census are the USA (22.5%), Germany (9.13%), France (8.38%), United Kingdom (7.5%), and Spain (7%). Approximately 17% of the artists in the census are represented by galleries, although this number is difficult to establish accurately, since not all artists indicate gallery representation on their websites. Gender has not been taken into account, since it is beyond the scope of this research to detect the differences between male and female artists in terms of the reception of their work or their career paths in the new media art world. Moreover, many artists work in collaboration with others, sometimes as a couple (for instance, Christa Sommerer and Laurent Mignonneau, Erwin Driessens and Maria Verstappen, or Revital Cohen and

Tuur van Balen), which makes a differentiation based on gender impractical. Age was not taken into account either, since most artists in the census are aged 25-40 and have developed their careers over the last ten years.

It must be noted that the census does not cover the total number of artists currently working with new media in each country. It is the output of a selection based on the criteria described above that was carried out in early 2013, and therefore it must not be read as an exact enumeration of the media art practitioners in the world. Its purpose is to enable a statistical study of a representative sample of the target group.

2.2.2 ELABORATION OF THE SURVEY

2.2.2.1 Objectives

The survey was part of the first round of interviews with the professionals involved in the new media and mainstream contemporary art worlds. The main objectives of the survey were the following:

1. to obtain information about artist's perceptions related to the new media and mainstream contemporary art worlds, as well as their own professional careers in the form of data that can be processed quantitatively, and
2. to contact artists that could be interviewed in the next phase of research.

In relation to the first main objective, the questionnaire was aimed at obtaining a quantitative answer to a series of questions that are presented on this table, along with the four research objectives to which they can provide valuable data:

Question	Related objective
Do artists see themselves as "new media artists"? What does "new media" mean to them? (Q1, Q2, Q3)	O1. To examine the concept of the art world and its workings as a social context, how an art world is created and how it defines itself.
Are "new media" artists visible, i.e. present in exhibitions, the art market, and the media? (Q5, Q6, Q11)	O3. To describe the process of recognition in the context of mainstream contemporary art and the art market.
What is the experience of "new media" artists in the art world? Are they more comfortable in the art market or in non-commercial exhibitions? (Q5a-b, Q11a-b)	O1. To examine the concept of the art world and its workings as a social context, how an art world is created and how it defines itself.

What are the objectives of their professional careers? Are they more interested in exhibiting and selling their art or in research? (Q7, Q4, Q12)	O3. To describe the process of recognition in the context of mainstream contemporary art and the art market.
Are artists independent in their funding or dependent on the art market, grants or research funding? (Q8)	O4. To analyze the interactions of new media art and the art market in the modes of presentation, distribution, and selling of new media artworks.
Do artists adapt their works to the conditions of the gallery or museum? (Q9, Q10)	O2. To understand the functioning of the contemporary art market in the context of the network society.
Do artists consider the programmed obsolescence of new media art works? (Q13)	O4. To analyze the interactions of new media art and the art market in the modes of presentation, distribution, and selling of new media artworks.

Table 7. Survey questions and related research objectives.

Since the results of the survey can be applied to different aspects of this research project, they are addressed in other sections of this dissertation, while the overall analysis of the collected data is discussed below (see 2.3).

2.2.2.2 Elaboration and distribution

An initial questionnaire has been developed following a set of e-mail interviews with several artists, selected among those I had been working with during 2013. The criteria for selecting these artists has been: 1) they are artists working with new media, 2) they are currently exhibiting their work in commercial art galleries and non-commercial venues (*Kunsthallen*, museums), 3) since the questionnaire had to be confidential at this stage, I selected artists with whom I have a close relationship and therefore can rely on their discretion. I compared their responses to those I had received previously from other artists interviewed. The combination of all these responses has contributed to shape the questions and options provided in this questionnaire.

The questionnaire is composed of 17 closed-ended questions. The reason to choose closed-ended questions is twofold:

- a) the questionnaire can be answered more quickly and therefore it is more likely to be completed by a larger amount of individuals,
- b) closed-ended questions provide answers that can be easily coded and provide a quantitative perspective of the artist's perception of the art world and their own artistic practice.

However, six questions included an open-ended option in order to prevent respondent frustration when none of the other options seemed applicable to their specific views and also to provide the possibility of expanding the information provided in their answer (the open-ended options are discussed in the survey analysis in section 2.2.3). Respondents were asked to provide personal details (name, email, website) in order to identify them as part of the population under study, and also to be able to contact them at a later stage, e.g. for a semi-structured interview. Personal details were required at the end of the questionnaire, as it was deemed probable that respondents would be reluctant to provide their details before answering the questions, and after completing the questionnaire they might be more willing to do so, if only for the sake of finishing the process.

What follows is a list of the questions and answers (in several formats: Likert scale, single answer and multiple answer) provided in the questionnaire. Some questions included the option of an open-ended answer in order to allow respondents to provide a more nuanced or precise answer, as well as to express their opinion on the issues being raised by the question.

#	Question	Answers
Q1	How would you define yourself? Please select the sentence that better describes you.	Single answer with the following options: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am an artist working with new media • I am a new media artist • I am an artist working with any available means, depending on the artwork • I am a contemporary artist
Q2	Does the use of electronic or digital media define your artistic practice?	Single answer and open-ended text: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, I consider that it defines my work • No, these are just tools for me • No, I consider these media important but they do not define my work • Other
Q3	Is there a difference between new media art and mainstream contemporary art?	Single answer and open-ended text: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, new media art has its own specific qualities as an art form. • No, there are no differences, it is just art. • There are differences, but I do not like to use the term “new media.” • Other

Q4	Do you consider that exhibiting your work is an important part (or the goal) of your artistic practice?	Single answer: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, exhibiting my work is the goal of my artistic practice • Yes, it is an important part of my artistic practice • No, it is not the aim of my artistic research, although I do participate in exhibitions • No, I am not interested in exhibiting my work
Q5	Have you shown your work in the following non-commercial exhibition spaces? Please check all that apply.	Multiple answers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Art museums or Kunsthallen • Science or technology museums • Film or media museums • New media art festivals • Contemporary art biennials or festivals • Group exhibitions related to symposia • Non-commercial or artist-run galleries • Public spaces • None of the above
Q5a	Please rate your experience in terms of the presentation of your work	Contingency question with Likert scale (Excellent – Good – Normal – Disappointing – Awful) for each of the items in 4: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Art museums or Kunsthallen • Science or technology museums • Film or media museums • New media art festivals • Contemporary art biennials or festivals • Group exhibitions related to symposia • Non-commercial or artist-run galleries • Public spaces
Q5b	Please rate your experience in terms of the consequences for your artistic career	Contingency question with Likert scale (Very positive – Positive – Couldn't tell – Negative – Very negative) for each of the items in 4: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Art museums or Kunsthallen • Science or technology museums • Film or media museums • New media art festivals • Contemporary art biennials or festivals • Group exhibitions related to symposia • Non-commercial or artist-run galleries • Public spaces

Q6	How often has your work been mentioned or reviewed in the following media?	Contingency question with Likert scale (Every time I create an artwork – Every time I show my work in an exhibition – More than five times – Less than five times – Rarely – Never) with the following options: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newspapers • Magazines • Books • Websites (besides your own site) • TV
Q7	Which actions would you like to be taken in order to give your work more exposure and recognition? Please select up to 4 options.	Multiple answers and open-ended text: Solo show in a major museum or Kunsthalle (e.g.: MoMA, TATE) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation in a group show in a major museum or Kunsthalle • Participation in a major biennial or event (e.g.: Venice Biennale, documenta) • National pavilion show at the Venice Biennale • Participation in a new media festival (e.g.: Ars Electronica, Transmediale, FILE) • Solo show in a large commercial art gallery • Acquisition of my work by a well-known collector • Publication of a book about new media art that includes my work • Publication of a book with essays about my work by art critics and curators • Publication of a collection of academic papers about my work • Participation in a symposium with a lecture about my work • None of the above • Other

Q8	How do you finance the production of your artistic projects? Please check all that apply.	Multiple answers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I get funding from an art gallery • I get funding from collectors, patrons, or friends • I get funding from my own personal/company resources • I get funding from exhibition fees/ production is paid by venue • I get funding from grants, awards and/or residencies • I get funding from the sales of previous works • I prefer not to answer to this question
Q9	When you are developing an artwork, do you consider the conditions under which it could be sold to an institution or collector?	Single answer with open-ended text: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, I try to make my work stable and as much “plug-and-play” as possible • Yes, although my work requires site-specific set up • Yes, although I cannot guarantee for how long it will work due to its experimental nature and/or external conditions (data flows, APIs, etc.) • No, I focus on my work and later on consider if it can be sold • No, I think that museums and collectors should worry about the preservation of the artwork • No, I'm not interested in the art market • Other

Q10	Have you ever adapted a work in order to sell it or created derivative work (e.g.: prints, videos) that could be sold?	<p>Single answer with open-ended text:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sometimes I adapt my work in order to make it suitable for selling and collecting • Sometimes I create derivate works (prints, videos) that can be sold and collected, since the original work cannot be collected (e.g.: performance, temporary intervention) • Usually I do not adapt my work but I provide means for it to be sold and collected (e.g.: contract, domain name registration) • Although I sell prints, videos and/or objects, I do not consider them to be derivate work but part of the artwork. • Most of my work is created in a format that is already suitable for a gallery or collector • Most of my work is commissioned so I do not need to consider if it will be sold • I do not adapt my work or consider the conditions under which it can be sold • Other
Q11	Have you shown your work in the following commercial exhibition spaces? Please check all that apply	<p>Multiple answers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small commercial art gallery (local reach and/or small city) • Medium commercial art gallery (large city and/or participates in medium or alternative art fairs) • Large commercial art gallery (participates in major art fairs) • Medium or alternative art fair (e.g.: Volta, Scope) • Major art fair (e.g.: ArtBasel, Frieze) • None of the above

Q11a	Please rate your experience in terms of the presentation of your work	<p>Contingency question with Likert scale (Excellent – Good – Normal – Disappointing – Awful) for each of the items in 11:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small commercial art gallery (local reach and/or small city) • Medium commercial art gallery (large city and/or participates in medium or alternative art fairs) • Large commercial art gallery (participates in major art fairs) • Medium or alternative art fair (e.g.: Volta, Scope) • Major art fair (e.g.: ArtBasel, Frieze)
Q11b	Please rate your experience in terms of the consequences for your artistic career	<p>Contingency question with Likert scale (Very positive – Positive – Couldn't tell – Negative – Very negative) for each of the items in 11:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small commercial art gallery (local reach and/or small city) • Medium commercial art gallery (large city and/or participates in medium or alternative art fairs) • Large commercial art gallery (participates in major art fairs) • Medium or alternative art fair (e.g.: Volta, Scope) • Major art fair (e.g.: ArtBasel, Frieze)
Q12	Is it necessary for an artist to work with commercial galleries in order to develop his or her career?	<p>Contingency question with Likert scale (Totally agree – Agree – Neither agree nor disagree – Totally disagree) for the following items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An artist can only develop a professional career working with commercial galleries • Working with commercial galleries is helpful, but not the only way to develop a career • One must reach a balance between commercial shows and non-commercial shows at museums, biennials or festivals • Shows at museums, biennials or festivals are better for an artist's career than gallery shows • Commercial galleries do not help in developing an artist's career

Q13	When you are developing an artistic project, do you take into account how it can be preserved?	<p>Single answer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, I have developed strategies for the preservation of the artworks (use of standards, commented code, documentation, backups, updates, etc.) • Yes, although I depend on others (programmers, technicians) to update/repair the code/hardware. • Yes, although I do not have the time/resources to preserve or update it. • No, I do not know how to update the technology I use in my artworks. • No, I am confident that museums/collectors will take care of the preservation of my artworks. • No, I consider that the artworks must not be updated or preserved, but rather have a life cycle. • No, my artworks must be performed on every occasion with the available technology. • Other
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Table 8. Questions and pre-defined answers provided in the questionnaire.

An invitation to participate in the survey was sent by email to the artists listed in the census. The invitation read as follows:

Hello,

My name is Pau Waelder. I am a curator, art critic, and currently a PhD candidate in the Information and Knowledge Society Doctoral Program at the Internet Interdisciplinary Institute of the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (UOC), as well as editor of the Media Art section in the contemporary art magazine *art.es*.

As part of my dissertation research, I would like to invite you to participate in the research survey *Artists's Perspectives on Art and New Media*.

Your feedback as an artist working with technology is very important for this research. All responses will remain confidential and secure. If you are willing to collaborate further on the project, I would be glad to contact you later on for a personal interview. Thank you in advance for your valuable insights.

Pau

pau@pauwaelder.com

<http://www.pauwaelder.com>

In this message, I stated my position as a professional in the art world, as well as my affiliation to the university, in order to indicate that the survey was carried out on the grounds of a direct involvement with the art world and with a serious purpose. I also expected my position as editor in a contemporary art magazine to be an incentive for some artists to participate, since it implied in a veiled manner that their work had caught the attention of a specialized media outlet. The title of the survey underscored the focus on artist's opinions, indicating the importance of the professional experience of the respondent. Both the title of the survey and in the description of the profile of the respondent ("an artist working with technology") the terms "new media art" and "new media artist" were avoided intentionally. I was aware that many artists do not agree with the use of these terms, and they usually do not like to be defined in terms of the media they use (the first two questions of the questionnaire address this issues on purpose).

In this message, the possibility of carrying out a personal interview at a later stage is advanced; I insisted on the fact that the answers were to be treated confidentially. These sentences are included, on the one hand, in order to counter the effect that surveys have on respondents, who feel at the same time flattered by the attention given to them but also treated as a mere statistic when they are answering questions with a limited set of possible answers. This is a particularly delicate issue with artists, who usually expect to receive attention for their work as individuals, not as part of a larger group. On the other hand, since some of the questions (related to personal expectations, finance and opinions about galleries and institutions) can be considered sensitive according to the definition provided by Gideon (2012, p.377), I deemed necessary to underscore the strict confidentiality of the information provided by the participant. Considering that this message was sent to all participants, I preferred not to add an invitation to share the link with others. This would have opened the possibility of an uncontrolled distribution of the survey that, however positive in terms of the number of respondents, would entail a probable contamination of the results. For this same reason, the survey was not distributed in email lists nor discussion forums. I only included such an invitation in personal emails addressed to artists whom I knew could provide contacts to other artists working with new media.

When the respondent clicked on the link, she was taken to a website on which a welcome page displayed a short message outlining the purpose of the survey and reminding of the average duration of the questionnaire (10 minutes) and the confidentiality in the treatment of the information being provided by each participant.

The questionnaire was translated into English and Spanish, considering that many artists living in Spain and Latin America may not be fluent enough in English to complete the questionnaire, or may be discouraged from doing so if it required an additional effort. While it could have also been positive to translate the survey into other languages (Portuguese, German, Italian, French, Japanese), these versions implied risks in the use of certain terms that may not have been properly translated and could therefore generate different answers. Moreover, most of the population with the level of education of the

artists being contacted in France, Italy, Germany, and Japan is fluent in English, as well as the corresponding population in Portugal and Brazil, who usually understand well English and Spanish. The QuestionPro online survey software tool allowed for a multi-language survey with only one database, ensuring that the answers provided by respondents would be processed equally, regardless of the language in which the survey was taken.

2.2.2.3 Response

The website registered 815 individual users accessing the survey (more than those included in the census, due to several artists sharing the link with other colleagues), of which 564 answered at least the first question; 393 completed the questionnaire (69.7% completion rate). Therefore, while almost all of the contacted artists accessed the survey (which seems to indicate an interest on the subject as it was expressed in the invitation email), a considerable percentage (approx. 30.8%) did not start the survey, and 48.22% of the artists who accessed the survey completed it. This was probably due to a lack of time or because people tend to be less willing to participate in a survey if the perceived rewards are not greater than the costs associated with responding, among other reasons (Gideon, 2012, p.128,187). While the implication of a possible reward for the respondent in the form of a review of their work or an interview being published in *art.es* magazine was (subtly) included in the invitation email, it could not be openly stated since it was beyond my capabilities to offer published articles and interviews to 800 artists. Moreover, even if this could be understood as a reward, it may probably not be enough to encourage participation in the way that other types of rewards would do, such as monetary incentives or gifts (in other sorts of surveys) or even the promise of a review in a more influential art magazine. Another form of incentive implied in the invitation letter follows the scarcity principle (Gideon, 2012, p.127), that suggests that emphasizing the importance of the participation of the respondent, who cannot be substituted by anyone else, will increase the chances of her involvement. The effectiveness of this incentive cannot be measured in this survey, but it has probably engaged a considerable number of respondents, since it is actually true that they belong to a small community and therefore their feedback is hardly replaceable.

As for the 30.3% of respondents who started but did not complete the survey, the reasons must be found in the contents of the questionnaire. Drop outs start mostly at Q5, probably due to the use of contingency questions with a Likert scale, which requires more detailed answers and evaluations. For this reason, Q11 (initially placed after Q5) was located at the end of the questionnaire. It also helped the participants to differentiate between non-commercial and commercial exhibitions. Q7 was aimed at collecting data about what artists perceived as forms of obtaining recognition, but it was not well received by some (according to comments in the open-ended text option) and many simply chose all of the possible options. Q8, Q9 and Q10 also proved difficult in some cases (motivating some respondents to drop out at this point) due to the fact that they address specific matters

related to the production and selling of the artworks, which can be considered “intimate” (see section 2.3 for a more detailed analysis of the answers to each question).

Among those who participated, the completion rate is considerably high (69.7%). The respondents's attitude towards the survey in this segment seems favorable, since 79.9% (314 respondents) answered positively to the last question, agreeing to be interviewed and providing contact details. Some of those who answered “no” sent an email explaining the reason why they could not be available for an interview. Most participants answered Q1 to Q4, which focus on their self-perception and address key issues such as the use of the term “new media art” and the perceived separation between new media art and contemporary art. It can be inferred, then, that the main motivation to participate in the survey was a personal satisfaction in voicing their opinions and defining their position as professionals of the art world. This motivation, that has been defined as egoistic (Gideon, 2012, p.126), probably fades away when the respondent is asked, in Q5, to provide more “statistical” data such as the type of non-commercial exhibition spaces where she has shown her work and leads to some respondents dropping out of the questionnaire.

The feedback provided in those questions that allowed for an open-ended answer also reveals the participant's implication in several key issues, regardless of whether they completed the survey or not. Six questions (from a total of fifteen) included the option of an open-ended answer. Table 9 displays the questions alongside the number of participants who opted to provide a written answer, as well as the percentage of this kind of replies from the total replies to each question.

#	Question	Open-ended answers	Percentage
Q2	Does the use of electronic or digital media define your artistic practice?	53	10.79%
Q3	Is there a difference between new media art and mainstream contemporary art?	80	16.91%
Q7	Which actions would you like to be taken in order to give your work more exposure and recognition?	65	2.25%
Q9	When you are developing an artwork, do you consider the conditions under which it could be sold to an institution or collector?	31	7.31%
Q10	Have you ever adapted a work in order to sell it or created derivative work (e.g.: prints, videos) that could be sold?	26	6.15%
Q13	When you are developing an artistic project, do you take into account how it can be preserved?	45	11.03%

Table 9. Questions with open-ended answers

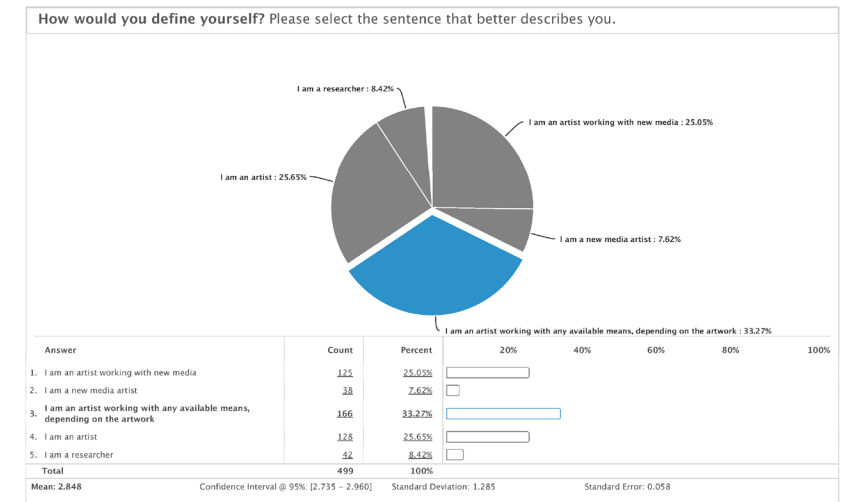
In Q2 and Q3, an open-ended answer was provided because the issue being raised by the question was too complex or controversial to be limited to a set of pre-defined answers, and it was expected that limiting the options of feedback to those answers would cause frustration among respondents. In Q7, Q9, Q10, and Q14 a text box was included to allow respondents to provide more detailed answers. Although the replies to each question will be more thoroughly discussed in section 2.2.3, some general observations regarding this particular form of feedback within the survey are outlined below in order to provide an overall picture of the respondents's participation:

- The percentage of open-ended answers in each question is relatively low: 10.43% on average, considering only those questions that allowed for a single answer (all except Q7). This means that respondents were mostly satisfied with the pre-defined questions. Therefore, respondents who chose an open-ended answer must have had a particular motivation to do so.
- Q7 is a notable exception, since it is a multiple answer question with 13 possible answers, which shows a lower percentage despite a relatively large number of open-ended replies. As will be discussed in section 2.2.2.3, the open-ended answer became in this case a space in which the respondent commented on the format of the question itself, which was faulty in its design and was not understood by several participants.
- Q2, Q3, and Q7 prompted most open-ended answers. This can be due to the subjects raised by these questions, particularly Q3, which prompted more elaborate, visceral, or ironic answers. As mentioned before, Q7 was answered with criticism but also with additional options of desired forms of recognition that denote the sensitive nature of this issue. By asking what defines the artists' practice, Q2 also incited more elaborate or critical answers.
- Q9, Q10, and Q14 deal with selling and preservation of the artist's work. Asking about these issues lead to open-ended answers that provide more detailed information about the respondent's practice and reveal the difficulties artists face when entering the art market (if they enter it at all) and preserving their own artworks.

As is the case in many surveys, response persuasion leads participants to express positive judgments (Gideon, 2012, p.164): this can be seen particularly in questions 5a-b and 11a-b, in which most artists express very positive experiences in every exhibition (commercial and non-commercial). These answers contrast with what artists have expressed in interviews and informal talks. What is more, the delicate issues pointed out in Q9 and Q10, related to adapting an artwork in order to being able to sell it result in what may be "politically correct" answers. For instance, in Q9 the most popular answer is "No, I focus on my work and later on consider if it can be sold" (38.44%), and in Q10 is "I do not adapt my work or consider the conditions under which it can be sold" (30.97%). While this may be true, observation of the art market shows that most artists adapt their artworks to salable formats. Despite these apparent contradictions, it is concluded that the respondents filled in the questionnaire with a positive and collaborative attitude, as can be inferred from the open-ended replies, in which artists always aim to provide more information, even if they are being critical.

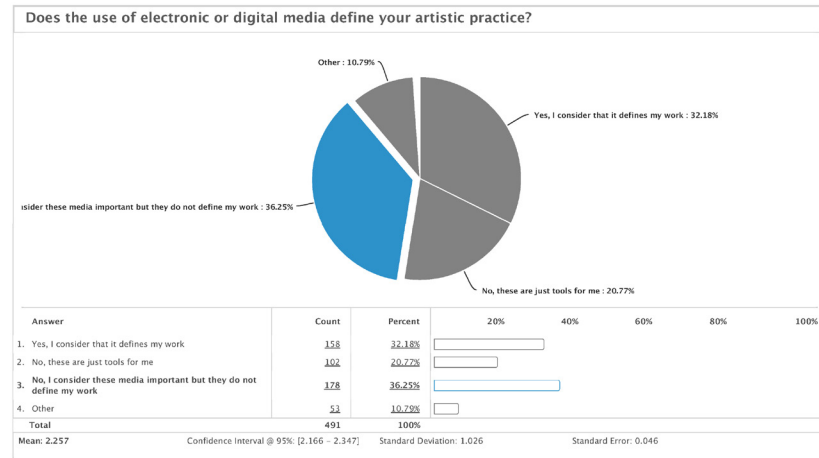
2.2.3 SURVEY ANALYSIS

This section provides a more detailed examination of the answers to each of the questions in the questionnaire. Observing each question individually will serve the purpose of pointing out the issues related to them, while establishing connections between certain replies will help configure an average profile of artists working with new media based on the data collected in this survey.



Q1. How would you define yourself? Please select the sentence that better describes you.

The most popular answer to this question is "I am an artist working with any available means, depending on the artwork" (33.27%), followed by "I am an artist" (25.65%) and "I am an artist working with new media" (25.05%). The option "I am a new media artist" is the least popular (7.62%). Therefore, the large majority of respondents (83.97% combined) prefer to be considered "an artist" without any labels attached to it. Although most of the respondents participate regularly in new media art festivals and have their work reviewed in magazines and essays about new media art, few of them describe themselves as "new media artists." These data support the perception that artists are now less interested in using the "new media art" label and are rather inclined to be considered professionals of the contemporary art world (as discussed in section 2.1). Tellingly, a slightly larger number of respondents chose the term "researcher" (8.42%) rather than "new media artist." The fact that some respondents describe themselves as researchers and not as artists indicates that they conceive their practice as something that does not belong to the art world. It might be expected, then, that these individuals may not be interested in selling their work at the art market or participating in exhibitions that are not related to a research project.

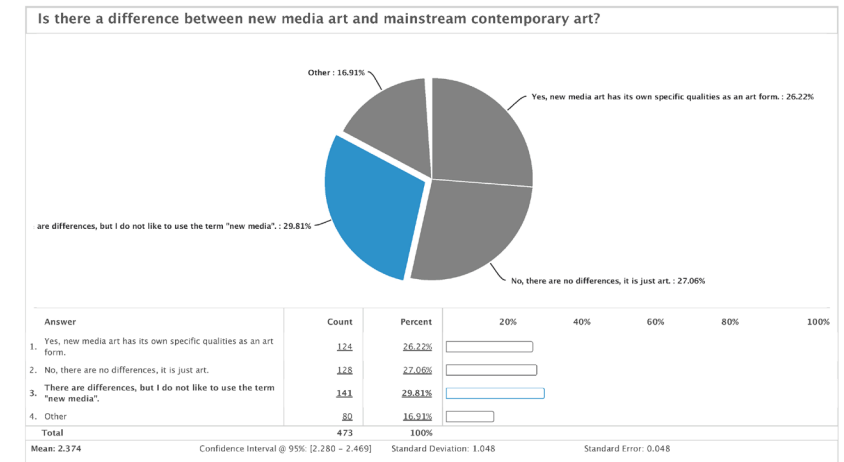


Q2. Does the use of electronic or digital media define your artistic practice?

Most of the artists do not perceive the use of electronic or digital media as a defining aspect of their practice: a combined 57.02% answer in the negative to this question, although 32.18% consider that these media do define their work. In this respect, it must be pointed out that artists have usually seen their work labeled according to a certain style, concept, or movement, but not in terms of the media they use. The open-ended answers (10.79%) provide further details about how many respondents perceive this relationship between their work and the media they use in its making. Many answers state that electronic and digital media have an impact or influence on the artist's work, although they modulate the pre-defined answer "Yes, I consider that it defines my work." One respondent states: "I believe the medium always defines the work, but that's not exclusive for electronic media" (#6684609),²⁰ while another considers it "more like a dialogue" (#6727769), and others describe an "interdependent relation between both" (#6691348), or a "feedback" (#6713711). Interestingly, many respondents consider digital media part of our society. As such, digital media cannot be ignored, and they usually become the subject of the artwork. "These media are inevitable and it is impossible to work without them" (#6722829) argues one respondent; "my work deals with a humanity that has become digital (willingly or unwillingly)," confesses another, "so I cannot imagine an artwork that doesn't have some digital component in it" (#7317556). Other respondents indicate that technology is not always present in their work, or that it is a subject that can be dealt in different ways, for instance through drawing. It must also be noted that several artists with a long career considered this question meaningless or at least constraining. One of them stated: "I have been creating art for over 65 years. For the past 50 years I have worked with art ideas that course through both my algorist and prealgorist work. Art, as an experience and

20. In order to preserve the anonymity of respondents, their statements are quoted with the reference number provided for each participant by the online survey software tool. The full transcription of open-ended answers for each question in the questionnaire is reproduced in Addenda A2.

in its creation, transcends «media» (#6692692). Another one commented: "I was born in 1929 and have several periods in my work. Your answer categories do not pertain to my conception of the art-making «process»" (#7299449). These statements indicate that artists do not feel comfortable with an interpretation of their work based on the media they use, although they recognize the impact of digital technologies in our contemporary society and culture. The contributions of more experienced artists advice against focusing solely on the technologies developed in the last decades, as well as reducing the artist's career to a single, monolithic line of work.



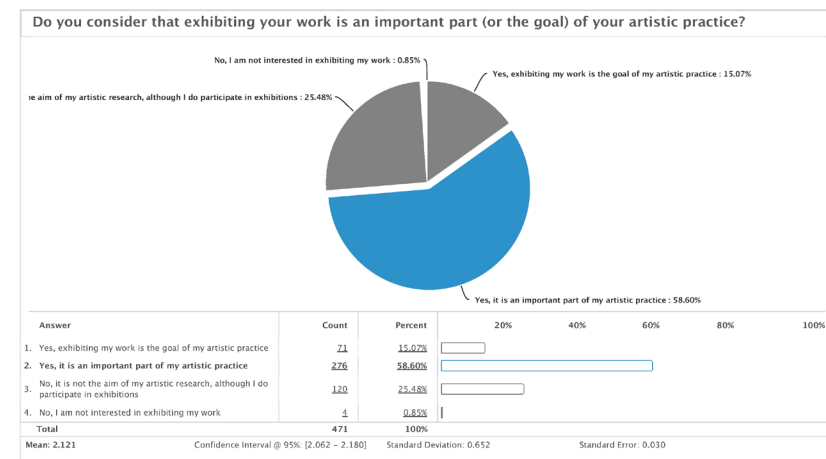
Q3. Is there a difference between new media art and mainstream contemporary art?

The perceived differences between new media art and contemporary art tend to generate strong reactions (as revealed by open-ended text answers). There is a uniform distribution of the three main answers: "Yes, new media art has its own specific qualities as an art form" (26.22%), "No, there are no differences, it is just art" (27.06%), and "There are differences, but I do not like to use the term «new media»" (29.81%). This apparently points towards a certain confusion in relation to whether the "new media art" label is positive or not, although if we combine the second and third answers, which do not recognize this label, 56.87% of the respondents point toward avoiding the term and its implications, which is consistent with the results of Q1 and Q2. The open-ended answers further illustrate the conflict generated by the use of the term. Some respondents consider that new media art is already a part of contemporary art (#6724013, #6951725, #7545160) or even a "subsystem" (#6691348) of it. Others criticize the use of the term, which is usually considered meaningless, therefore rendering the question absurd: "bullshit, they are just names" (#6732686), "This is not a relevant question" (#6832657), "The term "New Media" is painfully outdated for professionals working in these fields" (#6840863) and "new media is a corny term. But this question is too simplistic" (#7520926) are some of the reactions prompted by Q3. Many respondents state that

there are differences, but that these are mostly established by institutions and the art market: “new media art is harder to sell,” asserts one respondent (#6684767). Another one indicates that digital art generates trans-disciplinary processes that do not integrate in the art market (#6710774), while a third one believes that although there are no differences, these are created by the institutions (#6784578). The role of curators is underscored by several participants, who believe these professionals intervene in the separation between new media art and contemporary art. “Most of the current generation of mainstream contemporary art curators didn’t grow playing videogames” (#7305843), “I would like to see more good shows where the difference is being made” (#7396707), “mainstream art needs more curators who understand new media and embrace it” (#7484301). Finally, most of the respondents in the open-ended option express their belief that new media art and contemporary art will merge in the future. “New media become over time old media, and as old media they get adapted in the world of art” (#6735603), “new Media art will add a new vocabulary to Contemporary art” (#6779964), “This separation, I believe, will become less and less relevant with younger generations of artists involved in postnet art and new aestheticslike practices” (#6839411), “quite different now, but they will become a one art in the future” (#6967266), “I feel that both kinda merge under the idea of being postinternet, postinternet imageobjects” (#7294123), “the barriers are rapidly being broken, and in the future it will be very hard to separate what is new media from what is mainstream” (#7656565). The respondents’ observations coincide with the growing attention given to Post-Internet art in the contemporary art market (see 1.4). As previously stated, are consistent with the answers in Q1 and Q2 in the sense that “new media art” has become a less desirable label, as artists head towards the anticipated integration into mainstream contemporary art that supposedly will make the term and the distinction it implies irrelevant. Paradoxically, many artists agree to use a label such as “Post-Internet art” if it proves useful in advancing their career in the contemporary art market.

Q4. Do you consider that exhibiting your work is an important part (or the goal) of your artistic practice?

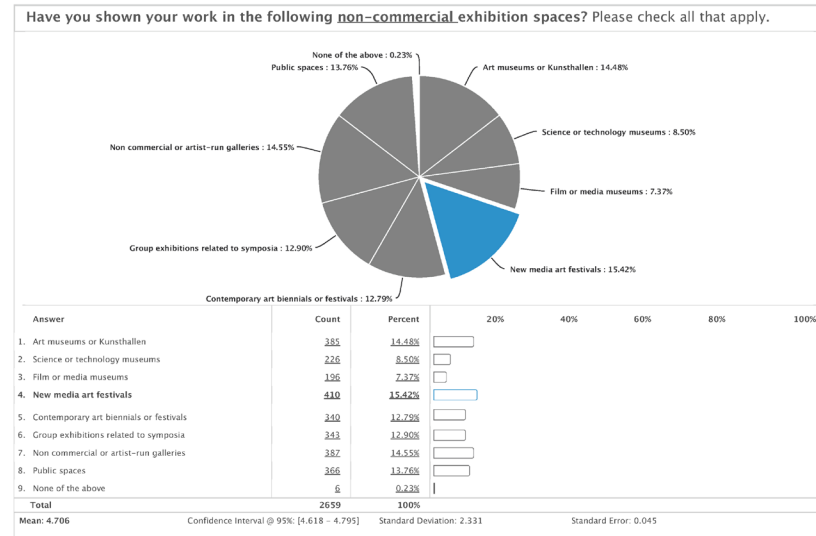
Although this question could seem unnecessary, since it is usually assumed that artists create artworks to exhibit and/or sell them, it produced interesting results. As expected, a large segment of respondents answered in the affirmative (73.67%, combining the first two answers), but tellingly most of them indicated that exhibiting is “an important part” of their professional career (58.60%), while a much smaller fraction (15.07%) considered it “the goal” of their artistic practice. A considerable number of respondents participate in exhibitions but they do not consider this the aim of their artistic research (25.48%), and finally a few respondents even stated that they are not interested in exhibiting their work at all (0.85%). These results indicate that most respondents consider their artistic practice within a wider range of professional activities that go beyond creating an artwork and presenting it in an exhibition space. This can be related to the fact that very few artists can make a living on their artistic practice alone, and most of those who do get their funding from grants, awards, residencies and exhibition fees (see Q8, below).



Activities such as lecturing in a university and teaching workshops, as well as doing programming or design in different sectors (advertising, creative industries or graphic and editorial design, among others) are frequently carried out by artists as part of their professional career. Exhibiting their work is therefore an important part, but not the main or sole purpose of their practice. Those who state that exhibitions are not the aim of their research or that they are not even interested in them, probably hold a position in a research institution and thus focus on their investigation, which may not require the specific output of an art show in a gallery or museum.

Q5. Have you shown your work in the following non-commercial exhibition spaces?

Upon inquiring on the presence of the respondents’ work in exhibition spaces, it was deemed necessary to separate non-commercial spaces (museums, biennials, festivals) from commercial spaces (galleries, art fairs), since the latter provide an indication of the artist’s involvement in the art market. It must be stated that exhibiting in a non-commercial space does not necessarily imply that no economic transaction has been made: usually, a new media artist may charge a fee to a museum or festival for mounting and exhibiting her work, or she might have the work commissioned by an institution. As stated in Q4 and section 2.3, many artists earn a significant part of their income through these means. The main difference between commercial and non-commercial spaces in the context of this survey is that for most respondents it is relatively easier to exhibit their work in non-commercial spaces and that this determines a different path in their careers in terms of their recognition in the mainstream contemporary art world, which is more closely connected to the art market. The answers to Q5 show an almost equally divided presence of the respondent’s work in the main types of non-commercial spaces: Art museums or Kunsthallen (14.48%), New media art festivals (15.42%), Contemporary art biennials or festivals (12.79%), Exhibitions related to symposia (12.90%), Non-commercial or artist-



run galleries (14.55%), and Public spaces (13.76%). Only Science or technology museums (8.50%) and Film or Media museums (7.37%) are less frequented. Given the large number of options, it was not possible to establish more precise categories: as stated in 2.2.2.3, drop outs in the questionnaire start in Q5, probably due to the nature of the question itself as well as the fact that there were nine possible answers, so it would have been counterproductive to add even more possible answers. Therefore, it must be taken into account that Q5 does not register the relevance of each venue in the art world (for instance an art museum in a small town is not as relevant as the MoMA in New York), the number of exhibitions in which the artist has participated in each venue, nor if these were solo or group exhibitions. All of these factors are important in understanding the presence of the respondent's work in the art world, but at this point Q5 aimed at knowing in which non-commercial exhibition spaces do most new media artists present their work. As expected, new media art festivals are the most common venue, although closely followed by art museums and artist-run galleries. This is consistent with the findings described in section 2.1, where it has been argued that many new media artists have exhibited their work in art museums (including some major museums), although this does not seem to have positively affected their careers. Many artists, particularly the younger generation, usually start their career by exhibiting in artist-run galleries (for instance, in graduation or post-graduation shows), therefore a large number of respondents clicked on this option too. The experiences and expectations of the respondents in relation to non-commercial exhibition spaces will be discussed below.

Q5a. Please rate your experience in terms of the presentation of your work

Table 10 summarizes the percentage of respondents that selected in each answer one of five possible categories in a Likert scale, ranging from Excellent (1), Good (2) and Normal

(3) to Disappointing (4) and Awful (5). The total of positive answers (obtained by adding the percentages in categories 1 and 2) and negative answers (obtained in the same manner with categories 3 and 4) is displayed in order to determine whether the perception is mostly positive or negative. The highest numbers in each column have been highlighted in order to identify the most selected options as well as the most and least popular exhibition spaces. In general, respondents have a positive experience when presenting their work in a non-commercial exhibition space, as the percentage of positive answers is between 3 and 20 times higher than the negative ones. Art museums and Kunsthallen are the most valued exhibition spaces in terms of the presentation of the artwork: they have the highest percentage in the "Excellent" category and the second lowest number in the negative categories. These results can be expected, since the museum is still considered the most prestigious institution in the art world. A museum is usually able to offer more professional resources for the presentation of artworks than a temporary event such as a biennial or festival; still, much has been discussed about the inability of most museums to deal with new media art, so in some cases the opposite will be true. Other museums (science, technology, film, media) rate lower but are still close in their overall perception to new media art festivals.

Exhibition space	Percentage of answers by category					Total positive	Total negative
	1	2	3	4	5		
						1+2	4+5
Art museums or Kunsthallen	37.64	44.10	14.33	3.93	0.00	81.74	3.93
Science or technology museums	18.93	34.95	34.47	10.19	1.46	53.88	11.65
Film or media museums	16.38	45.20	35.03	2.82	0.56	61.58	3.38
New media art festivals	18.88	47.34	24.47	8.78	0.53	66.22	9.31
Contemporary art biennials or festivals	18.24	42.02	32.25	7.17	0.33	60.26	7.50
Group exhibitions related to symposia	12.26	31.13	42.45	13.21	0.94	43.39	14.15
Non commercial or artist-run galleries	17.40	41.16	36.74	4.42	0.28	58.56	4.70
Public spaces	21.28	35.26	35.26	7.29	0.91	56.54	8.20

Table 10. Evaluation of non-commercial exhibition spaces. Numbers 1 to 5 refer to the categories in the Likert scale: 1=Excellent, 2=Good, 3=Normal, 4=Disappointing, 5=Awful.

Remarkably, new media art festivals do not stand out in Q5 nor in this evaluation: the presentation of artworks in these events is mostly considered “good” or “normal” and in a smaller number of cases, “disappointing.” It is generally considered that new media artists have developed their careers in new media art festivals, most of them exhibiting their work, others giving lectures or workshops and some receiving awards. It could be expected, then, that new media art festivals would figure prominently in these results, but instead they are placed in a middle ground alongside film and media museums and contemporary art biennials and festivals. The perception is positive but it does not stand out in the way that art museums do. This is probably due to the growing interest among artists in entering the contemporary art world and receiving recognition for their work, gradually moving away from the festival scene. Finally, group exhibitions related to symposia receive the most negative evaluations (while still being considered mostly positive). This is possibly due to worse exhibiting conditions (in many cases, halls and corridors are re-purposed as exhibitions spaces), along with less resources and budget. In conclusion, while respondents apparently have positive experiences showing their work in a wide range of venues, they still favor the museum as the most rewarding exhibition space.

Q5b. Please rate your experience in terms of the consequences for your artistic career

As in the previous question, the answers show that most respondents have a positive perception of the impact that these exhibitions have had in their careers. However, the limitations of the format in which this question can be answered must be stressed: first, the answers are based on the participants’s personal perceptions, which apply to the specific circumstances of the exhibitions in which they have been involved and their own professional trajectory. Second, the question asks for an answer that reflects the average experience in each of the exhibition spaces, regardless of the fact that an artist may have had different experiences in two exhibitions taking place, for instance, in an art museum. This also applies to Q5a and to what has already been stated about the limitations of Q5. Table 11 shows the percentage of respondents that selected in each answer one of five possible categories in a Likert scale, ranging from Very positive (1), Positive (2) and Can’t tell (3) to Negative (4) and Very negative (5). As with the table in Q5a, the total of positive answers (obtained by adding the percentages in categories 1 and 2) and negative answers (obtained in the same manner with categories 3 and 4) is calculated in order to determine whether respondents perceive the consequences of exhibiting as mostly positive or negative. The highest numbers in each column have also been highlighted. Again, art museums and Kunsthallen obtain the highest percentage of positive answers and a very low percentage of negative ones (in a scale of 1 to 100). Given their position in the art world, it is expected that exhibiting in museums will have a very positive effect on an artist’s career. New media art festivals rank lower but also obtain a high percentage of positive answers. This can be because these festivals can boost an artist’s career within the new media art scene, but not so much in the wider context of the contemporary art world, and therefore the perception of respondents is that their effect is less positive. Contemporary art biennials obtain less positive answers than new media art

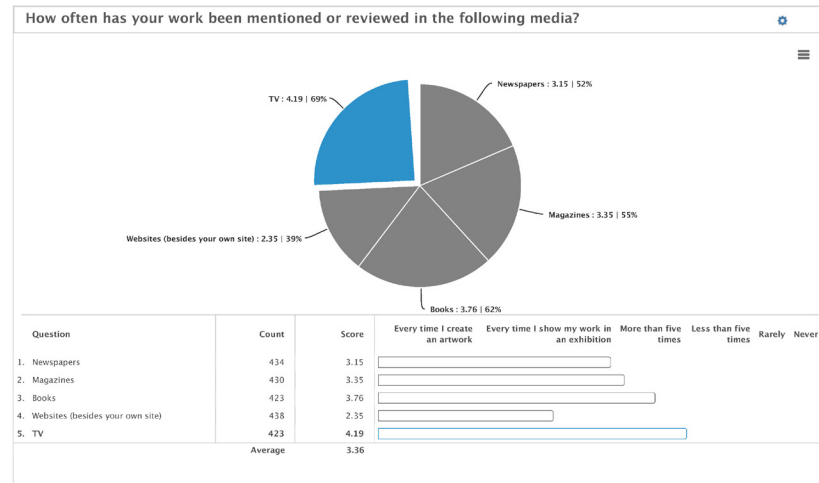
festivals, and therefore it can be interpreted that respondents either participate in lesser known biennials or that their participation in relevant biennials has not brought enough attention to their work, according to their expectations. It is worth pointing out that science and technology museums rank considerably lower than any other option, since many respondents expressed that they were unsure of the consequences that exhibiting in these museums had for their career. The difference between science and art museums is quite telling and also consistent with the results of the previous answers in the sense that respondents do not seem comfortable when their work is contextualized in the fields of science and technology, but rather prefer being integrated in the art world.

Exhibition space	Percentage of answers by category					Total positive	Total negative
	1	2	3	4	5		
						1+2	4+5
Art museums or Kunsthallen	41.18	42.02	15.97	0.56	0.28	83.20	0.84
Science or technology museums	13.59	33.98	50.00	1.94	0.49	47.57	2.43
Film or media museums	16.02	47.51	35.91	0.00	0.55	63.53	0.55
New media art festivals	27.06	50.66	20.69	1.59	0.00	77.72	1.59
Contemporary art biennials or festivals	32.26	42.72	24.27	0.65	0.00	74.98	0.65
Group exhibitions related to symposia	9.49	47.78	40.82	1.58	0.32	57.27	1.90
Non commercial or artist-run galleries	11.81	46.43	41.21	0.55	0.00	58.24	0.55
Public spaces	20.80	39.45	38.53	1.22	0.00	60.25	1.22

Table 11. Evaluation of non-commercial exhibition spaces. Numbers 1 to 5 refer to the categories in the Likert scale: 1=Very positive, 2=Positive, 3=Can’t tell, 4=Negative, 5=Very negative.

Q6. How often has your work been mentioned or reviewed in the following media?

The media presence of the respondents’ work provides a hint about the visibility of artistic practices related to digital technologies. Q6 asked participants to indicate the frequency of the presence of their work in five different media (newspapers, magazines, books, websites and TV), which define different audiences and levels of exposure. The frequency is expressed through a Likert scale with the following values: Every time I create an artwork



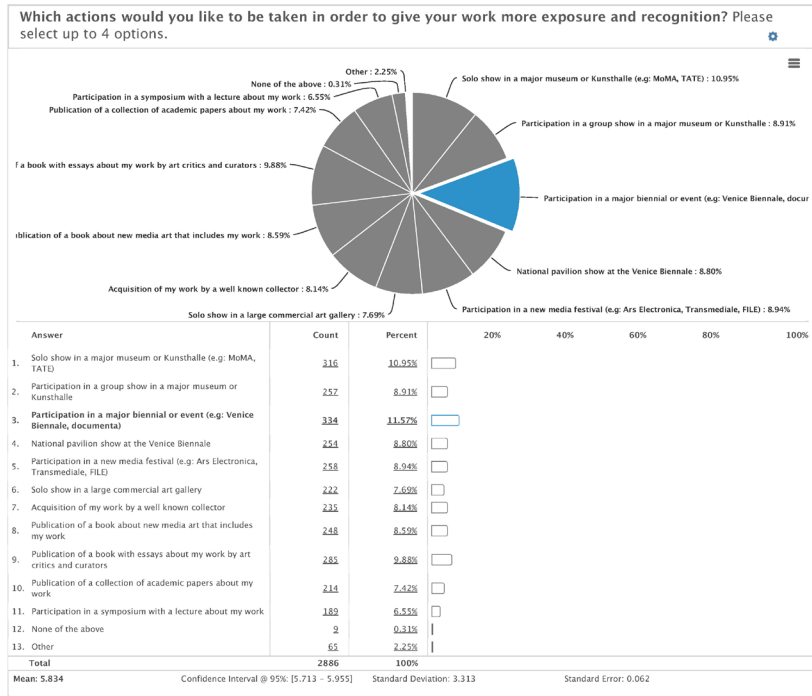
(1), Every time I show my work in an exhibition (2), More than five times (3), Less than five times (4), Rarely (5), and Never (6). These values can be roughly divided into two main categories: frequent presence (1 to 3) and infrequent presence (4 to 6). As Table 12 shows, the participant’s work is regularly shown or reviewed on the Internet, while it seldom appears on television. This contrast is expected, since nowadays most artists have their work frequently mentioned or reviewed on blogs or news sites. Moreover, many of them publish images and news about their work on social networks and other platforms such as Tumblr, where content is usually shared and re-posted by other users (see 1.4.2). On the contrary, television networks seldom air contents related to new media art. News about cultural events is usually reserved for exhibitions at major museums, mostly about artists who are well known to a general audience, as well as reviews of festivals or art fairs. Even when a TV program is dedicated to digital culture, it usually focuses on mainstream commercial productions such as videogames, digital devices, apps, digital effects in blockbuster movies, and viral content. There are of course exceptions, but, in general, the presence of new media art in most television networks is anecdotal at best. The middle ground between these two extremes is occupied by print media: newspapers, magazines, and books. The categories in Q6 are consciously vague in order to avoid the complications derived from including too many items in the question (as previously indicated in Q5). Therefore, it must be taken into account that respondents’s replies mean that their work has been mentioned or reviewed “more than five times.” These may have taken place in either local or national newspapers (probably in the culture or technology sections), in art magazines or other kinds of publications (which can also be specialized in technology, programming, fashion or design, for instance), and in books (possibly art books as well as academic essays). Although the vagueness of these categories does not allow for a deeper study, the results indicate that the work of new media artists is more prominently visible on the Internet, while also reaching print media.

Medium	Percentage of answers by category					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Newspapers	4.61	23.04	44.93	13.36	8.29	5.76
Magazines	4.65	14.42	46.51	16.28	11.86	6.28
Books	3.31	2.84	44.68	22.70	16.31	10.71
Websites (besides your own site)	22.60	34.25	33.79	4.57	4.34	0.46
TV	1.18	4.02	29.79	24.11	21.75	19.15

Table 12. Frequency of media presence. Numbers 1 to 6 refer to the categories in the Likert scale: 1=Every time I create an artwork, 2=Every time I show my work in an exhibition, 3=More than five times, 4=Less than five times, 5=Rarely, 6=Never.

Q7. Which actions would you like to be taken in order to give your work more exposure and recognition?

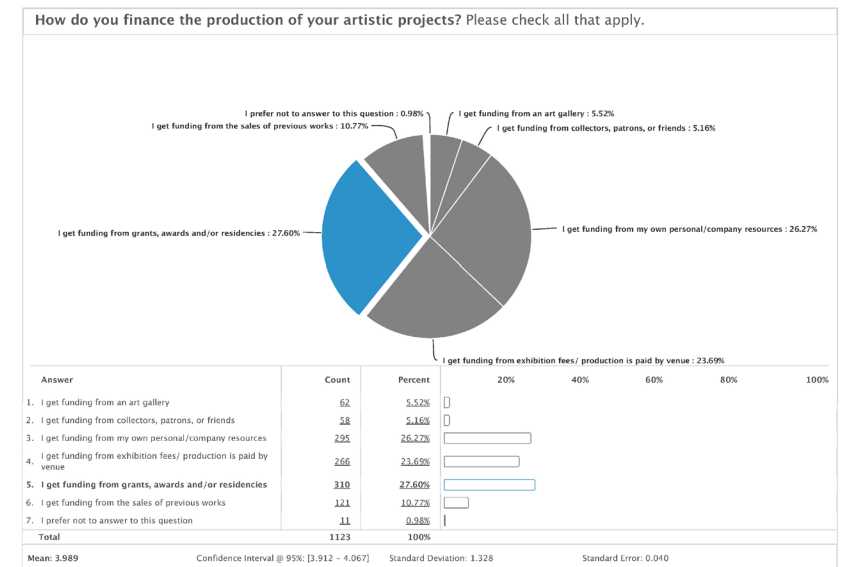
It must be stated in advance that a fault in the design of this question lead to misunderstandings on the side of many respondents, who expressed their opinions on the open-ended text option, but still the results, as well as these comments, reveal interesting aspects of the artist’s expectations about their careers. Aimed at finding out which forms of exposure and recognition are more attractive to new media artists, Q7 displays a list of thirteen possible answers. Among these thirteen choices, there are eleven ways in which an artist can gain recognition for her work in the contemporary art world and the new media art world; in museums and biennials as well as in galleries, private collections, or academia. The option “none of the above” was also included, as well and the previously mentioned open-ended text box. Initially, the options in Q7 were presented as a list of items that had to be placed in order of importance. Given the number of items, it was deemed that respondents might find this question tedious, which increased the risk of dropping out. Additionally, this format did not allow for a “none of the above” option or the text box, so Q7 was presented as a multiple answer question, with an indication that limited the number of possible answers. As this limitation was not set on the survey software tool, many respondents clicked on all or almost all of the options. The question seemed meaningless, since all options were positive for the artist’s career and therefore all of them could be chosen. Despite this misunderstanding, some options were markedly more popular, allowing for a cautious interpretation of the results. The way in which Q7 is phrased implies that the respondent will choose those actions that have not been taken in his career, and are therefore desirable. In this sense, it is telling that the three most selected options refer to outstanding positions in the mainstream contemporary art world: “Participation in a major biennial or event (e.g.: Venice Biennale, documenta)” (11.57%), “Solo show in a major museum or Kunsthalle (e.g.: MoMA, TATE)” (10.95%), and “Publication of a book with essays about my work by art critics and curators” (9.88%). Participating in a new media art festival ranks fourth (8.94%), closely followed by the



option of being part of a group show in a venue such as the MoMA in New York or the TATE gallery in London (8.91%). Participants therefore seem more interested in the recognition of the contemporary art world than that of the new media art world or the academy. Significantly, a publication of academic papers about the artist's work (7.42%) is not as desirable as a publication of essays by art critics and curators (9.88%), and the least selected option is the participation in a symposium as a lecturer (6.55%). The lower rankings of options related to academia may also indicate that most respondents already hold a position in a university or participate in symposiums.

The open-ended answers highlight other aspects of the respondent's expectations: first of all, recognition is a sensitive issue for artists, who in some cases apparently did not like to see this list of actions and be asked to choose among them. Certainly, this can remind them of situations that will possibly not happen in their careers, as noted by one of the respondents: "todo lo que no suceder..." (#6831362). Others reacted with critical or humorous comments, stating for instance that what is left to do after all these actions is just to die (#7304444) or simply wrote "bring it on!" (#7608820). Several respondents indicated the apparent meaninglessness of the question, understanding that all options could be selected since all of them were positive: "This list is completely stupid :-)" Every unit it includes could be important in an artist's career..." (#6717903), "who doesn't like attention?" (#7316884), "All of them, but to do what?" (#6951725) or "Not sure

what you mean. Everything above is positive. I have had experience with most of the above venues. Every additional event is positive" (#7299449). Besides these misunderstandings, other participants contributed relevant comments about their expectations. Several indicated their interest in the educational aspect of their artworks and in inspiring others (#6961434, #6713711, #6714416, #7305843). Others express their intention of reaching broader or different audiences: "I'm trying to get away from the art and new media worlds. They are small, and I'd rather communicate these ideas to a much larger audience" (#7641607), "[I'd like to be] featured in nonart world publications" (#7316198), "Interactuar con espacios masivos de consumo, tomando contacto con el público NO académico" (#6724530) or "En realidad lo que más me gustaría es crear obras permanentes en espacios públicos" (#6724774). Finally, some respondents contribute new options, such as residencies and fellowships (#6717057), being a jury in a big festival (#6684767) or simply forming a group with other artists (#6738182). The art market is seldom mentioned, although some refer to receiving "loads of money" (#6831461) or indicate the need for financial support (#6936353), while one respondent stresses that "Gallery representation almost trumps all of above" (#7295003). These latter comments indicate a need to gain recognition, not only in the contemporary art world but also in other professional contexts, and to achieve financial sustainability, all of which is consistent with the answers to previous questions and those of Q8, which are described below.



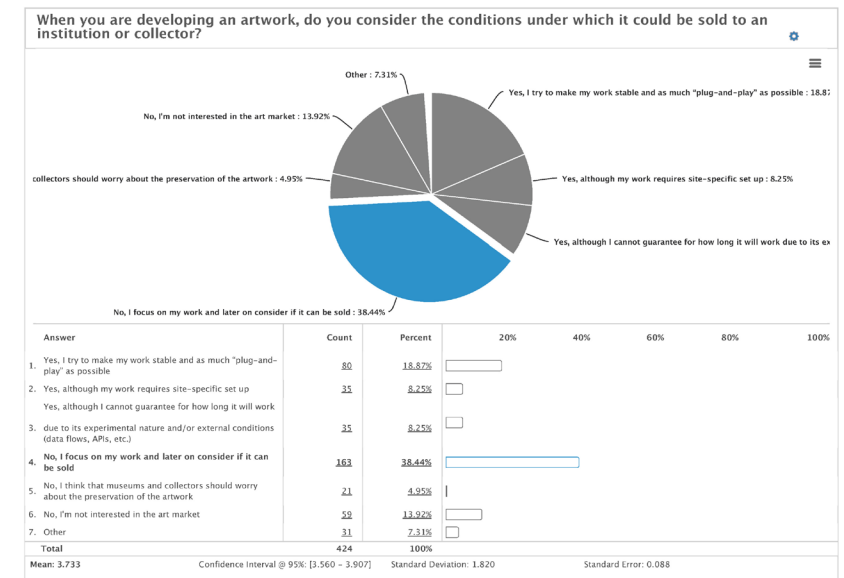
Q8. How do you finance the production of your artistic projects?

Financial resources are also a sensitive issue for artists, although in Q8 the majority of respondents provided information about them and only a few (0.98%) preferred not to answer to this question. Given that respondents were allowed to select as many answers

as it applied to their case, it is telling that most of them chose three main funding sources: grants, awards and residencies (27.6%), personal resources (26.27%) and exhibition or production fees (23.69%). Usually, artists primarily depend on their personal resources to produce their art (Moulin, 1997; Heinich, 1998; Abbing, 2002), and therefore it is not surprising that this is one of the most selected answers. Still, it is almost even with the most popular answer, which indicates the strong impact of institutional support in the production of new media art. Exhibition fees are usually paid to artists in the new media art scene, mostly due to its development among festivals and the assumption that the artist has to set up the artwork or loans the equipment that allows the artwork to come into being. These fees are one of the stark contrasts with the mainstream contemporary art world, where it is assumed that the artist does not charge a fee for showing her work. However, in most art institutions it has been common over the last decade to allocate part of the budget to the production of new artworks for an exhibition, which becomes a form of payment to the artist, who retains the ownership of her newly produced artwork. It must be noted that none of these three main sources of income are connected to the art market. A considerably smaller percentage of respondents indicate that they get funding from the sales of previous works (10.77%), from an art gallery (5.52%) or from collectors, patrons, and friends (5.16%). If we combine the answers referred to non-commercial exhibitions (3,4,5) and compare them to those directly related to the market (1 and 6), the separation becomes clearly visible. 77.56% of respondents finance the production of their works using personal resources or get funding from art institutions in different forms, while only 16.29% receive income from an art gallery or the sale of their artworks. New media artists therefore tend to make their practice sustainable by providing their own funds, charging a fee when exhibiting their work, and applying for residencies, grants, and awards. The market, it seems, is an afterthought.

Q9. When you are developing an artwork, do you consider the conditions under which it could be sold to an institution or collector?

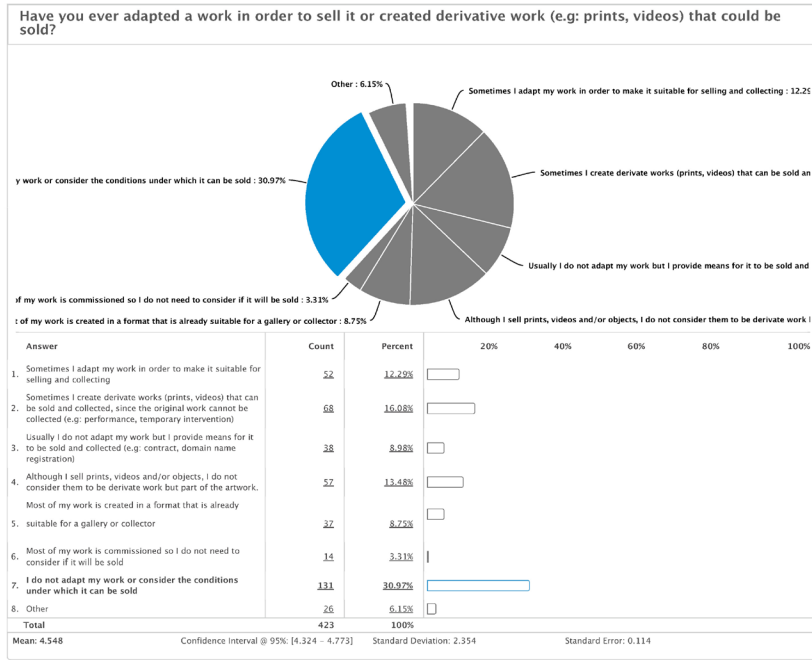
This question presented respondents with seven options, six pre-defined answers of which three replied in the affirmative (1 to 3) and three other in the negative (4 to 6) plus an open-ended answer. According to the most selected answer (38.44%), new media artists concentrate on creating their work and later on consider if it can be sold. Some artists (13.92%) plainly state that they are not interested in the art market. These results are consistent with those of Q8, which show that new media artists do not draw their main income for the market, but rather from institutions and festivals, and it may also explain why few artists are selling their work in art galleries (see Q11). Those who do consider how to make the artwork salable usually try to make it stable and easy to install (18.87%), although many indicate that it needs site-specific setup (8.25%), or that they cannot guarantee for how long it will work (8.25%). It must be stressed that these three answers are combinable, since a new media artwork can be relatively stable but need some setup and be dependent on external data that does not allow predicting its life span. Additionally, these answers could follow the most selected option: once the artist



has focused on producing her work, she might then consider if it can be sold, and at that point, the stability, setup, and durability of the artwork come into question. The open-ended answers provide more detailed information about how artists deal with this issue. Again, several respondents emphasize that they are not interested in the art market or that they do not consider selling their works (#6706727, #6735603, #6831362, #6936353, #7305843, #7408141, #7522682). Some indicate that their focus is on institutional collectors, who commission the artwork (#6706727, #7538931), or that they show their work mostly on festivals (#7626410). The stability and durability of the artwork is a concern to other respondents, although allegedly not for commercial reasons, but because the exhibition spaces demand it (#6831362, #7327245). In general, respondents do not seem concerned with the marketability of the artwork while they are developing it, partly due to their expressed lack of interest on the art market, but probably also due to the uncertainty of the outcome. As one respondent states: "it's hard enough to make it work" (#6920069).

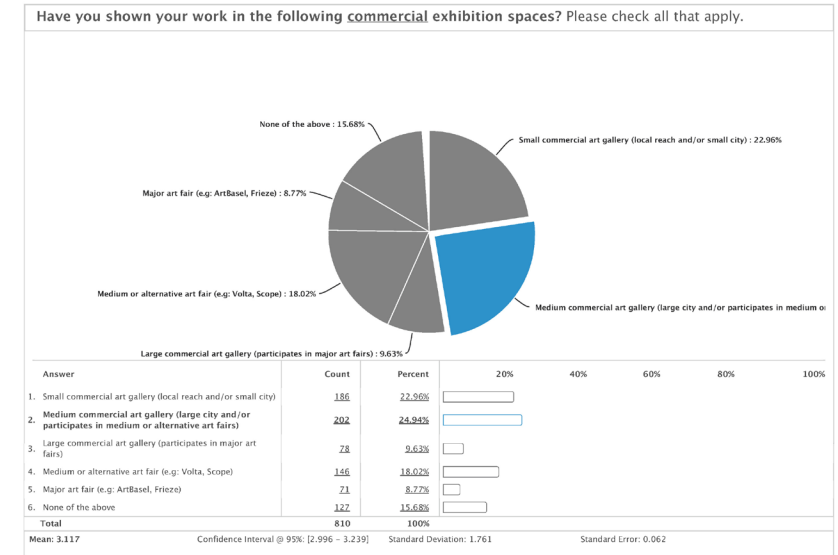
Q10. Have you ever adapted a work in order to sell it or created derivative work (e.g.: prints, videos) that could be sold?

This question reiterates the issue raised in Q9, although focusing on the creation of derivative works. I have observed that many artists working with new media create art objects from web-based or ephemeral projects in order to sell them in the art market (see 3.5). This led to including this question, which offers respondents seven possible answers and an open-ended option. Consistent with the results in Q9, the most popular answer is "I do not adapt my work or consider the conditions under which it can be sold" (30.97%).



Still, the percentage of respondents who chose answers 1 to 4 must be taken into account as a whole group: these answers present different forms of adaptation of the artwork to the requirements of the art market, and therefore we can consider them as if pertaining to a single answer. From this perspective, 50.83% of the respondents have answered that they do adapt their artworks, create derivative pieces or provide the means for selling and collecting, to which we could add those who state that their work is already created in a format that is suitable for the gallery (8.75%). The conclusion is, then, that these artists do not consider how to sell their artworks when they are developing them, but later on find themselves in the situation of adapting their work or creating suitable formats for the art market. As stated in section 2.2.2, it can be argued that respondents are inclined to provide “politically correct” answers to sensitive issues such as the influence of the market on their work. It is generally expected that artists work in a creative environment, free of any constraints, and that their output is the genuine expression of an idea, untainted by monetary interests, although this is clearly not true. The open-ended answers are split between those who state that they do not sell their work (#6687303, #6723582, #6851233, #6920792, #6961434, #7310969) and those who are considering how to adapt their work (#6705574, #6830261, #7040241, #7316884, #7327245, #7525728, #7559934). A few participants who are presently adapting to the art market describe the actions they are taking: “I try to make my works presentable with a strong emphasis on presentation in the last phase of the creation process,” states one respondent, “In addition I’ll buy spare parts and so on to ensure the buyer that the artwork will last long and his investment is secure” (#6688013). Another respondent confesses: “I have refused to

sell major pieces because of the conditions of the sale. I have also adapted derivative works, created lower priced works especially for non-collectors, etc. I kind of do it all...” (#7641607). It seems, therefore, that artists are faced with two options: either they adapt their work to the art market or they do not sell at all.



Q11. Have you shown your work in the following commercial exhibition spaces?

In order to outline the presence of new media art in the contemporary art market, respondents were asked to indicate in which galleries and art fairs they had shown their work. Auctions were not included because, at the time of carrying out the survey, no auctions of new media art had taken place.²¹ In this question, it was deemed necessary to provide more detailed answers, since there is a large difference for an artist’s career between being represented by a small, unknown gallery and a large, powerful gallery. Galleries that are more prestigious are also the entry point to more important art fairs and consequently higher prices for the artworks. Most artists gravitate towards small or medium commercial art galleries (a combined 47.90% of replies), therefore exhibiting their work in alternative art fairs. A smaller percentage (less than 10%) is apparently represented by a large gallery that takes their work to major art fairs such as Art Basel or Frieze. A considerable number of respondents (15.68%) indicate that they have not shown their work in any gallery or art fair, a result that can be expected following the replies in Q9 and Q10. If we compare this percentage with that of the same answer in Q5 (0,23%), we can see that the number of respondents who have never shown their work in a commercial art gallery or art fair is more than 20 times greater than the number of those who have not participated in exhibitions

21. A few months after closing the survey, the digital art auction Paddles ON! took place at Paddle8.com and Philips in New York, followed by two other auctions the following year (see 3.8.5)

in non-commercial spaces. The following questions provide further information about their experiences in commercial galleries and art fairs.

Q11a. Please rate your experience in terms of the presentation of your work

As is the case in non-commercial spaces, respondents rate commercial galleries and art fairs in mostly positive terms. Table 13 summarizes the percentage of respondents that selected in each answer one of five possible categories in a Likert scale, ranging from Excellent (1), Good (2), and Normal (3) to Disappointing (4) and Awful (5). The total of positive answers (obtained by adding the percentages in categories 1 and 2) and negative answers (obtained in the same manner with categories 3 and 4) is displayed in order to determine whether the perception is mostly positive or negative. The highest numbers in each column have been highlighted in order to identify the most selected options. Among the commercial art galleries, it seems that the larger the better in terms of the presentation of the artworks: the sum of positive answers increases from small to large commercial galleries, as well as the percentage of respondents who considered their experience “excellent.” This can be explained by the fact that usually large galleries have better spaces and resources for their exhibitions, including equipment and a team of collaborators, while smaller galleries make do in small spaces and usually have two or three people in their staff at most. However, it must also be noted that the number of respondents who considered their experience “disappointing” also increases, possibly due to greater expectations about the outcome of the exhibition given the reputation of the exhibition space, which for one reason or another were not met by the gallery.

Exhibition space	Percentage of answers by category					Total positive	Total negative
	1	2	3	4	5		
Small commercial art gallery	15.52	40.80	33.33	9.20	1.15	56.32	10.35
Medium commercial art gallery	20.31	44.27	26.04	9.38	0.00	64.58	9.38
Large commercial art gallery	29.73	35.14	21.62	13.51	0.00	64.87	13.51
Medium or alternative art fair	12.59	31.85	37.04	15.56	2.96	44.44	18.52
Major art fair	22.06	25.00	38.24	13.24	1.47	47.06	14.71

Table 13. Evaluation of commercial exhibition spaces. Numbers 1 to 5 refer to the categories in the Likert scale: 1=Excellent, 2=Good, 3=Normal, 4=Disappointing, 5=Awful.

As for art fairs, again major art fairs rank higher than alternative art fairs, although respondents seem less enthusiastic: the sum of positive answers is lower than in galleries

because a larger number of respondents consider their experience “normal.” It must be noted that an artist’s experience of the presentation of her work is usually less rewarding in an art fair than in a gallery. While galleries have a stable space and tend to present solo shows of their represented artists, in an art fair booth the exhibition space is more precarious and crowded, since the gallery tends to present as many artworks as possible from several of their represented artists. Therefore, it is not surprising that “disappointing” and “awful” experiences are more frequent than in galleries, totaling 18.52% in alternative art fairs and 14.71% in major art fairs.

Q11b. Please rate your experience in terms of the presentation of the consequences for your artistic career

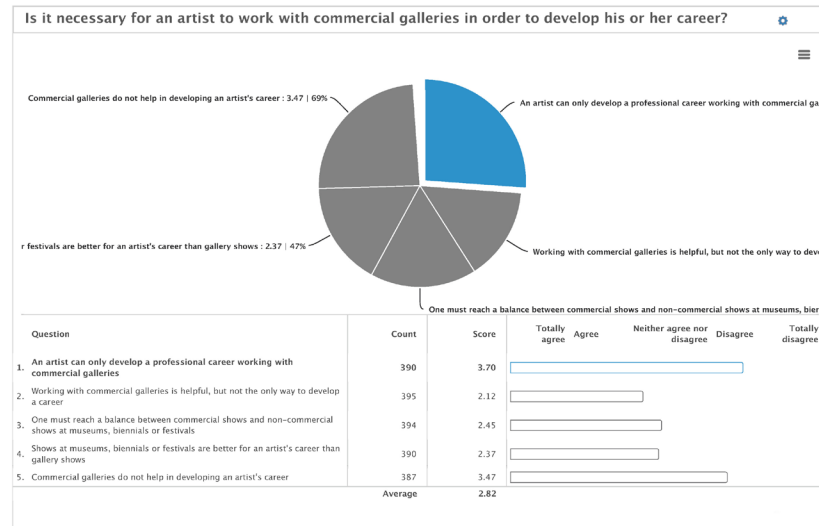
Table 14 shows the percentage of respondents that selected in each answer one of five possible categories in a Likert scale, ranging from Very positive (1), Positive (2), and Can’t tell (3) to Negative (4) and Very negative (5). As with the table in Q5a, the total of positive answers (obtained by adding the percentages in categories 1 and 2) and negative answers (obtained in the same manner with categories 3 and 4) is calculated in order to determine whether respondents perceive the consequences of exhibiting as mostly positive or negative.

Exhibition space	Percentage of answers by category					Total positive	Total negative
	1	2	3	4	5		
Small commercial art gallery	9.66	38.07	48.30	3.98	0.00	47.73	3.98
Medium commercial art gallery	18.75	52.08	27.60	1.56	0.00	70.83	1.56
Large commercial art gallery	32.05	47.44	19.23	1.28	0.00	79.49	1.28
Medium or alternative art fair	17.52	34.31	45.26	2.92	0.00	51.83	2.92
Major art fair	23.19	31.88	44.93	0.00	0.00	55.07	0.00

Table 14. Evaluation of commercial exhibition spaces. Numbers 1 to 5 refer to the categories in the Likert scale: 1=Very positive, 2=Positive, 3=Can’t tell, 4=Negative, 5=Very negative.

The numbers indicate again that respondents have a more positive experience in galleries than art fairs; in this case their expectations tend to increase from small to large galleries. The latter are more positively (79.49%) and less negatively (1.28%) rated by respondents than any other commercial exhibition space in terms of the consequences for their artistic careers. Small galleries create more uncertainty about this issue, as well as art fairs. This can be understood by pointing out that small galleries reach out to a lower number of collectors and attract less attention from the public and the media. In the context of an

art fair, however, the work of an artist is competing for attention with a large number of other artworks, and therefore it becomes more difficult to state whether exhibiting in these spaces has been successful or not, unless many works have been sold. Noticeably, no respondents have considered that exhibiting in a commercial space is “very negative.” Moreover, major art fairs have no negative answers at all, indicating that exhibiting their work there is viewed by respondents as a highly positive addition to their resume.



Q12. Is it necessary for an artist to work with commercial galleries in order to develop his or her career?

In order to complement the previous questions (Q11, Q11a, and Q11b), Q12 asks respondents to evaluate several statements using a Likert scale that includes the following categories: Totally agree (1), Agree (2), Neither agree nor disagree (3), Disagree (4), and Totally disagree (5). Table 8 displays the results in the same manner of previous tables, presenting the sum of answers indicating agreement or disagreement and highlighting the highest numbers in each column. The statements are designed to express different levels of interest in working with commercial galleries as opposed to non-commercial exhibition spaces. Remarkably, respondents tend to express their disagreement to the two most radical statements, one stating that working with commercial galleries is the only way to develop a professional career (60.51% disagree or totally disagree) and the other one asserting the opposite, that galleries do not help in this task (51.42% disagree or totally disagree). Therefore, it is not surprising that the statement with which most respondents agree is “working with commercial galleries is helpful, but not the only way to develop a career” (75.44% agree or totally agree). Respondents also tend to agree to the conciliatory statement “One must reach a balance between commercial shows and non-commercial

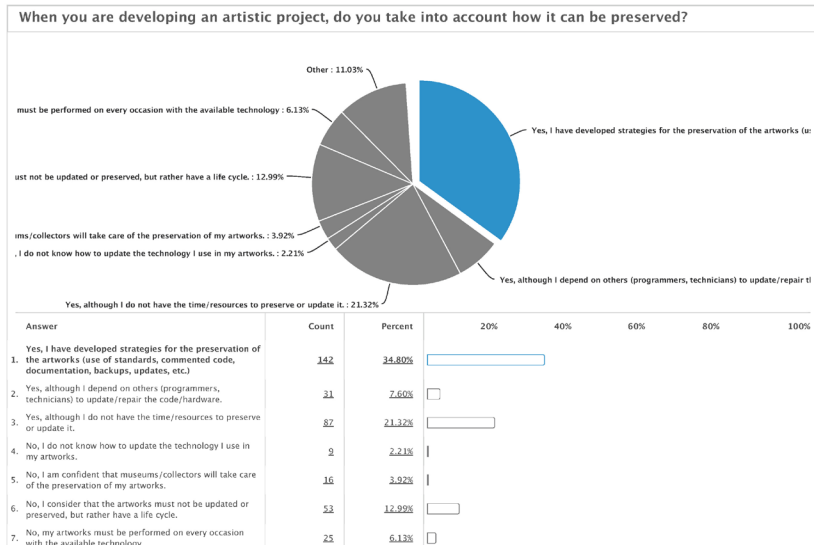
shows at museums, biennials or festivals” (55.33% agree or totally agree), although the number of those who cannot decide whether to agree or not is larger (31.47%). The same goes for the statement that values non-commercial spaces over commercial galleries (52.82% agree or totally agree, while 41.54% neither agree nor disagree). By comparing these results with those of Q5, Q5a, Q5b, Q11, Q11a, and Q11b, we can conclude that respondents are interested in the art market but have less experience in it than in non-commercial spaces.

Statement	Percentage of answers by category					Agreement (1+2)	Disagreement (4+5)
	1	2	3	4	5		
An artist can only develop a professional career working with commercial galleries	1.54	11.79	26.15	36.15	24.36	13.33	60.51
Working with commercial galleries is helpful, but not the only way to develop a career	18.48	56.96	19.75	3.54	1.27	75.44	4.81
One must reach a balance between commercial shows and non-commercial shows at museums, biennials or festivals	16.50	38.83	31.47	9.64	3.55	55.33	13.19
Shows at museums, biennials or festivals are better for an artist's career than gallery shows	15.90	36.92	41.54	5.13	0.51	52.82	5.64
Commercial galleries do not help in developing an artist's career	2.58	8.53	37.47	42.12	9.30	11.11	51.42

Table 15. Artist's dependence on commercial galleries. Numbers 1 to 5 refer to the categories in the Likert scale: 1= Totally agree, 2= Agree, 3= Neither agree nor disagree, 4= Disagree, 5= Totally disagree.

Therefore, respondents consider that in order to develop their career they must participate in the market but not focus exclusively on establishing a professional relationship with an

art gallery. The relative indecision as to whether a museum or biennial show is better than a show in a commercial gallery can also be explained by the fact that respondents have more experience with the former two, as well as by the ambiguity of the concept “gallery” itself. As Q11a and Q11b show, respondents perceive considerable differences between small and large galleries and therefore it becomes harder to evaluate this statement.



Q13. When you are developing an artistic project, do you take into account how it can be preserved?

The questionnaire concludes asking respondents about the preservation of their artworks, an issue that is of the utmost importance to the art market, since it requires stable, long-lasting objects in order to sell them to collectors. Seven statements (three answering in the affirmative and three in the negative) describe different ways in which this question can be answered. Given this is a complex issue that might require longer explanations an open-ended option was added. Most respondents do consider the preservation of their artworks (63,72% of the answers are affirmative) and a large portion of them (34.80%) has developed strategies such as backups, documentation, or commented code, whereas others depend on third parties (7.60%) and a considerable number of them do not have the time or resources to preserve or update older artworks (21.32%). Among those who answered in the negative (25.25%), most of them consider that their artworks have a life cycle (12.99%), while others conceive the work mostly as an idea that can be performed with the available technology at each time (6.13%), and finally some leave the task of preservation to museums and collectors (3.92%). Particularly noticeable within these results are, on the one hand, the fact that artists have to take care of updating their artworks besides creating new ones and that this task can be impossible to carry out due to a lack of

resources. This creates a disadvantage for these artists in the art market unless they adapt their work to a format that is stable enough, which as the results in Q9 and Q10 attest, is a difficult but unavoidable undertaking. On the other hand, some artists consider their work to have a life cycle and that approaches their practice to ephemeral art forms such as performance, which cannot be sold in the art market unless as documentation videos and other derivative pieces such as objects, prints or photographs. These two situations indicate that new media art is more likely to face difficulties in the art market or demand a greater effort from the artist. For this reason, the artist may feel more comfortable in the context of a temporal event such as a festival, or biennial, or in a museum show, were the requirements for adaptation or stability are not always present. Among the open-ended answers, the most common reply indicates that taking preservation into account depends on each artwork or project (#6689058, #6689308, #6843288, #6867141, #6896265, #7294123, #7306303, #7454536, #7513209, #7641607). One respondent specifies: “I distinguish between some work which should be preserved and other works which are ephemeral and treat them differently” (#6707602). This implies that many artists consider their artworks as processes or experiments, some of which are intended to last longer than others. Remarkably, some respondents state that they do not care about the preservation of the artworks (#6732686, #6836913, #7608116), and one of them even remarks: “What a strange art history type question...” (#6832719). Since many artists come from a background in computer science or another discipline from technology and science, the idea of preserving their projects can seem exotic. Finally, several respondents confess that they have not worried about preservation, but consider that maybe they should (#7316884, #7296276).

2.2.4 CONCLUSIONS

This survey does not intend to provide an accurate and conclusive statistical portrait of new media artists. To do so would require a longer and more complex survey process involving resources beyond the scope of the current research. This objective is also hardly attainable, since it implies the difficult question of defining the population (as outlined in section 2.2.2.1), as well as obtaining a large number of responses to questions that can be sensitive or uncomfortable for some respondents. However, as the previous analysis shows, the collected data draws a fairly illustrative image of the perceptions and expectations of new media artists in relation to the new media and contemporary art scenes. The results are consistent across the different questions and also correspond to observations and known facts about the structure and dynamics of both art worlds and the art market. In order to summarize these findings, this section presents a brief description of the perceptions and expectations of new media artists as expressed in the survey. These perceptions are confronted with the statements of several artists who were interviewed individually.

Artists tend to dislike labels. Most of them do not see themselves as “new media artists,” nor consider that the media they use define their work. While they perceive a separation

between new media art and contemporary art, they are not inclined to reinforce its relevance, expecting that in the future the gap will disappear. They also seem to be uncomfortable, tired, or even infuriated by this subject. Artist Aram Bartholl (see Addenda A1.1) admits that he describes himself in different ways according to the context, shifting between “artist,” “media artist,” “conceptual and media artist,” “contemporary fine artist” or even “interdisciplinary artist.” Sometimes these labels are used to refer to him in magazines and newspapers. He also states that identifying oneself with the label “new media art” is a “problem” since it places the artist in the context of new media art festivals, which is not considered particularly convenient. Although part of a younger generation, Nicolas Sassoon (A1.10) also indicates that he uses different terms according to the context, conflictingly describing himself as new media artist while stating that he does not feel like one. Sassoon also states that there are many specific niches within the new media art field, so when he talks with other artists working with new media, he tries to be more precise in defining his work. LIA (A1.4) asserts that the term “new media art” is “a problem” because the media are not new anymore; moreover, she considers that “it doesn’t say anything.” As discussed in section 1.4.2, even young artists who identify with Post-Internet art have problems with this label.

Most artists consider it an important part of their professional career to exhibit their work, although this is not the main goal. As stated above, this can be explained by the different professional activities carried out by many artists, which usually include teaching, writing, giving lectures and workshops, curating, or developing other projects not directly related to their artistic practice in the fields of print and web design, programming, engineering and so forth. For instance, LIA has developed a long career as a VJ in electronic music concerts, Nicolas Sassoon collaborates with fashion designers, and Rafaël Rozendaal participates in advertising projects. All of them state that they do not have conflicts in combining these different activities, nor that they entail any sort of problem with their respective art galleries. In terms of exhibiting, most artists have predominantly presented their work at new media art festivals and art museums, as well as artist-run galleries, small or medium commercial galleries and alternative art fairs. Three out of twenty artists who participated in the survey have never shown their work in commercial galleries. In general terms, this means that new media artists tend to have a medium to low profile in the art market, while they regularly participate in festivals and have shown in art museums. As discussed in section 2.1, the presence of new media art in art museums has been more or less frequent since the beginning of the 2000s, although participating in a group show in a museum has not given much recognition to most new media artists. Festivals such as Ars Electronica or Transmediale have regularly hosted the work of these artists, who in many cases have “grown up” in this context, as Aram Bartholl puts it. LIA mentions that the festival circuit creates a close-knit network, so that an artist usually goes from one festival to another, but is at the same time “completely detached” from the art world and the galleries. Evan Roth stresses the fact that, after receiving awards in the most renowned festivals, his position as an artist had not improved, neither financially nor professionally (see 2.1). Given the disconnection between the festival circuit and the art market, it can

be inferred that most artists who started their careers between the 1990s and early to mid-2000s have frequently participated in festivals but have had little presence in the art market. Currently, many artists express their intention of moving away from the festivals and focusing on the art market, which is consistent with their rejection of the term “new media art” and the expressed wishes of taking part in major exhibitions and events in the mainstream contemporary art world.

New media artists have consistently distributed their work on the Internet, particularly on their own websites but also on blogs, mailing lists, community platforms, online publications, and social networks. The new media art scene has produced a large amount of online documentation, some of which is kept in freely accessible archives such as Media Art Net or the archives of large festivals such as Ars Electronica, Transmediale, or FILE. For this reason, new media art is more easily found online than on other media such as television, newspapers, and art magazines, although this tendency is changing as more artists enter the contemporary art world and the market. Additionally, the renewed interest for the Internet in the mainstream contemporary art world (see 3.8) opens the possibility for an increased visibility of the work of artists working with new media, as online platforms become the prominent channel of distribution of art.

Considering their relatively recent involvement with the art market, most new media artists manifest an interest in working with galleries but also have doubts and can be pessimistic about the consequences of this collaboration, as stated by Evan Roth and LIA. Their income is not based on sales in the gallery but rather on personal resources, grants, and exhibition or production fees. Private and institutional funding has allowed new media artists in general to pay less attention to the market and to feel free from the constraints associated to making art that can be sold in the gallery. However, as the arts funding is decreasing in Europe and inexistent in the USA, the disappearance of an economy based on grants, awards, and fees leads artists to look for ways to make their activity sustainable, either in the art market or by using their skills in other professional domains. Those who participate in the art market tend to adapt their artworks to the conditions of the art gallery and the market (see 3.2, 3.5), creating objects and limited editions of digital and online work. In this sense, while most respondents in Q9 stated that they do not consider how to sell an artwork when they are producing it, they later on look for ways to make it marketable. Artists who combine performative work and interventions in the public space with artworks sold at the gallery, such as Aram Bartholl and Evan Roth, indicate that they feel some pressure to produce work that can be presented in the context of the gallery or indicate that they think about the gallery as a specific space (see 2.3). Some of the conditions that the artists must fulfill to present their work in an art gallery are the stability of the piece (it must be in a fixed format, such as a print or video, or use software that may not break down), its scarcity (the artwork must be unique or in a limited edition), and the easiness of its transportation and installation (pieces made of single objects are preferable, as well as plug-and-play installations). Related to these conditions is the central issue of preservation: the artwork must have a long lifespan in order to reassure

collectors. Although most artists indicate that they have considered how to preserve their artworks, many confess that they do not have enough resources to continually update or restore them. As will be discussed in 2.3, successful artists such as Rafael Lozano-Hemmer consider all of the aspects of the preservation of their artworks and maintain a studio with staff dedicated to their development and occasional repair. However, other artists consider the artworks have a certain life span that often cannot be preserved. Vanina Hoffman, director of Taxonomedia and media art preservation researcher, quotes artist Eduardo Kac, who considers that his works, “like life, are born and die” (Waelder, 2012d, p.100). Kac, however, also creates artworks in more stable formats, such as drawings, etchings, and sculptures, which are sold in art galleries.

In the following section, the career paths of new media artists will be discussed in relation to three main environments that have been mentioned in the previous description: the academic research community, the art market and the technology, design and communications industry. The involvement of artists in these different professional poles will be discussed in terms of the segmentation of the new media art community.

2.3 CAREER PATHS

The results of the survey, as well as the observation of the professional trajectories of artists working with new media and the information provided in semi-structured interviews (see Addenda A1) indicate that they develop their careers on three different environments. These environments do not fully determine the artist’s trajectory, they are not closed fields in which artists can be grouped; instead, they act as “poles of attraction,” providing different forms of capital (symbolic, economic, cultural) that artists may seek at a particular moment. Therefore, an artist can move between these poles, being more closely linked to one of them or switching from one to another as opportunities arise or her personal situation leads her to adopt a certain lifestyle. Briefly outlined, these environments are the following:

1. Academic research: universities and research laboratories promote the production of knowledge as their main goal. In this environment, research is generally more important than specific, tangible results: for an artist, this implies focusing on the aspect of research and innovation in a project rather than producing an art object. Financial constraints and time schedules are usually different from those of an artist working in a gallery. Even if the artist is not employed in a university or laboratory, she may see her work as a personal research and be guided towards experimentation and knowledge rather than obtaining a profit from the sale of an artwork or obtaining recognition from the institutions in the art world.
2. Art market: the contemporary art market is nowadays the driving force in the art world and the context in which professional recognition is obtained (as well as

economic profits). Artists who intend to exhibit their work and make a living from selling artworks while obtaining the recognition of the art world tend to adapt to the requirements of the art market and look for representation at an art gallery and chances to have their work included in curated exhibitions. Research is not absent from their work, but it is affected by the requirements of the art market.

3. Industry: the technology industry is a considerable pole of attraction for many young artists who have developed creative uses of technology and can apply their skills to produce new products for the industry. From industrial design to advertising, many different job positions constitute a potential way of making a living for an artist, particularly if she does not clearly see how to achieve a stable position in the art market.

Artists gravitate around these main poles, in a manner that allows an artist to hold a position in a university but also exhibit her work in an art gallery, or work at an advertising agency while developing a career as an artist. In the following sections, each of these environments will be addressed from the point of view of the artists interviewed in the context of this dissertation.

2.3.1 ACADEMIC RESEARCH

The field of academic research has had a prominent influence in the new media art community, given that since the 1960s most media art originated in research labs in universities and technology institutes such as the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). Scholars and theorists have led the main discourses in the field, participating in the symposia that have been a fundamental part of major festivals such as Ars Electronica and Transmediale and writing articles, papers and books of the issues surrounding the encounter of art, science, technology and society. As previously stated, an economy based on funding from public institutions and sponsored events has allowed artists to produce their work with support from grants, awards and other stipends. The art market has been ignored by most artists whose work is more closely related to the academic field, despite the fact that arts funding has decreased since 2008.

In 2013 and 2014, I had the opportunity to interview the recipients and jury of the VIDA Art and Artificial Life International Awards,²² a prize that has particularly attracted artists working with biotechnologies, robotics and computer science. In this context, scientific research is prominent, most artists working in research labs or directing their work towards rational methods of inquiry and addressing issues related to the concept of artificial life. The meeting of art and science is a key subject, which leads to questioning how these disciplines can interact with each other and how artists and scientist can work together. Artist and jury Chair of the VIDA Awards Nell Tenhaaf comments on her experience as an artist working in a scientific research lab:

22. VIDA Art and Artificial Life International Awards. See <http://vida.fundaciontelefonica.com>

“I remember that, 30 years ago, as an artist in a scientific lab I felt like a little bug... but now A-Life has helped bringing the idea that there is a different kind of science, and a different way to relate to other fields of knowledge. So science is not only there with its huge authoritative voice, there is something more of a conversation.” (Waelder, 2013, June 21).

The encounter between art and science has frequently lead to artists providing “illustrations” of scientific concepts, although as suggested by astronomer Roger F. Malina, art can transform science to the point of driving it in new directions (Waelder, 2013, December 22). The academic context has favored ambitious projects, which according to Tenhaaf are not always preferred by artists:

“For artists working in the context of universities, there is always the pressure to get involved in big, ambitious projects with a large team of collaborators. But many of these artists prefer to develop their own projects with less resources and the complications that stem from them. In this sense, the open source ethic is very good for artists because it provides the possibility of working without the need for a big infrastructure. [...] In that sense, I think that the artist has to make the decision of how far she wants to go into the lab, how far does her research go.” (Waelder, 2013, June 21).

Working in labs therefore implies compromises that an artist working on her own in her studio can avoid in order to work more freely, but at the same time the resources provided by the lab, both in terms of technical equipment and knowledge, can be crucial for the development of a particular project. In this sense, awards such as VIDA (which was discontinued in 2015) and artist in residence programs such as Arts@CERN²³ or artists-in-labs²⁴ have contributed to provide a framework in which artists can develop artistic projects connected to scientific and technological research. VIDA provided economic incentives and the opportunity to work at Telefonica’s R+D lab, while the artist-in-residence programs at Swiss labs give artists access to advanced research facilities. Moreover, these initiatives provide visibility to the work of the artists who, in addition to economic and technical resources, need their projects to be seen and disseminated, as underscored by artists Clara Boj and Diego Díaz (Waelder, 2013, November 12). However, the collaboration between artists and scientists does not happen spontaneously, it requires time, a certain predisposition, and it also depends on how the relationship between two individuals with different personalities and perspectives can evolve. Agnes Meyer-Brandis, an artist whose work questions the objectivity of science, comments on her experience in collaborating with scientists:

23. Arts@CERN. See <http://arts.web.cern.ch/>

24. artists-in-labs. See <http://www.artistsinlabs.ch/>

“As for the collaboration between artists and scientists, I believe in structures that grow by themselves. It is not enough just to put an artist and a scientist in the same room and ask them to make something nice together. It must come from an inner conviction and shared interest, and evolve naturally. In that case a very good collaboration can emerge.” (Waelder, 2013, June 4).

Meyer-Brandis’s projects usually involve long, painstaking processes in which the artist commits to work for long periods. For instance, *The Moon Goose Experiment* is an artistic project with living geese that, according to the artist, will continue as long as the animals are alive. Considering that the geese can live up to 80 or even 100 years, this can be a lifetime project for the artist who currently has planned future activities in 2027 and 2036. Both the time frame and the output of this project make it difficult to translate into the context of the art market, which arguably makes her work possible only within the framework of a research grant or with the continuous support of an institution.

Two other aspects in which the context of academic research and the idea of providing open access to knowledge influence the careers of artists can be pointed out. On the one hand, many artists working with technology follow the open source philosophy by providing free and public access to the software that they have developed for their artistic projects. By sharing these resources, a whole community of artists can benefit from tools that facilitate developing their projects and may also ease the tasks of preservation in the future, since the code they are using is shared with many others. On the other hand, teaching workshops and giving lectures is a frequent source of income for some artists. Evan Roth states that a speaking engagement can earn him €1,000 after investing some time in preparing his speech and attending the conference. This sum is easier to get by this means than by selling art, where the artist takes fifty percent, the gallerist the other fifty, and production and shipping costs are deduced (Addenda A1.8).

2.3.2 ART MARKET

As can be inferred from Roth’s calculations, selling in the art market is not immediately profitable. It implies costs, investments, and a risky operation that rarely translates into considerable profits, unless the artist’s work has reached a stable demand that translates into regular sales at high prices. However, many artists direct their efforts towards the art market following the promise of economic profits that may render their activity sustainable, as well as recognition in the context of the contemporary art world. Selling in the art market entails producing an artwork that fits into the requirements of the gallery, or adapting an existing work into these requirements (see 3.5). In general terms, the art market deals with unique objects or limited editions. Videos and software can also be sold, as long as the number of copies is artificially limited. In some cases, these formats may include the display device as a unique object or installation. For new media artists, carrying out this adaptation of the artwork into a unique or editioned object is a primary concern.

In particular, artists whose work takes place online or in the street, as well as those who create software-based, generative artworks, must consider not only the technical aspects of translating the piece into an object, but also its conceptual implications. Evan Roth explains how he considers the specificity of the gallery space:

“Anyway, just as the street artists that I love treat the street as a unique medium [...] I’m trying to treat the gallery in the same way, not to treat it as a place that is just to dump things and think pessimistically about the market but really think of it as a place that’s different, a place that exists on a longer time scale [...] And so I’m trying to diversify my practice: I’m still making work on the Internet, that is maybe better communicated in a blog post than in a gallery, but I am also making work that is trying to treat the gallery with respect.” (A1.8)

The artist bypasses the usual prejudice against the gallery by turning it into a space with its own identity and not just a non-site where art is sold. In this sense, he also argues that the formats of the works are consistent with their original concept: prints freeze in time chunks of the Internet, they become archives that will age as browser interfaces and screen resolutions change; 3D printed sculptures attain a physicality that was only simulated in the software version. Roth asserts that if a piece is a website, it remains as such, even if that means that it will not be sold. Following a well-established practice in the contemporary art market, the exhibition can include works for sale and others that will probably not be sold but contribute to give sense to the displayed pieces as a whole. This can also be profitable, given that it addresses the cultural aspect of the show and can dismiss the impression that it is only a commercial activity.

Digital files have the advantage of their versatility, and artists usually explore many different formats in order to find out which can be more successful, both in terms of disseminating the work and generating income. LIA is a software artist who has distributed her work in almost all possible channels: as a VJ in concerts, in installations and performances, as apps for iOS and Android (see 3.6), in the streaming service StillReel (see 3.5), in custom display devices and on the digital frame and collection FRAMED*2.0 (see 3.9.1). The artist confesses that she would like to be more actively involved in the art market, have her work exhibited and collected, but does not like the exposure that it will entail, as well as the actions she would have to carry out to promote herself (A1.4). She explains the differences in prices and formats in her work (for instance, her work on FRAMED*2.0 costs around €200 while an iOS app costs €1.50) indicating that the edition number and the size determine their respective value. In this sense, she considers her iPhone apps just a “demonstration” of her work, something like a portfolio, which can be cheap because it won’t be used to decorate someone’s home. The sale of these apps provide some “pocket money,” which is not much but is better than just showing the work for free on the Internet. Her diversified model of selling software art is similar to what artist Carlo Zanni advocates for video and net-based art. For his video *Iterating My Way to Oblivion* (2010), which existed on YouTube for six months, he made an edition of 1,000 for €90 each in

a customized package that refers to the content of the video. In his opinion, it does not make sense to artificially limit a digital file to a small edition and sell each copy for a high price, when it could be sold in large editions at more affordable prices (see 3.2). This would open the market to a larger segment of the public, a strategy that is also followed by online platform Sedition (see 3.8.3). Zanni also intends to debunk a long-standing myth in the art market:

“The art crowd shouldn’t be afraid to admit that uniqueness and high prices (or of course, cheap prices and high numbers) don’t automatically stand for quality but they are just a way to sell respecting the buyers and the time they are living in.” (Waelder, 2012a, p.46)

Zanni’s model is applicable to simple digital files that can be played on different devices; in the case of digital art works with customized devices or electronic parts, this logic entails some problems. Rafael Lozano-Hemmer realized that he was selling the editions of his artworks (usually 6) too fast and that did not allow museums to arrive in time to acquire them. With his team, they developed a new piece, *Zero Noon* (2013) in an edition of 12 at a lower price than other similar artworks, and then another, *X is not the new Y* (2011) in an edition of 100 at \$1,000. This last piece generated some problems, given that the artist’s studio handles the maintenance of the artworks, and such a large number of copies at a low selling price ended up being unsustainable (see A1.6). Lozano-Hemmer has also developed customized display devices, that allow selling software-based art as a unique object. The *Shadow Box* series—consisting of a monitor in a custom case with an integrated camera and different software applications that generate images according to the movements of the viewer—has been described by the artist as the biggest commercial success of his studio. The device has the advantage of being easy to install (plug-and-play) and conceal the technology behind a simple screen that creates an intuitive interaction with the spectator. The good reception of these pieces can be connected with the current development of digital art frames (see 3.9), which indicate that a likely setting for digital art will be on a dedicated screen hanging on a wall in the collector’s home.

Lozano-Hemmer also addresses the artificial scarcity of the digital file and the preservation of software-based art with an elaborated system based on the certificate of authenticity. This document takes the form of an anodized aluminum ingot with a description of the artwork, artist’s signature, an engraved reference number, and three watermarks containing encrypted PGP keys, which allow confirming the authenticity of the piece. If the artwork is, for instance, a photo, the collector receives a printed copy of the photo along with the digital file, instructions on how to print it and the certificate of authenticity. Lozano-Hemmer states that the artwork could be printed by the collector as many times as he wanted, be it because the original was damaged or because he wants to have the photo at home and in his office. The copies are not important, since the certificate specifies who owns the artwork. Without it, the printed photo has no value (see A1.6). The preservation of the artwork is also taken into account, as Lozano-Hemmer considers that each artwork

can be de-materialized into a set of instructions, a source code. Thus, the collector obtains the source code of the artwork (the software and/or digital files) but also the instructions that allow recreating the artwork in the future, should the technology become obsolete or some parts irretrievably lost. In a similar way to how the Variable Media initiative²⁵ conceives the preservation of media art works (Waelder, 2011a), the artist has developed a protocol that ensures the continued existence of the pieces according to their original design (even if none of the original materials are preserved). However, if the piece cannot be reconstructed in the future, the artist considers that it is better to give “an honorable death”: instead of keeping a malfunctioning or inoperative object, it is “more civilized” to accept that the artwork has ceased to be. A structured presentation of these ideas, in the form of a decalogue of “best practices” has been recently published by Lozano-Hemmer (2015) online. He has also announced that he will publish the schematics and source code of all 42 artworks in an upcoming solo show at Mexico City’s MUAC Museum, with the intention of allowing other artists to use his software and therefore “infecting future projects” as a strategy of preservation.

The “best practices” initiative has been developed by Lozano-Hemmer for at least over a year (he told me about it in an interview on February 2014 and has published an article in September 2015) after realizing that media art is usually perceived by collectors as a single entity. This means that, if a collector buys a digital art piece and it does not work, he will mistrust all digital art and will not feel inclined to purchase other pieces, even by other artists. The best practices approach is a step towards maturing the involvement of new media art in the art market. Despite the prejudices against the market bred by the context of academic research and festivals, artists need to adapt their artworks to the proper conditions for their commercialization and integration in an art collection in order to be taken seriously by the agents of the art market.

2.3.3 INDUSTRY

The widespread use of computers and digital technologies in general has opened numerous new paths for the development of services and products that are increasingly in demand. The consumer society has an inextinguishable appetite for new hardware and software, products designed to make life easier or more entertaining as well as cloud-based solutions for productivity and social interactions. Artists with a background in programming, interaction design, graphic and web design, digital animation and many other disciplines linked to new media have an advantage over painters and sculptors in their ability to apply their skills to a wide range of professional activities besides the production of artworks. Already the first artists to use computers were mathematicians or engineers who, as discussed in section 2.3.1, contributed to the predominance of academic research in the field of new media art. Nowadays, the diminishing arts funding in most

25. Variable Media Network. See <http://www.variablemedia.net/e/index.html>

countries, and the uncertainty inspired by an art market that still does not fully accept digital art leads many artists to use their knowledge in other professional fields. These are usually: computer animation in broadcast media or films, videogame and interface design, industrial design, graphic design, fashion design, and many other professional activities in the media, entertainment, and technology industries. This path can already start at school, since some universities offer Masters in Fine Art, which eventually become Design Technology courses (this was, for instance, Evan Roth’s experience at Parsons in New York). Additionally, the separation between the technology and art worlds (see 1.3.3) can make it even less attractive for an engineer, programmer, or designer to jump into the art market. This is not to say that an artist cannot combine her artistic practice with a freelance activity in other fields, but it tends to be more difficult to develop a career in both worlds. Evan Roth explains how the tech industry attracts many emerging artists in a competitive environment:

“In New York there is a whole new media art scene that, especially in New York where there is a big tech bubble happening, it’s so hard to justify a limited lifestyle when you have these skills that are very, very sought after, for Internet startup companies. So you have all these people who could have had these art careers, but because there is no... Well, this isn’t the only reason but it would help if there was a funding model that allowed them to survive and they didn’t have to take these jobs in IT and advertising.” (A1.8)

An uncertain career with low income prospects in the art world is no match for a steady job in the IT industry, particularly in Internet startups or videogame companies, where the possibility of developing a highly successful product and earning large amounts of money constantly fuels new initiatives. The need to earn money also becomes a pressing concern in large cities like New York or London, which are also the main hubs of the art world. The high cost of living leads to prioritizing activities that provide regular income. Artists Varvara Guljajeva and Mar Canet, who are based in Tallin (Estonia) explain that when they worked on their interactive installation for the *Digital Revolution* exhibition at Barbican (see 1.3.2) in London, they met other artists who were developing interesting projects but had to focus on commissions by corporate clients, making interactive installations for their offices or for advertising campaigns.²⁶ FIELD,²⁷ a London-based design studio created by Marcus Wendt and Vera-Maria Glahn in 2009, exemplifies this hybrid practice: they develop artworks for gallery exhibitions as well as product presentations in shops, installations in corporate offices and festivals and an iPad app. Besides working for the IT industry, other professional paths are available to artists: as previously mentioned LIA has worked as a VJ while Nicolas Sassoon collaborates with fashion designers. As developers of the technology created for their artistic projects, artists can also earn from patents of their inventions. Rafael Lozano-Hemmer explains that, at

26. Personal interview with the artists on August 20, 2014.

27. FIELD. Hi-tech art with a human touch. See <http://www.field.io>

the beginning of his career, he developed with engineer Will Bauer a tridimensional sensor that allowed a computer to track the presence of an object or person in an area of 144 square meters. Selling the patent of this invention allowed him to work for five years (A1.6). In 2008, artists Laurent Mignonneau and Christa Sommerer worked together with architect Michael Shamiyeh in the development and patent of Solar Display, a solar-powered system that allows displaying content on a building during day time in a non-intrusive way and without requiring electricity. Both inventions exemplify the ability of media artists to go beyond the art context and actively engage in the creation of industrial products.

However, it is the advertising industry that more closely connects with the way that artists work. Creativity is equally used, but with different purposes: whereas the artwork presents an idea or compelling visual composition to make the viewer think, an advertisement does so to convince the consumer to buy a product. Argentinian artist Eduardo Imasaka is the co-director of MID (Media Interactive Design),²⁸ a company that works closely with advertising agencies in Barcelona and Buenos Aires to provide technical solutions for promotional campaigns of products by multinational brands such as Kraft Foods, Pepsico, or Danone. Their project *Connected Hearts* (2012)²⁹ consisted of an interactive installation at the Obelisk monument in Buenos Aires. Passersby were invited to place their hands on two sensors that registered their heartbeats. The rhythm of the person's heart was communicated to a set of red pulsating lights directed at the obelisk. The installation, which is very similar to Rafael Lozano-Hemmer's biometric projects,³⁰ was sponsored by Danone for the promotion of a yoghurt, in collaboration with a public health campaign by the government of Buenos Aires. Imasaka confesses that he is not very comfortable working in commercial projects, but that he makes a living from it and can use the resources developed for advertising in creating his own artistic projects.³¹ He also stresses that, while his company intends to make "good use" of these resources, other agencies are less worried about the consequences that using ideas developed for artistic projects in advertising can have for the perception of interactive art. Rafael Lozano-Hemmer expresses disappointment for this use of his ideas, but admits that it is inevitable. On several occasions, sponsors have intended to introduce their projects into his large-scale installations, something that he has consistently opposed (A1.6). Artist Golan Levin criticized the repeated use of media art projects in advertising campaigns in a presentation at the FITC (Future. Innovation. Technology. Creativity) Conference in Toronto in 2012. Levin (2012) denounces that "new media artists are the unpaid R&D department of ad agencies, and this is not sustainable." Artists use open source tools to develop their projects and share them with their community, but these are also available to anyone who knows how to use them. As previously discussed, programmers and artists find jobs in advertising

28. Media Interactive Design. See <http://mediainteractivedesign.com/en/>

29. Connected Hearts. Media Interactive Design. Retrieved from <http://mediainteractivedesign.com/en/corazones-conectados/>

30. Biometric projects. Rafael Lozano-Hemmer. Retrieved from <http://www.lozano-hemmer.com/projects.php?keyword=biometric>

31. Personal interview with Eduardo Imasaka, May 13, 2013.

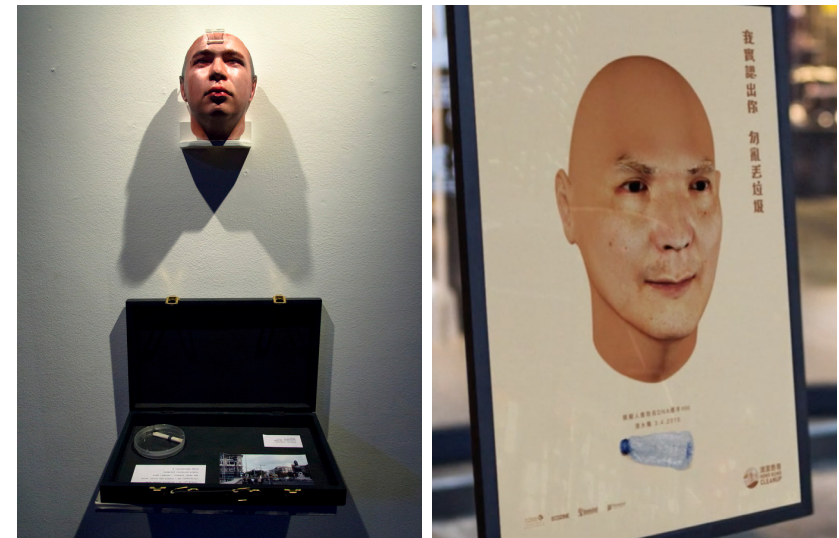


Fig. 8. Left: Heather Dewey-Hagborg, *Stranger Visions*. Installation shot. Source: deweyhagborg.com. Right: Hong Kong Cleanup campaign. Source: Ogilvy & Mather.

agencies, which often create campaigns by simply copying an artistic project. Levin argues that this sort of plagiarism is quickly detected by their client's target audience, which is the same that saw the original project. This entails a bad reputation for the brand that aims to promote their product by this means. As a solution, he suggests that advertising companies contact directly with the artists and ask them to develop a similar project, or that they at least keep record of where ideas came from. This tendency, nonetheless, has not changed. Heather Dewey-Hagborg's *Stranger Visions* (2012-2013),³² an artistic project that uses the analysis of genetic material to generate robot portraits of strangers based on litter found on the street, such as cigarette butts, chewing gum or strands of hair, was recently copied by advertising agency Ogilvy & Mather for an anti-littering campaign in the city of Hong Kong (Sharp, 2015). Launched in April 2015, the campaign applied the same methods used by Dewey-Hagborg to create posters intended to shame individuals who litter the streets (fig.8). The artist's project was not mentioned by the advertising agency; rather, Chief Creative Officer Reed Collins stated: "This campaign is one of a kind. It's interactive. It's innovative. It's our own science experiment that we're using to create social change."³³

The relationship between art and advertising can therefore lead to productive associations as well as lamentable cases of plagiarism that can entail and misperception of the original artistic projects. This is also proof that artists' creativity nowadays spans beyond the context of art and can produce interesting results in other professional fields. This in turn may lead to an expanded notion of art.

32. *Stranger Visions*. Heather Dewey-Hagborg. Retrieved from <http://deweyhagborg.com/strangervisions/>

33. Ogilvy & Mather press release, April 22, 2015. Retrieved from <http://www.ogilvy.com/News/Press-Releases/April-2015-OM-Hong-Kong-uses-DNA-testing-to-put-a-face-to-litterbugs.aspx>

3. THE CONTEMPORARY ART MARKET AND NEW MEDIA

3.1 ART VERSUS COMMERCE

The term “art” refers to a wide spectrum of artworks and artistic practices; the “art world” encompasses the complex interactions between a heterogeneous group of professionals (Becker, 1982). Likewise, “art market” is an abstract term that designates the interactions between art and commerce (Graw, 2012, p.185) in different environments and with the participation of different actors. In galleries and art fairs, art dealers sell artworks to collectors; these collectors eventually put the works in their collection on sale at auction houses. Additionally, some artists sell their works directly in their studios or, more recently, through online marketplaces such as Saatchi Art (see section 3.8.1). Isabelle Graw (2012) indicates that each of the segments and environments of the art market has specific laws and value systems (p.186), determining different dynamics of exchange and evaluation of the artwork. tending the usual division of the commercial art market into a primary market (where galleries sell artworks provided directly by the artists to collectors and institutions) and a secondary market (where artworks are re-sold by galleries or auction houses), Graw (2009, p.66) also refers to supplementary markets. Shee also categorizes a knowledge market (constituted by conferences, art academies and publications), a market of institutions (museums and art societies), and a market of major exhibitions (in the context of biennials, documentas, and other international crowd-gathering art events). In a similar way, managing director of Christie’s in Zurich Dirk Boll (2011) describes a structure of the art market in which the artist (as producer) and the collector (as consumer) are connected by a series of mediators. Thus, commercial intermediaries (galleries and auction houses) are dedicated to sell the artwork as a commodity, and content intermediaries (museums, media, art criticism, and theory) provide a discourse about the artwork and place it in a social and cultural context (p.11). These views denote a pervasive influence of commerce in all sectors of the art world, given that even those who apparently are not involved in commercial activities (such as art critics, theorists and museums) play a role in the market.

The contemporary art world is dominated by the economy, but at the same time, the art market cannot be explained using economic theories. This is due to the complex and contradictory relationship between art and commerce: as a cultural object, the artwork is priceless and cannot be confused with a simple commodity, but, at the same time, it must be sold in order to provide an income for the artist and the previously mentioned mediators. It can be argued (as discussed in section 2.3) that an artist can maintain her activity by receiving grants or commissions from institutions, governments, and exhibition spaces without directly selling her work in commercial galleries. However, following Graw’s definition, even these types of exchanges are part of the market and entail the same contradiction between engaging in an economic transaction while denying it. Pierre Bourdieu (1992) described the art world as “an economic world turned upside down” (p.81) in which it is necessary to conceal one’s economic objectives in order to gain symbolic capital and make monetary profits in the long run (1993, p.142). Traditionally, artists and gallerists have denied any commercial interest, focusing solely on the values of

the artwork as a cultural good and on its presentation, generously facilitated by the gallery inside a freely accessible exhibition space. In order to build a reputation and attract the attention of critics and theorists (thus, gain symbolic capital), the artist and the gallerist have to invest money in the production of the artwork and the maintenance of the gallery. This is an operation that may not immediately generate enough income to compensate for the costs (therefore, economic capital may be lost), but it can become considerably profitable later on, when either gallerist or artist gain enough reputation to sell the artworks at a high price. This logic of production and circulation that Bourdieu (1992) considers “anti-economic” responds to the objective of slowly accumulating symbolic capital and is addressed to a small, specialized sector of the public, opposed to the “economic” logic of the cultural industries, which trade in products (such as books or prints) addressed to a large audience and seeking immediate returns (p.142). The difference in the perception of these two logics are such that an artist or gallery that attains rapid success and reaches a wide sector of the audience can be met with suspicion and rejection by the art community (p.220). Both dealers and artists must therefore seek to maximize their economic profits in ways that do not compromise the symbolic aspect of the artwork, therefore excluding overt forms of mercantilism or promotion (Bourdieu, 1993, p.77).

The contradiction between art and commerce is particularly noticeable in the context of contemporary art galleries working in the primary market. Sociologist Olav Velthuis (2007) states that, while galleries are part of the capitalist world of market transactions, they are also cultural institutions, and as such provide access to the art world (p.23). In order to maintain this dual function, gallerists on the one hand firmly maintain that they are interested in art and not money (p.21), and on the other clearly divide the physical spaces where each activity takes place. The front room of the gallery is usually a white space dedicated to the sole purpose of exhibiting the art. The distribution of the artworks, lighting, and display are carefully considered in order to present each piece under the best possible conditions. All information about the prices of the artworks is limited to a printed list, discreetly placed on the reception desk, or even hidden from view. The back room is where the gallerist’s office is located, usually with a sofa and a quiet space to talk with the prospective buyer and discuss, in a more intimate environment, the prices of the artworks, discounts, and forms of payment. As the site where the artwork enters the market and becomes a commodity, galleries develop highly ritualized activities (p.38), such as the vernissage at the opening of an exhibition, in which the act of putting the artworks on sale becomes a social and cultural event. However, where the constant attention to separating art from commerce is made more evident is in its price. As a quantitative element, prices establish hierarchies (among the artworks themselves, and consequently among artists) and place the value of the artwork among those of all other commodities, prompting comparisons and judgments. Prices have therefore symbolic meanings that lead to establishing complex mechanisms for setting, controlling and displaying the price of an artwork. Velthuis provides a telling illustration of the importance that galleries place on the way in which prices are made available to customers: in 1988, the “truth-in-pricing” law was applied to New York galleries, forcing them to visibly display the prices of the

artworks (p.32). Galleries protested and some of them were fined for not complying with the new law, which was finally dropped in light of the strong controversy it had generated. In an article published in *The New York Times*, art critic Hilton Kramer denounced that galleries were treated as “supermarkets or department stores or butcher shops” and asserted that imposing the sales practices of retail businesses was damaging “the very essence of the enterprise,” as well as “something precious in the cultural life of the city” (Kramer, 1988). Both Kramer’s words and the gallerists’s reactions indicate that separating the symbolic value of the artwork from its economic value can be a crucial matter. Furthermore, dealers tend to avoid displaying the prices because these can be flexible according to several variables. For instance, the price can be lowered if the artwork is acquired by a well-known collector or institution (resulting in an increase in the reputation of the artist and consequently of her prices). It can alternatively escalate due to high demand of the artist’s work, as is the common rule with editioned artworks (as editions are sold, the price of the next edition is higher). Prices are, therefore, the “fine-tuning mechanism of the market” (Velthuis, 2007, p.74) and as such are better kept as private as possible.

It is not surprising, then, that the art market has been frequently defined by its uncertainty and asymmetry of information (Moulin, 2010, loc.40-46). As the case of the dealer negotiating the final price of an artwork with a collector shows, the value of artworks is constructed through social exchanges, in a complex interaction between the participants, their respective positions in the art world and the context in which the exchange is taking place. This value is constantly reconsidered, following the influence of dominant discourses on art, market interests, and the reputation of the artist (Moulin, 2010, loc.275). Within this uncertainty, however, some basic rules are generally followed regarding the prices of artworks, establishing what Velthuis (2007) defines as “anomalies” (p.158). According to Velthuis, they do not follow the laws of capitalists markets: on the one hand, prices never decrease; they can only increment as the artist gains reputation, has her work acquired by museum or institutional collections, or adds more exhibitions to her résumé. On the other hand, artworks of the same size by the same artist have the same prize. These rules stem from the perception of the artwork as a cultural good, the economic value of which is supposed to increase as a reflection of its growing symbolic value. Different artworks of the same size have the same price to indicate that they are all equally valued. A decrease in prices can ruin an artist’s career because it implies that the symbolic value of her works is also dropping; and it also entails an economic loss for collectors, who expect to be able to re-sell the artwork at a profit. To avoid this additional strategies are used, such as starting with low prices and raising them slowly, keeping the same price in a larger artwork or justifying a lower price by the fact that the artist is experimenting with a new technique (p.163). Visible price differences can create uncomfortable situations: for instance, in the first edition of the Unpainted Media Art Fair (see section 3.3) in 2014, one of the exhibitors, Sedition (see section 3.8.3), sold “digital editions” of artworks by established artists for prices as low as \$15. One of these digital editions was visually identical to an artwork by the same artist exhibited at the booth of an art gallery for around \$10,000. Although the artworks were entirely different in nature --one being a looped video and

the other a generative art piece--, their similar appearance and the stark difference in price threatened with devaluating the original work sold at the gallery.

Given the profound effects that prices can have on the value of the artworks and the artist's career, auction house sales can be particularly disruptive. Velthuis (2007) indicates that galleries tend to distinguish the prices set in their circuit from those achieved at auction (p.79), where the competition amongst bidders usually results in record prices. Although they dominate the secondary market, auction houses have increasingly incorporated contemporary art in their sales since the 1970s, entering in direct competition with galleries for the collectors's money (p.86). This creates an additional contradiction, since galleries tend to avoid displaying prices while in an auction sale everything revolves around the price, the artwork being just a "lot," one of many items being sold on a particular evening. Paradoxically, auction sales have attracted the attention of the media, generating the commonly held impression that large amounts of money circulate in the art market¹, which is therefore associated with wealth and luxury, and ultimately favors selling artworks for higher prices. However, they have also facilitated a space for open speculation that has had a profound impact on the art market. In 1973, collectors Robert and Ethel Scull sold at auction their contemporary art collection, obtaining \$2.2 million and setting record prices for some of the artworks, but mainly showing how profitable it could turn out to collect art and sell it afterwards. The frequently mentioned Scull sale established a turning point in the art market, which became an investment market (p.142) as more collectors realized that buying art had a strong potential for speculation.

The financialization of art has continued to develop as a growing tendency in the context of the network society, which, according to Castells (1997) is already structured around financial flows (p.552). Alongside the globalization of the art world and the impact of the Internet, the financialization of art is repositioning the carefully choreographed distinction between art and commerce traditionally carried out in the art market. Velthuis (2012) indicates that artists, collectors, and gallerists are more driven by profit-oriented motivations and less dedicated to artistic goals (p.18). In the case of artists, this translates into more commercial work, often conceived for the context of art fairs, where collectors will be seeing it (p.19). Collectors see art as an investment, which is turn fueled by the regular sales of contemporary art at auction houses. Not limited to the secondary market, auction houses increasingly intervene in the primary market: it is now common practice in China and India to sell new works at auction (p.21), while newly established online auction platforms such as Paddle8 (see section 3.8.5) have sales dedicated to emerging artists working with new media. Additionally, as Graw (2012) points out, economic success does not bring bad reputation to artists anymore (p.187). On the contrary, some of the most prominent artists, like Damien Hirst or Jeff Koons, are admired for their millionaire status and the astronomical figures paid for their artworks. The art market is thus approaching the logics of the entertainment and the fashion industry, with artists,

1. Actually, the art market is the smallest sector in the culture industry, with only a 0.15 share in the world's gross national product (Boll, 2011, p.12).

dealers, and collectors adopting the role of celebrities in lifestyle magazines (Velthuis, 2012, p.33; Graw, 2009, p.23) and blogs such as Artforum's *Scene and Herd*.² Furthermore, the popularization of annual ranks of the "most important" artists or the "most powerful" people in the art world, such as Kunstkompass (since 1970) and ArtReview's Power 100 (since 2002), reinforce the perception of a constant struggle to dominate the field and the existence of an elitist group which controls the art world in the form of an oligopoly.

The Internet as a channel for distribution and access to information has also deeply influenced the current configuration of the art market, and not just in terms of gossipy blogs (which, nevertheless, document and publicize the social interactions in the art world and reinforce the status of artists, dealers, and collectors). It has also had an influence in the unprecedented amount of data circulating on the Web. This contributes to leverage the previously mentioned asymmetry of information that has traditionally characterized the art market. Although it continues to retain a remarkable lack of transparency, developed around personal interactions and internalized protocols (Graw, 2009, p.63), information about the art market has been made more available through online platforms addressed to collectors, such as Artsy or ArtSpace (see section 3.8), as well as art market databases such as artnet,³ Artprice,⁴ or ArtFacts.⁵ On these websites a collector can find artworks, see or ask for their price, bid in auctions, follow market trends, read quantitative analyses about the career of an artist or a dealer, find out about the prices paid at auction for a particular artwork and compare them with those of other artists, or possibly figure out what price he can ask for an artwork in his collection. All of this can be done without setting foot in an art gallery and almost without contacting any art professionals, just by logging into the websites and paying the corresponding fee. Empowered by this access to information, the customer can now make informed decisions, and is able to purchase art as a calculated investment rather than a passionate or intuitive gamble (Velthuis, 2012, p.28). This can be compared with the current structure of certain financial markets based on what Karin Knorr Cetina (2006) defines as "scopic systems – electronic and informational mechanisms of observing and contextualizing market reality," which generate information that is shared by operating traders worldwide (p.555). In this type of market, participants establish networks to constantly know "where the market is," while the market itself is transformed into a set of quickly moving prices displayed on the screen. Scopic systems in the art market facilitate information about the fluctuating value of the artworks and the reputation of artists and dealers in order to make what could be considered a safe bet. However, investing in art presents profound differences with financial markets.

As the art market becomes financialized, this process is contested both by art world professionals and by the financial community (Velthuis, 2012, p.27). On the one

2. Scene and Herd. Artforum. Retrieved from <http://artforum.com/diary/>

3. artnet. Retrieved from <http://www.artnet.com/>

4. Artprice. Retrieved from <http://www.artprice.com/>

5. Artfacts. Retrieved from <https://www.artfacts.net/>

hand, although works of art are being used as collateral in order to secure multi-million dollar bank loans (p.26), they constitute risky investments. Art market specialist Noah Horowitz (2011) calls attention to the fact that artworks are highly illiquid (it is difficult to turn an artwork into cash money), and they do not generate money while in ownership. Instead, they result in insurance, storage, shipping, and transaction costs, and are subject to unpredictable fluctuations in value, since it depends on relative desirability, which is based on the rarity of the artwork and social prestige derived from owning it (p.18). However, since the 1960s the number of art investment funds has grown, achieving increasing complexity in their operation and strategies to obtain benefits from the resale of artworks and establishing collaborations with art experts (p.151). On the other hand, art world professionals reject speculation, particularly gallerists, who allegedly prefer to sell artworks to reputable collectors or museums (Velthuis & Coslor, 2012, p. 474) in order to ensure that they will not lose their symbolic value, and even keep an informal “black list” of collectors who speculate with art (Velthuis, 2007, p.95). Recent developments in the art world indicate that this process of financialization is not complete and depends mainly on a technological factor (the ability to access and quickly process data) and a human factor (the attitude of leading collectors).

In 2014, art dealer Carlos Rivera launched ArtRank,⁶ a paid online service that publishes quarterly projections of the evolution of the art market. It consists of a short list of artists whose work must be bought, sold or liquidated. The site claims that these predictions are based on a complex algorithm developed for an investment fund that combines data from auction results, exhibitions, online presence, and press coverage of the artists. As a direct consequence of the tendency to turn themselves into brands (Lind, 2012, p.8), artists are considered here as companies whose stock value increases or decreases. This information, which is provided to customers a month before being publicly accessible, supposedly facilitates making profitable investment decisions (according to the site, the algorithm facilitated a 4200% return on investment over a 16-month period).⁷ The crude display of the names of the artists in several lists with no further explanation (particularly in the “liquidate” category, which has been recently removed)⁸ caused an uproar in the art world. The consternation caused by ArtRank coincides with the trend among collectors to buy art from emerging artists, generate interest around their work, and then sell quickly, maximizing their profits. Labeled “art flippers” in reference to short-term speculation in the stock market, these collectors overtly follow economic interests, disregarding the consequences to the artist’s career or the symbolic value of the artworks. Entrepreneur Stephan Simchowit is the most relevant figure among this type of collectors: he is known for buying artworks from young artists and building interest around them by posting images on Instagram and Facebook, where he has a large number of followers. Then he sells the works before the interest on the artist decays, obtaining considerable profits.

6. ArtRank. Retrieved from <http://artrank.com/>

7. Frequently Asked Questions. ArtRank. Retrieved from <http://artrank.com/pages/faq>

8. Archive. ArtRank. Retrieved from: <http://artrank.com/blogs/archive>

Particularly interested in Post-Internet art, Simchowit asserts that “the most efficient way to invest in cultural production and support young artists is to buy their work and to give the people who buy their work confidence that they can make money from it and buy more” (Goldstein, 2014, March 29). This peculiar form of patronage equates the symbolic value of the artwork to its liquidity, disregarding the effects that this continuous speculation has on the artist’s career, as well as the fact that the artist does not obtain direct revenue from all these market exchanges. Simchowit and ArtRank indicate a shift in the relationship between art and commerce that is actually taking place on the symbolic level. Olav Velthuis indicates that what the art flippers do in public is also carried out privately by gallerists and collectors, who claim to follow the unwritten rule of separating art and economic profit, and that only 2% of the sales at auctions are those of art flippers (Velthuis, 2014). However, the impact of the use of online resources for retrieving and processing data as well as for generating new attitudes towards the consumption and distribution of art by empowered users is reconfiguring the relationship between art and commerce. As outlined in detail below, new forms of accessing, experiencing, buying, collecting, and displaying art through digital media may contribute to this change of paradigm.

3.2 ARTWORKS AS COMMODITIES AND DIGITAL FILES

All artworks entering the art market inevitably turn into commodities (Graw, 2009, p.24). Karl Marx (1867) defined a commodity as simply “an object outside us, a thing that by its properties satisfies human wants of some sort or another” (p.27). However, he also admitted that its value “converts every product into a social hieroglyphic,” because it incorporates a set of social interactions that continually construct it in an unsteady and unpredictable way, “independently of the will, foresight, and action of the producers” (p. 49). As we have seen in the previous section, the contradictory relationship between art and commerce and the wild fluctuations in the value of an artwork in the art market (from which art flippers derive spectacular profits) exemplify Marx’s assertion that “a commodity is [...] a mysterious thing” (p.47). Dealers attempt to control the value of artworks in the art market by setting prices that follow several unwritten but commonly accepted rules (see section 3.1). At the core of these rules is the conception of the artwork itself as the unique product of the original idea of an artist. Reproduction techniques have put into question the uniqueness of the artwork and its presence in time and space --its “aura” as Walter Benjamin (1936 [1992], p.514) expressed it-- that the art market has carefully preserved by controlling the number of copies of a single artwork. Artworks created with digital tools or existing in a digital environment further complicate the notion of authenticity and, as will be discussed below, have to be subject to more strict forms of control or transformation in order to retain their status as commodities.

The main difference between an artwork and another product is that the artwork is “one of a kind.” This places the artist in the position of a monopolist (Graw, 2009, p.25), the sole creator of a good that is therefore supposed to be produced as a unique piece or in a limited edition. The signature of the artist and the control of this production ensure the uniqueness and authenticity of the artwork. The scarcity of the artwork thus becomes a key factor of its commodification and economic value, to the point of being deliberately recreated (Moulin, 2010, loc.1341; Velthuis, 2007, p. 162). Works created with techniques that allow for reproduction, such as etching, photography, print, video, or sculptures and installations made with industrial products are artificially limited to a reduced number of copies, always referred to as “editions.” The fact that the artwork can only be owned by few people is the cornerstone of the art market, since it justifies the peculiar nature of prices. Artworks are priceless, and there is no price too high (Graw, 2009, p.29), as long as someone is willing to pay it (the fluctuations in demand lead in turn to the complex mechanisms that are articulated to maintain and gradually increase the price of every artwork). Any artwork can be turned into a commodity in order to integrate it into the art market. Despite that, as Dirk Boll (2011) maintains, an ephemeral artwork cannot be marketed because “it is impossible to make a durable commodity out of it” (p.77), there are ways to transform it into something whose ownership can be transferred. Boll refers to Concept Art and Internet Art, which “only occur in the mind and on the Internet” (p.77), but ignores that, on the one hand, several strategies have been developed to sell and transfer ownership of online art (see section 3.5.2), and on the other, even the most ephemeral art leaves traces and objects that are turned into commodities. Graw (2009) indicates that instructions on paper of conceptual artworks and certificates are also marketable (p.27), while Horowitz (2011) recalls how collectors have bought performances by Tino Sehgal and Rirkrit Tiravanija and how sometimes the objects derived from those experiences have been kept or sold (p.114–119).

The fetishism around the object as a unique item and a proof of ownership is particularly clear in artworks that have the relatively intangible quality that Boll sees as an impediment to commodification. Video art serves as an illustrative example: although many early video artists were not interested in the art market and dismissed the idea of creating collectible products, soon video art works began to be sold, and also rented. In 1972, gallerist Leo Castelli and Ileana Sonnabend founded Castelli-Sonnabend Videotapes and Films (CSVF), a company that rented video and film works from \$15 to \$150 and sold them from \$40 to \$1,000 in unlimited copies, except for a few videos which were sold in editions of 20 (Horowitz, 2011, p.35). Additionally, many artists signed their videotapes or created video sculptures that turned the artwork into a unique object (p.40). As video art has become integrated into the contemporary art world, its presence in exhibitions has grown, but it still poses the same problems for the art market that make it harder to sell than other artworks, such as paintings or sculptures. Noah Horowitz mentions that collectors are still reluctant to buy video art for their homes, because the artwork is not visible by itself but requires a player and a screen and therefore “compared to conventional

art objects, it is not always evident just *what* one is buying” (p.53). In order to satisfy the buyer’s demand of a tangible object, most artists create custom-made “collector boxes” that include an HD copy of the video art work in a DVD and images or objects related to it. An illustrative example are the videos of Matthew Barney’s *Cremaster* cycle, which have been sold to collectors in vitrines containing limited edition DVDs and props used in the films (p.60). The flexibility of the video format has also been used by some artists to create versions of an artwork as videos of different quality that are later on sold at different prices. As will be discussed below (see sections 3.5 and 3.9), these strategies have also been applied to the commercialization of digital artworks, which share with video (particularly in digital format) the possibility of being massively reproduced and distributed. The fetishism surrounding the work of art as an object is made evident, for instance, in Joe Hamilton’s *Hypergeography* (2011) (already mentioned in section 1.4.2). Hamilton created a collage of images in a Tumblr blog⁹ and a video, which was put on sale as a frame decorated with video stills that contained a USB drive with the digital file. However ironical the intention of the artist may be, the fact of neatly framing the device that stores the digital file (which renders it useless) illustrates the need to turn the artwork into a unique object and identify it with the class of art objects. In this case, the frame separates Hamilton’s USB drive containing his artwork from any other USB drive found in the market, just as the collector boxes and vitrines created by video artists separated the DVDs containing their videos from any other mass-produced DVD.

However, presenting the artwork in a custom-packaged storage device does not solve the problem that digital files pose in terms of the scarcity and the authenticity required of the artwork as a commodity. Digital files can be endlessly reproduced, each copy being identical to the original. In fact, as art critic and philosopher Boris Groys (2008) asserts, the difference between original and copy is obliterated (loc. 1062–63), because the original data resides in the file and what we see is actually an interpretation (or performance) of that data by a processor that renders the image on a screen. The artwork is performed in order to be seen, and therefore it can be displayed in different ways according to the available means, for instance a TV screen, or a projection on the wall. Groys compares the digital artwork, made of code, with a piece of music, whose score must be interpreted by a musician in order to be experienced, the score itself being silent (loc. 1072–74). This comparison is inspired by Nelson Goodman’s distinction between autographic and allographic arts. In *Languages of Art*, Goodman (1968) considers the authenticity of the artwork and asserts that in music, unlike painting, there can be no forgery of a known work because any copy of a music score is as genuine as the original (p.112). Therefore, while painting is an autographic art (given that the difference between an original and a copy is significant), music and literature are allographic arts, since any copy of the original script is as authentic as the manuscript by its author, the only requirement being “sameness of spelling” (p.115). That is, no element from the original text is altered or eliminated in the copy. Artworks in digital format can therefore be considered allographic

9. The original collage, hosted at hypergeography.tumblr.com, is subject to changes according to the maintenance of the files and Tumblr’s community guidelines.

since the file created by the artist is continuously copied and performed in order to be experienced. No difference exists between original and copy except for the variations in the form of interpreting and presenting the artwork (for instance, computer processor speed, image resolution, screen size, available physical space or light conditions). The artist can, of course, insert the digital artwork into a specific display and present it as a unique object, in the same manner that some video artists inserted their videos into sculptures and installations. Arguably, that can be seen as a form of adaptation, turning the allographic work into an autographic piece. But what is more interesting at this point is that artworks as digital files enter the market on the condition that their reproducibility is controlled or artificially limited, even against the possibilities provided by this media (as noted by Moulin, 2010, loc.1552). Furthermore, its authenticity is established by a document or mechanism external to the artwork itself, based on the authority of the producer (the artist) or her representative or distributor (art gallery or online platform). As will be discussed below (see sections 3.6, 3.8, 3.9), digital artworks are subject to stronger limitations than other editioned work to the point of questioning their ownership. For instance, artworks bought on certain platforms are never transferred to the buyer but remain permanently on the purveyor's server; the collector can access the artwork and potentially resell it, always within the framework created by the seller and under their authority.

Against this conception based on limitation, the artwork as a digital file can also be understood in terms of its unprecedented potential for distribution and sharing. As Walter Benjamin (1936) stated, "for the first time in world history, mechanical reproduction emancipates the work of art from its parasitical dependence on ritual" (p.515). The artwork is not attached to the ritual that surrounds its presentation as a unique object, but instead becomes a kind of content that is meant to be reproduced. Although this entails, according to Moulin (2010), the risk of banalizing the images and a social and economic devaluation of art by the disappearance of scarcity (loc.1336), it opens new ways of conceiving the artwork and its role in society. Internet artworks such as Rafael Rozendaal's websites (see section 3.5.2) achieve a combination of scarcity and multiplicity by being at the same time unique artworks (hosted under unique domain names) and freely accessible sites that anyone can see on a web browser. In the same way that the ownership of Rozendaal's sites is ensured by their respective domain names (as well as a mention of the collector on the html code of the web page), digital files can also carry their own certificate of authenticity in a watermark. In 2014, artist Paolo Cirio launched a model for distributing artworks as digital files without any limitations, while retaining their ownership. Titled *Art Commodities*,¹⁰ the model is based on the concept of Smart Contracts, created by Nick Szabo (1996). Szabo developed his idea on the basis of overcoming the limitations of paper contracts by creating a computer transaction protocol that enforces the terms of the contract. In order to avoid forgery, the contract would use encryption protocols such as PGP, which uses a private key (kept by the owner) and a

public key (accessible to anyone). By means of this contract, digital content can become Transferable Virtual Property: each file can be copied and distributed, but does not belong to anyone because it contains the information about its owner. In this way, the file can be bought and sold, its ownership being verifiable at any moment. Cirio translates this idea into the concept of a Smart Digital Art Object, an artwork as a digital file that is certified by the artist. The artwork is sold as a file stored in a hard drive or USB key. This artwork is purchased along with a printed copy of the contract establishing the conditions of transfer, sale, and reproduction of the artwork, a certificate of authenticity, a hash of the artwork image (allowing to check that no changes have been made to the file) and a public encryption key (used to certify the ownership of the artwork). Although this system is apparently similar to the usual practice of selling the artwork with a certificate of authenticity, the difference lies in the possibility of transferring the artwork as a digital file to the buyer, who can distribute it while maintaining a proof of ownership in every copy made from the file bought. Cirio's intention is to help develop a different art market based on distribution instead of scarcity. However, Art Commodities is currently still in beta version and the projected online store where artworks could be sold in digital format with smart contracts has not been developed.

3.3 WHITE CUBES AND BLACK BOXES

In the previous sections, two of the main characteristics of the art market, the separation between art and commerce, and the transformation of the artwork into a commodity have been discussed. Equally important are the physical (and virtual) spaces in which the presentation and commercialization of artworks take place. In this section, I will examine the exhibition spaces of art galleries and art fairs and the implications of presenting artworks in two different (and, to some extent, opposing) configurations, the "white cube" and the "black box."

Art galleries constitute one of the main spaces where the activity of the art market takes place. As spaces of presentation and validation of artworks, galleries bridge the transition between art and commerce, between creation and commodification. As discussed in section 3.1, the integration of the artwork into the art market by means of an exhibition in a commercial gallery is a highly ritualized event (Velthuis, 2007, p.38). The space of the art gallery is therefore not simply a vacant space where the art is placed, but a site that generates "an atmosphere of artistic theory" as Arthur C. Danto (1964, p.580) would put it, where the artwork incorporates a set of codifications that contribute to its evaluation. Artist and writer Brian O'Doherty described the space of the art gallery as a "white cube" in three articles published in *Artforum* magazine in 1976, in which he eloquently underscored the role of the gallery space as a defining context for art:

10. Art Commodities. Retrieved from <http://artcommodities.com/>

“The ideal gallery subtracts from the artwork all cues that interfere with the fact that it is «art.» The work is isolated from everything that would detract from its own evaluation of itself. This gives the space a presence possessed by other spaces where conventions are preserved through the repetition of a closed system of values.”

(O’Doherty, 1976 [1999], p.14)

With its white, clean walls, sober floor (usually made of wood or concrete), and homogeneous lighting, the gallery transforms the context into content, leading to perceive the objects as artworks –O’Doherty even asserts that these same objects may not be perceived as art outside of the gallery, and that “things become art” in this space (p.14). In an article written ten years later, he compares the art displayed in a gallery with “a trinket, a product of the boutique” (p.90), suggesting that the artificiality of the space does not only serve art theory, but also commerce. Velthuis (2007) indicates that dealers restrict the number of works at an exhibition to create a sense of scarcity that justifies the high prices of individual works (p.162), and in the same manner luxury boutiques offer a reduced number of products in a soberly elegant environment. Observing the way in which the luxury industry has adopted the conventions of the gallery space, as well as the artificial scarcity of limited editions, Isabelle Graw (2009) considers artworks as precursors of branded goods (p.130-136). This relationship between the white cube and the most exclusive sector indicates the adequacy of this form of presentation for the commercialization of upscale products.

Despite criticism and the many ways in which the space of the gallery has been reconfigured by artistic experiments¹¹ or avoided by artists who took their art somewhere else (and then took it back to the gallery), the “white cube” has become established as a concept and a mode of presenting art to an audience. Nowadays, the term is commonly used to refer to exhibition spaces in the contemporary art world since most of them adhere to its basic principles, to the point that O’Doherty’s description has not lost its validity (Sheikh, 2009). The prominence of this model as the quintessential space for art has led to configure even the virtual spaces related to contemporary art as white cubes. The sites of the main online platforms, such as Saatchi Art, Artspace, Artsy, or Paddle8 (see section 3.8) all follow the same layout: a white or light grey background on which the thumbnails of the artworks are neatly arranged. Only Amazon Fine Art has not followed this visual composition, which initially led to criticism due to the confusion that could be created by displaying artworks in the same manner as retail products (see section 3.8.6). Independent projects and non-profit online galleries also adhere to this principle, sometimes playfully, as in Chiara Passa’s *The Widget Art Gallery*,¹² and others matter-of-factly, as in Manuel Fernandez’s *Domain Gallery*,¹³ or Marialaura

11. A particularly interesting relationship of criticism and dependence can be found in Augmented Reality art projects in the “white cubes” of galleries, museums and biennials (Waelder, 2013a).

12. The Widget Art Gallery is a virtual exhibition space shaped as a white room where artists present specific projects, usually as animated GIFs. See <http://www.chiarapassa.it/TheWidgetArtGallery.html>

13. Domain Gallery is an online gallery focused on Digital and Internet Based Works that held a monthly

Ghidini’s *Or-Bits*.¹⁴ Going a bit further, in 2013 Larisa Leventon created for her online gallery Dot Dash 3¹⁵ a virtual 3D white cube that hosts the exhibitions in different rooms, including wall labels and a customizable floor (either wood or concrete). In these spaces, art is also displayed sparsely, in small groups on the virtual walls or individually in separate web pages. The white cube, as we have discussed, demands scarcity: its clean walls are not meant to be filled with pictures, its ample empty spaces are not meant to accommodate a large number of sculptures placed one after another, as in market stall.¹⁶ Additionally, it demands objects: paintings and framed images hung on the walls, sculptures, or found objects on white wooden plinths. The gallery space is therefore best suited for the display of objects that are the end products of the artistic process. This condition has been particularly contested by artists working on the Internet, as will be discussed in section 3.4. The environment of a web browser—where each individual user experiments the artwork in the private setting of her home computer while browsing many other contents—contrasts with the pristine, exclusive, and authoritative atmosphere of the art gallery. This may well be compared, to quote the well-known essay by Eric S. Raymond (1997), to the difference between a bazaar and a cathedral. In the spirit of one of the advocates of open source software, many artists initially avoided the closed structure of the commercial art gallery and preferred to develop their work in the unregulated space of the web. However, the pervasiveness of the Internet, the gradual adaptation of galleries to screen-based work, projections, and installations, and the growing interest of artists working with new media in entering the art market have led to adapting online and digital art to the white cube, particularly among the younger generation of Post-Internet artists (see sections 1.4.2 and 3.5). Transfer, an emerging gallery in New York (see section 3.7), exemplifies this transition with a program that focuses on taking to the gallery space the art of young artists working on the Internet. According to one of the founders, taking art to the gallery does not necessarily validate it, but it does introduce something that early net artists sought to avoid: exclusivity.

“We’re not saying that the white cube makes the artworks more valuable, it’s just a different environment. What is made online should stay online, and we think that if the artwork belongs in a browser, it probably doesn’t belong in our gallery because anyone could look at it anywhere.” (Waelder, 2014b, p.55)

A usual prerequisite of the gallery environment is that the artwork may not be found anywhere else. The decreasing attendance to exhibitions and commercial galleries, the increasing use of online services to find and buy art, and the prominent role played by international art fairs, has, paradoxically, reversed the tendency, opening the white cube to the Web.

program of exhibitions between 2012 and 2013. See <http://www.domain-gallery.net>

14. Or-Bits is an online curated space that presents quarterly group exhibitions. See <http://or-bits.com/>

15. Exhibitions. Dot Dash 3. Retrieved from <https://www.dotdash3.com/exhibitions/>

16. Obviously, an artist may create an object that consists of many pieces that fill the space, but in that case the whole is perceived as an installation, not as the accumulation of items on sale (despite the fact that, in some cases, each item can be sold individually).

Art fairs are structured in a way that accurately shows the hierarchies in the art world, indicating who is at the core and who is at the periphery (Morel, 2014, p.358). As a temporal event, the art fair occupies a large space that is divided into a number of booths in different sizes, where each gallery exhibits artworks for sale in the typical environment of the white cube. The spatial arrangement of these booths and their sizes indicate the position of each player in the field: leading galleries have larger stands which are placed in prominent areas such as the intersection of the main alleys, while smaller, emerging galleries are placed at the sides (p.359). The size of each booth is already an indicator as well as a perpetuator of the power structure: leading galleries can rent a bigger space (which is more expensive), placing in it larger artworks, configuring an altogether more impressive presentation that attracts collectors. Medium-sized galleries have to compete with smaller booths, where less works can be presented, to the point of showing artworks by just one artist, in the case of emerging galleries. Although, as has been said, it is widely accepted and valued that a gallery presents a small number of artworks, this scarcity has to be seen as a choice of the dealer rather than a physical limitation of the booth. Additionally, art fairs establish different sectors that aim to include a more representative spectrum of the art world, from emerging galleries to innovative or experimental art forms, but at the same time strengthen the perception of a solid hierarchy. Whereas established galleries are part of the “main program,” young galleries and art forms that do not adhere to the white cube (such as video art and most digital art) are placed in separate sections, sometimes on the periphery or even isolated from other booths.

A notable example in respect to the presentation of new media art can be found in the international contemporary art fair ARCO in Madrid. The Spanish art fair was among the first to introduce a space for new media art, *ARCO Electrónico*, in 1998. However, the initiative lasted for only two years, being replaced in 2000 by another section, *Netspace@ARCO*. This focused on the impact of the Internet in contemporary art, and run until 2002. In 2005, the space for new media art was presented again as Black Box (a name that seems to be intentionally opposite to the prevailing white cube); only to be rebranded in 2008 as Expanded Box, with separate sections for video art and new media art. After a change of director in the ARCO art fair, the Expanded Box was eliminated in 2010. According to curator José Luis de Vicente (2008), the complex story of this space indicates that it is at least dubious to attempt to market new media art on the same structure used for contemporary art. However, it may also be stated that the main problem with the Black Box and similar spaces is that they isolate screen-based and digital artworks from the rest of the art on display, in what has been considered a ghettoizing separation. Although some artworks use specific light conditions, create an interaction with the viewer, or generate sound that requires placing them in a separate room, by allocating a single space for all of them and labeling it as a different section, new media art tends to be presented as a curiosity rather than a type of art that can be collected. The interviews that I have conducted with several gallerists specialized in new media art (see section 3.7) reveal that the black box space tends to be considered in negative terms. The following statements summarize their impressions:

Magdalena Sawon, co-founder of the Postmasters gallery in New York: “We do not appreciate the separation. We really preach integration. Sometimes logistics dictate “video zones” for presentation at art fairs. It is ghettoizing and the time factor does not help.” (Waelder, 2001b, p.70)

Jonathon Carroll, co-founder of the Carroll/Fletcher gallery in London: “With screen-based works you have the additional problem of having to keep the collector’s attention for a period of time [...] we need to re-think the way screen-based works are displayed, so that collectors see that these works can be considered serious works of art.” (Waelder, 2013f, p.37)

Steven Sacks, director of the bitforms gallery in New York: “Today new media art is integrated into many art galleries so it’s common to see new media art scattered throughout the fairs. I don’t always like having special sections for media art as the works can start to blend and lose their uniqueness. Also, if the media art is very active, having a lot of it can be overwhelming. With that being said, ARCO’s Black Box has improved dramatically and this past year was nicely presented.” (Waelder, 2010c, p.70-71)

Wolf Lieser director of the DAM gallery in Berlin: “ARCO has skipped the E-box, which shows how commercially small this market still is, considering that the section was one of the best since they started.”¹⁷

The gallerists point out that it is always more difficult to keep the attention of a collector in front of a time-based artwork, be it a video, generative, or interactive piece, that cannot be grasped with a quick glance. Over-stimulating artworks disrupt an atmosphere that had been traditionally conceived for a relaxed and silent contemplation, although it is frequent that galleries present at least one eye-catching or attention-grabbing artwork in order to stand out from other booths. Finally, by setting all galleries presenting similar work in one place, the potential for social interaction between gallerists, which is an important factor in the attendance to art fairs (Morel, 2014, p.359), is diminished, reducing the opportunities to integrate new media art in the program of contemporary art galleries.

An alternative solution is found in specialized art fairs such as Unpainted, which celebrated its first edition in Munich between January 17 and 20, 2014 with more than 50 participants (25 art galleries, 9 institutions and 24 individual and collective projects). The art fair defined itself as “a new art fair devoted to a special topic: media art,” and focused on educating the audience about the roots of computer-generated art and how “artists react to the digitization of our world.”¹⁸ The education aspect is underscored by

17. See the original version of the interview with Wolf Lieser published in *art.es* magazine (Waelder, 2010d). The full text of the interview is reproduced in ADDENDA A1.5.

18. Unpainted art fair. Retrieved from <http://www.unpainted.net>

the director Annette Doms, who states that “it is important to educate people, not just to show what digital art is.”¹⁹ The art fair therefore has the handicap of being in the need to provide explanations about the art on display in order to convince collectors of its value, a task that is not carried out in most contemporary art fairs (at least, in general terms). Following the structure of contemporary art fairs, Unpainted also allocated more space to leading galleries and smaller booths to emerging ones. In this case, the round shape of the Postpalast forced an unconventional distribution of the exhibition spaces in the shape of rings around an empty center, where special presentations and forums took place. Given this arrangement, small galleries were placed closer to the center ring while large galleries were placed in the periphery, in front of the main aisle that circled around the booths. Artists’s projects were placed in small rooms at the wall of the building, forming an outer ring at both sides of the main entrance. In another part of the building, a separate space was dedicated to the stands of companies, institutions, and publications. The art fair was remarkably similar to any other contemporary art fair, except for a larger number of screen-based artworks. Most galleries, particularly the most prominent ones, had chosen sculptures and three-dimensional artworks such as Quayola’s *Captives* (2014), a series of digital and physical sculptures presented at bitforms gallery; Aram Bartholl’s *Forgot Your Password?* (2013), a group of eight books containing 4.7 million stolen passwords, displayed at DAM gallery; or Evan Roth’s *Identity Capital* (2013), an aluminum reproduction of the logo used at TED conferences, shown at XPO gallery. Most participants stated that a specialized art fair such as Unpainted is necessary for their sector of the art market. For Philippe Riss, director of XPO gallery, “given that artists have no market presence, we need to participate in specialized fairs.” Wolf Lieser, director of DAM gallery, asserted “I have no doubt that the concept of a niche fair like this focusing on new media or digital art, and addressing a field which is totally new to the market, is necessary. Meanwhile, there are a lot of museums and collectors who are acquiring this kind of work and the public is ready to be informed, but right now, what you get here you can’t get anywhere else” (Waelder, 2014c, p.99). After a hiatus in 2015, the Unpainted Media Art Fair is scheduled to take place again in Munich at the end of February 2016.

The persistence of the white cube, both in the gallery and at art fairs, as well as the hierarchies defined by spatial arrangements in the latter, can be described as a case of institutional isomorphism. Paul J. DiMaggio and Walter W. Powell (1983) argue that organizations tend to homogenization by a process that forces one organization to adopt similar structures and strategies as other organizations, which are under the same environmental conditions (p.149). This process takes place according to three different mechanisms, of which two are being discussed here. On the one hand, *mimetic isomorphism* is caused by an environment that causes symbolic uncertainty (p. 151) and leads organizations to model themselves after other organizations in their field that they perceive as more successful (p.152). This is particularly clear in the art market. Despite the need to stand out from the rest, galleries are aware of what their competitors are doing and follow the lead of the most powerful dealers (Moulin, 2010, loc.311). , These, in turn, may direct attendance to a particular art

19. Interview with Annette Doms at the Unpainted Media Art Fair, January 18 2014. See Addenda A1.3.

fair, or direct the activities and decisions taken by a group of galleries in a local or national association. The uncertainty in the environment is obviously the fluctuating value of the artworks and the reputation of the artists, coupled with the asymmetry of information that also affects gallerists deciding the future course of their businesses. On the other hand, *normative isomorphism* stems from an environment in which a collective of members of an occupation seek to define the conditions and methods of their work (p.152). The struggle to legitimate a professional activity leads to adopt common structures and policies that are enforced by the community itself. In the contemporary art market, an ongoing effort in relation to society at large is to legitimate the value of a set of artistic practices that are not always understood, as well as the commercialization of the products of such practices. As has been previously discussed, unwritten rules about proper behavior in the art market are widely assumed by art professionals and severely criticized when they are broken, as is the case of the Scull sale or the art flippers (see section 3.1). The concept of institutional isomorphism contributes to explain why the white cube still persists, despite the art world’s constant claims that art is innovative and disruptive, as well as the failure of the black box. It also points towards the homogeneity of the global art market and the initial rejection of artistic practices that, while being new, stray away from what is already familiar.

3.4 NET ART AND THE ART MARKET: NO TO MAYBE TO YES

The popularization of the World Wide Web in the mid-1990s brought the creation of new channels for the distribution of content, online platforms for virtual communities and a growing online market. In the art world, the web has been explored by some artists as a new space in which to experiment and freely distribute their work, while most of the art institutions, museums, galleries, as well as curators and critics have ignored its possibilities, showing little interest for their online presence until the late 2000s. Nowadays, two main trends can be identified in the way that the art world has used the Internet:

- Initiatives by artists, groups and some galleries aimed at selling digital art online, as well as integrating net art and digital art in the contemporary art market. Most of these initiatives are short-lived or apply specifically to the work of a single artist.
- The expansion of the contemporary art market on the Internet. The ubiquity of smartphones, tablets and smart TVs, as well as the consolidation of e-commerce, have kindled the interest of gallerists and investors in the possibilities of selling art online. This has led to the development of online platforms for selling and distributing contemporary art, with the support of large galleries and well-known artists (see section 3.8).

At the time when companies such as Intershop, Amazon or eBay developed their first

online stores, bypassing local shops and distributors and directly reaching their customers, many artists saw in the Web a means of escaping the rigid structures of the art world and access a wider audience without the mediation of galleries or the legitimization of museums, critics and curators. This perception is illustrated by texts such as the manifesto *Introduction to net.art (1994-1999)* by net art pioneers Natalie Bookchin and Alexei Shulgin. In this text, the authors refer to the Internet as “a medium for production, publication, distribution, promotion, dialogue, consumption and critique”, in which the roles of professionals in the art world are transformed: “Disintegration and mutation of artist, curator, pen-pal, audience, gallery, theorist, art collector, and museum”.²⁰ The artists consciously play with the rhetoric of avant-garde manifestos, expressing their ideas in a grandiloquent manner and inserting a certain dose of self-criticism and irony. This was clearly stated by the presentation of this manifesto as an engraved text on six stone tablets (elaborated by Blank & Jeron) at the exhibition *net_condition* (ZKM, Karlsruhe, 1999). However ironic, these statements are symptomatic of a need for a certain “democratization” of the structures of the art world, and particularly those of the art market, that at the time seemed to be bypassed by the decentralized and fluid structure of the Internet. Nevertheless, the transformations suggested by Bookchin and Shulgin did not take place. On the contrary, the contemporary art world has proven strikingly resistant to change: when museums and curators began to show some interest in the emerging art forms on the Internet, the lack of understanding of this medium generated controversies.

In 1997, documenta X hosted net art pieces for the first time with great success, although the way they were presented did not enhance the perception of the artworks: the room hosting the works on computers was described as “a classroom, with a big IBM logo on the wall” (Graham and Cook, 2010, p.219). Moreover, the organizers announced that, after the event was over, the website would be removed and sold as a CD-ROM. Reacting to this unfortunate decision, artist Vuk Ćosić copied most of the documenta website and hosted it in his own server, a move that generated some controversy. This and other experiences when presenting net art in the context of an art exhibition lead Ćosić (2001) to conclude that “whatever you do in a gallery in order to show net.art pieces (already this expression is thoroughly wrong) you will decontextualize it, and lose the spontaneity of free browsing” (p.14). This statement coincides with the general assumption that net art is incompatible with the physical exhibition space, as well as with the contemporary art world at large and the art market, despite the initiatives carried out by artists and galleries to bridge the separation between them and the inclusion of net art pieces in several exhibitions, markedly the “Temporary Autonomous Pavillion” at the Slovenian pavillion in the 49th Venice Biennale (2001). Curated by Aurora Fonda, this exhibition displayed the work of Vuk Ćosić and 0100101110101101.org and constituted the first display of net art in the Biennale’s history, thanks to an “art-political vacuum in Slovenia”, that lead to boycotting a previous selection of artists (Ćosić, 2001, p.13). The fact that net art had been included in a prestigious contemporary art event such as the Venice Biennale due to a calamitous situation further increased Ćosić’s disbelief in the art system and the impossibility

20. Natalie Bookchin, Alexei Shulgin. Introduction to net.art. Retrieved from <http://www.easylife.org/netart/>

of a positive relationship between net art and the contemporary art world.

In order to understand the apparent incompatibility between net art (or any net-based artwork) and the art system as well as the strategies developed to facilitate its commercialization, it is important to describe the main features that differentiate an online artwork from an artwork in a traditional format such as painting, sculpture, or a print or found object. Art historian Robert Sakrowski indicates that net art is deemed incompatible with the art institutions because the latter have tried to apply conventional concepts of the art world, such as considering that the artwork is exhibited when it enters a physical exhibition space. He uses the term “Net art activity” to refer to “all phenomena appearing on and via the Internet that are connected in some way to the art system”, a broad definition of net art, and points out that as phenomena taking place on the Internet, these Net art activities are already exhibited and enacted as a performance (Sakrowski, 2009 p.209). This idea leads to considering net art as an art practice that takes place exclusively online, and therefore any net art piece displayed offline (by means of an archived version, a video or print, for instance) is “a fish on dry land”, as Sakrowski phrases it. Net art has been closely identified with its own material (the Internet) due to the fact that the first generation of artists who worked on the Internet not only explored its technical possibilities but also conceived it as a specific social, political and cultural milieu:

“Working with the specific properties of the Internet and the computer, they also contributed to developing these properties. These specific characteristics later came to be designated the art «material» of the work. That is to say, Net artists were defined in terms of their work with and reflection on the material, i.e. the Net.” (Sakrowski, 2009, p.211)

As an environment with its own social and cultural context, the Internet is not only a network of connected computers but also a space in which the experience of the user is important, and for this reason Ćosić criticizes that taking a net art work to the exhibition space removes the possibility of freely browsing the Web at the same time. According to the artist, the original context of the net art piece is within the browser, mixed with other contents that the user may be viewing at the same time and in many cases directing him towards these contents through links and pop up windows. On a technical level, net art must be generated by a series of processes that define the activity on the Internet. Sakrowski (2009) distinguishes as the main components of this activity: “computer and server function, documents formulated in formal languages, network connection and all relevant hardware elements plus requisite communication conventions –in particular the domain, the client/reception situation [...] and the operating system that controls it” (p.218). A net art work, therefore, can only take place online and be the outcome of a transfer of files from a server to the user’s computer through a shared protocol.

These technical and contextual conditions seem at odds with the gallery space, a white cube that isolates the artwork from the rest of the world (see section 3.3) and mainly displays static objects. As long as the Internet constituted a separate and independent

environment from the physical space we inhabit (as the dichotomy “online/offline” or the expression “in real life” –as opposed to “on the Internet”– suggest), it did not make sense to force a content created for “cyberspace” into the gallery space. Early attempts to do so, as we have previously discussed, produced unsatisfactory results. However, the pervasive use of digital devices in post-industrialized societies and the accelerated development of technology over the last two decades has meant that a growing sector of the population have become Internet users and owners of computers, smartphones and tablets. Since the mid-2000s, web 2.0 platforms and social networks have given a prominent role to user-generated content, further integrating the use of Internet services in daily life. The separation between “offline” and “online” ceases to exist, as users don’t connect to the Internet in discrete sessions anymore, but have a permanent connection on their devices. Alexander Galloway and Eugene Thacker state that individuals are now always online, even when they are not using these devices:

“All the official discourses of the Web demand that one is either online and accounted for, or offline and still accounted for. [...] The body becomes a medium of perpetual locability, a roving panoply of tissues, organs, and cells orbited by personal network devices.” (Galloway and Thacker, 2007, p.126-127).

The ubiquity of Internet use in all contexts of post-industrialized societies and its impact in culture and everyday life has made the notion of “cyberspace” obsolete. In a recent publication, art critics Julieta Aranda, Brian Kuan Wood, and Anton Vidokle provocatively suggest that the Internet does not exist, since it is not a discrete entity but something that is somehow present in every space and activity:

“The internet does not exist. [...] Because it has no shape. It has no face, just this name that describes everything and nothing at the same time. [...] [W]hat we once called the internet has unleashed something that we don’t yet have a name for – possibly because it is made out of language itself.” (Aranda, et al., 2015, p.7)

In this context, the Internet can no longer be considered a separate space with its own rules and structures, as it was explored by early net art pioneers. If the net is everywhere, then net art can be experienced anywhere as well. However, it might be argued that exhibiting a net art piece out of its original context (the browser window on the user’s computer or digital device) changes the way it is experienced, just as moving any art object from its original setting or reenacting a performance modifies its meaning. In this sense, some argue that, as Steve Dietz describes it, “confining net art in the white cube of the museum or gallery is like chloroforming a butterfly and pinning it in a display case” (Paul, 2008, p.80). The debate around the appropriateness of exhibiting net art in the art gallery is in some ways still unresolved, although a growing amount of artists working on the Internet look for solutions to present their work in galleries, which is increasingly exhibited and sold in different formats. Just as the Internet has permeated every social context, including the art world, net art has found its way into museums and galleries.

The changing conditions in the relationship between net art and the art gallery are illustrated in several texts that net art pioneer Olia Lialina has published over the last 15 years. One of the first artists to sell her online work (see below), Lialina has been critical about the reception of net art in the contemporary art world and explored ways of integrating it into the art market. In 1998, Lialina sent a message to the nettime mailing list titled “cheap.art” in which she criticized the attention given to net art as an ephemeral trend and the lack of a theory that gave value to this set of artistic practices. She also disapproved the fact that the discourse around the art system did not generate any alternatives and that online initiatives were not a real option to the mainstream, offline art world:

“A year ago it was so sweet to announce that art theory, the art system, art commerce - all these are relics of the real art world system, a heritage to forget, but in fact this statement only brought some variety to off-line art institutions, not an alternative. [...] On-line galleries and exhibitions are nothing more than lists, collections of links. [...] On-line galleries only store facts and demonstrate that a phenomenon exists. They neither create a space, nor really serve it.” (Lialina, 1998)

These remarks, which were published after the documenta X and before Bookchin’s and Shulgin’s “manifesto”, already point towards giving up on the pretense that net art can simply bypass the art world altogether and find specific solutions to give it proper recognition. She also takes the art market into consideration, suggesting that net art could benefit from the growing interest towards investing on having a presence on the Internet:

“Banks, big companies or simply rich guys have always bought pieces of art for their collections or found it prestigious to sponsor artists. Now they or their younger brothers spend enough money (at least in Russia) to be well represented in the Net. Why not harness their desires? Why not advise them to collect, to buy and help develop the art of the next century? :)” (Lialina, 1998)

IT companies and investors have long been expected to become ideal collectors of new media art, on the assumption that they would be interested in an art that uses the same technologies on which they invest and that creates a cultural framework around them. However, the social circles of technology investors and art world professionals rarely meet, and when they do, the former are usually discouraged by the atmosphere of exclusiveness in art galleries and the complex mechanisms that rule the art world.²¹ Instead of gaining attention among the wealthiest members of the technology industry, net art has progressively entered the art market. In a lecture presented at the Transmediale festival in 2007, Lialina stated that net art was migrating between art markets and changing “from being an art form in New Media to a subject in Contemporary Art” (Lialina, 2007). She pointed out three

21. See, for instance, Alice Gregory’s article for the New York Times illustrating the disconnection between the tech industry and the New York art scene (Gregory, 2013).

conditions that facilitated the transition of net art into the gallery space and the art market:

1. The audience is now familiarized with computers and computer culture. According to Lialina, they “have the necessary experience and understanding of the medium to get the ideas, jokes, enjoy the works and buy them.”
2. The medium is mature, since the Web is now part of daily life. This also implies that there is a lot of online activity that competes with the artwork. For this reason, the artist considers that “users are really busy and the medium is totally invisible, and if I want to attract attention of users to their online environment and make the work about the WWW, I’ll better do it offline.”
3. New devices that simplify displaying digital art by merging the computer and the screen in a flat frame make it suitable for the gallery space. The framed artwork becomes an object that easily fits into an art world context.

Six years later, on the opening of the group exhibition *OFFLINE ART: new2* curated by Aram Bartholl at XPO Gallery in Paris (see section 3.7), Lialina addresses once more the question of whether it is possible and adequate to exhibit net art in a gallery. Summarizing her reflections over the last fifteen years on this subject, she states: “the answer has changed from a definite No to Maybe, to Yes, but and finally, to Yes” (Lialina, 2013). As the Web has become a mass medium, net art has reached a larger audience that participates in Internet culture and therefore does not need to connect with it through a browser in a home computer, but can also be experienced in an art gallery. This idea has been taken one step further by the young artists whose work is identified as Post-Internet art: the artwork that originates on the Internet can be translated into an object (a print, sculpture, installation, customized consumer product, etc.) that is exhibited in the art gallery, incorporating the Web as a cultural reference. Arguably, this type of artwork is not net art anymore, as it does not require “Net activity” it is referred to as *post-Internet*. However, it does have a relationship with Internet culture and can also exist in an online version, an apparent contradiction that illustrates the tensions still existing between online content and the gallery space. Different strategies have been developed to solve these tensions and find a model to sell online artworks in the art market. They will be discussed in the following section.

3.5 STRATEGIES FOR SELLING ONLINE ART

The commercialization of digital art and net art works has been carried out in the art market mainly in new media art galleries (see section 3.7), as well as through several initiatives that have sought models for selling and collecting online art, either by selling a website, establishing methods of monetary transaction or setting up online stores. As will be discussed below, not all of these formats have been equally successful, some merely providing a modest income to the artist and others being integrated into the operations of

an art gallery, but none of them establishing a stable market for online art.

After studying several prominent initiatives developed during the last decade, I have identified four main strategies for commercializing Internet based artworks:²²

- **Transfer:** the files that compose the artwork are transferred from the artist’s server to a server owned by the collector, or else the collector buys the artwork alongside the hosting and domain name server. Usually, the collector agrees to maintain the artwork online and publicly accessible.
- **Access:** the collector pays for access to the artwork, which is hosted on a server owned by the artist or the gallery. This access can be permanent (one-time fee) or temporary (subscription). The artwork is not publicly accessible, it can only be viewed or experimented by those who pay for it.
- **Adaptation:** derivate works in formats that are more suitable for selling as unique pieces or in limited editions are generated from the Internet based artwork, such as prints, videos, installations or objects. The online artwork remains publicly accessible, while collectors own the derivate works.
- **Crowdfunding:** although this increasingly popular way of funding projects is more effective in supporting the production of consumer products, it has been explored as a way of generating income for the artists, be it through the exchange of artworks for contributions or patronage of a specific project.

Each of these strategies will be analyzed alongside several case studies that illustrate their advantages and disadvantages, as well as their development in a real context.

3.5.1 TRANSFER

The usual method of selling an artwork involves transferring ownership of the piece from the artist (or the gallery) to the collector. When the artwork is a physical object, such as a painting or sculpture, once bought it is transported from the gallery or the artist’s studio to the house of the collector, his office, warehouse or any other physical space where he wants to display or store it. The collector retains the ownership of the artwork in two forms: first, he keeps the object inside a space of his property, somewhere he can freely access and control access to. Second, he keeps a certificate of authenticity, issued by the gallery and/or the artist, that attests his ownership of the artwork and allows him to resell it. When the artwork is an Internet based piece, the hosting server and the domain name act as the equivalents of physical spaces such as the art gallery or the collector’s home. The artist transfers the files that compose the artwork to a server owned by the collector, or else sells the artwork along with the ownership of the domain name and hosting to the collector. Usually the collector (be it an individual or institution) will add her name or the name of the institution to some part of the website hosting the artwork, be it in the source

22. These strategies have been previously outlined in Waelder, 2013g, p.111-119.

code or in a splash or introduction page that provides information about the artwork and links to it. The artwork remains publicly visible, since it is considered part of “the nature” of the work and it is usually in the collector’s interest to keep it online. The collector pays the artist or her gallery a one-time fee and acquires the ownership of the artwork, along with the commitment to maintain the artwork online, update it if necessary and pay the costs derived from hosting services and domain name renewal.

In 1998, Olia Lialina titled her personal website “FIRST AND THE ONLY REAL NET ART GALLERY”²³ and hosted the online exhibition *Miniatures from the Heroic Period*²⁴, which displayed five net art works by Alexei Shulgin, Heath Bunting, JODI, Vuk Ćosić and herself. Most works included a selling price on their information page, with prices ranging between \$1,900 and \$2,000. According to the artist, this was the first exhibition to explicitly offer net art works for sale (Lialina, 2010, p.40). On June 5th 1999, Lialina sold her artwork *If You Want to Clean Your Screen* (1998) to the artist duo Entropy8Zuper! (Auriea Harvey and Michaël Samyn) for an undisclosed sum and closed the deal with a handshake.²⁵ Harvey and Samyn received the files that compose the artwork and stored them in a special section of their own website, dedicated to the artworks they have acquired (to the present date, Lialina’s is the only artwork in this collection).²⁶ Entropy8Zuper designed a new context for the presentation of the artwork: on a red on black layout filled with the decorative borders found on certificates, a seal displays the word “possession” and an animated icon showing two hands in the gesture of asking to grab something. When the user rolls the mouse pointer over the icon, it changes into a currency symbol (alternatively, US Dollar, Yen, Euro or Pound Sterling). Lialina’s work is presented on another web page, in the form of a certificate of authenticity that includes the reference number in Harvey and Samyn’s collection, date of acquisition, title of the artwork, signature and name of the artist (referred to as a “net.artist”). The title links to the artwork itself, while the artist’s name links to Lialina’s website. In this transaction, the collectors acquired the artwork as two files (an html document and gif image) and the exclusive right to display it on their own site²⁷ and therefore decide whether the artwork remains online or not. Although an obligation to keep the artwork online has not been stated, the collectors have kept the artwork on their “possession” folder up to this date, maintaining the same URL²⁸, despite the fact that they have ceased their activity as Entropy8Zuper! and continued in a

23. Olia Lialina, PAGES IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE (former FIRST AND THE ONLY REAL NET ART GALLERY). Retrieved from <http://art.teleportacia.org/>

24. Olia Lialina, Miniatures of the Heroic Period. Retrieved from <http://art.teleportacia.org/exhibition/miniatures/>

24. Olia Lialina, Artist as an expert. [art.teleportacia](http://art.teleportacia.org/office/clients/). Retrieved from <http://art.teleportacia.org/office/clients/>

26. “Possession”, [entropy8zuper.org](http://www.entropy8zuper.org). <<http://www.entropy8zuper.org/possession/>>

27. The artwork can only be found on Entropy8Zuper’s website, although some video documentation has also been published online. Retrieved from <http://www.entropy8zuper.org/possession/olialia/olialia.htm>

28. Keeping the same URL is an important aspect of the preservation of an online artwork, particularly in the case of early works like this one, since all references on other websites and publications will point to it. Therefore, part of the collector’s responsibility is to maintain the original URL, a task that can be specified in the sales contract, as will be discussed below in Rafaël Rozendaal’s Art Website Sales Contract.

different line of work as the videogames development studio Tale of Tales.²⁹ The sale did not only imply a change of server and control of the files but also a different context that Lialina described as “a piece of art by itself”, innovative and somewhat ironic (Lialina, 2010, p.40). As a deal carried out between artists, every aspect of it entailed a certain form of artistic creation: the way in which Lialina documents the sale on her website with two photos of the artist shaking hands with the collectors on a sunny day in a beautiful prairie at Wolfratshausen is quite performatic, while the way in which Harvey and Samyn host the artwork becomes an artwork in itself. But not all sales carried out in this way generate such creative outputs.

Other net art works have been sold through a transfer of files to museum collections with different results, particularly in terms of context and preservation of the artwork. Lialina recalls that two more artworks of the *Miniatures from the Heroic Period* exhibition were sold, one to the Museo Extremeño e Iberoamericano de Arte Contemporáneo (MEIAC) in Badajoz (Spain), and another one to C³ Center for Culture & Communication Foundation in Budapest (Hungary). MEIAC acquired Alexei Shulgin’s *ABC* (1997) in 2005 for the NETescopio, a “net art viewer” created in the context of their Immaterial Museum project.³⁰ The museum’s website hosts a page with information about the artwork (a short description and several screenshots) as well as two links, one directing to the copy of the artwork on MEIAC’s server and another one to the original work on the artist’s website. In this case, then, the transfer of files does not imply an exclusive control of the access to the artwork, since there are at least two copies of each piece in the NETescopio collection. Although Lialina considers this duplicity “a temporary solution ... or curator’s confusion” (Lialina, 2010, p.40), NETescopio defines itself as an online archive rather than a museum collection, and therefore closer to the cataloging and preservation model carried out at Rhizome’s ArtBase³¹. On its mission statement, MEIAC’s net art viewer indicates that “[the] museum’s server will act as backup, storing replicate copies of the works that are on-line in each creator’s site or of those that, for a variety of reasons, may not be available any longer.” In this sense, acquisition and transfer of the artwork files to MEIAC’s server implies that the museum will retain a copy of the artwork, regardless of whether the artist maintains her own copy or not. As an online archive, NETescopio stores not only artworks but also websites with documentation of artworks that, due to their nature, cannot be hosted by its server. This is the case, for instance, of Sander Veenhof and Marek Swarek’s *We AR in MoMA* (2010),³² a site-specific Augmented Reality intervention, or Gazira Babeli’s *Hammering the Void* (2008),³³ a virtual performance in the online environment Second Life. MEIAC’s acquisitions do not imply an active preservation strategy of the artwork beyond the simple of act of hosting a copy

29. Tale of Tales. Retrieved from <http://tale-of-tales.com/about.php>

30. About NETescopio project. NETescopio [visor de arte en red del MEIAC] Retrieved from <http://netescopio.meiac.es/en/netescopio.php>

31. Rhizome | ArtBase. Rhizome.org. Retrieved from <http://rhizome.org/artbase/>

32. We AR in MoMA. NETescopio. Retrieved from <http://netescopio.meiac.es/en/obra.php?id=172>

33. Hammering the Void. NETescopio. Retrieved from <http://netescopio.meiac.es/en/obra.php?id=162>

of the original files or a static website with documentation. In contrast, C³ is maintaining a collection of almost seventy media artworks that includes online artworks such as Alexei Shulgin's *Form* (1997)³⁴ or Olia Lialina's *Agatha Appears* (1997).³⁵ Lialina states that her work has to be constantly updated due to the obsolescence of the file formats and was the subject of "one of the first experiments to restore a net art work" carried out in 2008 by conservator Ela Wysocka and C³ programmer András Szönyi (Lialina 2010, p.41). In a report following the restoration of *Agatha Appears*, Wysocka prudently states that "due to the nature of the medium itself the results obtained cannot be considered the final state of the work and the end of preservation efforts",³⁶ Lialina also affirms that "[there] is no end to preservation effort in case of art online" (Lialina 2010, p.41) and, as the following examples will show, this effort has proven challenging to the museums that started acquiring online artworks by the end of the 1990s and early 2000s.

In 1995, the Whitney Museum of American Art added its first net art work to its collection, Douglas Davis's *The World's First Collaborative Sentence* (1994). Created for an exhibition of his work at the Lehman College Art Gallery, the artwork consists of a webpage that allows users to contribute any amount of text to an endless *cadavre exquis*. In January 1995, the artwork was purchased by Barbara and Eugene M. Schwartz, who acquired "both the concept of the Sentence and the site itself"³⁷. While the *Sentence* remained online, hosted at a server provided by the City University of New York (CUNY), the collectors received a disk on which the first contributions had been stored, "[as] a symbol of ownership." That same year, Mrs. Schwartz donated the artwork to the Whitney Museum, although it remained on its original server, maintained by professor Robert Schneider from the department of mathematics at Lehman College. In 2005, the artwork was transferred to a server owned by the Whitney Museum. In this transition, crucial files were lost and moreover the large amount of text on each webpage became difficult to process on newer browsers, progressively causing the artwork to be unusable. In 2012, the museum started a preservation project that concluded with two versions of the artwork, a "new live version", adapted to current browsers and html code, that allows users to interact with the piece, and a "restored historic version", that maintains the original code and can be viewed in its original state using an old browser, but is not enabled to incorporate new contributions. In a similar way to the decision made by MEIAC, maintaining duplicate versions of the artwork (an "active" version, subject to change, and a "static" or "archived" version, supposedly stable) indicate the contradiction between the nature of online content and the museum's need to preserve the artwork in a stable form. Remarkably, Davis's *Sentence* is included in the online catalogue of the Whitney Museum's collection as a file with an

34. Form. C3 Foundation. Retrieved from http://www.c3.hu/collection/index_en.php?id=4

35. Agatha Appears. C3 Foundation

36. Quoted by Lialina (2010, p.41). The report is no longer available online but a presentation of the restoration project can be viewed on C3's website Retrieved from <http://catalog.c3.hu/index.php?page=work&id=597&lang=EN>

37. Unless otherwise indicated, all quotes in this paragraph have been extracted from the case study on the preservation of Davis's artwork, published on the Whitney Museum's website: Douglas Davis. Whitney Museum of American Art. Retrieved from <http://whitney.org/Exhibitions/Artport/DouglasDavis>

image but no link to the artwork.³⁸ Other artworks have fared worse in the collections of large museums, such as the Guggenheim or Tate. Shu Lea Cheang's *Brandon* (1998-1999), the first net art work commissioned by the Guggenheim Museum in New York,³⁹ has been inactive since 2005 and waiting for a restoration project (see 2.1). The net art projects commissioned by Tate⁴⁰ for its website between 2000 and 2011 are still available, although they have been relegated to the archive pages of the discontinued Intermedia Art programme,⁴¹ which ran between 2008 and 2010. Most of the projects are hosted on Tate's server, but in some cases the museum displays a link to an external website, usually owned by the artist, as in the case of Heath Bunting's *BorderXing Guide* (2002-2003),⁴² or *agoraXchange* (2003)⁴³ by Natalie Bookchin and Jacqueline Stevens. For these artworks, the preservation (or simply, documentation) effort of the museum is limited to the information page on their site, leaving the artists to maintain their own sites. But also those artworks that are hosted on Tate's server may become technically obsolete or lose some of their content if there is no active maintenance on the side of the institution. Furthermore, by moving the artworks to a different section of the site, their visibility is compromised.

These examples show that, in the case of a transfer of files from the artist to the collector, the latter must assume the responsibility of preserving the artwork and its original functionalities. For an art institution, this commitment can prove too expensive or difficult depending on the particularities of the online artwork and the current investment on preservation efforts (it must be noted that other, non-digital artworks also require costly preservation operations)⁴⁴. For a private collector, this can be equally burdensome. Therefore, it can be expected that acquiring an online artwork through a transfer of files can be less attractive to private a public collectors, or lead to adding to the collection an artwork that sooner or later will stop working. In the examples presented above, those artworks that have been preserved over more than a decade were in the hands of web-savvy or motivated individuals (web designers, a mathematics professor, an institution with a long term dedication to promoting and preserving media art, or the artists themselves). This may not be the case with many collections, which makes collecting online art more difficult. However, some creative solutions have been developed by artists who have sought to reconcile net art with the art market.

38. Douglas Davis: *The World's First Collaborative Sentence*. 1994-, conserved 2012", Whitney Museum of American Art Retrieved from <http://collection.whitney.org/object/10237>

39. Shu Lea Cheang. Guggenheim Collection Online, Retrieved from <http://www.guggenheim.org/new-york/collections/collection-online/artwork/15337>

40. Intermedia Art Archive: Net Art by Date. Tate. Retrieved from http://www2.tate.org.uk/intermediaart/archive/net_art_date.shtm

41. Intermedia Art. Tate. Retrieved from <http://www.tate.org.uk/about/projects/intermedia-art>

42. Intermedia Art: BorderXing Guide. Tate. Retrieved from <http://www2.tate.org.uk/intermediaart/borderxing.shtm>

43. Intermedia Art; agoraXchange. Tate. Retrieved from <http://www2.tate.org.uk/intermediaart/entry15278.shtm>

44. See, for instance, the conservation case studies of the Whitney Museum of American Art Retrieved from <http://whitney.org/Collection/Conservation>

In 2003, Carlo Zanni created *Altarboy (Cyrille)*,⁴⁵ the first of two artworks that explored a form of merging the online piece with a physical object, without losing the defining characteristics of a net art piece. Zanni had been researching on the possible ways of selling net-based art (see Addenda A1.11) and came up with what he describes as “a portable server-sculpture containing a network based art work that can be sold.” The sculpture is a repurposed briefcase that contains a laptop, in which the artwork files are stored and that also functions as an Internet server. On one side, this means that the hardware and software are already embedded in an object, so that the piece can be sold and kept by a collector as any other artwork. On the other side, the artwork comes to live when the server is connected to the Internet, and at that point it becomes freely accessible to anyone on the Web. Nevertheless, the artist added an option that allows the collector to see the artwork in private using data collected on previous sessions of online activity. Zanni created two pieces in this series, *Altarboy Cyrille* and *Altarboy Oriana*.⁴⁶ In each of them, the screen displays the portrait of a woman (Cyrille Polla and Oriana Fallaci, respectively) and several pop up windows that return the results of a Google Images search based on a series of keywords. The images are also resized to 1x1 pixels and placed in the pupils of the depicted person. The sculpture is completed with a transparent box filled with fresh rose petals, that constitute a *memento mori*, also reminding of the ephemerality of the process taking place in the artwork. *Altarboy Cyrille* premiered during Artissima art fair in 2003 at the Galerie Analix Forever booth and it is now part of Barbara Polla’s private collection. Zanni did not create other “server-sculptures” but continued to generate object-based works related to his online projects. The particular features of this artwork make it a unique solution that can hardly be applied to other pieces (even by the same artist), but constitute an interesting approach since, despite the claims of “immateriality” in net art, net-based artworks require a server, which is a physical object. By placing this object inside the artwork, thus conceived as a sculpture, Zanni developed a “plug and play” format that has also been used by other artists as a way to bypass technical complexities and obtain a “finished” product. In this sense, it must be noted that Zanni had to use an object that could accommodate the devices he needed to run the online piece and therefore if he had had access to more sophisticated technology, such as the digital art frames that are being developed twelve years later, the resulting artwork might have been different.

In 2013, artist Aram Bartholl curated the group exhibition *OFFLINE ART: new2* at XPO gallery in Paris (see section XXX). The exhibition displayed twelve net-based artworks, each of them exclusively accessible via a dedicated router hung on the wall of the gallery. Visitors could see the artworks by accessing the local area network of each router through their smartphones, tablets or laptops. The networks were identified by the name of each participating artist, and as soon as the device connected to one of them, the corresponding artwork was displayed. The whole exhibition was conceived mostly as a concept, an

45. Altarboy Cyrille. Carlo Zanni. Retrieved from <http://zanni.org/wp/index.php/portfolio/altarboy-cyrille/>

46. Altarboy Oriana. Carlo Zanni. Retrieved from <http://zanni.org/wp/index.php/portfolio/altarboy-oriana/>

exploration of a possible solution to the apparently endless debate around the presence of Internet art in the art gallery, as is reflected in Bartholl’s curatorial statement:

“OFFLINE ART: new2 reflects recent discussions among artists and curators about whether or not pieces should be available offline and how this should occur. All pieces in this show are browser-based and at the same time only locally accessible. In the end, each artist decides how and which version will also be available on the Internet.”⁴⁷

Although the exhibition was conceived more as an experiment than an actual sale format, it could be possible to buy a router with the artwork and keep it at home, available to anyone who is within the Wi-Fi coverage and wishes to experience the piece in their own portable device. In this case, the router can be hung on the wall as a sculpture or hidden from view, the artwork becoming a ghostly presence in the local area network until it is summoned. As with Zanni’s *Altarboy*, in this case the collector owns the server and runs the artwork in a local network, which limits its access to the physical space of his home.

While embedding the online artwork into a physical object makes ownership a clear-cut matter, this can also be achieved by means of writing code: both the programming code of the artwork and the legal code in a contract. Rafaël Rozendaal is an artist who has developed part of his work in the form of websites: each piece is a webpage displaying a visual composition (animated or static, interactive or autonomous) and has its own domain name that becomes the title of the artwork. Since 2001, he has created more than a hundred “art websites” that can be viewed for free by typing their corresponding domain name address or checking the full list on the artist’s site. Rozendaal, however, sells these websites to collectors, who acquire the artworks but comply with the requirement of keeping them publicly accessible online and maintaining the hosting, as well as renewing the domain name registration. These requirements, as well as those of the artist, are specified in the *Art Website Sales Contract*,⁴⁸ a legal document created in 2011 and further developed until 2014 with the assistance of several artists and the art dealer Steve Turner, whose gallery represents Rozendaal and who is also a lawyer. The 2014 version of the contract,⁴⁹ which also acts as a certificate of authenticity, indicates that the artwork consists of a website, its corresponding domain name and the signed contract itself. Upon being signed and within 30 days of payment, the artist provides the collector (referred to as “owner”) a signed and numbered disc containing three sets of files: “online files, necessary to run the website; [...] exhibition files, which will be self playing and compatible with both mac and pc; [...] source files, which can be used for future restoration.” Additionally, reference images are provided, but can only be used with written consent (presumably, to avoid the possibility of being printed and sold as separate artworks). Finally, the domain name is transferred to the owner. The contract also specifies the following obligations, both for the artist and the collector:

47. OFFLINE ART: new2. Aram Bartholl. Retrieved from <http://datenform.de/offline-art-new2.html>

48. Art Website Sales Contract Retrieved from <http://www.artwebsitesalescontract.com/>

49. Art Website Sales Contract 2014. Art Website Sales Contract. Retrieved from <http://www.artwebsitesalescontract.com/art-website-sales-contract-2014.pdf>

“6. Artist’s Obligations.

- a. ARTIST will transfer electronic data as provided in paragraph 4;
- b. ARTIST shall add the name of OWNER to the website;
- c. ARTIST will credit OWNER whenever the ARTWORK is exhibited or cited in publications.

7. Owner’s Obligations:

- a. OWNER will annually renew the domain name, so that ARTWORK will remain continuously accessible;
- b. OWNER will keep the website online and completely accessible to the public.”

The collector’s name is therefore added to the code of the website, inside the <title> tag, so that it appears on the top of the browser window or tab and can also be found when viewing the source code of the artwork. Since Rozendaal’s work is inspired by painting and each of his websites can be seen as a visual composition in which the browser becomes a canvas (Waelder 2013e, p.68), the source code view can be considered the backside of the canvas, where traditionally the information about the painting, the artist’s signature and other references are indicated. The collector becomes directly linked to the artwork, its name being part of the title, and is rewarded in this way for publicly sharing it. The value of ownership, in this case, is not in having exclusive access to the artwork but in being mentioned every time the artwork is displayed on a browser. The artist underscores the importance of being mentioned, as well as the crucial role of the domain name:

“If you put something in a domain name, it is more framed, more a finished work. It’s not just some file, it’s really something. So I started putting things in domain names, and the domain name makes it saleable. So when it is sold to a collector, the name of the collector is mentioned in the title bar. So it’s kind of like owning a public sculpture and having your name at the bottom of the sculpture in a public park. The more people see it, the better for the collector.”⁵⁰

Rozendaal has understood the importance of branding on the Internet, an environment where any content can be easily decontextualized. The online artworks we have discussed remain publicly accessible but have been subject to some sort of branding, usually by being accessible through the website of the collector or art institution. In this way, the collector is identified with the artwork, and it is therefore in his interest that the latter is open to the public, in the same manner that a sculpture is placed in a public park as a reference to its patron (be it the State, the City, a private sponsor or group). The conflict between owning and sharing, which is also addressed in Zanni’s *Altarboy* pieces, is apparently solved. Still, as with Zanni’s artworks, this solution is best suited for Rozendaal’s work: his websites are independent compositions with a separate identity as

50. Turning the Internet into an Art Gallery: Rafaël Rozendaal. The Creators Project. Retrieved from <http://thecreatorsproject.vice.com/rafa%C3%ABl-rozendaal/rafael-rozendaal>

digital paintings,⁵¹ “framed” by their domain name, that makes them unique, despite the possibility of being easily copied. They are made of html5 scripts which work well with new browsers (Rozendaal has updated all of his websites from Flash to html5) and can even be experienced offline (as indicated on the contract, the collector receives self-playing exhibition files), which also reduces the problems derived from obsolescence. This is not to say that the *Art Website Sales Contract* is not suitable for other artworks, as long as they are an “art-piece-in-a-domain-name”,⁵² as Rozendaal puts it. Other artists have already used it, such as Evan Roth, who even changed some of the terms of the contract according to the specific features of his artwork (Waelder, 2013d, p.71). The *Contract* provides a legal framework for the acquisition of online artworks, but binds the collector to a series of obligations that may not be appealing to prospective buyers.

3.5.2 ACCESS

The task of maintaining and updating the artwork when necessary can also be handled by the artist, who does not transfer the artwork files to the collector but rather provides access to it. At most, the collector gets a copy of the artwork or some files that facilitate access from his computer to a server maintained by the artist. This model is frequently used in the commercialization of other cultural goods, such as music, films, books or magazines: the client pays a subscription fee in order to have access to a selection of content that is transferred to her computer, tablet or smartphone through an Internet connection, via streaming or direct download. The client always get a copy of the “original” file, which is stored in the cloud, and is therefore not responsible for his preservation but can always download a new copy or access the content via streaming, as long as the subscription fee is paid. The provider, in this case, maintains the files and controls which content can be available. Paying for access to these contents has been positively received by consumers, who can now read books and magazines, listen to music or watch films without the burden of storing hundreds of CDs, DVDs, BluRay discs or publications, and usually paying much less. Titles are consumed and forgotten, they do not have to be stored because they are not likely to be read or watched again. Music also tends to be consumed at a faster rate, making it unpractical to collect CDs instead of paying a subscription fee to a music streaming service that is constantly updating its catalogue.

In the art world, the relationship between the buyer and the product is different. The collector buys an artwork as a unique piece or a copy in a limited edition for a relatively high amount of money; the artwork is, in most cases, an object that becomes part of his possessions permanently (unless lost, stolen, destroyed or resold); it is in the collector’s interest that the artwork is properly maintained, displayed or stored; finally, the collector

51. Rozendaal himself admits the influence of painting in his work (Waelder 2013e, p.68) and has elaborated “lenticular prints” based on his websites, such as Into Time 13-05-07 (2013). Retrieved from <http://steveturner.la/artists/rozendaal#15>

52. See the introductory text of the Art Website Sales Contract, cit.

is expected to keep the artwork for a long period of time (even after his death, as a legacy). Although some collectors buy and resell artworks quickly or prove to be negligent in their handling and maintenance, acquiring an artwork is not the same as purchasing a CD or a magazine. The latter are simply mediums for the storage and distribution of a content that can be more effectively and quickly stored and distributed on a digital platform. Each copy, then, is expendable and can be sold in large editions for a reduced price. Artworks tend to be exactly the opposite: unique, expensive objects that can only be possessed by a few (this rule and its exceptions have been discussed in section 3.2). A strategy of selling access to the artwork can then be applied to online or screen-based works using a system that limits the number of users or the duration of their viewing. Therefore, we can differentiate between two models, one granting permanent access and another one that can be described as “pay-per-view”.

A) Permanent access

In the permanent access model, the artist allocates the artwork on a web server and sells exclusive access to the collector, either directly or through a gallery. The collector pays the gallery or the artist a one-time fee and acquires the right to access the artwork exclusively. The artwork is not publicly available, although the right to access it might be sold to a limited number of collectors, in a similar process to that of limited editions. In 2002, artist Mark Napier developed this model when selling his online work *The Waiting Room*.⁵³ A virtual space shared by up to 50 users at the same time on the Internet, the piece was presented in an exhibition at bitforms gallery in New York (see section 3.7.1) between April 4 and May 4. On a screen, an abstract composition is constantly transformed by the activity of its users, who can add shapes, walls, lights and shadows that transform the digital space. The distinctive feature of this space is that, being shared among its users, any changes made by one user are reflected on the screens of all the other users. A mouse was placed in front of the screen at the gallery, allowing visitors to interact with the piece and suggesting that collectors could display the artwork on their homes as a flat screen hung on the wall, with a computer and a (wireless) mouse. Given its nature, the artwork was sold in “shares” for \$1,000 each (Goldstein, 2014). Collectors received a software on a CD and had to buy a computer, flat screen and mouse (or touchscreen), as well as provide their own Internet connection. Once the artwork is installed, the collector can choose to interact with it or watch as other co-owners modify its appearance. By acquiring a share of *The Waiting Room*, the collector becomes part of a “closed network”, as gallerist Steven Sacks puts it (Goldstein, 2014), in a balance between exclusivity and the distributed nature of an online artwork. In this case, the artist has to carry on the task of maintaining the artwork on its server and updating the code, if necessary, to newer configurations. Since all of the owners of the “shares” use the same software provided by the artist, and this software runs on dedicated machines, it is less necessary to care for updates than in the case of a browser-based artwork, that depends on third-party software and must

53. Mark Napier, *The Waiting Room*. Retrieved from <http://www.potatoland.org/waitingroom/>

be publicly available. Instead, *The Waiting Room* is distributed among a small group of people, who could be asked to update the software or hardware if necessary.

Again, this model may only apply to Napier’s artwork,⁵⁴ given its particularities and the fact that both the artist and the collectors engage in a long term commitment to maintain this virtual space. The artist must maintain the artwork online and ensure that it works well with the computers used by the collectors. The latter must also actively participate in the virtual space to make sense of the whole project: a shared space with no activity is a dead space. It is reasonable to think that the initial enthusiasm of a collector for this piece will eventually wear off (as it happens with everything else that a person buys) and therefore the activity on *The Waiting Room* will be increasingly infrequent. This could also give the artist or the gallery the additional task of regularly interacting with the artwork. All this activity may come about naturally, but in any case it is clear that *The Waiting Room* demands more attention from the artist and the collector than do most “static” artworks. Although it may only be necessary to check the code or update the software every five or ten years, it is questionable that the whole project is profitable for Napier, who is bound to the task of maintaining the files on a server for an undefined amount of time (probably his whole life) and eventually deal with technical issues in exchange for a maximum of \$25,000.⁵⁵ This amount can be obtained by selling one or several paintings or prints, which do not require such maintenance. For this reason, it is not surprising that Sacks has stated that “a lot of the web-based artists also make editioned, printed pieces related to some of the screen work” (Goldstein, 2014).

B) Pay-per-view

In the pay-per-view model, the artist allocates the artwork on a website that is publicly accessible. However, visitors access an “trial” section of the website that displays information about the artwork, including conditions of payment, and optionally a preview. The visitor must create a user profile and pay a fee to access the artwork. Different fees are established according to the amount of time that the artwork will be available to the paying user. The user, which could be considered more a subscriber than a collector, can view the artwork for a limited time by paying once or automatically renew her subscription to keep being able to access it. This model allows for a potentially unlimited amount of subscribers given that the artwork is never acquired but just accessed

54. Napier created on the same year another collaborative online artwork, *net.flag* (2002). Commissioned by the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum for its Internet Art collection, it also allows users to modify and share a composition, in this case a fictional flag of the Internet that can be created using elements from the flags of all nations of the world. Publicly accessible, the artwork is still modified by users although the Java script is not compatible with newer browsers.

Mark Napier. Guggenheim Collection Online. Retrieved from <http://www.guggenheim.org/new-york/collections/collection-online/artwork/10703>

55. This amount is calculated on the event of selling all 50 shares for \$1,000 each and subtracting the gallery’s commission, which is usually 50%. However, according to different interviews with Steven Sacks, around 15 shares have been sold to date.

for a certain period of time. As with other Internet services, a seemingly “permanent” access can be achieved by regularly paying the subscription fee. This model has been tested by artist Carlo Zanni in his artwork *My Country is a Living Room* (2011),⁵⁶ an online generative poem created with the Google Scribe application. On the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the reunification of Italy, Zanni wrote a poem about his country using the online software that auto-completes texts by presenting suggestions as the user types. Writing only the first words of each sentence, the artist let Google Scribe finish each verse automatically, generating a somewhat surrealistic but surprisingly eloquent text about the socio-political situation in Italy. He translated the resulting poem into 57 languages using Google Translate with no editing and published a print-on-demand book. Additionally, he created a website⁵⁷ on which the poem kept re-generating itself automatically using Google Scribe, each version slightly different than the other according to the changes in the suggestions made by the application, which in turn is based on the most frequent search queries. The “live” poem could be seen on a pay-per-view basis: users had to register as “members” and then pay a fee according to the time of viewing, either in one-time payments (1 Day: 0.99€; 3 Days: 2.50€ or 7 Days: 4.99€) or as a subscription (10 Days Membership: 6.99€, auto-renewing). Since the project relied on the use of a third party software, Zanni limited membership to a maximum of 10 days in case that Google decided to stop giving access to Scribe.⁵⁸ Indeed, in August 2012 Google Scribe ceased to be publicly available, leaving the “live” version of the poem out of order. In the meantime, the website had generated 111 versions of the poem, which are currently archived and can be seen for the above mentioned fees. The site also offers a “free trial” version, that allows prospective members to have a better idea of what they will get for their money.

Zanni has stated that his intention with the pay-per-view model is to explore other possibilities for selling art besides the gallery system, aiming at a wider audience with more affordable prices. This could be applied both to digital art and video art:

“Put simply, I think videos should go for 100€ and should be available for download and streaming too. In this way, you open up the audience, and you start selling to collectors and to the people as well. A small new economy starts, and this, with time, can build a new market.” (Waelder, 2012a, p.45)

My Country offers a way of experimenting an online artwork with a certain degree of exclusivity (as a “member”) for as little as 0.99€. With this small fee, the artist is trying to reach a public for art that is “wider than the circle of super collectors” (Waelder, 2012a, p.46) and potentially engage them into appreciating, or even collecting, digital art. It is also a way of obtaining revenue from the same Internet users who experience online works for free. But the profitability of this model is also questionable, since it requires a large

56. *My Country is a Living Room*. Carlo Zanni. Retrieved from <http://zanni.org/wp/index.php/portfolio/mycountry/>

57. Carlo Zanni, *My Country is a Living Room*. Retrieved from <http://mycountryisalivingroom.com/>

58. About. *My Country is a Living Room*. Retrieved from <http://mycountryisalivingroom.com/about#m>

number of “members” to generate enough income only to be sustainable (considering hosting fees, programming and design), and most users will only access the artwork for one or three days. A collector who wished to display the work permanently would pay a fee of approximately 255€ per year, which is not a large amount but it is considerably high for the average user, who pays around 120€ a year to access a collection of thousands of songs or movies. It also amounts to 25% of the one-time fee paid to access *The Waiting Room* for an unlimited period of time. It can be argued, then, that a pay-per-view model could work if it gave access to a collection of artworks and that for a single artwork a one-time fee is more appropriate.

Zanni’s and Napier’s online artworks are not only different for the type of access but also and more importantly for the number of users that have access to it. *The Waiting Room*, due to its shared interactive features, is intended for a limited amount of users and as such becomes the kind of exclusive artwork that can be sold in the art market. *My Country* is open to a potentially unlimited number of users who pay a small fee to watch, but not interact with, the artwork. Both aspects, the large number of people who can have access to it and the small fee, make it unsuitable for the gallery system, which is precisely the market that Zanni is trying to avoid. The artist has experimented with other forms of selling artworks in large editions at reduced prices, hoping to reach the sector of people interested in art who do not buy artworks at higher prices. A weak point in this strategy is to expect the same interest in artworks as in other cultural products such as music, books or films: an artwork is not experienced in the same way, and requires an understanding of its particular context or the process that generates it. Also, unlike movies and music it cannot share the same environment as other content, it requires its own space in a dedicated screen and computer or a digital art frame (see section 3.9). These conditions set artworks apart from the content usually sold by online platforms and therefore a strategy for selling online artworks cannot be based on the same parameters as those of music or movie streaming services.

Nevertheless, some initiatives such as Still Reel,⁵⁹ an online platform launched in January 2014, follow the logic of a content streaming service by offering its members access to a collection of digital artworks for a monthly fee of \$12.99 (\$4.99 during the first year). Founded by entrepreneur Nick D’Arcy-Fox, the site applies the pay-per-view model as a subscription in a similar way to how Spotify users access its music catalogue. Currently, there are 37 artworks by a dozen artists (including Gerhard Mantz, represented by DAM gallery, and LIA), in four categories: Animation, Digital Painting, Generative Art, Interactive Art, Visual Music and Glitch Art.⁶⁰ D’Arcy-Fox admits that he was inspired by Seditio, a site that sells “digital editions” of artworks (see section 3.8.3), but opted for the subscription model because he wants Still Reel “to become a personal experience for the subscribers, rather than just a sales environment” (Waelder, 2014d, p.68). A

59. Still Reel. Retrieved from <http://stillreel.com/>

60. The Art. Still Reel. Retrieved from <http://stillreel.com/the-art/>

percentage of the revenue is shared with the artists, with the aim of increasing it as more clients subscribe to the service. Still Reel is intended to be used by anyone who can set up a dedicated screen with a processor and an Internet connection (a SmartTV, tablet, smartphone or computer) to display digital art. Its founder considers that corporate offices as well as coffee bars and retail spaces can be potential customers, and probably for this reason many of the artworks are similar to animated paintings. A subscriber can set up a selection of artworks from the collection as a playlist, which allows her to continuously play the videos in a loop. Although the structure set up by Still Reel is quite robust, and could work provided that enough customers have the dedicated hardware to use the service, it is uncertain that these artworks can be consumed many times over, as is the case of music (Horowitz, 2012, p.95), particularly if they incorporate sound or interactivity. The business model and the technology are both available, but the social context is probably still lacking.

3.5.3 ADAPTATION

In *My Country*, Zanni not only creates a pay-per-view online artwork but also a print-on-demand book. This publication can be considered a derivative artwork, as it is based on the content of the online piece but constitutes a separate object, which in this case is published in an unlimited edition at a low price. Gallerist Steven Sacks indicates that many artists working on the Internet also produce prints, videos or objects inspired by the contents of the original networked piece. These derivative artworks are usually exhibited in the context of a gallery. The collector buys the pieces at the gallery in the same way he would buy any other artwork. The net-based artwork, in this case, serves as a reference that provides meaning and context to the pieces sold at the gallery and is maintained by the artist herself. Whereas the net-based artwork is publicly visible on the web, collectors own the derivative pieces, which are usually sold in limited editions.

This process can be described as an adaptation of the online artwork to the conditions of the physical exhibition space and the art market, although some artists may argue that they consider these pieces as part of the original project. As has been discussed in section 1.4.2, artists such as Seth Price, Oliver Laric or Artie Vierkant advocate the concept of the artwork as an idea that can take different forms depending on the context in which it is presented without losing its integrity. Therefore, we may consider the term “adaptation” in the sense that the artwork adopts a form that is better suited to a different environment, not in the pejorative sense in which “adaptation” and “derivative” are often interpreted. Following the results obtained in the survey among artists working with new media (see 2.2), it can be said that artists do not create their artworks on the basis of their suitability for the art market, but later on find themselves in the need to adapt their work in different ways, by creating objects and editioned or lower priced works. This adaptation does not always originate on the art market, but it can already take place in a non-commercial exhibition, such as a solo or group show in a museum or Kunsthalle, in which the artist decides to create prints, objects or



Fig. 9. UBERMORGEN, *[Vote-Auction Seal* (2000) and *700 Kgs of Temporary injunctions* (2005). Source: Carroll/Fletcher.

installations in order to give a new dimension to a project that has taken place online or has been mainly screen-based.⁶¹

Artists such as UBERMORGEN (Hans Bernhard and lizvix)⁶² or Eva and Franco Mattes,⁶³ whose online work is often performative or involves a specific action that has generated media reaction, have frequently created derivative artworks such as prints and videos. *[Vote-Auction Seal* (2000)⁶⁴ by UBERMORGEN (fig.9) is a pigmented print on fabric measuring 200 x 200 cm that reproduces the seal that the artists created for the website of their project *[Vote-Auction*.⁶⁵ A fake website conceived by James Baumgartner and later sold to the artist duo was launched during the U.S. presidential elections in 2000,

61. Many young artists who develop their artworks online are particularly interested in presenting their work in the context of an art gallery, as indicated by Kelani Nichole, director of Transfer gallery (see section 3.5.1).

62. UBERMORGEN. See <http://ubermorgen.com>

63. Eva and Franco Mattes. See <http://0100101110101101.org>

64. UBERMORGEN. *[Vote-Auction Seal*, 2000. Carroll/Fletcher <http://www.carrollfletcher.com/artists/36/works/1222/>

65. *[Vote-Auction*. <http://www.vote-auction.net/>

offering U.S. citizens a way to sell their vote to the highest bidder. Described by the artists as a “Media Hacking performance”, according to UBERMORGEN this fake website generated a heated debate, caused an investigation by the FBI and the NSA, temporary restraining orders in several U.S. States and the shutdown of the website’s domain names. *[Vote-Auction]* was featured in over 2,500 global and national news reports, including a 27 minute CNN special. Considered “one of the most risky and paradoxically successful projects by UBERMORGEN.COM”, it reached an estimated global audience of over 450 million people, received an Award of Distinction from Prix Ars Electronica in 2005 and has been exhibited as a selection of documents and videos in several museums in Europe (Ludovico, 2009, p.66). Everything that this performance has generated is summarized in the round seal that crowns the project’s website (which is different from the original site that caused the controversy). The print reproduces this seal with the same low resolution of the original GIF file, although on a large scale, and is sold in an edition of 3. *[Vote-Auction Seal]* clearly illustrates the value of a derivative work related to an online project. Although the seal itself can have a certain aesthetic value and may be self-explanatory (the words “vote-auction”, “in money we trust”, the star-spangled background and the U.S. flag are quite telling), it would not be as relevant if it didn’t refer to the complex story of the media hacking performance carried out by the artists and the attention it received. The print therefore embodies the activity and the debate that it generated in an object that can be bought and displayed without an Internet connection. Creating an art object that brings their projects closer to the presentation formats of the contemporary art world is a common practice in the work of UBERMORGEN (Waelder, 2011c, p.58), as can be seen in the installation of *[Vote-Auction]* at the Lentos Kunstmuseum (Linz) in 2005, where this print was exhibited. The artists created several objects for this and other exhibitions of the project in different museums, including a paper sculpture measuring 90 x 95 x 80 cm that consists of a large pile of legal documents issued by several U.S. States. *[Vote-Auction – 700 Kgs of Temporary injunctions]* (2005) is also sold in an edition of 3 by the Carroll/Fletcher gallery in London (see section 3.7.2). These pieces were created for a museum exhibition and may be hard to sell to a private collector (particularly the paper sculpture), but they are the kind of objects that can be sold in an art gallery.

Eva and Franco Mattes are among the pioneers of net art and have extensively worked on the Internet, creating elaborate fictions and carrying out performances in online environments such as Second Life, the videogame Counter Strike or the webcam-based social network Chatroulette. *Freedom* (2010)⁶⁶ is one of such performances in which Eva Mattes controls a character in the online version of the war videogame Counter Strike, but avoid participating in the gameplay and instead plead other players not to shoot her. Using the in-game chat, she tries to explain other players that she is “an artist” making “an art performance” and asks them why they are fighting. Her avatar is quickly and repeatedly killed before she can finish a sentence. The artists recorded the performance in an edited video that shows the numerous attempts at carrying out the performance, which

66. Freedom, 2010. Eva and Franco Mattes. Retrieved from <http://0100101110101101.org/freedom/>

is effectively executed as the character gets killed again and again. This video can be seen in its entirety on the artists’s website and is also for sale at the Carroll/Fletcher gallery in an edition of 3. As with UBERMORGEN’s project, or in fact any other performance, the only trace left of the artwork is the documentation. The performance could only take place in the online environment for a brief period of time: here the artist met with other players that did not know and where not interested in the artistic nature of her avatar’s actions, and since these actions disrupt the gameplay they can lead to the player being banned from the game. The video makes the artist’s experience available to those who did not participate in it and suggests a reflection on the nature of the videogame as well as that of the art performance. As any other video, it can be sold, despite the fact that it is also available for free on the web. While other video artists prefer to display only low-resolution samples or stills of their videos on sale, the Mattes post the full videos (sometimes in HD resolution) on their website and their Vimeo channel.⁶⁷ The difference is, obviously, in the ownership of a copy of the video with the certificate of authenticity. The artists have also explored different ways of presenting these videos as installations, using objects that either invite the viewer to watch the video (such as an inflatable mattress) or add a context to its contents (for instance, a cheap desk, monitor and chair that remind the environment of the average computer user). Arguably, the video could be sold along with these elements as a whole installation, as is the case of *My Generation* (2010),⁶⁸ a collage video that runs on a broken old computer. Besides these adaptations of online performances, the Mattes have repeatedly worked on the concept of the art object, whose authenticity and “aura” is explored in projects such as *Stolen Pieces* (1995-97),⁶⁹ a series of objects allegedly stolen from masterpieces by famous artists kept in museums, or the *Art Project Purchase Agreement* (2014),⁷⁰ which consists in buying ideas from other artists to make copies or versions of their work. The outputs of these projects are also art objects that are put for sale on the market.

The previous examples focus on the adaptation of online artworks, but this strategy is actually common to all kinds of artistic practices, particularly those that have moved beyond the context of the art gallery, such as land art, street art or performance art. Some artists create artworks that are more suitable for museums, temporary installations in the public space or the art market, in many cases taking to the gallery editioned work that refers to the larger or ephemeral piece presented in a museum or public space. A good case in point related to new media art can be found in the work of Rafael Lozano-Hemmer. Steven Sacks stresses how the artist has transitioned from the context of festivals to the art market by adapting his work:

67. The videos of Eva and Franco Mattes. Vimeo. Retrieved from <https://vimeo.com/mattes/videos/>

68. Eva and Franco Mattes. *My Generation*, 2010. Carroll/Fletcher. Retrieved from <http://www.carrollfletcher.com/artists/28/works/8/>

69. *Stolen Pieces* (1995-97). Eva and Franco Mattes. Retrieved from <http://0100101110101101.org/stolen-pieces/>

70. *Art Project Purchase Agreement* (2014). Eva and Franco Mattes. Retrieved from <http://0100101110101101.org/art-project-purchase-agreement/>

“There are artists who have made the leap from festivals to art venues, but they chose to make that transition, and made certain adjustments to their art practice in order to succeed. Rafael Lozano-Hemmer is a wonderful example of someone who has made that leap and has had incredible success. Known for huge scale installations at festivals and in public spaces, he now also creates smaller, more intimate works that are well received in the art world.” (Waelder 2010d, p.70)

Two artworks by Lozano-Hemmer illustrate this change of scale in a perfectly proportional manner. On one side, *Solar Equation* (2010)⁷¹ is a public space installation from the series *Relational Architecture* that consists of a “faithful simulation of the Sun” created using a spherical balloon that measures 14 meters in diameter, five projectors and seven computers with custom-made software. The projections on the balloon are generated by live calculations that simulate the activity on the surface of the Sun, based on images from NASA. The project includes an iOS app that allows viewers to disturb the animations or select different visualizations with an iPhone or iPad. On the other side, *Flatsun* (2011)⁷² is a circular LED screen measuring 142 centimeters in diameter with a built-in camera and a computer that simulates the surface of the Sun using mathematical calculations. The presence of the viewer is registered by the camera, causing the fake Sun to increase its activity with growing turbulence and frequent solar flares. Whereas *Solar Equation* is 100 million times smaller than the Sun, *Flatsun* is 1 billion times smaller. Both artworks simulate the surface of the sun and interact with the viewer, but the former is clearly conceived for a public space or large museum, while the latter is directed at private collectors. *Flatsun* has the proper dimensions for a home or office and is built as single object that can be easily installed. The description of the artwork on the artist’s website indicates that “a single knob lets the collector set the brightness of the piece and turn it on and off”, while the activity on the artwork is reduced when no one interacts with the piece. These features are specifically intended for the display of the artwork on a private space, where the activity of the piece may be disturbing at times. Made in an edition of 6 + 1 artist’s proof, the artwork has been acquired by several private collectors and foundations.

3.5.4 CROWDFUNDING

Crowdfunding platforms seem to be a natural resource for Internet based art, given that both address an audience of Internet users who are interested in creativity and novel ways of using digital technologies.⁷³ Backers of crowdfunding projects are also keen to support creative projects and have an adequate income that allows them to spend their money on the promise of a reward (usually, the pre-sale of a product at a discounted price). Given

71. Solar Equation. Rafael Lozano-Hemmer. Retrieved from http://www.lozano-hemmer.com/solar_equation.php

72. Flatsun. Rafael Lozano-Hemmer. Retrieved from <http://www.lozano-hemmer.com/flatsun.php>

73. Andrea Ordanini, Lucia Miceli, Marta Pizzetti, A. Parasuraman (2009). Crowdfunding: Transforming Customers Into Investors Through Innovative Service Platforms. Retrieved from http://didattica.unibocconi.it/mypage/upload/49036_20110414_125339_JOSM_CROWD_FINAL.PDF

the enormous amounts of money raised by crowdfunding platforms such as Kickstarter, which reports a total close to \$2 billion (with most projects raising less than \$10,000 but more than a hundred reaching \$1 million),⁷⁴ it can be expected that this form of funding could be a good source of income for Internet art projects. However, in the same manner as Zanni’s pay-per-view model does not take into consideration the differences between paying for music or movies and paying for viewing an artwork, to expect funding from a large crowd for an artistic project is misleading. Although some crowdfunding campaigns related to well-known artists such as Marina Abramovic⁷⁵ or Ai Wei Wei⁷⁶ have succeeded, these entail investments and costs that are usually beyond the possibilities of a net artist. Backers give money in exchange of rewards, which are usually different versions of the product being funded or merchandise associated with the project.⁷⁷ To obtain funding for an art project, the artist must therefore produce derivative or editioned work beforehand or give part of the production generated by the project itself, once it has been funded and carried out. The projects that will be discussed in this section have either opted for this last solution or relied on a form of patronage that rewards backers with visibility and a direct implication in the produced artworks.

In September 2014, artist Krystal South launched a Kickstarter campaign for her project *Exhibition Kickstarter*,⁷⁸ which consisted in funding an exhibition with artworks by eleven artists produced online. South contacted artists Brad Adkins, Anthony Antonellis, Kim Asendorf, LaTurbo Avedon, Jeremy Bailey, Zachary Davis, Bea Fremderman, Mo Marie, Ryder Ripps, Rick Silva and Krist Wood and asked them to design an artwork that could be produced by customizing an object through an online retailer and produce an edition of 10. Each artwork was offered as a reward to backers pledging between \$35 for an edition of *#Moneybrick Centurion Card* by Anthony Antonellis and \$500 for *DIPSY DOOTY – Garment Bag* by Brad Adkins. The campaign raised \$6,022 (surpassing the initial goal of \$2,068 by almost 300%) from 92 backers. 75% of the revenue went to the artists, while the remaining 25% was used to pay Kickstarter’s fees and the production of an exhibition displaying one edition of each of the artworks that opened at Ditch Projects⁷⁹ gallery in Springfield (Oregon) on October 11th. The concept behind the project and the resulting

74. Stats. Kickstarter. Retrieved from <https://www.kickstarter.com/help/stats>

75. Marina Abramovic launched a campaign to crowdfund the “Marina Abramovic Institute” between July and August 2013, raising \$661,452 (a little over the \$600,000 goal) from 4,765 backers. Retrieved from <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/maihudson/marina-abramovic-institute-the-founders>

76. The solo exhibition @Large: Ai Weiwei on Alcatraz presented by the FOR-SITE Foundation was funded through a campaign on Kickstarter between May and June 2014, raising \$89,455 from 265 backers. Retrieved from <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/for-site/large-ai-weiwei-on-alcatraz/description>

77. In her campaign, Marina Abramovic offered rewards in the form of videos and performances (which included “doing nothing” for \$10,000), whereas the Ai Weiwei exhibition was funded by offering different merchandise items.

78. Exhibition Kickstarter. Kickstarter. Retrieved from <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/ksouth/exhibition-kickstarter/description>

79. Krystal South: Exhibition Kickstarter. Ditch Projects. Retrieved from <http://www.ditchprojects.com/index.php?upcoming/krystal-south/>

exhibition is inspired by *Brand Innovations for Ubiquitous Authorship* (2012)⁸⁰ a group exhibition curated by Artie Vierkant at Higher Pictures gallery in New York. Vierkant asked more than fifty artists (among which was Ryder Ripps, also participating in South's *Kickstarter*) to produce an object using a custom printing or fabrication service such as CafePress, Zazzle or Walmart. The objects were not seen by Vierkant or Higher Pictures until they arrived at the gallery and were displayed in the exhibition space. A year later, the concept of the exhibition was "stolen" by Eva and Franco Mattes and restaged at Carroll/Fletcher in London with new objects created by almost thirty artists, among whom was Vierkant himself.⁸¹ Krystal South took this idea to Kickstarter and added the dynamics of crowdfunding, achieving the sale of at least one edition by each participating artist, some artworks selling all 10 editions. The advantage of South's use of Kickstarter is that the artworks did not have to be produced unless they were sold, a practice that is common when editioning certain artworks but that in this case apply to every piece on a print-on-demand basis. Another differentiating aspect of South's project is that it incorporates the public as a patron, taking the discourse around production and authorship of the artwork in Vierkant's show to a more general consideration about the economics of the art world. In the presentation of the Kickstarter campaign, Krystal South emphasizes the importance of finding a way to involve a larger sector of the public in the production of artworks and exhibitions:

"The conversations around the art economy focus on gallery sales and auction prices, not the living wage of the artist, curator, or independent gallerist. Crowdfunding sites such as Kickstarter offer a new opportunity for patrons to directly impact the life and work of a living contemporary artist. [...]

Supporting the arts should be as rewarding and exciting as buying a new tech gadget, if not more so. Those who don't have thousands or millions of dollars to spend at art auctions should still be able to support artists and enjoy their artwork in their homes. Let's try out this new form of peer-to-peer digital arts patronage and see how it could potentially shift an out of date system."⁸²

South also aims at a group of patrons that is "wider than the circle of super collectors", as Zanni phrased it in reference to his pay-per-view artwork. Both intend to find an alternative way of selling art that eventually would establish a different market, but they are limited to specific projects. The Kickstarter model has worked for a single exhibition and, as South admits, "it's incredibly hard work"⁸³ that demands constant

80. Brand Innovations for Ubiquitous Authorship. Higher Pictures. Retrieved from <http://higherpictures.com/press/brand-innovations-for-ubiquitous-authorship/>

81. Brand Innovations for Ubiquitous Authorship: A group exhibition stolen by Eva and Franco Mattes. Carroll/Fletcher. Retrieved from <http://www.carrollfletcher.com/exhibitions/16/overview/>

82. Exhibition Kickstarter. Kickstarter. cit.

83. Benoit Palop (2014). "Meet The Artist Who Launched The First Kickstarter-Powered Art Exhibition", The Creators Project, September 29th. Retrieved from <http://thecreatorsproject.vice.com/blog/meet-the-artist-who-launched-the-first-kickstarter-powered-art-exhibition>

attention, as well as mobilizing a network of people to disseminate the campaign and convince them to "buy" a reward. Crowdfunding campaigns usually last 30 days and most platforms work on an "All-or-Nothing" basis,⁸⁴ which means that if the goal amount is not met, all of the money raised is lost. These conditions make it hard to establish a sustainable selling model for artworks in a platform where less than half of the launched campaigns actually succeed.⁸⁵ Tellingly, when Transfer gallery started its activity in 2013, its directors intended to apply a crowdfunding model to produce their exhibitions, but quickly had to abandon it (see section 3.7.2) and adapt to the usual structures of the art market.

A permanent model for crowdfunding the work of net artists was tested in the form of patronage of online art exhibitions on the platform Art Micro Patronage (AMP).⁸⁶ Founded by Eleanor Hanson Wise and Oliver Wise in December 2011, AMP presented on its website a curated group show of online art every month. The artworks were freely accessible for the duration of exhibition, so that Internet users could see them or interact with them at no cost. The website interface displayed each artwork on full screen, but included a bar at the bottom of the page that displayed several buttons with amounts ranging from \$0.50 to \$20. Clicking on one of these button meant making a monetary contribution to the artwork displayed. Once the whole selection of artworks was seen, the website lead the user to a checkout page, on which she could review or modify the amounts donated to each artwork (with the possibility of donating only to some of them) and pay the final amount in the same manner as with any other e-commerce site. Upon completing payment, the user became a "Patron" and had the right to add her profile to the list of patrons⁸⁷ on the website, or could also remain anonymous. This profile included the patron's name, website, total amount pledged and the name of the artist who had received the largest amount of money. Additionally, a user could contribute to AMP in two other ways, either transferring an amount of money to her profile and then distribute it among the artists at will (for a maximum period of six months), or paying a fee to become a member, the amount of the fee being equally distributed among all artists participating in the exhibitions of the following six months. Patrons profile were therefore grouped into three categories: Top Patrons (those who have pledged higher amounts), Members and Gold Level Patrons. Besides their personal satisfaction and the recognition provided by their profiles on the site, patrons were rewarded with exclusive access to content: once each exhibition was over, the artworks ceased to be publicly accessible, and only patrons and members could access them. Patrons could access the artworks they had supported with donations, whereas members could access all of the artworks. In this manner, ownership is replaced by access, although many of the artworks were also available on the artists's own sites

84. Douglas J. Cumming, Gael Leboeuf, Armin Schwienbacher (2015). "Crowdfunding Models: Keep-It-All vs. All-Or-Nothing". Retrieved from http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2447567

85. Stats. Kickstarter. cit.

86. Art Micro Patronage. Retrieved from <http://artmicropatronage.org>

87. Patrons. Art Micro Patronage. Retrieved from <http://artmicropatronage.org/patrons>

and one of the participating artists, the group 0-Day Art, published all of the contents of AMP's site on their website as part of their artistic practice.⁸⁸

AMP transferred the donations to the artists, retaining a percentage for curators's fees, website maintenance and bank transfer expenses. This percentage was lower as the donated amount grew, in order to encourage patrons to pledge more money to support the artists.⁸⁹ The Wisers had a previous experience in developing this kind of initiative: in 2006 they had founded The Present Group, an art subscription service that until 2012 offered subscribers three limited editions artworks per year for a \$150 fee. They also developed a web hosting service and an award for artists. All these projects merged in AMP as an online exhibition space, crowdfunding and subscription initiative aimed at supporting the artists in the production of their work. However, the numbers did not add up and AMP had to cease its activity after six months (in may 2012) in order to reconsider their funding structure. According to a statement posted on their home page, during this period the site had distributed approximately \$1,000 to the artists, which was not enough to make the initiative sustainable.⁹⁰ Although it was planned to re-launch the site with six more exhibitions and a different funding model, no further activity has taken place on AMP since 2012.

During its six months of activity, AMP kept a busy agenda with six group exhibitions by six different curators and a more than 50 participating artists (see Table 1. Donations to each exhibition rounded around \$100 and \$200, a low amount that was showing signs of growth as the highest-grossing exhibition was the last one, curated by Lindsay Howard. Graph XXX displays this progression: if the numbers would have been higher or the Wisers had counted on financial support to keep the platform running, even at a loss, it could probably have reached a more profitable level of income. However, AMP's structure shows several flaws that impede its own success:

- The amounts donated were very low, even too low for the costs implied in the transactions. Top Patrons (5 people) donated around \$30 each, while Gold Level Patrons (25 people) donated on average \$10 each. The amounts suggested by the website's interface, starting at \$0.50, seemed more like tips than actual donations. The icon of a hand tossing a coin in the air, placed next to the donation buttons, did not contribute to considering one's pledge seriously.
- Unlike crowdfunding campaigns, backers to do not give money to bring a project to life (which is a powerful incentive) but reward an artwork that has already been produced.

88. 0-Day Art. Retrieved from <http://www.0dayart.net/>

89. For amounts up to \$9.99, artists received 70% of the income. From \$10 to \$24.99, 75%; from \$25 to \$49.99, 80% and over \$50, 85% of the money donated.

90. This vague number is not consistent with the sum of the amounts donated in each exhibition (see Table 16), considering that around 20% to 30% of the money raised is supposed to be allocated to AMP's expenses. Presumably, the Wisers had to add money from their own resources, which made the whole operation non-viable.

- The exclusive access given to patrons and members, although being a incentive to donate, stirred some controversy among those who consider that the nature of net art is to be freely accessible on the web. It was on the basis of this idea that the group 0-Day Art copied all the files from AMP and posted them of their own site.
- Several young professionals that participated in this project are also actively developing a career in the contemporary art world and the market (among them: curators Lindsay Howard, Karen Archey and Ben Vickers, as well as artists Angelo Plessas, Artie Vierkant, Harm van den Dorpel, JODI, Aram Bartholl or Kim Asendorf). Since crowdfunding is based on supporting startups and professionals who are beginning to launch their careers or a specific project, it is questionable whether patrons will be interested in giving money to artists who are already represented by commercial art galleries and supposedly have a source of income through the sale of their artworks on the art market.

Date	Title	Curator	Artists	Total donated
Nov. 2011	Material Motion	Sarah Klein	Scott Wolniak, Kathy Aoki, Tommy Becker, Paz de la Calzada & Michael Rauner, Sean Horchy, David O'Kane, Mel Prest, Andy Vogt, Aeneas Wilder	\$196,00
Dec. 2011	Dériving An Imaginary City: Virtual Psychogeographies	Andrew Venell	Les Liens Invisibles, Julian Konczak, Eduardo Cachucho, Sarah Shamash, Noriyuki Fujimura, Mariola Gajewska, Christian Marc Schmidt & Liangjie Xia	\$107,50
Jan. 2012	10000 Pixels	Jeff Thompson	Tom Moody, Travess Smalley Ben Vickers, Alexander Peverett, Laura Brothers, Matt Cella, Angelo Plessas	\$97,00
Feb. 2012	Can't Touch This	Karen Archey	Artie Vierkant, Ben Vickers, Ben Schumacher, Juliette Bonneviot, Harm van den Dorpel, Anna Lord, Kate Steciw, Leah Dixon Enterprise Inc., Nicholas O'Brien	\$115,00
Mar. 2012	Inverse Internet Operating Manual	Dena Beard	Anthony Discenza, Center for Tactical Magic, David Horvitz, Elizabeth Sims, Destructables.org Packard Jennings, Kristina Lee Podesva with Alan, McConchie, Anna Lundh	\$73,00
Apr. 2012	C.R.E.A.M.	Lindsay Howard	JODI, Greg Leuch, Aram Bartholl, Lucy Chinen & Emilie Gervais, Kim Asendorf & Ole Fach. David Horvitz, 0-Day Art	\$211,24
			TOTAL	\$799,74

Table 16. list of exhibitions hosted by Art Micro Patronage between December 2011 and April 2012.

The four strategies described in the previous sections illustrate the difficulty in merging online art and commerce. Three of them (Transfer, Access and Crowdfunding) present innovative features but have mainly been developed in experimental models that are often limited to a single artwork or project and can hardly become the foundation of a different art market. Certainly, online artworks can be sold by transferring their files to a server owned by the collector alongside a specific domain name using Rozendaal's *Contract*, or else the artist can create a web-based piece and sell access to it. It is also possible to crowdfund a specific project by widely diffusing the campaign and offering attractive rewards. But these are solutions to individual cases that, as the previous examples tell, have yet to prove their sustainability in a long period of time. The attempts at building a stable structure for the sale of online art have met with the imperfections of their own experimental nature and the lack of funding. As we will see in section 3.8, other initiatives originated in the contemporary art market and with considerable funding, such as Sedition, are applying some of the strategies discussed here with positive results. In these examples, we also find the mistakes in assuming that a model that works for the distribution and commercialization of other cultural products, such as books, music, films, magazines or even videogames will be equally effective when selling artworks. The specific motivations of the public of contemporary art as well as the dynamics of the art world and the art market have to be observed instead of expecting a crowdfunding campaign for an art project to have the same response as the one that launched the Pebble smartwatch or to assume that iPhone or iPad users will download and experience artworks in the same way they buy apps or multimedia contents.

Remarkably, the most widespread and successful strategy (at least in terms of entering the gallery) is the one that has been regularly applied in the contemporary art market over decades: adaptation of the artwork to the exhibition space and the commercial environment. Most artists working on the Internet produce objects and prints, as stated by Steve Sacks (see section 3.7) and exemplified by the trajectory of Transfer gallery in New York (see section 3.7.2). Once the online artwork becomes an object, it can easily become part of the art market, which is constructed around the sale of objects and has developed all the necessary structures and strategies to carry out this task. At this point, only the correct functioning and preservation of the artwork are particular issues to be tackled, but as the survey shows (see 2.2), most artists are developing ways of ensuring the preservation of the artwork, while others create their pieces in formats that do not require such maintenance or are not threatened by technological obsolescence. The influence of Post-Internet art and its discourse on the mutability of the artwork is leading a great number of artists to produce artworks as objects that use new media as a tool for production and refer to digital culture but do not incorporate a continuous calculation process that would require specific software, hardware and/or an Internet connection. An increasing number of these artists is represented by galleries, which implies that the presence of this kind of artworks in the art market is growing. This does not mean that process-based, networked or interactive new media art pieces are not also exhibited and sold, but that the strategy of adaptation remains as the most effective form of commercializing artworks in non-traditional formats.

3.6 ART FOR MOBILE PLATFORMS

A parallel environment for selling digital artworks is provided by the iOS and Android platforms, which enable artists to create artworks as apps than are experienced in handheld devices such as smartphones and tablets. In 2007, Apple released its iOS operating system for the iPhone, its first smartphone, released the same year. The following year saw the release of the Android operating system as well as Apple's App Store, which was integrated and exclusively available on iOS compatible devices. During the last eight years, Apple's iPhone has experienced an exponential increase in sales and popularity,⁹¹ followed by the development of Android compatible smartphones by other companies. The competing market for smartphones and tablets has generated an ever-growing base of customers who own one or several of these devices, which in turn has become an incentive for companies to produce products adapted to their respective operating systems.

Many artists have experimented with handheld devices as they have entered the market during the last decade. For instance, James Buckhouse developed *Tap* (2002)⁹² for the Palm Handheld device in collaboration with Holly Brubach, Christopher Wheeldon and Scott Snibbe, with the support of the Dia Art Foundation in New York. The artwork consisted of a series of animations of a dancer that were loaded on the PDA and allowed the user to interact with them using the stylus to tap on the screen. As curator Sara Tucker pointed out at that time:

“As PDAs, cellphones and other information appliances become cheaper, smaller and increasingly powerful, the ability to leave one's desk behind, while remaining connected, is enabling what Patrick Lichty has termed “a culture of distribution and nomadism” [...] Artists, like Buckhouse and Brubach, are interested in responding to these new cultural shifts.” (Tucker, 2002)

Only six years later, the iPhone allowed for enhanced forms of interaction by putting together in a single device a wide array of technical equipment, including a touch screen, camera, microphone, speakers, accelerometer, gyroscope, GPS and Internet connectivity, in addition to a “curated” operating system (that ensures the software will run without the need of any additional components) and a built-in store. Around 2009, the interest in developing artworks for iOS or Android devices grew, as it became apparent that these devices could open a new form of distribution for digital art. In an article published on Rhizome in 2009 that focuses exclusively on examples created for iOS, artist Jonah Brucker-Cohen describes this possibility in laudatory terms:

91. According to Statista, sales of the iPhone have grown steadily since 2007, up to a peak of 74 million units sold in the first quarter of 2015 and lately experiencing a decline. Global Apple iPhone sales from 3rd quarter 2007 to 3rd quarter 2015 (in million units). Statista. Retrieved from <http://www.statista.com/statistics/263401/global-apple-iphone-sales-since-3rd-quarter-2007/>

92. Tap. James Buckhouse in collaboration with Holly Brubach. Dia Art Foundation. Retrieved from <http://awp.diaart.org/buckhouse/>

“Instead of giving away your work for free on the web, Apple’s iPhone and iPod Touch devices provide an ample platform for distribution (through the Apple App Store) and hardware support for novel ways to experience screen-based work [...] Since Apple has kept the economic barriers for entry into this world of mobile development relatively low, it’s easier than ever for artists to use these devices for their creations and have an instant audience of millions to enjoy them. Whether you are looking to expand your artistic career or simply push the boundaries of these devices, the iPhone is a unique platform for experimentation and play for media artists to engage with audiences around the world.” (Brucker-Cohen, 2009)

Brucker-Cohen explicitly mentions the fact that most artists distribute their work on the web without receiving any form of economic compensation for it. The frustrating contradiction between receiving attention and recognition for one’s work while not being able to make a living from it is arguably what has motivated many artists working on the web (in comparison to artists working on other environments) to look for ways to make their work marketable (see section 3.5). The author also emphasizes the fact that the price for the apps is usually kept low, which theoretically allows for the artwork to be bought by “millions” of users. Following the logic of the Long Tail (see section 3.10), this would mean that an artist could make a living from developing app artworks that sold for a small sum to a large amount of users. Certainly, the Apple App Store has experienced a tremendous increase in sales since its release in 2008, reaching \$33 billion in sales in 2015,⁹³ becoming a “commercially lucrative world” (Brucker-Cohen, 2012) for some. However, as will be discussed below, it is hard for an artwork to be commercially successful on this platform.

Between 2009 and 2015, the artist and researcher has continued to examine the development of art apps for iOS devices in four articles published in Rhizome. In 2010, he notices a growing trend in releases of apps that creatively explore the technical features of the iPhone, iPod Touch and iPad. Released in 2007, the iPod Touch has all the features of the iPhone except the use of cellular network data (for this reason it has been described as “the iPhone without the Phone”)⁹⁴ and a built-in App Store since 2008. The iPad was released in 2010, introducing the possibility of experimenting the apps on its larger 9.7 inch screen, although the software had to be adapted for this device in order to avoid displaying the content on the native size of the iPhone’s 3.5 inch screen or at double size but maintaining the lower 320×480 pixel resolution. Whereas the iPhone or iPod Touch introduced the possibility of creating a digital artwork as an app for a widely distributed handheld personal device that allows for multimedia content, connectivity

93. Sarah Perez (2015, August 7) Apple’s App Store Saw \$1.7B in Billings And Broke Customer Records In July. Techcrunch. Retrieved from <http://techcrunch.com/2015/08/07/apples-app-store-saw-1-7b-in-billings-and-broke-customer-records-in-july/>

94. Erica Sadun (2007, September 5). Apple announces iPod Touch: iPhone without the phone. Engadget. Retrieved from <http://www.engadget.com/2007/09/05/apple-announces-ipod-touch-iphone-without-the-phone/>

and interactivity, the iPad comes closer to a display that could be exhibited in a gallery or hung on a wall, while retaining all the functions of the smartphone and being relatively affordable and easy to use. Commenting on the advantages of using iOS devices, Brucker-Cohen quotes Scott Snibbe, an artist who has extensively worked on interactive installations and has produced several apps⁹⁵ for Apple’s mobile operating system:

“I’ve been dreaming of this opportunity since the mid-nineties, a distribution platform for screen-based digital work [...] It’s why I abandoned doing this work in the mid-00s, because of a lack of a distribution model. [It] seemed silly hacking apart laptops to put [them] on the wall.” (Brucker-Cohen, 2010)

Snibbe’s words illustrate the particular problems faced by artists who work with new media: frequently the idea precedes the existence of a cost-efficient and stable technology for its realization. The artist indicates that the absence of this technology even lead to ceasing a particular line of work. Developing an iOS app has brought back the possibility of creating such artworks, this time for a wider audience that purchases the software at a low price and contributes the hardware. In this sense, the mobile device environment offers a second chance for old software or web-based projects that can be remade as apps. More recently, Brucker-Cohen mentions the work of Lia, also a prolific developer of art apps, who ported to iOS her interactive websites *Remove* (1999-2003)⁹⁶ and *TURUX* (1997-2001)⁹⁷. This transition facilitates a form of preservation of these early artworks, since the original shockwave files do not work well with current browsers. On the *TURUX* website, the artist has decided to replace these files with video documentation, therefore losing the interactive experience, which can be recreated by downloading the iPhone/iPad app (albeit in a “semi-automatic” way, some of the artworks being interactive while others not). According to Brucker-Cohen, the mobile version has improved the original websites: “What used to exist as Shockwave-enhanced web experiences has since migrated to the handheld and the results are a much more seamless experience overall” (Brucker-Cohen, 2015). Arguably, the effort of migrating these artworks from older configurations to App Store titles can be compensated by the income generated from selling the apps. In addition to the two revamped web-based projects, *TURUX Semi-Automatic* (2014) and *RE-MOVE 10* (2014), Lia has produced four other apps: *Arcs 21* (2009), *PhiLia 01* (2009), *PhiLia 02* (2010), and *Sum05* (2012).⁹⁸ With the exception of *Arcs 21*, all of them are compatible with iPhone and iPad and can even be bought together as a “Software Art Bundle” on Apple’s App Store. Lia has also recently developed an Android app, *Elements* (2015), in the framework of the Android Experiments initiative (see below).

95. Work >> Apps. Scott Snibbe. Retrieved from <http://www.snibbe.com/apps>

96. Re-move.org. LIA Software Art. Retrieved from <http://www.liaworks.com/theprojects/re-move-org/>

97. Turux.at. LIA Software Art. Retrieved from <http://www.liaworks.com/theprojects/turux-at/>

98. Apps. LIA Software Art. Retrieved from <http://www.liaworks.com/category/apps/>

Currently, the most well-known artworks developed for iOS are mentioned in Brucker-Cohen's articles for *Rhizome* and in iPhone Art,⁹⁹ an online archive of software art apps curated by Lia and maintained since 2009. According to the artist, the motivation to create this simple list of apps is the lack of an Art section on the App Store, which puts software artworks among the myriad applications in the Entertainment or Lifestyle categories. The title of Lia's website seems to imply that there is something that can be labeled "iPhone Art", as an art form or movement, and as stated calls for introducing this category into the App Store (disregarding the fact that an Art category would include thousands of apps related to all periods of art history and also art making in all its formats). Visibility is a key factor in the evolution of this emerging market for digital art: software art apps are hard to find among the 1.5 million mobile applications and games available at the App Store. Furthermore, they have to compete for the attention of users in a marketplace that does not differentiate between art, design, education or entertainment.

This has led some artists to market their apps emphasizing their relationship with the art world in an attempt to distinguish their work from other apps that simply provide an interactive experience to the user. For instance, Scott Snibbe developed in 2011 an app based on *Bubble Harp* (1997),¹⁰⁰ an interactive artwork created fourteen years earlier that plays with Voronoi fractal tiles and was initially presented as a touch screen hung on the wall. Interestingly, the original artwork is part of the series *Dynamic Systems*, of which Snibbe states: "I sought to probe the boundary between a tool and a work of art. These experiments blurred the lines between drawing, animation, scientific visualization, art, and games." The app recreates this piece on any iPhone or iPad with the following introduction:

"Bubble Harp was first released as a work of interactive art by Scott Sona Snibbe that was only available in galleries and museums. Now it's available as an iPhone and iPad application that also creates generative music."¹⁰¹

Snibbe asserts that what can now be bought for \$1.99 is a version of an interactive artwork that could only be found in a museum. This places the app on its proper context as an artwork, but also hints at the opportunity that constitutes owning a very expensive artistic creation for a very low amount of money. The pedigree of the artwork is thus particularly important in an environment that classifies content on broad categories and gives prominence to the most popular and best-selling titles, usually games, productivity and social media apps. Snibbe has produced four other apps based on his art installations

99. iPhone Art. Retrieved from <http://www.iphoneart.org/>

100. Bubble Harp. Scott Snibbe. Retrieved from <http://www.snibbe.com/digital-art#/projects/interactive/bubbleharp/>

101. Bubble Harp app. Scott Snibbe. Retrieved from <http://www.snibbe.com/bubbleharp-app>

Motion Phone (1995)¹⁰² *Gravilux* (1998)¹⁰³ *Mymegraph* (1998)¹⁰⁴ and *Tripolar* (2002).¹⁰⁵ The description of each app uses a similar text referring to the exhibition history of the original artwork. With these apps, Snibbe aims at connecting with a wider audience that can experience his work in the intimacy of their homes and not in a museum or a gallery. Therefore, the apps have to be attractive for what they do, while retaining their identity as artworks in order not to be confused with simple "entertainment". The artist indicates that his apps have a deeper background than those created just for fun:

"There's a great place for apps that are a one-shot "cool" "demo" experience, but what I'm after is something more inspired by the history of abstract animation [such as the work of] Len Lye and Oskar Fischinger. To create something with a connection to a deeper part of your mind and an infinite explorability. Also, to create a special effect on your mind. Even something you might do each day when you come home from work to relax!" (Brucker-Cohen, 2011)

The way in which these apps are presented and described illustrates the difficult balance between the "serious" nature of the work of art and the playful experience of interactivity. Remarkably, this balance appears to be more fluid in the apps developed by Snibbe's studio for musicians Björk, Passion Pit, Metric and Philip Glass: merging music and interactive visuals, they integrate artistic creativity in an enjoyable, game-like environment that allows users to create their own compositions.

Lia uses the same strategy as Snibbe. As previously mentioned, she has grouped her apps in a "Software Art Bundle" that includes in its description not what the apps do but a biography of the artist, underscoring her pioneering work in software art and net art as well as the connections between her work and the traditions of drawing and painting and its affinity with conceptual art.¹⁰⁶ This text is similar to what could be found in an art catalogue and intends to communicate the value of the apps by stating that they have been created by an artist that has exhibited internationally in museums and has received prestigious awards. Obviously addressed at an art audience, it is very different from the descriptions of most apps, that usually focus on the features of the product itself, briefly indicating that it has been top rated or that the developer has created another popular app or won an award. The individual descriptions of the artworks (which are displayed on each app's page) also remind the user of the artistic nature of the software. *PhiLia 02* is described as an "art creation tool" that promises the user: "you will be rewarded for your

102. Motion Phone. Scott Snibbe. Retrieved from <http://www.snibbe.com/digital-art#/projects/interactive/motionphone/>

103. Gravilux. Scott Snibbe. Retrieved from <http://www.snibbe.com/digital-art#/projects/interactive/gravilux/>

104. Mymegraph. Scott Snibbe. Retrieved from <http://www.snibbe.com/digital-art#/projects/interactive/mymegraph/>

105. Tripolar. Scott Snibbe. Retrieved from <http://www.snibbe.com/digital-art#/projects/interactive/tripolar/>

106. Software Art Bundle by Lia. iTunes App Store. Retrieved from <https://itunes.apple.com/at/app-bundle/software-art-bundle/>

experimentation with your own personal unique art piece.” In *Sum 05*, “the software and the user collaborate in the creation of the artistic experience, which requires no previous expertise or training from the user’s side.” In the description of *Arcs 21* we can read the following:

“From December 2009 until April 2010 the original *Arcs 21* can be viewed in the Victoria & Albert Museum as a (non interactive) work, in the scope of the exhibition «Decode: Digital Design Sensations.» Now with the iPhone version of *Arcs 21*, you can carry around this art creation tool in your pocket and use it wherever art is needed.”

These apps, as Lia and Jonah Brucker-Cohen state, are therefore “art in your pocket”, artworks that can be carried around and experienced in a daily environment, away from the museum and gallery context, but at the same time referring to it. A different approach can be found in Golan Levin’s *Yellowtail* app, based on a research carried out by the artist and developer during his Masters’s thesis, *Painterly Interfaces for Audiovisual Performance* (MIT, 2000). *Yellowtail* (1998-2010)¹⁰⁷ is an interactive software system that allows a user to draw using gestures and can generate animations in real time of the shapes that have been created. In his thesis, Levin gives an account of the main features of the software in the context of his research:

“The two most important contributions of *Yellowtail* are that it (1) permits the real-time creation and performance of spectrographic image patterns, and furthermore that it (2) permits the use of a dynamically animated image, and not just a static image, as the raw material for pattern playback. The combination of these two ideas yields an audiovisual instrument which not only affords an unusual quality and high degree of control over the spectral content of sound, but also makes it possible for this spectral information to gradually (or abruptly) evolve over time in a manner programmed by the user’s gestural movements.”¹⁰⁸

This project is developed not as an artwork, but as one of the tools used by Levin in his interactive installations, which are in turn presented as artworks in museums and festivals. In 2008-2010 he ported the system to iOS using openFrameworks and launched the *Yellowtail* app on Apple’s App Store. The app’s description is, in this case, clearly addressed at a user who wants to simply play with it or entertain her young child:

“*Yellowtail* is a mesmerizing, family-friendly app for drawing animated, wiggly lines! Just drag your finger to draw an ever-changing display of lively, worm-like textures. The software repeats your marks end-over-end, allowing you to author a line’s shape and its quality of movement at the same time. A simple menu lets you clear the

107. *Yellowtail*. FLONG. Retrieved from <http://www.flong.com/projects/yellowtail/>

108. Project report for *Yellowtail*. FLONG. Retrieved from http://www.flong.com/texts/reports/report_yellowtail/

screen, or choose between two different animation styles. Good for kids as young as 2 years old!”

The contrast between the two descriptions shows how the same software can have a different meaning and purpose, depending on the context where it is used. Whereas this is quite common in software and technology in general (often a technology is developed before its uses can be determined), it becomes confusing in the art world (it is generally assumed that an artwork can only serve an aesthetic purpose). Unlike the apps created by Scott Snibbe or Lia from previous artworks, *Yellowtail* can be an interactive toy because it was never an artwork and does not carry the weight of its genealogy. Similarly, Rafael Lozano-Hemmer’s studio Antimodular developed in 2009 the app *Pulse Phone*,¹⁰⁹ that measures a person’s heart rate using the iPhone built-in camera. The software is part of Lozano-Hemmer’s work in interactive installations using biometrics and, as *Yellowtail*, is not an artwork but a tool that can be used in an art project, or simply to monitor one’s heartbeats: described by the artist as “a one trick device”, the app is sold on the App Store in the Health & Fitness category.

Antimodular has also created iPhone apps for the specific purpose of allowing interaction with one of Lozano-Hemmer’s large-scale installations in the public space, such as *Solar Equation* (2010) or *Open Air* (2012). In this case, the app is simply a tool that is offered for free to make it easier for the public to participate in the installation. The popularity of the device and the ease of use of the App Store contribute to this objective. Other artists create apps as a companion to an event-based artwork: for instance, Katie Paterson’s *Second Moon* (2013-2014)¹¹⁰ consisted of a small fragment of the moon that was sent on a year long cyclical journey around the world, “on a man made commercial orbit.” An app for iPhone and iPad visualized the current location of the lunar meteorite in real time, as well as the Moon and the location of the user. This app, although not being the proper artwork, had a crucial role in the experience of the piece, since it facilitated a distant but intimate connection with the “Second Moon”. This example illustrates the different uses of apps in relation to artistic projects, not only as artworks themselves or versions of artworks (one might describe them as unlimited digital editions). Arguably, this diversity of uses, along with the fact that the playful interactivity can be easily confused with simple entertainment makes it necessary to identify the apps with the art world context. However, other aspects of the App Store and iOS pose greater problems for the maturing of a market for software art apps.

Brucker-Cohen’s enthusiastic praise for the iPhone and the App Store in his 2009 article was strongly criticized by some Rhizome users in the comments section. Artist and researcher Nicholas Knouf indicated that neither the hardware nor the operating system can be said to be open and available to everyone: in order to experience one of Scott

109. *Pulse Phone*. Rafael Lozano-Hemmer. Retrieved from http://www.lozano-hemmer.com/pulse_phone.php

110. *Second Moon*. Katie Paterson. Retrieved from <http://katiepaterson.com/secondmoon/>

Snibbe's or Lia's apps, one has to purchase an iPhone (the most expensive smartphone on the market, although contracts with mobile network operators have made it affordable for a larger segment of the users), and can only download software that has been pre-approved by Apple (therefore subject to censorship according to Apple's policy). Additionally, an artist who wants to develop an iPhone app must use an Apple computer, pay to become a certified developer and have her applications approved by Apple.¹¹¹ Writer Cory Doctorow also denounced several years ago the level of control exercised by the multinational tech company:

“Apple uses DRM to make sure that only apps bought from Apple will run on iPhones, iPod Touches, and iPads. So even if you go ahead and write some code that's compatible with Apple's platform, you can't sell it, or give it away to an iOS user, unless Apple approves it and adds it to the App Store. And Apple, of course, gets to take their 30 percent. [...] So every time someone buys into the iOS ecosystem and increases its footprint, it increases the need for software authors and interactive media creators to sell their wares there; but every time someone buys an app from Apple, it makes it more expensive for creators and audiences to move to competitors. And the more popular Apple has gotten, the worse the deal has gotten for creators.” (Huff, 2011)

For an artist, this is akin to having a worldwide exclusivity agreement with a gallery that has full control over the contents of the artwork. Although this is less rare than it may seem, the apps are additionally conditioned by the fact that they can only be experienced on an Apple device, which means on the one hand that all of its viewers have no choice but to be Apple customers, and on the other that the artwork will require constant updates as the company releases newer versions of its operating system that, in time, will render the app obsolete. Unless the sales make it profitable for the artist to dedicate her resources to update the apps, it is likely that the latter will be abandoned at some point. This has already happened to many net-based artworks launched in the 1990s: by the mid-2000s, they have been removed from the Web due to the obsolescence of the software they used and can only be viewed as video documentation. Additionally, online archives such as Rhizome's ArtBase or even Lia's simple iPhone Art website can only maintain a link to Apple App Store and therefore cannot contribute to any preservation effort. Software art apps are being developed in a closed environment that favors consuming newly released software and disregards long-time maintenance of both hardware and software.

Google's Android Experiments,¹¹² launched in August 2015, introduces a different approach, as it showcases “creative experiments” made with community-developed and open source tools that are freely shared and can be used by other developers. Although this project focuses on the technology and does not differentiate the kinds of applications

111. Knouf published his remarks under the username “nick” in the comments section of the article (Brucker-Cohen, 2009). They have been paraphrased in this paragraph.

112. About. Android Experiments. Retrieved from <https://www.androidexperiments.com/about>

submitted (mostly games), it can be a resource for artists who want to develop software art apps with open source software for Android devices. However, both iOS and Android determine the environment in which the artwork can be experienced, not only in terms of hardware but also of the type of users that will have access to it: while Android is the most popular mobile operating system worldwide, in the U.S. it is used predominantly by people in computer or technical jobs, as well as those with lower income and level of education; iPhone users tend to be more educated and affluent and are usually freelance professionals and business people (Hixon, 2014). Therefore, despite its limitations iOS is arguably a more convenient option for artists, since it allows greater control of the final output (given that the artwork can only be viewed on the iPhone, iPod Touch and iPad) and is used by a sector of the population that coincides with that of art world professionals and collectors. The increasing sales of smartwatches, which incorporate new forms of interaction and a different relationship between the user and the device, open new possibilities for digital artworks on mobile operating systems. The Apple Watch could spur the creation of artworks that explore its capacities, just as the iPhone did several years ago. Meanwhile, the market for digital art within the specific context of iOS or Android is far from reaching its maturity.

3.7 NEW MEDIA ART GALLERIES

During the last two decades, the presence of new media art in the art market has increased slowly but steadily, due to the perseverance of a few gallerists that decided to support these artistic practices, as well as the growing recognition of a handful of artists whose work has attracted prominent galleries and collectors. To describe a gallery as a “new media gallery” is in many cases as debatable as it is labeling an artist as a “new media artist” (see 2.1). In general terms, galleries prefer to avoid strict categorizations and develop an open program, based on the criteria of its director or invited curators, stating at most its commitment to supporting contemporary art in its different formats. Some of them have included shows of digital art or represent one or several artists working with new media as part of a program that includes a variety of artistic disciplines, but this does not mean that they are specifically interested in new media art. This is the case with prominent artists who collaborate with several galleries in different countries: for instance, Rafael Lozano-Hemmer is represented by bitforms gallery (New York), Galería OMR (México), Galerie Guy Bärtschi (Geneva), Galeria Max Estrella (Madrid), Carroll/Fletcher Gallery (London) and Baró Galeria (São Paulo). Most of these galleries incorporate Lozano-Hemmer's work to their wide-range program on contemporary art. Others, however, express a specific interest in new media art.

Table 17 below lists some of the art galleries that have devoted particular attention to new media art, either overtly stating it as their mission or dedicating a large part of

their program to art and technology. It is an incomplete list which nevertheless includes some of the most active and influential galleries. As previously stated, other galleries that represent new media artists (while not being devoted to digital art) could be included, as well as lesser known or short-lived exhibition spaces and projects.¹¹³ The selected galleries are listed in chronological order, according to the year they were founded, and include an excerpt from their respective statements. These brief sentences exemplify the ways in which the relationship between art and technology can be expressed. Following the list of active galleries, several closed galleries have been added, in recognition to their contribution as well as to illustrate how the financial crisis and a changing perception of technology mark a turning point by the end of the decade of 2000 (see below).

Active galleries			
Gallery	City	Year	Statement/ website
Postmasters	New York	1984	“During its 30 years Postmasters is showing young and established artists of all media.” www.postmastersart.com
Catharine Clark	San Francisco New York	1991	“The gallery has pioneered the presentation of new media art in San Francisco.” cclarkgallery.com
Pari Nadimi	Toronto	1998	“[the gallery] represents some of the most distinguished Canadian and international artists who work in diverse practices and mediums, such as sculpture, installation, new media, video, performance, photography and painting.” parinadimigallery.com
bitforms	New York	2001	“bitforms gallery is engaged in a contemporary focus that specializes in the visual discourse of new media culture.” www.bitforms.com
DAM	Berlin	2003	“The main focus is on the use of digital media as part of the art production and the dialogue with digital culture. The spectrum spans from the pioneers of the 1960s, through the Net Art artists of the 1990s to the artists after 2000.” www.dam-gallery.de
Charlot	Paris	2010	“Particularly sensitive to emerging art forms, Galerie Charlot focuses on the relation between art, technology and science in the post-digital world.” www.galeriecharlot.com

113. For a list of other galleries, see Quaranta, 2013, p.159-161.

Stadium	New York	2011	“Stadium is a space dedicated to fostering a dynamic environment for the multi-dimensional, multi-media exchange of ideas [...] While remaining cognizant of contemporary media’s role in the display and distribution of art, Stadium seeks to engage these new methodologies, through participation within this loop.” stadiumnyc.com
Spazio Ultra	Udine	2011	“ULTRA is a cultural project aimed to select and present those artists and those artworks which are able, today, to critically investigate the complex relationships existed between art, society and digital technologies.” www.spazioultra.org
XPO	Paris	2012	“XPO GALLERY gives priority to artists who document and comment on contemporary art after the arrival of the internet and is particularly interested in how digital can drive and affect curatorial processes.” www.xpogallery.com
Carroll/ Fletcher	London	2012	“the gallery has quickly emerged as a leading platform for contemporary art with an emphasis on multimedia and new technologies.” www.carrollfletcher.com
TRANSFER	New York	2013	“The gallery exists to explore new modes of support for distributed studio practices, and to discover formats for exhibition, collection and appreciation of the art that comes to you through the computer.” transfergallery.com
Zhulong	Dallas	2014	“Zhulong Gallery presents work by artists who acknowledge and engage with the prevalence of technology in the everyday.” zhulonggallery.com
Nome	Berlin	2015	“NOME operates between art, politics, and technology. By exploring the nodes of entanglements between these fields, NOME aims to raise critical awareness of the crucial issues facing our age.” www.nomeproject.com

Closed galleries			
Gallery	City	Year	Statement/ website
Fabio Paris	Brescia	2000-2012	“[the gallery] has continued its commitment to showing young and established artists within various media. [...] Our interest lies in the process and not the medium.” www.fabioparisartgallery.com
RX Gallery	San Francisco	2003-2007	“Rx aims to provides a fertile petri dish for the exploration and understanding of contemporary art with a strong emphasis on new media.” www.rxgallery.com
AND/OR	Dallas	2006-2009	“And/Or Gallery originally operated in Dallas, Texas from 2006-2009 and showed contemporary art with an emphasis on new media and Internet-related art.” www.andorgallery.com
Numeris Causa	Paris	2007-2008	“Numeriscausa is a gallery focusing on digital arts [...] believing that digital arts [...] had to face contemporary art both from the point of view of critics, audience and institutions and that of market and collectors.” www.numeriscausa.com
BOCA	Montreal	2011-2012	“Bozeau Ortega Contemporary Arts is the premiere online commercial art gallery for the sale and exhibition of digital art objects.” www.bocagallery.com

Table 17: galleries devoted to new media art or with a particular focus on art and technology.

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, the pervading impact of digital technologies in society also affected the art world. While most new media art was being developed inside the circuit of festivals, many artists and gallerists were interested in integrating these artistic practices in the art market. As we have discussed in section 3.2, the digital artwork presents specific characteristics that differentiate it from the “traditional” artwork in terms of its commodification and the fact that many digital artworks are not conceived as a product (an physical object resulting from a finished process) but as an ongoing process (which must be maintained for the artwork to exist). Gallerists venturing into new media art usually had to deal with unprecedented issues surrounding the sale and preservation of the artwork. This posed a challenge both to the gallery and the collector. But it also was an opportunity to open a niche in the art market and dominate a particular sector in the already saturated contemporary art landscape. Therefore, some galleries decided to focus

exclusively on digital art, promoting the artists and working with them to find solutions for the display, commercialization and preservation of their artworks. In this context, it was important for the galleries to emphasize their commitment to new media art and build their identity on its distinctive features.

During the first decade of the twenty-first century, a few galleries focusing on digital art (particularly bitforms and DAM) saw the benefits of this strategy, attracting the attention of collectors and finding their place in the international art market. However, new media art has been usually received with mild interest, not reaching its full recognition among critics, collectors and institutions. The financial crisis and the changes in the perception of digital technologies (not a novelty anymore, but an everyday commodity) have progressively lead to a different perspective in selling and collecting new media art. The last five years have witnessed an increasing interest in the artwork as a physical object and in digital technology as a cultural reference rather than a medium. Coinciding with the development of Post-Internet art, emerging galleries have developed a different attitude towards new media art, which is perceived as a contemporary art practice, not defined by its medium or technique. These galleries still stress the relevance of digital technologies and Internet culture in contemporary art, but avoid categorizations based on the use of these technologies in the making of the artwork.

In the following sections, I will present six case studies of galleries devoted to new media art. They have been selected among those enumerated in Table 17 due to their outstanding history and the fact that they exemplify different approaches to new media art, as well as tackle particular issues that are relevant to a general understanding of the commercialization of digital art. In order to emphasize their different backgrounds, I will group them into two categories: “seasoned” galleries and “emerging” galleries.

Seasoned galleries have been selling digital art for more than ten years. They can be said to be more or less “established”, although, it can be stated that a stable market for digital art has not yet been settled. The art dealers who run these galleries have been among the first to support digital art and have endured through periods in which there was little interest for this kind of artistic practice in the art market. Even so, they have participated in international art fairs and developed models for the presentation and distribution of digital art. The galleries included in this category are: Postmasters (New York), bitforms (New York) and DAM (Berlin).

Emerging galleries have a shorter history, most of them have opened in 2012 or 2013 in an atmosphere increasingly dominated by a Post-Internet discourse. Most of them view digital art as a part of contemporary art and make no distinctions between screen-based, generative, interactive and more traditional formats. Digital art is viewed in the wider spectrum of digital culture, and therefore the artworks they sell do not necessarily fall into the three characteristics of new media art as described by Steve Dietz (see 1.1). In the interviews conducted with the owners of these galleries, a different approach can

be identified in comparison with that of older galleries. The galleries included in this category are: Carroll/Fletcher (London), XPO (Paris) and Transfer (New York).

Following these case studies, I will argue that both “seasoned” and “emerging” galleries are mainly converging on the same views about the integration of new media art in the contemporary art scene. Nevertheless, it is interesting to retain an initial separation between these two groups of galleries in order to observe the different conditions under which they have developed their respective programs, and how these conditions entail particular perspectives on the commercialization of new media art.

3.7.1 SEASONED GALLERIES

3.7.1.1 Postmasters (New York)

Founded by Magdalena Sawon and Tamas Banovich in 1984, the New York gallery Postmasters¹¹⁴ is one of the pioneering spaces selling digital art. Over its more than thirty years of history, the gallery has been relocated several times, following the changes in the art market and the city itself. In 1989, it moved from East Village to Soho, then to Chelsea in 1998 and finally to a large ground floor space in Tribeca, that opened in October 2013. Representing a large number of artists, the directors emphasize in their statement the diversity of formats and disciplines included in the gallery’s program by grouping the artists in several categories: painters (Austin Lee, Steve Mumford, David Diao, Adam Cvijanovic, Federico Solmi and William Powhida), sculptors (Monica Cook, Daria Irincheeva, John Powers), installation artists (Diana Cooper, Sally Smart), photographer Chris Verene, digital artists (Rafael Rozendaal, Rider Ripps, Shamus Clisset), artists for whom form follows conceptual ideas (Mary Kelly, Oskar Dawicki, Serkan Ozkaya) and video and new media artists (Guy Ben Ner, Katarzyna Kozyra, Jennifer and Kevin McCoy, Eddo Stern, Natalie Jeremijenko, Holly Zausner, Eva and Franco Mattes, Wolfgang Staehle, Kenneth Tin-Kin Hung).¹¹⁵

The gallery organized its first show of new media art in 1996. Titled *Can You Digit?*, it featured 30 screen-based artworks, each of them presented on a designated screen. The monitors were placed next to one another on a “ship-like” wooden structure in the center of the exhibition space, so that visitors could move around them and see each of the artworks (fig.10). Some monitors had a small shelf in front of them with a mouse and a pair of headphones, allowing to interact with an individual piece. Additionally, several video projectors hung from the ceiling or the walls projected the images of other artworks. Although the whole setup may remind us today of a computer store, at the time it was unprecedented to find such display of technology inside an art gallery, and to be able to

114. Postmasters. Retrieved from <http://www.postmastersart.com>

115. List of artists represented by Postmasters according to the gallery’s website on August, 2015.



Fig. 10. *Can You Digit?* Exhibition view at Postmasters gallery, 1996. Photo courtesy of Postmasters gallery.

interact with the artworks. According to Sawon and Banovich, it was the first exhibition of its kind, and was met with a lot of interest. This exhibition also became a statement of the gallery, publicly expressing the directors intention to include digital art into their contemporary art program:

“We did it because we recognized the emerging forms of expression being formed and wanted to include this new material in our program. We always considered Postmasters as a gallery reflecting the cultural production of our time and we believed (and still do) that eventually market will adapt to what the artists are doing.”
(Waelder, 2011b, p.69)

It still took some time for the market to become interested in new media and digital art. In the meantime, the artists were already adapting to the market. In the late 1990s, new media artists were isolated from the art world. According to Banovich, “they had no clue about the structure of the art world [...] They were ghettoized into these festivals and had no interaction with artists who worked in other mediums.”¹¹⁶ But, progressively, they began to make their works more “market-friendly”, emphasizing the conceptual aspect and paying less attention to aspects such as interactivity, which had a fundamental role in digital art around the turn of the millennium. The gallery focused on ensuring that the artworks, whatever the format in which they were made, could be sold and preserved:

116. Tamas Banovich. Presentation of Postmasters Gallery, 2001. CRUMB. Retrieved from <http://www.crumbweb.org/getPresentation.php?presID=3&cop=4>

“We treat media work like any other re-produceable object so we apply the same standards for making editions of work and providing certificates of authenticity. Multichannel video installations of Omer Fast or Second Life videoperformances of Eva and Franco Mattes are editioned and delivered to collectors as movie files on a hard drive with display instructions. [...] We also assist private collectors to make sure the work is protected and preserved properly.” (Waelder, 2011b, p.70)

The directors’s pragmatism is particularly necessary, given that they deal with a set of artistic practices that had developed in the context of festivals, tied to experimentation and ephemerality, even with a certain disregard for the art object and its possible commodification. As we have discussed in section 3.2, making editions and issuing certificates of authenticity are essential aspects of the commercialization of artworks whose digital format allows for endless reproductions. In this sense, Sawon and Banovich affirm that they “approach new media works the same way as any other work” but at the same time admit that it challenges collectors’s expectations, and therefore it is necessary that the collector understands which is the intended format of the artwork, the “real thing” (Waelder, 2011b, p.70). In the first digital art exhibitions hosted by Postmasters at the end of the 1990s, we already find some of the common elements in the presentation and selling of new media art: the exhibition as statement (later on exemplified by the projects curated by Aram Bartholl for XPO Gallery), the predominant use of screens (leading to the development of dedicated devices –see section 3.9) and the conception of strategies to ensure the authenticity, ownership and preservation of the artwork (further developed, for instance, in a packaging and distribution system by bitforms gallery).

But probably the most remarkable aspect of the early years of this gallery is the fact that already in their second digital art exhibition, the directors addressed the cultural aspect of the computers themselves and the planned obsolescence of technology. *MacClassics (the Immaculate Machines)* is a group exhibition that took place in 1997, presenting the artworks on a series of Mac Classic computers (an Apple computer that integrates the CPU and screen in a single device), which at the time were already relics from the past. The artists not only worked with the computers as a display for their pieces, but on many cases modified the device, making it also relevant as an object. Sawon and Banovich emphasize their interest in questioning the seductive power of technology and challenging the artists’s creativity:

“The reason we did the McClassic show was precisely to point out traps of technology, that it is very easy to be seduced by newer, bigger, faster, brighter, etc... We intentionally gave artists old computers with little RAM and big limitations so they they work on their ideas harder.” (Waelder, 2011b, p.70)

This exhibition highlighted the possibility of addressing the symbolic value of the devices themselves, not simply as screens that are supposed to disappear from view but as objects with their own history, one that is related to the personal experiences of the user herself.



Fig. 11 Eva and Franco Mattes, *My Generation* (2010). Source: Postmasters.

The role of the home computer as a cultural artifact would not be fully understood until later on, after the popularization of the web 2.0: this can be seen, for instance, in the installation *My Generation* (2010)¹¹⁷ by the artist duo Eva and Franco Mattes (represented by Postmasters): a destroyed (but still functioning) PC and monitor that display a collection of YouTube videos of frustrated video game players (fig.11).

3.7.1.2 bitforms (New York)

Entrepreneur Steve Sacks founded bitforms in November 2001, at a time when digital art was getting attention among the contemporary art institutions in the USA as well as Europe.¹¹⁸ Exhibitions such as *Bitstreams* and *Data Dynamics* at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York (March 22 – June 10, 2001) and *010101: Art in Technological Times* at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (March 3 - July 8, 2001) were particularly inspirational for Sacks, as he has stated on several occasions (Vanderbilt, 2009; Goldstein, 2014). The former creative director of Digital Pulp, an advertising agency focused on new media, Sacks saw in this growing interest in new media art an opportunity to explore a new niche in the art market, one where his background could work to his advantage:

117. *My Generation*. Eva and Franco Mattes. Retrieved from <http://010010111010101.org/my-generation/>

118. Domenico Quaranta lists more than a dozen group exhibitions and events taking place in several museums and art centers between 2000 and 2001 (Quaranta, 2013, p.139-142).

“I thought, «Wait a second, this could be interesting. Now I know how to speak the language of these artists. I understand the processes they’re working with.» [...] Because it was all my funding, I needed to have a sustainable profitable business, and I thought focusing on an underexposed genre would eventually be a good thing, especially in New York City’s very competitive art market.” (Goldstein, 2014)

The press release announcing the opening on November 15, 2001 described bitforms as “digital art’s new destination”.¹¹⁹ The name of the gallery (always spelled in lowercase) merges the words “bit”, understood as a basic unit of information, and “forms”, referring to any art form, as a statement of its commitment to “the nexus of art and technology”. At 529 West 20th Street, the gallery’s strategic location (“in the heart of Chelsea, the epicenter of New York’s art scene”) further indicates Sack’s investment in developing a niche in the art market. bitforms is referred to as “the first gallery of its kind” in this press release, and later on Sacks affirms that it is “the first gallery exclusively devoted to new media art” (Waelder, 2010c, p.70), a statement that must be qualified considering that Postmasters was supporting digital art since 1996, while Wolf Lieser co-directed at the time the Colville Place Gallery in London (1999-2002), which sold computer-generated art (see below). Nevertheless, Sacks has made pioneering efforts in finding specific solutions for the presentation and distribution of new media art and turned bitforms into one of the leading art galleries in this sector of the art market.

A particularly outstanding achievement, which is also illustrative of the tortuous progress of the market for art and technology, is the opening of a second gallery, bitforms Seoul, between 2005 and 2007. Sacks sold a series of artworks by Daniel Rozin and “shares” of Mark Napier’s *Waiting Room* (see section 3.5) to the W Seoul Walkerhill Hotel. The main piece was a large mural version of Rozin’s *Wooden Mirror*. These artworks caught the attention of Mr. Chung Jae-Bong, president of Handsome, one of the largest fashion companies in South Korea. He offered Sacks a space inside Mue, a clothing boutique in Seoul, that was actually larger than his gallery in Chelsea (Vanderbilt, 2005). bitforms Seoul opened in September 2005, at a time when the gallery was achieving a remarkable success in the art market: in 2004, its revenue amounted to more than \$1 Million; the next year, Sacks sold several editions of Daniel Rozin’s *Wooden Mirror* (1999) for \$120,000 each at the ARCO contemporary art fair in Madrid (Vanderbilt, 2005). The piece was hugely successful, attracting large crowds of visitors who wanted to interact with it. Sacks recalls: “[It] was like the Mona Lisa. I had to hire a person to manage the crowd. To me, there was just this huge evolutionary moment in the way people were looking at art” (Vanderbilt, 2005). Despite the attention generated by Rozin’s beautiful and intuitively interactive artworks, as well as the proliferation of large media façades and monumental digital artworks in public spaces,¹²⁰ the market for new media art was

119. The quotes in this paragraph have been extracted from the press release distributed by bitforms in October 2001. Retrieved from <http://www.bitforms.com/exhibitions/bitforms-inaugural/press-release>

120. The late 2000s saw a proliferation of media façades and digital art projects in public spaces. This is exemplified by the Media Facades Festival (2008-2010) and the Connecting Cities network (initiated in 2013).

far from consolidated. In 2007, bitforms Seoul closed its doors, apparently due to the lack of a sustainable market. In retrospect, Sacks concludes that “Asia in general is not as sophisticated as the US and Europe in the area of contemporary art. They are very technologically advanced, but their appreciation of media art is still developing” (Waelder, 2010c, p.70). As will be discussed in section 3.8, the widespread use of technology does not necessarily imply an interest in new media art. In 2014, after thirteen years on a first-floor space in Chelsea, bitforms relocated to a ground-floor property on the Lower East Side. The gallery currently represents the artists Daniel Canogar, R. Luke Dubois, Yael Kanarek, Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, Manfred Mohr, Jonathan Monaghan, Quayola, Casey Reas, Daniel Rozin, Björn Schülke, Addie Wagenknecht, Zimoun and Marina Zurkow.¹²¹

As a gallery that distinguishes itself by its commitment to art and technology, bitforms has expressed its support of new media art in different ways over the years, in its press releases and website statement. Steve Sacks has also referred to issues of terminology and addressed the definition of these artistic practices in several interviews. In the first press release of the gallery, Sacks announces:

“bitforms will position digital art as an influential and innovative art form that is evolving and warrants recognition. The gallery will appeal not only to our sense of aesthetics, but also to our sense of discovery.”

The current statement of the gallery¹²² reads as follows:

“Founded in 2001, bitforms gallery is engaged in a contemporary focus that specializes in the visual discourse of new media culture. The gallery’s program draws upon a diverse range of disciplines and intellectual perspectives while maintaining a clear progressive thread.”

By comparing both texts we can see how the initial discourse –that sets the gallery’s objectives and claims recognition for an innovative art form– evolves into a more nuanced affirmation of the program of the gallery within the context of contemporary art. As previously indicated, new media progressively moves from a groundbreaking medium to a form of contemporary culture. This change, however, is operated only at the level of the description of a program that maintains its general focus over more than a decade: a large part of the artists represented by bitforms have worked with the gallery since at least eight years. The fact that the words describing the art change while the art itself is relatively the same (within the logical evolution of each artist’s oeuvre) implies that the terminology is an important part of the way in which the gallery defends its program in the context of the contemporary art market. In an interview that I conducted with Steve Sacks¹²³ in

121. List of artists represented by bitforms according to the gallery’s website on August, 2015.

122. About bitforms. Retrieved from <http://www.bitforms.com/gallery>

123. The following quote is extracted from the original version of an interview published in art.es (Waelder, 2010c). The full text can be found in Addenda A1.9.

2010, he stressed his interest in clarifying concepts. His words remind of the struggles to find a proper definition for new media art, as discussed in section 1.1:

“Let’s start by defining new media art, a term that is challenging and not always accurate. New media as a concept or a genre is based on tapping into the most contemporary tools and ideas of a specific time period and applying the innovative ways to the artist’s practice. Also, my program emphasizes the range of media that can be produced under the auspices of new media. Many of my artists focus more on the conceptual relevance of new media versus the innovative processes that may sometimes be defined as new media. This expanded definition of new media is crucial to the success of my program and what makes my gallery unique.”

Four years later, Sacks emphasizes again the problems in defining new media art and stresses its connection with contemporary culture and therefore with contemporary art. He also indicates that not every artwork in his gallery is electronic and therefore it is not the medium that determines bitform’s program:

“It’s always difficult to define what new media art is, but to me it’s not just about being new—it’s a contemporary way of thinking and responding to the latest tools of creation and societal changes. Each generation reveals their own “new media art” based on current influences and the latest technologies. [...] My goal at the gallery is to present cross-generational artists who are embracing a progressive way of thinking, processing, and connecting to contemporary media culture. [...] Typically there are electronics involved on some level, but the art we show in the gallery is many times not electronic.” (Goldstein, 2014)

The gallerist finds himself in the position of being forced to continuously define the art presented in his space, as well as to “educate” collectors and public, explaining what the work is about and how to engage with it (Sacks, 2003; Vanderbilt, 2005; Goldstein, 2014). This obligation is shared by other new media art galleries but it is not common to most contemporary art dealers, who in some cases do not find it necessary to publish a statement defining their galleries’s programs.

Besides putting into words the constituent features of new media art, Sacks has developed specific ways of presenting and commercializing the artworks in collaboration with the artists. Already in 2001, he announced the creation of an Interactive Digital Catalog (IDC), consisting of two flat touchscreen monitors on which collectors could obtain information about the artists’s work, including editions and price of the artworks. The following year, bitforms presented Mark Napier’s *Waiting Room* (2002-), an online artwork that can only be accessed by its collectors, who buy “shares” of the piece at \$1,000 each (see section 3.5). Up to 50 people can interact with a digital space on a screen in their home, their actions altering the composition on everybody else’s screens. The participatory and ephemeral nature of the artwork was not well understood by some

(Mirapaul, 2002), a relatively small percentage of the shares being sold slowly over the course of several years.¹²⁴ In 2003, bitforms presented at the Ars Electronica festival in Linz (Austria) a system for the display of a collection of digital artworks on a screen, using the devices manufactured by ezscreen¹²⁵: a touchscreen and computer housed in a single frame that could be hung on the wall. On the festival’s catalog, Sacks stresses the challenge of selling “software art” (by which he means software-based art, any artwork that requires a certain hardware running a software to exist) and establishes two categories: “framed software art” and “unframed software art”. While the former is “object oriented”, unique and embedded in a custom housing (for instance, the pieces by Daniel Rozin or Manfred Mohr), the latter is sold in a CD in large editions and displayed “in any way the collector desires” (Sacks, 2003, p.213). Unframed software art was later on sold at the Software Art Space,¹²⁶ (fig.12) a website offering software art in unlimited editions that were delivered in custom-designed CD-ROM packages (Vanderbilt, 2005). Launched in January 2005, this platform was created “[in] response to the excitement around the software art that was shown at bitforms”¹²⁷ offering four generative and interactive artworks (described as “art titles”): *Tissue* and *Articulate*, by Casey Reas, and *Floccus* and *Stria* by Golan Levin.¹²⁸ Sacks announced that the first 10 titles would be offered in an edition of 5000 at \$125 each.¹²⁹ In order to purchase an “art title”, users had to contact the company using an online form to be added to the waiting list.¹³⁰ This practice, common among galleries when selling coveted artworks, contradicts the logic of e-commerce in which the process of purchase is direct and, in the case of digital content, it can be automatically downloaded. Despite the fact that this software art titles were sold in large editions for a low price, the company decided to maintain a distribution based on a certain exclusivity, probably unsure of the impact that selling an artwork to anyone on the Internet would have on the value of other artworks by Reas and Levin. The Software Art Space later incorporated artists Lia and James Patterson and the interactive design studio LeCielEstBleu and kept its online activity until 2014.

Most of these new modes of distribution have not succeeded in the art market, the selling of physical artworks (screen-based pieces, installations, sculptures and prints) still being the main business of the gallery. Sacks, however, has long advocated for setting up a dedicated screen for art in the collector’s home, where she can choose which artwork to

124. When it was exhibited in 2002, 3 shares were sold (Mirapaul, 2002); in 2005, 14 shares were sold ; in 2010, Sacks stated that “over 15 shares” had been sold (Waelder, 2010c, p.71); in 2014, the gallerist does not specify the exact number of shares being sold (Goldstein, 2014).

125. At the time, Sacks recommends these all-in-one units that come in 15” and 18” versions and can be hung “like a painting or wall sculpture” (Sacks, 2003).

126. Originally hosted at www.softwareartspace.com, the site has been removed but can still be accessed through the direct links reproduced below.

127. The company. Software Art Space Retrieved from <http://www.softwareartspace.com/company.html>

128. Artists. Software Art Space Retrieved from <http://www.softwareartspace.com/artists.html>

129. Steven Sacks (2005, January 27). Software Art: Defining a new category. Software Art Space. Retrieved from <http://www.softwareartspace.com/>

130. Contact us. Software Art Space. Retrieved from <http://www.softwareartspace.com/contact.html>

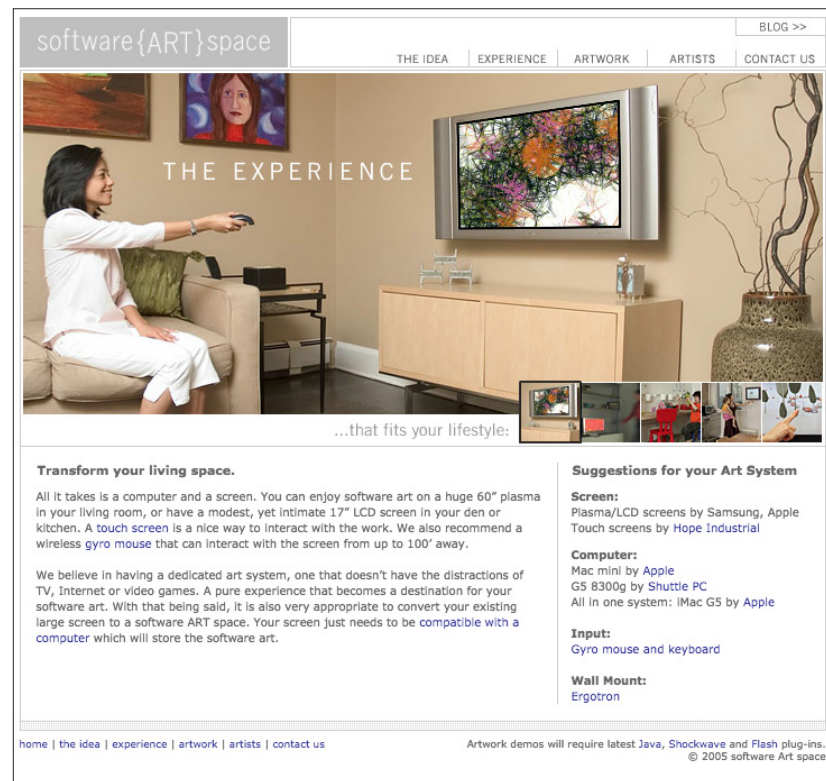


Fig. 12. Screenshot of the main page of bitform's Software Art Space. Source: Software Art Space.

display at any given time. This can be achieved, according to the gallerist, by spending less than \$1,000 on a Mac Mini, 46-inch screen and wireless mouse and keyboard (Vanderbilt, 2005; Goldstein, 2014). A wooden frame can also be added to the screen in order to make it look less like an appliance and more like a frame, which is what companies such as Electric Objects, FRM, Depict, Meural and DAD are currently developing (see section 3.9). The emergence of a market for digital art frames aimed at the average consumer (not just wealthy collectors) follows the predictions expressed by Sacks over a decade: in 2005, he expected that “within five to seven years, we’ll be rolling out a screen on our walls, like a huge canvas.” (Vanderbilt, 2005); in 2010, he foresaw “an art world where many collectors will have dedicated screens in their homes that will rotate a number of different artworks.” (Waelder, 2010c, p.71); in 2014, his description matches that of devices such as Electric Object’s EO1 (Goldstein, 2014), a project in which he was briefly involved.¹³¹

131. Sacks participated as a jury in the Artist in Residence/ Beta program launched by Electric Objects on July, 2014. The page containing this information has been removed from the site but can be accessed via the Internet Archive Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20140722080756/http://www.electricobjects.com/artists>

3.7.1.3 DAM (Berlin)

Art advisor Wolf Lieser became interested in new media art in 1987, upon meeting artist Laurence Gartel in Florida. Gartel had been experimenting with a Commodore Amiga computer to create compositions that he sold as prints. Lieser bought one of his prints and started researching the history of the use of computers in art. Later on, he exhibited the work of pioneers such as Vera Molnar, Manfred Mohr and Wolfgang Kibus at his gallery in Wiesbaden. Already then, he noticed that computer generated art suffered from a lack of recognition:

“In the 1990s I made several observations regarding new media: there was not much interest in this kind of work from the established art world, so digital art existed in a ghetto of festivals like Ars Electronica or SIGGRAPH without much overlap in the art world. There was not much of a market for this kind of work or it was sold under disguises such as constructive art or plotter drawings transferred to paintings. And finally, curators, museum administrators, gallery owners and journalists frequently just didn’t know about this field and its historic background since the 1960s.” (Waelder, 2010d, p.116)

At the time, Lieser opened a second gallery in London with Dr. Mike King. The Colville Place Gallery lasted for only a few years (1999-2002) but the partnership with King also motivated the first version of the Digital Art Museum (DAM), an “online resource for the history and practice of digital fine art”.¹³² Lieser’s interest in the historic background of digital art met with the support of academics and pioneer artists, most of whom also hold a position in a university or research institution, as can be seen in the advisory panel of the online museum. The DAM museum was founded in 1998 and has partly developed its mission of providing a selection of digital art (following a division into three phases identified by King)¹³³, as well as essays, biographies and other background information. Currently, some sections of the museum are still undeveloped, while a news section has been kept updated until recently (the last article was posted in May, 2014). As an online resource, the DAM museum is coeval with other efforts in writing the history of media art¹³⁴ and has met with the complexity of categorizing and selecting among the myriad forms of these artistic practices as well as the ample and constant funding needed to carry on such an undertaking. Despite its limitations, the DAM museum has stood out in its support for the work of pioneering artists, markedly with the d.velop digital art

132. About us. Digital Art Museum. Retrieved from <http://dam.org/home/about-us>

133. Dr. Mike King has established the following phases in the development of digital art: Phase 1 – The Pioneers from 1956, Phase 2 – The Paintbox Era from 1986, and Phase 3 – The Multimedia Era from 1996. Digital Art Museum. Retrieved from <http://dam.org/artists>

134. Among others, the Daniel Langlois Foundation for Art, Science and Technology (<http://www.fondation-langlois.org>), the Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie (ZKM) (<http://on1.zkm.de>), Media Art Net (<http://www.medienkunstnetz.de/>), the Archive of Digital Art (ADA) (<http://www.virtualart.at>), or the Rhizome community (<http://rhizome.org/>) have been building online archives and resources since the late 1990s or early 2000s.

award (later on renamed DAM Digital Art Award or [DDAA])¹³⁵, established in 2005. Endowed with 20,000€, the DDAA was awarded every two years to artists who had made “exceptional achievements in the area of digital art”, either during their whole career or through an outstanding series of works. It included a retrospective exhibition of the awarded artist in the Kunsthalle Bremen and the publication of a catalogue. Its recipients have been: Vera Molnar (2005), Manfred Mohr (2006), Norman White (2007-08) and Lynn Hershman Leeson (2010). Described by Lieser as “the most prestigious lifetime award in this field” (Waelder 2010e, p.116), the prize has been discontinued in 2012, probably inspiring the Visionary Pioneers of Media Art award, introduced in the Prix Ars Electronica from the Ars Electronica Festival in Linz in 2014 (see 1.1, 2.1).

In the early 2000s, while Lieser was exhibiting digital art at his galleries in Wiesbaden and London as well as developing the DAM museum, a growing interest for these artistic practices in art museums and specialized media seemed to mark a turning point. The exhibitions *Data Dynamics* and *Bitstreams* at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York and *010101 Art in Technological Times* at the SFMoMA in 2001, which had inspired Steve Sacks to open the bitforms gallery, were seen by Wolf Lieser as the cornerstones of the recognition of digital art in the contemporary art world. “When ARTnews proclaimed, «digital art is coming of age,»” stated the gallerist “I thought we’d finally got our big break!” (Scholz, 2014, p.199). However, the interest in digital art soon faded, partly motivated by the dot-com crisis. By 2002, Lieser had closed both his galleries in Wiesbaden and London. In 2003 he arrived in Berlin, where he opened the DAM Gallery at Tucholskystraße, in the increasingly popular district of Mitte. The city offered a new opportunity for experimenting with innovative forms of art:

“Everything seemed possible; space was affordable, if not free, and often times a good idea was enough to get started. Simply put, it was the perfect environment to give the digital art gallery concept another shot.” (Scholz, 2014, p.199)

The gallery lasted for eight years in this space, while the district saw many other art galleries opening and closing after a brief period, sometimes a little more than a year. In 2010, a sister gallery opened in Cologne, which moved to Frankfurt in 2013. This expansion responded to the need to provide customers in those areas with a presentation of the artworks in a gallery setting, not just as a photograph on a website or by attending an art fair during a few days, as Lieser has pointed out on several occasions. The Berlin gallery moved to a new space in Neue Jakobstraße in 2013 and a year later the Frankfurt gallery closed its doors. DAM continues its activity in Berlin, both by setting up group and solo exhibitions and attending international art fairs. According to Lieser, most galleries are moving to smaller spaces and taking part in art fairs, since less people visit the gallery and more collectors prefer to inform themselves on the web (Waelder, 2015a, p.102). Currently, DAM gallery represents the artists Kim Asendorf, Aram Bartholl, Peter

Beyls, Boredomresearch, Eelco Brand, Driessens & Verstappen, Lab[AU], Joan Leandre, Patrick Lichty, Gerhard Mantz, Manfred Mohr, Vera Molnar, Casey Reas, Flavien Théry, Roman Verostko, Sommerer & Mignonneau and Mark Wilson.

Wolf Lieser has actively supported digital art through his gallery and also contributed to its diffusion by writing (with contributions from several authors) the book *The World of Digital Art* (2010), a large format, glossy hardcover volume that included a DVD with video documentation of several artworks. Obviously aimed at art lovers and collectors, the book was intended to “educate” the public by offering information about the history and the characteristics of digital art (Waelder, 2010d, p.116). In the introduction, Lieser explains how he became interested in computer-generated art and defines it as a creative expression that belongs to the present but has been unjustly marginalized:

“Digital art is multifaceted and surprising. It corresponds to our time. It is the medium of choice for innovative, dedicated artists, who walk down completely new paths, for example with the internet or software art. This book is a credo for a fresh new genre, which is still treated unfairly and with a lot of scepticism.” (Lieser, 2010, p.8)

While stressing that digital art is a “fresh new genre”, Lieser emphasizes the role that computer art pioneers have had since the 1960s, and he has supported their work on numerous occasions, either through exhibitions at DAM (solo shows by artists Manfred Mohr, Roman Verostko, Frieder Nake or Vera Molnar, among others, or group shows such as *Aesthetica. 50 Years of Computer Generated Art*, which brought together plotter drawings by veteran and young artists during the summer of 2015) and in art fairs (for instance, at the first edition of the Unpainted Media Art Fair in 2014, Lieser curated a “museum” section, showcasing media artworks from the 1960s to the present). Arguably, Lieser has found in his support of early computer art a niche within the reduced market for digital art, which has brought him in contact with museums and art institutions, such as the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris or the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, interested in acquiring digital art for their collections (Scholz, 2014, p.204). However, the prices of the artworks by computer art pioneers remain low, even below those of young artists with a career spanning just a few years:

“Major museums are beginning to collect the work of important pioneers like Manfred Mohr and Vera Molnar, whom I have supported with my gallery over the last 10 years. They are experiencing well earned recognition and are selling well. But still, there is this situation that, for instance, an original plotter drawing from Vera Molnar from the 70s, a unique piece, costs less than a lenticular “painting” by Rafael Rozendaal from last year.” (Waelder, 2015a, p.100)

On the other hand, plotter drawings and prints are preferred by private collectors, who are the main clients of the gallery (Scholz, 2014, p.203), and constitute a form of access to the contemporary art market, since they are physical objects in unique or limited editions

135. DDAA- Digital Art Award Retrieved from <http://www.ddaa-online.org/ddaa-17>

and their content clearly relates to the historical art trends developed since the 1960s. While Lieser has described his support of early pioneers as a “disadvantage for the gallery, specifically regarding art fairs”, he regularly brings these artworks to art fairs, particularly specialized fairs such as Amsterdam Drawing (2014) or The-Solo-Project Basel (2015).¹³⁶ Arguably then, the plotter drawings can lead collectors to become interested in other formats of new media art, such as software artworks sold in hard drives or screen-based installations. This is consistent with the fact that pioneer artist Manfred Mohr,¹³⁷ whose work involves plotter drawings as well as prints, computer animations and installations, is being represented by most of the galleries described in this chapter (see section 3.7.3).

Lieser’s close ties to early computer art define the identity of DAM, which explicitly mentions the pioneers of the 1960s in its gallery statement, titled “Art of the Digital Age, from 1965 to Now!”.¹³⁸ The gallerist describes his professional trajectory as a “very personal career” that had him considered an outsider for a long time, his program not being taken seriously in the art scene in Berlin.¹³⁹ Known for its hybrid position both as an art gallery and an online museum, DAM has created a model that will probably not be repeated, as Lieser admits:

“How I see it now is that such a concept as I created more than 15 years ago, combining an online museum and a lifetime award with a commercial gallery, will probably not happen again. Because it doesn’t make sense any longer in the present art market context.” (Waelder, 2015a, p.101)

As we will see in section 3.7.3, DAM is progressively moving towards an approach to digital art that coincides with that of the other galleries, while retaining its historical perspective.

3.7.2 EMERGING GALLERIES

3.7.2.1 Carroll/Fletcher (London)

Jonathon Carroll and Steve Fletcher co-founded Carroll/Fletcher in 2012. Located on Eastcastle Street in Central London, the small gallery has developed a program that seamlessly combines new media and contemporary art. The list of represented artists illustrates this interest in both worlds, with a roster of emerging and established names: Basel Abbas and Ruanne Abou-Rahme, John Akomfrah, Karmelo Bermejo, James Clar, Constant Dullaart, Mishka Henner, Justin Hibbs, Michael Joaquin Grey, Christine Sun Kim, Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, Eva and Franco Mattes, Manfred Mohr, Natascha Sadr

136. Fair. DAM Gallery Retrieved from <http://www.dam-gallery.de/index.php?id=67&L=1>

137. Manfred Mohr, Retrieved from <http://www.emohr.com/>

138. Gallery profile. DAM Gallery. Retrieved from <http://www.dam-gallery.de/index.php?id=12&L=1>

139. See the original version of the interview with Wolf Lieser for art.es (Waelder, 2015a). The full text of this interview is reproduced in Addenda A1.5.

Haghighian, Thomson & Craighead, UBERMORGEN, Eulalia Valldosera, Richard T. Walker, John Wood and Paul Harrison.¹⁴⁰ The gallery’s particular approach to contemporary art reflects Jonathon Carroll’s own history as an art collector. An economist who began collecting in the early 1990s, Carroll became interested in new media art after visiting a solo exhibition of Rafael Lozano-Hemmer at bitforms gallery in 2002 (Waelder, 2013f, p.36). He considered establishing a foundation to support these artistic practices, but finally decided to open a gallery. Already in the year it was founded, Carroll/Fletcher participated in three international art fairs (LOOP Video Art Fair, Barcelona; Art Rio, Rio de Janeiro; and Bogotá International Art Fair) and has since taken part in 13 more (Art Stage Singapore, Art Rotterdam, Art Brussels, ArtInternational Istanbul, ARCO Madrid, Art Dubai, Silicon Valley Contemporary, Art Basel Hong Kong, Art-O-Rama Marseille, Expo Chicago, Manchester Contemporary, Art Basel Miami and ESTE Arte). The gallery’s attention to new media art is paired by a focus on video art: since 2014, Carroll/Fletcher organizes Onscreen,¹⁴¹ a weekly online cinema program of artists’s and experimental films led by an advisory panel of film makers and curators. Steve Fletcher stresses that this program intends to “increase the cultural value of video art works and explore the use of the net as a virtual exhibition space, from video to browser-based work.”¹⁴² Mimicking the conditions of the physical exhibition space, the films are available online for a limited period of time, which also allows to show artworks that would otherwise be unavailable, since many artists do not want their videos to be permanently displayed on the web. The gallery has also included an online store on their website, that sells publications, prints and artworks in large editions (20 to 100 copies), with prices ranging £5 to £100 (except a digital print by Eva and Franco Mattes in an edition of 20, priced at \$1,700). The online store is intended as an “access point” to the art sold at the gallery: Jonathon Carroll admits that art galleries are usually intimidating, the artworks being unaccessible to most people due to their high prices. The e-commerce option aims to make the art sold at the gallery more approachable (Waelder, 2013f, p.37).

Carroll/Fletcher defines itself as “a leading platform for contemporary art with an emphasis on multimedia and new technologies” and represents prominent artists in the new media art world, such as Computer Art pioneer Manfred Mohr, net art pioneers Eva and Franco Mattes (formerly known as 0100101110101101.org), activists UBERMORGEN, emerging artist Constant Dullaart (also represented by XPO gallery) and Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, who is one of the few widely recognized artists both in the contemporary art and new media art scenes. Still, it cannot be described as a new media art gallery, since this term is overtly rejected by Jonathon Carroll:

140. List of artists represented by Carroll/Fletcher according to its website on August, 2015 Retrieved from <http://www.carrollfletcher.com/artists/>

141. Carroll/Fletcher Onscreen Retrieved from <http://carrollfletcheronscreen.com/>

142. Statement by Steve Fletcher in a private professional meeting lead by Pau Waelder at the LOOP Video Art Fair in Barcelona (June 5th, 2015). Professional meetings. LOOP Barcelona. Retrieved from <http://loop-barcelona.com/loop-barcelona/loop-studies/professionalm meetings/>

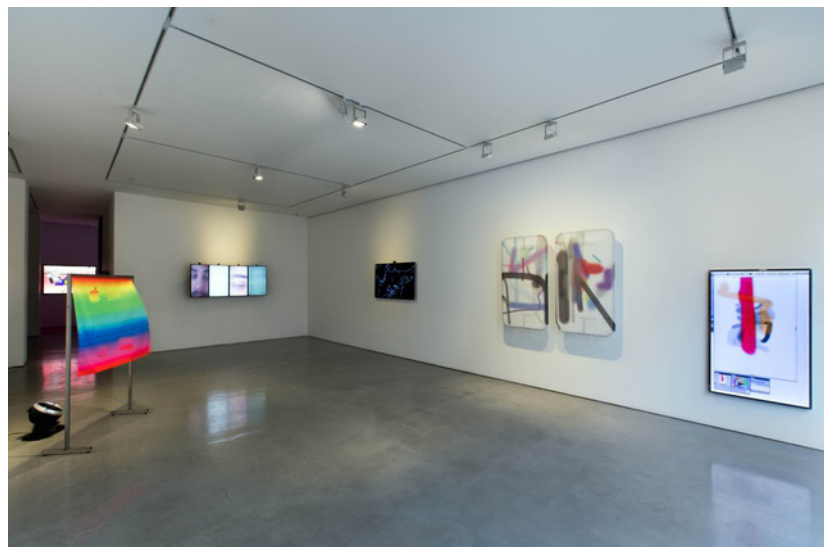


Fig. 13. Kim Asendorf & Ole Fach: *Computer's World* (2015). Installation view. Photo courtesy of the artists and Carroll / Fletcher

"I don't like labels, and specifically "new media" tends to cause people to make assumptions based on preconceived ideas about the nature of this work and can often even prevent some people from looking at the artworks. It is nonsense. [...] I tell my artists: "do not use the word new media artist, you're simply an artist." Perhaps a decade ago such artists thought it was necessary, it had value. But I don't agree: great artworks can hold their own irrespective of the format or medium.

Fortunately, the newer generation of artists are much less conscious of the notion of narrow categorisations –such that they don't want to be seen as new media artists because this potentially devalues their work in the wider contemporary art world and the market. If they are seen as conceptual artists who use certain media, which is actually the same thing, they shed any label and their work gets the focus as appropriate for what it is rather than primarily for the medium that they use."

(Waelder, 2013f, p.36)

Avoiding the term "new media" and its implications, or searching for other ways of stating an interest in the impact of digital technology on contemporary art, is a common strategy among the galleries that opened after 2010. Remarkably, Carroll considers that identifying with new media art is a disadvantage for the artists' careers in the contemporary art market. This is consistent with the results of the survey carried out among artists working with new media (see 2.2): most artists do not like to have their work defined on the basis of the media they use and are uncomfortable with a label such as "new media artist". Younger artists, particularly those related to Post-Internet art, bypass connections with the history or the dominant discourses in new media art and identify instead with Internet culture and

the current trends in contemporary art. These artists adopt formats that are more suitable for exhibitions in gallery spaces, as well as selling and collecting the artworks, and therefore it can be expected that they are more likely to be represented by contemporary art galleries. In this sense, Carroll/Fletcher's program was initially closer to that of DAM or bitforms than other emerging galleries such as XPO or Transfer, but the growing influence of Post-Internet art (or, at least, its aesthetics linked to Internet pop culture, digital prints and found objects) can be traced in recent exhibitions by young artists such as Kim Asendorf & Ole Fach,¹⁴³ (fig. 13) Helen Carmel Benigson¹⁴⁴ or Evan Roth.¹⁴⁵

3.7.2.2 XPO Gallery (Paris)

Founded by Philippe Riss, XPO¹⁴⁶ opened its doors in April 2012 in the Haut Marais district in Paris. In just three years, the gallery has developed an intensive program, gaining international attention with projects such as the exhibitions *OFFLINE ART: new2* (2013) and *Full Screen* (2014), both curated by artist Aram Bartholl, as well as the group exhibition and discussion forum *Hypersalon* (Miami, 2014), co-founded with Transfer gallery (see below). Philippe Riss is part of the selection committee of the Unpainted Media Art Fair in Munich (see section 3.3). The gallery represents artists Aram Bartholl, Vincent Broquaire, Grégory Chatonsky, Pierre Clément, Constant Dullaart, Angelo Plessas, Paul Souviron, Katie Torn and Clement Valla.¹⁴⁷

XPO focuses on art related to digital culture, but stresses that it is not a digital art gallery. Its statement clearly marks this separation:

"The gallery approach is not technologically driven or digital art oriented. We focus instead on impact and implications of the digital. [...] The gallery is medium-neutral, as it does not support digital art but art after the internet"¹⁴⁸

Philippe Riss states that XPO is not a digital art gallery, but "a gallery in the digital era", and asserts that "digital art doesn't exist; rather art in the digital era does" (Waelder, 2014a, p.68). This perspective is consistent with Riss's support of Post-Internet art, which has become part of the gallery's identity. As discussed in section 1.4.2, Post-Internet art is inspired by Internet culture but does not necessarily take place online, addresses the

143. Kim Asendorf & Ole Fach: *Computer's World*. Carroll/Fletcher. Retrieved from <http://www.carrollfletcher.com/exhibitions/38/overview/>

144. Helen Carmel Benigson: *Anxious, Stressful, Insomnia Fat*. Carroll/Fletcher. Retrieved from <http://www.carrollfletcher.com/exhibitions/37/overview/>

145. Evan Roth: *Voices over the Horizon*. Carroll/Fletcher Retrieved from <http://www.carrollfletcher.com/exhibitions/39/overview/>

146. XPO gallery. Retrieved from <http://www.xpogallery.com>

147. List of artists represented by XPO Gallery according to its website on August, 2015.

148. Gallery. XPO gallery. Retrieved from <http://www.xpogallery.com/gallery/>

technological layer of the global network or requires specific software or hardware. In fact, most of the artworks exhibited at XPO are digital prints or objects, although screen-based work is also present. According to Riss, the gallery does not impose a particular format: “The medium in itself isn’t the important thing, but whether or not the piece is beautiful and relevant. In that case, it will undoubtedly find a collector” (Waelder, 2014a, p.68). The exhibitions curated by Aram Bartholl played with the medium specificity of the artworks in an experimental setting that was arguably intended to generate commentary rather than sell the pieces. *OFFLINE ART: new2* (2013)¹⁴⁹ presented twelve web-based artworks by Cory Arcangel, Kim Asendorf, Claude Closky, Constant Dullaart, Dragan Espenschied, Faith Holland, JODI, Olia Lialina, Jonas Lund, Evan Roth, Phil Thompson, Emilie Gervais and Sarah Weis in twelve routers, which were the only objects hung on the walls of the gallery (fig.14). Visitors were asked to access the local area network created by each router in order to view the corresponding artwork on the screen of their laptop, smartphone or tablet. In this manner, the artworks were online but only accessible inside the gallery, establishing a hybrid format that favored the physical exhibition space while also displaying their artworks in the original form: as files transferred from a server to a screen via a network. Riss described the exhibition as “both prophetic and historical”, showing that “the gallery can sustain itself as a real space, a venue favoring an itinerary, or by becoming a simple access point” (Waelder, 2014a, p.69). *Full Screen* (2014)¹⁵⁰ consisted of an exhibition of the work of Ai Weiwei, Vincent Broquaire, Rafael Rozendaal, Petra Cortright, Constant Dullaart, Jennifer Chan, Paul Souvion, Sarah Ludy, Evan Roth and Aram Bartholl in twelve smartwatches and one large LED screen. In this case, screen-based artworks were brought to wearable devices, playfully stating the possibility of the artwork as a commodity that is incorporated into everyday life (in a similar way to what has happened with artworks developed as smartphone and tablet apps, as described in section 3.6). While these exhibitions can be interpreted as a bold statement from the gallery, XPO has kept an open approach to formats and integrated online content. *New Portraiture* (2015),¹⁵¹ a solo show by Rollin Leonard that took place both in Paris and at Transfer gallery in New York, included digital prints, a wall installation, and a series of animations that could be seen simultaneously on three screens at the gallery and on the online platform [Cloaque.org](http://cloaque.org).

The ongoing partnership¹⁵² with Brooklyn-based Transfer gallery, which started after both galleries participated in the Unpainted Media Art Fair in Munich (January 17-20, 2014), has led to exchanging solo shows by the artists they represent (Clement Valla at Transfer in 2014, Rollin Leonard at XPO in 2015) and co-founding *Hypersalon*,¹⁵³ a

149. OFFLINE ART: new2. Aram Bartholl - datenform.de. Retrieved from <http://datenform.de/offline-art-new2.html>

150. Full Screen. XPO gallery. Retrieved from <http://www.xpogallery.com/exhibition/full-screen/>

151. New Portraiture. XPO gallery. Retrieved from <http://www.xpogallery.com/exhibition/new-portraiture/>

152. TRANSFER and XPO GALLERY unite to bring a transatlantic group of artists to an international collector base. Transfer gallery. Retrieved from <http://transfergallery.com/xpogallery/>

153. h y p e r s a l o n :: Miami Retrieved from <http://hypersalon.net/>

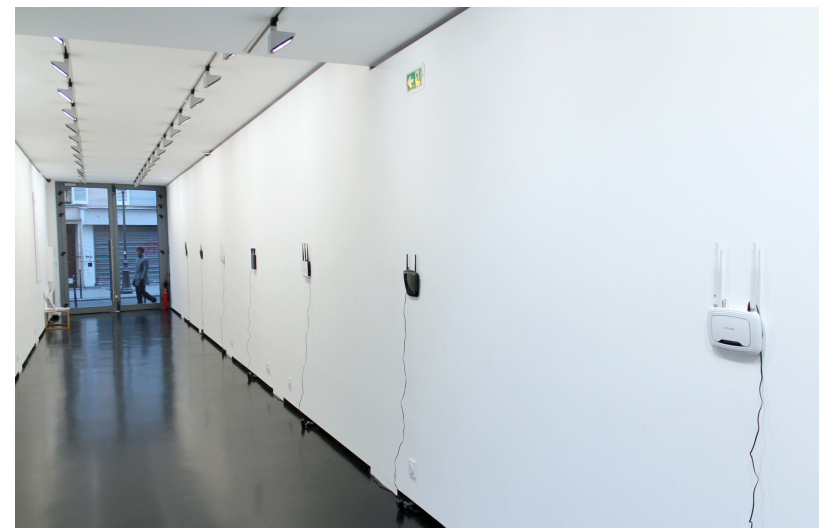


Fig. 14. *OFFLINE ART: new2* (2013). Group show curated by Aram Bartholl. Installation view at XPO gallery. Courtesy of Aram Bartholl.

salon-style exhibition that took place in Miami during ArtBasel Miami Beach (December 2-7, 2014). In this event, both galleries further stress their interest in being identified with the contemporary art scene rather than digital art, while adopting the aesthetic of Post-Internet art and supporting the work of artists usually identified with this term (particularly Marisa Olson, who coined it). The event is described as “a meeting point for contemporary art” that hosts “conversations on the conditions of networked culture in contemporary art.” The word “digital” is consciously avoided: artists are described as “emerging contemporary artists” and the work displayed on screens and projections as “contemporary moving image”¹⁵⁴, while sponsors are said to “support the exploration of media in contemporary art.” The week-long event consisted in an exhibition of several digital prints, installations and screen-based work, as well as a series of talks by curators, collectors and other professionals. *Hypersalon* was also an opportunity for Transfer and XPO to strengthen a network of collaborations with curators, galleries, organizations and specialized media. The moving image selections were guest-curated by Magda Sawon, co-director of Postmasters Gallery; curators Christiane Paul, Domenico Quaranta, Attilia Fattori Franchini and Ché Zara Blomfield (together with artist Ella Görner); and the

154. The descriptions of the event on Hypersalon’s website are notoriously vague, as is the lack of an image gallery. Other sources provide visual documentation about the event, such as the following articles:

- Paddy Johnson, “Hypersalon: A Gem Amongst the Miami Fairs”, Art Fag City, December 7th, 2014 Retrieved from <http://artfcity.com/2014/12/07/hypersalon-a-gem-amongst-the-miami-fairs/>

- Benoit Palop, “From Virtual Wallpapers to Emoji Gardens, We Explored Digital Art at Miami Art Week”, The Creators Project, December 8th, 2014 Retrieved from <http://thecreatorsproject.vice.com/blog/from-virtual-wallpapers-to-emoji-gardens-digital-art-at-miami-art-week>

- Boy, “TRANSFER ‘Multimediated’ @hypersalon Miami”, Thvndermag, December 10th, 2014. Retrieved from <http://www.thvndermag.com/arte-diseno/transfer-multimediated-hypersalon-miami/>

organizations and groups NonPrintingCharacter, American Medium and Fondation Galeries Lafayette. Sponsors included the contemporary art blog Hyperallergic, the startup Electric Objects (which presented its digital art frame EO1), the Tumblr-based platform and community Cloaque.org, and Eyebeam Art and Technology Center.

Philip Riss states that “[the art] market is experiencing a complete transformation and we should participate in these changes” (Waelder, 2014a, p.70). Certainly, XPO is taking strategic steps in order to participate in the contemporary art market at a time when the interest for Internet culture and new media is growing. Remarkably, while the gallery is expanding its activities beyond the reach of its modest space at the Haut Marais (a neighborhood that, nevertheless, attracts an art audience due to the presence of several galleries and the relative proximity of La Gaité Lyrique and the Centre Pompidou), it has not yet considered selling online. In Riss’s opinion, “the existing models aren’t satisfactory. To offer an edition of a digital work, which by definition is infinitely reproducible, doesn’t satisfy me on a conceptual level” (Waelder, 2014a, p.69).

3.7.2.3 Transfer (New York)

The Brooklyn-based art gallery Transfer¹⁵⁵ was founded by Kelani Nichole,¹⁵⁶ curator and digital product strategist, and Jereme Mongeon,¹⁵⁷ content strategist and online marketing specialist, in March 2013. Nichole had been working as a curator in Philadelphia and met online with many artists who expressed their interest in taking their work to the physical space. This led to opening the gallery in New York, initially on a funding model that Nichole described as “a sort of Kickstarter spirit”: through an e-commerce platform, the gallery intended to sell “smaller collection items of editioned work” before each show and use the proceeds to pay the travel and installation expenses of a solo show by each artist (Kimball, 2013). Apparently this model was abandoned, since according to Mongeon the artists produce their own work and are supported by the gallery in its presentation (Waelder, 2014b, p.56). The gallery also had an online store for a brief period time. Described as “an experiment in soft-launch”, the store offered artworks in editions of 25 minimum and a price range below \$1,000. Its intention was to access an international audience of young collectors (Waelder, 2014b, p.56). In its second year, Transfer participated in four international art fairs (UNPAINTED Media Art Fair Munich, Moving Image Art Fair NYC, PULSE Contemporary Art Fair NYC and Moving Image Istanbul), curated ten solo shows in its exhibition space and initiated a partnership with XPO gallery (Paris). In December, 2014, Transfer and XPO organized the exhibition *Hypersalon* in Miami, coinciding with the ArtBasel Miami contemporary art fair (see above). Since 2015, the gallery is independently directed by Kelani Nichole.

155. Transfer Gallery. See <http://transferyallery.com/>

156. Kelani Nichole. See <http://www.kelaninichole.com/>

157. Jereme Mongeon. See <http://www.jerememongeon.com/>



Fig. 15. Advertisement for Transfer gallery in the Art in America 2015 Guide, as reproduced in Kelani Nichole’s Facebook profile in August 2015.

Transfer represents the artists Malcolm Levy, Carla Gannis, Jamie Zigelbaum, Daniel Temkin, Marisa Olson, Rick Silva, Faith Holland, Lorna Mills, Phillip David Stearns, Rollin Leonard and A Bill Miller.¹⁵⁸

Transfer defines itself as “an exhibition space that explores the friction between networked practice and its physical instantiation”. This connection between the web browser and the gallery space has defined its identity, to the point that the media initially described Transfer as a “net art gallery” (Kimball, 2013). While the term “net art” is not mentioned in the director’s statement, Nichole stresses the importance of the Internet in contemporary art practice and the need to connect web-based art with the gallery space:

“Today artists live, work and exhibit on the Internet. [...] Their resulting body of work is sometimes best suited for the browser, but also develops beyond the screen into the physical space of the gallery. [...] The gallery exists to explore new modes of support for distributed studio practices, and to discover formats for exhibition, collection and appreciation of the art that comes to you through the computer.”¹⁵⁹

Kelani Nichole’s views of contemporary art and the Internet complement Philippe Riss’s focus on art after the Internet, both merging into the concepts put forward in Post-Internet art. Both gallerists work with artists who bring Internet culture into the world of contemporary art and are interested in displaying objects in a physical exhibition space.

158. List of artists represented by Transfer gallery, according to its website on August, 2015. Retrieved from <http://transferyallery.com/category/artists/>

159. About. Transfer Gallery. Retrieved from <http://transferyallery.com/about/>

The avoidance of specific terms related to new media art (particularly “digital art”), while emphasizing the impact of the Internet on contemporary art and culture indicates an intention to approach the contemporary art world with a set of artistic practices that are innovative and relate to the present, but do not carry the weight of new media art discourses. In his article on the work of Petra Cortright (an artist who has collaborated with XPO), Bruce Sterling states that she “was spared the ideological warmups and tortured justifications” of early net art (Sterling, 2012). Apparently, both Transfer and XPO intend to start with a clean slate, too. Terminology is particularly important to Kelani Nichole, who is defining the identity of her gallery in the slippery interstice between contemporary art and new media. An advertisement for Transfer in the *Art in America 2015 Guide* displays the gallery’s logo next to the terms “Pictorial Structuralism”, “Algorithmic Art”, “New Photography”, “Procedural Animation” and “Net Art” (fig.15). This mixture of terms borrowed from art history, aesthetics, computer science and media art history illustrate the complex discourse of a gallery that aims to integrate its program into the contemporary art world whilst emphasizing the aspects that make it stand out from other, “traditional” contemporary art galleries.

3.7.3 CONVERGING PATHS

The galleries described in the previous sections have different backgrounds but similar objectives. Their approach to new media art has been shaped by the moment in which they started to work with it as well as their particular circumstances and interests. In this sense, the division between seasoned and emerging galleries is congruous with their respective trajectories, bitforms and DAM having more in common between them than with Carroll/Fletcher, XPO or Transfer, even though there are obvious similarities and connections given that all these galleries work with the same artistic practices and in some cases with the same artists. In this section, I will argue that the main active galleries are adopting similar strategies in the art market, both in terms of their discourse and of the artworks being exhibited and sold.

This is partly due to the work of the artists represented by each gallery, particularly the younger generation who has different perspective of technology, closer to the end user and the culture that has generated around digital devices over the last two decades than to scientific and engineering research.¹⁶⁰ The fact that several artists are represented by more than one new media art gallery is an indicator of the shared interests of these spaces. Table 18 shows the artists who are represented by more than one new media art gallery (besides other galleries not mentioned in this chapter). All of them are represented by two galleries except Manfred Mohr, who is simultaneously represented by four of them, one in New York (where he lives) and three in Europe (Berlin, Paris and London). One of the few pioneers who has kept an active artistic production over the course of forty years, Mohr

160. This has been discussed in length in section 1.4

has a long experience with the art market and a solid body of work that encompasses both traditional formats, such as prints or plotter drawings, and software and screen-based installations. His work is well suited for the art gallery, both for its formats as for its content, which relates to recognizable trends in art history. The other six artists have gained wide recognition for their work since the 1990s (Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, Christa Sommerer and Laurent Mignonneau, Eva and Franco Mattes) and the 2000s (Casey Reas, Aram Bartholl and Constant Dullaart). This indicates that galleries tend to combine established names and emerging artists in their program (with the exception of XPO and Transfer, which focus on the younger generation of artists). Given the relatively small number of new media art galleries and their different backgrounds, it is remarkable that they share this number of artists (from two to four, approximately 25% of their roster of artists). Also remarkable is the absence in this list of well-known artists like Cory Arcangel or Petra Cortright, who are represented by contemporary art galleries.¹⁶¹

	Postmasters	bitforms	DAM	Charlot	Carroll/ Fletcher	XPO
Manfred Mohr		•	•	•	•	
Rafael Lozano-Hemmer		•			•	
Christa Sommerer and Laurent Mignonneau			•	•		
Eva and Franco Mattes	•				•	
Casey Reas		•	•			
Aram Bartholl			•			•
Constant Dullaart					•	•

Table 18. Artists represented by more than one new media art gallery, as of September 2015. Galleries are ordered left to right according to the year they were founded. Artists are ordered top to bottom according to the year they started their careers. The position of each dot does not indicate a chronological order.

Among the galleries, Transfer is absent because none of the artists it represents are also represented by other galleries, although its partnership with XPO has led to exchanging solo exhibitions by their respective artists (see section 3.7.2.3). Hitherto only briefly mentioned, Galerie Charlot (Paris)¹⁶² is included in this table due to its support of the work of Manfred Mohr and Christa Sommerer and Laurent Mignonneau. Founded by Valérie Hasson-Benillouche in 2010, the gallery has developed a program that mixes

161. Cory Arcangel is represented by Team Gallery (New York), Thaddaeus Ropac (Paris / Salzburg) and Lisson Gallery (London); Petra Cortright is currently represented by Foxy Productions (New York).

162. Galerie Charlot Retrieved from <http://www.galeriecharlot.com>

digital art, video art, installations and painting. In its statement, Charlot refers to “the relation between art, technology and science in the post-digital world” and defines itself as “a contemporary art space where artists, art collectors and scientists share their passion for digital art”.¹⁶³ Therefore, despite its support of relatively classical painting, the gallery identifies with digital art and participates in media art fairs such as Unpainted in Munich (2014) and Show Off in Paris (2013). Charlot exemplifies a particular middle ground in the positioning of the galleries described in the previous sections, neither exclusively devoted to digital art, nor avoiding the term.

Although their statements may differ, these galleries are adopting similar strategies in the art market. They present themselves as contemporary art galleries with a distinct program (focusing on the impact of technology in our society) that singles them out and positions the work of their artists among the prevalent discourses in contemporary art. bitforms has gradually modified its statement by identifying itself with the “contemporary” and focusing not in digital art but in “new media culture”. In a recent interview, he distanced the work shown at his gallery from the term “digital art”:

“Digital is not a term that should be defined as a genre—digital is everything, in a way. New media is more a way of thinking and connecting to the current culture’s mode of communicating. And I think the phrase digital art is a bad representation, with a connotation that is not necessarily of a fine-art nature, whereas new media has a kind of intellectual definition—there’s an intellectual connection to the idea of advanced media. To put it another way, all of the work I show here has a digital component, but it’s not digital art in terms of how I define it.” (Goldstein, 2014)

Wolf Lieser has also admitted a change in the focus of DAM’s program, particularly in the selection of artworks based on the media being used:

“At first, I strictly focused on art that showed evident use of the computer: software, installations, net.art. Digitally enhanced photography, collages, or video were strictly taboo. In the past few years, however, we have increasingly begun to include work by, as I call it, a third generation of artists who have grown up with computers and the internet. These ‘digital natives’ respond to digital culture without always necessarily working with digital tools. The whimsical, hand-illustrated QR codes by Aram Bartholl, a multidisciplinary artist from Berlin, are a good example of digital art that isn’t digitally produced. This trend—the US artist and curator Marisa Olson called it “Post-Internet”—played an important role in the 2013 re-launch of the gallery and will continue to inspire our programming in the future.” (Scholz, 2014, p.202)

Although Lieser has been critical of Post-Internet art and the recent interest in this trend among galleries and curators (Waelder, 2015a, p.100), he has had to concede that artists

are less oriented towards technology or computing in itself and more focused on its cultural aspects, which can be explored even without digital tools. In addition to this, neither Sacks nor Lieser are interested in having their galleries cornered into a specific area of the market, such as the “black boxes” at art fairs, that both of them have criticised. In this way, they are now closer to the positions taken by Carroll/Fletcher, XPO or Transfer in terms of their approach to digital art as part of the contemporary art discourse and their support of artists who create artworks in more stable or traditional formats. This does not mean that these galleries are developing the same programs, since it is one of the main objectives of an art gallery to distinguish itself from its competitors, but rather that certain formats of artworks (more experimental, technologically complex or even interactive) are less frequently present at new media art galleries in favor of art objects, prints, videos or photographs.

In conclusion, new media art galleries are currently leaving behind their more “experimental” or “innovative” phase in terms of achieving recognition for digital art, educating the public and collectors, developing new ways of presenting, commercializing and collecting digital art and identifying with these artistic practices as an innovative art form that does not belong to contemporary art, either because it has not achieved recognition or because it constitutes a new avant-garde. The title of Postmaster’s first digital art exhibition in 1996 playfully challenged visitors to try to understand a new, unknown form of art (*Can you digit?*). The directors of the gallery, as well as bitforms’s Steve Sacks and DAM’s Wolf Lieser, have expressed the need to “educate” the public and have collectors understand the value of the artworks they are selling as well as their particular requirements for display and preservation. Nowadays, this is increasingly less necessary as most people are regular users of computers and digital devices and participate in digital culture, as net art pioneer Olia Lialina has stated (see section 3.4), but also due to the fact that the artists themselves create artworks that are suited for the gallery space and the art market. Wolf Lieser admits that the particular model of his gallery, that combines a digital art museum, a lifetime award and a commercial gallery (as well as a book about digital art), will not be repeated. Sacks’s experiments with all-in-one touch screens for the display of digital art and an online store for software art in large editions at lower prices have been abandoned, although they have arguably inspired current startups such as Seditio (see section 3.8.3) and digital art frames manufacturers Electric Objects, FRM, Depict, Meural and DAD (see section 3.9). Even a recent tentative model such as Transfer’s Kickstarter-inspired funding for their exhibitions was quickly discarded, to be replaced by the usual form of operation of a regular art gallery. The need to establish a definition of digital art fades away as the word “contemporary” is frequently invoked and vague, all-encompassing terms such as “media culture” are used. Following the general trends in the art market, the galleries are investing on their participation in international contemporary art fairs, emphasizing their presence on the web and social networks and shifting the attention towards their exhibitions and the artists they represent rather than on their support of new media art.

However, these galleries are not simply becoming nondescript contemporary art galleries. Part of their *raison d’être* is their focus on a specific set of artistic practices that incorporate

163. About. Galerie Charlot. Retrieved from <http://www.galeriecharlot.com/en/about>

certain particularities (be it in terms of subject, aesthetics or format) and allow them to exploit a certain niche in the art market. Therefore, there is still the need to express a difference, to stand out in their support of “new technologies” or “art after the Internet”, as Carroll/Fletcher and XPO respectively phrase it in their statements. The fact that a young gallery like Transfer dedicates an advertisement to identify their program with terms such as “Pictorial Structuralism”, “Algorithmic Art”, “New Photography”, “Procedural Animation” or “Net Art” indicates that the problem with terminology is not over, and that describing new media art simply as contemporary art is not enough. Alternative models of presentation and selling are still explored, but within tested environments such as online platforms and shops. The development of dedicated screens for the display of digital artworks by several startup companies may provide stable devices that can be used by the artists and the galleries, although it is unclear whether their respective business models are compatible.¹⁶⁴ This possible collaboration between the galleries and other companies indicates that not only the spaces dedicated to selling digital art are adapting to the art market, but the art market is also experiencing profound transformations (as discussed in section 3.1) and, as XPO’s Philippe Riss states, the galleries should participate in these changes.

3.8 THE ONLINE CONTEMPORARY ART MARKET

Just as the relationship between net art and the institutions of the art world has been difficult, art galleries have long been reluctant to take their business online. On the one hand, this has been motivated by traditional perceptions about the artwork and their own trade: as Noah Horowitz points out, many art professionals consider that art can only be truly experienced (and bought) when seen in person, and additionally most art dealers do not want too much information about the price of the artworks or their sales to be publicly available (Horowitz, 2012, p.85). On the other hand, the development of e-commerce has been slow and difficult (it took the leading online store Amazon seven years to turn its first profitable quarter)¹⁶⁵, hampered by the dot-com bubble burst in 2000 and, specifically in the art market, the failed attempts at establishing online art businesses. In 1999, eBay invested \$260 million in developing a fine art section in its online auction platform but did not succeed. That same year, gallerists David Grob and Michael-Hue Williams launched Eystorm Media, which sold editions and original works by renowned artists such as Damien Hirst and Jeff Koons on its website, but

164. As will be discussed in section 3.9, digital art frames sell artworks in large editions through their own apps, while galleries prefer to sell artworks in small editions. However, startup Electric Objects has already established a brief collaboration with Steve Sacks (bitforms) and participated in Hypersalon, organized by XPO and Transfer, while DAD has launched its device in a group exhibition at XPO.

165. Amazon went online in 1995 and reported its first profitable quarter in 2002. Stone, B. (2013). *The Everything Store: Jeff Bezos and the Age of Amazon*. London: Random House.

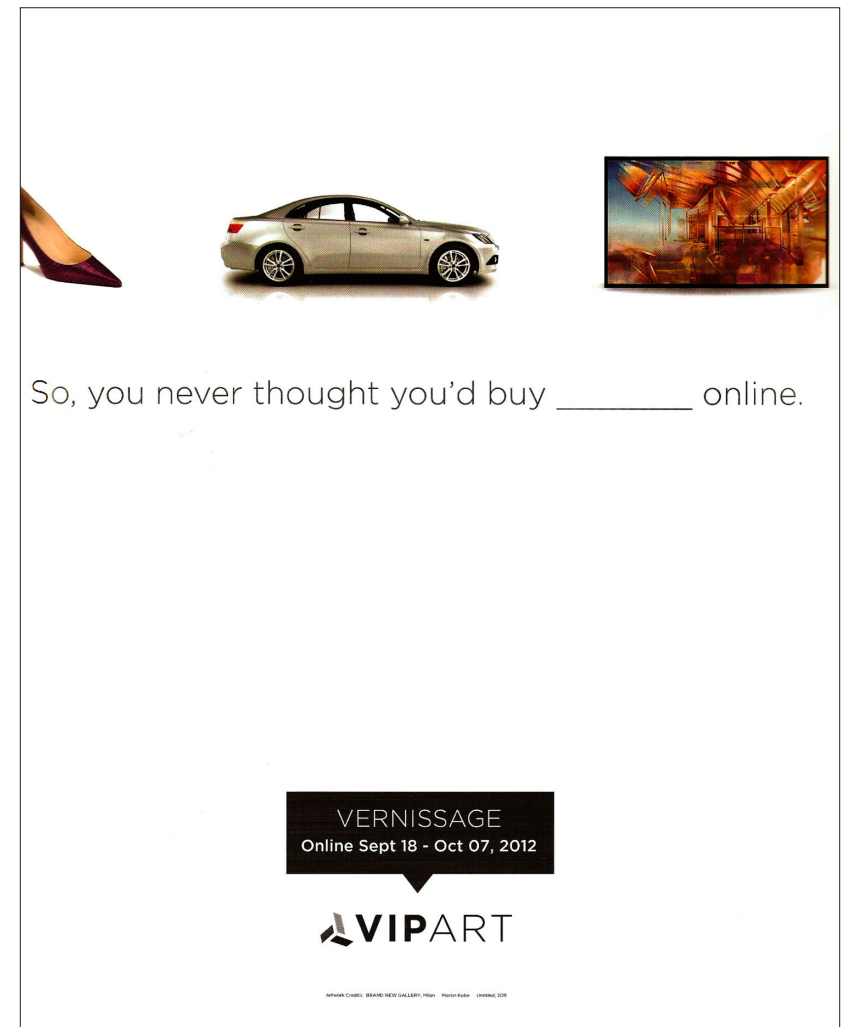


Fig. 16. VIP Art advertisement. Artforum magazine, September 2012.

finally was abandoned in 2002,¹⁶⁶ losing around \$30 million (Horowitz, 2012, p.88). Veteran art market site artnet¹⁶⁷ also launched an online auction platform too soon, in 1999, closing it a few years later with losses of around \$11 million. However, the most remarkable failure was the series of partnerships of the auction house Sotheby’s with Amazon (2000) and later on with eBay (2002) to develop online art auctions, which ended up in abandoning the project in 2003 with estimated losses of \$80 million

166. Eystorm was re-launched at a smaller scale and later on acquired by a group of entrepreneurs in 2011. The site continues to sell art editions online. Retrieved from <http://www.eystorm.com/pages/AboutEyeStorm.aspx>

167. Artnet. Retrieved from <http://www.artnet.com/>

(Horowitz, 2012, p.86; Thompson, 2014, loc.4195).

However, by the end of the 2000s, several factors came together in redirecting the attention of the contemporary art market towards the Internet. On the one hand, the financial crisis of 2008 had impacted the art market, decreasing sales and leading the most prominent sellers (galleries and auction houses) to look for emerging markets and other channels to reach their customers. They realized that the Internet was now the perfect environment to expand their businesses, given that the number of users had grown by more than 500% over a decade, technology had improved, providing enough bandwidth to easily distribute high resolution images and video, and e-commerce was on the rise. Social networks and web 2.0 services had turned every user into a producer and enhanced the ways in which customers and businesses were connected. A growing number of luxury goods were being sold online, and therefore art could also be acquired through a website, as an advertisement of the VIP Art Fair would remind Artforum readers in 2012 (fig.16). By 2010, when the prices at the high end of the market had returned to their 2007 level (Boll, 2011, p.28), many galleries were already selling art to their customers by displaying images on iPads and computers at art fairs or sending them by e-mail. On the other hand, the financialization of art (see section 3.1) has led to a more profit-oriented attitude in collectors and dealers as well as artists. This tendency has found on the Internet the right tool to quickly gather information, be everywhere at once and follow the latest trends, as noted by Noah Horowitz:

“[We] appear to be witnessing a paradigm shift away from conventional forms of connoisseurship and towards more overt forms of speculation, trophy hunting and lifestyle consumption: the newer and trendier, the better.” (Horowitz, 2012, p.91)

As the attendance to gallery exhibitions is decreasing, more art is experienced through reproductions on art magazines, websites and blogs. An online platform can therefore be far more influential and reach a wider audience than an exhibition space, at a fraction of the costs. Additionally, the globalization of the art market, that forced major galleries to open showrooms around the globe and attend a growing number of art fairs, is now taking place at a more accelerated pace and in a more cost-effective way on the Web. Even the initial failed attempts at establishing online auction platforms have been renewed: in 2015, eBay opened a new section on its site that allows customers to bid on the auctions taking place live at Sotheby's.

Since 2010-2011, several online platforms dedicated to distributing and selling artworks have launched, from online galleries and art fairs to artwork databases and digital frames (see below). The development of these online startups has taken place both on the level of big investors and major galleries as well as on more modest investments by small companies that have found financial support through crowdfunding campaigns.¹⁶⁸ This form of

168. However, as will be discussed, many of these startups use the crowdfunding campaign as a way of promoting their project rather than looking for vital funding.

collective funding through online platforms, previously intended for the production of independent films and projects, has entered the art market to the point of becoming part of the activities of the revered Art Basel international art fair: in 2014, Art Basel partnered with Kickstarter to launch crowdfunding campaigns on its platform for a series of jury-selected art projects.¹⁶⁹ Recently, art:i:curate,¹⁷⁰ a platform for “crowd-curating” art and design exhibitions created by Nur El Shami and Irina Turcan, turned into a site where artists and designers could submit their projects and have them co-produced by users. In a similar way to crowdfunding, this form of co-production rewards backers with a percentage of the benefits obtained from the sale of the artworks. Just as crowdfunding is increasingly common in the contemporary art world, so is buying art online.

The online art market is growing steadily, according to the Hiscox Online Art Trade Report, a survey among customers of online art platforms published by the art market analysis firm ArtTactic since 2013.¹⁷¹ In its third edition (2015), the report indicates that the global art market has risen from under \$1 billion in 2013 to an estimated \$2.64 billion in 2015. If it continues to grow at the same pace, it could reach \$6.3 billion in 2019. As stated by Robert Read, Head of Fine Art at Hiscox, these numbers show that the online art market has established “meaningful foundations”, but is distributed among “too many players” and therefore some will disappear or be absorbed by a few leading companies (ArtTactic, 2015, p.5). Several results of this report outline the overall structure of the online art market:

- 75% of respondents were driven by the value potential when buying art online. This is consistent with the financialization of art and indicates that artworks are more likely to be bought if they can be sold afterwards, at a profit.
- 84% of online art buyers bought art online at a price point below £10,000. This price limit is confirmed by the sales on most online platforms, as will be discussed below.
- 91% of online buyers surveyed had bought from a physical gallery or auction house before they bought art online. This signals the importance of seeing the artwork in a physical space or trusting the reputation of the artist, gallery or auction house before buying online.
- 49% of respondents (up from 38% in 2014) purchased art and collectibles directly via an online art platform. This is indicative of a slowly growing confidence in these platforms.
- 45% of respondents (up from 39% in 2014) said they found the online art buying experience less intimidating than buying from a physical gallery or auction house. The secrecy and exclusivity of the art market is increasingly rejected by customers who are used to quickly and easily obtaining information online about the products

169. Crowdfunding. Art Basel. See www.artbasel.com/crowdfunding

170. art:i:curate. Retrieved from <https://www.articurate.net>

171. The survey findings in the 2015 report are based on responses from 519 art buyers surveyed through ArtTactic's client mailing list, Twitter and Facebook and Own Art's mailing list (ArtTactic, 2015, p.29).

they intend to buy.

- 41% of respondents discovered an online art selling platform through social media, and among new buyers 74% said they were influenced by posts from other art collectors. This indicates the importance of social media and the leading role of influential collectors, as discussed in section 3.1.
- 73% of online buyers are over 30 years old, while 27% are between 20 and 30 years old. Younger art collectors, who are more familiar with online platforms and buying digital content, are likely to continue buying online, increasing the volume of sales, and probably be more receptive to digital art.
- Paintings are still the most popular art form in the online market (62% of online art buyers purchased a painting), followed by prints (53%), photography (35%), drawings (31%), sculpture (22%) and new media (10%). Bi-dimensional artworks are more easily sold in an interface that displays images on a screen. Several online platforms have a “view in room” feature that helps customers visualize the artwork in its real dimensions on a wall, as well as zooming in to see the details (see below). However, this does not work well with sculptures or installations. Prints are particularly in high demand, although at a low price range (under £500), while new media art is sold on average under £100, mostly in digital editions such as those offered by Sedition (see section 3.8.3).
- 80% of online art buyers saw in the ability to search for art a primary advantage, while 71% said that a key advantage in buying art online is the discovery of new art and artists. Several sites that do not directly sell artworks but provide information about them and act as consultants and intermediaries of the galleries (such as Artsy and Artspace) have a prominent role in the online art market. (ArtTactic, 2015, p.6-19)

The report indicates that buying art online is increasingly common and accepted. As previously indicated, most of the artworks sold are not net-based nor related to digital art, but paintings, sculptures, photographs, videos and works on paper by the same artists that show their work in the galleries. The art market is expanding on the Internet as galleries, auction houses and startups use digital tools to sell art in traditional formats. However, a path is also open to digital artworks that have been created for the medium in which they are displayed and benefit from the growing acceptance of screens and digital devices in the art world.

Several platforms dedicated to distributing and selling art online, launched between 2010 and 2015, are currently defining the landscape of the online art market. They will be discussed in the following sections, describing their development and approach to the art market. According to Robert Read, some of them are likely to disappear or be absorbed by bigger companies (in some cases, this has already happened), but at present they are introducing different strategies and new environments for collecting art using digital tools and displays.

3.8.1 SAATCHI ONLINE

Saatchi Online is a web-based platform and marketplace for artists launched in 2006 by the Saatchi Art Gallery. In April, prominent art collector Charles Saatchi announced a new section on the gallery's website (initially titled “Your Gallery”) that would be open to any artist who wished to display and sell her artworks, without paying commissions (Vogel, 2006). The online gallery was initially compared to MySpace (Gibson, 2006) and perceived as a social network. At the time, Saatchi stated: “I am not interested in taking any advertising on the site, or any kind of commercial participation in artists' sales” (Edgecliffe Johnson, 2007). Branded with the prestigious collector's name, the online gallery quickly attracted a large number of artists: from 1,750 on the first month since its launch, to 20,700 on December of the same year, to 70,000 on October 2007 (Gibson, 2006; Vogel, 2006; Edgecliffe Johnson, 2007). On this date, it was estimated that Saatchi Online generated approximately \$130 million in sales per year (Edgecliffe Johnson, 2007). Sales were also growing quickly, according to the gallery's staff: among a thousand artists who were asked about their sales in the month of August, 41% of respondents indicated that they sold \$30,000 per week, whereas in October, a similar percentage of artists indicated that their weekly sales amounted to \$80,000 (Crow, 2007). However, top collectors ignored the online gallery and some artists realized that having a prominent position on the site did not translate into sales. Saatchi continued to improve the site by translating it into additional languages and adding a feature called Saleroom that facilitated buying artworks through PayPal. In 2010, Saatchi Online redesigned its website and launched a new business model under the direction of Bruce Livingstone, founder of iStockphoto, a stock photography community and marketplace that had recently been acquired by Getty Images for \$50 million (Welton, 2011). The online gallery now managed all transactions of its 60,000 artists, who received 70% of the sale price and gained access to new features such as social network tools and participation in competitions with cash prizes. The switch from the apparent philanthropist model established by Saatchi to an e-commerce platform in which the gallery receives a commission for each sale is explained by the experience of Livingstone with iStockphoto. Initiated as a small community of photographers who shared photos to use them in projects for clients who didn't have a big budget, it quickly grew into a global platform. Livingstone explains how they changed their business structure at the time:

“When we got our first \$10,000 hosting bill, we realized we needed an actual business model. So we asked people to pay for the «credits,» giving a percentage to the photographer and the micropayment/microstock concept was born. That was 2001. It eventually grew into a global platform empowering amateur, hobbyist and part-time professional artists to share their work and make money.” (Welton, 2011)

This description of iStockphoto and the way it developed is strikingly similar to Saatchi Online, although the latter, instead of starting as a community that was later on acquired by a big firm, was branded from the beginning. Saatchi's online gallery must have faced

similar expenses to those described by Livingstone and reached a point where it did not make sense to support a million-dollar marketplace and not derive any profit from it.

Saatchi's more direct involvement also meant that now some artists could have the opportunity to show their work in the Saatchi Gallery in London and at other locations.¹⁷² Saatchi Online also launched notable initiatives aimed at gaining notoriety and bringing the attention of the professional art world to the site. In 2012, the online gallery presented artworks from its database selected by a hundred curators from different countries in an event titled *100 Curators 100 Days*: each day, the profile of a curator was included on the site alongside her selection of artworks. By establishing this collaboration with prominent curators, the online gallery intended to be seen as a site that offers a meticulously selected collection of art instead of being just a free platform for all artists, regardless of the quality of their work. The press release of this event underscores the need to have a curated selection of art in order to attract the interest of collectors:

“The stamp of approval from these curators provides a tremendous benefit to both artists and collectors. Artists who are selected will enjoy greater visibility and recognition, while first-time buyers as well as seasoned collectors will gain confidence in buying art online, by having experienced curators handpick and validate great emerging talent.”¹⁷³

That Saatchi has had to develop this sort of initiative illustrates the fact that the art market is driven by certain structures and rules of trust that cannot easily be bypassed. Collector Sam Schwartz stated in 2007 that he would never buy art at Saatchi Online because he only buys work from artists who are supported by their galleries (Crow, 2007). Whereas artists who sell their work in art galleries are backed by their dealers as well as curators and critics, artists with a profile on Saatchi Online are presenting their work on their own, on a platform that is open to anyone. From a collector's point of view, buying an artwork on this site entails the risk of acquiring a artwork that may not be relevant in terms of the contemporary art discourse or have any resale value. Given that Saatchi Online was not able to consolidate a business model and losing money, its shareholders decided to sell it to Demand Media in August 2014.¹⁷⁴ It was rebranded Saatchi Art and once again the site was renewed a new features were added, incorporating new forms of selection of the artworks: curated collections, information about exhibitions that feature work from the artists on the site, additional contests and information about outstanding emerging artists, whose

172. The New Saatchi Online Launches Art Marketplace Offering Artists 70 Percent Earnings and a 100 Percent Satisfaction Guarantee to All Buyers. *Business Wire*, March 16, 2011. Retrieved from <http://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20110316005201/en/Saatchi-Online-Launches-Art-Marketplace-Offering-Artists>

173. Saatchi Art Launches World's Largest Online Exhibition Created By Top Curators From Around The World 100 Curators 100 Days - Debuts July 18, 2012. Saatchi Art. Retrieved from <http://www.saatchiart.com/press>

174. Saatchi Online: Graceful Exit, Miserable Returns. *Skate's*, October 27, 2014. Retrieved from <http://www.skatepress.com/market-notes/saatchi-online-graceful-exit-miserable-returns/>

work could become a profitable investment.¹⁷⁵ Additionally, the site now includes an art advisory section, in which several curators suggest artworks based on the client's requests,¹⁷⁶ in a similar way to other online platforms for art collectors such as Artsy and Artpace (see below). Saatchi Art is currently working on its consolidation as an online marketplace for art that meets the demands of high-end collectors. However, its future development is questionable given that Charles Saatchi has recently sued Demand Media for the use of his name in the online gallery's brand, demanding that the “Saatchi” name is removed and all profits derived from its use are paid to the plaintiff.¹⁷⁷ Removing the Saatchi brand from the online gallery would put Saatchi Art in a very different position, since it would lose the reputation associated with the collector's financial success and his gallery, but it could also distance the online platform from the perception of Saatchi Online as marketplace for amateur artists.

Despite being a loss-making business, Saatchi's online gallery has spearheaded the growing interest for e-commerce among contemporary art professionals and investors that materialized around 2010-2011 in several initiatives discussed below. Arguably, the apparent “success story” of Saatchi Online, a leading e-commerce platform that generated more than a hundred million U.S. Dollars every year, displayed the work of thousands of artists and had hundreds of thousands of visitors worldwide, inspired these new ventures at a time when the use of Internet services had become commonplace and e-commerce started booming (since 2011 it has grown steadily, reaching \$1.298 trillion worldwide in 2012).¹⁷⁸ Saatchi's real numbers did not surface until Demand Media published the financial report on Saatchi Online, Inc. in October 2014.¹⁷⁹ By then, most of the platforms described in the following sections had already been developed, some being more successful than others, all of them jointly configuring the current online contemporary art market.

3.8.2 VIP ART FAIR / ARTSPACE

In 2011 the first edition of the VIP Art Fair took place at www.vipartfair.com.¹⁸⁰ Announced as the first contemporary art fair to take place exclusively online,¹⁸¹ it was founded by James and Jane Cohan (owners of the James Cohan Gallery in New York) and technology entrepreneurs Jonas and Alessandra Almgren, with the support of leading galleries such as David Zwirner (New York), White Cube (London), Gagosian Gallery (New York,

175. Invest in Art. Saatchi Art. Retrieved from <http://www.saatchiart.com/invest-in-art>

176. Art advisory. Saatchi Art. Retrieved from <http://www.saatchiart.com/artadvisory>

177. Abrams, Amah-Rose (2015, May 12). Charles Saatchi Sues Online Platform Saatchi Art to Stop It From Using His Name. *artnet*. Retrieved from <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/charles-saatchi-sues-saatchi-art-297042>

178. Ecommerce Sales Topped \$1 Trillion for First Time in 2012. *eMarketer*, February 5, 2013. Retrieved from <http://www.emarketer.com/Article/Ecommerce-Sales-Topped-1-Trillion-First-Time-2012/1009649>

179. Saatchi Online: Graceful Exit, Miserable Returns. *Skate's*, cit.

180. The domain name was not renewed after the art fair closed and is now used by a fashion blog.

181. VIP Art Fair press release, August 18, 2010. http://www.lehmanmaupin.com/artfairs/2011-01-22_vip-art-fair

London, Beverly Hills, Rome, and Athens), Hauser & Wirth (Zürich, London, and New York), Kukje Gallery (Seoul) and Sadie Coles HQ (London). Jonas Almgren recalls that the idea of the online art fair started around 2007-2008, when the financial crisis started and the profits in the art market consequently declined. A large part of the art industry, particularly the galleries, had ignored the possibilities of developing their business online, but now the high end galleries had to find new collectors and channels to access their prospective clients (Wang, 2015). According to Noah Horowitz, one of the organizers of the VIP Art Fair, while major art galleries had turned a blind eye to the Web, they were regularly selling artworks to their clients by showing them images on iPads or via e-mail (Horowitz, 2012, p.100). They believed that, by putting together these leading names, they could open a new channel for reaching collectors and public. In order to do this, they did not have to re-invent the concept of the art fair, just take it online.

“The fair’s ingenuity also boiled down to the fact that it did not aspire to turn the art market conventions upside down but to thoughtfully reposition some notable characteristics.” (Horowitz, 2012, p.101)

The VIP Art Fair opened for one week, between January 22 and 30 2002, presenting a total of 7,500 artworks by more than two thousand artists represented by 138 galleries from 30 countries. The website interface reproduced the usual structure of a contemporary art fair (see section 3.3): a large space was divided into booths of different sizes, some grouped into special sections for emerging galleries, solo exhibitions and editions. Booths were divided into three categories, according to their size: Premier large, medium and small. The most prominent galleries had Premier large booths, whereas emerging galleries presented their artists’s work in Premier small booths (fig.17). This hierarchy was only visible in the floor plan of the art fair: the booth of every gallery consisted of a white wall and a grey floor, facing the user. A scaled image of each artwork was displayed on the wall and could be viewed in detail by means of a zoom. A shadowy figure of a man or woman could be optionally displayed next to the artwork to have a clearer idea of its real size (fig.18). Next to each artwork, its description included the sale price and a link to contact the gallery. In order to view more artworks, the user simply had to scroll horizontally: a different artwork would appear as if they were all hung on a very long, moving wall. The website’s interface also allowed to view video art works (although most galleries posted only a preview version). Some galleries took advantage of the virtual environment to set up a different program every two days, since it is obviously easier to change the artworks on display in a website than in an actual art fair booth. Imitating the dynamic of physical art fairs, the online event could only be visited during one week and offered visitors guided tours as well as private and exclusive spaces, such as the VIP Lounge¹⁸² where they could watch commissioned videos of visits to artists’s studios and interviews with private collectors as well as access market news and learn about new artworks on display.

182. While general entry to the art fair was free (requiring the user to register and provide an email address), access to the VIP Lounge was provided by the participating galleries or for a fee of \$100.

BROWSE FAIR

Filter the Exhibitors you want to see and create a Tour of their Booths.

Medium ▼ Region ▼ Price Range ▼ Artist ▼

David Zwiler	White Cube	Brooks Alexander	Fraenkel	A. Gentil Carloca	Gelink	ANNA SCHWARTZ	Hauser & Wirth	Marian Goodman
		Luisa Strina		J. König	Dee	kaufmann -son		
Lehmann Maupin	ShangHART	ib	Xavier Hufkens	Fortes Vilaça	Pace	PKM	Leo Koenig	Chambers
OMR	Winkelman	Goodman		Marianne Boesky		K. MacGarry	Third Line	IBID
								Triángulo
Thaddeus Ropac	Moeller	Victoria Miro	M. Janssen	ONE AND J.	Tucci Russo	Shabibi	Mai 36	Max Hetzler
	Paul Kasmin		Pékin	BISCH OFF/WEISS	Barbara Krakow	Benzacar	Dvir	Salon 94
Schwarzwälder	Zander	Luhning Augustine	Bob v. Orsouw	R. Hoffmann	Thomas Modem	Gagosian	Minini	STPI
			John Szoke	ARNDT			Greenberg Van Doren	Schulte
Yvon Lambert								Tschudi
Krinzinger	Pierogl	Pratts	Peter Blum	Stephen Friedman	Feigen	C. Koenig	Nathalie Obadia	Leo Castelli
	Lombard Freid				Nara Roesler	Ross²	Postmasters	UNTITLED
								Id la
CONTINUA	EIGEN + ART	Van de Weghe	Gmurzynska	Carbon 12	Gonzalez²	Chemould Prescott Road	Lelong	Eba Benitez
		Urs Meile		LABOR	Eleven Rivington	Uffner	Brand New	Menda's Wood
								Cooley
BERNIER/ELIADES	Roslyn Oxley9	Daniel Templon	Pace Prints	Flomina Soares	James Cohan	ART-MIA	Rawson	THE LOFT
Maskara	Limoncello	James Goodman		Ota		I. LIPRANDI	James Fuentes	Renaissance
								White-chapel
Alan Cristea	Raquel Amaud	Leila Heller	ICI	Serpentine	Haines	Ullens	Texte zur Kunst	Corkin
	Dirmart		Parkett	Fruit-market	Guld	CCA Wattis	Fondation Carlier	Milan
								EIKON
								Rhizome

Fig.17. Layout of the second edition of the VIP Art Fair, 2012

Unlike Saatchi Online, whose marketplace was open to everyone, VIP Art Fair aimed at high end collectors, offering them artworks by blue-chip artists in the booths of the leading galleries, as well as the opportunity to discover quality emerging art from outstanding young galleries. The prices of the artworks ranged between \$5,000 and \$1 million. VIP (an acronym of “viewing in private”, according to the founders) intended to create on its website an atmosphere of exclusivity similar to that of the most prominent contemporary art fairs, with the additional advantage of viewing the artworks with “unparalleled ease and absolute discretion”.¹⁸³ By accessing the art fair from his own computer, the collector

183. VIP Art Fair press release, August 18th, 2010. cit.

had the advantage of quickly browsing the inventory of a large number of galleries, knowing the price of each artwork and being able to contact directly with the gallery by email, instant messaging or phone, without leaving home. Galleries had the advantage of potentially reaching new collectors who might not be able to visit their spaces or one of the art fairs in which they participate without the costs involved in shipping the artworks and setting up a physical booth: VIP charged \$3,000 to \$20,000 for a virtual booth, a tenth of the costs of a conventional art fair (Thompson, 2014:Loc.4241). However, in this environment the galleries felt exposed: publishing the price of each artwork on a freely accessible website was unprecedented in an art market that, as indicated by Raymonde Moulin, is defined by the asymmetry of information (Moulin, 2003: Loc.46). In retrospect, Jonas Almgren considers that it was a mistake to provide such transparency of information:

“I wrongly believed the high end art market missed the technology jump and I was presumptuous enough to think that I would be able to enlighten them. It turned out there was a reason why those high end art galleries did not modernise: they wanted to keep the opacity around the artworks, the prices and the trades. Transparency was not wanted. The online space would jeopardise their own business.” (Wang, 2015)

The online space was new to the dealers, who knew well how to handle their business at their own galleries or in a conventional art fair booth, but were not so comfortable posting all that information on a website and waiting by the computer for eight days in case a collector sent an email or wanted to talk via Skype. On top of this, the first edition of the online art fair opened with technical problems that lead to temporarily closing the site twice on its first two days, and closed with lower sales than expected. According to Don Thompson, only a few galleries sold artworks over \$100,000 and most sales were at a much modest price range:

“The most expensive confirmed transaction was Rudolf Stingel’s 2002 *Die Birne*, sold at \$800,000 by London’s Sadie Coles HQ. David Zwirner sold a bronze *Chris Ofili* sculpture *Mary Magdalene (Infinity)* for \$375,000 in the first hour of the fair and then nothing else. A Zwirner associate said they anticipated selling \$2 to \$4 million. Most reported sales were under \$50,000, with a few in the \$50,000 to \$250,000 range. On estimate was that 75 percent of sales were to collectors who were not on the dealer’s “free VIP lounge” list, so had probably never before purchased from a major dealer or at an art fair.” (Thompson, 2014, loc.4275)

Despite the relatively negative results, the innovative approach of this event allowed it to have another chance to determine its viability. In 2012, the second edition of the VIP Art Fair took place between February 3 and 8. This time, 115 galleries showed artworks by over 2,000 artists.¹⁸⁴ Founding galleries David Zwirner, White Cube, Gagosian and Hauser &

184. VIP Art Fair 2.0 press release, December 20th, 2011. “The world’s first online contemporary art event launches its second edition, following heavy investment in web platform and format”. The text can be found on Dubib.com. Retrieved from http://dubib.com/news/19389_middle-east-galleries-take-part-in-the-world-s-first-online-

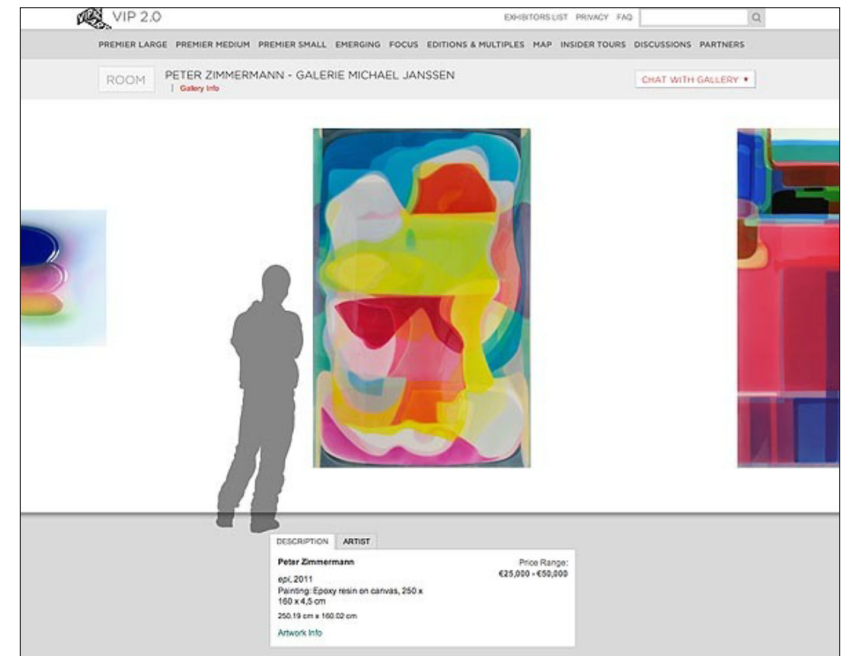


Fig.18. Booth of the Michael Janssen gallery at VIP Art Fair, 2012.

Wirth participated once more, alongside other prominent and emergent galleries, whose booths were distributed in three main categories (Premier large, medium and small), plus VIP Focus (for solo shows), VIP Emerging and the Editions and Multiples section. The latter included a booth of the online community Rhizome that hosted Rafael Rozendaal’s *websites* (see section 3.5.1), the only net art pieces in the art fair. However, they were displayed in the booth as screenshots hung on the wall (confusingly resembling large digital prints), a link to the original artwork being added to the description of each piece. VIP hired a new engineering expert to make sure that the site would not crash again and also appointed an e-commerce expert, Lisa Kennedy, who had consolidated a startup that was recently acquired by Amazon. In a similar move to Saatchi Online, it was expected that the appointment of a professional with a success story would help the platform find its proper business model. The art fair seemed to approach its consolidation, and even announced future specialized events (VIP Paper, VIP Photo, VIP Vernissage) to take place in the following months. But the second edition of the VIP Art Fair was, once more, unsuccessful: sales were low and the initial enthusiasm for this new concept waned both in the public and the galleries that supported it. In *Forbes*, Abigail R. Esman argued that the virtual art fair could not work because collectors want to see the artworks in person and participate in the social encounters that take place in those events. While accessing a large selection of artworks on the computer screen may be convenient, it is much less exciting than flying to another city and spending

contemporary-art-event-launches-its-second-edition-following-heavy-investment-in-web-platform-and-format

some days watching art and meeting like-minded people. Additionally, the galleries did not trust this model anymore. David Zwirner publicly expressed his disappointment:

“The fair was unfortunately a waste of time for us this year. We didn’t have any significant traffic in the booth, nor did we meet new collectors. I’m uncertain this format will work moving forward.” (Esman, 2012)

In September 2012, VIP Art Fair announced that it abandoned the art fair model and turned into VIP Art, a year-round online platform that displayed artworks from participating galleries to registered users.¹⁸⁵ Instead of focusing on a one-week event that imitated an art fair, VIP Art became a constantly updated resource for collectors, that had access to certain tools inspired by social networks (they could *like* an artwork, *follow* an artist or *share* their selection with friends and colleagues) and exclusive information. VIP Art also announced several future events but cancelled them when it was acquired by Artspace, a platform founded in 2011 that also provided online sales to more than a hundred galleries. With this acquisition, Artspace doubled the number of partner galleries and augmented its list of collectors up to approximately 200,000 (Russeth, 2013), becoming an important player in the online contemporary art market. In 2014, Artspace was acquired by publishing company Phaidon, which expands its operations by being able to offer its art and design books to a large number of collectors and establish partnerships with galleries and museums, reinforcing its influential position in the contemporary art world.

3.8.3 SEDITION

In November 2011, a new online platform for contemporary is launched.¹⁸⁶ Founded by art dealer Harry Blain, former owner of Haunch of Venison, and Robert L. Norton, former CEO of Saatchi Online, Sediton sells “digital editions” of artworks by a growing number of artists, in large numbers and at very low prices. Digital images and videos are sold at £50 or less in editions of up to 10,000. The archives are stored in Sediton’s server (the “Vault”) and can only be accessed through a web browser or the Sediton apps for iOS (iPad, iPhone), Android and Smart TV. The buyer does not download the artwork (except in the case of still photos) but has unlimited access to it on any screen connected to these devices. Ownership is attested by a “digital certificate of authenticity”, a digital image of a signed document that is stored in the user’s profile page. Additionally, collectors have the right to resell their artworks on Sediton’s “Trade” platform, once the edition has sold out.

On its launch, Sediton focused on selling digital editions of artworks by blue-chip

185. VIP Art press release, September 4th 2012. “VIP Art Fair announces its transformation into VIP Art. The text can be found on SFAQ. Retrieved from <http://sfaq.us/2012/09/vip-art-fair/>

186. According to Rory Blain, director of Sediton, the idea came out around 1997-1998, but it was not possible to put it into practice because the screen resolution on most devices and the Internet bandwidth were not good enough (Waelder, 2014f, p.56).

artists such as Damien Hirst and Tracey Emin, as well as other prominent names such as filmmaker Wim Wenders, for prices as low as £5. The contrast between these highbrow art names and the popular prices of the artworks on sale quickly caught the attention of the media, some of which described the e-commerce site as “innovative” and part of a “second digital revolution”.¹⁸⁷ The title of an article by Lizzie Pook in *Stylist* magazine summarizes the initial media coverage: “An original Tracey Emin: yours for £50.” Sediton’s apparent democratization of the most elitist sector of contemporary art, achieved by means of everyday portable devices and computers, was received as the logical consequence of the percolation of digital technologies in every aspect of society. According to *Stylist*’s reporter, “with a digital revolution sweeping through the art world, our iPhones (and laptops, tablets and TV screens) may soon be mini galleries that speak volumes about our tastes and preferences in the visual arts” (Pook, 2011). Sediton director Rory Blain stresses that the site’s main mission is to make contemporary art available to a large segment of the population:

“It is more about making the world’s greatest, most celebrated artists accessible on a purchase or collectible level to the everyman, or at least the everyman in the Western world. Our intention has always been to bring this art to people who are interested in it and can afford a digital device such as an iPad or iPhone.” (Waelder, 2014f, p.53)

This interest in the “everyman”, coupled with somewhat philanthropic intentions (similar to those of Saatchi Online), was well received by lifestyle and fashion magazines as well as financial newspapers and contemporary art publications. Most articles focused on the numbers: the millions of smartphones and digital devices sold every year, the low prices of the digital editions against the spectacular auction results achieved by the works of the same artists, and finally the large editions of what is usually sold in small amounts to a selected few. Less was said about the artworks, their content or what the “digital editions” actually are, although some articles criticized the idea on the grounds of the reproducibility of digital files or the real value of these editions for an art collector. In the UK edition of *WIRED* culture and technology magazine, Olivia Solon (2011) asseverates that, given how easy it is to copy a JPEG or video file, “it’s ridiculous to even talk about limited edition digital artworks.” In a brief note in the *Financial Times*, Georgina Adam (2011) is skeptical about Harry Blain’s claim that buying a digital edition will make people more interested in art and eventually become major collectors. The initial works sold on the site, particularly those of Damien Hirst and Tracey Emin, are basically static or animated photos of installations, paintings and drawings, therefore far removed from the original work and closer to what can be considered merchandise, such as a poster or fridge magnet. Rory Blain admits that Sediton’s initial strategy was to grab the attention of the public (and media) by offering work by world famous artists, although in their intention was always to also sell work created for digital platforms (Waelder, 2014f, p.54). Younger artists whose work is more directly related to digital technology, such as Casey

187. The articles mentioned in this paragraph can be found in Sediton’s press archive. See <http://blog.seditonart.com/category/press/>

Reas, Aaron Koblin, Matt Pike or Rafaël Rozendaal gradually joined the platform and, in June 2013, Sedition expanded its catalogue by adding to its “curated” section (that groups artworks commissioned by Sedition) an “open platform”¹⁸⁸ where artists can create their own profile and sell their artworks as photos or videos in digital editions. Sedition takes a 50% commission on the sales and asks that the artworks are exclusive of their site.¹⁸⁹

Ownership of the artworks bought from Sedition is one of the main concerns that arose when the platform was launched, and it remains a debatable question. Rory Blain agrees that “the ownership of a digital artifact is a slightly bizarre idea”, and actually rather than buying a file, the collector buys the right to access it and re-sell it (Waelder, 2014f, p.54). Editions always stay on Sedition’s server and, although the JPEG file or video could be copied, its ownership is certified by the company’s database. To reassure the buyer, a “digital certificate of authenticity” is issued, but this being also an image file, it has no real value. In fact, Sedition’s website initially included a preview of a certificate of authenticity on the page of each artwork on sale: a registered user (or “member”) would then see her named displayed on this fake certificate, alongside the edition number and the signatures of the artist and Sedition’s director, although the artwork had not been bought. The preview certificate and a real certificate were, in appearance, indistinguishable. Noticing this “bug”, I took screenshots of the certificates of each artwork for sale on Sedition’s “curated” section between 30th October and 16th November 2013 and saved them alongside real certificates of artworks that I had bought on the site. Later on, I put together this collection of 159 real and false certificates of authenticity in a book titled *\$8,793 Worth of [Art]* that was published in digital format by Merkske in London (Waelder, 2014g). The book was launched in a limited edition of 100, the initial price of £2 rising gradually per 25 sold in the same manner that editioned artworks (including those in Sedition) are sold. The title refers to the exact amount that would have been paid if all of the works had been bought as the certificates apparently attest. The publication aimed at opening a debate about the notions of ownership and authenticity of digital artworks and generated interest among scholars and specialized media.¹⁹⁰ Following the distribution of this publication, Sedition changed the way it displayed the previews of its certificates of authenticity, and finally removed them. The site had also added watermarks to the previews of each artwork in order to avoid the files being easily copied. Currently, although the files are apparently secured by Sedition and their database keeps a register of the owners of each artwork, the centralized nature of this system entails that all these artworks will be enjoyed by their collectors as long as the platform exists. Rory Blain promises that the artworks will be permanently available in a server “somewhere” and states that, at the moment they are

188. Announcing our new expanded platform for artists. Sedition blog. Retrieved from <http://blog.seditionart.com/2013/06/05/announcing-our-new-expanded-platform-for-artists/>

189. Artist support. Sedition. Retrieved from https://www.seditionart.com/artist_support

190. Following the publication of the book, I was interviewed by Régine Debatty for her blog *We Make Money Not Art* (http://we-make-money-not-art.com/archives/2014/05/8793-worth-of-art.php#.U3tt1Fh_s9Y) and by Filippo Lorenzin for his blog *L'identità Aumentata* (<http://lidentitaumentata.tumblr.com/post/85003723745/il-valore-dellarte-nellera-digitale>)

“locked in place for about 20 to 25 years” (Waelder, 2014f, p.56).

Collectors in Sedition therefore give up on certain rights associated to the acquisition of an artwork in exchange for a low price and a format that can be easily transferred to many devices and theoretically ensures that the piece will never be lost or destroyed. The artwork is not exclusive of a few but accessible to many; the collector cannot freely exhibit the artwork (he would have to pay a fee to Sedition in order to display it publicly); and, as previously stated, the collector pays for the access to the file, which cannot be dissociated from Sedition. This is also true when an edition is re-sold by the collector. Rory Blain states that ownership in Sedition is primarily about the right to sell the artworks that one has bought and derive a profit from this operation:

“[When] collectors really start to feel a sense of ownership is when they can sell it again, as well and the fact that by owning a digital edition you might take a loss or make a profit in the same way that you could in the real world. [...] The art itself is the true purpose of Sedition, but we must admit that the possibility of reselling has been a great reassurance to a lot of people that are collecting these digital editions.” (Waelder, 2014f, p.54)

These words remind of the growing trend of speculation in the contemporary art market, but there is an important difference: whereas a collector can choose where to sell the artworks in his collection, Sedition users can only re-sell their editions in the platform’s own secondary market, the Trade section.¹⁹¹ Introduced in September 2013 as “the world’s first trading platform for digital art”, Trade allows members of Sedition to sell the works in their vault once the editions are sold out. The marketplace is designed as a permanent online auction: members can put their works on sale with an asking price and receive bids, that they can choose to accept or not. When a bid is accepted, the artwork is transferred to the buyer’s Vault and the seller receives the agreed amount. Sedition obtains a 10% commission on this transaction. The first artwork to sell out its editions and enter the Trade section is also the most successful to date: Ryoji Ikeda’s *A Single Number That Has 124,761,600 Digits* (2013) a HD video sold in an edition of 300. The artwork was initially sold for £5, its price rising up to £100 in less than a year, according to the data published in Trade (fig.19). However, Ikeda’s conceptual video (which is remarkably unsuitable for any screen below 42 inches) is the only one to experience such a growth in demand among the 92 artworks currently available in Trade. Most of them are the individual frames of Jeremy Deller’s digital animation *We Sit Starving Amidst Our Gold* (2014), that were offered for free to Sedition members and have no bids, as well as iterations from Universal Everything’s *Walking City Citizens*. Other artworks have experienced unusual price developments, such as *Prosopopeia* (2013) by Matt Collishaw, initially offered for free exclusively to friends of the London EDITION hotel in an edition of 7,500. The work was sold initially for £90 and then quickly dropped to £50 or below. Noritoshi

191. Trade. Sedition. Retrieved from <https://www.seditionart.com/trade/marketplace>

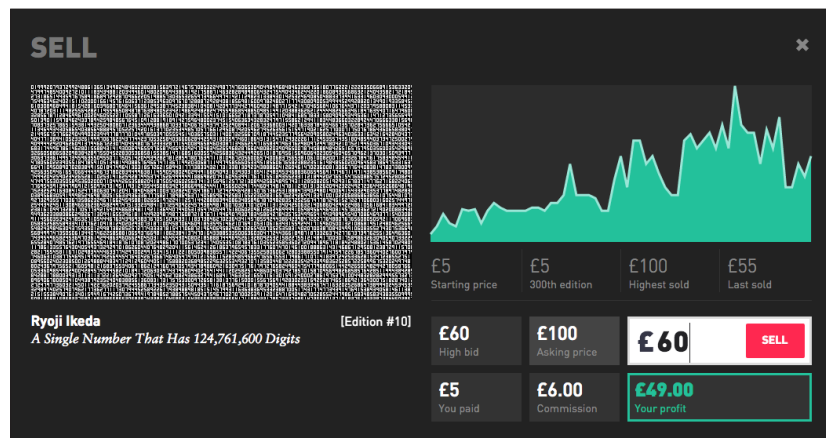


Fig. 19. Trade history of Ryoji Ikeda's *A Single Number That Has 124,761,600 Digits* (2013) on Sediton.

Hirakawa's photograph *A Mirror Light, El Paso* (2013), on the other hand, has wildly fluctuated between £5 and £30. These numbers should not be taken seriously, considering that most of the artworks being resold were obtained for free or at a very low price, and that they represent rather insignificant amounts. They belong to a small, experimental marketplace where no real investment or profit can be made, regardless of the importance that both Harry and Rory Blain have given to the fact that collectors can re-sell the works in their vaults and derive a sense of ownership from that experience.

Despite the limitations and particularities of its business model, Sediton maintains an active presence in the contemporary art world (in events, fairs and also by selling gift cards in museum shops) and keeps adding new artworks and artists that are offered on exclusive preview to members and then made publicly available on the site 24 hours later. The platform can be seen, to a certain extent, as a safe and affordable version of the art market where one can play the role of the art collector, grabbing the opportunity to buy an artwork before its price rises, discovering new artists, and even saving money on special offers such as a collection of artworks with a discounted price. Its Achilles heel is that it relies on the collector to provide the screen where the artworks can be experienced. Smartphones, tablets and laptop computers are readily available devices, but they are not convenient to display an artwork, both because their screen size is rather small and because they are used for other purposes. Collecting digital artworks becomes more meaningful when the owner has a dedicated screen to display the art, as gallerist Steve Sacks has repeatedly asserted (see section 3.7.1). Aware of the need to have its own display, Sediton announced in April 2015 its partnership with Meural, that will make a selection of works available on the manufacturer's digital canvas.¹⁹² Meural's low price (\$395 on pre-order) matches Sediton's price range and can become a good complement

192. Meural's digital canvas now available on pre-order. Sediton blog, April 20, 2015. Retrieved from <http://blog.seditonart.com/2015/04/20/meurals-digital-canvas-now-available-in-pre-order/>

to its offer, although incompatibilities can arise from the fact that Meural has its own marketplace (see section 3.9.3).

3.8.4 ARTSY

Artsy¹⁹³ is an online art database that has had a slow development over the course of more than two years. It was originally conceived as a web 2.0 startup, aimed at connecting art lovers with the art they would like to buy. Its founder, computer engineer Carter Cleveland, presented the idea to a panel of judges in the *Disrupt Battlefield* organized by the technology blog *TechCrunch* in May 2010. Cleveland had identified a problem in the difficulty to find the artworks he liked:

"Personally, I went online but I was very frustrated because I couldn't find anything to buy that I was actually able to see in person first. And even people who regularly collect art would complain to us about how they have to trek around to a bunch of different galleries and take up their entire weekend without any guarantee that they are going to find anything they like or anything that is actually going to be in their price range. And even if you find a great gallery with great artwork, only a small fraction of that will be available on the gallery's walls for viewing. But what most people said is that, even though they love art, they don't buy it because they feel unwelcome, they feel intimidated by the art scene." (Siegler, 2010)

Naively, the young entrepreneur considers the art world inefficient in the way it gives access to the artworks for sale: they are hard to find, not everything is on display, the prices are not publicly available and furthermore one has to go through the inconvenience of visiting more than one gallery to find an artwork. These arguments may seem laughable to an insider in the art world—Cleveland sees artworks as any other product on sale and ignores the complex social and structural implications in the way art is presented and sold in galleries. However, his remarks refer to a sector of prospective buyers who do not participate in the "social environment constructed around art" (Helguera, 2012, p.1) and therefore feel intimidated by the atmosphere of galleries. Cleveland also represents a younger generation who is more interested in obtaining information in a cost-effective manner on the Internet and then making a knowledgeable decision: while the site is initially presented as something close to a social network (that relies extensively on the use of Facebook and Twitter), it does not intend to supplant galleries, but rather lead informed customers to them. With typical web 2.0 startup bravado, Cleveland finished his presentation stating:

"No more inefficiency, no more intimidation. Anyone will be able to discover and be inspired by original beautiful art and artists will be able to pursue creating original art more sustainably." (Siegler, 2010)

193. Artsy – Discover, Research, and Collect the World's Best Art Online. Retrieved from <https://www.artsy.net/>

Intending to make the art world a better place, Artsy was addressed to the “unsophisticated collector”, as Cleveland would put it, as well as to a younger audience who would actively engage in social networks, promote their artist friends and share everything they do. The community was expected to do a large part of the work, recommending artworks in a way that is similar to how content is shared on Tumblr. Artsy won the Rookie Award at the Disrupt Battlefield and caught the attention of investors. Within a year of its presentation at the startup event, Artsy received \$1.25 million from a group of investors and the advice of prominent art dealer Larry Gagosian. Later on, the site received an additional \$6 million from investors and established agreements with 180 galleries in 40 countries (Chayka, 2011). Fueled by this funding and under Gagosian’s counsel, the site abandoned its social network approach and became a platform for art collectors with a more highbrow profile, as evidenced by its change of logotype¹⁹⁴ (fig.20) and range of services. In Beta version until October 2012, in 2013 it fully developed its functions as an online art consultant that connects collectors and galleries, also provides information about collections in museums and foundations, artists estates and art fairs, and even hosts art auctions on its site¹⁹⁵ (since 2014). As of September 2015, Artsy maintains a database of 300,000 images of art, architecture, and design by 40,000 artists and has partnered with prominent galleries and institutions such as Gagosian, Galerie Perrotin, The British Museum in London or the Guggenheim Museum in New York. The site also publishes visual documentation of exhibitions at museums and galleries, biennials and art fairs. With the aim of becoming the leading online resource for art, Artsy facilitates its database both for commercial and educational purposes. On the one hand, the site offers more than 26,000 freely downloadable, high-resolution images for educational use as well as articles on art history and artist’s biographies. On the other, it provides collectors with a range of services that include exclusive access to previews of art fairs, the assistance of an “Artsy Specialist” who acts as liaison with the galleries and finally a collection of over 230,000 works available for sale, with prices ranging from \$100 to \$1,000,000.¹⁹⁶

Artsy’s main feature is the search engine in its database, powered by The Art Genome Project, a classification system based on more than 1,000 characteristics such as art historical movement, subject matter, shapes, colors and other formal aspects, that are identified in each artwork by a team of art historians. These characteristics (or “genes”, as their are called within this project) are present in many different artworks, establishing links between them. The more “genes” shared by two artworks, the more similar they are supposed to be (around 30-40 “genes”, on average, are assigned to each artwork). By means of this tagging strategy, the database is able to suggest artworks with similar characteristics, and therefore guide the collector towards finding the art he likes. The

194. Artsy also changed its domain name from art.sy to artsy.net, since the use of Syria’s country code top-level domain (.sy) could be interpreted as a form of expressing support for the Syrian government in the midst of a violent civil war.

195. Auctions. Artsy. Retrieved from <https://www.artsy.net/auctions>

196. About. Artsy. Retrieved from <http://artsy.net/about>



Fig. 20. Artsy’s change of logo indicates its shift of orientation from social media to the art market. Left: original logo from the TechCrunch presentation in 2010. Right: current logo on Artsy’s website, as of September 2015.

enormous amount of genes is due to the heterogeneous system of classification, that includes established terms from art history (such as “northern renaissance”), others related to chronology (“16th century”), descriptive words (“reclining”, “nude”) and expressions that imply an interpretation of the content of the artwork (“stolen moments”). Initially, the user could access a long list of terms and filter artworks by medium, color and size, sorting out artworks for sale from those that belong to museums or collections. Later on, the interface has been simplified, presenting only three drop-down menus (size, price and medium) and the option to show only artworks for sale. An large collection of artwork thumbnails fills the page. The user is expected to scroll through it, and as she clicks on one thumbnail, the database displays the selected artwork and other related works according to the number of shared “genes”. Each artwork is displayed as an image that can be zoomed and also shown in the context of a museum-like room, on its real scale, hung on the wall in front of a wooden bench.¹⁹⁷ Below the description of the artwork, a simple form allows the collector to contact the gallery in order to buy the piece or ask for its price, if it is not displayed on the site. The connection between the collector and the gallery can also be maintained by “following” the gallery’s profile on Artsy, which entails receiving updates when new artworks or exhibitions are added. The same can be done with art fair, museum and artist profiles on the site.

Continuing with Cleveland’s initial objectives, Artsy facilitates access to a large collection of artworks, in a way that allows discovering similar works just as online music services like Pandora¹⁹⁸ or Spotify suggest new albums and artists based on the user’s playlist. By using the same method as Pandora, it assumes that the same results can be obtained, but this leads to a limited perception of the multiple possible readings of an artwork. “Genes” are assigned according to the decisions of a group of trained art historians, who must interpret each piece in order to determine whether they are suitable or not, and furthermore indicate their intensity in a scale ranging from 0 to 100. This means that the final configuration of “genes” for a certain artwork can be the result of a highly subjective process. For these reasons, the Art Genome Project has been received with skepticism among art professionals. In an article for the *New York Times*, Melena Ryzik quotes Robert Storr, dean of the Yale University School of Art, who considers that this kind of taxonomy

197. Not all artworks on the site have this option, and some others have not been indexed in the Art Genome Project, therefore no related artworks are displayed.

198. Pandora’s Music Genome Project is a direct inspiration for Artsy’s project. Based on a taxonomy of 450 musical characteristics, each song is analyzed by a musicologist who assigns the corresponding tags that will be used to find similar songs. See <http://www.pandora.com/about/mgp>

“will be reductive”, because it depends on the selection of characteristics, the criteria applied and the cultural assumptions behind them (Ryzik, 2012). Given its complexity, the Art Genome Project delayed the public launch of Artsy, and can be said to have been gradually sidelined as an education project and not the main feature of the site, which is now focused on providing information about the contemporary art world and connect collectors and galleries. Artsy is also increasingly investing in online auctions following the example set up by Paddle8 (see below): in September 2015, Sotheby’s announced a collaboration with Artsy on an online-only sale of contemporary art related to technology (either conceptually or as part of its process) that will include painting, sculpture, video and photography in a price range of \$50,000 or less.

3.8.5 PADDLE8

In 2011, an online auction house joined the ranks of startups expanding the contemporary art market on the Internet. Founded by Alexander Gilkes, Chief Auctioneer at Phillips, and entrepreneur Aditya Julka, Paddle8 hosts two types of art and design auctions: monthly themed auctions, curated by an individual, publication or institution, and benefit auctions, aimed at collecting funds for non-profits.¹⁹⁹ The online auction model, according to Paddle8’s founders, has a series of advantages, such as the lowering of costs for both buyers and sellers (since the auction takes place exclusively online, no shipping, insurance, or storage costs are initially necessary), direct shipping from the seller to the buyer, and ease of purchase, as well as “large network of collectors” that are informed by email of upcoming auctions. Paddle8 also has lower commissions than conventional auction houses: 8% for sellers and 15% for buyers (these are the current percentages from 2015, in 2013 the site indicated 6% and 12% respectively). Finally, the online auction house does not publicly disclose sales records in order to prevent an artwork from being “burned”²⁰⁰ if it does not sell. Registered users can access the auctions and bid on an artwork by simply entering an amount and clicking on “place bid”. Initially, users had to apply for a special membership to be able to bid, but now this is available to any user with a credit card. In a similar way to how Artsy makes information about artworks available online, Paddle8 aims to open the “clubby and esoteric”²⁰¹ world of art auctions to new collectors who are used to buying goods and services online.

Shortly after its launch, the online auction house quickly attracted prominent investors such as the Mousse Partners, venture capital firm Founder Collective, billionaire Vladimir Yevtushenkov, gallerist Jay Jopling and artist Damien Hirst, securing \$10 million in backing

199. FAQs. Paddle8. Retrieved from <http://paddle8.com/about/faqs>

200. A work that fails to sell at an auction is considered “burned”, meaning that it is devalued because it becomes clear that no one wants to buy it. Usually the work is not offered again at auction for at least two years (Thomson, 2014, loc.3490).

201. Eighth Wonder: Paddle8 Takes Art Online. Interview, June 22, 2011. Retrieved from http://www.interviewmagazine.com/art/paddle8#_

(Gamerman, 2013). Its business strategy is focused on selling artworks below \$100,000, including small pieces by renowned artists and works by emerging artists, which are usually not present at conventional auction houses because the shipping and insurance costs would result in a barely profitable sale (as previously mentioned, these costs are usually absent in an online auction). This specific amount also coincides with the price that many dealers consider “the most optimistic comfort price for online art the buyer has not previously seen”, while others set this price around \$50,000 or \$25,000 (Thompson, 2014: loc.4344). Paddle8 therefore does not directly compete with the most prominent auction houses, Christie’s and Sotheby’s, but develops a different line of business, in collaboration with Phillips, the third leading auction house (Thompson, 2010, loc.1710). This particular position allows Paddle8 to engage in exploratory sales, such as those that took place between 2013 and 2014, introducing digital art to the auction market.

*Paddles ON!*²⁰² was the first digital art auction at Paddle8 (and, arguably, the first digital art auction ever)²⁰³. Curated by Lindsay Howard (a young curator related to the Rhizome community and Post-Internet art – see 1.4.2), the auction took place online between October 1 -10, 2013. It culminated in a live sale at Phillips auction house in New York, which also hosted an exhibition of the artworks on sale. This hybrid online-physical space event was organized as a benefit auction in support of Rhizome and in collaboration with Tumblr. The earnings on each sale were distributed among the corresponding artist (80%) and Rhizome (20%). The selection included 20 artworks by 18 young artists in a wide variety of formats (digital print, video, sculpture, interactive installation, software art and net art) at prices ranging from \$500 to \$6,000 (see Table 19). Some of the artworks on sale entailed relatively new forms of acquisition and pricing, such as Rafaël Rozendaal’s *ifnoyes.com* (2013),²⁰⁴ a net art work sold under the conditions established in the artist’s own Art Website Sales Contract (see section 3.5.1), or Petra Cortright’s *RGB, D-Lay* (2011),²⁰⁵ a video whose price was determined by the number of views on its YouTube page. These particularities grabbed the attention of the media: in an article on *The Wall Street Journal*, Jennifer Maloney stresses that the organizers “have had to tackle unusual logistical questions as they prepare to sell works that, in many cases, live online –and will continue to exist there even after they are purchased” (Maloney, 2013). Although these issues had already been tackled in previous sales of online artworks (see section 3.5), they still seem new to the regular art collector and were met with reservations.²⁰⁶ Tellingly,

202. Paddles ON!. Paddle8. Retrieved from <http://paddle8.com/auction/paddleson2013/>

203. While digital art works have been sold at auction, this is the first time that a full sale is dedicated to digital art and announced as such, in connection with one of the major international auction houses. It is also unprecedented in the attention it received from the media.

204. Rafael Rozendaal. *ifnoyes.com*, 2013. Paddle8. Retrieved from <https://paddle8.com/work/rafael-rozendaal/20876-ifnoyes.com>

205. Petra Cortright, *RGB, D-Lay*, 2011. Paddle8. Retrieved from <https://paddle8.com/work/petra-cortright/20869-rgb-d-lay>

206. In the WSJ Live program *Digits*, journalist Simon Constable asked Jennifer Maloney about common concerns such as the possibility to make endless copies of an artwork, or the fact that the artwork must be kept online. How do you invest in digital art?. WSJ.com. Retrieved from <http://www.wsj.com/video/how-do-you-invest-in->

the sale was not carried out fully online but included an exhibition where prospective buyers could see the work for themselves (as previously stated, having seen the piece or trusting the reputation of the artist or gallery is an important aspect when buying art online) and concluded in a live session at Phillips, where a competent auctioneer could convince attendees to purchase the artworks and close the auction with good results. The sale started with a low number of bids, mostly concentrated on artworks in relatively conventional formats, such as digital prints, sculptures and videos (see Table 19), which took off during the final sale at Phillips.

Artist, artwork	Format	Estimated price	Current bid	Total bids
SILVIA BIANCHI + RICARDO JUÁREZ clay_def.jpg, 2013	Digital print on silk	\$1.000	\$600	0
SILVIA BIANCHI + RICARDO JUÁREZ Turning The World Upside Down, 2013	Digital print on canvas, objects	\$1.200	\$500	0
PETRA CORTRIGHT RGB,D-LAY, 2011	Webcam video, edition of 5	\$1.500	\$1.000	1
PETRA CORTRIGHT r_sept.psd #1, 2013	Digital print on aluminium	\$3.000	\$4.000	11
ALEXANDRA GORCZYNSKI PLUR Piece, 2013	Digital print and embedded digital tablets	\$7.500	\$4.000	0
JOE HAMILTON Hyper Geography, 2011	Video (linked to Tumblr account), edition of 3	\$2.500	\$800	0
ILJA KARILAMPI New York Minute, 2012	Video, edition of 3	\$2.000	\$800	0
BRENNA MURPHY glyphgraft-cavrncode, 2012	Digital print	\$3.000	\$2.000	1
AUDE PARISET Hosted Ceremony/Klack tray (Warehouse), 2013	Print on tray	\$1.500	\$800	0
SABRINA RATTÉ Aurac, 2012	Video	\$1.500	\$600	1
CASEY REAS Americans!, 2013	Generative animation, software, computer	\$12.500	\$9.500	0
RAFAËL ROZENDAAL ifnoyes.com, 2013	Website, javascript and html	\$6.000	\$4.000	0

RAFAËL ROZENDAAL Into Time 13 08 13, 2013	Digital print	\$12.000	\$8.000	1
NICOLAS SASSOON Waterfall 6, 2013	Animated GIF	\$1.800	\$800	1
MOLLY SODA Inbox Full, 2013	Webcam video	\$1.600	\$700	1
KATE STECIW Abstract, Accent,... 2013	C-print	\$6.500	\$3.000	0
MARK TRIBE Black Creek, 2012	Digital print	\$4.500	\$2.000	0
CLEMENT VALLA Postcards From Google Earth, 2010 (ongoing)	Digital print on paper, edition of 5	\$3.500	\$2.500	1
ADDIE WAGENKNECHT Asymmetric Love Number 2, 2013	Sculpture	\$12.000	\$5.600	3
JAMIE ZIGELBAUM Pixel, 2013	Interactive installation, glass, corian, LEDs, software	\$13.000	\$6.000	1

Table 19. Artworks on sale at the first *Paddles ON!* auction and bidding as of October 7, 2013 (three days before the auction closed).

Although Paddle8 didn't disclose the sales records, according to several sources (Galperina, 2013; Cardenas and Justin, 2015, p.55-56) the sale totaled \$90,600 (80% of the artworks were bought), the highest prices being achieved by Addie Wagenknecht's surveillance camera chandelier *Asymmetric Love Number 2* (\$16,000), Jamie Zigelbaum's interactive light installation *Pixel* (\$15,000), Casey Rea's software art piece *Americans!* (\$15,000), Petra Cortright's digital print *r_sept.psd #1* (\$9,500), Alexandra Gorczynski's digital print with embedded touchscreens *PLUR Piece* (\$9,000) and Rafael Rozendaal's lenticular painting *Into Time 13 08 13* (\$9,000). Remarkably, neither Cortright's signature videos nor Rozendaal's websites reached top sales, collectors opting to bid higher for other works by these artists in more conventional formats. As journalist Marina Galperina, who was present at the auction, remarked, "people like to buy things that look like paintings" (Galperina, 2013).

Paddles ON! was successful in bringing attention to the auction house and some of the artists who, despite their popularity on the Internet, hadn't yet entered the mainstream art market (Maloney, 2013). It also contributed to boost the careers of other artists who had already sold in art galleries, such as Petra Cortright and Rafaël Rozendaal. But in terms of sales it was not particularly profitable: comparing the results with the estimated prices published on Paddle8's website at the beginning of the auction (see Table 19), it can be noticed that some artworks finally sold below the original price. The need to set up an

exhibition in Phillips's showroom meant that shipping and insurance costs were added to the bill. Finally, the total amount of sales is not impressive considering the annual turnover of online auctions, including Paddle 8 itself, which reported \$50 million in sales in 2013 (Johnson, 2014). However, the experimental nature of the auction and the notoriety it brought to Paddle8 and Phillips must have contributed to the decision of organizing two more digital art auctions in 2014.

On April 15, *Born Digital*²⁰⁷ opened at Paddle8, a benefit auction in support of the Link Art Center in Brescia (Italy). Curated by two of the founders of Link, Fabio Paris and Domenico Quaranta, the sale presented more than 50 artworks by 33 artists working with digital technologies. Ambitious in its scale, concept and selection of artists (which included computer art and net art pioneers, artists who had developed their careers in the 2000s and young emerging names), the auction was conceived as an attempt to integrate media art into the mainstream contemporary art market, following the popularity of *Paddles ON!*. Three European galleries collaborated in this sale with artworks from artists they represented: XPO (Paris), 22,48m² (Paris) and DAM (Berlin). The result is a heterogeneous collection of artworks that seem to configure a sample of the history of media art since the 1970s in an array of formats, under the common denominator of being “born digital”, that is created with digital tools or conceptually referring to digital culture and the way in which digital technologies shape our daily experience.²⁰⁸ The prices of the artworks ranged from 100€ for a *ViBo* video book by Carlo Zanni or a *Certificate of Existence* by Martin John Callanan to up to 24,000€ for Jan Robert Leegte's installation *Scrollbar Composition*, although most artworks were in the range of 1,000€ to 3,000€.²⁰⁹ This time, the auction took place entirely online, and although no sales records were published, one of the participating gallerists told me that the results had not been particularly satisfactory.

A few months later, a second *Paddles ON!* auction took place in London. Phillips collaborated again with Tumblr and hosted an exhibition of the lots in its showroom. Curator Lindsay Howard selected 22 artworks by twenty-two artists created between 2010 and 2014 for an event that was described as “an exhibition and auction that brings together artists who are using digital technologies to establish the next generation of contemporary art”.²¹⁰ The organizers also pointed out that this auction recognized “the increasing viability of this work in the contemporary art marketplace.” This time it was not a benefit auction (artists and galleries received 100% of the auction profits), although a percentage of the buyer's premium (a commission charged to the successful bidder) was donated to non-profit Opening Times,²¹¹ a platform that commissions online art and research projects. Again,

207. Born Digital. Paddle8. Retrieved from <http://paddle8.com/auction/linkart/>

208. Born Digital: Benefit Online Auction on Paddle8. Link Art Center. Retrieved from <http://www.linkartcenter.eu/archives/2857>

209. Link published a freely downloadable catalogue with complete information about the artworks and the asking prices. Retrieved from <http://linkeditions.tumblr.com/borndigital>

210. Paddles ON! London. Paddle8. Retrieved from <http://paddle8.com/auction/paddleson/>

211. Opening Times. See <http://otdac.org/>

the artworks had modest estimated prices (between £500 and £10,000) that added up to a total sale of £83,500. Highest selling lots were Michael Staniak's *IMG_885 (holographic)*, a painting made of casting compound and acrylic on board (£25,000), Michael Manning's digital print with acrylic on canvas *Chinese Broccolini Torta* (£15,000) and Jonas Lund's oil on canvas *Under the Influence #2* (£6,000), all of them stretching the definition of “digital art” by transferring ideas and processes related to digital culture into compositions in conventional formats (Cardenas and Justin, 2015, p.55).

These auctions (particularly the two *Paddles ON!* sales) had the purpose of testing the waters in order to find out if collectors would be interested in digital art, sort out which artists are more successful and which formats are more likely to be bought. The sales at Phillips have proven that paintings and bi-dimensional compositions are preferred over more complex or experimental formats, even when choosing between two artworks by the same artist. As a whole, the auctions cannot be said to have contributed to introduce digital art into the mainstream contemporary art market, but rather promoted the work of a few artists. According to art dealer Carlos Cardenas, it is unlikely that there will be further *Paddles ON!* events, because some of the artists featured in these sales are now part of regular auctions at Phillips: between 2014 and 2015, Petra Cortright has sold five digital prints (two of them reaching \$40,000),²¹² Michael Staniak has sold eleven paintings for around \$20,000 each²¹³ and Michael Manning has sold nine paintings, one of them reaching \$35,000²¹⁴ (Cardenas and Justin, 2015, p.56). Far from the initial rhetoric about the challenges of collecting art that stays online and YouTube videos that increase their value according to the number of views, the auction house world has finally accepted those artists whose work is more similar to painting. The results of these auctions are consistent with the perception that the mainstream contemporary art market, despite expanding to online platforms, still relies heavily on traditional formats.

3.8.6 AMAZON FINE ART

One of the first leading e-commerce sites, Amazon is among the latest companies to sell art online, although already in 1999 it briefly partnered with Sotheby's to create a site for online sales,²¹⁵ that finally was developed by the auction house on its own (Thompson, 2014, loc.4195). On August 6th 2013, Amazon opened its “Fine Art” section, offering more than 40,000 artworks from 150 art galleries at prices from \$44 to \$4.85 million, although most works were in the \$500-\$5,000 range. Artworks are grouped under five main categories (Paintings, Prints, Photography, Drawings and Mixed Media), plus some additional categories such as Digital Art (which mainly refers to digitally manipulated

212. Petra Cortright. Phillips Art Auctions. Retrieved from <http://phillips.com/Search?Search=petra+cortright>

213. Michael Staniak. Phillips Art Auctions. Retrieved from <http://phillips.com/Search?Search=michael+staniak>

214. Michael Manning. Phillips Art Auctions. Retrieved from <http://phillips.com/Search?Search=michael+manning>

215. Amazon, Sotheby's in Venture. CNN Money, June 16, 1999. Retrieved from http://cnnfn.cnn.com/1999/06/16/worldbiz/amazon_sothebys/

photographs or graphic design compositions), Emerging Artists or Romantic Art. They can also be sorted by price, in five ranges from “Under \$250” to “\$2,500 and More”.²¹⁶ Each work is displayed on its own page, with the same layout and options as any other product page on Amazon: several product images, a description, the price (including discounts, if any), the yellow “add to cart” button, three lists of similar or related products: “Visually Similar to this Artwork”, “Customers Who Viewed This Artist Also Viewed” and “Other Works From This Gallery”, and a customer reviews section. Similarly to Artsy, the site also includes a “View in Room” feature that allows the user to see the artwork on its real scale in a sparsely furnished living room, hanging on the wall above the sofa.

Amazon’s Fine Art section is well organized and includes roughly the same information about the artworks that Artsy or Artspace present to their customers. However, when it was launched it was met with skepticism and mockery due to the fact that the layout and features of the Fine Art section (which belongs to the Home, Garden and Tools department) are no different from any other section on the online store. Presenting the artworks as mere products for sale, Amazon inadvertently underscored the contrast between their perception as cultural objects and their condition as a commodity in the art market. Traditionally, art galleries have separated their role as cultural institutions from their nature as commercial enterprises by stressing their focus on “art rather than money” (Velthuis, 2007, p.22). Online platforms dedicated to the art market, such as VIP Art, Artspace, Sedition, Artsy or Paddle8 had carefully followed this protocol and created elegant, white cube-like websites where there is a strong focus on the art and the prices are displayed discreetly. Amazon broke the unspoken rule with its unprecedented display of the artworks in an environment that is associated with the everyday experience of buying a book or a home appliance on the Internet. The contrast was particularly marked in the case of the most expensive artworks on sale, such as Norman Rockwell’s *Willie Gillis, Package from Home* (1941) for \$4.85 million and Claude Monet’s painting *L’Enfant à la tasse, portrait de Jean Monet* (1868) for \$1.45 million (Willet, 2013). On the product page of Monet’s original painting, several users published jocular reviews:

“USED? PAINTING HAS CRACKS!”

“For as much as I paid I’m a little upset that this isn’t a new painting. You can see OBVIOUS cracks and I’m worried that the artwork has had several owners before me. I might return to Amazon if I can’t get in touch with the seller. 1 out of 5 stars.”

“THIS IS THE REAL THING, BEWARE OF “MANET” RIP-OFFS!” “I’ve been a fan of Monet since the early days and this is a serviceable example of his mid-period stuff, not too fancy but gets the job done and gives an idea of what he’s like for people who aren’t ready to make up their minds about Waterlilies or Impression, Sunrise. But I really wrote this review to warn casual searchers that some bunch of opportunists are trying to rip off the unwary or inexperienced browser by flooding Amazon with their

216. The refined search panel includes additional options such as style, subject matter, size, orientation, color, color family, frame type, artist and seller.

cheap replicas, under the confusingly similar name “Manet”. Remember, it’s “Monet”, with the “o” that is the real thing.” (Willet, 2013)

The reviews express the apparent contradiction between the object and the context in which it is sold by writing comments about the artwork as if it were just another mass-produced commodity. Beyond these anecdotes,²¹⁷ buying from Amazon Fine Art presents serious risks to the collector, since it does not guarantee the condition of the artworks, nor can it confirm the veracity of the descriptions provided by the sellers (Rahm, 2013). In a marketplace where many artworks by well-known artists are lithographs and there are also many works from the secondary market, it can be easy, for instance, to mistakenly assume that a lithograph is an original artwork or to acquire a low quality piece, particularly if the buyer is not familiarized with the art market. However, Amazon’s reputation, its partnership with art galleries and its 30-day money-back guarantee should be enough to convince collectors, at least on a mid- to low price range, similar to Saatchi Art (Thompson, 2014, loc.4311).

3.9 DIGITAL ART FRAMES

In September 1991, Mark Weiser, chief scientist at Xerox PARC,²¹⁸ wrote an essay titled “The Computer for the 21st Century”, in which he described the work he and his colleagues were developing in what Weiser termed “ubiquitous computing”, the integration of computers into everyday life. Prefiguring the use of tablets and current technologies such as wi-fi networks and the developing the concept of the Internet of Things (IoT), Weiser indicated that computers must not be the focus of attention, but rather assist humans in their everyday tasks and “disappear into the background”. He also indicated the three main requirements for this integration to happen:

“The technology required for ubiquitous computing comes in three parts: cheap, low-power computers that include equally convenient displays, a network that ties them all together, and software systems implementing ubiquitous applications.” (Weiser, 1991)

Although ubiquitous computing has not been fully achieved yet, these three conditions have been met by the current technology industry: it is now possible to build low-cost computers, LED screens are highly versatile and consume little energy, wi-fi and bluetooth networks allow easy connectivity between the machines, and finally mobile operating systems iOS and Android allow to develop apps that can be quickly distributed to mobile

217. None of these artworks can now be found on Amazon’s Fine Art section. Currently, the most expensive artworks are two acrylic paintings by Victor Vasarely at \$350,000 each.

218. Xerox PARC (Palo Alto Research Center) was founded in 1970 as a research and development division of Xerox Corporation. In its laboratories, crucial developments of information technologies and computing were carried out, such as laser printing, Ethernet, the graphical user interface (GUI) and ubiquitous computing, among others.

devices and integrated with smart TVs or customized computers. The widespread use of smartphones and tablets has popularized the presence of digital screens in our daily activities, as well as consuming all sorts of contents (videos, books, music, films, TV programs, magazines) on portable devices. Artworks are also distributed and sold on mobile operating systems (see section 3.6), while numerous artists integrate their digital artworks in plug-and-play screens that are sold as unique or limited edition pieces (Rafael Lozano-Hemmer is one of the artists who has perfected this strategy –see section 3.5). Additionally, some attempts have been made at establishing a system for displaying a number of artworks in a screen or touchscreen hung on the wall, such as gallerist Steven Sacks's collaboration with ezscreen around 2003 (see section 3.7.1). According to Sacks, collectors will have a dedicated screen at their homes rotating a selection of artworks (Waelder, 2010c, p.71), a form of acquiring and displaying art that is similar to what some artists have created for iOS but quite the opposite of how artists such as Lozano-Hemmer conceive and sell their pieces. The artwork, as an image, video or software, becomes the content displayed in a screen that provides the hardware and display. This screen is therefore the frame where the art will be displayed: instead of buying a “framed” artwork, the collector buys the frame first, and then acquires the art. What Sacks describes as “unframed software art” (Sacks, 2003, p.213) was originally sold by the gallerist in custom-packaged CDs with recommendations about the computer and display that the collector should buy in order to set up the artwork at home. In 2014 and 2015, several companies have launched digital frames with an integrated computer, wireless Internet connection and custom software that provide an easy way to collect and display artworks (as well as other audiovisual content) at home or in the office. In this section, the devices and systems created by FRM, Electric Objects, Meural, Depict and DAD will be discussed, as well as their initial impact in the contemporary art market.²¹⁹

3.9.1 FRAMED*

Japanese company FRM was founded in 2011 by creative director, designer and engineer Yugo Nakamura and producer William Lai. In 2012 they created FRAMED 1.0,²²⁰ “a new form of art frame” consisting of a 55-inch LED display in portrait orientation with an integrated PC unit, webcam/microphone and Wi-Fi module. The device includes the “FRAMED Gallery”, an exclusive online gallery where users can purchase digital art such as “time-synched interior pieces” (digital animations that act as a clock) or interactive artworks that use the integrated camera and/or microphone and the web. Housed in a brushed metal frame, only 36mm in depth, the device has the appearance of an elegant, high-tech display that can be hung on the wall or mounted on a high stand (resembling an information panel, suitable for offices) or a low stand, that gives the device the appearance of a framed poster leaning against the wall and is intended to place the screen on the

219. An initial study of the digital frames created by FRM and Electric Objects has been published in ETC Media magazine, issue #104 (Waelder, 2015b).

220. FRAMED* 1.0. Retrieved from <http://frm.fm/v1/en/overview/>

floor. FRAMED 1.0 can also be controlled using an iPhone and a free app that allows to make adjustments on the screen, purchase artworks and also interact with them. The device initially offers its own selection of artworks, promising to incorporate new ones regularly²²¹ and develop a marketplace where anyone can freely present and sell their work. All of the artworks presented in the FRAMED Gallery adapt to the device's portrait orientation (127 cm. tall by 74.1 cm wide), since it is not meant to be displayed in landscape mode. This limitation is caused by the need to visually differentiate the digital frame from a regular screen or TV and is particularly convenient for some works, such as Nerhol's portraits, but cause an awkward horizontal scroll in others. Finally, some designs, such as Nakamura's own creations (three of which come pre-installed with the device) are already conceived for this format. The prices of the artworks and the editions change considerably from one artist to another, ranging from Kazumasa Teshigawara's and Yugo Nakamura's works for ¥31,500 (in an edition of 100) or Nerhol's portraits for ¥8,400 (in an edition of 500) to Aaron Koblin's animation based on a crowdsourced project for ¥10,000 (in an edition of 10,000).²²²



Fig.21. Promotional image of FRAMED 2.0, 2014. Courtesy of FRM.

This device is updated in a second release, FRAMED 2.0 (fig.21), launched in a crowdfunding campaign on Kickstarter²²³ between July 21 and August 20, 2014. The campaign ends successfully with a total \$529,339 pledged (706% of the original goal), the first units being shipped to backers and customers in September 2015. FRAMED 2.0 is a Full-HD display with built-in PC, 720p camera, microphone, stereo speakers and Wi-Fi module, as well as motion sensors and gesture recognition. The device has a hand-crafted walnut frame and comes in two sizes, 24-inch and 40-inch. It can be mounted

221. According to FRM's website, the FRAME Gallery has incorporated new artworks until June 2013. Retrieved from <http://frm.fm/v1/en/gallery/>

222. The prices are indicated in Japanese Yen as published on FRM's website. The equivalent amounts, as of September 2015, are between \$70 and \$264.

223. FRAMED* — A Revolutionary Platform For Digital Art. Kickstarter. Retrieved from <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/1353046055/framed-a-revolutionary-platform-for-digital-art/description>

on a wall, either in landscape or portrait orientation, and controlled with simple hand gestures, as well as with the free iPhone app. FRM has also enhanced the possibility of displaying any type of content from the web by simply accessing it on a smartphone and sending it with a swipe towards the screen. The versatility of the device (which can display many types of content in different orientations and allows interaction) is also applied to its redesigned “FRAMED Store”, where anyone can publish and sell their work. In a video created for the crowdfunding campaign, William Lai explains their main objectives when developing this device:

“We’ve always been passionate about visual culture online, but there really wasn’t a way to bring it back into the physical world that had that decorative element [...]. [We] set out to create a simple way for visual artists to physically frame their work and experience it in the same way we would with a traditional art piece or a painting in a room. [...] We really set out to create this timeless object, something you would keep on your wall for years, or generations at a time.”

Obviously, the focus is on the frame itself, the art being content that will fill the screen and the collection of the FRAMED Store, which now incorporates several new artworks²²⁴, also in editions of several hundreds at prices ranging between \$35 and \$150. The device is therefore meant to facilitate the display of digital content at home and the purchase of editioned work at affordable prices. As is the case with App Store apps, the highest cost is buying the hardware and then the content is obtained at relatively low prices or even free. The FRAMED* devices were offered at special prices during the Kickstarter campaign, starting at \$449 for the 24-inch model and \$1,500 for the 40-inch model. The artworks in the initial gallery are limited editions at fairly low prices, but as the store is developed, new content may be included at even lower prices or included in special editions, such as the FRAMED* screens sold at the MoMA Design Store in New York, which include pre-installed data visualization works by Aaron Koblin and Nicholas Felton. Additionally, since the device is open to all types of content found on the Web, it is easy to display an image or a video preview of an artwork, as well as anything that the user would like to see on the screen.

After presenting the device at several exhibitions and festivals during the summer of 2015, FRAMED*2.0 has started shipping in September and further developing its features and collection of artworks. While it is too soon to determine its possible impact on the art market, it will certainly have to compete with other devices that are currently being launched.

224. Gallery. FRAMED* Retrieved from <https://frm.fm/page/gallery>

3.9.2 ELECTRIC OBJECTS

Electric Objects was founded in 2014 by Jake Levine, the former general manager of news aggregator Digg, who raised \$1.7 million in venture capital to start producing the first prototypes of its device (Ha, 2014). In a blog post published in April that year, Levine outlines the idea for the EO1, “an internet-connected screen that will bring the Internet to your wall” (Levine, 2014). Following his experience in Digg, Levine is well aware of information overload and of the many interesting things that one can encounter on the Internet. Constrained by the limitations of the computer and the context of a daily activity centered on quickly obtaining information and fulfilling tasks, it becomes difficult to fully appreciate this found content. Electric Objects therefore aims to provide a space for this contemplation:

“The Internet is a beautiful place, full of beautiful things. Yet our ability to enjoy those things is constrained to one of 30 browser tabs, or to a tiny 4” screen with whom we have a tortured and unrelenting relationship. We are overwhelmed by content [...] It doesn’t have to be this way. [...] We can design a device which affords the time and space to enjoy the beautiful Internet.” (Levine, 2014)

Levine is not talking about art, but instead about the beautiful content that can be found online. The EO1 is initially a device to “put the Internet on your wall”, not necessarily to “put art on your wall.” A screen with a CPU and an Internet connection (as can be deduced from the images and the enigmatic description provided by the entrepreneur), is the product that “ends with a beautiful piece of hardware hanging on a wall in every home, [but] begins with a community” (Levine, 2014). The image of the first prototype shows a 23” screen in portrait orientation, resting on a bookshelf, as well as several images from the screens of the first beta-testers. They are mostly unusual found images that could have been posters hanging on the walls of a young person’s apartment. These images could then be shared among the users of the EO1, creating a community of people who put the most beautiful content of the Internet on their walls, somewhere between Tumblr and the interactive online space created by Mark Napier in *The Waiting Room* (see section 3.5). Inspired by Mark Weiser’s text on ubiquitous computing, Levine concludes that the device is meant to be part of a return to silence and contemplation, a computer that is integrated in the daily environment and helps overcome information overload.

Between July and August, a crowdfunding campaign on Kickstarter brought attention to the EO1 and helped fund its development with a total \$787,612 pledged (3150% of the desired amount). By then, it was described as “a computer made for art”²²⁵. The EO1 is a 23-inch, 1080p display with a white or black frame (a designer wooden frame is also available), an integrated CPU, Wi-Fi and Bluetooth modules (fig.22). The screen can be mounted on a wall or placed on a small stand (only in portrait orientation) and is

225. Electric Objects: A Computer Made for Art by Electric Objects. Kickstarter. Retrieved from <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/electricobjects/electric-objects-a-computer-made-for-art>



Fig.22. Promotional image of the EO1. Photo: Ben Pieratt. Courtesy of Electric Objects.

controlled by a free smartphone app for Android and iOS. Following Levine's intentions expressed in his blog post, the EO1 is designed to "fade into the background": minimal brightness and the absence of speakers ensure that the screen will be perceived as a picture frame and not as a TV. As a result, it can only display static or animated images, as well as artworks that cull data from the Internet, and does not allow for a direct interaction between the user and the screen. By lacking these features, the EO1 states its intention to become the digital version of a canvas, in a similar way to how an ebook reader is the digital version of a book and lacks many features found in a tablet. Therefore, it must clearly be defined as a device for art (constraining the definition of art to a static or moving image with no sound), which is what Electric Objects does in its crowdfunding campaign. The new description of the EO1 is very similar to the initial statement by Levine, with the addition of the word "art":

"There's more art on the Internet than in every gallery and museum on Earth. But many of these beautiful objects are trapped [...] inside of devices like our phones, our tablets, our TVs, our laptops — devices designed for distraction [...]. So we wanted to make a new way to bring art from the Internet into your home."

However, Electric Objects does not simply label the content displayed in its device as "art", it gets actively involved in the art world by partnering with several institutions such as the Museum of the Moving Image and the New York Public Library and features the work of artists such as Casey Reas, Aaron Koblin and Nicolas Sassoon. Curator Zoë Salditch, former program director at Rhizome as well as co-founder and "Director of Artist Relations" in Electric Objects, leads the introduction of the EO1 in the community of young artists working with new media, particularly in the New York art scene and



Fig.23. Electric Objects's Art Club. Webpage displaying a preview of Unicorn's *Still Isometric Life #2* and a list of the members who are displaying it on their screens.

closely related to the Post-Internet trend. The Kickstarter campaign already announces an Artist in Residence program that invites artists to create original works for the EO1 in exchange for a stipend and a prototype, and later on in September an "Artist Interview Series" focuses on the work of these emerging artists. The EO1 is also displayed at the *Hypersalon* exhibition organized by Transfer and XPO galleries during ArtBasel Miami Beach (December 2-7, 2014) and several other public presentations. A particularly interesting initiative is launched in April 2015: the *\$5 Commission*,²²⁶ a crowdfunding project on Kickstarter that invites backers to give \$5 and some of their personal data in order to produce four artworks by four artists. 1,108 backers contributed a total amount of \$7,150, answered a brief survey with six questions and uploaded a portrait photo of themselves and an image of something they've always wanted. The funds and the data were used by artists Lauren McCarthy, Addie Wagenknecht, Casey Reas and James George to produce the artworks that were later on displayed on the EO1. This project contributes to drawing attention to the digital frame and identify it with a community of young artists and users.

In August 2015, Electric Objects announces Art Club, its own community and collection of art made specifically for the digital frame. Art is understood here as any form of visual composition, therefore reaching beyond the confines of the contemporary art world and incorporating creations from other contexts by means of collaborations with record labels, websites, GIF search engines, video game companies, publishing platforms, illustrators, animators and photographers. While it may be discussed that

226. The \$5 Commission. Electric Objects. Retrieved from <http://www.5dc.club/>

these professionals can also create artworks for the context of the art world (museums, galleries, public and private collections), what is stressed here is that the contents displayed on the EO1 are open to a wider range of productions, combining Levine's original intention of "putting the Internet on your wall" with the more restricted notion of displaying artworks by artists who are actively engaged in the contemporary art scene and the art market. The collection is offered as a free preview to all owners of the device, with the intention of eventually asking for a fee to access some or all of them, in order to "go on producing them in a sustainable way".²²⁷ As previously stated, this responds to the original intention of establishing a community of creators and public, but also provides the initial content that makes it worth acquiring the device, sold for \$499. Each artwork can be viewed in the Art Club site as a preview, alongside information about the number of users who have that particular piece on display and the total time it has been displayed (fig.23). In this way, the device combines the experience of privately viewing an artwork and being part of a community.

3.9.3 MEURAL

Founded in New York in 2014, Meural²²⁸ is a company that combines art, technology and design to "create products that make us feel something." Their first product is a digital canvas, consisting of a 27" 1080P display with anti-glare technology and an embedded CPU in a soft maple wood frame (fig.24). The device incorporates a Wi-Fi connection, it can be hung on the wall in portrait or landscape orientation and is controlled via a smartphone application, as well as by simple hand gestures using electrical near field technology. The Meural digital frame is publicly announced in April 2015 as a device that will revolutionize personal home decoration. In line with the usual tech startup discourse, Meural CEO Vladimir Vukicevic identifies a problem and offers the company's product as a solution:

"For the vast majority of people, personalizing and decorating one's space is difficult. From setting aside the time and personal bandwidth to the cost factor and physical space limitations—especially in a city like New York—it can be very frustrating [...] With the Meural 'digital canvas,' we address all of these issues in a single crafted product—a product that just so happens to be powered intelligent technology."²²⁹

Currently on sale in pre-order for \$445, the device is expected to start shipping in the Fall or 2015. The contents it displays are provided by Meural's own art collection, a wide selection of images of historical and contemporary art sourced from partnerships

227. Introducing Art Club. Electric Objects blog, August 6, 2015. Retrieved from <http://blog.electricobjects.com/post/126027012625/introducing-art-club>

228. Meural. Retrieved from <http://www.meural.com>

229. Meural press release, April 7, 2015. Available in Meural's downloadable press kit. Retrieved from <http://meural.com/pages/about>



Fig.24. Meural digital frame (lightbox design) displaying a cropped reproduction of Vincent van Gogh's *Sunflowers* (third version, F456, 1888). Courtesy of Meural.

with museums, galleries, image libraries and artists such as Sedition (see section XXX), 1000 Museums (a website that sells prints from the collections of Fine Art museums), Bridgeman Images (an art images library), Eyes on Walls (an online store selling urban art and illustration prints) and the Con Artist art collective in New York. The artworks in Meural's collection can be accessed by paying a monthly fee of \$4.95. With its wide range of contents and subscription-based model, Meural addresses a large segment of the public who wants to decorate their homes with art images and be able to change them periodically or let the company suggest which images could be displayed, in a similar manner to how many users listen to music on services like Spotify. Meural's Director of Business Development Simone Hurse summarizes this idea in a statement published in the company's initial press release:

"For under \$500, you get access to the full spectrum of fine art, a beautiful statement piece for your home and the latest in consumer technology—what more could you ask for?"

Besides displaying the collection of artworks for a monthly fee, the owner of the digital canvas can also upload her own images to Meural's website in order to display them on their own device, and although this is not yet stated, the company could open in the future a marketplace in which artists would upload their works and receive a payment every time their work is displayed on a digital canvas. Although Meural has not yet released full information about its device, it clearly has a different approach than that of

FRAMED*2.0 or the EO1, as space for the reproduction of artworks in other formats (drawing, painting, photography, among others) rather than an environment for original artworks intended for the digital frame.

3.9.4 DEPICT

San Francisco-based startup Depict²³⁰ was founded by entrepreneur Kim Gordon and engineer Shambhavi Kadam in 2013 with the goal of distributing art in digital formats under the slogan “Bring art to your home”.²³¹ In January 2015, the company raised \$2,400,000 in funding²³² to produce their own display device: Frame, a 50-inch, 4K resolution screen with an embedded media player and Wi-Fi connectivity, in a maple wood frame (fig.25). The screen can be hung on a wall using a supplied rotating mount, that allows changing the orientation of the screen between portrait and landscape as needed. Available on pre-order for \$1,800, the device is scheduled to start shipping in Fall 2015. The content on the screen is supplied by the company’s other main product: Depict Cloud, a collection of more than 500 digital artworks (static images, animated GIFs and short videos) curated by an in-house team. Some of the artworks are exclusive to this platform and not available anywhere else. They are sold in editions, starting at \$10-\$30 and raising their price as more editions are sold. Depict takes a 40% commission on the sale of each artwork and exclusive rights for digital sales, while the artists retain the copyright and receive 60% of the sale (Levine, 2015). Each artwork is viewed on demand, cast to the screen from Depict’s server (none of them can be downloaded) and can be viewed as long as the user retains the account. The files include watermarking technology that, according to the company, “enables scarcity and provenance tracking, so it is something customers can invest in and re-sell down the road.” Furthermore, in order to prevent screen burn, the artworks can only be displayed during a maximum of 4 hours. Besides acquiring an artwork, a Depict user can choose to pay a monthly subscription of \$15 to access a curated selection of artworks. The company states that Frame will also allow the user to upload her own images, although this feature is not yet implemented in the device.

According to CEO Kim Gordon, Depict is very “artist-oriented” (Levine, 2015) and is actually establishing collaborations with many artists for its Cloud service (which can be used with any 1080p HD screen using ChromeCast or AirPlay), as well as for Frame. The 4K display stands out from other digital frames due to its superior resolution, that requires artworks specifically made for this device. Four pieces by artists Eric Cahan, Nicole Cohen, Chris Doyle and the design studio Universal Everything have been commissioned for Frame and are available only to pre-order customers. As its competitors, Depict needs

230. Depict. See <http://www.depict.com>

231. A promotional video distributed in September 2014 shows Depict as a service that allows users to access art and display it on their own screens. Depict – Bring art to your home. YouTube, September 24, 2014. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?t=61&v=6hQ1PHkYu4A>

232. Depict. AngelList. Retrieved from <https://angel.co/depict>

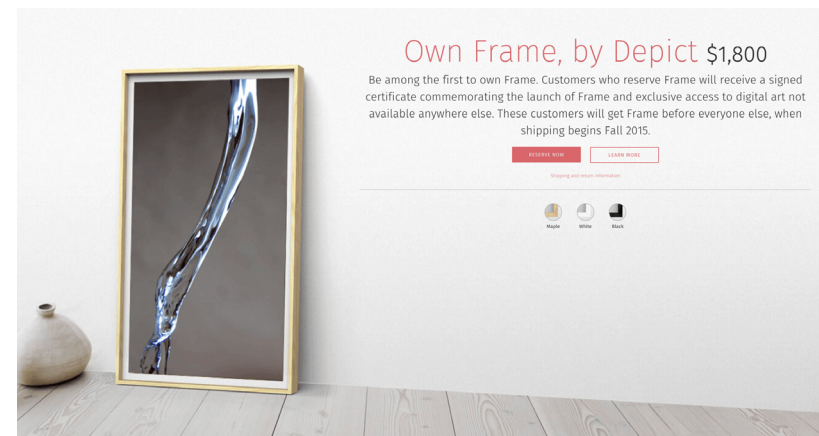


Fig.25. Screenshot of Depict’s website displaying the Depict Frame. Source: depict.com

to add content to its device in order to convince prospective buyers to acquire it. The company has opted for a traditional art market approach: it sells exclusive artworks in limited editions and suggests that paying for access to these files can become a good investment, theoretically generating profit in the future. However, as with Sedition, the collector’s ownership of the artworks depends on the existence of the company. The FAQ section of Depict’s website clearly states this situation:

How long do I own art I’ve purchased?
Forever! Once you buy a digital edition, it’s yours to keep. You will, however, need a Depict account to access your artwork.

This is also true for artworks or content directly uploaded by the customer: in order to send any content to the digital frame, a Depict Cloud account is necessary. The company therefore controls what is displayed on the digital frame, which becomes a gateway to its services. Paradoxically, Kim Gordon stated that the motivation to create Frame is that most digital art is “trapped inside the format of a laptop or a computer or a mobile device” (Chiaverina, 2015), but creates a different form of entrapment in which the artwork depends on the company and a permanent Internet connection.

3.9.5 DAD, THE DIGITAL ART DEVICE

Whereas Depict describes itself as “the iTunes for Art”, DAD (the Digital Art Device) launched its crowdfunding campaign on Kickstarter with the statement: “Imagine Apple TV meets Spotify for digital art, bringing museum-quality exhibitions directly to your home or business”.²³³ The campaign ran between May 27 and July 6, 2015 and obtained

233. DAD, the Digital Art Device. Kickstarter. Retrieved from <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/digitalartdevice/dad-the-digital-art-device/description>



Fig.26. Promotional image of the DAD screen. Photo: Emin Sassi. Courtesy of DAD.

23,344€ from 93 backers, more than doubling its initial goal of 10,000€. However, DAD was not launching this campaign in order to obtain the funds needed to produce its product, a series of devices and services that facilitate collecting and displaying video and digital art, but rather aimed at raising awareness of the whole platform and securing some pre-sales. The Digital Art Device system had been in development since 2013, when gallerist Carlos Cardenas and entrepreneur Vicent Justin worked on the concept of a dedicated screen for video art that could be installed in luxury hotel rooms and offer clients a curated selection of art. The idea in itself is not new (many video artists have artworks installed in hotels, and there are also curated programs of video art such as IkonoTV, available through the TV set in each room), but inspired Cardenas and Justin to work on a cloud service and display device that would make collecting and displaying video and digital art at home or the office as easy as using Apple TV or Spotify. Conscious of the specificities of the art world, the founders of DAD contacted collectors, gallerists and artists in order to examine the problems and possible solutions for the system they aimed to create. The output of this research can be found in the book *Collect Digital Video Art* (Cardenas and Justin, 2015), which was offered as a reward to backers in the Kickstarter campaign.

DAD²³⁴ describes itself as a “full holistic system” which comprises two devices, a free smartphone app and an online art collection (similarly to Depict). The DAD screen is a 42-inch full-HD screen with an integrated media reader, 2Ghz processor, 500Gb storage



Fig.27. DAD drive. Photo: Emin Sassi. Courtesy of DAD.

and Wi-Fi and Bluetooth connectivity (fig.26). It can be hung on a wall in portrait or landscape orientation and incorporates a range of customizable frames. The DAD drive is a media player with Wi-Fi and Bluetooth, 500Gb storage and a 2.4Ghz processor that can be connected to any screen equipped with an HDMI port (fig. 27). Both devices can be controlled using a mobile application on a smartphone. By developing both devices, DAD has chosen to cover different possibilities: on the one hand, it offers the DAD drive to customers who already have a dedicated screen, prefer to use another screen with a different size or even want to take their art to different screens as they please; on the other hand, the DAD screen is intended for customers who do not have a display device or prefer an all-in-one solution. Unlike Depict, DAD does not include the possibility of displaying the art in their collection on any screen using ChromeCast or AirPlay: the artworks are downloaded to the devices (hence the need for a 500Gb storage drive) in order to be screened at high resolution without the need of an Internet connection.

DAD provides the content for its devices through a cloud service that allows customers to either buy the artworks in limited editions or subscribe to access six curated exhibitions every year. The artworks bought on the DAD platform are stored in a “digital vault” (similarly to Sedition), although the owner also receives a high-definition master copy. The exhibitions consist of a selection of 10 to 20 digital artworks co-curated by “an internationally renowned curator, gallery, museum, or art center” and appear on the screen every two months. After a period of approximately six weeks, the exhibition is replaced by the next one, the artworks being removed from the device unless the collector buys them. Subscribers also receive a printed catalogue of the exhibition by mail. Both the structure of DAD’s system and its price range indicate that the devices and services are intended for upmarket art collectors: the artworks are sold at “market price” in editions of 3 to 5 for around \$3,400, while the devices cost between \$1,470 (DAD drive) and \$5,120 (DAD screen). Subscription costs around \$100 per month. However, the price tag is not the only element that indicates DAD’s specific target customer. Cardenas and Justin stress the importance of an approach based not on the device but on the content:

“Our first-hand experience working in the contemporary art world has taught us that technology has a role to play in informing artistic practices, but above all, it is

234. DAD The Digital Art Device. Retrieved from <http://www.dad.digital/>

quality and unique concepts that win through. It is for this reason we plan to work with the most respected and innovative contemporary curators and artists. DAD is your ticket to the private view you can't fly to, or the gallery you'd like to visit but haven't found the time to. It's about coming home from that groundbreaking show at MoMA and still having MoMA in your living room."²³⁵

DAD's first public presentation took place in Paris as a group exhibition titled "#1dad" and curated by Philippe Riss, director of XPO gallery (see section XXX). The show included 20 works by artists assume vivid astro focus, Johannes Bendzulla, Enrico Boccioletti, Vincent Broquaire, Jennifer Chan, Gregory Chatonsky, Judith Deschamps, It's Our Playground, Andrea Nicolas Fischer, Ella Görner, Isabell Heimerdinger, Kolkoz, Guillaume Leblo, Angelo Plessas, Florian & Michael Quistrebart, Torben Ribe, Paul Souviron, Katie Torn, Clément Valla and Yemenwed. The artworks were curated onto 5 different displays and additionally there were two DAD screens with a demo of the system, each including all 20 works available to users via the DAD app. The exhibition focused on the artists's work rather than on DAD itself, which Cardenas and Justin describe in the exhibition catalogue as "a simple tool." This apparent modesty responds to the need of clearly addressing the main concern of art collectors, which is the quality of the artworks, regardless of the medium in which they are displayed. Cardenas and Justin also address other concerns and issues related to collecting video art that arise in the interviews reproduced in *Collect Digital Video Art*, which can be summarized as follows:

- Video and digital art are closely related to painting, as exemplified by the work of Cory Arcangel, Rafaël Rozendaal or Petra Cortright.
 - Video art occupies a marginal position in the art market, particularly at auctions, and therefore it is not interesting as a form of investment.
 - Given its reproducibility, video art could be sold cheaply in large editions, but this does not make sense in terms of the art market, which favors scarcity and exclusivity.
 - A younger generation of collectors is more interested in art forms related to video and digital technologies, as well as in supporting the artists.
 - The strict installation guides of most video art works impose conditions that some collectors cannot meet. This has dampened the development of the video art market for private collectors.
 - For collectors, conservation can be an intimidating issue, given that they do not always have the means to regularly update the equipment they use to display the artworks.
 - Videos and digital artworks can be easily copied and are frequently widely distributed on the Internet. Some collectors do not mind as long as they have the certificate of authenticity, while others demand that all copies of the artwork are removed from the Web.
- (Cardenas and Justin, 2015, p.32-93)

235. DAD, the Digital Art Device. Kickstarter, cit.

The DAD system is apparently justified by some of these remarks, and offers a solution to several of these issues: if video and digital art is related to painting, a digital frame can be considered the proper display for it; artworks in DAD are sold at market price in limited editions, unlike its competitors, because large editions sold at low prices have almost no resale value; the DAD screen avoids the need for complex installations and updating the equipment, since the artworks are made for the screen or adapted to it; finally, the collector keeps a master copy and a certificate of authenticity of the artworks bought on the platform, as well as a copy in the "digital vault", therefore relieving some concerns about their preservation and reproducibility.

DAD achieves a balance between device, service and content that is specifically suited for art collectors. Although it would seem that its model stands out among its competitors, it must be noted, as will be discussed below, that each of these digital frames is actually addressing a different type of customer.

3.9.6 THE PICTURE FRAME

In an article from 1902 titled "Der Bildrahmen - Ein ästhetischer Versuch" (*The Picture Frame - An aesthetic study*), sociologist Georg Simmel eloquently pointed out that the artwork needs to be a distinct object, a world in itself, separated from the rest of the world and affirming its individuality. The picture frame, asserts Simmel, is what symbolizes and reinforces this separation:

"Indem das Kunstwerk ist, was sonst nur die Welt als ganze oder die Seele sein kann: eine Einheit aus Einzelheiten - schließt es sich, als eine Welt für sich, gegen alles ihm Äußere ab. [...] Was der Rahmen dem Kunstwerk leistet, ist, dass er diese Doppelfunktion seiner Grenze symbolisiert und verstärkt. Er schließt alle Umgebung und also auch den Betrachter vom Kunstwerk aus und hilft dadurch, es in die Distanz zu stellen, in der allein es ästhetisch genießbar wird." (Simmel, 1902)

As we have discussed earlier (see section 3.3), contemporary works of art and particularly those that are indiscernible from an everyday object, rely on the context provided by the "white cube" space of the museum or gallery, as described by Brian O'Doherty in the 1970s. This context isolates the artwork from everything that could distract its perception as art and creates the proper distance between the viewer and the object for the latter to be contemplated. Simmel's observation refers to painting, which was then understood as the art form par excellence, particularly in the domestic setting. Comparing the framed painting with a piece of furniture, Simmel further stresses that the artwork is an object with its own purpose (made for itself and not for us), that hangs on the wall undisturbed by our daily activity, isolated from its environment and ready to be observed:

“Das Kunstwerk ist etwas für sich, das Möbel ist etwas für uns. Jenes, als Versinnlichung einer seelischen Einheit, mag noch so individuell sein: in unserem Zimmer hängend, stört es unsere Kreise nicht, da es einen Rahmen hat, d.h. - da es wie eine Insel in der Welt ist, die wartet, bis man zu ihr kommt, und an der man auch vorüberfahren und vorübersehen kann.” (Simmel, 1902)

Paradoxically, after carrying out numerous “escape attempts” from the gallery space, expanding its boundaries and formats and almost seamlessly merging into everyday life, art comes back to the picture frame in the form of a digital screen. The devices produced by FRM, Electric Objects, Meural, Depict and DAD develop different strategies for collecting and displaying digital and video art and address different types of collectors, but they all share a remarkable attention for the concept of the frame, to the point of its embodiment as a wooden mount. Whereas TV sets usually have a metal or plastic frame, either for technical reasons or to carry out the function identified by Simmel in the picture frame, these digital canvases resort to wood as a way of distancing their dedicated screens from the multipurpose screens of televisions, computers or tablets. Even FRM’s minimalist screen features a frame that is “hand-crafted from walnut, left simple and undecorated to bring out the flawlessness of the wood material”, while Electric Objects offers a handmade wooden frame by Brooklyn-based woodworker Annie Raso and Meural states that its device includes “authentic wood frames, made in the USA.” Depict and DAD also provide a range of wooden frames in different colors.

Wood provides a symbolic and aesthetic accent to a frame that is not limited to the mount but encompasses the whole object. In most cases, a painting is made of a stretched canvas onto which the artist applied pigments, oil, acrylic or other elements. Usually, the artist has decided the final dimensions of the painting beforehand, or at some point in its production. Once the painting is finished, it is framed by cutting four pieces of wood to match the dimensions of the canvas. It is then that the frame carries out its function as it is identified by Simmel. The frame separates the artwork from the rest of the world, but it does not determine the shape of the work, it does not crop it or force its contents to adapt to a pre-defined surface. The digital frames, on the contrary, determine the confines of the artwork, its formal aspects (resolution, colors, size) and also its constituent processes (such as the calculations that take place in a generative animation or an interactive piece). In this sense, the screen size, resolution, processor and orientation of each device determine the features of the art displayed. For instance, Electric Objects’s EO1 is the only digital frame that only allows for portrait orientation. This limitation becomes a statement that applies to all artworks screened on this device, which necessarily adopt vertical compositions. Depict’s 4K screen requires an artwork that is adapted to this resolution, but also provides a significantly different visual experience. It could be argued that this is what usually happens with every screen-based artwork, but in the case of a single artwork the artist is free to find the best solution for one specific piece, whereas the manufacturers of the digital frames have had to decide beforehand the conditions that will apply to all artworks hosted in their devices.

Moreover, each digital frame creates its own “ecosystem” or “holistic system” that permanently links the screen with a collection of artworks for display or sale. As it has been outlined in the previous sections, both the device and the selection of artworks determine a particular approach to collecting and displaying art on a digital screen that addresses a certain type of customer. In an article for *ArtNews*, John Chiaverina describes the Depict Frame as a “50-inch gallery” (Chiaverina, 2015). The comparison with a gallery is fitting insofar as both screen and gallery work within a specific space and develop a selection of artworks and artists that defines their identity and consequently attracts a sector of the public and collectors. A comparison between the technical features, business model and selection of artists in each digital frame (see Table 20) reveals their different approach to the art market.

FRAMED*2.0 is the most technically advanced frame in terms of its multiple features and the ability to interact with it (actually, it is the only frame that can host interactive artworks). It takes advantage of all the functionalities that technology can provide nowadays, which makes the device attractive to a tech-savvy audience (engineers, designers and architects), as well as to artists who want to be able to incorporate interactivity, sound or other forms or input (via the embedded microphone and camera) into their artworks. The artists featured on the FRAMED Store are mostly related to digital art, with some prominent names such as Aaron Koblin, LIA and Rafaël Rozendaal. FRM sells the device in two sizes, with a special price at launch that is similar to those of most competitors, although it may rise considerably.²³⁶ The artworks are sold at low prices in large editions, combining a certain degree of exclusivity with an affordable price, in line with how design products are usually marketed. Given these parameters, it is likely that this device will attract a type of customer interested in art and technology, but not in the art market or the mainstream contemporary art world. Designers, architects and professionals from the technology industry will probably be drawn by the gadget itself as well as the content (remarkably, FRAMED*2.0 will be presented at the MoMA Design Store, a place where art, design and commerce meet). The device, therefore, identifies itself with high-end design, expanding its uses beyond the concept of a digital canvas: some of the pre-installed creations of Nakamura turn the screen into a wall clock, while the ability to quickly display any image from the Internet can be used for presentations and business-related tasks.

With a smaller, more discreet display and consciously limited possibilities (particularly its portrait-only orientation), Electric Objects aims to become a unique object, closely linked to a very specific community. Jake Levine has stressed his interest in “the beauty of the Internet” and having a computer that “fades into the background”: the EO1 is therefore a device that disappears behind the artworks it displays, which can only be static or moving images. Given its affordable price and focus on collaborating with young emerging artists, Electric Objects is particularly suitable for young professionals interested in emerging trends in art, fashion and design, who are also actively engaged in social networks and

236. Usually, items launch on Kickstarter with a special pre-sale price that is doubled when the product is available in stores.

	FRAMED* 2.0	Electric Objects
Features		
Screen size	24" and 40"	23"
Resolution	Full-HD 1080p	Full-HD 1080p
Frame	Walnut (custom colors)	Plastic (black and white) + designer wooden frame
Orientation	Portrait and Landscape	Portrait only
Computer	Quad-core 2.4 GHz	1 GHz Dual ARM Cortex-A9
Microphone	Yes	No
Camera	Yes	No
Speakers	Yes	No
Wi-Fi	Yes	Yes
Control by gesture	Yes	No
Smartphone app	Yes (iOS and Android)	Yes (iOS and Android)
Store	Yes	Yes
Collaborations		
Artists	Aaron Koblin, Emilio Gomariz, LIA, Holger Lippman, Universal Everything, Nerhol, Rafaël Rozendaal	Nicolas Sassoon, Casey Reas, Sara Ludy, Yoshi Sodeoka, Pasquale D'Silva, Erica Gorochow, Patrick Moberg, Rick Silva, Dina Kelbermann, Unicorn, Josh Rigling.
Galleries	None mentioned	Transfer, XPO and others
Museums/Institutions	None mentioned	Tumblr, Cooper Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum and others
Price range		
Device	\$450 (24") \$1500 (40")*	\$499
Artworks	\$35-\$150	Free, but will probably establish a fee later on

Table 20: main technological features, collaborations and prices of devices and services by FRM, Electric Objects, Meural, Depict and DAD. Source: companies websites and Kickstarter campaigns.

Meural	Depict Frame	DAD
27"	50"	42"
Full-HD 1080p	4K	Full-HD 1080p
Maple wood (several colors)	Maple wood (several colors)	Metal + custom wooden frames
Portrait and landscape	Portrait and landscape (rotating)	Portrait and landscape
1.8 GHz Quad-core ARM Cortex-A9	Not specified	2 Ghz
No	No	No
No	No	No
No	No	Yes
Yes	Yes	Yes
Yes	No	No
Yes (iOS and Android)	Yes (iOS)	Yes
Subscription	Yes + subscription	Yes + suscription
Collaborations		
Some of the artists at the Con Artist Collective	Chris Doyle, Eric Cahan, Nicole Cohen, Universal Everything, large collection of artwoks by many artists	assume vivid astro focus, Vincent Broquaire, Jennifer Chan, Gregory Chatonsky, Kolkoz, Angelo Plessas, Paul Souviron, Katie Torn Clément Valla
Yes but not specified	Yes but not specified	XPO and others
Sedition Art, 1000 Museums, Bridgeman Images, Eyes on Walls	Yes but not specified	La Gaité Lyrique and others (not specified)
Price range		
\$495	\$1,800	Screen: 4,500€ (\$5,120) Drive: 1,300€ (\$1,470)
\$4.95/month	\$30 or \$15/month	3,000€ (\$3,412) or 89€/month (\$101)

* The prices of FRAMED*2.0 devices are those published during the Kickstarter campaign and may double when the screens are put on sale.

like to be part of a virtual community. The work carried out by curator Zoë Salditch for the platform and the collaborations with galleries such as Transfer and XPO (see section 3.7.2) mark an affinity with Post-Internet Art and a strong connection between Electric Objects, its product and community, with the young generation of artists and creators who are participating in this trend. The fact that Electric Objects has invested in creating a collection for its Art Club without defining its business model (the artworks are, for the moment, free) indicates that it intends to develop an open and affordable platform that can attract a young audience.

Meural's maple wood framed screen moves away from technology and focuses on classical notions of art. The device is presented as a tool that connects art with people, stressing the importance of feelings and experiences. With a similar configuration to that of its competitors and a slightly bigger size than the EO1 and the 24-inch FRAMED*2.0, the screen itself does not stand out, besides its limited interactivity (the image on display can be selected by swiping the hand in front of the frame). The device sells at an affordable price and is mainly the platform for a subscription service offering a wide selection of classical, modern and contemporary art. Given that most artworks (particularly those included in Meural's promotional material) are reproductions of famous paintings, illustrations and landscape photos, the digital frame is more likely to attract a customer who is interested in decorating her home. Co-founder Jerry Hu describes this type of customer in a promotional video:

“A number of my friends, they have passed that stage of life when they are putting up posters on their walls... You find an image that you like and then you have to go online or go to a store and pay for it and take it home, or wait for a few weeks for it to be shipped... With Meural, you can have that image instantly.”

Meural users therefore are not interested in the art market or the resale value of any content bought on this platform (currently, no artworks are on sale, and if there were, they would probably sell in large editions at low prices). They are only interested in displaying beautiful images (included their own holiday photographs) on the screen and will pay a monthly fee for this service. At affordable prices both for the screen and the access to its art images collection, Meural has the potential to reach a wider (and less sophisticated) sector of consumers than Electric Objects or FRM.

Depict places its product in a similar segment as Meural, although it aims at high-end customers. Its larger, 4K screen is in itself a luxury item that has been designed to fill a 1,44m² area on a wall with its rotating mount. The price of the frame is obviously higher, as well as the subscription to its cloud service. Depict is characterized by its online art collection, the screen being a tool that allows its main service to be more easily integrated into customers's homes than by letting users display the artworks on their TV sets using third-party hardware. Artworks can be bought in large editions at low prices, but the fact that all content can only be viewed on demand by streaming it from

Depict's cloud may deter art collectors from buying the digital frame or subscribing to the service. Although Depict has contacted artists to offer exclusive work, its selection is not particularly interesting to knowledgeable collectors: most artworks are mainly decorative, either landscape photos or digital compositions inspired by Op Art, Pop Art and abstract paintings. It is likely, then, that this device will attract a range of customers interested in art but not dedicated to collecting, who conceive artworks as rather decorative items.

Whereas FRAMED*2.0 has been conceived by a designer and the EO1 was born from the ideas of an IT entrepreneur and later on received the input of art professionals, DAD originates in the context of the art market and the sector of luxury goods. Both DAD devices sell at considerably higher prices than its competitors and are in themselves refined design objects, created by Japanese designer Daï Sugawara, who has worked with Philippe Starck and was approached by Jonathan Ive to join the design team at Apple. The whole DAD system is intended for upmarket collectors who will buy the artworks at market price in limited editions (therefore retaining their resale value), keeping the file in the company's cloud but also receiving a master copy, and will also subscribe to access curated exhibitions every two months. DAD is therefore likely to be the choice of art collectors, particularly those already interested in video art, a much smaller segment than those targeted by Meural and Depict. Aimed at a more selective type of customer, DAD has to focus on the quality of its content and follow the main trends in the art market in order to fulfill their user's expectations.

These digital frames for art exemplify the development of a new sector in the art market, in which a digital device creates its own marketplace and secures the fidelity of its customers beyond discrete sales. Remarkably, none of these companies has received the kind of support from major galleries that quickly went to online platforms such as the VIP Art Fair or Artsy. However, according to the founders of DAD, these “new modes of display” are not competing with the gallery system but rather aim at bringing visibility to artists who create screen-based work (Cardenas and Justin, 2015, p.82). Digital frames can therefore become an alternative way to access the art sold in the art market, complementing the expansion of this market on the online platforms discussed in section 3.8. All these initiatives indicate that the contemporary art market is vividly interested in digital technologies as a tool to access a wider range of customers, or to reach them through different channels.

3.10 CONTEMPORARY ART FOR THE LONG TAIL

The examples explored in this chapter, from artist's strategies to sell their art online or through mobile platforms and the work of long standing and emerging art galleries dedicated to new media art, to the proliferation of online platforms for the distribution and commercialization of contemporary art and digital frames with their own, embedded, marketplaces, describe two major tendencies in the interactions between art, new media and the art market. On the one hand, artists and galleries working with new media seek an *integration* into the mainstream contemporary art market. Artists looking for a viable model to monetize their art and make their activity sustainable have developed strategies to sell online and software-based art. Most of these strategies are experimental or can only apply to individual artworks, showing that the most successful way of bringing art into the art gallery is to adapt the piece to the conditions of the art market, be it as a unique object or limited edition. Galleries specializing on new media art in the late 1990s and early 2000s have sought to exploit a market niche by highlighting the differences between these artistic practices and mainstream contemporary art. However, they have progressively adapted their discourse to a focus on new media art as part of contemporary art, joining younger galleries that tend to avoid a strict identification with digital art. On the other hand, the main players of the art market are investing on an *expansion* of their businesses through online platforms and digital devices, aiming to reach a wider audience, on a global level as well as on other social environments (such as the circle of technology industry investors, for instance). The Internet is perceived as an effective channel of distribution and intermediation with collectors, while newly developed digital frames are intended to find their place in homes and offices, presenting art as content in a controlled environment to buyers and subscribers.

Both tendencies merge into one basic objective: to expand the customer base, reach out to a larger number of people who are willing to pay for access or ownership of an artwork, and attract a larger audience who would contribute to increase the social acceptance of contemporary art.²³⁷ As a social environment that produces a network of relationships between individuals, clustered in different art scenes (Helguera, 2012, p.7), the art world constitutes a relatively small and elitist community whose members seek the recognition of peers, perpetuating the gap between "insiders" (active professionals and collectors) and the general public. In the art market, the separation is greater given the complex mechanisms through which the contradictory relationship between art and commerce is managed. Most people who are not familiar with the social scripts of the art market feel intimidated by the atmosphere of galleries, while the galleries themselves are bound to the convention of presenting the artwork as a luxury item and at the same time play the role of cultural institutions where art is meant to be experienced and discussed. Moreover, the need to control the biography of the artwork (Velthuis, 2007, p.43) leads galleries

237. While in Chapter 1 it has been frequently stated that new media art is under recognized, it is necessary to remind that contemporary art is also exposed to rejection in the wider context of society, as explored, for instance, by Nathalie Heinich (1997).

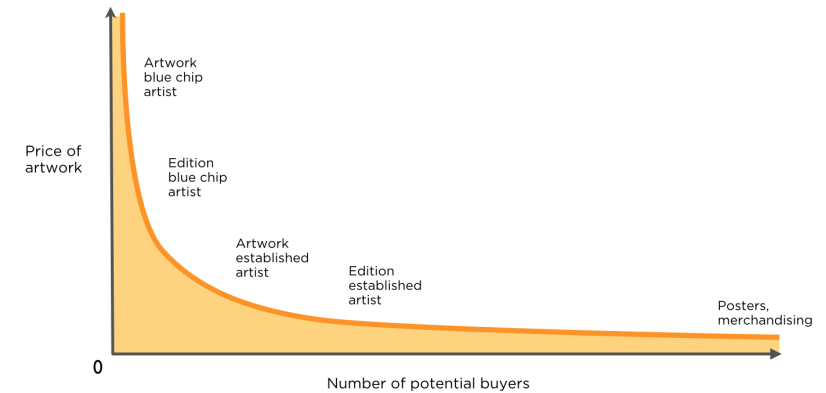


Fig.28. Illustration of a Pareto distribution applied to the relationship between the price of a contemporary art work and its corresponding number of potential buyers. For explanatory purposes, several types of artworks and art related products have been placed on the different levels of the curve, although their position could vary in certain cases.

to be as selective as they can with their customers, favoring collectors whose reputation is known, either because it will increase the value of other works by the same artist or because dealers want to avoid selling to speculators who could ruin the career of an artist by selling her works too quickly.²³⁸ Under the traditional conditions of the art market, artworks are usually conceived as Veblen goods, their value being associated to their high price and their demand being fueled by the fact that they are owned by peers (Velthuis, 2007, p.104; Thomson, 2010, loc.3355). The work of art, understood as a symbol of status, becomes a luxury commodity coveted by a small circle of people who can afford it and visit the gallery, the art fair or attend the auction. The segment of prospective buyers is therefore very limited, constrained by social, economic and geographic conditions: for instance, it could be described as a small group of wealthy people living in a large city, who probably know each other and buy art at the same galleries. However, there is a larger segment of people who are interested in art but do not buy it because it is economically out of their reach. Artists and galleries address this segment with smaller artworks and editions or sometimes accepting fractionated payment, but still there is a much larger segment of people who do not buy art at galleries but buy other products such as books, prints or merchandise at museum shops. The relationship between the prices of artworks and the number of prospective buyers (given an equal interest in the art) can be described as a Pareto distribution (fig.28). This graph shows a concentration of a small amount of potential buyers who can acquire an artwork at a very high price, followed by a larger amount of people who can afford lower prices and, at the end of the curve, a very large amount of people who purchase inexpensive items. This distribution can also be applied to the level of recognition of artists and dealers, as well as their income: a few artists and galleries make large amounts of money from the sale of artworks, down to a large

238. As indicated by Velthuis and Coslor (2012), artworks are usually held for a long period of time, which can be on average 28 years (p.481).

number of those who earn very little from their activity.²³⁹ Given this inequality, artists and gallerists aim to reach the highest part of the curve, that is, to place themselves among the few who dominate the art market and sell artworks for millions of dollars. However, the competition to attain this privileged position is fierce and the hierarchy of the market makes it highly difficult for galleries (not so for artists) to attain the level of the most prominent players. Additionally, this distribution becomes highly risky for the top sellers as long as they concentrate on the smaller segment of buyers who can afford their prices. For this reason, leading galleries also promote young artists, whose work can be sold at lower prices and who also represent an investment in the future, and open showrooms in other cities to attract new customers or control the market of one of their artists.

The Pareto or power law distribution illustrates the inequalities of the art market and contributes to understand its hierarchies and its peculiar economy. However, it also shows that there is a large segment of potential buyers who are usually ignored. The lower end of the curve, which extends as an horizontal line, describes a substantial amount of people who have little money to spend on art. They tend to be ignored because galleries do not have a product that matches their price range and in most cases cannot even reach to them (most of them have never set foot on the gallery, either because they don't know it, are afraid to go or live in a different city). This group also includes many visitors to art galleries who never buy art but rather conceive the exhibitions as cultural activities. They contribute to the social and symbolic aspect of the art market but not (directly) to the economic activity. This situation is similar to that of other markets, as described by writer Chris Anderson in his popular book *The Long Tail*. The author suggests that the Internet has transformed the market in a way that allows to reach a larger customer base and distribute products more effectively, which allows to exploit the market share of products with a lower volume of sales. According to Anderson (2009), "the mass market is turning into a mass of niches" (p.5). Using the graph of a Pareto distribution, he describes these niches as the "long tail" of the curve, which is now economically within reach and can make up a significant market (p.10). Although Anderson refers to selling a large number of products that have less demand instead of concentrating on the sale of a few best-sellers, in the art market this can be applied to the customers instead of the products. The move towards the long tail is, in this case, not to focus only on the small circle of big collectors but to address also the general public. However, as has been said previously (see section 3.1), the art market is different to other markets, the artwork being a rather complex commodity. Unlike consumer products, works of art are associated with lasting values (Graw, 2009, p.26), their value being closely linked to their price (Velthuis, 2007). To sell an artwork within the price range of a large segment of the public implies devaluating it in the eyes of the art world, since it would be close to what is paid for a merchandise item in a museum shop. The artwork must, therefore, retain its symbolic value but at the same time lower its economic value and reach a wider audience.

239. In this case, it must be noted that the tail of the curve is shorter for galleries, because at a certain point the business is not sustainable and the gallery closes. Artists, however, continue their production even when they do not obtain income from it and resort to other sources of funding (see chapter 2).

When *Sedition* (see section 3.8.3) launched its "digital editions", it was wisely decided to lead the introduction of this peculiar format (a large edition of an artwork in digital format at a small price) by selling products branded with the names of world famous artists such as Damien Hirst or Tracey Emin. Hirst's work, in particular, represents the top level of the art market (his auction sale in 2008 reached \$201 million) and is widely known, not just in the art world but also among the general public. By selling a digital edition of an "original" Damien Hirst, including a signed certificate of authenticity, *Sedition* attempted to connect both ends of the Pareto curve: at once a limited artwork by a renowned artist and a digital image that could be bought for £15 and viewed on any screen, the product intended to maintain an aura of exclusivity while being available to anyone. In order to achieve this, *Sedition* had to stick to the conventions of the art market (limited edition, signature of the artist, certificate of authenticity), while stretching them to be applicable to a JPEG image stored in a server. Not everyone was convinced, particularly among art specialists, but the idea was well received outside of the professional field, as the numerous articles published in fashion and lifestyle magazines attest.²⁴⁰ Remarkably, selling editions of their works at such low prices did not have a negative effect on the artists's careers: on one side, the presence of well-known art dealer Harry Blain at the helm of the project gave it a certain level of legitimacy; on the other, the use of digital technologies allowed for a margin of experimentation. Just as the VIP Art Fair took place with the support of leading galleries, Paddle8 has taken the work of young emerging artists to the showroom at Phillips and Charles Saatchi has lent his name to a marketplace for aspiring artists, *Sedition* can sell Damien Hirst for £15 because it does so in a digital environment. The digital has become the sandbox for the contemporary art market, a particular environment where some rules can be loosen, prices can be published, artworks can go from studio to auction and the art world can get a patina of democratization. Although this is far from stating that the art market is being revolutionized by digital technologies, it can be stated that new structures are built on top of the established hierarchy and also new forms of interacting with collectors and the general public are sought.

Sedition's business model popularized the idea of selling digital artworks and videos in large editions at reduced prices,²⁴¹ which has been applied by other platforms such as Daata Editions²⁴² and the previously mentioned FRM, Depict and DAD, and can also be compared to the apps for iOS and Android that some artists have developed from their

240. Press. *Sedition*. Retrieved from <http://blog.seditionart.com/category/press/>

241. This is not to say that the idea was entirely new. In section 3.2, I mention the example of Castelli-Sonnabend Videotapes and Films (CSVF), which sold and rented videos in unlimited copies at low prices in the 1970s (Horowitz, 2011, p.35).

242. Daata Editions is an online platform launched in May 2015 that sells commissioned video, sound and web art editions. Each artwork is sold in editions of 15 with prices ranging from \$100 to \$2,800. Unlike *Sedition*, the digital files can be downloaded to the buyer's computer, although the certificate of authenticity remains with the company. In order to resell the artwork, the collector must therefore contact Daata Editions to transfer the ownership to the buyer, who must also have an account on the platform. Daata takes no commission on these transactions. Retrieved from <https://daata-editions.com>

own artworks. As the use of digital frames increases, paying for a digital edition of an artwork can become a common way of collecting art, both for established art collectors and for art lovers with different income levels. The way in which each company addresses a different sector of customers indicates that there could be a new stratification in the levels of commercialization of artworks: somewhere between digital art and digital content, each artwork may be categorized according to its price and the size of its edition. Low-priced pieces in large numbers can be popular among younger audiences and those who are interested in art but not in serious collecting or even in the resale value of the purchased edition. More expensive artworks would go to collectors who buy these files just as they buy video art works or paintings. As the novelty of the medium fades, the conceptual content of the artworks and their quality is likely to prevail over simple decorative patterns (at least among a sector of the buyers), which may lead to an advantageous position for artists and galleries working with new media, since they may now reach a wider audience already familiarized with digital art.

Another “long tail” to which the contemporary art market is increasingly paying attention is that of potential collectors who are, in different aspects, “distant” to the gallery. This “distance” can be understood in several ways: collectors who are interested in the kind of art that the gallery is selling but live far away and have never visited or know about it; people who would like to buy art but are intimidated by the atmosphere of the gallery or don’t know what to buy; and finally art lovers who have acquired other kinds or formats of art (such as antiquities or prints) and may be interested in the art that the gallery sells. In this case, the power law distribution shows a small number of collectors who are “close” to the gallery (they follow its program, live in the same city, have bought artworks from the gallery) and a long tail of collectors who are “distant”, as I have previously described them. Although the contemporary art world is apparently globalized, most art dealers sell to a local clientele and work with artists from their immediate environment (Velthuis, 2012, p.36). Sociologist Alain Queminn (2012) states that the international art scene is dominated by Western countries with an extremely strong national concentration (p.57). The United States and some countries of Western Europe such as the United Kingdom, Germany, Switzerland, Belgium or France concentrate a large part of the activity in the contemporary art world and constitute its center (p.61). Accordingly, almost all of the artists, galleries and online platforms analyzed in the present study are either located in the United States or in Europe. In this context, art dealers in these countries face a highly competitive market and need to reach out to new collectors beyond their local environment. Online platforms such as Artsy and Artspace provide a channel to access this potential public who, as previously stated, is not only composed of collectors in other regions but also of people who are likely to buy art if they are taught to appreciate it and feel confident about purchasing from a gallery. These platforms are specifically addressed to collectors, offering them information and tools to find the artworks they may like, among the selection provided by partner galleries. Since search costs (the time spent looking for art, visiting galleries, etc.) are important to collectors (Velthuis, 2007, p.93), these centralized databases provide a fast way to look for art and ease the connections

between collectors and dealers, albeit in a more impersonal way. If, as the Hiscox Report (ArtTactic, 2015) predicts, the online art market can triplicate its revenues by 2019 (see section 3.8), it is likely that these online services may become crucial players in dominating the contemporary art market. Its influence can be much more decisive than the platforms selling digital files because the art sold at Arsy and Artspace is the same art that can be found in bricks-and-mortar art galleries. In a similar way, auctions houses are expanding their million dollar business online (after some initial failures), taking advantage of the possibility of making even larger profits by saving on the insurance, transportation and storage costs involved in traditional auctions.

The art market is experimenting profound transformations, although its fundamental structures and hierarchies remain intact. As Olav Velthuis (2012) suggests, it can be stated that the art market is both in stasis and flux (p.18). Although new modes of distribution and consumption of cultural goods such as books, music and films suggest tempting templates for the art market, the major differences between artworks and these goods indicate that trying to create “the Spotify of art” or “the art market’s Amazon” is the wrong way to approach the art world. The auction market is still controlled by Sotheby’s and Christie’s, while ArtBasel is still the leading art fair (Velthuis, 2012, p.34). Even new platforms such as Artsy and Artspace are supported and controlled by leading galleries, and paintings are still the most popular art form in the online market (ArtTactic, 2015, p.17). But the art market is not monolithic: there is a multiplicity of markets in different regions, art scenes and digital environments. The question remains whether one of these markets will grow to the point of imposing new rules to the established structure dominated by galleries and auction houses. The answer may emerge from the long tail.

4. CONCLUSIONS

4.1 NEW MEDIA BECOMES CONTEMPORARY

The separation between new media art and mainstream contemporary art has been bridged by a group of young artists who adapt their work to the art market and contribute to bring attention to digital culture. This does not imply a “convergence” (Manovich, 1996) or a “consummation” (Quaranta, 2013, p.170); what it does is to underline the exhaustion of the discourse surrounding New Media Art as a separate entity. The set of artistic practices related to electronic, digital, and bio technologies can hardly be said to ever constitute an entity, as exemplified by the multiplicity of “unfortunate” terms that have been used to describe them (see 1.1). In many cases, new media art has defined itself in its opposition to contemporary art rather than through a specific set of shared qualities. Festivals have provided a context and a space where all these creative practices have been exhibited and evaluated, to the extent that new media art could be identified with the content of the festivals themselves. However, these dynamic cultural events are characterized by their heterogeneity, putting together experiments in technology, artistic projects, and products of the entertainment industry under the same roof. This is not to say that a wide, interdisciplinary approach to the creative uses of emerging technologies is to be condemned; rather, the intention is to stress the inadequacy of assigning them a single label or considering them as a unique group, movement, or art world, evolving in unison. There certainly is a community and a network of professionals that can be described as an art world, with shared assumptions and a common discourse, particularly in terms of its relationship with mainstream contemporary art. Nevertheless, these professionals have different backgrounds, interests, and approaches to a field where art is only one of a combination of elements. From the perspective of different disciplines, new media art can be conceived in multiple ways: for instance, as a form of illustrating a scientific concept, testing the possibilities of a newly developed technology, or creating a novel form of human-computer interaction. These purposes are, of themselves, perfectly valuable. They can lead to better science, new technological developments, and to an enhanced design of the software and devices we use every day. However, they tend to be unacceptable from the standpoint of the art world, which assigns to artworks the sole function of being artworks, therefore fulfilling the role of an artifact of a kind created to be presented to an art world public (Dickie, 1997 [2005], p.115). With this constraining definition, the art world tends to establish a separation between what is art and what is not, which is particularly necessary at a time when anything can be an artwork (Danto, 1997 [1999], p.34). It is therefore not surprising that the mainstream contemporary art world has been reluctant to accept artworks created outside of its own field, sometimes with different purposes than those assigned to an artwork. Although many artists in the contemporary art scene have continuously tested the limits of the definition of art, their efforts have been contextualized from their inception in the art world, and not in a separate, self-defined field of artistic practices.

If current new media art becomes contemporary, it does so in the context of the contemporary art market, where artists and art galleries move away from the “New

Media Art” label and integrate their work in the sphere that dominates mainstream contemporary art. Post-Internet art appears as a radical break from the New Media Art discourse, a generational change that makes new media art obsolete in the form in which it has been presented in festivals. However, this is not the case. As a struggle to achieve recognition in the mainstream contemporary art world and enter the art market, Post-Internet promotes and denies its own label, ultimately representing a reduced cluster of individuals. This group is part of a wider tendency to move away from the festival and into the contemporary art world; other artists whose work is totally unrelated to Post-Internet are equally interested in exhibiting in art galleries and museums. However, they do not constitute the whole group of artists working with new media. Other artists are not interested in the art market, some do not have a problem with the term “New Media Art,” some consider their work as a form of research and almost dismiss the possibility of creating a specific art object or preserving it. Some of these artists will continue to present their work at festivals and in non-commercial contexts (not overtly commercial, at least).¹ Their work may not be visible in the contemporary art world, but that does not make it non-existent. On the contrary, it opens a space for experimentation and research in art that is not necessarily linked to the demands of the art market or the hierarchies of the art world. The work of these artists will have different constraints and imperatives imposed by the context in which it is presented. As previously discussed, artists working in academic research labs can be expected to participate in ambitious projects with a team of collaborators, just as artists selling in the art market can be pressured to make artworks that attract collectors at art fairs, and artists developing advertising campaigns are usually told to create an attractive image of a brand or product. Each context implies a set of expectations, which are projected onto the artwork. Artists can use their creativity in any of these fields, generating a different output that it may be misleading to simply label as “art,” or “new media art,” given that it would assign a single purpose to a set of different elements with distinct roles in dissimilar contexts.

It can be concluded that new media art is not limited to either the New Media Art world or the Mainstream Contemporary Art world, nor that new media artists can only produce artworks. To expect a recognition of new media art in the mainstream contemporary art world is understandable, since it is in this context that most artists build their careers and achieve posthumous fame—not to mention earning enough money to make their activity sustainable, profitable or even prosperous. However, it denies the possibility of more than one art world existing and of different contexts in which art can be produced, presented, and discussed. Likewise, it is usually considered suspicious that an artist creates something that is not an artwork, and even when she does this creation has to be somehow framed within the parameters of the artist’s work within the art world, as for instance Takashi Murakami’s collaboration with Louis Vuitton, or Olafur Eliasson’s Little Sun Lamp and Little Sun Charger. As it has been discussed, many artists nowadays are able to work in a wide range of disciplines, using their creativity for different purposes. In particular,

1. It may be debated if there exists any non-commercial context for the presentation of art, given that the programs of festivals, museums and other venues are influenced by the commercial interests of governments and sponsors.

artists working with code are potentially able to create anything from a software art piece to a commercial video game, a health app, or a text editor. To deny this or try to devalue what does not function as an artwork is also limiting. Instead of closing in on itself, the art world could expand towards a more open notion of art in its interaction with other fields and towards the role of the artist as a creator. This could also be applied, as it will be discussed below, to a new kind of art market and art collector.

4.1 “SHOW ME SCREENS, SHOW ME SOFTWARE”

Alain Servais is a Belgian financier and art collector who has gained notoriety since 2014 for his interest in new media art and his critical comments about the contemporary art market. Condemning the current financialization of art and the way in which the art world resembles the fashion industry, Servais has increasingly become a prominent voice in the context of a market driven by collectors with the lifestyle and social status of a celebrity. In January 2014, he participated in a talk at the Unpainted Media Art Fair in Munich,² where he argued that collecting new media art entails duties (such as maintaining the hardware) and that sometimes the collector is left to himself after he has bought the piece. However, he observed that the obsession with the artwork as an object is ridiculous, and that he preferred art in a virtual form, that “talks about today.” In an interview in 2015, he elaborated on this idea:

“But, yes, digital art—and we must dare to go the entire way. It’s like Facebook. Facebook is not just something on your desktop, it’s something that you consult on your iPhone, on your computer, on your iPad, on your watch, on your whatever. It’s virtual. So don’t try to bring everything back to objects, like self-branded Post-Internet art tries to do. [...] So I tell all the galleries coming to me, “Show me only the things that are digital. Show me screens, show me software.” [...] the art of the future will be partly virtual, and I believe that there will be more virtual art remembered in 150 years than there will be of Los Angeles painting.” (Goldstein, 2015)

Servais’s words go in the opposite direction of the trend that Post-Internet art has embraced: instead of creating new objects, he advocates collecting art on a screen. Software-based art that—as Steve Sacks reminded in his intervention at the same talk in the Unpainted Media Art Fair—could be stored and displayed in a dedicated screen at the collector’s home. This, in turn, corresponds to the business model of FRM, Depict, Electric Objects, Meural, and DAD the Digital Art Device. The fact that at least five companies in the USA, Europe and Japan are investing on the same format for collecting and displaying art (with some differences, as seen in 3.9) indicates that having a dedicated screen at home is perceived as the logical next step in the consumption of cultural goods. It certainly makes sense that, given the accelerated growth of sales of smartphones and tablets, the

2. UNPAINTED TALK 18.1.14 / Challenges in collecting new media. Vimeo. Retrieved from <https://vimeo.com/85662241>

screens of which only get bigger (as exemplified by Apple's iPhone 6 Plus and iPad Pro), and the diminishing cost of LED displays, more and more people will add screens to their homes for different purposes. As Mark Weiser (1991) predicted in his essay on ubiquitous computing, we are already surrounded by digital devices; it is but a matter of time that digital displays take the place of the pictures on our walls.

However, it is too soon to determine the effect that digital art frames will have on the art market and the habits of collectors: some of these devices started shipping a few months ago, while others are still on pre-order. As previously discussed, the art market does not behave like other markets; fully "virtual" options, such as the VIP Art Fair, have not fared well, due in part to the fact that the social interaction was eliminated. This can dissuade most collectors who like to travel to art fairs or visit galleries, watch art they like, and talk to gallerists and artists as well as other collectors and acquaintances. To buy an artwork online or through the smartphone app of a digital frame only requires clicking on a button: there is no need to talk to a gallerist, find out about the price, maybe ask for a discount, have it shipped to one's home, and installed. This can also be positive, since many people (particularly those who are not used to collecting art) feel intimidated by the galleries and the secrecy of the art market. Buying online is easier, since the price is known in advance and the decision to purchase the artwork can be made privately, without the relative pressure of a face-to-face encounter with the buyer. This privacy is increasingly important nowadays, when, according to sociologist Sherry Turkle (2011), we use technology to build relationships while at the same time we use it to protect ourselves from those very relationships. Turkle refers to the fact that teenagers prefer to text than to call on the phone, creating a separation that allows them to measure their words and control their social exchanges. If some of these adolescents are going to be the art collectors of tomorrow, they are likely to prefer an online platform or a visit to the gallery.

At this point, it can be argued that people who actively participate in the art world generally prefer social interaction; it is unlikely that someone buys an expensive and unique item such as an artwork sight unseen. As an economic operation, it is risky (Horowitz, 2012, p.86), and as a decision purely based on the intention of enjoying the artwork, it is difficult, given that the details and size of the piece are not easily perceivable. For this reason, online platforms include zooming tools and a "view in room" feature, but this still pales in comparison to seeing the artwork in person. However, as the Hiscox Report reveals (see 3.8), the tendency to buy online is growing, particularly painting and prints (which are easier to evaluate on a screen) on a low price range. It can be expected, then, that buying online becomes increasingly popular for lower priced artworks, in a sector of the market that is not the circle of the most prominent and influential collectors. People who buy art to decorate their homes, as well as those who are interested in art but not in speculating or achieving an influential position in the art world, are likely to buy art online or in digital frames. Software-based art, as the one that Servais is demanding from galleries, can find a proper niche in this environment, selling through the digital art frames's stores at several hundred dollars apiece in editions of a few hundred. The constraints, in this case, stem

from the format of the screen itself (the artwork must be adapted to the screen, although most of them allow for portrait and landscape orientation) and the proprietary ecosystem created by the device and its store or collection. Collectors currently have to choose which device displays the art they prefer and stick to it, or else buy different devices according to the content they want to display. Although it may be possible that a leading company ends up dominating the market for online sales (Horowitz, 2012, p.110) and possibly digital frames, at this moment the market is segmented according to the choices of each manufacturer, which acts as a gallery.

Servais compares digital art with Facebook in terms of its ubiquity. It may be contended that checking the social network for likes is not the same as contemplating an artwork. In any case, it is also worth considering if an artwork can be something that is carried in the pocket or stored in a computer to be displayed from time to time, as if it were kept in a drawer and taken out "when art is needed" (see 3.6). Instead of having art hung on the wall or standing on a corner of the living room, waiting to be looked at, it could be a content to be displayed on demand. Seditio applies this idea by selling digital editions that can be viewed on smartphones, tablets, computers, and smart TVs. Although they simply intend to solve the problem of selling the digital file "unframed" (as Steve Sacks would put it—see 3.7) and have the client provide the hardware, Seditio's model allows for different experiences of the same artwork. Artist LIA, who has adapted her work to iOS versions and sold them on the App Store, prudently considers these affordable software pieces as a test, a sort of demonstration of her work that cannot be considered on the same level of her individual pieces. The context created by the display device together with the price of the piece determines the value of the artwork. In this sense, the artwork is left in an awkward position, given that its value has traditionally been based on its scarcity and unique qualities. As a piece of software or a digital file, it now enters the distribution channels of mass media and intends to simulate the business models applied to books, music, and films. However, these cultural goods have always been valued for their content and, contrary to artworks, in relation to the numbers of copies that are sold of each individual title. In order to follow this model successfully, a radical change in the perception of artworks is needed. It is unlikely that this can happen in the art market, particularly if it entails selling at lower prices and expecting that a large number of copies sold generating a profit. Contemporary art is not meant for the general public, artworks are not massively consumed the way books, music, and films are. Even if some artists reach global fame, their work attains this recognition as museum pieces, available only as merchandise. Digital artworks sold at low prices tend to be perceived as a mere reference to an actual artwork. Some of the formats used by Seditio (photos of installations, looping videos of sculptures, and software art) contribute to this perception by offering something less than an artwork, at a lower price.

Scarcity is defined in terms of the limited number of copies that can be made of a single artwork. If it is a digital file, the certificate of authenticity becomes more valuable than the piece itself, since it is what distinguishes the "original" from a valueless "copy." Rafael

Lozano-Hemmer has developed a durable certificate meant to be stored in the safe that contains all the information about the artwork, while the digital files can be distributed or stored in hard drives or cloud-based services (see 2.3). Sediton and DAD provide their clients with copies of the digital artworks they buy and keep the “original” files on a “digital vault” (see 3.9). Nevertheless, scarcity can also be conceived in terms of the specific processes taking place in a software-based artwork. For instance, Carlo Zanni’s online films *The Possible Ties Between Illness and Success* (2006)³ and *My Temporary Visiting Position from the Sunset Terrace Bar* (2007),⁴ generated a different video every day, resulting in more than three hundred versions of each piece. This allowed the artist to sell different amounts of versions (a day, a week, a month) and set different prices. Additionally, a Kickstarter project by Electric Objects invited users to contribute \$5 and their data to produce four digital artworks (see 3.9.2). These pieces create different visual compositions based on the data provided by contributors, and therefore individual versions of a same piece (using the data from a defined set of people) could be sold, if that were consistent with the concept of each artwork. Therefore, digital art that processes data can facilitate a different form of scarcity by selling versions of a single artwork using different data sets instead of limited editions of the same piece.

Digital art allows for new ways of selling and collecting art, which contribute to transform the art market. These possibilities have been consciously limited (see 3.2), since they are currently incompatible with the structure of the market and the way it attributes value to the artworks. However, in a specific environment—be it the marketplaces of digital art frames, certain online platforms, or communities of digital artists—they may be explored and developed. Gradually introducing another way of collecting art, digital artworks could constitute a “third market” different from the primary and secondary art markets, where the value of each piece is based on other parameters. In the context of the society of information and knowledge, in which, as Jeremy Rifkin (2000) states, “markets give way to networks, sellers and buyers are replaced by suppliers, and virtually everything is accessed” (p.6), collecting art is also based on access. Instead of paying for a physical object, collectors can now pay for the intellectual property rights of an artwork (Horowitz, 2011, p.123), and derive a personal experience from it. Understanding artworks in terms of the experience they provide rather than as unique objects allows to divorce their value from their scarcity while achieving quite the exact opposite: that same value is increased as more and more copies are made. For instance, an artwork such as Rafaël Rozendaal’s *Iffyesno.com* can be experienced by anyone who accesses the site; furthermore, every time a user loads the page, a copy of the artwork (as html code) is transferred to her computer. Rozendaal’s piece is therefore continuously copied; however, it still belongs to Benjamin Palmer and Elizabeth Valleau, the collectors who bought it and whose names are displayed on the title of the website. The artwork can be viewed on any device with an Internet browser, but its ubiquity

3. The Possible Ties Between Illness and Success. Carlo Zanni. Retrieved from <http://zanni.org/wp/index.php/portfolio/tpt/>

4. My Temporary Visiting Position from the Sunset Terrace Bar. Carlo Zanni. Retrieved from <http://zanni.org/wp/index.php/portfolio/my-temporary-visiting-position-from-the-sunset-terrace-bar/>

and adaptability does not make it any less valuable. Quite the opposite, the more people experience it, the more valuable it becomes. People may enjoy it and—as with a book, film, or song—comment on it, boosting the social recognition of the artist and the collectors. The reproducibility of artworks as digital files can therefore establish a new form of patronage. For instance, a collector buys art and then freely shares it, whilst retaining the ownership of the “originals” and having his name attached to the artworks. The value of these artworks can be raised by the number of people who download a copy, in the same way that Petra Cortright sets the price of her YouTube videos based on their respective number of views. Social capital can then generate economic capital, as the collector could re-sell the pieces in his collection at higher prices based on their popularity. As with open source software, artworks could be sold under the condition that they continue to be freely accessible.

The remarkable interest expressed by Alain Servais for digital art (and software-based art in particular) also has a pragmatic side. The Belgian collector considers that the current trend of speculation in the art market is likely to escalate into a point of saturation:

“I believe that the craze for contemporary art among these new buyers who don’t know anything is going to create a situation when they just accumulate and accumulate and accumulate, and one of the biggest problems for any collector is storage [...] I know many collectors who have hundreds of pieces that they would like to sell, and they don’t know how to sell them. So my view of the future is that suddenly there could be a glut appearing.” (Goldstein, 2015)

The glut or oversupply Servais refers to is the hypothetical scenario where collectors can no longer store the artworks they have bought (which generate continuous storage and maintenance expenses) and feel impelled to sell them as quickly as possible. This leads to dropping prices and the careers of certain artists, as well as generating an atmosphere of uncertainty and mistrust in the art market. Arguably, such a situation would not take place in market of digital artworks stored in cloud-based vaults and displayed on dedicated screens, or any screen available. The likeliness of a glut appearing is difficult to predict, although it must be taken into consideration that Servais refers to a group of collectors who do not represent the most prominent sector of the art market (Velthuis, 2014). What is interesting about the situation described by Servais is that it presents a very different view of the artwork as an object.

Many of the initiatives analyzed in this dissertation have just begun their activities. Changes happen fast as the use of digital technologies continues to affect every aspect of society; some innovations are but simple fads, others appear too soon, and some slowly and quietly bring forth deep transformations. It may take some time until, as Clay Shirky (2008) puts it, technology is boring enough to be socially interesting (p.105). Eventually, everyone will have a dedicated screen above the sofa, displaying software art, images, videos, or any conceivable content downloaded from the Internet. This large amount of connected screens at people’s homes will certainly give artists some exciting ideas.

A1. INTERVIEWS*

A1.1 ARAM BARTHOLL, ARTIST

Skype interview, April 17, 2013 (excerpts)

How do you define yourself?

When people ask me about that I say that I am an artist, and when they want to know a bit more I also say media artist. In some school in Hamburg they said “conceptual and media artist”, which works quite well for me. But of course what is already in there when you say you’re a media artist... usually I’ll be like contemporary fine artist... people try to avoid to say that because it has a bad connotation. And that’s sad of course, it shouldn’t be like that but... have you seen this article? It just came out recently... My work is more about media than my work is media art, so something like that, when people want to know. And also when... I mean it’s different when parents or a friend asking this or the guy in customs when you enter the US and you explain to them what is a media artist or whatever... And then, of course when you ask me about this there is this whole discussion in the background. It seems if you just say artist it’s like you’re a painter or a sculptor... Recently... I liked this... Times magazine called me interdisciplinary artist, which in fact is also a very long... but it describes, sort of, pretty well... because I am hoping in between these boundaries. And that’s also what I think is important to do. So this works pretty well, but it also sounds like an excuse (laughs).

It sounds like mixed media...

Yes it’s true... The problem when you say “media artist” is that it sounds like it refers to Ars Electronica, dah-dah-dah, Transmediale... And then people from the arts have a very... set idea

of what this is, and... and there’s also many issues about what certain kinds of media art represents that I also have my problems with. And at the same time, this Bishop article from Artforum last year, which lot of people talked about or raged about, whatever...

It’s interesting that this article generated this big, outraged response... and I think that it is interesting this kind of accusing each other of being blind... It is this idea that people from these two different artworlds see things differently...

Yes... I have been in this discussion for like several years already, and apparently I am artist who is in between now... there’s many examples today of media artists who are also working in the commercial field and with galleries and all this. I just started with this one and a half years ago, and it’s a new experience but I was also sort of aiming for this, and the shows I did recently, the *OFFLINE* art show I did in Paris in the gallery with the routers on the walls... in the back there is this idea like there is this way to sneak into the door, right? To present these works in a format that collectors, fine art market people are better connected to. It’s ridiculous! (laughs) But it’s this thing hanging on the wall in the white cube and you can buy it off the wall and you can hang it above your sofa... so this is one part of it... So, I followed this discussion a bit, what’s going on and the Bishop article and blablablah... but I thought whatever, I’m just doing my thing. I’m more interested in making things and by making these projects commenting, maybe, or trying to open ways for people. But the discussion, as a discussion is also tiring... I mean, for some reason, coming from media art this is a big deal

* Note: the answers provided by interviewees are reproduced in their original language. Blasphemy and grammatical errors have not been edited.

for all the media art people. It's also interesting, for instance, when you work in Eyebeam, where I was in 2010 and 2011, the people working there, it's not only media art in terms of Ars Electronica but it is even more technological, they're in between applied technical stuff like working for NASA... so it's like a company of biotechnical... In a way, it's also more honest, I would say, but when you talk to them, most of those artists sort of they wish they could be in the art world too.

This always has been a big deal for all these media artists, and I think this is probably the same with photography and art photography, or experimental cinema, cinema, and video art... I mean, there's always all these layers of... even in painting, you have the abstract people, the realist, naturalist... and then they hate each other... So there's these different groups accusing each other... That's what I always encounter in media art, with media people they are always mad about, or not really mad but more like offended in the corner like "I don't care what you do". But at the same time they oppose this whole market and selling idea... I grew up in festivals and with media art, as a media artist, in this whole field, and now... I think it's good to be in between these fields and boundaries and of course there's all these conventions and rules about what you're supposed to do and what you're not supposed to do in fine art, but I think it's good to find your own way there and that what I'm doing.

At one point it was still a good thing to be related to new media art, but in recent years it seems like it is better to say I'm doing contemporary art. Have you developed your career in a way that, if you were just a contemporary artist you wouldn't have arrived there?

It's not so much like "oh, I want to be with the real people now and this is all not valid here"... It's just more what I saw and experienced myself. Just the fact that a lot of media art is

very connected with technology and MIT, like this interactive thing made in 1985 which was so hot... but then of course, today everyone has Nintendo Wii, and say: "so what?"... And this is one of the main problems, when your art is relying on the newness and then we talk about new media art, which is even worse... This advances so fast... [connection problem]

It's interesting when I talk to Wolf Lieser, he says, and it's true, that when you go to fairs there's all this *media art*, like screens and stuff, but from contemporary art... so on one hand we are stuck in this niche, Transmediale, whatever niche and discussing these topics, but there's artists out there already making all this stuff... and that's the whole point, that the whole internet, computer development has been so massive over the last ten, twenty years, and all these security, privacy topics arrived in a very broad level and society discussion, and also in arts, so now there are painters painting Facebook pages... and there's the whole young generation who is doing just whatever they want so they do screen stuff, they do installation, sculpture, drawings and they do also websites, computer gifs... I think it's a good development...

Today all the Post-Internet people don't want to be called Post-Internet (laughs), like I don't want to be called media artist... There's of course the tension going on, with the older generation saying "we did this 20 years ago" and the younger generation saying "yeah, I don't care"... At least what is on the positive side, is that how media are used today it's more open.

Today the context is different: before technology belonged to a research department, and there were all these MIT people doing things, and now technology is everywhere and we have developed a culture around it. In your work I can see that.

Yes, that's the way of addressing these questions and these in-between status, yes it's true.

The OFFLINE exhibition, do you consider it a gesture, or can it really be a model for exhibiting net art?

It's both. Maybe the gesture is stronger... but that's what I hear now, Evan [Roth] already sold the second piece in that show and I think that Kim Asendorf sold that too... It was conceived like this, that it is an open model, people can use it... of course it plays with the whole idea of... people go to shows and you watch the media stuff on a screen hanging on the wall but you can watch it on your private screen, which you look at all the time anyway. I think that time will tell, I'm sure it's not going to be like the big format of presentation, but certainly there's a twist there that you can try.

Many artists have created derivative works, in the form of videos, prints, bringing it into the format of the gallery, so maybe if you take the audience into experiencing it in a digital environment, maybe this is the way to go...

I totally think that this is way better than... now the whole contemporary art world is entering the Internet by these big sites, right? Artsy, etc... Sedition, which is really bad... You start to collect JPEGs of Damien Hirst's skull, and it's online but it's in your *vault*, but your vault could be on your phone or your iPad, but it's ridiculous, of course.

My impression is that while new media art is interested in the dynamics of the art market, the art market is only interested in new media as a tool, but not new media art.

Of course, that's the whole discussion about the commercial art market, every artist who is working on that field, they probably don't say it in public but it's boring and very conservative, and most people go the safe way. And making sure it stays in the canon of art.

[...]

Olia Lialina says that it is no problem to sell net

art, she has done it, for instance *My Boyfriend Came Back From The War* is a edition of 4 or 5 and she has sold already 3... and people get hard drives, and some certificate, and this is also the way JODI has sold pieces, and of course the piece is online. And then there's Rafaël [Rozendaal] selling websites, and Evan is also doing it and now Petra [Cortright] is selling her YouTube videos... and this show which was called *OFFLINE art*, but at the same time I think sixty percent of the pieces were also online, so... I left it open to the artists themselves to decide whether they have their work only in the machine or keep online and of course I am not going to tell Olia Lialina or JODI to take their stuff offline. Even Kim Asendorf has included a folder in the router with a special hash with the validation of the files that these are the only existing files, creating this scarcity thing which is a point for the art world, apparently. And then other people think it is ridiculous...

[...]

I am in the lucky position that I already made objects, and there is very few screen-based or software pieces... and that's sort of my advantage in the whole discussion that there is already things which are tangible, it's not like a JODI website...

You work both with performative actions, linked to hacker culture and also with objects that can perfectly enter the market, how do you combine both types of work?

Yes, there are projects like *Dead Drops* that became so central to my career and have this hacker culture in the concept, but... well there's always things that you just can't sell. [connection problems] Anyway, I think that there are lost of examples like this in fine art... and then you make a performance and then you sort of generate an artifact from the performance or have this videos, etc...

Now I have to struggle with these formats

because I have this upcoming solo show in Paris, and then the art fairs, so I have to think which works can go, fulfill the expectations, see how far I want to go... It becomes like an art kung-fu...

Do you think that the festival scene is still as relevant as it was some years ago?

Well, it's hard to say, I don't know if there will be fewer... Ars Electronica is always the example and for some reason what they do, they do very well and they are very good in involving the whole city and involving the economic, the firms and the area... it's really successful... For these reasons it will probably go on, they have lots of funding and support from companies and stuff. And then there's always the discussion about Transmediale in Berlin, they are doing a good job but I don't want to be in the position to save one of these festivals...

A1.2 SHU LEA CHEANG, ARTIST

Skype interview, July 3, 2013 (excerpts)

[03/07/13 11:06:14] Pau Waelder: In your work, you use "new media" but you address issues related to society, gender, environment... do you feel that as an artist it is your responsibility to address these issues?

[03/07/13 11:07:09] Pau Waelder: (With this question I mean that many artists working with technology focus on issues mainly derived from said technology)

[03/07/13 11:07:28] shuleacheang: not so much my responsibility, but more of my living conditions.

[03/07/13 11:08:11] shuleacheang: yes, i understand the tendency of technology applied art, but for me. i use technology as borrowed tools.

[03/07/13 11:10:11] Pau Waelder: From your experience, would you say that there has been a change in the way "new media art" is presented

from the 90s until now? Has it moved from techno-utopian to techno-critic, so to say?

[03/07/13 11:12:40] shuleacheang: well, we can hardly use the term 'new media art' anymore these days. maybe you are aware of this show, The Art Formerly Known As New Media ,curated by Sarah Cook and Steve Dietz , in 2005, at Banff, canada, which i am part of.

[03/07/13 11:13:30] Pau Waelder: Yes, I wanted to go into the use of this term...

[03/07/13 11:13:45] shuleacheang: i think there is always the parallel development of techno-utopian to techno-critic.

(1)[03/07/13 11:15:20] shuleacheang: recently i visited ars electronica center in Linz, austria, I was thinking how the (new) media is dead as presented in a museum context, while, yes, the media field is as vibrant as ever with socially engaged initiatives.

[03/07/13 11:17:12] Pau Waelder: I see, that is very interesting, so you would say that the art and technology field should move more towards social initiatives, activism, interventions etc than into the museum/gallery context?

[(2)03/07/13 11:19:11] shuleacheang: oh, but i dont say that, i say, there is always parallel developments. I was very much part of the museum system, but i finally give up on the gallery scene, working more in the open fields..... surely any art needs museum endorsement in certain form, this I cannot deny or resist.

[03/07/13 11:21:01] Pau Waelder: I understand, I didn't mean it to sound like and either/or situation. Still, you say you gave up on the gallery scene, can you tell me why?

[03/07/13 11:22:13] shuleacheang: in fact, i am planning a show at Furtherfield in London, opening august 31. but guess not a commercial gallery.

[03/07/13 11:22:47] shuleacheang: but yes, my work is really processing, durational work, it is very hard for gallery presentation/sale.

[03/07/13 11:24:47] Pau Waelder: I see, that is

the main problem that many artists have told me about when entering the gallery context. Still it would be possible to work on the basis of actions/performances or other sorts of process-based work and generate derivative works, such as prints, videos, books, etc...

[03/07/13 11:26:47] shuleacheang: yes, in the process of producing large format photo prints, but dont want to leave it as such...

[03/07/13 11:27:16] shuleacheang: would be doing intervention on my own photo prints.

[03/07/13 11:27:32] shuleacheang: maybe the only way i can reconcile the gallery show.

[03/07/13 11:28:30] Pau Waelder: Do you think that you need this reconciliation? You have said that art needs museum endorsement, is this also true of the art market?

[03/07/13 11:31:07] shuleacheang: I am interested in the museum as the effective public interface, but i am not seeking art market's certification.

[03/07/13 11:35:48] Pau Waelder: I see. How would you describe, then, your experience with museums? One of your works, Brandon, was acquired by the Guggenheim Museum but it is currently offline. Is the museum ready to show and collect net based or media art works?

(3)[03/07/13 11:40:47] shuleacheang: it's been so many years and the museum still not able to deal with it. Yes, for BRANDON, i have been dealing with Guggenheim's archival department for 2 years to bring it back online, but still not happening.

[03/07/13 11:41:52] shuleacheang: The high hope in the 90s for the virtual museum seems to have vanished. now we are stranded in dealing with net art legacy and archival issues.

[03/07/13 11:45:19] Pau Waelder: I'm sorry to read that. Yes, it seems like there was a great deal of enthusiasm for net art in museums in the 90s but it has vanished. We could say that Brandon exemplifies the way in which an artist working with the web could cut through the art

world hierarchy and have her work included in a world class museum. This was the big hope for the web at that time, wasn't it? To be free of the limitations set by galleries, etc...

[03/07/13 11:48:34] shuleacheang: At the time, The Guggenheim Museum also hire an architecture firm to 'build' a virtual museum, but again, there is this 'domain' ownership issue while net art digital art wants to be free...

[...]

[03/07/13 11:58:14] Pau Waelder: But you have been able to develop your work in residencies, exhibitions, etc in several non-commercial exhibition spaces. Can the art market be avoided? Is it possible to gain recognition outside the structure of the mainstream art world?

[03/07/13 12:00:56] shuleacheang: let's say, I am taking a more guerrilla tactics these days, while putting myself in 'legitimized' exposure, I am also 'broadcasting' in a free style.

[03/07/13 12:05:50] Pau Waelder: I see. I know that my questions tend to paint black and white pictures, but I am very interested in how digital art and contemporary art have developed parallel art worlds. It seems that in the 90s it was even convenient to be part of this new field which caught the attention of museums, but lately I see that many artists are uncomfortable with the "new media art" label and look forward to be integrated into the mainstream art world. In your experience, how did this separation between digital art and contemporary art work? Would you say there was a discourse aiming to identify digital art as a "new" art?

[03/07/13 12:10:00] shuleacheang: Good that you have such a read on the 'scene'. Yes, it is a rather 'peculiar' situation I set myself in. I am inclined to call myself 'self-styled'. I think mostly i am withdrawn with how the 'scene' progresses..In the 80s, i was making video art/ video installation, but now this form is part of 'art'. In the 90s with net art, we are special category with media focused festivals.. I am

losing the catch up on the trend. :)

[03/07/13 12:12:49] Pau Waelder: Yes, it is hard to keep track of the trends :-). I have seen lately young artists working with Tumblr and online collage compositions which look like early net art, and their perspective on what they do is quite different now, so one must rethink the very definition of what "digital art" or "new media" means...

[03/07/13 12:13:18] Pau Waelder: We've been chatting for one hour now, if I take too much of your time, please feel free to tell me so

[03/07/13 12:14:25] shuleacheang: yes, but Tumblr is bought by Yahoo, the corporate take over of the net is a big change.

[03/07/13 12:15:10] shuleacheang: so, yeah, let's wrap up this chat, i got to go underground in Berlin...

[03/07/13 12:15:16] Pau Waelder: Yes, it's true, now everybody is just feeding data to the big corporations, and I think many artists don't realize their work is partly owned by Yahoo, Google, etc.

[03/07/13 12:15:24] Pau Waelder: Ok one final question

[03/07/13 12:15:40] shuleacheang: yes, i think you should really address this issues.

[03/07/13 12:16:18] shuleacheang: In my case, I used not want to own any domains, but situationed under institutions, now i have registered various domain for various projects.

[03/07/13 12:18:10] Pau Waelder: I see. So one more question I have is: Is it harder to work with pornography, gender issues, political issues, etc or to deal with technology when confronting the art world institutions, audience, etc? What is harder for people to understand or deal with?

[03/07/13 12:18:42] shuleacheang: ah, glad to have this final question

[03/07/13 12:20:04] shuleacheang: I am in berlin to perform UKI, quite porn and now research/location scouting for a 'sort of porn' film to be made in Berlin in 2014.

[03/07/13 12:21:29] shuleacheang: I switch myself in various modes, but am feeling more free/easy to do such swing between gender/porn and eco issues now. As for institutions, it is always a struggle, which i also enjoy the challenge.

[03/07/13 12:22:09] shuleacheang: As for the audience, i am all about public interface in whatever medium.

A1.3 ANNETTE DOMS, DIRECTOR OF UNPAINTED MEDIA ART FAIR

Face to face interview at the Unpainted Media Art Fair. Munich, January 18, 2014.

I have read about UNPAINTED being "Munich's first digital art fair", "Germany's first digital art fair"... How pioneering is this art fair?

It's pioneering in the sense of the education aspect, for example. For me it was always important to educate people, not just to show what digital art is, so that's why we really start at the beginning, so we have a small museum here where you can see the first computer plotter drawings from the 60s and so it's going over until web art today.

And you have the talks too, so there's more like a dialogue with the people who come here? Maybe?

It is more a dialogue, so people are surprised... Because,...also... a lot of people don't know what it is, what can it be, or hasn't seen it, so there is this discussion on how to spell digital art: is it digital art? Is it digital medium? Media art? And we discussed this year in panels with collectors, with gallerists, with insurance people, and... yes, people are excited to see what's going on in our time.

You describe UNPAINTED as a "media art fair". As you said, there are many names for this kind of art. How do you deal with this? Does it create a confusion?

I did this because I know all these problems, so if I would say... if I would have taken digital art, digital art fair it would have been too small at the end, and media art... media art is everything. So, we... we let this... open to discuss, and maybe we find another subject...

Because media art also encompasses video art, doesn't it?

Yes, but we have a definition for the fair, so video art yes and no but not the narrative video art. So video art if its based on new technology with new software... yeah...

Ok. Then, the name: Unpainted. It seems like a take against mainstream contemporary art. Is that the idea? To somehow set yourselves apart from that? Why did you choose it?

The why, that's very easy, because somebody asked me what new media art is and how to... because we had to find a name for the fair, yes? So I did this explanation and then the person said "then, what's the name, then, "unpainted", or what?" and it was a person who never heard about digital art... And so, ok, it's a good name... The first reaction from somebody who really doesn't know what it is.

It's interesting because the reaction is like it's an interesting name, but then it makes you think how central painting still is to the art market and contemporary art in general, don't you think?

... (slight pause)... That's true, yes, this is still so... painting is all over and photography is all over, digital art is something new... and... but the last Art Basel for example I have seen a lot digital art there, and... even Steven Sacks was there with Manfred Mohr in a solo show and... in the

end, it's coming, so more and more and more and more galleries are open for this... and you know there is only a handful of galleries really dedicated only to digital art, and what we have here is also... many galleries within the program.

So for a gallery what is the main difference between participating in a contemporary art fair or in a black box and being in a media art fair like this one?

The difference is that this is a specialized fair like Paris Photo or Drawing Now or the LOOP, so... (brief pause)... I guess it was needed to show somebody what... yes, to specialize... on this... So that people know that here is digital art, or media art, they can come here, and can inform... so, it makes sense...

So, as you said like Paris Photo or other art fairs, you think that specialization is more the future of the art fair, that there is not enough time to encompass everything?

To open a normal contemporary art fair doesn't make sense. That's my opinion, if it's new because we have so many great art fairs all over, more than people can go... And if you do something in the fair section it's better if it's specialized...

So you imagine a future in which there would be contemporary art fairs that only show painting sculpture etc, then media art fairs like there are other types...

It depends! So, it makes sense to have a general contemporary art fair but... (pause)... I don't know... it's just... there will be... hum... copies of Unpainted, I'm sure... in the future time. And... but... (sighs)... yes, we will see, maybe in a couple of years we have ten or twenty new media art fairs.

Coming back to my first question: as far as I know this is the only art fair that is solely dedicated to media art...

It's not the only art fair, so there's the Show Off in Paris, it has been last year and then... also in Germany there was an art fair but it was a little bit smaller and more dedicated to our time, and we have also the history and a huge education program, so we have panels, we have performances, we have BYOB this afternoon, we have concerts, so we have the open field for the music as well... and... yeah, what we can do is show the manifold... art pieces.

Considering the possibility of showing digital art online, have you at any point considered making this an online event like the VIP Art Fair? Or was it necessary that it took place in a physical space?

No, I did not think about [it]... because... what art fair... it was an art fair, no?

The VIP Art Fair was an regular art fair that just took place on the Internet.

Yes, but for me it's important to have the physical feeling and the discussions and the dialogue with other and that is very important, so... I like online platforms but... for a fair... it does... no...

And there was also the discussion that was started at the collector's panel about the need to have an object... That the artwork in the end has to be an object, so how do you see that?

Yes, but it will change, we are on a time now that you can feel the change in the air, yes? And the generation who is growing up now... it's an internal timeline we have... it's nothing new... like history is showing that everything that is new takes time, and so in ten years nobody will ask anymore about the new media and not new media... it will be in tablets, and computers, and... yes, it's a normal process, historical...

I don't know if I am taking too much of your time but let me ask just one or two questions more... One of the exhibitors, sedition,

is selling, as you know, digital editions of artworks at small prices, so this tends to generate a market of smaller collectors... How do you see this living alongside the established art fair, where you sell a unique or very limited artwork for a larger price?

Also the websites are unique, you're buying a domain, so it only exists once, and... hum... yeah, why shouldn't a kid or a younger person not buy art pieces? So you can buy an app for 5 euros for example but it's endless, there are pieces for some millions as well... and... hum... yeah, so the interesting in new media is... younger, for younger people or... I like it that it's open, so...

So you think that younger collectors will be the ones who will be interested in this kind of art?

Yes, why not? So, to buy an app it's very easy, it's not expensive.

But, this is just a question, don't you think it could affect the value of the artwork if you can have for instance a work by Quayola which is very similar the one you can see on the gallery and the one you can get on sedition for maybe 12 euro?

... (pause)...

Yes, this may be a tricky question, sorry...

(smiles)

For instance, Quayola, he sells in sedition some artworks for 12 euro. And you can see a very similar artwork being sold in a gallery, I guess for a few thousand euro. Do you think that, being the artwork so similar it might create a problem in the perception of value?

No [emphasis], I don't think so... No, because it's in high... you have the same with photography so... Gursky or... other photographers they have editions or unique pieces, so it's nothing different... no...

And then the last one: there has been for many

years this perception of new media art being ghettoized, creating separate environments from the contemporary art world and I was wondering if a new media... media art fair would continue this or would somehow help in integrating new media art in the wider scene of contemporary art.

... Hopefully... yeah, I'm sure... so, more and more galleries are interested in and more and more museums are interested in and so there's a high discussion actually, yes...

So you think that other galleries who do not show media art if they see this as working and this market...

[Interrupts] Already started. Also the galleries are visionaries and of course they see what's going on and they need it and... yeah, so the work of the gallery is to support contemporary artists... this is the concept of a contemporary art gallery and so they cannot avoid it, they cannot oversee this kind of art.

Last question, really... Was it difficult to find the exhibitors in the sense that there would be maybe not so many galleries showing or working with digital art?

Yes, of course, specially because it's the first edition. So if you go out and say "hello, I am making a media art fair", so it's always difficult to find galleries and sponsors, but we did it. So there's a high trust of the galleries and... I would say, these galleries, those that are here are the galleries with the best courage... and next year it's much easier... so it's... yeah...

A1.4 LIA, ARTIST

Skype interview, April 20 2013 (excerpts)

In your work you work with galleries, with performance, music, you have also done

commercial work, so how has it worked for you in these different environments?

Hum, hum, a good question! (laughs). The different aspects that you talk about... of course it's very different if you make commercial work for some big company or if I'm in a festival for electronic music, the audience is quite a different one. Nevertheless, I think that my work stays the same in every field I'm working and I'm lucky enough that when I've done commercial work I'm asked to do something that I'm doing anyway (smiles). So I don't have to please anyone with stuff that I'm normally not doing and, yes... audiovisual performances I've stopped a little bit because I had to fly around a lot for about ten years and this gets boring over time, so yeah in this case the financial aspect is that you are getting 50, 500 or maximum 700€ for a performance and have to be flying around for several days and staying in hotels... it's exciting for a period of time, but not for ever.

Also, it's a different culture, so to say, no?

The festival culture is completely detached from any art world where... like, galleries are not involved in festivals. So it's basically if you go to a festival it leads to doing something in the next festival, but it stays in that world so... It's not that a gallery would suddenly come and say "I want to exhibit your work because I've seen it in the festivals." That's never happened.

Do you think that the audience you've had are really appreciating your work? Because I have the feeling that the visuals are often not really appreciated but immersed in all the environment of the concert...

Yes, you're right (smiles). Sometimes I don't know what the musicians are doing, unless I work with some people who I know and then know what they will play. But if you're asked to do some VJ and then you have to make visuals for music that you haven't heard before, and if

you agree with that of course it will not work. [...]

In club culture, what is shown is absolutely colorful and moving and that's it, it's more or less a nice wallpaper but there is not much artistic quality that you should expect there.

There are many categories for visuals, and it is a different think if people are just drunk and want to dance, or if it is more like a concert.

[...]

When you work with galleries, how do they see this part of your work, the VJing...

First of all, I haven't worked that much with galleries, and I think that's just ignored, in a way they might see a long cv with a long list of events and then they might be impressed but they don't really get it, I think. [...] I use to make a video documenting my work like once a year and these videos get played a lot in festivals.

I think that video is a format that can make it earlier into museums and galleries, because that's like from the seventies (smiles). But this is not the same with all the digital stuff, so we will all have to wait a little bit, I guess.

I think that your work, like that of the algorists, can be visually related to painting, op art, etc. so maybe that helps when you want to enter the art world?

Maybe (laughs). If you can write some text about it, maybe.

But in your work you mention for instance orphic cubism, and I don't know to which extent it might inspire your work...

Yes and no. I think they were also inspired by the same things that are just surrounding us. Like nature is there, and it is there for everyone, and a cube was there for a long time before cubism. It was already there, and it is just a matter of how you translate it. As an artist, you see something, you hear something, or feel something and then

you digest it and you have an output.

Are you interested in entering the art world and the galleries?

I'm constantly not sure of that. It's... on the one hand I see that a job as an artist in the art world is something that I don't... my imagination of how it should work is not what I want, really. It's always nice to be accepted and to have the work exhibited more and maybe some more collectors will buy it and stuff. That would be nice but you also have to pay a price for it, you have to be... more public, more extrovert, you have to show images of yourself everywhere, you have to do much more publicity, you have to actually travel around again, a lot, and I think I don't want this (laughs). So, it would be nice to be accepted but I am not willing to pay the price. This is a constant struggle...

You have created displays that work well with the gallery, like the display of rain or this display that reminds me a bit of a DJ control panel...

Yep. This was the result of my discussions with my husband Damien, basically it was the question of how to bring these digital works in the gallery and the mouse is a bit obsolete nowadays. So the first part was just to make the controls, for an exhibition where two other works were shown as projection with these controls as a different interface, and now the Rain box is more or less the second step or the final step. All you need to do is to connect it to the electricity and it just runs.

Going into plug and play is it more comfortable for you or do you do it for the gallery? Is the final purpose to sell it?

Yes (laughs). It was just the idea, there were a lot of discussions and a lot of thoughts before that... and at the moment you can only sell something that is an object. Like you still cannot really sell software, I think. I mean, there are

people who are selling software and also in the high price section but it is just a few people who manage to do that, and then again you have to... If you just sell the software you cannot control that people might show it on a cell phone, or they might show it on the wall of a building and this wouldn't work for the same software, so if you sell software you have to sell a license, basically and can say, ok you can play it in very specific places you have to use projection and the projection should have a minimum size of, and maximum size of... so you would have to be very specific if you sell software what is the actual use of it and how it can be seen. Now if you see software from the nineties, it doesn't make sense anymore. Like if you have a piece meant to run on a small monitor it would look totally different now on a huge monitor...

So the solution is to go for this one final object which has all the technical specifications...

It's a trial version, we try it out. So far we've had all sorts of positive responses.

And this work, supposedly it's going to work forever...

I hope so (laughs).

Have you worked on preservation issues, how it could be maintained or updated?

No, not really. I have some hard drives full of old work and I'm always thinking I should update them and never find the time to do that. Some of them are probably getting old already... I don't have the time to do it myself. I don't have a team, I'm working at home, so... yeah...

On the other hand you have explored creating apps for iPhone and iPad...

Yes, that was a test as well... I think it's ok. Basically, aside from any financial aspects my idea was just I want to create things and I want to share them with other people. Other people

may be inspired by that, or see that or get ideas and so... I think it works pretty nice because it's distributed so easily, also the people who may not go into the gallery or may not watch an art channel or whatever... I have no idea who is buying it...

Still it has to be sold as art, I noticed that you created this website iPhone Art...

Yes, because there is no art section. And its... it is also hard for Apple, I understand that there is no art section because who decides what is art? And... people, sometimes they create something and they call it art because they think it's art but if you see it in a wider... like if someone makes a kaleidoscope, it's not art, really. But they think it is. So it wouldn't make sense anyway.

There might be... a conflict, if for instance you sell some works at the gallery which have a price, like this display, and then have other works on the iPhone, I don't know if that might be a problem for the gallery...

I think they don't care anyway (laughs). And I think it's also the size that determines the price anyway, because it's a very small screen so you cannot project it or put it in your fancy house... I think it's just a different market. It was just a test, if it works then it's nice to have some pocket money every month, even if I'm not doing much advertisement about it, it's just going on. It's a nice mini-income. It's very mini but it's an income.

Jonah Brucker-Cohen said why give away your art for free on the Internet if you can make at least one euro for it? Maybe artists are a bit tired of giving away the art on the Internet, and are looking for ways to commercialize them.

Yeah, yeah, maybe... I mean in my case I just made some videos the last few days and uploaded them to Vimeo because many of my works that are made for free on the web, they were applets so they just don't play anymore. I'm just tired

to update them again and rewrite the script... so I just made the video, it's a documentation if someone wants it I can send it to them as a standalone application, whatever... But it's, you are right after almost twenty years you get a little bit tired of just showing your work for free like most most big museums, they don't pay if you exhibit digital art. If you ask them for the budget they just say we don't have any and it's very clear that they have budget for oil paintings... It's not very common that you are actually getting paid, you are getting fame, which supposedly you should use for selling art but as digital art is not bought that much yet...

I have had this experience curating shows that new media artists are used to charge a fee while artists from the contemporary art world usually don't get paid at all, because it's supposed to raise their prices on the art market

Yes but it doesn't work with digital artists yet.

And you are used to getting paid, as you normally do live shows.

Yeah, used to, maybe yes but not much. It's barely a payment actually, like half of it you spend on food and travel, so when you're back home after three days there is not much left. It's not enough to make a living from it.

Have you seen Sediton? I will send you the link...

I haven't seen that one yet. It's basically the concept of the Apple Store. I'm not sure if that will work. It's like with videos, if you compare the number of views of commercial stuff and those of artistic stuff, it's ridiculous.

In the last two months I had two offers from platforms like that... I am not sure. I have the feeling of well, maybe a gallerist takes 50% of the sale but takes care of promoting your work, while on the Internet I don't see that the company that collects the work has so much influence or so

much more publicity... I can't see that. Because in the digital art world everyone knows it anyway, so to get it to be known by other people it would really need to be someone who is at the border between digital art and... let's say normal people (laughs) or the commercial world or whatever.

It seems that we cannot escape this market

I don't know, I think these are business models that are copying the Apple mark I don't know if it will work out. If someone gives 5€ for a digital image, then fine, but that will also mean that probably the good free images will vanish from the Internet. I don't see that working, the Internet has too many corners... I don't see it, maybe I'm wrong.

I just did three more works for a company called Framed which was... it was created by Yugo Nakamura, who is himself a digital artist, actually, so I guess he know what he is doing. He is selling these framed devices and this is basically a huge very nice picture frame and it's the same thing as if you would buy a huge iPhone or iPad and hang it on the wall and you can also buy the software. This software is not in the cheap area, it is in an edition of about 100 and you pay around 100-200 euros for that. It's affordable, but it's not like 80 cents. I think that, in the end if you have a big size and you have a nice image, a nice piece of artwork, that someone spend a lot of time creating, why should it be so cheap? For iPad, iPhone, I think that it is something you can have in your pocket and show it to someone, but it is actually not for decorating your home, or for really showing off or whatever art should be for, I don't know... It's more like a demonstration of what could be done, so this can be cheap.

What does new media art mean for you?

It's not new anymore. That's a problem. And media is also very problematic, because everything is a medium. So it actually doesn't mean anything. It's just a term that was started

to be used, I think, in the mid-nineties, but it is actually quite... it doesn't say anything, at least to me... It says, ok if this artist is in new media artist she is not a painter, and she is not doing drawings with a pencil but something digital might be involved, but actually it doesn't say what you do, like are you working with software? Are you taking old television boxes and putting them on top of each other? What are you doing? It doesn't say anything.

However, for a time it seemed that it was positive to be identified as a new media artist, particularly in the context of festivals.

I think that people are always looking for terms to call what is happening right now and like in the mid-nineties the hip term was "interactive" so everything was interactive. It actually meant something that you can touch. Later on, everything became "generative". It was from 2003 or so. These terms were used by people to be hip. I try to call myself just an artist, after I tried interactive artist and generative artist, and new media artist or whatever. At the end, it doesn't matter because what makes you create work is not that you know how to program or how to do things, I think it's the way you look at the world.

Still, in your website you use the label Software Art.

Yeah, I mean Software Art, I put it there because these are my tools...

A1.5 WOLF LIESER, DIRECTOR OF DAM GALLERY

Interview published in *art.es* (Waelder, 2015a, p.100-103). Unabridged version.

It seems that finally new media art is going mainstream, but not in the way it could be

expected. Instead of well-known names, it is a generation of young artists who are attracting attention, mostly under the label "Post-Internet Art". What do you think about these emerging artists?

First of all what comes to mind is that they have a totally different perspective from the previous generations, they haven't had to struggle for decades to be accepted. They are now experiencing a phase where the market is realizing Digital Art is something innovative and new, exciting, flashy. So, some of these new "stars" are not necessarily better than others –from my perspective– but it seems to be an indicator of a broader acceptance of this medium. The interesting thing is as well that several international curators now feel like they have to pick up on "Post-Internet Art" because it's so hip right now. Post-Internet embraces the new generation of digital natives. Many of these don't seem to be aware of the history of digital art. It's the result of a new trend that has finally gone mainstream due to the fact that in our daily life the computer is omnipresent and is impacting on society: this genre cannot be ignored any longer. Another consequence of this increased recognition is that Digital Art is getting commercialized, which, from my perspective as a gallery owner who has supported this art for more than a decade, is not only positive, but it is how part of the art world operates. Once the market observes that there is some money to make, more money-oriented people get involved, people who invest in these artists. And there are new galleries who are following this strategy, now supporting these artists, who appear in auctions –even before they've had a few shows in galleries– and they are getting high results, which of course attracts further galleries... It's a phenomenon that I have observed in the US and Europe. This is due to a general change that the art market is experiencing.

However, it is not only the young artists who are getting more attention. Major museums are beginning to collect the work of important pioneers like Manfred Mohr and Vera Molnar, whom I have supported with my gallery over the last ten years. They are experiencing well earned recognition and are selling well. But still, there is this situation that, for instance, an original plotter drawing from Vera Molnar from the seventies, a unique piece, costs less than a lenticular “painting” from Rafael Rozendaal from last year. This is odd, but on the other hand, that’s how the market works. I prefer to support artists on a long term plan, for instance Aram Bartholl, who has a different attitude and approach to his work and the market, a more serious one in my opinion. In general, I have developed my program including the younger generation, but with the perspective of the previous generations. Newer artists of the gallery are Kim Asendorf and Flavien Théry, in whose work I see a new conceptual and aesthetic approach.

Therefore, besides the recognition in the mainstream contemporary art world, there is a change of mentality, apparently more market-oriented.

Yes, I think that some of these artists are aiming towards a market-oriented strategy. Some became well known for really being innovative by selling websites or YouTube videos. Many people identified with this kind of work and it spread. And then in the end they produced “Photoshop paintings” or “Lenticular Paintings”, which don’t have a lot to do with their original art anymore. It feels like a move towards the art market.

New galleries such as XPO, Carroll/Fletcher, or Transfer have a different attitude towards Digital Art, in the sense that they do not identify their program with this label.

It’s a different strategy, that’s true. But they

are only a few years old and they started when Digital Art was already successful with some artists like Manfred Mohr or Rafael Lozano-Hemmer. No need to be a pioneer or to concentrate on one specific medium. So it’s about which game you would like to play, and if you want to be a successful gallery as soon as possible, then there are some things you have to do. I have a very personal career in this respect because I was considered an outsider for a long time, which resulted beside other things to be refused at art fairs. My program was not taken seriously, and it is still like that to some degree in Berlin. But to run with the pack was never my priority. Positioning the gallery in field of the digital was definitely, sales-wise and marketing-wise, as well as in the art market, a disadvantage at the beginning. It is not considered to be the thing you should do as a gallery. Now I’m internationally renowned for that. Even naming a gallery DAM was considered a no go. How I see it now is, that such a concept that I did create more than 15 years ago, combining an online museum and a lifetime award with a commercial gallery, that will probably not happen again. Because it doesn’t make sense anymore in the present art market context. It is something which is, to some degree, old fashioned—or, as a friend of mine once called it, romantic. Still it has for me its strong advantages, which I wouldn’t want to miss, as it did connect the history of digital art with its present tendencies. That is a major advantage and of course I have the knowledge as well as the experience in the field, which you just can’t buy. That makes my job so much more fulfilling.

Besides the galleries, there are other platforms selling digital or screen-based art, such as Sedition, which sells digital editions of artworks. Do you think that this model can succeed?

Yes, I think that selling digital editions can be an option for an artist. I already mentioned this

in my book on Digital Art, where I included the work of LLA, who is selling with Sedition and through the Apple Store. I am not convinced about Sedition in regards to art because it is a mostly commercial approach, their strategy is based on names, not so much on quality of art. Why would you want to buy a JPEG of Damien Hirst, seriously? Having a platform for selling, renting or streaming artworks is an interesting business line in the future, but I think that it is really necessary to go beyond the flashy appearance. It could be an easy, accessible way to allow people to get involved with this kind of art, and that they understand at the same time its specific rules and aesthetics. But the way software art is presented in Sedition is confusing, it’s a video, a looping excerpt of a larger and more complex artwork, but someone buying the \$25 edition might not be aware of that.

On the other hand it can’t be denied that a increasingly larger part of society in this century will move more towards a nomad life, so many of our cultural artefacts will be in a digital format which we can carry around or just store in a cloud. We are developing a different attitude towards books, films and art that will be closer to how we consume music nowadays. So there is definitely a market developing in this field, a really broad one where more and more is in digital format. That seems obvious.

You have a new space in Berlin, after closing your sister galleries in Cologne and Frankfurt. What will be the next development of DAM Gallery?

I decided to close the other galleries due to the changing market situation. I opened those spaces because I have customers in those areas, and I felt it is important to give them the possibility to see the whole range of work of an artist, not just one or two pieces at an art fair. But in general people visit galleries less and less. They inform themselves on the web. So if you take aside

actual mainstream exhibitions of well known artists, you have not many visitors in the galleries anymore. Therefore, more galleries are moving into smaller spaces, take part in more art fairs, which is an easier way to reach potential buyers. Observing all this, I have decided to keep a base in Berlin and get involved with more art fairs, as well specialized fairs, where you meet more selective collectors. Because after all, I would like to get more art lovers to get excited about this kind of work!

A1.6 RAFAEL LOZANO-HEMMER, ARTIST

Skype interview, February 2, 2014 (excerpts)

¿Qué opinas de la polémica que hubo con el artículo de Claire Bishop en Artforum?

Mira, Claire Bishop... su artículo sobre la estética relacional me pareció fantástico, porque como sabes yo desgraciadamente utilizo la palabra relacional, pero a mí me gusta siempre aclarar que yo empecé a usar la palabra relacional uno o dos años antes de... del libro de Bourriaud. Entonces... pero cuando Claire Bishop escribió acerca de eso me pareció muy importante, sobre todo en lo que tiene que ver con el carácter político y de resistencia de las obras, etc. Cuando escribió sobre lo digital, sobre la utilización de la tecnología, me pareció muy triste, porque en dos frases se deshace por completo de toda la disciplina de los nuevos medios, como diciendo “bueno, eso tiene su lugar aparte”. No, a ver, señora, su trabajo es investigar eso. Es precisamente, si usted se está haciendo esa pregunta es porque usted no tiene acceso, o no ha tenido el tiempo o el interés o las necesidades institucionales o intelectuales de investigar un campo que está en plena ebullición y que tiene muchas respuestas y que... o sea, efectivamente la pregunta era buena pero usted decidió no

contestarla con los verdaderos protagonistas... Entonces... sí, te da una sensación de divide, de división, de una oportunidad perdida, porque sería estupendo poder agarrar a Claire Bishop y mostrarle el trabajo de Knowbotic Research o mostrarle el trabajo de Natalie Jeremijenko, ¿no? O sea, que de repente se empape ella de lo que nosotros llevamos hablando décadas... eso sería fantástico. Pero no tengo la menor duda, Pau, que eso va a cambiar, es decir... es casi un problema generacional y sin duda alguna eso va a terminar, y también nosotros los artistas, los críticos, los directores de festivales de arte electrónico, todos tenemos la culpa también. Porque, en mi opinión, sí somos incestuosos, no estamos... no tenemos la paciencia para... digamos, agarrar de la mano a estos críticos perezosos para que entiendan que nosotros ya leímos lo que ellos también leyeron. O sea, no somos ilusos e infantiles. Nosotros hemos decidido tomar estas disciplinas como algo crucial para entender a nuestra sociedad. Y no por eso nos puedes ahora excluir de los diálogos culturales que suceden en el arte contemporáneo. Es como una paradoja, y un poco una tristeza porque ella es una crítica que respeto muchísimo. [...]

Igual hay gente que ha visto tu obra, que es la que está más metida en el mundo del arte contemporáneo, más aceptada pero no ven todo lo que hay detrás...

Claro, pero sabes, hay un malentendido fundamental y esto te va a servir también, yo creo, para la tesis. El malentendido fundamental es pensar que el arte mediático es arte visual y no lo es. El arte mediático es arte de performance. Es decir: es un arte basado en el evento, un arte más parecido al performance o al teatro o a la música que al arte visual. ¿Por qué? Pues por varios motivos: el más importante es que, al final, éste no sólo se desenvuelve en el tiempo, no es *time based*, porque no es eso, eso es un loop

de video que repite. Es *event based*, está basado en el evento, es decir, es en el momento de la interacción que sucede algo, no es prescripción pregrabada en un secuenciador que te dice qué es lo que va a suceder, sino que hay un comportamiento emergente, y de hecho el premio de VIDA, precisamente lo que indica es que estas obras tienen... una conciencia. Una conciencia propia, y esto es fundamental, porque desde el punto de vista del arte establecido siempre ha habido como una jerarquía de significados que han hecho un grupo muy pequeño de críticos, de museógrafos, de coleccionistas, de artistas para mantener la hegemonía de eso... y qué bien que lo hagan, porque tampoco tengo un problema con eso, yo no estoy diciendo "derrumbemos eso", pero hay una falta de entendimiento sobre por ejemplo el hecho de que presentar una obra de arte mediático, de arte de vida artificial, es crear un entorno que permita esa interacción, que sean interacciones efímeras pero fundamentadas en la presencia, en el desenlace, en... bueno, ya sabes todas las cosas que eso conlleva. Pero el día que comprendamos, que presentemos a los artes mediáticos como artes escénicas se acaban muchos de estos malentendidos. ¿Sabes? Y lo bonito es que justo ahora estamos viendo en casi todos los museos buenos del mundo están incluyendo performance art como parte de su... de su abanico de posibilidades. Y eso es por donde nos vamos a meter nosotros, es decir la gente va a entender que cuando tú traigas una pieza robótica o traigas una pieza interactiva se trata exactamente de si te trajiste un performance de Marina Abramovic: es decir, tienes que crear las condiciones para que la pieza pueda vivir y tener un desenlace que no puedes predecir.

O sea, se trata de trabajar con procesos y no con productos.

Sí, se trata de... que además es un mensaje que el arte contemporáneo siempre... por los últimos 40 años ha estado abogando por eso... o más...

Es decir, Duchamp dijo que el artista debe de controlar el contexto. Bueno pues es eso, sólo que ahora el contexto (desde él, desde luego), el contexto es la obra, es la atmósfera, es la condición de... lo que... Walter Benjamin llamaba el aura, el aura ha vuelto y el aura es exactamente el devenir de una obra, o sea el *becoming*. O sea hacia donde... qué es lo que la obra se va a convertir, no que es lo que es. Eso pone muy nerviosa a la gente, porque los curadores, los críticos, los coleccionistas no quieren meterse en algo experimental cuyo desenlace no pueden controlar. Es tan sencillo como eso.

Y también es el mercado el que pide esto, porque estoy viendo muchos artistas que entran en el mercado acaban haciendo como la performance, que se acaban vendiendo objetos derivados de la performance, en este caso se venden objetos derivados del proceso...

Exacto, exacto y esa es una de las fórmulas para hacerlo. Hay otras, hay otras... yo por ejemplo utilizo mucho un recurso que es, pues la desmaterialización de la obra en instrucciones. Es algo que obviamente no inventé yo, Sol Lewitt hacía, que casi todos los departamentos de conservación de los museos saben de qué se trata esto. La idea es, bien, realizas una obra pero describes digamos como una especie de código fuente de tu obra... en el caso mío directamente es código fuente, yo se lo doy al coleccionista. Pero también la descripción de cuáles son los elementos que se pueden recrear y representar para que la obra pueda sobrevivir. Una cosa... perdóname si te estoy contando muchas cosas que ya has oído, pero es que... insisto mucho con los mismos temas: a mí no me interesa la preservación, *preservation*, de la obra de arte. Me interesa la perpetración del acto cultural. Es decir, no estamos aquí entre bolas de naftalina para mantener de forma vampírica y necrofilica una obra que no pueda cambiar. Si no que tú estás detallando cuáles son los contextos para que esa

pieza pueda volver a tener un performance fresco a futuro. Con baremos que el artista determina en el momento en que la obra se adquiere en colección. Porque recuerda que yo, o sea, antes de estar en galerías hice 15 años de arte efímero y yo me la pasaba toda mi vida criticando esta necesidad de posesión individualista de la obra, que si... Douglas Crimp, que si el museo es un mausoleo, todas estas cosas... y cuando empecé a trabajar con galerías y empecé a vender obras a museos me di cuenta que si es posible, si hay el interés, de que se mantenga esa vitalidad de la obra. La vitalidad es lo que hace falta mantener, que la obra puede tener un desarrollo acorde a su diseño... y muy importante, que si la obra ya no puede presentarse, que tenga una muerte digna. Que se le permita morir. Es uno de los momentos más civilizados que podemos imaginar. [...]

Tú crees que el trabajo que has hecho a gran escala te ha ayudado a ser más reconocido en el mundo del arte contemporáneo, que parece apreciar más este tipo de intervenciones en la ciudad, etc?

Me cuesta muchísimo identificar qué es lo que al final el coleccionista prima. Y te hablo de coleccionista, me refiero por ejemplo a museos, ¿no? En mi opinión cuando un curador que no conoce mi obra, tiene acceso a mis obras gigantescas de espacio público, terminan por pensar siempre en un evento especial. En la inauguración de un museo, o una bienal etc. lo cual está muy bien pero no piensan que algunos de esas estrategias o conceptos pueden de hecho estar en el interior... de que el público desea esa... suena muy mal, liberar al público, no suena horrible... esa autorrepresentación, esa capacidad de autorrepresentar al público dentro del museo les parece demasiado... ajena. Hay una respuesta muy común que tiene el mundo del arte establecido con el arte electrónico... y es, desgraciadamente por qué razón no lo se

pero es... polar. O es un juego, es decir tiene un tema... es lúdico, divertido, videojuego... este tipo de historia... o es orwelliano y es... oscuro y es un comentario sobre... Y lo que nosotros sabemos es que en el interior de este registro hay una infinidad de posiciones intermedias y otras que apenas están apareciendo. Entonces... va a ser un tema que se va a resolver pronto... yo estoy viendo por ejemplo... ¿tú conoces a Cecilia Andersson? Es una curadora que estuvo mucho tiempo en España, ahora es la directora de un museo en Suecia que se llama Umeo y es fantástica... ella es de mi edad, estaba en Cyberconf... pero ahora ella tiene poder, ahora tiene un programa en un museo, donde acaba de hacer una exposición a Daniel Canogar, me va a hacer una exposición a mí, va a hacer otras exposiciones rompiendo un poco esos moldes... Y a mí lo que me gusta es que no tenemos que empezar a convencer a nadie desde cero, sino que nosotros mismos estamos ascendiendo a posiciones desde las que se nos permita reflejar nuestras predilecciones. Y eso me da enorme optimismo porque la pelea nosotros solos no la podemos ejercer, eso tiene que ser una cuestión de tiempo.

Al final a mí me parece super importante que tú estés investigando justo en la frontera entre estas cosas. Porque gente como tú es si quieres el traductor, estás haciendo un trabajo de traducción. Y este es un trabajo super difícil, es un trabajo que nunca nadie te lo va a perdonar porque para muchos estas cosas son incompatibles pero al final si tienes éxito, que lo estás teniendo, la recompensa es enorme. Porque al final sabemos que no puede ser que existan festivales como Ars Electronica que se dedican exclusivamente a disciplina basada en electrónica... o sabemos que una Bienal de Venecia no puede evitar hablar sobre medios sociales... o sea, estas cosas son inevitables, y el futuro yo creo que esas cosas se normalizarán. Ars Electronica hará un festival totalmente dedicado

a la pintura... lo cual va a ser algo sensacional porque hay muchos artistas que están trabajando arte mediático desde la pintura... Y del mismo modo que la Bienal de Venecia hará una edición con particular hincapié en la interacción...

[...]

Según he podido observar, los artistas desarrollan su carrera en relación a tres polos de atracción: la academia, el mercado del arte y la industria.

Yo, por ejemplo, inicié mi carrera trabajando con un ingeniero que se llama Will Bauer, nosotros desarrollamos un sensor tridimensional que permitía a las computadoras seguirte en espacios de 12 x 12 metros. Y tuvimos patentes, licenciamos la tecnología a una compañía danesa que hace robots... o sea, de hecho fui un ejemplo del artista que se dedicó a hacer eso y que ganó bien, o sea yo mantuve mis operaciones 5 años gracias a esas patentes, pero que también te acaba marchitando. El tema industrial es un tema súper interesante porque sí es un agujero sin fondo. Yo me alejé de eso, me alejé de lo académico también. Yo verdaderamente, te juro Pau que leía y quería aportar (ríe) a la filosofía y a la crítica y eso y llegó un momento en que dije "no, a ver, tengo 3 hijos, me tengo que enfocar, voy a dedicarme 100% a mi trabajo" Y más que eso, yo tomé la decisión hace, no sé, 8 años, de no trabajar adentro de exposiciones de arte electrónico. Porque me parecía siempre el mismo problema... y la mejor palabra para hablar de ello es incesto. Malcolm X decía que es muy importante tener una comunidad cerrada para desarrollar tus vocabularios y tal, pero que ya que sales de esa comunidad luego tienes que conectarla a las otras. El último Malcolm X, el de la Meca, hablaba de eso, de las traducciones y de como tenías que tener esa plataforma pero tenías que despegarte de ella. Entonces yo soy digamos un ejemplo del típico artista que sale de V2, de Ars Electronica, del ZKM, etc pero que

ahora, la verdad, no tengo gran interés en volver a esos sitios. Por más que los respete, y que creo que deben mantenerse. A mí me parece el reto ahora como re-presentar la obra para que pueda tener un discurso con las grandes narrativas de intelectuales, de artistas, de críticos... que al final, si tu obra no está en el TATE, va a ser olvidada, Pau. Se va a olvidar lo que hiciste. Y eso es trágico, porque sabemos que hay pequeñísimos grupos de gente que toma estas decisiones. Pero mira, yo no tengo esa idea de que ellos tienen un plan maquiavélico para mantenernos... no, no, al contrario son gente que es muy capacitada y que tienes que mostrarles, tomarles de la mano y mostrarles como esto sí tiene que ser integrado en sus colecciones.

El MoMA de Nueva York adquirió mi pieza 33 preguntas por minuto, y la idea es... nosotros, cuando tú adquieres una obra nuestra nosotros te damos la obra, te damos pantallitas extra... porque, no sé si conoces la obra... y les dimos más pantallitas, pero luego les damos un manual así (simula el grosor de un libro con los dedos). Un manual de conservación. El manual tiene una metadescripción, una descripción de dónde comprar los elementos, tiene todos los circuit board designs, todos los esquemáticos, para poder crear la obra, tiene una cosa que es medio interesante, y es que estas pantallas las produce una empresa que se llama Griffó en Italia, aquí están sus contactos... si Griffó ya no produce pantallas, entonces hay un detallado de qué es lo que puede ser un reemplazo para esa pantalla. Porque en el futuro no habrá una pantalla de cristal líquido, habrá una pantalla de x y z, y yo sin saber qué habrá en el futuro digo "bien, usted puede reemplazar esta pantalla de cristal líquido con cualquier pantalla siempre y cuando tenga unas dimensiones tal que así que parezca un detonador, que pueda hacer eñes, que tenga sonidito tal y tal", o sea metadescripciones para que el curador del futuro pueda replantear la obra. Y lo más importante: les dimos todo

el código fuente al MoMA. Luego lo que ellos hicieron, un ejercicio, me mataron a mí y a mi ingeniero principal. Y sólo con los detalles del código fuente que nosotros les dimos le dieron ese código fuente a un chaval que está estudiando ingeniería en NYU. Nuestro código está escrito en Pascal o en Delphi para Windows, y le dieron esta información al chaval y el chaval lo tenía que re-escribir en C++ para Linux. El chaval en un mes tenía toda la pieza funcionando en otro sistema operativo con otra programación por completo en lenguaje de operación y sin una variación sobre la experiencia de la obra en sí misma. Esto fue un hito muy grande para nosotros, porque demostraba que la pieza podía migrar plataformas, que no era necesario tener un stock pile de computadoras con Windows 98, porque afortunadamente en 40 años no va a haber Windows (ríe). Entonces hay que ver cómo funciona esto prácticamente, hagamos un case study. Y ese case study fue todo un éxito. Entonces, eso nos da a nosotros esa tranquilidad de poder citar casos como ese. Y tener un best practices. La idea de que, cuando tú eres un coleccionista, seas museo o privado, sepas qué esperar de nosotros. Los artistas tenemos la culpa de que la adopción de nuestras obras por las grandes colecciones sea lenta, porque no conviene... por ejemplo, tengo un coleccionista en Londres que compró una obra de otro artista y no le funcionó. Y luego ya, desde ese momento en adelante que no recibió el apoyo necesario para mantener la obra, ya no tienen confianza en todo el medio. Entonces, lo que estoy pensando ahora es, desde la perspectiva de los artistas, cómo hacemos best practices. Porque, conoces Variable Media, ¿no? Pero eso es institucional, sé que tienen cuestionarios para artistas, etc pero eso es desde una perspectiva institucional. O sea, tiene que ver... los ejemplos que te dan son todos de forense. Yo lo que te estoy hablando de nosotros como artistas, a la práctica cómo hacemos... y hay ciertas cosas que hacemos, o

sea, damos garantías sobre la obra, y qué significa esa garantía? Es que los precios, todos los gastos que corres con la obra vienen incluidos en el precio de adquisición. Tu adquieres una obra mía e incluido en ese precio está el técnico que va y te instala la obra y te la explica. Y lo más importante, que le da las explicaciones a un técnico local, si es que lo tienes, para que ellos puedan mantener la obra. La segunda es, el código fuente y todos los esquemáticos están libres para el coleccionista para que él o ella pueda recrear la obra según quiera. Unas descripciones, las descripciones meta que permiten a la obra replantearse. Luego tienes una cosa que se llama (esto lo aprendí del MoMA) *software dependencies*, o sea todos los drivers... tienes que tener un inventario de dependencias explicados. Luego tienes... tienes esta cosa, mira te voy a enseñar...

Este es un certificado de autenticidad de mi estudio, ¿vale? Entonces es un lingote de aluminio anodizado a dos colores que lleva la descripción de la obra, etc una foto y va firmado y numerado, cuando vendo la obra la firmo y la numero, viene con un engraving, con un grabado en la parte trasera que tiene el número de inventario de nuestro banco de datos, y viene con tres watermarks que tienen una llave PGP, total y absolutamente encriptada. Entonces, la idea es que por ejemplo en este caso esto es una foto... Entonces, yo no te voy a dar dos copias, una para el refrigerador y una para exhibición. Te voy a dar una copia y luego te voy a dar un key con la pieza con las instrucciones de impresión, con los color lookup tables, con toda esa información para que en el futuro cuando esta obra se estropee o tu hijo la raspe o te cambies de casa o lo que sea, la vuelves a imprimir y no hay ningún problema. "Oye pero no tienes miedo que la impriman diez veces?" Pues no, claro que no, ojalá que la impriman diez veces! Significa que les gusta mucho y ponen una en la casa de su abuela y no se qué no se cuanto... Ahora, para proteger al coleccionista y para

proteger el sistema económico, pues está esto que no se puede reproducir. Y esto es lo que tú pones en la caja fuerte. El día que tú tienes una de estas obras y la quieres vender, si no tienes esto, no tiene ningún valor. Es esto, que al final es el recurso que han tenido siempre las galerías: el certificado de autenticidad... pero plasmarlo de una forma material que te permita tener la absoluta libertad incluso de cargar el software en tu propio sitio web con todos los detalles de la obra, pero que al final el coleccionista lo que ellos quieren es sentirse partícipes del desarrollo de la obra de un artista, entonces esto es lo que les permite hacer eso. Entonces, así es como nosotros estamos, justificando si quieres, la libertad con la cual las obras deben de desplegarse.

Porque ahí se pone mucho peso en la exclusividad del objeto final cuando estamos hablando de archivos, a fin de cuentas. Así que el certificado es el que manda...

Porque el archivo en el mundo digital, ya que la copia es la misma que el original, no es de recibo que tú te gastes 400.000€ en una obra de Gursky, que son obras digitales, y que no te den el archivo de impresión. Es que eso es absurdo, y que te gastes un dinerito en ponerlas en el frigorífico... Eso para mí es como un enorme malentendido. Lo acepto, para ellos, pero para nosotros ya no, Pau, estamos en otro nivel, nosotros estamos en el nivel de que las obras tienen que ser libres. Y que si alguien las imprime es porque les gustó mucho. La diferencia es que tú tienes casi como un sistema de honor de que si tú quieres apoyar al artista, y más importante si tú quieres que esta obra se revalorice en el mercado, tienes tu certificado, que sí es autenticable, con firmas con watermarks, con grabados, con todas las cosas que te puedas imaginar. Y me ha ayudado muchísimo hacer esto, porque el coleccionista al final lo que ellos quieren, muchos de ellos, lo que quieren es una seguridad sobre su inversión. Y lo cual a mí me parece de lo más normal: yo pediría lo mismo.

Si un coleccionista compra una pintura a un pintor y luego resulta que se desmonta o es de mala calidad, no va a culpar a todos los pintores, pero si compra una obra de arte digital mete en el mismo saco a todo el mundo que trabaja en este medio... Entonces ahí hay un problema de educación...

De educación... y es un problema que debemos aceptar nosotros los creadores como propio. Por eso, mi idea con best practices... yo voy a publicar cuales son los pasos que nosotros hacemos en el estudio y voy a pedirle a mis colegas que me ayuden, o sea yo no tengo todas las soluciones, pero ellos tendrán algunas, yo otras, y al final vamos a hacer una cosa, casi un label que se llama best practices. Entonces... "oye, vas a comprar la obra de tal?" "No sé, es best practices?"... "Pues no", "Ah, entonces, vete tu a saber" Pero es sencillo para los artistas revisar en el blog y ver cuáles son los elementos a asegurarse y si quieren lo hacen, se autocertifican. Pero es algo que a los artistas no les gusta hablar porque casi todos los artistas están en plan supervivencia, lo cual es normal... es que la gente no tiene tiempo de ser su propio documentalista, su propio historiador, su propio... todas estas cosas, entonces es demasiado pedirles. Yo, afortunadamente, estoy en una circunstancia privilegiada, creo que tengo un pie, como dices tú, en los dos mundos, y quiero trabajar en hacer eso posible. Y si ayuda a alguien, pues mejor que mejor.

[...]

Cuando hablamos del coleccionismo, tengo curiosidad por saber qué te parece Sedition... Lo que me parece interesante de Sedition es el modelo de vender más copias, bajar los precios y buscar otro público, no sé cómo ves tú eso... Lo veo bien. Depende de qué es lo que estés haciendo. Yo ahora mismo estoy aprendiendo también, por temas de mercado, las obras... yo hacía normalmente seis copias de cada obra y los precios terminaron por ser imposibles...

se vendía muy rápido, lo cual, no me estoy quejando, es una característica, pero por ejemplo los museos tardan mucho en tomar decisiones, de manera que los coleccionistas privados van muy rápido. Y ahora lo que hicimos en la última pieza, un reloj... [Zero Noon], bueno pues esa obra la hicimos en edición de 12, para bajar los precios. La obra, comparada con las otras es mucho más barata. Tenemos otra pieza que es en edición de 100 y esa originalmente estaba a 1000\$, tenemos otra pieza que es un app en iPhone a \$1... en fin, buscar formas de multiplicar para democratizar la obra. Ahora, también es cierto que... con el tema electrónico es difícil.

Te explico, uno de los temas que a nosotros nos preocupa mucho porque queremos que la experiencia con las obras sea impecable, es: si tú estás vendiendo una obra por ejemplo... mira esta es la 100 copias, X no es la nueva Y, esa obra es un Arduino con dos paper displays y algo muy sencillito, vale? Pero claro, ahora tú tienes 100 de esas copias por todos lados y que si alguien rascó uno de los circuitos o cualquier problema, luego eso termina llegándonos a nosotros. Entonces a nosotros nos importa mucho ver la obra en base a su mantenimiento también. Pensamos en las obras como si fueran fuentes de agua. Una fuente de agua es una inversión inicial pero sabemos todos que hay que cambiarle el agua, que hay que clorinar, que hay que cambiar las válvulas etc. Entonces tienes ya en la mente un plan de mantenimiento, y para nosotros el plan de mantenimiento de una obra en 100 copias a \$1000 está muy difícil poder hacerlo y poder tener, digamos, una ganancia. Por eso, el proyecto de buenas prácticas precisamente te explica que después de ese año de garantía nosotros te resolvemos el problema de la obra con un normal engineering fee. Y la idea, es que en vez de que sea un dolor de cabeza o un problema de sostenibilidad del estudio o de nuestro nombre se convierte incluso en una fuente de ingresos. No LA fuente de ingresos, sino una fuente de

ingresos que ayude al mantenimiento de un staff capacitado para mantener esas operaciones en funcionamiento. Entonces lo masivo a nosotros no nos ha venido bien porque los márgenes de beneficio no permiten mantener a un staff que pueda dar abasto con ese tipo de problemas. Ahora, también es cierto que si haces un app, no es problema. Nuestra app se ha vendido 18000 copias y el tech support ha sido muy breve. Pero si tienes hardware específico empiezan los problemas más grandes y si no contestas lo único que estás haciendo es dilapidar tu futuro porque sabes que a futuro la gente no va a confiar y vas a tener problemas.

Pero Sediton en particular no lo conocía y me interesó mucho lo que me contaste.

[...]

El éxito de mi estudio a nivel comercial, y esto no tengo problema en admitirlo, se llama *shadow box*. El *shadow box* fue, porque ya no lo estamos haciendo, pero fue un éxito comercial como nunca me podía yo imaginar. Y la razón por la que fue es porque yo controlaba el hardware. El hardware de la obra era un hardware que, en realidad lo que te presentaba era un marco convencional, o sea tú como coleccionista tenías es problema inicial de formato, esto va en la pared, tiene passe-partout, apretas un botón y todo funciona. Entonces, de esas obras lo interesante fue que el contexto no cambiaba. Las obras en sí eran muy diferentes: una iba sobre el color, la otra sobre la vigilancia, otra sobre las palabras, etc. pero el hardware era un formato estable. Y yo hablé durante un tiempo con Steve porque Steve, creo que incluso lo hizo, tenía ediciones a precio muy bajo, creo que eran en DVDs, pero haz cuenta que te compras una pantalla de 40 pulgadas y luego la pueblas con software de diferentes artistas, lo cual a mí me parece fantástico, y a buen precio. Pero el problema con el hardware es que cambia, y entonces tienes un límite de qué es lo que puedes hacer, pero yo veo... por ejemplo, yo le he dicho

a Steve, mira haz un shadow box generalizado, con kinect, que tenga su sistema operativo, y yo te hago obras para eso. Pero la idea es, eso tiene que ser una galería como Steve o como Sediton o lo que sea, que sea una plataforma, de la misma manera que un fax en cuanto el valor de una máquina de fax es más grande cuanto más gente tenga fax porque así puedes mandarle a uno, es lo mismo con este tipo de control de plataforma de hardware.

He visto en Buenos Aires que hay empresas que aplican montajes muy parecidos a obras que tú has hecho con fines publicitarios, no sé si has visto algo de esto.

No, no lo he visto.

Pues hicieron una campaña en la que se iluminaba un monolito con los latidos del corazón del público para anunciar un yogur que reduce el colesterol.

No me jodas...

Incluso hay artistas que trabajan en esas empresas y luego sacan el dinero para trabajar en sus obras.

Mira, a mí no me importa, la verdad, estas cosas van a seguir sucediendo... ¿Sabes cuándo me importa? Cuando sucede... tú conoces Greyworld, es un grupo de artistas inglés que yo respeto mucho. Resulta que me conocen muy bien y compartimos desarrolladores etc. Pues resulta que como un año o dos después de hacer yo mi sol en Melbourne, ellos hicieron un sol en Trafalgar Square, lo cual no me importa pero ellos lo hicieron y yo estaba en negociaciones para presentar mi sol en Trafalgar. Lo malo de esto es que si tú ves la documentación de la obra de Greyworld, en realidad eso era un anuncio de Tropicana. Entonces ves en YouTube a la gente tomando fotos del sol y de repente aparece Tropicana gigantesco... entonces, con eso sí tengo un grave problema. Cuando un artista

hace eso, rompe una confianza... tú al trabajar en el espacio público estableces una relación de confianza con el público. Si tú de repente muestras Tropicana o el yogur nosequé o BP, *it backfires on you and on the company*. Porque de repente artistas que pensabas que tenían una columna vertebral se han vendido por completo. Yo eso nunca lo he hecho ni nunca lo haré. A mí BMW me pidió que hiciera Body Movies en la plaza de Frankfurt durante el AutoShow. Y yo encantado de trabajar con BMW, ellos tienen mucha tradición de trabajar con artistas. Pero, cada 5 minutos ellos querían que uno de sus mini cooper pasara e hiciera sombra, entonces les dije que no. Por ahí no paso, a pesar de que podía haber mantenido el estudio un año con lo que me ofrecían, eso me quita toda seriedad. Entonces eso es lo que a mí me preocupa: me preocupa no cuando alguien le roba la idea al artista sino cuando el artista se la roba a sí mismo (ríe). Lo que sí puedes evitar es autoexplotarte.

A1.7 MANFRED MOHR, ARTIST

Skype interview, May 22, 2013 (excerpts)

My work is about content... I use dimensions, and the word dimensions already intimidates people, it's a big word... Because the dimensions I am talking about is never about some mysticism or some... incomprehensible of space, it's only the complexity of a system, it's like you have a piano with 88 keys or you have a piano with 500 keys. You can play more and more...

It's like this myth that a painting can be understood by simply watching it...

Of course, there's different levels in understanding a piece of art. Everybody has a sort of order in his mind, and compares their order with what they see, and if it works you sort of think you understand this pretty well. And

sometimes it clashes, you don't get it because it talks a different language.

How do you feel about this retrospective in ZKM?

I had several retrospectives in my life, there was one in 1998. That was the first one where I showed things from the sixties and at that time I really didn't know if it would work together because, I was scared to death that the old work would not hook up with the new work. But I'm not afraid anymore because I know that the content, in a sense, is still the same idea, so it fits together, somehow, all the time.

My struggle I can see now: the more far away you are from what you did when you were young, the more you can understand what you unconsciously did. In the late fifties, when I started painting, I very quickly understood that it's very complicated to do something good, you waste ten pieces of paper to make one good drawing. I cannot build my career on that, so I always had that feeling that there should be something which I can control from the start. I always thinking about music, because I play jazz and in music, however improvisational you can always write down what you want to do, so you have it... Luckily I got hold of these books by Max Bense who talked about rational art, so I thought "that is exactly what I want to do, rational art." But I had no idea how to do rational art... I didn't even know how it should look like. So it was a ten year struggle, probably, how to get to programming.

[...]

In music, you play an instrument, so for instance if I play the saxophone anybody can hear it and recognize that it is a saxophone (it doesn't matter if you are playing good or bad). So I thought, why couldn't I invent, in the graphic world, a graphic instrument so to speak, where if I play on it, it always sounds graphic? And I got the idea, aha! the cube is my instrument, I can play

in the cube and if I make an error I can see it right away. So the cube is my instrument, and it's incredible, since 40 years I have been playing the same instrument! It got more complicated, though, the dimensions add more complexity to it. This is my instrument that I can play, and I think that's my advantage compared to other artists who have to struggle everyday what they are going to do, I just have to take my instrument and play.

I didn't find a problem in your career, like having a problem with technology or being ignored by the galleries, but in your case it seems like everything has gone well...

Before the computer, I was pretty known in Paris, with my geometry, I had shows and critics, there are a lot of texts about my work, Catherine Millet she wrote about it. But the thing is that as soon as I touched the computer, everybody closed the doors and the windows. Nobody knew me anymore. I was completely finished. But what was curious is that engineering people they were "oh, fantastic!", and I had shows in engineer schools and this and that. And suddenly I thought, "I don't want to be with engineers, I want to be in the art world." And I got scared that I got pushed away from the art world as some engineering phenomena. So I tried very hard to get back to the art world. I wrote to several galleries and things like that. And it's very hard, nobody answers right away, but then there was one gallery, Galerie Heinz Teufel in Cologne. A critic saw a show of mine and recommended my work to Teufel... you see, sometimes you have to be lucky in life, that certain things come together. So, we worked together for 30 years and it was fantastic. He took me to all the art fairs, and that was my luck, and everybody went crazy that this guy is everywhere... He was the most important person in my life, as a gallery. He put me back into the art world.

The years after your show at Musée Moderne de la Ville de Paris you had several shows in galleries, so it doesn't seem like the doors were shut.

No, Paris was very helpful of course for me. In Paris I found a tiny little gallery, Pierre Weiller, this one was the only one who would accept my work. He wasn't afraid to show... crazy stuff. I had immediately in 1974 a show with him, he was a good voice in Paris for me. There were so fantastic moments in this gallery... I was afraid to even talk about the computer, to say that this was done by a computer because I scare everybody out of the gallery. So sometimes I didn't even talk about it... And in 1974, in one of my shows there is a guy who comes to me and says, "you know, you should look into using a computer in your work." (laughs) But most of the time people were very aggressive, it was like pornography...

I remember the panel from your show in 1971...

Yes it's very passionate... There's fantastic stuff there... And it was an accident that I did this, because there was a wall were there under a staircase and I could not hang anything there, so we put some paper... And it was lucky I did it. Now it's an historical document because it reflects the thinking of the time.

[...]

During the show I let the plotter run, of course it was offline because you could not move the computer but I had a tape and every day I drew the same thing. And it was such an experience... Little kids and older people were fascinated, but people my age who were 30 and just became graphic designers saw this thing and thought "I have to learn this", because it was against them, and they got very aggressive. They felt threatened by the machine.

I was so proud when I made my first computer drawing that I went to my gallerist and showed it

and said "look, I didn't do it", and he said "if you didn't do it why do you show it to me?". They could not get the idea that the real concept that you have an idea and it gets realized. I showed them but they didn't see it.

Also, you used a computer that nobody had at that time.

Yes, that was another problem. I was very lucky. When Barbaud gave his lecture, we were so enthusiastic about working with a computer, but, where can you get a computer? (laughs) It was a million-dollar object, owned by big companies, so who would let you in there... then, if you have a computer you still don't have a drawing machine. So, one day when I was doing all that kind of thinking I saw on television that the meteorology in Paris just got a wonderful, big drawing table, a plotter, to draw the weather... and I thought "that's exactly what I need." So I ran over there and talked to them, of course I didn't get over, they said "you have to ask officially", and this and that... So I wrote officially a letter to the ministry of transport whatever, and you won't believe it, two weeks later I got an appointment with the Minister. So I went there, all shaking and all, to explain what I wanted to do... There's a very funny moment... When you meet somebody you don't know, the minute you see him, you figure out the other person... So when I walked into the office of this big guy I saw in his eyes: it will work. After some talk he came around and said, "listen, I was an artist too, when I was young."

(laughs)

So he gave me everything I wanted. I had free access to the computer, only at night, of course. So for eleven or twelve years I went almost every night there, to work there. And I had all these drawing machines available... I became part of the meteorology staff, I was the free maintenance guy, making sure that the machine works properly and so... Also, meteorology

people they are all half artists, that's true. They let me do everything I wanted, even though at one point I almost got thrown out, because at that time you worked in batches, that means you type your cards, you give it away, and then you run the cards and you get the next day a result. But at night I did it myself, I was friends with all the operators, I run my program... and once the program is in the big computer which calculates the weather for all of Europe, and all the airports and everything, there is a priority: the weather has the highest priority, 7-7-7-7, so nothing can go in the way. So at night, at 3 in the morning I put my priority up to get quickly a result, but the program didn't work, it was cycling, so I took almost a minute of their time and the next day I got hell...

Do you think this could be done today? Because I think it would be much more difficult nowadays...

No, it's such a different world now. Nowadays you would have to do something else... and I was the first time at that time to ask for something crazy like this, to make drawings in their computers... so, if you're the first one it always works, more or less, but if you're one of the hundreds coming after... After people saw it in Paris they all tried to get in there, but I was the only one allowed. So I got all the jealousy... So then in 1982 the personal computer came up and then you could buy a little plotter drawing... it became more easy to do things. But in the seventies it was a lucky strike.

But still you had to be very patient to learn programming and make tests, try again, etc.

Yes, well to this day I think that the worst thing that can happen to a young artist is that he gets famous too fast. I was sure that what I did I wanted to do, no matter what other people said, but nobody bothered me. So I worked for years quietly, doing my thing and I have no pressure

of handing a hundred new drawings and thing like this so... I was very lucky that for twenty years I could work without getting pressured into business stuff. Sometimes an artist at twenty becomes famous and then at forty either he kills himself or... is finished... It's not good when you have a platform already worked out. As an artist, you have to build a base and then you can work...

Nowadays, artists are like businesses...

Nowadays they want instant gratification, to make one painting for forty thousand dollars... completely crazy... In this sense, I'm not... for example, my show in London last year, it was a fantastic show and even there the curator said "you are so nice"... All these young artists they come here and demand "I want a plane ticket with two assistants to fly over" "I want this, I want that"... You just do your thing, don't demand things... So I'm really from an old school, I'm afraid to ask "I would like to be invited to dinner" and so... It's not my personality.

In my opinion, this is what good artists do. Because there are many bad artists who are very arrogant...

Yes, it's true, I once met a guy who would not lift anything, somebody had to come over and do it for him... But nothing is a problem for me.

And now also with technology it has accelerated everything... everything has to happen faster, careers, developments...

I agree that it becomes a whole different model, and I can see that people need assistants, it becomes so complicated and fast that you can't do it alone anymore, you need a technician for this and a technician for that. In you're into media, there's always something wrong. I still repair everything myself.

I was impressed that in your *space.color* motion series you designed your own PCs...

Oh yes, I built the whole computer... I have a friend in Jersey, unfortunately he died now, I designed the box with the computer, everything... but it comes back to my childhood, and my interest in radios... Of course, it was a big box, but later on I found on the Internet a smaller box that I could buy... Now, I just put the Mini Mac behind the screen and it's clean, so...

I know this is not really in your line of work, but have you thought about doing something with touch screens, more interactive?

I am not so much interested in interaction. I may be old fashioned, but I am the artist, I decide what happens. I like to see what other people do, but my vision, my aesthetics is not other people saying what should be here. I decided what's there. I like interaction, there are great things done, but it's not my thinking.

[...]

I'm interested in that couple of years when you switch from using the supercomputer to using your own computer, how did it change your work? Because I guess you could work faster and easier...

Well, you see when in 1980 I got the word in Paris that meteorology is moving to the South of France. The government had decided Paris was too expensive so they moved it to Toulouse or somewhere. And it was also the time that, with my wife who is American we were travelling all the time to America, you could buy there a mini computer... It was the first computer you could buy and have in a room without air conditioning. So we bought that thing in New York and bought a loft, which cost nothing at the time, and I had my own computer sent there. I was so proud... after having worked every night there, I can finally relax and do something whenever I wanted to. Of course, I had to find a drawing machine too, and I found it too accidentally in some magazine, in California

there was a company who just developed a little plotter, and I wrote to them. And I became a beta tester for them, to see if everything works or anything... I believe in luck when you need it, somehow... When you want something very strongly, things happen...

So the transition was very normal, I just continued, I could do what I want... It was a great relief that I didn't have to report to anybody, so it was a great step.

You must have seen a big change in the art market, and you have changed galleries yourself, so what is your impression about how the market has changed?

It changes gradually and there is still a lot of resentment... People still don't really... when you really get to it they shrink back... but it became much more accepted because, you see, everywhere, in all domains in life the computer suddenly entered. People got less scared of the idea of the computer. And then when the personal computer started, people started with Photoshop and this kind of stuff, which is not really programming, it's just playing around... People became more and more excited... but you see, my work is completely different, it's not Photoshop. Still they don't see it... but it doesn't matter if they don't see it, the galleries... it becomes more and more easy to show my work, it's not a big deal. I don't even say that it is done with a computer, it means nothing. So it becomes normal, my art is my art, that's all.

Maybe the difference is that in daily life we control computers (or think that we do) but in your work it goes beyond because it creates its own compositions...

I doesn't really go beyond, because I control it to a certain degree of... the logic of what I'm doing, I control. What it does in detail, that there are parts that are random, that's not losing control, that's outsourcing, sort of (laughs).

But then if you take an abstract painting, there's randomness too, but they don't see this randomness. It's a psychological randomness, but my randomness is a logical randomness. I don't know what the next step is but it's calculated. I know what it does in a certain way, so I see it as not losing control. Certain decisions are not important for the flow of information.

[...]

Have you perceived any differences between how people react to your prints and your screen-based work?

What I can tell is that most people are fascinated when it moves, I agree... Everybody has a certain interest, so different people like different things... the person who buys a screen doesn't buy a painting, and the one who buys the canvas doesn't want the screen... It's different interests, I have no idea and when I show both then people choose what they like. I've had museums who bought the screens and the paintings... I don't know, it depends... there's no rules. In general, it's easier to show a person a moving image because through the movement he feels more connection to the drawing. Because he sees what happens or at least thinks he sees, while the stable image is just an image. He has to think more about it (laughs).

[...]

There is another thing happening that I don't like, it's that young students try to re-write my programs. They take whatever they see on the screen and they write using the Processing language... they miss a bit, but of course it *looks* like my stuff and they always say "after Manfred Mohr" or whatever. And I tell them that is plagiarism, but they don't see it, they say it's too precious to get lost. We have to re-write it in a new language, so it preserves in time. And I said "how stupid!" I wrote a program in the 1960s, why would it have to be rewritten? It's not the program which has to be preserved, it's the result!

It's like going to a museum and saying "I like the Picasso, let's repaint it because it's updating"... It's a stupid idea, but what can I do?

You mentioned Processing, what do you think about this programming language?

Well, I don't use it... I probably could use it but I have no interest in it for the moment. I know Casey Reas very well. But that's not really my idea, to do it better or easier... If I have an idea, I write it with my handwriting, which is another programming language. It doesn't matter, it's the same thing. Processing wouldn't change anything in the visuals of the works. It's just easier to do it, it's for people who don't want to get too much into programming, thinking, it's an easy way of doing things.

Is the code part of the artwork or do you think of it just as a tool?

I even showed it, in my first shows I showed code, but it's... I decided the code is my way of working, it is the content of my work but it's not the result. It's the passage to get to the result. It is the content but it is not the artwork.

[...]

Why would I show the code, if nobody would read it? And even if you read it, you still don't have the vision how it would look like. So it's more my way of working which is more my personal environment, but I show the result of it, not the process.

[...]

In the nineties, the media art community developed in festivals and generated a different art world, a separate space...

Yes, because at the same time as the computer made its way, the video world made its way, so it sort of like two competing elements. And the video sort of won instant success, video art became a thing... And these two things became compared... the computer was always a bit put down because video was something you could

understand right away, while computers were something... who knows what they're doing, I don't know. So the video took over and media events became video events, until today... People don't understand that the computer could be involved somehow... Like people call my work almost video, and I have nothing to do with video... it's so frustrating that I can show somebody a piece on the wall and say "look, this computer calculates the image at this moment", but in the next sentence the person says "oh, it's a nice video"... It's the same insult like if you are saying to a saxophonist "did you bring your trumpet?" (laughs).

A1.8 EVAN ROTH, ARTIST

Skype interview, February 25, 2014 (excerpts)

Your work is about hacking and empowering people with technology, but at the same time you work on the street, on the gallery and on the web. So you combine works in more traditional formats with others that are more experimental. How do you see yourself between these two worlds, the street art and digital art scene on one side and the art market on the other?

Sure... I'll start with how I got to where I am now. It took me a long time to use the word "artist", I felt uncomfortable calling myself artist for a long time. I came through design and architecture, I was teaching myself programming, I went to graduate school at Parsons in what was technically a masters in Fine Art but was really in Design Technology and it was very much in the new media camp, my thesis advisor was Zach Lieberman, so it was really inside new media art. After that I had the research and development fellow position at Eyebeam... it was definitely new media art, maybe more on activism... That's where I was coming from and where I existed

professionally for probably five years or so. I was probably among the people who were extremely skeptical of the art market. But no matter how involved you are in the art market, everybody is skeptical to some degree. I think that it's almost too easy to say it's a bad thing. But I think that I was part of a scene that turned its back on it in the sense that they didn't even want to know about it. I remember someone telling me what a limited edition was, after surviving as an artist for like two or three years... I really had no idea of what was going on in that realm and I was really inspired by these ideals coming from the open source movement, which got really overlapped with the new media art scene. This was really good for me, I felt that it was really natural to be so open with work and not worry about all these other things... The open source movement operates on a system that is totally different from the market, so they are not expecting to make money in the future. It's a gift giving culture, a whole new model, and I think that got wrapped up in the new media art scene that was really good. Because the new media art scene can challenge contemporary art in way that it needs to be challenged.

But then, at some point, I was... progressing in the new media art scene to a point where I've hit a few of the milestones that were the ones I didn't ever think I'd get to, like winning at Ars Electronica and winning the award at Transmediale and Future Everything, and I'd hit all those milestones... it's not that I was doing so great, but I was working in this collaborative group and had some projects that were thankfully well received so I got to see what that world looked like... like getting closer to the top... Then I could see what it would be like, ok, if all my dreams came true within this sphere of the arts, what did that look like? And it financially... not even financially because I was interested in how I put myself in a position of empowerment as an artist... And so, after

winning Ars Electronica, and getting all these great awards, after those events closed and I flew back home, I *wasn't* in a more empowered position as an artist. We're still scrapping for 500€ artist fees, and really having to send lots of emails to get them. So it wasn't a position of empowerment. Even though the system... it's relationship with money is very different from the contemporary art scene... there's still a client in the end, any time money is involved, so I started thinking about media art that I liked that this model didn't make as many concessions, or claimed not to. But then, the more I was involved with it, the more I felt I knew exactly what they wanted. I knew what kind of workshops I had to give, what kind of buzzwords had to be involved and I started realizing that, of course there's still concessions in this world, they might not be as out in the open as they are in the contemporary art market. For instance, in an auction the motivations are very straightforward, maybe in a way that's even more honest in a sense.

Then I started thinking about other models, because there seems to be a certain ceiling in the new media art scene, at least for my personal path through the new media art space. I didn't want to be, ten years from now, still arguing about 500€ artist fees. That wasn't going to be what led me to make more work. So that's when I started being curious about what the contemporary art commercial sphere was and started paying attention to it. I'm still getting to understand it... I'm actually glad I wasn't exposed to it younger because I had a period, specially those two years at Eyebeam, that was amazing for me, like I was just making making work and not thinking about any of this stuff. I feel really blessed that I was uninformed enough to be able to have that time. But now I try to be diversified a little bit, I am aware of the contemporary art world, and I'm trying to find ways not to be pessimistic about it. I'm not trying to take work that I did in the new media art sphere or street

art sphere and take it into the gallery, but I am trying to treat the gallery as a unique medium that is different. So I'm trying to see how that can influence the work in a good way.

[...]

I think the gallery is different, there is a time investment. You actually spend time travelling to the location, you are going to be there and you're probably going to sit with the work in a different way and I also have a respect for that... this is a different audience, this is an audience that is more invested in a sense... well, not necessarily, people can do a lot of research on the Internet as well... Anyway, just as the street artists that I love treat the street as a unique medium, the net artists that I love are those that treat the net as this place that is not just about putting documentation or video online, it's really making work that's uniquely for the Internet. And so I'm trying to treat the gallery in the same way, not to treat it as a place that is just to dump things and think pessimistically about the market but really think of it as a place that's different, a place that exists on a longer time scale, a place where people is on a more reflective or more quiet tone when they are looking at work. And so I'm trying to diversify my practice: I'm still making work on the Internet, that is maybe better communicated in a blog post than in a gallery, but I am also making work that is trying to treat the gallery with respect.

In the new media art scene, careers evolve very quickly, but then it is not enough to make your work sustainable, and you get swallowed by this system that seeks constant innovation and replaces one artist for another...

It's actually getting worse, because in Europe a lot of countries are losing arts funding so artist fees are only decreasing and in the US, where there was no arts funding to begin with, they are getting more and more comfortable with corporate sponsorship getting more and

more deeply entwined into the programming. So in both those cases it's getting harder and harder to fight for those artist fees. The artist fee is something that has become more important since the new media art scene came up because it wasn't something you really needed in the contemporary art model, because you could show work for free in a museum or a gallery space, and even if you weren't getting any money from that, there was a structure in place where if this starts a line and things went well, you could make a living from that. I could show a piece in a museum and even if they weren't selling it, it would attain value, it would be of interest to a collector or another museum. So, for better or worse there was a structure in place, but that got people used to the idea that you don't have to pay for art, because collectors and museums pay for it. So when new media became its own sphere, somewhere in the back of people's minds there was still that idea that "ok, we don't have to pay for art." I quickly learn that if you don't ask for an artist fee no one is going to volunteer to you, and everybody will keep telling you "oh, it's good for your career, it's good for your career". But, really, it's not. Just because I showed in a museum with a piece that's unsaleable, the next one is going to be the big cash cow.

In New York there is a whole new media art scene that, specially in New York where there is a big tech bubble happening, it's so hard to justify a limited lifestyle when you have these skills that are very very sought after, for Internet startup companies. So you have all these people who could have had these art careers, but because there is no... Well, this isn't the only reason but it would help if there was a funding model that allowed them to survive and they didn't have to take these jobs in IT and advertising.

[...]

I showed in the two exhibitions that Paula Antonelli curated at the MoMA, and that was a big moment for many new media artists to have

their work shown in that space, me included. But that was also a good learning curve for me because I realized that even in a show of that level, if you don't have any foot in the contemporary commercial art space, you could show at that show, and even get your work in the collection, our performance is in the collection of the MoMA, we have a certificate, which is a huge milestone. And I'm super grateful for all of it, but none of that... even that performance, it doesn't affect my bottom line in any way whatsoever, and I think for other artists even less so. Unless you know how showing in a museum can turn into these other things in the way that artwork models have run for hundreds of years, then it all makes sense. But unless you're aware of that... I guess it's a system that hasn't updated to this alternative sphere in the arts...

It seems that, whereas before museums consecrated artists they now use them to consecrate themselves by showing new media and experimental works.

Well... still it is a big line for me in my resume. Now I can see how that can help me open other doors and... but you're right, though, because I also ran into this realization that my relationship with contemporary art was really out of whack, because then when I was trying to find galleries to work with, they didn't know what to do with me because I had zero experience showing in galleries but I got like three pieces in the Museum of Modern Art, and they were like "what's going on here?"... To be honest I'm still struggling with that, to some degree, like the more traditional path would be the other way around...

You had to learn to how to work with galleries? Did you have to adapt your work? How did that go?

Hum... honestly, I have an optimistic disposition so I'm... I was very pessimistic for a long time about getting involved with them, but then I

decided to take it more seriously... I didn't want to be making work I didn't believe in. There's no point being an artist if that's the case. It took me a while to figure out what was different about those spaces and then find those as interesting design constraints. And so... I've been taking it more seriously for the last three or four years and maybe because it's also very new to me, like moving to a new country, where you have this learning curve for two or three years and then things take off and things become normal, so I'm still in this high learning curve period, where it is fascinating for me how everything works, and since I was only working on the Internet and with code for the most part, I'm really enjoying materials, I'm enjoying living with the work I have made, which I have in my own studio and I see how my opinion changes over the weeks, months and even years... and that makes me think differently about the work I'm making.

Did the galleries give you advice on how to make or present your work?

I think I've had pretty good experiences with the galleries I've worked with so far... In certain cases I've asked for more curatorial input in certain ways things might be framed, but most of the advice I got came from artists... just because they're friends, it's easier to get real input... one advice I got from a friend of mine is that the artists and gallerists, their interests are aligned, but they are aligned only to a certain point.

[...]

One funding model that has been particularly good for me, and I have seen this work for other new media artists are speaking engagements, which can be a good small investment, where I go somewhere, give a talk and get a thousand euros from it. And that thousand euros is so much easier to get than the thousand euros from an art sale, where the gallery takes fifty percent, then I take fifty percent, then we deduct shipping, we deduct production costs, the cost of the crate

and the frame... I have found that this is a good way to diversify income, some coming from art sales and some from speaking engagements. And sometimes those one hour talks are a good way to communicate artistic ideas anyway... Because you have people's attention for a full hour, which is a really long time span nowadays.

[...]

How do you decide the format of your work and how do you produce it?

When I work with prints I try to shy away from making a misstep which is to "I have a project and I need to make a print of it to sell." This ends up leading to work that, at best is documentation of a good project and at worst is pale comparison to what the piece was in the first place. So when I work with prints, I try to make them in relation to my work with archiving. As browsers change and screen sizes change, this prints are going to be an archive of what a chunk of the Internet felt like in a specific moment in time. It's more about what are the unique properties of those prints. Printing versus showing something on the screen, one of the ideas is that it ages, so a lot of the work that I do is the one that ages. The sculptures are similar... they represent the idea of freezing a motion, the graffiti analysis work I used to present it as software... but it really wanted to be a 3D shape... it was a 3D shape but stuck inside of a screen. When 3D printing became more accessible... it felt very natural in that piece, it didn't feel forced. It's what the data wanted to be from the beginning... Also, we I do shows in galleries, when it doesn't make sense I divorce myself from all that. If the piece wants to be a website, it's a website, I just put that in the gallery and I don't expect it to sell... site specific work, sometimes that can be misappropriated when it comes into the gallery. I saw a lot of my favourite street artists that came into that very dynamic period in the early 2000s when they were doing this amazing work around New York

and around Europe, and they would come into the gallery and just make these silkscreen prints, which is so devoid of what that action was about. If the piece I do is taking place outside, usually I end up showing video documentation in the gallery... but those pieces round up what the others are about, and most galleries are really open to that, and like it actually.

Still, maybe my experience with the art market is different from other artists because I'm just coming up and the collectors who are buying my work at this point they really like it and they want to support me, and that feels good, it doesn't feel dirty at all. That makes me feel empowered as an artist.

A1.9 STEVEN SACKS, DIRECTOR OF BITFORMS GALLERY

E-mail interview, May 10, 2010

During the last decade, new media has made its way into major museums, biennials and of course festivals, meeting a growing acceptance in the art world, except, it seems, for the art market. As one of the pioneers in promoting and selling new media art, have you experienced this condition as an advantage or an obstacle?

Lets start by defining new media art, a term that is challenging and not always accurate. New media as a concept or a genre is based on tapping into the most contemporary tools and ideas of a specific time period and applying the innovative ways to the artist's practice. Also, my program emphasizes the range of media that can be produced under the auspices of new media. Many of my artists focus more on the conceptual relevance of new media versus the innovative processes that may sometimes be defined as new media. This expanded definition of new media is crucial to the success of my program and what

makes my gallery unique.

The art market, if you mean the auction market is more conservative and tends to be on the safe side in presenting works. There are definitely works that are media-based being auctioned, but yes, they are far fewer than traditional media forms. These actions also make sense since works that enter Auction typically have a history before they acquire value and many new media works don't have that history yet. In 10-15 years there will be a lot more new media works available in auction. For me, the art market is the commercial gallery world, which encompasses my gallery in NYC and the many international art fairs we participate in.

Many well-known media artists with established careers have been, and some are, still unknown to a large segment of the art world and consequently the market. Has it been an advantage for you to be the first to work with these artists? How have the artists adapted to the conditions of the market?

Media artists have had a lot of success in the fine art world and also in commercial galleries. Dan Flavin, Gary Hill, Nam Jun Paik and Bill Viola are just a handful of very successful artists. New media, which is typically more experimental and can be more challenging to collect has seen a rise in acceptance and exposure in the art world. A lot of new media artists participate in festivals, which can lump too many similar minded works in one location. These festivals also target a different audience that may not connect with the contemporary art scene. As a result new media artists can become famous in these insular festival circuits and be overlooked by the fine art community. There are artists who have made the leap from festivals to art venues, but they chose to make that transition, and made certain adjustments to their art practice in order to succeed. Rafael Lozano-Hemmer is a wonderful example of

someone who has made that leap and has had incredible success. Known for huge scale installations at festivals and in public spaces, he now also creates smaller, more intimate works that are well received in the art world.

Being the first gallery devoted to new media art has helped me better connect to the process and visions of the artist and become a productive participant in helping them transition and produce works for an art-minded audience.

Between 2005 and 2007, you explored the Asian market by opening bitforms gallery in Seoul. How was your experience in this market? Is Asia less open to new media art than the United States or Europe?

Opening a gallery in Seoul was a fantastic experience. It allowed me to gain knowledge and exposure in a new market and introduce the idea of new media art in an Asian gallery setting. Also, I was able to forge a relationship with one of my most exciting artists, U-Ram Choe, who lives in Seoul. With our help, he has exhibited his works around the world and is in major private and public collections. Asia in general is not as sophisticated as the US and Europe in the area of contemporary art. They are very technologically advanced, but their appreciation of media art is still developing.

As a participant in several international art fairs, what is your opinion about their focus (or lack thereof) in new media art? Do you consider special sections such as ARCO's Black Box (now Expanded Box) positive or ghettoizing?

As mentioned, today new media art is integrated into many art galleries so it's common to see new media art scattered throughout the fairs. I don't always like having special sections for media art as the works can start to blend and lose their uniqueness. Also, if the media art is very active, having a lot of it can be overwhelming.

With that being said, ARCO's Black Box has improved dramatically and this past year was nicely presented.

As digital media is more affordable and a new generation of artists develop their careers with the aim of entering the market, new young galleries devote themselves to digital art. At the same time, established galleries turn their eyes to media art. Would you say that the competition is growing? Can this be positive?

This was answered previously....

As a process-based, and to some extent immaterial form of art, software-based artworks present several challenges to their distribution in the art market. How have you and your artists dealt with issues such as reproducibility, obsolescence of the media, and so on? (in general terms)

We treat software art and generative video art the same as galleries should treat standard video in terms of distribution. There is a "play" file and a back-up file, and each work comes with a certificate and any information needed to view and install the works. More complicated installations have guidelines that speak of future presentation and preservation of works. The main issue to consider for the future of software-based works is the migration to new operating systems. If the collector stays active in preserving the works they can be updated and maintained fairly easy through my gallery or directly with the artists studio.

In your experience, are screen-based works successful (in terms of sales)? Or do collectors prefer more established mediums such as print, photography or sculpture? Can the flat screen actually become the new canvas?

Screen-based works are very successful and have become even more popular the past few years as more artists are exploring the medium. I

envision an art world where many collectors will have dedicated screens in their homes that will rotate a number of different artworks.

Does interactivity make a difference in the amount of interest raised by an artwork? In your experience, are interactive artworks more appreciated than animations or more "static" artworks?

Interactive artworks can of course attract more attention and can instantly get a viewer involved in the concept of the work. The problem is, artists can use interactivity specifically to gain attention, which can become too playful and meaningless. If an artists uses interactivity to strengthen the connection to the viewer, and enhance their artistic vision it can be very powerful.

In 2002, with Mark Napier's *The Waiting Room*, you developed a form of acquiring a networked artwork in the form of "shares". Now that the concept of cloud computing is widely accepted and users pay for access rather than possession, do you consider Napier's artwork as a model for future net-based artworks?

At the time this was a very progressive idea. We were able to sell over a15 "shares" of the work. I still believe this is one method to distribute and access Internet-based artworks, but now there are other options, such as web site or URL ownership.

A1.10 NICOLAS SASSOON, ARTIST

Skype interview, July 24, 2013 (excerpts)

How do you define yourself in terms of your artistic practice?

I sometimes define myself as a new media artist, for me it's easier to place me or situate me like that, and when I talk to new media artists, I

don't necessarily introduce myself as a new media artist, because I feel there is also a lot of specific niches within that big new media sort of field, so we try to precise a little more.

Some artists I have talked to say they feel uncomfortable with this label because they think it's limiting or something...

Well, it's definitely limiting... sometimes, if somebody asks me if I am a new media artist, depending where that person is from I am going to say yes or no. For example, here in Vancouver a lot of the art scene is (sighs) sort of old school, people are involved in photography, or in drawing, in painting, so I think that when they ask me that question it is better for me to say yes, so they can see where I am coming from. Now if you talk about the term New Media Art at large, I don't feel that I'm a new media artist because the medias I'm working on are not part of new media anymore. I don't feel like my work is challenging technology, I don't feel like my skills as an artist are challenging technology, and my definition of new media art is something that has to do with being at the forefront of technology and I don't feel that way at all. If I'm talking with people who are experts in technology or new media or digital art or media art and they ask me if I am a new media artist I'm going to say no. I identify new media art with a lot of the teachers I've had. A lot of my teachers in school were identifying themselves as new media artists, which I think made sense at the time because that's where the term originated from and so I identified it with some types of work that were dealing with video, interactivity, programming, and they were emerging from the 1980s or the 1990s up to the early 2000s and where you work in a laboratory, sometimes you work with technicians, or it requires a team... that is my conception of new media art. I don't feel like I'm a new media artist at all. Because I work with technology that is extremely available and

I feel more bonds with words like painting or optical art or other fields that are maybe more traditional and not looking towards technology as a new media art.

You may be considered a digital native, so the digital culture is really part of your work, it cannot be understood without having an idea about digital culture, don't you think?

Yes, for sure. I guess I am a digital native... to me is a given thing, it's part of my culture just like the other fields of culture that are integrated... like art history... digital culture, to me is in the same level.

It seems we are now past the idea of new media art as a new thing or the "art of the future", as I see in the work of young artists like yourself...

There is something interesting about that... I had a very interesting conversation with another Canadian artist called Jeremy Bailey... we had this conversation about the idea of new media and what it refers to and what we felt comfortable and uncomfortable about this term, and like him my teachers were calling themselves new media artists and they were showing me works that were sometimes very exciting and sometimes very ridiculous, where the artists felt like they were revolutionizing the world, like they were inventing something extraordinary, doing this amazing thing... and there was this really strong drive like "I am working with the future, I am working with this technology, I'm going to create this thing that was never seen before, I'm going to extend my field of perception, etc etc." And so there is this whole drive towards the technology, the idea of the future, discovering new grounds... That is exciting, but I've never felt that, because what I'm doing is not at all in that field. Being in school, I saw how that drive was a very good selling asset, when you are going to meet a board of people who fund your project you're like "yes, I'm working with the future! I'm

working with technologies!"... It's like these sexy ideas that when you look at it in practicality it doesn't really work and it doesn't really deliver its premise. Whereas what I do, I work with the Adobe Creative Suite, I use a program that everybody uses, my worked hasn't challenged technology in any way, I am not challenging perception or breaking new ground, or if I am it's more like in relationship to Optical Art, or to Kinetic Art or to painting and how these fields maybe extend to that field of technology that we now work with every day. The discussion I had with Jeremy Bailey was interesting in this respect, because some of the teachers we had they were really looking towards the future, they didn't look at art history, they were more looking at the future, breaking new ground every day, making these new discoveries... I think they did, for sure, but I think that my generation, and I am not an academic or an institutional artist but I definitely tend to try to see if what I am doing has some links or some connection with more traditional forms of art and if I can build a bridge with these forms. So I really don't feel like a new media artist, at all.

So maybe this drive towards technology and the future in your teachers was pushing too hard on your generation, so you felt more comfortable looking back towards twentieth century art...

I think all of it, but I don't feel like I have... when I was working in school and in the field of new media I had technicians working for me, a programmer, somebody who was taking care of the sensors, the installation, and it was great, it was really interesting, but after art school I didn't have access to all that... And personally as an artist I've always wanted to be self-sufficient and be able to work and have a practice where if I want to work right now I can, I don't need to call two persons to build the project, etc. Because of that aspect I decided to push my work where

it went. But the idea of innovation I think is a bit of a double edge word, I think sometimes its innovative and sometimes it's not innovative at all, it's just making some things that have always been made, but in a different field so it feels like it's new... It seems now is the time when technology has settled up a bit and it is when we can explore more culturally, instead of just technologically or inventing new devices...

Exactly, I agree. Now we are not so much trying to break new grounds but trying to understand how culturally these things work. I always felt like it was a bit naïve to think that being in art school with a team of four people we are going to make this new discovery in technology, while there are these labs were 500 of the best techs are actually defining the new technology for you to work with. And you are just like the rat in the lab that plays with it afterwards.

[...]

Do you think the new media art scene is ghettoizing?

(sighs) I don't know... I don't know what the new media art scene is. I talk about these topics on Facebook with friends, and every time it turns into an argument. Because every time someone has something to say about new media art or net art. The last time I had an argument about net art... I had this project were I sold an animated GIF that I sold in a hard drive and I called it net art, and somebody told me that wasn't net art, so we had an argument about that. I definitely see scenes online that are working with this, but identifying them is really hard because it's so transient and in between so many things...

When I see the history of net art and the beginning of net art, I don't feel like an artist, because my work is sort of a bridge between a lot of things and it is not purely and solely integrated into the culture of Internet, while the pioneers and the work of JODI and this kind of people, it's like their work is really net art. Within the generation

that I work with I can definitely see a separation, where some people are totally... like their presence online is becoming more sparse, and they're less and less doing things and they're focusing on gallery work, on creating links with commercial galleries or institutions. And, as a consequence of that their contributions online are disappearing. And on another end, I see a lot of people who are focusing on making work online, and most of the time this people have a day time job or a full time job, which is kind of interesting because there is this acceptance of "I'm going to make net art and I'm never going to live from it"... This group of people are pushing something that is definitely more towards net art. Because they don't have a pressure like "should I try to make a living from my work? Should I be more strategic about it?" There is definitely this separation...

How has it been for you to combine doing things online and working with galleries?

It's been strange, because I'm a digital native but I started making things online four years ago. So, my work has been identified as something from the Internet from the very beginning but I've always had this drive to produce objects, installations and works that extend beyond the screen... It's hard because it's more work (laughs) and I think it's a challenge because there is something about publishing work online and having screens as your primary platform to show work and the Internet as your primary platform to publish your work. It generates a lot of things. To me, it has generated a lot of reflections on the type of experience I want to create and trying to translate that into a space is very challenging because it doesn't necessarily rely on the classic format of exhibition, it's trying to push something towards a certain direction... Trying to use the screen as a space for contemplation is something that I've always been keen on. And trying to translate that on the space is very hard because when you put a screen on the gallery wall people

stare at it like that and they look at it from afar so you have to think about all these strategies and bring these ideas into a physical space. That's been pretty challenging but at the same time that's been what I'm most excited about.

[...]

When I started working online I was contacted by music bands in Vancouver who asked me to produce visuals for their concerts and I started working with them and I actually found this very satisfying. When I make online works, they are going to be seen by people in front of their computers, at home or in the office, and there is no one around them screaming, it's an intimate setting so you are able to dive into the animation, it's a privileged relation with the image. And to make projection in this very dark space for electronic music parties, there was a continuation of the online experience. So I started with these projections and then I went to create installations.

[...]

I have this very prolific production of animated gifs, they keep coming, so I have these discussions with people that say I produce a lot of work which they don't know how to sell it. And it's funny because the artist who won the Golden Lion in Venice this year is Tino Sehgal, and he is the perfect example of the artist whose work is totally immaterial to the very end. [...] I think the real problem with selling animated gifs and things like that has to do with the problem with copies and with the lack of institutional support. Because if institutions and if galleries want to sell something immaterial, they just do it. They've been doing it for the last thirty years, so...

Have you considering a model such as Rafaël Rozendaal's, who sells his websites?

Yes, I've considered it. It's not something that I do very often, but I've considered it. It's funny because I don't really create a website for each of my works. My animated gifs tend to be just these objects and people just distribute them

and publish them on other websites. I think it's a format that works, what Rafaël did, and in terms of Internet real estate it works because people own it and share it at the same time, but it's not really my way of publishing work. Maybe it will become my way of publishing work, when I make work online I just focus on how I'm going to make it, I don't worry too much about how I'm going to sell it. And then I can produce physical works on the side because I have the strong appetite to make physical objects, and it's definitely something that I miss. I don't know if there is a magic formula, I guess it depends on supports, like for Rafaël Rozendall I think his format works really well but I think he also got supports, he got a network, he has been around for quite a while, he was linked to neen, he was close to Milto Manetas at some point, so he's got a really important network and his work is really representative of a certain era of net art that is still popular. I'm not quite in this position in my career right now. I have supports and I have a network but my work does not exist at all in the same context.

Also, Rozendaal has no problem to work in installations for product presentations and such...

Yeah, I have no problem with that too, I often work with fashion designers and I think it's awesome to work with them too. There is something that is very de-complexed about working... I don't like everything about fashion but I have worked with very nice people in fashion design...

[...]

Nowadays the difference between, art, design, fashion... is blurring...

Yes, and also the nature of the digital file. When you make a digital file, like a JPEG, or a GIF or a PNG, potentially it can become so many things... you can print it, you can use it as a template for a CNC, you can weave it onto a textile, there are many potential applications to

it. It's not like a painting, which is already an object that is socially and culturally very strong and identified. There is that sort of flexibility.

Nowadays many artists create some work intended for exhibitions, to draw attention to their work, and then have other pieces which are the ones that actually sell, so in your case maybe the animated gifs have contributed to draw attention to your work and then you create other pieces for sale.

It has happened, I don't know how consciously it has happened, but it definitely happened. To me, when I was in art school I looked at the painters and I was jealous: I wanted to be painter, to go to my studio, take a brush and start painting. And that's exactly the sort of model that I've tried to apply in the computer. I really see myself as an image maker, in the traditional sense of the word. And because of that I can see the gap between the production of textile, of fashion or others things like closing that gap really fast, really easily. Even wallpapers or graphic design or things like that: it's things that I fed from and still feed from and I don't see this really harsh separation between all these fields, so it's definitely... I have an appetite for that so when I get opportunities I don't decline them. I've tried to be more aware of what strategically is going to be more successful and what's not, but every time I try to be more aware about it, it just doesn't work and it doesn't happen. So I just do things in a more spontaneous and that works for me.

[...]

There is also the problem of achieving recognition in the art world, do you think that may change as digital culture is more widespread?

Well, it seems there is a field of digital art now and new media art or net art that is developing through specific centers and galleries, like Rhizome and Eyebeam, etc. And there is a form of recognition

that happens through these structures.

[...]

I feel like this is a particular moment, for me, because until like last year there was a very strong wave and momentum about digital art and Internet art, and to me Computers Club was a very strong drive and there were a lot of things happening there, and then there were a lot of things happening like *justhillin*, or 319 Scholes was organizing all these exhibitions that were really exciting... There was something very responsive and there was a very strong momentum of things happening that was very exciting and very inspiring. And now it seems like that have disseminated, a lot of the people that were active in that period of time are now focusing on gallery work, and their presence online is becoming more and more sparse, a lot of other people that were active at this period have become a lot less active, because they are focused on their own lives and they are putting art practice on the side, and a lot of others are focusing on online art but they are bringing it into different directions. Some of them are taking it towards design, design blogs... things that are meant to circulate well online, work well on fashion blogs... and some people are focusing on very small events, either offline or online. It seems that there needs to be a second breath... to me, I have always had the drive to produce physical works and physical objects and try to have a sustainable practice from that or from my work online, so it's always difficult because I'm always in between two seats. It is always a bit of both.

A1.11 CARLO ZANNI, ARTIST

E-mail interview, May 14, 2012

Do you consider yourself a new media artist? Does the use of electronic or digital media define your artistic practice?

I consider myself an artist primarily working with the "so called" new media, that is in my specific case mostly Video, Internet Data and programming.

Somehow it defines it, I would say it defines it technically. It's a shortcut to quickly distinguish what I do from what a painter does. But only technically, because to go ahead with this simple example, my practice and the painter's one can be more similar than one can guess.

Do you consider that new media art constitutes a field of artistic practice that is separated from mainstream contemporary art?

Well up to now, with some exceptions, it's separated de facto. There's no new media art regularly popping up in galleries, museums and art centers programs (in comparison with other represented media). Of course there are some rare cases, but the fact we can list them all, means they are just a bunch. I guess you don't want to waste your entire life listing all the venues showing painting :-)

But no, I think it's part of the art discourse like any other medium. It's just something happening now, and the art world is pretty slow in accepting changes.

Have you shown your work in museums, festivals, non commercial galleries or events? If so, how would you describe your experience?

Yes I did. It's not easy to generalize. The only thing I'm very sure - but it's about the whole art system - is that there are no rules, it's basically a no-system instead of a system. So every time you talk to a new venue for a possible show, it's always a new negotiation and it's pretty annoying because you lose time and you are pushed not to trust people because you don't have guarantees given you by a set of commonly accepted rules. When you get into troubles, often the money involved is so few that even if you have a contract you can't hire a lawyer because it would cost you

more than the money you are willing to get. This was to explain that in the end, it really depends on the people involved. So sometimes you are lucky, they fly you in to give a talk for 5 attendants offering a fee and accommodation too. Other times you show a piece and they don't even pay a train ticket to attend the show. Other times you get a gallery that invests money for a new project, getting payed when it sells it; other times you give them a print on aluminum you payed for, they hung it on the wall and when you get it back - when you are lucky to have it back - the print has bounced corners. Hopefully new media are pretty flexible so very often you email a link and that's it. You don't get payed for it, but at least you don't waste money and energies. Among all the art forms, Live media & live performances are probably the only ones more professionally organized / approached. They involve at least one artist and a set up and both require to be physically present in a specific place. So when they call you, the organizers already know they have to face and deal with a proper budget to cover these expenses. In the arts all the people are very convinced you can offer what you do for free in exchange of some exposure. Until we keep this mentality I don't see any chance for the art world to evolve.

Do you consider that exhibiting your work is an important part (or the goal) of your artistic practice?

I would say yes. I don't know if a work could be a work if not exhibited. And for exhibited I mean in a physical space or online too. I mean Published. Published is the right word for what I do.

Have you shown your work in a commercial art gallery? If so, how would you describe your experience of working with commercial art galleries?

Please see above for general issues. Sometimes it is very exciting. At the beginning when you get

in touch and you feel they are very interested in working with you. This is valid both in case they can produce new works both in case they can just set up a show of existing works. Then problems come later. When both expect something from the other that doesn't happen. Often they come if there are no sales. I might guess they could come even when a lot of sales and money are involved but I don't have such experience to report you.

In your opinion, is it necessary for an artist to work with commercial galleries in order to develop his or her career?

I don't think they help too much in developing your poetic, but they help a lot in developing a career, in selling, in giving you exposure, links to critics and curators, to the press and other show/sales opportunities. This is what they SHOULD be there for... You see young artists with a very simple work derived from the Arte Povera for instance making big career jumps only because represented by an important gallery. But today you can do a lot of work skipping the galleries and surfing the Internet. It's hard and challenging and this keeps you "Lean and hungry".

Has your collaboration with commercial art galleries (or lack thereof) affected the development of your career?

The lack of them affected it for sure :-). At the same time I was able to keep things going on. The few collaborations I had pushed me to think I would have needed to create a personal way to deal with galleries and the art world at large. A way I'm 100% at ease with. Being born with Napster and finding myself in the middle of a Wikileaks era, I can't escape this. I don't want to escape this. Quoting from Pirates of the Silicon Valley: "This ain't just business. This is practically spiritual. This is about overthrowing dead culture, dead gods." (Mr. Jobs, still running his fledgling company from his parents' garage,

to a man offering him \$250,000 in venture capital.) All this is ending in peoplefrommars.com a platform to sell digital media sound art and video art in high editions and cheap prices. The projects will be available as physical editions and/or digital download and/or pay-per-view; involving both galleries and no profits and curators that can take a temporary percentage depending on their level of complicity on a specific artwork. All this in a non exclusivity basis and above all sharing the revenues 70% to the artist who sells, 10% to the service, and then redistributing the remaining 20% among all the platform's members. So even those artists who don't sell, get a fee from other artists' sales.

Have you sold your work to museums, institutions or private collectors? If so, have you sold your work directly or through an art dealer?

I've only sold to private collectors. Both, directly and through a dealer.

In your opinion, are museums, institutions and/or private collectors interested in new media art? And the general public?

I would answer like point 2, there are but it's a niche of a niche. General public is a big topic. I think art never wanted to approach general public too much. It does in museums galleries etc. because shows are open to public and often you can attend for free. But the market always keeps the general public kind of far because of the high prices devoted to speculations. Video art and new media have the big opportunity to "invert" this trend. They are pervasive and ubiquitous. They can be available for a wider audience at a very affordable price without compromising anything of the real project, while dropping the "the price and the originality of the unique piece" paranoia. Indeed this uniqueness, if meant like the uniqueness of a painting, doesn't exist within video and new media.

What actions would you like to be taken in order to give your work more exposure and recognition (e.g. retrospective in a major museum, publication of an essay about your work)? Please mention at least three in order of preference.

What I would love on top of everything is open up the audience of my projects. I had a strange feeling when a video of mine was featured on the homepage at wired.com. Thousands of people saw my work in a few hours. That changed my perspective. I'd like to keep pursuing this way, operating my practice following the new permutations of music and publishing industry. Since up to now I had many group shows and a few solo, I feel I would need a retrospective. It could be important to better communicate my research that could seem not very homogeneous if not approached correctly. The venue, a major museum, is very important but it's not a fundamental requirement. Third place goes to a book collecting the Interviews/Dialogues I've been giving here and there for the past 12 years now.

How do you finance the production of your artistic projects?

Commissions, Family, Private collectors.

When you are developing an art project, do you consider the conditions under which it could be sold to an institution or collector?

Never at the beginning, but of course since I work on the same project for so many months it's very natural and normal to think of how you could sell it. For my poem project "my country is a Living Room" it all started experimenting, in a very pure and simple way. Then I wanted to find a way to market it staying close to my state of mind, my vision on how things could be in the arts. So they came the book on demand and the Pay-per-View Internet project.

Have you ever adapted a work in order to sell it or created derivative work (e.g. prints, videos) that could be sold? Have you felt pressured by an art dealer or collector to do so?

I made archives of a process' outputs. A collection of videos for instance. But this is suggested by the nature of the works, being in most cases time based and generative. I don't see these archives as an adaptation. I did some prints, trying to give them a better role than just being still frames of a video. Honestly I'm not a fan of video stills. But I like to work on movie posters. So an image with credits that can recap somehow the spirit of the project. Pressure is always very small since apparently there is no queue outside of the gallery waiting for my artworks :-)

When you are developing an artistic project, do you take into account how it can be preserved? Have you had issues with the preservation of your artworks?

Yes I had, because technology changes pretty fast. Think of Flash nowadays ! 4 or 5 years ago everything, even a black text on a white background, had to be wrapped in Flash. The problem, put simply (at least to me), is that we are alone and nobody really cares of what we are doing to the point to be interested on how my Internet project could be preserved. I guess we should focus primarily on distribution and sales, on opening up the audience and then, for those projects that require a certain approach, develop

guidelines for the preservation. Even if let's remember that "new media" can contain many different technologies and my feeling is that if approached in the same way you approach painting preservation, it could end in a waste of time. Like the business model to deal with digital content should be different to the one used to sell paintings, preservation should follow a similar way. Preservation within new media could be a set of multiple outputs both software and hardware, with the intent to respect the original manifestation of the project as much as possible, without dropping the chance to make a documentary on it, producing derivative documentation. Then periodically try to migrate these outputs on updated platforms. As a general rule, we should try not to depend on a specific software and hardware because they change fast, at the same time this is not easy because these kind of projects often relies on specific software and hardware.

Do you keep a systematic record of all your artistic projects? If so, which types of documents do you generate? How do you store and archive the documentation of your artworks?

I hate this question :-) because I know I'm not good at it. Yes I try. I have some files with which I try to give an order to what I do. I have several Hard Disks and I try to save some pre-production and production docs, as well as documenting shows and archiving publications.

A2. SURVEY: OPEN-ENDED ANSWERS*

A2.1 Q2: DOES THE USE OF ELECTRONIC OR DIGITAL MEDIA DEFINE YOUR ARTISTIC PRACTICE?

#6684609 I work with these media as materials, but these media are often also the subject of the work. I believe the medium always defines the work, but that's not exclusive for electronic media. I also work in media that are not electronic or digital.

#6684735 YES: I consider these media important but they are not exclusive

#6689308 i consider that it defines my work in the same way the painting does for monet : it's a question of a medium relationship

#6691348 it is an interdependent relation between both

#6692481 No simple response. I have been active as an artist for over 65 years. Currently I am known for my work as an algorist. Currently I am working on "mergings". I could hardly "define" my work other than as my "art".

#6692692 I have been creating art for over 65 years. For ther past rt50 years I have worked with art ideas nthat course through both my algorist and prealgorist work. Art, as an experience and in its creation transcends "media"

#6698596 It happens, they are part of life

#6706727 Public art with emergent technology

#6713711 es un feedback, yo la defino y me define, y asi...

#6714416 el medio define el la naturaleza y tratamiento y lenguaje de la obra.

#6715549 In some cases they're only tools, otherwise they're the subject of the artwork, but they are useless without the 'human' component.

#6717057 these are hybrid, paradoxical materials

for me.

#6722829 these media are inevitable and it is impossible to work without them

#6723914 los medios electrónicos y digitales forman parte del momento que vivimos, el arte contemporáneo es (supuestamente) un arte acorde al momento en el que acontece. Al margen de que las tecnologías sean constitutivas o no en una obra, están ahí y forman parte de nuestra realidad.

#6725264 Definen ciertos aspectos de las obras, no completamente

#6727769 I think it's more like a dialogue. The combination of boths things define the practice.

#6729453 Tengo la impresion que en general, los nuevos medios permiten nuevas posibilidades, en definitiva se podria afirmar que el medio es el mensaje.

#6732686 sometimes yes, sometimes not

#6779363 MARS media art research studies

#6784739 i have a deep understanding of new media and keep a critical analysis

#6784733 ?

#6828654 Yes that define a big part of my work but there is for example also a strong interest in physics

#6830468 Technologies and networks define the themes of my work

#6832639 Both : It defines my work. I define these media.

#6861820 Yes, I consider that it defines my work & these are also just tools for me

#6877024 I would say it has a big impact on our work, as we think about "technics" with it's impact on society

#6936353 they are important to my work, but also their own conditions of development and how they impact the world.

* Note: the answers provided by respondents are reproduced in their original language. Blasphemy and grammatical errors have not been edited.

#6961434 When my work is built from new media, then the architecture of the media is important to intent of the work. Meaning comes from experiential and metaphorical encounters with the work.

#6967266 not always consider it but have to use it

#7294171 Electronics and digital media do not define my practice, but when i USD mechanics it does define my artwork

#7294244 Can contact with electronic or digital media be avoided?

#7295003 No, I consider these media important but they do not define my work, nor do they provide the subject of the work

#7295458 i am an artist who seeks out the appropriate media for the work

#7299449 I was born in 1929 and have several periods in my work. Your answer categories do not pertain to my conception of the artmaking "process".

#7304224 Mi practica artística comienza en la intersección entre arte, cultura popular e Internet

#7304444 Internet, computer landscape and videogames aren't tools for me: they are instead a place, the new continent of connectivity. Some of those (such as Google with its maps and everything) are also fellow artists.

#7308839 In many respects, all cultural practices are digital cultural practices in some way...

#7317556 my work deals with a humanity that has become digital (willingly or unwillingly) so i cannot imagine an artwork that doesn't have some digital component in it

#7365619 I rarely work with digital or electronic media

#7387775 the use of media (electronic, digital or biological) are defining my artistic practice

#7396707 Not only, but they influence my thoughts.

#7454536 depends on who's asking and why.

#7454879 yes, but i do not always use this technology to complete a work of art, sometimes i am referencing the idea of technology while making

drawings or objects.

#7463537 My practice is various. Digital tools define one area of my work. But I do make some projects that engage with other questions and other tools.

#7469673 electronic and digital media have a big impact on my perception and lifestyle and this influences a lot my work

#7501584 I'm interest in digital culture and politics, and so digital media tends to often be the right tool for the job

#7522114 They are not just tools but don't define my work. The work is a result of functions of a system strategically organised towards poetics.

#7524643 No necesariamente. El medio se adapta a la idea generadora. Medios recientes pueden facilitar el tratamiento de estas ideas desde una perspectiva más cercana al momento actual y a sus inquietudes.

#7524744 el medio con que hago mi obra es solo un intermediario entre todas las capas que definen una obra o el artista.

#7545160 La pregunta me resulta un oxímoron. ¿El uso de un medio puede definir una practica? En tal caso el medio posibilita la practica. En el caso concreto de los medios electrónicos, la especificidad de sus recursos condicionan la practica de los artistas, sean conscientes de ello o no.

#7608820 I'm interested in the limits and failure of information and communication technologies (analog and digital)

#7646367 they are frequent themes in my work

#7691065 My work consists of electronic and digital media to a large extent but it is not always about these practices.

A2.2 Q3: IS THERE A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN NEW MEDIA ART AND MAINSTREAM CONTEMPORARY ART?

#6684457 either good or bad art

#6684609 It is often not a philosophicla difference but an institutional difference.

#6684767 new media art is harder to sell

#6685629 there are no differences, but digital art spaces have more technical capacities to exhibit digital artworks

#6688013 In the end it's just art but there are clearly differences with fine art for instance.

#6688959 These categories are not objectively defined. They just belong to culture.

#6689308 what is new media ? Art is art. art can use new media, but the use of new media is not necessary making art...

#6691348 this question is too general there are differences but as a category there media art is a subsystem of contemporary art

#6691704 the definitions are too fluid to be the "same"

#6692481 Art is created in hundreds of traditional and new emerging formats. "When", "where", "how", and "why" vary widely throughout the world. Everything from basket weaving, clothing design, poetry, theater, literature, film, video, mixed media and pottery are forms of art.

#6692692 These categories apply to their respective provinces. "New media" refers to "new media" as you conceive of it. Then you need to define what you mean by "new" as a "time" phenomenon, etc.

#6698596 No. They are both 'overdefined'

#6705574 depends on the art and artist. some artists make new media art and others make contemporary art

#6706727 Contemporary art must address the conditions and time of its making. Art that ignores digital and networked media in the 21st century is of dubious relevance.

#6707446 there can be and there may not be. it depends on the work and the artist

#6707663 Sometimes, but one can be part of the other

#6710773 It's only a contextual difference related to audience, magazines, etc.

#6710774 El arte digital ayuda a desarrollar procesos creativos contemporáneos que probablemente no tienen nada que ver con el arte contemporáneo ya que son procesos transdisciplinarios y no se integran dentro del mercado del arte.

#6713711 si bien es arte como practica, no puede sustraerse de su naturaleza medial. Es como la relacion entre infraestructura y superestructura que tampoco es lineal. Las preguntas son paradigmaticamente lineales.

#6717057 there are differences. many of those are rooted in _culture_ of material use, rather than concept. there are many visions of the future for these spheres: total separation, total merger, or some third path. The third path will not use the term new media, and it will be resilient. It will be postdigital.

#6724013 El arte digital forma parte del arte contemporáneo

#6724497 a veces hay diferencia porque a veces trabajos que operan con mucha tecnología sólo tienen ese aspecto como importante

#6732686 bullshit, they are just names

#6735603 of interest is here my point of view in a quite old interview (1995), personally I think not much has changed. Although I think new media become over time old media, and as old media they get adapted in the world of art.

#6735827 el lenguaje contemporáneo utiliza mucho los nuevos medios pero no es necesario que para hacer arte contemporáneo estrictamente deba estar relacionado con nuevos medios

#6737111 Creo que 'arte contemporáneo' es un termino que se utiliza para referirse a las practicas artisticas que ocurren en el contexto presente. El arte digital yo lo propondría como otra practica mas que esta definida dentro de este termino.

#6737751 Yes, they are two very different cultures (I hope this changes)

#6738182 New Media became a genre. It is a

useful label in the art establishment, but personally I don't care about how one calls it.

#6779964 I would think that new Media art will add a new vocabulary to Contemporary art.

#6784524 New Media art does have its own specific qualities as a medium. But unless we are saying contemporary art is an art form, then (a) doesn't apply.

#6784578 No hay diferencias, pero las instituciones las hacen, y por tanto parecieran diferentes.

#6799798 El new media se inserta dentro del campo del arte contemporáneo y aporta estrategias diferenciales en relación a otras estrategias artísticas

#6800758 Hay diferencias, pero no porque sean nuevos medios, siempre hay diferencias en función de las técnicas y procesos involucrados, lógicamente, puesto que el arte depende en enorme medida de lo formal

#6830468 It describes items of two different systems one describing the "material"(new media arts, visual arts sound art etc), one the time of its origin (contemp art, modern art, romantics etc)

#6832657 This is not a relevant question.

#6832639 There are specific qualities but it's not a specific art.

#6832719 Yes new media art engaged with computational culture. Contemporary art has lost its context

#6839411 There used to be a difference in the 80/90s period of so called new media art, mostly as a reactionary act towards more traditional and classical contemporary art networks. This separation, I believe, will become less and less relevant with younger generations of artists involved in postnet art and new aestheticslike practices.

#6840863 The term "New Media" is painfully outdated for professionals working in these fields.

#6843288 hopefully ther are essential differences between every art work...

#6858330 depends on the end goal

#6861820 There are differences, but it is just art

#6877024 for me, the difference to contem-

porary arts lies more in its "interactivity" or its "timebased"

structures. the act of reception different. but of course, new media art is contemporary art.

#6936353 Yes. Contemporary art has different conditions and criteria. Media art is often too much about the technology and not about the concepts.

#6951725 new media is contemporary. what is art is a bigger question.

#6967266 quite difference now, but they will become a one art in the future.

#7293472 this question is irrelevant for me. labeling and categorising artforms and making art are separate interests. I have no interest in the former

#7294123 yes, but i feel that both kinda merge under the idea of being postinternet, postinternet imageobjects

#7294244 Who does it serve to categorize practice?

#7294390 New Media seems to be a very broad and vague term to me nowadays. Some new media art is included in contemporary art, some isnt, some is part of art history. Maybe it depends on how the term New Media is defined and by who?

#7294282 I don't care about what passes for contemporary art.

#7295609 Different audience

#7299449 all art that ias created today is "conemporary". The term 'new media" jhas been in use for over 50 years. Not sure what you mean.

#7304444 Yes and no, it's like asking if there are differences btw Old Europe and newly discovered Americas.

#7304431 Yes, new media art has its own specific qualities as esch art form has its specific qualities.

#7304567 Yes, new media art has its own specific qualities as each art form has its specific qualities.

#7305843 It is just art, but of course, in general, if you go to a "new media art" exhibition you will see much more works that uses electronics, computers, etc, then if you go to a "mainstream contemporary art" exhibition. But I think the

term "new media" will become less and less used. I think that just as we have sculpture, painting, we have will "computer art", "electronic art", etc. I feel that some "new media artist" are sad because they don't impress "mainstream contemporary art" curators and for me that is ridiculous heheheh :D I think they don't impress them by two reasons: First: "new media art" works many times aren't really thaaaat interesting :) Second: most of the current generation of mainstream contemporary art curators didn't grow playing videogames.

#7306007 I like to say there are no differences. But it depends on each art work.

#7308839 Yes, but we don't know what they are.

#7310969 No, threr are no differences, but it depends on each art work.

#7327245 Yes, new media art generally questions the role of new media in our lives.

#7368376 El "arte contemporáneo", o sea, el de "ahora" utiliza las últimas herramientas disponibles, sea cual sea el medio (plástico, electrónico, conceptual, etc.)

#7396707 I would like to see more good shows where the difference is't being made.

#7466256 I think that mainstream contemporary art embraces many different art forms including new media.

#7484301 Yes, there are differences but mainstream art needs more curators who understand new media and embrace it.

#7500156 mainstream contemporary art can still use "new media"

#7501584 yes, but there are large overlaps

#7520926 new media is a corny term. but this question is too simplistic. If we throw out the term, what way could the first question be reposed?

#7521549 Creo que no se puede comparar, arte digital no me parece que sean nuevos medios, ni novedosos. Arte contemporáneo me parece tan solo una referencia temporal. Pregunta confusa, se presta más a la discusión que la decision.

#7522838 Creo que el arte electrónico es un sub-

conjunto del arte contemporáneo

#7523805 they looks different in this moment, but for long team, they will be considered as the same thing

#7525728 los nuevos medios y la tecnología son fundamentales para crear arte digital . Respecto al adjetivo "contemporaneo" incluso la propia palabra ya no suena más a contemporanea.

#7545160 El arte contemporáneo es un "conjunto" mayor que contiene dentro de sí al arte digital.

#7559934 They are like different worlds, very few overlappings

#7572225 New media art has its own specific qualities as an art form, like each other art form has its own specific qualities.

#7594226 Contemporary art is defined by its time specificity, New media art is defined by its medium specificity. A work can be labelled as Contemporary Art and/or New Media Art, depending of its context.

#7609397 Art in the age of the digital.

#7609743 There are differences in the market

#7656565 the barriers are rapidly being broken, and in the future it will be very hard to separate what is new media from what is mainstream

#7669950 There are differences. I don't have a problem with the term "new media"

A2.3 Q7: WHICH ACTIONS WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE TAKEN IN ORDER TO GIVE YOUR WORK MORE EXPOSURE AND RECOGNITION?

#6684767 participation in a jury of a big festival

#6691348 create an own large scale project with global impact

#6692381 all the other

#6713711 Arte medial tiene la posibilidad de crear dispositivos que pueden ser usados y no solo contemplados. ME encantaria ver que las personas usaran alguno de lis dispositivos o

codigo que he creado, eso es mas valioso a veces que una exposicion. Y es otro paradigma de circulacion artistica

#6714416 que mi trabajo sea usado por las personas. A diferencia de otras artes, new media o como se le llame posibilita la creacion de procesos y usos.

#Residencies, Fellowships

#This list is completely stupid :-). Every unit it includes could be important in an artist's career...

#6721561 to be continued

#6724530 Interactuar con espacios masivos de consumo, tomando contacto con el público NO académico

#6724774 En realidad lo que más me gustaría es crear obras permanentes en espacios públicos.

#6729411 being featured in certain internet sites with big prestigious and number of visits

#6732686 I do not care

#6735603 Recognition comes for me in the broadest sense and with this I mean that recognition beyond the art world would be also welcome. For example a youtube movie with many views.

#6737111 Esta pregunta es muy interesante. En mi caso al estar trabajando en un área interdisciplinaria emergente publicar artículos académicos en diferentes congresos arte, ilustración, tecnología, educación, ciencia... y dar talleres es lo mas interesante para dar visibilidad a mis practicas artisticas y generar debate. No obstante, reconozco que participo en exposiciones, festivales de arte digital... y también en propuestas tan diversas como esta: <http://www.undo.net/it/mostra/152067>

#6738182 Form a group with other artists with the same focus.

#6761857 Online publication of my work+lecture

#6778809 invitation to collaborate with well-known artists

#6831362 todo lo que no sucedera ...

#6831461 people giving my loads of money, but want only small refund

#6832657 recognition both in contemporary art but also other contexts

#6832639 :-)

#6836913 We've already had the privilege of doing most of the above. We're not greedy, we're lucky.

#6840863 Publication of my own book about my work

#6843288 artists recommending other artists

#6861820 all of the above before I died

#6877024 I would like as well exhibitions which mixes media and focuses more on "art" themes, for example "abstraction" (in painting, film, new media forgrafie ect....)

#6920069 outside the artworld(prisons/churches/libraries/schools/community halls/etc

#6936353 financial support

#6951725 All of them, but but to do what?

#6961434 Use of my new media work in art and art education courses.

#7294123 Street Party, Rave Party, Online Academic Presentation, fun stuff

#7294189 meme

#7294244 Word of mouth

#7294282 Being featured prominently on major software/videogame distribution platforms.

#7294596 Public commissions and performances.

#7295003 One of the most important things re presence is representation. An excellent gallerist raises money to make work, sells work, tells the world about your work etc etc. Gallery representation almost trumps all of above, although in the end, good work comes through, and good galleries lead from good work / lead from biennial shows etc etc

#7295294 These are stupid questions

#7295458 many of these opportunities i have had but i continue to seek them out as one needs to build and develop a career, as an artist i think part of your job is the career and you need to keep your work out there

#7299017 Phaidon monograph!!

#7299449 Not sure what you mean. Everything above is positive. I have had eaperience with most of the above venues. Every additional event is positive.

#7304444 Die

#7305843 Now I am more interested in do workshops about computer programming for art. Of course if nice people invite me to exhibit some work I will probably accept mainly to travel, visit different places and make new friends. I don't need much money for do my art work because I already earn a salary as teacher.

#7310969 internet midea

#7311181 in truth I'm not really interested in this goal

#7316198 Featured on TV, featured in nonart world publications

#7316884 I guess all of the above but the once ✓ are the ones i would prefer. who doesnt like attention?

#7317490 relacionarme con el flujo actual en un ambito publico como en una ciudad vinculando profesiones

#7358646 Online intervention/performances that go viral.

#7364005 todas menos la última

#7377584 Creation of technologies, systems and platforms in wide use/deployment.

#7383762 todas menos la última

#7403925 Participation in various scientific contexts.

#7454536 Work featured and discussed in reputable sites online.

#7463537 My work is mainly performance, so the question of gallery/festival/museum showings operates a bit differently. I have shown my work in the visual art context, but that sphere is not my primary one.

#7467846 online exhibitions

#7521441 DIY community

#7524643 Disponer de más tiempo, recursos y estructura para materializar nuevas ideas

#7525728 Publicación de mi obra en publicaciones online cuyo criterio es muy específico y relacionado con mi trabajo

#7558050 Arte público con buena difusión

#7559934 I'd appreciate all

#7608110 sell it on the appstore

#7608820 bring it on! :-)

#7614852 depends on the work

#7641607 I'm trying to get away from the art and new media worlds. They are small, and I'd rather communicate these ideas to a much larger audience. If I reach art and media art audiences coincidentally, but I try not to think of them as a target.

#7660143 participacion en las redes sociales. Blogs, web en general.

A2.4 Q9: WHEN YOU ARE DEVELOPING AN ARTWORK, DO YOU CONSIDER THE CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH IT COULD BE SOLD TO AN INSTITUTION OR COLLECTOR?

#6684767 Yes, I try to make my work stable and as much "plugandplay" as possible but i will always choose artistic values over longevity if the project demands it.

#6688122 It depends

#6689308 if it's a commissioned or a specific place artwork i consider the context.

#6706727 There is a difference between the art market and institutional collectors. I have no interest in art as commodity, but aspire to have my work collected and preserved by museums.

#6724774 A veces me preocupo de la calidad pensando en un futuro durable, otras veces sólo me preocupa el proyecto, aunque sé que ese tipo de obra no se vende habitualmente. Unas son más experimentales y otras más estables. A veces las muy experimentales se venden, creo que lo más difícil de vender es cuando se piensa en instalación (en mi caso).

#6732686 I have in the past but not any more

#6735603 I'm not interested in making work for the artmarket. I do how ever am interested in projects and strategy's that are contemplating in a conceptual way of these things. And I collabo-

rated in a few of this projects.

#6761857 I first focused on my work but now, in it last versions the way it can be sold and its value is an important part of the work itself.

#6831362 No tengo en cuenta la venta, pero hago con frecuencia exposiciones que duran varios meses. Las obras han de ser estables. Lo peor de una expo de "arte digital" son las obras que no funcionan cada dos por tres...

#6832657 New economy as to be found.

#6843288 I am interested in the art market, but I think it is not relevant enough to be considered, this and the "No, I think that museums..." answer

#6896265 I consider the conditions, but it is secondary to other concerns.

#6920069 No, its hard enough to make it work

#6936353 it is not for sale. nothing against, just does not apply to my work.

#7294123 It depends

#7294596 Yes, when appropriate but not a guiding force of the work.

#7299449 I consider only my art. However, that does not mean I have no interest in the market. I have an interest in marketing and I have a dealer.

#7305843 No, I'm not interested in the art market for me, but I like to know that some great artists can get some money to do some good stuffs.

#7316198 I usually think of where the work will end up during the development. I do not believe in the arrogance of relying on an institution to have the foresight I did not. The preservation of the work for future generations shouldn't also include the presentation of the work to THIS generation. I am less concerned with institutional presentation of my work, as I am in designing works which are accessible to their intended audience. The marketability of some works is not considered, but for those which it is considered, this is usually a consideration of the work while its being produced.

#7327245 I try to make my work as stable and plugandplay as possible, not necessarily to ease the sale of the artwork, but to ease the setup at various exhibitions, installations, festivals, events etc.

#7369347 sometimes, it depends on the work

#7396707 all of the above

#7408141 I don't consider selling while developing but do think about preservation of the work on a technical level.

#7454536 each artwork is different.

#7454879 yes, but it is the least of my concerns usually arising near the completion/execution/installation of the specific work.

#7463537 My work is performance based. Most of my gigs are within theatre or performance festivals, where there is no question of permanent sale. I will exhibit an installation soon which will be for sale so this is really a new question for me.

#7522682 No, my priority is not be interested in the art market

#7538931 Yes, but not necessarily for all the works

#7545160 Vivo de vender mi obra a coleccionistas.

#7559934 No, I focus on my work / lose interest as soon as it's working

#7626410 My work is mostly shown at festivals.

A2.5 Q10: HAVE YOU EVER ADAPTED A WORK IN ORDER TO SELL IT OR CREATED DERIVATIVE WORK (E.G: PRINTS, VIDEOS) THAT COULD BE SOLD?

#6684821 No, has never come up

#6687303 I have no gallery and don't sell work

#6688013 I seldom adapt. Depends also on the type of work, how much technology is integrated et.al. If so it try to make it as plug and play as possible. In any case I try to make my works

presentable with a strong emphasis on presentation in the last phase of the creation process. In addition I'll buy spare parts and so on to ensure the buyer that the artwork will last long and his investment is secure.

#6705574 I haven't done this but would consider it

#6713711 Aquí haria una distinción entre artistas que crean objetos y otros que crean código, pues en código muchos artistas tienen como casi única opción la venta, como Maeda, Reas, Davis, Natzke, etc.

#6713711 aquí haria la distinción pues muchos artistas de código venen su obra impresa, por lo que la pueden para impresión en alta, Lambda o algo así (Reas, Natzke, Davis, etc)

#6723582 nunca he vendido obra

#6732686 Yes, I have.

#6735603 See my response on the question before this one. Thanks.

#6830261 I do not currently adapt works but plan to in the future.

#6832657 it depends

#6851233 no vendi

#6920792 I mainly do live performance, which cannot be sold.

#6961434 My work is openly accessible, and supported by grants and awards.

#7040241 Have not but would in the future

#7294282 We sell our work to the public as software: cheaply and widely.

#7310969 I try to keep the traces. I don't want sell.

#7316884 I am thinking about doing this as of late, but have not really pursued this before.

#7327245 I do not adapt my work or consider the conditions under which it can be sold, HOWEVER it is something I am considering that I should do.

#7413450 I have done so once.

#7463537 So far I have not created derivative, saleable works from my performances.

#7522682 Although I sell prints, videos and/or

objects, they are a new work by itself.

#7525728 Todavía no he vendido ninguna de mis obras personales, pero estaría dispuesto a ello
#7559934 I have considered this but never done it

#7594226 Sometimes I create derivative works (prints, videos) that can be sold and collected, since the original work more difficult to be collected

#7641607 It depends on the work. I have refused to sell major pieces because of the conditions of the sale. I have also adapted derivative works, created lower priced works especially for noncollectors, etc. I kind of do it all...

A2.6 Q13: WHEN YOU ARE DEVELOPING AN ARTISTIC PROJECT, DO YOU TAKE INTO ACCOUNT HOW IT CAN BE PRESERVED?

#6684609 My work is usually not threatened to become technically outdated

#6684821 No

#6687303 N/A

#6688959 open source libraries

#6689058 it depends of which artwork

#6689308 that depends, but most of the time I have the solution.

#6707062 Yes, I am aware of the preservation issues, but artwork creation has a higher priority
#6706727 I try to migrate significant work across technologies as they develop.

#6707446 no I don't take preservation into account when I create the work, but I do worry about it later! some work should have a life cycle, other work should be preserved. it depends on the individual work

#6707602 I distinguish between some work which should be preserved and other works which are ephemeral and treat them differently.

#6717057 Media is ephemeral. It has more to do with performance practice than it does fine art practice with regard to "archival quality". it is a quixotic dream, though one i continue to pursue. at best, i hold onto (video) documentation of pieces that once might have been considered interactive or electronic.

#6724774 Si

#6727769 Internet is the storage base

#6729453 Si, pero incluso utilizando los ultimos estandares, el ciclo de vida de una obra es mucho mas limitado que en otras artes, ya que la desactualizacion de los elementos (tanto software como hardware) en relativamente pocos años hace dificil su mantenimiento a largo plazo.

#6732686 Normally I do not care

#6736526 I haven't thought about how to preserve electronic parts and mechanisms.

#6761205 No, but I hope that museums/ collectors will take care of the preservation of my artworks at some point, maybe.

#6832719 What a strange art history type question ...

#6836913 We'd like our work to last forever, or thereabouts, but we don't worry about it.

#6839411 All my work is released under a free culture license, which means that *anyone* can use it for *any* purpose. The latter can both has a positive impact and negative impact on the work as I am others the freedom to appropriate it the way they want to the point where it would even be difficult to use my moral rights to prevent a particular use of the work. The role of open standards and FLOSS in art conservation is explained here: <http://pi.kuri.mu/rock/>

In all honesty I care little about the preservation of my work. I did however start to be more careful on documenting my work, not because of preserving any original intention, but simply because a quick to digest and appealing documentation has been sadly superseding the work of art itself and therefore has become more important to be noticed and visible. More on that

topic <http://su.kuri.mu/2013/surfacewebtimes/>

#6843288 no, and the rest of the answer differs from case to case

#6867141 depende de la obra

#6895438 Aun no me planteo estas cuestiones

#6896265 Depends on the project.

#6914639 I consider this a very real problem, but probably unsolvable without substantial ongoing resources

#7294123 it depends

#7294399 Yes, I do take it in to account but I have not yet developed strategies for this to be always successful.

#7294596 Yes, although I don't always have time and resources to preserve it.

#7296276 i probably should, but i don't

#7299449 My code generates the work. Finished work exist on paper and I use archival procedures and materials.

#7305843 I don't think to much about this. But I try to keep copies of the softwares I write to make the works run and I am able to update its technology. Except when I use some outdated technology like CRT TVs, in this case, I think the work will be harder to be exhibited in future, because it will be very hard to find CRT TVs.

#7306303 it depends on the work, all of the above can be appropriate

#7316198 There is a shelf life for some digital works, for instance, browsers might not show animated GIFs in the future. There are aspects of digital work which are like land art, and will slowly fade away when their platforms are no longer supported.

#7316884 no i dont, while i wish my work would have as many life cycles as possible, i have just never made this consideration part of my practice. maybe i should.

#7327245 No, I would like the artwork to be preserved, but I am too busy working on new projects to dedicate myself to preserving the older artworks.

#7356601 none of the above

#7371152 no, only if the matter is brought up after the work has been shown

#7380565 No, I'll worry about it later when I have to.

#7407619 sometimes

#7444414 Yes, but it is a relatively low priority

#7454536 Depends on the project.

#7513209 it depends on the work

#7538931 yes, but not necessarily for all projects

#7608116 i dont care

#7641607 Again, I want to answer more than one here because with different works, different answers would apply. Mostly yes, but it differs.

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