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**Art Fairs as a Medium for Branding Young and  
Emerging Artists: The Case of Frieze London**

**Paper Submission**

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## **Abstract**

While previous researchers have attempted to explain the uncertain quality of visual arts with reference to branding theory, they have overlooked the role of art fairs. Socio-cultural approaches to branding allow us to explore the function of intermediaries in valuing contemporary arts. This article aims to analyse the role of art fairs in the process of branding young and emerging artists. In particular, a prestigious art fair, Frieze London, serves as an instrumental case study for developing a systematic understanding of art fairs in terms of valuing and branding contemporary art.

Keywords: art fair, brand, cultural branding, intermediaries, young and emerging artists, Frieze London, contemporary arts.

## **Introduction**

In the contemporary art market, the ambiguous borderline of being a work of art in terms of appearance poses a challenge in both academic and practical terms. In the academic field, a lack of standards for judging contemporary art requires “translators” that guide buyers or audiences in understanding the intention or context behind works of art (Pettersen 2014). Interestingly, the translators do not rely on the opinions of a single person, but many people engage in interpretation in the art world as the explanation or belief (Bourdieu 1996) is produced by a collective network based on arguments in the art world (Becker 1984; Danto 1964; [Dickie 1974](#)). The complex network contributes to the valuation of works of art, which is expressed as branding in the business world (Thompson 2011). In the practical field, the uncertain quality of a piece of contemporary art allows collectors to pay more attention to its maker, dealer, history and previous owners, i.e. its brand.

The emphasis on branding in the market and the uncertainty of visual art have inspired previous researchers to explore visual art from the viewpoint of management or marketing theory ([Schroeder 2005](#); Schroeder 2006; Thompson 2008; Thompson 2014; [Thornton 2008](#); Robertson 2005; [Rodner and Kerrigan 2014](#); Fillis 2004). Previous research interprets brands as a symbolic resource (O'Reilly 2005) or a repository of meaning ([Fournier 1998](#); McCracken 1993; Holt 2006; [Allen, Fournier, and Miller 2008](#)). As branding researchers note, constructing the meaning of a brand is done via multiple stakeholders (Brown, Kozinets, and Sherry 2003; Giesler 2012; Vallaster and Wallpach 2013; Hartmann and Ostberg 2012). Art management research also considers various actors for constructing the meaning of brands such as peers, critics, dealers, auction houses, museums (Preece and Kerrigan 2015), and national ideologies (Rodner and Preece 2015).

While previous research has contributed to the application of brand theory to the field of art, these researchers have overlooked the recent explosion of art fairs. In general, an art fair is an event that serves “as a meeting place, an economic cluster” (Robertson and Chong 2008, 10), in which many dealers present works by artists to individual and institutional collectors and media/art-lovers in a fixed duration. Indeed, 78% of current art fairs were founded between 1999 and 2010 ([Morgner 2014](#)); thus, we are currently in “[t]he art fair age” (Barragán 2008). Moreover, The rising attention to collecting contemporary works of art has encouraged the creation of more art fairs which can include a variety of market segments ([Chong 2008](#)); Art fairs such as Art Basel, Art Basel Miami Beach, the Armory Show, Frieze and Berlin<sup>1</sup> deal with mainstream (high-priced) works, while the Affordable Art Fair trades affordable art works. Additionally, there are also some domestic fairs, such as the Shanghai Art Fair in China and ARCO in Spain. Over the last two decades, art fairs have emerged as a significant

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<sup>1</sup> The list of art fairs reported from consultation with dealers (Robertson 2005, 34)

ancillary channel in terms of creating meaning or value in works of contemporary art, in addition to the traditional institutions and intermediaries of the art world.

Previous research on art fairs has focused on the conception of networks ([Yogev and Grund 2012](#); [Morgner 2014](#)) and globalisation ([Velthuis 2014](#); [Quemin 2013](#); [Curioni 2012](#); [Vermeeylen 2015](#); [Curioni, Forti, and Leone 2015](#)). [Curioni, Forti, and Leone \(2015\)](#) deem the internal selection of an art fair as one of the gatekeepers. Extending this view, we look at art fairs as “a solid piece of the art system” ([Garutti 2014, 15](#)), which is one of the elements involved in determining the value of art. As there are few studies on valuing and legitimating works of art by young and emerging artists, we revisit the issue of the institutional process of valuing art by focusing on young and emerging artists. In this sense, this article identifies two important questions about the emergence of a new medium or distribution channel in the art markets: what role do art fairs play in the process of branding young artists? And in what ways do art fairs contribute to constructing the value of art?

We address the questions by conducting an instrumental case study ([Stake 1995](#)): Frieze London. The fair is one of the “must-see” exhibitions ([Thompson 2011](#)) and mainly deals with contemporary works of art. More importantly, the case is selected because of its practices for young and emerging artists<sup>2</sup>. By analysing the case of Frieze London with secondary data sources, this article aims to re-examine the process of valuing contemporary art to extend the existing research on branding and arts management. In doing so, this article concentrates on the characteristics and functions of market intermediaries in the process of valorising works of art.

## **Theoretical background**

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<sup>2</sup> Even though many fairs targeted only for young and emerging artists (representatively Alternative Arts Fair) are pertained, there is a limitation of conducting research on such fairs due to the difficulties of understanding the inquired phenomenon of this study: the emergence of art fairs in visual arts field.

The imponderable value of a work of contemporary art (its uncertain quality) results from its unique characteristic of cultural products ([Wijnberg and Gemser 2000](#); [Yogev 2010](#); [Shin, Lee, and Lee 2014](#); [Peterson 1997](#)). From a wider viewpoint, a work of contemporary art is a type of cultural product. Hirsch (1972, 641) defines cultural products as “nonmaterial goods” that do not generally serve utilitarian needs, such as food and detergent, but provide an aesthetic or expressive value to the public. Put differently, works of art are credence goods ([Darby and Karni 1973](#)), which are defined using consumers’ costly judgements after purchase. In economics, the seminal work by Nelson (1970) reports two categories of the acquisition of information by consumers: search goods and experience goods. In search goods, consumers acquire information prior to buying. Conversely, in experience goods, information cannot be obtained before purchasing and using the products. For instance, vegetables are a representative example of search goods, and restaurants are experience goods ([Choi and Kim 1996](#)). In this sense, some scholars arguably classify cultural products as experience goods ([Shin, Lee, and Lee 2014](#)). However, even after experiencing cultural products, the uncertainty of their quality endures, as the consumers’ satisfaction after buying cultural products will be subjective ([Caves 2000](#)). Therefore, we insist that cultural products, especially visual art, are credence goods.

In this respect, to judge its worth, contemporary art requires information regarding cultural knowledge ([Bonus and Ronte 1997](#)). In other words, the uncertainty of contemporary art requires the explanation of its symbolic value/meaning. The procedure of building such value requires what “the art world calls validation, and the business world calls branding” ([Thompson 2011, 70](#)). While acknowledging the relationship between validation and brand, we consider the process of valorising works of art within branding theory. Previous scholars were aware of the relevance of explaining the visual artist and the market from the perspective of brand. With the extension of deeming artists as entrepreneurs ([Fillis 2004](#)),

previous studies consider an artist a brand manager in terms of handling their name (brand) and works of art (products) in the market ([Schroeder 2005](#); [Kerrigan et al. 2011](#); [Muñiz, Norris, and Fine 2014](#)).

More importantly, recent research adopts the approach of brand theory from the socio-cultural perspective owing to acknowledging the difficulties of applying general brand theory to the arts field ([Hewer, Brownlie, and Kerrigan 2013](#); [Preece and Kerrigan 2015](#); [Rodner and Preece 2015](#); [Muñiz, Norris, and Fine 2014](#)). This is because general brand theory, which shows that firms control brands, does not embrace the uniqueness of the arts market in terms of interdependency and intermediaries. Put differently, artists do not produce their works of art without support-personnel ([Becker 1974](#)) and the meaning behind artwork is delivered to recipients, like appreciators and collectors, through collective actions of a dense group of intermediaries.

More precisely, within the socio-cultural perspective, the brand is posited not only in its affiliated market, but also in the wider context of society and culture. Brand is here defined as a symbol of containing the “culturally-embedded meaning” ([Muñiz, Norris, and Fine 2014](#)) that is created by society. Therefore, brand is socially formed ([O’Reilly 2005](#)). In this sense, [Holt \(2004, 14\)](#) specifies it by suggesting that the conception of a cultural brand is a “performer of, container of, an identity of myth”. Indeed, artists reflect society in their works of art. In other words, artists transfer the cultural meaning of the world, which is embedded in their works of art. Therefore, an artist is the equivalent of a cultural brand in terms of “traffic[king] in meaning and idea” ([Muñiz, Norris, and Fine 2014, 69](#)).

With the extension of the concept of a cultural brand, in this section, we pay more attention to distinguishing one particular cultural brand from others; the process of interpreting or disseminating the myth or meaning from producers to consumers. In addition, we refer to the

process of transferring meaning from artists to collectors/appreciators as cultural branding. [Holt \(2004\)](#) initially introduces the term cultural branding by referring to the strategic model of capturing cultural codes for making a brand into a cultural icon. In the wider views of Holt's logic, in this article, the cultural branding model signifies the collective activities for branding cultural brands by intermediaries in the art world (Becker 1984; Danto 1964) between artists and consumers. As such, the activities contribute to co-construct the meaning behind works of art and legitimise certain works of art based on a constructed standard.

Moreover, we highlight that the relationship between intermediaries is not linear, but is intricately intertwined, like a spider's web in the legitimisation structure or the layer of legitimising works of art ([Rodner and Preece 2015](#)). In this complex web, the actors interact either regularly or irregularly, which results in a strong or weak relationship among them ([Jyrämä and Äyväri 2010](#)). We also acknowledge that it differs regarding the extent of each author's contribution to building the knowledge base according to the contributors' original status in the market.

The lack of equality in such a contribution has led us to look at the sociological interpretations regarding the visual art field (Bourdieu 1996; [Moulin 1995](#); [Heinich 2012](#)) where the field is observed to be hierarchically organised. That is, some international art exhibitions, museums and art fairs are artistically recognised, while other much less so. Although each actor plays a role in constructing the consensus surrounding the aesthetic standards for evaluating art (Becker 1984), the disagreement around certain interpretations of art must be discussed before reaching a consensus. According to [Bourdieu \(1983\)](#), the economic or cultural capitals<sup>3</sup> of each actor hugely impact these discussions; "there is the principle of legitimacy corresponding to 'bourgeois' taste and to the consecration bestowed

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<sup>3</sup> His field theory posits the field of cultural production within the field of power which is "the site of struggles between holders of different powers (or kinds of capital)" (Bourdieu 1996, 215) for occupying its dominance.



by the dominant fractions of the dominant class...” (331). Moulin (2009, 47 cited in Tomiuc 2015) says that the success of promoting a new artistic movement by a leading gallery depends upon its cultural reputation and financial status. Therefore, the distinguished identity of each actor unequally contributes to the legitimation of artworks while at the same time, the hierarchical structure in the art field becomes explicit through the accumulation of unbalanced acceptances in such a process.

As for young and emerging artists, they have to navigate through some very hierarchical career trajectories. Then, the careers of artists become distinguished via the layer of intermediaries. The layer between artists and consumers traditionally consists of actors, such as dealers, galleries, critics, museums, and auction houses. According to [Heinich \(2012\)](#), the role of the intermediaries is growing in the contemporary arts market. More importantly, this layer has changed over the last two decades owing to the establishment of a new actor: art fairs. The following section explores the role of art fairs in terms of systematically discussing and identifying the layer (the procedure of building upon the myth of cultural brands). In addition, the relationship between traditional actors and art fairs is discussed.

### **Research design and method**

Frieze London serves as the case study for this article and we followed Stake’s principle of conducting a case study by considering the case via the embedded philosophical perspective in research (constructivism).

Our qualitative research investigates “the particularity and complexity of a single case” (Stake 1995, xi) in terms of understanding its activities within its own context. Indeed, the weakness of generalising the outcome from a single sample tends to be the prevalent

drawback<sup>4</sup>. However, this assertion is based on an underestimation of the advantages of exploring a single case: a single case can richly describe the phenomenon under examination and is a “persuasive way of demonstrating why this is an important phenomenon” (Siggelkow 2007, 21). With regard to the issue of generalisation, our study does not seek the generalisation of our research outcomes, but pursues the establishment of naturalistic generalisations. Stake (1995, 85) defines naturalistic generalisation as “a conclusion arrived at through personal engagement in life’s affairs or by vicarious experience”. Our case, therefore, was subjective, interpretive, and holistic.

Unlike the positivists’ approach on selecting cases to study, the fact of a case being typical or representative is not our main concern when choosing a case on which to focus. Rather, the reason for selecting our case involved the fact that art fairs have not been studied widely, in terms of focusing on young and emerging artists and there is a dearth of academic research specifically on Frieze London, despite its good reputation. Thus, we designed a single case study, in order to address this gap in the relevant literature in a way that can contribute to building a theory ([Eisenhardt 1989](#))

We selected our case based on purposeful sampling. Merriam (1998, 61) defines purposeful sampling as “based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned”. We identified Frieze London through purposive sampling: such identification allowed us to enhance the understanding of the valuation procedure for young and emerging artists by exploring its spaces and prizes for this group. It is also emphasised that our case was instrumental. That is, we primarily focus on Frieze London, which led to a better understanding of a particular phenomenon: the explosion of art fairs in the contemporary art market.

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<sup>4</sup> Then, the single case study is often misunderstood as a non-scientific method (See Flyvbjerg 2006).

We mainly collected data by reviewing secondary sources. Various published data for our case were gathered from books (ten), journals (five) or newspaper articles (thirty), catalogues (two) and annual reports (two). The descriptions about the fair on the homepage of Frieze Art (<http://www.Frieze.com/>) were also gleaned in terms of its history, programmes, and participatory lists. Moreover, we reviewed direct quotations from interviews from several media in which informants were previously or currently related to the case. Moreover, one of the authors visited Frieze London in 2015 and observed the fair to gain a better understanding of the aforementioned aspects. The observation was conducted for five hours, which provided not only textual data, but also visual sources for this article.

We emphasised our subjective interpretation about the case, while having search for alternative meanings regarding the case while reviewing and analysing data. In our data analysis, we dissected our impressions about the case and provided meaning to the parts. The collected data were examined with categorical aggregation; we pursued the issue-relevant meanings (Creswell 2007) through “aggregation of instances until something can be said about them as a class” (Stake 1995, 74). The provided literature allowed us to create the categories of the search: its introduction, instruction, and the selection of young and emerging artists. We also addressed triangulation with multiple data sources to increase the credibility of our interpretation.

### **The history and operation of Frieze London**

Frieze Art Fair occurs annually in London each October and presents contemporary art by living artists. Frieze Art Fair was firstly organised by Matthew Slotover and Amanda Sharp, who were the founders of art magazine of “Frieze”, in 2003; from the beginning, the fair was a success<sup>5</sup>. In 2012, the art fair expanded its area in terms of ranges of presented artworks

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<sup>5</sup> Frieze London presented works by 124 galleries and attracted 27,700 visitors in 2003 (Placa 2004).

(from ancient to modern), and opened a branch in America: Frieze Masters, Frieze New York and Frieze London (henceforth, we strictly distinguish Frieze Art Fair from Frieze London). The outcome of the twelfth Frieze London represented 162 contemporary galleries from 25 countries (Frieze Press 2014a). Moreover, the fair attracted public attention (drawing over 60,000 visitors (Frieze London 2015)), as well as collectors' attention (sales of £26 million in 2004<sup>6</sup>).

Frieze London has influenced the entire art field in London, ranging from galleries, lectures, social events, to auction houses. As such, the fair has flourished after eight years, now being referred to as "Frieze week" (Sawyer 2011, 1). As reflecting on the effects of the Frieze fair, several 'big name' exhibitions coincide with Frieze. Moreover, the major auction houses, Sotheby's, Christie's, and Philips, have had their mid-season sales to coincide with the dates of Frieze London.

[Insert: Figure 1]

Unlike other art fairs, Frieze London takes place in Regent's park with temporary buildings and bespoke marquees (See Figure 1). According to Frieze London (2015), holding the fair in a natural environment allows it to be "lively and energetic", and offers the provision of natural lighting sources. Since the fair's beginning, its temporary structures have been designed by talented architects. Similar to other leading fairs, this fair has three types of ticketing systems for accessing the fair at different times (Adam 2014). Frieze London is largely divided into three sections; Main for leading galleries, Focus for emerging galleries and Live, which began in 2014 to present participatory works to "create moments of interruption or immersion", which is the chance for galleries to display experimental artworks (Frieze Press 2014b, 1). Moreover, the curated section, Frieze Projects, is designed by Frieze

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<sup>6</sup> After the first three years, annual sales figures for the fair were not provided due to inaccuracies. This was due to sales prior to the art fair, and the gallery's wish to hide the selling prices of certain works of art.

London, while there are also additional programmes: Frieze Film, Sculpture Park, and Frieze Talks. Regarding prizes, two awards pertain to the fair; one is for artists (Frieze Artist awards) and one is for a gallery (Frieze Stand Prize).

### **Findings and discussion**

The process of crafting the meaning by intermediaries is largely divided into three categories according to their function in the market; introduce, instruct, and include/select (Khaire 2015). The following section will analyse our findings in terms of the three categories. This analysis of findings contributes to specifying the mediation system of contemporary arts, thereby giving shape to the model of cultural branding.

#### **Introduce**

The role of introducing young and emerging artists to the market is highlighted in our case. The introduction of these artists is based on either allocating space for them or giving them prizes. For instance, there is limited space, around ten percent, for young and emerging artists in Frieze London. Firstly, Focus is designed for emerging galleries selected by Frieze London. In 2015, galleries formed after 2003 were eligible to apply for a booth in the section of Focus, and finished by allocating 36 booths to galleries. The right to apply for this space is based on gallery's age: "Depending on the age of gallery, those formed either in or after 2003 and 2007 are eligible to apply for different stand size, proposal types, and price level" (Frieze London 2015). In this section, the selected galleries presented works of art by young and emerging artists in a form of group shows or solo exhibitions.

Secondly, Frieze London has curated works of art for offering their own programme. Frieze Projects, non-profit sectors, aims to introduce young and emerging artists to the public.

Frieze Foundation runs the project, and two institutions<sup>7</sup> commission artists to install new site-specific works of art at a temporary structure in Resent's Park (Spence 2014). This project has been curated by Nicola Lees, senior curator, since 2013 and annually selects around seven artists. Frieze London bestows the Frieze Artist Award to one of the artists. With consultation from the senior curator, the project seeks works of art to be displayed to intervene and interact with structures at the fair.

The selected artists have opportunities to expose their art to many people from different fields who visit the event such as important private or institutional collectors, critics, journalists, dealers, other artists and art-lovers. Moreover, the artists' names, style of art, and marketability are shared not only with the visitors to the fair, but also with the entire art market via secondary exposure. For instance, Artsy reported the sales of artwork by an emerging artist, Pentti Monkkonen, at Frieze London 2015 (Forbes 2015), an example of how the marketability of the artists can be showcased.

However, art fairs do not initially introduce young and emerging artists. Rather, the initial introduction of artists to the market relies entirely upon dealers: dealers posit in the initial stage among intermediaries. Put differently, dealers play the role of introducing the meaning of a work of art by an artist to other people in the intermediary layer. Despite the high uncertainty for early-career artists ([Peterson 1997](#)), dealers provide a chance for potential artists to have their first exhibition and supply media coverage, thereby sharing the meaning of the artwork with others. Thus, we stress that the artists selected by dealers are efficiently introduced to the wider audience via the art fair. Indeed, in order to introduce artists, a dealer first discovers them among many artists. In other words, the discovery by dealers enables artists to introduce their work to the public. The dealers, who are close to the artistic community ([Bystryn 1978](#)), usually deal with discovering artists. Our case, interestingly,

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<sup>7</sup> This project is supported by mainly LUMA foundation and additionally Art Council England.

shows the role of dealers in discovering the meaning of works of art by selecting artists for the Frieze Project.

### Instruct

Art fairs instruct the insiders of the art world about how to interpret certain works of art by young artists. As such, art fairs directly provide consumers with the knowledge about how to understand confronted works of art; various types of talks and lectures are available for educating the audience, in our case. For instance, a Frieze talk is designed to deliver lectures and conversations or debates about several issues between panels. In 2014, this programme brought key speakers from different fields to Frieze London; for example, Bruce McLean (artists), Jon Ronson (author), a chief curator of MOCA, and Adam Linder (musician) (Frieze Press 2014b). Moreover, details about works of art introduced by the fairs are provided. Frieze London shows the instruction of each selected artist in Frieze Project via their website in which the information is given in a form of a transcribed conversation between the curator of the project and the artists. The provided information helps people to be attuned to the works of art.

Cultural knowledge is needed to understand the meaning of contemporary art. In our model of cultural branding, several intermediaries are in charge of instructing others in the understanding of the discovered and introduced meaning behind works of art. For instance, dealers first convince their clientele of the value of works of art, which they discovered or introduced. Caves (2000, 37) provides the reason for such persuasion: “the dealer is much more than order-taker, because for many reasons the art does not speak for itself”. The dealers, in a wider sense, educate the clientele about how to appreciate contemporary art. Secondly, critics foster the instruction of art for insiders in the art world. Critics help to construct the instruction of meaning by highlighting the artists’ intentions for making

contemporary art. By doing so, the critics place the works of art or artists in a certain position in art history. The critics and dealers have a close relationship. On the one hand, dealers need critics to provide convincing instruction to their collectors. As [Bystryn \(1978\)](#) exemplified, the catalogue of “Women”, an exhibition, included several well-written essays about presenting works of art by critics. On the other hand, critics can increase their credentials by placing the new artist/style in art history. Albert Aurier fostered the instruction of interpreting the works of van Gogh and gained a high status in the field of art (Wijnberg and Gemser 2000).

Art fairs also offer indirect instruction about works of art. An art fair is not only the collection of sellers, but also a temporary exhibition; it is not just the market of the unintended collection of works of art, but a museum for a short period (Moulin 2003, 98 cited in Morgner 2014). Curators with a specific theme, helping to educate the audience about works of art, generate exhibitions in a museum. Likewise, Frieze London has curators to display works of art by emerging artists with the specific goal of generating a proper exhibition (Frieze Project). Therefore, the audience is indirectly instructed about the emerging artists via appreciating the curated art at the art fair.

Moreover, in the main gallery section, the presented works of art are curated by each gallery. However, employees of the art fair allocate spaces for the galleries. Allocation of space is important, as works of art tend to be viewed “in the context in which the next one is viewed” (Morgner 2014, 43). Also, the participants comprise a homogenous network, as artists share similar ages and statuses (Yogev and Grund 2012). In order to acknowledge this, Frieze London places established galleries close to the entrance of the venue, and emerging galleries are positioned in the corners. Thus, visitors might appreciate works of art in certain galleries by taking the next gallery into account. By doing so, they comprise indirectly the idea of the



current trend of the style of contemporary art. In other words, art fairs provide an indirect impression of the current artistic form.

Include/select

The introduced meaning of art, after being discovered by dealers, filters through art fairs. Our case has a selection system for choosing exhibitors for the event. Even though the selection system is devised to maintain the good quality of the fair, the selection procedure contains the undertone of opting out the diffused meanings of works of art. In the previous section, we looked at the discovery, introduction, and instruction of the meaning of contemporary art by intermediaries. Interestingly, not every meaning constructed via the layer of intermediaries reaches recipients (collectors/public). Rather, the meanings of works of art are selectively conveyed to the recipients after being filtered by intermediaries, who act as the gatekeepers of cultural production ([Hirsch 1972](#)).

The selecting of dealers/galleries for art fairs means that the presented works of art at the fair have been filtered by the selection committees. The galleries have competed to participate in Frieze London. Each year, over 500 applicants fight for around 150 limited spaces, called stands. Applicants submit detailed documents describing their gallery, their artists, and which works of art they will present. Then, with rigorous criteria, seven committees select galleries from among the applicants. In terms of artist selection, all candidates between 25–40 years of age must submit several pieces of information (Frieze Foundation 2015). For example, artists provide a certain proposal of bespoke artworks for the art fair in which they explain the concept of their intending works in terms of how they connect to the context of the fair, and how to allocate the budgets. Then, the group of juries selects the winner. Juries include the artistic director of Frieze Art and curators of Frieze Projects, as well as invited international juries (renowned artists or curators). This selection procedure shows how Frieze London

plays the role of gatekeeper in terms of presenting works of art at the event. Hence, only selected meanings of works of art are shared with important insiders in the art world within a short period. Therefore, art fairs provide the shared decision on legitimating a certain work of art by young artists.

#### The importance of art fairs

Art fairs engage with every activity of intermediaries and, above all, this engagement hugely influences the contemporary art market. The reason behind this impact originates from the current status of the art fair, which is confirmed by its economic and social influence on insiders in the art market, as well as the public and the host city. First, when presenting works of art at top art fairs, artists take advantage of developing their careers by gaining international recognition. Next, it is crucial for dealers not to be “lost” in terms of meeting many wealthy collectors in a single venue within a few days. Dealers also take advantage of the audience gathered at the art fair to present works of art by emerging/young artists. In an annual report in 2013, dealers reported that thirty percent of sales were made via art fairs (TEFAF 2014), with some claiming fifty percent (Velthuis 2014). Lastly, collectors have opportunities to buy high-quality works of art, as dealers need to present superior artwork in order to secure space in a major art fair. The fair also optimises time efficiency for collectors, as they are able to compare works of art within a small amount of space and time.

The success of an art fair has a positive impact on the host city and beyond (Yogev and Grund 2012). As such, there are, during fair season, many people staying in the city, which means that they spend their money on food, shelter, transportations, and tourism in the area. To catch their attention, the most attractive exhibitions take place in the art institution of the district before, after, and during art fairs. Art fairs further invigorate the economy in the region by affecting construction.

Within the structure of hierarchy in the contemporary arts market, Frieze London occupies a rather high position. There are various facts that indicate the elevated status of this fair, such as the numbers of visitors, the reputation of participants (renown dealers in the main section), and Frieze Week (artistic events which coincide with the fair). We point out that the capitals of our case's founders, Slotover and Sharp, may have initiated the current position of Frieze London; their cultural reputation and economic resources have helped to propel Frieze London to its current state, as well as through the launch of their own media channel (Frieze Magazine). By building on the success of the fair for more than decade, Frieze London has consolidated its position in the contemporary arts field. Thus, its established identity contributes to strengthening the artistic discourse generated by our case.

Likewise, the identity of the gatekeeper is important for establishing the meaning of works of art (Khaire 2015; [Bourdieu 1983](#)). Each gatekeeper is able to discover, instruct, and select the meaning of artworks to convey to the recipients. However, the gravity of such meaning is affected by the selectors' statuses, which convinces other insiders, as well as consumers, of the value of their opinions. That is, the selection of famous dealers or renowned critics is more likely to be accepted in the procedure of establishing certain meaning in art. Therefore, the meaning introduced, instructed, and selected by art fairs, with their high reputation, is more convincible. Thereby, we affirm that art fairs play focal roles in the "appraisal and consecration" (Schultheis 2015, 3) of artworks.

Moreover, the esteemed reputation of art fairs in the market provides the seal of quality to dealers. Despite economic pressure, therefore, Jeffrey Deitch, art dealer, said, in a report by Bowley (2015, 2), that many galleries want to "[be] admitted to a club". On the one hand, the membership allows dealers to fuel "[their] artists' last mile in the path toward the hall of fame" (Curioni 2014, 37). On the other hand, as we have already discussed, art fairs consolidate the understanding of the presented new/young artists' works. The advantage of acquiring the

hallmark of being presented in prestigious art fairs makes dealers eager to join these art fairs. The high demands place art fairs in an important position in the market. As such, employees of art fairs, such as directors, selection committees, and curators, become powerful people in the art world. Not surprisingly, the founders of Frieze London (forty-nine) ranked in the top 100 of the most influential people in the contemporary art market (ArtReview 2015).

In addition, the importance of Frieze London in the visual arts field originates from the fact that it mainly deals with contemporary art. The ambiguity of contemporary art, examining the borderline between art and non-art and focusing more on the concept of an artwork rather than its appearance, enables artists to grow in terms of “the autonomy of cultural production” (Bourdieu 1996, 82) based on the political field, as well as based on the market. By doing so, the gap between producers and recipients becomes wider, so that it requires a growing importance placed on intermediaries: “the thickness of mediation...grows together with the autonomy of the field, in Bourdieu’s terms” (Heinich 2012, 699). Hence, along with other intermediaries, the role of Frieze London becomes more important in terms of filling the gap in cultural branding: introducing, instructing, and selecting works of art.

## **Conclusion**

To summarise, the uncertain value of contemporary art yields the layer of constructing belief in understanding the meaning of works of art. In our article, this layer is called cultural branding, which was used in an attempt to extend previous research ([Preece and Kerrigan 2015](#); [Rodner and Preece 2015](#); [Holt 2004](#)); the model of cultural branding delineates the holistic contributions of constructing the meaning by intermediaries between artists and recipients (collectors or appreciators). We insist that the solid system of art fairs (Garutti 2014) plays the role of intermediary based on its functionality. Put differently, art fairs contribute to framing the value/interpretation of contemporary art. Our instrumental case can

confirm Khaire's (2015) specification of intermediaries' functions in the art market. That is, with a focus on the spaces of emerging artists at the event, art fairs contribute to distinguishing the meaning of works of art by young and emerging artists (cultural brands) with others through their discovery, introduction, instruction, and selection. In this sense, young and emerging artists are branded via the medium of the art fair.

Moreover, art fairs are not isolated from other intermediaries in the process of distinguishing certain cultural brands from others. Rather, the discovered, introduced, instructed, or selected meaning of works of art by art fairs needs to be assisted by other traditional intermediaries (Curioni, Forti, and Leone 2015) such as dealers, galleries, critics, museums, media and auction houses. In other words, the cooperative network of all intermediaries enforces the meaning of presenting works of art and ends up creating its agreeable value (Becker 1984). In order to be presented at art fairs, moreover, young and emerging artists should first be selected by initial gatekeepers, or dealers. Therefore, as Curioni et al. (2015) insists, the role of the traditional gatekeeper is still important. Further, the network is not a linear connection, but is like a spider web; the interactions between intermediaries are complex (Jyrämä and Äyväre 2010) and its functionality often overlaps. Acknowledging this interdependence, therefore, we predict that art fairs do not supplant traditional intermediaries.

Despite the coexistence of art fairs with traditional intermediaries, we also conclude that art fairs (especially prestigious fairs) influence the behaviour of traditional intermediaries considerably because of their established status in the market. In the model of cultural branding, indeed, the meaning of works of art is diffused and selected based on the agreement in the mediation layer, which can be conveyed to consumers. Then, the degree of its contribution in establishing the meaning of works of art varies according to its status and identity. The events organised by other institutions are timed to coincide with Frieze London, and its franchised fair highlights its current status in the market. Thus, the presented works of

art, in our case, are more acceptable at the layer of intermediaries, because of the reputation of the art fair. The more traditional intermediaries want to place their presenting works in the fair, the more power art fairs gain in controlling them via the rigorous selection system. The members of selection committees increase the art fair's importance as a gatekeeper (Velthuis 2014), and their aesthetic taste has a profound impact on the marketplace. In a broader sense, prestigious art fairs play the role of gatekeeping other traditional gatekeepers, as well as that of taste-makers (Bowley 2015).

In this way, Frieze London reinforces the hierarchical structure in the field of visual arts. Moulin (1995, 36) says that "the market and the museum contribute inextricably to the definition and establishment of a hierarchy of artistic values...". We can add prestigious art fairs to Moulin's previous sentence. By situating our case in a high position within the structure, Frieze London contributes to the enhancement of the artistic value of artworks, in terms of consecrating them. Moreover, our case contributes to understanding the mechanism by which the commercial value of artworks is generated. As commercial and artistic values do not always coincide, art fairs have a rather ambivalent position in the art world, by virtue of their dual contributions in terms of consecrating artists and selling their work.

However, Frieze London does not embrace the majority of young and emerging artists since only a small number of young and emerging artists have a chance to expose their art due to the small portion of available space in the prestigious art fair. While acknowledging the limitation of the prestigious art fair, alternative platforms (Affordable Art Fairs and online markets for young and emerging artists) have emerged in the contemporary art market to enable more young and emerging artists to deliver the symbolic value of their work. These new platforms in addition to more established fairs and festivals are being used as tools for graduates and newly established artists to make their mark, enabling them to establish their

brand. Therefore, future research could investigate these platforms in terms of branding young and emerging artists.

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