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The Values of Art
Art of Values

BRAFA 2024 - General view © Olivier Pirard

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Editorial

Art has always been a reflection of its time, capturing the complexities of humanity and transforming them into beauty, provocation, and meaning. This issue of the ENCATC Magazine, developed in close collaboration with BRAFA Art Fair, invites you to explore the many dimensions of art, from the digital revolution that has reshaped the market to the ongoing dialogue between tradition and innovation.

At the heart of this edition lies the story of **BRAFA**, one of the oldest and most prestigious art fairs, now celebrating its 70th anniversary. More than a marketplace, BRAFA is a living testament to art's ability to evolve while staying rooted in history. This year, the fair welcomes Joana Vasconcelos as its guest of honor—a visionary whose bold creations embody the transformative power of art.

Beyond BRAFA, the magazine delves into critical questions shaping today's cultural landscape: the rise of blockchain and NFTs, the evolving role of AI in art expertise, and the collaboration between private collectors and public museums. From the ethical challenges posed by contemporary conflicts to the timeless debate on restitution, each article offers a fresh perspective on the enduring value of art in an ever-changing world.

As you navigate these pages, may you find inspiration in art's resilience, its ability to bridge divides, and its power to shape the future. Together, let us celebrate creativity as a force that transcends boundaries and connects us all.

I would like to extend my **warmest thanks to the BRAFA Art Fair** for their invaluable support in putting together this special issue. Their assistance in connecting us with the inspiring individuals we interviewed, as well as providing us with beautiful images and resources, has been instrumental in bringing this edition to life.

GiannaLia Cogliandro Beyens
ENCATC Secretary General

January 2025

BRAFA 2024 - N. Vrouyr © Emmanuel Crooÿ

ART IN TIMES OF CRISES

Kim Oosterlinck
General Director of the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium and Professor at ULB. Research on the art market, economic history and finance

Image: Sergei Akulich

How does the art market respond to major crises? Despite the recurrence of crises, be they of an economic or military nature, this question has received scant attention in the academic literature. Assessing the impact of crises requires to define them and to get the appropriate data to statistically test their influence on the art market. The availability of larger datasets has recently led to several publications which shed some light on this issue. The aim of this short piece is to review these recent findings.

Crises may be of a different nature. From a military perspective, every conflict could in theory be relevant, yet major international conflicts probably deserve special attention. From an economic perspective, one may for example consider periods of high inflation, major economic crises (Great Depression, Great Recession) and major stock market crashes.

The Art Market in Wartime

The impact of wars on the art market has mainly been analysed for the two World Wars. The results are contrasted. During World War I, the French art market stood almost completely still for the first years of the conflict. The market began only to recover in 1917. In the United Kingdom the war onset had a similar impact, yet the recovery was faster as prices began to experience a rising trend after 1915. The contrast with Germany is striking. Indeed, the German art market experienced a real boom during the war. Even though no cross-country analysis has been conducted yet, it seems that the difference across countries may be linked to differences in terms of monetary policy. Out of the three countries, Germany was indeed the one which relied most on the printing press, fuelling inflation and expectations of future inflation. The interest in auctions became so large that sometimes the police was required to limit attendance. The fear that money would lose its value coupled with a market isolated from the rest of the world because of the war, partially explain this phenomenon.

The desire of the Nazi hierarchy to be perceived as an educated elite significantly increased the demand for artworks.

During World War II, the evolution of the art market was even more striking. A real boom occurred in Belgium, France, Germany and The Netherlands. The causes of the boom were multiple. Besides their looting activity, the German occupation forces were active buyers on the market. In the occupied countries, the amounts received to cover occupation costs were so large that they could be used for other motives, including buying artworks. This situation coupled to the desire of the Nazi hierarchy to be perceived as an educated elite significantly increased the demand for artworks. Yet, this was not the only reason for this surge in demand. The economic situation of the occupied countries, characterized by a scarcity of real goods due to the rationing system, coupled to inflation and to a policy aiming at controlling most form of investments prompted many to seek artworks because they were exchanged in a market with limited controls and perceived as good hedges against inflation. Other motives also increased demand. The black market that quickly flourished in many countries enriched part of the population. These new rich were seeking ways to invest their profits that would not lead to questions about the origin of their wealth. Artworks provided part of the solution they were looking for. Others were also seeking artworks for their discretion, the ability to store a large amount of wealth in a small portable object: people willing to flee the occupied countries. This interest for discreet assets may be seen in the price dynamics of artworks with the smallest artworks experiencing an even steeper price increase than the largest ones. The boom observed in occupied France was such that brokers began to lament the competition of Drouot, the main auction house. Their complaint was not unwarranted as artworks proved to be one of the, if not the, best investment during the occupation.

The demand was such that some people considered as Jews by the Nazi racial calculus managed to survive the war in exchange of their expertise on artworks or on the art market.

The demand for artworks led to a strong rise in the number of art dealers, the number of low-quality artworks, the number of fakes and forgeries and demand for expertise. The number of art dealers grew as the selling artworks appeared to be a lucrative activity. In The Netherlands some businesses which had been strongly affected by the war, such as for example tobacconist, transformed themselves into art dealers. The same occurred in Germany. The price rise prompted some amateurs to become painters, probably influenced by advertisement suggesting they would become rich by embracing an artistic career. As a result, the market was soon flooded by low quality artworks. This was especially true in The Netherlands and in Germany. To address this issue the German government even passed in October 1940 a law targeting low-quality artworks. As for fakes and forgeries, annotated catalogues are replete with mentions of fakes. In some instances, auctioneers willing to preserve their reputation signalled that some signatures on artworks they were selling were probably not genuine. In this context, it is not surprising that demand for expertise rose. The demand was such that some people considered as Jews by the Nazi racial calculus managed to survive the war in exchange of their expertise on artworks or on the art market.

The situation observed in the countries under the German sphere of influence is dramatically different that the one observed in the United Kingdom. The market nosedived at the onset of the war, with transactions few and far between. Transactions with the United States were hampered by the German submarine activity which substantially imperilled the shipment of artworks. As the fortunes of the war turned in favour of the Allies, the market began to recover. Refugees, often willing to sell artworks, increased the supply. Yet, prices remained steady as demand increased even more. The lack of alternative investments but also the need for a way to psychologically escape the day-to-day horrors of the war have been suggested as reasons for this increase in demand.

The lack of alternative investments but also the need for a way to psychologically escape the day-to-day horrors of the war have been suggested as reasons for this increase in demand.

The Art Market during Economic and Financial Crises

In wartime results are thus mixed, with some episodes during which the art market performed rather well and others when the price evolution was less positive. What about economic and financial crises? Anecdotal evidence goes in both directions. The Great Depression is a case in point. On the one hand, some collectors tried to renege on their commitments, others filed for personal bankruptcy and some committed suicide. Yet, on the other hand, some collectors viewed their collection as positive for their wealth with the belief that the losses on the value of their collection were dwarfed by the losses experienced on stocks and shares.

The oil crises of the beginning of the mid-1970s provides another example of a crisis perceived as particularly harmful to the art market with contemporaneous actors blaming the high number of artworks bought-in (failing to meet their reserve prices) to the shock. As for the 2008-2009 crises, many consider it responsible for the bankruptcy of many art dealers.

The only way to get a sense of the average effect of economic and financial crises is to analyse a large dataset of sales. This is exactly what a recent study tracking the price evolution of artworks in the United Kingdom over more than a century does. This study concludes that the largest slumps were recorded in the post-First World War recession (1919–21), the Great Depression (1930–1), the (post) oil crisis (1974–5), the recessions of the early 1980s (1980–1) and the early 1990s (1990–1), and the Great Recession (2008–9). Results indicate that on average the art market performs poorly in times of economic and financial crises.

Artworks from artists whose works are less frequently auctioned experience a stronger price decline than others. The high-end of the market is also more affected by the crises. By contrast, prices of artworks by local artists tend to be more resilient. The art market seems thus to be particularly affected by economic and financial crises.

Results indicate that on average the art market performs poorly in times of economic and financial crises.

Further reading:

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KIM **OOSTERLINCK**

Kim Oosterlinck has been a professor of finance at the Université libre de Bruxelles since 2011. His work on arts includes, amongst others, the impact of fake discoveries on art markets, the reactions of art markets to monetary reforms and crises, art dealers' business strategy, the question of expertise and copies, and the strategic motivations of banks to create art collections. Kim Oosterlinck has published several articles on the French, German, Dutch and Belgian art markets during WWII. Since July 1st, 2024, he is the general director of the Royal Museum of Fine Arts of Belgium.

KIM **OOSTERLINCK**

Interview by
GiannaLia Cogliandro Beyens

Compared to traditional financial instruments like stocks or bonds, how does art perform in terms of risk and return? What should potential investors consider before entering this market?

Compared to other traditional financial assets, the returns on the art market tend to be higher than the return of government bonds (some studies find even a higher return than for corporate bonds) but below the returns observed for equity. This positive result needs however to be set into perspective as the volatility is extremely high for the art market. As a result, once the return is compared to the risk, investing in art is far from appealing. Potential investors should be aware of this issue and may want to focus on artworks they like to at least enjoy an aesthetic return.

What role can art play in diversifying a financial portfolio? Are there specific characteristics of art investments that make them effective in hedging risks?

The benefits of diversification are highest when the return of an asset is uncorrelated to the returns of a portfolio. Most studies report a positive correlation between the art market and equities. This would suggest that diversification benefits are limited. Yet, this correlation seems much lower for non-Western market such as the Chinese one, an element which plays in favor of investing in artworks in these markets.

As portable goods with a potential of a high value concentrated in a small object, artworks may serve as a hedge for tail events such as major wars. During World War II for example, in occupied France small artworks experienced a very positive price dynamic as they could be used to hide wealth in a very discrete way.

The global art market often seems opaque. How do factors like auction houses, private sales, and art fairs influence pricing and liquidity in this market?

Opacity is indeed a key characteristic of this market. Most studies rely on results from auctions to analyze the evolution of the market. Yet, this only provides a very partial view of what's going on. Furthermore, the price formation in auctions differs from the one observed in more traditional sales. Auctions results reflect the willingness to pay of the most eager bidder. By contrast in private sales the price is fixed ex ante and negotiable. The market structure thus influences the way we perceive the market. In addition, price guarantees offered by auction houses may distort the perception one has of the market.

Beyond financial returns, art offers cultural and emotional value. How do these non-financial factors impact the investment rationale for art?

Non-financial factors influence positively the demand for art. In a sense, they are often viewed as a compensation for the relatively poor risk-return couple exhibited by art as an investment. These non-financial factors are numerous: the love of the artworks comes obviously to mind, but conspicuous consumption or features related to the desire to collect and thus have a « complete » collection also influence demand.

Historically, how have major economic crises impacted the art market, and what lessons can we draw for future market behavior?

On average, major economic crises have a strong negative impact on the art market. Local artworks tend to be a bit more resilient, and of course major sales such as the Yves Saint-Laurent one in the middle of the Great Recession was a success. Yet, this should be viewed as an exception rather than the rule.

With the rise of digital art and non-fungible tokens (NFTs), how is the definition of "art as an asset" changing? Are NFTs a viable long-term investment?

Predicting the future of NFTs as an investment is complicated. The price evolution observed recently looks more like a bubble than a long-term viable investment. However, one could have said the same of the Bitcoin at its beginnings so I guess only time will tell. But as the Bitcoin, NFTs should probably be viewed as an even riskier investment than traditional art.

BRAFA, A STORY THAT STRETCHES BACK SEVEN DECADES

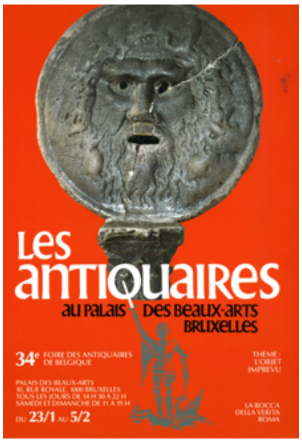
Joana Vasconcelos, Valkyrie Seondeok
© ArtisTree, Taikoo Place, Swire Properties 2024

BRAFA ART FAIR

BRAFA's story began in 1956, when it was held under the name "Foire des Antiquaires de Belgique" in the Salle Arlequin of the Galeries Louise in Brussels. The initiative, which came from Charles Van Hove, then chairman of the Belgian Chamber of Antique Dealers, aimed to bring together the country's leading antique dealers. It met with instant success, and by 1968 the growing number of participants prompted the organisers to move the event to the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels, a venue that was better suited to the ambitions of the Fair.

Attracting more and more exhibitors from abroad, the event grew internationally, a transformation that began in 1995 under the influence of Christian de Bruyn, who chaired the Fair from 1971 to 2002. Another significant change was that the Fair opened up to other fields, with tribal art, comics, contemporary art and design being added to the range of specialities on display.



As the Fair continued to welcome a growing number of exhibitors, it moved to a new location in 2004: Tour & Taxis. This move was a real gamble, since the site was still only a development-stage project. The space provided by this new venue enabled the Fair to expand rapidly. From a national Fair with 50 participants, it became an international Fair with over 130 participants. The name "Foire des Antiquaires de Belgique" (Antiques Fair of Belgium) no longer corresponded to the internationalisation and diversity of the fields on offer, so the decision was taken to rename the Fair BRAFA (Brussels Antiques & Fine Arts Fair), its official moniker since 2008. Over time, BRAFA has simply become known as the Brussels Art Fair.

Since 2009, the Fair has been under the High Patronage of Queen Paola. From the outset, a host of VIPs have been invited to inaugurate it. These have included the Belgian Royal family, the Grand-Ducal family of Luxembourg, Baroness

Philippine de Rothschild, Karl Lagerfeld, Catherine Deneuve, and many others. BRAFA has also welcomed prestigious guests of honour, ranging from major Belgian cultural institutions such as the Opéra de la Monnaie in 2013 and the Royal Museum for Central Africa in 2014, to internationally renowned artists such as Christo in 2018 and Gilbert & George in 2019.

In 2022, following the development of new projects on the Tour & Taxis site, BRAFA moved to Brussels Expo, which was specifically designed to host a variety of trade fairs and international events. Illustrating a prestigious past, the infrastructure of its exhibition halls is a legacy of the Brussels World's Fairs of 1935 and 1958, the flagship monument of which is undoubtedly the Atomium, the symbol of the 1958 Fair.

BRAFA's success owes a great deal to its exhibitors' loyalty. Renowned galleries have brought their expertise to the Fair, contributing to making BRAFA a leading event. This continuity is illustrated, amongst others, by the gallery N. Vrouyr.

Brussels Expo © Olivier Pirard

Having exhibited at the Fair since 1956, it embodies a family tradition that is currently being perpetuated by Naïry Vrouyr, the founder's great-granddaughter. Longstanding exhibitors at the Fair include Axel Vervoordt (1976), De Jonckheere (1977), Francis Janssens van der Maelen (1990), Patrick Derom Gallery (1992), Boon Gallery (1998) and d'Arschot & Cie (1998), to name only a few.

This year, BRAFA is celebrating its 70th edition, commemorating seven decades of tradition and renewal. Since its beginnings, the prestigious art fair has continued to evolve whilst preserving its DNA. Nowadays, BRAFA is ranked among the top 3 eclectic fairs in Europe, and fully intends to maintain this position. It's one of the oldest fairs in the world, with a lot of character!

BRAFA 2025 promises to be a dynamic and festive event. Dynamic, because a new Chairman and a new Board of Directors have been elected since June 2024. Whilst the fo perspective.

Festive, because BRAFA will be celebrating its 70th edition in 2025. To mark the occasion, it has chosen to welcome an internationally renowned Portuguese artist as its guest of honour: Joana Vasconcelos. The artist, born in 1971, is famous for her monumental sculptures and immersive installations. Her humorous, ironic work decontextualises everyday objects to examine the status of women, consumer society and collective identity. Her colourful pieces will undoubtedly leave a dazzling imprint on visitors' memories.

The Fair is also delighted to have been able to set up a collaboration with KIK-IRPA, the Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage. It will be occupying an exhibition space next to the stand of the King Baudouin Foundation, offering an insight into its activities: the analysis, authentication and restoration of works. KIK-IRPA will also be organising interactive workshops on its stand daily at 2pm and 5pm, giving visitors a behind-the-scenes look at heritage preservation. These workshops will enable them to learn about the modern scientific techniques unlocking the understanding of historical works of art and will teach them how to preserve their own artworks at home.

BRAFA will also be offering a series of daily lectures, the BRAFA Art Talks, at 4pm on the stand of the King Baudouin Foundation. Leading figures from the art world, exhibition and museum curators, and art market experts will be sharing their knowledge and expertise in a wide range of fascinating fields. It's a great opportunity to discover works of art, artists and periods, and to learn more about art and the art market. For the second time, ENCACT will propose a fascinating topic Digital Renaissance: *Blockchain, NFTs, and the Evolving Art Market Ecosystem* with high-profile professionals in the artworld.

For its part, the King Baudouin Foundation will be exhibiting a selection of remarkable works from its own collection, demonstrating its commitment to preserving and promoting Belgian heritage internationally.

Once again this year, 130 international exhibitors from 16 countries will present 20 specialties over 21,000 m² of exhibition space in the elegant setting of Brussels Expo. Between 10,000 and 15,000 top-quality works from every continent and period, from Antiquity to the present day, will be on display from Sunday, January 26th until Sunday, February 2nd, 2025.

Throughout its long history, BRAFA has always been striving for excellence, supported by Delen Private Bank, a loyal sponsor of the Fair for almost 20 years.

© Emmanuel Crooÿ @ BRAFA

INTERVIEW WITH

KLAAS **MULLER**

Chairman of BRAFA

© Guy Kokken @ Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium

Klaas Muller was born in 1975 in Lokeren. After studying art history at the University of Ghent, he opened his own gallery in 2000 in the Sablon in Brussels. He now welcomes visitors at his home, where he continues to satisfy his collector-customers' taste for antique art. Klaas Muller is passionate about paintings, drawings and sculptures from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, with a particular penchant for Italian, Dutch and Flemish masters. He is regularly called upon by museums. He has been a Board member of BRAFA since 2015. In 2021, he was appointed Vice-Chairman (Antiques and Old Masters). He has now become Chairman of BRAFA, a role he has taken on with great enthusiasm.

How do you see your role as the Chairman of BRAFA?

My colleagues, members of the non-profit organisation Foire des Antiquaires de Belgique, have decided to place their trust in me. I believe it is essential to prioritise dialogue and collaboration with the Board of Directors, the organising team and the other members of the association. I would like to be a chairman who takes exhibitors' needs into account as much as possible, whilst simultaneously making decisions in the general interest of the Fair. It will be a balancing act. But I'm very confident: the Board of Directors and the team around me are 100% committed!

What are the current challenges facing the Fair?

With the former Board of Directors and the exhibitors, we succeeded in organising one of the best editions in 2024. This organisation, this base, this "well-oiled machine," is something that we absolutely need to preserve. Naturally, there are always new challenges to face. Whilst contemporary art has and must always have its place at the Fair, I would like to place a little more emphasis on ancient and classical art, Asian and ethnic art, archaeology, and so on. We also need to continue to internationalise the Fair by attracting more exhibitors from countries such as Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland, the UK, Italy and Spain. In turn, these exhibitors will attract international clients. I would also like to develop closer relationships with national and international museums.

What are BRAFA's current strengths?

The Board of Directors is entirely made up of active art dealers. They, more than anyone, understand what matters in the art world and how the market is developing. BRAFA has become a brand in its own right. We have managed to avoid the lure of passing trends and fashions. What matters is the quality of the featured works and galleries. Our move to Brussels Expo in 2022 has increased accessibility to the Fair, for visitors from outside Brussels and abroad. The general atmosphere amongst participants is positive and friendly, the exhibitors are welcoming and always ready to share their passion with visitors, and our audience is very varied, from art lovers to discerning collectors, by way of interior designers and museum curators. BRAFA is the first major event on the artistic calendar, and everyone is looking forward to discovering our Fair, which has become an unmissable event.

It was predicted that a number of fairs would disappear after Covid. Yet new fairs are added to the calendar every year. Is there room enough for everybody? How can fairs maintain their drawing power?

There is admittedly an overabundance of art fairs and auctions. Some are specialised, others are aimed at a wider audience. I think that the most important thing is to maintain our own identity and not be too influenced by what others are doing and thinking. BRAFA has always gone its own way, and that's an excellent way of doing things.

INTERVIEW WITH JOANA **VASCONCELOS**

by Liliana Turoiu

With a career spanning over 30 years and a huge variety of media, Joana Vasconcelos is a Portuguese visual artist recognised for her monumental sculptures and immersive installations. Her artworks are represented in major collections such as those of François Pinault, Louis Vuitton and the Rothschild Foundation, while her public artworks grace Jupiter Artland, the city of Paris or Waddesdon Manor. Present at São Paulo Biennial, Art Basel or Artgenève, for instance, she has exhibited four times at the Venice Biennale, was the first woman and youngest artist in Versailles and held important solo shows at Guggenheim Bilbao, Yorkshire Sculpture Park and Uffizi Galleries. From Lisbon to the world, she manages a studio with nearly 60 employees and her own foundation promoting art for all.

Joana Vasconcelos © Lionel Balteiro for Atelier Joana Vasconcelos

Joana Vasconcelos, Valkyrie Seondeok © ArtisTree, Taikoo Place, Swire Properties 2024

Joana Vasconcelos, your installation at the Palace of Versailles and the floating pavilion at the Venice Biennale are iconic examples of your ability to merge tradition with contemporary innovation. As an artist who has exhibited globally, how do you approach an international fair like BRAFA differently from other exhibitions you have participated in?

As an artist, fairs like BRAFA hold immense significance, particularly during challenging times. They serve as platforms for dialogue, cultural exchange, and mutual understanding—qualities that are essential in today's world. Approaching an international fair like BRAFA differs from other exhibitions due to its unique ability to bring together diverse artistic voices and connect them with collectors, institutions, and the public. This convergence creates a dynamic environment where art becomes a universal language, bridging divides and inspiring hope. What sets fairs like BRAFA apart is their celebration of the interplay between different artistic periods and styles. This dialogue highlights the resilience and adaptability of art, emphasizing its timeless capacity to connect people across cultures and generations. Unlike exhibitions with a singular focus, fairs offer a panoramic view of art's continuum, from ancient craftsmanship to modern innovations. This broader context encourages a deeper appreciation of art's role as a unifying and reflective force.

Being named BRAFA's Guest of Honour is a profound privilege, especially as the fair celebrates its 70th anniversary—a milestone that underscores its historical significance and global influence. As the first female artist to hold this esteemed position, I am honoured to contribute to an event that embodies the convergence of tradition and innovation. Throughout my career, I've often been the first woman to achieve such recognitions, from my installations in Bilbao and Versailles to this role at BRAFA. Rather than just celebrating these accomplishments, I've always questioned why so many talented women before me were not given the same opportunities. It's no coincidence that materials like stone and metal are still considered 'noble,' as the art world continues to be predominantly male dominated. As long as women artists are not valued equally or afforded the same opportunities as their male counterparts, the feminist fight remains necessary. It is important for me to use the platform I've built to highlight these issues through my work and contribute to this vital conversation.

Blue Moon, 2019 - Handmade woollen crochet, ornements, polyester on canvas, plywood
H 150 x W 200 x D 65 cm - © Atelier Joana Vasconcelos, Courtesy Galerie La Patinoire Royale Bach

You've worked on many large-scale installations. How do you approach the challenge of creating art that can communicate with such a vast space while maintaining its intimate connections with the viewer?

I don't approach large-scale installations simply for the sake of monumentality. The scale of my works emerges organically from the materials I select to convey a specific message. For instance, Marilyn (2009) exemplifies this approach: I used medium-sized pans—everyday objects, typically used to cook for a family of four—to create a symbol of glamour, elevating the role and status of housewives. My work often involves ambiguity, starting with small, ordinary objects that I decontextualize and transform through repetition to create something entirely new and larger in form. The scale itself does not possess a magical quality; it serves as a means to offer fresh perspectives on reality and to invite deeper engagement with the concepts behind the work.

What specific works will you be presenting at BRAFA 2025, and what themes do you hope to highlight through them? How do you hope your work at BRAFA will inspire the visitors?

At BRAFA, I will be presenting two monumental Valkyries, sculptures from a series inspired by the powerful female figures of Norse mythology who soared over battlefields to resurrect the bravest warriors and take them to Valhalla. These works embody the spirit of

Blue Rose, 2016 - Stainless steel shower heads, handmade woollen crochet, fabric, ornaments, polyester
H 246 x W 95 x D 47 cm - Provenance: the artist's studio - Courtesy Joana Vasconcelos and Galerie La Patinoire Royale Bach

Joana Vasconcelos' portrait © Kenton Tatcher

strength and resilience, qualities that I believe resonate deeply with the contemporary moment. Made from a variety of textiles, the Valkyries showcase a surprising mix of volumes, textures, and colours, combining traditional craftsmanship with contemporary techniques.

I see these works as an aesthetic and conceptual focal point, paying tribute to BRAFA's rich heritage while creating an immersive experience that bridges tradition and innovation. My hope is that these Valkyries will contribute to making BRAFA's 70th anniversary an unforgettable and visually striking celebration.

Your works are often described as bringing joy and a deep emotional connection to viewers. How do you approach the creation of art that resonates so intimately with people's souls, and what do you think this emotional connection reveals about the role of art in our lives?

I believe that once an artwork is completed, it becomes its own entity, detached from the artist. An artwork absorbs the artist's understanding of the world and is intellectually stimulating. I do not believe in telling people what they should see and feel, and I am always amazed by what people project on my artworks, what interpretations spring to life, which is always connected to intimate life experiences. This creates a safe space for the viewer to interact and relate with my work freely. On top of that I have a profound respect for the Portuguese heritage and use it as lexicon throughout. More than replicating the traditions I aim to modernize them and recontextualise them in my practice.

Constantin Brâncuși once said, "The material is not a thing; it is the idea that is expressed through the material." You have a unique way of using materials like textiles, ceramics, and everyday objects to create art that transcends their original function. How do you interpret this idea of materiality in your own work, and how do you think your approach resonates to this philosophy of material as an essential part of the artistic expression?

I use everyday objects in my practice to maximize their aesthetic potent, creating new meanings and offering new perspectives. It is not a uniquely conceptual work as it is traditionally ready-made in art history. The aim is to question the way these everyday objects are perceived, not by simply elevating these objects to an art object status, but by incorporating them in my artistic practice as materials. The conceptual gesture remains but it is elevated by the aesthetic choices I make on or with these objects. Also, the objects I choose for my artwork are of emotional importance to me; I have a direct relation to them. The Morris Oxford used in War Games was my first car, gifted to me by my grandfather who was a car collector. I do not simply place the car inside the museum to elevate it to the art realm, I use it as raw material, adding laser guns and plushies in order to create new meanings with the piece. It is the transformation of the everyday objects what interests me.

As someone deeply involved in both the local and global art scenes, what are the key differences or similarities you see in the art markets around the world? What advice would you give to the next generation of creators, especially those navigating the complexities of today's art world?

The art market is as diverse as the cultures and contexts in which it operates, yet certain universal threads connect these seemingly disparate scenes. Locally, the art market often reflects a community's cultural heritage, traditions, and unique aesthetic sensibilities. These markets can be deeply personal, fostering close relationships between artists, collectors, and institutions. In contrast, the global art market is a more dynamic and interconnected space, shaped by international trends, economic forces, and a broader audience. What strikes me as a key similarity, however, is the enduring value of storytelling. Whether in Lisbon or New York, collectors and audiences are drawn to authenticity and narratives that resonate emotionally. This is where art transcends its market context to become a universal language—a bridge between cultures, ideas, and eras.

For the next generation of creators, my advice is twofold. First, remain rooted in your authenticity. Your unique perspective, influenced by your personal history and cultural background, is your most valuable asset. Do not shy away from integrating your identity and experiences into your work, as this is what creates a meaningful connection with your audience. Second, approach the art world with both resilience and curiosity. The industry can be complex and, at times, daunting, but it also offers incredible opportunities for collaboration, growth, and innovation. Be open to learning from diverse perspectives and don't fear failure—it is often a crucial part of the creative process.

Throughout your career, you've explored many themes, from gender to history and societal issues. What motivates you to choose a particular theme for a project?

My choice of themes is deeply connected to my observation of the world around me and my desire to spark dialogue about issues that resonate universally yet are often deeply personal. Each project begins with a spark—sometimes it's an everyday object that captures my attention, sometimes it's a cultural tradition, a historical moment, or a pressing societal issue. My art is my way of questioning and reinterpreting these elements, challenging preconceived notions, and inviting viewers to see them in a new light. Gender has always been a recurring theme in my work because it intersects with so many facets of life—identity, power, tradition, and social roles. For instance, in works like Marilyn or The Bride, I use objects associated with domesticity to explore the tension between the public and private roles of women. These pieces elevate what is often overlooked, paying homage to the strength and complexity of women's experiences.


Joana Vasconcelos' portrait © Arlindo Camacho for Atelier Joana Vasconcelos

History and societal issues inspire me because they are part of our collective story. I am particularly drawn to the intersection of the traditional and the contemporary—how the past informs the present and how we reinterpret it to address current realities. In Trafaria-Praia a floating pavilion for the Venice Biennale, for example, I drew from Portugal's maritime history while presenting a vision of cultural exchange that transcends borders and time. Ultimately, I choose themes that challenge, inspire, and provoke thought. Art is a powerful tool for conversation, and my motivation lies in creating work that resonates with people on both an intellectual and emotional level. It's about connecting the personal with the universal and using creativity to shed light on the complexities of our shared humanity.

In a world increasingly influenced by technology, how do you think art can help maintain human connection and emotional depth in a society that is becoming more digitally driven by AI and automation? Do you think AI can challenge the role of the artists in the future?

Technology has always been a double-edged sword—it offers incredible opportunities for innovation while also challenging us to remain critical and thoughtful in its use. In my own work, I often integrate technology to explore its creative possibilities, whether it's through engineering, materials, or innovative production techniques. Technology can amplify the scale and scope of artistic expression, but for me, it is always a tool in service of the human element, never a replacement for it. Art plays a vital role in maintaining human connection and emotional depth, especially in an era increasingly dominated by digitalization and artificial intelligence. While AI can mimic patterns, generate forms, and even simulate creativity, it lacks the essence of human experience—the emotions, intuition, and imperfections that make art a reflection of our humanity. Art is about connection: it speaks to our vulnerabilities, our histories, and our dreams. No algorithm can replicate the deeply personal and often unpredictable process of human creation.

That said, I do not see AI as a threat to artists or the creative process. Instead, I view it as a challenge and an opportunity—one that demands a critical approach. As creators,

Salada de Fruta, 2019 - Handmade woollen crochet, fabrics, ornaments, polyester, on canvas, plywood
H 130 x W 162 x D 40 cm - © Atelier Joana Vasconcelos, Courtesy Galerie La Patinoire Royale Bach

we must question how and why we use these tools. What are we gaining, and what might we be losing in the process? I believe it's essential to approach technology with both curiosity and caution, ensuring it enhances rather than diminishes our capacity for meaningful expression. Ultimately, the role of the artist will always remain rooted in the human condition. Art reminds us of what it means to feel, to question, and to connect—a role that no machine can fulfil. As society becomes more digitally driven, the need for art to anchor us in our shared humanity will only grow stronger. This is why we must continue to celebrate and support creativity in all its forms, ensuring that technology serves as a bridge rather than a barrier to human connection.

You've been an influential figure in art for decades. As an artist who has continually pushed boundaries and redefined contemporary art, what kind of legacy do you hope to leave for future generations of artists and audiences?

I hope my legacy will be one that celebrates the power of art to bridge worlds—between tradition and innovation, the personal and the universal, the past and the present. My work has always been about challenging boundaries, rethinking the role of materials, and questioning societal norms. If future generations of artists and audiences can find inspiration in this approach, then I will have achieved something meaningful. I want to be remembered as an artist who dared to reimagine the ordinary, transforming everyday objects into symbols that provoke dialogue about identity, culture, and societal issues.

Whether it's the domestic objects that speak to gender roles or the large-scale installations

Joana Vasconcelos, Royal Valkyrie 2012 © Lionel Balteiro | LaMousse - Cortesia Atelier Joana Vasconcelos
Handmade woollencrochet, felt appliqués, fabrics, ornaments, inflatable, power supply unit, steel cables
625 x 600 x 900 cm. Image of the work in the exhibition Between Sky and Heart at Galleria degliUffizi, Florence in 2023

that confront historical narratives, I aim to create art that encourages people to see the world differently—more critically, more empathetically, and with greater curiosity. For artists, I hope to leave a legacy of fearlessness. To show that you can navigate the art world without compromising your vision, that you can blend craftsmanship with bold ideas, and that it's possible to honor your roots while embracing innovation. For audiences, I want my work to remain a reminder of the enduring importance of art in connecting us to our humanity. Art has the power to make us feel, think, and dream, and I hope my pieces continue to spark these responses long after I am gone. Ultimately, my legacy is about contribution—creating spaces for reflection, conversation, and connection. If my work can inspire future generations to push boundaries, challenge conventions, and create with passion and purpose, then I will have left behind something truly lasting.

For the present moment I can tell you I'll be showcasing some works at La Patinoire Royale, opening February 1st. I'll be travelling to Madrid in February where I'll be opening Flamboyant a solo inaugural exhibition at Liria Palace. I will be showcasing some of my most iconic works, including Marylin, Valkyrie Thyra, and Flaming Heart. Looking ahead to 2025, it promises to be another exciting and busy year, and I couldn't be more thrilled. Mostly, I want to continue to do what I have been doing so far, pursuing my art wherever it takes me!

INTERVIEW WITH
AXEL **VERVOORDT**

by GiannaLia Cogliandro Beyens

Since the late 1960s, Axel Vervoordt has built up a strong reputation as an antiques dealer and art connoisseur. His family-run business has grown into an international company that proposes art, antiques and interior design. The company has always been uncompromising when it comes to quality and beauty. It's industrial space Kanaal proposes a unique and very diverse collection of objects including archaeological pieces, 18th century furniture, 20th century design, ZERO and Gutai art. All objects, regardless of their origin or value, share a timeless, universal beauty and an intrinsic purity. The Axel Vervoordt Gallery, directed by Boris Vervoordt, offers a platform for established and emerging artists to show their work on an international level. The gallery focuses primarily on artists with a passion for the concept of the void and whose dedication to the creative process expresses a fascination with the meaning of the universe.

Kanaal outside overview©Jan Liégeois

Your work is celebrated for its emphasis on timeless beauty and purity. How do you define beauty, and how do you identify it in such diverse objects—from archaeological pieces to contemporary art?

We are always looking for something different with a strength in whatever period it comes from. Each piece should still have a universal spirit, but not limited to its time. We are attracted to works that are either very architectural or very meditative, and express a positive energy.

Your work is celebrated for its emphasis on timeless beauty and purity. How do you define beauty, and how do you identify it in such diverse objects—from archaeological pieces to contemporary art?

Kanaal was an industrial site, originally built around 1865 as a gin distillery with brick warehouses along the Albert Canal. Later, after the second World War, it was converted into a malting complex with impressive concrete silos. In the late 1990s, it was almost abandoned. But I loved the synergy of the different buildings, the bold architecture that was never meant to be beautiful, the presence of the water. It was my dream to put live back into it and to convert it into a small village with exhibition spaces, apartments, offices, a restaurant, a bakery, ... My youngest son Dick turned it into a real estate masterplan and worked together with some of the best Belgian architects and a plan for the garden to link everything. Since we've installed the Axel Vervoordt Gallery there in 2017, there is a constant flow of varying exhibitions in the gallery spaces and monthly we have top notch concerts in our auditorium with Inspiratum. The general management of the Gallery is in hands of my son Boris, who decides upon the selection of new artists, choice of exhibitions, practical organisation of the exhibitions. I'm very proud of my two sons who helped to realise my dream.

Shiro Tsujimura, Echoes of Nature

Your gallery focuses on artists drawn to the concept of the void. How do you interpret the void, and why do you think it resonates so deeply with the human experience?

Yes, I'm drawn to this idea as it is closely linked to the Japanese terms "mu" and "ku" that refer to nothingness or emptiness—a primary tenet of Buddhism. Also known as sunyata, this philosophical theory of emptiness and detachment helps lead to enlightenment. This directly connects with the theory of the void expounded by the ZERO art movement and the "Concetto Spaziale" of Lucio Fontana that had such an intense influence on me in my early years. Today, many of the artists I greatly admire are "masters of the universe": artists who use empty space or infinity as a means of accentuating the innate beauty of things that exist.

How do you balance your work with historical pieces, like 18th-century furniture, alongside contemporary art forms?

My taste is always defined by a search for harmony. I try only to make things interesting. I'm searching for the timeless. Between East and West. Between time periods. I want to search for the answer of where it all connects.

For someone aspiring to enter the field of antiques dealing or art curation, would you recommend formal education in art history or a more hands-on, experiential approach? What was your own path?

First, follow your intuition, and train your intuition to be free. Afterwards, start studying it more in detail and ask for advice to connoisseurs. My advice is to keep your eyes open, go to a lot of exhibitions, a lot of museums, churches, …The more experience you have to understand art and artists, the better you become. Then you test your intuition based on historic relevance in art history. Don't ever go only from the investment side. Art is about expression of emotion, so one needs to connect to that. Never buy art just because of a place you have, buy it for its intrinsic value and connection you have with it.

Abraham Palatnik

Are there any specific books, authors, or resources you would recommend for those wishing to deepen their knowledge of art, antiques, or the philosophy behind your work?

Philosophically, I would recommend to read the *Tao Te Ching* by Lao Tzu, a foundational text that offers profound insights into Taoist thought. Also, Junichiro Tanizaki's *In Praise of Shadows* helped me a lot. To understand the art of proportions Matila Ghyka's publications, notably *Le Nombre d'Or and The Geometry of Art and Life* served as a great inspiration for my work as a designer.

In your opinion, how can someone learn to identify and appreciate the 'intrinsic purity' and 'universal beauty' that your work emphasizes? Are these qualities innate, or can they be cultivated?

Jef Verheyen © Jan Liégeois

Having an open mind and following your intuition is an attitude that is innate. But I'm sure your eye can be trained. The more you look at art, the more you get fascinated by it, the more details you start seeing, the difference you start seeing in quality, the more you start appreciating techniques and materials.

Your work bridges different eras and cultural traditions. How do you find inspiration across such a wide range of history and geography?

I've always had an open mind towards various cultures, origins, periods. The thing that is always actual will always be of interest. Real things, actual things, will always be adapted and conceived in different ways. We live in an era of real news versus fake news. The real thing is what matters and what lasts. Think of the music of Bach or Mozart. Think of Cycladic art or early Greek or Egyptian art. These are always actual things. Egyptians always wanted to make actual art that could last for an eternity. That's one reason why their work continues to be an inspiration. That made real works that in a way were already

announcing the future, giving identity a sense of eternity.

Your work bridges different eras and cultural traditions. How do you find inspiration

AXEL VERVOORDT © Nathalie Gabay

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The Axel Vervoordt Gallery has become a platform for established and emerging artists. What advice do you offer to emerging artists trying to find their voice and place in the art world?

I love artists that have a very open and totally free expression. Artists that are not influenced by what other people think and that don't want to follow the art market or trends.

Your family business has grown into an internationally recognized brand. How has the family dynamic influenced your work, and what role does Boris Vervoordt play in continuing your vision?

I'm very grateful that our two sons, Boris and Dick, continue in our steps. Working as a family in the same business is very enriching. We immediately understand each other and it makes you grow stronger together.

Looking back on your illustrious career, is there a particular piece, project, or artist that has been especially meaningful to you? Why?

If I had to choose one artist than it's my belated friend Jef Verheyen. He introduced me to artists like Lucio Fontana, Günther Uecker and Yves Klein. He gave me many books over the years. He was very well read and passionate about many things, including medieval art and knowledge. Jef also talked a lot about the concept of the void. He called it "vol-ledig", a Flemish word which describes the fullness of the emptiness.

With increasing digitization and the rise of online platforms, how do you see the future of art and antiques dealing? Will the human element of curation remain central?

It's hard to forecast the future, and I'm not so involved in the latest evolution of AI, but I always think positive about the evolution. So, I'm quite curious and open-minded to that as well.

What projects or exhibitions are you most excited about in the coming years? Are there any areas of art or design you feel are ripe for further exploration?

We are always working on new exhibitions and exiting art books. Right now, we're preparing a book on sacred geometry, as taught by my friend, the late Bernard Lietaer. He was one of the persons who taught me a lot on ancient art, on the art of proportions. We worked closely together on the outlines of the exhibition PROPORTIO in Venice in 2015, which took us four years of preparation. Right before his death, he made me promise to continue his work in the esoteric field and his research on the sacred knowledge of proportions.

Many people dream of creating spaces that are both functional and imbued with beauty, like those you design. What advice would you give to someone trying to design their own home with the philosophy of 'less is more'?

Try as much as possible to avoid the purely decorative but try to achieve an effect of harmony between the architectural environment, the furnishings and the works of art and objects. In our philosophy, in the end the people living in the house must be able to find more of themselves than of our intervention and that intervention must be a permanent source of inspiration for the future. The idea behind decoration is not decorating.

BEATRIX **BOURDON**

Interview by
GiannaLia Cogliandro Beyens

Beatrix Bourdon holds a degree in history from KU Leuven, a diploma in American Studies from the same university and a Master of Arts in East European Studies (KU Leuven, VUB, UGent). She was initially interested in being a journalist, but her passion for art proved decisive. She began working in auction houses before joining the ASBL Foire des Antiquaires de Belgique, the organisation behind BRAFA, in 1992.

BRAFA is now one of the oldest art fairs in Europe. Presenting ancient, modern and contemporary art, it is considered to be one of the most prestigious and eclectic art fairs in the world. Beatrix Bourdon, who was appointed Managing Director in 1999, is responsible for all aspects of organisation for the international event it has become: finding new exhibitors, setting up stands, printed matter, advertising, sponsorship, expertise, catering, etc.

Born in Knokke on the Belgian coast, she is a woman brimming with iodine, who loves long walks and bike rides in the open air, wild landscapes, happy gatherings with family and friends, and reading to dream. She is also a keen golfer. In the city, she spends her free time at museum exhibitions and concerts. A born traveller, she loves to explore the world through the aisles of BRAFA and discover artworks from a wide variety of eras, styles and civilisations, or from elsewhere: Italy, Sweden, etc. Beatrix has been married for 28 years and has 25 year old twins.

What's your background, personally and professionally?

I was born by the sea and spent a happy childhood there. On my father's side, my family were religious art goldsmiths and on my mother's side, hoteliers on the Belgian coast.

I studied history at KU Leuven and specialised in international politics. I'm very independent and I like a certain freedom. I have been working for BRAFA since 1992. I've sort of grown up with it, as if it were my big sister.

What gives you most pleasure in your day-to-day work?

Getting on with my job, creating, questioning the day-to-day, meeting nice people, sharing. I have to admit that I see my work as a bit of a hobby, even though it has always been a full-time job.

What have been your career highlights?

Having successfully moved from the Palais des Beaux-Arts to the Tour & Taxis site. We really were pioneers at the time. Getting through the Covid crisis without too much upheaval. Managing to give structure to the organisation of the Fair. Making every edition a success and having exhibitors come back year after year.

What's your leadership style?

Continuing to believe that we can improve. Not resting on our laurels and letting ourselves be showered with compliments. I'm a woman and I try to be equal to men. I like to listen, discuss and exchange ideas to reach a better understanding.

What's your communication style?

I try to stay in the background whilst always being available to intervene at every moment. For me, it's all about BRAFA, the exhibitors, the artworks... In the end, that's the most important thing, right?

What gets you out of bed in the morning?

There are only 24 hours in a day, and I try to make the most of my time to share it with family, friends or at work. Once in a while, I also enjoy simply taking advantage of spare time and doing nothing.

What do you do to relax?

Spend time with my family, go for walks by the sea, play golf, have friends over, read, cook... take weekend trips with my husband.

Can you describe your management style?

It's a big family, and I try to encourage the whole team to do their best, to achieve excellence. It's not always easy, because the people I work with are all different and have their own personalities. You have to listen and do better at the same time.

Do you want to be liked or respected?

I think respected. You can't always please everybody, and some decisions are less popular than others, but they have to be taken first and foremost for the smooth running of the Fair. Everything I try to put in place is in the interests of improving the Fair.

Do you read management books?

No, to be honest, I have never read any 😊 I'm a bit of a self-made woman and I follow my intuition.

What do you find the most difficult part of your job?

Making sure that the whole BRAFA team is happy to come to work every day. Paying attention to habits; questioning myself and listening to others.

What does success look like to you?

Success in itself doesn't interest me. What matters to me is that BRAFA be a success every year.

What was the last book you read?

"La Princesse insoumise" by Jean-Noël Liaut. Gayatri Devi grew up in the 1920s in the heart of a sumptuous palace. Her destiny became intertwined with the advent of subjugated India. She was the last great Indian princess. She was a lover, a woman of power and a feminist before her time.

The BRAFA Fair has evolved at an incredible rate in the last few years (more international, bigger, new location, etc,) and at the same time, relationships have also changed quite a lot post-pandemic. In this new context, what are the biggest challenges that you are facing as a manager?

To have a long-term vision. Where do we want to go? How can we achieve this?

To maintain the quality and excellence of our event whilst upholding our convivial reputation and cultivating a "family" spirit.

INTERVIEW WITH CHRISTIAN **VROUYR**

by GiannaLia Cogliandro Beyens

Born in 1950. Lives and works in Antwerp. Third generation of a family business that still specialises in hand-knotted carpets. His grandfather founded the company in 1917 and moved to Antwerp in 1920. His daughter is now in charge. Studied philosophy in Leuven. Christian Vrouyr travelled to the Middle East since 1973. He gives lectures and has published a book entitled 'Memoirs of a Carpet Dealer'. General Secretary of BRAFA (Brussels Art Fair, Tour et Taxis) for 18 years. Has given lectures about carpets for over 30 years in middle-class training schools President of Bota (Belgian professional association of oriental carpet dealers) for 25 years.

Picture of the shop

Your company has a remarkable history dating back to 1917. How has the business evolved over the years, especially since its establishment in Antwerp in 1920?

It has changed thoroughly.

A general phenomenon: the rhythm has changed. One must be alert, adapt.to a surrounding world that once seemed immutable or at least changing progressively. It is not any more. The dealer cannot afford to be a "charming poetic daydreamer". Talent alone is no longer enough. Even the selection of antique goods is indirectly influenced by fashion, something no one never would have suspected in the fifties. We progressively have learned to look at objects in a different way. And of course, the display and the way you talk about them too has totally changed. New words have been added to the vocabulary, some old expressions are banned. Creative marketing, ways of advertising, building a recognisable profile etc. cannot be neglected.

And as far as the world of rugs is concerned, a real landslide has occurred. New tendencies started arising in the late 19th century. Allow me to summarize. Next to the oriental tradition, Spain, France and England had developed hand knotted carpets with a recognizable style. But they were produced in organized workshops and were not a people's handicraft and inheritance. From the end of the 19thcentury on, some artists started the concept of total decoration and were very interested in handicraft. They set trends and even founded schools with very distinctive visual characteristics. Arts and

Crafts, Wiener Werkstätte, Bauhaus, Art Nouveau and Art Deco injected fresh impetus. This progressively started to have a new impact on the oriental market. First in a rash and unorganised way, later more structured. The western influence started using local technical know-how to produce modern and design carpets. It his has fundamentally affected and overturned some of the foundations of the Eastern market. I would even go so far as to use the word *depersonalised*. On the other way it opened new economical opportunities. But on the other hand, the traditional oriental carpet is surviving. Sometimes adapting, sometimes unchanging.

Being the oldest shop in Belgium specializing in contemporary and antique rugs and textiles, what do you think has contributed to the company's longevity and success?

In a nutshell: It all starts with a blend of common sense and passion. Then add Fingerspitzengefühl supported by expertise, patience, tenacity, networking, collecting information, ability to foresee changes, avoiding Himalayan blunders and a touch of boldness. And of course, a little bit of luck is always welcome!

How has your participation in BRAFA since 1956 influenced the company's reputation and visibility in the art world?

BRAFA is THE fair in Belgium: the place to be. High level visibility as it attracts close to 70.000 visitors. As far as I remember ten times more than in the early fifties. But it has more to do with the profile of the visitors. Some are interested in art but most of them are really passionate. An unrivalled meeting point for art lovers.

Custom-made rugs are a significant part of your offering. What does the process of designing and creating a bespoke rug look like? How do you collaborate with clients?

We are more often contacted by the artist, rarely by the final buyer. In a way it is fun: we build up a close contact with the artists and then we meet the buyer. But of course, it can be the other way around. We have sometimes, on the buyer's request designed a carpet by only using a detail he liked in a classical carpet. It can be fun for the designer too if he can participate!

Rug cleaning and restoration are intricate crafts. Can you share some insights into the techniques and traditions you uphold in your workshop?

The technique of restoration has no secrets: you need a keen sense of observation because the more you respect the technique and the style the better your restoration will look. We buy new or old, dyed or undyed wool from Eastern carpet-producing countries but we also dye in our workshop when the shades do not exactly match. The best restoration is the one you want to show to your customer but can hardly find where the work was done.

We wash but sometimes adapt the way of washing according to the problems and dangers that one should foresee and take in account.

For someone aspiring to work in this field, would you recommend pursuing formal education in textiles or related arts, or is it more important to learn through hands-on experience and mentorship?

Why not pursue a formal education first? it helps. Mentorship is of course essential. But most of all, the more you see, the better you can compare and the closer you get acquainted with carpets. Go to museums, attend lectures, become member of associations, ask many questions but do not take for granted every answer. You'll not learn it all in a couple of years: it does not take a lifetime. It requires a couple of lives. That what makes it so exciting!

What are the most important skills or qualities for someone entering the rug and textile industry? How can one cultivate an eye for quality and authenticity?

One eye is sharper than the other. Some have a stronger feeling for colours or materials, some don't, but does not mean that they will not learn. Anything is possible with love and application. Anyhow, it is not a science. It is a world with infinite possibilities.

Are there any key challenges in working with both antique and contemporary rugs, and how do you address them?

Well, in fact it is the same family, though they are not natural twins. It is not a challenge. It offers a broader view on what you are dealing with.

Your company deals with both preservation of heritage and innovation in rug design. How do you strike a balance between honoring tradition and embracing modernity?

Traditional rugs are witnesses of the past and show the way to the future. A Babylonian sculpture next to a piece by Ai Weiwei tells you a fantastic story about art. What it was and what ambitions today. In combination, they open the windows of the future.

Caucasus rug Karabagh, circa 1900 - Warp, weft and pile: wool Symmetrical knot, 573 x 210 cm

Rugs and textiles often carry a deep cultural and historical significance. How do you approach curating pieces for your collection, and what stories do they tell?

Yes, you are right. Each one tells a story. Sometimes it is a hidden or a forgotten story. And we are too easily inclined to fill in the gaps. It is rather an unfortunate addiction.

Books are full of crazy stories and the wilder the stories are the more the public loves them. One should keep in mind that he history of carpets is a jigsaw puzzle with more than two thirds of the pieces missing and lost for ever. If what you bought is linked to a substantiated story, good for you. But most of all, let the carpet, just like any other work of art speak. It is a dialogue between you and the object that can never be caught with words.

Rasht rug Iran, first half 20th century
Embroidered felt, 312 x 156 cm

What trends or shifts have you noticed in the appreciation of antique and contemporary rugs over the years? Are younger generations showing an interest in this art form?

There is no straight line. Younger people living in a design home can choose an antique piece because they expect a touch of warmth and cosiness and people living in very classical interior will dare to put modern carpets feeling that their antique furniture is better enhanced and seems suddenly to be 'dusted off'. No rules!

In your experience, what distinguishes a truly exceptional rug, whether it's antique or contemporary?

Nothing I can say with words. Often people ask me how it works when I am buying carpets. All I can say is 'there is a little red light that suddenly starts burning'.

For people interested in learning more about the craft and business of rugs and textiles, are there any books, authors, or resources you would recommend?

First of all, I would suggest avoiding books including a large number of pages devoted to symbols. (See question 10): they might be fun but are not the most trustworthy. Do check who the author is. Too many authors have just gleaned information in "other books" but do not have any personal experience about carpets. The better books are usually specialized in a certain country, a limited area. Easiest to handle are encyclopaedia or lexicons.

Persian Carpets only: Edwards, A. Cecil "The Persian Carpet: A Survey of the Carpet-Weaving Industry of Persia" Duckworth 1953, London. ISBN 10: 071560256X ISBN 13: 9780715602560

History: Erdmann, Kurt "Siebenhundert Jahre Orientteppich" Bussesche Verlagshandlung, 1966

Picture of the shop

The social aspect: Helfgott, Leonard M., "Ties that bind: A social history of the Iranian carpet." Smithsonian Books, 1996, ISBN 156098726X (ISBN13:9781560987260)

Easy general Alphabetical Iten-Maritz, J. « Enzyklopädie des Orientteppichs » Bussesche Verlagshandlung,1977 ISBN 3871208515

What advice would you give to collectors who are just starting to explore antique or contemporary rugs? What should they look for?

Antique: there is a lot to discover and explore, there are many 'neglected' zones. I would say: follow your intuition and trust the beats of your heart. Talk to many dealers, ask them for their opinion. Cheap does not mean worthless and expensive prices can be due to a momentary soar.

How can homeowners best care for their rugs to ensure they last for generations? Are there common mistakes to avoid?

If in a living room, just vacuum at the most once a week. Turn the carpet around or move them just a little to avoid the same areas to be continually in use. Danger one: moths! They appear when there is no air and no light. Danger two: water or any liquids! If the carpet is thoroughly wet, lift it up so that air can circulate underneath. If drying on the floor without air, warp and weft might rot and disintegrate

Looking ahead, what do you see as the biggest opportunities and challenges for the rug and textile industry in the coming years?

The survival of the handicraft tradition as part of the genes of the weavers, otherwise it will be just a technique for copying.

Tabriz rug - Northwestern Iran, circa 1900
Warp and weft: cotton, pile: wool - Asymmetrical knot, 405 x 260 cm

As a family-run business with a century-long legacy, how do you envision the company's future? What role does the next generation play in continuing this tradition?

In our business the fourth generation has taken over. Besides the expertise that they inherit they keep an eye on the market whose ins and outs demand a wider and more international view. One of the challenges is also to reinvigorate the position of rugs and carpets in interior decoration.

If you had to choose one piece from your collection that best represents your company's philosophy and craftsmanship, what would it be and why?

Sophie's choice! Maybe I would choose the humblest, most naïve little piece testifying showing the deep and astute roots of carpet-weaving

What have been some of your most memorable experiences or highlights from exhibiting at BRAFA?

One little boy who looked around like no other visitor ever did. He was continuously asking questions and as soon as I answered, it raised a new question. He wondered how carpets were made and asked about the countries I mentioned. But there was no question about value. It was a wonderful, uncommercial and genuine moment, a magic break in this busy fair. The little boy had suspended time.

Do you collaborate with contemporary artists or designers for your custom rugs? If so, can you share an example of a particularly exciting collaboration?

All collaboration with an artist is a stimulant experience. The expectations can be very high and so elaborate that it is not always easy to achieve the project. But it takes us all to unsuspected boundaries.

Collaboration 1

Artist Albert Szukalski, well- known for his 'sculptures' with ghosts, wanted to make ghost lying on a flying carpet. He wanted a thin metal base to support a corrugated plate. A carpet would have the exact size of that plate and on each of the 25 of them he would place a ghost. Our friend Pjeroo Roobjee, painter, actor writer and poet joined us and wrote a poem of 25 lines. Each line would be an inspiration for Szukalski to make a small gouache with a pattern of the carpet. Each line would be the title of each 'flying' ghost. The exhibition was called "Wol in de Wolken" (Wool in the clouds"). At the opening, we had clouds of vapour propelled in the hall while Pjeroo was reading his poem. It felt like heaven.

Collaboration 2

One our very first experiences was with the Royal Academy of fine Arts of Antwerp in 1990. We wanted to award three prizes for the best carpet-designs. In September we launched the project and asked the students to deliver their work by the end of December, so that by June we could exhibit the carpets in the Academy. We wanted the students to be able to see their work on paper in real. We were slightly worried and wondered if there would be enough response. By December we had received about 220 projects. It was almost a painful job to eliminate so many good candidates that we decided to deliver seven awards instead of three. Carpets were made according to the colours the young artists had required but we also warned them that we would have a second rug made with the same pattern but in colours that would be chosen by the weavers themselves. The contrast between the two was striking. A unique and enriching experience it was. Twenty four years later I suggested the board of BRAFA to do something similar. A prize was awarded for the best carpet-design and the winner could see his pattern (machine-made and printed), all over the floor of BRAFA. A breathtaking experience for the winners.

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DIGITAL RENAISSANCE: BLOCKCHAIN, NFTS, AND THE EVOLVING ART MARKET ECOSYSTEM

By **Annick Schramme**, Professor in cultural management at the University of Antwerp; **Liliana Turoiu**, PhD in Visual Art & Aesthetics; **Anne-Sophie V. Radermecker**, Associate Professor (Université libre de Bruxelles, Department of History, Arts, Cultural Management) and **Adriano Picinati di Torcello**, Global Art & Finance coordinator for the Deloitte group Luxembourg.

The speakers will be presented by **GiannaLia Cogliandro Beyens**, Secretary General of ENCATC, the European network on cultural management and policy.

The art market has undergone a digital revolution, driven by the rise of blockchain technologies, crypto-currencies and non-fungible tokens (NFTs). Five years after the media frenzy caused by the pandemic, what effects have these cutting-edge technologies had on the art market, and on the cultural and creative industries more generally?

INTERVIEW

by GiannaLia Cogliandro Beyens

ADRIANO **PICINATI DI TORCELLO**

Director | Global Art & Finance Coordinator

Adriano is the Global Art & Finance coordinator for the Deloitte group of member firms and has 30 years of professional experience. Consultant for the Finance, Art business and Cultural sectors, he is in charge of Art & Finance at Deloitte Luxembourg, an initiative he has been coordinating since its beginning in 2008. Deeply involved in creating awareness of art and finance, Adriano has initiated the international Deloitte Private Art & Finance Conference, which has become the annual benchmark event in the field. He is the co-author of the Deloitte Private and ArtTactic Art & Finance report. Being the spokesman of the Art & Finance initiative within Deloitte, he regularly speaks at international conferences.

Deloitte Private Art & Finance assists financial institutions, family offices, UHNWIs, art businesses and government and public sector stakeholders with their Art and Collectible assets and Art and Collectible related activities and projects. The Deloitte Art & Finance team has a passion for art and collectible assets and brings expertise in consulting, tax, legal, audit and business intelligence to the global art & finance ecosystem.

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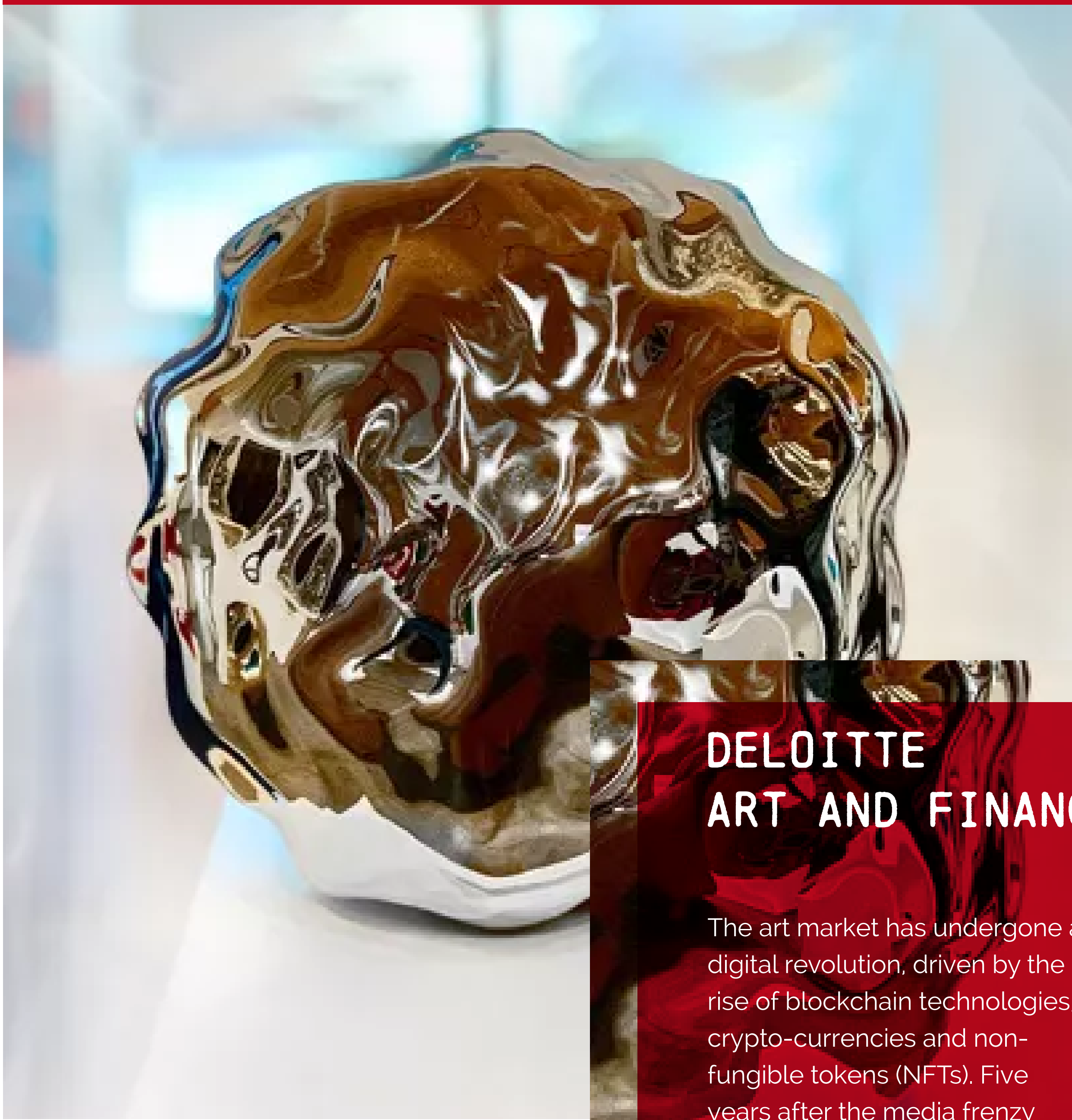


DELOITTE ART AND FINANCE

The art market has undergone a digital revolution, driven by the rise of blockchain technologies, crypto-currencies and non-fungible tokens (NFTs). Five years after the media frenzy caused by the pandemic, **what effects have these cutting-edge technologies had on the art market, and on the cultural and creative industries more generally?**

How has technology transformed the traditional art collecting landscape, and what are the key advantages for collectors in today's digital age?

From ensuring the authenticity of acquisitions to augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) experiences, technology is coming to serve as a strong ally in the art world. Fractional ownership is easing financial barriers to entry while non-fungible tokens

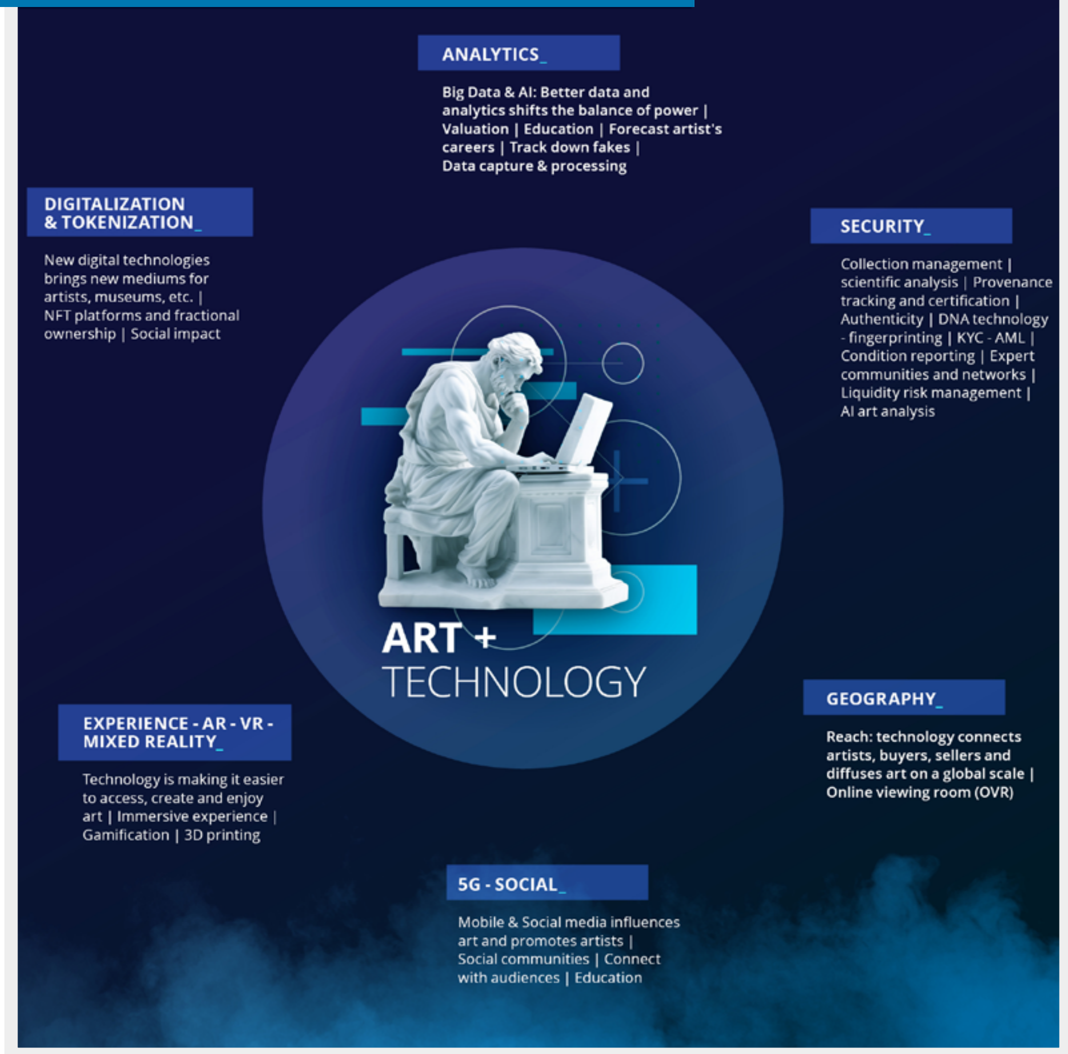
(NFTs) are offering increased security. Digital platforms have not only removed the physical constraints of geography but are also serving as places where invaluable information can be exchanged. Having morphed from marketplaces into treasure troves of information and data, collectors can now delve into rich research about artists, artworks and market trends to refine their collection strategies.

All of these shifts bring unprecedented accessibility and transparency, which creates a more inclusive, enriching and personalized experience for art collectors worldwide.

With the rise of online platforms, virtual galleries and museums, how do you think technology has expanded the accessibility of art for collectors around the world?

Access to art has definitely been democratized. Screens have transformed into personal museums, exposing collectors to artworks from emerging artists around the world—accessible with just the click of a finger. This direct exchange is more cost-effective, and connects collectors to vast selections of art spanning different eras, amplifying their choices. Various high-end technologies like AR and VR are creating immersive spaces where collectors can interact with the art as if in person when they may have otherwise not had the chance.

Six key facets – The maturing art technology industry is a key enabler for the art and finance industry
Source: Deloitte Luxembourg



In what ways do blockchain and other digital authentication methods contribute to the security and transparency of art transactions, providing reassurance for collectors?

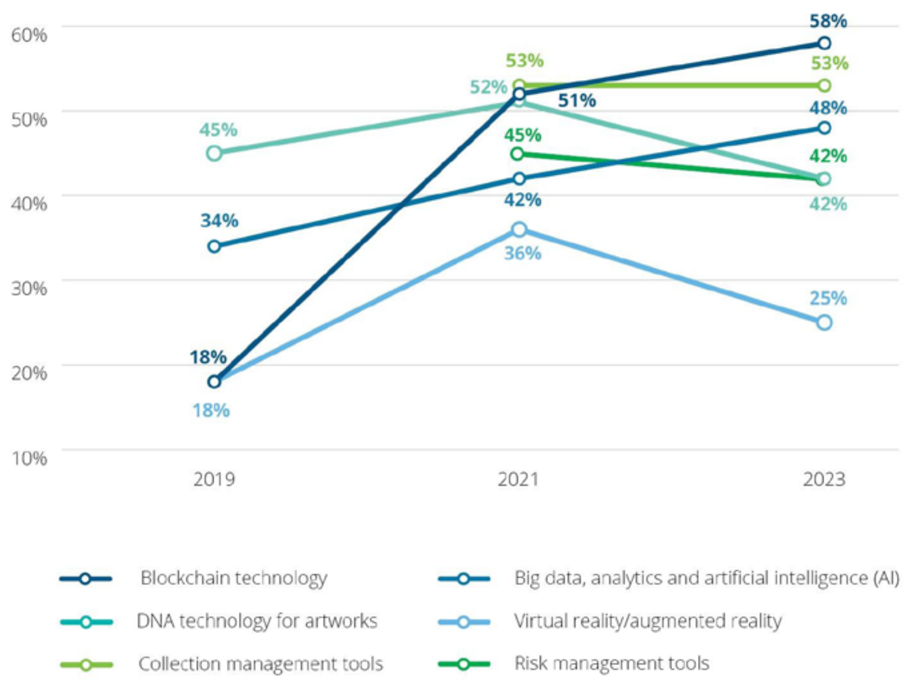
Blockchain and digital authentication have many benefits. The decentralized, transparent, and immutable nature of blockchain supports precise tracking of an artwork's provenance, preventing forgery and theft. Like a digital Sherlock Holmes, these unalterable certificates function as digital fingerprints for each artwork, verifying its authenticity and preserving its ownership history.

These features also enable secure, peer-to-peer transactions via smart contracts that automate verification—helping confirm an artwork's sale conditions are fulfilled before the transfer of ownership. Since blockchain transaction records are tamper-proof, any fraudulent activity is more easily identifiable, which reduces the risk of art fraud.

As we move forward and security measures get even more sophisticated, collector confidence will likely only grow.

Wealth managers: which of the following technologies could have the most impact on the development of art and wealth management services?

*Source: Deloitte Private & ArtTactic Art & Finance report 2023**

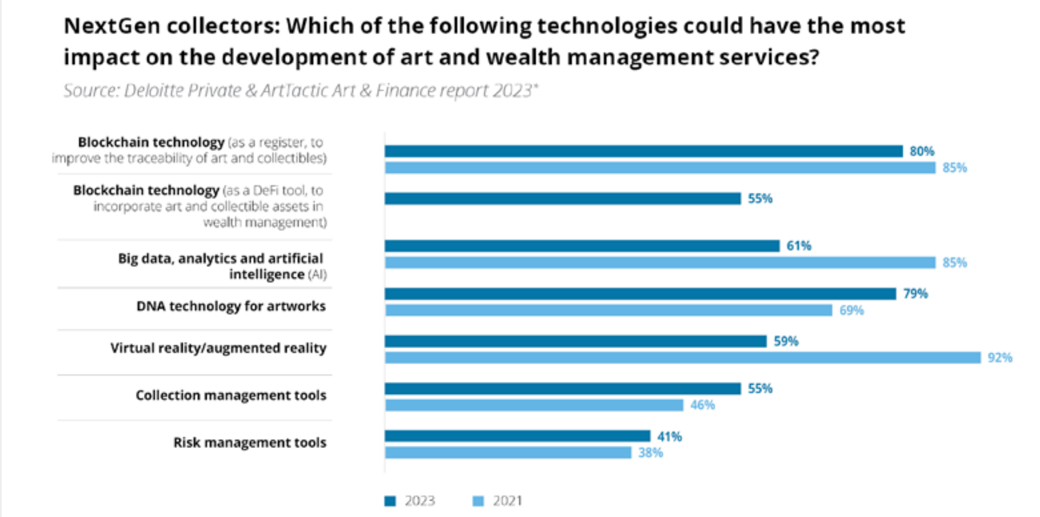


* Deloitte, Art & Finance report. A closer look at the growing Art & Finance industry, 2021, p. 264.

Can you share examples of innovative tech tools or apps that have empowered collectors in managing, cataloguing, and organizing their art collections more efficiently?

While I don't have a specific example or recommendation to share, it's clear that there are countless innovative solutions which offer collectors advanced functionalities to more efficiently navigate their collections. For instance, in addition to provenance tracking, many tools are leveraging a combination of different technologies that help with condition reporting and exhibition history; valuation and insurance management;

and the tracking, invoicing, and reporting of sales and acquisitions. They also support sharing collections with others, managing loans, and providing market analytics and insights. Simply said, these advances are certainly making art management more accessible and streamlined.



* Deloitte, Art & Finance report, 2021, p. 260, 262.

How can collectors of art and collectibles - protect and increase the value of these assets over time with the help of technology?

Technology is increasingly transforming from a tool to a companion, offering strategic support that has both immediate and long-term benefits. For instance, cutting-edge advancements like blockchain technology and DNA-based fingerprinting techniques can be leveraged to reduce a collector's risk of accidentally acquiring fraudulent pieces; it can also help with documenting verifiable ownership records. Tech can also help facilitate purchasing, holding, selling, or even donating assets. Those art collectors who adopt these emerging technologies will be able to more efficiently manage their collections which could have a positive impact on their portfolio's value over time.

Technology has enabled fractional ownership of artworks through platforms like blockchain-based tokens. How do you see this trend impacting the accessibility and diversity of art ownership for collectors?

Indeed, as a result of fractional ownership enabled by blockchain, we're seeing fewer cost barriers and more portfolio diversification; high-value artworks that were once out of reach are now within the grasp of a broader range of individuals. The result? A more democratic and fluid marketplace.

Traditionally considered an illiquid asset, fractional ownership (owning and selling small portions of an artwork) is making it increasingly liquid. While direct investment is still the most popular approach, our report indicated that 50% of next generation collectors (35 and younger) felt curious about this model of shared ownership. Additionally, with over US$1 billion in assets under management in 2023, financial regulators in Europe, the US and Asia have already begun supervising various fractional ownership initiatives. This shift towards a sharing economy signals the advent of a new era for art and collectibles.

Social media has become a powerful tool for connecting collectors, artists, and galleries. How do you think these online communities contribute to the overall experience of being an art collector?

Social media is definitely blurring the line between social networking and e-commerce. On social media platforms alone, collectors can discover new talent every minute—each promising a unique style that would add richness and depth to their collection. But perhaps more interesting than the improved ease of discovery is the ease of engagement; no longer elusive entities, collectors can directly engage with artists to better understand their inspirations and creative processes, which can deepen their appreciation. It also has meant that collectors are now afforded the unique opportunity to transform into their own gallerist as they promote their collections and attract global public interest.

What is the next frontier?

I can only speculate of course, but I think it's safe to say the relationship between art and technology will continue to strengthen, and we will increasingly experience new ways of making, consuming, sharing and selling art. We will see more artistic expression that's been made possible by digital design, 3D printing and Generative AI, and with advancements in virtual and augmented reality, we can expect to enjoy more galleries, exhibitions, and even art auctions taking place on platforms like the metaverse. Additionally, if advanced technologies like machine learning and AI are integrated with predictive algorithms, the art market as a whole could benefit as we improve how we predict trends and future values, as well as discover imminent artists or undervalued pieces.

In essence, the future of art collection lies at a deeper intersection of art and technology, where creation, recognition, exhibition, acquisition processes and valuation are all impacted. As more sophisticated technologies emerge, and as blockchain-enabled NFTs are more widely adopted, we will likely see the art of collecting expand to a wider world of investors, even if the pace of adoption varies across the industry.

New funding mechanisms?

As touched on, technology-driven funding mechanisms are reducing financial barriers to entry, accelerating market liquidity and broadening opportunities to invest in the art world. As advanced solutions penetrate the art industry, *what* art is being collected, *who* is doing the collecting, and *how* it is being funded is changing. For instance, some online platforms also offer art-secured loans where artwork serves as collateral that is evaluated by machine learning and data analytics; this helps accurately determine its fair market value and provides quick liquidity to collectors.

While they have higher interest rates, our survey revealed that 41% of family offices would consider using art-secured loans to fund the acquisition of more artworks. Other more "traditional" crowdfunding art platforms have also emerged as additional catalysts in the art investment space. Enabling collective procurement, these platforms allow smaller investors to participate in high-end art markets.

Cryptocurrencies could also offer a new means to finance art investment. Fractional ownership that has been facilitated by blockchain technology could help make exquisite artworks, previously accessible to only a select few, attractive and accessible to a far more extensive pool of interested buyers.

Non-fungible tokens can help collectors to digitally certify their collections and generate capital. Artists can also mint their artworks as NFTs to enhance their visibility and generate more revenue opportunities.

When we combine these innovative fundraising platforms with democratized access, we have the chance to amplify social impact investment in art and culture, which, according to our survey, is a primary motivator for 41% of next generation of collectors. This is excellent news for institutional art entities like museums that could leverage fractional investments to monetize their collections, promoting a culture of philanthropy while ensuring an exhibit's preservation.

Read the 16th Art & Finance Report to get a deeper look at Adriano's work exploring the intersection of finance, culture, and business: Art & Finance report - highlights in the art market | Deloitte Luxembourg

Image: Shubham Dhage

THE STATE OF THE NFT ART MARKET

Amy Whitaker
Professor at New York University

The current state of the NFT art market begins a few years ago with one of the least ambiguous graphs of all time: the *Nonfungible.com* snapshot of the NFT market over the second and third quarters of 2022. The chart falls from a height of $1.4 billion to well under $200 million between May and September of 2022 (NonFungible.com 2022, p. 27). In the same time frame—from January to September 2022—NFT trading volume fell 97 percent (Shukla 2022; Escalante De-Mattei 2022).

If the crash was unambiguous, its "before picture" was also well-documented. In ArtTactic's November 2021 *NFT Art Market Report*, Beeple's—the artist Mike Winkelman's—$69.346 million sale of the NFT *Everydays: The First 5,000 Days* at Christies on March 11, 2021, is a small yellow rectangle. In the landscape of the chart, that record-breaking sale like the roof terrace of an eight-story building overshadowed by a hulking skyscraper to its right. This ascent before the crash was summed up by Clare McAndrew in the 2024 *Art Basel Market Report*: The NFT art market went from $605,000 in 2019 to over $2.9 billion in 2021.

Sales in the Global Art Market 2009-2023

Clare McAndrew, The Art Basel Market Report 2024

In that context, it makes perfect sense to describe the 2022 crash as augering in a "crypto winter." Yet the more apt metaphor is that of a naturally occurring forest fire. As anyone who has hiked in such a landscape will know, the aftermath of a forest fire, years later, is striking. The big trees are fine. They have survived. The mid-sized trees are charred and not coming back. The forest floor is full of verdant, if still chaotic regrowth.

By analogy, the NFT space has big trees—excellent work with staying power accomplished by collectors, gallerists, and artists alike. Consider Pablo Rodriguez-Fraile and Desiree Casoni's pioneering RFC Collection and their work, in collaboration with 1OF1, to co-donate Refik Anadol's landmark *Machine Hallucinations* to the Museum of Modern Art. Consider the pioneering work of curators such as Tina Rivers Ryan who organized the first NFT retrospective at Buffalo AKG Art Museum in 2022. Consider the work of artists including Sarah Meyohas whose 2015 work *Bitchcoin* was collected by the Centre Pompidou in 2023.

If these projects—and many others—constitute the "big trees" that have survived, then the mid-sized trees are the speculation that burned off. The forest floor is the high potential part, in particular artists' royalties, retained equity, and cooperative, risk-sharing structures.

Through that lens, the NonFungible.com chart of the market crash is unexpectedly also a picture of possibility. The graph shows both the primary and secondary market sales. At the $1.4 billion peak, the secondary market portion is roughly $900 million. If one imagined a 10% royalty of that, the $90 million is on the order of magnitude of half of the US' annual National Endowment for the Arts budget, and several multiples of the annual funding to individual artists from Arts Council England. With the precarity of artists' working lives (Ehrlinger et al. 2024), the possibility of resale royalties is meaningful to consider.

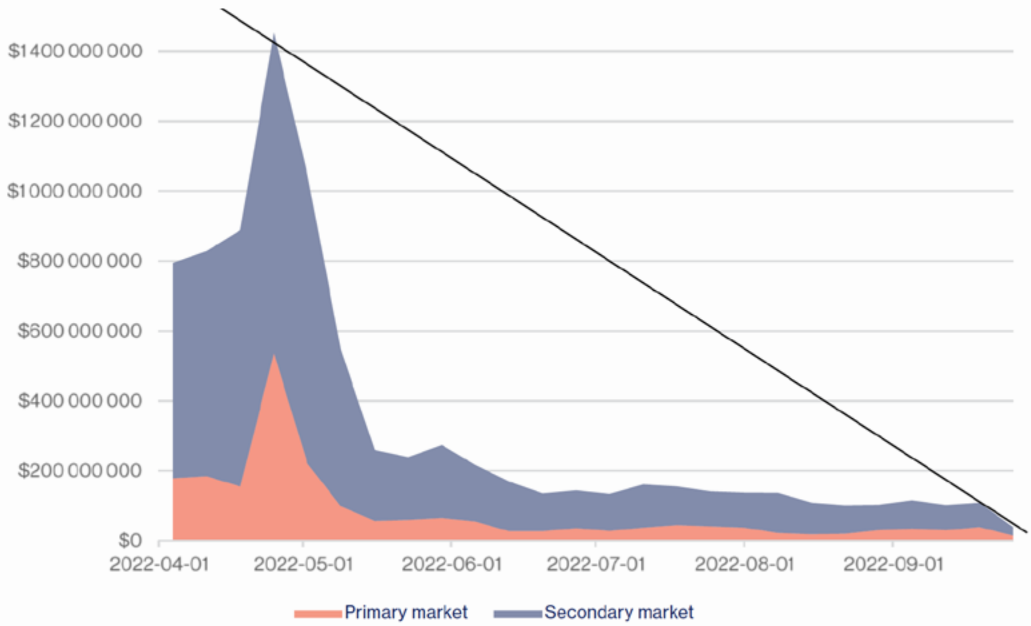


Fig. 05 – Breakdown of the volume of dollars traded between the primary and secondary markets (Q2 & Q3 2022)

Nonfungible.com Q3 2022 report

To consider this possibility, **it is also necessary to acknowledge that there was in fact a bubble. But then the question becomes, what kind of bubble was it?**

Here, I want to credit a conversation with Sean Moss-Pultz, the founder of Bitmark, co-founder of Feral File, and my original introduction to blockchain ten years ago. I have been an advisor of record to Bitmark since 2015. There's very little in the NFT space, across industries, that Sean and his team weren't already thinking about many years ago. Much of that thinking stems from the registrarial power of blockchain, before the NFT market developed in the arts.

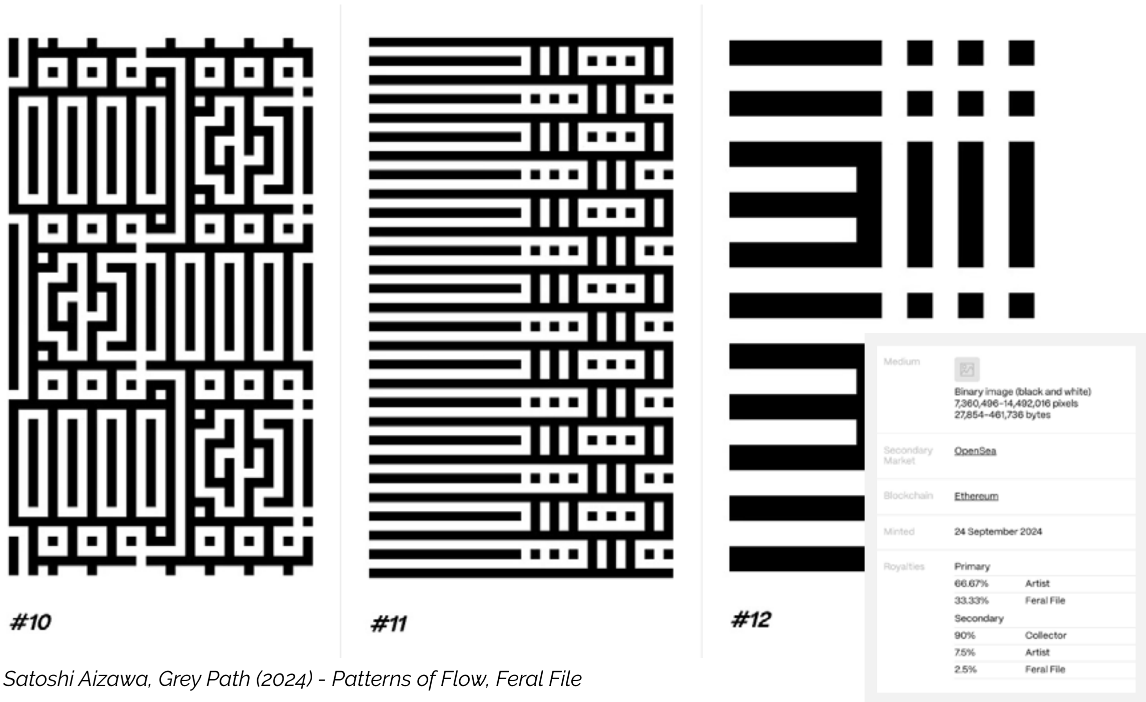
In discussing the market crash, Sean Moss-Pultz, the founder of Bitmark and Feral File interpreted it in the context of a new book bubbles, *Boom*, which was published in November 2024 by Stripe Press. The authors Byrne Hobart and Tobias Huber posit a theory that there are two kinds of bubbles—those that come from people trying to eke out the last of the status quo and those that are growing pains of a vision of the future. The Lehman 2008 crash would be the first, and the dot-com bubble of 2000 would be the second.

It seems likely that the NFT crash is both kinds of bubble. To be sure, some speculation burned off; some of that was behavior of those with centralized power extracting from a burgeoning market. But it is also very likely that the NFT contraction of 2022 was this second kind of crash, the kind that about metabolizing and building toward a future.

For me, that future is royalties and equity. Art is emblematic of fields where value—in its multiplicity of definitions—is only known over time. If artists—and dealers and collectors—take risk to support early-stage work, it is logical that they would own a percentage of the upside when works resell.

For me, that future is royalties and equity. Art is emblematic of fields where value—in its multiplicity of definitions—is only known over time.

Feral File is a case in point. Take for example the November 2024 exhibition *Patterns of Flow*, curated by Yusuke Shono and Alex Estorick. One can see on any work in the exhibition—for instance Saitoshi Aizawa's *Gray Path*—that royalties are paid. When the work is first sold, the artist receives two-thirds and the Feral File platform the remaining third. In the secondary market, the collector receives 90%



Satoshi Aizawa, Grey Path (2024) - Patterns of Flow, Feral File

and the 10% is split with 7.5% paid as a royalty to the artist and 2.5% paid to Feral File as a platform and itself early-stage investor in the work.

Feral File and other platforms including Monegraph and SuperRare have been committed to resale royalties and even inspired by the early activist history in the US of the Artist's Contract. SuperRare has been steadfast in upholding creator shares—and even piloted collector shares.

Yet I think as a field we need to revisit the design of royalties and to structure them better.

The state of the NFT market is not about the price tags on sales but about the structure–of shared upside and shared risk.

We currently structure royalties as a tax or surcharge. It's a percentage of whatever the price is. Many regulated royalties in the traditional art market—in the United Kingdom and the European Union, and over 70 jurisdictions worldwide—tend to structure royalties as a percentage of the price (van Haaften-Schick and Whitaker 2022).

That is not actually how royalties were imagined by activist artists in the US in the late 1960s, nor how they would operate best in finance. As conceived in the 1971 Artist's Contract (Seigelaub and Projansky 1971), there was a 15% royalty not on the price but on the *increase in price* since the last sale. Conceptually, we need this sense of a cost basis and what in investment management would be called high water mark accounting.

If we could do that, we would ensure a more collaborative health to the market, and even model collective investment structures in the arts that might serve as models in other fields.

The state of the NFT market is not about the price tags on sales but about the structure–of shared upside and shared risk. This is the verdant forest floor. It is so early stage, though, that it is a cathedral business of our time. Resale royalties do not look so remarkable now – but if they grow brick by brick, like cathedral businesses of our time.

The key question is to focus on artists—as many of the great galleries and collectors already do—and to architect a market that serves to support their livelihoods and their capacity to invest in and sustain their own practices.

In her foreword to Feral File's Patterns of Flow NFT art exhibition, Jasia Reichardt (2024) quotes a 1967 conversation with Shuzo Takiguchi, who said, "What is important is experiment." Reichart then adds: "In art, as in science, experiment may not succeed but it doesn't matter. It may lead to something or it may not, but it opens doors."

The key question is to focus on artists—as many of the great galleries and collectors already do—and to architect a market that serves to support their livelihoods and their capacity to invest in and sustain their own practices.

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AMY **WHITAKER**

Amy Whitaker is an associate professor at New York University in the Visual Arts Administration program. Amy is the author of numerous reports and journal articles, as well as four books: *Museum Legs, Art Thinking, Economics of Visual Art: Market Practice and Market Resistance*, and *The Story of NFTs: Artists, Technology, and Democracy* (co-authored with Nora Burnett Abrams). Amy's work on fractional equity in art using blockchain received the European Academy of Management's Edith Penrose Award for "trailblazing" scholarship that challenges orthodoxies and has impact.

BRAFA 2024 - Bernier/Eliades Gallery © Olivier Pirard

THE VALUE OF ART BEYOND ITS PRICE

Franco Broccardi
Expert in cultural economics and sustainability

"The trajectory of art and its economy has always been influenced by, and in turn has anticipated, the dynamics of capitalism and labor".

The trajectory of art and its economy has always been influenced by, and in turn has anticipated, the dynamics of capitalism and labor. The transformations of labor have provided us with the keys to understanding art transformations.

Art has always served as a litmus test for economic models and their prospects. An example of this can be found in the sort of "Big Bang" that gave rise to the art market as we know it today.

The revolution sparked by the Impressionists with their 1874 exhibition—organized in defiance of a reactionary and static system that had long refused to admit them into its ranks—is emblematic of workers becoming aware that the capitalist world, which opposes them, can be dissolved and rebuilt on on other foundations, seizing the key to production by reappropriating it.

Andy Warhol's portrait of Mao, much like his iconic depiction of Marilyn Monroe, serves as the perfect example of how art and capital eventually converged to a point of no return, blending technical reproduction with a reduction of thought. These works embody what can be described as Capitalist Realism[1]— a term coined as a parodic reference to Socialist Realism used in the 1960s by some groups of German pop artists.

The images, with their deliberate incompleteness, distract from thought, focusing the observer on details and preventing us from contemplating the image as a whole. They blur ideas: Mao is no longer a political leader but a pop icon, while Marilyn transforms from a dream woman into an imperfect image. In this way, they turn what something is into something else. Art thus becomes an object, the object becomes a market, and the market leads to money. That money, in turn, becomes art itself. This perfectly exemplifies Andy Warhol's famous statement: *Making money is art. Working is art. And good business is the best art of all*.

Making money is art. Working is art. And good business is the best art of all.

A work of art, despite its exceptional nature, is still a commodity within a capitalist market and, as such, an expression of power, entrepreneurial skill, and systemic functionality. Cultural policies, particularly those related to the art world, are at the heart of a globalization process. In this context, like any system that develops beyond national borders, governance cannot be limited to basic commercial aspects but requires active support for education, technological development, and the creation of networks.

Cultural policies, particularly those related to the art world, are at the heart of a globalization process.

Art and money are both symbolic systems with intrinsic or assignable value. Their worth is dictated by social conventions, an abstract recognition that has become increasingly entrenched in today's era of fluid exchanges—where money and art alike are more ephemeral than ever.

Over time, art has taken on many roles: a display of ostentation, a political message, a status symbol, a haven asset, a social narrative, a risky investment, a piece of home decor, or a vault-stored value. It has become something we struggle to define, often do not fully understand, and cannot always articulate why we desire or collect it. Yet inexplicably, it continues to captivate us, perhaps because it remains a form of language that communicates to others with a specific purpose, whether rightly or wrongly.

In one of the pivotal scenes of *Children of Men*, Alfonso Cuarón's film depicting a world without a future where no children are born, the protagonist Theo meets his cousin Nigel. Nigel manages the Ark of the Arts at the Battersea Power Station in London, where artistic treasures are preserved, safeguarding them from the ravages of a world at war.

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[1] M. Fischer, *Capitalist realism: is there no alternatives?*, Zero Books, 2009

When confronted with these works, Theo asks Nigel about the purpose of preserving and collecting art that no one will ever see again. Nigel's response, both nihilistic and hedonistic, is striking: *"I don't think about it."* It is an answer that many collectors might also give—rooted more in capitalism and accumulation than in culture.

We are living in a complicated period, one marked by ongoing transformations—or perhaps better said, by the need for transformations, new approaches, and fresh ideas. This is a time when the perception of value, particularly intangible value, its presentation, and its understanding, must be reexamined. A redefinition of our value scale has become essential.

The risk, as we already see happening, is reaching the point described by Fran Lebowitz[2]: *"If you go to an auction, out comes a Picasso: dead silence. Once the hammer comes down on the price, applause. We live in a world where they applaud the price but not the Picasso. I rest my case. They should applaud when the Picasso comes out? Isn't he good at painting? Not, aren't you good at buying?"*

What are we talking about when we talk about the art market? It's something that, depending on the year, is valued at around $70 billion—a highly polarized market where 80% of its activity is concentrated in the U.S., China, and the U.K., and even there, in just a few specific places like London.

We're talking about a market where 80% of sales involve artworks priced under $50,000, with half of these selling for less than $5,000. This segment represents roughly 10% of the total value exchanged. And yet, as always, we confuse money with reality, believing that if Ferrari's revenues rise, the entire car market is thriving. After all, it costs us nothing to follow a trend.

Or is it, as the data suggests, a manufactured market that exploits our unconscious desire for beauty, paired with a craving for ostentation.

But is art really something for the few that many desire? Something inaccessible to most, either because of its price or the knowledge required to appreciate it? Or is it, as the data suggests, a manufactured market that exploits our unconscious desire for beauty, paired with a craving for ostentation?

Appear and disappear, create popular desire, and still make it inaccessible. This is the rule of every capitalist market: increase demand without feeding a corresponding supply. But it is also the basis of every religious belief, based on the promise of something we cannot yet see.

Today, however, we cannot say that we still live in an era in which art, as a phenomenon, is to be considered inaccessible. We can no longer technically speak of the art market as something restricted to a circle of intellectuals and intellectualoids. Nowadays we are seeing an exponential increase in information related to the art world, and finding it is very easy, given the process of globalization in recent years. However, this abundance of information has not fostered the transparency

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[2] https://www.netflix.com/title/81078137

of the market, has not made it for everyone, nor inclusive. Perhaps quite the opposite.

We need culture, and first of all, art, to become a political subject again.

On September 1, 1969, Herbert Simon, who 9 years later would receive the Nobel Memorial Price in Economic Sciences, expressed decades in advance a concept that we can apply to many layers of our society today: it's the concept of the limitation of knowledge given by the overabundance of information. The so-called "attention economy" at first glance seems nonsensical, but it is not: the invasion of news and information we have at our disposal makes us inattentive and superficial. In the art market, this leads to dangerous distortions.

The human being is a social, fierce, and insecure animal, inherently inclined to conform in order to belong to a group. He needs aggregation and seeks the approval of his peers, of his own pack. Value is derived from common recognition, and the price is its consequence. It comes from the relationships we build, because, as we've already mentioned, everything is a relationship—art, politics, and economics alike.

Class struggle has shifted from knowledge to ostentation, to social display, which often reduces the meaning of art to money. Driven by a new form of collecting, often indifferent to the cultural dimension of art but drawn to the allure of a fascinating and recognizable world, we have witnessed a shift. This transition from cultural elitism to financial elitism has led to a continual rise in art prices and the value of other collectibles, thus shifting the sense of intangible value from meaning to consensus.

Buying art for someone was good business, certainly, but it was not necessarily good business for collectors. Buying expensive art, however, has become today primarily a status symbol, a social recognition. It has meant getting on the ark of the favored, the chosen ones, the elite. And all this regardless of what was purchased because, in these cases, it is not art itself that matters, but what it represents. It means being present and visible.

Return to being a value beyond its price. A value that can be proudly displayed. Blamelessly and without arrogance.

If art becomes an object of social display (appearance) and remains locked up mostly in repositories, turning into debt securities to be traded on other markets (disappearance), only the circus surrounding art remains. Art, in practice, is seen as a hobby for the rich, as an investment (good or bad, it doesn't matter), something that those who can buy will buy, and that's it. Something that has to do with money, certainly more than with culture.

We need culture, and first of all, art, to become a political subject again. Let them return to give us an answer to this simple question: how does culture still change society?

We need culture, and first of all, art, to become a political subject again. Let them return to give us an answer to this simple question: how does culture still change society?

Because collecting works of art should not be something to apologize for or a mere exhibition, but a sign of a spirit that does not conform. Art is education and study, and it must recover its critical capacity. Art must return to good speaking: it must abandon sensationalism, the quest for instant success, reality-show policies, and the idea that if it is not worth millions, then it seems not to exist. It must give itself credit again before it is too late. Return to being a value beyond its price. A value that can be proudly displayed. Blamelessly and without arrogance.

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STATE OF THE ART FAIR POST-COVID: AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES IN A POST-PANDEMIC CONTEXT

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Introduction

Cultural events are one of the most important tools for social development and engagement. At the beginning of 2020, due to the spread of Covid-19 and all the consequences that followed, the cultural sphere became one of the most seriously damaged. It can be specially noted on the venue and events-based activities, that had to search for new ways of engagement with their audience (OECD, 2020; Council of Europe, 2020).

Art fairs, typically held in big exhibition venues, gathering thousands of visitors and participants, was one of the industries that had to rapidly adapt to the new circumstances. On account of the cancellation of the most important art fairs in 2020 (The Art Market Report 2021), the future of these events became one of the most discussed topics in the art market at that time. Changes in their usual routine have undoubtedly affected other artistic spheres and actors: galleries, artists, art collectors.

During the confinement, art fairs' organizers had to develop creative solutions to stay connected with their audience and provide visibility to the galleries. Reinventing their usual forms of organization, they were testing diverse strategies, developing digital tools, organizing de-centralized smaller events, or promoting international cooperation with galleries and public spaces. It is important to add, that the need to change the existing art fair's model has been widely discussed even before the pandemic (Baldacci et al., 2020; Barragan, 2020; Saltz, 2018), but this issue became even more urgent in the post-pandemic context.

Art Fairs in the Pre-Pandemic Context

Art fairs, as we know them today, emerged in 1967 with the first Art Cologne, though their predecessors—art festivals, craft fairs, and biennials—have existed for centuries (Barragan, 2008; Morgner, 2014). Initially envisioned as spaces for dealers, collectors, artists, and enthusiasts to connect, these events have grown into global phenomena. While some fairs claim missions like "bringing art closer to audiences" (Art Cologne) or "discovering and rediscovering talent" (Artissima), their commercial potential remains undeniable. As Mehring (2008) noted, Art Cologne sparked unprecedented public discussions on the contemporary art market, earning labels like "tournaments of value" (Thompson, 2011) and "bazaars" (Heiser, 2020), emphasizing their business-driven nature—even in educational programs or talks.

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The rapid rise of art fairs is striking: the number increased from 55 in 2001 to over 300 by 2023 (Thompson, 2008; UBS Art Market Report, 2023). This expansion has led to descriptions of our era as "the age of the art fair" (Barragan, 2008) or the "artfairisation" of the art world. Art fairs remain vital for galleries to reach local and international clients, serving as entry points for educating potential collectors and fostering connections.

Despite their success, oversaturation has prompted criticism. The proliferation of fairs, extensive travel, and packed schedules have led to fairtigue (Heiser, 2020), a term reflecting exhaustion with the relentless pace. Calls to rethink the art fair model have gained momentum, with Barragan (2020) advocating for practical and financial innovations to adapt to changing economic conditions.

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Art fairs have also evolved into immersive experiences, aligning with the "experience economy" concept (Pine & Gilmore, 1998). Barragan (2008) sees fairs as places where visitors move from passive spectators to active participants, valued not just for the art but for the curated experiences they offer. These include VIP programs featuring exclusive events like gallery tours, private collection visits, and parties (Dalley, 2013). However, first-time or casual visitors often feel excluded or overwhelmed by the chaotic structure and lack of access to side events.

Art Fairs and Audience Development

Audience development is vital for the sustainability and growth of cultural institutions. To stay relevant in a fast-changing world, cultural organizations must adapt to evolving audience needs and expectations (Arts Council of England, 2011; Cuenca-Amigo & Makua, 2018). Defined as a strategy to foster lasting engagement, it encompasses marketing, programming, education, and distribution (Arts Council of England, 2011).

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Hadley (2021) distinguishes two traditions: one focused on broadcasting artistic taste and another prioritizing engagement outcomes. Lindlof (2014) highlights how audience development reflects the social and historical contexts of artistic value. Art fairs, blending cultural and commercial activities, can adopt these strategies to counter criticisms of exclusivity and oversaturation, addressing *fairtigue* by prioritizing accessibility and meaningful engagement.

Even before the pandemic, Barragan (2020) emphasized the importance of audience-centered strategies to reshape art fairs. Digital transformation, co-creation, and tailored programming can expand impact while supporting diverse audience segments. In the experience economy, fairs offer immersive cultural activities (Pine & Gilmore, 1998), such as VIP events for collectors (Dalley, 2013). However, casual attendees often feel excluded by chaotic structures and inaccessible information (Bollo et al., 2017).

Art Fairs in Confinement: Strategies, Activities, and Ways of Engagement with the Audience

The cancellation of Art Basel Hong Kong in March 2020 marked the beginning of widespread disruptions to major art fairs due to the pandemic (Brady, 2020; Schneider, 2020; McAndrew, 2021). The *UBS Art Market Report 2021* revealed that 61% of planned art fairs in 2020 were canceled, while 37% managed to hold live events under restricted formats.

To understand these responses, a thematic analysis was conducted on articles from leading cultural news outlets, including *The Art Newspaper* and *Artnet*, covering events and initiatives from March 2020 to September 2021. This analysis identified five major strategies employed by art fairs to adapt to the crisis, corresponding to Bollo et al.'s (2017) audience development framework: digital transformation, change of place, community engagement, collaboration and partnership, and time.

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

The pandemic accelerated digital strategies in art fairs, which had been underdeveloped before 2020 (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2013; Svahn et al., 2017). **Online Viewing Rooms (OVRs) became the most widely adopted format, offering online exhibitions accessible to global audiences.** Art Basel, a pioneer in digital transformation since launching its first website in 1995, introduced OVRs following the cancellation of its Hong Kong edition. While these platforms maintained visibility for galleries and artists, they were criticized for overwhelming content and limited interactivity, making them more commercial than cultural experiences (Carrigan, 2020).

Innovative digital initiatives sought to address these shortcomings. Art fair *Untitled*, for example, launched a VR platform using video game technology to simulate the physical fair environment, allowing visitors to browse booths or navigate a virtual floor plan (Carrigan, 2020). Beyond exhibitions, digital formats replaced traditional side events such as webinars, artist talks, and social media campaigns, keeping audiences engaged (UBS Art Market Report, 2021).

CHANGE OF PLACE

The pandemic also forced art fairs to reconsider their locations and formats. Restrictions on indoor gatherings led to creative solutions, such as building outdoor pavilions with better ventilation to comply with health guidelines. Decentralized formats also emerged as viable alternatives, spreading events across cities or regions to accommodate audiences.

ZONAMACO in Mexico City organized a decentralized series of exhibitions in galleries and other venues across the city, ensuring compliance with social distancing measures while preserving public access. Similarly, CHART 2020 adopted a regional approach, hosting events simultaneously in Copenhagen, Helsinki, Oslo, Reykjavík, and Stockholm. These strategies not only met safety requirements but also encouraged a broader engagement with local communities and regional audiences, diversifying the fair's outreach.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

With international travel restrictions in place, art fairs shifted their focus to local galleries and audiences, emphasizing regional collaboration and community building. Art Cologne's director, Daniel Hug, highlighted the importance of supporting local galleries and collectors, emphasizing that they could help sustain the market during the crisis (Hug, 2020).

New initiatives also emerged, such as the Hong Kong Art Gallery Association's *Unscheduled*, a smaller local fair featuring 12 galleries. Despite the absence of international collectors, participating galleries reported increased engagement with new audiences and potential collectors, highlighting a renewed interest in regional art ecosystems (Movius, 2020). These efforts reflect Borwick's (2012) concept of building communities rather than audiences, with fairs prioritizing local engagement over globalization during the pandemic.

COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIP

Collaboration proved essential for survival during the pandemic. Art fairs partnered with technology companies to develop digital platforms, enabling them to transition to online formats. Untitled.art, for example, collaborated with Danish art-tech startup

Artland to create a VR platform, while NADA Fair partnered with Artlogic, which donated an online viewing room platform to support the fair's digital presence (Carrigan, 2020). Artsy's #ArtKeepsGoing initiative similarly launched curated collections of works from canceled fairs, introducing their programs to wider audiences.

Partnerships extended beyond digital initiatives. Galleries formed collaborative clusters to strengthen their networks. During ZONAMACO's gallery week in Mexico City, established galleries hosted emerging ones in joint exhibitions, fostering partnerships and diversifying audiences. Founder Zelika García emphasized the importance of this collaborative spirit in connecting collectors, professionals, and local communities (Cassady, 2021).

TIME

The traditional format of five-day fairs underwent significant transformation, with many fairs extending their duration to weeks, months, or even year-round events. This shift offered greater flexibility to both visitors and participants, accommodating audiences with varying schedules and reducing the pressures associated with short-term exhibitions.

Digital platforms allowed fairs to keep content accessible for extended periods, enabling broader engagement and sustained interest. For example, some fairs adapted their programs to feature rotating online exhibitions, offering visitors multiple opportunities to explore the showcased art. This flexibility not only increased accessibility but also redefined the art fair experience, blending commercial and cultural objectives more seamlessly.

Searching for a Model of the Art Fair of the Future

The pandemic highlighted the adaptability and resilience of art fairs, which navigated economic challenges, audience shifts, and digital transformation. These responses provide insight into the evolving dynamics of the art world. While the crisis has largely passed, studying these strategies remains relevant to understanding the post-pandemic art market (Art Market Report, 2023).

In a post-pandemic context, the return to in-person events and human interaction has been essential. Art journalist Georgina Adam (2020) noted that a break from fairs could reduce *fairtigue*, making collectors eager to return. Reports from 2021 fairs (ARCO, Art Basel, Frieze) confirmed steady visitor growth after prolonged absence, which kept growing each of the following years (Art Market Report, 2023).

Digitization continues to shape the art world. According to the *Art Market Report 2021*, digital initiatives, such as Online Viewing Rooms (OVRs), have had a lasting impact. By 2023, hybrid fairs had become the norm, offering galleries and audiences flexibility to participate in-person, online, or both. This model has drawn younger, first-time buyers (Gerlis, 2021) and fostered greater price transparency. Online platforms have democratized access, with 40% of online

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sales now coming from new buyers, while auction houses report online bidding has become their primary method (Art Market Report, 2023).

The shift towards Web3 technologies and online engagement continues to influence galleries and collectors. A *2022 Art Market Report* survey showed a rise in online purchases from dealers, with 37% of HNW collectors preferring digital transactions, up from 29% in 2020. However, in-person art fairs remain dominant, with 66% of collectors favoring live events over OVRs, highlighting their supplementary role.

Post-pandemic, smaller boutique fairs and experimental formats have gained traction. Initiatives like Panorama, started by gallery collaboration *ITALICS* in Italy in 2021 use unconventional venues, such as historic landmarks, reflecting the industry's adaptability and focus on community-driven experiences. These developments indicate a shift towards more intimate, innovative approaches to showcasing art, blending physical and digital worlds in the evolving art market landscape.

Conclusions

Since its initial publication in 2021, the art fair industry has continued to evolve, drawing lessons from the Covid-19 pandemic. By 2024, fairs have shifted from crisis-driven innovation to sustainable practices, balancing tradition with transformation.

Post-pandemic years saw rapid digital experimentation, with tools like virtual tours and Online Viewing Rooms (OVRs) becoming essential. While in-person experiences have regained prominence, digital tools now complement fairs, offering curated online content to engage broader audiences and enhance accessibility. This hybrid model balances physical presence with global reach, engaging both local and international participants.

A notable shift has been the increased focus on community engagement. Fairs now prioritize connections with host cities while maintaining global appeal, embracing "glocalization" by tailoring programs to local cultures and leveraging digital tools for worldwide participation. This approach fosters inclusivity and cultural relevance.

Fairs have shifted from crisis-driven innovation to sustainable practices, balancing tradition with transformation.

Looking ahead, art fairs face the challenge of integrating these changes while staying true to their mission of connecting people with art. By combining vibrant in-person events with digital engagement, fostering local-global synergies, and committing to sustainable and inclusive practices, fairs are redefining their role as dynamic cultural platforms in the global art ecosystem.

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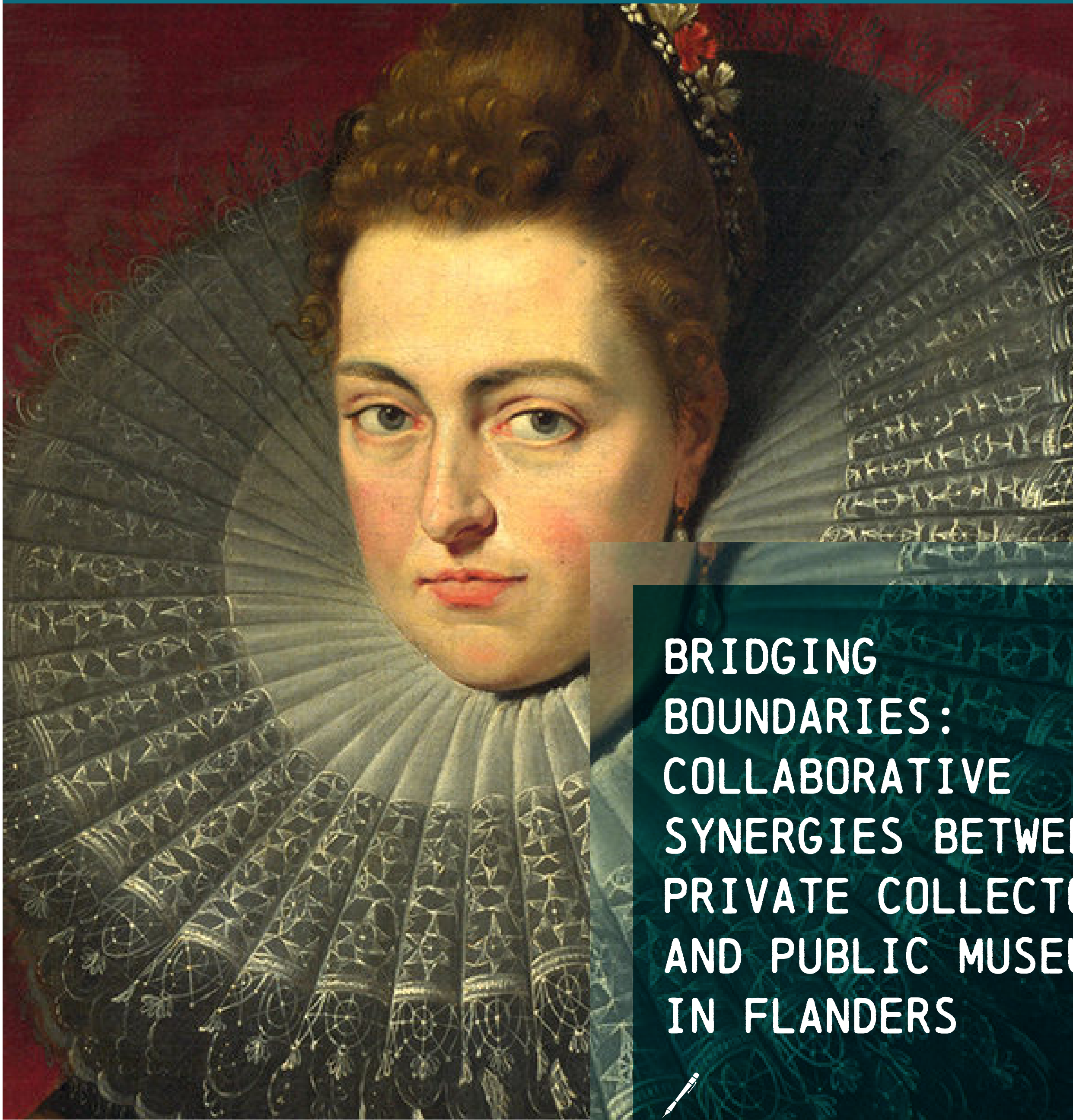

Portrait of Isabella Clara Eugenia, regent of the Netherlands

BRIDGING BOUNDARIES: COLLABORATIVE SYNERGIES BETWEEN PRIVATE COLLECTORS AND PUBLIC MUSEUMS IN FLANDERS

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Private art collections and their integration into public museums have become a critical area of study in the visual arts, reflecting broader trends in cultural preservation, museum management, and public-private partnerships worldwide. This article explores the contemporary landscape of these collaborations, focusing on the diverse types, developments, and the growing trend of private collectors establishing their own exhibition spaces. By adopting a museum-oriented approach, the study examines the complex interactions between private collectors and public institutions, highlighting the evolving dynamics and the broader implications for the global visual arts ecosystem. The research also identifies key stakeholders—such as galleries, auction houses, and service providers—who play a significant role in facilitating these collaborations. **The article underscores the necessity of ethical and legal frameworks to address the complexities arising from the integration of private collections into public domains, emphasizing the need for policies that ensure transparency, equity, and cultural preservation.**

The scope of this study is focused on Flanders—a region with a rich history of private-public partnerships in the arts. Through a detailed case study analysis of thirteen projects in Flanders, supported by forty in-depth interviews with stakeholders and experts, the article provides critical insights into the current practices and challenges in integrating private collections into public institutions. These insights are not only pertinent to Flanders but offer recommendations that can inform similar collaborations in other cultural regions in Europe. By combining region-specific data with broader theoretical frameworks, this article contributes to the academic discourse on optimizing public-private partnerships in the arts, with particular relevance for cultural policy, heritage preservation, and museum management both in Flanders and globally.

Introduction

Flanders is renowned for its numerous private collectors and their impressive, diverse, and unique art collections (Daenen & Rinckhout, 2007). The act of collecting and showcasing these collections has undergone various evolutions throughout time. Since the establishment of public museums in the early nineteenth century, private collectors have often been valuable partners for these public institutions (Verhaeck, 2019). Throughout history, this partnership has taken on various forms, ranging from providing support as lenders or donors to being the driving force behind the creation of a museum.

Today, private collectors worldwide are increasingly taking the initiative to open their own exhibition spaces, securing a significant position in the public exhibition circuit (Verhaeck, 2019). In Belgium, too, the number of private collectors establishing their own exhibition spaces is on the rise. The boundaries between public and private seem to be blurring. Simultaneously, the art market of today is characterized by increasing prices, sometimes reaching astronomical heights. This raises the question of the future impact on the public offerings of museums. Furthermore, there is a growing interest in fostering collaboration between such public and private actors.

Private collectors worldwide are increasingly taking the initiative to open their own exhibition spaces, securing a significant position in the public exhibition circuit.

This article examines the recent history and the types of collaborations that exist between private collectors and public museums, as well as how these collaborations can be further developed. The central focus is on the interaction between these two parties, which takes on diverse and dynamic forms: public-private partnerships, such as joint exhibitions or funding agreements; collaborations between collectors and museums, including co-curated exhibitions or donations; educational initiatives that engage the public in art and heritage; digital platforms for making collections accessible; or innovative projects like long-term loans and shared storage facilities.... Understanding and fostering these collaborations is becoming increasingly urgent in the light of rapid changes in the cultural sector, such as shrinking public funding, the growing importance of private collections in shaping cultural narratives, and the need for greater accessibility to cultural heritage. These partnerships are critical for ensuring that cultural assets are preserved, shared, and appreciated by diverse audiences. To fully comprehend them, we also analyzed the interplay among various actors in the broader 'ecosystem' of the visual arts, highlighting the potential to create more resilient and sustainable cultural infrastructures.

Art Collecting in Belgium: A Historical Framework of Private and Public Roles

Since 1800, nearly every self-respecting city in the Western world has built its own museum temple. However, the way our collective art treasures were displayed back then has made us forget that the roots of the museum lie in the domestic tranquility of the humanist's study, the stoic intellectual of the 16th century (first wave of collectors). His collection of antique sculptures and paintings quickly found its way from his study to adjacent rooms and galleries in his house, growing into true art rooms. This tradition of ambitious and critical collecting of art, curiosities, and scientific knowledge led to the creation of Wunderkammer, which was not only a world of wonder but also of intellectual and scientific ambition (Huvenne, 2013). Famous examples of art rooms and collections include those of Abraham Ortelius, Nicolaas Rockox, Cornelis van der Geest, and Peter Paul Rubens from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (second wave of collectors).

As Ulrike Müller (2019) has shown, the public role and position of Belgian private collectors underwent a fundamental change in the 19th century. In the first half of the 19th century, Belgium was repeatedly praised as a country of collectors and art lovers, with private art and antique collectors being significant and visible actors in urban cultural life. Although the first three fine arts museums in Belgium did not emerge thanks to a legacy or donation from a private collector, the growth and prosperity of these museums were significantly influenced by collector-patrons (Müller, 2019). Large and important donations gave these collectors fame and recognition in the development of these public collections. They also united in friends' associations, sometimes collecting in parallel with the museum (third wave of collectors). By 1900, however, there was an increasing discrepancy between private and public collections. Private collections became less accessible to a broader public, and collectors defined their roles more from individual considerations and personal aesthetic and artistic interests (fourth wave of collectors). Private collecting became a more individual private activity, detaching itself from public institutions with an educational mission and the preservation of national heritage. It is this tension between public and private that characterizes the contemporary perception of the private collector (Müller, 2021).

In his research, Tanguy Eeckhout (2020) showed that the tradition of collecting in the 20th century in Belgium was revitalized by a focus on modern, contemporary art. From 1945-1980, two successive generations of collectors emerged. While the first generation of collectors presented themselves as cultural generators engaged with their collections in the development of modern art (fifth wave of collectors), the next generation positioned themselves as resolute participants in the avant-garde (sixth wave of collectors). This generational shift was accompanied by significant cultural and social changes. Belgium long lacked specialized museums of modern and contemporary art. The introduction, breakthrough, and spread of modern and contemporary art were largely due to a few leading collectors (Eeckhout, Jacobs & Liefooghe, 2020).

Traditionally, the relationship between private collectors and public museums has been structured around several well-established models.

Philanthropy has long been a cornerstone, with private collectors or donors contributing financially or through the donation of artworks to public institutions, often driven by a desire to enhance public access to art, preserve cultural heritage, or build a personal legacy.

Since the 1980s, a new generational shift has been observed, again accompanied by significant cultural and social changes. A changed societal context, alongside trends such as the globalization of the art market, has profoundly disrupted the relationships between private collectors and public institutions in the visual arts field today. For instance, the public government showed a more active interest in the contemporary art sector in its policies. During those years, Muhka in Antwerp and SMAK in Ghent were established. Public actors have since developed increasingly independently (Verhaeck, 2019). As a result, the often-entrepreneurial role that private collectors previously assumed within the public field was somewhat reduced. The societal role of public actors became clearer, and they increasingly manifested themselves as public-oriented in the public space and society (seventh wave of collectors). Furthermore, the Flemish cultural policy was developed in the 1990s. The first Flemish Museum decree (1996) and the broadening to the cultural heritage decree (2004; 2008; 2012; 2018; 2022) further strengthened this professionalization process. While Flanders initially lagged internationally, it now takes on a leading role. ICOM, UNESCO, and the Council of Europe (Faro Convention 2005) strengthened reflection on the role of museums in society. Museums are no longer the only player but part of a broad cultural heritage field. Moreover, museum practice is becoming increasingly complex.

Nowadays, there are many elements that are part of contemporary museum practice, such as intangible heritage, artistic practices, contextual information, collection meanings concerning various heritage communities, digital heritage, expertise centers, etc. This list is not exhaustive and is continuously evolving. Although interesting, this also puts significant pressure on public museums due to limited budgets. In recent years, public institutions have experienced increasing financial pressure from various governments seeking to cut the culture budget, the financial crisis of 2008, the government's call to seek alternative funding sources, and the impact of the 2020 corona pandemic. They are encouraged to generate more own income, although this remains limited (Van Doninck and Schramme, 2019).

Traditionally, the relationship between private collectors and public museums has been structured around several well-established models. Philanthropy has long been a cornerstone, with private collectors or donors contributing financially or through the donation of artworks to public institutions, often driven by a desire to enhance public access to art, preserve cultural heritage, or build a personal legacy. Sponsorship represents another prevalent model, where private organizations provide financial support for exhibitions, restorations, or specific projects in exchange for visibility, branding opportunities, or association with the cultural prestige of the institution. Art Loans have also played a significant role, with collectors or private institutions lending works to public museums or heritage organizations for temporary exhibitions, allowing greater public exposure to privately held artworks while maintaining ownership. Additionally, joint exhibitions have become a common form of collaboration, where private and public institutions combine resources and expertise to co-curate exhibitions, resulting in more comprehensive displays. In some cases, partnerships extend to collection management, where private collectors collaborate with public institutions to co-manage collections, ensuring professional conservation and broader accessibility.

In recent years a notable shift has occurred as private collectors increasingly establish their own exhibition spaces.

In recent years, however, a notable shift has occurred as private collectors increasingly establish their own exhibition spaces. In Belgium, too, the number of private collectors with their own exhibition space continues to grow. Examples include the VanhaerentsArtCollection (Brussels), the Collection Vanmoerkerke (Ostend), and the Verbeke Foundation (Stekene), all opened in 2007. Since then, new players have emerged, such as the Hugo Voeten Art Collection (Herentals), Fondation A, Hangar (both in Brussels), and De Reede (Antwerp). Others are yet to come, such as the Cobra Museum by Ferdinand Huts or the Duchamps Museum by Marc Coucke in Durbuy. It was also announced that entrepreneur Fernand Huts has bought the iconic Boerentoren in Antwerp to give it an art and culture function. These private institutions are increasingly hiring staff with experience in museums. As a result, private museums are starting to resemble public cultural heritage organizations more and more. This will undoubtedly have a significant impact on the various positions of museums, private organizations, and museum staff in the long term. This ongoing transformation underscores the need for a nuanced understanding of how these evolving models influence the broader cultural and heritage sector.

In the literature, a distinction is often made between the European continental policy model and the Anglo-Saxon policy model regarding the relationship between private and public funding systems and mechanisms (Malshina & Firsova, 2018). The share of government spending to support culture in the Anglo-Saxon model is limited compared to most European countries (France, Italy, Germany, Spain, Austria) where the government has built a policy since WWII providing direct financial support to culture. In recent decades, governments in European countries have also increasingly used economic instruments to stimulate funding for culture, such as patronage, sponsorship, and fundraising (Malshina & Firsova, 2018). As a result, private actors seem to be taking on an increasingly important role as sponsors for public museums, founders of private art foundations, or partners in various collaborations (Verhaeck, 2019). This includes incentivizing private philanthropy by tax incentives and creating collaborative frameworks for cultural patronage. For instance, several European nations have implemented tax deduction schemes to encourage individual donations to cultural institutions. Countries like Austria, the Czech Republic, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and Switzerland offer tax deductions for individual donors, reducing their taxable income and, consequently, the amount of tax owed. Additionally, nations such as Belgium, France, Italy, Norway, and Spain provide tax credits against the value of donations, further promoting private support for the cultural sector (European Fundraising Association, 2018). Moreover, there is a growing interest in collaborations and partnerships between public museums and private collectors. An increasingly significant area of inquiry explores the extent to which the museum sector in Belgium and other European countries is converging with the Anglo-Saxon model and its implications for the traditional European cultural policy framework. How does this evolution reshape the dynamics between public and private actors, and what factors influence the balance between the opportunities and risks inherent in this transformation?

Private actors seem to be taking on an increasingly important role as sponsors for public museums, founders of private art foundations, or partners in various collaborations.

For this article an extensive case study analysis was conducted. This involved an in-depth examination of various cases, both in Flanders and internationally, to reflect on the specific needs, expectations, barriers, and risks encountered during collaborative projects. The case studies provided concrete examples and allowed for a detailed exploration of practical issues faced by parties involved in these partnerships. To begin with, various types of collaboration models are possible. Additionally, the uniqueness of the museum itself impacts the collaboration. Firstly, a distinction can be made based on the museum's collection profile. Furthermore, the organizational structure of the museum is important. Due to the internal state reform (2011) and the introduction of new public management with the municipal and provincial decrees of 2005, a multitude of structures and organizational forms emerged in the museum sector (Schramme & Delft, 2018). There are also significant differences in scale and budgets, ranging from museums with a local mission to large institutions with international appeal. These aspects all influence the desires, added values, needs, barriers, and risks that can occur during collaborations.

Cultural Organization/ Project	***Country***	***Cultural Organization/ Project***	***Cultural Organization/ Project***
Snijders&Rockoxhuis: Expo Blind date	Belgium	Recognized museum of private origin	Collaboration with private collector for exhibition
Rubenshuis	Belgium	Public museum	Loan policy
Het Kunstuur	Belgium	Private initiative	Collaboration with private collectors during exhibitions
Axel Vervoordt	Belgium	Private initiative	Collaboration with museums
Société archéologique de Namur: Hotel de Groesbeeck-de Croix	Belgium	Public museum	Collaboration with friends association where private collectors play a major role
KMSKB: Expo Aboriginalities	Belgium	Public museum	Exhibition focusing on one private collector
S.M.A.K.	Belgium	Public museum	10-year loan project with private collector
Platform 6a	Belgium	Private initiative	Private collections & collaboration with curators from public museums
Museum Voorlinden	The Nederlands	Public museum	Loans with museums
Depot Boijmans Van Beuningen	The Nederlands	Private initiative	Part of the depot designated for rental to private collectors
Centre Pompidou	France	Public museum	Involvement of society and private actors

Results

Evolving dynamics in the ecosystem of the Arts in Flanders

The ecosystem in which the art collector operates consists, on the one hand of significant private actors such as galleries, artists, art critics, auction houses, and art dealers. Additionally, there are private service providers, such as estate planners working at banks and lawyers with expertise in art-related issues. On the other hand, this ecosystem includes public cultural actors, such as public heritage institutions—which can also include museums—and the authorities responsible for or involved in the visual arts sector. A distinction must be made between public and private actors. The public space is continuously claimed, negotiated, occupied, and transformed by various parties (both private and governmental) engaged in a range of activities. However, in the last decades of the twentieth century, the government has increasingly been questioned about its management of public space (Gielen & Laermans, 2004). Certain matters are increasingly entrusted to private initiatives, and government institutions are increasingly expected to operate in a market-oriented manner (Kiitsak-Prikk, 2017).

Within this evolving dynamic, a notable transformation is evident, where the influence of private actors is becoming increasingly prominent. Private funds in Belgium, such as the King Baudouin Foundation—including the Léon Courtin–Marcelle Bouché Fund, the Heritage Fund, and the Pasfoundation—facilitate and support collaborations with private entities. These funds are assuming progressively significant roles as intermediaries, awareness creators, and initiators in the cultural heritage sector. Moreover, galleries and auction houses, traditionally perceived as private commercial entities, are increasingly aligning with public institutional players. For example, exhibitions in public museums are now sometimes organized in collaboration with galleries, and the exhibitions hosted by auction houses are beginning to resemble public exhibitions in their presentation and outreach.

Despite the existing collaborations between private collectors and (semi)public cultural heritage organizations, the full potential of the extensive private collections in Flanders has yet to be fully realized.

It is also essential to highlight the growing impact of private service-providing enterprises such as private banks, legal firms, and art insurers within this collaborative ecosystem. In recent years, these entities have significantly expanded their services to address a variety of art-related issues, increasingly acting as mediators, awareness creators, and intermediaries between private collectors and cultural heritage organizations. Their involvement is crucial in facilitating loans and philanthropy, thus bridging the gap between private collections and public access.

The evolving relationships between private and public players create new opportunities in the visual arts sector that were previously less prevalent. However, while the evolving role of private collectors - establishing their own exhibition spaces and foundations- increases the visibility and accessibility of private collections, it can also lead to a more fragmented cultural landscape where the lines between public and private are blurred. Despite the existing collaborations between private collectors and (semi)public cultural heritage organizations, the full potential of the extensive private collections in Flanders has yet to be fully realized. Several factors contribute to this untapped potential. Firstly, the lack of clear and comprehensive ethical and legal guidelines for managing and integrating artworks from private collections into public institutions creates uncertainty and can discourage both private collectors and public institutions from entering into collaborations. Both private collectors and public institutions often find the regulatory and support mechanisms for art donations and collaborations to be complex and cumbersome. This complexity can result in missed opportunities for collaboration and the integration of private collections into public heritage. Successful collaborations also require a high level of engagement and trust between private collectors, public museums, and the relevant authorities. Additionally, public museums often lack the extra infrastructure and financial resources to support and manage such partnerships. This includes adequate storage facilities, exhibition spaces, and the financial means to handle these collaborations effectively. Since these institutions are experiencing increasing financial pressure due to budget cuts and economic challenges, they are finding it more difficult to expand such partnerships.

Models of collaboration

The research identified various models of collaboration between private collectors and public museums, each with distinct characteristics, advantages, and challenges. These collaborations highlight the diversity of partnerships in Flanders and beyond, reflecting the evolving dynamics between private and public actors in the cultural heritage sector. One of the most common forms of collaboration involves private collectors lending artworks to public museums. This enables museums to display significant works that would otherwise remain inaccessible to the public, while collectors benefit from increased visibility and institutional recognition of their collections. For example, the Rubenshuis in Belgium has a well-developed loan policy that allows it to showcase key pieces. Similarly, the Kunstmuseum Voorlinden in the Netherlands, a private museum, actively collaborates with public institutions by loaning works, further bridging the gap between private and public collections.

Another model focuses on shared management and storage of collections, particularly relevant for collectors who lack adequate facilities to properly store and conserve their artworks. This approach is exemplified by Depot Boijmans Van Beuningen, which provides private collectors with access to professional storage facilities while maintaining public accessibility to selected works. In such cases, joint investments in conservation and digitization are common. Nevertheless, governance and ownership issues, along with the need for clear agreements on access and management on the longer term, remain significant concerns.

Donations and patronage represent another important form of collaboration, emphasizing the philanthropic role of collectors in supporting the cultural sector. Private collectors frequently donate artworks or provide financial support to public institutions, often encouraged by tax incentives, as in Belgium's provisions for in-kind donations. The King Baudouin Foundation has played a key role in facilitating such contributions, supporting the integration of private collections into public institutions. Additionally, exhibitions such as "Aboriginalities" at the Royal Museums of Fine Arts in Belgium (KMSKB) illustrate how museums can collaborate with private collectors to create focused, thematic exhibitions based on their collections.

Strategic collaborations where private collectors or collection structures participate in the governance and strategic direction of public museums are another emerging model. These partnerships often take the form of advisory boards or joint project development. For instance, the Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens integrates both private and public dimensions into its governance framework. Similarly, the Société Archéologique de Namur, through its Hôtel de Groesbeeck-de Croix, has worked closely with friends' associations where private collectors play a significant role in enhancing the museum's activities. Such arrangements require careful navigation of diverging priorities and expectations while ensuring transparency and ethical integrity.

The exchange of expertise and resources between private and public actors also highlights the mutual benefits of cooperation. Collaborative educational and research initiatives, as well as the sharing of expertise in conservation, digitization, and exhibition practices, demonstrate the potential for such partnerships to enrich the cultural landscape. For example, Platform 6a in Belgium brings together curators from public museums and private collectors to curate exhibitions, creating a dynamic intersection between private and public expertise. The involvement of society and private actors in major public museums, such as the Centre Pompidou in France, further underscores the importance of this model.

The exchange of expertise and resources between private and public actors also highlights the mutual benefits of cooperation.

Case studies such as Snijders&Rockoxhuis in Belgium, which collaborated with a private collector for the exhibition *Blind Date*, and Het Kunstuur, a private initiative that frequently works with private collectors for exhibitions, illustrate how private-public partnerships can enhance cultural accessibility. Axel Vervoordt, a renowned Belgian private initiative, also demonstrates this by frequently collaborating with public museums on exhibitions that integrate his private collection. The long-term loan arrangement between S.M.A.K. in Belgium and the private collection of Matthys-Colle for a 10-year collaboration further exemplifies the potential of sustained partnerships.

Four Conditions for Successful Collaborations

As collaborations between private collectors and public museums continue to grow in scale and complexity, they present both significant opportunities and critical challenges. These partnerships have the potential to enhance public access to private collections, foster mutual enrichment of expertise, and expand the visibility of art and cultural heritage. However, they also raise important concerns regarding governance and ethics, equity, and the balance of power between public and private actors.

One of the central challenges lies in managing the inherent tension between the public mission of public museums and cultural heritage institutions and the personal or commercial interests of private collectors. While collectors may offer financial resources, valuable artworks, or specialized knowledge, their influence can risk shaping institutional priorities in ways that may not align with broader public objectives. Furthermore, the increasing reliance on private contributions highlights disparities in access to resources, where larger, wealthier institutions are better positioned to engage in such collaborations than smaller, local organizations. Another significant issue is the lack of clear legal and ethical frameworks governing these partnerships. Ambiguities surrounding ownership, usage rights, and responsibilities can lead to conflicts of interest, undermining the trust necessary for successful collaborations. Moreover, public institutions often face financial and infrastructural constraints that limit their capacity to engage effectively with private actors, including a lack of adequate storage, exhibition spaces, or specialized staff to manage these relationships on the longer term.

These challenges underscore the urgent need for a set of conditions to ensure successful and equitable collaborations. Trust, transparency, and mutual respect are fundamental, but they must be complemented by structured legal, ethical, and governance frameworks that safeguard the public interest. This chapter identifies and elaborates on four critical conditions for success.

Trust, transparency, and mutual respect are fundamental, but they must be complemented by structured legal, ethical, and governance frameworks that safeguard the public interest.

I. Strengthening the position of Public museums and Cultural Heritage Organizations

Due to the globalized and rapidly growing art market, the acquisition policies and collection management of museums has become both very expensive. More collaborations have become crucial for public museums and cultural heritage organizations. In this context, we have identified four key needs: a clear collection profile, sufficient autonomy, robust infrastructure, and a strong engagement. Addressing these needs will help strengthen museums and enable successful collaborations.

First, it is crucial for public museums and cultural heritage organizations to have a clear collection profile. This clarity allows private collectors to align their interests and collections with the museum's policies, fostering mutually beneficial partnerships. A well-defined collection profile can outline the specific themes, periods, styles, and types of artworks that a museum prioritizes and thus provides the museum a clear view of gaps that can still be filled in the collection. By having a well-defined collection profile, museums not only attract private collectors who can see the value and relevance of their contributions but also ensure that their collections remain focused and significant. This strategic approach helps in long-term planning and resource allocation, making the organization a more attractive partner for private collectors who wish to see their art pieces used meaningfully and prominently.

Second, public museums and cultural heritage organizations need sufficient autonomy to seize collaboration opportunities. The success of collaboration often correlates with the organizational structure of the public cultural organization, such as a city museum, a nonprofit organization, or an autonomous public company. Public museums in Flanders are usually part of public administrations, albeit to varying degrees of autonomy. Many cities have created a more autonomous structure for their museums over the last 10 years. However, this structure does not always guarantee adequate speed, flexibility, transparency, accountability, and autonomy in the decision-making process. As a result there are not enough incentives for the museums to look for more collaboration, entrepreneurship and innovation.

Third, there is a significant need for infrastructure. Both public actors and private collectors are searching for more storage room for the preservation and the public presentation of their artworks. Well-thought-out storage and depot policies can create a win-win situation for both parties. Collaboration projects are invariably tied to financial resources, and a lack of these resources often leads to an unequal negotiating position for public actors. Private collectors are more inclined to collaborate with strong, financially stable public cultural heritage organizations and are wary of being perceived as solutions to these organizations' financial problems.

Finally, engagement is a crucial factor in developing successful collaborations. This engagement requires a trusting relationship, not only between the collector and the public museum but also with the relevant authorities involved. Collaborations frequently occur on an individual and ad hoc basis, leading to potential dissolution when key figures, such as a director or a collector, leave. To sustain collaboration, open and well-developed stakeholder management is essential. Long-term trust relationships among the various parties are crucial for enduring and fruitful partnerships.

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II. Knowledge Sharing

Employees of public cultural heritage organizations and private collectors possess unique knowledge and competencies from their respective perspectives that can be exchanged. This occurs at various levels, including during loan projects regarding the context and positioning of artworks, or information about conservation and management. Additionally, knowledge sharing extends to museum operations, co-creation, and curatorship of exhibition projects, as well as collection valuation processes. Access to unique knowledge often serves as a significant lever for collaboration and proves to be a crucial success factor throughout the process.

There is a pressing need for more knowledge, clarification, and support within the ethical and legal framework regarding collaborations in Flanders. Both private collectors and public actors require more information about government support measures and legal possibilities. A clear ethical and legal framework fosters mutual trust and, through increased transparency and a clear division of roles, enables the full utilization of the voice and input of all actors within the collaboration. To address this need, recent adjustments have been made to the regulations for the donation of art in the context of inheritance rights in Flanders. Since July 1, 2023, the revised decree allows for the payment of inheritance tax using cultural goods, making this option more attractive to potential heirs and benefactors. Only top pieces and key works that significantly enrich museum collections are eligible under this scheme, which ensures that valuable cultural heritage is preserved within the public domain. This adjustment aims to enhance clarity and expand the scope of the regulation, facilitating the process for both donors and recipients (Payment in Kind of Cultural Goods, n.d.). In the 2022 study, it was demonstrated that the complexities and lack of awareness surrounding these regulations often lead to missed opportunities. Clear communication and simplification of these procedures are essential to maximize their potential benefits.

Moreover, there is a need for more approachability and dialogue between various public and private actors to stimulate collaborations. The presence of strong facilitating funds, such as the King Baudouin Foundation, which can provide support as intermediaries in complex collaborations, is crucial here. Additionally, knowledge sharing through support centers and service organizations like Faro, OP/TIL, Publiq, Cultuurloket, and Cultuurconnect, as well as universities, can be enhanced. A knowledge center with specifical focus on public-private partnerships in the cultural (heritage) sector could be beneficial. This center could serve as a catalyst for increased collaboration and could take various forms: it might be an existing institution or support center, or it could be a virtual network.

Both private collectors and public actors require more information about government support measures and legal possibilities. A clear ethical and legal framework fosters mutual trust and, through increased transparency and a clear division of roles.

III. Encouraging Patronage

The cases that were central in our research and the international comparative aspect of the study indicate that optimizing patronage legislation is a significant incentive for private funding, donations of art from private collections, and public-private collaborations. In several countries, specific legislative measures have notably enhanced the patronage climate, leading to increased collaboration and the accessibility of private collections to the public.

In the Netherlands, the introduction of the "Geefwet" (donation law) in 2012 has fostered a supportive environment for private donations to cultural institutions. This law provides tax benefits for individuals and corporations that donate to cultural organizations, thereby encouraging more significant financial contributions from the private sector. Similarly, in England, the Cultural Gifts Scheme introduced in 2013 has facilitated the donation of preeminent cultural objects to the nation in return for tax reductions, thereby enriching public collections with valuable artworks and artifacts that might otherwise remain in private hands. France's Loi Aillagon, established in 2003, offers tax deductions for cultural donations, which has spurred a notable increase in private support for the arts. In Flanders, recent adjustments have been made to the regulations for the donation of art in the context of inheritance rights in Flanders (2023). This renewed regulation draws inspiration from England's successful 'Acceptance in Lieu' scheme. This program has enabled numerous artworks and private collections to become part of publicly accessible institutions in England, preventing their potential sale at auctions and ensuring their preservation within the public domain. The 'Acceptance in Lieu' scheme has proven particularly effective in bringing high-value cultural assets into public ownership. By allowing the transfer of these assets in lieu of tax payments, the program has not only alleviated financial pressures on estates but also significantly enriched public collections.

Additionally, the establishment of a private fund in Flanders could facilitate, stimulate, and initiate private financing of art acquisitions for public collections. Such a fund could operate by pooling resources from private donors and leveraging these contributions to support the acquisition of significant artworks for public institutions. This approach would not only diversify funding sources but also engage a broader segment of the private sector in the cultural heritage preservation process. Further research is currently in development (by the Center of Cultural Management and Cultural Policy of the University of Antwerp, since 2024, commissioned by the Flemish Government) to determine which model would work best in the Flemish context. The potential benefits of this approach are substantial, as it could enhance the financial stability of cultural institutions and expand public access to high-quality artworks.

Moreover, cultural authorities could encourage and showcase more public-private leverage projects. These initiatives, which combine resources from both public and private sectors, have the potential to generate a snowball effect. By demonstrating successful collaborations, authorities can inspire further private investment and participation in cultural projects. Highlighting these successes can create a positive feedback loop, where initial projects attract additional interest and funding, leading to a sustained increase in private support for the arts.

IV. Heritage protection

The artwork or collection of private collectors is often the starting point of a collaboration. To ensure fruitful collaborations in the future, it is important to have an overview of existing collectors and explore how (a selection of) the rich offering of private collections in Flanders can be integrated or protected. The Masterpiece Decree of 2003 (amended in 2009 and 2014) has already played a significant role in this regard. A further step could be to investigate collaboration models where private collections (or parts thereof) can find a place within public museums or cultural heritage organizations.

There is a growing need for a clear framework for auction houses and art dealers in Belgium concerning artworks of museal importance. In this context, creating policy frameworks around 'notifications' and a 'status of protected cultural property,' alongside the status of masterpieces, could be an interesting avenue. In France, for example, heritage objects automatically receive the cultural property status based on a set of fixed criteria. Owners must apply for a permit for export or sale outside the country (legislation has been in place since 1993). This regulation is a

	Criteria
I. Collaboration Model	*Type of Collaboration:* Type of collaboration, conditions & link to the museum's mission
	Alignment with Mission: Does the collaborative project align in content and quality with the museum's mission and the context provided by its permanent collections and programs?
	Legal and Ethical Issues: Are there any legal or ethical issues related to the collaboration that the museum might expect?
	Restrictive Conditions: Are there any restrictive conditions to the collaboration that unduly burden the museum?
	Loan or Donation: Is the collaboration for the loan or donation of an artwork?
	Legal Title: Does the artwork have a valid legal title?
	Provenance: Can a fair provenance of the artwork be guaranteed?
	Content and Quality: Does the artwork align in content and quality with the museum's mission?
II. Profile of Private Partner	*Integrity and Motivations:* Integrity and motivations
	History of Philanthropy: Does the collector have an established history of philanthropy and ongoing engagement with the museum?
	Collector's Integrity: Is the collector a person of integrity whose involvement enhances the museum's program?
	Transparent Motivations: Are the collector's motivations transparent and acceptable to the museum?

Table 1: criteria to legitimize the collaboration model and profile of the private partner

key policy pillar in France for protecting their heritage, offering protection against the unlawful circulation of art, such as stolen art. In the case of a permanent export request (= sale abroad), the government can decide to purchase the artwork itself or grant permission for a sale abroad. A similar measure will be implemented in the Netherlands from 2023 (Committee on the Collection of the Netherlands, March 7, 2022). The difference is that, in this case, the cultural property must first be given the opportunity to find a new owner in the Netherlands through 'domestic sales,' following the model of the UK. If that does not happen, the government can then decide to purchase it itself or grant a permit for foreign sales.

Initiating an ethical guideline for public-private collaborations

This research highlights the necessity for more systematic and well-founded collaboration processes, addressing substantive and ethical dimensions alongside financial and legal considerations. This translates into a set of principles aimed at enhancing collaboration effectiveness and legitimacy.

First and foremost, both parties must reflect on the legitimacy of the collaboration. It is essential to find a balance between the capabilities and expectations of both parties within the process. Effective communication with all stakeholders is crucial, not only before the collaboration begins but also throughout the entire duration of the project. This ongoing dialogue ensures that all parties are aligned and can address any emerging issues promptly.

The draft guideline to support public museums and cultural heritage organizations is grounded in existing best practices and validated by expert insights. In developing the draft, we drew on several key resources: the Ethical Code for Museums by the International Council of Museums (ICOM, 2004, translated in 2006), which provides a comprehensive framework for ethical museum operations; the Ethical Guideline created by The Association of Art Museum Directors (AAMD, 2007), which outlines standards for ethical behavior in art museum management; and the Model for Successful Public-Private Collaborations by Kaats & Opheij (2014), which offers a structured approach to developing and managing effective collaborations.

I. Legitimizing the collaboration

The draft guideline consists of seven elements designed to ensure a robust and ethical collaboration framework. The first two elements include a set of questions that can be assessed before the collaboration project begins to legitimize or substantiate the collaboration.

Firstly, as a public museum, it is important to consider several factors regarding the collaboration model. The concept and conditions of the collaboration are central in this regard. Reflection is required to determine whether the collaborative project aligns in content and quality with the museum's mission and the context provided by its permanent collections and programs. This forms a basis for the substantive connection between the project and the museum's profile.

Additionally, as a public museum, it is crucial to conduct thorough research into the legal and ethical framework of the collaboration project beforehand. The question must be asked whether there are any legal or ethical issues related to the collaboration that the museum should anticipate. This is especially important in cases of loans and donations, which must not be overlooked. When the collaboration involves a loan or a donation, it is also important to address several additional issues specific to the artwork at the center of this type of collaboration. For example, prior to a loan, it must be ensured that the artwork has a legitimate title and is therefore authentic as described. Investigating the provenance is also of great importance. It must be verified that the artwork was not illegally acquired or exported from its country of origin or any intermediary country where rightful ownership was established. Due diligence is required to ensure that the entire history of the object from discovery or creation is documented (ICOM, 2017). These considerations apply not only to incoming loans but also to purchases, donations, legacies, or exchanges, where the legitimacy of the title, provenance, and due diligence must be investigated and verified. Furthermore, it is important to reflect on whether the artwork fits the museum's mission in terms of content and quality and the context provided by its permanent collections and programs. Alternatively, it might be interesting if the work offers new art, new knowledge, and/or new cultural perspectives that complement the permanent collections and programs. In either case, this demonstrates the importance of justifying the loan within the museum's mission and vision.

Additionally, it is important to investigate the legitimacy and integrity of the collector. When a collector has an established history as a donor and ongoing involvement with the museum, this provides a basis for trust. However, new collectors should also be given the opportunity to engage with the museum. Therefore, the integrity of the collector should be considered. Prior to the collaboration, it is important that the collector's motives are transparent and acceptable to the museum. Sometimes it is agreed that if the loan is terminated, the museum gets the first right of refusal to purchase the work before it goes on the market. This can offer museums additional security against the unpredictability of long-term loans, as the owner can reclaim the piece at any time. Collectors know this might be less advantageous than a sale on the art market, but selling to a museum offers additional benefits. The work gains a place in a museum institution, validating the collector's taste and connoisseurship. However, due to often insufficient budgets, this option does not always provide a solution for museums. Moreover, due to the added value of having the work in a museum collection, it is more advantageous for museums to purchase works before the loan rather than after five or ten years. This also provides an opportunity to acquire key pieces. To utilize this option more frequently, museums need higher acquisition budgets or the flexibility and autonomy to obtain funds to purchase the artwork. Long-term loans that are retracted earlier can cause frustration and irritation within the agreement. Therefore, it is crucial that the legitimacy of the process can be guaranteed by the museums before a loan. This principle is also necessary for other types of collaboration. It is important to substantiate the reasons for the collaboration, and it is best to discuss this with multiple museum staff members so that the museum director is not solely responsible for the decision. Additionally, it is important to consider the conditions of the collaboration and whether these do not overburden the museum (Association of Art Museum Directors, 2007). It is also crucial to emphasize that collaborative projects can incur costs. The main potential expenses should be considered before entering into a collaboration.

III. Towards a balance between expectations and capabilities

Additionally, this guideline supports achieving a balance between the expectations and capabilities of the private collector and the public cultural heritage institution from the start and throughout the collaboration in the following five points. These matters should ideally be reviewed together by both parties. The research results have confirmed that trust is the most critical success factor for a successful collaboration. This trust implies reciprocity and balance, both on a personal and institutional level: the feeling that both parties contribute equally and can gain long-term value from the collaboration.

It is important that the public museum and the collector engage in discussions together to review the possibilities, expectations, and needs of both parties. According to Kaats and Opheij (2014, pp. 449-453), the following factors influence the success of promising public-private collaborations. It is crucial to align these factors in advance so that both parties can develop clear and transparent expectations about the collaboration. By discussing what the private collector and the public museum each want and can offer and achieve with the collaboration, a healthy balance can be maintained. The strengths and capacities are thus matched to the expectations, allowing for realistic prospects for the collaboration. Below is a list of themes that can help maintain a healthy balance.

Ambition	Interests	Relationship	Organization	Process
The extent to which the ambition is shared	The extent to which the parties have genuine interest in each other's interests	The extent to which parties have personal ability to connect	The extent to which structure and governance are aligned with the goals of the parties	The extent to which there is a well-thought-out phasing and good timing
The meaning and value of the ambitions for the parties	The extent to which the collaboration creates value for each of the parties	The extent to which group processes strengthen the collaboration	The extent to which parties participate in the collaboration and the collaboration can count on the support of the constituencies	The extent to which balance is found between substantive and process-oriented attention to the collaboration
The extent to which the ambition contributes to the collaboration strategy of the parties	The extent to which parties are willing to negotiate with each other	The extent to which parties trust and develop trust in each other	The extent to which the collaboration achieves the intended results	The extent to which there is a clear division of roles and clear process management
The personal significance of the ambition for key parties in the collaboration	The extent to which parties are genuinely in dialogue about each other's interests	The extent to which leadership is granted and demonstrated	The extent to which clear agreements are made and adhered to	The extent to which attention is paid to the quality of the process and the ambitions are realized

Table 2: Five factors that have an influence on the perception of success of promising public-private collaborations

First, ambition is crucial. This theme pertains to the finality of the collaboration project and the extent to which both parties have expectations about the end result and the goals to be achieved. Next, interests are important, referring to the possibilities and added values each party can offer. Dialogue is necessary to identify what one party can achieve and where the added values lie for the other party. Furthermore, it is important to consider the relationship. This involves assessing the intensity and involvement of both parties in the collaboration. Attention is given to how the collaboration supports building connections and trust (e.g., through regular contact or knowledge sharing). Additionally, prior to the collaboration, it is essential to reflect on how the organization of the collaboration can ensure a successful outcome. This focuses on how structures can be set up to ensure agreements are followed and the intended results (action plan) are achieved. Lastly, it is important to evaluate the process of the collaboration. The timing of the collaboration project is key here. It involves determining when each phase will take place and the involvement required from each party. A clear division of roles and transparent process management support smooth timing.

We also want to emphasize that the success of this guideline and collaborations relies on optimal convergence among the tripartite, where the involved government plays a crucial role. On the one hand, a clear, supportive, and stimulating policy framework is of great importance. On the other hand, governments are often closely involved in concrete collaborations. It is essential to reflect on their role in this process. When are they involved? Or conversely, when do they involve the museum? Before reaching a collaboration agreement, we recommend that the initiator (being the private collectors, the involved government, or the public cultural heritage organization) brings all stakeholders into contact from the outset and addresses the five themes mentioned above. This way, the expectations of each party and the possibilities of the collaboration can be well mapped out and are clear to all parties.

Concluding words

The relationships, positioning, and boundaries between private and public entities in the cultural heritage sector are dynamic and continuously evolving. Recent trends reveal the growing influence of private collectors within the public exhibition circuit and the expanding scope of the art market. Effective collaborations between private collectors and public institutions offer significant potential benefits, including greater public access to private collections, enriched institutional expertise, and enhanced visibility for cultural heritage. However, these collaborations are not without their challenges. Barriers such as differing organizational logics, dominant paradigms, and structural inequalities often hinder the development of successful partnerships.

These dynamics are particularly relevant in today's context, where the societal role of public actors is under increasing scrutiny. Public cultural institutions

Public cultural institutions are expected to maintain accessibility, inclusivity, and transparency while navigating financial pressures and resource limitations.

are expected to maintain accessibility, inclusivity, and transparency while navigating financial pressures and resource limitations. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive understanding of the specific needs associated with public-private collaborations. However, a detailed analysis of these needs is often lacking, limiting the ability to formulate actionable strategies.

The research highlights the importance of cultivating a cooperative environment where private and public entities can collaborate effectively, enriching the cultural landscape for future generations.

This article seeks to fill this gap by providing an in-depth examination of public-private collaborations in the cultural heritage sector. Through the formulation of guidelines and recommendations, it aims to offer a practical framework for fostering partnerships that align with the values and missions of both private and public actors. The goal is to guide the development of a shared vision that integrates the efforts of private collectors, public museums, and governmental bodies. In conclusion, while this study sheds light on the dynamics between private and public cultural actors, it emphasizes the need for a focused approach to identifying and addressing specific barriers to collaboration. The findings aim to facilitate partnerships that unlock the full potential of private collections to contribute to public cultural heritage. Ultimately, the research highlights the importance of cultivating a cooperative environment where private and public entities can collaborate effectively, enriching the cultural landscape for future generations.

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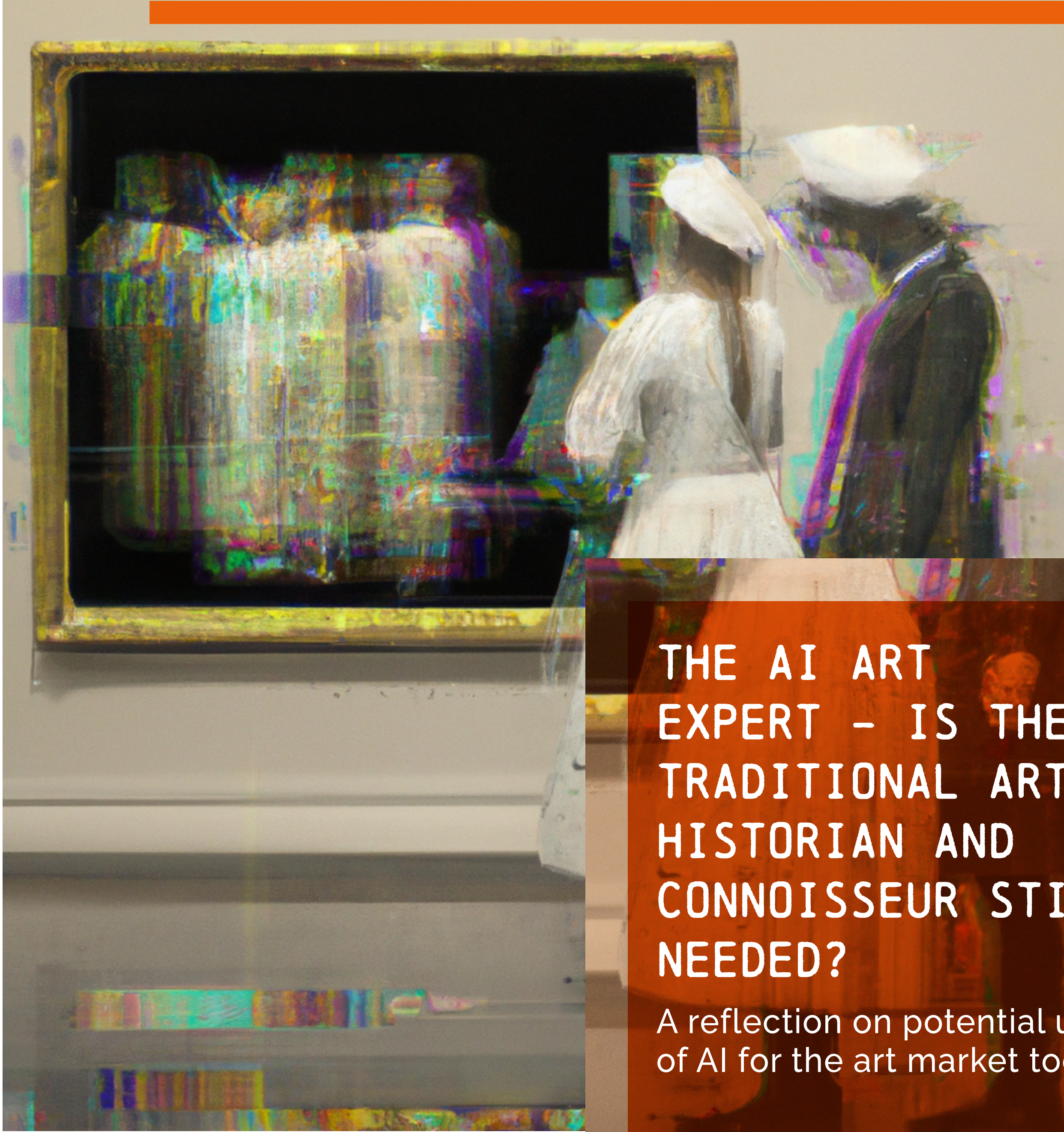

YankelVision, 'Gallery 005', Digital Painting

THE AI ART EXPERT – IS THE TRADITIONAL ART HISTORIAN AND CONNOISSEUR STILL NEEDED?

A reflection on potential uses of AI for the art market today

NANCY VON BRESKA
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Art expertise so far

For a long time, the evaluation of high-end artworks such as paintings by Old Masters, Impressionists or Modern artists has been the sole domain of a very highly specialized group. In this quite unique position, art historians and/or "connoisseurs", focussed mostly on one artist or a very narrow art historical period, having dedicated years or even their entire career honing their craft in recognizing the master's brushstroke and building their reputation in the field of art authentication of that particular master.

Recognizing the very characteristic traits (i.e. composition, brush stroke, pigments etc) of one artist, attributing them for example to Rubens or his workshop, or Leonardo da

Examination of painting by art experts and restorers (example), Credit: Giusseppe di Fiandra, Lapislazul

Vinci or his pupils, usually makes big waves in the art world and beyond. The expert's judgement makes art collectors or museums directors either very nervous or happy, while potential doubt about authorship shapes strongly each consideration of buying or selling, for auction houses, art dealers and art collectors alike. The stakes in art authentication are therefore high.

> *"Attributions matter in the art world: confirming the authorship of a work can increase the price if the artist is a star name, and can also boost scholarship in the field. "The Adoration of the Kings", offered at auction in 2021 with an estimate of €10,500-€16,000 as Circle of Rembrandt, was later attributed to the Dutch master himself and sold for £10.9mn with fees at Sotheby's in December.* [1] *"*

In recent years however, there has been a rise of a new sort of "art" expert, who supposedly can with rather minimal effort (i.e. upload of one picture), in a fraction of time needed

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[1] Harris, Gareth (2024): AI meets Old Masters in the fight to authenticate paintings, Financial Times, 3 March 2024, https://www.ft.com/content/101f6fde-0817-4fc6-9fe8-2b8d4b0f2c65?shareType=nongift

by human experts provide a valid expertise. This competition to the life-long human expert, arising swiftly in the first decades of 21st century did not come from experienced colleagues who spent years in art research but from an entirely different angle – researchers from tech and artificial intelligence (machine learning). This disruption, not singular only to the art market but to the wider arts and culture sector in general, has understandably created a lot of discussion among scholars, raised questions about validity of approach and methodology among researchers and scepticism of reliability of results among art lovers and techies alike.

The 21st century art expert in the age of AI

Contrary to the feeling of the art world, the rise of AI in authentication was not so sudden. It is rather that the attention in different domains – ranging from military and medicine applications to literature and music - has suddenly turned the spot on AI. This was especially the case since the launch and spectacular uptake of ChatGPT, DALL-e, Stable Diffusion and Midjourney since 2022.

Already since 2008 there have been experiments in authentication of works with the help of machine learning. For instance, some *"early attempts to derive meaningful information from visual inputs"* was made by an international group of researchers when they tried to make machines learn the pattern of brushstrokes by Vincent Van Gogh in order to distinguish original works from fakes.[2] In the following decade, a range of AI tools based on the method of pattern recognition has further evolved the concept of training and refining the AI model dedicated to art authentication. Mostly there was still human oversight to verify the final results. However, in December 2024, there seemed to be a paradigm shift when it was made public that Germann Auction House in Zürich has partnered up with the Switzerland-based AI authentication company named Art Recognition. They confirmed the provenance of a watercolour by the Russian artist Marianne von Werefkin by solely using AI. The company stated that it *"uses a "standalone AI," in which humans select and curate the dataset, but execute "no human judgment in the actual authenticity evaluation."* [3]

How does AI driven authentication work?

As AI cannot really "see" paintings like a human expert does, it is rather "trained" to recognise patterns with (ideally) a very high number of high quality and high-resolution images of original works by one specific artist. With some help and guidance of art

[2] Some historical insights on the rise of AI in the art market are provided in Lawson-Tancred, Jo (2024): AI and the Art Market, Hot Topics in the Art World, Sotheby's Institute of art, 2024

[3] Nelson, Trevor (2024): Swiss Auction House Becomes First to Sell Artwork Authenticated Solely by AI, Art Newspaper, 3 Dec 2024, https://www.artnews.com/art-news/news/swiss-auction-house-is-the-first-in-the-world-to-sell-artwork-authenticated-solely-by-ai-1234725695/

Research, documentation and digitisation of artworks (Example)Credit: Giuseppe di Fiandra, Lapislazul

specialists a curated data-set of representative images is created. To better discern originals from fake works, the AI system is also fed besides positive samples (i.e. originals) with negative ones (e.g. workshop replicas or even forgeries), so the AI can "learn" the difference.

In 2019 an AI tool called A-Eye was made by *"inputting images of small pieces or "tiles" of paintings" by Rembrandt"*. Using high-resolution digital images found on museum websites, the researchers provided input into their AI model with both *"undisputed Rembrandts and undisputed non-Rembrandts (i.e. Dutch portraits, similar in style and from the same period)"*[4]. Around the same time Art Recognition has trained its model with artworks from catalogues *raisonnés*, which are considered as a comprehensive, annotated listings of all the known works by one artist. The company also states that the AI *"is firstly trained to learn the main features of an artist from photographs of authentic pieces, along with negative examples — photographs of artworks similar in style, but not created by the artist. Once the training is complete, the AI can evaluate new, previously unseen paintings to determine if they are by the artist."*[5]

The final results are presented in percentages i.e. probabilities estimating if an art work is supposed to be attributed to the hand of the master, the pupil or/and the workshop. This can be in particular helpful with Old Masters from the Baroque period when a great

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[4] Goukassian, Elena (2019):, Can a Computer Authenticate Disputed Artworks?, Artsy, Apr 5, 2019, https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-computer-authenticate-disputed-artworks

[5] More about Art Recognition's AI driven authentication see Schaerf, Ludovica/ Potsma, Eric/ and Popovici, Carina (2023): Art authentication with vision transformers, in: Neural Computing & Applications. Special Issue on Visual Pattern Recognition and Extraction for Cultural Heritage, https://doi.org/10.1007/s00521-023-08864-8; Ostmeyer, Johann/ Schaerf, Ludovica/ Buividovich, Pavel/ Charles, Tessa/ Postma, Eric/ Popovici, Carina (2024): Synthetic images aid the recognition of human-made art forgeries, in: PLOS ONE, February 2024, https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0295967; Büttner, Nils / De Feudis, Alita / Popovici, Carina (2023): The Interplay of Art Historical Connoisseurship and Artificial Intelligence in Authenticating a Painting. Attributed to Anthony van Dyck https://www.kunstgeschichte-journal.net/622/3/Buettner%2C%20de%20feudis%2C%20popovici2.pdf

number of assistants were employed in big workshops to satisfy the high demand by patrons in courts all over Europe. In that case, the AI can help to better define areas of an art work which are potentially not done by the hand of the master. These "questionable areas" can also pinpoint to underlying damages or poor retouching in the past, making assistance from expert restorers necessary: *"When that probability is greater than 95 percent, consulting another expert may not be necessary (…). When below 80 percent, (…) often recommends material analysis or evaluations from other experts."*

What are the limitations of AI driven authentication?

Art experts have warned that the AI driven authentication is only as good as the paintings (data) it is trained on.[6] If for instance the *catalogue raisonné* includes doubtful works (e.g. workshop replicas or forgeries), the research behind was not rigorous enough or the *catalogue raisonné* is simply outdated, the results will be skewed. Art restorers and conservators have also warned that if the artwork contains damaged areas that have been not adequately retouched, this can alter the overall appearance of the whole artwork and consequently the final result is not sufficiently reliable.

Art experts have warned that the AI driven authentication is only as good as the paintings (data) it is trained on.

Also, a trustworthy result might not be as easily obtained when the known number of originals is very limited. A low number of preserved and still existing works (e.g. in case of Old Masters) creates problems for the training of the AI model. For instance, the A-Eye tool was trained to recognize an original by Rembrandt with only a limited number of images (80 paintings). Art Recognition also confirms the problem on the so-called *"data-scarcity"* (lack of a sufficient number of original works to train the AI tool). This remains an important issue for all AI driven authentication tools.

Finally, it is relevant to note that different AI tools, using so-called neural networks, which are developed by different groups of researchers can also deliver conflicting judgments about the likely authorship. In January 2023, using AI-assisted facial-recognition, software researchers from two UK universities (Bradford and Nottingham) concluded that an anonymous, centuries-old painting known as the *de Brécy Tondo* was likely made by the Renaissance master Raphael himself.[7] By comparing it to the famous Raphael's Sistine Madonna (ca. 1513) in the Gemäldegalerie Dresden, they concluded that the faces in the so called *de Brécy Tondo* were identical (with a 97% match) with the German original. However, a couple of months later Art Recognition conducted their own research and challenged the method used and this finding, stating that *de Brécy Tondo* is not by Raphael, with an 85% probability rating.[8]

[6] Geddes, Linda (2022): Computer says there is a 80.58% probability painting is a real Renoir, The Guardian, 19. Nov 2022, https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2022/nov/19/computer-says-there-is-a-8058-probability-painting-is-a-real-renoir?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other

[7] Dafoe, Taylor (2024): Will AI Change Art History Forever?, Artnews, 29 Aug 2024 , https://www.artnews.com/art-news/news/ai-changing-art-history-raphael-painting-attribution-1234716025/

[8] Alberge, Dalya (2023): Battle of the AIs: rival tech teams clash over who painted 'Raphael' in UK gallery, The Guardian, 9 Sep 2023, https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2023/sep/09/battle-ai-rival-tech-teams-raphael-painting-uk-gallery-old-master

Art and Tech (example), Credit: Giuseppe di Fiandra, Lapislazul

At this point, there is a broad consensus among researchers that art authentication should not solely rely on AI.

The future of the AI art assistant

Among all the buzz around AI, it is important to keep in mind that AI "thought processes" (machine learning methods to analyse complex data and patterns) are not truly and sufficiently transparent to the human user. They are more often than not likened to a "black box" with sometimes unusual as well as surprising results, which clearly do need art expert oversight and validation.[9] At this point, there is a broad consensus among researchers that art authentication should not solely rely on AI.

AI can provide valuable pointers, enhance the research and challenge established perspectives.

Just like the use of infrared reflectography, chemical pigment analysis and other forms of non-invasive imaging, that are inherently part of a diligent attribution, authentication and provenance research approach, AI can be used as another tool to help with a wide range of time consuming tasks involved in the intricate process of authentication. Like all the other phases of a complex

[9] Amanda Wasielewski, Assistant Professor in Digital Humanities at Uppsala University, calls it the "black box " of AI mechanics in her book, Computational Formalism: Art History and Machine Learning (MIT Press, 2023). Shaikh, Nageen (2024): Can AI Be Better at Art History Than Us?, Hyperallergic, 20 Jan 2024, https://hyperallergic.com/867971/can-ai-be-better-at-art-history-than-us-computational-formalism-amanda-wasielewski/

authentication process, AI can provide valuable pointers, enhance the research and challenge established perspectives. **As long as the humans involved in the process are diligent about the approach and methodology used, including transparency on the underlying training data and AI models, the collaboration of human researchers and AI in the field of authentication and attribution can be a very promising new avenue to explore, for art historians and the art world alike.**

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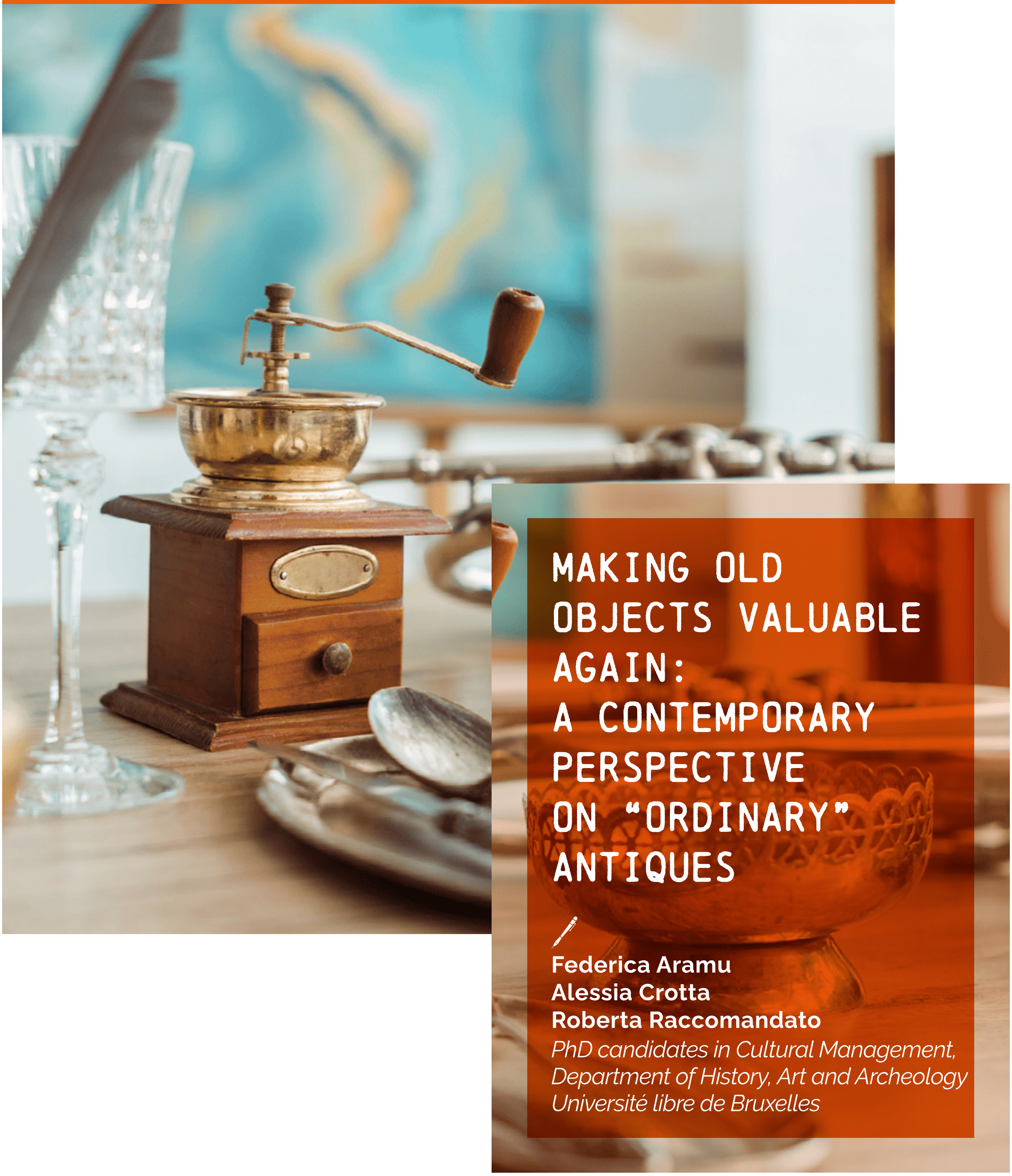

MAKING OLD OBJECTS VALUABLE AGAIN: A CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVE ON "ORDINARY" ANTIQUES

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If you wonder what "ordinary" antiques are, think about your grandma's ceramic tea set or the antique piece of furniture you sold on Facebook the last time you moved. Ordinary antiques belong to the lower-end segment of the art market and encompass a wide range of objects such as antique furniture, porcelain, glassware, clocks, metalwork, and tapestries. While fine antiques are celebrated for their superior craftsmanship and technical excellence, "ordinary" antiques often represent later, more affordable versions of these high-end items. Crafted with less expensive materials, these pieces are frequently at the margins of the market and cultural institutions, receiving little scholarly attention, exhibition space, or statutory protection.

Antique ceramics at a flea market, Amsterdam 2024, credits: MOOVA team

An illustrative example is Liège-style furniture, a designation for massive wooden pieces – wardrobes, buffets, cabinets, beds, and chairs – produced in the region of Liège (Western Belgium), with their golden age in the 18th century. While usually associated with high-quality craftsmanship and historical value, Liège-style furniture also includes later lower-end derivatives that were serially produced. These "ordinary" pieces, though visually similar to their finer counterparts and reflective of past savoir-faire, are now commonly found at flea markets or on online marketplaces, often priced cheaper than contemporary mass-produced goods. Starting with this representative example, we will discuss the broader category of "ordinary antiques" and its potential for fostering sustainable and innovative practices from an economic, consumption, and heritage perspective.

Although rarely considered, low-end antiques are traded in a market that adapts and evolves. Being part of the art market, antiques are exchanged in a setting that is typically characterised by asymmetric information, i.e., one in which one side of the market – usually demand – is less informed about product quality than the other – supply. In this situation, signalling quality becomes an essential task that reputable intermediaries such as dealers and auction houses perform. In turn, the presence of intermediaries, face-to-face interaction, and trust-based business relationships are core components upon which the market is traditionally built.

Although rarely considered, low-end antiques are traded in a market that adapts and evolves.

Dealers, in particular, are considered essential for information management and knowledge dissemination, to the point that they show scepticism towards the prospect of a digital and more democratised market in which information can be shared and accessed more freely. Despite the centrality of dealers, the emergence of the Internet has brought undeniable changes: the rise of platforms such as eBay, Catawiki, or Drouot.com has facilitated trade practices, lowered transaction costs, and diminished entry barriers for market players on both the supply and demand sides. Platforms may diminish the power of dealers, cause oversupply in the market, and threaten the circulation of truthful information, which requires regulation and policy attention. However, they could also diversify the ways in which the market develops, create new channels for intermediaries themselves, and possibly reproduce in an online setting the market dynamics of traditional business models, developing information management systems that fit the online setup.

An antique shop displaying the label 'Antiques are Green', Bruxelles 2023, credits: MOOVA team

On a demand level, platformisation may expand the consumer population and internationalise the trade of antiques, whose market is traditionally more local. Thanks to the Internet, typically local and antique manufactures can become branded internationally, raising questions about the peculiarities of ordinary antiques that can appeal to consumers. Can Liège-style furniture become more popular thanks to online platforms, and be appreciated for its historical production and aesthetics? To disentangle this question, looking at price formation is relevant, as these objects can be considered credence and decorative goods but also commodities, holding an aesthetic as well as a use value. In that, it becomes important to investigate the impact of an object's condition and state on price, together with other peculiar characteristics that are typical of ordinary antiques. Analysing elements such as an object's condition, materiality, locality, and potential for reuse can shed light on the ways in which these objects are valued and consumed, and could unveil strategies for this market to become more economically sustainable in the future.

From a consumption perspective, antiques are subject to shifts in taste and are often dismissed as outdated or unfashionable, which poses challenges to their market relevance.

Still, from a consumption perspective, antiques are subject to shifts in taste and are often dismissed as outdated or unfashionable, which poses challenges to their market relevance. Perceived drawbacks, such as their aged appearance (e.g., dirt, dust, smell, damaged parts), incompatibility with modern appliances, and evolving household habits, further diminish their appeal. For instance, a Liège-style wardrobe can appear massive and incompatible with contemporary interiors. Moreover, socio-economic factors like consumers' age, income, and lifestyle also shape consumption patterns, although these dynamics remain underexplored in this market segment. Despite the challenges, low-end antiques bridge past and present, offering both cultural value and potential as sustainable commodities. How can they contribute to a sustainable future?

Purchasing antique furniture significantly reduces environmental impact compared to buying new items.

A promising avenue lies in their potential adaptability to contemporary uses, needs, and tastes. First, they can be a valid and durable alternative to newly mass-produced commodities, a benefit recognised by stakeholders in the antique trade who highlight their environmental benefits. A study using carbon footprint analysis demonstrated that purchasing antique furniture significantly reduces environmental impact compared to buying new items. Second, low-end antiques align with sustainable consumption by supporting circular economy practices such as reuse, repair, refurbishment, and repurposing. These practices extend the lifecycle of antiques, preventing them from becoming waste and mitigating their environmental impact. For example, antique furniture lends itself particularly well to upcycling, a practice that allows individuals to reconnect with materials in a creative way and rethink consumption patterns. The growing popularity of 'do-it-yourself' activities (DIY) – repairing, restoring, and crafting – makes low-end antiques more appealing to the broader public. Online platforms like Facebook, YouTube, and TikTok provide accessible resources for learning restoration and upcycling techniques, empowering individuals to preserve and reinterpret these objects.

Although these practices offer new insights into the appropriation and reinterpretation of low-end antiques, they are not completely new. Historically, decorative pieces – especially furniture – were altered to reflect new trends and styles, highlighting their adaptability; similar practices were applied to tapestries, while other goods such as ceramics and glassware underwent fewer alterations over time. Overall, reusing "ordinary" antiques and adapting them to contemporary uses represents a way of preserving their cultural legacy while contributing to more sustainable consumption.

As part of our informal cultural heritage, low-end antiques often slip under the radar of statutory heritage lists, even lacking consensus on their definition and historicisation, with their most recent production spanning from 100 to even 50 years ago. From a heritage studies perspective, what sets these objects apart is their practical use over time, which often leaves marks of wear and material changes. This last feature makes low-end antiques a fascinating case to investigate new potential convergences of material research and heritage studies. Whether due to time, usage, restoration, gaps in their provenance, or crafted inspirational narratives about real (or similar-to-real) events in the past, these objects reveal how material and narrative changes often do not undermine their sense of authenticity. Authenticity is a central theme in heritage studies, yet it has long been linked to ideas of originality, material integrity, and continuity of its original function.

Low-end antiques challenge these traditional ideas, showing how authenticity can lie in alternative constituents from the most traditional and recognised ones (i.e., provenance, respect for original conditions, technical excellence). Indeed, an antique's authenticity may also reside in the extent to which it can be connected to an interesting story, personal connotations accompanying its historical context, or even the trustworthiness of the seller. In this view, authenticity is not a fixed property of the object, but a quality born from the relationships between people and things, where a central role is played by the figure of the dealer. Indeed, the way an object is narrated has been shown to serve as one of the key mechanisms for its evaluation in the antiques market. Alongside this narrative manipulation, there is also a material one. In particular, in the face of such unconventional and unregulated objects, how do dealers negotiate with external factors (i.e., the passage of time and uncertain provenance) when devising preservation strategies? Investigating the processes of material alteration must also account for the roles of other subjects, such as consumers. Each custodian – whether dealer, collector, or consumer – assumes a crucial responsibility in taking care of a piece. Hence, the multiple biographies of low-end antiques generate a collective process of care, where each subject plays a pivotal role in the object's passage from one life to another. In this sense, the cultural value of these objects, as part of our informal heritage, lies in their personal and relational significance, emerging from meaningful connections between people and objects.

Low-end antiques can be understood through multiple perspectives: as commodities with significant potential for sustainable practices, as credence goods exchanged in the art market, and as informal cultural heritage to be preserved collectively. As this article shows, these overlapping viewpoints raise challenging questions: for instance, how do we reconcile the notion of low-end antiques as consumed items with their value as cultural heritage? The sustainability of these objects lies precisely in their adaptability, i.e., their ability to take on new forms and functions over time. Yet, in the field of heritage studies, the concept of preservation has traditionally been tied to principles of originality and material integrity. This tension invites critical reflection: how can we safeguard the past while embracing transformative practices that enable a sustainable future? Rather than privileging one interpretation over others, we propose a hybrid perspective, one that harmonises preservation with adaptability and alteration, especially in light of the new instruments and channels that the contemporary digital era offers.

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Find out more at: www.moova-erc.eu

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Bombing on Lebanese Heritage Site

CONTEMPORARY CONFLICTS AND ART MARKETS

Can heritage professionals shape a new level of protection for cultural objects?

LORENZO VENEZIA
Law degree at Università Milano Bicocca

While arts and culture represent an important engine to participation, creativity and socio-economic development, it is clear that the movability of cultural objects can be identified as an expression of economic freedom and movement of goods. However, what happens when some cultural objects come from states or areas severely damaged by conflicts? Do cultural heritage professionals have the strength to protect cultural objects not only from damages and destructions but also from looting and illicit art trafficking?

Contemporary international conflicts are under the lenses of experts, researchers and heritage professionals' attention. In Sudan, Gaza, Lebanon, Ukraine and many other countries it is possible to witness damages and destructions of cultural sites, which sometimes also includes sites inscribed in the World Heritage List of UNESCO. Although the phenomenon of illicit art trafficking is well-documented by relevant literature, with regards to Sudan, Ukraine, Gaza and Lebanon, heritage professionals and international organizations are expressing serious concerns about the situations in those areas, but there is another underlying and almost downplayed problem, illicit art trafficking. Among

Russia's destruction of Ukraine's National and Cultural Heritage - Petros Giannakouris (AP)

damages, destructions and looting the fear of illegal exportations is understandable: this is why it is important to face this problem and to use every tool – including digital technologies – that can be relevant to protect cultural heritage.

Despite the articulated rules of international law, cultural heritage protection is extremely relevant for well-known reasons. It is then important to wonder what the art markets can do and how well-prepared are the professionals in mitigating the illicit trafficking of cultural property. UNESCO developed a major needs list in the fight against this phenomenon which includes to strengthen cooperation among countries and address vulnerability of the art market to illicit trafficking. And in doing so, the starting point can be to address these specific questions:

It is then important to wonder what the art markets can do and how well-prepared are the professionals in mitigating the illicit trafficking of cultural property.

- Has the art market developed instruments to prevent the illicit art trafficking that may involve cultural objects from the states of origin which are experiencing international conflicts?

- Can heritage professionals work together to prevent illicit art trafficking while working under the risks of conflicts?

- Can heritage professionals, together with researchers and experts from other fields, identify new instruments to protect cultural objects?

By embedding expertise and ethical standards, cultural heritage professionals can give transparency and trust in the art market.

Answering these questions is difficult and it requires an open dialogue with all the actors involved on this topic. A starting point in this discussion is that by embedding expertise and ethical standards, cultural heritage professionals can give transparency and trust in the art market because they can prevent the loss of cultural objects (and, consequently, the loss of identity) but also enhance the reputation of the art trade.

It is important to keep in mind that there are regional differences in the art market. This globalized market, as described in the Artnet Intelligence Report Year Ahead 2024, has some general trends while regional distinctions appear. For these reasons, it is appropriate to elaborate strategies for the art market that focus on the fight against illicit art trafficking while addressing issues about cultural objects from countries at war in the world that may be stolen and sold. For example, the event "Dialogue with the Art Market" organized by the European Commission on 30 January 2024 can be the beginning of a new phase of collaboration with entities and professionals that can work together to protect cultural heritage and combating the trafficking of cultural goods. This event can shape future initiatives in this field since it addressed important points such as the importance of accurate and reliable data in order to improve evidence-based policy making and protect trader's reputation; the adherence to code of conduct and ethics; the acknowledgment of the art market's role in sharing data with proactive measures. This event can be traced to the important EU vision which is crystallized in the EU Action Plan against trafficking in cultural goods 2023-2025. Another important event was the ANCHISE Forum on 3 April 2024, an event whose aim was to advance the fight against illicit trafficking of cultural goods.

It may be interesting for example to extend or adapt the concepts explained in the "Fighting the illicit traffic of cultural property: a toolkit for European judiciary and law enforcement" to operators in the art markets. The toolkit structure and contents are well structured and elaborated for the development of new documents in the art market which necessarily delve into the explanation and presentation of theoretical concepts and practical case studies. Different professionals can be involved, including cultural institutions and museums and States may adopt rules for many categories of stakeholders. These rules should cover both the purchase and sale of cultural objects. Further support for the adoption of codes of conduct comes from the 1970 UNESCO Convention, an important treaty that shaped the fight against international illicit art trafficking. Codes of ethics were developed by international and national organizations. These include the Code of Ethics for Dealers in Cultural Property adopted by the UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee for Promoting the Return of Cultural Property to its Countries of Origin or its Restitution in case of Illicit Appropriation (ICPRCP) in 1999, which incorporates the experiences of other national codes including the code of the Confédération Internationale des Négociants d'Oeuvres d'Art (CINOA) as well as the Code of Professional Ethics of the International Council of Museums (ICOM).

Heritage professionals know that conflicts have huge consequences for local communities, peace dialogues and State and individual responsibilities and witnessed in 2024 a disturbing level of destructions and damages alongside violations of international humanitarian law.

Far from being considered a complete analysis of the phenomenon, I would like to conclude by mentioning two things: on one side heritage professionals know that conflicts have huge consequences for local communities, peace dialogues and State and individual responsibilities and witnessed in 2024 a disturbing level of destructions and damages alongside violations of international humanitarian law; on the other side, heritage professional are discussing on how the present framework can be shaped in order to add measures in terms of protections that may include monitoring systems, partnerships and even legal reforms at international level. This requires a comprehensive inclusion of stakeholders and actors in the field so that heritage professionals can shape a new level of protection of cultural objects.

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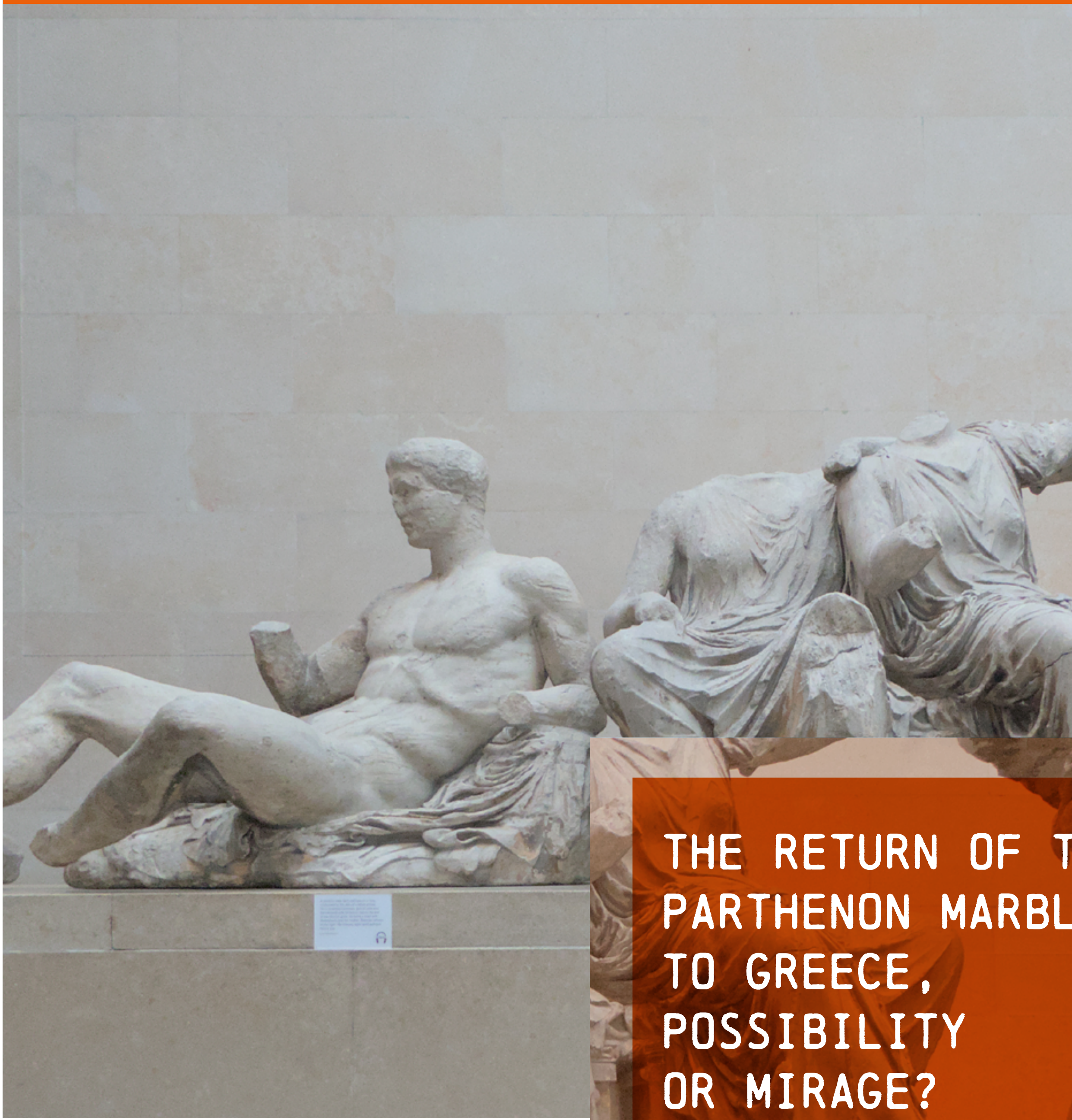

Image: Elgin Marbles Dominic's pics Courtesy Wiki Commons

THE RETURN OF THE PARTHENON MARBLES TO GREECE, POSSIBILITY OR MIRAGE?

Effy Tselikas
Journalist

Should the Parthenon marbles remain in the British Museum in London or return to their native land in Athens? The battle has been going on for centuries. The textbook case is all the more interesting because it takes place between two European countries.

But today, this example, which at first seemed a solitary and nationalist issue, is inevitably placed on the agenda of the world calendar. The demand for restitution is universal and affecting all continents, but most claims come from formerly colonized countries. Supported by the resurgent memory of their descendants throughout the world, this request aims to bring home objects which are considered only as works of art in the West, but sacred or symbolic to them.

The hectic trajectory of an ancient treasure

In this specific case, what is it about? Many pieces of the Parthenon Marbles are scattered among different European cities. The United Kingdom holds most of them: 17 pedimental figures and 75 meters of the Panathenea frieze, as well as a caryatid taken from the small neighboring temple of the Erechteion. Half of the frieze (56 blocks) is preserved in London at the British Museum; a third (40 blocks) is in Athens, at the Acropolis Museum. The rest is kept in various other European museums: a complete plaque in the Louvre, fragments in the Vatican, Vienna and Heidelberg. A fifth of the frieze was destroyed, but half of what disappeared is known from engravings.

Image: Denis Zagorodniuc

Let's go back to History: built on the order of Pericles in the 5th century BC, the Parthenon celebrates the power of Athens and the glory of its protective goddess, Athena, after a victory over the Persians. The entire mythical history of the city is recorded on two painted marble friezes, one inside (160 meters) and a second even longer all around the building outside. This Doric frieze is made of small paintings sculpted in bas-relief, called metopes, these show combat scenes between the Athenians and the Amazons, clashes with centaurs, with giants and representations of the Trojan War.

Throughout its history, the Parthenon suffered extensive damage. Transformed into a Christian church under the Byzantine Empire, the building is preserved, but the statues on the pediment representing the birth of Athena are destroyed. And many sculptures, considered pagan, were mutilated, particularly their sexes and noses. That episode is still hidden by the Greeks today. Latest proof to date: a film by the famous producer Costa-Gavras on the history of the monument opened the inauguration of the Acropolis Museum in 2009, but the sequence relating these facts was censored during the projection, without even warning the filmmaker. In 1456, after the Ottoman conquest, the building became a mosque. In 1680, during the siege of the city by the Venetians, a cannonball exploded the stocks of powder piled up in the temple, damaging part of the friezes. It became a mosque again with the return of the Ottomans in 1688. Athens was then nothing more than a city, where the ancient remains were abandoned. Pieces of marble scattered around the ruins are were reduced to lime or reused as building material. In the 18th century, more and more Western travelers took pieces of sculpture as souvenirs.

Appropriation by Lord Elgin

In August 1800, Lord Elgin, British ambassador to the Ottoman government, arrived in Athens. A fan of classical culture, his ambition was to *"enable English fine arts to make progress"* and thus allow *"English taste to be refined."* A team of artists (painters, engravers, molders) accompanied him and their primary mission was to paint and copy the antiquities of Athens. But the Acropolis was a military fortress closed to foreigners. After bribing the local authorities, he began to cut the frieze illegally. The situation being diplomatically favorable to him with the reconquest of Egypt by the British, in July 1801

he obtained a firman (official decree) from the Sultan giving him definitive access to the site. The dismantling work began, metope by metope, with no attention paid to archaeological ethics. When the blocks were too heavy, they were sawed in two. In the following year, half of the sculpted decoration of the Parthenon was removed and then the boning work continued on the Acropolis and various others places in Greece. A caryatid from the Erechteion was even taken away. The numerous crates of antiquities collected by Elgin's agents traveled from Piraeus to London; part of the cargo was lost during the journey, a boat even sinks during the crossing. (Small parenthesis: Lord Elgin only amplified the French example of Ambassador Choiseul-Gouffier, passionate about ancient Greece, who in the mid-1780s wrote to his agent Fauvel: *"Remove everything you* *can"* Corrupting the local authorities, Fauvel managed to recover a piece of the frieze as well as a metope, now kept in the Louvre.

In London, the marbles exhibited in a "garden shed" at the Elgin residence attracted all of London high society as well as artists. They were also decried by some scholars who denied their ancient character or by influential personalities who denounced these depredations, such as travelers, archaeologists, and mainly Lord Byron, the famous English philhellene poet who wrote: *"Blind are the eyes that do not shed tears at seeing your sacred objects pillaged by profane English hands."* Pressed by financial problems, Lord Elgin no longer had the means to keep his collection of 120 tons of marbles; he sold it to the State. In 1816, the marbles were exhibited at the British Museum in a temporary room. During the Second World War, the frieze was sheltered in the London Underground tunnels. It found its final location in 1962 in the new wing. In the Purchase Act passed by Parliament, an amendment was proposed, immediately rejected, stipulating that Great Britain would only keep the marbles until their rightful owner claimed them. Foresighted, the British government then set up a parliamentary commission which validated the legality of the acquisition of these works. In 1963, a law was even passed to prohibit the sale or transfer of the museum's collections.

Adventures around the possible return of the marbles to Athens

From the first years following its independence, in 1830, Greece tried in vain to bring back home the marbles of the Parthenon, including those of the frieze. In 1982, during the UNESCO summit in Mexico, Mélina Mercouri, muse of Greek cinema who became minister of culture of the new socialist government, a woke figure before her time, launched the official battle for the restitution of the Parthenon marbles by asserting: ***"The Parthenon belongs to everyone, but primarily to the Greeks."*** This standoff took a diplomatic turn, constituting a real political and electoral issue for the Greeks. All other arguments (see next paragraph) exhausted, the British justification was to say that *"Greece did not have the means to correctly present these fragments given that there was no museum large enough to welcome them"*. Taking them at their word, the Greek government, upon the announcement of the Athens Olympic Games (2004), had a vast museum built below the Acropolis entirely dedicated to the discoveries made on this site and fitted out to accommodate the marbles. With a very modern structure, all in glass and metal, and integrating perfectly into the landscape between ancient ruins and Byzantine chapels,

Parthenon marbles - Image: Paul Hudson

it rises over three floors. The last level is entirely dedicated to the life-size frieze of the Parthenon. The parts that remained in Greece are exhibited there and between them, the empty spaces are reserved for the missing parts, awaiting their return, such as that of the sailors' wives.

Since the opening of the museum in 2009, there have been numerous negotiations, promises, proposals for ephemeral restitution, and several failures. Compromises were considered by the British, such as a loan limited in time or an exchange of works, but the growing mobilization of scientists of all nationalities pleads for the *"return"*, the *"repatriation"* which refers to the *"national origin" of the sculptures"*, avoiding the notion of loan which *"would recognize the British Museum as the rightful owner"*. Latest tragicomic episode to date: in November 2023, in London, Kyriakos Mitsotakis, the conservative Greek Prime Minister, puts this subject back on the table during an interview with the BBC: *"For me, it is not so much a question of property qs of unity. Where can you most enjoy what is, essentially, a unique monument? Keeping part of the Parthenon friezes outside Greece would amount to cutting Mona Lisa in two."* The British Conservative Prime Minister Rishi Sunak responded by canceling at the last minute his planned meeting in London with his Greek counterpart. The Greek leader then met the leader of the Labor opposition, Sir Keir Starmer, likely to become Prime Minister in the next elections, and indicated that the latter would be in favour of returning to marbles, like 55% of British people (survey in 2021). Even King Charles got involved, wearing a tie and handkerchief adorned with the Greek flag, during his opening speech at COP28.

Arguments from both sides

The battle continues between the two countries, with contradictory arguments and often invective: the Greek government regularly demands the return of the Parthenon frieze, which the British government constantly refuses. Let's look at the arguments on both sides:

Cultural identity

For the Greeks, any state must be able to own an essential element of its cultural or historical heritage, relying on the UNESCO Directive on the restitution of cultural property which calls for the return of objects *"essential to cultural identity and national heritage of a people"* and the suppression of which *s*. The British consider that modern Greeks are not the only heirs of the achievements of the ancient Greeks and, furthermore, that these achievements are not the only or even the most important component of their current identity.

Artistic continuity

For the Greeks, the frieze which was part of the same set was thus disfigured. It is ***"a frieze sculpted as a unit and which tells a narrative story it should not be divided in two and exhibited in two separate cities".*** The British maintain that it is no longer possible to materially unify all the real parts of the frieze. But only virtually, by combining elements preserved in the various museums, engravings, casts and other representations, as for example in the almost complete representation of the Skulpturhalle in Basel.

The mode of appropriation

For the Greeks, the frieze was purchased from the Ottoman government, which did not represent the Greek people. Greece being then under foreign occupation, it was a theft and a pillage, carried out without following any archaeological ethics. The British government maintains that it acquired these cultural assets legally, from the representative of the sovereign authority in office at the time of the sale, that is to say the Sublime Porte, by an official firman of the Sultan. The British State therefore considers itself to be the legitimate owner.

Preservation and conservation over time

The British argue that whatever Elgin's motivations were, the result of his actions was to save the majority of the Parthenon sculptures from further destruction, following political events or degradation due to urban pollution. For them, countless visitors from all over the world can admire these masterpieces of Greek civilization in a museum worthy of the name.

The universal vs. national vocation

The British Museum defends a "universal" vocation, maintaining that the elements of the frieze are part of world heritage and that they are more accessible to the public in London than in Athens. It presents itself as a museum of all civilizations, allowing us to grasp the scale of human artistic achievements and to question narrow national pretensions: ***"The sculptures of the Parthenon are not reduced to totems of any nationality, but are freely available to all to be studied and appreciated in a rich comparative context as part of our common heritage."***

Moving towards a solution without opening *"Pandora's box"*

The United Kingdom, which holds many disputed pieces in its museums, is above all afraid of opening a breach by granting the restitution of the Greek marbles. In particular, for the heritage of former colonized countries which Europeans have seized for centuries and which have made the reputation of the great European and North American museums. Just one example: more than 90% of African heritage is today outside Africa.

The question of restitution, at the crossroads of historical, museum and political questions, took time to emerge, but it has become essential today in geopolitical relations. It should be resolved with intellectual and academic honesty, avoiding the trap of nationalist instrumentalization or opportunist memories, but restitutions are much more about geopolitics than love of art or a concern for reparation. The major difficulty lies in the overlap between the different legislations and the resulting contradictions for legal ownership, with numerous constraints: non-transferable ownership of public monuments and their objects, inalienable nature of the collections of national museums, prescription, principle of non-retroactivity, opposition between national laws and international conventions (UN, UNESCO, International Court of Justice, ICOMOS, EU, etc.). The most emblematic example is the very complicated restitution of the belongings of Emir Abdelkader, hero of the resistance to the French conquest of Algeria, which is illustrated in the memorial face-to-face by interposed museum pieces and which constitutes one of the keys to reconciliation between the two countries.

Without falling into the excess of certain positions, according to which the Elgin marbles are *"lessons of greed, xenophobia and intransigence"* and calls for *"acceptance of guilt"* and a "process of atonement" by the great museums of the world, the restitution greatly shakes up mentalities because we have become accustomed to thinking that the *"natural"* place of works of art was in the great Western museums. A framework law is needed to establish the general principles of restitution, in particular for "stolen property", which would put legal quibbles into perspective. Apart from a few sparse examples, treated case by case, such as the *"Hottentot Venus"* returned to South Africa in 2002 and the Maori heads to New Zealand in 2010, the subject is not moving forward quickly, due to Western government's procrastination. It is interesting to note that the same arguments and the same legal tricks used for the Parthenon marbles are used for all other cases: for definitive restitution, we try to substitute long-term deposits in order to legally remain owners of the pieces, putting forward the same argument of lower museum quality contradicted by the creation of new museums in Africa (with the geopolitical interested help of Asian countries). Hence the paradoxical position of the British Museum: it is participation in the project of the Edo Museum of African Art in

The Elgin Marbles, originally part of Parthenon and Acropolis of Athens

Nigeria which must, from 2024, exhibit bronzes from Benin City returned from European museums, and it thus hopes to improve its reputation without making any progress on the restitution of the Parthenon marbles to Greece.

Cultural goods, human goods

But it seems to me that today, another danger threatens these cultural goods, wherever they are, in the generalized context of commodification of culture. This danger is that of removing their status as public goods, in favor of private or privatized use with all the abuses that we know of. Let us remember in 1937-38, the aggressive and irreversible cleaning using abrasives imposed by Joseph Duveen, when he decided to finance a new wing in the British Museum to accommodate the marbles. This art dealer without any scientific skills was convinced that ancient marble had always been immaculately white. Or quite recently, the concreting of the Acropolis' paths by the Greek Minister of Culture, against the advice of archaeologists, to facilitate visits as brief as they are lucrative by cruise ship tourists. Likewise, indignation cannot be selective, whether a cocktail party is organized in London at the foot of the vestiges in the hall of the British Museum, or whether the Acropolis is privatized for VIP groups in Athens. Cultural goods are goods for all audiences. It would be paradoxical if the enjoyment of the emblematic masterpiece of Athenian democracy were reserved for a privileged few.

For further

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EFFY **TSELIKAS**

She has been travelling around the world all her life. First with her parents, Greek political refugees in North Africa and Latin America where she received a French education; then, all over Europe and Asia through her jobs, her loves, her children and friends. Constantly searching similarities behind differences. Her life is divided between a small island in Greece, Paris and travels.

She has a History and Economics degree and has acquired several languages in order to communicate with every one. After various posts in France and abroad, she is actually a journalist for the Greek and French media (TV, radio, press magazine), and film maker for documentaries, specialized in subjects such as double culture, historical heritage and migration. She also teaches *"Intercultural communication"* in universities in France and North-Africa. She contributes as an expert to projects of the Council of Europe, for instance *"Cultural values for Europe"* and *"Learning history; the image of other"*.

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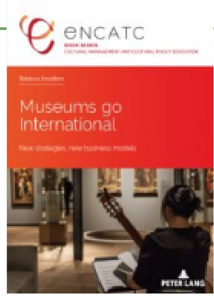

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Our contributors are leading academics, researchers, experts, practitioners, and policy makers. They are recognised by the industry we belong to as influencers. For our magazine, they are generously providing us with high-quality content, commentary, the best industry practices, and personal stories. Their contributions aim to help ENCATC to achieve its mission of helping the cultural sector become stronger and more sustainable. **This publication is made possible thanks to the financial support of the Creative Europe programme of the European Union.**

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