The art world of cosmopolitan collectors: In relation to mediators, institutions and producers
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In relation to mediators, institutions and producers

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Preface

This book is the result of a research in the field of contemporary art that I have conducted between 2010 and 2014. However, the ideas for the study have originated from an earlier period and relate to my various activities in the field of contemporary art. I started to collect art in 2007, was active as art historian and lecturer at the University of Amsterdam between 2009 and 2011, as art journalist as of 2010, as a gallery partner in 2011, and as art advisor and art dealer as of 2012. Those personal experiences have provided a wealth of information that, together with the theoretical investigations and empirical research, form the basis for the present book.

Before I became engaged in various facets of art, I used to work in a successful international corporate structure that operates according to the economic logic of efficiency and profit gaining. The art field seemed to follow different rules and principles, and this appeared to me as a fascinating challenge that I wanted to investigate on different levels. I had been buying artworks but was wondering when I should start calling myself an art collector. I never claimed to be so attached to my acquisitions that I would not consider selling them, which gallerists and other collectors indicated was a feature of a bad collector. These categorizations of good and bad collectors have intrigued me to such an extent that I decided to explore them in depth. At the same time, the research on the phenomenon of collecting offered me even more possibilities to understand how the contemporary art world functions and what it means to experience and own art.

The Research Master in Art Studies, which I finished in 2007, not only prepared me for, but also encouraged me to continue academic investigation in the field of art. Equipped with methodological tools, I could observe and analyze various codes of the art world from the different perspectives provided by my activities. Being a lecturer at the university gave me the great opportunity to be involved in the contemporary art discourse; what has struck me in this regard was how little interest the commercial and the theoretical parts of contemporary art have for each other. As an art journalist writing for some international magazines, I had the possibility to interview certain leading contemporary artists. These personal encounters were of great value for understanding the position of the artists nowadays and also their relation to collectors; at the same time, I could observe what choices magazines make when presenting artists and how important visibility has become. My experience as a business partner of one the leading Dutch contemporary art galleries in Amsterdam helped me to understand the art world even better. During that one year, I was confronted with all aspects of running a gallery, organizing shows, approaching collectors, selling artworks, participating in international art fairs and positioning the gallery in the art world. It was also a confrontation with the myths and logics according to which a contemporary art gallery functions.

Last, but not least, I have been advising collectors with regard to their collections and acquisitions. Being involved in the daily work with collectors has been an inexhaustible source of observations and information that time and again shed light on the mechanisms that govern the social behavior when buying or selling art. This research has proven even more how complex, rich and dynamic the art field can be.
Acknowledgments

I am first and foremostly grateful to the two supervisors of this dissertation, Prof. dr. Bram Kempers and Dr. Olav Velthuis. I am indebted to them for their constructive readings and challenging of my ideas and for sharing with me their extended knowledge.

My deep gratitude is to the collectors, artists, gallerists and other art professionals who participated in this research. The interviews, conversations and chats about their ideas of art, artists and the art world created the foundations of this study and provided the key to understanding what collecting ethics and collecting habits are. I would also like to thank many of them for their wonderful generosity and hospitality.

My media friends deserve a particular recognition. I would like to thank José Klap and Sandor Lubbe, directors of the Zoo Magazine, for our pleasurable cooperation. The interviews with artists, which I conducted for Zoo Magazine and L’Officiel, provided me a great opportunity of having close encounters of the great kind. I’m also grateful to Cornelis Tittel, editor in chief Die Welt, for recognizing the relevance of my research and publishing related articles in Die Welt am Sonntag. Frank van der Engel deserves my thanks for involving me in making of a documentary film about the art world, which turned out to be a source of valuable research material.
**Introduction**

**Punta Della Dogana**

Since its opening in 2009, many art professionals and amateurs have visited Punta Della Dogana in Venice: the private center for contemporary art set up by the French entrepreneur François Pinault in the city’s old customs building. Punta Della Dogana was opened to the public after a thorough reconstruction of the 17th century venues by the Japanese architect Tadao Ando, who has adjusted the buildings in order to function as a museum. The opening of the exhibition *Prima Materia*, which started there on May the 30th, 2013, coincided with the inauguration of the Venice Biennale, which was greatly attended by curators, artists, scholars and private collectors. One part of the exposition in the Punta Della Dogana featured works from the series *Untitled (Turkish Forest, Faces)*, which were made by the American artist Mark Grotjahn in 2012. Eight big colorful abstractions painted by Grotjahn were hanging in a large separate room, which gave them a strong presence and visibility, reinforced by their big number and their repetitive formal character.

Just a few weeks before the opening of the exhibition, a painting from the Face series *Untitled (Standard Lotus No. II, Bird of Paradise, Tiger Mouth Face 44.01)* made in 2012 realized the price of 6.5 million US$ during the Christie’s auction in New York. This price came as a big surprise to auctioneers, art dealers and collectors, as the estimation for this freshly made work read between 1.5 and 2.5 million US$. The work has received a lot of international media attention, while the name of Grotjahn was suddenly on everyone’s lips.

By giving this highly sought-after American artist a prominent place in his striking Italian historical venue redesigned by a world famous Japanese architect, the French collector created a spectacular effect for the quality seeking international audience. Mr Pinault achieved this effect by a careful selection of the artist—celebrated at that moment by the art market—an arresting staging of the works in the museum and the timing of the opening. This presentation not only expressed the collector’s artistic vision, but it also conveyed various social messages to the other actors in the art world.

What messages and signals these could be will be investigated in the course of this research. By way of analysis of personal and collective interests of today’s collectors, as well as their social behavior and strategies, this research aims to shed light on transformations and processes that have formed the conduct of contemporary collectors and, through them, the field of contemporary art.

This research focuses on the period between the end of the 20th century and 2014, which has witnessed a significant enlargement and globalization of the art market. Despite the recession of 2009, the turnover of the global art market reached 47.4 billion Euros in 2013 versus 22.3 billion Euros in 2002, whilst the sales prices of post-war artworks have been booking new records.\(^1\) In 2013, the work *Balloon Dog (Orange)* that was made by Jeff Koons between 1994 and 2000 sold for US$ 58.4 million and a work of the 32 year old Tauba Auerbach, *Untitled (Fold)* from 2011, realized the price of US$ 1.025 million. The Christie’s, Sotheby’s and Phillips autumn season 2014 of Post-War and Contemporary Art realized US$ 1.5 billion, being the most successful Post-War and Contemporary Art sales season in history.

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\(^1\) McAndrew 2014: 19.

\(^2\) Cap Gemini 2007.
The growth of the art market has been driven by buyers of art who mostly call themselves art collectors. The term *cosmopolitan collector* will be used in order to signal a certain type of internationally operating, professionally active individuals who have been collecting art in the new millennium. Most of them belong to the first generation involved in collecting, which implies that they did not grow up with the tradition of collecting. Instead, they have found their own reasons to become involved in art, which engaged them enough to call themselves collectors. They spend 50,000 Euros or more a year on art and yearly visit international art fairs. The criterion of 50,000 Euros allows focusing on collectors who have been actively engaged with mediators and whom the latter consider as important. Some of those collectors can be categorized as High Net Worth Individuals (HNWI), persons whose investable budget is more than US$ 1 million.2

Collectors acquire artworks in order to construct a new independent entity that is characterized by a certain aesthetic, personal and art historical coherence and aims at creating an individual or collective added value, an art collection. Not every art buyer is necessarily a collector, but there is no other name for persons who sporadically buy art works without the intention to create a coherent entity of works. This phenomenon is interesting since it could be a conscious marketing tool or unconscious behavior of various sellers of art in order to bind buyers to the product and to offer them a new identity that forces to act further. It happens regularly that one purchase of an artwork is enough to call a person a collector.

The research avoids categorizing collectors, although it acknowledges that classifications could be instrumental in order to unfold structures of certain behavior. A categorization by motives of collecting was, for example, used in the analyses of the French sociologist Raymonde Moulin in the 1960s; she distinguished six types of collectors in France: the ostentatious rich collector, the bourgeois, the erudite, the discoverer, the snob and the speculator, who were guided by, among others things, passion, money, cultural needs or play.3 The recent research by AXA Art Insurance categorized collectors according to the frequency of their buying and divided them into young, active, sporadic, mature and non-collectors.4 While such categorizations could be valuable in investigating preferences and approaches to collecting, they appear to be at the same time incomplete, as many collectors have a tendency to adjust their modus operandi according to the situation.

Instead, this investigation proposes a general category that includes collectors governed by various motives for and attitudes toward collecting. Although the differences between individual collectors could be big with regard to certain specific issues, they display the same behavior with regard to many others. Two collectors who think differently about selling works from their collections could be vehemently involved in the careers of the same artists for their collections and take care of their visibility. This broad range of approaches will be reviewed while discussing specific aspects of collectors’ activities. As a result, some general trends in the field of collecting of contemporary art will unfold in the course of this book.

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3 Moulin 1967: 219. An earlier example of such a categorization form the distinction made by the art critic Roger Fry who, in 1926, divided art consumers in industrial corporations, the working class (whom he often found barbarians showing mostly a conformist behavior), the state and the middle class consisting of three groups: the snobs characterized by a blind obedience to fashion, the men of culture who worshipped the past and the true aesthetes who formed a small group of amateurs, the only ones who could appreciate art. Fry 1972: 483.
Contemporary art is considered the totality of forms of artistic production, including all possible artistic media such as painting, sculpture, photography, installations, video, performances, text and sound that were produced in the period from roughly the 1970s until now. The research focuses on collectors of “transatlantic” art, which addresses art that has been produced in North America or Western Europe. Another used term is the North-Western art, which refers to art that originates from the Anglo-Saxon North American and Western European countries. Although each country has some specific aspects, such as the social and artistic structures in which actors operate, similarities in the North-Western contemporary art collecting allow to analyze it as one field.

The research inquires firstly into the social world of cosmopolitan collectors, followed by investigations of their modi operandi in various distribution and valorization channels, and finally explores their taste with regard to artists. It poses in particular several questions: in which geographical locations are cosmopolitan collectors concentrated and what is the reason? What are their motives for collecting contemporary art? Through which networks do they build their collections? What moral norms and rules of behavior do they follow and why? In which manner do collectors position themselves among museums and what are their motives? Have they developed artistic preferences and, if so, how and why were these preferences formed?

Since collectors function as part of the art field, these questions can only be answered by putting them in the broader context of artistic and social transformations that have been taking place from the late 20th century onward. Their behavior will be analyzed within the framework of a few systems according to which art operates, and in relation to other actors. These interactions will be defined as the art market, art world or art field, while the mutual interdependencies of actors will be marked as networks. These theoretical concepts address a social world of cosmopolitan collectors in which they develop their relations with art mediators, institutions and producers. Processes of globalization will form an important context of the study.

**Art market, art world, art field and network in a global context**

The art market comprises the totality of economic infrastructures, social relations and financial transactions through which artworks are being traded and through which various actors engage in exchange of goods and services related to art. The term “art market” was already being used long before the market in the modern sense was developed. The latter found its origin in 19th century France during massive changes of the society and the art field, as new capitalist structures redefined professional and

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5 Several dates are considered as the beginning point of contemporary art. In the questionnaire on the Contemporary conducted by *October* 130 (Fall 2009), the following data have been proposed: 1946, 1960, 1970 and 1989. *October* 130: 2-124. Art Economics uses the definition of contemporary art as art made by artists born after 1945. McAndrew 2012: 44. The subject was also addressed by Agamben 2009; Smith 2013.


7 While the system in the Netherlands relies on state subsidies to individual artists, as well as to specific institutions, the system in France is based on state financed purchases of works by French artists effected through the network of local organizations (FRACS). In the United Kingdom, as well as in Germany, art schools, art academies and universities play a very important role in creating an early visibility of artists who tend to concentrate around a master teacher and, from there, might reach the extended gallery circuit. In the United States, careers of artists are depending mostly on the visibility through the art market and museums, as well as involvement into art academies.
social relationships. In the post-war period until today, the art market has been the subject of various studies that approached the topic from numerous perspectives defined by historical periods, geographical focuses, disciplines and methodologies.

From the transactions point of view, the art market is divided into the primary and secondary art market. In the primary market, art works are presented for the first time to possible buyers whereby the works are principally brand new or have never been presented publicly before. The primary market transactions relate to artworks presented in art galleries or, sporadically, in artist studios; few auctions of new works by an artist in an auction house have been so far treated as exceptions. In the secondary market, the owner of artworks, who has acquired them from the primary market, offer them for sale anew through a network of auction houses, private dealers, galleries and collectors. Both the primary market and secondary market are not fully transparent and comprehensible.

The term “art world” covers a broader spectrum than the art market. It refers to the totality of global artistic, cultural, social, political and economic infrastructures, exchanges and relationships, which form the material and intellectual context in which contemporary art is being produced, distributed, perceived and valued. The art theoretician Arthur Danto used the term “art world” in the 1960s to point at art’s necessity for an art historical and theoretical embedding:

To see something as art requires something the eye cannot descry—an atmosphere of artistic theory, a knowledge of the history of art: an art world.

The term has become well known thanks to the American sociologist Howard Becker, who formulated its definition in his book *Art Worlds* (1982) as follows:

I have used the term in a more technical way to denote the network of people whose cooperative activity, organized via their joint knowledge of conventional means of doing things, produces the kind of art works that art world is noted for.

For Becker, the art world is made up out of people, since all arts include the cooperation of others: “to analyze the art world we look for its characteristic kinds of workers and the bundle of tasks each one does.” More precisely, Becker speaks about art worlds in plural, since, according to him, every work of art requires the specific and unique cooperation of people and distribution of labor. In such a form, art worlds do not have boundaries around them because each of them is a cooperative activity of people, neither do they have an organizational structure.

Transformations are typical for art worlds: changes can appear dramatically and gradually, due to the technological innovations that cause a new way of thinking.
or a new public that makes new constellations appear and the existing die. The
important terms in the art world theory by Becker are conventions and reputation. Conventions are the rules of the game: necessarily accepted structures in which a work of art can be made and can be given an aesthetic value. The knowledge about the conventions is shared in various stages by various groups and subgroups, and determines the underlying relationships.

The term “art world” is very commonly used, mostly without the specific references to the communal activities as defined by Becker, and appears to be more popular than the term “art field.” The latter is related to the theory of social fields developed by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. Becker’s art world signifies the networking and cooperation of its members, but the art field is defined by relations of domination of its agents. Bourdieu aimed at identifying structures and laws that govern the art field; he heavily criticized Becker for making only loose descriptions of how the art worlds function as separate islands of cooperation instead of acknowledging a permanent struggle of domination between involved actors.

In his seminal book Distinction. A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste, Bourdieu proposed a correction of the Kantian aesthetic judgment that has been based on the principle of disinterestedness. Interest in culture in general, and in arts in particular, is not a neutral given according to him. The capacity to formulate aesthetical judgments is not innate, as Immanuel Kant postulated, but socially constructed. Subsequently, aesthetic dispositions, knowledge and skills related to art are forms of cultural capital that can be compared with the economic capital, since it gives the one who owns it social prestige and authority in the group he belongs to.

Bourdieu introduced a few terms that have been relevant for the sociological research on art since then. The field, in which agents operate, is, according to Bourdieu, a historically created social space with a certain autonomy that is governed by its own rules, schemes of domination, legitimate opinions and interests, and that creates its own capital. Among the main fields in modern societies, Bourdieu mentioned education, politics, law, economy and arts. The art field is, thus, a structure of relations determining art production and reception, in which positions occupied by various agents struggle for a specific capital. Those agents depend on their habitus in acquiring their positions in the field. As habitus Bourdieu declared a set of consciously or unconsciously acquired or inherited values, dispositions and inclinations to a special behavior.

Within the various fields, different agents compete to acquire different forms of capital and to distinguish themselves from others. Bourdieu recognized economic, cultural, social and symbolic capital, which he defined as forms of capital that govern success in the field and the winning of specific profits that are at stake in that field. Economic capital addresses all possible means, resources, instruments that can be immediately and directly converted into money and institutionalized in the forms of property rights. While economic capital is transferable and negotiable, many forms of cultural and social capital are not. Cultural capital derives and differs from the economic and, according to Bourdieu, knows three forms. The embodied state can

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16 Bourdieu 1993: 30.
be called an individual cultivation that requires time and personal involvement to be obtained and immediate personal efforts. The objectified state address cultural goods such as artworks or books that represent certain cultural theories and which are transmittable. The institutionalized state confers on the holder values such as academic qualifications that guarantee a relative independency with regard to possession of cultural goods. Cultural capital, which includes knowledge of culture, education, skills and the ability to use symbolic goods, is essential in distinguishing between groups and individuals.

Social capital refers to actual and potential resources that create the social position of an individual within a network of social relations, which are crucial to acquire recognition and social standing. Social capital is linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships, which exist only in the practical state and is based on material and symbolic exchanges. Any given agent owns social capital that depends on the changeable network of connections, which he can effectively mobilize, and on the size of economic, cultural or symbolic capital that each agent in such a network possesses. Artistic prestige is an example of social capital as it gives an artist a distinguished position among other positions in the same field. At the same time, it is also a form of symbolic capital since the latter addresses immaterial resources that are apprehended symbolically. Investigating the art field, Bourdieu stated that the disavowal of commercial interests and profits as applied in the field of arts is, for example, “a form of economic rationality,” since it is a form of cumulating the symbolic capital.

Bourdieu addressed the art field and its capital in several other publications that focused on literature in the first place, but also discussed visual arts. His findings have been referred to and explored by many researchers of the art field. The German art sociologist and philosopher Ulf Wuggenig applied the field and capital theory to his extensive research on motives of collecting, art criticism, art centers and globalization. The art sociologist Olav Velthuis used Bourdieu’s taxonomy to distinguish circuits in the art market in his dissertation on formulating prices and their cultural meanings. He proposed that the economy of the art field is governed by the same laws as those of other economies. What makes the art field different is the use of juggling logics when it comes to artistic or commercial approaches and its moral component. The subject of class-related taste and the perception of cultural

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18 Bourdieu 1986: 244-247.
19 Bourdieu 1986: 278.
20 Bourdieu 1986: 258. The terms social and symbolic capital are often being used to describe relationships within various fields. The sociologist Nico Wilterdink suggested that the use of the word “capital” has enjoyed an increasing importance in the field of sociology as from 2000. He suggested that the attention paid to this term started in the 1980s, with the strong market-dominant thinking, and has continued its dominance until today. The specific term of social capital has been adjusted or corrected by several sociologists since its introduction by Bourdieu. Especially the question how to measure it has been addressed by various sociologists: through voluntary engagements of the actors (Robert Putnam 2000), through the participation in social networks (White 2002) or through the judgments people give about their involvements (Sennett 2006). There is no consensus about the value of the social and cultural capital for the social field (Wilterdink 2011).
21 Bourdieu 1993: 75.
23 Swaan 1985; Fowler 1997; Abbing 2002; Wilterdink 2011.
hierarchies in the Netherlands in the last decades was addressed in the recent dissertation by Marcel van den Haak.26

For understanding the habitus of collectors, of importance were the writings on socio-economic transformations at the end of the 20th century of the American sociologist Richard Sennett.27 Sennett signaled a new economic model that was defined by shifts into short-term results, increase of shareholding power in international companies and quick communication on a global scale.28 Although this research does not focus on the socio-economic aspects of collecting, Sennett’s analyses have added to the formation of a framework in which the behavior of cosmopolitan collectors could be understood.

The network is another term that has been of importance for this study. It will be used to denote shared connections, mutual relations and interdependencies between various actors. As part of the art field, the collector relates to many other actors who are involved in processes of production, distribution, reception, contextualization and valuation of contemporary art. The term “actor” has been chosen here since it accentuates acting and action (Becker calls the participants people, Bourdieu calls them agents).29 The actors who appear in this book are collectors, artists, gallery owners, dealers, art advisors, curators, institutional workers, art critics and scholars.

Actors operate within their profession, which can be described as an occupation with a cognitive base, legislation rules, institutionalized training, work autonomy, peer control, ethical code and certain prestige.30 Depending on the situation, various actors function as the so-called gatekeepers: individuals, organizations or institutions that control access to specific networks and positions and, therefore, can influence careers of artists or standing of collectors.31

An important aspect of today’s art world, art field and networks can be defined as globalization. Globalization addresses various processes that refer to the course, causes and consequences of transnational and transcultural integration of human and non-human activities.32 Cultural globalization points at an acceleration of worldwide cultural interdependencies, inclusion of what used to be cultural peripheries into the mainstream of artistic production and reception and interpenetration of mutual

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27 Sennett 2006.
28 Sennett 2006: 47. Some of these transformations have been addressed before by other sociologists. Bennet Harrison introduced the term “impatient capital,” which is more interested in possibilities to profit from shorter-term share prices than a longer-term dividend. Harrison 1994. Nigel Harris observed of “cosmopolitan capital,” which is a capital that seeks to break the boundaries of national states, which returned to the global stage from the last quarter of the twentieth century onward. Harris 2003.
29 The sociologist Nathalie Heinich proposed a correction of the theories by Becker and Bourdieu. For her, the notion of singularity, the particular and the personal was essential instead of the community as proposed by Becker and general approaches as proposed by Bourdieu; Heinich 1998.
Many other definitions have been used to denote these processes, such as a compression of space and time. There is no academic consensus about whether and to which extent a globalization of the art field has been taking place. Three different attitudes among academics shed light on the complexity of globalization mechanisms. Hyper globalists believe that globalization is undoubtedly and fast taking place, transformationalists see it as a continuous but complex and slow process, while skeptics discredit the alleged globalization as a myth.

While discussing globalization of the art field, the notion of speed occurs time and again. The art theoretician David Joselit has coined the term “art velocity,” which points at the speed at which the art field currently operates. It addresses the proliferation of artworks and mega art events and the fast growth of galleries and art spaces that encourage the quick absorption of proposed meanings. It also refers to the early start and rapid rise of artists’ careers as well as the requirement for their fast development. From a broader perspective, the speed of the current art market could be analyzed in the framework of the accelerationism. This term has been used in the philosophy and capitalist critique to signal processes of speeding up of current production and social engagements in general.

Networks of actors

In a close relationship to the collector stands the artist. Collectors buy and sell works made by artists and react to various artistic attitudes that artists represent. According to the art world theory by Becker, the person “artist” is only the originator and, so to say, the front page of the whole process of various cooperation models that produce artworks. Not denying that the artist has always relied on many factors and other actors in his practice, this study treats artists as actors with agency, although placed in the networks of the field they operate in.

The concept of the artistic autonomy, which has been constructed from the second part of the 19th century onward, has been fundamental to the artistic practice, as it has guaranteed the extra-ordinary position of the artist in the society on the one side, and has fed freedom of subjective judgment on artworks. However, during the 20th century, the autonomy of art has developed into a problematic condition for the artist. Since then, he needs to maneuver between the romantic aura of uniqueness, the post-modern death of subjectivity and authenticity and the discourse of cultural studies in which art is treated as a cultural practice. The autonomy issue could be problematic in the relation to the collector as well, as the latter can directly and indirectly intervene in artistic practices by giving commissions for specific spaces or by communicating his preferences. In the last case, an artist who

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34 Harvey 1990: 240.
37 Joselit 2012: 36.
38 In this context, accelerationism is seen as an essential characteristic of current capitalism that aims at the increasing of productivity and, therefore, leads to an intensification of the rhythm of production and exploitation. The thinkers concerned with this subject are, among others Berardi Bifo 2013; Shaviro 2003; Land 2011.
41 Winkl 2013.
is interested in his work becoming part of a given collection can react to the taste of the collector; by doing so, the artist gives the collector more voice in determining his artistic oeuvre.42

The artists who form part of this research are the living North-Western artists who have been considered important by international collectors and who are visible in the art market. All of the involved artists are visual artists; some of them are painters, some of them sculptors, but the majority of them operate in the broad range of mediums that is typical for the current period called the post-medium condition.43

Of crucial importance for creating collections are the distribution channels and valorization systems of art works. The first actor who participates in these processes and mediates between the collector on the one hand and the artist on the other is the gallery owner, often called “gallerist”. They own galleries or commercial art spaces in which artworks are being presented in an artistic context and sold. In principle, the gallery owners operate in the primary market although many of them are also involved in the secondary market.

The processes of defining the identity of the gallery have been analyzed in several studies on the French market in the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century and in numerous comprehensive studies on the Western art market during this period.44 For the understanding of various aspects of this profession in relation to collectors in the post-war period, the monograph about gallery owner Leo Castelli (1907-1999) has been instructive.45 The economic and symbolic logic of the gallery enterprise has been addressed in the extensive study by Olav Velthuis, who has analyzed various seemingly contradictory mechanisms that galleries have been applying in their work with collectors while maneuvering between ideological and commercial tasks.46 Diverse specific functions of the gallery work have been investigated further in several other recent publications.47

Collectors can engage with galleries through various physical and virtual modes of access such as gallery spaces, art fairs and the Internet. An art fair is a large marketplace of works of art for sale, which are held at regularly spaced intervals and at particular locations. They are attended by galleries coming from various regions in the world and intended for local and international collectors and a bigger audience.48

The Basel Art Fair, which was launched in 1973, became the most important international art fair during the 1990s. The galleries that form part of this research participate in the most important international art fair Art Basel in Basel and other important fairs, such as Art Miami Basel, Frieze in London, Fiac in Paris or Art Basel Miami Hongkong. The importance of the fairs has been growing so that the current period has even been called “the age of the art fair,” since the fairs have become one

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42 Several publications addressed the position of the artist in the art field in general and the art market in particular, among others Kempers 1988; Abbott 2005; Crawford 2008; Bhandari, Melber 2009; Crawford 2010; Carey 2011, 2012.
43 The term post-medium condition has been introduced by the art theoretician Rosalind Krauss as the reaction to the term medium specificity. Krauss 1999.
45 Cohen-Solal 2010.
46 Velthuis 2005.
48 Morgner 2013: 1.
of the most important sales and marketing channels.49 The Internet has also gained importance for galleries as a source of information on artists and an tool to present artworks to collectors and buyers.

Often, gallery owners are also called dealers. In this study dealers, will be treated separately from the gallery owners, as individuals or companies who buy and sell art works without having a primary gallery. Dealers own artworks themselves before selling them to their clients, which means they operate for their own account. Dealers can buy from the primary as well as from the secondary market. Important dealers of today have often worked previously in the auction houses: for example Stephane Connery at Sotheby’s, Thomas Seydoux at Christie’s and Dominique Lévy at Christie’s.

Auction houses are basically physical, but recently also virtual places in which art works can be bought and sold against a commission. They have gained in importance as a market place for collectors in the new millennium. The market leaders for Post-War and Contemporary art are Christie’s, Sotheby’s and Phillips but, since 2011, a surge of smaller Internet auction sites have attempted to generate interest from collectors, dealers and art buyers, especially in the lower price segment.

Many aspects of the profession of the dealers (in this particular case, the dealer also means a gallery owner) have been analyzed in the publication by the art economist Clare McAndrew, which she prepared for the international organization of the dealers CINOA. On the basis of 45 in-depth interviews with dealers and on-line surveys with collectors, which were placed in several popular art magazines, the study attempted to map the new transformation in the profession of the dealer.50 It appeared that many dealers have no art historical background, which means that many of them consider themselves self-taught in the field of art. Self-taught in art does, however, not mean the lack of higher education; McAndrew found out that the majority of today’s dealers have a high degree of education but not in art history.51 They operate in the footsteps of the first ideological dealers who did not rely on their art historical knowledge either but claimed to follow so-called intuitions or instinct instead.

Art advisors, as the name already suggest, advise collectors and buyers on which artworks to buy or to sell, as well as how and where. Art advisors are actors who operate mostly as mediators; they come between the people who offer artworks for sale (artists, gallery owners, collectors, institutions) and potential buyers; they make transactions possible and ask a fee for the mediation. The most common fee is 10% of the price of the work although the higher the price, the more the commission could be lowered. The period of this research could be characterized by a substantial growth of different art advisors who offer their services at various conditions (periodical fee, fee as percentage of the work, a salary). Some art advisors are hired to build complete collections. The terms “art advisor” and “dealer” are sometimes used as synonyms.

The tasks of the next actor active in the art field, the curator, vary and just as varied is the description of this profession. Curators are individuals who claim the expertise to define the relevancy of works and who organize exhibitions in public as well as in private exhibition spaces. In the past, most of the curators used to be employed as staff members by institutions such as public museums or exhibition spaces. In that case, the curator was responsible for the care and documentation of the

49 Rubalcaba-Bermejo, Cuadrado-Roura 1995; Eckstein 2006; Barragan 2008; Yoge, Grund 2011; Mazzurana, Schulthuis, 2013; McAndrew 2013; Morgner 2013.
50 McAndrew 2011.
51 McAndrew 2011: 27.
collection, interpretation and justification of the collection to the audience by organizing exhibitions and publications, and by completing the collection through acquisitions.

The position of curators has changed as the museum system started to change during the post-war period.\textsuperscript{52} The recent transformations have been the subject of many studies.\textsuperscript{53} During the last decade, a new group of independent curators, or freelance curators, emerged, who can be hired for a specific exhibition, also by private collectors, and who, mostly, do not engage in a long-term relationship with an institution. The model of the independent curator has been the Swiss born Hans Ulrich Obrist, who, as a highly active and knowledgeable curator, has organized contemporary art exhibitions and lectures worldwide and enjoys a star status comparable with the ones of the popular artists. He regularly publishes interviews with artists, works as the main curator of the Serpentine Gallery in London and as a freelance curator for numerous institutions, and often participates in talks during various art fairs and art events.\textsuperscript{54}

There is a distinction between curators appointed by an institution and carrying responsibility for the collection (institutional curator) and independent curators who are mostly concerned with making exhibitions (freelance curators). The last category has become very appealing, especially to young people, thanks to its casual character, the possible global dimensions of this profession and the social capital it can generate. Today, curators function as important gatekeepers by claiming the right vision in the art field and selecting artists who possibly matter for the discourse. Many curators have become visible through accessible publications such as choosing the pivotal works of the last 25 years, choosing interesting emerging artists or by presenting their best artists or best exhibitions in important magazines such as \textit{Artforum} or \textit{Frieze}.\textsuperscript{55}

Art critics comment mostly in a written form on separate art works, exhibitions, artists, art events and collections; by doing so, they interpret them, present them to the public and make (or do not make) judgments on art. Similar to the position of the curator, the art critic can also be employed by a journal or newspaper, or work as a freelancer. The art critics’ position in the consecration of artists and valorization of artworks has been changing in the new millennium. Many publications on their position and function emerged, especially addressing the difficult position the critic fulfills nowadays and the weakness of art criticism.\textsuperscript{56}

The public takes a marginal position in this research. This term refers to the anonymous mass of art consumers who either consider viewing art as part of their cultural behavior or who sporadically come in contact with art.\textsuperscript{57} No difference between the audience and the public will be made, although these terms can be endowed with different meanings.\textsuperscript{58}

Part of the artistic network is formed by scholars. Those are academic specialists and researchers in the field of art history, art theory, philosophy, sociology,
economy and others, who are involved in the contemporary art discourse through their research or teaching. The changing position of the discipline of art history itself has been addressed in some recent studies. Scholars have been essential in the production of the art historical discourse, although their dominant position in this regard has been shifting.

Data and methods

The focus of this research lies on certain social and artistic phenomena linked to the art field in general and the collector in particular. This subject, therefore, requires methods that have originated from art history, art theory and sociology, while concepts and theories shaped in other fields such as economy, philosophy or psychology will be used only sporadically. The use of data and methodologies from various disciplines is unavoidable for a research that moves between different disciplines, and that aims to highlight and explain phenomena that are not limited to one field.

This research is art historical, since it has used art historical methodologies in order to address artistic transformations as of the end of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century. The analyses of activities and positions of contemporary artists were conducted taking into account constructions of the notion of the artists in the art historical traditions. The changing position of the viewer and the status of the artwork, which have both been of importance to contemporary collectors, have been analyzed in the shifting art theoretical context of the 1990s.

The research is sociological, as it studies the habitus of collectors, their social interactions with other actors and their positions in the art field. For the sociological analysis, a combination of the interpretative and positivistic methods has been used. Positivistic methods have been applied in collecting and presenting quantitative data regarding, for instance, auction results, lists of private museums, locations of Top Collectors or data coming from fair catalogues. Qualitative data obtained through interviewing collectors, observing them or collecting their statements and opinions, have been interpreted in order to come to a deeper understanding of the life worlds they inhabit.

Simultaneously, also observations that cannot be quantified have been treated as information sources. Figures as much as anecdotal evidences illustrate various feelings and convictions of actors that have been permeating and informing the art field. Observations and opinions of the participants have not been tested for their rightness or accuracy; their significance lies within the fact that they enable me to reconstruct the ideological or social context in which collectors function.

Most figures mentioned in the financial reports on the art market, including the yearly reports issued by the economist Claire McAndrew, can only be considered as rough estimations. That is to say that the available data have been based on actual auctions and dealer sales figures obtained through Artnet, as well as on projections based on the results from polling. Data on the primary and secondary market sales are often not available or not precise, whereas the majority of private deals and gallery transactions are simply unknown. Many information sources cannot be considered as reliable; for example, the reported sales figures during the international fairs tend to be manipulated.

\textsuperscript{59} Belting 2011.

\textsuperscript{60} McAndrew 2011: 21.
The research is partially based on study of relevant literature, partially on various articles from newspapers, journals and the Internet and partially on qualitative empirical findings. All kinds of data that give an access to collectors’ world have been used, including the Baer F axt, an information source that provides news about auctions, people and art market, which is not officially obtained. The material provided by the media and popular books has been considered as accounts of the public image of collectors without falling into the fallacy of treating it as an accurate description of their actual behavior.

The research consists of several analyses on data that have directly and indirectly addressed international collectors or could add to the understanding of their behavior. The analyses of the home locations of important collectors and their private museums have been conducted on the basis of the data that have been published in American journals *Art Reviews* and the *2013 BMW Independent Collectors Guide*, which lists private museum and spaces, and *Larry’s List*, a company which was set up in 2012 to gather and sell online personal data on collectors and their artistic preferences.61 For the analyses of the motives of collectors with regard to art as investment of passion, the study *Profit or Pleasure. Exploring the Motivations Behind Treasure Trends*, which Barclays Ledbury Research conducted in 2012, was of importance. An investment of passion refers to rare, luxury, collectable items such as art, antiques, wine, jewelry or luxury cars, which the buyers buy for consumption and investment purposes while they are also passionate about owning and enjoying them.62 For this study, 2000 HNWIs and owners of treasures from 17 countries around the world have been interviewed in January and February 2012, of which the findings have been completed by interviews with academics and experts.

Of assistance was the research on collectors *Collecting in the Digital Age. International Collectors Survey by AXA Art*, published in 2014. The survey was conducted online in January and February 2013, with 972 respondents from the United States, Germany, France, the United Kingdom and Switzerland, in order to investigate collectors’ profiles and conduct. The findings of the abovementioned surveys will sometimes be used in this research, although as indications only, since they have not specifically investigated collectors of contemporary art but focused on collectors of treasures instead. The studies executed by the company Scorpio Partnership, which produces reports on the wealth industry, have also been taken as a source.63

For the research, several specific data analyses have been performed. In order to find out collectors’ motives when they are discovering artists, two age categories have been studied: the very young artists—younger than 33—and artists in the pension age—older than 64. With the intention of finding out collectors’ possible inclinations for art as investments and their interest in young artists, auction results of Christie’s in London and New York in the period between 2001 and 2013 have been analyzed. This auction house was chosen because it was the leader in the art market in the period of research. New York and London were selected as these locations are now the most important places for the trading of North-Western art. The data that were gathered from the Christie’s website formed the basis for various analyses that

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61 www.larryslist.com
63 www.scorpiopartnership.com
enabled to map the fluctuation and numbers of works sold at auctions, as well as the popularity of certain artists.

The qualitative empirical part has been based on three main types of data: participant observations, interviews and conversations with more than two-hundred actors from the art field, such as collectors, artists, gallery owners, curators, museum directors, auction house employees, fair organizers, dealers, advisors and art critics.64

The collectors who participated in the study represent various age groups, both sexes, numerous nationalities and positions in the art market; all of them consider themselves collectors, which implies awareness of their activities. For the research, 20 collectors have been interviewed through in-depth interviews and 38 collectors have been approached through recurring conversations. In relation to collectors, 54 artists have been interviewed in depth, as well as two auctioneers, a director of a big fair, an art consultant, five gallery owners, two museum directors, a dealer and an art critic. The interviews were executed without a questionnaire but have addressed the same topics related to collecting, such as motives and personal history of collecting, relation to artists, galleries and institutions, ideas about sharing the collection with others, sources on information on art, modes of acquisitions and their attitude toward selling and cultural responsibility.

For the understanding of the mechanisms of the behavior of collectors, the interviews were as important as my various recurrent conversations with collectors and other actors in the art field. Some conversations were made possible by coincidence, such as sitting together during a dinner, an encounter at a fair or a visit to a collector’s home. Being an insider in the art market was of a great value to discovering facts and attitudes that may not have been shared in a formal interview.

The majority of the collectors involved in this research have been men, which suggests dominance of male collectors, although opinions about this subject vary.65 This suggestion matches the findings of the Research of AXA Insurance Company from 2014, which claimed that stated male collectors dominate the field of collecting, including that of contemporary art.66 The Barclays research on HNWI owners of treasures mentioned that the position of women is strengthening, but there were no findings with regard to art specifically.67 A quantitative division between men and women collectors, however, is difficult to make, all the more since collectors often mention their partner as co-collector, even though, practically, only one makes the decisions.

As for age, most investigated collectors were 40 and older. Although numerous actors mentioned that new collectors entering the art field have become younger in comparison to the collectors in the past, a few studies on collectors have supported the implication of the age category as found in this research. The majority of collectors owning fine art paintings and sculptures, according to the Barclays Research, appeared to be 55 years and older.68 However, these statistics do not include the more contemporary art forms such as installations or video, which makes the data incomplete. The AXA Research concluded that the majority of collectors-

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64 Throughout this book, the masculine form has been used for both, feminine and male actors. It has been done only for the sake of the clarity of the text and the convenience of reading while the female and male actors have been treated equally.
65 Susan Pearce stated that collecting, in general, is more typical for women than for men (1998: 172), but art might be a special field where men are more represented than women. Wuggenig 2011: 74.
68 Barclays 2012: 17.
respondents was between 40-59 years old (50%), while collectors younger than 40 made up only 16%. However, the young collectors had preference for contemporary art.

The research only investigates private collectors since corporate and institutional collectors follow different strategies, which relate to companies’ social positioning and marketing. Although the acquisition programs of corporate collectors have contributed to the development of the art market, their ideology, their strategies and decision-making vary from the personal choices and individually made decisions by private collectors. The recent high auctions prices have been driven almost entirely by private collectors, who do not need to justify their expenses to relevant supervising bodies such as boards of directors, owners or governmental administrations.

The opinions, ideas and practices of several specific collectors will be unfolded in depth in consecutive chapters. Other collectors will only be mentioned when relevant for the subject of a specific chapter without describing their profile in depth. For each collector, her or his profession is mentioned, and in most cases the year of their birth; if not, the collector did not make the information available. For other actors mentioned in the research, their date of birth will be mentioned only if relevant for the subject. Most of the participants are mentioned by name with the exception of actors who have not given the approval for publication of their specific statements or comments.

I had the opportunity to interview in depth well-known artists and collectors thanks to my work as an art journalist and art advisor. Those artists and collectors were approached for personal interviews, many of which were published in international art and fashion magazines and newspapers such as Zoo Magazine, Die Welt am Sonntag or l’Officiel. As editor for the documentary film about the transformation in the art field, The Next Big Thing (2014), produced by the director and producer Frank van den Engel (Zeppers Productions), I was able to interview a few important international collectors and other actors who, as active participants, have been reflecting on the contemporary art field. Some other interviews were conducted by Frank van den Engel with my assistance as researcher and co-interviewer.

Immersing myself in the art world in the various functions of collector, gallerist, art journalist and art advisor provided me with a direct experience and an understanding of questions, issues and concepts, which form the context in which these actors operate. The anthropological method of “going native” has sometimes been associated with a possible lack of objectivity of the researcher. I have attempted to avoid this deficiency by taking various positions in the art world so that I was permanently shifting my perspectives without losing myself in one role.

The qualitative empirical part also included participant observations in real time, such as visits to various museums and gallery exhibitions in many European and American cities, as well as visits to various art events such art fairs in Basel, Miami, Paris, London, New York, Milan and Berlin, Biennales in Venice and Berlin as of 2007, Dokumenta in Kassel in 2007 and 2012 and the yearly Gallery Weekends in Berlin and Amsterdam. Those events have been a source of many observations on the

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69 AXA Art Insurance 2014: 5.
70 The situation in the Netherlands was described and analyzed by, among others, Kempers 1994; Heftig, Kempers 1994; Hecht 2009, 2010; Kuyvenhoven 2011.
71 The supervisors of the research have the names of the involved persons at their disposal.
72 Kanuha 1999; Fuller 2004.
behavior of different actors and on the functioning of various artistic concepts in relation to collectors. As a collector and art advisor myself, I could also participate in private collectors trips, visit the homes of private collectors and host other collectors in my home.

The data presented in this book are up to date as of November 2014. That the art field changes rapidly was proven by the fact that, during the process of writing, the functions of the actors involved in the research had to be corrected into ex-auctioneer, ex-curator or ex-director several times. Although the research concentrates on contemporary art, in the data coming from auction houses, contemporary art is categorized along with post-war art: art made after 1945. The choice has been made to use the currency that is mentioned in each particular data, which means that, in this research, Euro and US Dollars have been used both without exchanging.
1. Collecting and its histories

Introduction

Many extensive studies on collecting and collectors saw the light during the 20th century, especially in the post-war period until today. As the subject has many different aspects, there has been a huge spectrum on publications approaching the phenomenon of collecting from numerous angles.

These publications will be divided into several categories. The first group of studies focuses on collecting as a historical and social phenomenon situated in a delineated historical context. Books in the second category analyze collecting as a form of human behavior and, by doing so, apply theories originating from philosophy and psychology. Another type of literature constitutes studies that concentrate on the praxis of collecting, sorts of collectibles and modes of their presentations in various periods and locations.

Biographies of specific collectors and books written by collectors themselves form an important contribution to understanding the mechanisms of collecting. In such publications, emotions, passions and interests of individuals shed light on the mechanisms of collecting in general. Finally, a popular literature on art collecting has emerged, including self-help books on how to collect, which contain tips from collectors and various actors from the art world.73

The review of the literature on collecting will be preceded by a short summary of seminal studies that addressed the social value of ownership of cultural goods.

Socio-historical research on collecting

Collectors own art works, which possess certain economical, cultural and social value. The social value of owning and distinction through cultural goods has been analyzed from the 19th century onward, where a few social theoreticians addressed this subject in a different than normative way. Gabriel de Tarde claimed that the societal development has been based on imitation, while Herbert Spencer applied the idea of social Darwinism to human behavior.74 Other sociologists such as Georg Simmel explored the distinction through fashion; Max Weber investigated the issue of status, while Werner Sombart proposed a relationship between luxury and growth of capitalism.75

Of great value were the analyses of the American sociologist and economist Thorsten Veblen, who presented the taste in the American society in his time as a social construct that referred to class differences. In his book The Theory of Leisure Class (1994 [1899]), expensiveness, individual display and conspicuous consumption formed, for him, important factors when analyzing social values of objects in the new capital orientated society.76 Veblen coined several concepts that have been used until

73 The brief sketch of the publications below can only mention several titles, leaving many valuable books addressing this subject in each category uncovered. Other historical studies on collecting: Rigby, Rigby 1944; Taylor 1948; Rheims 1961; Holst 1967; Haskell, Penny 1981; Alsop 1982; Thurn 1994; Halle 1995.
74 Tarde 1962; 1993 (1890); Spencer 1893. An instructive summary of the sociological thinkers that were involved with the theme of social distinction has been recently offered by the French sociologist Jean-Pierre Daloz. Daloz 2010: 16-25.
75 Simmel 1957 (1904); Weber 1951 (1915); Roth, Wittich 1978 (1968); Sombart 1967 (1913).
76 He noticed, for example, how price and beauty tend to mix up in the new canon of taste:
today, such as the just mentioned “conspicuous consumption,” but also “leisure class,” “vicarious display” or “pecuniary emulation.”

Imitation behavior was also part of a theory proposed by the sociologist Norbert Elias, who investigated court manners and etiquette in his extensive historical study *The Civilisation Process*. He mentioned the obligation to live ostentatiously and competitive display as part of the court rationality, since luxury and refinement are achieved through exclusion of others. Another important form of distinction formed according to him emotional self-control.

In the course of the 20th century, other theories were proposed, in which the connection between the perception of art and changing social formations were brought to attention. For a long time, therefore, art production and reception have been considered in connection to social processes, which informed the habitus of related actors including collectors.

The first category investigating collecting in a fixed socio-historical context consists of academic studies that attempted to explain this process as part of broader social transformations. The art historian Kathleen Wren Christian conducted an extensive research on antiquities collecting in Rome from the fourteenth century until 1527. Having investigated the rising interest in the collecting of antique works with the focus on sculpture, Christian ascertained that, in the early modern period, the objects previously considered as pagan idols turned into “works of art” that were worthy of display. In her opinion, the interest in collecting contributed to the invention of fictive genealogies for these objects.

The Renaissance, although in a broader time spectrum, was also the period of research for the Dutch art sociologist Bram Kempers, who investigated the social dynamics between artists and their patrons and commissioners between the 13th and 16th century. He found out that activities and commissions of aristocratic, as well as of wealthy merchant patrons, to a large extent contributed to the professionalization of artists.

Certain aspects of the patronage during the Counter-Reformation period in Italy were analyzed by the Dutch art historian Arnold Witte in his study on various activities of Cardinal Odoardo Farnese. Using iconography as one of his research instruments, Witte reconstructed social motives of the cardinal and consequently the importance of institutional networks in the early 17th Rome, including the Catholic Church and secular authorities.

The American art historian Jonathan Brown delivered a wide-ranging study about collecting paintings in Europe in the 17th century, with the focus on royal and

“Any valuable object in order to appeal to our sense of beauty must conform to the requirements of beauty and of expensiveness… But this is not all. Beyond this the canon of expensiveness also affects our tastes in such a way as to inextricably blend the features of expensiveness, in our appreciation, with the beautiful features of the object, and to subsume the resultant effect under the head of an appreciation of beauty. The marks of expensiveness come to be accepted as beautiful features of the expensive articles.” Veblen 1994 (1899): 130.

The applicability of the theory of Veblen has been the subject of criticism since the 1980s. The main points were the restrictiveness of the “trickle down” system that Veblen proposed, no need for the consumption to be conspicuous and the change in consumption behavior that is no longer determined by the social class but by the life style. Trigg 2001: 99.

78 Among others Fry 1926; Benjamin 1934; Shapiro 1936; Greenberg 1939; Adorno, Horkheimer 1944; Debord 1967; Maciunas 1962.
80 Christian 2010.
82 Witte 2008.
aristocratic collectors. In his opinion, it was in the 17th century when the symbolic value of a painting started to become uncoupled from its material component. Collecting activities at the courts in London, Paris, Brussels and Madrid were of crucial importance to this process as the aristocratic collectors endowed their paintings with their social prestige so that art works could become bearers of meaning and markers of cultural enlightenment.\(^{83}\)

French collectors and patrons were reviewed in studies of power shifts in the French painting market by the already mentioned research by White & White.\(^{84}\) The authors described how the early Salon buyers, including the king, the aristocracy, the nobles and the so-called the noblesse de robe (nobles thanks to their function and not by birth), gave way to the bourgeoisie in the course of the 19th century. Simultaneously, the power of the Academy waned in favor of the artist-dealer-critic system with the collector as the end consumer. The mediation of the avant-garde ideologies and art works to collectors, especially in France and Germany at the end of the 19th century, was the focus of the research of the American art historian Robert Jensen. His extensive studies concentrated on the marketing of the modernist ideas in Europe, but he also addressed the increasing presence and influence of American collectors on the European art market from the end of the 19th century onward.\(^{85}\)

Several studies have been dedicated to the development of the tradition of collecting in the United States. The English turned American art historian William G. Constable attempted to analyze political, economic, cultural and social aspects of American collecting in the period between the end of the 18th century and 1913. Stressing the lack of a collecting tradition in the new country the United States in comparison to Europe, he underlined the pioneering role of early collectors such as James Jackson Jarves, who amassed a collection of Flemish Primitives in the 19th century, at that time a highly disregarded artistic movement. Constable further demonstrated that commercial and industrial development of American cities after the Civil War went hand in hand with an interest in culture, so the ideas of patronage and collecting resulted in the rise of art museums in Chicago, Cincinnati, Boston, Washington and other cities, which were all based on private funds.\(^{86}\)

A detailed and wide-ranging history of the shifts in importance in European and American collecting has been delivered by the American art journalist Robert Watson, who described rises, falls and careers of collectors, galleries and auction houses from the 19th century until the end of the 1980s.\(^{87}\) American collecting and its relation to the European market has also been addressed in two publications by the American art journalist Cynthia Saltzman. Using the history of one painting—Portrait of Dr Gachet by Vincent van Gogh—she presented shifts in the art market as well as a changing vision on art and collecting spanning the period of a 100 years: from the moment of Van Gogh’s creation of the painting in 1890 until its notorious sale at auction in 1990.\(^{88}\) In her more recent publication, Saltzman gave record of highly competitive activities of wealthy American industrialists such as J.P. Morgan, H.O. Havemeyer, Henry Gurdon Marquand or Isabella Stewart Gardner, who were

\(^{83}\) Brown 1995. Earlier studies on the interest in painting in England were offered by Herrmann 1972 and Pears 1988.

\(^{84}\) White, White 1993 (1961). The social reception and art buyers of Impressionism in Paris were addressed in several publications, Clark 1999.

\(^{85}\) Jensen 1994.

\(^{86}\) Constable 1975.

\(^{87}\) Watson 1992.

\(^{88}\) Saltzman 1999.
conquering works of European Old Masters between the 1880s and 1920s. She described their relationship to dealers and advisors, financial manipulations and their desire to have the best collection in artistic, as well as in monetary, terms.89

Collecting aspects in the inter-war period in Europe have been mentioned in several publications about shifts in the art market and changing conditions of art production and reception, which concentrated on the most important cities of art, Paris, Berlin, and London.90 The Dutch art historians Ellinoor Bergvelt, Huibert Schijff, Bram Kempers and Eduard van Voolen presented in their research the complicated access to collecting for the Jewish collectors who were active between 1885 and 1940 in the Netherlands, mainly in Amsterdam. Although officially equal to other Dutch citizens, the Jewish collectors faced restrictions in acquiring membership to associations or committees, which, however, did not hinder their ambitions in building up ambitious collections that reflected the taste of that time.91

The German art historian Gregor Langfeld focused on the reception of German art during the first half of the 20th century in two specific geographical locations, the Netherlands and New York. By analyzing museum policies with regard to German art in the Netherlands between 1919 and 1964, he gave attention also to collectors, their acquisitions, donations and general attitude toward the German art and avant-garde art in general.92 Langfeld’s study on reception of German art in New York between 1904 and 1956 unfolded complex relationships of American collectors toward the German avant-garde art, which has often been politically and not only artistically motivated.93

Collectors were mentioned in passing as one of the players in the New York expanding avant-garde art scene between 1945 and 1985, which was investigated by the American art sociologist Diana Crane. She considered the role of collectors especially important in case of Pop Art, as the position of the critics toward this movement was hostile. Crane noticed that art collecting in the 1960s had become “a profitable if risky investment” and that this aspect became noticeable in the art market.94 Next to Pop Art, she considered Photorealism and Neo-Expressionism as two other movements that relied more on the support of collectors and dealers and less on critics.

The German art journalist Willy Bongard focused on the collecting of Pop Art in New York during the 1960s. Commercialization of the American art market was one of the focuses of his book, for which he blamed a new generation of collectors of Pop Art, who were no longer culture-oriented wealthy people.95 For the book, he interviewed, among others, Robert Scull, a New York taxi entrepreneur, and Leon Kraushaar, a self-made insurance broker, who, according to Bongard, were exemplary for the new collector, combining their interest for collecting with the possibility of enjoying increases in the economic value of their holdings.96

The monograph on gallery owner Leo Castelli by the French art historian Annie Cohen-Solal offered insights into the life of collectors as well.97 Castelli played

90 Gee 1981; Mai, Paret (eds) 1993; Gee 1999; Feilchenfeldt 2006; Fletcher, Helmreich (eds) 2011; Kuhrau, Wolff-Thomsen (eds) 2011; Gee 2011.
93 Langfeld 2011.
94 Crane 1987: 38.
95 Bongard 1967.
97 Cohen-Solal 2010.
a central role in promoting Pop Art and Minimal Art to collectors in New York, but also to new wealthy entrepreneurs in other part of the United States. While explaining the gallerist’s modus operandi and his approach to collectors, Cohen-Solal let several of the latter pass in review, among others Leon Kraushaar from New York, Burton Tremaine from Cleveland or Eli Broad from Detroit and Los Angeles.  

The French sociologist Raymonde Moulin investigated the French painting market in the 1960s on the basis of interviews with more than a hundred participants, including eighty collectors. Interested in mapping the structures that governed the market, she classified French collectors according to their motivations for collecting. French collectors as part of the art market were readdressed as well in her later investigation during the 1980s, and other studies in which collectors in general were treated as part of the value system of art.

In a compilation of essays, the sociologists Ulf Wuggenig and Heike Munder offered insights into the functioning of the art field at the end of the 20th century and in the new millennium. Wuggenig investigated the motives behind collecting, conducted on the basis of questionnaires in Paris, Hamburg and Vienna in the 1990s, and Zürich in 2009/2010. He categorized the motives of his 44 respondents in five categories and noticed the opposition between the philanthropic/intrinsic versus the commercial and prestige oriented goals of collectors.

An inventory of the state of collecting in the Netherlands during the 1990s was the subject of the dissertation by the Dutch art historian Renée Steenbergen. She observed a great diversity amongst Dutch collectors, since some of them belonged to the wealthy families, some were students and some even lived on disability allowance. Most of them were collecting art by spending little money, while only a very small group of about one thousand collectors was using international auction houses and dealers. In her later publication, Steenbergen focused on the Dutch private patronage in the field of arts.

A form of human behavior

The books that belong to the second category of publications aim at analyzing the phenomenon of collecting as such, the fascination with owning, hoarding and showing objects. The German philosopher Walter Benjamin investigated this subject in his well-known essay ‘Unpacking my Library’ (1931). Analyzing his passion for collecting and owning books, Benjamin called the life of a collector a dialectic tension between order and disorder and the ownership “the most intimate relationship that one can have to the objects.”

A philosophical attempt at understanding collecting formed the basis of the book by the German philosopher Manfred Sommer, in which he confronted ideas of aesthetic keeping versus economic disappearance. The German art critic and

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101 Munder, Wuggenig (eds) 2012.
103 Steenbergen 2002.
104 Steenbergen 2008.
107 Sommer 1999.
essayist Heinz-Norbert Jocks compared the behavior of collectors with religious rituals and procedures. Similar to religion, the art field has created its rituals for the true believers. From this perspective, he considered auctions as forms of pilgrimage to the holy place of the auction houses where ritual slaughters of collectors paying too much or being omitted take place. 108

Psychological motives for collecting were shortly analyzed by Sigmund Freud at the beginning of the 20th century. He connected the desire for collecting with the wish to regain the loss of control that had occurred in early childhood: a collector longs to replace the once lost objects with new ones. 109 Recent psychological studies on collecting investigate its compulsive variant, treating it as a phenomenon related to malfunctions of certain cognitive domains. 110

The American marketing expert Russell Belk connected the popularity of collecting in the United States with the rise of consumer culture. From his perspective, collecting is a specialized form of consumer behavior that is able to fetishize, anthropomorphize and personify objects. 111

British art historians Roger Cardinal and John Elsner have put together historical, theoretical and descriptive essays by twelve authors aiming at finding the very nature of collecting. In extreme cases, processes of collecting can turn into obsessions and determine collectors’ lives. They treated collecting as a very broad phenomenon and did not limit their investigations to one historical period nor to one sort of collectible objects. The book offered philosophical approaches to the classification of motives of collecting by Jean Baudrillard, the idea on collecting by Sigmund Freud, next to the depiction of the collecting life of the English architect Sir John Soane, who tended to turn all his activities into collecting. 112

Types of collectibles and modes of display

Another category of the literature on collecting concerns itself with collectibles, the modes of collecting and the relations between collectors and institutions. 113 In her various publications, the British historian and museologist Susan Pearce investigated the relationship between European museums and collectors and the social value of private collecting. 114 According to her findings, museums play a very important role for collectors, as they can offer them social prestige and an idea of immortality. Pearce further edited a comprehensive collection of essays and studies on the processes of European collecting. In four volumes, the collecting practices of various kinds were discussed, spanning the period between the ancient Greece and the end of the 20th century. 115 Subjects such as Roman acquisitions of Greek art, the gift exchange, preservation of natural species and collecting jewels from India illuminated specific aspects of the European culture related to Christianity, Enlightenment or imperialism in a very broad sense.

The variety of collecting approaches was presented as well in a publication edited by the Dutch art historians Ellinoor Bergvelt, Deborah Meijers and Mieke...
Rijnders. Thirteen art historians addressed numerous collections that were built up in Europe between 1450 and 2000 by rulers, various private collectors and later also states. As the title suggests, the authors aimed at presenting all possible presentation modes, from private cabinets through public museums. The discussed collectibles, including artworks, curiosities, naturalia and objects gathered because of scientific fascinations of their owners, were categorized according to various motives and modes of collecting and ways of presentation. The book gives special attention to the institution of the museum and its policies of display.\(^\text{116}\)

The variety of collecting approaches and collectibles through the ages are also addressed in *The Journal of the History of Collections*, which publishes various studies on motives and contents of collections. Each issue offers articles on diverse subjects related to collecting and collectors originating from various historical periods and geographical locations. Besides publications that aim at mapping the collecting activities in a broad perspective, the journal aspires to be a wide-ranging source of various data and information related to historical and current processes of collecting.\(^\text{117}\)

Collectors as principled characters

The fourth category of publications related to collecting constitutes books about and by collectors.\(^\text{118}\) An early biography of a collector came from the hand of the American Wayne Andrews, who described the life and passion of the railroad entrepreneur William Henry Vanderbilt. As one of the early American collectors who became fascinated by the idea of art and collecting, Vanderbilt could—thanks to the inherited wealth—massively buy American artists such as Samuel Coleman, but later also French artists such as Jean-Louis Edward Meissonier, Jean-François Millet or Rosa Bonheur. The biography also mentioned that Vanderbilt showed his collection in a gallery space next to his house on Fifth Avenue in New York and even published a catalogue of his collection for the invited visitors.\(^\text{119}\)

A well-known publication on collectors’ lives is the book by the art critic Alice Saarinen that described several important American collectors from the end of the 19\(^{th}\) century until the 1950s. By examining personal stories of American collectors from Isabella Stewart Gardner and J.P. Morgan to Peggy Guggenheim and the Rockefellers, Saarinen presented the development of the tradition of collecting in the American society that went hand in hand with the emergence of public museums and the presence of American collectors in the European market.\(^\text{120}\) She was aware that her choice was subjective, as the collectors who were discussed represented a great variety of social origins and types; the common denominator was, for her, the obsession with collecting, which was expressed in their acquisitions and patronage.\(^\text{121}\)

The biography of the German Hilla Rebay described Rebay as a Wagnerian figure, who failed as an artist but succeeded in getting important acquisitions for the Guggenheim Museum in New York, which she led from its opening in 1939 until

\(^{116}\) Bergvelt, Meijers, Rijnders 1993.  
\(^{117}\) http://jhc.oxfordjournals.org  
\(^{119}\) Andrews 1941: 221-227.  
\(^{120}\) Saarinen 1959.  
\(^{121}\) Saarinen 1959: xx,
1952. Insights into the art market, collecting and the German society as a whole during the inter-war period provided the biography of Alfred Flechtheim, a Jewish German dealer, collector and publisher. The biography of the Dutch versatile entrepreneur D. G. van Beuningen focused, to a large extent, also on his collecting activities in the Netherlands in the first half of the 20th century.

The sociologist Heinz Bude offered a biography of another important German collector, Peter Ludwig, whose collections later formed the foundation for several museums in Europe, including the Ludwig Museum that was set up on the basis of his donations in 1976 in Cologne. Bude unfolded the life of Ludwig as a chocolate manufacturer and a leading entrepreneur in Germany during the 1970s and 1980s and a passionate buyer of various objects and art works. The book described the transformation of Ludwig from buyer of objects from historical periods and genres such as antiquity, the Middle Ages, the Baroque, Rococo and Meissner porcelain, into “Mr More,” which is how he was called in New York because of his numerous acquisitions of Pop Art, and his becoming the central figure for modern European collecting.

Many books presented certain selections of collectors and their collections that have been based on various criteria such as collectors from one country, women collectors or subjective choices of authors. The British art historian and ex-director of Sotheby’s UK, James Stourton, classified the best collectors who were active in the period after 1945. Books presenting one collection or a selection of works from a collection are often related to an exhibition of the collection in a public or a private museum. A catalogue issued for the exhibition of drawings donated to Centre Pompidou by Daniel and Florence Guerlain exemplified such an approach: it presents the collecting couple, their lives and their activities through an extensive interview. The catalogue for the exhibition of works from the collection of the Dutch collector Martin Visser included several essays on his work as a designer and his visionary discoveries. There are books devoted to founders of specific museums, such as the biographies of collectors William and Henry Walters, whose collections of manuscripts, antiques, paintings and ceramics laid the foundations for the Walters Museum in Baltimore.

Some collectors decided to speak about their collecting activities themselves. The well-known American writer Gertrude Stein described her fascination with new artistic movements and acquisitions in the period between 1903 and 1933 in her book *Autobiography of Alice Toklas*. Using her partner Toklas as the story-teller, Stein gave a personal account of her stay in Paris where she became friends with artists such as Picasso, Cézanne, Matisse and the dealer Ambroise Vollard. Stein showed how, during this time, she and her brother were actively acquiring art works and building a

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122 Lukach 1983.
123 Dascher 2011.
125 Bude 1993: 133.
129 Storvse 2013.
130 Bosch, Kreijn 2012.
131 Johnston 1999.
collection that would help introduce Cubism and other European avant-garde artists to the United States when Stein returned.132

Of the same tradition is the autobiography of the famous collector and patron Peggy Guggenheim: *Out of the Century: Confession of an Art Addict.* Writing about her tumultuous personal life, she gave insights into the bohemian artistic worlds in Paris before the WW2 and in New York after that, where she set up her gallery Art of This Century. The book is full of observations and anecdotes from the life of the extravagant wealthy collector who, as the wife of the artist Max Ernst and a friend or patron to artists such as Duchamp, Pollock or Dali, could witness artistic transformations in that time and participate by promoting the artists through her galleries and by forming her art collection. In her first edition, published in 1960, Guggenheim commented that art collectors of that time were motivated by snobbism or big business and not by a true passion such as hers.133

Directly and humorously referring to Guggenheim’s autobiography was *Confession of a Poor Collector*, a book written by the American collector Eugene Schwartz, who, together with his wife Barbara, amassed a big collection of art of his time.134 Schwartz was a successful advertising copywriter, a graduate from Colombia University and author of several books, including this book on collecting in which he wittily described how to establish a great collection without spending a lot of money.135 Money did play an important role in the life of collector Paul Getty, who in his autobiography gave an account of his collecting activities as one of the wealthiest men in the world.136

Collector Charles Saatchi picked a playful approach in his book *My Name is Charles Saatchi and I’m an Artoholic* from 2009. Presenting himself and his personal taste in short provocative sentences, he responded to questions that were put to him by journalists, critics and a bigger audience.137 German collector Harald Falckenberg chose for a more theoretical and psychoanalytical approach in presenting his collecting attitude, which he supported by personal portraits of several artists from his collection.138

**Collecting light**

Several informative and entertaining publications addressed collectors and collecting in the new millennium. Sociologist Sarah Thornton described, in a very accessible and anecdotal way, seven categories of important events from the art world, such as fairs, auctions or biennales, in which collectors take part and play an important role.139 Mechanisms of auctions, the way dealers act, marketing techniques of artists as well as the psychology of collectors were the subject of the book by the American economist Don Thompson.140 The recently released book by German ex-art advisor Helge Achenbach offered insider views on collectors’ taste by revealing details of

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132 Stein 2013 (1933).
133 Guggenheim 1997 (1960).
134 In 1987, *The New York Magazine* put the couple on the cover as collectors who personified the boom of the 1980s.
135 Schwartz 1970.
137 Saatchi 2009.
140 Thompson 2008.
transactions that he was involved in from the 1970s until 2014, mainly in Rheinland.141

Lastly, many books have been published that give advice on how to collect in general. They promise to give insights into secrets of collecting by asking the well-known collectors in which way they have established their collections and what recommendation they would offer to others.142 In addition, many various blogs and websites on collecting appear on the Internet, which provide all kinds of information and services for experienced and novice collectors, such as The Art Collector or Independent Collectors.143

Conclusion

Mechanisms and traditions of collecting have been investigated in various studies and addressed in numerous older and recent publications. The broad temporal and spatial spectrum that these publications cover demonstrates the diversity of collecting practices and their collective and individual meanings. While academic studies deliver time and again new insights into the historical significance of collecting and patronage, new understandings of human behavior shed light on possible psychological motives on collecting. Books on individual collectors and their passions not only reveal exciting personal stories, but also function as inspirations for new collectors seeking role models.

The great variety of this literature cultivates and strengthens the tradition of collecting and, by doing so, contributes to its social and cultural meaningfulness. Studies on collecting and all its possible aspects form part of the cultural capital of the field, which, as a result, enhances the social relevance of collecting.

This research remains in the longstanding literature tradition as well. As it attempts to give an overview of collecting activities of a certain group of people, placed in an art historical and social context, it can be classified into the first category of studies.

141 Achenbach 2014.
142 Among others Hunter 2006; Buck, Greer 2006; Bamberger 2007; West 2007; Völcker 2007; Davis 2009; McAndrew 2010; McManus Jansen 2010; Boll 2011; Findlay 2012; Bennigsen, Gludowacz, Hagen 2009; Lindemann 2006; Wagner, Westreich 2013.
2. Artistic transformations at the end of the 20th century

Introduction

In the new millennium, contemporary art has become popular among large audiences. Articles about artists and the art market are to be found in the daily press; contemporary art exhibitions and events generate attention from many visitors and the popularity of some artists seems almost comparable to that of celebrated actors and models. In his song *Picasso Baby*, the famous American rapper Jay-Z sings about his desire to have a Koons and sit at Christie’s,\(^{144}\) Ai Weiwei dances the Gangnam Style hit shaking loose handcuffs, while Marina Abramovic advises Lady Gaga on how to find her inner balance.\(^{145}\) Popular fashion magazines can no longer be imagined without reviews on art and conversations with artists, while art bloggers advise their readers on what to wear to a gallery walk.\(^{146}\) The German gallery owner Gerd Harry Lybke summarizes the general feeling as follows:

> We are more recognized by the general public. Years before, it was a closed club of collectors, curators and museum professionals. Now, art has become more so much more popular, like music, theater and opera…most people know what is going on in the art business, they go to the fairs and the galleries—they no longer hesitate to enter a gallery.\(^{147}\)

Although this remark sounds somehow exaggerated, since a visit to an art gallery is, for the majority of the North-Western population, still not part of ordinary cultural life, it does express the general perception of the growing popularity of contemporary art among collectors, but also among the average culture consumers. Contemporary art has become more visible thanks to the proliferation of products such as books on collecting and on the art market, art investment guidebooks, websites, journals and blogs about art, collectors clubs, friends organizations and art market advisory firms. The general experience of art nowadays has been compared to the popularity of music in the 1960s, as being a global phenomenon tied to culture and cultural change.\(^{148}\)

The market for contemporary art has grown extensively, resulting in more participants, more supply, more demand, higher turnover and new record prices. This growth suggests that collecting contemporary art has become increasingly popular. Before collectors’ interest in contemporary art will be analyzed in the next chapters, I will first turn my attention to a number of artistic processes that have contributed to rendering contemporary art attractive to its buyers. The question will be asked which of the art historical and art theoretical shifts that have become manifest at the end of the 20th century have been essential in formulating artistic and art theoretical conditions for contemporary collecting. This short description focuses only on

\(^{144}\) “Oh, what a feeling, fuck it, I want a billion
Jeff Koons balloons, I just wanna blow up
Condos in my condos, I wanna row of
Christie’s with my missy, live at the MOMA”


\(^{146}\) For example, in the German *Vogue* in March 2014, the artist Urs Fischer transformed photos by the fashion photographer Mario Testino into sculptures, while the painter Albert Oehlen reworked a photograph of Paris Hilton: 275-279, 330-331.

\(^{147}\) Lindemann 2006: 96.

\(^{148}\) Murphy, Raghavendra 2013.
processes and transformations in the art field that have been relevant for the development of collectors’ interests, and will, therefore, leave many other important phenomena uncovered. The observed artistic shifts have been used to signal certain developments without claiming that they are universally applicable.

**Going public: artistic strategies of Jeff Koons and Damien Hirst**

At the end of the 20th century, several artistic transformations were taking place that contributed to the redefining of the position of artists in society. The concept of the avant-garde, which implicated a new beginning from a historical zero point, as well as a rethinking of existing conventions of art and society, has been disappearing as an artistic ideal. The model of the principled and radical breach with existing artistic traditions in favor of the new implied historical consciousness and a deliberate, although negative, engagement with the past. This kind of engagement has, apparently, lost its attraction to artists. This development can also be seen as part of the crisis of the utopian postulates of modernism, which contemporary art is said to undermine. While lacking in avant-garde ambitions to change prevailing artistic, social and moral orders, most artists accept the situation they live in and propose inclusion instead of destruction.

The practice of the American artist Jeff Koons exemplifies how this concept has been developing toward the audience and buyers of his art. In his series *New Hoover Convertible* (1980), Koons presented vacuum cleaners elevated to the status of sculptures. He, thus, used the concept of the readymade and gave to these ordinary consumer objects an aura of desirability. His series *Luxury and Degradation* (1986) consisted of paintings of various consumer products in an inviting advertising manner and editions that mimicked luxury objects fabricated in stainless steel. His strategy has been seen as an advocacy for kitsch that had turned against the hypocrisies of the so-called good taste of the middle class. However, from the beginning of his career, Koons expressed an awareness of the multi-interpretable language that he was using, which, for him, was necessary in order to address different levels of the public. In one of his interviews, he stated that: “To me the issue of being able to capture a general audience and also have the art stay on the highest orders is of great interest.”

Koons’s intention was to stay in tune with the conceptual vocabulary, but, at the same time, to attract the ordinary public. He compared his art with television, which everybody can watch and in which everybody can find the right involvement for themselves. Whereby some viewers will stay only on the sensational level, some will proceed to the more intellectual one, which will lead to ever-increasing abstract ideas. The purpose of Koons is not to bash his viewers, but to include them. By

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149 Bankowsky, Gingeras, Wood 2009: 30. A similar idea on the avant-garde ideal has been ushered by the art historian Wolfgang Ullrich. He mentioned this lack of avant-garde ideas as one of the dominant features of current artistic practice. Lecture: *Kreativitätsdämmerung* in Haus am Waldsee, Berlin, 13.07.2013. The notion of contemporary avant-garde has remained a very complex issue about which there is currently no consensus. Birnbaum, Butler, Cotter, Curiger, Enwezor, Gioni, Nickas, Obrist 2011: 455-463.

150 Hopkins 2000: 197.

151 Rebentisch 2013: 267.


154 Koons in Robbins 1986: 1053.

doing so, he wanted to create art that is autonomous and conceptual yet popular and conceived according to commercial rules, all at the same time. His all-inclusive attitude resulted in works in which he wanted his viewers “to feel that they are perfect.”\textsuperscript{157}

This concept of the friendly attitude of the artist does not mean that the artworks avoided confrontation, though. This is exemplified by Koons’ Made in Heaven (1989) series, which consisted of pornographic photographs of him with his future wife, the Italian porn star Cicciolina. This series addressed another important artistic concept that manifested itself in that time, namely the public performance of the persona of the artist to his audience. Publicity and mass media became an important part of the communication between the artist and his public. Simultaneously, or perhaps consequently, the audience became increasingly interested in artists and their lives.\textsuperscript{158} The marriage between Koons and Cicciolina in 1990 and the public consummation of their sexual relationship was the ultimate response to this interest. Koons the artist turned himself into an art object by creating the myth around his publicly available persona.\textsuperscript{159}

This public availability did not make the artist part of the mainstream ethos. Despite his public presence, Koons stayed separated from the conventional audience by cultivating his special position outside the general moral and social codes, as his marriage demonstrated. This model, which remains in the tradition of the bohemian artist, allows the artist to play with notions of outsiders according to mainstream social rules, but outsiders who are friendly instead of destructive, who enjoy a full media visibility. These personal stories add to artists’ popularity, as for the consumers of their art they can form the unique selling point for their entire body of works.\textsuperscript{160}

From the early period of his career onward, Koons managed to attract the attention of a few important collectors, such as the American construction and insurance entrepreneur Eli Broad (born 1933) from Detroit and Los Angeles, and Peter Brant (born 1947), now a film producer and owner of the successful publishing concern Brant Publications. Another early buyer of Koons’ works was the Greek Cypriot industrialist and constructor Dakis Joannou (born 1939). Joannou, whose collection is considered to be one of the most valuable in the world, mentioned that the beginning of his collecting activities was the moment when he saw Koons’s work One Ball Total Equilibrium Tank (1985).\textsuperscript{161}

At the end of the 1980s, similar processes regarding the going public of the persona of the artist were taking place in London. The recession and its consequences for the art market in the United Kingdom were harsher and longer-lasting than in other European countries. Many traditional art buyers experienced huge problems

\textsuperscript{156} Such an affirmative attitude of the artist was discussed in the writings of the art critic Benjamin Buchloh. He explained such an integrative attitude by theoretical concepts of the cultural industry as proposed by Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer in 1947 and the idea of the society of spectacle introduced by Guy Debord in 1967. Buchloh 2000. Buchloh in Foster, Krauss, Bois, Buchloh 2004: 673.

\textsuperscript{157} In conversation with Hans Ulrich Obrist and Julia Peyton in 2009. Wood 2009: 49.

\textsuperscript{158} Between 1980 and 1983, Warhol was the only artist to be mentioned in the New York Post, besides some notices on art. As from 1984, artists and art related people started to be mentioned more frequently (Julian Schnabel, Mary Boon, Jean Michel Basquiat), to become the focus of attention of the big public in the second part of the 1980s. Rothkopf 2009: 38-39.

\textsuperscript{159} Godfrey 1998: 394-395.

\textsuperscript{160} An example of such an attitude forms the actions of the German artist Jonathan Meese who used the Nazi salute in his performances and was taken to court for this in 2013.

\textsuperscript{161} Lindemann 2006: 174.
because of the financial difficulties of the insurance company Lloyd’s of London in which they were engaged as investors. However, in this very crisis environment, which was characterized by the lack of gallery networks and an absence of a critical mass of collectors interested in contemporary art, some artists sought to become entrepreneurs themselves, taking their own responsibility for the marketing of their works.

The entrepreneurial variant of the artistic practice is not new; in the post-war period, it was advocated by Andy Warhol from the 1960s onward. Warhol communicated to his public the wish to become a business artist and considered being good in business as the most fascinating form of art. He was actively working on the promotion of his works through his studio The Factory, which has acquired a legendary reputation; he produced large numbers of serial works with a branding quality and took commissions from his customers. Damien Hirst could also be placed in this tradition, since, from the beginning of his practice, he took to operating as curator and dealer of his own works and the works of his co-students at the Goldsmiths College of Art in London. In 1988, he organized the exhibition Freeze in a Docklands warehouse in London, which marked the beginning of the group that was later called Young British Artists. In the absence of galleries interested in their works, he also took care of publicity and this created visibility of the works to possible collectors.

In their works, the YBA artists were often looking for a “killer concept,” a spectacular invention that would be able to catch the attention of a larger audience, often through a shock effect. This attitude could be observed in many works by the artists already very early: for the Freeze exhibition, Matt Collishaw made the light-box photo installation, Bullet Hole (1988), that featured an enlarged reproduction of a bloody head wound taken over from a pathology handbook. The work A Thousand Years by Hirst, which was shown in the exhibition Gambler in 1990 in London, was a large bisected glass cabinet in which flies were incubating in a box on the one side and then, flying over to the other side through a hole in the separating wall to feed on a real decaying cow’s head only to get electrocuted by Insect-o-Cutors hanging from the ceiling of the case. Marc Quinn’s Self is a sculpture of the head of the artist made out of his own frozen blood (1991). Those and many other works could be characterized by their sensational character, resourceful concept and appealing visual language, while using subjects that often related to mass culture. Comparable to the practice of Koons, they were crossing the traditional boundaries between art, marketing and entertainment.

The year 1995 was symbolic for the group as a confirmation of their importance. In that year, Damien Hirst won the prestigious Turner Prize, which is an annual prize awarded to a British artist under the age of 50 worth GBP 20,000. The finalists of the prize received mostly a lot of publicity. Hirst received the prize for his curatorship and for his contribution to Some Went Mad, Some Ran Away, a touring exhibition that was showed, among others places, in the Serpentine Gallery in London, and for the presentation of his work in the United Kingdom and abroad.

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162 Herchenröder 2000: 35.
164 Warhol 1975: 92.
166 The philosophical dimension of the interdependency between art and advertisement and the emotional numbing in the post-modern times using Andy Warhol as an example has been discussed by the American literary critic Frederic Jameson. Jameson 1991.
During the Turner Prize exhibition, he presented his work *Mother and Child, Divided*, which consisted of four glass cases full of formaldehyde, each containing one half of a cow or one half of a calf. Critics and the public either vehemently defended or attacked the work. The defenders stressed the role of art to provoke a public debate and release emotions or they pointed at the universal big themes touched on by Hirst. His critics accused him of being sensationalist and lacking content.\(^{167}\) Hirst has constantly underlined the importance of the viewer’s interpretation while avoiding imposing meaning on a work himself; a strategy that has been used by other artists as well, such as Douglas Gordon, Sarah Lucas or Sam Taylor-Wood.\(^{168}\)

Hirst’s recognition through the Turner Prize was followed by his exhibition in New York in 1996 at the Gagosian Gallery, which was very well received by the American public.\(^{169}\) The art of the Young British Artists and their what was called “fuck you” attitude, their excessive drinking and drug abuse became their trademark, along with themes such as mortality and commerce and their affirmative attitude toward money. Their image has been summarized in the name *Cool Britannia*, which started being used in 1997.\(^{170}\) Their popularity persisted despite the critique of their supposedly marketable naiveté, constructed and thus not authentic artist-personalities and one-liners instead of theory.\(^{171}\) Most of the artists from the group were well known at that time and were able to earn their living with art.

An important factor for the position of the YBA was the early and visible support of Charles Saatchi, who bought and showed their works as early as the late 1980s. Saatchi (born 1943) comes from a wealthy Jewish-Iraqi family that immigrated to London in the 1940s where he grew up and graduated from the London College of Communication. Together with his brother, he set up the successful advertisement company Saatchi & Saatchi. It became the world’s largest advertisement agency in the 1980s, having, among other things, successfully advised on two election campaigns for Margaret Thatcher. Interested in collecting at a young age (he used to collect comics and jukeboxes), Saatchi started actively collecting Minimal Art in the 1970s, also thanks to his then wife, the writer Doris Lockhart. His interest in collecting further resulted in acquisitions of works from the School of London and younger artists such as the American Julian Schnabel.

In 1985, he opened his *Saatchi Gallery* in the north of London, which was intended to house his collection and be open to the public. At the same time, he was also active as a Tate committee member. For the London art students, the Saatchi gallery was an important place to learn about cutting-edge artists such as Jeff Koons, of whose work Saatchi was one of the early buyers.\(^{172}\) Saatchi often bought works in bulk and became a hoped-for buyer for many young British artists, even though he was also heavily criticized because of his massive sales.\(^{173}\) Many of the artists whose works he bought did not go on to have a very successful career, which shows that although Saatchi was important for the development and visibility of the YBAs, he was only one of the factors for the creation of their hype.\(^{174}\)

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167 Button 2005: 112.
173 In 1989, he sold many works from his collections, which elicited heavily criticism from artists. Watson: 434.
The exhibition *Sensation. Young British Artists from the Saatchi Collection* held in 1997 in the Royal Academy of Arts in London marked the public acceptance of the aesthetics and artistic strategies of the Young British Artists and it heralded the victory of the private collector Saatchi in the public space. More than 300,000 visitors saw the exhibition despite warnings that works might be experienced as distasteful. The exhibition caused public turmoil and the resignation of a few academics because of the work *Mira* (1995) by Marcus Harvey, which depicted a child murderer rendered by patterns made with the casts of children’s hands. The exhibition later traveled on to important museums in Berlin and New York, causing controversy and interest in both cities because of the explicit sex, violence and blasphemous elements in various works, and again attracting a large audience at the same time.\(^{175}\) The exhibition still has a special status among collectors: in 2013, a Dutch collector mentioned that nothing has happened in contemporary art since then, while, in 2014, a German collector stated that the visit to this exhibition made him want to collect contemporary art because the works were so fresh and appealing.\(^{176}\)

In 1998, after the *Sensation* exhibition, Saatchi sold 128 works from his collection through a Christie’s auction. As reason for selling he gave his wish to financially support art students in four art schools in London.\(^{177}\) Apparently, only a small part of the pledged proceeds were used for scholarships and the rest was reportedly employed for new acquisition.\(^{178}\) Saatchi did collaborate with public institutions such as the Royal Academy of Art and donated works to British public institutions such as the Art Council Collection in the later period.\(^{179}\)

Ingenious creative ideas that are related to strategies from the field of advertising have remained visible in the artistic practices until today. Contemporary art has been called post-conceptual in the sense of coming after and permeated by Conceptual art.\(^{180}\) This approach has been called neo-conceptual but, in comparison with the Conceptual practice of the 1960s, it is said to be more striking while less problematic and more elegant and less discomforting.\(^{181}\) This practice has been associated with a lack of depth or stylistic revivalism and cultural relativism.\(^{182}\) Their intellectual appearance allegedly camouflages their function as commercial goods.\(^{183}\)

Despite these accusations, this formal and conceptual attitude has thrived ever since. An artist who has been exploring this attitude since the 1990s is Maurizio Cattelan (born 1960), who has made works such as *La Nona Ora* (1999)—an installation that shows pope John Paul II being hit by a meteorite. This work captures attention through its easily accessible humor—a pope who is hit by a meteorite from the sky could be seen as a good joke. At the same time, it provokes the values of the church by playing out religion against science and by mocking the celebrated persona of the pope.

Many of today’s artists continue to use arresting concepts with cultural references whereby the visual appearance of the works play with the strategies of advertisement. This approach applied Danh Vo (born 1974) when remaking the Statue

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177 Vogel 1998.
178 Kramer 1999.
of Liberty in a collection of made-to-scale copper pieces (*We, the People*, 2012-2013). The work consists of about 280 parts, which function as works in their own right. Each part is made out of large shiny copper parts of the well-known figure; it is recognizable, but also a puzzle. The artist tore one of the most important symbols of Western ideology to pieces, and the parts are now spread around the world in private and museum collections. Vo, who was born in Vietnam and grew up in Denmark, explores the issues and the legacy of Western colonialism. Therefore, this work can be interpreted on many layers according to the recipe of Koons: visual pleasure, resourcefulness of ideas but also a social critique of Western colonial politics expressed by the exportation of symbols of Western hegemony. For some viewers, it may stay on the level of entertainment and visual pleasure, for others, it can be a reservoir of critical social and cultural thoughts. Theaster Gates (born 1973) uses fire hoses as the material for his works (*Civil Rights Tapestries*, 2012). Found fire hoses are folded and rolled into gilt box frames, which makes them look like geometrically structured abstract paintings. On another meaning level, however, the African American Gates intended to point at civil rights struggles, especially in Alabama in 1963, where fire hoses were used against protesters. Once again, the work offers various forms of engagement, on both an aesthetic and the social level.

**Empowerment of the viewer**

Along with the rise of the public availability of artists and the layered engagement offered by works of art, the viewer has been given more discursive responsibility in the creation of the meaning of an artwork. The strengthening of the position of the art consumer versus the art producer means, indirectly, a reinforcement of the collector. Before and during the 1970s, for many artists in the small art field, the opinions of critics and their peer artists were most important, while the audience at large was a lesser factor when creating a work.¹⁸⁴ The artists Phyllida Barlow and Thomas Schütte mentioned that “attracting the public” as an artistic notion appeared only in the 1980s, and that it had not been the concern of the artists before that time. For them, it was not relevant for whom the works were made.¹⁸⁵ It was during the 1980s that many artists changed their focus to the beholder as a possible constructor of meaning. Some curators called this shift in the position of artist versus viewer the new essential element in experiencing art.¹⁸⁶ This attitude forms a vital aspect of the artistic practice right up until today, which is evident in the interviews that I conducted with leading internationally operating artists in the course of this research. Of the 54 interviewed, only three artists—AA Bronson, Ai Weiwei, Artur Zmijewski—claimed that they wanted to employ art on a large scale to change power structures in society and accredited art with avant-garde ambitions. The overwhelming majority of artists considered art to be a proposition to think about various social issues and a platform to engage between

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¹⁸⁴ Chuck Close, interview New York, 9 May 2013. Jack Whitten, interview Antwerp, 25 October 2012. Wojciech Fangor, interview Warsaw, 16 March 2014. Markus Lüpertz, interview Berlin, 24 July 2014. ¹⁸⁵ Barlow 2010: 9; Thomas Schütte, interview, Düsseldorf, 20 March 2010 and January 2013. ¹⁸⁶ This shift was mentioned during the talk that was aimed at analyzing art between 1986 and 2010 between the internationally operating curators Birnbaum, D., Butler, C., Cotter, S., Curiger, B., Okwui Enwezor, Gioni, Nickas, B., Obrist. The complexity of the notion of the avant-garde and the lack of the dominant ideology have been mentioned as the very aspects that have determined the artistic production during this period as well. Birnbaum, Butler, Cotter, Curiger, Enwezor, Gioni, Nickas, Obrist 2011: 455-463.
the artwork and the viewer. Most of them have stressed that there is no pressure from the side of the maker to force the viewer to think in a fixed direction. The artist does not claim an authority with regard to interpretation of the work but makes instead a friendly suggestion to the viewer who is given the freedom to decide on the meaning himself.

There are a few theoretical concepts that may shed some light on the processes of the involvement of the viewer and the recent empowerment of his position. The French post-structural theory, which questioned the authorship and originality of the author, gave more power to the viewer by releasing the artwork from the subjectivity of the artist. The authenticity of the author has been questioned in favor of the power of the viewer, who can be as much part of certain structures as the maker of a work. This theme has been artistically explored by the so-called Picture Generation artists during the 1980s, whose creative originality insinuated that the artist is only someone who shuffles existing elements such as language and image. By applying techniques of appropriation and using images from popular culture, the artists decentered the notion of the author and operated in the field of common visual language. Another consequence of the post-structural approaches has been the awareness of a variety of possible meanings, which undermined one clear artistic position that should be unquestionably legible to the viewer.

The position of the viewer was supported by the emergence of new artistic media. In the footsteps of the ideological emphasis that the public was given in the Minimal art or Performance art, the viewer has become the central point of reference in the installation, an artistic medium that became popular during the 1990s. The English art historian Claire Bishop proposed that installation art turned the experience of the viewer into its fundamental idea and structured its existence around him. The increasing significance of the viewer in relation to installation art seems to function on a reciprocal basis: processes of activating the viewer contributed to the emergence of installation art as much as installation art has contributed to the further emancipation of the viewer.

The theoretical and media related perspectives provided a few insights into the increasing strength of the viewer. In the territory of philosophy and cultural studies, the shift of power to the viewer has been noticed as well. Within philosophical aesthetics, the modernist concept of the primacy of the work over the experience is considered to have been reversed with the aesthetic experience having gained primacy over the work. Art has been declared to come into existence through the experience of it, while the materiality of the work forms a very important component of that experience. According to this concept, the contemporary artwork is seen as being open, allowing an unlimited number of interpretations by the viewer. As it has been

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187 Involvement of the viewer does, here, not refer to the notion of the participation of the viewer, a model of art production that has become popular thanks to activities of artists defined as relational aesthetics. Bourriaud 2002.
188 Roland Barthes stated that “the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the dead of the Author.” Barthes 1977: 147.
190 Ellegood 2013: 88.
192 Bishop 2005: 8-11.
193 Rebentisch 2013: 269.
194 Rebentisch 2013: 274. There are different opinions about how open works of art really are. Umberto Eco suggested that the participation of the viewer in a work is partially calculated by the artist. Eco 1989: 1-23.
claimed that an objective artwork does not exist, the meaning that a work creates relates back to the viewer and to the situation in which the viewer experiences it. The adequacy of these opinions will not be addressed here; what is of importance is that the realm of philosophical aesthetics has attempted to engage with the conceptual strength of the viewer toward the work and the artist.

From the perspective of visual culture, the concept that tried to explain the increasing importance of the position of the viewer was the *pictorial turn*, put forward by the American art historian W.J.T. Mitchell in 1994. According to Mitchell, the pictorial turn was the shift from a language-based to an image-based culture. This concept discards art historical methodologies of image analysis and endows the viewer with the task of conscious examination of all kinds of representations. Another shift that has been used to clarify the increasing importance of the viewer was the *performative turn*, a supposed transformation to the culture as performance, which promised an emancipation of the viewer. According to this theory, the concept of performance could be used as a methodological tool related to its ability to blur the boundaries between the viewer and the viewed.

These theoretical models are exemplary for the need of an explanation for the increasing emphasis that is placed on the viewer. They demonstrate that the growing openness of art works to interpretations of their meaning and the crucial role that has been given to the consumer has been noticed in many fields. The viewer has been given more freedom, whereas the works have become less strictly defined according to fixed categories or modes of interpretations.

It is not argued here that collectors in the past built their collections strictly following the prevalent art historical modes of interpretations. While art theory and art history constructed the discourses to which collectors could relate their acquisitions, many of them acquired artworks that they found interesting because of different, also personal, reasons. Meanwhile, the situation has changed as to the theoretical justification of collectors’ choices. The current theoretical framework, in principle, allows collectors free interpretations as part of the discourse.

**Broadening of art territory**

From the ideological perspective of art, the critical theory and theories of French post-structuralism, which, among other things, paved the way for the importance of the viewer, were experienced as dead around the mid-1990s. According to the opinions of many actors, there was no longer a need for them as an ideological context for art and its social analyses. Critical theory delivered, among others, the concepts of culture industry and the spectacle that defined notions about the position and meaning of art in society throughout the second half of the 20th century. Post-structural theory, which relativized the position of the artist as creator and questioned the ideas of authenticity and authorship, had been an important ideological aspect of some of the artistic practices in the 1980s. At a certain point, however, the validity of those concepts seemingly vanished and many actors observed an ideological vacuum, which has, to this day, not been filled with any other dominant ideological system. Art of the 1990s

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195 Rebentisch 2013: 272.
197 The founder of Performance Studies, Dwight Conquergood, argued that performance has the innovative methodological strength that can reconstruct various expressions of culture and can disclose invisible mechanisms. Conquergood 1989: 83.
198 Dave Hickey, interview, Skype, 18 February 2013.
was claimed to be like the society of the 1990s: chaotic, anti-hierarchical and pluralistic.\textsuperscript{199} Although it seems paradoxical in view of the importance of post-structuralism for the reinforcement of the viewer, the disappearance of the relevancy of this theory has not changed the balance in favor of the author. Instead, it contributed further to the ideological void in which the viewer, and indirectly the collector, remains relieved from the obligation of operating in prescribed theoretical frameworks.

The status of explanatory art historical models, which had been changing as well, contributed to such theoretical freedom. An increasing number of different interpretation modes resulted in the term methodological eclecticism in the field of art history.\textsuperscript{200} Throughout the 20th century until today, four main art historical models for analysis of artistic production have been in use: the formalist/structural, the psychoanalytical, the social-historical and the post-modern model. However, several aspects of these models have been losing their validity at the end of the century, which resulted in uncertainty about convincing interpretations of meaning of newly made art and continuity of these types.\textsuperscript{201} The abovementioned models of the historical and neo avant-garde, which articulated and explained various social and formal aspects of art, have lost their popularity.\textsuperscript{202} The formalist method suffered under its disinterests in external factors, such as history or social embedding of art, especially during the 1990s when identity and post-colonial politics came into attention.\textsuperscript{203} The theory of medium specificity, which art critic Clement Greenberg advocated during the 1950s and 1960s, started to wane already in the course of the 1960s.\textsuperscript{204} It finally lost its authority due to various post-modern theories during the 1970s, which shifted attention into the discursive qualities of art. Another reason was the emergence of artistic practices that were difficult for formal analysis, such as Conceptual art.\textsuperscript{205} The emergence of new media, such as installation and use of pluralistic approaches from various disciplines, contributed further to the questioning of medium specificity as a legitimate method of interpretation of art.\textsuperscript{206} Thinking in terms of medium and its formal possibilities is, however, still part of the art historical debate and artistic practice.\textsuperscript{207} The incorporation of various disciplines into the art territory was a symptom, or perhaps an effect, of post-modern all-inclusive attitudes, which allowed for many standpoints to co-exist. In the 1990s, artists regularly experimented with art and design; in works of Pae White, Jorge Pardo, Tobias Rehberger or Andrea Zittel, design and art have melted together, which resulted in hybrid works that parasite on the visual languages from both disciplines and conceptual artistic solutions. The artistic collective Bernadette Corporation has infiltrated the fashion field from 1994 onward and incorporated various processes that originated from fashion into their art.

\textsuperscript{199} Bauman 1995: 56. The dominant economic ideology of the 1990s, capitalism, was declared the winner after the collapse of the Soviet-Union and the fall of the Berlin Wall. Fukuyama 1992.
\textsuperscript{200} Buchloh 2004: 22.
\textsuperscript{201} Foster, Krauss, Bois, Buchloh 2004.
\textsuperscript{202} Foster in Foster, Krauss, Bois, Buchloh 2004: 679.
\textsuperscript{203} Dumbadze, Hudson 2013: 71; Ellegood 2013: 84.
\textsuperscript{204} “Each art had to determine, through the operations peculiar to itself, the effect peculiar and exclusive to itself by doing this each art would, to be sure, narrow its area of competence but at the same time it would make its possession of this area all the more secure.” Greenberg 1965 (1960): 774-775.
\textsuperscript{205} Foster, Krauss, Bois, Buchloh 2004; Ellegood 2013: 87.
\textsuperscript{206} Hopkins 2000: 228.
\textsuperscript{207} Dumbadze, Hudson 2013: 70-71; Ellegood 2014.
The designation Bio Art appeared in 1997; it addressed the practice of working with live organisms in art using processes of biotechnology.

In France, the curator Nicolas Bourriaud has formulated a theory on relational aesthetics to denote an artistic attitude during the 1990s, in which sociability and artistically orchestrated human contact replaced the art object or made the art object dependant on conviviality.208 According to this concept, art works were considered as models for action or as relational objects through which one learns "to inhabit the world in a better way."209 Such works using relational aesthetics were shown in the exhibition Traffic in Bordeaux, curated by Bourriaud in 1996, which included works by Philippe Pareno, Maurizio Cattelan, Carsten Höller and Dominique Gonzalez Foerster.210 At the same time, a widening of the notion of artistic medium was taking place through new technical possibilities. Dokumenta X (1997), curated by the French curator Catherine David, put the new time media, such as video and Internet art, in the center of attention, to mention only a few examples of broadening artistic practices.

Parallel to those processes of expansion of art’s disciplinary limits, its geographical borders have also been questioned. In 1989, the much talked about exhibition Magiciens de la Terre in Paris offered a multicultural view on art by presenting a 100 artists from 40 different countries from outside the North-Western territory.211 Although an immediate effect of this exhibition was doubted, the need to expose other than Western points of view was proven.212 This multicultural nuanced point of view was also expressed during the 1998 Sao Paulo Biennale, curated by Paulo Herkenhoff and Adriano Pedrosa. Using the notion of cannibalism, they exhibited European and American art in order to present Brazil as incorporating European and native influences.213 The Documenta 11 in 2002, curated by the Nigerian-American Okwui Enwezor, was seen as the culmination of the expansion of the art world outside of Europe and North America.214 This large and innovative exhibition showed transnational positions of artists often working and originating from places outside the North-Western territory and with additional Platform events taking place in various parts of the world.215

Another opposition that has been declared obsolete was the difference between mainstream and underground cultures, which became manifest especially in the United States. In the 1990s, identity politics gained momentum after the AIDS crisis and the activism of feminists, as well as gays and other minorities found its expression in the works of Group Material, Act Up, Robbert Mapplethorpe and Andres Serrano.216 For the channeling of those developments, the Whitney Biennale in 1993 was considered to be important, since the event succeeded in drawing attention to works that originated from marginalized groups that were previously

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208 Bourriaud 2002. This practices have been seen in the tradition of earlier artistis such Joseph Beuys. Lerm Hayes, Walters 2011: 4.
209 Bourriaud 2002: 13
210 Traffic, CAPC Musée d’Art Contemporain de Bordeaux, 26 January – 24 March 1996.
212 Hopkins 2000: 222.
214 Althuiler 2014: 373.
215 Documenta 11, Kassel, 8 June – 15 September 2002. The platform events took place in Vienna, Berlin, New Delhi, St.Lucia, Lagos and Kassel.
hardly visible. Works by Lorna Simpson, Fred Wilson, Daniel J. Martinez, Jimmie Durham and Nan Goldin, showed social and multicultural complexities that addressed issues of race, gender, sexual preference and, to a lesser extent, class. These processes of the inclusion of underground subcultures in the mainstream culture and the expansion of the borders of the art territory were called the Zeitgeist of the 1990s.

Conclusion

During the 1990s, several important artistic transformations were taking place that, in the long run, have added to the attraction of collecting of contemporary art. Many of them are still ongoing. One of the dominant models of the artist has become the one of an attractive public figure that principally does not intend to threaten the social order. Instead, he offers works as vehicles of thoughts and ideas that the viewer can perceive on various self-chosen levels of aesthetic and intellectual engagement. Part of the artistic production resulted in visually attractive and conceptually entertaining works that did not require art historical knowledge from the viewer in order to become involved. The ideological position of the viewer, and indirectly the collector, has strengthened as the final meaning provider for works. This importance has been demonstrated by several theories from various disciplines that attempted to explain this process. While the territory of art has been broadening, dominant art historical models have been losing their authority for explaining the relevancy of art works. This created a critical diversity of opinions and left to the viewer, also in the person of the collector, the freedom of possible interpretations. The widening of the borders of art, the intertwining between mainstream culture and subcultures and a lack of dominant art historical and theoretical models have made art accessible and approachable for many. Collectors from different parts of the world are invited to enjoy art in the way they want, without any prescribed manner of interpretation and without the necessity of theoretical engagement.


Gioni 2013: 13. In 2013, the exhibition 1993: Experimental Jetset, Trash and No Star in New York attempted to investigate important phenomena that formed the American artistic field at the beginning of the 1990s.
3. Mapping global collecting

Introduction

The term “global art” is sometimes used as a synonym for contemporary art. Its common use suggests that the ideas and practice of collecting of contemporary art have spread throughout the world. Such an assumption seems logical, taking into account the visual and conceptual accessibility of contemporary art, worldwide dissemination of artistic events and the popularity of new tools that are offered by the Internet. They not only give worldwide access to all kinds of information and data, but also provide a global access to activities of galleries, auction houses and public and private institutions.

However, the mapping of geographical locations of internationally operating collectors, as well as the mapping of various institutional systems in which collectors function, showed a different picture. The analyses have demonstrated that collecting contemporary art is concentrated in the art hubs that have developed in the post-war period. Despite various sensational media reports, North America and Western Europe have remained the leading nuclei of collecting activities and have continued to define the mainstream collecting culture.

As the majority of internationally operating collectors will prove to belong to the North-Western network, an urgent question arises: why has their dominance been so persistent? The possible reasons for the slow progress of the expected globalization of collecting, which is partly understood as the inclusion of what used to be cultural peripheries into the mainstream of culture, will be looked into.

Collectors everywhere: facts and myths

According to the ex-CEO and President of Sotheby’s, Michael Ainslie, at the end of the 1980s, there were about 400,000 serious collectors worldwide who were spending at least $ 10,000 a year on art, and about 250-350 important collectors whose collections were worth more than one million US$. The development of collectors’ numbers has been difficult to quantify, as the data hardly exist. Auction houses were not prepared to give any information on the number of their clients. The American art historian organization Rediscovered Masters estimated the number of American collectors buying fine art in 2011 as 4 million, and 8 million art market participants worldwide. This estimation did not divide between different values of collections or types of collectibles. In the Netherlands, the number of collectors with collections worth between 100,000 and 500,000 Euro has been approximated in 2014 somewhere between 500 and 700, and there are a few hundred individuals with collections worth more than 500,000 Euro.

The numbers of visitors of the important art fairs provide an indication for the numbers of cosmopolitan collectors. In 2013, the Art Basel Fair was attended by

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220 There are different opinions about when globalization processes have started; Immanuel Wallerstein has proposed that this process has been going on for a long time already, such as from the 15th century onward when the process of colonization started; Christian Kravegna pointed the 80s of the 20th century as the beginning; the critic Yilmaz Dziewiar saw the Documenta 11 curated by Okwui Enwezor as the breaking point. Buchholz, Wuggenig 2005.
221 Watson 1992: 419.
222 Rediscovered Masters 2011.
223 Kunstweek 2014.
70,000 visitors in Basel, 75,000 in Miami Basel and 60,000 in Hong Kong.\textsuperscript{224} Taking into account that most cosmopolitan collectors try to visit Art Basel fairs but that the above numbers consist also of other art professionals and visitors, there could have been between 30,000 and 50,000 cosmopolitan collectors visiting each fair. As some of them visit two or three fairs, it could be assumed that they were attended by between 90,000 and 110,000 collectors. At the same time, there certainly are collectors who did not go there and have not been included in the abovementioned figures.

Other indications are drawn from the analyses of Claire McAndrew, who suggested that, in 2013, there were 600,000 millionaires who are mid-to-high level art collectors.\textsuperscript{225} As this number applies to all possible collectibles worldwide, the assumption will be made that only part of them collect North-Western contemporary art. Taking these figures and fair visitor numbers into consideration, it is proposed that there are between 200,000 to 300,000 cosmopolitan collectors in the world.

An evaluation of the countries where leading collectors are based showed their cosmopolitan orientation. Each year, the American journal Art News publishes a list with the so-called world’s top 200 collectors, which is eagerly read by many art collectors worldwide. The list is made on the basis of interviews with dealers, auctioneers, collectors, museum directors and curators. The auction houses, which do not release the names of their clients, are asked to rate collectors, who have been proposed by the magazine, on a scale from one to four, one being “very, very important.”\textsuperscript{226} This classification is not convincing, since only known collectors can be placed on the checking list for the auction houses; Art News cannot acquire sales details from all galleries, while many big collectors buy discreetly and escape the attention of the media. Yet, since the same criteria are applied for every yearly list, a comparison between 2001 and 2013 can provide some clues, even though it cannot be treated as a solid classification.

Many collectors consider several places their home. Richard Chang (New York, Beijing) and Patricia Phelps de Cisneros and Gustavo A. Cisneros (Caracas, Venezuela; Dominican Republic; New York) exemplify the global orientation of their collections and their involvement in various institutions. Richard Chang, owner of the investment firm Tira Holding in Hong Kong, is professionally active as investor in, among others, real estate, media and fashion. He has been the board member of New York’s MoMA PS1 and the Whitney Museum, a patron of London’s Southbank Centre, a trustee of the Royal Academy Trust and a member of Tate’s International Council and the Asia Pacific Acquisitions Committee. His Domus Collection, which was launched in 2008, focuses on a mix of Western and Eastern contemporary art. Chang started collecting in the 1990s with what he called “a small Picasso,” but soon became fascinated by contemporary art, which he has been collecting on a big scale from 2006 onward. The breaking moment came when he started visiting art fairs, which led him to become a determined and almost professional collector. Today, he prefers sculpture-oriented works by artists such as Matthew Day Jackson, Anselm Kiefer, Damien Hirst, Anish Kapoor and Tatsuo Miyajima as much as contemporary Chinese art, since he intends to make a bridge between the west and Asia.\textsuperscript{227}

The collection of the de Cisneros couple, based in New York and Caracas, includes contemporary, modern and colonial art with a focus on Latin American

\textsuperscript{224} Art Basel Website; Artavista.de
\textsuperscript{225} McAndrew 2014: 17.
\textsuperscript{226} Art News, Summer 2001: 135.
\textsuperscript{227} Rappolt 2013a: 60.
artists. Gustavo Cisneros (born 1945 in Venezuela) has enjoyed his education in the United States before he joined the family business. As the owner of media and entertainment company The Cisneros Group, he belongs to the wealthiest people in the world according to the classifications provided by the magazine Forbes.228 As declared, the Foundation de Cisneros’ mission is to enhance the visibility and meaning of Latin American art. For this purpose, the collectors claim to provide many loans to various museums, such as the recent long-term loan of 34 works to the Museum Reina Sofia in Madrid. This loan includes works by Lygia Clark, Helio Oiticica, Jesus Soto and Mira Schendel. Patricia de Cisneros has been, among others, a Trustee of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, a member of the International Council and the Latin American Acquisitions Committee of the Tate in London, an International Trustee of the Fundación Amigos del Museo del Prado in Madrid, a member of the Berggruen Museum’s International Council in Berlin and the American Friends of the Fondation Beyeler in Basel.

Analyzing the lists further, and taking the first place mentioned as the home location, most of the collectors have been based in the United States in 2001 as well as in 2013 (Table I, II and III). Remarkably enough, the number of American collectors has remained the same in 2001 and in 2013: 97, or 48.5%. The number of collectors from Asia and South America did change: while Asia, including Qatar and Turkey, accounted 6 top collectors (3%) in 2001, their number increased to 16 (8%) in 2013. In South America, the number was 7 in 2001 (3.5%) versus 8 in 2013 (4%). The number of European collectors, excluding Russia and the Ukraine, added up to 38.5% in 2001, 33% in 2013. The figures could, therefore, be seen as a sign of a global spreading of the idea of collecting contemporary art, but show at the same time the unquestionable dominance of, firstly, the American and, secondly, the Western collectors, who, together, constitute 81.5% of the top collectors in 2013. It is noticeable that many of them are engaged in the most important art institutions in the North-Western hemisphere.

Hanna Schouwink, a partner of the David Zwirner gallery, mentioned that there is a permanent influx of new collectors into their gallery, but that the main collectors originate from America and Europe:

We do two fairs in Brasil, one in Hongkong, obviously various fairs in Europe…we have clients everywhere but predominantly in America and Europe, and many in Latin America and Asia as well, some also in the Middle East, but fewer.229

This remark is in line with the findings from the analyses of the Art News: the number of collectors from outside North America and Western Europe is growing, but those two regions have remained the main sources of new and existing collectors.230

228 Dolan, Kroll 2014.
229 Interview, New York, 11 May 2013.
230 The dominancy of the European and US collectors has also been stated in other studies: Wuggenig 2011: 68; Velthuis 2012: 36.
TABLE I

*ART NEWS* TOP COLLECTORS HOME LOCATIONS IN 2001

![Map of top collectors home locations in 2001]

TABLE II

*ART NEWS* TOP COLLECTORS HOME LOCATIONS IN 2013

![Map of top collectors home locations in 2013]
The next step is to analyze the geographical locations of private museums and spaces that have been included in *The BMW Collectors Guide by Independent Collectors 2013*. The guide listed 216 private museums or private spaces worldwide open to the public, which show contemporary art or contemporary in combination with modern art. Intended as a yearly publication, it was put together for the first time in 2012 by four art journalists, the Germans Nicole Büsing, Heiko Klaas and Christiane Meixner.
and the Italian Silvia Anna Barila. The journalists composed the list of spaces on the basis of conversations with artists, curators, gallery owners, critics, writers and the online organizations of Independent Collectors. The chosen collectors did not have to be members of the Independent Collectors.

Table IV shows that most private spaces are open in Germany (55), followed by the United States (26) and Italy (24). The private museums and spaces in Germany are concentrated mostly in two regions: Berlin has 17 private spaces and the south of Germany has 24. After the fall of the Wall in 1989, Berlin developed into one of the most important artistic cities in Europe and the image cultivated by the city has prompted collectors to show their collection there, or to start one. The Sammlung Boros, which Christian Boros (born 1964) opened to the public in 2008 in a monumental bunker from WW2, exemplifies the attitude of the collector, who has used the appealing image of the rough and artistically challenging image of Berlin. Boros, who studied communication design before he set up his advertisement company in 1990, bought the bunker for 1 Euro from the city of Berlin in 2003 and developed the historically loaded venue—it used to be a well-known Technoclub after the Wende—into a place for the private collection that he started in the 1990s. The bunker, with its thick grey walls without windows and artificial light, is a challenging place for showing art and the collector used exactly this aspect as a unique selling point in the presentation of the collection. Between 2008 and 2012, 120,000 visitors visited the bunker.\(^{231}\) Boros and his wife show contemporary works of artists who are often represented by Berlin galleries, such as Olafur Eliasson and Ai Weiwei from the Gallery Neugerriemschin, Alicja Kwade and Michael Sailstorfer from the Gallery Johann König and Anselm Reyle and Katja Strunz from Contemporary Fine Arts.

The large amount of museums in the south of Germany has been explained by the makers of The BMW Guide as owing to the long-term tradition of collecting in this prosperous region, with many family-run enterprises and collections founded already during the 1960s and 1970s.\(^{232}\) The people in this region had a strong interest in Konkrete Kunst, Conceptual Art and Minimal Art, which remains visible in museums such as Kunsthalle Weishaupt (collection started in the 1960s with works by Josef Albers, extended through Mark Rothko to Liam Gillick; opened to the public in 2007), Sammlung FER (started in the 1960s with works of among others Carl Andre, Sol LeWitt, Robert Barry; opened to the public in 2009) in Ulm or Museum Ritter in Waldenbuch (from Josef Albers, Zero Group to Paola Pivi; opened to the public in 2005).

The data confirm that North-Western collectors are more present than collectors from other parts of the world. From the 216 private museums and spaces, 172 are located in Western Europe and North America, which is 79.6%. Striking is the big number of German museums in comparison to other countries. Eastern Europe forms 3.7% of the total, Asia, including the Middle East, 9.3%, South America 4.6%, Africa 0.8% and Australia 1.9%.

\(^{231}\) [http://www.sammlung-boros.de/bunker-berlin.html](http://www.sammlung-boros.de/bunker-berlin.html)

\(^{232}\) Klaas and Büsing in conversation with the author, Berlin, 14 November 2013.
TABLE IV

_BWM Collectors Guide_ geographical locations of private museums and spaces

Locations of private museums and spaces as per BMW Guide 2013

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<td>Australia</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From a methodological point of view, the results presented by *The BMW Guide* should be treated carefully. It is remarkable that, according to one Italian and three German journalists, Germany has the largest number of private museums, with Italy coming in 3rd place. The personal preferences of the authors, their expertise, which focuses on specific regions, as well as the agenda of the authors could have somehow influenced the results as well, even though there is no need to question the strong position of American and Western European collectors.

Another source on the geographical locations of the active collectors is Larry’s List. The company Larry’s List, which was set up in 2012, attempts to gather personal data on collectors and their collecting taste worldwide; it organizes rankings and makes profiles of collectors, which are accessible at a fee starting at US$ 9.50 per profile. The company has also been approaching collectors for interviews and information and, according to their website, they had 3142 collectors’ profiles from 70 countries as of 15 April 2014. The company claims to have researchers who concentrate on data on private collectors worldwide, using 20 languages and more than 27,000 sources.\(^{233}\)

Larry’s List includes collectors of all art genres and historical periods, not just contemporary art, and only uses data on collectors that can be publicly found on the Internet. According to the founder of the company Magnus Resch, Asian and South American collectors are more inclined to put information about their collections online than collectors from other parts of the world. Moreover, the interest of the company concentrates on collectors from these continents, which is one of the reasons why Hong Kong is the home base of the company.\(^{234}\)

**TABLE V**

*LARRY’S LIST COLLECTORS LIST PER COUNTRY AS PER 15\(^{th}\) APRIL 2014.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Collectors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>865</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{233}\) [www.larryslist.com](http://www.larryslist.com)

\(^{234}\) Conversation, Berlin, September 2014.
In the data of Larry’s List, the American collectors represent the majority (27.5%), followed by German (8%), British (8%), Chinese (4.6%) and Brazilian collectors (4.5%). In total, the North-Western collectors account for 65%, again a dominant position even when taking into account that Larry’s List attempts to focus on global collecting and approaches and researches collectors from all over the world.

A research conducted on the basis of the data of Larry’s List demonstrated that collectors tend to collect works of artists originating from the same countries as they are. This preference was explained within the context of a home bias, a phenomenon known from the financial sector that denotes a preference to investments in the home country, in this case to collect artists from the known environment. Private collectors worldwide turned out to be strongly home biased. Although Africans and Asians show this tendency most of all, followed by the South Americans and Arabs, the North-Western collectors also show an inclination toward the collecting of artists from their own country.²³⁵

The manner in which the American couple de la Cruz has been making their choices for artists demonstrates this phenomenon. Rosa de la Cruz has been collecting art for 30 years and has built up an extensive collection of contemporary art that she also shares with the public. She and her husband Carlos emigrated from Cuba to the United States in the 1960s, where he became a successful entrepreneur in the field of the bottling and distribution of beverages such as Coca Cola. Based in Miami from 1975 onward, they opened their collection to the visitors, starting off in their own house, but, in 2009, opening a new 3000 m3 private museum. The collection De la Cruz includes works of established artists such as Martin Kippenberger, Sigmar Polke, Gabriel Orozco, Wade Guyton and Mark Grotjahn, next to younger artists such as Rashid Johnson or Alex Israel. She commented on the way in which they acquire works as follows:

We’re looking at what is happening today. That doesn't mean everywhere where things are happening, I mean we don't collect, for example, Chinese art. We are not looking at the East because there is no way that one individual can cover the entire world. So I mean I’ve never tried to go beyond a certain territory because you know I would have a hodgepodge of art works here.²³⁶

Acknowledging that it is impossible to follow all developments worldwide in-depth, de la Cruz focuses on what is close to her living environment, which means North-Western artists, galleries, international fairs and institutions.

A similar comment came from the American long-term collector Peter Brant, for whom American art has formed the main focus of his acquisitions. Brant has been collecting for over 40 years and, for him, the core of his collection relates to the developments that he can observe and participate in himself:

I try to focus on American art or at least artists who live in America, because I love so many things and I have to stop somewhere. So I'm really looking all over the United States, or actually North America, because I collect some Canadian artists...But this is the way I see it. When I was going to college, the New York School was pretty big—you had the Pop artists and you had the Minimal artists and you had the Abstract Expressionists, a lot of whom were...

²³⁵ Steiner, Frey, Resch 2013: 10.
²³⁶ Interview, Miami, 6 December 2012.
still around, including de Kooning. So there was a lot going on in New York, but today there's so much more going on than back then. I think that we are witnessing a real Renaissance of artists working in North America especially. They might come out of Tennessee or they might come out of Texas or they might come out of Vancouver, but they all somehow wind up in New York or Los Angeles.\textsuperscript{237}

Brant seems to have consciously chosen to be involved in a certain circle of artists, whom he can follow from up close. For him, those are artists from the United States and especially from New York, although they do not need to be American by birth. Brant has been collecting works by the Italian Maurizio Cattelan and the Polish Piotr Uklanski, both partially based in New York.

This tendency does not mean that all collectors focus their attention mainly on art from their own cultural environments. Walid Kamhawi, born in 1972 from Palestinian parents and raised and educated in the United States, has worked as an investment banker, among others as the director of the Blackstone Group, Private Equity Group, based in London, New York and Hongkong. After this period, he set up a financing and investment advising company, HP, based in Dubai. Kamhawi came into contact with art around 2004 through his curiosity for Chinese art in which he became interested as a form of investment. At that time, according to him, he did not know anything about art but was attracted to its financial potential. He took up the acquisition of art works and, soon after he realized that he needed the expertise, he hired the UK art historian Arianne Levene, who is specialized in China, South Asia and the Middle East and has advised his acquisitions ever since.

From Chinese art, he has expanded his interest to art from other places such as Pakistan, India, the Arabic countries and Iran. The artists present today in his collection are, among others, Yan Pei-Ming (born in China, lives in Dijon, France), Mounir Fatmi (born in Marocco, lives in Paris), Youssef Nabil (born in Cairo, lives in New York) and also Tracy Emin. Only recently he began to collect art from Africa through the acquisition of Malick Sidibe (born and living in Mali).

Kamhawi aims at developing a kind of collecting that embraces artists from all over the world, but, at the same time, he buys works of artists who are already well placed in the best international galleries and who have acquired a consecrating institutional presence. He is no longer interested in the first place in the financial value of the artworks he buys, but says to have become attracted to the artists and the ideas that they represent as well. It is important to him that the acquired art works tell a narrative about the region and that they are of a high artistic quality.\textsuperscript{238}

The concept of the global collection means to Walid Kamhawi that he buys works from the leading contemporary artists from regions in which he is interested. In the booklet about the collection, he presented his choice as the avant-garde art of the regions. Those artists, however, are represented by Western galleries, many of them also live in the North-West and have been exhibited in the North-Western institutions. Rena Begum exemplifies this phenomenon: born in Bangladesh, she lives in London and works with four galleries spread worldwide: The Third Line in Dubai, Bishoff Weiss in London, Jhaveri Contemporary in Mumbai and Galerie Christian Lethert in Cologne. The global orientation of the collection and of its owner remains embedded in the North-Western art system.

\textsuperscript{237} Goldstein 2014c.
\textsuperscript{238} Conversation, Dubai, 18 March 2014.
Globalization and artistic centers

The current dominance of the North-Western collectors in the art world defies the notion of the forthcoming globalization, which, among other things, is understood as the inclusion of what used to be cultural peripheries into the mainstream of artistic production and reception. Several recent studies attempted to unmask the idea of the globalization of the art field. Sociologists Larissa Buchholz and Ulf Wuggenig demonstrated that globalization ideas are myths by investigations of the position of artists who are active worldwide. They researched the list of the best living artists that has been published yearly since the 1970s in the magazine Kunstkompass (taken over in 2011 by the magazine Capital Management) and were able to prove that the percentage of the non-North-western artists was 8% in the 1970s and 11% in 2005, which means an extremely low increase of the participation of the non-North-Western actors.\(^{239}\) The French sociologist Alain Quemin investigated the countries of origin and residency of the most important artists according to Kunstkompass in the period between 2006 and 2013. It turned out that American, German and British artists have dominated the list, taking respectively the share of about 30%, 30% and 10%. Quemin further pointed out that the qualifying institutions for the valuation of those artists were from only 24 countries.\(^{240}\)

The investigation of the galleries participating in the most important fair, Art Basel, also confirmed the overwhelming North-Western presence by showing that, in 2013, 90% of the galleries were of North-Western origin.\(^{241}\) Olav Velthuis investigated the representation of national and foreign artists in galleries in Berlin and Amsterdam and stated that, on average, 39% in Amsterdam and 43.6% of artists in Berlin were born in the Netherlands and Germany respectively, followed by Americans in the 2\(^{nd}\) (in Amsterdam) and 3\(^{rd}\) (in Berlin) place.\(^{242}\) Velthuis explained this preference for artists from a small numbers of Western countries by three models. The cultural affinity model connects diffusion to the cultural affinities and similarities between producers and consumers of cultural goods, in the footsteps of previous sociological concepts on cultural preferences.\(^{243}\) This explains the inclination of galleries to artists representing a familiar understandable culture when choosing their program. The second model is a core-periphery model, which expresses the distribution of market power in general, and which explains the presence of American artists and absence of non-North-Western artists with the exception of China. The third model addresses organizational practices that make involvement with local artists easier especially for those galleries that cannot afford other logistics.\(^{244}\)

Although these empirical studies have questioned the idea of forthcoming globalization of the art world, for the general reception of collecting, this idea has been persistent. One of the reasons is the media presence of some collectors who originate from other than the North-Western sphere. In 2013, Shaikha Al-Mayassa bint Hamad bint Khalifa al-Thani from Qatar was ranked as the most powerful figure in the art world according to the yearly published ranking in the journal Art Review.\(^{245}\)

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\(^{239}\) Buchholz, Wuggenig 2005.

\(^{240}\) Quemin 2013.

\(^{241}\) Mazzurana, Schultheis 2013.

\(^{242}\) Velthuis 2013: 294.


\(^{244}\) Velthuis 2013: 299-230.

\(^{245}\) http://www.artreview100.com.
Al-Thani (born 1983) studied Political Sciences and Literature in Durham in the United States and at the Sorbonne in Paris. The journal calls her the sponsor of major art events and the head of the Qatar Museum Authority, although she is generally perceived as a private collector, who, as rumor has it, spends around 1 billion US$ a year on art.246

Another visible collector is the Russian collector Dasha Zhukova (born 1981), who has become well known as the wife of the Russian oligarch Roman Abramovic. Zhukova graduated in Slavic Language and Literature at the University of Santa Barbara in the United States and spent most of her life outside Russia. She stressed her Russian identity by establishing her private museum Garage in Moscow, where she organizes exhibitions of Russian and international artists. In 2011, the exhibition How Soon is Now presented a broad range of international artists such as Fischli & Weiss and Roe Ethridge, while Reconstruction attempted to map the Russian art movements during the 90s.247

The Ukrainian industrialist and investor Viktor Pinchuk (born 1960), who is married to the daughter of the ex-president of the Ukraine, Kuchma, often appeared in mass media in relation to his private space Pinchuk Art Center in Kiev and the star artists Takashi Murakami, Jeff Koons or Damien Hirst, whose works he owns. For his Future Generation Prize 2014, he managed to include important actors such as collectors Eli Broad, Dakis Joannou, the singer Elton John, the designer Miuccia Prada and art museum directors Richard Armstrong from the Guggenheim Museum, Glenn D. Lowry from the Museum of Modern Art in New York and Alfred Pacquement, the ex-director of Musée Georges Pompidou. Despite their involvement in art fields in the Middle East or the former Soviet-Union, these collectors, to a great extent, also operate in the North-Western system.

The dominance of the North-Western collectors within the global art field is remarkable, taking into account that, according to most of the actors involved in this research, the worldwide access to up to date information has had an enormous impact on the visibility and popularity of contemporary art and collecting. Especially the Internet data companies Artprice and Artnet, set up respectively in 1997 and 1998, have been mentioned as the most important sources for the market information, which includes auction results, data banks on artists, artworks and indices.248 Those companies are accessible worldwide, while new media and the Internet facilitate quick communication and the possibility to acquire works worldwide. ArtEconomics mentioned that, in 2013, 14% of the transactions conducted through dealers were done online, taking into account dealers who provided this possibility.249 Collectors of auction houses can watch the auction live and bid online; Sotheby’s reported a 36% increase of clients who purchased works through the Internet program BidNow in 2013.250 Collectors have worldwide access to websites of galleries, which have become an

246 http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2013/oct/24/qatar-sheikha-mayassa-tops-art-power-list
248 The owner of Artpace, T. Ehrmann, mentioned that the company has had 1.3 million clients in 2011 and that as from 1985, the company has been acquiring all possible date bases such as the Enrique Mayer Guide (1962/1987), the Dictionary of Art Sales 1700-1900 by Doctor H. Mireur, the American company, Sound View Press, with nearly 50 databases in the USA (1991), Franck Van Wilder editions (1970), the Swiss company Xyologic, the world specialist in Art Market price indices (1985), the Bayer database on the Anglo-Saxon art market from 1700 to 1913, in order to build the biggest data company on art from 1700 until today. Ehrmann 2011.
249 McAndrew 2014: 57, 104.
250 Sotheby’s Report Fourth Quarter and Full Year 2013 Financial Results.
important source of information when checking works and biographies of an artist. Gallery owner David Nolan noticed that collectors of various age behave differently with regard to buying through the Internet:

People are easier with buying through Internet… it is a generational thing. The older collectors still mostly want to see in the flesh. But the younger they feel they can interpret images better and faster through the Internet. Because that’s what they grow up with doing.251

Many actors suggested that especially younger collectors are inclined to use Internet for acquisitions and sales. Through the Internet, collectors can obtain detailed information on art from specialized research companies such as Skate’s Art Market Research, ArtTactic, Arts Economics, The Mei and Mozes Fine Art Index and many others. A popular Internet information source about exhibitions, artistic events, symposia and publication is e-flux, a worldwide Internet platform set up in 1999, or the Contemporary Art Daily, a website that shows mostly images of selected newly opened exhibitions. Collectors, nowadays, have many information sources at their disposal and, thanks to the Internet, are less depending on the institutions for forming their opinions about art. Internet companies do provide all possible data and analyses, as well as help to spread images around the globe without limitations.

Not only have images become available worldwide, contemporary art events have also spread all around the world. The number of international biennales has increased from 8 in the 1980s to 49 in 2005 and between 150 and 200 in 2013.252 According to the online art fair database Artvista, there were 147 art fairs for modern and contemporary art worldwide in 2012, whereby only the ones that attracted more than 3000 visitors were taken into account.253 Collectors, thus, have global access to the same data and information and the possibility of visiting various events worldwide, many of which can be followed online. In principle, a collector from the periphery can be served worldwide. As such, the question remains all the more important why the position of the North-Western collectors has been so strong?

The dominancy of North-Western collectors

The current dominance of the North-Western collectors will be explained by a combination of several factors of economical, social and fiscal kind. The growth of cosmopolitan collectors is related to the general global wealth increase in which they could participate thanks to their professional activities. Since the beginning of the new millennium, the general wealth increased worldwide and part of this wealth has flown into the art field. According to studies by Art Economics and Cap Gemini, the art market has been driven by the expansion of the population of High Net Worth Individuals (HNWI), who often consider converting part of their wealth into art and other investments of passion.254 Many actors from the art field connect the growth of the art market to new money. Amy Cappellazzo, the ex-head of the Post-War and Contemporary Art Department at Christie’s New York, noticed that the expansion of the contemporary art market could occur thanks to an influx of new capital that came

251 Interview, New York, 13 May 2013.
254 Cap Gemini 2013; McAndrew 2012: 70, 2013: 77.
into the art market ten years ago from the new places in the world but also from Europe and the United States.\textsuperscript{255}

The population of HNWIs has been steadily growing: from 6.9 million in 2001 to 13.7 million in 2013.\textsuperscript{256} The wealth of HNWIs worldwide has more than doubled (US$ 25.1 trillion in 2000/2001 versus 52.62 trillion in 2013). The country of the biggest population of HNWIs is the United States, with 4 million in 2013. In second place comes Japan, followed by Germany and China.\textsuperscript{257}

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\caption{Population High Net Worth Individuals in 2013 in Millions}
\begin{tabular}{l|c}
\hline
Country & Population in Millions \\
\hline
USA & 4 \\
Japan & 2.38 \\
Germany & 1.13 \\
China & 0.758 \\
UK & 0.527 \\
France & 0.472 \\
Canada & 0.330 \\
Switzerland & 0.320 \\
Australia & 0.219 \\
Italy & 0.203 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

The North-Western countries in the top 10 account for more than 50% of the global population of HNWIs. Within the group of HNWIs, a smaller subgroup of ultra-HNWIs (US$ 30 million in excess) has been distinguished, which represents 0.9% of the total HNWI population, but accounts for 35% of the global HNWIs’ wealth.\textsuperscript{258} The largest population of HNWIs is based in the United States (39,378), followed by Japan (16,450), Germany (11,392) and the United Kingdom (10,149).\textsuperscript{259} Many HNWIs and ultra-HNWIs are art collectors. In a short period of time, many of them have acquired various forms of wealth such as houses, land, cars, fashion and luxury goods, while part of this group has also focused on the acquisition of art; in 2011, fine art accounted for about 22% of the worldwide investments of passion.\textsuperscript{260} That HNWIs have been related to art enabled the quick recovery of the art market in 2010 and 2011, which could be explained by the relatively stable financial situation of HNWIs in the United States and other mature markets, where the very rich lost relatively less than the rest of the population.\textsuperscript{261}

Collector Rattan Chadha, of Indian origin and based in the Netherlands, United Kingdom, France and India, commented on spending money on art. He

\textsuperscript{255} Cappellazzo 2013.
\textsuperscript{256} Cap Gemini 2014: 4.
\textsuperscript{257} Cap Gemini 2014: 7.
\textsuperscript{258} Cap Gemini 2014: 6.
\textsuperscript{259} Knight Frank Research 2014: 18-19.
\textsuperscript{260} McAndrew 2013: 77.
\textsuperscript{261} McAndrew 2012: 20, 2, 45.
considers buying art as part of a social behavior of wealthy people who have acquired real estate and possible luxury items:

I like it and if I don’t like it I can get away from it. A lot of people have already a beautiful house, a beautiful car, a beautiful watch and the money doesn’t stop coming. Where to spend?  

For him, art is part of the total concept of the social and professional life of the wealthy, which he sees taking place also among his friends, whereby the consumptive character seems to take first place. Chadha (born 1949) grew up in India in a rich industrial family. In the 1970s, he set up his successful fashion enterprises in the Netherlands, followed by a company, CitizenM, that develops hotels in the main world cities as of 2007. His remark suggests that art works have become part of the environment of the wealthy, comparable with other luxury goods, because the growing wealth seeks new objects for consumption.

According to the study by the economists Christian Spaenjers en Luc Renneboog from 2010, the growth of the art market has been related to the growth of the highest incomes. On the basis of their extensive research of the period between 1908 and 2005, they stated that the money of the wealthy drives up the prices of the art market and that one can expect a boom whenever the income inequality increases quickly.

One of the reasons for the North-Western dominance has, thus, been the wealth concentration in the United States, Germany, the United Kingdom, France, Italy and Switzerland, from which part has been used for art acquisitions. The number of HNWIs has been growing and simultaneously growing was the number of collectors. However, the concentration of wealth does not suffice as the only argument to explain the North-Western dominance since Japan counts many HNWIs, whereby Japanese collectors have hardly been visible in the international collecting in the new millennium. In China, a significant number of collectors have been active, as demonstrated by Larry’s List, but many of them have focused on Chinese painting and calligraphy in the first place.

What has been of importance in the creation of new collectors is the almost uninterrupted tradition of private collecting. The United States and Western Europe have strong collecting histories that go back to the 19th century in the case of the USA, and even earlier in the case of Europe. Not denying collecting traditions in other non-Western countries such as China, the post-war political situations in many of them hindered such a continuation. These traditions in the United States and Western Europe have been cultivated, whereby new collectors have had existing concepts and structures of collecting at their disposal. American and European collectors can learn from and become inspired by exemplary role models of collectors such as Peggy Guggenheim in the United States or Peter Ludwig in Germany, to mention only a few. They can find out how collections were built in their own countries and what kind of cultural, social, financial and fiscal consequences collecting art can have and what advantages it can offer.

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262 Interview, Amsterdam, 7 December 2012.
263 Renneboog, Spaenjers 2010 in Spaenjers 2011: 91. The American artists Andrea Fraser used these data on the growth of the art market versus the income inequality worldwide to question the ethics of the phenomenon of collecting at large. Fraser 2011: 115.
264 McAndrew 2013: 107.
The longstanding tradition of collecting has been inseparable from the concentration of art institutions in North America and Western Europe. The institutions with the consecrating power within the field of contemporary art have been located there. In New York, there are several museums showing contemporary art with an international reputation, such as the Museum of Modern Art, the Guggenheim Museum, the Whitney Museum and the youngest, the New Museum. There are strong museums in Western Europe, such as Tate Modern in London, Centre Pompidou in Paris, the Hamburger Bahnhof and the Neue Nationalgalerie in Berlin and the Reina Sophia in Madrid. There is a network of strong museums in Rheinland in Germany. As the examples of the institutional involvement of Richard Chang and Patricia de Cisneros have shown, the top collectors have been related mainly to the most important North-American and West-European museums, even though parts of the collections or their focus lies on art and artists from the non-North-Western regions.

Based on the data from Artfacts, sociologists Larissa Buchholz and Ulf Wuggenig stated that, from the 23,700 institutions worldwide (galleries, auction houses, museums, art associations, art spaces and art journals) in 2011, more than one-third was concentrated in two countries: the United States (about 4400) and Germany (about 4100). They are followed by European countries France, the United Kingdom, Italy, Spain and Switzerland, while the only non-Western country represented in the top ten is Japan.265 The art journals that are considered the most influential are based in the North-Western network: Art News and Artforum are American, Art Review is British, Parkett Swiss and Frieze British and German. Although they aim at commenting on the global art field, their focus lies on the North-Western art field; for example in Artforum, most of the reviews are about American gallery exhibitions, with the focus on New York.

Institutions stimulate a creation of collectors from the city and countries where they are based. The organizations of friends of the museums organize events to increase the popularity of the museum, sometime to raise funds and new collectors can join available structures such as museum associations, collectors clubs or visit other collections. Many big museums work closely with collectors. The French collectors’ association ADIAF, for example, gives a yearly award to an artist, who is then given a solo exhibition in Centre Pompidou. The Association of the Friends of the Nationalgalerie in Berlin has 1400 members, which allows the organization to acquire works for the museum, currently for the amount of 1 million Euro a year. They also finance special exhibitions and support scientific research related to the institution. The British private organization Outset collects funds from its members, who are often art collectors, in order to buy works for Tate Modern during each Frieze Art Fair in London. The long-term American collector Laura Skoler (born 1936), a trustee of the New Museum in New York, expressed the feeling that many American collectors share:

I think most people who are really serious about art have joined an institution, and there are many in New York. And then they become involved in European institutions as well. Many Americans are members or friends of Pompidou for instance in Paris, but I don’t know if many Parisians are members of … well,

Laura Skoler has been collecting contemporary art for more than 30 years. Her New York apartment, which she cherishes as it used to belong to the French choreographer George Balanchine, is full of various art works in which works of the established artists such as Bruce Nauman and Mark Tansey hang together with artists that she once bought but who have remained unknown. Skoler used to organize travels to Paris, which is her other preferred city of choice. Art is a very important factor in her life. Her statement suggests that a serious collector is a collector who is involved in an institution, since this involvement shows his or her willingness to take responsibility and participate in the creating of a culture of a community. Strong institutions have the capacity to engage collectors, which creates fertile environments that potentially attracts new ones. The statement thus illustrates the pull effect of a museum in the city and also the mutual interconnectedness of collectors in the North-Western institutions.

In contrast, in many countries in Asia, the Middle East and Africa, museums and institutional networks have been lacking. In these countries, collectors can create their networks themselves. Such networks can be centered on new private museums, which numbers in the non-Western countries has been growing as the above data have shown. Enthusiasm for new undertakings can have a huge effect and serve as an example to others. The Brazilian collector and mining magnate Berardo Paz set up private culture and art center The Inhotim Institute in the poor region Minais Gerais. Known as a visionary and eccentric, Paz said to invest US$ 60 million each year to make Inhotim a paradise-like place. The goal of the museum, according to Paz, is opening the minds of people to culture and arts and investigating the meaning of communication for the future. These kinds of initiatives also have a pull effect on others and have the ability to create interest in collecting. Still, the continuation and policies of private initiatives are matters of personal decisions, while most North-Western institutions have proved to collectors to be a stable factor with public responsibility. A public institution objectifies the relationships of its members, while private museums rely more on the founders and their private networks.

The direct responsibility for the development of art institutions means, especially in the United States, financial contributions of the involved collectors. Laura Skoler commented on this phenomenon as follows:

I’ve been involved on the board of directors and of course being a small museum in one of the biggest cities, New York city, we had to do something different. So for many years I helped to raise money with the galas and doing special editions. In the United States we are not run by the Government, the Government does not fund us, so we have to make our own personal contributions. So I think that when you are really involved in something, that you wanna give to it. Because as they say: if you give, you get back.

This remark suggests a certain social pressure to be involved in art institutions in the United States, since it is the people themselves who are supposed to take care of the existence and development of these institutions. It also points at an often-heard

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266 Interview, New York, 9 May 2013.
267 Perrotet 2013.
268 Interview, New York, 9 May 2013.
argument that those who donate money or works will feel involved and promote the involvement in institutions.

The dominance of North-Western collators is embedded in the mutually supporting system of institutions, artists, galleries and market places. Gallery networks have had a long tradition in Western Europe and the United states. The important fairs have been held in these parts of the world as well: Art Cologne, Art Basel and Art Miami Basel, Frieze in London and Fiac in Paris. Art Basel Hongkong was set up only in 2013 and Art Dubai, although started in 2006, has not developed to an important art fair yet. Fairs contribute to creating interest for collecting in the place where they are held. Matthew Slotover, the owner and director of Frieze London, claimed that the fair has contributed to the growth of new collectors:

"Probably 80% of the visitors, who come to the fair, are not persisting art collectors, but we feel over time, perhaps over 10 or 20 years even, new generations of collectors can be built. Certainly in London we found that, when we started the fair there were very few art collectors that lived in London, there are many more now and I hope we've played some part in that."

On the one side, this remark could be an attempt to present the fair as a cultural enterprise that creates collectors and curiosity for art but, on the other side, it is certain that fairs are indeed visited by the local populations. Galleries mostly dislike the Saturdays and Sundays during fairs because those are family days: the visitors are culture oriented local people, sometimes even with small children, who come to look and not to buy. Big auctions houses such as Christie’s, Sotheby’s and Phillips are strongly represented in New York, London, Paris and Amsterdam, while there are many other smaller auction houses in Germany, Austria, Switzerland and France. The United States and Britain, and New York and London specifically, have been the most important location for contemporary art sales and have made up three quarters of the global auction turnover in the last years.

The North-Western network has been mutually reinforcing. Important North-Western collectors buy from the important North-Western galleries and visit the most important considered fairs, which are in the United States and Western Europe. The home bias seems to function as a hidden structural element of many collections. The cultural affinity model, as proposed by Olav Velthuis, certainly forms part of the explanation. Instead of home bias, however, it will be proposed that collectors demonstrate a representational bias. This is a preference for artists who are represented and shown by galleries and museums known to them. A gallery, as a physical and sometimes also a virtual place, is the central place for collectors to build their relationships, which are of crucial importance for their collections. All kinds of interactions, face-to-face contacts and information exchanges that add to constructing trust have remained important also in the globalized economy.

The representational bias applies also to collectors’ use of the Internet. Virtual experiences of works have not replaced experiences in the physical space of a gallery or a museum, but added to them. The Internet forms mostly an information source and sometimes an additional instrument through which collectors can acquire works and

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269 Interview, New York, 12 May 2013.
270 Horowitz 2011: 17.
271 Velthuis 2013: 296.
get to know the artist or a gallery better. According to the collectors survey of AXA Art Insurance, more than 90% of their respondents have been using Internet for obtaining information and for communication around art, but they primarily use it to do research. While 34% of them have already bought a work online, 45% on principle refuse the Internet as an acquisition source of art. As the data demonstrate, although possibilities online have expanded, buying works online has not become a common generally accepted practice for all collectors. For many of them, having the possibility to see and buy works online does not collide with the wish for experiencing works of artists in real life. German collector Giovanni Springmeier (born 1964), who has been collecting for 30 years, stressed the importance of an experience in a gallery space:

The Internet, or the communication through the Internet has become extremely important because you can create worldwide the market via an interesting website, through exhibitions online that can be seen everywhere. This is not a problem today to install a camera in an exhibition and somebody in Japan can see the exhibition and say: well, this is interesting. He gets also the information about the images within a few second. This is certainly something new, this availability has changed drastically during the last 10, 15 years...Still, the basis idea of a gallery to create a coherent group of international artists from a certain conceptual perspective which is defined by the gallerist. A part of it is the possibility for experience in space and place of the objects, not only in the Internet... No artist wants to have an imaginary gallery, as much as no collector wants to own imaginary works.

Springmeier expressed the opinion of many collectors who, comparable to him, have been collecting for many years. A requirement for a real physical experience is considered as essential in order to understand artistic practices and to make a judgment about the quality, at least in case of the first encounter with an unknown artist. Collectors buy works online but these are mostly works from a gallery or art advisor whom they know and trust, and by an artist that they are familiar with. For Springmeier and other collectors, a gallery is not only a physical space, but an ideological position and an artistic vision. This attitude nuances, to an extent, possibilities offered by the Internet, since many collectors do not pick up unknown works but show representational bias also in case of buying virtually.

Nowadays, the reason for the preference for North-Western artists is not lack of cultural affinity with non-Western countries and their cultures, but lack of representation and presentation of artists from these countries in galleries and museums in North America and Western Europe. Artists whose works were shown in Western galleries and museums, a tendency that has grown in the last five years, find collectors who are prepared to acquire them. Western collectors have been buying works by the South Korean artist Haegue Yang through the Paris-based renown gallery Chantal Crousel. Works by the Romanian artist Mirca Suciu have been acquired by West-European collectors from the moment he was represented by the

273 AXA Art Insurance 2014: 11.
274 Interview, Berlin, 17 April 2013.
275 The Chief Curator Alexandra Munroe from Guggenheim Museum mentioned that while in 1994 the exhibition about the Japanese art after 1946 has been placed in the less prestigious Guggenheim Soho and hardly generated any interest, during the year 2013 the main program of Guggenheim Uptown consisted of five shows which were all more or less related to Asia. Conference Museum Reloaded, 28 November 2013.
Gallery Zeno X in Antwerp. American collectors were interested to buy works by the Arab collective GCC from the Gulf after their striking exhibition in Fridericianum in Kassel and the New Museum in New York.276 These examples show that many collectors are open to artists from other parts of the globe but that they tend to buy from familiar North-Western galleries after being informed about them by familiar institutions. It is the familiarity with the distribution and institutional network that plays a crucial role in collectors’ choices and not the cultural affinity.

Moreover, in the context of global circulation of images through the Internet and events, collectors became used to a certain visual language that is not limited to one region or culture.277 This language functions according to the recipe of Koons; it allows various levels of engagement, whereby the cultural understanding is only one of the levels, but not a necessary condition for enjoying it. A collector can acquire a work from the Indian artist Bharti Kher made out of female forehead decoration bindis on board, because he likes its visual appearance without digging deeply into its cultural meaning. The idea of the globally understandable visual language is fed by the use of universally known points of cultural references and visual techniques. The Chinese artist Guan Xiao, based in Beijing, made a film about the popular reception of the sculpture of David by Michelangelo, using downloadable material found on YouTube. Kour Pour, a British-Iranian artist based in Los Angeles, combines in his paintings various symbols originating from ancient Egypt, antiquity, Persian miniatures or 19th century wallpapers designed by William Morris. These artists use the Internet as the reservoir of images for their works and, by doing so, they explore the same source of references of popular culture that is potentially understandable to many collectors worldwide.

Cultures’ characteristics are sometimes mentioned as favorable or unfavorable for collecting in certain specific countries. Several actors mentioned the competitive attitude of American collectors as an important factor that has added to creating their strong position. A long-term American collector said that they are as competitive in their professional life as the collectors are with each other in the field of collecting. Traditions of the conspicuous social responsibility and public consumption of art have been mentioned as characteristics of American collecting, which succeeded in breeding new collectors. A reason for relating to culture is often heard as an explanation for the strong presence of German collectors who, apparently, hold dear the Bildung (cultivation) ideals and responsibility for their own culture. In Berlin, people who are interested in the arts can attend events in private homes during which a film director, a musician or an artist tells about his works. The basic idea of such events is self-education and the sharing of cultural interests. How important a cultural environment of a given country is in creating the network of collectors versus other aspects is, however, difficult to ascertain, as both the United States and Germany score high with regard to the wealth and institutional and distribution networks as well. Although not excluding that certain cultural features stimulate or discourage collecting—the last is said about the Calvinistic culture of the Netherlands—it would be difficult to qualify and quantify in which manner cultural inclinations influence collectors and their acquisitions.

The dominant presence of North-Western collectors possibly relates to fiscal benefits that come with collecting. In several countries, such the United States and


Germany, donating art to public institutions provides certain benefits of tax deductions, which are said to be a big impetus for donations and bequests and, consequently, for collecting. Collectors are alleged to profit from fiscal regulations in the United States, which allow setting up donations of art to institutions and foundations at a 100% of the value up to a maximum of 50% of the income of the collector. In Germany, a collector can set off a certain part of his income against art works put into a foundation. As the tax matter is very complex, the system of benefits will not be investigated here. When donating works to museums, collectors can sometimes not only enjoy various tax benefits but also a value increase that the market would not allow: because of different reasons, a museum and a donator can agree on the price of the work, which would not be achievable on the art market. Fiscal regulations may also explain why some non North-Western collectors prefer to concentrate on their local art. Several import and export regulations seem to direct collectors’ interest to their national artists since art from foreign countries is said to be subject to high import duties, as is the case in China or Brazil, and this hinders the influx of those collectors into the visibility of the international art field.278

Conclusion

This study on the global orientation of collectors of transatlantic contemporary art showed that the collectors’ power has been concentrated in North America and Western Europe. Despite the media attention toward the non-Western collectors and their activities, the contemporary art world is dominated by North-Western collectors, as much as by North-Western galleries, artists and institutions.

A combination of economical, social and cultural factors has created this strong position. The wealth concentration in the United States, Germany and other Western economies, in combination with various fiscal benefits related to owning art in these countries, has been of great significance for creating new collectors. However, the economic power alone cannot sufficiently explain this situation since economic strength also characterizes countries such as Japan, where collectors of contemporary art are hardly active. What turned out to be important is the steady and almost uninterrupted tradition of private collecting, which has secured continuation of certain art historical and social practices and values. These traditions have been supported by strong institutional infrastructures, distribution channels and market structures that, time and again, evidenced to be able to mobilize new collectors.

The economical, cultural and social reasons for collecting are interrelated and reinforcing each other, which explains the strong presence of North-Western collectors in the art world. Their inclination to the North-Western artists, even in time of the worldwide Internet and an accessible global visual language, has been clarified by the representational bias, a half-intentional preference for artists who are represented by familiar galleries and shown in known institutions. It confirms, at the same time, the solid position of galleries as gatekeepers and the significant role of the museum as a possible consecration place in the view of collectors.

Regarding the globalization of collecting of contemporary art, the transformationalist position is proposed here. At this moment, the dominancy of the North-Western collectors has been revealed as clear and undeniable. However, since the wealth and the steady institutional and distribution infrastructures turned out to be of great importance for creating the North-Western dominancy, their development in

278 McAndrew 2013: 153.
other parts of the world could contribute to the growth of collecting practices in other countries as well.
4. Popularity of contemporary art and its social life

Introduction

Collecting art is claimed to be a subjective activity and the result of personal choices and considerations. Art collectors stress time and again that their choices for artworks and artists are highly individual and subjective and that they do not mimic other people’s tastes. This would suggest that art collections worldwide are highly diverse, since collectors can chose from a huge variety of artworks and objects from all possible historical periods, genres and numerous oeuvres of artists representing different past and present artistic movements.

However, collecting seems susceptible to shared predilections for certain geographical praxes and historical periods. The geographical preferences of cosmopolitan collectors lie mostly with art that has been produced and displayed in the North-Western framework in which those collectors operate and know best. Its self-reinforcing dominance assures that collectors’ attention tends to be directed to artists and institutions that function within the same network.

As to favorite temporal movements in the new millennium, contemporary art turned out to be preferred over art from other historical sectors. Changes of taste, which have been considered of vital importance to the popularity of certain periods, do not provide the answer to the question why contemporary art has recently gained so much in popularity among collectors. There must have been other processes going on that made contemporary art and its field so attractive.

On the one hand, these specific processes relate to the particular complexities that arise from collecting older art as opposed to contemporary art. On the other hand, however, contemporary art owes its attraction to a combination of several social and financial aspects that apply specifically to the art that is produced now and its social environment.

Preference for contemporary art versus art from other historical periods

The comparison of the *Art News* lists of the 200 Top Collectors from 2001 and 2013 has demonstrated that there is a clear shift toward contemporary art among collectors. While, in 2001, 29.5% of the list were collectors of contemporary art only, their number increased in 2013 to 36.5%. What is even more telling, the number of top collectors who do not collect contemporary art at all has decreased drastically: from 32% in 2001 to 12.5% in 2013. This means that, in 2013, 87.5% of Top Collectors worldwide were involved in collecting contemporary art (Table VII). These figures suggest that collecting contemporary art has become very attractive to the most influential collectors and that collectors of contemporary art have become the most interesting and visible group in media and art institutions.
### Table VII

**Art News Top Collectors’ Preferences for Periods**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Art Period</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contemporary art</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contemporary modern</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contemporary plus</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>200</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The general feeling among actors in the art field is that the number of collectors of contemporary art has increased drastically. Gallerist Gerd Lybke summed up the feeling as follows: “before there were 18 collectors, then 800 and then all of the sudden 800,000.”

Sotheby’s reported that, in 2013, the number of their buyers of contemporary art has increased with 23%, while the number of new first time buyers increased with 30%. The sudden attention for this sort especially has surprised many actors who have been in the art field for a longer period. The director of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin since 2008, Udo Kittelmann, regarded the current interest for contemporary art as an unexpected phenomenon:

Nobody could imagine at the end of the 80s that especially contemporary art would gain so much attention, as it did the last ten years. This art was always considered as a form of a cultural niche, but today we experience that all media in all spectrum inform about art, artists, museums and private collectors.

Kittelmann has been active in the field of contemporary art since the 1980s, first as curator and later on also as director of various German Kunstvereins. He expressed the feeling of many actors who have been involved in contemporary art for years and experienced the field in the past as a very small zone that was attractive only to a limited group of passionate actors. The director of Tate Modern, Chris Dercon, stressed how small the contemporary art world was in the 1980s:

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279 Interview, Miami, 6 December 2012.
280 Sotheby’s Report Fourth Quarter and Full Year 2013 Financial Results.
I knew all the collectors in Belgium; they were twelve; I knew all the dealers, they were four; I knew all the artists; they were eight and I knew all my colleagues; we were six.  

Dercon described the art world as a very limited territory with regard to all actors, not just collectors but also gallery owners, institutional actors and artists. Many of the people who had already been involved in the art world for a long time found the rise in popularity of contemporary art and the expansion of its field astonishing and striking. Collecting contemporary art rather than art from other historical periods used to be a marginal phenomenon.  

Non-contemporary art has been classified as “art classé,” a category of art of which the supply is limited and the aesthetic values are objectified by time and history. On the contrary, the market for contemporary art has been seen as unlimited and uncertain. As the valuation of older works is based on consensus related to the interpretation of art history, quality judgments on them have been easier to make. However, the fixed values of “art classé” have also been relativized since these quality judgments have also proven to be contingent and subject to declassification while the taste of the market changed.  

Although the unlimited supply of contemporary art works is relative, since the availability of works by specific artists vary and can, therefore, be tight in particular cases, the contemporary art field indeed has the ability to permanently deliver new artists and new artworks with a potential of high quality. In contrast, the supply of high-quality works from other periods is limited, which makes building serious collections of works from other historical periods difficult. The best works from the 17th century or Impressionism now form part of museum or private collections and only become available for sale sporadically. The limited availability of the works known for their historical value and artistic excellence makes them expensive to purchase, also owing to high costs of insurance and sometimes maintenance. A practical aspect in favor of buying contemporary art, rather than art from earlier periods, is the fact that the collector of contemporary art will rarely have problems with attribution and forgeries, which are two of the biggest issues concerning artworks from other periods. Consequently, recurrent cases of forgeries with prosecutorial consequences add to the problem since they make it difficult to find experts who would be prepared to guarantee the authenticity of a given work. Another legal problem with regard to historical periods could be the issue of looted art, which rears its head time and again with regard to art works made before WW2. The contemporary art field does not have this problem.  

The figures of the auction sales in the new millennium show the increasing popularity of contemporary art. Whilst, in 2003, the value of the market for Impressionists and Post-Impressionists was 614 million Euro versus 593 million Euro of the Post-War and Contemporary, in 2013, the value was 1,363 million Euro versus 4,943 million Euro Post-War and Contemporary. The slightly higher turnover of

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282 Sebastian 2014.  
284 The most recent examples are the long-term forgeries of works by, among others, abstract expressionists such as Mark Rothko, sold through the established New York gallery The Knoedler & Company, which came to light in 2013, and the alleged sales of fake works by Alexander Calder by his long-term dealer Klaus Perls.  
285 An example forms the accusation of the dealer Richard Feigen in 2013, who blamed the German auction house Lempertz for having sold him a work by Lodovico Carracci, which, afterwards, appeared as Nazi looted art and was therefore confiscated by the legal authorities in the United States.
Impressionists (3.7%) decreased, and became more than 3 times smaller than that of the Post-War and Contemporary. The same mechanisms apply to the Old Masters versus Post-War and Contemporary (2003: 427 million Euro versus 593 million Euro; 2013: 1,034 million versus 4,943 million Euro) and Modern (2003: 751 million Euro versus 593 million Euro; 2012: 3,158 million Euro versus 4,943 million Euro).\textsuperscript{286} Table VIII shows the market shares of the different sectors in 2013, which demonstrates a clear dominance of the Post-War and Contemporary sector.\textsuperscript{287} In 2013, the Post-War and Contemporary sector accounted for 46% of the total turnover of the fine art auction market, whereas Modern art accounted for 29%, Impressionist and Post-Impressionist for 13%, Old Masters for 10% and Others for 2%.\textsuperscript{288}

**TABLE VIII**

**MARKET SHARES BY SECTOR IN 2013**

Attempts are made to combine marketing art from other historical periods with contemporary art. Especially the expansion of certain important art fairs into other periods aims to create the awareness and popularity of older periods as well. In 2012, the Frieze Art Fair started a new fair, Frieze Masters, in which works from various historical periods are offered to the public who only used to visit the contemporary art fair. Some collectors and dealers claim that, because of the rapid price increase of the high segment of contemporary art, works from other periods have become more interesting.\textsuperscript{289} An example for such a change of direction is the collection of Christian Levett. This English collector, a hedge fund manager based in Monaco and Paris, started acquisitions of classical antiques instead of contemporary art after he discovered huge price differences in favor of antiques in an auction catalogue in 2003. In the meantime, he opened a private museum, Musée d’Art Classique in Mougins in France, to accommodate his big collection of antiquities together with works by Keith Haring and Matisse.\textsuperscript{290} However, the price growth of contemporary art has, so far, not

\textsuperscript{286} McAndrew 2014: 47-53.  
\textsuperscript{287} McAndrew 2014: 45.  
\textsuperscript{288} McAndrew 2014: 45.  
\textsuperscript{289} The auctioneer Tobias Meyer claimed that, for himself, he is buying German china from the 18\textsuperscript{th} century: Meyer, Gropp 2012, while the artists Chuck Close buys 17\textsuperscript{th} century paintings; Interview with Close, New York, 10 May 2013.  
\textsuperscript{290} Moore 2012: 4. www.mouginsmusee.com
discouraged many collectors, as there are other aspects that make collecting this sort more appealing than art from other periods.

Social attractiveness of contemporary art

The attractiveness of contemporary art is not only related to its virtually unlimited supply and to the relatively little risk related to forgery and authenticity, which buyers run when acquiring artworks. Contemporary art is also appealing to collectors from a social point of view. Here, an ethnographic snapshot from the Art Basel fair is instructive.

On the first preview day of Art Basel in Basel, people start to arrive at the door of the fair venue around 10:30. Within half an hour, it becomes very crowded. Most of the visitors know each other, since they are the most prominent and renowned collectors, art advisors, museum directors, curators and art critics; they greet each other but do not engage in conversations. Most women are dressed according to the latest fashion codes and wear expensive designer brands and high heels; on some of them, interventions of plastic surgery are clearly visible. Mostly, the men wear elegant suits without ties, which gives them a corporate but relaxed aura. While art buyers tend to dress expressing their masculinity and femininity, curators and institutional players wear more remarkable clothing combinations that do not stress their gender but rather their sophisticated taste. When the door opens, the visitors push forward, squeezing each other in order to get inside as quickly as possible. Once there, after showing their VIP card to the security officers, collectors quickly walk to specific gallery booths spread over two floors: the ground floor for modern and contemporary and the first floor for contemporary. As, nowadays, collectors are emailed the images of artworks before the fair starts, collectors may have made reservations on beforehand, and they can, if so desired, confirm their choices in the booth.

People notice each other. There are celebrities around such as actors Leonardo DiCaprio or Cate Blanchett, but, during the first hours of after the opening, there are not many conversations between collectors since they focus on acquisitions and visits to given booths. The gallery owners and assistants also look very fashionable; especially many young gallery assistants, sometimes called gallerinas, look astonishing with striking dresses and high heels. During the opening, all gallery owners are present in their booths; the following day, only the directors will be there. Gallery owners welcome the collectors. There are so many top clients at the same time that it requires their full attention, since clients do not want to wait. Exemplary was the reaction of a man in his fifties who was waiting to speak to gallery owner Jay Joplin in the booth of White Cube during the opening in 2012. When, after five minutes of waiting, Joplin was still engaged with someone else, he started to shout: “I wanna buy, I wanna buy” and was immediately approached by the gallery staff and then the owner.

After the first two hours, new collectors come in and, at 15:00, the next ones. Depending on the collector status, one can enter the fair at 11 or 13 or 15 hours, which used to be indicated by the color of the VIP card. The conspicuous social distinction starts at the entrance doors to the fair. At 15:00, many collectors from the first group are already sitting in the VIP lounges, some of them drinking champagne and having conversations. Collectors are showing each other their iPhones with images of what they bought, put on reserve or discovered, they update each other on the latest news and gossips and possibly plan other meetings and dinners.
The fairs are the events par excellence for collectors to display their wealth and social success. Spending money is the obvious form of conspicuous consumption. As not all art works are available for everybody, even if they can pay the price, having the possibility of buying works that are in high demand expresses the social ranking of a collector and his position in the art field. Showing images of acquired works is, therefore, a form of fixing positions that are related to the economic (how much money you can spend), social (do the galleries appreciate you so much that they would give you the access to desirable works) and cultural capital (do you know what is now important in art and why).

Being a part of the contemporary art world gives collectors a feeling of belonging to a special and extraordinary group. Collecting as cultural and social activity is, for them, a tool through which they can distinguish themselves from other people. It simultaneously denotes the participation in a community with values and codes they know and appreciate. The long-term American collector Michael Hort mentioned the art community as one of the main reasons to become involved in contemporary art:

The art is great but it’s the community, it’s the people that is great!...You go anywhere in the world and you have friends. Anywhere. In Paris you have friends that I would not have. But because of art I met them at art fairs and now we are buddies. People of different status, people who are billionaires, people of arts. The art is something we connect with, like a language.291

The New York couple Michael Hort and his wife Susan have been collecting art since 1985, when they bought their first work of art from the gallery of Jack Tilton. The artist Paolo Icaro and the gallerist visited their home to install the work and it turned out to be a fascinating encounter:

We had a dinner with Jack and with Paolo, and these guys were A: smart and B: a lot of fun. I went for a walk in front of my house with them, and they saw this rock formation, which I had run by and walked by two thousand times probably and never looked at. They were looking at shapes and colors; it was like an amazing experience. I have never walked by that rock formation after they left without looking at it again. And when they left I said to Susan, who appreciated contemporary art more than I did at that point; you know, maybe I like contemporary art, let’s see.292

This encounter, and not the artwork as such, inaugurated a life with contemporary art for the couple. It promised an access to new personal experiences and life beyond the ordinary, with people who share the same fascinations. The Horts started to visit the galleries in the East Village, where they learned more about art and artists and became friendly with gallery owners and other collectors. They realized that, at that time, New York was the center of the art world but this network of people was very small and they got to know almost everybody. As owner of a printing company, Hort and his wife started to spend time and money on discovering artists and buying works, engaging with collectors and other actors, which they continue to do today.293

291 Interview, New York, 14 May 2013.
292 Idem.
293 Idem.
Another New York collector, Laura Skoler, also appreciates that art has connected her with other like-minded people:

I think that it’s a great social phenomenon, because it brings you in contact with people all over the world. One of the things that art has brought into my particular life is that I can travel anywhere and have a friend. Because the minute I go into a gallery or any art venue, I can connect easily because of the conversation. Even if I don’t know a person, it’s easy to do. So I think socially, it brings nice people together and I’ve had nice experiences that way.²⁹⁴

Skoler described the art world as a structure that is easily accessible for everybody who is a collector and follows the codes of collecting. It functions according to the same rules everywhere in the world, while, at the same time, it creates a framework for new interesting encounters between its participants. Collectors seem to never be alone, as their passion and interests connect them automatically with others. The German collector Manuela Alexejew, who regularly opens her and her husband’s collection in their apartment in Berlin to other collectors, also mentioned the universal aspect of collecting art:

Contemporary art is a language; when you meet people who collect you speak the same language, even if someone is from Alaska and you are from Berlin, you speak the same language.²⁹⁵

The capacity of art as a universal language was also mentioned by the French collector Florence Guerlain:

Collecting is a universal language, wherever in the world, you can communicate in the same language, you recognize the people who speak the same language, you can always find artists you share, you do the same.²⁹⁶

The statements about art as a worldwide spoken language are very popular among collectors. The names of artists, galleries, titles of exhibitions and other actors form the vocabulary of this language and function as recognition signs. The idea of the universal language implies, for some collectors, the leveling out of social differences by the shared interest or passion for art. However, the vocabulary of the language also functions as a categorization instrument. A collector can be categorized on the basis of the people he knows, the artists he collects and the network of people he is part of. There is a hierarchy in names: owning well-known or desired artists place the collector in a higher position. The American collector Fernando Lopez explained how collectors are exchange names of artists whom they collect:

You go to art collectors, all they tell you 'Oh I have a Candida Höfer' and that already gives you a certain status economically and puts you in a certain place. To have the same one means I'm in the same place as you are.²⁹⁷

²⁹⁴ Interview, New York, 9 May 2013.
²⁹⁵ Conversation, Paris, 20 June 2012.
²⁹⁶ Idem.
²⁹⁷ Interview, New York, 12 May 2013.
Naming artists who are part of your collection is often not just a passionate summing up and sharing, but also a way of asserting supremacy over others. Famous names define the position of its owner, as artworks of prestigious artists bestow prestige on their collectors and place them higher in their social hierarchy. Collectors share a common vocabulary but they use it to distinguish among themselves in order obtain a dominant position compared to others. A namedropping of artists and works during a conversation establishes a social hierarchy between the speakers and members of the same community.

The German collector Giovanni Springmeier started with several prints during his medical apprenticeship in Paris in the 1980s, and, as of then, has expanded his interest into photography, installations, videos and, more recently, painting. As a psychiatrist and psychoanalyst based in Berlin, he has established a collection that includes, among others: Rineke Dijkstra, Clemens von Wedemeyer, Douglas Gordon and Sharon Lockhart. Springmeier sometimes attends openings of exhibitions and other social gatherings. As he explains, collectors use such gatherings not only to share their experiences but fore mostly, to position themselves among others:

Personally I have always found the contact with the artists more interesting than with collectors. It has to do with the fact that a collector always competes with the other collector, whether you want it or not. It is about what you have, what has the other, and very rarely I meet people who are open-minded. Most collections are constructed differently (than mine) and content-wise limited, so often I’m not so interested…It becomes interesting with museum people, curators because they could have knowledge about artists who don’t appear in the market, the so-called forgotten artists, the artists’ artists…this is very exciting.²⁹⁸

Collectors invite each other to visit their homes or art spaces in order to show their collections and share their ideas on art. The American collector Martin Margulies has been engaging with other collectors since the 1990s, when he opened his private collection Warehouse in Miami in 1999. During the periods when Miami hosts the Art Basel fair, he is available in person in his Warehouse to meet collectors he knows, especially from Europe. He wants to return the hospitality of the European collectors who welcome him and share with him collections whenever he can visit them.²⁹⁹

Margulies (born in the early 1950s) has earned his capital as a real estate developer in Florida. He started to collect in the 1980s and, over the past 30 years, has built an extensive collection, of which part is installed in his private museum in Miami. In this Warehouse, as he calls it, he combines various installations, paintings, sculptures, videos and photos by both established and emerging artists such as Ernesto Neto, Richard Serra, Leandro Erlich and Nathalie Djurberg. When asked about how he started collecting, he joked:

Through various friendships, people were saying to me, perhaps you should stop looking at sports and women and start looking at art. And I said: okay I can combine that, can I? So I started going to galleries and the more I was exposed to it, the more interesting it seemed. And that is how I emerged.³⁰⁰
This anecdote points at the social character that collecting art has had for Margulies and for other people. His statement highlights enjoyment, excitement and socializing with other people as essential components to his involvement in art.

The art calendar

This enjoyment has been part of the world before but, in the last decade, it became organized in larger dimensions. Art fairs, galleries and public institutions developed programs and special events to attract collectors for their activities. Depending on stature, each art fair has a VIP program that includes visits to collectors’ homes, studio visits and receptions. Collector Walid Kamhawi mentioned that, in 2013, a visit to the Dubai Art Fair has inspired him to open his own house to a selected group of international visitors. In the beginning of 2014, he installed part of his collection in his house in Dubai and opened it to the VIP public of the Dubai Art Fair.\(^{301}\) From a practical point of view, VIP packages often include stays in hotels that are free of charge and the use of cars. A wealthy Dutch collector always considers visiting a fair when she is offered hotel stays free of charge. The increasing number of fairs worldwide forces both the new and existing ones to concentrate on the VIP program in order to get collectors to attend them. The quality events and persons involved, in combination with practical issues, are some of the reasons on which collectors base the decision to attend or not to attend.

Museums and other institutions organize trips for collectors who are related to them. In the spring of 2014, a group of collectors related to the Whitney Museum in New York, together with director Adam Weinberg, visited several collectors’ houses in Berlin. The museum made a program to show to collectors museums, institutions and collections of importance in a city that they consider relevant for contemporary art. Such trips combine enjoyment, networking and access to knowledge for collectors, whereby, for the museum, it is a form of creating commitment to the institution in a pleasurable atmosphere.

Collectors take initiative themselves as well as the art trips show that are organized by the French collectors couple Florence and Daniel Guerlain. Having collected from the late 1990s onward, they first set up an art foundation in 1996 in their family estate Les Mesnuls outside Paris, which they closed in 2004 only to place more focus on drawing. In 2007, they established a new foundation. Every year, the Daniel and Florence Guerlain Foundation Contemporary Drawing Prize awards 15,000 Euro to one artist out of the three, who has been selected by a committee and judged by an international jury. The jury varies each year and is partially comprised of international collectors, who are invited to participate by the Guerlains.

The landscape architect and passionate cook Daniel Guerlain (born in the 1950s) is one of the heirs to the French perfume and cosmetics company Guerlain. His wife used to work in the field of public relations. Their passion for drawing has been personally and artistically motivated. The interest in drawing can be traced back to Daniel’s architectural background and his family’s tradition of collecting (for instance) Impressionist drawings. The couple considers this medium to be a central artistic expression, which, in an intimate and often spontaneous way, reveals ideas of artists.\(^{302}\)

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\(^{301}\) Conversation, Dubai, 18 March 2014.

In 2011, they organized a trip to New York with 12 other collectors and friends. The trip started with a visit to the Morgan Library, where the curator of the drawing department, Isabelle Dervaux, explained the history of the institution, which was set up by the particularly passionate collector J.P. Morgan, and showed some modern and contemporary drawings from the collection. Thereafter, the group visited the atelier of the drawing restaurateur Martina Jamin, who demonstrated to them special techniques of the restoration of paper works. In the drawing department of the MoMA, which was visited next, the curator Conny Butler explained the focuses of the MoMA drawing collection and showed to the group several recent acquisitions, some of which the present collectors knew. The curator walked them through the museum to the special exhibition of works that had been recently donated by the Belgian couple Herman and Nicole Daled to the MoMA and discretely brought up the theme of donations by European collectors. The museum organized a lunch that was shortly joined by the director Glenn Lowry, who cordially welcomed Messrs Guerlains.

The group paid visits to the apartments of a few American collectors, who guided the guests through their collections, showed them the works and might explain who made the work, when and where it was bought or why the work is special. They also automatically explained their personal history of collecting, for example buying early, exchanging the works by better ones and being connected to certain galleries. Guests engaged in conversation when they knew the artist or found other access to the story of a work, such as the gallery that represents the artist or design of the space.

Visiting collectors walked around in the apartments filled with artworks and then the hosts offered drinks and conversations continued. The trip was logistically very well organized, while food played a very important role. Lunches and dinners were held in very good restaurants that were especially selected by Daniel Guerlain, or at collectors’ houses. During the dinners, institutional curators and some artists would join the group. Collectors experienced the trip as an exciting and educative way of spending time and enjoyed the attention that they received from the institutions. They also stressed the easiness to get into contact with other collectors worldwide. As the reciprocity principle is important, most of the New York hosts collectors had previously visited the premises of The Guerlains in Paris and their residency Les Mesnuls.

This trip demonstrates why collecting can be attractive for many reasons to many different people. Every collector can choose the level of engagement: it can be the desire to learn about art, to share and to exchange experiences, but it can also be a method to gain access to other people to spend free time with in an enjoyable way. Such trips are opportunities to combine leisure time with art. Spending money on extending knowledge and networks, which is instrumental in acquiring high-quality collections, is a form of sophisticated conspicuous consumption and a tool to distinguish from others who are not involved in art in such an active way.

For many collectors, both big- and small-time, collecting contemporary art implies a calendar full of international festivities, such as art fairs, biennales, exhibition openings and meetings with artists. This social calendar has a clear structure and several fixed data: there is the Armory Show in New York and Art Basel Hongkong in March, the Gallery Weekend in Berlin at the end of April, Frieze New York in May, Art Basel in June and, every second year, the opening of the Venice Biennale in May or June. After the summer holidays, collectors often go to Frieze in London, to FIAC in Paris in October, and to Art Miami Basel in December. Besides there, there are a variety of important region-oriented fairs with a good international
reputation, including ARCO Madrid, Art Cologne, Art Brussels, Miart in Milan, Art Rio in Rio de Janeiro and Chicago Art Fair.

Michael Hort considers art fairs as part of a normal collector’s life. He summed up the most important fairs that he and his wife attempt to visit every year:

> We spend time at the fairs. I mean, we don’t go to all of them, but we go to enough of them. Generally we go to the Basel in Switzerland, and we go to Frieze in London; in a week we go late to London, early to FIAC. Last year we went to Cologne and Brussels, which were at the same time, and Berlin, and we go to Miami, and Los Angeles. Those are the only fairs, we went to last year and probably this year similar. 303

The collector mentioned eight international fairs throughout the year that have formed a, more or less, fixed schedule for his and his wife’s leisure time. Fairs structure the rhythm of the social life of many collectors and influence their collecting activities. Big fairs are the most attended events and meeting points. Some collectors, such as Zoë and Joel Dictrow, also explore other lesser-known fairs:

> We probably go to at least four to five art fairs a year. Two in New York—which is obvious, because it makes it very easy for us—and then this coming year we’re going to go Frieze and FIAC. End of Frieze, beginning of FIAC. We said, “Paris?” And then we always go to Miami because it's Miami and it’s usually a break from winter, even if it means going there a week after Thanksgiving. Then we have pick other fairs like Turin or Madrid or Mexico City or São Paulo because they have some interesting VIP programs and we like to participate. And, again, it’s a way of seeing a city. But the truth is, we use art fairs more for education than for acquisition, because you can see so much at art fairs. You get sore feet, your eyes feel like they’re falling out of your head. 304

Their choice of fairs shows that seeing art is not the only reason for visiting but that there are also other practical motives involved. The fairs in New York are easy to visit because they are located next door, the fair in Miami is very attractive for collectors coming from regions where it is already winter because of the warm weather, while FIAC is a good reason to visit Paris. Many newer fairs appeal to collectors because of their VIP programs, which include visits to other collectors’ houses, museum openings and, sometimes, studio visits.

The life of Laura Skoler is concentrated not only around fairs, but around various international art events:

> I’m going next week to Venice, and then on to Athens, to Dakis’ Deste Foundation then back to Paris and then Zurich for the Art Weekend and I think it’s all for the love of art. 305

Skoler mentions as first the opening of the biennale in Venice. This used to be an event for art professionals such as curators, artists and art critics, but, nowadays, forms an important gathering place also for collectors. Collectors want to be better

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303 Interview, New York, 14 May 2013.
304 Goldstein: 2014b.
305 Interview, New York, 9 May 2013.
and faster informed on artists and artistic trends first-hand and, during an opening, they can meet with artists, gallery owners and curators from different parts of the world. It is also a form of “following” an artist, which some collectors do. Once an artist joins a collection, the owner attempts to participate in important events that mark the artist’s career. An opening of the biennale is an opportunity to deepen relationships and extend the network, mostly in combination with the enjoyment of dinners and parties.\textsuperscript{306} As the biennale is an institutional exhibition, the commercial side of artworks is less visible than during an opening of an art fair, although transactions between gallerists and collectors take place there as well.

From Venice, Skoler intends to visit Greece in order to join an event organized by the foundation of the well-known private collector Dakis Joannou. The planning of such an event exactly between the opening of the Biennale and the Art Basel fair enables collectors from over the world to combine several events in one European trip. Another stop that Skoler is making is the Zürich Art Weekend, an event established recently in the weekend before the start of Art Basel. Collectors who are flying to Switzerland for the fair can see artworks and get into the buying mood in the neighboring city in which many of them stay. The density of events in various places around Basel is big, as many institutions attempt to use the presence of collectors to attract their attention. Kunstverein Freiburg in Germany, located just across the Swiss border, organized a solo exhibition of Mark Grotjahn from May through July 2014, which coincided with the Art Basel fair. It was remarkable that a small German Kunstverein was able to convince the American star artist to exhibit his highly sought-after and costly paintings just in Freiburg.\textsuperscript{307} Without taking the geographical location of the Kunstverein into account, the exhibition of Grotjahn in a small institution in a provincial town would be difficult to explain.

The time schedule of collector Fernando Lopez shows that the participation in global art events is now taken for granted by many collectors. Lopez (born 1965) was born in Colombia and moved to Miami in 1994, which is the main location of his collection. Lopez used to work in advertisement and his co-collecting partner has been involved in small hedge funds. In Colombia, Lopez used to collect and also deal in Pre-Columbian art. He has, however, shifted to contemporary art, with a main focus on contemporary abstraction. In his collection of abstract works, many artists from different parts of the world are represented, such as German Thilo Heinzmann, Kristin Baker, Gavin Perry and Sarah Morris.

Together with his partner, he travels a lot and frequently visits international fairs such as Fiac in Paris, abc Berlin, Istanbul, ARCO in Madrid, on top of the American fairs such as Armory Show and Basel Miami. Nowadays, the fair agenda determines his social calendar. He reads about art in art magazines but also in articles on art in the \textit{Financial Times} and cultivates his relationship with gallery owners, artists and other collectors. Lopez distinguished various kinds of collectors among the ones that he has met: people who follow their passions but also people who like to enjoy the social status of art, and people who like to play games. He especially enjoys meeting European collectors. In his perception, there is an atmosphere of trying to find “the new Basquiat”; the urge to find the next big artist permeates the collectors’ world. Lopez considers himself an incurable collector who “would sell everything to buy a work,” as he cannot resist buying art and collecting.\textsuperscript{308}

\textsuperscript{306} Charles Saatchi called the art world hideous because of the emphasis on ostentatious socializing during the opening of the Biennale in Venice in 2011. Saatchi 2011.
\textsuperscript{307} \textit{Mark Grotjahn, Circus Circus}, Kunstverein Freiburg, 16 May – 27 July 2014.
\textsuperscript{308} Interview, New York, 12 May 2013, and various conversations in Milan, Berlin and New York.
Social events as adhesives of the art world

Dinners, cocktails and parties, which accompany the openings of fairs, auctions and gallery and museum exhibitions, have been one of the reasons for new people to flow into the art world, as it offers entertainment as much as the idea of belonging to a special community. Gallery owner David Nolan from New York commented about why art is more interesting than other social fields:

There are people who are making enormous sums of money, more than that they know what to do with it. They are naturally attracted to having fun with their money because they worked very hard for it and they prefer the art scene rather than the real estate scene. And some of them will turn to be very passionate collectors.\(^{309}\)

Nolan contrasts the real estate scene with the art scene to show how the special character of the latter attracts people who are interested in enjoyment that has a special aura.

The long-term German collector Thomas Olbricht said to enjoy the party component of contemporary collecting without being tempted to forget what his collecting goals are. Olbricht (born 1948) has been working as a chemist and doctor endocrinologist, and is heir to the German cosmetics Wella concern, where he also has a function in the Board of Trustees. He has been collecting since the 1980s, not only art but also rare objects from various historical periods that now compose his Cabinet of Curiosities. Despite his broad interests, the focus of his collection lies on contemporary art. Collecting has been a part of his early education as his uncle Karol Ströher belonged to the prominent collectors of Pop Art in Germany in the 1970s. As of 2010, Olbricht operates from Berlin, where he opened his private art space me Collectors Room. He has been an active buyer of art and visits several art fairs a year. He appreciates the parties as part of the art world although he is fully aware not to mix up his acquisition decisions with celebrations:

It looks like that art, business and party go together and they can live together, at least in Miami and Miami Beach. At the end of the season I like to go there. Then I join various parties three evenings long. I can’t understand anything, because it is so noisy but I would smile and I hope that the weather will be nice and that’s it. I took my decisions about what to buy there already at home.\(^{310}\)

Olbricht demonstrates that he knows how to navigate in the art world. For him the entertainment is a background of fairs, which does not collide with his serious approach toward collecting. Rosa de la Cruz, who owns a private museum in Miami, described her attitude toward parties during the Art Miami Basel fair as follows:

This week during (Miami) Basel I have tons of invitations for every night. Every night we could go to five parties. But we go home after we finish the fair. Today we spent two hours at the fair. We went to the design fair too and afterwards by eleven o’clock we were home. And you know what? I have to

\(^{309}\) Interview, New York, 13 May 2013.
\(^{310}\) Interview, Berlin, 20 March 2013.
get up at six o’clock to open this place…People start coming in at 8:30 in the morning. We have to make sure that everything is in order.\textsuperscript{311}

De la Cruz belongs to the most important class of collectors and her statement about disinterest in parties indicates her powerful position among other collectors, as many collectors would be delighted to receive the invitations that she declined. She stressed instead her responsibility toward the collection and the public, arguing that making everything in order for them is her most important task, by which she indirectly places herself above collectors who flowed to the art world for enjoyment only.

Invitations to the opening dinners by some important galleries or museums carry a distinction value and indicate a high ranking in the collectors' hierarchy.\textsuperscript{312} They function as inclusion and exclusion instruments as they form an entry ticket to gatherings of social importance intended to a selected group. At the same time being invited to and participating in a dinner creates, for a collector, an unspoken commitment to the gallery. This importance of dinners and social gatherings for galleries is not a recent discovery; Leo Castelli already organized dinners for his collectors and cooperating galleries in the 1960s.\textsuperscript{313} Such events not only create a feeling of belonging to the group around a gallery, but also feed a gift relationship between collectors and galleries. During a party organized by a big European gallery, a collector admitted that, since he and his wife have been treated so well by being invited to such events, they feel obliged to buy works from the gallery.\textsuperscript{314}

An important aspect of attending social gatherings is, for some collectors, the opportunity to meet the artists and engage in a conversation with them. This is the main distinctive mark of the contemporary art world, since only contemporary art offers the possibility of a dialogue between the living artist and the collector, and participation in each other’s lives. Gallery owners organize dinners and parties during which artists are present, because many collectors consider the possibility of meeting the artist in person and having a direct conversation a privilege. Often, such a contact is seen as an advantage to other collectors who have never met the artist. During a conversation, the artist can explain his work more thoroughly but also talk about his life, which give the involved collectors precedence over others who have to rely on gallery information only.

The contemporary art world can offer a relational engagement as well. Rosa de la Cruz considers collecting art as a way of living her life, which is a joint experience that she can share with her husband:

My husband and I, we have always traveled looking for art. Not really to acquire, just looking for art. Looking at things, looking at architecture. So you really develop like a, I wouldn’t say a taste. You develop your life around looking for art. There are times that we go out and do not acquire any art. It’s more than experience. It’s a way of life.\textsuperscript{315}

\textsuperscript{311} Interview, Miami, 7 December 2012.
\textsuperscript{312} John Good, the director of Gagosian Gallery: “the social aspect of the art world has become more pronounced. I think that for smart collectors, however, they take it all with a very big grain of salt. There is something seductive about good parties, but ultimately, are we here for socializing or to look at great art? The glamour attracts new collectors and we need them. They are the sign of an expanding art market. And when the inevitable correction occurs, you will see fewer parties.” Bennigsen 2009: 216.
\textsuperscript{313} Cohen-Solal: 436.
\textsuperscript{314} Conversation, Berlin, 2 May 2014.
\textsuperscript{315} Interview, Miami, 7 December 2012.
For collector Michael Hort, collecting is a form of being together with his wife, with whom he has been sharing his passion for many years:

Collecting art is only a part of it. Because the greatest thing about it is that we do it together. Susan and I spend an enormous amount of quality time together that we wouldn’t spend doing anything else. I like to tell people: before we started collecting art we lived in Westchester and I played tennis with my friends, boys, and she played tennis with the girls and when we played together we had a fight. But art is something else, it’s just great. We travel a lot together, meet a lot of really interesting people. It’s great. 316

The American collectors couple Zöe and Joel Dictrow, who have been collecting together since the 1980s, also stressed the joy of collecting being an activity that they can pursue together:

Collecting gives us something to talk about. You sometimes see couples sitting in restaurants and they have nothing to say to each other. We always have things to say to each other. There's no such thing as sitting with nothing to say. 317

From the start of their collecting activities, the Dictrows have focused on young artists, because they “had limited budget, especially in the '80s and '90s, so we always looked at the newer art because that was the only thing we could afford.” 318 Their collection includes works by Gerhard Richter, Cindy Sherman, David Shrigley, Hayv Kahramian, Nick van Woert and Michaël Borremans. The former Magazine advertisement manager and the Citigroup executive were attracted to collecting by Eugene Schwartz, who, in their eyes, was a model and trendsetter to many collectors. They regularly open their apartment in New York to the public and other collectors during the Armory Show.

For gallery owner David Zwirner, the relational aspect of collecting has formed the most important reason why collectors feel so attracted to the social life of the contemporary art field:

In 2009, everything fell apart, values came down, and I thought, Shit, this is going to be rough, this is going to last years. But the structures of the art world were absolutely intact. We all flew to the fairs, showed up for the dinners. Collectors weren’t buying, but they were there, they were in our net. When I saw the mechanisms in place, and I saw the pull that what we do has on people’s lives, they don’t want to miss out. It’s the greatest couples therapy.” 319

Zwirner suggested that the strength of the contemporary art world has not only relied on collectors’ desire to buy artworks, but also on the art world structures that have regulated collectors’ lives. Collectors receive personal attention from galleries, artistic

316 Interview, New York, 14 May 2013.
318 Idem.
319 Paumgarten 2013.
events create the rhythm of their lives, while the entertainment appears as meaningful, since it is related to art and artists who represent certain cultural values.

Joining the contemporary art world can be also motivated by the wish to obtain useful professional contacts. In such cases, art can be called a “social lubricant” as its field is used for unofficial business encounters and the setting up of professional networks that are not directly related to art.\(^{320}\) Brigitte Oetker, a long-term German collector and benefactor, classified a large part of contemporary collecting as an attempt at social climbing by certain new collectors. She herself grew up with art: her father was a collector of, among others, the Düsseldorfer Schule, while her mother had a sense of good taste and quality in general. She graduated in art history and was director of the Culture Circle of German Economy before she married the German entrepreneur Arend Oetker. The collection of her and her husband is about quality: Wade Guyton, Alighiero Boetti, and many women artists such as Rosemarie Trockel, Cindy Sherman, Ellen Gallagher and Isa Genzken, who is also a friend.

In the opinion of Oetker, the “friends” organizations of important museums have, for many members, created a possibility to manifest themselves in the social field and to make useful contacts. She says to have been struck by the automatic social group behavior of people who had previously not shown any interest in art, but suddenly decided to collect it and have taken on buying without any further investigations of the artists.\(^{321}\) As a collector with a great cultural capital, Oetker commented on the sudden massive interest in collecting as opportunistic and not motivated by cultural motives.

Miracles, glamour and celebrity culture

The attractiveness of contemporary art to collectors also lies in its aura of social miracles and opportunities. The lives of some contemporary artists, gallery owners and collectors are a source of mythical narratives that help creating the idea that, in contemporary art, everything is possible. The art world is a place where social climbing is not unusual. Many artists whose works have become famous relatively recently, were not only unknown fifteen years ago but also lived lives in relatively poor conditions. Mark Bradford (born 1961) used to work in his mother’s hairdressing salon in a poor neighborhood in Los Angeles; nowadays, his paintings are sought after by collectors and yield more than US$ 2 million at auctions. The parents of the popular London-based Oscar Murillo (born 1986) are Colombian immigrants who managed to set up a cleaning company in London. Murillo, who used to work as an office cleaner himself while being a student, sold some of his works for more than US$ 300,000 in 2013. The tale about the super rich gallery owner Larry Gagosian, who, apparently, sold posters on the beach as a young man, is a well-known story and a cherished myth.

The story of the couple Dorothy and Herbert Vogel is well known in the art world. They both used to work as civil servants in New York, but managed to collect, with their very limited budgets, more than 4500 works of what would later appear to be significant American post-war artists, such as Sol LeWitt, Richard Tuttle, Cindy Sherman and Donald Judd. They started to collect in the 1960s and were consequently buying art works, often directly from the artists, using the salary of librarian Dorothy

\(^{320}\) The term “art as a social lubricant” was a quotation from a statement by an Exxon official that the artist Hans Haacke used in his work On Social Grease, 1975.

\(^{321}\) Interview, 29 February 2012.
to live on and the one of postal clerk Herbert to buy art. As a result, their one room apartment in Manhattan was completely filled with works, which they stored up to the ceilings and put underneath their bed. In 1992, the couple donated the works to the National Art Gallery in Washington, despite the fact that they could have cashed the profit. Starting from the year 2005, 2500 works went to 50 American institutions in 50 states. The Vogels were aware of the value of their collection; although they could easily have become millionaires, they “weren’t concerned about that aspect.”

In 2008, Megumi Sasaki made the film *Herb & Dorothy*, which showed the life of the legendary couple to a broader public. The story has many layers that probably appeal to collective beliefs of what art could be: its capacity to change the lives of ordinary people, to add unexpected and extraordinary meaning to our existence and to create the opportunity to become rich or famous.

This story contributes to the idea of the extraordinary life that contemporary art offers. For some collectors, it is interesting to meet people who would otherwise be hardly reachable. The German ex-advisor Helge Achenbach described how gallery owner Gagosian visited Achenbach’s booth during an art fair together with the actors Liz Taylor and Sylvester Stallone. The Dutch crown prince Willem Alexander and his wife Máxima spoke to Dutch galleries participating in Frieze in London in 2010, while the former Spanish king Juan Carlos has visited Arco Madrid art fair a few times. All these narratives contribute to the almost magical attraction of the art field in which both social and financial miracles can happen. The press reports on these events suggest to the broader public social opportunity and a proxy to the jet set life.

The glamour factor has added to the attractiveness of the contemporary art field as well. The important and financially successful artists such as Damien Hirst or Jeff Koons, gallery owners such as Larry Gagosian and collectors such as Peter Brant or Dasha Zhukova have become public figures with a lot of attention in the press and glossy magazines. The celebrated Hollywood actors Brad Pitt and Leonardo DiCaprio collect contemporary art, as well as well-known authors Salmon Rushdie and Thomas Clancy. Tracy Emin is friendly with model Kate Moss and singer Madonna; Daniel Buren designed the décor for the fashion shows by Mark Jacobs for Luis Vuitton in Paris in the spring of 2013.

The work *Stephanie* (2003) exemplifies a high celebrity factor: this work is the result of a commission that the celebrated American collector Peter Brant gave to the well-known artist Maurizio Cattelan to make a portrait of his famous wife, actress and model Stephanie Seymour. The commission was handled by the renowned art advisor Philippe Ségalot, who asked the hair dresser of the celebrities Frederic Fekkei to style the hair of the sculpture. In 2010, Brant sold the work at Phillips auction for US$ 2.4 million.

The art world meets the world of fashion. Artists are prepared to execute commissions for fashion brands, as demonstrated by Cindy Sherman for MAC Cosmetics or Takashi Murakami for Louis Vuitton. This kind of cooperation can go even further: Yayoi Kusama designed handbags for Louis Vuitton, whereby the

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322 Martin 2012.
323 Achenbach 2013: 92.
324 Collector Ratan Chadha comments on the connection between Luis Vuitton and Takashi Murakami: “In a way, it is art merging into society. It is art that is now merging with the wider public thorough objects, so everyone can afford a Richard Price or a Murakami. The same thing happened when they started fragrances: you could buy a Dior dress but you could buy a Dior fragrance. You could spend Euro 50 and you have a ‘Dior’. So it’s good for people—they own something from the artist for a price that they can afford. That is also good for the brand.” Bennigsen 2009: 105.
designer sponsored her traveling retrospective in the very important international museums, including the Whitney Museum in New York, Centre Pompidou in Paris and Tate Modern in London in 2012.\textsuperscript{325} Works of Kusama yielded very high prices on various auctions and, according to the ranking by Bloomberg, she has become the best selling living female artist.\textsuperscript{326} Yves Saint Laurent, who used to be a collector himself, made eye shadows in the colors of Rothko’s painting—the so-called “Rockefeller-Rothko”—that was sold during a Sotheby’s auction in 2007 for a record sum at that time of US$ 72.8 million.

Glamour and fashion was part of the art world in the past as well. Andy Warhol set up \textit{Interview Magazine} in 1969, aiming at combining people from fashion, art and culture. He was close friends with Diane Von Furstenberg, and made portraits of many fashion celebrities and famous artists such as Georgio Armani and Liza Minnelli. Warhol staged himself as a fashion model for the magazine \textit{Esquire} in 1967. The Studio 54, at the end of the 70s, was a well-known place where celebrities, models and actors such as Jerry Hall, Grace Jones, Liza Minnelli or Calvin Klein attended the parties together with artists. Keith Haring was friendly with Madonna, for whom he designed a special jacket. All these goings-on concerned, however, a small exclusive community with local dimensions and limited duration, in which the big public could not participate.

In the last decade, a fusion of art and fashion has become a recurring subject in many international and local newspapers and magazines, so that the Venice Biennale has been declared a fashion zone and the success of the Art Basel and Basel Miami fairs is commented on in the mass media through the presence of celebrities. Around the beginning of June 2014, the popular fashion website Net-a-Porter sent an email to their millions of clients with the title “What are you wearing during Art Basel?”. Emmanuel Perrotin, owner of the well-known gallery Perrotin in Paris and New York, made a comparison between art and fashion, which both play a role in the lives of the fairs and gallery visitors:

This is more than a mere rendez-vous, this crowd loves to congregate in places where exposition catalogues are carried around as fashion objects.\textsuperscript{327}

By equating fashion objects with exhibition catalogues, Perrotin suggested that art and the visiting of openings has become part of a life style of a certain group of people as much as fashion has. The obviousness of following fashion has been mimicked sometimes by the overtness of participating in specific art events. The monthly \textit{Artforum} has introduced the website page “Scene and Herd” with, among others, photos of the celebrities and art people that were taken during various openings and art events.

Many websites of museums have been accordingly adjusted to the celebrity culture, which seems to be appealing to visitors, among them collectors. On the front page of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York—which is one of the most prestigious high art institutions in the world—along with images of the masterpieces from the museum's collection, such as paintings by Cézanne, Van Gogh and Hokusai, the visitor sees the photographs of the celebrities with the following text:

\textsuperscript{326} The auction results of works by Kusama in August 2013 were 217.7 million US$. Bloomberg 2013.
\textsuperscript{327} Lindemann 2006: 101.
Alicia Keys picked Egyptian sculpture. Alex Rodriguez picked Warhol. Hugh Jackman picked Japanese armor. What's your Met? We're inviting you to share favorite works of art using the MyMet feature on this website or any form of social media.  

This is an invitation to share your experience of art just as a celebrity does. The artwork that is being used as the connection vehicle between the celebrity and the visitor leads the visitor, for the moment, to believe that he is as important as the celebrity, that his experience of art is important enough to share. At the same time, the celebrity becomes indirectly interpreted as being culturally involved in the cultural heritage of the country and art in general. What is even more striking here is the alleged democratization of the opinion on art: it does not matter what you have chosen, because all choices are equal. The content is not important and the argumentation for the choice is redundant; it is the participation as such that counts. The notion of a democratic openness to everybody and the proximity of glamour add to the attractiveness of the art world.

That some collectors value the celebrity factor was demonstrated by the glamorous provenance of a work that turned out to increase its value. In October 2012, the painting Abstraktes Bild (1994) by Gerhard Richter from the collection of Eric Clapton sold for US$ 34.165 million, which was double the estimate and, at that time, a record price for a living artist. The celebrity provenance was considered one of the factors that contributed to the high result.

Feeling the time of now

In contrast to art from other historical periods, contemporary art is visually and thematically engaged in the actuality of the current time. Collectors who collect contemporary art stress that this art is special because it gives them access to their own culture and that helps them in understanding what is happening now. Rattan Chadha, a fashion and hotel entrepreneur, explained why he started to collect as follows:

In the 1980s I saw this painting by Warhol of the Campbell’s Soup: I was shocked, the price was 50,000$ (I wish I bought it then!). And I was totally puzzled, why would somebody pay 50,000 $ for an image of the Campbell’s Soup? I didn’t understand it. But it triggered my mind. It took me six months to investigate and to ask; at that time there was nothing except fax machines. I got the answer back that it was the moment of the shift to the consumer society. That’s what he saw. Because his mother and his grandmother used to cook the soup herself during the day to be ready in the afternoon for the family to eat, a soup was this popular thing at home. And now he saw the same soup that his mother used to make in a shop! He could take it from the shop home and prepare it himself. It formed a dynamic shift in society because women had started to go to work instead of cooking 6 hours a day. Warhol captured the moment of the shift into the consumer society.

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328 MET website April 2012.
329 Reyburn 2012.
330 Interview, Amsterdam, 7 December 2012.
Warhol’s work has given Chadha insights about the changing society and helped him understand certain veiled social processes. The collector valued the concise and demanding way in which the artist addressed the subject. The interest that Warhol elicited in him has been further fueled by other motives:

I also follow contemporary art from the business point of view. I’m looking for the concept of what people want...Artists are cleverer than I am, they think about things more deeply. They have a different mindset, because they have different worries. They think very pure and very conceptual. I used to force my designers to look at art as well, to get inspired.331

Chadha has been fascinated by the myth of the artist as someone special who follows other rules and is equipped with other qualities than “normal” people. Exactly these qualities appeal to him because of his professional interest in creativity in general. His fascination with artists has been instrumental for understanding cultural shifts and searching creative solutions. As a member of the British and Dutch Outset, an organization that supports the acquisition of works by young artists for museums and organizes museum shows for them, Chadha has been participating in the social life that surrounds this organization. He has contemporary art works installed in his CitizenM hotels and Spaces—transitional office spaces—where art is meant to contribute to developing a “creative” atmosphere.

The German collector Julia Stoschek mentioned the engagement of her generation with important issues as one of the main motivations to collect. Stoschek (born 1975) has developed an extensive time-based media collection of established and emerging artists, whose works she shows in her private museum in Düsseldorf. As a relatively young collector, she has managed to quickly acquire a strong position in the art world because of the high quality of her collection and the public program of her art space. Stoschek graduated in economics in Germany and has inherited part of the family wealth, which her father made as owner of the company Brose, which manufactures car parts. Collecting revealed itself as a possibility when she made the connection between the actuality of contemporary art and her personal experiences of the past and now:

Video is the medium of my generation. A lot of things I grew up with, like horse competitions or school parties were registered on a video or tape by my parents. My father has been always interested in all technical objects, he likes to photograph and film, and also my grandma made fantastic documentary films in the 1970s, in China and India. In 2003, when I was studying in New York, I visited the Gagosian Gallery where the monumental installation by Douglas Gordon titled 'play dead real time' was at a display. It’s a huge three channels installation, which shows an elephant playing its own death. It is a really sad but an absolutely overwhelming art piece. I stayed in the gallery for three hours and couldn't move. This video presented itself in a way that was so different and so new for me, compared to these little black boxes I had seen before. From that moment on, art and art collecting became ever more important for me, it started to shape my life...I have many pieces made by artists from my generation: firstly because it is important for me that I can identify myself with the artist and secondly because there is a lot of political art with issues that are important

331 Interview, Amsterdam, 7 December 2012.
for our generation.\textsuperscript{332}

The possibility to concentrate on video as the medium that appeals to her most, and the works of artists who address the themes that are relevant to her, made Stoschek a passionate collector.

The use of new media and new technical approaches in contemporary art, as much as the addressing of universal subjects through current issues, appeals to many collectors. The long-time German collector Axel Haubrok referred to the actuality of contemporary art as one of the main attraction points for him:

Two years ago I bought a portrait of Michael Jackson. You would not be able to recognize Michael Jackson in it, because it is a waste bag or a clay sculpture that looks like a balloon that is losing the air and is painted black. Because the clay has not been backed properly it crumbles further away. I found it a very beautiful image of the perishability and mortality, this superimposed black,. in that moment that Michael Jackson has died the work became very strange to me. Because it all of the sudden fits in the spirit of time.\textsuperscript{333}

This analysis of the work shows Haubrok’s fascination with the actuality that can be grasped by contemporary art. The different meanings with which the subject of Michael Jackson is charged were caught in an object that defied the conventional ideas of sculpture. In the opinion of the collector, it touches upon the spirit of the time, because of its use of today’s materials and recent subjects.

Giovanni Springmeier mentioned the enjoyment of discovering important artistic positions as one of the reasons:

What is exciting is to identify intelligent and interesting art in an early stage and to narcissistically delight in the fact that something that you found important for yourself has become valued by others. This is certainly a decisive aspect. If today I find Monet great, I would say, ok, what is so special about it? The art history has already proven that he is important. For me personally it is an adventure to identify with an older work, but socio-culturally speaking, it has no relevancy.\textsuperscript{334}

Springmeier mentions the personal excitement of making a discovery, but also the prestige and recognition that a collector receives from other actors in the field because of having made the right acquisitions. From his point of view, buying works that already have status in the history of art does not offer such possibilities, since a buyer then only confirms what is already known. To the contrary, a value increase of contemporary works can offer self-esteem and gain social status among other collectors.

Another aspect of the here and now of contemporary art is the possibility of supporting living artists. Susan and Michael Hort set up a foundation in memory of their daughter Rema, who died of cancer at a young age. The Rema Hort Foundation in New York has two targets: one is to give money to young artists who have not had a solo show in a gallery, and the other is to give money to people who have cancer to pay for the family so that they can stay with the ill ones when they are undergoing

\textsuperscript{332} Interview, Hamburg, 14 April 2010.
\textsuperscript{333} Interview, 12 February 2010. Project Collectingnow.de
\textsuperscript{334} Interview, Berlin, 17 April 2013.
treatment. Hort called it a twin concept, probably because both forms of support deal with the urgency of helping someone who needs it.335

The last approach touches upon the idea of the responsibility one has for one’s own culture, which some collectors put forward as an important reason to collect. Brigitte Oetker has been supporting various social artistic projects. She donated funds to the Documenta 13 in Kassel and helped to find funds for this event from other sources, since she considered Documenta important for Germany. Her attention often goes to artistic projects with a social agenda, such as the one by French artist Jérôme Bell, who, as a theater maker, made a work in Kassel with mentally disabled people.336

As a reason for the popularity of art, British sociologist Sarah Thornton proposed the current higher degree of education of the UK and US population, which has developed the desire for more culturally complex goods.337 Since the percentage of people holding university degrees increased in these countries, thought-provoking and challenging art became attractive to them. Simultaneously, reading has become less popular in favor of visual culture, which makes Thornton suggest that the popularity of art can be explained partially by the increasing visual literacy. These suggestions might be part of the general context in which the popularity of contemporary art thrives. However, it is argued here that it is the accessibility of the visual language of contemporary art, its openness to interpretations and its freedom from an obligatory theoretical burden that contributed to its popularity. The impulse came, rather, from the transformations of art and its theoretical context, which have become more approachable, instead of the general intellectual and visual development.

**Contemporary art: investment and speculation**

Another important aspect to which contemporary art owes its current popularity among certain collectors is that it is considered suitable for investment and speculation. Although art in general, and contemporary art in particular, appeared to be a problematic investment instrument for professional investors, private collectors often treat it as a very suitable one.338 The obstacles, such as the lack of transparency in the market, limited track records of the past results, heterogeneity and a big illiquidity, that keep art from becoming the standard product of investors do not seem to bother private collectors that much.339 The price volatility of art works and its relation to the prevailing economic developments, as well as the unpredictable changes of taste, make private collectors believe in their choices.

What seems to be especially appealing to collectors are examples that have proven that the right investments in art can secure extraordinary profits. Making the “right” discoveries among unknown artists or buying the “right” works of established artists can turn artworks into very profitable assets for collectors, as many examples in the new millennium have demonstrated. Paintings by Gerhard Richter, which,335

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335 Interview, New York, 14 May 2013.
336 Interview, Berlin, 29 February 2012.
337 Thornton 2008: xv.
338 The complexity of financialization of the art market have been addressed in Horowitz 2011; Cosler, Velthuis 2013.
339 Some actors try to deny those uneasy qualities of art by stressing other aspects or denying the complicated issues such as illiquidity. Richard Gray Gallery, Andrew Fabricant: “Art is portable, and liquid, and can be traded in different currencies.” Art Newspaper, Basel Art Fair 2012: 1.
1960s, cost less than 10,000 DM, now have the capacity to fetch millions, as one of them, *Domplatz, Mailand* (1968), has shown. The painting realized the price of US$ 37 million at a Sotheby’s auction in 2013.

Buying and selling works of certain young artists appeared to be profitable as well: the painting *Untitled* from 2012 by Oscar Murillo estimated between 30,000 and 46,000 US$, ended up realizing the price of US$ 391,475 during a Christie’s auction in 2013. Many other examples of works by young artists, such as Alex Israel or Lucian Smith, substantiated the promise of gaining a quick and huge profit.

Contemporary art has a special status regarding the promise of a value increase, as certain artists who are to become very expensive in the future are cheap now. The excitement is of a speculative character as it lies in the fact that it is unknown who these artists are. According to the dealer and ex-director of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles Jeffrey Deitch:

> Contemporary art always starts very inexpensively. All of these artists here (in the museum) began selling at $1000, $5000, at very accessible prices. So if you are astute and if you are ahead of the curve there is always important art that you can buy, that is not expensive. They keep coming. Now we have a situation where artists like Jackson Pollock are in a different category, they’re almost like trophies acquired by governments, so for ordinary collectors, museums, the major Pollock is no longer accessible. But what happens is these big prices draw people into the art world. They create excitement. People hear that this work is so highly valued, and they should find out for themselves that this whole field must be very interesting if people are willing to value it so highly. So I think these stories about these high prices actually have drawn many more people into the art audience.\(^{340}\)

Deitch addressed the main points of contemporary art that attract people who see it as a product with a financial potential. The costs of young works are relatively low, but the expectation of a value increase is high, as any artist could potentially turn out to be important even in a short period of time. He also suggested that profit can be made especially by people who dare and this aspect appeals to collectors, who like to take risks. The gambling, thrill and mystery that people tend to see behind high values make the contemporary art a playing field for collectors who also tend to be financial adventurers.

The long-term collector Peter Brant expressed a similar opinion on the push effect of the high prices. He said the following on new collectors flooding the art market:

> They come in because they are commercially interested and think they can make a good living professionally off of art or just make a quick dollar and everybody hates that, but I don’t hate it because those people can turn out to be the biggest collectors in the future, and those people can turn out to be the biggest sponsors of museum shows in the future. You always want more people interested in art, and the interest in art has grown tremendously.\(^{341}\)

Brant defends the new collectors, who seem to be interested in the commercial aspect of art in the first place, as, for him, the financial interest in art is as good as other

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\(^{340}\) Interview, The Hague, 7 June 2013.

\(^{341}\) Goldstein 2014c.
forms of interest. His statement suggests that the primary interest in art as a financial asset can lead to a different sort of engagement with art.

The Barclays study on investments of passion among HNWIs concluded that investment has not been an important reason for buying art, and that the interest in the acquisition of paintings and sculptures is motivated, in the first place, by a combination of emotional, social and cultural factors. To the contrary, according to art advisors, more than 40% of HNWIs who buy art consider it as an investment. The AXA study stated that 24% of all collectors are investors; the other categories were aficionados, traditionalists and hybrid types. The art advisor Sanford Heller mentioned the market principles that govern collecting ideas of some collectors:

The people I work with are ambitious on their own; they’ve reached a level of success in their professional lives, they know what it is to take a risk, and they realize the risk inherent in buying art and building collections. To view it as a market is certainly a healthy way to kind of gauge the ups and downs.

The difference between the findings of Barclays, AXA and art advisors explain their various methods and analysis of responses. While art advisors work daily with their clients and know collectors’ unfiltered reactions toward acquisitions, the study of Barclays was concluded on the basis of responses of HNWI holders of treasures to questions in questionnaires. In a questionnaire, even anonymous ones, collectors tend to position themselves in a certain way instead of being transparent about the real situation. The study stated that 10% of the investigated holders of fine art and 11% of the holders of sculpture saw it as an investment only, whereby 13% of them believed that it provided security in combination with other assets they have. Of the respondents, 38% and 44% respectively said to consider their fine art paintings and sculptures priceless, while 42% and 39% of the respondents collected fine paintings and fine art sculptures with the idea that the objects will be inherited.

The study has not distinguished the category of contemporary art as having its own specific characteristics, and it only investigated the two categories of painting and sculptures. It stated that owners of fine art are only prepared to sell works within the first year of having been acquired if they reach an average 62% increase on the original price. Barclays interpreted this figure as a confirmation that the owners do not see artworks as an investment. This conclusion, however, is not convincing. In the art market, an increase of 50% in value, especially for works by emerging artists, is not considered as high as it might be the case for other assets. Furthermore, if the value of a work quickly increases by 50%, the owners tend to believe that it could

342 Barclays 2013.
343 Wuggenig 2012: 71. Wuggenig conducted a study on the collecting motives of collectors in Paris, Hamburg and Vienna during the 1990s and in Zurich during 2009 and 2010. He distinguished five general motives for collecting: responsibility for the vitality of arts, pleasure of discovering artists or arts, relationship with artists, investment and family tradition. Those factors oscillate between the intrinsic and philanthropic goals versus the commercial and prestige-oriented goals. Wuggenig 2012: 64.
346 Barclays 2012: 46.
increase further. It is a confirmation of the “right decision,” which stimulates more expectations. Especially when the price is increasing and spectacular sales are being reported, owners might wait for an even better return.

The study of AXA attempted categorizations and, therefore, made a distinction between collectors who immerse themselves in collecting as a passion and as a balance to everyday life; those who continue the family collecting tradition; those who consider art as investment and those who have different reasons. 349 This categorization is very vague since someone who carries on a family tradition, can see art as an investment as well. The same applies to people who are passionate about art, as the term “passion” does not sufficiently explain what collectors’ motivations are and does not clarify their attitude toward art as an investment. The lack of proper definitions and the methodology of categorizing collectors into different sorts contribute to the weakness of these studies, as they produce data that do not give insight into collectors’ motives and behavior.

Collectors’ categorizations fail as they change their motives and behavior depending on the situation. Artist Chuck Close told a story about a collector who was waiting for years to obtain a work by Close, which he promised to donate to a museum in Texas. The day after he received the work, he sold it. When the upset gallery owner called him he replied: “Well, I may be an art collector but I’m a businessman first. Anytime I can triple my money in one day I will do it.”350 This anecdote exemplifies the attitude that many collectors have but not many express: their interest in art is as genuine as their rational approach with regard to gaining profit from assets that they own. This juggling logic is reflected as well in what is called the attribution bias. It signifies different motivations the collectors apply in the way in which they evaluate the works they own: if the value increases, they tend to see it in financial terms and, if the value decreases, they present it as an object they simply like.351 This makes the categorizations that distinguish between passion and investment problematic.

Various collectors display different approaches toward investment. While some say to buy art works without thinking about profit, some are interested in the investment aspect to a certain degree. Again others consider the investment as an important element, and then finally there are those to whom investment and gaining profit in a short period of time is the central reason for being engaged in buying art. Although this sounds as a categorization using types in order to signify collectors’ behavior, it does not work in the long run because someone who buys work without thinking about profit can change his mind when he realizes that works he owns gained significantly in value.

The German collector Stephan Balzer, who has focused on buying young art, explained his position regarding investment as follows:

I hope that someone develops really well; this would be great. But I don’t buy as investment, which means this is not in the foreground. I would certainly sell something within a few years if someone develops very well and then I could say: “this paid well off.” But I had already inquiries from auction houses, which wanted to have a part of my things and then I said: “no, I don’t want to sell.” If I bought something for 1500 Euro and I could sell it for 6000, I

350 Interview, New York, 10 May 2013.
351 Barclays 2012: 32.
wo/dn’t do it. Because this is not decisive whether I would earn 4000, 5000 Euro from one work. Because then I would be a bit of a dealer and I don’t feel like being one. I am not a dealer.352

Although investment is not the main reason of his collecting, as Balzer put it, he does not exclude treating works as investment either, especially when the artist becomes really expensive.

Collector Fernando Lopez said that he only buys works that he likes, but he is not opposed to the idea of art as investment, which, for him, is a normal attitude toward art, since collectors’ attitudes depend on financial involvement:

That (seeing art as investment) depends on how much you spend on an artwork. I think if you're going to buy a piece for $2000, you don't care much about this as an investment, but if you're going to spend 50, 60, 100, 200,000 $ it becomes a kind of investment because that's a respectable amount of money and you want to be safe.353

He thinks that the amount of money paid for works will only increase:

I play with fire; sometimes I buy a piece because I love it and I don’t care, but sometimes I buy a piece and I’m thinking 'Oh maybe in a few years I can sell it if I need to or if I want to for much more money'. But firstly I have to love the piece, I don't want to buy a piece yet because I know that I want to sell it for 3 times more in 3 years if I don't like it. Because I have to live with that piece. But there are different points of view on that; that’s fine. There's no right or wrong.354

Lopez did not rule out that he might sell works, and neither did he argue that he has never thought about making profit from works, but he stressed that this is not his primary interest. For him, the difference between being interested in art or money is in the attitude toward the work: the fascination with the piece of art should be the first motivation, while the financial considerations should be in the second place. At the same time, he did not condemn quick sellers, but he cannot bring himself to buy a work for investment purposes if he does not like the work. His statement is to be interpreted by other collectors as a serious attitude toward collecting and a sensibility toward the works.

The aura of quick profit

People who quickly sell works for profit have been called flippers. “Flipping” indicates the practice of acquiring assets only to sell them for profit within a short period of time; the term derived from real estate or stock trade. Flippers concentrate mostly on works by young artists, which they often sell during auctions and gamble at on the alleged short-term predictability of the market. A Murillo painting bought from the gallery in 2012 and sold at the auction in 2013 could achieve a 1000% value increase in one year. Darren Leak, the Associate Director from Christie’s in London,

352 Interview 2010. Project Collectingnow.de
353 Interview, New York, 12 May 2013.
354 Interview, New York, 12 May 2013.
confirmed that these collectors have become active clients of the auction houses during the last years. Leak commented that these art buyers do attempt to quickly sell the works they recently bought and to gain profit, but he noticed that they are, at the same time, very passionate about art. His remark intends to connect the passion for art with—rather than exclude from—the wish for profit-making from the same art. This comment is understandable, taking into account that an auction house is interested in these clients as much as in the good reputation of their institution among other collectors.

Flipping practices have been addressed in a few researches, which have been ordered recently by the New York Times from Tutela Capital SA from Brussels and Beautiful Assets from New York. Both companies questioned the alleged widespread flipping practices, claiming that the holding period of works has not decreased recently. Beautiful Assets investigated Christie’s and Sotheby’s auctions whereby Tutela claimed to follow 2500 auction houses worldwide in the period between 1985 and 2014. They stated that the percentage of works younger than 3 years sold at auction was less than 2% in 2013, although, historically, the holding period is shorter than in the 1990s. However, there is no consensus on how widespread or limited the practice is thus far as many actors in the art world seem to think it is very common.

Michael Hort observed that new collectors have been especially interested in the value of art as investment:

When we go to an art fair dozens of people will come over to us and they’ll say to us something like: what do you think of an artist. Now, in the eighties, when they said that, they really sincerely wanted to know what we thought about it. Now all they really want to know is: do I think it has value or if it will go up. They aren’t really interested in what I think, except for that, is it going to go up. By the way, Susan and I usually say: “listen, you want to make money, buy Picasso. Picasso will go up.” Because basically I don’t know. The real truth is, one of the really interesting things is that Susan and I have been collecting long time, and everyone wants to know how we figure out our odds. And our odds of success after ten years are like twenty percent. Meaning, that if we buy art that we sincerely love, that we think is really great, like the art you see here, ten years from now eighty percent of them will not be worth much and most of them will be art teachers. Twenty percent will be successful and some extremely successful. But the point is, even people that are inside this as we are, have no clue which of those twenty percent are going to go make the cut.

Against the desire to secure the financial value, which seems to be typical of the new collectors, Hort placed the uncertainty that he and his wife know to be the essential characteristic of the development of value. With this statement, Hort stressed that the interest for art and not for investment should be central since nobody can predict the developments of artists.

The American collector Blake Burne expressed a similar opinion. As is typical of this time, he reflected on the collectors’ interest in value increase: his

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356 Manly, Pogrebin 2014.
357 Idem.
358 Interview, New York, 14 May 2013.
acquaintances, who recently started to collect, often ask him about the potential for a value increase when they are buying works. He always answers: “it will be a good investment only if you like it.” He noticed that there are many new collectors and many of them want to know which artist will be a good investment. He himself took losses with some works, which he bought too expensive, especially at the beginning of his collecting. His long-term experience has taught him, however, not to think in terms of art as investment. Every time he had investment in mind, the pieces he bought became worthless, whereas works that he bought because he liked them have become worth more.359

Another long-time collector, the French Gilles Fuchs, who has been one of the initiators and head of the French collectors’ organization ADIAF, also doubted whether it was possible to predict which artist will gain in value and remain important in art history. Fuchs has been involved in collecting for more than 30 years and has become an authority among other collectors, but, according to him, one will never know which young artist makes a career in the long run. He gave the example of his acquisition of a work by Jeff Koons in the mid of the 1980s. He found Koons an interesting and talented artist but not more interesting than a few other artists at that time. Consequently, when the gallery owner asked him to exchange Koons’ work against a work of another artist, Fuchs agreed. Koons made a career and the other has been forgotten.360

As collectors with a long experience and strong positions in the art field, Hort and Fuchs acknowledged their uncertainty about who will be or remain an important artist. At the same time, they have built collections that include many important and expensive works and that enjoy, to a high extent, prestige among collectors. Their admittance to uncertainty about decisions they take demonstrates their thoughtfulness, while their collections send off different signals to new collectors who asked them for advice about values.

In 2013, the online company Sellyoulater was launched, which later changed its name into Artrank. It claims to rank emerging artists according to their possible financial asset capacity in an attempt to give advice to collectors. It allegedly uses several algorithms in order to classify artists, such as web presence, social media counts, studio capacity and output, market maker contracts and acquisitions, major collector and museum support, gallery representation and auction results.361 The categories are: Buy Now <10,000$, Buy Now < 30,000$, Buy Now < 100,000$, Early Blue Chip, Sell Now (peaking), Liquidate (down) and Purgatory. The company received media attention as it was unclear whether the website attempted to seriously analyze the market or whether it was an artistic project, since the makers remained anonymous, allegedly afraid of the hostility of the art world.362 The owner of the company, the young entrepreneur Carlos Rivera from Los Angeles, claims to have clients who pay for the early access to the ranking, ahead of the public publishing of the list each quarter of a year.363 However, the classification mechanisms are not known and the use of algorithms for the ranking can also not be proved. It is unclear with which motives Artrank chooses the artists for each category, so the company could as well be a list of artistic preferences of its owner Carlos Rivera. Artrank offers

360 Conversation, Düsseldorf, June 2012.
a proposal that responds to wishes to standardize art as a product, which, so far, has remained ungraspable and unpredictable.

The aura of good investment and possibility of reselling has been created partially by auction houses and their various strategies to convince collectors to sell their valuable or highly demanded works. Auction houses have been offering attractive financial arrangements that include guarantees and waving of commissions.\footnote{Horowitz 2011: 194.} This practice suffered during the crisis in 2008-2009, but soon after, the big auction houses, driven by competition between them, continued providing attractive conditions for their clients.\footnote{It is claimed that, despite the record turnovers of contemporary art auctions, the profit of auction houses is small because of their commission and guarantee arrangements with clients. Milliard 2014; Boucher 2014.} Such conditions concern the works that which are in high demand, which is a very small part of art works owned by collectors. Still, the dynamics of the marketing of auction houses, often covered by international media, feeds the widely held assumption of easy earned money and high return on investment.

That collectors are driven to contemporary art as investment has been stated by Don Thompson, who investigated activities of big auction houses, renown galleries and artists in London and New York in 2007.\footnote{Thompson 2008.} Thompson, who is an economist and contemporary art collector himself, attempted to explain the mechanisms of creating financial values in the art world. His book gives an overview of the activities of the top-segment of the art world and actors who have a brand character: most important auction houses, galleries such as Gagosian and White Cube, artists Damien Hirst and collector Charles Saatchi. The study was limited to two-dimensional works on canvas and paper and sculpture only. According to Thompson, although the majority of works do not increase in value, collectors, motivated by news on sensational auction records, do see art as investment, especially the expensive art.\footnote{Thompson 2008: 257.} The book gave insight in a very important segment of the art market, as the visibility of the big auction houses and what he called “star” galleries adds to create a sentiment for the art market. Since 2008, the year of the publishing of the book, the art market has been expending further, while the position of the auction houses and star galleries has continued to strengthen.

To give the full picture of what is being said about the financial potential of the contemporary art and art in general, two more aspects need to be addressed. The first being the tax advantages that collectors enjoy in some countries, which form financial motives in favor of collecting; the second being the rumors about money laundering. The fiscal benefits were already mentioned in the previous chapter. Donations allow collectors to capitalize twice on their collecting activities: a collector receives tax benefits, enjoys a good reputation as benefactor and is a welcome customer to many galleries. He uses the same work to obtain social prestige and financial advantage.

As to money laundering, in 2013, the question was brought to light when the dealer Helly Nahmad from New York was accused of the laundering of millions of dollars on behalf of the illegal gambling business. The American judge Fausto Marin de Sanctis, who specialized in this area, stated that the international justice systems, regulatory bodies and police are inadequately equipped to detect and investigate laundering through art. He called art “the invisible asset” because of its lack of
transparency and it being an asset of which the value can be manipulated.\(^{368}\) Whether or not this aspect plays a role in the art market in general, and in the increase of popularity of contemporary art in particular, cannot be proven and will remain unanswered in this research.

**Conclusion**

Contemporary art has become the most popular art collectible among collectors in the last decade. In comparison to art from other periods, contemporary art offers collectors the opportunity to grow together with artists’ careers. Some collectors play with the possibility of discovering the “second Warhol,” great artists who will become part of art history. Its prices start cheap, its supply is less restricted as is the case with “art classé,” while a collector can actively and in real time participate in the making of the artistic canon. Practical problems such as forgery, looting and maintenance are also of a lesser concern in regard to art made recently.

However, what makes contemporary art so popular at this moment is the social world and the financial opportunities it offers. Paramount to the thriving social life are the qualities of the contemporary art itself, which became manifest at the end of the 20\(^{th}\) century. Its comprehensible visual language, its alluring conceptual approach and its actuality have formed the basis from which collectors’ various personal and collective interests could be explored.

This geographically and quantitatively extending social world forms a network through which collectors connect with some peers and other actors and simultaneously exclude others. Collectors feel part of an extraordinary group, which has a very attractive, culturally charged program at their disposal. The attraction of this social world is a joint effort of all actors, such as galleries, public institutions and fairs, who use all means they have to appeal to and charm collectors, whose financial participation in their activities is necessary for their existence. Collectors are being stimulated by institutional and art market actors and, so far, have been responding eagerly to these efforts by mobilizing each other and inspire new collectors.

International art events such as fairs form a great opportunity to show cultural, social and economic capital. In the atmosphere of enjoyment, glamour and exclusivity, collectors construct their identity by joining in and excluding in order to obtain prestige, profit and to secure their place in the hierarchy of actors in the same field. The universal language of art, which collectors acknowledge, promises alleged democratic accessibility to collectors’ world and equality of its members. Although the mixing of actors from different social origins happens regularly, collectors are in permanent pursuit of social distinction in relation to those outside the art world but also in relation to each other. The social world helps in relational management; it offers a platform for the social climbing of collectors and feeds its participants with inspirational stories about miracles that create the atmosphere that everything is possible.

Many collectors’ actions are instruments of creating hierarchies among themselves: showing images of artworks on their iPhones, naming artists from the collections, mentioning invitations to parties and dinners and participating in them. Enjoyment of shared interests goes hand in hand with the wish to distinguish and exclude.

\(^{368}\) Burns, Genfis, Michalska 2013.
Collectors follow the same social calendar where they meet peer collectors and also other actors. Of great importance for the success of art events is the opportunity to meet artists in person and obtain the information first-hand from its makers. For some collectors, feeling the spirit of their own time and actively taking part and responsibility in the creation of their own culture forms an essential motive for engagement in art.

Several aspects of the social world are not new. Informal social events for collectors were organized in the 1960s as well, while contacts between art and fashion were part of the New York art scene in the 1970s and 1980s. What distinguishes the social world of today’s collectors from the past is the combination of all these aspects together and its geographical and virtual enlargement. The art world has become popular, easily accessible and has massive dimensions.

The other very important reason for the current popularity of contemporary art is its financial capacity, which turned collecting into a potentially profitable experience. For many collectors, the profit potential has become a very attractive point of collecting. Although collectors express various attitudes toward art as investment, it is often a matter of price, not of principles, when an opportunity of cashing the profit appears. It does not make collectors into speculators, though. Enjoyment of owning an artwork goes hand in hand with the pleasure of receiving financial returns. The speculative activity called flipping received a lot of media attention but seems to be a limited phenomenon. Nevertheless, the interest in the value increase of art works has become a common feature of collecting.
5. Distribution networks: galleries and auction houses

Introduction

In order to participate in the contemporary art world, collectors need to gain access to works and information. This access is provided by galleries and auction houses, which are important channels through which collectors can acquire and sell art, with or without the assistance of advisors. At the same time, these networks are crucial sources of knowledge and news that help collectors form their opinions on artworks, artists and art in general.

Access to works through galleries and auction houses seems to be easy, but there are certain rules and unwritten guidelines that regulate the functioning of both structures, which collectors learn when operating there. Although activities of galleries and auction houses relate both to the presenting and dealing of art works, their rules of engagement with collectors differ and so differ the modi operandi of collectors in each of the networks.

So, to gain access to works and to, if so desired, be able to resell them, collectors need to understand the specific ideologies and professional logics and codes of these networks and act accordingly. A variety of approaches will be shown, as collectors choose numerous attitudes when operating in galleries and auction houses in order to pursue their own goals.

Where cultural and economic capital meet

In or through a gallery, collectors can get to know artistic developments and find access to certain cultural phenomena. They can discover or follow artists and engage in buying or, possibly, selling art works. Therefore, a gallery is, for many collectors, the first link to the art world and a crucial position when they start to collect. Collectors mostly involve in a relationship with a gallery by attending exhibition openings and by buying works from several artists represented by the gallery. Over time, the relationship between the gallery owner and collectors might become one of trust and if, the gallery develops well, this trust relationship could become of great importance in having access to works of valuable artists. Some collectors continue to buy art from a limited number of galleries, but most cosmopolitan collectors tend to expand their network. Collector Fernando Lopez described in which way he starts to visit a gallery:

You go to a gallery first, and if you like something, you start talking to the gallerist and he will explain to you if you don't know who the artist is. Then you go to a gallery again, get more information. I like to create a relationship with the galleries, because it's like a friendship, it's a partnership and you're becoming both in the history of that…I love to be educated because there is so much information. It's impossible for a collector to get all the information at this point, thousands of artists all over the planet. So that's what the galleries should do.369

According to Lopez, a gallery fulfills in the first stage a double role of presenting relevant artists and of educating the collector. Lopez aims at creating solid

369 Interview, New York, 12 May 2013.
relationships based on friendship, as this gives him a sense of being anchored in the art world.

The importance of the relationship between a collector and a gallerist, which offers guidance, is exemplified by the case of the American collector Blake Byrne (born 1934). Byrne worked in the film industry and had always found art interesting, but collecting had not occurred to him as an option. During his marriage, he regularly visited the Sculpture Center in New York and, sometimes, bought a piece of art for $100 or $200, but only after his divorce in 1988, he started actively buying artworks. He got into collecting after being encouraged by gallery owner Jack Tilton in New York. The gallerist took time to introduce him to art, to educate him and to show him artists who could be of interest, such as Marlene Dumas, whom he represented at that time. He also advised Byrne to visit Art Basel in 1989, where the collector bought six works by Dumas, James Turrell and Juan Munoz. These works laid the foundation of his collection. Byrne himself has become an important American collector and a trustee and benefactor of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles.

A relationship needs time to develop but several long-terms collectors pointed at the fact that, in the past, gallerists had more time to spend to educate collectors than is the case now. According to collector Richard Lane from New York, when he and his wife Barbara became interested in collecting, other than today, they were given time to develop their taste and their collection. In the 1960s, they started visiting the Gallery of Sidney Janis who understood that they were a young couple at the beginning of their professional careers, she as an interior designer and he as a lawyer. Although, at that time, they neither belonged to his best clients, nor did they have a lot of money, Janis took his time with them. The Lanes started to buy prints by Josef Albers from his gallery. As of 1972, they also became close to Leo Castelli and were buying works from his gallery, where they were given time to grow.370

Collector Rosa de La Cruz considers the relationship with galleries to be of crucial importance, as they secure, for her, the access to the works:

I always tell young people who start collecting; the most difficult part is how do I get the work? How do I have access to the work? Access is the number one thing… The galleries are really great to me. I have a good relationship with them and they know that I’m going to show their artist right. They know that at least I am going to try to do my best and that I always respect the artist’s wishes.371

The remark of Rosa de la Cruz shows that collectors depend on galleries in acquiring desired works; in order to obtain them, a good relationship is essential. The relationship is reciprocal as galleries depend on collectors to be able to function and to grow. Collectors prefer galleries with a good standing and a strong cultural or commercial position in the art field, as much as galleries prefer collectors with a respectable reputation and a good track record of payments. This mutual interdependency means that most collectors do not attempt to buy works from artists directly, but let the gallery financially participate in their acquisitions.

The German collector Axel Haubrok expressed his loyalty to galleries, which form the primary source of his acquisitions:

371 Interview, Miami, 7 December 2012.
I buy in galleries. Not from artists, principally not. I don’t do it, I don’t attempt to. I think that we live in an art system where everybody has his function and without galleries the artists wouldn’t have the possibilities and the collectors wouldn’t have the possibilities they have. Of course, I try to put the price down as much as possible but I don’t try to avoid them.  

Axel Haubrok (born 1951), together with his wife Barbara, has been collecting since the mid-1980s, with the focus on conceptual art. Their collection counts more than 700 pieces, including works of, among others, Martin Creed, Martin Boyce, Wade Guyton and Jonathan Monk. Haubrok used to work as a financial advisor and owner of the company Haubrok Investor Relations in Munich until he sold the company in 2012. He and his wife began to show parts of their collection to the bigger audience as of 2005. They started off in their apartment in Berlin, then in a special exhibition space in Berlin Mitte and, as of 2013, in a big industrial space, Fahrbereitschaft, that used to be a former car maintenance workshop located in Lichtenberg, on the edge of former East-Berlin. In this space, they organize exhibitions and other art-related events, such as collectors’ dinners and lectures.

Haubrok acknowledged the role of the gallery as part of the system in which he as a collector functions well, and he does not intend to challenge it by breaking the rules. The collectors Zöe and Joel Dictrow also stressed their loyalty toward galleries for similar reasons:

We always buy from galleries and not directly from the artist because my feeling is, let them do the legwork and then also let them make the money. Because we support the whole system, whether it’s galleries, museums, curators, what have you. There are approximately 40,000 artists graduating every year from art schools, and when an artist gets represented that's really when they start their career. For that to happen, the gallery has to decide to show this artist in one show after another, so they have to feel there is a future. And part of the joy is being able to follow an artist as they develop. You say, “This an artist who looks like they have a lot to explore.”

For the Dictrows, the importance of galleries in the functioning of the whole system of which they are part is the reason to be loyal to them. They especially appreciate the efforts and the important role of the galleries in finding artists who are worth being represented and helping them further in the development of their careers. By avoiding buying art works directly from artists but using the gallery instead, collectors allow galleries to receive their commissions and continue their work.

The collector Michael Hort and his wife bought early works by artists from the so-called Neue Leipziger Schule in Germany and the Cluj School in Romania. They visited artists’ studios in their countries and met the artists there personally. Although collectors’ efforts to obtain the works were substantial, Hort also stressed the role of galleries in their acquisitions:

We went to Cluj in Romania and to Leipzig when we knew the artists we were going to visit. We didn’t just go and go to studios. We went to Weischer, who we knew and Neo Rauch who we knew. And in Romania, Viktor Man, Adrian

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372 Interview, Berlin, 12 February 2010, Project collectingnow.de
373 Goldstein: 2014b.
Ghenie and Serban Savu... We try to get early if we can. But seldom, very seldom do we buy art from a studio. It is from the first shows in the galleries... Galleries are the people we buy the art from, based on good relationships, certainly.\textsuperscript{374}

Hort pointed out his loyalty to the galleries because they are the primary place where he and his wife have been discovering artists and buying artworks through the years, even though they are themselves actively involved in researching artists during travels and by providing grants. Comparable to the Horts, most collectors would emphasize publicly that the galleries have been the most important place where they find new artists and follow the existing careers. For Rosa de la Cruz, galleries and curators are the institutions that have the task of discovering artists, so she does not compete with galleries in this respect:

I am buying art from galleries and I am not discovering. Some people say what are you discovering? No, I trust the galleries that I work with. ... The galleries are the ones that scout, and curators. I am a collector, but I am not a curator and I am not a gallerist.\textsuperscript{375}

Many collectors would agree with Rosa de la Cruz, as, for them, the galleries with whom they have developed a relationship have evidenced their ability to deliver artists of the quality that the collectors wish for. If collectors like to visit a studio of a gallery artist, the gallery will arrange it with the artist. If a visit leads to an acquisition, a gallery will handle it, even if a work is coming directly from a studio. Most collectors and artists would not want to put at risk the good relationship with a gallery by trying to buy works without gallery involvement, because this good relationship is of essential significance to them.

Collector Martin Margulies has developed direct contact with artists whose works form a part of his collection. However, such personal encounters have, for him, been a way of understanding the work, not a possibility to acquire works:

I go to their studios, I invite them over for breakfast and lunch. I have several relationships with the artists, but when I do go to New York, it is a busy schedule and I don’t spend a lot of time socializing.\textsuperscript{376}

New York is the place where the Miami-based Margulies acquires the most of his works in galleries. He presented the contacts with artists mainly as enrichment to collecting and not as a possibility for buying artworks.

For collectors who are interested in young artists, the situation might be different, as such artists do not always have a gallery representation or are more inclined to work directly with collectors. The German collector Stephan Balzer exemplifies such an attitude. Balzer (born 1966), a media and Internet specialist and owner of the Red Onion communication Agency in Berlin, started to collect around 2000 and, from the very beginning, he was interested in young artists. His focus lies on young artists, many of whom are not represented (yet) by a gallery:

\textsuperscript{374} Interview, New York, 14 May 2013.
\textsuperscript{375} Interview, Miami, 7 December 2012.
\textsuperscript{376} Interview, Miami, 8 December 2012.
There are a few artists here in Berlin whom I got to know through others. This is a crowd. One artist would introduce me to another one and say: “look here, and come to our exhibition.” Then I would go to this exhibition, he would show me a few works and I would buy one or another.377

Buying directly from artists’ spaces can function well when artists do not have a certain market reputation that was built together with a gallery, so they are morally or legally free to sell to whom they want and without sharing the profit. However, established artists are well controlled by the galleries that helped construct their position in the market. The artist Thomas Schütte mentioned by way of anecdote that his New York Gallerist Marian Goodman even wants to know with whom he drinks coffee.378

The gallery owner David Nolan described how a purchasing conduct of collectors in a gallery often develops. He set up his gallery in New York in 1987 and, before that, he worked with the Gallery Michael Werner in Cologne and Ileana Sonnabend in New York, and over the years has developed a solid base of collectors:

You rarely have collectors who buy from every single show you do, but you do have collectors that will buy from 50% of the shows you do if they are really good clients of yours. I have clients: you go to their houses and you realize they have bought a lot from David Nolan over the past 20 years. And that’s really what you’re after and you are after the museum trustees or people encouraging clients of yours to donate pieces to museums.379

The goal of a gallery is to sell to collectors who have the reputation of understanding art, who would buy art works but would not resell, especially not at auction, and who are able to pave the way for the artist to a museum. Such collectors are given priority in buying works and in being informed about possible new talents.

Collectors buy from galleries through exhibitions, fairs and, sometimes, through the Internet. Mostly, they buy works after they have seen it in person, but sometimes also on the basis of an image. Before an exhibition or a fair starts, preferred collectors are given Internet generated images, PDFs, in order to have the opportunity to make a reservation in advance, which, in turn, means it gives the collector time to think. A difference in rank of importance among collectors means more time to think about eventual acquisitions. At the same time, the more desired an artist, the less time to decide. For art buyers who are not familiar with these working procedures, situations at fairs can be puzzling.

Hanna Schouwink, the partner of the David Zwirner gallery, confirmed that many works from their gallery exhibitions are sold before the show even starts. Collectors were, for example, prepared to buy works by Jeff Koons that were made for the exhibition Gazing Ball (8 May- 29 June 2013) even on the basis of bad photos.380 For some collectors, the real preview takes place in the virtual space, while the life experience of the given work during the fair or the exhibition is mostly to support the previously made decision.

Providing the best access to the preferred collectors means excluding other collectors from acquiring the desired work from a gallery. Collector Fernando Lopez

378 Conversation, Düsseldorf, April 2011.
379 Interview, New York, 13 May 2013.
mentioned that it is not always easy to obtain works and, moreover, that galleries sometimes apply strategies to create a higher demand for an artist:

If the artist is good, there is always a waiting list, but they play those games: all the museums want it, big collectors want this piece, you have to wait, you have to wait… but it's a way to engage the collector and New Yorkers react to that game very well. You create a better relation with the galleries in Europe, they take more time to explain you or to educate you about their artists, and there is less pressure… we find it more comfortable.381

According to Lopez, the difficulties to obtain certain works are not only created by their non-availability, but it is also a marketing tool that galleries use in order to create a feeling of importance and to get collectors to be more attached to them. Lopez highlighted an issue that galleries often raise with collectors in order to stress the value of an artist, namely the interest that museums take in the artist in question.

Collectors keep relationships with the galleries because many of them intend to follow the career of the artist they once bought. Often, they are interested in getting to know new ones. Martin Margulies explained how he becomes attracted to a work and how he proceeds:

I just go to galleries and there a work meets my eye, or even at an auction, if I really love the work, I might be more aggressive than normal… (Once I bought work by certain artists) I want to see their next shows, I’m hoping that they’re progressing, and I like to develop a historical aspect of that authors’ work… sometimes what might be an initial work that is appealing to my sensibility, sometimes the second or third show might be a disappointment. And then you just don’t buy it. You just pass by.382

As the development of the artist is essential for Margulies in order to judge the artist’s eventual relevance to the collection, galleries play a very important role in this process, since the collector can only follow how an artistic practice unfolds through exhibitions and works at fairs. Margulies considers it necessary to see many shows in order to discover new artists:

When I go to New York, I have the children going to school there, so I go visit them, generally I go to approximately twenty galleries a day and I look at work. If I find one or two works, I consider it a successful day. Twenty galleries sounds like a lot of hard work, but it is like going into a shopping mall. You see certain shops, and you know you are not going in and buy anything. So I try to find that gallery that might have the work that would be cohesive with my collection.385

Many collectors agree that seeing many exhibitions and works is fundamental to develop taste and to create a good collection. Michael Hort explained how he has been searching for and finding art that appeals to him:

381 Interview, New York, 12 May 2013.
382 Interview, Miami, 8 December 2012.
383 Idem.
You look at a lot of art, like you look at a lot of men, so you know what is attractive, right? If there was only one man, you wouldn’t be sure, if you got five men, maybe you’re still not sure. You look at hundreds and hundreds and you know what you think is good looking. Well, we look at thousands of pieces of art, every single year, you get to see what you like, you get to see what’s interesting.\textsuperscript{384}

The urge to train the eye, to follow careers and to discover new artists pushes collectors to visit galleries, both the ones they know and those they have never visited before. As the spectrum of galleries is huge, collectors need to choose which ones are interesting for them to visit. This sets off galleries to distinguish themselves in order to be visible among many others and to, simultaneously, keep the interest of the existing collectors clients and attract new ones. Many big galleries have expanded their activities to serve more collectors in different countries from more venues.

In 2014, Gagosian Gallery had twelve locations in nine different cities in the world. Thaddeus Ropac has opened a big new space in Paris in 2012, this being his 3\textsuperscript{rd} venue, while Hauser and Wirth has added new venues in the cities of London and New York and will open its 6\textsuperscript{th} venue in Los Angeles. Smaller galleries do the same: the New York based Gallery Lehmann Maupin has opened his dependency in Hong Kong, the Paris based Balice Hertling opened its second location in New York in 2013, to mention only a few examples. David Zwirner called today’s gallery world “an industry in its golden age.”\textsuperscript{385} This statement suggests that he considers the gallery a corporate enterprise that functions according to economic rules, that collectors have become clients and, moreover, that the profit his gallery and other so-called “star” galleries are making must be significant.

Many collectors follow activities of certain young international galleries that have recently been set up. Some of them have quickly managed to establish contacts with collectors and fairs and enjoy a reputation of having an interesting program, such as Societé and Kraupa-Tuskany Zeidler from Berlin, Night Gallery in Los Angeles, Carlos/Ishekawa and Seventeen in London, Canal 47 in New York, and T293 in Rome. For collectors, those galleries offer an access to new artistic phenomena and an interesting selection of artists, some of whom become quickly sought-after talents.

The variety of functions that a gallery offers to collectors means that a gallery operates simultaneously in the cultural symbolic and economic territories. The idea that commercial success is less important than the creation of cultural values is a principle, or a strategy, that the majority of galleries have been cultivating in various gradations, since the lack of interest in the commercial aspect of art has been historically connected with artistic integrity and quality. The ideology of the gallery, presented as non-commercial, and the daily practice of commercial operations, has been called the front room/back room principle\textsuperscript{386} Thanks to this separation, the gallery can demonstrate to collectors their cultural, non-commercial identity, whilst operating as an enterprise.

Subsequently, many galleries use various strategies in order to conceal their commercial side to their clients. With the exception of openings of exhibitions, a collector who enters a gallery mostly sees artworks hung up or installed in an empty and quiet space, while a gallery assistant works on a computer behind a desk. Prices of art works are mentioned nowhere and there is nobody who is trying to sell a work.

\textsuperscript{384} Interview, New York, 14 May 2013.
\textsuperscript{385} Paumgarten 2013.
\textsuperscript{386} Velthuis 2005: 29-37.
A collector can ask the list of exhibited works, but the list will mention all details but the prices.

Especially the internationally acclaimed galleries, such as White Cube, Gagosian, Lisson, David Zwirner and Hauser & Wirth, treat the prices in a careful way. If a collector asks the gallery assistant for the price of a work, the gallery assistant—who is not allowed to say “I don’t know”—will call the manager in charge of the artist to come to the exhibition space and talk to the collector. By applying this mechanism, the gallery not only preserves the image of a non-commercial institution and avoids spreading the information about prices, but it also creates a psychological obstacle for random visitors to ask prices since it implies a conversation with the gallery manager. For a gallerist, a personal encounter is a way to judge the newcomers. Gallery owner David Nolan described how he determines whether or not new gallery visitors are potentially interesting collectors:

You will try to put the artist in context and say what do you own, why do you like this, what brought you to this artist? And usually when they are responding, you'll figure out very quickly as to whether they are familiar with the artist, if they had bought other art or they are just trying to entertain themselves or be entertained by the art dealer. That's tricky because none of us have much time anymore.387

Initial conversations function as tests in order to categorize visitors as potential new clients. The above statement also showed that experience and knowledge of how to behave as a collector can help to pave the way to be taken seriously by the gallery owner.

The need to conceal the commercial side can complicate the daily operations of galleries. Collectors do not sign contracts when they buy works from a gallery but often receive an email confirmation and an invoice. Many galleries are very careful with sending reminders to the buyers who have not fulfilled their payment obligations in time, and prefer to wait instead. By sending a reminder, they emphasize the commercial aspect of their identity while the official ideology is that of creating culture. The behavior of many collectors confirms these expectations: collectors who, in their professional lives, strictly follow agreed payment conditions and due data can feel insulted when they are reminded that a payment for an artwork is overdue. A payment reminder transforms a purchase of art into an ordinary commercial transaction and also keeps collectors at bay for next purchases. Some collectors, who know that reminders are problematic to be sent out, attempt to profit from this attitude of galleries and postpone payments for a time. The collector Balzer observed that many collectors do not make haste in paying the galleries:

There are many collectors who have unpaid invoices with many galleries. Because they are very flexible and always say: “buy this.”388

Balzer considered the attitude of galleries the main reason why collectors owe money to the galleries, as the gallery owners offer the flexibility in payment and invite collectors to buy because they are interested to sell and create commitment. He referred to certain Berlin galleries and to artists for whom there is no big demand.

387 Interview, New York, 13 May 2013.
Galleries undertake many activities in order to stress and to show to collectors their cultural rather than their financial involvement. Collector Giovanni Springmeier explained how the gallerist Jan Mot operates, who, together with his partner Oscar van den Boogaard, used to be one of the first galleries from which Springmeier bought art:

Jan Mot is a gallerist who tells very little about art himself but instead he is someone who would say: “I put something in question when I choose it for my gallery and you have to decide for yourself whether it does something to you or not…This is not about selling but this object needs to fit with you, it has to address something in you and I have actually nothing to do with it. You need to negotiate with the object.” This is certainly an extreme position. Other gallerists come to you and ask, what does your house look like, perhaps I have something for you. In such cases, art becomes degraded to an object that adapts itself to circumstances.\(^{389}\)

Springmeier valued the a-commercial attitude of Mot as something special in comparison to others. The lack of persuasion to buy and the nonchalance toward selling made him more involved with the object on a personal level. He appreciated such an a-commercial approach as being demanding but valuable, as it stood, for him, for an intellectual challenge and cultural capital.

Cooperations with institutional actors such as curators and scholars link the galleries to institutionalized art historical knowledge and offer participation in the art theoretical discourse. Curators form a connection to public or sometimes private museums, while scholars operate in the academia, and, therefore, both can offer not only a cultural branding for exhibition but also involvement in other networks that will probably lead to other collectors.

Many examples demonstrate this strategy. Each year, coinciding with the time of the Vienna Art Fair, a selection of Viennese galleries present exhibitions set up by various independent curators, which is called Curated by Vienna. The gallery Hauser & Wirth hired the Chief Curator of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles Paul Schimmel to lead their new gallery space in Los Angeles, which is expected to open in 2015. In the David Zwirner gallery, the well-known curator Robert Storr curated the exhibition Ad Reinhardt in New York in 2013, which was received as an exhibition of a very high “museum quality.”\(^{390}\) The phrase “being of museum quality” also applied to exhibitions that offered historical overviews of important artists such as Piero Manzoni. A Retrospective in Gagosian in New York in 2009 and On Kawara Date Painting(s) in New York in 136 Other Cities in David Zwirner, New York 2012.\(^{391}\) Although only a limited number of works are for sale in these kinds of exhibitions, they are not for the sake of historical education only. They aim at positioning the gallery as an important valorization place and, at the same time, at finding a constellation of new collectors who can be approached to loan works, or attracted to visit an unusual display of extraordinary quality. Such exhibitions help accumulate cultural capital, which can later be converted into economic capital.

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\(^{389}\) Interview, Berlin, 17 April 2013.

\(^{390}\) Ad Reinhardt, November 7 – December 8 2013, New York.

\(^{391}\) i.e., Piero Manzoni A Retrospective in Gagosian in NY, 24 January – 21 March 2009, On Kawara Date Painting(s) in New York in 136 Other Cities in David Zwirner, New York 2012.
Art fairs: a love and hate relationship

Galleries show works of their artists to collectors not just during exhibitions in their own space but also during art fairs. For collectors, art fairs have become an important source of acquisitions, as they offer a concentration of many works from many galleries in one place. In 2013, sales at fairs accounted for 33% of the total dealers sales. The attitudes of collectors toward fairs vary, but almost every interviewed collector visits several fairs a year.

An art fair consists of booths, in which a number of galleries, between 150 and 300, depending on the fair, show selected works for sale by artists they represent during three to five days. A visit to a booth is less intimidating for new collectors than a visit to a gallery, where the non-commercial attitude can discourage bringing up the topic of prices. During the fairs, the opposite happens: gallery owners and personnel are open to speak about all aspects of works, including prices, and to engage in short conversations. By bringing together actors from many places all over the world, fairs respond to the global habitus of collectors, who want to see what is happening in the most important centers of the art world all at the same time.

Internationally operating galleries participate mostly in several fairs a year in order to serve the existing clients and to meet new collectors. Gallery owner Max Hetzler, who celebrated the 40 year anniversary of his gallery, with currently two venues in Berlin and one in Paris, in 2013, described the pro-active attitude of his gallery, which he considers as the general modus operandi of today’s contemporary galleries:

It is more that one visits collectors or encounters them at a fair and knows who is interested in what. As a gallery already for a longer time you no longer can live from one city or one region. Because of the fairs the market has become global and the Internet has accelerated it. There are no accidental sales. Nobody would pass by in the gallery and say: Well, I like this and I would like to buy it.

Hetzler pointed at the decreasing role of the local space as the central place of the gallery’s identity for collectors, which has been caused by the Internet and art fairs. In his opinion, the Internet and fairs have made the art market global and they have, consequently, weakened the primacy of the local space in favor of the fairs.

International fairs have become the most important events through which galleries try to reach new collectors. They offer opportunities to meet eventual buyers from various regions in the world, who would otherwise not be likely to come to the gallery. Acquiring artworks as the main concept of the fair and the short duration of several days, forces collectors to make quick decisions in buying. Gallery owner Gerd Harry Lybke explained why art fairs have become so important for him in search for new collectors:

This year we did 12 fairs. This is a lot. In my opinion the art market has really been changing…You must not forget that most people who have money to buy art have worked very hard to get it. This is no fun, really. This is the reality. A
few years ago you had to do with people who have had money before and had a lot of time to undertake anything. Now with the new generation, they are still completely involved in their own businesses and have actually no time at all. Perhaps not even in the weekends, because they simple want to relax at home instead to travel to one or another fair in the world. Therefore I need to go to them. I need to go where they are. This is the reason that I am in Shanghai, in Singapore, in Hong Kong, in Mexico; we are in Paris; we are actually everywhere where the new markets unfold.395

Lybke speaks the same language as his clients: he understands that making money is hard work and that time for acquisition is limited. Therefore, he works as hard as they do, goes where he can find his clients and focuses on the acquisition of collectors, which is essential for his gallery enterprise.

Treating art fairs as the main source of acquisition has consequences for the reception of art among collectors. As art fairs stress the gallery as a market place and not the place where culture is made, the attention of collectors shifts to the financial value of art as well. Collector Michael Hort found this commercial aspect of fairs very prominent:

You go to these art fairs, it’s obvious that they’re not selling art; they are selling a commodity, Miami especially. But it’s a good thing. Susan and I really get a lot of art there. But if you walk around, it’s unbelievable, it’s like a spectacle…It’s really about the aura, and the value.396

Hort found it striking that fairs emphasize the financial and not the cultural value and the opportunity of profit gaining, and that they are marketing art as any other product. He did not condemn fairs, however. He stressed that selling art has become a spectacle, but, at the same time, there is an opportunity to find good art in a short period of time. He and his wife visit several international fairs a year and buy works there regularly.

For collector Erika Hoffmann-Koenige, who has been collecting for more than 40 years, the current market-oriented character of the fairs is exactly why she refrained from going there:

In the past we went together to the fairs. More recently it has become distasteful to me because fairs have increasingly become places in which artworks have been fully degraded to commercial objects. Often I had the impression in the last years that many objects were made only to be sold. And I have kept this childish belief that art is made because of other reasons. At least I would like to find something else. Therefore I hardly visit fairs at all. Galleries: yes. And often I give attention to works, which were suggested to me by artists friends.397

The “fair quality” of works has been an oft-heard point of critique among long-term collectors, who consider many works as made for the sake of selling only. Those

395 Interview, Miami, 6 December 2012.
396 Interview, New York, 14 May 2013.
397 Interview in Berlin, 1 February 2010, Project Collectingnow.
collectors think that a dazzling atmosphere does not work in favor of works that need time in order to be understood.

Art advisor Stefano Basilico noticed that a fair could be risky as a place for making decisions about new careful acquisitions:

I would never want to encourage my clients to only buy at art fairs. I think an art fair is a great place to go if you know what you want already and you believe it may be there, then you’re going to hunt. But I don’t find art fairs to be the places to go to learn about art. I think that's best done at exhibitions, and galleries and museums.398

By suggesting that art fairs should not be used to learn about art, Basilico probably pointed at the atmosphere of haste and at the particular choice of art works that are shown at a fair. Gallery owner Bruno Brunnet from Contemporary Fine Arts in Berlin mentioned that art fairs required statements of artists, comparable with galleries’ advertisements in *Artforum*.399 This suggests that works need to be noticed by collectors and that, especially, the branding quality should be exposed.

Giovanni Springmeier visits several fairs a year. In his opinion, fairs offer a variety of works and attitudes:

It is said time and again that during the fairs mostly superficial works are showed, a certain form of painting, certain recurring formats. It is true. A fair is in the first place a sale event. The booths are difficult, not curated, made only to sell. However, this is only partially true because there are also good curated booths with solo shows, and this is decisive. You can see in a curated booth that a gallerist has made efforts for the presentation.400

According to Springmeier, a fair has its limitations, but, at the same time, these limitations can be overcome by galleries that want more than only to sell. Exactly such an attitude during a fair could work in favor of a gallery:

There are galleries, which use a fair as a window to show the quality of their artists. It can be very problematic when you have an artist whose works cost tenthuousands and only the booth cost 50,000 but I think that good collectors appreciate it and would say: this is a gallerist who has an idea and a vision.401

Springmeier identifies himself with good collectors who can distinguish the quality and who value a vision instead of being interested in buying only. He suggests that, even during a commercial event such as a fair, good collectors search for a vision and galleries can respond to it. In this way, a fair is not only a commercial undertaking. Taking risks in presentations differentiate galleries among each other, while collectors’ attitudes and expectations toward galleries can also be a distinction mark among themselves.

The manner in which collectors buy works at a fair shows their experience in the art world and their prestige at galleries. Collector Thomas Olbricht noticed how

398 Interview, New York, 14 May 2013.
399 Interview, Berlin, 5 September 2014.
400 Interview, Berlin, 17 April 2013.
401 Idem.
the atmosphere of art fairs could influence the purchasing behavior of mostly inexperienced collectors:

I know many collectors who bought something quickly during fairs and then back at home say: what did I do there? In the past I did it sometimes as well, today not any longer. One becomes relaxed as one gets older.\footnote{Interview, Berlin, 20 March 2013.}

Olbricht commented on the rush of a fair and the atmosphere in which art buyers stir each other up when there is a certain time limit to take a decision. Experienced collectors as Olbricht differentiate themselves from the others, who let themselves be tempted by the wrong kinds of works.

Spontaneous buying applies to works that have not been in high demand, as the latter are often sold before the fair even starts. Springmeier described how this works:

All important works at fairs are sold beforehand. Nobody goes spontaneously and says: now I would buy myself a Tuymans or a Borremans because they hang here 2 meters away. Generally speaking, a fair creates an atmosphere where people obviously also buy spontaneously: not collectors but people who believe that they have to buy. The people who collect, know in advance which works are available, which works will be offered and get the offer beforehand. They might confirm something during the fair. But the rule is that the important collectors buy before the fair begins.\footnote{Interview, Berlin, 17 April 2013.}

Being able to buy in advance is an advantage and distinguishes those who are being offered such a service by galleries from those who are not. This is a code that experienced collectors know, but which can result in confusion for inexperienced collectors. A beginning collectors couple could not understand that a work they wanted to buy was already sold when they arrived at the gallery booth, despite the fact that they were there at 11.00 o’clock on the preview day of the fair. The expectations of accessibility at a fair are a distinction tool through which galleries and collectors can recognize the beginners from the experienced collectors.

Springmeier mentioned that, for many collectors, fairs offer as well the possibility of obtaining the necessary information about art, artists and the art world:

I believe that when you visit three, four fairs a year that you are to some degree informed. The basis information is that the visibility of the works. If you imagine that only in Berlin there are about 450 galleries. How many openings I can visit per year 50, 100? This means that of the 3000-4000 openings I see maybe 10% and this is only in Berlin….\footnote{Idem.} (at a fair) You get information about galleries, that matter to you, about people who are active in the art market. You could obviously spend a lot of time for it. But the longer you are a part of it, the less you need to see the quality. And you simply need to accept that there is a lot you cannot see.\footnote{Idem.}

Fairs enable seeing many works in a short period of time and are a source of information, especially to collectors who are experienced and know what is relevant
and what not. Springmeier alluded that collecting requires cultural and social skills in order to be able to concentrate on what matters most: finding the highest quality works.

For both collectors and galleries, fairs have become important places of encounter and offer good opportunities to buy and sell art. Opinions of collectors vary: while some complain about the pressure to make decisions, the dumbing down of the quality and the shift to commerciality, others appreciate the compactness of fairs and claim to be able to navigate through the big supply of works. Almost all collectors visit fairs, find artworks to buy and artists to learn about. As mentioned before, an important element of fairs is also the concentration of social events and the possibility to engage with other collectors and the social life.

Cracks in the system

Although collectors seem to appreciate the role that galleries play in the art field, there have also been critical voices about the conduct of galleries’ and their strategies. Reasons often mentioned, although only off the record, were that some galleries have become money oriented or arrogant. Fernando Lopez described the practice of forcing collectors to buy from the gallery another work than desired in order to acquire the right one:

I bought a drawing from a gallery in France although I do not collect drawings. I never got the painting that I wanted from them. So four years later when I was waiting for the compensation, which I did not get I said “Listen, this is your drawing, I'll put it on auction or you can buy it back” and they bought it back and that was fine.405

Lopez describes a common practice that, in order to obtain important pieces, a collector must be prepared to buy minor ones first. He also touched on the issue of the correct behavior of the collector when he needs or wants to sell a work: he should sell it back to the gallery from which he originally bought it. Many collectors have complained about galleries in this regard, because galleries often do not want to pay a higher price when the work has increased in value. Putting a work up for auction can be used as a form of intimidation to a gallery, as most galleries will attempt to avoid seeing their artists being auctioned.

The dealer-collector, or, as he calls himself, “cultural entrepreneur,” Stefan Simchowitz claimed that galleries are only interested in gaining profit:

You can walk up and down Chelsea and see overpriced art every day by young artists to mid-career artists. What are these galleries trying to do? Extract the maximum margin possible.406

The South African born and Los Angeles based Simchowitz (born 1970) used to be a successful Hollywood film producer. According to the media, he sold his photo-licensing company Media Vest in 2007 for 200 million US$, which paved the way for him to become involved in art full time: as collector, advisor and dealer.407 He himself denied that the deal brought him that amount of money and claimed that it was much

405 Interview, New York, 12 May 2013.
406 Goldstein 2014a.
407 Duray 2014.
less. Art belongs to the family tradition, as his mother is an artist and his father built up a distinguished art collection that includes works by Lee Bontecou and Agnes Martin.

Simchowitz started by promoting and showing art works through social media such as Facebook and, more recently, Instagram. He discovers young artists by buying works in bulk against very low prices, helping them with daily problems and sometimes telling them what to do artistically. Simultaneously, Simchowitz advises collectors what to buy, many of whom follow him blindly, occasionally without even checking what an artist does.

Simchowitz has stressed time and again the importance of the Internet-related instruments for the circulation of art works and subsequently started to claim to be in the process of installing a new system of selling and buying art. His Instagram account is full of pictures of artists, artworks and people from the art world, and sometimes of the eccentric Simchowitz himself, embracing his little son, or holding an artwork with the text PRICK! He seems to aim at being as inventive and “cool” as the artists he fosters and campaigns for.

Many of the above aspects of his daily work could be defined as standard gallery activity, since galleries build careers of young artists by supporting, advising and promoting. Yet, what sets Simchowitz apart is his ideology of the art system. In his opinion, galleries are speculating as much as the art speculators whom they condemn:

Galleries and art critics are permanently busy to maintain their allegedly high moral position. They call me a flipper, but this term was only invented to damage the name of other actors and to keep the status quo… Gallery owners are hypocritical. Depending on how the business is going they would welcome you with open arms or with a distance. You can play this game, obviously, or you design your own rules.409

Simchowitz claims to have unmasked the myth of the gallery as the place where culture is made according to the high standing moral rules, as, in his opinion, the galleries are interested as much in financial values as any other participant of the market. In his universe, the enjoyment of collecting lies in play, speed, visibility and financial profit, in “the here and now,” as opposed to the classical long-term drudging through hermetic artistic oeuvres with a glimpse of cultural prestige as reward. Simchowitz encourages his clients to trust his authority and not to waste too much time in order to research their personal taste or to develop their own subjective vision on art:

If I sell you something for a dollar and you sell it to your mate for two dollars and he sells it to his mate for four dollars, and he sells it to his mate for eight dollars, and he sells it to his mate for 10—well, that’s five collectors who bought the work, discussed the work, studied the work, and made a profit from it. And then they feel good about investing in cultural production, which is a very difficult thing to do because art, at the end of the day, has no value.410

408 Interview, Los Angeles, 24 November 2014.
410 Goldstein 2014a.
This is a provocative statement, since Simchowitz does not deny the morally high-valued idea of the pricelessness of artworks. While most galleries will deny that the market is a mirror of artistic value, he justifies his commercial operations by the argument of genuine interest in artists’ development and participation in the making of the culture of one’s time. In passing, by promoting re-selling, he shifts the focus of collecting from permanent to transitional ownership.

His critical comments caused hostile reactions from galleries and art critics. Simchowitz initially irritates because of his blunt statements and aggressive behavior. When he approaches gallerists, particularly young ones, to sell him works by their artists, the conversation starts with compliments about the program, but can quickly turn into a series of offences. Simchowitz then often moves toward the artist in question, speaking to him or her directly and commenting on their gallery as provincial, narrow-minded and amateurish, while presenting himself as the only one who can make the artist rich and place him in important American collections.

What this method disguises is that Simchowitz’ ideology attacks the moral foundations of the art system that has governed the gallery networks. The system defined a good collector as one who is principally disinterested in money, the artist as living for the sake of art only and art as being useless in the practical realm of human activities. Simchowitz claims that these qualifications of good and bad have become problematic and uses this situation to gain power and authority in the art world. His acquisition of authority stems from a solid and exciting distribution of opinions and images with prospects of emotional and financial returns.

A statement of one of his clients, actor and producer Enrique Marciano, exemplified the manner in which Simchowitz has been building his status and the base of his followers:

If he says to buy something, I buy it. I don’t need to know the size. Yes, many times I’ve bought things without liking or disliking it or even seeing a picture. I bought Oscar Murillo’s when they were $500, Joe Bradley’s when they were $6,000, Ryan McGinley’s when they were basically free.

Simchowitz links his authority to the value increase of works that he has advised to his clients. But, what is at stake here, is the ideology of collecting, for Marciano admits publicly that he buys without having an opinion and without personal commitment to art, whilst mentioning prices that give an indication of the huge profit that he has made out of his early blindly made acquisitions. There is no personal choice, nor is there a subjective meaning; still there is enjoyment and the idea of involvement through success. If these collecting attitudes were to thrive, and if money were to be allowed as part of the morally accepted enjoyment of owning art, it will, in the long run, ruin the existing art system that Simchowitz attacks.

Moreover, he does not exclude anyone, whatever reason motivates them to buy or sell, because, owing to the diversity of his clients, he creates “communication,

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411 The art critic Jerry Saltz said about Simchowitz: “There’s a saying in the poker world that, if you don’t know who the sucker is at the table, it’s you. Any gallerist or editor who thinks that Simchowitz puts art first—or is anything more than an opportunistic speculator—is handing him money.” Saltz 2014. The gallery owner Sarah Christian said: “he doesn’t know what art really is.” Christian 2014.
412 Mentioned by several artists and gallerists 2014.
413 Duray 2014b.
struggles, drama and stories.” Simchowitz and his clients are not discrete, which was always part of the acquisition model in the galleries. His clients name prices, while Simchowitz mentions his clients by names and they seem not to mind:

I work with Sean Parker, Steve Tisch, Orlando Bloom, Guy Starkman, Enrique Murciano, and Rob Rankin, who is the head of investment banking at Deutsche Bank worldwide. I also work with young people like Justin Smith, who is a professional poker player, and I have clients in Australia, Israel, everywhere.

Simchowitz states that his activities have a worldwide reach and, secondly, that his clients are often well-known people from various economic areas and social spheres of the society. Sean Parker (born 1979) is an American entrepreneur who co-founded the file-sharing computer service Napster and a few other Internet using companies and served as the first president of Facebook. He enjoys a high status among the Facebook users as a creative and daring person. With his private self-made capital, which Forbes estimated US$ 1.3 billion in 2014, Parker belongs to the group of the UHNWIs. Steve Tisch (born 1949) is an American film and television producer and Guy Starkman a Los Angeles entrepreneur and restaurant owner. Rob Rankin’s field is the hard-core business environment, while Justin Smith earns his money through poker.

A common denominator of these people is that each of them is successful in their field. By disclosing their relationship with him, Simchowitz attempts to show the quality of his choices and approval of these successful and popular people of his modus operandi. These clients have proven, through their careers, to be able to realize their own wishes, which are often not mainstream, and they, possibly, identify with Simchowitz and his unorthodox attitude. Consequently, suggesting that some of them could be categorized as “bad” collectors according to today’s legitimizing rules, Simchowitz questions the criteria that galleries uses in order to select their clients.

He is in the process of set up a large worldwide distribution system by using social networks and involving friendly galleries in different parts of the world and artists who were prepared to cooperate with him. In order to cooperate, these actors need to hand over the control of the works to Simchowitz. In that case, he stimulates careers of such artists by not only making sales to his clients, but also providing them with studios and materials, arranging exhibitions with approachable galleries and creating public visibility through social media. Artists and galleries who do not want to cooperate and prefer to control artistic production themselves will either be left undisturbed or will be approached by proxies in case the system of Simchowitz does not want to miss a specific artist. His preferences go to young artists, as they make the current taste, but also because they are most prepared to give up their independency in exchange of establishing a position in the field, also in financial terms.

As a newcomer who questions the existing system of circulation and consecration and, possibly, provokes heterodox practices, Simchowitz has been categorized as a cynic and profit seeker as opposed to their positions, which are

416 www.forbes.com/profile/sean-parker
417 Interviews, Los Angeles, 21-27 November 2014.
rooted in their idealism of devotion to art as symbolic good. The heavy critique toward Simchowitz demonstrates the power struggle between existing structures and their possible challenger. Both fight for gaining or keeping authority in the art world and, consequently, for the access to works and the control of prices and distribution. The structure that Simchowitz aims at does not in principle threaten the existence of galleries, since, by using them, he acknowledges them, in general, as important parts of the art system.

The strong condemning of Simchowitz can be explained partially from the context of the established/outsider relationship. Claiming the position of the outsider, he attacks a few aspects of the current art system: the false distinction between good and bad collectors and the alleged disinterest in money. By doing so, he threatens the order of the system and authority of many of his members, so the system is striking back by a massive amount of critical comments and by the instrument that often works well: exclusion and stigmatization. Calling Simchowitz a flipper, a word with terrible connotations in the art world, is an example of such a stigmatization. Media mostly take over such statements without checking it, so this qualification spread quickly within the network.

A stigmatized outsider is someone to be avoided because the members of the system see him as a virus and even contact with him can mean “pollution.” This explains why many artists who used to work with Simchowitz avoid admitting it once they have become part of the established system and joined a “normal” gallery. They think that they have to choose between him and the established system, and often they do. As Simchowitz wants to control the supply of works and their distribution, this forms a direct competition with galleries, which will try to exclude him. For artists, especially at the beginning of their careers, a lot depends on their good reputation. Artists do have an advantage in belonging to the established art system because it gives them access to the institutional world, which, for many of them, is necessary to receive artistic recognition. So far, Simchowitz’ access to institutions has been limited, as they function according to the ideology of the art system and cannot afford contact with an outsider with a doubtful reputation.

The outsider position of Simchowitz is, however, problematic since he grew up with art and within the art field. He knows the rules as an insider and he provokes them. Therefore, his behavior, and the vast negative response to it, would be explicable according to the concept that false players tend to be easier accepted than rule breakers (“spoil – sport”). Although cheating, the first do function within the rules and, by doing so, accept them, while the latter question the premises of the system, place themselves outside it and become uncontrollable.

Whether or not Simchowitz’ activities represent a crack in the gallery system that will lead to a new distribution channel remains to be seen. New elements, such as his different ideology and ethics of collecting and the focus on the social media, go hand in hand with the traditional gallery work proper, such as the close monitoring of artists’ careers and control of the access and distribution of the works.

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418 Bourdieu compared the defense of cultural orthodoxy against competing messages with the system of the Church, which, referring to Max Weber, should “systematically establish and delimit the new victorious doctrine or defend the old one against prophetic attacks, determine what has and does not have sacred value, and make it part of the laity’s faith.” Bourdieu 1993: 13.

419 For the analysis of the outsider/established relationship, see Elias, Scotson 1965 (1994).


**Auction houses and their attractive uncomplicatedness**

Another place where collectors can buy and sell art works are auctions. That their popularity has been growing is demonstrated by the growing turnover of the Post-War and Contemporary auctions sales, which has increased from 593 million Euro in 2003 to 4,943 million in 2013, which means an increase of 833% in value.\(^{422}\)

Collectors seem to appreciate clear procedures and the relative transparency of the results, which are mostly publicly available and continuously accessible on the Internet. Auctions offer collectors easy access to works without the social categorizations based on reputation, visibility of the collector and trust relationships that are applied by galleries. At auctions, the highest bidder acquires the work without any unwritten constraints. Especially for new collectors who have not established trust relationships with galleries but can afford to acquire works, auctions form a comfortable source of artworks. Prices of works at auction can be higher or lower than in galleries, depending on the artist and the moment in his career.

The ex-director of Sotheby’s Post-War and Contemporary Art Department, Tobias Meyer, assumed that the popularity of auction houses has surged because new buyers love the auction processes because they are familiar with the principles of demand, supply and competitive bidding. The mechanisms of the auction are therefore understandable to them because similar mechanisms apply to other markets.\(^{423}\)

The ex-head of Christie’s Post-War and Contemporary Art Department, Amy Cappellazzo, described how she saw the advantages and the function of the auctions in the art market toward collectors:

> Here money is just money so whoever is gonna bid is gonna bid, if they have a clear credit and we have every reason to believe they are a legitimate client they can bid. So in a way, this is the most democratic aspect of getting an artwork.\(^{424}\)

Cappellazzo referred to the fact that there are no limitations in biddings and that every participant at auction can do what he or she wishes to do regarding the prices, as long as he can pay for it.

Leading auction houses Christie’s and Sotheby’s have been expanding their activities by becoming involved in the gallery networks and have taken on the model of exhibitions.\(^{425}\) Sotheby’s has opened the space S|2 in New York in 2011 and in London in 2013, which is the private gallery arm of the auction house that organizes various sales exhibitions that involve curators. Its aim is also to increase the private deals activities of the house outside of the auctions. Christie’s in London has organized curated exhibitions such as *Polke/Richter, Richter/Polke*, which showed works of the two highly popular artists.\(^{426}\)

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422 McAndrew 2013: 44.
423 Meyer, Gropp 2012.
424 Interview, New York, 8 May 2013.
425 In 1997, Sotheby’s cooperated with the gallery of Jeffrey Deitch, to whom Deitch sold 50% of his business in New York; in 2007, Christie’s bought the gallery Haunch of Venison in London, which, however, ceased operation on the primary market in 2013. Apparently, the reason for the ceasing of the operation as a primary gallery was the fact that Haunch of Venison was seen as an extension of the auction house and was, therefore, refused at important art fairs, which, in turn, made its reason for existence questionable. Tully 2013:76.
Auction houses have become involved in private sales, a trading activity that was only introduced in 2000 but that, in 2013, already constituted 17% of the consolidated sales by Christie’s and 19% by Sotheby’s.\textsuperscript{427} Private sales are transactions between collectors and auction houses that take place outside the auction and are not reported to the public. Collectors appreciate private sales because they allow them to keep their selling discrete, while an artist will not be “burned” if the result turns out to be disappointing. As private sales were, in the past, the specialty of dealers and galleries, this strategy of auction houses means an expansion of their territory into that of the galleries.

In order to strengthen their position toward collectors and to appeal to more clients, auction houses have been applying various strategies. They have often implemented financial constructions to encourage owners of sought-after art works to give those works up for auction. Such an instrument is a price guarantee, through which the seller has the comfort of the minimal price he will receive from the auction house, while the auction house takes the full financial risk. This risk, in turn, can be offered to other clients of the auction house who are prepared to guarantee the minimal price: if the work is not sold at auction, they will receive the work; if the work yields a better price, they will receive part of the provision of the auction house. Giving price guarantees has been prompted by the competition between auction houses in acquiring highly desired works. For all auction houses it is important to offer works that are “fresh to the market,” meaning that they were not traded at auctions before.\textsuperscript{428} Fresh does not mean brand new, since the auction houses usually only sell works that have already been sold in the primary market. In this respect, the sale of the newly produced works by Damien Hirst in September 2008 at an auction at Sotheby’s in London has shown that this rule can be broken and that the auction house acted as a primary gallery.\textsuperscript{429}

Auction houses advise collectors about legal, fiscal or quality issues. Their established institutional position gives their clients a certain sense of security, as Amy Cappellazzo mentioned:

For many sellers of works and buyers of works to feel that they're transacting in a safe environment whereby the works have been looked at very closely for condition, where there is, representation in warranty for every lot to be sort of the standard barrier of a transaction in the marketplace. Not just as an auction house, but also on the private sale deals that we do as well.\textsuperscript{430}

Operating through big auction houses indeed offers a certain quality guarantee to collectors, although the liability of auction houses is limited.

In 1988, Sotheby’s Financial Services started to advise their clients on financing issues and acquisitions; today, the Services also offer credit loans for properties consigned for sale and loans with the collection as a collateral. Christie’s service departments advise collectors about estimates, insurance valuation, taxes, collection management and storage. Education is an expanding field: Sotheby’s

\textsuperscript{427} Maneker 2014; Christie’s Press Release 22 January 2014.
\textsuperscript{428} Many auction mechanisms have been thoroughly described in Thompson 2012: 104-159.
\textsuperscript{429} There were other cases of selling brand new works at an auction in the past. In the 19th century, the artist Theodore Rousseau and Narcisse Virgile Diaz de la Pena sold their works through an auction house in Paris; Velthuis 2011: 185. In 1891, the artist Paul Gauguin organized an auction of his works in order to finance his trip to Polynesia; Rewald 1986: 79-80; Wuggenig 2012: 70.
\textsuperscript{430} Interview, New York, 8 May 2013.
organizes art courses through its Institute of Art in London, New York, Los Angeles and online, whilst Christie’s has launched Master’s programs in New York in Global Contemporary Art and Modern Art and its Markets available for art history undergraduates. Specialists from auction houses also guide their clients through events outside their own territory; for example, during the opening of the Venice Biennale 2013, Sotheby’s specialists accompanied some of their clients through this non-commercial art manifestation. Collectors can be obliged regarding the many different aspects of art without having to offer trust or loyalty in return; the only requirement is a fee.

If auction houses offer so much, and in such an accessible and clear manner, then why have collectors not turned to this network en masse, and why are some collectors reticent and even negative toward it? Expending activities of auction houses can be seen as another possible crack in the system, as they tend to undermine the existing structure and division of tasks in the art world. This makes some collectors concerned about the future of the art field. Thomas Olbricht expects that the role of galleries will change because of the increasing dominance of auction houses in the art market:

The auction houses will kill the general gallery scene, which we know at this moment. This is happening already now, it is no longer good. The auction houses have started to give certain price limits as it costs much more efforts to catalogue and sell ten works of thousand or ten work of ten thousand than one work that costs hundred thousand. A lot will change but art will certainly stay and new ways will appear.\textsuperscript{431}

Olbricht suggests that the consequences of the auction houses taking over certain aspects of the work of galleries and dealers are unpredictable and will be far-reaching. Especially since they concentrate on a certain specific group of expensive artists and art works that are financially worth their efforts, which leave many artists unnoticed.

Collector Rosa de la Cruz noticed the struggle between auction houses and galleries:

The galleries keep their prices but there is nothing they can do when someone who bought a work decides to sell it because then you have an auction. You have a lot of people bidding. It is not a choice anymore. Whoever pays more gets the work. So sometimes you see this crazy bidding and suddenly somebody pays ten times what the gallery is selling the work for. And then of course what happens is that the prices start going up and then you have to admit, you have to move on… if you can’t afford it you can’t afford it. It is the same way you are going to buy whatever in life. There is a market out there and what are you going to do? There is nothing you can do about it. There is no way you can stop that market.\textsuperscript{432}

In the opinion of De la Cruz, auctions can influence positions and values of certain artists because they fix prices according to other rules than galleries. Her word choice suggests that she sympathizes with galleries, whose activities can be disrupted by certain prices and sudden changes of market moods. However, although prices at

\textsuperscript{431} Interview, Berlin, 20 March 2013.

\textsuperscript{432} Interview, Miami, 7 December 2012.
auctions can be outrageous and capricious, De la Cruz accepts it, as this is the way in which the art market functions. The consequence is that some artists become too expensive for her to follow.

Giovanni Springmeier doubts whether auctions offer fair prices that are determined on the basis of a healthy supply and demand:

Auction houses offer collectors the idea of a fair price or price estimations. It is suggested that the price that is paid is the free play of the market and the bidders and then a work costs so much. This is nonsensical because if you look how many works are produced and how many go to the auctions and how much this market is manipulated, these prices are fake. It only becomes interesting when one needs to sell acquired works and seeks an exit.  

In his opinion the number of artists traded at auctions and their prices do not reflect the totality of the market of artists at all. He also insinuates that regarding the prices realized at auctions as the achievable market price is misleading, as the financial value of each work will be checked only when the owner wants to sell it. Auction houses create the idea of alleged liquidity of the art works and solidity of their prices, but these prices can be very capricious and unpredictable time and again.

The public availability of the prices has an effect on popularity of certain artists, whether positive or negative. Collector Thomas Olbracht accused the auction houses of making trends in the time that the reputation of an artist depends on the visibility and popularity of his name:

Who decide about what is art that will stay and which not? This will be anyway be known only over 50 years from now, but at this moment I have a bit the impression that auction houses heavily dominate the trends. Because what does not come in the auction houses will be not discussed and be on everybody’s lips. What is not on everybody’s lips will not be exhibited and so and how can otherwise the museum director know what is good? Spoken badly, an artist who emerges somewhere a field, woods, he will be never become someone as long as he will not be noticed by auction houses. Something has changed. Extremely changed.

The remark of Olbracht implies that, nowadays, auctions have become important to institutional actors who watch the development of an artist not only in the art theoretical context, but also through the results of his works at auction. Since institutional actors are responsible for the formation of the art canon, the collector suggests that, at the present time, the auctions results, which can be manipulated, contribute in forming an artistic discourse. The auction houses, in turn, are pleased to stress their importance in positioning an artist in the market in general.

Art advisor Stefano Basilico noticed that there are collectors who are interested in earning money and, possibly, also in manipulating the prices. In his view, such collections will not survive for very long and will not turn out to be good investments in the long run:

433 Interview, Berlin, 17 April 2013.
I'm sure there are some people who are trying to manipulate the market…but I'm not so certain that market manipulations will be effective in the long-run. They may be effective in the short-run. They often are. The question depends on how people collect, whether they are buying with their ears or with their eyes. If all that matters to a collector is that every time an art work goes up at auction, the price keeps going up then they should form a collection based on that and nothing else. It wouldn't hold together and they probably wouldn't be a particularly good investment either. Again because the art world is a not-rational world.  

Basilico stressed the collector’s freedom to buy and sell whatever he or she desires. Auctions are open to everyone and the methods of collecting are not fixed, thus allowing manipulation. At the same time, he is convinced that good quality art and good collections are not based on hypes, an open-minded approach that underlines his experience and expertise in this complex art field.

On their part, auction houses attempt to steer attention away from the aggressive strategies that they are often associated with and toward the cultural activities aimed at gaining symbolic authority among their clients. The notion of auction houses ruining the careers of artists is countered by their cooperation with artists. In Europe, art buyers are obliged to pay the artist a fee on the hammer price, which is called the Artist Resale Right. 

Auction houses involve actors with big cultural and social capital in order to show their involvement in making culture. When selling 128 works from the collection of the renowned German collector Ingvild Goetz, Christie’s asked the director of Tate Modern, Chris Dercon, to interview her and published the interview in the auction catalogue.

Dercon is a person with extensive international networks. The Belgian born art historian, filmmaker and cultural producer used to work for Belgian radio and television and was a lecturer in Video and Cinema Theory in Brussels. Between 1998-1999, he worked as the Program Director for the Contemporary PS1 in New York. From there, he moved to Rotterdam, where he became director of the contemporary art space Witte de With in 1990, followed by the function of director of the Museum Boymans van Beuningen. Between 2003 and 2011, he was the director of Haus der Kunst in Munich, where the collection of Goetz is based.

Ingvild Goetz, born in the 1930s, is one of the pioneers of professional collecting in post-war Europe. Her interest for art harked back to the 1960s, when she set up a publishing studio edition art in progress in Konstanz, which later became the gallery art in progress based in Zürich. Harald Szemann, whom she met coincidentally on an airplane, brought her into contact with many then active artists such as Christo, Eva Hesse, Robert Ryman and Ed Ruscha. In 1974, Goetz moved her gallery to Munich, shifting her attention to Arte Povera. In 1984, she finally decided to commit herself completely to collecting art and supporting artists. In order to host and to show her collection, she commissioned the architects Herzog & De Meuron to construct a private museum that opened in 1993 in Munich. The collection consists of

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435 Interview, New York, 14 May 2013.
436 The Artists Resale Right is calculated as follows: 4% for the works under the 50,000 Euro hammer price, 3% between 50-200,000, 1% for 200-350,000 Euro, 0.5% for 350-500,000 Euro and 0.25% for works sold for more than 500,000 Euro. This rule applies to the official sale at auction and not to the private deals.
437 Christie’s sale Post-War and Contemporary Art (Evening Sale), 13 February 2013. The revenues from the sale of Goetz’ works were intended to benefit projects for anorexia and asylum seekers.
about 5000 works made by artists, many of whom in the meantime have been consecrated by art history and the art market, while Goetz gained a high reputation and social status in the art field.

In the interview in Christie’s catalogue, called ‘Imagination becomes Reality’, the collector spoke about her involvement in art, stressing that she does not take the market into account at all, and talked, among other things, about how her relationship with artist Felix Gonzalez-Torres helped her to develop a different attitude toward death and to overcome the fear of death. Dercon, on his part, lay emphasis on the relationship between Goetz and Ulrike Ottinger, an artist who is commercially not successful. Both Dercon and Goetz stressed the never ceasing need to buy new art works, because collections require a permanent upgrading and focus.  

Although both speakers expressed an indifferent or negative attitude toward the market, the involvement of these actors, with big cultural and social capital, has been used as a marketing tool for the auction house, even after this particular auction had taken place.

Auction catalogues have become sophisticated marketing tools that show collectors the alleged links of the works for sale with art historical narratives. In the Post-War and Contemporary Evening Sale on the 15th of May, 2013, for example, many works that were presented for sale at the auction were supplemented by historical masterpieces. Those masterpieces were not mentioned in accompanying texts as a point of reference for the artist; the images were simply placed next to the works for sale. The photo Klichko (1999) by Andreas Gursky was juxtaposed with August Renoir’s painting Bal du Moulin de la Galette (1867) without making any mention of this work as a source for Gursky. The drawing Untitled (Black and Cream Butterfly Negative Middle 633) (2006) by Mark Grotjahn was accompanied by the Untitled Drawing by Barnett Newman (1946) that, formally, looks similar. Jean Michel Basquiat’s painting Dustheads (1982) came with several references: Demoiselles d’Avignon (1907) by Pablo Picasso, Jackson Pollock’s Guardians of the Secret (1943), Willem de Kooning’s Women and bicycle (1952-53), Ernst Ludwig Kirchner’s Berlin Street Scene (1913) and a photo of the lonely artist Basquiat with the Guggenheim museum in the background.

Interested collectors could use an easily accessible sheet with all possible references in art history that all led to Basquiat, which Christie’s created especially for this auction. The sheet was accompanied by music that he liked. Dusthead was one of the most important works at this auction and the buyer was prepared to pay the record price of US$ 46 million for the artist.

Auction catalogues started to become more informative about artists and artworks from the 1980s onward. This suggests that, around that time, collectors rather than dealers, became the primary clients of the auction houses and that auction houses, therefore, began to provide more information than before, when catalogues were still meant for professionals. Catalogues have become explanatory, full of well-known references and additional information such as interviews with collectors. Moreover, catalogues have become very visually appealing thanks to the use of quality photo prints, color contrasts, folding pages and shining paper. One work can be discussed on six pages. The luxurious design and abundance of well-known references and explanatory texts address collectors who are susceptible to good

439 http://artmarketmonitor.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Basquiat-Infographic.png
presentation and renowned names. How much value auction houses attach to the right presentation is exemplified by the following story about the sale of “Rockefeller Rothko” (1950) by Tobias Meyer:

This was a work, which the established Rothko market totally disregarded. They all wanted dark, depressing, emotional… Our competitors said that it would perhaps reach 30 million. But we gave a guarantee for 40 million dollar because I said: this is the new market! We produced a white catalogue, pure white, without colors, a white leather cover, with an image of only this work. With this I travelled to Hong Kong, I showed it to potential clients, then to Russia, and from the 5 bidders that bid at this works during the auction, only one person saw the work in real life! But because if was well printed, had beautiful colors, because it has the provenience of Rockefeller, the clients were convinced. And then the work achieved 72.8 million dollar; this was till then the highest price for contemporary art at auction.441

Meyer claimed that the quality of the presentation of the work to collectors was of huge importance for the high price that was eventually paid for the work. Although this story was probably told as an example of the resourcefulness of the auctioneer, the aspect of high-quality images and splendid presentation has become of great importance in attracting collectors’ interests.

Art advisors: setting own taste at rest

Some collectors choose to work with art advisors when buying and selling art works for their collections. Stefano Basilico, who started to work as art advisor in 2006, after he had closed his gallery in New York, explained why collectors involved him when building their collections:

It's useful to have an art advisor, at least it's useful to have someone who understands the art world better than you. The art world, or I should say, art history is in dispute, it's not fixed, it's always being rethought and rewritten. And these debates are valuable debates and interesting debates, and the more you know about them, and the more sophisticated your understanding of them, the better, and the more likely you make the right choices, because, like in any debate there are 2 points of view, but there aren't both necessarily correct.442

Basilico has been active in the art world for more than thirty years, working, for instance, as a gallery director with the well-known gallery Ilenea Sonnabend and artists such as Jeff Koons. He can be of added value to collectors because many of them are in need of the resources he possesses: knowledge of art and the art market, and an extensive network of galleries that could provide access to works. In this context, the rewriting of art history refers to the revaluation of various artists, which is important information because it changes the prices of their works. Being well informed about the quality of art and mechanisms of the art world means being able to buy works when they have not yet become the focus of attention. An art advisor can

441 Meyer, Gropp 2012.
442 Interview, New York, 14 May 2013.
guide collectors through art and the art world, and, possibly, open the doors to galleries that would otherwise be out of reach for certain collectors:

Collectors expect many different things from an art advisor, one of which obviously is understanding art; the other one is a certain ability to understand them and to be able to work with them correctly, understanding the market, that they happened to operate in and the art history that they're engaging in and looking at… I don't know that it's entertainment so much as information and education. Certainly we have fun, this is not an onerous business, collecting art is not painful, it's often done in very nice locations. But I don't know that I would call it entertainment.  

The loyalty of art advisors lies with the party that employs them, so they operate in galleries as much as in auction houses, depending on the situation and the clients. Art advisors often join their clients when traveling to art events and accompany them at art fairs and at auctions. Art advisors use their skills to fulfill the wish of collectors, whilst trying to maintain a neutral position within the art world:

If a client wants to sell a work, it would depend on the work that they're selling, and my advice would ultimately depend on how to make the most money for my client. In other words, my job isn't so much to recommend auctions or private treaty sales or a gallery. It's to protect my client and to understand their interest. And an auction may be the right place for a work to increase its value, but it may also be not the right place. There is such a thing as an auction work, which is to say, a work which many people want at the same time and that's a good work to send to auction. Then there are specialist works, works that are incredibly important, very sophisticated, but not really recognized by everybody... and there you need to handle the sale privately, quietly, and more directly, you are just dealing with a smaller audience of potential collectors.

Basilico stressed the importance of expertise in order to maximize the advantages and financial profits of collections. The differences he mentioned between places where sales of art take place demonstrate that even such an allegedly simple operation as selling a work requires expertise of the artwork and the right judgment of the market. Giovanni Springmeier described how art advisors operate in his opinion:

I know a few art advisors mostly from the English-speaking countries, most of them used to work with auction houses. Usually they are people who have addresses of people who buy or sell art. I only sporadically met interesting, creative and independent art advisors. Usually they are people who can anticipate what people like to have and often they are good sellers...If you buy only by yourself you can lose a lot because everybody thinks that the just discovered artist is the only one good and real. Friends, partners are not that objective in most cases. This means thus that a good art consultant with own vision about the works is very helpful. If you find them, they are certainly worth money.  

443 Idem.  
444 Idem.  
445 Interview, Berlin, 17 April 2013.
Springmeier distinguishes between different kinds of art advisors: those who mediate between sellers and buyers and those who develop their own vision on art and artists. While the first kind has more a practical function in the art market, art advisors of the second kind are, in his opinion, of great value to collectors, since they help their clients in developing their taste and keep their clients from making regretful decisions.

Some collectors stress that they do not need advisors and that their collections reflect only their own vision. Other collectors acknowledge the importance of other opinions in forming their own, but underline that they are the only ones making decisions. Thomas Olbricht finds the role of his advisors important but not essential:

I have many advisors. I listen to all voices around me and filter them, but I decide at the end always by myself whether to buy or not something for the collection. I have the head curator, he has been at the same time a good friend for more than 20 years, Wolfgang Schoppman, who had in the past an auction house and an own life with art. We get on well with each other, but one should be careful because not only alone but also the two or three, you can be blind and not notice that you walk in the wrong direction. You need to be open-minded every time again, and to look whether you are in the real world or in the world that you created for yourself but which is outside of everything. Especially when you are becoming older and collect contemporary art you should think whether he is still at the point.446

This comment places the need for the exchange of opinions in the context of time, and how it is triggered by the ambition to have a high-quality collection. Advisors can correct the collector in case he is in danger of losing the right track, especially because a good collector needs to feel the spirit of time and his age can therefore work against him.

Collector Julia Stoschek also stressed that she is the one who makes the decisions about her collection, although she admits to getting support from many people who make her final decisions possible:

I travel a lot. I try to visit as many exhibitions as possible. I try to improve my eyes everyday with every new work I see. I try to read and discuss a lot with my great network. I have no advisors but I have my team of people who work for me; the final decision is always made by me.447

Rosa de La Cruz has employed an advisor to have someone to exchange opinions with:

I also have our advisor Meredith Darrow. She is 33 years old. She lives between L.A and New York and we travel together because I also need someone to talk to. I need someone to play ping pong with. It can’t be just my thoughts so my husband Carlo and I we tend to be very open to asking questions.448

446 Interview, Berlin, 20 March 2013.
447 Interview, Hamburg, 14 April 2010.
448 Interview, Miami, 6 December 2012.
De la Cruz stressed, more than Olbricht, that her advisor fulfills only an additional role, as someone with whom she can speak about art and acquisitions, and that she herself is the only one who makes the final decisions regarding the collection.

Having an advisor can be seen as an indicator of the financial position of a collector and his serious intentions in art. A collector who is prepared to spend money to receive advice on art shows that he can afford it and that art interests him enough to be personally guided through it. The increasing involvement of advisors also suggests that financial risks of buying art have become bigger; art advisors can help to minimize these risks through their expertise. The participation of art advisors seems to help collectors to save time and money, but, on the other hand, it undermines, to a certain extent, the idea of the collection as subjective and about passionate choices.

**Conclusion**

Galleries and auction houses form the essential information sources and market places that collectors use in order to build their collections. A good relationship with the gallery is of central importance in order to have access to required works and relevant information on artists, art and the art market. As a good relationship paves the way to works, most collectors emphasize time and again how important galleries’ work is in building the careers of artists, and avoid putting their relationship with them at risk. They show their loyalty also by not buying directly from artists, even if they could, so that galleries can participate financially in case of acquisitions.

A gallery is a place of distinction, which is visible when offering works to collectors. Those important in rank because of their reputation, financial potential or status of their collections will be given first choice. Nowadays, the real preview of exhibitions or fairs takes place in a virtual space, where the collector whom a gallery appreciates most will receive the images and the opportunity to buy as first, before a show starts.

Collectors depend on galleries to acquire access to works as much as galleries depend on collectors, whose buying art finances their activities. Galleries attempt, therefore, to keep the attention of collectors through expending their geographical network, enhancing their cultural status and organizing social events, which will create collectors’ additional commitment. As galleries function in both economic and cultural territories, they tend to hide the financial interests in order to stress the cultural capital. This happens by concealing prices, refraining from chasing non-performance from their clients and cooperations with institutional curators and scholars.

Another variant of buying art from a gallery forms a fair. Although attitudes of collectors toward fairs vary, they have become an important and generally accepted part of the collecting mode in the last decade. Operating in the atmosphere of a commercial place, which a fair is, contributes to collectors’ awareness of the financial value of art. While some collectors like the concentration of artists’ choice and accessibility to information from galleries, others condemn fairs because of the alleged lack of cultural engagement. Some of them complain about their difficulties to distinguish or find good quality, since a fair allegedly requires striking statements. Nonetheless, collecting contemporary art without participation in fairs has become unthinkable for many collectors.

Although collectors do not criticize galleries as such, they sometimes accuse them of creating artificial demands, exclusion mechanisms and certain marketing strategies. These are, however, not fundamental points of critique but reactions to
behavior in certain particular cases. A more fundamental criticism came from the collector-dealer Stefan Simchowitz, who attacked the myth of the gallery as the place where not money but culture is made according to the high standing moral rules.

The social media, such as Facebook and Instagram, were of crucial importance to mobilize interest in his activities, since they allowed him to distribute images and ideas, helped the creation of his identity and supported building his client base. Fighting for authority in the art field, Simchowitz questioned the false distinction between good and bad collectors and the alleged disinterest in money from the side of collectors as well as from artists. The established art world attempted to stigmatize him as a flipper in order to minimize his social and cultural capital and exclude him from the access to power and authority. However, so far, Simchowitz’s critique of the current art world has not produced another art system, but added to it. In order to serve his clients and develop artists’ careers, he functions as an overarching gallery, using his own relationships to collectors, but also the existing galleries and their networks, for distributing or buying artists of his choice.

For collectors, galleries remain one of the central spheres of their collecting activities, which concentrate around exhibitions, fairs, the Internet or social events relating to artists and art. Collectors experience galleries as strong and powerful. The Internet, so far, did not change the fundamentals of gallery work but complemented the technical modes through which galleries operate.

Another channel for sales, acquisition and knowledge is formed by auction houses. Collectors appreciate the transparency and uncomplicatedness of auction procedures through which they can sell and buy art. Auctions offer collectors an easy access to works without the social categorizations based on reputation, visibility of the collector and trust relationships that galleries require. However, operating through auction houses can have negative consequences for the cultural and social standing of a collector. While buying artworks through an auction is morally neutral according to the codes of the art world, selling can entail moral condemning.

Auction houses operate not only via physical auctions but have been extending their activities through private sales, curated exhibitions, online sales and various advisory services. Some collectors consider this expansion into the territories of galleries, dealers, curators and art advisors as a threat to the whole system, since it leads to too much power concentrated in one institution. Besides, auction houses have been accused of ruining careers of artists, creating an artificial artistic canon, and driving prices up. In order to soften the critique, auction houses emphasize their democratic principle of participation and their cultural involvement by using actors with huge cultural capital for their activities.

When operating in the distribution networks, collectors sometimes involve art advisors, who assure the expertise on art and knowledge of the market. Art advisors promise neutrality when advising acquisitions and help in creating a vision about collections. Collectors show a wide range of attitudes toward art advisors. While some think that an art advisor proves lack of a taste of their own, others consider having an advisor as a sign of economic and social capital. Their increasing number could be seen as a sign that collecting is no longer about personal taste but about making the right acquisitions, whereby art advisors guarantee that a work will keep or increase its financial and cultural value.
6. Codes: the forbidden love for money

Introduction

Galleries and auction houses are physical and virtual market places, while they also function as ideological positions that aim at the creation of artistic and cultural values. For collectors, this implies that they are simultaneously operating in the art field that rewards the focus on symbolic capital, and in the art market that is governed by commercial rules.

The art field has developed certain mechanisms to protect the existing system of the distribution and circulation of works as cultural objects, and to discourage treatment of the art market as any other market. The mechanisms that have regulated these distribution systems are summed up in a few moral codes that collectors are expected to adhere to. They translate the notion of disinterest in money as the basis of involvement in art into two guidelines of collectors’ proper behavior: a good collector never sells and a good collector follows his eyes and not his ears.

The question arises in which way collectors act according to these moral imperatives in order to secure the symbolic and cultural capital on the one hand, and to be able to acquire economic capital on the other. Other questions that will be addressed are whether the alleged opposition of interests of art and the art market functions as a mark of distinction among collectors themselves and, if so, how.

A good collector never sells

The alleged duality of art’s cultural symbolic and commercial values forms the context in which collectors make their decisions with regard to buying and selling artworks. Catherine Thieck, ex-director of the New Galerie de France in Paris, projected this dichotomy on the behavior of the renowned French collector François Pinault, who has also been a successful entrepreneur as owner of the company Artemis SA, which controls several fashion brands and the auction house Christie’s:

> With Francois Pinault you don’t have one person talking but two. There is the amateur and there is also the buyer. The person who buys is not the same individual as the one who has been inspired by a work. As an amateur, he has an amazing synthetic vision system. You show him four works, and he will take the best one. The amateur is always moved by an artistic adventure, the buyer is mindful of price. For Pinault, though, art is more interesting than money. If he had to choose one or the other, he would choose art.\(^\text{449}\)

This quotation demonstrates the problematic duality of the artwork, which elicits different emotions as cultural object than as economic good. Simultaneously, it shows the power struggle within the ideological structures of the art field in which the economic capital is not sufficient to generate the symbolic one. Here, the amateur represents pureness; he is supposed to be someone who does not allow himself to be led by rationality and commerciality of the market but trusts his intuition, which is not spoiled by any form of rational calculations. Furthermore, the amateur collector carries the connotation of the enlightened unselfish amateur collector, as it appeared at the end of the 19th century. The businessman within the collector apparently makes

\(^\text{449}\) Azimi 2012: 89.
other choices than the collector who dares to follow his passion. He is thus, per
definition, involved in a moral conflict. Thieck, therefore, suggests that a good
collector follows his emotional and not his material preferences, and that a good
collector should clearly know which works carry an artistic potential and which works
a financial perspective, so that he can make a choice for or against art.

Today’s collectors, supposedly, face time and again a dilemma when making
their decisions about acquisitions and sales. They are supposed to be aware of the
choice between autonomous art versus commercial art, beauty versus commerce or
immortality versus profit.\textsuperscript{450} The alleged conflict between artistic and commercial
values is, however, not limited to the collecting activities and not new. Analyzing the
architecture of the art world, Olav Velthuis summarized this ideological opposition in
two concepts: Hostile World and Nothing But.\textsuperscript{451} The name Hostile World was coined
by Viviane Zelizer to denote the world of art as a sacred realm that opposes the vulgar
world of commerce.\textsuperscript{452} Art and commerce are thought to be mutually exclusive,
whereby art is incomensurable with other economic goods or social values, as art is
fundamentally unique.\textsuperscript{453} The opposite model called Nothing But puts forward that art
and economy follow one and the same logic, although it could be sometimes masked.
This model applies to the theory of Pierre Bourdieu, in which artworks are, at the
same time, commodities and symbolic goods. For collectors, a disavowal of
capitalization in short term and focus on accumulation of symbolic capital pays off in
the long run.\textsuperscript{454} Having demonstrated the constructive character of prices, Velthuis
holds the concept Hostile World unattainable, but, at the same time, stressed that, in
case of art, Noting But takes too little into account the significance of morality and the
cultural codes that structure the art market.\textsuperscript{455}

That the art market is partially regulated by moral codes is proven by two
persistent myths on collecting, which address the tension between “art” and
“commerce.” The first myth, which is very often heard in galleries and among
collectors, states that a good collector never sells the art works he once bought. The
artist produces a work, the gallery sells it to the collector and the work is taken out of
the art circulation. In this situation, the gallery can control the supply and distribution
of the works and regulate the prices. This myth serves the primary art market and
supports the existing market structure that originated at the end of the 19\textsuperscript{th}
century.

It is in the absolute interest of the primary market that as few works as
possible re-enter the market, since those works are outside of the control of the
galleries.\textsuperscript{456} The safest location is when a collector donates a work to a public
institution. In that case, a work becomes a terminal commodity because it will stay,
mostly forever, outside the commodity circulation and will leave its commodity
phase.\textsuperscript{457} Therefore, gallery owners prize collectors who keep the works for
themselves or donate them, often giving them moral acknowledgement or, more
concretely, first choice to buy—or perhaps second choice, after the collectors who can

\textsuperscript{450} Van Abbe 2010; Roger M. Buergel, the curator of the Documenta 12; Kuspit 2007.
\textsuperscript{451} Velthuis 2003: 18, 2005: 24-25.
\textsuperscript{452} Zelizer 2000: 817-848
\textsuperscript{453} Velthuis 2003: 19. The claims on incomensurability were thought not to be specifically related to
modern art history and not even specifically to art, but could be considered as part of the general
academic thinking to delineate a pure market domain and a pure nonmarket domain. Velthuis 2003: 21,
\textsuperscript{454} Bourdieu 1993: 113.
\textsuperscript{455} Velthuis 2005: 51-52.
\textsuperscript{456} Appadurai 1986; Velthuis 2005: 41-44; Coslor 2011; Coslor, Velthuis 2013: 279.
\textsuperscript{457} Kopytoff 1986: 75 in Velthuis 2005: 44.
bestow more visibility onto an artist. The art world needs the concept of the good, real, passionate collector as opposed to the bad collector who seeks mainly financial profit. Galleries—aware, or half-aware, of this mechanism—classify collectors on the basis of their selling behavior, since a re-selling collector threatens, more or less, their business activities. Some galleries attempt to incorporate quasi-legal but mostly morally binding conditions when selling to collectors: in their invoices, they put a clause that requests the buyer not to sell the work at auction during the next five years, or, else, to present it to the gallery first. The legal value of such a clause is questionable but it at least complicates, for collectors, selling from an ethical perspective, since it means a breach of trust. Some galleries use black lists of collectors who sell and refuse to offer them works. They declare a selling collector as a bad collector and his actions as a lack of respect toward the gallery and the artist.

Collectors show a large variety of attitudes toward the issue of selling, as both the access to works and their social prestige in the art field are at stake. Some collectors do not sell and cherish the moral reward of a high reputation in combination with practical benefits of preferential access to works. This behavior is considered the most morally desirable, since the collector who never steps back from a decision once made allegedly supports the artist by not letting him down. His integrity and high moral profile are seen as qualities that allow him to resist the temptations of the market, even when the possible profit could be huge.

For the overwhelming majority of collectors who do sell, selling is an uncomfortable operation and they, therefore, consequently tend to use various explanations to justify it. Buying for upgrading a collection is classified as a good reason for selling. Investigating the collecting of contemporary art in the 1990s in the Netherlands, Renée Steenbergen noticed that the only legitimate reason to sell was to upgrade the collection or to generate resources that can be used to acquire new works, often including the support of young artists.\(^\text{458}\)

These motives have been used until today as the most common explanations for selling, but not as the only ones. The upgrading of a collection is often used as the argument to legitimize selling. As the collection grows and collectors’ taste refines, some works become redundant and lose their significance for the collection. Giovanni Springmeier used this argument when explaining his sporadic sales:

Basically I permanently develop as a collector, as much as I develop as a human being, and the works that I had bought 20 years ago can still be exciting today but not necessarily. The question is then: do I need to keep them or can I sell them, if anybody wants to have them at all…In my opinion I can sell them and exchange them for something else because I have limited financial resources. To have works only to have is not interesting for me. If this is the case, you are allowed to split, without having a bad conscience.\(^\text{459}\)

Springmeier justified selling works from his collection using two arguments. Firstly, due to development of his personal taste, some works have become redundant and, secondly, he will use the revenues for the acquisition of new art. As an additional argument, he mentioned his limited resources as a medical doctor, through which he differentiated himself from other collectors whose means may allow them to keep the

\(^{458}\) Steenbergen 2002.

\(^{459}\) Interview, Berlin, 17 April 2013.
works. By mentioning a bad conscience when selling, he pointed at the moral pressure of the art field against these practices.

Selling works is said to give collectors the opportunity to buy new ones and give more focus to the collection. Rosa de La Cruz says she sells when the direction of her collection changes and works do not fit in any longer:

We feel that it is not fair to have a work in storage for the rest of its existence and another person would want that work and show that work ... I think there is nothing wrong with selling works if you feel that you are not going to go in that direction anymore.\(^{460}\)

She explains selling in case of lack of interest as being morally justified because it allows other interested collectors to enjoy artworks when the focus of her collection has shifted. In the bigger context of the art world, the works circulate between the collectors and this suffices to legitimize selling.

Fernando Lopez will also sell works for which he lost interest:

I'm thinking about it (selling) because at this point I have to send pieces to the storage, pieces I bought when I started collecting and I don't connect to those pieces any longer. I don't consider them mistakes, they were part of the experience, but they have nothing to do with me anymore, so yes I will sell.\(^{461}\)

He attributes importance to the works to be sold as they have contributed to the development of his taste. Since the development of taste is something inherent to good collecting, selling works is justified because the works have fulfilled their cultural role. The improvement of the collector's taste proves the meaningfulness of a collection, which disposes of what lost relevance and asks for new impulses that react to the changing culture.

Thomas Olbricht explained his motives for sales in a similar way, but justified the sales by lack of expected development in the artistic careers: “Why should I keep works of artists who have not developed well?”\(^{462}\) In this case, the collector placed the responsibility for selling or keeping works with the artist, who will be removed if he has not fulfilled the expectation of the collector.

The American Zoë and Joel Dictrow admitted selling works but only in order to buy new ones, while stressing, at the same time, their loyalty to the galleries:

Joel: If the gallery still represents the artist in question, we almost routinely go back to that gallery unless there was a major problem. If they’re not interested, that’s fine, but if they are interested, we’ll work with that gallery because they're the ones who sold it to us in the first place, and we're part of their support system.

Zoe: But let’s say a gallery says they can get you X amount of money, and it’s a lot less than the amount you can get some other way, then it can be hard to be loyal under those circumstances. [Laughs] But really we’re recycling, because the money is going to go back into art, and we’re not going to hurt the artist.

Joel: We never do that. That’s an absolute rule.

\(^{460}\) Interview, Miami, 7 December 2012.
\(^{461}\) Interview, New York, 12 May 2013.
\(^{462}\) Interview, Berlin, 20 March 2013.
Zoe: But with artists who have established markets, you’re not hurting the artist no matter how you sell.463

The collectors firstly expressed their wish to act according to the moral codes of the art field, indicating that they have always been prepared to return works to the selling galleries. Such a return, however, is not unconditional but market-related: the gallery in question needs to pay the market value. The fact that the collectors will use the money for other acquisitions gives them the moral strength to sell the works, possibly even outside the galleries, provided it will not be to the disadvantage of the artist. The last remark again is nuanced by the observation that established artists cannot really suffer from reselling works as their market has become solid anyway.

The wish to invest the revenues obtained from selling in social projects is sometimes mentioned to explain the act of selling. This motive carries principally positive moral connotations. When asked why he sold the work Balloon Dog by Jeff Koons, Peter Brant explained it as follows:

I sold that work—which is a really great work, no doubt—to raise money for the foundation. You know I always liked Jeff, and I still liked him. I think he's one of the most talented artists in the world and an incredibly gifted man. I have a lot of his work, and I'm very happy to have been a collector early on. But, as is so often the case, there are considerations of supply and demand…. Christie’s and Sotheby's came to me and they each said they had a client who would really be interested in the work and two or three other clients who are really interested as well, and that they thought it was going to bring a huge record price—they gave a much higher price than what it actually brought. I thought if it really could bring such a large price, then I could use it to set the endowment for my foundation going forward, and right now I'm looking at the long-term goals of what I'm trying to achieve with the foundation.464

The work achieved the price of US$ 54 million at a Sotheby’s auction. Brant brings up the good relation he has with the artist, demonstrating that he was an early collector of Koons and that he owns several pieces by the artist. This implies that, as a collector, he did his duty of supporting the artist in his early career and also that he has been a good collector because he was collecting in depth, not just looking for one trophy piece. The most important moral justification of the sale and for getting the highest price, however, was the final destination of the money: the Brant Foundation, which aims at increasing appreciation of contemporary art through educational activities and loans of works to institutions and individuals for study. The Foundation was set up in 1996 with the adding of the Art Study Centre in Greenwich in 2009, which organizes exhibitions based on works from the collection.

Some collectors differentiate between the core of the collection, which they do not sell, and other works, which form more of a public collection. Martin Margulies makes a distinction between his private collection at home, which he keeps intact and does not sell, and his collection in the Warehouse, which is open to the public, which, as he said, is subject to change.465 Thus, he remains owner of the social capital that belongs to the collector who does not sell what is most precious.

463 Interview, Goldstein 2014b.
464 Interview, Goldstein 2014c.
465 Interview, Miami, 8 December 2012.
Practical problems can also be used as explanations for forcing collectors to sell. A curator of a private collection said that it becomes very problematic when the collection consists of more than 4000 works, which means that it has become so big that you simply need to sell.\footnote{Conversation, Berlin, September 2013.} This remark points at the huge size of the collection, and implies that, by amassing it, the collector has secured his sincere commitment to art and is allowed to sell.

Selling works can be motivated as an attempt to find a solution for inheritance issues in case collectors consider art as their own passion and not necessary a passion of their family. The American Blake Byrne owned about 1200 works in 2013, and he started selling them around that time because, as he put it, he was 78 and did not want to bother his children with his collection and the problems related to it. He would be happy to keep 300 up to 400 works and to dispose of the rest. He said that he went to art dealers, galleries and, sometimes, auctions to sell; he did not consider it problematic to sell at auctions, because the works were not made recently.\footnote{Conversation, Paris, October 2013.}

Several collectors said that, in principle, they do not sell. However, they do not want works in their collections that are at risk of going down in value. This attitude shows a conflict between the moral codes of the collector and the daily practice, as, by saying the above, the collectors admit to getting rid of works. When works decrease in worth according to the market valuation, collectors take action and will attempt to sell them.

Some collectors, especially the ones who started collecting recently, admit off the record that they sell to make a profit. An American collector who is above 50 and who works as an investor in private equities and started to collect two years ago, mentioned that he has set up a club with his three friends in order to buy and sell artworks in order to gain financial profit. He is one of several collectors who, off the record, admitted that they are buying in order to sell when the value sufficiently increased.

Investigating Dutch collectors in the 1990s, Renée Steenbergen stated that, for those who were entrepreneurs in their professional life, the lack of guarantee of profitability formed the most important attraction, since art works could, therefore, be treated as treasures from a private sphere as opposed to financial assets.\footnote{Steenbergen 2002: 242, 459-461.} This conclusion could denote a different attitude of collectors in the time when the art market was not that active, as it was in the last decade. It could also show the traditional alleged disavowal of commercial interests that allow collectors to position themselves publicly as good and not seeking financial profit, which does not necessarily reflect the daily practice.

Hanna Schouwink from the David Zwirner gallery observed that almost every collector sells works nowadays: some of them many, some of them few, only a very small group does not.\footnote{Interview, New York, 15 May 2013.} The manner in which collectors sell matters for their reputation. The most proper way is to offer the work back to the gallery. The gallery will again have control of the work and will be able to determine its price. This option is, however, not as easy to exercise, as it seems. In case the work lost its value within the art market, the gallery will be unwilling to take it back. To the opposite, when the price of a work has increased, the gallery will offer to pay less than the secondary market to be able to include a margin for itself.
Therefore, selling through auction houses is a solution, but it can have severe consequences. It is considered as a breach of trust toward the gallery, since the price is made known publicly and is registered, and, as a result, if not in line with the gallery prices, this can influence the market of a given artist. Collectors know of this complexity and related moral condemning when selling through auction houses and many distance themselves from it. In Laura Skoler’s opinion, such behavior is incorrect and she will not do it:

Well, I’m a pretty ethical person. First of all, I’ve never sold with the big auction house. But if I have a piece that I think is worth something, I will first go back to the gallery that I bought it from, and find out if they want to sell it first, because I think that’s the proper thing to do. Like I have a John Currin drawing, if I ever wanted to sell it, I bought it from Andrea Rosen’s Gallery when she was representing him, I would go to her.

Avoiding selling art through auctions is a way for collectors to demonstrate their proper and moral attitude, and their loyalty toward galleries. The choice is, however, not always voluntarily made but, instead, forced upon collectors under pressure from galleries. Gallery owner David Nolan observed that gallerists are aware of works that they sold to collectors and that then later appear at auction. While a sporadic sale might be understood, a collector who intends to buy from galleries in order to earn money will likely have difficulties when trying to acquire works:

The good art dealers, they will keep track of what comes up for auction, and if they see that something has come up by a good client of theirs for sale at auction, they will make a note of that and say, ok, so we will see what they're trying to do. If they're just trying to get money out of this, in a very aggressive way, we are not interested in doing business with them, because they are not a partner in this. And they are not loyal.

A collector who buys art from a gallery and sells those works at auction will often, at least for a certain period of time, be denied access to works. A gallery will exclude him from its network and often attempt to decrease his reputation in the art world. Besides maintaining good relations with galleries, another reason for cultivating the image of someone who never sells, is the wish not to endanger the collectors’ relationships with artists. If a collector personally knows the artist whose work he owns, there is often a certain amount of trust involved and an admiration for artist’s ideas, which no longer seems to be valid if the collector sells the works. Establishing personal relationship between artists and collectors can, therefore, work in favor of the primary market, since the collector could feel more committed to the artist, could be inclined to follow his career and, at least temporarily, refrain from selling. Galleries, therefore, encourage personal contacts between artists and collectors. From this perspective, dinners and encounters with artists during openings and visits to studio partially serve as control instruments. This model of sharing and engagement creates personal attachment from collectors that makes selling art works uncomfortable, while galleries can, to a certain extent, control collectors and artists. Giovanni Springmeier lets the artist financially participate in case he resells a

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470 Interview, New York, 9 May 2013.
471 Interview, New York, 13 May 2013.
472 The ethics of the art world that tend to favor the position of the artist will be not discussed here.
work outside the primary gallery:

   It is about respect and about the feeling that you give an artist respect. When I
sell a work I give the artist a bit of the money because I really believe that he
should benefit from the increase in value. Of course you could say, I bought it
and he already got his money. I consider it as a very arrogant attitude of
people who think that the very act of selling made the work more expensive.
No, the artist has created something extraordinary and accordingly I think that
the artist should benefit.473

Springmeier legitimizes sales toward the artists by acknowledging that, without their
efforts, there would be no value increase at all, and justifies his opinion by giving
them a fee in case of sales. This gives him a high moral standing even in such
complicated operations as selling.

An overwhelming majority of the artists are in support of the position of the
gallery as controlling the prices and access to works. They dislike it when collectors
sell their works, especially through auctions. The American artist Mark Bradford
commented on the public character of the auction that, for him as an artist, is difficult
to accept when it concerns his own work:

   I hate it, who wouldn’t? It’s like your love-letters that you wrote to somebody
would be on the auction block, it is so personal and so private. I do not mind
that people sell my work. You do what you need to do, but I hate the public-
ness of an auction. I wish the seller would do it through the gallery. And that is
mainly the way that has been done a lot, just, through the gallery; this is
respectful of the work and of the relationship. I always find it a bit funny, the
auction house respects the person that is selling it, but the artist is on the
block, we have no privacy. So selling at auction always makes me really
uncomfortable; not because they are selling the work, but because it’s so
public.474

Bradford mentions that a lot of his works have been resold through a gallery and that
this does not bother him. Selling through an auction, however, is, for him, a sign of
disrespect toward the gallery, artist and the work. Prices and works are publicly
available and they can be capricious as they depend on the moods of the market. The
lack of control and the being subjected to the arbitrariness of the market is also why
Romanian artist Adrian Ghenie has mixed feelings about auctions:

   If you see your name on a painting that you did and a five zeros it is somehow
flattering. Your ego is pleased but at the same time there is something dark
about it….You see the whole system in front of you and you suddenly realize
oh my god, I’m just a part of it now. And it is completely not in my control.475

Control of the prices, supply and demand of works is important for building the
position of an artist. Prices of works sold at auction often influence primary market
prices: too low a price can discourage interest from other collectors in an artist while
too high a price tempts many collectors to bring their works of the given artist to the

473 Interview, Berlin, 17 April 2013.
474 Interview, Skype, 6 November 2013.
475 Interview, Berlin, 21 March 2013.
Auction. A specialist of Sotheby’s mentioned that, after the painting by Mark Grothjan Untitled (Standard Lotus No. II, Bird of Paradise, Tiger Mouth Face 44.01) realized the record price of US$ 6.5 million, the next day, they received many telephone calls from collectors who wanted to sell their works by Grotjahn. Grotjahn observed that many collectors could not resist the attraction of making profit of his works:

It is okay. I guess it is what I signed up for. I’m just disappointed sometimes that someone sells my work and he is one of the collectors who used to put an arm around me and say, ‘I will never sell your work, not even for five million dollars, never.’ And then they don’t want me to come over for Christmas because my painting is no longer on the wall because they sold it without telling me...It happened enough times to me that it is not shocking any longer.476

Grotjahn suggests that, for collectors, the temptation of financial gain is greater than the urge to keep their moral commitments to him. For him, a very annoying aspect of re-selling is not only that collectors sell, but also that the artist does not share in the, possibly huge, profit a collector makes. Grotjahn even took one of his early collectors and museum trustees, Dean Valentine, to court to acquire a small sum of royalties that were officially due to him after Valentine resold his painting.477

The re-selling of works at auctions is considered unwholesome behavior or even serious wrongdoing, depending on the situation. Collectors’ relationships to galleries and their reputation could be at stake. In the case of successful sales, collectors profit from the cultural and social capital that the artist has gained with the help of the galleries, without sharing the financial profit with them. When, on the other hand, a work fails to sell, a collector is accused of having wasted the gallery’s and the artist’s efforts and of being only interested in economic profit.

Collectors who sell, as demonstrated, threaten the control of prices, supply and demand that galleries hope to regulate. The moral condemning of this practice, which is so far the only commonly used instrument, has a limited effect, as collectors counter these reproaches by arguments that fit into the moral of the art world.

A good collector buys with his eyes and not with his ears

The second myth often heard in the art field is that a good collector does not buy with his ears but with his eyes. According to this myth, a good collector does not follow the rumors and trends of the market, which are symbolized by ears, but is able to look and see for himself and, by doing so, make an independent judgment. This pure experience of art, when the collector trusts his “eye,” has been questioned by Pierre Bourdieu, who argued that the “eye” is a product of education in processes of decoding artistic meanings.478 Ignoring the conditioning of experience, the eye stands for purity and subjectivity, while the opposition between the eyes and ears is frequently used to mark the difference among collectors’ behavior. Thomas Olbricht describes how he understands buying with ears:

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476 Interview, Skype, 7 January 2013.
477 Interview, 7 January 2013.
I don’t want to offend anybody but many buy with their ears. Not with the eyes. Then someone needs a Warhol or an Alex Katz and he buys one. They don’t know anything about what the oeuvre of the artist looks like; or about when the artist made something and what else he did. The main point is: I now have a Warhol or I now have an Alex Katz. “He is an old man. Maybe he's not living next year. We should buy him.” But this is a shit work.\footnote{Interview, Berlin, 20 March 2013.}

Olbricht points at the ignorance of some collectors for whom only the names of artists are important, and who do not pay attention to the quality of particular works. As an experienced collector, he knows that artists go through various phases in their artistic careers and that, consequently, not every work is good, even if it was made by a celebrated artist. For some buyers, the quality of works seems to be irrelevant as long as the work is made by a star artist and as long as they can show off with the names. Another example that Olbricht gave was the idea that some collectors have: that an artist’s work becomes more expensive after his or her death. Speculating about artists’ deaths in order to gain financial profits is morally repulsive. By contrasting his thoughtful behavior with the mindless acquisitions and profit-oriented strategies of others, Olbricht shows his profound knowledge of artists’ careers and his experience within the art world. In this case, the myth is used by collectors to make a distinction among themselves. By pointing at people who follow the rumors and buy without understanding, Olbricht claims more cultural capital, as he can judge the quality of art himself.

Michael Hort also noticed that the importance of certain names and works are being taken for granted without looking. This is the reason why he and his wife hang up the \textit{Nurse Painting} by Richard Prince, which is a very well-known and sought-after series by the American artist, when they open their space for visitors during fairs:

\begin{quote}
We have a really great Richard Prince painting in my opinion but it is worth probably twenty percent of the \textit{Nurse Painting}, because the \textit{Nurse Painting} has sort of become an icon. You know, people with untold amounts of money want a \textit{Nurse Painting} because it’s so recognizable. Not great art necessarily, but so recognizable that if they have it in their office, people will come in and say: ah! You are obviously successful because you got a Richard Prince \textit{Nurse Painting}. But it has nothing to do with the quality; in fact, I don’t even think Richard Prince paints it, to be honest with you. At this point he has got people, and it is his idea certainly and it is his art, but I mean it’s just not, in my opinion his best art. And that’s true of an awful lot of art.\footnote{Interview, New York, 14 May 2013.}
\end{quote}

Hort wonders about the attraction of recognizable works that have been declared interesting. According to him, people follow artists who have been able to produce branded products such as the \textit{Nurse Painting} rather than forming their own opinions. Instead of paying attention to the quality of the work, which means using their eyes to see and to compare it with other works in the artist’s oeuvre, collectors are interested in buying what they heard is considered worth buying.

Hort’s statement demonstrates that he is able to navigate in the art world. On the one hand, he displays his cultural capital by doubting the quality of the \textit{Nurse
Painting in comparison to other works, on the other, he uses the branding quality of this work to gain social prestige and authority of those who acknowledge it. This example also illustrates why buying trends are popular among collectors, as it shows that a sought-after work can bring prestige and financial gain, for as long as it lasts. The condemnation of such behavior, which is what the second message does, is aimed at preventing everyone from tracking the same artists and works.

Collectors Zöe and Joel Dictrow used the eyes/ears distinction to describe their way of collecting:

We always say that we listen with our ears, but we use our own eyes. If someone tells us to look at something, we look at it seriously. It doesn’t mean we buy it, it just means we look at it, and we use our own eyes to make the determination whether it’s something we want.\(^{381}\)

The Dictrows do not deny that they listen to the information and rumors that the market provides, but they stress that they do not let the decision depend on rumors only, but make the decision themselves. They acknowledge the importance of stories and information that are spread around in the art world, but they claim to be able to filter them properly.

This myth is a warning and an advice: good collectors should have developed their own vision about art and should be well informed. They know that, within each artist’s oeuvre, there are works of outstanding and mediocre or even bad quality, so buying a work by a famous name does not guarantee buying a good work. Good collectors can also separate rumors and half-news from relevant information. Dealer and ex-museum director Jeffrey Deitch explained how listening to stories without knowledge can result in the wrong acquisitions:

So today many people hear: well it’s very good to buy a Christopher Wool. But they are not necessarily so discerned in which work they buy. Christopher is a not a good example because most works he does are wonderful but there are other artists, particularly some of the younger ones who are still working through their ideas where you really have to understand a work to get the right example, because some of the works are not fully formed.\(^{482}\)

Deitch warns against buying works only because they were made by famous artists, or artists who are becoming famous, without looking at particular characteristics of the work. Simultaneously, he emphasizes his cultural capital as someone with an extensive knowledge of artists’ careers, which lends him a position of superiority in relation to all of those who cannot distinguish between good and less good art.

The American art advisor Thea Westreich Wagner, who has been working with collectors for over 30 years, gave the following advice to collectors:

Don’t buy with your ears. Viewpoints of curators, critics, and fellow collectors are important, but shape your collection with your own eyes. There are almost an infinite number of ways to go about collecting—concentrating on a particular medium, or art-making practice, or a conceptual approach. Be aware of market value, but understand there is far more benefit in educating your eye

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\(^{381}\) Interview, Goldstein 2014b.

\(^{482}\) Interview, The Hague, 7 June 2013.
and learning your own tastes and sensibilities. Collecting is an adventure, so make sure it’s your own. ⁴⁸³

According to her statement, buying with your ears stands in the way of the adventure of collecting. Without being explicit, she insinuates that mimicking the views of others and following the opinions of the market hinders the excitement of forming one’s own taste and deciding on acquisitions. Westreich warns against listening to rumors and against having financial gain as the main reason for collecting—in that way stressing her cultural involvement and responsibility for the arts.

For Giovanni Springmeier, buying with the ears and following trends defeats the whole idea of collecting:

> I believe that it is absolutely legitimate to earn money with art but earning money for someone who collects should be always secondary to the essence of collecting because you otherwise start to look at the market and to buy with the ears...If you hear that something is fashionable you need to hear as well that something is not fashionable any longer. This means that your total perspective changes and that you collect periodically. You buy something, a direction, because it is now hip and then three years later you need to get rid of it. As said—you can do it, but for me this is not collecting. These short periods I hold for not interesting, this is not collecting but dealing. I have no problem with this but this is something else. ⁴⁸⁴

According to Springmeier, listening to the rumors of the markets and buying what is in vogue in a certain moment requires a dealer attitude from collectors. In his opinion, works that are hip are mostly only hip for a limited period of time, so one needs to know when to sell them. It is, in such a case, a matter of buying and selling, following the market and not necessarily following what is essential in art and why it matters for a collection.

This second myth serves to distinguish between collectors and to categorize them on the basis of the individuality of their choices and resistance against trends. It criticizes those who blindly follow surges of the market without developing their own opinions about artists and works, while it praises the others who prefer the subjectivity of their choices over alleged financial gains. It addresses the fundamental ideology of collecting, the possibility to create a personal meaning out of the chosen works and, through this, bringing oneself in contact with the mystery and understanding of art and culture. Collectors can discover essential cultural values of the time, however, they are warned that those values are not represented by the trends.

The consequence for a collector who buys according to trends and who is interested in financial profits in the first place, is that he does not emotionally engage in the culture of his time and will not understand the challenges it offers. The myth would classify some of Simchowitz’ clients, who buy without seeing a work in real life, as bad collectors, since they only listen to other people’s opinions without forming their own.

The negative connotations of the ear are contrasted with the positive ones of the eye. Having a so-called good eye is a positive distinction mark among collectors as it signifies understanding and sensibility for art. An early acquisition date of works of later famous artists can be appreciated as the visionary ability of the collector who has “the eye”; an insight into and intuition about the meaning of the future.

⁴⁸⁴ Interview, Berlin, 17 April 2013.
Long-term collectors versus newcomers

The essence of the two myths is that good collectors resist the temptations of accumulating economic capital in order to accumulate symbolic capital. They are able to ignore the market in favor of developing their own subjectivity and understanding of art and, by doing so, supporting the existing art system. The core of this good behavior can therefore be put down to collectors’ disinterest in money. This feature has been claimed by long-term collectors as a main characteristic that distinguishes them from new wealthy collectors.

As newcomers generally tend to imitate the behavior and taste of those superior to them, new collectors have simply imitated the tastes and habits of the established collectors or of a given social elite.\(^{485}\) The German collector Harald Falckenberg therefore called Pop art the first anti-elite step, since the buyers followed their own taste instead of pursuing the prevailing cultural orientation.\(^{486}\) This attitude has become predominant, since many new collectors do not want to relate to the traditional elites and do not copy their taste and conduct. This could be a symptom of a broader phenomenon that relates to the different role of the cultural elite in general, which was caused by the post-modern pluralistic culture that has mixed up symbolic hierarchies and allows many codes to co-exist independently.\(^{487}\)

Collector Brigitte Oetker can be classified as a long-term collector who considers collecting art as one of the forms of engagement in the development of cultural values. According to her, the art market has changed a lot in the last decade because the work with the highest economic value is perceived as the best. For her, however, good quality always implies something ambivalent and open, something that simultaneously touches upon the nerves of the time but is not necessarily the most expensive work. She personally never sells the works that she once bought; instead, she and her husband give them away or donate them to institutions. They do not have a private museum but co-fund the public Museum of Contemporary Art in Leipzig, together with the city, the province Saxen and a few other sponsoring members.

Oetker is not against selling as such but she sincerely detests the current art market because, according to her, it functions as a real estate market. She hates it when gallerists jump on her when she enters a gallery, as much as she hates to be explained a work, since she can interpret it herself when she wants it. By saying this, she indicates that her cultural capital is sufficient to make judgments by herself, while, in a larger context, she distinguishes herself from the newcomers who need to be explained what artworks are about.

In her opinion, there is a difference between buying and supporting. If you buy a work, you do not necessarily support the artist: you acquire a work. You support the artist when you pay his atelier or his residency. She noticed that many collectors with new money are, in the first place, interested in their visibility and in the cultivation of their image, in contrast to real collectors who are prepared to take responsibility for culture, not only through buying but also through supporting. The old money is, therefore, more involved in patronage, as she is.

Oetker is not interested in conversation with other collectors, as most of them are not thought-provoking; incidentally, she thinks that people with money are often

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\(^{485}\) Veblen (1899) 1994; Daloz 2013: 15-16; see also Elias, Scotson 1994 (1965).

\(^{486}\) Falckenberg 2011: 171

\(^{487}\) This phenomenon refers to the different role of the cultural elite in general, which has been caused by the post-modern pluralistic culture that confused symbolic hierarchies and allowed many codes to co-exist independently. Daloz 2010:141.
not that interesting. She considers education and responsibility as the key tasks when speaking about her relation to culture and society. Her life is about culture in all possible forms.488

Oetker makes a distinction between herself and other wealthy people, who recently flowed into the art world, by using her cultural and social capital. Her disinterest toward money and her responsibility for culture serves as the essential distinction mark, versus the alleged superficiality of the newcomers who are financial profit-oriented prestige seekers. Her long lasting engagement in culture is a fact, whereas economic capital as a means of distinction has become problematic with the increasing number of rich people, even for a very wealthy person such as herself.

The financial capacities of the newcomers are seen as the reason for driving prices for certain artists up, which has made it impossible for some long-term collectors to follow them. Martin Margulies, who is himself a wealthy person, admitted that he cannot buy whatever he wants since many works have become too expensive for him:

Some of the great works are, for me, completely unaffordable. Unless I would sell something that is in my private collection, which I won’t do.489

The rapid price increase has a double effect on his collecting activities. He can no longer buy some artists but his core private collection, which he keeps at home with works by Mark Rothko, Franz Kline, Bruce Nauman or Mario Merz, has increased in value.

Thomas Olbricht mentioned something similar, for he stated that he cannot follow certain artists because their works have become too expensive:

I am very happy though that I have always been a step ahead with some artists. I cannot afford them today, I am not a sheik and not an oligarch.490

Olbricht first says that he has a good eye, and that he, therefore, has been able to see the quality of some artists in the early stages of their careers. So, at the beginning of their careers, he bought ahead of other collectors. At the same time, he made a distinction between himself and what he called “sheikhs” and “oligarchs,” which refers to very wealthy buyers associated with the Middle East and Russia, who seemingly have unlimited resources at their disposal. Also, in Olbricht’s case, the cultural capital, the intuition and understanding of art competes with the economic capital of the newcomers. According to Olbricht, the newcomers have access to works simply because they can buy them. The absence of financial “suffering” when buying art results in newcomers being seen as lacking in durable commitment for specific artists and art movements, since artists seem to be replaceable.491

Collector Axel Haubrok touched upon the difference between being an entrepreneur (like him), who has to earn money himself, and people such as Friedrich Christian Flick, who inherited family fortunes and can, therefore, afford whatever they want:

488 Interview, Berlin, 29 February 2012.
489 Interview, Miami, 8 December 2012.
491 This lack of commitment could also be part of the broader social phenomenon that is related to some current socio-economic changes in the society. Sennett explained the lack of commitment in relation to the changes of authority structures within corporate companies. Sennett 2006: 59.
I would like to follow artists’ biographies but often I can’t. I’m not Croesus. I am an entrepreneur but have no unlimited amount of money. You can’t compare me with Flick or with somebody else. Instead I need to ask myself every time again: do you have money for this or not? This is a very big difference.492

Haubrok presents himself as someone who needs to give more thought to his acquisitions than people with fortunes and that he cannot follow some artists who have become too expensive. This statement, again, shows that some of the long-term collectors who have followed artists from an early stage are, at a certain moment, unable to continue buying because the prices have become too high. Haubrock also suggests that his involvement is more authentic and personal than that of the wealthy, since, for him, it is about choices and suffering instead of realizing wishes. Several long-term collectors mentioned not to be able to compete with the newcomers who have more money and are able to buy the expensive works.493

The German-Italian collector Egidio Marzona (born 1944) also commented on how attitudes of newcomers differ from his own ideas about collecting. Marzona built up an acclaimed collection of Minimal Art, Arte Povera and Conceptual Art. In 2002, he donated 372 works of artists such as Bruce Nauman, Daniel Buren and Richard Sierra to the Staatliche Museen in Berlin. Another part of his collection was acquired by the museum at a price much lower than he would have received on the market. In his house in Berlin, a work by Carl André lies on the floor, a box of Duchamp is placed in the show case and many paintings, such as the one by Robert Ryman, hang on the wall. Marzona also has a second place in Italy, in Friuli, to which he has, as of the mid-1980s, regularly invited artists for site-specific projects. This idea was born during a conversation with Konrad Fischer, his very good friend, artist and gallerist, who guided him through the art and was important in forming his taste and preference in art.

Marzona’s collection was not a project that was set up intentionally but rather the result of a fascination for certain artistic phenomena, which only years later appeared to him as a collection. He was buying a lot during the 1960s and 1970s, especially from the gallery Konrad Fischer in Düsseldorf, sparked off by the radicalism of the new art and the provocative attitude it meant to him. He did not take over the successful cast concrete company of his father but, instead, set up his own publishing house Edition Marzona at the beginning of the 1970s. During the following 15 years, he was involved in research, and published books about art, architecture and photography of the 1920s. He has an interest in the total environment in which art is being made, and has, therefore, been collecting all possible documents, manifests, invitations, photos, correspondence and artifacts that were linked to given movements and artists. This resulted in an extended archive that Marzona destined as a basis for a research center in Europe for the art of the 20th century. He directed his attention back to the artworks he had bought earlier on only after he stopped with his publishing house, and he discovered that he had a big collection. As he thinks that a collector is able to best understand the spirit of his own generation, he decided to use

492 Interview, February 2010, collectingnow.de
493 The American collector Richard Lane mentioned this as a phenomenon that he has observed among collectors recently. The paradoxical situation is that they could buy more if they were to sell the old works they have, but they are against selling those works. Lane in conversation with the author, June 2012.
all his means and energy to fill the gaps in his collection of art between the 1960s and 1980s, instead of extending his collection until today. His collection forms an effort to define the time he was living in and an attempt to catch the spirit of that time.

Marzona does not visit openings nowadays since, for him, they do not have anything to do with art (“why should I waste my time?”); neither does he read articles on art, as the media concentrate on the figures only. According to him, the image of Gerhard Richter, for example, is constructed in the media only with figures about the prices of his works. For Marzona, collecting art was a personal provocation of existing values and a search for a possibility of another reality. One of the first works he bought was the white monochrome painting by Robert Ryman because it was different and nobody could understand what it was about and why someone would spend 300 US$ on a white empty canvas. According to him, the big difference between then and now is the fact that today’s collectors are interested in specific artists and their particular works that keep their value.

With his collection and archive, his extensive knowledge and his generous donations and supportive attitude toward museums, Marzona accumulated a lot of prestige in the art field. His comments about the main interest of current collectors in financial values distinguish him from these others and make him superior; his museum donations were proof that money interests him less than the continuity of culture. His collection, which includes celebrated and consecrated works, still carries the potential of high economic capital, as it could be converted into a substantial amount of money if he wishes to do so. However, he stresses that he built the collection because of his personal interest in the art of his time and his profound fascination with its broader context.

According to Rosa de la Cruz, real collectors are characterized by their passion, hard working, discipline in their approach to art and the coherence and context of their collection. These qualities are lacking in many new collectors:

There is too much instant coffee. Too many people building collections who have no idea what they are doing. They don't know anything about art but they just write checks. And then they write checks and they build a collection. That's not the way to do it. Art requires patience. To build a collection you need to require some critical thought, you need to learn. You don't just jump in the wagon and say I am a collector... Some people buy works - but that’s not a collector. Like the same way you can take photographs in the street but that doesn't mean you’re an artist... So all these people that we call collectors today are really just buying art but, I mean, not necessarily performing the duty of a collector.

De la Cruz makes a distinction between collectors and buyers. The first ones, to which De la Cruz belongs, understand the responsibility of collecting, which involves a long-term vision of art and social obligations toward artists and the community. The others, the buyers, lack artistic vision and social calling, and consider collecting as mere acts of acquisition. De la Cruz criticizes the attitude of just buying without being aware of what spending money on art really means. She herself, on the other hand, has always been focused on the production of knowledge and creating her own vision, whilst investing in the development of art and creating possibilities for artists to make...
art. De la Cruz set her cultural and social capital against the mere economic capital of the others.

Long-term collectors differentiate themselves from newcomers using several characteristics that are meant to define real collectors as opposed to others. Those characteristics are: connoisseurship and the understanding of art, passion or real commitment, taking responsibility for the culture of one’s time and a lack of interest in art as an economic investment. Connoisseurship and the understanding of art is the first important feature that was mentioned as a distinction mark between real collectors and art buyers. This represents the embodied state of cultural capital, which cannot be bought; the only way to acquire this disposition is through direct personal efforts, which take time. Judging someone’s personal connoisseurship and knowledge of art is, therefore, the easiest instrument to establish someone’s artistic cultivation and, if so desired, place him under or above oneself. Another characteristic forms the passion for art but using passion as a motive for collecting is a common habit of the majority of collectors. Therefore, collectors need to differentiate more. Some declare their readiness to follow an artist against all odds and not disposing of works when the artist is going through a difficult period in his career. At a time when the expectations of making a quick career are high, the real collector gives an artist time to grow while the buyer will drop an artist if he does not fulfill the promise of value increase.

These characteristics can be applied as modes of distinction only by those who consider them relevant. This is where the problem arises, since these virtues have been disappearing in the last decade. A historically embedded connoisseurship seems to have become unimportant to being a successful collector. A collector can buy cultural capital by hiring an advisor who guides him through galleries, auction houses and selects works of importance without the collector’s personal efforts to integrate art and its history in his habitus. Many of today’s works function well thanks to their visual appearance and the resourcefulness of the maker without relying heavily on the current or past discourse, and, consequently, they do not require extensive art historical knowledge from their buyers.

As well as a devaluation of connoisseurship, good taste remains arbitrary. The lack of quality norms has been inherent to the idea of modern art throughout the 20th century and the current arbitrariness of quality and taste should be seen as a continuation of this phenomenon. The distinction through the ungraspable notion of good taste seems to have lost its validity to certain new collectors, who create their own standards instead of mimicking the existing ones. Stefan Simchowitz, who represents the newcomers, questions the good taste and sensibility for art of the established “good” collectors:

I’ve seen work that has stayed in collections forever. It goes to rich old people—no offense to rich old people—who have no connection to the work. They have houses in Bel Air and Beverly Hills that are designed by some bad architect, and usually decorated by some second-rate interior decorator. They have ugly cushions. They frame the work when it’s not suppose to be framed, or hang it next to the toilet, and then forget it ever existed because they have so much money it doesn’t make a difference. Those are the “good” collectors.

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Simchowitz ridicules older, wealthy collectors by describing them as a group of people with bad taste and disinterest in art, who treat art as the decoration of their houses. He suggests that their allegedly proper behavior conceals their lack of sensibility in general, and lack of a connection to art works in particular. Simchowitz, again, fights his struggle for authority by attacking the system of traditional categorizations, trying to reveal them as being untenable.

Responsibility for culture is claimed as another distinction mark. Long-term collectors are often involved in foundations, museum organizations or artists’ support, which signifies their interest in the spreading of certain cultural values. Supporting is used to differentiate from buying because it is, allegedly, driven by cultural and social motives. Since foundations have become interesting because of fiscal motives and because support for public institutions is used as a source of inside information and social climbing, taking responsibility for culture is problematic to qualify.

As good taste is arbitrary, connoisseurship buyable and responsibility for culture an unreliable criterion, the distinction based on interest in money functions as a solid instrument of categorization. The passion of real collectors opposes the alleged unemotional reasoning to gain money of the newcomers, especially in the current situation, in which the cultural capital cannot only be converted into the economic, but the economic can buy the cultural.

**Best buys**

Despite the two moral codes, the primary market and the dominant actors in the art field manage to influence the selling behavior of collectors only partially, since the anti-commercial attitude of many collectors varies. Restricted by the etiquette of proper collecting, collectors avoid speaking openly about their interest in art as a form of investment, but many of them do buy works that carry the promise of an increase in financial value.

To get a better grip on the attitude of collectors regarding investment, their preferences at auctions have been mapped. The assumption is that, if collectors consider art as an investment, they will mostly go for the well-known blue chip artists, as they are most liquid. A choice has been made to analyze the number of artists whose works have been sold at the spring and autumn day auctions at Christie’s in New York and London during the period between 2001 and 2013. The day sessions were of greater importance to this research since they principally show a variety of artists, whereas the evening sessions are reserved for the best works of the already consecrated artists. Therefore, in the case of the evening sessions, collectors hardly have a real choice between the less and more established artists. The data have also been used to check the reappearance of artists at auctions per year in comparison to the previous year.

The total figure of the artists whose works were sold at those auctions in the period between 2001 and 2013 turned out to be 794 in New York and 850 in London. There were 412 artists who appeared in both places. The number of the artists per year varied, as did the number of artists whose works were sold in the previous year and who reappeared in the next. TABLE IX demonstrates that the number of artists per year fluctuated between 194 in 2002 up to 295 in 2012 in New York, and between 114 in 2002 and 255 in 2013 in London. In New York, from the total of 794 artists, 17 artists appeared in all thirteen years; in London, the total number was 850 and only one artist, Thomas Ruff, appeared in all 13 years.
A comparison of these figures with the number of artists who have been presented during the Art Basel fair between 2001 and 2013 showed that the variety of artists at auctions has been very limited (TABLE X).
Taking into account that Christie’s accepts works from all over the world for those auctions, and that it sells to all possible clients around the globe, the number of artists whose works were traded can be considered very low. To put the figures into perspective, the number of artists registered as such in the city of New York was more than 10,000 in 2013, and this refers to artists whose primary income is derived from art and does not include many artists who also work somewhere else, of which there are said to be around 10,000. In 2013, the number of professional artists living in Berlin was more than 6,000. The 300 international galleries in Basel represented, that year, over 4,240 artists and they form only a very small selection from the big variety of galleries worldwide.

The diversity of artists whose works were offered at auction in London was greater than in New York, where the fluctuation of artists was more limited. The main reason for this difference was probably the higher price level in New York than in London. Art buyers in New York are prepared to pay the highest prices for North-Western art and the artists who are often “branded” most expensive, and who are in high demand, were therefore auctioned there. The majority of these desired artists in New York were established artists who cooperate with important international galleries, which, in turn, attempt to control the supply. The important American artists were preferably sold in New York, where their main collectors base has been. A comparison between artists whose works have been sold in 2001 and the artists in 2013 showed 90 recurring names from 2001, which is 30.8%: this could indicate how steady the core of the auction is.

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499 The official website for the city of Berlin, Visit Berlin 2013.
The research on the behavior of HNWI conducted by the Scorpio Partnership, a company that advises and researches the wealth industry, demonstrated that brand is extremely important for their wealthy clients. During the last 10 years, they have been investigating a group of HNWI with the investible income of 3 million US$. In general, “brand” turned out to be the most appealing factor with regard to spending and managing money, including art. The results of Christie’s confirm the interest in branded artists, who, most probably, are seen as a form of guarantee for the value of the invested money.

The preference for the branded quality of artists, dealers and auction houses have been stated by Don Thompson in his investigation on the economics of contemporary art. Thompson mentioned the insecurity that characterizes buyers of contemporary art as one of the important reasons for choosing brands, being renown artists who are represented by well-known galleries. This insecurity is inherent to contemporary art, in which quality is not strictly defined and which can, in principle, absorb any object of the artist and declare it as art. Thompson compared the insecurity of buyers of branded artists with the insecurity of buyers of fashion brands, who prefer labels that are easily recognizable and known as expensive. The comparison to fashion refers to recognizability as a sign of social and economical success; art works, in contrast to fashion, are meant to increase in value.

That the market for artists in London was more open than in New York was also confirmed by the figures on the number of recurring artists per year (Tabel XI). In New York, the number was an average of 54.8%, the lowest being 46.6% in 2006 and the highest 65.6% in 2008. In London, the average number was 39.9%, the lowest 32% in 2002 and the highest 51.5% in 2008. The number of artists who appear only in one year is 287 in New York and 401 in London, respectively 35.8% and 47% of the total number.

TABLE XI
PERCENTAGE OF RECURRING ARTISTS IN LONDON AND NEW YORK

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500 Dovey 2013: 69.
502 Idem: 15.
Christie’s makes its selection of works on the basis of supply, which they acquire from the sellers and from estimations on demand from the buyers. These figures demonstrate that auctions have mostly traded works of artists who had been auctioned before. They also demonstrate that the auction house as gatekeeper allows a very limited number of artists to appear at auction. Taking into account the limited amount of artists who were represented during this whole period of thirteen years (794 and 850), it can be assumed that those artists were chosen because of a solid interest from collectors who have, on their part, preferred to concentrate on a small group of artists. This suggests that the recurring names have a branding quality and that collectors see those artists as being suitable for investment.

I don’t believe that these people invest in art. It is more to buy a “Balloon Dog” for 50 million for in a garden or to put it in their own private museum and be able to say “look, I bought it!”

The long-term gallery owner Max Hetzler expresses the popular idea that collectors who buy the well-known expensive works by celebrated artists do so to show off and not because of their investment value. Allegedly, for someone who is making millions, it would not matter what he spends on art. However, the data and collectors’ behavior suggest that it does matter. Even if, for some of collectors, the amount they spend on art is negligible in comparison to their incomes, they tend to see the monetary value and act accordingly by negotiating the best price and selling when they consider the price right.

Conclusion

Collectors operate in the art market and in the sphere of culture, which are often considered as conflicting and incommensurable. The ideology of the art field requires that, while making decisions, the businessman in the collector struggles with the man of passion, which illustrates the dilemma of good and bad motives of collecting. What should gratify a collector is participating in cultural and artistic values, and not the financial profit. The art market uses these ethics of collecting to structure collectors’ behavior in order to protect artworks from being treated as any other commodity. Therefore, in order to obtain cultural, social but also economic capital, collectors follow the various codes that each sphere requires.

Two moral imperatives are applied to control collectors’ behavior in the art market: a good collector never sells and a good collector buys with his eyes and not with his ears. As a result, they keep the current system of distribution and circulation of art works intact. Gallery owners give collectors who do not resell a moral acknowledgement and preferential treatment in opposition to bad collectors, to whom they refuse access to works. The moral pressure has been, so far, the most used tool to prevent collectors from reselling, as solid legal agreements are not customary for the art market.

The overwhelming majority of collectors resell their works however. As selling can have significant consequences, such as lack of access to works and a bad reputation, they preferably avoid speaking about it. In case they do, they legitimize their actions by reasons that are morally acceptable from the ideology of the art field. The most common motives to justify selling address the upgrade of their collection,

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503 Reichert 2014: 22.
which often relates to the development of a collector’s taste. Sold works will be replaced by other works, so proceeds from selling are said to be utilized for new acquisitions of art. Using revenues for morally high standing projects such as foundations of cultural or social importance form another justified motive. The third type of justifications constitutes practical problems such as lack of storage, maintenance problems or issues of inheritance. Some collectors admit to sell for profit but not openly. Others argue that they do not want to keep works in their collections that threaten to lose its value.

There are gradations in moral condemning with regard to the manner in which collectors sell. Most proper is giving a work back to the gallery, while the worst is public selling through an auction. Since an auction result can have consequences for an artist’s career, selling there can place collectors in a difficult relationship with galleries and artists. A hidden source of irritation is that artists hardly, and gallerys not at all, participate in the revenues that a work achieves at auction. Collectors can disturb galleries’ control of prices, supply and demand as their commercial interest becomes stronger than their moral commitment.

Where the first moral code is mostly used to distinguish between good and bad collectors by galleries, the second myth is used typically to make a distinction between collectors themselves. That a good collector does not buy with his ears but with his eyes presupposes that he does not follow the rumors but creates his own opinion about works. It addresses the fundamental ideas of collecting: the making of subjective choices and the creation of one’s own vision. Collectors with a greater cultural capital claim not to need to follow the mainstream preferences and fashions, but are instead able to decide themselves. They reproach fascination with names and brands, condemn the lack of information and knowledge and the herding behavior triggered by the possibility of financial profit.

The notion of disinterestedness in relation to money functions as one of the most important distinction marks among collectors. Long-term collectors use this characteristic to position themselves against newcomers, whom they associate with unlimited wealth as opposed to their own financial means. Other points of distinction refer to the way in which they build up a collection. Passion, hard working and discipline oppose the temporary fascination and lack of personal involvement. Connoisseurship and the understanding of art serve as an important tool of distinction as they represent a quality that cannot be bought. Collecting is, furthermore, claimed not to be limited only to creating an art collection, but it implies social responsibility for creating culture. As connoisseurship turned out to be buyable, passion shared and responsibility for culture an unreliable criterion, the distinction based on interest in money functions as a solid instrument of categorization. Especially since it has a double function: on the one hand, it operates as a distinction mode amongst collectors and, on the other, keeps the existing art market intact.

The pressure of the moral codes proved to have an effect only to a certain extent. It forces collectors to avoid speaking openly about their interest in art as a form of investment, but it does not hinder collectors’ interest in the financial value of works and the economic potential of their collections. The study of collectors’ preferences at auctions demonstrated that the number of artists whose works were sold was very low and the number of recurring artists in consecutive years very high. It evidenced collectors’ inclination for blue chip artists. Their branding quality could be seen as choices that guarantee a better position in the art market. Although the social and cultural values of owning art are of great importance, today’s art collectors are highly aware of the financial worth of their works and their potential.
7. Private museums and public displays

Introduction

In the new millennium, the number of private museums and private art spaces has grown rapidly. Many private collectors have decided to open their houses for visitors, or to put their works on display for selected groups and bigger audiences in spaces especially designated for this purpose. Contents and presentations of collections demonstrate the taste of the collector, but not only this. Collections may also represent the vision, social standing, cultural understanding or financial possibilities of their owners.

The question that will be addressed below is why private museums have recently become so popular among private collectors, and which specific motives have driven them to share their art works with known and unknown visitors. It will be analyzed whether the increasing presence of museums and the going public of private collections have influenced collectors’ relationships with other actors, such as galleries and public museums.

Especially the relationship between public museums and private collectors will be given attention. As public museums have always relied on cooperation with particular collectors in order to function properly, it will be asked what the consequences have been of the rise of private museums for collectors and public institutions, and how both parties have reacted to this development. Other forms of engagement between private collectors and public museums will reflect their mutual interdependencies, advantages and the risks that are involved in such cooperations.

Motives to share private collections with the public

Private exhibition spaces often function like museums without the actual word “museum” in the official name. The Rubell Family Collection in Miami, set up by Don and Mera Rubell in 1964, was opened to the public in 1993 in a 40,000 square-foot space, which used to be a storage for the Drug Enforcement Agency. Since its opening, the Rubell Collection has offered a wide-ranging exhibition program, presenting many international artists, young and established, sometimes before the artists have been shown in public museums. In the same year, the Goetz Collection opened to the public in Munich, for which occasion the collector Ingvi Goetz had commissioned a building by Herzog & De Meuron. The Collection, which can be visited at appointment, presents changing exhibitions twice a year and offers visitors facilities comparable to the ones of public museums, such as an informative website, in-house publications, a library, a storage and restoration facilities. The Saatchi Gallery was set up by Charles Saatchi originally in North London in 1985 and, in 2008, in London Chelsea in a 19th century building of 6500 square meters. Since its opening, the private museum has hosted in its venue various well-attended international exhibitions such as The Triumph of Painting in 2005 and The Revolution Continues: New Art from China in 2008/2009. Furthermore, this space provides the same visitor services as a public museum, including restaurants, bars, public talks and the possibility of having school visits.

The BMW Independent Collectors Guide 2013 has listed 216 private museums and private spaces worldwide that have been open to the public, some of them permanently, some of them at appointment. As Table XII demonstrates, 5 of them were established in the 60s (2.3%), 4 in the 70s (1.9%), 16 in the 80s (7.4%), 25 in the
90s (11.6%) and 167 from the beginning of the new millennium onward (77%). Especially the number of the museums and spaces set up or opened to the public as of 2006 has exploded in comparison to previous years: 125, which is 58% of the total number of the active museums and spaces. The publication is from 2013 and it already included a museum that was to be opened in 2014, but the exact numbers for 2014 are not yet known. The figures demonstrated that the owning of private museums has become interesting for collectors worldwide. At the same time, the data should be taken as an indication since the museums listed in the Guide were chosen by its makers and do not pretend to be a summary of all existing private spaces.

TABLE XII
GROWTH OF PRIVATE MUSEUM AND SPACES WORLDWIDE

A possible general reason for the rise of private museums could be the accumulation of wealth of the UHNWIs, whose income and numbers have been growing. As wealth increased, so too the spending on investments of passion and property including art. The increasing financial strength of collectors have contributed to the popularity of private museums, as such private spaces cost money and often do not generate any income.

Collectors themselves named various reasons for setting up a private space. The first one is of a practical and social nature: the collection grows and the collector runs out of space at home, yet the collector wants to see the works himself and share them with others. This is one of the reasons named by collector Rattan Chadha, who opened his private space for contemporary art in Voorschoten in the Netherlands in 2009:

In the first stage it is for myself to see because too many works were in the warehouse. The artist would come with a jpeg, I would say I love this work, I

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would sign a check and it would land in the warehouse. I was frustrated, I wanted to see it and I wanted people to see it. So I opened the space in Voorschoten although I don’t hang very expensive art there.\textsuperscript{505}

Chadha described his choice for showing part of his collection as a combination of the personal desire to see the art works he has once bought and also show it to others. The space in Voorschoten is open for a selected public that is invited by Chadha or his curator, and at appointment only. He made a difference between the open space, where he exhibits less expensive works, and his private houses, where he hosts the most valuable works.

Julia Stoschek mentioned a similar reason to open a private space, although the specificity of her collection has formed an additional motivation to not keep her works only at home:

The first reason why I wanted a building was because I was collecting media-art. If you live in a big apartment, you can install some paintings, but in my case, in a few years of collecting, I figured out that I had no chance to really see the works I collected, because you cannot install a 3 or 4-channels video installation in your own apartment. So I wanted to make my works visible just for myself. Very egoistic. And then the second step was to say, perhaps we can open it for the public, maybe there is an interest from the public, but it was an experiment. I never expected people to be so much interested in video art.\textsuperscript{506}

Stoschek mentions as her point of departure her personal “egoistic” desire to see her collection, which, because of the medium, has been even more difficult to display than a collection of traditional media such as painting or sculpture. Only after she fulfilled her personal wish to live surrounded by works that she likes, she said to have become aware of the fact that her collection had become relevant to others. By describing this process, she stressed the organic development of the opening of her collection to the public without trying to impose her will on the audience.

Stoschek opened her space in 2007 in a 100 year old industrial building in Düsseldorf, which she had redesigned especially for her museum. In the meantime, she organized exhibitions of artists who have been consecrated by art history, such as Bruce Nauman, Sturtevant or Marina Abramovic, hand in hand with emerging but institutionally noticed artists, such as Francis Stark or Ed Atkins. Her high-quality program and her involvement as a trustee of the MoMA New Media Department in New York makes her private space an attractive place for institutional actors, curators and artists who are considered relevant, and through whom she takes part in the art theoretical discourse.\textsuperscript{507}

Thomas Olbricht opened the private museum me Collectors Room in 2010 in one of the artistic centers of Berlin, the Auguststrasse. The 1300 square meter building hosts varying exhibitions, as well as a permanent display in the Wunderkammer Olbricht, a cabinet of curiosities that contains more than 200 rare objects from different historical periods. Olbricht named two reasons for setting up his private museum:

\textsuperscript{505} Interview, Amsterdam, 7 December 2012.

\textsuperscript{506} Interview, Hamburg, 14 April 2010.

\textsuperscript{507} Interview, Hamburg, 14 April 2010.
When the collection was growing and simultaneously the public interest became visible through requests for exhibitions and loans, I thought: now you can show it. And then came the idea to do it in Berlin.  

The growth of the collection caused the need for more space, while the noticed interest in the works he owned convinced him about the quality and maturity of his collection, which he then considered ready to show. He chose Berlin as the city with solid artistic reputation worldwide, and he chose for one of the centers of art in the city: several galleries have their venues in the same street, while the important public institution Kunstwerke is the direct neighbor of me Collectors Room. This location stresses the serious ambitions of Olbricht as it engages his collection with the discursive public art organization.

Rosa de la Cruz considered her and her husband’s private museum as an extension of their collection that is on display in their home, which, because of its intimate setting, cannot function as a public space:

We built a space because this is a public space; our home is still a private house. You can never turn a private home into a public space because you have to watch that you don't bother your neighbors. This space is the opposite. This space is totally public. But I have always seen it as an addition to our home. I have never seen this space as something new or that we are developing. It’s just been like another moment with the collection.

De la Cruz makes a distinction between the possibilities of display at home, which is subject to different privacy rules than her private museum, which can be visited by the public without limitations. Moreover, the display at home had its limitations, which she encountered once their collection was changing its profile:

We started first buying works for our home and those works for our home were very much about living with art in a very sort of domestic way. But when we did the installation of ‘No ghost just a shell’ the work by Philippe Parreno and Pierre Huyghe it was a lot of video art inside the house. So we had to control light, control sound. Something that is not domestic.

Showing contemporary works in a private home involves the subordination to the requirements of their display, which means that a collector is forced to give up part of the comfort of living.

A private museum is a real physical space situated in a specific place: the museum can therefore play a role in the creation or in the life of a community. Collectors very often mentioned social responsibility as one of the main reasons for having a private space that is open to the public. Social responsibility can be understood in various way: as a task to mediate the value and understanding of art to those who do not know it yet and/or as a possibility to create social coherence and an improvement of social conditions, which such a space can generate.

In the Warehouse of Martin Margulies and the Rosa de la Cruz Collection in Miami, both owners can sometimes be found talking to visitors. The collector

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509 Interview, Miami, 6 December 2012.
510 Idem.
Margulies called his space “serious fun” since many works are made by emerging artists who are not (yet) historically established:

We opened this space eleven years ago. We ran out of space at my residence, because I started collecting photography eleven years ago. And we didn’t have a venue and we decided not only to get more space but also to make our primary purpose the education of kids, who might come and see the facility. So we are an educational facility.\textsuperscript{511}

Margulies stressed the educational aspect of his public collection as the most important one. He not only tries to give young people the possibility to engage with art in an early stage of their lives:

Where I see my collection is not in a museum, but to charity. To people that have been bypassed, disenfranchised people who through their fault or not their fault need help. So we are very active in women and children’s homelessness. And that’s where I see a lot of my collection going, to charitable purposes.\textsuperscript{512}

Margulies thinks about his collection not only in terms of its cultural meaning but considers it as a source of financial means that can be used for the basic needs of other people. He has been employing homeless people in his Warehouse but, moreover, his remark indicated that the funds released by the selling of art works have been used and will be used to organize projects for people who need assistance.

Rosa de la Cruz sees her collecting as a passion but she also puts her responsibility for culture in the first place:

We have lectures here, we have workshops, we have social programs to help art students, we send young students from Miami to Europe two weeks a year. We have another program with New York. Collecting is a lot of responsibility. My husband and I, I think we are aware of it and we are taking them. It’s not just buying.\textsuperscript{513}

For her, the responsibility for education on art and assisting artists in their careers form the key value of the collector. According to her, helping to understand art, creating art discourse and supporting young artists is an essential part of collecting, which is inseparable from buying and showing art.

Rattan Chadha expressed his wish to educate people in and through art as well, since an encounter with art can change one’s perspective of thinking:

I also think to open a big space of contemporary art in India. Education of people is very important. They need to see things; they should be exposed to art. They don’t have to get it at the first instant, as I couldn’t get the Campbell’s Soup at the beginning.\textsuperscript{514}

\textsuperscript{511} Interview, Miami, 8 December 2012.
\textsuperscript{512} Interview, Miami, 8 December 2012.
\textsuperscript{513} The third important collector in Miami, the Rubells family, have been mentioned by some actors as not thinking of community but thinking more about their own collecting professional company.
\textsuperscript{514} Interview, Amsterdam, 7 December 2012.
In his statements, the wish to educate goes hand in hand with the wish to give back to other people the opportunity to develop a relationship with art and a deeper understanding of processes that have been taking place in the surrounding world, as he once did.

Thomas Olbricht finds the task of education in art, especially for children, perhaps the most important task of his activities as a collector:

But what I show here moved me actually less than our foundation work with children. Today what my wife and myself put as the most important task for us to bring art to children. Not my artistic taste. I believe we are doing it very seriously; every day before the opening of the space this opens my heart. This makes me really happy and this is what we want to intensify. We have a moving Cabinet of curiosities, a bus, where you could bring things to people, to children at school so that they could possibly hold a snake skin. When I roll out the 5 m long Boa skin and the children notice for the first time, this is a snake; this is great and wonderful.\footnote{Interview, Berlin, 20 March 2013.}

Olbricht considers direct and real experiences of objects, in combination with emotions that such encounters can bring about, the most important duty of his collector’s work. He is convinced that such encounters can influence someone’s life. Olbricht wants to “give back” to children what he was given when he was young himself, as he knows that this kind of experience can influence someone’s life. The collector spoke in an emotional way when talking about his involvement with children.

Olbricht intends to use his private museum to experiment with viewers’ experiences of art and going beyond the traditional way of engaging with art objects:

My idea is to bring senses together, not only seeing but also hearing, perhaps even smelling, and you cannot do it in a public space. Here I can try it. This is why I call it me Collectors Room but also a laboratory. I can test here whether we can jump over the limits, whether it makes sense, whether the usual visitors will accept it… We are in a space where you could possibly even touch an object, although when it will be touched too often it could get destroyed. This goes too far but still I want more than only look at pictures and objects.\footnote{Interview, Berlin, 20 March 2013.}

Experiments with art reception and the space as a laboratory have formed the important programmatic points of the museum. The word “Me” in the name of the space is an abbreviation for “moving energies,” which indicates the ambition of the collector to create and stimulate personal encounters between visitors and artworks, which differ from experiences in a museum or a gallery.\footnote{http://www.me-berlin.com/besuch/}

Erika Hoffmann and her husband opened their collection in Berlin in 1997 in one of the industrial buildings that became available in the former East Berlin after the Wende. Their decision to open a private collection to the public was urged by historical shifts in Germany after 1989. In the past, they had installed works from their collection in premises of their fashion company Van Laack in Cologne. Being West-Germans, they wanted to engage in historical transformations in united...
Germany through art. After they failed to open an art space in Dresden, they chose for a private space in Berlin Mitte:

We wanted to contribute something, which could bring us together, or at least could add to a dialogue about different ethical values of our western and eastern societies. This dialogue unfortunately hardly took place. The essential in the western art was for us that many art works exemplified a risk that the artists take when they decide for their freedom and independency from social rules.\(^{518}\)

Sharing the collection could, according to Hoffmann, generate social meaning in the form of a dialogue between western and eastern German cultures, in which they have both participated. The historical moment forced them to see their collection as an instrument that could function as a bridge between two cultures, which they could understand and explain to those who could not. The intention was to place the collection in the space that simultaneously formed part of the living space. They presented this special model of “lived collection” when trying to buy former textile factory buildings in Berlin:

People here thought about us as the usual investors who want to get rich. This of course we wanted as well. But not only in the material sense, but in terms of new experiences in an environment that was new to us, of new excitements, through the exchange with strangers. Probably thanks to our concept we could get the building to disadvantage of other bidders.\(^{519}\)

Besides social exchange and new contacts with the surroundings that Sammlung Hoffmann has generated, the concept of a culturally charged private space helped the Hoffmanns obtaining the desired venues in Berlin. The collection has since been open to visitors on Saturdays, when Erika Hoffmann is often personally present, and engages in conversation about art works. To the collection, which still expands, belong works by Arte Povera and Zero, and also artists such as Fred Sandback, Christian Boltanski, Roni Horn, Chiharu Shiota, Christopher Wool, Marina Abramovic, Valie Export and Yael Bartana.

Julia Stoschek considers education and responsibility for art as her main task as well. Stoschek has not only organized exhibitions but, moreover, has been inviting artists for talks and regularly organizes film screenings that are all free of charge for the public and fully financed by herself.\(^{520}\)

Collector Axel Haubrok saw his responsibility as a missionary of art, for which task his private space plays a central role:

Of course I have a mission. This is why I opened such an art space. I mean, this is only my private money and I try to show in which way one can experience art, why this is an intellectual challenge, why this is exciting, what can you achieve by doing it, which gigantic personal mindful profit one can get, what is certainly the case. Also the exchange with other collectors.\(^{521}\)

\(^{518}\) Interview, Berlin, 1 February 2010. Project Collectingnow.de
\(^{519}\) Idem.
\(^{520}\) Interview, Hamburg, 14 April 2010.
\(^{521}\) Interview, Berlin, 12 February 2010. Project Collectingnow.de
Haubrok suggests that investment of his private money to make his collection available for the public stresses the seriousness with which he takes his task to promote art among those who do not appreciate art yet. For him, spending money is proof of commitment and dedication to his social mission, which aims to demonstrate the intellectual challenge and personal development that art can offer.

Collectors are driven by various practical, social and artistic motives when opening their space. For those who can afford it, a private museum forms a solution when lack of space at home hinders seeing the collections. Pleasure in seeing goes hand in hand with the pleasure of sharing. Sharing experiences turned out to be of importance in creating a hub from which the social responsibility for culture and one’s own social environment can be further developed. Some collectors were motivated by the desire to experiment with art in their own way without sticking to the official artistic canon and ways of presentation. Overall, individual impulses to open a private space vary, but what collectors consider as their social and cultural tasks have been similar.

Visibility as the way to secure access to works

The public accessibility of private collections offers more than the possibility of sharing interests and experiences with the audience. By presenting their museums as fruits of passion, collectors accumulate symbolic capital, which they can then convert into economic capital in the art market. In this way, the public exposure of a collection can add to collectors’ social status in the art field but also to their position in the art market, because the visibility that a collection can offer to artists means an easier access to valuable works in the primary market.

Gallery owners will mostly give first access to collectors who promise to give a work to a museum or to show them in their private, preferably renowned, collections that are open to the public. This secures that an artwork can be viewed by a bigger audience and that an artist can gain popularity and might also be noticed by institutional actors. For gallery owner Lybke, public visibility forms an important argument when selling artworks:

> The first priority is that the works go to public collections, museums, private collections. Then they stay at public display and they work further.522

Lybke sees as his task the securing of the public visibility of a work, because this gives the work the opportunity to be noticed and generate attention. Gallery owner David Nolan considers the visibility of a collection and a collector a relevant argument when deciding to whom to sell a work that is in demand:

> Sometimes selling to a very good collector is as good or better than to a museum because they are very public about what they own and they will go out there in the world…the effect in the end can influence many more people for that artist’ career than selling to a particular museum.523

Nolan mentioned the “public” attitude of private collectors when buying and showing works, which means that, once they bought works, they will certainly show them and

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522 Interview, Miami, 7 December 2012.
523 Interview, New York, 13 May 2013.
give attention to them in, possibly, different networks than public museums. Collectors understand that visibility mechanism and recognize the value of their private museums for the acquisition of works they want to buy. Rosa de la Cruz suggested that the access that she achieved to desired works has been thanks to the visibility of her collection and the excellent presentation of the works to the audience:

Sometimes a work comes up and there are fifty people that want that work but only one is going to get it. So I consider myself lucky. Why I’m getting it sometimes is because the gallery also wants to place that work well. I think galleries are very honest people. galleries really are fighting for their artists. They’re looking at their artist and they want to do the best for their artist. So I think that they see what we are doing here. The installations and what we’re installing, the way we are. And I just feel privileged when I get one of the major works like Rashid (Johnson) for example is giving these works, which are an incredible body of works.  

Michael Hort is fully aware of the value of the visibility of their collection and the advantages it offers:

We can get the work we want because our space is very prominent. Who has twenty thousand square feet in Manhattan and shows their art there? Nobody. So people want to be in our collection… During the Armory Show we have thousands of people coming through during a couple of days and a lot of galleries have discovered artists here…. So there are two things to have an open house: one is if we like an artist, we want everyone to like that artists, we want to expose him and give him an opportunity to be seen. The other thing is, to be honest, the reason that we get the best prices and the best art because we are so visible. People might buy as much as us but if they don’t have the space or they don’t want to show it they can’t get what we get. 

This visibility could be one of the reasons that the Hort collectors acquired two of the much desired paintings by Oscar Murillo during the group exhibition at David Zwirner in the summer of 2013 for 75,000 US$ each, while the prices in the secondary market were much higher. 

Getting the right work when there is a high demand is the big issue for a collector. Collector Martin Margulies pointed at the fact that, especially when a work is in high demand, reputation and visibility are of great importance since there are many buyers prepared to pay a high price:

If it is a very strong work there is lot of global money from all different countries and it is very very hard to get a seminal work. 

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524 Interview, Miami, 7 December 2012.
525 Interview, New York, 14 May 2013.
526 Exhibition Folk Devil, David Zwirner New York, 11 July – 7 August 2013. The other reason mentioned by Zwirner himself was to bring the director of his newly opened London Gallery Rodolphe von Hofmannsthal in direct contact with the collectors Hort. Paumgarten 2013.
527 Interview, Miami, 8 December 2012.
Collectors who opened their private spaces can use the public visibility of their collection as an important argument and an acquisition tool to gain preferred access to works, while, at the same time, it strengthens their position among other collectors.

Collector Olbricht observed that it has taken him decades to be taken seriously as a collector because he has chosen not to be visible:

The lack of public presentation was the reason. For decades I was silent and only because of the opening of this space here in Berlin 2, 3 years ago I got the publicity and it has been swallowing me further...I don’t really want it but I don’t reject it either. I’m ambivalent.\textsuperscript{528}

According to Olbricht, he became visible to the art world only through his me Collectors Room in Berlin, although he had been collecting for many years before he opened the space. The public visibility of the space has offered to him the advantages of becoming a known collector, which also implies his permanent exposure to the media.

The increasing value of visibility, which has found its reflection in the growth of new private museums, also generates a different effect that stimulates the art market. A collection open to the public and to other actors in the art field needs to be updated and refreshed time and again. The long-term collector Ingvild Goetz, who managed to build up a very prestigious collection, pointed at the permanent need to add and fill:

A collection can always be tightened up, made more concentrated, more focused. A collection is something that needs to be worked on continuously, meaning that you go to fairs, you buy new things now and again. As a collector, my idea is to focus the collection in some way so that the whole thing is one big work.\textsuperscript{529}

Especially in case of a collection on public display, the owner needs to keep buying new art works in order to keep his visible collection interesting enough so that he can preserve the reputation and enjoy the profits that the visibility of the collection had once gained. The structure keeps itself intact: collectors make their collection visible in order to have access to works and better prices but, once they have attained visibility and accessibility to galleries and artists, they need to continue buying in order to receive the social acclaim in the art field each time anew.

The increasing importance of visibility suggests that the valorization of contemporary art works and artists, at least for a certain period of time, has been taking place through their public exposure. Moreover, it implies that actors in the art field have become aware of mechanisms of this process. The visibility of collection can generate a double advantage for acquisitions: access to the works and better prices. The more prestigious the location, the better the accessibility and price the collector can achieve.

Private museums were said to be attractive hobbies of wealthy collectors, meant for a small group of passionate art lovers.\textsuperscript{530} Their increasing number in the Netherlands during the 1990s was explained by individualization and wealth increase, in combination with disappointment at the cooperation with public institutions.

\textsuperscript{528} Interview, Berlin, 20 March 2013.
\textsuperscript{529} Interview with Chris Dercon, February 2013. Christie’s 2013.
\textsuperscript{530} Steenbergen 2008: 39-40.
Private museums’ financial independency allowed them to break with the administrative structure of public museums and react quickly to the new developments.\footnote{Steenbergen 2002; Steenbergen 2008: 39.}

It is argued here that private museums, although often taking passion as a starting point, are instruments that generate social and financial privileges. In the current expanding art field, which permanently admits new artists, galleries, curators and collectors, visibility has become an important factor in creating the artistic and market value of works. To be noticed and maintain attention in the art world matters for all parties involved; consequently, private museums have become popular, as they offer a visibility tool for artists and galleries as much as they promote collectors themselves.

Private museums form the platform where the social and economic capital of a collector can be celebrated. The eight paintings by Mark Grotjahn owned by François Pinault and presented in his private museum Punta Della Dolgana in Venice are, therefore, not only a formal arrangement. They form a sign to other collectors that the position of Pinault is so highly valued in the art market that, despite the waiting list, he is able to acquire eight works all at once of the artist who is in high demand among collectors. It is an act of superiority toward other collectors who understand the language of the art market and the rules of the pecking order, because being able to buy quantities of works by desired artists is not only a sign of a financial position of the buyer, but also a sign of a rank of significance given to a collector by a gallery. A private museum helps to gain significance and forms a place where the social, cultural and economic power of a collector can be celebrated.

Private museum as place of distinction and exchange

The promotional value of the visibility factor also serves as one of the reasons why collectors attempt to distinguish themselves from other collectors by giving their collection a special character that gains attention. In Berlin, Stephan Haupt has chosen to promote his collection through a single theme: he only collects works about money and shows his collection in public places, such as bank offices. Reiner Wild, another German collector, has built a collection of works from the 20\textsuperscript{th} and 21\textsuperscript{st} century representing fruits and has been promoting the subject through his foundation \textit{Stiftung für Fruchtmalerei und Skulptur} in Heidelberg. Christian Boros presents his collection in Berlin in a bunker that has no daylight. The French couple Florence and Daniel Guerlain concentrate on works on paper and award a yearly drawing prize of 15,000 Euro to one artist who engages with the medium drawing in a unique way. The German collector Torsten Kunert bought a baroque castle in Kummerow in eastern Germany in 2011 that he intends to develop into a private museum with a focus on photography.

The Finnish collector Timo Miettinen (born 1955) exemplifies the way in which visibility can secure additional value for the collector. Miettinen is a successful entrepreneur and manufacturer of electric devises and industrial components based in Finland. In 2011, he bought a house in Berlin where he set up the art space Salon Dahlman. One of the first exhibitions that was held in the Salon was \textit{The Moment I Became a Collector} between 26 April and 13 May 2012. Assisted by three curators and art advisors, Miettinen asked several well-known collectors from Berlin to show a work that meant their breaking point in thinking about collecting. Many well-known
collectors agreed to participate in the exhibition, among others Siggy und Sissi Loch, Jürgen und Gabriele Lucius, Paul Maenz and Ulla and Heiner Pietzsch. It was then that Salon Dahlman became visible in the artistic landscape of Berlin.

The space has since then been used to present the interests and the taste of the collector Miettinen. By choosing to show Finnish artists such as Marianna Uutinen or Robert Lucander, who are represented in his collection, he aimed at promoting Finnish culture in general. At the same time, he established contacts with the Berlin artistic community and international artists who could be connected to those artists: for example, Uutinen was shown together with the German artist Anselm Reyle. Salon Dahlman also hosted exhibitions of important historical figures such as Ulay or Valie Export, which connected the space to the art historical discourse. During the Gallery Weekend 2013, together with the gallery Bärbel Grässlin from Frankfurt and Heinrich Ehrhardt from Madrid, Miettinen organized a show of the very sought-after Spanish artist Secundino Hernandez. A year earlier, Miettinen gave Hernandez a space in his house in Berlin as a residency and has, ever since, been enjoying the success of the artist and his discovery.532 In 2014, Miettinen was invited to the international art fair ARCO in Madrid for a talk about Nordic collecting, in which he participated as collector and Director and Initiator Art and Culture Space Salon Dahlman.533 Although Miettinen has only been collecting for seven years, he has become the face of Scandinavian collecting to some people in the art world within less than three years. The visibility of him as collector through his activities in Salon Dahlman has been essential in the achievement of this position among other collectors.

Private spaces form a platform to exchange ideas, works and networks with other collectors. For example, Axel and Barbara Haubrok hosted a Collectors’ Dinner during the Art Week in 2013 in their private space called Fahrbereitschaft. The name originates from when the big industrial complex of 19,000 m2 was still used as a special car service in the former East Berlin. During the Gallery Weekend, the international collectors invited by collectors from Berlin could share their ideas about art in the near empty rooms of the abandoned industrial unit. Ten important collectors from Berlin were each asked to invite ten other international collectors in order to exchange views on collecting without other institutional actors, artists and gallery owners, who could disturb the open exchange of thoughts and tactics on collecting.

The Australian David Walsh (born 1961) gained a lot of visibility because of his private museum set up in Tasmania in 2011. Walsh studied mathematics and computing at the age of 18 at the University of Tasmania, but dropped out after a year only to play at the local casino almost every night, developing a betting system with which he and his friends had moderate success. It resulted in Bank Rolls in the 1990s, the company founded by Walsh and his partner Ranogajec, which seems to be one of the largest gambling syndicates in the world. According to Walsh, his gambling life consists of not much more than a giant network of computers calculating mathematical information in which he himself is hardly involved anymore.534 Walsh has been collecting objects such as archeological finds, stamps and Greek coins, together with contemporary art, for which he sought assistance of international curators. In 2011, Walsh opened his private MONA (Museum of Old and New Art) in Hobart, a location close to his birthplace, which shows a mix of

532 “If I ever would be remembered as collector that would be because of my discovery of Secundino.” In conversation with the author, 26 April 2013.
534 Flanagan 2013.
ancient artifacts and new upcoming artists, all of which he considers as contemporary. The main themes in his collection are sex and death, which he believes to be the human main drives in life. The color black plays a central role in the design of the museum and the website. Walsh called his museum a secular temple and a subversive adult Disneyland.\(^{535}\) Religion and subversivity play an important role in his life; raised in a Catholic community by a deeply religious mother, Walsh lost his faith by the age of twelve and has been an advocate for atheism ever since he received media attention.

In 2009, Walsh entered into a remarkable bet with the French artist Christian Boltanski, which has been shaped as an artwork. Walsh bought the rights for filming Boltanski at his studio 24 hours a day for the next eight years at a fixed price per day; the payments being made up of monthly allowances. The images from the studio are being transmitted into the museum. If the artist were to die within these eight years, Walsh will have made a right price speculation and obtain the work at less than the price agreed.\(^{536}\)

Together with the museum, Walsh set up a winery, a bear brewery, a hotel, restaurants and a library. The place is now mentioned in travel guides such as the Lonely Planet and TripAdvisor as one of the main attractions of the country. In the first year of its opening, the museum has received over 400,000 people and is considered to be one of the main economic incentives of the island of Tasmania.\(^{537}\)

Walsh has gained big visibility not only because of his private museum but also because of his personality, his taste and the way he presents his choices. His attitude toward art and the institution of the museum is provocative, as he treats the museum as a place of total experience and subjectivity and not a place to educate. The texts about him on the website of the museum defy the seriousness and responsibility that his institution could claim.\(^{538}\) However, despite his provoking attitude and tendency to violence and sex, many of his works were made by established artists such as Wim Delvoye, Matthew Barney or Jan Fabre. For exhibitions and the collection, Walsh frequently involves international curators such as Jean-Hubert Martin, who are able to secure a connection to the contemporary art world and secure the high quality of selections and display. Walsh’ subversion is a distinction mark among other collectors, that he can express because of the public character of his museum.

Walsh showed part of his collection in Paris in 2013 in a private museum that has been set up with the intention of collaborations between collectors and the foundation La Maison Rouge in Paris.\(^{539}\) The foundation was established in 2003 by the French collector Antoine de Galbert (born 1955) as a place that would allow various international collectors to show their art works during temporary exhibitions. The foundation aims at enhancing the knowledge on art and collecting and organizes, therefore, not only exhibitions but also lectures. De Galbert, who is inheritor to the owners of the multinational retailer Carrefour group, used to work in corporate management before starting his art gallery in Grenoble and, later, the foundation.

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\(^{535}\) Idem.

\(^{536}\) Flanagan 2013.

\(^{537}\) Gibb 2012.

\(^{538}\) The description of David Walsh reads as follows: “Other red-hot facts: he has a Great Dane called Bruce and a cat called Christ. Like some of the greatest minds of the modern era (the people with the minds) he consumes too much dairy, and sometimes obscures insecurity by acting like a prick. Usually, however, he’s a prick because he feels like it.”

http://www.mona.net.au/mona/museum/david-walsh/

Works from his collection form part of the exhibition scheme but the focus lies on works that will be brought in by invited international collectors, who then show how divers contemporary collecting can be.

The possibility of a presentation of works in Paris is often based on the reciprocity principle from the invited collectors. The works from the collection of Antoine de Galbert were presented in me Collectors Room in Berlin, while part of the contemporary collection of Thomas Olbricht, together with old masterpieces and curiosities, was shown in La Maison Rouge in 2012. Another example of a collectors’ exchange is the exhibition of the editions of Gerhard Richter in 2013 from the me Collectors Room, which traveled to Turin to the private space Foundation Patricia Sandretto Re Rebaudengo. In return, a selection from the collection Sandretto Re Rebaudengo was shown in Berlin in 2014.

Such exchanges, which function as gift relationships, strengthen the contacts between given collectors and give them opportunities to speak and learn about art, artists and collecting. At the same time, they allow each other to participate, at least partially, in each other’s networks of artists, art galleries and possibly involved institutional actors. Presentations of collections in other places than their home locations add to collectors’ visibility and reputation. A collection is noticed by other people and the exhibition could possibly be reported in the press. If the collections are well known and respectable such an engagement could multiply collectors’ social prestige. Invitations for exchange can, therefore, be used as an instrument to increase collectors’ social and cultural capital, while they contribute simultaneously in enlarging the collectors’ international networks and recognition.

Private spaces and public museums

A private space that presents exhibitions and engages with the public brings to mind a comparison with public museums. Collectors are aware of this contextualization and position themselves in relation to public institutions. Some collectors stressed that they do not have the intention to compete with public museums but use their private museum only to add a personal vision, such as, for example, Julia Stoschek:

I don't think it is a competition. My private space is only open once a week, and in Düsseldorf we have really fantastic museums. So I don't think it’s a competition; it is an addition to what already is. I don't see my collection in a competitive way to the other museums.

Stoschek claims that she has a cooperative rather than a competitive attitude toward museums, and she refers to the limited time that her space is accessible and points out the high quality of the museums in the city. She stresses the added value of her space and avoids mentioning the quality of her collection, exhibitions or educational programs as points of eventual competition. For her, the cooperation with public

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542 Stanze/Rooms. Works from Sandretto Re Rebaudengo Collection. 2 May 2014 – 21 September 2014.
543 For the concept of gift relationship, see Mauss: 1954 (the French original published in 1925); Kempers 1992.
544 Interview, Hamburg, 14 April 2010.
museums is important, as she demonstrates through her activities as a trustee in MoMA in New York.

Collector Thomas Olbricht does not believe that his private space is a competition to museums in Berlin either, and underlines the possibility of cooperation instead:

We have proved it in the past. When Gerhard Richter had his big retrospective in the Neue Nationalgalerie we were showing at the same time an exhibition with his editions, whereby in both venues there were references to each others: please go there as well, there is more to be seen. Especially with Mr. Kittelman as general director we understand each other very well and this should be followed, also in other cities. I know that this very often has been seen as competition. As a private person I cannot effort but if I can contribute and perhaps can introduce also an idea of mine then I’m very open for cooperation every time, and this is only good.  

At the same time, Olbricht stresses that his space could offer an opportunity to experiment with art, other than in a public museum:

Different from the museums with their customary didactic tasks I can afford myself something not conventional, perhaps with the danger that this will harm art and the risk that my intention will not be understood by everybody.

In his opinion, a private museum enjoys more freedom than a public museum, as the latter is, apart from its artistic tasks, obliged to take art historical responsibilities into consideration that are linked to its general public function and history of the institution. The example of multisensory experiences that Olbricht mentioned before shows not only his wish to challenge the art experience but also to differentiate from what a public museum does. He is fully aware that a space like his offers more opportunities, as he is the one to decide what is allowed and what not.

Rosa De la Cruz demonstrates a different attitude by comparing her private museum to the public ones only to stress the advantage of her place. She thinks that the works that she collects are more progressive and more in tune with the time:

I think that the (public) museums can’t move fast. The whole framework of the museum is so bureaucratic and so slow that in today’s world they just stay behind because there is no life in those museums. Whereas contemporary collectors can move fast. They don't have to account with a group of people that have to agree. If you see some of this board of the museums they don't move fast. Because they want to continue living in the past. It is so difficult to live in the future and to live in the present. When you stay in the past you feel comfortable because you know everything around you but when you are doing a collection like ours you are taking risk, you’re moving ahead, you are subject to criticism because of course you are exploring new territories, new artists. You are not buying trophies. You are buying artists that are working today, are doing installations and… it requires a lot of thought.

545 Interview, Berlin, 20 March 2013.
547 Interview, Miami, 7 December 2012.
De la Cruz made the distinction between private and public collections using the notion of time: the past versus the future and speed versus sluggishness. Her comments are very critical toward existing public museums, since she accused them of a lack of vision about the future and conservatism, which hinder them in taking risks and exploring the new art of now. In her opinion, private collectors such as she and her husband, are able to act adequately to build a historically relevant collection, whereas the museums engage more with conservation than with an understanding of the current time.

Rattan Chadha sees his private museum as part of the general tendency of the increasing importance of private collectors in comparison to the public museums:

Private collectors have become more important. At the end of the day the artists have to live, they have to be fed, if nobody is buying their art it doesn’t work. Museums have simply no budget and private collectors do.  

Chadha points out the common belief in the art world that many public museums have recently been facing cuts in their acquisition budget, while many private collectors have kept enough funds at their disposal. His opinion is shared by many collectors who own a private space. They claim that, in terms of developing the careers and visibility of artists, private collectors have become more important than public institutions, since new acquisitions of public museums have become very limited. Besides the latent competition over acquisitions, collectors and private museums compete over the formulation of a new artistic canon.

Public museums have reacted to critical statements and competition threats from private museums by emphasizing what they consider the programmatic error of such institutions, the lack of obligation to continuity. Directors of public museums, such as Chris Dercon, Udo Kittelmann, Eugen Blume, Marion Ackermann, Philipp Kaiser or Bernhard Mendes Bürgi, stressed time and again that it remains to be seen how private museums will develop, as they have no responsibility of continuity or education. Once the founder dies or has lost the intention to continue presenting his work to the public, the museum can easily disappear. Such a museum depends on the funding from a private person and, therefore, is vulnerable when the financial situation of the founder changes. In 2014, the Austrian long-term collector Karlheinz Essl was forced to close his well-known private museum in Klosterneuburg because of the insolvency of his company Baumax and tried to sell the collection to the state of Austria. A selection of 44 top works has been sold during a Christie’s auction in October 2014.

Actors in the art field remain skeptical with regard to the future of private museums. Art advisor Stefano Basilico expressed the widespread opinion:

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548 Interview, Amsterdam, 7 December 2012.
549 During a conference about the role of museums, the directors and curators of a few German and American museums—M. Ackermann, H. Ficher, P. Thomas Berguis and Alexandra Munroa from Guggenheim New York, Philipp Kaiser, Klaus Biesenbach from PS1 in New York—agreed that there is a new artistic canon in the making, which is not controllable by a single authority, 28 November 2013, Berlin.
550 Eugene Blume during the talk Collecting now. Collecting how. Technische Universität in Berlin, 14 February 2012; Kittelman in conversation with the author, 2013; Bürgi in conversation with the author, October 2013; Ackerman during the conference Museum Reloaded, November 2013.
551 Another example forms the Scheringa Museum of Realist Art in Spanbroek in the Netherlands that also housed contemporary art. The museum, which was set up in 1997, was closed after the owner Dirk Scheringa was declared bankrupt in 2009.
We have had an explosion of private museums, but none of these museums are much older than 15 or 20 years. And in most of these museums I believe the people who formed them are alive and still funding them. What will happen a 100 years from now, when these collectors are all dead, they may or may not have left adequate funds for their museums to be maintained. The museums may or may not have interesting works that people continue to want to see a hundred years from now. We’ll see.552

The director of Tate Modern, Chris Dercon, called this absence of the continuity urge in case of private museums “half pregnant”; in his view, one cannot set up museums that are “half public” and that are lacking any responsibility toward the public.553 When asked to react to this remark, collector Olbricht was not that pessimistic:

Maybe. But there will be no abortions, neither premature miscarriages because the things what is all about, are art works and they will stay with or without the collector, if only nobody will throw them away, which will not happen. Then they will stay much longer than the collector himself.554

Olbricht focuses on the value of separate artworks, which, according to him, is the only relevant issue in the constellation collector-museum, which does not depend on their place in one specific collection. By saying this, Olbricht, to a certain extent, confirms what Dercon suggested; that the collector does not consider the continuity of the collection as their main responsibility. Olbricht underlined that his main task is embedded in the here and now, which means that he has not yet developed a clear concept that would guarantee the continuity of his collection:

My task is to show the art, which I have now. My task should not be a Mausoleum Thomas Olbricht in the future because then there could be totally different more important things, which are more important to show in the new art scenario. One day my art works will have their continuity because of themselves, but maybe with other collectors, spread through out the world, but I’m not there yet. I haven’t really thought about it so far. Nothing must stay together. I don’t survive, the art will survive, in other hands or here. This is open.555

It is not the idea of a collection for eternity that motivates him but the finding and showing of the best works with the potential to survive. He realizes that, perhaps, his collection will not stay together but that the meaning of his discoveries and experiments as a collector will remain in the particular works, which might change hands.

Private collectors are also exempted from the obligation of consistently following the careers and developments of artists who have formed a part of their collections, as collector Michael Hort explained:

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552 Interview, New York, 14 May 2013.
553 Dercon 2009: 111.
We try (to follow), we keep track within reason. But we have too much art; we don’t follow them like religiously. If they send us information, we will read it. If they have a major show we try to go if it’s reasonable. But we’re not a museum.  

Hort describes their wish to follow artists as being different from that of a public museum, which, in his opinion, does not have as much choice as he and his wife have. They can feel responsible for artists’ careers but they are free and have no obligations to follow them. They can shift their attention to other artists or other activities if they wish, whereas public museums carry the responsibility of following art historical and biographical tracks of given artists.

Rosa de la Cruz, on the other hand, likens her activities and the position of her collection to the one of a public museum. She is convinced that her collection will gain the historical importance, without expressing in which form:

We were looking at the future. We were looking at what are the artists doing today. We were traveling, we were networking. All of that you require in order to fulfill that desire of building a great collection of your moment, because most collections when they were built, they were contemporary and then they become historical. If you look at the collections in museums or private homes at the moment they were contemporary, now we see them as historical. So this collection twenty years from now would be a historical collection. But if I had not jumped in at the right moment I wouldn't have these works.

De la Cruz stresses the historical quality of her collection, which will stay or will become even more relevant in due course, owing to the right choices she made as a collector. Although she does not specify in which form her collection will survive, she speaks of an entity with historical value and meaning, and not about specific works that keep their importance with or without being part of a collection.

The remark by De la Cruz suggests that being able to show works to the audience seems to make collectors less dependent on public museums when it comes to consecrating artists whose works they own. The museum directors and curators of the Reina Sofia in Madrid called the shift from state supported to private supported collecting a new paradigm. They observed that collectors, more and more, claim their own expertise and the relevance of their choices to art history.

As private museums are not a new phenomenon, neither is their relationship to the public institution. A well-known example of the development of a private museum forms the collection of Peter Ludwig, who initiated the Ludwig Museum in Cologne in 1976. Ludwig became interested in art early on in his life, obtained a PhD on the subject of the human image in the works of Picasso after the war, but pursued a business career in the chocolate industry. At the beginning, he and his wife started collecting various objects and art works from many historical periods and genres, including antiquity, Baroque, Rococo and Meissen porcelain. In 1967, during one of his business trips to New York, Ludwig discovered Pop Art thanks to the galleries of

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556 Interview, New York, 14 May 2013.
557 Interview, Miami, 6 December 2012.
558 The representatives of the Museo Nacional Reina Sofia, Madrid: João Fernandes (Deputy Director), Rosario Peiró (Collections Director) and Jesús Carrillo (head of Cultural Programmes in the Public Activities Department) for the meeting Private Collecting and Shared Heritage: proposals for debate, 5 December 2013.
Leo Castelli and Sidney Janis, where he bought many works of Lichtenstein, Warhol, Rosenquist, Oldenburg, Twombly and Wesselman. These acquisitions resulted in two big exhibitions of contemporaneous art works in the Suermenmt-Museum in Aachen in 1968 and in the Wallraf-Richartz-Museum in Cologne in 1969, which prompted the interest for Pop Art from a wider audience in Germany. In the 1970s, he was massively buying art from East Germany and later, the USSR, made possible thanks to his business trips.

Ludwig set up a private museum in close cooperation with the city and the state. The Ludwig Museum was established on the basis of 350 works that were donated to the city of Cologne, and extended by donations of works by the Russian avant-garde and Picasso. The museum was first located in the municipal Museum der Angewandte Kunst and, in 1986, a new building was opened that was intended to house three museums: the Wallraf-Richartz Museum, the Ludwig Museum and the Agfa-Photo-Historama. Finally, because of the size of the donation, the new building, designed by the architects Busmann and Haberer, remained at the disposal of the Ludwig Museum only.

The history of the museum unveiled that the development of the institution in its current form was a continuous process in which, besides the collectors couple, other parties were involved. Ludwig required cooperation with a municipality, which would guarantee a public character of the museum. It was, for him, of great significance since he was convinced that a public museum is the central place where art is defined as art. This close cooperation with the public bodies differentiate him from many contemporary collectors, who prefer to stay independent from other parties and might cooperate only without losing their private character.

In the footsteps of Ludwig follows collector Ingvild Goetz, who donated 350 new media works to the state of Bayern in the autumn of 2013 and lend her museum and another part of her collection to the city for ten years, remaining herself the director of the museum. After those ten years, she will decide about the fate of the museum. She declared, however, that she does not want to bother her children with a collection that is not theirs, which suggests that the collection and the museum could, possibly, remain in public ownership.

A slightly different approach is demonstrated by private museums that are set up and kept at the disposal of their founders and their foundation. The Menil Collection is such an example, which opened to the public in 1987 in Houston, USA, in a building designed by the architect Renzo Piano. The collectors couple Dominique and John de Menil emigrated from France to America before WW2. She graduated in mathematics and he in political sciences and law during night courses while working at a bank. Using the private revenues from their holdings in the multinational oil-field services company Schlumberger, which was set up by Dominique’s father and uncle, they amassed a collection of modern and contemporary art including Pablo Picasso, Cy Twombly, Barnett Newman and Jasper Johns. An important role in arousing the couple’s interest for collecting played Father Marie-Alain Couturier, a French Dominican whom they met in New York during the 1940s. Couturier knew many artists such as Léger, Matisse and Rouault, and introduced the couple to galleries and promoted modern art to them.
In 1971, the Catholic de Menils built an all-faith sanctuary to house fourteen paintings by Mark Rothko, who gave the name to the chapel. They collaborated with several international and local museums: John was a trustee in the MoMA in New York; Dominique was involved in Centre Pompidou in Paris. As a trustee of the local Museum of Fine Arts, John campaigned for the director James Johnson Sweeney, former director of the Guggenheim Museum in New York. However, because of a conflict with other trustees, de Menils drifted away from the institution and decided to set up their own museum. Since the moment of its opening up until today, the museum has been managed by The Menil Foundation set up by the founders.

A similar development shows the Guggenheim Museum in New York, which was founded by Solomon R. Guggenheim in 1939 to house his collection including works by Wassily Kandinsky, Marc Chagall and Fernand Léger. After the death of the founder in 1949, it has been managed and financed by the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation with contributions from individuals, foundations, corporate donations and government agencies.

So far, the majority of the new private museums attempt to keep the collection in the hands of the foundation that is managed by the founder. Once the founder faces the issue of continuity, this attitude can change depending on his financial means, the country where the museum is based and the ambitions of the collector. As this matter is complex, because tax systems and positions of public museums vary in different countries, the question about the prospects of new private museums requires more specific studies on this particular subject. Overall, various modes of existence of private museums and their engagement with public institutions are not new. What has changed in the new millennium is the big number of new museums, which brought about the authority struggle regarding the artistic canon and cultural relevancy. The struggle has become this urgent because the buying power of collectors has become so great, and art historical knowledge and curatorial skills buyable.

**Mutual interdependencies and their risks**

Public museums have often relied on cooperation with private collectors through donations, bequests and loans. Hamburger Bahnhof in Berlin and De Pont in Tilburg exemplify museums that were established on the basis of private donations. The first one could be opened thanks to Erich Marx, who, in the mid-1980s, donated his art collection to the city of Berlin. The Museum De Pont was founded on the legacy of the Dutch collector Jan de Pont, who ordered, before his death, the use of part of his estate for setting up a museum of contemporary art.

Many actors experienced the power relation in the last years as changing in favor of collectors, because of the more difficult financial situation of public museums. This situation was caused by the decreasing acquisition budget, in combination with the urge to attract the mass public, the wish to react to global transformations and to explore new media possibilities. Collector Martin Margulies stated that the lack of financial means has made museums more dependent on collectors:

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564 In the United States, the governmental funding increased as of the 1970s through the National Endowment for the Arts and state Arts Councils and by corporate donations to museums. Lachmann, Pain, Guana 2014: 62.


Well eventually, a museum, if they’re not a conservation museum, they need to get a collection. And they cannot afford a collection today, so they have to have a symbiotic relationship with collectors who might have public facilities. So there is a certain détente that has to occur, in order to get a collection. Museums cannot afford, to go out and buy (of the most part) ‘museum quality work’. They can get work, but it might not be ‘great A-work.’”

Margulies points at the great buying power of private collectors, which puts museums in a position of dependence, as they cannot compete with private wealth. As acquisitions have become problematic, museums make efforts to engage with collectors in various ways in order to encourage long commitments in the form of donations, loans or bequests.

A cooperation with a museum can offer advantages to both collectors and museums. A collector who gives a donation to the museum will, possibly, not only enjoy a tax advantage, but ensures the visibility of his name and the work. As has been proven, visibility implies a better access to works and lower prices in the primary market. The visibility factor applies to the works of a collector shown in a public museum, which functions as a quality stamp for their choices in general and to his name mentioned as a benefactor. A loan or a donation to a public museum generates social prestige for collectors. Public museums participate in consecrating artists and can, therefore, add to the cultural and social capital of a given collector.

Udo Kittelmann, the director of the State Museums in Berlin, stressed the importance of good relationships with collectors, but also that the museum should remain in charge of its own curatorial course. Marion Ackermann voiced the same opinion. She did not want the museum she manages, the Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen in Düsseldorf, to be forced to promise anything to collectors. An often-heard statement is that a good museum does not collect art, but collects collectors, which implies that a good relationship with collectors could result in gifts and bequests.

For museums, donations can significantly enrich public collections, as is demonstrated by many examples. In 2004, after turning 70, the American collector Blake Byrne donated 123 works to the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, where he used to be a trustee for many years. The donation included works of Paul McCarthy, Martin Kippenberger, Juan Munoz, Stephan Balkenhol and Claes Oldenburg, which have been exhibited in a special museum show in 2005. Byrne also donated a few works to Centre Pompidou and to smaller museums such as the Nasher Museum of Duke University, where Byrne is a dean. He admitted that giving donations and loans offers him tax advantages but it also makes it possible to show works to the public that would otherwise be inaccessible to them.

Collectors can enjoy special regulations or request tailor-made arrangements. In the United States, collectors can commit to a fractional donation, which means that they can give a percentage of the artwork to the museum and own a percentage

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567 Interview, Miami, 8 December 2012.
568 In the United States, private donations have been deductible from Federal and most state income taxes for the last 40 years already. Lachmann, Pain, Guana 2014: 62.
569 Ostrower 1995: 37, 86.
570 Interview, Berlin, 20 March 2013.
573 In conversation with the author, Paris, October 2013.
themselves. In this construction the value of the work is to be fixed when the donation is effected in full, which implies for the collector benefit of the value increase over the years while keeping the work. The tax law change of 2006 in the United States that limited fractional donations, was considered as the reason for collectors to donate to own private foundations instead of to existing museums, which formed a boost for opening private spaces. Many countries follow various regulations that offer fiscal advantages to donators. Sometimes, the price agreed between museum and collector exceeds the value that the collector would receive in the secondary market and this agreed value forms a basis for the tax benefit. Giovanni Springmeier explained that, collectors’ cooperation with public institutions is not only motivated by social responsibility but also by fiscal benefits:

The longer you are there (in the art world), the more important is the awareness that as individual you are a part of the group and that ownership obliges. Especially in art the ownership is not only private but should be available for public use… I give works on loan to museums and donate works as well, although it shouldn’t be considered actually as a gift because I get tax benefits from it. This is why I think it is a bit of showing off when someone says I make a foundation for nothing.

Springmeier presents himself as a collector with moral social consciousness and someone who is aware of the meaning of art for the community. Therefore, he is prepared to give loans despite bad experiences with regard to the handling of works by public museums. He also publicly acknowledges the fiscal advantages that cooperation with public museum can offer and criticizes others who want to profit from their social and cultural capital while hiding the economical. Sometimes, the agreed value exceeds the value that the collector would receive in the secondary market and this agreed value forms a basis for the tax benefit. Sometimes, the agreed value exceeds the value that the collector would receive in the secondary market and this agreed value forms a basis for the tax benefit.

Private loans to public museums form a more multifaceted subject for the collector and the museum. For collectors, a loan to a museum secures visibility of a work and, in case of long-term agreements, could mean a decrease in maintenance and storage costs, which are borne by the museum. Museums are obliged to take care of works on loan with regard to restoration, maintenance, storage, insurance and research even though these works do not belong to the museum. A loan offers not only practical advantages but also contributes to the prestige of a collector, since exhibiting a work in a public museum implies a quality of the choice of the collector. The work becomes museum-proven. Consequently, it adds to the economic value of the work, which increases in case of exposure in public institutions.

On the other hand, collectors complain sometimes about the bad service that museums provide when borrowing works. Collectors tell stories about works that returned in bad condition after an exhibition. Especially short loans from collectors for temporary exhibitions mean administrative work, appointments with transportation companies and require trust that museums will treat the works well. The collectors couple Hort stress that lending works also requires a lot of work for collectors:

574 Kahn 2006.
575 Interview, Berlin, 17 April 2013.
We lend a lot. We have over a hundred fifty pieces at any one time loaned around the world. So now we have a hundred and fifty, and next month we’ll have a hundred and fifty, a different hundred and fifty. It’s a lot of work, but it goes in and out. But one of the things that is important to us, is the, when we support an artist, we love an artist, we want to get the best art we can, at the best price we can. And we deal with young artists, living artists. If they have an opportunity to be in a museum, we have a responsibility to show it. And we do.

Social responsibility for supporting the development of an artist is, for Hort, the reason to make all efforts in order to allow a work to be shown in a museum. By saying this, Hort admits the important role of museums in the valorization of the artist. The participation of a work in a museum exhibition contributes, at the same time, to the value of a work.

Loans sometimes form a problematic issue to museums because the loan giver can easily withdraw the work if he wishes so, which has happened regularly. For instance, the Broere Foundation (Monique Zajfen Collection) withdrew several important works lent to the Stedelijk Museum in 2011. Another collector removed a work from a Dutch public museum despite of an agreement fixed for several years, because he could sell the work at a price that was interesting to him. Consequently, some museums do not accept loans and aim at donations and bequests only.

The American critic Dave Hickey mentioned as the darkest side of the prominent role of private collectors the problem that public museums have started to mimic them in their exhibitions. He noticed that, instead of offering in-depth solo shows that give an overview of the oeuvre and ideas of an artist or ideology, the museums repeat presentations from collectors’ houses; a combination of separate works of many artists. The alleged influence of new collectors is a point of concern to other actors in the art field.

Public museums seek to connect with private collectors by organizing exhibitions of their collections. Examples are the Collection Sandretto Re Rebaudengo: Maurizio Cattelan in Whitechapel Galery in London in 2012, Entropy of a City—Julia Stoschek Collection in Muscarnok (Kunsthalle) in Budapest in 2013 or Bad Thoughts. Collection Martijn and Jeannette Sanders in the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam in 2014. Special exhibitions around a particular collection give exclusive attention to the taste of a collector and, by doing so, the museum confirms the collector’s cultural standing. However, these kinds of exhibitions were organized in the past as well. Tracking special exhibitions in four American museums—the MoMA, the Guggenheim, the Whitney Museum and the Metropolitan Museum of Art—from 1945 to 2010, sociologists Robert Lachmann, Emily Pain and Anibal Guana stated that the number of exhibitions related to patrons of the museums did not increase in the last decade. Despite the decline in governmental funding and an increasing dependency on private donations, the wealth of the benefactors has not resulted in increased control over the museum programs. While the data before 1968 showed a large number of special exhibits, the decline after the introduction of federal funding has been steady and continued to 2010. The professionalization of

577 For example, Kunstmuseum Basel.
578 Interview, Skype, 18 February 2013.
579 Lachmann, Pain, Guana 2014: 60, 67, 68.
curatorial staff is seen as the main reason for the lack of increase of collectors’ influence. Because of art history and museology studies, the group achieved a high degree of authority and autonomy from trustees and benefactors, through which they can defend their professional ethos.580

In the case of Transforming the Known, an exhibition that showed part of the collection of Bert Kreuk in the Gemeentemuseum in The Hague in 2013, the museum gave the collector a near carte blanche, allowing him to operate as the curator of the exhibition. Kreuk (born 1964) has traveled to many international art fairs and visited artists’ studios and gallery exhibitions worldwide, mostly in Western Europe and the United States. He has been the VIP guest of all possible fairs, gallery weekends and other social art events. He has loaned several of his works to museums and sporadically donated works as well.

Art was not part of his early habitus, neither of his early education and he, therefore, had to acquire his knowledge himself, and develop his own strategies and, methodologies regarding art in general and his particular interests. He calls his collection a collection of contemporary conceptual art, in which he has engaged with both established and emerging artists. He has not been interested in investigating art historical references; he describes the conceptual art that he has been collecting as being formed by the concept and idea of the artist, but he has not placed his collection in the art historical perspective of Conceptual Art.

In interviews, Kreuk spoke enthusiastically about his passion for art, for artists and for concepts. What mattered to him were the art of this time and the pleasure of discovering, especially since he has developed the skill of noticing quality.581 He expressed his negative opinion about people who are not serious collectors and buy artworks to sell them quickly, as much as he was negative about art investors whose activities, according to him, have nothing to do with art. For him, collecting is about art and not about the question of possible profits. He considers himself as a serious collector and is glad that galleries worldwide regard him as such.582 He has achieved a position to get first choices from important galleries but it took time for him to acquire this status; at the beginning the galleries treated him as a passer-by.583 He was buying works by blue chip artists (Christopher Wool, Jeff Koons, Damien Hirst and Rudolf Stingel) and popular emerging artists (Victoria Snoeck, Oscar Murillo, Klara Liden, Alex Israel and many others). He was aware of the fact that other collectors were collecting the same artists but thinks that his choice of works is highly personal.584

Kreuk said not to have an advisor but to listen to the opinions of people he respected. His attitude toward the galleries he was working with was not always positive. He believed that many galleries are interested in money only, or in the first place. He was also skeptical about art advisors who often have a hidden agenda in their preferences and who, for example, finance works of artists only to gain access to

581 Smallenburg 2013: 23; Rappolt 2013.
582 Interview, The Next Big Thing, 2014.
583 Artforum in April 2011 reported about a benefit auction in New York:
“The drama of the night came during the live auction, when Hauser & Wirth director Joel Yoss, had to vie with an absent phone bidder over a painting by gallery artist Matthew Day Jackson, who was sitting at the same table beside Lawler. The winning bid, $88,500, went to the mystery collector, who turned out to be one Bert Kreuk of Sarasota, Florida. ‘Who?’ Yoss wondered. ‘I’ve never met him,’ said Ballroom curator Melissa McDonnell, still clutching the phone.” Yablonsky 2011.
584 Press release of the exhibition Transforming the Known, June 2013.
them and sell them for a higher price. He himself claimed to finance works by artists now and then but only to help them develop interesting projects.\textsuperscript{585}

The exhibition \textit{Transforming the Known} showed works of international artists, many of whom have been popular and appreciated by the market. The director of the Gemeentemuseum, Benno Tempel, admitted that the museum does not have the financial means and expertise to follow recent developments worldwide as well as the collector Kreuk does. Therefore, Tempel was pleased to be able to show a selection of the private collection, which he would not have been able to show to his public otherwise.\textsuperscript{586} Moreover, the museum has received several works from the collection on loan and even a few donations.

Jeffrey Deitch, then in his function of director of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, opened the exhibition in The Hague. He praised Kreuk for his vision, passion and the extraordinary works he collected:

\begin{quote}
It’s not easy to be an accomplished collector. There aren’t that many more great collectors than great writers, than great art dealers even great artists. It takes a unique set of skills and that kind of special individual you have through the history of modern art there are more now than there were 100 years ago, but it’s still quite rare to find a great collector like Bert who’s ahead of most curators and art collectors, ahead of many of the galleries. And who was able to put together a coherent grouping where going through his exhibition you can understand so much more about what is going on in contemporary art.\textsuperscript{587}
\end{quote}

Three months later, almost immediately after the exhibition in the museum ended, Kreuk put 13 works from his exhibition up for auction in Sotheby’s New York in November 2013, the majority of them being made in 2011, 2012 and 2013.\textsuperscript{588} A few artists were very upset about their works being put from the exhibition to auction, and the newspapers and public blogs questioned the position of the collector, who then said that many artists produce works for the market and that, despite the selling of the works, he remains loyal to artists.\textsuperscript{589} Director Tempel said that Kreuk’s passion is not in following artists long term, but that, instead, he looks around to see what the market is doing and what other collectors are doing.\textsuperscript{590}

The position of the public museum is problematic in this case, especially in view of the statements of the director who admitted to understand that Kreuk is very much market- and not artist-oriented. In the case of the emerging artists, the name of the museum was mentioned under each lot as the only place where the works have been exhibited. However, in the interviews, Tempel downplayed the role that the Gemeentemuseum might have in the valorization of a work for a sale at auction:

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{585} Interview, \textit{The Next Big Thing}, 2014.
\item \textsuperscript{586} Interview, \textit{The Next Big Thing}, 2014.
\item \textsuperscript{587} Interview, The Hague, 7 June 2013.
\item \textsuperscript{588} Among others Walead Beshty \textit{Picture made by made hand with assistance of light}, (2011), Danh Vo \textit{Alphabet M} (2011), Oliver Laric \textit{Schengen Visa Hologram} (2012), Alex Israel \textit{Untitled Flat} (2013), Nathan Hylden \textit{Untitled} (2012).
\item \textsuperscript{589} Interview, Pontzen 2013a: 11.
\item \textsuperscript{590} Pontzen 2013b: 23.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
If the work was showed in the museum of François Pinault or the Museum of Modern Art, maybe. Not in the Gemeentemuseum. For this we play internationally a too small role.  

Bert Kreuk expressed the same opinion, and stated in an interview:

You don’t think that an artwork in New York would be worth more because it was showed in The Hague?  

Despite this talking down of the museum’s position by its director and the collector, the museum, which owns the largest Mondrian collection in the world, has been seen as a valorization and consecration place by others. International galleries were prepared to sell works to Kreuk exactly because the works were to be shown in the Gemeentemuseum. A few of those works were later put up for auction. The international position of the museum was confirmed by the visit of President Barack Obama, who was in the Netherlands for the NSS Top in April 2014 and who visited the museum despite his very tight schedule. The European Vincent Award, which is considered a prestigious international art award, takes place in the Gemeentemuseum.  

Kreuk put other works from the exhibition up for sale through Sotheby’s gallery in London. For the show Just Now, Sotheby’s and Kreuk, who was presented by Sotheby’s as curator and collector, even used the same logo as for the museum show in The Hague. The remarkable choice of works, which represented a chain of artistic influences according to Deitch, turned out to be a preview of separate works for two auctions.  

Kreuk considered himself a collector, who enjoyed living with art and valued some of the aspects of cultural enrichment that art gives to him. At the same time, Kreuk is the embodiment of the speculator and flipper. The example of the exhibition Transforming the Known showed Kreuk’s pleasure of sharing his experiences with art but also his genuine interest in dealing in artworks as part of this passion and enjoying financial profits that collecting art offers. His attitude shows his lack of long-term commitment to artists whose works he collects, although he claimed that commitment remained despite of the sales. He further legitimized the sales by the usual morally accepted motives, which is an upgrade of his collections, for which he needs resources.  

Kreuk has been switching between the logic of the commercial market and the logic of passion, depending on the situation. When wanting to buy a work, he presented the character of a true passionate collector. He was upset when a gallery or an artist did not want to sell him art works (certain galleries and artists have, in the meantime, become careful with selling) and was prepared to prosecute the party whom he assumed to be in default. The moment he acquires a work, he applies the commercial matrix and, depending on his commercial interests, he might decide to sell or not to sell quickly. In that case, he was clear in stating that galleries and artists

591 Pontzen 2013: 23.  
593 Conversations with artists and gallerists with the author, 2013.  
594 Ebony 2014.  
596 Interview with the author, The Hague, 7 June 2013.  
597 He brought the Gallery Isabella Bortolozzi and the artist Danh Vo to court in 2014 for alleged non-fulfillment of an acquisition agreement.
have no say about works that no longer belong to them. He has been switching between the logics of passion and the logic of business to his own convenience. In the interview, Kreuk said:

(Art) It’s about expanding your mind, to keep your brain working in a different way than just about commercial ways of thinking or doing things. I always said that the art was a counterbalance to what I was doing in business.\textsuperscript{598}

There is a discrepancy between the public image of the passionate art collector and the pragmatic profit maker. While the first passionate side is intended to be shared with the public, the latter pragmatic side is not. The fact that Kreuk called himself a curator in the museum exhibition and in the exhibition of Sotheby’s points out that he attempted to avoid being associated with dealing and financial profit. His behavior showed that he wanted to gain economic capital by using the symbolic one.

This case demonstrated that, when cooperating, museums and collectors follow their own interests. The Gemeentemuseum has chosen to collaborate with the collector because of certain advantages he has offered to the museum, such as loans, donations and the possibility of showing works that Tempel considered otherwise unobtainable for exhibitions. The collector, with his own agenda, used the museum for his goals, such as visibility, which offers prestige and upgrade the value of the works. The museum accepted the terms and, moreover, in order to downplay the meaning of Kreuk’s sales, the director, Tempel, had to undermine the role of the museum he leads. Following their own limited interests, the collector and the director unveiled the strategies of both parties without taking into account the moral rules according to which public museums function.

Conclusion

Contemporary collectors follow in the footsteps of earlier collectors who, socially and culturally motivated, decided to share their collections with bigger publics. In the new millennium, the number of private museums is quickly growing. The increasing number of High Net Worth Individuals, who spend part of their expanding wealth on art, makes up the context in which collectors’ interest in private places has developed, since private spaces generate costs and mostly no incomes. Various motives drive collectors to open a private museum. Pleasure to see the works goes along with the wish to share experiences with the public. In museums, collectors show their personal taste and ideas about what matters to them in art. A museum provides collectors the opportunity to differentiate, as much as it offers a platform to create a gift relationship with other collectors. Collectors regularly invite others for exhibitions in their venues and, by doing so, to expand their network and profit from each other’s reputations. A physical space such as a private museum allows for the creating of visibility of the collector in the art world as much as in the local community. It offers a platform to develop social activities, such as artistic education and various support programs for artists or the community. Through these morally praised activities, collectors gain social prestige and build their reputation as passionate collectors.

Another explanation of the current increasing popularity is the visibility factor, which, in the past, was less important as the art market had smaller dimensions and

\textsuperscript{598} Rappolt 2013.
the competition for works and the need for distinction was less prominent. Private museums are of importance to collectors’ positions in the art market since public visibility helps secure access to works and receiving of better prices. The accumulated social and cultural capital of the collector, which is expressed in his prestige and reputation, can be transformed into financial advantages. Collectors profit from the public exposure of their collections, whereas they contribute to the economic value of an artist by showing their works to the public. In the continuously growing art world, the visibility factor has become of vital significance for creating a context in which an artistic and market value can be established. Private museums offer a visibility tool to artists, art works and galleries, which, in its turn, builds the social, cultural and financial capital of the collector. The art market profits from the current high value of public visibility, since the latter forces collectors to permanently upgrade and change their collections through new acquisitions and sales.

As activities of private museums equal, to a certain extent, the work of public institutions, a possible struggle for authority urges collectors to formulate their standpoint in this regard. Some collectors stress the importance of the public spaces and express their cooperative, and not competitive, attitude. Others claim being more progressive than public museums, as the latter stayed too much in traditional cultural and administrative structures and cannot react adequately to the transformations in the art world. This implies that they are not able to create artistic relevancy. Public museums defend their position by accusing the private ones of a basic arbitrariness in their responsibilities. Lack of obligations for continuity, education and commitment to artistic careers are, according to public institutions, a big obstacle in creating a serious artistic discourse and cultural meaning. This struggle for authority became urgent because collectors represent more buying power, can act quickly and attempt to participate in formulating the new artistic canon. Since the access to art historical knowledge and curatorial skills is buyable and the ideological context allows a variety of artistic positions, including the ones celebrated by the market, public museums need to prove their added value. Public museums emphasize, therefore, what new private museums cannot prove: their long-term social commitment, lasting cultural meaning and confirmed art historical relevancy.

Private museums, today and in the past, follow various paths of engagement with public institutions. Some collectors prefer to involve another institution to secure a continuation or public significance of their private museum, while others keep their collections in the hands of foundations that are managed by the founder. The issue of continuity can change this attitude.

Donations, bequests and loans are various forms of cooperation between public museums and collectors, now and in the past. The relation between collectors and museums is reciprocal, as both parties can profit from each other. While the museum needs financial contributions, loans and donations, collectors can upgrade works by making their quality museum-proven and enjoy fiscal advantages. Moreover, cooperation with a public museum adds to their reputation and the prestige of their collections. Because of budget cuts in state funding and the increasing private wealth, the influence of private collectors is claimed to be growing. This claim has been anecdotally substantiated but not sufficiently quantified. The question whether collectors define programs and strategies of public museums more than in the past requires more thorough research analyzing the specificities of each country.
8. In pursuit of right discoveries

Introduction

Collectors search for artists whose works fit in their collections as meaningful acquisitions, and who will hopefully prove to be the right discovery. In most cases, a discovery refers to an encounter with unknown works in a gallery or museum exhibition, at a fair or at auctions. The “new” can refer to a very young but also an older, unknown artist. Collectors expect those artists to realize their promised artistic significance in the art field, preferably in a not too long period of time. The collectors also expect the artwork to gain value on the art market. When an acquisition fulfills these premises, it can be marked as “right.” Discoveries are often experienced collectively, and this is where collectors’ passions and market trends come together. This raises the question which qualities in an artwork attract the interest of collectors. The qualities address artistic ideas as much as the social and cultural phenomena related to a given artist. In order to understand which factors are of significance to collectors, two categories will be investigated more closely: very young artists and artists who are at what is considered to be retirement age. Those categories have been chosen because they include artists who are either at the very beginning of their artistic practices, or who have already built an oeuvre throughout the years but have become visible only later in their careers. Collectors’ sudden interest could, potentially, disclose certain artistic, cultural and social mechanisms that turn a work into a right discovery and may constitute trends.

The recent hype around Oscar Murillo and the revaluation of the oeuvre of Phyllida Barlow may shed some light on which artistic and social aspects matter to collectors. These processes demonstrate the interdependence of the art market, institutions, media and art historical narratives.

A mercantile novel of Oscar Murillo

Oscar Murillo graduated in 2012 from the Royal College of Art in London and has since then continued to make large abstract performative paintings, which he exhibits, sometimes accompanied by social events, in his studio. He paints with dirt, cement dye, spray and oil paint. He draws lines using a broom stick and writes simple words that often relate to food on surfaces in a manner that reminds one of graffiti. His bleak raw canvases are often made of several pieces stitched together in a shabby way and are usually not framed. His paintings therefore look like filthy curtains or quilted banners hung up on the wall and are always recognizable as his.

During the auction on the 26th of June 2013 at Christie’s in London, his painting *Untitled* from 2012, which was estimated between 20-30,000 GBP, ended up realizing the price of 253,875 GBP (US$ 391,475). At the time, Murillo had three galleries to represent him and his work. A painting by him, bought at one of those galleries, would have cost around 30-40,000 US$. However, those works had become very hard to come by, since the demand was already very strong.

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599 For the phenomenon media hype, see Vasterman 2004.
600 In comparison: in the 1980s, the price increase of the works by the popular young artist Julian Schnabel was not directly reflected in the results of the auction houses. His works appeared at auction for the first time (Christie’s and Sotheby’s) in 1986 and both sold at 4000 US$ hammer price. The higher results were achieved only in 1990, being $ 28,658 and $ 114,482 for bigger works.
Murillo was born in Colombia in 1986, but his family immigrated to Great Britain when he was ten. He thus inherited an “exotic” background, but had access to a Western education. His family set up a cleaning company, and, during his student years, Murillo used to clean office buildings. South American office cleaners in London form an aspect of his work—he integrates them into performances and parties, where he has them mingling with the fashion crowd and collectors. The representation of the South American immigrant community as proposed by Murillo is friendly and unthreatening, which confirms the widespread cliché of their ability to work but also to enjoy life.

His performance-style manner of working plays with sociability and conviviality, and some collectors consider his work to be a form of “street art.” Murillo cooks food for his studio guests and has yoga sessions conducted in his studio. Furthermore, words referring to basic foods across the globe, such as “milk” or “rice,” often feature on Murillo’s canvases. The characteristic materiality of his paintings and their formal language fit perfectly in the current trend of large, abstract, process-oriented paintings. They come into existence during creative acts in his studio but this artistic gesture is, at the same time, questioned since he produces stacked paintings; paintings that are placed one after the other, doubting the value of the singularity and originality. He is aware of the practices of other artists and of the current discourse, and he places the use of his material in an ecologically conscious frame of “what is available.”

In 2011, when Murillo was still studying, he got a chance to exhibit at the new London gallery Carlos/Ishekawa. Around this time, the collector-dealer Stefan Simchowitz met Murillo during a group show at Mihail Nicodim in Los Angeles. He later explained his fascination with Murillo’s work as an intuitive experience of something great:

When I saw Oscar Murillo’s work it was immediate. No one else saw it at the beginning. I can’t explain it.

He bought all the paintings from the exhibition and called up the Hilary Crisp gallery in London, where Murillo participated in a summer show, and bought available paintings there. According to Simchowitz, Murillo is a very special artist of his generation:

I would call what Oscar Murillo is doing neo-primitivism... It’s ritualistic in nature, and exists in polarity to the Post-Internet movement. I see these approaches as the North and South poles of what is going on...I also think Oscar’s work is interesting in that it really is about hierarchy disruption to some degree—it’s about flipping the order of things, setting the painting on the floor, using all the trash in the studio for the art. A lot of the work has gamesmanship to it—like he’s playing a constant game of chance, and there’s a prospect of winning or losing.

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601 Obricht: 2012.
602 Goldstein 2014a.
603 Duray 2014b.
604 Goldstein 2014a.
Simchowitz was one of the early buyers of Murillo. He bought 34 works at a very low price and sold another 30 to his clients, such as the actor Orlando Bloom. At that time, the artist was interested in their mutual cooperation and they went to Murillo’s country of origin, Colombia, together.

Simchowitz’s description of the immediate attraction that he felt when he first saw Murillo’s work is similar to what many collectors say: “it is great but I cannot explain why.” Nevertheless, Simchowitz took up to explain it further: he contrasted Murillo’s artistic practice with the post-Internet artists who explore the imaginary and distribution systems that owe their existence to Internet and who often produce very smooth and clean looking works. What is important, in Simchowitz’s observation, is that he connects Murillo to primitivism and ritual, which are associated with notions such as the pure, natural and unrefined power of the artist that is beyond the rules of rationality. Simchowitz refers to the rebellious character of Murillo’s artistic practice, such as painting on the ground instead of on the wall, and using dirt instead of paint. However, these working methods were already used by many other artists long ago. In the 1940s, Jackson Pollock painted his canvases on the floor, and, in the 1960s and 1970s, artists such as Daniel Spoerri and Anselm Kiefer used unconventional materials such as dirt and mud for their paintings and objects. Thus, Simchowitz’s claim of Murillo revolutionizing the order of things with regard to use of materials is not really valid. Still, there is a new aspect to it, according to Simchowitz, which is the aesthetic of labor that Murillo represents. These aesthetics confront the aesthetics of fetishism that has constituted the mainstream of artistic production in the post-war period. According to Simchowitz, Murillo represents the purity of labor and, therefore, he perceives Murillo as rebellious and able to question current aesthetics.

Simchowitz sees the subversive character of Murillo not only in his works but also in the possibility of changing the rules of the art system, which the person of Murillo offers:

I think Oscar, frankly, is probably the most significant artist to have arisen on the art scene in the past 40 years, in part because he also demonstrates another one of my mega-themes. The idea that art is produced in power centres like New York and L.A. by white art-school-educated people who talk about the canon and come out of the academic structure is basically very problematic. What we are going to see is the emergence of people who are disrupting this hierarchy, and they are not marginalized figures—it’s not like anyone thinks that Oscar Murillo is a marginalized figure because he’s from Colombia and he’s dark-skinned. He is central to the practice. He is the conversation.

Simchowitz has given Murillo the position of the artist who is challenging the existing hierarchies in the art world, which, according to the former, has been mainly white, academic and centralistic. The dark-skinned Colombian Murillo, who instead of functioning in the margin has taken a prominent position, defies the system with his success. The example fails at first to prove Simchowitz right, since Murillo graduated from one of the most acclaimed art academies in one of the centers of the North-Western network, the Royal College of Art in London. Furthermore, Murillo, as a UK citizen and a Colombian one, takes up a far more multi-cultural position in his private and professional life than a Colombian who is anti-western.

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605 Kazakina 2014.
606 Interview, Los Angeles, 22 November 2014.
607 Goldstein 2014a.
The periphery, according to Simchowitz, is, however, not only geographical but also cultural; he speaks about the peripheries of cultural production that, thanks to the new social networks, escape its corruption. Murillo, who allegedly symbolizes honest labor instead of fetishism, defies the conservative academic production and offers participation and networking instead. Such an understanding of the challenge to the existing hierarchy does not address the issue of Murillo’s participation in the gallery system (Simchowitz discovered him in a gallery show in Los Angeles), as Murillo can only through this partaking change the system from within. Simchowitz stresses the assumed outsider qualities of Murillo, since identification with these qualities could support his struggle against the existing system.

By 2012, collectors saw Murillo in group shows of important galleries such as Isabella Bortolozzi in Berlin and Stuart Shave Modern Art in London. The same year, the well-known American collector couple Don and Mera Rubell invited Murillo for a five-week summer residency in their private museum in Miami. The Rubell couple (Mera born 1943, Don 1940) have been collecting art since the 1960s and have managed to become an authority in the art world, although not indisputably so, thanks to their extensive visible collection and permanent new acquisitions that have been followed by other collectors. Part of the collection has been housed in the publicly accessible private museum Rubell Family Collection (RFC), where several times a year, the RFC organizes exhibitions featuring works from their own collection.

Mera and Don Rubell saw Murillo’s works at the booth of Stuart Shave during the Independent Art Fair in New York in 2012. Mera Rubell said that they became interested in the artist immediately and that they were interested in buying his works, but that they were late:

> By the time we got there, everything was sold out...We were so blown away by the work, I told Stuart we wanted to meet him even though there was nothing left to buy. 610

The meeting was arranged by the gallerist so the collector couple could visit the artist’s studio in his residency in Hunter College in New York. Mera Rubell described the encounter as follows:

> We arrived at 9 a.m., and he looked dishevelled, exhausted, like a homeless person...He’d stayed up 36 hours straight and had made seven or eight paintings, so he had something to show us. They blew us away. We ended up spending four hours talking to him...The last time I saw that kind of energy was Keith Haring or Jean-Michel Basquiat. It was so intense. I don’t even think he was on drugs...The way he works with paint is incredible. Every painting is really beautiful. 611

The description of Murillo shows the way in which collectors perceive him and his works. It is the sudden fascination of something new but this new is not really explained: “we were blown away.” The collectors defined the strength of his work by comparing him to established artists such as Keith Haring and Basquiat, whose works

608 Interview, Los Angeles, 23 November 2014.
609 Idem.
610 Vogel 2014.
611 Vogel 2014.
they also have in their collection. Today, these names stand for natural creativity and the true unruly talent. Another aspect that appealed to the Rubells was his personality: his generous attitude toward collectors (he did not sleep in order to show them something), his intensity and his relation to poverty, which is true and not true at the same time. He used to be poor and he looks like a homeless person in order to make art, but his talent can change everything into gold.

After meeting Murillo in Hunter Collage, he was invited for a five-week summer residency in the RFC in Miami. He was living and working in the spaces of the Rubell Foundation, which resulted in several works that stayed in the Rubell collection and were on display in the exhibition Oscar Murillo: work (5 December 2012 – 2 August 2013). In 2013, this was followed by a solo show at Isabella Bortolozzi during the prestigious Gallery Weekend in Berlin, and another show at the Art Statement during Art Basel that same year. Both shows enabled the presentation of the artist to the large masses of international collectors who were visiting the two events. Murillo made enough works to be visible, but not enough to saturate the demand. Rumors about waiting lists in the primary market quickly started to circulate, which drastically increased his prices on the secondary market.

The institutional interest in his work contributed to its growth. In 2012, Hans Ulrich Obrist held an interview with Murillo and invited him to participate in the exhibition To the Moon via the Beach in Arles, France. In this exhibition, the young artist was connected with established artists who were known for their intellectual approach, such as Liam Gillick and Philippe Parreno. In 2013, Murillo had a show in the prestigious Serpentine Gallery in London, where Obrist is co-director, incidentally during the Frieze Art Fair. In September 2013, Murillo joined the David Zwirner gallery in New York and London. A director of the London office, Rodolphe Von Hofmannsthal, has allegedly been following his development from up close from the beginning. The interest at auctions was still going steady; in 2013, the actor Leonardo DiCaprio bought Murillo’s work at the Christie’s auction in New York for almost 400,000 US$. DiCaprio bought the work anonymously but the rumors about who was behind the acquisition spread quickly.

Being represented by David Zwirner functions as a quality mark within the art world, since the consensus is that the gallery will invest in the making of the artist and will use its institutional and collectors’ network to develop his career further. The first show in the gallery, The Mercantile Novel, was, therefore, not about painting but an installation of a Colombian chocolate factory in the gallery space in New York, addressing social issues of colonialism and exoticism. For this exhibition, Murillo invited thirteen Colombian factory employees, who worked in the premises of the gallery producing chocolate as they normally do in the factory in Colombia. The process could be seen by the gallery visitors. The chocolate-covered marshmallows were packed per two in silver shiny packages decorated with a smiley—visitors could take them and they were also distributed in the museum bookshops in the city. In the bookshop of the Moma Ps1, several young visitors found them “really cool.”

After joining the David Zwirner gallery, Murillo weakened the role of Simchowitz in the development of his career. Asked about his relationship to the dealer-collector, he said that the two do not really speak anymore, and, about their joint visit to Colombia, he said: “I’ll take anyone to Colombia…We got on as people,

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612 At LUMA Foundation, Arles, 5 – 8 July 2012.
613 Vogel 2014.
614 David Zwirner, April – May 2014.
615 Overheard by the author, New York, 7 May 2014.
I think because we’re both outsiders, we both have this hesitation to fit in.” Simchowitz commented that Murillo is a strategically oriented mature artist, but that, in reality, they still remain in close contact with each other. This remark suggests that Murillo is aware of the requirements of the art world, where a morally clean reputation is highly appreciated.

A combination of several social, artistic and financial aspects helped to create a hype around the artist, which attracted the attention of collectors. His artistic and social talents were noticed and supported in a short period of time by various important actors in the art field. Each of these actors have another network through which Murillo could be promoted. Established galleries such as Stuart Shave and Bortolozzi have the name of discovering artistic talents, participate in art theoretical discourses and cooperate with public institutions. The promotional activities of Stefan Simchowitz have a broad reach, especially in the United States, among a different network of collectors who were made attentive to the artist and his financial potential. The influential collectors the Rubells offered him visibility through their museum and their network, while the well-known curator Hans Ulrich Obrist engaged him in institutional exhibitions. The high auction results that were broadly reported by daily newspapers added to the hype. All these individual factors together caused the young artist to become immensely visible and desirable. This, in turn, possibly contributed to Murillo’s joining the world’s leading David Zwirner gallery.

His solid gallery base and the curatorial support, which both contextualize his work within current discourses, have been complemented with a personal fairy-tale. Murillo managed to convert his low social status, symbolized by the job he had working as a cleaner (work that most Westerners outsource to emigrants), into the position of a winner. His transition story from being poor to a sudden financial and social success appeals strongly to the public fantasy as a global Cinderella story.

His South American background is important, because some collectors speculate that he could be the first South American international young star artist, as Murillo has become a successful “South American” artist through his triumph in London and the United States. At the same time, South Americans may relate his success to the increasing presence of South American collectors and artists in the art world. For those who want to see it in this way, Murillo uses elements of South American culture, expressed literally in words such as “nacho,” “burrito” and “yuka,” which are, however, also globally known. A South American collector said:

To be honest I can't connect with his work but I admire him knowing where he's coming from and what he has achieved. And part of me would like to get a piece just as an investment.

This comment expresses respect for Murillo’s achievement as well as a belief that his works will increase in value. In 2013, during the spring auction at Phillips in London, the painting Untitled was bought by a Colombian collector, who called herself “Antonella F” and who was prepared to pay 224,145 US$ for it.

Leaving the personal narrative and the South American element aside, what also helped to arouse the interest from collectors were the aesthetic and conceptual qualities of Murillo’s work. The artist uses a globally understandable visual language

616 Duray 2014b.
617 Interview, Los Angeles, 24 November 2014.
618 Conversation, July 2013.
619 Tully 2013a.
with easy to interpret language signs. The practice of employing the same recognizable visual elements, words and materials gave his works a brand quality. The conceptual side of his works is full of references and imaginary narratives such as primitivism or ecology, but the theoretical context leaves room for all kinds of interpretations, since it does not refer to one specific theory. His works allow for various explanations to be applied to them, but, at the same time, they can function as decorative elements. His basic medium that brought him to attention was painting. Paintings are appreciated by collectors because they are easy to keep at home and most suitable for auctions.

Collectors associated Murillo’s “raw talent,” the graffiti quality of his works and his physical appearance with the brilliance of the currently very popular Jean-Michel Basquiat. One artist mentioned that it was the Rubells couple who advised Murillo to style himself after Basquiat and even got him a hairdresser. Whether or not this is true is not relevant, since even mere gossip shows how aware various actors are of the value of branding and marketing mechanisms. Some collectors, indeed, call Murillo the second Basquiat, while Basquiat, in turn, is sometimes referred to as the second Van Gogh: pure, nonconformist and expressing his soul in his art. A European collector said:

I think, he wants to become the new Basquiat; maybe he will succeed. I have several pieces by him, so we will see. He works quickly and makes a lot of works. I think it should be good for him to take a sabbatical within shortly.\footnote{Conversation, May 2013.}

The collector changed the perspective and said that it is Murillo himself who wants to be the next Basquiat. In his opinion, there is a chance that the artist has the potential. The collector took it for granted that the reference to Basquiat is self-explanatory. Another part of the statement referred to Murillo’s way of working and its function in the art market: since his technique allows him to make many works in a short period of time, there is the possibility of being able to feed the collectors’ demand. The collector saw a possible danger in this approach: on the one hand, it works in favor of Murillo as a brand, on the other hand, it could harm the quality of his work if the artist concentrates on quantity instead of quality.

This statement is an example of the way in which way collectors comment on Murillo: it is mostly not about the work itself but about his market and how to anticipate potential market reactions. A Christie’s staff member mentioned that, the day after the auction in June 2013, at which Murillo’s work realized 400,000 US$, they were offered thirty works for auction by various collectors. Outside the auctions, through dealers in the secondary market, his works were changing owners as well.

The formal repetitiveness of his paintings fits in the concept of branding and makes trading such works easy as they can be bought and sold by collectors without seeing them in real life. Collectors can buy works on the basis of jpegs after seeing a work once. The comments made when purchasing another work were, for example, “there should be more red” or “I prefer a different blue.”\footnote{Conversations, 2013.} The works are wanted as long as they are Murillo’s but they are exchangeable. The branding quality encourages selling, since collectors who want to sell use this quality as a reason for not treating the work as a precious cultural object.
The high prices and the interest shown by the celebrated actors Leonardo DiCaprio and Orlando Bloom added to the aura of Murillo in the art world. The talent and potential that collectors were projecting on Murillo kept being confirmed by the high prices that his works fetched at auctions, and by the absence of his works on the primary market. His sudden success endorses the assumption that collectors search for talented artists with an appealing personal character, that they value a branding quality in the works, that they appreciate involvement of solid galleries, and that they are prepared to speculate.

The accessible visual and conceptual language, in combination with a personal story, the lack of art theoretical references and the promise for quick financial gains are some of the reasons for Murillo’s visibility and success. These comprehensible and photogenic works meet the wishes of those collectors who seek enjoyment in accessible and not too theoretically charged works that allow for quick circulation and speculation. The question is whether Murillo has been valued as an outburst of unusual creativity or whether part of his success is due to collectors’ alleged fascination for young art.

**Wet art**

The category of the very young art is sometimes called *wet art* or *wet-paint art*, as though it so fresh that it is not dry yet. Time and again, the combination of young age and high prices generates a lot of attention from the media; as a result, wet art has become a widely observed phenomenon on the art market. Collectors’ interest in young artists is proven by auction results, which demonstrate a certain demand. Galleries have waiting lists for specific artists, and there are inquiries about young artists in the secondary market. Besides the Murillo case, there are several examples of young artists who were “discovered” in the very early period of their careers. Tauba Auerbach’s (born 1981) work *Untitled (Fold)* from 2010 has been sold for US$ 1,025 million at Christie’s in New York in November 2013, while Jacob Kassay’s (born 1984) monochrome works jumped from US$ 24,000 in 2011 to US$ 290,000 in October 2012. The public attention for Lucian Smith (born 1989) aroused when his work *Hobbes, The Rain Man, and My Friend Barney / Under the Sycamore Tree* (2011) was sold during the Phillips auction in New York in November 2013 for US$ 398,000, while he made the work as a student at the Cooper Union.

The example of Smith demonstrates that even graduation works can be auctioned for a great sum at an international auction house shortly after they were made. Artist Chuck Close (born 1940) considers it unthinkable for his generation that someone would start showing and selling art whilst still a student or shortly after, since many years are needed to develop a mature vision or a personal style. The opposite seems to be the case in the last years: being young does not hinder a quick price growth, and it does not keep young artists from joining serious galleries and enjoying popularity among collectors.

Collectors name various reasons for their interest in young artists. The collectors Hort, who buy works of many young artists, motivated their choice by their wish to support an artist in an early stage of his or her career, as, especially, in that stage they think they can make a difference:

623 Interview, New York, 10 May 2013.
One of the things that is important to us, is that, when we support an artist, we love an artist, we want to get the best art we can, at the best price we can. And we deal with young artists, living artists.

Young artists offer collectors the chance to be closely involved in their development, from the very beginning of their careers. It is a dynamic environment, where high risks can offer high gains. Michael Hort stressed the hazard of buying works of young artists, since their oeuvre has yet to be made:

A part of what happens is, that the artist’s next show isn’t as good as the show before. Or he moves, or he gets married, or whatever, you know. These are living people. And the other thing I want to clarify is this: if you buy art for a million dollars, you’re more likely that there will be some value some day, right. We’re buying young art. That’s important. We’re buying emerging art. We’re buying art that is for show. So you have, you don’t have museums behind them or anything like that.

By buying works of young artists collectors can claim more involvement as supporters, because they are taking more risks than collectors who buy work of established artists who are already being taken care of by galleries and museums. As the development of an artistic career is impossible to predict, buying works of young artists and making their growth possible can be seen as an act of support and encouragement to artists, with the risk that the career will never develop. This brings collectors social capital and, if the artist develops well, the confirmation of a sensitivity for art and its understanding. The notion that one is “taking a risk” when buying young artists also discloses the ideology of collecting, as it implies that a work is only good if the artist achieves his significance in the art history and the art market. Consequently, collecting is not seen as buying nice pictures but as participating in the relevant artistic movements of one’s time.

Collectors who buy works to speculate with them seem to have a different motivation for buying young artists. The risk element is involved here, too, but, seen from a financial point of view, the risk of a lack of development is counterbalanced by the low price of the works and the promise of gains in the future. Fernando Lopez commented on buying hyped young artists, which he observes around him:

It's part of the game. Everybody wants to secure the new Basquiat. I don't have those kinds of artists, because I'm always afraid. If I like the artist, then yes I will buy it, but I don’t want to follow that trend because everybody's buying these artists. “You have to buy it,” “you have to buy it,” and you go and see the work and you don't like it. You're just buying it because you know he's going to be big in 3 years or it’s going to cost four times more. I feel in a way like a prostitute, it’s a personal feeling. I respect that everybody's going to fight for these works, that's fine too and it happens all the time.

Lopez described how a hype works. It starts with rumors that there is an artist you have to buy. Collectors speak with each other during a fair or an event, there might be inside information about an upcoming important exhibition or a purchase by an

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624 Interview, New York, 14 May 2013.
625 Idem.
626 Interview, New York, 12 May 2013.
important collector with a private museum. At a certain point, an artist can be talked about by collectors, curators and gallerists. Then, collectors buy because they are convinced that the artistic and financial value of the artist will keep growing over a period of a few years. Active collectors with broad networks, including gallery owners, other collectors, artists and advisors, are often informed which artist should now be bought. Lopez stressed that he would not buy such an artist if he does not like him and that he prefers to discover artists himself:

I try to follow what I like. When I go to fairs and I see something which I like, while I don't even know the artist, I like that. I'm happy that the artist is becoming very famous. I believe it's more fun when you do spontaneously then when you are predetermined to buy something or to see something.627

Lopez enjoys his personal discoveries made only on the basis of his decision and takes a distance from following trends just for the eventual financial profit and collective expectations. Still, also for him, the enjoyment increases when a young artist whom he discovered becomes famous.

Collectors say that they object to high prices because they can break artists’ careers. Zöe and Joel Dictrow mentioned that too high a price in an early stage forms a threat for the future:

It’s very hard for an artist in their 20s to keep their head on straight. An artist who is 28 and swept up in this is thinking, “Hey, I’m 28, and I hope I’ll be getting better and better. But why is my work at this huge price? Does it make any sense?” What makes sense is to hold on to your money, kid. I mean, I feel that when an artist is young the work shouldn’t be that expensive, because they can really make a lot of work and have a high energy level. Yes, they should make a really good living out of that, but they shouldn’t blow out their prices if they want to have a long career.628

The Dictrows commented on high prices of the artists from the perspective of the artists. A high price at the beginning of a career can spoil the idea of further development, especially as there is not always an explanation for it when an artist is young and has not yet achieved a substantial long-term position in the art world. The argument that a young age does not go with high prices has been rejected by Simchowitz and his clients:

Would you say to a runner who just finished a marathon in three hours: “you shouldn’t have done it because you would never ever run faster?” Prices go up and down, who cares?629

The comparison of an artist to a marathon runner who breaks records visualizes—perhaps coincidentally—the speed that characterizes the quick emergence of new artists who become trends. An American collector commented on the current demand for young artists, and pointed at its pyramid scheme:

627 Interview, New York, 12 May 2013.
628 Goldstein 2014b.
629 Frenzel 2014.
It’s a bit like the burning match theory where you don’t want to be the last one holding the match.630

The collector suggested that each buyer who hands over a work to a newcomer adds a margin that makes the work increasingly expensive, until, finally, the interest vanishes. The last owner “burns his fingers” by losing all the money he paid for the work. It is unpredictable who is the last one holding the match.

Thomas Olbricht analyzed the emergence of hypes of young artists within the context of the current shifts in the contemporary art market:

I think that today some artists try exact the opposite, consciously or not consciously, to reach the whole world with their art. It goes through emblems, through symbols, which are known. This plays a real important role. Then come the auction houses, which obviously have their own art cosmos, I would say 150 to 200 artists. You can keep track of them, they are available, they come to auctions. I would estimate after what I have read that there are the numbers has been increasing, about three to four thousand collectors in the world—whether they are the real collectors, collectors-investor or investors is open—who spend more than one million or two on art. They want of course all these names, because they firstly don’t know any others and because they hope that if something is so expensive it will become only more expensive. However, these 100 or 200 artists cannot serve this market, they cannot paint that much. Therefore the prices increase even more. At one moment not all have so much money to pay but the art hunger is there so there is a need for new artists, to breed new ones perhaps. And then the 10,000, 20,000, 50,000 cost. Most of them fail and the other who raise will raise only more. This is the way how it goes.631

Olbricht connected the emergence of the current hypes to the global expansion of the art world and the influx of new wealthy buyers, who have been mostly investment-driven. For him, the emergence of young expensive artists are a result of the tightness of the numbers of blue-chip artists whose works are traded at auctions, which, in turn, creates young artists who can be considered as an interesting investment for those collectors.

In order to ascertain how great the collectors demand is for very young artists, analysis was made of their presence in the galleries participating in the Art Basel fairs in the period between 2001 and 2013. In this period, the total number of artists has increased from to 3080 in 2001 to 4240 in 2013, which means an increase of 37% (Table VIII), while the number of the galleries doubled from around 150 in 2001 to 300 in 2013. The names of the artists were listed in the yearly catalogues so the year of birth of each artist could be found and classified. The catalogues mention the names of all artists whom the participating galleries represent, and not only the ones who have been exhibited at the fair.

630 Conversation, June 2014.
The age limitation for the category of very young artists was 32. This distinction is related to the exhibition *The Generational: Younger than Jesus*, which was organized in 2009 in the New Museum in New York. It showed works by artists who were younger than 33, many of whom had already been working with galleries and institutions. The data from the Art Basel fairs showed that, while, in 2001, 7% of the total of artists were younger than 33, the number of the young artists gradually decreased to 5% in 2013, with the exception of 2009.

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632 The art critic Holland Cotter mentioned: “So it’s no surprise to find that, even with the introduction of some new names, ‘Younger Than Jesus’ feels familiar, like a more-substantial-than- average version of a weekend gallery hop in Chelsea and the Lower East Side, right down to the token Asian and African imports.” Cotter: 2009.
TABLE XIV

ART BASEL FAIR: NUMBER OF ARTISTS IN TWO AGE CATEGORIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Younger than 33</th>
<th>Older than 64</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The decreasing number is surprising as it shows that young artists function in the margin of the galleries participating in the Art Basel fair, which contradicts the idea advocated in media reports. The fair catalogues mentioned all artists represented by the participating galleries, not only the ones showed at the fair, so a possible argument of choosing only the most established artists for the fair is not valid. Instead, it should be concluded that the galleries that were considered the best in the world have not worked with the very young artists extensively, and consider them as a marginal group. The year 2009, when the Western economy was hit by economic crisis, shows an exception in comparison with the general downward trend. This could be seen as the moment at which some galleries thought about changing their strategies and attracting more young artists. This situation seems to be corrected after it became clear that the top market segment had not suffered a lot and did not need a change. This number shows that the alleged hype of young artists is not reflected in the programs of the established galleries, where the young artists account for visible but small numbers. The percentage of young artists indicates a “speculation” margin: artists who are or could possibly be interesting as speculation material with regards to their artistic and market development either in the present or in the future.

The next step was, therefore, an investigation of the position of young artists in the auction market. At first, an analysis was made of the numbers of young works that were sold in a leading auction house between 2001 and 2013. “Young” were those works that were sold at auction at a maximum of three years after their creation date. The choice was made to analyze the sales at Christie’s Day Post-War and Contemporary auctions in New York and London, because Christie’s is one of the two chief auction houses in the world and has dominated the market in the new millennium. The data originate are day sessions, since those sessions offer works of artists at different stages in their career, in contrast to the evening sessions, which overwhelmingly show the already consecrated artists. As of 2002, day sessions in New York have been divided in morning and afternoon sessions, which are both included in the investigation.

The data demonstrated, in the first place, that the total number of works sold at these auctions per year has been increasing: from 418 in 2001 to 788 in 2013 in New York and from 229 in 2001 to 389 in 2013 in London. In both cases, in the years 2006
and 2007, the total number of works drastically increased in comparison to previous years and, in both cases, the years 2008 and 2009 showed a decline. In New York, Christie’s sales topped in the years 2012 and 2013 (Table X). The analyses show that the number of the young works varies per year and per selling place. The total number of works sold in London is much smaller but the percentage of young works is much higher than in New York. Tables XV and XVI present the number of works and the percentage that those young works made up as part of the total number of lots sold at auctions in London and New York.

TABLE XV

SALES OF YOUNG WORKS AT CHRISTIE’S AUCTIONS IN LONDON AND NEW YORK AS NUMBERS OF TOTAL SOLD WORKS
These numbers demonstrate that young works in New York formed a small percentage that has varied between 2 and 6.9% of the total lots sold. The numbers of young works in 2008 and 2009 were the highest, which may suggest that, in the time of uncertainty, buyers were more inclined to sell the recently acquired works and keep the older ones as a security, and that the auction houses accepted and sold younger works.

A slightly different picture gives the results from London: the numbers of younger works are significantly higher but they show large fluctuations. The highest number of young works in 2008 was 16.5%, which declined in the following years, but showed a clear increase in 2012 and 2013, in which the percentages being respectively 14 and 14.8%.

The figures reflect the different market positions of New York and London. New York has been the most important trading place for the North-Western collectors who attract the most attention and generate the most sales, more than in London. The high pressure on New York sales could explain the smaller number of younger works sold there since the attention of collectors and sales opportunities force Christie’s to select for New York the works that are most sought after and that can achieve the highest value. According to Christie’s specialist Darren Leak, an auction house will try to put a maximum five hundreds works up for an auction. Taking this into account, the selection will be made very carefully and the auction house will reserve the potentially most expensive works to New York in the first place.\textsuperscript{633}

According to Leak, London also tends to develop as a more investigational place that involves experimental clients who permanently want to see new works and can appreciate hypes. Christie’s in London uses different locations for different purposes; the auctions in South Kensington have been instrumental in order to check the interest in an artist.\textsuperscript{634}

\textsuperscript{633} Interview, London, 10 January 2014.
\textsuperscript{634} Idem.
The results relate to some degree to market hypes and speculations since “good” collectors are supposed to keep works and not to cash the profit coming from an increase in price, at least not at auction. The sellers who chose to realize the profit gain were, therefore, not exactly following the unwritten rules of the art world, but were following the usual rules of the market instead. As Christie’s will only accept works for auction that have an assured market value, the young works by established and by young artists represent, to a large extent, what is in vogue at the given moment.

The next step in the investigation was to prove how large the group of very young artists is within the category of young works. The analyses demonstrate that their numbers have been very limited but also that it has varied significantly. As part of the total sales, the number of works by young artists was hardly perceptible, but, as a percentage of the young works, their numbers were especially noticeable between 2005 and 2008 and as of 2012, which are considered the booming years of the auction market. Although the time span is too short to speak about trends, it is striking that the percentage of young artists as part of the total young works has increased considerably in New York as of 2012 (Table XVII and XVIII).

TABLE XVII

SALES OF YOUNG WORKS AT CHRISTIE’S AUCTIONS BETWEEN 2001 AND 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Nth lots</th>
<th>Nth May and June three years old and younger</th>
<th>young works as % of Nth lots</th>
<th>Works by artists younger than 33 as % of total young works</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>11.70% 6 + 22.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>11% 0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.50% 0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5.00% 0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.20% 2 + 4.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>401</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>7% 4 + 18.5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>548</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>11.50% 2 + 8.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>333</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>16.50% 7 + 3.6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>247</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>6.50% 1 + 4.8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>337</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>11% 1 + 2.8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>341</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>6.50% 0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>357</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>13.7% 3 + 6.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>398</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>14.80% 4 + 6.8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Christie’s London 2001-2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Nth lots</th>
<th>Nth May and June three years old and younger</th>
<th>% of Nth lots</th>
<th>Works by artists younger than 33 as % of total young works</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>418</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2.60% 3 + 10%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>394</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>9% 0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>382</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4.70% 0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>8.50% 0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>577</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3.50% 1 + 5.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>693</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>5% 3 + 5.5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>649</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>2.70% 4 + 20.5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>485</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>6.20% 5 + 16.7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>524</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>6.80% 0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>659</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>6% 0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>617</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2.90% 1 + 3.1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>733</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3% 1 + 6.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>788</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>4.21 11 + 33.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Christie's NY (conference, NY Park Avenue, NY Rockefeller Plaza)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Nth lots</th>
<th>% of Nth lots</th>
<th>Works by artists younger than 33 as % of total young works</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>418</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2.60% 3 + 10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2002</td>
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<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>382</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4.70% 0</td>
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<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>8.50% 0</td>
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<td>2005</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>3.50% 1 + 5.9%</td>
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<td>2006</td>
<td>693</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>5% 3 + 5.5%</td>
</tr>
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<td>2007</td>
<td>649</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>2.70% 4 + 20.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
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<td>2009</td>
<td>524</td>
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<td>2010</td>
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<td>2011</td>
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<td>788</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>4.21 11 + 33.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Selling young works, and especially works by young artists, at auction is more problematic than selling older works, because some actors condemn such practices from the moral point of view of the art system. Darren Leak stated that, for this reason, the auction houses try to avoid selling works by young artists. Ideally, they want to sell works that are five years old and older, or, at least, refrain from selling works made in the same year or the year before. However, if the market situation and collectors’ interests force them to respond, when, for instance, an artist is very much in demand, they will decide to put very young works at auctions because they want to serve that demand.\textsuperscript{635} This remark implies that the number of sold works demonstrates a solid but limited demand for these artists, as the auction house will not experiment with artists that could eventually damage their reputation if they cannot be sure of a demand for them.

Together, the figures from the Art Basel fair and from the Christie’s day sales show that young artists form a small category among the artists represented by the gate keeping galleries and also a small and variable percentage at the international auctions of leading auction houses. The limited number at auctions could be due to the moral pressure of the art system and the generally lower prices of young artworks in comparison to the established artists. Young artists are not very suitable for big auctions, with exception of several artists who are fashionable at a given moment. The small representation of young artists in the established galleries demonstrates that those galleries who serve collectors consider this group as marginal and did not massively shift to young artists. The efforts that the development of artistic potential requires are high, while the artistic and financial potential is uncertain. The reputation of these galleries, which is partially built on creating cultural values, does not allow them to follow alleged market trends. By including young artists who are associated with the art market, they will risk losing their cultural and social capital among institutional players who are important in order to establish artistic careers.

\textsuperscript{635} Interview, London, 10 January 2014.
A different situation applies to young galleries in various parts of the world. They start, time and again, with showing and placing young artists among collectors, which implies that there is a demand for certain young artists and that some collectors are interested in taking part in this small niche. Many of them participate in satellite fairs such as NADA in Miami or Sundays in London. Collectors who are interested in young artists visit such fairs, contact galleries, use art advisors and dealers who follow young artists. The idea of low investment with a potential of huge gains fascinates collectors, especially since the media reports insinuate that the profit possibility is huge.

The visibility of the phenomenon of young artists is partially caused by media attention to the high prices that works of some artists have achieved. The theoretical framework of media-hypes proposed by Peter Vasterman offers insights to understand the overwhelming presence of young artists. A hype means a disproportional coverage in relation to a relevance, whereby news seems to develop a life of its own, responding mainly to media themselves using amplification and magnification strategies. In case of young artists, the auction results function as key events that provoke response, since they can be framed into a bigger subject such as the relationship between money and art. What hype needs is an interaction between media and social actors, whereby the responses are reported as news.

In case of young artists, there has been indignation from the institutional actors who, operating from the concept of Hostile Worlds, condemn high prices of artists without serious traces of artistic careers in the institutions. The emergence of young artists who have not yet proved their artistic potential within the institutional framework is judged and much talked about among different actors in the art field. They arouse negative connotations from the perspective of the moral system of the art world, where efforts need to be made to build an artistic career, and it challenges, indirectly, the critical legitimacy of institutions. The general negative feeling is fuelled by the presumed connection to new wealthy collectors, who, allegedly, buy works to spend money but do not understand art.

Many articles, opinions and comments were published about the auctions results of Oscar Murillo and young artists in the art market. The high degree of uniformity in the news that has reported on this alleged phenomenon, possibly led to a self-fulfilling prophecy. The self-fulfilling prophecy made artists imitate artistic approaches that were reported as in vogue. There has been a surge of abstract paintings that became visible on numerous websites of artists and in galleries after the

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636 Galleries that represent young artists are, among others, Future Gallery, Societe, Kraupa-Tuskany Zeidler in Berlin, Jonathan Viner, Seventeen, Rod Barton, Elis King in London, Thomas Duncan, Night Gallery, Young Art in Los Angeles, Zach Feuer, P! and Tomorrow in New York.


639 Art history professor Ulli Seegers: “When I see what at this moment in the art market achieve high prices, I state that this is not art that is critical or subversive, that stimulate a new thinking but an art that is more affirmative with a certain high polish aesthetic and easy to swallow.” Curator Kasper König: “It is difficult for me to speak about quality. It is possible that an young artists with many ideas starts perhaps a production which not necessarily fulfills high quality requirements but expresses somehow interesting and crispy ideas.” Breuer 2014.

640 Saatchi 2011; Gleadell 2012; Reimers 2012; Burns, Gerlis, Michalska 2013.

641 Cotter 2009; Douglas 2010; Gimein 2013; Adam 2014; Boucher 2014; Gleadwell 2014; Milliard 2014a; Franco 2014; Vogel 2014; Kazakina 2014; Lane 2014.

success of abstraction at auctions. Some artists, thinking that being a young painter is an advantage in the art market, seek art consultants, offering themselves as the best investment. The abstraction surge, genuine interest from some collectors and the disproportional media attention that amplified artistic imitation again made new collectors, gallerists and art consultants become involved in works of young artists. In 2014, the MoMA in New York organized an exhibition about the new painting, including works by Oscar Murillo. It indicates that institutional actors with a high reputation responded to the phenomenon as well, which, again, stimulates an interest from new collectors.

Miraculous resurrections

Another category that could constitute materials for a right discovery among collectors are older artists. As criterion for the analysis the age of 65 and older has been chosen, since it is the traditional age of retirement in Western countries. An investigation of this age category on the basis of artists’ representation in galleries in the Art Basel fair between 2001 and 2013 shows that the number of artists of that age category has steadily grown: from 9% in 2004 up to 14.2% in 2013 (TABLE IX). These numbers demonstrate that the older artists have increasingly been given attention by galleries and collectors.

Artists from this category have been working on an oeuvre and artistic ideology for a long time, but many of them do not have notable international recognition or have been forgotten. This situation offers the possibility to put their works in a new art historical light and in connection with new trends or international developments. The advantage is that the persona of the artist can still be a part of the marketing strategy to the public and, secondly, that the new works can be added to the existing historical oeuvre. Lesser-known artists can be related to famous artists from certain historical periods or young popular artists, whereby, at the same time, they can be presented as discoveries, with the accompanying excitement.

Collectors notice the potential of such artists from artistic and financial perspectives. For the American collector Peter Brant, finding good artists who are experiencing a period of unpopularity is a good opportunity to buy:

You have to zero in on the artists that you really think that can make major contributions to art history and, if you can, just continue to collect them and go with what you really believe and feel, not what an art dealer or an auction house tells you. I think it's really important to focus in on the artists that you are confident about—you're not going to hit every one of them, but you're going to put yourself in a position where you are collecting quality. You need a huge amount of money to collect an artist in depth who's the most popular guy of his time, of course. But there are a lot of artists who go through periods where they're really popular and everyone wants to buy their work, and then they overproduce and their work becomes less attractive in the market and

644 Artists sometimes promote themselves as good investments in emails sent to art advisors and collectors.
their prices take a decline—and that is a good opportunity to buy. There are a lot of great artists who are around today whose prices are not that high and who are really important artists.\footnote{Goldstein 2014c.}

Brant sees market opportunities in buying works of artists who are not in demand and who are temporarily outside the market attention. A smart collector can see the quality of an artist even if the market judges differently. Brant suggests that collectors with knowledge and perseverance can create a winning position.

The long-term collector Laura Skoler does not relate her discoveries to the hypes of the market:

I don’t take the market into account because I really cannot afford what the market is presenting now. For me, a discovery of a younger artist, when I say younger let’s say unknown, I just bought a 62 year old artist, is exciting and adventurous. I feel like it’s rewarding for me, personally… I think everything gets revived, and has life again. So it’s interesting that artists that I bought are becoming like more popular again… I do feel that the young artists market has gotten out of hand. I think to buy a first piece by an artist for 10 or 20 thousand dollars is a lot of money. I don’t think average people can support that. But there are people who buy it, so the market makes the market.\footnote{Interview, New York, 9 May 2013.}

According to Skoler, young artists who are discovered by the market quickly become too expensive. Older unknown artists form an alternative for discoveries, because, for young artists, whom she mentioned as a category, prices tend to increase too quickly. This development is one of the factors that push collectors into other categories of potentially interesting not-yet-discovered artists. The other element that Skoler considers as important to her is her personal journey of finding what matters to her.

Collector Axel Houbrok described his passion for discovery of interesting artists of various categories, who have been neglected by the art market:

I’m trying to collect not so very well-known artists. This has changed through the years. In my opinion there are many, many artists, who are very good, but they are not so hyped, and are not being seen by the market, as they actually deserve. The same can also happen with established artists. It does not necessarily apply only to young artists. I see myself a bit as a discoverer. I believe, everybody wants it. Which means I don’t walk behind someone and say: he has this, he has this and he has this, so I also want this. Instead I’m trying to act a bit like a truffle pig. You don’t need to discover only the young unknown artists. You can also discover from well-known artists, of relative known artist say: my god, he has been always seen wrongly.\footnote{Interview, 12 February 2010. Project Collectingnow.de.}

Searching for these artists, motivated by of the lack of attention from the market and the wish for personal discovery, could explain the increasing interest in older artists from collectors and their increasing numbers in the important galleries. The recent “discovery” of artist Phyllida Barlow makes up an interesting case to analyze a few market processes.
The British Barlow was engaged in redefining the medium of sculpture since the 1960s. She graduated in 1966 from the Slade School of Fine Arts in London and, since she could not earn a living from her artistic work, she worked as a teacher at art institutions and continued her free work after hours. She was raising her five children and, according to the artist herself, she had so little money that she was forced to recycle the materials she used for her works, so there is hardly any sculptural work by her from the period before 2010. Her works often interact with the space; they look raw, not finished, or quickly made (which is true in case of smaller works), as if the traces of the creative process are still palpable. Barlow has always used cheap materials such as packing materials, cement, plaster, textiles, polystyrene and paint. After 2008, when she retired, she could dedicate herself fully to her work.

During her teaching period at Slade, she strongly influenced many of her pupils, some of whom have become internationally well-known artists, such as Douglas Gordon (born 1966) or Eva Rothschild (born 1972). Those artists were quickly noticed by collectors and art institutions, while she herself remained outside of both. She explained the lack of interest in her work in the 80s and 90s through the aesthetic fashion for sculpture that mimics the commercial glamour objects, as seen in the work by Jeff Koons or Young British Artists. Barlow has conversely made anti-glamour objects. Her breakthrough came in 2010: the gallery Silberkuppe from Berlin showed her works during Art Cologne, the art space Studio Voltai re in London organized a solo show with her and she has been invited for cooperation by the German artist Nairy Baghramian (born 1971), who offered her the possibility to make a joint exhibition in the Serpentine Gallery in London. Baghramian, who works with the medium sculpture herself, wanted to engage with Barlow’s rough and spatial approach and make the hardly noticed artist visible.

In the summer of 2010, the gallery Hauser & Wirth included Barlow in their list of artists, and, from that moment onward, at the age of 66, her career accelerated. All of a sudden, the artist was invited to produce solo exhibitions such as Phyllida Barlow: Bad Copies at the Henry Moore Foundation in Leeds (2011); Brink at the Ludwig Forum für Internationale Kunst, Aachen, Germany (an exhibition that was related to the Kunstpreis Aachen 2012 that was awarded to the artist) and Siege at the New Museum in New York (2012).

In 2012, Barlow participated in the Kiev Biennale and the exhibition Before the Law, organized by the well-known curator and museum director Kasper König at the Ludwig Museum in Cologne. The museum has acquired a few works by Barlow from the museum collection. Hauser & Wirth presented a gigantic installation by her at Art Unlimited in Basel 2012, and curator Maximiliano Gioni included her works in the Venice Biennale 2013. In January 2014, Barlow received the yearly Tate Britain Commission, a highly appreciated commission from the museum that invites the chosen artist to engage with the collection. Barlow put a gigantic installation in the main museum halls that confronted every visitor with her overwhelming, colorful spatial constructions. The gallery show at Hauser & Wirth in 2011 in London seemed to be very successful; collectors heard from each other during

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649 Barlow in conversation with the author, 2010.
650 Nairy Baghramian and Phyllida Barlow, 8 May – 13 June 2010.
651 The introductory text for Barlow’s show at the New Museum in New York in May – July 2012 presented her as follows: “The emergence of her work in the early 70s marked a radical break with British sculptural tradition and since then Barlow has exerted a tremendous influence on British art through both her realized projects as well as her long teaching career in London art schools.” Carrion-Murayari 2012: 2.
the Frieze fair in London, which coincided with the exhibition, that the show was sold out within 24 hours. The gallery prices have increased four times in two years, although the prices still remain modest.

As of 2010, a radical shift occurred in the institutional and market attitude toward Barlow, who, despite having been active for forty years as an artist and teacher, was largely ignored until then. This shift was partially caused by the fact that she was taken up by one of the leading galleries in the world, which had an extensive network among collectors and institutions. Consequently, the question should not be why this radical change in visibility occurred, but why Hauser & Wirth chose her at the age of 66, as the quality of her work had been visible for years already.

The explanation should be sought in the broadening landscape of collectors. As the number of collectors expands, there is a necessity to present new artists who could be of interest because of their artistic quality and their personal curriculum vitae. With the influx of new collectors, leading galleries such as Hauser & Wirth or David Zwirner need to enlarge their program with new artists in order to serve their clients. Barlow, who built up her autonomous oeuvre and was part of the post-war artistic scene in the United Kingdom, was an artist whose art could be presented as a discovery and, at the same time, as a high-quality safe buy. Her oeuvre reflects various phases of the art history of the second half of the 20th century, including the formalistic break in sculpture.

There is a special aura surrounding Barlow’s art since her early works simply do not exist any longer, or only as traces of material in her other works in which they have been reincarnated. The aura of the fragility of existence of her works could be combined with the personal myth of the woman artist who, against all odds, has continued to make art and believe in her work. Her enormous creativity and ability to make art out of the most basic of materials demonstrated her talent and vision as an artist. Her previous lack of commercial success make her a non-conformist, an artist pur sang who finally managed to gain visibility without making compromises.

The other important reason for putting the artist into attention is her formal language and attitude that could be linked with the “cool” urban attitude and the international, abstract visual language of young artists. This urban language and the rough materiality of the works have now found a formal connection with the anti-glamour works of the younger generation of the likes of Murillo. Barlow’s works have a branding quality as they are immediately recognized as hers. What is possibly of importance as well is that Barlow is able to make large-scale installations, which are suitable for museum spaces and art events and generate a big visibility of the artist.
Conclusion

Collectors are permanently in search of new artists who will fulfill their expectations of artistic creativity, produce high-quality works and, preferably, gain importance in the history of art. At the same time, they seek artists whose works promise a growth not only in terms of artistic value but also in price; depending on collectors, short or long term. Such artists can be found in all age groups; however, the categories of young artists and artists over the age of retirement offer the best opportunity to analyze collectors’ preferences. As these artists have either been too briefly present in the art world to develop a curriculum or were too long neglected, a sudden collective interest in them provides general clues for collectors’ discoveries.

The idea that collectors massively switch their attention to young artists has been proved wrong and partially media driven. Collectors buy, and some of them speculate with, works of young artists but this has been, so far, a marginal albeit very visible phenomenon. The analyses of the careers of Oscar Murillo and Phyllida Barlow unveiled certain comparable mechanisms that govern collectors’ interest. An artistic talent is often not sufficient to be noticed. What turned out to be of greater significance for collectors is the support for artists from the gatekeepers of the art world: galleries with high reputation, big auction houses and celebrated artistic institutions. Whereby an auction result can boost collectors’ interest and draw attention to an artist, galleries form the most important factor in judging artist’s potential, because a gallery promises the continuity of an artistic career not only in the art market but also in institutional circuits. Each of the gatekeepers offers visibility to an artist, which, as demonstrated, is highly appreciated by collectors in the current art world. The combination of these elements together promise to collectors a value increase from the cultural and financial point of view.

Personal and emotional narratives furthermore appeal to collectors’ imagination, as they help constructing the artistic identity of the given artist. The examples showed that multi-cultural and feminist interpretations related to the personal lives of artists added to their desirability. They create emotions through which collectors can identify with the personal or social standpoints represented by the artist.
Conclusions

Collectors of contemporary art, who are the main subject of this research, have demonstrated a variety of approaches toward collecting, as well as diverse opinions on art. Yet, they have also shown certain similarities in their behavior and taste, both of which were informed by a combination of economic, social and artistic factors that manifested around the end of the 20th century. The similarities formed the material for searching general mechanisms that govern collectors’ modi operandi in the current art world and to analyze these practices as a social phenomenon.

This research responded to a need for structured analysis on collectors’ positions and behavior since, despite a surge of literature on collecting as from the beginning of the new millennium, a systematic study on collectors of contemporary art was lacking. While studying several aspects of current collecting practices, the research placed cosmopolitan collectors in relation to the existing tradition of collecting, and this research in the tradition of the literature on collecting.

Although the theory of Pierre Bourdieu formed a guideline for the study, distinction processes among art collectors do not evolve only around taste itself but around collectors’ activities: the manner in which they acquire and sell art, the presentation of their collections, their motivations for selling and their attitude toward the moral codes of the art market. Collectors’ behavior has been further analyzed from the perspectives defined by the concepts of the art world, art field and art market.

The artistic and art-ideological transformations that took place at the end of the 20th century were important in paving the way for cosmopolitan collecting. Visually striking, conceptually compelling and intellectually accessible art works were capturing the attention of the audience and collectors. The idea of the artist as a poor outsider and an avant-garde threat to the existing social order has lost its validity. Artworks have been left open to various interpretations without heavily relying on delineated art theoretical discourses. The lack of a dominance of particular art theories and art historical readings added to the heterogeneous character of art that was absorbing multi-media approaches, cross-disciplinary attitudes and awareness of various social politics. In the diversity of opinions, the viewer has gained more conceptual recognition in the creation of meaning of artworks. Contemporary art has been expanding its geographical, social and conceptual limits, which has contributed to creating accessibility of art and artists to collectors.

Processes of globalization make up another noticeable element in the art field at the end of the 20th century. Despite the multi-culturally accessible language of art, the possibilities provided by the worldwide reaching Internet and the dissemination of international artists, the global spreading of the idea of collecting remains limited. Research has proven that, so far, the North-Westerners enjoy leading positions among collectors, just as it has shown that the contemporary art field is still dominated by a North-Western network of galleries, artists and museums. The main reason for this dominance is the concentration of wealth in North America and Western Europe and the large numbers of High Net Worth Individuals, who tend to spend part of their financial means on art. To the advantage of the North-Western collectors is also the existing continuous collecting tradition and the presence of strong networks of galleries, public museums and other institutions. These networks, which are also stimulated by various fiscal benefits in given countries, have functioned as mutually reinforcing systems that empower their participants. North-Western collectors tend to work with North-Western artists and their galleries, and they participate in the North-Western network of public and private institutions. Consequently, the current
structure of dominance could be subject to change if the wealth growth and development of private and public institutions in other parts of the world continues.

In the new millennium, collectors have shifted their interest to contemporary art, which has become the most popular collectible category of art. To some extent, it owes its popularity to the restraints and practical problems of collecting high-quality art from other historical periods. Of art historically recognized works, the supply is seen as limited and prices as high. Forgeries, high maintenance costs and possible legal issues, which have been appearing time and again, are among the disadvantages of collecting non-contemporary art. The expensiveness and limited supply could be applied to certain contemporary artworks as well; what sets the category of contemporary art apart from the art of other periods is the possibility to discover artists at the beginning of their careers and to grow with them, that is, if the discovery proves itself right from an art historical perspective as well as from an art market perspective.

For the best part, however, it is the aura of the social world of contemporary art that has created a widespread interest for it among collectors. The cross-pollination of celebrity culture, fashion and glamour has given contemporary art in general, and art events in particular, a promise of enjoyment, excitement and a charm of exclusivity. The supposedly universal language of art offers collectors all kinds of opportunities to engage with each other, while their leisure time can be structured around art’s international social calendar. The art world promises social miracles that have been sparked by well-known myths, and have been proven by personal stories of its participants. At the same time, there is a link to the big capital that the wealthy collectors represent. International art events are, therefore, places par excellence for collectors to flaunt their economic, social and cultural capital in order to distinguish themselves from the outside world and between themselves. Collectors can also gain cultural and social capital by becoming involved in an artist’s career, which enables them to participate in the production of their own culture. The huge attraction of today’s social world of contemporary art is a result of joint efforts of many various actors who, together, have created an event culture that continuously stimulates the influx of new participants.

For many collectors, conspicuous consumption goes hand in hand with a silent investment. The social life of contemporary art would not have been so captivating if artworks did not have the ability to function as an investment asset and as the subject of speculation. The work of art as a financial asset has been always problematic because of its double and complex identity, namely that of the symbolic and unique object on the one hand, and that of a commercial product on the other. However, these qualities do not hinder, and sometimes they even encourage, private collectors to consider artworks as interesting financial instruments and objects of speculation. Analysis demonstrated that collectors consider art, and especially artworks by blue chip artists, as possible investment assets. As for speculation: although experienced collectors stress that nobody knows who will be the next Warhol, stimulated by prospects of eventual cultural and/or financial gains, many collectors want to believe that they will find him.

Collectors expressed various attitudes toward art as a financial asset and used these attitudes as a distinction mark among themselves. Some treat art as an object of value that should not lose its worth, others speculate on quick financial gain, some deny having this interest altogether. The art field, possibly, reflects processes that were manifest in the field of economy in the last decades. The lack of long-term commitment and the focus on short-term gains, which were called the main
characteristics of the new economy model, could be one of the reasons for collectors’ increasing interest in art as investment and speculation. Collectors realizing quick financial gains have been called flippers; they often see themselves as passionate collectors but ones who quickly replace a passion for one artist with another. While flipping seems to be a limited phenomenon, the interest in and the enjoyment of the value increase of art works has become a common feature of collecting.

Collectors use the international distribution networks of galleries and auction houses to acquire and sell works, and to build their collections. As both networks require different rules of engagement, collectors have been maneuvering their ways in order to obtain the required works and information, using different approaches and strategies depending on the network and on a given situation. The large majority of collectors have acknowledged their dependence on galleries in order to gain first hand access to desired works and information, and for that reason avoid criticism of galleries in favor of declarations of loyalty and trust. The access to works appeared to be of crucial importance to collectors, for it enables, to a large extent, the gaining of social and economic capital. Galleries’ involvement implies, furthermore, a continuation of artistic careers, which again has consequences for their cultural and financial value.

The galleries, on their part depend, on collectors’ acquisitions, as well as on the visibility that collectors can offer artists through presentations of their collections and collaborations with public museums. International art fairs have become vital to reaching both new and current collectors. Despite some criticism of the commercial aspect of such art events, which suggest that art fairs do not offer the proper cultural conditions to engage with art, most collectors visit several international fairs a year and consider them their main source of information and acquisitions. Fairs offer a quick and compact overview of works from international galleries, without the policy of obstructing the visibility of prices that characterizes the exhibition space.

Collectors are not equal from the galleries’ perspective, as each one of them treats collectors differently depending on the social, cultural and economic capital they represent. Collectors with greater prestige, visibility or financial means use the inequality in treatment as a positive distinction mark toward other collectors who have less to offer to galleries. Although most collectors have chosen not to jeopardize their relationship by criticism, some critical voices were directed against galleries’ powerful gate keeping positions, their exclusion strategies and their allegedly outmoded ideology, which attempts to hide financial interests. Especially the moral two-facedness of culture and commerce has been a subject of recurring disapproval. Despite this discontent, collectors consider the existing gallery system as strong and powerful, whereas the Internet and new media, so far, have not changed the fundamentals of gallery work but, instead, add to the existing operation modes.

Apart from galleries, auction houses form the other essential distribution network for collectors. Auction houses claim to offer transparent acting procedures, which are governed by demand, supply and competitive bidding. What makes auction houses attractive to collectors is the uncomplicated access to works, which is regulated by financial means only. This forms a significant contrast with the access to works in galleries, which is constrained by other factors such as the status and reputation of a collector and his relationship with the gallery. Collectors use auction houses for selling and buying, although public selling, especially of young works, can have negative consequences for the reputation of the collector in the primary market.

Auction houses attempt to hide their predominantly commercial goals and engage in activities that are aimed at securing more cultural authority. They involve well-known institutional actors and established long-term collectors for publicity, attempt to enhance the status of specific auctions by stressing their art historical importance and create an aura of an auction as an art historical valorization place.

Collectors thus operate in an art world that rewards disinterest in money with cultural and social capital. At the same time, collectors are active on the art market, which is governed by commercial rules. Because these symbolic and financial ideologies do not necessarily have the same goals, the art field has developed certain mechanisms of protection, which aim at preserving the status of art works as cultural objects rather than as commodities. These mechanisms are operative in the two guidelines for collectors: a good collector never sells and a good collector follows his eyes and not his ears. These unwritten rules have helped constructing the ethics of collecting. On the one hand, they guard the functioning of the mechanisms of symbolic creation of value and, on the other, allow the controlling of prices and distribution of artworks.

The myth of the good collector who never sells works that he once bought has functioned as a moral obstacle against entering the secondary market in order to defend the proper functioning of the primary one. Galleries reward collectors who refrain from selling with the social prestige of a good reputation and with access to desired works. The moral pressure has been, so far, the most effective tool to prevent collectors from reselling, as solid legal agreements are hardly used in the art market. However, it proved to be effective to a limited extent only, since the majority of collectors do sell works from their collections. Not to jeopardize their reputation, collectors attempt to justify selling using morally correct arguments from the perspective of collecting ethics, such as improvement of the artistic quality of a collection, the development of the personal taste of the collector or the social use of monetary revenues from sales. Moreover, the myth forces collectors to avoid publicly expressing their interest in the financial potential of artworks. Instead, they stress other motives for their passion for art, such as the excitement of making a discovery, understanding the world through art and the confrontation with some essential human conditions or values.

There are gradations in the moral condemning of selling depending on the used method. While giving a work back to the gallery is considered as correct, selling through an auction can result in a bad reputation. In that last case, collectors’ commercial interest will appear stronger than their moral commitment to artistic careers and, consequently, cultural values.

The other myth states that a good collector buys with his eyes and not with his ears. This rule stresses the importance of developing one’s own vision, which, in turn, should lead to a unique, authentic and subjective experience, which is what makes the process of collecting worthwhile and extraordinary. At the same time, it warns against copying others and listening to trends and rumors, and it directs the attention and the capital to less trendy artists. In as much as this is possible, this rule tries to prevent collectors from massively following hypes and all going after works by the same artists, which could raise prices but also result in the dumping of those works. This moral code is mostly used to make a difference among collectors themselves, as collectors with greater cultural capital condemn those who follow the market without knowledge, condemning them for searching financial gains.

The alleged opposition between the interests in art and the art market is one of the most important distinction marks among collectors. Collectors who consider
themselves to be culturally driven have cultivated their symbolic instead of their economic capital, which they deem to be the main interest of others. They emphasize the qualities that distinguish them from new collectors, such as connoisseurship, a longer history of collecting, passion for art, responsibility for culture and, first and foremost, their lack of interest in art as an investment. However, these characteristics do not necessarily guarantee authority in the current art field. Collectors do not need to be knowledgeable themselves, since they can make use of art advisors and buy their connoisseurship. Passion for art is claimed by all collectors, while operations related to responsibility for culture often offer tax benefits and have, thus, become an unreliable criterion. The distinction based on interest in money, therefore, functions as a solid and easy instrument of moral categorization and distinction between good and bad collectors.

Private museums also function as distinction tools among collectors. They create visibility for the collector in the art world, which has become of great importance in the expanding art market. Since exposing a work in the public space helps create artistic careers, private collectors who can offer such visibility will receive preferential treatments from galleries regarding the access to works and better prices. Collectors’ understanding of the visibility factor has been proven by a rapid growth of private museums and spaces open to the public, especially since 2006. This growth was made possible by the increasing wealth of High Net Worth Individuals and fiscal benefits related to foundations that manage private museums. It is a win-win situation for many actors: collectors profit from the visibility of their collections, while public exposure brings advantages to exhibited artists and their galleries. The dynamic of the art market benefits from the current high value of public visibility, since collectors need to permanently upgrade and add new works to their visible collections.

Collectors have named various reasons for opening a public space, such as running out of space at home, the need to share their passion with others, the responsibility of being involved with the community or the desire to create their own interpretation of art history. In principle, these activities are non-binding, since private museums do not have the obligation of education and continuity that public museums have. Despite these programmatic differences, some private museums have developed a cultural and social reputation that, to a certain extent, competes with the one of public institutions. The growth of private museums implies, therefore, a latent struggle between private and public institutions about which institutions have the authority to valorize art. What makes this competition urgent is the current financial strength of private museums, which limits the acquisition possibilities of the public ones.

Private museums follow various paths of engagement with public institutions. Most collectors express a cooperative and not competitive attitude toward public museums and, by doing so, acknowledge the unremitting importance of institutional consecration of artists. Collectors prefer to participate in the historically accumulated cultural capital of public institutions rather than to contest it. Some collectors prefer to involve a public institution to secure a continuation or public significance of their private museums. The majority of the new private museums, however, keep their collections in the hands of their own foundations, which can be changed when the issue of continuity appear.

Although public museums have always been connected to private collectors, whose donations have been essential in forming public collections, museum actors have signaled that the current need to engage private collectors is becoming different.
The high prices of art works, in combination with low acquisition budgets, are not the only problems that have appeared recently. Museums try to attract larger audiences to respond to global transformations in the art field, and to make use of the benefits offered by new technology and media, all which requires even more financial resources. Therefore, museums have been searching donations and bequests, and have been experimenting with various loan constructions, attempting to bind collectors on short- and long-term bases. For collectors, forms of engagement with public museums such as loans and donations can add to their reputation, which is of crucial importance when attempting to buy art works from galleries and which can possibly put the collections in a better art historical light. Collectors can gain cultural and social capital thanks to their acquisition power, since public museums offer the quality hallmark for works from private collections, help consecrate certain artists and provide financial advantages.

Collectors are always in search of the “right” artistic discoveries. The kind of artistic and social qualities that appeal to collectors is demonstrated by examples from two age categories of artists, who hover around the opposite edges of their careers. They showed that collectors pursue artists who have the potential to, preferably, develop both sides of an artistic practice: their artistic qualities and their position in the art market. The idea that has often been suggested by the media, namely that collectors massively switch their attention to young artists, has been proven wrong. Collectors buy—and some of them speculate with—works of young artists, but this seems not to be a dominant, albeit very visible, phenomenon. A different phenomenon relates to the other category of artists, as a steady increase of the participation of older and rediscovered artists has been observed in the art field. For collectors, such artists offer an opportunity to witness and, perhaps, to help create a resurrection of an oeuvre and artistic ideology, which, so far, did not receive sufficient recognition in the international art world and art market.

Collectors search for talent, but they also search for elements that promise them a value increase from cultural and financial points of view. It turns out that artists’ participation in various networks, such as galleries, auctions and institutions, is of vital importance to this endeavor of value growth in monetary and cultural sense. Collectors realize that the support of important galleries guarantees artists a certain international visibility through exhibitions and fairs, and that artists supported by galleries are more likely to gain access to institutional circuits. Moreover, cosmopolitan collectors like the branding qualities of works and appreciate interesting personal narratives of artists.

Wealthy and less wealthy, both long-term and new collectors are well aware of the financial value of particular artworks and the monetary opportunities that art collecting in general offers. The reported prices confront collectors with potentially changing financial values of the works they own, while the current focus on auctions and fairs directs the attention of collectors to the financial aspect of collecting art, because of the commercial nature of these events.

Aiming at giving a broad overview of activities, preferences and behavior of cosmopolitan collecting, I touched upon many subjects that require further study. The alleged weakening position of public museums, which is so often expressed in the media and by institutional actors themselves, appeared not to be experienced as such by the majority of collectors. They value public institutions as they benefit from the visibility factor and the cultural, social and fiscal possibilities they offer. A subject that is worth zooming in on is the possible influence of collectors on the formation of the current artistic canons and their capacity to rewrite the existing ones. A related
Subject that needs an in-depth study is the contribution of contemporary collectors in creating and supporting artistic careers. Taking into account the visibility factor, their financial strength and participation in public institutions in various forms, the question rises to which extent collectors can make or influence artistic developments.

Contemporary collectors follow in the footsteps of earlier collectors. Socially and culturally motivated, they buy art, create collections, share them with bigger publics and enjoy accumulations of cultural and social capital. The collector has gained importance in the art field in the context of the artistic and socio-economic shifts and transformations that have been taking place in the last two decades. As this research has proven, collectors are the driving force of the growth of the contemporary art market, acting in the networks of big auction houses and internationally operating galleries. The artistic qualities of today’s contemporary art, the social field this art produces and the financial and speculative potential it offers respond well to their lifestyle. The idea of collecting art as a project with delayed gratification has changed into collecting art for instant satisfaction. Collectors are not only interested in the cultural and social values of collecting but also in the financial aspect of owning art. Collecting for eternity is changing, for some of them, into collecting for the here and now.
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Summary in English

The Art World of Cosmopolitan Collectors
In relation to mediators, institutions and producers

This research addresses transformations and processes that have formed the conduct of collectors of contemporary art and, through them, the art field, as of the end of the 20th century till 2014. To the attraction of collecting contemporary art contributed partially qualities of the art itself that have become manifest during this period. The artist as an attractive public figure that principally does not intend to threaten the social order has become one of the dominant artists’ models. Part of the artistic production resulted in visually attractive and conceptually entertaining works that did not require art historical knowledge from the viewer in order to make him a final meaning provider. The ideological position of the viewer has strengthened, which has been reflected in several theories from various disciplines that attempted to explain this process. The widening of the borders of art, the intertwining between main culture and subcultures and a lack of art historical and theoretical dominating models have created a critical diversity of opinions and left to the viewer, also in the person of the collector, the freedom of possible interpretations.

This study showed that the collectors’ power has been concentrated in North America and Western Europe, which has been created by a combination of economical, social and cultural factors. The wealth concentration in the United States, Germany and other Western economies, combined with various fiscal benefits related to owning art in these countries, has been of great significance for creating new collectors there. What turned out to be important as well is the steady and almost uninterrupted tradition of private collecting in these regions, which has secured continuation of certain art historical and social practices and values. These traditions have been supported by strong institutional infrastructures, distribution channels and market structures, which appeared to be interrelated and reinforcing each other. The inclination of North-Western collectors to the North-Western artists, even in time of the worldwide Internet and an accessible global visual language, has been explained by the representational bias, a half-intentional preference for artists who are represented by familiar galleries and shown in known institutions. It confirms, at the same time, the solid position of galleries as gatekeepers and the significant role of the museum as a possible consecration place in the view of collectors.

That contemporary art has become the most popular art collectible among collectors in the last decade has been explained by several reasons. Next to its comprehensible visual language, its alluring conceptual approach and its actuality, contemporary art offers collectors the opportunity to grow together with artists’ careers and promises to collectors a discovery of the “second Warhol,” great artists who will become part of art history. Its prices start cheap, its supply is less restricted as is the case with “art classé,” while a collector can actively participate in the making of the artistic canon. In comparison to art from other periods, practical problems such as forgery, looting and maintenance are of a lesser concern. For some collectors, feeling the spirit of their own time and actively taking part and responsibility in the creation of their own culture forms an essential motive. However, what contributes to the popularity of contemporary art even more, is the social world it creates, and the financial opportunities it offers.
Collectors feel part of an extraordinary group, a geographically and quantitatively extending social network, which has a very attractive, culturally charged program at its disposal. The attraction of this social world is a joint effort of all actors, such as galleries, public institutions and fairs who create the atmosphere of enjoyment, glamour, miracles and exclusivity. Collectors follow the same social calendar where they meet peer collectors, see artists in person and obtain the information first-hand from its makers. The universal language of collecting promises democratic accessibility to the art world and equality of its members. In reality, it is to a certain extent an illusion. Although the mixing of actors from different social origins happens regularly, collectors are in permanent pursuit of social distinction in relation to those outside the art world but also in relation to each other. Collectors permanently create hierarchies among themselves: showing images of artworks on their iPhones, naming artists from the collections, mentioning invitations to parties and dinners are instruments of distinction. Enjoyment of shared interests goes hand in hand with the wish to differentiate and exclude in order to obtain social prestige and to secure their place in the hierarchy of actors in the same field.

The other very important reason for the current popularity of contemporary art is its financial capacity that can possibly turn collecting into a profitable experience. Although collectors express various attitudes toward art as investment, when an opportunity of cashing the profit appears, it is often a matter of profit, not of principles to treat a work as a financial asset or not. However, the common interest in the value increase does not make collectors into speculators. In the current collecting enjoyment of owning an artwork goes hand in hand with the pleasure of receiving financial returns. The speculative activity called flipping received a lot of media attention but seems to be a limited phenomenon.

Collectors build their collections using the distribution system based on galleries and auction houses. A good relationship with the gallery is of central importance in order to have access to required works and relevant information on artists, art and the art market. Most collectors emphasize therefore how important galleries’ work is in building the careers of artists, and avoid putting their relationship with them at risk by not showing their loyalty or openly criticizing them. Eventual accusations of creating artificial demands, exclusion mechanisms and certain marketing strategies are expressed sporadically and mostly off the record. A more fundamental criticism came from the collector-dealer Stefan Simchowitz, who has been consequently attacking the myth of the gallery as the place where not money but culture is made according to the high standing moral rules.

Galleries from their side attempt to keep the attention of collectors through expending their geographical network, enhancing their cultural status and organizing social events, which will create collectors’ additional commitment. Fairs, which form another variant of buying art from a gallery, have become an important and generally accepted part of the collecting mode in the last decade. While some collectors like the concentration of artists’ choice and accessibility to information, others condemn fairs because of the alleged lack of cultural engagement. Another point of critique form difficulties to distinguish or find good quality, since a fair allegedly requires striking statements. Nonetheless, collecting contemporary art without participation in fairs has become unthinkable for many collectors, while at the same time being a commercial place contributes to collectors’ awareness of the financial value of art.

A gallery functions as a place of distinction, as collectors who are considered important in rank because of their reputation, financial potential or status of their collections will be given first choice. Nowadays, the real preview of exhibitions or
fairs takes often place in a virtual space, where the collector whom a gallery appreciates most will receive the images and the opportunity to buy as first, before a show starts. Collectors experience galleries as strong and powerful. The Internet, so far, did not change the fundamentals of gallery work but complemented the technical modes through which galleries operate.

Another distribution channel form auction houses, which collectors appreciate because of their transparency and the uncomplicatedness of auction procedures. Auctions offer collectors an easy access to works without the social categorizations based on reputation, visibility of the collector and trust relationships that galleries require. However, operating through auction houses can have negative consequences for the cultural and social standing of a collector. While buying artworks through an auction is morally neutral according to the codes of the art world, selling can entail moral condemning because of alleged ruining careers of artists, creating an artificial artistic canon, and driving prices up.

Auction houses operate not only via physical auctions but have been attempting to attract collectors through private sales, curated exhibitions, online sales and various advisory services. Some collectors consider this expansion into the territories of galleries, dealers, curators and art advisors as a too big concentration of power and therefore a threat to the whole system. In order to soften the critique, auction houses emphasize their democratic principle of participation and their cultural involvement by using actors with huge cultural capital for their activities.

When operating in the distribution networks, collectors sometimes involve art advisors, who assure the expertise on art and knowledge of the market by promising neutrality when advising acquisitions or creating a vision about collections. While some collectors think that an art advisor proves lack of a taste of their own, others consider having an advisor as a sign of economic and social capital. Their increasing number could be seen as a sign that collecting is no longer about personal taste but about making the right acquisitions that will keep its financial and cultural value.

When building their collections, collectors operate in the art market and in the sphere of culture, which interests are often considered as conflicting and incommensurable. In order to obtain cultural, social but also economic capital, collectors follow the different codes that each sphere requires. The ideology of the art field dictates that collectors are motivated by participating in cultural and artistic values and not in financial profits. The art market uses these ethics of collecting to navigate collectors’ behavior in order to protect artworks from being treated as any other commodity and to keep the current system of distribution and circulation of art works intact. Two moral imperatives are applied to control collectors’ behavior in the art market: a good collector never sells and a good collector buys with his eyes and not with his ears. Gallery owners give collectors who do not resell a moral acknowledgement and preferential treatment in opposition to bad collectors, to whom they refuse access to works. The moral pressure has been, so far, the most effective tool to prevent collectors from reselling, as solid legal agreements are not customary for the art market.

However, the overwhelming majority of collectors resell their works. As selling can result in lack of access to works and a bad reputation, they preferably avoid speaking about it. In case they do, they legitimize their actions by motives that are morally acceptable from the ideology of the art field such as the upgrade of their collection, which often relates to the development of a collector’s taste. Sold works will be replaced by other works, so proceeds from selling are said to be utilized for new acquisitions of art. Another morally justified motive applies to using revenues for
morally high standing projects such as foundations of social or cultural importance. There are justified motives of practical kind such as lack of storage, maintenance problems or issues of inheritance form another be acceptable. Some collectors admit to sell for profit but not openly, whereby others argue that they do not want to keep works in their collections that threaten to lose its value.

There are gradations in moral condemning with regard to the manner in which collectors sell. Giving a work back to the gallery is considered as most proper, while the worst is public selling through an auction. A hidden source of irritation is that artists hardly, and gallerists not at all, participate in the revenues that a work achieves at auction. Collectors can disturb galleries’ control of prices, supply and demand as their commercial interest becomes stronger than their moral commitment.

Where the first moral code is mostly used to distinguish between good and bad collectors by galleries, the second myth of collector who does not buy with his ears but with his eyes, is used typically to make a distinction between collectors themselves. It addresses the fundamental ideas of collecting: the making of subjective choices and the creation of one’s own vision instead of following the rumors. Collectors with a greater cultural capital claim not to need to follow the mainstream preferences and fashions, but are instead able to decide themselves. They reproach all that is connected with the ‘ears’: fascination with names and brands, the lack of profound information and knowledge and the herding behavior triggered by the possibility of financial profit.

The notion of disinterestedness in relation to money functions as one of the most important distinction marks, especially among long-term collectors versus newcomers, whom they associate with unlimited wealth as opposed to their own financial means. Other points of distinction refer to the way in which they build up a collection where passion, hard working and discipline oppose the temporary fascination and lack of personal involvement. Connoisseurship and the understanding of art serve as an important tool of distinction as they represent a quality that cannot be bought. Collecting is, furthermore, claimed not to be limited only to creating an art collection, but it implies social responsibility for creating culture. As connoisseurship turned out to be a buyable service, passion and responsibility for culture an unreliable criterion, the distinction based on interest in money functions as a solid instrument of categorization. Especially since it has a double function: on the one hand, it operates as a distinction mode amongst collectors and, on the other, keeps the existing art market intact.

The pressure of the moral codes proved to have an effect only to a certain extent. It forces collectors to avoid speaking openly about their interest in art as a form of investment, but it does not hinder collectors’ interest in the financial value of works and the economic potential of their collections. The study of collectors’ preferences at auctions demonstrated that the number of artists whose works were sold was very low and the number of recurring artists in consecutive years very high. It evidenced collectors’ inclination for blue chip artists with a branding quality, which could be seen as choices that guarantee a solid value in the art market. Although the social and cultural values of owning art are of great importance, today’s art collectors are highly aware of the financial worth of their works and their potential.

Contemporary collectors follow in the footsteps of earlier collectors who, socially and culturally motivated, decided to share their collections with bigger publics. In the new millennium, the number of private museums is quickly growing. The increasing number of High Net Worth Individuals, who spend part of their expanding wealth on art, makes up the context in which collectors’ interest in private
places has developed, since private spaces generate costs and mostly no incomes. Collectors who opened a private space combine the pleasure to see the works with the wish to share experiences with the public. They show their personal taste and ideas about what matters to them in art, whereby their museums provide them the opportunity to differentiate, as much as it offers a platform to create a gift relationship and network exchange with other collectors. A physical space such as a private museum allows for the creating of visibility of the collector in the art world as much as in the local community. It offers a platform to develop social activities, such as artistic education and various support programs for artists or the community. Through these morally praised activities, collectors gain social prestige and build their reputation as passionate collectors.

The visibility factor has become nowadays of vital importance, as the art market in the past had smaller dimensions and the competition for works and the need for distinction was less prominent. Private museums are of importance to collectors’ positions in the art market since public visibility helps secure access to works and receiving of better prices. Collectors profit from the public exposure of their collections, whereas they contribute to the economic value of an artist by showing their works to the public. In the continuously growing art world, the visibility factor has become of vital significance for creating a context in which an artistic and market value can be established. Private museums offer a visibility tool to artists, art works and galleries, which, in its turn, builds the social, cultural and financial capital of the collector. The art market profits from the current high value of public visibility, since the latter forces collectors to permanently upgrade and change their collections through new acquisitions and sales.

As activities of private spaces equal, to a certain extent, the work of public museums, a possible struggle for authority urges collectors to formulate their standpoint in this regard. Some collectors stress the importance of the public spaces and express their cooperative, and not competitive, attitude. Others claim being more progressive than public museums, as the latter stayed too much in traditional cultural and administrative structures and cannot react adequately to the transformations in the art world. Public museums defend their position by accusing the private ones of a basic arbitrariness in their responsibilities because they lack obligations for continuity, education and commitment to artistic careers. This struggle for authority became urgent because collectors represent more buying power, can act quickly and attempt to participate in formulating the new artistic canon. Public museums emphasize, therefore, their long-term social commitment, lasting cultural meaning and confirmed art historical relevancy because these values cannot be proved by private institutions.

Public museums and collectors know various forms of cooperation, now and in the past. Their relation is reciprocal, as both parties can profit from each other: while the museum needs financial contributions, loans and donations, collectors can upgrade works by making their quality museum-proven and enjoy fiscal advantages. Moreover, cooperation with a public museum adds to their reputation and the prestige of their collections. Because of budget cuts in state funding and the increasing private wealth, the influence of private collectors is claimed to be growing although this claim has been anecdotaly substantiated but not sufficiently quantified.

Collectors are permanently in search of new artists who will fulfill their expectations of artistic creativity, produce high-quality works and, preferably, gain importance in the history of art. At the same time, they seek artists whose works
promise a growth not only in terms of artistic but also of financial value; depending on collectors, short or long term. Such artists can be found in all age categories.

The idea that collectors massively switch their attention to young artists has been proved wrong and partially media driven. Collectors buy, and some of them speculate with, works of young artists but this has been, so far, a marginal albeit very visible phenomenon. The analyses of the careers of Oscar Murillo and Phyllida Barlow unveiled certain comparable mechanisms that govern collectors’ interest. An artistic talent is often not sufficient to be noticed. What turned out to be of greater significance for collectors is the support for artists from the gatekeepers of the art world: galleries with high reputation, big auction houses, important collectors and celebrated artistic institutions. Whereby an auction result can boost collectors’ interest and draw attention to an artist, galleries form the most important factor in judging artist’s potential, because a gallery promises the continuity of an artistic career not only in the art market but also in institutional circuits. Each of the gatekeepers offers visibility to an artist, which, as demonstrated, is highly appreciated by collectors in the current art world. The combination of these elements together promise to collectors a value increase from the cultural and financial point of view.

Personal and emotional narratives furthermore appeal to collectors’ imagination, as they help constructing the artistic identity of the given artist. The examples showed that multi-cultural and feminist interpretations related to the personal lives of artists added to their desirability. They create emotions through which collectors can identify with the personal or social standpoints represented by the artist.

Contemporary collectors follow in the footsteps of earlier collectors who socially and culturally motivated, buy art, create collections, share them with bigger publics and enjoy accumulations of cultural and social capital. What distinguishes the social world of today’s collectors from the past is that the art world has become more popular, easily accessible and has massive dimensions. Collectors are the driving force of the growth of the contemporary art market, whereby they are not only interested in the cultural and social values of collecting but also in the financial aspect of owning art. The idea of collecting art as a project with delayed gratification has changed into collecting art for the short term satisfaction.
De Kunstwereld van Kosmopolitische Verzamelaars
In relatie tot bemiddelaars, instituties en producenten

Dit onderzoek behandelt artistieke en sociale transformaties en processen die het gedrag van verzamelaars van hedendaagse kunst vanaf het einde van de 20ste eeuw tot 2014 hebben gevormd, en daardoor ook indirect het kunstveld mede hebben gedefinieerd. De populariteit van hedendaagse kunst in deze periode werd onder andere gestimuleerd door karakteristieken van deze kunst zelf die zich in deze tijd gingen manifesteren. Een van de dominante kunstenaarsmodellen werd dat van een opvallende en in de media aanwezige figuur dat de sociale orde niet wil bedreigen, maar kunst produceert die als platform tot nadenken functioneert. Een deel van kunstproductie resulteerde in visueel aantrekkelijke en conceptueel onderhoudende werken die de toeschouwer tot de finale betekenisgever verklaarden, zonder dat van hem kunsthistorische kennis werd vereist. De ideologische positie van de toeschouwer werd sterker; dit uitte zich in theorieën uit verschillende disciplines die deze groeiende macht trachten te verklaren. Doordat de grenzen van de kunst werden opgerekt, hoofdcultuur en subculturen verstrengeld raakten en er een gebrek was aan dominante kunsthistorische en kunsttheoretische modellen, ontstond een diversiteit aan meningen en kreeg de toeschouwer, ook in de persoon van de verzamelaar, een theoretische rechtvaarding tot vrijheid van interpretatie.

Deze studie toont aan dat de macht van verzamelaars zich concentreert in Noord-America en West-Europa en dat dit wordt veroorzaakt door een combinatie van economische, sociale en culturele factoren. De concentratie van rijkdom in de Verenigde Staten, Duitsland en andere Westerse economiën, gecombineerd met allerlei belastingvoordelen verbonden aan kunsteigendom, is van groot belang geweest voor de aanwas van nieuwe verzamelaars. Wat eveneens belangrijk is gebleken, is de stabiele en bijna ononderbroken traditie van het particuliere verzamelen in deze regio’s. Deze verzameltraditie leunt op sterke institutionele infrastructuren en distributiekanalen, die met elkaar verbonden zijn en elkaar versterken. De voorkeur van noordwesterse verzamelaars voor noordwesterse kunstenaars, zelfs in de tijd van het internet en een toegankelijke globale visuele taal, wordt uitgelegd door representational bias, een min of meer bewuste voorkeur voor kunstenaars die worden vertegenwoordigd door bekende galeries en die worden getoond in bekende instituties.

Verschillende oorzaken verklaren de stijgende populariteit van hedendaagse kunst onder huidige verzamelaars. Behalve haar toegankelijke visuele taal, haar aantrekkelijke conceptuele benadering en haar actualiteit, biedt hedendaagse kunst verzamelaars de mogelijkheid om mee te groeien met de carrières van kunstenaars. Zelfs in de tijd van het internet en een toegankelijke globale visuele taal, wordt uitgelegd door representational bias, een min of meer bewuste voorkeur voor kunstenaars die worden vertegenwoordigd door bekende galeries en die worden getoond in bekende instituties.

Vergeleken met kunst uit andere perioden kent hedendaagse kunst minder praktische problemen als vervalsing of diefstal. Sommige verzamelaars hebben als drijfveer dat ze in de geest van hun tijd de eigen cultuur mede vormgeven, maar wat vooral bijdraagt aan de populariteit van hedendaagse kunst is de sociale wereld die deze kunst creëert en de financiële mogelijkheden die ze lijkt te bieden.
Verzamelaars voelen zich opgenomen in een bijzondere groep, een geografisch en kwantitatief uitdijend sociaal netwerk met een zeer verleidelijk en boeiend programma aan sociaal-culturele activiteiten. De aantrekkingsskracht van deze sociale wereld is de resultante van de gezamenlijke inspanning van alle actoren, zoals galeries, publieke instellingen en beurzen, die een atmosfeer weten te creëren van plezier, glamour, exclusiviteit en de wonderen die de wereld nog niet uit zijn. Verzamelaars volgen dezelfde sociale kalender van kunst-events, waar ze andere verzamelaars ontmoeten, kunstenaars persoonlijk leren kennen en informatie uit de eerste hand krijgen. De universele taal van het verzamelen belooft een democratische toegang tot de kunstwereld en gelijkheid van de deelnemers daaraan. Dit is echter tot op zekere hoogte een illusie. Hoewel actoren van verschillende sociale achtergronden zich regelmatig met elkaar mengen, zijn verzamelaars er permanent op uit zich sociaal te onderscheiden, zowel ten opzichte van mensen buiten de kunstwereld als ten opzichte van elkaar. Verzamelaars vestigen voortdurend een onderlinge hiërarchie; het tonen van kunstwerken op hun iPhones, het noemen van kunstenaars die men kent, het melden van uitnodigingen voor diners - het zijn allemaal manieren om zich te laten gelden en een onderscheid aan te brengen. Enerzijds is er het plezier van de gedeelde belangstelling en passie, maar anderzijds is er de wens tot differentiatie en uitsluiting om sociaal prestige te verkrijgen en de hoogste plaats in de rangorde van de actoren in het kunstveld.

Een andere zeer belangrijke oorzaak van de huidige populariteit van hedendaagse kunst is haar hypothetische vermogen om te veranderen in een winstgevend financieel instrument. Verzamelaars uiten weliswaar verschillende standpunten over kunst als investering, maar zodra zich een mogelijkheid voordoet om winst te maken bepalen de mogelijke opbrengsten en niet de principes of een kunstwerk wordt behandeld als een financieel instrument of niet. Toch maakt de wijdverbreide interesse voor waardestijging de verzamelaars niet tot speculanten. Bij het huidige verzamelen gaat het plezier in het bezit van een kunstwerk samen met het plezier in het behalen van winst. De speculatieve processen van flipping hebben veel media-aandacht gekregen maar bleken tot nu toe een beperkt fenomeen.

Verzamelaars bouwen hun collecties op door gebruik te maken van het distributiesysteem dat is gebaseerd op galeries en veilinghuizen. Een goede relatie met een galerie is van centrale betekenis voor de toegang tot gewenste werken en relevante informatie over kunstenaars, kunstwerken en de kunstmarkt. De meeste verzamelaars benadrukken daarom hoe belangrijk galerieactiviteiten zijn voor het opbouwen van kunstenaarscarrières en vermijden kritische uitspraken of een gebrek aan loyaliteit om deze relatie niet in gevaar te brengen. Soms worden galeries ervan beschuldigd een kunstmatige vraag te creëren of bepaalde uitsluitingsmechanismen en marketingstrategieën te hanteren, maar dit gebeurt zelden en al helemaal niet in het openbaar. Meer fundamentele kritiek komt van de Amerikaanse verzamelaar-dealer Stefan Simchowitz, die consequent de mythe aanvalt van de galerie als een plek waar niet het geld maar de cultuur wordt gemaakt volgens hoge morele normen.

Galeries op hun beurt proberen de aandacht van verzamelaars te trekken en vast te houden door hun geografische netwerk uit te breiden, hun culturele status te verhogen en sociale events te organiseren die tot een extra commitment van verzamelaars kunnen leiden. Beurzen - een variant van galeriewerkzaamheden - zijn in het laatste decennium een belangrijk en algemeen geaccepteerd onderdeel van verzamelpрактиjken geworden. Terwijl sommige verzamelaars de concentratie van kunstenaars en beschikbaarheid van informatie aldaar waarderen, veroordelen anderen beurzen vanwege een verondersteld gebrek aan culturele betrokkenheid. Een ander
punt van kritiek vormt het onderscheiden en vinden van kwaliteit, omdat beurzen vooral opvallende kunstwerken zouden prefereren en weinig ruimte zouden laten voor kunstexperimenten. Hoe het ook zij, voor vele verzamelaars is het tegenwoordig ondenkbaar om hedendaagse kunst te verzamelen zonder beurzen te bezoeken. Tegelijkertijd is een beurs principieel een commerciële plek, hetgeen eraan bijdraagt dat verzamelaars kunst welbewust zien als objecten met een financiële waarde.

Een galerie functioneert ook als een onderscheidingsinstrument omdat verzamelaars die als belangrijk worden beschouwd vanwege hun reputatie, financieel potentieel of de status van hun collectie, de eerste keus van werken krijgen. Heden ten dage vindt de echte preview van tentoonstellingen en beurzen plaats in een virtuele ruimte, waar de verzamelaars die door de galerie het hoogst worden aangeslagen de afbeeldingen zien en de mogelijkheid krijgen als eersten een werk aan te schaffen. Het internet heeft vooral nog de fundamenten van het bestaande galeriemodel niet veranderd maar is wel een belangrijke aanvulling geworden op de traditionele werkwijze van de galeries.

Een ander distributiekanaal vormen veilinghuizen. Verzamelaars waarderen deze vanwege de transparantie en ongecompliceerdheid van de procedures. Veilingen bieden verzamelaars een eenvoudige toegang tot werken, zonder de sociale categorisering die galeries aanbrengen op basis van vertrouwensrelaties en de reputatie en zichtbaarheid van de verzamelaars. Toch kan het gebruikmaken van veilinghuizen negatieve gevolgen hebben voor de culturele en sociale positie van de verzamelaar. Terwijl het kopen via een veiling moreel neutraal is volgens de codes van de kunstwereld, kan het verkopen ophef veroorzaken omdat wordt verondersteld dat een kunstenaarscarrière wordt geruïneerd, een kunstmatige artistieke canon wordt gecreëerd of prijzen worden opgedreven.

Veilinghuizen proberen verzamelaars aan te trekken via private verkopen, curatoriële tentoonstellingen, online verkopen en verschillende adviesdiensten. Sommige verzamelaars beschouwen deze expansie tot het terrein van galeries, dealers, curatoren en kunstadviseurs als een te grote machtsonderbreking in één institutie en daarom ook als een bedreiging voor het gehele systeem. Om de kritiek te verzachten, benadrukken veilinghuizen hun democratisch deelnameprincipe en hun culturele betrokkenheid door voor hun activiteiten gebruik te maken van actoren met een aanzienlijk cultureel kapitaal.

Verzamelaars huren soms adviseurs in, wier kennis van kunst en de kunstmarkt de kwaliteit bij aankopen of bij het formuleren van een visie op een collectie zou waarborgen. Waar sommige verzamelaars denken dat het inhuren van een adviseur getuigt van een gebrek aan eigen smaak, beschouwen andere het hebben van een adviseur als een teken van financieel en sociaal prestige. Het groeiende aantal adviseurs wijst erop dat verzamelaars voor velen geen kwestie meer is van persoonlijke smaak maar van de juiste aankopen die hun financiële en culturele waarde zullen houden.

Hun collecties opbouwend, opereren verzamelaars zowel in de kunstmarkt als in de sfeer van de cultuur, waarvan de belangen vaak als ongeldig of zelfs tegenstrijdig worden beschouwd. Om cultureel, sociaal maar ook economisch kapitaal te verkrijgen, volgen verzamelaars daarom de verschillende codes die in elk van deze domeinen heersen. De ideologie van het kunstveld dicteert dat verzamelaars worden gedreven door culturele en artistieke waarden en niet door financieel gewin. Wanneer hun commerciële interesse sterker wordt dan hun moreel commitment aan het kunstveld, bemoetijken verzamelaars de controle van galeries over vraag en aanbod, en daarmee over de prijzen. De kunstmarkt gebruikt daarom de ethiek van het
verzamelen om circulatie van de werken te beperken en te behoeden dat kunstwerken als economische goederen worden behandeld. Twee morele codes worden toegepast om het gedrag van verzamelaars in de kunstmarkt te controleren: een goede verzamelaar verkoopt niet en een goede verzamelaar koopt met zijn ogen en niet met zijn oren. Galerist geven verzamelaars die niet verkopen een morele erkenning en voorkeursbehandeling, in tegenstelling tot ‘slechte’ verzamelaars, die de toegang wordt geweigerd. Deze morele druk is vooral nog het meest gebruikte instrument om verkopen te verhinderen, want juridische middelen zijn in de kunstwereld niet gebruikelijk.

Echter, de overweldigende meerderheid van verzamelaars verkoopt kunstwerken. Aangezien verkopen kan leiden tot beperkte toegang en een slechte reputatie, praten verzamelaars er liever niet over. Wanneer ze het wel doen, rechtvaardigen ze hun gedrag met motieven die moreel passen in de ideologie van het kunstveld, zoals een collectie-upgrade, die dikwijls verbonden wordt met de ontwikkeling van iemands smaak. In zo'n geval worden de opbrengsten van de verkochte werken gebruikt voor nieuwe aankopen. Een ander ethisch verantwoord motief wordt ingezet voor verkopen waarvan opbrengsten worden gebruikt voor moreel hoogstaande sociale of culturele projecten. Er zijn ook praktische motieven die verkopen legitimeren, zoals ruimtegebrek, onderhoudsproblemen of erfvraagstukken. Sommige verzamelaars geven toe dat ze verkopen om winst te maken, maar dat doen ze niet in het openbaar; anderen zeggen dat ze geen werken in hun collecties willen die in waarde zijn gedaald. Er zijn ook gradaties in het veroordelen van de manier waarop men verkoopt. Teruggave aan de galerie is de meest correcte wijze van verkopen, terwijl een publieke verkoop op een veiling het laagst scoort.

Terwijl de eerste morele code (een goede verzamelaar verkoopt niet) meestal wordt gebruikt door galerist om een onderscheid te maken tussen goede en slechte verzamelaars, de tweede code (een goede verzamelaar koopt met zijn ogen en niet met zijn oren) doet opgeld tussen verzamelaars onderling. Deze code spreekt het fundament van het verzamelen zelf aan: het maken van subjectieve keuzes en het scheppen van een eigen visie in plaats van achter geruchten aan lopen. Verzamelaars met een groot cultureel kapitaal beweren dat ze de populaire modes niet volgen maar in staat zijn zelf te beslissen. Ze bekritiseren alles wat met het ‘oor’ te maken heeft: fascinatie met roem en merken, gebrek aan juiste informatie en grondige kennis, en het kuddegedrag dat vooral wordt aangedreven door het idee van financiële winst.

De notie dat men niet geïnteresseerd is in geld wordt vooral gekoesterd door de langetermijnverzamelaars, die zich daarmee willen onderscheiden van de nieuwkomers. Dezen associëren de eerstgenoemden met onbepant rijkdom, in tegenstelling tot hun eigen financiële situatie. Andere onderscheidscriteria onder verzamelaars zijn passie, kunstkennis, hard werken en discipline; deze kenmerken zouden dan staan tegenover vluchtige, oppervlakkige fascinaties en een gebrek aan persoonlijke betrokkenheid. Verzamelen heet zich bovendien niet te beperken tot het aanleggen van een kunstcollectie maar het omvat ook een sociale verantwoordelijkheid: men creëert immers cultuur. Echter: kunstkennis is te koop, en passie en verantwoordelijkheid voor cultuur zijn onbetrouwbaar criteria omdat aan schenken vaak fiscale voordelen zijn verbonden. Waarmee alleen het onderscheid dat is gebaseerd op financiële interesse of desinteresse overblijft als een solide categorisatie-instrument.

De druk van de morele codes blijkt slechts een beperkt effect te hebben. Ze dwingen verzamelaars vooral om niet openlijk over hun belangstelling voor kunst als investering te spreken, maar ze voorkomen niet dat verzamelaars wel degelijk
interesse in de financiële waarde van werken hebben en het economisch potentieel van hun collecties nauw gadeslaan. Een analyse van verzamelaarsvoorkeuren op de veilingen in het laatste decennium heeft aangetoond dat het aantal kunstenaars wier werken verkocht waren zeer laag was en het aantal jaarlijks terugkerende kunstenaars zeer hoog. Dit suggereert dat verzamelaars afgaan op bekende blue chip kunstenaars die als een merk in de kunstmarkt fungeren, hetgeen een solide waarde in die markt zou moeten garanderen. Hoewel de sociale en culturele waarde van kunstbezit belangrijk is, zijn hedendaagse verzamelaars zich zeer bewust van de financiële waarde van hun werken en hun potentieel.

Hedendaagse verzamelaars treden in de voetsporen van vroegere verzamelaars die, sociaal en cultureel gemotiveerd, besloten om hun collecties met een groter publiek te delen. In het nieuwe millennium is het aantal privémusea sterk gestegen. De belangstelling van verzamelaars voor particuliere tentoonstellingsruimten is gerelateerd aan het stijgende aantal HNWI (vermogende particulieren met een besteedbaar inkomen vanaf 1 miljoen US$) die een deel van hun vermogen aan kunst uitgeven. Verzamelaars die een privémuseum openen combineren hun plezier in hun werken met de wens om kunstervaringen met anderen te delen. Zo tonen hun persoonlijke smaak en hun ideeën over kunst, terwijl het museum hun tegelijk de mogelijkheid geeft zich van anderen te onderscheiden en een platform creëert voor een uitwisseling met andere verzamelaars. Een fysieke ruimte zoals een privémuseum vergroot de zichtbaarheid van de verzamelaar, zowel in de kunstwereld als in de lokale gemeenschap. Ze biedt mogelijkheden om allerlei sociale activiteiten te ontplooien, zoals kunsteducatie of programma’s voor kunstenaars of de samenleving. Via deze moreel hooggeprezen activiteiten verkrijgen verzamelaars sociaal prestige en bouwen ze een reputatie op van gepassioneerde verzamelaars.

De zichtbaarheidsfactor is vooral in het laatste decennium zeer belangrijk geworden omdat de kunstmarkt daarvóór veel kleinere dimensies had, de concurrentie om de populaire werken minder relevant was en de reden tot differentiatie minder urgent. Privémusea en kunstruimten zijn van grote betekenis voor de positie van verzamelaars in de kunstmarkt, daar publieke zichtbaarheid een betere toegang tot werken baant en lagere prijzen faciliteert. In de permanent groeiende kunstwereld is zichtbaarheid wezenlijk geworden voor het scheppen van de context waarin artistieke en commerciële waarden kunnen worden vastgesteld. Privémusea verschaffen daartoe een instrument aan kunstenaars, kunstwerken en galerijen; andersom definieeren ze het sociale, culturele en financiële kapitaal van de verzamelaar. De kunstmarkt profiteert van de hoge waarde die tegenwoordig wordt toegekend aan publieke zichtbaarheid, omdat verzamelaars hierdoor gedwongen worden permanent hun collecties te verbeteren en aan te vullen door nieuwe acquisities en verkopen.

Aangezien activiteiten van privéruimten meer of minder het werk van publieke musea weerspiegelen, dwingt de schijn van een mogelijke autoriteitsstrijd verzamelaars ertoe om hierin een standpunt te bepalen. Sommige verzamelaars onderstrepen het belang van publieke instellingen en hebben een coöperatieve en niet-competitieve houding. Anderen claimen dat ze progressiever zijn dan publieke musea, daar de laatste in traditionele culturele en administratieve structuren zijn blijven steken en niet adequaat kunnen reageren op de transformaties in de kunstwereld. Publieke instellingen verdedigen hun positie door privémusea op hun fundamentele willekeur aan te spreken omdat ze geen verplichtingen hebben met betrekking tot continuïteit en educatie en geen commitment tegenover kunstenaarscarrières. Deze strijd om autoriteit is urgent geworden omdat verzamelaars meer koopkracht tonen, sneller reageren en hun artistieke canon proberen te
formuleren. Publieke instellingen benadrukken daarom telkens weer hun langetermijncommitment, hun gevestigde culturele betekenis en bewezen kunsthistorische relevantie - waarden die niet kunnen worden bewezen door particuliere instellingen.

Publieke musea en private verzamelaars kennen verschillende vormen van samenwerking, nu en in het verleden. Hun relatie is wederkerig, want beide partijen kunnen profiteren van elkaar: terwijl het museum financiële bijdragen, leningen en donaties nodig heeft, kunnen verzamelaars door de samenwerking met een publiek museum de reputatie en het prestige van hun collecties verbeteren en fiscale voordelen genieten. Nu door bezuinigingen museumbudgetten dalen terwijl de particuliere welvaart toeneemt, is er een gevoel dat de invloed van private verzamelaars op publieke instellingen toeneemt, hoewel kwantitatieve data dit proces niet kunnen bevestigen.

Verzamelaars zijn permanent op zoek naar nieuwe kunstenaars die hun verwachting van artistieke creativiteit vervullen, werken van hoge kwaliteit produceren en bij voorkeur een plaats in de kunstgeschiedenis veroveren. Tegelijkertijd zoeken ze kunstenaars wier werken een artistieke én financiële groei beloven - op korte of lange termijn, afhankelijk van de verzamelaar. Het idee dat verzamelaars massaal hun aandacht naar jonge kunstenaars hebben verplaatst is niet juist gebleken en vooral afkomstig van de media. Verzamelaars kopen, en sommigen van hen speculeren met werken van jonge kunstenaars, maar dit is tot nu toe een marginaal, zij het zeer zichtbaar, fenomeen.

De analyse van de loopbaan van de kunstenaars Oscar Murillo en Phyllida Barlow heeft aangetoond dat artistiek talent vaak niet genoeg is voor een kunstenaar om te worden opgemerkt. Van groter belang voor verzamelaars blijkt de steun van de poortwachters in de kunstwereld: galerieën van naam, grote veilinghuizen, belangrijke verzamelaars en delears, en gevierde kunstinstellingen. Hoewel een veilingresultaat een onverwachte interesse voor een kunstenaar kan opwekken en de aandacht op hem kan vestigen, vormen galerieën toch de centrale factor bij de beoordeling van het groeipotentieel van een kunstenaar omdat zij continuïteit in een artistieke carrière beloven, niet alleen in de kunstmarkt maar ook in institutionele kringen. De combinatie van deze factoren, en de zichtbaarheid die alle poortwachters bieden, geeft verzamelaars een perspectief op waardestijging, zowel in cultureel als financieel opzicht.

Wat helpt bij de constructie van de artistieke identiteit van kunstenaars zijn persoonlijke en emotionele narratieve die tot de verbeelding spreken van verzamelaars. Opvallende levensverhalen van de kunstenaars kunnen aan hun begeerlijkheid bijdragen, want ze creëren emoties en daardoor een manier waarop verzamelaars zich met hen of hun standpunten kunnen identificeren.

Net als verzamelaars in het verleden genieten hedendaagse verzamelaars van de accumulatie van hun sociale en culturele kapitaal. Wat de sociale wereld van hedendaagse verzamelaars anders maakt dan die van hun voorgangers, is dat kunst verzamelen populairder is, de kunstwereld grotere dimensies heeft aangenomen en tegelijk toegankelijker is geworden. De positie van galerieën en publieke instituties is solide, maar het zijn de verzamelaars die de drijvende kracht vormen achter de groei van de hedendaagse kunstmarkt. Ze hebben niet alleen belangstelling voor de culturele en sociale waarde van verzamelen maar ook voor de financiële aspecten van kunstbezit. Daarom is het verzamelen veranderd van een bevredigend project op de lange termijn in een streven naar een snellere voldoening.