

Digital Age Abetting Algorithmic Success over Cultural Arts (Manifesto)

In the pursuit of clarity, it's important to understand words and terms for the purpose they serve in the structure of this discussion. In the context discussed here, the 'art market' is referred to in wider terms beyond the typically perceived prestigious 'high arts' market. Instead, the art market is anything pertaining to an exchange of money, attention, and promotion/referral within the digital sphere. The term 'algorithms' will be in reference to the mechanism/tool that exists in the digital field to either aid or suppress connectivity. Finally, the term 'cultural arts' is in reference to any artistic form that is rooted in and in reference to a particular group(s) of society. One that is *typically* an accurate translation or interpretation of that particular group's environment/practices/experience into a visual, experiential, or auditory forms of art. Unlike the other terms, the cultural arts will be referenced for their existence within and outside of the digital field. In the factual and theoretical understandings of the interaction between the three variables: cultural arts, algorithms, and art market, conflicts begin to arise that draw apparent concern. Concerns over long term representation in and of the cultural arts for the future times/generations beliefs and understandings. The preservation of accurate markers of time and community (through the form of artistic creation) have reached their most consequential time in recent history.

The unforeseen circumstances of the present: The most developed and advanced point digital technology has reached in present day paired with a lengthy worldwide shutdown (due to Covid-19), has brought forth one of the most contested points the arts have faced in history. The arts and digital technology have never been brought so close together, especially as the arts have come to seek a certain level of dependency and reliance on digital technology to continue as a *functioning* part of society. Prior to the pandemic the art market had already utilized and shown signs of dependency on the digital sphere; "According to Hiscox 2019, 80% of art buyers use social media to discover new artists and 89% of art galleries use social media to attract new customers (Hiscox 2019, p. 9). As for The Art Market 2019 estimates, social media remain a strategic tool to build trust and brand awareness (The Art Market 2019, p. 287)(Sidorova, 2019)." As in person experiences of art have halted due to the pandemic, the scope, repercussions, and legacy of the contemporary art world infused so deeply in technologies lay in question. Factoring in an understanding of media studies (digital sphere of the art market and algorithms) will aid in analyzing current circumstances, especially as it becomes apparent that the art world is on course for an (even more) unhealthy space of misrepresentation/exploitation/degrading intellectual and independent thought of those in the present and future. The arts are a commentary on the wider world, however, the allowed/unnoticed aiding and abetting of biases by institutions of digital powers (i.e. social media platforms) have brought forth questions of the *true* transparency and honesty of the cultural arts/artworks being produced in our current state.

Defining digital powers as mechanisms of 'aiding and abetting' against the cultural arts is not an overreaching statement, as a key attribute of art/cultural art is to recount the present that it was made in, often serving a purpose of reference in which those of the future seek to retain the good of that time and not repeat the bad. The unknown volatility of the digital/tech worlds impact and influence on the arts is a scary thought to consider for our immediate and the long term, especially as artists are forced to utilize tech at some interval during their pursuit to include their cultural artwork in the art market. The morality of the digital powers to bestow certain aesthetics and conversations (within cultural artworks) with stronger art market receptions because they met the preferred algorithms is criminal. Especially considering that algorithms are programmed and constructed by humans (opinion based) intervention, it would be naive to say the cultural artists/works that go further in the art market, through digital systems, are coerced by favorable microaggressions and microbiasses (within the digital programming), just as the non-favorable cultural art is suppressed. This is in terms of subject matter, agenda, discussions, aesthetics, and process (within the artwork) that aligned with popular cultures' thinking/opinion. Channeling ideals towards the top (art market success) and artworks that challenge or deviate from the *ideals* towards the bottom (censorship/suppression). Digital powers play a role in the 'aiding and abetting' against the transparency of *all* cultural arts within each respective society. Instead, pushing particular and popular aspects to the forefront of society's reception. Discouraging the cultural arts that mainstream doesn't hold at a high value (of importance and aesthetics), artists are more inclined to 'fall in line' to succeed or sustain themselves in the art market.

Algorithms and AI utilization have already pronounced their growing position in the sharing and trade of art/cultural art. Separate but informative to the understanding of mechanisms in the 'social media art market', some galleries utilize AI (artificial intelligence), which "functions as a machine-learning recommendation program that matches prospective customers with a particular product upon examination of their online activities, such as Internet searches and web browsing. This technology is already extensively used in the movie and TV industry. It is estimated that the choice of at least 80% of watched content is made upon algorithmic recommendations (The Art Market 2019, p. 302). The online art market has only recently endorsed AI-based marketing (Sidorova, 2019)." These systems are designed and developed not out of a goal to draw society's arts/cultural arts towards more connectivity, instead, it is the pursuit of maximizing monetary gain and platform (website/app) utilization. This is by providing a user (art buyer or viewer) with simplicity and speed towards getting them what and where they want, making them *feel* resolved and content with their art viewing/buying experience. However, this is depriving society of access to unfiltered cultural artworks, instead forcing a pursuit of the 'model' or 'ideal' representations in the economic-oriented society we have today. Speculated before digital power gained such a strong grasp on the art market and cultural arts due to Covid-19, Melanie Fasche compiled various understandings into layman's terms: "In recent times arts and culture have gained momentum in the advanced capitalist societies, which is expressed by a growing convergence of cultural and economic spheres. The convergence has commonly been observed from opposing viewpoints either as economization of culture (Aspers 2009: Boltanski and Chiapello

2005) or culturalization of the economy (Amin and Thrift 2004; Lash and Urry 1994; Scott 1997)(Fasche,2017).”

The zeitgeist of the present art period will likely be a byproduct of powerful media/tech structures favored artists and artworks. One's in which “expectations” of agenda, censorship, and channelling of society's cultural arts are met. Moreover, artists who pursued a non-favorable avenue in creating cultural art will adapt to incentives of the digital powers, as the exploitable but inconspicuous nature of our advancing technologies have made people malleable through action, thought, opinion, and emotion, even in the world's most honest form of creation, art. Certain invaluable discussions, imagery, and experiences may never go beyond the confines of abandoned cultural art creations/plannings. However, an optimist would argue the example of “the [art]work of the post impressionist artist Vincent van Gogh. Although his brother was an art dealer in Paris, the center of the art world in the late 19th century, van Gogh sold only one painting in his lifetime. His work was despised and dismissed by all but a few faithful friends and supporters” ... “Even if contemporary artists do not know these specific facts about van Gogh, fine arts culture is constructed upon the story of the rejected artist whose work is ultimately recognized for its greatness (Plattner, 1988). With avenues for lifetime success presented to artists, some will choose to retain honesty/accuracy/culture in their artwork over appealing to “algorithms” presented to them. One day receiving the deserved credibility and recognition their art should have received in the immediacy of its creation and more importantly, contributing to the zeitgeist and cultural reference of its time.

Bibliography and Annotations

Fasche, Melanie. “Making Value and Career Building in the Creative Economy - Evidence from Contemporary Visual Art: Melanie Fasche.” *Springer*, Springer International Publishing, 2017, www.springer.com/gp/book/9783319540290.

Fasche focuses on the artists career, specifically the monetary, promotion, and popular success of what creative avenues are taken. Acknowledging that art “can hardly be grasped by conventional economics terms and rational agents”, there is still a competitive process of making value in art. However skewed by the ‘fact’ that creativity and talent need to be *given* value. Value that is a “continuous but unpredictable process that is socially and spatially entangled, determined by individual practices, power relations, reciprocity and unintended effects...”, ultimately creating an uneven distribution of power and reward.

Plattner, Stuart. “A Most Ingenious Paradox: The Market for Contemporary Fine Art.” *Jstor.org*, 1988, www.jstor.org/stable/683126.

Plattner discusses the bizarre nature of the art world/art market in which at every stage of the process (art production, art dealing, and art purchase/investing) there are variables that in any other field would be economically irrational (amongst other anthropological qualities), hence the ‘paradox’. Plattner attempts to make sense and create rationality of the process, as art “as

a non utilitarian good, occupies a higher cultural position than merely useful things” there is only so much explanation feasible.

Sidorova, Elena. “The Cyber Turn of the Contemporary Art Market.” *Arts*, vol. 8, no. 3, 2019, p. 84., doi:10.3390/arts8030084.

Sidorova draws a focused discussion on the art market in the digital age (‘art market’ in terms of mainly galleries/auction houses interactions/transactions). The journal maintains a neutral stance on the evolving art market as the objective is to simply educate the reader on the evolving and newly developed systems if the digital/tech adopted art market. Algorithms, AI (artificial intelligence), and secure digital currencies are all discussed in their integration to the mainstream art market systems. Sidorova acknowledges and discusses the growing position the “social media art market” holds in the overall art market, as it facilitates a significant bridgepoint in artist/dealer/buyer connectivity.

McAndrew, Clare. “The Art Market 2020.” *Artseconomics.com*, 2020, d2u3kfw92fzu7.cloudfront.net/The_Art_Market_2020-1.pdf.

Marwick, Alice, and Rebecca Lewis. “Manipulation and Disinformation Online.” 15 May 2017.

Editorial, Artsy, and Benjamin Sutton. “Gallery Sales Dropped 36% and Online Auctions Surged as COVID-19 Hit the Art World.” *Artsy*, 18 Sept. 2020, www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-gallery-sales-dropped-36-art-market-reeled-pandemic.