

EVENTS AND CONFERENCES

Marius Müller*

Art for the People? Questioning the Democratization of the Art Market TIAMSA's Second International Conference Vienna, 27-29 September 2018

Deloitte's *Art and Finance Report 2016* states that "the art market [is] opening up to new audiences – this is the biggest challenge, but it is also the biggest opportunity";¹ indicating a phenomena that is also called the democratization of the art market. Taking up these developments, The International Art Markets Studies Association's (TIAMSA) annual conference 2019 in Vienna focused on the art world and the market that has traditionally been called the domain of the elites and has thrived on exclusivity.

After opening with a round table on "The Art Market and the Internet" at Vienna Contemporary, the first conference day at the Blickle Kino close to the Belvedere was enriched by several historical contributions. When speaking of democratization, it is important to remember, as explained

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¹ <https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/global/Documents/Finance/gx-fsi-art-finance-report-2016.pdf> [accessed: 23.03.2019], p. 93.

by Filip Vermeyleen (Rotterdam), that the early modern period in the Dutch Republic was characterized by a ubiquitous art trade. Later during this first conference day Stoyan Sgourev (Paris) showed how the current situation on the art markets reminds one of the 17th-century Netherlands. Already then, a simultaneous democratization of art through increasing sales of inexpensive art took place alongside the constitution of a high-end market dominated by wealthy collectors with a financial-investor profile. Following up on this perspective, Lukas Fuchsgruber (Berlin) examined the 19th-century auction houses in Paris as real urban spaces accessible for a larger public. Leanne Zalewski (New Britain, CT) later explored the parallels between the dealer-experts in the 19th and 21st centuries. Despite the fact that the internet has made information on art trade more accessible, it appears that these “historical” figures still have an essential role within the art market. This assumption was confirmed by Michaela Jenisova (Prague), who presented the well-known advisor-collector relationship between Wilhelm von Bode and Rudolf Kann in late 19th century.

Focusing on the socio-economic perspective of online auctions, Ronit Milano (Be'er Scheva) assured the participants of the necessity of market liberalization in moral terms by means of wider commercial platforms for art. Revolutionary change – aspired to or real – in the whole art system however is certainly not a new phenomenon. As Clarissa Ricci (Venice) outlined, already in 1970 social activism was the driving force in achieving radical changes in the art system. Venice Biennale became a democratized art exhibition after the national bureaucracy had to yield to public demands. Anne-Sophie Radermecker's (Brussels) research on the market reception of the new connoisseurship supported the concern that by continuing to focus on the artist's name, salerooms tend to sustain a relatively outdated and anachronistic vision of early modern art, which indirectly reinforces information asymmetry on this market segment. Prior to the contribution by Santiago González Villajos (Madrid), who shed light on street art and its reception by the market, Jack Roberts (London) vividly argued that online market's growth is bringing about a greater need for the traditional art dealer. As for the effects of art market's democratization on private museums, Dorothee Wimmer (Berlin) demonstrated that the rising number of private art museums in the past two decades is caused by art activities being turned into global or local investment strategies. Closing the first day, Payal Arora's (Rotterdam) keynote lecture “Automating Culture: How Digital Platforms are Shaping the Art World” led the audience into an enriching game of thought, asking – in the spirit of Walter Benjamin – about the aura of a work of art not in times of mere “technical reproducibility” but in times of “digital purchasability”.

The historical approach was taken once again in the introduction to the second conference day at the Dorotheum by Luís Urbano Afonso (Lisbon), who spoke on the modes of collecting, displaying, and use of African ivories in 16th-century Western Europe. Leaving aside Africa as the sole origin of those objects collect-

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ed and examined in Europe, Stephanie Dieckvoss (London) offered an important introduction into the collecting practices on the African continent and into genuinely African art, focusing on the case of the Musée d'Art Contemporain Africain Al Maaden in Marrakech. Malvika Maheshwari afterwards illustrated how art markets in democracies respond to the increasing outbursts of offence-taking and violent attacks on artists and art works, with a special emphasis on India as the world's largest democracy. Artists, critics, art dealers, collectors, and auctioneers tend to shed their inhibitions to reap profits in the face of such censorious pressure and violence, the speaker explained.

TIAMSA welcomes the establishment of TIAMSA groups as a great way to explore specific themes or provide local access to art market studies. Following this principle, Alicja Jagielska-Burduk (Opole) and Philipp Nürnberger (London) launched TIAMSA Legal as a new thematic group aiming to identify and analyse the most pressing legal issues revolving around and relevant to the art market. The co-chairs therefore offered insights into the already established nexus in the art market-related legal world around the globe and ongoing common projects. The legal panel was formed by practitioners and dealt with very practice-oriented legal issues. Justin Ferland (Geneva) introduced the Responsible Art Market (RAM) Initiative, which has been bringing together stakeholders since 2015. RAM is a reaction to the globalized art market and exemplifies the commitment of the market itself to self-regulation. Thomas Steinruck (Zurich) also focused on self-regulatory frameworks that are already shaping the art market, not by norms but by standards, such as: the Basel Art Trade Guidelines (2012) and The Art Basel Art Market Principles and Best Practices (2017). With Saskia Hufnagel's (London) paper on the prosecution of money-laundering in the art market, the panel was provided with an insight into the effects of European Union legislation on the art markets in the Member States. The final speaker, Fernando Loureiro Bastos (Lisbon), brought the interdisciplinary audience into the topic of the "Legal Implications of Street Art as a 'Democratized'/'Open' Form of Art", which deals with the question of how new artistic creations are transferred into the legal world, e.g. as cultural heritage.

TIAMSA's second annual conference – with its international speakers from a wide variety of academic and practical fields – shed light on the questions: To what extent has the art market been affected by developments such as democratization in the past? How is it embracing today's democratic potential, and at what cost? Digital innovations – from search engines and big data analytics to virtual auctions – already transformed the long-existing *modus operandi* of the art world and the traditional structure of the art market. Due to the art market living up to the new environment, it is also becoming less opaque and therefore more transparent. This development means new challenges for interdisciplinary art market research – which TIAMSA supports since 2016. TIAMSA's 2019 conference will take place at the Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon on 21-22 November 2019. For more information, see: www.artmarketstudies.org.