

# **Commercial Galleries in Copenhagen, London and Reykjavík: a comparative study of the formations, contexts and interactions of galleries founded between 1985 and 2002**

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by

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## **Abstract**

This study situates the commercial gallery operator, or 'gallerist', in the context of art world conceptions. Specifically it examines the contexts and activities of gallerists in Copenhagen, London's East End and in Reykjavík in the era of the Young British Artists and the revitalised art market that phenomenon engendered. Drawing upon interviews with gallerists and studies of urban culture and environments, this thesis reveals that gallerists are driven by creativity and artistic vision, often at the expense of market awareness. The London and Copenhagen gallerists saw themselves as pioneers who through their actions not only established new art businesses but developed new cultural quarters in these cities. The tiny capital city of Reykjavík exposed the significance of scale and position; its new galleries remained within the comfort zone of established art institutions in the city centre. They were small and internationally isolated, and appeared much like those found in provincial cities in larger countries. Copenhagen also lacked the world city status of London and its gallerists sought recognition and buyers through international art fairs. In contrast, London found itself at the heart of an international art world. Galleries were established in such numbers in the East End as to produce an art world momentum of its own. Gallerists in the more cosmopolitan settings of London and Copenhagen possessed a greater sense of community; those in constrained markets of Reykjavík retained a small-town competitiveness. The creative desires of gallerists were also reflected in their proactive pursuit of artists; it was they who decided what to show and who to patronise. While the majority of gallerists favoured art with a conceptual edge, all denied that they were specialising in this work. They emphasised the diversity of the works on sale. The London and Copenhagen markets were mature markets but those in Reykjavík appeared more regulated. Within these cities it was possible by these means to detect distinctive art worlds as products of, and woven into, the cities they inhabited.

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**Part 1**

**Introduction**

# 1 Introduction

The 'art world' has been the subject of substantial academic and popular deliberation since the 1960s when Danto coined the term and, in doing so, gave art, art markets, and artists a secular theoretical home.<sup>1</sup> Thus he opens up the possibility of examining the gallery-owning commercial dealer – 'the gallerist' – as an inhabitant of the art world. In Danto's conception of the art world, the actor-participants are few and quite elite. Gallerists do not belong in this rarefied world, but Danto's view did not remain unchallenged for long.

This study aims to look at contemporary gallerists in order to understand and explain their constitution, role and purpose in contemporary art worlds. This is a study of the contexts, formation and interactions of European commercial galleries founded between 1985 and 2002.

The study centres on commercial gallery districts in three European capital cities: Islands Brygge and Valby in Copenhagen, London's East End and Reykjavik's city centre. For shorthand and to aid comparative analysis the three cities will be referred to as the COLORE cities (COpenhagen, LONdon and REYkjavik). This shorthand will also permit a consideration of different pairings such as CORE, COLO and LORE. This is inspired by the abbreviation COBRA which refers to a group of post war abstract painters from Copenhagen, Brussels and Amsterdam.

The temporal frame of this study has been determined by the period which saw the rise and success of the Young British Artists (YBAs) with the

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<sup>1</sup> Arthur C. Danto, 'The Artworld', *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. LXI [61], No. 19, (1964), pp. 571-584.

legendary 'Freeze' show in 1988, their patron Charles Saatchi and an explosion of contemporary art galleries in London's East End in the years leading up to the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Together they signified the rise of a new cultural episteme within the geography of COLORE cities because of the new cultural, economic and geographical energy that seemed to be at work. This produced what became known and marketed as Brit Art, an economic and cultural phenomenon with international impact. Not far below the surface of this art phenomenon one finds the gallerist and, in doing so, a justification for the study undertaken within this thesis.

The apparent prosperity of art worlds has not escaped the eyes of politicians and Prime Minister Tony Blair was not shy about crediting himself and his government for their role in the success of contemporary art. In a speech given at Tate Modern on 6 March 2007, he claimed that since 1997 there had been a golden age in British culture as a result of the Labour government's doubling of cultural funding. Furthermore

Mr Blair said he was delighted to be speaking in one of the "most extraordinary modern icons in our country today", and opined that arts and culture were absolutely at the heart of what the new modern Britain was all about, actually. "For me the whole process of stimulation through books, plays, films, works of art; the delight in design, in architecture, in crafts: all of this enlarges the country's capacity to be reflective, interested and bold. Dynamisms in arts and

culture therefore create dynamism in a nation,” he said encouragingly.<sup>2</sup>

Emanating from a buoyant European nation, this had a ripple effect. British Minister of Culture, Tessa Blackstone, was interviewed for the Icelandic national newspaper *Morgunblaðið* in 2002. In this, Blackstone stated that the London market for contemporary art was one of the strongest in Europe because of excellent art universities nurturing increasing numbers of artists. She also claimed it reflected renewed public interest and increasing numbers of foreign investors.<sup>3</sup>

Little of this had anything to do with government funding. There was a coincidence in the early private investment in art initiated by Charles Saatchi, the revival of optimism in 1997 with the emergence of *New Labour* and the year of the *Sensation* show at the Royal academy. Arts Council Chief Executive, Peter Hewitt’s claim in 2002 that ‘People don’t come to Britain for the weather or the food, but they certainly come for the arts’,<sup>4</sup> seemed to have a new resonance.

This is the context in which this thesis was produced. It is centred on three core aspects: 1. The place of the commercial art gallery in the art world; 2. The effects of location and geography; 3. The construction of value. I shall briefly introduce these themes here.

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<sup>2</sup> Charlotte Higgins, ‘Blair reminisces about Labour’s ‘golden age’ of the arts; others wonder where it went’, *The Guardian*, Wednesday 7 March, 2007, pp.18-19, (p.18).

<sup>3</sup> Fríða Björk Ingvarsdóttir, ‘Gagnvirk tengsl menningar og mennta’, [Interactive Relations of Culture and Education], *Morgunblaðið* 12 May 2002, p. 8.

<sup>4</sup> Martin Kettle, ‘Things can only get better’, *The Guardian*, G2, 11 July 2002, pp. 14-15 (pp. 14, 15).

## Placing the commercial gallery in the art world

Beyond its use in the political production of 'Cool Britannia',<sup>5</sup> Brit Art also, in its explicit understanding of the art world and its challenging use of materials and concepts, acted as the last phase in a 20<sup>th</sup> century art historical tradition of shock and criticism (including, for example, Futurism, Dadaism and Surrealism, abstract art, happenings, conceptual art, land art and video art). The 'new art' echoed the readymades of an older generation of artists in its cynical mocking of its patrons. Anthropologist Alfred Gell argued that a work such as Hirst's shark in formaldehyde<sup>6</sup> is embedded in the notion of readymades and 'the post-Duchampian tradition of "concept" art and, as such, is capable of being evaluated as good art, bad art, middling art, but definitely art of some kind'.<sup>7</sup> Implicitly, this stresses the role of history and institutions as deciding powers in what is consecrated as art, but without questioning the power of the artist or the relevance of the gallerist. This art has been institutionalised by both public and private art galleries whether it is the Tate or Saatchi Gallery.

Design and communications researcher, Jonathan Vickery, has also stressed the institutional role in his 'Organising art: Constructing aesthetic value'. Vickery uses Carl Andre's readymade *Equivalent VIII* (1966, [1972]) as an example of how the Tate Gallery canonised Andre's brick structure. There is a good deal of Danto's institutional and aesthetic theory in these

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<sup>5</sup> On Cool Britannia, see David Christopher, *British culture: an introduction* (London and New York, Routledge, 1999), p. 20.

<sup>6</sup> The title of Damien Hirst's work is *The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living*, 1991.

<sup>7</sup> Alfred Gell, 'Vogel's Net: Traps as Art Works and Artworks as Traps', *Journal of Material Culture*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1996), pp. 15-38, (p. 16).

arguments. However, it helps us little in understanding how art is processed in art worlds in times when aesthetic values have more or less been written off.<sup>8</sup>

Over the last 150 years, art markets and dealers in many of the major cities of the world have been subjected to sharp critical analysis. In England, for example, Roger Fry had a leading role in shaping perceptions of art dealers and the local art market in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. There are, unfortunately, no similar studies of 20<sup>th</sup> century art markets in the CORE cities from the same period. During his lifetime, Fry became increasingly aware of the complexities of the market but maintained a faith in the state, and the working and middle classes as the appropriate powers to generate demand for art. He saw the lack of effective competition in the art market as a consequence of corruption and in doing so perpetuated doubts about the contributions of private companies and individuals.<sup>9</sup> Fry's admirer Craufurd Goodwin constructs Fry's legacy as being an advocate for the importance of class over that of private initiatives in art markets. Class, of course, also pervades Pierre Bourdieu's discussion of art and the politics of artistic distinction, but his view is quite the reverse of that of Fry.

Bourdieu saw 'agents'<sup>10</sup> in the field of cultural production as instilling class-related values in art: 'whose combined efforts produce consumers

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<sup>8</sup> Jonathan Vickery 'Organising art: Constructing aesthetic value', in *Museums in the Material World*, ed. by S. J. Knell (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), pp. 214-229.

<sup>9</sup> Craufurd D. Goodwin, 'An Interpretation: Roger Fry and the Market for Art' in *Art and the Market: Roger Fry on Commerce in Art*, Selected Writings, ed and with an Interpretation by Craufurd D. Goodwin, foreword by Asa Briggs (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1998), pp. 1-65, (pp. 30, 21, 33).

<sup>10</sup> The main players in the scheme – the agents – according to Bourdieu are artists, writers, critics, art critics, publishers, gallery directors, families, teachers, art dealers, patrons, museums, galleries and academies. The list is in Pierre Bourdieu's book *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, ed. and introduced by Randal Johnson (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), p. 37. [First published in English 1993 by Polity Press]. To expand on Bourdieu's list and for the benefit of this study I have added the following factors: commercial

capable of knowing and recognizing the work of art as such, [...]'.<sup>11</sup> For Bourdieu, the art market was a serious political instrument; a class-related conspiracy which, in making artists, gallerists and galleries, perpetuated the elite. His ideas also place the gallerist as a primary force activating art in society. If Gell saw contemporary art as a product of its history and Fry of the establishment, Bourdieu saw a network of conspirators.

Fry's binary – black and white – view of the art market, which sees the gallerist as a negative aspect, has been slow to fade but it has begun to do so. In the wake of this changed attitude, there has been an increasing desire to understand the art dealer. Sociologist Olav Velthuis's essay 'Symbolic meanings of prices: Constructing the value of contemporary art in Amsterdam and New York Galleries' argued 'that prices tell rich stories about the caring role dealers want to enact, [...]'.<sup>12</sup> Such work humanises individuals which both Fry and Bourdieu help to demonise. Now gallerists are everyday people, written about in online newsletters such as *ARTINFO* and the *Art Newspaper*. Here commentators, like Marc Spiegler ponder gallerist ecology in articles like 'Do contemporary dealers still need galleries?' and 'Too many galleries, not enough art'.<sup>13</sup>

In Denmark, the earliest discussion of the private sector in the modern art market is contained in the tongue-in-cheek, *Så er der fernisering*.<sup>14</sup> This book mocks every aspect of Danish art in the late 1980s, whether it is

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galleries, collectors, politicians, auctioneers, art magazines, the mass media, the spectators, fakers, smugglers, thieves, art historians, gallerists, art books and art facilitators.

<sup>11</sup> Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, p. 37.

<sup>12</sup> Olav Velthuis, 'Symbolic meanings of prices: Constructing the value of contemporary art in Amsterdam and New York Galleries', *Theory and Society*, Vol. 32 (2003), pp. 181-215 (pp. 207-8).

<sup>13</sup> See <http://www.theartnewspaper.com/news/article.asp?idart=11696> (22/06/2004 and <http://www.theartnewspaper.com/news/article.asp?idart=11588> (04/03/2004 ).

<sup>14</sup> In English: *Now we are going to have a preview*.

mainstream representational art or performances and conceptual art.<sup>15</sup> Published by the sensationalist newspaper, *Ekstra Bladet*, the book typifies that other tradition of ridiculing contemporary art also seen in the British press each year when the Turner prize is awarded. A more serious study by Møller and Nielsen, *Kunst økonomisk set*,<sup>16</sup> recognised the importance of the art market in Denmark. It argued that sales exhibitions should be in the hands of private businesses because public exhibition places like *Kunsthall Charlottenborg* in Copenhagen do not attract the buying public and a large proportion of sales from shows at these venues take place after shows to avoid paying the gallery's fees. Møller and Nielsen also point out that the private sector can offer a range of venues to exhibit and sell art, and is better equipped to collect commission.<sup>17</sup> These authors promote a positive attitude towards art businesses and acknowledge the commercial gallery as a vital factor in the cultural and economic landscape of Denmark. In her book *Kulturen, kunsten og kronerne: Kulturpolitik i Danmark 1961-2001*,<sup>18</sup> Dramaturge, Mia Fihl Jeppesen pushed for the Ministry of Culture to support creative arts like music, art, literature and theatre. She has no particular interest in commercial galleries, but does identify an official tendency to support visible art-distributing institutions rather than invisible artists. In recent years government support to institutions has increased while the riskier

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<sup>15</sup> Ole Lindboe, *Så er der fernisering* [Now we are going to have a preview], (Copenhagen: Ekstra Bladets Forlag, 1987).

<sup>16</sup> In English: *Art in an Economic Perspective*.

<sup>17</sup> Michael Møller and Niels Chr. Nielsen, *Kunst økonomisk set* [Art in an Economic Perspective] (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1999), p. 85. 'Markedet er i stand til at udbyde et ganske stort antal udstillings- og salgssteder, mens Charlottenborg åbenbart ikke tiltrækker et købedygtigt publikum. Det kan selvfølgelig ikke afvises, at en væsentlig del af salget finder sted efter udstillingen for at undgå at betale salgssalær, men det er vel i sig selv et argument for at overlade salgsudstillinger til private, der er bedre til at undgå at blive snydt for deres commission'. See <http://www.kunsthallcharlottenborg.dk/forside> for information about Kunsthall Charlottenborg.

<sup>18</sup> In English: *Culture, Art and Money: Cultural Politics in Denmark 1961-2001*.

experimental work of individual artists operating outside institutions has received decreased funding.<sup>19</sup>

Research into aspects of Icelandic gallerists and art markets has been quite limited throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. My own 2007 essay, 'London og Reykjavík: Tvær borgir og margir listmarkaðir'<sup>20</sup> was published to compare the art markets in these two cities and challenge a prevailing fear of commercial galleries and gallerists among Icelandic artists as well as challenging a tension between galleries. The essay also argued for the notion of multiple and geographically determined art markets within the capital cities, the importance of commercial galleries for art promotion, public support for new galleries, promoting progressive art as well as criticising official interference in art businesses.<sup>21</sup>

## The geographical dimension

Important to the research contained in this thesis have been studies which have recognised the significance of local cultural and geographical contexts. Malcolm Gee's linking of the value of paintings, reputation, and geographies of distribution in early 20<sup>th</sup> century Parisian art markets established a number

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<sup>19</sup> Mia Fihl Jeppesen, *Kulturen, kunsten og kronerne. Kulturpolitik i Danmark 1961-2001* [Culture, Art and Money: Cultural Politics in Denmark 1961-2001]. ([København?]: Akademisk, 2002), pp. 76-77. ['Der har kulturpolitiken i højere grad støttet de synlige institutioner frem for de usynlige kunstnere', som arbejder udenfor de institutioner som formidler kunst. Officiel støtte til Institutioner har i de sidste år stigit mens støtte til usikker eksperimentel kunst af individuel kunstnere som opererer udenfor institutioner har mindsket. Translation by MG.]

<sup>20</sup> In English, 'London and Reykjavík: Two Cities and many art markets'.

<sup>21</sup> Magnus Gestsson, 'London og Reykjavík: Tvær borgir og margir listmarkaðir' [London and Reykjavík: Two Cities and many art markets], *Lesbók, Morgunblaðið* 01 September 2007, pp. 12-13.

of themes which I took up in my study of the COLORE cities.<sup>22</sup> Another important study has been *Creative Quarters: The Art World in London from 1700 to 2000*, by Kit Wedd, Lucy Peltz and Cathy Ross published in 2001. The study succeeds in identifying geographical shifts in the London art worlds and its markets, a move which might be generalised as 'eastwards'.<sup>23</sup> Aidan While, a lecturer in town and regional planning, establishes this move further in his study 'Locating art worlds: London and the making of Young British Art', arguing that 'The sense of challenge was also bolstered by a shift in the geography of the London art world, and particularly the elevation of aspects of the East End's alternative art scene'.<sup>24</sup> While gives importance to 'the ways in which images and symbols of place are inscribed in the production and consumption of cultural commodities, or the use of culture in the promotion and consumption of places themselves [...]'.<sup>25</sup> In some respects, my work has addressed similar questions, but taken an expanded, comparative gallerist- and gallery-oriented view. In contrast, in his essay 'The cultural geographies of Abstract Expressionism: painters, critics, dealers and the production of an Atlantic art', Andy Morris argued 'that Abstract Expressionism is neither the product of New York City, St. Ives or any other location, but that Abstract Expressionism was something which was produced *through* the connections between these places within the network'.<sup>26</sup> It offered a counterview to

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<sup>22</sup> Malcolm Gee, *Dealers, Critics, and Collectors of Modern Painting: Aspects of the Parisian Art Market between 1910 and 1930* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1981), p. 38.

<sup>23</sup> Kit Wedd, Lucy Peltz and Cathy Ross *Creative Quarters: the Art World in London 1700-2000* (London: Marrell and Museum of London, 2001).

<sup>24</sup> Aidan While, 'Locating art worlds: London and the making of Young British Art', *Area*, Vol. 35, No. 3, (2003), pp. 251-263 (p. 261).

<sup>25</sup> While, 'Locating art worlds: London and the making of Young British Art', p. 251.

<sup>26</sup> Andy Morris, 'The cultural Geographies of Abstract Expressionism: painters, critics, dealers and the production of an Atlantic art', *Social & Cultural Geography*, Vol. 6, No. 3, (June 2005), pp. 421-437, (p. 435).

Guilbaut's *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom and the Cold War* which argued that during the Cold War it was a political decision of American authorities to pour money into culture and use abstract expressionism as a political weapon.<sup>27</sup> By doing so, American authorities constructed and manipulated the value of contemporary art via institutions in times when Europe was in ruins after World War Two.

## Constructing value

The final overarching theme concerns the dealer's role in constructing value. Here opinion is sharply divided. Baudrillard saw the New York art market as located beyond good and evil. Where one set of values was tied to a regulated hierarchy, the other was dependent upon investment possibilities and global financial markets.<sup>28</sup> Velthuis argued that gallerists 'succeed in twisting and turning prices in different ways to make sense of their economic life'.<sup>29</sup> Artists, however, have commonly seen the dealer as friend and supporter. Van Gogh, for example, 'freely acknowledged the crucial role a dealer could play in both materially and critically supporting artists. [...] Despite his failure to win public support, he continued to believe in collaboration between dealer and artist that reached from the easel to the

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<sup>27</sup> Serge Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom and the Cold War*, Translated by Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1983), pp. 11, 204.

<sup>28</sup> Jean Baudrillard, 'Transpolitics, Transsexuality, Transaesthetics' Translated by M. Valentin, in *Jean Baudrillard: The Disappearance of Art and Politics*, ed. by W. Stearns and W. Chaloupka (London: Macmillan, 1992), pp. 9-26, (pp. 14-15).

<sup>29</sup> Olav Velthuis, 'Symbolic meanings of prices: Constructing the value of contemporary art in Amsterdam and New York Galleries', p. 208. Regarding gallery discount, see Robert Ayers, 'On Collecting/Ask Art Info: Should You Ask for a Discount?' <http://www.artinfo.com/News/Article.aspx?a=17810&c=175> (29/06/2006).

marketplace and to the broad public'.<sup>30</sup> This idealism contradicts Fry's conceptualisation; for Van Gogh, dealers were not hostile and the market was not out of control. However, 'the irony was grotesque in the light of the artist's own poverty and despair over being unable to sell works during his lifetime'.<sup>31</sup>

Julian Stallabrass saw the dealer's influence in the production of value as rather less helpful: it was manipulative and existing in a 'narrow world'.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, Hatton and Walker described YBAs as mere pawns manipulated by Saatchi the collector-dealer who managed to scare artist Sandro Chia's dealers away. They hint at murky dealings in commercial galleries, preferring instead the openness of auction houses.<sup>33</sup> The irony here, of course, is that major auction houses have been involved in a number of problematic activities that have put question mark on their operation.<sup>34</sup> Despite these modern critics, academic studies have revealed the significance of dealers in the production of value and in activating art. Janet Wolff, for example, credited the dealer-critic system for the success of the Impressionists.<sup>35</sup> Picasso also eventually recognised the worth of dealers.<sup>36</sup> Charles Saatchi also talks

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<sup>30</sup> Michael C. Fitzgerald, *Making Modernism: Picasso and the Creation of the Market for Twentieth – Century Art* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1995), p. 9.

<sup>31</sup> Cynthia Freeland, *But is it art? An Introduction to Art Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 107.

<sup>32</sup> Julian Stallabrass, *High Art Lite: British Art in the 1990s* (London and New York: Verso, 1999), pp. 12, 11.

<sup>33</sup> Rita Hatton and John A. Walker, *Super Collector: a critique of Charles Saatchi* (London ...ellipsis, 2000), pp. 163-165, 167.

<sup>34</sup> See Heather Stewart, 'The price of price-fixing', [guardian.co.uk](http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/2002/mar/27/6/print), Wednesday 27 March 2002, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/2002/mar/27/6/print> (28/01/2009). The article discusses the price-fixing that took place between Sotheby's and Christie's at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

<sup>35</sup> Janet Wolff, *The Social Production of Art*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1993). [First published in 1981].

<sup>36</sup> Fitzgerald, *Making Modernism: Picasso and the Creation of the Market for Twentieth – Century Art* pp. 3, 4, 11, 266. Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler with Henri Hrémioux, *My Galleries and Painters*, with an introduction by John Russell (London: Thames and Hudson, 1971), p. 154. The title of the book suggests an ownership of painters which contradicts contemporary ideas of collaboration.

positively about 'swanky dealers'<sup>37</sup> in his introduction to the book *100: The Work That Changed British Art*.

## **Studying the gallerist**

My aim has been simply to lay down some markers which suggest the need for this study at this time, and what this study might concern itself with (the gallerist in his or her place contributing to the construction of value). I shall deal with these topics in more detail throughout this thesis. In general, the literature places the gallerist as a supporting actor; I intend to locate the gallerist centrally.

The aim of this thesis is to understand the functioning of the gallerist in the contemporary art world through the analysis of interviews with the gallerists themselves, through examination of the local workings of art markets and the study of the cultural environment of COLORE gallerists. This will involve understanding how gallerists manipulate perceptions of art and the commercial gallery, as well as the gallerist's aims, networks and geography of operation. My research questions are:

- What are the aims of the gallerists and what affected the founding process?
- What factors affect the selection of the gallery location?
- How does the gallerist find artists?
- What are the mechanisms for the promotion in the gallery?
- What is the level of control in the contemporary gallery?
- What is the role of style and trend determination among the gallerists?

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<sup>37</sup> Charles Saatchi, 'Introduction' in *100: The Work That Changed British Art* (London: Jonathan Cape and The Saatchi Gallery, 2003), [p.11]. [(p. 11)].

- Do the gallerists belong to and produce art movements and do the artists they collaborate with belong to movements or produce a particular type of art?

As regards the gallerists and their galleries, the initial purpose of the study is to look at the existence of commercial galleries in particular geographical areas and across borders where emerging artists and emerging galleries share the notion of being new in the field.<sup>38</sup>

In order to understand the historical context of the interviewed gallerists and their galleries, I will also discuss an older generation of art dealers. I am also interested in the relations between local, national and international production, and consumption of art in the context of commercial galleries and their geography.

## Key terms and concepts

I first came across the word *gallerist* in a conversation with artist Helgi Þorgils Friðjónsson, which took place in his studio 19 August 2002. Later Friðjónsson used the concept gallerist in his essay 'Í rykmekki farandriddara'<sup>39</sup> where he discusses the smallness of the Icelandic art market, the lack of galleries specialising in exhibiting and selling work by an older generation of artists, as well as young galleries who regularly challenge established taste, and rapid generationshifts where each new generation freezes the old generation out.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> For comparison and discussion about risk shared by newcomers to the field see, Morris Hargreaves McIntyre [consultancy], *Taste Buds: How to cultivate the art market*. Full report ed. by Janet Hadley (London: Arts Council England, October 2004), p. 20. To access the report online See also *Arts Council England* <http://www.newaudiences.org.uk/resource.php?id=490> (29/01/2005).

<sup>39</sup> In English: 'In the knight's cloud of dust'.

<sup>40</sup> Helgi Þorgils Friðjónsson, 'Í rykmekki farandriddara', [In the knight's cloud of dust], *Lesbók Morgunblaðsins* – Mennig/Listir 16 November 2002, pp. 8-9.

The word gallerist is not to be found in English and Danish dictionaries yet, but it is already in the online Icelandic Dictionary of the University of Iceland. Furthermore, gallerist Chris Noraika founder of *One in the Other* uses both the terms art dealer and gallerist in his article 'Going it alone' to refer to a person who sells and promotes art.<sup>41</sup> Today the word gallerist is commonly used in all three languages, English, Danish and Icelandic.

The *gallerist* exhibits, promotes and sells traditional, mainstream or cutting edge contemporary art in the *primary market* where first time sales take place. This activity takes place in a venue called a *gallery* or *commercial gallery* aiming to sell art to members of society.<sup>42</sup> The art on offer is made both by young emerging artists and more established artists that may have been with the gallery some time. Most young galleries are in the phase of being shaped and it is intended that they grow in experience with the artists and the gallerist. *Cutting edge* art is art where new means, ideas and materials are executed to produce an effect. This genre is often within the tradition of readymades and frequently it does not enjoy the status of publicly celebrated art. *Art market* on the other hand is a social space where art is bought and sold in primary, secondary and tertiary markets where it acquires and loses monetary and eventually cultural value. The *established market* offers art that has secured a status and value in society and is applied to both old and modern masters. This art is accepted by groups that may be defined as both art world outsiders and art world insiders. The *art dealer* has a role similar to the *gallerist*, but in the context of this thesis the word applies to

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<sup>41</sup> Chris Noraika, 'Going it alone', *a-n Magazine*, September 2003, pp. 24-25, (pp.24-25).

<sup>42</sup> For detailed analysis of types of galleries see Ian Robertson 'The international art market', in *Understanding International Art Markets and management*, ed. by Ian Robertson (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 13-36 (p. 25).

those who deal in both the *primary* and *secondary market* and sometimes go to great lengths finding works to sell. Traditional dealers often buy in bulk to sell at a later point.<sup>43</sup> The *art world* is the primary space where the activities concerned with art, discussed above, take place. *Geography* as applied to this study refers to both the physical placement of a gallery within the cityscape as well as the gallery's existence beyond its fixed geographical location. Thus, the geographical location has the potential to shrink and expand. Furthermore, concepts like *cultural geography*, referring to local and global culture, and *geographical value* in relation to location as a factor in establishing the value of art, will also be applied. Additional terms and concepts intended to underpin arguments and explain the workings of the markets in question, such as *boundary objects*, *thematic approach* and *networks* will be discussed and explained in appropriate contexts in later chapters.

Apart from the terms and concepts discussed above, I have also come across the concepts *facilitator*, *consultant* and *organizer of information* as descriptions of gallerists and their activities. The word *facilitator* first came to my attention in the context of gallerists while interviewing Max Wigram, founder of *MW Project*, in May 2003. Wigram preferred to call himself a facilitator because he was offering facilities for various projects based on the concept of a TV production company and the activities ranged from research to representing collectors. This notion arose from his dislike of the idea of running a shop, which is basically what galleries are in his opinion.<sup>44</sup> Wigram does not deny that he wants to sell, but he claims that he is producing a

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<sup>43</sup> See Ian Robertson 'The international art market', pp. 24-25. See also Hugh St. Clair, *Buying Affordable Art* (London: Miller's, 2005), pp. 26, 112-113, 116.

<sup>44</sup> *Author's Interview with Max Wigram*, 22 May 2003, pp. 4-5.

number of goods. Similarly, the function of the American gallerist Seth Siegelau, who in the 1960s was prominent in promoting conceptual art, is considered to have changed ‘from that of a dealer to “a consultant”, or “organizer” of information’.<sup>45</sup> In this context, changing definitions of roles can be regarded as a logical way of moving on, or developing a business profile capable of adapting to societal change.

## **The interviews with gallerists**

This thesis is based upon a comparative study of nineteen interviews with contemporary gallerists. By comparing the gallerists and the capital cities it is possible to locate what is particular about each location as each component acts as a point of reference and contrast. Through comparison it is possible to identify and evaluate the meaning of similarities and differences and explain local workings and forces affecting the gallerists. Comparison also permits the identification of distinguishing and unifying themes. Both Reykjavík and Copenhagen seemed to respond to the Brit Art phenomenon and yet reveal that the art markets were different in those countries. It made for a logical choice for comparative study and to understand and differentiate the role of gallerists in the market place. One could not talk of a European art market, I thought, and one way to demonstrate this was through comparative study. I also have linguistic and cultural competence in these three countries which permitted an informed and detailed analysis of each capital. Through comparison it might also be possible to see how far the ripples of Brit Art travelled.

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<sup>45</sup> Alexander Alberro, *Conceptual art and the politics of publicity* (Cambridge, Massachusetts And London, England: The MIT Press, 2003), p. 83.

Consideration was given to the ethical issues surrounding this study and my intention to interview the gallerists. It was essential that a sentiment of mutual trust between interviewer and interviewees was established. At the time of this study, the University of Leicester was yet to formulate its own protocols on research ethics.<sup>46</sup> Following the lead of sociologist, Jennifer Mason, and her assertion of the incompleteness of informed consents, no such document was prepared for interviewees to sign. 'Recognizing that fully informed consent may be impossible always to achieve puts researchers in a powerful and highly responsible position, and means that they have a greater, not a lesser, duty to engage in a reflexive and sensitive moral research practice.'<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, as regards issues like withdrawing a consent, answering whatever question is asked, the use of data and a number of other details, Mason claims that 'there are limits to how adequately you can inform all interviewees'.<sup>48</sup> Consequently, the fieldwork was carried out in accordance with what was considered good practice in 2003 when the interviews were conducted.

Interviews permitted my actors to tell their version of a reality based on first-hand knowledge of events. This is partly a process of personal meaning making on behalf of the interviewee and partly a construction of knowledge 'through dialogic (and other) interaction during the interview. [...] According to this perspective, meanings and understandings are created in an interaction, which is effectively a co-production, involving researcher and interviewees'.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> See Copyright and Ethics, University of Leicester, <http://www.le.ac.uk/emoha/howtointerview/copyright.html> (16/01/08).

<sup>47</sup> Jennifer Mason, *Qualitative Researching*, Second ed. (London *et al*: Sage Publication, 2002) p. 82.

<sup>48</sup> Mason, *Qualitative Researching*, p. 81.

<sup>49</sup> Mason, *Qualitative Researching*, p. 62-63.

Interviews are a two-way process where interviewees can withhold information or be very generous depending on the questions asked or personal situation. The challenge for the interviewer is to encourage the interviewee to speak freely without interrupting the narrative. What goes on the audio tape is the interviewee's version of what he/she considers to be valid information in relation to his/her knowledge, personal understanding and communication during the interview. In this case the final result gives access to the person's understanding of his or her profession. Then the produced dialogue is subject to analysis and contextualising in relation to literature on the subject as far as it exists. Hence it is possible to understand the experience of people in three different cities and, to some extent, three different cultures.

Interviews were based on 37 questions focussing on four themes: the founding of the gallery; the stock and stable of artists; dealing; and promotion. The same questions were used in all the interviews but sometimes they were rephrased during the interviews, but without changing their meaning, and new questions also emerged from the informant's narrative. Thus I was always ready to allow both myself and the 'interviewee(s) to develop unexpected themes',<sup>50</sup> and issues as Mason suggests. Sometimes these open-ended approaches led to unexpected thoughts by the interviewees. This gave me a wide range of responses that had the potential to throw a sharp light on my topic of research. The average interview time proved to be circa 45 minutes but I spent two hours with Diamandidou, Lárusson and Þórisdóttir.

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<sup>50</sup> Mason, *Qualitative Researching*, p. 62.

In August 2002, I undertook a short research trip to Iceland to introduce myself and my research to gallerists and prepare informally for the interviews. The gallerists proved to be both interested and helpful. Before leaving the UK, in March 2003 to undertake the interviews in Iceland, I emailed and called the gallerists I wanted to talk to; it proved to be easy to make appointments in Reykjavik. I knew all the galleries in advance except *Gallery Hlemmur*. My general feeling was that some of the Icelandic gallerists were ambitious about establishing a professional contemporary art market and establishing international contacts.

The second series of interviews were made in Copenhagen in April 2003. To locate prominent galleries I searched the internet; an article on the Copenhagen gallery scene published in *Art Review* was also very helpful.<sup>51</sup> Then I emailed the *Danish Gallery Association* and received some invaluable information about contemporary art galleries from its president, art dealer Henrik Kampmann.<sup>52</sup> After having researched the relevant galleries' websites, the gallerists were emailed. The emails were followed up with phone calls. It was fairly easy to make appointments in Copenhagen and the selected gallerists were both interested and supportive and very generous about providing newspaper articles and other additional material about their galleries.

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<sup>51</sup> P[ablo] L[afuente], 'Copenhagen', *Art Review*, Vol. LIII, (July and August (2002), p. 43, (p.43).

<sup>52</sup> Email to the author from Henrik Kampmann 14 January, 2003. For information about the Danish Gallery Association, see <http://www.danskgalleri.dk/english/index.html> (01/10/2003), this is now: <http://danskgalleri.dk/index.php?c=Galleri&id=&l=English> (10/06/2009). The Wonderful Copenhagen website listed 'galleries outside the immediate city centre,' <http://www.woco.dk/show.asp?id=677&templateid=8> (31/03/2003). The same list 'Galleries around the corner' can also be accessed from [http://www.woco.dk/composite\(753\).htm](http://www.woco.dk/composite(753).htm) (31/03/2003).

The last interview sessions took place in the East End of London in May 2003. Preparations for the interviews were different from preparations to the other sessions because they started in 2002 when I attended the 14th London Art Fair, *Art 2002*, which ran from 16-20 January. I did so because a vital part of that year's fair was to introduce new galleries to visitors. Amongst these was the East End galleries, *One in the Other* and *Rhodes+ Mann*, together with the *Whitechapel Gallery* and *ACME*.<sup>53</sup> Later in the year, I also participated in the inaugural East End gallery weekend, *F-EST*, held from 4 to 6 October. The weekend included late openings, talks, events, guided tours and parties. This collective product of the East End galleries was intended to boost networking opportunities and increase

awareness of the East End's rich cultural life to local people, other Londoners, and visitors to the city. The aims are access, education and interaction with the community at all levels, to be achieved by forging new creative links between arts and local businesses.<sup>54</sup>

The third event involving the East End gallery scene was *The Galleries Show* at the *Royal Academy of Arts* from 14 September to 12 October 2002.<sup>55</sup> Six of

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<sup>53</sup> ACME has supported art and artists since 1972 by providing cheap studios in East and South East London.

<sup>54</sup> *F-EST Map and Program* (London: Pocket London, 2002). [No pagination]. [F-EST handout].

<sup>55</sup> See *The Galleries Book* (London: Royal Academy Publications, 2002). See also Simon Tait, 'Sensation Seeker', *Museums Journal*, Vol. 102, No. 7, (2002), pp. 22-23, 25, (pp. 22-23, 25). In this interview, with Norman Rosenthal exhibition secretary of the Royal Academy it is stated that the show 'will be an art fair that will look like an exhibition with 17 different displays. 'Each gallery will be asked to make a statement, sometimes with one artist, sometimes a group show. I want to say that as far as new art is concerned, and this is just a simple historical fact going back at least 120 years, the great decisions about art have certainly not been taken by curators, and very rarely by collectors, but by artists and by dealers', p. 23, suggesting that the art market is artist-dealer controlled.

the galleries participating in the show are included in my research. This research therefore had a formative impact on the final selection of gallerists to interview.

Making appointments with East End gallerists was extremely difficult and my list of prominent informants changed on a daily basis. The contacting process was the same as with Copenhagen and Reykjavik, emails to start with followed up by telephone calls. Sometimes a number of calls were needed, for example to *Victoria Miro Gallery*, *Matt's Gallery*, *MW Project* and *Vertigo*. Every time I went to London to make an interview I personally went to other galleries on my list to introduce myself and use my charm to convince the relevant gallerists that I knew what I was doing and my purpose was legitimate and to make an appointment. Despite having a hectic time I considered myself very lucky, managing to book nine interviews with extremely important high profile gallerists.

Before each interview started I briefed my informants again about the research and asked if they had any questions, but none of them needed any extra clarifications. At the end of the interviews informants were asked if they were willing to appear under their full names and whether the gallery could be mentioned in the thesis. All my interviewees agreed to this arrangement. Then relevant boxes in the *Fieldwork Record Sheet* were ticked and we shook hands.

In addition to interviewing gallerists, my visits to cities were also used to collect data. I undertook three research trips to Copenhagen: April 2003; May 2004; and May 2005. The first trip helped to establish contact with a new generation of key players in the contemporary Copenhagen art markets. On

the second trip in 2004 an older generation of art dealers were visited in order to acquire information about early dealerships in the city, so establishing a historical context. This was necessary because research into the activities of early dealerships proved non-existent. Furthermore, Annette Birch – daughter of art dealer Børge Birch – was able to provide me with a manuscript containing stories about her father's activities. Art dealer Kampman also proved extremely helpful in providing basic information about early Copenhagen dealers. In addition, gallery websites have provided important information.

Visits to Reykjavík to undertake fieldwork, literature research and to interview gallerists took place in August 2002, March 2003 and May to August 2004. Gallery websites and other material produced in the galleries also provided vital information about galleries in the city. As an example, the website of *Gallery Hlemmur* is still active and contains an archive of the media coverage the gallery enjoyed.<sup>56</sup> Like Copenhagen, there is no academic research into early Reykjavík dealerships, although an important BA dissertation, *Gallerí og sýningarsalir í Reykjavík 1900-2000*,<sup>57</sup> by art historian Guðni Tómasson provides an interesting account of exhibition spaces in Reykjavík, but without paying a particular attention to the activities of gallerists.

Discussion concerning the East End art market is distributed around various media and there is more information about the contemporary London market in art historical literature than in Reykjavik and Copenhagen. Literature on the history of the London art market is available, and the rise of the 1990s

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<sup>56</sup> Anonym, Gallery Hlemmur 'Um fjöllun', <http://www.hlemmur.is> (10/08/2009).

<sup>57</sup> English: *Galleries and exhibition spaces in Reykjavik 1900-2000*.

art market is available in the literature on the YBA generation and in art historical studies. In addition there is a number of articles, booklets and brochures tackling the East End art scene from the 1960s to the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, although this body of literature does not contain a great deal of information about art markets *per se*. A number of field trips to the East End have taken place since 2002 when the first research trip took place. A key event was to attend the *F-EEST* gallery weekend in October 2002 and in 2003. In May 2003 the interviews took place and two field trips were undertaken in June 2005 to catch up with developments.

Each city is viewed as a distinct geographical and cultural entity, despite any interconnections between the areas internally and the big markets. Within the areas in question there are a number of players interacting with each other and by doing so they may shape the way cutting edge art is appreciated, disapproved of, played with and manipulated.

The case studies interviews with 19 gallerists took place in 2003: nine in London (15 to 22 May); five in Copenhagen (10 to 15 April) and five in Reykjavík (18 to 21 March) (see Table 1).<sup>58</sup> All the informants were active gallerists at the time of the interviews except two in Reykjavik:

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<sup>58</sup> See also Appendix, Gallerists interviewed in this study.

<b>London: Founder</b>	<b>Gallery</b>
Andrew Mummery	Andrew Mummery Gallery
Bea de Souza	The Agency Contemporary
Ronnie Simpson	Mobile Home (Not active in 2009)
Chris Noraika	One in the Other
Angela Diamandidou	EC Art Space
Robbin Klassnik	Matt's Gallery
Victoria Miro	Victoria Miro Gallery
Christine Shearn	Vertigo Gallery
Max Wigram	MW Project
<b>Copenhagen: Founder</b>	<b>Gallery</b>
Christian Chapelle,	Mogadishni
Christina Wilson	Gallery Christina Wilson
Gustav Gimm	Gustav Gimm (Not active)
Nils Stærk	Nils Stærk Contemporary Art
Nicolai Wallner	Gallery Nicolai Wallner
<b>Reykjavík: Founder</b>	<b>Gallery</b>
Þóra Þórisdóttir, Valgerður Guðlaugsdóttir	Gallery Hlemmur (Closed as of January 2004)
Pétur Arason, Ragna Róbertsdóttir, Ingólfur Arnarson	Exhibition Space Second Floor (Not active)
Tryggvi Páll Friðriksson	Gallery Fold
Edda Jónsdóttir	i8
Hannes Lárusson	Gallery 11 (One One) (Not active)

**Table 1:** Interviewed gallerists and their galleries

In order to analyse the interviews with relevant gallerists and understand their activities, a thematic approach has been adopted. This approach made the histories told by the informants more accessible than if they had been un-themed.

In her discussion of thematic analysis, Jodi Aronson identifies a number of key elements in the method where interviews create the foundations on which thematic analysis is based. Firstly, thematic analysis focuses on 'identifiable themes and patterns of living and/or behaviour'.<sup>59</sup> The second phase is to list patterns of experiences. Thirdly, all the data that relates to patterns that have already been classified is identified. Then related patterns are combined and catalogued into sub themes. Aronson also points out, with a reference to Taylor and Bogdan, that 'themes are defined as units derived from patterns such as "conversation topics, vocabulary, recurring activities, meanings, feelings or folk sayings and proverbs."<sup>60</sup> 'Themes that emerge from the informants' stories are pieced together to form a comprehensive picture of their collective experience.'<sup>61</sup> 'Thematic studies are, therefore, as argued by nursing theorist M. M. Leininger, about "bringing together components or fragments of ideas or experiences, which often are meaningless when viewed alone."<sup>62</sup> The downside of this approach is that a series of interviews are used to create an account that can be applied to all

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<sup>59</sup> Jodi Aronson, 'A Pragmatic View of Thematic Analysis', *The Qualitative Report*, Volume 2, Number 1 (Spring 1994), <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/BackIssues/QR2-1/aronsons.html> (15/05/2006).

<sup>60</sup> S. J. Taylor and R. Bogdan, *Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods: The Search for Meanings* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1989), p. 131. Quoted in Jodi Aronson, 'A Pragmatic View of Thematic Analysis'.

<sup>61</sup> Aronson, 'A Pragmatic View of Thematic Analysis'.

<sup>62</sup> M. M. Leininger, 'Ethnography and ethno nursing: Models and modes of qualitative data analysis', in *Qualitative Research Methods in Nursing*, ed. by M. M. Leininger (Orlando, FL: Grune & Stratton, 1985), pp. 33-72. Quoted in Jodi Aronson, 'A Pragmatic View of Thematic Analysis'.

the informants instead of making each individual's voice heard and a special experience within the overall theme of a particular research project. However, it needs to be taken into account when gallerists express similar ideas to explain as far as possible why this might happen. Despite this, this study intends to prioritise individual voices, while taking similar ideas into account, without jeopardising individual narratives.

Thematic analysis brings together fragmented bits of knowledge from individuals who share the experience of being gallerists without necessarily being directly connected to each other through family relations or friendship, although the individuals may know about each other. For example, both Wigram and Miro knew about Wallner, and Miro also said she knew about Christina Wilson. In order to explain the process of thematic analysis Aronson gives an example of an interview with a family that has experienced a juvenile justice system. This example can be applied to the analysis undertaken here. The first pattern of shared experience is under the heading *Founding* and is directly linked to a question about whether there was a particular reason for choosing the location of the gallery. Here the 'reason' is an important factor that can link the experiences of each gallerist. Some of the explanations the gallerists give may differ from one informant to the other, while other bits may be exactly the same or similar. Aronson seems not to take into account that differences could create two or more layers of meanings that are equally valid and could be discussed as such, rather than attempting to establish a linear narrative, by bringing together a number of opinions in order to create one agreeable opinion, as Aronson argues, opposing what de Bono describes as

‘vertical thinking’<sup>63</sup> in his book *Serious Creativity*. ‘Vertical thinking’ can also be critical because an interview is never in itself complete. However, the next step is to investigate ‘attitudes’ of the gallerists towards the location and eventually the process of selecting a location. The idea is to see if they reveal or describe themselves, and their actions and selection preferences, through ‘attitudes’ or the use of particular words or phrases that may be loaded with emotions. These attitudes may also include social elements like ‘community’ ‘co-operation’, and ‘distinction’ between gallerists and other components within a geographical area. These can then be directly referred to or paraphrased. Aronson’s approach, taking into account his lack of interest in differences and the ability to see the situations from more than one viewpoint inevitably limits the analysis. Taking into account layers of meanings could create more complex and interesting results than if the gallerists’ answers were taken at face value as something definite without any questioning. Highlighting differences and layers of meanings in gallerists’ statements could therefore be more rewarding than the comprehensive elements stressed by Aronson.

## **Thesis in outline**

The first chapter serves as an introduction, outlining practical and fundamental theoretical and methodological issues including aims, objectives and terminology. Chapter 2 profiles the notion of the ‘art world’ in order to identify and discuss how concepts have been researched, theorised and contextualised in existing literature. By examining the development of the

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<sup>63</sup> Edvard de Bono, *Serious Creativity: Using the Power of Lateral Thinking to Create New Ideas* (London: Harper and Collins Publishers, 1992), pp. 53, 147.

debate I hope to explain the impact art worlds, as primary fields of interaction, have had on gallerists, galleries and artists. Discussion of art worlds is distributed across the literature where it is approached from a variety of angles. The originators of art world analysis, Danto, Dickie and Becker, are not always present when art worlds are discussed; the notion now exists outside the control of theorists as a general concept. The thesis adopts a narrative of increasing resolution. The art world, or art worlds, are considered as overarching fields within which the gallerist operates.

The position of the gallerist in the overall conception of art worlds is examined in the third chapter. Chapter 4 will increase the resolution of the study still further and look at the geography and contexts of the COLORE capitals individually and comparatively. The chapter provides an introduction to the gallery districts, and the galleries themselves. The chapter ends with a review of the field work and the purposes of the next chapters which focus entirely on new research into the galleries in these COLORE cities.

Chapters 5 to 11 discuss the results of the interviews. Chapter 5 looks at issues relating to the founding of the galleries and gallerists' visions. Chapter 6 examines issues of location, focussing on locating the galleries within the cityscape. The seventh chapter looks at how gallerists acquire artists. Chapter 8 looks at the material and concepts used to promote both artists and galleries. Chapter 9 tackles the question of the power of the commercial gallery in the art world. The role of gallerists as determinants of style and trends within art worlds is discussed in Chapter 10. Chapter 11 considers whether gallerists believe that they belong to or produce art

movements. The thesis concludes in Chapter 12, reflecting more generally on the themes that have been explored.

**Part 2**

**Research context**

## 2 Art worlds and art markets

### Introduction

In Chapter 1, I introduced the context for, and methods used in, the writing of this thesis. This chapter provides the overarching context of art worlds and art markets within which gallerists operate. This discussion is necessary, because such notions as 'art worlds' now appear in the literature without reference to the various conflicting theories that brought them into being. In order to contribute to the development of the art world notion, I intend to contextualise this concept by asking: what type of knowledge has been generated about art worlds? How have they been investigated? And what has been the focus of existing knowledge? This chapter considers the views of theorists and commentators who have studied art worlds, and considers how these differing views position the gallerist differently. This chapter leads naturally to the next, which will examine the gallerist in detail. The thesis then builds in resolution from general concepts to the specifics of practice in the COLORE cities.

In contrast to 'art worlds', 'art markets', as cultural spaces where art is bought and sold, have been conceptualised for centuries.<sup>1</sup> However, the foundations for contemporary understandings of art markets were laid in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> Century when the traditional patronage systems of church and

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph Alsop, *The Rare Art Traditions. The History of Art Collecting and Its Linked Phenomena Wherever These Have Appeared* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1982), pp. 41, 42.

aristocracy collapsed.<sup>2</sup> This contributed to making the artist and the original art work the centre of attention. The notion of an art world on the other hand has only been in the public domain since the mid 1960s but, since then, it has become a key concept in contemporary art debate. In the context of this study art markets are understood as one of the components of art worlds.

## **The birth of art worlds 1964-1984**

The distinctive positions of Arthur C. Danto, George Dickie and Howard Becker in shaping the theoretical foundations of 'art worlds' – of a now widely accepted concept – have been widely debated. However, the art world concept did not come into being until 1964, when American Philosopher and art theorist, Danto, published his essay, 'The Artworld'. Here, Danto gradually unveiled his key concepts by giving examples from philosophy, literature, science and art. Aesthetics play a major role in this conceptualisation, and figure in an appreciation of art from the ancient Greeks to Danto's own era. He argued from an elitist position that theoretical foundations and art history were needed to establish the work of art: 'To see something as art requires something the eye cannot decry – an atmosphere of artistic theory, a knowledge of history of art: an art world.'<sup>3</sup> He then goes on to argue that the 'greater the variety of artistically relevant predicates, the more complex the individual members of the art world become; and the more one knows of the entire population of the art world, the richer one's experience with any of its

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<sup>2</sup> See, Janet Wolf, *The Social Production of Art*, p. 11. See also Harrison C. White and Cynthia A. White, *Canvases and Careers: Institutional Change in the French Painting World* (New York et. al: John Wiley & Sons, 1965). The Whites study is very artist focussed.

<sup>3</sup> Arthur C. Danto, 'The Artworld', pp. 580, 581

members'.<sup>4</sup> The demand for social interaction is thus also a part of the production process along with the notion of 'impure' paintings and actors who have acquired an authoritative position (such as connoisseurs) and similarly influential institutions (such as museums).<sup>5</sup> There is also a grain of binary culture in the definition, which is implicit in something being 'impure'. However, even though Danto ends with the impression of art as a mirror that reveals us to our self, it all hangs together on binaries and restricted access: 'Whatever is the artistically relevant predicate in virtue of which they gain their entry, the rest of the Artworld becomes that much the richer in having the opposite predicate available to its members'.<sup>6</sup>

Danto's theory indicated that the art world was bordering on being unreal, in the sense that it is theoretically and aesthetically constructed and intangible: the 'world has to be ready for certain things, the artworld no less than the real one. [...]. It is the role of artistic theories, these days as always, to make the artworld, and art, possible'.<sup>7</sup> In this way, Danto emphasises the importance of aesthetics in the making of art.<sup>8</sup>

Danto uses Andy Warhol's *Brillo Boxes* to demonstrate how a gallery is fundamental to deciding what is a work of art. However, he does so without mentioning which gallery exhibited the boxes: '[...] we cannot readily separate the Brillo cartons from the gallery they are in [...]'.<sup>9</sup> Other sources inform us that Warhol was exhibiting Brillo boxes in the commercial *The Stable Gallery*

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<sup>4</sup> Danto, 'The Artworld', pp. 583-584.

<sup>5</sup> Danto, 'The Artworld', p. 584.

<sup>6</sup> Danto, 'The Artworld', p. 584.

<sup>7</sup> Danto, 'The Artworld', p. 581.

<sup>8</sup> Danto, 'The Artworld', p. 581.

<sup>9</sup> Danto, 'The Artworld', p. 581.

in New York from April 21 to May 9, 1964,<sup>10</sup> the year Danto's essay was published. Danto's notion of the artworld is, then, important to understanding the place of the commercial gallery and gallerists in the construction of artistic value, though he made little of it. I shall return to this point.

Danto remained wedded to this theoretical position, arguing against Dickie's institutional theory, which I shall discuss next: 'So, as in moral judgement, the designation of something as art must be justified, through a discourse of reasons, and cannot, without becoming unacceptably arbitrary, consist simply in declarations.'<sup>11</sup> Danto's theory is undoubtedly philosophical, institutional and social by nature though he pays little attention to this latter, critical, factor.

George Dickie, Danto's contemporary, was also interested in making sense of what consecrated modern art in the social turmoil of the 1960s. In his essay 'Defining Art', he focussed on the sociology of institutions and in so doing empowered those institutions as art makers.<sup>12</sup> But the decision is not only in the hands of an institution *per se* because 'A work of art in the descriptive sense is (1) an artefact (2) upon which some society or some sub-group of a society has conferred the status of candidate for appreciation'.<sup>13</sup> Dickie acknowledges Danto, but identifies a social process based on a social group which awards the status of art to a candidate apparently without any theory, art history or an art world for that matter. While art world practices of both the past and the present are taken into account, Dickie claimed, rather

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<sup>10</sup> 'Andy Warhol's Selected Exhibitions 1952-1987', <http://www.warholstars.org/art/artchron.html> (04/02/2008).

<sup>11</sup> Arthur C. Danto, 'Introduction: Philosophy and Contemporary Art' in *Philosophizing Art: Selected Essays* (Berkeley *et al.* University of California Press, 1999), pp.1-12, (pp. 6-7).

<sup>12</sup> George Dickie, 'Defining Art', *American Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 6, No. 3, (July 1969), pp. 253-256 (p. 256).

<sup>13</sup> Dickie, 'Defining Art', p. 254.

bluntly, 'a work of art is an object of which someone has said, I christen this object a work of art'.<sup>14</sup> Here the art world is dispensed with as a decisive factor; the decision is a personal and institutional one.

Neither Dickie nor Danto mention art dealers as decisive factors in consecrating art although, they both note a great level of personal intervention in the process although this intervention is from Dickie's point of view purely of institutional nature. However, since their studies were published, art dealers, and later gallerists, have become more visible as vital actors of art worlds.

When Dickie published his article 'An Artistic Misunderstanding' in 1993 in response to Richard Wollheim's book *Painting as an Art*<sup>15</sup> Dickie underlined that in his book *Art and the Aesthetic* published in 1974 he 'characterized the artworld as an *informal* institution [...] "a loosely organized, but nevertheless related, set of persons including artists (understood to refer to painters, writers, composers), producers, museum directors, museum-goers ... and others."' <sup>16</sup> Furthermore in his response to Wollheim in 1993, Dickie signalled that the institutional theory is a work in progress as well as being artist focussed:

In all the versions of the institutional theory of art, I have been attempting to capture what it is that artists do when they create art, and I have never thought or said this involves the legislative action of

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<sup>14</sup> Dickie, 'Defining Art', p.256.

<sup>15</sup> Richard Wollheim, *Painting as an Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1987), pp. 13-15. Wollheim argues that the artist's action above anything else makes the painting.

<sup>16</sup> Quoted in George Dickie, 'An Artistic Misunderstanding', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 51, No. 1. (Winter, 1993), p. 70, (pp. 69-71). See also George Dickie, *Art and the Aesthetic: an Institutional Analysis* (Ithaca et al.: Cornell University Press), pp. 12, 29, 31-38, 43, 49, 80, 180.

*representatives* of the artworld. I have always thought of the artworld as the *background context* within which art is created by artists.<sup>17</sup>

In 1975 Dickie published an essay titled 'What is Anti-Art?' to further explain his conceptualisation of the art world as an institution by resorting to traditional dualism. In the article he identified creators, presenters such as gallery managers, art galleries and appreciators as driving forces in establishing and maintaining 'the institution that is the art world'.<sup>18</sup> However, he did not directly mention art dealers or commercial galleries signalling that they were still not valid entries of the art world.

By the end of the 1970s, the art world notion was widely understood to mean an assemblage of actors involved in the production and consumption of art. It was already being used without a need for close definition.<sup>19</sup>

When Becker published his book *Art Worlds* in 1982, a socio-organisational labour-based dimension was added to the art world debate and attention was at last paid to dealers.<sup>20</sup> For Becker, art was a product of social interactions and networking. The strength of his study is that he seems to extend the notion of personal involvement, only hinted at by Danto and Dickie,

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<sup>17</sup> Dickie, 'An Artistic Misunderstanding', p 70.

<sup>18</sup> Dickie, 'What is Anti-Art?' *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (Summer, 1975), p. 419, (pp. 419-421). Towards the end of his essay Dickie philosophises about when art is not worth looking at in relation to artist Vito Acconci's project of moving things from his flat to a gallery as an example of anti-art because nothing is added to it but he regards it as art because it is within the parameters of the art world institution and thus dismissing individual contribution as well as added value and meaning by moving things from one place to the other as Gee pointed out in relation to the Parisian art market. See Gee, *Dealers, Critics, and Collectors of Modern Painting: Aspects of the Parisian Art Market Between 1910 and 1930*, p. 38.

<sup>19</sup> See, for example, Gee, *Dealers, Critics, and Collectors of Modern Painting: Aspects of the Parisian Art Market Between 1910 and 1930*, p. 286.

<sup>20</sup> Howard S. Becker, *Art Worlds* (Berkeley et al: University of California Press, 1982), p. 94.

making it the centre of attention. He emphasises that people have more say about the sanctification of art than institutions or theory. Becker writes,

a great many people are involved in the organized division of labour I have called an art world. Their choices, made throughout the life of a work, and the artist's knowledge of what their standards and choices will probably be, constitute the mechanism by which participation in an art world affects what artists do and the character of the work.<sup>21</sup>

The preferences of a conceptualised target group are, according to this, an important factor in accessing art worlds. Becker boldly states, 'art worlds, rather than artists, make works of art'.<sup>22</sup> He is therefore constantly directing his readers away from the artist and the art work as a centre of attention. What also makes Becker's and Dickie's analysis different from Danto's is that as well as paintings or sculpture they also take into account music and applied arts which all make up the notion of art worlds. In his conceptualisation, interactions of people are vital when putting theory in motion and activating art in society.

For Becker the art world is also a social conspiracy of people who make the news. Here is the sensation of high art prices, celebrity, popular culture, and mass media. Yet there is, he recognises, also a more technical art world. The popular notion of "Art world" is commonly used by writers on the arts in a loose and metaphoric way, mostly to refer to the most fashionable people associated with those newsworthy objects and events that

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<sup>21</sup> Becker, *Art Worlds*, p. 197.

<sup>22</sup> Becker, *Art Worlds*, p.198.

command astronomical prices.<sup>23</sup> The other art world preferred by Becker is more technical, which denotes, in his words, '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 the art world is noted for'.<sup>24</sup> This is also an actor-centred conspiracy of the knowledgeable and their net-working skills in order to create, confirm, and maintain knowledge and decision-making power. Becker seems to be describing a closed web of people, who possess the appropriate theoretical and historical knowledge, more blatantly than what comes through Danto's analysis above. However, Becker's art worlds do not appear to be a democratic community or a system of units supporting artists. The importance of the mass media in promoting art, for example, does not appear to signify increasing public access to art. Art worlds are therefore in Becker's mind complicated and multi-layered, though he does not acknowledge these complexities specifically.

None of these authors pay particular attention to the gallerist, though all in some way offer a place for the gallerist and implicitly it seems that Danto saw Warhol's *Brillo Boxes* in a commercial gallery. Danto on the other hand remained true to his original conception of the role of the institutional theory and the capability of qualified individuals to consecrate art.

In time the contemporary art scene took up the notion of art worlds as a primary concept to describe the social space where art is dealt with. It is now used without critique or question, fixed as a description rather than a theoretical conception.

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<sup>23</sup> Becker, *Art Worlds*, p. x.

<sup>24</sup> Becker, *Art Worlds*, p. x.

## Interior workings of art worlds

Danto, Dickie and Becker promoted the art world concept by implying that everything associated with art is of the art world as long as it has philosophical, aesthetic, institutional or sociological references. In doing so, they opened up the possibility of theoretical study and public discussion as well as mass media dialogue. However, as has been suggested above, these authors do not probe deeply into the internal workings of art worlds, and they barely touch upon the gallerist. Others, however, have unpicked these art worlds in order to locate interactions and influences.

Amongst those studies completed around the time of Becker's publication was Malcolm Gee's, 1981, doctoral thesis, *Dealers, Critics, and Collectors of Modern Painting: Aspects of the Parisian Art Market Between 1910 and 1930*. Gee's focus was on consumption of avant-garde art and art world actors,<sup>25</sup> rather than artists alone, and contextualised art in a world of events, activities, movements and markets. For Gee, a detectable art world was constituted in 19<sup>th</sup> century Paris and developed rapidly between 1910 and 1930. Although focussing on actors like dealers, collectors and critics, artists were obviously at the heart of the whole operation. 'The fundamental structure of the "support-system" [...] remained largely the same not only during the 1930s, but beyond them: many of its characteristics may be recognised in the contemporary art world.'<sup>26</sup> Notably Gee gave prominent roles to dealers in this world.

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<sup>25</sup> Malcolm Gee, *Dealers, Critics, and Collectors of Modern Painting: Aspects of the Parisian Art Market Between 1910 and 1930* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1981), pp. 7, 9.

<sup>26</sup> Gee, *Dealers, Critics, and Collectors of Modern Painting: Aspects of the Parisian Art Market Between 1910 and 1930*, p. 286.

Like Gee, Liah Greenfeld's book, *Different Worlds: A Sociological Study of Taste, Choice and Success in Art* also focuses on the actual practice of art world actors, this time in Israel in the 1980s, rather than on art world theory. Greenfeld's aims are to reveal systems of gate keeping; who decides what is art? She also argues that art and success are social phenomena by locating new ideas about restricted access in which the dealer plays a strong role. She identifies two contrasting art worlds: one based on avant-garde abstract art and the other on accessible figurative painting. Accordingly she assumes

that the two art worlds are two subsystems in the social structure of Israeli painting. [...] At the basis of the theoretical framework suggested here lies the assumption that art worlds connected to different styles – and therefore different artistic ideologies – may differ radically both in terms of the factors that affect the formation of taste, the process of evaluation and patterns of success in them, and in terms of the nature of the influence these factors exert. The art worlds differ in accordance with the variation in the value-system guiding both the production and consumption of art, namely in artistic ideologies and outlooks or perspectives of the public'.<sup>27</sup>

Here informative study opens up the possibility of discussing the art world of video art, the art world of folk art, the art world of abstract art and the art world

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<sup>27</sup> Liah Greenfeld, *Different Worlds: A Sociological Study of Taste Choice and Success in Art* (Cambridge et.al.: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp.1, 4.

of readymades, the art world of conceptual art, as well as the London art world, the East End art world, the Copenhagen art world, the Islands Brygge and Valby art worlds and the Icelandic and the Reykjavik art worlds and art worlds of gallerists. Thus gallerists may experience art worlds differently from other actors. Greenfeld effectively demonstrates that one can produce a focussed – actor-based – conception of art worlds.

This echoes Becker's distinction between art world and craft world, suggesting that way every art work configures micro cosmoses 'within the broad lines of an art world. Every art work creates a world in some respects [...]'.<sup>28</sup> The logic of breaking the art world down into units like this, leads to the culturally specific analysis I adopt in a comparison of art capitals. Thus Greenfeld's application of the art world concept without reference to definition, implicitly suggests that they exist charged with social meanings. Although offering an accessible analysis, Greenfeld's implicit definition of art worlds is based on the practice of insiders; showing, reviewing, paying, consuming and appreciating. By not adopting any prior conception, she implicitly rejects them, preferring instead to possess few assumptions.

Art historian Carol Duncan was also interested in power and argued that the 'high-art world monopolizes high-art prestige, but it does not organize all creative labour',<sup>29</sup> thus arguing against Becker's conceptualisation of art labourers and leaving room for actors to take on the prestigious powers and carve out an operation space for themselves, for example by opening galleries to promote the art they like.

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<sup>28</sup> Howard S. Becker, *Art Worlds*, pp. 281, 63.

<sup>29</sup> Carol Duncan, 'Who rules the art world', in Carol Duncan, *The Aesthetics of Power: Essays in Critical Art History* (Cambridge et.al.: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp.169-188, (p. 187).

Anthropologist, Nancy Sullivan, offers a different take on art worlds focussing on communications rather than a conspiracy of elite power. Her study contributes to the constitution of art worlds as a topic of study. She reflects on the notion of the art world as imagined and then defines it 'as a "discursive formation" constituted of particular social relations at a given time. It is not a cultural group, but a community of common interests [...]'.<sup>30</sup> The art world is based on interactivity rather than one-sided feeding of authoritative information.

In 'Contending Indian Art Worlds', Danish Anthropologist Helle Bundgaard reflects on the general theories of Danto, Dickie and Becker, but then conceptualises the art world as having a plural form understood from the study of practice. She considers the plurality 'art worlds' to be a reflection of diverse meanings and cultures. She does not visualise the art world as a group of consecrated actors who decide what real art is.<sup>31</sup> In this respect, there is a difference of view here between Greenfeld's rich spectrum of artistic activities and Bundgaard's less constrained conceptualisation.

Annuka Jyrämä's *Contemporary Art Markets. Structure and Practices: A Study of Art Galleries in Finland, Sweden, France and Great Britain* also considers Danto, Dickie and Becker.<sup>32</sup> Jyrämä does not set out to examine art worlds but nevertheless reveals her understanding as being a 'place' of production and environment based, rather than actor based. Here the art

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<sup>30</sup> Nancy Sullivan, 'Inside Trading: Postmodernism and the Social Drama of *Sunflowers* in the 1980s Art World', in *The Traffic in Culture: Refiguring Art and Anthropology*, ed. by George E. Marcus and Fred R. Myers (Berkeley et al.: University of California Press, 1995), pp. 256-301. (pp. 257, 258).

<sup>31</sup> Helle Bundgaard, 'Contending Indian Art Worlds', *Journal of Material Culture*, Vol. 4, No. 3, (1999), pp. 321-337, (pp. 321, 322, 323, 234-235).

<sup>32</sup> Annuka Jyrämä, *Contemporary Art Markets: Structure and Practices. A Study of Art Galleries in Finland, Sweden, France and Great Britain* (Helsinki: Helsinki School of Economics and Business Administration, 1999), p. 15.

market is equal to an art world – they are interwoven and inseparable. In her conceptualisation, the entities of this field are gathered from Bourdieu and apply to performing arts, visual arts and literature.

The art market or art world is not a uniform field. It can be classified from several points of view. [...] In this study, the visual arts are interpreted as including works of art like paintings, sculpture, graphics and to some extent video art and other new media art, [...] art can be seen as a product of a specific social context or environment. Art is seen as a product of an “art world”, which is specialised in the production of works of art and their symbolic meaning.<sup>33</sup>

Art worlds are therefore fundamental ‘places’ where art is activated with the participation of individuals. They can also, as discussed above, contain interpretation, philosophy, social activities and production and so on.

Partly drawing on Becker, in his understanding of art worlds, sociologist Shyon Baumann argues that artists are central to art worlds and intellectuals lead the development of how art worlds are understood. This takes place via organisations and networking making ‘reputation’ and “critical discussions” one of the focal points of art worlds.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Jyrämä, *Contemporary Art Markets: Structure and Practices. A Study of Art Galleries in Finland, Sweden, France and Great Britain*, p. 14. On p. 14 Jyrämä also identifies the ‘production of culture approach’. Culture as a ‘collective production of cultural symbols’, giving a meaning to cultural products, studying culture in a specific environment and organizations as well as studying individuals within the field like critics, and galleries. She does not particularly mention gallerists in this respect, which suggest a sidelining of the profession.

<sup>34</sup> Shyon Baumann, ‘Intellectualization and Art World Development: Film in the United States’, *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 66 (June 2001), pp. 404-426, (p. 405).

A more recent study by Joy and Sherry complicates understandings of art worlds and art markets by identifying particular inhabitants of art worlds and art markets in an effort to untangle art worlds: The actors of art markets are artists, art critics, historians and curators. The art world on the other hand consists of art dealers, art galleries, auction houses and the stock market by implication.<sup>35</sup> In their conceptualisation there is no room for multifarious art worlds or using the concept as an umbrella for actors, activities and actual democratisation.

Despite obvious attempts from the authors above to disentangle art worlds, the sense of elitism remains very strong. While Becker acknowledges the role of the news media, none of the early theorists paid much attention to the role of the popular press in promoting an understanding of art worlds. By the 1990s, however, with *Sensation* show at the Royal Academy in 1997, the role of the media in the conceptualisation of the art world could not be ignored.

## **Art, media and the masses**

Bourdieu saw the art world as an instrument of power in a class struggle; the exercising of taste produced distinction and elites. With education an individual could adapt to new styles in art. 'Taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier. Social subjects, classified by their classifications, distinguish

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<sup>35</sup> Annamma Joy and John F. Sherry, Jr. 'Disentangling the Paradoxical Alliances between Art Market and Art World', *Consumption, Markets and Culture*, Vol. 6 No. 3, (2003), pp. 155-181, (p. 155). As a contrast to this, an earlier study by Joy argues that, besides academics, artists need 'the general public to interact and respond to the art they create'. See Annamma Joy, 'Art, Works of Art, and the Discourse of Fine Art: Between Art Worlds and Art Markets', in *Research in Consumer Behavior*, ed. by Russell W. Belk et al. Vol. 9, (2000), pp. 71-102, (p. 97).

themselves by the distinctions they make, between the beautiful and the ugly, the distinguished and the vulgar, in which their position in the objective classifications is expressed or betrayed'.<sup>36</sup>

Undertaking his research in the 1960s, Bourdieu was working in an era when the media still tended to be authoritative; there was no deconstructed media democracy. The media helped consolidate the role of the elite. Greenfeld also felt the same social control: Israeli art worlds 'in which a self-appointed elite, not accountable to anyone, and certainly not to the non-elite, rules without norms or standards'.<sup>37</sup> More recent work also recognises the continuing role of elites in controlling the art world as well as critiquing Charles Saatchi.<sup>38</sup> Yet, there is a change here. Whereas once the connoisseur was venerated, now Saatchi is a media celebrity, there to be variously celebrated and ridiculed along with all the other media celebrities.

While the mass media has long had a role in promoting art worlds, its role in the last 15 years has been particularly pronounced, as the art itself seemed to call for popular attention. The thirst for media coverage and scandal as well as artists' self promotion has been discussed by Schroeder and Fillis, and are, in itself, an argument against the notion of art being locked

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<sup>36</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, 'Introduction to Distinction', in *The Consumer Society Reader*, ed. by Martin J. Lee (Malden and Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), pp. 84-91, (p. 89). [Originally published in 1984]. Pierre Bourdieu 'The aristocracy of Culture', translated by R. Nice, *Media, Culture and Society*, (1980) 2, pp. 225-254. See also Richard Jenkins, *Pierre Bourdieu*, Key Sociologists Series ed. by P. Hamilton (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), p. 147. [First published in 1992. Revised ed. first published in 2002]. See also regarding distinction Cynthia Freeland, *But is it art? An Introduction to Art Theory*, pp. 93-94.

<sup>37</sup> Liah Greenfeld, *Different worlds: A sociological study of taste choice and success in art*, p. 177.

<sup>38</sup> Julian Stallabrass, *High Art Lite: British art in the 1990s*. Julian Spalding, *The Eclipse of Art: Tackling the Crisis in Art Today* (Munich et. al: Prestel, 2003). Rita Hatton and John A. Walker, *Supercollector: a critique of Charles Saatchi*.

up in elitism.<sup>39</sup> This could not only signify, as Richard Shone argues, increasing democratisation and media attention in art worlds since the 1960s,<sup>40</sup> but also that more and more people are made aware of nuances of contemporary art worlds without being active agents and actors. Reporters now possess educations tinged with postmodern cynicism and democratic questioning. Thus if Bourdieu's elite-centred art world has in part folded, it has done so partly through the work of himself and his contemporaries. Art world actors, who became savvy to this new playful media world, understand perfectly what the press wanted. In 1991, for example gallerist and founder of the *White Cube*, Jay Jopling was a member of a think-tank instigated by Nicholas Serota upon his appointment to the Tate in 1991, which aimed to make the newspapers more genuinely interested in contemporary art because, in his opinion, the tabloids were only interested in ridiculing it. The think-tank which was apparently very powerful

got the *Daily Star* to take a bag of chips to one of Damien's fish in formaldehyde pieces which was then on show at the Serpentine and photograph it as the most expensive fish and chips in the world. Stunts like that forced people to know about the art and if they know about it, then that encouraged them to go and see it,

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<sup>39</sup> See, Stallabrass, *High Art Lite*, p. 12. See also Jonathan E. Schroeder, 'Édouard Manet, Calvin Klein and the Strategic use of scandal', in *Imaging marketing: Art, aesthetics and the avant-garde*, ed by S. Brown and A. Patterson (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 36-51. Ian Fillis 'The endless enigma or the last self-portrait (or, what the marketer can learn from the artist)', in *Imaging marketing: Art, aesthetics and the avant-garde*, pp. 52-72.

<sup>40</sup> Richard Shone, 'From 'Freeze' to House: 1988-1994', In *Sensation: Young British Artists from the Saatchi Collection* (London: Thames and Hudson and the Royal Academy of Arts, 1999), p.15. (pp. 12-25). [Originally published in 1997].

and then they were forced to take a view. It certainly was a way of getting art into the public arena.<sup>41</sup>

On the surface, this was a play on the popular notion that the art world elevates the most modest of achievements with extraordinary financial values. In doing so, it suggests a newspaper teasing readers who lack, in Bourdieu's terms, the 'right education'. In other words, this is no less the work of an elite (in this case a collaborator with an artist) manipulating the beliefs of the masses, than the art worlds of which Bourdieu was so critical. Matters are not helped by the participation of an elite museum. Were this not the case, then the stunt would simply serve to strip art of its serious intent with no other artistic merit other than they are fun.

This expands Bourdieu's notion of actors and agents. Here we have *Tate Modern*, members of the think-tank, an acknowledged gallerist, Jay Jopling, the *Serpentine*, a sensational newspaper, Damien Hirst, the shark, the readers, the chips, and the spectators engaged in an art world interaction. Media engagement has produced a double edged experience – a carnival centred on the sanctification of a shark. If Jopling the gallerist is now a showman, then what, in Bourdieu's terms, is the field: 'it is a question of understanding works of art as a *manifestation* of the field as a whole, in which all the powers of the field, and all the determinisms inherent in its structure and functioning, are concentrated'.<sup>42</sup>

At a fundamental level, it is not possible for anybody or anything to represent anything other than him/her/itself. In other words a particular artist

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<sup>41</sup> Rose Aidin, 'Brit art's square dealer moves on', *Guardian Unlimited*, <http://observer.guardian.co.uk/review/story/0,6903,796335,00.html> (17/09/2003)

<sup>42</sup> Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, p. 37.

represents him/her self, a work represents itself, and a gallerist represents him/herself. Anything else is simply manipulation.<sup>43</sup> Yet manipulation is at the heart of this new art and the media world in which it is engaged.

Jopling's story contains a sub text about the clever gallerist who manipulates other agents who are extremely powerful art world insiders and who participate in manipulating the value and meaning of art worlds and markets. Newspaper readers, visitors to the show may not be so empowered, but they are at that moment all participants in the complexities of art worlds. Therefore, in the end it is not only the appropriately educated agents, as Bourdieu claims, who create the meaning of art and art worlds but also unexpected outsiders experiencing art via food, media and museums.

Bourdieu's contrast of an elite and distanced aestheticism with a popular aesthetic gave explanation to the repellent qualities of modern art for the masses. Work like Carl Andre's, *Equivalent VIII*, (1996) [1972]; *Genesis P-Orridge and Così Fanni Tutti* show at ICA in 1976, and David Mach's *Polaris* outside the Hayward Gallery in 1983, which led to the fatality of a protester, have produced rather different media debates.<sup>44</sup> Art worlds have an inbuilt shock factor which today rests upon public access. However, it might be doubted that the elite can be shocked by art anymore.

In the media spotlight, modern art worlds are a part of a public spectacle. Rather than simply being elite, and private pleasure domes, they now thrive on media access. One might imagine therefore that the new galleries selling this work are also media confident.

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<sup>43</sup> Though it might be argued that even the self may be manipulated.

<sup>44</sup> Jonathan Jones, 'Shock treatment', <http://www.guardian.co.uk/g2/story/0,365332,00.html> (04/03/2008). See also regarding Mash's *Polaris*, Elisabeth Mahoney, 'It's a weird, bizarre, dangerous world', *The Guardian* 14 March 2002, p. 10.

Julian Stallabrass's deconstructive approach to 1990s art in *High Art Lite* leads the reader towards complicated clusters of meanings of art worlds where the mass media plays a vital promotional role. While media participation reached new heights in the late 1950s, through the spectacle of art auctions as observed by Robert Wright in his ironic book *The Art Game*,<sup>45</sup> Stallabrass claimed that during the 1990s the art world turned 'away from the inward-looking concerns of the art world to new subjects, especially to those which might appeal to the mass media'.<sup>46</sup> It is an opinion he shares with Richard Shone. In this turmoil of ideas and issues the notion of extrovert and introvert art worlds identified by Becker seems to surface again in Stallabrass' analysis.

In the media-aware, artist-centred extrovert art world, popular culture blends with a discourse of art historical references as in Gavin Turk's sculpture of Sid Vicious, *Pop*, from 1993.<sup>47</sup> For Stallabrass, an art world discourse seems to be about artists citing the work of other artists and celebrity culture. In this sense the conceptualisation of the art world has not moved far from Danto. Yet, Stallabrass also sees an art world where 'self-indulgence and vacuity that has come to dominate art-world discourse in the wake of celebrity'.<sup>48</sup> The conceptualisation of artists as celebrities permeates the YBAs and a celebrity culture cultivated around commercial galleries and auction houses. Stallabrass identifies this with a kind of unexpected emptiness as if celebrities, whether they are artists, film stars or musicians, are not capable of producing or appreciating art.

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<sup>45</sup> Robert Wright, *The Art Game* (London: Leslie Frewin, 1967), pp. 104-105. [First published in 1965].

<sup>46</sup> Stallabrass: *High Art Lite*, p. 5.

<sup>47</sup> Stallabrass, *High Art Lite*, p. 44-45.

<sup>48</sup> Stallabrass, *High Art Lite*, p. 106.

This was elitism of another kind: 'conservative populism understanding that the new art does contain a critique of the art-world establishment not so different from its own (and that is also more than a little star struck), is doing battle with another faction of conservative elitists who see it as a register of the long-term decline in culture and education'.<sup>49</sup> This element of conservatism within art worlds suggests once again that there is more than one art world of left and right political ideologies that Stallabrass fails to notice. For Stallabrass the radicalism of the new art conceals a conservative ideal embodied in Margaret Thatcher's publicist, Charles Saatchi.<sup>50</sup> Stallabrass is analysing the relationships between the state (public art world) and art businesses (private art world).<sup>51</sup> The orientation of the two art worlds, public and private, is quite different; but the two are interdependent.

Stallabrass appears to see a grain of corruption in this arrangement and prefers a strong public art world that is capable of surviving without being dependent on commercial galleries. It is as if the idea of the commercial side of art worlds is a drawback for the public sector and that it is close to a crime for public art institutions to purchase from the commercial sector. In some respects Stallabrass was swimming against the tide; still desiring the socialism of the pre-Thatcher days. Now even the *New* left seemed to be buying art and there were new attempts to encourage participation.

In 2004, for example, writer and *Art Newspaper* columnist Louisa Buck produced *Market Matters: The dynamics of the contemporary art market*, a report produced for Arts Council England. It encouraged public participation: 'the art world is a broad church and if more buyers can be encouraged to buy

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<sup>49</sup> Stallabrass, *High Art Lite* p. 106.

<sup>50</sup> Hatton and Walker, *Supercollector*, p. 48.

<sup>51</sup> Stallabrass, *High Art Lite*, pp. 187-188.

art by living artists, whether or not this art forms a bridge to more challenging work, a wider and more active interest in art and artists can only be to the benefit of all aspects of the art market'.<sup>52</sup> Buck has also published a number of other books on art worlds and mass involvement in collecting, such as *Owning Art* written in collaboration with the American art collector, Judith Greer.<sup>53</sup> Along with changing media attention, it suggests that art worlds are in the process of opening up and becoming less elite. I shall return to this in the next chapter.

## Geographically determined art worlds

A few writers have considered the geographical aspects of art worlds. Gee, Greenfeld and Bourdieu, for example, have produced geographically located studies. It is also worth noting the importance of geographical aspects involved in St. Ives' art worlds and American abstract art around the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>54</sup> Andy Morris's study from 2005, stresses the importance of cultural geography and the role of St. Ives and New York in promoting Abstract Expressionism via a cultural route across the Atlantic Ocean; a thread that will be taken up in relation to gallerists in Chapter 3.<sup>55</sup> In 2006, De Marchi and Van Miegroet edited 19 essays tracing aspects of geographical movements of paintings between European countries and cities from 1450-1750 stating that

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<sup>52</sup> Louisa Buck, *Market Matters: The dynamics of the contemporary art market* (London: Arts Council England, 2004), p. 33.

<sup>53</sup> See Louisa Buck and Judith Greer, *Owning Art: the Contemporary Art Collector's Handbook* (London: Cultureshock Media Ltd., 2006). On Judith Greer, see Anon. 'An expert's guide to buying the best art works', *The Times*, 1 October 2008, *Times Online*, [http://entertainment.timesonline.co.uk/tol/arts\\_and\\_entertainment/visual\\_arts/article4854624.ece](http://entertainment.timesonline.co.uk/tol/arts_and_entertainment/visual_arts/article4854624.ece) (31/01/2009).

<sup>54</sup> See Richard Shone 'From 'Freeze' to House: 1988-94', p. 14.

<sup>55</sup> Andy Morris, 'The cultural geographies of Abstract Expressionism: painters, critics, dealers and the production of an Atlantic art', pp. 421-437.

the history of art and art worlds cannot be told without tracing the history of art dealers and markets.<sup>56</sup>

Louisa Buck and Aidan While's studies have a particular role in the context of this thesis because they address geographical aspects of the YBAs.<sup>57</sup> Buck explores a unified and interconnected international art world: British art 'is viewed not so much as an isolated national phenomenon, but rather as a vigorous multifarious strand within an interconnected international art world'.<sup>58</sup> The art world is seen as one international and interrelated unit, with no special British art world, only a vast and diverse international one. Interconnection then suggests a level of internal communication. The validity of her analysis suggests that the presence of singular and multiple art worlds is, like all cultural analysis, a product of taxonomic bias of the analyst. One can see homogeneity or heterogeneity according to one's preferences and needs. One need not believe exclusively in one or the other; it is what makes the analysis possible that counts. If Buck imagines a monolithic art world, she admits to its fluidity: 'The art world that both sustains and has grown up around this scene is equally shifting and ambiguous. The entities in *Moving Targets 2* confirm that boundaries are permeable and categories seem to exist only to be breached. In these hybrid times, the roles of artist, curator and

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<sup>56</sup> *Mapping Markets for Paintings in Europe, 1450-1750*, ed. By Neil De Marchi and Hans J. Van Miegroet, Studies in European Urban History (1100-1800), Vol. 6, series ed. by Marc Boone (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2006). See also Author's notes from the conference 'The Rise of the London Art market', 8-9 February 2007.

<sup>57</sup> See, Louisa Buck, *Moving Targets 2: a User's Guide to British Art Now*, (London: Tate Publishing, 2000). See also Aidan While, 'Locating art worlds: London and the making of Young British art', *Area*, Vol. 35, Issue 3, (September 2003), pp. 251-263. <http://www.blackwell-synergy.com/links/doi/10.1111/1475-4762.00174/full/> (07.07.2004).

<sup>58</sup> Buck, *Moving Targets 2* p. 7.

critic are no longer mutually exclusive [...]'.<sup>59</sup> Here the art world is a flexible social space that can be bent and shaped according to the needs of actors. British art worlds, and for that matter the Icelandic and Danish ones also, are not static, isolated spaces but rather symbiotic contributions to global art worlds manipulated through collaboration between gallerists, artists, galleries and interested parties such as collectors and authors of art studies, the media and the general public. There is dynamic geography here which is easily understood if one considers the artist as starting his career by staging a local show, before collaborating with swanky gallerists and reaching a wider audience.

Aidan While's study is a particularly important contribution to the geography of art worlds. Thus far we have come to understand art worlds as philosophically, sociologically, institutionally, aesthetically, interpretively and ethnographically determined. While suggests they are also geographically determined. A place can thus contribute to the shaping of the history of art and provide a context.<sup>60</sup> This opens up a completely new way to explain art worlds and their markets. While argues that the transformation of the London art worlds works on two levels. Firstly, by the rise of new galleries and new ways of activating art and secondly, in terms of geography with the separation of distinct art worlds in the East and West Ends. This was closely connected to the development of the YBAs who

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<sup>59</sup> Buck, *Moving Targets* 2 p. 8. As a comparison, it has been a practice in Icelandic art worlds for decades to employ artists to write exhibition reviews and critique, as well as teaching, suggesting that they have had exclusive positions.

<sup>60</sup> While, 'Locating art worlds: London and the making of Young British art', pp. 251-263.

offered something distinctive in both the concerns of its art and its attitude to London's existing art world. This is marked by a concerted effort to develop new ways of presenting and promoting art by an extended group of dealers and critics as well as artists. The sense of change was also bolstered by a shift in the geography of the London art world, and particularly the elevation of aspects of the East End's alternative art scene.<sup>61</sup>

Shifts like this in the city's art worlds have been recorded since 1560.<sup>62</sup> The geographical shift in the 1990s made the alternative art scene more visible than it had been since the rise of punk in the mid 1970s. And the do it yourself spirit of punk was one of the driving forces of YBAs.

It seems evident that art worlds are charged with geographical references and they have the potential to take the understandings beyond the conceptual, social, institutional, political and philosophical understandings. The geographical determinations of art worlds open up for different understandings and signify a considerable change in the debate.

## Changing art worlds

In his study of the YBAs, Richard Shone reflects on an increasingly relaxed approach towards art and its journeys as well as the mass media in the

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<sup>61</sup> While, 'Locating art worlds: London and the making of Young British art', pp. 251-263.

<sup>62</sup> See, Wedd, Peltz and Ross, *Creative Quarters: The Art World in London from 1700-2000*.

1960s. He also discusses the opening of 15 galleries in London in 1961, and the importance of New York connections.

A democratisation of the art world took place that owed much to the art scene in New York, experienced at first hand by an increasing number of British artists, dealers and curators, a transatlantic migration that accelerated a pattern begun by some of the St Ives painters in the later 1950s. [...] The activities of the art world and the lifestyles of artists received unprecedented attention in the '60s, as now. The face of London's art world may have changed beyond recognition since the energetic but essentially gentlemanly atmosphere of the '60s, but the progression and expansion set moving then has continued in the same direction.<sup>63</sup>

For Shone, the art world is almost a tangible fact and a fixed size, it is about art and it has moved on from being an exclusive upper class entertainment and academic topic into the public sphere. This makes contemporary understandings of art worlds accessible to larger sections of society and, in so doing, freeing up the concept. In this light, art worlds can also be seen as a creative product of the 1960s. Shone sees the development of art worlds as a continuous process and the rise of YBAs as a theme related to the rise of the East End,<sup>64</sup> as a geographically and culturally important art territory. Shone's analysis of the 'art world' concept is bounded politically, as Bourdieu

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<sup>63</sup> Shone, 'From 'Freeze' to House: 1988-94', p.15.

<sup>64</sup> Shone, 'From 'Freeze' to House: 1988-94', pp. 15-16.

imagines; art worlds are mundane, materialistic, promoted by the media and concept free; they are for everybody to use in whatever context is appropriate.

Gell's take on the rise of YBAs and art worlds is quite different. He sees the movement as a manifestation of the rise of interpretive theory over aesthetics. Gell argues that the interpretation of actors in art worlds determines the status of art; taking it beyond beauty and ugliness, explaining his notion by using Hirst's media-saturated and iconic shark in formaldehyde. For something like the shark to acquire the status of a work of art requires it to be

interpreted in the light of a system of ideas that is founded within an art-historical tradition. [...] The great critical merit of the interpretive theory over the 'aesthetic' theory is that it is more attuned to the realities of the present-day art world, which has long abandoned the making of 'beautiful'-looking pictures and sculptures in favour of 'concept' art, [...]. It is a work thoroughly grounded in the post-Duchampian tradition of 'concept' art, and as such, is capable of being evaluated as good art, bad art, middling art, but definitely art of some kind.<sup>65</sup>

Gell dives deeper into the art-work, its geography and art worlds and explains his approach thus:

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<sup>65</sup> Gell 'Vogel's Nest: Traps as Artworks and Artworks as Traps', p. 16.

A work may be in origin unconnected with the mainstream of art history, but if the art world co-opts the work, and circulates it as art, then it *is* art, because it is the living representatives of this art world, i.e. artists, critics dealers and collectors, who have the power to decide these matters, not history.<sup>66</sup>

History as such does not determine anything, only those who deal with its emplotments. This makes the process into a social activity based on theory. What is critical in Gell's analysis, however, is his use of the concept 'representatives', because actors can only represent themselves and their taste whether it is based on intuition, theory or history of art. By identifying interpretive factors of art, Gell underpins the complexity of art and value judgements within contemporary art worlds.

The change Gell identifies is further confirmed in Alexander Alberro's book *Conceptual Art and the Politics of Publicity*, which explores artistic change since the 1960s.<sup>67</sup> Alberro argues that 'one of the basic aims of conceptualism was precisely to decenter the "artworld"'.<sup>68</sup> In an interview, former conceptual art gallerist, Seth Siegelaub, also identifies a number of reasons contributing to the changes since the 1960s. At that time 'people were thinking of changing the whole sphere of art; the limits, boundaries and the nature of the genre itself'.<sup>69</sup> Siegelaub also identifies changes that took

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<sup>66</sup> Alfred Gell 'Vogel's Nest: Traps as Artworks and Artworks as Traps', p. 17.

<sup>67</sup> Alexander Alberro, *Conceptual Art and the Politics of Publicity* (Cambridge, Mass. et.al.: MIT Press 2003), pp. 7-10.

<sup>68</sup> Alberro, *Conceptual Art and the Politics of Publicity*, p. 4.

<sup>69</sup> Raimundas Malasauskas, 'Interview with Seth Siegelaub 03.31.04', <http://www.16beavergroup.org/journalism/archives/000820.php> (12/03/2005)

place later in relation to increasing capitalisation of art worlds stating that art practices

have changed dramatically because the world of art itself had changed dramatically by taking on many of the characteristic values of the world of business; of ruling capitalist life. This has to do with what is now called “branding” in the corporate world; developing an image or look and try to sell or clone it as widely as possible [...]. [...] what interests me is how the art world has changed over the years, socially, politically, economically, and maybe even emotionally [...].<sup>70</sup>

Siegelaub conceptualises the complexities of art worlds and that the coining of the concept is closely connected to the rapid development of conceptual art. Consequently the contemporary art punter is more likely than ever before to come across conceptual art, video art, installations and web art. A realistic landscape painting or traditional abstract art is of course still available in commercial galleries but readymades are more main stream now than ten or 30 years ago. This development is a part of the post modern situation argued for by Gell. The adaptability of art markets and art worlds is considerable. In relation to that aspect Joy and Sherry argued that

new art, did not deter the development of the art market. The market subsumes any radical tendency, such as gender, ethnicity, simulation,

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<sup>70</sup> Malasauskas, ‘Interview with Seth Siegelaub 03.31.04’.

within its dominant narrative, bringing new meaning and an understanding to the role of technology in a late-capitalist society.<sup>71</sup>

The ability to adapt seems to be at the heart of art markets, art worlds and actors. This adaptability has changed art worlds in London, and more recently in Copenhagen and Reykjavik, making conceptual art more and more acceptable.

Art worlds are, like other aspects of human life, not only about philosophical speculation, but also about social constructs, human interactions and competition between agents.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has discussed differing views of art worlds, and considered how differing opinions position art worlds differently. The chapter has also contextualised art worlds in relation to what type of knowledge has been generated about them, how they have been investigated and what the focus of existing knowledge is.

The art world debate started off as a philosophical theorisation, but it soon developed into a discussion about the art world as an institution. At a later point, social relations became the focal point and in the early 1990s the concept attracted the attention of art historian Carol Duncan, who analysed art worlds in terms of a conspiracy of power structures that are not fully manageable. The interest of anthropologists and sociologists during the

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<sup>71</sup> Joy and Sherry, 'Disentangling the Paradoxical Alliances between Art Market and Art World', p.156.

1990s and at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century has proved to be a creative contribution to establishing art worlds as a topic of study. These studies indicate an increasing interest in people, networking and communication systems of art worlds. In addition there is an increasing interest in geographical aspects of art worlds. The evidence also suggests that art worlds vary from one country to the other and from one city to the other, as well as within cities as regards gallery areas. In addition the meaning of art worlds and markets may also vary from one person to the other.

The impact of mass-media on opening art worlds to the public and the way they are understood is more powerful than the academic debate. They have become increasingly accessible, often with loud headlines. Thus the art world has developed from being a specific theoretical concept to being accepted into language to the extent that everyone believes they understand it. Art worlds are taken for granted and everybody involved in them knows what they are and they appear to be real to those who exist within them. But on the whole they seem to be loosely organised and in constant flux.

Investment in art has always trivialised art worlds by making them a repository of cash. Connected to this is the stereo-typing of art worlds, by authors such as Stallabrass and Hatton and Walker. They also claim that associating art worlds with extensive media promotion is implicitly intended to put particular artists in the spotlight, rather than having anything to do with increased public access. They see this and the whole business of commercial galleries as unhealthy, although they do not seem to have researched what keeps gallerists moving.

The multiplicity of meanings discussed here, suggests that there is no general consensus about how art worlds should be defined, although in general terms it could be stated that people, activities and everything that is associated with art belongs to art worlds. Very few of the studies discussed above pay a particular attention to the gallerist as a main character who is involved in activating the social journey of art. Interest in art worlds is more focussed on commercial aspects of art businesses and murky dealings, than on the gallerists themselves.

Consequently, art worlds – as they are now understood and have been debated – give impetus to research on the gallerist - to take that part of the study further. Although the commercial aspect of the art market has been important in various studies over the last 15 years, there are still too many presumptions and too little information about what makes contemporary gallerists tick. In the next chapter I shall discuss in a little more detail how gallerists have featured in the literature to date.

# 3 The history and context of the art dealer/gallerist

## Introduction

Chapter 2 provided an overview of the art world context which forms the backdrop of this study of contemporary gallerists.<sup>1</sup> That chapter identified a gap in our understanding of the gallerists' role and geographical aspects of the conceptualisation of art worlds. This chapter increases the resolution on this art world context by looking in more detail at studies of art dealers.

Of particular interest to this study is the rise of the dealer in modern art, who emerged with the birth of a new breed of artist and who sought a livelihood in the market place by pushing the boundaries of art in a manner that frequently marginalised them from established art domains. A cultural network of actors was formed who sought support and acknowledgement from each other, and for each other. In this relationship art dealers played a vital role but they lacked the visibility of other actors. Over the years this relationship has changed and gallerists have acquired recognition in increasingly democratised art worlds. Evidence of the dealer's existence and role can be understood from academic studies, specialist magazines and other cultural forms such as David Williamson's play, *Up for Grabs*, which perpetuated the clichéd decadent gallerist obsessed by money and thus projected a popular image of the profession onto society.<sup>2</sup> To position the

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<sup>1</sup>This chapter will refer to 'dealers' when discussing an older generation of art merchants, and 'gallerists' when discussing the period since the term came into public use.

<sup>2</sup>David Williamson, *Up for Grabs* (London: Faber and Faber, 2002). [First published in Australia 2001]. Fictional references will not be discussed in this thesis but examples can be found in Bourdieu, *Field of Cultural Production*, p. 17 etc., David Carrier in *Museum*

gallerists, this chapter will consider the historical rise of their role before examining how gallerists have described themselves.

## The rise of the art dealer

In his discussion of the movement of works in an emergent French art market, Gee has noted ‘the dominant role which the art dealer occupies in the system. This role began to take form during the 19<sup>th</sup> century: Paul Durand-Ruel, as is often pointed out, was the originator of modern art dealing’.<sup>3</sup> His contribution to a change in the Parisian art markets during the second part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, was the replacement of the Salon as the centre of both ‘artistic confrontation and of the artistic economy’.<sup>4</sup> Gee argues that

it was during this period that the Salons collapsed as a visible alternative, and even addition to, the private gallery as a place of exhibition, and that for all those involved in making, interpreting, or buying art, the private gallery became a focal point of interest and activity. This “triumph of the dealer” was the logical corollary to the “triumph of independent painting”, and it inaugurated an era in the history of art which is still in progress, characterised by a permanent

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*Skepticism: A History of the Display of Art in Public Galleries* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006), pp. 29 and 128, Hatton and Walker, *Supercollector*, pp. 155-156, quoting Oliver Stone’s movie *Wall Street* to explain art as the ‘ultimate capitalist commodity’. See, also John A. Walker, *Art and Artists on the Screen* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1993), p. 134. Danish writer Poul Vad, *Galskabens karneval*, [Carnival of Madness] (Viborg: Arena, Forfatternes Forlag, 1981), p. 45, describes gallerists as business men caring for artists and the quality of art. Eijó, [pseudonym] *Ávöxtur efasemda* [*Seeds of Doubt*] (Reykjavík: eijó, 1995), p. 219. Eijó, describes a traditional dealer who buys in bulk from artists offering a new show and high profile buyers.

<sup>3</sup> Gee, *Dealers, Critics, and Collectors of Modern Painting: Aspects of the Parisian Art Market Between 1910 and 1930* p. 286.

<sup>4</sup> Gee, *Dealers, Critics, and Collectors of Modern Painting: Aspects of the Parisian Art Market Between 1910 and 1930* p. 286, 12.

process of stylistic innovation, by the disintegration of a consensus of artistic appreciation, and by the establishment of a new hierarchy of taste, capped by the avant-garde.<sup>5</sup>

The changes involved in the rise of a new support system have had a profound effect on the distribution of art despite, as Gee notes, an anti-capitalist and anti-market strand that was built into avant-garde.<sup>6</sup> This political contrast remains in place today.

In their book, *Canvases and Careers: Institutional Change in the French Painting World*, sociologists, H. C. White and C. A. White, map the move from the patronage of church and gentry to that of dealers and a nouveau riche industrial and commercial bourgeoisie. Implicitly, this study seems to embrace Dickie's institutional theory and, in stating the importance of institutional change, overlooks the institutional nature of earlier forms of patronage, such as the church. It seems more appropriate to talk about small businesses dismantling and redistributing the power of an institutionalised establishment.<sup>7</sup> White and White's study discusses the middle class identity of artists enhanced by dealers like Durand-Ruel.<sup>8</sup> Artists aspired to independence and to making a living from paintings. Taking on board Gee's earlier comments, it produces an inherent contradiction, not unfamiliar to circumstances where idealism meets the real world. The conspiracy of art, then, is, as Bourdieu suggests, manufactured within the middle classes but I

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<sup>5</sup> Gee, *Dealers, Critics, and Collectors of Modern Painting*, p. 286. Words underlined by Gee.

<sup>6</sup> Gee, *Dealers, Critics, and Collectors of Modern Painting*, p. 187.

<sup>7</sup> White and White, *Canvases and Careers*, p. 97. In *Making Modernism: Picasso and the creation of the market for twentieth century art*, p. 7, Fitzgerald like White and White focuses on artists rather than dealers as a main reason for the change.

<sup>8</sup> White and White, *Canvases and Careers*, pp. 88,130.

would take issue with Bourdieu's suggestion that this created an impersonal market. This is central to Bourdieu's discussion of the critical role autonomy played in the formation and preservation of the art world and it is to this question I now wish to turn.

Bourdieu argues that the rejection of direct forms of traditional patronage created an impersonal market where the direct link between artist and patron is broken and the artist and art worlds gain greater autonomy over production.<sup>9</sup> In Roger Cook's Bourdieusian analysis:

The autonomy of the art world as a relatively independent social field was historically only gradually attained and was finally won in Paris in the latter half of the nineteenth century by the Impressionists who were emancipated from the French Academy system. Such is the long historical investment in the autonomous artworld that it is hardly surprising that it is jealously guarded by those social agents who have most at stake within it. For it was then that the mutually independent relationships between the Artist, the Critic, the Curator, the Historian, the Dealer and the Collector were established and modernism and the institutionalization of anomie and the notion of the 'avant-garde' were born.<sup>10</sup>

Building on Gee, Dickie and White and White, Cook claims that Bourdieu suggested

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<sup>9</sup> Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, p. 114.

<sup>10</sup> Roger Cook, 'The mediated manufacture of an 'avant-garde': a Bourdieusian analysis of the field of contemporary art in London, 1997-9', in *Reading Bourdieu on Society and Culture*, ed by Bridget Fowler (Oxford and Malden MA: Blackwell and The Sociological Review, 2000), pp. 164-185, (p. 166).

that if the autonomy of culture is to survive and continue to thrive, then autonomous artists and intellectuals (those not solely motivated by market forces) need to organize themselves and unite in its defence. They can only do this, of course, if they first understand and accept that there is a threat to the autonomy and quality of their endeavours by the large-scale field.<sup>11</sup>

Thus, the main enemies of autonomy in art are unlimited capitalism and individualism. In this impersonal world, business attempts to construct the illusion that art-is-more-important-than-money. White and White, and Gee, construct a rather different reading from close study of the movements of art and relationships of art world actors.<sup>12</sup> The challenges of selling art in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, as revealed by these studies, shows that a developed personalised network of actors situated in a new business structure, was essential to art world success.

Bourdieu claims that actors 'present themselves as an autonomous world which, although it is the product of historical action, has its own laws, transcending individual wills, and remains irreducible to what each agent or even the whole population of agents can appropriate'.<sup>13</sup> According to this the system, and not the individual, is autonomous. This state of affairs, however,

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<sup>11</sup> Roger Cook, 'The mediated manufacture of an 'avant-garde': a Bourdieusian analysis of the field of contemporary art in London, 1997-9', p. 181.

<sup>12</sup> Paul Durand-Ruel, 'Memories of Paul Durand-Ruel' [Abstract] in "*One Hundred Years of Impressionism*": *A Tribute to Durand-Ruel* (New York: Wildenstein, 1970), no pagination. See also Florence Gould, 'Preface', in "*One Hundred Years of Impressionism*": *A Tribute to Durand-Ruel*, no pagination. In her essay Gould also states that Durand-Ruel was backed by an industrialist and a bank, and artists such as Monet and Renoir offered to support him during a re-organization of his business in the early 1880s.

<sup>13</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, translated by Richard Nice (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2000), p. 228.

should not be overstated. Historical studies and work undertaken for this thesis would suggest that this is not the case; that individuals and collaborators can be empowered and have effect. An example is the greatly debated *Sensation* show in 1997 that made contemporary art both visible and active in societies far beyond the UK. Particular individuals can be identified as shaping these events; there is no sense of system which disempowers the individual.

The dealers who operated in the early Parisian art market were as different as they were many. Joseph Duveen (1869 - 1939), for example, was dealing in old masters while Paul Durand-Ruel (1831 - 1922), Ambroise Vollard (1866 - 1939) and René Gimpel (1881 - 1944) supported styles such as Impressionism, through to early 20<sup>th</sup> century abstraction. Dealers had particular enthusiasms which are echoed in the activities of modern gallerists (see Chapter 10). These early dealers made their mark and are documented in standard histories of art. Here I shall reflect on how they have been interpreted and remembered. In this remembering, it is important to note that many of the dealers produced their own commentaries on their lives.

Durand-Ruel, for example, has been described as a pioneer who dedicated his life to making artists known.<sup>14</sup> He took up art dealing in 1862; having inherited his father's art business in Paris, which was established in 1831 as a stationary shop that branched into supplying artists with painting materials, taking paintings as payments for materials. The operation grew rapidly, benefitting from being the only gallery dealing in contemporary art at the time. His buying power was enormous, despite a deep recession in 1882.

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<sup>14</sup> Durand-Ruel, 'Memoirs of Paul Durand-Ruel', no pagination.

In 1876, Durand-Ruel opened a gallery in London, but his most successful business opened in New York in 1886 where he felt the art he admired was more welcome than in Europe. He is infamous for his promotion of the Barbizon painters and for contributing to the longevity of Impressionism.<sup>15</sup> He saw a moral role for the dealer: 'The true art dealer ought to be an enlightened connoisseur, ready to sacrifice what seems to be his immediate interest to his artistic convictions, and, at the same time, be ready to join the fight against speculators, rather than take part in their activity'.<sup>16</sup> This suggests that there were at least two breeds of dealers: the ones who think about improving the reception of new art and artists' lives; and apparent crooks, who only seek profit. Durand-Ruel's pioneering spirit created a dealing trend based on one's own personal tastes, even though these were against the prevailing fashion. He did, however, understand the role of fashion: 'Art which is in fashion always sells more easily than works by really great painters who are least understood by the public, in just the degree in which their art is more personal and original'.<sup>17</sup> His promotion of Impressionism served not only to give that art form fashionable status but, in a reflexive manner, also produced a paradigm for the art dealer.

The success of avant-garde art may have inspired Vollard, who founded his business in the early 1890s in "the street of pictures" on rue Laffitte in Montmartre, Paris. Artist, Marc Chagall, remarked that each new generation of dealers produced a new generation of artists. He saw Vollard as being 'not so much a dealer as a mystic, with a great enthusiasm for art, then unknown, that followed the Impressionist era of Durand-Ruel. He was a great

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<sup>15</sup> Durand-Ruel, 'Memoirs of Paul Durand-Ruel', no pagination.

<sup>16</sup> Gould, 'Preface', no pagination.

<sup>17</sup> Durand-Ruel, 'Memoirs of Paul Durand-Ruel', no pagination.

precursor'.<sup>18</sup> Durand-Ruel's power and intuition seems to have been unfathomable in Chagall's opinion and he also acknowledges these qualities as being fundamental when promoting new art. Una Johnson's 'Foreword' to Vollard's *Recollections* sees the dealer producing Cézanne's first private show and shortly afterwards shows of Picasso's and Matisse's work. It suggests the shaping influence of dealer in the reception and consumption of modern art.

It was thus that Vollard assumed his exceptional position in the art world of Paris and his little gallery seldom lacked visitors. Aggressive, enterprising and, especially, shrewd, Vollard carried forward his unswerving policy of buying directly from the artists and often in quantity. The artists complained about the low prices he offered, but he was one of the few dealers who did buy and sell their paintings. In his instinctive ability to foresee the probable acceptance of these "new artists", in his willingness to take the risks of acquiring their works, and, finally, in his ability to interest these same artists in working on his numerous publishing ventures, lay his special genius. In their company he was witty, charming, knowledgeable and, above all, persuasive.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Quoted in Una E. Johnson, 'Foreword', in Ambroise Vollard, *Recollections of a Picture Dealer*, foreword by Una E. Johnson (New York: Hacker Art Books, 1978), pp. ix-xv, (p. xv). [First published in the USA 1936]. See also for information about Chagall's dealings with Vollard, Anon. 'Chagall Etchings for Dead Souls' Spaightwood Galleries, [http://www.spaightwoodgalleries.com/Pages/Chagall\\_Dead\\_Souls.html](http://www.spaightwoodgalleries.com/Pages/Chagall_Dead_Souls.html) (05/11/2008).

<sup>19</sup> Johnson, 'Foreword', p. x.

Although erring towards hagiography, Vollard has not been without his critics (see later in this section). Perhaps, Vollard's main contribution was to produce a plausible and simple storyline for his artists, turning the avant-garde into an easy-to-follow plot shaped around the future of his business.

René Gimpel also produced a book, *Diary of an Art Dealer*, covering the period from 12 February 1918 to 3 September 1939. Gimpel inherited an art business founded by his father in Paris in 1889. In contrast to these other dealers, he favoured French art from the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, but also recognised the new style and artists like Braque. Sir Herbert Read greatly admired him as 'a witness of the revolutionary changes that began with the first appearance of Cézanne's genius and did not cease until a completely new conception of art had been established throughout the world'.<sup>20</sup> Read implicitly acknowledges the importance of dealers in shaping art worlds and how art is perceived in society.

In his book on the English born dealer Joseph Duveen, Behrman mythologises his subject as 'the most spectacular dealer of all time'.<sup>21</sup> Actively selling European art to Americans in 1886, Duveen contributed to the formation the three distinct markets in London, Paris and New York. Duveen is depicted in a similar heroic manner to others reviewed here, but Behrman is also useful in telling us how Duveen managed scarcity in his dealing: 'the fertility of the nineteenth-century painters would have sadly upset the Duveen economy of scarcity'.<sup>22</sup> Shortage of masterpieces seems therefore to have

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<sup>20</sup> Herbert Read, Sir, 'Introduction', in René Gimpel, *Diary of an Art Dealer*, Translated from the French by J. Rosenberg, Introduction by Sir Herbert Read (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1966), pp. ix-xii, (p. ix). [First published in France 1963].

<sup>21</sup> S. N. Behrman, *Duveen*, with illustrations by Saul Steinberg (London: Readers Union and Hamish Fulton, 1953), p. 1.

<sup>22</sup> Behman, *Duveen*, p. 59.

been the driving force behind his business in keeping prices high. This contrasts with the more supportive role advocated by Durand-Ruel. Duveen operated in the secondary market, thriving on old masterpieces rather than riskier contemporary modern art.

The dealer, then, has been praised, perhaps surprisingly, for his moral fibre and commercial acumen. Rather less surprising, has been a long running critique and doubting of this commercial aspect. The low prices Vollard paid have been portrayed as exploitative. Indeed, this other side of art dealing – alluded to by Durand Ruel, for example – was already in circulation in Germany in 1904, when Julius Meier-Graefe published his book *Entwicklungsgeschichte der modern kunst*. Here the cliché of the artistic life is developed: ‘the greatest artists toil in poverty, to enable a few dealers to grow rich after their deaths and a few fanatics to hoard their works in warehouses’.<sup>23</sup> The supportive role, risks and developmental contribution of dealers was overlooked; implicit is an idealistic sense that art could exist without an art market.

Parisian dealer Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler (1884 - 1979) has been praised as ‘the great pioneer modern art dealer’ who reshaped the art business.<sup>24</sup> In an introduction to Kahnweiler’s book *My Galleries and Painters*, John Russell claims that in 1907 Kahnweiler invented a new kind of art dealing. According to Russell, Kahnweiler changed the commercial gallery from being a formal palace of art into being ‘an informal, unpretentious

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<sup>23</sup> Julius Meier-Graefe, ‘The Mediums of Art, Past and Present’, in *Art in Theory 1900-1990: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, ed. by Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (Oxford and Cambridge USA: Blackwell, 1998), pp. 53-61, (p. 57). [Art in Theory first published 1992. An English translation of Meier-Graefe’s book was published in 1908].

<sup>24</sup> Anthon Gill, *Peggy Guggenheim: The Life of an Art Addict* (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 2001), p. 101.

relationship in which profound emotional commitment was the thing that mattered most'.<sup>25</sup> Kahnweiler was advised to learn the tricks of the trade but later in life he said, 'Well, I still don't know what they are. No one ever told me. I had five or six clients, after a while, who came in from time to time. I showed them what was on the wall, and either they bought or they didn't. That was all there was to it'.<sup>26</sup> Russell suggests that Kahnweiler was aware of formal dealing practices of his predecessors as well as favouring a low profile and buying cheap like Vollard. 'He bought cheap, and he sold cheap. He never advertised, never did anything to get his gallery talked about, and never went out of his way to court a rich client.'<sup>27</sup> Kahnweiler is given the image of a modest man who puts intrinsic and ethical values above capital gain in a saint like blissfulness. But one should note that he bought cheap. There is not, then, that supportive role claimed for Durand-Ruel. Yet, Kahnweiler was regarded as the artist's friend; as artist, Jules Olitski, put it, artists "'always hope that they will find their Kahnweiler". Olitski continued. "But the truth is that there are no Kahnweilers. Even Kahnweiler wasn't Kahnweiler, at least not as he has been pictured in retrospect"<sup>28</sup> The ideal gallerist was an illusion, created by gallerists and those who write about them.

Parisian dominance of the art market is said to have diminished as a result of another dealer, Julian Levi (1906-1981), who founded his gallery in 1931 and specialised in surrealism.<sup>29</sup> Like others before him, Levi

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<sup>25</sup> John Russell, 'Introduction', in Daniel-Henri Kahnweiler and Francis Crémieux, *My Galleries and Painters*, translated from the French by Helen Weaver (London: Thames and Hudson, 1971), pp. 7-12, (p. 9). [First published in France 1961].

<sup>26</sup> Russell, 'Introduction', p. 8.

<sup>27</sup> Russell, 'Introduction', p. 7-8.

<sup>28</sup> Alice Goldfarb Marquis, *The Art Biz: The Covert World of Collectors, Dealers, Auction Houses, Museums and Critics* (Chicago: Contemporary Books, 1991), p. 274.

<sup>29</sup> Gill, *Peggy Guggenheim*, p. 276.

documented his activities in his own book *Memoir of an Art Gallery* with an introduction by museum curator Ingrid Schaffner. Schaffner provides an interesting historical and geographical explanation for how Paris lost its title as the art capital of the world because of this small art business; thus revealing the constant reconfiguration of cultural routes and connections. Just before World War II, Levi's gallery 'championed experimental film and photography and his gallery served as a venue for artists fleeing Europe and Hitler. [...] It is also a place to watch as the identity of the art gallery as a commercial institution takes shape, from a near-curiosity shop [...] to a contemporary art gallery: naked white and modern'.<sup>30</sup> Schaffner suggests that it is open to question whether Levi invented the cocktail party opening and the gallery press release, but his ultimate claim to fame is that he made openings a public event, open to anyone interested in new art instead of it being for collectors only.<sup>31</sup> He created a spectacle instead of waiting for his small clientele to show up like Kahnweiler is said to have done.

This earlier history of the art dealers is revealing about the activities of gallerists as key shapers of art worlds and markets. At the heart of their successes are personal attributes and tastes. The majority of those discussed here dealt in the new and shaped their businesses and activities according to the challenges that presented themselves. There is also a clear geographical dimension centred on the power of cities and of foreign culture. These are important themes for the research produced in this thesis.

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<sup>30</sup> Ingrid Schaffner, , in Julian Levi, *Memoir of an Art Gallery*, Introduction by Ingrid Schaffner (Boston: MFA Publications, 2003), pp. ix-xxi, (p. ix). [First published in the USA 1977].

<sup>31</sup> Schaffner, 'Portrait of an Art Dealer', p. xviii.

## Late 20<sup>th</sup> century studies of gallerists

The 20<sup>th</sup> century saw rapid changes in art dealing not only in terms of the number of active dealers but also in the art they promoted and the amount of money in circulation. The century saw the primary market in contemporary art established as a part of western culture. At the same time, art markets became the subject of academic scrutiny and theorisation. Nevertheless dealers remained invisible

In her thesis, *Different Worlds: A Sociological Study of Taste, Choice and Success in Art*, covering the period from 1950 to 1980 when she interviewed dealers, Greenfeld asks whether dealers are gate keepers in the contemporary Israeli art world. These interviews, and the geographical specifics, of this study make it particularly important.

Greenfeld identifies three categories of galleries: a majority of galleries selling figurative art, prestigious minority galleries with clear avant-garde preferences, and insecure semi progressive galleries.<sup>32</sup> Within these galleries she locates divert practices; there is no singular notion of the role and actions of dealers. This is – in comparison to much art world theorising and celebratory history – a work of rigorous empiricism and analysis. Dealers in figurative art operated on the basis of consignment, accepting and exhibiting works of art as a part of a gallery's collection. More respectable thoroughbred galleries purchased a number of works from an artist, which they then sold as their own property. These dealers acquired works from artists coming to the gallery or from visiting studios and studying CVs. Sometimes there were signed contracts which put the artist on the gallery payroll, in which case the

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<sup>32</sup> Greenfeld, *Different worlds*, p. 110.

gallery acquired the artist's total production. Still another type of dealer rented spaces to artists they had selected and promoted their shows. These dealers profited from the leasing while the artist received earnings from sold works. The selection process in galleries was, in most cases, based on the personal taste of dealers, but was affected particularly by saleability.<sup>33</sup> As one of Greenfeld's informants states "because the gallery is mine I feel that I must do what I want in it".<sup>34</sup> Over time, dealers aimed to build up a group of permanent clients. It seems evident from the study that dealers made every possible effort to know their audience's preferences. As a result, the importance of the gallery owners as "gatekeepers" for painters was increased, for they served as reliable barometers of the public opinion. They did not, then, mould the taste of the public or determine the success of the artist, as is done, for example, by curators and critics. Gallery owners did perform as opinion leaders for their public or clientele, but the relationship between them seems to be analogous to that between a dog and its master. Namely, by being exceptionally sensitive to where the wind blows among the public, gallery owners are always found half a step ahead of the public and, apparently, leading it. In fact, though, they go in the direction desired and chosen by the public itself.<sup>35</sup>

Dealers in figurative art gained a sense of the public's 'definite taste and clear criteria for selection and evaluation of works of art. Since this is a group which earns a livelihood by selling art, the behaviour of its members constantly undergoes a concrete and immediate test. The test is the commercial success of the gallery, and thereby of the artists it selects, among

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<sup>33</sup> Greenfeld, *Different worlds*, pp. 110-115.

<sup>34</sup> Greenfeld, *Different worlds*, pp. 115.

<sup>35</sup> Greenfeld, *Different worlds*, pp. 112-113.

a certain public.<sup>36</sup> For these galleries there was less risk and uncertainty. Those dealing in modern abstract works had no such assurance and no way to judge what might be consumed. 'However, through their support of different avant-gardist groups they [...] gain a valued title of the promoters of art as well as importance among the people affiliated with museums, mass media and a public of a certain kind of intellectuals [...].'<sup>37</sup> The progressive dealers did not build their 'decisions on commercial considerations and take pride in this. "My considerations are never commercial," says one gallery owner, "I don't want to be a shop, I am interested in the advancement of art, I do not want to grow rich from the gallery." She is very much for contemporary, experimental, Conceptualist art.'<sup>38</sup>

Bourdieu's theorisation also rests on empiricism. For him the role of gallerist 'consists in making a name for oneself, a known, recognized name, a capital of consecration implying a power to consecrate objects (with trademark or signature) or persons (through publication, exhibition, etc.) and therefore to give value, and to appropriate the profits from this operation.'<sup>39</sup> The gallerist makes the artist's name but only after making his own. Robertson seems to concur: the patron is 'buying into the trader as much as the artist and the work of art.'<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Greenfeld, *Different worlds*, p.123.

<sup>37</sup> Greenfeld, *Different worlds*, p. 124.

<sup>38</sup> Greenfeld, *Different worlds*, p. 121.

<sup>39</sup> Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, p. 75.

<sup>40</sup> Ian Robertson, 'The international art market', p. 24.

## Contemporary gallerists in their own words

An interview with former gallerist, Karsten Schubert, in the online magazine *Everything* reveals that he used to work in the groundbreaking Lisson Gallery,<sup>41</sup> before starting his own venture. The interview also discloses that he was one of the first entrepreneurs to realise the prospects of the YBAs by opening a gallery in collaboration with Richard Salmon. The gallery, *Karsten Schubert Ltd.*, was active from 1987 to 1994.<sup>42</sup> Schubert led the gallery through finding an appropriate location, selecting artists, a market boom in late 1990 and a market collapse in May 1991. Schubert suggested that critics were losing their power as a force to shape the visibility of artists:

There was a funny moment in about 1982/3 when the critics realised that their endorsement did not matter – it did not carry any weight. The market was a powerful mechanism to do it on its own – to the point where you had the perverse phenomena of the critics denying the validity of certain works and the market going for it regardless. That was a quite dramatic change because before that point the two were pretty much in tandem.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> The gallery was founded by Nicholas Logsdail in 1967. See, Anna Somers Cocks, 'History' *The Art Newspaper*, October 2008, <http://www.lissongallery.com/#/history/> (10/11/2008). See also *Technique Anglaise: Current Trends in British Art*, 'Discussion' ed. by Andrew Benton and Liam Gillick (London: Thames and Hudson, One-off Press, 1991), pp. 7-41, (p. 11).

<sup>42</sup> Steve Rushton, 'everything talks with Karsten Schubert', *everything*, 1994, <http://www.backspace.org/everything/e/hard/text/schubert.html> (20/10/2003). The interview has been moved to a new site <http://easyweb.easynet.co.uk/~giraffe/e/hard/text/schubert.html> (10/11/2008).

<sup>43</sup> Rushton, 'everything talks with Karsten Schubert'.

Schubert's demise as a gallerist has been variously blamed on his being a party-goer, a fall out with his financial backer, and the departure of his most important artists, Gary Hume, Rachel Whiteread and the late Angus Fairhurst (1966 - 2008), who referred to him as 'the wrong man at the right time'.<sup>44</sup>

Another art trader, Sadie Coles of *Sadie Coles HQ* founded her business in 1997 and now runs two outlets in the West End of London and sells the work of Sarah Lucas and Fairhurst.<sup>45</sup> Coles discusses her trade in an article entitled 'Does she mean me?' which she wrote about David Williamson's play, *Up for Grabs*. Here, Coles compares herself to the art dealer, Loren, in the play. Coles observes that value is never fixed but depends on what buyers are willing to pay, rather than gallerists putting a considered and cognitive artist-friendly price on the object.<sup>46</sup> She also reveals the complexity of relationships with buyers: the gallerist needs the buyer but yet must remain authoritative over the buyer.<sup>47</sup> In this way, she argues against Velthuis' artist friendly price manipulation discussed above. In the article Coles does not address the artist-gallerist relationship, but at the conference *The Rise of the London Art Market, 8 – 9 February 2007* she said that she, in collaboration with the artist, tried to control value using her own sense of taste, her vision of the future and the possibilities of resale. She manages

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<sup>44</sup> Kirsty Bell, 'Karsten Schubert Ltd.', in Grosenick and Stange ed. *International Art Galleries: Post-War to Post-Millennium*, Translated from the German by S. Gallagher and M. Scuffil (London: Thames and Hudson, 2005), pp. 394-399, (p. 398). [First published in Germany by Du Mont Literatur und Kunst Verlag in 2005]. The chapter on Schubert's gallery contradicts Rushton, claiming that the gallery was open from 1987 to 1997, first on 85 Charlotte Street and from 1993-97 at 41/42 Foley Street, both venues in West London. This suggests that the promotion of YBAs started in the traditional West End, although Maureen Paley had already started operating a gallery in the East End.

<sup>45</sup> See *Sadie Coles HQ* website <http://72.34.44.175/~sadiecol/index.php/site/contact/> (26/10/2007) – this is now: <http://www.sadiecoles.com> (12/06/09).

<sup>46</sup> Sadie Coles, 'Does she mean me?', *Guardian Unlimited*, Monday 27 May 2002, <http://arts.guardian.co.uk/features/story/0,,723022,00.html> (30/01/2007).

Williamson, *Up for grabs*, p.16.

<sup>47</sup> Coles, 'Does she mean me?'

both primary and secondary market sales of works by artists with whom she is collaborating. Her ambitions revolve around a desire to be responsible for her artists and secure the value and longevity of their works and, in so doing, share the value with the artists.<sup>48</sup>

An earlier generation of American dealer, Richard Polsky, reported on his own experiences in his book *I Bought Andy Warhol*. Polsky produces a rather grounded image of art dealing, stating that it is about ‘tracking down paintings lost in transit, securing proper insurance cover, and filling out sales tax collection forms’.<sup>49</sup> He states it

may come as a mild shock, but anyone can become an art dealer – there’s no test to pass and no such thing as certification. And because of that, everyone makes up the rules as they go along. Since most people become art dealers because they can afford to – the vast majority come to the table with plenty of operating capital – no one has to behave. As a result, concerns over connoisseurship, educating collectors, and developing worthwhile exhibition programs

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<sup>48</sup> Gestson, Magnus, ‘Notes from the conference “The Rise of the London Art Market”’, hosted by Tate Britain 8 to 9 February 2007. Gallerist Sadie Coles did not present a paper in the conference but she participated in a Panel Discussion with Andrew Brighton and Oliver Barker where she generously shared her experience with the delegates on 9 February. The discussion was chaired by Sacha Craddock. Coles thoughts were captured in my notes from the conference. See also Gestsson, ‘London og Reykjavík: Tvær borgir og margir listmarkaðir’ [London and Reykjavík: Two Cities and Many Art Markets], pp. 12-13. [The essay published in the Culture Supplement of a national newspaper covers ideas and issues discussed in the conference. Arguments for and against this resale right are discussed in Martha Lufkin, ‘Are contemporary dealers too powerful?’, The Art Newspaper.com, <http://www.theartnewspaper.com/news/article.asp?idart=11828> (01/07/2005).

<sup>49</sup> Richard Polsky, *I Bought Andy Warhol*, (Harry N. Abrams: New York, 2003), pp. 11.

often take a back seat to focusing on that night's entertainment plans and gossip.<sup>50</sup>

Art businesses are apparently about practicalities and bureaucracy, chatting and financial backing above anything else. Polsky's comments suggest, contrary to Coles and Rosie Millard, in *The Tastemakers: U.K. Art Now*, that educating patrons and achieving museum standard shows may not be at the front of dealers' minds.<sup>51</sup>

## Critical perceptions of gallerists

Criticism of art traders has been ongoing throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century but acquired renewed energy with the rise of YBAs. However, gallerists appear to have been reviewed more positively in recent years as a result of academic curiosity as well as informed discussion in the art media.

One of the toughest critiques of contemporary gallerists in recent years was produced by Stallabrass in *High Art Lite*. Stallabrass referred to gallerists as 'shop-owners' and 'proprietors' and to their galleries as 'shops but of a very odd sort', where control and restricted access are orchestrated by gallerists.<sup>52</sup> Stallabrass' criticism of gallerists' control also rests upon the small number of purchases made from galleries and a highly personalised service that is considered more reliable than casual buyers.<sup>53</sup> He also states, rather

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<sup>50</sup> Polsky, *I Bought Andy Warhol*, p. 12. American dealer Ivan Karp agrees with this point, in Marquis *The Art Biz: The Covert World of Collectors, Dealers, Auction Houses, Museums and Critics*, p. 274.

<sup>51</sup> Rosie Millard, *The tastemakers: U.K. art now* (London and Sidney: Schribner, 2001) pp. 82-96.

<sup>52</sup> Stallabrass, *High Art Lite*, p. 182.

<sup>53</sup> Stallabrass, *High Art Lite*, p. 182.

prejudicially, that he is analysing 'art that looks like but is not quite art, that acts as a substitute for art'.<sup>54</sup>

Rather more interesting is Stallabrass' observation that artists can now move more swiftly from one gallerist to the other, implying that ownership of artists may not be as widespread as it was; that artists have grown in power.<sup>55</sup> In the East End there was growing competition amongst galleries: artists now had a choice. Stallabrass is very artist-centred, which may explain why he scorns gallerists for being elitist and controlling, but he is also conscious that artists have faults too, such as lacking understanding of their work, eagerness to participate in media savvy manoeuvring with dealers, journalists and the public relations specialists, as well as having 'an interest in lying'.<sup>56</sup>

In this situation the *Own Art* project<sup>57</sup> is most definitely a way forward in what Stallabrass describes as 'the narrow world of art-buyers and dealers'.<sup>58</sup> To Stallabrass art as business does not look completely healthy, honest and perfect. In relation to this, gallerist Max Wigram remarked: '[...] people like Stallabrass slightly annoy me because they expect the art world to be different for some wonderfully moral reason, and I hate piety, or piousness, I think it's self righteous and it's bollocks, you know, and I think he basically, I don't disagree with him but what does he expect, does he expect everything to be fantastic, honest, totally moral and with no kind of hype?'.<sup>59</sup> Stallabrass gives

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<sup>54</sup> Stallabrass, *High Art Lite*, p. 2.

<sup>55</sup> Stallabrass, *High Art Lite*, pp. 182-183. See also Chris Noraiaka, 'Going it alone', pp. 24-25.

<sup>56</sup> Stallabrass, *High Art Lite*, p.12.

<sup>57</sup> *Own Art* is an initiative encouraging public participation in activating art through purchases that are made possible with interest free loans. The scheme is a collaborative project between commercial galleries and Arts Council England. See, [www.artscouncil.org.uk/ownart](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/ownart) (12/01/2009).

<sup>58</sup> Stallabrass, *High Art Lite*, p.11.

<sup>59</sup> *Author's interview with Max Wigram*, 22 May 2003, pp. 11-12.

an opinion piece, but his arguments rest upon a distanced and morally determined idealism.

Of the new breed of collectors contributing to the 1990s art boom, Charles Saatchi has been the most frequently discussed one. Hatton and Walker's *Supercollector* describes him as a collector and dealer, and as a man who used to have 'too much influence over the Tate's exhibition programme'.<sup>60</sup> They describe him as having enough power to corner the art market and damage artists' relationships with gallerists. Regarding the negative impact on artist/dealer relationships, Robert Hughes pointed out that 'new traders can move in and, by buying in blocks from Saatchi, bypass the artists' dealers and force prices up out of all proportion to those of their new work'.<sup>61</sup> Implicit in this statement is the notion that Saatchi is more evil than dealers and manipulates the market for his own profit. The issue here is the level of influence he possesses and the illusion he is seen as manufacturing. Noted for his successful contribution to the promotion of Thatcher's widely disliked government, Saatchi was imagined to be constructing a similar illusion where he fulfilled the role of art patron, when really he was a robber baron.<sup>62</sup>

Similar problems crop up in museum person Julian Spalding's the-end-of-innocence-book, *The Eclipse of Art: Tackling the Crisis in Art Today*. He mourns the public's loss of power to decide what is good and bad in art; his aim is to reverse this trend. Spalding laments that museum curators lost to

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<sup>60</sup> Hatton and Walker, *Supercollector*, pp. 163, 124.

<sup>61</sup> S. Scully, quoted in Hatton and Walker, *Supercollector*, p.164. Originally quoted in Robert Hughes, 'Art and Money: Sold!' *Time International*, Vol. 134, No. 22, 27 November 1989, pp. 38-43.

<sup>62</sup> See Bryan Appleyard, 'The Accused: Charles Saatchi is Standing Trial on Multiple Charges of Butchering British Art. Is the Evidence Overwhelming or has he Been Framed', *The Sunday Times Magazine*, 16 September 2001, pp. 22-27, 29, 31.

dealers their power to identify and patronise new talent. At fault were Saatchi and a number of gallerists, who snapped up a couple of artists and left thousands behind. Spalding seems to regard gallerists as a necessary evil, acknowledging that they enable artists to sell their work in what he, like Stallabrass, sarcastically calls 'retail outlets' that are not like other shops.<sup>63</sup>

Contrary to what dealers suggest above, Spalding states that they

do not set out to sell what they are already fairly certain people want to buy but, rather, try to create a market for the art that they want to sell. Even those contemporary dealers who are more interested in art than money – either because they have the financial backing to be able to, or enjoy living dangerously – are not in the business to promote art for the public. Once the dealer has selected what they call their 'stable' of artists – the associations with class and cash, not to mention the concept of the thoroughbred, are never far from the art dealer's world – their job is to make them winners.<sup>64</sup>

Spalding's analysis is challenged in Buck's and Greer's *Owning Art: The Contemporary Art Collector's Handbook*. They define dealers in terms of activities: 'The dealer is the main distributor of contemporary art. The term can apply to commercial galleries, artist agents, gallerists and private dealers. It is the dealer – and specifically the one with his or her own gallery space – who is the major point of contact for artists and collectors, as well as for artists,

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<sup>63</sup> Julian Spalding, *The Eclipse of Art: Tackling the Crisis in Art Today* (Munich et al: Prestel, 2003), pp.17, 89.

<sup>64</sup> Spalding, *The Eclipse of Art*, pp. 9, 17, 89.

critics and institutions.<sup>65</sup> This understanding of the gallerist as a point of contact for a number of professionals gives a more positive picture of the profession.

Compared to this, Spalding's notion of two types of gallerists is quite narrow. He identifies those who are in business for the money and the ones who promote art for the love of art.<sup>66</sup> We have seen these two kinds discussed repeatedly above in various historical contexts. Interestingly though, he imagines the gallerist with solid financial backing as the one who is in business for art's sake rather than the money. It is a perverse assumption not borne out by any known investment model. While Spalding desires an increased power for public art galleries, he is unrealistic about the resources involved. Besides, he does not take into account that commercial galleries are open to anyone without regards to buying power. Indeed, contemporary art has never before been as accessible as it is now.

There is a current trend of encouraging the public to purchase art, but it operates outside the museum sector and therefore not in the manner Spalding prefers. This development is supported by *Arts Council England, Own Art* and *Culture Shock* as well as being thoroughly researched and argued for in the reports *Market Matters: The Dynamics of the Contemporary Art Market* by Louisa Buck and *Taste Buds: How to Cultivate the Art Market*, compiled by Morris, Hargreaves and McIntyre.<sup>67</sup> With these publications the

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<sup>65</sup> Louisa Buck and Judith Greer, *Owning Art: the Contemporary Art Collector's Handbook*, p.114. Running a permanent space may not be as important today as it was at earlier stages of the development of the art market.

<sup>66</sup> Spalding, *The Eclipse of Art*, p. 89.

<sup>67</sup> Louisa Buck, *Market Matters: The Dynamics of the Contemporary Art Market*. See also Morris Hargreaves McIntyre, *Taste Buds: How to Cultivate the Art Market*.

*Arts Council* is paving the way for a wide public participation in future art markets.

## **New gallerists on the horizon**

Annukka Jyrämä's study of art galleries in Finland, Sweden, France and Britain, *Contemporary Art Markets: Structure and Practices*, is a particularly important point of reference for the present study. Like Greenfeld, she produces a deeply empirical account. Her main conclusion is that the practices of gallerists are similar in all the four countries she looked at. She argues that this is a socially constructed pattern where new actors follow 'the example of galleries which were perceived as successful. The gallery owners often also shared similar backgrounds and education or were in close contact with each other socially. [...] as well as paying a lot of attention to what was happening and to the "proper manners" as illustrated in international markets.'<sup>68</sup> Those who intend to open a gallery in this system start by finding a job in an established gallery, as Schubert and Coles did, to learn the tricks of the trade. Hence Jyrämä identifies protocols that appear to be in operation among contemporary gallerists validating their activities and sense of continuity; this contrasts with earlier claims that each generation re-invented the art businesses.

One might also understand these galleries through comparison to a shop model, an impresario model or a museum model. In *The Tastemakers: U.K. Art Now*, Millard adopts a museum model. Here, apart from selling art,

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<sup>68</sup> Jyrämä, *Contemporary Art Markets: Structure and Practices. A Study on Art Galleries in Finland, Sweden, France and Great Britain*, p. 165.

commercial galleries 'have a public service ethos; an interest in breaking new artists; an interest in the notion of hanging a coherent show rather than just selling individual pieces of work; and a sociability which has allowed them to be something than mere shops for art.'<sup>69</sup> Not only do they attend to traditional gallery activities but they have revered Spalding's conceptualisation by imitating the museum. Millard also sees dealers as urban leisure brokers, lifting everyday life out of the mundane, entertaining with dinner parties and brunches and providing spaces for artists to show and sell their work.<sup>70</sup> Interestingly though, the notion of the gallery as a shop still prevails. However, Millard signals that reasoned shows take galleries to the level of educational institutions. As Icelandic conceptual artist Eggert Pétursson put it: 'the newly rich need to be educated and *i8* has been very energetic in doing so.'<sup>71</sup> The notion of education is quite widespread among gallerists and is visible through their publications. In contrast, Angela Flowers of *Flowers East* gallery in the East End, describes herself as an impresario rather than a dealer in an interview with Millard: 'Dealing is going to someone's country house and seeing something and taking it away. Old-style dealers do that'.<sup>72</sup> As a contrast to the old school dealer, she runs a gallery 'where artists can exhibit and make a living by selling their work'.<sup>73</sup> She firmly distances herself from the idea of art dealing as shop keeping, although a shopkeeper may also need to create a coherent atmosphere when dressing a shop, but in the end the concept of a shop seems to be an intellectual and social cul-de-sac. However, it is obvious that the coherence of *Flowers East* resembles other gallerists, but

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<sup>69</sup> Rosie Millard, *The Tastemakers: U.K. Art Now*, p. 96.

<sup>70</sup> Millard, *The Tastemakers* pp. 88, 89, 93.

<sup>71</sup> *Email to the author from Eggert Pétursson*, 09 November 2007.

<sup>72</sup> Millard, *The Tastemakers*, p. 93.

<sup>73</sup> Millard, *The Tastemakers*, p. 93.

instead of promoting cutting edge art she trades in mid-priced 'elegant, witty and aesthetically pleasing'<sup>74</sup> paintings, prints and sculptures.

The notion of gallerists and galleries as generators of interest in new art, is evident in the fact that they have continued 'to leave their mark on the style of contemporary art because they have been able to convince exhibiting institutions and art critics of the value of "their" artists. [...] they present in their rooms works by artists important to the age, and thus constantly supply the art business with decisive impulses'.<sup>75</sup> This coincides with exhibition organizer Alan Jones' definition in his introduction to *The Art Dealers* co-edited by journalist, de Coppet: 'dealers [...] are far more than able businessmen and women who thrive in a highly competitive and intangible marketplace; they are the nurturers of the most elusive of commodities – inspiration. Like great literary editors, they provide the first line of support and consultation to individual artists, before the collector, the critic and the curator enter the picture.'<sup>76</sup> This is similar to Buck and Greer, as well as suggesting that art businesses are both highly individual and of institutional stature, as Millard argues. As well as signalling shades of meanings, the arguments also suggest a ripple effect where the commercial sector goes beyond the immediate circles of actors, to the media and from there into the public realm. This acknowledgement of the gallerist underlines their indispensability. Adam Lindemann's book *Collecting Contemporary* reflects back to the gossip factor identified by Polsky. Lindemann puts art dealers at the front and challenges

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<sup>74</sup> Millard, *The Tastemakers*, p. 92.

<sup>75</sup> Uta Grosenick and Raimar Stange, 'Art is What Makes Life More Interesting than Art', in *International Art Galleries: Post-War to Post-Millennium*, ed. by Grosenick and Stange (London: Thames and Hudson, 2005), pp. 8-9, (p. 8). [First published in Germany 2005].

<sup>76</sup> Alan Jones, 'Introduction to the Cooper Square Press Edition', in *The Art Dealers*, ed. by Alan Jones and Laura de Coppet (New York: Cooper Square Press, 2002), p. 13. [First published in 1984].

artist-centred debates, signalling that gallerists are in business to make their own names known:

Art dealers are fascinating people – their egos are often bigger than those of their artists – but they have to be. It takes balls to open an expensive retail store that sells stuff that nobody actually needs and that nobody may want to buy. [...] The dealer is trying to manage his or her portfolio of artists for *profit*, and they have got bills to pay: 50 percent to the artist (or more for superstars), overheads, dinner parties, openings, catalogues, magazine ads, museum patronage, etc. [...] the dealer's risk is that an entire show doesn't sell. [...] the dealer is fishing, [...].<sup>77</sup>

Gallerists are designated as impresarios, but still described as mediators in a network, as Albertsen, Diken and Laustsen say in their study 'Artworks' Networks – Field, System or Mediators?. 'Thus, a geography of the domains drawn by the distribution of types of mediators [...] can show subterranean connections among the domains.'<sup>78</sup> Art worlds and art markets would not exist without gallerists, who create links between individuals and areas. The strength of the interaction is on such a scale that none of the domains would exist without the profession.

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<sup>77</sup> Adam Lindemann, *Collecting Contemporary*, (Hong Kong *et al*: Taschen, 2006), pp. 30-31.

<sup>78</sup> Niels Albertsen, Bülent Diken and Carsten Bagge Laustsen, 'Artworks' Networks – Field, System or Mediators?' (Lancaster: Department of Sociology, Lancaster University, LA1 4YL, UK, [2003]), <http://www.comp.lancs.ac.uk/sociology/papers/Albertsen-Diken-Artworks-Networks.pdf> p. 11, (pp. 1-16). [No access date available].

## Conclusion

The 20<sup>th</sup> century has seen the triumph of gallerists as key actors in activating art, as well as confirming that they are firmly rooted in the geography of the metropolis. In addition, the growth of the profession has been phenomenal particularly in the wake of the YBAs throughout the 1990s.

Despite this expansion, a long lasting anti-capitalist ideology has stood in the way of understanding the profession, leading to an extended cultural displacement of gallerists. This displacement has been corrected in recent years by gallerists themselves, and academics who have argued that gallerists provide care and livelihood for artists. To be able to do so, gallerists have applied a high level of creativity to their operations as regards promotion and the use of their spaces, leading to the production of exhibition facilities that are art installations in their own right. In this way art traders have expressed an ability to express creativity by thinking outside the box. In this environment, gallerists express their own creativity through their spaces designed to attract both general viewers and art investors, but at the same moment they are responsible, practical and grounded. Furthermore, the most creative gallerists have challenged their contemporaries by placing their bets on artists who make the most unacceptable art. This conceptualisation has been sidelined because of a prevailing focus on over capitalised art worlds in need of being purified of monetary value.

The profession is socially constructed through networking and mediation, rather than being self directed. In this communications system, gallerists have the capability to make a name for themselves and acquire recognition that may rise quite high, for example by including their names in

the name of a gallery. Based on those who have commented on galleries, and gallerists who have produced accounts of their activities, it can also be assumed that the continuous value of the names of gallerists has been secured by the literature.

Comparing an early generation of dealers to contemporary gallerists, suggests that the profession has changed from being introvert to being extrovert. This development is evident in the increasing media visibility of the profession. This debate has given gallerists a meaning in contemporary art worlds largely resting on interactions and the tools they apply to make their operations visible.

There is a strong geographical strand in the discussion above, stretching from Paris, throughout Europe and across the Atlantic Ocean, indicating that the histories of gallerists cannot be explained on the basis of one location because they are strongly intertwined on a global scale. However, this voyage through existing literature suggests that the understanding of gallerists is quite emotionally charged, and frequently based on presumptions, rather than objectivity and extensive empirical research. This implicitly says that it is important to look at new generations of gallerists empirically and geographically, to reveal sides of the profession that may have remained unknown until now.

It has been established above that gallerists are major contributors to art worlds. To develop the study further it is now the intention to increase the resolution and look at the COLORE cities and the geography of their art worlds, in order to underpin an understanding of the cultural environment of COLORE gallerists.

# 4 The COLORE cities: Three gallery contexts

## Introduction

As was stated at the outset, this thesis attempts a deeper understanding of the gallerist and the commercial gallery through the comparative study of three northern European art worlds: Copenhagen, London and Reykjavík; the COLORE cities as I have termed them. The two previous chapters have provided the context to this study. In this chapter, I shall explore the specific contexts of the COLORE gallerists as an essential foundation for the analysis of the interviews discussed in subsequent chapters. Before discussing and comparing the COLORE cities, it is important to note that amongst the fundamental differences between the nations concerned, perhaps of particular significance is their differences in size. Björn G. Ólafsson, and others, have suggested that the size of a nation may deeply affect its visibility, geography and cultural activities. Ólafsson identifies a number of influential variables, including population, Gross National Product, climate, culture, history and geographical scale or area, and population. Existing studies suggest that states with a population of between 300,000 and 15 million have 'small state' characteristics.<sup>1</sup> With populations of 300,000 and 5.5 million, respectively, Iceland and Denmark are clearly, by these criteria, small nations, while at just

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<sup>1</sup> Björn G. Ólafsson, *Small States in the Global System: Analysis and Illustrations from the Case of Iceland* (Aldershot et al: Ashgate, 1998), pp. 8, 9, 11.

over 60 million the UK is not.<sup>2</sup> There are three rather different kinds of nations presented within the COLORE equation which should immediately suggest that this study is not a comparison of equals. Rather, one of the important factors that might affect gallery businesses in these cities is indeed scale and visibility. This, then, is an underlying and pervasive attribute, which must be factored into the comparative study attempted here. It is something I wish to understand in the context of galleries and gallerists, and their activities and cultural environments.

A second factor concerns the geography of the cities and nations. Two are island nations, while Denmark, which has a large coastline, also has many island characteristics. Iceland and Denmark share a cultural identity as Nordic Countries, as well as being of Anglo-Saxon origin, like England. There is a historical connection between these countries, then, that unites them historically and culturally. Both Denmark and, in Britain, London, have a far higher level of European connectivity than residents of Reykjavik. Each city is a recognised European capital with an important European profile, but only London really has the characteristics of a world city and forms a global international hub comparable with Paris, Berlin and New York.

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<sup>2</sup> According to *Iceland Review* Online, the population of Iceland was 299,404 on December 1<sup>st</sup> 2005. See, Anon. 'Population in Iceland close to the 300,000 mark', [http://www.icelandreview.com/icelandreview/daily\\_news/?cat\\_id=16539&ew\\_0\\_a\\_id=174069](http://www.icelandreview.com/icelandreview/daily_news/?cat_id=16539&ew_0_a_id=174069) (21/01/2006). For the population of the UK, see Anon. 'Population Estimates. UK population grows to 60.975.000', <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/CCI/nugget.asp?ID=6> (14/08/2007). For information about the population of London see Anon. 'Population density of London: by London Borough, 2006', [http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme\\_population/regional\\_snapshot/RS\\_Lon.pdf](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_population/regional_snapshot/RS_Lon.pdf) (14/08/2007). For the population of Denmark see, Anon. 'Summary', <http://www.aneki.com/Denmark.html> (14/08/2007). For the population of Copenhagen see Anon. 'population' [http://www.visitcopenhagen.com/tourist/about\\_copenhagen/basic\\_facts/population/](http://www.visitcopenhagen.com/tourist/about_copenhagen/basic_facts/population/) (14/08/2007).

On the world stage, big nations, like Britain, are constantly visible due to their size, population, economy, cultural infrastructures and mass media. Big nations have access to a wider range of cultural routes which reinforces their galleries. The smallness of Copenhagen and Reykjavík makes them vulnerable, as was so apparent in the recent economic crash in Iceland, yet each has the drive and energy of national cultural expression. To keep up with the big players, CORE galleries have, in recent years, increased their visibility through participating in art fairs. This can be an expensive undertaking for commercial galleries from small nations. Sometimes such initiatives are partly funded by public bodies, but the majority of galleries are dependent on their own resources. The art world connectivity of these nations also varies. London and Reykjavík are only weak links, while galleries in London and Copenhagen are better connected. Indeed, the very well known East End, *David Risley Gallery*, moved to Copenhagen in spring 2009.<sup>3</sup> Cultural links between Reykjavík and Copenhagen, via official cultural bodies like the Nordic House, are well established. For about 550 years Iceland was a colony of Denmark; Danish rule ended as recently as 1944. Galleries, like *i8*, however, have also been active in building links elsewhere in Europe and the USA by participating in art fairs.

The geographical and historical links and contrasts between the three countries provide strong reasons for looking at the cultural make-up of the capital cities. The high profile impact of YBAs provides another useful cultural context. With this in mind, the gallerists studied were selected on the basis of

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<sup>3</sup> David Risley Gallery, *Newsletter*. 08/10/2008. The Danish painter Tal R and the Norwegian performance duo Elmgreen and Dragset have worked with Wallner and exhibited with Victoria Miro. Chapelle has also collaborated with one of *Vertigo's* artists, Simon Keenleyside.

the rapidly shifting gallery areas in Copenhagen and London. In the much smaller city of Reykjavik, this segmentation of the art market is less apparent. Locations can be crucial for the life of galleries, as well as relations to artists, museums and regeneration bodies.

## **The new gallery scene in Copenhagen**

Copenhagen is an inviting city that does not give itself and the gallery scene away at first glance, despite commercial galleries promoting a variety of art being spread all over the city. This study focuses on two small areas, Islands Brygge<sup>4</sup> and Valby. The gallerists operate in a somewhat contradictory environment, where protectionism, global capitalism and social consciousness seem to exist side by side with a strong cultural outreach, where commercial galleries are ahead of official bodies in promoting contemporary art. To explain the environment, this section will construct an understanding of the gallery areas and look at cultural outreach and other aspects of activating art in society. In order to deepen the understanding of a contrasting culture further, I will also look at Nordic protectionism and how it may stand in the way of a symbiotic flow between cultures.

During research trips to Copenhagen from 2003 to 2005, it became obvious that the signs of global capitalism were not as blatantly obvious as in Iceland and England, despite a neo-conservative government. The Danes remained economic and ecological at heart. Copenhagen lacks the bustle of city traffic, and retains a sense of a 1960s and early '70s social

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<sup>4</sup> 'Islands Brygge' means 'Iceland pier' and has its roots in the Danish colonisation of Iceland. It is the part of the harbour where ships of monopoly merchants sailing between Copenhagen and Iceland loaded goods to sell in Iceland and unloaded goods for the Danish market.

consciousness. The 'alternative' ghetto and 'Free State' Christiania and its drug culture<sup>5</sup> continue to contribute to the uniqueness of the city and seem to be defended against the government's normalisation plans, for example, by supporters who live all over the city. As a social experience, Christiania may be as equally important in understanding the Danes as the nation's tradition of informal learning through debate.

Widespread support for alternative cultures has meant that pressure from the authorities and forced closing of social initiatives for young people in the city, have been met with debate and street fights.<sup>6</sup> The energy to fight for ideals in the streets and improve society is, amongst the cities studied here, unique. The tradition for direct social involvement, and an ability to take on new areas, may have affected the new galleries established just outside the city centre. One needs to be dedicated and adventurous to go there.

Another aspect of public involvement is the popular Art Societies. They are one form of direct public participation in the art market. These societies are operated by employers of both public and private corporations. Members of Art Societies such as *Kunstforeningen af 1976 ved TDC* pay a monthly fee. The fee secures members an original print every two or three years. The society's elected executive committee purchases from galleries, who give 10% discount as well as buying directly from artists. The purchased works are then distributed among members via a lottery in the annual general meeting,<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Jason Burke, 'End is nigh for the commune that kept hippie dream alive', *The Observer*, 21 December 2003, <http://observer.guardian.co.uk/international/story/0,,1111171,00.html> (14/11/2007).

<sup>6</sup> Lars Borking, 'Det er bare gas, vi kan ta' det', ['It is only gas, we can take that'] *Information*, 9 October 2007, <http://www.information.dk/147772> (10/05/08). See also Anon 'English newz' <http://www.ungeren.dk/spip.php?page=english> (20/05/2008).

<sup>7</sup> Email to the author from Henrik Nykvist. Svendsen, 14 June 2005. See also Henrik Nykvist Svendsen, 'Bestyrelsens beretning' [The Executive Committee Report] in *Kunstforeningen af 1976 ved TDC: Katalog for bortlodning den 24. Maj 2005* [The Art Society of 1976 at TDC:

signalling public participation and interest in art on a communal and social level.

Geographically, the Copenhagen gallery areas looked at here are split up between two islands: Valby is on Sjælland and Islands Brygge (Brygge for short hand) is on Amager (See Map 1).



**Map 1:** Map of Copenhagen showing gallery locations. A, Gallery Christina Wilson; B, Gustav Gimm; C, Nils Stærk, D, Nicolai Wallner; E, Mogadishni; F, The Royal Academy of Art; G, The Royal Palace. Valby, Islands Brygge and the city centre are identified on the map.

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Catalogue for the lottery 24 May 2005] (Copenhagen: Kunstforeningen af 1976 ved TDC, 2005), [p.1], ([p.1]). I was invited to attend the general meeting on the 24<sup>th</sup> of May 2005 and it proved to be a lively, friendly and creative gathering of art lovers. [TDC stands for Tele Denmark [Communication]]. See also the *Kunstforeningen af 1976 ved TDC* website <http://www.sitecenter.dk/tdkkunst> (01/03/2009).

Christian Chapelle's gallery, *Leisure Club Mogadishni*,<sup>8</sup> was originally founded on the Brygge in early 2000, but in February 2003 it moved to bigger premises in an industrial estate in Valby in the west part of Copenhagen and became a commercial gallery (Plate 1). In 2006, he opened a branch in the city of Aarhus. The development did not stop there, because in February 2009 the gallery moved from Valby and became a part of the gallery quarter around the corner from the Royal Palace.



**Plate 1:** *The industrial environment of Mogadishni*

*Gustav Gimm* gallery was founded on Njalsgade on the Brygge in 1999 (Plate 2), but moved around the corner to Sturlasgade in 2004 where it opened under a new name, *Gimm and Eis*, and became Christina Wilson's

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<sup>8</sup> Since 2001 the gallery has been called *Mogadishni*.

neighbour. The gallery closed in the spring 2005 due to a long-term illness of Gimm's business partner, Eis.



**Plate 2:** *The building that housed Gustav Gimm gallery in April 2003*

*Nils Stærk Contemporary Art* has enjoyed a longer life since opening on Njalsgade on the Brygge in 1999 (Plate 3).



**Plate 3:** *The main entrance to Nils Stærk Contemporary Art*

*Gallery Nicolai Wallner opened on the Brygge in 1999 (Plate 4).*



**Plate 4:** *Gallery Nicolai Wallner is behind the windows on the top floor of this building*

The latest arrival to the area was *Gallery Christina Wilson* opening further away from the Njalsgade cluster on Sturlasgade in 2002 (Plate 5).



**Plate 5:** *Gallery Christina Wilson's gallery front*

Some of the apartment blocks and coastal warehouses on the Brygge are under renovation. The warehouses stretch into the back gardens of the main road, Njalsgade, where the galleries are located, mixed in with light industries and services, while the Sturlasgade galleries are in a more industrial environment. All the galleries fall under the set criteria for this study as regards their age, off city centre markets in areas not previously associated with art businesses. They are known for launching young artists and developing an interested clientele.

After London, the Copenhagen market is the second oldest of the markets studied here, but its history is more fragmented and not well

researched. The art market took off in a high society area in the city centre near the Royal Academy of Art and the Royal Palace right after World War II,<sup>9</sup> (see Map 1). In contrast, the new galleries are on the margins of the city centre but within walking distance just off the main shopping street, Njalsgade. The area is, for the most part, residential with huge apartment blocks.

Opening around the same time gives the galleries a strong sense of community, although Mogadishni did not stop for long and was first to move away stretching the boundaries of the Copenhagen gallery scene to Valby.

Despite the sense of community insularity amongst its new galleries, Copenhagen has a history of developing art routes. The international spirit of the COBRA group was taken further, when the *Danish Contemporary Art Gallery (DCA)* opened in New York in 1994. It is not unprecedented for small nations to operate cultural centres in the capitals of the world. Iceland, for example, operates a cultural centre in Copenhagen and there are Nordic Houses in Reykjavík and on the Faroe Islands. However, what makes this project different is the collaboration between the Danish Ministry of Culture and the established Copenhagen galleries *Asbæk*, *Bie & Vadstrup*, *Galleri Faurschou*, *Galleri Moderne* and *Galleri Milkael Andersen*.<sup>10</sup> However, this venture closed on 31 July 2005.<sup>11</sup> Its closing reflected a policy shift which

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<sup>9</sup> See *Email to the author from Henrik Kampman* 19 September 2003. According to Kampman, there are no studies available about early Copenhagen galleries. See also, Anon. *Stations in Life*, 'Bertil Sjöberg'. An interview. [http://www.art-sjoeberg.de/html/stations\\_in\\_life.html](http://www.art-sjoeberg.de/html/stations_in_life.html) (26/11/2007).

Annette Birch 'Gallerie Birch' [No date. A manuscript chronologically tracing the history of *Gallerie Birch* put together by Annette Birch, states that it was founded in 1946.]

<sup>10</sup> *Galleri Milkael Andersen* had a stake in the development of *Gustav Gimm* Gallery.

<sup>11</sup> See, Anon. 'DCA Gallery Location...'

[http://maps.google.co.uk/maps?f=q&source=s\\_q&view=text&hl=en&q=dca+gallery+loc%3A+New+York%2C+NY%2C+United+States+of+America&btnG=Search+Maps](http://maps.google.co.uk/maps?f=q&source=s_q&view=text&hl=en&q=dca+gallery+loc%3A+New+York%2C+NY%2C+United+States+of+America&btnG=Search+Maps)

sought to increase commercial and corporate investment in the cultural industries in place of public funds.

The imminent closure of the DCA in order to establish a new body to support collaboration between culture and businesses has been seen as the rise of market capitalism over a culture of state protection of art.<sup>12</sup> This is widely seen as a negative development.<sup>13</sup>

The remnants of the official regulation of cultural affairs are also seen in the Copenhagen art fair. Although the participating galleries are small capitalist businesses, they also seem to support protectionism. The fair has been recognised as an international opportunity for investment and established artists.<sup>14</sup> While the directors of the fair are attempting to attract the interest of foreign collectors the fair itself, and public Nordic bodies, are trying to localise and eventually isolate the Nordic markets which may signify that they are being frozen out of the global context. This is evident in the fact that the annual art fair, *Art Copenhagen*, is not open to non-Nordic galleries.<sup>15</sup> It is also interesting to read that while the 73 participating galleries come from Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden, the more than 550 artists presented

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(20/08/2007). See also Anon. 'Kunstrådet trækker sig ud af DCA Gallery', [English: 'The Art Council withdraws from DCA Gallery'], *Kunstrådets Nyhedsbrev* nr. 5, February 2005 <http://www.kunststyrelsen.dk/59f2774> (14/02/2005) and 'Visit these links to see more art related to DCA Gallery' <http://www.dcagallery.com/links.html> (14/02.2005).

<sup>12</sup> Jakob Jakobsen, 'Det fri (kunst)marked og intet andet', ['The free (art)market and nothing else']. the online art newsletter *kopenhagen.dk*, in May 2002 <http://www.kopenhagen.dk/fileadmin/oldsite/artikler/jakobsenkdk.htm> (23/11/2003)

<sup>13</sup> Anon. 'Udrag fra Poul Nyrup Rasmussen's forord' to *I grådighedens tid Kapitalfonde og Kasinoøkonomi* [Abstract from Rasmussen's introduction to *In times of Greediness. Capital Funds and Casino Economy*]. The book criticizes the situation as well as pointing out solutions to avoid damage to the Danish welfare society caused by foreign investors who are buying up prosperous Danish businesses. [http://www.informationsforlag.dk/view\\_product.php?product=978-87-7514-162-3&PHPSESSID=08d696535bc9a9e4022f69cb5dbd5925](http://www.informationsforlag.dk/view_product.php?product=978-87-7514-162-3&PHPSESSID=08d696535bc9a9e4022f69cb5dbd5925) (24/11/2007).

<sup>14</sup> Clemens Bomsdorf, 'Stockholm isn't big enough for two fairs,' *The Art Newspaper-News*, <http://www.theartnewspaper.com/article01.asp?id=177> (17/02/2006).

<sup>15</sup> Anon. 'Galleries – Art Copenhagen' <http://www.artcopenhagen.dk/English/Galleries> (29/11/07).

in the fair are of international stature.<sup>16</sup> The idea of only opening the fair to Nordic galleries is criticised by Bomsdorf, in *The Art Newspaper*, 'Most of the fairs in Scandinavia take a protectionist stance, allowing only Nordic galleries to exhibit in an attempt to boost local trade. In the end, the move is likely to be counterproductive, as international galleries would bring international clients and collectors'.<sup>17</sup> This may explain why the East End gallery, *David Risley Gallery* moved to Copenhagen in spring 2009.<sup>18</sup> The fair hints at a strong cultural nationalism and does not have the global strength of the nationalism associated with YBAs and Brit Art. Not all of the Nordic gallerists attend international or local art fairs, but the majority of galleries are on the move all year round constantly expanding their territory in search of global opportunities.

The will to reach beyond Denmark is strong within a new generation of artists and gallerists who emerged in the 1990s.<sup>19</sup> In a commentary on this trend, Richard Vine splits ways of selling art into old and new styles. The former is artist-centred and

sales are generated primarily through artist associations — groups of like-minded practitioners who rent exhibition space once or twice a year and sell directly to the public. [...] But aggressive younger artists

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<sup>16</sup> Anon. 'Pressemeldelse. Stor tilstrømning til Art Copenhagen 2007' ['News announcement. Visitors flock to Art Copenhagen 2007'].

[http://www.artcopenhagen.dk/bc\\_files/artcopenhagen/2007/Presse/04.09.07.DK.pdf](http://www.artcopenhagen.dk/bc_files/artcopenhagen/2007/Presse/04.09.07.DK.pdf) (30/11/2007). [...] præsenterer 73 tonegivende gallerier fra Danmark, Finland, Norge og Sverige samt værker skabt af over 550 internationale kunstnere [...]. Danish text translated by the author.]

<sup>17</sup> Bomsdorf, 'Stockholm isn't big enough for two fairs'.

<sup>18</sup> Anon. '[Announcement]', *David Risley Gallery, newsletter @davidrisleygallery.com*, 07 October 2008.

<sup>19</sup> Richard Vine, 'Part II: how to succeed in Copenhagen – modern art movement in Denmark – Report from Denmark', *Art in America*, (December, 1996), [http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m1248/is\\_n12\\_v84/ai\\_18967383/print](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1248/is_n12_v84/ai_18967383/print) (26/11/2007).

have come to disdain these old-style artist associations, which they consider deadeningly respectful of seniority and overly accommodating to established tastes. They prefer to work instead with renegade groups attuned to au courant critical discourse and with a handful of savvy dealers plugged into the global art market.<sup>20</sup>

Vine describes a dramatic transformation fronted by this new collaboration, which seems contrary to expectation; 'high energy and international marketing know-how – two qualities which many Danes concede are not part of their national character.'<sup>21</sup>

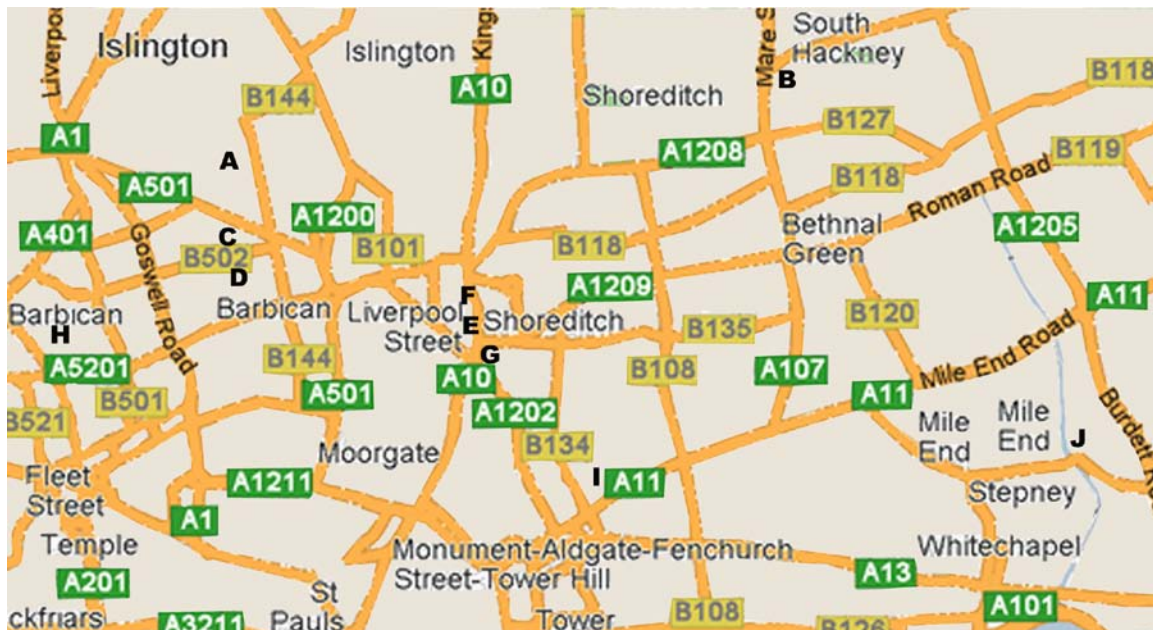
Vine's outlook is artist-centred and he sees artists, rather than gallerists, as leading this trend but this seems to underplay the role of globally connected gallerists. This new generation of gallerists grew up in an insular and protected environment and Wallner appears to have taken on the task of challenging this comfort zone of Danish art. He was the first to move to the Brygge and was soon joined by other likeminded young people who saw great opportunities for art in an increasingly capitalist culture, which still retained a socially conscious welfare state. This new community of gallerists distanced itself from the established gallery scene, both geographically and culturally; that older scene is no less capitalist, but the new gallerists wished to be seen as new and different. There is much about this new Copenhagen art scene that has similarities with events in the East End around the time of the YBAs. It suggests that the DCA development was rather rapidly seen as Old World.

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<sup>20</sup> Richard Vine, 'Part II: how to succeed in Copenhagen – modern art movement in Denmark – Report from Denmark',

<sup>21</sup> Richard Vine, 'Part II: how to succeed in Copenhagen – modern art movement in Denmark – Report from Denmark',

## London's East End galleries



**Map 2:** *Map of Gallery Locations in the East End of London.* A, Victoria Miro Gallery; B, Mobile Home; C, One in The Other; D, mw project; E, Vertigo Gallery; F, The Agency; G. Andrew Mummery Gallery (2004); H, EC Art Space (2004); I, Whitechapel Art Gallery; J, Matt's Gallery.

The West End and the area around the Royal Academy had been the focal point of contemporary art galleries for the best part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and they particularly thrived in the 1960s.<sup>22</sup>

At that time, artists started moving to the gangland of East London in search of cheaper studios and accommodation. This resulted in the establishment of Europe's largest artists' quarter.<sup>23</sup> However, the rise of the new East End galleries in the 1990s seems to have no relation to either the

<sup>22</sup> Barrie Stuart-Penrose, *The Art Scene* (London et al: Paul Hamlyn, 1969), pp. 18, 43-44.

<sup>23</sup> Kit Wedd, Lucy Peltz and Cathy Ross, *Creative Quarters* (London: Marrell and Museum of London, 2001) pp. 140-155.

West End galleries or this earlier rise in the population of artists. However, the East End did attract galleries from the West End, such as *Miro* and *Jopling*, who may have further contributed to establishing the art scene in the area.

Despite current visibility, the East End gallery scene kicked off without major media interest when Robin Klassnik opened *Mat's Gallery* in the 1970s. A later generation of gallerists, such as Paul Hedge and Paul Maslin founders of *Hales Gallery* in South East London 1992 without any clients, patrons or experience of art dealing, have identified the East End gallerist Maureen Paley, who started exhibiting in her Hackney home just before 1980, and Robin Klassnik as models for their gallery.<sup>24</sup> The development of the East End as an art world force is the result of a chain of transforming events. One link in that chain was the legendary gallerist Joshua Compston who opened his Hackney gallery *Factual Nonsense* in 1992 seeking 'power through collaboration rather than competition with the artists of his generation'.<sup>25</sup> This identification of networking as an empowering way forward, introduced a new positive mind-set for a new art world in the making. It needs to be noted, however, that cooperative artists' initiatives for running studios had been in place in the East End since the '60s. Soon Compston's gallery became a focal point for creativity, through community events attracting attention to the East End such as *A Fête Worse Than Death* in 1993 and 1994. These were carnivalesque happenings with market stalls, clowns and art, involving artists and other East Enders.<sup>26</sup> The importance of these is further underlined by gallerist Chris Noraika, who credited Compston as being a model for

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<sup>24</sup> Louisa Buck, *Moving Targets 2: A User's Guide to British Art Now*, p. 172.

<sup>25</sup> Jeremy Cooper, *No Fun Without You: the Art of Factual Nonsense* (London: ...ellipses, 2000), p. 161.

<sup>26</sup> Cooper, *No Fun Without U*, pp. 78-81, 123-136, 219-223.

creativity.<sup>27</sup> Until *Sensation* in 1997, both YBAs and the East End art scene remained out of sight. Galleries opened and closed, there was regeneration and rising fashion ability, and money and then extravagant restaurants leading to an increasingly wider section of the public dropping by.<sup>28</sup> Inspired by this, I undertook my first study trip to the East End in the summer of 2001.

When I first visited the East End in July 2001, after having read extensively about it, I felt I was entering a brave new world where great inspired artists walked the streets throwing golden dust over the residents, creating art in the streets with frantic gestures and then taking their art from one gallery to the other. What I saw was completely different. Initially I was disappointed; the East End brought me down to earth. But then I noticed there really were galleries everywhere. But where are the artists? I met two young people whose clothes were covered with splashes of paint. They could have been artists I thought, but they were not at all similar to the artists I had been reading about: those who had penetrated the art worlds and were the talk of the town. These young people could easily have been decorators. But maybe that is the trick: great artists never look like artists or adapt to stereotypes.

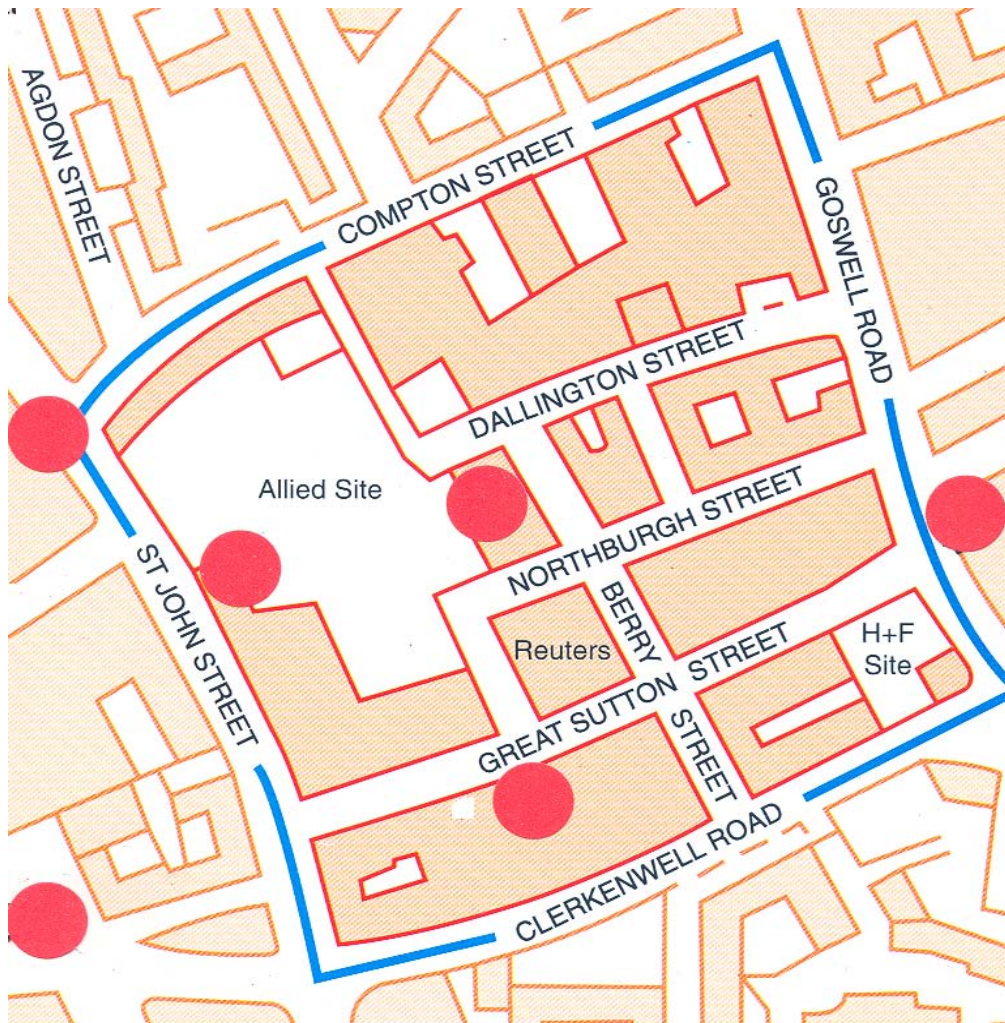
What makes the East End gallerists interesting is their opening in areas not previously associated with art businesses and distancing themselves from the established city centre gallery areas.

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<sup>27</sup> Author's Interview with Chris Noraika, 15 May 2003, p. 5.

<sup>28</sup> See Wedd, Peltz and Ross, *Creative Quarters*, pp.140-155. See also Simon Morley, 'The lure of the East', The Art Newspaper.com, <http://www.allemandi.com/TAN/news/article.asp?idart=2812> (19/11/2001). This story is also traced in Michael Archer, 'Oranges and Lemons and Oranges and Bananas,' *ACME Bulletin*, (April 2001), no pagination.

Angela Diamandidou curated her first exhibitions in the moveable *EC Artspace* in 1998. The gallery has never had a fixed address, but the concept was to exhibit in derelict buildings in the East End. Thus, *EC* has a very strong geographical reference to the postal area East Central (see Map 3).



**Map 3:** The dots on the map show the locations of *EC Artspace* until 2003.

The history of *Matt's Gallery* goes back to 1979, when Robin Klassnik founded it in his Hackney studio. It is a respected non-profit gallery that, in 1993, was 'registered as a Friendly Society, thus attaining charitable status and allowing it to receive funds from a broader range of charities and agencies.'<sup>29</sup> Both little known and younger artists are invited to 'develop new ideas and ways of working, while making a new work for the space in which it is to be exhibited.'<sup>30</sup> Selling art is not the main focus, although exhibited works have been sold to collectors and museums (see Plate 6).



**Plate 6:** *The main entrance of Matt's Gallery*

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<sup>29</sup> Anon. *Matt's Gallery: a Brief History*. [Handout produced by Matt's Gallery].

<sup>30</sup> 'Matt's Gallery' [http://vads.ahds.ac.uk/vads\\_catalogue/oep/mattsgallery/index.htm](http://vads.ahds.ac.uk/vads_catalogue/oep/mattsgallery/index.htm) (29/07/2002).

*Victoria Miro Gallery* opened in the West End in 1985, but moved to the East End in 2000 where Miro promotes established artists like Chris Ofili, together with less known innovative artists of both older and younger generations (see plate 7).



**Plate 7:** *Victoria Miro Gallery's front*

*Andrew Mummery Gallery* was founded by Andrew Mummery in 1996 and has moved a few times within the East End (see plate 8). He exhibits a range of contemporary art; currently the gallery is centrally located in the so called *Tea Building*.



**Plate 8:** *The front side of Andrew Mummery Gallery on 63 Compton Street when the interview took place in 2003*

Chris Noraika started by installing non-profit shows in his artist's studio in 1996. After having had a space near the Spitalfield market for four years, the gallery *One in the Other* moved to the quiet Dingley Place off City Road in 2001, when it formally became a commercial gallery (see plate 9). Noraika exhibits a range of work from installations to paintings. The venture moved further east to the industrial Vyner Street in January 2006, an area that has now turned into a small community of galleries.



**Plate 9:** *The front of Gallery One in the Other in Dingley Place*

*Vertigo* on the busy Great Eastern Street was founded by Christine Shearn in 2000 in a ground floor space with a big window facing the street and a spacious basement (see Plate 10). The gallery is in a former Victorian rope and tarpaulin factory. During research trips to the gallery in 2002 and '03 the art on the walls looked quite mainstream, but it appears to have changed since then. Paintings by one of the gallery artists, Simon Keenleyside, have also been exhibited in *Mogadishni* signalling that the gallery has moved towards the cutting edge.



**Plate 10:** *The Vertigo Gallery*

*Mobile Home* was founded by Ronnie Simpson in Bloomsbury in 1999, but moved to Vyner Street where it opened during the first *F-EST* weekend in October 2002. The gallery has now closed (see Plate 11).



**Plate 11:** *The front of Mobile Home*

*The Agency Contemporary* was originally founded in 1992 by Bea de Souza to promote contemporary art in south London, but moved to 35-40 Charlotte Road in 1993 and then again to 18 Charlotte Road in 2003 where the interview took place (see Plate 12).<sup>31</sup>



**Plate 12:** *The Agency Contemporary*

From 1993, Max Wigram was associated with an artist-run space, *The Independent Art Space* in Chelsea, but in 2002 he founded *MW Project* (see Plate 13), which opened during the *F-EST* weekend - taking the initials from his name - on 43B Mitchell Street. He concentrated on art with a conceptual edge in a variety of media. The gallery grew rapidly, changing its name to *Max Wigram Gallery* and moving to 99 Bond Street. He can rightly be called an

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<sup>31</sup> Since then the gallery has moved to 15A Cremer Street around the corner from the *Geffrye Museum* of design and in June 2009 it is located on 66 Evelyn Street in the SE8 postal area.

East Ender because he moved there to live in the early 90s before the area was settled by gallerists. The gallery continues to promote a variety of progressive art with a strong conceptual and ready-made edge.



**Plate 13:** *The main entrance of MW Project*

The 14th London Art Fair, *Art 2002* appears to have been one of the first formal attempts to market East End galleries to that particular audience. The selected galleries were *David Risley*, *Danielle Arnaud*, *E C Artspace*,

*Flowers East* and *Vertigo*, of which *One in the Other* and *Rhodes+ Mann* together with the established public body the *Whitechapel Gallery* and *ACME*, enjoyed particular attention.<sup>32</sup> I spoke to Fred Mann of *Rhodes+ Mann* and to Chris Noraika of *One in the Other* at this event. Later that year, the inaugural East End gallery weekend, *F-EST* took place from 4 to 6 October with the participation of around 80 East End galleries; a considerably higher number than had access to the fair. The *F-EST* weekend occurred annually until 2004 when it appears to have disappeared. These were exciting weekends of late openings, talks, events, guided tours and parties. This first collective product of the galleries, following Compston's street art parties, was targeted at the local community, collectors, and tourists at a grass roots level and was intended to increase 'awareness of the East End's rich cultural life to local people, other Londoners, and visitors to the city. The aims are access, education and interaction with the community at all levels, to be achieved by forging new creative links between arts and local businesses'.<sup>33</sup> The third event that year was *The Galleries Show* at the Royal Academy of Arts from 14 September to 12 October 2002, curated by Max Wigram and Norman Rosenthal.<sup>34</sup> Six of the high profile galleries participating in the show, *The Agency Contemporary Ltd.*, *Andrew Mummery Gallery*, *Mobile Home*, *MW*

<sup>32</sup> Lucy Field 'Welcome to the 14<sup>th</sup> London Art Fair', in *Art 2002. London Art Fair 16 – 20 January 2002* (London: [London Art Fair, 2002], p. 3. (3). See also *ibid* pp. 7, 211. *ACME* has been supporting art and artists since 1972 by providing cheap studios to artists in East and South East London.

<sup>33</sup> *F-EST Map and Programme* (London: Pocket London, 2002). [No pagination]. [F-EST handout].

<sup>34</sup> See *The Galleries Book* (London: Royal Academy Publications, 2002). See also Simon Tait, 'Sensation Seeker', pp. 22-23, 25. In this interview, published two months before the opening of the Galleries Show it is stated that the show 'will be an art fair that will look like an exhibition with 17 different displays. Each gallery will be asked to make a statement, sometimes with one artist, sometimes a group show. I want to say that as far as new art is concerned, and this is just a simple historical fact going back at least 120 years, the great decisions about art have certainly not been taken by curators, and very rarely by collectors, but by artists and by dealers.', p. 23. This suggests that the art market is artist-dealer autonomous.

*Projects, One in the Other* and *Victoria Miro Gallery* are included this study. Apart from encouraging and introducing 'a larger public to the pleasures of regular visits to the galleries of London',<sup>35</sup> by directly inviting commercial galleries onto the premises, the Royal Academy challenged its own role as a public art institution and brought together the galleries of the East and West Ends. To stage an event like this, in this established heartland of British art, was to legitimise the new art and the new galleries of the East End on their own terms. It was unprecedented and placed the Royal Academy at the cutting edge; legitimisation can go both ways it seems.

By then the galleries were firmly associated with the new art of the Young British Artists (YBAs). The YBAs had made their names in the early 1990s and were active in revolutionising the art market and how art is perceived. Therefore the rise of the YBAs is important to this study.

In his 'The Essay', promoting and highlighting work in the Saatchi collection, critic and art historian Richard Cork defined the YBAs' work and Saatchi's collection as 'an obsession with mortality and decay, combined, paradoxically, with raw energy and playful sexuality'.<sup>36</sup> Saatchi soon became an actor in the unfolding drama: Saatchi 'thrives on hysterical controversy. He wants to demolish taboos, in the hope of widening art's ability to explore human life with frankness, daring and verve.'<sup>37</sup> The YBAs started exhibiting with a do-it-yourself attitude in abandoned warehouses in South and East London while still art students, thus renouncing dependency 'on the gallery

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<sup>35</sup> Norman Rosenthal and Max Wigram, 'Introduction', in *The Galleries Book: 33 Contemporary Fine Art Galleries in London* (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2002), no pagination.

<sup>36</sup> Richard Cork, 'The Essay', in *Saatchi: The Definitive Guide to the New Thameside Gallery*, ed. by Alison Roberts (London: The Guardian, The Observer [And Saatchi Gallery, 2003], pp. 4-6, (p.4). [Exhibition guide/catalogue].

<sup>37</sup> Cork, 'The Essay', p. 6.

owners and powerful institutions for opportunities to become established'.<sup>38</sup> Damien Hirst proved to be instrumental in this desire for DIY and as an example of the mythmaking that is taking place. As well as signifying dependence on powerful institutions, Hirst collected former Exhibitions Secretary of the Royal Academy Norman Rosenthal to take him to the first *Freeze* show that 'was already a legend in insider circles'.<sup>39</sup> The need to involve powerful art world insiders is therefore unavoidable. When reflecting on *Freeze*, the YBA's patron, Charles Saatchi, argues that the show was not really good apart from the work of Gary Hume and Mat Collishaw. However, neither the show nor other activities of the students at Goldsmith's could be ignored because of the freshness and 'the hopeful swagger of it all'.<sup>40</sup>

In his study 'Locating art worlds: London and the making of Young British art', Aidan While stresses that London offered the necessary networks, associations and facilities to secure the success of YBAs as well as different ways of doing art business; the success they enjoyed 'can be linked to London's changing status as a cultural capital, as well as profound changes in the business of contemporary art'.<sup>41</sup> London, as a successful financial capital, had the economic and cultural systems to make art visible. It is also evident from While's study that geography – London and the East End - played a vital role.

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<sup>38</sup> David Christopher, *British culture: An introduction* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), p. 172.

<sup>39</sup> Norman Rosenthal, 'The Blood Must Continue to Flow', *Sensation: Young British Artists from the Saatchi Collection* (London: Thames and Hudson with the Royal Academy of Art, 1999), pp. 8-11, (p. 9).

<sup>40</sup> Charles Saatchi, 'Introduction', no pagination.

<sup>41</sup> Aidan While, 'Locating art worlds: London and the making of Young British art', (p. 251). See also <http://www.blackwell-synergy.com/links/doi/10.1111/1475-4762.00174/full/> (07.07.2004).

Looking at the East End, first colonised by artists, and then gallerists such as Robin Klassnik and Maureen Paley who founded her home gallery *Interim Art* in 1984,<sup>42</sup> it signals a lively art scene and a will to give global art a presence on the gallerists' home ground.<sup>43</sup> Locating a gallery in the East End suggests that a number of the artists are East Enders, whilst it is likely that before the East End boom artists had West End dealers because that is where the London art market was located. This arrangement demanded transport of art from East to West for those who managed to acquire dealers. However, Schubert's promotion of YBAs in the West End signals that the history of the YBAs art started in the West End. But taking into account the fame of Tracey Emin, the Chapman Brothers and Hirst, who are represented by the White Cube, it seems obvious that art and artists do not need to cover great distances to acquire value and fame in the contemporary art market as was the case with the early Parisian market. Another important factor for the development of YBAs, particularly in their formative years, was their dependence 'on the role of established national and international art world actors [...]'.<sup>44</sup> This reliance appears to have eased their way into global art worlds, as well as underlining their significance as international players. This signals the significance of a network of national and international agents in promoting artists. It seems clear though that the YBAs have had a strong impact on the London art markets. However, While is of the opinion that,

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<sup>42</sup> Regarding the history of Paley's gallery see Anon. 'Gallery History' [http://www.maureenpaley.com/maureenpaley.php?color=yellow&element=30&id\\_cache=1](http://www.maureenpaley.com/maureenpaley.php?color=yellow&element=30&id_cache=1) (26/02/2009). See also regarding the history of art activities in the East End, Michael Archer, 'Artists in East London [1960-2000]', *ACME* [News Letter], (April 2001), no pagination.

<sup>43</sup> See also Anon. ['Exhibitions 1984-2004'] <http://www.maureenpaley.com/medias/history-paley-84-04.pdf> (26/02/2009).

<sup>44</sup> Aidan While, 'Locating art worlds: London and the making of Young British art', p. 261.

whether it marks a decisive long-term shift remains to be seen.<sup>45</sup> Despite an attempt to put YBAs and geographical issues related to them and art worlds in an international context, While focuses on London and the outreach of British art making it possible to consider a symbiotic flow between the UK and other cultures.

Despite the global nature of YBA art, government economic actions affect their development on both a local and national level. 'While the art boom of the 1980s and reduced state subsidy had brought business and contemporary art closer together, economic recessions of the early 1990s seems to have acted as a force of creative modernization for the London art world.'<sup>46</sup> While's conclusion about the East End art world suggests that they cannot be understood without taking into account how finance and art shift from one territory to the other via networks. Gallerists are breaking new territories because they seek for more routes, participate in a wider network and promote art that has a shared global language.

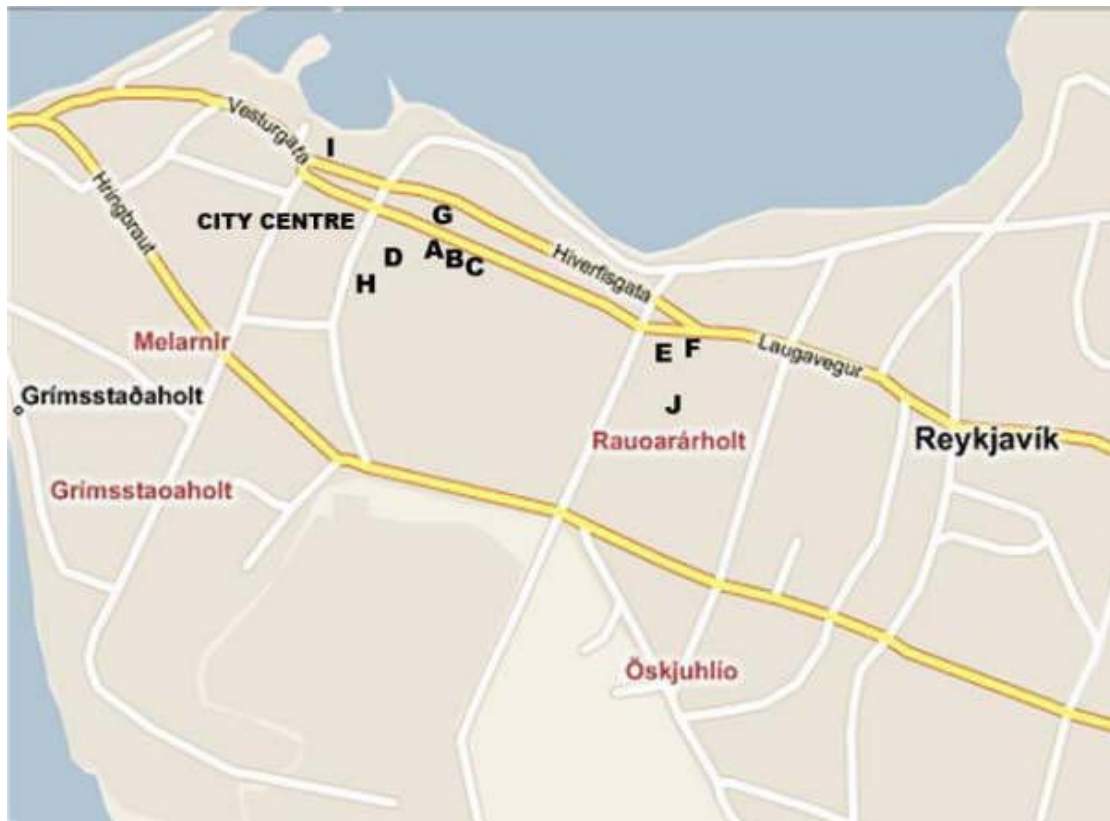
## **Reykjavík's galleries beyond the international market**

Reykjavík has a special status among the COLORE cities because it is not clear whether there is an art market in the city or not, so the cultural landscape is for the most part a *tabula rasa*. Therefore it is a complex task to evaluate the cultural environment of gallerists and position them and what they stand for.

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<sup>45</sup> Aidan While, 'Locating art worlds: London and the making of Young British art', p. 262.

<sup>46</sup> Aidan While, 'Locating art worlds: London and the making of Young British art', 261.



**Map 4:** Map showing Locations of Galleries and main art institutions in Reykjavík. A, i8; B, The Living Art Museum; C, Gallery Second Floor; D, Gallery 11 (One One); E, Gallery Fold; F, Gallery Hlemmur; G, Kling og Bang (artist run space); H, National Art Gallery, I, Reykjavík Art Museum; J, The Icelandic University of Art.

Of the three cities, Reykjavík has the shortest history of continuous art businesses. The first milestone was *Listvinasalurinn*<sup>47</sup>, operating from 1951 to 1954. The next step in the development was the *Sýningarsalurinn*<sup>48</sup>, from 1957 to 1958. Despite the short lives of the galleries there was a market for

<sup>47</sup> In English: *The Friends of Art Salon*.

<sup>48</sup> In English: *The Exhibition Salon*.

art but it was mainly in the form of artists selling through their studio door or their private shows in rented spaces in the city centre.<sup>49</sup>

According to a review of exhibition spaces in Reykjavík in 1985, 'Myndlistarsýningar í Reykjavík 1985'<sup>50</sup> artists Eggert Pétursson and Kristinn G. Harðarson suggest that it was not until the 1980s that the commercialisation of art began to change the landscape from non-profit artist-run spaces and rented out galleries. Galleries contributing to this development were *Listmunahúsið*<sup>51</sup> and *Gallery Borg*<sup>52</sup>. The authors argue that it does not really matter whether a gallery looks like a shop or not because 'art is as much of a commodity as anything else'.<sup>53</sup> This statement is an important step for the Icelandic art market because the artist-centred art market was still strong at that time, although this statement is as bold today as it was in the 1980s. The commercialisation of art has increased and five years after the article was published it became obvious, through the operation of *Gallery Fold*, the rise of *i8* and a rapid increase in the number of professional commercial galleries since 2004, that art is as much of a commodity in Iceland as it is in the COLO cities, and galleries serve different markets.

At the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, Iceland has rapidly been transformed into the ultimate capitalist paradise. A financial market, unregulated by the state, may have contributed to an increasing number of professional commercial galleries. Besides, corporate sponsorship of the arts has

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<sup>49</sup> Guðni Tómasson, *Gallerí og sýningarsalir í Reykjavík 1900-2000* [Galleries and Exhibition Spaces in Reykjavík 1900-2000] (University of Iceland: BA Dissertation, 2001), pp. 16-18. See also Kristín G. Guðnadóttir, 'Klessulistarhreifið: Listvinasalurinn 1951-1954' ['The Splat-Art-Nest: The Friends of Art Salon 1951-1954'] (Reykjavík: Listasafn ASÍ, 2008) [Exhibition handout commemorating the Splat-Art-Nest 5 April – 4 May 2008].

<sup>50</sup> In English: 'Art exhibitions in Reykjavík in 1985'.

<sup>51</sup> In English: *The House of Art Objects*.

<sup>52</sup> In English: *City Gallery*.

<sup>53</sup> Eggert Pétursson and Kristinn G. Harðarson, 'Myndlistarsýningar í Reykjavík 1985' ['Art exhibitions in Reykjavík 1985'], *Teningur*. No.2 Vol. 2 (1986) pp.4-5, (pp. 4-11).

increased rapidly in this period. The newly rich seem to have enormous buying power, but the nation as a whole seems to have missed out on ages of artistic cultivation that is so obvious in Denmark and England in particular, where families have collected art for generations and each new generation adding the art of its time to the collection, like the Sainsburys have practiced. However, in contrast to this, and because of limited philanthropist culture, the young Icelandic market needs the newly rich, as well as gallerists, to buy into art and museums to educate them.

Progressive galleries tend to operate in the immediate city centre of Reykjavík, while galleries outside the centre are more traditional, selling a range of art, and generally they do not install shows on a monthly basis.

The *Second Floor* (Plate 14) was established in Pétur Arason and artist partner's Ragna Róbertsdóttir home in collaboration with artist Ingólfur Arnarson and promoted contemporary minimalist and conceptual art. During the lifetime of the gallery they exhibited work by internationally acknowledged artists and Arason kept up with the national and international art market as a collector and gallery owner,<sup>54</sup> but on a smaller scale than Saatchi.

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<sup>54</sup> *Author's interview with Pétur Arason, 21 March, 2003, p. 11.*



**Plate 14:** *This building housed Gallery Second Floor*

Hannes Lárusson's *Gallery 11 (Gallery one one)* (Plate 15) was located on the ground floor of Lárusson's private house in the city centre, where he exhibited contemporary art. Attempting to increase the visibility of art, Lárusson has, over the years, been an active analyst of the Icelandic art market and its development.<sup>55</sup> In 2001, he revealed his analysis of the isolation of the Icelandic market for progressive art in a symposium on the art market. He criticised the lack of corporate participation in the market for progressive art and the lack of professional galleries.<sup>56</sup> He has also argued against the high prices of emerging artists, state-controlled price scale operated by the art museums, and the Ministry of Education who oversees

<sup>55</sup> *Author's interview with Hannes Lárusson*, 20 March 2003, pp. 24-26.

<sup>56</sup> Hannes Lárusson, 'Notes from a symposium talk' hosted by *Association of Icelandic Visual Artists* 26/10/2001', no pagination.

museums in Iceland,<sup>57</sup> and the lack of market value of art. Taking up the issue was very important for an art environment that has developed resentment against the market, commercial galleries and the importance of wealthy patrons.

In a newspaper interview, Lárusson argued that artists needed a stronger media presence as well as claiming that art, in terms of the market, was split into two levels, real art with no market share and the art market. Progressive art did not have a place in this system in 2002. On the one hand, the units are 'real art to be found in the grass roots movement and on the other hand the art market [...]. Britons are for example very conscious. Artists over there are public figures who frequently appear in the media. Thus the public acquires insight into this particular world that otherwise is closed.'<sup>58</sup> This signals a considerable isolation of artists, both in terms of market and media presence. Hence it seems evident that cultural democratisation and access had not reached Iceland in 2002.

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<sup>57</sup> *Author's interview with Hannes Lárusson, 20 March 2003.*

<sup>58</sup> Kolbrún Bergþórsdóttir, 'Alvöru myndlist í sjálfskipaðri útleigð' [Real art in self inflicted exile], *Fréttablaðið*, 11. 02. 2002, pagination missing. ['[...] alvöru myndlist, sem finnst í grasrótarhreyfingunni og hins vegar listmarkaðinn, [...]. [...] Bretar eru t.a.m. mjög meðvitaðir. Myndlistarmenn þar í landi eru opinberar fígúrir og iðulega í fjölmiðlum. Sem gerir það að verkum að fólk fær innsýn inn í þennan ákveðna heim sem annars er lokaður.' [English translation by the author.].



**Plate 15:** *Gallery 11 (Gallery one one) was located on the ground floor of this building*

*Gallery Fold* has proved its importance by operating in the primary, secondary and auction market (Plate 16). The gallery deals in a variety of arts and crafts, operating the biggest privately owned commercial gallery in Reykjavík. The walls are literally wallpapered with art in a salon style hanging. The gallery does not promote conceptual art, making it very different from the majority of other galleries in this study. The gallery is further divided into three

smaller spaces; one for photographs, another for paintings, sculptures and water colours and the third space is rented out to artists.



**Plate 16:** *Gallery Fold. The picture gives a good idea of the size of Fold's vast display windows*

Gallery Hlemmur (Plate 17), founded by artist and curator Þóra Þórisdóttir and artist Valgerður Guðlaugsdóttir in 1999, was around the corner from *Fold* (See Map 4). The gallery focussed on grass-roots artists and progressive art in a variety of media and was located off the high street Laugavegur. The gallery was split up into two exhibition spaces, an office and a store room, and was usually rented out to artists. Had the gallery survived, the plan was to run a professional-non profit gallery and invite artists to exhibit.



**Plate 17:** *The front of Gallery Hlemmur*

In 1995, Edda Jónsdóttir founded *Gallery i8*. It has been very active in promoting a variety of contemporary art by established Icelandic and foreign artists (See Plate 18). The gallery also exhibits promising young artists in a small space called *Under the Stairs* on the lower ground floor. The main gallery is located on a ground floor and a lower ground floor off the high street, Laugavegur. Artists are selected and invited to exhibit in the gallery. One of the main reasons for opening the gallery was to give Icelandic artists a profile, significance and monetary value somewhere other than in Iceland.<sup>59</sup> This seems to have worked, because the gallery is still active developing cultural routes by participating in global art fairs.

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<sup>59</sup> Author's interview with Edda Jónsdóttir, 20 March 2003, p. 3.



**Plate 18:** *The front of Gallery i8 on Klapparstígur*

Despite the smallness of the Reykjavík market, the galleries have applied professionalism that seems to be appropriate to their level of operation. In style, look, content, and context, *i8* and *Gallery Hlemmur* are closer to the East End and Copenhagen galleries than *Fold*. It also seems evident that the Reykjavík market is in its formative years as a capitalist venture and it seems to have the energy to mature and develop.

Despite signs of changing markets, more interest and more capital circulating in art worlds, the changes did not really occur until after 2003. Since then, the visibility of conceptual art has increased steadily, mostly because of the persistence of *i8* and *The Living Art Museum*,<sup>60</sup> and an

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<sup>60</sup> For further information about the Living Art Museum, see, <http://www.nylo.is/english/index.php?option=content&task=view&id=25&Itemid=49> (13/01/2009).

extensive private sponsoring of artist initiatives such as *Kling og Bang gallerí* and *Klink and Bank* studios and exhibition spaces.

An increasing interest in a market driven art market in Iceland has also raised concerns about artists giving away their right to decide what is art 'to gallerists, curators and museum directors who today tell us what is art and what is not art'.<sup>61</sup> The fear of commercial galleries has also been identified by artist Gísli Sigurðsson, when he stated that 'it has been a custom in the land of acquaintances that potential buyers of art go to artists' homes to buy directly from them and hopefully they will keep on doing so.'<sup>62</sup> It is in itself interesting to see that these gallerists are a threat to artists in capitalist Iceland, while the role of the buyers is ignored by Ransu and they are accredited by Sigurðsson. There is a strand of insecurity among Icelandic artists towards gallerists and in that aspect the cultural environment of gallerists has not changed over the years.

The movements of the Reykjavík galleries do not seem to be fluid and their locations are fixed in the city centre where they exist in conjunction with public museums (see Map 4). Based on the discussion above, and Morris' study of the contexts of Abstract Expressionism, it can be stated that promotion of cultural production is about discovering new routes and utilizing existing trading networks, as Van Miegroet has argued.<sup>63</sup> In that aspect, *i8* has done well by creating routes to art fairs abroad.

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<sup>61</sup> Jón B. K. Ransu, 'Ódýr viðbygging á veikum grunni' [A cheap extension on weak foundations], *Morgunblaðið*, 9 November, 2004, p. 43. '[...] listamenn hafa í raun gefið það vald frá sér til galleriista, sýningarstjóra og safnstjóra sem í dag segja okkur hvað sé list og hvað ekki'. English translation by the author.]

<sup>62</sup> Gísli Sigurðsson, 'Hrútar og hlébarðar –og grjótið í Grjótinu' ['Rams and leopards – and the stones in the Rock'], *Lesbók Morgunblaðsins*, 19 November 1988, p. 10.

<sup>63</sup> Magnus Gestsson, 'Notes from the Conference 'The Rise of the London Art Market'', hosted by Tate Modern 8-9 February 2007.

The overall value and visibility of new art in Reykjavík may depend as much on gallery locations and the works themselves. Consequently, the geographical factor is very important for their context. The smallness of the city and closeness to established art institutions in city centre may make it easier for galleries to survive, but it offers a very limited scope to establish new intercity routes. *Fold* is different from *i8* because they do not attend art fairs. This makes them static in a globally expanding market that is contrary to the economic outreach of big Icelandic businesses that started around 2002. This may be because the art they promote is mainly by Icelandic artists, giving the gallery the aura of nationality. It is also evident that its market is not big enough to attract global collectors to the venue.

## Conclusion

The galleries discussed above are new in the areas they occupy and they have marked out their territories, both locally and globally, as well as cultural routes and fields of expertise. Gallerists, like other people, need a cultural background and networks to grow and prosper. This is shared by gallerists in Reykjavík, London and Copenhagen.

The Reykjavik city centre serves as a cultural quarter for galleries and museums. As a contrast to that, new art initiatives are constantly created outside the London and Copenhagen city centres offering excitement, difference and new cultural routes. One of these differences is the ability to break up the limitations determined by size and closeness to markets. Here Copenhagen and London are better positioned than Iceland. The cultural make-up of the capitals is shaped by size, social and economic landscapes,

cultural geography, history, colonialism, nationalism, democratisation, political ideologies and cultural politics. These factors undoubtedly shape the environment of the gallerists and how they experience themselves culturally and historically. Although the gallery areas studied here are geographically distinct and distant from each other and established art quarters, gallerists, time and space contribute to bringing their meaning and cultural closeness and metro-political interactions to light. Galleries are created by people, and they shape each other. These are symbiotic relationships, networks rather than a one-way communication system. Histories and environments shape people, and the people shape each other, in active networks. Thus, the factors affecting gallerists are not only their cultural and historical background but also interactions and will to think and operate outside fixed cultural moulds. In addition, there is a strong ripple effect on Copenhagen and Reykjavík from London. This contributes to a cauldron of social interactions within and between gallery areas, particularly as regards the East End and Copenhagen as well as signalling that gallery businesses are initially metropolitan activities.

The emergence of YBAs and the renewed energy of the London art market have penetrated the CORE markets with vitalising effects but with a slight time delay. Via the rise of this exotic environment, savvy professional gallerists have emerged, determined to test nationalist limitations of art by looking for opportunities outside the geographical and cultural restrictions of their own country. A strong sense of democracy and the importance of the art in question, as well as the globalised nature of art worlds, seem to be a part of this development. As regards active galleries, the outreach to other markets

seems to be particularly evident in the case of *i8* and the Copenhagen galleries, who realised the importance of outreach in the 1990s. Thus, the LORE galleries seem to have a strong need to expand their geographical boundaries through outreach to increase their cultural value, while London seems to have the ability to attract art on a bigger scale than the other cities. The change from few and small early COLORE galleries to the current number stresses a cultural renewal instigated by the galleries and affluent patrons. The increasing number of galleries in all the cities also signals a growing need for their service and considerable stability of the markets as well as a potential to expand. This happens despite the essence of cultural difference. In the context presented here, London galleries attract more attention than marginal galleries in the other cities, but things happen differently in each capital. In order to enhance the contrast of this study, the next seven chapters will focus on discussing the gallerists and their activities.

# **Part 3**

## **Results and discussion**

# **5 Founding the commercial art gallery: Visions and context**

## **Introduction**

In Chapter 4, I developed a geographical and cultural context for the gallerists and their galleries, and explained how these factors might affect their activities and outlook. In its pursuit of increasing levels of resolution, this thesis has now come to a series of chapters which examine individual gallerists themselves. In this chapter, the aim is to establish and contrast the thoughts and contexts that affect the founding of galleries, the making of gallerists and to look at the founding moment in the context of the local conditions of the art market. To achieve this, each gallerist will have a voice of individual significance and thus their histories will be distinguished and contextualised on the basis of their personal experiences. Studying the founding moment of galleries may reveal unexpected aspects of creativity, commercialism, exploitation, commodification, love of art and collaboration between gallerists and artists. In order to disentangle the specifics of local contexts, the cities will be looked at separately and in relation to what the gallerists want to achieve and how they envisage their activities.

## **Copenhagen**

Copenhagen's key position as an important cultural junction between Central and Southern Europe and the other Nordic countries provides particular opportunities for gallerists. One implication may be a desire amongst the

Danish art community to take contemporary art out of the local comfort zone and into the international market. Nicholai Wallner, Director of *Gallery Nicholai Wallner*, claimed that his aim from the beginning was to take artists to art fairs because of the importance of international recognition to artistic careers.<sup>1</sup> Wallner said that when he opened his gallery in 1993, the Danish art market was still locked in the 1980s and the *Neue Wilde*, who according to Wallner were commercially very successful

in the sense that they sold a lot of works to Danish museums and to a few private collectors - but not more than a handful. So, when I opened there was not really a collector base for the gallery. There was nobody who really cared so much about contemporary art or younger artists and we didn't sell anything for the first couple of years; nothing what so ever.<sup>2</sup>

In London, things were slightly better but, even here, Wigram argued that the art market did not really kick off until Tate Modern opened.<sup>3</sup> Both cities see the rise of these new commercial cultural structures as playing a key role in establishing the conditions for art to develop. Wallner held his nerve and responded in a fashion that later became the norm for galleries on Brygge and Valby.

I decided very early to take part in art fairs around Europe, and the first one I went to was Cologne in '94, and I found out there that there was

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<sup>1</sup> *Author's interview with Nicholai Wallner*, 10 April 2003, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> *Wallner*, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> *Author's interview with Max Wigram*, 22 May 2003, pp. 6, 9.

a place for me to be, because [...] I found out that in countries other than Denmark there was [not just] a [...] curatorial interest in the artist, but also a commercial interest, meaning that people actually wanted to buy the works.<sup>4</sup>

Wallner's early actions and will to sell art could be seen as a model for later Copenhagen gallerists and seems to have contributed to transforming the way art was activated in Denmark. Wallner enjoyed huge media coverage in Denmark after leaving the city centre, suggesting that location and value are strongly connected. Founding a gallery around the corner from the establishment, Royal Academy and the Royal Palace, suggests a buying into the values of a neighbourhood. His subsequent move away from this area appeared to signal rather different attitudes to art and taste.

Christian Chapelle, who founded *Mogadishni*, also aimed to operate an international gallery and take art to art fairs and exhibitions abroad, as well as exhibiting foreign artists in Denmark. He did not start with a fixed idea about the work he wanted to show and was soon exhibiting sculpture, drawings, paintings, installations and videos; works 'that are more about communication, and are more conceptual'.<sup>5</sup> He became associated with readymades and aware that Danish art sells for higher prices abroad than in Denmark.

Entering the Brygge after Wallner, Chapelle nevertheless expressed a similar inexperience. When he opened on Njalsgade, 'the situation was that I didn't know anything about the art market. I started from scratch and [...]

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<sup>4</sup> Wallner, p. 2-3.

<sup>5</sup> Author's interview with Christian Chapelle 15 April 2003, p.8.

because it used to be a non-commercial space I had no connections at all'.<sup>6</sup> However, when the gallery moved to Valby, in 2002, it occupied a commercial space. The move and the location attracted media interest. Chapelle's outlook was fundamentally changed:

you know, in one stroke, with the business moving, that means that there are new facilities, and I had a big opening show and everybody was here at the opening, like more than 200 people you know. And I had the front page of the best paper in Denmark, and three other of the major papers had big interviews with images of me and of the works of the artists, and all that has been part of the value generation, money circulation, whatever [...].<sup>7</sup>

The publicity arising from the new venue and location gave the gallery the cultural capital to enable Chapelle to generate new contacts. He started to invite curators, because this was, as he claimed, the best opportunity he might 'ever have to invite them over, because they want to see [...] what's going on and, ah, it's a new space and it got a lot of publicity, what the fuck's going on, you know'.<sup>8</sup> The gallery itself was now contributing to the cultural capital of the area as a whole and in 2006 two new galleries opened next door to Chapelle.

Through experience, Chapelle soon acquired a personal commercial connoisseurship which permitted him to understand what would be saleable abroad:

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<sup>6</sup> *Chapelle*, pp. 2-3.

<sup>7</sup> *Chapelle*, p. 4.

<sup>8</sup> *Chapelle*, p. 5.

I knew a bit about the art market because I know that with these sorts of art works, like the sculpture, like the video works, it would probably be easier for me to sell abroad. It would be very difficult to get a real business out of it here in Copenhagen, here in Denmark. I didn't really have any specific ideas about how it worked. I mean, because I had not been in contact with buyers or anything.<sup>9</sup>

This suggests that both Wallner and Chapelle were initially offering works that were still too avant-garde for the conservative Danes. This changed when he moved and began to build a network:

I've been part of the arts circulation for a while now, [...] people talk, and I talk [...], and then I meet some people from a museum and then I talk with other gallerists, and then I talk with artists and, I mean in that way you start to generate some kind of idea about what's going on, you know. And you get some specific connections as well.<sup>10</sup>

Rather surprisingly, then, both gallerists discussed thus far possessed little idea of how the market worked prior to opening their galleries. Their approach is much like the artist who begins to paint to see what happens.

Although the Director of the eponymous *Gustav Gimm Gallery*, was more upfront about making money from his new venture, like the others his plans at the outset were not very clear and seem to have developed over time as he gained experience. 'I had no idea what [...] the commercial scene was

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<sup>9</sup> Chapelle, p. 3.

<sup>10</sup> Chapelle, p. 4.

like.<sup>11</sup> He knew he needed to generate revenue to run a gallery and aimed to launch artists, exhibit and sell their work nationally and internationally and by these means enable the artists to make a living.<sup>12</sup>

Gimm dealt with his lack of knowledge and initial insecurity by collaborating with - or rather gaining patronage from - an established gallerist in the city centre, Mikael Andersen, Director of *Gallery Mikael Andersen*. By this means, Gimm benefited from access to a mailing list and Andersen and an associate of his paid the rent and telephone bills for one year. This arrangement gave Gimm time to find his feet.<sup>13</sup> He possessed a great optimism having opened next door to Stærk and Wallner in 1999. His was not an entirely naïve move; he was attaching himself to a scene that was already in development, where others had taken far greater risks and overcome them. In that sense, he and other latecomers to the Brygge and Valby operated in a similar way to *Miro* and the *White Cube* who came to the East End when it had established itself. There was a mutual benefit: they gained from the actions of the pioneers, while the pioneers recognised the boost to the area that the growing mass of galleries produced. Gimm's position suggests that he was a follower rather than a leader and that he might be controlled by the interests of his backer. This might seem to diminish Gimm's role and influence. However, Angela Diamandidou, founder and director of *EC Art*, London, points out:

the established galleries, I know they [...] have financial backing, or even the small galleries someone will be supporting them. Also they

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<sup>11</sup> Author's interview with Gustav Gimm 14 April 2003, p. 4.

<sup>12</sup> Gimm, p. 1, 4, 6.

<sup>13</sup> For *Gallery Mikael Andersen* See [www.gma.dk](http://www.gma.dk). (30/05/09). Gimm, p. 4, 2.

have mailing lists, I mean I have a mailing list but it was built from scratch, while, you know, to sell work [...] you have to have people to help you.<sup>14</sup>

If the market-naïve artist needs a support network of galleries, it appears that some of these galleries – no more knowledgeable about their trade – need the support of others too. A surprising number of these new gallerists possessed a naïve optimism and went in search of fame and fortune, as Diamandidou points out.<sup>15</sup>

Nils Stærk stated a firm ‘Yes’ when asked if he possessed clear aims and objectives when he opened his business. He ‘wanted to have a network – [an] international[ly] based network – before I had a physical space here, [...] so I spent my money and time on travelling and establishing a network and participating in art fairs and suchlike.’<sup>16</sup> Network building was the key for these Danish gallerists though each had concluded this independently.

Stærk began his gallery *Nils Stærk Contemporary Art* in 1997, uniquely working from home. He was very conscious about the smallness of ‘the local art market,’<sup>17</sup> a factor that has not changed. Consequently, he put his efforts into establishing an international network in order to have a customer base.<sup>18</sup> He opened on Njalsgade in 1999, at which time he appears to have been clear about what he wanted to achieve, having undertaken some research into the market and how to go about building up a clientele. He considered the market ‘interesting, but it was not very big and I couldn’t rely on surviving on

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<sup>14</sup> Author’s interview with Angela Diamandidou 21 May 2003, p. 9.

<sup>15</sup> Diamandidou, p. 12.

<sup>16</sup> Author’s interview with Nils Stærk 10 April 2003, pp. 2.

<sup>17</sup> Stærk, p.1.

<sup>18</sup> Stærk, p.1.

the market that already existed in Denmark.<sup>19</sup> The Copenhagen gallerists all understood the inadequacies of the local market, but found ways to take it on. They shared a sense that they could change things.

Christina Wilson, founder of *Gallery Christina Wilson*, was rather different. She seemed to possess a human interest in the artists she exhibited; she believed in and liked them. She saw and liked their international potential and political attitude. The intrinsic qualities of art, such as form, content and a philosophical aspect are also quite important and, although she is very much into conceptual art, this is not a medium with which she can work. Wilson's aims are linked to 'really good aesthetic quality'.<sup>20</sup> Her manner seems different, but it is difficult to assess if this is a gendered perspective. In other regards, her outlook is no different from her peers:

Our main goal is, of course, to present the artists to a large crowd of private collectors [and] museum people, so they can get museum shows or gallery shows around the world. That's what we hope for and that is not possible to do from Denmark – not everybody comes to Denmark, but everybody comes to Basel once a year.<sup>21</sup>

Wilson's awareness of the market was implicit, but this was no simple matter of locating saleable art; it was rather a matter of exercising taste.

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<sup>19</sup> *Stærk*, p. 2.

<sup>20</sup> *Author's interview with Christina Wilson* 11 April 2003, pp. 3-4.

<sup>21</sup> Sören Hüttel, 'Basel Profile: Christina Wilson Gallery,' *Kopenhagen.dk* [mailliste@kopenhagen.dk], Nyhedsbrev #300 - uge 25 2006, <http://www.kopenhagen.dk/index.php?id=5868> (23/06/2006).

[I] didn't think very much about the situation in the art market, as such, because I was very much into planning what artists I was going to show, so I was not very much into the money part of it. I was just thinking that if I showed lots of good art it would probably be sold, but I can see now that the situation was, the financial situation in the society as a whole... it was better than it is now. There was a much more positive attitude.<sup>22</sup>

This economic optimism was liberating for Wilson when she launched the gallery on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2002. It might also embody that naivety seen in other gallery launches, as by the end of that year she remarked:

[sale] to private individuals has gone down quite drastically. I haven't got that many people coming in, looking at art from my storage as I used to, but of course [...] I have to admit that since I opened up last year I had a lot of press [...] about the gallery, so I suppose there was a lot of people coming up here also because they were curious to see what I have in storage and what I was going to show, but [...] it has levelled out a bit now.<sup>23</sup>

Roughly one year after the opening, she realised that her gallery appeared not to be doing as well as others in the area. Selling on the basis of personal taste appears to have its risks. For her, pecuniary affairs seem secondary; running a gallery is about artists and space.

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<sup>22</sup> *Wilson*, p 1.

<sup>23</sup> *Wilson*, pp. 1-2.

## London

As discussed in the previous chapter, London is very different to Copenhagen; it has a fundamental role in global finances as well as being a creative hub in the established art world. Christine Shearn, founder and director of *Vertigo* in the East End, like Stærk, claims a clear sense of mission when the gallery opened.<sup>24</sup> In addition the intention was

to showcase artists from all over Europe as well as London. We collaborate with galleries in Brussels and Berlin, while a second *Vertigo* space is planned for Milan. We exhibit both up-and-coming and more established artists, reflecting the most interesting and successful trends in contemporary art.<sup>25</sup>

When Shearn founded the gallery in June 2000, she had

planned it for [...] quite a few years [...] it was the end of a process. [...] The art market was doing really well and people were selling a lot of work. It was a good time when I started thinking. [...] It tailed off right after that, almost immediately.<sup>26</sup>

Like others, Shearn had no sense of the trend in the art market. She merely reflected on the recent past and, like Wilson, tapped into the buoyant mood.

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<sup>24</sup> Author's interview with Christine Shearn 20 May 2003, p. 1.

<sup>25</sup> See, Vertigo Gallery <http://www.vertigogallery.co.uk/> (29/07/2002). This aim has been deleted from the gallery website 06 December 2007.

<sup>26</sup> Shearn, p. 1.

She was right to do so for, after the slight drop off in trade, the gallery has continued to be successful.

In terms of vision for the future Bea de Souza, director of *The Agency Contemporary*, presents herself as having been very knowledgeable about the international scene when she opened the gallery in 1992. Her aspiration appears very clear and programme-focussed. The exhibition programme also appeared very enthusiastic in the *Galleries Show*, seven months prior to the interview, which had work addressing political issues, culture, race and violence.<sup>27</sup> 'In relation to the programme, yes. Everything else had to go as a consequence from that,'<sup>28</sup> as she put it. The exhibition catalogue adds a dimension to the art-centred original aims by stating that 'the agency shows international contemporary art across a range of media: video, installation, sculpture, photography, and painting. Although there is no attempt to follow an overt agenda [...].'<sup>29</sup> Her taste seems to have developed from being very clear in the beginning to being more open ended.

When de Souza opened a gallery in South London in 1992, the market was in recession, 'but that meant that there was more freedom on what you could show and there was a space on the agenda'.<sup>30</sup> Her early move to the East End in 1993 places her with Klassnik, Paley, and Compston.<sup>31</sup> De

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<sup>27</sup> Anon. 'The Agency Contemporary Ltd.', in *The Galleries Book: 33 Contemporary Fine Art Galleries in London* (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2002), p. 21, (p. 21).

<sup>28</sup> *Author's interview with Bea de Souza* 20 May 2003, p. 1. See the gallery's website for shows in 1994-95 'The Agency archive' <http://www.theagencygallery.co.uk/past2.html> (16/06/2008). The season 1994-95 seems to be as far back as the archive goes and some of the art is quite challenging.

<sup>29</sup> Anon. 'The Agency Contemporary Ltd.', p. 21.

<sup>30</sup> *de Souza*, p. 1.

<sup>31</sup> Jeremy Cooper, *No Fun Without U*, p. 219. Cooper also states that Maureen Paley supported Compston when he was preparing for the opening of his gallery and introduced him to the Cologne dealer Aurel Scheibler. It is also evident from the book that 'Paley had recently [in 1992] moved her business back from the West End to a small terraced house in

Souza's *Agency* at 35-40 Charlotte Road was next door to Compston's *Factual Nonsense* at 44A, which opened in November 1992. However, neither she nor the *Agency* is mentioned in Cooper's eulogy on Compston.<sup>32</sup> De Souza may nevertheless have sensed that something new and adventurous was happening in the area and wanted to be a part of it, securing her a place as a pioneer. While, in de Souza's case, the importance of a receding market is played down, there is also a sense that she plugged into a trend of optimism about this up-and-coming gallery area, much like other gallerists.

Like Wilson, Ronnie Simpson, founder of *The Mobile Home*, sees the gallery as a representation of his personal taste as regards exhibitions and wishes to see that taste recognised. He exhibits work that he 'would have liked, [...] to gain a [...] certain recognition, as well within the market as a young gallery.'<sup>33</sup> This ambition was realised in the *Galleries Show* where *Mobile Home* was hailed 'as one of the hottest galleries in London'.<sup>34</sup> This small, raw, industrial looking and partially unfinished gallery (when the interview took place) gave the impression that it had the potential to move things on, but it has now closed down.

Simpson claimed that the market was 'pretty buoyant' when the gallery opened. But in 2003, when the interview took place, he found it

actually still quite difficult to tell because sales are still increasing[...] but in a way that's sort of no indication of what the market is. [...] it has retracted quite a lot [...] and I think it is really difficult to tell now what's

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Beck Road, Hackney, rejoining other significant East End galleries like Matt's Gallery, Chisenhale and the Showroom', p. 51.

<sup>32</sup> See discussion in Chapter 4, pp. 13-14,

<sup>33</sup> *Author's interview with Ronnie Simpson*, 21 May 2003, p. 4.

<sup>34</sup> Anon. 'Mobile Home', *The Galleries Book*, p.27.

going on. [...]. Yes I think it's a sort of difficult time just now really. It's difficult to tell what's going on, and in the end I think it can [...] affect the mid range rather than it can [affect] the [...] high end market, and low end market, which is what we are really...<sup>35</sup>

The Galleries Show catalogue had stated that works by artists exhibiting in the gallery were snapped up by an international group of clients, but the future seemed uncertain.<sup>36</sup> The Galleries Show appears to have had no long-term impact – at least this gallery failed to capitalise upon it successfully in the longer term. I have no precise information on what happened to the gallery.

The initial vision of Max Wigram, who founded *MW Project* in 2001, is explained in the *Galleries Show* catalogue:

the project space was conceived to allow us to work both with artists we represent and those from other galleries. We run a programme of exhibitions of the work of emerging artists and of more established artists, with whom we work on individual projects. All the projects we take on involve the making of new work; [...]. MW Project is actively involved in curating exhibitions outside its space, producing exhibitions curated by its own artists and working privately on building personal collections, [...].<sup>37</sup>

In this way, the venue seemed to offer a new twist to the commercial gallery; it was a consultancy and curatorial service.

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<sup>35</sup> Simpson, pp. 2-3.

<sup>36</sup> Anon. 'Mobile Home', *The Galleries Book*, p.27.

<sup>37</sup> Anon. 'M W Project', *the galleries book*, p. 18.

When Wigram, who curated the *Galleries Show*, was interviewed he had only been running *MV Project* for about one year. In the interview he was slightly sarcastic about the situation of the art market, remarking on an artist-run space in which he was involved in 1993, 'when there was no art market in England supposedly and it was an amazing time. You know nobody was really involved in contemporary art then'.<sup>38</sup> When he started thinking about opening a gallery, the situation of art markets was

Not too good supposedly. [...] I mean the English art market has changed enormously in the last ten years. [...] We now have a proper art market in England. I mean it's a small one compared to New York, but it's probably [...] I suppose getting up towards Germany I would imagine. [...] we've now got about 40 galleries in London, who are involved in the international art scene.<sup>39</sup>

In ten years, contemporary art has become exciting, a factor that may well have encouraged Wigram to go commercial. Wigram thinks that this transformation could not have happened on its own, and noted the importance of the *Frieze Art Fair*, the opening of *Tate Modern* and the *Turner Prize*.<sup>40</sup> In his thinking, culture and commerce were inextricably linked. Wigram also acknowledges the importance of public art galleries by stating that, before *Tate Modern* opened, the English art world was 'a Christmas tree without a top [...]. So now we have that top, and it's made a big effect to the art market

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<sup>38</sup> Wigram, p. 2

<sup>39</sup> Wigram, pp. 6-8.

<sup>40</sup> Wigram, pp. 8-10.

[...]'<sup>41</sup> When Wigram opened his East End gallery the market was energetic and the transformation had produced 'healthy sales'.<sup>42</sup> He also remarked '[I] was always supposed to be a dealer really, and a curator, I like curating too but I think I was always supposed to do this.'<sup>43</sup> This has been born out by his subsequent move to Bond Street signalling success and the growing legitimacy of the artworks he sells.

Chris Noraika displayed a particular shrewdness in his art dealing by focussing on art works and exhibiting artists who already had success with bigger galleries.<sup>44</sup> By comparison to other galleries, Noraika's *One in the Other* seems quite calculating, and almost parasitic. But his success also depends on positive collaboration with other galleries such as *Victoria Miro Gallery*.<sup>45</sup> This tactic may permit the gallery to gain a foothold, but it is a rather different strategy from those already discussed.

Noraika possessed that artistic naivety seen in other gallerists:

the art market was probably quite buoyant really, but because we didn't go into it with the intention of establishing [a] gallery, and certainly not a commercial gallery, I wouldn't, from my own personal experience [...] be able to comment too accurately on what those circumstances were in the art market, and for the first four years the gallery was quite sort of anti commercial in a way. [...] and because at that time I was very much operating as an artist, my understanding of the art market, the commercial art,[...], was almost non-existent really. So from the point

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<sup>41</sup> Wigram, p. 9.

<sup>42</sup> Wigram, p. 7.

<sup>43</sup> Wigram, p. 14.

<sup>44</sup> Author's Interview with Chris Noraika, 15 May 2003, p. 6.

<sup>45</sup> Noraika, p. 6.

of view of staging the first shows [...], there was really little genuine insight into the operations of the art market at that time'.<sup>46</sup>

Noraika defies the stereotype of the profit seeking dealer, and in his naivety and artistic ambition echoes a sensibility quite common amongst the gallerists. Indeed, gallerists appear, at least at that moment of conception, rather more like artists than businessmen judging from Noraika's discourse.

Angela Diamandidou, founder of *EC Art* in 1998, offers a rather different outlook. Like an urban planner locating *Tate Modern*, she sees the founding of a gallery as a mechanism to promote urban renewal. She founded *EC Art*

with the idea of using contemporary visual art to bring Clarksenwell to the forefront of London's cultural life. *EC Art* aims to bring art out of 'the gallery' and into spaces that are between use. *EC Art's* exhibitions are more than just shows of art. They seek to connect art with space; to create a dynamism between the work and the surroundings. *EC Art* transforms the urban buildings and spaces for a short time in their history, allowing an interaction between art and the urban development process. The shows invite the developers to be involved differently in the regeneration of the area. They provoke the interest of local residents and businesses, and draw attention to beautiful old buildings which otherwise would be seen as purely economic enterprises.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> *Noraika*, pp. 2-3.

<sup>47</sup> 'ecArt', <http://www.art-online.org/ecartspace/statement.html> (07/05/2003 ). See, also 'ec Art' <http://www.art-online.org/ecartspace/statement.php> (25/10/2008), for a direct link to mission

Like others, there is an artistic sensibility here which sees the repeated making of galleries as an act of artistic installation. Her vision connects her to the ambitions of *F-EST* and continues to erode a sense that gallerists' commercialism conflicts with higher ideals. Repeatedly, these gallerists suggest that these things go hand in hand. It is not a question I asked them directly, as that would inevitably provoke a positive answer. It is simply implicit and repeated in the statements they have made. Of course, I am aware that even then they may have wished to portray their actions in a particularly positive light.

Diamandidou did not consider the art market when she founded the gallery:

No in fact, I don't think I was very conscious about it, when I started. I was primarily interested in the space and in work, and I showed purely, not as a commercial enterprise, purely as a final project. [...] people, especially young galleries maybe [...] they think they will make money. [...] I'm not having such illusions.<sup>48</sup>

For her, the moveable gallery spaces are artistic social initiatives and contributions to life in the East End and, as such, they are more relevant than art business and making money.

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statement. Because of the issues covered in the interview the question about aims slipped my mind so I need to depend on the aims as they are set out on the gallery website.

<sup>48</sup> *Diamandidou*, pp. 11-12.

Victoria Miro, owner and founder of *Victoria Miro Galley*, is more traditional in her plans, hinting at the standards of a big public gallery when she explains that her concept was

to make shows with my artists that really were able to show [...] what they were producing. [...] I could make a show here and people could come and see it and it would be like really having a show at somewhere like *Whitechapel* [...], the space was big enough [...] to be able to [...] to display whatever they wanted to do without limitations.<sup>49</sup>

This gallery, more than any other, had museum aspirations. It saw itself comparably it seemed, as desiring public access to new art, suggesting that there was nothing conspiratorial about it. Yet Miro also indicates her ownership by referring to 'my artists'. Miro started out in Cork Street in 1985 by taking over, as she calls it, 'a very famous gallery called *Robert Fraser [Gallery]*',<sup>50</sup> in times when the art market 'was much more difficult than it is now, [t]here was a much smaller collectorship, [...]'.<sup>51</sup> In 2003, these difficulties seem to have been removed. By then she had gained confidence from a group of artists who had entered the mainstream:

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<sup>49</sup> Author's interview with Victoria Miro 21 May 2003, pp.5-6.

<sup>50</sup> Miro, p. 3. About Robert Fraser see <http://www.bbc.co.uk/bbcfour/documentaries/features/art-sixties1.shtml> (21/05/06) and Barrie Stuart-Penrose, *The Art Scene*, pp. 106-107. See also *Art & the 60s: This Was Tomorrow*, ed. by C. Stephens and K. Stout (London: Tate Publishing, 2004), pp. 134-137, and Harriet Vynner, *Groovy Bob: The Life and Times of Robert Fraser* (London: faber and faber, 1999). Fraser was a colourful art dealer and a part of the Rock 'n' Roll celebrity scene in the 1960s. He was the first British gallerist to promote American pop art in the UK.

<sup>51</sup> Miro, p. 3.

[...] the art market was strong but not only was the art market strong, but a lot of the artists, I had found when they were beginning, had become very established, and [...] that gave me the confidence, having these artists who were, [...], very well regarded in the art world and had a very good market.<sup>52</sup>

By comparison, her first gallery lacked confidence: 'we were quite modest in the way that we set the gallery up. We didn't really invest a lot of money into that first galley'.<sup>53</sup> In the East End, she developed a keen eye for art that had the potential to be controversial and sought after like Grayson Perry's ceramics and Chris Ofili's paintings and as such she has contributed to an upbeat art market while still being museologically and socially spirited.

Robin Klassnik, founder and director of *Matt's Gallery*, shared many of the visions of the gallerists already discussed. Being an artist and preferring an artist community might also explain his vision of the gallery: 'I see is as part of my own creative output'.<sup>54</sup> Stressing creativity could therefore explain why Klassnik does not see *Matt's* as a business:

the aims and the objectives of the gallery were very clear from when we opened and they still are very clear. It was to invite an artist of any discipline to use the space as his or her studio, for anything up to two to three months and to make a piece of work which related to the gallery either psychologically, physically or mentally, and in some cases they would be science specific, but this included people who did

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<sup>52</sup> *Miro*, p. 4.

<sup>53</sup> *Miro*, p. 4.

<sup>54</sup> Michael Archer, 'Oranges and Lemons and Oranges and Bananas', no pagination.

painting, people who did photography, people who filled the space with oil, it [...] doesn't count anyone out but the philosophy was to make a piece of work in my space, in my studio space and then to open up that space after two or three months as a gallery and that is its primary concerns.<sup>55</sup>

In the early days, Klassnik's studio was a gallery. Today it is more a gallery, but yet it retains some of its original rawness and idealism. Given his particular ambition it is not unexpected that he stated categorically: 'I knew nothing about the art market'.<sup>56</sup> However, having 'decided to short-circuit the traditional gallery system and strike out his own [...]'<sup>57</sup>, it appears that he must have imagined a market of sorts. When I suggested to Klassnik that he knew more about the market in 2003 than he did in the '70s he replied rather angrily: 'No, [...] I still know nothing about the art market. We're a non profit organisation and we are publicly funded. I don't attend art shows, so I, I have no understanding of the art market.'<sup>58</sup> In light of what has already been stated about *Matt's* as a commercial venue, the gallery seems to operate like some publicly funded art galleries which only display temporary exhibitions of saleable works. It imagines it exists at a distance from the market when really it does not.

Andrew Mummery possessed similar ambitions: 'I just wanted to make exhibitions and introduce artists who I thought were making interesting

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<sup>55</sup> Author's interview with Robin Klassnik 20 May 2003, p. 1.

<sup>56</sup> Klassnik, p. 1.

<sup>57</sup> Jeffrey Kastner, 'Matt's Gallery', in *British Art. Defining the 90s. Art and Design, Profile No. 41* (1995), (London: Academy Editions, 1995), pp.29-34, (p. 29).

<sup>58</sup> Klassnik, p. 1.

contributions.<sup>59</sup> But his *Andrew Mummery Gallery* is clearly a commercial venture. It started out in 1996. I visited him at his second venue, 63 Compton Street. He was no more market savvy than the others:

I didn't really know very much about the art market at that particular time and so I didn't make any assessments based on that. I just was looking to put on some exhibitions and hopefully to sell the work that I was showing. But the art market at that time was beginning; two to three years before that it would have been very difficult [...] for me to have done this because people weren't buying so much, the market was beginning to pick up at that time and that was an advantage, but [...], I was fortunate in that sense [...].<sup>60</sup>

## Reykjavík

Being the smallest city, with the fewest galleries and only two interviewed gallerists active when the interviews took place, makes Reykjavík very different from the other cities both in 2003 and today.<sup>61</sup>

Hannes Lárusson, founder of *Gallery One One*, appears to be quite practical and business orientated in his approach because his initial plan was to invite selected artists to exhibit and thus attract museums as potential buyers. However, his gallery was partly run on a rent-out basis because he did not expect any sales. He selected artists that he thought would be of interest to the art museums in Reykjavík, but they did not purchase anything

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<sup>59</sup> Author's interview with Andrew Mummery, 22 May 2003, p. 2.

<sup>60</sup> Mummery, p. 1.

<sup>61</sup> October 2008.

from shows. On a number of occasions he also discovered that artists sold works through their studio door after shows in the gallery.<sup>62</sup> Lárusson seems to have had museum-friendly art in mind, although the gallery had a conceptual edge all the time, and he was also confronting a conservative establishment which again suggests he may have been out of step with his proposed clients. Some of this art was strikingly challenging like Daniel Buren's wooden extension of the gallery front.<sup>63</sup> Lárusson regarded the initiative as an art business but the local market was unfavourable.

He, like Jónsdóttir of *i8*, was aware that Icelandic artists needed to be seen in an international context, either by importing foreign artists to Iceland or by taking Icelandic artists abroad in order to establish market value for their art and thus contribute to building up a market. The gallerist was reliant on making artists successful; there was an inseparable link between the gallerists aspirations for the art and for the gallery. Both relied upon a global outlook.

Lárusson began his gallery in 1989 and evidentially does not identify a great change in the Icelandic art world, suggesting that where there is no market there is no market situation to affect the founding:

Well, yes it was not very different from what it is like today. There is actually no real market for the type of art I emphasized. Art that is to some extent progressive, [...] but I already knew it beforehand so it was partly run on a rent out basis. [...] and it was actually clear from the beginning that it was not possible to build the gallery on sales.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> *Author's interview with Hannes Lárusson* 20 March 2003, pp. 5-6.

<sup>63</sup> Eiríkur Þorláksson, 'Daniel Buren', *Morgunblaðið* 12 June 1992, p. 12.

<sup>64</sup> Lárusson, p. 2.

Lárusson identifies the interference of the state-run art market where museums, as major buyers, and the Ministry of Education operate a sliding price scale where artists are equal without regard to experience or quality of their work, because paintings of a particular size have a determined price.<sup>65</sup>

Pétur Arason's gallery, *Second Floor*, was intended 'to promote, exhibit, and educate people about contemporary art.'<sup>66</sup> He also reserves for himself and his associates complete power in terms of exhibitions: 'Me, Ingólfur and Ragna invited people we were interested in and that we thought were good artists. There was no compromising. There was no use for someone to come and ask for a show'.<sup>67</sup>

The market in Iceland was virtually non-existent. Arason again:

[...] of course I was hoping that someone would be interested in acquiring works by these men. I also made it known abroad and some of the work was sold abroad. [...] We are 30 to 40 years behind in this respect. However, there is one gallery, *i8* here that operates on a professional level. They invite artists to exhibit, participate in art fairs and exhibit an international group of artists. That is all there is.<sup>68</sup>

This is like Denmark, but only more extreme, Iceland could claim no market for cutting edge art and relied upon trade abroad. Arason also found the local museum uninterested in foreign art.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Lárusson, pp. 22, 24.

<sup>66</sup> *Author's interview with Pétur Arason* 21 March 2003, p. 6.

<sup>67</sup> Arason, p. 6-7.

<sup>68</sup> Arason, pp. 3-4.

<sup>69</sup> Arason, p. 4.

Tryggvi Páll Friðriksson, director of the biggest gallery in Reykjavík, *Fold*, stated that his gallery was in the market to sell art and it has been run with that in mind without regards to whether it is smart or not.<sup>70</sup> Unlike most gallerists, he does not shy away from art as commodity.

Friðriksson focuses on representational art: 'We are not interested in this so-called conceptual art. [...] Most people are not at all interested in it and therefore it does not work to sell it. [...] nobody would think of buying it. This determines what we can sell and make a living from.'<sup>71</sup> The contrast is like that Greenfeld noted for her two kinds of gallerist: those who struggle to sell abstract art and those who can make a living from selling more conservative works. *Fold* belongs to this latter tradition. Perhaps it is inevitable in a small nation that this is the only kind of commercial gallery that can successfully trade.

Friðriksson's sense of a market reflects the situation as it was when he and his wife Elínbjört Jónsdóttir took over the business around 1992. It is a gallery of the kind commonly found in the smaller tourist towns of England: 'There had been a great interest in prints for some years but this interest was ebbing out around that time. When we [took] over, the main sales were in smaller work, prints, oils, pastels, small watercolours and such things. However, very early on we realised that opportunities for expansion lay in selling larger works'.<sup>72</sup> *Fold* operates on a different level from other galleries in the sample by not focussing on a small group of artists, a model which he believes 'works in big cities but here [in Iceland] it simply does not work. It is

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<sup>70</sup> Author's interview with Tryggvi Páll Friðriksson 19 March 2003, p. 6.

<sup>71</sup> Friðriksson, p. 3.

<sup>72</sup> Friðriksson, p. 3.

not more complicated than that. Icelanders are only 300,000 and around half of them live in Reykjavík.<sup>73</sup>

Þóra Þórisdóttir, director of *Gallery Hlemmur*, states that the gallery is primarily a 'partnership of two individuals'<sup>74</sup>, which aims 'to fulfil a need for an exhibition space for young and emerging artists.'<sup>75</sup> On the gallery website it is stated that it 'is a non-profit artist-run space [...]. We exhibit emerging Icelandic contemporary artists and our aim is to provide a new generation of Icelandic and international artists with the facilities to realise works in [the] form of exhibitions and projects.'<sup>76</sup> This suggests a resemblance with *Matt's Gallery* but unlike *Matt's*; Þórisdóttir wants to measure her operation against the international scene.

Þórisdóttir said that public grants decide who is an artist in Iceland rather than the market or museums. 'I mean, the art market is in *Gallery Fold*.'<sup>77</sup> She is basically stating that *Gallery Hlemmur* has nothing to do with an art market in Iceland and at one point in the interview she stated that the venue 'never intended to be a commercial gallery'.<sup>78</sup> 'We do not want to be a sterile commercial gallery. We would rather like to move more towards being an experimental gallery but, at the same time, to market art and not being shy about commission and sales. We would also like to contribute to the pricing of art.'<sup>79</sup> There is a sense in these responses that the art market is even more foreign here; locals have little exposure to it.

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<sup>73</sup> Friðriksson, p. 6.

<sup>74</sup> Author's interview with Þóra Þórisdóttir, 18 March 2003, p. 5.

<sup>75</sup> Þórisdóttir, p. 2.

<sup>76</sup> 'Statement', <http://www.hlemmur.is/ymislegt/statement.html> (07/03/2003).

<sup>77</sup> Þórisdóttir, p. 19.

<sup>78</sup> Þórisdóttir, p. 3.

<sup>79</sup> Þórisdóttir, p. 11.

Consequently, Þórisdóttir declares that the founding of the gallery 'was not fuelled by the situation in the market'.<sup>80</sup> It seems to have been a coincidence based on the space itself more than anything else. 'In terms of a real art market, there is maybe just one collector and *The National Gallery* or something.'<sup>81</sup> Not enough to sustain a market. However, what makes Þórisdóttir exceptional from her peers is that, towards the end of the gallery, she prepared a business plan in order to help secure public and corporate funding to save the gallery,<sup>82</sup> but probably too late because it closed in February 2004.

Operating in an international context was also a vital part of Jónsdóttir's gallery concept, *i8*, from the beginning: 'I wanted to run a top gallery although it was small, a gallery that would meet international standards'.<sup>83</sup>

Jónsdóttir appears to have been very conscious about the situation of the art market when she opened her gallery in 1995 because she

thought the situation was awful and as an artist I thought there were limited opportunities for artists. [...] The reality was that the market for real art was very small at that time. My ideal was to try to boost it..., give it a bit of an opportunity by giving good shows and slowly try to make foreign contacts. [...] Of course there had been relations between museums, for example the *Living Art Museum* and the *SUM* group with overseas artists but there had never been anything about establishing a market connection with the art world. I mean, that is

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<sup>80</sup> Þórisdóttir, p. 1.

<sup>81</sup> Þórisdóttir, p. 20.

<sup>82</sup> Þóra Þórisdóttir, 'Viðskiptaáætlun: Gallerí Hlemmur' ['Business plan: Gallery Hlemmur'], July, 2003.

<sup>83</sup> Author's interview with Edda Jónsdóttir 20 March 2003, p. 5

what I had in [mind?]. I was interested in importing good exhibitions and trying to sell good Icelandic art abroad with the intention of giving the artists some significance somewhere else than here [in Iceland]. So that they would acquire some sort of a monetary value. That is to say, to give the works a price. There was no comparison here because they were not selling overseas.<sup>84</sup>

Looking back, Jónsdóttir sees the situation in a wide context as awful, with no mechanisms to measure art against global developments of art worlds. Her understanding of the market is based on import and export, but with an underlying strand of creating cultural routes and, in that sense, much like many Copenhagen gallerists.

## Conclusion

The majority of the informants are aware that their activities are market-driven networking on a global level. Consequently one would think that the situation of markets might have affected the founding of the galleries. On the contrary, the opposite seems to be the case. The evidence suggests that art market situations neither encouraged nor dissuaded the founding of galleries.

It is also quite clear that a prior knowledge about the state of art markets has not been important when planning COLORE galleries. The gallerists decide to open a gallery and stick to it believing in their creativity, art and the artists they promote. Situations in art markets do not matter so long as one has the ambition, will, and creativity to make a living from art. Besides

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<sup>84</sup> Jónsdóttir, p. 3. The SÚM group [Association of Young Artists] was founded in 1969.

quite a few galleries were founded on a wave of optimism and perceived booms.

The gallerists' will to provide facilities for artists and their art is evident. There seems to be a slight difference between gallerists in terms of aspiration, ranging from offering selected artists' space to develop ideas and space-specific work. Nearly all gallerists – certainly in London – possessed strong ideological outlooks that reflected a desire to perform in some way as artists themselves, from Klassnik, as artist collaborator, to Diamandidou's installations and the gallery as an installation of taste.

This notion that gallerists have an artistic sensibility is also reflected in what appears to be their sense of business planning at the outset. They learn by doing rather than modelling themselves on a succession of gallerists. Through this, their control over their situation and their places in the markets appear to develop over time with increased experience, rather than it being integrated in their activities right from the beginning. Opening a gallery without regards to situations in the markets may also signal a strong survival instinct of gallerists.

The interviews also imply a geographical value aspect attached to it on a local, national and global level. In COLO this value system is fuelled by an enormous media interest, because placing challenging art in new locations can gather media attention. Pioneers attract followers and symbiotically they can help each other by creating a mass. London as a global thoroughfare makes it likely that more people go to the East End than the marginal CORE galleries, who are dependent on developing routes by attending art fairs to support sales and also because of limited access to the Copenhagen art fair.

The local media has promoted the new Copenhagen art scene very enthusiastically and helped transform it from the grass roots level to professional and business areas with a global focus. Meanwhile the grass roots stage seems to be a prevailing situation in the Reykjavík art quarter. What also makes Reykjavík different is a tendency to compare it with what is happening abroad, art and artists rarely make the headlines, the official price determination of contemporary art in Iceland, the absence of a market and public grants deciding who is an artist, rather than galleries and the market.

The notion about cultural routes as a way to gauge value is fundamental in *i8* Gallery, but could also be regarded as the initial operative concept among Copenhagen gallerists because they work with artists on a global level. This global collaboration seems to aid the formation of cultural and monetary values beyond borders, and art fairs are a vital part of this process.

The question of followers and leaders has inevitably come up in this discussion and late comers to an area can be defined as followers. But overall it would be true to say that the gallerists express a unique vision of the area they occupy as well as the place of the gallery within art worlds as moveable rather than static. Some also see it spatially while others, like the Copenhagen gallerists, see it rather more socially.

Gallerists are creative people whether it is business creativity or artistic creativity signalling that they are not motivated by business opportunities alone. There is also a sense of virtuousness to their activities that is implicit. Many of the London and Copenhagen gallerists are in an entirely different league and many of these are global leaders, particularly the London

gallerists, who can in the power of London's visibility attract collectors more powerfully than CORE. However, it is evident that active gallerists lead the activation of art.

The size and global dimension of the cities is of fundamental importance: London is an easy environment fully embracing the art market, Copenhagen is midway, but with not much local market for cutting edge art and reliant on selling art in big nations because of a conservative national market. In this way, Danish gallerists have taken art out of the comfort zone of Copenhagen attracting the attention of a wider section of audiences. Then Iceland is ultra small and Reykjavík rather more like small town in outlook. They are limited by small nation perspectives and, as such, they might have more resemblance to provincial galleries in England. Iceland is detached – rather like Denmark – but without the easy connections.

# 6 Locating the gallery in the city

## Introduction

Having, in the previous chapter, captured the ambitions that gallerists invested in their galleries, in this chapter I wish to pick up on the geographical thread that emerged there, and discuss factors that affected their choice of gallery locations.

## Copenhagen

One might think that it would be logical for gallerists to select a location in a city's established gallery quarter. But a group of new art merchants in Copenhagen thought differently, and at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and similar to London, they settled in an area that previously had nothing to do with galleries.

For Christina Wilson, the Brygge offered a friendly neighbourhood, a large gallery space and a closeness to home. 'I have four children [...], they are in a school nearby [and] it is great luck [...] that the other galleries are also in this area [...].'<sup>1</sup> 'I needed a space which suited my ideas of an exhibition space.'<sup>2</sup> Wilson entered the Brygge after the pioneers had settled in and, collectively with her family, created the foundations for an extended family of galleries. In Wilson's opinion

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<sup>1</sup> *Christina Wilson*, 11 April 2003, p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> *Wilson*, p. 6.

there are some similarities [...] between us gallerists out here on Islands Brygge and that means that we are working together in different [...] areas, and [...], that is, for example, openings on the same days, doing parties together, and [...] we're on our way [...], trying to be better at [...] marketing together, because [...] we are the strongest group of galleries, we show the newest things here, then we might as well unite our strength.<sup>3</sup>

This compares favourably with her previous experience of gallerists, whom she describes as being afraid of sharing, sparse, competitive and unsupportive.<sup>4</sup> Wilson's testimony suggests that the most important factors in the process of selecting an area are personal, professional, practical and community focussed.

The Brygge gallerist who comes closest to Wilson's opinion is Nils Stærk. He strongly indicates that the most important factors in his selection are of communal and professional origins. Through his participation he was involved in transforming the meaning of the area from the start: 'I mean, Nicholai Wallner and Tommy Lund, who unfortunately is dead now, and I wanted to move to a new space. Both of those guys had a space already. [...] but I wanted to open a space so we decided to [...] take on this area and move here, all the three of us at the same time.'<sup>5</sup> The colonisation of the area was a collective project of gallerists intending to recreate markets for Danish art. This market has now reached beyond the existing local market, further

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<sup>3</sup> *Wilson*, p. 7.

<sup>4</sup> *Wilson*, p. 7.

<sup>5</sup> *Nils Stærk* 10 April 2003, pp. 2-4. See also gallery website, <http://www.nilsstaerk.dk/information/information.htm> (02/06/2006).

indicating the strong community feeling that appears to be one of the foundations of this scene. The practicality signalled in Stærk's statement is evident in reducing risk by joining hands with Wallner and Lund.

Wallner left the imagined security of the established gallery area when his lease came up for renewal. He needed a larger space and there were no 'spaces in the centre of town that I could afford'.<sup>6</sup> Wallner was also after something different; a proper gallery rather than a shop: 'the space I had before was more or less like a, a normal shop, like when you go down [town?]. [...] The other galleries they have shop windows out to the street, and I was not so interested in that anymore. I was more interested in a, [...] clean white cube.'<sup>7</sup> Wallner was also motivated by the idea of distancing the gallery from the establishment and looking for different opportunities in a different geographical area:

[...] it was not that we got this space for free, [...], it costs money to be here but we had different opportunities and I thought it was interesting to start off in a new area that didn't have any galleries before, of course also inspired [by] how things develop in New York and Berlin, and London as well, where galleries moved out of [...] the centre of town and [...] to another centre and usually a rather industrial centre, with other opportunities, so that was the reason [...] we moved here.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Nicolai Wallner, 10 April 2003, pp.6-7.

<sup>7</sup> Wallner, p. 7.

<sup>8</sup> Wallner, p. 8.

Wallner acts more individually than other gallerists despite being in an informal partnership with gallerist Lund.<sup>9</sup> It is also interesting to see that, despite sharing an area, the reasons for being there vary greatly from one gallerist to the other.

Gimm acknowledges the role of Wallner, Lund and Stærk in re-defining the Brygge, rather than identifying himself and his partners as pioneers. 'We [...] had this idea that we wanted to open a commercial gallery, [...] it had to be here because Wallner and Lund are opening here and so that was the only obvious place to make it' [...].'<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, Gimm states that 'if Nicolai Wallner and Tommy Lund had situated themselves somewhere far away from here we'd [have] gone to that place.'<sup>11</sup> There is a strong feeling of dependence in the practice of Gimm and associates and enjoying the support of the other galleries in the community, 'from the very beginning [...] we got quite a lot of attention out here'<sup>12</sup>, he said. However, 'Kongens Nytorv and Bredgade seems [...] a lot more like centre than this does.'<sup>13</sup> He acknowledges that there is an established centre on the other side of Copenhagen. However, things were still to change for Gimm because in 2004 he moved from Njalsgade and the actual Brygge to bigger premises on Sturlasgade, apparently only to close the gallery in spring 2005. Chapelle started off with a non-commercial exhibition space on the Brygge that functioned for about two years, or until the Ministry of Culture's Development

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<sup>9</sup> Wallner, p. 7. See also Anon. 'Bygning 15 [Building 15], Njalsgade 21, 2300 Kbh. S', *Kunstmagasinet 1%* [The Art Magazine 1%], No. 6 (Summer 1999), pp. 18-19.

<sup>10</sup> Gustav Gimm, 14 April 2003, pp. 5-6.

<sup>11</sup> Gimm, p. 8.

<sup>12</sup> Gimm, p. 6.

<sup>13</sup> Gimm, p. 9.

Fund terminated its funding in 2002.<sup>14</sup> Chapelle's primary reason for founding the gallery was that he 'didn't want to be part of the [...] city galleries. They have a, totally another profile. I mean it's much more commercial, and [...] I don't find it very experimental, and it's not very young artists [...].'<sup>15</sup> Despite Chapelle's anti-commercialism he is aware of that side of art, but he views it as a secondary component: 'of course commercial, but [...] the starting point should not be that I want to earn a lot of money. It should be the other way around, the money should come because what I do is very good and interesting [...].'<sup>16</sup> But as regards Chapelle's move to Valby, the Brygge 'was already defined before I came. I mean [...] there were several galleries and [...] a certain attitude and people had a certain idea about the area.'<sup>17</sup>

By moving to Valby he deconstructs himself from potted histories about the Brygge as the new centre indicating a spectrum rather than a scale based on two fixed locations such as city centre – Brygge.<sup>18</sup> He is not trying to make himself visible because he is a part of a new centre, but because he is brave enough to marginalise himself. In a pioneering spirit he does not need a community of like-minded people for self approval. As regards Valby, he said that he liked

the feeling of this industrial area and that I can do it from scratch. I mean I have to work a lot to get people's attention now. Before it was a bit like we were like four or five galleries and we were quite close to each other and people could walk from one gallery to [each sic.] [the]

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<sup>14</sup> *Christian Chapelle*, 15 April 2003, pp. 1-2.

<sup>15</sup> *Chapelle*, p. 11.

<sup>16</sup> *Chapelle*, pp. 11-12.

<sup>17</sup> *Chapelle*, pp. 10-11.

<sup>18</sup> Keith Jenkins, *Re-Thinking History* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 34-36.

other, and it's a very nice way. I mean [...] it's not because I don't like the idea, [but] it was just a bit boring as well. It's more fun for me to be here.<sup>19</sup>

Now the number of galleries in his neighbourhood is rising and he has also opened an outlet in Aarhus. The main reasons for taking on Brygge and Valby are a strong community feeling and pioneering spirit.

## London

This sense of community also applies to Simpson's reasoning for opening an East End gallery. But he also signals practicality and professionalism when arguing that the established galleries help newcomers to develop: '[...] it was on a circuit with lots of other galleries more established than we are, [...] but in a similar vein to [...] what we are doing, [...].'<sup>20</sup> In addition, he suggests a link between the location and the art exhibited in the gallery by saying that it is 'sort of conceptual',<sup>21</sup> but to underline his independence he also states that 'it is quite kind of mixed, particularly the type of work that we show'.<sup>22</sup>

A sense of community, networking, a living space and practicality is strong in Wigram's mind when he reflects on his reasons for lodging, and later opening a gallery, on 43B Mitchell Street. A community sense seems to have played a central role in selecting this location. 'I had this space, this used to be where I lived, and it's a great space but it's also close to other galleries down here, it's kind of networked now, [...], if you're a collector or a curator or

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<sup>19</sup> *Chapelle*, p. 11.

<sup>20</sup> *Ronnie Simpson 21 May 2003*, p. 5.

<sup>21</sup> *Simpson*, p.8.

<sup>22</sup> *Simpson*, p.8.

something, you can come down to this area now and see quite a few galleries in a day.'<sup>23</sup>

Klassnik seems to have a strong tendency to distance himself and his gallery from other galleries, both geographically and physically. Originally it seems to have been important to him to move as far away from the established West End market as possible. His current location also signals that he is staying out of the way of commercial East End galleries. However, what linked him with other East End galleries is a personal reason for the location: '[...] I quite like the view outside. [...] But it's not the park that I like so much, [...] there's a canal behind us and four or five gasometers that the gallery looks out on, but unfortunately this week they've taken all the gasometers down to build up some flats I believe.'<sup>24</sup> He also mentions a community he might like more than the commercialised art worlds, namely the company of artists and closeness to earlier premises. 'Well, it [the gallery] was, [...] only two kilometres from its previous location in London Fields and [...] it was also within an artists' complex, and had studios above [...].'<sup>25</sup> It is therefore as if everything that he thinks can marginalise him from other art world activities contributes to the gallery's location.

Miro's reasons for the gallery location seem to be purely practical and professional, but also connected to the West End where she started her business. In 2003, Miro was only a stone's throw away from Noraika's on the other side of City Road:

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<sup>23</sup> *Max Wigram* 22 May 2003, p. 16.

<sup>24</sup> *Robin Klassnik* 20 May 2003, p. 2.

<sup>25</sup> *Klassnik*, p. 2.

[...] I like this location because, although it was in the East End, I felt it wasn't too far from the centre. [...] some of the galleries are further out, whereas in fact we are [...] close to the centre really, we're the first gallery maybe, in the East End, if you're coming from [ ] Cork Street [...]. But I knew that I could never have a gallery like this in the centre because I could never afford the property price.<sup>26</sup>

The property price makes her selection a practical one, but she is also located outside Hoxton, which places the gallery both within and outside the East End.

Bea de Souza defined her gallery as a space 'for new tendencies in British and International contemporary art.'<sup>27</sup> The gallery's location in fashionable 'Art-Hoxton' gave the impression of the right gallery in the right location. When asked about reasons for settling down in Charlotte Road, she said that 'at the time it was the highest concentration of artists in the area, and there was a lot of empty property available which allowed more scope for galleries. [...] the natural process has applied, as a result of a lot of artists being in the area, it has changed... so it's now a more expensive area.'<sup>28</sup> De Souza implies that she simply followed the flow of artists in 1993 when she opened in the East End. Her selection of locations is different from Wigram's argument that the expansion of the area took place in four steps: First the artists moved in, then the developers and in their wake the galleries and restaurants and such things. But at the same time a new development takes

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<sup>26</sup> Victoria Miro 21 May 2003, pp. 6-7.

<sup>27</sup> The Agency website <http://www.theagencygallery.co.uk/gallery.html> (22/01/2005 - this is now <http://www.theagencygallery.co.uk/> (31/05/2009). According to the website the gallery is moving to South London.

<sup>28</sup> Bea de Souza 20 May 2003, p. 2.

place, because artists who have not made it move further east and north, and those who have made it big time have a house in the countryside.<sup>29</sup> In this way locations are in a constant flux similar to the art markets analysed by Baudrillard earlier.

When Noraika opened his gallery in 2001, he had been operating a none-profit space in his studio close to the Spitalfields Market in the East End. Locating and selecting the new space involved a mixture of factors like the nature of the space, closeness to what is happening in the vicinity of Old Street, but mainly it 'was a mixture of [...] circumstance, good fortune, and [...] selection. [...] we needed an East End gallery [...], that's where its roots were, [...].'<sup>30</sup> Thus the focus was on being true to the origins. Noraika's example signals strong community links. Looking back Noraika is pleased about the location because it is close to Hoxton, although he 'didn't really want to [...] simulate the gallery into kind of Hoxton hype, so it's quite nice to be able to sort of stand apart from it.'<sup>31</sup> When he started, the East End had not developed into what it is today with the *White Cube* as a major attraction. There are similarities between Noraika and the Copenhagen gallerists because they seem to thrive better on the margins than in concentrated areas. Noraika has also deconstructed his business away from the main attractions while still being close to them. This may, therefore, be vital for the survival of his gallery. This looks like a community of loosely connected galleries. Noraika seems to prefer being part of a pioneering community because he moved the gallery to Vyner Street in January 2006.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Wigram, pp. 3-4.

<sup>30</sup> Chris Noraika, 15 May 2003, p. 8-9.

<sup>31</sup> Noraika, p. 9.

<sup>32</sup> Email to the author from Chris Noraika 25 November, 2007.

Christine Shearn identifies two reasons for the selection: firstly, '[...] it was the best value for money in London in terms of size, it was a really nice space, and secondly this is a good area. There are lots of galleries around here so it's a good area to be based in... near other galleries, it's quite vibrant.'<sup>33</sup> The notion of a community seems to be important for her, although the notion of living on the back of the pioneers seems to come through.

Because Diamandidou's *EC Art* project does not have a permanent address she could not be asked why she selected the current location for her gallery. However, her activities are restricted by the post code East Central, (EC) where she has installed a number of shows since 1998 (see map 3).

She states that the

idea basically came because I was very much involved in the, [...] Clarksenwell area, and [...] of course there was a lot of redevelopment and a lot of building activity, [...] and [...] I had an interest in [...] fine art [...] on a personal level, and I've got this idea because I was running this programme [...] Cultural Quarters [...] which was basically to [...], attract funding to specific areas.<sup>34</sup>

She then used an old ruin that had been empty for 10 years to stage her first show.<sup>35</sup> Diamandidou regards her exhibition concept as a renovation process with an artistic initiative where space and art work together: 'It is [...], because every time [...] I have the idea [...] what I want to show then I'm looking for the right place. Sometimes I see the space, and then I think of the work or what I

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<sup>33</sup> Christine Shearn 20 May 2003, p. 2.

<sup>34</sup> Angela Diamandidou, 21 May 2003, p. 1.

<sup>35</sup> Diamandidou, p. 1.

could show. So it's a two way process.'<sup>36</sup> This is a dialogue between art and [...] space where the renovation fuels a debate. In 1995, The City Fringe Partnership 'secured £3 million in grants from the Government's Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) to invest in four demonstration projects to: help local people get jobs in the City, develop the area's cultural character and encourage visitors, help local businesses with new technology, improve the buildings and streets at prominent gateways to the City'.<sup>37</sup> *EC Art* is a part of the area development. Diamandidou seems to have had first hand information about the regeneration of the area, enabling her to step in and fuel artistic, spatial and social dialogue. Diamandidou's reply makes her activities into an artistic development process.

As regards Mummery, space is what he considered when selecting a place for his gallery with the help of Diamandidou. The gallery 'was very close to where I was before, and the space was a very beautiful space to have a gallery in. [...] it hadn't been used for a long time and [...] Angela told me about this space and that's [...] how I found it. But it seemed to be a perfect location and also the space, more the space itself actually; I thought it could be very interesting as a gallery.'<sup>38</sup> There is an aesthetic quality to Mummery's decision along with a strong feeling for the East End.

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<sup>36</sup> Diamandidou, pp. 8-9.

<sup>37</sup> See, Anon. *Cultural Quarters: Clarkenwell*. A leaflet published by Islington Council in association with City Fringe and The Government Challenge Fund, [No date].

<sup>38</sup> Andrew Mummery, 22 May 2003, p. 3. When Mummery was interviewed, the gallery was on 63 Compton Street East Central. Before that he had operated since 1996 at 33 Great Sutton Street, 'one of the first to do so in the Clarkenwell area of East London'. See Andrew Mummery Gallery <http://www.art-online.org/andrewmummery/galleryinformation/mid.html> (29/07/2002). His Clarkenwell space connects him to the renovation and social debate of the late 1990s and the alleged gateway to The City. Currently his gallery is in The Tea Building, Studio 1.4, 5-11 Bethnal Green Road E1, which means that he is not directly associated with East Central anymore. In my interview with Diamandidou she told me that she had found exhibition spaces for Mummery.

## Reykjavík

As regards the selection of gallery locations in Reykjavík, unlike in the big capitals, there are not many prosperous districts to select from. The restrictions are built into the city's geography and, consequently, Reykjavík may offer an opportunity for locations with a difference.

This comes through in Jónsdóttir's reply stating that she '[...] saw the property; I was born in a house behind the current gallery premises. [...] The old gallery was not very welcoming to the public and it demanded a bit of courage to enter. I noticed that the new space has huge windows and people can view [shows] from the pavement and it is easily accessible.'<sup>39</sup> She is conceptualising a shop where the goods are immediately visible to passersby, but the windows also extend the space into the street. Both the location and windows signal that passersby can freely view contemporary art. Thus access, communication and action can be seen as focal points of the location. As a comparison, only one East End gallery, *Vertigo*, had big display windows while the Copenhagen gallerists renounced big windows. Furthermore, both Wilson and Jónsdóttir expressed family factors as being vital parts of their selection process, which makes them different from other gallerists in this study.

Lárusson's reasons for selecting a location for his gallery in the city centre are straight forward. He simply 'bought the house at that time so in that sense it was convenient.'<sup>40</sup> The gallery was on the ground floor of his home and he made creative use of a space that was not a living area. The big

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<sup>39</sup> Edda Jónsdóttir 20 March 2003, p. 8.

<sup>40</sup> Hannes Lárusson, 20 March 2003, p. 10.

display windows on either side of the entrance door played a role in public access to the shows.<sup>41</sup>

When Friðriksson reflected on the relocation of *Fold* to the margins of the city centre he said that the 'lease had expired, together with a change in the ownership of the property. The new owner of the house wanted to raise the rent so we started looking for a new place, something a bit bigger and more accessible in terms of parking and we found this place. It was as simple as that.'<sup>42</sup> *Fold* is separated from the conceptual art community down the road on Laugavegur that has evolved around *i8*, *Kling & Bang* and *Living Art Museum*, because *Fold* strongly renounces conceptual art. However, the gallery is in the vicinity of the *University of Art*, the progressive *Klink & Bank* studios and exhibition spaces, and a branch of the *Reykjavík Art Gallery*. *Fold* has vast, carefully dressed display windows to attract customers and expand the gallery.

Arason is thinking in the wider context of an art community when he reflects on his gallery: 'it was great with the *Living Art Museum* just around the corner. I cannot think of a better location.'<sup>43</sup> His reply suggests that the two institutions supported each other while he operated the gallery.

Regarding selection of the location of Gallery Hlemmur, Þórisdóttir reflected on *Fold* by explaining that

[...] there is a bank that separates us so it is not confusing in any way. Occasionally we get people through the door who are looking for *Fold*, but there are no relations between us [...]. But no bad

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<sup>41</sup> Lárusson, p. 12.

<sup>42</sup> Tryggvi Páll Friðriksson 19 March 2003, p. 7.

<sup>43</sup> Pétur Arason 21 March 2003, p. 9.

feelings either. We send each other emails and keep up with what is happening, but we do not have anything in common. But I do not think there is any mutual contempt either.<sup>44</sup>

Artistically the gallery belongs to the conceptual sector, but it also signals that in a small society different types of galleries need to share the same area. It is difficult for a Reykjavík art establishment to distance itself geographically from other galleries, because distances are very short in comparison to COLO. Therefore, the main difference between Reykjavík galleries is revealed in the art they exhibit. Deciding the location of Gallery Hlemmur was swift. Þórisdóttir and her associate, Guðlaugsdóttir,

heard that the premises were up for rent, so we signed the contract and moved in. And when we looked through the window over to the bus station we realised that it was a gallery. It happened so fast. The location... [...] the gallery depends on it. [...] We wanted to define ourselves as being between an underground place, like the bus station, a meeting place for outsiders and the gallery space as a white sterile box that artists destroyed and we would build up again.<sup>45</sup>

However, the location does not seem to have helped the gallery as a business venture in the long run, because it is now closed.

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<sup>44</sup> Þóra Þórisdóttir 18 March 2003, p. 9.

<sup>45</sup> Þórisdóttir, p. 8-9.

## Conclusion

A number of interesting aspects emerge from the informants' replies. A considerable number of answers indicate a strong social consciousness, networking, community feeling and sharing similar ideas about art and the area. But there is also a strong tendency to pioneering.

It remains questionable whether it is possible to talk about the Reykjavík gallerists in terms of selecting locations because the city centre is the only available gallery area. If that is the case, the city centre is a comfort zone that progressive galleries cannot break free from and the same seems to apply to the more traditional *Gallery Fold*. However, there is a positive side to this, identified by Arason, who signals a community of which he sees himself a part. But, different from the other cities, traditional galleries also belong to the comfort zone in the city centre.

Most of the galleries seem to select a location on the basis of being an active participant in a progressive art world community. However, they do not emerge as fantasists. Their reasons are grounded in practicality both regarding size and access, particularly in Reykjavík. Other important aspects are geographical, social, artistic, community and networking dialogues that are evidentially vital parts of locations and the existence of galleries. As regards Copenhagen, the reasons for locations are very similar to Reykjavík. In Copenhagen the reasons can be split up into two groups, where the strongest ones are geographical and pioneering, as well as professional, practical, economic, communal, and professional. In one case, the reason was that other galleries had already settled on the Brygge and, besides, he enjoyed direct support from an established gallery. The notion of a

community, as a part of the location process, is a particularly interesting part of the Copenhagen and East End gallery colonies, because of personal relationships to locations. This relationship was a vital part of Wilson's reasoning that made the Brygge community different from her experience of established Copenhagen galleries. Elements of a community feeling are also found in Klassnik's reply, but in a very contradictory form of constantly distancing the gallery both geographically and ideologically from other aspects of art worlds, while admiring the geography of his neighbourhood. Apart from that, the East End gallerists express personal, professional, and geographical reasons such as, in the case of Miro and de Souza, bearing in mind that they originally come from different parts of London. However they all share a sense of community and East End focus. What makes Shearn different is the practicality involved in value for money while her communal reasons for location are strongly associated with being a part of the scene like other gallerists.

Diamandidou and Mummery seem to belong to a different component. The strength of their operations, reasoning for locations, as well as their enthusiasm for architecture, is based on a social and spatial dialogue that makes them also very different from other East End gallerists. Diamandidou's notion of the activation of art as a moveable social experiment gives her a strong aura of artistic creativity.

Social interaction among the Brygge, Valby and East End galleries seems to be much stronger than in Reykjavík. They collaborate because they have been able to deconstruct themselves from established centres in a way that is not possible, or not seen as vital, in Reykjavík and therefore they can share

an experience of being different from the establishment. However, it is apparent that all the galleries contribute to a dialogue on a number of levels via location, where the importance of practicality is stronger than the oblivion that seemed to be at work in relation to aspects of situations in art markets in Chapter 5. It is also interesting to notice that big front windows seem to be more important for galleries in Reykjavík than in the other cities, and there is very little evidence of a community feeling in Reykjavík. Both active and non-active gallerists in the Reykjavík, with the exception of Arason, seem to operate in a way that is out of touch with each other as well as not taking communal factors of an area into account when selecting venues and areas.

# 7 Finding the artist: Headhunting and the welcoming smile

## Introduction

A context for the selection of particular areas for the COLORE galleries was developed in the previous chapter in order to compare similarities and differences between the gallerists. That chapter strongly signalled that location is a fundamental factor in gallerists' aims to activate art in society. To develop the discussion further, this chapter looks at how contemporary gallerists acquire artists with whom to collaborate, building on the question of whether gallerists are aggressive talent hunters or welcoming exhibition providers. In order to examine the current situation among the interviewed gallerists, their personal voices will be at the heart of the discussion.

## Copenhagen

Keeping in mind the community spirit and networking among Copenhagen gallerists, it is logical to expect them to encourage artists to bring their portfolios to the galleries. However, Stærk is extremely direct about his strategy, confirming his authority over how artists are entered into the gallery. 'I always pick the artists; [...] a lot of artists approach me but I never took up one.'<sup>1</sup> Stærk's reason for this approach is that 'there was no one I wanted to take up. It's not that [there is?] a principle about it [...] just [has?] not

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<sup>1</sup> *Nils Stærk* 10 April 2003, p. 5.

happened.’<sup>2</sup> He may be indicative of how things generally work in galleries. However, Stærk does not state anything about his criteria. We are assertively informed that this is how things work in his gallery, suggesting that he is a head hunter.

Wilson promotes emerging artists and shows signs of head hunting: ‘I go to them’. [...] There’s a lot of people who come here but I’m not really dealing with things like that, very, very seldom.’<sup>3</sup> Part of her assertiveness is related to intuition that seems to be the core of her operation ‘because it is about being true to one self’.<sup>4</sup> In addition she offers this explanation:

I have seen loads [...] of art – therefore I can see immediately whether there is anything new in it. Whatever I see, loads of things go through my head because I am an art historian. Therefore I am able to assert that there is a bit of Cubism ... bits and bobs that I can distil and all of a sudden I can see a core that does not belong to any ism. And if I come to the conclusion that this core cannot be classified – I think it is interesting.<sup>5</sup>

In addition to her own tastes, Wilson applies her qualification to the selection process. This enables her to go beyond the art canon. Through her approach

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<sup>2</sup> Stærk, p. 5.

<sup>3</sup> Christina Wilson, 11 April 2003, p. 11.

<sup>4</sup> Birgitte Elleman Höegh, ‘Følg din intuition’, [‘Follow your intuition’]. *Euro Woman*, No. 16 (April 2003), pp. 60-61, (p. 60). [Original text in Danish: ‘[...] I alle livets sammenhænge – fordi det handler om at være tro mod sig selv’. English translation by the author.].

<sup>5</sup> Birgitte Elleman Höegh, ‘Følg din intuition’, p. 60. [Original text in Danish: ‘Jeg har set rigtig, rigtig meget kunst – så derfor kan jeg med det samme se, om der er noget nyt i det. Ligegyldigt hvad jeg ser, går der enormt mange ting igennem mit hoved, også fordi jeg er kunshistoriker. Så kan jeg konstatere, at der er lidt fra kubismen...lidt fra alle mulig ting, som jeg kan sortere fra, og lige pludselig kan jeg se, at der er en kerne, jeg ikke kan sætte hen på en isme. Og hvis jeg så kommer frem til, at denne her kerne er uhåndgribelig – så synes jeg, tingene er interessante’. English translation by the author].

she seems to have developed a resistance against mainstream art. It is also evident that her approach is based on intuition, assertiveness and her conception of going beyond what she considers to be established art.

Wallner states that he concentrates on the group he is collaborating with, rather than considering head hunting or taking new artists into the gallery:

basically I'm not really searching for so many new artists to work with because I'm very pleased with the group I'm working in already and [...] the operation we are running, is not larger [...] than what we can handle now. I mean [...] we can work with the group of artists [...] we have [...] I'm still starting working relations with new artists but, but not as much.<sup>6</sup>

Judging from this response, it is difficult to identify a method and whether he is a head hunter or not, but he signals that he is in charge of selecting artists he likes when talking about 'searching'. Thus he can be identified as a hunter who works with a group of artists.

There are a number of aspects involved in Chapelle's selection of artists. He is very open, which is rare among the gallerists in this study. '[...] I always tell them [...], you're welcome to forward some information about your works because I always like to know what's going on. So, it works both ways.'<sup>7</sup> He also prefers to do his own research when selecting artists: 'Yeah I do. I go to fairs and I go to exhibitions abroad, but also in Denmark. I read art

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<sup>6</sup> Nicolai Wallner, 10 April 2003, p. 10.

<sup>7</sup> Christian Chapelle, 15 April 2003, p.15.

magazines, use the internet and stuff like that. So, normally it would be me who establishes the contact, [...].<sup>8</sup> However, as much as an artist may dream about joining a particular gallery, the final decision is with the gallerist. Chapelle gives the impression that he is actually partially welcoming the chance to update himself about what is going on in art worlds. Art fairs are a source of networking since they are prioritised in his response and he is constantly on the lookout.

Gimm is not hesitant in stating his privileges as regards finding artists, claiming the ultimate power for himself without compromise, even though he appears to be welcoming.

I have never, [...] often artists come here and present themselves and ask whether they can show me stuff and I always say yes, [...] but I don't think I've ever started to work with an artist afterwards who came like that, [...] there are so many artists and there are so few of them who, in my mind, make a real difference so [...] since we started, the newcomers who [...] arrived later on, have all, somehow [...]. I've seen their, their works somewhere [...] at a group show or [...] in some weird newspaper, [...] but [...] I've contacted them and asked for some more, that's actually how it's done.<sup>9</sup>

Wigram has also stated in his interview that '90% of everything is rubbish, plumbers, electricians, car designs, landscape gardeners, astronauts, [...] I mean whatever the fuck it is, [...], but 10% is great and the art world is no

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<sup>8</sup> *Chapelle*, p.15.

<sup>9</sup> *Gustav Gimm*, 14 April 2003, p.13.

different [...].'<sup>10</sup> The 10% rule applies not only to artists, as Gimm indicates, but a vast group of other practices. This approach seems to work for Gimm and Wigram in finding artists.

## London

Being the biggest city with the longest history of commercial galleries of the COLORE cities, as well as being one of the toughest markets in the world, makes London an interesting comparison in terms of how gallery artists are selected.

De Souza assertively states 'I go out.'<sup>11</sup> The reply strongly indicates that she does not wait for artists to bring their portfolios around. Shearn shares this approach with de Souza, claiming that she can see right away whether particular artists match the gallery. This applies both to artists who come to introduce their work and artists she finds on her own initiative. 'I mean a few people come all the time to introduce themselves to me but it's quite rare that I find someone that I think is suitable for the gallery in that way. On the whole I, I look [...].'<sup>12</sup> To 'look' indicates confidence as well as suggesting that looking at art and searching for prominent artists is a vital part of being a gallerist. Although she does not state that she is a head hunter, she strongly signals extensive talent hunting. It seems evident that those who bring their portfolios around to galleries do not stand a chance in the competition because gallerists want to do things their own way. This is unexpected and seems to contradict the notion that artists and makers should

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<sup>10</sup> *Max Wigram*, 22 May 2003, p. 11.

<sup>11</sup> *Bea De Souza*, 20 May 2003, p. 3.

<sup>12</sup> *Christine Shearn*, 20 May 2003, pp. 3-4.

send their portfolios and CVs to galleries, as advised by authors such as Staines.<sup>13</sup> Generally contemporary gallerists consciously seem to avoid the hassle involved in welcoming artists.

Klassnik, who seems to exist in an idealist denial of the art market despite being a part of it, states that searching for talent is a part of his job that makes him a head hunter. '[...] we go out quite often looking for [...], new artists.'<sup>14</sup> This is unexpected from a gallerist who holds idealism in high regard. However, Klassnik seems to follow the same pattern as other gallerists when searching for new talent: going out.

Headhunting is also vital for Diamandidou's gallery experiment, although she seems to be quite modest. For her, it is risky to discover artists who are already with a gallery because it involves money: '[...] I go out [...] and I always go out looking for artists, but then sometimes [...] I've spotted artists who I would like to show their work and then shortly after I realise they work with the gallery or they were, because the gallery can promise them money [while?] I can't'.<sup>15</sup> This is a highly competitive environment where money speaks louder than idealism and experiments with art and space. This also seems to restrict her activation of art. In Diamandidou's conceptualisation, the gallerists select artists with the aid of money without any idealism or love of art and creativity. From this perspective, money is more primary in activating art than location, space, gallerists' aims or talent. The notion of money separates *EC Art* from the majority of the other galleries and may restrain its possibilities to acquire artists.

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<sup>13</sup> Judith Staines, *Artists Handbooks: Selling* (Sunderland: AN Publications, 1993), p. 104.

<sup>14</sup> Robin Klassnik 20 May 2003, p. 3.

<sup>15</sup> Angela Diamandidou, 21 May 2003, pp. 27-28.

Noraika seems to be more artist-friendly than other gallerists, including those who allocate time to receiving artists: 'people might just knock on the door on the right day, at the right time [...] there's an element of that sort of luck involved.'<sup>16</sup> However,

whether they actually come to work with the gallery is a slightly more considered process. [...] it's a very considered approach as to how we choose people to [...] participate within the gallery, and that's not a commercial consideration either, it's very much to do with the quality and nature of the work. So by and large the commercial side of it is, [...] not really taken into account, as you know we're not, [...] just interested in [...] the financial marketing for it.<sup>17</sup>

Noraika is more interested in cultural value and plays down the capitalist side without renouncing it, because both factors are relevant. This is not the only way to find artists and he reveals extensive insider networking: '[...] some of our artists might say, oh have you seen so and so's work, go and have a look at it, so that'll be one way. Other times I might stumble across something, so [...] it's a combination of all those ways that we come across people.'<sup>18</sup> In a way his approach is as friendly as Chapelle's, disclosing that there is more than one way to make things happen.

It is difficult to say whether Wigram is a head hunter or inviting, because his reply is slightly indirect despite being a 'No',<sup>19</sup> implying that artists

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<sup>16</sup> *Chris Noraika* 15 May 2003, p. 17.

<sup>17</sup> *Noraika*, p. 17.

<sup>18</sup> *Noraika*, p. 17.

<sup>19</sup> *Wigram*, p. 21.

do not approach him nor does he headhunt for new talent. However, in terms of selection, it seems to be important for him to have known artists like photographer Nigel Shaffron for thirty years,<sup>20</sup> although he admires 'galleries who found their own artists'.<sup>21</sup> But the quality of their work and their 'sense of understanding of the materials or the medium which they work in'<sup>22</sup> seems to weigh more than headhunting or hospitality towards artists.

Simpson can be grouped with gallerists who endorse a 'mixed' approach representing himself both as head hunter and someone who adopts artists who introduce their work to him, although he identifies limitations to how many he can adopt. 'But reality as well is that we're so little. [...] It's very limited [...] what [...] we as a gallery can do. [...] we represent now about twelve people, which is actually [...] a lot of people to represent, and there's only eight slots for shows a year, so it is quite an intake.'<sup>23</sup> It is not likely that he will take more artists into the gallery because of the limitations he mentions and he talks about smallness in a similar manner to the Icelandic gallerists. The gallery's space was small but it was nicely refurbished and accessible. Simpson is managing his work load and the number of gallery artists like Wallner, which may explain why he is applying the mixed approach.

Miro signals a low profile by stating that 'it's not that you actually go out hunting, it's more like keeping your eyes open.'<sup>24</sup> She keeps herself updated about who is exhibiting, what artists are talked about and what other gallerists are doing.

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<sup>20</sup> *Wigram*, p. 22.

<sup>21</sup> *Wigram*, p. 21.

<sup>22</sup> *Wigram*, p. 21.

<sup>23</sup> *Ronnie Simpson*, 21 May 2003, p. 8.

<sup>24</sup> *Victoria Miro*, 21 May 2003, p. 11.

Similar to Noraika, Mummery implies that networking strongly affects who is taken into a gallery: '[...] a lot of it is word of mouth; I get recommended people, often by other artists, or other galleries,'<sup>25</sup> although Mummery may have the final word regarding what artists are adopted. This networking community could also be defined as a support system that goes beyond the gallerist. In terms of taking new artists he states that 'it's less easy for me to do that now than [...] when I started. I was going to degree shows and I was looking at art fairs and I was looking at other exhibitions, but because I've now got a [...] fairly reasonable group of artists [...] it's very difficult for me to add new people.'<sup>26</sup> The gallery seems to have reached a stage of saturation, as the artists he collaborates with have become more reputable. Apart from the networking community, Mummery's criteria is that new artists 'have to relate to the programme [...], they have to interest me [...]...., and [...] I feel that I can contribute something to their careers, so the freedom I have now is not what I [had] when I started [...].'<sup>27</sup> For him, 'it's very important that there is an identity maintained and that I can see something in their work that fits into what I have already been doing and what I'm interested in.'<sup>28</sup> Networking, continuity, consistency, freedom, identity, style and personal interest are the foundations of his activities.

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<sup>25</sup> Mummery, p. 7.

<sup>26</sup> Mummery, pp. 6-7.

<sup>27</sup> Mummery, p. 7.

<sup>28</sup> Mummery, p. 7.

## Reykjavík

In her reply, Þórisdóttir states that she is both a head hunter and welcoming but would like to be more selective: 'In the beginning when we were selecting art we automatically looked for art we knew and I knew the artists quite well'.<sup>29</sup> Different from some East End colleagues, Þórisdóttir seems to have been restricted by a network of friends wanting to exhibit and, despite the welcoming approach, she acknowledges that 'an open door policy is time consuming due to the quantity of stuff. And it is also energy consuming to reject people without being rude. However, we thought the open door policy was vital to give artists the opportunity to access us [...]'.<sup>30</sup> Applying both methods thus seems to have caused conflicts for Þórisdóttir and she would have preferred to be more decisive in terms of what is exhibited.

As a contrast, Jónsdóttir states that there are very few newcomers in her gallery. However, different from other gallerists, she operates an experimental selections space for emerging artists called *Below the Stairs* on the lower ground floor of her gallery. This offers support to the youngest generation of artists and creates a dialogue between emerging and established gallery artists. However, Jónsdóttir said she 'would not say that there were many newcomers. All the artists have had a number of shows. I think I have never taken anyone on board who has not had a show before joining us',<sup>31</sup> thus stressing the importance of artists establishing their name before being taken up by a gallery. Gallery *i8* partially operates an open door policy:

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<sup>29</sup> Þóra Þórisdóttir, 18 March 2003, p. 14-15.

<sup>30</sup> Þórisdóttir, p.15.

<sup>31</sup> Edda Jónsdóttir, 20 March 2003, pp. 15-16.

We try to spread the news that we select the artists, but they are welcome to send us examples of their work because we see fairly quickly whether it is something that... We do not care to sit for an hour with whoever happens to come. The first thing we say is “send me some of your work, and if it is worthwhile I will get back to you”. It is best for all parties and that is the way we try to keep it.<sup>32</sup>

She makes artists aware that the gallery reserves the right to complete power as regards the selection of artists. Like Miro, she keeps up with the latest developments, deriving information ‘both [from] teachers at the University of Art and Dorothee [...]’.<sup>33</sup> This ‘is a bit of headhunting and if we hear about someone good we try to go and see what the person is doing.’<sup>34</sup> Networking and word of mouth seem to be important sources of information about new talent for the gallery.

Arason and his partners did not run a hardcore commercial gallery despite attempts to sell work by world class artists exhibiting in the gallery. Arason was driven by personal interest in art and he was a head hunter for famous artists, wasting no time on beginners. The method Arason and his associates applied was daring because they ‘wrote a letter or called the artists in question and invited them to come.’<sup>35</sup> Things may not always be as straight forward as this because the Icelandic Sagas attracted Donald Judd and Carl

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<sup>32</sup> *Jónsdóttir*, p. 15.

<sup>33</sup> *Jónsdóttir*, p. 15. Dorothee was a member of the gallery staff when the interview took place.

<sup>34</sup> *Jónsdóttir*, p. 15.

<sup>35</sup> *Pétur Arason*, 21 March 2003, p. 7.

Andre to exhibit in the gallery because they had read them.<sup>36</sup> Arason gives gallerists some credit, but his way

was always to have personal contact with artists. I avoided communicating with the galleries in this case. The general rule is that the artists have a gallery that takes care of their business. But I did it differently and on a personal level with the artists.<sup>37</sup>

However, the gallery also exhibited artists that were 'rather unknown at that time but they are more known today. It was a mixture of older and established artists and younger.'<sup>38</sup> This highly selective process seems to have enabled the gallery to cultivate a unique exhibition programme.

Lárusson, as a contrast, does not emerge as a head-hunter on level with Arason and he appears to have been, like the artists, feeling his way around exhibiting both established and emerging artists:

People were feeling their way around and came later when they had a show ready. But, yes I was asking around and shortly after the gallery opened and before the opening I had discussed possible shows with both Icelandic [...] and [...] foreign artists. Then I worked on it for a number of years.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Arason, p. 10.

<sup>37</sup> Arason, p. 9.

<sup>38</sup> Arason, p. 14. These young artists were Vincent Shine, Lesley Foxcroft, Karin Sander, Roni Horn and Adrian Schiess.

<sup>39</sup> Hannes Lárusson, 20 March 2003, pp. 16-17.

This comes across as a long insecure process on behalf of both artists and Lárusson, a situation that suggests an underdeveloped market. Knowing the situation, he plays down the art market but underlines the art world: 'yes, the art world but not necessarily in the art market. At least not as regards the Icelandic artists [...]. Some had been acknowledged by the museums and I had artists like Kristján Guðmundsson, Magnús Pálsson and Jóhann Eyfells who had a reputation, younger artists and emerging artists.'<sup>40</sup> His reply further confirms the incapability to accept concept edge art at that time. But importantly, these artists were involved in the progressive side of Icelandic art worlds and they contribute to the profile that is associated with selecting artists.

Friðriksson of *Gallery Fold* can hardly be described as a tough head hunter because he said that,

it varies, but generally they come here for a discussion and... Quite often we send people away and everybody who is not professional is sent away but we always look at what people are offering. We are very careful about what we say to those who come; [...] "You are alright but start learning" [...] sometimes we go and get artists that we know are promising right after they graduate and try to manage them and we have often been quite successful. But sometimes it has been the other way around.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Lárusson, 20 March 2003, p. 17.

<sup>41</sup> Tryggvi Friðriksson, pp. 13-14.

It is not always a recipe for success to bet on art graduates that have not proved their capability to survive in the art market, although it is a nice gesture to offer to sell their work in the gallery. The gallery also seems to run an open door policy enabling artists to bring in their portfolios. *Fold* has a standard phrase for artists like i8 and apparently Friðriksson sounds intimidating. It is interesting to notice that a gallery focussing on traditional art applies similar methods as progressive galleries when selecting artists.

## Conclusion

None of the Reykjavík gallerists are committed head hunters and there is a strong tendency to be a welcoming head hunter mixed with networking and talent observation. Motivation based on strong personal interest was exceptionally obvious in Arason's response, signalling extensive hunting for famous artists. In contrast, Lárusson appeared extremely hesitating in his feeling-my-way-around approach. The general impression is that the gallerists keep their eyes open, as well as running an open door policy while being assertive about what qualifications and abilities they expected from artists.

Stærk and Wilson emerge as definite head hunters who assertively reserve themselves the right to decide who is exhibited and who is not exhibited, indicating a tough business environment. There are also strong head hunting instincts in Chapelle and Gimm, although they operate a more open door policy than Stærk and Wilson. Gimm has developed a rule of thumb resembling Wigram's notion that only one tenth of art is worth looking at. This sounds harsh and may demand a high level of determination and

assertiveness to practice. It is also evident that no artists are accepted by galleries because they want to be a part of the gallery no matter what.

De Souza, Shearn and Klassnik appear to be the only distinct head hunters among the East End gallerists, building on their own ideas about what is art. As a contrast, Diamandidou and Simpson amalgamate headhunting and a softer approach that can be described as talent hunting. Miro's tactics are to keep her eyes open for talent with a hint of head hunting. Wigram is best placed outside fixed structures of headhunting and open door policy, because of his enthusiasm for quality of work, and artists' knowledge of the medium they are working in. Noraika seems to run an open door policy that resembles a lottery draw for artists in the way that they might or might not be taken into the gallery, although careful consideration sometimes based on recommendation is behind every artist taken into the gallery. This approach seems to be connected to his commitment to the early social interactions and community feeling in the East End. This may also apply to the importance of word of mouth and artists' recommendations, implying networking and artists supporting artist friends, a fact that makes his gallery different. However, what seems to have more impact than forming an in-group is the quality of work above commercial factors, although the latter are of immense importance. Mummery, for example, argues that there are strong indicators of art historical continuity, freedom and word of mouth recommendations of artists where the identity and what the gallery stands for are extremely important, although the personal interest of Mummery is the final criteria in his gallery.

The limited interest in money expressed by some gallerists may be geographical and manifested by bypassing established centres where the big

money traditionally is. It is also evident from Wallner's experience that established gallery areas and patrons of established galleries are not ready for challenging art, not even in Reykjavík. Moving to a low rent area is another factor, suggesting that money is not what the gallerists are after, but in the end they save money by paying low rent in an off-centre area. Initially this indicates an interest in value for money and the worth of art. This, however, does not make the galleries and their selection of art second rate, but may demand a higher level of creativity and business acumen. Besides, when the media discovered a change in the geography of galleries in Copenhagen and the East End, as well as a range of new artists, it fuelled interest and took capitalism in the areas to a new level. It is evident that gallerists claim power over which artists they adopt, preferring to find the artists themselves although some of them operate an open door policy on the surface at least. Their intention is to state that gallerists have the creativity to decide for themselves what works in their installations.

# 8 The art of promotion

## Introduction

The previous chapter looked at how gallerists find artists, identifying three main methods: gallerists prefer to find their own artists, selecting on their own taste and initiative; recommendation through word of mouth; and networking. The least popular way is to adopt artists who bring their portfolios to galleries. In order to take the study further, this chapter intends to identify mechanisms of promotion applied by the gallerists under scrutiny. The activities of commercial galleries are rarely seen in the context of carefully considered production of promotional material. The prevailing focus on money seems to have directed people's thoughts from the detailed creative work that takes place in the gallery, leaving people with the idea that that money rolls in automatically, or that value is created with magic or alchemy, as argued by Duncan and Robertson.<sup>1</sup> Publications such as catalogues, books, advertisements and gallery handouts seem to have been regarded as informing art historical accounts about artists, rather than promotional material. As a consequence, the products of commercial art venues have not been fully explored and contextualised.

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<sup>1</sup> Carol Duncan, 'Who Rules the Art World', in Carol Duncan, *The Aesthetics of Power: Essays in Critical Art History*, p. 174. Duncan argues that the critic is an alchemist who transforms a valueless thing into a valuable asset: 'It is the alchemy, the invisible, seemingly magic wand that converts potential art into the real thing.' Regarding alchemy in the art market, see Robertson, Ian 'The international art market', p. 22.

One way to understand the production taking place in the gallery and development of promotional material is in the concept of boundary objects, developed by Assistant Professor of Information and Computer Science and Sociology, Susan Leigh Star, and Assistant Professor of Philosophy, James R. Griesemer, entitled, 'Institutional Ecology, 'Translations' and Boundary Objects: Amateurs and Professionals in Berkeley's Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, 1907-39'. The study analyses a natural history museum, the acquisition of natural history specimens, and defines the boundary objects thus:

In natural history work, boundary objects are produced when sponsors, theorists and amateurs collaborate to produce representations of nature. Among these objects are specimens, field notes, museums and maps of particular territories. Their boundary nature is reflected by the fact that they are simultaneously concrete and abstract, specific and general, conventionalized and customized. They are often internally heterogeneous.<sup>2</sup>

In the context of commercial galleries, boundary objects relate to their vertical operation in the way that they are produced under the management of galleries and are *representative of art*, for example when patrons, gallerists, theorists, scholars, critics, gallery staff, journalists, invigilators,<sup>3</sup> and visitors (amateurs) collectively or individually produce representations or evidence of the existence of gallerists, art, artists and a gallery and what it stands for.

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<sup>2</sup> Susan Leigh Star and James R. Griesemer, 'Institutional Ecology, 'Translations and Boundary Objects: Amateurs and Professionals in Berkeley's Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, 1907-39', *Social Studies of Science*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (Aug., 1989), p. 408, (pp. 387-420).

<sup>3</sup> Here used in the meaning of front of house staff, exhibition sitter etc.

Although referring to boundary objects as man-made documents, it may also be possible to understand a conversation about a gallery, gallerist, artist and a work of art such as video etc. as intangible boundary objects.

## Copenhagen

Over the years Chapelle has produced a series of catalogues for distribution among visitors to promote his gallery, although he emphasised that their production was restricted by the gallery's budget. Despite this restraining factor, he likes giving things away 'because it makes people happy'.<sup>4</sup> He also revealed that a pleased visitor would remember the gallery or an artist's name and might purchase a work or tell a friend. The ripple effect he is describing is 'a way [...] of selling or you know to, to generate hype or whatever. I use the internet a lot. Almost all my communications are done by emails and the home page as well.'<sup>5</sup> Thus, the concept of hype is instigated by the gallery and integrated in its operation and then developed further with the aid of the media attention he has enjoyed. The attention also seems to be related to Chapelle's promotional stunt – *Do you trust your gallerist?* – a photograph of himself in a suit with a flower decorated balaclava over his head displayed in the gallery's inaugural exhibition after it moved to Valby. Apart from these, he has a wide selection of handouts, leaflets, cards, stickers, lists of works, email invites and site maps that all have an important role for the gallery. This material is intended to generate interest and revenue which is not seen as a negative factor in his gallery.

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<sup>4</sup> Christian Chapelle, 15 April 2003, p. 25.

<sup>5</sup> Chapelle, p. 25.

Stærk is rather minimalist in terms of prioritising the gallery production, but states that the gallery has 'one person working 100% on just getting works into exhibitions, both group exhibitions and solo exhibitions at other galleries and institutions. So, we do a lot of that.'<sup>6</sup> Prioritising this signals the importance of museums in securing the reputation of artists and the gallery. He also operates a website and sends invites via emails. In addition, he produces discovery material such as leaflets, sitemaps and cards, as well as price lists for in-house use, for example for Martin Bigum's exhibition 'The Face of God'.<sup>7</sup> Boundary objects like pricelists are difficult to acquire from gallerists, but a single nod from Stærk to his assistant during the preview secured my access to this precious product, revealing that pricing is a fundamental factor in promoting the main product of galleries, the artists, to what appears to be a selected audience despite the gallery being open to everybody.

Identifying a number of important products, Gimm, like Stærk, prioritises exhibitions in collaboration with museums. As a logical consequence of this, material addressing buyers and employees of art institutions enjoy priority.<sup>8</sup> However, he also makes handouts and leaflets for distribution in the gallery as well as invites and operating a website. He also had plans to collaborate with the established Asbæk Gallery in Bredgade to promote German artists, but this fell through because funding failed. In terms of the Brygge gallery community he favours co-ordinated preview parties.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> *Nils Stærk* 10 April 2003, p 11.

<sup>7</sup> *Nils Stærk Contemporary Art*, Martin Bigum, 'The Face of God', 27 May – 2 July 2005. Desk Copy – Please do not Remove. [Exhibition pricelist].

<sup>8</sup> *Gustav Gimm*, 14 April 2003, p. 24.

<sup>9</sup> *Gimm*, pp. 9-10.

Wallner adds a geographical dimension to the debate because of his strong ambition for art fairs. He takes artists to European Art fairs in order to situate himself, and make the artists aware that Copenhagen is not an art centre: 'Going to the art fairs, introducing [artists] at the art fairs, doing the work I do every day. Keeping a dialogue with the people I work with, artists [...] curators and press and so on.'<sup>10</sup> Simple products become vehicles for a dialogue with collaborating actors. This also highlights the importance of symbiotic communication as more preferable than a one-way feeding of information. Other means of communication are the web page and invitations but

the most important thing is the daily work, keeping a dialogue, keeping people informed. We get [...] loads of requests every single day from people who are interested in the artists, so answering them, giving them the material they need [...].<sup>11</sup>

Encouraging a dialogue is therefore a consistent part of his operation.

Producing gallery shows is a priority in Wilson's gallery and the website made by her husband comes second. Other important productions are art fair shows, meeting museum and gallery people and maintaining a network that she built up whilst working as a museum and gallery employee.<sup>12</sup> As a vehicle for networking the gallery appears immensely vital. And she benefits from contacts established long before the gallery opened. Making these contacts is a key feature of every gallery.

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<sup>10</sup> *Nicolai Wallner*, 10 April 2003, p. 18.

<sup>11</sup> *Wallner*, pp. 18-19.

<sup>12</sup> *Christina Wilson*, 11 April 2003, p. 23.

## London

Miro can be grouped with gallerists who emphasise the importance of producing exhibition opportunities for the gallery artists in museums. She also emphasises advertisements, gallery exhibitions, websites and art fairs and ensures that the artists are presented to curators and that they are included in surveys. In addition, the gallery also produces catalogues and handouts for the 'serious press'.<sup>13</sup> She also emphasises that museums and galleries need each other to validate their production, including the artist. This is a complicated process aimed at securing the innovative cultural role of the gallery as a contact point.

For Wigram, exhibitions and A4 invite cards developed by him to provide convivial information are key components of his operation. Producing art fair shows is another major component, as well as promotional material on CDs for the media. Advertisements are also a vital way to get in touch with potential customers. 'Yeah, that's what people will need [...] information [...] we take this seriously you know.'<sup>14</sup> It is obvious that the more communication channels are kept open, the more people will know about the fundamental product of galleries: the artists.

Describing his marketing as 'vigorous', Noraika mentions the *Frieze* magazine as a preferred venue for advertisements. He signals that marketing of shows is very important in the highly competitive, but still community oriented, East End art market. His strategy demands the production of mailing lists, mail outs, invites, and press releases where the key target group is

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<sup>13</sup> Victoria Miro, 21 May 2003, p. 18-19.

<sup>14</sup> Max Wigram, 22 May 2003, pp. 32-33.

writers who promote the gallery and artists to a wider audience. Other aspects are ensuring listing of shows and that their profile is made as high as possible to get artists into other shows. Noraika seems to operate a carefully considered marketing strategy, although he does not emphasise 'hard sell time but just sort of subtle in a nuanced way',<sup>15</sup> where networking and word of mouth are also important means of communication.

Diamandidou also emphasises advertisements and producing material for *Time Out*. Free catalogues are important for promoting her gallery and she produces invites but, in contrast to other gallerists, she phones people, chasing and nudging them. Diamandidou also avoids targeting critics, because she considers people that she has got to know over the years – some of whom are important in art worlds – more vital,<sup>16</sup> signalling the importance of networking with powerful friends when producing an artist. Obviously, galleries have a leading role in bringing all these various strands together.

Different from other interviewees, only Shearn puts the private view at the top of her list of imperative gallery production. This is a logical step because generally all the important patrons come to the previews. Apart from that, her promotion resembles the promotion in other galleries: invitations, emails, art fairs and exhibitions.<sup>17</sup>

There is, evidentially, very little difference in the production of boundary objects from one gallery to the other. As a contrast to the other galleries, the production of *Mobile Home* is rather minimalist, aimed at gaining editorial coverage. Simpson also mentioned participation in fairs as a meeting point of

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<sup>15</sup> Chris Noraika, 15 May 2003, pp. 30-31.

<sup>16</sup> Angela Diamandidou, 21 May 2003, pp. 42-43.

<sup>17</sup> Christina Shearn, 20 May 2003, p. 6.

key people but because the gallery is on a tight budget they do not advertise.<sup>18</sup> This could signal that Simpson is not as well connected to the insiders of art worlds as Diamandidou.

De Souza mentions invitation cards and press releases as key promotional material in her gallery. She acknowledges the commercialisation of art and that the production of promotional material is in no way different from 'any other [...] commercial, [...] things that businesses get up to in order to [...] show that they're present. That's it.'<sup>19</sup> This clearly signals that art businesses are in no way different from other commercial activities. They produce and deliver goods that are sought after and the potential customers need to be informed about available goods.

*Matt's Gallery* is a stark contrast to de Souza's in terms of approach to business and production. Promotional material is limited by public funding so resources do not go a long way. However, Klassnik identifies

leaflets, advertising, invites and word of mouth. Very simple [...] promotion, not a lot of it [...] when I say we are publicly funded we're not publicly funded to a vast amount of money, it's quite a lot of money, but you know it doesn't go a very long way.<sup>20</sup>

The notion of word of mouth as a promotional tool can be regarded as a form of networking. This minimal production of promotional material may also signal a modest profile of a gallery that only needs to sit and wait because it has secured its place on the cultural map of the East End.

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<sup>18</sup> *Ronnie Simpson* 21 May 2003, p. 16.

<sup>19</sup> *Bea de Souza*, 20 May 2003, p. 5.

<sup>20</sup> *Robin Klassnik*, 20 May 2003, p. 7.

In a way, Mummery's reply sums up the main reasons for producing promotional material in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century gallery when he mentions the importance of mailing lists, art fairs, the website, mail shots but, most importantly, 'talking to people, it's a network'.<sup>21</sup> Within this network, mobilising of the gallery community such as patrons, artists, and curators takes place. This community is activated via boundary objects produced in galleries.

## Reykjavík

Exhibiting in art fairs and in the gallery are, in Jónsdóttir's opinion, the fundamental products of her gallery. She finds it extremely important to inform collectors and the media about the artists and to generate new collectors. Radio and newspapers have contributed to promoting the gallery and artists with reviews, articles and interviews. She also experiments with art consultation, as well as encouraging people in Reykjavik to visit the gallery. In addition, *i8* operates a website that plays an immense promotional role in terms of communicating with interested parties about gallery activities.<sup>22</sup> The gallery has also produced a series of handy and informative catalogues, invites and handouts with information about artists and titles of works.

Because *Gallery 11* was both rented out and artists were invited to exhibit, the renting artists managed their own promotion while Lárusson supervised the production of press announcements, printing of invitations as well as arranging interviews with artists<sup>23</sup> in invited shows.

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<sup>21</sup> Andrew Mummery, 22 May 2003, p. 10.

<sup>22</sup> Edda Jónsdóttir, 20 March 2003, p. 27.

<sup>23</sup> Hannes Lárusson 20 March 2003, pp. 28-29.

Arason emphasises that it is actually the gallerist who promotes the artist and they need to network to succeed. Artists need to 'understand how the system works. [...] everybody who thinks clearly knows that they have to communicate with [...] gallerists who take care of promoting your work.'<sup>24</sup> This is not a one-way communication, because to communicate successfully gallerists need to understand how artists operate. To succeed, gallerists need to be creative in activating the artist. However, in terms of promotional material Arason was very minimalist because he only mentions arranging interviews with artists and generating interest among art students. Interestingly, he also assumes that due to the smallness of the Icelandic scene there is no need for extensive production of boundary objects 'because those who are interested know about these things. That is the way it is'.<sup>25</sup> This approach may have carried more weight in the early 1990s, but in the media saturated contemporary art worlds more needs to be done to attract attention as other gallerists point out.

*Gallery Fold's* printed newsletter '*Listapósturinn*'<sup>26</sup> has served as an invitation to gallery shows and auctions as well as informing readers about artists, various gallery events and discussing art. Other products are news announcements and contacting the media to arrange interviews with exhibiting artists.<sup>27</sup> In recent years, IT has had an increasing role and today invites and the newsletter are electronically transmitted.

Þórisdóttir basically states that it is very difficult to try to promote and produce artists by manipulating the media because of a quota system in the

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<sup>24</sup> Pétur Arason, 21 March 2003, p. 22.

<sup>25</sup> Arason, p. 35.

<sup>26</sup> In English: *The Art Newsletter*

<sup>27</sup> Tryggvi Páll Friðriksson 19 March 2007, pp. 26-27.

media. When she contacts journalists requiring an interview to promote a show they frequently say:

“No, you had an interview last month”, and it does not matter for them whether they are interested in the art or not. And the only chance for artists to have an interview is if they know someone. [...] “Hello, *Gallery Hlemmur*, you cannot take the stage for your own glorification because someone else might be next in the queue. We have only this limited space available per week”. [...] Of course we try to make as much use of the media as possible. However, what I have found the most successful way is when artists make use of what is said about them, because that is the way things work here.<sup>28</sup>

Pórisdóttir is the only gallerist who encourages artists to participate in promotion by using what is said about them without restriction suggesting that artists have a free reign in regards to this. This suggests that a direct contact with the media and even a scandal are the most successful ways to promote artists. However, during visits to the gallery it became evident that the gallery produced handouts, catalogues, invites, and gallery statements as well as the website. In that respect, things work similarly in all the cities but on different spectrums. The quota system seems to be more powerful than art, restricting the gallery as well as opportunities to activate art. It is also evident that hype has not reached the same level as in COLO.

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<sup>28</sup> Þóra Þórisdóttir, 18 March 2003, pp. 32-33.

## Conclusion

The gallerists evidently share promotional mechanisms, such as gallery shows, exhibition opportunities in museums and art fairs, signalling geographical perspectives and cultural routes. The only major exemption from promoting art through fairs is *Fold*, apparently because the art they sell has more local than global appeal. Increased web presence has also gained weight in establishing gallery profiles. Dialogue, as Wallner points out, and informing actors and distributing knowledge through boundary objects is also extremely relevant. The evidence also suggests that the most popular product of commercial galleries throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the exhibition catalogue, is disappearing while IT is gaining increased strength. Chapelle also mentions the generation of hype as one of the most important promotional devices in his gallery. Other major assets are mailing lists, advertisements and patrons that constantly need to be informed.

The majority of informative material is made and distributed through the gallery and the same applies to the artists. Press announcements, invites, mail-outs, leaflets, word of mouth, price lists, handouts with titles of works and captions, are also boundary objects that all the galleries produce to varying degrees. This material is useful because it suggests activation of knowledge to enhance the profiles of art, artists, galleries and gallerists, while also serving as a means to develop collectors and consultation, as Jónsdóttir said. The need to advertise is evident in the replies of Miro, Wigram, Noraika, Diamandidou and Klassnik. To keep the channels of communication open, one of the most important assets of galleries is the mailing list and a private phonebook, as Diamandidou states, this is fundamental in networking with art

world insiders. Every gallery has a preview for invited guests, but only Shearn points out the vitality of the opening night although some of the Brygge gallerists have emphasised the synchronized openings.

Most importantly, though, the creative production of boundary objects discussed here means that gallerists do not sit around waiting for customers to come as Kahnweiler said he did. Instead they go out and get them, which makes them head hunters for both talent and potential clients.

What separates Reykjavík from the two bigger markets is the fact that Jónsdóttir, Þórisdóttir and Arason found it difficult to attract the attention of the media. It also seems that the media is more important for CORE galleries than London and breaks in media coverage may hinder a continuous art debate, while it must be one of their primary tasks to keep the debate alive with big headlines. Trying to arrange interviews with artists in this tough environment has a particular importance in the minds of Lárusson, Arason and Friðriksson, suggesting that interviews have a key role in promoting art in Iceland.

By defining promotional material and the media as fundamental factors of the galleries' visibility, as well as identifying it as boundary objects and the artist as a product of the gallery, this chapter has offered an alternative view of the way gallerists are understood as activators of art. It also seems evident that CORE gallerists need to put more effort into promotion abroad than London gallerists who, on the basis of the size of the city, can afford to wait for their clients.

# 9 The power of the commercial gallery

## Introduction

Chapter eight dealt with the promotion of galleries, art and artists as well discussing how the size of capitals and local interest in art affects sales and marketing of art nationally and abroad. To develop the discussion further, this chapter will examine power in the galleries using the word 'autonomy' to mean 'the power or right of self-government',<sup>1</sup> with an emphasis on power in order to identify who may be in control of galleries.

## Copenhagen

Chapelle argues across a wide spectrum for a mixture of influence and gallery control in the art market, leaving artists out of the equation:

well, there are some very big art galleries [...], maybe they are not controlling the market but they have a lot of influence, and they're so well known and they have so well established artists that, a lot of the museums are very keen on buying and supporting their status in [...] society and in the art community, so yes I think you can control the market.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Chambers Combined Dictionary Thesaurus*, ed. by M. Manser and M. Thomson (Edinburgh: Chambers, 1999), p. 83.

<sup>2</sup> *Christian Chapelle*, 15 April 2003, p. 19.

Through social interaction, museums and galleries give themselves and their employees a positive visibility through the activation of art. But most importantly, he signals advanced networking as an element that can dissolve confrontational situations between actors. The actual autonomy and the ability to sustain it are in the networking skills of gallerists. In this system, complete personal control is hardly ever possible in the gallery setting because of the interactions that constantly take place.

Gimm's take on this aspect is slightly different, because he believes that the art market is

controlled by, [...], all players but perhaps I am being too certain [...] perhaps I think that galleries has [have?] a bit more to say in the end than artists, but I think that artists and galleries and journalists and museums and everyone who, who is connected to the art world [...] is a part of the position.<sup>3</sup>

Gimm may wish that he has the final word about what takes place in the gallery in terms of shows and standards. But, as he also points out, there is a need to acknowledge the power of other actors that both he and the artists may find helpful. And 'if a journalist makes a review and says it [a show] is fantastic or it's extremely bad, [...] that matters, it makes [...] a difference.'<sup>4</sup> The gallerist is self directed in creating his gallery but he is also dependent on people who also claim authority. The main difference here, though, is that the critique is circulated in the public sphere and is more influential than a private

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<sup>3</sup> *Gustav Gimm*, 14 April 2003, pp. 17-18.

<sup>4</sup> *Gimm*, p.18.

collaboration between artist and gallerist. Gimm describes very complicated interactions that are not always in favour of the gallery and its interests.

Stærk, in contrast, limits himself to galleries and artists, and speculates that

it will probably be more the galleries I would say, [...] [on] many occasions it might be the artist also, so it's difficult to give one answer. It's very individual so [...] if you should say like, what is the most typical situation I would probably guess that it would be the galleries.<sup>5</sup>

This suggests uncertainty about the autonomy of the gallery and the gallerist. Stærk is leaning towards the gallery, although signalling that artist and gallerists need to negotiate shifting power positions.

Wallner underlines the complications of power and how vulnerable gallerists and artists are towards patrons, supply, demand and power. Successful artists occupy a unique position, because they provide

the works to the galleries [...] but if you are extremely powerful or [a] rich gallery with a huge number of very successful artists, [...] then you can be very important and control, but [...] I don't know if one can really control the market, because things can change and artists can run from your gallery and, [...] the collectors has [have] the power meaning that they can decide to buy something else tomorrow, and then the

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<sup>5</sup> *Nils Stærk*, 10 April 2003, p. 7.

successful artists are not so successful any more and the galleries work with him the same.<sup>6</sup>

This is the grim reality of art businesses in Wallner's conceptualisation. The foundations are shaky and power positions are constantly changing without regards to networks or a defined centre of power.

Wilson's conceptualisation is simpler, stating that the art market is artists focussed but they and other actors have a free play:

at the moment the market is really controlled by artists. [...] I think it's maybe the first time in [...] history that the market is [...] more controlled by artists than at any other time [...] because [...] it has been professionalised that much, and since there are [...] more actors on the art scene than ever before [...] there's a lot of people who have found out that they can get a financial bite of an artist [...] there's suddenly a lot of levels in the art market which haven't been there before [...] all these freelance whatever people coming in, trying to get [...] a bite of this market. [...] So it's really the artists' market at the moment, because there's so much hype around artists, and [...] gallerists really have to fight [...], to keep the artists [...] because an artist will always be able to get a better offer from another gallery.<sup>7</sup>

As Wallner claims, artists and other actors are constantly on the move and they are motivated to search for better deals. However, if a gallerist and an

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<sup>6</sup> *Nicholai Wallner*, 10 April 2003, p. 14.

<sup>7</sup> *Christina Wilson*, 11 April 2004, p. 14-15.

artist want to collaborate, it is likely that both envisage a growth potential in each other. This, and the increase of freelancers swarming the galleries, may be a development that can only happen on a big scale in advanced markets like COLO. These cultural contractors are important for the promotion and growth of contemporary art worlds, while also complicating the meaning of art worlds. It is also evident that the Copenhagen gallerists are aware of the complications of power and multiple meanings.

## London

Mummery claims that power and autonomy goes beyond gallerists and artists via networking, while galleries are still the most important factors of this intangible structure because they

wield a lot of power [...] cos they are the ones with the right connections to the right curators and the right critics and the right collectors, but at the end of the day without the artists making the product they wouldn't have anything to present, [...] but it can make a difference to an artist which gallery they get adopted by, because the top galleries have the ones with the power and the contacts, so, the artist [...] is the raw material if you like but it's the galleries who put it [...] where it needs to be. This is the way the art business runs at the moment.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Andrew Mummery, 22 May 2003, pp. 8-9.

Powerful gallerists and artists may seek each other out to establish foundations of collaboration. Mummery also identifies a link to the work of art as a fundamental factor in the development of networks. But there is more to it, because Mummery describes a gallerists-artist-critic-curator cluster that contributes to value in the network. In this system, both artist and gallerist benefit from being well connected and both the work and the artist are through creative care transformed from raw material into being a marketable product.

Also in Simpson's opinion the market 'is really mixed [...]. I think there are other elements there as well, it's also collector led [...]. [...] it's museum led, it's led by a whole range of... [...]. Some have lots some have [less power?].'<sup>9</sup> Simpson emphasises leadership roles taken on by various actors rather than definite autonomy, control and networking. In this context, none of the elements have all the power but some of them have some power.

Wigram's initial response to the question was that he thought it was

a partnership. I mean behind every big movement of art, someone's got to recognize it, yeah? So there is critics, museums, everyone plays their part. Critics, museum curators, independent curators, galleries, artists, collectors [...] they all play their part but the biggest part is played by the artists and the galleries and that particular relationship. You know, 95%, 99% of what happens in contemporary art takes place in galleries, not in museums. [...] Galleries take the first risk.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> *Ronnie Simpson*, 21 May 2003, pp. 11-12.

<sup>10</sup> *Max Wigram*, 22 May 2003, pp. 25-26.

The structure of art worlds rests on gallerist artist relationship. There is no real autonomy at work and power is shared. The system is driven by actors orbiting around galleries and the power is spread among them. It is evident that gallerist and artist have a key position, but they cannot manipulate the system more than other participants.

Miro's reply, 'a mixture really [...]',<sup>11</sup> signals that both artist and galleries are autonomous as well as having a say in a mutual dialogue. The consistency that is developing among the gallerists is interesting and Shearn also claimed that the art market is neither artist nor gallery autonomous. Artists and gallerists 'are quite linked with each other. [...] they both need each other and the work [...].'<sup>12</sup> Shearn does not identify other actors in the equation of power, signalling that the operation of the gallery rests on creative collaboration of artists and gallerists.

In her reply, de Souza states that the notion of autonomy of markets and artists is too simplistic 'because the market is very wide and because internationally there are so many different factors involved, including collectors, art fairs, trends set by international magazines, etc., so, it's impossible to say it like that.'<sup>13</sup> As opposed to gallerists who are grounded in a simplified distribution of power, de Souza underlines the complex layers of meanings associated with power by mentioning art fairs, and trend setting on a global level. In this environment, the rapid spreading of conceptual art looks like a natural process. This view caters for activation across geographical territories rather than autonomous status of one above the other.

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<sup>11</sup> *Victoria Miro*, 21 May 2003, p. 15.

<sup>12</sup> *Christine Shearn*, 20 May, 2003, p. 4.

<sup>13</sup> *Bea de Souza*, 20 May 2003, p. 4.

Klassnik is very much on his own, stating that he has ‘no idea, you tell me, you’re writing this thesis. I don’t deal in the market and this is why, I think... I’m the wrong person to be interviewing, I’m not actually market driven [...]. [...] I know nothing about the art market.’<sup>14</sup> In this way, Klassnik argues against his involvement as well as autonomy in the art market. Despite his denial, the gallery is involved in the market and power through the promotion of challenging art.

Decisiveness characterizes Noraika’s statement that ‘the art market is galleries autonomous. That’s not to say one or two artists can’t operate outside the system. They do, [...] and they get commissions and they sell their work but, I would say 99% of the time it’s galleries autonomous, the galleries control what’s going on.’<sup>15</sup> Noraika does not cater for any discussion about distribution of power because it is there and this is what it looks like. He also states that 1% of artists can claim their autonomy and make a living, but this small percentage does not control art worlds because the commercial sector does it. Compared to gallerists’ statements above, it may be necessary to take into account that artists strongly influence 99% of the autonomy of galleries because artists are adopted into galleries via artists networking.

Diamandidou hints at a conflict between the freedom of the artist and the free will of the gallerist. In her conceptualisation, she would like to change the galleries’ autonomy in the market. She is not ‘really happy to tell the artist you should do this because I am going to sell it, I don’t like that because [...] this is anti-commercial for me. I would rather build on something which is true [...] maybe that takes more time or more effort to promote this work and to, to

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<sup>14</sup> *Robin Klassnik*, 20 May 2003, p.4.

<sup>15</sup> *Chris Noraika*, 15 May 2003, p. 24.

show to people that this is good work.’<sup>16</sup> Diamandidou’s operation is anti-commercial, but she is also aware of gallery power but does not agree with it. ‘[...] I think the galleries basically; [...] that is where I don’t agree. Many times the galleries ask the artists to do work which they believe they will sell, and there is very much of that around.’<sup>17</sup> Acting in art worlds has made Diamandidou aware of galleries putting ‘a lot of emphasis to what they will sell, therefore the artist is [...] producing, [...] what the gallery will sell. I think for me [...] this becomes [...] like any other commercial thing, it’s not fine art for me.’<sup>18</sup> She prefers art that she imagines is true rather than any economical benefit based on her autonomy to direct the production of artists. By placing herself outside the actual manipulation practiced by galleries she may be better equipped to criticise the power of galleries, but this approach may also make her powerless and transfer the artist’s autonomy over to the market. The demands of potential buyers and the market is therefore a priority among gallerists that do not share her idealism. Diamandidou shares an anti-capitalist approach with Klassnik, as well as involvement in power, despite renouncing it. The contrast between the autonomy of artist and galleries does not support the networking approach of some of the gallerists, although it is evident that the transgression of autonomous power of galleries and artists enjoys more support than the binary approach. With this in mind I will move on to discuss how the Icelandic gallerists conceptualise power.

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<sup>16</sup> *Angela Diamandidou*, 21 May 2003, pp. 34-35.

<sup>17</sup> *Diamandidou*, p. 34.

<sup>18</sup> *Diamandidou*, p. 35.

## Reykjavík

Like a number of gallerists, Jónsdóttir argues 'that neither has complete control. [...] I think that in such a small country these things operate a bit jointly.'<sup>19</sup> The explanation makes the statement interesting because it signals small nation inferiority. There is a strong tendency to take smallness as a valid factor when explaining a situation in Iceland and using it as an excuse to underline a difference that is, actually, no difference when compared to the other gallerists:

I think it is different from what is customary in other countries because we do not have this big control system. The same applies to the artist because, generally, he is so broke that he is incapable of controlling anything unless he is already well connected. Interestingly, if museums in most countries exhibit an artist it secures the artist's work, it will be bought, but it is not secure here, not even if he has a gallery show. There is no such control here and there is no market control.<sup>20</sup>

Jónsdóttir believes that foreign museums possess more control than the Icelandic ones, making artists, galleries and museums too weak to claim power in the art market. Due to financial difficulties and bad connections, artists lack autonomy and destitute artists do not control anything. By suggesting that artists need to be 'well connected' also implies awareness of

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<sup>19</sup> *Edda Jónsdóttir* 20 March 2003, p. 20.

<sup>20</sup> *Jónsdóttir*, p. 20.

networking as a driving force in art worlds. Jónsdóttir also signals that there is no market autonomy in Iceland because there is no actual market there, due to the Ministry of Culture's price scale. Jónsdóttir is also reluctant to embrace the market, although she claimed above that her purpose was to empower the market for contemporary Icelandic art by creating an opportunity for it to stand alongside foreign art.

According to Friðriksson, the size of a nation is irrelevant and gallerists and artists are powerless because 'it is all about supply and demand',<sup>21</sup> placing the control in the market. His reply also seems logical considering the prosperity of his gallery. Arason is aware of *Fold's* strength because he states that 'there are galleries that are good at selling these things like *Gallery Fold* [...]'.<sup>22</sup> But this may be because 'we are a bit yokel here in Iceland'.<sup>23</sup> Friðriksson also assertively states that 'we can influence what is purchased [...]',<sup>24</sup> claiming considerable power for the gallery. This seems to leave artists and galleries powerless and the same applies to art historians who unsuccessfully claim power in the market, but 'they could have influence on the museums, I do not know about that, [...]'. It is all so peculiar'.<sup>25</sup> Besides, *Fold* is no place for cultural contractors similar to Wilson's description. Friðriksson also exercises autonomy and control by suggesting a change in artists' production, rather than refusing to sell work, by saying 'these pictures have already been put to the test, do you have anything else? This is what we do. We are very loyal in this gallery. We do not betray our friends, you see'.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Tryggvi Páll Friðriksson, 19 March 2003, p. 18.

<sup>22</sup> Pétur Arason 21 March 2003, p. 21.

<sup>23</sup> Arason, p. 21.

<sup>24</sup> Friðriksson, p. 18.

<sup>25</sup> Friðriksson, pp. 18-19.

<sup>26</sup> Friðriksson, pp. 17-18.

This relates to supply and demand, because if the artist supplies customer friendly art she/he will sell.

Þórisdóttir turns the tables in terms of gallery power by stating that the *National Gallery* would rather purchase on the basis of the artist's quality than the profile of a gallery where the work is exhibited. In this way, she signals both the curatorial power and the art market power of art historians. This is the power artists are subject to. She explains the situation by pointing out the smallness of the market and that everybody knows everybody.<sup>27</sup> In this system of museum autonomy a vanguard gallery does not have a name, contrary to what Jónsdóttir believes. Consequently, small ventures like *Gallery Hlemmur* are left without power and freedom to expand and network. Þórisdóttir is aware of this because, when asked whether the art market was artists or galleries autonomous, she replied: 'well, the market',<sup>28</sup> and 'the art market is in *Gallery Fold*',<sup>29</sup> implying that this particular market also controls the movements of her gallery. Þórisdóttir seems to be aware of this, although she sounds ironic. In this sense, Reykjavík is beyond art markets. This may have developed because the market is young, rather than having anything to do with the smallness of the nation or alleged remoteness. Besides, the fact is that Reykjavík is the youngest capital of the three and did not start expanding rapidly until after World War II.

In terms of contemporary art, Lárusson also argues that artists and galleries 'are weak and have always been weak. Today they are weaker than ever before in terms of [...] control. So, I think that the galleries, as a force that shapes things in the Icelandic market, as far as there is a market [...] are

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<sup>27</sup> Þóra Þórisdóttir, 18 March 2003, pp. 19-20.

<sup>28</sup> Þórisdóttir, p.19.

<sup>29</sup> Þórisdóttir, p.19.

extremely weak.<sup>30</sup> Lárusson also argues that public bodies operate a social security for artists.<sup>31</sup> This system, based on fixed prices, signals that artists provide a service to the state and through buying power the state possesses more control than artists and commercial galleries:

Over the last years the average price for a painting is circa IKR 300.000-600.000. The standard price is about IKR 400.000. Sculptures are rarely bought but the price is circa IKR 600.000-1.200.000. [...] the negotiating prices are IKR 700/800.000 to IKR 900.000 and from IKR 900.000 to circa IKR 1.000.000 for huge sculptures. [...] In terms of paintings people might be able to squeeze out IKR 500-600.000 over a period of 1 year and through persuasion and moaning one might be able to earn IKR 200-300.000 every once in a while for a painting or smaller work and then IKR 380-600.000. This is how it goes.<sup>32</sup>

Lárusson also claims that those 'who have been operating within this system demand these prices.'<sup>33</sup> Generally, artists sell directly to official bodies and casual buyers without the intermediation of galleries because they 'are weak under these circumstances'.<sup>34</sup> As a major player in the art market, the state contribution is 'equal to unemployment benefits [...] over a long period of time'.<sup>35</sup> In this state manipulated art market 'monetary value of art is manually

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<sup>30</sup> Hannes Lárusson, 20 March 2003, pp. 21-22.

<sup>31</sup> Lárusson, p. 22.

<sup>32</sup> Lárusson, p. 25-26. The amounts are from 2003.

<sup>33</sup> Lárusson, p. 25.

<sup>34</sup> Lárusson, p. 23.

<sup>35</sup> Lárusson, p. 25.

decided without considering market, quality or anything.’<sup>36</sup> However, as interesting as this is, the art market and determination of monetary value does not appear to be problematic for *Gallery Fold* and the market for contemporary mainstream art and modernist masters. The official system also builds on moaning artists rather than networking of free individuals. However, evidence suggests that market prices are rising above the official scale, for example in terms of the monetary value of paintings by Eggert Pétursson as of 2001.<sup>37</sup>

Arason is also aware of the conflicting nature of autonomy in galleries when stating that the situation ‘is chaotic in the sense that artists are energetic, but they are more like businessmen than artists’,<sup>38</sup> because they usually manage their own exhibitions. Arason is calling for stronger gallery participation and challenging artists to use the gallery system because

everybody who thinks clearly knows that they have to communicate with the party we call gallerists who take care of promoting your work. They are a vital link and good gallerists are equally as rare as good artists. They are unique people, because they risk everything. [...] often they do not have much money and they are generally 100% committed to what they are doing. [...] What is a good gallery? It promotes something new and fuels interest. I mean, there is no problem opening a gallery and you can find artists who are already known, which is probably not a good idea, but a gallery that starts

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<sup>36</sup> Lárusson, p. 24.

<sup>37</sup> See Eggert Pétursson, ‘Verðskrá, Sýning’ [Pricelist. Exhibition] 21.06 – 28.07.01’ and Eggert Pétursson ‘Verðskrá’ [Pricelist], 08.05.03 – 28.06.03. Pricelists provided by *i8*.

<sup>38</sup> Arason, p. 21.

from nothing and creates and promotes new artists deserves an honour. The same applies to the artists, 98% of art is crap like the gallerists. [...] there are incredibly few galleries worth visiting. That is the way it is.<sup>39</sup>

Arason also emphasises the creative role of gallerists by talking about creating artists and thus claiming autonomy for the commercial gallery. Arason also reveals another side of gallery power by claiming that both he and famous artists can bypass gallerists:

I know gallerists and respect them greatly if they are good, and I think they are very important people, but my way was always to have a personal contact with artists. I avoided communicating with the galleries in this case. The general rule is that the artists have a gallery that takes care of their business. But I did it differently and on a personal level with the artists.<sup>40</sup>

Despite crediting gallerists, Arason was not squeamish about bypassing them because gallerists cannot control big names. The artists he exhibited

were so well known and big that the galleries did not control them. They just did what they wanted to do. Everybody wanted to come to Iceland because Iceland was the real attraction [...]. Had the gallery been in Denmark, Amsterdam or Sweden they would not have

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<sup>39</sup> Arason, pp. 22-23.

<sup>40</sup> Arason, p. 9.

bothered. It was just because it was Iceland you see. [...] Donald Judd and Carl Andre had a great interest in the Icelandic Sagas and they had read them. I do not know. It is difficult to say, but countries seem to have their moment and Iceland was at the centre of interest and it was exciting. I cannot fully explain it.<sup>41</sup>

Not only does this suggest a great level of artist's autonomy, but it also signals Arason's autonomy and unorthodox communications. It is also strongly indicated that he ranks artists far above gallerists, however good they may be. Arason boldly questions the autonomic power of gallerist more strongly than their actual work, making him very different from other informants.

## **Conclusion**

There are equally as many ideas about autonomy, power and control in the galleries as there are informants. However, the notion that there is no complete autonomy and power seems to be shared by actors. Gallerists and artists are a nucleus orbited by actors operating symbiotically.

Contradictorily though, Wilson argues that the art market is artist autonomous through their celebrity status, but she also identifies a number of actors who claim a share in the money involved in art businesses. The idea of making a living from art as a cultural contractor also stretches power in various directions. These contractors are interested in art, but even though their work is creative they are not the pioneers who risk everything.

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<sup>41</sup> Arason, pp. 9-10.

Arason is of the opinion that there is a strong current of artist autonomy that is more powerful than that of galleries. This relates to Millard who argues that artists 'have started to demand freedom from the grasp of their company and assert that they, the talented and famous ones, should have the power.'<sup>42</sup> This underpins Arason's argument, as well as displacing the gallery power, whilst also ignoring the creativity of gallerists argued for above.

In terms of autonomy and power, the focus of Icelandic gallerists is local. Þórisdóttir, for example claims that art museums control the market because their sense of value is founded on the quality of artists, rather than gallery profile. In this way, art museums discredit commercial galleries and confirm their own authority.

As a contrast, galleries appear more powerful than artists in advanced markets, as Gimm argues, while also taking into account journalists, critics and museums. In Stærk's opinion however, galleries are more powerful than artists, although he also acknowledges artists' power in the art market.

The evidence strongly suggests that gallerists and artists do not control each other because their interaction is subject to networking and negotiations that eliminates autonomy. Besides, the interviews also suggest a democratic collaboration between gallerists and artists.

The notion of mixed power is shared by the East End gallerists Simpson, Wigram, Miro, Shearn and de Souza, who mention collectors, various markets, art fairs and magazines as collaborators, but a fundamental factor is that artists and gallerists need each other to survive. This suggests that the supposed binary gap between the two is constantly transgressed,

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<sup>42</sup> Rosie Millard, *The tastemakers: U.K. Art Now*, p. 76.

making the artist-gallery relationship a driving force in activating art. In Simpson's opinion, however, it all comes down to leadership roles played out between actors rather than one group or person having infinite control.

Powerful artists and gallerists work together and they need to be well connected. The size of galleries may also suggest a carefully crafted and mutual support. However, these structures are in constant flux despite Noraika's claim that galleries possess more autonomy than artists.

There are also other layers of control such as Friðriksson's notion of market autonomy based on supply and demand that make artists, galleries and gallerists powerless. The notion of market control contrasts Lárusson's notion about official manipulation of prices, a situation that separates Iceland from COLO markets. Lárusson's conceptualisation of state power signifies weak galleries.

The strands of power in the gallery environment are blurred because of differing opinions. However, there is a reason to look at the notion of shared power and networking. Chapelle argues for a mutual power of actors who share reputation. Thus it seems logical that galleries influence the developments of the market rather than controlling it. At the heart of this is a democratic interplay where power is integrated in the networking abilities of gallerists and other actors. However, it needs to be kept in mind that when artists operate as private enterprises the power of the free market and galleries may diminish.

Power is also aided by promotional mechanisms, such as art fairs, giving a gallery that is deprived of power locally a sense of autonomy and power in a global context. The replies also suggest that value is created

through the strength of the galleries, networking and negatively through the official price scale.

The small Reykjavík gallerists articulate the views of the disempowered small nationhood despite the constant tendency to look big in their own eyes and the world's. To break the mould of smallness, *i8* established a visibility through networking with gallerists on a global scale, similar to what Lárusson wanted to do. In addition, there is no evidence of COLO gallerists using size of nation as a way to measure failure and success.

There seems to be a trend to attach autonomy to artists, and art rather than galleries and gallerist. It also seems evident that a strong vision, creativity and power are interconnected and integrated in galleries, suggesting that gallerists who feel powerful are fuelled by strong vision and creativity. The context of all the factors, as well as location, cultural routes, movements of art, creativity and empowerment, produce the networking gallerist.

# 10 Do gallerists determine style and trends?

## Introduction

Chapter nine looked at the complex nature of autonomy, power and control in the gallery environment. Opinions on the topic are divergent, but it is evident that a number of gallerists are transgressing the binary gap that has been created between gallerists and artists. This development is empowered by the distribution of power between actors via creativity, value, geography, and networking. This appears contrary in Reykjavík because there is very little evidence of shared ideas about collaborative power as the art market has been operated by public bodies. There may also be reason to doubt whether these elements can exist in a society where there has not been a market for vanguard art.

In order to develop the discussion further, this chapter will consider whether gallerists contribute to the production of particular styles, art trends, or movements. To achieve this, I will look at what the gallerists have to say about style and trend determination and compare their replies, both within and between cities.

## Copenhagen

In his reply to the question about whether the artists he has adopted produce a particular kind of art, Gimm signalled that it was not an issue for him:

I simply exhibit artists and work with artists [...], who I like. It's, [...] just [as] simple as that and [...] you have to be able to see patterns in what I'm choosing, because it's so subjective, but I can't really put my finger on [it], but I'm sure [...] somebody else could do it.<sup>1</sup>

Gimm indicates style by referring to conceptual and the visual aesthetic content of art, although he gets bored with conceptual art.<sup>2</sup> But his selection is not calculated, which further underpins intuition, creativity and a strong feeling for what works. Hence, his operation is not only about exhibiting artists he likes, but also about maintaining a style that he believes is created subconsciously.

Stærk is very confident in his reply about the artists as part of a movement: 'no, absolutely not. They have many different types. I am not focussed on any specific media or age of artists or anything. [...] there's a pretty wide range of both media and also age of the artists, also nationalities.'<sup>3</sup> Individualism and diversity are Stærk's main arguments. However, he prefers to talk about the gallery's focus on Nordic artists and taking advantage of Scandinavian art.<sup>4</sup> In this aspect, he appears to be true to his cultural roots whilst still creating an international climate in his gallery. Wilson is also assertive but in a different way, stating that the artists she works with 'produce a special kind of art. [...] Because they all [...] except one [...] are very interested in society and [...] what society they are a part of, and that is what

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<sup>1</sup> *Gustav Gimm* 14 April 2003, p. 12.

<sup>2</sup> *Gimm*, p. 22-23.

<sup>3</sup> *Nils Stærk*, 10 April 2003, p. 5.

<sup>4</sup> *Stærk*, p. 10.

they deal with [...], in their works of art. [...] they all have [...] a sense of [...] critique [...].'<sup>5</sup> This signals a strong social and political strand in the gallery's exhibition policy as well as the type of art Wilson offers. This also reflects back to Wilson's own style and taste, which she describes as 'this political aestheticism, that's my style'.<sup>6</sup> It is evident that her taste determines what is exhibited and that she reserves for herself considerable autonomy as well as consistency between type of art and her style.

In Wallner's opinion, the artists he works with do not produce a particular kind of art: '[...] I think the only thing [...] that really puts them together [...], as a group is the fact that I've chosen to work with them, and they have chosen to work with me, that's the only thing.'<sup>7</sup> However, as regards Wallner's conceptualisation of promoting a style and a movement, his reply states his individualism: 'no, no. I mean not except that what I promote is the art that I believe in [...].'<sup>8</sup> The notion of personal taste is strong in the development of what is exhibited, and puts great self directive power in the hands of gallerists, as well as the idea that they do not see art as a particular style. This also reveals a mutual selection of individuals with a collaborative potential at the heart of galleries. The notion of matching partners is, therefore, more fundamental in the gallery than the promotion of style in Wallner's opinion.

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<sup>5</sup> *Christina Wilson*, 11 April 2003, pp. 9-10.

<sup>6</sup> *Wilson*, p. 20.

<sup>7</sup> *Nicolai Wallner*, 10 April 2003, p. 10.

<sup>8</sup> *Wallner*, p. 17.

The artists Chapelle collaborates with do 'not at all'<sup>9</sup> make a particular kind of art. However, when it comes to him and the gallery, he has a clear sense of style:

The gallery definitely has a style. [...] It's me who [is] putting a concept around the artists because the gallery is a brand that is important, [...] well it is as important as the artists' works seen on a [...] commercial scale, not in reality, but on a commercial scale [...].<sup>10</sup>

Chapelle is not reluctant to talk about commercial aspects of his business and the gallery has a stronger character as a brand than his and his artists' style. In this respect, he brings up ideas that strongly relate to other gallerists, as well as giving himself an opportunity to create a context that serves his purpose of selling art.

## London

Diamandidou is open about promoting abstract art as her favoured style: 'yes [...] the style of art I'm promoting is [...] more abstract art, [...] with architectural references, because the work I show [...] has a lot of architectural references. [...] I'm quite selective towards my shows, [...].'<sup>11</sup> The connection between her style and the style of the artists she is working with is quite strong and she signals that abstract artists are a movement of which she is a part.

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<sup>9</sup> *Christian Chapelle*, 15 April 2003, p. 14.

<sup>10</sup> *Chapelle*, p. 23.

<sup>11</sup> *Angela Diamandidou*, 21 May 2003, p. 41.

As regards the question about the type of art produced by the artists and being a part of a movement, Wigram states that is not the case:

no, but one thing they have in common is that [...] they all have a real sense of understanding of the materials or the medium which they work in, so the painters that I represent love paint, the photographers I represent love light, the sculptors I represent love materials, and the film makers I represent understand the camera and use the camera, both critically and formally.<sup>12</sup>

There is a strong feeling of individual achievements in Wigram's statement, rather than the artists being a herd where everybody is building on the same concepts. The same applies to Wigram who does not regard himself as having a style or representing a style or a movement.<sup>13</sup> In this respect, Wigram emphasises that the interaction of understandings between artists, works and gallerist are more fundamental than a style.

In his reply, Klassnik states, rather hostilely, that the artists exhibiting in the gallery do not produce a particular kind of art:

no, [...] because [I mean] artists produce the kind of art that they make. Are you [...] asking me do we tell them what sort of art to make? No [...] we show Tony Bevan a figurative painter, we show Willy Doherty who makes videos and photography, we show Mike

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<sup>12</sup> *Max Wigram*, 22 May 2003, p. 15.

<sup>13</sup> *Wigram*, p. 23.

Nelson who does large scale installations, we show everything from painting to empty rooms.<sup>14</sup>

Klassnik argues that the exhibits are diverse and the gallery is not endorsing a particular type of art.

No it's very, it's very chaotic. The kind of art I show is very chaotic. [...] there is no similarity; the only similarity would be that they were chosen by me and I consider the artist to be both intelligent and have some form of intellectualism behind them. I think they're intelligent artists [...].<sup>15</sup>

It can be argued that Klassnik's style is to exhibit a number of styles, and that he has a monopoly in terms of selecting the style of the gallery, although he does not tell artists what to do. Nevertheless, the notion of style is, as Gimm pointed out above, in the eyes of the beholder, and in the end visitor and potential buyers define what the gallery represents for them. This aspect may be more important than what the gallerist thinks about his venue in terms of style.

Gallerists are reluctant to state firmly that they embrace styles such as conceptual art, minimalism or readymades. As a contrast, Simpson, similar to Gimm, is not disinclined to state that in his gallery 'the work does have [...] a conceptual approach to it'.<sup>16</sup> There is a strong tendency towards claiming that the galleries exhibit a variety of styles and dismissing the notion that they

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<sup>14</sup> *Robin Klassnik* 20 May 2003, p. 3.

<sup>15</sup> *Klassnik*, p. 5.

<sup>16</sup> *Ronnie Simpson*, 21 May 2003, p. 8, 14.

focus on a particular style. This indicates that admitting exhibiting conceptual art may be negative for a gallery's profile. Hence, Simpson comes across as being different from other gallerists in this respect. However, he does not see artists as producing a particular kind of art or that they belong to a movement: 'I don't see them as a part of a movement. I see them as, a kind of [...] a new generation [...] for art.'<sup>17</sup> The concept of a generation is different from other understandings because it rejects the relevance of style and type of art. Gimm and Simpson identify a conceptual strand while, at the same time, playing it down by stating that the art he exhibits is 'quite [...] mixed, particularly the type of work that we show'.<sup>18</sup> Other gallerists are more prominent about focusing on the multiple fibres their galleries are spun from.

Noriaka, on the other hand, argues firmly against the notion that his gallery has a unified style:

I somehow find that you don't necessarily cultivate a house style and I think people rightfully are [...] wary of things like that, cos you end up with something superficial, but [...], there is something cohesive about the identity of the gallery and, and the artists that the gallery works with, so it's a sort of ... coherence.<sup>19</sup>

Noriaka's conceptualisation of superficiality may explain why gallerists are reluctant to acknowledge styles of art. To underline this and free himself, the artists, and the gallery from the styles, he comes up with 'cohesion'. Thus, the artists appear to have individual freedom to produce work in whatever style

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<sup>17</sup> *Simpson*, p. 8.

<sup>18</sup> *Simpson*, p. 8.

<sup>19</sup> *Chris Noriaka*, 15 May 2003, pp. 16-17.

they fancy, as long as there is consistency in their work. This is explained in Noriaka's reply to the question about whether he has a style and whether he is representing a particular style:

I wouldn't call it a style. I'd say we represent artists that think in a similar way, have similar ideas about work, about what is good work, and what is bad work. [...] who have a kind of, a well defined critical faculty towards contemporary art, but [...] we don't look for a style.<sup>20</sup>

Thus, style equals cohesion in the cultural context of Noriaka's gallery. In this way, he goes beyond styles both as regards himself and the artists, suggesting a carefully thought out scholarly and theoretical approach to the question, as well as implying that he has thought carefully about this side of the business.

Shearn responding both to the question about the kind of art made by the artists, and artists as part of a movement, is more direct: 'no, [...] I don't really feel they're part of a movement in any way',<sup>21</sup> suggesting a high level of individualism in the gallery. However, in terms of Shearn's own promotion of style, she says: 'yeah, [...] there is a link in that a type of art, it's not like a, a style [...].'<sup>22</sup> Shearn may be signalling that she has a style linked to the type of art she promotes, but she might think that acknowledging a particular style could be bad for business in an economy that praises variety in the form of the same product under many names.

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<sup>20</sup> Noriaka, p. 29.

<sup>21</sup> Christine Shearn, 20 May 2003, p.3.

<sup>22</sup> Shearn, p.5.

Miro is very precise making links to the artists stating that she goes beyond style:

I just take on artists that [...] I personally find very special in some way and it doesn't matter whether they are painters or photographers, sculptors, installation, video... [...] if I feel they have something which is really unique then that, that's what interests me to know it's not like a school or something.<sup>23</sup>

However, Miro reveals her own style when saying 'I try to promote art which I think is of a very special calibre, a very special quality, and you know that's the only art that I want to, to promote, but it has to be contemporary.'<sup>24</sup> Thus, the style of both Miro and the artists she works with is marked by mutual distinctiveness.

Nothing in de Souza's reply hints at the notion that the artists she works with are making a particular type of art. They are put together in the gallery and 'they make sense in the line up of this gallery, for what we are trying to achieve, but the agendas could also be different. I think if the work is good the artists will survive in any other context [...].'<sup>25</sup> The emphasis is on the work, rather than the style of the artists, and because of their quality their credibility remains. However, as regards the style of de Souza and her associates she, like Gimm and Simpson, states 'we concentrate on conceptual art [...]'.<sup>26</sup> This anchors her style and the style of the artists without

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<sup>23</sup> *Victoria Miro*, 21 May 2003, p. 10.

<sup>24</sup> *Miro*, p. 17.

<sup>25</sup> *Bea de Souza*, 20 May 2003, p. 5.

<sup>26</sup> *de Souza*, p. 3.

any attempts to shroud the gallery with ideas about multiple styles. In this aspect she gets right to the point.

In relation to artists and movements, Mummery states assertively that 'there's no style that's particularly associated with this gallery.'<sup>27</sup> This is further underlined in his reply to the question about his style and whether the gallery is promoting a certain style:

no [...] my main interest is in [...] painting and issues to do with painting and the substance of paint itself. [...] there's no particular style within that. I show figurative artist, abstract painters, [...] I mean photography, I'm interested in themes relating to history, landscape and architecture but that's quite a broad subject anyway, [...] there is no set style<sup>28</sup>.

Mummery and Diamandidou are connected through their interest in abstract art and architecture but, in contrast, Mummery identifies a variety of styles. He signals that the bigger the spectrum of the works, the more layers of meanings and approaches emerge, but his interests direct the gallery's style.

## Reykjavík

The interviews have revealed that gallerists reject association with styles. In addition, there is no evidence to suggest geographical determination of styles instead there is an emphasis on adopting artists on the basis of presenting an

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<sup>27</sup> *Andrew Mummery*, 22 May 2003, p. 6.

<sup>28</sup> *Mummery*, p. 10.

international profile rather than a stylish one. To develop the discussion further, this section will look at stylish issues in relation to Reykjavík gallerists.

Arason's reply to the question about the kind of art exhibited in the gallery starts by stating the particularity of art exhibited in the gallery:

[...] we exhibited a variety of things [...]. There was a lot happening here, shows that I would call exhibitions of paintings; conceptual art, minimalism. I would not talk about a particular direction so to speak. We exhibited what we thought was good and interesting.<sup>29</sup>

Based on the type of art in Arason's collection, there is no doubt that his favoured styles are conceptual art, land art and minimalism by artists such as Donald Judd, Carl Andre, Dan Flavin, Hamish Fulton, Richard Long, Lawrence Weiner and On Kawara.<sup>30</sup> Arason is, in the context of the other gallerists, the only one who clearly states what artists he was after, although he does not want to associate himself with a particular style.

Friðriksson acknowledges style pointing out that it 'depends very much on where they graduated from.'<sup>31</sup> However, this may not tell the whole story because painters like the Icelandic Eggert Pétursson who graduated from the Department of New Media at the Reykjavík Art College in times when the director was opposed to conceptual art, has mixed conceptual art and painting and blurred the dualism between the two.

Regarding Friðriksson and the gallery promoting a particular style he states that:

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<sup>29</sup> *Pétur Arason*, 21 March 2003, p. 11.

<sup>30</sup> *Arason*, pp. 2-3.

<sup>31</sup> *Tryggvi Páll Friðriksson*, 19 March 2003, p. 11.

some other people might see it that way, but I cannot, but on the other hand, as I have said, we are not into conceptual art. We are not! It is not more complicated than that. We have concentrated on paintings, sculptures and such things. It is a bit difficult to define it, but we are not into happenings and such things.<sup>32</sup>

The style of exhibited art is diverse but restricted, making Friðriksson the only gallerist who openly renounces conceptual art while the majority leaves it unmentioned. Thus, Friðriksson presents himself as traditional favouring abstract and mainstream art, which are the foundations of the gallery's success. This is perfectly logical because there is a vast customer and collector base for galleries with this focus. Compared to other galleries in this selection who promote more challenging art, it can be questioned whether *Fold* belongs to this study. To that, I would argue that the gallery is an important contrast to conceptual art styles in all the capitals. Besides, it is frequently mentioned as the home of the Icelandic art market and the only visible evidence of a market and has a lasting reputation in the Icelandic market.

Lárusson's conceptualisation of style is related to a rapidly increasing interest in postmodernism in Iceland and the exhaustion of modernism when he opened his gallery in 1989.

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<sup>32</sup> Friðriksson, p. 25.

Icelandic art is shaped by an ideology that came into being at the end of the 1960s. It is avant-garde that comes into being when modernism is developing through minimalism and losing its strength and new ideas are emerging. [...] This is the point where I thought the gallery fitted in and could take on things that were under conscious revision on post modern grounds.<sup>33</sup>

This broad overview of the developments in progressive art in Iceland signals a post modern style gallery. Therefore, when he selected artists, he may have tried to secure an aura of post modern movement. Although not a particular style in art, post modernism has had an impact on how art has developed since the 1980s via Cindy Sherman, Sigmar Polke, Richard Wilson and Hirst.<sup>34</sup> Lárusson puts himself, the gallery, and Icelandic art in an international context that was new and for him, an equivalent of a movement seems to have been born. This philosophical approach separates Lárusson from other galleries in this study. Despite the stylish linked movement in Lárusson's discussion, he states that he 'did not do much in the direction at that time.'<sup>35</sup>

Jónsdóttir groups herself with gallerists who argue that their galleries do not promote a particular style of art by stating that that the gallery is not 'directly promoting a particular type or movement in art. Generally people think it is rather minimalist, but this comes from people with a narrow point of view. I personally think the art we have exhibited has been quite diverse.'<sup>36</sup> To underline the diversity, she states that the gallery collaborates with the

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<sup>33</sup> Hannes Lárusson, 20 March 2003, p. 15.

<sup>34</sup> David Hopkins, *After Modern Art 1945-2000*, Oxford History of Art (Oxford et al: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 197-231.

<sup>35</sup> Lárusson, p. 37.

<sup>36</sup> Edda Jónsdóttir, 20 March 2003, pp. 14-15.

‘Gjörningaklúbburinn’ in order to develop the group.<sup>37</sup> She concludes by stating that the artists are ‘not producing a particular kind of art.’<sup>38</sup> Classifying *ið* as a minimalist gallery is not accurate, although minimalism has its place in the gallery’s repertoire, besides the meaning of style is also created by visitors and actors of art worlds. Indeed, in terms of personal style, Jónsdóttir describes herself as intuitive, ‘sincere and provincial’.<sup>39</sup> This situates her among gallerists who are reluctant to use words like conceptual art to profile their operation.

*Gallery Hlemmur* focussed on ‘fine art’,<sup>40</sup> as Þórisdóttir stated in relation to style in her gallery, but she

consciously tried not to promote one movement or style like installations, video, performances and such like. More traditional methods are also accepted. We have tried to exhibit contemporary art and if someone is painting it is not enough for him or her to just try to make some sort of pictures, she/he has to be trying to move things on at least in the context of him/her self.<sup>41</sup>

Þórisdóttir emphasises that diversity is at the heart of her action. She also looks for consistency like Noraika, intelligence and evidence of development, factors that other gallerists do not seem to emphasise very strongly. She signals the promotion of a particular type of art by identifying what she does not exhibit: ‘if we say that contemporary art is a particular type... Not in the

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<sup>37</sup> Jónsdóttir, p. 14. [‘Gjörningaklúbburinn’ in English is ‘The Icelandic Love Corporation’.]

<sup>38</sup> Jónsdóttir, p. 14.

<sup>39</sup> Jónsdóttir, p. 26.

<sup>40</sup> Þóra Þórisdóttir, 18 March 2003, p. 13

<sup>41</sup> Þórisdóttir, pp. 13-14.

context of medium... [...] I do not exhibit photographs, design or such because I concentrate on fine art.’<sup>42</sup> Þórisdóttir also indicates the existence of movements and styles in Icelandic art worlds by maintaining that different movements like an installation style movement or a video style movement have a place in the exhibition programme. Þórisdóttir’s own style also overlaps with the art she promotes and her notion of movement: ‘contemporary art produced by the young sector. [...] we are trying to place ourselves between being commercial and experimental which is some sort of an outcome of the Icelandic reality.’<sup>43</sup> In this way, style could resemble aims. She also associates ‘being commercial and experimental’ with an Icelandic reality. That is not necessarily the case, because the realities of Icelandic art worlds are more complex than the binaries commercial – experimental suggest. Besides, for comparison, Klassnik is both commercial and experimental and both East End and Copenhagen galleries seem to create a healthy revenue by selling high profile experimental art that is a sought after commodity in European art worlds. It is as if Icelandic gallerists have developed a blind spot towards the commercial potential of experimental art. This negative focus may, in the end, work as a drawback on the development of new art and commercial galleries.

## Conclusion

There seems to be a strong movement towards claiming not to exhibit a particular style, according to de Souza, Wigram, Klassnik, Noriaka, Miro, Shearn, Mummery, Arason, Jónsdóttir, Friðriksson, Stærk and Wallner. It

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<sup>42</sup> Þórisdóttir, p. 13.

<sup>43</sup> Þórisdóttir, p. 37.

also seems evident that gallerists do not think that artists are producing a particular kind of art. They appear to be guided by the notion that their selection gives the impression of diversity, rather than them endorsing a particular style. It is also evident that appreciation of style is geographically determined both locally and globally. However, Mummery offers a slightly different take on the subject because his reply suggests that his style is to exhibit paintings. Based on this information, notions of style are layered both as regards gallerists and artistic production. In the end, they all exhibit a particular type of art despite continuously claiming not to do so.

A number of gallerists are very assertive about style. Wilson, for example, favours a political style, Diamandidou emphasises abstract style, Lárusson signals a philosophical approach and Þórisdóttir stressed her appreciation of a fine art style and a variety of styles exhibited in her gallery. Chapelle, on the other hand, highlights brand above style. Therefore, it seems apparent that gallerists can determine styles for their own galleries, whilst also giving the impression that their selection is wide and diverse.

One of the most interesting findings is that gallerists avoid associating their businesses with conceptual art with a few exceptions; Simpson, Gimm and de Souza.

The notion about the personal taste of gallerists is strong in contemporary art worlds in terms of selecting styles of art to exhibit. However, this may lead to misplacement as visitors may not have the same opinion as the gallerists about the art on display. In that respect, style is in the eye of the beholder. This does not necessarily point towards narrow mindedness, but could suggest that visitors are capable of defining styles in

terms of their own needs. It is also evident that gallerists provide styles that their customers can select from. However, the overall implication is that gallerists deny style while they all implicitly act to develop it.

# 11 Do gallerists belong to or produce art movements?

## Introduction

In Chapter 10, I looked at the question of style in relation to gallerists and their galleries. The evidence suggests that the gallerists prefer to see themselves as promoting a number of styles to give the impression of open-mindedness. To expand on the previous chapter, I will now discuss to what extent gallerists belong to and produce art movements to activate art.

## Copenhagen

Gallerist Chapelle argues that he does not contribute to creating movements, because artists he collaborates with are Nordic, Surinamese, and German. Therefore, 'it would be very difficult to say that, that they're a part of the same movement, of the same focus.'<sup>1</sup> Thus, artists bring their origins into the context of the gallery contributing to its global existence with a local/national focus. Furthermore, Chapelle does not regard himself and the gallery as parts of movements: 'not really, [...] no',<sup>2</sup> he said implying a uniformity between him and the artists.

Gimm is of a similar opinion and does not see himself and the gallery as producers of movements: 'no not a movement, I wouldn't say that'.<sup>3</sup> He also pointed out that even though the artists were about his age, he 'wouldn't

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<sup>1</sup> *Christian Chapelle* 15 April 2003, p. 15.

<sup>2</sup> *Chapelle*, p. 13.

<sup>3</sup> *Gustav Gimm* 14 April 2003, p. 10.

make that [...] an issue of movement, I wouldn't say that. [...] I think [...] it's basically about who I am and, [...] the reason why I choose to work with whatever kind of artists I choose to work with.'<sup>4</sup> Gimm assertively confirms his individuality, and that his diverse selection is a fundamental part of his operation. He also points out that artists cannot be identified as a movement because of how different they are from each other.<sup>5</sup> Hence, he cannot produce movements, although he creates artists that he likes, hoping that other people will also like them. This underlines that a variety of styles is a vital part of galleries at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Stærk simply says 'no',<sup>6</sup> when asked whether he regards himself and the gallery as a part of a movement. He also applies the expression 'not really', indicating that artists with whom he is working might be a part of a loosely connected movement, although individualism weighs more than a movement in Stærk's reply: 'no not really [...] they're so individual, they're very, [...] different, [...] you can't say that I have a [stereotype] gallery [...], [...] I'm not a photography gallery, I'm not like a conceptualist gallery or something, I, [...] have very mixed profile'.<sup>7</sup> This suggests a strong independence from movements and that he does not want to reveal a definite direction as it might jeopardise a profile that seems to be direct, but pointing in more than one direction.

Wilson does not regard herself, the gallery and her artists as part of a movement, although the artists 'produce a special kind of art'.<sup>8</sup> It is also evident from her reply that the artists she collaborates with do not belong to a

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<sup>4</sup> *Gimm*, pp. 10-11.

<sup>5</sup> *Gimm*, p. 12.

<sup>6</sup> *Nils Stærk* 10 April 2003, p. 4.

<sup>7</sup> *Stærk*, p. 5.

<sup>8</sup> *Christina Wilson* 11 April 2003, p. 9.

movement 'because I really see them as really individual, [...] it's not a special movement. It's their job.'<sup>9</sup> However, the artists are 'a part [...] of the contemporary art movement if you can say that contemporary art is a movement, [...].'<sup>10</sup> This appears contradictory, but art as global phenomena goes far beyond the spatial and geographical limitations of a gallery. The answer may lay in the international approach practiced by her and the artists, who are international players, as 'the artists that I am showing [...] are international in their attitude [...].'<sup>11</sup> Because of this commonality, they can be regarded as a global movement of individual artists. Contemporary artists have the freedom to move from one medium to the other, videos, installations and paintings and they even change their style from one show to the other. This constant flux is then likely to affect the consistency of media, although their basic subject may remain the same.

Wallner argues that he and the gallery do not belong to a movement because it is more like an institution

that has been quite important for the communication and dialogue of art since 1994 [...] and I see my gallery as a reference for loads of people internationally, that know the gallery and because we were the first, [...] young gallery to go abroad and to bring artists in an international [context?], [...] because [...] my older colleagues had not really in a very ambitious way [...] tried to promote the artist internationally, they had not really had so much interest in that.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> *Wilson*, p. 10.

<sup>10</sup> *Wilson*, p. 10.

<sup>11</sup> *Wilson*, p. 8.

<sup>12</sup> *Nicolai Wallner*, 10 April 2003, p. 9.

Wallner firmly claims creativity, individualism and pioneering spirit for himself and the gallery, confronting stagnation in a locally-centred art market. He further argues that the gallery artists do not belong to a movement and that a mutual selection of partners takes the gallery beyond movements into a realm of shared power that builds on mutual interests, with shared taste for the same style of art being a fundamental factor in their collaboration: 'I think the only thing [...] that really puts them together [...] as a group is the fact that I've chosen to work with them, and they have chosen to work with me, that's the only thing.'<sup>13</sup> In that aspect, the notion of movements is non-existent in Wallner's gallery, suggesting a fundamental change in the approach of gallerists from the times when artists like Impressionists were seen as a movement.

## London

Diamandidou's reply argues for artists' movements by claiming that they exist, but she is not concerned about them as long as they have an architectural reference suitable for her venture:

not really, no, [...]. [...] I like abstract work so I have showed a lot of abstract work. [...] but, I wouldn't say that I was trying [...] to show something which is a particular movement of artists, [...]. Because [...] I don't mind if it's this movement or that movement [...] because

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<sup>13</sup> Wallner, p. 10.

[...] it has to work with the space, and this is where I put most emphasis.<sup>14</sup>

She validates the concept of movements in art, although she is not concerned about them. It is also evident that she exhibits abstract art that suits her personal taste; *ergo* she, the artists and her exhibition spaces could belong to an architecture-focussed movement. However, Diamandidou prioritises on the basis of space rather than movements and even though movements exist, they have nothing to do with her activities. Besides, since she is the only gallerist running a gallery that is subject to intangibility and tangibility it can hardly be regarded as a part of a movement of galleries promoting art in a particular architectural context, as she does. Consequently, the notion of variety of art does not seem to apply to Diamandidou.

Wigram, on the other hand, states that he and his gallery do not belong to a movement and the same applies to artists he collaborates with.<sup>15</sup> This is further underpinned in a reply to a question about relations to other galleries:

There's different types of galleries, and everyone has their own market, [...] it's just very important as a gallery to be who you are, to have your own identity, to not worry about what other people do, but just be who you are as a gallery and to develop [...] your own personality, [...] and do things your own way, you know, I mean, inasmuch as you can.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Angela Diamandidou, 21 May 2003, p. 27.

<sup>15</sup> Max Wigram 22 May 2005, p. 19.

<sup>16</sup> Wigram, p. 17.

He emphasises personal style and independence as the core of every gallery and that different types of galleries promote various types of art without regards to movements of any sort. In that respect, Wigram seems to think in a similar way to a number of gallerists. Based on this, art is activated via unique individual positions and an interaction between gallerists, galleries and artists rather than movements.

Klassnik also emphasizes this, by stating that artists he exhibits are 'not part of any movement [...] they're all individual artists.'<sup>17</sup> Drawing on Klassnik's ideas about the independence of artists, and that neither he nor the artists endorse a collective style, it is evident that he is neither part of a movement nor is he involved in producing any. In that aspect, there is no difference between a commercial gallery and his undertaking.

In his reply, Simpson states that he does not see artists 'specifically as a specific movement',<sup>18</sup> and regards himself and the gallery as a young contribution to the East End. The gallery belongs to a continuing gallery tradition rather than being a part of a movement of concept-orientated galleries in the vicinity.<sup>19</sup> This indicates that independence and variety in style seem to create a tighter connection between the galleries than being young, East End and not belonging to an art movement. Based on this, it is logical to claim that both Simpson and the gallery do not belong to movements within art worlds.

Contrary to Simpson, Noraika argues for a national context of young London-based artists who go beyond any formation of a movement:

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<sup>17</sup> *Robin Klassnik*, 20 May 2003, p.3.

<sup>18</sup> *Ronnie Simpson* 21 May 2003, p. 8.

<sup>19</sup> *Simpson*, p. 6.

I only really see it as part of a wider context of contemporary art in the UK today and predominantly we show London based youngish contemporary artists, so only from that point of view, [...] I wouldn't really [...] position ourselves within any kind of [...] smaller categorisation, it's just showing predominantly UK-based contemporary artists.<sup>20</sup>

There is more nationalism in the statement than a neighbourhood feeling from the early days of YBAs. He also contests the notion of an artist movement and that the artists produce a particular type of art.

[...] it's better for everyone involved that the stable of artists is more than some of [the sum of?] its parts, and I think that's, in a sense [...] the kind of the function of a gallery [...] and generally I find that the artists that we work with have a shared sort of sensibility, [...].<sup>21</sup>

Despite a national focus, the spirit of the gallery as a community emerging from this is stronger than a movement according to Noraika. This intimate community is the driving force of the gallery and the artists he is working with. And this group is energized from within. This may distance him and the artists from the individualism and independence the other gallerists are vigorously praising. The artists may, therefore, be under a considerable influence from each other making them collectively important instead of being individually important. Both Noraika and the gallery belong to this expanded community

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<sup>20</sup> *Chris Noraika* 15 May 2003, p. 13.

<sup>21</sup> *Noraika*, p. 16.

context, rather than any movements as such. This is both a community and a network with various links to society that give the gallery a social resonance<sup>22</sup> that goes beyond other similar operations.

Christine Shearn claims that the artists she collaborates with are not '[...] part of a movement in any way',<sup>23</sup> and she does not regard herself and the gallery as parts of movements: 'no not really I'm afraid, no'.<sup>24</sup> The statements assertively declare the independence of the gallery without any speculation.

Miro thinks along similar lines to Noraika and Simpson, but in a more international context:

I see the gallery as, [...] a London gallery [...] but [...] in [...] the last ten years or so, London's been very interesting and very buoyant and I feel that the gallery has been part of that kind of, explosion in contemporary art, just part of it.<sup>25</sup>

The feeling of participating in something big seems to be of greater importance to Miro than movements. In that respect, the notions of explosion and participation seem to be more important to her than individual experiences. This is a social formation that has developed over a decade and being situated in a city of international stature makes the gallery international

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<sup>22</sup> Simon Knell, 'Museums, Fossils and Revolution', Inaugural Lecture at the University of Leicester, 13 June 2006. The ideas presented here are inspired from S. Knell's lecture. The lecture has been published, see Simon J. Knell, 'Museums, fossils and the cultural revolution of science: mapping change in the politics of knowledge in early nineteenth-century Britain' in *Museum Revolutions: How museums change and are changed*, ed. by S. J. Knell, S. Macleod and S. Watson (London and New York: Routledge, 2007, pp. 28-47.

<sup>23</sup> *Christina Shearn* 20 May 2003, p. 3.

<sup>24</sup> *Shearn*, p. 2.

<sup>25</sup> *Victoria Miro* 21 May 2003, p. 8.

without really having to struggle, although it attends art fairs as a part of the international scene.<sup>26</sup> But attending fairs is also like being in London, because everybody goes there. By attending fairs, Miro stresses the importance of an international network. Having stated that she and the gallery do not belong to a movement, it is logical for Miro to say about artists and movements: 'no I don't, I don't really see them as part... of a movement at all [...] it's not like a school or something',<sup>27</sup> a statement that further underlines independence and individualism.

De Souza states that she does not 'see the artists as part of a movement',<sup>28</sup> but similar to Noraika her conceptualisation about artists evolves around the gallery: 'they are put together here, they make sense in the line up of this gallery [...]'.<sup>29</sup> Comparable to other replies, she does not feel that artists, gallerists or galleries belong to groups, but they and their art can make sense in more than one context and go beyond both good and bad art, as Gell argues above. However, as regards herself and the gallery as parts of a movement, she answers 'no'.<sup>30</sup>

Mummery does not see the artists he is working with as a movement or producers of a particular type of art. Furthermore, the explanation of his ideas about existing classifying systems signals, amongst other things, that they are based on the idea that geographical distance works against the formation of movements:

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<sup>26</sup> *Miro*, p. 16. Both Miro and Wallner participated in Art Basel from 14 – 18 June 2006, see Art Basel <http://www.artbasel.com/ca/n/elg> (14/06/2006). Christina Wilson and *Mogadishni*, on the other hand, participated in a subsection of Art Basel LISTE 06: the young art fair in Basel, designed for young galleries, see, Liste <http://www.liste.ch/exhibitors/default.shtm#> (14/06/2006).

<sup>27</sup> *Miro*, p. 10.

<sup>28</sup> *Bea de Souza* 20 May 2003, p. 3.

<sup>29</sup> *De Souza*, p. 3.

<sup>30</sup> *De Souza*, p. 2.

[...] as I said before, my main interest is in painting and in issues relating to painting, so most of the gallery artists use paint, but I wouldn't necessarily say they were all part of the same movement in the sense there is no, [...] there's no style that's particularly associated with this gallery. I mean, in the sense that they're a part of a movement, [...] the fact that they're working in London and or in Glasgow at a particular time. I think movements are something that history [...] creates rather than [it being?] is particularly, [...] obvious at the time. I mean, critics and curators like putting labels on things and putting people into groups which aren't, [...] necessarily the case. I mean [...] the group now known as the YBAs is actually a very diverse group of artists, they just happened to be working around the same [...] time and are associated together but not by themselves, more by critics and curators, and they all knew each other, and all my artists know each other but that doesn't mean to say they would necessarily see themselves as part of the movement.<sup>31</sup>

Whether Mummery and his gallery belong to movements is unclear, but the geographical twist also tells us that he and his gallery belong to the East End gallerists and galleries who have rapidly increased 'opportunities for people to exhibit art and see contemporary art now, so I'm part of that'.<sup>32</sup> This approach and the social implications place Mummery thoroughly away from other

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<sup>31</sup> *Andrew Mummery* 22 May 2003, p. 6.

<sup>32</sup> *Mummery*, p. 4.

gallerists and illustrates the fact that they contribute to increasing the opportunities of artists and art lovers.

Drawing on Mummery, what is needed to create a movement and its related value are: a gallery promoting a particular style, geographical area, critics and curators to classify and contextualise, uniformity, and shared aims. None of these factors seem to be fully operating because individual experiences count for more than manifestations.

## Reykjavík

As regards Arason, he does not define himself and the gallery on the basis of belonging to movements: 'no, not particularly',<sup>33</sup> and in addition he does not see any direct evidence of movements among the artists either. Artists are instigators of creativity rather than being cogwheels in artists' movements: 'I mean, if we talk about art movements there are always originators, right? We exhibited a number of originators working in a number of isms.'<sup>34</sup> Arason is arguing that the artists are pioneering individuals capable of coming up with new ideas. As such, they resemble gallerists. They all operate as individuals, each working from their own perspective, rather than them being a unified task force. All the artists who exhibited in Arason's gallery were world famous so, in that sense, he did not shape them or promote them as a movement.

The notion of being contemporaneous also applies to Friðriksson who, by shaking his head, implies that he does not see himself and the gallery as a part of a movement, and the same applies to the artists who sell their work through the gallery. He also points out that, because Icelandic artists go

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<sup>33</sup> *Pétur Arason* 21 March 2003, p. 10.

<sup>34</sup> *Arason*, p. 13.

abroad for degree studies; art in Iceland is more varied than in Denmark, *ergo* there are no overarching movements or schools in Iceland.<sup>35</sup> This is another sign of strong individualism that is apparent among other gallerists, based on the notion that they are activating a number of styles.

It is interesting to notice how little difference there is between an openly commercial Reykjavík gallery like *Fold, Mogadishni*, and the majority of East End galleries, and galleries whose owners are reluctant to accept commercial aspects of initiatives. It also shows that conceptual art, minimalism and other art forms are products in a market in the same manner as what is, sarcastically, termed as kitsch or applied arts.

Lárusson is of the opinion that the gallery indirectly belonged to a movement: 'yes, it was part of an effort to make contemporary art visible to some extent and to make it a natural part of daily life. The concept was to pull these things up from the grass roots.'<sup>36</sup> However, it is not evident that the artists who exhibited in the gallery formed or belonged to a movement and the same applies to the gallery. Nevertheless, the notion of movement is visible from another perspective later in the interview, when Lárusson states that it might be possible to promote a particular movement, but he 'did not do much in that direction at that time'.<sup>37</sup> Lárusson contributed to debate about movements and analysed Icelandic art worlds in a broad context.<sup>38</sup>

Jónsdóttir seems to prefer the concept 'gallery world' to avoid associating herself and the gallery with movements: 'I do not know if I could... Of course I see myself and the gallery as a part of the gallery world and it is

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<sup>35</sup> Tryggvi Páll Friðriksson 19 March 2003, pp. 9, 13.

<sup>36</sup> Hannes Lárusson 20 March 2003, p. 11.

<sup>37</sup> Lárusson, p. 37. He is referring to the time when the gallery was active.

<sup>38</sup> Lárusson, pp. 37-41.

not a big part of the world.'<sup>39</sup> The 'gallery world' is an umbrella term without any notion of shades of meanings such as mainstream galleries, kitsch and photography that have required status and place above as candidates for movements. However, when talking about *Art Basel* she may see herself and the gallery as being close to the top of the range of contemporary galleries.<sup>40</sup> It is apparent, though, that the galleries are not a part of a movement that may be out there in the midst of all the individualism that seems to be a theme in the art debate. Furthermore, the gallery is not directly promoting an art movement.<sup>41</sup> Building on the notion of diversity, Jónsdóttir is not producing a movement.<sup>42</sup> The gallery belongs to a strong group associated with art while participating in *Art Basel*, but apart from that its place seems to have been quite vague at the time of the interview. Furthermore, her arguments suggest that the gallery belongs to a cluster of meaningful galleries rather than a movement.

Pórisdóttir's response to the question about herself and the gallery as a part of a movement was brief but hesitant: 'at this moment I think it is'.<sup>43</sup> She also mentions that a new generation of artists is taking over and the general rule in Iceland is that older generations of artists are pushed to the side and new age groups take over without there being movements. This process does not seem to have had the strength to change the scene in terms of whether artists and galleries should grow old together, or a new group is taken into the gallery on a regular basis.<sup>44</sup> If a movement is defined in terms of age group,

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<sup>39</sup> Edda Jónsdóttir 20 March 2003, pp. 11-12.

<sup>40</sup> Jónsdóttir, p. 12.

<sup>41</sup> Jónsdóttir, pp. 14-15.

<sup>42</sup> Jónsdóttir, p. 26.

<sup>43</sup> Þóra Þórisdóttir 18 March 2003, p. 11.

<sup>44</sup> Þórisdóttir, p. 10.

as Stærk argues above, new movements become active and visible quite regularly and new galleries, like *Gallery Hlemmur*, are intended to serve a new generation. In an Icelandic context it appears as if every new generation could be seen as a movement in its own right. In the context of a rapid turnover of generations it is as if *Gallery Hlemmur* may have developed into a stopover for artists either moving on to more prestigious galleries or who were taking care of their own affairs. Under these circumstances, the gallery may never have been able to achieve the high profile Þórisdóttir visualised. As regards the artists belonging to a movement, Þórisdóttir replied: 'I do not know, because I have not experienced it myself. When reading about movements in art, both here and abroad, they seem to have come in waves. I am not sure whether one such wave is taking place in Iceland right now.'<sup>45</sup> This generation game may be seen as a sign of an underdeveloped art market, although the older generation has a place in *Fold*. Activation of art takes place outside movements in commercial galleries and the mass media, and on a more individualist and capitalist basis than before. The reports *Taste Buds* and *Market Matters* instigated by Arts Council England guide the way towards increasing capitalisation of art in England by encouraging a wider section of the population to buy art. This is a development that may contribute to a complete disappearance of movements in all the capitals.

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<sup>45</sup> Þórisdóttir, p. 10.

## Conclusion

The Copenhagen gallerists, Chapelle, Gimm, and Stærk argue that artists and gallerists are not parts of movements. Chapelle, for example, points out that the international focus works against the formation of a movement, while Gimm claims that the rich variety in styles and the age of artists and gallerists does not unite them in a movement. Building on the variety of the art he exhibits, Stærk claims that there are no foundations for movements of gallerists and artists. Artists and gallerists are individuals, and galleries belong to a much bigger unit that Wilson contextualises as the umbrella concept contemporary art movement. Wallner, on the other hand, true to his pioneering spirit, explains that his gallery is an institution for communication outside artists' movements. A creative will to collaborate keeps them together rather than interest in promoting the same style of art. Therefore multiplicities of meanings are at the heart of the Copenhagen operations as well as a strong feeling of independence.

The East End gallerists unanimously claim that they are not associated with movements, although their arguments differ slightly. Considering the overall responses, it can be assumed that layers of meanings have taken over ideas about how movements within art worlds are conceptualised. Diamandidou does not exhibit art that can be attached to a particular movement of artists, nor does she group herself with a movement. However, she promotes abstract art to the level of regarding it as a movement. In that respect, variety does not seem to be a part of her activity. Wigram's main points are that artists in his gallery share an interest and understanding of materials on a professional level, rather than being a movement suggesting

independence and originality. Klassnik also underlines his and the artists independence from movements. Simpson sees himself, the artists and the gallery as a contribution to the development of the East End and belonging to a new generation of galleries, rather than a movement. Noraika and artists working with him go beyond formation of a movement because of how different they are. Therefore, both he and the gallery belong to a wider context of collaboration and internal networking in the form of artists' recommendations. Miro conceptualises herself, the gallery and the artists as an international London venue, rather than belonging to schools. Mummery also argues against the notion of seeing artists, himself and the gallery in terms of movements because he has increased the exhibition opportunities for artists and people's possibilities to see new art. Therefore, he contributes to activating art on the basis of visibility and accessibility beyond movements. Galleries can be seen as focal points of every gallerists' operation where the creation of an artist takes place, as de Souza points out, but like Shearn, she also claims that she, the artists, and the gallery are not parts of movements.

As regards Reykjavík, Arason, Friðriksson and Jónsdóttir state that they, the galleries, and the artists are not associated with movements. As a contrast, some insecurity seems apparent in Þórisdóttir's response regarding artists as parts of movements because of the rapid turnover of new generations of artists and galleries, reducing the opportunity to mature together. The main reason for this is the young age of the art market. It appears that she thinks of herself and the gallery as a part of an age-related group where new grass-roots generations of artists are promoted. Lárusson identifies a development from modernism to a post modern movement and an

extension of developments abroad, making him more aware of philosophical influxes than other gallerists.

Originality and creativity of commercial gallerists are factors that are likely to contribute to longevity, especially in the mature Copenhagen and East End markets. The East End is undoubtedly the cradle of Brit Art but can hardly be regarded as a movement, as Mummery argues, however, some of that energy has been kept alive channelling interest in later creativity but without becoming a marketing bandwagon or a bandwagon exploited by gallerists. Even though gallerists are in the game of selling, their emphasis on collaboration is strong enough to prevent exploitation to happen, for example, because artists do always have the option to go somewhere else and gallerists can direct artists somewhere else. Reykjavik is more difficult, since there is no real market for contemporary cutting-edge art in the city because of rapid generation shifts, with only one gallery being associated with the market, and an underdeveloped market that has suffered in the current bank crash. A strong strand of individualism detached from ideas about movements is evident from the discussion. The chapter has also revealed the individual artist, the creative and the individual gallerist and his gallery as a creative space capable of activating art in a broad context.

Having achieved this, it is now appropriate to contextualise the ideas that have been brought together in the previous chapters and summarise the main findings of this study in the next, and concluding, chapter.

# **Part 4**

## **Conclusion**

# 12 Conclusions

This thesis is a comparative study of the formation, contexts and interactions of gallerists and commercial galleries in Copenhagen, London's East End and Reykjavik established between 1985 and 2002. The spur for this study was the success of the YBAs and an explosion of contemporary art galleries in London's East End. This sent ripples through the art world and placed the commercial art gallery and the gallerist very much in the public eye. A subject largely ignored by cultural analysts and museologists, this study has sought to bring new understanding of these important cultural institutions.

The existing literature on this subject is varied, but includes both implicit and explicit visualisations of gallerists as uncreative, unnecessary and mediocre. For some, they are no more than specialised elite shopkeepers who occupy an inconsequential supporting role. More hardened critics have seen them as connivers and immoral parasites; a necessary capitalist evil exploiting the commercial possibilities of art, rather than signalling innovation and creativity. In their critical appraisal of gallerists, artists and academics alike have tended to see commercial galleries only in terms of market place exploitation and economics. As a consequence, gallerists remain hidden actors in discussions of art worlds seemingly populated by more legitimate players: artists, curators, academics, critics, collectors and so on. Even in the popular literature of government politics, sensational art, conspiracy theories, high prices, smuggling and forgery, gallerists make little showing. This study attempted to look at these art worlds afresh and bring about a more subtle reading of the gallerist.

Its most profound discovery, in this regard, has been to reveal that gallerists view their enterprises in artistic terms: they see their galleries as an artist might imagine an installation. Rather surprisingly, gallerists often tend to lack economic acumen, following instead their own creative artistic vision. They want visitors not only to buy art, but also to see these artistic installations (their galleries) almost as works in themselves. These galleries do not make a simple and superficial appeal to style; many gallerists possess a deep sense of what they are doing. This arises, in part, from their engagement with the leading edge of artistic innovation, and the creativity involved in recognising new art. In a parallel of artistic achievement, gallerists are activating art in society and contributing to public appreciation. They are critical to the artist. The relationship is symbiotic rather than parasitic.

This study has also attempted to move beyond an over-generalised view of the gallerist by the comparative analysis of gallerists in European cities of different sizes and degrees of isolation, and global participation. In and between these contexts, this research has searched for a more nuanced account of the artist-gallerist relationship where both share a notion of the new. Here there are – contrary to Bourdieu's theory which contributed greatly to distrust in gallerists – shared interests in mutual support and creativity between gallerists and artists.

Research here has also revealed the varying significance of local, national and international production and communication according to the international status of the local market, and indeed the size and global importance of the city and nation. This substantiates the notion that one must talk, in the plural, of 'art worlds'. This research has entered these different art

worlds in order to situate and understand gallerists through interview and analysis.

## **The gallerists' vision**

While this thesis has consciously worked towards increasing the resolution of our understanding of gallerists, it is evident that gallerists focus on increasing the visibility of artists rather than their own visibility. Indeed, gallerists have made an important contribution to the establishment of an artist-centred culture. This is a vital part of their artistic vision: apart from creating their gallery 'installations', their vision is to produce artists and promote them as widely as possible. This makes economic sense, of course, but the gallerist aspires to rather more than this.

These commercial and curatorial interests are seen by Wallner as combining artistic creativity with business creativity. But, as Mummery points out, the artists make the art that is installed in the gallery; the gallery is a product of creative symbiosis which draws upon the gallerist's abilities to network in galleries, art fairs and the mass media. Commercial galleries are the product of a creative fusion.

Wallner's notion of 'business creativity' seems to be the correct one, as gallerists tended to be oblivious of the state of the art market at the time they founded their galleries. Although some remember a recession or an upbeat market around the time of founding, this information had no effect on the decision to found their galleries. Despite this, some galleries have reached maturity and gathered momentum in terms of global visibility. To achieve this, they must have understood something of the workings of the art market, even

if only implicitly. The majority of the Brygge gallerists and Jónsdóttir soon felt the need to look for markets abroad and promote an international range of artists; the local market was never going to have the scale or activity to support their ambitions. These developments enhance the perception that personal enthusiasm and creativity are the drivers of gallery success, rather than careful market research and business planning. The only gallerist to mention business planning was Þórisdóttir, but this referred to a moment towards the end of the gallery's life when she was desperately searching for financial backup to save it from closing down.

An important ingredient in this creative enterprise is the availability of innovative art and artists. Gallerists require these things to attempt to distinguish themselves creatively and, by that means, acquire a niche in local, national or international art worlds. In doing so, they often possess levels of optimism that border on the naïve and blind.

In terms of vision, then, the commercial gallery cannot be understood merely in economic terms. Indeed, a truer interpretation of the aspirations of these gallerists lies in artistic creativity. They possess all the idealism of the artist, yet most channel this instinct into networking and promotion. By this means, they believe they have a fundamental role in the appreciation of art.

## Locating the gallery

In this thesis, analysis has focused on three highly contrasting city art markets. The contrasting size and position of these cities in a globalised art system further enhances the view that the gallerist is driven by art and not commerce. Why should anyone want to open a gallery in tiny Reykjavík? Why select a location outside the established cultural routes of cities like London or Copenhagen? While economic attractions of particular locations plays a role, there is, nevertheless, the same idealistic optimism in finding a location for a gallery that drives individuals to establish commercial galleries in the first place. The galleries in Valby and on the Brygge, for example, were not established to enrich the local urban culture with art. Here, gallerists decided to take on these areas in an attempt to invent new kinds of galleries selling new art. In these locations, far removed from the everyday bustle of the city centre, art and galleries could be made more exciting. This development paralleled events in the East End. Reykjavík, on the other hand, lacked the scale to establish this kind of artistic 'counterculture'; here gallerists tried to expand the value of art in the high street shop window. Meanwhile, in London and Copenhagen, cultural enterprises in side streets and factory buildings served to enrich and exoticise new art; in the marginal capital of Reykjavík, art enterprise was rather more about moving into the mainstream.

The development of gallery areas in Copenhagen resulted, in part, from collaboration, although each gallerist had his or her own individual reasons for moving into these areas and each produced a very personal interpretation of the gallery. There were, however, pioneers and other individuals less wedded to the notion of a gallery community. In London,

Klassnik, for example, had a strong tendency to distance himself from the other galleries, preferring instead the company of artists. He, nevertheless, inevitably contributed to the sense of there being an East End gallery 'scene'.

In Reykjavík, the situation was different. Arason mentions the presence of a minor community when he was active. Reykjavík gallerists prefer to take on areas on the basis of practicality, personal history or by discovering the gallery potential of a location. Only a tiny gallery community, gallerists were constantly reminded of how they differed from one another, rather than seeing themselves as part of a community. They were competitors. In London and Copenhagen, the gallery scenes became newsworthy through this juxtaposition of new art and new place. Reykjavík possessed none of these advantages. The city did not possess the scale to support a gallery 'scene'. In the other two cities, one senses that gallerists made a contribution to the cultural life of the city, above and beyond their commercial activity. The activation of art in a specific urban location was important to making this possible. In this sense, and despite their alleged distinctiveness, gallerists were never distant from the activities of other city dwellers. As with other businesses, these galleries moved into areas, galleries came and went, a part of the city was reshaped and one day it will find another use. The galleries reflect a moment in the cultural geography of an evolving city; like other activities they are themselves a reflection of the environment in which they find themselves. Wigram argues that they utilise the characteristics of urban life and the urban environment to create complex, vibrant and communal interactions. Real collaboration becomes possible. Examples of this are synchronized preview parties on the Brygge and Stærk's *Yours Truly* project,

in collaboration with businesses across Copenhagen in 2003. *F-EST*, in the East End, was the most developed gallery collaboration, made possible by that area's peculiar richness as a venue for art. Copenhagen and Reykjavík have not been able to imitate this. In contrast to the other cities, in Reykjavík, the situation is rather more claustrophobic. In this environment, gallerists do not have the same creative possibilities and they are distracted by what other gallerists are doing. They have, however, in their own way, negotiated their place within cultural frameworks and activities of the city, although sometimes only for short periods. An urban centre, undeveloped until after World War II, Reykjavík was the youngest city studied and this too must contribute to its relative cultural isolation, which affects quite fundamentally the development of the local art market.

It is evident that the locations of galleries did not contribute to the production of a particular type of art. Conceptual and readymade art had acquired a position of some strength in the East End before the galleries arrived, as this was already an artists' ghetto. In Copenhagen, conceptual art and readymades were moved to Valby and the Brygge, because that is the type of art the gallerists liked and it did not fit into the slightly old fashioned Bredgade gallery area where the latest thing was still the *Neue Wilde*. Unsurprisingly, Reykjavík city centre still embraced this rather more conservative and accessible art; readymades and conceptual art had lingered there since the 1960s but with no market share.

The East End's association with the production of art is unique amongst the cities studied and adds to the significance of the place. It became important as a hot spot for urban creativity and renovation, with its

own cultural diversity, and highly visible artists and gallerists. There was a gallery explosion – an expansion well beyond the steady growth of galleries seen in London in previous decades. In this creative milieu, galleries appeared in response to other galleries in an extraordinary manner.

The gallery areas in Copenhagen became lively and identifiable communities because pioneers selected unlikely urban locations. Both here, and in London, galleries gravitated towards the Bohemian possibilities of low rent industrial areas. But while East End gallerists entered an established hotspot and could wait for their clients, in the other two cities leading edge gallerists had to work much harder to locate that clientele.

When moving through the COLORE cities and their art spaces, then, one may sense that one is following established cultural routes populated by museums, galleries, and so on. It is only when galleries relocate outside of this established geography that unique pathways develop. In these new individualised and democratized metropolitan art areas and spaces, the art consumer can design his or her own individual route and construct their own art connections. This creativity is particularly evident in Diamandidou's moveable *EC Art* installations because she encourages new routes for art lovers, as well as contributing to renovation, seeing the possibilities of the city from a new perspective.

Perhaps ironically, the production of these art spaces – certainly in London and Copenhagen – also reflects a desire to distance the gallery from a casual and general public. Visitors to the gallery quarters of these two cities will simply fail to discover many of these galleries because they lack shop windows. They look obscure and private. By these means, the gallerist can

avoid unwanted traffic and instead secure genuinely interested visitors. The Brygge and Valby galleries are extremely contained in this respect because they are in back gardens and frequently high up in old warehouses. Only Wilson's gallery is on a ground floor with a big window, although this window faces a back garden. The side street identity is also strong in London, although exhibitions in three galleries – *Vertigo*, *de Souza* and *Mummery* – could be viewed through windows from the street at the time of interviews. In contrast, every Reykjavík gallery aspires to main street visibility except *Second Floor*.

The levels of gallery visibility in a location are indicators of how developed an art market is. The more developed and the bigger the city, the easier it is to distance the art market from established centres, thus making the history of galleries also a history of distinctive and new art worlds. It is also a movement from an accessible inner city culture to an industrial suburb culture, where distancing makes art in one sense accessible and interesting (for those in the loop), yet also exclusive and remote (for those who are not). The doors to these secluded spaces present a remarkable psychological barrier to entry; one needs to be brave to enter. Once the visitor has braved the door, s/he is made to feel welcome. There is a complex social geography at play here, then, between the exterior space and its placement within the city, and this private but welcoming interior. In this peculiar urban environment, those who wish to belong can do so; they merely have to open the door and enter this world. Those who remain outside that door do not belong; they are outsiders. Both parts have a democratic choice of taking a new route or leaving it.

## Finding artists

Compared to the multiple meanings involved in selecting a location, the secret of locating artists is straight forward: artists who promote themselves by bringing their portfolios to galleries are not likely to be adopted. However, a considerable number of the gallerists present themselves as welcoming and available to talk to artists in search of galleries, but that is as far as it goes. What seems to have more weight with gallerists are unexpected private discoveries, personal interactions and networking. In this system, an artist who is already with a gallery recommends an artist friend because he fits into the overall image of a gallery. It is also evident that the gallerists do not follow particular criteria for selecting artists; selection is highly subjective and reliant upon connoisseurship. The relationship here between artist and gallerist is not that of employee and employer; the gallery is seeking exhibits and products. Selection involves a process of matching gallery and art. However, it should be noted that galleries are, by this process, 'collecting' artists – people – rather than pieces and objects. It is a process of patronage which produces mutual benefits for the patronised and patron. The aim is a kind of symbiosis. The connoisseurship skills at work here blend personal taste and creativity with intuition, art historical knowledge, styles and trends and so on. The saleability of the art is important, but also a product of this embodied knowledge of art and moment. Personal relationships are also important; a gallerist wishes to feel they can work with a particular person.

## Promoting the gallery and the artist

Having established the gallery and selected one's artists, the gallerist must consider how both can be promoted. In Britain, the Turner Prize offers the most high profile promotion of new art, much of which is patronised by East End galleries. The art of the YBAs created a media circus through high profile and controversial purchases. Rather more low key, but a phenomenon in its own right, was the attention Chapelle enjoyed when he moved to Valby. This move was promoted as an entirely new development for art in Copenhagen. However, these are rather exceptional examples of galleries attracting the media spotlight.

Of more traditional means, rather surprisingly 'previews' appear not to be a primary method for marketing galleries. Only Shearn of *Vertigo* mentions them as such. The 'show', on the other hand was a key promotional tool for Stærk, Gimm, Wilson, Miro, Wigram, Shearn and Jónsdóttir, while the rest of the galleries seemed to focus more on catalogues and other printed materials. Contemporary gallerists need to be extrovert; they need to lure patrons to their galleries via extensive promotion. However, the level of promotion varied from site to site, with the East End having a more established presence and less need to work to draw in buyers. Art fairs were extremely important and particularly so for Copenhagen gallerists. Here again, promotion drew upon those same networking skills needed to bring artists into the fold, only here gallerists were negotiating with potential buyers.

Perhaps reinforcing a point made earlier about the normality of these businesses, it is noteworthy that in using supplementary materials, specialist publication and websites, these galleries differ little from other market-centred

businesses, despite an apparent philosophical detachment from out-and-out commercialism. Others simply produced supplementary materials, specialised art publications and websites with global reach.

## **The contemporary gallery and the control of art**

The issue of control and power in relation to artists emerged in discussions of dealerships in the late nineteenth century, when avant-garde artists were freed from the academically controlled Salons in Paris. Here, early dealers participated in an anti-establishment struggle to wrestle control of the promotion of new art from academia. In doing so, they created a kind of a *Salon des Refusés*. It is not entirely evident that dealers had complete control of artists then, however, simply because, taking Impressionism as an example, one is bound to think about Monet rather than his dealer Durand-Ruel. Although both men's importance was acknowledged after their death, one is a critical point of origin always attached to – and giving significance to – the art work.

In their analysis, White and White identified a shift of institutional control from the French Academy, the gentry and the church as primary art patrons, to commercial gallerists. This suggests that one should consider gallerists holistically in the same institutional terms as these other organisations. However, there is very little, if anything, that suggests this to be the case. The study discussed in this thesis, however, shows that this was not a transfer of power from one institution to the other, but rather a move towards individual initiative, collaboration and networking of gallerists, artists and cultural contractors. It was a break from control. This arrangement has placed

the profession (the gallerists) at the cutting edge of art promotion, a position that most prominent galleries still hold. Therefore, as a contrast to the long lasting concept of the art world as a decisive and static institution, this study identifies a shift of decision-making and power from institutions to individuals' personal taste and networking.

It seems evident from the manner, in which gallerists find artists and promote them, that gallerists wield considerable power. Despite a notable focus on the undeserved power of gallerists over artists in the literature, my study reveals high levels of collaboration and support. Each party reserves the right to terminate collaboration in the case of it failing; in these cities in developed nations this appears to represent a fair relationship. In his book, *The Art Market, Collectors and Art Museums in Taiwan since 1949*, Su-Liang Tseng suggests that this might not be the case in the dog-eat-dog developing world.<sup>1</sup>

Noraika argues that the gallery and gallerist are more powerful than the artist and Jónsdóttir argues that the bigger the nations, the more power galleries possess. However, commercial galleries – unlike the major auction houses – generally possess only localised power and operate in a competitive environment where artists may have choices – particularly so in the larger cities. However, in some art markets examined here, the artists and gallerists are only part of the scene. There are a number of other interest groups, such as writers, curators, collectors and art historians who claim a share in the economies of art worlds, as Wilson argues, and both gallerists and artists benefit from each other's contacts as Mummery states, which reinforces the

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<sup>1</sup>Su-Liang Tseng, *The Art Market, Collectors and Art Museums in Taiwan since 1949* (Taipei: Sanyi Cultural Enterprise, 2003).

idea that power results from networking. Friðriksson and Greenfeld point out that individuals do not possess autonomy over the whole market, only over personal decisions and interactions. The game, of course, is to beat the system; to have impact beyond this. This requires the power of the network and the social capital that makes a particular gallerist effective in this regard.

## **Style and trend**

In the commercial galleries studied, it was not possible to identify a particular East End style or trend, or, for that matter, a Nordic, Reykjavík or Valby art style or trend because of the global emphasis of the majority of gallerists in terms of selecting artists and selling art with a conceptual edge to an international audience. This suggests trends, concerning the promotion of particular styles in galleries, that the owners convincingly try to prove are individually different from each other. In other words, gallerists actively discourage a sense of there being a shared style or trend; they value individualism, difference and distinction. COLORE gallerists claim that they exhibit a great variety of available art in their galleries, without focusing on particular styles. However, the majority of the interviewed gallerists have gone for the least attractive art in terms of popular demand: namely various kinds of conceptual art and readymades. This suggests that taste, sense of style, and what is considered to be trendy and arty, has changed rapidly with the rise of YBAs. This development highlights the significance of ‘the new’ for the trendy nouveau riches that flock to the exotic and trendy areas where the galleries have positioned themselves. It indicates that the galleries have invested in educating the visitors about what is acceptable as art through promotion

above extensive educational programmes for their local communities. There is, then, a complex system at play, with new art speaking to gallerists, art teachers and students, the new rich, and so, which then feeds back positively into further development of the art system, but also into property development, gentrified flats in former warehouses and still more galleries. The art system here is a complex socio-urban process, not simply to be understood in the standard configurations of the art market.

It is also evident that, in a society where the market for art is weakly developed, representational art becomes a feasible option for the majority of art lovers. This is evident in Iceland where the market has been manipulated by the state and collaborations with major museums. *Fold* benefits from this situation but other more adventurous galleries struggle; in Reykjavík such works are regarded as desirable gifts or worth owning or collecting. This is likely to be the situation elsewhere where the market is constrained in some way. It also suggests that big cities, which offer a wider spectrum of art businesses and consumers, will not reveal this obvious tension between representational art and conceptual art.

The question whether gallerists belong to or produce art movements, and if the artists they collaborate with belong to movements or produce a particular type of art, is closely related to questions of style and trend. It has been explained that gallerists and artists produce each other in a symbiotic relationship in the city. This interaction has intensively influenced the geography and culture of London and Copenhagen in a constructive, collaborative manner. This has not happened in Reykjavík, and may explain why the ripple effect from London has left Iceland more or less untouched;

this study reveals a rather more subtle and nuanced – more broadly sociological and geographical – articulation of the art world, or of art worlds. I believe this could only be located through cross-cultural comparative study of gallerists.

It is evident that strands of readymades and conceptual art run through the art that is sold by most of the galleries analysed in this study. However, the majority of gallerists claim that they are not mediating a particular type of art, stressing diversity over uniformity. This suggests that the conceptualisation of art may vary between actors in the art market. The only thing gallerists have really done, apart from promoting art they like, is select particular areas to work in. They are creative and productive, but the cities themselves shape aspects of that creativity and where it can be taken. Copenhagen and London have made room – geographical space – for new art. Yet Copenhagen also possesses that curiously Danish mix of social consciousness mixed with neo-conservatism and capitalism. By comparison, Reykjavík senses its smallness, its binary culture and its weak contemporary art market that headed towards unprecedented heights after the actual research for this thesis took place. London is the most buoyant of them all. It is a world city with all that that brings. We cannot separate the form of the art market – its social complexity and operation, its tastes and values – from the cities themselves.

The privatisation of art that has taken place over the last one hundred and fifty years has given increasing recognition to galleries as creative forces, but the notions of style and art movement originate elsewhere, in parts of art worlds less concerned with commerce; in newspapers and magazines, books

and museums, where art can be selected and arranged to construct such ideas. Gallerists may contribute to this, but they do not control it. Ironically, the two Reykjavík gallerists, Lárusson and Þórisdóttir, who believed they had captured movements, had to close and saw these so-called movements disappear as a result of those forces which have far greater power to decide such things: the media and officials.

## **Final words**

This study of gallerists began with a desire to understand one under-studied component in the much discussed and debated art world. The comparative aspect was a means to understand the subtleties and diversity of these roles in different contexts. However, these contextual aspects – geography, history and culture, values, locations, architecture, style, individualism, pioneering spirit, creativity, networks, festivals, collaborations and so on – have fundamentally affected the results of this study. While it has been possible to give a far more detailed account of the gallerist, I believe the most interesting aspect of this study is the manner in which it has revealed the art world to be a product of these supposedly contextual things. The art worlds, as I have come to understand them, are not simply that often discussed relationship between art actors; it more fundamentally involves its public, geography and the cultural qualities of a city or nation. The normality of trade and consumption, mixed with the extraordinary qualities of art as a traded commodity, construct this rather more complex interweaving of city, culture and art. It is, then, interesting to remember that gallerists primarily consider themselves creatives. Thus, in some respects, to study the gallerist reveals

something of these, rather larger, facets of art consumption (which have similarly received little attention in the literature) and also to imagine rather more complex art worlds or systems.

# Appendix

## Gallerists interviewed in London for this study

### **Angela Diamandidou**

Position before becoming a gallerist: Diamandidou worked as an Architect and Town Planner while also operating the gallery

Address at the time of interview:

Diamandidou did not operate an exhibition space in 2003

Exhibition at the time of interview:

No show at the time of interview

Examples of artists who have exhibited in the gallery:

Francis Aviva Blane, Nigel Ellis, Basil Beattie and John McLean

### **Bea de Souza**

Position before becoming a gallerist: Various arts related employments

Address at the time of interview:

The Agency Contemporary

18 Charlotte Road

London

EC2A 3PD

New address as of 19/08/09:

66 Evalyn Street

London

SE8 5DD

Exhibition at the time of interview:

Seamus Nicolson, 10 May – 6 June 2003

Examples of artists who have exhibited in the gallery:

Edwin David, Paul McCarthy, Zineb Sedira, Ross Sinclair, Ken Lum, Faisal Abdu'Allah

### **Robin Klassnik**

Position before becoming a gallerist: Artist

Address at the time of Interview:

Matt's Gallery

42-44 Copperfield Road

London

E3 4RR

Exhibition at the time of interview:

Alison Turnbull, Hospital, 9 April – 1 June 2003

Examples of artists who have exhibited in the gallery:

Victor Burgin, Till Exit, Willie Doherty, Kate Smith, Imogen Stidworthy, Richard Grayson

### **Victoria Miro**

Position before becoming a gallerist: Artist

Address at the time of interview:

Victoria Miro Gallery

16 Wharf Road

London

N1 7NW

Exhibition at the time of interview:

Tal R, 17 May – 14 June 2003

Examples of artists who have exhibited in the gallery:

Doug Aitken, Conrad Shawcross, Chris Ofili, Grayson Perry, Tal R, Elmgreen & Dragset

### **Andrew Mummery**

Position before becoming a gallerist: Unknown

Address at the time of Interview:

Andrew Mummery Gallery

63 Compton Street

London

EC1V 0BN

Mummery now operates in partnership with Wolfram Schnelle

Current address of new partnership as of September 2007:

Mummery and Schnelle

83 Great Titchfield Street

London

W1W 6RH

Exhibition at the time of interview:

Merlin James, 7 May – 7 June, 2003

Examples of artists who have exhibited in the gallery:

Peter Harris, Peter Davis, Alexis Harding, Peter Lynch, Carol Rhodes and Ori Gersht

**Chris Noraika**

Position before becoming a gallerist: Artist

Address at the time of Interview:

One in the Other

4 Dingley Place

London

EC1V 8BP

Address as of January 2006:

One in the Other

45 Vyner Street

London

E2 9DQ

Exhibition at the time of Interview:

The Queen Mother Show, Group show, 11 – 18 May 2003

Examples of artists who have exhibited in the gallery:

Satoru Aoyama, Luke Caulfield, Simon Linke and Anna Mossman

**Christine Shearn**

Position before becoming a gallerist: Gallery employee

Address at the time of interview:

Vertigo

62 Great Eastern Street

Shoreditch

London

EC2A 3QR

Exhibition at the time of interview:

Andrew Crocker 'Like a River', 9 – 28 May 2003

Examples of artists who have exhibited in the gallery:

Simon Keenleyside, Sarah Medway, Bent Spencer, Marta Thoma, Fred Schlemme

It has been announced that the gallery is moving, but the new premises have not been made public (18/08/2009)

### **Ronnie Simpson**

Position before becoming a gallerist: Worked in public and private galleries

Address at the time of Interview:

Mobile Home

7 Vyner Street

London

E2 9QG

The gallery is now closed

Exhibition at the time of interview:

Elizabeth Price, 'Dennes', 2 May - 8 June 2003

Examples of artists who have exhibited in the gallery:

Andrew Grassie, Nick Crove, Marta Marce, Alison Turnbull, Julie Verhoven

**Max Wigram**

Position before becoming a gallerist: Curator as well as operating a non profit space in Chelsea, London

Address at the time of interview:

MW Projects  
43B Mitchell Street  
London,  
EC1V 3QD

Current address under a new name:

Max Wigram Gallery  
99 New Bond Street  
London  
W1S 1SW

Exhibition at the time of interview:

Marine Hugonnier, 'Ariana', 4 April - 31 May 2003

Examples of artists who have exhibited in the gallery:

James Hopkins, Tim Noble and Sue Webster, Gary Webb, Anna Bjerger, Mustafa Hulusi, Slater Bradley

# Gallerists in Copenhagen

## Christian Chapelle

Position before becoming a gallerist: Art student

Address at the time of interview:

Mogadishni

Carl Jacobsens Vej 16, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor

2500 - Valby

Denmark

Current address as of February 2009:

Mogadishni

Bredgade 23B, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor

1260 Copenhagen K

Denmark

The gallery operated an outlet in Aarhus for roughly one year from 2007 to 2008

Exhibition at the time of interview:

The interview took place during a changeover 30 March - 24 April 2003

Examples of artists who have exhibited in the gallery:

Andreas Schulenburg, Simon Keenleyside, Neil Farber, Willem Weismann, Li Wei

## **Gustav Gimm**

Position before becoming a gallerist: BA History of Art, collaborated with an artist run space

Address at the time of interview:

Gustav Gimm

Njalsgade 21H

2300 Copenhagen S

Denmark

As of June 2003, Gimm entered a partnership with Jesper Eis to run the gallery on Njalsgade

As of January 2004, the gallery moved to new premises and the name was changed to

Gimm and Eis ApS

Sturlasgade 14D

2300 Copenhagen S

Denmark

As of spring 2005 the gallery ceased to operate

Exhibition at the time of interview:

Rasmus Danø, 'Re-Act-Mind-Out', 7 March - 26 April 2003

Examples of artists who have exhibited in the gallery:

Bjørn Rosengreen, Morten Schelde, Judit Ström, Paul Smith, René Schmidt

**Nils Stærk**

Position before becoming a gallerist: Gallery employee

Address at the time of interview:

Nils Stærk

Njalsgade 19C

2300 Copenhagen

Denmark

As of September 2009, the gallery will move to Valby and take over a former truck garage on the premises of the Carlsberg Breweries on Ny Carlsberg Vej 68, 1760 Copenhagen V. The gallery's neighbours will be Galley Nicolai Wallner, Copenhagen Publishing, a new artist space and The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts student gallery

Exhibition at the time of interview:

'Yours Truly', a group show in collaboration with businesses across Copenhagen,  
7 March - 26 April 2003

Examples of artists who have exhibited in the gallery:

Birgir Andr sson, Miriam B ckstr m, Tatthew Ronay and Richard Hughes

## **Nicolai Wallner**

Position before becoming a gallerist: Operated an artist run space with a group of artists

Address at the time of interview:

Gallery Nicolai Wallner

Njalsgade 21

Building 15

2300 Copenhagen

Denmark

As of September 2009, the gallery will move to Valby and take over a former truck garage on the premises of the Carlsberg Breweries on Ny Carlsberg Vej 68, 1760 Copenhagen V. The gallery's neighbours will be Nils Stærk, Kopenhagen Publishing, a new artist space and The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts student gallery.

Exhibition at the time of interview:

Group show with Tilo Baumgärtel, David Schnell, Matthias Weischer, Tim Eitel, Christoph Ruckhäberle and Peter Busch, 21 March - 26 April 2003

Examples of artists who have exhibited in the gallery:

Gitte Villesen, Peter Land, Michael Elmgreen & Ingar Dragset, Daniel Buren, Mari Eastman and Christoph Ruckhäberle

## **Christine Wilson**

Position before becoming a gallerist: Art historian, gallery employee

Address at the time of interview:

Gallery Christina Wilson

Sturlasgade 12H

2300 Copenhagen S

Denmark

Current address, as of 2008:

Gallery Christina Wilson

Esplanaden 8B

1263 Copenhagen K

Denmark

Exhibition at the time of interview:

Groupshow 'Playschool', 14 March - 26 April 2003

Examples of artists who have exhibited in the gallery:

Jesper Just, Kirstine Roepstorff, Linde Busk, Alicja Kwade and Anette Harboe

Flensburg

## **Gallerists in Reykjavík**

### **Pétur Arason**

Position before and whilst being a gallerist: Businessman

Address at the time of interview:

The gallery was open from 1992-1997. The interview took place in Arason's living room where the gallery used to be.

The gallery address was:

Exhibition Space Second Floor

Laugavegur 37

PBOX 442

101-Reykjavík

Iceland

Exhibition at the time of interview:

No exhibition on

Examples of artists who have exhibited in the gallery:

Eyborg Guðmundsdóttir, Max Neuhaus, Roni Horn, Lawrence Weiner, Richard Long and Karin Sander

### **Tryggvi Páll Friðriksson**

Position before becoming a gallerist: Businessman

Address at the time of interview:

Gallery Fold

Rauðarárstíg 14-16

105-Reykjavík

Iceland

The gallery has another outlet in Kringlan (Shopping Mall)

Gallery Fold

Kringlunni 4-12

103-Reykjavík

Iceland

Exhibition at the time of interview:

'To my Taste', 8 - 27 March 2003, Prime Minister (1991-2005) Davíð Oddsson selected the artists in the show

Examples of artists who have exhibited in the gallery:

Daði Guðbjörnsson, Jónas Bragi Jónasson, Haraldur Bilson, Sara Vilbergsdóttir, Tryggvi Ólafsson and Gunnella Ólafsdóttir

## **Edda Jónsdóttir**

Position before becoming a gallerist: Artist

Address at the time of interview:

i8 Gallery

Klapparstígur 33

101-Reykjavík

Iceland

Exhibition at the time of interview:

Bernd Koberling, 13 March - 26 April 2003

Examples of artists who have exhibited in the gallery:

Eggert Pétursson, Roni Horn, Birgir Andrésson, Karin Sander, Kristján Guðmundsson and Sigurður Guðmundsson

## **Hannes Lárusson**

Position before becoming a gallerist: Artist

Address at the time of interview:

The gallery was open from 1989-1994 and the address was:

Galley 11/Gallery One One

Skólavörðustíg 4a

101-Reykjavík

Iceland

Exhibition at the time of interview:

No exhibition

Examples of artists who have exhibited in the gallery:

Hreinn Friðfinnsson, Steingrímur Eyfjörð, Daniel Buren, Jóhann Eyfells, Hrafnkell Sigurðsson and Hannes Lárusson

**Þóra Þórisdóttir**

Position before becoming a gallerist: Artist

Address at the time of interview:

Gallery Hlemmur

Þverholti 5

105-Reykjavík

Iceland

Exhibition at the time of interview:

Ásmundur Ásmundsson, 8 - 30 March

The Gallery was active from 1999-2004

Examples of artists who have exhibited in the gallery:

Erling T. V. Klingenberg, Ósk Vilhjámsdóttir, Þóra Þórisdóttir, The Icelandic Love Corporation, Jon Brunberg and Steingrímur Eyfjörð

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