

FAIRLAND

EXPLORATIONS, INSIGHTS AND
OUTLOOKS ON THE FUTURE OF ART FAIRS.

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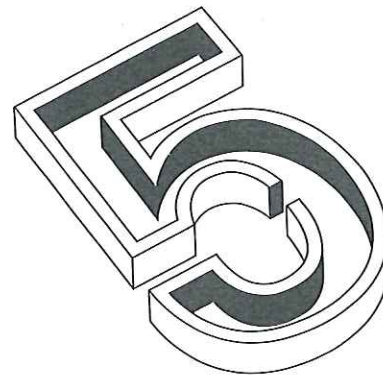
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A GLOBALIZING ART WORLD.
"ELITISM" AND THE ECONOMY
OF SYMBOLIC GOODS.



Franz Schultheis
ethnologist
interviewed by Francesco Garutti

Francesco Garutti – In 2011 you started an ethnographical study on the most important art fair in the world, Art Basel. Why did you decide, as sociologist interested in social inequalities, struggles for legitimation and welfare politics, to study the art world?

Franz Schultheis – My interest in the art world started when I visited the fair in Basel in 2010 with some friends of mine. I'd never done research on art before, but I knew the important work done by Pierre Bourdieu in the field, particularly with texts like *L'Amour de l'art* (1966) and *Les règles de l'art* (1992).¹ When I went to Art Basel four years ago for the first time—I loved art to some degree, as people of my social class tend to, but I was not any kind of a specialist at all—I found that it was quite an interesting place to go for social scientists. It seemed to me a little like going to Amazonia in order to meet aborigines of different tribes and observe their rituals, their communication codes, their dress rules and so on. So I had the same interest in the art world that I had in other research done before while working on popular culture and religion, everyday family life, different kind of professions, and so on. With a group of six sociologists² at the University of St. Gallen working together for a while, we decided to do a sort of ethnography of Art Basel, a qualitative research project. It's not a statistical study of art prices and market terms, we're doing that too, but it's not the center of our interest. What we try to do is to have a look at the art scene, seeing all the different kinds of people and communities who inhabit and act in this world and make it exist. We're analyzing "who's who" in terms of their

1 In 2012, Franz Schultheis and Stephan Egger published a huge German edition of Bourdieu's collected writings on art: Bourdieu, Pierre, *Kunst und Kultur. Kultur und kulturelle Praxis. Schriften zur Kulturosoziologie 4*. hg. von Franz Schultheis und Stephan Egger, Konstanz, 2013.

2 Stephan Egger, Erwin Single, Tina Willner, Thomas Mazzurana, Raphaela Köfeler.

specific place inside the mechanism of Art Basel or another fair. As sociologists, we're very much interested in methods of symbolic domination, social classification, and struggles for legitimacy, and in this sense the art world—the art fair as a microcosm of it—is a very interesting context for our study. That's maybe the scope of our investigation. Once the directors of Art Basel accepted our demand and gave us free access to almost every dimension of the fair, we asked the National Science Foundation in Bern to finance our research project and in the end obtained major funding. This official support given to our project was at the same time a clear sign of public interest in the kind of research questions we were pursuing, and gave our research team supplementary legitimation.

FG – You're carrying on another sociological research project that explores the field of art: "Creative Precarization." What is this study about? Does this investigation somehow overlap with topics you're also exploring in your ethnographic analysis of Art Basel?

FS – Yes, it's a parallel but complementary project based on our interest in the field of the "creative classes." The study is aiming to explore why and how people enter these sorts of professions with high risk of being precarized for their entire lives. Sociologist Pierre-Michel Menger wrote *Portrait de l'artiste en travailleur: Métamorphoses du capitalisme* ("Portrait of the Artist as Worker: Metamorphosis of Capitalism") (2003), a study of how the profession and condition of the artist has become, over the last thirty years, in the neoliberal era, a sort of ideal model of the "employable" employee. At the same time, Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello did a very important study called *Le nouvel esprit du capitalisme* ("The New Spirit of Capitalism") (1999) on the same question based on empirical research on management books. The book explores also how the professional figure of

the "artist" is becoming a sort of model for managers. The attractiveness of all these jobs in the field of design, art, media and so on is getting higher and higher: more young people want to enter this kind of career without considering that there are very important problems in store for them.

The world of art is very complex and full of ambivalences and contradictions. It's not just the one of Art Basel and the world of the most important artists, galleries or collectors. There are millions of people around this system who try to enter into this world, and most of them will never have any success, will never be visible in the media. As sociologists, it's crucial for us to have a look at both sides of this world: the very big players, a kind of global cultural and economic elite, and the other ones, who'll stay in the shadow of these others. That's why for this project we're working with many different professionals as artists, art dealers, galleries, collectors, curators, museum directors or art consultants.

We are discovering the attractiveness of the contemporary art context for growing masses of people in all societies with a high level of education, but it's a world that is highly selective and unequally accessible. We have on the one hand the logic of "winner takes all"—reflecting neoliberal thinking in its purest form—where very few artists, very few collectors have a sort of monopoly on all the resources, both material and symbolic, of public visibility and appreciation, and on the other hand a huge mass of people who'll never get access to this elite.

FG – How do you carry out the research? Which kind of strategy have you set up?

FS – The strategy of the research was to carefully explore the so-called "Olympics of Art" which is Art Basel, the venue where the most important players meet. A representative place for the global art world. So we had the idea of going there several times, from 2011 to 2013, for one week, organi-

zing interviews with all the players in the system and performing a survey through the visitors and through the galleries.

We've done already around 120 interviews with different figures and with the staff of the fair. Nearly each interview is a long insightful story: deep explorations of several aspects through oral conversations. Surveys have instead already been performed twice in Basel and once in Miami Beach and Hong Kong.

So in a way we started with a very small project as ethnologists interested in the functioning of the art world, doing research on the microcosm of Art Basel—a big part of all the elements which are important on the global art scene can be found inside in this little place—and now we're enlarging it, going to the other two cities where Art Basel has expanded and exported its brand: Miami and Hong Kong.

We also decided to work by visual sociology through the use of photos. It's a classic ethnographic method we borrowed somewhat from Pierre Bourdieu, who used it to develop his theory on "habitus" just studying women's pictures he shot in Algeria fifty years before. He was working on "male domination" and built his analysis theory on gender-habitus by using those pictures.

This seemed very useful to us, because it's of course very difficult to perform ethnographic work in a place like a fair. It's very complex, there are thousands of people moving around there and we too, the researchers, are part of the crowd, we're submerged in it. We don't have enough eyes and time to capture what is worth looking at more intensely. The idea was to take thousands of pictures and to study them afterwards. Through the images, among many other aspects, we analyze for example the standardization of the space: the similarities of the structures among all the booths. Always a table, catalogues, people with iPads in their hands, beautiful young women dressed in black, and the partitioning of the stand between "space" and "function," two

parts of this world, exactly like Olav Velthuis stated when he spoke of "the front stage and the back stage," the white cube and the back office of art galleries. We're also using pictures to investigate the dress codes of visitors and their physical interactions in front of artworks, for instance.

FG – What kind of tools are interviews for your research?

FS – I'm working at the moment on fifteen different interviews with collectors.

Seen from the outside, collectors could look like a homogenous group: very wealthy people, cultivated and interested in art, loving art. But there are actually different types of collectors, and inside this group you can find people who are born into family dynasties that have been collecting for a hundred or even two hundred years and still longer; you could also find people who never show what they're collecting, very private and socially distinguished and distinguishing people. Some of them that we met—in Miami Beach, for example, we had the chance to talk with the Rubell family—are instead building private museums and invite people to come visit their collection and show who they are and the feeling they have for art. There's also one type that talks about the other collectors, for instance discrediting their knowledge of art or criticizing them. Some have a really eclectic collection, some others select a specific kind of art or only the most cutting-edge pieces, following a kind of *Zeitgeist*.

There are important symbolic battles in the field of collection—in the gallery context as well, of course—and it's interesting for us to try to understand in what way these kind of social fields are places of struggle for appreciation. Struggles of classification around the status of being a real, legitimate collector or not; during our long interviews, most of them are talking to us about the criteria that define this

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kind of status. While telling us their philosophy, their way of looking at art, collectors are actually talking about themselves and their condition. Our interviews are a kind of stage for their identity construction, a way of describing their role in society and an opportunity to distinguish their own position from other ones:

FG – Contradictory relations between art and commerce, social charisma and money are at the center of your study. In addition to those issues you've mentioned power battles and struggles for legitimation as clearly visible aspects of the environment you analyzed. How did you study topics like the "elitism" of the system or social classification and selection at Art Basel?

FS – It's a question that's both crucial and delicate. During our interview series we heard for instance the frustration of collectors who didn't receive a VIP card from the fair for the very first day. For them this is something terrible. In their mind, it is something which reveals that they are losing status. The same happens of course for the galleries who haven't been accepted to be present. We even decided to explore more in detail the interesting aspect of "rejection," setting up a tour of interviews only with galleries refused by Art Basel. It's clearly a big loss for their reputation in the field.

For us, as sociologists, the VIP Program is something very interesting, because it is based on the composition of a sort of classification of people as very important, important, less important and not at all important. Art Basel is a kind of geography of power. The selection is made on each side—galleries, VIPs, companies coming in: everyone must have the necessary symbolic, social, and economic capital to have the chance to say "I'll be one of you," and once they succeed in being selected, they can legitimately feel like they're a part of it—a new global, economic, cultural elite. Fair directors

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developed the classification strategy years ago, becoming more and more selective and restrictive in recent years. Today they reserve two of the six days for VIPs only. Last year it was one and the half, and before it was only one day.

Now there are even three categories of VIPs—First Choice, Preview and Vernissage. It's in a way a very complex and tricky matter: who's deciding who'll be VIP or not? Art Basel tells us that, until two years ago, they went to the galleries and gave them a certain number of badges for VIPs, and the dealers then made their choices. Last year the strategy changed: Art Basel employees were taking decisions together with the galleries, looking very closely at the selection that is made, getting more and more control of such a crucial aspect. We could say that in this way the social selection of who will be "in" or "out," who will be "a part of the game or not" and contribute to a certain image of this collective event or not has become more effective. On the other hand, the division into three different categories of VIPs is actually hurting quite a lot of people: Art Basel knows that they have to be very prudent about that.

Furthermore, we noticed from the data we've got that, on the gallery side, they're very conservative. Only 5–10% of booths are changing from one year to the next: 90 to 95 percent of them are still the same every year. This way, every visitor is perfectly familiar with the layout every year and knows that the Beyeler Foundation booth, for instance, is always when you enter on your right—it's the first booth you meet!—and you easily can remember which neighborhood to visit to find Gagosian, Zwirner, Pace, Michael Werner, Marian Goodman, White Cube and so on. Very big, important players always have the same kind of privileged position. The new galleries coming in every year are very few: there's not enough space, they accept 300 galleries and the most important are already inside. On the other hand, they know that they can't go on having almost the same exhibitors every

year, so they try to bring some new young people in. In any case it's difficult: for each one they take in, they have to get some other out and it's a very delicate thing to do. In relation to the VIP Program, we asked in our survey of galleries how many days should be reserved for VIPs in the fair, and 95 percent replied they wanted two days. And in fact it's what happened. Of course they know that in these two days they're doing their business. Galleries often make 50% of their yearly sales inside art fairs. That shows how the fair is so important for their survival, but at the same time, we are studying the degree to which a fair can be a danger for a gallery.

FG – What kind of danger are you referring to?

FS – There are different kind of dangers. For example, there's tendency for artists to make the same kind of artwork for a certain kind of typical collector. Galleries are selling it at the fairs. During our interviews, a well-known dealer told us: "What this artist is doing is selling very well. I could sell something like 50 to 60 of his artworks a year for 60,000 dollars, but I told him we cannot go on like this. In maybe two years there won't be any more interest in his work. We have to slow down, and we shouldn't go on with art fairs in this way." But do all galleries think and act like this? Aren't they quite often seduced by the market success of an artist and try to push him to produce in order to make a profit from a given good bet? There are other dangers in store for them. For this reason, one section of our project will be called "Art fairs are destroying galleries," echoing the statement made to us by a dealer. So as sociologists we always try to see the ambivalences and contradictions in all the processes: art fairs are very often an economic success for galleries, but they are of course very expensive, and sometimes a danger for the development of works and for the careers of emerging artists who not conform to this market and the predominant "taste" in art.

FG – What aspects create a successful fair? Many kind of markets and economic worlds intersect there and contribute to the scenario.

FS – Yes, sure. We have talked to the director of Art Basel who's responsible for networking, for their sponsors. They set up a very interesting strategy. They've just brought together representatives from UBS, BMW, Cartier, Net Jets, Davidoff, champagne brands and many others around a table: very refined people sitting together around the table of art. The point here is simple: considering art as a fine object, as a tool. Contemporary art as a point of departure for creating real social capital, essential for strengthening the selling power of each of these companies.

The collectors we interviewed very often visit fairs without buying, just to meet people, meet other collectors, have dinners and discussions. What are they doing? They're constructing social relationships as a global elite. They're putting together their social capital—from their different countries, from their different companies and so on—and they're becoming a very powerful group through this. It's pretty clear how there's not only economic capital inside Art Basel. There's a high level of cultural capital—art is cultural capital, but also the capacity of someone to appreciate, interpret and love art is a form of incorporated cultural capital. The global social elite meeting at this event and using it as a moment of reproduction and a kind of self-celebration is not only particularly rich from a financial standpoint—a banal precondition of being an art collector of the type you meet at Art Basel—but also rich in social relationships and influence, cultural skills, distinctive "savoir vivre" and what sociologists call "symbolic capital" in the form of social recognition, reputation and public visibility. The kind of figures invited by fair directors obviously appreciate the sort of amalgam of high-level consumer products and artworks that is perfectly organized as a kind of global

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lifestyle. In this sense, art fairs are becoming more and more places where many markets meet.

So as sociologists we speak of a "total social phenomenon," to quote Marcel Mauss: in the social selection produced by an art fair we can identify not only the high impact of economic capital, but at the same time, that of social, cultural and symbolic capital, which influence and reinforce each another reciprocally.

FG – Do you think we could imagine an art fair just as a simple place for the exchange of art and money, getting rid of all the curatorial aspects like talk programs or special shows, events and so on?

FS – I think that a fair where people come just to buy and sell, like any other "marketplace" for commodities, wouldn't work at all. I'm pretty sure about that. In a show where most of the collectors try to present themselves as generous, noble consumers of the most noble and sophisticated objects, it's indispensable to conceal the economic aspects. Money should remain unseen, backstage of the happening. On the front stage of the event, you don't talk about money; you don't show it, even if it's everywhere. Even if it's crucial, everybody involved in the game has an interest in hiding it.

Organizing a meeting place specifically conceived to talk only about money and pricing would demolish the charismatic power and effect of the artwork, it would destroy the rules of the game. And the people attending the event are very clear: we are here primarily as lovers of art and not in our role of wealthy people. In a way, the idea to "stop hiding reality" is interesting, but people need and want this kind of charm of the pure "love of art," making it possible to chase away the banal, vulgar economic aspects of the marketplace. It would be like showing a Hollywood movie to an audience while disclosing and displaying all the events and the special effects produced for it. I'm not convinced at all about this possibility.

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FG – In your opinion, are fair formats like Villa Warsaw (2006), Villa Reykjavik (2009) and Villa Tokyo (2011)—urban fairs using cheap city locations as venues—interesting experiments? Do you see clues for the future in this kind of experiment?

FS – I think it's a good idea to sell an art fair via a sort of happening, organized around a place with symbolic value, and constructing a new kind of marketing where it's possible to mix different categories of players. It's maybe the only way—facing the positions of the very big players—to establish something new in this context. A big part of all this business is based on cultural events, and why shouldn't we play this game—while the others are occupying the very important positions—by inventing a sort of event that will make people interested in coming to a place for three or four days? Making a small town a sort of Gesamtkunstwerk—the whole town becoming a sort of microcosm of the art world—to offer a sort of collective feeling, a sort of happening and so on. In a way it already functions a little bit like this in the case of Miami, where the "event strategy" works pretty well with all the important collectors.

In fact, there's one thing these wealthy people usually don't have: it's time. They go to art fairs because it's a concentration of the global art world in one place for a few days, and during these four or five days, there's a big density of VIPs over a short time, and even in that specific moment, we're talking about three or four thousand people. It's not a dozen or a hundred. When you're inside and you take photographs of these three, four thousand people coming in, you often have the feeling of observing a situation very similar to a sale at a big shop or supermarket when people are coming in to buy everything for 50 percent off. We have several pictures documenting this kind of rush at the entrance of Art Basel. Most of the collectors enter as quickly as possible, with a sheet of paper in their hands showing

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what booth they have to visit in order to find the things they're interested in. They often don't seem very distinguished, elegant or noble in that specific circumstance! Even if they are pursuing the romantic dream of the pure love of art, it's evidence that they are hurrying into a commercial place with high competition over rare goods. The contradiction between the romantic idea of discovering art and this empirical reality is difficult to deny or to relegate.

FG – Is the selection of the VIPs conservative like the selection of the galleries? Do you have data related to the buyers? Are they almost the same every year?

FS – They obviously didn't give us their names, so we cannot track this kind of aspect, but we know from the collectors we're interviewing—big players—that they're in the first-choice group of VIPs. We think that the very important people of the art world are very well known, and we're really sure that the selection is relatively the same each year. We have met people who have been moved from category two to three, for instance. We assume that is due to the arrival of more and more millionaires coming from South America, for example. We found a growing population of potential buyers, and the selection of course takes into account these kind of shifts and necessities. But even considering the changes, we have the feeling that the list of invited VIPs is nearly the same from one year to the next. If I had to say, it's more conservative than changing.

Sure, you find new collectors coming from Russia, from Arab countries, but what is interesting to us is that these people are currently not very well accepted by the art-fair establishment. These newcomers have the money necessary to enter the game and try to be players in it, but they are regularly stigmatized as not knowing anything about art, as faking the "love of art" just as the bourgeois gentleman created by Molière was faking "savoir vivre" and noble manners.

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There is a kind of noblesse of the very ancient families who have the legitimation of several generations, or the old bourgeoisie, forming a kind of aristocracy of the art world, which takes very exclusive attitude toward these newcomers. "Chinese people who didn't know anything about art ten years ago are now buying our Picassos." There's actually a kind of cultural racism in this sense.

FG – A research project like the one you're carrying out has many delicate aspects. You mentioned you're taking visual documentation at the fair: pictures of collectors, pictures of galleries. The art world is a very conceited world, but at the same time, a context where images are very much under control, and where social relations and hidden behavior can even be part of the artists' practice itself. How would you manage this topic?

FS – We haven't yet decided if we're definitely going to take the pictures inside. It's very difficult because people—VIPs, mostly—don't like to become "objects" of scientific observation. Actually there are also important legal problems we will talk about with the direction of Art Basel before publishing our book, and we will respect their desire to have us show them the photographs we would like to use first in order to avoid potential conflicts.

FG – How far can you push your study? Are you allowed by the fair to study and explore every aspect of how the event functions? How is a sociologist to get behind the curtain of an event like this, where some business must be kept confidential?

FS – My colleagues and myself have really often got the feeling of finding ourselves in an ambivalent situation. Even with the directors of the fair. They generously let the sociologists inside, but they don't know exactly what they're doing. It's clear that sociologists share a critical view of this

kind of social world, especially when they are as close to Pierre Bourdieu as I am, having worked with him for some sixteen years: we're talking about symbolic domination, we have a look at how very wealthy people buy art, spending quite a lot of money in order to get symbolic goods and legitimation of their wealth.

We have a look at the kind of struggle between different groups of collectors and take notes when listening to collectors tell us "You know, to be a real art collector you have to have it in your biology or you'll never have it." We cannot close our eyes and ears when facing clear symptoms of class arrogance or strategies of social distinction.

When we went to Miami Beach in December 2011 and 2012, we visited the private museums of different collectors. Very fine people who offered us their hospitality and time, and we talked a lot. I loved these people; at the same time, they were talking about the recently published book *Back to Blood*, a novel set in Miami, where the author, Tom Wolfe, talked about Art Basel Miami Beach and how the big collectors sometimes behave, looking at them from a very critical point of view. They tried to defend themselves, their image and their reputation. We could feel to what degree they felt wounded by the description Wolfe gives of their role and behavior. The contrast between the images of themselves they project outside the world of the arts of course contrasts very much with the idea they have of their identity. Everything was so evident to us, but from the standpoint of the ethics of our scientific research, we will at all costs avoid falling into the trap of social resentment and denunciation.

FG – What is the relationship between the art fair and the local context? Art Basel is a model of reference, with almost 50 years of history, but how do you see the new format of fairs growing in countries where this kind of model never existed before?

FS – It's very interesting. When we were in Miami last year, it was the tenth time that Art Basel was being held in Florida. There was a political event where a representative of the town of Basel and a politician from the city of Miami—responsible for the art and design district—were discussing how much the city changed since the arrival of the fair. The design district is an astonishing place, with big design shops, private foundations and so on. The city was profoundly transformed by the arrival of this event, of the contemporary art transported there by an important institution like Art Basel, a brand which had all the global symbolic power already established in Switzerland and Swissness, something that works very well around the world. Miami is not the same as ten years ago, and I'm sure I'll be able to say the same of Hong Kong in 2023.

Furthermore, Art Basel in Hong Kong is interesting because it's based on a new formula of art fair: 90 to 95 galleries from the East and 90 to 95 from the West. The idea is to present a new kind of mix. It's a sort of hub where two cultural areas and cultural habitus meet. Something fascinating, on the one hand, and I think very complex to manage on the other, because the aesthetic values of the two cultures—the Asian world and our own—are not at all the same. Far Eastern culture is actually not our contemporary. Its history of art in the last century is completely disconnected to Western modernity and what has happened here in our countries. So the crucial question here is again: we're working on globalization, but what does globalization mean? Is globalization a sort of imperialism or colonization of these countries by dominating Western civilizations? Just as we brought them Christianity and many other Western values, we're now bringing them our idea of legitimate culture, art and lifestyles. When we look at the meeting of the Eastern and Western world in Hong Kong, are we dealing with a sort of transcultural exchange or a one-way road with a sender

of a message on the one hand and a recipient on the other? Even more: is globalization coming from different parts of the world, and is there a kind of global art coming out of this process which is much richer than what we had, or are we dealing with a process of cultural standardization? Exhibitions like "Magiciens de la Terre" (1989) or Documenta 11 (1992) explored the topic of globalization in different ways, between colonialism and exchange. That's a crucial question in Hong Kong.

FG – You did interviews with some auction house directors too. What kind of role are auctions playing in the art context nowadays? What kind of social actors are they?

FS – Yes, we interviewed a few of them and we met them in Hong Kong, too. In Asia you don't yet find important museums or institutions presenting contemporary art, everything is starting now. You don't find an established culture of galleries. Chinese people don't like galleries that much. They complain about the fact that galleries want 50 percent of the price of the artworks, and for this financial reason they prefer going to auction houses where they pay only the 15 percent auction charge. Of course there's another reason for this kind of preference: during an auction you can see other participants bidding and raising. Through this kind of transparency—anyone can see if there's a collector offering one million dollars for this or that artwork—it's also possible to understand more about art scene and the system. The market logic is much more evident and seems to inspire confidence.

It's also very interesting to see that nowadays auction houses are developing new strategies, opening up their business and way of engaging with the market. More and more often they're choosing young contemporary artists who haven't yet found their way to galleries and selling their

artworks directly. The traditional division of labor in the art field between the different institutions and professions seems less and less clearly respected nowadays. For example, recently, the well-known Swiss auction house Kornfeld embarked on a joint venture with the Galerie Bischoff, which in the future will give up its autonomy and function as a sort of exhibition space for the auction house. Elsewhere, the well known Austrian gallery Ropac opened an enormous new exhibition space in the suburbs of Paris, and this new gallery has nearly all the characteristic attributes of a traditional museum, with a dozen of exhibitions of highly rated artists a year, a café, a shop for visitors and so on. The contemporary art world is undergoing fundamental transformations and most of them seem to confirm the hypothesis that we are dealing with a process of massive economization and commercialization of art.

So you can see that inside the field of art speculation, production, and commercialization, the relative impact of different players is changing very rapidly. Auction houses today are quite often opening their own galleries. In addition to holding auctions, they have their private museums where they show artworks they've bought for themselves, and they have galleries where their clients can come all year long and buy artworks directly: for the galleries and art fairs that's dangerous, in a way.

FG – How do you imagine the future?

FS – Hard to say. Sociologists should not play the role of prophets, speculating about possible future developments. We prefer to collect empirically founded knowledge about what people in the art field think about their future, because they actually are engaged directly in the "making of the future." Their representations of the years to come in relation to art market developments, even if they are speculations, can turn into self-fulfilling prophecies and

become real, as these agents of the art field act in the direction of their beliefs and projections concerning upcoming scenarios.

From our discussions, surveys and interviews, we've gathered interesting information. In relation to the role of the art fair, gallerists, for instance, have told us that the Asian market, with Hong Kong at its center, is on the way to become the most interesting art market, followed by Shanghai and Seoul. Concerning Latin America, dealers see São Paulo and Mexico City as places that will play a major part in the future field of art fairs, while traditional hubs of the art market like New York, London and Paris should preserve, so they tell us, their status quo role. Other places like Madrid are seen as the losers in this ongoing evolution. Visitors and collectors in Basel and Miami stressed the role of the Arab countries too.

Dealers consulted about who had the most influential role on the scene for the future interestingly pointed to collectors as major players, and only then art fairs and auction houses. Again according to the dealers, museums and the prestige of the galleries are still important factors for price evolution on the market, whereas the role of critics in this sense has dropped sharply in the past few years compared to curators.

I can say that figures in the art world are really interested in the very idea of the "future," in the possibility of foreseeing it; and, even more, they actively contribute to the realization of it. For us, the coming developments are imagined in another way. We would describe the evolution of the scenario as a sort of drifting apart among the higher segments of the art market and the art field as a whole. Modern art and all of its possibilities are products of a Western history that is marked by the contrast between art and the "commercial." So this is also the future arena for an essential conflict, to decide where the art world is going. But to us the weapons are, in fact, unequally distributed.

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