SOCIAL MEDIA, EXPERTISE AND THE ART WORLD

MASTER THESIS

By

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ABSTRACT

There is not much research done on the implementation and the consequences of Web 2.0 on the art world. The research so far has focused on earlier uses of the World Wide Web such as commercial online galleries, digital art as an art form, and museum practices in the online realm. The main focus of this work will fall on the relation between amateurs and experts within the arts and how are these relations impacting the existing expert roles in cultural industries and institutions such as the role of the curator, the museum and the art critic. Curators, art critics and gallery managers have been usually perceived as experts in the field of art and have been trusted with the task of validating and contextualizing art. The museum on the other hand, is still seen as one of the ultimate art institutions when it comes to validating what constitutes as art. Further, social media has triggered talk about greater audience and amateur involvement in art evaluation. The purpose of this master's thesis is to investigate if social media tools manifest the democratization of the high art sphere? Are cultural institutions such as museums and galleries bending their ear to the public voice on how art should be exhibited and experienced in museums and galleries? Or are social media tools actually reinforcing the existing roles within the art world? Is the role of the expert being challenged or reinforced by the greater involvement of amateurs in the art world? Finally social media platforms will be examined in order to determine to what extent their role as public spaces can foster the process of knowledge creation via the social interaction of the members within them.

Key words: Social media, art, art world, experts, amateurs, expertise, knowledge construction

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1. Introduction

Web 2.0 (O'Reilly, 2005) triggered a massive change both in real life and in cyberspace. Ordinary people were given the tools to comment, create, share, reshape, disperse and interact with content online. As Jenkins (2004) notes, as the process of convergence happens within the media world, the lines between the amateur and the expert, producer and consumer, between the individual and the institution, and the notions between high and low culture start to blur. Many scholars within the field of new media (Jenkins, 2004, Benkler, 2006, Shirky, 2008) have been optimistic about the possible democratization of society due to the increasing involvement of lay users of new social media tools. Others have seen the rising power of the masses to create and disseminate content on an unprecedented scale as a major threat to our culture and values (Keen, 2007). Despite the obvious impact of social media and digital technologies on fields such as the music industry, film production, journalism, and telecommunication, it is interesting to explore the ways social media tools of the 21st century are impacting the art world and its cultural institutions, such as museums, art galleries and the experts that are involved in the art process.

There is not much research done on the implementation and the consequences of Web 2.0 on the art world. The research so far has focused on earlier uses of the World Wide Web such as commercial online galleries, digital art as an art form, and museum practices in the online realm. The main focus of this work will fall on the relation between amateurs and experts within the arts and how are these relations impacting the existing expert roles in cultural industries and institutions such as the role of the curator, the museum and the art critic. Curators, art critics and gallery managers have been usually perceived as experts in the field of art and have been trusted with the task of validating and contextualizing art. The museum on the other hand, is still seen as one of the ultimate art institutions when it comes to validating what constitutes as art. Further, social media has triggered talk about greater audience and amateur involvement in art evaluation. The purpose of this master's thesis is to investigate if social media tools manifest the democratization of the high art sphere? Are cultural institutions such as museums and galleries bending their ear to the public voice on how art should be exhibited and experienced in museums and galleries? Or are social media tools actually reinforcing the existing roles within the art world? Is the role of the expert being challenged or reinforced by the greater involvement of amateurs in the art world? Finally social media platforms will be examined in order to determine to what extent their role as public spaces can foster the process of knowledge

creation via the social interaction of the members within them.

The Master Thesis will provide insights on the relations between the different actors in the art world in the social media domain and it will also feed into the greater volume of scientific work which is examining how users are participating in the online sphere.

The Master Thesis will be organized in the following manner. First a literature review will try to outline the existing ideas concerning the art world and the actors involved in to it. Afterward it will determine the major characteristics of what constitutes an expert and how we decide if someone is an expert in the given field. Then the literature review will proceed by analyzing the current ideas relating with the social media platforms such as blogs and how their use by amateurs has contested the traditional authority of experts. This will be done by outlining how the blogosphere and amateur bloggers have criticized the traditional experts by doing so the literature review will aid us in understanding the shifts in the perception of experts triggered by the arrival of social media. Finally an interaction analysis model developed by Gunawerdana et al. for analyzing collaborative knowledge construction will be presented. This model has been developed in order to study how members in a online space can construct new knowledge and resolve a common problem via social intercourse and social discord. The model was developed particularly for studying the interactions in a online space (forum) and can serve as useful tool for analyzing the discourse taking place in the researched blogs.

Following the literature review the Thesis will continue by explaining the process of data collection and the used methodology for the purpose of the conducted research. Afterward the gathered data on how audiences are interacting with experts in social media platforms will be analyzed in order to determine how and if lay users are contesting the role of the expert and if social media has led to the formation of new expert roles. Following the data analysis the social media platforms will be analyzed in order to determine if there are signs for knowledge construction by using the Gunawerdana et al. (1997) interaction analysis model.

Based on the findings from the data analysis there will be a discussion on the possible changes triggered by social media followed by a conclusion outlining the findings of the research.

2. Literature Review

Amateurs and experts:

There has been a large ongoing debate both within the academic and the public field regarding the level by which the Internet, and more recently Web 2.0 applications and social media, empowers the lay users, the general public, the amateurs, etc. Notions such as the collective intelligence, the hive mind, the wisdom of the crowds have celebrated the possibility for large communities of geographically dispersed individuals to construct, evaluate and disseminate knowledge and information. Bottom up systems were heralded to hold great potential and power in empowering the masses. Also this new form of communication brought by the Internet was seen as an opposite to the traditional top down, hierarchical structure most institutions in the field of media, politics, consumption and the culture held. On of the first researchers in to the new medium and the way the public was using it was Howard Rheingold who adopted a view that today may seem radical, he believed that bottom up structures would be able to construct and evaluate knowledge and meaning without any top down structure (Rheingold, 1992). In more recent years the arrival of what Tim O'Reilly branded Web 2.0 has transformed the Internet and has supposedly increased the possibilities for the general public to engage in practices in information consumption and distribution which are seen as more democratic than the ones in the previous eras. Certain scholars of new media have celebrated the power of the many and have brought forth the proposition that this new medium will blur the borders between the amateur and the expert, producer and consumer, between the individual and the institution, between the notions of high and low culture. (Jenkins, 2004; Benkler,2006; Shirky, 2008). Traditional power institutions, intermediaries and experts have fallen under criticism by the general public regarding their position and function in the contemporary world. Social media is helping more and more people to voice their opinion on diverse matters and facilitates new voices to enter discourses which were in the past reserved or restricted to a limited number of qualified experts.

This zeitgeist in which the amateur's voice has been amplified by social media, is creating a massive tide of amateur generated information, it has triggered the status change for some amateurs who have been able with the help of social media to elevate themselves to the status of an expert in a given field. This rise in the common man's expression of his opinion was met by some scholars with a great deal of concern and skepticism. Authors such as Keen have seen the "Cult of the Amateur" as a threat to the very institutions which he sees as the pillars of our contemporary culture. There was the fear that the new information that amateurs were creating will undermine the foundations of the traditional experts and cultural gatekeepers and by doing so will result in the erosion of our culture due to the fact that it was precisely the work of those experts and gatekeepers that defined and communicated culture to the general public. Keen saw experts as the individuals who were educated and capable to put the focus of

the public attention on a matter they seemed worthy of their attention and were able to communicate the importance of a given cultural practice or artifact (Keen, 2007). It was precisely this editorial function that cultural intermediaries and experts held that was under threat according to some voices in the ongoing debate.

However the call for editorial practice in and its values in an environment where there is an increasing amount of user generated content is not a new one. Kevin Kelly in the dawn of the hype surrounding the new medium has noted that with the greater increase of the volume of information and the voices in the discourse the harder it will be to move the knowledge and meaning process further. In this era of information abundance the editorial or intermediary role, some have argued, will not only not parish but there will be even a greater call for it in order to harvest the hive mind or the crops produced by the collective intelligence. While the level of editing may decrease it will note disappear. (Kelly, 1994). With the hysteria surrounding Web 2.0 starting to subsume it has become apparent that the celebrated notion of purely amateur, bottom up, non-hierarchical structures is somehow not entirely true. Even the banner of the supporters of the hive mind approach and its effectiveness – Wikipedia turned out to be not exactly free, bottom up system, where everybody had the equal status. In their research on the way Wikipedia was operating Kitur, et al (2007) established that a large part of the entries in the digital library were the work of a few professionals who were serving not only as writers but as editors, not surprisingly most of them possessed knowledge be it technical or academical that distinguished them from the "average Joe".

Despite such fact it has been proven that collective intelligence holds great power within it and has been seen as if not an opposition then an alternative to the information provided by experts or traditional power institutions, such as the media corporations, the State, Universities etc. The debate surrounding the amateur-expert relation has been marked so far by opinions marked by great polarity. There is a growing consensus between the different parties that there is a need for re-visiting existing hypothesis and re-evaluating the relationship in a less "black and white" perspective. Furthermore while there has been evidence how social media can lead to the erosion of authority and the rise of the amateur as a new expert most of the debate is centered around popular culture and recently the political sphere where platforms such as Facebook, Tweeter, YouTube are driving the change. By situating the debate in the art world which has been characterized as hierarchical, closed, elitist, expert driven it is possible to explore the amateur-expert relationship in a new light and from a different standpoint.

The Art World:

The Art world provides an interesting realm in which we can situate the "amateur-expert" debate, since unlike other realms it has been the stronghold of experts for quite some time. The art world has been characterized by authority, expertise, elitism and it is a hierarchical structure due to the fact that high art and high culture have for centuries been distinguished from popular culture and the masses. Being perceived as a citadel of expertise the art world presents the opportunity to explore how and if social media is forcing a change in the established relations in the realm of the art world. But prior to investigating the implications of social media within the art world and its impact upon it, it is necessary to outline the structure, actors and interactions within the realm so that we can gain a better understanding of the its internal dynamics.

First we need to define the problematic idea of the art world since it is a vague and unclear in general. A definition presented Martin Irvine a professor in the Georgetown university and a founder of Irvine Contemporary art gallery sees:

*The primary function of the art world is continually to define, validate, and maintain **the cultural category of art**, and to produce the consent of the entire society in the legitimacy of the art world's authority to do so.*

- *The art world is thus part of our system of professions, and many parts of the art world network are now highly professionalized and careerist.*

- *As in all institutions as interdependent networks, you don't need to know you are participating in the art world to be carrying out its primary cultural function. (Irvine, 2008, p.1.)*

Also in his summary on the different theories, actors and purposes of the art world Irvine sums up the actors in the art world. They include:

- art schools, colleges, and professional art teachers

- artists

- art historians and academic art theorists

- art critics, art writers

- art periodical publishers, magazine editors and professional production staff

- book publishing industry for art books, monographs, museum exhibitions

- professional associations for artists, educators, and dealers

- art dealers and galleries

- curators, museum directors, other museum professionals

- public and private art collection managers

- international art fair organizers, corporations, supporters, funders

- managers and organizations for international art exhibitions (biennials, Documenta, etc.)

- art collectors

- art patrons, donors, public art funders

- private arts support foundations, both direct grants to artists and funding of art organizations (museums, non-profit spaces, university galleries, etc.) (connected to general economy through invested endowments and private contributions)

- all staff levels in art funding organizations: public (local, state, and federal government) and private (foundations, corporate art funding)

- auction houses and art business professionals in the auction companies

- art consultants

- art investment advisers

- art insurance companies

- art market data companies and publishers

- art advertising and art marketing specialists

- directors of non-profit and alternative art spaces

- art materials suppliers and materials fabricators

- conservators, art materials specialists

- museum and collections security systems, climate control, archiving

(Irvine, 2008, p.6)

The Art world is been used as a concept and as unifying term for all the practices, actors and institutions with in the domain of art. Despite being a frequently used concept today it did not come in to existence until the 60's when Arthur C. Danto used the definition in his 1964 essay. Here he does not only outline the characteristics of the art work and the art world but he also identifies key aspects in the production and consumption process of art. In Danto's view despite the creation process of an artwork the greater appreciation of art is linked with interaction within the social structures within the art world. Thus by interacting with as many actors within the art world and getting acquainted with as much art works and styles as possible one can gain a greater appreciation towards art. (Danto, 1964). Social interaction is then seen as a vital part of the practices of art production, consumption, evaluation and appreciation. Danto recognizes that with the art world there are actors and institutions who have acquired distinctive authoritative positions – such actors are connoisseurs (experts, critics, curators) and museums which play a critical role in the discourse running within the art world and have a strong say in the process of recognizing and validating an art form or an artifact as art.

Another scholar who was investigating the workings of the art world was George Dickie whom unlike Danto places a greater importance on the individual artist in the process of defining what constitutes as art. In his view it was the symbiosis between the individual and institutional actors which made it possible for the definition of art. (Dickie, 1969) In his original definition of a work of art George Dickie (1969) describes an art piece as:

A work of art in the classificatory sense is 1) an artifact 2) upon which some person or persons acting on behalf of a certain social institution (the artworld) has conferred the status of candidate for appreciation.. (Dickie, 1969, p.464)

It is clear that in Dickie's view art consisted of both the physical object created by an artists as a work of art and the validation of this object by the institutions of the art world. However this theory has been revised since it was lacking a major component – that of the public of the art in question. Conversely the art world public has its own characteristics as described by Dickie:

Such a public is not just a collection of people. The members of an art world public are such because

they know how to fulfill a role which requires knowledge and understanding similar in many respects of that required of an artist. (Dickie, 1983, p.51)

It would seem that Irvine has missed a major component of the art world's structure that of the public, unless we accept the premise that the art world is its own public. However Dickie's definition of the art world public is in itself exclusive and outlines a group that possesses characteristics that are not typical for most of the general population. Such a "Members only" approach doesn't seem to fit today's reality where art in all of its forms is presented and displayed to the general public. However the greater public exposure to art doesn't necessarily result in a democratization of the art field.

Contemporary conceptual art has presented a type of "Members only" or it should be said "Experts only" approach when it came to evaluation, judgment and appreciation of such works of art. For example evaluation of Tracy Emin's 1999 installation "My Bed" was restricted to a very narrow circle of "experts" the exact line was:

No-one without the training and exposure to appropriate gallery-going is… 'competent' [to make a judgment]. So, can one derive the conclusion that only they should judge art? (Collins and Evans, 2002, p.)

Despite the abundance of opinion on this particular work of art by people both in and out of the art world the opinion within the art world remain indifferent to those of lay people.

It is important to note that the purpose of this thesis is not to come up with a definition on what should be considered as art; neither it will make any judgments on the relevance and values of contemporary conceptual art. The goal of this work is to examine how the implementation of social media within the art world is relating to the expert-amateur relationship. The debate and controversy surrounding contemporary conceptual art practices provides with a topic where expertise is being contested both online and in the real world.

The art world especially in the times before the Internet and social media were available was considered a closed structure which had the authoritative say on matters of art. Despite the multiple actors working with the art world there was still a clear hierarchy and system by which those at the top of the art world would legitimize art, construct meaning about it, and disseminate that meaning on to the general public which was perceived as less knowledgeable. Becker have perceived the art world as both the combined image presented to the public which includes all the celebrity artists and collectors

that fill the pages in the art section of a newspaper, and that which according to him is a more subtle art world consisting of actors with greater knowledge and practice in the field of arts that are actually the ones the make art possible. This closed network of people also is seen to use its knowledge and networking skills in order to maintain knowledge and decision making power (Becker, 1982).

It seems that the art domain has been perceived and has acted as a domain of exclusion rather then inclusion with a few actors within it holding significant power and authority. Research on evaluation practices within the art world have proven the not only certain actors (critics) have considerable power as experts but that these actors would apply evaluation criteria which remains unexplained to the general public shrouding it in secrecy (Greenfield, 1989). Greenfield analysis of the Israeli art world is crucial not only because she identifies the main gatekeepers within the art world but because she presents an idea similar to that of Becker that the art world is not a unified entity and that it is possible for multiple art worlds to coexist simultaneously and each of these art worlds may contain its own actors and practices linked to a specific movement in art (Greenfield, 1989).

Other researchers of the practices and interactions within the art world have suggested that when we are discussing it we must approach it as an imagined idea or a community of common interests rather than a solid factual group of people. The art world has been perceived by some as more of a "discursive formation" that is defined by the interaction between the different actors (Sullivan, 1995). It is the interactions between these actors that make the art worlds possible. It is a combined effort of the artist creating the art work followed by the intellectuals and experts within the art field who are the ones responsible for the reputation and networking of the art within the public field (Baumann, 2001).

It can be implied from previous studies of the art world that it is defined by elitist and exclusive hierarchical practices which privilege the dominant elite consisting of experts be it artists, museum directors, curators, critics who have the defining way in shaping the processes and relations within the art world. However for the purposes of this thesis it is necessary to outline the tasks experts (critics and curators) perform, what is their place within the system of the art world and why are they seen as figures of authority within the art domain.

In their research in to the practices in the art world Joy and Sherry (2003) outlined one of the most important actors which are: artists, art critics, curators, historians, art dealers, art galleries and auction houses. These are part of the public which constitutes the art world. Their roles are of a prominent importance since they are actors in "an artistic field capable of formulating and imposing its own ends against external demands" (Bourdieu, 1987, p.202). According to Bourdieu it is via the competition and

discord between the different agents within the art world that reproduces the interest and the inscribed values and virtues in the art world (Bourdieu, 1987). The process of art creation can not and should not be limited to that of the creation or the exhibition of an art work, it should take into account the discourse surrounding the art work since it is precisely via discord that an art work or an artist is validated as such.

If such is, the logic of the field then one can understand why the concepts used to consider works of art and particularly their classifications, are characterized (as Wittgenstein has observed) by the most extreme indeterminacy. (Bourdieu, 1987, p. 205)

This thesis focuses on the relation between the general public supposedly consisting of amateurs in the art sphere and actors in the art world – in this case critics and curators, and leaves out the rest of the inhabitants of the art domain.

The Art Critic:

Art critics have been an integral and important part in the process of defining, talking of, and validating art. They are also the people involved in the creation of symbolic meaning connected and attributed to certain artworks (Joy & Sherry, 2003; Venkatesh and Meamber, 2006; Taylor and Carpenter, 2007). As Joy and Sherry note:

Art criticism provides the rationale for setting disciplinary guidelines, helps to train new writers and critics, and contributes to the growth and maturity of academic concerns. The identification and promotion of new talent have been long the task of the critic. Objects that enter the process of evaluation through narration enjoy a certain privilege in the history of culture. The more complex the narrative, the greater the importance accorded the object and the higher its value. (Joy and Sherry, 2003, p.161)

Venkatesh and Meamber (2008) also recognize the fact that actors within the filed of art such as critics, curators, museum managers, artists and gallery owners all play a part in the process of "production and diffusion of the arts and aesthetics [and] contribute to the creation of the symbolic meaning and the transfer of these meanings to cultural products" (Venkatesh and Meamber, 2008, p.18). In their analysis of creation and marketing of art and aesthetic products Venkatesh and Meamber (2008) outline several subsystems in the process with one of them being the communication system which attributes the product with a "symbolic set of attributes" and is responsible for disseminating these meanings to the general public.

It seems that the role of the art critic is quite important for the interactions and the practices within the art world. Their role in the process of creating and facilitating the discourse that ascribes symbolic meaning to art works and drives the art world forward. It is important to outline some of the characteristics of art critics.

In her study of the Israeli art world and the different actors within it Greenfield (1989) like others has described art critics as one of the important cultural gatekeepers which evaluate, talk, explain and eventually make an assessment of the virtues of a given artwork. Furthermore Greenfield notes that in the past critic was the one who:

from the heights of his knowledge and understanding, aids the public to distinguish between good and bad, between what is worthy of being exhibited and what is not worthy. (Greenfield, 1989, p.80).

Tracing the backgrounds of art critic it became apparent that they were essentially people who were currently or at some point liked to other institutions within the art world be it museums, art schools, galleries or artists themselves. Besides some exceptions that came from outside the art world and latter vanished from the scene the profile of the art critic was that of a person already dealing within the matters of the art sphere (Greenfield, 1989). Critics are expected of being knowledgeable in the theories and practices in the current art world but another and perhaps more important requirement is to be deeply involved within the social interactions that take place in the art world. They are expected to visit and interact with other art spaces such as galleries in order to build up the necessary background experience in order to acquire a deeper and more profound understanding on the matters of art.

Such attributes combined with the connection with the art world has been a characteristic of the art critics it is precisely these conditions that give him the power to speak and act as a figure of authority within the art world. In the past critics along with art historians were seen as one of the most important experts within the art world. However due to the changes within the art world such as the arrival of a new discourse – the postmodernism along with the increasing trend for the co modification of art have taken some of the power critics held in the past. Today while handing over some of their power to other actors within the art world such as curators and art historians (Greenfield, 1989; Shrum, 1996) the critics still are an important actor in the art world since they are perceived as experts who posses the necessary characteristics to facilitate and move the discourse within the art world.

Despite their obvious role of cultural gatekeepers within the art matters, an art critic should not necessarily be granted the status of an expert. It would be more accurate to state that the role of the expert is precisely this - a role that the art critic steps in and out of. Since the pallet of art styles and

forms has become so diversified so has critics diversified their expertise. Stern (2002) notes that when dealing with art criticism the critic can act in several different roles – that of the amateur, the connoisseur or a professional critic and that a person can step in and out of any of these roles at a given time. It is quite possible for a person when confronted with multiple art works or styles to adopt all three roles however it is only when one is assuming the role of the professional critic that one needs to make judgments and evaluations from the figure of authority. Also an important observation made by Stern (2002) is the fact that not only art critics can assume the role of the "professional critic", connoisseurs or in other words people who have understanding and appreciation to art can also attempt and to assume the role of an professional critic. The decision on whether one should be accepted as a "professional critic" lies in the intersection where the opinions of the person assuming the role, the rest of the professional critics and the general public cross paths. (Stern, 2002). This observation is an important aspect in the relationship between experts and amateurs in the art realm since it moves the general understanding of the process from one that is set in time and space and where the expert is viewed as a person, to the idea that "expert" and "amateur" are fluid roles in which the people involved in the art field can step in and out of.

In recent years art critics has lost some of their agenda setting power within the art realm to other actors such as curators and art collectors (Joys and Sherry, 2003; Carol, 2007). Nevertheless they remain a key part of the art world since they are still one of the groups, along with curators and other, who largely shape the discussions within the art world and direct the public's attention in different directions.

The Curator:

Like the art critic, the curator is a key figure within the system of the art world. This is so not only because the curator is another prominent actor who shapes the discourse within the art world and attributes symbolic meaning and value upon an artist or an art work. The curator and his function are seen by some as:

[T]he linchpin in a system that imbues art with aesthetic significance. The research and development essential to the commercial success of an artist, or the establishment of a style, is carried out by curators within museum settings. Curatorial decisions catapult an object from obscurity to international acclaim because of the research that is done. Without curators, critics would lose their primary source materials. (Joy and Sherry, 2003, p.163)

One of the reasons why the curator is seen as one of the most important figures of knowledge and

expertise lies in the historical relationship between the fine arts museum and the role of the curator. If we trace the practices of museums and curatorial practice back to the first public galleries it is not hard to see the power of the curator in shaping the public understanding of art, for it is actually the museum which first validated the authority and the expertise of the curator. Museums have been perceived and still are perceived by many as the ultimate institution of authority (Joy and Sherry, 2003). It is a combination of multiple factors that make the museum what it is, among many its initial function as a sanctuary, with all the exclusive practices within museum architecture, the dominant and authoritative tone and discourse, they all build a feeling of superiority of importance (Gestsson, 2009; Joy and Sherry, 2003; Venkatesh and Meamber, 2008). It is within this setting of authority that the role of the curator was formed and gained its significance.

The curator is seen as a person with deep understanding, knowledge and expertise within the matter of art, he is also expected to have come from the cycle of the art world or in other words he is expected to be associated with an art school or education, relationship with other members of the art world etc. His tasks within the museum has been researching, preserving, cataloging, indexing, staging, choosing, and providing the surrounding narrative of an entire exhibition. Being seen as a figure of great knowledge and authority combined with its affiliation with the museum meant that the choice and decisions of the curator were going to be rarely challenged by the other actors within the art world.

However with the processes of c*ommodification* of art ever increasing, the conflation between the art market and the art world, and the rise of new actors and structures of power and authority such as the private collector and the commercial gallery has forced a change within the role of the curator. Despite loosing some of his decision making and agenda setting power in the contemporary art world the curator still remains an important figure in the process of art validation and evaluation, apart from this role the curator, much like the artist, and the art critic has been forced to adopt a rather more flexible and adaptive role. Today apart as a supreme judge on art matters the curator is also expected to act as an art educator or an adviser or a marketing agent when placed in commercial setting. Nevertheless this chameleon like function has helped the curator to remain a powerful agent within the art world. Some have stated that:

[I]t is the curators who travel the most, who see the greatest range of work, who have the broadest sense of practice; the curators whose activity (exhibition) is closest to the practice and has the greatest impact on it. Many critics today wonder why criticism is so enervated... [T[he vitality of critical debate appears to have shifted, at least for now from discourse to curating. [I]t's the curator who is most

informed, who is the most able to articulate what's interesting and important in art practice. (Meyer in Carroll,2007, p. 138).

Today curators again are faced with a world of change, a world in which traditional roles and institutions are being questioned, a world where the public demands a greater involvement in practices which were previously out of their reach. The tools provided to the masses by Web 2.0 has expanded the idea of curating to an activity available to everybody who has the interest to do it. With the more and more of the images of the art world becoming available in the digital realm users today can "curate" their own collections and present them online. This practice has raised concerns regarding the possible devaluation of the elite or expert status of the traditional art curator. Many professional curators have expressed concerns about the "dumbing down" of the activities they perform, while others have expressed the feeling that broadening the idea what a curator is does not diminish their expert status since according to them there is a difference in the way an "expert" and an "amateur" curator understand and approach the task of a curator (Schlatter, 2010).

The art sphere presents an interesting opportunity to examine how and if social media is causing some changes in the expert – amateur model when it comes to who provides the definitions in the field, who legitimizes something as art, and how knowledge and certainty are constructed between the different actors in the field. The art field has been surrounded by a certain deal of controversy throughout history. Simply because art itself is hard to define, it must be of no surprise that many art forms that are established in our present times have been surrounded by a great deal of criticism and debate when they appeared on the art scene: impressionism, expressionism, dada art, conceptual art, surrealism, cinema and photography have all been branded outrageous, indecent lacking aesthetic and artistic qualities and in general have caused both experts and the general public to question their existing perceptions of art, then renegotiate them and come up with some new answer to the grand question "What is art?".

The Contemporary Conceptual art scene:

Today one of the most controversial topics is that of conceptual art. Ever since its birth in 1917 when Marcel Duchamp exhibited his now famous *Fountain*, an urinal with reworked purpose and meaning, in a gallery setting both the public and the art establishment have been arguing passionately over what constitutes something as a work of art. In recent years the controversy surrounding conceptual art has been taken out of the closet dusted off and brought in to the spotlight again by artists such as Tracy Emin, Damien Hirst, Martin Creed, Bel Littlejohn and others whose work have forced the

artworld to rethink its perceptions of art. Once again like in the past the experts in the field of art and the general public have ended up on both sides of the barricade with one side represented by the art establishment such as: art critics, artists, curators, galleries such as TATE, and award committees such as the one giving the Turner prize have defended and praised conceptual art and the works of the YBA (Young British Artists) while on the other hand the general public and people who are involved in the art field without being a part of the art establishment have spoken against it questioning both its values and techniques.

The tension is apparent when we consider the response some works of art have provoked by experts and amateurs for example Sarah Kent a notable British art critic and a member of the Turner prize jury has described recent examples of conceptual art as: "It raises disturbing questions about life, death and the nature of art," or Mathew Collins another member of the British art establishment with his take on YBA's work: "It raises complex issues not only about who we are and where we are going but about what we are going to do when we get there, and who they are and when they are going and what we are   going to do when they've gone. It seems apparent that conceptual art has its value for the members of the art establishment. However when we look at the way the general public has responded to it the void between the two sides seems almost unreachable. Here are some of the responses by lay people:

"Concept art is the biggest fraud I have seen. Anyone can do it. It requires no talent or creativity.", "Personally conceptual art has no appeal whatsoever to me and requires no artistic talent to create whatsoever." "Someone who spouts rubbish to sell sub-standard goods is usually called a con-artist(BBC, 2002)

However one could argue that it was always the same when it came to new art forms the experts were the first to spot the potential, beauty and idea behind the art piece and the public followed along after some time. The problem in the case of contemporary conceptual art is that it has spurred criticism not only by lay people but by other members of the art establishment such as Ivan Massow, head of the Institute of Contemporary Arts who defined most conceptual art as: *"pretentious, self-indulgent, craftless tat"*, or Culture Minister Kim Howells who's take on the subject was: *"cold, mechanical, conceptual bullshit"*.

The Characteristics of Expertise:

Before we can explore how art expertise is contested in the online realm by the tools and

developments which consist of the now accepted term Web 2.0 (O'Reily 2005) it would be appropriate to outline those qualities that constitute when a person can be branded an "expert" in his given field. Also apart from the characteristics of expertise it is relevant to outline the role of the expert and that of other actors in processes such as certainty creation and knowledge construction in order to have a clear understanding of the changes social media is bringing in the relation between the expert and the amateur. Not only that but by identifying the profile of an expert we can juxtapose it to that of the amateur, since the presumption is that the expert is all those things which the amateur is not.

As Shanteau et al. have noted, experts are needed in areas which lack certainty *"and correct answers seldom exist…"*(Shanteau et al, 2003, p.253) The art sphere does meet those requirements actually the contemporary conceptual art sphere is one of the most uncertain up to date, where multiple opinions are existing simultaneously and it is extremely hard to determine who is the expert and which expert opinion is more valuable. The model presented by Shanteau et al. (2003) notes that a good and reliable measurement of expertise is the possibility to discriminate between similar cases and shows high level of consistency in his judgments and decisions. This does seem applicable in certain fields however it does not seem appropriate for the contemporary art field since as noted earlier the art field is characterized by constant reevaluation on definitions and practices,it would be a Herculean task for an art expert to keep his ratio high considering that definitions and benchmarks in the art world are in constant flux . However Shanteau et al. outline some other basic characteristics of the expert, and while all of them have certain shortcomings is is fair to say that these are the characteristics that constitute what today we perceive as an expert. The characteristics outlined in their research are:

- Experience – while it is an important factor for expertise, experience in a given field does not automatically grant a person the right to be considered an expert. For example a person may have worked a great deal of time in an art institution such as a museum but he would not be c*onsidered an art expert because of that. Nevertheless experience is vital for expertise but we must remember that is not the only requirement for it.

- Accreditation – While many consider accreditation to be a signature feature of expertise this is not the always the case, since once given a title the person will hold it for the rest of his life. The fact that one has some kind of accreditation does not mean that he is per se more knowledgeable on a given topic than someone who does not hold a title in the field. Multiple examples can be given for this and examples from the field of IT and software development

are illustrative of how those considered "lay people" can actually hold greater expertise than those with some form of accreditation. However within the art world accreditation by a prominent art school has been a must if one wanted to join the ranks of the art world experts.

- Social Acclimation (Peer Identification) – In cases when one can not rely on any personal indicators in a given field one can rely on the opinion of other professionals in the field. In other words the person who is recommended by the most professionals in his given field is granted the status of an expert. The shortcoming of this method of establishing expertise and granting expert status is the fact that there is the threat of granting the status to the most popular and most known person in the field rather than to the person who is actually the best professional in the group. Also as it will be elaborated later that professionals and experts tend to have a hostile attitude towards outsiders to their field. This again points out that sheer peer identification is not the best way to determine expertise.

- Consistency – In order for one person to be considered an expert he must show consistency in his performance, knowledge and judgments on matters in his field of expertise. Low levels of consistency would surely make others doubt the level of expertise and professionalism of the given individual. Although consistency is a fairly good indicator of one's expertise, there is the threat be consistent in following the wrong path which till a certain point has been considered the right one . We must not look very far in time to find such examples. A good example is Alan Greenspan the former Chairman of the US Federal Reserve who was considered a top level expert in the field of economics and finance until the financial crisis proved his expertise wrong.

- Consensus (between) reliability – Consensus between a group of experts is a necessary condition for their individual expert status. After all if there is major disagreement between experts this would suggest that their expertise is not genuine. However this expert indicator does not seem fit for the art world sense there are multiple examples where experts disagree. Furthermore it is possible to have different expert camps where one group disagrees with the other which is very much the case in the art world. Other than these shortcomings consensus between experts does not guarantee that this will be the best possible decision, since apparently the answer can lie in controversial areas in which the group does not wish to enter.

- Discrimination (make distinction between very similar cases) – An important characteristic of

expertise is the possibility to distinguish the differences between similar but not identical cases and make the correct decision and judgment depending on those small differences. As mentioned earlier this is hard to achieve in the field of art since notions are in constant flux and it is hard to make such judgments. Nevertheless even in the art world discrimination is an important quality of an expert. But it must be noted that others too can be able to tell the difference between similar cases, however other qualities besides discrimination are required in order to be granted an expert status.

- Knowledge – This seems one of the easiest and most obvious characteristics of expertise. After all, one is expected to be knowledgeable in his respective field in order to be branded an expert. However only knowledge is not enough, what differentiates the expert from the person who is simply knowledgeable is the way the knowledge is being put in practice. An expert is required to implement his knowledge in different situations and adjust it to the task at hand. An amateur may be knowledgeable on the different styles in art such as realism, impressionism, cubism etc, but that may be insufficient when he is asked to distinguish between the works of different artists.

After outlining some of the characteristics of experts it is important to determine the role experts play in our society. As noted earlier experts are needed in controversial fields and areas where certainty is low and notions and definitions are in flux. This is where the expert comes in to the spotlight in order to clear the mist of uncertainty and provide the public with some guidelines and definitions so that they can make sense of the available information on the topic. However as Collins and Evans (2002) point out that the decision-making process has changed over the last decades and along with that, the role of the expert in this process has changed as well. They outline three waves in this process with the "First Wave" being characterized by the dominance of the figure of the Experts in the decision making process in their own field as well as in other fields as well, since they were seen as coming from the world of academia since at that time was the highest possible authority on knowledge and expertise. Moving in time ideas coming from "social constructivism" entered the scientific and scholarly fields and it became apparent that other people were able to contribute to the decision making process, other people who were not necessarily scientists or scholars in the respective field. During this time considered as the "Second Wave" the boundaries between experts and non-experts started to blur to the point that it became hard to tell the difference between the two of them. In their proposed model of the "Third Wave" Collins and Evans (2002) argue for the reestablishment of

certain boundaries when it comes to expertise and its role in the decision making process. As it was noted in the Second Wave the boundaries were blurred beyond recognition, and what the third wave introduces is not the reestablishment of the strict boundaries between experts and non-experts but rather point out that it is possible that certain "pockets of expertise" exist amongst "non-certified experts", (Collins and Evans, 2002, p.205) the wider scientific community and the general public. These distinctions in the field of expertise are quite useful since it shows that expertise is not a unified solid domain but rather a more layered or diversified matter where different actors can contribute and be perceived as experts. So in order to aid our research the categories developed by Collins and Evans (2002) will be applied to the art world in order to outline some of the different actors in the process of decision making and certainty construction:

- Core Experts – These are the so called certified experts who hold main characteristics of expertise such as accreditation, experiences, knowledge, etc. In the art field we can identify art critics, the directors of galleries/museums, famous artist and exhibition curators who revolve around the prominent art clusters of our time – London, Paris, New York, Berlin and Los Angeles

- The broader scientific community – These are people who may not be involved with the core matters of the respective field but revolve around it and are associated with it in different ways. In the art world it can be said that these are art professors, students in the art field, less prominent artists, critics, curators and gallery owners.

- Uncertified experts – These are what one might call lay experts, however the term lay experts is controversial since the lay public's main characteristic is that it posses no expertise on the subject. Uncertified experts are members from the general public who are able to contribute to the decision making and certainty construction process but derive their expertise in a different manner than let' say the core experts. Their expertise may come from personal interest and education or professional experience. In our case uncertified experts within the art field can be an artist with no prior education, art enthusiasts, frequent visitors of art shows, collectors.

- The General Public – The general public consist of the rest of the population who has some interest in the respective field. They are not directly involved in the process of decision making or certainty construction but are the consumers of the end product that came out of

the interaction between the former three actors. In the art domain the general public are people who either have no affiliation with art or is not interested or concerned with tensions and debates in the art world, and perceives art as a past time or leisure activity.

As well as providing a useful framework in order to classify the different types of experts and their relation to one another Collins and Evans (2002)   also introduce the idea that there are different types of expertise which can be attributed to different actors. The three types are as follows:

- *No Expertise: That is the degree of expertise with which the fieldworker sets out; it is insufficient to conduct a sociological analysis or do quasi-participatory field work.*

- *Interactional Expertise: This means enough expertise to interact interestingly with participants and carry out a sociological analysis.*

- *Contributory Expertise: This means enough expertise to contribute to the science of the field being analyzed.*

(Collins and Evans, 2002, p. 254)ok

While these categories have been developed for the scientific fields it is possible to appropriate them so that they fit the purpose of this research. Because in the art field it can be said that actors such as critics or museum/galleries directors have interactional rather than contributory expertise unlike artists or curators who have contributory experience, it must be noted that one does not include the other. And the general public as it can be expected is the one with no expertise.

Experts vs Bloggers

Now as we have outlined the characteristics and roles of experts it is time to turn our gaze towards one of the main purposes of experts and expertise which among other things as noted earlier is the process of certainty construction. Following the model of Collins and Evans (2002) we see that certainty at least in the First and Second wave on decision making and certainty construction was moving from the core experts onwards to the wider scientific community and at the end was accepted by the general public. Actually the certainty which the wider scientific community and the general public have accepted predates the agreement between the core experts which continue to debate over the matter after the rest of the actors have accepted the new status quo. The problem one faces when it tries to apply this model of certainty construction and decision making in the art field is that in it

the core experts are reluctant to hand their authority to neither the broader scientific community or the general public (the case of Tracy Emin's bed). We are still in a position at least in the field of conceptual art where a narrow group of super experts are the ones making the decisions and evaluations on the values and merits of certain art work.

In recent years the arrival and implementation of Web 2.0 and Social media has triggered a great hype both in the public and the academic sphere. One of the main features of the new media of today is "interactivity." The word has rapidly become the mantra of people dealing with matters brought forward by Web 2.0. The possibility to interact with both content and other users was one of the most appealing qualities of the new web tools. The interactive features combined with the idea of the new free information environment in time started to result in different types of criticism of the well established power institutions of yesterday - the same power institutions that were seen as fortresses of expertise. At one moment it became apparent that what previously were perceived as lay people had a lot to say on complex matters and not only were they able to say it but apparently there were people willing to listen, agree or disagree and spread the information they found interesting. Since Web 2.0 is not a solid structure but rather a loose network of platforms, new independent voices were coming from multiple places One of the most popular platforms used for personal expression and sometimes contested traditional expertise are blogs.

Blogs began as personal journals in the online domain and with time became increasingly popular amongst the general public. It will be fair to say that in the beginning they were some of the most prominent platforms for challenging the positions of the traditional experts. Apart from the fact that they provided an easy interface for one to share his views on different matters, blogs allowed people to debate online via comment sections, hyperlinks to other blogs where the discussion could continue. With time the traditional power institutions started to catch up with the net savvy public and began using blogs for their own purposes be it information dissemination, feedback from their audiences or in order to harvest the "wisdom of the crowds". Doing so, the power institutions entered a domain with rules that were pre set by those which were branded amateurs in the past. The rules of the digital domain, how to interact with others, how to establish credibility and how to voice one's opinion differed from the rules of the past. Bloggers themselves criticized traditional expertise on several grounds. Lichtenstein (2009) on his research on the lay bloggers criticism on the authority of traditional experts in the new Web 2.0 era outlined several points of criticism :

Experts make subjective decisions	0	2
Public doubt in scientific methods	0	3
Value of innate cognitive abilities vs. practice/experience	8	4
Unreliable use of information by experts	0	5
Experts are elitists, or represent elitists	67	6
Experts cannot be trusted (new)	23	N/A
Experts are not the only people with valuable knowledge (new)	11	N/A
Experts are a failed "institution" (new)	5	N/A
Experts are not independent (new)	21	N/A

(Lichtenstein, 2009, p.1040)

Bloggers criticism on experts was not about their expertise per se but rather about the fact that expertise should not be limited to a small circle of elites . These criticisms resembles the ideas of the second and third waves proposed by Collins and Evans and are in tune with the ideas of social constructivism which views expertise and knowledge as socially constructed elements. Apart from the fact that bloggers, which many have perceived as the new experts brought by the Web 2.0 era, recognized the fact that other people beyond the core group can be seen as experts they outlined some other flaws in the traditional perception of expertise. According to bloggers, traditional experts lacked independence which was a quality previously unnoticed characteristic of expertise. It can be inferred that with the rise of the blogosphere as a popular information source and the rise of online experts' independency is a quality that boosts the credibility of a person who is striving to be granted an expert status. Also Rubin, V. and Liddy, E. (2006) have identified a framework consisting of several sections of factors which are important for the credibility of a blogger or a blog post. They are as follows:

1) Blogger's Expertise and Offline Identity Disclosure

    1   a) Name and geographic location

2   b) Credentials

3   c) Affiliations (personal and institutional)

4   d) Blogrolls (i.e., hyperlinks to other sites)

5   e) Stated competencies

6   f) Mode of knowing

2) Blogger's Trustworthiness and Value System

1   a) Biases

2   b) Beliefs

3   c) Opinions

4   d) Honesty

5   e) Preferences

6   f) Habits

7   g) Slogans

3) Information Quality

1   a) Completeness

2   b) Accuracy

3   c) Appropriateness

4   d) Timeliness

5   e) Organization (by categories or chronology)

6   f) Match to prior expectations

7   g) Match to information need

4) Appeals and Triggers of a Personal Nature

1   a) Aesthetic appeal (i.e., design layout, typography, and color schemes)

2   b) Literary appeal (i.e., writing style and wittiness)

3   c) Curiosity trigger

4   d) Memory trigger (i.e., shared experiences)

5   e) Personal connection (e.g., the source is an acquaintance or a competitor of the blog-reader)

(Rubin, V. and Liddy, E., 2006, p.4

While some of the factors overlap with signature features of expertise as identified by Shanteau et al. (2003) there are new factors that are apparently a signature mark of online communication and online expertise. In fact the concept of expertise has been altered in online spaces where information has become abundant and the users of this information were forced to determine and access the credibility and trustfulness of both the source and information online. As Lankes notes today, users are increasingly turning to such features of online platforms such as "*user-submitted comments, editorial reviews, and open conversations on a given topic, artifact, or idea to determine trust and expertise". (Lankes, 2008, p.113)*

As noted earlier, there is a large ongoing debate regarding the expert-amateur relation that has been spurred by social media. Since their arrival blogs have been seen as an autonomous and independent source of information but in recent years the numbers of traditional expert institutions are incorporating blogging into their media platforms . It is interesting to observe the ongoing interaction between experts and amateurs in these spaces in order to examine how are traditional and new experts interacting in the online sphere and how is the general public responding to this, since they are one of the judges on who should be perceived as an expert.

Knowledge construction and the interaction analysis model

Also following the ideas of social constructivism and Collins and Evans (2002) where certainty construction and the decision making process is seen as a process involving several actors who are constantly interacting with each other, it will be interesting to see how this is transcending to online platforms in order to investigate if the same process is taking place. Is certainty constructed via social

interaction in the online domain, is expertise contested or reinforced, how and by whom? Another idea that has been linked with the online sphere is the process of knowledge construction. A model presented by Gunawerdana et al.(1997) describing the stages of interaction between the users in an online forum which can lead to knowledge construction provides us with a useful framework to examine how the same process is taking place in online platforms which are dealing with controversial matters in the art field. By applying this framework this thesis can examine if and how this process is taking place and who are the users contributing to it. In a nutshell the Gunawerdana et al framework consists of five different stages trough which people participating in the process of knowledge construction can move back and forth. The participants in an discussion facilitated by an online forum are able to construct knowledge via interacting with each other, share and debate the knowledge they posses and arrive to a new stage in their perception on the given topic . The five stages are as follows:

- *Phase I. Sharing/comparing of information*. In everyday transactions, this might take the form of ordinary observations, statements of problems, or questions. This phase may include an observation, opinion, agreement, corroborating example, clarification, and/or identification of a problem.

- *Phase II. Discovery and exploration of dissonance or inconsistency among the ideas, concepts, or statements advanced by different participants.* This is defined as an inconsistency between a new observation and the learner's existing framework of knowledge and thinking skills. Operations, which may occur in this phase, might include identification of differences in understanding of terms, concepts, schemas, and/or questions to clarify the extent of disagreement.

- *Phase III. Negotiation of meaning and/or co-construction of knowledge.* This phase includes negotiation or clarification of the meaning of terms, identification of areas of agreement, and proposal of a compromise or co-construction.

- *Phase IV. Testing and modification of proposed synthesis or co-construction.* Events that occur in this phase include testing against an existing cognitive schema, personal experience, formal data experimentation or contradictory information from the literature.

- *Phase V. Phrasing of agreement, statement(s), and applications of the newly constructed meaning.* This phase encompasses summarizing agreement(s) and metacognitive statements

that illustrate new knowledge construction and application.

3. Data Collection and Methodology

Blogs have been perceived as alternative sources of information and have frequently criticized traditional information outlets. Bloggers themselves became critical towards established experts as it was demonstrated earlier in the line of this work. While seen as informal, independent and personal platforms, blogs have recently been adopted by those same institutions which were previously criticized in the blogosphere which has now expanded to include the voices of both the amateur and the expert. Such blogs are virtual representations of the expert power institutions and while incorporating some of the basic features of personal blogs such as a more informal approach and

language they still carry some of the formal characteristics of their parent institutions. One of the main blog characteristics is the possibility to voice one's opinion on the subject matter via the comments section most blogs provide. Comments are possibly the most basic form of interaction provided by blogs. While there have been previous studies on blogs and how bloggers gain authority and credibility amongst the public of the blogosphere, not much research has been done in analyzing ongoing conversations in the comments section and especially not in relation to art. In our opinion the discussion taking place in the comments section of institutional blogs in the art domain can provide us with examples of how the authority and credibility of the core experts is challenged or reinforced via the ongoing social interaction and discord. For this purpose this thesis has chosen the blogs of institutions which represent the "core-experts" in the art world:

- The blog of prominent gallery such as TATE Modern where it focus on postings of one of the galleries curators regarding the process of setting an exhibition of contemporary conceptual art.

- The blog of the Guardian art critic Jonathan Jones and his take on the ongoing debate surrounding contemporary conceptual art in the UK and its supporters and opponents.

- And finally the online chat of the Guggenheim online forum which deals with matters regarding the place of art in today's world.

The first two blogs were chosen due to the high volume of comments which is an indicator of the level of public engagement with the topic. Also both blogs appeared in the top rankings of art blogs when a Google search for "top art blogs" was conducted.

While the first two blogs were chosen as examples of online platforms where an active on the topic of art is taking place the Guggenheim chat was selected because it provided an idea how an immediate interaction with art experts is taking place on a topic which is much more specific and complicated to the mere reaction or opinion on how one perceives an art work or what art is. Unlike the comments sections which are asynchronous in nature the chat panel gave the possibility for an immediate dialogue with the "core-experts", much like a Q&A session on a conference. It is expected that in this way experts will not have the opportunity to avoid a debate with other people who are interested in the dealings of the art world.

It must be noted that all three platforms did have a set of guidelines and rules for the usage of either

the comments section or the online chat panel and were subjected to some form of moderation. This was clearly mentioned in the Usage Guidelines and Terms and Conditions sections made available online. Since it is impossible to determine whether certain comments were altered or removed by moderators we worked with the existing materials but we should keep in mind that there is the possibility that certain opinions or forms of expression may not be permitted by the moderators of these platforms.

The data gathered from the TATE Modern Curator Blog came from 16 blog posts by a curator of a current exhibition of the Mexican contemporary conceptual artist Gabriel Orozco. The posts followed the process of curating the exhibition as well as reviews of the work of the artist presented by the curator. The particular exhibition was chosen because it was conceptual art which as noted earlier provokes controversial opinions by the art world elite and the general public. The posts were published during a 5 months period ranging from December 2010 to April 2011, and can be divided in three stages:

1.   Pre-show: There were 4 posts building up to the exhibition which were marked by low activity in the comment section. It was mostly positive and encouraging comments over the exhibition and the artist. No discussion or presenting of ideas which can be seen as controversial or spurring dabate.

2.   Post-show: Right after the exhibition opened there was a massive activity in the coments section as the post asking the visitors of the gallery to express their feeling about the experience managed to generate 404 comments. Another post dealing with a controversial piece of art in the exibition generated another 72 comments.

3.   Follow up: Two months after the show the curator continued to post information and profesional readings of the works of art as well as asked for technical feedback from the audience. Again this section did not provide much comments that could be used for the purpose of the Thesis.

The Guardian's blog ran by art critic Jonathan Jones was the other chosen blog. The data came from a post dealing with issues surrounding the place of conceptual art in the contemporary british art scene. Again the reaason why this was the chosen post to examine was due to the conection with conceptual art. Apparently it is a issue people feel the need to voice their opinion since the post that was opened for discussion for 7 days and it generated a total of 356 comments.

For the purpose of this thesis the model used by Mishne and Glance (2006) for analyzing the role of

comments as a part of the blog structure and their function in the knowledge production comments. The categories used by them to study blogs' comments are adopted as well as the categories for determening the nature of the comments. This framework was applied to fit the actors and relations within the art world as outlined in the previous section. In addition another category was added in order to determine the complexity of the structure of the comment in order to investigate to what extend it might fit the complex language usage of members of the art world elite. While scoping the available data several types of comments were identified:

- Personal oriented comments – Which represented the user's feelings about a piece of art of an idea without engaging in a debate or provoking a discussion. An example for such type of comment is:

"A well-curated exhibition which presents Orozco's work in a compelling way. I'm going to return with my daughters (7 & 5) to see what they make of it. I suspect the chequered skull, the squashed citroen and the pendulum billiards will all make an impact!" - Matthew – the TATE blog.

- Comments directed at the author or other users - Such comments presented some form of encouragement or agreement with the author of the post. An example of such type of comments is:

"I have very much enjoyed reading this blog! Thank you for sharing your reflections on Orozco's work." – F.M. – The TATE Blog

- And finally comments characterized by Mishne and Glance (2006) as "disputative comments" – Such comments presented alternative or controversial opinions that differ from the standpoint of the author or another user and provoke a debate. In such debates we can actually observe how expertise is being contested or reinforced, how credibility is established and how is "expert" status granted to certain users..

For the purposes of this research, qualitative content analysis (Mayring, 2002) was used in order to examine how the different users were challenging expertise and in some cases were trying to establish themselves as experts in the eyes of the other users of the blog. Whenever a comment included a phrase that contested the view of the "expert" or that of another user it was examined in order to determine the nature of the criticism. Also the following features of the comments were analyzed:

- Comment length – While scoping through the data it became apparent that "disputative" comments tend to be greater in length than personal comments or comments directed towards the author or the expert.

- Complexity – The level of complexity of the language used in the comment. The hypothesis is that users striving to gain the recognition of their peers will tend to use a more elaborate way of expression in order to be granted an "expert" status.

- Grammar and punctuation – The comments were examined for correct use of spelling and punctuation. The hypothesis being that users striving to gain expert status will be more careful when structuring their comments so that there is no mistakes which can hinder the public's perception of the level of education of the user commenting.

- Subjectivity vs. Objectivity – Disputative comments were analyzed in order to determine which were deemed more credible by the rest of the public. Subjective comments refer to personal opinions rather than objective facts. Presumably objective comments were going to be seen as beneficial to establishing the credibility of the person and his opinion.

- Polarity – The polarities of the comments were analyzed in order to establish whether the comment was closer to the interpretation of the "expert" or were opposing the common view. It is interesting to examine if comments opposing the "official" reading of the topic were more likely to be perceived as credible and therefore their authors to be granted a higher status or whether the public preferred the comments and authors that were "in tune" with the official expert.

- References – In previous studies on comments sections (Mishne and Glance, 2006) it was established that referencing previous opinions is a signature mark of disputative comments. We are examining not only how users in the comments section are referencing each other but what other sources do they use to support their arguments in the debate. Furthermore where possible the profiles of the users engaging in debates and contesting *the authority and expertise of the "core experts" and other users were analyzed in order to determine in which group of experts they belong (core-experts, broader scientific community, uncertified experts, general public).

Also both the comments and users were analyzed on whether they exhibited the online behavior that was linked with greater credibility and higher levels of trust in an online environment. For this purpose the author of this research used the features of blog posts with higher credibility(Rubin, & Liddy, 2006, Weerkamp & Rijke, 2008), the hypothesis being that comments and users with higher credibility will examine the same characteristics as trusted and credible blog posts and bloggers. Apart from the characteristics of blog posts which lead to higher credibility the research examines whether users exhibit characteristics which are linked with the traditional perception of experts. This will be done in order to determine if there is an actual shift of the "expert" profile by the general public.

Alongside the analysis of the content and the profiles in the chosen platforms, the characteristics of the platforms will be briefly examined in order to determine if the interface of the platforms has any relation to the process of credibility establishment and the process of gaining an expert status. Since the technical capabilities of the users are also a quality, this needs to be taken under consideration when researching online spaces and the human interactions within them.

Following the analysis of comments and profiles the online platform will be examined in order to see if there is any evidence of certainty and knowledge construction. Scholars in many fields have noted the possibility of online space to foster productive dialogue that can result in social construction of new types of knowledge (Martin, 1973; Collins & Evans, 2002; Thomas-Hunt et al. 2003; Hmelo-Silver, 2003; Lankes, 2008). As noted earlier a framework proposed by Gunawerdana et al will be used to asses the knowledge construction. Following the research of Thomas-Hunt et al. (2003) the hypothesis is that experts and their interaction with the online community are beneficial to the knowledge construction process and certainty construction.

4. Data Analysis

TATE's Curators Blog:

While analyzing the curator blog of the TATE Modern, it became apparent that most comments were rather informal and subjective, focusing mostly on the personal experience the visitors had with the exhibition. Comments for the most part were short, especially negative subjective comments:

I was very disappointed with the exhibition. I think the Tate Modern is getting desperate. Gabriel Orozco is obviously very creative but not a great artist. this has all been said before. Marcel Duchamp with his urinal for instance. And the explanations are so banal.

Although there were many disputative comments very few of them provoked a response from the rest of the public.

Despite the fact that comments were ranging from both ends of the "loved it-hated it" scope, very few comments actually showed any attempt to question the authority and expertise of the gallery or the curator. Comments that did provide some sort of criticism were focusing mainly on the exhibited art works or on the artist himself. The few comments that were critical towards the gallery were opposing the possibility of an art space such as a prominent gallery such as TATE Modern to ascribe artistic values to what some members of the public considered mere "objects"

GUILLERMO SEPULVEDA: WE ARE ALL FEED UP WITH THIS, BORE FUNNY THINGS! WHERE IS THE ART? WHY THE TATE IS WHAT THE TATE CONSIDER THE BEST? WHATS ENGLISH PEOPLE OR GENERAL AUDIENCE OPINION?

Dominic Timmis I don't think its art, I think its just a gimmick, and I tired stunt at that, its all been done before with pop art movement, just take any everyday object, anything from a can of soup to

pornography, and place it in a Gallery, and people call it art… is it really.

Tag says: I can not believe The Tate Modern of all Institutions is involved such fruitless exercises

J. Matthew Riva says: How can anyone seriously defend this shoebox as being art. If it wasn't in the TATE would would anyone consider this as art? This is not an original concept or discussion and the TATE should be embarrassed thoroughly for egging this discussion on, which showing this "piece" inevitably would do.

On the hypothesis presented earlier was that objective disputative comments with greater length, higher complexity, proper grammar and punctuation and higher polarity towards the legitimate opinion were signatory features to comments which were linked to users trying to contest the authority of the traditional experts. While analyzing the data we also searched for comments exhibiting the features of credible blog posts described by Rubin and Liddy (2006) such as:

- Offline identity disclosure

- Trustworthiness and values system

- Information Quality (Accuracy, Completeness)

- Visual appeal of the message – format, links, references

Such comments were expected to be signatory of comments trying to establish their author as a credible source of information (Van House, 2004; Marlow, 2004, Rubin and Liddy, 2006) and subsequently to aid him in acquiring the status of an expert within the group.

When analyzing the comments in the TATE online platform it became clear that objectivity, proper grammar, higher levels of complexity, and comment length were important for the credibility of the post and its author. On the other hand, polarity and referencing of other disputative comments did not prove to be sufficient for contesting expertise or the establishment of a person as a credible source of information.

J. Matthew Riva: How can anyone seriously defend this shoebox as being art. If it wasn't in the TATE would anyone consider this as art? If you follow Picasso's belief that u can't say what is art and what is not but just what u like and do not like… Then I say I do not like this tired banal

conceptual art jab at all. But then again this goes way past that. Some people have stated that The Emperors New Clothes analogy is a cliche. We it is only a cliche because conceptual art too often falls into that category. It is because of sophmorish attempts like the shoebox that this analogy comes up.

Their are tons of examples of conceptual art that do pose new concepts, that inspire, make you think about things in new ways, but this is not one of them. I am sorry but any person whos eyes and brain function and doesn't believe any little nonsense they are told or shown must see this shoebox is a joke on them. It assumes arguments like those posed here on either side will occur. Averageness, if that's a word is all round us. This is not an original concept or discussion and the TATE should be embarrassed thoroughly for egging this discussion on, which showing this "piece" inevitably would do.

Whoever curated this little farce should also just find another vocation. It's not that it's bad it is that it is boring. It is taking advantage of the oldest fait accompli/ catch22 in history. "Art is in the eye of the beholder." Well yes it is, and no it isn't at the same time. No one can claim it isn't no matter how insignificant it is, but shame on you Tate, shame on you. Your beloved Turner is spinning in his grave. Your Bacons, your Rothkos, the greatest works in your collection, if they too had a voice then they would most certainly cry out in agony.

Also most of the comments and their authors did not show most of the features ascribed to credible blog posts. There weren't any examples of consistency in argumentation in the opinions of the users, neither was there any specific links to their own personal values. One feature that was observed and was signatory to most disputative comments which had the required characteristics was self disclosure. Almost all comments that were in some way linked with the idea of contesting, reinforcing or striving to gain the status of an expert had a link to the person's webpage of blog where some personal information was available. It is interesting to note that all comments that was possible to trace back to the person were traced back to people with some level of involvement in the art field - predominantly professional artists.

Since one of the goals of this research was to try to determine which actors would be involved in the process of contesting expertise, we found that in the case of the TATE Modern blog, the users were mainly people associated with the art world who few in the category of the broader scientific community or that of an uncertified expert and not in the category of the general public.

While analyzing the available data it became apparent that users were applying different tactics in order to gain the recognition of their peers. Three categories are developed in this thesis and they can be outlined as follows:

1. Expert status gained by reinforcing the opinion of the "core –expert" – In such cases the user aligned himself with the opinion of the core expert and contested the view of the segment of the public which was disagreeing with the expert:

   It's about context. The artist doesn't just decide to put a box on the floor. The action is the result of an ongoing process – the artists process – most likely a lifes work. In some cases it's about physical experiments – painting/sculpture – and sometimes it's about thoughts and ideas. To say this isn't art or doesn't require 'skill' is missing the point. What makes this art is that it has been presented as such. We are being asked to 'consider' this object. Many of the comments on here fall into ignorant tabloid outrage because it's 'just a box'. I believe the artist had good reason for presenting this piece but whatever that reason is, it's unimportant. Some will engage with it, others won't. I for one find it strangely poetic … others just see an empty box.

2. Expert Status gained by contesting the core-expert opinion – In these cases the user provided either a controversial or an alternative reading of the discussed topic:

   I find Orozco's work beautiful, I've been studying it in my third year of my degree. Having been to the exhibition I was overcome by the sense of a loss of the present that was communicated in his work

   Rather then agreeing with the information in the guide about Extension of Reflection, 'Orozco's concern that his works remain active is a key to his photographs. These demand engagement in the moment because, as he puts it, 'the event is still happening.' I saw the works as ghosts, moments of perfection when something remarkable happens within the everyday that is no longer with us, no longer happening.

3. Expert Status gained by providing new information on the topic – There were certain users that did not show polarity towards the presented opinions. They tried to gain credibility by providing new information on the subject:

You keep referring on Twitter and here to "the Orozco exhibition".

In Mexican art, for better or worse, the name "Orozco" on its own, for historical reasons, means Jose Clemente Orozco, the muralist, one of Mexico's most famous contemporary artists (there with Kahlo and Rivera as you know).

Though Gabriel Orozco is of course one of Mexico's best-known artists as well, and though the ellipsis is literally accurate, merely referring to him by his last name (especially in a context in which one cannot assume general awareness of *that other* Orozco) can produce a certain smell of artistic ignorance by omission.

As noted earlier it is important when analyzing the interaction in online platforms to take into consideration the features of the platform itself. The TATE Blog provided a fast and easy to use interface for its visitors. Users were able to post comments without prior registration to the blog. While there was the possibility to add link to the user's web page or blog and add a picture, there was no option for the user to create a personal profile in order to represent him in greater depth online. This is important due to the fact that in their study on the process of establishing credibility in the blogosphere Rubin and Liddy (2006) outlined personal self disclosure as a key factor in the process of gaining credibility. Also the platform did not provide any system for the users to rank or rate the popularity of the comments , the option to share the information in the comments section was nonexistent as well as the chance to hyperlink the content. An additional hypothesis is presented that the lack of such interactive features hindered the overall user experience on the platform and subsequently was detrimental to the processes of establishing user expertise, certainty creation and knowledge construction. Another aspect drew our attention while researching the TATE platform. Since blogs were perceived as spaces where the author and the public could interact with each other it was surprising to find that the curator (the core expert) was actually using the blog as a broadcasting tool in order to disseminate information from one to many rather than to engage with the audience. Nice Therefore any criticism on the part of the public was virtually left unanswered. The lack of engagement of the expert in our opinion was detrimental to the overall process of negotiation of expertise- that was I guess not the intent, since as it will become apparent in the course of this work "core-experts" can serve as facilitators or moderators of the discussion and also act as "validators" of other users' expertise.

Nevertheless we must not assume that the online platform would be used by the users as aspace to

renegotiate expertise. It is possible that the blog is actually a space used for the strengthening of the real life experience of the visitors or the reinforcement of memory construction (Panagiotopoulou, 2011)

The Guardian's Art Blog

Continuing with the analysis of our data, we proceed with the blog of the Guardian's art critic Jonathan Jones. I m confused here about your format- shouldn't this be another section ? Here the topic itself was meant to provoke controversy since is was dealing with tensions in the contemporary British Art Scene (YBA vs. Stuckists), By framing his blog post as a question, the critic gives the discussion the initial momentum and afterward the public begins to try to negotiate between the different standpoints.

Unlike the comments in the TATE blog, here the majority of the comments exhibited the full range of characteristics of the Mishne and Glance (2006) model that were ascribed to comments that aim to promote their author as an expert in the art field. Most comments tended to fall into the category of "disputative comments" and provoked a debate. Predominantly the comments that drew the most attention tended to be:

• Objective

• Greater in length

• With complex structure

• Correct use of grammar and punctuation (With small exceptions which however did not damage the overall structure of the text).

• Proper referencing of the other "disputative comments" (In this platform unlike the TATE blog comment proper referencing was vital for the credibility of the post and its author, however again the polarity of the opinion was not a significant factor whether the person was striving to gain the status of an expert:

In the following quoted conversation all the characteristics mentioned above can be observed:

readgrins

4 April 2011 8:38AM

@damienhirst

"I am not defending conceptual art but just art. conceptual art just happens to be the reality of our time. if tomorrow that happens to be something else I'll defend that too. my point is just that we can't say what art should be and what not because that's something that is part of the general changes that happens inside our society."

I agree with you broadly that it is impossible to prescribe what art should be; but I don't think it's enough to say that art is an expression of societal shifts, because the generalised image completely leaves out the efforts of the individual artist.

When an artist sits down with a concept to express, be it through painting, an installation, or a video piece (and it's worth remembering that *all* artworks have a conceptual basis somewhere) the concept they wish to express is filtered through their individual method of expression. This is, potentially, what gives the work its significance. It captures the wider imagination, as it makes a broader societal trend or emergence able to be engaged with, or comprehensible (leaving aside all aesthetic questions).

What I dislike about conceptual art (recalling what I said about all arts having a conceptual basis) is that the YBAs in particular argued for the abandonment of *craft*. It was enough to have the idea, and pay others to generate the work that resulted from it - the artist didn't have to create it themselves. William Blake said it best: execution is the chariot of genius. The way in which an idea is expressed, brought to the canvas, the score, the stage, allows for the demonstration of individual innovation.

As I see it, the YBA movement - stemming from R Mutt - led to a new criterion of value being needed for modern, conceptual art - if craft couldn't be the yardstick of value-judgement, what was? It's annoying that almost every mainstream media report of happenings in the art world focus on monetary matters - record sales at auctions, and little else. Monetary value has replaced craft, and the gallery occupies a powerful position in accordance with this new rubric.

Today's art, broadly speaking, is anything that appears in a gallery. Be it a pile a bricks, an unmade bed, some stale donuts, rubbish (literally), a fighter jet... It doesn't matter that the artist had no hand in its creation beyond its conceptualization: art galleries only contain art; it's in an art gallery; ergo it *is* art (and ergo, additionally, the art gallery is a art gallery).

To me, art should derive its power through its ability to overcome exterior context: it should *declare* itself as art, rather than being reliant on being placed in a gallery to be art. If an art object is to be such, it should be possible to find it in a rubbish tip, and still know it as art.

damienhirst

4 April 2011 10:29AM

@readgrins,

> *I agree with you broadly that it is impossible to prescribe what art should be; but I don't think it's enough to say that art is an expression of societal shifts, because the generalised image completely leaves out the efforts of the individual artist.*

but an artist is part of the society too. the society is just an abstract term that defines people and what these people do, how they think etc. and I will give you a very simple example like artists couldn't paint on canvas using paintbrushes before canvas and paintbrushes were invented. one couldn't be a digital artist before digital media was invented and so on. it's pretty much all related because an artist doesn't exist in vacuum but he actually responds to what is going on around him or inside his head which is again influenced by what is going on around him.

> *What I dislike about conceptual art (recalling what I said about all arts having a conceptual basis) is that the YBAs in particular argued for the abandonment of *craft*. It was enough to have the idea, and pay others to generate the work that resulted from it - the artist didn't have to create it themselves. William Blake said it best: execution is the chariot of genius. The way in which an idea is expressed, brought to the canvas, the score, the stage, allows for the demonstration of individual innovation.*

but again you need to see this idea inside the context. when did all this start to happen and why? it's

pretty much related to what was going on inside the society. mass production, repetition, automation, business values, commercialization, consumerism and so on was the reality that was happening around the artists and they simply adopted it. in the same sense as for example the invention of the photographic camera in the second part of the 19th century made artists re-think about what should art be depicting. thinks don't just pop out like that from nowhere.

if craft couldn't be the yardstick of value-judgement, what was?

but the value of craft in art is also not something absolute. I mean which is supposed to be the objectively valuable way to do art? the way ancient egyptians did it? the way michelangelo did it or maybe the way monet did it or picasso, kandinsky? pollock? it's all relative and coming to this point you can also conclude that the craft alone it's something relative and not necessary. it's simply part of the process. maybe after a couple of years the artist will realise they need to turn back to craft or maybe the won't. art is just not something one can predict or control.

It's annoying that almost every mainstream media report of happenings in the art world focus on monetary matters - record sales at auctions, and little else. Monetary value has replaced craft, and the gallery occupies a powerful position in accordance with this new rubric.

but this is true for art in general not just conceptual art. you can't really blame conceptual art for that but it's simply the role that art got inside our society.

Today's art, broadly speaking, is anything that appears in a gallery. Be it a pile a bricks, an unmade bed, some stale donuts, rubbish (literally), a fighter jet... It doesn't matter that the artist had no hand in its creation beyond its conceptualization: art galleries only contain art; it's in an art gallery; ergo it *is* art (and ergo, additionally, the art gallery is a art gallery).

well, yes. but if you look at what art is you will realize that it has no objective reality. what is art is first defined by our idea of what art is and that is already a subjective interpretation. then it goes on being defined as something an artist does. who defines who is an artist? well, that's actually a self-declaration. no one is appointed to become an artist by some absolute authority but is basically just their choice or intention. I mean does going to an art school makes you an artist? even if then you end up cutting steaks in a butcher's shop? the point is that there is no

objective definition related to what art is and what is not and what defines an artist and what not.

Also the users contesting or expert status did exhibit both the characteristics attributed to credible and trustworthy bloggers and some characteristics linked to the traditional experts. The following characteristics were observed:

•   Consistency in argumentation was crucial when users were challenging the expertise of others and reinforcing their own. In certain cases a discussion between two or more actors in the debate to lead to a thread with multiple argumentation posts by each actor (sometimes ranging in over 10 posts in a given conversation. Every following post was an argumentation on the position the user was taking :

CharlesThomson

31 March 2011 6:37PM

Stuckism is based on Modernism, or rather a re-evaluation of it termed Remodernism. This emphasises the importance of content, meaning and value, as opposed to innovation as a primary criterion. The 20th century paradigm was one of progress, where the new was seen as desirable for its own sake. The necessity for the 21st century is a paradigm of conservation, namely the integration of the new with a retrieval of what is still of worth to us from the past (known as tradition).

The 20th century was a time of partiality, by which I mean tunnel vision focus on a small area, regardless of the greater picture. Insecticides were good for one particular task but disastrous environmentally. Likewise in art, the components were broken down into small areas, developed by successive movements - the abstract by one, the area of the irrational by another, expressiveness by another, geometry by another etc. etc.

The 21st century is a time of holism, the relationship of the components to the whole. This is an increasing practice in, for example, medicine. It is advocated by Stuckism in art. The conclusion drawn in this approach by Stuckists is that figurative painting fulfills this aim.

The Stuckist manifestos are useful as a thoughtfully brash way of staking out some ground and making enough noise to get the argument in motion. The ideas are developed more fully in essays and interviews.

Most Stuckist artists take very little part in the polemic and protests (I have to admit rather more culpability here). As Edgeworth Johnstone said his book, Stuck Near Tate Modern: "We demo 2 days a year, paint 363, and the press call us a 'protest group'."

Even the briefest knowledge of the history of Modernism would show that In the contemporary art climate, if Stuckism didn't exist, someone would have to invent it.

damienhirst

31 March 2011 7:11PM

@Charles Thompson,

Stuckism is based on Modernism, or rather a re-evaluation of it termed Remodernism. This emphasises the importance of content, meaning and value, as opposed to innovation as a primary criterion. The 20th century paradigm was one of progress, where the new was seen as desirable for its own sake. The necessity for the 21st century is a paradigm of conservation, namely the integration of the new with a retrieval of what is still of worth to us from the past (known as tradition).

what doesn't convince me here is the fact that before modernism there were ideas offering different values and before that there were ideas offering different values and so on and so on way back to the cave paintings. now, the question is why picking modernism? why not the way they understood art in ancient egypt or greece or renaissance or whatever else? so, it's not like modernism is the beginning of everything and as such is universally more relevant than anything else. so, why modernism? because it's the "closest"? and for how long do you suggest would be relevant for us to be stuck with this reference to this particular past until we can then move on a bit further and redefine what is new and what is the tradition worth being conserved? or should be just stuck with the modernist values forever?

CharlesThomson

31 March 2011 7:56PM

@damienhirst

why picking modernism? why not the way they understood art in ancient egypt or greece or

renaissance or whatever else? ... for how long do you suggest would be relevant for us to be stuck with this reference to this particular past ...?

Art is the visual manifestation of the world view of the epoch. Medieval art with its idealised forms represented the theological orientation of that time. The focus on the material world by the Renaissance was reflected in the emphasis on fixed viewoint three-dimensionality in art. We are still living in the reality of the Modern era with its technological inventions, psychological perceptions, and social and individual values. We have to have an art that engages with the spirit of this. We will be stuck with it artistically, as long as we are stuck with it in every other way.

damienhirst

31 March 2011 8:07PM

@CharlesThomson,

Art is the visual manifestation of the world view of the epoch. Medieval art with its idealised forms represented the theological orientation of that time. The focus on the material world by the Renaissance was reflected in the emphasis on fixed viewoint three-dimensionality in art.

exactly my point.

We are still living in the reality of the Modern era with its technological inventions, psychological perceptions, and social and individual values. We have to have an art that engages with the spirit of this. We will be stuck with it artistically, as long as we are stuck with it in every other way.

but if this is indeed true then where does all that you are trying to refuse come from? isn't your argument falling apart exactly because of the fact you are actually feeling there is the need for change. but what do you want to change exactly? maybe you want to change exactly what defines this present time. because if this doesn't define our present time then what does it define? can a social reality be wrong? I mean is reality something that we need to create consciously and methodically and not just a process that happens on its own? I mean was the whole history of human kind planned? and you really believe that nothing really changed in the last 100 years?

CharlesThomson

31 March 2011 11:38PM

@damienhirst

Not exactly sure what you meant in some of your post of 31 March 2011 8:07PM, but we are refusing art that comes from superficial fashionable inclinations of the age, rather than the spiritual essence of it: c.f. Victorian salon painters with the Impressionists. Social reality is not artistic reality. I think my point is exactly that things have changed in the last 100 years, but we are still based on the same foundation of ideas and values. We just need to readjust them.

damienhirst

1 April 2011 7:37PM

@CharlesThomson,

Not exactly sure what you meant in some of your post of 31 March 2011 8:07PM, but we are refusing art that comes from superficial fashionable inclinations of the age, rather than the spiritual essence of it: c.f. Victorian salon painters with the Impressionists.

so, for you the victorian salon painters with impressionists are the start and the end of art? like we can only change a bit of this and that but the main structure is supposed to remain the same? what was done prior to that wasn't really art or good art and what was done after was also flawed in a way or another? also, what did victorian salon painters or impressionists represent at their time? well, nothing more than fashionable mainstream. weather today's mainstream is superficial compared to the past ones is here strictly a subjective opinion and a matter of taste and not scientifically proven fact.

Social reality is not artistic reality.

so, where does art come from then? and if so then also economic reality is not social reality? cultural reality is also not social reality? fashion is again not social reality. then what is social reality exactly?

I think my point is exactly that things have changed in the last 100 years, but we are still based

on the same foundation of ideas and values. We just need to readjust them.

you mean you are still based on the same foundation of ideas and values? because how could I value something that doesn't fit the foundation of my ideas? I mean how could I be and think in any different way than for what I actually am? and again if you are talking about the need to readjust ideas and values again explain me where did this values and ideas you need to readjust come from? where does this "flaw" come from? what does define it? how did it happen? why is it here then? and why you think you need to fix it with 100 years old ideas and values? well, apart that of course that's what suits you?

The quality of the presented information did prove to be a significant indicator of who is more likely to be granted the status of an expert. Referencing other examples from art history and other related literature were beneficial in the contest for status:

Parisa

3 April 2011 1:04AM

@ *Alarming* - I do get the gist of what you're saying - not sure I agree - although you seem to actually be agreeing with me re photography. And yes - of course I know Susan Sontag's essays including the one On Photography - I've always been a fan of her. I think anyway if you're an artist or painter, you don't really follow these arguments - you just do it! But I enjoy the blogs - when I have time I enjoy Jonathan Jones, too.

I was just reading an article about Pollock & some b&w photos by Harry Callahan. During a decade, they were exploring their chosen mediums' potentials for abstraction, all over composition & randomness. Altho' drawing was not his main mode of expression, Pollock flirted with Surrealist automatism, & other modes of expression such as riffs on Picasso & schematic renderings of all natural forms. Callahan pushed nature forms & found elements in the natural world with his camera - the result was that both mediums have a similarity - of course Pollock pushed this to an even greater level with painting. At any rate, the exposures in the photos are v reminiscent of Pollock's "all-over drip paintings" that he began painting several years later. Perhaps Callahan might even have done his photos as an homage to Pollock. What it shows is an independent, parallel development. But influences can & do come from anywhere & be used in multi-media. And I totally disagree, painting is

not in a tight corner. It's just the same a part of the art world as ever it was.

When the profiles of the most active participators in the discussion were analyzed, it became apparent that proper self representation in the online realm was a vital ingredient in the process of establishing oneself as a credible and trustworthy source of information. Most profiles contained some sort of self representation along with a visual avatar and in some cases a link to the user's personal webpage or blog. Once again like in the case of the TATE blog, the participants that were questioning the expertise of "core-experts" or the other users were not real amateurs but much rather members of the broader scientific community or uncertified experts. The range was far more diverse than in the case of the TATE community, where there were former art critics, artists professional and people who were engaging in art for personal reasons, art scholars or students in the field of art and artist which were in the core of the debate surrounding conceptual British art. Another important participant in the debate is one of the founders of the Stuckist movement – **Charles Thompson** who could have be identified as both a "core-expert" and a member of the broader scientific community.

Since the people exhibiting the characteristics of "potential-experts" were by far more numerous than in the TATE blog, they engaged in debates in which they contested each other's expertise rather than that of the "core-expert" in this platform – namely the Guardian's art critic. When doing so, they engaged in long discussion threads where they challenged the expertise of multiple users and in their own term defended their own.

This thesis outlines some of the main points of criticism of the users towards each other were:

- Elitism – users which exhibited elitist attitudes towards the rest of the users were criticized over such behavior. It is interesting since this critique was mainly attributed towards traditional "core-experts". This leads us to suspect that whenever a user is elevated to the status of an "expert" he must not perceive himself as a part of an elite in order to keep his credibility and expert status. Elitist attitude overall was detrimental to the credibility of "potential-experts":

  pinkrobbo

  3 April 2011 8:18PM
  @demienhirst

  Despite your pretense of being a relativist and subjectivist, you are clearly very keen to tell

everyone exactly what is, or isn't, a relevant part of our society. Your are an authoritarian who doesn't have the intellectual clarity to realize it.

- Subjectivity vs. Objectivity – When discussing contemporary conceptual art issues it was beneficial for the image of the user to keep an objective tone. However, when applying objective measurements in relation to art in general, users were perceived as less credible as users that considered art to be a subjective matter :

damienhirst

31 March 2011 7:26PM

@premodernist,

Resurrected? What, like a vampire you mean? Or a zombie? An empty, dead corpse. A vacuous husk of it's former self with the blood of ages sucked from its withered body?

well, your interpretation doesn't surprise me. you are obviously one of those people who don't understand beyond what they see nor they can't imagine things beyond what they were taught. contemporary art is surely not for people without imagination.

It's not even creative, it's formulaic. Here's the formula for successful contemporary modernism (again) Trivial Visual Novelty + Manufactured, Ambiguous Universe (with bullshit, weasel excuses) = Contemporary Modernist Art.

that's awesome. now try to follow that formula and lets see how far you can reach, ok? or should we just agree that you are just trying appear smart?

Trivial Visual Novelty (the unmade bed in an art gallery) + Manufactured, ambigous Universe (what? Does anyone remember? Oh yes, Tracy Emin's own personal 'hell' or something) = Contemporary Modernist Art.

I can act the same dumb describing any artwork of your choice. just try me. in other words I hope you realise that what you manifested here is just ignorance.

There are only the craft values you speak of, all else is writing and verbal bullshit; Artspeak and self-delusion.

well, everyone have their own limitations I guess. and some don't even know that values are subjective anyway. so, the fact that I don't really value your values proves you wrong already. any better argument?

- Follow the netiquette of the form: No flaming and polite addressing of others, when cases of insulting behavior were observed, the user was denied the chance to be elevated to a higher status.

In the case of the Guardian's art blog, users again were contesting for status by either siding with the "official" reading of the topic or by opposing it, but unlike the TATE blog, there were no examples of neutral opinions that gained status by providing new information on the topic.

When the blog platform of the Guardian was analyzed, it showed multiple interactive features:

- Users were required to register in order to participate in the discussion which gave them a sense of belonging to a community.

- There was the possibility to create a profile and share personal details and interest and by doing so create a more tangible online persona, which as noted earlier is crucial for the establishment of credibility online.

- The members of the community were able to rate the comments of other users by "recommending" them. It is interesting to note that comments that were in line with the opinion of the Guardian art critic did receive higher number of recommendations unlike opinions that were opposing it.

- Users were given an option to hyperlink the comments and by doing so disseminate through these their own social networks.

- Finally users were able to create a selection of clippings from the available comments. Which despite of being left unused gave the users another tool to interact with the available content.

Overall the interface of the Guardian art blog was by far more interactive then the one of TATE

Modern. While it was fairly easy to register and comment, it required a certain level of knowledge on how to use new media and the proper netiquette of online discussion spaces. Based on the analysis so far, it is fair to hypothesize that potential experts or those who are striving to gain expert status in online spaces are people who are knowledgeable in the field of new media and therefore such knowledge is a requirement for expertise in online platforms.

If we compare the way the "core-experts" (curator/critic) were engaging with the audience it is apparent that in the case of the Guardian's art critic there was indeed a sign of interaction with the audience. Still when compared with the overall volume of comments his interaction was miniscule, but nevertheless it was of great importance the way he framed his initial post so that it triggered the discussion. Similar to the TATE's curator, the fact that his authority and expertise were challenged did not engage him in a discussion in which he could have defended them. The role he chose to play was more that of a facilitator or moderator by clarifying certain terms or summarizing the information in the discussion so far.

jonathanjones

31 March 2011 5:12PM

@Bartelbe

I really need to clear up this use of the term "modern art."

Modern art means Cezanne and Picasso, Monet's Nympheas and Matisse's Dance, Magritte's dream images and Bacon's terrors. And a lot else besides.

Modernism in art begins depending how you define it with Manet or Picasso and ends in the 1960s when movements like conceptual art, performance art, etc rebel against its seriousness.

In fact, a glass of water on a shelf is not modern art at all. It is post-modern art. The trouble with art today is that instead of acknowledging it's post-modern nature it pretends to somehow be the same as the avant garde a century ago. Thus it becomes intolerant of, say, figurative painting as retrograde when in reality, video and paint exist in the same pluralist postmodern condition. In other words we should indeed be able to look at Leonardo and Damien Hirst, Rothko and Freud, and to be as eclectic about art as everything else.

But this is not quite the case. Stuckism is one obstacle. But so is the false notion that what we have today is "modern art" in the same way it was modern in 1911. I blame Tate Modern for confusing the poor Brits about what modern art actually is.

Another finding from the gathered data was the fact that users possessing the characteristics linked to

the expertise, trust and credibility acted as validates of each other's credibility and expertise by contesting or agreeing with each other's opinions. Apparently comments and users whose expertise was contested by others were seen as credible and important enough to be debated over. This leads us to believe that in certain situations, expertise is a fluid concept. As such, users are acting as "potential-experts" trying to gain the acknowledgment of the public, the other "potential-experts" and the "core-experts" in order for themselves to be elevated to an expert status . However even if this happens their expertise is not stable since it is under constant challenge by other potential experts

The Guggenheim Live Chat:

As noted earlier stages of this research apart from the two art blogs, a third form of online communication was examined for the purposes of this thesis which were to determine in what way the features of social media are impacting the expert amateur relation and are they forcing any changes in it.

The Guggenheim museum presented the general public with the opportunity to engaging in a dialogue with core experts from the art world such art professors and prominent art critics over matters dealing with the place of art in contemporary society. The topic of the discussion is far more abstract that the ones in the blogs of TATE and the Guardian which shows how one of the ways "core-experts" are debating about art – as something much more ephemeral and as part of social construct and social reality.

One of the first things that draw attention is the difference in the language being used in the debate. Unlike the previous two platforms, the language used by the core experts is by far more detailed and specialized, full with elaborate phrases and arguments. One might describe the language as academic. This may be the reason behind the low public participation in the live chat sessions (10 persons only). Despite the elitist nature of the grammar, a criticism regarding elitism did not occur from the other participators in the debate. This may be due to the fact that the participants in the discussion did not feel that the language that was being used was exclusive since they were used to it and did not perceive it as elitist.

When analyzing the discussion that took place, we are able to outline several characteristics of the ways the users and the experts were interacting:

• The language used was objective with proper use of grammar and punctuation, the comments/messages were short in length but this may be a result of the software being used to support

the live chat.

- There was no polarity in the debate due to the fact that all of the participants were working together in the process of establishing certainty on the matters discussed. The discussion was rich with references to academic works related to sociology and the art world. Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt, Abbing, Alfred Gel, Theodore Adorno were amongst the cited works. Almost all of the references to scientific works came from the core expert – in this case acting as moderator. In this way he did reinforce his status of a credible and knowledgeable expert. However participants familiar with the cited works who showed clear understandings on the topic were also seen as knowledgeable and this was recognized by the rest of the core experts.

- The participants in the form did help the dialogue in order to determine some certainty on the discussed matters such as: *"In what ways did artist of the twentieth century deal with politics in their works?"* By questioning the expert's on their opinions on the topic and providing some input of their own, the rest of the participators did force both experts to make slight adjustments in their perceptions, but nevertheless these adjustments weren't stated out clearly and it is not certain to what extent the shift in their opinion did really take place.

> *Domenick :Ethically/morally, is being an artist different from, say, working in a factory making ballpoint pens? By which I mean are the moral concerns that go into artmaking—and they do for many artists--any different from those that go into any other job? If so, why?*

> *Moderator:To comment on Domenick's post: The artist is supposed ideally to have a freedom to define the self and work together. That offers a wide panorama for the ethical to operate in. Of course, the actuality is often not like that, as we've been hearing.*

> *Domenick:*
> *But if we presume there is no possibility of that freedom, Julian, might we assume that it is OK to separate one's political practice and one's art?*

> *Expert panelist:*
> *Domenick: I'm not sure if it's possible to completely separate those two things, but there may be gaps in the relationship between the two.*

> *Moderator:*
> *I'm not saying there's no possibility of that freedom--I think it exists and it's what continues to attract so many people to the insecure job of artist. It's just that, in fact, there are many and maybe increasing pressures on artists to perform to the agendas of others.*

- Overall it did become clear that the core-experts were more interested in debating with each other rather than with the rest of the participants. Almost half of the postings in the one hour long chat session (43 out of 90) were messages between the three core experts and another visitor who also when researching his profile prove to be deeply involved in art as both an artist and a critic. This leads us to hypothesize that like in the two previous cases the "core-experts" were reluctant to defend or even reinforce their expertise by interacting with the rest of the public.

When observing the interface that supported the interaction between the participants in the discussion it appeared to be similar in relation to its interactive features to the TATE blog than to the one of the Guardian. However, unlike the two former platforms which provided a relatively easy interface for interaction with the information presented by the experts, the "Cover it Live" software required significant technical expertise along with the time to set up the software in order to participate in the discussion. Apart from entering an alias through which one could be represented, the software did not provide any other means for self representation in the online space. While it did give the chance to share the comments in the conversation in social networks such as Facebook and Twitter no other interactive features were available.

Regarding the users participating in the live chat, there was no way to link them back to their personal web pages, blogs or profiles. However since some of them provided what we presume is their real names, a search with the given name was conducted in Google. From the 6 persons who provided full names, four came up in the first results of the Google search. All four were related to the web pages of people involved in the art field with one of them – Mark Johnson being a person deeply involved in the art field both as an artist and as a scholar and the other one Domenick Tomson (names changed for anonymity purposes) turned out to be a person who was actually working with the Guggenheim museum and was the web master of the institution. So again as with the TATE blog and the Guardian blog, the people who were involved in a discussion in this case a more complex and elaborate discussion on the topic of art were not the amateurs with no prior knowledge on the subject. Rather, they were people who are involved in the art domain and are mostly part of a broader scientific community with few falling in the category of the uncertified expert.

5. Knowledge Construction in Online Spaces

Apart from outlining the major characteristics that were linked to the process of contesting, reinforcing and establishing credibility, trust and expertise in social media platforms and investigating who are the actors who were involving in such practices, the other goal of this research was to determine to what extent did the public spaces that social media provided aided the process of knowledge construction via social interaction between the different participants in the discussion. In order to do this, the research used the interaction analysis model established by Gunawerdana et al. (1997) which has been applied in similar settings (in their case an online forum where experts were debating on a common problem). Their findings showed how participants of the forum were able to construct new knowledge or reconstruct existing knowledge by exchanging ideas, opposing them, negotiating the middle ground between different standpoints and at the end constructing new knowledge via social discord. The Gunawedana interaction analysis model for computer mediated communication was subsequently applied in the studies on the impact of roles in social knowledge construction (Mi Heo and Breuleux,

2009; De Wever et al. ,2010) and in the process of knowledge construction in asynchronous learning networks (Aviv et al., 2003).

Since this research was dealing with online spaces where participants were debating over a common theme, we were interested if they too were going to be able to construct some new knowledge via their online interactions.

In a subsequent study using the Gunawerdana et al (1997) model, Kanuka & Anderson (1998) were able to establish that in certain cases the interactions in an online environment did not move past the lower phases of the interaction analysis model. This they concluded may be due to the fact that anonymity in online environments eased the participants to avoid responding to conflicting opinions. For the purpose of this thesis it is important to outline the way anonymity is understood within the line of work. While the online environment provides the chance for one to conceal his true identity and adopt an digital alter ego – via a nickname or an entire digital persona this should be differentiated from the practice of some users to post a comment without any proper self-representation in the digital realm. The former mode of self-representation does carry within it the possibility for the author to remain anonymous as of who he is in real life it still does allow others to create a perception of the person based on his or hers self-representation online . The later does not give the rest of the users in the online environment the chance to get any impression of the person behind the post, in this sense he is truly anonymous. When anonymity is seen as a possible reason for avoiding conflicting opinions it is perceived as the absolute lack on online self-representation.

Kanuka & Anderson (1998) also found that most of the discussions were remaining the first stage of the interaction analysis model – namely that of sharing and comparing information. Also most of the discussion remained in the sphere of social interchange. Social interchange is used to describe online interactions that expanded the overall knowledge base by presenting new information that was compatible with already existing knowledge. The social interchange practice does not force the members in the discussion to readjust their perceptions on the given topic and did not aid the construction of new knowledge by the participants. . In the rare cases of their study where new knowledge was constructed this was done by social discord which was seen as a vehicle that helped the construction of new shared knowledge.

Social discord occurs when there are contradicting opinions between the participants in the online forum, and where the members are involved in "discord discussion" (Anderson and Kanuka ,1998).

Such discussions are possible when information that is contradictory of inconsistent with the views of one the participants in the debate is presented. When trying to clarify the inconsistent information in the presented views by participants were changing or adjusting their views in order to fit the new information in their perception of the topic. Thus by appropriating the adjusted view the participants acquire new knowledge (Anderson and Kanuka, 1998).

When applying the interaction analysis model in our research across the three investigated platforms, it became apparent that in two out of the three platforms, members were able to reach the higher stages of the model and engage in social discord. It must be noted that none of the three platforms had examples where users were able to move through all five phases of the interaction analysis model and arrive to some new or changed knowledge. It is interesting to examine the specifics of the platforms and their users and to determine the factors that are beneficial to the knowledge construction process and also outline the main reasons why the participants in the discussions failed to complete all five stages that could have resulted in some new knowledge in the field of art.

In the case of the TATE blog it became apparent that overall comments remained in the first phase of the interaction analysis model (Gunawardena et al., 1996). In this phase the participants in the discussion presented opinions or observations and agreements between the participants they also corroborated examples provided by other participants in the discussion. This can be observed in the thread bellow:

> *julian perry: I could only connect with 2 of the exhibits: the bicycle montage and the space contained clay hand molding: both of which stopped me for just a few seconds. As for the rest – concept/constructs that melt in the mouth and are unlikely to revisit/ambush me ever again.*

The following posts are the thread of replies by other users and the shared agreement with the proposed statement:

> *Patricia Ash: I expected to be more impressed by this exhibition. It was good to be back at Tate Modern again but overall the exhibition was a disappointment and I would question if it all constitutes art.*
>
> *Susan Ross: I too was deeply underwhelmed by this exhibition. Why choose Gabriel Orozco? What makes him stand out? You have fabulous rooms at Tate Modern and there are so many more deserving contemporary artists who deserve to be exhibited in them. I want to be challenged and inspired by what I see, particularly in this difficult economic climate – this*

certainly did not achieve that. It was just too ordinary for me.

Sandra: I agree. I was very disappointed with the exhibition. I think the Tate Modern is getting desperate. Gabriel Orozco is obviously very creative but not a great artist. this has all been said before..Marcel Duchamp with his urinal for instance. And the explanations are so banal. Take the Ventilator 1997 ...its not even worth talking about.. I am really fed up with the art establishment making such poor choices... This period should be known as Classical Modernism..so much for pushing the boundaries!

Also these comments were subjective and did not show interaction that would have resulted in the challenge of the expertise of the core-experts or the credibility of other users in the discussion. Also one of the characteristics of the platform was the lack of possibility for personal representation in the online space which can be linked to the argument made by Kanuka and Anderson (1998) that the anonymity of the online space provided, makes it easier for users to avoid conflicting opinions and ignore them

In the rare cases where the discussion could have moved to the second phase that where disagreements are articulated and social discord can occur the users lacked the consistency to follow up on their argument and the debate fell apart after while. Furthermore, in the model of Gunawerdana et al (1997), ideally, the role of a moderator was that who facilitated the discussion by summarizing the points made by the conflicting sides and then advancing the discussion to a new level of the interaction analysis model . In the case of the TATE, there was no actor in the debate that was serving this function which led the debate to run free and this subsequently prevented the debate from moving to some form of knowledge construction. The lack of users that were granted an expert status by both the public and the core experts meant that no figure of authority was present in the debate, and in order to act as moderator one needs precisely the authority to direct the conversation.

Overall the comments in the TATE blog did not elevate past the initial stage of the interaction analysis model in which users share observations, opinions and rise questions.

When the Gunawerdana et al. (1997) model was applied to the Guardian art blog it did show far greater results. In the case of the Guardian platform, a fair number of comments and users were able to elevate up to the third stage of the model and in some rare cases, even to the forth stage but still it failed to reach the fifth stage where the new knowledge is constructed and applied in the "metacognitive statements by the participants illustrating their understanding that their knowledge or ways of thinking

(cognitive schema) have changed as a result of the [online] interaction"

The transcript bellow is following the asynchronous debate between two participants in the discussion where it is possible to observe how they flow between the different stages of the interaction analysis model:

CharlesThomson

31 March 2011 6:37PM

Stuckism is based on Modernism, or rather a re-evaluation of it termed Remodernism. This emphasises the importance of content, meaning and value, as opposed to innovation as a primary criterion. The 20th century paradigm was one of progress, where the new was seen as desirable for its own sake. The necessity for the 21st century is a paradigm of conservation, namely the integration of the new with a retrieval of what is still of worth to us from the past (known as tradition).

The 20th century was a time of partiality, by which I mean tunnel vision focus on a small area, regardless of the greater picture. Insecticides were good for one particular task but disastrous environmentally. Likewise in art, the components were broken down into small areas, developed by successive movements - the abstract by one, the area of the irrational by another, expressiveness by another, geometry by another etc. etc.

The 21st century is a time of holism, the relationship of the components to the whole. This is an increasing practice in, for example, medicine. It is advocated by Stuckism in art. The conclusion drawn in this approach by Stuckists is that figurative painting fulfills this aim.

In this first comment we can identify the first phase of the model where statement are presented along with examples that support it as well as a definition of a existing problem.

damienhirst

31 March 2011 7:11PM

@Charles Thompson,

Stuckism is based on Modernism, or rather a re-evaluation of it termed Remodernism. This emphasises the importance of content, meaning and value, as opposed to innovation as a primary criterion. The 20th century paradigm was one of progress, where the new was seen as desirable for its own sake. The necessity for the 21st century is a paradigm of conservation, namely the integration of the new with a retrieval of what is still of worth to us from the past (known as tradition).

what doesn't convince me here is the fact that before modernism there were ideas offering different values and before that there were ideas offering different values and so on and so on

way back to the cave paintings. now, the question is why picking modernism? why not the way they understood art in ancient egypt or greece or renaissance or whatever else? so, it's not like modernism is the beginning of everything and as such is universally more relevant than anything else. so, why modernism? because it's the "closest"? and for how long do you suggest would be relevant for us to be stuck with this reference to this particular past until we can then move on a bit further and redefine what is new and what is the tradition worth being conserved? or should be just stuck with the modernist values forever?

In the reply following the initial comment we can see how the discussion process is advanced to stage two where areas of disagreement are identified and questions are asked to clarify the source of disagreement (Gunawardena et al. , 1997).

CharlesThomson

31 March 2011 7:56PM

@damienhirst

> *why picking modernism? why not the way they understood art in ancient egypt or greece   or renaissance or whatever else? ... for how long do you suggest would be relevant for   us to be stuck with this reference to this particular past ...?*

Art is the visual manifestation of the world view of the epoch. Medieval art with its idealised forms represented the theological orientation of that time. The focus on the material world by the Renaissance was reflected in the emphasis on fixed viewoint three-dimensionality in art. We are still living in the reality of the Modern era with its technological inventions, psychological perceptions, and social and individual values. We have to have an art that engages with the spirit of this. We will be stuck with it artistically, as long as we are stuck with it in every other way.

damienhirst

31 March 2011 8:07PM

@CharlesThomson,

> *Art is the visual manifestation of the world view of the epoch. Medieval art with its idealised forms represented the theological orientation of that time. The focus on the material world by the Renaissance was reflected in the emphasis on fixed viewoint three-dimensionality in art.*

exactly my point.

> *We are still living in the reality of the Modern era with its technological inventions, psychological perceptions, and social and individual values. We have to have an art that engages with the spirit of this. We will be stuck with it artistically, as long as we are*

stuck with it in every other way.

> but if this is indeed true then where does all that you are trying to refuse come from? isn't your argument falling apart exactly because of the fact you are actually feeling there is the need for change. but what do you want to change exactly? maybe you want to change exactly what defines this present time. because if this doesn't define our present time then what does it define? can a social reality be wrong? I mean is reality something that we need to create consciously and methodically and not just a process that happens on its own? I mean was the whole history of human kind planned? and you really believe that nothing really changed in the last 100 years?

As the discussion move forward it advances to the third and forth stage of the Gunawardena model. In the third stage participants are negotiating and clarifying the meaning of terms which is done by Chalres Tompson, also a new statement is proposed to the other participant in the dialogue. In his reply we can see how "damienhirst" is moving trough the third and forth stages of the model by first negotiating the meaning of terms(phase III) as far as the relationship between art and the social world are concerned. He then moves on to the forth phase where the proposed statements are tested against the personal views of the actor. Here we see how the proposed model is rejected. The debate between them continues moving between the different stages but fails to lead to an agreement on the general topic. Overall the actors in the discussion were involved in the processes of social discord since there were many conflicting opinions and standpoints on the discussed matter:

The main characteristics of the Guardian blog were the possibility to create a rich online persona which as noted earlier, was identified as beneficial to the process of establishing credibility and expertise in online environments. Also when a more detailed representation of the self is possible, it is less likely that other users would chose to ignore a conflicting opinion. When analyzing the discussion threads it became clear that the majority of the users that would provoke a dicussion and those who engaged in it had used the available tools to represent themselves in more or less detail in the digital realm. Also the objective language, proper referencing, greater length and complexity were all important features for the processes of expertise negotiation.

Despite the fact that the participants were engaging in social discord over their conflicting standpoints on conceptual contemporary art here as well as in the TATE blog, there was a lack of a moderator which could have summarized the points made up to this point set a common ground from which the debating participants could have moved onwards in the knowledge creation process rephrase sentence .

Finally in the case of the Guggenheim live chat session where there was neither the possibility for the

creation of online profiles nor any major conflicting points between the different actors in the discussion, which meant that expertise was not contested. CThe participants moved between the first three stages of the interaction analysis model as it can be seen in the following transcript.

Expert:

Ethically/morally, is being an artist different from, say, working in a factory making ballpoint pens? By which I mean are the moral concerns that go into artmaking—and they do for many artists--any different from those that go into any other job? If so, why?

Moderator:
To comment on Domenick's post: The artist is supposed ideally to have a freedom to define the self and work together. That offers a wide panorama for the ethical to operate in. Of course, the actuality is often not like that, as we've been hearing.

Jon Jensen
Isn't that trying to take population based set of ethics or morals and apply them to an individual, who may or may not agree with them?

Expert:
But if we presume there is no possibility of that freedom, Julian, might we assume that it is OK to separate one's political practice and one's art?

Expert:
@Domenick: I'm not sure if it's possible to completely separate those two things, but there may be gaps in the relationship between the two.

Moderator:
I'm not saying there's no possibility of that freedom--I think it exists and it's what continues to attract so many people to the insecure job of artist. It's just that, in fact, there are many and maybe increasing pressures on artists to perform to the agendas of others.

It is curious to note that when the discussion was taking place only between the core experts they were able to actually skip the stage of disagreement and move directly to the third phase where they proposed and negotiated new statements built on compromise.

Whenever the core-experts were joined in the discussion by other users who were not part of the art world "elite" contradiction and disagreement entered the discussion as it is possible to see in the transcript bellow in Jon's comment -

Michael:
I am wondering if there is any art that is non-political. In the context of today's transient culture, maybe all art is political inherently.

Moderator:

I'm sure that's right, Michael: the claim to autonomy is deeply political, after all.

Michael:
In other words, does the artist make a political statement by the mere fact of trying NOT to be political

Jon :
I'd have do disagree. I feel like there is a wide collection of art that is just the celebration of beauty, which is non-political. The problem is the pressure to perform to other agendas as Julian said.

One of the defining characteristics of the Guggenheim live chat session was the fact that almost all of the participants were either "core experts" or members of the broader scientific community with deep understanding in the field of art. Also all of them were some experts and were working together in the process of reaching some common conclusions on the discussed topic. This combined with the presence of a moderator who was responsible for facilitating and moving the discussion forward did help the members to move through the stages of the interaction analysis model with greater ease and in a much shorter period of time than the participants in the discussions taking place on the two other platforms.

In the process of applying the Gunawerdana et al. social interaction model for knowledge construction the current research has several propositions to make.

1. In online platforms where there was a large segment of the population consisting of diverse range of experts ranging from core experts to the general public proper online self representation was important for the process of knowledge creation. When it was impossible to create a detailed online persona it became easier for other members to ignore conflicting statements and not to engage in social discord.. Whenever there was the possibility for proper profile creation combined with objective argumentation and complex structure, the users were more likely to engage in social discord and move to the higher levels of the model.

2. Smaller groups that consisted of core experts and members of the broader scientific community whom had a common knowledge base and worked towards the resolution of some conflicting matter were more likely to reach to point where they constructed some new knowledge, despite the lack of virtual representation.

3. The role of the moderator is crucial in the process of knowledge construction . The hypothesis

being made is that core experts in online platforms can serve the function of moderators and facilitate the discussion so that the debating participants can move from one level to the other and in the end the discussion will result in the construction of new knowledge.

6. Conclusion

The primary goal of this thesis was to examine how social media impacts the existing expert-amateur relationship within the art world. A domain characterized by hierarchy, elitism and where experts have dominated the discourse by which the art world itself is defined. The three social media platforms were

researched because of the interest provoked by the debate regarding the change of statuses and roles in both the real and digital worlds. (Rheingold, 1992; Kelly, 1994; Jenkins, 2004; Benkler, 2006; Keen, 2007; Shirky, 2008).

The analysis of the comments section as a form of public discourse was expected to provide understanding of the roles within the expert amateur relationship when situated in the art world. The findings support neither the idea that social media will blur the boundaries between expert and amateur and that this practice overall beneficial to the respective field nor the fear that the blurring of boundaries between expert and amateur manifested by social media will force certain areas of our culture that rely of experts judgment to deteriorate. What the findings in this thesis show that rather then blurring the boundaries between "expert" and "amateur" social media in the face of blogs expands the idea of expertise without necessarily eroding the position of the experts of the pre-Web 2.0 boom. What this thesis pushes for is a the advancement of the understanding of expertise as a dynamic structure rather then a static one. Collins and Evans (2002) present an idea according to which the realm of expertise there are several actors which have different levels and roles withing the construction of certainty. By appropriating their understanding this thesis argues that the arrival of social media has expanded the number of experts within the art world and made them visible to the general public without leveling the existing hierarchy within the art world itself. The idea streaming from the model of Collins and Evans (2002) is that expertise can consist of both the opinions of the core experts of the field as well as "pockets of expertise" which are contributed by members outside the core such as the broader scientific community, uncertified experts and the general public. The research of the three platforms did provide evidence that by debating on art matters such "pockets of expertise" emerged. The tension apparently was not between the "amateur" and the "expert" but between different actors outside the core of experts. These actors were contesting in different ways in order to be recognized as "pocket of expertise". Analyzing the actors who attempted to gain recognition it became apparent that the consisted predominantly of members of the broader artistic community or uncertified experts. Apparently the general public did not feel the need to strive for expertise.

By situating the debate withing the art world we can see that the internal dynamics of the art world this examined how the internal dynamics of the art world remained rather unchanged by the arrival of social media. The actors facilitating the discourse in the online platforms related to the art matters remain members or affiliates of the art world and are not the amateurs or members of the general public. The debates in which expertise different from that of the core group can be identified are predominantly

provoked and participated by follow the internal dynamics of the art world and its practices. By debating on conflicting views on art these actors were able to form such "pockets of expertise". Inferring from this the thesis purposes the idea that social media by widening the number of voices in the discourse has widen our view on the different actors and forms and expertise and has added new ones next to those from the past. The research performed in this thesis also provide support of the ideas of Stern (2002) who sees expertise at least in the realm of art criticism as a fluid concept, a role which different actors withing the art world such as professional critics, connoisseur and amateurs attempt to play with different degree of success.

This work also has shed light on the way the new medium has forced a change in the characteristics of expertise. While the traditional characteristics of experts as outlined by Shanteau et al. (2002) remain unchanged the architecture of the social media tool or the blog plays a part in the process of establishing the person as an expert Both the creation of an online profile and the proper format of communicating within the blogosphere were characteristics of expertise online. This thesis outlines the importance of the possibilities of the self representation in social media platforms when investigating relations between amateur and experts online. The analysis provided evidence on the relation between the virtual self representation and expertise when it became apparent that most actors who were perceived as experts were keen to voice their interest I art in their profile and also their affiliation and role with and within the art world.

Finally this thesis investigated blogs and social media tools such as live chat as a space for knowledge creation via social discourse by applying the interaction analysis model for examining social construction of knowledge in computer conferencing developed by Gunawardena et al (1997). In the analysis of the three platforms and the interactions between their users this work concludes that despite the shown potential of some of the platforms to serve as spaces for knowledge creation there are other requirements for knowledge construction to occur. As such are identified the interface and characteristics of the social media platform, the structure of the group – in groups that consisted of multiple sets of experts the discussions evolved to higher stages in the knowledge construction process. Also the lack of a moderator who can facilitate the advancement of the discussion is identified as a possible reason for the failure in knowledge construction. This comes from the fact that in their analysis Gunawardena et al. (1997) used data from a CMC that was moderated and facilitated in reaching the higher stages of the model. The analysis of the potential of expert blogs to act as a space for knowledge creation can be useful for institutions within the art world that are engaged in education

processes since it outlines the necessary factors that should lead to successful knowledge construction processes.

In summary this thesis has made an attempt to fuel in the debate about the implementation of social media within the amateur expert relationship by situating it in a field where the distinction between amateur and expert is high – namely the art world. The key findings in the research process suggest that at least in the art world social media does not lead to the deterioration of expert status or the questioning of existing expertise of key actors in the art world such as the art critic, the curator or the museum. Rather then replacing old experts social media has provided a space for other members of the art world to present their opinions and assert an expert status themselves thus diversifying the number of actors and practices by which members outside the core group of experts can gain credibility. The findings of the thesis are limited to the examined actors and platforms and may miss out on other interactions between expert and amateurs in other social media platforms where expertise can also be contested. Also it is possible that users of social media in relation to the art world have different approach and goals when engaging with art in the digital realm. Further research is needed in order to understand the value the general public places on the opinion of the new emerging experts in relation with that of the core experts. Another area that shows potential for further research is the way core experts are influenced by the interactions with them and their messages by other experts and the general public.

In conclusion it seems that social media has been able to widen the plethora of experts and expert opinions within the art world. However this has not resulted in democratization of the practices of the art world, nevertheless it is intriguing to observe the ways power institutions and experts act in this new environment of multiple voices.

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