

# **The impact of new media on international contemporary art fairs (ICAFs)**

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## **Abstract**

Over the past decade the influence of the Web 2.0 has dramatically changed the way in which organizations communicate with their consumers. This shift has not only paved its way into becoming an essential element of the corporate communication mix. The cultural sector too, has been increasingly engaging users through social media. Ranging from popular music events to high-cultural institutions, empirical research has established the benefits its use has in engaging and expanding audiences. However, as of yet, almost no research has defined the role of social media within the high-cultural event. This thesis will explore the impact of new media on high-cultural events by researching its role within the international contemporary art fair (ICAF). The objective of this thesis is to outline the viewpoints and usage of social media, in order to create a deeper understanding on its current role within ICAFs. Five European ICAFs will be explored from different angles and analysed comparatively in order to determine until what extent the ICAFs are becoming more popular and global through the use of new media.

## **Keywords**

*Art fairs, social media, popular and high culture, globalization, audience engagement, city branding, networking, culture*

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## Section 1 - Introduction

*“Whenever I hear of a new art fair starting it’s almost physically painful to me. The art world has become a gypsy circus”* (Micheala Neumeister cited in Thompson, 2011, p.60).

The art fair has become a progressively integrated and popular event in contemporary society. With an increased demand for culture, contemporary art fairs have emerged since the 1980’s. Currently, there are 190 international contemporary art fairs held each year, with around 3 million visitors attending fairs globally in 2011 (Vermeyleen, forthcoming). Rather than living up to its high-cultural status the international contemporary art fair (ICAF), has become an ‘unmissable society event’ that embodies the merge between the market and the arts (Vermeyleen, forthcoming). Often partnered with large corporations, such as the Deutsche Bank, art fairs of today are often frequented by celebrities, hosting special events to detect the VIPs from the VOPs (Thompson, 2011). In 2013, Art Basel|Miami Beach featured parties such as Louis Vuitton dinners and Dom Perignon club nights throughout their weeklong event, hosting more of a Vegas-style carnival than a serious art-event (Freeman, 2013). Nonetheless the fairs have become increasingly accessible to the greater public as well, and in Europe prices for a day ticket range between €12-37.

In addition to selling art to the masses in a setting not unlike that of a giant shopping mall, the fairs’ growing popularity is also due to the potential economic prosperities hosting art fairs can have on cities (Yogev & Grund, 2012). Art fairs are often combined within an attractive weeklong program in order to increase cultural tourism. An example is [Art Rotterdam Week](#), which incorporates various art fairs, expositions and pop-ups taking place during a weeklong event in the city of Rotterdam. Additionally, partnerships and networking with various stakeholders such as museums and tourism boards may be implemented to increase mutually beneficial exposure (Yogev & Grund, 2012). Nevertheless, branding techniques and city involvement vary per city. Although some cities implement wider cultural engagements and expansive promotion around the event, others are not involved with its production whatsoever.

The rising worldwide presence of the contemporary art fair is emphasized by their international nature. Since the 1990’s emerging economies such as Brazil,

Russia, India, and China (BRIC countries), have been increasingly present in the art market (Velthuis, 2012). Art fairs, in turn, have played "...a key role in matching demand and supply" from these markets, expanding gallery and visitor participation (Velthuis, 2012, p.4). As the ICAFs provide international artists, curators and galleries within one platform, experts and art aficionados alike prefer to now spend much more time visiting fairs and biennials than walking around single galleries (Quemin, 2013). As a result, more visitors visit the galleries in one day at the art fair than in the regular venue during the whole year (Velthuis, 2011). The international nature of the art fairs thus aids to "...enforce the perception of an integrated and fast-paced global art market" (Vermeulen, forthcoming, p.5). However, juxtaposing the apparently increasingly inclusive and global outlook of the fair are scholars whom remain sceptical on the on the true internationalization of the fairs, where the art fair hierarchy remains Western-dominated (Quemin, 2013).

Parallel to the increased demand for culture and the steep growth of art fairs is the proliferation in social media over the last few years. Several scholars have outlined the benefits of social media for the cultural industries, describing positive effects in awareness, fundraising and engagement with the organization (Vogel, 2011; Thomson, Purcell & Rainie, 2013). Both high and popular cultural industries have already embraced social media as a tool of accessibility and participation (Jamison-Powell et al., 2014). In addition, the art-fairs combine the format of a high-cultural institution and corporate business through the commodification of the arts. Commodification is described as "...a process in which something enters freely or is coerced into a relationship of exchange, a transaction enabled by an instrument of payment within a relatively short period of time" (Ganahl, 2001, p.24). Thus, it seems logical that like other cultural institutions and corporate businesses strong importance is placed on the use of social media by the art fairs. However, whereas empirical research has proven the benefits of social media use within the cultural industries, current research does not yet specify the role of public high-cultural events such as the art fair within this notion, indicating a gap in literature.

The objective of this thesis is to explore the social impact of new media on international contemporary art fairs (ICAFs). Current online communication strategies and engagement perspectives will be explored in order to determine how social media is used to sustain and expand audiences. Exploring the relationship between public cultural events through social media will aid in the further understanding of the

factors that make up the engagement and participation factors that make up today's cultural realm. By exploring the selected fairs through a comparative angle, overarching patterns or contradictions may be uncovered. Additionally, through selecting and comparing different national art fairs a global angle will be incorporated. By researching fairs from different nations this thesis will be able to further elaborate on the current understanding of globalization present in the international art fair. Next, this thesis may also help to explore new territory in the research of expanding and engaging audiences and potentially expose an under tapped consumer base. This research could thus be relevant for both the event organizers and policy makers who are looking to establish city branding by the means of cultural events.

This thesis will first present a literary review of the historical concepts of the art fair until its integration in society today. Next, it will move on to the internationalization of the fair, highlighting key players present within the art fairs today. The framework will then discuss the role between the fairs and the cities, by touching upon the concepts of cultural tourism and city branding. Then, the role of social media will be explored, which will include the benefits that its usage can have in the cultural industries. Finally, the role of expertise will be investigated. Subsequent to the theoretical framework the chosen methodology for this research will be presented, outlining the details of the research, after which the results and analysis will be presented. From the analysis done in this thesis it can be concluded that as of yet, there are strong inconsistencies between the image that the fairs want to project and the use of social media in their communication mix.

## **Research question and sub-questions**

**RQ: To what extent are public high cultural events becoming more popular and global through new media?**

**Sub 1) How are art fairs engaging their cultural consumers through social media?**

**Sub 2) How is globalization expressed in the fairs' online campaigns?**

**Sub 3) How do art fairs use city branding as part of their online campaigns?**

**Sub 4) How are art fairs capitalizing on stakeholders?**

## **Section 2 – Literature review**

### **2.1 Opening up the high-cultural realm**

The 20<sup>th</sup> century marked the opening up of high-culture through increased public funding of the arts and overall accessibility. Coinciding with this was an upsurge in the level of education, through which a greater demand for high-cultural presence was established (Crane, 1992). Thus, in line with rationalizing the increased public spending on high-cultural institutions, the high-cultural realm was required to open up to expanding audiences. Opening up culture increased the demand for culture, too, and the arts, in turn, became increasingly commodified as a cultural good (Gu, 2012). The art fair in particular is a significant example of this. As the fairs are selling cultural goods en masse, it could be concluded that the contemporary art fair embodies the merge between high culture and corporatization.

### **2.2 Art fairs – A history**

The commercial art fair has been an esteemed event for a long time. According to Thomson (2012), the earliest art fair recorded was Pand in Antwerp in the mid-15<sup>th</sup> century. Here, a local cathedral hosted ‘picture-sellers, frame-makers and colour-grinders’ over a six-week period (Thomson, 2012, p.59). In the Netherlands, both local and non-native art became available at the *kermis* (carnival) market in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century. The *kermis* was one of the first fairs recorded where both local and foreign artists could sell their ware (Muller, 2013). However, as the *kermis* market was typically associated with uncivilized behaviour, artists had to place care in differentiating their wares from the “boorishness” of the common city folk (Muller, 2013, p.76). For this reason, art dealers became increasingly common, scouring markets and collecting stock-in trade for their consumers (Montias, 1988). Another reason art dealers became popular was because of their economic and timesaving value towards the consumer, as many were not able to travel around and visit various towns searching for art tailored to their needs.

Far removed from the crudeness and common public’s access to the *kermis*, the 18<sup>th</sup> century introduced elite audiences to the first real collaboration between art and commerce in the French *Salons* of Paris. Serving as a prestigious platform, the Salons



would invite the public to view the exhibited art works from the most renowned artists at the time (Gordon, 2012). The Salon's high-end works first had to get a seal of approval from its gatekeeper, the Academy (*Academie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture*). The Academy's main purpose was to "elevate the fine arts and distinguish them from commercial craftsmanship" (Delacour & Leca, 2011, p. 43.). Similarly, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Royal Academy of London would produce exhibitions with only the most prominent art works of the time (Thomson, 2012). In line with the notion of art and commerce as presented in the Salons, the USA hosted The Armory Show in 1913. This show was the first of its kind where art works were not only on show but also for sale (Gordon, 2012). Exhibiting only Modern art, 4,000 visitors were invited to the first edition of the fair, which lasted for one month. The fair displayed both local and international art, which indicated a turning point in the locality of the fairs. Around 30% of the 1300 works shown came from outside the USA, and out of the 174 artworks sold, 123 were by foreign artists (Gordon, 2012). The aim of the art show was to develop "...a broad interest in American art activities, by holding exhibitions of the best contemporary art work that can be secured, representative of American and foreign art" (Gordon, 2012, p.1). By creating an event where 'art, society, commerce and culture' were intertwined with one another, the experiential element of the art fair became grounded in society (Gordon, 2012).

Several decades later, it was the Kunstmarkt (or Koelnmesse) that defined the contemporary nature of many of today's art fairs. The art fair, which opened its doors in Cologne in 1967, had as its initial purpose to re-connect West Germany to the international art world (Mehring, 2008). The Kunstmarkt's strategy was to fully commercialize and commoditize artworks as a consumer good, and the fair provided individual booths where galleries would create small versions of their shop for the visiting audiences (Mehring, 2008). In order to obtain funding for the art fair, an association was formed named the *progressive German art dealers*. The Kunstmarkt then closed a deal with the municipality, which stated that a venue would be allowed to be used in order to host the fair, however all entrance fees would have to go to the city treasury (Art Cologne, 2013). Secondly, in order to emphasize West German works the fair remained local this first year (this changed in 1974 when an international element was strongly incorporated into the fair's structure). Prices for artworks ranged between DM 20 - 60,000 and the artists represented came from cities such as Munich, Hamburg & Berlin (Art Cologne, 2013). For five days, the fair

hosted 18 galleries and over 16,000 visitors, proving the marketability of the arts (Gordon, 2012).

By exceeding all expectations the Kunstmarkt (now Art Cologne) became the unprecedented model of almost all contemporary art fairs that subsequently sprang out in the Western world (Mehring, 2008). Proving to be an incredible popular event, many other initiatives soon followed suit. Art Basel (one of the key players of the art fair today) was established in 1970 and was the second art fair to take on the Kunstmarkt's commercial model (Vermeyleen, forthcoming). The Foire Internationale d'Art Contemporain (FIAC) in Paris and The European Fine Art Fair (TEFAF) in Maastricht were established soon after, and remain some of the dominant actors within the world of art fairs today (Vermeyleen, forthcoming).

Even though much has changed since the late 1960's, the notion of the commodification of contemporary art remains. Moreover, society's current high consumption of culture has given way to an innumerable amount of art fairs springing up globally. Indeed, the late 20<sup>th</sup> century surge in the contemporary art market could be regarded to align strongly with the overall commercialization of cultural goods (Velthuis, 2012).

The historical context outlined above depicts several fluctuations in the status of the fair, which has been varying between an elitist and commercially orientated event. With the arrival of the first contemporary art fair, the Kunstmarkt, art truly became established as a cultural good. As today's contemporary art fair embodies the commercialization of the arts, it could be expected that the fairs are operating according to a less elitist frame in order to increase audiences and potential buyers. Since social media is exemplary in opening up to larger audiences it would be assumed that art fairs are using online strategies to benefit from expanded reach. However, as of yet there is almost no theoretical or empirical evidence supporting these assumptions. Thus, this thesis will explore whether the fairs are using social media in order to implement an increasingly inclusive communication strategy. Moreover, as the fairs researched are across European borders, comparisons can be made and overarching patterns and themes can be detected.

### **2.3 The contemporary picture of the art fair**

As stated above, contemporary art fairs are the result of the changing art market and the increased public demand for culture. Since the 1970s, the number of art fairs has augmented greatly. Currently, there are 190 international contemporary art fairs (ICAFs) held each year, with around 3 million visitors attending fairs globally in 2011 (Vermeulen, forthcoming). Moreover, art fairs now represent the third-largest institution in the art market, preceded only by art galleries and auction houses (Morgner, 2014). Even though participation of the fairs remains a costly experience, the reputational status of established fairs ensures a fair amount of competition amongst applicants. Here, applications of the more esteemed fairs such as Art Basel far surpass the amount of galleries the fair can actually host (Velthuis, 2011). To exemplify the expansion of the art fair in current society the UK can be taken as an example. Where in 1999, London had just one contemporary art fair; in 2014 no less than 20 are held in the UK, primarily in its capital (The Economist, 2014).

Remaining similar to the structure of the Kunstmarkt, art fairs are held annually and are between three days and one week in length. Its participants consist of hundreds of galleries and art dealers, showcasing their work in individual booths to the masses of visitors and buyers attending the event (Velthuis, 2011). Its visitors, in turn, come from far and wide, although today's international art fairs also allows galleries to transport their artworks to the collector instead of collectors scouring for works in individual galleries (Yogev & Grund, 2012). Today's art fairs are often privately sponsored. Many corporates are jumping on the bandwagon to fund the cultural industries as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) program, or to lure in rich clients (Thompson, 2011). Examples are the Deutsche Bank, which sponsors both Art Cologne and FRIEZE fair in London, and the ING, which is one of the main sponsors of Art Brussels (Thompson, 2011).

According to DiMaggio (1996) visitors of high-cultural establishment remain predominantly high educated and from the upper classes of society. Even though art fairs are part of the high-cultural realm, and thus remain having a rather elite status, the events themselves have become increasingly accessible to the public. The fairs are all accessible to the general public, where for a low to moderate price a day-ticket can be purchased (ranging from €12-37 in Europe). In turn, remaining a societal event,

they are now also often frequented by celebrities, and progressively seen as an educative and entertaining day out (Thompson, 2011). The entertainment factor is best portrayed through Art Basel|Miami Beach. With its celebrity influx, societal galas and night clubbing events, its structure is rather reminiscent to that of the *kermis* (carnivals) held back in the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Thompson, 2011). Over recent years, visitor numbers have increased by tenfold, and over 55,000 visitors visited Art Cologne in 2013 (Art Cologne, 2013). By orientating itself commercially, the art fair can thus attract a greater number of visitors, reduce overhead costs and make a profit.

This chapter has highlighted some of the contradictions between the art fair as an elite event and its increasing popularization. So how does social media contribute to these factors? Remaining a societal event but now also frequented by the greater public and celebrities, the need for a more varied communication strategy is established. As stated above, social media could feature as an exemplary tool in order to engage wider audiences (and thus potential buyers) globally. However, since the fairs remain embedded in the high-cultural realm, there might be contradictions between the fairs in the kind of audiences they want to attract. Thus, it is of importance to explore until what extent the fairs are engaging with this medium, as well as uncover the reasons for its usage to determine which audiences the fair desires to engage with and why.

### **2.3.1 Going global**

Adding to the expanding audiences is the international outlook of the fair. According to Velthuis (2011), even though local fairs still *do* exist, today's contemporary art fairs tend to have an international character (p.40). With their international character and audiences, art fairs can thus be stated to be one of the most important indicators of the overall globalization of the art markets (and in fact, of our society) over the last decades (Quemin, 2008; Velthuis, 2011). In turn, the fairs' mall-like set up is ideal for the globetrotting curator, gallery owner, artist or art aficionado, who do not have time to visit individual galleries in their busy schedules (The Economist, 2014; Vermeulen, forthcoming).

Overall, the increasingly globalized nature of the art fairs has been applauded, as the incorporation of alternative actors in the art market would lessen the power in

authority from Western countries (Velthuis, 2011). Over recent years alternative players within the field are becoming increasingly present (Velthuis, 2012). According to Artprice (2013), the most recent addition to the list of emerging countries is the periphery of the Middle East. Within the last ten years, both Dubai (United Arab Emirates) and Doha (Qatar) have climbed up to the 15<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> position in the sales of contemporary art, highlighted by the emergence of international art fairs within the region (Artprice, 2013). Moreover, due to a vast increase in the acquisition of wealth in BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India and China) countries, many of these emerging markets are starting to make a name in the art world as exemplified by Art Basel setting up a fair in Hong Kong (Art Basel, 2014; Velthuis, 2012).

However, according to Quemin (2006), paradoxically to the international outlook of the fairs, there is still a marked hierarchy engrained within the countries that are represented. Participating galleries remain Western-dominated and key players within the European region consist of France, the UK, Germany and Italy (Quemin, 2006). These actors do not only favour national artworks over foreign works in exhibitions, but also have a stronger relationship to one another than to other actors (Quemin, 2006).

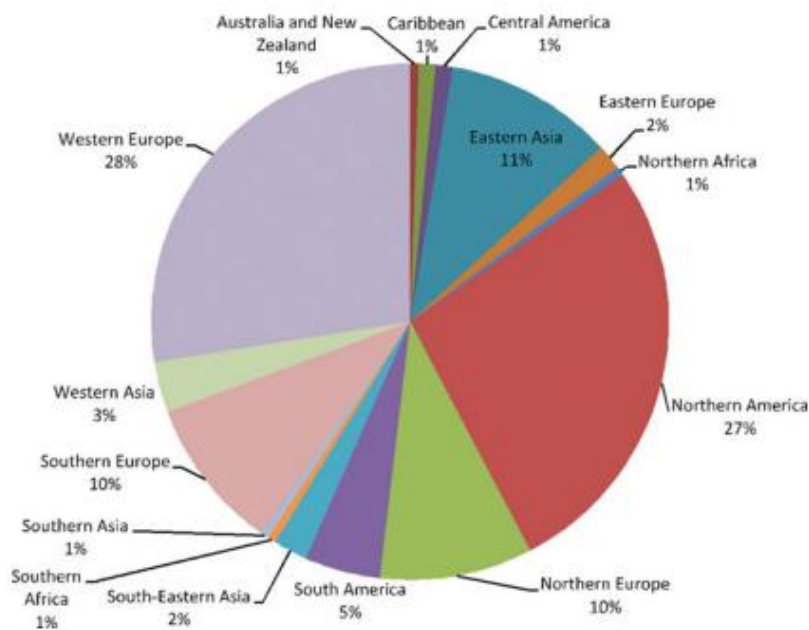


Figure 1: Geographical location of art fairs in 2010 (ArtFacts). Adopted from Morgner (2014)

This section has defined the international aspect of art fairs today. The historical section of this theoretical framework previously outlined how the global aspect of art fairs was already present in the *kermis* fairs of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. This shows that incorporating international aspects is not new but something deep-rooted, which has strongly developed over the last thirty years. Even though the fairs have increasingly enhanced the concept of internationalization, some scholars remain sceptical of their true international nature. In order to give more insight into the international nature of the art fairs, this concept can be carried through to the online sphere. Here, findings on internationalization can be given further depth by examining the fairs' communication on new media. This can be explored through researching the type of art and artists highlighted by the fairs, and can be further verified through examining the participating galleries. In addition, through comparing the fairs across Europe similarities and discrepancies can be detected in the level of internationalization across borders.

### **2.3.2 The fair and the city**

Today no one asks if the city can stand four art fairs...the whole city is prepared. The different events are coordinated and the people can meet each other in various spaces. It's like a big family trip . . . that does not only increase the attractiveness of the city but also the sales on the art market. (Yogev & Grund, 2012, p.24)

One of the reasons for the innumerable amount of art fairs springing up globally (and some 20 art fairs being held in London this year), is because of the perceived beneficial ties between cities and cultural events. Even though cultural tourism has already been established for centuries, it has only been since the last three decades that the cultural tourist has been recognized as a specific tourism market (Richards, 1996). Since the shift in cultural policies in the 1980s, governments have invested heavily in both cultural hardware and cultural events in order to create economic prosperity (Hitters, 2000). Fuelled by globalization and urban competitiveness, the creation of cultural facilities was increasingly seen as an important weapon in the competitive struggle between European cities (Richards,

1996). Besides branding the city through mass events such as the European City Of Culture (ECOC), smaller events too have been noted to have a positive impact on city image. When successful, these smaller events may eventually grow to become brands in their own right. Examples are Notting Hill Carnival in London or the Edinburgh Film Festival, which both serve as vehicles for economic growth (Richards & Wilson, 2004).

Indeed, according to Yogev & Grund (2012), art fairs have a strong impact on the local economy. As the fairs often last around one week, an attractive program for both the local and international visitors is created. This can include the cooperation with the individual city councils for increased exposure (Yogev & Grund, 2012). Additionally, it can include the collaboration with other fairs simultaneously held in the city, but also that of partnering with other art galleries, museums, restaurants, and hotel venues. This is done in order to create an overall appealing line-up for the duration of the fair, which has become increasingly immersed with today's society (Yogev & Grund, 2012).

Even though cultural events are one of the main contemporary city branding strategies, some theorists point out the short-term effects events they may have. Gelders and Van Zuilen (2013), claim that while cultural city events may receive intensive media attention in the short run, this only becomes durable when part of a larger city strategy in the long run. Similarly, Richard and Wilson (2004) performed a study on the perceived image of Rotterdam as a cultural city after hosting the ECOC in 2001. Even though the city was temporarily considered as a booming cultural hub, the city's strategies proved to not align thoroughly enough. Hence, the elements of the city's image as the 'working city in the Netherlands' continued to dominate shortly after the event (Richard & Wilson, 2004).

Nonetheless, cultural events remain a thriving city branding technique. Cities all over Europe are actively participating in exuding culture through entertainment. In addition, part of positive image of event can be attributed to its unique nature, which requires active participation in order to fully enjoy the experience (Gelders & Van Zuilen, 2013). Events have come to be considered as 'vital elements' within the reorganization and regeneration of the city in order to create jobs, attract visitors and stimulate cultural consumption, providing an ascent in economic growth (Van Aalst & Van Melik, 2011). In addition, as the contemporary art fair is an annual reoccurring event, a larger city strategy could be implemented in order to make the positive

effects long lasting.

From the information outlined above, there seems to be a strong positive connection between art fairs and their host cities. In addition, since the researched art fairs in this thesis all have the name of the city tied to them, it would be expected that strong ties are created in order to create mutually beneficial exposure. However, while bigger cultural events such as the ECOC are usually tied to cities through financial backing and an all-over city-branding strategy at the time of the event, this is different for the art fair (Richards & Wilson, 2004). While some fairs are indeed financially backed by the city and do create a weeklong event as a strategy for cultural tourism, many remain privately funded. Nonetheless, in both cases, previous research has not yet embarked on how the relationship between the city and the fair is expressed online. Since this thesis will research art fairs from different European countries, careful conclusions can thus be made about the overarching themes in online relationships between the art fairs and the city.

### **2.3.3 Networks**

A second prominent feature of the art fair lies within its structure. Already in 1982, Howard Becker described how art works could only be created with the participation of others (Morgner, 2014). In his book 'Art Worlds' he described various processes of the labour, collaboration and cooperation between an artist and others in order to produce a work of art as a "network of cooperating people" (Morgner, 2014, p. 33). This network of artwork production is enhanced by the structure of the art fair, which seems to be inextricably linked with networking. When The Armory Show was held in 1913, the concept of tie formation was strongly encouraged within the weeklong event. Both Art Cologne and Art Basel further developed this notion within the structure of their fairs in the late 20<sup>th</sup>-century, which served as *the* model for the contemporary fair structure as we know it today (Morgner, 2014). The network structure thus enhances the business relationships in the arts where: "the balance of power and the degree of dependence or independence will help shape the atmosphere of the exchange process" (n.d., p.3).

An example is ART Rotterdam, which (like many others) is organized for both professionals and the general public. The main motive here is to connect art galleries



internationally in order to internationalize the Dutch art world (F. Hof, personal communication, January 13, 2014). Indeed, the structure of the fair, with its assemblage of a dense network of galleries at a particular time, can serve as the perfect networking opportunity, both between internal gallerists and externally towards their audiences (Morgner, 2014). Examples of benefitting actors are: ‘galleries, artists, collectors, curators, museum representative, critics, art lovers and tourists’ (Yogev & Grund, 2012, p.24). Frequented by the media and serving as a strategic meeting and networking hub, fairs are thus both a platform for the creation of new ties and reassure existing relationships (Yogev & Grund, 2012). The importance of networking is recognized by those participating at the fair. According to one art fair director: “today as a gallery it is almost impossible to survive without a network of colleagues to interchange artists, information and work at regular intervals” (Yogev & Grund, 2012, p.25).

By partaking at the fair a special profile may be constructed, which can be based on cooperation, information exchange or status enhancement (Yogev & Grund, 2012; Morgner, 2014). Whereas the cooperative aspect is based on identity construction through the similarities between galleries, the second is used to achieve *desired* profiles and identification. This is also referred to as *intra-networking*. Here, the reputation of others is ‘highjacked’ to increase reputation and develop “a more significant voice through a greater density of befriended galleries” (Morgner, 2014, p.40). Outside of the fair this case of ‘keeping your friends close but your enemies closer’ or the *frenemy* is exemplified through the clusters of galleries or creative spaces within a city. More often than not, cities boast well-known areas where art galleries are concentrated, such as Witte de With in Rotterdam or South Bank in London. Various scholars have already examined the notion of space within organization and communities, and the initiation of relationships when closely located to one another (McPherson, Miller, Smith-Lovin & Cook, 2001; Yogev & Grund, 2012). This too, holds true for the location of art galleries in the city (Rius Ulldemolinos, 2012). Here, one of the main roles remains economically, where visitors can be attracted to gallery clusters to find all the artworks they could want in one district. For the gallerists, in turn, the gallery districts of the city can serve as a collective strategy in order for the leading actors to reinforce their element of prestige (Rius Ulldemolinos, 2012).

While status and elitist notions may create a barrier between new galleries’

entries into specific city clusters or indeed entry to the art fair, emerging art fairs often incorporate a more varied profile (Morgner, 2014). By selecting a wide-range of similar-status galleries, fairs often focus on particular elements that all the galleries have in common. These selections may be based on various levels such as creativity, being established or conservativeness. However, as the fair is internationally orientated the sense of direct homophily is eliminated, making competitors both an interesting partner prospective and status enhancer (Morgner, 2014). Overall, the art fair provides opportunities, initiated through its structure that allows for *conversation*. According to Edward Winkleman of Winkleman Gallery NYC:

We are hopefully finding other artists, working on the galleries it makes sense for our programme and hopefully connecting jobs with curators and museums who we probably wouldn't have met under any other context. But the best thing about it is the whole art world walks past you and, for whatever reason, you can spark up a conversation. (Morgner, 2014, p.39)

This chapter has built on the concept of networking as interwoven in the art fairs' structure. By leveraging and connecting with expanding networks through being placed within the city's art district or hijacking reputations through interacting with competing galleries at the fair, the fair provides participants the opportunities to build on and create new relationships. Here, though the concept of inter-gallery connections has been proven both empirically and scientifically, the question on how the fairs themselves benefitting from networking engagements remains largely unexplored. Hence, this research will explore the fairs' relationships with their stakeholders in order to see in which ways the fairs are capitalizing on their networks for increased status and exposure.

## **2.4 New media and the cultural industry**

Parallel to the popularity and demand for the contemporary art fair is the steady growth of social media. The arrival of the Web 2.0 could be seen as providing a platform for interactive relationships between brand and consumers, and is a valuable method to engage and increase audiences. However, the notion of social media is build upon mutual trust and interaction, something which is not innate to

high-cultural institutions (Kidd, 2010). Instead, institutions such as museums and art fairs have been identified as institutions that shape knowledge. Exuding a sense of authority, a notable gap is created between the institution and its audiences. Here, curators, gallerists or art dealers act as the authoritative intermediaries between the audience and the work of art without expecting an interactive dialogue (Kidd, 2010; Schweibenz, 2011). Thus, traditionally the voice of the curator is regarded as *expert* and the dominant narrative (Arora & Verboom, 2012). This is comparable to the traditional communication strategies of corporations, where communication remained predominantly one-sided.

Despite innate reluctance by high-cultural institutions (in particular auction houses and galleries) towards using the Web 2.0, social media has become a tool of increasing importance in the high-cultural realm, especially in museums (Arora & Vermeylen, 2013). Part of this may be due to jumping on the social media bandwagon, however, as social media is one of the key features in opening up prospective audiences it could prove to be a very useful tool in opening up high-culture (Schweibenz, 2011). However, where several theories have already researched the positive effects of social media use on museums and popular cultural events, almost none have explored the notion between art fairs and social media use. Thus, it is of great importance to research the digital communication strategies of public high-cultural events such as the fair, in particular as it emphasizes the sales of a cultural good.

The first relation that will be explored is how museums are engaging with social media. The museum strongly relates to the art fair in its model. It presents high-culture in a publicly accessible space, has an authoritative voice, and entrance fees are often charged to the visitor. However, a decrease in public spending on culture, and a dramatic increase in both demand for culture and competing art institutions since the 1970s, established a *new museology* (Kidd, 2010). Here, a need was established for museums to be re-scripted, both in terms of experience and audience demographic in order to engage the new consumer (Kidd, 2010). This involved museums drastically reconsidering audience involvement in the museum, where nowadays there has been “increased emphasis on dialogue, conversation and even democracy” (Kidd, 2010, p.65). Social media, in turn, is stated to be exemplary in public outreach and connecting the masses with the art scene (Logan cited in Arora & Vermeylen, 2013; Birkner, 2012). As the Web 2.0 has the ability to provide “richer, more relevant and

more personal content”, more value can be added to the museum content as well as to individual visitor experience (Kelly & Elis, 2007, p.2). With museums increasingly being presented as educational and engaging platforms, numerous institutions have begun to successfully experiment with social media in order to engage with current and prospective audiences (Arora & Vermeulen, 2013).

An example is Moma’s Google Art Project; a website in collaboration with Google and 151 art institutions from over 40 countries. Here, users can take virtual tours of museums or build their own collections of art, which they are prompted to share via social media, hence increasing the reach of art and the museums (Birkner, 2012). Other ways to engage audiences can be done via just bringing a smart phone to the museum. Here, photos taken can increase external audience via user-generated content posted on Instagram, Twitter or Facebook, leading to extending the visitor experience to outside of the museum (Weilenmann, Hillman & Jungselius, 2013). Furthermore, museums have increasingly started working according to an *inclusivity* frame within their communication output. Through using social media, user participation is encouraged and narratives are being co-created (Arora & Verboom, 2012). This sense of *accessibility* is conveyed through for example engaging in live-chats with curators or showing behind the scenes videos on YouTube or Facebook. Through this, the museum creates a more humane identity, which allows audiences of various background and ages to engage with the museum. Thus, online activity shows to account for “users’ increased awareness and recognition of art, reinforcement of cultural heritage and national identity, creation of a community around the museum, and the strengthening of audience trust in the institution” (Kidd cited in Arora & Vermeulen, 2013, p.3).

Popular events (such as annual music festivals) too, have grown exponentially during the demand for culture over the last 20 years (Liu, 2012). Through their participatory nature, festivals and events are seen as an accessible entrance to the cultural sector by younger audiences (NEA, 2013). In their quest to attract and engage with the masses, many popular cultural events have embraced social media (Jamison-Powell et al., 2014). Popular music festivals are employing the use of social media in a myriad of ways to personalize and enhance the festival experience. An example is Lollapalooza festival in Chicago, which created a big hype through social media prior to the festival kick-off (Hudson & Hudson, 2013). Here, Lollapalooza made a deal with the Chicago Transportation Authority (CTA), and instead of an advertisement,

the screen had one or two lines of lyrics of artists who would be playing the festival. The lyrics included a Twitter hashtag, which users could include when discussing the bands online. Similarly, both Latitude festival in the UK and Lollapalooza created an app for their festivals to enhance online experience. This ranged from informative details of the festivals to creating a groupchat to chat with other festival go-ers and creating a contest for creating the best festival Fan-App (Hudson & Hudson, 2013).

The success of social media in both the high and popular public cultural realm is evident from the contexts outlined above. As social media adds to increasing scope, experience and engagement with audiences, it seems surprising that currently little further research has been done examining the social media practices of the art fair. Since the art fair is depicted as an increasingly popular yet elite event the concept of *inclusion* and *audience engagement* through social media will be a particular interesting one to explore. Are the art fairs really reaching out and accepting of new and wider audiences that come with this medium or do they remain stagnant in their communication strategies? How are prospective audiences engaged and for what reasons?

## **2.5 The blurring boundaries of expertise**

As indicated above, one of the main obstacles between high-culture and social media use is the concept of authority. Authority in the art world has long since been present in terms of experts, who act as gatekeepers to distinguish between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ art (Arora & Vermeulen, 2013). During the Renaissance, artistic quality and value was mainly determined by art theorists. This changed in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries as both art auctions and internationalization of art works started to play a more prominent role in society, placing greater emphasis on the valorization of art works. The 19<sup>th</sup> century however introduced the genre of experts that remains established today. As outlined above, these experts consist of curators, art dealers and gallerists, but also of those deemed suitably educated in the field, such as art scholars and critics (Arora & Vermeulen, 2013). From the 19<sup>th</sup> century, experts and critics were often viewed as “gatekeepers, mediators between the arts and the audience, or intermediate consumers”, forming an elite barrier between art works and audiences (Shrum, 1991, p.351). Even though there was a slight demise in the year 2000 on the

trustworthiness and value of critics, criticism and reviews remain a valid source for culturally produced content.

According to Augustin & Leder (2006), the difference between art experts and non-experts is due to their preference judgements. Non-experts primarily concentrate on the content depicted and draw upon own experience and common knowledge when regarding an artwork. Contradictory, the experts predominantly judge art with respect to style and have developed “cognitive models that are art-specific, related to aspects such as style and art-historical significance” (p.137). In line with Parsons (1987) model of art development, the top part of the scale is only reached when critically applying art-historical preferences to judge a work of art (Augustin & Leder, 2006). Thus, the use of the word expert is reserved for those properly trained and educated in the field. In turn, this creates an elitist gap between those with and without ‘adequate’ knowledge. In addition, the gatekeepers or experts in the cultural field are not only attributed to defining quality, but also serve as a ‘tastemaker’ towards audiences at large (Foster, Borgatti & Jones, 2011). By reviewing and promoting products, these tastemakers shape (amongst others) demand for products and cultural event attendance (Foster et al., 2011).

However, the arrival of the Web 2.0 has given way to alternative players entering the field of expertise (Verboord, 2010). One of the reasons for this may be due to the general lack of objectivity within the valuation of art, indicating the need for intermediaries such as art dealers, experts and critics. However, Arora and Vermeulen (2013) state that this same lack of objectivity “not only gives legitimacy to the above experts but also theoretically opens doors for new voices...” (p.195). In turn, the Web 2.0 provides the ideal platform for these new voices to be heard. First of all, Web 2.0 platforms much lower entry-barriers. This is shown through platforms such as Ebay and Amazon, where users are free to write opinions in reviews. Secondly, the participatory nature of the Web 2.0 can lead to community forming and *crowd wisdom*. Here, users can co-create wisdom collectively, which may in turn surpass the knowledge of traditional experts (Arora & Verboom, 2012). Examples are Wikipedia and the Twitter platform, which have served as a tool for reporting breaking news (Hu, Liu, Wei, We, Stasko & Ma, 2012). Nevertheless, similar to offline hierarchy, online users remain looking for *quality* (Arora & Verboom, 2012). This online quality may be verified through online opinion leaders or style mavens,

though their credentials may not be established through traditional barriers such as class or education.

Like offline opinion leaders, online opinion leaders can act influential and shape demand for a product. An example of this is through the *review*. Online word-of-mouth (WOM) through user reviews has become increasingly important in determining the quality of various products, and is already strongly prevalent in tourism and travel websites such as AIRBNB or Hostelworld (Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006). However, websites providing cultural content too, such as Amazon or Goodreads, provide their existing and potential consumers with extensive ratings and reviews (Verboord, 2010). According to Duan, Gu and Whinston (2008), online reviews have "...been recognized as one of the most influential resources of information transmission since the beginning of society, especially for experience goods" (p.1007). As art is experiential in nature, USG online reviews and critiques of high-cultural goods, events or institutions could prove to be very valuable to potential consumers.

Even though the participatory nature of the Web 2.0 may be opening up new doors for 'new' experts and therefore challenging the roles of traditional expertise, Andrew Keen highlights the degree of subjectivity present online in his book 'The cult of the amateur' (Kakutani, 2007). According to Keen, many bloggers use the net do not strive to deliver the best truth but rather to "confirm their own partisan views and link to others with the same ideologies" (Kakutani, 2007). For this reason, a blurring of lines not only appears in 'true' expertise but also creates an overall air of elusiveness, which can push through to social and political issues (Kakutani, 2007). In addition, *trust* and *status* remain essential to art consumers (Arora & Vermeylen, 2013). These can be derived from traditional forms of knowledge by University education or training by well-known auction houses or museums. Thus, it could be stated that the Web 2.0 has as of yet not *eliminated* the role of the traditional art expert (Verboord, 2010). Rather, a new dimension of expertise has been added, creating an increasingly inclusive high-cultural environment.

This chapter has described the role of expertise and authority in the age of the Web 2.0. Here, although the traditional forms of experts still play an important role in the art world and online voices are criticized for being subjective, alternative actors are gradually entering the fray of expertise. In the case of the art fairs the concept of trust will be particularly interesting to investigate. Are the art fairs mainly sharing

online content that is linked to traditional expert credentials or are they following society's larger trend where online style mavens are being regarded as an additional cultural tastemaker? Are communities being formed online, and if so, between which players?



## **Section 3 - Methodology**

### **3.1 Research justification**

In this research a focus is placed on how art fairs are using social media to become more popular and global. In order to answer this research question the following sub-questions were posed.

**Sub 1) How are art fairs engaging their cultural consumers through social media?**

**Sub 2) How is globalization expressed in the fairs' online campaigns?**

**Sub 3) How do art fairs use city branding as part of their online campaigns?**

**Sub 4) How are art fairs capitalizing on stakeholders?**

In order to answer the aforementioned questions 5 international contemporary art fairs (ICAFs) were selected as a research sample. These fairs were then looked at from an overall comparative angle in order to distinguish the greater themes present within the ICAFs social media use. The contemporary art fairs chosen are all Art- (city) contemporary fairs in Europe. All Art- (city) fairs are international and serve as a platform to internationalize and connect art galleries globally, but are also all publicly accessible. The European region has been chosen as the research periphery, as this will discard any larger intercontinental differences in communication strategies. The art fairs were sampled by a criteria of social media presence and the use of the English language on their respective sites in combination with other languages understood by the researcher. Based on these criteria and accessibility five art fairs were selected namely: Art Rotterdam, Art Brussels, Art Paris, Art Madrid and Art Vilnius. These specific fairs were chosen in line with the accessibility of the social media managers.

The social media use of all the fairs was researched in order to determine a common unifying platform. The common social media platforms present on all ART sites were Facebook and Twitter. At the time of writing, Facebook is ranked second out of the top 500 websites on the web. This in comparison to Twitter, which is in eleventh place (Alexa, 2014). In addition, as stated in the theoretical framework, Facebook currently has 1.23 billion active users Facebook users, and is increasingly gaining territory on engaging audiences of all ages (Kiss, 2014). Moreover, in 2013 Facebook was selected as the most important social media network tool for marketers, and, following You-Tube in first place, 92% of marketers are using Facebook

currently whilst 66% plan on increasing their activities (Stelzner, 2013). Facebook is in the lead in the business to consumer engagement space, and furthermore, Facebook is seen as the number one platform selected by marketers starting out on social media platforms (Stelzner, 2013). Thus, as all the fairs were engaged with the Facebook medium, this platform was chosen to perform social media content analysis.

### **3.2 Research design**

This research was conducted according to a qualitative methods design. Creswell (2012), defines qualitative research as: “beginning with assumptions, a worldview, the possible use of a theoretical lens, and the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning that individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (p.37). As this research aimed to explore a social phenomenon, a qualitative design was assigned in order to pursue inductive reasoning. Moreover, qualitative research deals with smaller amounts of data in human interaction rather than large amount of numerical data and involves “a continuing interplay between data collection and theory” (Babbie, 2008). Thus, a qualitative approach is very applicable when studying social and cultural issues. In addition, as the data collected was based on human interaction it allowed the researcher to pursue in-depth investigation of the content, in turn uncovering social situations and underlying issues.

In order to execute this research, a combination of in-depth interviews and qualitative content analysis was performed. This combination of methods is also referred to as a process of ‘triangulation’. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004), define triangulation as: “seeking convergence and corroboration of results from different methods and designs studying the same phenomenon” (p. 22). The combination of interviewing and content analysis thus provided the researcher with a holistic manner in which to approach the main research question and sub-questions.

### **3.3 Qualitative content analysis: In-depth interviews**

The first chosen methodology for this research was in-depth interviews. In-depth interviews are particularly useful to explore detailed perspectives on particular objectives, and have the ability to add rich and deep data to the research (Boyce & Neale, 2006). In addition, in-depth interviews can provide valuable data to provide

context to other data, thus proving a valid method choice for this research (Boyce & Neale, 2006).

The interviews were conducted over a period of three months, between the 10<sup>th</sup> of March and 10<sup>th</sup> of May, depending on the availability of the interviewees. The interviewees were interviewed for approximately 30 minutes through Skype with a recorder. However, not all communication managers were available for direct contact. Thus, the choice was made to send the original interview questions to the remaining interviewees. In addition, one of the respondents became unavailable during the process of analysis, namely Art Brussels. Therefore it was decided to only analyse the fair with content analysis from its website and Facebook page. Overall, the interview data gathered resulted in two verbal interviews and transcripts from Art Rotterdam, and Email responses by Art Vilnius, Art Madrid and Art Paris.

Commonly, there are three structures in which to conduct in-depth interviews namely unstructured, semi-structured and structured. For the purpose of this research a semi-structured paradigm was chosen, which is organized around predetermined questions yet allows for flexibility in questions emerging from the dialogue (Dicicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). The interviews held were in various languages, Dutch, English and French, all of which were understood by the researcher. Here, the aim of the questions asked was provide answers to sub-questions 1 and 3, in order to uncover communication strategies of the fair and gain perspective on city branding. However, the interviews also revealed initial insights into sub-question 4, regarding the way fairs are capitalizing and interacting with stakeholders. Both the verbal and Email interviews informed the participants of the nature of the research as well as the intended uses of the interview and assurance of confidentiality (USAID, 1996). The set questions asked in the interview were as outlined below:

- 1) *What is your role in the company?*
  
- 2) *How would you describe the differences in communication strategies between now and 5 years ago? → Are you catering to different audiences? Approaching audiences/consumers in a different way?*
  
- 3) *What are the main strategies in engaging audiences online? (For example through campaigns, interactive communication, competitions)?*

- 4) *When did you start using social media? Why/for which projects? Could you share a sample of successful projects and provide me some links?*
- 5) *How has the use of social media influenced the overall communication of the art fair?*
- 6) *How important is social media use to the contemporary art event? Why is this?*
- 7) *On average, how much time do you spend on the Facebook platform per week? → How often do you post?*
- 8) *Is the respective city of the art fair involved with the production of the fair (financially? Or otherwise)? Do you know whether this is communicated outwards?*
- 9) *Does the fair emphasize a relationship with the city it is held in (through city branding/promo material?)*
- 10) *What overall associations do you have with your city? Name 5 words to describe the city the fair is held in*
- 11) *Do you think the fair fits the city image? Why/Why not?*

The first question of the interview asks respondents for their specific role within the company. According to USAID (1996), starting the interview with a factual question is advisable as it helps respondents to relax. In addition, this question was asked as the participants' roles varied within the communication spectrum. For example, for Art Rotterdam both the social media manager and overall communications advisor were interviewed in order to gain the overall perspective on communication strategies.

The second question relates to the overall communication strategies used, and whether there is a defined difference within the means of approaching audiences of

the fair between now and five years ago. High-cultural institutions are increasingly expanding to a more commercial and popular role within society and moving away from purely elite audiences (Gu, 2012). The art fair in particular has become an incredible popular event, which has taking the form of a mall-like structure (The Economist, 2014). Therefore, it is of interest to see whether art fairs are actively engaging in attracting a more variable range of audiences within their communication strategies.

The third, fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh question all refer to the fairs' *actual* social media use and the importance of it to the fair. Increased digital features and social media have been stated as exemplary in connecting the masses with the art scene and several museums have already successfully adopted a social media approach within their communications (Arora & Vermeulen, 2013; Birkner, 2012). However, the high-cultural realm has a nature of authority (Schweibenz, 2011). This is directly opposed to the approach of social media, which is based on a relationship of equality and trust (Kidd, 2010). Thus, these questions are asked in order to expose the reason behind the fairs' social media use. It also aims to explain how and *if* the art fairs are engaging in different tactics to approach their audiences between on and offline or whether traditional stances on communication are carried through.

The last four questions are asked in order to reveal the role of the cities in the fairs' presence. Culture is increasingly used as a means of attracting cultural tourism and city branding (Quinn, 2004; Van Aalst & Van Melik, 2011). Secondly, as all the fairs have adapted their host-city's name within their title, the relationship between the fair and cities are of interest to explore.

After conducting the interviews, texts were transcribed and coded according to the three main coding categories of qualitative data analysis. Coding is described as "the process of putting tags, names or labels against pieces of data" (Punch, 2009, p.176). The analysis commenced with *open coding*. Open coding requires the researcher to read and re-read the text for analysis in-depth and identify any concepts that become apparent by questioning the data (Babbie, 2008). Open-coding is commonly described as "descriptive and low-inference" and "increases the conceptual level of the data" (Boyce & Neale, 2006, p.179). Even though the open-coding structure is non-evasive, the global scope of the researched themes was kept in mind whilst re-reading the texts. An example of the open coding concept is outlined in the table below:

Sabine Dunnewijk from Art Rotterdam	Open Coding Concept
S: En, he, dat ook wel gewoon, dat mensen graag met je willen samenwerken	1. A real brand = known names that want to work with you
S: En hebben we natuurlijk ook met de Groene gemerkt (Groene Amsterdammer red), en met het FD, he, dat het ook gewoon voor beide partijen iets opleverd.	2. Duality for both parties, between media partners and fair
S: En ehmm..we werken ook veel samen met musea als het Booymans van Beuningen en De Kunsthal, die ook he, grote leden bestanden hebben, waar wij dan samenwerking mee hebben zodat ze ons meenemen.	3. Museums = increased audience access
S: Wij hebben de AR krant, dat is een heel belangrijk communicatie middel van ons. Daarin staat eigenlijk heel veel informatie over AR zelf maar ook over de week zelf, dus de ART Rotterdam Week krant heet ie ook.	4. Own newspaper = important communication tool
S: Want wat je merkt is op het moment, in het begin was het een avantgardistisch evenement AR, dat is nu dus gevestigd.	5. Emphasis on before and now of AR, well-established creates hype

**Table 1: Open coding example**

The above example shows a small paragraph out of the interview with Sabine Dunnewijk from Art Rotterdam. Here, the data was approached by first highlighting all information that was deemed of overall importance. This extract describes how the Art Rotterdam has become an increasingly established event and how it cooperates with several partners and media outlets in order to communicate the event outwards.

After open coding the texts the *axial coding* of the text can take place. This second step is aimed “to identify the *core* concepts in the study” and create interconnections between the open codes (Babbie, 2008, p.423; Boyce & Neale, 2006). Thus, previously identified concepts can be re-grouped according to larger key themes present. As described above, the text outlines information on where post content is gathered from, as well as the way in which it is communicated towards audiences. When looking at the bigger theme, the sentences refer to the type of targeted audiences by creating networks and partnerships, the *preferred* audiences and the type of traditional media output used by the fair.

From identifying the larger key themes the researcher can approach the last step within the coding scheme, *selective coding*. In this final step of the coding

process all the previous themes and concepts are further conceptualized and and grouped together in order to determine the few *central* themes present within the text (Babbie, 2008; Boyce & Neale, 2006). An example of the total process is outlined in the table below, where as shown the selective coding shows the predominant theme in this extract to be related to the grander notion of *networking*.

<b>Open coding</b>	<b>Axial coding</b>	<b>Selective coding</b>
A real brand = known names that want to work with you	Context/strategy	Networking
Duality for both parties, between media partners and fair	Cooperation/partnerships	Networking
Museums = increased audience access	Cooperation/audiences	Networking
Own newspaper = important communication tool	Media strategy	Media strategy
Emphasis on before and now of AR, well-established creates hype	Context/ Popularity/Audiences	Context

**Table 2: Complete coding process**

### **3.4 Qualitative content analysis: Facebook and website content**

The second methodology applied for this research was the analysis of the online content of the art fairs mentioned above. The online content predominantly consisted of Facebook sites, as well as promotional material found on the websites of the art fairs. Content analysis is described as “the study of recorded human communications” (Babby, 2008, p.350). This method is very well suited to the studies of communications as who, what, why and effect questions can be researched. In addition, as the content has already been written no intrusive measures are caused by this type of method (Babby, 2008).

The aim of the qualitative content analysis method was to gain deeper insight into sub-questions 1 and 4, which look at the way in which art fairs are engaging users online and how they are capitalizing on their stakeholders. However, by researching the Facebook and respective websites, further perspectives were also gained on sub-question 2 (addressing global campaigns) and sub-question 3 (regarding the implementation of ties to the city). Hence, applying this methodological strategy allowed for *verification* and *comparative* analysis between the fairs. In addition, by comparing and enhancing the statements given by the social media managers with online findings, the imagined and actual Facebook presence was determined. The concept of verification through comparison held true for all fairs except Art Brussels. Since the planned interview with the social media manager of the fair was cancelled only online content was considered.

In order to categorize findings, initial coding was used from the conceptual framework, also referred to as *thematic analysis*. Only differentiating slightly from content analysis, thematic analysis is driven by the researcher's underlying interests. Here, the researcher "searches for themes that emerge as being important to the description of the phenomenon" (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006, p.82). Thematic analysis also allows for a greater focus on the qualitative aspects of the data, and permits the researcher to "combine the analysis of codes with analysis of their meaning *in context*" (Marks & Yardley, 2004, p. 57). The themes in turn are transformed into codes, where a good code is described as one "that captures the qualitative richness of the phenomenon" (Boyatzis cited in Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006, p.83). Thematic analysis is deemed particularly useful to "find solutions to real-world problems", and was therefore deemed to be directly applicable to this research (Quest, MacQueen & Namey, 2012). Furthermore, thematic analysis allows the researcher to include both *manifest* and *latent* content. Manifest content indicates the directly visible content, which becomes apparent quickly. Latent content, however, refers to the underlying meanings within the text (Marks & Yardley, 2004; Babbie, 2008). By studying posts more intently, these deeper meanings can be uncovered and interpreted by the researcher.

In the case of this research, the underlying interests, or sampling, were aligned with the research question and sub-questions asked, aligning with the *theoretical sampling* strategy. In theoretical sampling a decision is made based on "analytic ground developed in the course of a study" (Sandelowski cited in Coyne, 1997, p.628).



Selective sampling, on the other hand, “refers to a decision made prior to beginning a study to sample subjects according to a preconceived, but reasonable set of initial criteria” (Sandelowski cited in Coyne, 1997, p.628). In this research, these underlying criteria consisted of an interest in the engagement factors on social media, *actual* social media strategies employed and the relationship between the fairs and their host city. Examples of prior categories for sub-question 1 are the interactivity and dialogue between users and the art fair. For sub-question 2, initial codes were based on the provided data from the interviews with the social media managers in order to align between *imagined* and *actual* social media presence. For sub-question 3 the initial codes consisted of promotional online material on the art fairs’ Facebook and official websites. These posts were selected based on the inclusion of the city’s name in the post. This included posts inviting audiences to visit other events in the city, airline deals during the event, or any other tourism and city promotional content. And lastly, for sub-question 4 prior categories consisted on the display of relationships in posts between the fairs and stakeholders such as museums other galleries or tourist boards.

Nonetheless, it must be noted that the data was not *restricted* to these underlying interests. Rather, the Facebook output was intently studied within the timeframe of one year, and other emerging themes were taken into consideration. This one-year frame was chosen as some of the fairs had limited Facebook output. In addition, in order to enhance certain findings other means of digital communication were taken into account too. As the fairs were held at different times throughout the year this meant that for some the most popular posts of 2013 were selected whilst for others the 2014 fair was available for research.

Through analysing Facebook content of the indicated one-year timeframe more carefully, several key concepts became present. Some were new, such as the importance placed on sharing of *expert reviews* online, whilst others supported earlier findings from the individual interviews such as *partnerships* and *relations to the city*. In order to categorize this data, posts significant of occurring themes were selected. As outlined above, the 5 most popular post of each occurring theme were put in the appendix, and used as indicators when writing up findings. Finally, the researched content was divided into the 5 most central themes that emerged from the data. These were as follows:

**Theme 1: Revised media strategies**

**Theme 2: Expertise**

**Theme 3: Globalization****Theme 4: City branding****Theme 5: Networking**

In line with the overall comparative nature of this research, these themes represented the findings from all the art fairs. The themes were supported or contradicted by interview quotes and screenshots of Facebook posts. Next, the themes were linked to previous findings outlined in the theoretical review, helping to further critique and question current knowledge.

**3.5 Limitations**

There are several limitations to this research. First of all, qualitative content analysis is an interpretive method, which increases bias on the research. Inherent issues with reliability lie within the frame of thematic analysis. Here, “more interpretation goes into defining the data items (i.e., codes) as well as applying the codes to chunks of text” (Quest et al., 2012, p.10/11.). Nonetheless, as this research paradigm is based primarily on interpretation of the research, the regular objectives in validity and reliability, as used in quantitative research for example, become redundant. Instead, research should be analysed according to the interpretative research paradigm of credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). In addition, even though there are slight issues relating to reliability, thematic analysis is described as “the most useful in capturing the complexities of meaning within a textual data set” and is the most widely used method of qualitative analysis (Quest et al., 2012, p.11).

Secondly, in- depth interviews are considered to be prone to bias and cannot be generalizable for a more global scale of research (Boyce & Neale, 2006). However, as this research was performed according to a method of triangulation, which may be considered to give more validity to the research, as it adds an extra dimension into studying the phenomenon (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

Lastly, one of the greatest limitations in the data collection of this research was the availability of the social media managers of the art fairs. Due to unavailability from various social media managers for the outlined interview, only 2 interviews were held on Skype (with the communication and social media managers of Art Rotterdam red). The rest of the interviewees (except Art Brussels) agreed with the option of an

Email interview. Although this generated some interesting results, the limitation of the Email interview lay in the relatively short answers that were given to the questions, decreasing the overall extensiveness of findings. The extensiveness in findings is further limited by the actual scope of this research, where only 5 popular art fairs in Europe were selected. Here, a larger scope of selections and longer timeframe would account for a larger data set and thus a more valid research overall.

## Section 4 – Results

In this chapter the data gathered from both the online content analysis and the in-depth interviews will be analyzed. The aim of this thesis is to answer the larger question on until what extent the art fairs are using social media in order to become more global and popular. Here, four sub-questions were created in order to help shape the arguments for the larger research question. These are:

**Sub 1) How are art fairs engaging their cultural consumers through social media?**

**Sub 2) How is globalization expressed in the fairs' online campaigns?**

**Sub 3) How do art fairs use city branding as part of their online campaigns?**

**Sub 4) How are art fairs capitalizing on stakeholders?**

With these sub-questions in mind, emerging patterns in the data were detected. This led to 5 main themes occurring on both website and Facebook platform and offline interviews. The themes detected were as follows:

- 1) Media strategies
- 2) Expertise
- 3) Globalization
- 4) City branding
- 5) Networking

By analysing the data according to the aforementioned themes several overarching patterns were detected. First of all, this analysis highlights the contradictions currently present between *imagined* and *actual* social media usage. Though all fairs state to recognize the medium to be effective in engaging expansive audiences, discrepancies are found between the inclusive and exclusive media strategies of the fairs. Secondly, the traditional role of expertise is still very present within the fairs online presence. Thirdly, the role of globalization was analysed. Here, the findings indicate that although galleries from alternative countries are increasingly present, hierarchy remains Western-dominated. Fourthly, the relationship between the fairs and their cities were examined. Main findings in this section included the differences in relationships per country, where the city is only actively involved with the fair if it is believed to bring economic prosperity. Lastly, the notion of networking

was analysed. Here, main findings consisted of the online ways in which art fairs are capitalizing on their stakeholders in order to enhance status and expand audience base.

## **4.2 Inclusive and exclusive media strategies**

In order to gain insight on sub-question 1 and 4, the first section of this analysis addresses the media strategies used by the fair through both on- and offline vehicles. This theme was chosen as it highlights how the fair communicates and engages with their audiences. The media strategies can relate to a variety of factors. First, it can include the preferred socio-demographic of the fair's audiences. Who are the audiences that they are trying to reach and how are they engaging these stakeholders? Secondly, the mediums used are taken into consideration. Are art fairs primarily reaching audiences via traditional or online vehicles? How much time and money are spent on the respective vehicles? How do these findings align with the traditional communication methods of the art fair? Finally, each chapter will conclude with key findings, and link them back to the theoretical framework.

### **4.2.1 Target audiences**

In describing the audiences of the fair some fairs remain very true to the traditional and considerably elite group of audiences. Art Rotterdam's communication and PR manager Sabine Dunnewijk, states that Art Rotterdam does not approach the masses with the promotional communication of the fair, but focuses on a selected audience. When asked to describe these target audiences Dunnewijk states: '...interested in the arts, that's what it starts with of course. And, yes, in general those are the higher educated...' (S. Dunnewijk, personal communication, March 26, 2014). Hence, a more selective strategy is adopted in order to reach the higher-educated audiences with an affinity of the arts. Art Paris is even more definitive in naming the precise audiences of the fair. Director of communication Catherine Vauselle states Art Paris's audiences to consist of "CEO's, liberal professionals (freelancers, etc.), and collectors/buyers" (C.Vauselle, personal communication, May 12, 2014). In terms of age, Vauselle states the overall median age of the fair's visitors to be estimated at 43. Like Art Rotterdam, Art Paris engages in selective activities to reach their target

audiences. As the communication manager of Art Brussels was unavailable for an interview, their target audiences remain unclear. However, the fair's official website and low amount of content posted on Facebook reveal a stronger focus is placed on offline media strategies.

Opposing the abovementioned fairs are Art Madrid and Art Vilnius. Though not explicitly stated, these fairs both aim to engage wider audiences. For Art Madrid this is evident through the importance placed on having creating an overall 'appealing identity' and being a 'quality source' for audiences, indicating commitment and a personal approach (B. Vidal, personal communication, April 28, 2014). For Art Vilnius, engagement with wider audiences is related to one of the most important aims of the fair, which is to create a good image of the city of Vilnius and Lithuania in general (S. Baliuckaite, personal communication, May 5, 2014). As both fairs target an overall broader audience the media vehicles used are unlike those of Art Rotterdam and Art Paris, and can be seen as a discrepancy between the fairs in terms of in- and exclusiveness.

#### **4.2.2 Media vehicles**

Both Art Rotterdam and Art Paris highlight the use of selective media vehicles as their main communication strategy. When speaking to the fairs director, Fons Hof, it becomes clear why. Even though Hof recognizes the importance of social media use in contemporary society, he questions the extent to which social media is really able to help generate *new* audiences (personal communication, January 18, 2014). Thus, offline media vehicles such as the newspapers Financieel Dagblad (The Financial Times), De Groene Amsterdammer and the magazine Kunstbeeld are capitalized on and indicated to play primary roles in audience outreach (S. Dunnewijk, personal communication, March 26, 2014). In turn, this provides the fair with extended coverage both locally (in the city of Amsterdam) and on a national scale. Here, the socio-demographic of the readers of the previously named offline newspapers align with the target audiences indicated. They include those that generally are higher educated, slightly older, and with a higher income. Overall, this indicates a more traditional stance by Art Rotterdam on their audience reach.

Art Paris, in turn, states to have almost no social media strategies, although there is a desire for stronger communication on social media platforms (C. Vauselle,

personal communication, May 12, 2014). However, the fair does have online presence. Art Paris's primary focus lies in deviant online vehicles to communicate with their audiences. Here, the fair hires professional communication agencies such as the Art Media Agency (AMA), Eflux and Huma3, to send out newsletters to their audiences (C. Vauselle, personal communication, May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2014). By paying for the services of the communication agencies, Art Paris ensures an extended audience reach. For example, AMA's content is not only distributed via Email but also placed on its website and digital associations such as the iPhone app and Google News (AMA, 2014). E-flux, in turn is "an international network which reaches more than 90,000 visual art professionals" (e-flux, n.d.). Like AMA, e-flux reaches its audiences through its website, e-mail list and 'special projects' (e-flux, n.d.). E-flux's database consists of the following readers: 18% writers/critics, 16% galleries, 15% museum affiliated, 12% artists, 10% consultants, 8% collectors and 5% general (e-flux, n.d.). By using the (albeit costly) aforementioned media methods, both fairs could be deemed successful in reaching their described audience base. Lastly, as mentioned above, both the Art Brussels website and its low Facebook presence reveal the use of offline media strategies. Though not specifically named, the fair's website highlights TV interviews and radio shows where the fair is highlighted. By focusing on the specific segment of society through their media vehicles of choice, the fairs highlight their exclusivity.

Again, contrasting the three art fairs, Art Madrid and Art Vilnius indicate the importance of social media use in reaching their audiences. Firstly, Art Vilnius partners up with several Baltic websites in order to place the fairs banners and newsletters online. Secondly, the fair posts to Facebook 1-2 times a week and daily when the event starts. Although all fairs posts intensely around the time of the event, only 2 out of the 5 fairs (Art Madrid and Art Vilnius), maintain a regulatory Facebook presence throughout the remainder of the year. In addition, Art Vilnius currently only has three employees to organize the entire fair. Sonata Baliuckaite takes on all communication activities. Even with just one employee in charge and a comparatively 'consistent' presence on Facebook, Baliuckaite states a desire to increase social media presence (personal communication, May 5, 2014).

For Art Madrid the importance of social media can be attributed to wanting to become 'part of the new flow' present in society today (B.Vidal, personal communication, April 28, 2014). Vidal (2014) states communication ranging from

advertises to newscasts to increasingly gain territory online. Here, the 9,000 followers Art Madrid has gathered on platforms such as Facebook and Twitter are the result of maintaining a strong online presence. The fair engages in online activities such as an ‘up-to-date pressroom’, as well as a ‘news section and blog which is fed by a team of collaborators’ (B.Vidal, personal communication, April 28, 2014). Facebook is deemed a particularly important medium, and content is posted six times daily. In turn, the success of the last edition of the fair (in 2013) was attributed to the fair’s strong social media presence (Vidal, 2014). One of the reasons for this enhanced presence may lie in the fair’s *age*. The fairs were established in 2006 and 2009 respectively, and thus aware of the benefits of social media (See appendix A). Overall, both fairs seem to be conscious of the power of a strong social media presence in creating audience awareness of the fairs.

#### **4.2.3 Online engagements**

Even though online strategies are not directly addressed by all of the communication managers, many fairs do incorporate online incentives. These become apparent upon analysing the individual Facebook sites. Firstly, even though Art Rotterdam indicates to have a stronger focus on offline partners than on online media, the fair’s social media presence is quite strong. Social media manager Bianca Spierenburg is responsible for this site, and hosts the page from an ‘enthusiastic rather than strategic perspective’ (personal communication, March 23, 2014). Here, she addresses the initial reluctance of the fair towards social media use.

*“I tried to tell the director something like: hey, should we do something with social media? And that didn’t happen, so I started to do it myself in the first year...and I got an amazing response”* (B. Spierenburg, personal communication, March 23, 2014).

In addition, 2014 was the first year in which she was given more time to spend online for the promotion of the fair, averaging between 20-30 hours per week (Spierenburg, 2014). Moreover, though not hosting the fair’s Facebook site from a strategic viewpoint, Spierenburg *does* engage in networking strategies. Here, she tries to find



every gallery or stand owner online, searching for connectivity and a sense of ‘duality’ between the gallerists and the fair (Spierenburg, 2014).

The second fair that will be considered is Art Paris, which states to have no particular social media strategies (C.Vauselle, personal communication, May 12, 2014). However, a significant finding in the fairs Facebook presence lies in the high imagery and vividness used. High vividness is determined through the inclusion of *links* or *video* in Facebook posts, which in turn is stated to be exemplary in engaging consumers online (Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013). Many of the video posts are shared clips from the fairs own VIMEO channel. At the time of the event, new clips of the event are shared every few days. As a significant amount of Likes, Comments and Shares are gathered on each, the videos prove very popular amongst audiences and engagement factor is high (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy & Silvestre, 2011).



**Figure 1 – ART Paris videos**

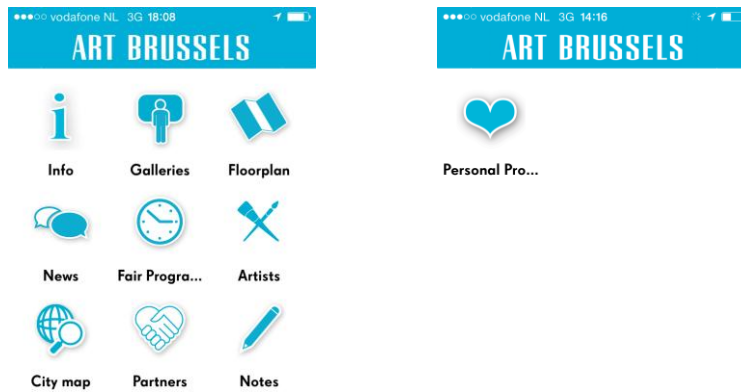
In addition, the fair offers users of its website a virtual tour of the fair. Here, visitors can navigate around the fair and zoom in on galleries or artists of interest, creating a personalized online experience. These findings juxtapose Vauselle’s (2014) statement on social media use and demonstrate the (perhaps unbeknown) online strategies the fair is executing.

The second fair that engages in deviant online tactics to engage audiences is Art Brussels. As no interview was conducted with the fair only online content was considered. Here, although overall Facebook presence remained relatively low, Art Brussels did present audiences with a mobile app (see image below).



**Figure 2: Art Brussels mobile app**

Like Art Paris's virtual tour, the Art Brussels app provides its users with a more personalized experience. Here, the app enhances the fair's experience in several ways, but mainly through *customization*. Customization in relationship marketing is defined as "the creation of products/services based on the customer's requests" (Ahemd, Bojei, Wel & Julian, 2014, p.299). Through the app's features, the fair could even be said to reach the highest level of customization: *personalization*. Here, product modification is introduced in order to "more fully meet the needs of the individual" (Holland & Menzel Baker, 2001, p.38). The *Personal Program* tool allows users to create their own program for the fair. Here, participating artists and galleries can be browsed and booked into timeslots, which in turn are transferred into a diary. Next, the *Fair Program* feature provides a detailed schedule with all additional talks and screenings, and the *Notes* feature allows users to write down any interesting events, artists or artworks as experienced during the fair. By allowing users to customize their experience the use of mobile technology overall brand loyalty towards the fair can be increased (Holland & Menzel Baker, 2001).



**Figure 3: ART Brussels App interface**

From the information outlined above we can see that, even if there is a discrepancy between the overall online strategies of the fairs, all fairs engage in a form of social media strategy. Art Vilnius and Art Madrid both already stress the importance of social media use, fitting the increasing inclusive frame in the cultural industries (Crane, 1992). On the other hand, the communication managers of Art Rotterdam and Art Paris claim they do not have particular strategies for online media use. In turn, Art Brussel's low Facebook presence indicates that not much importance is placed on their online strategies. This is in line with the overall innate reluctance of social media use in the high-cultural industries (Kidd, 2010). Nonetheless, the actual online presence of these fairs indicates differently, and audiences are indeed engaged online. Whether this is through enthusiastic social media presence, video sharing or mobile technology engagement, all of the above are strategies in which to engage users attention.

#### **4.2.4 Contradicting strategies**

Through researching the imagined and actual media presence of the fairs, several conflicting strategies came to light. Another example lies in the discrepancy between the audience description and fair structure of Art Rotterdam. The fair juxtaposes their exclusive outlook (as described in their target audiences), by its collaboration with initiative *We Like Art* in 2014's fair. *We Like Art* is an initiative from Amsterdam selling art ranging between €150 and €1500. *We Like Art* specifically aims to 'open up the art world to new audiences', by making art accessible to first-time buyers (*We Like Art*, n.d.). The fair's closing statement

verified the success of the initiative, as 132 artworks were sold. From these findings it can be gathered that even though the three fairs may exude a sense of exclusivity through their audience reach and media strategies, a shift is indeed taking place into making the fair a more inclusive platform overall. This increasingly inclusive stance is apparent through the accumulative time that is spent on online activities, as well as offering less costly art works during the fair. What is particularly noticeable here is the *success* of opening up high-culture to expanding audiences, ranging from positive responses on Facebook to the sales of relatively cheaper artworks at the fair. These findings thus coincide with the overall societal shift, where demand for high-culture is on the rise (Crane, 1992).

Nevertheless, the level of actual *interactivity* (measured by Comments on Facebook posts) between users and the fair remains low. This finding is confirmed by Spierenburg of Art Rotterdam who states that: “There is no real dialogue...it is especially informing people about...what there is and what is going to happen” (B. Spierenburg, personal communication, March 24, 2014).

This statement opposes scholarships findings on interactivity in high-cultural institutions such as the museum. Here, interactivity is outlined as key in order to humanize high-culture, creating a more personal relationship between institution and user (Kidd, 2010). As user participation is vital in social media use, it seems that the fairs still have some learning to do (Kidd, 2010). This is not unlike many museums who, as of yet, still have to understand the “rules” of engagement online (Kidd, 2010, p.68). A second reason for the lack of interactivity relates back to the exclusivity frame. Social media stimulates a collaborative framework, something that is not innate to high-cultural institutions (Kidd, 2010). Secondly, as a high amount of trust needs to be present to ensure user participation, perhaps some of the fairs are purposely avoiding conversation. Through one-sided communication the fair can maintain a stance of authority, and distance itself from the crowd (Schweibenz, 2011).

Overall, it seems that the current media strategies of the art fairs are rather inconsistent. Some fairs are holding on to traditional models and ideals, yet open up to larger audiences through engaging them online. Others, in particular the younger fairs, seem to innately incorporate a more inclusive strategy, but do not fulfil all the social media requirements. Even though (albeit reluctantly for some) a more inclusive stance is adopted through the incorporation of social media, the fairs are neither as successful as popular events or museums already engaging in this strategy (Birkner,

2012; Hudson & Hudson, 2013). The largest obstacle here seems to be the lack of *interactivity* between the fair and its users. This indicates that although digital strategies are becoming increasingly present, there is as of yet no ‘one size fits all’ approach that the fairs can use in order to fully engage their audiences with social media.

### **4.3 Art expertise in the digital age**

This chapter will focus on the Facebook content shared by the fairs. All fairs were selected on social media presence, so what are the popular ways in which they engage with their users? After a more in-depth research of the Facebook sites of the measured fairs, a prominent feature in shared content appeared in the form of *expertise*, present through the sharing of *reviews*.

This chapter will concentrate on the various ways in which the concept of the review is present in the fairs Facebook content.

First of all, four out of the five fairs engage in posting content that relates to the concept of expertise. Art Brussels is the only deviant fair where no reviews are present on either the Facebook or official website. Again, as the fair was unavailable for commenting, the precise reason for this remains unclear. However, the lack of review sharing does indicate the lack of importance the fair attributes towards re-affirming the fairs status through expertise.

The remaining fairs have varying degrees of engagement through the review, with Art Rotterdam posting reviews most frequently. The fair even has a special section dedicated to the reviews on their website, shown in the image below.

## RECENSIES 2014

[ALGEMEEN DAGBLAD, 30-1-2014](#)  
[HET FINANCIËELE DAGBLAD, 1-2-2014](#)  
[ART SLANT, 3-2-2014](#)  
[NRC HANDELSBLAD, 5-2-2014](#)  
[LOST-PAINTERS, 5-2-2014](#)  
[TROUW, 6-2-2014](#)  
[ARTNET, 6-2-2014](#)  
[KUNSTBEELD, 6-2-2014](#)  
[NRC HANDELSBLAD, 6-2-2014](#)  
[DE VOLKSKRANT, 7-2-2014](#)  
[BLOUIN ARTINFO, 7-2-2014](#)  
[ALGEMEEN DAGBLAD, 7-2-2014](#)  
[LOST PAINTERS, 8-2-014](#)  
[TRENDBEHEER, 8-2-2014](#)  
[METROPOLIS M, 9-2-2014](#)  
[LE MONDE, 10-2-2014](#)  
[LE QUOTIDIEN DE L'ART, 10-2-2014](#)  
[ALGEMEEN DAGBLAD, 10-2-2014](#)  
[THE ART NEWSPAPER, 13-2-2014](#)  
[DE GROENE AMSTERDAMMER, 13-2-2014](#)  
[KUNSTMARKT.COM, 13-2-2014](#)  
[AMA NEWSLETTER, 13-2-2014](#)  
[TAZ.DIE TAGESZEITUNG, 19-2-2014](#)  
[DARE MAGAZINE](#)  
[MISTER MOTLEY](#)

**Figure 4: Review section on the ART Rotterdam website**

In line with the focus on their media partners discussed in the previous chapter, some of the reviews come from these sources. These are: Het Financieele Dagblad, Kunstbeeld and De Groene Amsterdammer (see figure 4). Nonetheless, apart from the mentioned partners, a lot of other players are highlighted as well. By examining the sources of the highlighted reviews above as well as the reviews shared on Facebook, it becomes clear that Art Rotterdam attributes the most value to reviews that come from ‘traditional’ sources. This finding holds true for the other fairs too (with the exception of Art Brussels which does not share reviews online), who post reviews that come from traditional sources most frequently (see appendix B). Traditional sources in this instance refer to established offline media, such as newspapers, but also renowned online sources such as cultural magazines or websites. An example of the Facebook format of the review posts is shown below.

"Art Rotterdam, la foire d'art contemporain la plus importante des Pays-Bas" in Le Quotidien de l'Art:

<http://www.artrotterdam.com/users%5C128%5Ccontent%5CPers%5Cfiles%5Cle%20quotidien%20de%20l'art,%2010-2-2014.pdf>

Like · Comment · Share

11

**Figure 5: Review shared by Art Rotterdam**

This example is taken from the art newspaper Le Quotidien de l'Art (The Art Daily News). The newspaper is renowned for offering readers daily news of the arts, and offers a subscription for around €200 per year. The subscription fees asked for this newspaper indicates a more exclusive audience reach, where only those who are truly engaged will purchase. In addition, the newspaper has a permanent staff base, but also features articles from art professionals such as museum directors, art historians and critics (Le Quotidien de l'Art, 2011). By sharing reviews from traditional sources with their audiences the fairs emphasize the importance of the conventional critic. Here, the value of the fair is determined by these cultural gatekeepers, where the critic is given the authority to judge what is 'good' or 'bad' about the fair (Arora & Vermeulen, 2013). Thus, through serving as a tastemaker the critic can potentially enhance the status of the fair, which is confirmed by the fairs' abundant sharing of the reviews (Foster, Borgatti & Jones, 2011).

Nonetheless, although four out the five fairs share reviews from traditional sources on their respective Facebook sites, some unconventional players are becoming present too. Both Art Rotterdam and Art Madrid recognize these alternative actors entering the fray of criticism. Firstly, Art Rotterdam presents its Facebook and website users with reviews from the following sources:

[Mister Motley](#) – Until 2012 Mister Motley was an art magazine, but since 2013 they operate solely on an online basis. The website primarily produces user-generated (USG) content by guest bloggers, and anyone wanting to contribute is invited to do so by sending an Email to the host site (Mister Motley, 2013).

[Trendbeheer](#) – Online magazine with visual reports, reviews and tips to news concerning the arts. Has artists contributing to content but invites larger audiences to contribute as well (Trendbeheer, n.d.).

Both these websites operate either on a free or donate based subscription basis, and produced content comes from professionals and enthusiasts alike. This in contradiction to the conventional critics, such as Le Quotidien de l'Art, where a subscription fee often has to be paid. Offering free alternatives for cultural platforms thus creates a more open and inclusive atmosphere towards users from all backgrounds. In addition, although the writers from the above websites have not necessarily benefitted from elite schooling or professional experience, they are still regarded as valuable by the virtual environment. Here, the elite barriers are replaced by the low barriers of the Web 2.0, giving a voice to those who are not usually heard. This is confirmed by Barbara Vidal from Art Madrid. When asked about the changes in the communication strategies of the fair between now and five years ago she states how we can now all fulfil the role of opinion makers online:

*“...now we all can be – we all are – journalists, trend-hunters, opinion makers, only because we constantly share our points of view, opinions and ideas all over the Internet.”*

Moreover, Vidal emphasizes the importance of bloggers on public opinion.

*“...a blogger can sometimes have more influence on public opinion than a politician because he reaches a much bigger audience”* (B.Vidal, personal communication, April 28<sup>th</sup>, 2014).

Aligning with the offline opinion leader, those who are deemed to be online opinion leaders or style mavens can have a huge influence on their audiences.

This is confirmed by Bianca Spierenburg of Art Rotterdam who stretches the importance of bloggers in promoting the fair to their audiences.

*“You have always got a few super promoters. People that blog about you, people that ask if they can, if they can blog about you in exchange for an entry ticket... So we try*



*to look at the best ways to adapt to this... We wish all the enthusiasts well because then you'll get it back.*" (B. Spierenburg, personal communication, March 23, 2014).

Nonetheless, even though both these fairs recognize the importance of online critics in influencing opinion, the alternative vehicles chosen to convert this content remain somewhat 'screened' for quality. Art Madrid's Facebook only offers its audiences reviews by established cultural magazines or websites. Art Rotterdam, in turn, derives its USG produced content not from single person blogs but from regulated cultural platforms. When further researching the websites Mr Motley and Trendbeheer it becomes clear that audience input cannot 'just' be placed online. Before contributing, users are asked to Email the websites. This, in order to regulate input and ensure desired format and quality (Trendbeheer, n.d.).

This indicates that, although Art Rotterdam and Art Madrid may have a more innovative mind-set with regards to online criticism, they are still reluctant to fully embrace additional online role models. For the second time, this indicates a discrepancy in communication strategies. Even though online voices are *said* to be appreciated, in actuality their content is still scarcely shared. These findings, in turn, remain to be in line with the inequality that remains present in the art market today (Davidson, 2012). Continuing to be dominated by a selected few, the perks of being one the main actors in the field are "so rewarding that the slots are zealously guarded" (Davidson, 2012). Even though the Web 2.0 can provide opportunities for outsiders to enter the network of expertise, it remains to be debatable until what extent these outsiders can truly be integrated and accepted.

#### **4.4 Globalization**

The third prominent theme in this analysis will focus on the degree of internationalization of the art fair. All the art fairs researched are described as 'international' art fairs within their structure. Although historically the first form of the art fair (the kermis) did display non-local artworks, this changed with the French Salons of Paris in the 18th century in which only established local (or national) art was displayed. International art was again displayed when the US hosted The Armory Show in 1913 (Gordon, 2012). Increased emphasis on featuring international artists was later adopted by The Kunstmarkt. After remaining local for the first few years the

focus on international artists heightened in 1974, and shaped the model of the art fair as it is known today (Art Cologne, 2013). So does this sense of internationalization prove true in the galleries and art works that are emphasized by the fairs' online presence? Secondly, as the fairs are all European, do their campaigns revolve around national, European or international artworks? This chapter will discuss the internationality of the fairs featured artworks by comparing the represented galleries to the artworks emphasized in online presence.

#### **4.4.1 Represented galleries**

The first way of determining the global versus localness of the art fairs is through looking at the actual number, and variety, of countries that each fair represents. Ranging from largest to smallest fair, the statistics of the number of countries represented by the fairs are as follows in 2014:

<b>Host city</b>	<b>Total number of galleries</b>	<b>Galleries from host country</b>	<b>Galleries from abroad</b>	<b>Number of countries represented</b>
<a href="#"><u>Brussels</u></a>	190	46	144	27
<a href="#"><u>Paris</u></a>	140	84	54	20
<a href="#"><u>Rotterdam</u></a>	114	57	57	13
<a href="#"><u>Vilnius</u></a>	70	32 (+6 projects)	32	16
<a href="#"><u>Madrid</u></a>	43	39	4	4

**Table 3: Statistics on countries represented.**

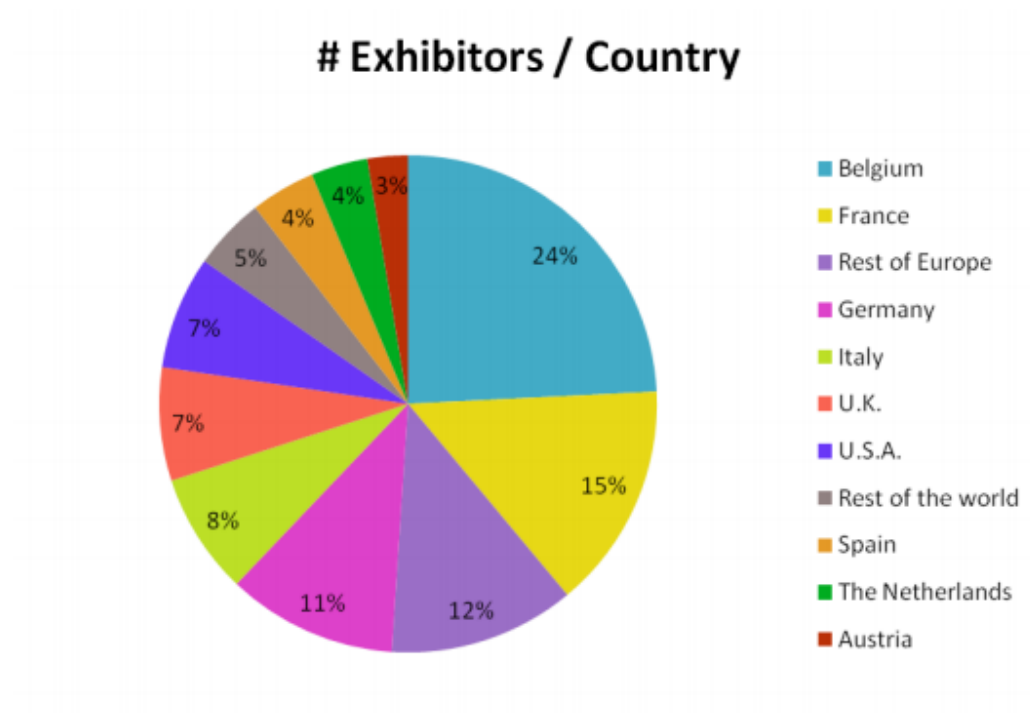
The first point of discussion is the variety in numbers of the galleries from abroad in comparison to the participating galleries from the host countries. Remarkably, both the eldest and youngest art fairs have the widest range of foreign galleries exhibiting at the art fair. Art Brussels, the largest and most well-established fair, has a total of 27 countries represented by the 144 foreign exhibitors of the fair. Art Vilnius, in turn, represents a total of 16 countries in their relatively small fair, with half of all galleries originating from other countries. This is in contrast to Art Rotterdam and Art Paris. Even though Art Rotterdam has an equal amount of host and foreign exhibitors the

fair has a much larger scale, while the actual number of countries represented remains limited. This is similar to Art Paris, which places a much greater focus on French artists than on foreign exhibitors. This is particularly significant as 2014's fair featured China as the guest country of honour. Although Chinese artists were indeed represented through several global galleries, only 10 of the galleries were actually from the Asian-Pacific region (Art Paris, 2014).

In the very last place is Art Madrid, which represents only 3 other countries in addition to Spain at their fair. Thus, even though all fairs are described as *international*, only Art Brussels and Art Vilnius are presenting audiences with a wider variety of represented countries.

#### **4.4.2 Internationalization or Europeanization?**

The second finding lies within the *range* of countries that are represented at the fair. As stated in the theoretical framework, the international art fair has been indicated to be one of the most important outcomes of the overall globalization of the art markets (Velthuis, 2011). When considering the variety of countries represented at the individual fairs however, it becomes clear that the fairs are primarily hosting foreign exhibitors from neighbouring peripheries, and remain predominantly European. An example is Art Brussels. Even though the fair presents their audiences with the widest range of exhibitors and representing countries, their press release reveals inequality between the featured countries (see image below).



**Figure 6: Exhibitor pie chart Art Brussels (Art Brussels press release, 2014).**

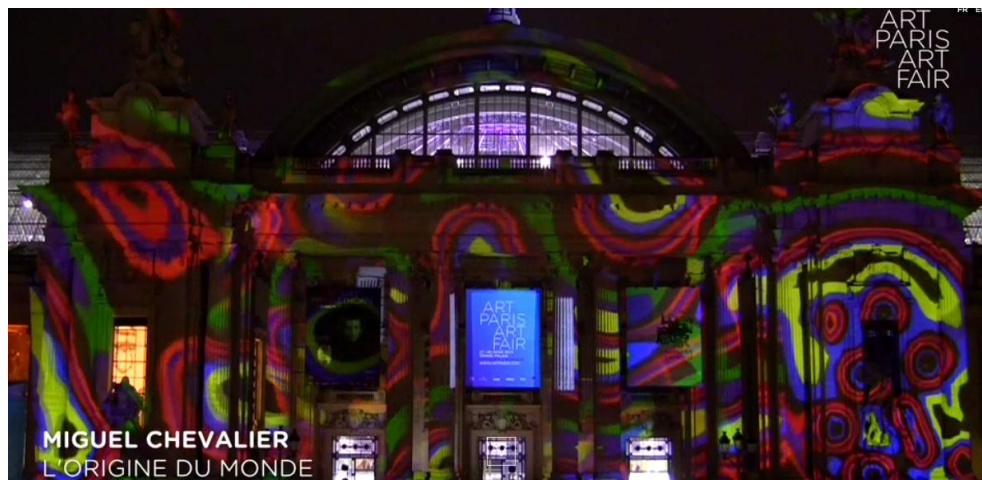
As evident from the image above, the fair highlights key players such as Belgium, France, Italy and Germany, to play the most prominent roles at the fair. This is confirmed by the fair’s press release, which states that “Belgium, France and Germany represent 50% of the galleries” participating at the fair (Art Brussels, 2014). Outside of Europe, the USA is best represented. In addition, the tags given to alternative players including ‘rest of Europe’ or ‘rest of the World’, leads to the tentative conclusion that not only are alternative countries narrowly represented, they are also thought to be not as *important* by the fair.

The focus on the recognition of national art is further emphasized by Art Brussel’s communication campaign hosted by a local artist each year. This campaign is conducted in order to “highlight the position of Brussels as Europe’s most upcoming art city and strengthen its relationship with the city of Brussels and its artists and institutions”, thus indicating the importance of local art (Art Brussels, 2014).

Aligning with the sense of locality and importance placed on both local and ‘neighbouring’ exhibiting countries are Art Paris and Art Rotterdam. Here, even though Art Rotterdam states to debut participants from Hungary, Egypt, Greece and Japan, neighbouring countries such as Belgium, Germany and Great Britain remain those best represented (Art Rotterdam, 2014). In addition, Art Paris highlights the increasing international outlook of the fair in their press release where “50% foreign

galleries were featured in 2014 compared to the 43% in 2013” (Art Paris, 2014). However, the fair also states to remain “committed to supporting those who constitute its foundations in Europe and France where it is deeply anchored” (Art Paris, 2014).

One way in which the relationship to the host country is presented is through the artwork featured in online presence. Both the fair’s website and Facebook page emphasize the digital artwork of French artist Miguel Chevalier, which is presented on the walls of the ‘Grand Palais’ where the fair is held.



**Figure 7: Still from Art Paris website**

Even further engaged in local embeddedness is Art Madrid, which exhibits the strongest notions of locality in their represented artworks and galleries. The fair features almost no deviant actors apart from the Spain in their fair. Since the fair is relatively popular, it seems surprising not many other galleries are featured. However, when researching its Facebook site its national focus is further presented through the language use. Where (apart from France), all other fairs use English at least partly in their communications Art Madrid remains fully Spanish. It is therefore not surprising that, even though a lot of attention is given to variant artists on the Facebook page, their cover photo features a sculpture from a Spanish participant at the recent fair.



**Figure 8: Facebook cover Art Madrid**

Art Brussels and Art Rotterdam too, are highlighting local artists artworks in their online presence. Both display posts on the sculptures of the local artists which can be viewed at the entrance of the fair (meaning that the artwork is the first visitors see upon arrival) on their Facebook pages. Additionally, Art Rotterdam also offers audiences ‘fun’ local initiatives by staying overnight in a local artist’s home.



**Figure 9: Rotterdam local initiative**

The last fair that will be discussed is the only counter actor to the Western European art fairs; namely Art Vilnius. In addition to placing high emphasis on featuring Lithuanian artists in their fair, Art Vilnius also places the greatest emphasis on its neighbouring countries such as Latvia, Poland, Romania, and Russia. Even though these are alternative players, the fair remains engaged within their own geographical region. One reason for this is that Art Vilnius is the first contemporary art fair in the Baltics, and thus is searching for both local and international recognition of Eastern European art. This is confirmed by the fair’s press release, which indicates a focus on the *regional* art market (Art Vilnius ’14, 2014).

Nonetheless, even though Art Vilnius is benefitting from increased recognition and an innovative regional status, its international recognition remains low. This is in line with Quemin's (2013) findings. Here, the slow recognition of Art Vilnius as an established ICAF, as well as the high amount of neighbouring galleries featuring at the other fairs, may be due to the lack of *real* cultural globalization (Quemin, 2013). This holds true for the fairs mentioned above, which mainly feature local and neighbouring Western-European art. Thus, even though European countries are overall becoming more integrated with one another, in terms of cultural globalization this appears mostly as "...an increase in transnational exchanges that neither erase national borders, nor the impact of national units" (Quemin, 2013, p.173). Hence, countries with a stronger art presence (such as France and Germany), are featuring a lot more 'own' art at the fairs, demeaning the notion of a true 'international' art fair and indicating a strong sense of Europeanization instead. As the Baltic area in terms of art & culture belongs to the outer periphery of Europe, chances are the fair has a more difficult time in getting established. Instead, the above findings confirm the strong sense of hierarchy which is still present in the international art fair world, in which the leading actors remain Western-dominated (Quemin, 2006).

#### **4.5 City branding**

This fourth chapter will focus on sub-question 3 of the research, and will address how art fairs use city branding as part of their online marketing campaigns. All the art fairs are inextricably linked to their host cities by name, yet have varying degrees of displaying the ties to the cities they are held in. Here, it will be of interest to highlight exactly *how* the fairs are engaging with their host cities. Are ties displayed on their website or Facebook pages? Do the fairs benefit from financial backing from their respective governments and are these links made implicit or explicit? This chapter will first explore the cities' involvement linked to the phenomenon of cultural tourism and then focus on the geographical locations of the fairs.

### **4.5.1 Art fairs and cultural tourism**

The umbrella of city branding is an important part of the fairs for various reasons. First and foremost, the associations between the fair and the city are of importance as it is part of their *branding*. Already in 1996, Richards stated the increasing link between culture and cities that had been taking place since the 1980s. The first art fair that adopted its city's name was Art Cologne, and this concept has been carried through to many of today's contemporary art fairs. All researched fairs in this paper have adopted their hosting city's name as part of their title. According to Catherine Vauselle from Art Paris, the immediate link between the city and the fair should be seen as something mutually beneficial and thus "...naturally bring us the city's support" (C. Vauselle, personal communication, May 12, 2014). However, in the case of Art Paris, the only city support it gets is the link by name and the initiative of the fair remains private. Barbara Vidal of Art Madrid states the relationship between the fair and its city and inhabitants to be of great importance in the success of the fair as they "...are the best publicity and strengthen your confidence to keep on working", and therefore wishes that "...Madrid's government would be more involved in the cultural life of this city..." (personal communication, March 23, 2014). In addition to these statements both the cities invoke ties to their respective cities through their Facebook presence. Below is a video post from ART Paris, which highlights the cultural agenda of the city during the time of the event.

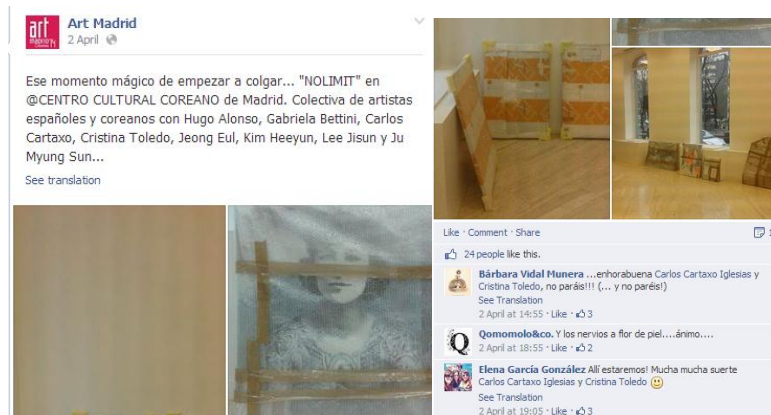


**Figure 10: Cultural agenda Paris**

In turn, ART Madrid not only offers their audiences a cultural agenda and to-do during their stay of the fair, but also provides Facebook users with a useful cultural event-guide throughout the entire year. Through (primarily) free events and exhibition opening information to their audiences, users are being kept up-to-date on events being held in the city, turning ART Madrid's Facebook page into a valuable source (B.



Vidal, personal communication, April 28, 2014). Posts remain solely in Spanish, however in this case this could indicate the *inclusion* of inhabitants of the city except for only focusing on tourism and visitors.



**Figure 11: Cultural event-guide Madrid**

The relative lack of any kind of involvement from the city with their (popular) art fairs, thus seems to contest with the use of cultural events to increase cultural tourism (Richards & Wilson, 2004). As art fairs have been stated to potentially create strong benefits for the local economies, the apparent disengagement between the city of Madrid and its fair seems unexpected (Yogev & Grund, 2012). A potential reason for this could be that both Paris and Madrid do not feel the *need* to be involved with the art fairs for enhanced cultural tourism. Both cities are already established tourist destinations, and ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> (Paris) and 4<sup>th</sup> (Madrid) in the European *Global City Index* of 2014, thus underlining their leading status in Europe (ATKearney, 2014).

Juxtaposing the desire for a greater support from the city is Art Rotterdam. This fair benefits from full financial backing from Rotterdam's local city council. In addition, Art Rotterdam takes place within [Art Rotterdam Week](#), a weeklong cultural event in the city hosting various art fairs and expositions. Thus, collaborating underneath the framework of a larger event can gain both the city and the fair increased exposure (Yogev & Grund, 2012). However, contradictory to Paris and Madrid, here it is the city that aims to create stronger ties with the fair instead of vice versa. Even though communication manager Sabine Dunnewijk outlines the good relationship between Art Rotterdam and the city, she stresses that the actual *collaboration* between the two remains low.

“In general we don’t work that closely together, no...It’s just like, hey, what else is happening during the Art Rotterdam fair?” (S. Dunnewijk, personal communication, March 26, 2014).

Here, instead of being actively involved with the city, which also hosts various other fairs at the same time, Art Rotterdam chooses to distance itself, attending audiences only about their own event. One of the reasons for this might be is that the fair itself has grown out to an established *brand* over the last years (Dunnewijk, 2014). According to Dunnewijk (2014) Art Rotterdam is *the* leading event during *ART Rotterdam Week* and thus, the fair might not see the *need* to leverage on its host city. Nevertheless, the Facebook presence of Art Rotterdam does emphasize the relationship between the fair and the city, though host Bianca Spierenburg accentuates this is not necessarily from a strategic position but rather from an enthusiastic perspective (B.Spierenburg, personal communication, March 23, 2014). Here, she particularly presents audiences with posts that highlight Rotterdam as an increasingly esteemed city and fun initiatives in the city. An example from the New York Times is given below.



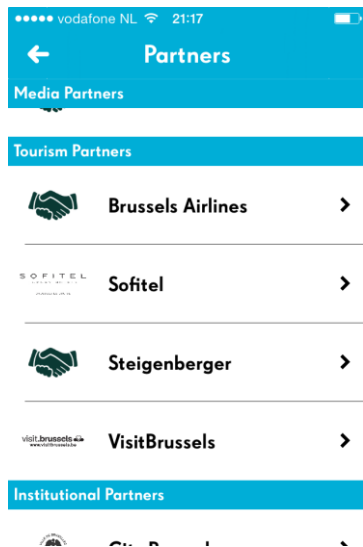
**Figure 12: City branding Rotterdam**

Further notifications on Facebook are similar to those of Art Madrid. Here, the fair cooperates with several other establishments in the city (such as hotels or museums), and notifies audiences about other expositions to see or places to stay during the time of the event. This indicates that even if overall the fair does not have many strategic ties with the city of Rotterdam, the relationship with the city is still emphasized through their social media presence.

The last two fairs are Art Vilnius and Art Brussels, whom both have a strong relationship to their host city. According to Sonata Baliuckaite from Art Vilnius, the recognition of the fair and its city branding remain the fair's most important aim.

*“To create good image of Vilnius, Lithuania is one of the most important aims. We invite people to visit Art fair ARTVILNIUS and to visit our beautiful capital”* (S. Baliuckaite, personal communication, May 7, 2014).

Like Art Rotterdam, the fair benefits from full financial backing of the local city council, and the Lithuanian Ministry of Culture is one of the sponsors of Art Vilnius (S. Baliuckaite, personal communication, May 5, 2014). Contradicting this finding is the fact that Art Vilnius does not have any specific posts relating to branding on its Facebook site. Nevertheless, it has a very strong relationship with the municipality and actively tries to use the art fair as a way to gain more popularity and out of economic decline. Art Vilnius's 2013 press release stated Art Vilnius's aim of making contemporary art accessible in order to help gain momentum in times of economic recession. In addition, there is a wide range of alternative programmes available at the art fair, all of which involve Lithuanian culture (S. Baliuckaite, 2013). Like Art Vilnius, Art Brussels relationship with its host city is strong. As outlined in the previous section, the most important aim of Art Brussels yearly communication campaign is to “highlight the position of Brussels as Europe's most upcoming art city and strengthen its relationship with the city of Brussels and its artists and institutions” (Art Brussels press release, 2014). In order to do this, the fair strongly engages with their stakeholders. The fair is linked to the tourism website *VisitBrussels* and is supported by the local council. Secondly, even though in 2013 not many Facebook posts introduced audiences to the city, in 2014 this increased greatly. In addition, the ART Brussels mobile app provides users with partnered hotels, restaurants and other events happening in the city.



**Figure 13: Brussels partners**

Lastly, in addition to partnering up with the tourism website Art Brussels is also partnered with Brussels Airlines. Here, visitors of the fair receive a 15% discount when buying their flight tickets to come and see the fair. In line with the cultural branding strategies implied over the last years, these findings indicate that the hosting of a cultural event is believed to be capable of generating increased global status and stimulate economic growth (Richards & Wilson, 2004).

#### **4.5.2 Fair location**

A second significant finding is the location of where the fairs are held, which tend to be in cultural emblematic buildings. Even though Art Rotterdam expressed to not have explicit ties to the city of Rotterdam, the fair was held in the Van Nellefabriek this year, which was nominated in January 2013 as an UNESCO World Heritage site (Van Nellefabriek, 2013). Likewise, Art Paris was held in the Grand Palais, an iconic monument in Paris. In turn, Art Madrid was held in CentroCentro Cibeles along the famous ‘art mile’ in Madrid. Vidal (2014), indicates the importance of *place* in situating the event.

*“I think (the Art Mile red) constitutes a vertebral axis of the city’s cultural and artistic life”* (B. Vidal, personal communication, March 23, 2014).

By being situated along this ‘art-mile’ immediate positive associations with the fair and its status are established, relating back to the importance of networking. The location of the fairs can strongly affect the way the fair is regarded by its visitors. Emotions towards place can work in a manner of self-identification and is becoming increasingly important within the city-branding realm. Thus, it seems conflicting that few of the fairs cities would choose to remain uninvolved with the event.

Overall, the results above indicate the strong variation that is present in the need to involve the host city in the fair’s branding. Art Rotterdam’s established brand may in fact surpass its host city in terms of global credentials, and therefore does not express the explicit need to collaborate with its city. However, Art Madrid and Art Paris, both tourism hubs, indicate a desired stronger involvement from their local governments. The strongest involvement from the governments is most present in the tourism underdogs, Vilnius and Brussels. Thus, it seems that city branding through cultural tourism still plays a dominant role in leveraging cities out of economic decline and into becoming an established cultural hub globally.

## **4.6 Networking**

One of the ways outlined above in which to heighten cultural tourism is by partnering up with cities or individual institutions such as hotels and airlines. This falls under the headline of *networking* and *stakeholder engagements* of the fair. Traditionally, Howard Becker already described how an artwork can only be created by passing through a networking structure (Morgner, 2014). This notion is carried through in the structure of today’s art fair, which provides both gallerists and audiences with endless networking opportunities. In researching the fairs’ presence, the last main theme that emerged was the importance placed on the concept of networking. This chapter will explore both the on and offline networking methods as used by the fairs today.

### **4.6.1 Ties to cultural institutions**

As briefly discussed in the previous chapter, several of the fairs have established relations with various museums in their cities, in order to capitalize on positive associations. Here, Art Rotterdam and Art Paris are the best connected to

their cultural institutions. Firstly, Art Rotterdam highlights ties with museums in order to reassure quality/credibility and to gain greater recognition (S. Dunnewijk, personal communication, March 26, 2014). One way in which this is done is through notifying visitors of the museums of the fair's presence, which can be done by sending out a promotional Email to its audience base for example. Secondly, in order to create mutually beneficial ties Art Rotterdam's entry tickets have also functioned as a discount card at other cultural events and museums such as De Kunsthal in Rotterdam for several years (B. Spierenburg, personal communication, March 23, 2014). An example is provided below, and notifies Facebook users of the 35% discount they will receive when entering De Kunsthal with their Art Rotterdam entry ticket. Thus, through leveraging on their cultural stakeholders, Art Rotterdam can reach out to expanded audiences.



**Figure 14: Discount for museums in Rotterdam**

Art Paris engages in a different way in of connecting their audiences to the museums they are partnered with. Instead of promoting the fair through discount tickets or accessing the museum's database, Art Paris organizes a specific programme for collectors in various Parisian museums. This is done in order to reflect the honorary guest country, and the collectors are invited through the *friend* program exemplified below (C. Vauselle, personal communication, May 12, 2014).

ART PARIS ART FAIR shared Art Paris Art Fair's photo. 23 March

**WE ARE ALL COLLECTORS – NOUVEAUTÉ 2014 !**  
[http://artparis.fr/fr/friend\\_access](http://artparis.fr/fr/friend_access)

Si vous avez par le passé acquis une oeuvre d'art sur Art Paris, nous sommes heureux de vous recevoir comme membre du CERCLE DES AMIS D'ART PARIS ART FAIR.

Vous bénéficiez de nouveaux services sur la foire :  
 – VISITES "DÉCRYPTAGE" D'ART PARIS ART FAIR PAR L'OBSERVATOIRE DE L'ART CONTEMPORAIN.  
 Un parcours guidé de 45 minutes à travers les différents secteurs de la foire, secteur général, plateforme Chine, Promesses, ArtDesign.  
 Lieu de rendez-vous : STAND B1 au « CERCLE DES COLLECTIONNEURS »  
 (12 personnes maximum, sur inscription)\*

– CONFERENCES ART PARIS ART FAIR  
 Vous pouvez vous inscrire à toutes les conférences organisées par la foire  
 (sur inscription – valable pour 2 personnes)  
 Lieu de rendez-vous : Auditorium MK2 du Grand Palais  
 Accès gratuit par la Rotonde Alexandre III, entrée Cours la Reine.  
 Merci de vous présenter 15 minutes avant l'heure de votre conférence.

INSCRIPTIONS : [http://artparis.fr/fr/friend\\_access](http://artparis.fr/fr/friend_access)



Like · Comment · Share 4

**Figure 15: Friend access ART Paris**

*We Are All Collectors (Friend Access)* was introduced in 2014, and provides additional services to those who have purchased artworks at the fair by becoming a ‘friend’ of Art Paris. One of the additional benefits of becoming a collector and friend of Art Paris is the tour around the various museums in the city. So, although both the fairs are partnering with cultural institutions in order to gain from added status, Art Paris only provides the added museum privileges to (previous) buyers. Thus, the main difference between the two fairs is that Art Rotterdam engages all members of the museum, whereas Art Paris only engages their previous buyers with partnered museums. Thus, Art Paris’s strategy indicates a more exclusive approach to audiences.

#### **4.6.2 Offline VS online tie formation**

Engaging in partnerships with various cultural institutions in the city is not the only way in which the fairs are exercising networking structure. Art Madrid, for example, is also benefitting from offline networking structure by being located in the ‘art-mile’ of Madrid. The location of the fair in the cluster of the city’s prestigious art district can lend itself as a status enhancer, where perceived status can be gained by association (Rius Ulldemolinos, 2012). Art Rotterdam is also relying on the more traditional methods of networking by strongly relying on their offline partners in their communication output (S. Dunnewijk, personal communication, March 26, 2014). As discussed in the first chapter of this analysis, Art Rotterdam’s offline media vehicles consists of newspapers and magazines which generally are read by those

with a higher socio-economic and educational status and thus align with the preferred exclusive demographic of the fair. Within these newspapers, Art Rotterdam often gets featured as part of a 'special attachment', benefitting from extensive coverage in media directed at their targeted audiences. Nonetheless, Art Rotterdam's social media presence uncovers strong alternative networking tactics. During the time of the fair, Art Rotterdam posts many small updates or images of the galleries that are presented at the fair. In these posts, either the exhibiting gallery or artist is tagged, which creates an immediate tie between the fair and said gallery, creating mutually beneficial associations. The duality and increasing online networking between Art Rotterdam and the actors involved is confirmed by Spierenburg:

*"...I've tried to finally find each stand or gallery owner online or on Facebook...I think I'm trying to find duality"* (B.Spierenburg, personal communication, March 23, 2014).

Through this duality, a stronger connection with participating gallerists can be established. Spierenburg quotes the difference into engaging in this online manner compared to five years ago.

*"Five years ago this wasn't there yet. All the gallery owners definitely weren't online, let alone have a website. So, that too, is really just evolution that they can do these things, the communication strategies on their own..."* (B.Spierenburg, personal communication, March 23, 2014).

These findings align with Art Madrid's Facebook presence. Here, the fair does not only tag the galleries present at the fair at the time of the event, but takes this notion of networking one step further by engaging alternative media, artists, institutions or events through the tagging system. Facebook audiences are notified of anything related to the concept of art happening both on and offline. Barbara Vidal states the reason for this to be that being a useful source is one of the key ingredients in keeping audiences engaged with the platform (personal communication, March 23, 2014). Here, the fair purposely tags the institution, event, gallery or artists in question. Secondly, the fair shares the post in a very personal matter. When the fair is mentioned by a cultural website or magazine, Art Madrid re-shares the post by

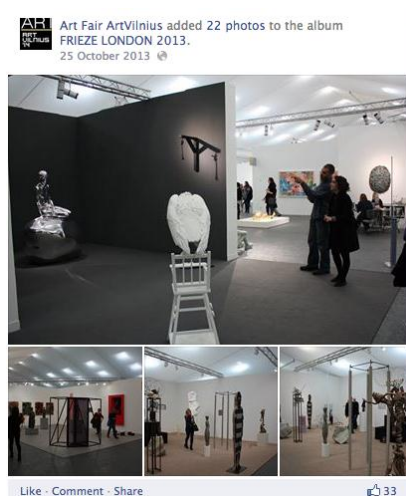


tagging and thanking the author. Secondly, artworks by artists of interest are shared and praised, and if a variant exhibition is taking place in the city of Madrid audiences are encouraged to visit. Through tagging and personal approach, Art Madrid manages to establish positive relationships with a wide variety of institutions.



**Figure 16: Tagging of Art Madrid**

The last fair that engages in online tagging strategies is Art Vilnius. However, a significant finding within these postings is the amount of attention that is placed on alternative art fairs. Art Vilnius does not establish links by tagging individual artists or galleries in their posts, nor by the sharing of elements of other Facebook pages. Rather, the fair records the imagery of their visit to other European art fairs, and shares part of their experience with their Facebook followers.



**Figure 17: Tagging by Art Vilnius**

It could be debated whether this indeed brings the positive associations of *status enhancement* through network leveraging in the same way as it does with Art Rotterdam and Art Madrid. This, as Art Vilnius only creates a visual experience and does *not* tag the competing fairs in these albums. By neglecting to tag the fairs, it is hard to see how Art Vilnius could benefit from the potential of expanded audiences. Moreover, Tortoriello, Perrone & McEvily (2011), argue that even though associations with more established organizations can bring positive associations towards one organization, vice versa this does not work. Thus, even though Art Vilnius associates itself with others, the networking may not be mutual, as others cannot ‘gain’ from the fair’s current status like they do with the more popular fairs of Art Rotterdam and Art Madrid.

Overall, both long-term and loyal relationships in the arts have been considered key for survival for some time (Stegemann & Sutton-Brady, n.d.). Relationships between “artists, artwork, ambiance and location” all play in to consumers’ needs and emotional motives such as “social gathering, atmosphere and entertainment value” (Stegemann & Sutton-Brady, n.d., p.10). In turn, these relationships all add to the overall perception and experience consumers have with a gallery, institution or event. The notion of engaging in the profitable relationships is carried through by the online networking of the fairs above. This aligns with previous research on the concept of tagging, where tagging in social media posts is primarily used in order to benefit from added visibility (Savage, Monroy-Hernandez, Singer & Hollerer, 2013). Like with other networking strategies, the online tagging method can make taggers benefit from others “reputation, identity, and social graph”, as is exemplified by both Art Rotterdam and Art Madrid (Savage et al., 2013, p.39). Both the fairs are tagging in order to capitalize on their stakeholders networks, which provides with greatly expansive audience reach.

Nonetheless, it remains debatable how online networking can truly serve to enhance status for those that are not part of the established art scene. This is exemplified by Art Vilnius. Though part of the unsuccessful recognition by its peers may lie in the manner in which the art fair is engaging in online linking, the fact remains that Vilnius is the underdog and only Baltic art fair as of yet. Thus, in line with the dominant Western-European outlook of the fairs, Art Vilnius may have to work twice as hard in becoming an established and recognized entity.

## **5. Discussion and conclusion**

In order to answer the research question of this thesis “*To what extent are public high cultural events becoming more popular and global through new media?*”, the communication challenges and opportunities of international contemporary art fairs (ICAFs) were studied. The contemporary art fair was chosen as high-cultural events remain, thus far, a largely unexplored territory in terms of social media. Social media use is becoming an inextricable factor of our lives, and its presence has been noted to have beneficial influences on both popular- and high-culture. Thus, expanding the field of research towards high-cultural events seems a necessary and logical next step of research.

The objective of this thesis was to give insight into the use of new media by international art fairs. The analysis of the topic of this thesis was approached from different angles. The theoretical framework outlined the current structure of the ICAFs in contemporary society. Meanwhile, the analysis gave insight into the views and opinions of the art fairs themselves, which were compared to online content analysis. In turn, the global angle of this thesis was achieved through contrasting and comparing the findings between five European art fairs. Hence, overarching themes were established and discrepancies were noted. The main conclusion revolved around the inconsistencies that are currently present between the image that the fairs want to project versus the use of social media in their communication mix. Other areas of the analysis highlighted that true internationalization of the art fair is not yet achieved. In order to answer the research question of this thesis, further empirical findings of the sub-questions are outlined below, after which theoretical and future implications will be given. Finally, the main research question of this thesis will be answered in the conclusion.

### **5.1 Empirical findings**

This section will condense the empirical findings in order to answer the sub-questions of this thesis.

**Sub-question 1. How are art fairs engaging their cultural consumers through social media?**

### *1A. Traditional concepts of engagement remain present*

Most fairs state the traditional methods of audience engagement to remain of high importance. An example is the use of media partners by the fairs, which can be present through online communication agencies or offline through newspapers. This is carried through in the fairs' social media practices. News articles, reviews or other articles by media partners are often shared, highlighting the importance placed on art expertise. In addition, similar to offline high-cultural communication practices, the actual dialogue between fairs and audiences on social media remains low.

### *1B. Alternative online engagements*

Although traditional concepts of audience engagement remain emphasized by the fairs, alternative engagements are increasingly present. Some fairs exude a strong presence of imagery and videos online, emphasizing the experiential factor that is already inherently present in the art industry. Secondly, Facebook is not the only platform through which audiences are engaged with the fair. Alternative online platforms such as mobile apps and virtual tours of the fair can both personalize and enhance the fair experience for users.

## **Sub-question 2. How is globalization expressed in the fairs' online campaigns?**

### *2A. Emphasis on artworks from local artists*

A strong focus is placed on the 'international' aspect by the fairs in their communication. Yet, when researching the type of art displayed by the fairs it remains to be predominantly local, in both on- and offline presence. Offline, this is done through displaying local artworks at the entrance of the fair. Online, this is achieved through featuring local art as a website background or Facebook cover, highlighting local artists in Facebook posts or offering audiences links for overnight stays with local artists.

### *2B. Strong focus on local galleries and neighbouring countries in participation*

The concept of locality is not only emphasized within the fairs' communications. Though participation from various countries is increasing, the fair remains dominated by local and Western-European galleries. The Baltic fair in this research, Art Vilnius, displays the highest variety in participating countries, however concentration remains on neighbouring Baltic countries.

### **Sub-question 3. How do art fairs use city branding as part of their online campaigns?**

#### *3A. Institutional partners*

City branding is primarily done through partnering with institutions in the city. These institutions can consist of tourism boards, museums or airlines, where discounts are given at the time of the fair. These initiatives, in turn, are shared with audiences online, either on Facebook or through the official website or mobile app. However, the city seems to only be truly involved with the fair if it thinks it can benefit from the fair's presence.

#### *3B. Sharing a cultural and city agenda*

In addition to sharing partnered initiatives with their audiences online, the fairs also contribute to host city's exposure through sharing a cultural and city agenda on their Facebook pages.

#### *3C. Location of the fairs*

Most fairs are held in emblematic and culturally rich heritage sites, which invoke immediate ties to the city they are held in.

### **Sub-question 4. How are art fairs capitalizing on stakeholders?**

#### *4A. The importance of networking*

Through analysing Facebook content, it becomes clear that networking is an important means to engage both the general public and professionals in the field. This is done through connecting and tagging artists or galleries in shared posts or albums. However, as outlined above, capitalizing on stakeholders is also done through partnering with cultural institutions, established media partners, or locating the fair within renowned art districts of the city. Overall, the concept of networking proves to be more effective for fairs with an established status, as it provides stronger tie incentives for others. This creates an elitist dominated environment and makes it difficult for variant actors (such as Art Vilnius) to enter.

### **5.1.2 Further emerging themes**

#### *Discrepancies between inclusive and exclusive strategies*

Another frequently reoccurring theme within the data analysis lies within the contradictions that are present in inclusive and exclusive communication strategies.

Established fairs such as Paris and Rotterdam highlight strategies aimed at targeted audiences. However, increasing attention is given to online presence, and overall time spent on online activities is gradually increasing. In turn, while younger fairs stress the importance of social media presence they remain reluctant in engaging fully with alternative players.

## **5.2 Justification and future insights**

Scholarship states that both the high and popular cultural industries have currently embraced social media as a tool of accessibility and participation (Jamison-Powell et al., 2014). This is exemplified through the positive effects on popular events and high cultural institutions such as museums (Jamison-Powell et al., 2014; Birkner, 2012). However, this research indicates that, although some fairs are positive on the use of social media, reluctance towards full social media engagement persists. In line with Kidd (2010) and Schweibenz's (2011) findings on the issues faced by high-cultural institutions in social media use, primary issues in addressing full social media engagement of the fairs lie within the concept of trust and interactivity. Nonetheless, while other high cultural institutions are increasingly overcoming these issues, it seems that the art fair is not yet capable of fully applying social media strategies to their communication mix. As this finding challenges previous findings on the use of social media in high-cultural establishments, the question that remains is what the precise reasons for this reluctance are. Hence, further research is necessary in order to detect more precise reasons as to where this reluctance is coming from. In addition, research into the backgrounds and socio-demographic of social media users could provide for clearer indications of the exact audiences reached through this medium. In turn, this could prove beneficial for the fairs' in further developing online strategies for potential future buyers.

The second theoretical implication is in line with the importance placed by the fair on networking and partnerships. In the case of networking, this is in line with Morgner (2014) and Yogev & Grund's (2012) findings on the *intra-networking* structures at the fair, where participants can leverage off each other in order to gain increased reputation. Adding to this theory is the way in which this networking element is carried through to online presence. Here, fairs and participating galleries engage in a *tagging* system in order to leverage off one another. As social media has a

considerably easy barrier of entrance, when effectively used it could bring less well-known fairs increased (global) recognition. Even though the concept has already been proven to be an integral part of the fairs' offline structure, this research has expanded the theory to the importance placed on networking online well. As networking is traditionally not an integrated part in the communication mix, further research could help explore the role of networking within business communications.

Finally, findings of elitism remain prevalent within the global aspect of the art fair. This thesis enhanced that, thus far, the 'international' art fairs remain primarily ruled by a few Western-European key players. This opposes earlier notions on the strengthening of globalization in the arts but is in line with Quemin's (2013) findings.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

*“To what extent are public high cultural events becoming more popular and global through new media?”*

This thesis discussed the impact of new media on ICAFs. The topic was approached from different angles in order to create a holistic approach. In the analysis, the research compared the opinions of social media managers with online content findings. The results prove that even though the art fairs are an increasingly popular event and incorporate many trendy concepts within their fair structure, such as various evening programs taking place, social media usage is still approached in a manner filled with contradictions and true internationalization is lacking.

First, even though the fairs are placing increasing importance on displaying global art to international audiences, it remains questionable until what extent they are actually doing so. Instead, in both on- and offline presence the fairs remain focused on elite players in the field. Though more variance in countries represented is evident galleries still mainly originate from national or neighbouring countries. This is in line with Quemin's (2013) findings, who stated that the "...international art market remains highly territorialised and controlled by a few national units in spite of the intensification of exchanges" (p.172). This notion is enhanced online, as some fairs studied do not even offer their online audiences with an English section on their Facebook pages and provide audiences with art predominantly representative of local artists. Claiming to be an international fair and not providing potential global

audiences with an English option in Facebook use seems disengaged with the very nature of the *international* art fair. Instead, the notion of globalization should be followed through on Facebook, and connect global audiences to international artists in order to dramatically expand networks and potential buyers.

Secondly, although all fairs display awareness of the potential benefits from social media, hesitance towards full engagement with the medium persists. Brussels, Paris and Rotterdam are all established fairs and seem to be reluctant towards social media use and association with wider audiences. Since most communication managers express ways of targeting audiences through elite platforms, this reluctance may derive from the level of accessibility that social media presents. Thus, already established fairs feel might not feel the *need* for social media in order to thrive and prefer to remain engaged with more elite audiences through other media outlets. As it stands, these conclusions contribute to an overall elitist outlook, where the fair does not really want to be involved with the greater public. Here, strong interaction with Facebook might make the fair appear *too* accessible, and could endanger prestige by connection to the VOPS of society. Even though these concepts are understandable from a high-cultural standpoint, they seem conflicting with the business perspectives of the fair. This is further emphasized by the increasing presence of social media within high-cultural institutions, which too realize the necessity of engaging prospective and current audiences through social media (and have prestigious institutions such as MOMA and Tate Modern at the forefront doing so). Hence, the fairs' lack of engagement online is remarkable. In contemporary society, new media should not only be practiced but be an integral part of the communication mix.

#### **5.4 Limitations of this study**

This research aimed to uncover how the international contemporary art fair (ICAF) is using social media in order to become more of a popularized and global entity. However there were several limitations to this study.

The first limitation is the lack of prior research being done on the topic of art fairs and social media. Although there was plenty of scholarly material on the benefits of social media use by both high-cultural institutions (such as the museum) and popular cultural events, high-cultural events such as the art fair remained, as of yet, a



largely unexplored concept. Thus, although comparisons could be made towards alternating theories, none of these were tailored specifically to the art fair.

The second limitation in this research was the lack of access granted. Getting access to the social media managers of the art fairs proved difficult and when communication was established, access remained limited. This resulted in several Email interviews, which provided much less depth than the verbatim interviews. In addition, one interviewee became unavailable during the process, which led to only four interviews being conducted.

The last limitation of this research lies within the sample and sample size used. First of all, the study only focused on European art fairs, and although internationally orientated, thus cannot account for similar findings across art fairs globally. Secondly, the sample size of five fairs was chosen in order to fit within the timeframe of this research. Again, the sample size is not sufficient to make global assumptions, although the findings could be used as a standpoint through which to conduct further research.

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## Appendix A

### Facebook background of the five fairs

#### ART Rotterdam

**Fair established in:** 1999

**Mission:** “The fair to discover young art in the Netherlands” (Facebook, 2014).

**Facebook Likes:** 4,655

**Facebook presence:** Moderate

**Post language:** English/Dutch

#### ART Madrid

**Fair established in:** 2006

**Mission:** “...promote art collecting and revitalize the contemporary art market through the professional sector and public at large” (ART Madrid, 2014).

**Facebook Likes:** 8,628

**Facebook presence:** Strong

**Post language:** Spanish

#### ART Brussels

**Fair established in:** 1988

**Mission:** “...*the* European platform for upcoming talents in the field of contemporary art and focuses as well on strong established galleries...” (ART Brussels, 2010).

**Facebook Likes:** 7,160

**Facebook presence:** Low

**Post language:** English

#### ART Paris

**Fair established in:** 1998

**Mission:** N/A

**Facebook Likes:** 11, 536

**Facebook presence:** Low

**Post language:** French

**ART Vilnius**

**Fair established in:** 2009

**Mission:** N/A

**Facebook Likes:** 1,875

**Facebook presence:** Moderate

**Post language:** Lithuanian/(English increasing in 2014)

# Appendix B – Facebook reviews

## ART Rotterdam

### Post 1 – De Volkskrant

ART Rotterdam  
7 February

"Art Rotterdam – dé beurs voor de meest hedendaagse, hipste en avontuurlijkste kunst"

Lees meer in de Volkskrant van vandaag:

<http://www.artrotterdam.com/users/128/content/Pers/files/volks%207-2.pdf>

See translation



## Art Vilnius

### Post 1 – Art Territory

Art Fair ArtVilnius shared a link.  
26 June 2013

[http://www.artterritory.com/en/art\\_market/art\\_fairs/2442-the\\_first\\_international\\_art\\_fair\\_in\\_the\\_baltic\\_countries\\_returns\\_to\\_vilnius/](http://www.artterritory.com/en/art_market/art_fairs/2442-the_first_international_art_fair_in_the_baltic_countries_returns_to_vilnius/)

The first international art fair in the Baltic countries returns to Vilnius  
[www.artterritory.com](http://www.artterritory.com)

June 26 / 09.00

Like · Comment · Share

15

## Art Madrid

### Post 1 – MAKMA magazine

 Art Madrid shared a link.  
7 February

Amigos de MAKMA... SÓLO QUEDAN 12 DÍAS! Gracias por la difusión!

<http://www.makma.net/art-madrid14-inicia-la-cuenta-atras/>

See translation



Art Madrid14 inicia la cuenta atrás - | MAKMA  
[www.makma.net](http://www.makma.net)

Presentación de la Feria de Arte Contemporáneo Art Madrid14, un proyecto renovado y más dinámico, centrando su atención en el arte emergente.

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## Art Paris

### Post 1 – IDEAT Magazine

 Art Paris shared a link.  
20 March 2013

Revue de presse Art Paris Art Fair :

Téléchargez le Cahier spécial IDEAT du mois de mars 2013

<http://bit.ly/ZdJCYu>

See translation



[http://artparis.fr/media/jpg/language/fr/media\\_key/DsQcb9fU/size/800](http://artparis.fr/media/jpg/language/fr/media_key/DsQcb9fU/size/800)  
artparis.fr

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