

**“The art galleries’ necessary evil”: attending art fairs as a means to develop reputation and to maintain legitimacy**

**Erasmus University Rotterdam**

Erasmus School of History, Culture and Communication

M.A. Cultural Economics and Entrepreneurship

Academic year 2015-2016

Submitted by Rachele De Stefano (430920)

Supervisor: Pawan Bhansing

Wordcount: 27494

**Abstract**

The paper presents the results of a qualitative study which aims to investigate how participation in contemporary art fairs is a means for art galleries to develop their reputation and to maintain social and cognitive legitimacy. More specifically, the study increases theoretical understanding on the relationship between legitimacy and reputation by suggesting that legitimacy can be seen as a prerequisite for the development of reputation.

**Keywords:** Reputation, Legitimacy, Contemporary Art Fairs, Art Galleries

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## 1.Introduction

Art galleries are cultural intermediaries in the art market (Velthuis, 2001) and they fulfil the role of art managers for the artists they represent (Bandixen, 2000). In fact art galleries provide the necessary “humdrum inputs”<sup>1</sup> that the artists need in order to develop a career within the art world (Caves, 2000). One of the key role of commercial art galleries within the primary art market of contemporary art<sup>2</sup>, is to promote the career of their artists (Velthuis, 2011). “One of the manager’s core functions is that of establishing a secure and effective position for his client within the relevant environment. He must firmly plant reputation and distinction in the minds of customers, audiences and consumers, as well as in the media, in the relevant political scene, and among the experts, critics and whomever else may be of importance” (Bandixen, 2000, p. 8). Reputation is especially relevant within cultural markets – and in particular in the one of contemporary art (Yogev, 2010; Ertug, et al. ,2016; Velthuis, 2005)- as quality in these markets is uncertain (Caves, 2000).

Art dealers within the primary market, create reputation for themselves and for their artists in different ways. For instance, they host exhibitions, they engage in partnerships and collaborations with other galleries and with institutions, and more importantly they participate in social events where they meet collectors, curators and all other art world’s players (Velthuis, 2011). In doing this they also need to adhere to norms, values and rules which are shared with others in the field, by following what Velthuis (2005) defined “the business repertoire “ of art galleries. Broadly, this is important for firms operating in all industries, as by conforming to standards, they maintain legitimacy (King and Whetten, 2008; Suchman, 1995).

Firms face two pressures: the pressure to be different and the pressure to be the same (Thomas, 2007). Likewise, art galleries build their reputation and the reputation of the artists by distinguishing themselves from the other galleries in the industry. Meanwhile, to maintain their legitimacy they have to make sure that their activities result understandable to their relevant stakeholders. Thus, they need to adhere and to conform to standards that are shared with other galleries in the industry.

We argue that participation to contemporary art fairs is a means for commercial art galleries to maintain their legitimacy and to build their reputation with their relevant audience. Art fairs correspond to the social events that Currid (2007) described as “parties” where various cultural gatekeepers, intermediaries, producers, and all actors of the art world participate to the valorisation of art. In fact, studies in different fields pointed out that these events, as fashion shows (Entwistle and Rocamora, 2008) and trade fairs in other industries (Skov, 2006; Moeran, 2010), “reveal and simultaneously (re) configure the fields of which they form a part” (Moeran and Pettersen, 2009, p.3). For these reasons, the art fair results to be a particularly interesting research settings.

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<sup>1</sup> Caves (2000) argue that producing cultural goods requires creative inputs (provided by the artists) and “humdrum inputs, as labor and financial resources provided by cultural managers.

<sup>2</sup> The primary market is where a given art work is sold in the market for the first time, while the secondary market or ‘re-sale market’ is the one that trades art works which have been sold more than once (Velthuis, 2011).

The art market experienced several changes in the recent years (Baia Curioni, 2012) that affected its structure and the practices of its actors (Jyrama and Morel, 2009)<sup>3</sup>. As a result the art fair gained a prominent role within the art market and participation to art fairs became extremely important especially for art galleries (Baia Curioni, 2012; Yogeve and Grund, 2012, Morel and Jyrama, 2009). Art galleries are increasingly investing time and money to participate to these events (Baia Curioni, 2012; Yogeve and Grund, 2012) in order to face the challenges posed by their changing environment in which the traditional “bricks-and-mortar” gallery’s model hardly fits anymore. In fact, they have to deal with the increase role of auction houses and online sales in the market, as well as with the emergence of new players from emerging economies (Baia Curioni, 2012).

Whilst art fairs provide relevant commercial platforms for art galleries and their artists<sup>4</sup>, they are also important meeting points for the various actors in the market, such as galleries, collectors, curators, museums’ directors, art critics, journalists and all art lovers (Yogeve and Grund, 2012). In this view, they are key events in the market, as they provide significant networking opportunities for their participants (Morgner, 2014; Yogeve, 2010; Yogeve and Grund, 2012). In addition they also have the potential to be powerful marketing tools for art galleries, by providing international exposure and visibility, to both the participating galleries and their artists (Baia Curioni, 2012).

Although earning a financial return is extremely important for the art galleries that take part to contemporary art fairs, reputation and legitimacy are also crucial factors that are at stake for those attending these events. In fact, recent studies have pointed out how being selected as exhibitors at leading international art fairs, is for art galleries an official “social marker” that signals their status within the art world (Morel, 2014, Jyrama and Morel, 2009).

As such, this study, is guided by the following research question: **how is participation to contemporary art fairs a means for commercial art galleries to maintain their legitimacy and at the same time to build their reputation?**

Legitimacy and reputation have been the subject of research within the fields of management and sociology, however there is little agreement on the definitions of these two terms and on their relationship (King and Whetten, 2008; Foreman, Whetten and Mackey, 2012). Moreover, the work that exists is mostly focused on defining the concepts theoretically and little empirical research has been done on this topic (Deephouse and Carter, 2005). One of the main reason is that, legitimacy and reputation are especially difficult to separate when analysing phenomena in the real world, as they are often overlapping and intertwining (Foreman, et al, 2012; Deephouse and Carter, 2005). Moreover, the only study that analyses art galleries’ legitimisation

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<sup>3</sup> See literature review, the most significant changes are the increased role of auction houses and the online sales along with the participation of new comers from emerging economies, and the proliferation of art fairs worldwide (Baia Curioni, 2012).

<sup>4</sup> As reported by Mc Andrew (2016) art galleries make more than 40% of their annual sales at art fairs.

process in the context of contemporary art fairs (Jyrama and Morel, 2009), does not look at the concept of reputation at its connection with legitimacy. In fact, it focuses on the legitimization process of the galleries in its connection with their status position within a network.

Therefore, there is the need for empirical research and theory building with respect to scholar's understanding of the relationship between legitimacy and reputation. Fombrun (2012) in his review on reputation studies also emphasises the need for future empirical research on reputation that works in interaction with the world of practitioners. Being aware of the social context is extremely relevant when understanding reputation and other related constructs (Jensen, Kim and Kim, 2012). The aim of this study is to shed light on the relationship that exist between legitimacy and reputation within a specific social context, the contemporary art world, by looking at art galleries' participation in contemporary art fairs. In addition, the study increases understanding on the manifold and pivotal role of contemporary art fairs within the art market.

The theoretical framework to this research is provided by combination of literature from different disciplines. The resulted theory is applied to empirically investigate the phenomenon we discussed. As such, the study should provide a contribution to the literature on legitimacy and corporate reputation. Moreover, by looking at perceptions and expectations of art galleries' owners, on participation to art fairs, the study provides insights that may be helpful to art fairs' organisers. In fact they may use the result to design strategies addressed to meet the needs and expectations of the art galleries which represent their main stakeholders.

We adopt a qualitative approach as it proves to be helpful when the aim is to understand and illuminate the studied phenomenon (Bryman, 2012). Moreover, most of the research that focused on the art world used this approach due to the lack of transparency that characterised the community of this field (Velthuis, 2005).

## **2.Theoretical framework**

### **2.1.Introduction**

The literature which follows draws from studies within different disciplines. The objective is to investigate the concepts of legitimacy and reputation as discussed within sociology and management, and to investigate how these concepts apply to the contemporary art world. More specifically it looks at how they are related to the business of art galleries. Finally the art fair phenomenon is investigated in the last section. As such, it presents an overview of the studies from different fields concerned with art fairs and trade shows in the creative industries and in other markets. Specifically, it draws a conceptual framework which illustrates the symbolic and social functions of the fairs as platforms that enables interaction, knowledge exchange and learning processes to take place among the art world's players which all converge to these events. The objective is to highlight the manifold role that fairs play for the participating art galleries within the contemporary art world. In addition, it aims to provide a contextualisation for defining the concept of legitimacy and reputation in relation to the participation of art galleries to these events.

### **2.2.Legitimacy and imitation**

Suchman (1995) defines legitimacy as “ the generalised perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values and definitions” (p.574). The legitimacy ensures that the actions of a firm result understandable to others (Suchman, 1995); moreover, it plays an important role when innovation is introduced in the market (DiMaggio, 1992), (whether this is a product or a new practice or way of acting). In fact, innovation has to be understandable by those that interact with the given actor. However, legitimacy is not constant, instead it is dynamic, since it is continuously created and re-created through social interaction (Suchman, 1995; Jyrama and Morel, 2009, for the art world). Therefore knowledge of what is legitimate is acquired through participation in the field activities (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983), and keeping track of these developments is important not only to “new comers” or “innovators”, but also to established firms (Suchman, 1995).

Schuman (1995) identifies pragmatic, moral and cognitive legitimacy; whereby pragmatic legitimacy is conferred by actors to others which are perceived similar for sharing similar objectives and values. Moral legitimacy is conferred when a certain activity is judged as “the right thing to do”, while cognitive legitimacy is connected to the capability of the actors to act understandably within the field. Others studies (Elfring and Hulsink, 2003) have identified similar categories and separate legitimacy between the socio-political and cognitive legitimacy whereby the socio-political legitimacy refers to the acceptance of the actor by others within the industry, while the cognitive legitimacy is related to the fact that the actor need to act in ways that are understandable to others. In this conceptualisation, the moral legitimacy (Suchman, 1995) that entails the adoption of the “proper manners” is included in both the categories we named. In fact, actors are accepted by others, and their actions result understandable, on the basis of rules and values that are proper within a



specific industry. From this perspective, legitimacy can be defined as a judgement of the “appropriateness” of an organisation which responds to criteria of similarity within a social system (Foreman, Whetten and Mackey, 2012).

In order to maintain their legitimacy, firms need to anticipate changes in the environment as well as to protect their previous achievements (Dowling and Pfeffer, 1975). As pointed out by Suchman (1995) maintaining and obtaining legitimacy depends on the communication between the firms and their stakeholders’ groups. As firms need to inform their stakeholders about their practices.

However, institutions and regulators operating in the field might influence the opinions and assessments of stakeholders, and media or other intermediaries play a crucial role for the communication of firms’ legitimacy (Lemmers and Guth, 2015).

Typically, in the attempt to gaining and maintaining legitimacy, firms imitate the firms that are perceived as more successful, with superior legitimacy and status (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). According to this perspective, when firms constantly imitate each other, they start a process of homogenization among firms and their practices as well, which became institutionalised (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983).

This process is defined by DiMaggio and Powell (1983) “isomorphism”. This is a "constraining process that forces one unit in a population to resemble other units that face the same set of environmental conditions" (DiMaggio and Powell, p.149) . There are two types of isomorphism: competitive and institutional, as "organizations compete not just for resources and customers, but for political power and institutional legitimacy, for social as well as economic fitness" (DiMaggio and Powell, p.150).

This approach emphasises that legitimacy is crucial for the survival of the organization which need to conform to the standards of the environment to be successful in the long term. DiMaggio and Powell (1983) identified different processes of institutional isomorphic change: coercive, normative and mimetic. Although they are separated in academic research, in the real world they may overlap and occur together. The coercive process “results both from formal and informal pressures exerted on organizations by other organisations upon which they are dependent and by cultural expectations in the society within which organisations function” (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983, p. 150). Another change in isomorphic pressure is the normative which is connected with the process of professionalization. Lastly, the mimetic isomorphism occurs when the environment is characterized by uncertainty and organisations model themselves on the example of other organisations which they perceive to be more successful (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). Similarly, to this perspective, Thomas (2007) points out that organisations become legitimate by conforming to other similar organisations in the field; he also argues (Thomas, 2007) that legitimacy result from the pressure to be the same, while the pressure to be different allows the reputation of the firm to form.

## **2.3 Reputation and differentiation**

Before turning our attention to the comparison of legitimacy and reputation, here we describe the concept of reputation as result of a process of differentiation. Corporate reputation has been defined as "a collective representation of a firm's past actions and results that describe a firm's ability to deliver valued outcomes to

multiple stakeholders" (Fombrun and Van Riel, 1997, p. 10). However, many other definitions of reputation have been developed within different academic fields, nevertheless, there is little agreement on how reputation should be defined (Barnett and Pollock, 2012).

In a recent work, Fombrun (2012) reviews the different definitions of reputation in the attempt to find a common ground. He concludes that there is agreement among scholars, on the fact that a positive reputation is an intangible asset for firms and represent a competitive advantage; moreover, a common view, is that reputation needs to be defined in terms of a specific stakeholder group and a specific reference group. In this view, Jensen, Kim and Kim (2012) elaborate a conceptualisation of reputation that is attribute specific as it contains information that refer to specific characteristics of the organisation, which are valued by a specific audience. Thus the authors argue that reputation is also audience specific, as it depends on the perceptions and expectations of various audiences. Moreover, the stakeholders' perceptions are influenced by different internal or external factors which might be related to the behaviour of the firm, to changes in the environment and to the behaviours of other firms (Fombrun, 2012).

Reputation is always for something (Foreman et al, 2012). Different stakeholders groups value different attribute of the firm, therefore a certain aspect might be relevant for a particular stakeholders' group, while for others stakeholders, it might not be relevant. Consequently certain stakeholders groups might value positively a specific attribute of a firm, while another groups might value the same aspects negatively (Jensen et al, 2012). Therefore in an ideal case, the reputation of the firm is given by the result of the sum of the different reputations of the firm with the different stakeholders. Obviously such aggregate measurement of the reputation of a firm it is almost impossible to be obtained. Therefore reputation is always relative to the specific stakeholders group (Fombrun, 2012).

Reputation has been defined a multidimensional construct that serves several functions for organisations (Barnett and Pollock, 2012), for instance it works as signalling device, as it helps organisations to predict future behaviours of other organisations with which they interact and it is used as also to communicate to the stakeholders the most attractive characteristics of the firm. Therefore reputation can be seen the result of competitive process among firms, in which they compete to communicate to their stakeholders their uniqueness and attractiveness, in order to maximize their reputational standing and gain competitive advantage (Rao, 1994). Hence, reputation is important as it allows organisations in the field to identify and categorize other organisations and it is therefore the product of a process of social comparison (Foreman et al. 2012).

## **2.4 Relationship between Legitimacy and reputation**

Although reputation and legitimacy share common conceptual ground by both being the products of external stakeholders' evaluations and perceptions, they are two different constructs (Foreman, et al., 2012). King and Whetten, (2008) argue that legitimacy and reputation arise from the same accountability standards that are

shared by the organisations within the industry. As such, they indicate what are the minimum criteria that a prototypical organization should achieve in order to be member of a particular social identity and at the same time, they define what performance standards an organization should fulfil in order to be considered “ideal” within the industry (King and Whetten, 2008).

Other studies have focused on defining the differences between legitimacy and reputation, however “among all the concepts developed within the Institutionalists’ repertoire, the idea of legitimacy is the most closely associated with corporate reputation” (Carroll, 2015, p.225). In fact, especially when looking at the real world, legitimacy and reputation result closely connected and intertwined (Foreman, et al.,2012). And consequently, scholars struggle in providing a definition of these terms (Jensen, et al., 2012).

The tension that characterised the relationship of these concepts, leads to the “legitimacy paradox” as described by Lemmers and Guth (2015). This is that in order to have a positive reputation, an organisation must conform to standards of legitimacy but in order to have a strong reputation, an organization must distinguish itself and challenging standards.

Therefore legitimacy and reputation result to be overlapping and intertwined concepts, as firms need to acquire some levels of legitimacy before creating a reputation. However, the main differences between legitimacy and reputation, is that legitimacy focuses on similarity by being associated with imitation of other firms’ practices and it refers to appropriateness criteria, by being connected to adherence to shared standards. While reputation is focused on differences between firms and requires diversification, as it is based on the uniqueness of the firm (Deephouse and Carter, 2005). Moreover, legitimacy is the result of comparisons of the firm with social norms, while reputation results from the comparisons of the firms with other firms (Foreman et al, 2012).

## **2.5 Legitimacy and reputation applied to the contemporary art world**

Reputation plays an important role in all cultural industries, however it is especially relevant in the market of contemporary art as it is characterized by high levels of uncertainty (Caves, 2000). In fact, there are not specific and objective criteria that can be used to define quality of art. Moreover, in the art market goods are heterogeneous, meaning that there are not substitutes for a given artwork, as each art object is unique. For instance, it is not possible to reproduce the Mona Lisa by Da Vinci and even contemporary art objects by living artists are unique pieces, as they are not replaceable by any other work. Since art works are unique, they are also difficult to compare, therefore differences in the quality of the art objects are difficult to be found by consumers. Moreover, the product which is traded in the art market differs from the one traded in other industries, as the uncertain quality of the artwork remains, also after its consumption (Velthuis, 2011).

The value of art is difficult to determine and to predict. Thus, reputation plays an extremely important role in the art market, as it provides audiences with information that are relevant to them, in order to reduce uncertainty regarding the quality of the product (Ertug, Yogev and Grund, 2016). The art market has been defined as a market of credence goods (Singer and Lynch, 1994; Velthuis 2011) in which “The value of art

cannot be objectively and individually determined but it relies to a large extent on the credibility of experts involved in the collective evaluation processes that take place within art worlds” (Velthuis, 2011, p.37).

The idea of art world here applied is the one developed by the sociologist Howard Becker (1982), in which the art world is seen as a network of relationships among different actors that collectively contribute to the production, distribution, evaluation and consumption of art (Becker 1982). The art world relies on the judgements of experts as determinants of quality. For this reason, these experts have been defined by scholars, as “gatekeepers” (Caves, 2002, Velthuis, 2003). The term refers to someone that “make [s] a selection out of the pool of oeuvres and individual artworks that have been made throughout history”(p.37). Metaphorically the world gatekeeper recalls to someone who controls and guards the access to a gate and acts as a filter, selecting what is considered legitimate within the art world. Moreover, by making a selection out of the mass of art works produced, they generate credibility and beliefs among the members of the art world (Velthuis, 2011).

On the other hand, the “system of norms, values and definitions” in which legitimacy is created (Suchman, 1995) is also subject of change, as legitimacy is dynamic and it is constantly created and re-created through social interaction (Suchman, 1995). With regards to this, White and White (1965) described for instance how in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the shift of power from the Academy of Paris, to the art critics which became the new taste makers, determined the recognition of impressionist painters. Therefore, by expressing subjective judgements of quality on art, they influence expectations and opinions of the audience. Thus they also have an influence on the reputations of the artworks and the actors in the field (Ertug, Yogev, Lee and Hedstrom, 2015).

Experts confer “credibility” to the quality of art works and artists (Becker, 1982). They own the cultural and the symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1986) necessary to understand and evaluate art. The cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986) is built through experience of the arts, only a small elite possesses the intellect and the taste required to understand what Bourdieu defined high-brow art. This is a type of art that result difficult to understand by the non-experts and therefore it exclusive by nature. Meanwhile, the symbolic capital refers to the set of resources that these actors have accumulated in the time by carrying on their activities within the art world. In doing this, they have achieved “recognition” among their peers, cultural knowledge and reputation. These factors are required to make assessments of quality of art objects, that make the artwork credible to the audience (Bonus and Ronte, 1997) who trust the experts’ opinion.

Reputation in the art world, is a process that determines comparisons and differentiation. It also has the effect of excluding non-insiders for whom art with high reputation might results non –understandable. It arises from assessments made by different audiences that compare the work of art or the artist with similar others. As described by Becker (1982): “Reputations grow out of the way the art world assesses the relation between what an artist has done and what others doing similar work have done” (p.361).

As for other fields, also within the art world reputation is the result of comparisons of the firm, (here an artist or a gallery for instance) with similar others, while legitimacy results from comparisons of the firm with the shared standards (here the values norms and beliefs of the art world).

Bourdieu (1984) and Becker (1982) in their work discussed the concepts of legitimacy and reputation within the art world or field. In these studies, actors maintain legitimacy through knowing and acting understandably. In doing this actors, need to rely on shared values and practices that are considered “appropriate” by the other actors with whom they interact. They also emphasise the importance for actors to establish relationships with those which are considered legitimate and with a good reputation. In fact reputation and knowledge of the proper manners pass through these relationships (Becker, 1982; Bourdieu; 1984).

In conclusion, by looking at legitimacy and reputation within the art world, it results that they are overlapping and closely intertwined (Deephouse and Carter, 2005). In fact, actors in the field become legitimate through adherence to norms, beliefs and values that are shared within actors in the field. These “institutional rules” (Jyrama, 2009) are created through interaction of the actors in the field, however interaction also change these practices that are therefore subject of change over time. Reputation are developed on the basis of the same system of values, rules and beliefs. However, as quality in the art world is uncertain, reputation is plays a crucial role (Bonus and Ronte, 1997), in fact it provides information that are not directly accessible by the interested audience. The public needs to rely to the judgements of experts that posses the knowledge, the “taste” and the reputation to express judgements of quality. In this sense, “credibility” plays a fundamental role in the art market.

## 2.6 The Art Galleries

Becker (1982) sees the art world as network, where different actors engage in a system of relationships that make art possible. Art galleries are especially important as they have the role of intermediaries (Caves, 2000). Therefore they are crucial actors especially within the primary art market, which is characterised by higher levels of uncertainty. In fact, this is the market where art works are sold for the first time (Velthuis, 2011). Traditionally, being represented by a gallery is the way through which an artist become a legitimate actors in the art world (Becker, 1982). Consequently, through interaction with various actors, the gallery works to build the artist’s reputation (Becker, 1982). Thus, the gallery create legitimacy and reputation for itself and for the artists it represents, following what Velthuis (2005) defines “the art galleries’ business repertoire”. Legitimacy is provided by adherence to these rules and values that shape the art world practices. For instance, as noted by Bourdieu (1983) and confirmed by Velthuis (2005), in order to gain reputation, galleries need show other members of the art world that their primary focus is on pursuing artistic goals, that they care about art and the economic aspect of their activity is secondary. Of course, in the long term the artistic value of their activity can produce revenues and the symbolic capital is then transformed into economic capital (Bourdieu, 1993).

Reputation of the gallery is passed through the relationship the gallery establish with other actors in the field (Becker, 1982). As it is important for the artist's reputation to be represented by a gallery with a good reputation, the same is for the art gallery, that build its reputation on the quality of the artists and the art, it represents. In fact, the reputation of the gallery depend on the one of its artists and vice versa. This because reputation is passed through affiliation (Becker, 1982). Artists become legitimate actors, through their cooperation with a legitimate gallery that traditionally provides its artists with the "humdrum inputs" (Caves, 2000). These inputs refer to all the "commercial" activities related to the creation, promotion and distribution of the artists' work. In fact traditionally, artists focus on the creative process and for different reasons, they cannot carry these activities by themselves (Velthuis, 2011; Caves 2000).

Bourdieu (1993) described the legitimising process as a process of "consecration" that involves a system of relationships between different actors and institutions (such museums and established dealers) which conserve the symbolic capital and exercise cultural authority in the field. Bourdieu (1984) sees the art field as dominated by a hierarchical structure whereby each player covers a position within the field. The hierarchy of relations is based on the level of legitimizing authority that the actor posses. The system generates a circle where hierarchy is dynamic, and it "expresses the structure of objective relations of symbolic force between the producers of symbolic goods who produce for either a restricted or unrestricted public and are consequently consecrated by differentially legitimized and legitimizing institutions" (Bourdieu, 1993, p.121). Legitimacy is thus conferred by actors that covers higher positions in the hierarchy. A certain position in the hierarchy and thus the power of being a legitimising actor, is provided by knowledge and adherence of values and rules of the field (symbolic capital). Moreover this power, is determine by the quality of the output produced by this actor and by the nature of its audience (restricted or unrestricted).

Art galleries operate both in the primary and secondary market and both in the high end and low end of the market. In addition they might have a role on different scales of the market, at the local, regional or international level (Shubik, 2003). However, normally dealers are small scale enterprises which employ few people and who are managed by the director. There are few exceptions to this, they are the so called "mega galleries" (Winkelman, 2015) who are located in the main centres of the global art market as London and New York and in some cases branch out to other cities to reach new buyers. They can employ larger numbers of employees and they make tens of millions of dollars every year (Velthuis, 2011). As pointed out by Velthuis (2011) the art dealers' market is relatively competitive, the barriers to enter the market are low and only 50% of the galleries survive after the first five years.

There are differences between the way in which dealers operate in the primary and secondary market. In the secondary market dealers re-sale artworks and keep a commission (Velthuis, 2011). On the primary market dealers fulfil different functions. They create a market for the artists they represent by inviting collectors to see the artworks, they promote the artists among collectors and other members of the art world by organising exhibitions and they cooperate with other actors and institutions as art critics, curators, other

dealers as well as museums. Determining whether or not the artist will be successful is difficult to predict and often only few artists that the gallery represents manage to be successful. Normally the profit that the artist made is reinvested in support to the career of other artists.

There are different types of dealers, Velthuis (2005) separates them between the “avant-garde” and the “commercial” enterprises. He structured this separation on the basis of Bourdieu’s (1993) description of the art field as divided between two circuits following “two aesthetics”: the “bourgeois art” and “intellectual art” or “traditional” and “avant-garde art”. They are represented by two social classes: those with cultural power but less economic wealth are affiliated with the avant-garde circuit, while those with economic power but less cultural wealth are affiliated with the traditional circuits” (Velthuis, 2005, p.45).

Traditionally a distinction in the art market is made between low brow and high brow art (Bourdieu,1993) whereby the lowbrow art responds to the demand of the wider public taste, it is easy understandable and does not require specific knowledge from the public to be consumed; while the highbrow art is dedicated to a small public who possess the cultural capital to appreciate its features.

The same opposition is reflected in the art’s production between “the production based on the denial of the economy and of profit which ignores or challenges the expectation of the established audience and serves no other demand than the one it itself produces, but in the long term, and a production which secures success and the corresponding profits by adjusting to a pre-existing demand”(Bourdieu, 1993, p.82). He continued describing the interconnection between these two logics and their representation within the market : “the opposition between genuine art and commercial art correspond to the opposition between ordinary entrepreneurs seeking economic profit and cultural entrepreneurs struggling to accumulate specifically cultural capital, albeit at the cost of temporarily renouncing economic profit” (Bourdieu, 1993,p.82-83). Likewise, as described by Velthuis (2012) the commercial motivation is reflected in the type of work artists make :“easily recognizable and digestible, iconic and provocative images, often borrowed from popular culture” (Velthuis, 2012, p.19).

Becker (1982) also emphasised the connection between the quality of the art and the art world that produced that art, and in his view the relationships within a network and the knowledge of the shared conventions and principles within the art world are the main factors that allow to make a distinction between professionals actors (i.e. legitimate galleries operating within the network) and those who are considered not legitimate or not yet legitimate, as in the case of artists that he defined “mavericks, folk and naive artists” (Becker, 1982).

Another aspect that helps to categorise galleries within the market, is their “status”. Galleries are classified as established and not established galleries. Increasingly, as suggested by Velthuis (2013) established galleries are considered those who participate in International Art Fairs. In fact, attending international art fairs is expensive for art galleries, as it requires significant efforts from their side, both in terms of money and time. Therefore not every gallery can afford participation to international art fairs, especially if these events are geographically distant from where the gallery is located, as transportation cost might be considerable.

Moreover, since certain art fairs adopt a selection process that selects the exhibitors, admission to these events is perceived as a marker of quality for the participating galleries (Morel, 2014).

The terms dealers and art galleries are here interchangeable however some studies (Velthuis, 2005) have highlighted the different connotations of these terms, as dealers might refer mainly to those that focus on the business side of the profession, buying and selling art, while art gallery or gallery owner, entail, the function of the gallery as exhibition space and as institution within the art world, that select and show artists and promote their work. The decision of dealers to represent a specific artist is influenced by different factors, often it is based on the advice of experts and members of the art world whose judgment the dealers trust (Velthuis, 2011). In this view, again the role played by trust and credibility of the experts, is essential for determining the decision making of all players in the art world, influencing the interaction of people in the whole network. Thus, influencing legitimacy and reputation that are both the results of interaction among actors in the field.

As dealers for their success depend on networks composed by collectors, museums and other institutions, knowledge and trust tend to be the most valuable assets that determine the success of the dealers within the field (Shubik, 2003). Hence, establishing and nurturing personal contacts are essential for dealers in conducting their business. In this sense, participation in the field's activities and interaction with the various actors is essential for the business of art galleries, which continuously need to meet collectors, gather information about the market, the competition and the new trends. As such, social events as opening parties and dinners with collectors, the "parties" described by Currid (2007), are extremely important for the business of the dealers. Dealers have to promote their artists to art critics, curators, museums and other actors and institutions. However, it is broadly acknowledged that people which are not part of the art world, often feel a barrier to enter the gallery space, therefore normally the gallery space is visited by only very few visitors per day. Thus, art fairs become increasingly relevant for art dealers as means to reach their audiences and to expand and maintain their relationships with the various stakeholders.

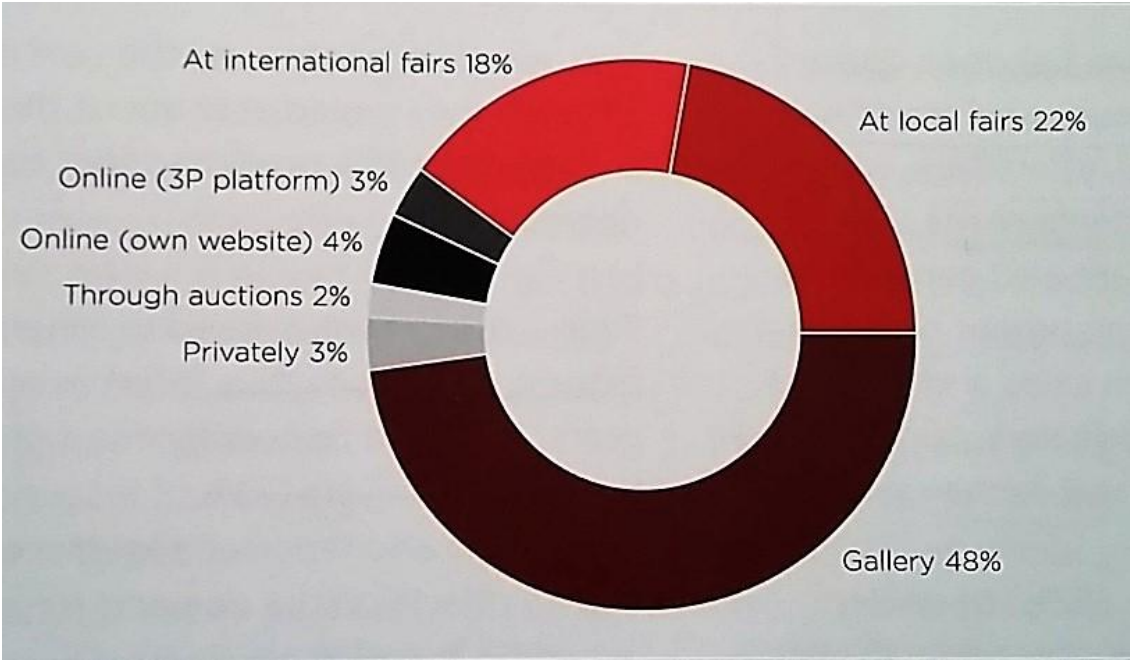
## **2.7 Art fairs**

Art Fairs are commercial exhibitions where art is displayed and for sale. They are market places which enable supply and demand to meet in a specific space and moment in time.

These events are a major part of the dealers business (see fig 1). As reported by Mc Andrew (2016) they represent a stable share of 40 % of their sales.



**Figure 1. Share of Dealers Share by Channel 2015**

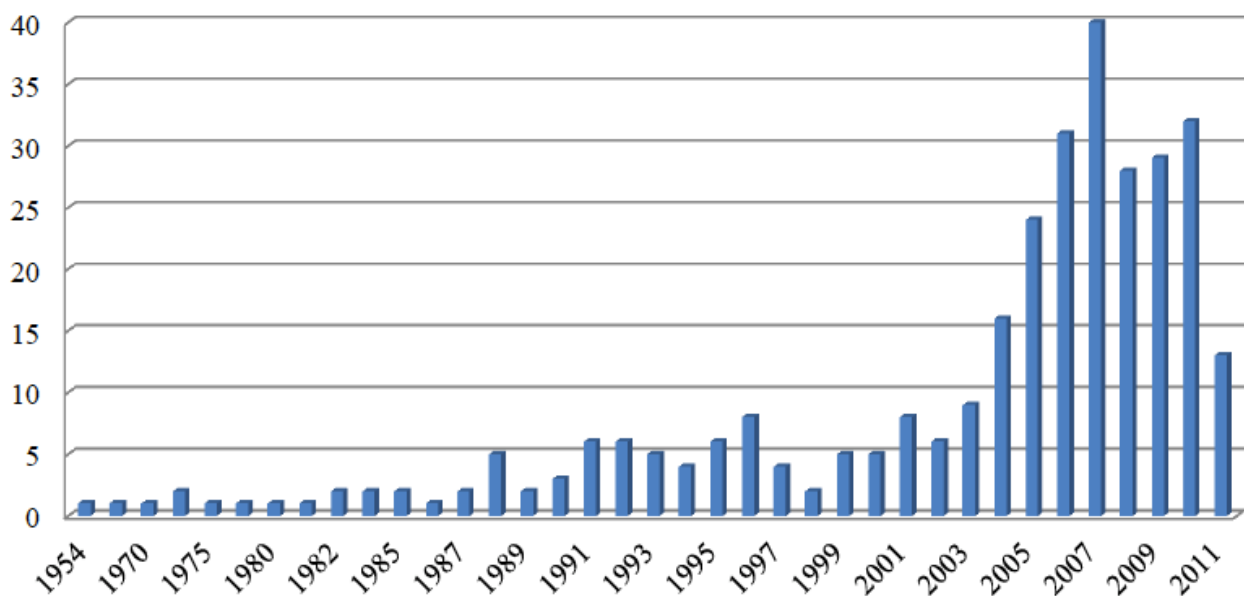


Source: Mc Andrew (2016)

Art fairs together with galleries and auction houses, play an important role in the valuation of art (Baia Curioni, 2012; Morgner, 2014; Thompson, 2011). Moreover, as the role of auction houses increased in the last years, expanding in the primary market as well, recent studies have suggested that art fairs might represent a means for art galleries to face the increased competition with auction houses in the market (Thompson, 2011).

The number of art fairs has increased dramatically in the last 30 years (Baia Curioni, 2012; Morgner, 2014a) While in 1970 there were only 3 main events (Basel, Art Actuel in Brussel and Kunstmarkt in Koln), in 2005 the number increased to 68, and in 2011 there were 189 art fairs world-wide (see Fig. 2). As result the market of art fairs became segmented with the establishment of niches and the emergence of art fairs dedicated to specific art forms, such as photography, or to artists categories as emerging, established or young artists.

**Figure 2. Art Foundations, 1954-2011**



*Source: (Morgner 2014a)*

However, beside the sales, art fairs are crucial for art galleries as development platforms for their business, as they can prepare the ground for future partnerships and sales, by nurturing their existing network, establishing new connections with collectors, other dealers, and curators, allowing opportunities for knowledge exchange (Mc Andrew, 2016).

### 2.7.1 The contemporary art fairs

The art market has experienced several changes in the last decade and the proliferation and the increased power of art fairs is one of them (Baia Curioni, 2012). The curator Pablo Barragàn invented a new term and describes this phenomenon “artfairisation” (Barragàn, 2008).

The development of the contemporary art fair has been recalled to *Kunstmarkt Köln* that was founded in 1967 and that can be considered the prototype of today’s contemporary art fairs (Morgner, 2014). *Kunstmarkt*, renamed Art Cologne, was intended to bring attention to German galleries exhibiting contemporary art and to reconnect West Germany with the international art world (Morel, 2014). However, the selection criteria for the admission to the fair were criticized by those galleries which were excluded and this led to the foundation of Art Basel which in fact opened in 1974 as direct response to Art Cologne (Morgner, 2014).

On this path, in 1970, Arte Fiera in Bologna and FIAC in Paris were reproducing the same structure, and other events soon emerged as ARCO Madrid and Art Brussels in 1982, The Armory Show in New York in 1998 and Frieze London in 2003 (Morgner, 2014; Morel 2014). Satellite fairs emerged around those events which became more influential in the market, and at the same time, some fairs create their profile by focusing on niche markets, specialising on specific art forms as photography or drawings (Morgner, 2014a). Emerging countries also started to promote their own fairs, such as Art Dubai, India Art Fair and Contemporary Istanbul, by adopting and reproducing the formats of western art fairs. At the same time, leading contemporary art fairs have branched out in different countries to reach new markets, examples of this are Art Basel Hong Kong and Art Basel Miami.

Today only few art fairs are considered capable of influencing the future of the exhibited artworks, they are Art Basel, the European Fine Art Foundation (TEFAF) and Frieze London (Thompson, 2011). These fairs have attracted the attention of researchers (Morel, 2014; Jyrama and Morel, 2009; Baia Curioni, 2015; Morgner, 2014, Yogev, 2010). However, other fairs are renowned for attracting high numbers of visitors as in the case of the Guangzhou International Art Fair in China and ARCO in Madrid, with respectively 200.000 and 160.000 visitors (Baia Curioni, 2012).

The market of fairs can be divided in three groups positioned in a hierarchical system (Thompson, 2011) where the influential group that we mentioned earlier is on the high end of the market. Below them there are those fairs that attract the mainstream dealers and where the prices do not set records. Finally it is possible to identify a third group which represents the lower end of the market. The hierarchical position within the market is therefore determined by differences in the quality of the artworks which are traded, the volume of

sales and the number, the status and the nationality of the attendees. In this system, some fairs are able to position themselves on the high-end of the market exhibiting the most powerful galleries at the global level, while others operate on a smaller international scale connecting networks of galleries from different countries and at different stage of their career. Increasingly, there are emerging fairs that chose cover a niche market by focusing on a particular art form, for instance Loop in Barcelona is specialised on video art. Finally, there are less reputable fairs, satellite fairs, or events with a strong local focus that often result not attractive for “serious” galleries.

Baia Curioni (2012) questioned the quality, opposed to the quantity of the increased numbers of art fairs in the last few years suggesting that their proliferation will eventually contribute to erode the traditional boundaries between lowbrow and highbrow art. On the other hand, Morgner (2014a) described how fairs build a reputation within the market by developing their own profile which is provided by the characteristic of the participating galleries that need to be therefore similar one another, in order to make clear to participants and collectors as well, what the fair is about. At the same time galleries have to be able distinguish themselves from the rest of the participants, as variety is needed to make the fair attractive and successful for all the stakeholders (Morgner, 2014a).

One of the recent development of the contemporary art fair sees they transformation from “markets” to places “where the consumption (not necessary the acquisition) of contemporary art is package as a social and cultural experience” (Lind and Velthuis, 2012). The public of the contemporary art fair became therefore increasingly heterogeneous, as the fair attract not only collectors and art galleries that exhibit at the fair, but also curators, museum professionals, critics, artists, student from the academies and all art lovers.

This led to increased challenges for art fairs’ organisers that need to meet the expectations and needs of a diversified audience. Moreover, from the galleries perspective, attending art fairs became increasingly important. As globalisation, the increased role of online sales and auction houses in the market, have changed the art world (Baia Curioni, 2012) and its practices (Jyrama, 2009), art galleries seek out opportunities for networking, visibility and international exposure at art fairs (Yogev, 2010). Participation to these events became a means for them to gain social and cognitive legitimacy within the art world (Jyrama and Morel, 2009) that “materialises” itself at the fair (Morel, 2014). While acceptance in reputable fairs is important for galleries to gain legitimacy, not being admitted might have a negative influence on their image and affect their reputation (Jyrama and Morel, 2009). In this view, for participating art galleries fairs represent an unique opportunity for exposure and for promoting their artist. Here we want to understand through which mechanisms art fairs allow art galleries to maintain legitimacy and to build their reputation within the art world that converges at the fairs.

### **2.7.2 Studies on fairs and trade shows in other industries**

Contributions on the research on fairs are provided by different academic fields, which entail marketing, economic geography, sociology, management and cultural economics.

### 2.7.3 Fairs as Knowledge Platforms : Temporary or Cyclical clusters

Although fairs have remained connected with the traditional trade function (Li, 2014) researchers have shown that their role has shifted from being just places for the exchange of commodities to platforms where interactions take place and relationships form (Rosson and Seringhaus, 1995). Rosson and Seringhaus (1995) shown how the trade function become less important, while the role of the social activities and interaction increased. This approach finds justification in the temporary cluster perspective whereby fairs fulfil different roles.

While marketing authors consider these events mainly as promotional tools, focusing on the visitor's or exhibitor's point of view, their perceptions and behaviours, in order to highlight the commercial advantages derived from their participation (Rosson and Seringhaus, 1995; Gopalakrishna, Roster and Sridhar, 2010), for economic geographers the relevance of the fairs is related to the traditional regional clusters. Bathelt and Cohendet (2014) shown that the function of the fair has experienced a shift. While they have initially been established to enabling commercial transactions, fairs became events where products are presented and exhibited to the public.

Maskell, Bathelt and Malmberg (2006) have defined the fair as a "temporary cluster". In this sense, fairs are not just markets where commodities are exchange but they are places for temporary organized geographical proximity, for leaning, information exchange, initiate new relations and maintain the existing ones with distant actors. As such, they allow the connection of distant actors in a specific place within a specific time frame, which normally is few days, by enabling the exchange of knowledge and different and geographically distant pools of knowledge (Bathelt and Cohendet, 2014). In this view, international fairs connect different industries and enable interactions between exhibitors and visitors from different part of the world.

According to Bathelt and Shouldt (2008) trade fairs are important for the industries because of the rich ecology of information and knowledge flows that these events are capable to produce. The authors described how by bringing together people from specific communities of practice fairs allow processes of learning to take place and support interaction and process of exchange and knowledge creation. This interaction forms what has been defined a "global buzz" (Bathlet and Shouldt, 2010; Maskell et al. 2006). Bathlet and Shouldt (2010) identify five components of the global buzz phenomenon at international trade fairs, such as the global co-presence, face to face interaction, observation, focused communities and multiplex meetings and relationships. In this view, the physical presence and the face to face communication taking place at fairs, are the key elements that allow participants to gather information regarding the competition and the new trends of the market.

The "buzz" fulfils the function of developing shared values, norms and conventions, within the industry, thus facilitating process of decision regarding for instance, acquisitions and partnerships. Again, the fair enables opportunities of interaction to take place for its capability of attracting the different players of the market. Maskell, et al. (2006) explained that these interactions occur through vertical and horizontal synergies, the

former taking place between exhibitors and buyers while the horizontal between exhibitors and other firms in the industry such as competitors. Likewise, vertical interactions might be intended also as the ones taking place between firms occupying different positions within the hierarchy of the field.

Finally, by focusing on the learning processes, Power and Jansson (2008) argued that fairs should not be seen as isolated events but they are phenomena which are interconnected one another in a global circuit. Hence, they describe these events as “cyclical clusters” arguing that knowledge processes in temporary clusters depend on long term relations which participants build through repeated attendance to these events. For this reason in order to benefit from attending the fairs, participants are compelled to regularly participate in these events which are therefore defined as a cyclical phenomenon, stressing the necessity for exhibitors to engage with a repeated attendance in a global circuit. This approach explains how repeated attendance is a ‘must’ for exhibitors as it enables knowledge and social exchange processes to take place.

#### **2.7.4 Art Fairs as Networks**

Art fairs, they are not only places for art galleries and collectors to meet, rather they allow encounters for museum directors, curators and journalists that all converge to these events and collectively contribute to the creation of an information ecology. Enwistle and Rocamora (2006) by focusing on the London fashion week, described how participating in this event is a way for every actor to fulfil a different function. For instance, while for journalists the London fashion week represents “news”, for buyers it is a way to understand the designers’ vision (p. 742).

By focusing on knowledge processes, other studies investigate the capabilities of international fairs in building relationships between distant actors serving as a springboard for the establishment of “global pipelines” (Maskell et al, 2006, Bathelt and Shouldt, 2008). These trans-local linkages enable the development of networks between spatially distant actors. Morgner (2014a) by applying the concept of art field to the art fairs phenomenon, highlighted the role of the fair as a network which becomes the core factor for its global success. In this view, art fairs function as systems of relationships and interaction among art galleries and other actors which operate by being located in different parts of the world they can still conduct their business on a global or international scale, by sharing, creating and dismantling their networks through participation in art fairs. Thus art fairs and the art fair system can be seen as the art worlds of Becker (1982), thus networks that overlap and engage in different circuits on different scales.

Moreover, contrary to the arguments based on the local buzz and global pipelines model (Bathelt et al. 2004), the study conducted by Rinallo and Golfetto (2011) has shown how processes of exchange of knowledge at trade shows do not always take place at global level, rather these processes occur and are constructed at different scale levels, “from the merely local to the truly global” (Rinallo and Golfetto, 2011). The role of fairs’ organisers is relevant in this terms, as they have the power to shape these processes by selecting exhibitors and by organizing the layouts of the show, these practices alter the micro-geographies of and the interactions at the show (Rinallo and Golfetto, 2011; Power and Jansson, 2008).

The results are in line with the findings of other studies focused on investigating the dynamics of the global art market. In fact, while contemporary art seems to be traded in a global market where interactions between distant actors take place at international events as fairs or biennales, empirical studies have shown that the markets are still operating on a local scale ( Velthuis and Baia Curioni, 2015). One of the reason is that selling art still depends on face to face interactions and apart from the top end of the market, the rest of the art world is composed by people who cannot afford the expenses involved in exhibiting or attending the major art fairs such as Art Basel.

Therefore although the infrastructures of the western contemporary art market have been exported all over the world also in those emerging countries as China or India where contemporary art constitute a relatively new market, the flows of art traded in those markets are not globalized. This is that for instance, collectors from Brazil collect art from Brazilian artists, they buy from local galleries which attend local fairs. With respect to this, by focusing on the India Art Fair, Vermeylen (2015) shown how despite the efforts of the fair organisers in promoting the international nature of their fair, in the attempt to attract collectors and galleries from abroad, the event is characterized by a local identity which is reflected by the predominance of local art.

### **2.7.5 Art Fairs as Field Configuring Events**

The works by the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu and Howard Becker on art field and art market are helpful to make clarification on the complicated phenomena of art fairs, which result to be much more than market places. In fact not only sales are on stake, but also reputation, knowledge and status are important implications for the galleries that participate in what can be seen now places that are extremely important as they allow social interaction.

Entwistle and Rocamora (2006) applied the concept of art field theorized by Bourdieu to the London Fashion week. By observing the dynamics of what represent the most important gathering for the fashion industry, Entwistle and Rocamora (2006) shown how this event is capable of reproducing the fashion world and reflecting its key actors, hierarchies, boundaries and relations. For instance, the researchers described how the sitting plan at the catwalk show reflects the power relations of the fashion field and how the different designs and colours of the tickets are used to communicate other participants at the fair, the status or position of the holder within the fashion world (Entwistle and Rocamora, 2006, p. 744)

Similarly, the study conduct by Power and Jansson (2008) on furniture fairs, pointed out that the fair recreates a micro-cosmos of a specialized industry. In this respect, Lampel and Meyer (2008) defined fairs and other events as exhibitions and conferences as “field configuring events”. The authors described fairs as temporary social organizations “in which networks are constructed, business cards are exchange, reputations are advanced, deals are struck, news is shared, accomplishments are recognized, standards are set and dominant design are selected” (p.1026). These events “provide unstructured opportunities for face-to face

social interaction” while including “ceremonial and dramaturgical activities” they facilitate “occasions for information exchange and collective sense making” enabling “to generate social and reputational resources that can be deployed elsewhere and for other purposes” (p.1027).

Hence, several studies have observed that at fairs, practices and values of the field are reproduced and revealed by indicators. For instance, the physical distribution of the actors in the space of the fair might reveal their status position in the field (Entwistle and Rocamora, 2006; Skov, 2006), other practices or rituals as described by Velthuis (2005) the “gallery repertoire” , are reproduced and their understanding is relevant to explore the role and the dynamics and the system of relations that occur at fairs as well as within the art world.

On this path, Morel (2014) described the art fair as a “metaphor of the art world”, observing that by studying the plans of the major art fairs “leading galleries are allocated the bigger stands [...] usually at the intersection of major alleys [...] whereas new comers are put at further ends of the fair” (p.353). The study by Morel (2014) described the booth of the gallery as a projection of the gallery space revealing the force that DiMaggio and Powell (1983) have defined as “isomorphism”. Likewise, Velthuis (2005) describes how the practices that are used by dealers within the gallery’ space are reproduced at the fair, where for instance there is a separation between the space where the business is made and where the aesthetic values of the artwork are discussed.

In this view, understanding the role of organisers in shaping interaction and knowledge exchange at the fair, results necessary, as in doing this they confer legitimacy and influence the reputation of the exhibitors. With respect to this, by focusing on European trade shows, Rinallo and Golfetto (2011) defined four types of practices adopted by fair organisers to shape the learning and interaction at these events. “By marking the boundaries of temporary clusters, improving the release and acquisition of knowledge, hindering undesired knowledge spillovers, and investing in the development of new knowledge, organizers bring to life knowledge – rich spaces that are currently attended for learning purposes, rather than for economic exchange” (Rinallo and Golfetto, 2011, p.455).

## **2.8 Conclusion**

The theoretical framework to the study drawn from different fields to provide the basis for this research that investigates the relationship between legitimacy and reputation and to see how these concepts apply to the art world. We turn our attention to the role of the contemporary art fairs as platforms for interaction and networking to contextualise the research and to highlight their symbolic and social functions for the participating art galleries.





### **3. Methodology**

The following chapter connects theory with practice, the aim is to justify the adoption of the qualitative research and to describe the methods which have been applied for the actualization of the study.

The first section explains the research design and the strategy, while the second part illustrates the tools through which this study has been conducted including the procedures involved in the data sampling and the data analysis described in the third section. Finally the limitations of the qualitative research are discussed.

#### **3.1 Research strategy and research design**

The study is concerned with the relationship between art fairs and art galleries and specifically with the practices through which art fairs serve as means for participating galleries for creating their legitimacy and reputation within the contemporary art world.

Based on this interest a qualitative approach has been adopted with the aim to comprehend and understand the studied phenomenon, as most of the research conducted on the art world has used a qualitative approach, mainly due to the art world's lack of transparency (Velthuis, 2005). This type of research entails a series of advantages that best fit with the purpose of the research and that here below are illustrated.

The research question of the research emerged from the researcher's experience in the art world specifically with art dealers and artists and their interaction with international exhibitions. As explained by Creswell (2007) the researcher's worldview is an important factor to take into consideration when starting the research, it might benefit the research process allowing the establishment of closeness and intimacy with the respondents and contextualization of the data, however, it might also be a source of potential bias when the researcher is too involved within the studied group and the objectivity of the researcher might get lost.

The qualitative research entails an inductive approach whereby the theory is generated through data collection and analysis, the process is in line with the purpose of this study which aims to provide theoretical understanding of particular events through the eyes of their participants. As illustrated in the table (1.0) the research question emerged throughout the research process. The information gathered from conversations with dealers and artists especially within the context of art fairs, has allowed the formulation of categories subsequently used as guidelines for the data collection and for the process of data analysis.

**Table 1. Research development**

Review of the literature on trade fairs and art fairs
Generalization of theory from the literature and from the past
Using data to build categories
Asking open ended questions to participants and takes field notes at art fairs
Researcher gather information through interviews and observations

*Source: own elaboration*

Hence, the need to understand theoretically particular events requires the adoption of the inductive approach to the research (Bryman, 2012).

Another advantage of the qualitative research is give by the interpretivist approach, whereby researchers assume that there is no absolute truth when dealing with a social phenomenon, but many possible accounts of social reality exist and social phenomena are viewed as the result of the interaction between individuals, rather than a separated phenomenon which can be studied as isolated from its context (Bryman, 2012). Indeed, for the actualization of the study there was the need to gather in depth information and to provide context to the data, therefore a qualitative research, by focusing on micro –scale features of social reality (Bryman, 2012) resulted appropriate.

As the focus of this research is to understand art fairs and the meaning that art galleries attribute to them, it is not possible to investigate this topic, without adopting a strategy that allows the researcher to gather in depth information about the particular phenomenon and the participants' worldviews. Indeed the qualitative approach, has been preferred, since it enables the understanding of the world from the point of view of its participants (Bryman, 2012; Creswell, 2007). Art dealers have to deal with a system of relationships and shared values that characterised the art world within which they operate. In order to understand their connection with the art fairs, the reason why they attend these events, as well as the meanings they attribute to them, it is therefore necessary to conduct a qualitative research. As the qualitative research provides opportunities to gain access to people worldviews (Creswell, 2007) it provides significant advantages when the research is focused on gathering in depth knowledge regarding a social phenomenon.

Moreover, the qualitative research provides a significant degree of flexibility by allowing the researcher to adjust the research questions according to the emerging of the data. This explains why the direction of the research might change while research is underway (Bryman, 2012), therefore flexibility represents an important advantage provided by the adoption of the qualitative approach, entailing the data collection and sampling as well. In addition, also the interviewing in qualitative research may benefits from a certain

degree of flexibility, for instance, the questions to be asked to the respondents may change in the process of data collection together with the sample criteria adopted, according to the emerging data.

In conclusion, the qualitative approach meets the purpose of this research as it allow the contextualization of a phenomenon and its relation with a particular social world. The capability of providing details, describing and explaining the social reality, is also an important feature proper of the qualitative research which emphasizes the relevance of the contextual understanding of the social behaviour (Bryman, 2012, p. 399 ). As explained by Bryman (2012) the emphasis on context in the qualitative research goes back to classic studies in social anthropology , which often demonstrated how particular practice made little sense unless we understand the belief system of that society. Likewise, the behaviours, the meanings and the practices adopted by art dealers and fairs’ organisers are hereby studied in their relation with art fairs as social platforms. The objectives of this study is to provide an answer to the question:

**How is participation to contemporary art fairs a means for commercial art galleries to maintain their legitimacy and at the same time to build their reputation?**

Sub-questions are:

- Why do art galleries attend art fairs?
- How do art galleries select particular fairs?
- Why do they exhibit a particular presentation to a given art fair?
- What practices and values are considered legitimate by art galleries?
- How do art galleries develop their reputation?
- How does the fair select its participants?
- What role is the role of the fair’s organisers in influencing interaction at the fair?

**Table 2: The main objectives of this study**

Objective 1: to explore the relation between legitimacy, reputation and art fairs attendance
Objective 2: to investigate the role of art fairs as knowledge exchange and learning platforms
Objective 3: to understand the role of art fairs as gatekeepers within the art world

*Source: own elaboration*

### 3.1.2 Data sampling

For answering the questions the researcher attended several art fairs and talked with a dealers, artists, independent and institutional curators and fair organisers operating within the contemporary art world, in the Netherlands and Belgium.

After this initial phase whereby information gathered from informal talks and non academic publications (as newspapers and specialised online platforms) was collected, the fair *Art Rotterdam* has been identified as suitable setting for conducting the research. The selection is justified by the fact that the fair is widely recognised by most sources, the most important fair in The Netherlands for contemporary art with a strong focus on young art. By looking at the development of the fair that this year organised its 17<sup>th</sup> edition, it is interesting to see that the fair has grown with respect to the number of its participants and the number and type of activities organised which have been in part allowed by the renting of the new venue in Ven Nelle Factory.

The fair is considered to be the most important appointment for contemporary arts in the Netherlands, with a focus on young art. It is therefore suitable for the study because it is an example of a contemporary art fair which serves as mean for art galleries from a specific area to create their legitimacy and build their reputation within the art world in which they operate. In addition, the location and the period in which the fair took place were also relevant aspects that made Art Rotterdam eligible as suitable setting for the research which has to suit the schedule of the master thesis. The sampling was conducted through 3 separate stages taking place before, during and after the art fair respectively.

#### **Phase 1 : Before the fair**

Before attending the fair the director of *Art Rotterdam* was contacted with an interview request by email. That was important to secure accessibility to the fair as well as to relevant information regarding the event and the organisation. The Director made available for the researcher a V.I.P pass through which it was possible to have free access to the fair.

After that it was possible to create the sample of galleries to be interview after the fair. The selection was made from the list of galleries participating in the 2016 year edition using data from the press releases of the last 3 past editions of the fair, which were available online. For this purpose the following criteria were applied:

1-Galleries participating at least for 3 editions

By comparing the 2016 list of galleries as starting point it was possible to identified those galleries which participated in the fair at least from the 2014 continuously.

This requirement was needed in order to investigate the knowledge exchange and learning process that is activated by repeated attendance at the fair.

## 2-Galleries operating in the primary market

This was important in order to form an homogeneous group of galleries, although Art Rotterdam mainly hosts galleries dealing in the primary market there are also some few galleries operating within the secondary market, therefore those galleries were excluded from the sample.

## 3-Focus on the Galleries' owners

Art galleries are founded by individuals with previous experience in the art world, it has been demonstrated how their name is strongly connected with the name of their gallery, therefore they better know the trajectory of the gallery and can provide the study with useful information regarding the gallery and art fairs attendance.

## 5-Galleries located in the Netherlands and Belgium

Since visiting the space of the gallery was an important part of the research, this criteria was imposed by limited resources available. Moreover, the final sample was composed mainly by Dutch galleries.

### **Phase 2: At the fair**

During the fair it was possible to visit the booth of the galleries included in the list, to collect pictures and field notes and to take initial contact with those interested in participating in the research. The dealers were approached in those rare occasions when they were less occupied with their business and more willing to talk. For this reason it was useful to have printed on paper sheets a summary stating the objectives of the research that the dealers could keep. The information sheets included the contacts of the researcher and all information that the respondents would have need in order to have a clear idea about the research focus and the identity of the researcher.

From the initial sample approximately 50 % of the respondents were asked regarding their availability to take part in the research after and outside the fair. This decision was motivated by the fact that during the fair dealers were normally focused on conducting their business and they are therefore less open to in-depth conversations with visitors. In fact, it was not possible to speak with all the galleries included in the initial sample due to time constraints and the fact that some gallery owners were not always available for that.

### **Phase 3: After the fair**

After the fair, those gallery owners who accepted to contribute to the research have been contacted through an interview request by email.

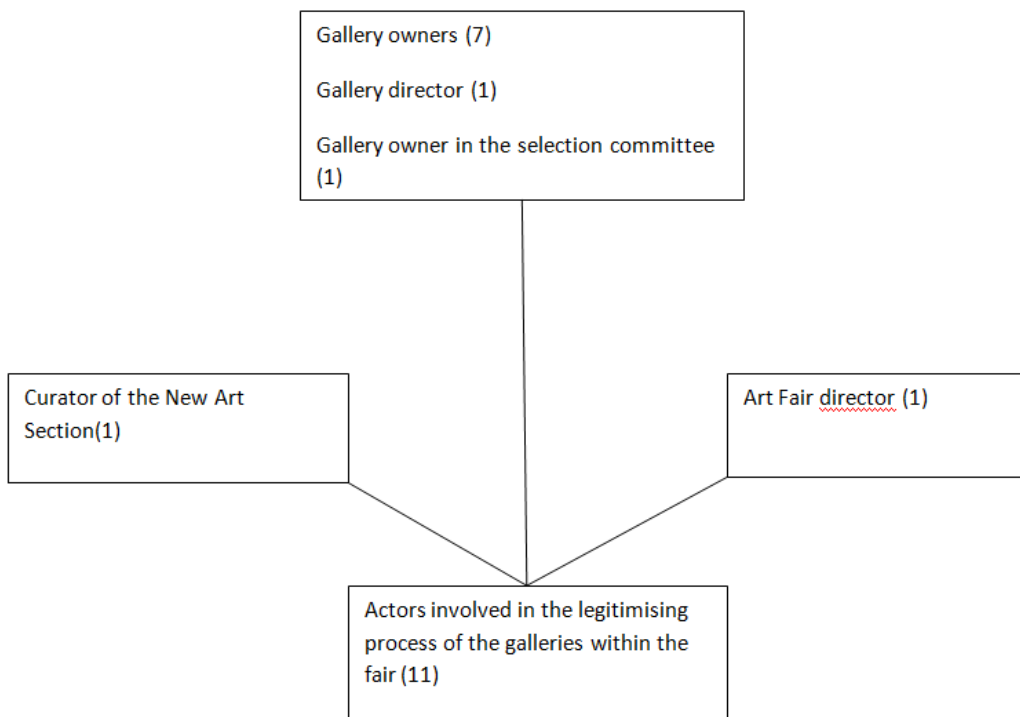
## 6-Galleries that accepted to take part in the research

Some galleries initially accepted to be interviewed but after being contacted via email they did not react with a positive feedback or did not react at all. Often the reason why some gallery owners could not take part in

the research is that they were busy with the preparations of other fairs such as Art Brussels, TEFAF, Art Cologne and Independent. The final sample (n=11) consists of 9 gallery owners, the director of Art Rotterdam and the curator of the New art section which is the part of the Fair entirely dedicated to young galleries and more experimental projects (the number of interviews are 9 in total including the director of the fair and the curator, but the number of the gallery owners interviews are 9, one interviews took place with 2 gallery owners together and another one with the gallery owner and the gallery director).

The curator was included with the focus on gathering information about the selection process which for the main art section is conducted by art dealers. For the same reason one art dealer seating in the selection committee has been also included in the sample.

**Figure 3: Final Sample**



*Source: Own elaboration.*

### 3.2.1 Data collection

Data was collected between February and April 2016 whereby 9 Face-to-Face interviews took place with: 7 gallery owners among which, one was also member of the selection committee of the fair Art Rotterdam and another one involved the gallery owner and the gallery director; another interview took place with the curator of a section of the Fair and another one with the Director of Art Rotterdam.

The interviews were conducted in the gallery spaces or in the office of the respondents in the case of the curator and the fair director. All the galleries are located in The Netherlands in the cities of Amsterdam, Rotterdam and The Hague, with the exception of one gallery which is located in Antwerp, Belgium. In this occasion, the interview took place in a cafeteria, due to the non usability of the particular gallery space at the time of the interview and also due the time constraints from the side of the gallery owner.

The importance of visiting the gallery space is that it allowed the researcher to learn about the gallery trajectory and its focus, moreover it enabled the field observation in the gallery, useful for making comparisons with the arrangements found in the respective booth at the fair.

The information collected through the interviews was enriched by data derived from participant observation in site whereby field notes were taken as well as images, both during the art fair and the visit to the art galleries. The use of different methods increases data validity and it is also a tool to avoid misunderstanding from the side of the researcher (Bryman, 2012). Data was furthermore informed by informal talks with artists curators and dealers in the course of several occasions such as art fairs and exhibition openings, when the informal nature of the settings did not allow these conversations to be recorded, in fact people felt more comfortable to discuss their opinion freely in a more informal without the use of the recorder.

A significant advantage of conducting face to face interviews is the possibility of establish a comfort atmosphere for the conversation to take place. This method enabled the researcher to have access to the reality of the respondents who had the time to provide their answers while taking small breaks to refresh the conversation by for instance talking about their exhibition space and the works which were hung on the gallery's walls. With respect to this, having previous experience with the world of art galleries was useful to start the conversation and to contextualise information.

The interviews took between 45 to 60 minute and were led in English. Two interviews were a group interview, one with two dealers both owners of the gallery and the second one with a gallery owner supported by the director of the gallery.

The interview were guided by semi-structured and open ended questions, the in-depth interviews have the advantage of providing detailed information about the respondents' thoughts regarding the creation of legitimacy and reputation within the art world and the relevant role that art fairs play in providing galleries with the right platform for fulfilling that need. In this way the interviews were useful to examine the reality from the different perspectives of its participants (Bryman, 2012; Creswell, 2007). Indeed, the different point



of view of the dealers, the organiser of the fair as well as of those who take care of the selection process, such as the selection committee and the curator, were included. Moreover the method allowed to understand what are the qualities that these actors value as important for the galleries to have in order to create their legitimacy and to build their reputation within the art world.

An interview guideline was developed for each group of respondents, namely art dealers (including one gallery director), the art fair director, the curator and the dealer who is part of the selection committee of the fair. However the qualitative interviewing allowed to depart from the guide and to adapt the follow up questions according to the flow of the conversations and the type of information provided by the respondents.

The objective of the interviews was to let the concepts of reputation and legitimacy to emerge based on their connection with art fairs and with the actors which take part in these events. The guideline was developed through the use of theory and previous experience of the researcher with the art galleries' business.

Introduction question were asked to all the different groups as well as follow up questions, in order to increase validity also probing questions were included in the guide (Bryman, 2012). All the interviews started with a general introduction whereby the researcher provided initial information about the research and the respondents introduced themselves as confirmation of their involvement with the gallery and with the fair. The interview was structured in 5 different sections as it is illustrated in the interview guide (in Appendix).

For all the interviews the goal was to exploring the concept of legitimacy and reputation, focusing on what the respondents value as important for art galleries to be recognised within the art world and how do they use the art fairs platform to meet this need. Another common question characterising all the interviews was focused on exploring the respondents' thoughts about art fairs, their participation at these events and their perceptions and reactions about the recent growth of the market of art fairs.

For all gallery owners, the initial questions which followed the introduction, were concerned with the programme of the gallery and its trajectory, the objective was to learn their thoughts about legitimacy and reputation within the art world and their connection with the quality of the gallery programme.

For instance questions like "What aspects characterise a good gallery from a bad gallery?" was a recurring topic, as well as the relationship with the good gallery and the good presentation at the fair, how to attract people attention? How to be accepted? To which fair to go? . With respect to this ,the main section of the interviews focused on investigating the selection process that anticipate the participation in art fairs, which entails the gatekeeping role played by fairs within the market and by the galleries as well when they make selections regarding their programme. Hence, the conversation was around the criteria involved in the selection process of artists and artworks exhibited both at fairs and at the gallery.

After that, the gallery owners were asked to indicate on the calendar which fairs they planned to attend this year, the goal was to gather information about the frequency of attendance and the quality of fairs in which they participate or aim to participate., and to therefore explore which role art fairs play in relation to the gallery's trajectory. The interviews all concluded with questions about future challenges and perspectives.

For the dealer in the selection committee the interview was longer since it was necessary to investigate both the role of the gallery as gatekeeper as well as his position as exhibitor in the art fair. The objective of this interview was to understand the selection process of the selection committee, the criteria that are used and the interaction with other committee members and the fair organisers.

The interview with the curator covered questions addressed to explore her practice and criteria used as gatekeeper for one section of the fair and her thoughts about the role of curators within art fairs and the challenges of dealing with art galleries and the art fairs settings.

Finally, the interview with the art fair director, was focused on understanding the strategies through which the organisation enables the creation of legitimacy and reputation within the fair, the role that these two concepts play for the business of the fair as well for the participating galleries .

Another source of data was the art fair web site and the press release, the art fair catalogue as well as the map of the fair which have been useful for the sampling and the field observation, and the data analysis as well.

### **3.1.4 Data Analysis**

For the analysis of the data all the recorded interviews have been transcribed with the support of a transcription software. Verbatim transcription will not be employed since it is not considered necessary to transcribe individual phonetic or linguistic characteristics for answering the research question (Bryman, 2012)

The texts resulted from the interviews transcriptions have been analysed by Atlas.ti a qualitative data analysis software which is suitable when using large amount of unstructured data. The programme allowed to code the data using pre-existing code, new codes as well as Nvivo codes, meaning that it was possible to use part of the text as code itself. In addition, the tool Memos, enable to keep track of relevant ideas related to specific codes that helped in the process of data analysis and data interpretation. Several query tools, as Network, or World cloud helped to recognised important patterns and to themes and to better visualize them.

During the transcription of the recorded interviews it was possible to take notes regarding recurring themes and to further implement the list of emerging categories with the use of the software. The process of data analysis required a continuous process of comparison between the data and the findings as new themes and categories have been used to code the data during the process of data analysis.

The process of data analysis went to three phases.

The first step required the coding of the transcripts using the pre-existing codes based on the interview guide, after that new codes were added during the process. Secondly, the data was examined and filtered to recognised themes and figures, after that the use of network tool, resulted useful to organise the codes and to create relationships between them. Finally the results and findings were drawn following the structure of the interview guide with the incorporation of adjustments. (In appendix the list of codes).

### **3.2 Limitations**

Qualitative research is time consuming, this represents an important aspect to be considered when deciding to conduct a qualitative research. In addition in order to conduct successful qualitative interviews the researcher needs training, this especially to avoiding the risk of missing data and leading questions (Bryman, 2012). With respect to this, the suggestions from fellow students and the professors have been useful.

One of the main critique to the qualitative approach, is the difficulty to generalise the findings of the research and to replicate the research, the first reason is that the sample and the context of the research will change over time (Bryman, 2012; Creswell, 2007). Moreover, since for the qualitative research the instrument of data collection is the researcher, a replication of the same research is almost impossible and the characteristics of the researcher are also likely to affect the result of the research since respondents' interviews might be influenced by the age, gender or personality of the researcher (Bryman, 2012).

The qualitative approach has received critiques for being subjective (Bryman, 2012), however, in this study tools for guarantee validity and reliability were the inclusion of different actors taking part of the fair in order to guarantee a wider perspective on the studied phenomenon.

## 4. Results and Discussion

This chapter illustrates the results of the research that, by looking at the expectations and perceptions of art dealers on participation to contemporary art fairs, aims to understand the relationship between the concepts of legitimacy and reputation. The results are organised in five different sections:

The first section briefly describes Art Rotterdam. The objective is to provide a contextualisation to the settings of the research. The second part focuses on the relevance of visibility and exposure as major reasons to attend art fairs for the art galleries, and necessary conditions to develop their reputation and the one of the artists they represent. This approach allows to see the gallery's booth as a "projection" which reflects the projected image of the gallery to a specific audience. After that the dichotomy "shop vs. real-gallery" is discussed. The section shows how the galleries navigate the struggle between the need to conform to shared standards and at the same time, to develop a reputation by "doing something different".

Finally we illustrate the process through which art galleries select the fairs they attend and how on the other hand, art fairs select their participants. The objective is to highlight the process through which art galleries and art fairs maintain legitimacy and develop their reputation by engaging in the art fairs' circuits on a long-term basis. The findings in the last section discuss that participation to art fairs is perceived by art galleries as "*a necessary evil*".

The findings are based on the interpretation of interviews with art galleries owners located mainly in the Netherlands. Moreover, the data are informed by field observation notes taken during the visit of Art Rotterdam which provided the settings for this research. The findings are then related and compared to the theoretical framework. As the information collected are confidential, the identity of the respondents is protected by anonymity. For clarity interviewees have been assigned with a number code.

### 4.1 Art Rotterdam

Art Rotterdam is a contemporary art fair that takes place every year in Rotterdam during the first week of February. "It started in 2000 in the Cruise Terminal" as explained by Fons Hof, the former Director and owner of Art Rotterdam. Since 2015 the art fair has a different venue, Van Nelle Factory, that allowed to expand the fair and develop its different section, especially the section dedicated to video art and the young galleries that as explained by the Director needed further visibility. In this sense, moving to a larger venue was necessary for the fair to improve and to grow "to attract the best galleries", however the size of the new venue poses several challenges to the organisers of the fair, the Director says that "12.000 square meters are difficult to fill in". Therefore, the challenge for the art fair is to expand by maintaining its reputation as "a fair where to discover young art and up-coming talent"<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> Art Rotterdam Official Web Site <http://www.artrotterdam.com> (last access 06 June, 2016),

As other contemporary art fairs, Art Rotterdam is divided in different “sections”. In Art Rotterdam young galleries (galleries that are in the market for less than 10 years) are located in the New Art Section, while established galleries in the Main Section.

The two sections have different arrangements, for instance the Main section benefits from greater visibility and larger booths. The size and the shape of the booths that are variable for the Main section while for the New art section is standard (approximately 23 square meters). In addition the New Art section exhibits “solo presentations”, as the galleries are allowed to exhibit only one artist in their booth. Prices also vary for the booths in the different sections and the Main section is the most expensive one. Another section is “Projections”, which is dedicated to video art and it is located in what used to be the storage of Van Nelle Factory; there is also a specific section for projects supported by the Mondrian Funds, called “Prospects and Concepts”. Moreover, outside the ex-factory’s building the fair dedicates a large space to artists’ projects and presentations by non –profits, called “Intersections”. These rooms together with the spaces for the lectures, are free entry, while for the other sections the public is charged with the price of a ticket.

#### 4.2. “Visibility” and “Exposure” at the fair

Participation to art fairs increases visibility and exposure for the galleries and their artists. Attending these events is perceived by the respondents as an unavoidable practice for the development of the galleries’ business. In fact, one of the activity that characterised the business of the gallery, especially in the primary market, is providing visibility to their artists and expanding their audience by growing contacts (Velthuis, 2011). As a gallery’s director explained: *“a gallery is an intermediary”*[02]. The educative role of the gallery is also emphasised: *“a gallery is really somebody between the artist and the ...the ‘client’, and it also educates to explain what the artist is doing, that is also very important”*[03].

With respect to this, all the respondents mentioned that participation to art fairs is particularly important for fulfilling their roles as “real-galleries”. In fact, art fairs are not only places for collectors and art galleries to meet, but they are also platforms where different art world’s player meet and interact. Curators, dealers, museums’ professionals, art critics and journalists, they all attend these events. As such, participation to art fairs provides significant exposure to the artists and the galleries as well as networking opportunities. In fact, gallery owners explained that by attending these events they create new relationships and maintain the existing ones with their audiences. It is therefore not surprising that “visibility” and “contacts” are the most recurrent words used by the respondents , when describing the main reasons for participating to art fairs.

*“ [we go to fairs] to meet the audience that we do not meet at home, I mean there are so many more visitors that you see, we were in Art Cologne last week and the visitors you have, the contacts that you can work with, they grow so much more rapidly than in the gallery, so you are stupid if you do not participate”*[03].

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“The Top 5 Art Fairs this Winter”, *The Huffington Post*, March 15th 2015  
[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/artphaire/top-5-art-fairs-this-wint\\_b\\_6458042.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/artphaire/top-5-art-fairs-this-wint_b_6458042.html) (last access 06 June, 2016)

Art fairs are events that attract an international and heterogeneous audience and for this reason they play an increasingly relevant role for the art galleries' business within the global art market (Morgner, 2014; BaiaC urioni, 2012; Quemin, 2013). In fact, the Director and owner of Art Rotterdam explained:

*“[art fairs] connect galleries to collectors and galleries to curators and galleries to new audiences, and that is so strong that it is the key factor of the international global art market and the global art market cannot exist without international art fairs. So for example, it was possible for Sariev who was a new art institution to have a gallery in Bulgaria where there is almost no market in Bulgaria; so the only reason why they can exist is because they do international art fairs, and they meet collectors and curators, and a lot of collectors have intense relationship with galleries, without being in the galleries ever. So, it is totally based on the participation on art fairs”[06].*

The focus on sales and on collectors remains crucial for the art galleries when attending art fairs, however all the respondents emphasised the relevance of art fairs as places for capturing the attention of curators and museums' professionals.

*“[at the fair] you have so many more buying people, like collectors, so the chance that you sell something is a lot bigger, if not immediately, you can sell it later maybe. So that is directly for selling, and the other thing is exposure for you and your artists. So for example at Art Rotterdam everyone is just there, like the collectors but also people from the museums and art spaces, that's why you need to be there. And so, people notice what you are doing and you speak to so many people” [11].*

The focus on curators and museums' professionals is a recurrent topic. In fact, these art professionals are “gateways” to exhibitions and museums' shows:

*“an important thing is that [at the fair] there are a lot of curators also international curators, and it s very good, because we have young artists, and I think that at the last Art Rotterdam , at least there will be 3 exhibitions for the artists...elsewhere”[09].*

It emerged that when attending art fairs, the galleries focus on promoting their artists to a specific audience. The “right” audience depends on the specific characteristics of the particular gallery, however it is possible to say that in general the right audience is the one through which the gallery increases attention and exposure for its artists. For instance by attracting the attention of a curator at the fair on a specific artists, a gallery might be able to have that artist included in a museum's show. Moreover, the right audience is the one that owns the relevant information to appreciate the artists' work and the gallery's activity. “Visibility” and “exposure” to specific audiences are essential factors for the reputations of the artist and the gallery to form, as a gallery owner explained:

*“if you have to build a reputation during the course of time, you need a kind of force, or people which are interested in your programme and are willing to show the work you present on, in an institutional show or*

*buy even the work, and the higher the profile of your costumers, the higher the profile of the gallery, in a way”[10].*

Becker, (1982) emphasised the importance of creating relationships for an actor to become legitimate within the art world. In fact, it is a way through which the actors learn what are the shared norms, values, practices and beliefs shared by the actors in that art world. Moreover legitimacy is created as the reputation of the affiliated actors is passed through the relationship. This dynamic is confirmed by the findings as the reputation of the gallery is connected with the one of its clients. As a dealer said: *“I always say, you get the client that you deserved” [10].*

In addition, as described by the dealer, reputation is a “process”, as *“you have to build a reputation during the course of time”*, which depends on the gallery’s connections. As such, a gallery develops its reputation and the one of its artists, by establishing and maintaining relationships with *“people which are interested in the gallery programme and willing to show your work”* as explained by the dealer. The gallery therefore needs to focusing on a specific audience that owns the relevant information to appreciate the artists and the artworks that the gallery presents.

As the findings show participation to art fairs is a means through which art galleries reach this specific audience and develop their reputation with that audience.

In fact, a gallery owner said: *“[attending art fairs]it s about nurturing and promoting the career of an artist, and sometimes it means that you perhaps do not sell a work with that particular ‘exhibition’, but the artist gets museum shows, and the museum show is interesting and better for the artist than the fact that 4 or 5 works are sold. So, it is a lot about promoting the career of the artist and not about selling the work, and that's why we had ‘that’ presentation within the art fair”[01].*

It emerges that participation to art fairs is a means for galleries to promote the artists and their work as at these events they can meet their relevant audience. This audience might be collectors, curators and museums’ professionals. Moreover, the findings show that galleries reach a specific audience, by exhibiting a particular presentation in the art fair’s booth.

#### **4.3The booth’s presentation as the gallery’s projected image**

The art fair is a context in which art galleries, as exhibitors in other trade shows (Maskell et al, 2006), compete for visibility and exposure to the relevant audience. The ways through which galleries capture the attention of their audience is by exhibiting the ‘right’ presentation at the booth. As a gallery owner pointed out:

*“because there is so much to see at fairs, we want people to come into our booth and people are always focused on one work to come in [...] So people are always focused on one work: ‘ah that s interesting!’ and then they come in, and if they come in and look at that work and then stay a few seconds longer or few minutes longer to look around and go from that work to another work, and they have seen more works than*

*the work they came for, then I know I have a good booth”[07].*

Most respondents emphasised that the booth has to be an “*eye-catcher*” at the fair. However, a certain presentation might result “attractive” for a particular audience, while for others it might not be interesting. The gallery is aware of that when planning the exhibition to present at the fair. In fact, the booth’s presentation is always meant to attract a specific public attending the fair. The focus of the gallery is not only on the collectors, in fact, curators and museums’ professionals are also important audience groups for the participating galleries.

*“what we did this year, we knew it was difficult to sell, this big installation...but it was an eye-catcher, then there are other works that you can sell much easier but ok, we did this because the artist works with big installations, and the fair was good to introduce his work also this type of work...so we did it”[04].*

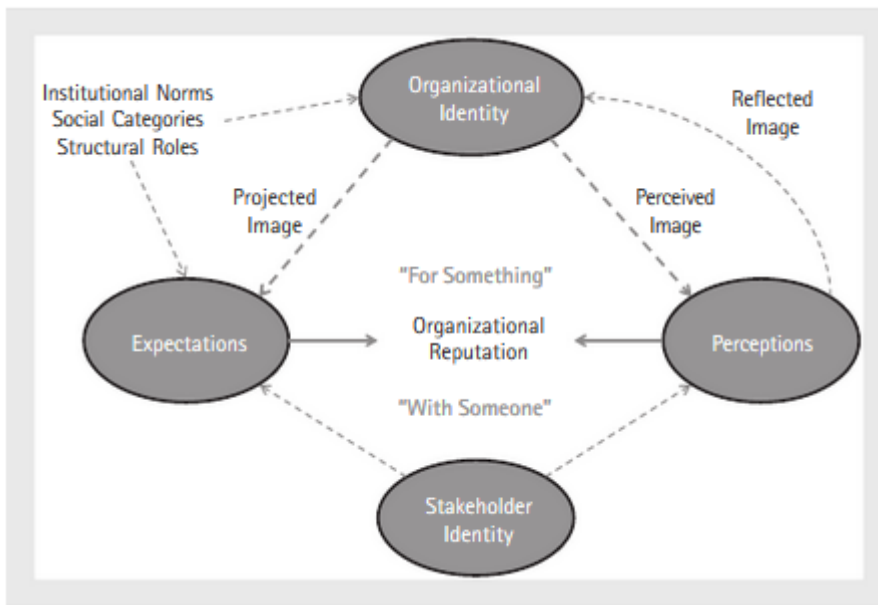
Most galleries interpreted their presentation at the fair as a way to communicate their identity to the audience that they are interested in : *“it s important to show what you are doing to a broader public, of course you can never show exactly your context as a gallery, but it is a ‘snippet’ of what you do and people can see it” [04].*

Foreman, Whetten and Mackey (2012) adopt an identity based view to define reputation. This approach is useful here as it allows to see the booth of the gallery as the reflection of the gallery’s identity. From this perspective, it is possible to see the exhibition that the gallery shows in the art fair’s booth, as the projected image of the gallery’s identity. Researchers in other fields pointed out that *“the organisation’s identity is commonly manifested in the form of descriptive statements about ‘who we are and what we are’. [...] and it reflects central and enduring characteristics that establish its distinctiveness as social entity”*(Foreman et, al., 2012, p.184). While the projected image corresponds to how insiders (gallery owners) want outsiders to see the organisation (Foreman et al.,2012). Likewise, the respondents described the presentation in the booth as something that indicates *“what the gallery stands for”*: *“because if you see the booth of a gallery of a fair, you want to understand immediately what a gallery stands for, whether they show 5 or 6 artists or just only 1 or 2”[07].*

As such, the gallery’s booth focuses on communicating how the gallery want to be viewed by a specific audience. The different audiences of the fair when visiting a gallery’s booth and observing the exhibition that is on show, receive specific information regarding the gallery’s programme and its focus which correspond to the projected image of the gallery. However, the different publics elaborate and interpreted the projected image in the light of the information that are relevant to them (Foreman, et al., 2012). Consequently the reputations of the gallery form through the interaction of the audience with the gallery’s presentation at the fairs’ booth (fig.4).



**Figure 4.: Organizational Identity, Image and Reputation**



Source: Foreman, Whetten and Mackey (2012)

As the same gallery’s presentation is differently perceived by the various audiences at the fair, the gallery develops different reputations with the different audiences that visit its booth.

For instance, a curator might find a conceptual presentation interesting while for other publics the same booth might result difficult to understand, as they lack a type of knowledge which is very specific. In fact a gallery owner said that: *“if we are presenting photography and it does not fit and the visitors do not expect that and they do not appreciate it, it is really a waste of time”*[08].

Reputation is in fact audience specific as it is: *“an evaluation of some aspect(s) of the organisation by some stakeholder(s), consisting of comparisons of perceptions and expectations”* (Foreman et al., 2012, p.186).

However, in order to make sure that the presentation results attractive to a specific audience, the gallery needs to operate in a way that results understandable by that audience. Therefore it needs to rely to specific rules and values that are shared within the fairs participants.

This is that for instance the booth’s presentation has to meet certain “standards of quality”. The criteria that are used to determine whether a booth is appropriate or not, are the same criteria that are applied by the gallerists when they distinguish between what is considered a “real gallery” and what is considered a “shop”.

As pointed out by Jyrama and Ayvari (2010) the gallery space is a source of mimetic isomorphism (Di Maggio and Powell,1983), in fact the booth that is considered legitimate is the one that reproduce the characteristics of the gallery space. The booths for this reason are projections of the galleries’

spaces. Likewise, a presentation is considered to meet certain criteria of “appropriateness”, when the focus is clearly on “promoting the artists” and on “communicating the focus of the gallery”.

The findings show that a gallery develops its reputation by creating a presentation that “stands out” at the fair. As explained by the curator of the New Art Section, the gallery’s does that “*by breaking up that white - cube feeling of the booth, this is really helpful, because it will make you stand out from all of other presentations*” [05].

On the other hand, the same presentation needs to meet certain criteria through which the presentation is considered acceptable or understandable by the audience of the gallery that takes part to the at the fair. The results confirm studies on the relationship between legitimacy and reputation (Deephouse and Carter, 2005) in which while legitimacy is an evaluation made by a organisation’s external stakeholders in comparisons to shared norms or standards, the reputation is an assessment of relative standing of the organisation in comparison to other similar organisation.

However, as pointed out by scholars (Fombrun, 2012), reputation and other related constructs, such as legitimacy, identity and image, are difficult to investigate as separated concepts, and this is especially true when investigating phenomena in the real world. As such, it results that the constructs of legitimacy and reputation are closely connected and intertwined.

The findings shows that by focusing on attracting the attention of a specific audience, galleries are not interested in the general public (visitors that are not part of the art world’s community). Moreover, most gallery owners described the presence of this audience at fair as “*disturbing*”. The findings correspond with the observations by Jyrama and Morel (2009) that focused on the practices of the galleries’ business at leading international contemporary art fairs. These visitors are potentially an obstacle from capturing the attention of the audience that are relevant for the galleries, such as curators or collectors. In fact, the general visitors distract the dealer’s attention from the focus audience. In addition, their presence in the gallery booth might hinder the visibility of the gallery’s presentation, for the relevant audience of curators, collectors and other art world’s professionals.

However, the gallery owners explained that it is easy for them to understand when a visitor is really interested in the artists’ work or not. They understand that, by observing how the visitors walk in the booth space, how much time the visitors spend in front of the work, and what questions they ask. In fact, at the fair it is common to see dealers seating behind their laptop screen even if their booth is crowded, while when particular visitors start asking “the right” questions, they immediately leave all their previous activities to turn their attention to those visitors. What happens in these occasions, is that the dealer recognises in that particular visitor an ‘art world insider’, for instance, the visitor might be a collector or a curator. In fact, the visitor and the dealer share the same knowledge of the practices of conducting business within the art world. This is something that correspond to what Velthuis (2005) in his work on art galleries’ prices strategies, defines as “the business repertoire”: “*the business repertoire manifests itself symbolically in the way art is*

*marketed, business is conducted and prices are set. Surely each circuit may nowadays be too large for all its respective members (artists, dealers and collectors) to actually engage in a day-to-day conversation with each other; nevertheless they do share the same business culture, visit the same or similar shows, are interested in each other's gossip and rumors and read the same arts magazines" (p.18).*

In this view, the extent to which the visitors are familiar with the art world's practices and their knowledge about the art that is exhibited, are factors that automatically select and exclude certain audiences in the interaction with the gallery's presentation. The adoption of certain practices is therefore a means through which the gallery focuses on a specific audience and excludes others.

The way the art works are exhibited within the booth is a practice that indicates what is the focus of the gallery and which audience's attention the gallery aims to attract with that particular presentation. In fact the shared views of the respondents on this aspect can be summarised by what has been said by gallery owner:

*"when you make a show of artists you can put the works in such a way that they are very attractive to buy, you can do that, but we always chose to make curated shows so the work become meaningful, in a context. So it's not about making money and selling as much as possible" [02].*

All the respondents defined a bad presentation as something that has "a shop feeling". The criteria that the used to describe such exhibitions are the display of the artworks in the booth, the quantity of the artworks, their quality and the number of the artists that are shown. As such, the 'shops-booths' result confusing, packed with many different artworks by different artists that are unrelated one with the another. Thus, the shows exhibited in these particular booths lacks the curatorial approach that is distinguishes a good presentation. On the other hand, a presentation is good when it results to be "different" from rest of what is exhibited at the fair, when "it stands out". The objective is in fact to emerge in order to attract the attention of a particular audience. A gallery owner comments on this saying that:

*"[how the works are displayed]that is typical for the quality of the fair, if a fair allows that to be, than it is like a shop, and if there are many artists to be shown, that means there is a lack of focus, because if I do a fair myself as a viewer and then I walk the streets of the fair and then what makes me stop or look inside or go inside, it is when I have the feeling. Of course it is because of one interesting work, but also because the presentation of the total booth concept. Because then you are attracted to go in, because there is peace, it fits, there is quite, although it might be a big installation or whatever, but it has to be different, well thought, true. And you notice that when you go to fairs, if there is enough space between works, and the story is right, whether it is a solo or a group exhibition, and it is all about the balance you know" [07].*

By presenting a booth that results too "sales-oriented" within a "good" fair where other exhibit "mini exhibitions", a gallery might risk to damage its reputation, and to lose its legitimacy as exhibitor within that fair (and in other similar fairs as well). As that gallery is conferred with the label of being a "shop".

A gallery owner provided an interesting example of how this process takes place:

*“so we went to Arco Madrid, and you see sometimes, very good galleries, that for the desperation to sell, they have 15 artists...and totally unrelated, and there is no, feeling no atmosphere, and of course yes it is calling like ‘buy me, buy me’...but I do not know who is going to buy.. I mean maybe sometimes people do not care and they going to buy...but I do not want reach this point, this point where we have to do it...But we do not think like that”[04].*

Legitimacy is gained through conforming to standards of “appropriateness” by following the criteria that determine whether the presentation in the booth is “a mini exhibition” or “a little shop”. At the same time, reputation is developed and improved by making a presentation that does not conform to what is exhibited at the fair, as it is important that the booth “stands out” in order to attract the attention of the audience.

This is in line with the common view of the difference between legitimacy and reputation as reputation is formed through a process of distinction while legitimacy is connected with imitation (King and Whetten, 2008; Thomas, 2007). However, the extent to which a gallery need to conform to what is considered legitimate, varies according to the reputation of the gallery and its “status” within the fair.

In fact it results that the galleries exhibiting in the New Art Section of Art Rotterdam are expected to show a presentation that is more “experimental” or “innovative”, than the one exhibited by those galleries which are already established and that are located in the Main Section of the fair. These galleries have more freedom in deciding what to bring on show and they are allowed to make more ‘commercial choices’ than the younger galleries. However, this by always within certain limits that are determined by the art fair selection committees.

In fact, within Art Rotterdam the young galleries exhibiting in the New Art Section have the limitation imposed by the fair of exhibiting only one artist. Some young galleries perceived this rule as a restriction and a limitation, while by others it is considered a guideline, that is helpful for preventing un-experienced young galleries from making mistakes that might negatively influence the development of their reputation that still has to form. As the owner of a young gallery said: *“if you have to present one or two artists it [the presentation]focuses by itself, then it is difficult to mess up. But if you are free to show whatever you like, and you take an anonymous booth. it is easier to mess up”[04].*

Galleries that do not have yet a established a reputation represent a potential risk for the total result of the fair, as eventual mistakes form their side would also be damaging for the reputation of the fair as a whole, that in fact depends on the one of its exhibitors.

#### **4.4The role of art fair’s organisers**

The fairs’ organisers have a major role in attracting the “right” audience and in creating opportunities for interaction for all the participants of the fair to take place, as described by the study of Rinallo and Golfetto (2011) As such, they have to face the challenge of meeting the diversified needs and expectations of their

various stakeholders. The fair needs to result interesting to art dealers, collectors, museums' professionals, journalists, students and all art lovers. The Director of Art Rotterdam responds to this challenge by organising an event that he defined "*a village of experience*" [06]. This as described by Lind and Velthuis (2012) is a common trend for contemporary art fairs where "the consumption of contemporary art is packaged as a social and cultural experience" .

However, some gallery owners complained about this strategy , as the fair acquires "*a festival feeling*"[09]. For the fair's Director, the main task of the fair is providing the conditions for art galleries to conduct their business. This means that gallery' owners need to meet their collectors and their booths have to been seen by the relevant publics (curators mainly). In order to achieve these objectives the fair's organisers adopts different strategies. One is for instance providing exhibitors and collectors with free hotel night stays. To facilitate the business opportunities for dealers and collectors to take place, the fair organises V.I.P previews and dinners. Access to these events is by invitation only. The cooperation with the city is very important to enhance the attractiveness of the fair. In fact, connecting with museums and other institutions guarantees a certain "buzz" around the main event of the fair to take place. Lectures, performances and talks -to use the words of the fair director- "*are important to give in another layer to the fair, a more intellectual one*"[06]. The intellectual layer is needed as it makes the fair more attractive to museums' professionals and curators.

The fair' organisers facilitate interaction among participants at the fair in different ways, some of these activities are related to the logistics and arrangements of the fair as explained by the Director:

*"to create this buzz at the fair, this feeling, this upper, it is important that also gallerists interact. So for example what we also do, it is very simple thing, we put these standing tables in the corridors, so I want to create a kind of cosiness with it. If you do not have that you only have those straight corridors, and if you have those tables people can stand on it, they drink a glass of wine, they meet each other, it is very important to create this atmosphere [...] the gallerists can stand in the middle of the corridor and if the table would not be there it would be very strange to stand in the middle of the corridor, and with the table they can stay there and approach the collectors on the corridors"* [06].

The physical arrangements of the show play an important role in influencing visibility and interaction at the fair. Thus they have a major role also in the formation of reputation with the audience. In fact, as a gallery owner explained:

*"some galleries at the fairs want to be at the champagne bar because collectors are there, they drink and they are surrounded with the colleagues. And I don't know, there is no mathematics for that. I don't want to be somewhere in a corner where nobody finds you, as long as you are in the main alleys and your neighbours are good"* [07].

In every fair there are “good spots and bad spots”. The best spots are the ones that provide the right exposure to the gallery. They are “easy to find by the public” and “open”, and for some respondents those spots are also positioned “in the centre of the fair”, “at the corners of the main alleys” or “close to the main entrance”, as people see the booth at least two times during their visit: when they enter and when they leave. In addition, being at the same spot every year is important, as clients and the gallery’s public in general know already where to go when they enter the fair.

*“I think it is important that you are in the same spot every year, because you are easy to find, and when you are hidden somewhere it is not good because people miss you, and you are not easy to approach just by the infrastructure”[10].*

Some respondents mentioned that it is important for them to be located in a place that is not too crowded, as their presentations require a quiet environment for the public to concentrate on the artists’ work, for this reason they do not like to be at the main entrance.

The neighbours are also important for shaping visibility and interaction. They have an influence on the public that might be distracted or at the contrary, attracted, by the presentation exhibited in the nearest booth.

*“if you feel you have a programme and you are in a neighbourhood with other galleries with whom you do not feel affiliated, it is difficult, so it is a question you never know until you do not do the fair, you do not know how people walk around some people go right other left, but you always have to look at the spot you have, how does the booth look like, how can we make it work”[07].*

For this reason the “good” galleries which are renowned within the audience and the exhibitors of the fair are located one next to another. As observed by studies in the fashion world, “fairs have a function similar to graphs in that they chart the relative positions of companies in abstract space”(Skov, 2006, p.768).

Likewise, “the best galleries get the best spots”. The role of the art fair organisers is crucial in influencing which gallery gets more visibility at the fair. The Director of Art Rotterdam decides who is located where. The decision is based on the “quality of the gallery”, the “quality of the presentation” and “the relationship with the gallery”, as “loyal clients” benefit from a special treatment. As the Director said:

*“you have a kind of good spots, the best spots. So for example, if [gallery ‘x’] tells me ‘I want this spot’, well I give him that spot. Because I think he is probably the best gallery from the Netherlands, so there is probably a top list, so if you are in this list, we listen better to your wishes, than if you are in the lower part of the list, and I think that most of the galleries are aware where they are in this list.*

*Then, I try to put galleries together with a kind of same focus, same ideas, so for example, yes, if I take [gallery ‘y’] I put her next to [gallery ‘z’], because I think she has kind of also conceptual focus. And it has to be a kind of variation of the Dutch and foreign galleries, so it is not that you have a corner with only foreign galleries and a Dutch enclave. But also you have very international active foreign galleries and I do*

*not place them to very national-focused Dutch galleries”[06].*

As “*top galleries get the best spots*”, the position of the gallery in the fair result to be the reflection of the position of the gallery in the Director’s list. The hierarchy in which the galleries are positioned is made visible by the location and arrangements of the galleries’ booths within the fair. By looking at the plan of the art fair (in Appendix), it is possible to have a picture of this “hierarchy”.

The size of the booth is also an important indicator of the gallery status within the fair, as it also reveals how much money the gallery invested in the participation to the fair.

#### **4.5 Reputations as “labels”**

Every fair has a public and the quality of this audience differs from fair to fair. In fact, a fair may result attractive for a specific audience while for others the same fair might be uninteresting. The extent to which a fair results attractive for art galleries varies according to different factors. However the results show that the quality of the audience and the reputation of the fair are closely interconnected and they together play a major role in attracting the galleries. The success of the fair in the long term depends on the reputation of the fair with its main stakeholders: the art galleries. The reputation of the fair is developed through the assessments made by galleries that interact within certain networks. This process is summarised by the Director of Art Rotterdam :

*“ [the success of the fair in the long term] has to do of course with your reputation but also of course it is about the experiences of other galleries, on ‘how they did’. So for example if you have for example a year where the sales are not good then it is very difficult to get the attention of new galleries, because they all talk with each other. So if many galleries say: ‘oh well I did not sell anything’, that is problematic. This year we had a very good year, extremely good results, and that will reflect also, I hope so, in the quality of the galleries who will apply the next year”[06].*

Reputation is a multidimensional construct that serves different functions for organisations and their stakeholders. For instance, by being based on stakeholders’ aggregate assessments on the organisation’s past behaviour, reputation works as a signaling device for the organisation’s stakeholders regarding the organisation’s future behaviour (Love and Kraatz, 2009). The results confirm this definition of reputation, in fact as explained by the director of Art Rotterdam, galleries by looking at this year’s performance of the fair, formulate their decision regarding whether or not to participate the next year. Moreover the reputation is constructed through a phenomenon of word of mouth within the galleries’ networks.

A good fair for galleries to attend is the fair where their artist can benefit from the best visibility and exposure to the relevant audience. Deciding to which fair to go it is not easy for art galleries. Most galleries perceive the growing number of the art fairs as “*overwhelming and confusing*”, and the financial

constraints are always an issue for most respondents. In order to make a selection within the growing number of art fairs, respondents explained that they need to rely on others' opinion, they therefore "*ask other participants*". In addition, in order to have an impression of the quality of a specific fair, before applying, they look at the list of galleries that are participating to that event. The reputation of the galleries is used as a means to lower the uncertainty related to their participation to an event of which the quality is uncertain. The findings confirms that another dimension of reputation is the function of lowering uncertainty for the organisation's stakeholders (Fombrun, 2012).

As explain by a gallery owner : "*it's over-whelming and it is confusing, and the thing is that you have to make your own choices and but of course you can never be sure and you can only try, or you can try to investigate a bit what is happening at that particular fair. You can look at the list of the galleries that participate in that fair, if they have some galleries that you admire then you know... That's how we look at that. In every country or in every city, we have several galleries we are fan of, let's say; and we look at what fairs they go and what they do, what is their programme, and if it's close to us in what we do, then we know ok, we do that thing, we like to go to that art fair*"[04].

More importantly, the respondents emphasised the relevance of visiting the fair themselves in order to feel the "atmosphere of the fair". It means, that they go to the fair and look at the audience that is participating, if there are international curators and collectors. They also check the quality of the booths and the infrastructure of the venue. Moreover, the price to pay for the booth plays a major role in influencing the decision to attend a specific art fair.

*"...and then we go there and visit, to see how the art fair looks like, how the booths look like, the programme they have, everything, then I know if that fits me very well; and also and important parameter is the financial one. The price they have. Because some fairs are extremely expensive, so you may fit into Basel, but how can you pay 40.000 euro for your booth? So some, you are already excluding before applying"* [03].

As not all the fairs attract the specific audience that interests a particular art gallery, it results that for that gallery certain fairs are attractive, while others are not. At the same time, it happens that a fair has the potential to provide the gallery with the right exposure, but the gallery does not meet the requirements to participate to that particular fair.

Likewise, the more the fair is selective regarding its participants (and thus related audience), the more it results attractive for the art galleries. These selection mechanisms lead to the establishment of classifications and hierarchies, in which art fairs are located according to the reputations that they have developed within the art galleries' networks.

*"there is definitely an hierarchy in fairs, like there is an hierarchy for galleries, I mean if you are a young artist and you start with a gallery which is not really well considered to be an interesting gallery, if it is on your cv, then it could maybe influence your career if you try to go to another gallery"*[03].



The phenomenon is described by the Art Rotterdam's Director:

*“there is of course a kind of ranking in the fairs, it has to do with which galleries participate and but it is also something that is in the galleries' world than in the collectors' world. Because, sometimes, if I have the feeling, 'we are a little bit less' and if 'you' see the names, well the collectors do not see it at all. So, there is a kind of rating that is underneath gallerists' world and art fairs very important, but not so much in the collectors' world. But of course you want to have the best galleries, so for us it means that we want to have the most promising ones, and there is a lot of competition in that because all these fairs they all have this young sections”[06].*

The reputation of the fair depends by the one of the participating galleries, as the reputation is passed through their affiliation as it happens with the relationship between a given art work when it is exhibited in a museum or between the artist and the gallery by which he is represented (Becker,1982) . This is confirmed by the fair director' words and by the fact that galleries decide whether or not to take part to a specific fair, by looking at the names included in the participants' list. As the art fair's reputation is formed through a process of “word of mouth” within the galleries' networks, most respondents agree that:

*“as long as everybody is talking about oh is such a good fair, is such a good fair, then it is a good fair and it attracts people” [08].*

This is also confirmed by the curator of the New Art section of Art Rotterdam:

*“it is only word of mouth, asking around, asking to the people who have been part of the community of other galleries so to kind of advise each other”[11].*

Reputation is also symbolic (Rao,1994) as it reflects the collective knowledge of the stakeholders have of the characteristics and the activities of the organisation, and therefore it work as a means for stakeholders and other “actors” in the field to identify and categorize the organisation (Foreman et al.2012). The findings show that galleries “categorise” art fairs by providing them with specific labels. These labels reflects a view of that particular fair that is shared within galleries and also other art world's actor.

For instance, Art Rotterdam has the reputation for being *“the fair where to discover young art”* and some defined it *“the small Freeze of the Netherlands, let's say like this, it is the best fair we have in the Netherlands. It is small but it s focused”[04].*

Art Rotterdam is also renowned for being a place where to meet collectors from Belgium,

*“of course the Belgium collectors will travel there so you have this mixture, which might be interesting for galleries to take this risk and see what happens”[07].*

Certain fairs have the reputation for being “international” as they attract galleries and audience from different countries. However, fairs are considered to have different degrees of “internationality” that contribute to increase the attractiveness of the fair for the galleries, as the director of Art Rotterdam explained:

*“we [Art Rotterdam] are international and also we are a local art fair. I think there is only one international art fair and that is Art Basel. But for the rest... if for example there is a German gallery coming to Art Rotterdam the only reason for them to come is to get connected to the Dutch art market. and then for Art Rotterdam is the Dutch and Belgium art market, because Belgium is very strong in Art Rotterdam. So, in that perspective, there is a locality in every fair”[06].*

Other art fairs have the reputation for being the “curators’ fairs”, respondents named Artissima, in Turin and ABC in Berlin. As explained by a young gallery owner:

*“you hear about fairs that are very good, for example Artissima is a very well known fair, but I always hear from gallerists that, yes it is very good for your artists, but you will never sell anything there. So they call it ‘the curators’ fair’. So that can be very good but it s all about the contacts, so then you sort have to make the investments and you know you are not going to make any money from it, so that is a really difficult choice you make”[11].*

Participation to a “curator’s fair” is a financial risk for art galleries, however it might have some other benefits in the long term as making new contacts and enhancing the reputation.

In addition, there are fairs which are recognised for being “specialised” and focused on specific audience and art medium: for instance Loop in Barcelona is a fair that recurrently has been mentioned by respondents , as a particularly renowned fair for video art.

*“Loop is a very specialised fair, where many people and experts on video art meet, so in a very short time, in few days, these people have a booth in the same hotel, the experts stay in the same hotel, there are lectures and shows in Barcelona all based on video art, and I think this is a boost in your information and network on video art, that is very important”[03].*

The galleries in the sample have been asked to indicate on the calendar which are the fair they attend during the year. It emerged that some of them attend the same fairs, as Art Rotterdam of course, but also Unseen and Loop are common appointments.

#### 4.6. Admission to Art Fairs is the first step for building their reputation

If specialised fairs are a “boost” for increasing information and contacts, likewise, there are other fairs that are renowned for providing a “boost” to the gallery’s reputation. Participation to these events is perceived as a means to improve the gallery’s name:

*“when you are in there it is sort of a signal to people that you are in the right place, because you got selected [...] by being selected by the curator or the director or everybody who is involved anyway, it means that you are doing the right thing somehow, that people are perceiving what you are doing well and they want to work with you. This is very important, this is like what you are doing everything for”[11].*

The work by Jyrama and Morel (2009) shows that leading contemporary art fairs act as legitimising agents for the participating galleries. For the galleries which apply being accepted to these events is as a “marker that signals their quality”. “Participating in a key art fair act as a sign of peer’s approval of the gallery’s products- their artworks are quality art-and of the gallery’s owner”(p.5).

Being selected as exhibitors to certain fairs is not easy, at least not for every gallery that submits its application. As most contemporary art fairs apply a selection process that filters the quality of their participants, being admitted to these events is important to art galleries. In fact, it is a public confirmation of the quality of the gallery. This system assures that the fair’s exhibitors meet certain standards, and it is as a signal for collectors, galleries and the various audiences, that indicates the quality of the fair. For instance, galleries need to prove with photo material, the number and quality of shows that they organised for their artists in the last few years. In addition having a space is a requirement, as well as indicating to which other fairs the galleries participate. These are standards to which all the galleries need to conform in order to be considered eligible for participation, as it is explained by a gallery seating in the selection committee of the Main Section:

*“there are always more applications than booths. So it is really important that the galleries that apply have a gallery programme and that they invest in gallery shows, and that they have a list of at least 6 or 7 artists they represent, and for which they do a show....so that is not really on the quality of the work itself but more on what the gallery is doing for the artist...and that s very important criteria because..we get often applications of galleries who are not galleries, they are more art advisors, or agents, and some do not have even a good space”[10].*

Standards criteria applied to the fair, are also a means through which the fair create an event that results recognisable for the audience. For instance, when a collector visits Art Rotterdam it expects to see certain galleries showing certain kind of art. As the fair is renowned for being a fair for young art, he would expect to find in the art fair’s booths young art. Thus, by adopting certain criteria for the selection of its participants,

the fair builds its reputation “for something” (Foreman et al, 2012; Lang, Lee and Dai, 2011), in fact every fair has a specific label through which the fair is categorised by participants. At the same time by selecting its participants the fair attribute labels to the galleries. For instance by including certain galleries in the New Art Section the fair provide them with a label “young galleries”. While those in the Main Section are “established”. At the same time participation to specialised fairs as Loop in Barcelona that focuses on video art, assigns a reputation to the gallery for being focused on video art. It is a common practice in fact for art galleries to publish on their websites the list of the fairs in which their exhibit. This is a way through which collectors, artists, curators but also art fairs classify the galleries. Therefore participation to art fairs plays a key role in the development of the gallery reputation.

The selection of the fairs’ participants is made normally by a committee composed by art dealers, however certain fairs may also assign this role to a curator. Art Rotterdam has two main selectors’ entities which are supervised by the art fair’s Director. The galleries that exhibit in the main section are selected by a committee of three art dealers which are considered to have acquired a specific taste and a certain status within the network of the galleries, curators and art professionals that participate to Art Rotterdam. On the other hand, admission to the New Art Section is judged by one curator from the Witte de With Contemporary Art Centre. In both cases, the final decision is taken together with the fair’s Director:

*“it is a discussion we are talking now about the main section, and we have around 75 spaces, and we have about 140 applications. So the first 50 it is easy you know, the good galleries like [gallery ‘x’], there is no discussion. We know them, we are very happy that they apply so there is not discussion about them. There is a discussion about the 5 galleries yes or no, if we take this gallery we cannot take that one, [...], so the discussion in the selection meeting is about this lower range of people ‘just in or just out’. So it is very long discussion about a relatively small group of galleries” [06].*

The criteria that the selectors apply to evaluate the applications differ for each selectors’ groups, according to the information that are relevant to them. For instance, the curator focuses on “*aesthetic considerations*” on the work presented by the galleries:

*“I would say maybe they [the section committee] are more sensitive towards the sales potential of the main fair galleries, but I am an institutional curator so I am not interested in the commercial art circle, I am not so aware of this, so my choices are more based on kind of aesthetic considerations than commercial ones probably” [05].*

On the other hand the dealers seating in the selection committee take their decisions in the light of other criteria:

*“if we have to make a selection, so there are 10 galleries and we have to select 5 out of them, that is always very difficult and that is very subjective in a way. Then you have a kind of discussion with your colleagues, a professional discussion about the work they want to show, and about the kind of consistency, [...] then I look at the different works and how they match each other, and sometimes there are galleries who do not make a good match, or they make a little shop, they put it full of works they put all together and it becomes messy, and that is also what we do not want, an art fair where there is only hanging full of paintings or all stuck to each other”[10].*

The Director has an important influence in the selection process. If the commission looks at the “consistency” of the gallery and its programme, the role of the director is to supervise and to provide an overall policy to the fair which in fact has to meet needs and expectation of an heterogeneous public, and sometimes his opinion might be different for the one of the commission:

*“ [the Director] he’s part of the committee in a way, he is presiding always, [...]he has to look at the overall policy, on the clients who come to visit the fair, that can also be an argument...if there is a gallery who is not really a primary dealer, or he only buys works in auctions and he is really a dealer-dealer, and he is on the secondary market, and he can decide that it is important that we have someone in the fair that has this kind of position, and that’s a kind of policy he has, the director of the fair, he’s the owner of the fair actually ”[10].*

“Politics” is a recurrent word used by the respondents when describing the art fairs’ selection process. The gallerist in the selection committee confirms that: [...]sometimes we have really discussions...for one or two cases...and if one of the committee member is very convince saying we should really take it in ..then it is in”[10].

Personal connections play a major role in determine the favourability of a gallery within the fair as summarized by the director of a gallery:

*“so it is always about politics, and the key is that of course you have to be a good proposal and of course you have to have a good proposal, these are the two keys but, then there is the third criterium, which is politics.”[02].*

Being a loyal client might also influence the admission to the fair, in fact reputation is a means to predict organisations’ future behaviour (Fombrun, 2012):

*“for Brussels we do not have to do that difficult selection anymore, because we are participating there for about 6-7 years so they know us and they know the artists we have and what we do with the booth and the presentation”[07].*

The gallery has developed a reputation over the years through repeated participation to the fair, consequently the commission (and the clients of the gallery) knows what to expect from the gallery. However admission to the fair is also a way through which the gallery maintain its legitimacy.

#### 4.7 “Real gallery vs. Shop”

All the respondents emphasised the distinction between what is considered a “real gallery” and what is considered a “shop”.

*“you have shops and you have galleries...and the gallery is not a shop” [02]; “a good gallery is something that does not look only on the commercial side”[01]*

*“so when you have a shop with art, an art shop, not a gallery-gallery, but a shop that calls itself a gallery but it functions as a shop, and you look at what is hot in the magazines and what is presented in the Museums and you start selling that[...] there are 40 of those [real galleries ] in the Netherlands, galleries who sell things which are not hot yet, there is not market yet, it's not in the art magazine yet, it is not in museums yet, it's a product that does not exist yet, but you show it you want to be innovative and you want to show something new”[02].*

It results that a ‘real gallery’ maintains this label, by working in a way that is considered in line with certain values and established rules that distinguish the “gallery” from a “shop”.

*“you focus on making money you lose focus on what you want to say with your gallery, so we open the gallery to say the idea we have to a broader audience we did not make it to make money...of course if that happen it is very welcome and pleasing and good for everybody, if we manage to live from the gallery...but that's not the first requirement, focus. We can open a bakery if we want to make money we make a lot more, believe me”[04].*

The legitimate gallery works on showing and communicating the artist’s work to a public, while the focus of the gallery-shop is on sales.

At the same time the gallery has to break the rules, in order to be innovative and to do something different from what others are doing. This means exhibiting something that does not have a market yet and creating an audience for that product.

In fact, *“the objective of the gallery is to sell a product that does not exist yet”[01].*

For others being a real gallery means being different form the “standard recipe”:

*“what we are aiming for it is to try to get within this art world to change something [...]by showing how we work, we show other places that it can actually be different than the standard recipe. Because the recipe itself it is very simple, you start a nice place, you do it in Amsterdam preferably in certain area, with all the*

*others of course, because people can walk through the neighbourhood, and you have like an 150 sqm...then you are really something, most of them have 90. And the inputs come from the Rijksakademie, the ateliers, maybe you do Von Heijk as well. And then you have to be part of the network as well, that's the most important thing because people start saying ok, if I just open the door everybody will just come in...that's not the case"[09].*

The gallery distinguishes itself from other similar galleries by showing something different. This is also how the gallery develops its reputation. However, a gallery needs to first take part to the art world's discussion, making the right connections and learn what it considered legitimate within that particular art world in which it starts to operate as a legitimate gallery.

Acquiring the information of what is considered legitimate is essential in order to maintain the cognitive and social legitimacy conceptualised by Suchman (1995), as these "standards" are subject of change over time. In fact a gallery owner said that:

*"it's actually always being in contact with the art scene and what is coming up..and then you can be at the forefront of that...and then you are a good gallery"[01].*

#### **4.8 Attending Art fairs to remain connected with the art world**

As trade shows and fairs in other industries art fairs are important events for their exhibitors. Studies on trade fairs emphasise the relevance of these events for firms as they can compare themselves with what the competitors are doing and through face –to-face interaction with the different participants they acquire important information for the development of their business (Maskell, et al, 2006).

Likewise, participation to art fairs is important for art galleries to acquire the information they need in order to maintain their legitimacy.

*"the more fairs you do the more you see the more you get involved in the art world the more you go narrow, and so how do you say that...when you go like this, well, you narrow down.. [07]"*

As trade fairs in other industries, art fairs are also places where exhibitors meet the competition (Maskell et al, 2006). Therefore by attending these events galleries keep track of the developments of the market, the new trends and new comers and they participate in the gossips.

*"What makes a good fair it is also where you can meet more people and expand your network, and also to understand what other people do, and you improve..also in this way.."[11].*

Thus, participation to art fairs is also a means to remain updated regarding possible changes in the norms, rules and values that together define what is considered legitimate, therefore by attending art fairs galleries maintain both cognitive as well as the social legitimacy described by Suchman (1995). In fact a gallery's owner said that:

*“because it is not possible for everybody to follow everything what everybody does in every city, in every country, an art fair is a very good opportunity. You get visitors from all over the world and people are really very interested in knowing what is going on. So yes, you get to know a lot of people and you can promote your artists and yourself, and you can see what other people do, it is like visiting a museum or something” [04].*

#### 4.9 The “necessary evil”

Participating to art fairs events is expensive for art galleries and it is a risky investment as they do not know if they will be able to sell and to earn back their investment. Most respondents admit that these are difficult times for the galleries' business but that attending art fairs is necessary and therefore they have to “keep going on”:

*“that's a difficult period for every gallery, it's getting harder for everybody. You hear many galleries closing down every day. Big galleries sort of do not sell at art fairs and they try to find out ways to do that. You will hear that from everybody: you have to still keep going on” [04].*

*You need a good platform also for your artists to show their work and to make good shows, but you need the art fairs as a platform especially to go more international but also to develop yourself, also to present yourself and the artists you work with to grab the attention, and from there to try to get into the good fairs, but that is a decision you make quite early or not, if you decide to have...it also depends on the profile of the gallery, if you want that. If you do not want that it is fine, there are so many satellite fairs and so many possibility you can go to, it also depends on the strategy of the gallery”[07]*

Making the investment to participate to art fairs is especially difficult for younger galleries, as the risk involved for them is higher, as a gallery owner explained:

*“The point is that for established galleries, they have quite often quite a lot of established artists with higher prices so it is easier to sustain, to maintain. When you start and you are 2- 3 years old, it is impossible, you are not accepted anyway, but in case you are accepted to be in that fair, you have to pay so much money for the booth that it is impossible to have enough turn over to pay the booth at the end”[10].*

In addition, despite the financial risk, attending the wrong fair might be damaging for galleries in terms of legitimacy and reputation:



*“[going to the wrong fair] it can be bad for your reputation”[01]*

*“it's about the reputation, you have to build your reputation and you do it by working with the right people, and you help your reputation, your name and you grow your artists, and if you associate yourself with the wrong club that it is bad for your name”[02].*

In the art world the reputation of an actor is passed to another actor through their relationship (Becker, 1982) Therefore by attending a fair with the wrong reputation, a gallery might lost its legitimacy as exhibitor in the “good fairs”. As a the owner of a young gallery explained: *“I got asked to do the other fair in Rotterdam, the Rotterdam Contemporary fair, but I said no. Because I did not know yet if I was selected to Art Rotterdam, but even then, if I did not get selected the first time, I would have just waited one year. I would not have gone to the other one, because I knew that once I did that one, I would probably never get in Art Rotterdam” [11].*

Being refused to a fair is also a factor that influence the gallery's reputation, the study by Jyrama and Morel, (2009) pointed out “refusal at a fair might tarnish the gallery's reputation”(p.5). In fact, for the galleries it corresponds to having the label: *“not good enough”*. For this reason galleries that are refused do not communicate it to their public.

The respondents complained about the fact that the financial risk involved with participation to art fairs forced them to *“make more commercial choices”*. The gallery has to create the booth's presentation by following certain rules and values that meets the expectations of the audience. As such the gallery adheres to the minimum standards that distinguish a real gallery form a shop. However in doing this, the gallery faces the challenge of exhibiting a presentation that allows to earn back the price paid for the booth.

As a gallery owner explained: *“the negative side for me is that's a huge financial risk every time, because it s really unpredictable like how it is going to go and it s really expensive, and it is hard to avoid, you sort have to do it and that s what I do not like so much about it, and but also it s negative for me because it is so expensive you are making more commercial choices, so you would rather show paintings than maybe video work for example that you maybe would do in the gallery, because you know that you will never going to sell it, so that s is definitely a negative thing for me that you have to think about making more commercial choices”[11].*

However despite the financial constraints and the risk involved with participation in art fairs, as a gallery owner said: *“you have to be there, at that fair...if you like it or not”[09].* Participation to art fairs is perceived by most the respondents as a “necessary evil”:

*“for a young gallery and especially if you have started in the recession, it is really hard, because fairs are terribly expensive, so you have to be very careful, and we decided to do it step by step, and for us, the fairs that we did until now worked really well, for different reasons, and I think actually it is a sort of necessary evil” [03].*

Galleries have to attend art fairs for two reasons: it is a way to develop their reputation and the one of their artists to the relevant audience that they cannot reach in their gallery’s space.

Secondly, they need to attend these events, as participation to art fairs is considered a practice through which the gallery maintain its legitimacy within particular circuits or networks:

*“you go because it s good for your name. So for example if we do not do Art Rotterdam - independently if we do not sell or not- if we do not go, people will think ‘ah they are not good enough’ even if we haven’t applied, people will think we are not a good gallery enough. Because we are not in that fair, so you have to keep on doing that and some years are very good and some years are ‘ok’”[04].*

Jyrama and Morel (2009) pointed out that “only by acquiring legitimate status, reputation as a ‘serious gallery’ firms can survive and succeed within the core of the contemporary art market”(p.8).

Similarly, the findings show that participating to specific art fairs is a way through which art galleries become legitimate within a specific circuit. For instance, by participating in Loop a particular gallery that focuses on video art, becomes legitimate within a network of galleries and other art professionals that also focus on video art. At the same time through the interaction with the actors that operate in the field of video art, that gallery develops over time a reputation for being a “serious gallery” with a clear focus on video art. The reputation that the gallery develops, allows the gallery to enter other fairs that are more selective. In this view as a gallery owner explained a gallery makes its steps higher and higher by attending art fairs: *“it’s ... joining the discussion and understanding the lingo within this world and use this lingo to make your steps higher and higher and higher..”[09]*

Power and Jansson(2008) in their study on design trade fairs, pointed out that fairs are less temporary clusters than they are ‘cyclical clusters’. They suggest that these events should not be seen as isolated but interconnected in a global circuit. Moreover, they argue that firms can only benefit from participating in these events if they continuously take part in them.

The findings show that galleries needs to participate on a long term-basis in the same art fairs if they want to build their reputation within the particular “art world” of the fair.

Lampel and Meyer (2008) develop the concept of ‘Field Configuring Events’ that sees fairs and other trade shows as temporary social organisations in which “networks are constructed, business cards are exchanged, reputations are advanced, deals are struck, news is shared, accomplishments are recognised, standards are

set, and dominant designs are selected” (p.1026). Lampel and Meyer (2008) also suggest that these events are places for “information exchange and collective sense making” that “generate social and reputational resources that can be deployed elsewhere and for other purposes”(2008, p.1027).

Likewise the results show that repeated participation in specific fairs is a way through which the gallery develop a reputation, which they use to enter other fairs. They are more selective fairs, that are perceived to cover a higher position in the hierarchy of art fairs. As such the gallery makes its “*steps higher and higher and higher..*”[09]

## 5. Conclusion

This study set out to shed light on the relationship between legitimacy and reputation within a particular social context, the contemporary art world. By looking at art galleries' participation in contemporary art fairs, the research aimed to answer the following research question:

**How is participation to contemporary art fairs a means for commercial art galleries to maintain their legitimacy and at the same time to build their reputation?**

The study answered the question showing that art galleries maintain legitimacy and develop reputation by engaging in art fairs on a long term –basis. In fact, repeated participation to these events is necessary for art galleries in order to maintain social and cognitive legitimacy as well as to develop their reputation and the one of the artists. Art fairs resulted to be particularly relevant means through which art galleries meet these objectives. In fact, participation in art fairs allows art galleries to gain visibility and exposure and to maintain and create new relationships with a specific audience that otherwise they would not reach in the gallery's space.

According to Becker (1982): *“Reputations grow out of the way the art world assesses the relation between what an artist has done and what others doing similar work have done”* (p.361). As such, the art fair results particularly suitable setting for the research as it facilitate the participants to make comparisons on the presentations of the participating galleries. As economic geographers Maskell et al. (2006) pointed out, fairs like trade shows in other industries, are places for face-to-face interaction and idea generation, where firms meet their competitors and their clients in the same “short-lived hot spots of intense knowledge exchange” (Maskell et al., 2006, p.997).

The setting of the art fair enhances the tension that characterised the relationship of legitimacy and reputation, described by Lemmers and Guth (2015) as the “legitimacy paradox”. This is that in order to have a positive reputation, an organisation must conform to standards of legitimacy but in order to have a strong reputation, an organization must distinguish itself and challenging standards. The competitive environment of the fair forces galleries to compete for visibility to communicate to their stakeholders their ‘uniqueness and attractiveness’, in order to maximize their reputational standing and gain competitive advantage. Therefore, galleries in order to attract the attention of their desired public, need to exhibit a presentation that “stands out” and results different from the one by other galleries at the fair. On the other hand, participating galleries need to conform to certain norms, rules and values. The fair itself acts as a “regulator” as it forces galleries to adhere to certain standards. In fact, galleries have to meet certain standards in order to be selected as exhibitors. The findings are in line with the theory by Thomas (2007) whereby legitimacy results from the pressure on the organisation to conform to other similar organisations, while reputation arises from the pressure to be different. The findings confirm that while reputation respond to criteria of differentiation, legitimacy refers to criteria of imitation.

The study has several theoretical implications. Jensen, et. al (2012) argue that reputation is audience specific, as it depends on the perceptions and expectations of various audiences. Likewise, we found that art galleries develop their reputation at the fair by exhibiting a presentation that focuses on attracting the attention of a specific audience. This audience is composed by ‘art world’s insiders’ such as collectors, curators and museums’ professionals. Establishing a relationship with these actors, is particularly relevant for art galleries in order to develop a reputation for themselves and their artists. As for instance, curators might bring museum shows and further exposure to the gallery and its artists.

The respondents described the presentation they exhibit at the fair “*a snippet of what[the gallery] stand for*”. Thus, we applied the identity-based model by Foreman et al. (2012) to understand the relevance of the gallery’s booth for the development of the gallery’s reputation at the fair. Interestingly, the findings suggest that the gallery’s booth functions as a projected image of the gallery’s identity.

The study confirms and supports the conceptualisation of reputation by Jensen, et al., (2012), that describes reputation as attribute specific, as it contains information regarding specific characteristics of the firm. In fact, by showing a particular presentation at the fair, the gallery addresses a specific audience which possesses the knowledge to understand that presentation. The resulting interaction enables the reputation of the gallery to form with the desired audience. However the development of reputation occurs through repeated interaction with its audience over time.

For instance, a gallery that initially focuses on young artist might develop over time a reputation that becomes more defined and focused on young artist that works with video art. As such, the same gallery might be able to distinguish itself in the field positively, by following a consistent programme. Attending art fairs where similar galleries participate as exhibitors is a means through which galleries develop and define their reputation, which can be seen as a process. Likewise, art fairs develop a reputation over time by selecting galleries that share specific attributes. As reputation is passed through the actors’ relationships (Becker, 1982), art fairs are labelled, becoming the fair “for young art”, the fair for video art, a “curators’ fair” for instance. Thus, we suggest that, reputations are similar to ‘labels’, as reputation is always “for something” (Foreman et al.,2012). However, they do not work as ‘marks’, as reputations are dynamics and change over time.

Reputation resulted to be a process that develops through repeated attendance to art fairs. In fact, as pointed out by Powell and Jansson (2008) art fairs as trade shows and events in other industries, can be seen as “cyclical clusters”. They are events interconnected in global circuits and firms in order to benefit from participation in these events need to engage with them on a long-term basis. This perspective is useful to understand the role of art fairs for the participating art galleries which need to attend art fairs in order to establish new relationships and to maintain the existing ones. Therefore, participating in the same art fair every year, allows art galleries to increase “credibility” with their stakeholders. As artists, collectors, other galleries, curators, as well as the fair’s organisers expect the gallery to be at that fair. As such, missing these

appointments might be perceived as a signal that the gallery is “*not good enough*”. In fact, not being accepted to art fairs is for art galleries a signal that might tarnish the gallery’s reputation. The findings are in line with the ones by Jyrama and Morel (2009). On the other hand, being selected as an exhibitor, is perceived as a signal that a gallery meets certain standards.

Engaging in art fairs participation on a long term-basis, is also a mean for art galleries to maintain their legitimacy. Gallery’s owners as other entrepreneurs, need to participate in the field’s activities in order to acquire the norms and values specific to their industry (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). By attending the fair galleries maintain social legitimacy which is also emphasised by the art fair’s practices that shape interaction at these events. One of them is for instance, the location of the gallery’s booth within the fair.

Economic geographers (Maskell, et. al, 2006; Bathélet and Turi, 2010) described fairs and other trade shows as platforms that allow knowledge exchange and learning process to take place. From this perspective, participation in art fairs, is for art galleries a way to maintain social and cognitive legitimacy. In fact, repeated attendance is necessary for the art galleries as it allows them to keep track about new trends and developments. Cognitive legitimacy is a requirement that exclude art world’s member from the general public, in fact, knowledge of the norms and standards of the art world’s is necessary for the gallery’s work to result understandable to its audience. Interaction is needed for the reputation to form (Becker, 1982) and it occurs when the actors are accepted by the stakeholders (social legitimacy) and when they act in ways that result understandable to each other (cognitive legitimacy).

The study increases theoretical understanding on the relationship between legitimacy and reputation, by suggesting that legitimacy can be defined as a prerequisite of reputation. In fact, in order to build their reputation, galleries need to acquire and to work in the light of certain rules, norms, values and practices that allow the interaction with other actors in the field to take place. Without that interaction the development of reputation could not take place.

By looking at the expectations and perceptions of gallery owners on their participation to contemporary art fairs, the study results relevant for art fairs’ organizers that are taking distance from only selling space to become intermediaries who facilitate networking and interaction of the art world’ members and help to develop their reputation. The challenge for them is to remain competitive in the market by not losing their attractiveness for their main stakeholders: the art galleries. The findings show that attending these events is perceived by galleries as “a necessary evil”, as it forces them to focus on artists and art works that can be more easily sold at the fair. This explains the need expressed by the Director of Art Rotterdam to provide the fair with “*a more intellectual layer*”. The findings show in fact that art galleries are increasingly attracted by attending art fairs and other events such as art weekends, which are experimenting new ways for combining their being a market place with becoming platforms for cultural consumption. Therefore art fairs’ organisers need to find new solutions in this direction in order to remain competitive. The challenge for them is to adopt differentiation strategies in order to establish strong reputations and to position themselves in the market.

Despite having provide new theoretical understanding on the relationship between legitimacy and reputation and explored the relevant role played by contemporary art fairs for the business of art galleries, this study is not free of limitations. Although the application of a qualitative approach resulted to be particularly suitable for understanding the relationship between legitimacy and reputation within the contemporary art world, the study is not suitable for generalisation. Moreover, by looking at the business of art galleries at contemporary art fairs, the study focuses on a particular social context, consequently generalisations to other industries cannot be made. In fact as suggested by Jensen et. al, (2012) any research concerned with exploring reputation and related constructs should be aware of the social context in which these constructs arise. Therefore, there is the need for future research that focuses on understanding the relationships between legitimacy and reputation in other industries. A major limitation to this study is due to the restricted size of the interviewees' sample. Future research should focus on investigating art galleries' participation in multiple the contemporary art fairs, and expanding the research including gallery' owners from different countries and circuits. Moreover, due to it being a Master thesis, this study has a limited scope. A longitudinal study would allow researchers to shed light on the development of reputation of the art galleries over time. This calls for quantitative and qualitative research to analyse the connection between art galleries' participation to art fairs and the development of the galleries' reputation over time.

Concluding , the study shows that contemporary art fairs play an essential although pivotal role, for the business of art galleries. Participation to these events is especially relevant for young galleries as they are in the infancy stage of building their reputation. However, in order to benefit from participating in art fairs in terms of legitimacy and reputation building, galleries have to engage in these events on a long term basis. In fact, through repeated attendance they maintain social and cognitive legitimacy. At the same time by engaging in repeated interaction with the art world's players, they develop a reputation over time.

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## APPENDIX

### A: Interview Guide

STRUCTURE	RESPONDENTS GROUP			
	Gallery owners	Selection Committee	Director	Curator
<b>General Introduction</b>	Visit of the space Consent signed Comfort respondent Intro research Intro researcher Opening questions for contextualization Respondent involvement with the gallery	Visit of the space Consent signed Comfort respondent Intro research Intro researcher Opening questions for contextualization Respondent involvement with the gallery and with the fair	Consent signed Comfort respondent Intro research Intro researcher Opening questions for contextualization Respondent involvement with the art fair	Consent signed Comfort respondent Intro research Intro researcher Opening questions for contextualization Respondent involvement with the art fair
<b>Main Part</b> How is legitimacy created “how to be similar to other similars”	Development of the gallery	Development of the fair	Development of the fair	
	Respondent background	Respondent background	Respondent background	Respondent background
Process of building reputation “how to be different among similars”	Mission and Vision of the gallery	Mission and Vision of the Fair and the gallery	Mission and Vision of the Fair	Mission and Vision of the gallery
	Process to be recognised as a good practice	Process to be recognised as a good practice	Process to be recognised as a good practice	Practices through which galleries distinguish themselves as good galleries and practices for art fairs to distinguish themselves as good fairs
	Actors involved in the reputation building process	Actors involved in the reputation building process	Actors involved in the reputation building process	
	Criteria for the selection of the gallery 's programme (artists, artworks, activities)	Criteria for the selection of the gallery's programme (Artists artworks, activities)		Selection criteria for the programme of the exhibitions (artists, artworks,..)
			Information about the competition	
			Strategies to be competitive	
The roles of art fairs	Reasons for art galleries to attend art fairs	Reasons for art galleries to attend art fairs	Reasons for art galleries to attend art fairs	Reasons for art galleries to attend art fairs
	The public of the fair	The public of the fair	The public of the fair	The public of the fair
Legitimacy and reputation	Gatekeeping role of the fair , the Role of the selection process of the fair	Gatekeeping role of the fair , the Role of the selection process of the fair	Gatekeeping role of the fair, the Role of the selection process of the fair	Gatekeeping role of the fair , the Role of the selection process of the fair

			Roles of the different gatekeepers	Role of the curator in art fairs
	Galleries' admission requirements to art fairs	Galleries' admission requirements to art fairs	Galleries' admission requirements to art fairs	Galleries' admission requirements to art fairs
	Indicators revealing the Status of the participating galleries at fairs	Indicators revealing the Status of the participating galleries at fairs	Indicators revealing the Status of the participating galleries at fairs	Indicators revealing the Status of the participating galleries at fairs
Reputation at the fair How to be recognised, by whom	Selection process and criteria for the selection of the booth presentation	Selection process and criteria for the selection the booth presentation		Selection criteria for exhibitions and art fairs
			Selection process and criteria for the booth allocation	
Degree of agreement gatekeepers' decisions	Ways to deal with conflicts	Ways to deal with conflicts	Ways to deal with conflicts	Ways to deal with conflicts
		Selection process for the galleries admission	Selection process for the galleries admission	Selection process for the galleries admission
Qualities of reputable art fairs	Art fairs' selection	Art fairs' selection	Criteria used by galleries to select art fairs	Art fairs' selection (to work with)
	Relationship with participating galleries	Relationship with participating galleries	Relationship with participating galleries	Relationship with participating galleries
	The role of the fair as knowledge exchange platform	The role of the fair as knowledge exchange platform	The role of the fair as knowledge exchange platform	The role of the fair as knowledge exchange platform
	Role of cultural activities	Role of cultural activities	Role of cultural activities	Role of cultural activities
	Pros and Cons of art fairs attendance	Pros and Cons of art fairs attendance	Pros and Cons of art fairs attendance for art galleries	Pros and Cons of being a curator of art fairs
	Art Fairs on the Calendar	Art Fairs on the Calendar	Art Fairs on the Calendar	Art Fairs on the Calendar
			Main difficulties concerning the organisation	Main difficulties concerning the organisation
Conclusion	Future challenges  Thoughts about the market and the art fairs  Signal end interview  Check for missing questions  Asking for final comments or possible remarks  Contacts for possible further questions	Future challenges  Thoughts about the market and the art fairs  Signal end interview  Check for missing questions  Asking for final comments or possible remarks  Contacts for possible further questions	Future challenges  Thoughts about the market and the art fairs  Signal end interview  Check for missing questions  Asking for final comments or possible remarks  Contacts for possible further questions	Future challenges  Thoughts about the market and the art fairs  Signal end interview  Check for missing questions  Asking for final comments or possible remarks  Contacts for possible further questions  Thank for availability

	Thank for availability	Thank for availability	Thank for availability	
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## B: Coding List

Code name	Definition
Galleries legitimization process	Owner background Development of the gallery How to build the reputation of the gallery (the recipe= recognised legitimisation path) Gallery programme (focus=gallery's Identity) Artists selection process and selection criteria
Art fairs attendance	Reasons to attend art fairs Art fairs selection process (to which fair to go?, How many?) Different publics of the fairs Admission requirements The exhibition in the booth ("an eye-catcher")(What artists ? what artworks? How many Why?) How reputation is build by exhibiting at the fair Perceptions and opinions about art fairs' system attendance and the art market
Art fairs as legitimizing agents	Selection process for the participating galleries Selection criteria The role of the selection committee The role of the curator The role of the fair organisers The settings and the location of the booth
Art fairs as networking platforms	Interaction at art fairs Partnerships Relationships with collectors and other actors within the fair The role of the network
Art fairs as learning platforms	Attending art fairs as mean for galleries (and for other actors) to acquire knowledge
The organisers of the fair	The role of the director in shaping interaction How the fair create its reputation ("a village of experience") The relationship with the participating galleries Relationship with the hosting city
Hierarchical structure of the art world (the reputation circle)	Art fairs hierarchy Gallery hierarchy Commercial vs non Commercial values The relevance of "Being affiliated with the right team"
Future outlooks	Challenges Ambitions Changes in the market Alternatives to the traditional fair's format
Issues	Difficulties Risks Changes in the market Conflicts

# C: Art Rotterdam floor plan

### Main Section

37	AKINCI (NL)	71	Hogedier Gallery (BE)
42	Andreaschuck gallery (NL)	75	Kaatsberggalerie (NL)
7	The Gallery Apert (IT)	78	Koesters (NL)
79	ADP Gallery (DE)	8	Wolven Baars Project (NL)
54	Willem Baars Project (NL)	82	Van Amerongen (NL)
58	Basel Art Project (BE)	83	Basel Art Project (BE)
59	Basel Art Project (BE)	84	Basel Art Project (BE)
60	Basel Art Project (BE)	85	Basel Art Project (BE)
61	Basel Art Project (BE)	86	Basel Art Project (BE)
62	Basel Art Project (BE)	87	Basel Art Project (BE)
63	Basel Art Project (BE)	88	Basel Art Project (BE)
64	Basel Art Project (BE)	89	Basel Art Project (BE)
65	Basel Art Project (BE)	90	Basel Art Project (BE)
66	Basel Art Project (BE)	91	Basel Art Project (BE)
67	Basel Art Project (BE)	92	Basel Art Project (BE)
68	Basel Art Project (BE)	93	Basel Art Project (BE)
69	Basel Art Project (BE)	94	Basel Art Project (BE)
70	Basel Art Project (BE)	95	Basel Art Project (BE)
71	Basel Art Project (BE)	96	Basel Art Project (BE)
72	Basel Art Project (BE)	97	Basel Art Project (BE)
73	Basel Art Project (BE)	98	Basel Art Project (BE)
74	Basel Art Project (BE)	99	Basel Art Project (BE)
75	Basel Art Project (BE)	100	Basel Art Project (BE)

### New Art Section

98	All Together New (NL)	120	Basel projects (CH)
99	Art Project (NL)	121	Basel projects (CH)
100	Art Project (NL)	122	Basel projects (CH)
101	Art Project (NL)	123	Basel projects (CH)
102	Art Project (NL)	124	Basel projects (CH)
103	Art Project (NL)	125	Basel projects (CH)
104	Art Project (NL)	126	Basel projects (CH)
105	Art Project (NL)	127	Basel projects (CH)
106	Art Project (NL)	128	Basel projects (CH)
107	Art Project (NL)	129	Basel projects (CH)
108	Art Project (NL)	130	Basel projects (CH)
109	Art Project (NL)	131	Basel projects (CH)
110	Art Project (NL)	132	Basel projects (CH)
111	Art Project (NL)	133	Basel projects (CH)
112	Art Project (NL)	134	Basel projects (CH)
113	Art Project (NL)	135	Basel projects (CH)
114	Art Project (NL)	136	Basel projects (CH)
115	Art Project (NL)	137	Basel projects (CH)
116	Art Project (NL)	138	Basel projects (CH)
117	Art Project (NL)	139	Basel projects (CH)
118	Art Project (NL)	140	Basel projects (CH)
119	Art Project (NL)	141	Basel projects (CH)
120	Art Project (NL)	142	Basel projects (CH)

### Prospects & Concepts

1	Enthousiast Aden	28	Inghar König
2	Goose Bait	29	Sussex Foot
3	Silva Baler	30	Maurits Koster
4	Solomon Baugh	31	Peer de Kraker
5	Marten Borek	32	Charl Lambreght
6	David Borek	33	Johannes Langendoorn
7	De Buijs	34	Ja Lantier
8	De Buijs	35	De Buijs
9	De Buijs	36	De Buijs
10	De Buijs	37	De Buijs
11	De Buijs	38	De Buijs
12	De Buijs	39	De Buijs
13	De Buijs	40	De Buijs
14	De Buijs	41	De Buijs
15	De Buijs	42	De Buijs
16	De Buijs	43	De Buijs
17	De Buijs	44	De Buijs
18	De Buijs	45	De Buijs
19	De Buijs	46	De Buijs
20	De Buijs	47	De Buijs
21	De Buijs	48	De Buijs
22	De Buijs	49	De Buijs
23	De Buijs	50	De Buijs
24	De Buijs	51	De Buijs
25	De Buijs	52	De Buijs
26	De Buijs	53	De Buijs
27	De Buijs	54	De Buijs

# ART ROTTERDAM 2016 FLOOR PLAN

**citizenM cinema**

citizenM Hotels and Art Rotterdam present an interactive film compiled by art critic and writer Hans den Hartog. In his film Den Hartog uses illustrations to personal highlights of the fair and puts these into an art historical frame. The film runs at the citizenM cinema all interactions and starts every quarter of an hour.

**Artists in the film**

**Projections**

115	Shirley Moulton - 1846 (NL)
116	Peter Brouwer & Margje Luidjckx - AKINCI (NL)
117	Jakko Jans - anti-matter eye gallery (NL)
118	Tomasz Gajdzis and Kasper Hahn - Elfen de Buijs Projects (NL)
119	Kerstin Napper - robus (NL)
120	Els Van den Meerch - Anne Gerrits Gallery (BE)
121	Li Magi Lian - Wilfred Lantier Rotterdam (NL)
122	Hans Do de Bree - Galerie Ron Mandou (NL)
123	Hans Do de Bree - Galerie Ron Mandou (NL)
124	Chen Chun-jen - Liu Robert (FR)
125	Shirley Moulton - 1846 (NL)
126	Emma van der Put - tegenwoordicheden (NL)

**Artsy app**

Art works are also available online at the platform Artsy, see [www.artsy.net](http://www.artsy.net) or download the app for iPhone and iPad. Artsy is this year's exclusive online partner of Art Rotterdam.

**Tickets/Info**

**Classroom**

**Entrance Art Rotterdam**

## Reflections Room Public Program

**Thursday 11 February**  
**Encounters: Art & Context**  
 By Hans den Hartog | Free entry

At a time when thinking in terms of traditional disciplines – such as art, music, dance and architecture – seems to function less and less, the definition of art seems to reside more in method than in appearance. Within the series 'public meetings' during Encounters, two international experts (per event) will be given space to highlight their artistic preoccupations and engage the audience in a discussion.

Hosted by Judith Kew, Director Stichting Lokaal

11:30 - 12:30 hrs - Encounter 1  
**Paula Giles**, researcher of sociology of art and politics  
**Joséphine Boime**, journalist and critic

12:35 - 13:40 hrs - Lecture + presentation essay  
**The Ujster**, Assistant professor in the philosophy of art and culture

13:45 - 14:45 hrs - Encounter 2  
**Schippers, Willem**, poet and essayist  
**Reinhold de Leeuw**, Conductor and pianist

14:50 - 15:30 hrs - Encounter 3  
**Mark Balin**, Artist-researcher  
**Ranier Kambouris**, Curator of contemporary art at De Huis van Haaren

15:30 - 16:00 hrs - Lecture + presentation essay  
**Micha Anderson**, poet

**Saturday 13 February**  
**The Technological Future and Art**  
 By Metropolis M | Free entry

Post-Internet, Post-Human, Circulation, Data-Mining, Data Geometry: the world of Art and Technology is being shaped by two of the most important and powerful forces of our time. The Art Magazine Metropolis M presents an afternoon on the new language of digital art and its implications for the way we create, share, and experience art.

Hosted by **Melanie Böhler**, founder and curator Amsterdam Innovation District Buglers, chief editor of Metropolis M

13:00 - 14:30 hrs - Keynotes by  
**Don Cas**, New York and London based writer  
**Florian Cramer**, researcher and media theorist

14:35 - 16:00 hrs - Case Studies + Q & A by the artists:  
**Remko Hopman**, **James Lund**, **Rebecca Stepien** and **Martin Heidecks**

16:00 - 16:30 hrs - Conclusion

**Refrein**  
 Laser projection by **Nathan Achterhuis**

**Ein Goldener Berg**  
 Installation by **Leonard van Munster**

**citizen**

**ARTSY**

**VENEMAN**

**De Groene Amsterdammer**

**YOUR OFFICE IS AN UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE**

**Reflections Room**  
 Thursday 11 February  
 Almost Familiar Place  
 Installation by **Vaiziro Kolakis**

**Entrance Art Rotterdam**  
 Friday 12 February  
 Coming Home  
 Installation by **Ryan Mendez**

**INTERSECTIONS A**  
 Friday 12 February  
 Refrain  
 Installation by **Nathan Achterhuis**

**INTERSECTIONS B**  
 Friday 12 February  
 Ongoing during Art Rotterdam  
 Kunsthuys 5b  
 All the Curators (part 1)  
 # "Tus" (2015/16)  
 interactive

**INTERSECTIONS C**  
 Friday 12 February  
 Framed Framed  
 An economical performance by artist Thomas Geiger that probes the limits of what a private building system can do to finance its own artistic projects in an independent way.

**citizenM cinema**

**Sunday 14 February**  
**Club Solo**  
 Cavity Live by **Ger Jan Prins** (12pm, 2pm & 6pm)  
 Ger Jan Prins focuses on the sonic and musical qualities of electronic noise and percussion and investigates its relationship with the visual.

**Framed Framed**  
 Homeless: Elsewhere is Somewhere near Nowhere  
 Performance by **sonnyfulcomforable** (2pm - 3pm)  
 Performance by **Walter Zuy** (3 pm - 4 pm)  
 Conversation between **Walter Zuy**, **sonnyfulcomforable**, **Berly** & **Amal Alhaag** (4 pm - 5 pm)

**75B and Studio Fd**  
 'are you afraid to be destroyed and recovered?'  
 With: **Kollet de Jong**, **lakes and vopels**, **loftwork**, **Wibbe de Boer**, **Julian Lopez** and **Peer Good** (4pm), **guitar**, **live guitar** and **soundscapes**, and **Volens van den Hoogen** (4pm - 6pm)