

# The emergence of the Romanian art market

An exploratory study

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## **Abstract**

Over the past decade Romania has been characterized by the emergence of institutions aimed at the consecration and commercialization of contemporary art such as galleries, art fairs, biennales, contemporary art museums and auction houses which publish yearly reports on the development of the Romanian art market. All these developments are indicators of an increasing professionalization of the Romanian art market as well as indicators of the current globalization of the art market which has been interesting regions all over the world since the 1980s.

As research on emerging art markets within the globalization framework underlines how the development of new markets occurs as a combination of adoption and adaptation of the Western art market model, this thesis aims to explore how is the Romanian context influencing the current development of the contemporary art market. The research draws on 12 in-depth semi structured interviews with relevant actors in the current Romanian art market and participant observation in important artistic events. Lastly, as most research on emerging art markets has focused on the BRICS countries, this thesis contributes to the literature on emerging art markets by offering insights on the current developments in a smaller country as Romania.

**Keywords:** emerging art markets, globalization of the contemporary art market, Romania, local context

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 RESEARCH BACKGROUND

For long the global contemporary art market was dominated by Western European and North American artists and institutions, however, starting with the 1980s, new players have emerged on the international art market. As a matter of fact, over the past three decades, the presence of artists and collectors from the BRICS<sup>1</sup> economies has become increasingly significant in the global art market (Velthuis & Baia Curioni, 2015). In particular, according to the 2017 art market report published by Artprice.com ( <https://www-artprice-com.eur.idm.oclc.org/artprice-reports/the-art-market-in-2017/2017-summary-the-art-market-enters-a-new-phase/> ), China's art market is the first one by auction turnover surpassing for the first times the US market.

The emergence of these countries on the global art scene is explained not only by the rise of a new upper middle class which sees art as “an object of desire, a status symbol, or a potential investment” (Velthuis, 2012, p.24) but also due to the development of the needed infrastructure for the valuation and legitimization of contemporary art, such as, art galleries, art fairs, biennales and museums. The above-mentioned infrastructure constitutes the European / American gallery model or dealer-critic model (White & White, 1965) and it developed in France at the end of the nineteenth century. In addition to the diffusion of this model, the boom of biennales and art fairs in various regions around the world together with the increasing influx of collectors from areas outside Europe or North America auctions are some of the most significant signs of the globalization process. As a matter of fact, starting with the new millennium art fairs have been rapidly burgeoning, going from 36 fairs in 2000 (Baia Curioni, 2012) to as many as 269 fairs in 2015 (Chan, 2015) and auction houses such as Christie's and Sotheby's have opened offices in countries such as Russia, India, and Mexico.

As Velthuis and Baia Curioni (2015) illustrate, these changes on the art market brought about a “celebratory discourse” of globalization which they dissect in six different assumptions on the globalization of the art market. Two of these assumptions are of interest for this study. The first assumption presents the globalisation of art markets is a teleological process that will lead to a convergence in the way art is traded across the globe (Velthuis and Baia Curioni, 2015). It is to say that, according to these assumptions, once nations have reached certain socio-

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<sup>1</sup> The acronym refers to Brazil, Russia, India and China and South Africa which are seen as four large developing economies.

economic conditions it is only natural that a market for contemporary art will arise and that the various emerged contemporary art markets will be structured and function in the same way. The second assumption is related to the first one, and it expects that the model all markets will converge to is the European/ American gallery model. More specifically, it is assumed that in order to have a legitimate system for trading contemporary art a country will need to adopt the European/American gallery model.

Nevertheless, a recent body of studies on emerging art markets has challenged these assumptions. For example, the case of Japan, which despite being one of the worlds' leading economies appears to be isolated from the global developments on the art market due to its reluctance to accept international curators (Favell, 2015) challenges the first assumption. Similarly, the study conducted by Kharchenkova, Komarova and Velthuis (2015) on the Official Art Organizations in China and Russia questions the convergence of art markets towards a unique model, as it illustrates how these institutions, inherited from the Mao and Soviet era, continue to exist and have an influence in the respective markets.

Furthermore, Kharchenkova (2017) and Komarova (2018) have illustrated how, despite the strong organizational isomorphism (DiMaggio&Powell, 1983) characterizing the art markets, the emergence of an art market is a multi-faceted process which cannot be merely equated with the implementation of the European/ American model in these new markets. For example, Kharchenkova (2017) explains how Chinese auction houses also operate on the primary market and are a prominent gatekeeper due to their stable presence on the market and the transparent way of setting prices. In addition to this, Komarova (2018) illustrates how in India art dealers tend to offer discounts even to first buyers, seeing this act as a sign of showing respect towards the customer not only to institutions (Velthuis, 2005).

## 1.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTION

So far literature on emerging art markets has focused on the BRICS countries. Nevertheless, similar developments can be seen also at the lower levels of the global art market, as in the Romanian case. In 2007, Plan B gallery was the only Eastern European gallery to be part of the Armory Show ([http://www.icrny.org/s15-2007-Galeria\\_Plan\\_B\\_at\\_the\\_Armory\\_Show.html](http://www.icrny.org/s15-2007-Galeria_Plan_B_at_the_Armory_Show.html)) and since then the number of Romanian galleries participating in international fairs has been increasing (artfacts.net). ). In fact in the past years (starting with 2005 and more intensively in the past three years<sup>2</sup>), the Romanian art scene has been characterized by an increase in the

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<sup>2</sup> According to the Artmark report

number of portfolio galleries and the emergence of other various institutions necessary for the legitimation and valuation of contemporary art (Artmark, n.d.). As a matter of fact, according to the latest Romanian art market report (Artmark, 2017), there are two biennales, -Bucharest biennale (2005) and Art Encounters (2015) which take place in Timisoara- four national auction houses- Alis (1990), Goldart (2008), Artmark (2008) and Lavacow (2014) the first online only Romanian auction house- an art fair, Art Safari (2014).

These elements, can be considered indicators of the emergence of a contemporary art market. Consequently, in line with previous studies showing the influence of the local context on the emerging art markets, in studying the emerging Romanian contemporary art market, qualitative research methods such as semi-structured interviews and participant observations, will be used in order to answer the following research question:

**How does the local context influence the emergence of the contemporary art market in Romanian?**

As previous studies have shown these influences can be seen both in the infrastructure of the market (Kharchenkova *et al.*, 2015) and in the way institutions adopted from the Western model function (Kharchenkova, 2017), this exploratory study will have two purposes: on the one hand present an overview of the Romanian art market infrastructure and understand whether there are pre-existent institutions or practices co-existing with the new institutions and practices, and, on the other hand, understand if and how galleries, the auction house, and the art events (biennale and art fair) function differently in the Romanian art market compared to the Western counterparts.

This thesis contributes to the literature on emerging art market in post-communist Countries (or in transitional economies) by exploring the structure of an emerging art market and illustrating how the various actors adopted from the Western model infrastructure of the art market function in Romania. Moreover, by illustrating the case of the Romanian case this thesis will contribute to the emerging body of literature showing that market emergence cannot be equated with the diffusion of Western blueprints, but it is a complex process of adjustment between elements of the local context, such as pre-existing practices and institutions and the new institutions, and the way organisational forms adopted from the Western model are adapted to the local context done (Kharchenkova *et al.*, 2015; Komarova, 2018; Komarova & Velthuis, 2018).

The remaining of the thesis is structured as follows: in order to be able to identify the elements of divergence between the Western model and the emerging Romanian art market Chapter 2 will present the main theories concerning the Western model and will present in-depth how four

of its main actors, namely, the galleries, the auction house, the art fair and the biennale function. In addition to this, it will present a brief overview of the Romanian context; chapter 3 will illustrate how the qualitative research was carried, present the sample and show how the analysis was carried on; chapter 4 will present the main findings by gathering the themes emerged from the analysis in two subsections: the “Romanian art market model”, and “Adaptation of the America/ European” model.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

As previously mentioned, the aim of this study is to explore the influence of the local context on the emerging art market in Romania. As the adoption of the European/ American model is a relevant part in the emergence of the market (Velthuis & Baia Curioni, 2015) the literature review will focus on the theories explaining the model and presenting evidence of its adaptations in emerging markets ( Kharchenkova, 2017; Komarova, 2018). Lastly, it will offer an introduction of the Romanian context which can help formulate some expectations how this emerging market is structured.

### 1.2 CONTEMPORARY ART MARKET: THE EUROPEAN/ AMERICAN MODEL

This section will present an overview of the main characteristics of the contemporary art market and briefly illustrated the process of value creation for contemporary art as theorized by Rodner and Thompson (2013).

Velthuis (2011a) defines “art markets as the place where supplier and buyers exchange cultural objects” (p.33). As the definition illustrates, it is more accurate to refer to a multitude of markets when referring to the arts. This is because the structure of the of the art market is given by the different levels of trading: primary and secondary (Robertson, 2005; Velthuis, 2011a). The primary market deals in artwork that appears on the market for the first time. The work of art can be bought directly from the artist or through an intermediate, a dealer. According to Robertson (2005) dealers operating in this market tend to be young, energetic and operate on small margins with almost no stock. Whereas, the term secondary art market refers to the subsequent sales of artwork. It can be done both by dealers that operate in the secondary art market or by auction houses. In addition to the structure division, the art market can also be divided into various categories based on the type of commodities such as paintings and drawings. Another possible division is given by the temporal sector. For example, within the painting category, artworks are divided between “Old Masters,” “modern art” and “contemporary art” (Robertson, 2005). However, all art markets share a common trait: they trade heterogeneous goods (Velthuis, 2005). It is to say, artworks are unique and almost non-substitutable. This characteristic makes the art market a combination of monopolistic markets.

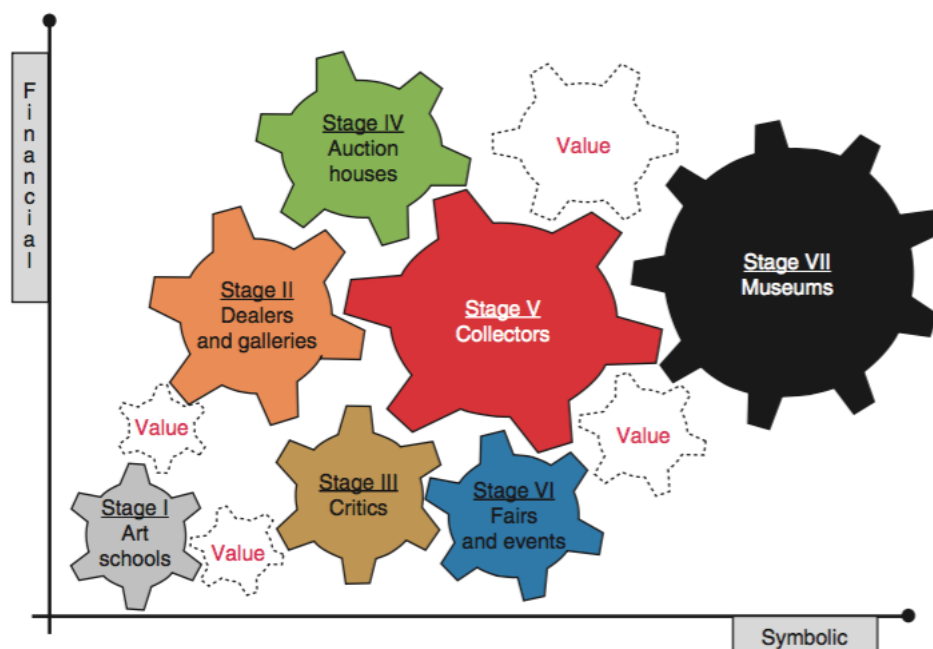
The nature of the product determines another relevant characteristic of the art markets, which is uncertainty. From an economic point of view, artworks have the properties of credence goods which means that their value cannot be objectively determined (Bonus & Ronte, 1997;



Velthuis, 2011;). The difficulty in establishing the value of artworks creates information asymmetries which in turn lead to uncertainty (Akerlof, 1970). This is especially true for contemporary art which does not have the aura of worthiness given by age, as in the case of Old Masters (Rodner & Thomson, 2013). Consequently, in order to overcome this uncertainty, various gatekeepers and experts in the art world collaborate to confer symbolic and financial validation to contemporary art (Caves, 2000; Arora & Vermeyleen, 2012; Rodner & Thomson, 2013).

In trying to unveil the validation process of the contemporary art market, Rodner and Thomson (2013) have introduced the metaphor of the “art machine” which conceptualizes seven stages that can help the artwork of a contemporary artist gain both financial and symbolic value. Their framework builds on previous theories which focused on illustrating the essential components necessary for the commercialization and validation of contemporary art (Roberson, 2005). However, what distinguishes the model of the art machine is that the elements are interlocking (Rodner and Thomson, 2013). In fact, it presents the contemporary art market as a network in which the various actors in the contemporary art market are connected and work together towards the creation of value as illustrated in the subsequent paragraph.

**Figure 1 The value creation process as illustrated by Rodner & Thomson (2013)**



Source: Rodner & Thomson (2013)

The value creation process starts with the art schools which confer the first legitimization to young artists and are a platform for interests from other actors in the art market, such as galleries, or residencies. The second and third stages are that of the gallery and that of the critics. Ideally, after graduation, the artist finds a gallery or a dealer who represents the second stage of the value creation process. The gallery or dealer will promote the artists by exhibiting and selling her work, this representing the debut of the artist on the primary market. Moreover, the gallery or dealer will try to stimulate the interest of critics, who can confer the artist and his art symbolic value. Stage four and five represent the passage of the artwork from the primary to the secondary market and illustrate how the auction house and the collectors add both financial and symbolic value to the artwork. The sixth stage is that of art fairs and biennales. These events are complementary and, participating in high-profile art fairs, or biennales confer the artist a “seal of approval” within the industry (Rodner and Thomson, 2013). The last stage is that of the museums; once a museum has acquired and exhibited a work of art, the work of art receives the highest institutional approval.

Rodner and Thomson’s (2013) framework can be enriched with Robertson’s (2005) division between commercial firms (such as dealers) which have the role of selecting, controlling supply and commissioning information, and governmental cultural institutions which have can validate commercial actors’ choices and consecrating the works of art by exhibiting and collecting them.

The subsequent paragraphs will illustrate in more detail how those actors considered as symbols of the globalization of the contemporary art market, contemporary art galleries, auction house, and the art fair-biennale pair (Velthuis & Baia Curioni, 2015; Vermeulen, 2012) function and the role they play in the contemporary art market.

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### 1.2.1 CONTEMPORARY ART GALLERIES

This section will present some of the distinctive traits of contemporary art galleries and how they function in the European/ American model.

In the European/ American model contemporary art galleries are the primary gatekeepers in the art market for they are usually the ones assuming the risk of selecting emergent artists and introducing them to the art market (Rodner & Thomson, 2013). The dealer stimulates and maintains the creation of contemporary art markets by promoting the group of artists she represents by stimulating the critical acclaim and getting all the other actors in the art market such as museums, curators, biennales and art fairs interested in “her” artists. This model is also known as the “dealer-critic system” and was theorized by Harrison and Cynthia White in their book *Canvases and Careers* (1965, as cited in Moulin, 1966). It developed at the end of the nineteenth century when

dealers shifted their focus “from selling individual canvases to selecting a limited number of artists and actively promoting their careers” (Velthuis, 2005). An important contribution to the understanding of how contemporary art galleries function in the Western world was brought by Olaf Velthuis with his sociological study on contemporary art galleries in Amsterdam and New York, *Talking Prices* (2005). His work was one of the main sources in the definition of this section.

What is undoubtedly one of the main traits of contemporary art galleries is their dualistic nature as both cultural and commercial organisation. Unlike other actors in this market which nature is more defined as either cultural (e.g. museum and biennales) or commercial (e.g. auction house and art fairs), the contemporary art gallery finds itself functioning between the symbolic and commercial world (Velthuis, 2005), between the sacred and the profane. Therefore, as uncertainty in the art world is overcome by the accumulation of symbolic value (Arora & Vermeulen, 2012; Rodner & Thomson, 2013), contemporary art galleries are constructed and behave in ways that conveys a rejection of the commercial world, order to affirm their status (Velthuis, 2005). This rejection of the commercial world is visible in the location of the galleries, their architecture and the practices/ strategies of the gallery.

According to Velthuis (2005) one first symbolic negation of the commercial world can be seen in the fact that (avant-garde) contemporary art galleries often choose to locate themselves in more peripheral areas far from shopping-districts or other high-traffic areas. The other element of distinction from the commercial world is the architecture of the gallery: the white cube model. The austere and minimalistic architecture of contemporary art galleries recalls the atmosphere of museums and is considered as one of the main examples of market isomorphism (Velthuis, 2005; Velthuis & Baia Curioni, 2012; Kharchenkova *et al.*, 2015). Inside the white space, there are no price tags close to the individual artwork and if a piece is bought it will not be removed from the wall until the end of the exhibition (Velthuis, 2005). Moreover, often this white front room is complemented by the presence of a back room where all commercial activities take place. This division between front and back room symbolises the dual nature of the gallery itself (Velthuis, 2005). Lastly, the demise of the commercial world is underscored also by their selling practices. In selling an artwork on the primary market, dealers practice what Velthuis (2005) defines as the “waiting game”, in which “the artwork supposedly sells itself” (p.41). In order to facilitate the sale of the artwork, they stimulate the critical acclaim.

According to Komarova & Velthuis (2018), the opening of a gallery is very important move for the emergence of a contemporary art market since galleries are the main stimulators of the market in trying to promote the artist they represent. Because gallery owners seek to produce belief in the value of the artists they represent, they are the ones trying to create networks among those

that possess the necessary “symbolic capital” (Bordieu,1983) to validate their artists. It is hard to estimate the actual number of contemporary art galleries in Romania as there is no unique database of galleries and various sources present different numbers. One reliable source can be ArtFacts.Net<sup>3</sup> where there are listed 47 private galleries most of which are concentrated in Bucharest (27), Timisoara (5), Cluj (6).

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### 1.2.2 AUCTION HOUSES:

According to the art machine model (Rodner & Thomson, 2013), the sale at auction is what reintroduces the artwork in the commercial circuit and, an important, step in the value acquisition process. Consequently, this section will briefly present some of the characteristics of an auction and the role this actor plays in the market.

First of all, as previously mentioned, auction houses operate on the secondary market (Velthuis, 2011a) which means that before going to auction, an artwork has been already validated at “lower levels of the art machine” (Rodner & Thomson, 2013). The main reason why auctions are avoided on the primary market is the uncertain nature of artworks and the fact that prices have a signalling function (Velthuis, 2005; Kharchenkova, 2017) thus if a price fails to reach the level reached previously, this can be interpreted by potential buyers as a decline of the reputation or quality of work of an artist (Velthuis, 2011c). Therefore, before going to auction the work of a contemporary artists needs to be validated by other intermediaries of the art market such as galleries, prizes, critics, collectors and so on (Velthuis, 2011c).

They operate as an intermediary between the consignor and the final buyer reason why both the buyer and the consignor have to pay the auction house a fee (Ashenfelter, 2011). The buyers’ premium usually varies 10 to 25 per cent, with the fraction being lower for higher-valued sales, whilst the consignor’s percentage is lower, ranging from 15 to 5 per cent (Ashenfelter, 2011). Furthermore, often, the consignor is charged a fee also if an item does not sell and usually this fee is a percentage of the reserve price<sup>4</sup> established by the consignor, this way the seller is incentivized to keep the reserve price low (Ashenfelter, 2011). In return for these fees the auction house performs various functions both for the consignor and the bidders. For example, after obtaining the consignment the auction takes care of storing, transporting, researching the authenticity and provenance of the work of art, making catalogues, arranging delivery after the purchase and so on (Thompson, 2008). As on what concerns the services for the bidders, some of these include the condition reports, phone bidding, and transport of the work of art (Thompson, 2008).

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.artfacts.net/index.php/pageType/galleries/sel1/geo/sel2/0/country/26/lang/1>

<sup>4</sup> A price the consignor negotiates with the auction house, under which the item is not sold.

Art auctions follow the English model where the bidding starts low gradually goes up as bidders increase their bids (Ashenfelter, 2011). As a matter of fact, every aspect of the auction is designed to instigate competitiveness among bidders in order to reach as high prices as possible (Rodner & Thomson, 2013). Once the bidding stops the item is “knocked down” at the hammer price (Thompson, 2008). Although auctions might appear as transparent, there are various elements that give these events a mysterious aura. One of these elements is the secrecy of the reserve price and the fact that items are hammered down even if the bid did not reach the reserve price (Ashenfelter, 2011; Fuchs, 2012). According to Thompson (2008), auction house specialists suggest two main reasons why this price is not disclosed: the auction would have to start from this price if this were disclosed and bidders might be incentivized to wait for the painting to pass and negotiate a private sale.

Despite the various ambiguities surrounding the activity of auction houses, auction sales are a relevant step in the value gaining process of a contemporary art work, enabling the translation of symbolic value into commercial value. Both the reputation of the collector selling the artwork and that of the auction house have an important validating role and contribute to adding value to the work of art (Rodner & Thomson, 2013). Besides, their validating role, auctions are also important information tools for other uninformed sellers (Ashenfelter, 2011). Through the published results, an uninformed seller can obtain information on the value of an item they own, as the values set at an auction influence the prices set in transactions outside the auction system (Ashenfelter, 2011).

The global art market is dominated by Christie’s and Sotheby’s duopoly which own 80% of the world auction market in 2006 (Thompson, 2008). The two English auction houses have a strong validating role on the international art market “conferring upon the art they sell the benefit of their own reputation” (Rodner & Thomson, 2013). These big players were also the model for Artmark, a national auction house founded in 2008. Artmark is currently the biggest player on the auction house market in Romania owning 80% of the market shares (The Romanian art market report, n.d.). Other important auction houses in Romania are: Alis, Goldart, and Lavacow (Artmark’s online only subsidiary).

Comparable to developments in other emerging art markets, as illustrated by Vemeylen (2015), the emergence of local auction houses can be considered a sign of adoption of the Western art market model. However, as Kharchenkova (2017), has illustrated, in a young market where practices are still unsettled, auction houses can function differently than in the Western model, as it happens in China. According to Kharchenkova (2017), due to their stability in the market, their luxurious character, and the transparent price-setting mechanism of the auction, these actors have a

leading role on the Chinese art market. Therefore, in a young context as the Romanian one, the auction house might have a similar role.

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### 1.2.3 ART FAIRS AND BIENNALES

Unlike the actors presented in the previous sections, art fairs and biennales are temporary events taking place either annually, in the case of art fairs, or biannually, in the case of Biennales. They are distinct events as one is more market oriented and the other is more artistically oriented, but they do share common traits. This section will briefly introduce these events and illustrate focus on their common traits which can help understand their function in the art market.

First of all, here are some of the differences between these two events. Art fairs have the aim of creating a temporary market place in order to facilitate the match between supply and demand, and supposedly have no curatorial ambitions, whereas biennales have strong curatorial ambitions and collaborate with museums, critics, and curators (Baia Curioni, 2012). Furthermore, art fairs are for-profit organizations and work with galleries which have to submit an application to the art fair with the artists you want to “sell” and if accepted rent a booth for the duration of the art fair, which can be quite expensive (Van Hest & Vermeulen, 2015). Conversely, Biennales are organized around a concept: each edition a curator (or a group of curators) is invited to develop a concept and choose the artists that better fit the defined concept (Van Hest & Vermeulen, 2015). Thus, while one of the actors is more commercially orientated and can influence the financial value of an artwork, the other is more artistically-oriented and can influence the symbolic value of an artwork and his/her artists. However, as the subsequent paragraphs will illustrate they share various common traits.

The first common trait is that they both play an equally important role in conferring a seal of approval to an artwork (or the artist) (Rodner & Thomson, 2013). This, is especially true if they are high-profile international events such as Art Basel or Venice Biennale (Thompson, 2008; Rodner and Thomson, 2013). According to Khaire’s (2015) framework, they do so by introducing new artists (or actors) on the market; by contributing, alongside other intermediaries such as critics or museums, to instruct consumers on the symbolic value of the artworks; and they, select only a limited number of artwork or artists whose merits they recognize. It is important to note that in the case of art fair or biennales the introductory function might be limited as Lee and Lee (2016) indicated, as dealers predominantly cover this role, while the instruction function might be stronger in an emerging market as in the case of India Art Fair (Vermeulen, 2015). In addition to performing the above presented tasks, according to Khaire (2015), intermediaries should also possess independence and expertise in order to have a significant impact on validating the artworks.

The second common element of these events is their proliferation over the past two decades which makes them one of the major indicators of the art market's globalization (Baia Curioni, 2012; Vermeulen, 2015). As Baia Curioni (2012) illustrates while in 1970 there were only 10 biennales and 3 art fairs, while in 1990 there were fourteen art fairs and twenty biennales. However, the real boom of these events started with the beginning of the new millennium, as a matter of fact, in 2011 there were circa 189 art fairs and more than 100 biennales (Baia Curioni, 2012). Nowadays, they are considered an important manifestation of the internationalization of the art market and are seen as evidence of the development of an emerging art scene as they seek to attract foreign galleries and artists as well as international collectors or audiences (Vermeulen, 2015). By doing so they become important vehicles for marketing art (Vermeulen, 2015) and allow galleries or artists to develop and maintain relationships with key actors in the global market (Yogev & Grund, 2012).

Although these events are hailed as a main force for the integration of the international art world (Vermeulen, 2015) empirical evidence suggests that these assumptions might not be entirely true. In studying the India Art Fair Vermeulen (2012) has shown how local artists were over represented and how the event appeared to function more as a “catalyst” for the development of a home market more than a driver of globalization (Vermeulen, 2015). Similarly, Van Hest (2013) has demonstrated how, albeit to a lesser extent than art fairs or other institutions, biennales are also locally embedded and are “used as a gateway to the international art world for domestic artists” (p. 233). Consequently, as the Romanian art market is emerging, this might be the case also for the biennales and the art fair taking organized in Romania.

### 1.3 THE ROMANIAN CONTEXT

In order to understand the current developments of the art market in Romania and the adaptations of the Western art market model it is essential to briefly introduce the local context. This section will present a picture of the Romanian current context by briefly introducing the elements of the communist legacy and trying to define the role the Romanian government plays in the current developments of the art market.

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#### 1.3.1 THE COMMUNIST PAST

In understanding some of the peculiarities of the Romanian art market, it is relevant to understand its pre-existing institutional setting as these can determine the shape local markets take (Komarova & Velthuis (2017). Although almost 30 years have past since the fall of the

communism, it is still relevant to discuss some of the peculiarities of this regime which dominated every aspect of the social and political life the country for 50 years, as they can help understand some of the current challenges commercial actors in the contemporary art market might face.

During the communist era arts and culture were controlled by the State and used as means of propaganda. Moreover, similarly to Chinese and Russian cases (Kharcheknova et al., 2015), artists were organized in creative unions controlled by the party-state. The main official arts organization for visual artists was the the Romanian Visual Artists' Union (Uniunea Artistilor Plastici, UAP) was the one in control of the means of artistic production in the field of visual art (Preda, 2016). In fact, the Union owned all the galleries and artists' studios which were dedicated exclusively to exhibiting works of the Union's members. The Union's galleries were also the places where one could buy art. The prices however, unlike nowadays, were standardized<sup>5</sup> and established by the Union (Ilie, 2013). It is not clear what were the criteria according to which the Union was establishing the process, nevertheless, this indicates that the regime had an unique valorisation/ evaluation practices. In addition to studios and exposition spaces, the Union was also supporting the artists by granting them loans and pensions, covering their medical expenses, and providing them the needed materials to create public art (Preda, 2016). However, in order to have access to these benefits one had to comply with Social Realism style which led the country to almost fifty years of artistic isolation (Stoenescu, 2011).

Consequently, after the fall of communism, the country did not have the infrastructure (e.g., private galleries, contemporary art museums) or practices needed for the consecration of contemporary art and it took more than 10 years for the first commercial actors to emerge on the contemporary art scene (Ratiu, 2010). This was mostly due to the fact that the 90s represented a very frantic transition time characterized by “contradictory approaches, resistance of old structures and habits and sometimes a lack of initiative and political backup as well as a devaluation of culture's rank in the national budgetary system” (<https://www.culturalpolicies.net/web/romania.ph>). The only galleries selling art during the 90s were those belonging to the Visual Artists' Union, which continued to exist and protect the rights of its members after 1989, no support being given to artists outside the union. In addition to the Visual Artists' Union, Ratiu (2007) mentions other important players on the Romanian art scene during the 90s: the foreign public agencies, such as the Goethe Institute, the French

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<sup>5</sup> Prices would not go beyond 10.000 lei which approximately corresponds to 900 euros nowadays (Ilie, 2013).



Institute and the British Council and private foundations such as the Soros Foundation for an Open Society who established a Centre for Contemporary Art which contributed to the development of a diverse and dynamic art scene.

Consequently, as in the case of the Russian and Chinese market, the current structure of the emerging art market in Romania might be a combination between old and new institutions (Kharchenkova *et al.*, 2015)

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### 1.3.2 THE ROLE OF THE ROMANIAN GOVERNMENT

The government plays an important role in the development of a local art market by means of its public institutions which can validate contemporary art, and throughout the tax system and export restrictions (Robertson, 2005). Consequently, in this section I will present an overview of the current public arts institutions which and presenting the VAT tax and export restriction

First of all, according to Roberson (2005) public cultural institutions have the power to validate the choices of the commercial actors by promoting and collecting the art chosen by dealers and, over-time, convert contemporary art into the Old Masters of the future. On what concerns the Romanian case, the public institutions that necessary for the validation of contemporary art are quite limited. As a matter of fact, currently, there is only one public contemporary art museum which is the National Contemporary Art Museum which was open in 2004. In addition to the National Contemporary Art Museum, other local museums organize exhibitions for living artists (e.g., The Art Museums in Craiova or Cluj). However, it is not clear whether they also collect or not as none of the museums publishes their yearly budgets and a google search on the acquisitions of the National Contemporary Art Museum issues news items from 2007/2008 which to the acquisitions made by the museum. This shows that the public infrastructure needed for the validation art still needs to be developed.

The other two important elements through which the government can influence the development of the art market are the VAT and the export restrictions (Robertson, 2005). As a EU state member Romania complies to the main EU tax and export regulations. In Romania the sale of artworks is subject to a special VAT regime governed by the art. 1522 of the Fiscal Code according to which artworks are taxed at 24% at the margin. However, in addition to the VAT tax the buyer will also have to pay an additional art stamp tax of 0,5% on the selling price for fine art objects (<https://www.artmark.ro/auction-rules/>) according to the Law 35/1994. The money collected through this art stamp tax will be collected by the Visual Artists' Union. The export of artworks is regulated mostly by law 182/2000 and the Government Decision 518/2000 (<https://www.artmark.ro/auction-rules/>). According to the legislation, with the exception of

artworks certified as created by living artists, any other object that classifies as movable cultural good needs to obtain a temporary or permanent export license from the Romanian authorities.

Consequently, by complying to the EU regulations, the government does not pose great barriers to the trade of contemporary art (at least not for its export), however, it appears that its infrastructure for the validation of art is limited and it is unclear to what extent it functions. As museums have important roles in the “art machine” (Rodner & Thomson, 2013), this situation raises questions on the validation process of contemporary art in Romania.

## 2 METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides insights into the researched method used to explore the question guiding this research. More specifically, the first section will illustrate why data collection and data analysis methods compliant with qualitative methodology are appropriate for this study. The subsequent sections will provide information on the sampling methods and the sample used for this research, the analysis process, and lastly, the limitations of this study.

### 2.2 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHOD

This thesis aims to explore how local contexts influence the emerging art market in Romania? More specifically, it aims to provide an overview of the local structure and practices and explore if and how galleries, the auction house, and the art events (biennale and art fair) function differently in the Romanian art market compared to the Western counterparts. The research has an exploratory nature due to the lack of prior studies on the Romanian art market. Moreover, the nature of this study motivates the use of a qualitative approach, following the example of previous studies on the role of local context in the emergence of art markets (Kharchenkova, 2017; Komarova, 2018; Sooudi, 2015).

Furthermore, the nature of the research question itself makes the use of qualitative data collection analysis method the most appropriate method for answering this question. As mentioned by Komarova and Velthuis (2017), the role of the local context in the development of a contemporary art market can be explored through the lived experience of the agents that contribute to the creation of the market. This is because, “the effect the local contexts have on the development of markets is not direct but it is mediated via the interpretative frameworks that market actors use in order to make sense of their actions in the environment” (Komarova, 2018, p.170). Consequently, as qualitative research methods allow respondents to voice their experiences (Bryman, 2012), this research method dovetails the explored question.

The main data collection methods were in-depth semi-structured interviews with both intermediaries and artists in the Romanian art market, and participant observation (Bryman, 2012). The in-depth interviews helped me explore the respondents’ feelings and opinions about the discussed topics (Brennen, 2013) whereas the ethnographic observations helped me understand more about the space of the galleries and the practices of the actors I studied for the research. I complemented the use of these two methods with review of primary data from resources such as Artfacts.net, Artprice, in order to find reliable data on the main artistic institutions and artists, and 5 news articles on Romanian art market, artists but also the websites of the galleries (to see their artists and the fairs attended) and of the auction house.

In order to collect the data, I visited Bucharest twice. Once from the 20<sup>th</sup> of March until the 30<sup>th</sup>, period in which I had interviews with the representatives of the two art events (Bucharest Biennale and Art Safari<sup>6</sup>), the owners of three contemporary art galleries and three artists. In addition to the interviews, I visited three exhibition openings, other three galleries where I had informal talks with the owners or assistants of the galleries about the Romanian contemporary art scene and market and attended the “Spring auction” at Artmark, the main auction house in Romania. This first visit also allowed me to obtain contacts of other gallery owners in other important cities in Romania (Cluj and Timisoara). The second time I visited Bucharest was from the 16<sup>th</sup> until the 20<sup>th</sup> of May. During this time, I attended the opening of the Bucharest Biennale, visited Art Safari, and re-visited some of the galleries in Bucharest. More precisely, on the 17<sup>th</sup> I attended the press conference which signed the official opening of the Biennale and, afterwards, I was invited to join a group of the participating artists and the curators in visiting the spaces of the biennale. This gave me the opportunity to have conversations with artists and curators. Moreover, being in Bucharest while the Biennale and Art Safari took place allowed me to learn about the reactions of other actors to these events. Due to time and resources limitations I have conducted my ethnographic research only in Bucharest as this is the city with the greatest concentration of art galleries and institutions (artfacts.net). However, I did want to interview intermediaries and artists also from Cluj and Timisoara, in order to understand whether there are differences between the cities. Consequently, I conducted 2 video-call interviews with 2 gallery owners and an artist-run space from these cities.

As previous research indicates that the influence of the local context can be seen on various levels (Kharchenkova *et al.*, 2015; Kharchenkova, 2017; Komarova, 2015). It can be seen both in the way the market is structured (complementarity of pre-existent institutions and practices and new ones) (Kharchenkova *et al.*, 2015), and in the way institutions adopted from the European/American model function. Consequently, in conduction the in-depth semi-structured interviews I aimed to understand the practices of the intermediaries and artists in the Romanian art market and learn more about their experiences in this nascent market as well as what are the main validators in this market. While I did create guidelines for the interviews, it is important to note that the use of semi-structured interviews allowed for room to pursue specific topics of interest to the respondents (Bryman, 2012). In defining the topics to be explored during the interviews I built guidelines for the three categories of subjects I interviewed, namely, gallery owners, event founders and artists (see

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<sup>6</sup> The planned interview was with the CEO of the event, however, the day of the interview she did not come. She sent the PR& Communication responsible to talk to me.

Figure 2, or [Appendix B](#) for more detailed guidelines). More specifically, in building the interview guidelines for galleries and artists I looked at how Komarova (2018) formulated their questions, in order to minimize the effects of my limited experience in conducting qualitative interviews.

While artists are not a main subject of study, I decided to include their perspective in my study in order to obtain a more complete image of this young art market. Moreover, incidentally, all the interviewed artists were also managers of non-profit or for-profit spaces, which to some extent, makes them intermediaries in the market. Conversely, the auction house was one of the subjects of my research, I could not obtain an interview with a representative. In order to compensate for this limitation, I attended the spring auction on the 27<sup>th</sup> of March and observed part of an online auction, studied their website and, asked respondents that have worked for or with the auction house more information about how it functions.

**Figure 2: Topics discussed in interviews for each category**

Galleries <sup>7</sup>	Artists	Events organizers
introductory questions		
motives to start a specific activity (or undertake a professional career in the arts )		
<b>The “business model”</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• work with artists</li> <li>• strategies for promoting artists</li> <li>• work with buyers</li> <li>• work with other actors in the market</li> <li>• financial structure</li> <li>• the space</li> <li>• general questions</li> </ul>	<b>Career development process</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• work with galleries</li> <li>• career development strategies</li> <li>• work with buyers/ collectors</li> <li>• work / collaboration with other actors in the market</li> <li>• general questions</li> </ul>	<b>The “business model”</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• general questions about the organization</li> <li>• selection criteria</li> <li>• instruction</li> <li>• the audience</li> <li>• financial structure</li> </ul>
the impact of participating in the local events (art fair or biennale) on reputation and network of the participants		
Perceived role in the market	-	Perceived role in the market
Perceived role of other actors ( e.g., auction house, galleries, Biennales, Art Safari)		
identify main validators of contemporary art in the country		

Source: Researcher’s construct

All interviews started with an inquire into the motives to start a specific activity (or undertaking a career in the case of artists) and tried to explore what each interviewee regarded as important tastemakers on the Romanian market and their opinions on other intermediaries in the Romanian art

<sup>7</sup> The guidelines for galleries and artists were I great part based on the ones developed by Komarova (2018)

market (e.g., the auction house, the two biennales, galleries). In addition to these topics, there were the ones that were specific of each category and aimed, in the case of the galleries and the events, to underscore those elements that differentiate them from their Western counterparts.

In total I conducted 12 interviews which on average lasted between 55 and 60 min with the exception of two which lasted 90 minutes. In conducting the interviews, I encouraged the participants to speak in the language they feel most comfortable with. Only two participants preferred using English instead of Romanian.

As mentioned above, the participant observation helped me gather data about the practices of exhibition openings and auctions in Bucharest but also the opinions of other actors active on the Romanian art market and helped me understand some of the characteristics of this young market mentioned by the interviewees (e.g., limited collaboration). In addition to this, visiting the galleries helped me gather information about their spaces and location within the city. As my main objective was that of having an overview of the whole Romanian market, in conducting the participant observation I chose to have an outsider position (Bryman, 2012). While I did attend various events and interact with people during the events, at no time did I actively participate in organizing any of the events.

### 2.3 SAMPLING

In defining the sample for the research I have adopted two sampling strategies complying with the qualitative methodology: purposive and snowball sampling. As “the influence of the local contexts can be understood by studying the lived experience of key mediators” (Komarova and Velthuis, 2017, p.61), I have tried to build a sample composed of mediators in the Romanian contemporary art scene which includes both commercial and non-commercial actors as they all play a relevant role in the validation of contemporary art (Rodner & Thomson, 2013). Due to time limitations I

**Figure 3. The number of respondents per main occupation**

Main occupation	n
Gallery owner/assistant	6
Biennale / art event co-founder/assistant	2
Artist	5
Total number of interviews	12

Source: Researcher’s construct

decided to focus mostly on galleries, art events (Biennale and art fair), and the main auction house as these are considered by literature as the most prominent signals of the birth of an art market (Baia Curioni, 2012; Vermeulen, 2015; Komarova and Velthuis, 2017). In addition to mediators, I decided to also interview artists in order to obtain a more comprehensive picture of the Romanian contemporary art market. It is important to note that, incidentally, all the interviewed artists were also managing non-profit or for-profit spaces which can qualify them as intermediaries.

As there is no unique database with all the arts institutions in Romania, in building the initial sample, I relied on *artfacts.net* which offers an extensive list with arts institutions in Romania and on snowball sampling in finding the artists. In addition to the institutions listed on *artfact.net*, I also decided to include Art Safari which, locally, is considered an important art event and extensively discussed in the local media. The two main criteria for selecting an art gallery were participation in international art fairs (certifiers of artistic quality) and, representation of living artists. On what concerns the selection of the artists, all interviewed artists, had formal training, sold at least one artwork, and exhibited at least once.

## 2.4 DATA ANALYSIS

This section presents an overview of the data analysis process. In order to analyse the gathered data, the interviews were transcribed verbatim and analysed by means of techniques in line thematic analysis as described by Nowell, White and Moules (2017). Notes on recurring patterns or contrasting opinions were taken during the data collection period and analytical memos were also added to the interviews (in the form of comments in Word) while transcribing them.

As already mentioned the analysis process started already during the data collection and the transcription of the interviews. Once the interviews were transcribed, the coding phase started. The coding process followed the methodology described by Saldana (2009) and was composed by two cycles. The first cycle of coding was done using Microsoft Word (codes were written as comments) and a combination of descriptive and in vivo coding; descriptive coding helped me pinpoint the most salient topics while in vivo coding allowed me to prioritize the respondents voice highlight the respondents' perception of the situation (Saldana, 2009). Moreover, already during the first cycle of coding I underlined in different colours the codes that belonged to the various topics of the interviews in order to facilitate the subsequent process (See Appendix C). The codes resulted from this first cycle of coding were then transferred in an Excel spreadsheet where they were first categorized by respondent and by the main topics explored during the interviews. Once the Excel database was complete, I started the second cycle of coding, which was aimed at individuating the

most salient categories and links between codes by following the recommendations given by Ryan and Bernard (2003). This second cycle of coding resulted in the creation of categories which were partly mirroring the categories explored in the interviews but also the emergence of new categories. These categories formed different themes: “local context”, “the Romanian art market model”, and “adaptation of the Western model”. In presenting the finding, the relation between the elements of the local context and the other themes will be presented.

## 2.5 QUALITY OF THE RESEARCH AND LIMITATIONS

According to Bryman (2012) reliability and validity are important criteria in establishing the quality of quantitative the research (p. 389). However, their applicability to qualitative research has been largely discussed. Some have suggested a different interpretation of the meaning of these words in order to adapt them to qualitative research (Manson, 1996, as cited in Bryman, 2012) while others have suggested different criteria. One of the alternatives suggested by Guba and Lincoln, (1994, as cited in Bryman, 2012) is trustworthiness.

First of all, in order to ensure the credibility of my results I have used triangulation “which entails using more than one method or source of data” (Bryman, 2012, p.392). In fact, the qualitative interviews were triangulated by the use of participant observation. In addition to this, in order to obtain a more objective image of the contemporary art market in Romania, I have interviewed different actors. Furthermore, to some extent, respondent validation (Bryman, 2012) was also applied to this research. During my second visit in Romania, I had a draft of the preliminary results which I discussed with a small group of people I had previously interviewed.

Secondly, triangulation and respondent validation together with the availability of the interview transcripts help ensure a certain level of dependability (Bryman, 2012). Moreover, the choice of interviewing different actors and not getting involved with the organization of any of the events, helped me maintain a neutral position and ensured confirmability (Bryman, 2012).

Lastly, limitations of this research arise from the fact that the nature of qualitative research encumbers transferability and generalization as “qualitative findings tend to be oriented to the contextual uniqueness and significance of the aspect of the social world being studied” (Bryman, 2012, p.392). Other limitations arise from the fact that due to time and financial limitations, I was only able to visit Bucharest, which makes so that most of my respondents are from Bucharest, while I have limited representation of the art scene in Cluj (only three artists) which is the second most important city for contemporary art (artfacts.net). Nevertheless, this is not a major limitation as making a comparison between the cities is not the scope of this exploratory research.



### 3 FINDINGS

This chapter presents the main findings of the research. In presenting the results this section will show how the local context<sup>8</sup> influences the emergence of the Romanian art market on two main levels: the structure of the market and its orientation, and the functioning of some those institutions that are considered as belonging to the Western model.

The following section will offer an overview of the structure of the Romanian art market and show what are the main elements distinguishing it from the Western model. The subsequent section will present an in-depth analysis of how those institutions considered as signs of isomorphism, such as contemporary art galleries, biennale and art fair and the auction house (Vermeulen, 2012; Velthuis & Baia Curioni, 2015; Kharchenkova, 2017; Komarova 2018) function differently in the Romanian context and what are the elements of the local context determining this adaptation.

#### 3.2 THE ROMANIAN ART MARKET MODEL

In presenting the “Romanian” art market model I will focus briefly presenting its evolution, its size and the actors, and I will focus on the the elements that distinguish it from the Western model. More specifically, it will show how in the Romanian case, as in that of other countries, the emergence of an art market is not merely an implementation of the Western blueprint but a more complex adjustment process of pre-existent practices and organizations and new models (Kharchenkova *et al.*, 2015), and how the

##### 3.2.1 THE EVOLUTION OF THE MARKET

As previously mentioned, the emergence of an art market in Romania is a relatively recent phenomenon when compared to other emerging markets such as China and Russia. There are no written accounts on the first developments of this market yet according to some of the interviewees (one of which was the founder of the second commercial gallery in Romania) the first commercial gallery was established around 2001-2002 in Bucharest.

“the first gallery opened in 2001, it was “Galeria de Interese” which actually was more of an artist run space, created by young graduates from the University of Arts in Bucharest, who

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<sup>8</sup> Local context to be understood as public agency, pre-existent institutions/ practices and socio-economic factors.

simply did not know what to do, they had no space to exhibit, so this was a first try, then “Galeria Posibila opened” which still exists and soon followed Dan Popescu’s H’art gallery which had a very clear exhibition programme and went to international fairs” [Gallery 3-1, p.43]

Throughout the subsequent years other actors necessary for the validation for contemporary art emerged, such as other commercial galleries which started to participate in international art fairs, the National Art Museum (opened in 2005) non-profit and artist-run spaces, biennales (Bucharest Biennale in 2005; Art Encounters in 2015), Art Safari (first edition 2014) which started as an art fair, Artmark (2008) which was the first auction house in Romania to organise a contemporary art auction<sup>9</sup> and at least one private contemporary art museum will open this year<sup>10</sup>. Currently, according to Arfacts.net, in Romania there are 45 private contemporary art galleries. However, this number is most probably smaller as some of the institutions mentioned by Artfacts.net are reportedly closed and the data base counts among commercial private galleries also some non-profit or artists-run spaces. Nowadays, the three main cities for contemporary art which are also the cities in which three important arts academies are located are: Bucharest, Cluj and Timisoara. The three cities appear to have different scenes: Bucharest is the city hosting most of the commercial galleries (artfacts.net); Cluj, home of the Paintbrush factory and Plan B gallery (which in 2007 was the first Romanian gallery to participate at the Armory Show in New York) appears to be dominated mostly by artist-run spaces; Timisoara occupies a quite marginal position if compared to the previous two cities, but with the foundation Art Encounters biennale it has become more relevant on the local scene.

“the Art Encounters Biennale, somehow put Timisoara on the art map again, since then a lot of things started to happen again even if they are still few galleries, I mean very few galleries, like two or three” [Gallery 4-1, p.64].

It is hard to establish the size of the contemporary art market in Romania due to the lack of systematic sales data or official directories. However, Artmark, the main auction house has been publishing yearly reports on the Romanian art market which contain information about the total volume of the auction sales. According to their report on 2016, the total auction sales in Romania reach 7,8 million euros, 15% of which (900.000 €) representing the sales of post-war and

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<sup>9</sup> According to one of the interviewees.

<sup>10</sup> five of the interviewees mentioned the upcoming opening of a private contemporary art museum, the Museum of Recent art.

contemporary art (Artmark,n.d). The top five selling artists for contemporary art on the auction market in 2016<sup>11</sup> in Romania were: Adrian Ghenie, Ion Tuculescu, Paul Neagu Corneliu Baba and Horia Bernea (see figure 4). The only living artist is Adrian Ghenie who is currently the most successful Romanian artist on the international art market (he is ranked 113<sup>th</sup> on artprice.com).

**Figure 4: Top auction prices for contemporary art in Romania (2016)**

Artwork	Artist	Price	Geographic distribution (according to <a href="http://artprice.com">artprice.com</a> )
Christ	Adrian Ghenie	€125.000	United Kingdon (73%)
Mare Albastra (“Blue sea”)	Ion Tuculescu	€65.000	Romania (97%)
Edgerunner 300	Paul Neagu	€50.000	Romania (74%)
Pieta	Corneliu Baba	€47.500	Romania (95%)
Coloana (“Column”)	Horia Bernea	€22.000	Romania (93%)

Source: Artmark(n.d.) Romanian art market report and artprice.com

This can be considered an indicator of the current demand for contemporary art in Romania. In fact, many interviewees underlined, the number of collectors who invest in living artists is still very limited.

At a first glance, this young art market appears to have an art market infrastructure complying with the Western model (Velthuis & Baia Curioni, 2015). However, this is only a part of the Romanian art market structure, as private/ commercial galleries, auction house and the art fairs are not the only organisations through which art is sold. The interviews and informal talks with various members’ actors on the art market revealed a series of differences between the Romanian art market and the Western model which are: “the co-existence of indigenous practices and institutions, and the new model”, “the hardly developed cultural infrastructure and the predominance of private actors” and the “international orientation and validation”.

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<sup>11</sup> This is the most recent data I could retrieve

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### 3.2.2 OLD AND NEW

The first element of divergence is the co-existence of indigenous practices and institution with the new ones. In fact, comparably to what happens in other emerging art markets, alongside this new emerging model, older practices or institutions still continue to exist, such as selling from the studio through unregistered dealers or through the galleries of the Visual Artists' Union. The practice of selling from the studio was probably already present during the communism (according to some of the curators I talked to) but it undoubtedly became popular during the 90s when there were no commercial galleries and the only "legal" manner of selling was through the galleries of the Visual Artists' Union to which one would have access only if a member of the union. It is true that this practice is not uncommon in the Western world either. In fact, according to Brouwer and Meulenbeek (as cited by Velthuis, 2005) on the Dutch art market 30% of the sales are from the artist's studio. However, what distinguishes the Romanian market is the fact that, in some cases, selling from the studio is a parallel activity to selling through a gallery. Some of the reasons behind this behaviour can be the fact that the artists are used to the "old system" and do not understand the added value of selling through a gallery:

"It [selling from the studio] used to be common since there were no galleries and it used to happen all the time. What I convinced all my older artists to do is to, if they sell from the studio, to sell the same price as in the gallery, so then the collector says well, it does not make any sense I'll buy from the gallery. It didn't happen very often to me, but it happened."  
[Gallery 4- 1, p.77]

In addition to this, similarly to what happened in Russia or China, Official Arts Organizations(OAO) founded during the communist regime continue to exist (Kharchenkova *et al.*, 2015). The main official arts organization in Romania is probably the Visual Artist Union which still owns some galleries thorough which members of the organizations can exhibit and sell. This organization was not one of the main concerns of this study, consequently, data gathered on the role of this organization is limited. However, the interviews with the four artists together with data gathered on the website of the organization provided enough information to understand that this organization is not a competitor of the newly emerged institutions. On the contrary, similarly to what happens in Russia the logic of this organisation resembles that of a welfare organization (Kharchenkova *et al.*, 2015). As a matter of fact, in exchange for a yearly fee of approximately 50

euros (<https://uap.ro/comunicat-privind-plata-cotizatiilor/>), members of the union have the right to exhibition opportunities, are entitled to a pension and have other mundane benefits.

The artists' perceptions of the Union were diverse. Of the five artists I interviewed, two were members and the other three did not have any interests in being part of the institution as they considered it had no added value for their careers.

“I thought about it several times, maybe I will need a pension [laughing]. No, I am not part of it. I think it is important for those who are interested in public institutions in Romania, such as museums, and for those who fit these kind of institutions. For me, it would be a loss of time and waste of money because you have to wait, it very bad what I am about to say, but you have to wait for a few generations to die, before you get a studio.” [Artist 1- p. 169]

While the artists that chose not to be part of the Union regarded it as an old fashioned institution which promotes mostly art “that has nothing to do with contemporary art” (Artist 3-1, p.220), one of the artists that was part of it mentioned that now there is a new generation of artists which are part of the Union and are trying to change it. Moreover, according to the respondent, the institution appears to play a role in the export of art as it is one of the institutions who can release an export certificate.

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### 3.2.3 THE LIMITED INFRASTRUCTURE

As the infrastructure for the validation of contemporary art is still developing, some of the “cogs” (Rodner & Thomson, 2013) appear to be less developed or active than others. It is the case of museums, experts such as critics or journalism and to some extent collectors.

In line with the expectations presented in the literature review ([See 2.2.2](#)), the support of public institutions to contemporary art appears to be limited. In fact, many respondents claimed that artists do not have many opportunities for exhibition. Non-profit spaces are limited, museums offer limited opportunities to exhibit contemporary art and, if they do, they do not support the costs of the exhibition.

“They [museums] offer artists the possibility to exhibit but at their own expenses” [Artist 1- p. 167]

Moreover, museums' acquisition of contemporary art appears to be limited. This goes also for the National Contemporary Art Museum, which last acquisition dates back to 2007.

“I have [my works] in a few museums, but if they buy, they buy very little. To be frank, most of the museums acquired my work as a donation, so they did not buy them. Still it was good, drawings, small works, you can imagine, because they have limited budgets, this is the issue. And the only acquisition made by MNAC (National Contemporary Art Museum) was the one in 2006-2007, the only one since the revolution until today” [Artist-2-1, p.192]

As the artist explains the main reason for this situation appears to be the limited public funding for the arts. This, in turn, has stimulated private actors to undertake the role of public institutions. A few examples are the choice of some galleries to offer their space for young artists to make their exhibitions during the summer or the private museums that two Romanian collectors are about to open as none of the Romanian museums offers the viewer the possibility to admire contemporary art.

“For example, this year, the first contemporary art private museum will open in Romania: the Museum of Recent Art, I worked with them, I have been working with them for the past 5 years for the permanent collection of the museums.” [Gallery2, p. 29]

Furthermore, as this is a young market, alongside with a limited number of institutions, respondents indicated that there is also a limited number of experts such as art critics, journalism or curators. In fact, while there are degrees in History of Art which can potentially form art critics, there is no course or degree for arts journalism or curatorial studies.

“Here in Romania there is still no course in curatorial studies, which raises some practical issues. You have no certified curator but everyone is a curator, this is a bit...” [Gallery 3-2, p.56]

This indicates that there is a limited number of experts or gatekeepers that can reduce the uncertainty of the Romanian art market (Arora & Vermeulen, 2012; Rodner & Thomson, 2013).

Lastly, collecting contemporary art is also a recent phenomenon which makes so that the collectors base is still limited and inexperienced:

“I wouldn’t say that there is a solid base of collectors because the collectors are also young, not as age but collecting as a phenomenon. It is still young. There are only a few collectors who reached a maturity, in the sense that they play an active role on the market.” [Gallery3-3, p.46]

This limited infrastructure influences the mechanism of the “art machine” (Rodner & Thomson, 2013) at a local level and can explain the characteristic illustrated below.

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#### 3.2.4 INTERNATIONAL ORIENTATION AND VALIDATION

The third element is “international orientation and validation”. In nowadays global art market, international recognition is the highest form of recognition (Roberson, 2005) thus galleries from all countries try to bring their artists to the attention of international experts or intermediaries. Nevertheless, the propensity of the commercial actors in this market to be internationally oriented is also driven by a sort of necessity as the number of Romanian collectors of contemporary art appears to be limited. In addition to this, it appears that participating in international fairs or events, is a strategy used also for attracting local collectors:

“Some galleries are more advanced because they started differently, they went overseas first but that was their approach. I support it, you know, because it is a good approach, because people here tend to pay notice if you have a made... if somebody overseas has given you an award or something form of validation, then suddenly they are interested as well.” [Gallery 1 – p-9]

The fact that collectors tend to be interested in buying an artist once his work has been validated internationally (as the auction results presented in Figure 4 confirm) can be considered an indicator of the fact that no Romanian institution has the power to consecrate the works of young artists which was confirmed by all the respondents.

This shows how the theory of the art machine (Rodner& Thompson, 2013) does not really apply at the local level in Romania, and confirms Kharchenkova’s theory (2017) according to which “in emerging markets valuation can be organised differently than in established markets” (p.99).

Overall, this section answers to the first sub-question: What is the Romanian contemporary art market model? It does so by presenting an overview of the actors on the market and illustrating

how, on the one side, his market is characterized by the co-existence of new actors with older organisations and practices ( Kharchenkova *et al.*, 2015). And how, on the other side, the new infrastructure is still young and underdeveloped which in turn affects the valorization process of contemporary art (Kharchenkova's theory, 2017).

### 3.3 “ADAPTATION” OF THE EUROPEAN MODEL

This section will illustrate how, in line with recent literature on the emerging art markets, not only the Romanian contemporary art market has a different structure compared to the Western model but also some institutions adopted from the Western art market model, function differently (Kharchenkova, 2017; Komarova 2018). More specifically, this section will illustrate how contemporary art galleries, the main auction house, one of the two biennales and the art fair, organisations considered as “symbols” of institutional isomorphism in the contemporary art market (Vermeulen & Baia Curioni, 2015), function differently in the Romanian context. In addition to illustrating the main differences compared to the European model, the section will also try to present what local factors can explain these differences.

#### 3.3.1 CONTEMPORARY ART GALLERIES

As previously mentioned, in studying the contemporary galleries, I tried to explore various topics related to the functioning of a gallery such as the relationship with artists and collectors, promotion strategies and their relationship with other actors in the market. In presenting the findings I will briefly introduce some of the most relevant differences between the Western model and the Romanian galleries, and illustrate how these differences can be explained by the local context. The findings presented in this section draw on the analysis of ethnographic notes taken during the two visits to Bucharest and six interviews with contemporary art galleries, four conducted this year and two last year<sup>12</sup>.

Comparable to their Western counterparts, contemporary art galleries in Romania revealed to be devoted to the long-term building of the careers of their artists. They do so by organising exhibitions, making catalogues, stimulating critical acclaim, taking them to art fairs and trying to position them in good collections (Velthuis, 2005; Rodner and Thomson, 2013). Art dealers have various backgrounds, some coming from families of collectors, others were friends of artists or

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<sup>12</sup> While the focus of my research last year was different, most of general questions on the gallery were similar. This year I only had informal conversations with the people of the gallery in order to ask more specific questions on their work with artists, and collectors.



related to artists, while other worked for other cultural institutions. The galleries as well have quite different artistic programmes, some focusing more on young emerging artists, other on more established artists; some promoting exclusively Romanian artists, other having a more international portfolio. Nevertheless, what they do have in common is the will to contribute to raising the profiles of the artists they represent and make them more visible both locally and internationally as the following quotes illustrates:

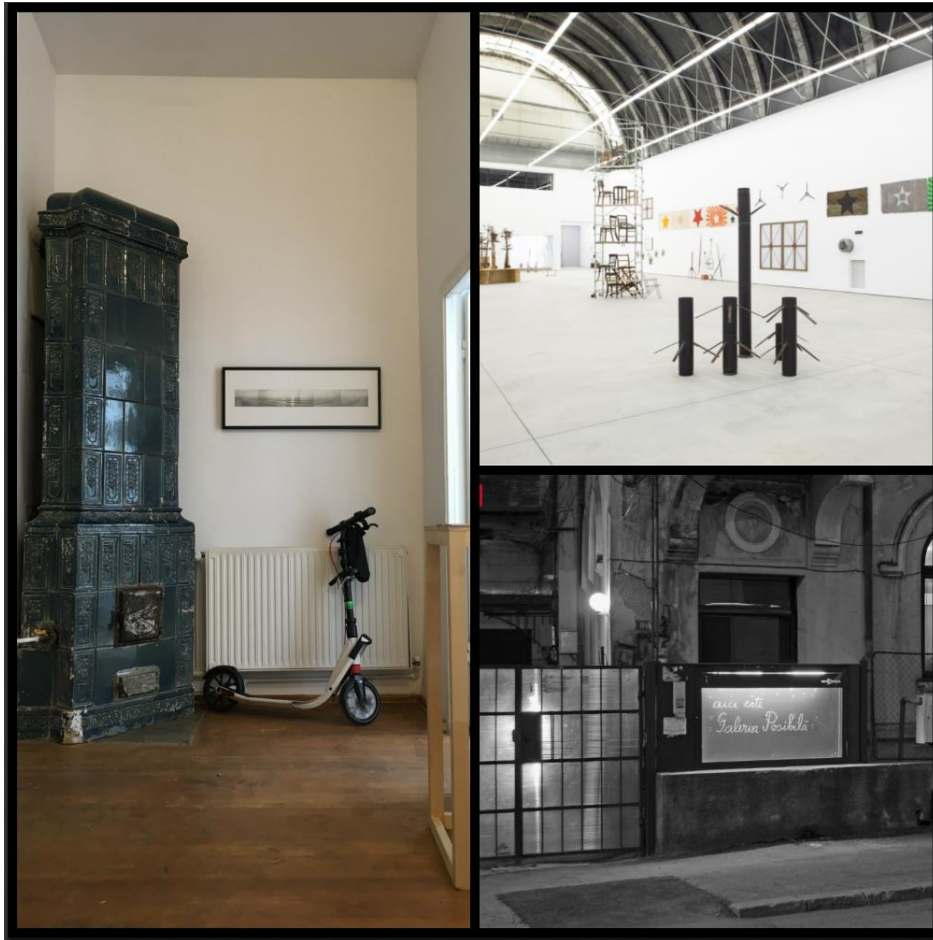
“her intention [of the owner] was that of creating a gallery which aims to contribute to the development of price indexes for Romanian artists, the ones we have in our portfolio, and also try to increase their visibility both in Romania and abroad” [Gallery 1-1]

“[my goals are] to work with good artists, to promote Romanian artists, have a good portfolio, have a good promotion, both nationally and internationally, to be well known both nationally and internationally, to sell, to put the artists in good collections” [Gallery 5-1].

Besides illustrating the aims of contemporary art galleries, these two quotes reveal a possible important difference between the rhetoric of Romanian art dealers and that of their Western colleagues: the disclosure of their commercial role. As a matter of fact, interviewees did not try to conceal the commercial role of the contemporary art gallery, and openly acknowledged the role of the gallery both as a cultural institution and commercial enterprise. Nevertheless, the openness in discussing the role of the gallery might come from the fact that they were talking to a researcher and not a potential buyer. However, other conversations and ethnographic observation did not reveal the strong dichotomy between sacred and profane present in the world of art commerce in the West (Velthuis, 2005). Furthermore, the spaces of the galleries themselves can be considered as an indicator in favour of this argument.

A more revealing difference between the Romanian art galleries and the Western ones is the overall absence of the white cube model. This model and its diffusion is probably one of the most relevant signs of mimetic isomorphism in the art market (Velthuis, 2005; Velthuis & Baia Curioni, 2012; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). As a matter of fact, this model appears to be adopted among galleries in emerging art markets as a means to confer legitimacy to the newly established institutions, as in the case of China (Kharchenkova, 2017) and to some extent Russia (Komarova, 2018). However, the Romanian galleries do not tend to follow this model. On the contrary, there appears to be no uniformity in the physical structure of the various galleries in Romania, as they inhabit various spaces such as historical buildings, apartments, refurbished industrial buildings (mostly in Cluj), in some cases, even the underground or the ground floor of the house of the

owner<sup>13</sup> or they are nomad and change space for each exhibition. Their walls were white in most of the cases but the spaces do not have the austerity of the white cube, elements of furniture could be seen and, as one of the interviewees said, “the presence of the space is still strong” (Gallery 5-2). In



discussing the space of the gallery most of the interviewees and other gallerists I talked to<sup>14</sup> distanced themselves from the white cube model, as this model is considered to be belonging to a culture or tradition which is not that of Romania, and tried to show me those elements that distinguish them from the white cube model which does not belong to the Romanian context.

“Although everything is white and we care about the lights, the presence of the space is strong: you have the fireplace, you have the doors... it’s like an apartment.” [Gallery 5-2]  
[...] White cube or other Western conditions do not fit in this context; they don’t have the

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<sup>13</sup> This was the case for the two commercial galleries I interviewed outside Bucharest.

<sup>14</sup> During my stay in Romania I visited other galleries and had informal talks with owners who refused to be interviewed.

same meaning; it would be a “*forma fara fond*<sup>15</sup>”. I think it’s good that galleries in Romania are more “down to earth”, closer to the reality.” [Gallery 6-2]

“This is one of those elements that tell you about the local context” (Gallery 1-2) is how one of my interviewees replied in justifying the fact that the gallery is not a white cube. But what elements of the local context can explain this aspect of contemporary art galleries? From the interviews mainly two reasons emerged. The first one, is the lack of spaces built for the purpose for galleries and the second one is the desire of the galleries to be more accessible to everyone:

“Here, maybe because we don’t have such a long history of galleries and there is no education on this topic, a white cube space could be more intimidating whereas a space that reminds of a living room can be more accessible.” [Gallery 5-6]”

In addition to the space, there are other significant differences which are more related to what we can consider the business models of the galleries themselves. These differences in their operations can be grouped in two main categories: diversity, and education and documentation. These two themes emerged in discussing their main operations such as the work with artists or collectors, their promotion and selling strategies as well as other functions that they might perform.

Diversity is the theme that can best encompass some of the differences between the Western/ European model and the Romanian galleries. In line with what other studies on emerging markets unveiled (Kharchenkova, 2017), in this young market, practices are unsettled and actions among various market actors differ significantly. One example of this variety of practices can be seen in how each gallery works with its artists. From the interviews it resulted that each gallery had its own way of working with artists: some sign only formal contracts, others rely mostly on gentleman’s agreements; some work on consignment, others try to pay for the production on their works; some work only with the artists in their portfolio, others have collaborations also with other artists; some believe exclusivity is important, others do not consider exclusivity as important and so on. For example, the following quotes illustrate the different opinions about exclusivity:

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<sup>15</sup> This is a specific Romanian expression created at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century used to indicate some of the theories on the Romanian process of modernization. It can be considered an equivalent of “mimetic isomorphism”. However, it appears to have slightly negative connotation.

“It is important [to represent artists exclusively] for the artists but also for the gallery somehow. It gives trust to the collector if she knows you are taking exclusive care of the artists.” [Gallery 2-1]

“I do have contracts with a few of my artists, I have gentleman agreements with the other ones. So it's, it's more an agreement between me and the artist but I don't I, exclusive, I mean I do represent a few artists exclusively but I found out throughout the years that is very good, also for me that the artist has more than one gallery, he can work with others so he does not have to rely only on what I am doing.” [Gallery 3-1]

Moreover, some of the respondents (4 out of 12) alluded that the same term “exclusive” might entail different agreements compared to those established in the Western market world. However, due to time limitations I could not explore this potential difference. Nevertheless, what is clear is that this market, as other emerging markets, is characterized by a variety of practices and a lack of general rules (Kharchenkova, 2017). This flexibility is also present in various interactions with other actors on the art market such as curators and collectors. None of the interviewed galleries has an in-house curator and in defining their work with curators they often talked about collaborating with the right curators for the right artists. On what concerns collectors, while, as their Western counterparts, all the galleries I interviewed have a group of “loyal” collectors and are cautious in choosing whom to sell to (Velthuis, 2005), part of the interviewees (4/6) revealed that they sell also to “one-time buyers”. In all cases, this choice was justified with the hope that, those “one-time buyers” will one day be willing to explore more in depth the world of contemporary art and will understand the role active role a buyer of contemporary art should play.

“Then you also have one-time buyers who for me are a mystery. What makes someone buy a piece of art? But I have the hope that one day they will overcome the simple act of purchasing and will try to understand [that buying an artwork is more than just buying]” [Gallery 4-2]

The other relevant trait of contemporary art galleries in Romania is their educational and documentation role. That galleries fulfill also an educational role is not something entirely new as, to some extent, dealers in the primary market act as educators by trying to develop a specific artistic program and create a certain artistic sensibility among her collectors (Velthuis, 2005). Moreover, galleries are usually open for the general public to visit and, most of the time, vernissages are

attended by those who cannot afford to purchase art (Velthuis, 2005). Nevertheless, this educational role appeared to be more pervasive throughout the various functions of the Romanian galleries<sup>16</sup>. Although it was not a topic I intended to discuss throughout the interviews, it emerged constantly when respondents discussed not only their work with collectors, but also that with artists and, in some cases (3/6), with the wider public. In fulfilling their roles of market makers for artists, gallery owners in Romania, find themselves in the position to educate not only collectors but also artists.

First of all, Romanian galleries, especially the ones who aim at increasing their local collector base, mentioned investing considerable amount of time in forming collectors as this is a new phenomenon especially on what concerns collecting contemporary art.

“[...] my aim is that of finding new clients, new collectors, actually educate new collectors. It is quite hard to find new collectors, you need to educate them, and this takes time but I have already managed with two young people.

It took me about two years with one of them. He came to exhibitions, I showed him, I gave him materials to read, took him to museums' exhibitions, to art fairs with me[...]" [Gallery 2-1, p.22]

Secondly, as the practices and the rules of the market are not clearly defined yet and, as previously mentioned, in some cases, artists, continue the practice of selling from the studio despite being represented by a gallery, and gallery owners might find themselves in the position of educating artists on the role of the gallery:

“But older artists have always the issue, "why, why shall I get the same money as you get?" Because it's 50-50. And I always tell them "well listen if I go to this", I only giving you the example of an art fair, I went to Art Brussels and he was really upset, "why 50-50?" "Listen, I spend about 20.000 euros for this, for my personnel, for an insurance, if I sell one piece you get 50% of it and I still have to get 20% to, only to be on 0. So I have to sell like ten works in order to break even and you are already winning, does that make sense?" So they get it, slowly, but it is complicated. The older they are, the more complicated. But it's part of the job." [Gallery 4]

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<sup>16</sup> The degree to which a gallery is more active on one or another of the educational levels varies on the gallery.

Thirdly, in some cases, galleries play a role in educating the wider audience as in the case of three of the galleries I interviewed. As previously mentioned, the number of public institutions showcasing contemporary art are limited and, with the exception of those studying history of art, one does not have the opportunity to learn about contemporary art. Consequently, private actors, such as galleries, undertake the mission of educating audiences. There are various ways in which they try to do this. For example, one gallery in Bucharest, revealed having a whole agenda for events aiming at educating the wider audience:

“I have a whole obsession for this part [education] because I realise it is essential to do more than just exhibiting. Besides my exhibition agenda, I have an agenda of parallel events which aim at educating people [...] I don't think it is normal to enter a gallery or a museum and to feel uncomfortable, to be afraid to ask questions, to have the impression you are being looked down on, so I started thinking of programs aimed at equipping people with instruments they can use to better understand what is happening [in the contemporary art world].” [Gallery 4- p.52]

Besides educating wider audiences, these initiatives can be seen also as long term strategies aimed at developing demand for contemporary art. Moreover, in the case of the previous gallery, one needs to pay a fee to attend the seminars organised by the gallery, therefore, these activities can also be considered a means for generating alternative revenue.

Lastly, once again due to the lack of government support to contemporary art, galleries invest in researching and documenting the practice of the artists they represent. Most of the galleries (6/7) galleries mentioned publishing not only catalogues of the exhibitions but also artist monographs or other books. In order to be able to do so, but also other activities such as offering residences, some/ many<sup>17</sup> galleries have also a foundation through which they can apply for funds or receive sponsorships.

To sum up, this section illustrated the main differences that emerged during the empirical research between the Romanian contemporary galleries and the Western model. Moreover, it illustrated how the young age of the market (Kharcheknova, 2017), and the cultural (persistence of old practices, lack of education) and institutional (limited number of cultural institutions, limited

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<sup>17</sup> 4 of the 7 galleries I interviewed had also a foundation and some interviewees suggested that this is a common structure.

support for contemporary art) features of the local context can explain some of the differences between contemporary art galleries in Romania and the Western gallery model.

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### 3.3.2 THE AUCTION HOUSE

Auction houses are another important “cog” in the art machine (Rodner & Thomson, 2013) and one of the “symbols” of institutional isomorphism in the global art market (Velthuis & Baia Curioni, 2015). Romania has 5 auction houses operating at a national level (Artmark, n.d.), but one of them appears to have the monopoly on the auction market. This section will briefly introduce the most prominent Romanian auction house, Artmark, and focus on those elements that differentiate this actor from the Western model and on what can explain these differences.

Artmark was founded in 2008 and is one of the youngest auction houses in Romania<sup>18</sup>. Yet it soon became an important player on the Romanian art market, especially on the market for modern art, as both interviewees and various news items mention.

“Artmark did a good job in the beginning, they did a very good job because it developed a market that did not exist, and I am referring to the market for modern art, end of 19<sup>th</sup> century, beginning of 20<sup>th</sup>.” [Gallery 2, p.36]

As a matter of fact, throughout the years, not only they have increased the number of auctions or the type of products sold at auction<sup>19</sup>, but they also increased the number of divisions. Nowadays, Artmark, in addition to the auction house, has several other divisions: an art boutique (2011), the Art management Institute (2012) which offers courses for those interested in investing in art, publishes art market reports and created a price index for Romanian artists, an online only auction house (Lavacow) which was founded in 2015, and the Art Society Foundation which in 2014 started Art Safari, the first national art fair until 2017 (included)<sup>20</sup>.

According to their website (<https://www.artmark.ro/despre-noi>), they organise around 40-50 auctions per year for various products: not only visual art but also jewellery, books, furniture, design or “family collections”. The four most important auctions are the four seasonal ones which

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<sup>18</sup> The youngest auction house is Lavacow, which is an online only auction house and a division of Artark

<sup>19</sup> Not only artworks but also wine, cars and jewellery [https://www.artmark.ro/despre-noi?\\_\\_store=en&\\_\\_from\\_store=en](https://www.artmark.ro/despre-noi?__store=en&__from_store=en)

<sup>20</sup> The 2018 edition was only a temporary art exhibition, no longer a fair.

focus on Romanian art<sup>21</sup>. While most auctions take place in the headquarters of the auction house, the seasonal auctions take place in the luxurious hall of a renowned hotel. They usually start at 19:30 and can end after midnight. The auction follows the English model and the atmosphere is aimed at instigating present people to bid. For these auctions, they also offer phone and online bidding services. Moreover, in the room, several other bidders appeared to be bidding on behalf of a mysterious buyer whom they were talking to on the phone. By attending one auction, one can notice how Artmark follows the model of the Western auction houses. In fact, in an interview, one of the founders attributes the success of the auction to their high levels of professionalization and the strong marketing and PR strategies (“Artmark- Intre pasiune si business”, 2014). Yet, even in the case of the auction house, which overtly follows the model of the Western auction houses (<http://artindex.ro/2012/03/15/casele-de-licitatii-romanesti-o-perspectiva/>), various differences emerged. These differences can be grouped in three main categories: presence on the primary market, accessibility (or limited exclusivity) and education.

First of all, similarly to the auction houses in China (Kharcheknova, 2017), Artmark operates on the primary market mostly due to the underdeveloped commercial infrastructure for contemporary art. Interviewers suggested that the presence of the auction house on the primary market can be explained by the limited number of contemporary art galleries. In this way, the auction house can offer emerging artists an outlet for selling their art. Nevertheless, almost all the respondents (8/10) were aware of the risks of selling an emerging artist at auction and the negative impact it can have on her career.

“[...] an auction house should work on the secondary market, with the collector, which does not happen, and it does not happen because of our dysfunctional system and market, because there are not enough galleries that can cover all the artists. Ok no market has [enough galleries], they went directly to the artists and created artificial price indexes of artists that do not show anymore and will never sell for the same price.” [Gallery 2, p.36]

Of the four artists I interviewed, one has tried once to sell an artwork through the auction house’s online-only subsidiary and did not succeed and two of them had been invited to consign works of art for auctions. However, they declined the invitation as they were well aware of the risks of selling directly at auction.

In operating on the primary market, it was suggested that they don’t only work with artists but also with galleries. However, collaboration with galleries for primary market sales might be less

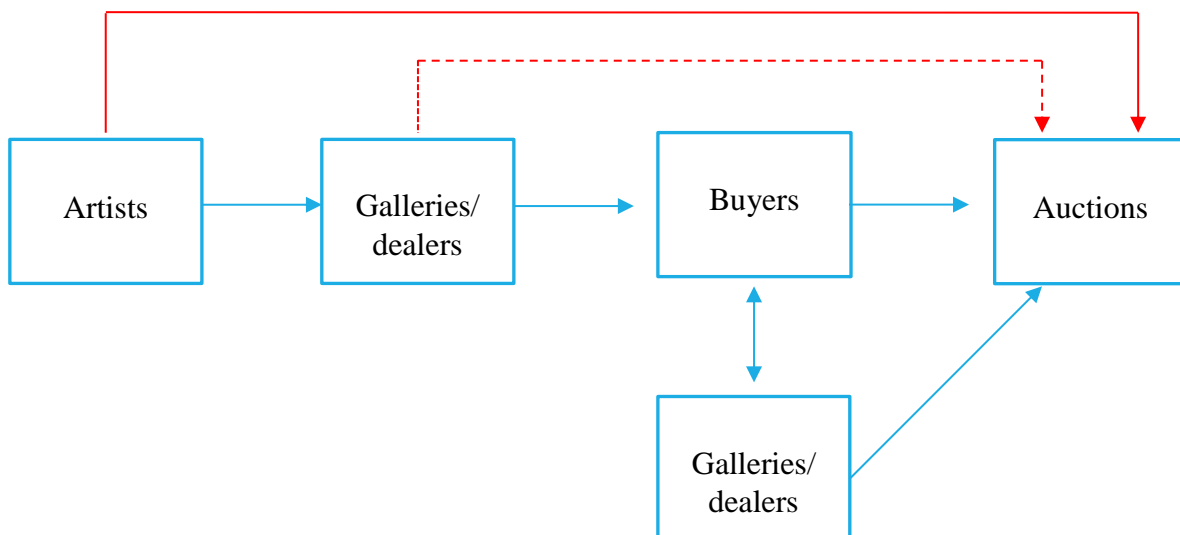
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<sup>21</sup> Mostly modern art but also some contemporary artists.



common as all the three galleries that mentioned working with the auction house criticized the fact that the auction house tends to significantly lower the estimate in order to encourage buyers to bid.

“[...] there are artists whose works did not sell, or sold at very low prices, there has always been a communication issue on their side. You were writing a contract with an approximate price but they were not mentioning the starting price which was considerably smaller than the estimate and the works [that did not sell] remained with those low estimates.” [Gallery 5, p.87]



Source: Adapted from Kharchenkova (2017). The red lines indicate the presence of the auction house on the primary market as in the Chinese model. However,

Overall Artmark’s business model appears to be more similar to the one of the Chinese auction houses illustrated by Kharchenkova (2017) than to the Western model (see Figure 8). However, unlike the Chinese auctions, Artmark does not seem to be able to fully establish itself as a strong judgement device (Beckert & Asperts, 2010) for contemporary art<sup>22</sup>. This could be because of two

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<sup>22</sup> It is true that this research lacks the perspective of collectors or buyers, which can be a limitation in understanding whether the auction house is a more trustworthy actor than the galleries when it comes to purchasing contemporary art. Nevertheless, based on the information provided by the

main reasons. First of all, the auction is a quite young player on the art market as it was founded only in 2008, and unlike Chinese auction houses which started to operate on the primary market from the beginning (Kharchenkova, 2017) when there were no galleries, Artmark started its activity on the primary market when there were already some affirmed galleries on the market. The second element could be its “accessibility” which will be further explained.

Accessibility is the second distinguishing feature of this auction house. The auction house is accessible for both consignors and buyers. In fact, on what concerns the consignors, it appears that anyone who wishes to sell something at auction is welcome to require an evaluation of their items and the threshold for introducing a lot in an auction appears to be quite low. For instance, even for the seasonal auctions, estimates start with as low as €200, such as lot 106 in the catalogue for this year’s summer auction ([https://www.artmark.ro/licitatii-curente/licita-ia-de-vara-294-2018.html?dir=asc&order=lot\\_nr&p=9](https://www.artmark.ro/licitatii-curente/licita-ia-de-vara-294-2018.html?dir=asc&order=lot_nr&p=9) ).

“[They accept consignments] from artists or inheritors, I mean from everyone who has something to sell. They can come here and have their item evaluated, and if the auction house decides it can if it can be introduced in on of their thematic auction” [Event 2, P. 146]

The low starting prices are also an indicators of how accessible buying at auction is. Another cue for the “accessibility” of auctions can be the free admission to all auctions, without any registration needed as one only needs to register if she wins a bid. In fact, on all chairs one can find a bidding paddle and a registration form (<https://www.artmark.ro/cum-cumpar> ).

As the Chinese case illustrates, besides the luxurious settings, a strict selection (of both works and buyers<sup>23</sup>) is an important element in establishing a reputation as a valid judgement device in an emerging market (Kharchenkova, 2017). However, in the Romanian case, the auction house appears to be sending contrasting signals: on the one hand they choose luxurious venues for both their headquarters and their seasonal auctions which indicates a certain exclusivity, on the other hand, their “accessibility” might signal of low levels of selection. As a matter of fact, in talking about Artmark, various respondents indicated the propensity of the auction house for favouring quantity over quality.

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gallery owners, it appears that those who buy contemporary art at auction hardly ever buy works of emerging artists but mostly of artists whose artworks have been already validated by the efforts of galleries.

<sup>23</sup> Some auction houses in China required those who wished to bid to pay a deposit.

“They extended [their operations] in all the fields, all sort of small auctions and I don’t think the market was ready for this. They are barely done with an auction and then they start sending collectors the new catalogue, show him that they also have this and this and this.”  
[Gallery owner 2 (who also used to work for the auction house)- p.36]

Consequently, these low levels of selection can be one of the factors mining the “authority” of the auction house as a judgement device for contemporary art<sup>24</sup>. Nevertheless, this “accessibility” could be explained by the young age of the market and the auction houses’ aim of generating revenue.

The la third element of differentiating Artmark from the Western model is the educational role it plays. As the galleries, the auction covers an important educational role which entails not only explaining local actors how auctions function (Kharchenkova, 2017), but also educating local actors on how art can be a form of investment. First of all, as a new form of organisation in a young market, the auction house has “to educate local actors about its functioning” (Kharchenkova, 2017, p.74). While all auction houses have a section on their website in which the rules of the auction are explained (See Sotheby’s or Christie’s websites), on Artmark’s website, these functions are well visible in the main menu. Furthermore, there is a section of the website with tips on how to start creating an art collection and how to valorise it. In addition to this, before starting an auction the maitre-priseur explains the rules of the auction, including the disclosure that items will be hammered down also in the case in which the reserve price was not met. Secondly, one of the divisions of the auction house, the Arts Management Institute, organises regularly a variety of courses of art management, history of art or art consultancy (<https://www.artmark.ro/ima-program>).

Overall, this section illustrates how this actor is differing from the Western model by operating on the primary market, being more accessible and undertaking an educational role. Moreover, the section illustrated how, unlike the Chinese case (Kharchenkova, 2017), its presence on the primary market cannot be equated with its prominence as a “trustworthy” judgement device for contemporary art probably due to its young age and its accessibility. Instead, what emerged as an explanation of this practice is the underdeveloped infrastructure for the commercialization of contemporary art on the primary market. Therefore, selling through the auction house is considered to be a hazardous practice for emerging artists whose value has not been established “at lower levels of the art machine” (Rodner & Thomson, 2013).

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<sup>24</sup> It is important to note that the observations refer strictly to the position of the auction house on the contemporary art market which is marginal as most of its revenue derives from sales of modern art ( Artmark, n.d.)

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### 3.3.3 BIENNALE AND ART FAIR

This section will illustrate how two of the three main art events, Art Safari and Bucharest Biennale, function in Romania. In presenting these events the section will try to illustrate to what extent these events perform the key tasks performed by intermediaries according to Khaire (2015) and whether they are independent and have enough expertise to have an impact on the market. Equally relevant, as these events are considered symbols of the internationalization, this section will also try to show how international are these two events.

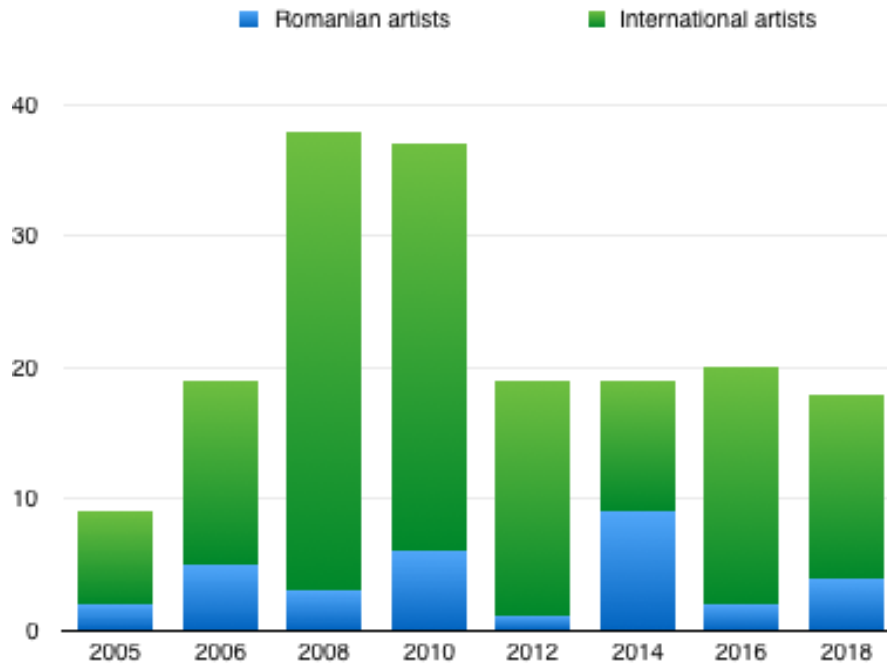
The Bucharest Biennale was founded in 2005 at a time when there were not that many institutions that worked with contemporary art and this year celebrated its 8<sup>th</sup> edition.

“X and I, when we started with the Biennale, we wanted to make an event that could cover the lack of contemporary art at that moment. Not that there wasn’t anything, there were some [institutions], but they had a weak level of representation” [ Event 1 , p.108]

It follows the model of other biennales (the respondent used as examples Berlin and Istanbul biennalesp. 133) as described by (Vermeulen & Van Hest, 2015): the board selects the curator/s who will develop the concept based on which the artists will be selected<sup>25</sup>. The opening of the biennale is signed by an opening party which facilitates networking among participants. On its website it presents itself as an event that “continues to build a strong partnership between Bucharest — a geocultural space where the political is reflected in all aspects of life—and the rest of the World.” (<http://bucharestbiennale.org/history.html>). In fact, throughout all the editions the number of international artists has been greater than that of Romanian artists.

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<sup>25</sup> The selection of the artists is a combination of open call and invitation



In this sense, more than being a gateway for Romanian artist to the international world, the Biennale can be considered a real symbol of internationalisation (van Hest, 2012) and does not seem to present many differences compared to other Biennales when it comes to the organisation of the event. Nevertheless, as expected, elements of the local context shape the organization of this event: the most important elements being the dearth of public funding and the lack of education of both the lay public and the decision-makers.

First of all, the low education levels among decision-makers are related to the dearth of public funds for contemporary art. This, in the words of the respondent, appears to be a major hindrance to the evolution of a healthy contemporary art world/ market in Romania and to the event. In fact the public contribution to the project is less than 1%<sup>26</sup> and makes the realization of the event contingent on the financial availability of private sponsors. As the organisation relies mostly on private funds, a major setback of this year edition were the limited financial resources provided by private actors due the politically unstable atmosphere.

“At this moment, everyone is reluctant because of the government's fiscal policies. The tax policies that this government has been doing lately have been very blurry and as nobody really understand what they are doing, then the companies are more reluctant. But I can say from experience, I worked with banks that gave money like Unicredit or Transylvania, which gave good money to contemporary art” [Event 1-p.109]

<sup>26</sup> Data comes from interviewee, no budget available online.

The limited financial resources impact the organization of the biennale in several ways. First of all, they influence the choice of the curator as “it has to be someone who understands the situation” (Event 1, p122.). In fact, often, in choosing the curator the board relies on their personal and professional network. Secondly, it makes so that the biennale collaborates with embassies or cultural institutions from the countries of origin of the artists invited which makes so that the benefits of the artists in coming to Bucharest for the opening are contingent on the policies of these bodies. For example, it was indicated to me that artists from Nordic countries obtain more support when participating to an artistic event abroad than Eastern countries such as Azerbaijan or Georgia which in some cases cannot even obtain the visas to attend the opening of the event.

“It is true that artists from Scandinavian countries receive most money, but not from us, it’s unfair I know, but, after all, each country with its own policies. It is unfair that artists from countries such as Azerbaijan or Georgia do not receive anything, those countries give them nothing. I even have to fight for them to obtain a visa to come to Romania” [Event 1-p.134]

And, lastly, it limits the instruction function. In fact, the number of educational services offered by the Biennale are quite limited. The number of parallel activities being limited to two talks (one with the artist and the other with the curators) and the possibility to have, upon request, a guided tour.

These limitations, however, do not appear to damage the artistic reputation of the event, which occupies the fourth place<sup>27</sup> on [artfacts.net](http://artfacts.net) among the top ten arts institutions in Romania and works with internationally renowned curators and artists. For example, this years’ edition had as a curator Beral Madra, founder of the Istanbul Biennale, and an artist who is shortlisted for the Turner Prize and previous editions showed works of artists listed among the top 100 artists on [artfacts.net](http://artfacts.net) such as Ewin Wurm and Yoko Ono. On the contrary, it can be argued that its financial structure can be an indicator of its independence from actors with commercial interests (in the arts world) and the collaboration with established curators and artists, as well as its resilience (if compared to other actors on the Romanian art scene) can be a sign of its expertise (Khaire, 2015).

Although Bucharest Biennale appears to have both the independence and expertise, elements that should confer the biennale a certain authority in the art market according to Khaire

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<sup>27</sup> The first two are museums and the third place is taken by a biennale that no longer takes place.

(2015) its impact on the local art market appears to be limited as the founder himself stated while talking about the impact of the Biennale on the career of the artist:

“[...] internationally yes [it has an impact], in Romania no, because as I was saying, if people don't know who Erwin Wurm is, they won't know who Mihai Zgondoiu is.” [Event 1, p. 125]

In fact, the event appears to have a limited popularity within Romania as most of the respondents (9/12) did not seem very informed about this event. Moreover, at the press conference that inaugurated this year's edition (which was free admission) the public was quite limited (approximately 30 people) and most of the public was formed by organizers, partners and the artists that could make it to the opening. This illustrates the little attention offered by the local press to the event. This might be because due to the fact that the public for contemporary art in Romania is still limited (Institutul National pentru Cercetare si Formare Culturala, n.d).

At the opposite side of the spectrum lays the art fair, Art Safari, which this year took place at the same time as the Bucharest Biennale and is far more popular on the local scene than the Bucharest Biennale. This might be because, unlike the Biennale, Art Safari has the patronage of the Bucharest municipality and receives public funding ( <https://www.scena9.ro/article/art-safari-2018> ) which can be invested in the realization of the event and a strong marketing campaign (see Figure 2). Nevertheless, this event is regarded as quite controversial by local actors (mostly the ones from Bucharest) for its peculiar structure and its affiliation with the auction house.

“They [referring to Artmark] started Art Safari, I have not participated in any of its editions, and I will not do it from now on, it's no longer a fair but an exhibition because it did not work [as a fair]. Why offer the collectors a fair when you already have auctions? It also had a...a not very good reputation in the market so the best galleries did not want to participate anymore, and if you don't attract the good galleries...they also used fake marketing to attract the public and this is also did not help them at all” [Gallery owner 2, p.36]





Art Safari was launched in 2014 as Romania’s first art fair, or as the founder described it in an interview soon after the first edition, it was Bucharest’s “Frieze Art Show” (<https://www.casinoinside.ro/artmark-intre-pasiune-si-business/>) but unlike any other fair, it was offering booths to both galleries and museums from the first edition. Moreover, while generally, art fairs are considered the weapon used by art dealers in the battle against the auction houses (Thompson, 2008), this event is an initiative of Art Society foundation which is Artmarks’ foundation. The event has changed every year, both in duration, which varied from 4 to 30 days throughout the different editions, and structure, which evolved from combining the fair component with a “museum pavilion” to no longer being a fair. In fact, this year, the event was presented as “temporary museum” (Event 2, p. 132). These continuous changes of the event are an indicator of how, as the market is emerging, the structures of the various institutions are not yet defined (Kharchenkova, 2017).

The interviewee was not able to inform me about the motivations behind the removal of the fair component of the event. Nevertheless, indications on the potential reasons were given by other respondents. First of all, although the interviewee mentioned also the presence of international



galleries in the previous edition, it appears that the fair<sup>28</sup>, much like the India Art fair, tried to be a vehicle for the development of a home market (Vermeulen, 2015). However, as the collector base is quite limited in Romania and most of them are located in Bucharest<sup>29</sup> the event was benefiting galleries located in more peripheral cities not Bucharest as the following quotes illustrate.

“It started very well as an art fair for Romania, because Bucharest, at least for us, it is a good market because a lot of collectors are based in Bucharest, that don't come to Timisoara”  
[Gallery Owner 4, p.76]

“[...] very high participation costs, it's better to go to Athena to attract new [collectors]. As the market is small, we know our collectors. I was invited, I was the public, and I did not come with new customers from this fair. What we were interested in, the few collectors, they know us.”  
already. [Gallery owner 5, p. 86]

The lack of “networking opportunities” together with the “low level of selection”, indicated by the fact that the event was combining galleries with museums, non-profit spaces or art boutiques, are some of the reasons that determined many galleries to not participate or return to the fair. At the same time these elements influence the marginal position of the event in the Romanian artistic scene. In fact, while the event is very popular among the lay public (according to their website, <https://www.artsafari.ro/en/visitors/>, this year's edition had almost 90,000 visitors), it is not listed on [artifacts.net](https://artifacts.net)<sup>30</sup>.

Instead of focusing on selection or introducing new artists or galleries, the event appears to focus more on education, fulfilling thus its instructional role (Khari, 2015). In fact, throughout the various editions, more and more attention was given to the educational role the event can play. They organize talks with both national and international figures from the contemporary art scene on various topics, and they have special programmes for children. In fact, Art Safari Kids is aimed at socializing young children with art:

“Throughout the time [...] we realized how important is the educational part. To come and visit is not enough, it is important to explore the subject. Consequently, with the second

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<sup>28</sup> It is no longer possible to find lists of the participants of the past editions of the fair as the official website has been changed and the information on the past edition refers only to the theme of the edition, the number of visitors and that of galleries.

<sup>29</sup>As one of the interviewees suggested.

<sup>30</sup> Artifacts.net gives points based on the “fame of the artists” that are associated with an event.

edition we launched the programme Art Safari Kids which was very successful and we work on improving it every year. Besides special tour for kids we also created special workshops for them.” [Event 2, p132]

In conclusion, the case of the two events illustrate how given the Romanian context shapes the way they fulfil their roles (or not) as intermediaries in the art market. The most relevant elements of all appear to be the lack of education and the limited knowledge about contemporary art not only among lay people, but also among decision makers. This influences both events: on the one hand it is a limit for the Biennale which struggles with limited funds and it is not popular on the local scene, on the other hand, it is an opportunity for Art Safari, which benefits from public funds (probably due to their ability to attract large numbers of visitors) and turns the lack of knowledge about contemporary art in an opportunity (as participants to the educational activities have to pay a fee).

## 4 CONCLUSIONS

The question guiding this research is: How does the local context influence the emergence of the contemporary art market in Romania? As previous research on emerging markets illustrated that the influence of the local context that emerging markets can present differences in the structure and in the way institutions function (Kharchenkova *et al.*, 2015; Kharchenkova, 2017; Komarova, 2018). The research aimed to unveil the differences between the Romanian contemporary art market structure and the Western model, and understand how four of the main institutions of the Western model work differently in the Romanian context. In order to do this, a qualitative approach was adopted: 12 semi-structured interviews were conducted with various actors in the Romanian art market and complemented with participant observation.

The main findings have shown how the structure of this emerging art market is characterized by the co-existence of new actors with older organisations and practices (Kharchenkova *et al.*, 2015). And how, on the other side, the new infrastructure is still young and underdeveloped which in turn affects the validation process of contemporary art (Kharchenkova's theory, 2017). In fact, from the field research it emerged that, none of the arts institutions operating in Romania has the power to validate contemporary art.

Furthermore, by investigating the way in which galleries, the main auction house, the fair and the biennale function, I was able to find out how two main factors of the local context, namely

the lack of government support and the lack of education and knowledge make so that these institutions function differently. More specifically, the lack of education appears to be both a hindrance and an opportunity for these actors.

By showing how the structure of the Romanian art market does not perfectly match with the Western model, but it is a combination between pre-existent institutions and practices and new institutions, and how these new institutions adopted from the Western model function differently, this thesis illustrates how the emergence of art markets cannot be entirely explained by theories of isomorphism (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983) but instead is a more complex phenomenon of adjustment and adaptations between the pre-existent institutions and practices and the newly implemented intuitions.

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## APPENDIX A: RESPONDENTS

Respondents	Organisation	Occupation	Location
Gallery 1	AnnArt Gallery	Art gallery director	Bucharest
Gallery 2	SupraInfini	Gallery owner	Bucharest
Gallery 3	Mobius gallery	gallery owner	Bucharest
Gallery 4	Jecza gallery	gallery owner	Timisoara
Gallery 5	Anca Poterasu gallery	gallery owner	Bucharest
Gallery 6	Ivan Gallery	Managing director	Bucharest
Artist 1	Visual Kontakt	Artists/ manager non-profit space	Cluj
Artist 2	Atelier 030202	Artist / manager non-profit space	Bucharest
Artist 3	Atelier 4	artist / manager artist-run space	Cluj
Artist 4	Atelier 4	artist / manager artist-run space	Cluj
Event 1	Bucharest Biennale	founder/ curator 2018 edition	Bucharest
Event 2	Art Safari	PR & Communication	Bucharest
Artist 5	Mav d'Art Gallery	artist/ gallery owner	Campina



## APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW GUIDELINES

Topics and aims	Respondent category	Topics and aims	Respondent category	Topics and aims	Respondent category
	<b>Gallery, owner/managing director</b>		<b>Artists</b>		<b>Art fair and Biennale organizer</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Visit the space (if possible)</li> <li>Presentation of the researcher and the research</li> <li>Presentation of the respondent</li> </ul>	<b>Introduction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Presentation of the researcher and the research</li> <li>Presentation of the respondent</li> </ul>	<b>Introduction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Presentation of the researcher and the research</li> <li>Presentation of the respondent</li> <li>Attend the event (done after the interviews)</li> </ul>
<b>Introductory questions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inquire about reasons to open a gallery</li> <li>mission and goals of the gallery ( e.g., profit maximisation, introduce new artists to the international/ national art scene)</li> </ul>	<b>Introductory questions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inquire about his/her reasons to become an artist</li> </ul>	<b>Introductory questions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>inquire about reasons to the art fair or biennale</li> <li>the mission of the event</li> </ul>
<b>Work with artists</b>  aim: understand more about how they function	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are the artists you currently represent?</li> <li>how do you select your artists?</li> <li>What type of agreements do you have with you artists?</li> <li>Do you represent artists exclusively?</li> <li>What services do you provide to your artists?</li> </ul>	<b>Work with galleries</b>  Aim: understand more about the work between galleries and artists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do you work with a gallery? (in case they do not work with a gallery inquire why)</li> <li>What type of agreements do you have with the gallery/s?</li> <li>What are the services provided by the gallery?</li> </ul>	<b>General questions on the organisation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>is there a preview?</li> <li>who is usually invited to the preview?</li> <li>collaboration with international cultural institutions ?</li> </ul>
<b>Strategies for promotion artists</b>  Aims: on the one hand, understanding how galleries promote their artists; on the other hand, unveil whether they are more internationally or nationally oriented	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are the strategies you use for promoting your artists?</li> <li>Exhibitions (work with curators, who is invited at the openings)</li> <li>work with critics, media, other institutions such as other galleries or museums (in Romania or abroad)</li> <li>Art fairs (national/ international? how many in a year?)</li> <li>other strategies?</li> </ul>	<b>Career development strategies</b>  Aim: More commercially or artistically oriented	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do you have a career development plan? what is it?</li> <li>Are you more interested into being “successful” nationally or internationally?</li> </ul>	<b>Selection criteria</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(art fair) selection criteria for galleries</li> <li>inquire there are “special” criteria for international galleries</li> <li>how are the curators selected</li> <li>(biennale) selection criteria for artists</li> </ul>

<p><b>Work with buyers/ collectors</b></p> <p>The aim: Do they practice the “waiting game”?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do you sell to a group of regular collectors or also to one time buyers?</li> <li>How is your relationship with your collectors?</li> <li>Did you ever refuse to sell an artwork? Why?</li> <li>Are your buyers/ collectors mostly Romanian or international?</li> <li>do you collaborate with the auction house (Artmark)?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Work with buyers/ collectors</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do you sell form the studio? or only through gallery?</li> <li>Who are your main buyers? do you know them?</li> <li>Did you ever refuse to sell an artwork? why?</li> <li>Are your buyers/ collectors mostly Romanian or international?</li> <li>Do you sell through the auction house? why?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Impact on reputation</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>does being present at your event have a positive impact the reputation of the gallery/ artist ?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Work/ Collaboration with other actors in the market</b></p> <p>The aim of this set of questions is that of understanding</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaboration with curators</li> <li>Collaboration with other galleries (Romania and abroad)</li> <li>Collaboration with museums (in Romania or abroad)</li> <li>Collaboration with auction house (Artmark)</li> <li>Collaboration with other cultural institutions</li> </ul>	<p><b>Work/ Collaboration with other actors in the market</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do you work with a curator?</li> </ul>	<p><b>who are the audiences</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mostly national or international?</li> <li>(for art fair) do you know if you attract also important collectors ?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Financial structure</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For profit or non-profit?</li> <li>Financially sustainable?</li> </ul>		-	<p><b>Financial structure</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is this a for profit or a non profit organisations?</li> <li>What are the funding sources?</li> </ul>
<p><b>The space</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Why did you choose this location?</li> <li>would you describe your gallery as a white cube?</li> </ul>		-		
<p><b>General questions</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are you member of a dealer’s association?</li> <li>Do you have a model or an idea of running a gallery that you follow?</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>are you member of any artists’ association?</li> </ul>		
<p><b>Impact of participating in the local art fair or biennale</b></p>	<p>(for those who participated in Art Safari)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Did it help your reputation or your network?</li> </ul>		<p>(if participated in any of the events)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>did it help your</li> </ul>		
<p><b>Perceived role in the market</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>what is the role of an at gallery in the art market?</li> </ul>		-		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>what is the role of the art fair/ biennale in the Romanian</li> </ul>

					contemporary art market ?
<b>identify the main validators of contemporary art in Romania</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>is there any institution in Romania that can define what is contemporary art and what is not?</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>is there any institution in Romania that can define what is contemporary art what is not ?</li> <li>what can make you a successful artist in Romania?</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>is there any institution in Romania that can define what is contemporary art and what is not?</li> </ul>

## APPENDIX C: CODING PROCESS

we are definitely among the very top selling galleries. I mean we do sell. Our approach, the kind of artists, the manner we yeah, my networks, bla bla, we sell. So that is a box ticked but my personal, professional interest, social also if you want would be that to help educate an audience, to create an appreciation and, hmm, and a familiar field, people in relation to contemporary art. That would be my main interest.

Georgiana Iuliana Carp  
relevance of networks

Georgiana Iuliana Carp  
educate an audience

me: Are you creating events or evolved in events in order to do this... are there initiatives, others you can collaborate with?

G: I wouldn't say the profession is very, is working together ... people follow the egos of the artists in a way. I noticed that galleries are also little worlds into themselves, there isn't much. There was actually an attempt to do a galleries association. We tried. About six got together.

Georgiana Iuliana Carp  
attempt gallery association

Georgiana Iuliana Carp  
reasons for "failure"

Somehow it didn't work, there isn't enough drive, there isn't enough conviction, there were...

Georgiana Iuliana Carp  
young market and ways are not established

plus because the market is so young and the ways are not established, artists themselves are not used to working professionally with a gallery. I mean. So this...you know there is...

Georgiana Iuliana Carp  
artists do not know how to work with a gallery (lack of professionalism)

we...ok, I don't know if galleries here offer what is known in the west as an exclusive partnership that is protected by you know, legally protected by a contract, we only work with contracts and stuff but there is an in-built flexibility because you accept that artists tend to

Georgiana Iuliana Carp  
the contracts → no exclusive

Georgiana Iuliana Carp  
flexibility in working with artists

want to maybe show something somewhere else outside the programme of the gallery. Some artist switch sides which again is unheard of in a mature market. You know, you work with

Georgiana Iuliana Carp  
artists want more flexibility

Pace, you don't suddenly as an artist, oh well I'd rather go with Gagorian. It does not work exactly like that, but here there is this flexibility which, let's say is tacitly accepted but I don't

Georgiana Iuliana Carp  
artists switch sides

Georgiana Iuliana Carp  
tacitly accepted

think it's ok, I don't think it's healthy. I don't think it helps build-up but gradually it is coming on, it is not fast but is happening, a more professional approach.

Georgiana Iuliana Carp  
professionalization is coming

Me: I just had an interview with an young artist because I was trying to see their perspective and he told me that he just collaborates with a gallery and I was like, ok what does this mean? and he told me he just gives them some works every now and then.

Georgiana Iuliana Carp  
galleries as shops

G: Yeah, just like the gallery is some kind of shop where you just take works and make a bit of money whilst we are here for the long run, I mean we want to build and with the artists that we have worked, you know, we do regular exhibition with catalogues, we do good PR for

Georgiana Iuliana Carp  
to build with the artist