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The Role of Gatekeepers in the Evolving Art Market

Student Name: Caoimbhe Molly Crowe

Student Number: 610969

Supervisor: Dr. Donagh M. Horgan

Thesis Coordinators: Dr. Anna Mignosa and Dr. Valeria Morea

Cultural Economics and Entrepreneurship

Erasmus School of History, Culture and Communication

Erasmus University Rotterdam

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Abstract

In an evolving digital landscape, the art market in relation to the transformative force of digitisation is reshaping how art is consumed, distributed and monetised. This thesis addresses a critical challenge that questions the role of gatekeepers of the art market within a digital context. The main focus of this thesis remains on how gatekeepers navigate the challenges and opportunities that are tackled by online platforms.

The main guiding research question of this study is how gatekeepers in the mid-range Dutch art market adapt to the impacts of digitalisation on their relationships with audiences and the broader art ecosystem. To delve into this question, a qualitative research approach guides the following methodology, which is outlined by Grønmo (2019). This study approach is for examining the complex social phenomena that allow flexibility in the data collection and analysis. The study conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews with art market intermediaries such as gallerists, art dealers, curators and market researchers to deliver a rich and broad insight into the art market dynamics and the role of gatekeeping within a digital time.

The data collected results in findings that illustrate how digitalisation has significantly impacted the traditional role of gatekeeping structures, which are now facing the challenge of maintaining the relevance of art market validators while adapting to new technologies and digital tools. The research points out that while digital technologies and platforms on one hand offer the opportunity to engage and broaden audience engagement, on the other hand, they introduce the complexities of a gatekeeping structure that maintains the role of curating and valuing the art. It results in the core of gatekeepers must tackle these challenges while balancing the use of digital tools with the focus on preserving and catering to personal connections and network structures by applying their expertise that defines their role.

In conclusion, this thesis outlines the necessary steps for further empirical research into the evolving dynamics of the art market in the context of digitalisation. It showcases further knowledge on the gatekeepers' perspective and their strategies for adaptation to this digital sphere. It is crucial to sustain the integration and value of art in an ever-changing digital space. The implications of this study extend beyond the art market, reflecting a broader societal context that is shifting towards digitalisation and the changing nature of cultural consumption.

KEYWORDS: Digitalisation, Gatekeepers, Art Market, Market Dynamics, Transparency

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1. Introduction

The rise of rapid digitalisation in relation to the art market demonstrated a shift in how art forms are produced, consumed and distributed. In a historical context, the art market evaluated the validity and value of art through traditional gatekeepers such as gallerists, critics, curators and art dealers, who mediated access and impact of artists and their success that operated as experts in contextualising the art to the art world (Arora and Vermeylen, 2012).

However, Cheng (2024) mentioned how digital platforms reshape the international art market in the operational structures of how art is created, distributed and their consumption patterns, have democratised access to the art and are therefore disrupting the traditional showcasing structures by introducing new opportunities and challenges in a digital landscape. Alongside this development, the role of the traditional gatekeepers, which in this thesis will be identified as the intermediaries on the supply side, is defined as the experts, dealers, or directors, the media, the art critics, and the curators. Even digital platforms, and in general, the force between art and the market can operate as intermediaries. Historically, these traditional gatekeepers mediated the access and the success of the creator in the art market. Now, with the proliferation of online platforms and social media, the traditional role of gatekeepers is changing, and digital gatekeepers or even platforms create a potentially democratised visibility for the creator. This development led to a broader discussion about the democratisation of the art market in relation to the authority, authenticity and validity of art in the hybrid sphere.

As identified with existing literature, in this context, it is established that traditional gatekeepers of the art market are facing a shift in the market that leads to the loss of business when not investing in new artists or creative workers who have direct access to a global audience (Handke, 2014).

However, traditional gatekeepers and creators face challenges in this digital landscape to utilise it to create meaningful exposure and establish success in this transitioning landscape. The key focus is to understand how gatekeepers are navigating the impact of digitalisation within their practice to tackle the challenges of market uncertainty and involving gatekeeping roles.

The focus of this study is to challenge the role of the gatekeeper as they are becoming more obsolete, or even further to be questioned if there are new roles involving new forms of mediators. Digital tools provide for greater visibility and access to art for emerging artists and a broad audience that shifting the traditional power dynamics within an art ecosystem. Therefore, it is first relevant to question whether this shift is leading to business success. Following up on this, the thesis will follow the main leading research question of:

How the emergence of digital platforms transformed the role and influence of gatekeepers in the art market, and what are the implications for market dynamics, creators' exposure and the distribution of success? These transformations mentioned above reflect a broader phenomenon within the art market that influences trends in contemporary culture, whereas decentralised, and participatory practices are implicated in reimagining artistic authority (Abbing, 2022).

In this thesis, the researcher will first examine the existing literature on market uncertainty in the cultural sector, specifically the art market, to understand how various perspectives relate to the issue and to establish a connection to the art market. When doing so, this thesis will take an angle on the needs and perspectives of emerging artists and attempt to relate to established visual artists who operate in the traditional art market. Overall, the aim is to examine whether there is a difference between how success is developed within the art market and see if there is a formula for emerging visual artists to apply in their practice or even establish learning models for visual art education.

This research is related to my own experience as a former student in art education and as a graduate who was facing a change within the art market during the COVID-19 pandemic. In my experience, art education is lacking in the implementation of digital tools and training within a digital landscape. This experience is underlined with extensive research on digitalisation and its impact on industries such as economics, and particularly applied within the global art market. The limited research focuses on the art market and how emerging or even established businesses within the art market adapt and succeed within this transition between the traditional and digital ecosystem.

Furthermore, the aim is to contribute to the discourse on digital impact and market dynamics by further exploring the question that crystallised out of the data collection, which questioned how gatekeepers within the Dutch mid-range art market are navigating these digital shifts. It investigates how intermediaries of the art market balance providing their expertise and curatorial roles while also integrating digital platforms to engage their audiences. It leads to questioning the future of gatekeeping roles within the digital and physical art market. The study explores the existing literature on a micro level within the gatekeeping practices and on a macro level, exploring the shifts driven by the pressures of digitalisation and technological innovations (Finnemann, 2009; Caves, 2003).

The thesis applies firstly a qualitative research approach by Grønmo (2019) through semi-structured interviews with art market gatekeepers to gain insight into their practice and experience concerning digitalisation. Secondly, this study conducted participant observation

following the guide of Malinowski et al. (1922) by visiting a Dutch art fair in Amsterdam. The goal is to gain an in-depth understanding of current practices and challenges regarding online exposure and success. The data collected is supplemented by a theoretical framework, online reviews and research of individual strategies of the gatekeepers to understand the broader art market dynamics.

The findings gathered from this research aim to develop effective strategies for policy-makers, business owners and creators to navigate an emerging digital landscape. Furthermore, recommendations will be addressed to guide educators who contribute academically to understand digital art market dynamics and market transformations. Overall, the results support more accessible pathways within the digital landscape.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Introduction

This chapter of the thesis discusses the relevant key theories and concepts that are supported by academic literature to guide this research and the subsequent chapters of this thesis. The main topics are digitalisation, gatekeeping roles and their market dynamics concerning their intersections. The theoretical framework is sectioned into macro, meso and micro levels that will address the various dimensions of the digital impact on gatekeeping in the art market.

This chapter begins at the macro level by discussing the evolution of the art market in a historical context, from traditional to contemporary gatekeeping practices. It will set the main focus on the impact of technological and digital changes on socio-economic changes, which will be referred to and discussed with the literature of Finnemann (2009) and Caves. In this section, the theoretical framework will discuss how these shifts set the stage for the current art market dynamics.

Then this section is debating digitalisation in the art market, as it firstly needs to look into how digitalisation is influencing the art market dynamics. Further, it will lead to discussing the democratisation of access to art that goes hand in hand with market transparency that can be related to pricing strategies and information. With this debated phenomenon, the role of the gatekeeper becomes relevant as it concerns the rise of new market actors alongside platform economics. The following topic is concerning audience engagement and consumer behaviours in the digital realm, as the literature will follow the question on how digital environments reshape audience segmentations according to the scholars Chong (1998) and Wallmsley (2019). Further on the macro level, the theoretical framework will discuss insights into power dynamics and market concentration as it relates to actor-network theory of Bruno Latour, which is discussed in Verhoeven (2018) and the concept of superstar effects in Handke et al. (2014).

The next section looks at the art market on a meso level by exploring the topics of intermediaries, gatekeeping practices and the market structures in which these participants operate. It starts with elaborating on the traditional gatekeeping roles and their evolution in the art market to key define the term intermediaries and gatekeepers, the historical context needs to be addressed. Central here is that these intermediaries carry the role of mediators for artists and to validate and curate the art in its context. Then this section will place the relationship between these participants of the art world and digitalisation by discussing the shifts within the role of a

gatekeeper. The literature will explore how the role is shifting towards new forms of gatekeeping that are also initiated by the introduction of digital platforms and algorithms. Then, the practices of the gatekeepers are examined by looking at how their practices within the literature are impacted in a digital age by social media and digital tools, by looking into the literature of Salonen et al. (2022) concerning the actor network theory discussed in Verhoeven (2018).

Finally, on a micro level, the practices, behaviours and audience engagement become the central role in the last section of the theoretical framework. It will delve into gatekeeping practices in decision-making to audience segmentation as digital distribution has made a profound impact that led to a shift in how art forms are consumed, distributed and monetised, as well as on how creators operate and succeed discussed in Handke et al. (2014).

2.2. Macro Level: The Broader Ecosystem of Digitalisation and Art Market Transformation

This thesis will explore the central question this research is trying to answer by first examining the art world's reaction to digitalisation at a macro level. The key **concepts that the macro level** examines are the broader transformational shifts in the art market ecosystem due to digitalisation. First, this thesis attempts to state that the art world is experiencing a shift pushed through the proliferation of online platforms, social media and the integration of digital tools. These implementations, such as social media and digital platforms and technological advancements, are a driving force for reshaping how art is consumed, marketed (Handke et al. 2016). This thesis is attempting to state that, according to existing literature, the traditional gatekeepers that in this thesis will be identified as the intermediaries on the supply side are defined as the experts, dealers, or directors, the media, the art critics, the curators, even digital platforms and in general, the force between art and the market.

It is argued that the Internet (as an innovation) has drastically changed the way the art market functions (Finnemann, 2009). The traditional role of a gatekeeper of the traditional art market is changing through innovation and digitalisation in the visual art industry, gatekeeping structures and authorities, the possibility of self-publishing and platforms, and search recommendations and filters (Cheng, 2024).

In Abbing (2022), the paper explores the evolving role of digital platforms in the news ecosystem, and it discusses the shift from traditional journalism as a gatekeeper to the relationship of journalists, platforms and audiences. The paper discusses the concept of conversational gatekeeping that focuses on the relevance of social interactions in the

post-publication of gatekeeping practices. The limitations of this paper illustrate that the social media strategies face practical and ethical considerations. Furthermore the paper is solely focused on the impact of platforms such as Facebook and it therefore overlooks how conventional gatekeeping practices operate on other social media platforms which can have other interactions and norms for the various audience. The key takeaway here is that engagement strategies benefit from a focus on engagement in conventional media and practices as audiences seek clarification, and this can lead to building mutual understandings and effective communication, which overall will build a stronger connection to an audience.

In Cheng (2024), the theory questioned how digital platforms change consumer behaviour as they make consuming art online more convenient and informed. The implications of this are that the paper addresses, on the gatekeeper side, that there is a need for a strategic adaptation to the changes brought by digital technologies for the stakeholders within the art market, as they need to navigate the digital sphere.

Here is where network effects become more relevant to emerging artists who decide to publish their work online. In Baumann (2024), network effects are defined as the value of a service or product increases as more people use it. As an example, the more people use a certain communication app on their mobile, the more people value the use of this service. In the relevance of online platforms, it is crucial to have more drive and growth to sustain within an ecosystem. On the other hand, this implies that network effects can also impact the market dynamics as more dominant stakeholders utilise their dominant position and make it therefore challenging for other businesses to enter. This becomes more and more relevant when looking at the implications of algorithms that may operate as gatekeeping tools for certain platforms within the art world. It is in this thesis that it is questioned whether shifting to online platforms increases revenue for art businesses. For instance, transitioning from tangible to digital art reduces costs from transportation and producer-consumer distance. It is questionable whether the long-term effects of digitalisation on the art markets, following Caves' (2003) concept of quality uncertainty and the predictability of the art market. Existing literature on art market unpredictability is based on a pre-digitalisation era (Caves, 2003).

To briefly describe the term market uncertainty according to Caves by looking at many scholars who took this concept to look at financial market dynamics, for instance, Kerestecioglu (2021) mentions in regards to financial markets that uncertainty can lead to ambiguity in the sense that new source raises risks when it emerges under conditions of high economic uncertainty that on the other hand is affecting asset pricing and market efficiency. Furthermore, Sharfaei and Ojo (2023) look at its effects on a firm and its performance. Often,

the effects are related to the lack of resources that support navigating unstable environments effectively. Also, the research of Sharfaei and Ojo (2023) indicates that competitive advantage doesn't bridge the gap between the relationship between market uncertainty and performance, which overall emphasises that there is a need to develop knowledge to reduce the effects of uncertainty. So, how does market uncertainty behave and relate to the emergence of digital platforms when it comes to the art market specifically?

Identified with existing literature that established that traditional gatekeepers of the art market are facing a shift in the market that leads to the loss of business when not investing in new artists or creative workers who have direct access to a global audience (Cheng, 2024).

It is argued that the traditional gatekeepers of the art market are facing significant challenges factoring in the proliferation of online platforms, social media, and other various digital platforms and tools such as AI that are currently reshaping how artworks are created, promoted and monetised. As mentioned above, the literature indicated that traditional gatekeepers of the art market are required to adapt to this trend. This thesis further wants to learn how traditional gatekeepers integrate or even display a lack of integration of digital changes. These integrations can include taking advantage of digital sales strategies, fostering new partnerships with established or recently implemented online platforms, to investing in online social media marketing to remain relevant in a digital age.

2.1. Art Market Dynamics

So, what are the art market dynamics according to current academic literature? In Velthuis (2011), it is pointed out that the art market itself serves a variety of participants. Those operate with different motivations to engage with market outputs such as art, education, nostalgia, identity expression and further entertainment. The term audience is often referred to as those who consume these outputs, depending on their role and context. These different groups tend to attend the same artwork for specific purposes, which highlights the multifaceted landscape and nature of these audiences (consumers) who engage with art and art forms.

In Chong (1998), these groups of audiences are highly segmented into categories that, in the end, have the potential to lead to innovation as well as challenges in developing marketing strategies. Overall, it is arguable that it has the potential to lead to clashes in marketing approaches in regards to the segmentation of markets, as it does not directly address the unique behaviours observed in cultural and ideological aspects of organisations within the arts.

Cultural implications are concerned with audience engagement as the unique relationship between creative workers and their audiences is involved. According to Wallmsley (2019), when looking at how the arts utilise marketing strategies. It focuses on consumer needs but is emerging into clearly recognising the importance of building a relationship through engagement and audience engagement. It illustrated a shift towards an interactive and collaborative approach that reflects the general trend in marketing by transitioning from the entirely transactional models of arts marketing.

This points out that the topic of audience development is linked to audience engagement. To be effective, Chong (1998) mentions that the arts are required to gain knowledge and understand the individual and diverse motivations of the various audiences, which also means it has a need to involve and include external stakeholders such as donors and the general public.

2.2.1. Meso Level: Intermediaries, Gatekeeping Practices, and Art Market Structures

The following section will look into how digital environments reshape the audience interactions and engagement behaviours according to Chong (1998) and Wallmsley (2019). It will address the difficulties and opportunities for entering a for established participants of the art market. Further, it will emerge into the actor-network theories developed by Bruno Latour, which are discussed in Handke et al. (2014) and Verhoeven (2018).

On a meso level, this thesis is looking at the importance of community building and intermediacy, doing so, taking Anderson's (2004) concept of the long tail, just as a brief reminder, the concept of the long tail looks at many products in categories (Anderson, 2004). The theory taps into the market dynamics as the long tail refers to the less popular items exceeding the purchase of the few more popular items, which is referred to as the head. It makes sense to take this into consideration with the digital advantages, as online sales on online platforms offer a wider range of products that are not limited to the shelf space of a physical store. Therefore, it allows for serving a diverse customer base, which in the aftermath makes it possible for sellers to profit from items being sold in smaller quantities.

For many product categories, smart technology is transforming mass markets into millions of small niche markets. For instance, within the art market, an example of this mass market transformation can be taken in the case of Saatchi Art and the online sales platform Artsy that allow artists and gallerists to showcase and sell their work to a broad and global audience. This transformation to online sales on online art sales platforms caters to the

preferences that enable collectors to search and find specific artworks online. This transformation shifts the traditional galleries to an online platform, which illustrates how technology is creating a niche market within a hybrid art world. Although each of these niche markets may be small, when all the various niches are combined, the volume of business is greater than the traditional mass market successes. Thus, the great commercial opportunity of the future isn't catering to the “short head” of the demand curve, where multiple copies of the same product are sold. Instead, the real opportunity to move forward lies in serving the “long tail” of the same curve – the millions of various niche markets (Anderson, 2004).

There is another angle on how digitalisation can impact this market when looking at the long-tail hypothesis. Furthermore, Handke et al. (2016) mentioned that digital distribution allows niche products to thrive, which in the long run increases the diversity of offers that can potentially affect stabilising the market dynamics.

In Bonet and Donato (2011), the role of Gatekeepers is discussed in the sense that digital platforms can therefore become the gatekeepers of markets by influencing customer choices that have an impact on the trends that, in the end, change the traditional predictability models for markets. It can be argued that digital platforms offer opportunities for diverse market engagement, but the literature lacks a further exploration of the long-term effects on market dynamics. The direct implications of Bonet and Donato (2011) discussed are related to how digital platforms can directly impact customer choices as they are in the gatekeeping position of curating and promoting the content given on platforms. This pre-selected content feeds customers' choices and market dynamics, as it has the potential to decrease the diversity of cultural offerings. Furthermore, the market predictability models have the potential to be altered as they diffuse the shifts in popularity. The effects of this lead to cultural markets becoming less predictable over time, as it also influences the way cultural organisations need to strategise their engagement and production, as it becomes more important with online visibility. In the long run, it becomes more centralised how cultural organisations measure their success and how their value is perceived when digital engagement metrics grow in significance. However, the study of Bonet and Donato (2011) lacks a comprehensive long-term analysis to understand the impact this has on cultural diversity as artists emerge or how stable the cultural markets are in a digital age. The knowledge gap identified in Bonet and Donato (2011) refers to the lack of understanding of how this gatekeeping role reshapes the market dynamics over time, which can impact cultural expression, customer behaviour and the entry to the market for artists.

2.2.2. The Impact of Digital Platforms on Art Education, Communication and Market Dynamics

Regarding the effects of the emergence of digital platforms concerning education, we have all seen how digital tools have changed the way people work, produce, consume and interact during the COVID-19 pandemic. Further analysis by Mehta and Yadav (2024) discusses how social media platforms, for instance, enhance teaching and learning as they foster virtual communities by facilitating communication between students and educators. Also, digital media tools in general provide access to a diverse range of resources, which enhances nonsupervised learning experiences. However, according to Bandyopadhyay et al. (2021), when looking at who has the resources for digital tools then there is a persistent digital divide considering socio-economic groups.

In art education, it makes sense to consider that the artists' practice, both in the traditional sense and in my personal experience, takes place offline in the physical world. Fine arts students are encouraged to work by themselves in their studios, which, in the long run, does not initiate engagement much with fellow students, as the students are pushed to develop their own artistic practice (researchers' observation).

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the importance of digital tools in art education and other sectors became significantly apparent. Specifically, when looking at the prospects for emerging artist following their graduation. The shift that online platforms, transformed the communication, as in enabling young professionals to delicate their social media channels such as Instagram and Twitter (today X). It was a key tool in mobilising social movements to give people their own voice. An example of this is the Black Lives Matter Movement or even local initiatives such as N8W8 in the Netherlands that have successfully bridged the governmental regulations and subcultural needs. This illustrates how digital platforms can be utilised to empower artists to engage with a broader audience in an independent way from traditional gatekeepers. This democratisation of the visibility is crucial for emerging artists, as this allows them to distribute their message and work and engage with broad communities without having to rely on established intermediaries.. Furthermore, as mentioned in Handke et al. (2014), the economic implications of these online platforms are profound in the sense that they reduce transaction costs and enhance the distribution of information. Therefore, it is revolutionising the art market. However, the dominance of a few tech firms remains and raises concerns in today's age (e.g. Musk and the influence of X) about the market failures. It is needed to balance this approach to digital engagement in the arts.. In general, the integration of

digital tools in art education and artistic practice not only fosters a broader accessibility and visibility but also equips emerging artists with the resources to navigate and grow in an evolving art market. When relating this to the art market and the emergence of digital platforms, look closely at dominant platforms such as Artsy or Sotheby's, which overall operate as an oligopoly of the art market.

In Arora and Vermeulen (2012), the involved role of experts within the art market is discussed concerning the emergence of social media and with this the democratisation of information tools. The tension between emerging audiact players and established experts who take the role of evaluation experts is questioned as to whether the mass of participation will lead to valuable judgments. The scholars of this paper themselves take it into the relation of historical context to analyse the impact of digital platforms that create knowledge on the production within the art market. The implications of this paper scope the questions of how to redefine the role of experts within the art market, as their role includes new forms of experts that involve customers' choices. Furthermore, it illustrated the need for critical engagement with the mass participation in art evaluation that should foster a nuanced understanding of the valuation of art within the digital realm. The limitations to this research lead to point out that this paper primarily focuses on the historical context within the evolution of experts within the art market and does not deliver a broad consideration of the impact of digital media and the fast-paste changes of technology and the hierarchical power of digital platforms that reshape the impact on the art market.

2.2.1. Understanding the Role of Actor-Networks in the Digital Age

According to Handke et al. (2014), looking at the winner-takes-all dynamics that the art market exhibits in its effects, where a small number of artists can seize the lion's share of revenues, which, on the other hand, complicates the predictability of the market.

Also mentioned in Handke et al. (2014), this is closely related to the superstar effect, which, in recent literature, is mentioned that the implementation of digitalisation platforms can amplify the superstar effect. Overall, this leads to a greater concentration of attention and earnings among alpha artists. This would affect the outcome and influence of the diversity of a market. It would be interesting to look into how platform algorithms also play a key role in superstar effects.

In Verhoeven (2018), the actor network theory that has been developed by Bruno Latour (1996) is described as a concept that helps to examine how actors in the sense of humans and

non-humans can form a network that constructs a form of reality. Verhoeven emphasises that the collective processes that are associated with the role of the controversies help to understand social phenomena. According to Niederman (2022), this social concept helps to understand the information systems that emphasise the interconnectedness of human and non-human actors. This concept encourages a deeper exploration of the relationships and their dynamics set within a network. In this thesis, this concept is applied to the art world to support the exploration of the relationship that exists between art world gatekeepers and their relationship to digitalisation.

This theory can be directly linked to the crucial role of networks in the art world. In Baumann (2022), it is described that networks facilitate the connection between various stakeholders that include the artists, the galleries, collectors and the institution. These relationships enable the collaboration and distribution of resources that enhance the visibility and opportunities for artists and their work.

2.3. Micro Level

At the Micro Level of this theoretical framework, existing gaps are positioned within the academic literature and practices concerning the relationship between the art market and digitalisation. The discussion follows on how the current academic literature of Salonen et al. (2022) lacks a detailed exploration on a granular level that is specified to actors in the art ecosystem of the impacts driven by digitalisation on the experiences of art consumption and distribution in the traditional and digital art market. This thesis attempts to underline the need for further empirical research that lays its focuses on the gatekeepers that are operating within this shifting landscape. As mentioned in the previous sections, the present evidence demonstrates that few scholars are tackling the complex impacts of digitalisation on art market dynamics, their pricing structures and practices. Within the micro level of this theoretical framework, the attempt is to address these gaps by looking at other models from other sectors, such as the music industry and publishing. Here, digital distribution has made a profound impact that led to a shift in how art forms are consumed, distributed and monetised, as well as on how creators operate and succeed.

In Collet and Rémy (2022), the focus is on the music industry concerning the role of the intermediaries within the context of digital transformation. It points out that digitalisation has an impact on consumer behaviour and engagement. On a macro level, it looks into the indie productions and how the consumer acts upon the judgment-forming agents.. Here, agents operate as gatekeepers that actively mediate between the artists and the consumer by organising

events or by supporting labels and artists. Within the music industry, the consumer plays a crucial and active role in sharing information by promoting and spreading the word; they blur the lines between the artists and the audience. Collet and Rémy (2022) illustrate how consumers become the intermediaries and taste-makers of cultural value, specifically in a digital age within the independent music industry.

3. Methodology

This thesis is structured into several chapters that contextualise the current discourse on the impact of digitalisation within the art market.

The first chapter builds the theoretical framework of this study. It will engage in reviewing the key concepts such as gatekeeping, art market dynamics and the impact of digital platforms on the contemporary art intermediaries. It analyses the insight from interdisciplinary intermediary sources to identify the contextual gaps in literature that are relevant to the art market.

Here, within the following chapter, the methodology of this research will be described in detail with a focus on the qualitative approach of semi-structured interviews with art market intermediaries. It aims to capture insightful perspectives on the research question to gain knowledge on adaptation strategies in a hybrid art landscape.

Following the empirical findings chapter, which will discuss the findings collected in the interview and build a discussion and analysis of the relevant topics that emerged within the conversations. The chapter will balance the gatekeepers' role concerning digital engagement and the traditional role that is embedded in a historical context. This will lead to tackling the question of the role of the gatekeeper in today's art market. It discusses the implications that this role and context have on the art market dynamics and market stability in the context of current and future audience engagement and cultural authority. Then this research will look into recommendations for the art sectors within a dedicated chapter by relating these to policymakers and educators.

The final chapter will conclude with future directions. Looking into the key insights by addressing the limitations and recommendations for further research into the evolving role of gatekeepers in response to the ongoing shift within market power dynamics and digitalisation.

3.1. Qualitative Research Approach

The structure of my methodology follows a qualitative approach described in Grønmo (2019), as this thesis is conducting a qualitative research study on the intermediaries in the art market. The qualitative approach within the research design is suitable for exploring complex social phenomena, such as those seen in the art market. According to Bryman (2011), it is described that a qualitative approach supports the understanding of such social phenomenon therefore a quantitative study can help to understand the dimensions of art sales and the demographics behind it, but in this case, this study is moreover looking into the general approaches and effects digitisation has on how the art market operates. In Grønmo (2019), it is argued that a qualitative research approach emphasises the relevance of context in understanding a phenomenon. A qualitative approach allows the researcher to explore social, cultural and historical factors that can have an impact on behaviours and attitudes, which overall are crucial for the interpretation of findings. Further, this approach allows the researcher to be more flexible in adjusting the focus as new insights emerge within a study and lead to more relevant and nuanced findings. Furthermore, the priority on the perspectives of study participants allows their perspectives to be shared as their viewpoints enrich the research findings. Overall, the qualitative approach offers an in-depth understanding of a topic, as in this case, participants' experiences, thoughts allow the researcher to capture the complex human behaviour and in social interactions (Grønmo, 2019).

Therefore, to gain an in-depth understanding of the following research question, a qualitative research approach provides insight to participants of art market intermediaries to answer the question of:

How the emergence of digital platforms transformed the role and influence of gatekeepers in the art market, and what are the implications for market dynamics, creators' exposure and the distribution of success?

To address this question, a general overview of art market dynamics and the role of gatekeepers needs to be explored; therefore, qualitative research opens the dialogue with such stakeholders and offers insight into their motivations and business approaches (Grønmo, 2019).

The participant's selections follow the purpose of a sampling method that identifies and selects intermediaries based on their relevance to the art market. Those are, as mentioned above, identified on the supply side, such as the experts, dealers, or directors, the media, the art critics, the curators, even digital platforms and in general, the force between art and the market. Moreover, the participants are operating within the mid-range art market within and outside of the Netherlands. They are either well-established in the market or have recently entered. Further, their educational background is rather irrelevant; moreover, it is relevant if they operate as an

intermediary as described above. Within the data collection, a semi-structured interview guide has been formulated to collect data through the insights of the participants in the interviews. The interview guide has been developed based on the literature of the theoretical framework, and the questions themselves have been formulated in an open-ended format that leads to deep reflections that allow the participant to delve into and elicit detailed insight, opening new topics that might appear throughout the interview. The interview provides flexibility within the participant's responses while also covering the relevant topics (Grønmo, 2019).

Prior to conducting the interviews, this researcher delved into extensive online research in the initial phase of the study. It identified potential participants through online platforms such as Google and LinkedIn, as well as official gallery networks and associations throughout the Netherlands. It resulted in an extensive table with a diverse overview of the participants in the Dutch art market and their online representation. My outreach method, following the initial snowball method by online research, included outreach posts on social media to my private contacts and network, and emails to contacts of potential participants. This outreach method faced challenges in communication on digital channels; therefore, it eventually moved to analogue methods such as regular phone calls to secure interviews.

3.2. Participant Observation

This led to the second research method described in Malinowski et al. (1922) as participant observation. Here, firstly, the research objective is to learn about the social setting or behaviour that can be observed within the mid-range Dutch art market. This research aims to get a better understanding of how the mid-range Dutch market operates within their relationship between the gatekeeper and their audience, and how this is impacted by digitalisation. The goal is to gain an analytical understanding of these dynamics and to create a recommendation that can be addressed to educational institutions, the policy-makers and future gatekeepers that may attempt to enter the market. Furthermore, this analysis will support researchers in understanding the aims and norms or even unspoken rules, that can be explored within specific behaviours of this market.

The timing and location of this research will take place at KunstRAI 2025 in Amsterdam. The Art Fair is known as a long-standing and influential contemporary art platform that provides a space for established gatekeepers of the art market in the Netherlands, but also abroad. According to their own statement, the Art Fair has played an important role in shaping the Dutch art scene over the past 40 years, and in 2025, it celebrated its 40 years of resilience

within the national and global context, which makes it the oldest Art Fair of its kind. Overall, this Art Fair is a commercial setting and a cultural event that brings together buyers and sellers in a mid-range art market. The focus of the participant observation includes informal interview questions and prompts that facilitate the understanding of the sellers' relationship with their audience in the context of digitalisation. To conduct this participant observation, the researcher situates themselves into the environment as a participant and a visitor to the Art Fair, but also as an observer. Questions to the sellers will be addressed subtly with caution to not disturb the naturally occurring behaviours that take place. The questions addressed are listed within the attached appendix interview guide. In Mortai (2015), a reflectivity method in research is described as a phenomenological perspective that supports the researcher to avoid bias and to become aware of the surroundings. It emphasises the truthful description that is lived through the experiences by focusing on what is immediately present. While observing, the researcher is critically examining their role. To enhance this transparency and authenticity, the researcher documented the observation and in the findings chapter, these observations will be linked to the findings and the researcher's own experience and assumptions.

The data collected by this immersive observation will be documented in handwritten notes and printed or digital handouts of the individual booths. To analyse these data, the researcher will look into such as mentioned above patterns, norms, rules and unspoken behaviours within the social context. These data will be cross-validated with the findings of online research and informal conversations, as well as feedback from the participating gatekeepers. Lastly, the researcher must constantly reflect on their role and presence as observers to not influencing the natural setting of the Art Fair.

To apply this framework, the researcher follows the research question on what the dynamics of the gatekeepers and their audience are and what role digitisation has in this case, traditional art market setting?

In Grushka (2005), the participant observation method is used as a primary method to access the meanings and semiotic value of artworks that are distributed in a social context between artists. In Grushka (2005), this approach shared insight into the personal experiences of the participating artists. Overall, it delivers insight into the background and motivations of the artists and it questions, by following a hermeneutic-phenomenological perspective, how to interpret the meaning that is created through the artistic practice.

The limitations of the participant observation method described in Malinowski et al. (1922) can lead to a sample bias and scope depending on the researcher's selection of the field. Furthermore, it is restricted to temporal constraints as the duration of observation is limited;

therefore, the overall depth and the effect of these observations as the researcher might be influenced by the behaviour of the participants and social desirability bias. Generally, the researcher might experience surface-level data as the brief interactions and visual inspections provide a limited understanding of the underlying motivations and strategic considerations of the digital adaptations of the gallery owners.

3.3. Declaration of The Use of AI Tools for This Thesis

During the initial stages of research on various topics to develop this thesis, the researcher consulted with OpenAI to discuss interest and research goals. Furthermore, during the primary research on the participants' tools on online platforms such as LinkedIn and OpenAI supported this research on finding the cultural networks to select participants for the qualitative interviews. Then the interviews were conducted either online with Google Meet or by phone and recorded and transcribed with the support of Otter. ai. Afterwards, the transcripts were manually checked to make sure that the wording was true to the interviews. To support the wording in this thesis, the researcher used Grammarly as a spelling tool (Erasmus University Rotterdam, 2025).

4. Findings / Thematics

4.1. Introduction

The findings chapter delves into the findings that derived out of the qualitative research on the role of the gatekeeper within the mid-range Dutch art market by also relating this sector to the general international art market in the context of digitalisation. The aim is to explore how the intermediaries navigate the involved landscape that is reshaped by digital tools and platforms. Through the semi-structured interviews, a rich insight illustrates the context of gatekeeping in an increasingly digital ecosystem. The findings present a structure that reflects the diverse nature of the art market in focusing on the critical and involving role of the intermediaries. The relevance of maintaining this role in the art market amidst rapid technological advancements. This chapter will examine how these intermediaries modify their strategies to maintain and foster their relationship with audiences while balancing the demands of digital engagement and traditional gatekeeping practices. Furthermore, the challenges faced by the intermediaries extend beyond the art market; therefore, this chapter offers valuable insights into a broader context of societal changes in relation to digitalisation and cultural consumption.

The insights offer the perspectives of the research participants and aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of the power dynamics within the art market. The insights gathered contribute to academic discourse on art market intermediaries by serving as a foundation for further empirical research and practical application, and recommendations for stakeholders in the art world.

4.1.1. What is Gatekeeping in Times of Digital Transformation?

When looking above at the description of what and who a gatekeeper is, some of the interviewees struggled with identifying with this role. The educational backgrounds of these participants varied, and some come from the creator side, others have a background in law, while others operate in research. Their role has changed when taking the catalysing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic into account, which boosted the integration of digital tools in everyday practice. For Interviewee Eight, her role over time involved throughout her experience, “(...) *what certainly has changed is the level of expertise and the reputation and credibility I've gained (...)*”. Interviewee Two questioned the traditional gate-keeping model, noting that digital platforms reduced the need for conventional gatekeeping structures. Her role has shifted towards a moreover, “(...) *more*

equitable form of gatekeeping (...)”, transforming more into a mediator that connects artists with their target audiences rather than serving as a traditional barrier. Interviewee Three said that although the traditional role of gatekeeping is still plays a significant role he see reflected “*(...) the artist's role in promotion and sales has increased (...) in light of the growth of digital platforms, artists gained (...) more options and power [...]*” in delicateing power dynamics between intermediaries and artists. Interviewee Six describes a hybrid role she and her business partner take on as “*(...) a shift towards more equitable forms of gatekeeping, with artists having direct contact with buyers (...)*”. In light of a decentralised market and international shipping options, geographical barriers are removed as Interviewee Seven noted that “*(...) the relationship between gatekeepers and artists is flexible, with artists represented by multiple galleries in different countries (...)*”. The exclusivity that a gallery would have about a locality of their gallery is removed as a local market removes the barrier to enter an international market. Overall, the statements reveal the need to question the traditional role of gatekeeping structures in the digital age.

4.1.2. Impact of Digitalisation

When asking about the impact of digitalisation within their practice, the answers varied from looking at presentation methods to marketing opportunities that engage their audiences to pricing structures.

Firstly, Interviewee One states clearly that, “*(...) digital representation leads to visual consumption of art and the loss of the personal experience of seeing art in person (...)*”. Therefore, the physical exhibition will remain a key experience for the visual arts. Further, he worries that “*(...) the framing effect of digital platforms and the potential spoiling of the natural connection to art (...)*”. Interviewee Three underlines this by stating the audience “*(...) want to go into a museum or into an art gallery or an art space and be mesmerised by the colours and the vibrancy (...)*”. It also depends on the need of the buyer as Interviewee Three differentiates “*(...) If you know exactly what you want, you can look for it online, and then it doesn't matter whether it's in LA or in Brazil, so you might buy it online, but most of the buyers are not like that (...)*”.

But when asking whether going digital means that revenue can be increased than the answers align in the sense that more exposure leads to more awareness about the gallery space and the artists. This aligns with Interviewee Four's observations of how “*(...) digital platforms make it easier for artists to monetise their art at lower prices (...) this also leads to (...) artists being more visible and less dependent on government funding (...)*”. These observations lead to a increased pricing transparency and democratisation of the art market in itself and are supported by Interviewee One stating “*(...)*

slowly accepting changes like visibility of prices (...), and Interviewee Two adds *“(...) while digital platforms make it easier for artists to monetise their art at lower prices (...)*”.

On the other hand, considering Abbing (2002), who discussed the constant criticism of an online audience, points out that while producing your art, this criticism can blur into the artwork rather than an artist that is creating independently from an autonomous artistic point of view. Interviewee Two worries here that the artistic expression *“(...) automatically borders on commerce, because I also think that a lot of artists can be vulnerable to making things they know will appeal now, because you have really a direct feedback, especially when you're on popular platform, digital platforms like Instagram or crypto markets, you get you you have instant feedback, so you also really know what your audience likes, which is interesting from a commercial point of view, but it's all if you look at it from an artist expressing their their voice (...) it's always, it's always a bad idea to make art while at the same time thinking about how it's going to be perceived. And I think that really is inevitable at the moment. I think as long as you're an artist that is really active on that sort of platform, I think it's hard not to do that as an artist (...)*”.

Further Interviewee Eight takes this into relation to the art market as a whole as *“(...) digitalisation can be applied on different levels, right on a business level, on a structural level, but when we come to the art level, or the level of art production, then certainly the event, the rise of digital art, has had an enormous impact on the market, because it's challenging. So many mechanisms which have worked, which have worked before, but can't be applied to digital art because it's intangible. It's sold differently. It's appealing to a different or younger target group. So it's interesting to see how the market well, they took quite a long time to really start accepting that digital art is a category of contemporary art (...)*”.

4.1.3. Market Transparency and Democratisation

One key topic throughout the qualitative research was in relation to pricing structures and the need for market transparency. This is introduced by the statement of Interviewee Two *“(...) traditional galleries expressed scepticism about online sales, while noting that digital platforms have reduced the need for traditional gatekeepers, giving artists more options and power (...)*”. This follows the observation of Interviewee One *“(...) difficulty in defining the value of his work in numbers and the ongoing struggle with pricing transparency (...)*”. This indicates that there is no wide implemented consent on how to tackle market transparency. Interviewee Six opens the topic by noticing the shift within the practices and changing dynamics of traditional gatekeeping structures as she states *“(...) The project space offers different price ranges, with some works being more transparent and others being on request. They are learning how to best communicate prices and balance transparency with exclusivity (...)*”. She furthermore adds that it comes down to personal practices to protect businesses and power

dynamics, “(...) *Some artists don't want their prices on, for instance, a gallery viewer, so you can put it in a range instead of the exact price. And then, if somebody's interested, they can just click on a button and then get which will reach me, and then they can inquire for more information which I can provide them with (...)*”.

Interviewee Eight explains this in a broader context, how these shifts in power dynamics remain the need for gatekeeping structures, “(...) *I mean, once the work is online, and that's why people are still hesitant to put up an online store or make works available online, because you don't have the I mean, you don't even know anymore where it's going. People can buy anonymously. But if you think of an artist's career, or you know, in a book where you want to list the work and where the list is, you kind of lose track. It's a very same digital art which can be bought anonymously, so you don't know anymore where your work is, or the gallery doesn't know anymore where the works are spread. So it becomes very difficult to create exhibitions, you know, because you don't know whom to call anymore and to lend the work back (...)*”. Interviewee Eight add that with the rise of digitalisation the increasing need for changing structures are notable as she gives, “(...) *the best by the best example being art fairs, where Art Basel didn't really know where to put digital art in a category. And then they had one try, which is really lame, and then they stopped doing it, because they just really didn't know how to display it and where to display it, and what to do when people want to buy it (...)*”.

4.1.4. Resilience within the traditional art market

One guiding question towards the research participants was directed at what the intermediaries define as business success. One main answer was remaining within a market and demonstrating resilience; these were rather intangible motivations than economic ones. Interviewee Three noted that there was a decline in market participants, which indicates a decreasing traditional Dutch art market, as he states “(...) *when we started, there were five, six galleries, and like I said, there's now only three left (...)*”. Taking this concerning implementing digital tools to foster a new audience, Interviewee Eight responded “(...) *it's an industry who are not longing for new solutions, but has to be tricked into new solutions (...)*”. She adds “(...) *challenge when you realise that the client isn't actually able to go the way or the journey they thought of themselves, you know, because it requires capacities. It requires change (...)*”. She noted that there is no incentive for traditional intermediaries to stay resilient and to implement new approaches. “(...) *most of the established galleries are people between the 60s and 80s, and they founded the galleries, and they kind of matured together with the collectors and the artists. So they don't really care for younger generations, because they say, you know, we are evolving together. And what they don't say, but what we both know it, and they're going to die altogether. So there is no need for many of them, especially those who are owned by one owner and carry the name of the owner; there is no undergoing in turn, to turn it into a business which is sustainable beyond their very own death. So obviously they don't have a need to*

think about the future and about future collectors, but many of the bigger galleries who are trying to survive for ever, at some point need to stop and turn and face Gen Z, Gen millennials, and maybe even already Gen alpha to see what's different. (...) And I see a lot of people being very adamant and very negative and saying, you know, this is not our client here. They're so different. They don't care for art. They buy differently. They are weird. They're always on their phone. But in 10, I mean, you know better than I but in five years, it's millennials, like being 80% of the people buy of the buying power, and then in 10 to 15 years is Gen Z. So you need to face them, and we have to accept they are ticking so differently that you really need to start understanding them now to make business with them in 10 years. So I think that is something the art market as a system hasn't really realised yet, which is really funny, because it's coming. I mean, there's no negotiation. It is happening. And I think that will that would be another challenge for the market to overthink mechanisms and rewards, and traditions, if they want to stay in business. (...) it also implies that it's not a business, in the sense of a business. It's more of a business until I disappear, yeah. And to me, that's not sustainable business (...)". This indicated that there is a general decline in the market and that there is an urgent need for new participants to integrate new business models to foster a new art market.

4.1.5. Traditional Gatekeeping

Examining the traditional art market, galleries served as the primary gatekeepers for artists to enter the art market. According to Interviewee Three, *"(...) historically, the gallery was the gatekeeper (...) "*. He here admits that this exclusive role has changed over time. This role entailed that the gatekeeper traditionally controlled which artists had the potential to grow in visibility. The gatekeeper would also determine the pricing and pricing strategy behind it, and overall manage the relationships with collectors, as they would solely operate over the gatekeeper's network.

Interviewee Eight looks more closely at the narrative and role of the gatekeeper in the context of the artist's career. She notes that *"(...) There is a strong gate-keeping between galleries and collectors (...) as in the purpose of this dynamic and gate-keeping behind the mission to (...) you want to really savour and protect the artists in their career. So I think that there has to be some gatekeeping [...]*. This she places into the relation of the pricing strategy behind creating the artist's career, as in *"(...) if you see an artist rising very fast, (...) and he or she doesn't sell, he or she is dead (...)"*. The caution here is due to the gallerist needs to be hesitant and careful to whom to sell an artist's work to as *"(...) someone they don't know, they might be up to sell very fast again (...)"*. This Interviewee acknowledges the criticism of such gatekeeping but points out its function in building an artists career further *"(...)*

this is elite, and this is grown over the years, and I think at some point there was a reason (...) you know, someone is deciding (...) who pays, who buys what (...) (Interviewee Eight).

4.1.6. Shifting Power Dynamics

Interviewee Eight continues and explains that *“(...) it all ends with digitalisation (...) once the work is online, and that's why people are still hesitant to put up an online store or make works available online, because (...) you don't even know anymore where it's going. People can buy anonymously (...)*”. This makes it even more difficult to control these transactions.

Many of my Interviewees mentioned a notable shift within the power dynamics in the relationship between the gatekeepers or intermediaries and the artists. Interviewee One has been operating for more than 15 years within his business and was the first to describe how he first of all started his career on a very traditional track throughout the academic to fairs in Milan that brought him in contact with partners or gatekeepers across Europe, to the UK. He pointed out that over the years how digital platforms have made it difficult for galleries to maintain the elite and exclusive control over the artist's prices. Interviewee One states that *“(...) If you saw it online, (...) how can the gallery interfere? (...) or even ask for their value? (...) the traditional ways of gatekeeping (...) was having the exclusivity in a city or in the country or even the continent, which is with shipping not actually really possible anymore (...)”*. Furthermore, Interviewee One gives an example of how digital platforms disrupted traditional gallery control mechanisms as he states *“(...) I have a colleague who has a gallery in Brussels, (...) that (...) is angry because he's working with a gallery in the USA. (...) That gallery in the USA is buying and stuff, and the gallery in Brussels is having the work on commission (...)”*. He indicates here in questioning as an artist the relationship towards the gallery, as the artist has the opportunity to choose the better deal.

So why, even as an artist, is it relevant to step from their own digital marketing to approach a gallerist? Interviewee Eight explains this simply by looking at the emergence of digital artists approaching institutional gallerists *“(...) first digital artist shyly, slightly started asking galleries for representation or institutions to be featured, because, come on, you want to be seen, and there's no way to be seen if you don't have a gallery or at least an institution featuring you (...)”*.

In a way, this comes down to the personal relationship a gallerist has with their artist; some do handshake contracts, some just operate with a certain guarantee of revenue on sales, as in his example of the gallery working on commissions. These relationships can be very individually situated, as on the other hand, Interviewee Three states that *“(...) I'm not going to deny the opportunity to one of my artists, if there is a gallery in Berlin that approaches them and said, (...) can we go*

solo? I congratulate them and say: Go! Do! Go ahead. Please try and sell your work! (...). Furthermore, he acknowledges the change as he mentions *“(...) historically, you needed the gallery because you needed somebody who had a connection to...the higher classes who were buying art. Now it's much more a democracy (...)”*. Furthermore, Interviewee Three adds *“(...) the gallery has less power than in the past, because the artists does not necessarily need a gallery (...)”*.

4.1.7. Hybrid and Collaborative Gatekeeping

So, taking this into account, what task can this gate-keeping entail these days? Several responses indicated a more collaborative approach towards the function and role of gate-keeping, as in for example Interviewee Two opened the suggestion as the intermediaries or gatekeepers change their function towards a more collaborative approach in the sense that they cooperate more as a curator to target particular audiences, she states this with *“(...) helping people select artworks that tell a specific story that needs to be told for the right audience rather than differentiating between high and low art (...)”*. When looking at the role that Interviewee Six carries, she struggled with identifying with the role as being the gatekeeper, as she describes their project space as a platform that embodies one of the maker or creator and the gatekeeper or dealer.

Many Interviews revealed that the notion of storytelling is more and more of a necessary but also crucial tool for their engagement and positioning within their role as a gatekeeper. Interviewer Four used the term transmedia approach operating between various media such as newsletters, websites and published interviews with artists, as he explains *“(...) I see it as something that is almost like a transmedia approach. So things are happening here, but online, you could have added more depth to some of the information that people might be receiving. And I think this kind of approach can also, you know, I think, I think that's the might be the interaction. So it's about visibility. It's about telling the narrative (...)”*. Integrating digital formats to their physical showcasing plays according to Interviewee Seven a crucial role as it highlights the gallery and engages audiences. He further suggests that online platforms offer *“(...) more exposure and marketing opportunities (...)”*.

On the other hand, Interviewee Eight is concerned with balancing the storytelling with the substance of the art itself. It suggests that an oversaturated storytelling has the potential to overshadow the artistic quality, especially in the online spheres, as *“(...) verification system with the audience doesn't always lead to depth and quality within the work and the art itself (...)”*. It can be understood that storytelling is essential for market engagement, but it further questions the authenticity that bridges the gap between artistic work and cultural context, whereas this cannot be bridged and applied with general marketing tools.

4.1.8. Digital Platforms as New Gatekeepers

Entering the digital sphere comes with the emergence of digital platforms. Most of the interview participants mentioned working with platforms such as Instagram, Arty, their own website, or even utilising Email newsletters. Only one gallerist who operates in the traditional sense remains using printed versions of his catalogue and mails those to his clients. Interviewee Four explains this as follows: *“(...) I send a lot of invitations to clients buying by post, I send them a booklet which is really printed for a fair with new acquisitions, a selection of acquisitions. So everybody does this via the internet and digitally, because it's cheaper and easier, but you but I do it the old way, and in that way, it is really. People really notice it, because something is falling in the mailbox, in the door, and normally they click the way, and now they have to open the envelope. And it works. It works quite well (...)”*.

On the other hand, an oversaturated digital platform comes with an algorithm. Interviewee Two explains this in relation to collecting art as *“(...) the artist is more visible to a larger audience, also to an audience that that are not generally, specifically art enthusiasts. So there's a wider audience for your art (...) a lot of people's view that I think the line between art and commercial products, (...) it's less, less strong border. It's (...) more diffuse. So in that sense, (...) if you look at the crypto art market, for instance, it's really people want to own it as something to trade and as something to collect. So it's, it's really not so much about the art, maybe, but it's more as a means to generate more money or just to collect, you know, almost like a Pokémon with the NFTs. And I see that also, when I'm organising my light art festival, I also see that it's all it also borders a little bit on art and entertainment. It's a fine line, and the feel gets thinner (...)”*. She states this with the ethical concern that market power platforms such as Instagram take over what people consume, as she states *“(...) currently, the big companies like Meta, they now serve as a gatekeeper, because of the algorithms (...)”*.

Following this thought, Interviewee Eight responds to this and acknowledges that digitalisation puts pressure on traditional gatekeeping structures, but it also opens the door to new forms of access control as she states *“(...) Once the work is online, and that's why people are still hesitant to put up an online store or make works available online, (...) I mean, you don't even know anymore where it's going. People can buy anonymously. But if you think of an artist's career, (...) in a book where you want to list the work and where the list is, you kind of lose track. It's a very same digital art which can be bought anonymously, so you don't know anymore where your work is, or the gallery doesn't know anymore where the works are spread. So it becomes very difficult to create exhibitions, (...) because you don't know whom to call anymore and to lend the work back (...)”*.

4.1.9. Continued Relevance for Gatekeeping as a Verification System for Value

But why gate-keeping in the first place, and how to look at this well-established system today? Another way to look at this is the verification system that traditional gatekeeping systems allow. This means that having a gallerist confirm the value of an artist's work gives the buyer confidence, as the gallerist will select their work based on experience and pre-existing taste. Interviewee Three looks at this from a traditional and pragmatic point of view “(...) *Like I said, I am the gatekeeper. We can pick whoever we like, because there are hundreds of artists who want to exhibit at the gallery, and there's only one or two new ones that I can add to the roster each year (...)*”.

Interviewee Two mentions facing challenges when it comes to selecting artist throughout opencalls when it comes to the use of digital tools such as AI technology, where she feels there is a continues need for a human expert to distinguish the value of the work from the storytelling “(...) *as a curator, sometimes, you know, a lot of people use AI these days also to generate proofs of concepts, (...) it's always up to me to really get a good feel how much really is attributed to the talent of the artist itself, or to AI. And it's sometimes it's hard to distinguish between them. (...) For a proof of concept, normally, I know you can still pretty much see what is AI and what is not. And I mean visually, but also in when you read the concept, you can still have a feel for it, but it's getting harder and harder, so sometimes it's hard to distinguish if if the artist is just really bluffing or bullshitting, or that It's actually something that's worthwhile for me to book, and that's why I rely more and more on, (...)*” just reading them personally, or if they're within my network, if I if they have some sort of reputation, if I can find more works (...)”.

Interviewee Eight “(...) *there's always a reason for gatekeeping. And obviously, this is really getting under pressure now with the digitalisation hitting there also. I mean, it's not a choice anymore, and so it's interesting to see how gatekeeper positions are now cracking under the pressure of Digitalisation on democratisation. But, I mean, you know, in theory, you are, you're right, there is a strong gatekeeping between galleries and collectors in terms of who will be dedicated, which kind of artwork are you actually in a position to be sold (...), to buy something when I don't think you should buy something. I mean, this is elite, and this is grown over the years, and I think at some point there was a reason to do so, because it's always easy to say, Ah, there's gatekeeping, (...) because you want to really savour and protect the artists in their careers. So I think that there has to be some gatekeeping (...)*”.

4.1.10. Future Directions of Gatekeeping

The interviews reveal that there is a shift in the role and the power dynamics of the traditional gatekeeper towards a more transparent, curatorial and collaborative role of these intermediaries.

It is suggested that the gatekeeping should be envisioned as a connector of barriers that focuses on ass Interviewee Two suggest “(...) *making sure the artist that has something to say meets up with the audience that really needs to hear that (...)*”.

Furthermore, the role is more complex when taking the demand side into account, as Interviewee Eight states it is not only the pressure of the digitalisation on the gatekeeper but also “(...) *another pressure or impact is coming from the new collectors' generations arising (...)*”.

Interviewee Eight “(...) *think about how this can be adapted so it feels right today, (...) I'm all in for the art. (...) I believe in this art system (...). I think we all need to invest time into how we can convert the system, which truly makes sense, but works in today's times and and there must be different ways, (...)* Furthermore, when discussing the future of the art market in relation to engaging a new audience that should be fostered, she adds “(...) *I think that would be another challenge for the market to overthink mechanisms and rewards, and traditions if they want to stay in business (...)*”.

4.2.1. Findings of Participant Observation

The participants' observation took place on an art fair in Amsterdam named KunstRAI that had a duration of two days during a weekend in the spring of 2025. This art fair disclosed insights into the dynamics of the Dutch art fair, its audience and the general environment. This year, the art fair celebrated its 40 years of resilience in the Dutch art market and therefore served as an established physical platform for established and emerging galleries and artists. In general, the art affairs role as a commercial and cultural event within the Netherlands plays an important role in bringing together buyers and sellers.

The researcher approached approximately 65 booth owners with the main focus on their hybrid practices at this physical fair. Of the 65 participants, two all displayed QR codes on their business cards.. This indicates a limited integration of digital tools in direct marketing. Furthermore, none of the participants utilised digital tools or interactive technologies on site, which can include digital displays or shop features for online payments.

Generally speaking, in regards to businesses and digital presence, three gallerists mentioned that this will be their last show, pointing out that their in-name business is planning to close. This suggests a decline in traditional gallery participation or a broader interest in physical art fairs for the long run. About 75% of the booth owners provided an email address, whereas 25% are only accessible through landline phones. Of these 75%, further research showed that only 25% had a functioning online shopping option, and most of those, if they provided an

online shopping option, then it referred to a redirection to an established online art sales platform such as Artsy instead of a proprietary e-commerce platform.

Furthermore, the visitor demographic and engagement indicated that the general visitor profile was observed as predominantly part of the boomer generation, with no visitors under the age of 50 on-site. The attendance was moderate, notably lower visitor numbers compared to prominent art fairs such as Freeze Art London compared to 2019. This indicates that there is a limitation to either foot traffic or interest in participating in or buying art at physical art fairs in the Netherlands.

Lastly, the online presence and the digital strategies of the observed booth owners are generally complex, as most websites are not regularly updated and do not offer interactive tools or showcasing options. Only a quarter of the galleries incorporate online shopping options, but most are primarily linking to an external platform and are not providing a seamless e-commerce experience. The limitations of these participant observations are the moderate attendance of the event compared to the interviews, as some stated that in previous years, the attendance figures decreased, which raises concerns about the relevance of physical art fairs. Furthermore, the lack of a digital presence hinders the direct ability to attract a new and diverse audience and reflects on the growing importance of implementing digital tools in the art market.



Contempo Rotterdam - Peter Koopmans - busy
 Smith Davison - Paul v. Amsterdam/Miami
 Contemporary Art Gallery - Linda v.
 Rademaker Gallery - Bart - closing down - No
 Beon Wessels Gallery Rotterdam - Dali - Olive
 Serenize Zaken Amsterdam -
 Bart van der Kooij - Bart@morethanart.com - Bart - kind very analogue - media works
 Frank Wilkens - contact@frank-wilken.com - young kind
 Zoep Galerie - Zic - on holiday
 Galerie Wisbaard Rotterdam - hoeleene - has time - said cur by
 Newhouse Gallery Amsterdam -
 Untitled Rotterdam - no time - but holes
 Monica Dolano - with his time - said mil.

⇒ Anita van Os - Galerie de Roos van tude - seemed good but open - no doors - figure - ~~beuwarden~~
 Open Art Exchange Schiedam - Jolke Bakker - Hansen - come by during opening hours - Nadine - wed + Thuesday 12 - 17 - whatsapp here!
 The Late Photography Gallery - Langue - first no artist
 BDOft Gallery Leiden - Hard to
 Galerie Saita Utrecht (Canal) - wrote down by contacts
 Artified Contemporary - Bars - available with through - visited - then off to London
 Boef - A Galerie Rotterdam - email (14-4) telephone - hard to
 Mulder: Matilda @ gmail.com - Namuso Gallery Den Haag
 Ten half projects Amsterdam

JUSTIN @ [artprojects.com](mailto:justin@artprojects.com) → Jeroen - friendly
 Gallery 40 NL Doetinchem → Jeroen - open friendly
 Davis gallery Copenhagen (DK) → Annelieke Davis
 ↳ Gallery Association Dandee Galerie de

Galleri Viborg → Thorild
 Galerie Feuers Engels Amsterdam - @artlook.com - Cas de France
 Bejstak # Utrecht - already give an interview to EYE about
 Peet van der Horst Gallery den Haag + Taipei - Tuesday onwards 10-Ann
 Chris Tuesday Art + Design Market - Casanne Schep - busy but open - not fair in 3 weeks
 Benkers Modern Art - wants to stop the business
 Exit Art Amsterdam - Artist Collective
 ↳ With Dittlo 061218700 speak on voice mail
 Gallery Post + Garcia's Maastricht - email here
 Gallerie Roger Kattink Amsterdam - Eerste Kattink
 Gallerie Kuga Haput Alphen aan de Rijn -
 GDT de Koon Rotterdam - Coen - don't love to share - not this week but week after
 ↳ (de Gallerie de Haag)

Karen - Galerie Beyond (BE) open to interview
 Kunsthandel E.J. van Wisselingh & Co - Maelen - Willem de Winter - probably busy shipping but hey!
 Gallerie Don'te Ruyphen
 ↳ Chiefs and spirits van Hing - about travels in opening weeks (Texas)

Femke van Heugten @ gmail.com
 Young collectors Swistat - Mel (DE) - Dagmar Wiste - Diercke
 Simon & Schuster EDE - Frans @ Simonis . NL -
 Visus Gallery Casne (BE) - Evelynne Gellens
 Karel Bodden x Bas van Pelt Den Haag - Wisse Prosser Cuijter - online!
 WARR art, Galerie Amsterdam - on Facebook
 Kyas Salon Amsterdam -
 Obit Art Utrecht - busy but open
 Root gallery aan de Lek - Ivonne - Sieske - friendly
 Huis van de Kunst Amsterdam -
 Woudaerwood Amsterdam -
 Vroon ~~Woudaerwood~~ Amsterdam -
 Gallerie Door Nijmegen -
 Serenize Zaken Amsterdam - group + Ven best tuesday
 SBK Kunstwerken Amsterdam - group + Ven best tuesday
 Gallerie Ronald Kersveld Nood - Schamwande -
 Gallerie Frank Wierken Nysen East - Frank - open for online
 Home com Gallery Amsterdam - Nadine - no time
 Soko Gallery Paris -
 Namuso Gallery Den Haag - Director busy until June
 171 project space - Ben + Duna - first time but Kunst Rai - available on coming week
 WTC the Haput Art Gallery - Axel Lemmas
 Gallerie Linda Noudis Wageningen -

CARLOS SILVA
silva118@hotmail.com → Artist Berlin Based
 Klokter Fine Art Gallery Naarden - No - not good on online things
 Kunstconsult 20th cent. Art / object Zaanen - 30 years in business - info @ kunstconsult . NL - side but wants to read thesis
 Beoft Gallery Leiden - Peter - NO
 Arnold Licht Art Kunsthandel & Benideling Amsterdam - please call by phone
 Guus Manis Amsterdam - NO
 ME Art Gallery Amsterdam - in 10 days - tap to India
 Art infected Haarlem -

5. Recommendations

5.1. Introduction

Based on the findings and discussions in the previous chapter, the following chapter will present the recommendations that are formulated to enhance the adaptability of the stakeholders in the art market. The recommendations in this section are directed towards the support and aims for educators, policymakers, and art market participants, who have an impact on the market as a whole. The crucial importance of developing structures to adapt and embrace the evolving technological and digital advancements is discussed in the previous chapters. In the following, there will be some guidelines and statements discussed that support this shift in the art market. This chapter will begin by discussing the importance of integrating digital platforms and their tools in artistic practices. This chapter will provide examples of how digital engagement attracts a future audience and impacts the enhancement of art consumption in the long run. Following this, the next section will discuss recommendations for adapting to market trends by emphasising the intermediaries to remain informed about changing consumer behaviours and market dynamics. Recommendations towards strategies will be discussed and adapted to business practices accordingly, which goes along with the implementation of educational practices for future market participants. The traditional gatekeeping role is based on personnel connections, and maintaining these relationships will remain important within the art market, but further, it needs to be discussed how to balance the digital engagement with the personal networks and connections to enhance the value of art and their validation practices.

The next section is directed to policymakers who will be recommended to build on a collaborative approach with the cultural sectors to develop a supportive framework for digital integration in the art market. Some examples illustrate the potential of policies have on protecting the future of art and culture, consumers and creators in a digital context. Following this, the recommendation chapter will look into limitations of this research and recommendations towards future research on the understanding of art market dynamics that inform the future generations of art market participants..

Finally, this recommendation chapter will conclude with key recommendations that will guide and reinforce the sustainability and relevance of the art market and the broader sector.

5.2. Recommendations to The Sector or Individuals

This section will begin with looking at the implications of the technological structures in the art market. Interviewee Five notices that there are some implications given, but is worried about the implications these structures have on protecting the artistic practices by saying “(...) *I think every creative developer should be very aware of what type of foundation models are behind the tools they're using, what copyrights, what data is being collected, or that they are collecting themselves with what purposes, I think that becomes much more relevant to the practice, to to have an opinion about it, and how you as a practitioner or gatekeeper relate to that. And of course, luckily, I think we're in Europe, and we're gonna get some support and guidance to the EU acts, and there are some boundaries in that, because artists are also hybrids and work transnational, and that would also mean they need to relate to, Yeah, how, how other countries deal with that, and whether you are okay with that or not (...)*”. She noted that interaction of digital tools enhances the practice and there is somewhat of some governmental support, but for future direction, more guidelines need to be formulated concerning the rapid and fast pace of technological advancements, therefore, she continues by stating “(...) *I think it's like Digitalisation can bring us a lot of possibilities, like what we talked about, about connection, about your reach, about certain new tools to create things. But I think we should also always keep in mind, like, with what aim are we using this, and what is the non-digital option for that? Because of digitalisation, it's it seems free, and it seems in the clouds that there are different costs related to that as well, from the mining that is needed for it, from the energy that goes into it. And I think that's an important consideration to take into account as well in these kinds of analysis and discussions (...)*”. She brings the environmental and sustainability aspect into perspective, and when using, for instance, AI tools or operating with technological tools that outsource certain resources, the focus here should also be directed towards environmental impacts. Technological innovation can bring us many new artistic expression but she brings to light the following “(...) *it's about proving that there are different ways of innovation and within this funnel that we can also think about more responsible innovations that take into account ecological and social costs, environmental and one way to do that is to work in these multidisciplinary teams. And I think that for also business successes, companies in their new products and services have thought about and experimented with potential, yeah, prototypes, so that whether they continue with it or not, they're much more informed and it's a better option (...)*”.

5.3. Market Future Structural Directions

This sustainability is directly linked to economic impact, and according to Throsby's concept of the concentric circle, it all starts with the core of artistic expression that impacts the economy as a whole. Now, where is this leading these days? Interviewee Eight worries about the future directions of the art market in its resilience in fostering a new audience “(...) *I remember*

many conversations with my older gallery clients. I mean, most of the established galleries are people between the 60s and 80s, and they founded the galleries, and they kind of matured together with the collectors and the artists. So they don't really care for younger generations, because they say, you know, we are evolving together. And what they don't say, but what we both know, and they're going to die altogether. So there is no for many of them, especially those who are owned by one owner and are carrying the name of the owner, there is no undergoing in turn, into turning it into a business which is sustainable beyond their very own death (...) So obviously they don't have a need to think about the future and about future collectors, but many of the bigger galleries who are trying to survive for ever, at some point need to stop and turn and face Gen Z, Gen millennials, and maybe even already Gen alpha to see what's different (...)". Furthermore, she elaborates in the context of the development of new audiences "*(...) the major shift will come because the mindset amongst future customers, in our case, collector,s will change. They will buy differently. They like things differently. They invest differently (...)*".

This aligns with the narrative that Interviewee Two makes when thinking about how to foster and engage a future art market as she states "*(...) we want to have made people enthusiastic about art, and especially the younger generation that is really used to instant gratification, and we want to have them also understand the art experience, and we do that also with big education projects at schools before the festival in the year before (...)*". This resonates directly with this thesis participant's observation mentioned in the findings chapter.

5.4. Education

This directly leads to the fundamental education systems that need to reconsider new market dynamics and new audiences. Most of the well-established mid-range gallerists have a lack in die education, time or motivation to engage with digital tools. This comes from both the dealer but also the creator; today need to adapt new tools to their practice. Interviewee Two notes that "*(...) we want to have made people enthusiastic about art, and especially the younger generation that is really used to instant gratification, and we want to have them also understand the art experience, and we do that also with big education projects at schools before the festival in the year before (...)*". A long-time, well-established gallerist as in Interviewee Four, acknowledges these changes and admits that "*(...) if I would start my business now and I was 30 years old, I would do it differently. I couldn't do what I do now; it would be too risky. Then you really should need to step in (...)*". Furthermore, he recommends "*(...) if you got clients in the age of 20-30, then you need to do it differently (...)*".

As it comes to the art education in itself, for the creator side. Interviewee Three notes that the artist's role has also changed into more of a five-hat community manager that needs different skills to engage a digital audience and to manage a creative business. He suggests that

“(...) art academies could do better by providing an incubator, space, training, and coaching to help artists navigate the market (...)”.

It comes to show that recommendations should guide educators towards understanding the digital and physical art market dynamics alongside those market transformations to build a resilient future of the art market and foster audience engagement.

5.5. Policies

The reason to utilise digital platforms overall is to operate in a collaborative, curated approach, and to do so, gatekeepers as well as artists use platforms such as Instagram to find their business partners as well as buyers. These platforms, such as Meta, come with the challenge of working with an algorithm that can support but also hinder certain content. The feed becomes, as mentioned above, oversaturated. To avoid this, policies could step in to regulate these tools: therefore, Interviewee Two mentions that *“(...) I think it would be really good if, like, for instance, governments would provide a platform for that governments or the EU or something that that it's more it's more independent from commerce, but that that should not be something that a lot of money should be put into, with a lot of bureaucracy and stuff like that, but more just like a place that people can find each other, because that, in the end, that's all that's needed is just the audience and the art to find each other (...)”.*

Generally, the EU regulations are tailored not to small businesses when it comes to regulating certain measures in regards to technical art installations, or even tax regulations can hinder business transactions from taking place. Interviewee One complains that *“(...) the European Union also didn't consider those artistic fields in their regulation... It's tailored to big companies and not to extremely small businesses (...)”.*

In consideration that the most of the Interview were with mid-range gatekeepers in the Netherlands, these businesses too operate in an international market and Interviewee Seven noted *“(...) what I would think would be a good suggestion is to follow the Germans and well in recent developments that I don't need support in making a website or a contribution to but the taxes for me selling an artwork of a Dutch artist to a Dutch Client is 21% And the taxes that an artist pays is 9% and they get the difference between a nine and 21 in Germany, since I think a month or two months is both for the galleries and for the artists, 7% (...)”.*

This is something Interviewee Eight can relate to when it comes to digital art transactions within a decentralised market, she noted that *“(...) Laws might have to be adjusted to what's possible and relevant now (...)”.*

5.6. Future Research:

This last section is dedicated to future research, and it leads to questions around the ethical and artistic practice that is changing in the light of digital and technological advancement. In the findings, it is stressed that the impact is pressured through the driving forces of digitalisation, but what this means for artistic expression is another topic that crystallised throughout the qualitative research. Interviewee Eight formulated this nicely in saying that “(...) *I think it's very important to remind ourselves that the main shift doesn't come from digitalisation. The main shift comes from the shift in the mindsets of the future generations, and they, of course, are very impacted by digitalisation in the world they are born into. (...)*” She continues by looking at the necessary technological structures that need to be implemented to foster new audiences and a resilient art market. Furthermore, she elaborated on “(...) *We need to work on the APIs between the systems to make it really smooth... You need to be prepared to sell it on the spot at an art fair. Otherwise, you're going to lose business. — We all need to invest time into how we can convert the system, which truly makes sense, but works in today's times (...)*”.

These thoughts go along with looking at other aspects of the economy that are impacted by digitalisation, as Interviewee Five adds “(...) *But I do see that the cultural world is trying to adapt like that. They have a fair code of practice. They also try to already have, like, some thoughts about how they can do it more environmentally consciously, but at the same time also, they also, yeah, it's one of the sectors in our society, and there are many others (...)*”.

5.7. Limitations:

This research focused on the role of the intermediaries of the art market and contextualised it in relation to the impacts of digitalisation on gatekeeping practices. This thesis research limitations are directed to the scope of the research, as broader empirical research may lead to more insights into the implications of digital advancements. Furthermore, research directed to other stakeholders, such as the consumer of culture and art, will deliver a holistic perspective on the art market. To fully understand the consumer behaviours, especially in taste-making trends, would capture a complete dynamic on the question of how market dynamics interact with consumers in the evolving art market and its digital aspects. Furthermore, the participants' observation method has a great potential for this researcher's bias due to personal motivations and selections in the field. As well as further implications mentioned in the methodology chapter. Lastly, the online engagements indicate a small percentage of galleries that

incorporate online sales structures, and this study primarily focuses on established mid-range market participants that solely operate on the physical and traditional Dutch art market. Further research directed towards solely online art sales platforms may indicate a different outcome of the study.

6. Conclusions

To conclude the final chapter of this thesis, the study began with the initial focus on the art market and the driving impacts of digitalisation on the intermediaries' practice by following the research question of how gatekeepers navigate the challenges posed by digitalisation in the art market. The initial aim was to understand how these intermediaries that are in a traditional gatekeeping role, as viewed as the validators of art, are adapting to a digital landscape. The purpose of this thesis is to look into the gatekeepers' practice regarding the impact of digitalisation in the context of the challenges and opportunities that are pressured by digital platforms. To rationalise the research, this thesis implemented a qualitative research method by conducting semi-structured interviews and participant observation during a Dutch art fair. The participants included art market intermediaries such as gallerists, art dealers, curators, and researchers. This allowed the methodology to gain an in-depth insight into participants' perspectives on the art market dynamics and the involved role of these intermediaries.

The academic relevance and contribution to society are related to the social implications. The most relevant implications of the findings chapter focus on the role of the gatekeeper in today's digital age. It emphasises questioning how digital platforms have transformed the traditional gatekeeping roles, taking into account the customer or as in this thesis referred to, audience choices and the art market dynamics. It illustrates a transformation that is presented in the challenges and the opportunities that the role of gatekeepers has in adapting to this changing digital landscape in fostering a broader, diverse artistic voice.

The scientific contribution is illustrated in how these traditional tools are being challenged and redefined in the face of digitalisation. It provides a framework for future research that needs to explore the intersection of digital technological advancements and art.

It results in illustrating a broader narrative that this thesis is attempting to convey by focusing on redefining the role as a gatekeeper and questioning the role and implications these gatekeeping behaviours have on a broader art market and its dynamics. To briefly explain, the digitalisation of the art market does not move with just a trend, but it is a notable shift that requires future art market intermediaries to rethink their strategies to engage a future audience.

This thesis highlights the importance of the continuance and consistency within a balance between operating with the utilisation of digital tools and the preservation that the expertise of gatekeepers is required to build to refocus their role in a more curatorial and collaborative approach to assess the value of art.

At a macro level, the framework of this thesis concludes by looking into the implications of the findings chapter to discuss the broader relevance of how the changes in gatekeeping roles are shifting towards a digital and democratic hybrid art world. The relevance of shifting the perspective and practice supports the artists and the future of the art market. For instance, new audiences need to be engaged, and new gatekeeping practices involve a collaborative and curatorial practice. The main focus is the critical role that gatekeepers have in both approaches in being curators and validators of the artistic value in this hybrid physical and digital landscape.

Policy development can leverage these findings in order to formulate frameworks that foster the integration of digital tools to ensure that intermediaries and stakeholders are equipped to adapt to emerging technologies. Furthermore, intermediaries gain a framework to develop practices that foster and encourage the collaborative and curatorial approach in which traditional intermediaries and digital platforms create an environment in which all participants can grow and thrive. This will involve training programs to enhance knowledge sharing and digital literacy in a collaborative gatekeeping structure that enables practitioners to navigate the digital art landscape. The ongoing relevance comes from the pressures of digitalisation and the audience that needs to be catered for. It concludes by remaining relevant to question how to adapt to these changes while engaging with their essential functions as mediators, intermediaries, dealers and curators to deliver the context of the artwork to a broad art market.

Returning to the macro level of this thesis, the broader implications of these changes within the art ecosystem demonstrate that the evolution of gatekeeping structures has an effect on individual artists but also broader intermediaries and consumers. It reflects on a societal shift towards a digital landscape and changing consumer patterns that impacts market dynamics. The art market is at a momentum in which it is with the integration of digital platforms and tools facing a transparent environment that is responsive to reshaping the future of artistic authority and market dynamics. This thesis concludes that the research showcases the role of gatekeepers is not solely linked to the power and control of market success for artists, but also in a position to adapt to the challenges and opportunities for growth and innovation in a changing digital landscape.

7. References

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8. Appendix

- A. Interview Guide
- B. Coding Table
- C. Transcripts and Informed Consent
- D. Declaration Page: Use of Generative AI Tools in Course Assignments