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The role of institutional relationships in shaping the career development of emerging artists

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Purpose: We consider the role of institutional relationships in providing an exhibition as a launching platform for emerging artists to develop their careers, as well as contributing to the broader creative economy. We view this as an entrepreneurial intervention in challenging the status quo through its potential to stimulate artist career development.

Design/methodology/approach: Data were collected using a case study approach in order to understand the complex inter-relationships between stakeholders of an emerging artists' exhibition at a well-known art institution. Twenty-six interviews were held with a selection of the exhibiting artists, artists from previous years' exhibitions, institution staff, the exhibition selection panel and major prize givers.

Findings: The main relationship value created by the institution as perceived by the exhibiting artists was high-level publicity and exposure of their work. Related benefits such as the potential to build career-enhancing networks were also emphasised. Some of the artists interviewed were aware of the art market structure and how they could create and sustain value within it. Others expressed a lack of awareness of and interest in its operationalisation where more assistance from the institution could help.

Originality: The exhibition is one of only a very limited number of similar events throughout the UK and can be viewed as a successful entrepreneurial intervention.

Research limitations/implications: This research focused on the institutional relationships relating to one organisation, albeit one which leads the way in terms of helping to accelerate emerging artist careers. However, best practice lessons emerge from the research in terms of informing similar institutions elsewhere. We move beyond quantitative measurement of cultural value activities in developing in-depth qualitative insight into these relationships so that more nuanced understanding is revealed.

Practical implications: There is a need to develop pathways to assist new graduates and for a more strategic focus by art institutions to help develop their careers by creating and sustaining impact and engagement in the marketplace. This will be of interest to policy makers in helping to shape programmes of assistance in the future beyond the art institution. We also uncover broader cultural value impacts beyond the exhibition site where these institutional relationships can contribute positively to health and wellbeing.

Key words: institutional relationships, professionalisation, emerging artists, careers, policy, market

Word count: 8621

1. Introduction

The aim of our paper is to assess how institutional relationships associated with an annual high-profile privately funded contemporary art exhibition as a platform for emerging artists can assist in their career development beyond their initial degree shows (Fraiberger *et al*., 2018; Lehman and Wickham, 2014; Martin, 2007). This research is part of a wider Cultural Value project examining the exhibition from a variety of stakeholder perspectives. We contribute to knowledge development by moving away from the historical reliance on quantitative measurement. The focus of our research is on the emerging artist's relationship with the institution hosting the contemporary art exhibition. Our findings will be of interest to policy makers, other institutions, artists and researchers as we view what we uncover as an entrepreneurial intervention in an otherwise art-focused environment. We use the term 'emerging artists' to describe those artists who have recently graduated, following their degree show. Other authors may use related descriptions such as 'young' or 'recent graduate'.

There are a number of academic and non-academic studies on artist career issues, including employment and cultural work, income and career paths. However, there has been a lack of meaningful synthesis of their contributions, partly due to the disparate nature of where they have been published. Ball *et al*. (2010), for example, consider the concerns and experiences of recent arts graduates, including gender differences and social capital issues in securing employment. Taylor and Littleton (2008) identified how arts graduates tended to accept that a low-income career is an inevitable consequence of working in the creative industries. Honey, Heron and Jackson (1997) believe that it is psychic income, or the non-monetary, non-material satisfactions which accompany an occupation, rather than financial rewards which motivated artists.

Publications exist on artists' support in general, including the need for assistance; for example, financial aid to help them to sustain their careers (e.g., Cliché *et al.*, 2001; Arts

Council England, 2006; Hellmanzik, 2009; Throsby and Zednik, 2011; Glinkowski, 2012; Daniel, 2014; UNESCO, 1980). Portfolio working, where artists combine working in the sector with paid employment elsewhere, is often the reality for many artists (Fenwick, 2006). Any commercialisation activities are seen as part of a deliberate artistic strategy, including a refusal to follow a solely business only path for developing their careers.

Bridgstock and Cunningham (2016) investigate career sustainability, noting issues of oversupply and precarity, high amounts of self-employment and portfolio working, also found in previous surveys in the UK (Ball *et al.*, 2010; Pollard, 2013). In Australia, and elsewhere, there is an absence of a nationally agreed framework or curriculum for higher education, resulting in heterogeneous programme design and learning outcomes. Any frameworks which do exist do not acknowledge contemporary needs such as entrepreneurship and lifelong learning (Bridgstock and Carr, 2013). Arts Council England (2018) identified the following factors in influencing artists' careers: talent, hard work and persistence, self-motivation, critical timing, training, the opportunity to exhibit, family, friends and peer support. Examples of specific achievements or events which contributed to making the artist feel established include the initial individual large professional show or exhibition, group exhibitions, residencies and the ability to spend time producing the art. A number of barriers included financial issues, not enough time to make the art, market access and difficulties promoting the work. A study commissioned by The Scottish Contemporary Art Network (SCAN) examined the experiences of visual arts in Scotland, in addition to how well the sector operates (Blanche, 2015). This gave an overview of the people, places, resources, and relationships within the sector in identifying the strengths, opportunities, and challenges for the future.

2. Literature review

Synthesising insight into artist career development

Petrides and Fernandes (2020) critique the relevant literature in constructing a model of the elements required to assist artist career development. This involves a blend of skills in entrepreneurship and marketing, developing relationships with art world gatekeepers, and the creation of brandings strategies alongside reputation management. They note that their model can be applied to every artist career stage, from early/emerging, to mid-career and late/established. Interpretation of the model should be holistic, rather than believing that each block represents a career stage. They inform their thinking by drawing on the literature from management, marketing, and entrepreneurship (e.g., Fillis, 2004; Varbanova, 2013; Konrad, 2013); economics, including cultural economics (e.g., Klamer, 2011; Singer, 1988), and sociology (e.g., Becker, 1982; Bourdieu, 1985). De Klerk (2015) also contributes here by adopting the entrepreneurial bricolage lens in helping to understand how network development can assist in securing the necessary resources in solving problems and identifying opportunities. Understanding the information needs of the artists is also important here (Mason and Robinson, 2011). Additional sociological insight can be gained through the work of Alexander (2021, p. 114) who defines an artist career as involving 'the succession of jobs they have over a lifetime. This pathway is often non-standard and is therefore challenging to evaluate statistically. A successful artistic career can also involve "exhibiting work, reaching a wide audience, and making a living by selling art" (Petrides and Fernandes, 2020, p. 305). It is important to note that the notion of 'artistic career' will vary, depending on the context and who is involved in the conversation, e.g., gallerists and dealers tend to concentrate on market-based contexts, while curators place critical acclaim in higher esteem. Artist career development involves the development of artistic competencies in helping to influence the future direction of the artists' work, and the leveraging of their social capital (Bourdieu, 1986).

These help to gain the attention of market and institutional agents as experts and gatekeepers towards their work (Foster, Borgatti and Jones, 2011; Janssen and Verboord, 2015). Career progression is also aided through enhancement of cultural knowledge and the continued development and management of relevant network relationships in the building of artistic credibility (Bonus and Ronte, 1997; Richardson, Jogulu and Rentschler, 2017; Wickham, Lehman and Fillis, 2020). Networking involves efforts to establish and maintain connections with those individuals, groups and organisations who are able to help others in work or career contexts (Forret and Dougherty, 2004).

Once we have a picture of how artist career development occurs, we can then consider in more detail the accentuation of particular intervening factors. The first exhibition after an artist's degree show can be viewed as the initial platform to professionalization (Lee, Fraser and Fillis, 2018; Throsby and Petetskaya, 2017; Lehikoinen, 2018). This entails moving away from a focus on self-actualised creation of art to art also shaped by market actors through the process of professional self-structuration (Wyszomirski and Chang, 2017). An artist's professional status is reflected in the benchmarks set by the marketplace, education, and the profession itself (Jeffri and Throsby, 1994; Fine, 2017). This includes peer recognition (Plattner, 1998) as well as, for example, securing commissions, grants, and prizes.

Values surrounding emerging contemporary artist career development

Armbrecht (2014) notes how different forms of value are associated with, and created by, cultural institutions, such as social, creative, educational and health related benefits, in addition to any economic impacts (Bille Hansen, 1995; Crossick and Kasznska, 2016). Value can also be viewed in cultural, symbolic, aesthetic, intrinsic and economic terms, or capitals (Holden, 2006; Mason, 2002; Throsby, 1999). More specific contributions include assisting in the development of the artist's identity and accessing social networks in terms of helping emerging artists to leverage relevant contacts in developing their careers.

So, the values associated with artist career development can be assessed from both tangible economic positions (e.g., Bonus and Ronte, 1997; Throsby, 2003), as well as from a more qualitative, subjective stance (e.g., Walmsley, 2011; Walmsley, 2016; Belfiore, 2020). The former perspective has resulted in a stagnation of debate and understanding, while the latter stance is now generating new insight. Artists in general, not just emerging artists, tend to create based on a continuum of intrinsic to market facing priorities. Some have the ability and means to focus mainly on the former, due to their non-economic priorities, previous success, and self-focus. While, at the other extreme, other artists are fully engaged with the marketplace as they seek to sell their work. Institutional relationships, however, tend to focus on assisting with the former. Not all institutional relations, however, remain positive, as Rentschler, Fillis and Lee (2022) uncover in their longitudinal study of arts council brand legitimacy. There may also be impediments relating to cultural diversity (Rentschler, Le and Osborne, 2008) and ethnicity which also impact on career development due to an over-reliance on cultural capital over economic and social capitals (Le, Jogulu and Rentschler, 2014).

Lee, Fraser and Fillis (2018) examine the opportunities and barriers for new contemporary artists, noting the challenging environment for recent art college graduates as they enter self-employment. Many of these artists exhibit a lack of interest and awareness of commercialisation of their work and, instead, are intrinsically motivated (Amabile, 1993), focusing on non-monetary rewards or psychic income (Menger, 2006). Røyseng, Mangset and Borgen (2007) found that young art students exhibited a large amount of ambivalence towards the economic aspects of their future careers. However, other art students actively embark on engaging with the marketplace. The former may behave entrepreneurially in terms of experimenting with their artistic creativity, while the latter engage entrepreneurially in both artistic and market terms. Whichever path is taken, this will impact on career direction and success in a variety of ways.

Artist self-expression tends to dominate over seeking financial profitability. As it currently stands, the percentage of active artists following graduation declines markedly over time (Stohs, 1989; Stohs, 1992), with many taking up other occupations. Interventions such as the platforming strategy of the institution at the centre of our investigation can assist artists to remain as artists, given the absence of other support initiatives.

Artists, institutions, consumers, and other stakeholders interact directly and indirectly through the interplay of artist-centred and market-led priorities (Fillis, 2006). These interactions collectively play a part in contributing to artists' career development through shifting stances on priorities at specific points in time. The artist-centred position, for example, stems from:

> The symbolic revolution through which artists free themselves from bourgeois demands and define themselves as the sole masters of their art while refusing to recognise any master other than their art (Bourdieu, 1993, p.169).

Market-facing interactions are often established out of necessity or as a deliberate strategy by the artist. However, with emerging artists, the degree of authenticity of their work can vary depending on how derivative or original their art is perceived to be as they seek to find their niche. At the same time, their brand identity is also still developing. The brand value of an artist is shaped partly by the social and physical spaces between the artist and the place of creation (Sjöholm and Pasquinelli, 2014). Schroeder (2005) also confirms the value of the artist as a brand, helped by communication of the artist's style, self-expression, and image production. These factors also interact in shaping the artist's reputation and can require careful management as the artist's career grows (Bauer, Viola and Strauss, 2011). Rather than having a sole focus on artistic creation, artists need a balanced set of artistic and business-related skills in order to help improve career development.

Enhancement of value and career development involves a range of stakeholders including artists, galleries, institutions, art schools, critics, auction houses, collectors, dealers and interested consumers (Jyrämä, 2002). This network, or art world, should be seen as an evolving set of relationships between interested stakeholders, with linkages to the wider environment (Becker, 1982). Rodner and Thomson (2013) help us to appreciate the contributions of the various art market network members in what they term the *art machine* in creating value in the art marketplace. The institution has a central role to play here. Artist validation is carried out within this space where co-branding by artists and institutions helps raise recognition levels and positive impacts on career development. This also raises the collective and individual value connected with the stakeholders involved.

The role of mentoring

Mentoring can be viewed as an entrepreneurial intervention (Scandura *et al*., 1996; Hanson, 2021) in aiding the development of both artistic and marketplace skills through calculated risk taking and experimentation. Valentine, Fillis and Follett (2013) developed an innovative research and development model concerning access to equipment, facilities and university art and design research staff as mentors, resulting in the creation of distinct portfolios of practice. This included establishing new pathways for approaching national and international vendors for exhibiting and retailing their work. The mentoring programme also encouraged risk taking and experimentation through its mentoring programme. Mentoring is a qualitative way of supporting professional development as an integral part of the creativity and innovation process (Megginson, 2000; Schrage, 2000; Jackson, 2004; Kwok, 2010). Merriam (1983) views the role of a mentor as multipurpose in that it involves being a teacher, counsellor, developer of skills and intellect and guide.

3. Methodology

Research Setting

The research site was the sixth annual contemporary art exhibition (Exhibition 1) in a prominent institution in a major city in Scotland, showing the work of 64 selected graduates from five art schools after they have made it through a rigorous selection process. The exhibition's remit covers, for example, painting, sculpture, and printmaking. Apart from their degree show, the institution's annual emerging artist exhibition is the only platform which assists new art school graduates in Scotland in progressing the early stages of their careers as artists. Since 1976 the institution has presented an annual student exhibition which has been rebranded as this contemporary art exhibition for selected graduates only since 2009. Established in 1826, the aims of the institution include encouragement and support for emerging artists; to uphold best practice in contemporary art and to inform national debates on a range of visual, cultural and educational issues. It is an independent membership-led organisation, with over one hundred Academicians and thirty honorary members. The privately funded institution does not receive any public funding. There are also several UK wide initiatives such as the Bloomberg New Contemporaries which, since 1949, has provided a platform for new and recent fine art graduates from UK art schools in the form of an annual national touring exhibition. We refer to Exhibition 1 as the initial exhibition at the Institution. Exhibition 2 is the subsequent exhibition held in London for the selected prize winners. Exhibition 3 is a retrospective exhibition involving a selected artist from each of the previous year's Institution exhibitions.

In addition to offering over £25,000 worth of monetary prizes, residency opportunities, studio spaces and awards the institution has also secured a national touring opportunity of the exhibition at a high-profile gallery in London (Exhibition 2) for the first time for a small proportion (about 30%) of selected artists from the Exhibition 1, providing a significant

platform for new Scottish artists in London. The institution also hosted a special exhibition reinviting one artist from each of the annual exhibitions (Exhibition 3). For our study, we explore all three exhibitions launched by the institution in order to explore the role of institutional relationships in shaping the career development of emerging artists.

Data Collection & Analysis

Our data were collected using a case study approach (Yin, 2009) in order to understand the complex inter-relationships between various stakeholders and their interpretations of value attached to the exhibition presenting emerging contemporary artists. Twenty-six interviews were held with a selection of the exhibiting artists (15), institution staff including the president and director (4), the exhibition selection panel (2) and major prize givers (5). Among the 15 artists we interviewed, 11 were newly graduated and invited to Exhibition 1 and the other 4 were from previous years' exhibitions who were reinvited to Exhibition 3. From those 11 artists from the 6th annual exhibition, 4 were invited to Exhibition 2 and one of them was further invited to Exhibition 3 as a representing artist of the year.

All interviews were semi-structured based on a broad agenda tailored to each interviewee group and were recorded digitally. We asked each of the stakeholder groups a number of career development related questions; for example, exhibiting artists (current and past) were prompted and probed about their participation in the exhibition, their longer-term ambitions, the different types of value associated with their work, engagement or otherwise in the market and the importance of an audience. We also asked about the impact of their work and its validation, their reflections on the usefulness of the exhibition in developing their careers as artists and how this might be enhanced, the wider impacts of the exhibition and their relationship with the institution.

The transcribed interviews were coded for analysis using the Nvivo software package for interrogating qualitative data. Although coding was undertaken individually by the

researchers, differences in opinion were reconciled. From a thematic analysis of the interviews (Boyatzis, 1998), we assessed (1) the role of the contemporary art exhibition as a launching platform for career development of the emerging artists; (2) the engagement by the emerging contemporary artists with the institution in professionalising their practice and therefore assisting their career development. We use pseudonyms or job roles for artists and other study participants in order to preserve their anonymity.

Following our assessment of the literature and our understanding of the sector, our overarching research question is:

How do the institutional relationships associated with a high profile annual contemporary art exhibition contribute to the construction of a platform for emerging artists which can help their career development?

4. Findings

Institution launching platforms for emerging artists career development

We carried out a number of interviews with the exhibiting artists, and also with those who had exhibited in previous years. An emerging artist who had exhibited several years previously saw the exhibition as a platform in furthering her career:

> It was good to have something to work towards after the degree show. I mean like when you finish you think "oh gawd what am I gonna do?" and then this was like something to work towards because I created a few new pieces as well and had my original work that I had in the exhibition. So certainly, having something to work towards was great. (Painter and Printmaker, Artist from previous years' exhibitions)

The convenor of the selection panel for the exhibition has extensive experience as Head of School of Art, and as an Academician. The process works in the following way. One member of the institution joins the convenor at each of the art school visits. This results in a team of four selectors. For every seven students in a final year in each art school one student is selected, resulting in a total number of 64 students. There are no detailed selection process rules set by

the institution, apart from an outline of the process. The convenor adopted an intuitive approach to selection, allowing the assessors to respond to the work as they saw it on the day of the visit to each art school. The selection panel visit each degree show 'blind' as they do not know the academic history of each of the artists. This ensures that bias is limited when selecting the exhibiting artists. Those involved in the selection process are from different conceptual areas. The age range of selectors is from the 30s-80s, ensuring an extremely experienced and balanced panel. In addition to the institution selectors, there are always 2 members of staff from the Art School being visited to ensure context and provision of additional insight.

> The selection sticker located next to the student's artwork serves as an early marker in the artist's career in terms of perceived quality and differentiation. One of the benefits of the selection process is being able to take risks in decision making. Decisions are made, not because of tutor recommendations, but because of the perceived quality of the work. Each year the composition of Academician selectors changes, which acts positively in countering specific taste preferences.

Creating brand value of emerging artists

Artists talked about the value of the institution in helping secure publicity which enable them to build their own brand name, acting as a catalyst in developing the value of their work and reaching a new audience beyond the art school environment. This supports the notion of the art machine as a means of value creation in the art marketplace (Rodner and Thomson, 2013).

> I think it would get more exposure from people who aren't necessarily that interested in art to start with…they're all possibly not art minded and all have different views and that can add value because you can make somebody interested in art and also it can be beneficial to you…because they could know somebody, or you could be the first piece of work that they ever invest in… It hits a really wide audience… (Sculptor, Exhibiting artist)

The emerging artist initially generates value through the creation of the idea behind the artwork and then enhances this, helped by the institution.

The Director explained that the exhibition validates the emerging artists who are selected to exhibit, operating as a kite mark of quality or the beginning of a brand identity in helping to stimulate their career development (Schroeder, 2005; O'Reilly, 2005).

An artist talked about the value of the exhibition in terms of shaping his future career. However, he was more concerned with the intrinsic benefits of his work, rather than any financial return:

> ...the value of the exhibition was never monetary so I thought the value was to be able to have the space, to be able to be showing in such a prestigious place, the excitement of this new space and being able to tell people to come along and being able to get these kind of images and being able to get it on my CV… (Mixed media artist, Exhibiting artist)

We interpret this as brand value created by institutional relationships. Consumption of ideas from peers also informs how these relationships create value. This then results in additional value and enhancement of the artist's brand which further assists their career development. The institution raises the brand value of the exhibiting emerging artists due to its prestigious status in the art world (Schroeder, 2005). It also acts as an anchor and broker of a network (Shaw, 2006) and facilitates value creation by acting as a platform for emerging artists' career development, while also marketing the artists and the exhibition itself.

Other institutional related benefits mentioned by our respondents included the possibility of building career-enhancing networks. Some of the artists we interviewed were aware of the art market structure and how they could operate within it by creating and sustaining value. Other artists displayed a lack of awareness, interest and understanding of how the art market operates, something where more assistance from the institution could help.

An experienced artist who had previously exhibited at the exhibition noted how the art market was more than just financially shaped with many qualitative dimensions also at work here:

> The value isn't monetary I don't think because it's an emotional, more spiritual connection that you have with a piece that can't be quantified and it's so personal to everyone who looks at it.

An exhibiting artist demonstrated the clash between willingness to become involved with the market and the inner motivation to create art:

> I suspect a lot of people who are artists perhaps the personality that you have or why you do or what makes you do it is kind of contrary to the personality of the person who is really good at marketing and putting themselves out there and being brash and bold about how wonderful their work is. That kind of self-promotion for me is quite alien.

The second platform:

Exhibition 2 in London, supported by a partnering foundation for Scottish artists for some of the exhibition prize-winners, provided an opportunity to experience a different audience in a major location as a further step to career development. The Bursary is a significant award of £10,000, with an additional £4,000 for artistic production costs. It also includes a year of mentoring to oversee the artist's professional development and transition into an established career. This was a special year for RSA New Contemporaries as it saw the presentation of the first ever Fleming-Wyfold Bursary, sponsored by the Fleming-Wyfold Foundation:

> This critical support of young artists is a core objective and value of the Foundation. Building on the strength and enduring legacy of the Fleming Collection, we hope to develop new and existing relationships, from education to exhibitions that will underpin our role as a key promoter and supporter of Scottish art and culture and fulfil our ambition to be seen as a hallmark of excellence in Scottish visual arts. (Trustee and chairman of Fleming-Wyfold Foundation Management Committee)

The Institution Secretary identified the benefits of fostering this relationship:

> I think the involvement with [the Foundation] has been great…I suppose to a certain extent it seems to come as some sort of recognition for us to get that kind of help. I think it's helped with our publicity; I think it's raised the profile of the exhibition that engagement with…Possibly it's because of the monetary value of the prize given but then there's the acknowledgement of the development of young artists as well so it's kind of like commitment from both parties; both from the [institution] and…to support and encourage artists to flourish in Scotland. (Secretary)

The Institution Secretary identified the benefits of the exhibition as a launch pad to the future careers of the exhibiting artists in terms of a giant leap towards professionalism after art school (Jeffri and Throsby, 1994; Throsby and Petetskaya, 2017).

The value of the exhibition to the exhibiting artists was also considered by the Director, including it being a validation process and an arena for accessing new audiences:

> They are able to platform to a wider audience…Being able to…have something to work towards at the end of the degree show that is not institutionalised…they have…support from the team here to encourage them and talk them through different elements of what they are doing… (Director)

The value of mentoring emerging artists in shaping career development

Instead of the emerging artists working in isolation, the [institution] enables experienced and less experienced artists to meet and interact, creating value with respect to artistic practice, philosophy, debate and advice for career development:

> …we're…dealing with emerging artists at one end and yet…seen by others as the kind of ultimate establishment body but then…we're all creative and some of the older ones would give the young ones a real run for their money and it's interesting when the students start to come up against some of the Academicians that are involved in organising it [the exhibition] and think wait a minute, these guys are actually, some of them are quite sharp. (President)

Co-creation as a stimulant for career development occurs between the emerging artists and the institution through provision of advice, encouragement and engagement (Boorsma, 2006):

> …when I was installing for a week, it was really nice because people would come and give their critical feedback in a constructive way and that was a huge help… (Performing artist, Exhibiting artist)

By being able to interact with older established artists, this maintains their motivation levels and pushes them creatively and in developing their careers as they learn how experienced artists have developed theirs.

An international communications consultancy dedicated to promoting and managing the reputation and interests of the arts worked with the Foundation to help assist the bursary artists

in their career development through mentoring and training in developing a gallery relationship (Scandura *et al*., 1996; Valentine, Fillis and Follett, 2013):

> …the purpose is to give them a new platform and audience outside of Scotland…that year when an artist graduate is the hardest year when they're trying to transform from being an artist into having a proper career…that's where they need the support…So…our relationship with [the Institution] was really two…fold. The bursary which…was a significant amount of money but attached to that was this mentoring programme that really helped the artists understand how to use those earnings to forward their next project, to really build their career, their networks…how to enter a gallery. (Arts consultant)

Post exhibition mentoring, facilitated by the institution, creates additional value in helping to inform emerging artist career development. Although specific advice on pricing is not formally offered, staff, including the Director and Gallery communications co-ordinator will assist the artists if they ask for help. This advice is available for all artists, including established Academicians. Other benefits include the setting up of international artist residency exchanges. This is another opportunity for network building in enhancing career development.

Longer term institutional relationship benefits

A range of institutional relationship dimensions stemming from the original exhibition can be identified: within the wider exhibition programme itself in terms of artist support and engagement, as well as helping to develop relationships with the wider art community. Although the institution does not have studio facilities or offer technical access, it acts as a focus for artists in enabling the pursuit of opportunities. Keeping in touch with the artists as they grow their careers is also important:

> …Everyone thought they knew what the [Institution] did and they imagined that to be a Victorian model and it was just re-investigating all of the elements of what the [Institution] was doing… you know how it supported artists and then start to put in an exhibition programme that would engage with different types of artists and different age groups of artists...What we decided to do was to look at the relationship development from early career onwards and so over the last 11 years we have really focused on maximising all of our relationships and be there with customers, with the arts community, with other galleries and then…with residency providers, with the art schools and university departments and also with emerging artists and artists therefore throughout careers. (Director)

Several years after exhibiting, the artist/institution network is often maintained, even though the artists may be working overseas. This also demonstrates the enduring nature of the institutional value stemming from the initial exhibition:

> …an artist who we showed I think 3 years ago who was an Edinburgh graduate and had a splendid big composite piece taking a whole wall and just 2 weeks ago [the Director] was sent this beautiful hard-backed book from his new dealer…prior to a big show opening…we were looking through it...and the last page is the installation shot of his work in [the exhibition] because that's where his career started. (President)

Two of the exhibiting artists at the institution, who work as a pair, were awarded the bursary. A year-long mentoring programme was also included in order to assist with the artists' professional development in establishing their careers. Since receiving the bursary, their joint brand has been recognised internationally as they have exhibited in locations such as Hangzhou, Toronto, as well as London and throughout Scotland.

Some of the previously exhibited artists were selected to show at a secondary exhibition which arose after the initial exhibition. This reflective exhibition enabled them to participate alongside established Scottish artists with strong reputations and brand recognition in the Scottish art world and beyond. Other artists who have also benefitted from the Institution's support include a print maker who was awarded a scholarship to Florence and has subsequently exhibited, held artist residencies and participated in Biennials across the UK, Europe, the Middle East, the West Indies, Canada and South Korea. One artist was photographed for the front cover of the New Contemporaries exhibition catalogue, accentuating his artist brand identity at an early stage of his career. He has subsequently held residencies and exhibitions in Glasgow, Ohio, and Askeaton in the Republic of Ireland.

Summary of key findings

The institution is definitely an effective platform for career development, with strong mutually beneficial relationships demonstrated. This is enduring in its contributions towards strong, co-

created brand building, reputation development and subsequent strengthening of artist career opportunities. The artist/institution relationship also helps to develop enduring networks at local, national, and international levels. However, there is more potential for this relationship to be used to help raise awareness by the artist of the art marketplace and its operationalisation. The artist/institution relationship has also succeeded in platforming to a higher level for some of the artists with their reputation, validation and identity further enhanced. The mentoring processes involved additionally impacted positively on artist career development opportunities.

Revisiting our research question, it is clear that the institutional relationships that we identified and investigated did result in positive benefits for the exhibiting artists, both current and previous. The exhibition, and its many direct and indirect relationships with the artists, did result in platforming and in accelerating an awareness of the artists which contributed to their career development.

5. Discussion

The aim of this research was to qualitatively assess how the institutional relationships relating to an annual high-profile contemporary art exhibition as a platform assist in career development for emerging artists. Our work contrasts with Rodner and Thomson (2013), Chong (2005) and Martin (2007) in that the institution serving as the initial platform enables access to other network members instantly, rather than at some point in the future as the emerging artists' careers develop. In doing so, we visualise the bypassing or short-circuiting of the longitudinal route to success**.**

Preece, Kerrigan and O'Reilly's (2016) notion of value being co-constructed, negotiated and circulated is useful in helping to understand emerging artist career development. With our research, the locus of control is very much with the institution as a facilitator or enabler at the early stages of the artists' careers. The value which we find located around the contemporary art exhibition challenges the belief that value can only really develop once the

artist's career has matured (Penet and Lee, 2014) with deferred success (Moulin, 1987). We contribute to the contemporary arts marketing literature which views artistic careers in a more general sense as dynamic (e.g., Hellmanzik, 2009; Lehman and Wickham, 2014; Petrides and Fernandes, 2020). Value emerges from social relationships via the networks being established which can occur at any point.

We believe that institutional involvement has greatest impact at this early point in the artist's career. Also, Preece *et al*.'s (2016) visual arts value framework is helpful in identifying how the artist receives value from a variety of stakeholders, but we do not necessarily view this as process led phenomena. They situate the artwork within a commercial context. While this is often the case, much contemporary art is not for sale or enduring if it is, for example, performative. Their identification of early champions of cultural capital resonates with our own work. It is not the art school, however, but the artist's first public exhibition within the institution which stimulates the more impactful marketplace interaction as the emerging artists become exposed to a wider audience for the first time. Our study shows that, at an early stage of career development, it is institutional relationships which can have the greatest impact, including impacting on the professionalism of the emerging artist (Jeffri and Throsby, 1994; Muzio, Brock and Suddaby, 2013; Lehikoinen, 2018).

6. Conclusions

The exhibition, by creating value through institutional relationships, validates emerging artists and their work and helps to accelerate their careers. Co-creation of the artist brand between the institution and the artists has also assisted here. What is clear is that there will always be an interplay between art making and market making priorities and, depending on the artist, this blend will vary. Our research focused on the actions of one institution but there are clear lessons for others to embrace. Following our evaluation of emerging artist career development, we construct the following propositions to assist future research development:

P1: Whichever career development path is taken, the role of institutional relationships in shaping career development of emerging artists is important.

In terms of future research, we have generated the following propositions in order to open up the conversation by moving beyond a single institution's relationships to developing suggestions for longer term assistance. This will involve working with other stakeholders in order to improve market awareness and entrepreneurial behaviours in order to exploit marketplace opportunities.

P2: Those emerging artists who lack interest and awareness of commercialisation of their work develop careers influenced by non-monetary rewards and behave entrepreneurially in terms of experimenting with their artistic creativity.

P3: Those emerging artists who actively engage with the marketplace develop careers influenced by monetary rewards and behave entrepreneurially in term of experimenting with both their artistic and their market-shaped creativity.

As well as influencing artist career development, impacts on society more broadly can be seen in terms of the cultural value generated through institutional relationships (Fillis, Lee and Fraser, 2015). This is achieved through the artistic production systems in place, their associated cultural messages, and co-created value between the artists, institution, audiences and other stakeholders (White, Hede and Rentschler, 2009). Hunter and Throsby (2008) deem cultural value to be distinguished from economic as essential to the existence of society (Hutter and Throsby, 2008). Additional benefits of experiencing art include its positive impact on health and wellbeing (Wheatley and Bickerton, 2017).

Future qualitative research could interrogate these propositions in other geographical and cultural settings. The authors have been involved in related research on established artists and so cross-cultural, longitudinal tracking of artist career development is possible. Testing of the concepts could be carried out in large scale quantitative surveys. This would then enable comparative analysis to be carried out in uncovering future preferred platforming pathways. We believe that our findings serve as a representative lens for understanding the potential for similar events across the UK and elsewhere to assist new graduates beginning careers in the visual arts.

In practical terms, we encourage the leveraging of institutional relationships with emerging artists in order to create and sustain their impact and engagement in the marketplace. Broader support is required to assist in the raising of awareness of the art market and its operationalisation in assisting emerging artists as their careers develop.

In terms of broader support, the institution we investigated offers funded artist residencies held at other art venues in the UK and overseas. However, it is also possible for artists elsewhere to hold residencies in universities and industrial settings where unexpected opportunities are created and developed through new ways of seeing at individual and organisational levels (Lee, Fillis and Lehman, 2018). These residences can be viewed as a critical lens on the organisation and its practices, where the artist helps create a positive change (Antal, 2014).

We believe that our research has begun to address the research gap in investigating the role of institutional relationships in assisting artist career development and hope that other researchers in the UK and elsewhere will be motivated to carry out related research in addressing this important arts and cultural issue. There are also potential cultural policy implications arising from our findings which can inform future strategic thinking on artist career development including the impact on art school curricula in preparing students for

work post-graduation. The cultural value of artists' work extends far beyond the direct stakeholders involved to include potential benefits for society more generally, for example, in terms of the benefits of consuming art in health and wellbeing terms.

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