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## **Artists and online dissemination: An analysis of positions and position-takings**

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# **Artists and online dissemination: An analysis of positions and position-takings**

This article analyzes visual artists' response to online sales and dissemination technologies by mapping the range of corresponding positions and position-takings by professional artists in Norway. We consider whether artists' responses align with traditional logics of artistic consecration identified in Bourdieu's accounts of the field of cultural production, and how these responses correspond to Rogers' theory of diffusion of innovations. Employing multiple correspondence analysis, we find position-takings towards online sales and dissemination can be structured by a dimension differentiating between technology-oriented optimism and techno-skepticism, between high and neutral levels of risk aversion towards online technologies, and thirdly between technology adopters and those still at an intentional stage.

Keywords: artists, online dissemination, position-takings, consecration, field theory, Bourdieu, diffusion of innovation, multiple correspondence analysis

## **Introduction**

Digital technology permeates the arts world in ever-new ways including new digital production technologies (Bakhshi and Throsby 2012; Greffe 2004), lower barriers to outsourced production, evolving ways of artist networking (Hansson 2015), changing social conditions from which art emerges, new modes and expectations of audience participation (van Dijk 2014), and expanded options for dissemination to a global audience. At the same time, a substantial growth in the number of artists (Mangset et al. 2018; Menger 2014) creates grounds for assuming increased competition for visibility and recognition within the arts. How do artists respond to the increasing influence of digital technology? In what ways are the internal rules and dynamics of the artistic field shaping different responses to the new digital possibilities? And in what ways are the diffusion of digital tools in the artistic field following a similar pattern to that of innovations in general?

Digital technology offers tools for artists to ‘find customers’ and enhance visibility of their work (Miles 2018). Facilitating this are a range of sales and dissemination tools including own websites, social media platforms, websites of physical and online galleries, museum websites, third party aggregators of gallery content, physical and online auctions, and many other forums. Where artists have a degree of agency over these choices, one could imagine digital tools to be attractive. On the other hand, processes of consecration within the artistic fields (Bourdieu 1993; 1996) might affect the degree to which artists embrace the brave new digital world. As emphasized by Rogers (2003), the diffusion of innovations such as digital technology depends on the innovation’s compatibility with the norms of the social system in which it is implemented.

Current research indicates that digital technology has triggered diverse responses in different artistic fields. Although social norms can be more important than economic interests in the diffusion of innovations (Rogers 2003), digital delivery has become largely standardized in cultural fields where distribution-related economic interests have fundamentally altered traditional power relations, such as in music, film and television. In artistic fields where economic interests are less dominant, digital technologies may potentially align with the process of consecration in other ways. Currently there is little research that investigates the relation between traditional logics of consecration on the one hand and how a broad range of professional artists respond to online technology on the other.

This paper contributes with insights into how the rules and dynamics of the artistic field shape different responses among Norwegian visual artists to online sales and dissemination technologies. While online sales and dissemination technologies capture an ever-expanding set of tools, the paper describes the broader differences in

how artists respond to these technologies, particularly where artists have greater agency over how they are used, and it considers how such responses are related to artists' positions in the artistic field. Bourdieu's (1993; 1996) mapping of artists' field positions and position-takings offers a useful sociological framework for examining different responses to online dissemination among artists, and it plays an important theoretical and empirical reference in how our study has been conducted. Furthermore, we explore the degree and ways in which artists' responses to digital technology might be similar or different to the diffusion of innovations in other social systems. To do so, we combine the Bourdieusian approach with insights from Rogers' seminal theory of diffusion of innovation.

We begin by reviewing Bourdieu's field theory in relation to the visual arts before surveying key literature on artists' position-takings towards digital technology and introducing Rogers' diffusion theory. After presenting some contextual properties of the Norwegian visual arts landscape, we present the findings of a multiple correspondence analysis (MCA) that draws on qualitative and quantitative data collected from Norwegian visual artists. By identifying three main axes of opposition, and examining the relationship between these dimensions and objective structures describing artists and their positions within the arts field, we answer the question of how artists respond to online sales and dissemination technologies, to what extent this aligns with traditional logics of artistic consecration, and the degree to which the diffusion of digital tools in the artistic field follows a similar pattern to that of innovations in general.

## Literature review

### *Field theory, the arts, and position-taking towards online technology*

Bourdieu's field theory and analysis of the artistic field is a point of departure for understanding the relation between artists' positions in the artistic field and their position-takings towards digital technology. According to Bourdieu, social fields are relatively autonomous areas of society that follow their own laws of functioning (Bourdieu 1993). A field is a social micro-cosmos where certain ways of thinking and acting are legitimate while others are attempted to be excluded. The field concept represents a relational mode of thought where actors occupy the diverse available positions and engage in competition for resources specific to the field in question. According to Bourdieu, competition in the artistic field largely concerns the authority to consecrate artists and artworks, i.e., processes through which artistic prestige is distributed. The symbolic production of art in the artistic field is thus as important as the material production of art. Bourdieu's relational perspective therefore represents a break with a substantialist mode of thought, where artists and artworks are celebrated and fetishized as exceptional individuals and exemplars.

Processes of artistic consecration are, according to Bourdieu, characterized by continuous struggles and competition between fractions that draw on different principles of hierarchization when assigning value to artworks and artists. Bourdieu has argued that since the artistic field gained relative autonomy during the 19th century, an autonomous principle of hierarchization has been dominant within the field underlining that art should be valued for its own sake, i.e., consecration by specialized actors within the field. A competing heteronomous principle emphasizes that public success should be the fundament of artistic recognition, i.e., consecration by actors outside the artistic field. According to Bourdieu, these two principles of hierarchization constitute two

different subfields. The former principle is constitutive to the subfield of restricted production while the latter is constitutive to the subfield of large-scale production.

The two different poles of the artistic field also represent two different ways of ageing (Bourdieu 1996). While immediate commercial success is sought by actors in the subfield of large-scale production, immediate success would be understood as suspect by actors in the subfield of restricted production. Bourdieu even characterizes the devotion expected and celebrated in the subfield of restricted production as Christ-like. The young artist should be willing to sacrifice financial rewards and live in line with the myth of the suffering artist. When sufficiently consecrated, it is legitimate to convert artistic capital into economic capital, but the timing is crucial. You have to sacrifice in the first stage of your career to become a saint in the next.

Furthermore, Bourdieu points out that within the subfield of restricted production there is an opposition between the consecrated avant-garde, the established figures in the field, on the one hand, and the unconsecrated avant-garde, the newcomers, on the other (Bourdieu 1993). Newcomers will, according to Bourdieu, insist on change through new modes of thought and expression as the primary criteria by which art should be evaluated, while the well-established will defend the value of existing artistic approaches.

Applying Bourdieu's field theory, differences in artists' position-takings towards online technologies can be linked to opposing principles of hierarchization. For many artists, online activities are synonymous with positioning the artist as entrepreneur (Swords 2017; Win 2014). A link between online practices, commerce, and loss of autonomy emerges when disintermediation requires artists to take on new marketing, communication, and sales responsibilities as 'artist-as-intermediary' (Kribs 2017). When following the tradition and consecration pathway that 'artist-as-oracle' requires

mediation, artists have further logic for under-playing online marketing (Hansson 2015). These concerns, which align with the subfield of restricted production, provide a rationale for resistance to online sales and dissemination practices.

For artists positioned towards the pole of large-scale production, online tools offer benefits that are attractive to unrecognized artists where gallery representation is unavailable, commissions erode already low margins, or where artwork has no commercial market. Here, online platforms offer advantages of disintermediation (Arora and Vermeyley 2013; Hansson 2015; Samdanis 2016), lower commissions (Tully 2013) access to wider audiences (Hansson 2015), and lower geographic restrictions to building artist networks and collaborative practices (Budge 2013). In line with the heteronomous principle, entrepreneurial online practices may also be recognized as the democratization of art's production and consumption (Bianchi 2015).

Applicable across art's subfields, online attitudes and behaviors often align with an artist's level of recognition. Given its symbolic nature, art's value is often constructed through discourse mediated by consecrated institutions, and thus the risk of buying online typically limits sales to the less complex, lower-priced, or already known artwork (Khaire 2015). Pure online sales platforms then favor artists in the uninitiated and emerging career stages, and conversely, those with the greatest consecration.

Recent contributions have suggested a need to develop a post-Bourdieuian sociology that recognizes different logics of consecration not only exist in different parts of the artistic field, but also co-exist at the same time in the same part of the field (Beljean, Chong, and Lamont 2015; Craig and Dubois 2010). Molnár (2018) then argues that the relation between art and economy is better understood as a continuum than an opposition. A more fundamental critique of the Bourdieusian perspective is that it implies people accord with cultural systems that are coherent. Swidler (2005) has



argued that people are more pragmatic than the Bourdieusian perspective assumes and that people use different cultural tool kits to make sense of the different situations they encounter. According to this perspective, the social actor will draw on different logics in different situations without being bothered by inconsistency. This modifies the Bourdieusian idea that different logics are best understood as oppositions that are manifested in continuous struggles in the artistic field. Previous research on how artists relate to emerging ideas that they should act as entrepreneurs might serve as an example. A survey among Norwegian artists shows that although there is a clear opposition between those who are positive and negative to market-based activities in the arts, neutral attitudes towards the market dominate (Heian and Hjellbrekke 2017).

### ***Diffusion of digital technology in the arts***

Rogers' theory of diffusion of innovations starts with the assumption that new media do not influence people directly. Such processes should rather be understood as social in which opinion leaders play an important role in influencing others and where compatibility of the new media with the norms of the social system is crucial. Even if relative advantage of the innovation may be measured in economic terms, social prestige factors are at least as important (Rogers 2003). According to Rogers, "the heart of the diffusion process consists of the modeling and imitation by potential adopters of their network partners who have previously adopted" (Rogers 2003, 18). To an extent, Rogers' theory and Bourdieu's field theory share the idea that social norms and dynamics are crucial to how new ideas and tools are responded to. However, Rogers' definition of a social system is both vaguer and more unified than Bourdieu's concept of field. Rogers indicates that a social system might be "a community, an organization, or some other structure" (23). Bourdieu's definition of fields is more specific and highlights the oppositions between the different poles and hence is more conflicting

than Rogers' approach implies. This article primarily draws on the Bourdieusian perspective in defining the social context of visual artists. We nevertheless find it fruitful to supplement the Bourdieusian perspective with Rogers' theory to investigate the degree and the ways in which the diffusion of digital technology in an artistic field follows a similar pattern to the diffusion of innovations in general.

Rogers' theory identifies a general pattern of diffusion where different adopter categories play different roles in the process. Five categories associated with distinct features are highlighted, and the extent an innovation is implemented in a social system is proposed to depend on how far in the chain of adopter categories the innovation is diffused (Rogers 2003). The five adopter categories are presented in the temporal order that they are assumed to implement the innovation. *Innovators* are active information seekers about new ideas and can tolerate higher levels of uncertainty than other adopter categories. *Early adopters* are more integrated in the social system than innovators and have the highest degree of opinion leadership within the social system. *Early majority* adopt new ideas just before the average member of the system and interact frequently with their peers but seldom hold positions as opinion leaders. *Late majority* is a skeptical category for which economic necessity and increasing peer pressure might be important for adoption of new ideas. *Laggards* are characterized as traditional and the last in a social system to adopt an innovation. According to Rogers, the different adopter categories are related to different socioeconomic characteristics. Rogers underlines that earlier adopters have more years of formal education and higher social status than do later adopters.

### **Research setting, data and method**

Norwegian authorities have emphasized welfare and active public engagement with regard to artists (Mangset 2020), and so Norwegian artists have benefitted from a

comparatively generous artist policy with schemes supporting the work of individual artists. The recognition of visual artists can be traced to a wide range of factors such as where and how often your art is exhibited (Braden and Teekens 2019). In the Norwegian artistic field, the distribution of public grants to individual artists, based on a peer-review system, also constitutes an important source of recognition.

Visual artists have been prioritized in such schemes and public support represents a substantial part of the artistic income of this group. With 37 % of the artistic income generated from scholarships, visual artists represent one of the groups with lowest artistic income in the Norwegian artist population (Mangset et al. 2018). In the context of the growth in the artist population and low artistic incomes, Norwegian cultural policy has since the millennium increasingly called for artists to become more entrepreneurial (Røyseng 2019).

To capture relevant data from professional artists in Norway, our survey population was limited to members of the Association of Norwegian Visual Artists (NBK). Oriented towards professional artists, NBK sets eligibility for membership on educational and practice-based requirements (Master level education in visual arts, lower where evidence of artistic activity and grants). Of artists qualifying for NBK membership, actual rates of membership were estimated to be around 80% in 2012 (Solhjell and Øien 2012) and are assumed to remain high. Survey data was collected between March and June 2019 in response to an initial email sent by NBK to members and two follow-up reminders. Of NBK's 3000 members, 458 responses were recorded, of which 75 surveys were excluded due to incompleteness and 46 excluded due to excessively fast response time (< 5 seconds per question).

With 337 surveys retained for analysis, the effective response rate of 11.2% is low but not atypical of surveys of visual artists (Heian, Løyland, and Kleppe 2015;

Kretschmer et al. 2011). To identify sampling biases, we compared the demographics of survey respondents with NBK member data and NBK-administered national stipend application data. While quite representative of the NBK members, the survey indicates slight bias towards grant recipients, the slightly younger, and Norwegian-based members. A suggested bias towards mixed-media artists is likely overstated given the large number not specifying artistic medium in NBK stipend applications. An online survey is expected to introduce limited bias towards a younger artist cohort. Nevertheless, 98% of the Norwegian population have internet access (Statistics Norway 2020), NBK conducts most communication with members online, and Norwegian arts funding applications are digitally submitted.

[Table 1 near here]

[Table 2 near here]

Survey data was analyzed using Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA), a geometric modelling technique that reveals latent structures in matrixes of categorical data. MCA is considered an appropriate analytical method because its inductive approach is suited to the relatively under-researched area of artist differentiation with respect to online sales and dissemination, it can analyze a broad informational set to map social differentiation, its relational quality aligns with the notion that tastes and behaviors may have multiple meanings (Roose, van Eijck, and Lievens 2012), and because it permits the multiple structuring principles in the visual arts (Bourdieu 1993; Becker 1982; Solhjell and Øien 2012).

To conduct MCA, survey data was recoded into 28 attitudinal and 7 participation variables, generating 101 active attitudinal modalities. To avoid attitudinal modalities having a relative frequency of under 5% (Hjellbrekke 2019), five-point Likert scale responses were recoded to a three-point scale with the values ‘disagree’, ‘neutral’ or ‘agree’.

The 35 active variables chosen for the study reflect core sources of capital and recognition in Bourdieu’s (1993) fields of cultural production, position-takings identified in previous studies of the visual artists in online and physical arenas, and perceptions of the impact of technology adoption. Autonomous or heteronomous orientation is associated with symbolic and economic capital formation (Bourdieu 1993; Solhjell and Øien 2012; Velthuis 2005; Abbing 2002), and is captured by attitudinal variables covering orientation towards: 1) art as commercial good; 2) separation of art and commerce; 3) pricing of art; 4) preference for grants over sales; 5) adapting art for online formats; and 6) adapting art to ensure sales. Level of consecration has been linked to orientation towards contesting norms (Bourdieu 1993; Coslor 2010; Bourdieu 1996) and is captured attitudinal variables covering: 7) risk aversion towards collectors; 8) risk aversion towards peer reputation; 9) risk of online technology development; 10) risk to career from online galleries; 11) intention to use online galleries if normalized; 12) intention to sell online; and 13) intention to use other digital sales tools. Perceptions of relative advantage are found to influence technology adoption (Rogers 2003), and is captured by attitudinal variables covering the impact of online gallery use on: 14) sales income; 15) commissions; 16) invitations to exhibit; 17) profitability; 18) delivery advantages; 19) marketing advantages; 20) own productivity; and 21) buyer confidence. Reflecting varied consecration logics of restricted and large-scale production, inclusion and diversity (Solhjell and Øien 2012; Bourdieu 1993), attitudinal variables also cover

how online dissemination of art impacts: 22) how art is seen and sold; 23) audience diversity; 24) artist diversity; 25) artistic expression; 26) artistic mediums; and 27) what gets recommended. Participation variables capture information on online dissemination platforms used, frequency of online dissemination usage, sales experience, and online sales strategies.

Supplementary variables used in the analysis capture a range of objective structures often associated with field position and position-taking in an offline setting (Bourdieu 1993; Solhjell and Øien 2012; Wohl 2019): age, gender, level of education, area of artistic practice, time worked as professional artist, main category of employment, exhibition activity, location of exhibitions, whether received a grant in the last 4 years, whether exhibited in a publicly funded space, and art practice related income. Following Throsby and Zednik (2011), we define art practice related income as income derived from creative activities and other core artistic work.

Missing data occurs in six variables due to survey question routing. This issue was addressed by performing Specific Multiple Correspondence Analysis (Le Roux and Rouanet 2010).

## **Results**

The number of axis to be interpreted in MCA is commonly based on both the decrease in eigenvalues and the cumulated modified rates, in addition to interpretability of the axes (Le Roux and Rouanet 2010). Following this logic, MCA indicates three axes for interpretation.

[Table 3 near here]

To assist interpretation of the axes, we display modalities with an absolute contribution that exceeds the average for that axis (i.e., contribution  $> 1/K$ ). Figure 1 shows modalities with the highest contribution to axis 1, where the negative (-), positive (+), and (-/+) neutral signs indicate attitudinal positions.

[Figure 1 near here]

For axis 1, the 37 modalities with contributions of more than average belong to 25 variables and account for 81% of the axis' variance. The left-hand side of the axis is characterized by modalities that indicate an own-advantage of using online platforms, a perception that art and its users will benefit from online technologies, an openness to adopting online technologies, and a rejection of tradition concepts of art. The right-hand side of the axis is characterized by a neutral view of own advantage, reluctance to adopt online technologies, pessimism towards art's online dissemination, and a more traditional view regarding how art will be consumed.

We interpret the first axis as differentiating between technology-oriented openness and optimism versus techno-skepticism and preference for traditional channels. To the extent that technology-oriented openness and optimism captures a desire to expand exposure and audiences, while techno-skepticism and preference for traditional channels reflects a preference for protecting art and own symbolic capital from the clutter and disintermediated risk of the online, this opposition has clear parallels with Bourdieu's (1993) opposition between restricted and large-scale production.

[Figure 2 near here]

For axis 2, the 39 modalities with contributions of more than average belong to 24 variables and account for 83% of the axis' variance. The lower area depicts exclusively neutral attitudes towards online art platforms in relation to career risk, own advantage, the concern the art will be damaged, and intention to adapt or innovative to technology. The upper area of the axis is differentiated by modalities signaling negative attitudes towards the impact of online technologies on own advantage and art more generally. The modalities also signal risk aversion, and reluctance to adopt online technologies.

We interpret the second axis as differentiating between neutral and high career-oriented risk aversion to online sales and dissemination technologies. As becomes clearer when compared against supplementary variables, this axis has parallels with Bourdieu's (1993) opposition between attitudes and behaviors of consecrated artists and the unconsecrated newcomer in the subfield of restricted production.

[Figure 3 near here]

For axis 3, the 28 modalities with contributions of more than average belong to 16 variables and account for 79% of the axis' variance. The lower area is characterized by those selling on a range of online platforms, different attitudes towards strategies for improving buyer confidence, and neutrality towards future innovative behavior. In contrast, the upper area is characterized by those not using online sales platforms, an intention to use them, a perception of own advantages from use, and a view that online dissemination will change art.



The opposition inherent to this axis firstly concerns technology adoption; an opposition between those that have crossed the threshold of adoption and those still at an intentional phase. A second opposition is reflected in the difference between the positive impact expected of the yet-to-adopt and the more ambivalent attitudes and pragmatic behaviors of actual users. Intended or actual adoption of digital technologies may reflect a view that digital platforms represent the potential to generate visibility via an expanded online audience, and so aligns the third axis with the sub-field of large-scale production.

[Figure 4 near here]

### *Supplementary variables*

In relation to axis 1, we observe greater techno-skepticism and preference for traditional channels among the less-experienced, higher-educated, and grant recipients compared the more-experienced, artists with less education and non-grant recipients. Age follows a similar patten to experience with the exception of the oldest cohort (65 years+) who display techno-skepticism and a preference for traditional channels. Techno-skepticism is also observed for mediums that are more difficult to disseminate or sell online. F-tests for differences between the variable modalities indicate significance at the 0.001 level for education, years professional experience, and whether the artist works with prints/graphics. The Eta-square measure shows the same three variables, all exceeding 0.025, are associated with axis 1 (Hjellbrekke 2019).

[Table 4 near here]

Along axis 2, risk aversion to online sales and dissemination technologies is negatively associated with age and years' professional experience. Although inconsistencies occur, risk aversion towards online sales and dissemination is positively associated with artistic income, exhibition frequency, and whether an artist has exhibited in a publicly funded space. As a possible proxy for full-time versus part-time artists, risk aversion is also higher among those with self-employment as primary income source compared to those generating primary income from fixed or temporary employment. Artists working with either drawing or sound/video display more neutral risk aversion. Age is the only variable that indicates significant differences between the variable modalities at the 0.001 level. Eta-square measures show association between axis 2 and each of age, exhibition activity, and income.

Along axis 3, pragmatic users of digital sales and dissemination technologies can be distinguished from intended users by their higher likelihood of not having received a grant and not having exhibited abroad. No variable modalities are significant at the 0.001 level, and none of the Eta-square measures indicate meaningful association with the axis.

### ***Concluding discussion***

One of the main findings presented in this paper is that ways and extent to which Norwegian visual artists perceive and adopt digital technology for sales and dissemination is related to the traditional logics and structures of the artistic field. Rather than transforming the artistic field, possibilities related to digital technologies seem to be significantly refracted by the logics and processes of consecration of the artistic field highlighted by Bourdieu. This is reflected in several findings in our study.

By applying MCA, we see that the diverse responses of artists to digital technologies is captured by a homology between the artists' positions and position-

takings. The oppositions in our analysis are close to Bourdieu's analysis of the artistic field. First, we find an opposition between skepticism and optimism towards digital technology that reflects an opposition between autonomous and heteronomous pole within the field. This finding strengthens previous research where online activities have been found as being synonymous with positioning the artist as entrepreneur and commercially oriented (Swords 2017; Win 2014). In this way, digital technologies and the possibilities they offer are only to a limited degree perceived as relevant for getting symbolic recognition.

Second, we find an opposition between high and neutral career-oriented risk aversion to online sales and dissemination technologies that has parallels with Bourdieu's (1993) opposition between consecrated artists and the unconsecrated newcomer in the subfield of restricted production. Bourdieu's (1996) characterization of a 'Christ-like' devotion expected of young artists may provide an explanation here. If online disintermediation is seen a 'shortcut' that skips the sacrifice necessary for securing recognition, younger artists may act with greater caution towards online dissemination. The Christ-like metaphor also suggests that once reputation is secured, artists have greater freedom to act commercially. Supporting theory, Heian & Hjellbrekke (2017) find a more relaxed attitude towards commercial activities among consecrated artists in Norway. Unlike commercial activity, our study shows that concern over career-oriented risk aversion to online technologies' increases rather than decreases with level of consecration. An explanation may be that the pathway from consecration to economic profit is established and accepted, whereas the pathways to online disintermediation has yet to become a tradition, and, for an established cohort, is perceived to carry significant reputational risk.

Third, we find an opposition between intended adoption and pragmatic use of online platforms. This opposition is placed closer to the heteronomous pole. The intended or actual adoption of digital technologies may then reflect a view where specialized actors of the field are not seen as important and where anyone interested in their art is seen as a valuable audience or interesting buyers.

While the Bourdieusian perspective captures some of the most salient results in our study, the large number of neutral responses is not easily interpreted with this perspective. However, Rogers' theory of diffusion seems to have more to offer in this respect. Our study reveals that digital technologies are, only to a limited degree, seen as compatible with the norms of the artistic field. Therefore, we do not find a pattern of diffusion that follows all the stages and adopter categories of Rogers' theory. Against Rogers' adopter-categories we see that artists holding the most positive attitudes towards digital technology represent parts of the artistic field with lower symbolic capital and recognition, i.e., the subfield of largescale production. In turn, this means that the adopters of digital technologies have limited ability to act as opinion leaders in the artistic field, at least not where the symbolic value of the field is produced and reproduced, i.e., the subfield of restricted production. Among artists most favorable to online technologies, there is no obvious candidate that can be aligned with Rogers' category of early adopters. Thus, the high proportion of neutral responses can be interpreted in light of Rogers' claim that for an innovation to be diffused there is a need for opinion leaders with high status (and formal education) to adopt the new technology in question. Our analysis reveals that the groups that adopt and are most positive to digital technologies do not have the characteristics needed to act as opinion leaders. This might lead to a situation in which many do not know how to respond to the possibilities of digital technologies, hence neutral responses. However, this does not

help us to understand what the significance of the neutral responses is in relation to the oppositions in the field identified by MCA.

The emphasis put on clear oppositions in the Bourdieusian perspective has, as we have seen, been challenged by several scholars and it has been argued that the axes rather should be understood as continuums (Molnár 2018), that different logics coexist in the same part of the artistic field (Beljean, Chong, and Lamont 2015) and that social actors are more pragmatic in their orientations than a Bourdieusian perspective assumes (Swidler 2005). If reflective of indecision between different logics or even a ‘mid-position’, the large amount of neutral responses could support such claims. However, we do not know what exactly lie behind the neutrality expressed in the study. This calls for follow-up studies that investigate what this really means. Sonnett (2016) argues that distinctions between indifference and ambivalence are often ignored. In our case, this might both represent a methodological and substantial problem. Surveys like ours, asks respondents to indicate either positive or negative attitudes, while unclear, indifferent or ambivalent attitudes are often understood as a residual category. The large number of neutral responses may reflect something substantial about the sense people make of digital opportunities that we do not grasp.

It seems appropriate to conclude with some reflection on what our study suggests for artist’s online position-takings post Covid-19. Of the range of factors driving the high levels of neutral attitudes towards online dissemination in 2019, we expect certain of these to be amplified by Covid-19’s health, social and economic disturbances. As artist’s perception of these factors are re-calibrated post Covid-19, we expect many artists with previously neutral attitudes will adopt online dissemination and sales. However, it remains unclear whether the disturbance will be sufficient for online dissemination practices to establish as a co-existent or dominant strategy in the subfield

of restricted production. Because of the conservatism of the unconsecrated avant-garde, and the fear of losing symbolic capital, it might require the consecrated artist to adopt online dissemination before the former group joins. Our study tells a story of artists' position-takings towards online dissemination on the cusp of major disturbance to the visual arts' traditional infrastructure, and so we therefore look forward to future studies that can develop and offer comparison from a post Covid-19 environment.

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