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Artist-run Galleries - Differentiating Three Models in Current Contemporary Art Markets

ABSTRACT

In the past five years the contemporary art market in a Western European and US context has progressed in its economic growth, professionalizing certain art world roles and encouraging the rise of young international galleries and private museums in the US. This article focuses on a particular local establishment of artist-run galleries in New York at the intersection of art production and commercial/

institutional recognition. Artists founded art-run galleries that show strategies to exhibit and sell works of art in a peer-to-peer scenario, breaking with some established safeguarding protocols of emerging and established White Cube galleries. The article examines these strategies and demonstrates a reflective symbiosis between artist-run galleries and commercial and institutional recognition in the contemporary art market.

Over the past five years the contemporary art market in Western Europe and the US progressed with regard to its economic growth, the professionalization of certain art world roles, and the increase and growing influence of young international galleries and private museums. During 2013 and 2014, epochal auctions of post-war and contemporary art highlighted a new peak in investment in art that had been produced within five years of the auction. When an *Untitled (fold)* work by Tauba Auerbach from 2010 sold for an auction record price of \$1,515,877 in October 2014 on the secondary market, even though paintings by her sold at the same time on the primary market between \$40,000 and \$60,000, the event opened the door for two years of so-called flipping practices on the contemporary art market. These accelerated (“flipped”) economic increases bolstered a rise in economic significance of contemporary art both at auction and on the private secondary market. Meanwhile, on the primary market rapid developments in the past five years saw a plethora of art fairs, the expansion of New York, Berlin and London galleries with branches in Los Angeles and Brussels, and the emergence of a cluster of

new galleries on the Lower East Side in New York. In 2010, the so-called Independent New York art fair proposed a new model with a curated program in an open exhibition space as an alternative to the customary art fair booths based on the traditional model of the venerable Armory Show. Frieze expanded to New York in 2012, and in the same year NADA, another fair for contemporary art, opened in New York for the first time.¹ These events corresponded to the unprecedented bidding levels seen at New York auctions in 2013 and 2014. The New York fairs gained significance and generated a local level of attention comparable to established contemporary art fairs such as Art Basel and Frieze London. Although more than twenty art fairs take place in New York each year, NADA, Independent and Frieze built their reputation around offering works through galleries that represented artists with institutional recognition. Steering committees that curate galleries in the fairs select those that have shown a record of institutional representation and international press, and can afford booth prices that reached double the square meter price of the Armory in 2013.² In addition, these art fairs compete for sponsors and VIP packages among each other.

This article will illustrate different forms of artist-run galleries, in which art was exhibited for sale without an intermediary dealer, or rather with artists who became dealers and handled sales of works. The arguments in this article are based on a field study, participant observation and semi-structured interviews in the contemporary art world of New York for the author's PhD thesis titled *Collecting Contemporary Art: a visual analysis of a qualitative investigation into patterns of collecting and production*.³ For this article the author continued the field study with interviews with artists who had run artist-run galleries in New York and with further field research with a reflective, empirical focus on these galleries' strategies and models.

New York became the center of the contemporary art market in Europe and the US in the past five years due to the opening of new art fairs, the remodeling of institutions such as the Whitney Museum of American Art and MoMA PS1, the expansion of the emerging gallery sector on the Lower East Side and the long-standing array of significant auction houses, art magazines and art schools in the city. The multiple roles in the contemporary art market⁴ of artists, gallerists, curators, collectors, advisors, critics and many more overlap in a local network, in which information is exchanged about artist's practices, upcoming exhibitions and the Who is Who (or rather who collects what and paid which

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- 1 "In early 2015, and excluding art fairs that do not present contemporary art, I counted over 220 international art fairs [...]. Add in fairs that do not include any, or much, contemporary art and the number is closer to 300. Indeed, a new art fair is announced seemingly every month now, making any exact number a somewhat limited data point." Edward Winkleman, *Selling Contemporary Art: How to Navigate the Evolving Market* (Allworth Press, 2015), 65.
 - 2 David Halle, Elisabeth Tiso, *New York's New Edge: Contemporary Art, the High Line, and Urban Megaprojects on the Far West Side* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 83.
 - 3 Anne Luther, 'Collecting Contemporary Art: a visual analysis of a qualitative investigation into patterns of collecting and production', PhD thesis (University of the Arts London, 2016).
 - 4 Olav Velthuis "The Architecture of the Art Market" in *Talking Prices: Symbolic Meanings of Prices on the Market for Contemporary Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005) 21-52.

price for it). The resulting interplay between art fairs, where current primary market prices are generated in an international comparison to other active participants in the sale of works of art, and auctions, in which a current secondary market value is revealed to the public, forms part of a socially coded environment in which these pieces of information are weighted against each participant's personal access, interest and economic liquidity. In art centers such as New York, local knowledge is a traceable context for the numerous participants that can also be capitalized on, due to certain art world protocols⁵ that are only known to those who understand the socially coded language. Art world protocols describe positions mutually agreed through social interactions by the participants of the art world. It is a convention that is built in constant flux. Protocols are not written rules but rather attitudes, acts and knowledge about what is described as “good practice”, or as a “shady business”, in other words, the dos and don'ts. The language that is used in the field of the contemporary art market to define these protocols has no limits, as demonstrated by the example of the extensively covered topic of “Flippers”. Flippers were mostly young collectors who bought young contemporary art directly from the artists' studios, bypassing any middlemen such as galleries, curators or dealers.⁶ They flipped works of art on the secondary market with a massive price increase, sometimes as quickly as during the same year they acquired them, and were soon thereafter con-

5 Throughout the entire study, one sentence repeatedly came up: “But there are no rules in collecting or the art world.” The challenge of capturing a culture of collecting with the presupposition that the culture one wants to capture does not follow any fixed or structured rules and thus to reveal patterns became part of the methodology that was used to enter the field: the development of a software tool that would enable the visualisation of the field of study and consequently describe a collecting culture in contemporary art. The field of study is a western European and US-based contemporary art world, and the field study was based in New York. The term field is used in reference to Graw's 2003 cultural study on the “adoption and exception” of contemporary artists, in which she stresses that the western European and US “Kunstbetrieb” [art apparatus] has a particular relevance as a “horizon of artistic production and zone of approval.” Isabelle Graw, ‘Aneignung und Ausnahme. Zeitgenössische Künstlerinnen: ihre ästhetischen Verfahren und ihr Status im Kunstsystem’, PhD Diss. (Frankfurt/Oder: Europa Universität Viadrina, 2003), 6. Graw expands the notion of the field with the term art world, with which she moves away from Bourdieu's notion of the “artistic field” [künstlerisches Feld] in which production is always based on a perception of competition. The term art world, says Graw, signals a milieu-oriented field in which the individuals who belong to it all strive for the same basic interest— namely to secure its existence, which means that the competition in the field is real, but nevertheless also means that potential rivalry on one day can also mean potential collaboration another day (Graw, 2003, 7). Graw emphasizes furthermore that not only the production and therefore the existence of the field is what brings the individuals within it to collaborate; the legitimacy of the product “contemporary art” is additionally at stake (Graw, 2003, 7). Anne Luther, ‘Collecting Contemporary Art: a visual analysis of a qualitative investigation into patterns of collecting and production’. PhD thesis, (University of the Arts London, 2016) 1-2.

6 “Between 2008 and 2015, though, the relaxing atmosphere of collecting contemporary art began to change on many fronts. I am sure it remains more relaxing than many of the wealthy collectors' day jobs, but I would argue that during this time there was a sea change in the culture of collecting contemporary art. This change emerged due to several factors, including increased access to information online; increased competition for bankable artists' work; the “corporatization” of the contemporary art scene; the way art fairs accelerated the pace of collecting; and how much more money in the system grabbed the attention of new entrepreneurs hoping to get some of it.” Edward Winkleman, *Selling Contemporary Art: How to Navigate the Evolving Market*, (New York: Allworth Press, 2015), 89.

demned as the greedy devils of the art world⁷ due to their disinterest in the discourse, practice or sustainable support of the artists whose work they were buying. A “flipping explosion” in 2014 quickly led to the establishment of a protocol designed to blacklist collectors who resold works at auction that had been bought on the primary market and without consulting the gallery. Blacklisting of these collectors was however restricted to works by artists with institutional recognition and secondary market interest. The practice led to a vouchsafing process for buyers interested in works matching these two criteria, and collectors or their advisors developed social strategies in order to gain access to works that clearly showed a market increase. For example, such social strategies included and still include demonstrating a track record of museum loans from a collection or a connection to an institutional network. Publicizing a collection and showing works with “museum quality”⁸, or the acquisition of works by “artist’s artists”⁹ from a gallery that also sold so-called “trophy works” can assist a collector in getting access to high quality, signature works. Access not only becomes a matter of demonstrating the correct intentions for a collector, but also allows for greater price control and consequently market security for the gallery, which as a result can offer a more consistent financial support to its artists through sales.

Nevertheless, galleries also developed strategies to financially support the artists they represented that would bring the value and prestige of institutional recognition to their programming rather than turn a direct financial profit. A strategic gallery program would clearly demonstrate a balance between institutional recognition and commercial significance. One example for such a strategy is the increasing practice by gallerists to support artists financially in production, studio and exhibition costs. It may seem that galleries take on the role of patron due to a belief in their artists’ symbolic value, but the strategy is designed to build prestige through institutional recognition and non-market-targeted art production. In turn the gallery gains symbolic capital that leads to economic capital: institutional recognition increases the market value of both the gallery and its artists. Recognition of a discourse, materiality and aesthetics that artists establish supports galleries in their programming, which is also part of the prestige or standing a

7 Christopher Glazek, “The Art World’s Patron Satan,” in *The New York Times*, December 30, 2014, accessed August 26, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/04/magazine/the-art-worlds-patron-satan.html>.

8 “A principal characteristic of art museum cartography is the focus of interpretation on works of art as objects which embody the history of art, a product-based approach where objects are understood as outcomes of the creative act – as products. [...] The sorts of questions and issues which are incorporated into a product-based approach are: who the artist is; what the visible characteristics of the work are in terms of technique and style; how they are different from those of the works of predecessors and other artists generally, or indeed from those manifest in other parts of the same artist’s ‘oeuvre’; how important that object is; and how important the artist is. [...] Process-based approaches ask different questions, literally about the processes in which art is embedded: why was this object made; for whom; how was it paid for and by whom; [...] how does it relate to societal concerns? In short, art objects can be mapped in relation to different cultural concerns in museum interpretation, and indeed the two axes of product-based and process-based interpretation can intersect most suggestively.” Christopher Whitehead, *Interpreting art in museums and galleries* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2012), 36-37.

9 Annette Tietenberg, “The artist - an endangered species?” in *Paul Thek: artist’s artist* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008).

gallery develops in its local network. The gallery works on a recognizable signature for each artist, and deviation from such a market-ready practice often becomes unknown territory that the artist has to enter alone, with his or her own investment of time and personal risk of failure. Young galleries tend to build a linear narrative of an emerging artist's practice that is progressing from earlier works. The descriptive word "emerging" also hints at this strategy. Young curators thus have the opportunity of building their own recognizable programming with artist names that stand for certain discourses, while collectors can build their own coherent collection narrative. The reputation of these roles is defined through the categorization of artists they are selling, collecting or exhibiting ("trophy works", "women artists", "political art"...). The capitalization of local and socially coded knowledge to establish a certain standing that allows access to art works with a traceable market success (including institutional support as described) is a circular process. By definition, it denied the possibility to reinvent, fail and explore any practices that would not fall into the established standing or narrative agreed on all sides (art production, sales, collecting and exhibiting).

One result of this development, especially looking at the past five years in the local art world of New York, was the emergence of exhibition spaces that are run by artists with an already established standing on the commercial and institutional art market. Some exhibitions were site-specific and temporary, lasting just one weekend such as "Hüttendasein",¹⁰ an exhibition in a temporary cardboard shed in a Brooklyn backyard that included works by Ben Schumacher, (represented by Bortolami Gallery) and Rochelle Goldberg (represented by Miguel Abreu Gallery), to name two artists with established institutional and auction track records. Artist-run galleries emerged not only as a sporadic reaction towards market pressures.

Different sale strategies depend on the model of the artist-run gallery and can be divided in the following categories: an exhibition space that has an autonomous programming, an exhibition space that is representing artists, and a non-permanent space that is not representing artists. An artist studio that turned into a gallery for specific projects is an example of a non-permanent, non-representing space. Artist-run galleries have been a part of the contemporary art world in New York since the appearance of an art market.¹¹ The differentiation made here is contextualized in current art market protocols.

The differentiation of these spaces is important for the negotiation of sales percentages that an artist receives. A protocol for sales percentages of a work of art is that the representing gallery usually receives percentages even if they are not the exhibiting or selling agents. The representing gallery splits the sale price with their representing artist in a 50% share when they are instrumental in making the sale. In the case of an artist

10 "Contemporary Art Daily," Contemporary Art Daily RSS, accessed 26 August 2017, <http://www.contemporaryartdaily.com/2016/08/huttendasein-at-15-orient-ave/>.

11 Melissa Rachleff, Brian Bentley, and Alison Mueller, *Inventing downtown: artist-run galleries in New York City, 1952-1965* (New York, NY: Grey Art Gallery, New York University, 2017).

wanting to exhibit the work in a different gallery or a non-permanent exhibition space in which works of art are for sale, the representing gallery receives 10% or 15% commission and the owners of the space that sells the work receive 40% or 35%. These commission rates can vary and are negotiated between the representing gallery and the exhibiting space but the abovementioned percentages are a typical protocol. As mentioned before, these practices and percentages are not to be considered as rules but rather as socially constructed protocols that are up for negotiation. The commission percentages are justified through the argument that the representing gallery establishes a collector base and a reputation of the artist that in return opens the possibility for the non-representing space to sell works. Prices are made by the representing gallery and cannot be altered by the non-representing space unless the artist autonomously decides to sell work without the gallery, which usually only happens with works that the gallery do not have in their inventory and which differ significantly from any work that has ever been exhibited by the representing gallery.¹² However, the scenario of the negotiation of sales in artist-run projects is especially dependent on the communication with the artist rather than the dealer because these projects are set out as peer-to-peer exhibitions, artists showing artists rather than a dealer/curator who is exhibiting an artist.

Three categories of artist-run galleries that emerged in the context described in the past five years and that exhibit art for sale can be differentiated.

Artist studio turned exhibition space

In 2012, Laura Owens, an artist represented by the New York gallery Gavin Brown's Enterprise, moved into an old printing press building in Los Angeles and turned it into her studio space. Only one year later, she opened the space as the exhibition location 356 Mission Rd affiliated with her representing gallery, showing her own work as the opening show. Since then, the exhibition space hosted forty-nine exhibitions including artists Alex Katz and Elaine Sturtevant, both represented by Gavin Brown's Enterprise and with highly acclaimed institutional recognition. The space also opened a for profit book shop and hosts regular art events. Galleries' support for their artists' studios is nothing new in the contemporary art world and has been commented on above as being part of a strategy that also targets the commercial success of a gallery. In this instance, turning an artist's studio into an affiliated exhibition space and exhibiting in a looser fashion than a typical programming by a representing gallery can however also be contextualized with the history of Gavin Brown's Enterprise. Gavin Brown, a practicing artist himself, opened his gallery in Soho New York in 1994, just after his first solo show at David Zwirner Gallery in 1993. Although this studio-turned-exhibition-space is a peer-to-peer or rather artist-exhibiting-artist scenario, 356 Mission Rd. developed a program of work that is also shown in international acclaimed commercial galleries. The financial structure that was already in place for insuring, shipping and handling works of art in price categories of \$50,000 and up shows that 356 Mission Rd. is comparable to the extension of a gallery

12 Anne Luther, 'Collecting Contemporary Art: a visual analysis of a qualitative investigation into patterns of collecting and production. PhD thesis, (University of the Arts London, 2016), 77-79.

based in New York to a space in Los Angeles, rather than an artist studio turned gallery. Nevertheless, the proximate narrative between Gavin Brown and his role as an artist and gallerist and Laura Owens, a practicing artist who runs a commercial non-representing gallery gives a perspective on how fluid roles in the contemporary art world have always been.



Figure 1: Installation View, National Gallery at Grand Century. Available at National Gallery, accessed August 28, 2017, <http://www.grandcentury.biz/nationalgallery.html>.

In New York, the described pressure coming from emerging and established representing galleries led to a context in which artists showed peers in their studios with a greater distance to the white wall aesthetics of commercial galleries, an aesthetic that 356 Mission Rd. continued in their programming. Grand Century, an exhibition space in the studio of artists Dora Budor, Alex Mackin Dolan and Olivia Erlanger opened in 2014 on the Lower East Side. The group exhibitions were curated, lasting over one weekend, and the program included artists such as Isa Genzken in an exhibition curated by London-based curator Tobias Czudej in 2014, the same year she had a retrospective at MoMA. Darren Bader was included in a group show just a few months after his solo exhibition at his representing gallery Andrew Kreps in New York in 2014. These two examples from the programming of Grand Century show that the peer-to-peer studio exhibition space included artists that are commercially and institutionally represented on an established level. And although artists such as Seth Price and Michael Williams appeared in their program, the space emerged with the intention to show artist friends and work that would not be found in established gallery spaces, even by the established artists men-

tioned. Isa Genzken's work was, for example, installed along all other works in the exhibition National Gallery on a metal construction of a lowered ceiling which was removed and replaced by plexi glass. The work, two small paintings with coins, a ripped dollar bill and miniature plastic figures glued onto it, could be accessed with ladders that allowed the audience to climb to the ceiling and view the exhibition from both the floor looking up and the ceiling looking down (see Figures 1 and 2).



Figure 2: Installation View, N Figure 2: Isa Genzken, Untitled, 2014, spray-paint, coins, plastic, dollar bill, National Gallery at Grand Century. Available at National Gallery, accessed August 28, 2017, <http://www.grandcentury.biz/nationalgallery.html>.

Grand Century participated in the two art fairs NADA Miami Beach and the Material Art Fair in Mexico City before closing the exhibition space shortly after in 2015. The participation in art fairs brought a direct contact with collectors and other galleries and reasons for closing the space were related to New York real estate issues rather than continuing exhibitions. Grand Century is an example for an artist-run gallery that emerged out of a studio space on the intersection of institutional and commercial recognition. They showed artists that had just graduated from art school and were not represented by any gallery, and presented their work in the same manner that established artists were shown, far absent from large, white-wall gallery aesthetics.

In 2015 APPLES, a curatorial project between Israel Lund, an artist represented by David Lewis Gallery and the independent curator and associate editor of ArtReview Sam Korman, opened their first exhibition in the alley outside of Lund's studio. Only lasting one day, the ongoing exhibitions are breaking with the gallery model in every aspect. The announcements of their exhibitions are only distributed in emails to their peers and on their

instagram accounts, where documentation only appears sporadically and only to those that follow the artists included in their exhibitions. Their project continues with studio exhibitions and projects in restaurants, breaking with the conceptualization of what exhibition spaces can and should be. Artists such as Viola Yeşiltaş, Virginia Overton and Keren Cytter, all represented by established galleries, participated in APPLES exhibitions alongside artists that are not represented by a gallery nor had an institutional exhibition. Grand Century and APPLES distinguish themselves in that way from 356 Mission Rd., which only showed artists with a commercial or institutional standing and mostly presented in solo exhibitions. The spaces declare their intention with the status of the artists and the type of space chosen for their exhibitions.

Artist-run gallery

Eli Ping, an artist who showed work in the first Alley Show of APPLES in 2015, runs the non-representing gallery Eli Ping Frances Perkins that opened in 2012 and moved to Harlem in 2016. The space that the gallery occupied in 2012 was taken over by artist-run gallery 247365 in 2014. The local network in New York is traceable to some extent to the real estate that artists occupy. The “unusual” character of spaces that are used as exhibition platforms is another distinction from most commercial galleries. Permanent spaces such as 67 Ludlow, a space in a basement of a Chinatown building, with low ceilings and access to gas and electricity meters on two of four walls, are questioning the white cube concept¹³ with rather autonomous exhibitions. In a more radical way, Bed Stuy Love Affair pushed the understanding of a gallery space as an artist-run gallery that established a discourse on the intersection between the commercial art market and institutional recognition since it opened in 2014. Initially a gallery in the apartment of the artist Jared Madere, it became a moving exhibition space when he moved the gallery and his apartment into an RV he bought off of Craigslist for \$2,300.¹⁴ In this moveable space, Korakrit Arunanondchai showed work in a group show in 2014 just after his first solo exhibition at MoMA PS1, and artists such as Jessie Reaves, who was included in the Whitney Biennale 2017 and is now represented by Bridget Donahue Gallery in New York, and Rochelle Goldberg, who had a solo-show at the Sculpture Center in 2016 and shortly afterwards became represented by Miguel Abreu Gallery in New York, exhibited work before their institutional and commercial breakthrough. Jared Madere opened his first solo-exhibition in the new Whitney Museum of American Art, a few months before the museum invited him to present the RV Bed Stuy Love Affair as part of a Whitney Art Party in November 2015. And although the institution featured the artist-run gallery and its independent practice, it is worth mentioning that he became represented by David Lewis Gallery during these events. Understanding the pattern shown in these local intersections between institutional recognition, commercial gallery representation

13 Brian ODoherty and Brian ODoherty, *Inside the white cube: the ideology of the gallery space* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010).

14 Andrew Russeth, “Because This Gallery Can Get Stuck in Traffic,” NYMag.com, published 13 December 2015, accessed 26 August 2017, <http://nymag.com/news/articles/reasonstoloveny/2015/rv-gallery/>.

and an artist-run gallery results in the illumination of strategies that artists develop to establish a record of exhibitions, which is accompanied by a record of documentation and digital images that are distributed internationally on curated blogs such as Contemporary Art Daily¹⁵ and ArtViewer.

Furthermore, it illustrates a particular local and social network. Another difference between artist-run galleries and commercial galleries is the rationale to show artists because they are peers and not because the curator/dealer chooses in keeping with signature discourses in their practice. The artists invited to show their work in an artist-run gallery are most likely friends or acquaintances of the invited curator, who is also most likely known to the gallery owners. Peers become peers through the exhibitions or studio visits that lead up to the exhibition, and the proximity between the artists that are exhibited is often mirrored in a local network that can have been established even in art school. In a commercial gallery exhibition or institutional show, the work of an artist is more likely to be shown because of a certain standing or discourse rather than for reasons of personal relationship, and works can be loans or commissions from private collections. Often communication is solely handled by representing galleries, when curators from other commercial galleries or institutions want to exhibit an artist's work. In artist-run galleries, the role of the gallery as middleman in communication, administration and sales is minimized and the artists often organize art handling, shipping and installation themselves. "We wanted to create a space for art-related activities for ourselves and our friends"¹⁶ said Ben Morgan-Cleveland and Tyler Dobson for Interview Magazine, describing their artist-run gallery Real Fine Arts in Brooklyn which has participated in art fairs such as NADA NY and Miami Beach, Frieze New York and Art Basel Miami since 2010. There are many other artist-run galleries that can be mentioned at the intersection of the institutional and commercial art world in New York, but these short descriptions already illustrate the argument made above: boundaries between the role of a commercial gallery as the middleman in for example sales, administration and art handling are minimized by artist-run galleries and become blurred at the intersection of institutional and commercial recognition (in some cases for both the gallery and the artists shown).

Artist collective with blurred roles

Artist-run galleries are often separated from the practice of the artists who are organizing the spaces. That does not mean that these galleries do not show the work of the artists who are running the space, but rather that the gallery itself is not part of their practice. A difference can therefore be made to artists, who developed a practice in

15 Michael Sanchez has discussed the significance of distributed images on Contemporary Art Daily in the article Michael Sanchez, "Contemporary Art, Daily.", in Isabelle Graw, Daniel Birnbaum, and Nikolaus Hirsch, eds., *Art and Subjecthood: The Return of the Human Figure in Semicapitalism* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2011), 52; and David Joselit wrote about image traffic in the book David Joselit, *After art* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2013).

16 Photography and Published, "Real Fine Arts," in Interview Magazine, accessed 26 August 2017, http://www.interviewmagazine.com/art/the-new-deal-real-fine-arts#_.

which forms of economic exchange and exhibition methods are inherent discourses, concepts and material. The artist-run gallery becomes a method or material for their own production. Reena Spaulings and the Bruce High Quality Foundation have used exhibition-making as part of their practice to criticise art world protocols of access, economic dependency and the development of institutional standing, to name but a few, as argued in this article. Reena Spaulings is led by the two artists Emily Sundblad and John Kelsey, who invite other contributing artists such as Jutta Koether and Merlin Carpenter to their own art production and exhibit them as autonomous artists in their gallery Reena Spaulings Fine Art, founded 2004 in New York. The shifting role of their gallery space is in contrast to obvious participation in typical art world processes such as expanding their gallery in New York with a second space in Los Angeles in 2016 in cooperation with the Mexico-City-based gallery House of Gaga. The role between anonymous artist collective and a space that offers an alternative approach differing from the social protocols and economic pressures of the art market is also part of the practice of the Bruce High Quality Foundation, an artist collective that founded a tuition free university, a residency program and a gallery practice with selling exhibitions in New York and around the US under the acronym BHQFU. One of their signature exhibitions was the Brucennial, first opened in 2008 and last exhibited in the Meatpacking District in Manhattan, a location right next to the Whitney Museum of American Art. The exhibition featured artists such as “Damien Hirst and Cindy Sherman rubbing shoulders with those of Cooper Union undergrads”,¹⁷ with over 400 artists exhibited per exhibition. The over-exaggerated “inclusive” exhibition model was criticism of and participation in the art market at the same time, and their claim that Vito Schnabel, who represents the artist collective and is the dealer of their work, is “more [a] collaborative relationship than the traditional artist/dealer division” nevertheless signals the financial access the collective enjoys to the network that Schnabel brings to their collaboration. In an interview in *Art in America*, they said that they “like to be involved in decision-making about where our work goes once it leaves the studio, and Vito has been importantly involved in projects like the Brucennial and BHQFU.”¹⁸ The intention of breaking with the typical artist/dealer relationship is a pattern that is repeated in the three types of artist-run galleries described above that emerged especially in the past five years in New York. The examples show that artists working on the intersection of the commercial and institutional art world, and peer-to-peer exhibiting, can generate symbolic and economic capital with the establishment of an alternative to market-driven intentions.

The symbiosis between commercial and artist run-galleries becomes evident in the description of the three differentiations. Artist-run galleries that operate at the intersection between art production and institutional/commercial recognition automatically oscillate in a symbiosis, as young curators of mentioned institutions such as MoMA PS1, Whitney Museum and the Sculpture Center work with emerging artists that were first recognized

17 Nick Irvin, *The Last Brucennial: The Interview*, in *Art in America*, accessed 26 August 2017, <http://www.artinamericamagazine.com/news-features/interviews/the-last-brucennial-the-interview/>.

18 Irvin, *The Last Brucennial: The Interview - Interviews - Art in America*, accessed 26 August 2017, <http://www.artinamericamagazine.com/news-features/interviews/the-last-brucennial-the-interview/>.

in peer-to-peer exhibitions and created a local social network, which in return circled back into the art market as a negotiating factor of exhibition practices and other protocols. The reflected criticism became institutionally recognized. One noticeable pattern that developed, particularly after the described “flipping” phase until 2014, was that artists wanted to have more control over sales (or rather over what happened to their work after a sale). Another pattern, which also becomes tangible by differentiating between those three types of operations is that artists create a social network that allows them to show their work, as a reaction to the power structure of curators and dealers who decide whether a work is sellable or fits in with their programming. With the exception of 356 Mission Rd., the described exhibitions and spaces aim for a gallery format that is as far removed from white cube galleries as possible. Exhibitions in studio alleys, on the ceiling or in a RV seemed to become a reaction to the brightly lit, grey floor and white wall aesthetic of any commercial gallery and contemporary art institution in New York in the past years. The distribution of digital images of these spaces led to work that was made in relational aesthetics, as discussed by Michael Sanchez. Time constraints such as weekend shows, or location changes due to movable vehicles or temporary outside spaces, encouraged the participation of a social peer group rather than a publicly announced opening in a museum or commercial gallery. Due to their participation in art fairs, institutional and commercial recognition of the artist-run galleries resulted in a new discussion on the role of the gallery and its responsibility towards its artists’ work, especially when selling. Questions were raised, such as: can an artist ask for collector names or refuse a sale? Can the current gallery model become redundant with the emerging forms of exhibitions that are curated and sold by artists?

The emergence and symbiosis of artist-run galleries and institutional/commercial recognition illustrate the constant reflexive mode of justification of protocols in the art world. The exemplified intersection between artist run galleries and art market recognition demonstrates that an understanding of an “outside” or “anti” art market structure is impossible to describe because this position can lead to social, symbolic and economic capital through participation as “the other” or “critique”. At the moment in which established artists are showing their work alongside non-represented artists, their position adds value to the exhibition, even though it is considered to operate outside of these established forms. Nevertheless strategies such as gallery aesthetics, dealer strategies of safeguarding artists from their clients, inclusion and exclusion strategies in exhibition-making and other protocols mentioned above are challenged by the three types of artist-run galleries differentiated here. The challenges originate in the art market context described in the first paragraphs and currently lead to a new criticism of the exhibition and sales practices of commercial galleries.

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