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Defining the Art Product: A Network Perspective

Mark Wickham, Kim Lehman and Ian Fillis

Structured Abstract

Purpose: This paper explores the nature of art as a product through a network perspective, accounting for key contributing stakeholders in shaping its essence.

Design/methodology/approach: This study adopted a qualitative data collection and analysis design, and centred on a series of face to face interviews with established Australian visual artists.

Findings: Results support the notion of an art product shaped by interconnections and interdependencies of actors in the art market. In particular, attention is paid to the roles of actors in conceptual, production and distribution networks.

Research limitations/implications: Although there are idiosyncrasies that (in part) define the Australian art market context, the issues identified here are nonetheless useful in determining the nature of the interconnectedness of the art market in other similar Western contexts. Many Australian artists have achieved similar recognition and status to other established artists elsewhere. Future cross-cultural comparative research should be carried out in order to assess this relationship in the longer term.

Practical implications: Our research provides artists and other art market stakeholders with a finer-grained understanding of the art product which will allow a more focussed approach to developing relevant strategies and tactics for the creation and marketing of art products.

Originality/value: Although philosophical assessments of art as a product have been carried out elsewhere, there is a lack of evaluation from an artist perspective in respect to their experiences interacting with other art market stakeholders.

Keywords: Art, product, artist, network, conceptual, production, distribution

Article classification: Research paper

Defining the Art Product: A Network Perspective

INTRODUCTION

In terms of extant marketing theory development, the concept of 'product' has been examined extensively, and most prominently in terms of: product policy (Kotabe 1990), new product development and innovation (Zahay, Hajli and Sihi 2018), product placement (Nebenzahl and Secunda 1993), product positioning (Ahmed 1991), product design (Bocken, de Pauw, Bakker and van der Grinten 2016). product as brand (Chaudhuri and Holbrook 2001), cultural aspects of branding (Schroeder 2009), new product diffusion (Van den Bulte 2000), product standardisation and customisation (Wang, Zhang, Sun and Zhu, 2016), and the e-product (Helander and Jiao 2002). Despite the advanced state of its development, however, exploring the notion of 'product' as it relates to artistic output remains eclectic, relatively underdeveloped, and highly contested (see Briskman, 1980; Dewey, 2005; Fillis, 2006; Lewitt, 1967; Molotch, 1996). Whilst there is some overlap between the marketing concept and arts and cultural production (in terms of planning and strategy), it is widely acknowledged that the idiosyncratic nature of the arts and cultural sectors, where co-creation and artist-led product development are the norm (rather than the exception) does not fit easily into mainstream marketing theory (e.g. Colbert, Nantel, Bilodeau, and Rich 1994; Fillis, 2004). Co-creation concerns the processes of collaboration between consumers and producers collaborate in creating value in a co-consuming brand community (Pongsakornrungsilp and Schroeder 2011). We experience art both passively and actively as we consume through absorption and immersion, signalling the co-creation of value (Gronroos 2012). A generic adoption of conventional marketing practices within an arts and cultural setting fails to acknowledge the specific needs of a growing creative sector where often quite distinctive

beliefs impact (Fillis, 2011). There are also quite different stakeholder relationships (Lehman and Wickham, 2014), and often the notion of 'product' is not clearly defined (Lehman, Wickham & Fillis, 2016). Specific marketing studies on the art product are limited. O'Reilly (2004), for example, considers the marketing mix elements of popular music, but he also goes far beyond this position in considering the history of the discipline and its relationship with branding.

Charters (2006) identified the lack of studies and theoretical frameworks in understanding the consumption of art and culture-based products. The barriers to the stimulation of such work can be explained when attempting to define what art actually is, with some commentators feeling that art should be viewed in the same way as an industrial product (e.g. Anderson 1991; Hagtvedt, and Patrick 2008). Other interpretations which help us think about the nature of the art product include viewing art consumers who form subcultures or communities of consumption around particular product classes, brands and consumption activities (Schouten and McAlexander 1995). There is also a growing body of research on co-creation around market-mediated cultural products which borrows the idea of a network of interrelationships (Schau, Muniz and Arnould 2009). Also, the values associated with an art product can be understood through Holt (1995), who notes how consumers (from different social backgrounds) consume similar products in different ways due to cultural capital variation. However, much of this empirical work adopts an holistic view of the art world and art market, often taking a 'production process' approach which explains flows of information, capital and value creation (e.g. Jyrama & Ayvari, 2010; Rodner & Thomson, 2013; Venkatesh & Meamber, 2006). This does not, however, address the intricacies of the interconnections between the various actors within the networks found in the art market that culminate in the art product, e.g., capital and value creation, flows of information, and patterns of

influence/power. Nor does it shed any light on the nature of the product. The broad research opportunity to be addressed in this paper, therefore, is to frame understanding from a network perspective in capturing the relationships between contributing influential factors in shaping the art product. This then shifts the focus away from the artist as the sole initiator of the work. We focus mainly on networking via face-to-face contact within business and personal contact networks (Shaw 1999) from conceptual, production and distribution perspectives, although this is sometimes also virtual.

LITERATURE REVIEW

One of the earliest papers to adopt a network perspective to explain the array of connections in the arts was that by Pezzini (2013) in their analysis of writers on art in Edwardian London. Adoption of the network lens views the artist as creator away from the centre of attention in recognising the involvement of other interested stakeholders involved in the collaboration, including the social shaping of the production and consumption of the work, and its critique. Yogev and Grund (2012) made use of art fair data (and qualitative interviews with the various actors in the art market) in order to study the development of the art fair network over three years. They note that annual art fairs are a major part of the contemporary art market, enabling exposure of, and relationship building by the artists, with key actors in the global art market. The adoption of a network lens in arts marketing research also improves our understanding of art and cultural markets in general, and the market for contemporary art in particular which are characterized by high levels of uncertainty (Caves 2000; Hirsch 1972). Network analysis is a useful tool with which to study such markets where there are no objective parameters which define quality; as noted by Powell (1990: 304): “networks are especially useful for exchange of commodities whose value is not easily measured.” Several scholars have noted the relevance of networks for the study of the art market (Albrecht 1968;

Becker 1974; Crane 1989; Crane 1992; Kadushin 1976; Moulin 1987; Ridgeway 1989; Simpson 1981; White 1993). However, none appear to have explored the product concept explicitly in this way. Although the networks and networking lens have been increasingly adopted in business, management and marketing research, they have a much longer history in anthropology (Barnes 1972) and the behavioral sciences; as Kadushin (1976: 769) notes:

> A network is a set of social objects onto which is mapped a set of relationships or 'flows' not necessarily in a 1:1 fashion.

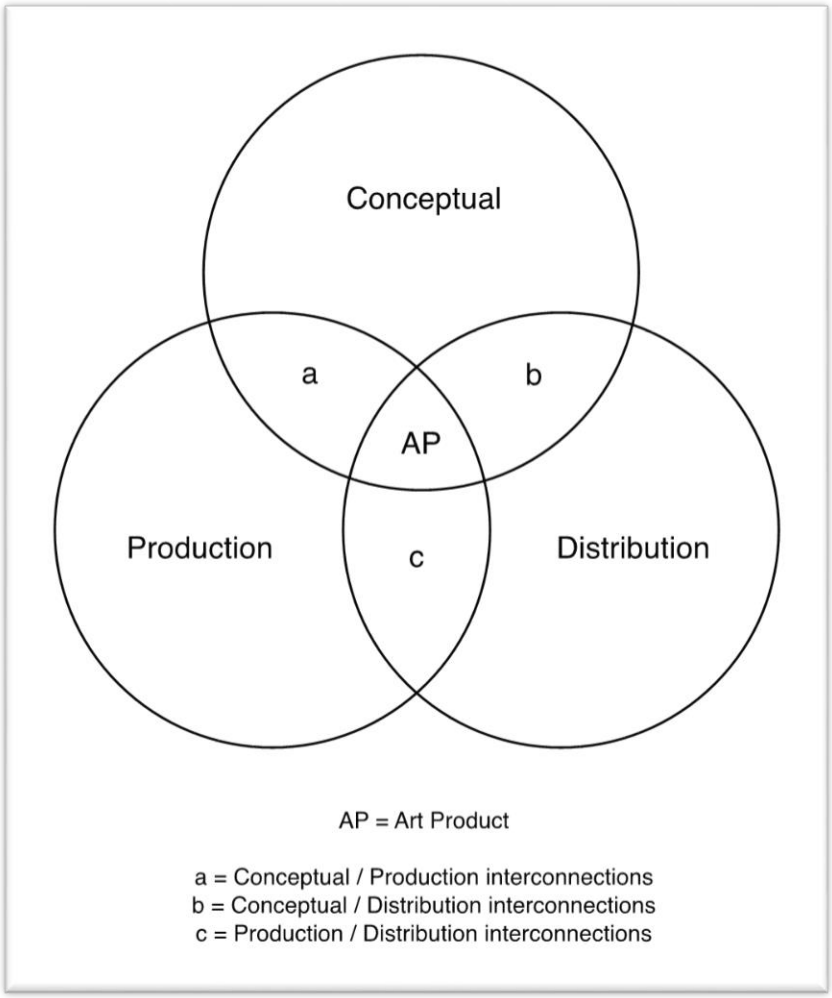
Long before consumer researchers considered producers of culture also being consumers, Kadushin (1976:770) identified them as consumers of each other's outputs in considering 'the flow through producer networks [as] at least two-way and often circular.' Thinking in a circular systems way means that the boundaries are not clear and the division between the center and the peripheral edge can only be arbitrary. From a supply chain perspective, these relationships have been viewed elsewhere as either linear or circular (Nasir et all. 2017) and we elaborate on the supply chain mechanism throughout the paper. Also, individual members can only really 'see' others in close contact, rather than those distant from their center. De Klerk and Saayman (2012) investigated the use of networking at art festivals, finding that relationships and trust are key success factors. Here the artist has to build relationships with suppliers, buyers, customers, clients, the bank manager, competitors, business chambers, as well as other entrepreneurs (Dodd and Patra, 2002, p. 117). Relationships in a network and the management of these relationships are important in building credibility for oneself and to succeed in business and to find mutual support, as well as enabling the opportunity to collaborate with others and bridge holes in one's own network (De Lange et al., 2004: 352). They also allow us to gain access to resources (Stokes and Wilson, 2006) through supplier-buyer relationships and in other business areas such as research and development (Pittaway et al., 2004). Strong ties (family and friends) and weak ties (other role players in the business

environment) or relationships (Granovetter, 1973) need to be maintained to ensure personal and business success. Stokes and Wilson (2006: 472) also describe networking as part of entrepreneurial management behaviour.

Jackson and Oliver (2003) utilise network theory (and Social Exchange Theory specifically) to explain how entrepreneurial popular musicians develop their activities via a series of interdependent relationships consisting of proactive social actors. We similarly argue that the formation and use of conceptual, production and distribution networks by artists and other interested stakeholders is, in part, socially shaped. We build on the work of Rodner and Thompson (2013), Fillis, Lee and Fraser (2015) and others (e.g. Albrecht 1968; Becker 1974; Kadushin 1976) in offering an alternative way of visualising what occurs. The opportunity 'holes' (Burt 1992) which appear in art networks can be exploited by those willing to leverage existing and future potential connections in order to grow in an artistic sense. The trial and error, or reworking, approach in art making lends itself naturally to the flexible nature of a network structure. The interdependence of the various proactive stakeholders in an art network is typical of any social network. By becoming a member of this network, both formal and informal relationships can be formed so that novel information and advice, resources, markets and technology can be accessed than if stakeholders had acted individually. Recognition of a network as a legitimate structure involves the network as a form, an entity and as interaction (Human and Provan 2000). The act of effective networking can even be deemed a personal competency (O'Donnell and Cummins 1999). To complicate things further, art is not just a commodity to be traded but is co-created and consumed by producers, consumers and other stakeholders in the creation, sharing and sustaining of cultural value (Crossick and Kaszynska 2014). Uzzi and Spiro (2005) interrogate the idea of the small world network (Milgram 1967) in order to understand how collaboration and creativity occur within

musical theatre networks. Creativity can be stimulated within the artist network, irrespective of its size, via the interaction of the actors or stakeholders within the social system. The 'small world' network can help us to understand how emerging artists can grow their creative activities in the early stages of their career, since they have fewer network ties than that of the established artist (Lehman and Wickham 2014). The way in which art is expressed is determined by the systems of production and the dissemination of cultural messages in the form of products, services and relationships (Robertson 2016; Venkatesh and Meamber 2006). We use these interconnections to justify our identification of conceptual, production, and distribution networks within the art market (see Figure 1 below).

Figure 1: Networks and their interconnections within the art market



Following our review of the literature and our conceptualisation of art product interconnections, this paper seeks to address the following specific Research Question:

> *To what extent do the interconnections between the various networks in the art market contribute to our understanding of the art product concept?*

METHOD

In order to address this research question, this study comprised a series of semi-structured interviews with sixteen visual artists identified by (and recruited) from a list compiled by an expert panel (i.e. a commercial gallery director, a curator from an art museum, and an art school professor). In order to qualify for the semi-structured interview process, the visual artists were selected according to two essential criteria: (a) that were actively working as a full-time visual artist in Australia, and (b) that they possessed *ad minima* one post-graduate qualification in a fine arts discipline, and were in the 'established' stage of their visual arts career (see Lehman and Wickham, 2014). Given their commercial experience, the visual artists recruited for this study were able to reflect on how demand influenced their production decisions; how their relationships with a range of suppliers and intermediaries impacted their work, and; how these relationships influenced their art making decisions. Of the sixteen visual artists recruited for this study, 9 were female and 7 were male; 6 of the visual artists resides in Hobart, 4 resided in Launceston, 2 resided in Melbourne, 3 resided in Sydney, and 12 resided in Canberra. In terms of their demographic characteristics, the sample recruited for the data gathering process reflect the national population of visual artists in Australia (see Throsby & Peteskaya, 2017).

Guided by the review of extant literature, a question guide was developed to control the content and scope of interviews and included standardised questions common to all visual artists recruited for the study:

- To what extent have external issues affected your production of visual art pieces over your career?
- To what extent has the work of other visual artists affected your production of visual art pieces over your career?
- To what extent has increasing consumer demand for your work affected your production of visual art pieces over your career?
- What relationships and networks have you developed over your career as a visual artist?
- What was the rationale for developing these relationships and networks?
- To what extent have these relationships and networks affected your production of visual art pieces over your career?

The questions were framed in a way to allow the interviewees latitude for introspection and open recounting of their experiences in the art market. The interview process allowed for follow-up questions to elicit clarification, and interviewee responses to researcher comments. Following the data gathering process, all of the interview transcript data were converted into MS Word® format, exported into an NVIVO (version 12) database for coding and interrogation purposes. In order to categorise the primary data gathered in line with the extant literature, coding rules were developed to capture the respondents' views concerning their interactions with other actors in the art market (i.e. their relationships with other conceptual, production and distribution actors). The coding rules used to capture these interconnections can be found in Table 1.

Table 1. Groups of Supply-Side Actors Involved in the Art Market

Network	**Coding Rules**
Conceptualization	This node captured any data relating to actors involved in assisting the artist(s) in researching, formulating, and developing/expanding

	an art concept. It includes the artist themselves as well as (but not limited to): family, friends, peers, and any person involved in the intellectual and creative process upon which their artwork is formulated.
Production	This node captured any data relating to actors involved in the assembly or construction of an artwork. This group includes individuals that provide physical assistance in the construction, fabrication and/or production of an artwork. It also includes individuals that are called upon for their expertise or experience in using specific technologies or media.
Distribution	This node captured any data relating to actors involved in the distribution and marketing communication of the artwork (e.g.: transport, logistics, commercial galleries, public institutions).

Once the data were coded into the nodes relating to the conceptual, production and distribution actors in the art market, they were then further interrogated to link the various roles and interconnections to the theoretical elements of the product concept from the marketing literature. The coding rules used to capture how the interconnections in the art market linked to the product concept can be found in Table 2.

Table 2: Product Concept Coding Rules

Node	Coding Rules
Product Concept	This node captured any data relating to the idea or concept for a given artwork.
Product Design	This node captured data relating to the planning processes involved in the creation of a given artwork.
Product Manufacture	This node captured data relating to activities in the implementation of plans and other emergent processes in the physical construction of a given artwork.

To ensure that coding of data was consistent with the coding rules, inter-coder reliability checks were undertaken at regular intervals utilising the three-phase process suggested by Compton, Love, and Sell (2012). During the first phase the researchers established and pre-tested a sample of 5 interview responses against the NVIVO nodes and coding rules presented in Tables 1 and

2. Secondly the researchers agreed on how to deal with ambiguous data (e.g. data that did not neatly align with established nodes and coding rules, or could be coded to more than one node). Thirdly, during the coding process the researchers utilised the memo tool within the NVIVO software package to notate the analysis process and assist the verification of findings and development of theory (see Wilson, 1985). For example, during this process memo reports were generated which provided the researchers with the opportunity to further analyse and reflect upon the emerging trends and themes, and to generate empirical knowledge via the creation and retention of memos concerning the data, coding categories, and emergent relationships. Table 3 provide a summary of how the data were interrogated and how the validity of the relationships between the categories was verified using the memo analysis process; the themes emanating from the second-round of coding form the basis of the results section that follows.

Table 3: Processes for Data Interrogation

Tactic	Procedure
Noting patterns and themes	When observing phenomena, gestalt psychology holds that people tend to perceive events in their entirety rather than their constituent parts. Therefore, as data relating to art production and marketing activities were interrogated using text-based search functions, recurring patterns and themes were noted in order to consolidate individual facets of the information.
Seeking plausibility	Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 246) suggest that when drawing inferences "…often happens during analysis that a conclusion is plausible, 'makes good sense', 'fits' … so plausibility, and intuition as the underlying basis for it, is [valuable]."
Clustering	Organising primary and secondary data into clusters aids in its interpretation by grouping themes that have similar characteristics. In this research, the clustering of data culminated in the determination of interconnected themes.
Noting relationships between variables	Determining the nature of the relationship between the variables and the data relating to arts production and marketing allowed the researchers to ascertain how these variables change directly, change inversely, or demonstrated no relationship at all.
Finding intervening variables	An intervening variable is one that theoretically affects the observed phenomenon but cannot be observed directly. When variables in this inquiry seemed to be related but provided an unsatisfactory explanation, the data was interrogated/triangulated further for possible intervening variables.
Making conceptual or theoretical coherence	Having gleaned evidence from the data that appeared to form converging patterns and identify relationships, theory was inducted from that evidence.

RESULTS

The data analysis provided evidence for the idea that the constituent parts of the art product can be explored as a function of the interdependencies and interconnections between actors in the networks that comprise the art market. Firstly, the data from the established visual artists sampled in this research supported the conceptual framework suggested by the Literature Review (presented in Figure 1); that is, the supply side of the art market is comprised of three key networks, Conceptual, Production and Distribution. These networks are briefly outlined below,

Conceptual

This network involves those persons who contribute or assist the artist(s) in researching, devising, and developing an art concept. It includes family, 'critical friends', peers, mentors, and other persons involved in either the intellectual or creative process. Importantly, it also includes the artist themselves and their personal intellectual resources.

> …I still get emails from people who say, they've looked me up [online], they send me an email saying, wow, I just want to let you know I just had this amazing experience in…and can you tell me where the soundtrack [in a video-based art work] came from and blah, blah, and blah and what you did 'cause it's made me really interested in meditation and… (Interviewee 6)

> …and they're obviously close friends and other artists that you have serious conversations with about your work… I think some of the best artists I know do that very well and have almost generated their own R&D departments in terms of having a few close colleagues that they work with closely and again studio setups can facilitate that. (Interviewee 7)

Production

This network includes individuals and organisations that provide assistance in the construction, fabrication and/or production of an art work. It also includes those persons employed (either in a paid

or voluntary capacity) for their expertise and/or experience in areas where the artist/s lacks capability, or to utilise specific technologies or media.

> I mean the only gallery I'm tangled up with at the moment is [deleted] in [deleted], and anything over a couple of grand, two and a half grand doesn't sell in [deleted] unless it's in a competition or something like that. …I comply with that so I make small bronze axes which she sells around for a grand a half, thousand, 15 hundred. You know, I take off 40% they're really pretty much like brown pottery mugs in many ways. (Interviewee 9)

> I personally employ my ex-students to work for me… anyone that shows any interest of sewing for me, or helping me to fabricate work, I usually stay in contact with…So one of my current assistants.. like if I need anything I'll go to her and she'll give me other students that need work, or other ex-students. (Interviewee 13)

Distribution

This network is comprised of those persons or organisations involved in the distribution and marketing of the art work. It includes exhibition and event management, transport and logistics, as well as commercial galleries and public institutions. In addition, it includes marketing, promotion and media advice and activities.

> I like to think… 'cause of the way I identify myself is very far removed from marketing and branding, and stuff like that. And artists and curators, and whoever else in the art world can either find [marketing] really off-putting and they fight against it, or they kind of, if they're like me, they kind of work within it. It doesn't mean that I love it all, but it's something that I work within. (Interviewee 1)

> …the distribution of it, I tried vineyards and shops and coffee shops and restaurants and all different kinds of things that I did I suppose in addition to being at Stills, but actually having a commercial gallery and having that kind of shopfront, it gives you a permanent location that people can see things at and I don't think there's anything that's quite like that particularly if they take shows overseas. I think it's harder to distribute your work if you don't have… [a] commercial gallery that people can go to. (Interviewee 10)

Each of these networks interacts in various ways to contribute to the art product. The interconnections are evaluated in the following sections.

Conceptual/Production Interconnections

The data analysis provided support for four aspects relating to critical Conceptual/Production interconnections: (1) the connection between the artists and members of the Production network; (2) partnerships; (3) imagination and understanding; and (4) the actual ability to produce something. The data indicates a close connection between the artists' conceptual work and the technical support provided. There is, however, a lack of marketing and promotional support which could be enabled, but is not:

> The piece that I think most people like myself and certainly in any art school in this day and age are really weak at is marketing of that work, and it's left in a traditional sense to the gallery to do. (Interviewee 9)

Sometimes there is conflict between what the artist requires and what marketing can offer:

> … and that is the thing that's between the product and the service that marketing has no room for…it's actually what makes us human. (Interviewee 15)

However, there can be clear benefits of adopting a marketing approach in terms of leveraging the artists' networks in order to market what they produce.

Collaboration between Conceptual and Production network actors meant that any outsourcing of necessary skills was not detrimental to them 'owning' the art product. Inspiration and knowledge exchange between Conceptual and Production network actors resulted in the ability to jointly evaluate art production context and content. Contextualisation occurs with respect to an art work's relationship to other art made by the artist, within the exhibition and in relation to other artists' work. Resource constraints also impact on art product development.

Conceptual/Distribution Interconnections

Important relationships here include those between the artist and Distribution network actors such as galleries. There is often an imbalance here in terms of power relationships, with the

gallery often holding sway through the actions of curators and gallerists. The art product and its direction is often influenced by these parties as much as it is by the artist when commercial priorities are considered. Market forces shaped by customer demand also affect the production process. However, although there is an acknowledgement of the merits of this orientation, there can be a tendency to shy away from it:

> Sometimes I think if I show someone my videos in the marketplace, you know in commercial galleries that some of them would get sold, that they're kind of things that people might choose to live with. So I don't have an objection to that, it's just that I don't actually participate in that arena. (Interviewee 16)

For others, understanding how the marketplace functions is essential:

> It doesn't worry some people but you have to look at the cultural marketplace and, as I said, there are plenty of reasons for me to want to give up. But I just can't. (Interviewee 14)

However, at times, the power in the relationship is with the artist and this is when artistic control is greatest:

> A dealer's never influenced my ideas ever, and they've never interfered with my ideas… sometimes they've been a bit concerned about the scale, about how difficult that might be to sell. There's not much they can do about it. (Interviewee 13)

> So it sets a limit on… so I've got to hit an end point in six months and my discovery is the trajectory of my research or my practice is going to extend that far and the gallery's this big which means five paintings, three prints. So there's project driven mode of production. (Interviewee 7)

Ultimately, a combination of artist and gallery reputation drives the relationship, artistic output and direction.

Production/Distribution Interconnections

Important relationships here include improved access to knowledge and information, heightened appreciation of additional artistic opportunities outside of the gallery such as new

studio space, a new distribution outlet and interaction with other artists at different stages of their careers.

> Even with a festival or an exhibition that you're going to have, it's curious to watch how that kind of ripples back into the production process. (Interviewee 7)

Drawing on support from peers is important, as well as learning from the process of artistic development, including the formation of gallery relationships:

> In terms of distribution…it's a slow process, you find your way but… well just being picked up by another gallery in Sydney. Even with a festival or an exhibition…so at that point in time it becomes very much…a relationship and that's a slow process because between you and the gallerist there is that building up of a relationship which generally takes quite a long time for you to understand… where they're at and for them to understand you and for you to get that communication going and getting a good rapport. (Interviewee 11)

Curator relationships are also important here in helping to develop the artist's work:

> …I work quite closely with…who's the curator of our Longford show, and he'll often say, "Oh, I'd like to see something like blah blah blah", and maybe it's because we have a good relationship, but I'll just go, "Oh, yeah, I think I can do that".… it's a more cooperative and personal thing… (Interviewee 16)

These interconnections improved idea generation and art production, as well as the ability to acquire additional storage space and access to transportation for their art work, while also maintaining quality control over the processes involved. So we can see that a variety of supply related interconnections are central to shaping the art product.

DISCUSSION

As noted earlier, we proposed the following Research Question based on our literature review and our conceptualisation of the art market networks' interconnections set out in Figure 1:

> *To what extent do the interconnections between the various networks in the art market contribute to our understanding of the art product concept?*

Subsequently, our analysis of the data confirmed our identification of three key networks operating in the art market: Conceptual, Production and Distribution. Viewing the art market from a network perspective has provided insight into a number of important issues. Primary amongst these is that the data suggests that the range of interconnections involved in the creation of any given art product imbue it with a range of characteristics exceeding that of the conceptual and artistic skill of the artist(s) who created it. Certainly there are conceptualisations around the value added, created and co-created from other parts of the art market (e.g., Curioni, Forti & Leone, 2015; Preece, Kerrigan & O'Reilly, 2016; Rodner & Thomson, 2013). Jyrama (2002: 56) did take a network view but concentrated on a 'focal net" with a commercial gallery at its centre, consisting of the "owner, artists, collectors and art critics or other experts interested in its program". In contrast, our concern is with the nature of the art product, and the ways in which our understanding of the supply-side aspects of art production is enhanced by examining the interconnections between actors in the various networks. It is here that we see that the nature of the art product is changed by the relationships that the artist has with those involved in their production processes.

It is apparent that the art product depends on the talent, input and personality of the artist, but importantly, it also depends on the technical expertise of Conceptual and Production network actors. It is also reliant on the maintaining of reliable actor relationships, together with effective collaborations across the networks. In terms of those actors within the artist's Conceptual network, creation of the art product is influenced by their peer group and other persons they have interacted with, either intellectually or creatively. There is also evidence here that 'current' art works produced by the artist are shaped by previous art created by the artist. That is, artists develop their practice over time, and consciously seek to continually move forward with new ideas and more finely honed skills. Similarly, the Production network

can generate new opportunities, via a new or refined process that leads the artist in a new direction. Significantly, though, the constraints set out by Production actors can determine some of the parameters of the final art product. However, in some ways this can be problematic for an artist seeking peer recognition or personal aesthetic fulfilment, in that their artistic standing can become diluted—to advance artistically may mean ignoring market-driven opportunities or constraints. This can be viewed as a dynamic art making orientation, moving between 'for the market' and 'for the self' positions.

This is also the case in relation to the Conceptual/Distribution interconnections, with the art product exhibiting certain characteristics shaped by the relationship between actors in the Conceptual and Distribution networks. Actors' reputation and interaction across the network also carry influence in determining the consistency and value of the art. The exhibition space also plays a role in determining the image and identity of the work. Works presented in a major art gallery or art museum will take on additional value based on the brand of the institution (Drummond, 2006). This is not unlike a traditional product benefitting from being on sale in a reputable retail outlet. However, the role of this type of distribution channel in the art market is one of legitimisation (Martin, 2007). However, artists wishing to further their career can look for more prestigious commercial representation or aim for a larger geographic influence, for example negotiate international exhibitions (Lehman & Wickham, 2014). Importantly, as was previously mentioned, there is also a range of power dynamics at play in the art market, reminiscent of the relationships between retailer, wholesaler and manufacturer in a consumer good market. As Kottasz and Bennett (2013**)** have noted:

> An artist with a strong personal brand is likely to have a wider range of distribution options than an artist with no brand identity and thus may be less dependent on intermediaries. (2013: 27)

The resources available to an individual artist do not allow for the same control over brand that might be seen in other product areas; this means that it is only when the artist becomes 'famous' that they can control their relationships between themselves and their distribution network (Lehman & Wickham, 2014).

In terms of Production/Distribution interconnections, an art product is permeated by the capacity of the available logistics services to deliver on transportation and storage requirements. In addition, large works can have a limited market—only institutional buyers such as museums and foundations have the resources for large scale installations and sculptures (Zorloni, 2005). In short, there are limiting factors will affect what is actually produced, together with the actual amount and the size and nature of the output. Nonetheless, there is a level of quality control provided by the specialist supply chain actors that reinforces the reputation of the art product, and therefore allows the image and brand of stakeholders to be maintained. Again, the situation found in the art market is not dissimilar to the key role logistics chain capabilities plays in other industry sectors (Cooper, Lambert and Pagh 1997; Van Wassenhove 2006). Arguably, though, an artist is 'constrained' by the realities of art market logistics, and not in a position to find ways around the difficulties, as could a traditional business entity. In contrast, the knowledge and information sharing that appears to be an integral facet of the Production/Distribution interconnections can stimulate and support the artist and therefore have a positive influence on the resultant art product. There are developments, skill sets, opportunities and new collaborators that only come to the artist's attention via the actors within the Production and Distribution networks.

CONCLUSION

Overall, viewing art as a product notion can be simultaneously divisive and helpful. In our assessment, we do acknowledge there are sector specific beliefs and practices, and behaviours peculiar to the art market. We believe that the motivations for 'production' in the aesthetic world of art are inherently at odds with the consumer-focus at the heart of modern marketing. However, at the same time we deliberately position our lens alongside elements of the marketing mix as traditionally defines, as we believe its application in the arts context is appropriate and useful (Colbert and Martin, 2009; Fillis, 2011). Examining the wider evidence, there is broad application of art as product, but our work helps to give a clearer focus to the debate, including a contribution to aesthetic product understanding (Charters 2006). Art is clearly not an industrial product, but this has not prevented some researchers and practitioners from treating it as such (see Hagtvedt & Patrick, 2008). Co-creation among interested stakeholders should also be part of the conversation (Schau, Muniz & Arnould, 2009). Our work builds on existing art network interpretations (e.g. Jyrama & Ayvari 2010; Rodner & Thomson, 2013) by assessing inter-dependent relationships amongst sets of interested stakeholders within a network. We have also highlighted how wider social and other network relationship (e.g. Kadushin, 1976; Richardson, Jogulu and Rentschler 2017) can contribute to understanding of art as a product. We even identify how our approach contributes to the congoing cultural value debate (Crossick & Kaszynska, 2014) by demonstrating how value can be shared and sustained within a network.

LIMITATIONS/FUTURE RESEARCH

The focus of this paper was on the understanding of the art product network using data from our study of experienced Australian artists. Despite particular idiosyncrasies of that marketplace such as geographical isolation, we believe that the issues identified and discussed in this paper are also useful in other similar Western contexts. Nonetheless, what would be useful is future cross-cultural comparative research which can assess the relationships

uncovered here, as well as any other factors not identified so far. There are variations in the structures of the art worlds across countries that it would be valuable to tease out. On method, we believe that our qualitative approach to exploring the interconnections and relationships provided significant insight into the development of the art product. That said, it would also be useful to explore the scale and impact of these network relationships, which could be achieved through large scale quantitative survey work using larger samples. In addition, further research exploring the extent to which the network relationships identified here are also relevant to other creative industry settings such as the performing arts (drama, music, and dance), another area where markets must be created rather than followed. As noted above, we focused mainly on face-to-face networking and so future research could address other forms such as those made possible via website communication, Instagram and similar new media in supplementing more conventional physical approaches. The artists assessed in this paper were established in the marketplace and had longstanding relationships with galleries and other clients. Future research could also assess how other artists have been successful in selling to hotels, cruise ships, and businesses either through agents such as interior designers, or directly, since these avenues did not emerge in our interviews.

Also it is interesting to note that, even though some form of market awareness and marketing insight would improve artist career development, it is not generally embedded in art related degree courses. This stems from the limited insight and policy relating to how artists can access relevant information and advice in helping to develop their careers. There are a number of publications on artists' support in general (e.g. Cliche, Mitchell and Wiesand 2001; Hellmanzik 2009), although Arts Council England (2018) in a recent consultancy report does help to raise awareness. Also, recommendations from the AHRC funded Cultural Value project by Fillis, Lee and Fraser (2015) included the generating and spreading awareness of

the market for art (and its mechanisms and implications) among art students and newly graduated artists and specific interventions e.g. on pricing advice; ‘business’ training for art school graduates, and wider competency training (Bauer, Viola and Strauss 2011).

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