

# Corporate Art Collections in Europe: Impact, Influences and Responsibilities in the Art World

by Nora Larakı

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School of Arts University of Kent

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## Abstract

This thesis is an inquiry into the changing role and growing influence of corporations as collectors and modern patrons of contemporary art in Europe. As pressure increases on public funding, corporations have become an important source of income for artists and cultural institutions. This is a relatively new and ongoing development in Europe, where the governments have a long-standing tradition of supporting and funding the arts in various ways. This thesis is a critical analysis of power imbalances in the neo-liberal market, highlighting the ethical implications of corporate intervention in the arts.

The basis of this study forms a qualitative analysis of data collected from in-depth interviews, case studies, text- and picture analyses, accompanied by a comprehensive statistical analysis of European corporate collections. Researching art as a social product, I have positioned this project on the intersection of art history and sociology, drawing on Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony and Bourdieu's notion of the field.

The findings of this study show that corporate collectors occupy influential and powerful positions within the art ecosystem. Many of them have gained significant recognition and legitimisation by entering strategic partnerships with the public sector. Moreover, contemporary corporate collectors can positively influence artists' careers, however the evidence in this study shows that this can be problematic as corporate collectors can in some cases actively censor and influence artistic production to conform to their demands. Furthermore, this study suggests that while corporate collections generally seem to follow the trends of the art market, their buying patterns indicate a strong bias towards male artists and Eurocentric values. The ethnographic approach of this research project additionally provides an in-depth insight into and documentation of the operations and workings of corporate collecting in Europe.

A practical outcome drawing on the findings of this study is the proposal for a code of ethics, put together by summarising and structuring the discussions I had with corporate collectors outlining their consensus about responsibilities and their role in the art world. Significantly, publishing this code of ethics could potentially help to hold corporate collectors accountable, offering more transparency to the public and their employees as well as increasing the systemic support for marginalised artists.

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# Part 1

# 1. Chapter I - Preface

## 1.1. Introduction

This research inquires into the changing role and the growing influence of corporations as collectors and modern patrons of contemporary art in Europe. When we think of art as a product of its social environment, we might consider only the artistic influences on the artist. The references or reactions of an artist to their peers, to previous artistic movements or the creation of new innovative ideas. However, the artistic environment is not the only social environment that affects an artist. The production and dissemination of art requires the interaction and cooperation of many different people, institutions, art schools, critics, dealers, collectors, patrons, other artists, and consultants. Part of this network are also corporations which have been, due to the ongoing cuts of government funding, increasingly present during recent decades as modern patrons and funders of art in Europe.

While often perceived as private collectors, corporate art collectors have taken a more public facing role in the art world. They are commissioning art, building high-profile art collections, sponsoring and collaborating with museums, and some corporations have even opened public museums of their own to show their collection. As producers, distributors and interpreters of art, corporations form a distinct and recognisable entity in the cultural life of contemporary society.

This thesis aims to contribute to the further development of knowledge about the impact of corporate power and money in the art world. Analysing qualitative and quantitative data, I have identified five major issues related to corporate intervention in the art world, which I will address. First, 'artwashing', a practice where corporations alter their controversial image by associating themselves with art. Second, the persistent gender imbalance and eurocentrism prevalent in corporate art collections. Third, the inequalities resulting from the focus and pooling of resources to a few western, male artists. Fourth, the utilisation of art for corporate branding and consumerism and fifth the exploitation of the power imbalance between corporations and artists leading to actively censoring and influencing artistic production.

Along with major issues I have identified benefits that corporate collectors provide, which I will also discuss. The engagement with art in an office setting is a powerful tool for social cohesion amongst employees and fosters understanding and tolerance between people. Moreover, corporate collections have significant exposure to their employees and can therefore reach individuals that would typically be less involved in the art world. Through their extensive

network in the artworld and their investment into living artists, corporate collectors can positively influence artists' careers. Underlying less regulations than the public museums, corporations can also react more quickly to the market, and offer new platforms and possibilities for artists.

This thesis presents the findings of a comprehensive statistical analysis of European corporate collections as well as a range of qualitative data obtained from ethnographic research, including in-depth interviews, case studies, text- and picture analyses which were gathered over twelve months between 2018 - 2019. Aside from discussing the issues and benefits of corporate collections laid out above, I am also offering original and new insights into the challenges and operations of corporate curating, the ties and networks of corporate collectors in the art world and artists' perspectives on corporate funding.

Researching art as a social product, I have positioned my research project on the intersection of art history and sociology, drawing on Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony and Bourdieu's notion of the field. This thesis provides a critical analysis of the power imbalances of the art market and highlights the ethical implications of the convergence of interests between the corporate world and the art world.

## 1.2. Rationale

To introduce the reader to the phenomenon of corporate collectors, I will start with a short case study. The Simmons & Simmons art collection is an illustrative example of the involvement of corporate collectors in the art world.

As is the case with many corporate collections, the Simmons & Simmons art collection was founded in the 1980s. Stuart Evans, who at the time was a lawyer and partner of the firm, brought up the idea of an art collection during a board meeting in 1989 while the company was in the process of moving offices. Subsequently, the law firm decided to collect contemporary art to support young artists early in their careers and provide a point of differentiation to the corporate collections in law firms, which during the 1980s mainly focused on 18th and 19th-century landscape paintings. Recounting the first few years after the collection's inception, Evans revealed in an interview published by the online magazine *Art Territory* in November 2019, that his acquisition strategy had proved successful despite working on a limited budget:

*"In 1997, Charles Saatchi had his YBA [Young British Artists] show, Sensation, at the Royal Academy; he showed forty-two artists. In 1997, twenty-seven of those artists were already in the Simmons & Simmons collection. We had early works by Tracey Emin, Angus Fairhurst,*

*Damien Hirst, Gary Hume, Michael Landy, Sarah Lucas, Chris Ofili, Wolfgang Tillmans, Mark Wallinger and Gillian Wearing, acquired during the 1990s on a budget of £25,000 pa. The firm still has those works, and I was very fortunate in that I developed relationships with the artists. Michael and Gillian are friends, and I've done various projects with Mark Wallinger."* (Daiga Rudzāte, 2019)

However, young contemporary artists were not always keen to be part of a corporate collection. As Evans explains, it sometimes took convincing to show artists the benefits of displaying their works in an office environment:

*"Interestingly, quite a lot of artists at that time weren't sure that they liked the idea of being involved with capitalism and commerce and joining City collections. But I would say to them: 'If someone goes to a gallery or a museum and sees your work, what would be a long time for them to look?' Well, two minutes would be a very long time. And I told them that we'd have their work in our conference rooms. The meetings go on for hours and hours, and the meetings are always partly boring. If your work is there, it will resonate in an entirely different way. People's consciousness will be invaded by your work."* (Daiga Rudzāte, 2019)

Evans went on to build a comprehensive art collection of over 450 pieces during the following three decades for Simmons & Simmons, carrying on his work as a curator after his retirement. Building himself a reputation as a successful art collector for his company later earned him a seat on the Tate acquisition committee, on which he served from 1997 – 2000. In 2001 Evans was part of the panel of judges for the Turner Prize, one of the best-known prizes for visual arts in the world – awarded in that year to Martin Creed, whose works at this point have been part of the Simmons & Simmons art collection for years (Daiga Rudzāte, 2019).

The example of Stuart Evans and the Simmons & Simmons corporate art collection confirms in many ways the stereotypes of corporate collectors known by the general public today: an art collection that was founded and shaped by a senior member of staff in a privileged position, to decorate the office walls. However, it also shows a few unexpected sides of corporate collecting: how the corporation dedicates the purpose of the collection to support young artists at the start of their careers, instead of maximising profits and collecting trophies; Evans was one of the first to buy the infamous Young British Artists even before their immense success. That Evans, as corporate curator, actively influenced and shaped public discourse through his positions at the Tate and on the Turner Prize panel is furthermore testament to how blurred the lines between the corporate world and the art world have become. This anecdote therefore raises several questions: what role exactly do corporations play in the art world and why? What

impact do they have on the public and their employees? Who are corporate art collections for? How do corporate curators choose which artists to support and in what ways do artists benefit from being part of a corporate collection?

Simmons & Simmons is not the only corporate collector to successfully integrate itself into the art world. Deutsche Bank famously owns the largest corporate art collection with over 55,000 works displayed in their offices across the world and in their private museum in Berlin. Luxury fashion retailers such as Prada and Luis Vuitton both founded company associated foundations to house and build their extensive contemporary art collections, providing the public with a cutting-edge exhibition programme every year. From energy suppliers such as E.ON, to insurance companies such as AXA and Hiscox, to financial service institutes like UBS and the ING Bank - corporate art collections are part of their company culture, firmly anchored in their identity as a corporation and present in the daily lives of their employees.

Companies and businesses have been positioning themselves as patrons of art throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The historical phenomenon of the expansion of corporate intervention into the art world especially characterised the 1980s. Only fifteen years later, half of the Fortune 500 companies were also collectors of art (Kottasz *et al.*, 2008, p. 235). The financial services industry evolved to be an influential and pioneering force driving this trend, but one can also find art collections in many other types of businesses, such as hotels, real estate companies, call centres and health trusts (Kottasz *et al.* 2008, p. 235). In fact, several companies with products and operation areas unrelated to art own some of the world's finest artworks. Two shifts in the involvement of corporations in the art market and their collection activities are noteworthy.

Firstly, corporate art collections have undergone extensive professionalisation in the past 30 years. Where previously paintings were purchased on an ad-hoc basis by a CEO, corporate collectors now employ highly experienced curators who conceptualise and develop the art collections to museum-level. Art in office spaces is part of thousands of employees' daily lives, and several corporate collectors have opened private museums to make their collection more accessible to the general public. There is no doubt that businesses' involvement today seems to be well advanced in every aspect of contemporary art – in its production, its dissemination and its reception. The investigation of how corporations collect art, social hierarchies within the organisational context and how their collection activities shape public debate will be the concern of this thesis.

Secondly, another factor has contributed to the further involvement of corporations in the art world, specifically in Europe. As pressure increases on public funding, corporations have

become an important source of income for artists and cultural institutions. Unlike the philanthropy model of the USA, this is a relatively new and ongoing development in Europe, where the governments have a long-standing tradition of supporting and funding the arts in various ways. Art patronage informs artistic practice and the new forms of art funding therefore inform how free, how cutting edge, and how diverse contemporary art in Europe will be. Researching the buying patterns and motivations of art collectors significantly contributes to the further understanding of existing racial and sexual bias in the art world. However, the impact of corporate collectors as players in the art market remains underestimated and ignored. To date, little attention in art market reports and research has been dedicated to corporate collectors, and debates around the topic in the popular press are often fuelled by prejudice and unfounded assumptions.

There are a few studies on the motivation behind corporate art collections, the size and type of collections, elaborate typologies of the collecting histories of companies, and the influence of displayed art on the attitude and performance of employees (Hoeken and Ruikes, 2005; Lindenberg and Oosterlinck, 2011; Smiraglia, 2014; Yoon and Shin, 2014). The findings of these studies imply that corporate art collections are a tool for marketing communication and are used to shape a company's external and internal identity and image. Additionally, Chin-tao Wu published a comparative study in 2003, where she describes and analyses the extent to which contemporary art has been subjected to the process of privatisation in Britain and America since the 1980s. She specifically focusses her study on the roles of governments; Reagan's and Thatcher's influence in shifting public policy.

Note that many of the studies mentioned above follow a strongly quantitative approach. However, a qualitative approach, which forms the basis for this research project, can also be a suitable way to study such complex topics that can often be hard to quantify. To date there are no studies dedicated to gathering data of female and minority artists in corporate collections or researching the reinforcement of hegemonic values through the visual culture that thousands of employees are exposed to every day. Additionally, there is also a distinct lack of artists' voices in conversations about the role of corporations in the art world. Most subjects for interviews and questionnaires are corporate curators or the management that is responsible for the corporate art collection, which results in a very one-sided view in the findings.

This study has topical relevance by contributing to further development of knowledge by presenting in-depth qualitative research on the active participation of corporations in the cultural field and the impact of corporate power and money. As such, as my original

contribution to knowledge, this research project aims to elucidate the corporate collector's role in the commercialisation and commodification of art as well as the dominant power relations in the art world that shape public discourse. Furthermore, while focusing part of my inquiry on corporate curators, I am paying equal attention to contemporary artists and their ideas and perceptions of art funding, artistic autonomy and market constraints. Outcomes of this dissertation are a comprehensive database with information about the scope, size and buying patterns of 88 corporate art collections in Europe, as well as a code of ethics for corporate art collectors derived from the discussions with corporate curators about their responsibilities and accountability in the art world combined with museum recommendations. The code of ethics aims to encourage corporate collectors to reflect on the ethical issues in current collection practice and acknowledge their own moral agency. The idea is that the issues around corporate collecting brought to light by this thesis can only be changed by engaging corporate collectors in current discourse about ethics and encouraging the sharing of best practice amongst corporate collectors. The suggested code of ethics has been submitted to the International Association of Corporate Collections of Contemporary Art (IACCCA) to be further developed by their 57 members.

While maintaining a critical stance towards corporate involvement in the art world throughout this dissertation, I also acknowledge the potential of corporate art collections. The relationship between art and business is not a new one and will continue for the foreseeable future. For many artists, corporate collectors are an important source of income, which means that their funds are also needed. Moreover, some employees may not have grown up having had access to cultural institutions and are receiving their first introduction to contemporary art through the art programme of the company they work for. It is a position of privilege to criticise corporate funding from the outside under the guise of research when there are artists and employees who benefit from corporate art collections. Instead of condemning the practice altogether, I aim in this dissertation for an honest review and analysis of corporate collecting in the hope of paving the way for an ethical, sustainable, and meaningful approach for corporations to collect art. The study thus concludes with a practical outcome; a concrete proposal for a code of ethics for corporate art collectors and their activities in the art world - a first step to engage corporate collectors into an ongoing discussion about ethics.

### 1.3. Thesis Overview

This thesis is structured into seven chapters, divided into four main parts. Along with this introduction (chapter I), the first part of this thesis comprises the literature review, theoretical

framework and methodology (chapter II). The second part, including chapters III and IV, is focussed on the *modus operandi* of corporate art collection and the relationship between art and business. In chapter III, I outlined the history of corporate art collecting, identifying the added value and function of art in corporations. Analysing qualitative and quantitative data about corporate collections in chapter IV offers new insights into structures and dynamics within companies collecting art. The third part of this dissertation is exploring the role and position of corporate collectors in the art world and their ties and relationships to artists and cultural institutions (chapters V and VI). Analysing in-depth interviews with various artists and art world professionals in chapter V offers a significant change of perspective before moving on to the network of activities of corporate intervention in the art world in chapter VI. The fourth part, chapter VII, concludes this thesis by summing up the findings and arguments of this study and proposing a code of ethics for corporate art collectors as one of the primary practice-oriented outcomes. The following paragraph will outline the next chapters in more depth.

Chapter II starts with the literature review of previous studies on corporate collections, where I discuss previous methodologies, concepts and gaps in current research about corporate collecting. Examining the notions of new art history and the sociology of art, I critique the current discourse of interdisciplinary research between sociology and art history. Developing my argument from this critique, I introduce the theoretical framework used in this study by examining Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony and Bourdieu's field theory, noting both the applicability and limitations of these theories. In addition, I discuss my methodology and how I approached my research and data collection, outlining the definitions and limitations needed to frame my research.

In chapter III, I begin with an historical analysis looking back at the history of corporate art collections and what the connection traditionally used to be between art and business. Then I analyse the value that art creates for corporations today and what function art fulfils in companies, drawing parallels with the historical analysis. In this chapter, I also look at the challenges and curatorial implications corporate curators often face and how they influence curatorial practice within corporations. In particular, I touch on the relationship between the corporate curator and the employees. Drawing on van Maanen's concepts of aesthetic communication, I explain why corporate collections benefit from not being purely decorative but often try to challenge and engage their viewers.

Corporate art collections have gone through a process of professionalisation since most of them were initially set up in the 1980s. In today's companies, the job of a corporate curator



comprises much more than overseeing and shaping the acquisition policy of the company's collection. A corporate curator is responsible for hanging, maintaining, and presenting the collection and communicating to stakeholders, employees, and the general public. In chapter IV, I take a close look at how corporations collect art today. Accompanying a quantitative analysis of over 80 corporate collections in Europe, this chapter provides a qualitative analysis of in-depth interviews with corporate curators from international companies with headquarters in the UK, Germany, Switzerland, and France. This chapter gives insights into organisational structures surrounding and shaping a corporate art collection, such as decision-making, acquisition- and deaccessioning procedures. We learn here about the buying patterns and biases of corporate curators and attempt to answer the questions: what is corporate art and who is a typical corporate artist?

In chapter V, I shift the focus from the corporate art collection and the artwork itself to the relationship between corporate collectors and artists. The relationship between a patron of the arts and an artist is traditionally more than just a singular monetary transaction through units sold. A patron can support an artist not only financially, but also through access and exposure and thus support an artist's development and career. I mainly focus in this chapter on in-depth interviews of early to mid-career artists and their experiences of working with corporate collectors. I have also included in the analysis statements of other art professionals such as art consultants, activists and academics as well as curators for public foundations and hospital charities to give more insights into a perspective from outside the corporation. We learn in this chapter about the two sides of the relationship between artists and corporate collectors: one where corporations positively support artists' careers and are often preferred to government funders, and the other side where artists speak about compromising their artistic freedom and experiences of censorship within the corporate context.

In chapter VI, I investigate the position that corporate collectors have in Bourdieu's concept of the cultural field. In comparison to the art market, which revolves around transactions, the cultural field is a much broader concept. While the art market refers to the people who buy and sell works - that is dealers, collectors and auction houses - Bourdieu's cultural field is a social sphere that includes critics, curators, teachers and artists themselves, who are not regularly involved in the commercial activities of the art market. By analysing three case studies of corporate collectors (Deutsche Bank, Hiscox and Soho House), I demonstrate how the corporation's approach to collecting art leads to different positions in the art world. To undertake a field analysis, I am discussing the case studies in terms of their founding and history, their art collection and their other extended activities in the art world. Grenfell and

Hardy developed method in their 2007 publication *Art Rules, Pierre Bourdieu and the Visual Arts* a visualisation method based on Bourdieu's field analysis to show the field of art in relation to other fields. The method of visualisation for the field analysis used in this chapter is based on Grenfell and Hardy's methodology.

In chapter VII, the conclusion, I summarise the arguments and findings presented in this study and evaluate the application of the theoretical framework throughout the analysis. Drawing on the outcomes of this research project and discussions with corporate curators, I further derive the key principles for a code of ethics for corporate art collectors. The practical outcome of this study is an original contribution to help create a systematic support system for artists and for holding corporate collectors, as powerful players in the art world, accountable. Finally, I highlight some areas for future research that could further build upon and test this study's findings about corporate collections.

## 2. Chapter II – Researching Corporate Collections

### 2.1. Introduction

The relationship between an artist and their patron is a significant part of art history research, but it is also relevant in other disciplines. The connection between art and business has been addressed in several marketing studies, and the impact of different social environments on artists' practice has been the topic in several sociological research projects. Corporate art collections as a phenomenon have gained increasing interest in the relevant literature since the 1980s. This chapter lays out three foundational aspects of this research project: the literature review, the theoretical framework and the methodology. The aim is to provide relevant background information for the analysis and interpretation of the findings and touch on the reasons why taking an interdisciplinary approach to this study is essential.

In the first part of this chapter, I introduce previous research on corporate patronage, the commercialisation of art and corporate branding and consumerism and position this study within the relevant literature. Drawing on the most important empirical studies of this subject, I summarise the researchers' approach and subsequent findings relevant to this dissertation. I also point out gaps in researching corporate collections and explain where my research fits into the broader discourse.

The second part of this chapter is the introduction to the theoretical framework of this dissertation. Discussing the connection between art history and sociology, I mainly focus on two research movements - 'the new art history' and 'the sociology of art', which are particularly

relevant to this study. I will furthermore elaborate on the two leading theories used - Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony and Bourdieu's notion of the field - to provide the theoretical context for this thesis, summarising the applicability as well as the limitations of Gramsci's and Bourdieu's theories in the 'conclusions' part of this section.

Lastly, I will give an overview of what data was used and how I approached collecting and analysing the qualitative and quantitative data for this study, considering several ethical implications. I will also address limitations in part 2.4.3 and provide relevant definitions in order to be specific on the scope of this research project.

## 2.2. Literature Review

The phenomenon of corporate art collections first sparked interest in academic research shortly after the 1980s when corporations increasingly started to buy art. In 1990, Martorella published a comprehensive study about corporate art in the USA that is seen today as pioneering in its field. As a sociologist, Martorella set out to analyse organisational structures, the role of art within organisations, and its effect on human behaviour. The study comprises qualitative research mainly conducted between 1987-1988 and quantitative data from 234 corporate art collections in the United States (Martorella, 1990, p. 31). In her findings she draws out a couple of tangible benefits of corporate art collections. Firstly, she explained that corporate collections contribute to the decentralisation of the American art market through preferring to buy locally. Secondly, her research is one of the first studies linking the benefits of corporate art collections to marketing concepts like corporate image and public relations, known to drive competitive advantages on the market (Martorella, 1990, pp. 178–179). Since then, several other studies in relevant literature have been dedicated to evidencing the economic advantages of corporate art collecting focusing on case studies in the USA and Europe, mainly linking them to three marketing concepts: corporate identity, corporate social responsibility, and corporate culture (Hoeken and Ruikes, 2005; Kottasz *et al.*, 2008; Kottasz *et al.*, 2000; Lindenberg and Oosterlinck, 2011). Yoon and Shin (2014), more recently, provided further empirical evidence indicating that corporations use art collections to respond to social pressures and communication needs. It is this link between economic benefit and art that provides a more nuanced understanding of curatorial decision making addressed in this thesis.

I found Hoeken and Ruikes' (2005) study on the link of art and corporate identity specifically useful. In their paper, 46 participants evaluated eight works of art with reference to four different corporate identities of existing companies. The results of this study not only showed that works of art can align with their identities significantly, but also that participants are able to

relate works of art to a specific corporate identity. Hoeken and Ruikes conclude: "*Therefore works of art can function as symbols of the company's personality*" (Hoeken and Ruikes, 2005, pp. 243–244). Building on these findings my thesis is investigating these branding strategies and which artworks and artists corporations preferably use to convey their 'personality'. Furthermore, it is this knowledge that is needed to understand why 'artwashing', as a practice where corporations actively alter their controversial image by associating themselves with art, works.

All of these exploratory studies also provided useful signposts to corporate art collectors' practises through the years, occasionally describing acquisition policies, employee attitudes and managerial objectives connected to the collections. Often dealing with a lack of historical data from the corporations themselves, these documentations of collection practises proved extremely useful to track the progressing professionalisation and changes in corporate collecting.

Other publications which offered a wealth of information about size, focus, history and collection policy of various European corporate collections were Appleyard and Salzmann's typology *Corporate Art Collections: A handbook to corporate buying* (2012), Goodrow and Conzen's *Global Corporate Collections* (2015), and more recently *The International Directory of Corporate Art Collections* (2017) by Shirley Reiff Howarth and *Corporate Art Collections in the Netherlands* (2017) by Barendregt *et al.*. These publications formed the basis of the dataset of corporate art collections used for quantitative analysis in this study<sup>1</sup> and furthermore complemented the qualitative data gathered for this thesis with even more quotes, insights and information about corporate art collecting. As I often struggled with access to source this information from corporate collectors directly, I am greatly indebted to these publications. However, reviewing these studies also highlighted the lack of data about female and minority artist representation in corporate collections. I noticed that statistical analysis of corporate art collections often considers aspects such as number of artworks within a collection or age of the art collection rather than looking at gender or racial bias within the collections. My study is therefore aiming to further fill these gaps in knowledge. As Reilly and Lippard conclude in the final chapter of their book *Curatorial Activism* (2015) "*Counting, after all, is a feminist strategy*". Reilly and Lippard's writings on counter-hegemonic curatorial initiatives and feminist theory furthermore offered a wealth of information about gender inequalities and eurocentrism in the

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<sup>1</sup> Find more information about the quantitative data collection in chapter 2.4.2.

art world, many of which I was able to identify and relate to curatorial practices of corporate art collectors in chapter IV.<sup>2</sup>

Related to the changing role and growing influence of corporations as funders of the arts are several studies examining capitalist influences in the art world. These studies often do not focus on corporate art collectors specifically but nevertheless provide valuable insights into the dynamics of the art world and the shift towards privatisation and commercialisation of cultural institutions in the past decades. Rosalind Krauss published the landmark text *The Cultural Logic of the Capitalist Museum* (1990) at the beginning of the 90s identifying a profound shift in the identity of US museums due to an increasingly corporate nature in which they operate. Analysing case studies of capitalist museums such as the Guggenheim she criticises the blurred lines between the museum and the commercial world. During the analysis of corporate partnerships with the public museum sector, I found that since the publishing of Krauss' essay the corporate model of museum practises has been widely adapted in European institutions as well, and corporate art collectors have been a part of it as exemplified in the opening of the Deutsche Bank-Guggenheim Museum in Berlin.

The commercialisation of European and American galleries has also been picked up by Chin-tao Wu's seminal work *Privatising Culture: Corporate Art Intervention since the 1980s* (2003). Wu specifically focussed her study on the roles of Reagan's and Thatcher's influence in shifting public policy and the subsequent rise of corporate sponsorship of culture. She further stressed in her findings the increasingly hegemonic position that corporations occupy in the public culture of Britain and America and just like Krauss highlights the convergence of interests between the corporate sector and the art world (Wu, 2010, p. 345). Both of these studies were fundamental in contextualising corporate intervention into the wider art world and understanding the implications of commercial interests subverting the public art world.

The complexities around corporations with their underlying commercial interests as modern patrons of the arts is furthermore addressed in Sharon Zukin's essay *Art in the Arms of Power* (1982). Zukin analysed the social history of art patronage during the 60s and 70s in America giving several examples where a shift in dynamics between art patron and artist has led to motivations of patronage becoming tainted by "*fundamental motifs of privilege and power.*" (p. 446) In her essay she describes how in the 1950s, due to increased media presence, artists started to be regarded as social assets and therefore sparked the interest of business investors

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<sup>2</sup> Read more in chapter 4.3.1.

and politicians who saw the arts as a way of re-establishing cultural and political hegemony. In the conclusions of her paper Zukin summarised:

*“In the past hundred years patronage of the arts has become a collective investment for both the public and the private sector. As an investment, patronage contains definite, though frequently submerged, ideas about expected returns. The combination of political and economic calculations in these expectations has led, on the one hand, to a valorisation of art and through art and, on the other hand, to a blurring of the distinction between free expression and social control.”* (Zukin, 1982, p. 447)

Zukin’s analysis was a useful resource for me to further understand the underlying dynamics of the artist-patron relationship and associated issues such as censorship and the corruption of artistic autonomy addressed in chapter V. Furthermore, intriguing was the idea of not just the commercialisation of art as a product but of the artist themselves, who Zukin described as a ‘social asset’. Don Thompson’s ideas about branded artists overlap with this concept. In his publication *The \$12 Million Stuffed Shark* (2012) Thompson describes how certain artists achieve premium prices with their contemporary art through their own brand as an artist. “Branding”, he wrote, “adds personality, distinctiveness and value to a product or service. It also offers risk avoidance and trust.” (Thompson, 2012, p. 12). By buying a work of art by a branded artist, buyers are acquiring social status, validation, and social acceptance (Thompson, 2012, p. 17). Three out of the twenty-five major branded contemporary artists listed in Thompson’s book are also under the six most popular artists in corporate collections discussed in chapter IV of this thesis<sup>3</sup>. Thompson also suggests that in turn the purchases of ‘branded’ art collectors can create an instant reputation for an artist (Thompson 2010, p.93). As my thesis demonstrates this is also true for corporate art collectors who can positively impact an artist’s reputation and career<sup>4</sup>.

In the next part of this chapter, I will continue the review of relevant literature with a specific focus on the theoretical framework underlying this study. Several landmark texts were helpful in further understanding the intersection of art historical and sociological research. Furthermore, Gramsci’s writings about cultural hegemony and Bourdieu’s field theory will be examined in the second part of this chapter, noting both the applicability and limitations of these theories when framing the findings of this study.

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<sup>3</sup> Read more in chapter 4.2.3.

<sup>4</sup> Read more in chapter 5.4.

### 2.3. The Theoretical Framework

Researching the involvement of corporations in different aspects of the art world and investigating in what way corporate collectors are able to contribute to and shape the art world, shifts the focus of interest from the artwork itself to the socio-economic relationships needed to create works of art (La Fuente, 2016, p. 412).

Since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, several studies within art history have described and analysed the social-historical aspects that influence individual artists and the development of particular styles under the name 'new art history'. The new art history, as Rees and Borzello explain in their 1992 publication, "*sums up the impact of feminist, Marxist, structuralist, psychoanalytic and social-political ideas on a discipline notorious for its conservative taste in art and its orthodoxy in research*" and is often seen in opposition to more traditional approaches to art history which are about "*style, attributions, dating, authenticity, rarity, reconstruction, the detection of forgery, the rediscovery of forgotten artists and the meanings of pictures*" (Rees and Borzello, 1992, p. 2). Since then, several art historians have used critical theory for the study of art objects that intersect with sociological theoretical frameworks.

Arnold Hauser and T.J. Clark are some of the pioneers using Marxist theories to draw on the relationship between art, class struggle and general power structures in society. First published in 1951, Arnold Hauser's book *The Social History of Art* explores the development of art over the centuries, identifying particular styles, such as realism or naturalism, and relating them to social ideologies and the social context of production at the time (Hauser, 1999). A similar approach is taken by the British art historian T.J. Clark in his 1973 publications *The Absolute Bourgeois: Artists and Politics in France 1848-1851* and *The image of the People: Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution*, discussing the case studies of a small number of French artists and how social and political conditions of the time influenced their artistic expression (Clark, 1999b, 1999a). Both authors demonstrate how art can only really be understood in the context of historical events and how it is, therefore, an active element in and of social change (Harris, 2001, p. 73).

In 1963 Francis Haskell published his book *Patrons and Painters*, one of the first studies focussing specifically on the symbiotic relationships between patrons and artists, offering a new perspective of Italian art in the age of Baroque (Haskell, 1980). And a few decades later Michael Baxandall published *Patterns of Intention* where he analysed the artworks of renowned artists like Picasso, Chardin, and Piero Della Francesca, with an understanding of the historical and cultural circumstances of the time the artists lived in (Baxandall, 1986). The book *Painting*,

*Power and Patronage* by Brams Kempers and Beverly Jackson, first published in Holland in 1987 and translated into English in 1992, takes a similar approach. Kempers and Jackson traced the history and influence of patronage in Renaissance Italy using sociological concepts to analyse the relationships and processes around the production of art in quattrocento Italy. Commenting about the, then still underdeveloped discipline 'sociology of art', Kempers notes in the introduction of his book that: *"It is striking how little attention sociologists have paid to art. It is as if they, too, have thought artists immune to the forces operating in society."* (Kempers and Jackson, 1992, p. 6)

In the light of developments of the feminist movements in the 1960s and 1970s, a feminist enquiry into art history was introduced by Linda Nochlin. In 1971 she published the article *Why are there no great women artists?*, applying a critical feminist framework to show the systemic inequalities between male and female artists and the restrictions female artists have faced throughout history. Criticising the institutional preconditions for achievements in the arts, she concludes in her essay that *"it was indeed institutionally impossible for women to achieve excellence or success on the same footing as men, no matter what their talent, or genius."* (Nochlin, 1971, p. 36). In 1985 an anonymous collective of American artists called Guerrilla Girls started a poster campaign highlighting sexual and racial discrimination in the art world. Their 1989 poster entitled *Do women have to be naked to get into the Met. Museum?* was a commentary addressing the systemic biases against women in major museums and art galleries. The slogan on the poster is accompanied by the picture of an Ingres nude wearing a gorilla mask and states that *"less than 5% of the artists in the Modern Art Sections are women, but 85% of the nudes are female"*, thus stressing the exploitation of female bodies by male artists and the simultaneous exclusion of works by female artists in museums. Feminist art history, just like the Marxist movements of the 'new art history', has its roots in social-political enquiries into art history practice.

The concept of art as a social product also sparks interest outside art history research, in the field of sociology - forming the new subcategory of 'sociology of art'. Similar to the 'new art history', researchers approach the art world by focusing primarily upon contextual factors, instead of the artworks themselves.

Howard Becker's *Art Worlds* (2011) is one of the foundational texts dedicated to the social scientific study of the arts. Becker discusses the social factors involved in creating art, highlighting the need to understand the links between producers, patrons, and audiences. Becker introduces his interactional approach as a framework where he understands the art



world as cooperative activities and links between participants. This implies that the status of artworks depends on a consensus among participants. Becker's theory shows that art is social in the sense that it is created by networks of people acting together, and proposes a framework in which different modes of collective action, mediated by accepted or newly developed conventions, can be studied (Becker, 2011). However, Becker barely discusses the role of institutions and how they can influence or even dominate participants' behaviour, and instead focuses on the participants and how they are responsible for their interactivity. Moreover, his approach is often criticized as being solely descriptive and lacking the development of objective relations and concepts to describe the general workings of the art world (van Maanen, 2009, p. 53).

Perhaps the most important and elaborate conceptualisation of the art world in the twentieth century is that provided by Pierre Bourdieu. Starting his career with the study of the connection between education and class distinction, Bourdieu later develops several studies on the function of social spaces, which he conceptualises in the notion of the field. Contrary to Becker, Bourdieu focuses his research on finding general patterns, laws and mechanisms to develop a theoretical construct of the field as a social space. He dedicates a substantial portion of his research papers specifically to the study of the dynamics and structure of the cultural field and its relation to other fields, mainly summarised in his landmark publication *The Rules of Art. Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*. (Bourdieu, 1996). Turning his attention from consumption to creation of art, Bourdieu draws upon the history of literature and art from the mid-nineteenth century to the present to develop an original theory of art conceived as an autonomous value. In *The Rules of Art*, Bourdieu argues the interconnection between art and the structures of social relations within which it is produced and received, introducing his main concepts of capital, field and habitus - the tools to understand the changes in social structure inside and outside of the artistic field. The overarching themes in Bourdieu's research are the reproduction of social distinction and its patterns of domination. In *The Rules of Art*, Bourdieu offers a considerably more complex and nuanced account of status than that which is implied in his earlier work *Distinction* (1987), which is therefore particularly useful in bringing out the relevance of his work for this thesis. In many respects, Bourdieu's field theory supports the conceptualisation of status as complex, multi-layered, dynamic and context specific. His idea of interlocked fields subverted by meta-hegemonic forces, and structured by different status hierarchies, rules and resources may help to explain the contradictory and complex dynamics which are so evident in the discourse of corporate art collections.

There is another landmark text by Bourdieu that is relevant to this study titled *Manet: A symbolic revolution* (2018). In his last publication, Bourdieu sets himself the task of analysing the changes that were happening in modern painting in France towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Bourdieu, 2018, p. 45). By applying his own field theory Bourdieu provided a structural analysis of Manet's practice at the time and the impact he had on the constitution of the artistic field, a key moment in the emergence of an autonomous field of artistic production. Bourdieu argues that before Manet, the state imposed its own artistic visions through a system of state-controlled art schools, competitions and prizes. Artistic success was governed by the artists' conformity to the state's system of consecration and rejection. Manet was the first to challenge and reject this system and the imposed artistic style. According to Bourdieu, Manet and every artist after him was now no longer exclusively tied to the established channels of state sponsorship, rather they asserted their own individuality and therefore reconfigured the cultural capital in the field itself; this is what Bourdieu described as the 'symbolic revolution' which led to the emergence of an autonomous field of artistic production. The new individualism of the artists matched the attitudes of a new emerging middle class in society. On the one hand the reconfiguration of the field of artistic production was therefore achieved by the artists' initiative (or in Bourdieu's words "revolution") but on the other hand stabilised through corresponding changes in the field of artistic consumption. Taking Manet's work and career as an example, Bourdieu argued that artistic production can only be understood within the structures of society. He explained that *"the subject of a work is a complex relationship between a socially constructed habitus and a historically constructed field"* and that *"it is in the relationship between this habitus and this field"* where a *"new manner of painting, is invented."* (Bourdieu, 2018, p. 61). It is Bourdieu's approach of analysing culture and agency without ever losing sight of the institutional contexts in which art is socially produced and consumed, that will be deployed in the following analysis of corporate intervention in the art world.

Another important aspect from Bourdieu's *Manet: A symbolic revolution*, is his view on the notion of intention. In his book he described how critics of Manet's time credited Manet with intentions of *"subversion, provocation or incompetence."* (Bourdieu, 2018, p. 45). However, Bourdieu's philosophy is one of disposition centred around the structural conditions of artistic creation. *"Every stroke"* he wrote *"is both free and structured"*, arguing that *"social agents are not entirely aware of what they are doing, that what they do has more significance than they realize. This is true for ordinary men, for every one of us."* (Bourdieu, 2018, p. 55). Bourdieu takes away the focus from individual agents' 'intentionality' and instead concentrates on the conditioning factors, the evolving dynamics of the artistic field. In this thesis I have appropriated

Bourdieu's philosophy of disposition to shift the focus from presumed corporate or curatorial intention to the reality of structural conditions of the artistic field.

In *The Field of Cultural Production* (1993) Bourdieu coins the term 'symbolic power' to explain how the dominant groups in society maintain their power and protect their interests through the use of cultural institutions. Symbolic power is a mode of unconscious domination which describes the process of cultural perspectives becoming skewed to favour the dominant groups of society consequently contributing to the shaping of public ideologies (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 121). These elements of Bourdieu's theory closely link with Antonio Gramsci's concept of 'cultural hegemony'. Gramsci's research about class and culture became particularly popular in Europe during the 1960s and 1970s, just when Bourdieu was working on his first publications. Both Bourdieu's and Gramsci's ideas focus on the way dominant groups in society use cultural institutions to empower certain cultural values, beliefs and practices to the submersion and exclusion of others and through this process inform notions of common sense. Gramsci's work is particularly applicable to this thesis because of the central role which he allocates to culture in the establishment, maintenance and challenging of status hierarchies. His conceptualisation of hegemony can help to understand how certain art forms, genres and aesthetic ideals come to be associated with higher status groups in society. I am therefore using his work to explore the ideological aspects around corporate curation shaping corporate art collections. Both, Bourdieu's and Gramsci's theories form an important theoretical connection between culture, institutional power and capitalism and are therefore essential in understanding a corporation's power and impact in the art world.

In this thesis, I will follow a sociological approach to analyse the corporation's role in the social environment and network of the art world. In the next sections, I will summarise Gramsci and Bourdieu's critical theories in more detail and introduce their theoretical concepts, which provide the basis for the subsequent data analysis and interpretation of the findings and help analyse the role that corporate art collectors play within the art world.

### 2.3.1. Gramsci's Concept of Cultural Hegemony

The relationship between culture and institutional power under capitalism can be understood by means of Antonio Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony. Gramsci was a Marxist and philosopher of the early 20th-century carrying out research in political theory, sociology and linguistics. Cultural hegemony is a theoretical framework that demonstrates how culture in a society undermines and reinforces existing social structures and how cultural institutions can

therefore be used as a tool by the ruling class and the state to maintain power and propagate their own values to the working class (Gramsci, 2005a). Gramsci refers in his publications to Karl Marx's definition of the bourgeoisie as the ruling class and the proletariat as the working class. According to Marx's *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, the bourgeoisie are the "*industrial millionaires, the leaders of the whole industrial armies*" (Marx, 2013, p. 15) and the proletariat is defined as the "*modern working class, a class of labourers, who live only so long as they find work*" (Marx, 2013, p. 18). While years have passed since Marx wrote his manifesto, his ideas about a two-tier society can still be applied today. In the capitalist society of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, one can still see the accumulation of wealth within a smaller upper class, characterised by inherited wealth and elite education and their exploitation of the working class who lack the ownership of property and economic power.

A common phenomenon in a capitalist society is that it functions disproportionately in favour of the members of the dominant class at the expense of the subordinate class. But how and why do the masses acquiesce in a social system that does not benefit them? To explain the concept of cultural hegemony is to answer the question "*Who has power in a society?*". According to Gramsci, the 'who' is everybody who is involved in shaping the values and norms in society (Lears, 1985, p. 572). This includes experts of all kinds such as teachers, professors, politicians, celebrities and CEOs - the dominant social class. According to Gramsci, 'power' includes cultural, economic and political power and is the ability to dictate cultural norms and define the boundaries of what is perceived as common-sense reality within a society. By influencing cultural norms and reality, instead of asserting dominance through open oppression and violence, the dominant class can shape society, serving their own interests without openly addressing the struggle between oppressor and oppressed. The 'ruling' class within a democracy, therefore, does not rule by directly governing anymore, but rather by virtue of controlling ideologies through their economic influence. For the masses, the system they live in is just the way the world runs, it is perceived as what reality is and cannot be changed. They mistake the reality of their culture with the reality of the universe (Gramsci, 2005a).

Furthermore, Gramsci says that by assimilating to the dominant culture, the masses unconsciously legitimise their domination and help to maintain this kind of social order. This does not mean that there cannot be any form of resistance or the existence of counter cultures within a society. However, cultural hegemony works through legitimisation which means that the ideas, values and experiences of the dominant group are validated and reaffirmed in public discourse. In contrast, the ones that fall outside of these boundaries are publicly rejected by

being ignored or labelled as 'tasteless' or 'irresponsible'. Cultural hegemony is, according to Gramsci, reinforced by taking control of the intellectuals of society and the education within a society (Lears, 1985, p. 577).

Gramsci divides intellectuals into two main categories: organic intellectuals and traditional intellectuals. Traditional intellectuals have no class bias and are not linked to the economic structure while organic intellectuals are connected and biased by a class. If the organic intellectuals are part of the dominant class, they reinforce hegemonic culture by legitimising the dominant values and ideologies. The subordinate class can produce their own intellectuals as well, which will question the norms of the hegemonic culture and drive social change in the public discourse (Gramsci, 2005b, p. 135).

Intellectuals spread the dominant values and ideologies to the masses through social institutions; schools, universities, churches, but also through the media, through museums and exhibitions. Therefore, the people who control these institutions control society (Kaygusuz-Schurmann, 2018, p. 53). The importance of cultural institutions in contemporary society for Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony is critical: cultural institutions have the power of representation by shaping self and group identities, and by distinguishing different conceptions of community and belonging. Museums have been criticised in the relevant literature as hegemonic devices for cultural elites and the upper class (Durrans, 1994). Any exhibition, museum and collection bears the notion of selecting what is relevant to show to the public and rejecting what is not. What visitors see in a prestigious art collection or a museum is what is taken as art worth showing. Moreover, the artists that these cultural institutions select to represent are perceived as the ones whose stories are worth telling.

### 2.3.2. Bourdieu's Field Theory

Gramsci's cultural hegemony resonates closely with Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of 'symbolic capital' and 'habitus'. Though Bourdieu does not directly use Gramsci's terminology, the concepts of hegemony and class struggle for power within society are part of his field theory as well (Schaffer, 1995, p. 36). Bourdieu started his career in sociology, researching how educational systems reproduce class distinctions; his later developed notion of 'field' forms an essential theoretical basis for sociologists looking to account for the complex interrelations between industry, institution and practice. The field theory explains a theoretical construct of concepts through which the working of a field can be analysed. Bourdieu's framework tries to discover general structures, laws and mechanisms in that set field (van Maanen, 2009, p. 53).

Unlike other sociologists before him, Bourdieu moves from abstract concepts of structure and agency to the level of action<sup>5</sup>.

Bourdieu defines the field as social spaces in which agents compete for power and influence using their economic and symbolic capital. Agents can be individuals, groups or institutions and operate as producers, consecrators of value or mediators (Bourdieu, 1983, p. 312). The third central concept to this framework is the habitus. Bourdieu describes habitus as an agent's attitude that is shaped and conditioned by the agent's experiences and a set of social dispositions. Habitus governs the agent's practices, beliefs, tendencies, appreciations, and perceptions, and through that, the embodied indicator of an agent's position in society. The habitus is acquired through the reality in which an individual is socialised, similar to what Gramsci described when speaking about the different realities and opportunities perceived by people in different classes. An agent's habitus structures their assumptions, behaviours and lifestyle, and is, by informing future decisions with past experiences, in its nature resilient. Nevertheless, it is a dynamic concept that can shift over time as the result of new experiences (Dawson, 2014, p. 985). Bourdieu also points out that agents in similar social positions have a similar habitus due to them having very likely similar past experiences in their lives, which is described as 'class habitus'. The concept of 'class habitus' again links with Gramsci's theory of hegemony, where he groups society into different classes with shared ideas, values and experiences (Gramsci, 2005a).

Agents take a specific position in a field based on their habitus. The hierarchy between the positions stems from the way different forms of capital have been distributed among the positions in a field and the agents struggle to win more of this capital (Bourdieu, 1983, p. 312). The different forms of capital govern recognition, prestige and success according to the logic of the field (van Maanen, 2009, p. 57). In his publication *Forms of Capital* (1986) Bourdieu defines capital as "...accumulated labour (in its materialised form or its "incorporated," embodied form) which, when appropriated on a private, i.e., exclusive, basis by agents or groups of agents, enables them to appropriate social energy in the form of reified or living labour." (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 15)

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<sup>5</sup> However, both points Bourdieu's structuralism and lack of agency are also grounds for frequent critique of Bourdieu's field theory. I will discuss these arguments in more detail in the conclusion section of this chapter.

Bourdieu divides the term 'capital' into three forms: economic capital, cultural capital, and social capital. Economic capital is typically understood as economic resources (assets, property or monetary) that can be immediately converted into money and easily transferred in ownership (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 16). Social and cultural capital are symbolic capital, which means that they are considered symbolically as an object of knowledge but not obviously recognised as capital (van Maanen, 2009, p. 150).

Cultural capital refers to an agent's education and knowledge that can be of advantage in the social field. Cultural capital comes in three forms: embodied, objectified, and institutionalised. Embodied cultural capital is the knowledge passively and actively learned over time; it is hardly transferrable and is needed to appropriate or use objectified cultural capital. Objectified cultural capital is defined as a person's property that symbolically conveys the possession of cultural capital by ownership. This can typically be artworks, books, or musical instruments. The transfer of these objects is in theory possible, but possession is not enough, embodied cultural capital is needed to use these objects. To use a musical instrument, the learned skill of playing that instrument is needed, or otherwise, the instrument loses its value as cultural capital. Artworks are a classic example for objectified cultural capital and have great symbolic value in Western cultures. The specialised knowledge that is needed to appreciate art is capable of generating a reputation by communicating a social distinction and is generally a prominent feature of the elite class. The final form of how cultural capital can occur is in the institutionalised form. Institutionalised cultural capital describes an institution's formal recognition of a person's cultural capital. This could be an academic degree that confirms a person's knowledge through a certificate, or in the art world, a prize given out by a recognised institution (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 21). According to Bourdieu, cultural capital is critical in the struggle for prestige and social distinction, but social capital plays a mediating role.

Social capital describes the power that comes with being part of a social network. It refers to the accumulated resources an agent gains access to by being linked to and recognised by a social group consisting of other agents and institutions. The accrued benefits, gained from being part of a specific network, generate solidarity and a shared sense of identity between its members which makes these cohesive groups so powerful. Building a network or getting into a group often comes with several hurdles and demands a certain degree of investment. This could be a monetary investment for a club membership or relationship building through the exchange of gifts and taking part in events that reinforce the boundaries of the network and the exclusivity of these groups (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 21).

According to Bourdieu, the struggle for dominance between the positions is one crucial factor that governs the dynamics of a field. However, no field is entirely autonomous of its environment and can therefore be influenced by other fields. The other factor that governs the dynamics of a field is thus its relationship to other fields, particularly the field of power and the broader field of society (van Maanen, 2009). The field of economics and politics combined constitute the field of power, together they directly affect every other sub-field. Politics, for example, decides government budgets and investments in other subfields. A financial crash can influence these budgets and the value of capital in other fields. The broader field of society includes the different social classes and their relationship to each other and is therefore also referred to as the field of class relations.

### 2.3.3. The Dynamics of the Field of Cultural Production

In his 1983 essay, Bourdieu produced a detailed analysis of the field of cultural production, where he explains that this field is embedded within the field of power which is, for its part, within the field of class relations. Bourdieu speaks about a double hierarchy within the field of cultural production due to it being part of the dominant section of society (the field of class relations), but at the same time being within the field of power, by which it is dominated (Bourdieu, 1983, p. 312). The field of power generates within the field of cultural production two opposing poles - an autonomous pole and a heteronomous pole, describing the relative degree of external versus internal influence on the structure of the field. The hierarchy within the field is expressed by the degree of consecration, also described as artistic prestige or recognition, expressed in the cultural capital of positions in the field (Bourdieu, 1983, p. 320).

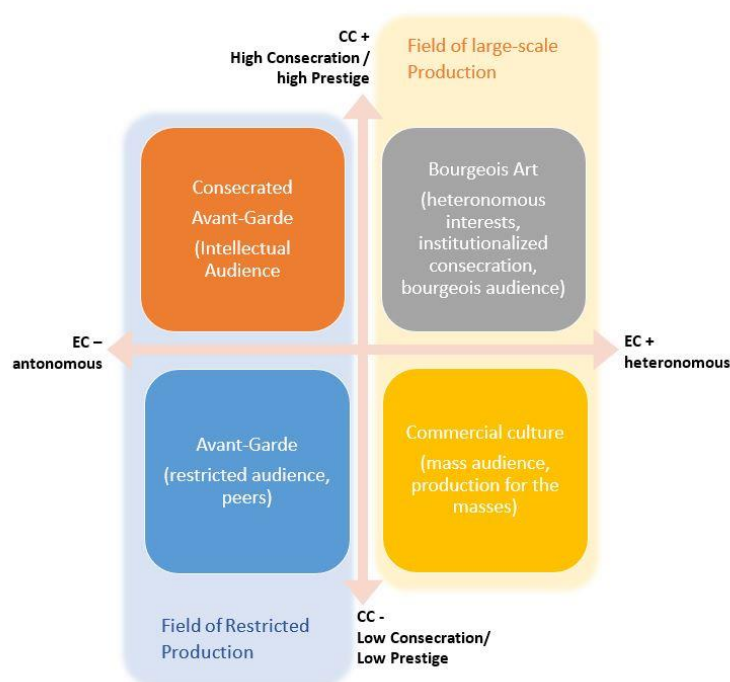


Figure 1: Bourdieu's Field of Cultural Production



Both hierarchies are interwoven and can be conceptualised on two different planes: a horizontal and a vertical one (van Maanen, 2009, p. 65). A lack of economic capital and a presence of cultural capital corresponds, according to Bourdieu, in the field of cultural production with a high degree of autonomy; it is art produced independent from the economy for a restricted audience of other producers and peers (art for artists), e.g. avant-garde art (Bourdieu, 1983, p. 321). On the other extreme, a lack of cultural capital and a presence of economic capital is coherent with a high degree of heteronomous influences. This includes, for example, art produced which is favourable to those who dominate the field politically and economically (e.g. bourgeois art) and large-scale mass productions (Hilgers and Mangez, 2014, p. 10).

Figure 1 is a simplified summary of Bourdieu's concept of the field of cultural production and the two hierarchical planes structuring the field. The field can be divided into two sub-fields: the field of restricted production and the field of large-scale production. Agents positioned in the lower left side of the diagram neither have the cultural nor the economic capital yet. These are, for example, emerging avant-garde artists, producing art for their peers and only reaching a very small, restricted audience or no audience at all. To gain cultural capital and move into the section above, to the licensed avant-garde, they are relying on being consecrated and recognised in their field. Both are in the sub-field of restricted production, which means that agents produce for a restricted audience and are mainly oriented towards gaining cultural capital. The other side of the field shows the oppositions of high art being consumed as a product of class distinction and mass culture produced for mass consumption. Both are within the sub-field of large-scale production aimed at producing for a broader audience and accumulating economic capital. To understand the field of cultural production as a site of competition, one has to fully comprehend the process of cultural consecration and the power to grant it.

#### 2.3.4. The Hierarchy of Consecration

As was discussed earlier, Bourdieu uses the term 'consecration' to describe the process of granting or gaining recognition, legitimacy, and artistic prestige in the field of cultural production. As art is a symbolic good, its value cannot just be measured by the addition of the economic value of its components. It gains its value by being recognised as a work of art. In other words: *"The work of art is an object which exists as such only by virtue of the (collective) belief which knows and acknowledges it as a work of art"* (Bourdieu, 1983, p. 317). The consecration by other agents and institutions is therefore crucial to first define what is

recognised as art and what is not, and secondly to determine an agents' position in the field of cultural production.

However, the agents and institutions themselves possess a varying degree of authority to consecrate, which depends again on their own recognition in the field. These different degrees of authority to consecrate produce a hierarchy of consecration within the field. The ability to impose judgments of legitimacy or the power to grant consecration in the cultural field allows agents to reproduce their own position and legitimacy.

There are two categories of institutions that grant consecration in the cultural field: institutions which conserve symbolic goods, as for instance a museum or a collection, and institutions which reproduce agents conforming to the institution's values, as for example the educational system (Bourdieu and Bourdieu, 1993, p. 12). Other organisations who grant consecration do not have to be fully institutionalised such as art magazines, art critics, podcasts, blogs, literary circles and galleries. Museums and collections decide what art is worth being conserved, and the educational system decides what art is studied within the education of new artists and art historians, reinforcing their ideas and values within the curriculum. This is where one can understand the influence of the field of power and the field of class relations on the field of cultural production. If the very definitions of *"what is art"* and *"who is an artist"* depend on the consecration of recognised agents and institutions within the field, the people who control these institutions are the people who decide who gets to be a recognised artist and what is recognised as art. Museums, for example, depend on government funding, on corporate sponsorship and philanthropic donations from affluent individuals and are - through that dependence - dominated by the field of power and the field of class relations. In this respect, it is crucial to consider on behalf of whose interests these institutions, organisations and agents - who have the authority of consecration in the cultural field - act and who benefits from this.

By reproducing and spreading the dominant classes' definition of culture, public museums produce cultural hegemony.

An artwork by Serbian artist Mladen Stilinović further illustrates what cultural hegemony can look like in the art world. In 1992 Stilinović produced a banner reading: *"An artist who cannot speak English is no artist"*, offering a cutting commentary towards the Anglo-Western hegemony in the production of culture and knowledge (Mladen Stilinovic, 1992). Stilinović picked up on the way in which the English language as the 'world language' is a daily reminder that Eurocentric culture is projected to the rest of the world as 'world culture' and a barrier for

artists like him, whose first language is not English. To gain recognition, non-Western artists do not just have to communicate in English as implied by Stilinović, they also have to seek consecration by dominant Western institutions.

Understanding the reproduction of hegemonic values and power is an integral part of Bourdieu's dynamics of the cultural field, however it is in no way only a theory of reproduction. The field theory also allows an understanding of changes and movements within the field marked by struggles of agents to change their position.

### 2.3.5. The Theory of Cultural Change

The theory of cultural change gives an insight into possible movements of agents within the field. It describes how initially avant-garde artists produce innovative products in the lower left-hand part of the field. As the artist earns more and more recognition from other peers and intellectuals in the field, they accumulate more cultural capital and move up to the consecrated avant-garde. If the artist now wants to increase their economic capital, they are likely to move laterally towards the bourgeois audience, where the dominant economic elite seeks new cultural products for class distinction. This is also where the artists receive institutional consecration from art prizes or partnerships. From this point on, it is very likely for the artist to become mainstream or to cater to mass audiences as the masses tend to imitate the dominant economic class. Moving towards the lower right part of the field still comes with an increase of economic capital but also with a decrease of prestige as the artist is seen as a 'sell-out' (Hilgers and Mangez, 2014, p. 12).

A good example where the theory of cultural change can be traced in practice is the career of British artist Damien Hirst. Hirst was born in 1965 in Bristol and shortly afterwards moved to Leeds where he spent most of his youth. Coming from a working-class background, Hirst struggled in school and worked at building sites for a few years before finally being admitted to Goldsmiths University in London in 1986 (Correy and Godfrey, 2020). This is where Hirst made important connections with Michael Craig-Martin, his teacher and mentor during his studies, and several students in his year who would later become important players in the art world, such as Sarah Lucas, Gary Hume and Michael Landy. In 1988, his second year at Goldsmith's, Hirst was the main organiser of an independent student exhibition in a warehouse in the London Docklands titled *Freeze*, featuring the works of 16 fellow Goldsmiths students as well as his own. It is here that Hirst painted the two first versions of his widely recognised series of *spot paintings* directly onto the warehouse walls (Correy and Godfrey, 2020). Hirst later recounted

that frustration with the art world and pressure from the College inspired him to take matters into his own hands and create an audience for his own and his peers' artworks:

*"There was also that pressure from the College – good pressure – saying 'you need an audience', basically. Don't wait for one; don't put your paintings in the corner of the studio and wait for someone to buy them when you're dead."* (Noble, 2020)

Freeze is often named as the root of the Young British Artist (YBA) movement, which launched not just Hirst but the careers of an entire generation of British artists. The YBAs formed the British avant-garde of the late 1980s and 1990s, and were known for their entrepreneurial attitude, deploying shock tactics for media attention and challenging the traditional ideas of material and processes with which art can be made (Tate, 2020).

In these first few years, we can see that Hirst was in a position of little economic and cultural capital (due to his socio-economic background) and a very restricted artistic production, mainly aimed at his peers. In his warehouse shows, Hirst associates mostly with his peers and is not (yet) able to attract a wider audience and recognition for his work. In Bourdieu's concept of the field of cultural production, he therefore starts in the lower-left side of the diagram with the avant-garde (position A).

With his graduation from Goldsmiths in 1989, Hirst gains artistic and institutional consecration which is further increased by being associated with his university mentor - Michael Craig-Martin. Michael Craig-Martin holds this consecration authority through teaching at recognised educational institutions of art such as Goldsmiths, Canterbury and Bath University, his own education at Yale, as well as his successful career as a conceptual artist (Grenfell and Hardy, 2007, p. 123). Another indicator that Hirst had gained enough cultural capital to reposition himself during this time with the consecrated avant-garde was his inclusion in a touring show, shortly after his graduation in 1989, by the organisation New Contemporaries. The selectors for this show included Iwona Blazwick, an art critic and lecturer who went on to curate Hirst's first solo show in 1991. During this time Hirst attracted mainly an intellectual audience, working with institutions like the Serpentine Gallery and the Institute of Contemporary Arts, reinforcing his position with the consecrated avant-garde (position B).

However, Hirst soon gained the attention of a bourgeois audience, exemplified by Charles Saatchi, a successful businessman and art collector, who bought his first piece from one of the warehouse shows in 1990. In 1991, Hirst met art dealer and founder of the White Cube Gallery, Jay Joplin, who represented him from thereon. With the financial support of Saatchi, in 1992

Hirst presented at the Saatchi Gallery, his perhaps most famous work - a thirteen-foot tiger shark preserved in a glass tank full of formaldehyde, entitled *The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living*. The sculpture attracted a considerable amount of media attention, and shortly afterwards Hirst made his break into the international art scene during the Venice Biennale in 1993. With *Mother and Child divided* Hirst displayed a bisected cow and calf preserved in four large glass tanks filled with formaldehyde. Following this, in 1995, Hirst was awarded the highly prestigious Turner prize. The 1997 show *Sensation* at the Royal Academy in London was widely seen as the acceptance of the YBAs into the establishment (A&F Markets, 2020).

Hirst increased his economic capital enormously during this time, catering mainly to a bourgeois audience of collectors like Charles Saatchi (who used Hirst's sensational and shocking work to achieve class distinction as Bordieu puts it). He gained further institutional consecration through receiving the Turner prize and exhibiting at the Royal Academy. Another indicator that Hirst moved towards the field of large-scale production (position C) around the mid-1990s, is that he started to employ several assistants for his studio to help him produce more works in his series of *spot paintings* and *spin paintings* (Singh, 2012).

The end of the 1990s and the early 2000s is when Hirst's practice started to move more towards commercial culture, the lower right half of the diagram (position D). Hirst sold his sculpture *Hymn* to Saatchi for £1m in 2000 and subsequently produced several copies of the sculpture, selling them for similar prices. In the same year, he attracted 100,000 visitors in the first 12 weeks of his retrospective show at the Gagosian Gallery, selling every single artwork featured in the show (A&F Markets, 2020). With his rising popularity, Hirst started to cater more and more for a mass audience. For a charity event in 2000, Hirst decorated a mini cooper car with his signature spots, crossing the line between art and merchandise. The spots also appeared in the following years on skateboard decks and clocks. In 2012 he designed the British Flag for the Olympics in the style of his famous spin paintings (Correy and Godfrey, 2020) and launched a designer backpack in collaboration with the Olsen twins, decorated with spots (Pous, 2012). In 2012 he designed the trophy for the Brit Awards, again with his spots, and in 2019, collaborating with Vans, he released a collection of sneakers featuring skulls, butterflies, and more spots (Pauly, 2019). At this point in his career, he employed several hundred people in his factory-like studios, catering to the mass audience. Through 'selling out', Hirst lost artistic consecration and cultural capital but still enhanced his economic capital. Hirst's career is a prime example of an artist moving through Bourdieu's field of cultural production. Notably,

Hirst still holds enough cultural capital and consecration to be ranked within the top 100 artists at Artfacts.net and achieves record prices in auctions.

The theory of cultural change, as demonstrated by Damien Hirsts' example, shows a common pattern within the cultural field but is by no means the only possible way for agents to move throughout the field. It is also essential to underline that the artist's products do not stay the same when moving throughout the field in the theory of cultural change. According to Bourdieu, artworks and products that move through the social spaces of the field are reinterpreted in new contexts to fit the values and ideals of the respective group. This inevitably goes hand in hand with a translation of meaning and purpose. An artwork produced for a restricted audience of peers by an avant-garde artist will change when being defined according to external interests and moving towards the right heteronomous side of the field (Bourdieu, 1983, p. 313).

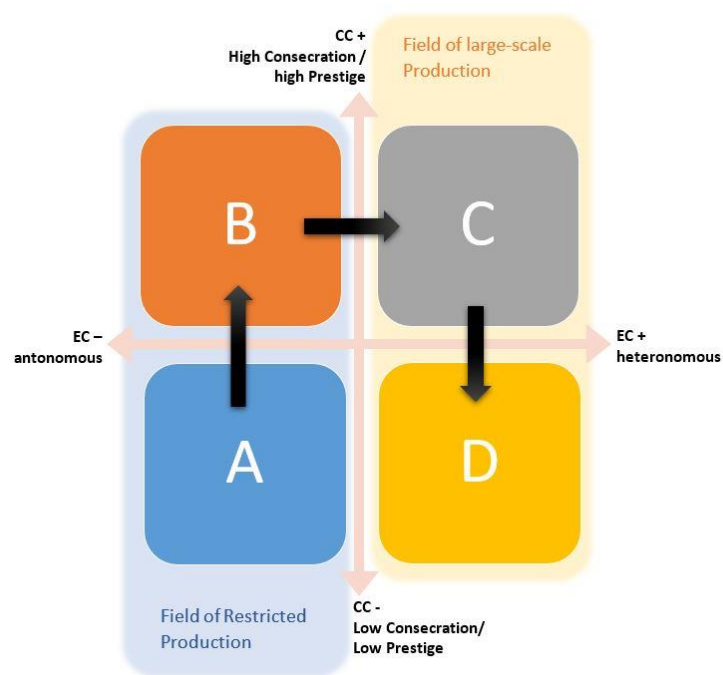


Figure 2: The Theory of Cultural Change in Bourdieu's Field of Cultural Production

Staying with the example of Damien Hirst; one of the early spot paintings that he painted himself for his peers in one of his warehouse shows would have a changed meaning today, now that it is associated with the large-scale production of similar spot paintings, produced for a mass audience. The social context and how and where an artwork is presented can change the meaning of an artwork.

In his essay *The Field of Cultural Production, or: The Economic World Reversed* from 1983, Bourdieu summarised this effect: *“The meaning of a work changes automatically with each change in the field within which it is situated for the spectator or reader.”* (Bourdieu, 1983, p. 313).

#### 2.3.6. Conclusion

Although Bourdieu and Gramsci's theories are now well-established (Bourdieu published his finding four decades ago), they are still influential in the field of sociology. Both theories promote innovative ways of thinking about the structures of the art world, and its relationship to the broader environment. These theories and concepts help to look at relationships and positions within the art world without neglecting the bigger picture of society at large. Nevertheless, a lot has happened in both the world and the art world since the 1980s, changing the field of cultural production, starting with the phenomena of the globalisation of the art market, and greater access to education. When Bourdieu's analysis of the cultural field was published, corporate collectors were not as actively involved in the art world as they are now. A few comments are therefore necessary regarding the limitations of both Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony and Bourdieu's notion of the field for the analysis of companies.

Bourdieu included commercial institutions in his analysis of the cultural field. These institutions - theatres, publishers, museums or galleries - act in the field as producers, consecrators of value or mediators. They have a shared purpose and a shared collective identity, rooted in the field of cultural production. Nevertheless, these institutions cannot be equated with corporate collectors in the sense that collecting or exhibiting art is not a corporation's primary function. Even though corporate art collectors actively try to be part of the consecration and dissemination of art, their primary function lies outside of the field of cultural production. It is subordinated to their primary function as a commercial institution in their particular field.

One might argue that corporate collectors could be grouped with individual affluent private collectors in the field of cultural production. It is true that due to their wealth they could be equated as the dominant elite, the bourgeois audience that Bourdieu included in his theory of

cultural change. However, this approach is problematic for two reasons. Firstly, the underlying binary concept of class structure in society is not readily applicable to the corporation as a whole. While the upper management and chief executives might enjoy the same position in society as the former bourgeoisie, the workers and lower management within a corporation certainly do not. Secondly, while the employees of a corporation might have a shared purpose and collective identity when it comes to the primary business function of the corporation, it cannot be assumed that the same holds true for a corporate art collection. On this individual level, employees of any level are not primarily part of the organisation because of the art collection and therefore might not have the same interaction with the art collection on every managerial level. The corporation itself is not just an abstract concept, but consists of a multitude of people and can, according to Bourdieu, be seen as a field itself (Bourdieu, 2014, p. 69). To fully understand how a corporation positions itself as a unit in the field of cultural production, one needs to consider first the dynamics that influence a corporate collection from within the company and how the different groups within a company interact with the art collection.

It is also important to mention at this point that oppression is not a two-dimensional concept. Social theories based on Marxism often reduce the analysis of oppression primarily to class oppression, focussing on particular economic relationships between the social classes. However, when using Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony, one has to consider all other forms of domination like sexism, racism and heteronormativity together. The concept of intersectionality was coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) and emphasised that the social systems of domination are linked to one another and that they are so intertwined, they cannot be analysed separately. A good example of the importance of considering intersectionality is the gender pay gap. The gender pay gap measures the difference in average earning per hour between women and men. According to a report by the American Association of University Women (AAUW), an American woman makes on average 82 cents to every dollar earned by a man. This statistic might give insight into the ongoing sexism in the American job market, but only looking at the gender discrimination ignores the variation in pay when race is also included in the analysis. While white women earn 79% compared to the wage of a white man, Black women earn only 62%, and Hispanic women are even further behind at 54% (AAUW, 2018). The gender pay gap is the result of many factors, some of which, like gender discriminating norms in choosing an occupation and the unequal division of domestic labour, affect all women. However, looking at the issue from an intersectional perspective, one can see how the other ways in which women are marginalised substantially contribute to these statistics. In this



example, race plays an important role in explaining the pay gap between the different ethnicities, but other factors like age, access to education, religion and disability all contribute to women experiencing different pay gaps. One can also see in this example how much the different factors are intertwined with one another. Race, segregation, gender and access to education are all known to be interconnected and to heavily influence each other. All these factors together, therefore, contribute to the result of the gender pay gap. It is important to keep intersectionality in mind when analysing the structures of the art world as different socio-economic factors individually influence the struggle of agents in the art world.

Finally, there has also been criticism of Bourdieu's field theory which frequently resurfaces in the relevant literature. Most of the criticism comes down to the issue that Bourdieu's theory is often linked to structuralism and described as being too materialist and determinist (Yang, 2014, p. 1522).

Structuralism is a theoretical approach to the humanities and often applied in cultural theory, anthropology and sociology. The theory implies that elements of human behaviour must be understood through their relationships to a materialistic system rather than the qualities possessed by them. However, this approach neglects human agency by suggesting that human behaviour is determined by underlying cultural and social structures (Almeida, 2015, p. 626). Bourdieu's field theory is often described as determinist or structuralist as the only explanation for artistic choices within a field are the underlying mechanisms and 'rules' of the system. Agents in Bourdieu's framework are therefore lacking the autonomy and independence to change themselves, their work or their relationships (van Maanen, 2009, p. 74).

Especially the concept 'habitus', is often criticised as being too deterministic and constraining. As habitus is defined as the product of an agent's past experiences and capital, an essentially objectivist concept, Bourdieu's framework neglects individual willpower and reflexivity (Calhoun *et al.*, 1993, p. 6). There is furthermore little attention paid to conceptualise and explain social mechanisms of breaking out of the system and overcoming one's habitus or lack of capital which would account for social change and exceptions (Swartz, 1997, p. 8). Another point of critique is Bourdieu's focus on the agents' position taking and marginalisation of actual interpersonal elements, such as communication. Even though Bourdieu assumes communication between the agents, he does not conceptualise different practises and fails to consider the subjective properties of interactions when evaluating the agents' course of action (Swingewood, 1984, p. 217). According to his critics, he furthermore fails to accommodate the agents' individual motivations, which is reduced in his theory to the competition for prestige and status

(Yang, 2014, p. 1532). Overall, Bourdieu's framework presents agents as individuals who are uncritical, lack agency and autonomy, and mechanically struggle for prestige and status.

Acknowledging these limitations, I believe that an ethnographic research approach informed by Bourdieu's notion of field and Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony remains applicable and valuable to analyse power structures and relations in both the company internal politics surrounding a corporate collection and the external position of corporate art collectors within the art world. Part of the rationale for this thesis is to uncover relationships in the art world and learn more about the underlying structures inside and outside of the corporation. Instead of focussing on the individual, I want to find out where corporate collectors are positioned within these structures - Bourdieu's structuralism is therefore not necessarily an issue for this research project and the concepts of field, capital and habitus are valuable tools to better understand the dynamics around corporate art collections. Although it is legitimate to describe elements of Bourdieu's concept of habitus as determinist, Bourdieu himself argues, that it is not the case that agents do not act reflexively or voluntarily at all. However, it is more the case that their choices are limited subjectively (and mostly unconsciously), by the agents' perception of the social space and their position in it, and objectively by real life conditions (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 133). Habitus can, thus, contain both dimensions: a level of agency where the agent can freely choose, combined with the constraining sides of society, meaning the agents social background and available capital limit the agent's 'free choice'. The duality of this concept complements Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony and helps to better explain the complexities of the conscious and unconscious processes behind cultural domination.

Furthermore, in order to overcome the two-dimensional concept of oppression adopted by Bourdieu and Gramsci in their theories, I will try and take an intersectional approach to consider multiple factors of oppression, as far as my data allows it.

## 2.4. Methodology

To position myself within the field of corporate collecting and to gain a deeper understanding of the topic I first carried out a review and mapping of the history of corporate collecting and wrote detailed case studies about three significant European collections, with roots in France, the UK and Germany. To create the empirical base of this study, I deployed a range of approaches and methodologies including ethnographic fieldwork, document and digital-based research and analysis, in-depth interviews, as well as building up a comprehensive database of European corporate collections. As corporate collections are often part of the mainstream press, reading newspapers and online articles was also part of my research. Notably, I used

these sources as accounts of the public image of corporate art collectors without falling into the trap of mistaking them as an accurate description of their actual behaviour. Finding different ways to collect data was an iterative process, which was continuously developed and refined throughout the study.

During my fieldwork, I worked as a gallery assistant at a contemporary art gallery in Mayfair, London, and as a freelance curator. Being immersed in the art world, not just as an observational researcher but also as a professional gave me an understanding of the art market beyond what one can read and learn through literature and theory. The work at the gallery gave me access to a vast network of curators and artists who regularly came into the gallery to exhibit, to buy or to mingle at private openings. Through the gallery, I was also able to attend several art fairs in London throughout my fieldwork years. Working at an art fair as opposed to being part of the audience results in vastly different experiences of the event. Setting up the gallery booth and taking part in the opening events for industry people enabled me to connect differently to other professionals and observe the different relationships and dynamics between a variety of players in the art world. Standing on the gallery side when talking to curators and clients gave me a deeper understanding of how buyers choose art, why they do so and sometimes also why a sale did not happen.

Working in the art world allowed me to collate a vast collection of empirical materials for this study. My sources include observations, photographic and sound recordings, in-depth audio interviews, insider accounts, exhibition and collection catalogues, photobooks, online archive materials, as well as specialist- and mainstream - publications. I attended several panel discussions around the topics of art sponsorship and ethical implications of curation. Part of my research was also to participate in public tours through corporate collections such as the Deutsche Bank Headquarters in London, UBS offices in London and Daimler's gallery space in Berlin.

#### 2.4.1. Fieldwork and Qualitative Data Collection

The qualitative interviews form the basis of this research project: I conducted 31 interviews, 13 of them via telephone and 18 face-to-face, each lasting between half an hour and two hours. The interviews were semi-structured, based around an agenda of topics and questions that I had prepared beforehand (see appendix for examples), allowing a conversational flow and the interviewees to express their own concerns and input regarding the topic. Furthermore, I offered five additional interviewees, who did not want to participate in face-to-face or telephone interviews, the opportunity to answer a catalogue of questions in writing. Another

interviewee followed up a personal telephone interview by answering several more questions via e-mail. These interviews are by no means as in-depth as the ones that were conducted within a personal dialogue, but nevertheless offered personal insights that added to the findings. An overview of interviewees, their occupations and further details can be found in the appendix of this thesis.

To decide whom I wanted to interview, I first followed an approach of stratified sampling. This method of sampling divides the population into sub-groups according to one or more common attributes, which are essential to the responses. As opposed to simple random sampling, this method guarantees that specific sub-groups are equally represented in a population sample. The art world includes a variety of different actors; stratified sampling helps to minimise bias that one specific group in the art market might have regarding corporate collecting by making sure that all groups are represented equally. I also hoped to gain more insights into differences in the opinions and views of these sub-groups and compare the results between the strata. I soon recognised that as much as the method of stratified sampling made sense in theory, it does not, in this case, translate well into practice. When trying to stratify the art market, for example, by current occupation, I soon discovered that due to the nature of the art world, rarely anyone has just one job. This is partly because of the low pay that causes people to seek income in more than one occupation, and also due to the blurred lines and overlaps between different art-related occupations. Curators are, for example, often also art critics, researcher, art consultants and authors. Artists often also earn money by curating shows or teaching students at universities, and even when people currently only do one job, their career usually includes multiple experiences in other related jobs within the art world. One of my interviewees has run their own gallery in East London for 20 years, taking part in art fairs, curating shows and representing several artists, before taking a job a few years ago as a corporate curator. So, who is to say what occupational category they belong to? And even when trying to categorise people by the occupation that they currently spend the most time in or earn the most money with, they will still speak within their experiences and capacities of a multitude of jobs from the past and the present.

The same issue arose when trying to stratify my sample by country to compare possible differences and commonalities between European nations. Due to the globalised market, corporations have branches in a multitude of countries and continents and artists sell their art and reside across borders as well. Even though the clear and detailed stratification of the art world was an issue, it was still essential for me to try and focus my sample of interviewees to Western- and Central Europe, to focus the frame of this study and to ensure that active

information about the contemporary art market, as well as a well-established contemporary art scene in the selected countries, is available. In the next part of this chapter, I will explain the national limitations of this study further.

Regarding the occupation of the interviewees, as the study revolves around corporate art collections, I made sure that at least half of my interviewees were current corporate curators working for an active corporate collection with headquarters in Western- and Central Europe (15 personal interviews and five written interviews with headquarters in the UK, Germany, France and Switzerland). I chose to include corporations from a multitude of sectors (banks, energy providers, law firms, private members clubs etc.) which were also active in other European countries. For the rest of the sample, I decided to include art consultants, professors, activists, gallerists, curators of public collections and, specifically, artists. The voices of artists form the largest group of interviewees after corporate curators, taking up 30% of the overall sample. Here I made sure that every interviewee has worked with or collaborated with corporate art collectors in the past, to ensure that their opinions are based on their own experiences and not on rumours or assumptions circulating in the art world.

To contact interviewees, I mainly e-mailed them first with a short introduction of myself, and an explanation of my research. Mostly corporate curators and art consultants insisted on seeing the interview questions before agreeing to an interview, which I provided via e-mail. E-mail addresses were sourced from the company-, artist-, university- and business websites or through personal networking, when I met people at art fairs, exhibition openings or during public tours.

There were a few significant ethical implications that had to be considered in order to not put interviewees in a position where they could potentially compromise their careers. Previous studies, and my own experience of researching corporate art collections, shows that often information is classified as 'confidential' or employees become secretive when it comes to the release of actual figures, providing information about underlying reasons for corporate social responsibilities, and granting insight into internal group processes like acquisition and buying strategies. Additionally, as I am dealing with big multinational corporations, if the name of the employee or the corporation is published within an interview, the entire text often has to be approved by the PR and communications team first. To not put corporate curators, or anyone working with these corporations in the past or the future, at risk, I decided to anonymise all of the interviews conducted for this study. The majority of interviewees asked several times before and within the interview to remain anonymous, which further confirmed my initial decision.

Prior to interviews, participants received an information sheet with a detailed outline and objectives of my study, as well as a consent form reiterating the terms of the research. The consent form included tick-boxes specifying the usage of the participants' data, the anonymisation of interviews and details about the recording of interviews. Interviewees had to opt in on each of the boxes to express consent and sign the form. All interviewees who are included in this study have signed and agreed to the terms on the consent form. All interviewees, except for two, agreed to an audio recording; the two who did not consent to this were captured by manual notetaking. Some interviewees requested to double check the quotes used in the thesis before submission, these interviewees received their quotes and have once again confirmed their consent to the usage of their data.

All corporate curators who participated in the interviews either gave me a personal tour of the art collection on their premises where we met, or supplied me with additional catalogues, brochures, and photobooks of their art collections. Some of them invited me back for an exhibition opening or sent me video material of art collections on premises outside of my reach. For the collections that I visited in person, I was also allowed to take photographs of the art in lobbies and meeting rooms for my data collection.

All interviews were transcribed and coded based on reoccurring themes that came out of the interviews, as well as particular keywords mentioned in the research questions and concepts rooted in the theoretical framework elaborated earlier. I organised my codes according to the internal processes and politics of the corporation (mainly sourcing from the interviews of corporate curators) and the outside relationship of corporate curators to the art world (mainly sourcing from interviews of artists and other players in the art world). A more detailed explanation and documentation of the interview coding scheme can be found in the appendix of this thesis (Appendix 3. Interview Coding Scheme).

However, it is essential to acknowledge the drawback of using interviews as the primary source of data and research strategy. The human perception is often very biased towards a person's own interests, position and affiliation. Corporate curators only rarely say anything negative or critical about corporate art collections due to their position within the corporation. Some corporate curators also deal with a collection that includes thousands of artworks or a history spanning back decades. Their memory regarding numbers, names or historical milestones might be compromised or inaccurate. On the side of other players in the art market, I often came across assumptions and expectations towards corporate art collections that were based on nothing else but personal prejudice and bias regarding the topic. It was therefore essential to

gather as much data as I could from different sources and extend my fieldwork to observational and textual analysis, double-checking and comparing the data from the interviews to data from other sources. To further support my research, I also gathered and analysed quantitative data about corporate art collections. This helped me gain a better understanding of whether a particular phenomenon in the interviews was circumstantial or generally common in the corporate art scene.

In the concluding chapter *Understanding*, part of the book *The Weight of the World* (1999) Bourdieu furthermore raised and problematised the topic of asymmetry within the relationship between researcher and interviewee. According to Bourdieu, within the researcher-interviewee relationship, the researcher is superior by definition, which can affect what is presented through an interview, and therefore also influence how an interviewee is represented or potentially misrepresented or even misunderstood by the researcher. The researcher, he says, is therefore obligated to reduce and avoid 'symbolic violence' which is inherent in every interview relationship (Bourdieu 1999, p. 608). In order to enhance conditions of non-violent communication and reduce the social distance during the interview, Bourdieu suggests that the researcher needs a reflexive awareness of, and accounting for, the constructed nature of the research relationship and the agents' different positions within the social space. Through active methodological listening and freeing the interview as much as possible of its' practical constraints the researcher should provide interviewees with a 'safe space' - or in Bourdieu's words an *"exceptional situation for communication, freed from the usual constraints (particularly of time) that weigh on most everyday interchanges, and opening up alternatives which prompt or authorize the articulation of worries, needs or wishes discovered through this very articulation, the researcher helps create the conditions for an extra-ordinary discourse, which might never have been spoken, but which was already there, merely awaiting the conditions for its actualization"* (Bourdieu 1999, p.614)

Following Bourdieu's recommendations on reducing social asymmetry I made sure to provide interviewees with adequate and sufficient information about the interview setting, the objectives of the research, interview questions and structure. If the interviews took place in person I let the interviewees decide where they wanted to meet to ensure that they felt comfortable with the setting; interviews took place in artist studios, cafés, private meeting rooms and office spaces. I intensely researched each interviewee's work and corporation before the interviews to make sure I develop an understanding for their unique perspectives, as previously mentioned working in the art world during my field work helped me familiarize myself very quickly with the field of corporate collecting. However, I was not able to create a

setting absent of time constraints. Most of my interviewees preferred to conduct the interviews during their working hours and therefore considered a maximum of one to two hours for the interview. With interviewees who were very restricted with time, I therefore agreed a follow-up interview via email or telephone if there were any questions left. Generally, I tried to give the interviewees as much agency as possible of the interview settings to create an “*exceptional situation for communication*” that they felt comfortable and safe in and most, if not all of the times managed to engage in an “*extra-ordinary discourse*” with my interviewees.

#### 2.4.2. Quantitative Data Collection

To support the qualitative analysis of the interviews, I carried out an extensive review and mapping of active corporate collectors through their own publications and external publications about corporate collecting. The dataset used for the analysis discussed in the following chapters was created solely for the purpose of this study. The process of data collection proved extremely difficult for various reasons: corporate collections in Europe can individually consist of several thousand artworks and undergo constant changes via acquisition and deaccessioning. Up-to-date data is therefore not always available for every collection. Furthermore, art collections often do not share information on every single piece or artist in their collection publicly and especially art collections that are not used for communication purposes are often not mentioned on public platforms at all. Producing a complete dataset of art collections and artists was therefore a subtle undertaking.

For the reasons explained above, sourcing new data directly from a sufficiently large number of corporations to form a reliable database was beyond the scope of this study. The database of active European corporate collections and affiliated foundations used in this study was instead created by gathering data from a range of established existing publications. As the primary data source, I used three significant publications about corporate collections published within the last ten years: *Global Corporate Collections* by Goodrow and Conzen published in 2015, *International Directory of Corporate Art Collections* by Howarth published in 2017, and *Corporate Art Collections* by Appleyard and Salzmann published in 2012. Other sources for this database are the website of the International Association of Corporate Collections of Contemporary Art (IACCCA) and my own interviews. The validity of each data entry was checked against and completed with information acquired on the corporations’ website to add data about the country of residence, business area and to ensure that the art collection is still active.

The result of this complicated process of data collection is an extensive and almost complete dataset on European corporate art collections with a total of 87 entries, which corresponds to a



large fraction of collections active in Europe. Goodrow and Conzen list a total of roughly 600 corporate collections worldwide in *Global Corporate Art Collections* (2015, p. 6). The following paragraphs will give a rough overview of the collected data.

#### *2.4.2.1. The Corporate Collections*

Data collected about the corporate collections include the corporation's name, the year when the collection was founded (which is not necessarily the same year the company was founded), the area of business, the size of the collection, the number of artists within the collection and the nationality of the company. Note that although some corporations operate internationally, nationality was defined solely via the location of the headquarters. The dataset contains information on corporations from 16 different countries.

The majority of collections are located in central and west Europe across Germany (18), the Netherlands (14), France (11), Switzerland (11) and the UK (9). The other 24 art collections are distributed across 11 European countries in southern and northern Europe. Unfortunately, no information about corporate collections from east Europe was found, which might be due to a lack of corporate collecting in those countries. Data about collections from America, Australia, Russia, and Asia were not collected, due to the focus of this study on European collections.

The corporations' core businesses were grouped into 12 categories, with the most frequent categories being banks & financial services (34), insurance (12), fashion (8), food and drink producers (6) and energy providers (5). The foundation year of the art collections spans between 1850 and 2014, with the majority of collections (34) being founded between the years 1980 and 2000. The size of the art collections varies from a minimum of 20 to as many as 60,000 artworks.

#### *2.4.2.2. The Artists*

Information on various key artists was gathered for the majority of collections in the dataset, to find statistical indications for possible buying habits and biases regarding individual artists or artist groups. Typically, around five key artists were listed per art collection. The key artists are introduced in the source material and were put forward by the corporate collections themselves. It is usually not disclosed by the collection whether the mentioned key artists were chosen based on being the most important artists of the collection, representative of the general collection, or most prestigious and expensive artists of the collection. However, I will assume that artists named as key artists are important to the respective collection and as part of the core collection do hold a certain degree of representation for the direction of the remaining collection. The database contains a total of 256 artists' names.

The gathered names of key artists were further researched to include information on nationality and gender for additional analysis. Nationality was determined by the country of birth or as stated by the artist's bio on the official website of the corresponding artist. The artists are native to 32 countries in the world, with the majority being US American (41), German (32), Dutch (28), British (27), Swiss (23), French (24), Italian (17) and Belgian (14). The remaining 24 countries are located in Europe, America, Russia, East Asia, the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa.

The field of corporate patronage is very diverse, and different forms of patronage exist. There is a need to clarify what exactly the subject and scope of my study is and which corporations I was able to include in my research. In the next part of this chapter, I will explain further the scope of this study and the reasoning behind some limitations.

#### 2.4.3. Scope and Focus of this Study

The relationship between art and business has gone through different stages and models throughout the centuries. Historically, businessmen- and women or founding families bought and commissioned art that was partly displayed in their offices or factory premises or gifted to churches and cities. This later translated into CEOs taking the lead in selecting art or pushing the initiative to found an art collection (find more on the history of corporate collecting in chapter III, 3.2). The ownership and the primary task of shaping the art collection were in the hands of an individual person or family leading the company. Corporate art collections are now defined by being owned by the corporations themselves or by corporation affiliated foundations. The decentralisation and professionalisation of corporate art collections has often led to curators and art consultants being involved in shaping the art collection; it is not uncommon now for a company with an art collection to have their own in-house curator or art department. The legal form of a corporate art collection can fall anywhere on the spectrum between a limited company, a trust fund or a charity. However, more importantly, the art collection is affiliated with a corporation as a whole, not just one leading individual.

Furthermore, an assemblage of artworks in an office environment does not constitute a corporate art collection, and contrary to common belief, the number of pieces is not what makes a group of artworks a collection. An art collection is defined by a well-planned, purposefully acquired and curated accumulation of artworks, connected by a common theme or narrative (for example, in the Deutsche Bank collection: works on paper). The defining principle of a corporate art collection, therefore, is the intent to build a cohesive collection and with that comes a certain degree of commitment to keeping the collection alive. This intent and

commitment can be seen when corporations inherit artworks through merging corporations, and then purposefully review and restructure the focus of the different strands of their art collection, to further shape their collection towards a common narrative (for example AXA's merger with Nordstern Insurances and Colonia Insurances).

These distinctions are essential to define the scope of this study. The focus of this research project lies on active art collections owned by corporations or corporation affiliated foundations. Corporations who exclusively sponsor art events or museum collections but do not own an art collection are excluded from this study. This includes, for example, corporations like BP, who have a very active portfolio of supporting the arts, but no art collection of their own (BP, n.d.). Further exempt from this research are businesses who own prints or artworks without relation to each other or theme, that do not meet the criteria of an art collection. This is often the case for smaller restaurants or individual hotels who own a few pieces of art for the purpose of decoration. Even though it is difficult to assess how actively some corporate collectors are still involved in collecting art through time, I have also tried to specifically focus this study on active corporate collections only, as they are the ones who still interact with the art world.

A further distinction has to be made between corporate art collections and art collections owned by individuals who are known as successful businessmen and women and invest their private fortune into the arts. Their names might be tied to the name of a corporation but as previously assessed, a corporate art collection is today owned and tied to the corporation itself. This means that for example, the private art collection of Charles Saatchi, who has had an undeniable impact on the contemporary art market during the 1990s, though acquired with the profits he made through owning various companies (first Saatchi & Saatchi, then M&C Saatchi), is not a corporate art collection. Saatchi's passion for art was always tied to his personal identity and life and not to his companies. In contrast to this stands the case of the Hiscox art collection, mentioned in the case studies. Robert Hiscox, the CEO and namesake of the company, initially founded the art collection and helped to shape the collection substantially, but when he retired from the business, the art collection stayed, and the new CEO took over the role to help and acquire artworks together with the company's curator. The art collection is owned by the company and primarily tied to the company's identity, instead of Robert Hiscox's persona (Robert Hiscox owns his own private art collection, separate from the company's collection).

Though the majority of cases are relatively straightforward, understandably sometimes the founding members of a corporation, the business itself and the art collection are so interwoven

with each other that even when considering the legal form, it is hard to decide if the art collection is more tied to the individuals or the business. An example for this is the Museum Ritter, affiliated to the German Chocolate manufacturer Ritter Sport. Marli Hoppe-Ritter, co-owner of the Ritter Sport company, started privately collecting art in the 1970s together with her husband. Early on she specialised in collecting geometrical art, focussed around the square, in relation to the square format that distinguishes the chocolate bars manufactured by Ritter Sport from its competitors (Museum Ritter, n.d.). The theme of the collection is therefore undeniably tied to the company and their identity, even though the company's CEO privately owns the collection. In 2005 Museum Ritter opened to the public, located right next to the company's headquarters and the chocolate factory, housing the *Marli Hoppe-Ritter Collection*. The collection and the museum are now owned by the *Marli Hoppe-Ritter Foundation for the Advancements of Art* and governed by Marli Hoppe-Ritter herself, as well as a board of trustees. The company's employees have free access to the museum, and artworks of the collection are displayed throughout the company's headquarters. Though both the collection and the museum are entirely independent of the company, there is nevertheless a clear connection between the art and the corporation (Goodrow and Conzen, 2015, pp. 336–338). In these instances, a case-by-case assessment had to be done to decide if the collection could be considered as a corporate art collection in this study or not.

A few comments are also necessary regarding the national boundaries of this study. In a globalised world, corporations are rarely ever restricted to national borders, but rather they operate worldwide. This holds especially true for big banks and insurance companies, who have a history of continually expanding into new territories and merging with foreign competitors. This effect makes it difficult to categorise corporate collections within national borders and compare between different nations. AXA, for example, is a French multinational insurance firm but merged with two German competitors (Nordstern Insurances and Colonia Insurances) between 1995 and 1997. The art collection that is now known as the AXA art collection was predominantly shaped and acquired by Nordstern Insurances and to this day makes up the core of the AXA art collection. It is therefore difficult to define AXA art purely as a French art collection. The same applies to artists, too. Though artists may start their career initially in the country they were born in, the global market makes it possible to sell artworks, move countries, take up residencies and produce work worldwide. Today, it is equally common to enjoy dual citizenship, emigrate and adopt different nationalities and generally be culturally influenced by a multitude of factors. It is therefore difficult to determine what, in the globalised world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, makes an artist or a company belong to a particular nation.

This historical and economic entanglement between corporations, as well as the convenience of travel and migration for artists, is incredibly strong when it comes to Europe. The shared history, the proximity of the countries and the trade agreements within the European Union encourage market activities across national borders. For simplicity, it is therefore sensible to study the European art market as a whole, with particular focus on central and west Europe, rather than each individual nation's art market, and most of the following analyses will be restricted accordingly. The European corporate art market will be defined based on the headquarter locations of the corresponding corporations and first citizenship of the corresponding artists.

## Part 2

### 3. Chapter III - Art and Business

#### 3.1. Introduction

Various authors have previously studied why corporations venture into the art world (see chapter II, 2.2. for a detailed literature review). Many of these studies link corporate collections to marketing concepts such as corporate identity, corporate culture, and corporate social responsibility. However, corporate collections existed even before the emergence of what could be considered the modern concept of marketing, which raises the question of what fundamental value and function art can offer to corporations in a broader sense. It is therefore essential to first clarify possible meanings of 'value and function' with respect to the arts, and different authors have interpreted these concepts in different ways. One possible aspect is the economic value of art. However, as the relevant literature suggests (see chapter II, 2.2.) the economic (or monetary) value of art that might be gained through resale or via tax returns cannot be the only driving factor for corporations to start an art collection. Lindenberg and Oosterlinck, for example, argue in their study from 2011 that on balance sheets artworks were treated as fixed assets, rejecting the idea that art collections are cost-effective investment purchases (2011, pp.10 – 11). A straightforward observation to support this argument is the fact that financial service institutes and banks which make up the majority of corporate art collectors, would likely find more secure ways to invest their money than a comprehensive art collection. In this chapter, I will therefore focus on the aspects of aesthetic, social and psychological value and function of art to further gain insight into the connections between art and business.

The value of art and the function of art have historically been closely intertwined or even overlapped in their definitions. Althusser distinguishes art from science in his publication *Letter on Art*: *"The real difference between art and science lies in the specific form in which they, in a totally different way, provide us with the same object: art in the form of 'seeing', 'perceiving' or 'feeling', science in the form of knowledge"*, and further references in the same text towards the function of art as: *"the special character of art is that it makes us perceive something (...) that alludes to reality"* (Althusser, 1984, p. 223).

Van Maanen states in his 2009 publication *How to study art worlds* an explicit explanation of the difference between the two terms: *"[The value of art] can be identified as an aesthetic experience (...), to sharpen perceptive capacity or to strengthen imaginative power, which can be seen as aesthetic function."* (van Maanen, 2009, p. 11)

In principle, this means that the value serves the function. When Kai Kuklinski, CEO of AXA Art, talks about the AXA art collection in an interview, he states: *“To us, art is more than a commodity, it is a living passion. Being surrounded by so much exciting and engaging creativity constantly inspires and energizes us in our work”* (Goodrow and Conzen, 2015, p. 8). The aesthetic experience that the artworks displayed at AXA Art create, has the function to inspire and energise the employees at their workplaces, and therein lies the value.

This chapter focuses on answering the following sets of questions:

1. How has art and business historically been connected? What are the factors that influence their relationship? What has been the historical value and function of art for corporate patrons?
2. How do corporations utilize art today? What aesthetic restrictions do curators have to comply with in an office setting? How do curators deal with conflicts?
3. How is art used socially within a corporate context? Why is art so useful when trying to connect to specific audiences?

I will start with a historical analysis of corporate art collections for question 1 and further use insights from the in-depth interviews with corporate curators as well as case studies to analyse questions 2 and 3.

### 3.2. Corporate Collections: Historical Context

This section will study the historical connection between art and business with a focus on the first question group. In spite of what is commonly believed, corporate art collecting was not invented during the 1980s in the United States. The roots of corporations as patrons of the arts reach back to medieval and Renaissance Europe, where banking families often supported the arts as a form of penance for usury, the practice of making unethical monetary loans that unfairly enriched the lender, which was condemned at the time by the church. Banking families therefore commissioned art directly for the church or for the public, to atone for sinning and cleanse the wealth that was perceived as ill-gotten through usury. Churches were one of the most influential patrons of the arts themselves, commissioning the painting of church walls and religious works, sponsoring some of history’s most treasured artists (Becker, 2011, pp. 99–100). Pope Gregory the Great (590 – 604) defined the role of art in the church as the following:



*"It is one thing to worship a picture, but it is another thing to be taught by the story conveyed in the picture what to worship. For words teach those who can read; pictures show the same to those who cannot read, but only see, so that even the ignorant can learn from pictures whom they should follow; pictures enable the illiterate to read."* (Kempers and Jackson, 1992, p. 21)

The function of pictures and images in churches was therefore one of morality and conduct, to serve as examples and guides for people and to convey the church's values and beliefs in a way that everybody would understand.

One of the first politicians to be an art patron was Gaius Maecenas, who supported various artists in the Roman Empire to endorse his political ambitions and prestige. Another prominent example dates back to the 15<sup>th</sup> century where the Medici family of Florence commissioned one of the most famous Renaissance paintings *The Birth of Venus* by artist Sandro Botticelli (Yoon and Shin, 2014, p. 19). The Medici family had made its fortune between 1380 and 1420 after founding the Medici Bank which grew to be the largest and most respected bank in Europe, enabling the Medici family to gain significant political power in the decades that followed. During the second half of the quattrocento, the Medici family rose to be an influential patron of the arts, often advised by the pope himself to contribute to church restorations in Rome and Florence to make up for violating the prohibitions of usury (Kempers and Jackson, 1992, p. 193). The Medici patronage undoubtedly influenced the nature of images made, as Kempers and Jackson explain in their publication *Painting, Power and Patronage*, *"countless churches displayed the Medici arms, countless chapels contained portraits of the Medici and those of their fraction."* (Kempers and Jackson, 1992, p. 199). However, the oldest corporate art collection was thought to be founded by the Monte Dei Paschi bank in Siena during the Renaissance around 1472. The bank and its art collection still thrive today, with works spanning throughout the centuries of the bank's existence (Randolph, 2002, p. 83).

Over time, two critical aspects changed the nature of corporate collecting. Firstly, institutions and other collective entities such as foundations, corporations and governments increasingly replaced individual businessmen and women as art patrons; and secondly, there was a new trend of purchasing already existing pieces instead of commissioning new artworks, due to the development of an impersonal market. For artists this meant that they were less dependent on specific patrons and gained more agency about what art they wanted to produce (Martorella, 1990, p. 11).

Around the turn of the twentieth century, a tradition emerged where businesspeople would either commission or use already existing artworks as the basis to design advertising posters.

The posters would portray the business or business operations and were either self-celebratory or business-related in nature. One example of this practice is William Hesketh Lever, who founded the soap manufacturing company *Lever Brothers* in 1884, which is today known worldwide as Unilever. Lever started to collect art for the promotion of his product *Sunlight Soap*. He used already existing pictures he perceived as beautiful and appealing to his main target groups of housewives, copied the artworks and added the Sunlight brand name and slogan. It is not known if the artists agreed to this practice except for William Powell Firth who publicly complained that by using his artwork for advertising the meaning of his painting was altered (Lady Lever Art Gallery, 2018). After initially buying art for business reasons, Lever soon grew a taste for collecting and founded the Lady Lever Art Gallery, dedicated to his wife, Elizabeth. Today the gallery stands separately from the company Unilever and is, even though they share a common history, not mentioned on their website or corporate responsibility portfolio.

By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century companies had begun collecting art to decorate offices, meeting rooms and lobbies. By the 1930s IBM founder Thomas J. Watson was the first to introduce a corporate art collection as a business strategy. IBM's corporate collection toured between North and South America between 1941 and 1945 and was part of the *New York World's Fair* and the *Golden Gate International Exposition* in San Francisco in 1939: a pioneering strategy for its time (Jacobson, 1993, p. 19).

In 1959, just a few decades later, after the recent merge of Chase Bank and the Manhattan Company, David Rockefeller was nearing the top ranks of the newly named Chase Manhattan Bank and suggested that the company might begin an art collection to decorate the new offices on Wall Street. The Rockefeller Family has had a long history in being philanthropists and collectors of art. In 2012, the collection comprised around 30,000 works. Some came to the collection through the various mergers the bank had gone through since establishing the original collection. The collection is said to be one of the most famous and influential corporate art collections in America today (Appleyard and Salzmann, 2012, p. 19). While in the early years the emphasis of the acquired art was American art, specifically focussed on the New York market, the JP Morgan Chase & Co. states in its mission statement today that the core collection is enhanced with a range of objects from every country the bank operates in and therefore aims to be more international than in its founding years (Goodrow and Conzen, 2015, p. 276).

While the narrative around the Rockefeller family is often one of great philanthropists in the art world, an incident in the 1930s indicates that the Rockefeller's love for art was not unconditional and is subsequently not very often mentioned in connection to the company's history of collecting art. In 1933 Mexico's famous artist Diego Rivera was commissioned by John D. Rockefeller and his son Nelson Rockefeller to paint a mural in the lobby of the Rockefeller Centre in New York. The theme for the mural was set as *Man at the Crossroads Looking with Hope and High Vision to the Choosing of a New and Better Future*, a painting that was supposed to make the people pause and think when looking at it. After approving initial sketches, the works on the mural began but were interrupted when it was revealed that Rivera included an image of Vladimir Lenin in the mural. Nelson Rockefeller requested for the image to be removed or altered, but Rivera refused to do so. Finally, Rivera was taken off the project, and the unfinished painting was plastered over. Rivera's views as an advocate for communism contrasted with the Rockefellers' and even though the Rockefellers admired Rivera's art and knew about his political conviction, they could not accept his expression and interpretation of the theme for their commission. In response to the destruction of Rivera's mural at the Rockefeller centre, the Mexican Government offered Rivera a wall at the Palace of Fine Arts in Mexico City, where he painted a fresco titled *Man at the Crossroads* (Scott, 1977, pp. 70–74). This famous example shows a glimpse of what happens when artistic freedom and a company's image drastically contrast.

The peak of corporate collecting finally emerged in the 1980s, and by the mid-1990s half of the Fortune 500<sup>6</sup> companies were collecting art (International Art Alliance, 2012 - 2013, p. 6). The industrial sectors of these companies vary from consumer goods, such as Pepsi and Domino's Pizza, to hotel chains and estate agencies, law firms and financial service institutes. Though they have no apparent connection to art, financial service institutes were among the first collectors and are still strongly represented among collection owning companies (Kottasz *et al.*, 2008, p. 235). By the end of the 1980s, most companies had taken on a more professional attitude to collecting than earlier collectors who used to buy works in an ad-hoc fashion. In this time, many corporate collectors started restructuring their collection, cataloguing them, formulating a mission statement, and implementing an acquisition policy.

There were two structural changes, which occurred in the mid-1990s to corporate art collections. The first affected the size of the collections; due to the global economic recession, several companies decreased the size of their collection. IBM, for instance, despite being a

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<sup>6</sup> The fortune 500 list ranks the companies with the most revenues, profits and market value.

pioneer in corporate art collecting, announced significant budget cuts for its collection in 1995 (Yoon and Shin, 2014, p. 20). A second change that developed in the 1990s was the structure of corporate collections; corporations began to not only display their art in their own offices and headquarters but also to position collections in separate exhibition activities (Behnke, 2007, p. 229). Christopher Behnke suggests in his 2007 paper:

*“In our view, a corporation’s motive for separating exhibition spaces from corporate locations is to garner media attention and to position themselves as players in the art field.”* (p. 229)

An example is the EA-Generali foundation; Generali is an Austrian insurance company which founded a Corporate Art Club in 1988, and by 1995 had built a separate space for exhibitions and study rooms for artists (Generali Foundation, n.d.). Other examples of separate exhibition activity can be seen with Daimler Contemporary, Migros Museum for Contemporary Art Zurich and of course Deutsche Guggenheim Berlin (Deutsche Bank, 2020b).

A significant milestone in the timeline of corporate collections was the global financial crises in 2008 when the economy faced its most dangerous crisis since the Great Depression in 1930. Investment banks such as the Lehman brothers, insurance companies and commercial banks were hit incredibly hard by the global crisis, and as this was one of the sectors with the most art collections, the global crisis had a further effect on corporate collecting.

The collection of the Lehman Brothers Bank was sold at a Sotheby’s auction in 2010, two years after the bank’s bankruptcy during the financial crisis. The collection comprised of over 100 works including works of art by Damien Hirst, Anish Kapoor and Andy Warhol and raised \$12.2 million overall, which was used to reimburse the bank's creditors (Davis, 2018). Another corporate collection that was sold in London during the crisis in 2008 was the Deloitte Collection of Modern and Contemporary Art, reaching a total of £870 000 and including works from artists like John Hoyland, David Hockney, and Mark Quinn (Lyon & Turnbull, n.d.).

Other corporations kept their collections but slowed the acquisition process down or cut the budgets for the general sponsorship of the arts. The significant financial cuts that were suffered through the absence of corporate sponsorship resulted in museums selling artworks to gain funds (Karatzias, 2020) or as in the case of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, to freeze staff hire and close 15 of their satellite stores throughout the country (Vogel, 2009).

Corporations were also increasingly worried that investing into the arts while cutting salaries and firing staff would be perceived negatively by the public and as unnecessary spending, which

is why corporate collecting was carefully handled in the years during and following the financial crisis.

Today more than ten years after the financial crisis, corporate art collections can be observed in all scales and scopes. In terms of collection size alone, none rivals Deutsche Bank, which owns the most extensive corporate art collection in the world with approximately 55000 works (Deutsche Bank, 2018c), nearly twice that of the second and third largest collections, which belong to the Swiss Bank UBS (UBS, n.d.a) and J.P Morgan Chase & Co. (JPMorgan Chase & Co, 2020), respectively.

Other collections stick to a smaller number of works with a very narrow focus for their collection, for example as previously mentioned Ritter Sport, a German chocolate company, famous for producing their chocolate bars only in square form. Ritter Sport holds an art collection of a mere 900 paintings, yet has mastered their corporate collection image by exhibiting contemporary art objects and sculptures exclusively dedicated to the theme “square” in a museum next to the chocolate factory (Museum Ritter, n.d.). Another example of a smaller art collection is British publishing company Penguin Books, which owns a collection of only 200 pieces. The collection focuses on limited-edition prints of printmakers and mostly British artists who work with text (Sooke, 2014).

Corporate patronage has a long tradition and as economy, society, and organisations evolved, so did their involvement in the arts. Throughout the history of corporate patronage, we can recognize common themes of how art was utilized in a business context; it was used to atone for sin and give back to society, it was used as a status symbol and for class distinction, and it was used to market a company’s product by appealing to their primary clientele. In the case of Lehman Brothers, the corporate art collection even ended up having a simple economic function, being used as assets to pay back the banks’ creditors. That art sometimes only has a value for corporations if it fulfils a specific function, is revealed in the case of Diego Riviera and the Rockefellers. Here, the Rockefellers declined and even destroyed Rivera’s artwork when it did not align with the agreed themes and political convictions of the commissioners. The mural could not represent the bank and its values and was therefore useless or even harmful for the Rockefeller collection.

In the next section, I will focus on the question of how current corporate collections utilize the art in their offices and where the curatorial boundaries lie for corporate curators.

### 3.3. The Added Value and Function of Art for Corporations

In this section, I focus on the second group of questions and analyse how art can add value to a modern corporation today. As referenced in the introduction of this chapter, the value of art, according to van Maanen, can be found in the *“capacity of an artwork to generate an aesthetic experience in the act of reception”* (van Maanen, 2009, p. 10). Taking this definition apart and looking at it in detail, one can see that it stresses both the objective and subjective components of art. Objectively, every artwork holds within itself the conditions for a possible aesthetic experience; the experience and perception of this value will be subjectively perceived and felt differently by every consumer. Secondly, van Maanen’s definition also mentions the reception of the artwork in order to experience its aesthetic value in the first place.

When considering the corporate environment, this definition brings several implications for corporate curators. An artwork therefore only has a high value to the corporation if it is seen and perceived in the first place. To illustrate this definition of aesthetic value further: if a company buys an artwork and puts it away for storage instead of displaying it, nobody can see and engage with the artwork, and it has therefore no added value for the corporation. If a work of art is displayed in the office space, but nobody looks at or engages with the artwork, it has a relatively low aesthetic value for the corporation as it might still be decorative but does not generate an aesthetic experience as it is just overlooked.

Having as many artworks within a collection as possible on display is a theme that consistently emerged in the interviews with corporate curators. Interviewee number 8, curator for an international insurance provider, explains to me that 100% of the art collection she looks after is currently on display:

*“We have just over 1000 works. And everything we have is on display. We have around 40 offices now, in the US, the UK and Europe – we have artworks on all the walls.”* (Interviewee No. 8, 2018)

She further says that options of display and the ability of an artwork to stand out in an office environment are essential factors that inform her buying pattern:

*“We have lots of boring practical restraints in terms of display that has to be taken into consideration. (...) I know which works work well in a busy working environment. Not everything*

*does, and some things can just get overlooked and lost. But things need to be able to stand out.”*

(Interviewee No. 8, 2019)

Even the curator of an exceptionally big art collection, like the one of Swiss investment bank UBS which comprises approximately 30,000 works, states during one of the tours through their London offices that the majority of the collection is currently displayed on their office walls and not in storage:

*“The majority of our 800 offices that we have globally, have artworks on display. And I’d say that at any given time we have probably about 70-80% of that 30,000 on our walls in our offices.”*

(UBS Art Tour, 2019)

Corporate curators are very well aware that the art of their collection has to be seen to create an aesthetic value. This policy is reinforced to an extent where art that cannot be displayed is subsequently not bought. Furthermore, curators regularly change and rotate artworks within their offices to generate new attention and engagement with the artwork and prevent the art from being overlooked and become a ‘part of the furniture’. Interviewee number 8 states that the rotation of artworks within the different branches is as much part of her job as a curator as researching and acquiring artworks:

*“My role as curator is to present works, to research artworks for us to acquire and also to manage the collection and the display and the rotation of works around the offices.”*

(Interviewee No. 8, 2019)

Another critical aspect determining the value of an artwork for a corporation is that the aesthetic experience of the consumer has to align with the purpose of the art collection set by the corporation. Suppose an art collection has the purpose of generating a positive experience and a creative environment for its employees, but the aesthetic experiences the employees have, when looking at the artwork, are very negative. In that case, the artwork has no added value for the corporation as it does not fulfil its function or may even cause harm by having the opposite effect of its original purpose. This could, for example, be the case when a corporation wants to communicate a young and innovative image to their clients with their art collection but displays more traditional art that might be perceived as boring and outdated.

Interviewee number 12, the curator for a law firm, tells me how she inherited a number of artworks via mergers of the company that she thematically does not consider displayable or sellable and therefore keeps in storage.

*“Every time you absorb a company, you absorb their art collection. So, there is quite a range of stuff in the stock room. Some of which is interesting and some of which I look at and think ‘what the hell is that?’. It is not appropriate in our days. We have a few battle scenes downstairs of European wars or whatever. I’m not going to put them on walls because it would just be weird.”* (Interviewee No. 12, 2019)

Another example is provided by the curator of a hospital art collection. The collection's purpose is, according to their mission statement, to *“improve the patient experience”* but some artworks, she says, can be harmful to people who are unwell:

*“You have to be mindful what you are using and what you are bringing into the space. What things might be misinterpreted (...) It’s really basic stuff like red; we can’t have a lot of red. Reds and browns because of the bodily functions associated. We had to take down a quite long-standing piece in one of our units because it was making people feel sick. There are real physical reactions to it.”* (Interviewee No. 5, 2019)

Both examples illustrate clearly how artworks that do not generate the desired aesthetic experience lose value, and we also learn how much function and value of art influence each other. So why do corporations not just play it safe and only display decorative and pleasant sceneries and sunsets to their staff?

The answer lies in the psychological effects that different forms of art can have. In his 2009 publication, van Maanen introduces three types of aesthetic communication: decorative, comfortable and challenging, basing his framework on Bourdieu’s concept of ‘aesthetic disposition’ and Gadamer’s theories about the relationship between form and meaning (van Maanen, 2009, p. 187). According to van Maanen, decorative aesthetic communication consists of forms that do not seek meaning; comfortable aesthetic communication can be understood by means of familiar perceptual schemata and challenging aesthetic communication calls for a reassessment of one’s perceptual schemata. He then assigns each of these different categories of aesthetic communications and experiences different emotional effects that relate to the



value and function of this type of art. Figure 4 shows a summary of van Maanen's concept of the three different aesthetic communications.

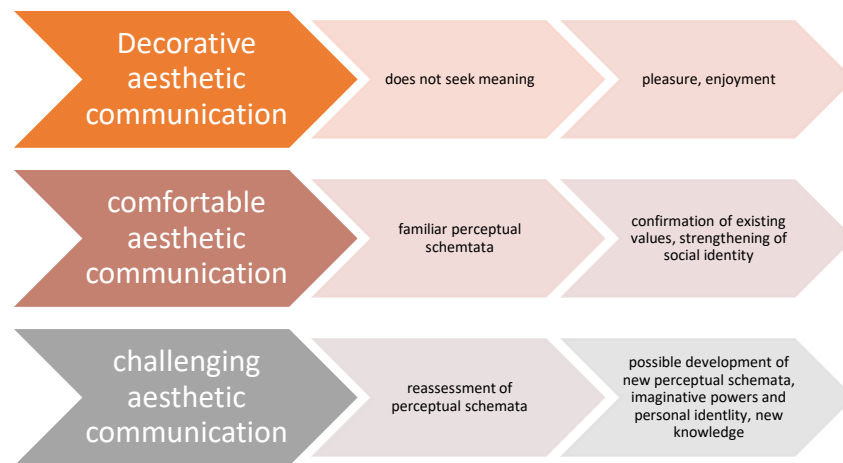


Figure 3: van Maanen's Three Types of Aesthetic Communication

As shown in the diagram, decorative aesthetic communication forms do not call for meaning, which means that the only emotional effects are the pleasure that derives from the pure enjoyment of the art (without giving it meaning) or enjoying the relationship between the artwork and its surroundings (van Maanen, 2009, p. 193).

Comfortable aesthetic communication engages the emotional system without challenging it. The emotional effects are the enjoyment of the recognition and reliving of familiar schemata and sharing known emotions and concepts with others, which is where the value of this type of art lies as well. The function of comfortable aesthetic communication is as van Maanen describes the confirmation of existing values, of the personal identity and the strengthening of social identity.

For the challenging aesthetic communication, these emotional effects apply as well. However, additionally, it is possible to experience new and unfamiliar forms of emotions and therefore having to use the imaginative power to deal with the discrepancy between the known and the unknown. An additional joy can derive from sharing these new emotions and learned concepts with others. The value of the challenging aesthetic communication therefore lies in the unfamiliar and its function is, therefore, the possible development of new perceptual schemata, imaginative powers and personal identity. It also supports the regulation of the emotional system and development of new knowledge, insights and one's own social identity (van Maanen, 2009, p. 195). Van Maanen's concept of the emotional effects of challenging aesthetic

communication aligns with the findings of a study published in 2001 by Professor Semir Zeki, a neurobiologist at University College London, who claims that being surrounded by art increases critical thinking, empathy and tolerance towards people different from yourself (Zeki, 2001, pp. 51–52). Van Maanen also stresses that an essential aspect of art lies in sharing the aesthetic experience with others. When people share familiar or new perceptions experienced together through an aesthetic experience with others, the group of audience members feel more united.

Several benefits therefore lie in the engagement with challenging aesthetic communication that decorative art cannot offer. These insights might explain why mission statements and catalogues of corporate art collection often state that the collection's purpose, besides *“to inspire”* and *“to energize”*, is often also *“to challenge”* and encourage critical thinking.

Gaia Donzet, Director of the corporate foundation Carmignac, for example, explains in a publication from 2015 the purpose of the corporate art collection as the following: *“It helps to consolidate energies and stimulate initiatives. Artworks challenge people and bring them forward.”* (Goodrow and Conzen, 2015, p. 128)

Edouard Carmignac, founder and CEO of the company, adds in agreement that the collection *“provides the perfect antidote to conformity and convention.”* (Goodrow and Conzen, 2015, p. 128) Silke Schuster- Müller, Head of Social Concerns and collections' manager at the DekaBank Deutschland, says that their art collection *“both challenges and enriches our everyday work.”* (Goodrow and Conzen, 2015, p. 170). And Dr Alfredo Gysi, Chairman of BSI SA finds that their art collection *“enriches people, enhances each other's understanding, shows new perspectives and promotes creative and original thinking”* (Goodrow and Conzen, 2015, p. 122).

In these cases, displaying scenery or decorative art would perhaps be perceived as pleasant and cheerful, but would not serve the purpose of the art collection to spark discussions or provoke a critical reaction. Curators often face a difficult challenge to choose artworks that fit into the collection, are meaningful and exciting to look at but are at the same time not too provocative so that it disturbs the audience to the extent that they feel unwell or offended.

Every corporate curator continually deals with the question of *“What is appropriate for an office environment?”*. Behnke describes in his 2007 publication about corporate art collecting, a phenomenon many corporate curators face:

*“Quite often, employees in corporations complain about contemporary or modern art that is imposed on them as decoration in their offices. Because they never had any contact with this kind of ‘wall decoration’ before, they often regard these installations as colonization of their environment” (Behnke, 2007, p. 235)*

The curator of an international corporation providing financial services sums up the phenomenon of a ‘captive audience’ during an interview in February 2019:

*“The difficulty about a corporate collection is that your audience is not a voluntary audience; it is a captive audience. People who come to work come to work. They don’t come to be offended or equally, to be enlightened. They come to do a job and get paid. So, you are kind of pushing the boundaries of expectation (...). And this is where the issue has arisen when members of staff say, ‘I will go home if I have to work in front of this piece because it offends me.’ and you can question that and say, ‘why does it offend you?’, but actually, ultimately, if it does, it does. The first port of call is to see if this was a one-off or if it happens more often (...), the second port of call is to remove the problem and put it somewhere else. And in the worst case, the work goes away and is never seen again.” (Interviewee No. 3, 2019)*

The curator of one of the biggest corporate art collections within the financial services sector describes a careful approach when acquiring art in an interview in September 2018:

*“You know we are a corporate working environment, and you do have to be sensitive around that and be aware of it, and you know a lot of people within the bank will see the artwork, whether it’s clients or visitors or employees so you have to be sensitive to anything that is overtly – basically overt in anything. Anything that is too sexual – we tend to not have any nudity in the collection, anything that’s particularly political anything that is particularly - things (...), that could cause offence to some people within the bank, it’s just something we have to be careful within the working environment. We’re not a museum; we’re not an institution, so there are those restrictions in place.” (Interviewee No. 1, 2018)*

There were several themes in artworks that curators in my interviews expressed to be not appropriate for an office environment. This includes, but is not limited to, anything of sexual or pornographic nature, including nudes, anything thematically related to violence, war,

swearwords, abuse or racism, religious and political themes as well as death and drugs. Some curators followed strict censorship of these topics; others had a less stringent approach. Several curators expressed that they would consider including artworks treating these themes but only if the topic was not displayed too 'overtly'.

Interviewee number 9 has been the curator and founder of the corporate art collection of a law firm for the last 25 years - first while also being a partner at the firm, and then later as full-time curator of the collection. The collection, he said, "reflects an appetite for challenging thought" and is less about bland pieces that please the audience but more about provoking thoughts and sparking conversation. In a personal interview in November 2018, he spoke about his experience with backlash from the employees and partners with artworks displayed in the office spaces and his approach to handling this kind of critique.

As a first example he mentioned a series of screen prints showing the demolition and subsequent destruction of a high-rise building of flats. The artwork preceded two historic events (the Grenfell fire in London in 2017 and 9/11 terrorist attack in New York) where high-rise buildings were famously destroyed and is therefore not a reference to these events. Nevertheless, interviewee number 9 explained that employees later connected the images of these events with the artworks and felt uncomfortable about them. In our conversation interviewee number 9 described a proactive approach in dealing with the complaints:

*"I heard that there were mutterings about these pictures after Grenfell. So, I said I'd like to talk about this work (...) to people who had concerns. And I should think about 20 people - how many people are here, 800? - about 20 people came, and I explained why I thought it was appropriate to have this series of photographs of controlled demolition of dangerous flats (...). It was the second time it had happened; the senior partner said was it appropriate to have these things up immediately after 9/11. So, I said yes, and I said why."* (Interviewee No. 9, 2018)

However, confrontation is not the only solution to employee complaints. Interviewee number 9 further reflected on two artworks, one showing a nude man jumping and a text-piece including a curse-word which had received negative feedback in one of the office branches where they were displayed. Following the negative feedback, interviewee number 9 decided to try and move these artworks to other office branches:

*“There are other things that I’ve taken down. (...) We have a wonderful series [showing a man] and it is his back view, naked, jumping up and down. But I have to say I’ve had issues with hanging it. People have prepared to speak up and said, ‘We don’t think this is appropriate.’ (...) We had a (...) text piece with the word ‘fuck’ in it. That was objected to. It’s now in [another city]; they don’t have a problem with it. (...)”* (Interviewee No. 9, 2018)

However, sometimes even moving an artwork to another branch is not enough. One particular artwork showing a series of portraits of the same man wearing strong make-up or looking upset and holding an unidentifiable object in his mouth has been specifically unpopular in several branches of interviewee number 9’s company.

*“That [artwork] has never gone down well. I have been asked to take them down, twice in [city name] and from two of our European offices.”* (Interviewee No. 9, 2018)

Despite the unpopularity of this particular artwork by several employees in the company’s branches across Europe, the piece was later featured in one of the first-ever exhibitions of the firm’s art collection curated by staff themselves. The exhibition was a response to personal and societal conflicts showing several artworks which were part of the firm’s art collection and other selected artists. While this is a positive example of the learning and growth of employees and a curator who managed to stand his ground by explaining and communicating about an acquired artwork, there are certain instances where respecting employees and keeping their wellbeing in mind, meant simply taking an artwork down. Interviewee number 9 further reflected on his curatorial approach explaining that he will continue to take risks in his acquisition even if it challenges his audience:

*“My approach is that art isn’t tame or tameable. And you’ve got to face up to that. If you’re only going to buy bland things that don’t offend anybody you’re going to end up with a very boring collection. So I think it’s important that there is challenge and wildness and rawness as part of it.”* (Interviewee No. 9, 2018)

Interviewee number 10, the corporate curator of a bank expresses in an interview her general disagreement with the restriction and censorship that corporate collections often follow:

*“Death is part of our lives; religion is part of our lives. If we would cut ourselves like this, we couldn’t do the work we are doing.” (Interviewee No. 10, 2019)*

However, even though she explained that the bank she works for does not have any thematic restrictions when it comes to acquiring art, interviewee number 10 later recounts a case where she had to take a series of artworks down. The artwork, a sequence of photographs, shows two people climbing a tree. In the last sequence one person falls off the tree. After a tragic suicide of one of the bank’s employees, some staff made an uncomfortable connection between the artwork and the tragic event.

*“We had to put a series away (...) because a member of our employees jumped off the [office building] and killed themselves. (...) And a lot of employees were so mentally touched that they felt like the series was [a call for] a person to jump off a building. So, we took it down, as a sign of respect towards our employees. I mean, of course, it has nothing to do with the artwork. [This person] was suffering from depression.” (Interviewee No. 10, 2019)*

Incidents like this illustrate the issues around the phenomenon of the ‘captive audience’. It shows how much of an emotional effect an artwork can have on the onlooker. The restrictions of a corporate collection sometimes develop from within, from events surrounding a particular corporation, a social environment or, as in this example, by reminding the employees of a traumatic incident at their workplace.

The curator of an international investment management company recounts in an interview how negatively staff can react to controversial artworks, but also that what is deemed ‘controversial’ can change from country to country depending on political disputes or occasionally the age demographic of office staff. Younger staff, he said, are usually more open to provocative artworks. As other curators, interviewee number 3 indicates that he swaps and moves artworks to other branches if he has to take pieces down:

*“I’ve had staff in China crying in front of works that they find too politically or culturally provocative. (...) China and Taiwan are quite touchy around things like territory. (...) Where you have disputed territories and perhaps a piece is in some way discussing disputed territory or currency or geography that can be [difficult]. Taiwan is a disputed territory, and we had some work in Taiwan which talks about that - not popular. And then you move it to China, and you get*

*the same issue from the other side - not popular. Then you bring the piece over here. And then ironically you get countries like India, which you think is going to be (...) very conservative and really, they are up for anything. You can have all sorts of crazy things over there, and they enjoy it. It's also partly the demographic over there; the offices are very young.”* (Interviewee No. 3, 2019)

He further recounts a specific case with an artwork in a Japanese office that has been rejected by office staff. Explaining the cultural implications and interpretations of the artwork he admits that the artwork placement was not a good choice:

*“In Japan - fundamentally conservative - I've had work refused in Japan. (...) The piece that we had wasn't a very good choice. It was the artist photographing herself in a factory in Vietnam that produces underwear. And the staff (...) were offended by the fact that this picture was taken in a shop that makes ladies underwear. It wasn't the artist's point that it was underwear. They also didn't like the fact that it was a Vietnamese factory, that implied wage disadvantage and so on. People read in a lot of stuff, which may be there may not be there. But the fact that they put it there makes it a problem.”* (Interviewee No. 3, 2019)

He further explains that special consideration for cultural differences is needed when curating artworks in different branches of the corporation, acknowledging that for him as a British curator who knows more about the European culture, this was a learning process:

*“The UK [employees are] basically very tolerant people, still prepared to express an opinion, it tends to be much more subjective. I never had any reasonable veto in the UK. I had people say 'that looks stupid in our office' or 'that's just a childish thing that my daughter could have done', but that's not rejecting it that's just a reactionary thing. I may have been a bit more careful. Truth is as a curator you are only as good as your experience, and I know a lot more about European culture. I know a lot more about Chinese and Asian culture now, and certainly know to avoid more things than I used to.”* (Interviewee No. 3, 2019)

Similar to interviewee number 9, interviewee number 3 expresses that he still finds it important to take risks and challenge the audience, despite occasionally receiving backlash from the employees for some of his curatorial choices:

*"I keep on trying to take risks, though. Because otherwise you just buy wallpaper. But you have to be vigilant; now I check things quite exhaustively. If [the artworks] have some kind of script on it, I find out what it is. (...) But that's where corporate collections are compromising, and public collections got a much more free - not exactly free remit - but I mean it's free of some of these issues" (Interviewee No. 3, 2019)*

An indicator that art collections which are taken out of the corporate context indeed face less thematic restrictions is shown in the case of interviewee number 2. Interviewee number 2 is the curator for an art collection which transferred out of the corporate sphere and into a stand-alone non-profit collection after the corporation it originally belonged to was sold in 2000. Since then, the art collection has been part of a registered charity which is governed by six trustees, including three members who initially founded the art collection. The collection does not have a physical exhibition space but is publicly accessible by being loaned to national museums and institutions as well as private offices and organised travelling exhibitions. Part of the collection is also placed in government buildings, to promote cultural diplomacy. This way, up to 2/3rds of the collections' artworks are on display at all times. When talking about the acquisition policy of the former corporate collection, interviewee number 2 explains to me that the trustees rarely shy away from buying and displaying controversial themed art, not just because of the positive effect on the viewer, but because the shock-effect can garner media attention for the foundation:

*"We have a fair amount of nudity within the collection and are quite open to having that on the walls. We've got some politically divisive work, we've got some religious work, and we just acquired four photography works from refugee artists. (...) Our trustees don't shy away from politically provoking shows (...) Because we are such a small collection, we are keen on doing shows that are small, but really on point. It is a great way to get press and publicity by doing something provoking." (Interviewee No. 2, 2018)*

As we know from van Maanen's theories about aesthetic communication, there is a high payoff when engaging with challenging aesthetic communication, especially when shared with others. For corporate curators, this means that challenging art has a higher value and can fulfil functions beyond decoration. As the corporate curator of a bank summarizes in our conversation:



*“Art is a form of communication and gives us the possibility to think of the situations we are living in, in a different way – sometimes easier, sometimes more difficult. And irritation is a fundamental topic in the art world. Irritation makes you see. If you are not irritated, you don’t see.”* (Interviewee No. 10, 2019)

However, this approach means continuously testing the boundaries with the risk of having to justify choices in front of employees and other stakeholders and sometimes even having to take down displayed artworks. Especially when operating in a different cultural environment, curators have to be aware of local taboos and conflicts. However, trying to avoid offence from the outset and opting for safer choices when acquiring art, can easily lead to having a decorative art collection that the audience will not engage with in a more meaningful way, therefore being of lesser value and only fulfilling a limited function within the corporation. What the interviews also show is that all curators have an awareness of the role that the art plays in the daily life of employees, both positive and negative. Ultimately, the employees' feedback has significance, and they do have a voice when it comes to the art hung in the office spaces around them. All corporations in my study therefore make a conscious effort to offer a variety of methods for staff and visitors to engage with the art displayed. This ranges from informative labels on the walls to catalogues, newsletters, and an in-house database of the collection. Corporate collectors often offer regular tours to staff, clients and sometimes the public. Some collectors even organise tours through artists' studios for their staff and their families. A common practice is also that senior staff with private offices can choose the art that is hung in their office spaces.

Determining the value and function of art for a corporation is not as straightforward as it seems and not always a question of how decorative an artwork is in an office environment. The curator faces, within a corporation, the unique challenge to balance between curating interesting high-value art but also recognising the potential sensitivity of the employees who spend every day around the artworks. There are as many different approaches to face this challenge as there are corporate collections, but ultimately a high value is achieved when art is seen and engaged with. The aesthetic function might vary and could range from being purely decorative to being thought-provoking and challenging. A corporate curator is, to a certain degree, subject to the influence and conditions of the employees' wellbeing and the corporation's overall image and can therefore not act as autonomously as a curator for a charity or museum collection might be able to.

### 3.4. The Social Value and Function of Art

In the last two sections, we learned that besides the emotional and learning effects that art can have, there are also social aspects that can create value for a corporation. In the past, art has been used to elevate one's status due to the prestige and honour that comes with owning art in western society. In this section I want to concentrate on the third and last question cluster and explain how exactly corporations utilize art within a social context.

As previously explained, an essential aspect of art that amplifies its benefits lies in sharing the aesthetic experience with others. Sharing new perceptions experienced together through an aesthetic experience can lead to more cohesion and unity within a group of people. This aspect can be utilized by a corporation when trying to create new or strengthen existing relationships within their network.

A good example of this is the AXA ART collection. AXA Group is a French-owned global leader in the field of financial services and insurances, with its headquarters in Paris. Besides offering services like life-, travel- and home insurances the company specialised, with its subsidiary AXA ART, on insuring fine art and other collectables and with that plays an essential role in the art world, by insuring art collections as well as being an art collector themselves (Goodrow and Conzen, 2015, p. 84). AXA's own collection runs under the name *Passion and Patronage* and comprises more than 12,180 works by approximately 1,400 artists displayed in their offices in Paris (France), Cologne (Germany), New York (USA), Mexico City (Mexico), Zurich (Switzerland) and Brussels (Belgium).

Henri de Castries, CEO and Chairman of the AXA Group, sees a natural connection between collecting art, preserving it and AXA's work in the insurance sector:

*"As an insurer, we naturally care about the long term, and protecting our cultural heritage is part of our mission. The collections reflect the diversity of our group, our history and of course, our passion for art."* (Goodrow and Conzen, 2015, p. 83)

AXA uses its art collection to hold regular exhibitions at different art fairs, connecting to people who are interested in art and might own art themselves. In a press release from 2016 about an exhibition of the corporate collection taking place at the Art Basel fair, the global CEO of AXA ART Kai Kuklinski talks about the reason AXA is exhibiting its collection at the art fair:

*“We are very happy to be able to present a part of our art collection to the guests at Art Basel in Basel. In this way, we are able to draw attention not only to works that we believe are important but also to the value of corporate collections in general. The exhibition documents our sense of our own corporate identity, our passion for art, and, above all our efforts to protect art and to maintain its value.” (AXA ART, 2016)*

Notably, the press release only offers more information about the AXA ART Insurance programme instead of the actual art collection that is exhibited at Art Basel, which indicates that the motivation behind the exhibition is to promote AXA’s services as art insurers and connect to new potential clients, rather than to inform about the value of corporate art collections.

Owning an art collection gives AXA ART access to events like Art Basel, which attracts up to 90,000 visitors each year (Art Basel, 2020). All these visitors are potential clients for AXA and exhibiting their collection gives the insurer the legitimacy to be part of the event. By owning an art collection, AXA also creates a sense of cohesion and commonality with its wealthy clients who own art collections as well.

Interviewee number 1 is the curator for an international bank, which owns one of the most significant corporate art collections within the financial services sector. Because of their involvement in art, the bank is also the lead partner for a renowned international art fair and holds regular exhibitions of works from their collection on the art fair. These exhibitions are not accessible to the regular art fair visitor – only invited individuals, usually high profile clients of the bank, are granted access to these private viewings. The fact that the bank is not trying to connect with the regular public, but with particular individuals, is evident by the restriction of access.

*“We have something called the (...) [private exhibition name] on [the art fair], which are basically these very strictly invite-only lounges for a mixture of both our wealth management clients, and you know, the top people in the art world really. So for people from institutions and artists and it’s a really nice space at [the art fair], on-site, and we host an exhibition there every year that changes – it’s usually in partnership with one artist.” (Interviewee No. 1, 2018)*

Contrary to the usual corporate social responsibility mission statements which mostly underline a corporation's efforts for the general public, these private exhibitions are only known and accessible to the people specifically invited, a network of people associated with high status in the art world or a particular net worth to be a ‘wealth management client’. For the bank, this is

an opportunity for relationship management with existing clients and the acquisition of new wealthy clients. The invited art world professionals provide consecration and legitimize the exhibition within the wealth lounge. In this way, art is used as the medium for getting everyone together in one room, but at the same time communicates the status and prestige of the bank to the clients.

The status that art has in society is also often strategically used by property developers to gain community consent in order to increase the attractiveness and, ultimately, the value of property in an area. This phenomenon has been described with the term 'Artwashing' by Feargus O'Sullivan in his critique of discussions and by critics in discussions about gentrification. O'Sullivan describes in his article *The Pernicious Realities of Artwashing* the way in which property development companies strategically use the presence of artists and creative workers to regenerate an area in London in order to remarket it to a more elite demographic (O'Sullivan, 2014). O'Sullivan says that what is often disguised as Corporate Social Responsibility, 'Placemaking' and community art programmes is often a way for corporations to first gain access to a specific community and subsequently through art programmes improve the perception of that area for potential new clients.

Another aspect of Artwashing is when corporations alter their controversial image by associating themselves with art. One of the most famous examples for this is the BP sponsorship of Tate Modern in London. After 26 years, BP ended its sponsorship of Tate modern in 2016, following the ever-increasing protests of environmental groups who strongly criticised the association of cultural institutes with the oil giant (Brown, 2011). Other examples of this are the Sackler Trust which has been an art patron to the National Portrait Gallery, the Tate and the Guggenheim in New York. The Sackler family, which owns pharmaceutical companies that are strongly linked to the opioid crisis in America, has recently announced that it is stopping all philanthropic gifts to cultural institutes after a flood of criticisms and protests from the public about Sackler sponsorship of the arts (Greenberger, 2019). The Beretta family is a gun manufacturer from Italy, which has supported the Venice Biennale and sponsors several art museums in Italy (Corbett, 2018). When controversial corporations sponsor art institutions or invest in the art world by buying art, it is seen as a way to 'make up' for unethical business choices while not actually changing their practice. When corporations 'artwash', they use art as a tool to distract from their problematic businesses, gaining the trust of the public. By being validated in the art world, they also receive validation in society or as interviewee number 17

describes it – art helps corporations to “*establish a social licence*” to operate and participate in society (Interviewee No. 17, 2019). This, of course, does not mean that every corporate art collection per se is a tool of deception, but it stresses how powerful the positive association with art and artists can be and how corporations have been consciously utilising art as a tool to raise the profile of their brand.

Art helps corporations to create relationships and to make a connection. It communicates to the world something about the company’s values and knowledge and helps to position a company within society. Corporations utilize an art collection to gain access to potential new clients, by finding common ground, or to specific communities, by using the social status of art as a way to generate consent. Art is often what brings people together in one room, and this can be invaluable to a corporation’s operation strategy.

### 3.5. Conclusion

The historical connection between art and business reveals that art has been traditionally used by businesses to ‘make up’ for questionable business practices and give back to society, symbolize class distinction and elevate one’s status as well as marketing a company’s product by appealing to their primary clientele. By analysing how corporate collectors utilize art collections today, we can see that there are many parallels between the traditional functions of art and the instrumentalization of art within businesses today. The modern term ‘Artwashing’ for example describes a phenomenon where corporations distract or try to make up for socially condemned business practices, similar to how they historically tried to atone for their sins of violating the prohibitions of usury, a condemned business practice at the time. Private exhibitions for wealthy clients only and exclusive exhibition openings are a contemporary way of associating with the affluent class in society and convey the corporations’ cultural status. Using the art collection to promote a corporation’s art insurance services is a good example of connecting and subtly advertising to a target audience, in a sense similar to using artworks that appeal to housewives to sell soap as in the case of William Hesketh Lever. Utilizing art to convey a corporation’s values and beliefs as images of morality and conduct can be traced back to the way churches utilized imagery in Renaissance Italy for the very same reasons.

Its purpose and functionality predominantly determine the added value of art within a corporate collection. The displayed art has to thematically and aesthetically align with the corporations’ purpose, or the collection can otherwise even be harmful to a company’s image. The added value is significantly less if art is not seen, not engaged with or only decorative.

Particularly challenging art has an effect on the viewer and can actually stimulate their development but is also the most difficult one to justify in an office space where people come to work and bears a risk of offending and upsetting people. It is specifically important to stress here how much of an impact art can have on the employees and that corporate curators generally seem to be especially aware of this and recognize their responsibility towards the employees.

Art in corporations often also has the function of bringing people together. Social events around art, like exhibition openings and tours through the art collection, are also used as an opportunity to share experiences and unite a group and thereby cause greater cohesion; this is not just important within a corporation, but also invaluable for relationship management with existing or new clients, contractors and sometimes even the public.

When relating the findings of this chapter back to Bourdieu's theory of capital, we can see that an art collection offers several ways of accumulating social and cultural capital which can then be converted to more economic capital and at the same time enable a corporation to appropriate an elevated status of value and prestige in society. As objectified cultural capital art has the power to convey the possession of cultural capital symbolically. This means that the sole ownership of an art collection symbolizes a corporations' knowledge and appreciation of art and helps corporations to distinguish themselves from other agents on the field. Educating the employees about the art collection can also be interpreted as an investment into raising the embodied cultural capital of the staff over time, which is needed to maximise the value of objectified cultural capital. If the employees do not have the skills to decode and appreciate the works displayed in the office, the collection loses its value as cultural capital, at least for the employees.

Corporations often use art to increase their network and therefore their social capital. The collection can help gain access to exclusive events and help corporations build relationships with an audience that can be easily transformed to new clients. The benefits that corporations gain by being part of the cultural field also include the solidarity and shared sense of identity that some corporations need to further operate in society.

As discussed in chapter II, Bourdieu further argues that the value of art as a symbolic good cannot just be measured by the addition of the economic value of its components but by being

recognized as an artwork. Another aspect that influences the value of art as a symbolic good in a corporation is the perceived functionality of the artwork. Within a corporation, an artwork can only add to its economic value when its aesthetic effect aligns with its purpose.

The findings around the curatorial censorship of thematically controversial artworks also give an insight into the corporate curators' habitus. Bourdieu describes habitus as an agent's attitude acquired through the reality that an individual is socialized in, by their experiences and through social processes. The corporate curators' habitus is strongly influenced on the one hand by trying to build up a meaningful and exciting art collection to maximise the benefits of art and therefore justify the economic investment in the first place. And on the other hand by keeping the employees' wellbeing at heart and navigating through several aspects of cultural and personal sensitivities. For some curators, this conflict leads to a safe and risk-averse approach to acquisition. For other curators, it leads to a compromise by addressing controversial subjects covertly within the acquired art, or occasionally take a loss and take an artwork down.

The next chapter will take a closer look at the structural processes around an art collection. With the help of curators' accounts and statistical data, I will assess how corporate collections develop over time and draw out the factors that influence buying and deaccessioning practices. I will also analyse acquisition patterns to find possible bias within corporate collecting and take a more detailed look into what exactly 'corporate art' may be.

## 4. Chapter IV - Internal Processes and Politics

### 4.1. Introduction

Corporate art collections have gone through a process of professionalisation since most of them were initially set up in the 1980s. Behnke (2007) found in his extensive quantitative survey including 120 corporate art collections in Germany, Switzerland and Austria that in the founding years of most corporate collections, during the 1980s and 1990s, 55% of art collections were administered by their CEO. In 2007, the time Behnke conducted his study, only 7% of collections were still administered by their CEO. 30% of companies had appointed a curator within their company to be responsible for the collection (Behnke, 2007, p. 228). A growing majority of the employed curators came from a professional art background and had previously worked in the art sector, holding professional ties to galleries and museums. Behnke sees the professionalisation of the collection's administration as the reason why many corporate collections underwent general changes; changes in collecting styles, a new concept and focus of

the collection and different intellectual profiles. A move away from the personal preferences of a CEO or board member who previously dominated the collections (Behnke, 2007, p. 229).

In today's companies, the job of a corporate curator comprises much more than overlooking and shaping the acquisition policy of the company's collection. A corporate curator is responsible for hanging, maintaining, and presenting the collection and communicating to the stakeholders, the employees, and the public. In this chapter, I will take a close look at how, 20 years after Behnke's study, corporations collect art. Accompanying the quantitative analysis introduced in chapter II, this chapter will provide a qualitative analysis of in-depth interviews with corporate curators from international companies with headquarters in the UK, Germany, Switzerland and France to give an insight into how the acquisition process is handled in detail today.

The data was analysed with the aim to answer the two main questions posed by this chapter:

1. How does a corporate collection develop over the years? What are the internal processes related to acquisition and deaccessioning works? What difficulties and challenges do corporate curators face and how much autonomy does a corporate curator hold within the corporation?
2. What do corporate collections typically collect? What biases exist in corporate collections? What is 'corporate art' and who are typical 'corporate artists'?

Analysing the findings in this chapter about internal processes within the corporation will help to explain where the corporate collector is positioned between the field of cultural production and the field of power, in Bourdieu's theoretical framework. The acquisition bias and buying patterns will help to understand if a corporate collection is a hegemonic device for dominant groups in society or if they are able to introduce counter-hegemonic values into the art world.

## 4.2. The Development of an Art Collection

In each of my interviews with corporate curators, I asked interviewees to walk me through their acquisition process, starting with the average number of new works annually acquired, through the criteria for shortlisting artists to the final decision making. The deciding factor for which artists and how many artworks can be acquired per year is, of course, first and foremost connected to the allocated budget, which is rarely ever disclosed to outsiders and strongly dependent on the economic performance of the company overall. However, the data suggests that there are several related factors, besides the budget, that shape the acquisition process of a corporate collection.



#### 4.2.1. Growth of a Collection

A typical art collection of a European company comprises of approximately 1200 artworks. This number sounds surprisingly small compared to the extensive art collections of JP Morgan, UBS or Deutsche Bank, which frequently make headlines in the press. However, these collections are really outliers to the norm, and out of 87 European corporate art collections, more than half have a collection equal or smaller than 1200 pieces. It is therefore often more feasible to describe the general size of a collection by using the median, rather than the mean, as the mean is more sensitive to very extreme data points within the sample.

When putting the size of the art collection in relation to the age, one can find a few interesting points within the data. Contrary to popular belief, a corporate collection does not merely grow linearly with time. The scatter diagram below (figure 5) shows on the vertical axis the number of artworks within an art collection and on the horizontal axis the age of the corresponding collection. It is important to note here that the foundation date of the art collection is not necessarily the same as the foundation date of the company itself. For both diagrams, the outliers (defined as collections with more than 10,000 artworks, which applies to only six cases overall) have also been disregarded and are not shown.

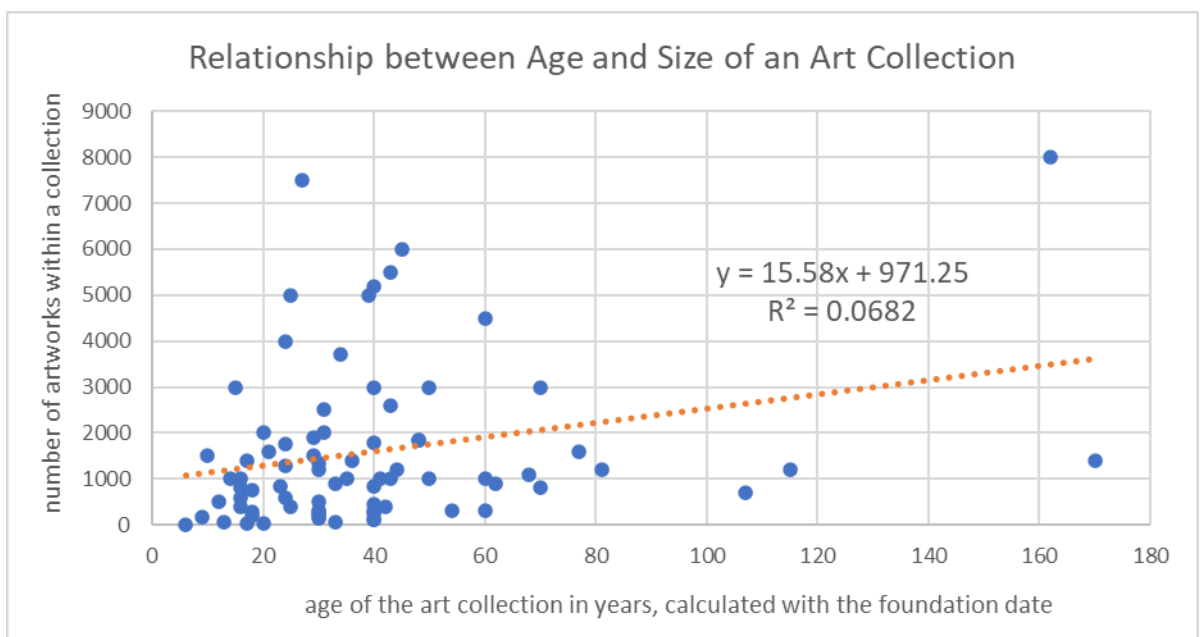


Figure 4: Relationship between Age and Size of an Art Collection, Scatter Plot

One can see in this diagram (figure 5) that five out of the six oldest collections are relatively small (with less than 2000 pieces) and the distribution of the size of collections seems to change only very little with collection age for collections older than about 20 years. The wide spread of the distribution during almost the entire record period of over 100 years suggests that various

other factors contribute to the collection size and collection age only plays a minor role in its determination. This is further supported by the low correlation factor of  $R^2 < 0.1$  and relatively small slope (of about 15 pieces per year) of the linear least-square-trend displayed in the diagram. Despite the large variations between individual collections one can still draw conclusions about the average size of collections and how it changes statistically with time.

For the bar diagram below (figure 6), art collections were grouped by their age. The vertical axis shows the average size of the art collection within the corresponding age group. The chart indicates that the size of art collections rapidly grows within the first 20 years after their foundation, but then stagnates at an average size of around 1500. Note that this saturation value is in good agreement with the overall median of 1200 artworks mentioned earlier. This could also explain the slightly increasing slope of the linear least-square-trend in the first diagram.

Both diagrams show that each art collection grows uniquely, and while the data suggests a particular behaviour of an average collection (initial growth and saturation size), there have to be additional factors strongly contributing to the evolution of each individual collection.

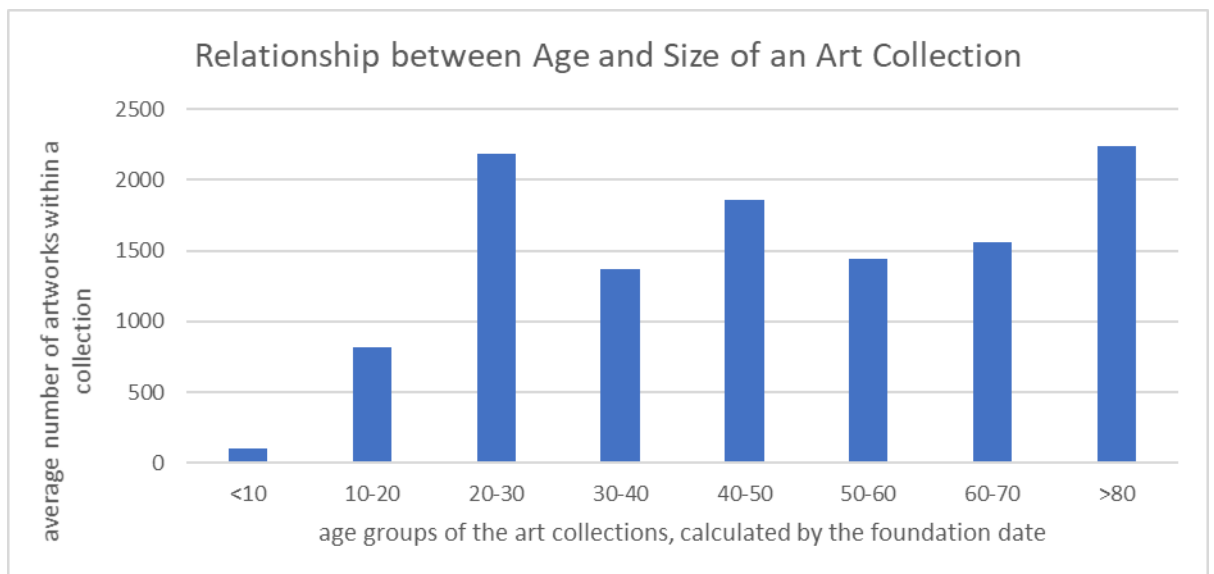


Figure 5: Relationship between Age and Size of an Art Collection, Bar Diagram

The data from the interviews suggests that the number of artworks acquired annually can vary from as few as 10-15 pieces to as many as 2000 and more artworks per year. Interviewees confirmed what the quantitative data indicated and stated, that when the decision is first made to start collecting art, many artworks are acquired in the first few years to build up the collection quickly. One interviewee who is the corporate curator for an international insurance

company describes the change from the first initiating years of the collection to later when she joined the company as a curator, as the following:

*“Until the year 2000, there was an art commission, consisting of many internal and external specialists. We had a 6-digit amount, so 100 000 Euros, and we tried to build up the collection. It was necessary to have an art commission to invest this money. In the year 2000 commission stopped and since 2004 when I came to [the company], we have only purchased a few works, so it was not necessary to have a big commission for this anymore.”* (Interviewee No. 4, 2019)

This also applies when a new branch or headquarter is opened, which is often mentioned as the initiation point for art collections as well. A new building also often opens up the opportunity for site-specific commissions. An interviewee, who is the Art Project Manager of an international bank, describes that the budget for new acquisitions is usually quite small, but that for new buildings extra money will be allocated:

*“I think that people think that we acquire new work all the time and that we purchase these massive works and that is actually the opposite of reality. We have a very small budget for new acquisitions. But then there are other instances when, for example, the bank might be opening a new building. So that happened a couple of years ago, and within the budget for the new building, they allocated some of that for new acquisitions, for artwork. So, in these instances, they tend to be more direct with an artist that we researched specifically for that, so it’s more of a commission.”* (Interviewee No. 1, 2018)

The curator for a rapidly growing private member’s club, founded in Europe and now opening clubs worldwide, explains to me:

*“We acquire 2000 works a year. Because we are expanding so much. So we have an ongoing budget.”* (Interviewee No. 6, 2019)

If there is less wall space to fill within an office, the rapid acquisition slows down, the budget is reduced, and the acquisition strategy often changes. An interviewee explains to me that she switched from formally buying a lot of photography to now acquiring more paintings:

*“Even though we still have wall space to fill, there is less of a demand for buying a lot of works. So rather buy less but spend a bit more on each work and paintings are usually a bit more expensive.”* (Interviewee No. 8, 2018)

In summary, it can therefore be said, that besides the acquisition budget, several defining factors determine the growth of an art collection. The number of acquired artworks might be

irregular and different, depending on the age and the overall size of the collection. Other factors are the medium that is collected and the number of works that are deaccessioned (if any). While an art collection typically goes through a rapid phase of growth within the first years of initiation, it usually tends to stagnate after the first 20 years.

Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that the growth of the art collection is ultimately heavily influenced by the economic circumstances of the company and that when the company grows, the art collection grows too. The continuity of art collecting within a company has come up in the interviews as well, and most curators agree that there should not be a full stop of acquisition in financially difficult times, as it causes significant gaps within the collection and cuts of the philanthropical support to artists. However, realistically there will be a significant cut to the acquisition budget and a rapid slowdown in acquisition activities, which is justified, in the view of the curators, because the art collection is just not a core business of the organisation.

#### 4.2.2. Decision-making

As mentioned above, Behnke (2007) suggested in his study an increasing trend of professional corporate curators taking over the management of the collection from CEOs and company trained administrators by the 2000s. While it is true that most of the corporations who seriously collect art employ a professional curator now, it is misleading to believe that the CEO or the Board would therefore be excluded from the acquisition process. The data from my interviews suggest that while the curator researches appropriate artists and artworks to acquire, maintains the contact with the galleries and visits art fairs, the actual decision making about what to buy takes place in a committee with the partners or the CEOs. Curators often work as in-house art consultants to the management, making recommendations and researching what to acquire next for the art collection. Out of 18 corporate curators that were interviewed, only three stated that they, as curators, were the sole decision-makers when it came to acquiring art. Fourteen curators described that the decision was reached either directly working with the CEO or via an art committee consisting of the curator and partners of the firm or upper management.

The curator of a multinational private bank with headquarters in Switzerland describes the acquisition committee as the following:

*“In the decisional process we have an acquisition committee, all in all, we are four members who decide what gets into the collection, but the curator does the propositions and gets the validation from the acquisition committee. [The committee] is the owners of the bank. It's three*

*owners, and one is an ex-banker, but he has a very large private collection, so they are very knowledgeable.” (Interviewee No. 7, 2019)*

Another curator of an international insurance provider describes the close working relationship with the CEO when it comes to the art collection:

*“It's myself, and it was previously [Previous CEO], he was responsible and in charge of the collection up until early last year. Now it's [New CEO], who is the CEO within the company and my role hasn't changed. I still go around looking at things, sometimes with [New CEO], sometimes without. But I present things to him whenever I can and whenever I see something. So he ultimately makes decisions, and we have a budget that is fixed every year.” (Interviewee No. 8, 2018)*

In one instance, a curator who was formerly a partner within the law firm had built up and shaped the entire art collection over more than 30 years by himself. He kept his role as curator for the firm when he retired as a lawyer and partner. He was the sole decision-maker and buyer of art in the firm for the entire time while he was working there, but now that he has retired, he explained, the process has changed and a committee of partners must approve his acquisitions before buying. (Interviewee No. 9, 2018)

The collaborative approach between the management and the curator to acquiring art within a corporation is an important part of the corporate curator's practice. It is more than just voting on what to acquire for the company. When asked about the involvement of management in the acquisition process, the curator of a commercial bank explains the importance of this collaborative approach:

*“We have two meetings a year, and then I propose certain artists and often I propose more than we need so that they can pick as well, but it's always artists I would be happy with totally, so they follow my approach, and two things are important for me about this. First of all, that they follow up on our topics and they don't say that it's only my decision. I think we should do this as a company and not as a curator. (...) It's the sense of, not only ownership; we are doing it together. It's our way of seeing the world.” (Interviewee No. 10, 2019)*

Other interviewees stress how these objective discussions as to what fits thematically in the collection often break the first reaction of management to just judge by personal taste and at the same time help to create a sense of ownership (Interviewee No. 11, 2019). It is also worth noting that all artworks discussed in the committees have already undergone an extensive research and vetting process by the curator beforehand, so the management only makes a

decision about preselected works. While the role of the management in the acquisition process is evident, it is not quite clear how much staff are actively included in the development of the art collection. The curator for an international law firm describes to me the work with the art committee of different branches of the corporation, which initially sounds more like a democratic approach to acquiring art:

*"In each country, we form an art committee, and it's very much who wants to come. It may be three people, or it may be ten people. So sometimes it works really well, but there is a certain freedom in the structure of the company if it allows a certain freedom for people to make local decisions, with my input as a sort of procedure or policy."* (Interviewee No. 12, 2019)

After following up on the question and asking if every staff member was allowed to join the committee or if the seats were reserved for upper management, she elaborates:

*"Actually. I suppose... in theory...it depends. It depends on the policy of that local office and how it works there."* (Interviewee No. 12, 2019)

The involvement of employees in the art collection is often handled differently. In some cases, the curator consults a committee of staff separately to ask for suggestions and input for the art collection, before preparing the research to hand into the acquisition committee. Here, the curator is taking on a role as a cultural mediator between the staff and the management. In other companies, the curators do not actively consult the staff at all when it comes to developing the collection but are open to receiving their input and feedback. Employees are more seen as the receivers and the audience of the collection. They benefit from exhibitions and discussions around the collection; they are invited to participate, sometimes even together with their families and children, in workshops with artists from the collection or tour their studio spaces. In some instances, the employees can cast a vote when the corporation is hosting a competition for graduate art students. A common way to involve employees in the art collection more personally is to let them choose which artworks they would like in their office spaces. Here, the curator either prepares a few suggestions, or the employee can look through a database of available artworks within the collection. This option is only available to private offices though, not open-plan offices, which presupposes that the employee has to be at a certain career level to enjoy a private office in the first place. Generally, for employees an art collection is more part of a benefit-system connected to working for a particular company. The higher ranked the employee is within the company, the more opportunities they have to actively be part of the development of the collection.

Considering that only a very small group of people get a seat at the table to choose the artworks of the collection, I want to take a closer look in the next sections of this chapter at where art is purchased, and which artists are commonly purchased in corporate collections.

#### 4.2.3. Buying Sources and Deaccessioning

There is a common misconception that corporations with big acquisition budgets are buying off the prestigious and expensive art in auction houses, to flip them and sell them on for big profit.

In my research, I found that quite the opposite is the case, and corporations now rarely ever buy from the secondary market. In the rare cases that a corporate curator bids at an auction, it is usually because a specific work from a specific artist is missing within their collection. In the interviews, curators explained several reasons why corporations now commonly buy on the primary market, which are mainly connected to the internal process of collecting art and the image that corporate collectors want to portray to the public and their clients.

Firstly, the process of acquiring art within a corporate collection from researching artists, to committee meetings and finally, the approval of an acquisition is often too slow for taking part in auctions. It seems that for corporate collectors, auctions are simply not the most fitting way to acquire art anymore, now that there are several people involved in the decision process of acquisitions and a fixed annual budget is set for the curator. One curator whose corporate collection specializes in contemporary photography also comments on the difficulty of receiving specific information about the artworks' past when buying via auction:

*"No, we don't buy from auctions, because when we buy from auctions, we don't know how much light the photo has already been exposed to."* (Interviewee No. 10, 2019)

Secondly, there is an aversion to being perceived as lavish spenders in the eyes of the stakeholders when it comes to expensive purchases, as often associated with purchasing via auction. An art collection is not part of the core business of a corporation, and especially companies charging commissions and fees in their usual business do not want to make the impression that they are 'wasting' clients' money. Ultimately, spending any extortionate amount of money on a non-core business activity has to be somehow justified to the stakeholders of the company, as well as to the clients.

Lastly, buying from artists directly if possible or from their representing galleries is, for corporate curators, not just a cost-efficient solution to acquire art, but it also aligns with their concept of art patronage and supporting living artists, that they communicate to the public.

Another reason that might explain the preferred buying sources of corporate collectors is that 85% of European Art collections<sup>7</sup> stated that the focus of their art collection is contemporary art only. Art fairs, contemporary galleries and, of course, the artist directly offer a much better platform than auctions when it comes to acquiring the newest and freshest art on the market.

Artworks are usually acquired at art fairs, via galleries or the artist directly, only very rarely via auction. This has, on the one hand, practical reasons, including the internal processes of acquiring art collaboratively with an acquisition committee. However, on the other hand, the buying process strongly illustrates how much the work of the corporate curator is influenced by preserving the corporation's image with regards to the clients and the public.

When discussing how art comes into a corporation, one has to also consider the question of how it leaves. Especially, when a company inherits artworks through company merging or when the curator feels like the collection needs to be refocussed, the question arises what to do with the artworks? While interviewing curators, it soon became clear that different companies find different ways of deaccessioning artworks. The first reaction to the question of selling artworks was often defensive, explaining that the collection is not for investment purposes and not for profit. However, when further inquired about what happened to artworks in the past that did not fit the core collection anymore, some curators explained that on these few occasions the artworks had, in fact, been sold. Deaccessioning artworks which have increased in value to acquire new lower-cost works by younger artists also seems to be a way for corporations to keep the art collection alive during financially difficult phases and budget cuts. The curator of an international energy provider's art collection explained in the interview the company's approach to deaccessioning:

*"I know there were many voices that said 'let's take out all art and sell everything and cut it back' which is, of course, a possibility. But since it's been such a tradition, close embedded into the company culture, we still keep it up. But the money, of course, is missing. That's why I became creative and said, ok then we have to sell and buy new and become creative and see what we can do and keep this topic, this whole topic, lively even without a lot of money."*  
(Interviewee No. 13, 2019)

Even though the profit of the sale, in this case, is going back into the art collection, and a corporate collection unlike a public museum is under no legal obligation to never sell their art collection, deaccessioning via sale or auction seems to be a taboo with corporate collectors.

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<sup>7</sup> Based on a total of 87 from my dataset



One curator shared their negative experience with selling an artwork out of a corporate collection in the interview:

*“Well, unfortunately, we sold our most valuable work on Jackson Pollock, and that had so much press then that went to all newspapers and all over Germany but also over Germany's borders and unfortunately that had a very, very high visibility many people think when they think of the [Corporation Name] art collection - they think of that Jackson Pollock.”* (Interviewee No. 13, 2019)

Another curator explained why selling an artwork can have negative consequences when operating on the art market as a collector:

*“I wouldn't want to suddenly decide (...) to become a collection which sells because that would be a betrayal of trust, if you like, to the assumptions that we make when we buy a work. So, you have to be clear with your intentions. If we did decide to sell a piece, I would approach the people that were involved and explain what we are doing and see if there are any issues that come with that. You have to be transparent, and clearly, when I buy a work, I have a relationship with people based on certain assumptions. So, you have to respect these assumptions. And if I suddenly turn around and say, you gave me that piece with a 30% discount and now selling it for a 300% profit they might be understandably pissed off at that. So, the responsibility is there to act in an honourable way with the people you are working with. Otherwise, you find yourself with no friends; people wouldn't want to sell to you. So, in a way what gives you access to a good artwork is that people know we are keeping it. We don't turn around and try to sell it the next year.”* (Interviewee No. 3, 2019)

He explained in the same interview how the company and he as a curator approach deaccessioning by giving to charity as opposed to selling:

*“We don't ever sell. We haven't sold anything before. This year for the first time, we did donate about 100 artworks which had ceased to be of any particular sort of importance to the collection. Where there was either duplication or where they were almost acquired by accident rather than by design, and they were disposed of via the process of deaccessioning via a charitable gift.”* (Interviewee No. 3, 2019)

One can see that there are two fundamentally different motivations underlying the deaccessioning of artworks in these cases. On the one hand, there is a corporation deaccessioning via sale to reinvest the funds into new artworks to keep the art collection active and alive when funds within the corporation are missing, and on the other hand, a corporation

deaccessions via charitable gift, simply to help focus the collection and 'clean up around the edges'. The funds from a sale here are not needed for reinvestment. It becomes clear that while selling is generally frowned upon and can even have negative consequences by damaging a corporation's reputation and generate distrust from other agents in the art world, the need to generate funds sometimes outweighs the possible risks of doing so. This becomes particularly clear when the funds are not needed to keep the art collection alive but to save employees' jobs or the core business of the corporation. The phenomenon of corporations auctioning off their art collections during an economic recession has been documented during the financial crisis in 2008 (see chapter III, 3.2.). Most recently, in early 2020, the Art Newspaper published an online article on Deutsche Bank selling one of their most prestigious and valued artworks, Gerhard Richter's *Faust* (1982). The artwork was acquired over 30 years ago and has since been displayed in the bank's lobby, at their Wall Street offices in New York.

The article states that the Bank has been financially struggling since 2008 and that the artwork had to be deaccessioned due to an office move to a new building, where there is no space for Richter's large-scale triptych. The piece was sold to a private collector who made an 'attractive offer', no name was given in the article. It is furthermore explained that while Deutsche Bank is still collecting new artworks and vowing their continued support of contemporary art, acquisition has generally slowed down, and valuable paintings will continue to be deaccessioned (Hickley, 2020). This news emerged after Deutsche Bank was widely criticised only a year before in 2019 for publishing a statement vowing not to touch the art collection while letting 18,000 people go during a process of 'global restructuring'. The Sunday Telegraph published an article titled *Art collection spared while Deutsche axes staff* citing disgruntled ex-employees describing the bank's decision to prioritize the art collection as "*ridiculous*" (Lucy Burton, 2019).

The most recent economic crisis, caused by the Covid-19 lockdown, has affected several businesses across all sectors, but it has hit the aviation industry incredibly hard by suspending all travel for months. In June 2020 several press outlets published the news that British Airways had decided to sell a selection of incredibly valuable artworks from their art collection via auction with Sotheby's to help generate funds to save jobs and the business as a whole (Hotten, 2020). The Guardian cites Alex Cruz, the airlines chief executive, promising to "*take every possible action to conserve cash*" during the crisis (Topham, 2020). Even though the airline did not disclose which artworks specifically are going to be sold, the BBC reports that the art collection holds several high-value names like Damien Hirst, Bridget Riley, Anish Kapoor and Gary Hume, some of their pieces are estimated to generate millions of pounds. Many artworks

were acquired early on in the artists' careers and have substantially increased in value during the past two decades.

The corporate curator of an investment management corporation explained to me in a discussion about the British Airways sale that when corporations auction off valuable artworks from their collection, it is almost always a reaction to financial stress, and not a proactive sales policy within the corporation:

*„When these moments happen, in terms of corporate collections, it almost always as a response to some kind of stress. It's more of a reactive thing. I think it's very rare where it's actually a proactive thing. It's very rare that you have an art collection and they say each year we're going to sit down and dispose of things. We have a deaccessioning policy which is very minor, a small amount of gift disposals, they are charitable donations, not for sales. But I can't think of any company that is actively seeking a sales policy within the collection. But at the time when the company goes bust, or when they are bought or merged or have some massive PR disaster, then you've got a situation. That's the problem. That comes down to the difference between corporate management and cultural management. If you are looking at a cultural institution in a financial crisis, then the first step wouldn't be to sell their collection. It would be to go to the government or raise money through private donors. If you get a company which is suffering some sort of financial stress, they will look for things they can do to try and deal with that stress.“ (Interviewee No. 3, 2020)*

He further explained the difficulty and pressures a CEO is faced with in financially hard times and the ties to the shareholders of a corporation:

*“It can be quite hard, if you have 50 million pounds on your balance sheet and your shareholders are saying, ‘You're answerable to us, we own this business’. And you're sitting on 50 million pounds of art, and you're also deciding to sack loads of employees, you have to sort this out. No company's management, no company's executive will ignore that. They've got to respond.“ (Interviewee No. 3, 2020)*

Selling off valuable artworks does not always generate the funds to save the corporation or employees from being made redundant entirely, but according to the interviewee it can sometimes also just be a PR statement for the public, symbolizing that something is being done, a sacrifice is being made to save jobs. In opposite to cultural institutes, the art collection is not part of a corporation's core business and not prioritized when it comes to saving the business.

The tenor is that corporations do not want to be seen as profiting financially from ‘flipping’ artworks, for fear of sabotaging their reputation as a collector in the art world and undermining relationships with galleries and artists. However, the art collection seems to lose its sanctity when a corporation faces bankruptcy and large-scale redundancies as in the British Airways case or economically struggles, as in Deutsche Bank’s case. It seems that *“We do not sell our artworks”* as often quoted from the interviews, means in reality: *“We do not sell our artworks, as long as we do not have to”*. A corporate collection belongs to the corporation and can therefore be sold if needs be. Most of the times this happens as a reaction to financial stress, to save the core business, employees’ jobs or to reinvest into artworks, to keep the art collection alive.

While accredited museums act within an agreed legal and ethical framework and have approved policies for deaccessioning works from their collection, a corporate collector has no legal obligations to the artists or to the public on how to manage their collection. It is up to each company to develop its own policies or code of ethics for its art collection. Associations like the IACCCA (International Association of Corporate Collections of Contemporary Art) offer a platform for corporate curators to discuss the responsibilities of corporate collecting and share their views and experiences with each other. A common way to protect the art collection from sales and economic changes to the corporation is to give the collection the legal structure of a private foundation, a charitable company limited by guarantee or a charitable trust. Company affiliated foundations who manage an art collection are, for example, the Prada Foundation, the AkzoNobel Art Foundation or the Fondazione Ermanno Casoli. Setting up the art collection as a separate legal entity can have several benefits for a corporation. Besides offering tax exemptions and reductions, CEOs or company owners can still maintain control over their assets by acting as a trustee to the company associated foundation or charity. Interviewees have also expressed that while corporate art collections are usually grouped within the marketing communications department, being a separate legal entity would help the art collection gain more independence and be at an ‘arms-length’ from the corporation:

*“Right now, the board is tracking a proposal that we might become a foundation, which I would appreciate so much because right now we are part of the communication department. And if we were a foundation, we could do our own work. We have to constantly justify our work to the communication department.”* (Interviewee No. 10, 2019)

Considering all these benefits, why is it not the norm to legally separate the art collection from the corporation? The answer is that there are also downsides involved that a corporation would

have to consider. First of all, in order to enjoy the full benefits of the charity status in the UK, the public benefit of the organisation is a strict legal requirement, this implies some sort of public access to the artworks and also restricts the corporation from using the art collection as a marketing or PR tool. An interviewee also explained the disadvantages of legally separating the art collection from an accountant's perspective:

*"You can absolutely protect the art collection if you do it in the right way. There are also reasons not to do that. From an accounting perspective, it is probably in some ways beneficial to keep the art on your balance sheet. Because then it's an asset. In theory. Even in theory if we got 100 million in art as assets, we can then borrow 100 million against that asset and can use the \$100 million extra in our business. I mean we don't do that, but giving art away, putting it into a foundation you're achieving something, but you're also losing something. And if you're happy to lose that thing, if you're happy to just distance yourself from your \$100 million, then great. (...) You can protect a collection with a foundation, but then it's not yours anymore."* (Interviewee No. 3, 2020)

He furthermore explained why it is also not beneficial to the integration of the collection into the corporation to separate the two:

*"Because if you distance yourself from the company, then the company has less and less reasons to want you. So, we don't have a strong connection with brand and marketing, but if we did then brand and marketing would be standing up for us. (...) If we're sitting in our ivory tower of our foundation, then brand and marketing would say 'Why would we help you?'. You're decoupling at that point from the business."* (Interviewee No. 3, 2020)

As previously established, the acceptance of the art collections by the employees and by upper management is vital for the life and growth of an art collection and has significant influences in shaping the collection as well. Legally separating the art collection from the corporation would protect artworks from being sold off during a financial crisis and would give the curators more independence by not having to answer to the marketing or communications department. However, it would also alienate the collection from the corporation and its members and bear a risk that the collection cannot be integrated into the company culture, making it less relevant to the corporation as a whole.

#### 4.3. What is Corporate Art?

Learning about the acquisition process reveals a lot about the internal relationships between the different agents within a corporation. This section will focus on the art collection itself and

the artists that are typically collected by corporate collections in Europe. Most collections implement a process where the curator researches and selects artists and artworks that would fit into the concept of the art collection considering the medium, topic and all practical implications such as size and price of the artwork. The suggestions are then discussed within a commission committee that typically includes the CEO and/or upper management of the company.

‘Corporate art’ is a term that is widely known but nowhere defined. An interviewee who is an established artist and represented in several corporate collections, explained to me her definition of the term, which - in my experience - the general public seems to share and resonate with:

*“[Corporate art] always seems to have a sort of slickness to it. I always think of shiny surfaces and Teflon. Immediately. And more abstract work and work that doesn't have a big political content. When you say corporate art, that's the image that comes to mind.”* (Interviewee No. 14, 2019)

If compared to the three types of aesthetic communication discussed in chapter III, this perception of corporate art is closely related to the concept of decorative aesthetic communication, holding little meaning and having mainly an effect of pleasure and enjoyment to the viewer.

Another interviewee who has previously worked as an art consultant and is now a corporate curator for an international company offering financial services, explained in an interview his view on corporate art. Besides the decorative factor, he highlights the aspect of corporate art being produced for corporations due to the commercial mindset of ‘corporate artists’ or other professionals in the art world who specifically cater to corporations:

*“Corporate art is simply art that exists in a corporate setting, in difference to domestic art. However around the corporate art market, because it's a fairly rich scene, and there is a lot of potential for sales within the corporate art world, you then get a sort of series of satellite operators, who hover around that corporate art world, trying to take advantage of it—trying to work with it. That would typically include what I am referring to as corporate artists but also art consultants, galleries who offer a bespoke consultancy service whatever that means, I mean any ways that a gallery can introduce themselves by expressing themselves as being objective, by saying 'you can try things, we can bring things, we can bring ten pieces, and you can try and think what you want on the day'.*

*All these people who provide a services to the corporate art sector. Corporate artists are, I would say, artists who have slightly - I don't want to sound like I am condemning a whole group of people, there is validity in whatever route you take - but if you're not careful as an artist and you find success in approaching corporate companies you find that you are just producing things, which you know will be a success. Which you know is sellable. And artists' good art really should exist independently of all of that. It should really just exist in the artists' imagination and in their own minds, to transpire their own integrity and their own requirements for producing art."* (Interviewee No. 3, 2019)

Both the artist (interviewee number 14) and the curator (interviewee number 3) seem to describe similar aspects from different point of views. It struck me, while conducting the interview with this particular curator, that we sat in a private conference room in the corporation's office spaces with an artwork on the wall from the same artist quoted above (interviewee number 14). It seems that even though both work with the corporate sector, they do not see themselves as buyers and producers of 'corporate art'. And this was no exception - in fact, I came across negative connotations against 'corporate art' a few times during my interviews with corporate curators. Interviewee number 9, for example, noted in our conversation that while having founded and curated a corporate collection for the past 30 years, he is not particularly interested in other corporate collections:

*"Funnily enough I've only been to a few corporate collections. I have no desire to do so. I think they will be full of corporate art."* (Interviewee No. 9, 2018)

I suspect that part of the bad reputation of 'corporate art' stems from corporate collectors themselves condemning it, instead of redefining it, as they are clearly convinced that they are the exception and in possession of a quality collection.

There was another aspect of corporate art brought up by interviewee number 19, an established artist. Instead of focussing on the general aesthetic, he highlighted the medium that corporate art often comes in:

*"There is a kind of art for offices, absolutely. Forget video. Forget very few three-dimensional works, forget anything that is performance-related, forget anything installational, basically, we are talking about anything on the walls, photography, painting – [they are] heavily biased towards that kind of work. And that's unfair, but it's [also] completely understandable (...). I think companies make a bigger noise about their collections, so they try to sort of paint it as a different thing other than just decorating their walls. (...) But really, they are still about*

*projecting their image and who they are by picking certain artists and putting that on the wall. So yes, painting wins, photography wins, anything that can be stuck on the wall.”* (Interviewee No. 19, 2019)

Evidently, the quantitative data collected for this study suggests that most corporate collections focus on 2D wall-based artworks and sculptures. 28% of corporate collectors do own film and video-based artworks, but the quantity of these artworks is nowhere near that of paintings and photography. Due to offices being first and foremost a work environment, art in corporations often has limited space. Additionally, in a busy office environment, the artwork has to be protected from damage while still being accessible and visible to its primary audience. Wall-based art therefore lends itself to a better integration into the constraints that corporate collectors face. However, Diedrich Diederichsen, Professor for theory, practice and communication of contemporary art at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, sees another advantage in artworks based on traditional mediums such as paintings, sculptures and photography. In his 2008 publication, Diederichsen differentiates between artworks that need legitimization and the ones that *“are acknowledged as art in the everyday sense of the term, without further discussion”* (Diederichsen, 2008, pp. 29–30). The corporate curator’s preference for painting, photography and sculptures could therefore also be explained by the fact that besides fitting better into the office environment, these mediums are more commonly recognized as art and can be easier justified when speaking to the management and employees.

In summary, it can be said that even though a few general commonalities can be identified, a consensus of the exact definition of corporate art does not exist, and many statements about corporate art are based on unfounded interpretations. In the examples here and in quite a few other instances within the interviews, even people within the sector of corporate collections – the curators of corporate collections or artists who regularly sell to corporate collectors – distance themselves and denounce corporate art due to the connection to commercialized art and services commercializing art that are specifically offered to corporations. Factually though, corporate art is art, that exists in a corporate setting. The following analysis offers a starting point to learn more about the potential artist preferences of different groups of corporations and their biases towards certain key artists. Recall that the buying patterns of corporations are analysed based on a representative group of key artists, as explained together with other details on the dataset earlier in chapter II, 2.4.2. To account for the unequal data coverage, the dataset was diagnosed in terms of relative numbers, rather than absolute numbers of artists and exclude those collections in the corresponding analysis where not all necessary information was available.



#### 4.3.1. Country- and Gender Bias within Art Collections

In my first analysis, I am investigating whether collectors from a specific industry or country favour artists based on their nationality or gender. In Chart 1 (figure 8), the artists' nationality and the business area of the corporations are put in relation to each other. We can see that US

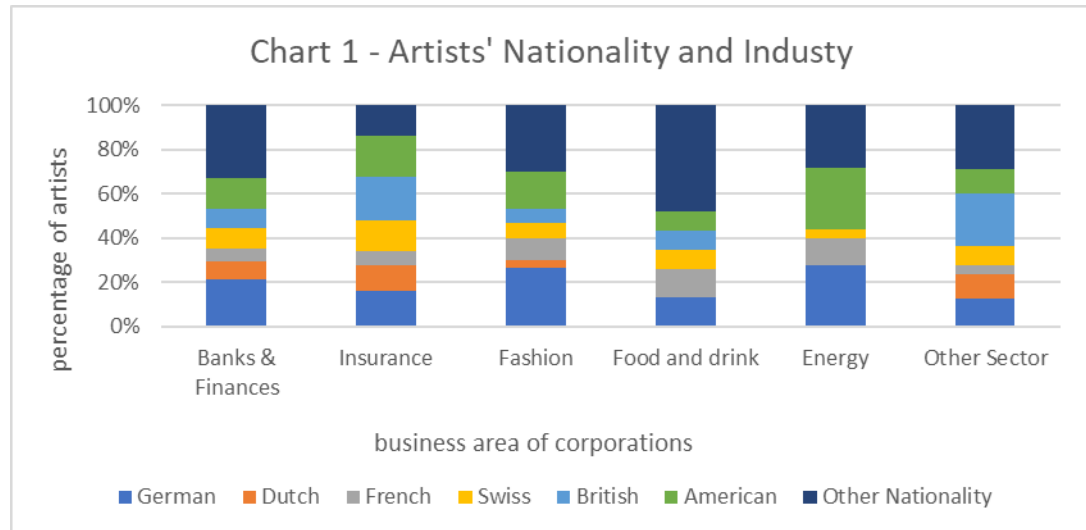


Figure 6: Chart 1, Artists' Nationality and Industry

American artists are strongly represented across all business areas. Regarding European artists, German artists are more consistently represented in different sectors than British artists. They seem to be wildly popular with energy providers and the fashion industry, while British artists only seem to enjoy particular popularity with insurance companies in comparison to the other sectors. This could potentially be explained by different business sectors being more dominant in certain countries. The distribution of different artists seems to be roughly even with no strong bias in the different industries.

Chart 2 (figure 19) shows the relationship of the artists' nationalities to the corporations' location

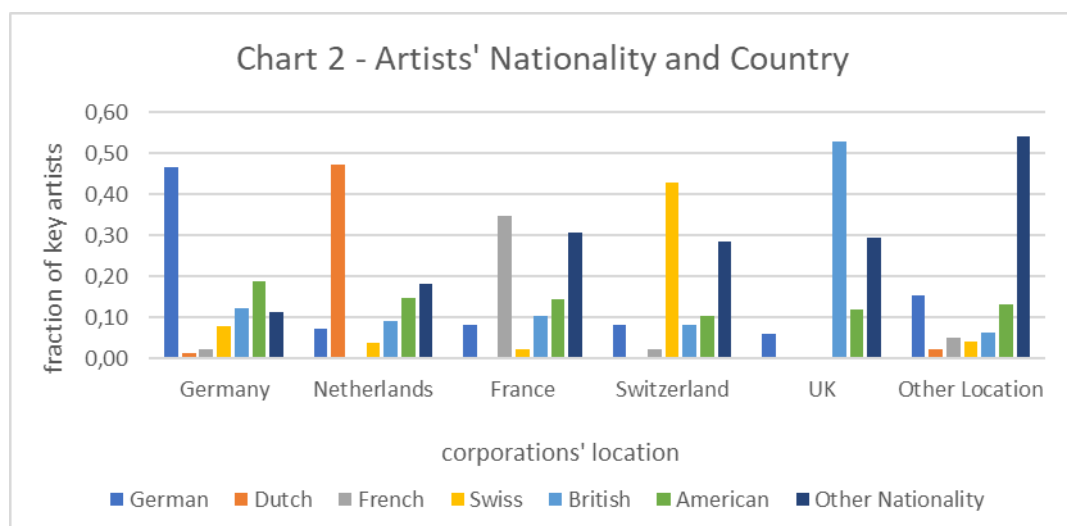


Figure 7: Chart 2, Artists' Nationality and Country

nationalities. The chart describes the national diversity of key artists and the preferences of corporations in the respective country groups. There are a few interesting aspects that this chart reveals: firstly, one can see in the chart that typically each country has a clear preference and priority to collect artists with the same nationality, this bias seems to be a bit weaker in France and more prevalent in the UK.

Secondly, even though only European collections are included in the dataset, again US American artists are strongly represented across all countries. Especially the German collections seem to be more western-oriented with a preference for US American and British artists who are both more represented than all other nationalities.

On the other end, while French collections share a strong representation of US American and British artists, native artists make only 30% of the key artists here. While German artists are well represented in all other locations, Dutch artists are rarely represented and besides being part of Dutch collections, only cover a small fraction in German collections.

The data from the interviews suggests that several older art collections founded before or during the 1980s initially had a focus on native artists only, that then later opened up to a more international collection approach (Interviewee No. 1, 2018). A few collectors said that they prefer to buy locally and therefore have more native artists in the collection (Interviewee No. 11, 2019), or the collection approach was deliberately focused on preserving the country's cultural heritage (Interviewee No. 7, 2019). All three of these aspects could explain why each country's collections show a stronger representation of native artists. However, the majority of art collections in both the interviews and the database state that they have an international approach to collecting and, even though we can see a diversity of artists in chart 2 (figure 11), it is more a diversity of European artists with US American influences, than truly an international representation of the art world.

In support of this Eurocentric interpretation of an international art collection is the following example from a Deutsche Bank Collection published in 2013. It states as a mission statement on the first page:

*"International contemporary art plays its part in helping us to navigate a changing world. As a global bank, we want to understand and engage with different regions and cultures which is why the Deutsche Bank Collection features contemporary art from all over the globe. The artists connect us to their world."* (Hicks and Findlay, 2013)

Page 16 of the catalogue displays 100 artists from the collection and their birthplaces with the headline “Where do ideas come from?”. Even though the list contains artists from 29 international countries, the focus lies with 44 artists from the UK and 17 artists from West- and Central Europe (Germany, France, Sweden, Netherlands, and Ireland) clearly on the representation of European artists, even though this list of artists was most likely explicitly designed to show the diversity and contain a range of nationalities. Of course, with a collection like Deutsche Bank’s, which consists of around 60,000 pieces the key artists in my database and even the 100 artists listed in their catalogue are not a full representation of the collection. Nevertheless, advertising internationality while consistently emphasising and prioritizing European artists indicates quite a Eurocentric interpretation of what an international art collection is.

Another very prominent feature of the lists of key artists is the overwhelming imbalance between female and male artists. From a total of 256 artists named as key artists, 84% are male. This strong over-representation of male artists can be observed robustly and consistently through all countries and areas of the business, as displayed in chart 3 (figure 10) and 4 (figure 11). As the charts show, male artists dominate all collections, across countries and industries. The food and drink industry seems to show a slightly stronger representation of female artists than other industries but is still nowhere near an equal distribution.

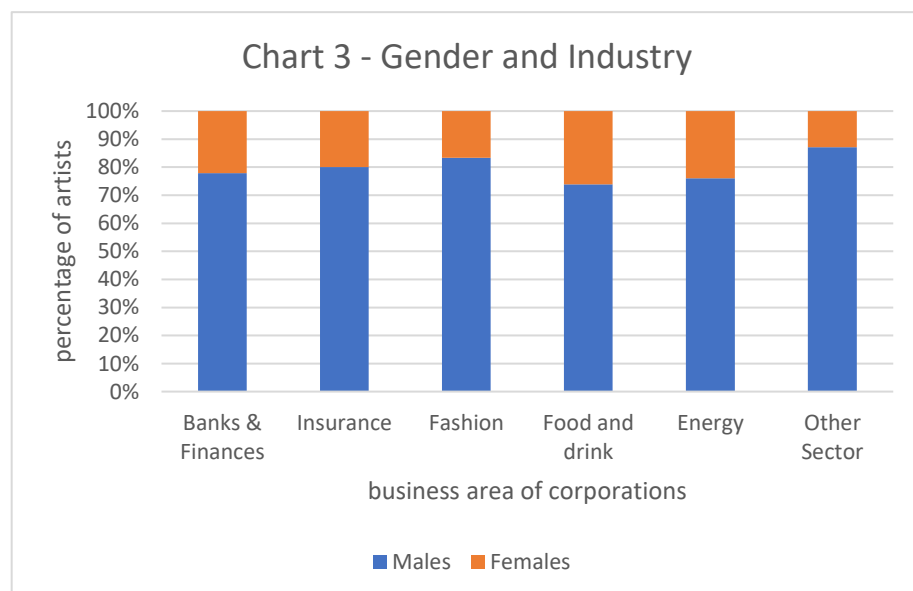


Figure 8: Chart 3, Gender and Industry

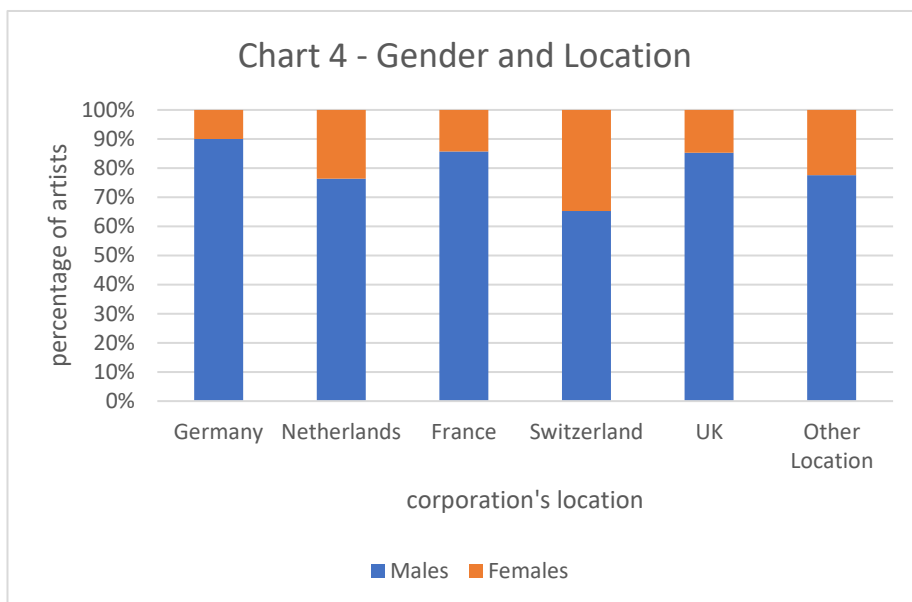


Figure 9: Chart 4, Gender and Location

To test if the hypothesis of gender bias applies not just to key artists but can be translated to the entire collection of a corporation, I evaluated the gender balance of the Hiscox art collection as an example. Hiscox is one of the few corporate collections which has a complete catalogue of artists represented in their collection published on their website (Hiscox, 2014a). Out of 236 artists in total named on their website, only 64 are female which equates to approximately 27%. This over representation of male artists is consistent with my findings shown in chart 3 and 4 and further supports the hypothesis that corporate collections are strongly gender-biased.

However, gender biases are not exclusive to corporate collections and more a general issue of the visual art market. Even though women dominate fine art studies in Europe and the U.S. by 70%, only 30% of artists represented in commercial galleries are women (Brown Brothers Harriman & Co., 2017). This also applies to museums representation as (in 2017) only 3 – 5% of artworks featured in permanent collections in the U.S. and Europe were from female artists (EENCA, 2019). The National Gallery's permanent collection in the UK, for example, comprises 2,300 artworks by roughly 750 artists, of which only 20 are women (The National Gallery, 2018b). While female artists lack representation, press and attention from galleries and museums, they also achieve considerably lower prices at art auctions, as a study documented in 2017. Adams *et al.* (2017) analysed 1.5 million auction transactions in 45 countries and calculated that artworks by female artists receive a 47.6% gender discount in comparison to their male counterparts (Adams *et al.*, 2017, p. 13). Furthermore, the gender imbalance does also translate to administrative jobs in the arts. While women make 70% of gallery and museum staff, the ratio in leadership positions is strongly biased towards men. Only five out of the 33 directors of the major museums in Europe are women (Reilly and Lippard, 2018, p. 9). Francis Morris, as a prominent example, became the first female director of the Tate Modern as

recently as 2016 (Tate Modern, 2020). Sarah Thornton, sociologist and author of the book *Seven days in the art world*, explains the link between the role of men in decision making positions and the gender bias of the art world as the following:

*“One would expect the art world to be more egalitarian ... At the top end of the market, the people who can afford to spend a lot are entrepreneurial (white) men. And they buy entrepreneurial (white) artists – Warhol, Hirst, Koons – artists they perhaps identify with.”* (Reilly and Lippard, 2018, p. 221)

This could also hold true for corporate collectors. Amongst the largest publicly listed companies in Europe, 82.4% of executives and 93.1% of CEOs are men (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2020). And even though the majority of corporate collectors work with an internal curator now, as previously assessed, CEOs and board members still actively take part in the acquisition process. Having a majority of men involved in the acquisition could lead to the gender bias in corporate collections illustrated in chart 3 and chart 4.

The dominance of male artists in corporate collections and the emphasis on gender when buying art was addressed in the interviews as well, with a mixture of responses. One curator explained to me in the interview, that she perceives buying specifically female or diverse artists as limiting and that the emphasis should only be on buying ‘good’ art.

*“Well, I'm not looking for a female African-American. I am not prescriptive in any way. I feel like that's silly. That's limiting. I buy work because it's good. I am not trying to fill an agenda. We have a real mix of ethnicities, nationalities, gender.”* (Interviewee No. 8, 2018)

Similarly, another curator distanced himself from trying to fit specific gender criteria, when acquiring works, explaining that gender diversity is not a goal or a target to be met while acknowledging that approximately only 20% of artworks in the collection are from female artists. This number for the overall collection is consistent with the gender ratio of the key artists shown in chart 3 and chart 4.

*“We are not trying to fit criteria. I do occasionally analyse what we have, for interest and I've also done some presentations in the company on some of the groups about inclusion, diversity and those are presented as kind of facts, rather than goals, there are no targets. I think we have 500+ artists in the collection; I think far less than half are women, I think probably about 100. What's interesting when you start to break it down by region, you see a lot more female artists in Europe than you do in North America, you see also less female artists in Asia than in Europe. These are all kind of interesting but not particularly relevant. (...) We put labels on things on the*

*walls with basic information, but we don't, I'm not particularly concerned this piece is made by a woman, or it cost \$1000 or \$10.000, that's not what I want the people to focus on."* (Interviewee No. 3, 2019)

It seems that these curators and corporations feel that including gender equality in their acquisition strategies is not necessary because there is already enough diversity in their collection, they perceive emphasising a specific gender as 'limiting' or not relevant to the collection at all. While they deny any conscious gender bias when acquiring art, the data in the charts 3 (figure 12) and 4 (figure 13) suggests that there is a bias towards male artists in virtually all areas of corporate collections. This could potentially be evidence for a robust unconscious bias of corporate art collectors, which is likely to extend even beyond the countries and sectors examined in this study.

Other curators have noticed pressure from outside to diversify the collection more, as explained by the curator of an international law firm. He furthermore described that recently the emphasis on international and female artists already comes into play when he puts together the pre-selection of artworks and artists to acquire for the acquisition committee:

*"Recently, in the last couple of years, there has been a - no one said this - but the whole business culture is about diversity and inclusion. And the international aspect of the art collection - so we are consciously doing that pre-selection, looking at BAME artists and trying to make sure that the female representation is high and what it should be. The female [agenda came in] a while ago, but the BAME [agenda] is about 3-4 years old. I'm sure [our art collection is] equal. Partly I would say it's because of it got this big historic tail to it. And I don't necessarily think that there was an equal production of prints back in the days. But recent acquisitions, we would aim for at least 50:50."* (Interviewee No. 11, 2019)

An interesting phenomenon was described by a curator for an international bank in the interviews. She acknowledged that the bank is trying to diversify the collection more towards international and female artists, because it is more 'exciting', but also explained why sometimes something else is 'right' for the collection:

*"There is quite a push to collect a really international area of artists in the collection. So, you know when there is an artist from a country (...) that we haven't collected before - that's obviously quite exciting for us to be part of. Women artists as well, just to diversify the collection basically and get as much in as possible, as many different types of artists from different nationalities, different genders, so that's something you look for. But, you know, if something is*

*right for the collection it's right for the collection. For example, last year at Frieze, there were two smaller works by Wolfgang Tillmans purchased. Obviously, he's a white German artist, male. But the works really fit in with our collection because they fit in with this room we had upstairs. We got a Richard Hamilton Room and one of Tillmans' works was a photograph of Richard Hamilton, so it just fit really well in the collection."* (Interviewee No. 1, 2018)

What the curator describes here is that while there is an effort to actively diversify the collection, acquisition choices are still sometimes informed by previous curatorial concepts, e.g. the meeting rooms dedicated to one specific (in this case, white, male) artist. If an art collection was previously centred around white male artists and this concept is now indirectly passed on and reproduced by favouring acquisitions which are referring or answering to these artists, the focus of the collection has not really shifted. This also holds true for curators who are trying to diversify the art collection by hanging female artists to more prominent positions while still being underrepresented in the art collection as a whole:

*"Recently, we've been trying to emphasize equality and diversity and other things within the collection. Some of those [artworks by 'divers' artists] have been moved to more prominent positions. It makes the stories more interesting. I might happen to find those works interesting. But [the collection is] not even, on the whole."* (Interviewee No. 12, 2019)

The issue of gender inequality and underrepresentation of marginalized groups has been recognized in these cases, but the political gesture behind representation needs to be significant, thoughtful, and meaningful. Simply filling a diversity quota or moving female (or other marginalised) artists to more prominent walls, does not challenge systemic inequalities within the art collection (or within the art world). Speaking from the perspective of an established female artist, an interviewee pointed out the problematic approach of private and public collectors making only a perfunctory or symbolic effort to be inclusive of minority groups in their collections:

*"You know the Tate collection, for example, used to be 7% women. Then it went up to 11%. They said, 'look at all this work we've done isn't that fantastic.' But actually, in the early 2000s, they have taken it from 7 to 11%, and they were really proud of themselves. Well, that to me is not really good enough. Also, there is a tokenism; there is kind of the same female artist in every collection, the same Black artist."* (Interviewee No. 14, 2019)

Within all interviews that were held with corporate curators, one curator stood out with a clear policy on inclusion and diversity:

*"We have a good gender balance [in the art collection], so we are always 50:50 with gender. We make sure that's the case for every single time we curate something. I probably end up with more women. I think there is much more responsibility to be culturally aware."* (Interviewee No. 6, 2019)

She further explained how she was responsible for building up and acquiring the art collection for a new hotel, owned by the same company, and used the opportunity to actively address the issue of gender imbalance in the art- and the business world.

*"(...) It's called the [Hotel Name]. Because they are owned by [company name], I did the collection for them. And I did a collection called [collection name], and I took the cities' 100 CEO index. The gender ratio, as of January 1<sup>st</sup> 2017 was 93 men running the top companies and seven women, so I reversed it. The collection is 93 women and seven men. And every male artist called to be in the collection, and I turned them all down, and we stuck to the 93 women and the seven men. And every women artist I asked said yes, and they said yes because they believe in the power of this statement. The city is completely gender imbalanced. And the art world is completely gender imbalanced. And why don't women artists get bigger representation? (...) I know that there are some important people who use that place and I know it will always be popular. So actually, it is my responsibility to use that attention and not say what everyone else is saying. But say what everyone else should be saying."* (Interviewee No. 6, 2019)

The collection's focus did not take away or limit the curator's option to acquire high-quality art. It includes works by Turner prize nominees Runa Islam, Tracy Emin and Lubaina Himid to only name a few (Nadège Mériaux, 2017). The curator managed to subvert the masculine dominance of the hotel's location, the city's financial district, and put the attention on a current issue. The collection and the statement, as she explained, has a legacy for the future:

*"I think it will be really useful [in the future] actually because of instances like the [collection]. It will be interesting to know that in 2017 we still had that problem with women artists. I think in 10 years' time we will be more advanced. It would be interesting to look back historically at that. And I think it would be a good list of 93 women artists of this time."* (Interviewee No. 6, 2019)

An important point emphasized by this corporate curator is the acknowledgement of the gender imbalance in the art world and the need, as a curator with a platform, to react and resist. As previously demonstrated, statistically, men dominate every aspect of the art world - production, acquisition, and consumption. However, even though this has been widely researched in feminist literature and discussed in the mainstream press, the interviews suggest



that the majority of curators do not feel the need to acknowledge or react to gender discrimination on the market. This resonates with research that has been conducted in other business sectors. Roseberry and Roos (2014) for example, describe in their publication *Bridging the gender gap* how several managers and employees from different organisations expressed in interviews that working on gender imbalance within their companies bears the risk of sacrificing “*excellence for equality*” (p. 6).

Moreover, Brake (2007) explains in her paper *Perceiving Subtle Sexism: Mapping the Social-psychological Forces and Legal Narratives That Obscure Gender Bias*, that when researching barriers faced by women in legal professions, interviewees often met the topic with a refusal to acknowledge the ongoing issue and denial that gender remains worthy of attention (p. 680). Psychologists have labelled this phenomenon a ‘meritocratic worldview’. This ideology describes the assumption that “*in the absence of special treatment, people generally get what they deserve and deserve what they get*” (Rhode, 2007, p. 613). A meritocratic worldview supports the belief that people who work hard will get ahead in life regardless of their circumstances. This disregards social barriers and discrimination as an influence on people’s lives and explains underrepresentation with a lack of qualifications or commitment (Levine and Hogg, 2010, p. 283). These views can prevent women and minorities from receiving the assignments and attention they deserve and requires them to further prove their capabilities, again reinforcing the meritocratic worldview. A system like this exists to justify the status quo and serves the dominant group to maintain their power and status in society.

Furthermore, to break the cycle, one has to actively resist and work against the bias imposed by the market. Corporations and institutions working with an agenda to close the gender gap in employment and leadership are therefore not pro-women but pro-equality. Moreover, curators who work with a curatorial approach to equally include women and artists from minorities do not deprive their collection of artistic excellence; they offer a more just and fair representation of global artistic production.

Lucy R. Lippard, American art critic, activist, and curator criticizes the persisting phenomenon of “*curatorial laziness, an unwillingness to think beyond precedents, out of the box, around the block, out of the comfort zone that can result in involuntary misogyny, racism, homo/lesbophobia*” (Reilly and Lippard, 2018, p. 10). She further urges curators to be more inclusive and accountable for their work with artists and that “*if the percentages are lousy, you need to do more work*” (Reilly and Lippard, 2018, p. 11). Exhibitions of art only by women, she

says, are “no more restrictive than, exhibitions on German, Cubist, Black and white, soft, young, or new art” (Reilly and Lippard, 2018, p. 27).

To summarize, an already existing bias in the art market in general, a majority of men involved in decision-making and leadership positions within a company and a meritocratic worldview could lead to the gender imbalance prevailing in corporate collections. The interviews suggest that the majority of curators continue to base their curatorial selections solely on subjective and Eurocentric standards of “taste” and “quality” or only superficially address the gender (and general diversity) imbalance within their collection, which further leads to sexual and racial indifference and exclusion in their collection and again, reproduces the sexism of the art market.

#### 4.3.2. Popular Corporate Collection Artists

When working through the list of key artists, I quickly discovered that a few particular artists seemed to be more frequently mentioned than others. The majority of key artists in the dataset are internationally acclaimed and award-winning artists, so being established and known is not what distinguishes these frequently mentioned artists from the rest of the list.

On the top of the list as most mentioned artist is contemporary German photographer Andreas Gursky, who is known for his large-scale architecture and landscape colour photographs, often dealing with topics of sustainability and consumerism in his artworks. There are a few other German artists on this list of most mentioned: Gerhard Richter, one of Germany’s most important contemporary visual artists, known for both abstract and photorealistic paintings. Thomas Ruff, an established photographer who shares a studio with Andreas Gursky in Düsseldorf, and who is known for architectural photography and portraits. Finally, Katharina Grosse, who is the only woman on the list of the six most popular artists and is known for her large-scale site-related sculptures and installations. The remaining two artists on the list are British artist Damien Hirst, member of the Young British Artists (YBAs) who dominated the British art market specifically in the 1990s and his British-Indian colleague Anish Kapoor, who specializes in installation art and sculptures. Both artists are internationally established and are now among the wealthiest artists in the UK (Kinsella, 2017). It is becoming apparent from the short biographies, that all six of them are household names for contemporary art. That the majority of most popular artists in the dataset are German is no surprise, considering the consistency of German artists through different nationalities and business areas, illustrated in chart 1 (figure 10) and chart 2 (figure 11). Furthermore, the gender ratio of these most popular artists is, with five men to one woman, consistent with the gender imbalance illustrated in chart

3 (figure 12) and chart 4 (figure 13). It is also worth noting that while all artists are Central- or West European, only one artist (Anish Kapoor) is from an ethnic minority background.

Before analysing the statistical data around these six artists, I want to take a closer look at their artworks and consider the reasons why these artists specifically appeal to corporate collections. It is difficult to retrace why a corporate collector chose to acquire an artwork besides the previously discussed parameters of price, accessibility through the primary art market and a medium that fits the focus of the art collection. As also discussed in chapter III, corporate curators are very careful about displaying nudity or pornography or themes of sex, death, and religion within their collection. However, an artwork with a challenging aesthetic experience would enhance the added value for a corporate collection.

#### 4.3.2.1. Curatorial Analysis of Popular Artists

Analysing what collectors say about the artists and artworks themselves in their online and print publications might give a hint about what the initial appeal of specific artworks and artists were at the point of acquisition. The following quotes are collected from print- and online publications of UBS, Deutsche Bank, E.ON, Mirabaud the ABN AMRO Bank and the La Caixa Foundation.

The UBS art collection has published a small catalogue with some of what they describe as their most significant artworks currently exhibited in their London offices.<sup>8</sup> Part of the selected artworks is Andreas Gursky's large scale photograph *99 Cents* (1999). UBS introduced the chapter in their catalogue by declaring that photography is one of the most approachable mediums of fine art and praised Gursky as one of the world's "*unequivocally, most celebrated*" and renowned photographers (UBS, n.d.b, pp. 15–16). The artwork was described in the catalogue as the following:

*"99 cents, captured frontally, from an elevated viewpoint, is a temple of consumerism. The copiously stacked shelves of the supermarket, which are even reflected in the ceiling, seem to continue far beyond the limits of the frame. The few customers, wandering through the aisles, are dwarfed by the overwhelming variety of goods on offer and seem to merge into the background. Due to the large amount of detail, the scene becomes almost purely abstract and ornamental."* (UBS, n.d.b, p. 16)

Themes in Gursky's works, as summarized by UBS, are the effects of capitalism and globalisation in contemporary life, today's 'burgeoning high-tech' industries and global markets.

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<sup>8</sup> The catalogue was collected personally from their London offices in 2019

Conceptually, his prints are composed like *“historical landscape paintings”* and *“seemingly depicting reality, (...) altered digitally before printing, blurring the line between painting and photography even further.”* (UBS, n.d.b, p. 16)

The La Caixa Foundation, affiliated to Spanish Bank CaixaBank, included Gursky's *Hong Kong Shanghai Bank* (1994) photograph in their collection. In their online archive, they introduced the artwork and the artist. Much like UBS, La Caixa highlighted the details in the picture, which have to be studied closely to understand the general composition of the work. Another commonality in the organisation's description of Gursky's artwork was the comparison of his landscapes and scenes to historical paintings. However, La Caixa took it a bit further stating that *“there is a Romantic category, the sublime, adapted to the present here”* (Reyes, 2020).

Andreas Gursky and Thomas Ruff have a lot in common within their artistic practice. This comes as no surprise as they both went to the same art school (Kunstakademie Düsseldorf) to study photography with Bernd and Hilla Becher. Much like Gursky, Ruff's work is strongly influenced by the Becher School, using photography to record the physical world with apparent objectivity. Ruff is mostly known for his series *Portraits* and *Nudes*. *Portraits* is a collection of large-scale photographs of men and women, notably emotion- and expressionless. *Nudes* is a series of digitally edited and enlarged pornographic pictures. Mirabaud, a Swiss banking and financial institute specialised in asset management, introduces Thomas Ruff in their online catalogue as one of the *“greatest living photographers”* (Mirabaud, 2020). For their collection, Mirabaud chose to include Ruff's photograph of the night sky, titled *STE 1.41 (STERN 20H48M / -40°)* (1992) and an abstract photogram created by 3D mathematical rendering, titled *PHG.06\_I* (2013). The catalogue text explained the scientific background to Ruff's night sky picture and photograms highlighting Ruff's approach to experiment with new techniques continuously. Mirabaud acknowledged Ruff's emotional distance and objectivity in his artworks but nevertheless found a certain poetry, a *“charm on the beholder”* within his works. La Caixa owns two of Ruff's large-scale architectural photographs *House 5 III* (1988) and *House 6 II* (1989), showing two seemingly abandoned houses. On their website, La Caixa described the artwork as trivial but intimidating, stressing the role of human absence:

*“Ruff strips the buildings of the architectural context, of their inhabitants, of their vehicles, of the plant life, of all references to the everyday or the passage of time, just as in his series of portraits, the large format and the colour of the images heighten the feeling of the strange presence of what is familiar and trivial at the same time. (...) The composition, the balance and forms, the parallelism of the lines, the volumetric relation between the ground and the sky and*

*the combination of textures are carefully studied in each of these two images so that the final image is both trivial and intimidating. Certain icons or signals evoke the absurdity of human presence and, once again, underline its absence.”* (Gili, 2020)

Both Mirabaud and La Caixa especially highlight Ruff’s versatility and creativity with the medium of photography and his technical skills. A reoccurring theme, that collectors also stress in other artists’ works, is *“human presence”, “questions of presence”, “human existence”* and *“the everyday life”*.

Part of La Caixa’s collection is also a realist painting by Gerhard Richter, titled *I.G.* (1993), depicting a woman with her back turned to the viewer. By hiding the woman’s face, La Caixa writes *“Richter is referring here to questions of presence or mystery. (...) The domestic scale of the paintings also suggests the poetic potential of the everyday.”* (Juncosa, 2020). Gerhard Richter is also known for his elaborate series of large-scale abstract paintings, two of which are also in the La Caixa Collection. Deutsche Bank famously owned an abstract painting by Richter, displayed in their Manhattan Headquarters but sold it recently, in February 2020. The E.ON art collection also holds an abstract by Richter, a *“masterpiece”* as they describe it in their catalogue (Stadel, 2017). La Caixa explains that in his abstract paintings, Richter is *“using painting to achieve images with metaphysical potential, (...) to create ambiguous and metaphorical spaces of great beauty.”* (Juncosa, 2020)

Abstract art is very popular and often found in corporate art collections. UBS describes abstraction as a *“central theme in contemporary art and a truly international and cross-generational form of human expression.”* (UBS, n.d.b, p. 51) E.ON owns a few smaller, very colourful abstract works by Katharina Grosse, made with an airbrush gun. Their catalogue shows the meeting room where Grosse’s works are displayed.

The description states that the *“atmospheric cloudy formations emitted from Katharina Grosse’s spray gun know no boundaries”* but that these particular works in the E.ON collection are ‘fairly traditional’ by Grosse’s standards *“with their powerful colour explosions kept within the bounds of the picture frame”* (Stadel, 2017). Notably, the chairs in the meeting room depicted in E.ON’s catalogue mirror the green and yellow colours of Grosse’s works displayed on the walls.

A series of abstract artworks that I came across multiple times in corporate collections are Damien Hirst’s spot paintings. The spot paintings are part of the *Pharmaceutical series*, spanning over 1000 paintings and several thousand prints. The spot paintings were first produced by Hirst himself, and later by his studio assistants over almost the entirety of Hirst’s

career as an artist (1986 to 2011). The spots are often referred to by the press as Hirst's trademark look (Johnson, 2008) and are, according to Hirst himself, his most widely recognized works (Correy and Godfrey, 2020). The paintings show a grid-like structure made of colourful spots where no two spots have the same colour. Due to the names of the paintings, which are always pharmaceuticals and the shape and colour of the spots, the series is often associated with pills (UBS, n.d.b, p. 52). But for Hirst these paintings are more about colour, as he is quoted on his website, he says in reference to his spot paintings that the most fundamentally important thing in art is *"... the harmony of where colour can exist on its own, interacting with other colours in a perfect format."* (Correy and Godfrey, 2020)

Simmons & Simmons owns a spot painting, directly painted onto their wall in the cafeteria of their London city offices. This stands in close reference to the first two spot paintings titled *Edge* and *Row*, which Hirst painted in 1988, during his infamous show *Freeze*, directly onto the warehouse walls (Correy and Godfrey, 2020). Another one of his spot paintings, titled *Albumin, Human, Glycated* (1992) is part of the UBS art collection and exhibited in their London offices. As explained by the curator during a public tour through the UBS art collection, the corporation is incredibly proud of this particular painting, as it is one of the earlier produced spot paintings.

*"What is special about this spot painting is, it was made in 1992. Damien graduated from Goldsmiths in 1989. He made this just a few years afterwards. So, Damien actually made this painting himself. It's easily in the top 10 of the most valuable paintings, monetary wise, that we have in our collection. Because he only produced a handful of these paintings himself before he handed it over to his studio for them to produce."* (UBS Art Tour, 2019)

In their catalogue, UBS explained that the spot paintings serve *"...as a continuous backdrop to [Hirst's] oeuvre that continues to address fundamental issues about human existence"* and that the *"juxtaposition of formal arrangement with colour variation hints at the futility of controlling one's environment"* (UBS, n.d.b, p. 52).

Deutsche Bank famously displays a large-scale spot painting, titled *Biotin-Maleimide* (1995) in the lobby of their headquarters in London, positioned opposite to Anish Kapoor's monumental steel sculpture titled *Turning the World Upside Down III* (1996). The sculpture takes the shape of a large steel ball with a curved void in the middle that reflects back onto the viewer. In a promotional video for the Financial Times from 2012, Alistair Hicks, the former curator of the Deutsche Bank art collection, explained that Kapoor's more traditional steel sculpture stands in contrast to Hirst's 'flippant', colourful spot painting. He concluded that both works *"...are about*

orientation" (Financial Times, 2012). In a leaflet about the art collection in London, Deutsche Bank further wrote about Kapoor's sculpture:

*"Anish Kapoor's art encourages questions about the origins of the world. His recurrent theme of the void has made this clear. Turning the World Upside Down III, 1996 is like a great beached scientific model of the void and the world. The curved steel in the void of the sculpture reflects back on itself, doubling the image and turning everything upside down. It almost stands as a warning of the fragility of ideas."* (Deutsche Bank, 2018a)

The ABN AMRO bank in the Netherlands owns a sculpture by Kapoor that is fixed to the walls, a pink stainless-steel circle that almost acts like a convex lens, mirroring the surrounding and again, turning the reflection upside down, *Untitled* (1999). For the ABN AMRO bank, this sculpture is part of the highlights of the collection. It was purchased in 2000 for the opening of the new offices in London. On their website, they introduce the artist and his artwork:

*"The Indian-British artist Anish Kapoor is seen as one of today's most prominent contemporary artists. His work centres on a mystical experience of emptiness. His sculptures and drawings are characterised by cavities and holes, the contrast between the interior and exterior space – an allusion to such dualities as man and woman, heaven and earth, light and darkness, matter and spirit."* (ABN AMRO, 2020)

Analysing these quotes from online and print publications a few points immediately stand out. First, each organisation thought it was essential to introduce the artist along with the artwork in the collection, most of the time, even before writing about the artwork. In the introductions, it is mainly stressed how established the artists are in the art world; artists are described as 'renowned', 'celebrated', 'prominent', 'greatest'. What seems to be specifically crucial about these artists is their perceived excellence, their consecration in the art world, and for the organisations to communicate that. All of the discussed artists have a distinctive and recognizable style, which is part of their brand as an artist. By choosing these particular artists as key artists in their collection and by consistently using a rhetoric of affirmative associations, a corporation presents not just the artists in their best light but also themselves, profiting from the positive attributes associated with the artists' brands and reaffirming their own values and identity.

Secondly, themes in the artworks are generally substantial and important (e.g. 'human existence', 'human presence', 'questions of existence'), but mainly uncontroversial, agreeable, 'safe' topics to address within an office environment. This is consistent with the statements of

curators in chapter III, where topics were discussed that are usually not displayed in a corporate environment (sex, racism, death, religion etc.). While addressing critical topics, all artworks are also described as decorative ('romantic', 'poetic', 'beautiful', 'powerful'). In Gursky's case, the themes of his photographs are a bit more political, dealing with consumerism, capitalism, and globalisation. The serious and critical topics that Gursky is touching with his photographs are, as one can see from the analysis in the publications, clearly understood and appreciated by the organisations (UBS and La Caixa in this example). As banks themselves, they are not just profiting from, but building their business on capitalism and the global market. Including these critiques into their art collection could reflect a degree of awareness and accountability that these organisations would like to communicate. However, as the other artworks in this analysis, Gursky's photographs are overall also described as pleasant ('ornamental', 'romantic', 'like a landscape painting'). It seems that what especially Gursky, but also the other artists in this analysis, offers are artworks which are dealing with serious and current topics, that are hidden beneath the details of a decorative, mostly abstract picture. If the viewer does not want to, there is no need to go beyond the pleasant surface. Referring this back to the findings of chapter III, all discussed pictures thematically categorized as either comfortable or challenging aesthetic communication, but also include an element of decoration due to being less overt or non-figurative.

This does not mean that the artists themselves do not produce controversial or political art as well. As previously mentioned, Thomas Ruff is more known for his *Nudes* series than for his abstract works and night sky pictures. Damien Hirst famously shocked the art world in the 1990s with a tiger shark preserved in a vitrine filled with formaldehyde and in 2014 Gerhard Richter introduced his controversial series of abstract paintings, titled *Birkenau* that are based on photographs taken by a Jewish prisoner in Auschwitz-Birkenau during the Holocaust (Dege and Kräme, 2017). However, while still including these prestigious artists into their collection, corporate collectors carefully choose artworks which also fit into the restraints of their collections. This thought is also extended when it comes to Katharina Grosse's airbrush paintings, which as per E.ON's catalogue usually know "*no boundaries*" by being painted across walls and doors, but for their art collection, E.ON chooses to include a more traditional version of the paintings where the colours are restricted to the canvas. The way that corporate curators seem to compromise between their practice and the corporate restraints is to choose artworks that reveal their comfortable or challenging aesthetic communication only when engaged with and still have a decorative element so as to not overtly challenge any employees who do not want to interact with the art. In E.ON's case the decorative elements of the artworks are even



more underlined by the matching office furniture, the matching chairs, wall colours and overall design of the rooms around the artworks.

The ambiguity of corporate lobby and foyer spaces has been creatively addressed in the past by British painter Richard Hamilton. Hamilton's 1988 painting *Lobby* is based on a postcard of a Berlin hotel lobby and explores a corporate space that is mundane but simultaneously complex. It shows a space that seems oddly familiar yet completely unknown; a reception desk, a sofa to sit down and wait, corridors, a green dotted carpet, a staircase that leads nowhere and of course, two mirrored pillars reflecting the interior and creating a complex distorted feeling of the room. The lobby in Hamilton's painting appears empty and impersonal, he depicts a modern aesthetic with an almost clinical interior. However, when looking closer the painting reveals to be intriguing through its hidden references and illusionism.

There is a parallel that can be drawn between the mirrored pillars in Hamilton's artwork that reflect small, framed pictures on the hotel walls and Anish Kapoor's large reflective sculptures at the Deutsche Bank or ABN AMRO bank lobbies reflecting the interior. Even though Hamilton published his study of corporate spaces in the 1980's one can still see a similarity between the lobby in his painting and the foyers and office spaces of the corporations shown earlier; mundane office furniture, corridors, staircases, and doors, combined with mirroring surfaces, light reflections, full of ambiguity, apprehension and disorientation.

Corporate spaces, especially foyers, corridors, and waiting rooms are liminal spaces, a space of transition between one destination and the next. As intermediary points, they are the most frequented spaces within offices, and it makes sense that this is where art is displayed. However, through their function, they are also transitional spaces, where people pass through or only spend a short time waiting. Perhaps this is why corporate curators choose comfortable aesthetic communication and decorative art for these spaces and the ambiguity of the artworks discussed above offer just the right level of engagement for corporate spaces.

#### *4.3.2.2. Statistical Analysis of Popular Artists*

For the statistical analysis of the six most popular artists, the group of popular artists were analysed in relation to the company's location and the age of the art collection. This analysis is shedding light to buying patterns and trends of corporate artists with a specific focus on finding out when the artists were acquired to conclude if corporate collectors are generally setting trends in the artworld or following them.

Chart 5 shows the distribution of these most popular artists in relation to the company's location. We can see here that it looks like Germany is particularly prone to include all of these artists in their collections, slightly favouring Andreas Gursky and Gerhard Richter to the others. Damien Hirst is the only artist consistently present in all country groups, with a strong representation in the UK collections.

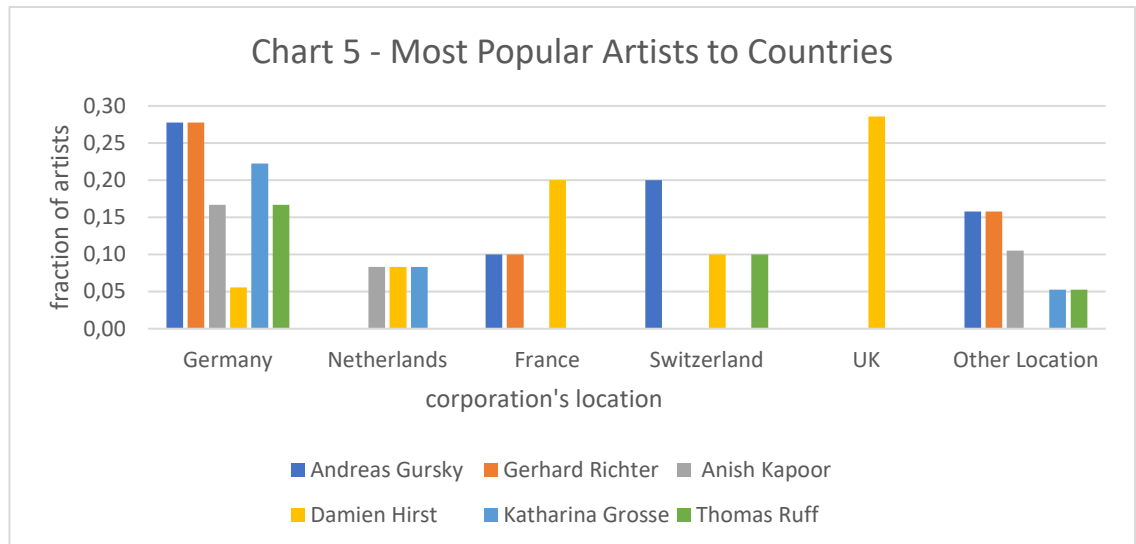


Figure 10: Chart 5, Most Popular Artists to Countries

This is consistent with the previous findings where UK collections especially favoured native artists and show a lack of diversity in comparison to the other country groups. However, this graph also shows that these particular artists are represented in collections outside of their own nationality. Considering that chart 2 illustrated that corporations especially buy artists native to their own country, this implies that these specific artists are attractive to corporate collections

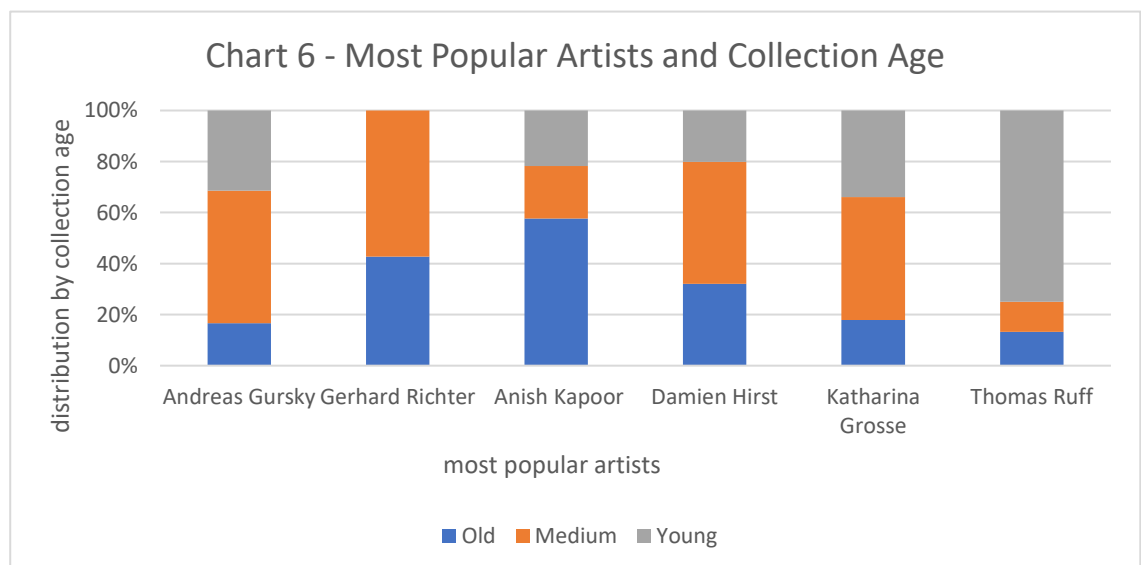


Figure 11: Chart 6, most popular artists and collection age

across Europe despite the country bias.

For the next chart, the art collections were grouped by age, categorizing all collections founded before 1980 as 'old', between 1980 and 2000 as 'medium' and after the year 2000 as 'young'. While younger collections seem to strongly favour Thomas Ruff out of the six artists, Gerhard Richter and Anish Kapoor are more represented in older art collections. Gerhard Richter is by far the oldest one of the artists on the list, being born in 1932 and building up his career during the 1960s and 1970s. By the 1980s he was an internationally acclaimed artist, today his artworks reach record prices in auction houses. It makes sense that as an upcoming contemporary artist with still manageable prices, Richter was frequently acquired by corporations who were already collecting between the 1950s and 1980s, while younger collections founded after the year 2000 would find it more difficult to acquire a Richter now.

The website Artfacts.net offers a few more insights into an artist's position in the art world considering their exhibition history and exposure in art fairs and galleries. Artfacts created a ranking of more than 500,000 contemporary artists based on the number and type (group show or solo show) of exhibitions displaying them, as well as the type of institution (museum or gallery) and the countries the artist is displayed in. Comparing the annual development of an artist's ranking through Artfacts offers a comprehensive way to observe an artist's progress throughout their career and quantitatively measure their popularity. Such additional information could potentially explain certain aspects of the buying habits of corporate art collections that were identified earlier. The amount of available data on precise buying times and amounts is likely not sufficient to perform a comprehensive analysis. However, in the following paragraphs, I will point out consistent theories that link and combine various findings and conclusions made previously in this chapter and therefore provide supporting evidence for such.

In chart 6, we have seen that certain artists seem to be more popular with older art collections, while younger collections seem to have fewer of their pieces. A potential explanation could be given by the fact that these artists had a correspondingly early increase in popularity and that corporations prefer to buy artists that are currently 'trending', rather than unknown artists (who have insufficient value) and well-established artists (who are often expensive to buy or have little estimated increase in value over time). Note here, that collections founded after the corresponding artist became popular would not have a chance to buy them during this 'trending time' and would therefore own fewer of their pieces.

To illustrate and support this hypothesis, I will use an example case and take a closer look at Anish Kapoor's career, according to Artfacts. The Artfacts data suggests that he rapidly climbed up the ranking between 1979, where he was ranked 4294th, and 1982 where he ranked 674th. These were the biggest jumps within a few years which mark his 'upcoming' career and rapid growth of representation and consecration in the art market. His career further developed within the next few years reaching position number 146 in 1986. Though his career remained stable in the following years and he still climbed up the rank, slowly but steadily, he never reached the top 100 and ranks today at his all-time peak in position 106. Kapoor is especially popular with art collections founded before the 1980s, as can be seen in chart 6. This could be because he was an affordable upcoming artist at the time. He seems to be most popular with older and medium-aged collections and less popular with the newer ones. This could be rooted in the traction his career gained during the 1980s and the attention he would have gotten for this. He still maintains his position later on in his career, but the jump between rank 146 that he held in 1986 and rank 106 in 2020 is not as substantial as the ones during the 1980s. He maintained to be an established artist but maybe less interesting for corporate collectors who are looking for something new and exciting on the contemporary art market.

The theory discussed above is based on the idea that there is a tendency for corporate collections to purchase artists in a time when they are just becoming popular. Generalising this way of thinking, it might be possible that corporate art collections have an overall tendency to follow the trends of the art market and change their buying habits accordingly. This is also consistent with corporate collections generally reflecting the gender imbalance of the art market discussed previously. Note that the gender ratio in the top 100 list on Artfacts is 80% men to 20% women, which is very similar to the ratio calculated earlier for the Hiscox art collection, as well as for the list of key artists. There are also a few other points where trends and biases found based on the list of key artists seem to reflect the trends Artfacts shows for the general art market. Chart 2 showed a bias towards corporate collections tending to buy artists with the same nationality as the collection. A similar trend can be observed for the entire art market based on the information on artfacts, e.g. about the preferred exhibition locations of the six key artists discussed earlier:

	Gerhard Richter	Anish Kapoor	Andreas Gursky	Thomas Ruff	Katharina Grosse	Damien Hirst
1	Germany	USA	Germany	Germany	Germany	UK
2	UK	UK	USA	USA	USA	USA
3	France	Germany	Spain	Spain	Spain	Germany

*Table 1: Popular Artists and Preferred Exhibition Locations*

This table shows not only that each artist is exhibited predominantly in their native country (except for Kapoor having the UK only listed as the second choice), but also that all artists are mostly consecrated by the USA and West/ Central Europe. Generally, this trend of US- European bias is also reflected in the top 100 list of artists on Artfacts. 29% of the artists on the list are from the USA, 25% are German, and artists from France, UK, Austria and Switzerland together cover 25%. This is once again consistent with the predominantly US-Eurocentric direction of corporate collections. Furthermore, over half of the top 50 artists in the list of key artists in corporate collections are also in the current top 100 list of trending artists on Artfacts.

These figures indicate that corporate collections generally seem to follow the art market as they reflect the general trends and bias of the market. Artists that currently trend on the art market are often found in art collection, the gender- and country bias that exists in the art world, exists in corporate collections, too. The art market and corporate collections both show a strong tendency to prefer US-American and European artists. However, the fact that corporate collectors seem to follow the art market closely does not diminish the value that corporate collections hold, both in a monetary and a cultural sense. That over half of the top 50 artists in the list of key artists are also part of Artfacts' current top 100 list of artists, shows that art collections typically own high quality and established artists. Nevertheless, the strong similarities with and orientation towards the general art market also indicates a lack of identity and direction within corporate collections.

#### 4.4. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed the internal politics and processes of corporations building and managing their art collection by analysing qualitative interviews and supporting my findings with quantitative data about art collections.

We learn that a typical art collection is approximately 1200 artworks in scope and much smaller than the famous art collections of JP Morgan, UBS and Deutsche Bank who are really outliers to the norm. The quantitative data also shows that the growth of an art collection is not linear and

the number of artworks within a collection usually rapidly increases within the first few years only to typically stagnate after 20 years of collecting. Ultimately the growth of an art collection is heavily influenced by the economic situation of a corporation at all times.

Analysing the decision-making process around new acquisitions sheds light on the social structure surrounding a corporate collection within a corporation. While higher-ranking employees, management and especially CEOs are heavily included in the decision process of which artworks to add to the collection, lower-ranking employees are typically more seen as the audience and consumers of the collection. Curators take on a research role, preparing and vetting potential artists and artworks to present to the acquisition committee. Nevertheless, employees' feedback is often taken on board, which is why the curator often finds themselves in a mediating role between employees (audience) and management (decision-makers).

Relating this back to Bourdieu's field theory, the dependence of the development of the art collection on the general economic situation of the corporation and the prevailing influence of the upper management on the acquisition policy are both indicators of how firmly anchored corporate art collections are in the economic field and therefore in the field of power.

When it comes to buying art, corporations prefer to buy on the primary market instead of auctions. The reason is the contemporary focus of many art collections, the restricted budget that corporate curators often navigate and the principle of trying to support the artists directly as much as possible. Deaccessioning work is connected to a lot of stigmas and usually only done as a reaction to financial stress, less often proactive to refocus the collection. This is also where we clearly see the difference between cultural institutes and corporate collections; in a financially difficult time, a corporate collection has to prioritize the core business and its employees before the art collection. Both the process of acquisition and deaccessioning are strongly driven by image concerns of the company which does not want to come across as 'wasteful' when buying art that is too expensive, or as profit-driven when selling artworks on the secondary market.

All of these findings show that the corporate curators' actions are heavily influenced by heteronomous interests from within and outside of the corporation. The dominant agents within a corporation who influence policies around acquisition, deaccessioning and budget for the art collection are the board members and CEOs. The curator's autonomy is further compromised by maintaining the corporation's image to the clients and the public and considering the employees who work around the art daily and might not possess the cultural capital to decode more controversial works of art. These findings also reflect the conclusions of

chapter III, where the corporate curator's habitus is described as being heavily influenced by restrictions within the corporate environment and cultural sensitivities of employees in different countries.

The analysis of artists and artworks within corporate collections sheds light on the strong country and gender bias that prevails in corporate collections. An already existing bias on the art market in general and a meritocratic worldview of the curators could lead to the domination of male artists and the eurocentric focus evident in corporate collections. The majority of curators express that they base their curatorial selections solely on subjective standards of 'taste' and 'quality' which further reproduces the prevailing racism and sexism of the art market. We also previously learned that board members and CEOs, who are predominantly men, heavily influence the acquisition policy which could indicate why a gender imbalance within the corporate collections still exists and the curators feel very little pressure to correct this at all.

Learning that a small group of dominant and powerful agents within a corporation heavily impact the acquisition of artworks and that the resulting art collections are heavily steered towards a specific nationality and gender could be interpreted in Gramsci's terms as cultural hegemony. Powerful white men in top positions of corporations do not just belong to the dominant group within their business but within the entire Western society. That the art collections displayed in their offices to their staff reflect just these same values and diversity is often dismissed as 'limiting' or simply not important, leads to the conclusion that corporate collections function as hegemonic devices for dominant groups in society. The curators as cultural experts within a corporation thereby reinforce and legitimize the dominant values and ideologies by granting artistic consecration through their advisory role in the acquisition process and their mediating role when it comes to employees' feedback. That these dominant ideologies put forth by corporate curators are made to seem natural and common sense further resonates with Gramsci's theory.

That there are corporate collections which, outside of the norm, resist the eurocentric and gender biases of the art market and actively use the art collection as a platform against inequalities, signifies that corporate collections very much have the potential to introduce counter-hegemonic values into the art world. It seems that this is entirely down to the curator's personality and the corporate culture.

Lastly, in this chapter, I am identifying several artists that seem to be particularly popular within corporate collections. These artists are established and consecrated artists in the artworld addressing agreeable, safe but meaningful topics in their artworks, such as 'human existence'

and 'human presence on earth'. All of the artists have a specific and recognizable brand which corporate collectors use to associate themselves with, not just with the art but also with all other positive attributes associated with the artist. Just as Diederichsen's concept of art that does not need further legitimization to be recognized as such, the most popular artists in corporate collections conform to the classical prototype of artists. Being mainly white and male, they are already part of the demographic that is mostly celebrated and recognized in the art world. The same applies to the topics addressed in their artworks, which are widely accepted as important. Neither the medium of artworks nor the artists themselves or the issues they speak on are particularly controversial or in need of additional discussions to be cast as relevant. Diederichsen further argues that while this type of accepted art is more numerous on the art market, *"the art in need of justification and its justifying discourses supply the grist for the art world's mill, its conversation and its ideas"* (Diederichsen, 2008, p. 30). In other words, one can say that the art most popular in corporate collections is widely recognized and legitimate art, not in need of further justification but at the same time, it is also not the kind of art that contributes and shapes the discourse of the art world.

Analyzing the presence of the most popular artists led to the conclusion that even though these artists are very high ranking and established now, they have most likely been acquired by the corporation when their career was just picking up. Generally, corporate collections seem to reflect the biases and general trends of the market, which further indicates that they follow the current trends of the market instead of setting them.

The popularity of this group of established artists might be seen as standing in juxtaposition to corporations being very conscious of not being seen as lavish or wasteful when acquiring art. However, especially for the financial service institutes, buying artists when they are trending to later show off a collection of 'trophies' tells a story about their smartness and ability to invest. As we know this is not necessarily connected to actually selling the artworks, as most collections are 'non-selling' or a sale is only considered within exceptional circumstances. Being a smart investor in art communicates to the public and clients more about the abilities in the corporation's core business. As one of the corporate collectors said in the interviews when speaking about financial service institutes, *"smart investment is their bread and butter"* (Interviewee No. 6, 2019), meaning that the investment ability of these businesses needs to be reflected within their art collection. Popular, established artists also grant by association artistic consecration to the rest of the collection and the collector themselves.



The next part of this thesis will explore the role and position of corporate collectors in the art world and their ties and relationships to artists and cultural institutions. Chapter 4 will focus on the relationship of corporate collectors with the artists, switching the perspective from corporate curators to focussing primarily on artists' voices. Analysing the artists' point of view will grant insight into how corporations communicate and act as patrons of the arts and how they might help artists' careers. Chapter 5 will examine three case studies of corporate collections and their position in Bourdieu's cultural field.

## Part 3

## 5. Chapter V - Corporate Collectors, Art Patronage and Consecration in the Art World

### 5.1. Introduction

The relationship between a patron of the arts and an artist is traditionally more than just a singular monetary transaction through units sold. Becker describes the patronage system in his book *Art Worlds* as *"a person or organisation supporting the artist entirely for a period during which the artist contracts to produce specific works or a specified number of works"* (Becker, 2011, p. 100). This support can take, according to Becker, the form of commissions, residencies or a stipend and often comes along with encouragement, opportunities and exposure for the artist. Having the means to support artists financially and offer them a platform requires a certain amount of political, financial and social power. A patron who enjoys a certain status within the field of art, can by associating with and supporting certain artists, legitimise them and improve their position within the art world and thus contribute to building an artist's reputation and career (Becker, 2011, pp. 107–108).

Bourdieu describes this phenomenon in *The field of cultural production* as a specific form of legitimacy that corresponds to bourgeois taste, also identified as 'consecration' by the affluent and therefore dominant group in society (Bourdieu, 1983, p. 331). Not every art patron or wealthy person has the power to grant consecration to artists within the art world; different agents have varying amounts of legitimisation authority depending on their position, reputation and consecration within the field. Several other agents can also consecrate artists in the art world such as universities (through diploma), museums, peers and the mass audience (i.e. popular artists). The competition for consecration describes the effort of agents to keep or to make their position within the field of art the most legitimate one, as being consecrated also confers the power to consecrate others and influence the canon (Bourdieu, 1985, p. 15). The agents who hold consecration authority within the field of cultural production therefore also partially shape the taste of others.

Becker also shines a light on another important aspect of art patronage: the role of patrons in the production process of art. Becker states:

*"Patrons pay, and they dictate - not every brushstroke, but the broad outlines and the matters that concern them. They choose artists who provide what they want. In an efficient patronage system, artists and patrons share conventions and an aesthetic, through which they can*

*cooperate to produce work, the patrons providing support and direction, the artists creativity and execution."* (Becker, 2011, p. 103)

In summary, art patronage can therefore be characterised as a durable collaborative arrangement between the patron and the artist. A patron can support an artist financially but also by generating consecration, access and exposure and thus impact an artist's development and career but will also influence the art produced.

In this chapter, the focus shifts from the art collection and the artwork itself to the relationship between corporate art collectors and artists. Alain Dominique Perrin is the former president of Cartier International, a French manufacturer of luxury jewellery and watches. The company owns an extensive art collection that is looked after by the *Fondation Cartier pour l'art Contemporain*, a company associated foundation. Perrin speaks in a publication from 2014 about the relationship between the foundation and the artists in their collection:

*"We have been doing our job, and artists respect us for it. They know that by coming here, they will not be spoilt or used. I am very serious on that subject. It is an absolute rule. It is a duty for us to respect the artist and also to protect them."* (Goodrow and Conzen, 2015, p. 131)

Grazia Quaroni, the Senior Curator and Head of Collections for Cartier, adds *"There is no collection without the artists, there is no exhibition nor curator without them."* (Goodrow and Conzen, 2015, p. 134)

Similar quotes and statements of this nature can be found in interviews or catalogues when other corporate collectors speak about the artists they support and collect. However, only listening to corporate curators and CEOs gives a one-sided view of the topic and to fully understand the relationship between artists and corporate collectors, it is essential to study other possible perspectives.

This chapter therefore mainly focuses on the in depth-interviews of early to mid-career artists and their experiences of working with corporate collectors. I have also included statements of other art professionals, e.g. art consultants, activists and academics as well as curators for public foundations and hospital charities into the analysis to give more insights into a perspective from outside the corporation.

The interviews were analysed with the aim to provide answers to three main questions:

1. How do corporate collectors relate to government funding? Is there a general tendency towards or against artists preferring corporations as buyers and supporters of the arts? If so, why is that?
2. What does the personal relationship between corporate art collectors and artists look like in terms of communication, contact and commissions?
3. How do corporate collectors impact artists' careers? And what are the parameters for an artist's success?

Answering these questions aims to improve our understanding of what corporate art patronage looks like from the perspective of the artists, and if and how corporate collectors can contribute to the consecration of artists in the art world. Each question group will be discussed separately in the following three sections and will be introduced with a short historical contextualisation of the topic.

## 5.2. Corporate Collectors as funders of the art in relation to Government funding

In this section, I will study the relationship between corporate and government funding, with a focus on the first question group (see previous section). Chapter III (3.2.) has given a detailed history of corporate funding and corporate collecting in Europe. To understand how government funding of the arts relates to corporate funding and how the government's approach to corporate funding varies between the nations, one needs to take a look at the history of government subsidies in art and culture in Europe.

Europe has a long-standing tradition of supporting and funding the arts in various ways, and shortly after World War II a vibrant and lively culture and arts scene emerged in Western Europe even without specific government policies covering arts and culture. Governmental oversight was first introduced in the 1960s along with the implementation of the welfare state concept which, for the first time, discovered the arts and culture as one arena of public policy. A welfare state turns a democracy into a social democracy, and along with the social-democratic philosophy, Western countries began to develop cultural policies aimed at improving the production of art and culture with an emphasis on promoting cultural equality and social equity (Crane *et al.*, 2016, p. 29).

France took the lead in the development of a cultural policy by establishing a Ministry of Culture in 1959. In 1965 the first junior minister was appointed in the UK with a particular focus on

cultural policy, while at the same time significantly increasing the budget of Britain's Arts Council. Within the same year, the Netherlands followed and created a new Ministry of Culture, Recreation, and Social Work. By the late 1970s, public support of the arts had increased in almost every country in the Western world and was commonly accepted as part of public policy (Crane *et al.*, 2016, p. 30). The common rationale for governments to fund art and culture at the time, besides the obvious economic advantages of attracting tourism to bigger cities, was as mentioned earlier, strongly shaped by the social democratic philosophy of economic, social and cultural equality. When subsidising ticket prices, the government opened the doors of cultural institutions to lower-income individuals and spread cultural education and participation across class and social boundaries. Efforts to make art and culture more available and accessible to the public also led to decentralisation of the production of art and culture. In his field theory, Pierre Bourdieu stresses the importance of cultural capital for personal development. If the government wanted to increase the cultural capital of its people, it had to make sure that everybody has access to art and culture regardless of income and location (Crane *et al.*, 2016, p. 31).

However, public policies or governmental systems differ significantly between Western countries. Through differences in history and development paths different models of public policy of the arts have emerged. Stefan Toepler and Annette Zimmer analysed and compared in their chapter *Subsidising the Arts – Government and Arts in Western Europe and the United States* published as part of the book *Global Culture – Media, Arts, Policy and Globalization*, the differences in public policy patterns between various groups of Western European nations and the United States and drew out three main groups that the countries can be roughly categorised in.

The first group described the approach of the larger countries of Central Europe, which are traditionally seen as 'big spenders' when it comes to public funding of the arts. Zimmer and Toepler found that in these countries the state's commitment for, and responsibility to, funding the arts and steering public policy is a historical legacy and often inherited by the cultural institutions that the aristocracy of these countries built in the eighteenth century. The state plays a dominant role in producing high culture as most cultural institutions are typically still owned by the government, art and culture are here often seen as the foundation and expression of the nation's greatness. Therefore, state intervention into the art and the cultural market is perceived as protection of the arts and against anti-culture and mass production. A distinctive feature of several countries in Central and Western Europe is the centralisation of

the government which led to the country's capital not just being the centre of political and economic power but also of intellectual and cultural life, overshadowing independent artistic movements in the provinces. Zimmer and Toepler used France as a prime example for this bureaucratic top-down approach to cultural policy. The state highly subsidises artistic and cultural production in France, whereas business support of the arts was actively discouraged until the 1980s (Crane *et al.*, 2016, p. 36).

The second group of countries which Zimmer and Toepler focus on, are the Scandinavian countries. Just like central Europe, the Scandinavian countries have a long history of government involvement in art and culture, and to this day major cultural institutions are predominantly state-run. Furthermore, because there has always been a consensus among the political parties that the provision of resources for cultural institutions is a public rather than a private matter, private support and mass marketisation are generally rejected. What differentiates the approach to cultural policy in the Scandinavian country group from the central European countries is the broad support not only for high culture but also for grass-roots cultural activities which led to a mostly decentralised system, giving local and regional institutions a higher degree of autonomy. As a representative example for the Scandinavian country group, Zimmer and Toepler chose Sweden, whose public funding of the arts is roughly at the same level of Germany and the Netherlands. Much like France, Sweden's government tries to counteract with public funding the negative effects of commercialisation and does not have any tax incentives in place to encourage corporate support of the arts. A fundamental difference between France and Sweden though is the notion that cultural policy in Sweden is closely linked to the social policy where art is mainly used as a tool of empowerment rather than a representation of the nation's high culture and expression of prestige (Crane *et al.*, 2016, p. 42).

In stark contrast to the Central European and Scandinavian countries stands the Anglo-Saxon model where the private sector dominates cultural policy initiatives, and the government only plays a supporting role — the strongest example for this model according to Zimmer and Toepler is the United States. Lacking the aristocratic history and infrastructure of the European and Scandinavian countries, the elites and business communities became the primary funders of institutions and culture and the driving force behind cultural policy initiatives in the United States. Because the government spending on the arts is considerably lower compared to other industrialised countries and the donations by foundations, individuals and corporations cannot fully subsidise the missing funds, cultural organisations are often forced to increase their earned

income to cover their operating costs. This is realised by commercialisation strategies that range from museum membership schemes, the expansion of merchandise and museum shops, as well as on-site restaurants (Crane *et al.*, 2016, p. 41).

The three distinct categories that Zimmer and Toepler identified within the country groups of Western Europe and the United States are helpful to understand general notions and differences in regards to their approach to public policy. Nevertheless, most countries share characteristics representative for two or even all three categories, and a unique association with a single category is often not possible. Countries like the USA, Sweden and France can, in that sense, be regarded as very representative for a single specific category and are therefore used as typical examples.

Even though Germany, for example, shares the aristocratic history with France and other central European countries, their approach to cultural policy is quite different as a result of the historical events during and before the second world war. Culture played a significant role in the Third Reich, where 'Aryan' culture was heavily promoted by the state while other forms of artistic production, such as modern forms of art, or even abstract art were suppressed and eventually banned altogether. Consequently, Germany implemented in its new constitution from 1949 a decentralised form of cultural policy, called 'cultural federalism' to limit the power of the state, particularly in the arts. The freedom of the arts is guaranteed by the basic law, ensuring a neutral and liberal attitude of the state (Dubois, 2013, p. 4). Noticeably, this part of German history has led to a reluctance of state-driven cultural policy, certainly less of a regulating function of the state as seen in France. Subsequently, Germany is in many aspects of funding policies closer to the Scandinavian model of decentralisation, enabling the development of a flourishing art scene in the more regional parts of the country (Deutsche Unesco-Kommission, 1977, p. 11).

Government support of the arts in the United Kingdom reached a turning point when Margaret Thatcher came to office at the beginning of the 1980s. The United Kingdom is, as a centralised state with an aristocratic history and long tradition of the arts, historically very close to other West European countries. And just as with France and Germany the government directly supported arts organisations with their operating costs since the establishment of the Arts Council after the second world war in 1945. However, the social-democratic take that access to the arts is a basic right for every citizen, just like access to any other public service, was fundamentally challenged by the new cultural policies implemented by Thatcher (Wu, 2010, p. 47). While the British government cut the budget for direct art subsidies, arts organisations



were asked to sustain a reliable income from the private sector and become more financially enterprising. Incentives were given to both sides; arts organisations were offered match-funding for every donation from the private sector, and businesses were offered tax reliefs to encourage support of the arts (Wu, 2010, p. 49). Thatcher's policy of privatisation has shifted the United Kingdom's approach to cultural policy closer to the American model.

The notion of moving away from a strictly social-democratic take on cultural policy towards a more liberal idea of public-private partnerships has developed not just in the United Kingdom but gradually throughout Central and Western Europe. The 1990s have seen an increasing degovernmentalisation of art institutions in Europe and the European Fundraising Association reported in 2018 that all of their member nations<sup>9</sup> except for Sweden currently *"encourage corporate donations by offering a tax incentive"* (Dubois, 2013, p. 6). Note that as discussed in chapter III, 3.2., corporate patronage has existed in different forms in Europe for a long time alongside government funding, the change that occurred in the 1990s is the government's endorsement and support of corporate intervention, due to the reduction of government spending on art. Even though active corporate involvement in the art world is now much more public and accepted in Europe than it was a few decades ago, funds from the private sector are not regarded as a replacement for public funding, but rather as a complement (Crane *et al.*, 2016, p. 45).

When speaking to artists and art professionals about the opportunities and obstacles of government and corporate funding, many interviewees agree that a mix of public and private funding is a good balance. The founder of an art foundation explains in an interview that government funding is in her view specifically needed when it comes to the artist's development and experimental phases of their career:

*"In my view, public funding should be for fundamental art research and corporate or private funding should be possibly looking at short-term benefits. If you look at fundamental research, it's experimenting, not necessarily delivering something short term, and the impatience of the market makes it difficult for artists to explore that. Whether they just graduated and are pushed to create some output, they burn their wings because they are not ready. Or if you look at mid-career or mature artists as well, they found their recipe that is successful, and they are pressured*

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<sup>9</sup> Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK

*by the market to produce more of it. So, they don't have time to explore new things, they are pressured to have studios who are producing like print factories."* (Interviewee No. 22, 2019)

Interviewee number 14, an established contemporary artist, explains that government funding has a fundamentally different incentive than corporate support, stressing the social agenda of government-funded projects:

*"I think that the government supports a lot of social practice. They support the art in a different way from production - a kind of bourgeois concept of what art is - something to buy and put on your wall. It's much more about social interaction, collaboration, inclusivity, diversity and encouraging different forms of practice."* (Interviewee No. 14, 2019)

However, there are also arguments in favour of corporate funding. In comparison to government funding, corporate funding is often described by the interviewees as less bureaucratic, more free, more specialised and independent as well as more spontaneous in their reaction to the market and decision-making processes. An art consultant argues:

*"Museums can't collect everything. Corporate collectors are very focussed on a particular medium or period. (...) Corporate collections are more focussed and tightly curated and don't have that legacy that museums have, and deal with the restraints museums have."* (Interviewee No. 20, 2019)

Another established artist weighed into the discussion, referring to Museum Ritter as an example. The museum, associated with the German chocolate manufacturer Ritter Sport, has specialised their art collection around the theme 'square' in correspondence to the shape of their chocolate bars.

*"I think government funding is sometimes perhaps more slow or more bureaucratic because they spend public money. And also museums - sometimes I think it's a challenge for the museum to buy those works that society wants to keep. Companies or corporations are sometimes more spontaneous (...) they don't have to be responsible to the public for what they want to buy. Some companies are buying only abstract art, only drawings, and they can do it. (...) [Museum Ritter] has this idea to only collect squares; they can do it. A public museum couldn't do it so easily; they have to really have a good reason."* (Interviewee No. 26, 2019)

In a publication about corporate art collections from 2012, Appleyard and Salzman described a similar line of argument in regards to the freedom and independence that corporate collectors enjoy.

*"Ever since the late 1950s, the best corporate collections have adopted museum standards of decision making - but unlike their not-for-profit counterparts, they have the luxury and the added benefit of not having to fulfil a museum's obligation to represent a chronological or academic canon."* (Appleyard and Salzmänn, 2012, p. 18)

The corporate curator of a bank collection, reaffirmed the artist's accounts in her interview, mentioning that public institutions are often under pressure to attract a certain number of visitors to receive government funding. According to her, this leads to museums choosing more popular themes and artists for their exhibitions.

*"We can deal with topics a lot of museums can't deal with anymore because they have to bring a certain amount of visitors in. In a sense, we are freer because we don't have to fulfil a certain fashion."* (Interviewee No. 10, 2019)

In general, corporate collectors do not have to answer to the public in the same way that museums do, and the corresponding lack of accountability bears various risks, e.g., for the corporate collector to suddenly sell artworks<sup>10</sup> or stop funding art altogether, as recounted by an established artist in one of the interviews:

*"[Corporate patronage] nearly completely stopped during the bank crisis. The first thing the companies did was that they didn't spend much more money on art. Now it's getting a bit better, but that was always a problem that they were to buy on a regular basis, art from young artists and then it stopped."* (Interviewee No. 23, 2019)

As discussed in chapter III, the financial crisis in 2008 caused many corporate collectors such as Lehman Brothers and Deloitte to sell their art collection or substantially cut their budget for the collection, so new acquisitions slowed down or completely stopped. If corporate patronage supplements or, as in the American model, even replaces government funding, the sudden block of this funding stream can cause financial difficulties for artists. On top of that, the release of several artworks from the same artist into the art market through the sale of a whole collection at once can substantially influence an artist's prices. In this regard, corporate

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<sup>10</sup> As discussed in chapter IV, 4.2.3.

collectors are similar to private individual art collectors, who may have a moral code of collecting but are not obligated in any way to protect or even consider the artist when buying or selling art.

Hans Haacke, a German artist internationally renowned for his works around institutional critique, remarked in a conversation with Bourdieu published in 1995 how difficult it is to reverse the situation once the state has stepped back from arts funding and artists have started to depend on corporate patronage:

*"The sponsors' enthusiasm is not guaranteed forever. (...) It would be naive to think that the state will resume its responsibilities for culture when the Cartiers of the world [meaning corporate art collectors] have lost interest."* (Bourdieu et al., 1995, p. 71)

Because of these issues around the reliability and sustainability of corporate funding for the arts, corporate patronage can always only be an addition to government funding and not a replacement.

Besides the ethics of collecting, there are also moral factors that artists expressed regarding the corporation's core business practices when it comes to accepting funding, making a sale or entering a competition. While there is often a mutual understanding that any company dealing with oil, tobacco, or weapons is off-limits, the case is often not as clear when it comes to the financial services sector. In an interview, an artist shared his experience with a competition he won in the mid-1980s, sponsored by a local bank:

*"I won a few awards, and one of these awards was a very prestigious one from all the postgraduate art schools. It was sponsored by [bank name]. I entered it at the last second because, at the time, that was 1986 (...) and [bank name], of course, there was a lot going on with the South African apartheid, and it was really dubious.<sup>11</sup> (...) It was like 10,000 quid at the time and an exhibition at a big gallery. (...) So with this money I wanted to buy a studio because you could at the time. (...) I didn't think I would win it. It was an absolute shock."* (Interviewee No. 16, 2019)

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<sup>11</sup> Student activists played a major role in forcing banks to end their loans to the South African government which were used to uphold and enforce apartheid. The boycott campaign that was initiated by students in 1969 and included sit-ins in bank branches, strikes and protests. In the following years the activists also encouraged a substantial number of political, cultural, religious and student organisations to publicly close their accounts with these banks. The boycott came to a peak in 1986/1987 when the bank announced that they finally sold their South African subsidiary (Wilcox (n.d.).

Besides the prize money and the exhibition at a renowned public gallery, part of winning the competition was also that the bank included the winning artwork into their art collection. The bank ended up deaccessioning it decades later without the artist's knowledge and today when reflecting about his feelings after winning the competition, the artist recounted:

*"I was terrified. I didn't enjoy a second of it. I felt guilty and rubbish."* (Interviewee No. 16, 2019)

Another artist granted insights into the dissent around the topic of corporate patronage within his professional circle of academics and artists:

*"I suppose I'm someone who is always cautious and suspicious about corporate funding. I wouldn't say I'm incredibly [politically] active around things, but I'm always aware of artwashing as they call it. Like the Hunting group [oil and gas supplier], they had a prize which was a big deal when I was a student. There is often a lot of talk around this and a lot of uncomfortable feelings. But also, kind of a real trickiness when artists are trying to survive. I don't think it's a clear cut (...)." (Interviewee No. 19, 2019)*

But despite these moral implications, based on his own experiences a positive stance towards corporate collectors buying his work:

*"The other sense of corporate funding in relation to certain companies who have corporate collections. [Corporate collection name] has bought my work (...) There have been a lot of sales throughout the years that have come through that corporate collection. I haven't had a conversation with my colleagues at [University name] about the ethics of these companies. Obviously, [corporate collection name] is kind of an investment company, and one might take kind of a strong line against the idea of capitalism and growth and so on. But on the whole, I kind of think, if that money is going into the arts, I'm sort of in favour of the arts. It's kind of nice to be part of [the corporate] collection. Again, that idea that there is public and private money, there is always some sort of compromise around it. (...) I realise that actually quite often it's been corporate collections which have bought my work."* (Interviewee No. 19, 2019)

In justifying his reasons for accepting corporate money, the artist reproduced an argument that is as old as corporate patronage itself: 'Dirty' money can be cleansed through being put towards the good cause, in this case, himself and his art (see also chapter III, 3.2.). He also voiced another issue that is often overlooked when comparing government and corporate funding: As much as we expect that corporate funding can come with strings attached, state funding for the arts has its underlying agendas and compromises, too. The instrumentalisation of art exists on both sides, with government and corporate funding. Both of these artists' encounters capture

the complexity of the relationship between an artist and their patron. Artists are conscious about ethically questionable corporations and do not want to be associated or involved, there is even a sense of guilt and peer pressure if they are - but at the same time especially young artists also need to survive and sometimes lack the choices of other funders.

In summary, it can be said that corporate patronage in Europe forms a welcome addition to government funding of the arts. While professionals in the art world and artists themselves consider government funding to be important to protect artists from the pressure of the market and allow them critical development of their work, it is often perceived as overly bureaucratic, restricted and slow. Corporate funding is praised for being a bit more spontaneous in their reaction to the market and decision-making processes as well as independent from government guidelines when it comes to their acquisition strategy. However, this spontaneity can also have a downside and bear risks for artists when corporations suddenly decide to stop their funding programme or sell their art collection.

Artists are also conscious of ethical implications when it comes to their corporate funders: oil, tobacco and weapon manufacturers are openly rejected. All artists in the interviews acknowledged that they actively consider which corporations they associate themselves with, but ultimately also require support from outside the government.

Finally, even though corporate collectors do not have to fulfil museum obligations and represent an academic canon, findings in chapter IV do not support that this leads to corporate collections and exhibitions therefore being more daring or adventurous. The findings suggest that corporate collections generally follow the trends of the art market (chapter IV, 4.3.) and that curators generally consider employees' wellbeing and therefore often avoid controversial topics (e.g. sex, religion, violence etc.) (chapter III, 3.3.). Corporate curators may not be answerable to the public about what artworks they buy and which artists they include in their collection. However, they do have a responsibility to the company's stakeholders, who are, at a senior level, in many instances directly involved in the acquisition process (chapter IV, 4.2.).

### 5.3. Personal Relationship between Artists and Corporate Collectors

This section discusses the personal relationship between patrons and artists. After giving a brief historical overview, I will take a look at the artists' interviews and personal accounts, aiming to answer the second research question stated at the beginning of the chapter.

The study of artistic contracts in Renaissance Italy indicates that the relationship between artist and patron was historically similar to the one between any other customer and contractor. The

patron specified what they wanted, as in topic, examples and material, and the artist delivered (Schapiro, 1964, p. 363). Kempers and Jackson wrote in their publication *Paintings, Power and Patronage* about the history of art patronage in Renaissance Italy. They explained here, that when it came to commissioning artworks, it was very common for patrons to give specific instruction on what to depict and for the artist to have very little say: *"If there was any controversy about the subjects to be painted, the dispute was between clients and advisers; painters had no part in it."* (Kempers and Jackson, 1992, p. 187)

To give the patron a guarantee of what would be delivered, it was common for the artists to first produce drawings or, if sculptures were commissioned, manufacture terracotta models (Drogin, 2017, p. 13). A relic of this time is, for instance, the terracotta model for the funerary monument to Cardinal Niccolo Forteguerri made in 1476 by artist Andrea del Verrocchio in Florence. The model served as a contractual basis for the commission of a marble sculpture and can now be admired as an artwork in its own right in the V&A Museum in London (V&A Collection, 1476). If a patron was dissatisfied with the produced artwork, it was common practice for the artist to change and correct their work retrospectively. Kempers and Jackson shared in their publication an anecdote which shows the influence commissioners had on the final outcome:

*"(...) There is a letter from Benozzo Gozzoli to Piero de' Medici (dated 10 July 1459) written in response to a complaint of Piero's concerning the paintings of the Medici Palace Chapel. Benozzo acknowledges the client's dissatisfaction with the inclusion of two angels in the work."* (Kempers and Jackson, 1992, p. 188)

Kempers and Jackson later directly cited the letter where Benozzo agrees to amend the artwork: *"I will do as you command, two little clouds will take [the angels] away."* (Kempers and Jackson, 1992, p. 187)

To the authors this example also illustrated just how dependant artists were at the time on those who provided them with regular work and profitable commissions.

Particularly wealthy patrons, like the Medici, cultivated a durable employer-employee relationship with artists, housing them in their large estates over an extended period of time. Patrons had great control over their artistic projects, and patronage was as much about the patron as it was about the artist (van Maanen, 2009, p. 213). Over time, changes in the dynamic between the artist and the patron were evident, due to the growing status of artists in society. The artists were given a more active and creative role and were able to make independent

decisions about the content and design of their work. With the development of an impersonal market, the dependence of artists on direct commissions from patrons and collectors ended. This subsequently led to a decline of 'sacral' and 'courtly' art, both of which were usually done via direct commission (Burger, 1984, p.48). Rulers and nobility were replaced by a new urban culture of middle-class people, merchants and lawyers, who formed the bourgeois society. Some features of the modern art world, such as the rise of art dealers, public art auctions and catalogues, can be traced back to this time (Montias, 2002, p.11). Art was increasingly separated from the social institutions which had previously supported and conditioned it and with the establishment of the first art museum, art could be viewed purely for its own sake without reference to its traditional functions in churches or at the court (Grindon, 2011, p.81).

Artistic autonomy as an ideological concept especially gained traction during the Industrial Revolution and the Romantic Era (Bourdieu, 1985, p. 16). The aestheticism movement that developed during the mid to late 19th century saw beauty as the primary element of art. This process of divorcing art from any social, political, or moral purpose is in critical theory often summarised with the phrase "l'art pour l'art"- art for art's sake<sup>12</sup>. At the time, artistic production was idealised as "*free, disinterested 'creation' founded on the spontaneity of innate inspiration*" (Bourdieu, 1985, p.16). Theorist Peter Burger refers to this kind of art as 'autonomous art'<sup>13</sup>, as it was viewed as art radically separate from everyday life, independent from society, free from interest (disinterestedness) and without any function other than being art (Burger, 1984, p.35).

Theorist Peter Burger coined in his book *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, first published in 1974, the term 'institution of art', meaning the norms governing the production and reception of art in society (Burger, 1974, p.22). He viewed the bourgeois institutionalisation of art as the establishment of their hegemony over art and culture. Burger explained that the concept of autonomous art in bourgeois society had led to art becoming the domain of social values excluded from capitalism:

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<sup>12</sup> Bourdieu often refers to "art for art's sake" when writing about the autonomous pole in the sub-field of restricted production (see chapter II, 2.3.3.). However, "Art for art's sake" refers in Bourdieu's case more to "art for artists", meaning artists, who primarily produce for peers, reaching only a small audience (van Maanen, 2009, p. 69). According to Bourdieu, artists in this sub-field have the least cultural and economic capital and are therefore more independent from the economy (Bourdieu, 1983, p. 321). However, art at the autonomous pole of the cultural field is not necessarily divorced from all external factors, as Bourdieu often mentions avant-garde art as an example of this sub-field (van Maanen, 2009, p. 65).

<sup>13</sup> Again, this definition of 'autonomous art' stands very much separate to the autonomous pole in Bourdieu's cultural field. While Burger sees autonomous art as art removed from society, Bourdieu sees art at the autonomous pole of the cultural field as art produced for peers and other artists.



*"The autonomy of art is a category of bourgeois society<sup>14</sup>. It permits the description of art's detachment from the context of practical life as a historical development - that among the members of those classes which, at least at times, are free from the pressures of the need for survival, a sensuousness could evolve that was not part of any means-ends relationships."* (Burger, 1974, p. 46)

He further concluded that the flipside of this ideological concept, the removal of art from practical life, meant that autonomous art lacked social impact (Burger, 1974, p.22). The historical avant-garde movement that began in the early decades of the 20th-century sought, according to Burger, to contest both *"the distribution apparatus on which the work of art depends, and the status of art in bourgeois society as defined by the concept of autonomy."* (Burger, 1974, p.22).

It is important to note, that the extremism of aestheticism is not the only reason why the avant-garde emerged at this particular moment in time. The beginning of the 20th century was also a time of economic and technological change in society. Aestheticism's characteristic detachment and disinterestedness in real-life stood in stark contrast with the socio-historic experiences of society. Just like Burger, Richard Murphy stressed in his analysis the link between the emergence of the avant-garde and historical events at the time:

*"The historical significance of aestheticism for the emergence of the avant-garde lies then in the conjunction of historical factors: the extreme turmoil of contemporary society combined with the crassness of aestheticism's blank rejection of any need to react to it. It is this response that begins to raise doubts concerning the legitimacy of such autonomous art forms, and so ultimately mobilizes the avant-garde."* (Murphy, 1999, p.7)

According to Burger, the aim of the avant-garde movement was the reintegration of art into everyday life, the rediscovery of art's social function. In his analysis, he focused almost exclusively on two movements of the 20th century: Dadaism and Surrealism and characterised the techniques of the avant-garde as the ones that negate the autonomy of art. Burger interpreted the subsequent institutionalisation of the avant-garde, the integration of avant-

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<sup>14</sup> While Bourdieu's idea of autonomous art is artists producing for themselves and their peers, Burger says autonomous art is bourgeois society institutionalising art. In Bourdieu's field theory the bourgeois consecration and institutionalisation of art would be the opposite and take place on the heteronomous side of the diagram with more external influences to the artistic process. So, what Burger describes as the autonomy of art is on Bourdieu's diagram the heteronomy of art.

garde art into the museums, as evidence of its failure to destroy art as an institution and reintegrate art into the praxis of life (Burger, 1974, p.74).

The aestheticist ideology of artists, who are inherently, intrinsically motivated has been fundamental to the modern artistic practice and has permanently shifted the role of the patron in the creative process. However, Bourdieu himself criticised the concept of artistic autonomy as superficial. As he states in his 1985 analysis of the market of symbolic goods, the artist still depends on earning money:

*"This liberty is purely formal; it constitutes no more than the condition of [the artists] submission to the laws of the market of symbolic goods, that is, to a form of demand which necessarily lags behind the supply of the commodity (in this case, the work of art). They are reminded of this demand through sales figures and other forms of pressure, explicit or diffuse, exercised by publishers, theatre managers, art dealers."* (Bourdieu, 1985, p. 17)

Today, an art collector can limit the artist's autonomy directly or indirectly by giving commissions with specific constraints or by communicating their preferences. An artist reacting to or trying to cater to a collector's specific taste to become part of their collection corrupts their artistic autonomy due to market pressures (Gnyp, 2015, p. 41). Interviewee no 23, an established artist and art teacher himself, explained to me how, especially young artists, are sometimes subtly influenced in their artistic process by collectors:

*"If you're a young artist, you're extremely uncertain and really longing for recognition, and a director comes to your studio and buys a specific kind of art from your studio - then this art becomes kind of more important than the rest of your art. So, the artist starts repeating it. I'm a teacher, and a lot of my students have become popular at a very young age, and they are extremely vulnerable at that age. (...) When you're a bit older, then it doesn't influence you anymore. But you need more confidence in what you're doing."* (Interviewee No. 23, 2019)

This also reflects earlier statements that, especially in the experimental and early stages of an artist's career, subsidies and financial support are needed to relieve young artists from the market pressure and commodification of their art. Most of the established artists in the interviews state that they rarely have direct contact with their corporate buyers as they prefer to buy from their galleries or directly at art fairs (e.g. Interviewee No. 18, 2019). Buying an artwork that has already been produced seems to have retrospectively little influence on the artistic autonomy of more established artists, though interviewees indicate that they welcome corporate collectors in their circle of buyers as they often buy again (e.g. Interviewee No. 23,

2019). It seems that while established artists notice a financial impact that corporate collectors have by regularly buying, they do not feel their artistic autonomy corrupted through a buyer's preference, unlike the younger, more upcoming artists.

This seems to change though when it comes to commissions, as it is here where corporate collectors connect to artists before the production process begins. Even for established artists, commissions seem to be a form of patronage in which artistic freedom is typically an issue to be negotiated. Interviewee number 14, herself a well-known artist and part of several public and private collections, granted insight into why producing work for corporate commissions is often frustrating:

*"The thing that I find difficult doing commissions, which is the main area where I am involved in the corporate world, is that it's a very specific outcome that they want. They want this, and sometimes they will come by and say 'oh no, we don't want that, we want this.' so there is a bit of 'well why don't you make it then?'. (...) They say 'we don't really like that bit of it' almost, 'we like that but can you do it in blue?' (...) It can be very controlling and then manipulate what you produce. It would be quite nice to do a corporate commission where they just wanted me to make what I want to make. That doesn't happen."* (Interviewee No. 14, 2019)

The artist described how she feels limited in her creative process and artistic freedom when working towards a corporate commission due to the controlling and manipulating behaviour of the commissioner. She explained that corporate curators often know exactly what they want and how it should look and that her role is reduced to the production, without making the artwork 'her own'. She furthermore explained why she often felt trapped into finishing the commission regardless:

*"They keep coming back and narrow it down and really push it towards an idea they have. (...) How it looks, what size it is, all sorts of compromise seem to come later once you're in. Once you invested your time and energy into it. (...) That's a bit difficult to say 'well fuck off then' because you already invested loads of time in it, you know you're halfway there or three quarters."* (Interviewee No. 14, 2019)

Alterations of the artwork, she said, often come in later during the artistic process, when she has already started working on the commission. As she has already invested time, material and effort into the artwork, it is too late for her to decline the commission at this point, and she eventually gives in to market imperatives. She also clarified that she understands restrictions

relating to space, health and safety but wished explicitly to receive more artistic freedom within the commissions:

*"It would be nice to just make a corporate commission where they just say: '(...) Do what you want. We don't mind.' You know it has to go in this space, understandably you know, it has to fit in a certain space, or it has to be within a certain scale, but I got a 30-year track record, they'd know the kind of things I make, so they could give me freedom to express myself. That would be nice."* (Interviewee No. 14, 2019)

Recounting her past experiences with corporate commissions, she explained to me why she has rejected offers from some corporations in the past:

*"[I have declined working with] tobacco companies. And other people where I just think, I don't like the ethics of them. Or I think that they are just going to rip me off or a few of them who were just unrealistic, you know, they've got no idea - they think that art is something you make on a Wednesday afternoon, and it takes five minutes. Who have absolutely no idea what they are doing or what I do and where I don't want to waste my time."* (Interviewee No. 14, 2019)

Declining work based on the corporation's business ethics and acceptance in society is also reflected in the findings of the previous section. But she also described instances where corporations have acted exploitatively, unprofessionally or condescendingly towards her and her artistic practice. She concluded that even as an established artist, most of the time she takes on corporate commissions for financial reasons, not to develop her artistic practice:

*"I do the commissions for money. To support my practice. That's really the bottom line. (...) I have been commissioned by a big hedge fund to make a few pieces of work, and that basically keeps me alive and pays the bills. (...) I feel like I am always frustrated because I'm not really doing what I want to do. In fact, I am just about to go into a period where I'm not gonna do any commissions for a while because I just want to do art for art's sake. I just want to make what I want to make. Not work towards a brief or to produce an output."* (Interviewee No. 14, 2019)

For interviewee number 16, including the audience is part of the artistic process of finishing an artwork. He too admitted that as an artist you need the financial means to be completely independent of market pressures:

*"Well, I do [think about the audience when creating a work], because it's only really finished when someone stands in front of it. You have to move to a really powerful position as an artist to say 'I just do what I want now.'"* (Interviewee No. 16, 2019)

It is difficult to say how common cases of self-censorship like this are amongst artists who work towards a corporate commission, as artists are extremely reluctant to admit a corruption of their artistic freedom and on the corporation's side, being associated with coercive restriction of artistic expression, would greatly tarnish the image of the selfless patron of the arts. There are a few accounts I came across during my fieldwork, which support the hypothesis that this is not a singular occurrence but does happen - even to established and well-known artists.

Another example of self-censorship can be found in the headquarters of an international investment bank. During a tour through the art collection, the curator introduced me to a single piece of work made up of 12 individual paintings, covering an entire wall in the lobby facing towards the street. A Turner Prize-winning artist had made the work specifically for the bank's reception in 2011. Each painting is full of visual references, relating to elements, seasons, zodiac signs, numbers and of course to each other. One of the panels shows a woman, drawn in black and white, standing on a beach, wearing a sunhat and a bathing suit. She is smiling, directly facing the audience. In front of her is a set of five playing cards, covering the woman's body, leaving only part of her torso, her shoulders and her face visible. While decoding the hidden messages and references of the artwork, the curator explained the negotiation that took place when the artist submitted his original design for the artwork to the corporation:

*"When he first submitted it, the playing cards were further down. And obviously, she's in her bathing suit - so we asked him to move them up [to cover the women's body]." (Interviewee No. 1, 2018)*

And apparently, this was not the only detail that the artist altered for the bank. Interviewee number 15, who is the former senior curator of said bank, had developed the art collection for 20 years before leaving in 2016 to work as an author and freelance curator. In our conversation, he revealed that there was another alteration of the artwork, concerning the second panel, where a cluster of Newspaper articles all dated to the artist's birthday are displayed:

*"I would say he did two bits of self-censorship. There was another piece, where he thought the bank<sup>15</sup> would be worried. (...) On the second panel, he has all the newspapers, which is his way of signing [the artwork], because they are all his birthday. (...) And one of them had a down market. And he thought that would upset the traders. So he slightly blurred that." (Interviewee No. 15, 2019)*

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<sup>15</sup> Name taken out to sustain the anonymity of the bank, the interviewee, and the artist.

This example reflects the previous artist's experience that corporate commissions are often steered towards specific wishes of the corporation during the production, sometimes right before the final approval and display of the work. Artists are encouraged to self-censor their work to meet the patron's guidelines. That corporate collectors are averse to nudity displayed in artworks and specifically worried about the employees' reception of controversial art, is also consistent with the findings of chapter III. The stand that some corporate art collectors have towards commissions that supports this narrative is also reflected in interviews I have had with corporate curators. Interviewee number 3, for example, explains why he only 'commissions with caution' for the corporate collection he looks after. While expressing that as the commissioner, he feels like he has to be really specific when briefing the artist or risk getting an artwork that does not exactly meet his expectations, he also acknowledges that taking away that artistic freedom from the artist does not always lead to them creating their best work:

*"Artists don't often work very well to commission. It's taking part of the creative process away from them and giving them a different kind of angle to the process, but it doesn't always resolve to their best work. (...) I mean it's a risk. Unless you say to the artist, I want a white so and so of that size with a spoon on it you might end up getting a glass full of water. And you would say 'well I didn't want a glass of water' and he would say 'well that's what I decided to do.' (...) My view is you commission with caution if something really demands it."* (Interviewee No. 3, 2019)

Interviewee number 24, a business director of a company which has developed some of the most recognisable buildings of a European capital city, who is responsible for commissioning artists for the public sculptures and installations on their building sites, offers another point of view. He agreed that there are certain constraints and guidelines that artists have to comply with, mostly site-specific or health and safety-related, but stressed that artists welcome these 'challenges' and always manage to take the corporation's specifications on board:

*"I think a lot of times artists are very good and almost embrace constraints. And actually, it's a way they can make their work react to something. So, in most cases, it can be a very positive exercise of saying 'ok, it can go here but it can only weigh this much, or it can only stand in that place', and they go 'ahh'. And the 'ahh' is usually a very positive one. They are not going 'well that's impossible' and throw their hands up. When I look back, I'm trying to think of where it's ever been a problem, instead of a positive thing. They are good problem solvers - artists - and they want to make things happen."* (Interviewee No. 24, 2019)

While this interviewee's experience shows that there are certainly also positive examples for the collaboration between corporate commission and artist, the lack of similar accounts in the

artist's interviews might be an indicator for drastically different perspectives of the same events.

Historically, the relationship between artist and patron often involved a negotiation between artistic freedom and the interests and guidelines of the patron. This still seems to be true for many corporate collectors and artists, specifically when it comes to commissioning work for an art collection. All of the accounts discussed in this section uncover a power imbalance, where corporate patronage often serves the patron first, and the artist second. We also learn that corporate policies of not displaying nudity and other controversial topics sometimes filter through to the production of art. Artists often comply with the corruption of their autonomy to be part of a specific collection or (i.e. in exchange for institutionalized consecration), in the case of less affluent artists, to pay the bills and ultimately support their practice (i.e. economic capital).

Note that the topics of censorship and self-censorship are widely considered as taboo and corresponding statements taken from interviews and insider accounts might consequently be biased. The presented findings therefore need to be interpreted with caution. However, the range of opinions and reported personal experiences gives confidence that the above analysis captures the main aspects of the power dynamics between corporate collectors and artists and can thus give valuable insights about the relationship between artists and corporate patrons in general.

#### 5.4. Corporate Collectors and Artists' Careers

The third and last question posed focuses on the ways that corporate collectors can have an impact on artists' careers and the general parameters determining an artist's success. A considerable number of research papers are dedicated to exploring the complexity of artistic career patterns and artists' success in relation to different socio-economic factors like location (Daniel, 2016), education (Comunian and Ooi, 2016; Banks and Oakley, 2016) and gender (Brooks and Daniluk, 1998). There are, of course, many competing factors that influence an artist's career besides the quality of their work. As discussed in chapter IV, existing biases in the art market, in general, are reproduced not just in corporate collections, but also in museum collections and galleries, which further leads to the exclusion of women and ethnic minority artists. Aside from market bias, Ryan Daniel identified in his 2016 paper about artists' career patterns, two success factors that emerged from his qualitative interviews with graduate artists: a network of industry contacts and the intrinsic motivation of the artist, also described as drive

or persistence (Daniel, 2016, p. 95). Daniel also describes how graduate artists often feel the need to move to large metropolitan cities of the world to build their network which subsequently leads to an oversupply of creative labour in these cities and a tougher competition for the young artists (Daniel, 2016, p. 91).

A recent paper researching a quantitative take on artists' success and reputation was published by Samuel P. Fraiberger *et al.* (2018). Fraiberger *et al.* collected the exhibition history, auction sales and primary market quotes of about 500,000 artists mapping the movement of art between prestigious institutions (e.g. MoMa, Guggenheim, V&A Museum) to understand how access to an influential network of public institutions can play a crucial role in shaping an artist's career. Their findings include that famous museums and galleries are often a gateway to prestige and that – in particular - early access to these venues leads to a successful life-long career (Fraiberger *et al.*, 2018, p. 825). Note that this study focuses more on public museums and galleries than corporate collections and corporate museums.

Grenfell and Hardy (2007) decipher in their book *Art Rules* what the components of an artist's symbolic capital are by analysing the habitus of the highly successful YBA artists of the 1990s, a group of American abstract expressionists (also known as the New York School) and French painter Edouard Manet (Grenfell and Hardy, 2007, p. 135). They conclude, that although the particular constituents of habitus vary between the fields, the successful configurations of symbolic capital across all three groups are educational capital (a degree from a prestigious art school such as Goldsmiths in London or Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris), consecrated artistic capital (an exhibition by a renowned museum or gallery such as the Tate or MOMA) as well as social and cultural capital (living and working in a metropolitan city such as London, New York or Paris). The researcher also bases the particular success of artists like Damien Hirst and Jackson Pollock on their *volume* of social capital, meaning that the strong connection they formed to key teachers, gallery owners, curators and influential private collectors was the decisive factor in their exceptional success stories (Grenfell and Hardy, 2007, p. 136). Grenfell and Hardy reflect with their conclusions what Daniel and Fraiberger *et al.* in parts mention in their research findings; network, location and education play a key role in an artist's career.

Of course, as anyone who buys an artist's work does, corporate collectors contribute financially towards an artist's career by simply purchasing artworks. Interviewee number 9, the corporate curator of a law firm, recognised that often a collector's impact on an artist's career is first and foremost of a financial nature:



*“There is a stage in an artist's career where they just want to sell some work. If only to be able to afford to make some more works. So the corporate collector has that limited role.”* (Interviewee No. 9, 2018)

And of course, the financial support of an artist can have a knock-on effect on their livelihood and their practice, as further explained by interviewee number 21, a professional in the art world. Financial support through sales can give the artist more freedom to develop their practice:

*“The purchase or support of an artist can then mean that they get the financial and economical means to continue to work. Or focus on their practice or be free from financial concerns to keep doing what they are doing. I think for some artists, that can really work. (...) It can give people more freedom to create work because they've got time and money.”* (Interviewee No. 21, 2019)

Selling artworks to continue their practice, especially as young artists, has been identified by several artists in the interviews as crucially important to their career. To support their practice, many artists have jobs on the side, as explained by interviewee number 14, who has several income streams to support her practice:

*“I don't sell a lot of work, but I live from doing commissions, really that's probably how I earn most of my income but also through being artist in residence, getting fees, teaching at university one day a week, I do talks, I get fees for exhibitions occasionally, I mentor students from America, and I teach at an independent art school occasionally - so yeah I do a lot of activities to earn a living as an artist, I certainly couldn't live off only selling my work.”* (Interviewee No. 14, 2019)

Nevertheless, spending time doing other jobs ultimately takes away from the actual artistic work. Buying artworks directly enables an artist to spend more time making art and enables them to buy materials or rent a studio. Interviewee number 26, an established artist who himself sold a few artworks to a corporate collection early on in his career, explains how important continuity was for his career development:

*“When you're a young artist, it can help to survive when a company buys your work. (...) [Bank name] bought very early something, many years ago in the 1990s. (...) I think for me it was very important to be able to continue my work. To stay on, to stay in my studio. I felt that my career was not something quick, it was a very very long way, and the main thing is to keep on working.*

*There are artists that stop at some point, and for me, it was important to carry on. And everything that helps on this way was important."* (Interviewee No. 26, 2019)

Findings in chapter IV indicate that corporate collectors tend to prefer buying artists at a time when they are just becoming popular rather than well-established artists. In comparison to other buyers, their financial support therefore often comes at a time when an artist is more dependent on the income to further accelerate their career.

Another theme that emerged during the interviews with both artists and corporate curators was the benefit of referencing a corporate collection on the artist's CV as a third-party validation for potential buyers. Third-party validation has an increased effect, particularly on the primary art market, due to the oversupply of products and the undersupply of information about their quality (Witte and Wijnberg, 2020). A typical way for an artist of the 21st century to show the milestones of their career and their links with prestigious institutes is the artist's CV. Much like any other CV, it shows where the artist graduated, exhibitions they have had, prizes they have won and collections they are part of. Not every sale and exhibition is documented on an artist's CV; only the most important events are listed. If the artist is signed to a gallery, they will typically link the artist's CV on their website as well as provide printed versions of it at art fairs as part of the artist's portfolio and price list. Interviewee number 25, an artist, explained to me how including corporate collectors on an artist's CV can positively influence other buyers:

*"I think it's definitely a good thing to have on your CV. Whenever something was bought by someone who has a good name in the art world, that always helped, if a corporation buys something and makes it known, other people will follow."* (Interviewee No. 25, 2019)

Interviewee number 23, another established artist who exclusively makes sculptures, agrees and adds that if the corporate collection itself has received recognition through collection awards, its reference stands out even more:

*"If that institute has a collection award or a couple of institutes have a collection award, it also shows that you are a respected artist. It's something you mention in your CV. It enlarges the status as an artist."* (Interviewee No. 23, 2019)

Interviewee number 26 is an artist who mainly produces drawings and is accordingly represented in a corporate art collection which mainly focusses on works on paper. Due to the curatorial specialisation of the collection, interviewee number 26 found it important to associate himself with this particular corporate collection:

*"For someone who does drawings, of course, I think the drawings collection of the [bank name] is important. (...) They have works by Joseph Beuys - it's like a museum of the last 60 years, they have a huge collection, and it's very professional."* (Interviewee No. 26, 2019)

An advantage here is, that by being part of the collection, the artist will be associated with other prestigious collection artists, specifically in his genre (e.g. Joseph Beuys), too. Being part of a corporate art collection does not just financially support an artist, it can validate and legitimise them, which is important in the highly competitive art world. However, ideally, the corporate collector needs 'a good name' themselves, to have consecration authority in the cultural field. Another factor that interviewees mentioned, where artists benefit from being part of a corporate collection is the increased visibility and widespread promotion of their work through exhibitions, catalogues and books as well as on the corporations' websites and within the corporations' premises. As an art consultant, interviewee number 21 explained that even though art in corporate settings is not as publicly accessible as art in museums, it is at least not hidden away in a private home, as is the case for art owned by some private collectors:

*"Not every private collector wants their art on display. A corporate collection has the potential of doing something good in that way."* (Interviewee No. 20, 2019)

Interviewee number 21, who works for an art foundation, explained that the audience whom an artist is exposed to within a corporate setting could even be different from the average museum visitor. Being part of a corporate collection would therefore offer increased visibility to a new potential group of buyers:

*"I think the networks and markets [artists] get in contact with through [being part of a corporate collection], sometimes that audience can be quite different to what you would get through exposure from public galleries or regional collections."* (Interviewee No. 21, 2019)

The curator of an international chain of private members clubs knows about the importance of an artist's network and therefore tries to offer the artists who are part of their in-house collection access to their members who are usually high-net-worth individuals. She explained to me in an interview the system that the members club uses to pay artists for their work; partly in economic capital and partly in social capital:

*"The collection works with the Colombe d'Or principle. So Colombe d'Or is this hotel and restaurant in the south of France, where Picasso or Matisse would rock up in the early 20th century and have a two week stay with their mistresses and just drink the most expensive Magnus champagne, and as they left there would be an artwork at the reception for the*

*payment, and it cleared their debt. So, when the art collection started out we would say to an artist, 'could you give us a painting (...) and we can give you some comfort or membership'. The comfort is credit; you can spend on a hotel or spa and membership. (...) And to be honest the collection still mainly works like that. (...) If I am doing a deal with an artist where the artwork is worth £10 000, then we would say two years membership is worth £3600, and we have a full waiting list for that - so we can't just give it away. Every time we give away a membership, someone else doesn't pay us - it's real costs. So two-year membership and you can have the rest £6400 in cash or comfort. So cash just will literally pay in your bank account, comfort is credit. And they decide what percentage they want. Most of the time, they will want to do that. (...) If they're broke, which is for young artists quite normal, then we say 'we buy two artworks, one just 100% cash and the second one the comfort or the membership, so you get the best of both worlds.'"* (Interviewee No. 6, 2019)

Of course, this system works very well for restaurants, hotels and private members clubs, but is less applicable for investment banks and financial service institutes. Law firms, on the other hand, sometimes offer pro bono work for artists in exchange for artworks as mentioned by interviewee number 9, the curator and former partner of a law firm (Interviewee No. 9). Giving memberships to artists obviously also benefits the members club, by positioning themselves as a creative community in the market, which consequently distinguishes them from other clubs and serves as a competitive advantage. Interviewee number 6 also explained how she connects the artists and the members by regularly inviting collection artists for events and talks and, according to her, at least once a month, members inquire about buying from collection artists. If a corporate curator is well networked in the art world, as is the case for interviewee number 6, there are several ways an artist can benefit from this social capital. The interviewee further argued that having a good connection to a corporate curator can therefore lead to more opportunities for the artists to develop their career:

*"I get to meet a lot of people around the world so if you work with me and as a young artist then maybe - I get asked for recommendations, or collectors ask me who they should be buying. I am working with young artists, and I can be quite helpful because maybe they get mentioned by me in a magazine or apply for residency. (...) There is a really good residency in Italy and every year they email me and ask about young artists, and I email them a long list, and then they go through it, and they email me who they like and come back to me and ask 'can you introduce us to these six?' and then I introduce them to these six and they usually get something. I am also*

*doing mentoring. So, if artists ask me for advice, I always do it. And I can recommend galleries for them - I've got three people now a gallery show."* (Interviewee No. 6, 2019)

Overall, it may be said that many different factors determine an artist's success, and some now very famous and sought-after artists never reach recognition during their lifetime. However, corporate collections can play a part and support an artist's career in a few different ways. Their financial impact early on in an artist's career can enable an artist to continue their work and develop their practice, as buyers and supporters they can validate and legitimise artists in the art world, they increase artists' visibility sometimes even to new audiences through their website, exhibitions, catalogues and booklets. And lastly, if a corporate curator is well connected in the art world, there is great potential for the collection artists to expand their network. To lead these findings back to Grenfell and Hardy's theoretical approach, being part of a corporate collection can contribute to an artist's economic capital, social capital and consecrated artistic capital, which are all parameters for an artist's success. The authority of their consecration, though lies within their position in the art world and how prestigious and recognised the corporate collection is themselves. The next part of this chapter will therefore focus on the position that corporate collections take within the cultural field and if and how they build up their consecration authority.

## 5.5. Conclusion

In this chapter, we looked at corporate art collectors as patrons and funders of the arts from the perspective of contemporary artists and art professionals. The switch in perspective is invaluable to learn more about the role of corporate collectors in the art world and their position within the cultural field.

While corporate funding and support for the arts prove to be a welcome addition to government funding, it cannot act as a replacement. In the last decades, most European governments have endorsed and encouraged corporate philanthropy of the arts with, for example, tax breaks, but artists and art professionals find that government funding is still crucial as it is more reliable, sustainable and protects artists from the pressures of the market. Because artists constantly compete for limited funding in an oversaturated market, corporate patronage is appreciated as an alternative to other funders. Corporate funding is therefore positively seen as an additional source of income that is less bureaucratic and more spontaneous in their decision-making processes. Because corporations do not spend public money, they can subsequently be more niche and specialised in their curatorial focus. The downside of not

having to follow museum standards is though that corporate collections can bear risks for artists when corporations struggle financially and suddenly stop funding or even sell the art collection.

Relating this back to Bourdieu's theory, we can see that the position of corporations as funders of the art is strengthened through government endorsement, which means that corporations have received symbolic capital derived from their connection to the field of political power. Being consecrated, supported and legitimised as art funders by the government gives them a stronger position in the cultural field.

However, corporate funding is strongly driven by heteronomous interests, meaning that the budget for art and the continuation of the art collection first and foremost depend on other fields outside of the cultural field, in this case, the economic field. Because of that, corporate funders are perceived as less reliable and less dependable. Bourdieu himself explained in a conversation with artist Hans Haacke how he had accepted corporate funding in the past for a photography project and did not just benefit from the financial support the company offered but also from their expertise and knowledge within the field. He recounts how he was harshly criticised back then by his peers, but that corporate patronage has gained a critical position within the cultural field since then, as the funding and patronage from the state further declines:

*"Some twenty years ago I wanted to undertake a study of photography, I accepted support from Kodak, not so much for the money, which was an insignificant amount, but rather for information, especially statistics, that only the company could provide. My initiative provoked extra-ordinary reprobation. (...) And today the very same people who were indignant at the time are absolutely defenceless when it comes to patronage."* (Bourdieu *et al.*, 1995, p. 15)

Bourdieu further speculated in his conversation that the rise of corporate and private patronage may lead to suspension of state funding under the premise that it is no longer needed. According to him, this would gradually lead to a material and mental dependence of artists on economic powers and market constraints (Bourdieu *et al.*, 1995, p. 16). And Bourdieu's apprehensions are not unfounded. When analysing the personal relationship between corporate art collectors and artists, it soon became apparent that specifically when it comes to commissions, the artistic process and output is often manipulated and steered to fit corporate interests and guidelines. While this dynamic is very similar to the traditional patron-artist relationship in Renaissance Italy, it conflicts today with the concept of artistic autonomy and artistic freedom. Even though censorship and self-censorship are very delicate topics in the art world that are not very often talked about, it seems to be an element of the relationship

between artists and corporate collectors. Artists often distinguish between 'jobs' where they comply with the corruption of their artistic autonomy to pay their bills and earn money and their own work as an artist where they can develop their practice and produce what they want. In consequence, only artists who are able or willing to cater to the corporation's demands are likely to be chosen for commission work and therefore deemed worthy to be included in the collection.

The findings of this section indicate that the heteronomous interests that the corporate curator faces from within and outside of the corporation can also influence the artist in their production processes. Artists mainly comply and give up their autonomy for the gain of economic capital or institutionalized consecration, which in Bourdieu's diagram of the cultural field, moves an artist from the field of restricted production and the autonomous pole, lateral to the field of mass production towards the heteronomous pole. The artists cater to the tastes of the dominant and affluent class in society, which are the corporation CEOs who steer the acquisition policy and collection budgets. In chapter III (3.3.) we also learned that the value of art for a corporation is specifically linked to its purpose and functionality. It is therefore not surprising that corporate curators have a strong interest that the commissioned work complies with the collection's purpose and fulfils its function for the corporation.

Lastly, this chapter's findings show that corporate collectors can impact artists' careers through raising their economic capital, social capital and consecrated artistic capital. By buying artworks, they do not just support an artist financially to continue their work; they also validate and legitimise them in the art world. On top of that, corporate collectors can increase an artist's visibility outside of the museum and gallery sector to an entirely new audience, and a well-connected corporate curator can help an artist expand their social network. This is especially important when considering the findings from chapter IV, revealing the biases within corporate art collections. On an institutional level, corporate art collections conserve and consecrate specific artworks that tend to support the hegemonic values of a few powerful people at the top of the organisation, which in the cultural field reproduces these values and structures the field and its agents accordingly. As Marta Gnyp summarises in her 2015 publication: *"Collecting is not only creating an art collection, but it implies social responsibility for creating culture."* (Gnyp, 2015, p. 203)

The findings of this chapter suggest that corporate collectors have several ways in which they can consecrate artists and artworks in the art world. The significance of their consecration, though, lies within their position in the art world and how prestigious and recognised the

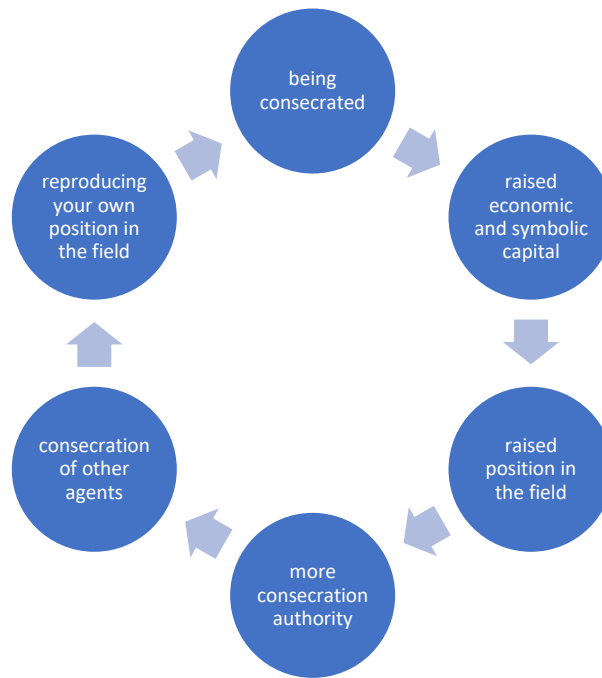
corporate collection is itself. The next part of this chapter will therefore focus on the position that corporate collections take within the cultural field and if and how they build up their consecration authority.

## 6. Chapter VI – Position of Corporate Collections in the Art World

### 6.1. Introduction

In this final chapter, I will look at the position that corporate collectors have in Bourdieu's cultural field. In comparison to the art market which revolves around transactions, the cultural field is a much broader concept. While the art market refers to the people who buy and sell works; that is dealers, collectors and auction houses, Bourdieu's cultural field is a social sphere that includes critics, curators, teachers and artists themselves, who are not regularly involved in the commercial activities of the art market (Horowitz, 2014, p. 18; Thornton, 2012, xii). Institutions like museums, universities or galleries operate as producers, consecrators of value or mediators in the field. Other agents in the field are organisations who are not fully institutionalised such as art magazines, art prizes, Biennales, Art Fairs, podcasts, blogs or literary circles. All players in Bourdieu's field have the ability to impose judgments of legitimacy or the power to grant consecration on other agents. The authority to consecrate depends on the position and prestige of the agent themselves, and consecrating others allows agents to reproduce their own position and legitimacy. The illustration below (figure 22) shows the interrelation of consecration, capital and position-taking in the cultural field. Note that this is an example of a self-enhancing cycle that in reality is, of course, intermediated by several other factors that play into the position taking of agents in the cultural field.





*Figure 12: The Interrelation of Consecration, Capital and Position-taking in the Cultural Field*

An illustrative example for this interrelation of effects is the internationally renowned art fair TEFAF (short for The European Fine Art Fair). Organised by the European Fine Art Foundation, every year TEFAF invites 260 international galleries to their Maastricht or New York location to show and sell contemporary art, old masters, and jewellery for 10 days to an international audience (70,000 visitors in 2019) (Artsy, 2019). To be part of the fair, galleries have to go through an extensive application process, where they are being judged by a selection committee on criteria such as international presence and following, overall integrity and stand, participation in other renowned art fairs, press reviews, engagement with and sales to museums and public institutions as well as the quality of the artists and artworks represented by the gallery. TEFAF is especially proud of their extensive vetting process that every artwork goes through before being displayed at the art fair. Over 175 international experts, which include academics, curators and conservation scientists examine every artwork at the fair for quality, authenticity, and condition (TEFAF, 2020). Because of the extensive vetting process, the fair enjoys a reputation for authenticity and quality in the art world which attracts wealthy, elite clients such as Scott Schaefer, senior curator of paintings at the J. Paul Getty Museum, along with the curators from the Louvre and the Chateau de Versailles. Even famous celebrities like Kanye West and millionaire businesspeople like Ronald Lauder, heir to the multimillion company Estee Lauder, are regular guests of the art fair (Reyburn, 2013).

Relating this back to the diagram, by being associated with affluent, powerful clients, showing blue-chip artworks and collaborating with internationally renowned galleries raises not just the

economic capital, but the cultural and social capital of TEFAF and secures them a powerful position in the cultural field. The more recognised TEFAF is as an art fair in the art world, the more consecration authority they possess. Therefore, exhibiting at TEFAF is not just financially beneficial but is a way for galleries and their artists to receive consecration in the cultural field. TEFAF on the other hand, by choosing only the most prestigious participants and accepting only 'museum-quality' artworks to be displayed on their art fair, reproduces their position in the cultural field and regularly receives positive press and reviews from prestigious newspapers and art magazines.

Like museums, corporate collectors conserve symbolic goods and grant consecration by deciding which artist is worth collecting and which one is not. But as we learned from the previous chapters there are also quite a few differences between a corporate collection and a museum collection. Corporate curators have to always keep the employees in mind as the primary audience when acquiring artworks, and if the corporation does not own separate exhibition spaces, there are safety implications that greatly restrict the access to the art displayed. Corporate collections do not have to comply with the ethical guidelines for collecting and conserving art that museums work with but have to keep the company's image and stakeholders in mind when acquiring or deaccessioning artworks. In this chapter, I will analyse the position of corporate collectors in the cultural field through consideration of three corporate collections and their role in a large social space as sites of struggle for symbolic capital and consecration. To undertake a field analysis, I will consider their relation to other fields, particularly the field of power, and analyse not just the history and inherited capital of the collection, but also the habitus of key agents who founded and shaped the art collection. The case studies are discussed in terms of three areas:

1. Founding and history
2. The collection: acquisition and mission statements
3. Present-day activities: public access and art world involvement

This analysis will shed light on the relationship corporate collectors have to other agents in the art world, how they accrue symbolic capital and secure their position as consecrators in the cultural field. Finally, I will demonstrate in this chapter how the corporation's approach to art collecting leads to three different positions in the art world. This analysis will show if and how corporate collectors consecrate and influence other agents in the art world, by visualising their involvement and relationship to other fields; the field of commerce, the field of education, the field of art etc.

Grenfell and Hardy developed a visualisation method based on Bourdieu's field analysis to show the field of art in relation to other fields. They apply this method in their 2007 publication *Art Rules, Pierre Bourdieu and the Visual Arts* to analyse several institutions, such as the Tate (p.94), the Musee d'Orsay (p. 86), the MOMA (p. 101) or British Art more generally (p. 119). The method of visualisation for the field analysis used in this chapter is based on Grenfell and Hardy's methodology.

## 6.2. Deutsche Bank Art Collection

### 6.2.1. Founding and History

Deutsche Bank is a multinational investment bank and financial services provider with roots in Germany. The bank was originally founded in Berlin in 1870 and has through numerous mergers and acquisitions today branches in 58 countries around the world, with a large presence in Europe, America, and Asia (Deutsche Bank, 2018c). With assets amounting to approximately 1.3 trillion U.S. dollars it was the eighth largest investment bank globally in 2019, employing over 87,000 people (Norrestad, 2020).

Deutsche Bank launched its art collection officially in 1979 but did buy art during most of its 130-year long history, building up a collection of primarily classic modern work. It was Dr Herbert Zapp, a member of the directorate from 1977 to 1994, who decided in 1979 that it was time to formulate a coherent policy for the bank's art collection. Before joining the Deutsche Bank directorate, Dr Zapp worked as a lawyer for the German Ministry of Finance but has always had a special interest in art and culture (Historische Gesellschaft der Deutschen Bank e.V, 2020). Together with art historians Peter Beye and Klaus Gallwitz, Dr Zapp developed the concept to focus on works on paper for the collection of the bank (Hicks and Findlay, 2001, p. 27). At the time of the inception of the art collection, Peter Beye was the director of the Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, a German museum founded in 1843 with an impressive collection of 9000 paintings and drawings from high profile artists such as Henri Matisse, Pablo Picasso and Joseph Beuys (Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, 2016). Klaus Gallwitz was, between 1967 and 1974, the director of the Kunsthalle Baden-Baden, a contemporary art museum, where he presented the first solo shows for (at the time) upcoming artists like Gerhard Richter, Georg Baselitz and Anselm Kiefer (Staatliche Kunsthalle Baden-Baden, 2020). Moreover, Gallwitz was, between 1955 – 1968, part of the council leading the internationally renowned contemporary art exhibition *Documenta*. And there is another key person who significantly shaped and contributed to the development of the Deutsche Bank collection; Alistair Hicks was the senior curator for Deutsche Bank for 20 years before leaving in 2016 to work as an independent

curator. Having studied at the prestigious elite institution Eton College, Hicks then studied art history in Scotland and the United States before writing his first publication on the Saatchi Collection in 1988. Hicks has worked as a writer, curator and art critic and has published several books as well as articles in internationally renowned publications such as *The Spectator*, *The Times*, *The Financial Times*, *Apollo* and *Vogue* (Thames and Hudson, 2020).

Looking at the biographies and habitus of the four key people who founded and shaped the Deutsche Bank collection one realises that even from the very start the art collection had access to significant capital derived from diverse social and cultural fields: state political capital from the field of power (through Dr Zapp's work at the German Ministry of Finance), economic capital (through Dr Zapp's role in the directorate of the Deutsche Bank), cultural capital from the field of art (through Beye's, and Gallwitz' leading positions in major state museums, as well as Hick's work as author and art critic) and social capital (through all of their networks in politics, the art world, high society and the financial sector). The art collection received consecration in the cultural field right at its inception through the involvement of art world professionals Beye, Gallwitz and later on Hicks.

#### 6.2.2. The Collection: Acquisition and Mission Statements

Entering the headquarters of the financial giant Deutsche Bank in London leaves a lasting impression. The middle of the room is decorated with a large stainless-steel sculpture from Indian artist Anish Kapoor, which presents onlookers with a distorted reflection. *"It's a straightforward challenge, an invitation to question the way we see ourselves and the world."* (Hicks and Findlay, 2001). On the wall, contrasting Kapoor's sculpture, is also a large canvas with one of Damien Hirst's famous spot paintings: a grid-like structure, where no two spots match the same colour. Between these two pieces are lounge chairs where one can observe the art while they wait. The focus of the collection was, as it is still today, works on paper. Initially though, this would only include works by artists from German-speaking countries from the second half of the twentieth century.

Peter Beye and Klaus Gallwitz explain the reasons for this specialisation:

*"The works in the collection have a very broad spectrum from the first rough depiction of an idea to the final composition, from autonomous drawings, watercolours, collages and gouaches to works in the most varied of composite technical forms. The far-reaching preference for this medium (...) lies primarily in the unique diversity of its artistic use, while also accommodating the possibilities of younger artists for whom paper is often the most practical, easily accessible and economical material."* (Hicks and Findlay, 2001, p. 9)

The 1980s especially were characterised by a peak of corporate intervention in the art world, which suggests that the time of the establishment of the Deutsche Bank Art collection was no coincidence. Today the collection contains more than 55,000 works of art in more than 900 branches worldwide and organised under the title *Art Works*. With the growth of the bank the concept broadened and Deutsche Bank's offices outside Germany started acquiring works from artists local to the host countries to hang alongside German artists (Appleyard and Salzmann, 2012, p. 63). Today Deutsche Bank describes its art collection as *"younger and more international than ever before"* and *"as international as Deutsche Bank itself"* (Deutsche Bank, 2018c). A representative of the head office in London explained, during the public art tour through Winchester House, the change in the acquisition policy that occurred around the late 1990s as:

*"We have a real focus on international artists (...) When the collection started here (in London) it was mainly British and German artists, and then everyone realised that just didn't reflect anything really – it didn't reflect the artistic centres of the world, it didn't reflect our employees, it didn't reflect the people who looked at the art. So, what followed was a push to get artists from all over the world."* (Deutsche Bank, 2018b)

The collection's theme is still contemporary works on paper and photographs but now also with a strong focus on international young artists, comprising works of more than 5000 artists from over 40 countries. In its brochure about the art collection published in 2013, the mission statement is written as follows:

*"At Deutsche Bank, we surround ourselves with art. International contemporary art plays its part in helping us to navigate a changing world. As a global bank, we want to understand, and engage with, different regions and cultures, which is why the Deutsche Bank Collection features contemporary artists from all over the globe. These artists connect us to their worlds."*

*Art is displayed throughout our offices globally, challenging us to think differently, inviting us to look at the world through new eyes. Artists are innovators, and they encourage us to innovate."* (Hicks and Findlay, 2013, p. 1)

The curation of the art varies slightly between the main buildings of Deutsche Bank, depending on space and the architecture of the local office building. As previously described, more dominant and bigger pieces, as well as sculptures, are located in the lobbies, while smaller hung pieces are spread throughout the rest of the building. The headquarters in Germany, Frankfurt, currently displays the biggest part of the art collection and dedicates each floor of their 60 story

twin towers in the city to an individual artist. While formerly all storeys were dedicated to German artists only, the bank used the refurbishment in 2011 to re-conceptualise the exhibition spaces of their art collection to fit their newer, international outlook on the arts. The chosen artists today are from more than 40 countries and arranged by region into the following groups: Asia (10 artists on 10 floors), the Americas (14 artists on 14 floors), Middle East / Africa (10 artists on 10 floors), Germany (7 artists on 7 floors) and Europe (19 artists on 19 floors). Though sticking to the international concept of the art collection, there is still an emphasis on German artists by dedicating an extra 7 floors to them instead of including them with the European group (Deutsche Bank, 2020a).

Winchester House in London has been occupied by Deutsche Bank since 1999. It happens to have a double reception hall giving the curators plenty of opportunities to fill both spaces with massive sculptures and artworks that can be seen from outside. As the London headquarters are smaller than the offices in Frankfurt the curators decided, instead of dedicating whole floors to an artist each, they would name around 100 conference and meeting rooms after international artists, including a plaque in each room giving information about the individual artist. Corridors and floors are hung with art as well; in contrast to the lobby, the focus here lies on more modest works on papers (Deutsche Bank, 2018c).

Besides the previously mentioned artworks by Damien Hirst and Anish Kapoor, the Deutsche Bank collection comprises several artworks from household names in the contemporary art world, such as Lucian Freud, David Hockney, Gerhard Richter, Bridget Riley, Dieter Roth and Francis Bacon. It comes as no surprise that the majority of artists (66%) represented in the top 100 list of most popular artists on Artfacts.net are also represented in the Deutsche Bank collection. Note that the overall number of artists within the Deutsche Bank collection is, with 5000, of course very high, and the Top 100 would, even if all 100 were represented in the collection, only make a small part of the overall number of artists.

Nevertheless, the collection can be described as canonical, comprising major contemporary artists that can be easily recognised by art connoisseurs but also by the regular visitors who are not experts in the art world. That the bank especially emphasises and highlights these prestigious and successful artists within their collection can also be observed when considering which artworks occupy the spacious lobbies and entrance areas of the Deutsche Bank offices with oversized paintings and sculptures. As previously mentioned, this includes, amongst others: Damien Hirst, Anish Kapoor, Tony Cragg and Keith Tyson (in the U.K. offices) but also

A.R. Penck (in Luxembourg), Gavin Turk (in Germany) and, up until earlier this year, Gerhard Richter (in New York).

Even though Deutsche Bank has announced efforts of internationalisation within their collection, findings in chapter IV show that in line with many other corporate art collectors the Deutsche Bank art collection has a rather Eurocentric focus with a prevailing gender imbalance favouring male artists.

### 6.2.3. Present-day Activities: Public Access and Art World Involvement

Corporate art collections typically only limited access to the public. If hung in office spaces the art is primarily seen by employees, clients and visitors to the spaces. The art in senior management offices is even more restricted. Especially financial service institutes and banks are highly secured buildings and can only be entered with permission and on invitation.

Deutsche Bank tries to make its art more accessible for the public by giving free public art tours through their main buildings in Frankfurt, London and New York to show and explain a selection of pieces (Appleyard and Salzmann, 2012, p. 64). Another way of showing their collection to a wider audience is lending their pieces and collaborating with public museums. Deutsche Bank co-founded the Deutsche Guggenheim Museum in Berlin and the Kunsthalle in the Berlin office. The Kunsthalle was an exhibition space in the ground floor area of the Deutsche Bank Berlin office. In 2017 Deutsche Bank announced that the bank itself will move out of the spaces and founded the *Palais Populaire*, so the whole space can be used for exhibiting pieces of the collection, art-related events and discussions. Palais Populaire opened in summer 2018 and offers an extensive programme of tours, talks and events but also educational workshops for children and young people (Deutsche Bank, 2020b). The founding of the *Palais Populaire* as an art space is an astonishing example where a corporate collection has taken over an office in such a way, that the office itself ended up moving out to make more space for the art.

To further promote their collection and to give artists a platform, Deutsche Bank started publishing an online and print magazine *ArtMag* which was first launched in 2002 and is now on its 101<sup>st</sup> edition. The magazine discusses the international art scene and gives an insight into the bank's role within it. Besides regular catalogues and publications, there is also the Deutsche Bank app that gives people access to artists and artworks within their collection.

For 15 consecutive years, Deutsche Bank has been the lead partner of the hugely successful Frieze Art Fair. As Deutsche Bank is not selling art itself, it keeps a secluded and luxurious place called the *Deutsche Bank Wealth Management VIP Lounge* at the fair, accessible only by

invitation to clients and guests, and used to connect collectors and investors and hold meetings. The bank presents a solo exhibition within the lounge with works of a selected artist; in 2017 acclaimed British artist John Akomfrah was the collaborating artist, with Tracy Emin taking on the role in 2018. The exhibition is, due to the exclusivity of the lounge, only reserved to be seen by those who hold an invitation – employees of the bank or their guests who as the name indicates are typically high profile-clients, or high-ranking art world professionals.

To promote young artists the Deutsche Bank and its foundations have initiated several art prizes. Since 2010, for example, the bank annually awards an *Artist of the Year*, to honour international emerging artists who address social issues with their art. The prize is dedicated to introducing the public to new and emerging artists and is not a monetary prize itself but rather helps to promote the artist and give their work a platform (Appleyard and Salzmänn, 2012, p. 65). Besides purchasing several pieces of the winning artist's work, the bank also dedicates a solo exhibition at the Kunsthalle Berlin / Palais Populaire to the winner of the prize. The annual award is based on the recommendation of Deutsche Bank's *Global Art Advisory Council* which includes internationally renowned curators Okwui Enwezor, Hou Hanru, Udo Kittelmann, and Victoria Noorthoorn (Deutsche Bank, 2020b).

Deutsche Bank's effort to make the art collection more publicly accessible through regular tours, the app and a separate exhibition space helps to establish them in the public eye not only as philanthropists but also as players in the cultural field. As previously demonstrated, the Deutsche Bank collection comprises several high-profile artists; it therefore makes sense for the bank to promote their cultural capital publicly to consecrate the collection overall by the association to these household names of contemporary art. Through partnering up with the internationally renowned Frieze art fair and museums such as the Guggenheim, Deutsche Bank raises their social capital but also receives institutional consecration, which again reproduces their position in the field and raises their consecration authority. This consecration authority is in turn used by the bank to consecrate artists of their collection via art prizes, solo shows in their own exhibition spaces and publications through their art magazine.

#### 6.2.4. Deutsche Bank Field Analysis

Deutsche Bank as a corporate collector managed to secure high volumes of symbolic and economic capital through a combination of founders being at the head of the organisation (Dr Zapp) and in high ranking professional roles in the cultural field (Beye, Gallwitz and Hicks).

Besides having the biggest corporate art collection with approximately 55,000 artworks including a majority of top-ranking artists in the art world, Deutsche Bank is also active in the



cultural field by having its own museum space (Palais Populaire former Kunsthalle), giving out the *Artist of the Year* art prize and partnering up with internationally renowned Frieze art fair. These activities and partnerships secure and advance the bank's position within the cultural field. Moreover, Deutsche Bank is putting a lot of effort into making their art collection available and visible to the public digitally (app and website), through publications (magazine, books and catalogues) as well as in-person (guided tours, exhibitions). Figure 23 shows the field analysis for the Deutsche Bank art collection. We can see here how the collection is connected to the field of power, commerce, media, education and of course art through their different activities.

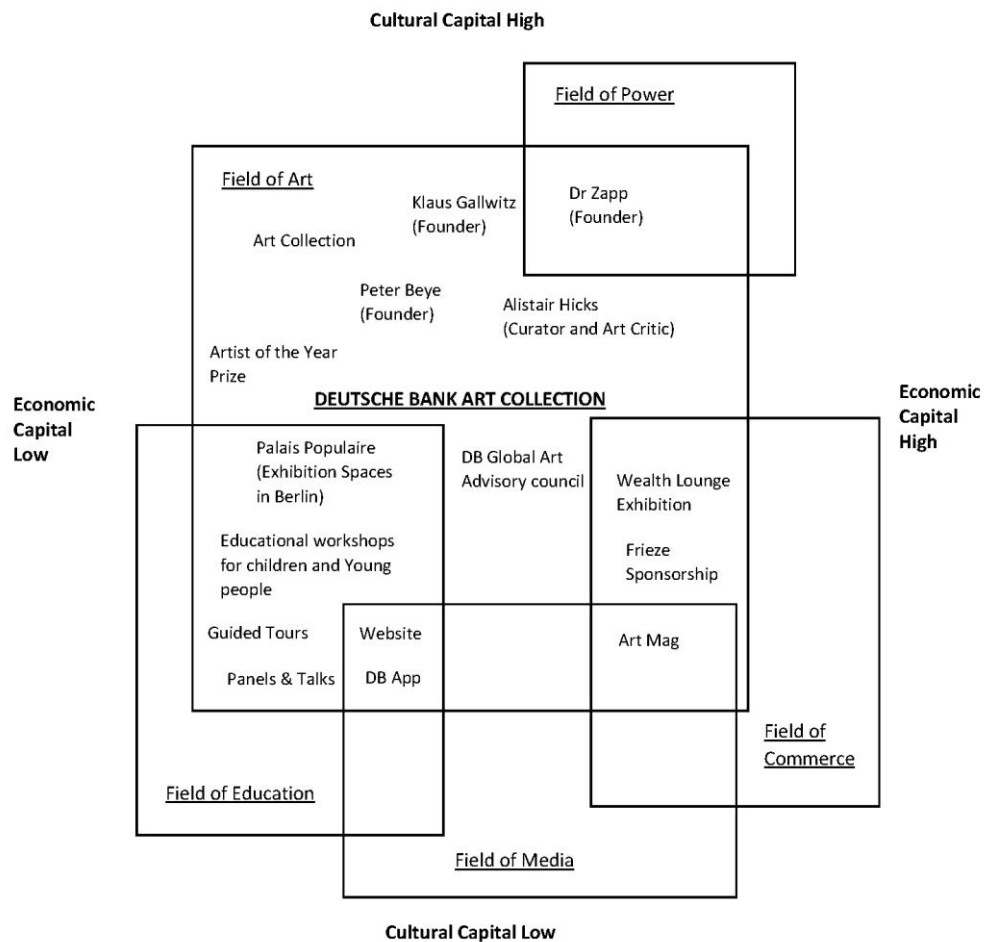


Figure 13: Deutsche Bank Field Analysis

Deutsche Bank receives consecration from several partners in the artworld and uses their increased consecration authority to further push the artists within their collection. Through their private museum (Palais Populaire) in Berlin, and their programme of exhibitions, panel discussions and talks Deutsche Bank manages to position themselves as a cultural institution within the field of art. However, their activities in the art world will always be dependant on the economic situation of the corporation and, as previously discussed in chapter IV, we have learned through the press that Deutsche Bank has started to sell off some of the artworks in

their collection in spring 2020. It therefore remains to be seen if Deutsche Bank stays committed to their activities and their position within the cultural field.

### 6.3. Hiscox Art Collection

#### 6.3.1. Founding and History

Hiscox is an international firm of insurers whose roots go back to *the Roberts agency* founded in London at the height of industrialisation in 1901. In 1946 Hiscox and Roberts collaborated and founded the Roberts & Hiscox partnership, before Hiscox' son - Robert Hiscox - joined the company in 1967, becoming chairman in 1970, after the death of his father. Robert Hiscox studied at the highly prestigious University of Cambridge and married Lady Julia Meade, who is the third daughter of the 6th Earl of Clanwilliam and is through this connection associated with British Royalty and the elite class (Alchetron, 2020). The Hiscox company today is Bermuda-incorporated but still listed on the London stock exchange. The insurer employs 1,800 people all over the world, aiming to provide their services to high-net-worth individuals and companies (Goodrow and Conzen, 2015, p. 252).

The art collection was founded in the 1970s by Robert Hiscox, who as an art collector himself had the idea to buy art to decorate the offices to inspire his employees and uplift the working environment. With the support of his fellow directors, Robert Hiscox proceeded to acquire art for the art collection by himself before being later joined by curator Elliot McDonald, who is also an artist himself represented in the Hiscox collection (Hiscox, 2014b). In 2011 McDonald was succeeded by former art dealer Whitney Hintz, who is the curator for the Hiscox art collection until this day. Robert Hiscox himself left the company to retire in 2017 and was replaced with Steve Langan as the CEO for Hiscox USA and group chief marketing officer, who is now working together with Hintz on the art collection.

Similar to Deutsche Bank, the Hiscox collection had from the start substantial access to political, economic and social capital due to the initiator Robert Hiscox, who was not just director of the company at the time but was also heir to the founder of the company with ties to the British elite. A little later Elliot McDonald and Whitney Hintz, the curators of the collection, contributed by adding cultural capital and consecrating the art collection further through their expertise as professionals in the art world.

### 6.3.2. The Collection: Acquisition and Mission Statements

Two decades after its inception the collection comprised around 50 works by British artists such as Damien Hirst, Francis Bacon and Gilbert & George. There were two triggering events that led to the decision to sell 35 of their 50 pieces of the art collection by the end of the 1990s.

In 1992 in a terrorist attack on the Baltic Exchange Building in the City of London the IRA damaged parts of the Commercial Union building in which Hiscox resided at the time. The bombing left parts of the art collection destroyed and subsequently sparked discussions about the rising value of artworks on the office walls and a possible recalibration of the collections acquisition policy (Goodrow and Conzen, 2015, p. 253).

In 1996, Hiscox became a listed company and transitioned from a privately held company to a publicly held one. During this process, questions were brought forward about the ownership and the transfer of the art collection, which had significantly increased in value during the last decades. Several shareholders were objecting to buying the artworks.

Whitney Hintz, the curator of the Hiscox art collection, stated in an interview in 2015 about the decision to sell several key works: *"We were advised by our bankers that we should sell some of the more valuable works in the collection, as they considered art not to be the best use of corporate capital."* (Goodrow and Conzen, 2015, p. 253)

Robert Hiscox released a statement at the time explaining the decision to sell considering the rising value of the artworks: *"We have collected for nearly 30 years and the time has come to take stock, knowing that some of the pictures have become valuable - probably more valuable than we can justify hanging on the office wall."* (Goodrow and Conzen 2015, p. 253)

The decision was made to go forward with an auction at Sotheby's, not to end the art collection but rather to reassess the acquisition policy and interests of the company. After the auction in 1996, art was only bought sporadically until in 2001 when an official curator was appointed, and a restructuring of the art collection, including a new acquisition policy, was put in place. The aim was to build a new collection with an emphasis on contemporary works from emerging young artists. With the expansion of the company to the U.S. in the same year, the collection grew gradually more international as well, as the curators decided to mainly buy art from galleries local to the office branches. Hintz explained that the aim was *"for the works in each office to be reflective of their local milieu."* (Goodrow and Conzen 2015, p. 253).

When Robert Hiscox explained the importance of the art collection, it becomes clear that the collection is closely intertwined with the company's service and identity as an art insurer: *"Art is*

*an integral part of the culture of Hiscox. We ensure it, we own it, and we encourage it."* (Goodrow and Conzen, 2015, p. 252) The corporation's website reflects this in its communications about the collection: *"owning art helps us enormously in our understanding of and ability to underwrite it (...)"* (Hiscox, 2014a)

The collection today comprises approximately 1000 works from over 230 artists, including paintings, photography and sculptures, from artists such as David Hockney, Damien Hirst, Jeff Koons and Sol LeWitt. After the focus of the collection was in the first few years on modern British art and Russian constructivists, the emphasis shifted through the years to contemporary art, specifically the YBAs (Young British Artists). Today, Hiscox states that the collection has a broad focus on international contemporary art, especially emerging artists (Goodrow and Conzen, 2015, p. 252). No works of the collection are held in storage and art is on display in almost all parts of the offices, including boardrooms, staff rooms and photocopy hubs. 14% of the artists in the top 100 list on Artfacts are also represented in the Hiscox art collection. Even though this number seems initially not very high, one needs to consider that the Hiscox art collection is with 236 artists much smaller than the Deutsche Bank collection. And of course, through the company's history, some of the collections most expensive artworks which would possibly be part of the top 100 list were sold off during the auction in 1992. Just like Deutsche Bank, findings in the previous chapter IV suggest that the Hiscox art collection is, with 73%, strongly dominated by male artists.

### 6.3.3. Present-day Activities: Public Access and Art World Involvement

Since 2017 Hiscox has been the contemporary art partner for the National Gallery in London. As an insurer the company is also reaching out by giving loans and pro bono insurance for selected art exhibitions such as the Art Night 2018, where Hiscox provided the insurance for the works on display during the festival, and for the Whitechapel Gallery, for which Hiscox has insured the displayed artworks since 2009 and to which Hiscox occasionally lends its artworks for display. Hiscox has also sponsored the Evening Standard's arts section since 2016 and is partner for the *Hiscox & Evening Standard Art Prize*, where the winner receives payment of £10,000, a lifetime National Art Pass and one year's fine art insurance (Goodstuff, 2018). Moreover, the insurer also supports several universities such as the Glasgow School of Art (MacAskill, 2003, p. 6), the University of Art Hamburg (HFBK) in collaboration with the Kunsthaus Hamburg (Kunsthaus Hamburg, 2015) and the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris (Appleyard and Salzmann, 2012, p. 71) with graduate prizes, shows and catalogues. Since 2013, Hiscox has also been one of the sponsors of the art prize of the art magazine *Aesthetica*, which is awarded to established and emerging contemporary artists.

While the collection is not regularly open to the public, tours are offered for staff and clients. The artworks are frequently rotated every two to three years within the offices in the same countries (Appleyard and Salzmann 2012, p. 71). Hiscox has also published a few catalogues and a book for the collections 50th anniversary in 2020 (Hume and Calero, 2020). To further commemorate the anniversary of the collection, Hiscox has invited artist Gary Hume to curate an exhibition of selected works from the collection at the Whitechapel Gallery. The exhibition was on from August 2020 until January 2021 and was made digitally accessible when the Gallery closed to the public in October 2020 due to the Coronavirus pandemic. Moreover, the Hiscox art collection also has a separate website where all collection artists and artworks are listed and accessible to the public (Hiscox, 2014a).

Like Deutsche Bank, Hiscox receives consecration through partnering up with prestigious institutions such as the National Gallery or the Whitechapel Gallery in London, as well as the close collaboration with contemporary artist Gary Hume on their 50th-anniversary exhibition. CEO Steve Langan expressed in a statement how important the association with prestigious institutions such as the National Gallery is when speaking about their partnership:

*"The National Gallery is a world-renowned art institution with a total commitment to quality, and we are immensely proud to now be associated with it. Its status and values perfectly align with our own as a market-leading insurance company and brand within the art world."* (The National Gallery, 2018a)

The sponsorship of art prizes and the focus on collaborations with art schools reflects the focus of the collection on emerging contemporary artists. But Hiscox is here often only listed as sponsor, adding the economic capital to a cultural event but not symbolic capital or consecration by, for example, being part of the jury or adding the winner to their art collection. Evidently, in a lot of Hiscox's philanthropic work, their economic means as a business and their service as an insurer stands in the foreground instead of the art collection itself, highlighting Hiscox first and foremost as an insurance company and not as an art collector. This definitely makes economic sense but hinders Hiscox from positioning themselves as an autonomous art collector on the cultural field. Other partners such as the Evening Standard do not have high volumes of cultural capital themselves and therefore cannot consecrate Hiscox within the cultural field.

#### 6.3.4. Hiscox Collection Field Analysis

Similar to the set-up of the Deutsche Bank collection, the Hiscox art collection comprises economic capital from the field of power through the former director Robert Hiscox and the

current CEO Steve Langan is combined with symbolic capital and artistic consecration from art world professionals Elliot McDonalds and later Whitney Hintz. However, Robert Hiscox built up the art collection for a substantial time only by himself, the curatorial staff only joined later and was not part of the art collection's inception and initial conceptual development, as was the case at the Deutsche Bank. Figure 24 shows the field analysis for the Hiscox art collection. Similar to Deutsche Bank, we can see here how the collection is connected to the field of power, commerce, media, education and art.

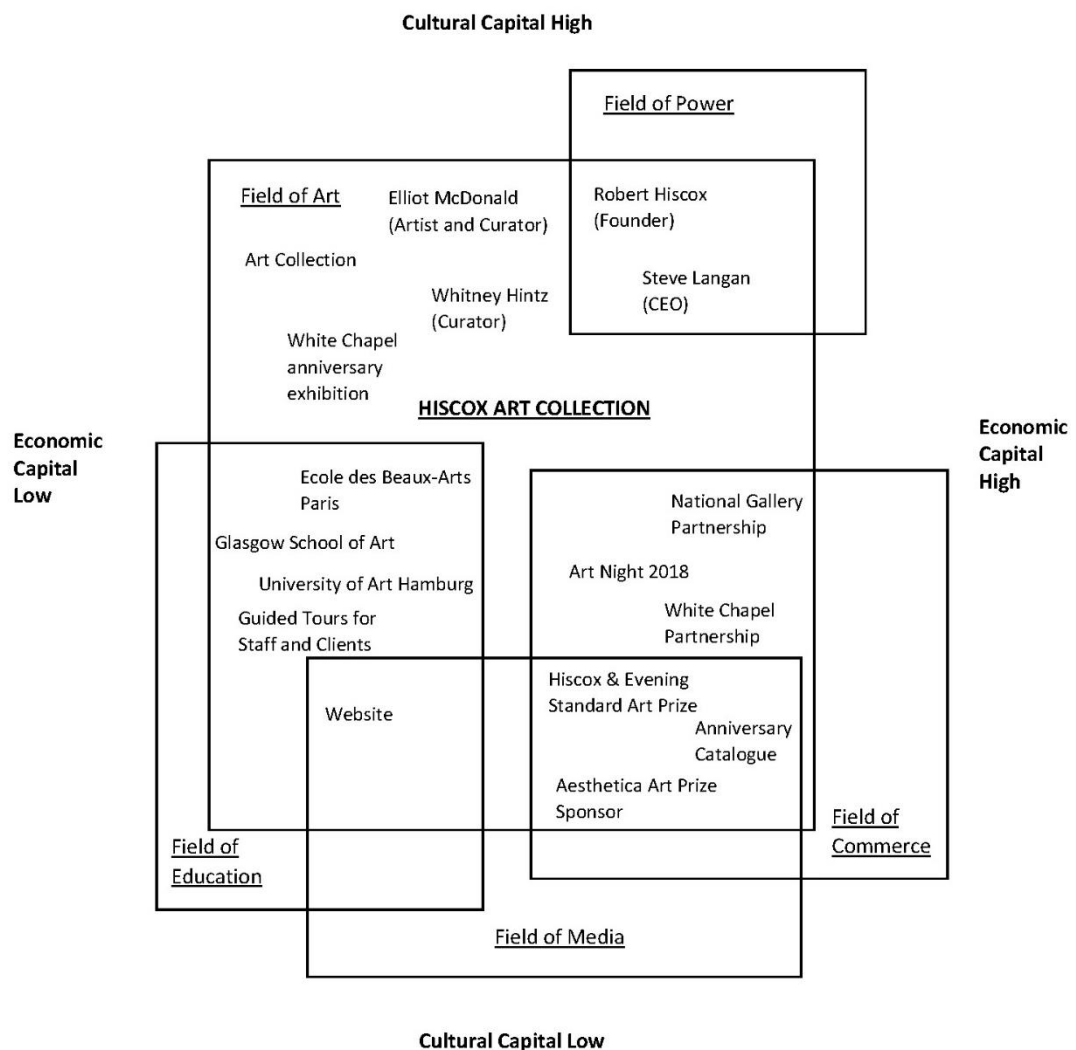


Figure 14: Hiscox Field Analysis

Hiscox's activities in the cultural field are focussed on sponsorship of art prizes and partnerships with museums where they act in their capacity as insurers or providers of financial support. These activities are more connected to economic capital instead of cultural capital and are

therefore located towards the bottom of the diagram. In the case of the Aesthetica Art prize, Hiscox is, for example, one of many corporate sponsors, the artistic consecration received through this association is therefore relatively low. As the Hiscox art collection itself is only rarely seen by an audience outside of the company (as tours are only for staff and clients), the general public sees Hiscox mainly in the field of commerce, within a sponsorship capacity in connection with various art institutions.

This establishes Hiscox as a financial supporter and philanthropist of the arts with high volumes of economic capital but does not give them the cultural capital and consecration authority to position themselves on the level of an art institution - it is the visibility of the art collection that is missing here.

## 6.4. The Soho House Art Collection

### 6.4.1. Founding and History

The Soho House & Co company is a chain of restaurants and private members clubs, including hotels, gyms, spas, workspaces and cinemas originally aimed at people working in the creative industries. The first club opened in central London's Soho district in 1995 and has since then expanded to 28 clubs and 14 restaurants in 19 locations around the world, including Europe, North America, Turkey, Hong Kong and Mumbai. Soho House currently employs around 4,046 workers and is partly owned by founder Nick Jones who holds a 10% stake, since 2008 by British entrepreneur Richard Caring who currently holds 30% of the club, and by the American investor Ron Burkle who was the last to join in 2012 after being a member himself for ten years. Burkle currently holds the majority with a 60% stake. According to Forbes, the House reported in December 2018 89,000 members with another 36,000 members on the waiting list (Dawkins, 2019). While in its beginnings the membership was exclusively given to people working in the creative industries like film or fashion, the selection criteria today is less strict and aims to include people with a 'creative soul' (Soho House, 2020b).

The Soho House art collection was initiated in 2009 by founder Nick Jonas and British portrait artist Jonathan Yeo to decorate the new restaurant in London's Dean Street. As the membership clubs were mainly targeted at people from the creative industries, Jonas and Yeo initiated a programme whereby the artists in the collection would receive a combination of cash and access to the club through membership credits, thus growing the creative community of the clubs and restaurants (Yeo, 2020). Relatively early into the inception of the art collection in 2009, Soho House employed an in-house curator to look after and develop the art collection. Francesca Gavin, who had previously worked as an art editor for the British fashion, culture and

art magazine DAZED, and the online platform for selling and buying contemporary art Artsy, worked as the curator for the Soho House collection for almost 7 years, leaving her job in 2016 to go on and co-curate the Historical Exhibition for the Manifesta Biennial in Zurich (LCD Berlin, 2020). Taking over from Gavin from 2016, the new head of collection at Soho House is British art historian, curator and broadcaster Kate Bryan. Bryan started her career as an art dealer and curator in Hong Kong and London, before being appointed in 2011 as the youngest director of the Fine Art Society in its 120-year history, which eventually paved the way to her work with the Soho Collection. In the past years, she has also published a book, presented and written television programmes for Sky Arts and BBC2, as well as being a judge on the annual competition programmes *Sky Arts Portrait Artist of the Year* and *Landscape Artist of the Year* (Bryan, 2020b). Bryan says about her work that she is "*especially passionate about helping new audiences to come to contemporary art*" speaking openly about the elitism and sexism prevailing in the art world as well as actively working as a mentor for young women trying to start their career in the creative industries (Bryan, 2020b).

Similar to Deutsche Bank and the Hiscox Art Collection, the Soho House art collection had access to high volumes of economic capital through the three owners of the company (Jones, Caring and Burkle) right at its inception. Contemporary artist Jonathan Yeo who was in 2009 already an established artist helped shape the art collection at its beginnings providing cultural capital and artistic consecration to the endeavour. What distinguishes the Soho House art collection from Deutsche Bank and Hiscox is that both curators Gavin and Bryan did not just add cultural capital through their previous activities in the art world as curators and art dealers, they also brought a significant amount of social capital specific to the field of media and journalism due to their activities as magazine editors and TV presenters. Both curators are with their entrepreneurial activities in the art world a brand by themselves and in Bryan's case, widely known due to her celebrity status. Because of the artists and creative people who frequent Soho House as members and clients in the highly popular restaurants, the brand and the art collection consistently gain more artistic consecration and social capital.

#### 6.4.2. The Collection: Acquisition and Mission Statements

Soho House is, as a company and subsequently as an art collector, much younger than the other two case studies, but with the collection comprising approximately 5000 works, it is five times as big as the Hiscox art collection. As we learned in chapter IV, it is characteristic for corporate art collections to rapidly grow within the first 20 years of inception, after which they usually stagnate a bit depending on the development of the corporation overall. As the Soho House art collection was only founded in 2009 the collection is still at an early stage of its development



and expected to further expand in the next 10 years. However, it has already surpassed the average corporate collection size of 1500 artworks by far and therefore already belongs to the category of larger corporate art collections.

Even though there is not a comprehensive list of all the artists represented in the collection, one can find lists of key artists represented in the Soho House members clubs and the several permanent exhibitions in the restaurants. Part of the collection are contemporary household names such as Damien Hirst, Keith Tyson, John Baldessari, Tacita Dean, Tracy Emin, Oscar Murillo but also less canonical contemporary artists such as Chinese artist Cary Kwok, Bolivian-American artist Donna Huanca and Zimbabwean artist Admire Kamudzengerere. While the collection does not have a comprehensive website for itself, it is introduced on the Soho House website in several articles and included in the extensive social media activities of the company. The Instagram account of the Soho House currently counts 535,000 followers.

In the different locations, the collection is often curated by a theme and artists local to the area of the club are favoured. Soho House in Amsterdam, for example, comprises 500 works, 60% of them being from Dutch artists and 40% from international artists all responding to Dutch art history in some way. Themes are focussed on landscapes, still lifes and portraits in reference to famous Dutch artist Rembrandt who created one hundred self-portraits throughout his life (Osmond, 2000; Bryan, 2020c). Another example is the curation of the collection in 40 Greek Street, the cornerstone of the London Soho House group. The bar displays an ensemble of works titled 40x40x40, giving 40 artists under the age of 40 a platform at the location 40 Greek Street. Another group of artworks at the same location are titled *Walk the line* and have been specifically commissioned for the Soho House collection. Here, 20 established artists including Tracy Emin, Yinka Shonibare, Tacita Dean and Jonathan Yeo were asked to produce a continuous single line drawing as part of a surrealist game and homage to artist Paul Klee (Bryan, 2020a).

As a curator and public figure, Bryan is involved in several other curatorial projects, such as the collection and permanent installation of artworks in the London members club *The Ned*, a sister collection to the Soho House group, which comprises a majority of female artists referencing the gender imbalance of CEOs in London's city. Her latest project in October 2020 was the curation of emerging artist Sarah Maple's exhibition, titled *Nazi Sexy Shark Show*, showcasing her provocative work around identity, feminism, and stereotypes (Bryan, 2020d).

As a restaurant and member's club, Soho House does not face the same curatorial implications of their art collection in the way that other corporate collectors who operate in regular office

buildings do. The collection is much more publicly visible by the visitors to restaurants and members of the clubs. Moreover, these particular groups do not spend as much regular time around the artworks as staff in an office setting would. As the club is geared towards people working in the creative industries the cultural capital and knowledge to decode challenging artworks is also already very high. One can see why Soho House can therefore be much freer in their acquisition of controversial and provocative works. The Soho House art collection also has a specifically high volume of social capital through the close relationships with the collection artists who are mostly also members of the clubs. Instead of a singular transaction to develop the art collection, the Soho House seems to actively form relationships with artists, inviting them back for talks, commissions and events. A good example illustrating this relationship is the story around the ground floor of the Soho House Berlin, which is decorated with an artwork by Damien Hirst. Famously, Hirst spray-painted the piece directly onto the wall during an after-party in 2010. The piece has since then been cut out and preserved and is often celebrated as part of the collection (Gray, 2010).

What also sets the Soho House collection particularly apart from Deutsche Bank and Hiscox is the open activism and unapologetic feminist lead of Kate Bryan, which is a central theme in all of her curatorial work. As previously discussed, many corporate curators shy away from displaying overtly political pieces or often describe a feminist approach to the acquisition policy as limiting and compromising to overall quality. Contrary to this, Bryan makes a point of addressing and commenting on inequalities in her work as a curator while upholding the art historical merit of the collection.

#### 6.4.3. Present-day Activities: Public Access and Art World Involvement

Unlike Deutsche Bank and Hiscox, Soho House is not involved in sponsorship activities of big art fairs or museums. The art collection is often central to the centre of the membership newsletter and events, serving as an example for how to start collecting art, how to hang art in your own home and introducing new and upcoming artists from the collection. In her capacity as the head of collection, Kate Bryan has also collaborated with the Jealous Gallery, a London based art gallery specialising in contemporary art and printmaking, to launch the Soho Home edition - a portfolio of eight prints by emerging and established artists all represented in the Soho House art collection. The edition is curated by Bryan and printed by the Jealous Gallery and can be bought at the Soho Home website for approximately £300 with a discount for Soho House members (Soho Home, 2020). The website introduces the artwork with a short biography and a quote about the artwork by Bryan, as well as information about which Soho House around the world exhibits the same print and other artworks by the same artist. Besides these prints, Soho

Home sells furniture and home accessories inspired by the interior design of the Soho House clubs.

The Soho Home edition is not the first time Soho House and Kate Bryan, as the curator, have ventured into facilitating a sale of art. In collaboration with the Platform Foundation, a non-profit art space in Mayfair, London specialising in highlighting young and emerging artists, Bryan curated a selling exhibition titled *Generation Y* in the summer of 2019. She explains on her website how the idea for the exhibition came about:

*"We are often asked by members if they can buy the work they see. Since our collection is non-commercial and permanent (not to say much cherished!) I am delighted to have been able to create an alternative avenue for collecting some of the brightest young stars."* (Bryan, 2020e)

All thirty artists exhibited in the exhibition are part of the Soho House collection. As we know from the previous findings, it is generally frowned upon for private as well as corporate collectors to sell artworks from the collection on the secondary art market. However, it does happen when corporate collectors struggle financially or want to refocus their art collection (chapter IV, 4.2.3.). Bryan therefore makes sure to clarify in her quote that the art sold is not from the collection itself which is not for sale, but rather it is, similar to the Soho Home edition, a platform for emerging artists who are supported by the Soho House and an opportunity for admirers of the collection to acquire their own piece.

In summer 2020, Soho House announced the launch of their art prize in collaboration with the British gin distillery Bombay Sapphire. The prize called for suggestions and ideas from emerging artists for an installation that would take place at the Soho Beach House in Miami during the Miami Art Basel Fair in December 2020. The winner received a production and mentorship fund of £15,000 as well as the inclusion of one of their pieces into the Soho House collection via acquisition. The panel for the art prize consisted of three experts: Kate Bryan, Hebru Brantley, an artist who previously collaborated with Bombay Sapphire, and Maria Balshaw, the director of Tate art museums and galleries (Bryan, 2020f).

Together with the culture department of the car manufacturer BMW, Soho House also recorded several digital artist-talks interviewing artists such as Dread Scott, Jemima Kirke and David Shrigley about their inspiration and artistic practice (Soho House, 2020a). Moreover, the art collection often receives attention through the press and several articles have been written about specific parts of the collection, the fashion magazine Harpers Bazaar for example published a story in 2018 on ten women artists from the Soho Collection (Haper's Baazar, 2018).

As previously mentioned, in addition to the activities Soho House as a company actively supports in the art world, there are several initiatives Kate Bryan participates in which are not necessarily a partnership with the Soho House brand but with her personal brand as a public figure. Even though these activities are not happening within the capacity of the Soho House company, they are, through Bryan's position as head of collections, always connected to the Soho House brand. This, for example, includes Bryan's activity on the social media platform Instagram which, due to its focus on visuals, is particularly popular with galleries and museums. Bryan's personal account currently counts 32,000 followers and is mainly focussed on her work in the art world and her capacity as curator for the Soho House. She has also collaborated in the past with *The Other Art Fair* on curatorial projects on sustainability and gender bias on the art market (Bryan, 2020d).

#### 6.4.4. Soho House Field Analysis

Like Deutsche Bank and Hiscox, the Soho House art collection positions itself with a combination of economic and cultural capital derived from the field of power (through the stakeholders and investors) and the field of arts (through the curators Yeo, Gavin and Bryan). Unlike the two previous case studies, however, Soho House does not gain consecration through the association and sponsorship of museums and prestigious art fairs. The artistic consecration of the collection very much derives from the close relationships with established and famous artists of the collection who are mostly also members and regular visitors of the clubs and through employing broadcaster and curator Kate Bryan as head of collections.

The Soho House collection managed, by curating exhibitions with relevant political themes, to resonate not just with the press and wider public but also with established artists, who in return actively *want* to be part of the collection. This phenomenon can be observed by looking at the Soho House's sister art collection at the private members club and restaurant *The Ned*. Kate Bryan curated here a permanent installation of 100 established artists with 93 being female and only 7 being male, referencing and inverting the gender imbalance of the CEOs in London's city where *The Ned* is located. Due to the underlying theme of the exhibition, the activist stance that also reflects the interests of the participating female artists, Bryan managed to acquire pieces from museum-level artists such as Lubaina Himid, Rachel Whiteread and Phyllida Barlow amongst others, some of them even producing work specifically for the collection. When choosing the male artists, Bryan explains that she only considered candidates who were regularly collaborating with women as part of their artistic practice. Recounting how an artwork of Idris Khan became part of the collection, Bryan highlights how excited and enthusiastic artists reacted to the idea of the Ned's collection:

*"Idris Khan and Annie Morris are husband and wife. They don't normally collaborate together but when Idris saw the Ned when I gave him a tour he was so impressed and he was so jealous that Annie was going to be able to have her work there and become a member [of the Vault 100] he insisted that they make a duo together and they'd give us a piece."* (The Ned, 2020)

Maria Balshaw the director of the Tate Museums and galleries came to the opening night of the collection and the initiative received substantial attention through the press. Balshaw was later also included into the art prize panel, officially connecting the Soho House to a prestigious highly consecrated art institution. As this example shows, the social capital which is the network of artists around the Soho House collection is what raises the cultural capital of the collection, as well as consecrating the collection by association.

As the diagram (figure 26) shows, the Soho House collection is particularly active in the field of commerce and the field of media. Projects like the Soho Home edition, the artist talks and social media presence are clearly geared towards the mass market but also create visibility of the art collection to the general public, including those who do not have access to the member's clubs.

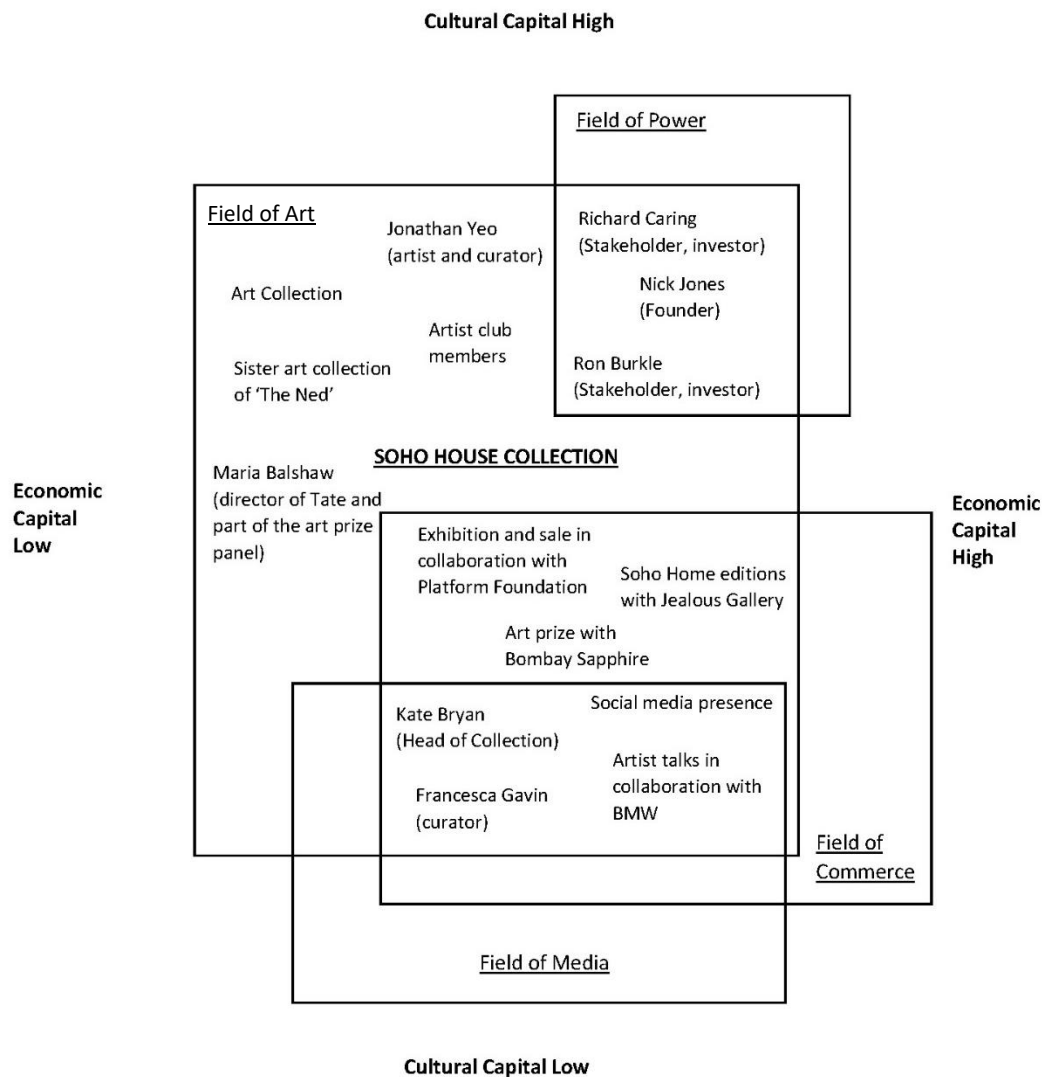


Figure 15: Soho House Field Analysis

Unlike the Deutsche Bank and Hiscox, Soho House is not active in the field of education. While they do support younger emerging artists by for example partnering up with the Platform Foundation, they do not collaborate with art schools directly.

The Soho House art collection positions itself with a high volume of economic and symbolic capital as an important player in the field of cultural production. While they are perhaps less similar to a cultural institution that focusses on the preservation of artworks like Deutsche Bank, they could be described as similar to a gallery who is close to the market and actively pushes artists with their consecration authority, influencing trends and sales on the art market. Interestingly, Soho House often uses its powerful position and capital to introduce and push

counter-hegemonic values in the art world. If the collection manages to keep this position when key figure Kate Bryan eventually moves on to another employer, remains to be seen.

## 6.5. Conclusion

When Bourdieu's analysis of the cultural field was first developed in the 1980s, corporate art collectors were not included in his research and mapping of the cultural field, likely because at the time corporations were either not recognised as serious players and influencers in the art world or grouped with private patrons. But almost a decade later, corporate intervention in the art world has sparked the interest of both, Bourdieu himself and artist Hans Haacke, who discussed the topic in their 1991 conversation *Free Exchange*. Haacke explained to Bourdieu:

*"I think it is important to distinguish between the traditional notion of patronage and the public relations manoeuvres parading as patronage today. Invoking the name of Maecenas, corporations give themselves an aura of altruism. The American term sponsoring more accurately reflects that what we have here is really an exchange of capital: financial capital on the part of the sponsors and symbolic capital on the part of the sponsored."* (Bourdieu et al., 1995, p. 17)

While there is no denying that corporate patronage until today has been motivated by an exchange of financial and symbolic capital, the narrative that art patronage by affluent individuals during the renaissance was only driven by altruism and not by the same underlying motives of gaining symbolic capital is misleading. And while sponsorship of artists and art institutions is a specific successor of traditional patronage, it does not adequately describe the activities of a corporate art collector today.

However, even in Grenfell and Hardy's 2007 publication *Art Rules* where Bourdieu's field theory is applied to several aspects of the contemporary art world, corporations are mainly mentioned as corporate sponsors in the cultural field, not as collectors or even cultural institutions themselves.

Grenfell and Hardy speak in their publication about Stuart Evans, the curator for the Simmons & Simmons art collection, and mention him as an *"important art patron"* who purchases work to *"enliven his company's headquarter"* (Grenfell and Hardy, 2007, p. 120). But even though Evans originally founded the corporate art collection in question, he is spending company money to develop a company-owned collection that will stay and continue after he leaves the corporation. Factually, therefore Simmons & Simmons should be acknowledged as the

*“important art patron”* and as an agent in the cultural field rather than Stuart Evans as the curator.

We have learned, through the historical analysis of the relationship between business and art in chapter III (3.2.), that corporate patronage is not a new phenomenon but has undergone several changes through time. While during the 1980s artworks were usually acquired by a senior staff member on an ad-hoc basis, most corporate collections today have been professionalised by employing an in-house curator, implementing acquisition policies, committees and allocating fixed budgets. On top of that many corporate art collections regularly publish catalogues and some even opened their own private museums as exhibition spaces separate from the company offices. Because of these structural changes in corporate patronage, the relationship between corporate art collectors and the field of cultural production and consumption has changed through time.

In the interviews several corporate curators, artists and art world professionals acknowledge the change of role and position that corporate collectors in the cultural field underwent in the past few decades.

Interviewee number 7, corporate curator of an asset management company, reflected on the development of corporate art collections, stating that corporate collectors now take their activities in the art world quite seriously and are furthermore important partners for public institutions in the art world:

*“Corporate collections have grown from buying what used to be called 'bank art' like little editions for corridors and smaller decorations to becoming proper curators and collectors and they run their collection professionally, not just with the idea of a decorative environment, but with a strong conscious of building a cultural patrimony. And corporate collections have moved into becoming important partners also with public institutions who sadly have less and less acquisition funds and as such we today also see it as part of corporate social responsibility to share and give out loans, some of the corporate collections also have their own museums, do their own exhibitions.”* (Interviewee No. 7, 2019)

The corporate curator of an international insurance company, interviewee number 4, explained that while corporate collecting in the 1970s and 1980s was just as common as today, the collections were less publicised and accessible to the public:



*"The collections in the 1970s and 1980s were very internal. But now they are seen by the public. And also, museums for examples are interested in working with corporations."* (Interviewee No. 4, 2019)

Corporate collections today seem to be much more outward facing, communicating their activities to a wider public while having at the same time a more professionalised approach to collecting. Being involved in several aspects of the art world, corporate collectors position themselves differently today in the cultural field, as more than just sponsors and are subsequently taken more seriously by other art institutions. In fact, corporate collections seem to take themselves more seriously, too, as interviewee number 7 mentioned that their collection is building a *"cultural patrimony"*, other collectors explained in their interview their commitment to *"protecting and preserving culture"*.

All of these aspects are also reflected in the analysis of the case studies in this chapter. Even though the profiles of the three art collectors are quite different, we can see that generally, all three corporations are as collectors involved in several activities in the art world. All of them follow a structured and professional process of acquisition and their art collections comprise several canonical and museum-level artists. But we also learn that the level of consecration authority and the position of corporate collectors varies throughout the field.

Some corporate collectors, such as Deutsche Bank manage to position themselves in the art world as institutions which preserve culture and educate by sharing their collection with the wider public. A corporation who has a similar approach to corporate patronage as Deutsche Bank and therefore a similar position in the art world is for example Foundation Cartier pour l'art Contemporain which houses the extensive art collection of the French jewellery manufacturer Cartier International. Just like Deutsche Bank, Cartier, who has been collecting art since 1984, has a separate publicly accessible exhibition space and works closely with several museums to regularly lend artworks from the collection. Further examples of this type of corporate collector are the Foundation Bancaria *La Caixa*, Luis Vuitton, DZ Bank AG, the AkzoNobel Art Foundation, Fondazione Prada and Daimler AG. These corporate collectors hold a substantial amount of economic and symbolic capital and have received artistic consecration by collaborating with institutions in the art world. Through the establishment of private museums and exhibition spaces the art collection is accessible for the public and enjoys greater freedom than art collections that are only exhibited in office sites. In comparison, these corporate collectors' position in the art world could be described as close to the ones of museums.

Corporate collectors such as Hiscox are more inwardly directed. Their collection is only exhibited within their offices and rarely seen by the public on specific occasions, outside of the company premises (e.g. the temporary exhibition of collection highlights for the collection's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary at the White Chapel Gallery). Though occasionally working with museums for lending artworks or establishing smaller art prizes, their external activities in the art world are more likely to be financial sponsorship or pro bono work. Even though these art collections can be just as high quality and museum-level as any other collection, these corporations might find it difficult to establish themselves as cultural institutions in the cultural field. As most of their activities are sponsorship-related and their collection lacks public visibility, they are not receiving a lot of artistic consecration to establish their position on the field and build up consecration authority. Corporate collectors who have a similar approach to collecting as Hiscox are for example the British law firm Linklaters and electric utility company E.ON. An extreme case of this type of inwards directed collection is the Fidelity International collection. Fidelity owns a professionally curated high calibre art collection managed and looked after by an experienced curator, but their art collection is not publicised at all, not through the internet and not through catalogues. The people who do not work with or for Fidelity probably do not know that the corporation is an active collector which obviously puts Fidelity in the cultural field in a less powerful position. In comparison, these corporate collectors' position in the art world could be described as close to private collectors.

Lastly, the case study of the Soho House art collection introduced a young art collector who has managed to position themselves not just as a preserver of art but also as driver and influencer of the art world. Through their high volume of social capital and their close relationship with artists, Soho House managed to build themselves a reputation as a patron of the arts actively using their platform to highlight inequalities and reinforcing counter-hegemonic values. Soho House has taken the position as expert and consultant, using their experience as art collectors to advise the public and members on several topics around art collections. Additionally, Soho House is engaging in helping emerging artists to sell art through partnerships with galleries and charitable art spaces. Due to their high level of activities in the field of commerce and media, the position of the Soho House in the art world could be described as close to a consultancy, art space or gallery. This approach to art collecting is quite unique for a corporate collection but other newer corporate collectors similarly have found new ways and approaches to engage with the field of culture. Google for example does not just invite artists into their headquarters to paint elaborate murals, they also partnered up with the Barbican in London in 2014 to create an exhibition on installations using technology and code. The Google Creative Lab had

commissioned several artists to work with the technology to show the audience how coding is a creative discipline (Swift, 2014). By founding *Google Culture*, the tech company partnered up with several cultural institutions to develop a platform where users can virtually walk-through museums, see high-resolution images of artworks and put together a virtual collection of their own. Google Culture aims to preserve and present art and to contribute to the democratisation of culture by making art digitally accessible. After being initially criticised for Eurocentrism due to the selection of partnering institutes and documented artworks (Shu, 2018), Google Culture has since committed to diversifying their platform and has now added 2000 museums around the world and 100,000 artworks to their database (Google, 2020).

The findings of this chapter illustrate the different histories of corporate art collections, their inherited social and cultural capital as well as their current position in the art world. We learn that the collectors' network and activities surrounding the collection shape the relationship to different fields and help them accrue more symbolic capital and consecration authority. Several corporate collectors, specifically the ones that are separately governed by a company associated foundation and have their own exhibition spaces, managed to position themselves as cultural institutions in the cultural field. Other corporate collectors are more internally focussed and act more like private collectors in the field. Lastly, a small number of young and innovative corporations reinvent corporate collecting and by breaking the norms and re-interpreting what corporate patronage in the 21<sup>st</sup> century can look like.

Additionally, one might note, that even though corporate collections are not visited specifically for their art by clients or employees, due to the size of these international companies the art is seen every day by a substantial amount of people. As mentioned in the case studies, Deutsche Bank has 89,000 employees and is one of the largest employers in the City of London. UBS and ING Bank, also active corporate collectors, each employ 66,900 and 54,000 people who work around the artworks displayed in their offices every day. As the curator of an international insurance company with over 125,000 employees worldwide and a thriving corporate art collection concludes in one of the interviews: *"We have brought a generation of people in the working environment in touch with art."* (Interviewee No. 4, 2019)

## Part 4

## 7. Chapter VII – Conclusions

### 7.1. Summary of Findings

This thesis set out to explore the changing role and the growing influence of corporations as collectors and patrons of contemporary art in Europe. As this research project is situated at the intersection of sociology and art history, it is building on relevant research of both disciplines, providing an in-depth empirical analysis of the social network of management, curators and artists, that is needed to create corporate art collections. As such, Bourdieu's notion of the field and Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony introduced in chapter II, have been used as tools to analyse the social power structures and curatorial practice within the largest and most influential corporate collections in Europe. Given that the neoliberal market economics have gained greater penetration into the traditional European public sphere and the UK government is reducing its funding for the arts, this study has topical relevance by contributing to further development of knowledge by presenting research on the active participation of corporations in the cultural field and the impact of corporate power and money. This study is based on empirical data derived from a range of methodologies including ethnographic fieldwork, document and digital-based research and analysis, in-depth interviews as well as building up a comprehensive database of European corporate collections. The following chapter offers a summary of findings, discussing and highlighting the most significant discoveries of this dissertation.

Chapters III and IV were initially focussed on the social structure and internal processes surrounding a corporate collection and on the function an art collection fulfils within a corporation. For chapter III, I undertook an extensive review of existing literature on the history of art and business and compared the historical accounts to current mission statements and interview data of corporate curators. I found that corporate art collections and the way corporations utilise art are by no means a new phenomenon. Even though corporations in the form and structure as we know them today, are only a few decades old, art has for centuries been a symbol of power and status for wealthy people and families. There are many parallels of traditional functions of art and the instrumentalisation of art today.

A comparison between historical corporate collections and corporate collections today also revealed that companies still use art to improve their image or that of their product. By being generous patrons of the arts, corporations such as BP or Beretta try to gain back acceptance and the license to operate in society, whitewashing their images from their unethical business

practices. Alternatively, art is used as a way to raise the value of housing developments, rebranding whole city areas to pave the way for gentrification.

*Wealth management lounges*, exclusive exhibition openings and the corporate presence in museums and art fairs are modern ways for corporate collectors to distinguish themselves and associate with the wealthy affluent class in society. For many corporate collectors, the art collection is inseparably connected to the service or product they sell and utilised as a tool to gain access to a specific group. Art insurers such as AXA and Hiscox, for example, use the art collection as a way to connect to their target clientele of art collectors, private, public and corporate, to sell their insurance services. The Soho House connects with their art collection to creative people working in fashion, film and the art world, which is also the target group for memberships to their private clubs. Corporations also utilise art to communicate their values and morality to their employees, clients and the public in a subtle form that everybody can understand. Even just by owning an art collection, a corporation conveys their appreciation of culture, their acquired taste and their philanthropic efforts to the public. As an art collection is accumulated over time, influenced by different successors within the organisation, it is also a mirror of the corporation's history - a visual way of telling a company's story.

Creating a comprehensive statistical dataset of European corporate art collections allowed me a unique and more quantitative insight into the general trends and behaviours of corporate art collectors. The evaluation of statistical data in chapter IV showed that the average corporate collection comprises approximately 1200 artworks and usually grows rapidly within the first 20 years of initiation. I found that typically, the collection growth will stagnate after this time, but this is strongly dependent on the economic situation of the corporation. Merging with a corporation that already owns art or opening new offices can result in a new surge in collection growth. Even though most corporate art collections now employ a curator, the management and CEOs are commonly still involved in the acquisition process. Moreover, the findings indicate that while the upper management often actively shapes the art collection, lower-ranking employees are typically more seen as the consumer of the art collection.

The evaluation of interviews in chapters III and IV suggests that the corporate curator is not just the link between the corporation and the art world, they also take a mediating role between the management (decision-makers) and the employees (primary audience). An essential part of the curator's job is to amplify the added value of the artworks, which means aligning the art collection thematically and aesthetically with its assigned purpose but at the same time, making sure that the art is seen and engaged with. While challenging art has the most significant effect

on the viewer, by actively stimulating their development and creating a sense of cohesion when experienced in a group, it is also the most difficult type of art to justify within an office environment. Some corporate curators have therefore adapted an approach of taking risks and exploring possibilities of buying art that is not just decorative and comfortable but challenges the viewer. These curators have to deal with negative feedback from employees and occasionally even take down controversial artworks. Other curators instead stick to 'safer' options and less 'overt', more comfortable artworks or altogether ban topics such as sex, death, religion, or nudity from their art collections. An additional challenge is for the curator of global corporations with art in offices around the world to consider aspects of cultural sensitivities that might vary from country to country. The curatorial approach seems to strongly depend on the curator's character, but also how integrated the curator is within the organisation and how close the communication between the staff and the curator is. Generally, the more engaged and interested the staff is in the art collection, the more they learn about decoding even challenging artworks which ultimately gives the curator more freedom in their choices of acquisition.

The analysis of interview data in chapter IV demonstrated that most corporate collectors stick to buying art from the primary art market. I found that this is partly the result of the number of people involved in the acquisition process but also influenced by image concerns where corporations do not want to come across as splurging money on expensive auctions. Additionally, for most corporate art collectors who make their money in banking and the financial services sector, a smart investment into an upcoming artist and an artwork that later gains in value puts them in a favourable light and tells a story that is easily transferable to their core business. This is also reflected in the findings that corporate collectors tend to purchase artists when they are just gaining popularity and traction in their career. Discovering supporting evidence that corporate collectors seem to follow the general trends of the art market instead of setting them, is one of the key findings of chapter IV.

Interviewing corporate curators about their thoughts and approaches to deaccessioning artworks showed that this is generally a controversial topic as it conflicts with the moral code of collectors to not 'flip' artworks. Corporate art collections are usually not for profit and not for sale. However, the interviews revealed that there are circumstances where a corporation decides to sell artworks via auction or gift them to museums and charities. Individual sales and gifts usually only happen proactively when a curator is trying to refocus the art collection. If the curator's budget is cut, older and more valuable artworks are sometimes sold in order to

reinvest the funds into updating and growing the art collection. If the corporation suffers financially, artworks can also be sold off in order to save employees' jobs and reinvest into the core business, as it was the case during the 2020 Coronavirus crisis with British Airways and Deutsche Bank. While actively selling off the art collection mostly only happens as a reaction to financial stress, corporate collectors have no legal obligations to the artists or to the public on how to manage their collection. It is up to each company to develop its own policies for its art collection. A common way to protect the art collection from sales and economic changes to the corporation is to give the collection the legal structure of a private foundation, a charitable company limited by guarantee or a charitable trust. However, I found that this can sometimes make it difficult to integrate the collection into the company culture, making it less relevant to the corporation as a whole.

With usually several people involved in the acquisition process and the implications of appropriateness, thematic and aesthetic fit that curators consider when buying art, I demonstrated in chapter IV that, surprisingly, ensuring an equal representation of gender and a diversity of ethnicities within a corporate art collection is seemingly not a priority. The analysis of statistical data revealed that, comparable to museum collections, corporate art collections have a Eurocentric focus and are strongly dominated by European and US American artists. Furthermore, I was able to demonstrate that across all industries and countries included in this study, corporate art collections show an overwhelming imbalance between female and male artists. With an average ratio of 80% male to 20% female artists, corporate art collections reflect and reproduce the gender bias of the art market. The interviews in my study suggested that the majority of curators continue to base their selections solely on subjective and Eurocentric standards of 'taste' and 'quality' or only superficially address the gender imbalance within their collection, which further leads to sexual and racial indifference and exclusion. Most curators expressed a meritocratic worldview and generally perceived the inclusion of diversity in their acquisition strategy as limiting and not necessary. It was apparent that there was no pressure to further diversify the collection from within the corporation.

An extensive analysis in chapter IV identified a group of six artists, who are particularly popular in corporate collections: Gerhard Richter, Andreas Gursky, Thomas Ruff, Anish Kapoor, Katharina Grosse and Damien Hirst. The majority of these artists are white male artists, which is consistent with my findings of the Eurocentric focus and the lack of gender diversity within corporate art collections. All of these artists have a specific and recognisable brand, success and a reputation of innovation that corporations like to associate with. Evaluating the practice,



career and artworks of these artists and comparing them with the statements of corporate collection catalogues, gave valuable insights into corporate tastes and preferences in their acquisition. The analysis showed that corporations often praise artists in their catalogues for their excellence, prominence and greatness, equating these attributes directly to the corporation's values. Looking at the specific works of these artists bought by corporate collectors also revealed an interesting trend. Even though this group of artists is often known for their shocking and controversial work, the art that was chosen by corporate collectors often addressed agreeable, safe but meaningful topics like sustainability, human existence and their relationship to the environment.

In the second half of the thesis, in chapters V and VI, the focus is shifted from inside the corporation to the network of relationships outside the corporation. The switch of perspective gained by including in depth-interviews from artists and other professionals in the art world was invaluable to gain a comprehensive and differentiated view of the position that corporate collectors occupy within the art world. For chapter VI, I also included three extensively researched case studies of European corporate art collections, to further evaluate their position and involvement in the art world.

In the last decades, most European governments have endorsed and encouraged corporate philanthropy, and the analysed case studies show that today corporate collectors are actively involved in several aspects of the art world; from partnerships with art fairs and museums over educational grants and prizes for graduates to private museums and publicly accessible exhibition spaces. I found that corporate collections today are generally much more outward facing, communicating their activities to a broader public while following a more serious and professional approach of collecting.

The interview data evaluated in chapter V suggested that artists often perceive government funding as overly bureaucratic and slow, which is why corporate funding offers a welcome additional source of income. Because corporate collectors do not have to follow museum standards, they can be more niche and specialised in their curatorial focus, which is much appreciated by the artists. However, there is a consensus that government funding is still crucial as it is seen as more sustainable and necessary to protect artists from market pressures. Not having to comply with museum standards also bears a risk for artists, as corporate collectors can sell an entire collection whenever they want without repercussions.

Based on the case study analyses of the Deutsche Bank-, Hiscox- and Soho House collections in chapter VI, I demonstrated that, depending on their engagement with the art world and their approach to collecting, corporate art collectors occupy quite different positions in the art world. Several collections such as Deutsche Bank managed to build a cultural institution around their art collections and commit to the preservation of and education about art. Many of them have opened private museums and exhibition spaces that are accessible to the public and have close relationships and exchange programmes with public museums. Other art collectors are more inwardly oriented and, if at all, only engage in sponsorship activities within the art world. They are seen more as art patrons, primarily focussed on the benefit of their own employees and sometimes not even known by the public as art collectors.

Lastly, a new generation of young corporate collectors introduced a new approach to corporate engagement in the art world. Soho House, for example, actively tries to drive and influence the art market by using their platform to highlight inequalities and reinforce counter-hegemonic values. Another example is the Google Culture initiative, which is dedicated to making art accessible to the public by providing digital access to museums and cultural institutes all over the world. Overall, one can say that it is difficult to assign one position to corporate art collectors based on the smallest common denominator of being a corporate initiative. The engagement with the art world and the resulting influence and status within it is vastly different between the corporations and in the extreme cases are barely comparable with each other.

Additionally, one should not ignore that no matter the position and status of a corporate collector in the art world, the art in corporations is always seen by the employees, every day for the significant amount of time the employees spend in their offices. And the size of this audience is not to be underestimated, corporate collectors such as Deutsche Bank employ around 89,000 people all over the world. Many of these people could never visit a museum in their life and still see high-profile contemporary art on a daily basis within their office spaces.

Findings in chapter V show that corporate collectors can have a positive impact on artists' careers. Many different factors determine an artist's success, but corporate collectors can contribute to an artist's career by buying artworks, increasing their visibility outside of museum and gallery spaces and helping expand their social network. As previously mentioned, several corporate collectors do position themselves as public cultural institutions in the art world; they therefore very well possess the recognition and influence in the cultural sector that is needed to actually enhance an artist's career. Corporations that are less active in the art world and occupy a position similar to private collectors are still supporting artists - at least financially by buying

artworks from the primary market. As the interviews show, financial support often allows artists to continue and develop their practice further. These insights are especially striking when considering that corporate art collections are strongly dominated by Eurocentrism and gender bias and highlight the need to introduce an ethical code to the acquisition strategies of corporate collectors.

Finally, when analysing the personal relationship between corporate collectors and artists, it was revealed that specifically when it came to commissions, the artistic process and output is often manipulated and steered to fit corporate interests. The previously discussed censorship and restrictions that some corporate curators put in place in order to protect the corporation's image and the employee's wellbeing seems to translate into the commission process and in some rare cases artists even retrospectively amend artworks to adapt to these expectations. These corporate collectors seem to have a predisposition to see artworks as something to own and as consumable luxury goods that first and foremost need to fit a certain idea and aesthetic that corresponds with their corporate culture. During my research, I found that the corruption of artistic autonomy and censorship are complicated and often prescribed topics in the art world and therefore, only rarely discussed. For this reason, it is difficult to assume that they are a common element of the relationship between corporation and artist. Nevertheless, the fact that they do occur gives insights into an existing power imbalance between corporation and artist and indicates that in an oversaturated market, artists are dependent even on ethically questionable funders. Furthermore, it highlights the lack of systemic support for artists to preserve their artistic autonomy within the art world.

## 7.2. Corporate Art Collections and the Theoretical Framework

The corporate collector's position and ties within the art world have been the primary issues addressed in this study. Bourdieu's field theory has proven to be a useful tool to analyse internal and external power dynamics, underlying structures and social relationships of corporate art collectors. His key concept of the field has been particularly helpful to understand the link between objective structure and individual actions of players in the art world as well as the social mechanisms at work when corporations venture into the cultural field.

Bourdieu's different forms of capital have helped to track the exchange of value between corporate collectors and the art world, that goes far beyond monetary transactions for units sold. Art collections offer several ways for corporations to accumulate social and cultural capital which can then be converted to more economic capital and at the same time enable a

corporation to appropriate an elevated status of distinction and prestige in society. In turn, corporate collectors can support individual artists and institutions in the art world by raising their economic and social capital. If the corporate collector attains a position in the art world where their discernment is recognised and respected by other agents, their consecration can positively affect artists' careers. A number of corporate collectors hold a substantial amount of economic and symbolic capital which is derived through the combination of individual capital configurations it shares with its associated agents. Part of their capital is inherited by their founders: CEOs and other art world professionals who have acted as initial consultants when setting up the art collection. Other sources of capital and consecration have been received by collaborating with institutions in the art world or government endorsements.

However, corporate activities in the cultural field are strongly driven by heteronomous interests. The budget for art and the continuance of the art collection first and foremost depend on other fields outside of the cultural field - in this case, the economic field. An art collection is not the core business of corporate collectors, and if it comes to a recession, the budget for art is often the first to be cut. Furthermore, in order to justify spending money on art, an art collection within a corporation is always connected to a specific function. These functions can vary from purely decorating the office spaces, to educating the employees or helping the corporation to communicate their image to the public. To fulfil its function art has to be chosen in a way where their aesthetic experience aligns with the designated purpose of the art collection. This too shows the underlying heteronomous interests that influence corporate art collections. Within Bourdieu's theory of cultural change, this shows how corporate collectors are part of the forces within a field that coerces artists to move from the autonomous pole lateral to the field of mass production towards the heteronomous pole.

Moreover, Bourdieu's concept of habitus has been useful to reveal the multiplicity of forces that shape the corporate curators' work and therefore, indirectly the corporate art collection. The findings demonstrated that corporate curators themselves are not autonomous within a corporation but dominated by the upper management, which mainly influences budget and policies for the corporate collection. The employees, even though usually not directly included in decisions about the art collection, play an important role for the curator as the primary audience of the art displayed. As the link between the field of culture and the economic field, the corporate curator also legitimises the art collection by granting artistic consecration through their advisory role in the acquisition process. As there are a multitude of different agents with completely different roles and motivations within the corporation, it was difficult to establish a

cohesive group habitus for corporate collectors. It was therefore important to treat the corporation as a playing field itself and take a look at the individual predispositions, perceptions and roles of the different agents within the corporation.

Additionally, Bourdieu's theory proved to be restrictive when it came to explaining why certain artists face more barriers than others moving through the field of cultural production. The social repercussions of corporate collections being primarily driven by a small group of dominant and powerful agents at the top of the hierarchy within a corporation are better understood through the concept of Gramsci's cultural hegemony. Powerful white men in top positions of corporations do not just belong to the dominant group within their businesses or the art world but within the entire Western society. That the art collections displayed in their offices to their staff reflect just these same values of Eurocentrism and patriarchy, leads to the conclusion that corporate collections function as hegemonic devices for dominant groups in society. Corporate curators, as cultural experts within the company function as intellectuals who legitimise these values and ideologies and spread them through the art collection. A significant number of employees, for example, learn from the corporate collection which art is worth collecting and which artists are deemed relevant, unconsciously contributing with the reproduction of these values to the existing social order. Moreover, by disproportionately buying and showing artists who fit these hegemonic values, corporate collectors further add to the dominance of Western values within the art market. That these dominant ideologies put forth by corporate curators are made to seem natural and common sense further resonates with Gramsci's theory.

The fact that a few corporate collectors exist who are aware of the impact of art collecting and their responsibility to collect ethically and with intent proves that corporate art collections can be very well used to introduce and support counter-hegemonic values in society. Corporate art collectors are institutions that preserve art and transmit knowledge, culture and history - sometimes to a restricted audience (employees) and sometimes to the public. This places corporations in a certain position of trust to their employees, clients and the artists they work with. Significantly, this dissertation contributes to the recognition of corporate collectors as players in the art world and highlights the responsibilities entailed.

### **7.3. From Theory to Practice: The Corporate Art Collector's Responsibilities – Leading the Way to a Code of Ethics**

Acknowledging that curating is a practice involved with theory and certain pragmatics, the empirical research elaborated in this dissertation strongly suggests that there is a need to further address the ethical behaviour of corporate collectors when operating in the art world.

Discussing this topic was also part of several interviews with corporate curators. Interviewee number 7, herself a corporate curator, explained in our conversation that unlike museums, corporate collectors are not obliged or expected to follow any code of ethics. There is no written guideline that advises corporate collectors on a standard of collection practice for their specific field or serves as a document of consultation to ensure an ethical approach when faced with issues.

*"There are no rules. A corporate art collection does exactly what it wants to do. But I think (...) that companies are increasingly aware of the need to establish guidelines or a code of ethics or conduct, something along that line."* (Interviewee No. 7, 2019)

Corporate collectors are often perceived as equal to private collectors, arguing that some of them have similar or even bigger budgets for the acquisition of arts. However, unlike private collections, corporate collections are exhibited in a semi-public space, and corporations have a duty of care towards their employees and an accountability to their stakeholders.

Museums have operated with professional codes of ethics to organise and regulate best practice for the past century, the first one being the American Association of Museums Code which was published in 1925. The codes provide a benchmark for professional decision-making and actively inform 'acceptable' museum practice. They are also a tool to communicate the sector's values to the public. Museum codes are not legal documents and as such, not reinforced through the law and not a definition of right or wrong in a legal sense. Instead, they operate through peer pressure with penalties for museums acting against the code of ethics. This can include the loss of accreditation and funding as well as the exclusion from museum associations (Kidd, 2017, p. 495).

However, codes of ethics, in the museum sector and outside, are not uncontested. Different understandings of ethics as well as contrasting opinions on the code's use, function and interpretation are among the issues under discussion within the professional community and relevant literature. Scholars have pointed out that ethics are not a universal set of values that can be arbitrarily applied with a technical set of guidelines (Marstine, 2012, p. 31). Others have pointed out that a code of ethics can possibly lead to complacency rather than discourse or that codes of ethics have no impact on decision-making at all (McNamara *et al.*, 2018, p. 729). Evidently, museums have been operating with professional codes of ethics for almost one hundred years and are still struggling with several ethical issues; the systemic bias against female artists and ethnic minorities within museum collections and the cooperation with

questionable corporate sponsors for financial gains being just a few examples discussed in this dissertation.

However, even though a code of ethics may not immediately resolve all ethical issues they do reflect current practice, offer a basis for further discussion and reflection as well as an opportunity to recognize and address larger patterns of behaviour. They also help to make abstract ideas of social values more tangible and enable institutions to position themselves and acknowledge their own moral agency. Central to the idea of a code of ethics is the sharing of ethical challenges and opportunities with stakeholders, the consistent engagement with and discussion of contemporary discourse and the ability to introduce new ideas and change the code to stay relevant to the changing needs of society. Or in the words of Janet Marstine (2012, p. 41):

*“Ethics codes do not resolve ethics issues but can promote an ethics of social change when seen as part of a matrix of other mechanisms, from mission statements to vision statements to strategic plans, invested in the moral agency of museums and which are routinely interrogated and re-imagined.”*

As a practical outcome, and part of my dissertation, I produced in the following section a first version of a code of ethics, specifically for corporate art collectors. The principles of this code are derived from the discussions and conversations I had as part of the interviews with corporate and public curators, artists, activists, teachers, and other art world professionals. They therefore represent a general consensus and current practice of people working in and with corporate art collections, combined with existing museum recommendations.

Signing up to this code of ethics for corporate collections will not guarantee or immediately lead to ethical behaviour by corporate collectors and professionals working with corporate art collections. However, by documenting current practice in the sector the code offers a starting point for discussions, a way for collectors to reflect on their responsibilities and a tool for shared decision making. For artists, employees, and the public a code of ethics offers more transparency and insights into corporate decision making and a measurement to hold corporations accountable if necessary. Central to my argument is that the code of ethics is seen as “an opportunity for growth, rather than a burden of compliance.” (Marstine, 2012, p. 31).

In the following section, I have grouped the discussions into four key areas formulating the principles as a direct result of interview data and findings of this dissertation.

### 7.3.1. Employee Engagement and Company Benefit

Most corporate curators felt that the primary area of responsibility of corporate art collectors lies in their relationship to stakeholders, employees and management of the corporation. As we learned from the analysis in chapter III, the relationship between the art collection and the employees is a specifically crucial one. The interview data suggested that corporate curators are generally very aware of the employees' wellbeing and the impact that art might have on it. Interviewee number 11, a corporate collector for a law firm, highlighted in our conversation that he sees a responsibility in educating staff about the art collection to encourage engagement:

*"The educational side of [the art collection] we take quite seriously. Here, we have what is called an art club where the members of the firm sign up to a newsletter, and they get information about the artists and the artworks represented here." (Interviewee No. 11, 2019)*

The corporate curator of a private members club, interviewee number 6, added that making art accessible for employees also includes the way information about the art is conveyed. Employees with different upbringings and socioeconomic backgrounds may not have built up prior knowledge about art and therefore find it harder to engage with the art collection:

*"I think it's really important to make [the art collection] accessible. (...) So, I don't make anything too academic, too elitist. I want to make it easy for everybody to love art." (Interviewee No. 6, 2019)*

However, corporate spaces are not cultural institutions, and people first and foremost attend work to pursue their employment activities. Interviewees number 10 and 13, both corporate curators, therefore argued that while an art collection can be a benefit for employees, they must not be pressured into an engagement with it. After all, there is a power dynamic at play when it comes to the relationship between employees and their workplace.

*"(...) of course, you have a connection to a lot of employees and others show no interest, but we are not demanding in that sense. We don't want to force the employees that they now have to deal with art (...). We offer it to them, we offer." (Interviewee No. 13, 2019)*

*"They are living [at the office] more than at home, and I think it's a question of respect towards the employees to ask what they want and if they maybe don't want an artwork at all. We have on our floor exhibitions; there are still 4 or 5 floors that have no exhibitions." (Interviewee No. 10, 2019)*



Being respectful and mindful towards employees also extends to possible cultural sensitivities in different branches of the company that corporate curators are often unaware of. This has been discussed extensively in chapter III. Curators or curatorial teams who look after an entire art collection are even in global corporations often located at the company's headquarters. Corporate curators need to be aware of the implications that different cultures have when it comes to displaying art.

The findings in chapter IV suggested that even though corporate curators are often not the sole decision-makers when it comes to acquisitions, they are the cultural experts and the link between the art world and the corporation. As cultural gatekeepers, they have a crucial role in developing the art collection. Interviewee number 13, the corporate curator for an international energy provider, noted that when buying on behalf of the corporation, corporate curators have to be especially diligent to use these resources responsibly:

*"There is so much art on the market. The market is full. And not all art is great. I mean also, not all galleries are good. There are huge gaps in quality. One also has a responsibility towards the company and towards the owner of the company to be very cautious about how you invest your money and what you are doing and have an eye for quality, which is not only also being expensive but just being good. Good quality."* (Interviewee No. 13, 2019)

Tying into this is the argument that corporate curators must have a strong awareness of the corporation's identity when working with the cultural sector. Especially corporate curators criticised the discrepancy of corporate identity and corporate philanthropy that some of their colleagues displayed in the past. Interviewee number 1, corporate curator for an international bank, explained in her interview how art sponsorship does not always positively reflect on the corporation when partnerships are not chosen with intent:

*"There was an incident recently where BP, the oil company, was sponsoring a national geographic photograph exhibition, and there is a real disconnect between what the company does to the landscape to what these photographers are photographing. So I think it's specific - I think corporation's do have a responsibility to understand when you put your name on something it's also your entire branding, your entire company is behind that and it's something you have to be sensitive of."* (Interviewee No. 1, 2018)

Interviewee number 7 expressed a similar view, stating that a company needs to be aware of their identity and carefully assess their reasons and strategy when being active in the art world:

*"[There is a need] to find coherence between the identity of the company and what you do for the arts. We see today more and more scandals with people involved with or getting support from tobacco companies or opioids and so on and of course this awareness is just getting stronger and stronger, and as such, we need to be clear of who we are, why we do what and what makes sense from our company."* (Interviewee No. 7, 2019)

Cultural activist and art lecturer, interviewee number 17, added that corporations who seek to make up for unethical behaviour need to face and process these issues directly instead of turning to philanthropy:

*"There are specific cases where [corporations] owe people reparations like, for example, Shell. I don't think buying artworks is a specific form of that. I don't think that does any good."* (Interviewee No. 17, 2019)

A discrepancy between corporate identity and corporate philanthropy is often the case when art is used as a tool of distraction or deception, as discussed in chapter III when explaining the term 'Artwashing'. Of course, art collections are often utilised as marketing tools to convey a corporation's values to the public, but this stands separate to corporations who intentionally use art to distract from unethical business practices. Overall, corporate collectors need to be aware of a corporation's history and identity when building partnerships in the art world. The underlying motivations of corporate collectors need to be transparent to ensure that philanthropy is not perceived as manipulation.

In consideration of the discussion points set out above, the following principles for the key area of employee engagement and company benefit apply.

Corporate collectors and those who work with corporate collections should:

- Be sensitive to the impact on employees when displaying art in office spaces.
  - If possible, involve employees in choosing artworks for their private offices.
  - Consider employees' feedback in open office areas, encourage debate and be ready to explain your choices to the staff.
  - For branches in different countries, corporate curators should be especially aware of cultural implications and, if possible, seek advice from local people (e.g. by engaging a local advisory board into the decision-making process).

- Give employees access to information about the art collection, make sure that there is accurate and comprehensive information available about the art and collection artists.
- Provide meaningful engagement opportunities for employees with the art collection, use the collection for the employees' education and inspiration.
- Be responsible with the company's resources. Spend the art budget to your best judgement and knowledge on quality artworks for the benefit of the company and its employees.
- Be transparent about your motivations for collecting art. Reflect on how these motives correspond to the overall identity of the corporation. Use the philanthropic aspects of an art collection in line with the highest standard of integrity.

### 7.3.2. Stewardship and Preservation of the Collection

Another key area of responsibility is the custodianship of the artworks that corporations take on when committing to an art collection. Especially in a busy office area, corporations have to ensure that artworks are displayed safely and restored if damaged. Interviewee number 3, a corporate curator for a global investment company, identified the preservation of the art collection as one of the key responsibilities of a corporate collector:

*"[We need] to be a responsible custodian of the works, so that they are still able to be enjoyed in the future. There is nothing more depressing than a corporate or private collection which people just allow to deteriorate. And it's quite common that that happens. Where people are only interested in the acquisition and beyond that, they don't care. So as soon as a work starts to deteriorate because a piece falls off or stops working, they just put it away. (...) It's a commitment, if you don't want that kind of commitment, don't have a collection." (Interviewee No. 3, 2019)*

He further explained that as the curator, he often has to justify the ongoing costs of properly maintaining the art collection to the management:

*"This discussion comes around every year when it comes to costs. Like 'Why is this so much costs?' Well, because there is a lot of things to do. We got 3.5 K objects, and we photograph them once a year and that costs." (Interviewee No. 3, 2019)*

These aspects are also reflected in the conversation with another corporate curator, interviewee number 13. She stressed how important the role of the corporate curator is, who is often the only cultural expert within the company and therefore, the person who knows how to manage the art collection accordingly:

*"It is a responsibility in the first sense towards the artworks themselves (...) because of course, you have to regard that most people don't know the names of the artists, they don't know what is more valuable and what is not. And of course, we have lists and everything, but you are so involved with the art, I know exactly what hangs where what is from which artist - what is more valuable, what is not more valuable, what has to be restored and whatnot, it's a responsibility. It's also a responsibility to hang the artworks up correctly. That they don't fall down, that they don't get too much light, that they have good framing. It's a lot of responsibility in the first sense towards the art; the maintenance and the respect of the art. You know? The respect of the art. And therefore you have to know a little bit about it; otherwise, of course, you cannot respect it."* (Interviewee No. 13, 2019)

Properly maintaining artworks is part of the curator's job, and so is making sure that the artworks are preserved in the best possible conditions. Too much light exposure, humidity or adverse temperature can cause damage to artworks over a long period of time. Interviewee number 9, corporate curator for a law firm, emphasised in our conversation that the conditions for art in a corporate environment cannot be equated to cultural institutions:

*"[We need to] look after [the art] to the best of our ability, facing up to the fact that these aren't museum conditions."* (Interviewee No. 9, 2018)

This consideration may sometimes lead to the conclusion that artworks that cannot be adequately preserved within the office environment need to be deaccessioned. Factually, regularly reviewing and refocussing the art collection is also part of the corporate curator's responsibilities. As discussed in chapter IV, corporate collectors have several reasons to dispose of artworks and, depending on the reason, follow different approaches of disposal. Some collectors decide to gift artworks to charities and museums, while others sell the artworks to either reinvest the funds back into the collection or in exceptional circumstances, to reinvest the funds into the core business of the corporation to help financially critical situations.

Another way that art in corporate collections changes ownership is when it is part of the sale of the entire business. This frequently happens when bigger banks or insurance companies merge, and acquisition competitors on the market - an existing art collection is often part of the sale.

For property developers commissioning art is frequently a way of upgrading their developments before selling them for a profit. Accordingly, there is an anticipated change of ownership when it comes to the artworks installed in the developments but also the implication that the property is not primarily bought for the art. Interviewee number 24, new business director for a property developer, explained in his interview that new owners are not always fond of the art that they buy with the properties:

*"I had one or two circumstances where I put art in buildings, where new occupiers come in, and it's not what they particularly think represents their business, disappeared. (...) Some of them you can't give back because it's integrated into the building. So, I had one building where it was, the artist conceived it as a tiled finish inside the building, so all the columns and beams were tiled in this pattern. But when the new occupier came, they were saying: 'it doesn't represent our values'. And so, they basically just threw it away." (Interviewee No. 24, 2019)*

He further elaborated on how the company tries to sustain the artworks even beyond their time of ownership by putting contracts and agreements in place before the sale:

*"If it was a piece or like a sculpture, what we are trying to do is put a contract in place, for when it wasn't needed anymore then actually the artist would be contacted and then they would have some involvement where it went next in an ideal world. But what happens is that sometimes there is a bit of dislocation that we might have that contract but then when the building has gone through three different owners whether they realise that anymore. But we try and produce these kinds of documents and publications so that the art doesn't get lost." (Interviewee No. 24, 2019)*

The approach to deaccessioning art is perhaps where corporate collectors and cultural institutions contrast the most. Corporate collectors certainly have the right to dispose of artworks from the collection for curatorial and financial reasons, and financial profit as primary motivation is not unreasonable. However, in order to follow an ethically acceptable approach, corporate collectors also need to act sustainably and think about the longevity of commissioned artworks and collections when acquiring and deaccessioning works. Decisions should always be made with the thought in mind that the art collection is primarily part of their corporate social responsibility and philanthropic activities and should therefore be treated as such. Any decisions about deaccessioning works, especially when they are part of the core collection, should receive a great deal of consideration and should not be done for short-term gains. These points are also reflected in the conversation with professionals in the art world, outside of

corporate collections. Interviewee number 21, who works for an art foundation specialised on funding and commissioning emerging artists, reflected this in our conversation about the importance of corporate collectors to think ahead and make conscious decisions about the future of their art collection:

*"There is a responsibility to the artist, but also preserving and knowing what is a sustainable future for that collection and those works. (...) I think there is a responsibility to preserve [the artworks] in knowing what the future might be. Particularly works that are specifically commissioned for a collection."* (Interviewee No. 21, 2019)

As it is not unlikely that in the course of its life a corporate art collection will change ownership altogether, some corporate collectors have decided to put precautionary measures in place to protect the art collection in the long run. An excellent example for this is the case of the Fleming collection, previously owned by the Fleming Bank and now a stand-alone trust-fund collection.

The Robert Fleming & Co. Bank was founded in 1873 by Robert Fleming in Dundee, Scotland. The bank stayed throughout its history in the hands of the Fleming Family up until the sale in 2000 to the Chase Manhattan Bank for \$7.7 billion, after damage incurred in the Asian financial crisis (Appleyard and Salzmann, 2012, p. 116). In 1968 David Donald, who was a director at the time, suggested creating an art collection to decorate the office walls of a new building the bank previously moved into, in the City of London. After his death, another interested director, Bill Smith, took over the acquisition of paintings with the help of a member of the Fleming family. By the mid-1990s the collection had gained international recognition as several artists whose works the bank had acquired in the 1970s suddenly drastically increased in value. By this time a regular but flexible budget was put in place and after Smith's retirement Selina Skipwith was hired to look after the art collection (Appleyard and Salzmann, 2012, pp. 116–117).

With a new, more structured approach of the art collection, a prearrangement with the Fleming family was negotiated which stated that the art collection would be repurchased by the Fleming family and donated to a charity if it ever came to an acquisition of the bank. Subsequently, when Chase Manhattan took over the Fleming Bank in 2000, the family bought the art collection for the market price of around £10 million and donated it to the Fleming-Wyfold Foundation (Appleyard and Salzmann, 2012, p. 117). There were a lot of changes that came along with the transition from a corporate art collection to a trust-fund collection. Initially, the works were moved to their own gallery spaces in Mayfair, London between 2001 and 2002. The next step was a careful deaccessioning of several pieces of the collection. This was due to

limited space in the new gallery premises, to focus the collection and to free up capital for new acquisitions. The aim was to trim the collection down to museum-quality pieces while considering their obligations and responsibilities to the dealers and artists.

Skipwith put a policy together, closely working with Robert Fleming and any other affected party, well in advance to the auction. To not overwhelm the market and devalue any artists, the deaccessioning process was divided into two auctions with Christie's, limiting the sales to no more than three works of art per artist not selling works by elderly or ill artists (Appleyard and Salzmann, 2012, pp. 118–119). In the two auctions, 300 pieces were sold, leaving the collection with 850 works, which then again reduced due to additional sales to 750 works of art in the collection today (Art UK, the Public Catalogue Foundation, 2020). The Fleming collection is an impressive example where an art collection managed the transfer out of the corporate sphere and into a stand-alone non-profit collection. It shows the development of a collection being initially founded to decorate office walls to a trust-fund collection supporting young artists, educating and promoting Scottish art as an independent unit in the art world. The ethical decisions of the founders and curators enabled the Fleming Bank to leave a valuable legacy to the art world.

In consideration of the discussion points set out above, the following principles for the key area of stewardship and preservation of the collection apply.

Corporate collectors and those who work with corporate collections should:

- Preserve the collection's artworks in the best possible condition for current and future generations.
- Treat art respectfully. Care for the artworks beyond their initial acquisition; this includes the commitment to ongoing costs for restoration and maintenance.
- Protect the artworks as much as possible from damage. Be considerate of the office environment when displaying art.
  - If artworks cannot be adequately cared for, consider deaccessioning (or long term-loaning) them to museums.
- Think about the longevity of the art collection. If possible, set up a policy that decides what happens with the art collection in case of a merger or a sale of the corporation. This will protect the core collection as well as the collection's artists.

- Build transparent relationships with artists. If artworks from the collection are sold, inform the artist about your plans. Consider a moderate and careful approach when releasing several artworks by the same artist to the market as this can influence an artist's prices drastically.
- Commission with care. If commissions are customised to a specific space, think carefully about the future of that space. Should the property be sold to new owners, protect the artwork with a contract.

### 7.3.3. Public Access

Public accessibility is a controversial topic for corporate collectors. As discussed in chapter VI corporate collectors position themselves in the art world quite differently, while some corporations have founded private museums freely accessible to the public, others do not publicise their art collection at all and are therefore not even known by the public to own art. Furthermore, the attitude of corporate collectors has changed through time as well. While artworks were previously often only regarded as decoration, corporate collectors today collect seriously and professionally. Moreover, the corporate art collection is regarded as a strategic tool when it comes to philanthropy, corporate social responsibility, or communications. Interviewee number 6, the curator of a private members club, explained in our conversation that being a patron of the arts also means to offer a certain level of transparency to the public:

*"I think that no one wants to think that people are collecting art just for their own good. You want to collect for the good of the art world. So, we expect them to sponsor things, we expect them to be supportive or act as a patron. I think in the 1980's it wasn't strange as a bank to have an art collection but locked away. And now you want to know with corporate responsibility, where is the art collection?" (Interviewee No. 6, 2019)*

However, public access to most corporate collections is difficult due to the security implications in office buildings. Interviewee number 6 further elaborates how she found several different ways to give the public access to the artworks of her collection, that are usually only accessible for staff and members of the club:

*"I think there has to be a level of transparency. I know I can go and ask Deutsche Bank for a tour. I know that I can ask Deutsche Bank what they have in their collection. Likewise, if someone was to email [our collection] saying 'I am writing my A-level paper on Tracy Emin, and I heard you have an amazing Tracy Emin artwork can I come and see it?', then I would have someone from*



*my team meet them at the reception and take them to see the painting. I would. I also do a lot of talks outside of the [collection] about the [collection]. Maybe at different art clubs or secondary schools. (...) So, at times, we take it outside to the club. Because within the members get to hear about it and we have a magazine and write about it loads and stuff. Outside less, but I do talks. I speak quite a lot about the art collection. (...) We are doing a book on the art collection, and that will be available at the bookshop. So, we can open it up a bit more."* (Interviewee No. 6, 2019)

Interviewee number 7 adds that many corporate collectors also donate artworks to public institutes or engage in long-term loans of specific artworks to enable the artworks to have a broader audience:

*"Many company's collections they give donations to public collections or at least long-term loans or regular loans."* (Interviewee No. 7, 2019)

If the art collection is part of the corporate social responsibility strategy and philanthropic efforts of a corporation, a certain level of transparency and an effort for broader dissemination of the collection's art should be pursued. If offering tours through office buildings is not an option, there are several other ways of engaging the public with the collection.

Giving public access is also critical from the artists' point of view. Findings in chapter V demonstrated that a corporate collector can positively impact an artist's career by increasing their visibility and helping the artists expand their network. Helping to legitimise the collection's artists further will, in turn, elevate the corporation's status as a knowledgeable collector. Interviewee number 17, art lecturer and activist explained in our conversation that public accessibility to artworks is an essential factor in creating value:

*"You only manufacture value from the art that is collected, really, when you publicly exhibit it. You have a relationship where you set up a collection that is lending to other institutions; the artworks become valuable as they are circulated."* (Interviewee No. 17, 2019)

This created value benefits the artist and the collector. Morris Hargreaves McIntyre published with the Arts Council England in 2004 a research paper detailing the workings of the UK art market, specifically for contemporary visual art. Detailing the role of the buyer, McIntyre states that public collectors and significant private collectors add to the artist's legitimisation on the art market. He further concludes that the ideal collector will maintain the artwork and ensure accessibility:

*"At the highest levels, appropriate buyers are those that can be trusted to provide safe custodianship of the work, thereby maintaining its value and leaving it accessible for loaning to exhibitions."* (McIntyre, 2004, p. 5)

In consideration of the discussion points set out above, the following principles for the key area of public access to the collection apply.

Corporate collectors and those who work with corporate collections should:

- Actively build transparent relationships with the public.
  - If collecting art is part of your corporate social responsibility strategy or philanthropic programme, growing your public audience and engaging the public with the collection should be part of your mission.
  - Of course, free access to a corporate collection is not always possible, but corporate collectors can reach a public audience by offering tours and museum loans, through catalogues and websites as well as engaging in public talks and lectures.
- Make artworks accessible for loans, exhibitions and research to generate knowledge and act in the interest of the collection's artists and the general public.

#### 7.3.4. Working with Artists and in the Art World

Finally, for the last key area of responsibilities, I want to focus on the activities and conduct of corporate collectors in the art world. Most corporate curators in my study expressed that they are aware of their privileged position in the art world and the responsibilities that this entails. Interviewee number 7, for example, expressed in our conversation that as economically powerful institutions, corporate curators need to act ethically when engaging with the art world:

*"Today, we are at a point, since I would say 1990, where the power of strong corporations have been made very clear in the arts, we are also more aware of how we need to act and move ethically. (...) We have certain economic resources and as such power on the market."* (Interviewee No. 7, 2019)

She further explained what ethical conduct when collecting art means to her:

*"I mean we're aware that we're part of the market, but as a responsibility, it means the ethical part of what you do the way you purchase, the way you negotiate, how you want to operate."*  
(Interviewee No. 7, 2019)

Other corporate curators reflected this. Interviewee number 12, adds that even though the art market is very deregulated, it is essential not to take advantage of that situation:

*"We work with galleries and dealers, and we work in a kind of proper way, formal way. The art market is as you know unregulated and slightly opaque and there are lots of ways to work unethically, and lots of people do that. We don't work like that."* (Interviewee No. 12, 2019)

Moreover, the findings in chapter V indicate that there is a power imbalance between collectors and artists, specifically emerging artists. Due to the oversaturation of the market, artists are often dependant even on ethically questionable funders. As a corporate curator, interviewee number 6 therefore makes a point not to exploit artists:

*"I think we have a really big responsibility to make sure that we never take advantage of artists. I always say to my team; an artist might offer us something really cheap when they are desperate. And we can't do that. We have to pay them fairly and really look after the artists because we are not here to take advantage of anyone. We are here to support artists."*  
(Interviewee No. 7, 2019)

With their financial capabilities and their sometimes well-known brands, corporate collectors occupy a powerful position on an opaque and oversaturated art market. As patrons of the arts, corporations need to be aware of their responsibility to not take advantage of this and act in the interest of artists. This is, of course, also reflected in the statements of people working outside of corporate collections. Interviewee number 22, an art world professional, summarises:

*"[Corporate collectors] need to be respectful of the environment they interact with - if they want to interact with the arts, they have a responsibility of respecting the ecosystem and nourishing it."* (Interviewee No. 22, 2019)

Some corporate collectors saw a specific responsibility in supporting their immediate environment. Interviewee number 12, who curates the art collection of a global law firm, for example, found it important to support the local cultural scene specifically.

*"[We have a] responsibility to look for new work, try to look locally, try and encourage somewhere like [city name], the creative economy is so important."* (Interviewee No. 12, 2019)

Other corporate curators had a different take on their curatorial approach. For them, it was more important to branch out to the global art market and not constrain themselves with their immediate location:

*"The world is so big. Why if a company comes from Essen and is an international acting company, why should all the art only come from Essen, Düsseldorf and Nordrheinwestfalen [North Rhine-Westphalia]? Companies do that, and I think it's good for them, but for us, we don't close our eyes towards the world. There is a good South American artist who worked with us, so we act very globally."* (Interviewee No. 13, 2019)

The location or country of origin plays an essential role for some companies when it comes to their corporate identity. Corporate identity, in turn, is often communicated with the art collection. It is therefore not uncommon that corporate collectors focus on artists from a specific country, as reflected in the country bias identified in chapter IV. On the other hand, several corporations such as Deutsche Bank have expressed in the past that they have changed their curatorial focus from their country of origin to pursue a more international approach. This was done after realising that predominantly hanging art by German artists into their international offices did not seem to reflect the diversity of their employees at all (see chapter IV).

Generally, it can be said that a curatorial focus on a specific nationality is an approach that needs to be carefully assessed so as not to turn into blind patriotism or an issue of cultural imperialism. In a globalised world, nationalities do not reflect where artists grew up, where they have taken up residencies and what has shaped their artistic output. If corporations decide that they want to keep a link between their national identity and their art collection, they need to interpret the ethnic concept of membership to a specific country with the implications of globalisation in mind. Furthermore, especially international corporations from Western countries need to be aware of their status in the world. Art as a medium is a way of communicating culture and values. Exclusively promoting the culture and values of traditionally dominant countries in office branches located in other countries can be perceived as a way of colonisation; corporate curators need to be sensitive and aware of these issues. Lastly, a curatorial focus on artists from a specific country can feed into the already prevailing Eurocentrism of the art market and therefore contribute to the further discrimination of minority artists.

The findings in chapter IV outlined the issues of racism and sexism in the art market that are reflected in corporate art collections. The attitude of corporate curators in this study towards the diversity of their collection varied from being aware and actively trying to combat the issues, through being aware but not able to incite a meaningful change in their collection, to dismissing the issue altogether and labelling diversity as 'limiting' (find more information about this in chapter IV). That people in a position of power still disregard social barriers and discrimination as an influence on people's lives and explain the underrepresentation of marginalised groups as due to a lack of qualification or commitment is an issue that occurs within corporations generally, not just within the art collection. However, discrimination in terms of employment is regulated by legislation, such as the Equality and Diversity Act 2010 in the UK. The act aims to protect people from indirect and direct discrimination identifying several protected characteristics such as gender, age, religion and disability. Company policies around equality and diversity in the UK today are based on this 2010 legislation, and even though these laws do not entirely eradicate systemic inequalities, they do advance awareness around equality issues and discrimination. If corporations use these policies for their employment strategies, one could suggest that similar principles could apply to the art collection, too. Why should the artists supported by corporations not be equally protected from discrimination as their employees? Moreover, why should the art displayed in offices not be just as diverse as the employees who work around the art collection every day? If equality and diversity are part of the corporation's identity and culture, they need to be reflected in the art collection just as much as other values (for example, previously mentioned national identity).

In the interviews, especially artists and art world professionals expressed the wish that, bearing corporate social responsibility in mind, corporate collectors should consider the marginalisation faced by specific groups in the art world in their acquisition strategies. Interviewee number 14, an established contemporary artist, expressed in our conversation that due to the economic power of corporate collectors, she sees a responsibility for them to assess consciously which artists they support:

*"[Corporate collectors] can bring opportunities for artists. At the same time, they can direct the art world in a certain way - they have a lot of power to change the art that's visible. Maybe their responsibility is to think about what art they make visible. Because now we look back, there is a lot of work and movement into making unheard voices heard. Whether they be of any minority group and the ones that haven't been, you know, not just white male - I think they have a responsibility to be aware culturally, and not just continue that and to look right across the*

*spectrum and make their collection diverse and represent the culture and society within. (...) I suppose, corporate responsibility is part of a bigger question and what track record corporations have of taking responsibilities for social issues."* (Interviewee No. 14, 2019)

This is also reflected in my interview with an art world professional, who advocates for corporate collectors to carefully think about the role they play as patrons of the arts, specifically when it comes to artists careers:

*"Think about the art world, how it is sustained. I mean questions that are continuous about the ability for artists to flourish. We have a few artists who are making the headlines in auction houses for sales, but there is a vast amount of artists who are gifted who are not getting the support."* (Interviewee No. 22, 2019)

Some corporate curators brought up the topic as well. Interviewee number 6, for example, a corporate curator herself reiterated the questions that she feels herself and her colleagues need to be answerable to:

*"I think there is much more responsibility to be culturally aware. (...) Are you doing anything for artists? Are you doing anything for minority artists?"* (Interviewee No. 6, 2019)

Lastly, an area of responsibility identified by both corporate curators and art world professionals alike is the relationship corporate collectors build with public institutions. Interviewee number 1, a corporate curator, stressed the importance of transparency and continuity of partnerships with public institutions and organisations in the art world. Suddenly cutting sponsorships and endorsements could not just bring an organisation in financial difficulties but also unintentionally send the wrong signals to the public:

*"You know a lot of people know that we support the arts quite heavily. You know through [art fair name], or they see that we sponsor an exhibition here or another event there, I think it is our responsibility to continue that. Because the minute you stop sponsoring these institutions, it's a bit like – well why have they done that, you know? So I do think it is a big responsibility."* (Interviewee No. 1, 2018)

As an activist and lecturer, interviewee number 17 found it essential that partnerships and sponsorship activities between corporations and cultural institutions are transparent to the public. He explained that often the only way for the public to gain insights is to pressure the

institution as they have to answer to the public. He strongly criticised that there is no way to hold corporations which are active in the art world accountable:

*"There is no infrastructure holding them to account. I think there is a point where they interface with public institutions that they need to be more accountable and visible in their processes. And the only practical way to do this is to hold the public organisations to account."* (Interviewee No. 17, 2019)

In consideration of the discussion points set out above, the following principles for the key area of public access to the collection apply.

Corporate collectors and those who work with corporate collections should:

- Be aware of your influence and impact as an economically powerful player in the art world.
  - Build respectful and transparent relationships with partners such as galleries, dealers, and artists. Uphold the highest standards of integrity when operating in the art world.
  - Ensure fair pay for artists. Seek guidance from unions and support organisations such as the a-n Artist information company's guide for fees and day rates for visual artists (a-n The Artists Information Company, 2018). Be inclusive and accountable when working with artists.
- Be conscious about possible bias in your acquisition caused by structural inequalities in the art market. Carefully assess how your acquisition strategy plays into further amplifying the discrimination and structural barriers faced by minority artists.
- Ensure that equality and fairness are embedded throughout your collection activities. Strive for a more just and fair representation of global artistic production.
- Monitor and seek out systemic inequalities within your art collection. Use the data to inform your acquisition strategy.

#### 7.3.5. Application of the Code

The code of ethics aims to encourage corporate collectors to reflect on the ethical issues in current collection practice and acknowledge their own moral agency. The idea is that the issues

around corporate collecting brought to light by this thesis can only be changed by engaging corporate collectors in current discourse about ethics and encouraging the sharing of best practice amongst corporate collectors. Acknowledging that the needs and abilities vary drastically between different collectors, corporations can use this proposed code of ethics as a basis but have to individually adapt the code. The key in this exercise is for corporate collectors to actively engage with questions of ethics and take responsibility for their actions and status in the art world. The code should be a living document and continuously improved and reviewed by corporate collectors and their stakeholders. To create more transparency for employees, artists and the general public, the code should be publicly available. Discussions about codes of ethics and active engagement in current ethics discourse should be led by associations such as the International Association of Corporate Collections of Contemporary Art (IACCCA), the Arbeitskreis Corporate Collecting (ACC) or the Netherland Association of Corporate Art Collections (VBCN).

These associations already have a programme that supports the sharing of expertise and host regular talks, roundtables and panel discussions. IACCCA has recently introduced research groups that are looking at specific challenges of corporate collectors; one of them is looking at codes of conduct together with legal issues, another one is looking at corporate social responsibility, both topics that are related to and would inform a code of ethics. However, I would suggest that a code of ethics is discussed in a separate research group to clearly separate the discussions about ethical issues from the legal or profit driven agendas of the other groups.

#### 7.4. Final Remarks and Recommendations for Future Research

The extensive ethnographic study described in this dissertation is more than just a study of corporate art collections. It is part of the bigger picture analysing the art world, the relationships and dependencies within it, the factors that influence artistic production. Even though the state-funded museum sector often sees itself as the gatekeeper of fine art and culture, private and corporate collectors occupy influential and powerful positions within the art ecosystem. The origin of their power lies in their purchasing power, to which their accumulated economic capital gives its owners access. After all, having different players in the art market ensures that the state is not the only gatekeeper for culture. However, it also means that we need to learn more about the motivations and behaviours of these private funders and collectors.



Moreover, corporate collections have significant exposure to their employees, and by creating private exhibition spaces and donating artworks to public collections, they have access to a broad public audience and can reach individuals that would typically be less involved in the art world. Corporate collectors therefore form a distinct and recognisable entity in the cultural life of contemporary society.

The analysis of qualitative and quantitative data in this study gave important insights into the dynamics of corporate collections within the company and their ties to the art world and the art market. The typical corporate collector today follows a professional and committed collection approach, but generally seems to follow the trends of the art market. While corporate collections often include museum-level artists, their buying patterns indicate a strong bias towards male artists and Eurocentric values, which is consistent with the strong dominance of the art market by Western societies as it reflects and reproduces their widely manifested hegemonic values.

Contemporary corporate collectors can positively influence artists' careers and are active in several aspects of the art world. Many of them have gained significant recognition and legitimisation by entering strategic partnerships with the public sector. However, their relationship with artists has been criticised in this study, as evidence indicates that corporate collectors can in some cases actively censor and influence artistic production to conform to their demands. The highly competitive situation for artists (due to the oversaturation of the art market) combined with the economic power of big businesses creates a power imbalance between corporate collectors and artists that can easily lead to exploitation and a compromise on artistic autonomy. The reproduction of hegemonic values and the exploitation of power by the hand of corporate collectors highlights the lack of systemic support for artists and the need to further address ethical behaviour of corporate collectors operating in the art world.

Corporate art collectors are producers, distributors and interpreters of culture and bear with that a responsibility. A practical outcome of this study is the proposal for a code of ethics, put together by summarising and structuring the discussions I had with corporate collectors outlining their consensus about responsibilities and their role in the art world. Significantly, engaging corporations in the development of a code of ethics (chapter VII) will help corporations acknowledge their own moral agency, offering more transparency to the public and the employees as well as increasing the systemic support for artists. As of spring 2021, the International Association of Corporate Collections of Contemporary Art (IACCCA) has received

the code of ethics to distribute to their members as a resource for further discussion and adaptation.

The study discussed in this dissertation gives important insights into the dynamics of the art market, and the characteristics and buying behaviours of corporate collections. However, it also indicates relations and dependencies involving corporate collections and artists that are not yet fully understood and which therefore provide potential for further research. As this research project was mainly focussed on corporate art collectors it would be useful to conduct a more in-depth analysis on the impact of corporations which do not collect art but are still active in the art world through sponsorship activities. Furthermore, as the participants of this study only comprised corporate curators, artists and art world professionals, a qualitative study focussing on the employees and the management of collecting corporations could give more insights into the impact of an art collection on company culture but more interestingly on the education and familiarisation of the art world with employees who were not interested in art before joining the company.

Additionally, it would be helpful to explore corporate art collections outside of US America and Western Europe more, to test the hypotheses formed as part of this research project in an extended or alternative system. There are only a few corporate art collections outside of Western Europe and US America that are included in the current discourse; the Japanese cosmetics and fragrance producer Shiseido Co., for example, founded its art collection around 1919 and has accumulated over 2500 works today (Goodrow and Conzen, 2015, p. 432). Another lesser-known corporate collection is owned by the Moroccan Attijariwafa Bank, which started collecting art in the mid-1970s. Comprising over 2000 works by predominantly Moroccan artists, the art collection documents the developments of Moroccan art starting shortly after the country's independence in 1956 until today (Goodrow and Conzen, 2015, p. 78). There are also several art collections in Australia (Macquarie Group Limited, Westfarmers) and Brazil (Itau Unibanco S.A.). It would be interesting to try and gather more comprehensive data about the number of corporate collections in Asia, Africa, South America, Australia, Russia and Eastern Europe to understand the full extend and market share of corporate collectors in the art world. Furthermore, for formerly colonised countries like Morocco, South Africa, Brazil and Australia, in-depth case studies could give insights into the question if corporate collections act here as hegemonic devices for the dominant culture and show the same Eurocentrism and gender bias as their colleagues in the West.

A case study on the Moroccan corporate collection of the Attijariwafa Bank could be specifically interesting, not just in regards to their links to their former colonisers (France), but also considering the relationship between the Arab and Berber culture in Morocco. Is the Attijariwafa Bank art collection a counter-hegemonic device when promoting Moroccan artists instead of French artists and at the same time hegemonic by neglecting the representation of Berber artists? How does the Attijariwafa Bank address the complex recent history of Morocco within their art collection, and how does it impact their audience and the artists themselves? Does the bank's involvement in promoting Moroccan artists maybe help further diversify and decolonise the global art world?

Furthermore, new technologies and platforms such as Google Culture have started to digitalise several public collections to make them more accessible to the broader public. Corporate art collections are so far not part of this digitalisation process but encouraging corporate collectors to do so would create more transparency and a comprehensive basis for future research on the buying patterns and acquisition strategies of corporate collectors. It would also make corporate collections more publicly accessible despite their security concerns and help them further promote their commitment to the arts. The digitalised data of corporate collections could be used to further extend the dataset that was put together for this dissertation and would thus offer a comprehensive statistical basis for future research projects.

A final important question is the effects of the change that employment and office culture is going through in 2020. The Covid-19 pandemic has had a lasting impact on working culture, sending many employees and whole industries temporarily and indefinitely into the home office. A recent study published by McKinsey suggests that the pandemic has set in motion a structural shift permanently impacting urban life, transportation and working culture. Their research indicates that three to four times as many people than before the pandemic will be working from home indefinitely. Even more people will enter into hybrid models of remote work, spending significantly less time in the offices (Lund *et al.*, 2020). If the workplace is where employees are mainly exposed to corporate collections, how can a corporate collection effectively reach their primary audience, when people work remotely and do not have to be on-site anymore? Is it possible to conceptualise and trial a home-lending art scheme for employees? If corporations downsize their offices because of more remote working patterns, what are the effects on their corporate collection? Lastly, the repercussions of the pandemic related lockdown and closures in 2020 have had a detrimental impact on the global economy, especially on the creative industries. In the midst of this, Bloomberg published an article written

by James Tarmy claiming that corporate collectors are saving the art world as several museums permanently closed and dramatically scaled back programming and collection activities (Tarmy, 2020).

Tarmy claimed that *"by comparison, 1 in 3 American museums never reopened after shutting down in March, according to a survey released on Tuesday by the American Alliance of Museums. Seventy-eight percent of the International Association of Corporate Collections of Contemporary Art (IACCCA) 's 56 members have continued to acquire art during Covid (...)"* (Tarmy, 2020)

It would be helpful to capture the role of corporate collectors through this exceptional time and to document how they may have had a positive impact. If corporate collections really do outlive public collections in critical times, promoting the application of the code of ethics becomes an even more urgent matter.

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## Appendix

### 1. List of Interviewees

Identification	Business Area	Number of Interviews	Form of Interview	Occupation
Interviewee No. 1	Financial Services	1	in person	Corporate Curator
Interviewee No. 2	Art Charity	1	in person	Curator
Interviewee No. 3	Investment Company	2	in person / telephone	Corporate Curator
Interviewee No. 4	Insurance Company	1	telephone	Corporate Curator
Interviewee No. 5	Health Charity	1	in person	Hospital Curator
Interviewee No. 6	Private Members Club	1	in person	Corporate Curator
Interviewee No. 7	Financial Services	2	telephone / email	Corporate Curator
Interviewee No. 8	Insurance Company	1	in person	Corporate Curator
Interviewee No. 9	Law firm	1	in person	Corporate Curator
Interviewee No. 10	Financial Services	1	in person	Corporate Curator
Interviewee No. 11	Law firm	1	in person	Corporate Curator
Interviewee No. 12	Law firm	1	in person	Corporate Curator
Interviewee No. 13	Energy Provider	1	telephone	Corporate Curator
Interviewee No. 14	Independent	1	in person	Artist
Interviewee No. 15	Independant	1	in person	Corporate Curator, Writer, Art Consultant
Interviewee No. 16	Independent	1	in person	Artist
Interviewee No. 17	University	1	in person	Activist, Curator, Academic
Interviewee No. 18	Independent	1	telephone	Artist
Interviewee No. 19	Independent	1	telephone	Artist
Interviewee No. 20	Independant	1	telephone	Art Consultant
Interviewee No. 21	Art Charity	1	in person	Head of Programme
Interviewee No. 22	Art Charity	1	in person	Managing Director

Interviewee No. 23	Independent	1	telephone	Artist
Interviewee No. 24	Property Development	1	in person	Senior Advisor
Interviewee No. 25	Artist	1	telephone	Artist
Interviewee No. 26	Independent	1	telephone	Artist
Interviewee No. 27	Art Charity	1	in person	Head of Consutancy
Interviewee No. 28	Independent	1	telephone	Artist
Interviewee No. 29	Independent	1	telephone	Artist
Interviewee No. 30	N/A	1	survey	Corporate Curator
Interviewee No. 31	Automotive manufacturer	1	survey	Corporate Curator
Interviewee No. 32	Automotive manufacturer	1	survey	Corporate Curator
Interviewee No. 33	N/A	1	survey	Corporate Curator
Interviewee No. 34	N/A	1	survey	Corporate Curator

## 2. Example for Semi-Structured Interview Guides

### 2.1. Question Guide for Corporate Collectors

- 1.) Please tell me about the history of the corporate collection. Can you describe what your role is within the company and what you do?
- 2.) Let's talk about the acquisition process of new works. Can you walk me through the process of how you decide what works are bought from which artists?
  - How is it decided what pictures are acquired, which artists to invest in?
  - Especially when buying from new artists, how does your company decide which new artists to buy from?
  - How do the curators choose and find the new and upcoming artists?
  - How does the company choose what art not to buy?
- 3.) The new role of corporate collectors on the art market:
  - With the government funding getting more and more cut and companies stepping up buying art, commissioning art, giving out prizes and giving art a platform in general, how do you think the role of corporate collectors in the art market has changed through the time?
  - What responsibilities do you think come with being such a big part of the contemporary art world? How does the company recognise problems or opportunities?
  - Do you think that corporate involvement in the art world pushes and helps artists careers?
  - As modern patrons of the art, what is the nature of the relationships between the bank and the artists they buy from and award prizes to?
  - With corporate involvement into the art market (art fairs, art collection, art prizes) do you think corporate collectors are tastemakers or set trends in the contemporary art world in terms of art production?
- 4.) Corporate Collections and the public:
  - How accessible to the public does a corporate art collection have to be?
  - What responsibilities does your company have towards the public when owning important paintings blue chip artists?
  - What legacy do you think will your corporate art collection leave to the art world?

## 2.2. Question Guide for Artists

- 1.) Please tell me a little bit about your work as an artist and your background.
- 2.) Art and funding
  - What do you think about the question of who should fund the arts? (government vs private funding)
  - Where are the challenges and opportunities in government vs corporate funding in your opinion?
  - Why do you think corporations get so involved in the art world?
- 3.) Corporations in the art world
  - With the government funding getting more and more cut and companies stepping up buying art, commissioning art, giving out prizes and giving art a platform in general, how do you think the role of corporate collectors in the art market has changed through the time?
  - What responsibilities do you think do corporate collectors have in the contemporary art world? What opportunities do they bring for artists?
- 4.) Corporate sponsorship and artists
  - Do you think that corporate involvement in the art world pushes and helps artists careers?
  - If you have, can you talk about your experiences with corporate sponsorship / corporate collectors? Did you ever sell any works to a corporation? Did you ever get commissioned by a corporation? Have you taken part in corporate funded art prizes or competitions?
  - Do you think that corporate buying habits can influence an artist's process of producing art or compromise the creative freedom of an artist?
  - Would you say corporations are as big players on the art market trendsetters or tastemakers of contemporary art?

### 3. Interview Coding Scheme

Data gathered from the interviews were sorted and collated using the NVivo 12 Pro computer software package. After transcribing the interviews, I pre-coded and summarized each interview building a number of 'theme-trees' with words and phrases from the interviews. My summaries and notes were shared with my peers and supervisors for discussions. This was done during my field-work year while I was still holding interviews which allowed me to collect more data or re-interview participants when I felt like I needed more information. After my field-work year I went back to the interview transcripts and re-coded them using my previous notes and theme-trees. While coding the data I started to simultaneously organise categories that emerged from that data and once the major categories were identified, I attempted to identify patterns or relationships between the categories. By dialogic analysis and reflection, I came to form the backbones of the three core categories of the thesis: internal processes and politics, art patronage and external relationships. A partial listing of the categories and codes mentioned above is provided in the table below.

Core Categories	Category	Codes
<b>Internal Processes and Politics</b>	Collection management	Founding and Histories Deaccessioning Continuity Acquisition Growth Cultural implications Collection focus Feminism Diversity
	Internal relationships and dynamics	Decision-making Employees CEO/Board Stakeholders 'Lavish spending' Autonomy Responsibilities Curatorial Restrictions Target audience
	Function	Purpose Aesthetic value Social value Motivation Legacy 'Corporate Art'
<b>Art Patronage</b>	Funding	Corporate funding Government funding

	Artist relationships	Censorship Commissions Personal relationships Financial impact Network support Career benefits Artistic autonomy Discrimination
<b>External Relationships</b>	Position and ties in the art world	Consecration Corporate collaborations Cultural collaborations Reputation Societal Function Networks Development / change of position
	Relationship to the public	Placemaking Artwashing Public access Transparency Ethics

*Table 2: Interview Coding Scheme*

#### 4. Corporate Collectors in Europe Database

(this document was submitted digitally)