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Stocco, Daniela

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THE ART FAIRS IN RIO DE JANEIRO AND SÃO PAULO: DEMOCRATIZATION AND ACCESS TO ART AS A MARKETING STRATEGY

Las ferias de arte en Río de Janeiro y São Paulo: democratización y
acceso al arte como estrategia de marketing

As feiras de arte no Rio de Janeiro e São Paulo: democratização e
acesso à arte como estratégia de marketing

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DANIELA STOCO

PhD in Sociology (Federal University of Rio de Janeiro and Paris 8). Masters degree in Sociology (Federal University of Rio de Janeiro). She was a Lecturer at the Erasmus School of History, Communication, and Culture. Last publications: Stocco, Daniela. "As Feiras de Arte Contemporânea no Rio de Janeiro e em São Paulo: entre a exclusividade e a democratização". In: Villas Bôas, Gláucia. *Um vermelho não é um vermelho — estudos sociológicos sobre as artes visuais*. Ed. 7Letras, Rio de Janeiro, 2016.

danstocco@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Brazil's art market has experienced a significant growth during the 2000s and the first years of the 2010s. This growth, among other things, has stimulated the creation of four contemporary art fairs in the two richest cities in Brazil—São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. Even though they all were inspired by international fair models, and they all have attempted to seize the opportunity the Brazilian art market was projecting, they each use different market and symbolic strategies. Three of the four promoted themselves as privileged places to make art more accessible to a broader audience, not exclusively to buy it, but to see and enjoy it. In this article, my goal is to show the reasons and the context behind this positioning strategy choice, its consequences, and, most importantly, the conflicts and adaptations it produced from the first to the more recent editions of those fairs.

KEYWORDS

Contemporary art market, art fairs, access to art, democratization of art, Brazilian art market.

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RESUMEN

El mercado del arte en Brasil ha experimentado un crecimiento significativo en la década del 2000 y en los primeros años del 2010. Este crecimiento, entre otros factores, ha estimulado la creación de cuatro ferias de arte contemporáneo en las dos ciudades más ricas de Brasil: São Paulo y Río de Janeiro. Aunque las ferias intentan aprovechar la oportunidad que el mercado del arte brasileño estaba proyectando y se inspiraron en los modelos internacionales de feria, utilizan diferentes estrategias de mercado y simbólicas. Tres de las cuatro se posicionaron como lugares privilegiados para hacer el arte más accesible para un público más amplio, no exclusivamente para comprarlo, sino para verlo y disfrutarlo. El objetivo de este artículo es mostrar los motivos y el contexto detrás de esta elección de estrategia de posicionamiento de marketing de las ferias, sus consecuencias y, lo que es más importante, los conflictos y adaptaciones que produjo desde los primeros hasta las ediciones más recientes de esas ferias.

PALABRAS CLAVE

Mercado de arte contemporáneo, ferias de arte, acceso al arte, democratización del arte, mercado del arte brasileño.

RESUMO

O mercado da arte no Brasil tem experimentado um crescimento significativo na década de 2000 e nos primeiros anos dos 2010. Esse crescimento, entre outros fatores, estimulou a criação de quatro feiras de arte contemporânea nas duas cidades mais ricas do Brasil: São Paulo e Rio de Janeiro. Ainda que as feiras tentam aproveitar a oportunidade que o mercado brasileiro projetava e se inspiraram em modelos internacionais de feira, elas utilizam diferentes estratégias de mercado e simbólicas. Três das quatro apresentaram-se como lugares privilegiados para fazer a arte mais acessível para um público mais abrangente, não exclusivamente para comprá-la, mas também para vê-la e desfrutá-la. O objetivo do presente artigo é mostrar os motivos e o contexto por trás da opção dessa estratégia de posicionamento de marketing das feiras, as suas consequências e, o que é mais importante, os conflitos e adaptações que causou, desde as primeiras edições até as mais recentes dessas feiras.

PALAVRAS CHAVE

Mercado da arte contemporânea, feiras de arte, acesso à arte, democratização da arte, mercado da arte brasileira.

INTRODUCTION

Brazil definitely does not play a central role in the international visual art scene. According to a research carried out by Claire Mc Andrew for the TEFAF Art Market Report 2013, the sales in the art market in Brazil in 2012 were estimated at 455 million, which corresponded to 1% of the global art market then.¹ Nevertheless, its peripheral position, associated to a booming new art market and to the specificities of its local context, among other factors, created an interesting and dynamic contemporary art world. Although the international art market is perceived as a reference, the art market in Brazil also presents singularities which are substantial for sociological research. Here are some important singularities of Brazil and its visual art market. Brazil is one of the so-called BRIC-countries (along with Russia, India, and China). These emerging countries share certain common characteristics which have led to a boost in their art markets, and have become more important and present at the global art market; for instance, a degree of economic growth, an emergent middle class group interested in art, and the rise of a new art market with new galleries, actions and art fairs, as much as new institutions such as museums and biennials.² In the case of Brazil, from the mid 2000s through the end of 2013, the contemporary art market has experienced sustained growth. According to the Latitude Project, created by the ABACT (Brazilian Contemporary Art Association), whose research was coordinated by Ana Leticia Fialho, the galleries facing primary sales³ increased by 44 % between the beginning of 2010 through the end of 2011; 22.5 % in 2012; and by 27.5 % in 2013; whereas the international market experienced a contraction of 7 % in 2012, according to TEFAF Art Market Report 2013.

Brazil's art market is also a quite new achievement. It displays peculiarities and similarities to other Western markets.⁴ One of the first sociologists to have studied Brazil's art market, Maria Lucia Bueno (2005), explains that the first galleries in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro were opened during the 1930s, but started to work in a more professional way only in the 1960s. Before that, the galleries were privileged places for the intellectual elite to meet and socialize, especially for European immigrants who missed a more intellectual ambiance.⁵ Moreover, the galleries were not autonomous, as they were associated with design and decoration. Selling art was then not one of the more important purposes of gallery owners. During the 1960s and 1970s, the Brazilian art market flourished not only due to an economic boost, but also to the emergency of a new local middle class who sought for social recognition and distinction.⁶

Brazil's art market suffered the impact of the military dictatorship (1964-1985) and of the economic crisis which spanned from the late 1970s through the

1. "TEFAF Art Market Report" Claire Mc Andrew, 154.

2. Olav Velthuis, "Globalization of the art market [emerging art markets — the BRIC countries]", *Grove Art Online*. 2015. <http://www.oxfordartonline.com.ezproxy.uniandes.edu.co:8080/groveart/view/10.1093/gao/9781884446054.001.0001/oao-9781884446054-e-7002274637>; Femke Van Hest and Filip Vermeylen, "Has the art market become truly global? Evidence from China and India", in *The Shape of Diversity to Come: Global Community, Global Archipelago, or a New Civility* edited by De Been, W., Arora, P. & Hildebrandt, M., 2015.

3. The primary market is the first sale of the work of art; the secondary market covers the resale of works.

4. Amanda Brandellero, "The emergence of a market for art in Brazil", in *Cosmopolitan canvases: the globalization of markets for contemporary art* edited by Olav Velthuis, & S. Baía Curioni (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 215-237.

5. Maria Lucia Bueno, "O mercado de galerias e o comércio de arte moderna. São Paulo e Rio de Janeiro nos anos 1950-1960", *Revista Sociedade e Estado* 20 (2005), 377-402; José Carlos Durand, *Arte, privilégio e distinção (artes plásticas, arquitetura e classe dirigente no Brasil, 1855-1985)* (São Paulo: Perspectiva, [1989] 2009).

6. José Carlos Durand, *Arte, privilégio e distinção (artes plásticas, arquitetura e classe dirigente no Brasil, 1855-1985)* (São Paulo: Perspectiva, [1989] 2009).

beginning of the 1990s.⁷ Since 1990, the art market has been gradually working in a more professional way, taking the international market as a reference. Brazil experienced another period of economic growth between 2006 and 2012, which also impacted on the art market. The increase in demand for Brazilian artworks was followed by the growing number of galleries and art fairs in Brazil's two biggest cities—Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo.⁸ Among the running contemporary galleries in those cities between 2010 and 2013, 33 % were launched in the 2000s, and 33% after 2010.⁹ It is important to point out, however, that the growth of the art market was not followed *pari passu* by art institutions in the country. For even though they play an important role in promoting and legitimating contemporary art, such institutions still face difficulties in reaching for economic and human resources, implementing long-term projects, and building and maintaining a collection.¹⁰ It is in this context of expansion of a newly formed market that the interaction, cooperation, and, therefore, associations and conflicts, develop and shape the world of contemporary art in Brazil.¹¹ From 2010 through 2014, I had the opportunity to collect data for my PhD research, in order to study the primary art market world in Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo. In the wake of the Brazilian art market growth, and during the time which my research spanned, new art fairs were created. They turned out to be a privileged platform to study the values, rules, and contradictions brought up by the different expectations of the art world's members.

Before presenting and discussing the four art fairs launched in Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, it is important to describe what art fairs in general are and what their role in the art world is. Art fairs are a purchase and sale place where many galleries gather in order to sell artworks and promote artists, and where collectors search for artworks and look for good deals. Furthermore, it is a place where all the actors of the contemporary art world —gallery owners, critics, curators, collectors, and other art lovers— meet together. There they seize the occasion —whether they are in their local circles or not— to make new contacts, seek for artworks and artists they have not seen or heard about yet, settle new partnerships and new expositions, and cultivate old and new relationships. In a nutshell, art fairs are all about selling/purchasing art and networking. They are, therefore, the occasion for interaction, cooperation, and the establishment of conventions, all of which make up the art world.¹² Art fairs also reaffirm the connections between human actions and objects —the artworks, in this case— which structure and organize the field of art and create their axiological foundations.¹³ Art fairs signal the role of each actor in the art circuit, as well as the interests and values that sustain their passion for art. They are one of the greatest events in the art world. Art Cologne, which took place in 1967 in Germany, and Art Basel later in 1970 in Switzerland, were the first art fairs organized to the effect of

7. Leonardo Carvalho Bertolossi, “Arte enquadrada e gambiarra: identidade, circuito e mercado de arte no Brasil (anos 80 e 90)” (PhD thesis in Social anthropology, USP FFLCH-PPGAS, 2015); Brandellero, “The emergence of a market for art in Brazil”.

8. Bruna Fetter, “Um bom negócio: as recentes movimentações do mercado de arte contemporânea no Brasil” in *As novas regras do Jogo: o sistema de arte no Brasil* organized by Maria Amélia Bulhões. (Porto Alegre: Zouk Editora, 2014), 105-134.

9. *Pesquisa Setorial o mercado de arte contemporânea no Brasil*. 3. ed., abril 2014, www.latitudebrasil.org/publicacoes/

10. Ana Leticia Fialho y Ilana Seltzer Goldstein, “Economias” das exposições de arte contemporânea no Brasil: notas de uma pesquisa. *Políticas Culturais: Pesquisa e Formação*. (São Paulo: Itaú Cultural/Fundação Casa de Rui Barbosa, 2012), 249-266.

11. Howard Becker, “A Dialogue on the Ideas of ‘world’ and ‘field’ with Alain Pessin”, *Sociological Forum*, n.º 21 (2006), 275-86.

12. Howard S Becker, *Art worlds* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).

13. Nathalie Heinich, “Como se tornar um artista”, in *Criações compartilhadas* organized by Ana Paula C Simioni, Ana Paula C, Claudia Oliveira, Joelle Rouchou, Monica P Veloso (Rio de Janeiro: MAUAD/FAPERJ, 2014).

bringing multiple artworks, art dealers, and collectors closer. Today, Art Basel is the most important international contemporary art fair in the world, having two new branches as well — Miami Basel and Hong Kong Basel.

Successful art fairs are a sign of a booming or strong art market. Moreover, and not less importantly, art fairs allow us to know the most popular and best-selling artists, the most influential galleries, and the major collectors. Fairs and galleries mutually support their legitimacy in the art world. Joining a renowned fair adds up to the gallery's reputation, while presenting famed galleries in turn raises the reputation of the fair. Indeed, the organizers of every fair establish a selection process whereby they invite a series of experts —curators, critics, collectors, and even gallery owners— in order to decide which galleries will take part in the edition. Once the event grows in size and reputation, however, it attracts the more renowned galleries, leaving less room for other less known ones. In addition, the fair, along with the gallery owners, strive to attract collectors. To this end, they organize parties, dinners, exclusive opening days for guests, VIP rooms, and other amenities, designed to ensure not only the massive presence of collectors, but also that the most important ones are actually there. Finally, art fairs can also be considered cultural events, since they are public events¹⁴ which exhibit art. They also invest in “institutional spaces”¹⁵ — as both SP Arte and ArtRio organizers refer to them.¹⁶ The fair organizers promote lectures on contemporary art, reserve areas for the exhibition of installations and performances, and invite curators to assemble small exhibitions, create awards for artists, and so on. Art fairs such as Art Basel and Art Paris promote this kind of endeavors, which seek to alleviate the eminently commercial character of the fairs. A mix of trade and cultural events, they turn out to be a microcosm of the art world. This alone makes art fairs a relevant subject of sociological study. Christian Morgner, who has contributed to the art fair research by presenting the creation and development of art fairs, claims that although art fairs are one of the key events of global art market, they have nonetheless been neglected in scholarly studies.¹⁷ Tamar Yorgev and Thomas Grund have also studied the development of network built by art fairs between 2005 and 2007.¹⁸ In this sense, the aim of this article is to contribute to the art fair studies, by researching a particular aspect of the art fairs in Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo. Three of these fairs, created between 2010 and 2012, have been designed to be not only a place to purchase art, but also to make art more accessible to a wider audience; in other words, to act in favor of the democratization of contemporary art. This not only seems to be a very noble goal for art fairs, but also brings some issues up. On the one hand, democratizing art and its access is a complex matter.¹⁹ It is not merely about making museums socially inclusive, or making entrance fees free or inexpensive. It is more about facilitating the access to art,

14. Even though one is normally required to buy a ticket to enter an art fair, there are no further restrictions to entering.

15. In Brazil, museums and other cultural institutions which are devoted to the promotion of art and culture but do *not* represent the art market are generically referred to as “institutions”. Accordingly, the expression “institutional space” emphasizes the idea that the action is meant to distance itself from the market.

16. During an interview granted to this research, one fair director described the institutional space as an opportunity for the fair visitors to take a break from asking prices, negotiating, and buying.

17. Christian Morgner, “The evolution of the art fair”, *Historical Social Research* 39, n.º 3 (2014) 318-336, <https://doi.org/10.12759/hsr.39.2014.3.318-336>

18. Tamar Yorgev y Thomas Grund, “Network Dynamics and Market Structure: The Case of Art Fairs”, *Sociological Focus* 45, n.º 1, 23-40, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00380237.2012.630846>

19. Kate Booth, “The Democratization of Art: A Contextual Approach”, *Visitor Studies* 17, n.º 2 (2014), 207-221, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10645578.2014.945353>

and of promoting the tools which enable an audience to enjoy and interpret art. This can be achieved only by enabling the audience to better understand the context of art production and its possible reading, but also by providing it with the freedom to choose to what extent it wishes to participate in it. On the other hand, art fairs are a huge investment of money and time for gallery owners, and their goal is to make good deals and enhance their connections with curators and collectors. So, why would they be interested in making art more accessible, and in playing an educational role to art fair newcomers? Besides, the economic character of artworks is more difficult to hide in art fairs, even though artworks are not usually exposed with a price tag. How could a wider audience be educated to emphasize the artistic, aesthetic, and symbolic values of artworks in a place where the link between artworks and merchandise is more evident? Is there room in art fairs to be a key event of the art market, as well as to be considered an educational event? Taking these issues into account, the research question proposed by this paper is the following: How manageable has it been for art fairs in Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo to conciliate the traditional goals of art fairs, on the one hand, with the aim of making contemporary art more accessible to a general audience, on the other? Given that three out of four fairs have decided to play a role in enhancing access to art, a further question is also proposed: Why have the art fairs in Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo recurrently pursued the democratization of art access? To answer these questions, I shall bear upon the data collected during my doctoral research from 2010 through 2014. The data include interviews conducted by me specifically for that research, participant observation data, and several publications about the art fairs and their organizers available in the media. The theoretical framework and methods chosen are presented in the following pages.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The main goal of my doctoral research was to describe how the primary market for contemporary art in Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo operated, who its actors were, and how their actions and interactions influenced artists' careers and reputation. To achieve this goal, the theoretical framework chosen was the Art World Theory from Howard Becker (1982, 2006), which focuses on the interaction and cooperation —as well as on the conflicts and contradictions— that enable the production, promotion, circulation, and validation of art production. In other words, the art world metaphor means that the production, the promotion, and even the enjoyment of art, are all collective activities in which the existence of others —whether they be members of the art world or not— is acknowledged, and in which their actions shape the way actors play their parts and interact with each

other. Nathalie Heinich's²⁰ theoretical approach of Pragmatic Sociology theory²¹ was also used to complement Becker's theory. Heinich proposes to focus not only on the analysis of actors and the interactions which build the art world, but also on the values and interests which guide those actions and which determine —among others— who belongs to this world, how art is produced and legitimated, and which criteria are required to classify a work as contemporary artwork. Regarding the present paper in particular, which focuses on the art fairs in Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo and their art democratizing aim, the values and interests connected to their actions and decisions were highlighted. How were the art fairs promoted and described by their organizers? How were their choices justified? How were they criticized by other actors? What happened to the general audience after all? Nathalie Heinich's theoretical approach permeates the whole analysis and was thus essential to it, since her suggestion is to follow the actors and to analyze the axiomatic background of their actions and decisions, while pointing out the set of values attached to what they do and to how they relate to art — and in the specific case of this paper, to art fairs, their roles, and art accessibility.

METHODS

Diverse sources were used in analyzing the art fairs in Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo. My PhD dissertation was a qualitative research concerning the primary art market in Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. For this paper's sake, I collected many articles in newspapers and magazines about artists, galleries, art fairs (SP Arte, ArtRio, Feira Parte in Sao Paulo and Artigo Rio), and the contemporary art market in Brazil. The reports published by Latitude-Project mentioned above were also an important source of data, as well as the art fair catalogs. Participant observation was also implemented in fairs, in art galleries, art exhibitions, events in art institutions, etc. In addition, I conducted 33 semi-structured interviews between 2011 and 2014 with gallery directors, collectors, curators, art fair directors, and artists. By means of discourse analysis of the texts —articles on the press and advertisements promoting the art fairs— and those interviews, I identified the observation of interactions between the actors and the expectations each one had in relation to each other. The moral values and interests they mobilize to justify their actions (or criticize the actions of others) were also pointed out, along with the conflicts they generated. Through participant observation in the art fair and in the gallery stands, I seized the opportunity to watch how the interactions took place and what values were more evidently brought up during those interactions. In the specific case of the art fairs, I highlighted the values praised by the art fairs, the collectors and gallerists, as well as their goals, their expectations of a successful fair, and its connection to the audience.

20. Nathalie Heinich, *L'art contemporain exposé aux rejets: Études de cas* (Nîmes: Éditions Jacqueline Chambon, 1997); Nathalie Heinich, *Le triple jeu de l'art contemporain – sociologie des arts plastiques* (Paris: Éditions Minuit, 1998); Nathalie Heinich, "Práticas da arte contemporânea: uma abordagem pragmática a um novo paradigma artístico", *Revista Sociologia e Antropologia* 04, n.º 02 (2014), 373-390; Nathalie Heinich, "Como se tornar um artista", in *Criações compartilhadas* organized by Ana Paula C. Simioni, Claudia Oliveira, Joelle Rouchou, Monica P. Veloso (Rio de Janeiro: MAUAD/FAPERJ, 2014).

21. Nathalie Heinich, *L'art contemporain exposé aux rejets: Études de cas* (Nîmes: Éditions Jacqueline Chambon, 1997); Nathalie Heinich, *Le triple jeu de l'art contemporain – sociologie des arts plastiques* (Paris: Éditions Minuit, 1998); Nathalie Heinich, "Práticas da arte contemporânea: uma abordagem pragmática a um novo paradigma artístico", *Revista Sociologia e Antropologia* 04, n.º 02 (2014), 373-390; Nathalie Heinich, "Como se tornar um artista", in *Criações compartilhadas* organized by Ana Paula C. Simioni, Claudia Oliveira, Joelle Rouchou, Monica P. Veloso (Rio de Janeiro: MAUAD/FAPERJ, 2014).

Gathering from the richness of this material, as well as from the theoretical and methodological framework, it was possible to understand —among many other issues— how art fairs influenced the art market, how they were promoted, what their goals were, and what conflicts they have generated and how they have handled them.

THE ART FAIRS IN SAO PAULO AND RIO DE JANEIRO

The art fairs are a recent phenomenon in Brazil. Although the Sao Paulo Biennial was first launched in 1951 and was the second biennial in the world —created just after the Venice Biennial²²— the first fair exclusively dedicated to modern and contemporary art in Brazil was created in 2005. The two most important contemporary art fairs in Brazil are SP Arte and ArtRio. They are produced and organized using international contemporary art fairs as references (e.g. Art Basel, Frieze London and New York, FIAC in Paris, and ARCO in Madrid). The first editions of SP Arte and ArtRio happened in 2005 and 2011, respectively. Each one promotes itself as the largest contemporary art fair in Latin America —a role for which they in fact compete. Added to these two major fairs, there are two fairs of smaller proportions— Feira Parte in Sao Paulo, and Artigo Rio in Rio de Janeiro. Both of them were inspired by the Affordable Fair, created in 1996 in London, whose goal is to offer a more “relaxed environment” and affordable artworks, according to its creator, Will Ramsay.²³ Today the Affordable Fair is quite successful, with editions in countries in North America, Asia, and Europe. SP Art and ArtRio, as well as Art Basel, mostly attract galleries from the primary market. However, they also shelter a small group of secondary market galleries where both contemporary (mainly deceased artists) and modern artworks can be found. At ArtRio, as well as at SP Arte, the secondary market galleries, which are more focused on the resale of works of already established artists, are grouped at the same sector. In turn, Feira Parte and Artigo Rio attract galleries exclusively of the primary market. Nevertheless, although the two largest art fairs present galleries from the secondary art market (some of which are specialized in the works of Brazilian modernism), the vast majority of the galleries are of primary sale. Even if some primary market galleries also hold resale of works, they represent living artists and present works offered for the first time. Thus, the art fair is, as mentioned before, a privileged stage where the actors and the artworks which integrate the contemporary art world are concentrated.

Out of the four fairs, therefore, three stood as facilitators of access to art, whether to enjoy it or buy it. They sought to reach a general audience, broader than solely art collectors and art lovers who are already familiar with art fairs and other visual art events. In what follows, SP Arte, ArtRio, Feira Parte, and Artigo

22. Isobel Whitelegg, “The Bienal Internacional de São Paulo: a concise history, 1951-2014”, *Perspective*, n.º 2 (2013), 380-386.

23. “About Affordable Art Fair”, *Affordable Art Fair*, <https://affordableartfair.com/about>

Rio are going to be compared with respect to their descriptions and origins. To that end, the arguments used by the organizers to justify their creation will be analyzed. Special attention will be given to such arguments which may conflict and create contradictions between the expectations of those who are already part of the contemporary art circuit —and who support values as rarity, uniqueness, and special treatment— and those who are interested in joining and participating in it without being driven in their actions by the same values.

SP-ARTE: THE STANDARD FAIR

SP-Arte was the first initiative to promote a contemporary art fair in the country, in the same lines as other international fairs such as Art Basel. It was launched by Fernanda Feitosa, a lawyer and collector. She is the spouse of Heitor Martins, the former president of the Sao Paulo Biennial Foundation and currently the president of the Art Museum of Sao Paulo (MASP), one of the most important ones in Brazil. Fernanda Feitosa was inspired by ArtBA, the International Art Fair from Buenos Aires (Argentina), and thus decided to create a similar event in Sao Paulo.

According to interviews given by Fernanda Feitosa to the press,²⁴ the goal of SP-Arte was to stimulate the art market in Brazil and to open a platform for international galleries to access the Brazilian market. Since its beginning in 2005, its editions take place at the Sao Paulo Biennial Foundation building, where the Sao Paulo Biennial happens. Despite the lack of support from the most prestigious galleries in the local market at its beginning, the event has managed to prove its worth and earn the respect of Brazilian galleries. SP-Arte shows an institutional concern, since it promotes actions more oriented towards the art circuit (and not exclusively towards sales), such as artwork donations to museums, prizes for artists, and curated expositions in the art fair. This aim was reinforced by the creation of the curator laboratory in 2012, which, coincidentally, this occurred just after the first edition of ArtRio, its competitor in Rio de Janeiro. In fact, considering art as a commodity or highlighting its economic value to the detriment of its artistic value is a big taboo in the visual arts circuit.²⁵ With such actions, therefore, SP-Arte exhibits a more institutional character, strengthens its reputation, and shows its concern to promote the art circuit and not just the market itself. In addition, the market needs the support from institutions which are part of the art circuit, because promoting art, artists, and galleries is a collective effort. Art institutions —especially through exhibitions in renowned museums with renowned curators— guarantee artists' recognition. A fair which presents renowned artists and galleries also reaches a higher status and recognition. However, while most visitors to the fair leave empty-handed (since only 10 %

24. Gisele Kato, "Para vender e comprar arte: feira SP Arte completa quatro edições", *Veja São Paulo*, 23 april 2008, www.vejasp.abril.com.br/revista/edicao-2057/para-vender-comprar-arte-feira-sp-arte-completa-quatro-edicoes; Leonor Amarante, "Mercado maduro – 5ª edição da SP Arte legitima um mercado potente e em crescimento no Brasil", *Revista Brasileiros*, 20 July 2015, <http://brasileiros.com.br/2009/06/mercado-maduro/>; Cecilia Ribeiro, "SP Arte aumenta seus domínios com número recorde de galerias", *Revista Brasileiros*, n.º 46 (2011), <http://brasileiros.com.br/2011/05/sp-arte/>

25. Olav Velthuis, *Talking Prices – symbolic meanings of prices on the market for contemporary art* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2007); Tavares, Cláudia; Mansur, Monica. *Ser Artista: entrevistas*. Barra do Pirai: Binóculo, 2013.

of the visitors purchase works, as mentioned in an interview conducted for this research with SP-Arte organizers), SP-Arte does not target the general public. The number of visitors has clearly augmented through the years, according to SP Arte organizers and the local press. In 2007, almost 10 thousand people visited the fair, a figure which rose to 15.7 thousand in 2010,²⁶ to 18 thousand in 2011, to 20 thousand in 2012,²⁷ and to 22.5 thousand in 2013.²⁸ Nonetheless, even if SP-Arte has gradually attracted a wider audience, the fair does have a specific target audience. The fair's advertisement has not been massive. For the 2011, 2012, and 2013 editions, the fair advertisements were displayed in magazines specialized in art and culture, in the two most prestigious newspapers from Sao Paulo (*Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Estado de S. Paulo*), and in the local booklet from a prestigious Brazilian magazine (*Veja São Paulo*). Accordingly, it reached only the more educated portion of the population, especially from Sao Paulo, and the art lovers among it, who already have contact with fine arts and who already attend art exhibitions. It is important to point out that SP Arte was approved to be supported by the Federal Law for the Encouragement of Culture — a tax incentive law known as the Rouanet Law. This law allows that projects approved by the Ministry of Culture (at the federal level) or by the Secretary of Culture (at the state level) seek sponsorship from companies, which can then choose to apply up to 4 % of their income tax due to cultural activities. However, at least in the interviews given by Fernanda Feitosa until 2010 to the press, SP-Arte was not positioned as a cultural event for broadening contemporary art audience, but as a place where members of the art market and the institutional circuit actors are expected to interact, buy and sell, and encourage more people to do so. Otherwise stated, SP-Arte positions itself not as a cultural event *per se*, but as a market event based on cultural objects. Such was the argument used to justify both the raising of funds by the Rouanet Law and the entrance fee of R\$ 30.00.²⁹ During an interview, two SP-Arte organizers, justified the support of Rouanet Law to a commercial event thus:

That is a very biased reading, an extremely biased reading. Is there anything richer than soccer? A soccer team? A soccer player pass? And does a soccer match ticket cost five reais? It doesn't. And there's sports law all the time, the cinema has audiovisual law... Do you go to the movies and watch them for free? No. Not even does the Rouanet Law make this distinction. It's for commercial and non-commercial events with either ticket collection or not. The Law doesn't make this distinction. The Rouanet Law is an instrument created by the government, which admits it can't reach all the micro-cells of culture production. It can't do that, so it goes like this: "Whoever has a good project, and whomever I think they do have a good project, will get support from the

26. Reynaldo Damazio, "SP Arte supera suas edições anteriores, em público e venda", *Revista Brasileiros*, 20 July 2015, <http://brasileros.com.br/2010/05/sp-arte-supera-suas-edicoes-anteriores-em-publico-e-venda/>

27. Silas Marti, "SP Arte negociou ao menos 49 mil ingressos para a Feira", *Folha de S. Paulo*, 20 August 2012, www1.folha.uol.com.br/ilustrada/1111442-sp-arte-negociou-ao-menos-49-mil-ingressos-para-a-feira.shtml

28. Silas Marti, "Com ingressos limitados, Feira ArtRio termina com público de 52 mil", *Folha de S. Paulo*, 2 January 2016, www1.folha.uol.com.br/ilustrada/2013/09/1338996-com-ingressos-limitados-feira-artrio-termina-com-publico-de-52-mil.shtml

29. Wagner Malta Tavares, "A dona da feira", *Revista Brasileiros*, 20 July 2015, <http://brasileros.com.br/2009/05/a-dona-da-feira/>

government and will be able to raise funds by means of it”. It isn’t even a direct support, it’s an indirect support because it proceeds by means of giving up a tax. But that’s not all — they make an over-biased reading of the business.³⁰

Since its sixth edition in 2010, SP-Arte is described by their own organization as a major market event of Latin American art. Nonetheless, stimulating the local market and driving international interest to it were not the only contributions of this art fair in Sao Paulo. As reported in an interview given to us by a person working in the fair’s organization, it was through the SP-Arte that galleries have come to see each other as an industry, and not simply as individual competing initiatives:

[...] the fair provided a new insight, namely: “Have you ever realized you’re part of a small club? That there is a business here called ‘art market’?” Because it was like that then — I sell at my store, you sell at your store, and we do not meet. It was all very isolated, it was everyone at their place, making their daily living. There was Luisa [Strina] pushing Wesley Duke Lee into other vanguards; Paulo Kuczynski taking his paintings up and down with his clients; and no one meeting and realizing that there was a great art market there, with a very broad target which needed to be developed. So the [SP Arte] fair turned out to be a great trigger. In the first edition the biggest difficulty I had wasn’t being able to raise money, but saying everyone should be together; reactions were the most diverse [...].³¹

The union of some of these galleries was essential for the creation of ABACT —the Brazilian Contemporary Art Association— which brings together some of the most important art galleries in Brazil.

Even though SP-Arte has reached many goals throughout the years, making art more accessible to wider audiences has not been one of them. The fair actually tries to invest in the non-commercial circuit of contemporary art with the institutional areas, donations, and prizes; still, reaching for the general public is not on SP-Arte’s agenda.

ARTRIO: THE SOCIO-CULTURAL EVENT

ArtRio was the first contemporary art fair in Brazil which presented itself as a socio-cultural event. It intended, as all fairs do, to stimulate the art market and heat up the art circuit by attracting its actors (gallerists, collectors, curators and critics, in particular). However, the fair also targeted a wider audience, and proposed to make contemporary art more accessible, not limited to a specific group

30. Interview conducted on 08/08/2013. Original text in Portuguese: “É uma leitura super enviesada, é uma leitura extremamente enviesada, tem coisa mais rica do que futebol? Clube de futebol? Passe de jogador de futebol? E o ingresso do jogo de futebol é cinco reais? Não é. E tem lei do esporte o tempo todo, o cinema tem audiovisual, você vai no cinema e assiste de graça? Não, inclusive a lei Rouanet não faz essa distinção, ela é para eventos comerciais e não comerciais com cobrança de ingresso ou não, ela não faz essa distinção a Lei Rouanet é um instrumento que o governo criou admitindo que ele não tem condições de chegar a todas as micro células de produção de cultura, ele não tem condições de fazer isso, então ele fala assim: ‘Quem tiver um bom projeto, e eu achar que é um bom projeto, vai ter apoio do Governo e vai poder captar’, não é nem um apoio direto, é um apoio indireto porque ele está abrindo mão de um imposto, mas não é isso, eles fazem uma leitura super enviesada do negócio.”

31. Interview conducted at 08/08/2013. Original text in Portuguese: “[...] a feira proporcionou um outro salto que foi ‘Vocês já perceberam que fazem parte de um clubinho? Tem um negócio aqui chamado mercado de arte?’, porque então era assim, eu vendo na minha lojinha, você vende na sua lojinha e a gente não se encontra. Era tudo muito isolado, era cada um em seu local, fazendo o seu dia a dia. A Luisa [Strina] acreditando no Wesley Duque Lee em outras vanguardas, o Paulo Kuczynski levando para baixo e para cima os quadros dele com os clientes dele e ninguém se encontrando e se dando conta que tinha ali um grande mercado de arte com um público muito amplo que precisava ser desenvolvido. Então a feira foi um grande disparador disso. na primeira edição a maior dificuldade que eu tive não foi juntar dinheiro mas foi falar que todos eles vão estar juntos, as reações foram as mais diversas [...].”

of experts, by initiating a public education process. ArtRio promotes itself as a trade fair and a cultural event with an educational purpose. To that end, in 2011, besides announcing in the most prestigious newspapers from Rio de Janeiro (*O Globo*) and the carioca booklet from the magazine *Veja* (*Veja Rio*), ArtRio was also announced on the radio, on national TV, and on signs posted on Rio de Janeiro's subway stations. The fair offered guided tours for individuals and groups, including school groups in 2011 and 2012 — something which is rare in other major international fairs.

Its idea was conceived by Brenda Valansi Osório, artist, and Elisangela Valadares, a journalist specialized in art history, curator, consultant, and art dealer. ArtRio's project began in 2009. In an interview given by a member of the ArtRio organization, it is clear that the intention of launching a socio-cultural event, or, in other words, a cultural event which promotes art as something accessible for anyone and not only rich or intellectuals, was a goal of the ArtRio fair project from the outset:

So the idea of the fair was born also with the will of bringing people together, a will of benefiting the [artistic] class and also the people who do not have access [to art] because, the same way that it [*sc.* art] impressed me a lot, how the visit to this [art] exhibition changed my life, so I've always had this in my mind, in the sense of willing to give access to these people, because the transforming power of art is huge in a person's life. It doesn't mean it will change someone's life as it happened to me, but in the end, that people ought to have access [to art]. So this was always very intrinsic to the implementation of the fair and, consequently, for a social side of access. And [...] there were many people who did not have access to art, people with purchasing power who did not have access to art and who should have it too. I soon realized that there were two profiles [of people] —less wealthy people who considered that art was for millionaires (and it is not the case, as anyone can buy a work of art), and the other who are the very rich people who think that art is for intellectuals, and who thus don't have access to art. So even at the fair's first edition project, we had already been thinking about breaking these preconceptions, and nothing better than a fair that has this name 'fair',³² where everyone goes— And there came the idea of really making it quite *Carioca*, which attracts quite a lot of people who are not connected to art, so that they could have that first contact.³³

In July 2011, the Brazilian entrepreneurs Luiz Calainho (owner of a holding of twelve entertainment companies, and co-owner both of radio station Sulamerica Paradiso, in Rio de Janeiro, and of the Vírgula entertainment site) and Alexandre Accioly (owner of Accioly Fitness Holdings and co-owner

32. "Feira" can be translated in English both as "fair" and as "street market".

33. Interview conducted on 22/10/2013. Original text in Portuguese: "Então, a ideia da feira já nasceu também com um cunho de aproximação e benfeitoria para a classe, e também para as pessoas que não têm acesso, porque do mesmo jeito que me impressionou muito, como mudou a minha vida a visita a essa exposição, então eu sempre levei isso comigo no sentido de querer dar acesso a essas pessoas porque o poder transformador é muito grande da arte na vida da pessoa. Não que ela vá mudar a vida como aconteceu comigo, mas enfim que as pessoas têm que ter o acesso, então isso sempre foi muito intrínseco na execução da feira e, consequentemente, por um lado social sim de aproximação. E [...] tinha muita gente que não tinha acesso à arte, pessoas com poder aquisitivo que não tinham acesso a arte e que deveriam ter também. Eu logo percebi que tinham dois perfis, tinham as pessoas menos abastadas que a arte era para milionário, e não é, qualquer pessoa pode comprar uma obra de arte, e o outro que são as pessoas muito ricas que acham que a arte é para intelectual e então não se aproxima. Então já no projeto da primeira edição a gente já foi pensando em quebrar esses pré-conceitos, e nada melhor do que uma Feira que tem esse nome "Feira" que todo mundo vai e aí veio a ideia de realmente fazer que seja bastante carioca que atrairia bastante as pessoas que não estejam ligadas em arte para que elas tenham esse primeiro contato."

of BTG Pactual investment bank, in addition to having a partnership in some Brazilian restaurants) become associated with the project. It is worth to notice that the profile of the two first organizers —Osório and Valadares— is more artistic than business-oriented; whereas with the entry of Accioly and Calainho, the fair has acquired a more business profile. Nevertheless, the social character of the fair was especially evident during its two first editions — 2011 and 2012.

ArtRio has been a big event since its debut. During the first two editions of ArtRio, the warehouses in Pier Mauá —a location with a beautiful view and in an area undergoing a gentrification process— were full. During the 2011 and 2012 editions, 46 thousand and 74 thousand people, respectively, visited the fair,³⁴ according to the fair directors and the local press.³⁵ For the 2013 edition, a limit was established on the maximum number of daily visitors: 12 thousand people, which added up to 52 thousand visitors on the whole.³⁶ The advertisement of the fair in 2013 was less intense as well. Interestingly, the price of the entrance ticket, which costed R\$ 30,00 in 2011 and 2012, decreased to R\$ 15,00 in 2013. ArtRio received the approval to be supported by Rouanet Law from the State of Rio de Janeiro, but not by the federal version of the law, as SP Arte was. The number of visitors shows that there is an interest on behalf of the general public to learn more about contemporary artistic production. Although it is possible for the organizers of art fairs to inflate these figures, participant observation showed that ArtRio was visibly crowded in its first editions. The purpose of the fair was not to demystify art, nor to question its holy character;³⁷ nor was it to question the superior aspect of intellectual and artistic life, and the gifted artist and the sacred character of artworks.³⁸ The purpose of encouraging a wider public to take an interest in art throughout the fair is more akin to the articles of faith accepted by art lovers, as described by Alfred Gell. According to Gell, the principle of the True and the Good resides in artworks; thus, they can lead those who are interested in art to a path toward transcendence.³⁹ Therefore, since art has so much to offer, it must be promoted to and shared with a broad audience. In other words, the fair was an invitation to the general public to join the “art cult”.⁴⁰ Inviting a broad audience to a fair which was not limited to art lovers, and offering guided tours for individuals and school groups, was thus presented as a way of bringing art and this new audience together. ArtRio also provided curated spaces with exhibitions and conferences, such as it is expected from renowned art fairs. Still, ArtRio’s environment is still aimed at the sale of artworks, not at educating the visitors on contemporary art. At an exhibition in a museum or cultural center, by contrast, an effort is made to connect the artworks with the context in which they are produced, the subjects it can be related to, and the description of concepts the artist mobilizes. All this is displayed through texts on the walls throughout the exhibitions. At ArtRio, as in

34. Catharina Wrede, “ArtRio arrecada R\$ 120 milhões em 5 dias”. *O Globo*, 13 set. 2011, segundo caderno. <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/consulta-ao-acervo/?navegacaoPorData=201020110913>

35. Audrey Furlaneto y Catharina Wrede, “Com 74 mil pessoas, ArtRio fica entre o êxito e o caos do crescimento”. *O Globo*, 2 jan. 2016, <http://oglobo.globo.com/cultura/com-74-mil-pessoas-artrio-fica-entre-exito-o-caos-do-crescimento-6122298>.

36. Silas Marti, “Com ingressos limitados, Feira ArtRio termina com público de 52 mil”, *Folha de S. Paulo*, 2 jan. 2016, www1.folha.uol.com.br/ilustrada/2013/09/1338996-com-ingressos-limitados-feira-artrio-termina-com-publico-de-52-mil.shtml.

37. Abbing, Hans. *Why are artists poor? The exceptional economy of the arts*. Amsterdam University Press, 2002.

38. Pierre Bordieu, *Mais qui a créé les créateurs? Questions de sociologie* (Paris: Les Éditions de minuit, 1984/2002), 207-235.

39. Alfred Gell, “The Technology of Enchantment and the Enchantment of Technology”, in *Anthropology, Art and Aesthetics* edited by J Coote, A Shelton (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992), 40-66.

40. Gell, “The Technology of Enchantment and the Enchantment of Technology” 40-66.

other art fairs, however, information is concentrated in the gallery owners and their staff, and so the audience must contact them in order to know more about the artworks and artists. Besides that, in non-commercial cultural institutions, they present curated exhibitions, meaning that there is a concept linking the artworks together. At fairs, although some galleries try to expose works which show a connection with each other, they are often juxtaposed in the stands, and not connect in any way.

In addition, some gallery owners who participated in ArtRio have expressed their dissatisfaction. First, because of the large number of visitors; second, for their lack of knowledge about the expected behavior in the art world. Let us appeal to Pierre Bourdieu's (1979) concept of *habitus*, according to which predispositions and practices are socially structured, and organize the divisions and perceptions of the social world. Accordingly, it is possible to say that the lack of certain (pre)dispositions among this new public is characteristic of those who are not familiar with the *habitus* that prevails in visual art events. The fair was actually crowded and some people even touched the artworks, whereby the gallerists felt the need to protect them physically. Furthermore, the galleries' staff had to answer questions posed by new visitors, which diverted them from their main objective — to meet potential buyers and to close deals. Through participant observation and through complaints posted on social media (mostly Facebook), some of the new visitors noticed that galleries' salespeople were not pleased to talking to them. Moreover, some visitors failed to understand the commercial character of the fair and complained that artworks were being replaced during the event.

Even though the idea of making art more accessible has not been criticized by the gallery owners interviewed for this research, the mixture of a beginner audience with the already established members of the art world was not well seen by them. This opinion was confirmed by gallery owner Ricardo Rego, from Rio de Janeiro, to the newspaper *O Estado de S. Paulo*. Rego claimed that the fair must meet the interests of galleries and attract “qualified public”, without becoming an event for 70 thousand people. Certainly, the main objective of an art fair is to promote the encounter between galleries and collectors, and to boost sales.⁴¹ Gallerists invest money to participate in the fairs, and expect to meet collectors and close deals. Collectors also expect to find fine works of art and make deals. Nevertheless, the relationship between gallerists and collectors is not only commercial. Collectors appreciate the fact that they belong to a select group, the members of which share knowledge about art, among other things. Being able to interact and to build a relationship with other people who enjoy art as well, and have resources to collect it, is seen as a high point of being part of the art world.⁴² Collecting is a social activity. The collectors also expect a certain treatment, and

41. Yogev and Grund, “Network Dynamics and Market Structure: The Case of Art Fairs”, *Sociological Focus* 45 n.º 1, 23-40, DOI: 10.1080/00380237.2012.630846

42. Cyril Mercier, *Les collectionneurs d'art contemporain: analyse sociologique d'un groupe social et de son rôle sur le marché de l'art. Sociologie* (Paris: Université de la Sorbonne nouvelle – Paris III, 2012).

the higher their reputation is, the more privileges they hope to get. Gallerists in an art fair seek to respond to the needs of collectors, and this is a different kind of effort than presenting contemporary art to a new public. Indeed, contemporary art fairs are open events. After the private opening for guests only, everyone is admitted, as long as they pay for the ticket.

It is not required that art fair visitors should learn all the codes and rules of behavior, or that they accept any values attributed to art, in order to be able to attend art fairs. However, even though the public can be heterogeneous, there was a clear cleavage between art world outsiders and established members, at least during the two first ArtRio editions.⁴³ In this case, ArtRio cannot be characterized as a place where a new audience is formed. To solve the dilemma between maintaining a socio-cultural character and responding to galleries' business requirements, ArtRio organizers have reached a decision:

The matter is to separate them more and more. ArtRio is a business fair, everyone is welcome, but it is a trade show. So [this is] what we did: ArtRio is the mother brand, and we have the [brand called] Connections [...]. Connections organizes these events, for example, at the Fashion Mall, Casa do Saber [House of Knowledge]. There is the fair and there is content generation. [...] so it [the goal] is to make this audience read more and more and come to the fair with a little more, not so unaware, thanks to the information that we are spreading [...].⁴⁴

They therefore decided to promote social and educational activities throughout the year with groups linked to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and by bringing new audiences to museums, cultural centers, etc. Thus, they were able to reserve the days of the fair for galleries, which could focus on presenting and selling the artworks of their artists to a narrower audience than that of the 2011 and 2012 editions. The guided tours are not available anymore, nor student groups are invited to visit the fair, but the curated exhibitions and the conferences about art, the art market, art collections, etc., continue to be held year after year. While ArtRio aims to retain a different character than other large international fairs, and to preserve the social and cultural investment in a new audience, it has nonetheless adapted to the expectations of the galleries.

FEIRA PARTE AND ARTIGO RIO: THE "ACCESSIBLE FAIRS"

The Feira Parte and Artigo Rio fairs, inspired by the model of the Affordable Art Fair, also presented proposals for the democratization and facilitation of access to art, but in another way — they tried to show that buying a work of art, starting

43. Norbert Elias y John L. Scotson, *Os estabelecidos e os outsiders: sociologia das relações de poder a partir de uma pequena comunidade*. Translation by Vera Ribeiro (Rio de Janeiro: Jorge Zahar, 2000).

44. Interview conducted on 22/10/2013. Original text in Portuguese: "A questão é cada vez separar mais mesmo, a ArtRio feira é uma feira de negócios, todo mundo é bem vindo, mas é uma feira de negócios. Então o que a gente fez: a ArtRio tem uma marca mãe ArtRio, e temos o Conexões [marca] [...]. O Conexões faz esses eventos, por exemplo, no Fashion Mall, Casa do Saber. A feira é a Feira e há geração de conteúdo, [...] então é fazer com que cada vez mais esse público leia e venha para a feira com um pouco a mais, não tão leigo assim, por conta dessa informação que a gente está disseminando, [...]."

a collection, or even acquiring more information about the works and artists, were all possible for anyone.

In the case of these two fairs, the discourse of democratization was strong at the beginning, but faded away through time. Having the Affordable Fair as their reference, there were some rules for the price of artworks exposed at the art fairs. The average price was 3 thousand reais at both fairs (1,200 €). In 2013, Feira Parte raised the average to 4 thousand reais (1,324 €). The maximum possible price would be 15 thousand reais (6,000 €) in 2011, and 18 thousand reais (6,950 €) in 2012. From 2013 on, there was no upper limit anymore. On the other hand, for Artigo Rio the top price was 17 thousand reais (6,800 €) in 2012, and 18 thousand reais (5,845 €) in 2013. Besides, the information about the artworks (price, title, name of the artist, and materials) should be displayed next to them. Accordingly, the visitors would already have some information about the works before talking to the gallerists and would enjoy (and possibly buy) works at a more accessible range of price. The fairs were announced in the most prestigious newspapers of Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo (*O Globo*, *Folha de S. Paulo*, and *O Estado de Sao Paulo*, respectively). The fairs organized conferences and supported art interventions made by artist collectives. Feira Parte also offered an art workshop for children. Nevertheless, neither of them received the approval to be benefited by Rouanet Law.

The press did not disclose the number of visitors at Feira Parte. On its Facebook page, Feira Parte organizers announced that 2.6 thousand people visited the fair in 2011. A video produced by the fair organizers points out that 8 thousand people visited Feira Parte in 2012. There are no figures available for 2013. Artigo Rio 2012 attracted 9 thousand visitors, according to newspaper *O Globo*. No other figures about Artigo Rio's attendance were found. Participant observation showed that the halls and the stands of both fairs were far from crowded in 2012 and 2013. The opening days were the busiest, but not crowded.

Artigo Rio's objective was to make art accessible to everyone, especially to the members from "Class C".⁴⁵ In an interview for the newspaper *O Globo*, Artigo Rio's director Alexandre Murucci claims the fair's target is the Class C, thus showing that art is accessible to anyone.⁴⁶ A person from Artigo Rio's organization, whom I interviewed for my research, pointed out that a Class C family had an income around 10 and 12 thousand reais⁴⁷ (which amounted, actually, as a Class A income in 2012 and still today). Still, according to this person, even if the Class C people had the resources and the interest in art, they did not feel comfortable in galleries. The fair was therefore created to address this issue, by making art more accessible, something closer to everybody's daily life. This goal led to the creation of the slogan, "Art will be part of your shopping list", which links artistic production to everyday purchases. The fair took place at a

45. In Brazil, research institutions and companies use social to implement a demographic segmentation of the population. The social classes are identified by letter: A, B, C and D. Class C became the largest group in 2010, after Brazil experienced significant economic growth. They became the apple of the eye of Brazil's economy, since this group was enabled to have a higher level of consumption. However, the Class C family income varies between three to five minimum wages.

46. Catharina Wrede, "Novafeiraqueratiraclasse média", *O Globo*, 10 august 2013, <http://oglobo.globo.com/cultura/nova-feira-de-arte-quer-atrair-classe-media-5451551>.

47. This amounts to between USD 2,650 and 3,180 today. In 2012, when the interview was conducted, the minimum wage in Brazil was R\$ 622,73, that is, USD 165.90 today. For the minimum wage in Brazil from 2000 through 2018, see: http://www.guiatrabalhista.com.br/guia/salario_minimo.htm

convention center at Rio de Janeiro's city center, and the entrance fee was R\$ 10. This association with art and everyday purchases and the collective action of the artist collective *Filé de Peixe*, who proposed the sale of square centimeters of works of art for an average of R\$ 0.50, finally lifted the taboo of considering art as any other commodity. In the case of Artigo Rio, not only the merchandise character of artworks, but also the mythology of art as something “holy”⁴⁸ or sacred and superior, were displayed and questioned.⁴⁹ Art was considered part of everyday life and something that anyone can frequently purchase, without any kind of rituals or too much thinking. But this was not well seen by some members from the art world, as the following discussion between a newspaper writer and the director of Artigo Rio illustrates.

Francisco Bosco, a poet and philosopher who writes a column in the newspaper *O Globo*, wrote two articles on Artigo Rio — “Art and merchandise” and “Art and merchandise II” (BOSCO 11/21/2012 and 14/11/2012, respectively). In these articles, Bosco criticized the Artigo Rio's stance in announcing that “art is like any product”, as well as the *Filé de Peixe* collective. For Bosco, this kind of democratization of art takes the experiential character of the work of art, and turns it into a commodity alienated from its creative process and its meanings. It thus loses its value as art.

Alexandre Murucci wrote a letter in response to Bosco, also commented in the latter's second article. Murucci stated that Artigo Rio proposed the demystification of art as something aimed only to the elite. Still, Bosco, who confessedly had not been to the fair, and therefore did not understand the irony in *Filé de Peixe's* intervention, retained the view that the demystification of art as an article like any other empties all work from its creative process.

This discussion shows that such actions may have held off all those who already had an acquaintance with contemporary art. Indeed, artists, gallerists, critics, curators, and collectors, try to show that they appreciate art beyond its commercial value. Selling art simply to make profit, or even using it for decorative purposes, happens every day; but those actions are not well seen by these art world members, as they undermine the “right reason”, according to them, for collecting, dealing, or enjoying art —the love or passion for it. In the interviews and participant observation for my research, the love and passion for art— and the oblivion of its merchandise feature — was pointed out as the most important motivational key for participating in the art world.

On the other hand, Feira Parte, from Sao Paulo, proposed to “democratize” art, as described in the article, “A New Fair”, published in *O Estado de São Paulo*.⁵⁰ The first edition of the fair was held in a shed which used to shelter Korean cult rituals, in an upper-middle-class neighborhood, Pinheiros, and the entrance cost was R\$ 15,00. The second and third editions took place at the

48. Abbing, Hans. *Why are artists poor? The exceptional economy of the arts*. Amsterdam University Press, 2002.

49. Pierre Bourdieu, *Mais qui a créé les créateurs? Questions de sociologie* (Paris: Les Éditions de minuit, 1984/2002), 207-235.

50. Camila Molina, “Uma nova feira. O Estado de S.Paulo”, *Estadao*, 22 December 2015, <http://cultura.estadao.com.br/noticias/geral,uma-nova-feira-imp-,753854>.

Paço das Artes, a place designed for cultural events at the main campus of the University of Sao Paulo, and the entrance was free. Regarding the goals of Feira Parte, according to the article “Fair with Cheap Works Attracts New Collectors” published in the newspaper *Folha de São Paulo*,⁵¹ the objective of Feira Parte was “to attract new collectors”, by offering more affordable works of art, and by creating a less embarrassing and imposing environment, not only for the usual collectors, but also for new contemporary art lovers. In the fair marketing material it could be read: “Be a PART of the art world. Selected galleries and art you will want and be able to take home.” The emphasis here was, just as for ArtRio, not in questioning the sacrality of art, but rather in inviting more people to “join the club”. One of the organizers of Feira Parte, Tamara Pearlmann, said in an interview for *Globo News*, a cable news channel, that in its first edition in 2011, the fair failed to attract an audience beginning to take an interest in contemporary art; but rather an audience which, while already interested, was not confident enough to buy works or start a collection. Hence, these small fairs are not platforms to expand the interest of the general public in contemporary art. As with other fairs, they do not provide the best ambiance for a new audience to be better informed about contemporary art. First of all, their promotion strategies do not reach a broad audience. Besides, even if the name of the work’s author and the price are available next to the artworks, other relevant information about the artworks is still controlled by the galleries’ salespeople — precisely the information that justifies their artistic value. And even if such an information is available, this does not mean that new audiences fully understand why it is useful or important. People still need to ask questions about the artworks, the artists, and their relevance, showing how much they know (or do not know) about art. Yet Artigo Rio and Feira Parte present an opportunity for those who already are interested in art, and who do not feel confident enough to start buying art on their own, since these fairs try to build a more relaxed atmosphere to the fairs. Finally, they appear disturbing to those who believe the association between art and average goods empties the artistic value of an artistic object.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The four art fairs examined here were able to meet their basic goal — to serve as a place where many players from the art world were able to interact, buy, sell, and promote artworks and artists. Nevertheless, our analysis of the objectives of the art fairs, of what actually took place in them, and of the opinions and discussions that later emerged concerning them — analysis carried out against the theoretical background of Nathalie Heinich’s Pragmatic sociology — clearly shows that the fairs’ objective of democratizing access to art pose questions and

51. Silas Marti, “Feira com obras baratas atrai novos colecionadores”. *Folha de S. Paulo*, 22 December, 2015, www1.folha.uol.com.br/fsp/ilustrada/9307-feira-com-obras-baratas-atrai-novos-colecionadores.shtml.

contradictions. On the one hand, the fairs tried to show that art is not something exclusive to a cultural or economic elite. In the Brazilian art context, where cultural institutions still struggle to conserve and promote art, and where social distinction is valued by the members of the art world, opening the access of art to a broader audience can be at the same time noble and bold. In addition to that, in a booming art market scene, in a country where the market in general was also experiencing growth, it can be tempting to try to open the market and invite people to jump in. Effectively, a number of art dealers and collectors who cherish the superior and sacred character of art, and who also praise being part of a select group, sharing an interest in art and being entitled to some privileges, were displeased. The main objective of art fairs, as Yogev & Grund (2012) have argued, is the construction of a network, mostly among like actors. Here, ArtRio tried to use the galleries as a platform to present art to a new audience, which is far from what art dealers actually pursue. In contrast, Artigo Rio made the opposition between artwork and merchandise — a big taboo among artists, art dealers and collectors — harder to maintain. ArtRio's large audience failed to democratize access to contemporary art, since there was dissatisfaction both on the side of the regulars, as on the side of the gallery owners. Indeed, between 2013 and 2015, ArtRio focused its socio-cultural and democratizing efforts during the year and independently the fair, in order that it could concentrate on the business in the week when the fair opens its doors. The fair still tries to implement a social contribution by supporting events and leading groups of public schools. Still, these are very specific actions which do not necessarily guarantee either the growth of contemporary art audience, or the questioning of the idea that contemporary art is meant to be enjoyed by an economic and intellectual elite.

Without mastering the art world behavior codes, new visitors created confusion and displeased gallerists. Without the tools required to assess, interpret, and enjoy the art exposed there, probably just a few of the visitors were able to better understand what contemporary art proposes; and for few of them the interest of trying to enter this art world was aroused — even if only as admirers. Indeed, the guided tours were a way to fill the gap of enjoyment tools; however, a public education effort to encourage their interest in any kind of art should be continuous and persistent. Aware of this necessity, ArtRio — with its social endeavor to promoting visits to museums and cultural institutions by youngsters and children from public schools and NGOs, — as well as SP Arte — with its encouragement to visitors of museums in the city of Sao Paulo — both try to bring back the educational role to institutions which are also responsible of developing a new audience.

The four art fairs hitherto studied can be classed into two types. On the one hand, the big ones or “Art Basel type” ones — SP Arte and ArtRio; on the

other hand, the smaller ones or “Affordable Fair” ones— Feira Parte and Artigo Rio. Accordingly, it is safe to state that the first type of fairs are better equipped to attracting more people and providing a series of educational actions. These fairs, however, even if they intend to contribute to the formation of a growing audience for contemporary art, cannot afford to do so in a more extensive way. The reason is not only that art fairs are not a privileged space for education in contemporary art; but also because such a goal conflicts with the interest of gallery owners and collectors who aim at discretion, exclusive and restricted access, special treatment, privileges, and secrecy.

Conversely, in the case of the second type the actions taken to democratizing or facilitating access to contemporary art are basically offering more affordable prices in a less hostile or embarrassing environment. The growth of the market in general, and of the art market in particular, led the fair organizers to focus on those people who now could afford buying art, but who were still too shy to do it. In contrast, ArtRio attracts a wider audience and offers tools (guided tour, visits to institutions throughout the year, and workshops for children, for example) so that they can enjoy or play with the art they observe. In the case of Feira Parte and Artigo Rio, however —as was acknowledged by Tamara Perlman, organizer of the latter— these smaller fairs are not suitable to attract people who were only recently drawn to contemporary art, even taking into account that advertisement for those fairs was not broad enough. These fairs provide a new dynamic to the market, and encourage individuals to start small collections or even occasionally buy a work of art, but have not resulted in the dissemination of contemporary art beyond its already established world. Finally, they facilitate the first contact with gallery owners and the purchase of works for a very specific group — beginners in contemporary art collecting. They also show that information on art and even artwork purchase is not restricted to those who already understand the subject and have abundant resources to collect them. After all, although democratizing the access of art for larger audiences has its merits, art fairs are not privileged places to make beginners or new audiences get out of the fringe of the art world and come definitely inside.



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