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# The superstars of contemporary art: a sociological analysis of fame and consecration in the visual arts through indigenous rankings of the “Top Artists in the World”

[*Estrelas da arte contemporânea: uma análise sociológica da fama e da consagração através dos rankings nativos do Top Artists in the World*

Alain Quemin<sup>1</sup>

**RESUMO** • O que os *rankings* dos “artistas visuais top” no mundo dizem sobre a construção social do valor dentro do domínio da arte contemporânea? Após uma análise histórica dos sistemas de avaliação de artistas, apresentamos a metodologia utilizada pelos quatro *rankings* que analisamos neste artigo: o *Kunstkompass*, o *Artfacts*, o *Artnet* e o *Artprice*. Em seguida, os dois primeiros indicadores em que fama e consagração são mediadas por especialistas são analisados em profundidade, e comparados entre si. Isso destaca resultados um pouco semelhantes, diferindo de um terceiro *ranking*, em que não há esse tipo de medição (*Artnet*). Por fim, analisa-se a ligação entre sucesso institucional e sucesso econômico (medido através do *ranking* *Artprice*), revendo-se a teoria da criação do valor artístico a partir da injunção entre as instituições e o mercado de arte. • **PALAVRAS-CHAVE** • Arte contemporânea; mercado artístico; valor artístico; instituições artísticas;

*rankings*. • **ABSTRACT** • What can the rankings of “top – visual – artists” in the world tell about the social construction of value within the contemporary art domain? After drawing a historical analysis of evaluation systems of artists, we present the methodology used by the four rankings that we analyse in this article: the *Kunstkompass*, the *Artfacts*, the *Artnet* and the *Artprice* ranking. Subsequently, the first two indicators in which fame and consecration are mediated by experts are analysed in depth and compared. This highlights somewhat similar results, differing from a ranking (*Artnet*) with no such mediation. Finally, the link between institutional success and economic success (measured through *Artprice* ranking) is analysed, thus reconsidering the theory of the creation of art value at the junction of institutions and the art market. • **KEYWORDS** • Contemporary art; art market; art value; art institutions; rankings; fame.

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The interest of sociology for fame and consecration in the arts is neither new nor even recent. One of the earlier attempts is *Les stars* by French sociologist Edgar Morin<sup>2</sup> which was published as early as 1957. In his book, Morin analysed the creation process of movie stars as mass commodities and also their consumption process by fans. It is difficult to perceive on what empirical survey the book was based, and the approach is mostly symbolical (among other things, Morin focuses on the “star liturgy”). Thus it can be argued that, in many aspects, the book consists more in an essay than in a rigorous sociological contribution to the analysis of fame and consecration processes. More important for the study of fame and success in the arts domain, the writings of another French sociologist, Raymonde Moulin, although less focused on the topic, proved to be much more consistent. In *Le marché de la peinture en France*, Raymonde Moulin<sup>3</sup> studied both economic value in the visual arts on the art market and aesthetic success for which reputation is a key factor. Still, it can be said that only with British author Alan Bowness and his book *The conditions of success. How the modern artist rises to fame*<sup>4</sup> was fame placed at the center of the analysis in the social sciences, especially for the visual arts sector. It may be necessary here to stress that Alan Bowness is not a sociologist but actually an art historian, (and also a museum director). Still, his perspective is largely sociological when studying the different steps that lead visual artists to success and consecration. Even today, after the strong development of surveys on fame, success and consecration through a sociological perspective which marked the beginning of the new millennium, Alan Bowness is often referred to due to the exploratory nature of his work and his important contribution in the understanding of the phenomenon.

Unlike Alan Bowness who concentrates mostly on the different steps that lead artists to success, in this article, we would like to focus on the most successful artists, those who have successfully completed the steps or circles of recognition discerned by Bowness and who have become “Star Artists”. In order to do this, we will analyse

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<sup>2</sup> MORIN, E. *Les stars*, Paris: Le Seuil, 1957.

<sup>3</sup> MOULIN, R. *The French art market. A sociological view*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1987 (abridged edition of *Le marché de la peinture en France*. Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1967).

<sup>4</sup> BOWNESS, A. *The conditions of success. How the modern artist rises to fame*. London: Thames & Hudson, 1989.

some of the most important rankings that exist in the visual arts domain and that try and objectify who the most visible/famous/successful living artists are. The consecration process will be illustrated and analysed by commenting upon the existing rankings themselves and other empirical data that we *elaborated* in order to complement them. Although we conducted more than 100 more or less *formal interviews* and identified and analysed a dozen different “indigenous rankings” of the most famous/visible/recognised artists – as some of them have been published for decades now, about 70 different editions of rankings dealing with contemporary art were analysed – we will focus in this article upon four major rankings of artists. How are the various rankings elaborated and do they all offer the same image of fame and consecration in the visual arts? By what measure does the methodology impact the results? And as Raymonde Moulin theorised that art value is created at the junction of the market and the institutions<sup>5</sup>, do rankings in terms of visibility and legitimacy give similar results to rankings reflecting success on the market? In the first section of this article, we will show the central role of rankings to try and evaluate who the most important artists are through a historical analysis of evaluation systems of artists. In the second part, we will present the methodology utilised by the four rankings that we will analyse: the Kunstkompass, the Artfacts ranking, the Artnet ranking and Artprice data. The third part will consider artistic fame and consecration from the two indicators in which fame and consecration are mediated by experts: the Kunstkompass and Artfacts rankings. Do different indicators offer diverging views on fame and consecration? Then, the previous results will be compared to those that are unmediated by experts (Artnet). Finally, relying on Artprice data, the final section will study the link between institutional success and economic success, thus reconsidering the theory formulated by Raymonde Moulin of the creation of art value at the junction of institutions and the art market<sup>6</sup>.

## **FROM PRELIMINARIES TO RANKINGS IN ART HISTORY TO THE SIMULTANEOUS EMERGENCE OF THE FIRST RANKING OF ARTISTS AND OF CONTEMPORARY ART AS A CATEGORY**

As early as art history emerged as a discipline, authors had to evaluate the aesthetic value of works and decide who the most important “visual artists” were (i.e. painters and sculptors at that time). Italian artist, art critic and historian Giorgio Vasari in *The lives of the best painters, sculptors and architects*<sup>7</sup> selected dozens of artists, yet never attempted to hierarchize them, nor even attribute marks in order to quantify or objectify aesthetic quality. Later in history, French commentator Roger de Piles in

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5 MOULIN, R. *L'artiste, l'institution et le marché*. Paris: Flammarion, 1992.

6 Idem, 1967, op. cit.

7 VASARI, G. *The lives of the most excellent Italian painters, sculptors, and architects, from Cimabue to our times (Le Vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori, e architettori da Cimabue insino a' tempi nostri)*. Florence, Lorenzo Torrentino, 1550.

his *Cours de peinture par principes*<sup>8</sup>, selected 57 (deceased or living) significant artists, commented their works and attributed them marks – out of 20 – on four criteria – composition, drawing, colours and expressivity. However, despite this quantification which would have made it possible to elaborate a ranking if all marks had been added, it never came to his mind to do so and to *rank* the diverse artists whom he had selected and evaluated.

Things changed radically in 1970 with the first ranking of artists ever to be published on a yearly basis, the *Kunstkompass* (“the compass of art” in German). The rankings were published by Willy Bongard, an economic journalist with a strong concern for art, in the German economic magazine *Capital*<sup>9</sup>. One fact should be stressed: the first ranking of artists was simultaneous to the emergence of contemporary art as a category; with the historical and seminal exhibition *When attitudes become form* curated by Harald Szeemann at Bern Kunsthalle in Switzerland, in 1969. It seems that with the emergence of the new form of art, or “contemporary creation, it became immediately necessary to try and reduce the uncertainty of the value that characterized it”<sup>10</sup>.

From 1970 until 2007, the *Kunstkompass* was regularly published on an almost yearly basis in *Capital* and moved in 2008 to another German economic journal, *Manager Magazin*, also publishing it annually until it was abandoned in 2015. Still, *Capital* did not stop publishing any ranking of contemporary artists as it developed a partnership with a firm, *Artfacts*, to publish – also on a yearly basis – a second ranking of contemporary visual artists: *Capital Kunstmarkt Kompass!* The long existence of the *Kunstkompass* combined with the more recent apparition of a competing ranking, the *Capital Kunstmarkt Kompass*, constitutes a clear indication of the now long lasting and strong social demand for such rankings of living artists that aim at reducing the uncertainty of value within the contemporary art sector<sup>11</sup>.

Artnet is a private German firm which was created in 1998, the Germans seeming to be more eager for rankings in the art domain and the objectification of their required operations, than other countries. Artnet publishes results of artists at auctions and is also an online platform that enables its users to sell, look for and buy works of art – with more than 39,000 artists offered by more than 2,200 galleries, located in more than 250 cities. The firm's activities also consist of the publication of

<sup>8</sup> PILES, R. de. *Cours de peinture par principes*. Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1969 (original edition: *Cours de peinture par principes compose par Mr. de Piles*. Paris: Jacques Estienne: 1708 [Amsterdam and Leipzig: Arkstée & Merkus, 1766]).

<sup>9</sup> VERGER, A. L'art d'estimer l'art. Comment classer l'incomparable?. *Actes de la Recherche En Sciences Sociales*, v. 66-67, mars, *Histoires d'art*, 1987, p. 105-121; ROHR-BONGARD, L. (Hrsg.). *Kunst = Kapital. Der Capital Kunstkompass von 1970 bis heute*. Köln: Salon Verlag, 2001.

<sup>10</sup> QUEMIN, Alain; NAN HEST, Femke. The impact of nationality and territory on fame on the success en the visual arts sector: artists, experts, and the market. In: VELTHUIS, Olav; CURIONI, Stefano Baia. *Cosmopolitan convases* – the globalization of markets for contemporary art. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015, p. 172.

<sup>11</sup> MOULIN, R. & QUEMIN, A. La certification de la valeur de l'art. Experts et expertises. *Annales ESC*, special issue *Mondes de l'art*, n. 6, novembre-décembre, 1993, p. 1421-1445.

rankings of searches made on artists on the website; the activity on which we will focus upon within this article.

Whereas the three previous rankings try and evaluate the visibility of artists – the first one taking art institutions and art magazines only into account and the second one synthesising information dealing both with art institutions and art magazines and with the market – another ranking, that of Artprice, deals exclusively with the results made by artists at auctions. Thus, this ranking is only economic. Artprice – a French firm – was created in 1987 and, among other activities all connected to the auction market (it also organises auctions and other sales at fixed prices), has regularly published – each year – its rankings of the top contemporary artists at auctions.

### **METHODOLOGY OF THE KUNSTKOMPASS, THE ARTFACTS RANKING, THE ARTNET RANKING AND THE ARTPRICE RANKING**

In all types of rankings, the results depend directly on the methodology utilised, which in return is the product of certain perspectives. It is necessary therefore to briefly present the method used by the four rankings that were selected, because all publish annual lists of (at least) the top 100 living contemporary visual artists in the world or alternatively their published data can be utilised in order to develop such a list.

#### **The Kunstkompass**

Since its creation in 1970, the Kunstkompass has been based on a system of points allocated to different forms of artists' visibility. The system has slightly evolved over time and was not perfectly transparent as it was published intermittently. Nevertheless, it can be summarised schematically as follows. Artists acquired points on three major occasions:

- Solo-exhibitions in museums or contemporary art centres: the more prestigious the institution, the higher the number of points acquirable. For instance, a solo show at MoMA in New York City, at Tate Modern in London or at Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris will attract a significantly high number of points, whereas other solo shows in less important yet significant institutions will attract fewer points.
- Participation in collective exhibitions such as biennials or in collective shows in museums or contemporary art centres. Once again, the more prestigious the institution, the higher the number of points attainable, (for instance, participation in the most prestigious biennials such as Venice's in Italy, or the Kassel Documenta in Germany, attracted a very high number of points, whereas other significant biennials organised in other cities were also considered as qualifying, but secured less points). As a solo show provides more visibility to artists and plays an

even greater part in their consecration process<sup>12</sup>, the most important solo shows weighed more than participation in the most prestigious collective exhibitions. • Reviews in the most influential contemporary art magazines such as *Flash Art*, *Art in America* and *Art Forum*.

A specific number of points was allocated to each of the previous occasions of visibility and, at the year ending, they were summed up, thus enabling the Kunstkompass team to publish its annual ranking of the top 100 contemporary (living) artists in the world who are ranked individually.

It is important to mention that nearly as early as its creation, the Kunstkompass has been criticised for presenting a strong bias mostly in favour of Germany (by over-representing German institutions among qualifying ones and by attributing them coefficients that have often been considered too heavy compared to their real weight in the international contemporary art world<sup>13</sup> and, to a lesser extent, to neighbouring countries that belong to its cultural zone of influence (such as Austria). Nonetheless, the Kunstkompass has existed for more than 40 years and its general methodology has fundamentally remained the same.

### **Artfacts' methodology**

What is the methodology used by Artfacts to produce the competing *Capital Kunstmarkt Kompass*? Unlike the team that elaborated the Kunstkompass, Artfacts uses a much wider number of qualifying institutions: private contemporary art galleries, public institutions (with or without a collection of their own, that is to say museums and contemporary art centres), biennials and triennials, other spaces of temporary exhibition, contemporary art fairs, auctions, art hotels, art reviews, journals and magazines, art books, art schools, festivals, non-profit organisations, or even art management institutions or private collections. Although not completely exhaustive, the extremely diverse acquirement of information limits certain risks of biases.

Whereas some instances are crucial in the consecration process, others seem more secondary, if not marginal. It is therefore important that the coefficients attributed to each of the different instances reflect this. To that intent, Artfacts has created an algorithm that determines the weight of each instance based on the fame of the artists who are associated with them. Fundamentally, “network points” are allocated: all artists whom are collected by museums and represented by galleries get such points that are then conferred to the institutions that collect or represent the artists; these “network points” reflecting therefore the reputation of the institution that is concerned. For each exhibition in a museum or gallery, an

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<sup>12</sup> QUEMIN, A. *Les stars de l'art contemporain. Notoriété et consécration artistiques dans les arts visuels*. Paris: Editions du CNRS, 2013; QUEMIN, A. From “national creativity” to social recognition and success in the visual arts: a sociological perspective on rankings of the “Top 100 Artists in the World”. In: CHAN, Janet & THOMAS, Kerry. *Handbook of research on creativity*. Cheltenham, UK and Northampton, MA, USA: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2013, p. 230-248.

<sup>13</sup> Idem. *Les stars de l'art contemporain. Notoriété et consécration artistiques dans les arts visuels*, op. cit.

artist acquires points. Although, from a logical point of view, it may seem surprising that artists and institutions mutually influence each other's weight and, therefore, the position of artists in the ranking, sociological analysis has shown that in the world of contemporary art, artists and galleries (and also gallery owners), but also artists and institutions, mutually influence each other's reputations<sup>14</sup>. This is one of the major interests of the method that has been elaborated by Artfacts to try and reflect that peculiarity of the contemporary art world. Unlike other methodologies such as the one of the Kunstkompas, in which the important part of subjectivity in determining coefficients generated significant biases (leading, as we will see, to an overrepresentation of German artists), the coefficients, in the case of Artfacts, are not set more or less once and for all. These coefficients are not only very occasionally reconsidered as is actually the case with the Kunstkompas. In the case of Artfacts' methodology, coefficients are continuously actualised (that is, every week) by the algorithm, taking into account the certifying power of the institutions based on the reputation of the artists with which they are then associated. Besides, the size of the database is an essential dimension, with no less than 70,263 artists referenced in the world in June 2012 (100,000 are ranked today and 300,000 more are listed without being ranked). Although Artfacts takes both deceased and living artists into account, we will focus upon living artists only in our analysis; in order to facilitate the comparison of Artfacts' list of the top 100 living artists with that of the Kunstkompas rankings.

As a private firm, Artfacts neither publishes, nor communicates on request, the construction mode of its ranking algorithm which is protected by industrial secrecy. This is frustrating for the social scientist who would like to explore the rigorousness of the methodology used; however an indirect reconstitution of some of the coefficients was achieved by one of our collaborators and it was found to be both satisfactory and pertinent. Although the main ranking is established on the basis of the number of points that have been accumulated since the indicator was created in 1999, the ranking is not that different from the one that would be obtained by considering only the number of points accumulated during the last twelve months: success generally begets success.

### **Artnet and Artpice methodologies**

The methodologies utilised both by Artpice and Artnet are much more simple than the two previous ones.

On its site, Artnet regularly publishes a table with the ranking of artists who were most searched on the website during the most recent six months, providing results month after month. If, just like in the case of the Kunstkompas and the Artfacts ranking, the Artnet one also expresses visibility, it is important to underline that, in its case, visibility is not mediated by the choices of experts<sup>15</sup>, it is the result of the search of users who can be all sorts of professionals but also only art amateurs

<sup>14</sup> MOULIN, R., 1992, op. cit.; MOULIN, R. & QUEMIN, A., 1993, op. cit.

<sup>15</sup> MOULIN, R. & QUEMIN, A., 1993, op. cit.

who directly influence the result of the classification. Initially, we had considered checking the result obtained via a research engine such as Google for all artists listed in the Kunstkompass and in the Artfacts ranking, however we preferred to analyse an alternative indigenous ranking of visibility, that elaborated by Artnet from the search on its own website and there again we focus on living artists.

Artprice references the results of all auctions in the world and, on a twelve month period, sums up the amounts obtained by all artists. It defines contemporary art by considering the year of birth of artists, from 1945 onwards. Then it publishes a list of the 500 most expensive artists in the world. Within its ranking, Artprice considers both living artists and deceased ones, and once again for comparison purpose, we will focus upon living artists' rankings only.

## **LESSONS ON ARTISTIC FAME AND CONSECRATION FROM TWO INDICATORS IN WHICH FAME AND CONSECRATION ARE MEDIATED BY EXPERTS**

### **Turnover rates in the Kunstkompass and in the Artfacts ranking**

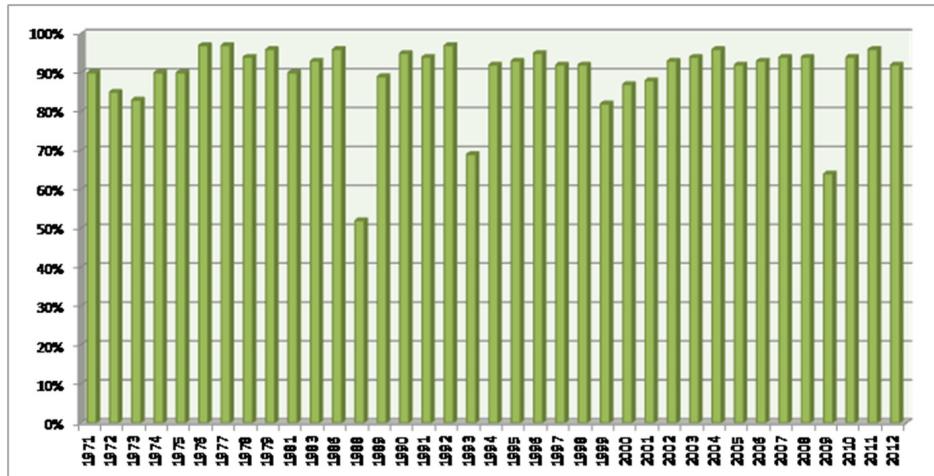
As we mentioned earlier in this article when we briefly presented the methodology used to elaborate the Kunstkompass and the Artfacts ranking, both indicators proceeded and proceed through the aggregation of expert decisions and synthesise the visibility of artists. What can we learn from the variations of each of the rankings from one year to the next? This question is an important one that is recurring in the emergent sociology of fame and celebrity; a domain in which we would like to bring a contribution to from this article. Although it was generally and long considered that public attention to people or visibility was highly volatile<sup>16</sup>, a more recent and rigorous empirical approach of the phenomenon<sup>17</sup> based on the recurrence of names in the media, demonstrated that at high levels of fame, visibility remains very stable over time. What do our data on the superstars of contemporary art suggest?

As the Kunstkompass has existed for more than 40 years, we studied the permanency of artists by this indicator. The most striking result is the continuity of the ranking from one year to the next. Thus, the proportion of artists each year that were already present in the ranking the previous year was generally very high (and could even be extremely high).

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<sup>16</sup> BELL, C. E. *American idolatry*: celebrity, commodity and reality television. Jefferson, NC: McFarland Publishers, 2007; BOORSTIN, D. *The image*: a guide to pseudo-events in America. New York: Harper and Row, 1961; COWEN, T. *What price fame?*. Cambrige MA: Harvard University Press, 2000; KURZMAN, C. et al. *Celebrity Status. Sociological Theory*, 25(4), 2007, p. 347-367.

<sup>17</sup> VAN DE RIJT, A. et al. Only 15 minutes? The social stratification of fame in printed media. *American Sociological Review*, 78(2), 2013, p. 268-289.



**Graph 1** – Share of artists who were already present in the previous edition of the Kunstkompas each year

The main finding of the previous Graph 1 is a strong continuity of the indicator over time, from one year to the next, confirming the previous analysis of Arnout van de Rijt, Eran Shor, Charles Ward and Steven Skiena regarding the persistence of fame over time<sup>18</sup>. Generally, more than 90% of artists who are listed in the Kunstkompas one year were already present in the ranking the previous year and, quite often, the proportion was as high as 96 or even 97%! It should also be stressed on several occasions, due to the Kunstkompas not being published on one year or very exceptionally on two consecutive years, the high reproduction rate does not refer to a one year period but to a two year or even three year one; another clear illustration of the permanency of the results of the ranking over time. Only very occasionally, turn over explodes in the ranking and can reach as high as 48%; however this is only due to a radical change in the methodology of the Kunstkompas. It seems that, on several occasions, when the list of institutions and the coefficients used to elaborate the ranking remained too permanent, the stability of the Kunstkompas became so high that its authors felt the need to more or less radically modify both the list of institutions and the coefficients so that it better reflected the changes that the art world had undergone. This was especially the case in 1988 with a turnover that affected around half of artists in the ranking, a very exceptional phase in the history of the indicator as our data clearly shows.

Another result that can be mentioned is the rank of the artists whose positions are the less stable in the ranking over time: those who are situated at the bottom of the ranking. Although the top 10 positions are extremely stable and artists very rarely decline in the ranking once they have reached its very top, the second half of the ranking and especially the last 20 positions are much more vulnerable. This also confirms previous empirical data produced by Arnout van de Rijt, Eran Shor,

<sup>18</sup> Ibidem.

Charles Ward and Steven Skiena on the persistence of fame over time<sup>19</sup>; when studying empirically the presence of names in the press and its evolution over time. Our empirical data also confirm that, as is generally considered common sense, often “success begets success”, a perfect illustration of the “Matthew effect”<sup>20</sup>. An artist is all the more likely to be considered worthy of interest and even listed as a star one on a given year that he or she was already considered one on a previous year, thus confirming a more general mechanism of fame and reputation<sup>21</sup>. The most accurate factor in predicting success – not to mention consecration – is the level of fame or visibility that was already reached previously, as is shown in the work by Jeffrey Evans Stake (on law school rankings)<sup>22</sup>. This can be explained by different reasons, such as rankings – here in the contemporary art domain – are influenced by different effects such as bandwagon effects<sup>23</sup>, self-fulfilling prophecy and commensuration<sup>24</sup> that generate reactivity. Although they are supposed to unveil the visibility and success of artists, rankings play a *performative* role. They function as legitimising processes in their own right: they contribute to reinforce the legitimacy of artists, making it more likely for them to be selected by the informal academies<sup>25</sup> that rule the contemporary art world for the very reason that they are already considered very legitimate/prominent artists.

As far as the Artfacts ranking is concerned, we studied the turnover between 2012 and 2013 and obtained a figure similar to those that are associated with the Kunstkompass: 9% only, that is to say a permanency of no less than 91%. Still, it may be useful to mention that, between the two publications of the Artfacts rankings for 2013 and 2012 in French magazine *Le journal des Arts*, the methodology was modified which, as we saw earlier in the case of the Kunstkompass, generally tends to increase the turnover in rankings. Had there been no modification to the methodology, the reproduction rate would have most probably been even higher. Besides, as in the case of the Kunstkompass, the very top of the ranking is less affected by moves, either to other parts of the ranking or out of it than the bottom of it, confirming once again a result of fame shown on the presence of celebrities in the press by Arnout van de Rijt, Eran Shor, Charles Ward and Steven Skiena<sup>26</sup>.

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19 Ibidem.

20 MERTON, R. K. The Matthew effect in science. *Science*, 159, 1968, p. 56-63; HUBER, J. C. Cumulative advantage and success-breeds-success: the value of time pattern analysis. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science*, 49, 1998, p. 471-476.

21 VAN DE RIJT, A. et al., op. cit.

22 STAKE, J. E. The Interplay between law school rankings, reputations, and resource allocation: ways rankings mislead. *Indiana Law Journal*, 82, 2006, p. 229-270.

23 LEIBENSTEIN, H. Bandwagon, snob and veblen effects in the theory of consumer demand. *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, v. 64, n. 2, 1950, p. 183-207.

24 NELSON ESPELAND, W. & SAUDER, M. Rankings and reactivity: how public measures recreate social worlds. *American Journal of Sociology*, 113(1), 2007, p. 1-40.

25 MOULIN, R., 1992, op. cit.

26 VAN DE RIJT, A. et al., op. cit.

## Comparison of the two rankings: how does the difference in methodology affect the appreciation of fame and consecration?

When considering the first two columns of Table I, that mention the ranking of artists in the Kunstkompas and in Artfacts data, the first and most important result of all is that the two rankings, although with significantly differing methodologies as shown earlier, share ¾ of the artists! Moreover, ranks are often quite similar, especially for all those artists situated at the top of each of the rankings. This highlights that, at the highest level of success, that of consecration, the impact of methodology tends to be very limited, at least as long as one tries to objectify the positions by taking advice formulated by experts into account<sup>27</sup>. It is as if consecration imposed itself to its analysts or observers. This result could bring an important contribution to the sociology of fame and celebrity<sup>28</sup> and would probably be worth testing empirically in other domains. The proportion of ¾ of artists in common is all the more striking that, as we briefly mentioned earlier in this article, there existed a strong bias in the case of the Kunstkompas in favour of German artists. As there is no such obvious bias in the case of the Artfacts ranking, which tends to represent more American artists as opposed to German, similarity between the two lists is mechanically limited. In spite of these differences, nationalities in the two rankings also present similarities in the fact that only 22 countries are represented in the Kunstkompas and only 23 in the case of the Artfacts ranking<sup>29</sup>.

Name and first name	Artfacts	Kunstlk	Artnet	Artpice
Abramovic Marina	26	64	52	/
Acconci Vito	40	/	/	/
Ackermann Franz	/	98	/	/
Alsoudani Ahmed	/	/	/	37
Alijs Francis	20	35	/	80
Andre Carl	39	/	/	/
Araki Nobuyoshi	/	/	7	/
Armlieder John M.	71	/	/	/
Artschwager Richard	91	/	/	/
Atchugarry Pablo	/	/	/	81
Aytjoe Christine	/	/	/	50
Baldessari John	5	15	42	/

27 MOULIN, R. & QUEMIN, A., op. cit.

28 FERRIS, K. O. The sociology of celebrity. *Sociology compass*, 1, 2010, p. 371-384.

29 QUEMIN, A. *Les stars de l'art contemporain. Notoriété et consécration artistiques dans les arts visuels*, op. cit.

Balkenhol Stephan	/	/	96	69
Banksy	/	/	3	38
Barcelo Miquel	/	/	/	14
Barney Matthew	69	22	/	/
Baselitz Georg	6	3	86	/***
Beard Peter	/	/	89	/
Becher Bernd & Hilla	62	58	78	/
Bochner Mel	/	/	84	/
Bock John	/	88	/	/
Bolin Liu	/	/	15	/
Boltanski Luc	38	16	/	/
Bonvincini Monica	/	47	/	/
Botero Fernando	/	/	17	/
Bradford Mark	/	/	/	57
Brandt Nick	/	/	58	/
Brown Cecily	/	/	/	34
Brown <u>Glenn</u>	/	/	94	11
Bruyckere de Berlinde	/	/	/	100
Buren Daniel	58	54	/	/
Cai Guoqiang	/	/	/	40
Calle Sophie	73	50	/	/
Cattelan Maurizio	50	26	/	12
Chia Sandro	/	/	/	90
Chihuly Dale	/	/	47	/
Christo	/	20	/	/
Clark Larry	/	/	97	/
Clemente Francesco	/	/	95	/
Close Chuck	82	/	14	/
Combas Robert	/	/	/	62
Condo George	/	/	31	16
Cragg Tony	49	76	85	68
Crewdson Gregory	/	/	26	/
Currin John	/	/	/	28
Dean Tacita	56	49	/	/

Delvoye Wim	/	/	72	/
Demand Thomas	81	33	/	/
diCoccia Philip-Lorca	/	/	87	/
Dijkstra Rineke	94	99	48	/
Dine Jim	64	/	19	/
Doig Peter	/	89	60	41
Dumas Marlène	79	55	/	26
Dweck Michael	/	/	6	/
Eggleston William	/	/	82	/
Eliasson Olafur	10	8	/	/
Emin Tracey	/	/	36	/
Estes Richard	/	/	71	/
Export Valie	36	/	/	/
Fabre Jan	/	/	/	67
Fairey Shepard	/	/	10	/
Farocki Harun	/	100	/	/
Feldmann Hans Peter	80	79	/	/
Fischer Urs	/	/	/	22
Fischl Eric	/	/	/	74
Fischli & Weiss	12	29	/	/
Fish Janet	/	/	83	/
Fleury Sylvie	77	/	/	/
Förg Günther	45	39	/	91
Fritsch Katharina	/	83	/	/
Genzken Isa	/	56	/	/
Gilbert & George	/	31	/	/
Gillick Liam	57	70	/	/
Gober Robert	95	78	/	29
Goldin Nan	33	/	9	/
Goldsworthy Andy	/	/	29	/
Gordon Douglas	14	32	/	/
Gormley Antony	/	/	/	17
Graham Dan	13	42	/	/
Graham Rodney	34	73	/	/

Grotjahn Mark	/	/	/	21
Gupta Subodh	/	/	/	73
Gursky Andreas	17	11	5	9
Guyton Wade	/	/	/	48
Hamilton Richard	/	91	/	/
Hatoum Mona	23	43	/	/
Hirschhorn Thomas	67	74	/	/
Hirst Damien	25	25	4	2
Hockney David	52	82	18	/
Hodges Jim	/	/	/	31
Höfer Candida	78	/	53	/
Höller Carsten	89	46	/	/
Holzer Jenny	41	30	/	/
Horn Rebecca	/	63	/	/
Horn Roni	88	85	/	/
Houseago Thomas	/	/	/	75
Hütte Axel	/	/	98	/
Huyghe Pierre	51	53	/	/
Indiana Robert	/	/	32	/
Jenney Neil	/	/	/	92
Jia Aili	/	/	/	99
Johns Jasper	11	19	30	/
Kabakov Ilya	60	38	/	/
Kahn Wolf	/	/	51	/
Kapoor Anish	/	72	64	13
Kassay Jacob	/	/	/	61
Katz Alex	59	/	12	/
Kawara On	97	/	/	/
KAWS	/	/	50	/
Kelley Mike	/	9	/	/
Kelly Ellsworth	30	68	34	/
Kentridge William	9	10	62	46
Kiefer Anselm	24	5	55	7
Kirkeby Per	/	81	/	/

Knoebel Imi	92	27	/	/
Koons Jeff	35	14	25	5
Kosuth Joseph	100	/	/	/
Kounellis Iannis	85	69	/	/
Kruger Barbara	/	/	/	70
Kuitca Guillermo David	/	/	/	83
Kusama Yayoi	54	/	13	/
LaChapelle David	/	/	33	96
Lawler Louise	/	97	/	78
Leibowitz Annie	/	/	56	/
Levine Sherrie	/	/	/	51
Ligon Glenn	/	/	/	30
Long Richard	61	84	/	/
Longo Robert	35	70	/	47
Lüpertz Markus	/	60	93	/
Mann Sally	/	/	2	/
Marclay Christian	55	/	/	89
Masriadii Nyoman	/	/	/	53
Max Peter	/	/	49	/
McCarthy Paul	16	34	/	24
McGee Barry	/	/	92	/
Meese Jonathan	/	62	/	/
Milhazes Beatriz	/	/	81	49
Minjun Yue	/	/	59	10
Minter Marilyn	/	/	43	/
Moffatt Tracey	99	/	/	/
Monk Jonathan	63	/	/	/
Morellet François	84	/	/	/
Morris Robert	96	/	/	/
Mr Brainwash	/	/	38	/
Mueck Ron	/	/	/	63
Muniz Vik	70	/	1	33
Murakami Takashi	/	/	22	8
Nara Yoshimoto	/	/	23	15

Nauman Bruce	1	2	/	/
Neshat Shirin	66	41	68	/
Noland Cady	/	/	/	18
Oehlen Albert	90	/	/	20
Ofili Chris	/	/	/	87
Oh Chi Gyun	/	/	/	94
Oldenburg Claes	29	21	/	/
Ono Yoko	65	/	/	/
Onsoy Kemal	/	/	/	82
Opie Julian	/	/	40	71
Orozco Gabriel	42	45	/	76
Oursler Tony	27	95	/	/
Paladino Mimmo	/	/	/	97
Pang Maokun	/	/	/	85
Paredes Cecilia	/	/	61	/
Penck AR	87	71	/	/
Penone Giuseppe	/	/	/	77
Perjovschi Dan	/	/	86	/
Perry Grayson	/	/	70	/
Pettibon Raymond	48	61	75	44
Peyton Elizabeth	/	/	72	65
Phillips Richard	/	/	67	/
Pistoletto Michelangelo	75	/	/	/
Prince Richard	47	51	69	4
Quinn Marc	/	/	/	27
Rainer Arnulf	31	44	/	/
Ramos Mel	/	/	76	/
Rauch Neo	/	59	/	56
Ray Charles	/	/	/	32
Rehberger Tobias	/	48	/	/
Reyle Anselm	/	/	/	43
Richter Gerhard	2	1	11****	****
Riley Bridget	/	/	46	/
Rist Pipilotti	22	17	/	/

Rondinone Ugo	/	/	/	54
Rosler Martha	93	94	/	/
Ruby Sterling	/	/	/	86
Ruff Thomas	8	18	21	84
Ruscha Ed	4	36	27	/
Sala Anri	76	/	/	/
Sanchez Thomas	/	/	/	88
Saville Jenny	/	/	37	/
Sawaya Nathan	/	/	66	/
Schnabel Julian	/	/	77	60
Schneider Gregor	/	77	/	/
Schütte Thomas	68	24	/	42
Scully Sean	/	/	74	23
Serra Richard	19	7	57	/
Serrano Andres	/	/	80	/
Sherman Cindy	3	4	24	6
Signer Roman	/	90	/	/
Smith Kiki	44	93	54	/
Son Sangki	/	/	/	79
Soulages Pierre	/	/	79	/
Spoerri Daniel	/	96	/	/
Stella Frank	46	67	20	/
Stern Bert	/	/	39	/
Stingel Rudolf	/	/	/	19
Storrier Timothy Austin	/	/	/	95
Struth Thomas	28	28	88	58
Sturges Jock	/	/	8	/
Sugimoto Hiroshi	53	92	65	36
Sultan Donald	/	/	63	/
Takano Aya	/	/	/	93
Taylor-Wood Sam	/	/	45	/
Thiebaud Wayne	/	/	16	/
Tillmans Wolfgang	21	75	44	/
Tiravanija Rirkrit	72	80	/	/

Tomaselli Fred	/	/	/	35
Trockel Rosemarie	18	6	/	98
Tutle Richard	98	/	/	/
Tuymans Luc	74	52	/	45
Twombly Cy	(died)	13	(died)	(died)
Uecker Günther	/	57	/	/
Varejao Adriana	/	/	/	39
Ventura Ronald	/	/	/	66
Viola Bill	32	23	/	/
Vitali Massimo	/	/	41	/
Walker Kara	83	65	100	/
Walker Kelley	/	/	/	64
Wall Jeff	43	37	/	25
Weiner Lawrence	7	40	/	/
Weiwei Ai	/	/	28	59
West Franz	15	12	/	/
Whiteread Rachel	/	66	/	/
Witkin Joel-Peter	/	/	91	/
Wool Christopher	/	/	99	1
Wurm Erwin	37	87	/	/
Xiaogang Zhang	/	/	90	/
Yan Pei-Ming	/	/	/	52
Young Russel	/	/	73	/
Zhang Xiaogang	/	/	/	3
Zobernig Haimo	86	/	/	/

**Table 1** – Synthesis of lists of top 100 artists (ranked in alphabetical order) with their ranks in Artfacts ranking (number of points in 2011) and / or in the Kunstkompass 2011 and/or on Artnet\* and/or Artpice\*\*:

\* Rank in Artfacts ranking: number of points in 2011; in the Kunstkompass 2011; Artnet: ranking produced from the Artnet lists of the most searched for living artists between June 2012 and November 2012.

\*\* Top 100 artists generating the highest result at auctions for the period 2011-2012 (list built from Artpice data) without Chinese artists whose visibility is only national.

\*\*\* As Georg Baselitz and Gerhard Richter were born before 1945, they are not included in Artpice data on contemporary art. However, if this restrictive convention that differs from other sources was not adopted, they would both, especially Gerhard Richter appear at the (very) top or Artpice ranking on results at auctions.

\*\*\*\* Surprisingly enough, superstar artist Gerhard Richter is referenced twice in the Artnet ranking: once under his name and surname, once under his family name only.

\*\*\*\*\* See previous note on Georg Baselitz

Our finding of similarities within different rankings based on the comparison of the Kunstkompass and Artfacts ranking is corroborated by other rankings that we have found and analysed and that – for their part – seem to be based on a very loose methodology. This is precisely the case of two rankings of the most famous or iconic works of contemporary art, the top 50 of the most prominent works of art of the last five years published by Complex Art+Design and the top 100 most iconic works of art (also of the last five years) published by Art Info. In these two rankings which list the most important works of contemporary art, the results, which seem to have been obtained by just asking a few “experts” (mostly journalists and / or art critics), are similar once again. Moreover, the artists who created the works are often very well placed both in the Kunstkompass and Artfacts ranking<sup>30</sup>.

### **Lay visibility *vs.* visibility mediated through expert judgments**

What changes when visibility or fame is not mediated by experts? Are popular fame and visibility similar to that produced by experts of contemporary creation (that is to say filtered by them)? To answer this question, we decided to analyse the ranking of the most searched artists on the site Artnet that we briefly presented at the beginning of this article.

A table is regularly published on Artnet that provides the ranked list of the 300 most searched visual artists month after month on a six month period. The list is not only limited to living or contemporary artists but mentions all artists of all times. The most striking result is that, in the case of a ranking of visibility that is not mediated by expert judgment<sup>31</sup>, volatility is much higher than when the decisions of experts are aggregated to elaborate the rankings.

In order to be able to compare Artnet ranking with the Kunstkompass and the one produced by Artfacts, we decided to remove from Artnet's list all artists who are not contemporary or who are deceased. And, in order to limit the strong variation effects in the rankings from one month to the following, we decided to elaborate a new ranking taking into account the average rank obtained in a six month period.

If one decides to exclude all artists who did not systematically show in the ranking during the six month period that was considered in November 2012, one generates a list of 213 artists who can be ranked according to their average rank between June 2012 and November 2012. We then decided to remove from the list all deceased artists in order to be able to compare the new list obtained from Artnet data with other rankings. The new list that we obtained reduced to only 126 artists and we decided to limit it to the 100 top positions in order to compare it both with the Kunstkompass and with the Artfacts ranking. The list thus obtained was included in Table 1 and constitutes its 3<sup>rd</sup> column.

It should be stressed here that photography as a medium is overwhelming, with no less than one third of listed artists (34 of them) who use photography as their main medium in the ranking elaborated with Artnet data, (whereas photography is

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<sup>30</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>31</sup> MOULIN, R. & QUEMIN, A., op. cit.

only a minor practice in the case of artists referenced in the Kunstkompass or in the Artfacts ranking). Moreover, the proportion of photographers is extremely high at the top of the ranking that was constructed using Artnet data. This may be resultant of photography as a popular medium (Bourdieu, 1996) or because the technique is associated with the production of multiple works. Artnet users and visitors are probably often interested in obtaining results from auctions and the probability of taking interest in an artist through the website is all the more likely if he or she has an important production of works, which is often the case with photography.

After mentioning the previous bias, in what measure does the previous ranking elaborated through “lay” searches on a (specialized in the visual arts) website converge with the Kunstkompass that we presented earlier and that relies on expert judgments? The overlap rate is rather low, with only 30 artists in common. Besides, it should be noted that our own intervention that consisted of producing some regularity in the Artnet ranking tends to favour the most legitimate artists and to increase the rate of stepping – the degree of overlap – between the two rankings. Still, it may be necessary to highlight that, more often than not, the same star artists that were referenced both in the Kunstkompass and in the Artfacts ranking, and very often in the highest positions, are precisely those artists that are the most likely to be found in the new ranking that we produced using the Artnet data.

What can previous developments offer to the understanding of sociology of visibility and fame in the art domain? It seems that what matters most and significantly influences the results that are obtained is not the use of a very elaborated / complex methodology, but by referring (or not) to judgments or acts that have been either formulated or completed by experts on the one hand or by lay actors on the other. As far as experts intervene, they tend to refer to common knowledge in their domain that is much more specialised than they tend to believe, and which constitutes as a kind of *expertise*<sup>32</sup> although it is generally considered as simple *common sense*. This is why different rankings elaborated with the use of very different methodologies will produce results which are much more similar than what could have been expected given the wide offer of possible artists who could – at least theoretically – appear in the rankings. This also explains why variations in the rankings are particularly slow and limited over time<sup>33</sup>. Major changes appear to be only due to total upheavals in the methodologies used and, even in that case, at least half of the most notorious or visible artists remain in the lists (and often much more than this). On the contrary, considering lay expressions of interest like typing a name on a site on the internet which gives birth to much more labile rankings that vary extremely quickly over time. Still, even in that case, a limited nucleus of artists who were already identified as superstars by experts remain in those rankings that are elaborated through the actions of lay users. It is as if consecration was a strong enough social process to impose itself to all those who try and objectify it. Although *fame and visibility* can be affected by the methods that are used to objectify them,

<sup>32</sup> MOULIN, R. & QUEMIN, A., op. cit.; KARPIK, L. *Valuing the unique: the economics of singularity*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010.

<sup>33</sup> VAN DE RIJT, A. et al., op. cit.

and mostly by the intervention either of experts or of lay users rather than by the diverse methodologies that can be used in order to aggregate judgments, *consecration* is a social process of a different nature. It is much less affected by any sort of social process that is mobilised to try and identify consecrated artists, even in a sector where success cannot be as easily identified as in other artistic domains such as those that deal with popular culture. This point can be a significant contribution to the sociology of fame and consecration and deserves to be empirically tested in other domains in order to see if it is generalisable.

## THE LINK BETWEEN INSTITUTIONAL SUCCESS AND ECONOMIC SUCCESS

The theory formulated by Raymonde Moulin at the beginning of the 1990's<sup>34</sup> considers that art value is created at the junction of art institutions and the market. That means that favourable aesthetic judgment plays a joint role with economic legitimization through high prices in the valorisation process of art. Besides, aesthetic value influences economic value and, simultaneously, economic value plays a part in aesthetic judgment. We found it useful to test empirically the previous theory that was never submitted to empirical data. Is there a link between the lists of the most famous / recognised artists and those whose works reach the highest prices on the art market?

### Considering Artprice's ranking

Firstly, one fact should be stressed. When commentators mention the art market, they generally mean auctions. Other transactions in a private environment, be it within galleries or booths at art fairs, remain secretive and very little is known both about the prices of particular works of art and about the volumes that are made. The situation is very different at auctions. Of course, prices can be manipulated and sometimes are, but the results are much more transparent than in private transactions<sup>35</sup> and auctions are therefore a much better source of information for analysing the art market.

Artprice publishes an annual report on auctions of contemporary art worldwide with a list of the top 500 artists who generate the highest result. We will analyse here the list that was published in *Le marché de l'art contemporain 2011/2012/Contemporary Art Market/Le rapport annuel Artprice*, that references all contemporary art auctions that were held in the world on a one year period between July 1st 2011 and June 30th 2012. Surprisingly, as we mentioned earlier, the definition of contemporary artists for Artprice designates all creators who were born after 1945 and the ranking hosts both living artists and deceased.

As other rankings that we analysed previously only account for living artists, we first created a new list of the top 100 living artists who generated the highest result

<sup>34</sup> MOULIN, R., 1992, op. cit.

<sup>35</sup> SMITH, C. W. *Auctions. The social construction of value*. New York: The Free Press, 1989.

at auctions during the July 2011 – June 2012 period. 94 artists who were born after 1945 and who were among the top 100 were still alive. This initial list was completed with the following 6 living artists. Still, it turned out that no less than 45 artists on the new list were ... Chinese! As a matter of fact, in 2007, China and Chinese artists literally exploded within the international art auction market and especially within the contemporary segment<sup>36</sup>. Since then, the progression of China and Chinese artists has been steady as can be seen through our 2011-2012 figures of Chinese artists at auctions. Since the presence of Chinese artists in the rankings of visibility or fame that we commented earlier in this article is very limited, the disjunction between rankings in terms of visibility and rankings in terms of economic success in recent years is salient. The gap between the two systems can be explained by the fact that although China tremendously developed its auction sales and Chinese artists, especially contemporary ones, reached record prices in recent years<sup>37</sup>, the so called “international” contemporary art world is still controlled by the West and the most influential institutions are still all located in the Western world (as a matter of fact, in a small number of countries that all belong to the Western world)<sup>38</sup>.

Considering the previous figures, it is evident that, in recent years, as given the sudden breakthrough of Chinese artists on the contemporary art market – at least at auctions – that is not associated with a similar presence in art institutions, the relationship between the creation of art value through institutions on the one hand and through the market on the other hand<sup>39</sup> is no longer valid, at least at the very top of the contemporary art world.

Still, what is the situation for non-Chinese artists? Are the same artists found in the rankings that try and reflect the highest degree of visibility and fame on one side and those rankings that reflect economic success on the art market on the other side? To study this, we elaborated a new list of the top 100 artists at auctions (still for the

36 QUEMIN, A. *La Chine et l'art contemporain. L'arrivée de l'Empire du Milieu dans le monde et sur le marché de l'art*. In: BRET, J.-N. & MOUREAU, N. (Ed.). *L'art, l'argent et la mondialisation*. Paris: L'Harmattan, 2013, p. 77-98.

37 *Ibidem*.

38 Idem. *L'art contemporain international. Entre les institutions et le marché*. Nimes: Jacqueline Chambon ; Lyon: Artprice, 2002; Idem. L'illusion de l'abolition des frontières dans le monde de l'art contemporain international. La place des pays “périphériques” à l'ère de la globalisation et du métissage. *Sociologie et Sociétés*, v. XXXIV, n. 2, automne, 2002, p. 15-40; \_\_\_\_\_. Globalization and mixing in the visual arts. An empirical survey of “high culture” and globalization. *International Sociology*, v. 21, n. 4, Jul., 2006, p. 522-550; Idem. The internationalization of the contemporary art world and market: the role of nationality and territory in a supposedly “globalized” sector. In: LIND, Maria & VELTHUIS, Olav (Ed.). *Contemporary art and its commercial markets*. Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2012, p. 53-84; Idem. International contemporary art fairs in a “globalized” art market. *European Societies*, v. 15, n. 2, 201, p. 162-177. Idem. *Les stars de l'art contemporain. Notoriété et consécration artistiques dans les arts visuels*, op. cit.; Idem. From “national creativity” to social recognition and success in the visual arts: a sociological perspective on rankings of the “Top 100 Artists in the World”, op. cit.; VAN HEST, F. *Territorial factors in a globalized art world? The visibility of countries in international contemporary art events*. Rotterdam: ERMeCC, 2012.

39 MOULIN, R., 1992, op. cit.

same period of time 2011-2012) by removing all the names of Chinese artists, except the very few of them who have a high or at least significant degree of visibility on the international contemporary art scene. The new ranking that we thus obtained from Artprice data is presented in the fourth column of Table I.

What is demonstrated if we now compare the previous list of non-Chinese (with some rare exceptions of those who have a real international visibility in institutions) contemporary artists who make the highest sales at auctions with the rankings of the most famous or visible artists that we previously presented and analysed? The step rate of the ranking that we elaborated with the Artprice data on auctions and the Kunstkompas is only 26%. Still, one fact should be stressed: as Artprice includes in the contemporary art category only artists who were born after 1945 and as star artists today are old or even very old<sup>40</sup>, such star artists as Gerhard Richter or Georg Baselitz, although they are very present on the market and sell at very high prices are not referenced by Artprice in the contemporary art category. The inclusion of a few such examples suggests that an overlap rate of about one third would be more probable if there were no such bias in the Artprice definition of contemporary art as the one that we have just mentioned. Still, the step rate remains much lower than what could have been expected considerate of Raymonde Moulin's theory on the creation of art value at the junction of art institutions and the art market<sup>41</sup>, even for Western artists.

It may be useful to acknowledge the high proportion of American and German artists; the proportion of the latter being due to the overrepresentation and overweight of German institutions in the elaboration mode of the Kunstkompas and hence of German artists in the result of the ranking.

As we have compared the ranking that we developed using Artprice data with the Kunstkompas, we can now compare it with the top 100 artists of the Artfacts ranking. One could expect to acquire a significantly higher step rate as the construction mode of the Artfacts list includes some events that are connected to the market such as the galleries that promote the artists or the presence of some works at important auctions. However, this is not the case, and instead of a step rate of 26% between the Kunstkompas and the ranking that we elaborated using Artprice data, the rate is 27% (there again, one should add 2 points for Gerhard Richter and Georg Baselitz who were born before 1945 and who are stars of the market) – just one point more – in the case of the later and Artfacts ranking. This may be due to the fact that there is a bias that favours German artists among creators who are referenced in the Kunstkompas and, as these artists are very active and appreciated in the market, notably at auctions, they often tend to be simultaneously represented both in the Kunstkompas and in Artprice data of the best sales at auctions, which tends to compensate for the integration of market factors in the calculation mode of Artfacts ranking.

As was already seen in the case of the Kunstkompas, the link between the Artfacts ranking in terms of visibility in the contemporary art world and success on the contemporary art market as expressed through the ranking that we built using Artprice data proves to be weak, even for Western artists (mostly). Besides, one should

<sup>40</sup> QUEMIN, A. *Les stars de l'art contemporain. Notoriété et consécration artistiques dans les arts visuels*, op. cit.

<sup>41</sup> MOULIN, R., 1992, op. cit.

not forget that we decided to put aside most Chinese artists in the second ranking in order to check if the disconnection between aesthetic success and economic success that we immediately noticed was only due to the eruption of Chinese artists on the contemporary art market from 2007 onward. However, the figures that we analysed previously tend to show that the disconnection between aesthetic success and economic success is even more general. This may be due to the fact that the theory of Raymonde Moulin<sup>42</sup> was never empirically tested and may have been false or too systematic at the time when it was formulated at the beginning of the 1990's, or that it does not apply at the very top of the art market and at the highest level of artistic consecration. It may also be due to the fact that, during the most recent years, the market reinforced its own legitimacy on the creation of art value and does not need the support or art institutions (biennials, museums and art centres) as much as before to build its own star artists in a logic of its own, illustrating the Bourdieusian concept of heteronomy<sup>43</sup>.

Although we know both from the interviews that we conducted and from the field work that we made as an art journalist and critic that recognition by art museums and art centres is sought by artists and their gallerists in order to build artistic careers and comfort prices on the market, it seems that today, at the highest level of success, there exists a hiatus between fame and aesthetic recognition on the one hand and economic success on the other hand. This may be due to the fact that only the very top segment of both universes is considered, where artists may have to specialise more into an art that will be appreciated and appraised either by institutions or by the market<sup>44</sup>, or it may also be that, since Raymonde Moulin formulated her theory at the very beginning of the 1990's, the marked has significantly developed and, at its highest level, has partly disjointed from art institutions<sup>45</sup>.

### **A second way of identifying the artists who are most recognised by the market through prestige auction sales**

A second method for identifying the artists who are most recognised by the market considers artists whose works are sold at prestigious auction sales. This can lead once again to the comparison of their list with that of the most famous or visible artists referenced in reputational rankings, especially the two most important of them that we regularly analyse here, the Kunstkompass and the Artfacts ranking. As the presence in the previous economic ranking based on Artprice data can partly depend on the volume of works that are sold on a particular year, another perspective can be adopted that consists in focusing attention on the artists whose works generally

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<sup>42</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>43</sup> BOURDIEU, P. *Photography: a middle brow art*. Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1996 (*Un art moyen. Essai sur les usages sociaux de la photographie*. Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1965).

<sup>44</sup> MOULIN, R., 1992, op. cit.

<sup>45</sup> BOURDIEU, P. *Photography: a middle brow art*. Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1996 (*Un art moyen. Essai sur les usages sociaux de la photographie*, op. cit.).

generate the highest prices at auctions. In order to identify these artists, we decided to analyse prestigious sales organised by the two most important auction houses worldwide, Christie's and Sotheby's, and focus on the contemporary art prestige sales (evening sales) that they hold twice a year in their two main locations for contemporary art, New York and London. We decided to consider both locations as the market tends to be segmented in each of the cities according to the following principle: generally, works that are more fitted to American taste are sold in New York City whereas works that are more appropriate for a more European demand are sold in London, the "local" still mattering even in a market as internationalised as the very top segment of the art market<sup>46</sup>. Even if, generally speaking, the most important artists and works are sold in New York City even more than in London, it seemed appropriate to focus on both locations. Apart from such superstars as German artist Gerhard Richter whose works are often sold in New York City, the American market is more likely to be chosen for American artists and other creators living in the USA.

We analysed four contemporary art prestige ("evening") post-war and contemporary art sales organised by Christie's in 2012 and made similar work for Sotheby's contemporary art evening auction sales on that same year. 90 different artists are represented in these sales.

The list that is obtained comprises therefore of 90 "star artists" listed in Table 3 whose market is strong enough for them to have works included in the most prestigious contemporary art sales and who are all the more successful as they are sold simultaneously by Christie's and Sotheby's. What proportion of these star artists in the market could be found in the *Kunstkompass* in 2012 in its top 90 artists?

In fact, as Table 2 shows, only 28 artists out of 90 (one third of them) can be found simultaneously in the top 90 ranks of the *Kunstkompass* and in the list of artists whose works are sold in the most prestigious auction sales; that is to say that they are both stars for institutions and stars for the market. Here again, there is a significant difference in terms of aesthetic success on the one hand and economic success on the other hand, even if one finds in the economic ranking several artists who were included in previous rankings of the *Kunstkompass* than its 2012 edition and, simultaneously, some artists who were ranked in the *Kunstkompass* in 2012 had sometimes been sold at prestige auctions on some previous years. Still, even if Raymonde Moulin suggested that the value of art is created at the junction of institutions and of the market<sup>47</sup>, there seems to be always more artists, at least at the very top of the contemporary art social world<sup>48</sup>, whose production is very market oriented whereas the work of other artists is more esteemed by art institutions. Hence it is more unlikely to meet each kind of artist in the other universe than the

46 QUEMIN, A. *L'art contemporain international...*, op. cit.; QUEMIN, A. *L'illusion de l'abolition des frontiers...*, op. cit.; QUEMIN, A. *Globalization and mixing in the visual arts...*, op. cit.; QUEMIN, A. *International contemporary art fairs in a "globalized" art market*, op. cit.; HERRERO, M. *Sociology and art markets. European Societies*, v. 15, n. 2, 2013, p. 155-161; VELTHUIS, O. *Globalization of markets for contemporary art. Why local ties remain dominant in amsterdam and berlin. European Societies*, v. 15, n. 2, 2013, p. 290-308.

47 MOULIN, R., 1992, op. cit.

48 BECKER, H. S. *Art worlds*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1982.

one to which it belongs which may be due to a recent increase of autonomization of the market from the institutional world and norms<sup>49</sup>.

	Christie's	Sotheby's	Total	Rank in the KK 2012
Abramovic Marina	0	0	0	62
Allora & Calzadilla	0	1	1	/
Alsoudani Ahmed	2	2	4	/
Alÿs Francis	0	0	0	31
Andre Carl	0	0	0	88
Auerbach Frank	1	12	13	/
Baldessari John	0	1	1	17
Barcelo Miquel	1	0	1	/
Barney Matthew	0	0	0	23
Baselitz Georg	2	1	3	3
Becher Bernd & Hilla	0	0	0	53
Bock John	0	0	0	84
Boltanski Christian	0	0	0	14
Bonvicini Monica	0	0	0	56
Bradford Mark	0	2	2	/
Brown Cecily	1	0	1	/
Brown Glenn	0	5	5	/
Buren Daniel	0	0	0	48
Calle Sophie	0	0	0	64
Cattelan Maurizio	0	1	1	21
Celmins Vija	1	0	1	/
Ceylan Taner	1	0	1	/
Christo & Jeanne-Claude	0	0	0	18
Condo George	1	0	1	/
Cragg Tony	0	0	0	59
Curran John	2	1	3	/

<sup>49</sup> BOURDIEU, P. *Photography: a middle brow art*. Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1996 (*Un art moyen. Essai sur les usages sociaux de la photographie*. Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1965); *The rules of art. Genesis and structure of the literary field*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996 (translated from *Les règles de l'art. Genèse et structure du champ littéraire*. Paris: Seuil, 1992); BOURDIEU, P. *Manet. Une révolution symbolique*. Paris: Le Seuil, 2013.

de Bruyckere Berline	1	0	1	/
Dean Tacita	0	0	0	60
Demand Thomas	0	0	0	34
Doig Peter	1	0	1	/
Dumas Marlene	0	0	0	58
Eliasson Olafur	0	0	0	9
Escobar Marisol	1	0	1	/
Feldmann Hans-Peter	0	0	0	77
Fischer Urs	2	3	5	/
Fischl Eric	1	0	1	/
Fischli & Weiss	0	0	0	26
Förg Günther	0	0	0	41
Fritsch Katharina	0	0	0	74
Genzken Isa	0	2	2	63
Gilbert & George	1	0	1	27
Gillick Liam	0	0	0	73
Gober Robert	1	0	1	61
Goldin Nan	1	0	1	/
Gordon Douglas	0	0	0	20
Gormley Antony	1	0	1	/
Graham Dan	0	0	0	42
Graham Rodney	0	0	0	80
Grotjahn Mark	2	1	3	/
Gupta Subodh	0	1	1	/
Gursky Andreas	2	5	7	12
Guyton Wade	0	2	2	/
Gyatso Gonkar	0	1	1	/
Hatoum Mouna	0	0	0	40
Hirschhorn Thomas	0	0	0	46
Hirst Damien	2	9	11	28
Hockney David	0	2	2	82
Hodgkin Howard	1	1	2	/
Höller Carsten	0	0	0	43
Holzer Jenny	0	0	0	36

Horn Rebecca	0	0	0	72
Horn Roni	0	0	0	78
Houseago Thomas	2	1	3	/
Huyghe Pierre	0	0	0	44
Indiana Robert	1	1	1	/
Johns Jasper	3	0	3	19
Jones Allen	1	0	1	/
Kabakov Ilya & Emilia	0	0	0	37
Kahn Idriss	1	0	1	/
Kapoor Anish	3	6	9	76
Kassay Jacob	0	1	1	/
Kelley Mike	0	0	0	8
Kelly Ellsworth	2	0	2	55
Kentridge William	0	0	0	13
Kher Bharti	0	1	1	/
Kiefer Anselm	5	2	7	6
Knoebel Imi	0	0	0	35
Koons Jeff	4	1	5	16
Kounellis Jannis	0	0	0	57
Kusama Yayoi	0	1	1	/
Levine Sherrie	1	0	1	/
Ligon Glenn	0	2	2	/
Long Richard	0	0	0	81
Lüpertz Markus	0	0	0	67
Marden Brice	0	3	3	/
McCarthy Paul	0	0	0	29
Meese Jonathan	0	0	0	68
Milhazes Beatriz	1	1	2	/
Morley Malcolm	0	1	1	/
Murakami Takashi	1	3	4	/
Nara Yoshitomo	0	1	1	/
Nauman Bruce	0	0	0	2
Neshat Shirin	0	0	0	38
Oehlen Albert	2	4	6	/

Offili Chris	1	0	1	/
Oldenbug Claes	0	0	0	32
Orozco Gabriel	0	0	0	47
Oursler Tony	0	0	0	87
Penck A-R	0	0	0	83
Pettibon Raymond	0	0	0	51
Peyton Elizabeth	1	0	1	/
Pistoletto Michelangelo	0	1	1	79
Prince Richard	3	3	6	54
Quinn Ged	2	1	3	/
Rainer Arnulf	0	0	0	49
Rauch Neo	0	1	1	50
Ray Charles	0	1	1	/
Rego Paula	2	0	2	/
Rehberger Tobias	0	0	0	45
Richter Daniel	1	0	1	/
Richter Gerhard	14	13	27	1
Riley Bridget	0	1	1	/
Rist Pipilotti	0	0	0	10
Rothenberg Susan	1	0	1	/
Ruff Thomas	0	0	0	15
Ruscha Ed	2	2	4	33
Ryman Robert	1	2	3	/
Schneider Gregor	0	0	0	70
Schütte Thomas	1	0	1	25
Scully Sean	2	0	2	/
Serra Richard	1	0	1	7
Shaw Raqib	0	1	1	/
Sherman Cindy	2	3	5	5
Smith Kiki	0	0	0	86
Songsong Li	1	0	1	/
Soulages Pierre	1	0	1	/
Stella Frank	1	0	1	69
Struth Thomas	1	0	1	24

Sugimoto Hiroshi	0	0	0	85
Tàpies Antoni	1	0	1	/
Thiebaud Wayne	2	1	3	/
Tillmans Wolfgang	0	0	0	90
Tiravanija Rirkrit	0	0	0	75
Tomaselli Fred	2	0	2	/
Trockel Rosemarie	1	1	2	4
Tuymans Luc	0	3	3	52
Tyson Keith	0	1	1	/
Uecker Günther	1	0	1	65
Ufan Lee	0	1	1	/
Viola Bill	0	0	0	22
Walker Kara	0	0	0	66
Walker Kelley	0	1	1	/
Wall Jeff	2	1	3	30
Warren Rebecca	1	0	1	/
Wateridge Jonathan	1	0	1	/
Weiner Lawrence	0	0	0	39
Weiwei Ai	1	2	3	89
West Franz	0	0	0	11
Whiteread Rachel	0	0	0	71
Wool Christopher	4	4	8	/
Xiaogang Zhang	0	1	1	/

**Table 2** – Comparison of the list of the 90 artists sold by Christie's and Sotheby's in 2012 in their contemporary art prestige sales in New York City and in London (with number of works sold per artist) with the list of the top 90 artists of the Kunstkompass on that same year

## CONCLUSION

The present article produced several findings which can contribute to the sociology of visibility and fame and celebrity<sup>50</sup> in the visual arts domain. Firstly, it is demonstrated that when the methodology utilised to measure visibility or success is formalised, the results produced generally vary very little from one year to the following, thus confirming a result already obtained by Arnout van de Rijt, Eran Shor, Charles Ward

50 FERRIS, K. O., op. cit.

and Steven Skiena on the persistence of fame over time in the case of the printed media<sup>51</sup>. The new set of data that was analysed here thus confirms former empirical research and is a step towards the generalisation of previous findings on the stability of fame over time; a result that contradicts what was generally considered in the sociology of fame until recently. A more specific finding is that it also appeared, from the visual arts example that was considered here, that the results that are obtained in the rankings that are produced to try and objectify fame and artists' positions in this social world<sup>52</sup> through quantified, formalised processes is not that much influenced by the use of a very elaborated/complex methodology. On the contrary, referring or not to judgments or acts that have been either formulated or completed by experts<sup>53</sup> on the one hand or by lay actors on the other hand has a strong impact but mostly when fame in general, rather than consecration – the highest form of it – is concerned. In so far, consecration appears to be a social process of a different nature.

The second focus of the article was more embedded in economic sociology applied to art and consisted in trying and empirically testing Raymonde Moulin's theory of the construction of art value at the junction of art institutions and the art market, there again to better understand how fame is constructed in the art world and what affects it. Surprisingly, the step rate remains much lower than what could have been expected considering Raymonde Moulin's theory when we compared rankings of the most famous / visible artists on the one hand and those who meet the highest degree of success on the market, be it in term of results that they make at auctions or through their presence in prestige sales, on the other. This hiatus between fame and aesthetic recognition on the one hand and economic success on the other hand may be due to the fact that only the very top segment of each universes was considered, a segment where artists may have to specialise more into an art that will be appreciated and appraised either by institutions or by the market, or it may also be that, since Raymonde Moulin formulated her theory at the very beginning of the 1990's, the contemporary art market has significantly developed and, at its highest level, has partly disjointed from art institutions with a recent increase of autonomisation of the market from the institutional world and norms producing heteronomy<sup>54</sup>. Fame or reputational success is rather independent from economic success even in a domain as marked by uncertainty of value in general as contemporary art where reputations, aesthetic success, could have been thought to be central to determine economic value.

As the present article was meant to be very empirically grounded, we decided to focus on the contemporary visual arts only. It may now be necessary that specialists of other artistic domains test our results in order to indicate if our findings on fame and consecration in the arts are specific to the domain that we studied or if they possess a wider pertinence beyond the visual arts case that was studied.

51 VAN DE RIJT, A. et al., *op. cit.*

52 BECKER, H. S., *op. cit.*

53 MOULIN, R. & QUEMIN, A., *op. cit.*; KARPIK, L., *op. cit.*

54 BOURDIEU, P. *Photography: a middle brow art*, *op. cit.*; BOURDIEU, P., *The rules of art. Genesis and structure of the literary field*, *op. cit.*

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