

# WYDARZENIA

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## *Towards a Sustainable Art Market?* The 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the TIAMSA – The International Art Market Studies Association Brussels, 30 June – 1 July 2023

The challenges brought by extreme climate change events in recent years have led us, as participants in the art world, to reflect on the impact of our own actions on the sustainable development of the international art market scene. The 6<sup>th</sup> Annual TIAMSA (The International Art Market Studies Association) Conference, organized in cooperation with the Université libre de Bruxelles, is a timely meeting of the minds aimed at shedding light on the question of sustainability (in all its dimensions: social, economic, and environmental) within the art market.

During two working days, the following six topics were discussed by approximately twenty speakers, experts, and practitioners from diverse backgrounds, each followed by enthusiastic discussions with the audience: 1) “Museum, Curating, and Sustainability” (Chair: Olav Velthuis); 2) “Art, Art market and sustainability” (Chair: Véronique Chagnon-Burke); 3) “Roundtable: Towards a Sustainable Art Market?” (Chair: Anne-Sophie Radermecker); 4) “Technology, Media and Sustainability” (Chair: Filip Vermeulen); 5) “Sustainability and Asia” (Chair: Kim Oosterlinck); and 6) “Galleries and Sustainability” (Chair: Alicja Jagielska-Burduk).

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The conference got off to a great start with a presentation by Claudia Quiñones from Canvas Art Law, London, who gave an overview of how museums, as custodians of heritage and catalysts for sustainability, cope with the current climate crisis by taking actions in line with the UN 2030 Agenda, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and made recommendations for a more sustainable museum culture. Then, Marina Maksimova from Sotheby's Institute of Art, London, brought our attention to the concept of slow curating, i.e., to consider local contexts in sustainable growth and remaining grounded, by analyzing the performances of the institutions within the UK cultural scene and highlighting potential drawbacks in the face of limited funds and resources. Closing the first session, Olav Velthuis and Márton Gera (University of Amsterdam) addressed the question of "The Sustainability of Cultural Philanthropy: Why Private Art Museums Close?" Using qualitative content analysis, they suggested that private museum closures were due to complicated reasons which often involved financial issues, highlighted how private art museums are not as solid as they appear, questioned the legitimacy of private museums, and called for more sustainable strategies in cultural organizations. Further, Ulrike Hahn from Erasmus University Rotterdam presented her findings on how climate-themed exhibitions were perceived by visitors. By focusing on two climate-related exhibitions, she found that many audiences were highly educated and highly engaged in climate change issues and perception differed for only a few small matters, concluding that adding benches to the choir and reaching wider audiences will continue to be an important task. Then, Julie Reiss (independent art historian) discussed the case of the "Green" auction by ChangeNOW and Christie's (2021), "MoreArtLessCarbon: The First Sustainable Art Charity Auction," where the artworks were made from upcycled materials, and reflected on what sustainability means for the creation of art. Investigating the perspective of collectors, Adelaide Duarte (Universidade Nova de Lisboa) and Marta Perez-Ibañez (Universidade de Grenada) underlined the fact that, ontologically, to collect is to accumulate artworks continually, which is contradictory to sustainability. They provided insights on collector's attitudes, suggested alternative models, and raised awareness regarding the need for a paradigm shift towards slow collecting as a responsible collecting process. After the two engaging sessions, the first day wrapped up with a roundtable chaired by Anne-Sophie Radermecker, where practitioners from the art market scene joined the conversation on Towards a Sustainable Art Market. Emmanuel Van De Putte (Senior Director, Managing Director at Sotheby's Belgium & Luxembourg), Nele Verhaeren (Managing Director of Art Brussels), and Noémie Goldman (Gallery Director at Gillis Goldman Fine Art and Agnews Brussels), shared their industry insights on the sustainable practices adopted by art institutions, such as going digital with catalogues, but also highlighted the digital fatigue which everyone has been experiencing since the pandemic.

The second day opened with a session on Technology, Media, and Sustainability. "The Hall of Mirrors?: Readdressing art investment in the contemporary NFT

market through the lens of commercial dealerships” was presented by Georgia Gerson (University of York), who examined three cases of commercial dealerships in London and shed light on how dealers in the NFT market are adapting to the rapidly changing market, their marketing strategies, and the impacts on artists and collectors. Anita Archer from the University of Melbourne highlighted that the global art market operates as a sustainable ecosystem with a special focus on the well-being of stakeholders of the art world, particularly artists. Based on the agrarian concept of *lumbung* (rice barn), she examined the post-Covid global art world from the perspective of technology and the emerging genre of digital art and illustrated how greater focus on infrastructural care and design could help build a more resilient and socially significant cultural field. This session was closed by Ulrike Hahn and Filip Vermeylen (Erasmus University Rotterdam) who addressed the news coverage of climate-related art through qualitative content analysis of approximately 125 newspaper articles, which revealed that climate-related art was often reported as a reflection on societal issues but is also tied to demanding change, and is evaluated based on external factors such as subversive power, topicality, environmental sustainability, and artistic qualities. The second session of the day focused on insights from the Asian art markets. Inspired by the explosive growth of the art market in Hong Kong, Zoran Poposki (The Education University of Hong Kong) highlighted the unique environment of the Hong Kong art market as a gateway to the large and growing Chinese art market and key factors, such as the free-market economy and well-developed infrastructure, that contributed to the development of Hong Kong’s art market as a global hub. Georgina S. Walker (The University of Melbourne) presented a unique case study of the Naoshima and Techima Islands in Japan to illustrate the power of art to reverse environmental damage and underlined the coexistence of the natural environment and the complex art world. To close the session, Kim Oosterlinck, Anne-Sophie Radermecker and Yuqing Song (Université libre de Bruxelles) provided insight from the Chinese art market by addressing the critical issue of authenticity in art, focusing on a Chinese Old Master and revealing the unique evaluation mechanism of copies in the Chinese market as the largest emerging art market in the world. Their study challenged the way copies were and should be evaluated in the context of art authenticity and highlighted the international art market as an interconnected ecosystem. Last but not least, in the final session, Melanie Fasche from the Sotheby’s Institute stressed the power of joining forces for a more sustainable art market as a strategy to navigate challenges by exploring the collaborative strategies of galleries, and Anne-Sophie Radermecker from Université libre de Bruxelles proposed her innovative ERC funded research project (MOOVA: Making Old Objects Valuable Again) on the market for antiques to expand on new research areas but also for the development of a more sustainable art market.

“The best way to create the future is to create it.” TIAMSA’s sixth annual conference brought together insights from international speakers from a wide variety

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of academic and practical fields to pave the way towards a sustainable art market. Through the lenses of museum and curating, artworks and collectors, practitioners from art institutions, technology and media, Asian art market, and galleries and new research directions, the two-day conference was filled with engaging presentations and stimulating conversations. The next conference by TIAMSA, as a first attempt to engage audiences outside Europe but also to advance understanding on the local actors of the art market, will take place at the University of Melbourne in Australia in July 11-13, 2024. We anticipate it will continue with the conferences' tradition of yielding new perspectives and opportunities for interconnected practitioners. For more information, see: [www.artmarketstudies.org](http://www.artmarketstudies.org).