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The Value of Art as a Means of Cultural (and Personal) Expression in an Increasingly Globalised World

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Fine Art

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“The value of art as a means of cultural (and personal) expression in an increasingly globalised world”

Fine Art (Hons)

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of a Bachelor of Art (Hons) degree in Fine Art

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis sets out to highlight the value of art as a means of cultural expression in a world that is becoming increasingly globalised.

Chapter one gives insight into what the commercial art market is and what it looks like. Discussing the role of large galleries and auction houses and goes into detail into the workings of that world and the artists that have gained big names as well as a lot of money through the way the system works. It also looks at what local art galleries and artist run spaces look like and their role and place in the contemporary art market. Through looking at these two spaces, I aim to give an accurate impression of what the global art world looks like with its strengths and weaknesses.

In chapter two I dissect the intricacies between the artists and their cultural context to highlight the importance of the nationality as well as cultural and personal background of an artist with regards to the artwork they make and the unique voice with which they present their art. In this way, I will create a picture of how you can see and experience the culture and upbringing of an artist through their work. After I have done this, I will reflect on my own personal practice and the fascination I hold with cultures, languages and the expression of a national identity. Through unpacking my practice, I aim to draw importance to learning about various cultures, their unique perspectives and the importance of being able to learn and connect with those cultures to build global connections.

Chapter three aims to highlight ways in which culture can be preserved within the art world and the value of educating young people well on the importance of the nation's past and contemporary art practice. In this chapter I will be looking around travel gallery Scotland also known as art on a bus and projects such as room 13 and the impact that organisations and projects such as those two have had in the shaping and retaining of the local and national art and how they build a bridge bringing in the next generation of contemporary artists.

I will conclude that whilst there are various different aspects to what makes art valuable, personal expression from the standpoint of cultural and personal experiences plays a key point to fighting the commercialisation of art, where art becomes solely about the money that can be earned as opposed to the value it can bring to the people it is created for.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

TITLE	PAGE NUMBER
ABSTRACT	3
LIST OF FIGURES	5
INTRODUCTION	6-7
CHAPTER 1	
1.1 <u>Giving context for the Globalised and Commercialised Art Market</u>	8-12
1.2 <u>Giving context for Artist Run Initiatives and galleries with a focus on Community</u>	13-15
CHAPTER 2	
2.1 <u>Artists who make work on the value of Culture in their practice</u>	16-19
2.2 <u>How my personal practice relates to the value of culture in art</u>	20-22
CHAPTER 3	
3.1 <u>Bridging the gap between commercial and cultural art through artists in schools</u>	23-24
3.2 <u>Traveling Gallery Scotland – Art on a Bus bringing art to secluded communities</u>	25
CONCLUSION	26
BIBLIOGRAPHY	27-32

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

**Fig 1.** “The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living” 1991, Damien Hirst, Glass, steel, silicone, shark and 5% formaldehyde solution, 217 x 542 x 180 cm | 85 7/16 x 213 3/8 x 70 7/8 in

**Fig 2.** “Brillo Box (Soap Pads)” 1964, Andy Warhol, Polyvinyl acetate and silkscreen ink on wood, 17 1/8 x 17 x 14" (43.3 x 43.2 x 36.5 cm)

**Fig 3.** “Grow me a Waterlily, আমার জন্য একটি শাপলা পরিচর্যা কর” 2017- ongoing, Nilupa Yasmin, Mixed media

**Fig 4.** “The Roar”, 2021, Liu Xiaodong, Oil on canvas, 98 3/8 x 118 1/8 in.

**Fig 5.** “A Gaze in Inverse” 2019, Nelson Makamo, Charcoal, pastel and oil on canvas, 160 x 120 cm

**Fig 6.** “Christ The Redeemer (Cristo Redentor)” 1931, Paul Landowski, Heitor da Silva Costa, Gheorghe Leonida, Albert Caquot, concrete covered in soapstone tiles, 98 feet (30 metres) tall and its arms stretch 92 feet (28 meters) wide

## INTRODUCTION

The value of Art is a hard subject to have a one-sided, straightforward answer to, so I will not begin to attempt to fully define it in this dissertation. However, what I will be doing is highlighting the importance of art as a reflection of culture and personal expression and how art can equally inspire a culture and shape as well as reflect it. With the increasing pull of globalisation, there is a lack of cultural identity and value placed on a countries unique voice and expression. It is the aim of this dissertation to rekindle a passion for culture within the arts and to present ways in which to preserve the mindset to create art that is culturally relevant and unique to the perspective and upbringing of the artist.

To start this evaluation, I will need to shed light on what is meant with the term “The Artworld”. This term as it is used in this dissertation refers to the workings of every aspect and component within the art industry and how this industry is presented to everyone interacting with it. I have reached this conclusion through researching the origin of the term “The Artworld”, which came from a journal article written by Arthur C Danto called: “The Artworld”<sup>1</sup> in this essay he explains that when referring to “The Artworld” it needs to be seen as everything as a whole, one side cannot exist without its opposite side also being present. He also dissects various artists works and the way that art marketing operates. When he does this, he states: “The greater the variety of artistically relevant predicates, the more complex the individual members of the artworld become; and the more one knows of the entire population of the artworld, the richer one's experience with any of its members.”<sup>2</sup>

To further my research into this term I also found an article by Ben Eastham in which he had given a survey to people and writes about the responses: “That there exists an artworld went largely unchallenged, albeit people were liable in the follow-ups to argue that there are several intersecting artworlds, or to distinguish between ‘the market’ and every other aspect of artistic production, or to say that the artworld should be dismantled as a matter of urgency, or to refer me to Arthur Danto’s 1964 essay ‘The Artworld’ (which type of noncommittal deferral to an external authority is also very artworld), all of which points have obvious merits and warrant discussion at greater length than is possible here.”<sup>3</sup> This highlights the need to dissect the term further in parts to create an accurate picture of what people now refer to as “The Artworld” with all of its varying expressions.

In the first chapter, I will create a setting for what is meant with the term “The Artworld” as a whole and compare and contrast big galleries and commercialised spaces with local galleries and artist run spaces.

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<sup>1</sup> Danto, A. (1964) ‘The Artworld’, *The Journal of Philosophy*, 61(19), pp. 571–584.

<sup>2</sup> Danto, A. (1964) ‘The Artworld’, *The Journal of Philosophy*, 61(19), pp. 571–584.

<sup>3</sup> Eastham, B. (2020) *What Is ‘the Artworld’?*, *artreview.com*. Available at: <https://artreview.com/what-is-the-artworld/>.

In the second chapter, I will be referring to artists that make art that is reflective of their cultures as well as celebrating culture as a whole. I will be looking at the components of their work and how their work plays an interactive and important part in connecting cultures. As well as looking into my own practice and how I approach creating a space to celebrate cultural diversity as well as the expression of language. My interest in making work about diverse cultures stemming from moving countries many times in my life and my fascination with languages coming from the fact that I speak several.

In the third and final chapter, I will be looking at the systems put in place to help propel the art culture in Scotland forward in cultural expression and the places that have created room for artists to thrive, express their authentic voice and bring art to those who are from backgrounds and places that have less access to the arts because they are part of a more marginalised community. The aim of this chapter is to highlight the importance of culture in art to build a bridge connecting communities with each other.

These points are all important to highlight and increase awareness of the key role that art plays in creating culture and propelling culture forward. Additionally, culture adds value to art therefore, it is valuable to allow space for art to have unique expressions that are influenced by culture.

# CHAPTER 1

## 1.1 Giving context for the Globalised and Commercialised Art Market

The glamourised art world is one where artists earn millions for their work and their work is shown in the big galleries all over the world. But is this a true reflection of the artists world? To simplify the definition of “The Artworld”, I have split the concept up into two main sections. I will be dissecting the first of those in this part of the chapter which is “The Artworld” that has become glamorised and commercialised. When starting my research for this dissertation I came across the book: “The \$12 million Stuffed Shark- The Curious Economics of Contemporary Art”<sup>4</sup> in this book Dom Thompson refers to the work of Damien Hirst called “The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living”<sup>5</sup> This work is of a taxidermized shark of which the concept was more so praised than the work itself, unsurprisingly the original taxidermized shark no longer exists and got replaced by a second one, due to issues with the preservation of the first. The fluid the shark is preserved in is formaldehyde.



**Fig 1.** “*The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living*” 1991, Damien Hirst, Glass, steel, silicone, shark and 5% formaldehyde solution, 217 x 542 x 180 cm | 85 7/16 x 213 3/8 x 70 7/8 in

Thompson is critical of many aspects of the economic side to art, with regards to the art of people that are heavily involved in the commercialised art market. He himself admits to not

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<sup>4</sup> Thompson, D. (2009) *The 12 Million Stuffed Shark The Curious Economics of Contemporary Art*. New York: Doubleday Canada.

<sup>5</sup> Cube, W. (2025) *The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living by...*, *White Cube*. Available at: <https://www.whitecube.com/artworks/the-physical-impossibility-of-death-in-the-mind-of-someone-living>.

having had any prior knowledge of the inner workings of the art world before starting his research on this book meaning he had no bias going into his research.

Another artist Thompson refers to with a critical eye in his book is Andy Warhol. He makes a reference to his work called “Brillo Box (Soap Pads)”<sup>6</sup> which are some of Warhol’s first Readymades. Readymades refer to a type of artwork first used by Marcel Duchamp where ordinary items are transformed into an artwork. Warhol’s version of a Readymade is an exact copy of an item such as in this case Brillo boxes that look identical to the original product you would get from a shop. Creating art such as this was the beginning of a long discussion in the realm of art about what exactly can and cannot be art. In many ways this discussion is still ongoing, and you will find a range of answers that often differ based on an individual’s opinion.



**Fig 2.** “Brillo Box (Soap Pads)” 1964, Andy Warhol, Polyvinyl acetate and silkscreen ink on wood, 17 1/8 x 17 x 14” (43.3 x 43.2 x 36.5 cm)

A work that reviews Dom Thompson’s book is an article by Kathryn Graddy called “Book Review- ‘The \$12 million Stuffed Shark- The Curious Economics of Contemporary Art’”<sup>7</sup> in this review Graddy writes: “Thompson has formed negative views both of Contemporary Art and of Contemporary Art dealers, and he uses these chapters to advance these views. This is

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<sup>6</sup> Warhol, A. (2019) *Brillo Box (Soap Pads)*, *The Museum of Modern Art*. MoMA. Available at: <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/81384>.

<sup>7</sup> Graddy, K. (2025) ‘Review: [Untitled] on JSTOR’, *Jstor.org*, 33(3). Available at: <https://doi.org/10.2307/41811028>.

evident in comments like “One should remember that the key part of the word contemporary is ‘temporary’” which is a clear position that Thompson does take, having had no previous knowledge of the inner workings of “The Artworld” it is clear that he has little value for the institutions he reviews in his work such as: Sotheby's, White Cube and countless other galleries and auction houses which present work by “Big Name” artists.”<sup>8</sup> Graddy summarises the book up by stating that: “Thompson believes that artists, dealers, and auction houses have conspired to brand certain artists, thereby driving up their prices. Which is more so his opinion than a well-researched and backed up fact.”<sup>9</sup> Thompson's perspective is an interesting one to take on the innerworkings of that aspect of “The Artworld” and just goes to show how he only analyses one side of “The Artworld” namely the glamourised side, posing the question of whether or not he is aware of the other side to “The Artworld”. In a documentary called: “The Mona Lisa Curse” made by Robert Hughes<sup>10</sup>, Thompson's belief about the branding of artists is confirmed. This documentary quotes one of New York's most knowledgeable dealers Richard Feigen about the branding and price of artworks and their corresponding artists: “A menu of certain favoured artists has gotten expensive because they have been promoted, this is my opinion, and it has very little to do very often with how important they are.”<sup>11</sup> Overall, Graddy states about the book that: “While reading the book, however, it is important to keep in mind two caveats. First, not all information that is stated as fact may be correct. Secondly, branding may not be the cause of expensive pieces of contemporary art. Work may be expensive because it is culturally important or innovative and therefore in great demand.”<sup>12</sup> which I believe is an excellent point of view, especially as it draws back importance on arts role in shaping culture, which remains a noble cause that is inevitably carried by any art institution whether it has been globalised or not.

Additionally, in my research into the commercial art world, I came across a documentary called: “The Price of Everything”<sup>13</sup>. This documentary goes on a deep dive into the inner workings of the contemporary art market. Taking a critical look at how this operates. This documentary deals with “Big Name” artists those artists who got “randomly” selected to have their work circulated in galleries. “Randomly” refers to the fact that these artists have been made famous through their connections and the friendships they have built. The effort they

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<sup>8</sup> Graddy, K. (2025) ‘Review: [Untitled] on JSTOR’, *Jstor.org*, 33(3). Available at: <https://doi.org/10.2307/41811028>.

<sup>9</sup> Graddy, K. (2025) ‘Review: [Untitled] on JSTOR’, *Jstor.org*, 33(3). Available at: <https://doi.org/10.2307/41811028>.

<sup>10</sup> Watch, D. (2008) *The Mona Lisa Curse (2008) | Watch Free Documentaries Online, WatchDocumentaries*. documentary by Robert Hughes. Available at: <https://watchdocumentaries.com/the-mona-lisa-curse/>.

<sup>11</sup> Watch, D. (2008) *The Mona Lisa Curse (2008) | Watch Free Documentaries Online, WatchDocumentaries*. documentary by Robert Hughes. Available at: <https://watchdocumentaries.com/the-mona-lisa-curse/>.

<sup>12</sup> Graddy, K. (2025) ‘Review: [Untitled] on JSTOR’, *Jstor.org*, 33(3). Available at: <https://doi.org/10.2307/41811028>.

<sup>13</sup> filmswelike (2018) ‘THE PRICE OF EVERYTHING (Trailer)’, *Vimeo*. Available at: <https://vimeo.com/297964138> (Accessed: 6 February 2025).

put into the art that they produce doesn't always marry up to the price of their work but in a market where fame depends on branding and building connections, being an artist's rides largely on networking. These are artists such as Jeff Koons, Larry Poons, Njideka Akunyili Crosby, etc. A famous art collector called Stefan T. Edlis gets interviewed for the documentary and paraphrases Oscar Wilde by saying: "There are a lot of people who know the price of everything and the value of nothing."<sup>14</sup> This quote refers to the fact that many people in the spheres of the commercial art market, have very little knowledge of art or even any interest in it beyond the mere right they have to be able to say: "This is a Jeff Koons original." The over commercialised art that is being sold at auctions sells for prices that are disconnected to the artist or even the originally perceived value of the work. Not to mention the fact that many artists only get a small percentage of the price that their art was sold for and make even less when their work is auctioned or re-sold. This fact was also re-highlighted in "The Mona Lisa Curse" where there is a scene where many artists are protesting outside an auction house after Robert Scull bought their work for a low price and then auctioned it off for a lot more money, of which they didn't receive any commission. However, the fact that none of the artists received a royalties payment for their work getting sold at auction sparked the motivation for Robert Rauschenberg to fight for artists royalties payments for future sales at art auctions. Unfortunately, this bill never passed legislation in the USA federal law. All of this information presents the important question of whether art and economics should have ever mixed in the first place? And whether there are better models out there for artists to be treated fairly for their work and efforts.

In this documentary artist Njideka Akunyili Crosby also said: "Yeah, museums are, for a lack of a better word, the gatekeepers of culture, to some extent."<sup>15</sup> This is an eye-opening thought, with regards to the type of content and exhibitions that are displayed in a museum. Especially with regards to the type of art that museums display not being restricted to just Contemporary Art but to art from a variety of centuries and movements. Contemporary Art refers to all art that has been created since the 1950's.<sup>16</sup> "Museums are the gatekeepers of culture." is not just a part of a quote that has become widely spread but is a critical statement about how the role of museums has changed towards becoming more commercially focused than focussed on being a representation of culture for the public. Many museums have storehouses of art that rarely get exhibited and are just gathering dust in a basement. This is a result of the complex interplay between museums and auction houses. Of which the role of a museum becomes to both show and add value to the artworks it displays, whether it is cultural value, through its accessibility to the public, or economic value, due to the increased recognition and fame of the artwork. This however is not a guarantee for accessibility of the

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<sup>14</sup> filmswelike (2018) 'THE PRICE OF EVERYTHING (Trailer)', *Vimeo*. Available at: <https://vimeo.com/297964138> (Accessed: 6 February 2025).

<sup>15</sup> filmswelike (2018) 'THE PRICE OF EVERYTHING (Trailer)', *Vimeo*. Available at: <https://vimeo.com/297964138> (Accessed: 6 February 2025).

<sup>16</sup> Walker, S. (2025) *The History of Modern & Contemporary Art Movements — CAI, Contemporary Art Issue - Platform, Publisher & Gallery on Contemporary Art*. Available at: <https://www.contemporaryartissue.com/the-history-of-modern-contemporary-art-movements/>.

art to the whole public because it rather presents the question of when people actually get to see the work as well as who gets to see the work. Say a gallery is in the middle of a bustling city, how are people from areas without a museum able to experience art? How are they able to experience this essential part of culture? These issues have been identified already by artists who seek to address them which creates a distinct and secondary part to “The Artworld” which I will discuss in the second part of this chapter.

## 1.2 Giving context for Artist Run Initiatives and galleries with a focus on Community

In contrast to “The Artworld” presented in the first part of this chapter there is also a side to this world that is run by artists and people with a heart for the local artists and communities. These hubs and spaces are crucial to express the cultural identity of a country as well as the artists themselves. From locally based galleries to artist run spaces they all play a crucial role in the shaping of the type of art being created and the expression this takes on.

One such space that puts a high value on local artists and their voices is: “The Art Department, Paisley”<sup>17</sup> who holds a yearly exhibition with an open call to artists called: “The Big Art Show Paisley” – This is a gallery in the area I grew up in that has open calls that give priority to local artists. This year I have submitted my own work to go up in that space. It went up along with the work of other local artists including several artists that make work specifically on the location and community in Paisley. The value of these types of galleries is that they help give new and up and coming artists such as myself an opportunity to build their artist CV, caters to giving them a place to display art that is expressive to them and gives that community a place to put value on art and creates a space for cultural celebration. The opening of this gallery and the renewal of the town's art centre have made a massive impact on the town's cultural recognition. I remember before this gallery's opening, along with various other artist spaces, the town had many more problem areas and a lack of spaces for people to create. This lack was felt by the community and therefore the change in having spaces for the arts has had an immense positive impact on the whole community in Paisley. The existence of the Paisley Art Centre has helped to become a building block for the ever-growing arts and cultural scene that we experience now. The Art Centre has been in Paisley since 1987 and has recently been revived in a renovated building, this has helped the town as a whole which has even been evidenced through a recent article by the BBC titled: “Paisley named Town of the Year for 'Remarkable' Revival”<sup>18</sup> In this article the renewal of the Art Centre as well as the library, town hall and approaching re-opening of the museum are credited for the increase of businesses that have been opened as well as the increase of visitors to the town.

The same can be said for Dundee, which is a city that has become increasingly established as a city for culture, in which artist have played a key role. As a fine art student at Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design in Dundee I have the privilege of seeing another side of “The Artworld” with a variety of artist run initiatives also known as ARI's and galleries

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<sup>17</sup> The Art Department (2025) *The Art Department, Paisley Ltd – Paisley's newest art gallery, exhibition and event venue in Paisley centre, Art-department.org*. Available at: <https://art-department.org/> (Accessed: 12 December 2025).

<sup>18</sup> BBC (2025) ‘Paisley named Town of the Year for “remarkable” revival’, *BBC News*, 24 October. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cev1d4mg32ro>.

that partner with local artists for their exhibitions. An ARI<sup>19</sup> is any space outside of a traditional run gallery or commercial structure that is run by a community of artists. One such initiatives in Dundee is called Generator Projects<sup>20</sup>. Generator Projects offer a free membership to join them making stepping into an artist run community accessible to all that are interested to do so. They offer paid opportunities to artists, where they simultaneously gain experience in areas such as exhibition making, connecting with a wider audience and networking. They also provide local communities with the chance to interact with the arts through exhibitions, workshops and various types of events. With all their exhibitions being free to attend they have become very accessible to anyone who wants to view them. On their website Generator Projects acknowledges the importance of ARI's by stating that: "These peer-led spaces play a pivotal role in the arts ecosystem, and in engaging local communities. Generator is the second-oldest artist-run space in Scotland, and the oldest in Dundee."<sup>21</sup> This statement agrees with Arthur Danto's opinion of having to look at "The Artworld" in its entirety and not just at one aspect or avenue of it. This is an agreement with the fact that every aspect involved in the makings of "The Artwork" is important to reflect the art market and everything involved accurately.

In my research I came across a network connecting various ARI's across the world with each other. This network is called AIM network<sup>22</sup>. To create this network several artists from different countries gathered because they saw the need to build connections between the existing ARI's in various countries. This network has helped put these artist run spaces on the map and opened exchanges between them, as well as making them easier to find by people that might have previously been unaware of their existence. Because of the initiative of AIM Network. These ARI's seem to be doing globalisation very well, keeping the art all about the local and national artists whilst also connecting with different nations and opening up space to have artists come over from a different country for a brief amount of time, creating a bridge without swinging from the extreme of being isolated as a gallery or exhibition space to being so overrun by internationalism that the gallery retains no space for those who are key artistic voices for their nation.

Through AIM my attention has been drawn to the ARI's that are established in other countries such as the Netherlands and Latvia. In The Hague, the Netherlands there is an

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<sup>19</sup> Kane, N. (2025) *Artist-Run Initiatives in Britain - British Art Network*, British Art Network. Available at: <https://britishartnetwork.org.uk/research/artist-run-initiatives-in-britain/> (Accessed: 14 October 2025).

<sup>20</sup> projects, generator (2023) *About, GENERATORprojects*. Available at: <https://www.generatorprojects.co.uk/about>.

<sup>21</sup> projects, generator (2023) *About, GENERATORprojects*. Available at: <https://www.generatorprojects.co.uk/about>.

<sup>22</sup> Waelder, P. (2025) *AIM Network: Artist Run Map*, Artistsinitiatives.com. Available at: <https://artistsinitiatives.com/artistrunmap/> (Accessed: 14 October 2025).

experimental art space called “Project Space 1646”<sup>23</sup> which is one of the longest standing independent art spaces in that nation. Their goal from the start has been to invite artists to take over the space with their bold and unique voices and statements, which lead it to become a key place for exchanging perspectives and ideas. This space was allowed to flow from being one thing to another, such as, a storefront, a White-Cube space, or a living room and then back to a storefront again. This allows it to be a space to fit around the needs of the artist rather than the artist having to accommodate what they are creating based on the space. They have been participating in festivals and various inter-institutional events and using money from grants to take on more ambitious and sometimes more international projects. They also have a residency project with a strong emphasis on making an environment that has better conditions for artists and workers in the cultural sector. In general, this space has repeatedly shown itself to adapt around the needs of both the artists and the community surrounding it, making it a significant place for the cultural expression of the nation.

In Riga, Latvia, there is an ARI called “Totaldobže Art Centre”<sup>24</sup> which is a platform for interdisciplinary contemporary art activities which prides itself on being a largely experimental space. Creating an opportunity for a wide range of creative expressions such as artist talks, exhibitions, poetry slams, concerts and a large range of other performative arts. They are currently without a permanent venue which gives them the freedom to pop up in various areas in Latvia and beyond. They have made the fact that they do not have a venue work to their advantage, now they can take their projects to different areas in Latvia instead of just in the capital, which for a nation with very few artistic spaces is a key connector between the arts and the local communities.

These are just two examples of active ARI’s that I came across in my research, but they stand as a representation of a wider network run by artists that have a global reach as well as remaining culturally and locally relevant institutions.

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<sup>23</sup> Mesić, L. (2020) *About 1646 – 1646, 1646.nl*. Available at: <https://1646.nl/about/> (Accessed: 29 October 2025).

<sup>24</sup> Art Centre, T. (2015) *Totaldobže Art Centre, YouTube*. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC0Tlvi9IbmtZTpgNj1cckPw> (Accessed: 29 October 2025).

## CHAPTER 2

### 2.1: Artists who make work on the value of Culture in their practice

“Art is deeply intertwined with culture, drawing inspiration from customs, rituals, and values passed down through generations. The influence of culture on creativity is profound, shaping the themes, techniques, and symbolism artists employ in their work. Whether through mythology, folklore, or societal norms, culture provides a rich reservoir of inspiration for artists to draw upon.”<sup>25</sup> This quote is from Eclectic Gallery London and expresses an opinion that I have always held. This quote implies that art and culture have always been and will always be interactive, and one cannot function in full without influencing the other, this is an important thing to consider as we are walking towards an increasingly globalised world, never forgetting the importance of looking towards art as being a valuable asset to keep a culture alive and expressive.

Art also plays a critical role when it comes to diplomacy and finding ways to bridge cultural gaps, as we are approaching globalisations rise in domination it becomes more important than ever to find ways to be diplomatic in relations with other countries and art is a powerful connector of cultures as well as an area of common ground, bringing countries understanding, respect and empathy for each other.

“Cultural diplomacy involves using cultural expressions (like art, music, or literature) to promote mutual understanding and cooperation between nations or communities. Art, with its ability to convey emotions, histories, and identities, is uniquely suited to this role. It bypasses diplomatic formalities, speaking directly to human experiences and fostering empathy.”<sup>26</sup> This is a quote from an article on the work of art as an asset for diplomacy. With this in mind, the value of looking into artists with a practice built on their cultural background became more significant.

In my research into the importance of cultural expression within “The Artworld” I came across several artists who create work that is expressive of their roots and nationality. One such artist is Nilupa Yasmin, a British Bengali artist. Her work “Grow Me a Waterlily”<sup>27</sup> is a reflection and celebration of the Bengali culture and is often reflective of her identity through the lens of her cultural background and heritage and experiences growing up and the things that are valued in her culture. This work is an installation where the viewer is invited to partake in the Bengali culture whilst looking and experiencing her work. Her work is all

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<sup>25</sup> Eclectic Gallery London (2024) *Cultural Influences in Art: Tracing the Roots of Creativity*, Eclectic Gallery. Available at: <https://eclecticgallery.co.uk/news/209-cultural-influences-in-art-tracing-the-roots-of-bridging-worlds-exploring-the-cultural-tapestry-of-artistic/>.

<sup>26</sup> Artinfo (2025) *Cultural Diplomacy: How Art Strengthens Global Connections - Artinfo Magazine*, Artinfo Magazine. Available at: <https://magazine.artinfo.com/cultural-diplomacy-how-art-strengthens-global-connections/> (Accessed: 14 October 2025).

<sup>27</sup> Yasmin, N. (2025) *Grow me a Waterlily*, nilupayasmin. Available at: <https://www.nilupayasmin.com/grow-me-a-waterlily>.

around Kantha's which are colourful and embroidered blankets made up of old sarees and other fabrics that have been embroidered together bringing with it the memories, recollections and important things of the past. According to her, this work is also an attempt to combine the British culture with her cultural heritage of being Bengali to find a space where she can express herself. In doing this she invites the viewer of her work into her world which allows for an understanding of both cultures to be created for the viewer.



**Fig 3.** “Grow me a Waterlily, আমার জন্য একটি শাপলা পরিচর্যা কর’ 2017- ongoing, Nilupa Yasmin, Mixed media.

Another artist who created work based their cultural heritage is Liu Xiaodong. Liu Xiaodong had no access to museums or exhibitions until he was high school age, he only had access to images of paintings from catalogues owned by his uncle which he had to replicate in order to practice at getting good at art. Only when he went to Beijing did he finally have access to libraries, exhibitions and museums. Xiaodong makes work on China reflecting on the cultural and physical changes that have taken place over time. Specifically referring to the restrictions that artists in China used to have on subject matter as well as on how they created art. A statement Xiaodong makes about his artistic practice is: “In art, too, those like me who make art with our hands are being pushed to the periphery, our paintings are becoming mere ‘travel souvenirs.’ In a way, I am painting with my hands as a challenge to globalization, and to resist the corporatization of art.”<sup>28</sup> here Xiaodong makes a point of being authentic to

<sup>28</sup> Munroe, A. (2015) *Liu Xiaodong: Evidence - Alexandra Munroe - Medium, Medium*. Available at: <https://medium.com/@AlexandraMunroe/liu-xiaodong-evidence-a2d965044738>.

painting in the way that feels authentic to him and expresses his artistic voice, as a means of combatting the effects that globalization has had on the art market and the way that it has become a money driven profession.



**Fig 4.** “The Roar”, 2021, Liu Xiaodong, Oil on canvas, 98 3/8 x 118 1/8 in.

A final artist whose work is heavily based on his cultural background and nationality is Nelson Makamo. Nelson Makamo is South African born. A continuous statement he makes with his work is to challenge the unfair stereotype of African children being portrayed as sad and impoverished. His work has often been referred to as “The Art of Optimism.”<sup>29</sup> Because of the bright colours and the big eyes that he incorporates into his work as well as his refusal to let a perspective of poverty be the only narrative attached to portraits of African children. Every portrait expresses his love for his culture and nationality as well as the beauty of the people belonging to it. His work “A Gaze in Inverse” depicts a girl with an intense look, she looks serene and relaxed. His choice of colours used in painting accents such as the glasses or

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<sup>29</sup> Makamo, N. (2025) *About - Nelson Makamo*, Nelson Makamo. Available at: <https://nelsonmakamo.com> (Accessed: 15 October 2025).

the flowers is bright and adds a playful whimsy which fits in with the theme of childlikeness. Another strong theme within his work is the dreamlike gaze which his subjects have, perhaps this is a reflection of the dreams that he has always stewarded and promoted in his own life. Breaking through barriers put up in his surroundings, never being afraid to test something new and starting a trial without the certainty of it working out or not.



**Fig 5.** *“A Gaze in Inverse”* 2019, Nelson Makamo, Charcoal, pastel and oil on canvas, 160 x 120 cm

The thing that ties all these artists together is the common thread of love for their culture in the entirety of what this represents. They all create work celebrating their background and it forms a bridge connecting the viewer to that country and culture. And inviting them to step out of their own realm of experience into a realm that could have been previously so foreign to them that they were not even aware of its existence.

## 2.2 How my personal practice relates to the value of culture in art

In my own practice I have noticed more of a pull towards the value of culture expressed through art. Growing up as a third culture kid (an individual who grew up in a culture that is different to the one that their parents belong to) I have always had a fascination with culture. I grew up with one foot in the Belgian culture, one foot in the Scottish culture and whatever else that was left of me belonged to the Dutch culture which is the culture my parents belong to. This being the only reality I ever knew, gave me a value for each culture that I have ever been presented with, whether I became a part of it or not. The level of fascination I have with the way two people from completely different backgrounds can come together and find common ground through language, art or another expression altogether, has been something that has struck me deeply all these years.

This is why when I was introduced to words from languages with no literal translation into English, I was instantly captivated. Looking more deeply at words that do not have a direct translation into English but do exist in other languages made me realise their connection to that culture. These concepts are so engrained in a culture that they had enough value to be put into words. Often these words are also heavily tied to a feeling, making them relatable and an expression of them can be felt and become relatable to someone who is an outsider to that culture looking in. The fullness of the word might not be grasped but even just a whisper of its meaning is pure exhilaration. This concept is much like art itself, as the work of art in every sphere of influence does have a heavy influence on national identities and becomes culturally significant to a country to the point where it can become a bridge connecting that nation to others through the expression of the work. Artworks for example become representatives for the specific countries and cultures of which either the artist belonged to or of which it was created, in some cases even both. For example, the “Christ the Redeemer”<sup>30</sup> statue in Rio de Janeiro which has not only become a statue to represent Christianity's influence on the nation but a national symbol for the nation, attracting tourists from across the globe. Many songs have been written about this statue, showing the role of art in sparking inspiration for other art-forms to interact with it. This is just an overdramatised example, that stands in place for the concept that art plays a role of translator and mediator for a country and translating feelings of national identity to the world.

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<sup>30</sup> Murray, L. (2018) ‘Christ the Redeemer | History, Height, & Facts’, *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Christ-the-Redeemer>.



**Fig 6.** “Christ the Redeemer (Cristo Redentor)” 1931, Paul Landowski, Heitor da Silva Costa, Gheorghe Leonida, Albert Caquot, concrete covered in soapstone tiles, 98 feet (30 metres) tall and its arms stretch 92 feet (28 meters) wide

The aim of my practice is to open a space for conversations about these words but also for contemplation. Hopefully there will be people that feel like they can relate to certain words like for example *Gezellig*<sup>31</sup> (the best description of this word would be a mixture of togetherness and coziness. It is a versatile word that can be used to describe anything from an atmosphere to a person) or *Hygge*<sup>32</sup> (This word can also be translated as cozy; however, its emphasis is more on intentionally making time for comfort, contentment and wellbeing). I aspire to create a space where people can recognise and see the impact those words have on the Dutch or Danish culture and make the viewer question whether the word is something they have experienced before without feeling understood because they had no word to put to it. These words will all be displayed in one room together and will be interacting with each other. Each word will present an invitation for the viewer to step into something that holds value in another culture. Then they will have the opportunity to reflect on each word individually to see whether they relate to it. They can ask themselves if they have ever felt similarly and they have an invitation to learn more about a culture and language that was previously foreign to them. The aim of my work is never to make a presumption on the word that I am illustrating; it is to present it through my understanding and my interpretation.

Another component I am considering adding in is a collaboration with people who speak the language of each of the words I have selected. I will ask them if they can tell me a story that they can relate to the word, either personal or imagined. A description, a poem or something

<sup>31</sup> Vlad Moca-Grama (2025) *Gezellig: an Essential Dutch Concept*, *DutchReview*. Dutchreview. Available at: <https://dutchreview.com/culture/gezellig-an-essential-dutch-concept/> (Accessed: 25 October 2025).

<sup>32</sup> Th, R. and Norman, i (2018) *What Is Hygge? Everything You Need to Know*, *Scandinavia Standard*. Available at: <https://www.scandinaviastandard.com/what-is-hygge/>.

that is personal to them but reflects the knowledge of that word intimately. The outcome for this is to be able to incorporate not just the perspective of me, an outsider looking in, but the perspective of someone who grew up with the existence and reality of that word, someone who never had to consciously learn it, someone who has subconsciously never existed without it.

## CHAPTER 3

### 3.1 Bridging the gap between commercial and cultural art through artists in schools

The importance of art as an expression of culture is something that can never be learned at too young an age, which is why I will be addressing art through the lens of education within Scotland. There is a glaring gap in art education that has a detrimental impact on the art and practices that are happening in Scotland which is in large due to the way in which art is taught in secondary schools. When looking at the grading system and curriculum for the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) it becomes very quickly noticeable that the way art is taught in Secondary school has little to do with the way an art practice is developed in university or the art practice of a contemporary artist. This has a confusing effect on many students as they move from secondary to further education.

One initiative that has served to combat this issue is Room 13. Since 1994 there has been an initiative called Room 13<sup>33</sup> which was for a long time largely experimental but resulted in great success. Room 13 was an initiative that invited an artist to have a residency within a school. Where a pupil is invited to interact and experience the reality of what an artistic practice looks like. Everything from the unique voice of the artist to the practicalities of planning and creating the work is opened to students to experience and learn from. This presents the students with an accurate picture of what the life of an artist looks like. Meanwhile the artist is also able to offer workshops and teach students straight from their practice, this is more relevant than students only being taught techniques that might not have any relevance to their future practice. Students can also follow their own artistic interests instead of the prescribed curriculum. Room 13 has grown into a worldwide reaching organisation involving artists, young people, schools and wider communities. When art education looks like this, the reality of the unique voice of an artist becomes apparent as well as how this reflects the national identity of the artist. Schools are a key place for shaping the culture of a nation. Posing the question of what “The Artworld” could look like if artists were taught how to cultivate their voice from a young age. This would also be an effective deterrent from buying into the lie that to be successful as an artist it is purely a matter of random selection. And that if you are not one of those “lucky” selected individuals you automatically become a starving artist. If initiatives such as room 13 were more widespread children would be introduced from a young age to the bigger picture of life as an artist.

In an article written by Jeff Adams called: “Room 13 and the Contemporary Practice of Artist-Learners”<sup>34</sup> looking at the work of Room 13 through the lens of child pedagogy, he recognises the many strengths of the organisation. He states about the pupils in Caol Primary (Fort William): “Important as their economic self-sufficiency and commercial activity is to the identity and character of Room 13, it is secondary to this singular feature of constantly

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<sup>33</sup> Room, 13 (2025) *Home, Room 13 International*. Available at: <http://room13international.org/>.

<sup>34</sup> Adams, J. (2005) ‘Room 13 and the Contemporary Practice of Artist-Learners’, *Studies in Art Education*, 47(1), pp. 23–33. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00393541.2005.11652811>.

addressing what the concepts of artist and learner mean, and what it is to occupy these subject positions. The acquisition of cultural language, and their willingness to enter into the discourse of contemporary art also characterises Room 13.”<sup>35</sup> Highlighting the key skills the pupils are learning through the initiatives of the program. Adams also states: “Room 13’s relationship to its artist-teachers/learners, guests and other contributors and their sophisticated patterns of integrated, collaborative, critical production is more aligned with contemporary global art production practices than those commonly found in schools.”<sup>36</sup> Highlighting its effect of students ability to learn what an art practice looks like for professional artists as well as inviting them to become professional artists themselves through the experiences and training they receive through the Room 13 project. Which is again emphasised through the experience pupils have of exhibiting their work in local as well as national exhibitions, some even reaching London’s Tate Modern (Room 13/ZCZ Films, 2004)<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Adams, J. (2005) ‘Room 13 and the Contemporary Practice of Artist-Learners’, *Studies in Art Education*, 47(1), pp. 23–33. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00393541.2005.11652811>.

<sup>36</sup> Adams, J. (2005) ‘Room 13 and the Contemporary Practice of Artist-Learners’, *Studies in Art Education*, 47(1), pp. 23–33. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00393541.2005.11652811>.

<sup>37</sup> Room, 13 (2025b) *The Story of Room 13*, *Room 13 International*. Available at: <http://room13international.org/about/the-story-of-room-13/>.

### 3.2 Traveling Gallery Scotland – Art on a Bus bringing art to secluded communities

But what if there is nothing artistic happening in my community? This is a question that represents a reality faced by many communities across the world. I think the way art has been approached in the past has created many problems of which we have to face the repercussions now, but moving forward into the future means that we have an opportunity to change the approach to art that has been the standard so far. And an important change that has been needed in “The Artworld” is the accessibility to art, exhibitions, museums and workshops in more marginalised and secluded communities.

Since 1978 Travelling Gallery<sup>38</sup> is a bus that travels and has exhibitions throughout various communities and locations in Scotland. It is a non-profit organisation that is funded by Creative Scotland’s multi-year fund 2025-2028 and has joined as a part of Museums & Galleries Edinburgh. It is not limited to giving communities access to art but also encourages them to engage with the art and artists that exhibit their work. They pride themselves in being able to develop and nurture young talent as well as providing a space for them to exhibit and work alongside established artists. Their exhibitions are largely experimental, inclusive and diverse. They are focused on curating and facilitate a place for discussion and conversation about all things related to arts and culture. The fact that the art is displayed in a bus makes it accessible to communities that do not have an active art scene or where there are no contemporary art galleries or ARI’s. This presents a unique opportunity as there is no restriction to the location of the exhibitions and workshops. Travel galleries Scotland also frequently runs workshops along with their exhibitions, inviting viewers and communities into making art and developing creative skills. With their website being continually updated to include the approaching tour dates of the bus, it gives the bus flexibility as well as ample time to generate awareness of their approaching exhibitions. Initiatives such as Room 13 and Art on a Bus create a bridge bringing culture into art as well as creating a unique voice for the nation of Scotland through its artists, which in turn can be used to build global connections.

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<sup>38</sup> Travelling, G. (2020) *Travelling Gallery - Scotland’s Art Gallery in a Bus, Travelling Gallery - An art gallery in a bus touring Scotland*. Available at: <https://travellinggallery.com/> (Accessed: 30 October 2025).

## CONCLUSION

The aim of this dissertation was to highlight the importance of art as a reflection of culture in an increasingly globalised world. Through dissecting the various aspects of “The Artworld” I have painted a picture of what the current art scene looks like both from the perspective of the “Big Name” artists and institutions as well as shedding light on the other side of the art market that is run by artists for the artists. Throughout this discussion it has become clear that it is important to value a country’s cultural expression in order not to let commercialisation take over the creative industry. As this creates a gap between the artists and their community causing not just the art market to suffer but also the culture of each individual country. In the second chapter, I have highlighted the interconnectivity between art and culture and the importance of having artists who create art with a specific lens of culture and celebrating their cultural background. Additionally, I wrote about my practice and the exploration of culture through the difference in languages and words as they relate to the individuality of each culture. Finally, in the third chapter, I looked critically at how the education system reflects the value of art as an advancement of culture. And at how art education is a core piece of generating a unique cultural identity within young artists. Additionally, I looked at the accessibility of art and its importance in shaping the culture of both an entire country as well as individual towns and cities within each nation. Overall, it can be concluded that art as a means of cultural expression has always been of immense importance and has become increasingly so with the rise of globalisation. As nations seek to find common ground and grow toward each other, it remains crucial that each nation retains their own cultural voice and unique expression. Bearing this in mind, art can be a bridge connecting cultures as well as nations with each other which is of immense importance with the world becoming more globalised.

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