



Mandate Event: Future of the Art Market Unconference

Hosted By: Somerset House, London

Date: 13th November 2019

SCAN Mandate Attendees: Agnes Jones, Artist

the Future of the Art Market Unconference provided an opportunity for people to talk about where the art market is going, looking into the role of technology, social media and other things on our art practices.

The discussion

We had a lot of discussions about digitalisation in art – both in terms of digital art and digital representations of art work, so questions of whether works of art are more than the piece that you buy, and whether that changes the whole concept of owning art. Making work more digitally can help to come up with a different range of distribution models.

This was important in the discussion of art galleries, of showing work as well – with other ways of people viewing work, how can galleries adapt? There was no answer other than that they need to be able to show work in new ways.

This lead onto whether escaping gallery settings can help artists and makers. As artists are earning less and less from their art, they have to create their own networks, spaces and opportunities. This includes creating their own brand, selling merchandise, having pop up shops and online marketplaces.

There was a lot of discussion on whether transparency will increase with more digitised platforms, or if it will decrease. Online platforms allow people to name and shame, to show the public what happens behind the scenes in ways that couldn't be done before.

3D printing and whether it has a positive or negative impact on making. I think it will never replace making skills but can augment them and produce very interesting other objects.

Was there anything to note from the event that you think would help us to drive forward our manifesto demands?

We discussed a lot about how things could get better for people who are outside of London and major cities, how digital methods of creating, viewing and distributing art and craft could get more involved in the art market.

There was a discussion on who is the determiner of credibility and quality, and how artistic and economic value should be looked at. There was a hope that if we work towards allowing artists to lead this we could have greater 'democratisation' of art. In some other feedback I read there was a hope that this would lead to "a reassertion of artistic, social and political values that may also result in an updating and celebration of the role institutions, galleries and artists can play in society."

Digital art is something that can be used to change the way we think about ownership, and can be a very collaborative and interesting way of making and owning art. Although we have to think about the lifetime of a piece of digital art, due to software and hardware obsolescence, there was a lot of discussion about younger generations a "moving towards consumption as access, experience and expression of identity rather than possession" and that we are going to be spending money on "intangible assets and putting more value on experiences" – which will hopefully move towards a more sustainable lifestyle.

There was a session about smaller galleries and how their sales are in decline. One way out of this is through working in both more online and community based ways. Creating gallery hybrid models where people share spaces is also helpful, or people doing things differently, such as Cypher in South East London whose exhibition space is a billboard.

What did you contribute to workshops, open sessions or feedback opportunities?

I found it hard to engage with people in some of the sessions, as it was mainly dominated by a few large characters, notably people who worked for large galleries, and an artist who has been gaining a lot of traction online, who didn't seem to find my experiences relevant.

What will you do next or differently as a result of attending the event?

I thought a lot about how to make use of digital methods of exploring work. I have had a lot of requests in the past for "online exhibitions" and am unsure of how practical it is as an idea for something that is as physical as my work is, but it might be something to get involved in. I would also like to speak to local galleries who might be using the model of space sharing, and try to engage with ways of showing art in different, non gallery, locations.

The information above was summarised by SCAN from an event report provided by attendee Agnes Jones.