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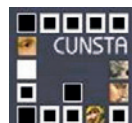
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The Maker behind the Artist. An Analysis of Artistic Craftmanship in the Production of Contemporary Artworks in Italy

Francesca Leonardi*

Abstract

The article studies the institutional positioning of art makers who collaborate with artists and who, far from being institutionally recognized in and by the art world, are fundamental in the artistic creation process. The article analyzes the working relationships between craft makers and artists and their institutional dynamics; it also critically assesses the problematics of the craft sector in relation to the artistic one. The qualitative research methodology is based on the thematic analysis of 15 semi-structured interviews with different Italian artisans who work with different materials (glass, bronze, paper, marble, neon, ceramic). The article concludes that the art world's institutional logic prevents the recognition of the artmaker, but potential opportunities can come from its recognition as a part of the value-creation of artworks without diminishing the role of the artist and also answering to the problems of the craft sector.

L'articolo indaga il posizionamento istituzionale degli artigiani che collaborano con gli artisti e che, lungi dall'essere istituzionalmente riconosciuti dal mondo dell'arte, sono fondamentali nel processo di creazione artistica. L'articolo analizza i rapporti di lavoro tra artigiani e artisti e le loro dinamiche istituzionali, oltre a valutare criticamente le problematiche del settore artigianale in relazione a quello artistico. La metodologia di ricerca

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qualitativa si basa sull'analisi tematica di 15 interviste semi-strutturate a diversi artigiani italiani che lavorano con diversi materiali (vetro, bronzo, carta, marmo, neon, ceramica). L'articolo conclude che la logica istituzionale del mondo dell'arte impedisce il riconoscimento dell'artigiano, ma che dal suo riconoscimento come parte della creazione di valore delle opere d'arte possono derivare potenziali opportunità, senza sminuire il ruolo dell'artista e rispondendo anche alle problematiche del settore artigianale.

1. *Introduction*

«Simply Sauro. Without him, in Rome no art is possible»¹ described the figure of Sauro Radicchi, the maker that «has in his grasp all the contemporary art production in Rome»². However, his fundamental capacities are not met with institutional recognition nor with adequate economic support. Like Sauro, there are a lot of unrecognized makers behind contemporary art production in Italy.

The artistic collective Claire Fontaine created a series of artworks titled *Interior Design for Bastards* (2009), which includes a neon artwork constituted by the wall neon phrase: *This neon sign was made by Felice Lo Conte for the remuneration of one thousand, nine hundred and fifty euros*. This artwork has been produced in different variants, with the name of the artisan and the amount varying accordingly. This series addresses the problems and issues investigated in this article, concerning the role of makers, their relationship with artists, and their different institutional recognition.

This situation is emblematic of a lack of recognition of the maker by the art system, while at the same time being fundamental for the artistic production. This article investigates the contemporary art production dynamics and practices at the core of the relationship between the maker and the artist, analyzing different craft materials and production realities. More specifically, the article tries to answer the following research questions:

- How is the relationship between the artist and the craft maker structured at a work organizational level in contemporary art production?
- What are the potentialities of a possible institutional recognition of the maker in the art production?

The article gives preliminary definitions of the artist and the artisan; the following section briefly analyzes the juridical definitions and legislative protection of craftsmanship and the copyright protection applied to the art sector, even if this section is only functional to the better understanding of the dynamics not part of the literature review. In the Results section, the cases are described

¹ Tonelli 2014, author's translation.

² *Ibidem*.

following a thematic analysis. In the Discussion section, the recognition of the artisan is analyzed in relation to potential opportunities, such as the creation of art production companies and platforms. Finally, the conclusions will sum up the main points of the article while opening the field to further research.

2. Preliminary definitions and literature review

2.1. The craft-maker and the artist

To better understand the relevance of the role of the maker in the art world, it is firstly necessary to agree on preliminary definitions of the concept of the artist and the craftsman.

As Adamson noted, «craft is itself a modern invention»³, meaning that its definition has always been developed in opposition to that of industrial production and of fine art. In contrast to the Industrial Revolution, craft is usually described as traditional, based on handmade work that is tacitly transmitted, whereas industry is based on the division of work into minor tasks, on the use of machinery, on repetition which leads to alienation, and it is inextricably linked to the concept of progress. However, together with a qualitative superiority assigned to manufacturing techniques of modern industry, a re-evaluation of certain characteristics of craft proceeded at the same time. Indeed, in the late nineteenth century with the institution of the Arts and Crafts movement, that of the craftsman was portrayed as the best possible work since it represented the best alternative to the alienated worker of the factory⁴. Grant⁵ argues that the Arts and Crafts movement's most significant effects were the emphasis on the process of artistic production in response to the industrial one, and the expansion of art-making to society at large as a cure for anxieties and illnesses. Interestingly, some of these assumptions have influenced today's idea of craft and art concepts such as the meaning of art as not specific to an object but rather to the proficiency of an activity (e.g., cooking, even if it is not part of fine arts) or the idea of craft or DIY (Do It Yourself) as therapeutic activities for the burnout and digital society (e.g., art therapy).

³ Adamson 2013, p. 13.

⁴ John Ruskin, who was the primary influence of the movement, described the art and craftsmanship as the most valuable forms of work because of the beneficial effects on the worker (healthy kind of work compared to the factory's one) and because of the union of mental and physical labor (in opposition to the alienation of the factory's worker). William Morris added to Ruskin his vision of the intellectualization of the artist as the cause of his detachment from the artisan and from common people's aesthetic needs.

⁵ Grant 2018, p. 49.

Similar to this opposition, also in economics and organizational studies, as it has been studied by Kroezen *et al.*⁶, the conventional understanding of craft has been described as a primitive approach to production which was later replaced by industrial, mass-production firms based on Taylorism principles, in turn, replaced by 20th-century companies' corporations, substituted now by platform economy, in a linear and progressive vision of society and economics. Even though this idea of craft as something of a pre-industrial past has somehow continued to influence literature and society at large, it has also been demonstrated that craft has developed and has continued to exist in parallel to industry and fine art.

Considering the development of craft opposition to fine art, Shiner⁷ drew a cultural history of the invention of art based on its differentiation from craft, even if, as Adamson stresses, this opposition has been drastically overemphasized at the point of becoming a post-1945 tendency⁸. Starting from the Renaissance, authors have identified a trajectory of increasing differentiation between the artist and the artisan, even if they were working together on decorative projects⁹. The role of the intellect in the production of art started to be valued more and the social value of the artist and the artworks increased¹⁰. Art started to be considered a free activity with no purpose other than contemplation, in opposition to craft seen as labor whose only production is linked to function/use and payment. The work of the artist was portrayed as a mix of natural innate talent and mechanical skills, which would concur to nurture the image of the artist as a "solitary genius", still deeply rooted in the contemporary (Western) artistic dominant narrative.

So, in contrast to art, craft has been described as «something well [made] through hand skill»¹¹, as a mastery of hand-based techniques, «specific processes carried out in specific materials» and «an approach [...] a way of doing things»¹² – all definitions which however could also apply to art. Adamson describes craft in comparison to modern art as being «supplemental», «organized around material experience»¹³, based on skill, whereas art is autonomous, meaning it has an intrinsic rather than purely commercial value. So, it is difficult to determine a significant distinction in the way art and craft are

⁶ Kroezen *et al.* 2021.

⁷ Shiner 2001.

⁸ Adamson 2013, p. 14.

⁹ Wohl 2012.

¹⁰ Kant, in the *Critique of Judgement* (1790), started to distinguish art from craft and to acknowledge specific knowledge to the aesthetic experience. As Grant argues, Kant distinguished art from craft basing the discrimination on the fact that art is "agreeable on its own account" whereas craft is "mercenary" (Grant 2018, p. 35).

¹¹ Adamson 2013, p. 24.

¹² Adamson 2019, p. 1.

¹³ Adamson 2019, p. 4.

defined based solely on production techniques or qualities, which is why the attention should be put, instead, to the context of production, the «judgement devices»¹⁴, the *field*, better say the institutional perspective.

2.2. *The theoretical framework*

For this research, then, the definitions of art and craft reside in the organizational and institutional perspective which is exemplified by the sociologist Becker as follows:

“Art” and “craft” are two contrasting kinds of aesthetics, work organization, and work ideology, differing in their emphases on the standards of utility, virtuoso skill, and beauty. Activities organized as craft can become art when members of established art worlds take over their media, techniques, and organizations. Conversely, through increased academicism or subordination of traditional art concerns to exigencies that arise outside an art world, activities organized as art can become craft¹⁵.

This definition highlights the organizational and institutional character of both the fields of art and craft. They are described as different ways of organizing work (e.g., art as an individual activity in the studio, whereas craft takes place in a *bottega* with multiple apprentices), based on different notions of what is valuable and of beauty. Both of them need a system (or world) that recognizes the value of their activities and judges it, but sometimes there can be overlaps: craft can become art when it is done by artists (or *for* artists), and art can enter the realm of craft when it starts to answer to needs outside the art world. What is relevant to note is that the quality of the production in this distinction is not taken into consideration; instead, it is the positioning in a certain field that is fundamental¹⁶.

As Becker stated, artwork can be defined as a collaborative practice of different actors with different roles who work for the valorization of the artwork/artist by and for the people inhabiting the art world. The two different worlds answer to different sets of values, and judgments over quality which respond to different criteria: generally, it is agreed that art is done for no purpose other than the freedom of expression of the artist and it is judged by critics, curators, gallerists, museums’ directors and collectors.

¹⁴ Karpik 2010.

¹⁵ Becker 1978, p. 862.

¹⁶ «The members of art worlds usually describe the work of those who produce their characteristic products with such shorthand folk terms as “art” or “craft”. The person who does the work that gives the product its unique and expressive character is called an “artist” and the product itself “art”. Other people whose skills contribute in a supporting way are called “craftsmen”. The work they do is called a “craft”. The same activity, using the same materials and skills in what appear to be similar ways, may be called by either title, as may people who engage in it» (Becker 1978, p. 863).

Craftwork, instead, is described by Becker as follows:

the worker does the work for someone else – usually the client, customer, or employer – who defines what is to be done and what the result should be. The employer understands that the worker possesses special skills and knowledge but regards it as appropriate to have the final say himself as to the suitability of the result. The worker may know better ways of doing things, not known to someone outside the craft, but recognizes the employer's right to the final word. Both recognize that the object of the activity is to make something the employer can use for his purposes, whatever they may be. [...] The object is made to serve someone's need for a useful object¹⁷.

The work of the artisan is here emphasized in relation to its cliental foundation: the final word is the client's (who pays for the work) even if he/she does not have any technical competence to understand a work well done. Moreover, another craft fundamental characteristic is mentioned: the usefulness and purposiveness of the artisanal object – in which many recognize the main difference with arts. It is interesting to note that this definition by Becker includes also the possibility of makers producing artworks on behalf of artists by mentioning the purposes of craft «whatever they may be»: the only real distinction is, then, not the object itself but how the product is interpreted and described in the selected field/world, i.e. if as an artwork or as a craft object.

A residual difference that comes from the practice refers to the quantity of the production: artists usually produce one piece as an artwork (see Legislative Perspective section), while craftsmen can reproduce their creations multiple times according to market needs. Craft is usually associated with manual and handmade objects; however, according to the specific material, the production techniques may vary, and nowadays also technological types of production can be included in the craft process.

So, to sum up, the main differences between arts and crafts are specific to their different systems or fields and can be summarized in table 1.

¹⁷ Becker 1978, p. 865.

	Arts	Crafts
<i>Purpose / Aim</i>	No purpose except the expression of the artist.	It is bound to a purpose/function and to a practical use.
<i>Production</i>	Either made by the artist or outsourced.	Entirely made by the craftsmen, usually by hand.
<i>Materials</i>	Multi-material.	Specific to a single material or a technique.
<i>Product / reproducibility</i>	Artwork, unique piece.	Functional object, production in series, replicable multiple times.
<i>Criteria for judgement</i>	Aesthetics and art history-related criteria.	Functionality and aesthetics, <i>virtuoso</i> ability.
<i>Skills required</i>	Either intellectual, idea, abstract or/ and manual and technical skills.	Manual and technical skills.
<i>Legislative protection</i>	Bound to the artwork and the artist: copyright, <i>diritto di seguito</i> .	Bound to the technique and know-how if considered ICH, or business-oriented if considered CCI.

Tab. 1. Difference between arts and crafts

An additional interesting distinction that should be briefly addressed is between arts, craftsmanship, and artistic craftsmanship. The latter could seem to be at the intersection of arts and craftsmanship for its artistic intentions, but actually, it remains decisively in the field of craftsmanship in its core features: artistic craftsmanship does not produce unique pieces, as the art world does; it does not end up in art museums shows but more easily in generic crafts exhibitions. Artistic craftsmanship still produces objects with a functional purpose and with a decorative effort; so, in this sense, it is more similar to design than to art. Even when artists use materials typically belonging to craftwork (textile, glass, pottery, etc.) giving birth to new art typologies (fiber art, quilt art, studio glass movement, etc.) and hybridizing products, still the institutional boundary remains clear. Finally, amateur production is usually included in the crafts field, whereas art does not allow any amateur production, reinforcing again the difference between art and craft as a matter of quality rather than activity¹⁸.

So, the theoretical framework developed by Becker¹⁹ is used in this article to understand how and where the craft-maker is positioned in the art world (see Discussion section). His theoretical contributions are fundamental but, given their broad and systematic perspective, they do not cover the focus of this article, meaning the figure of the maker behind the artist, on which persists a lack of academic research.

¹⁸ Fariello in Buszek 2011.

¹⁹ Becker 1978, Becker 1982.

However, many other relevant contributions have analyzed similar issues but cannot be recalled here for the sake of brevity, concerning craftsmanship studies and manual labor²⁰, the notion of the art world and institutional theory²¹, the economic and organizational analysis of the craft sector²², the definition of a cultural field and the valuation in the economic and cultural field²³.

2.3. *Legislative perspectives*

Concerning the notion of craft, from a legislative perspective, the World Crafts Council of 1964, in trying to define craft, stressed the concept of «sophisticated technique», while a broader definition was found during the World Crafts Council of 1974 as «any form of production that requires skill or skilled work»²⁴. In the following years, other characteristics were added to the description and identification of craft: the connection with the material that needs to be transformed with the skills; the fact that it is a human process; the mastery of a technique; the relationship with the past and ancestral knowledge. According to the UNESCO/ITC International Symposium²⁵ definition²⁶, the essential characteristic of craft is the work done by hand or the manual ability to modify materials in the process of making²⁷.

Concerning the protection of craftsmanship, there are two possible interpretations of craft, which in turn influence the definition and valorization of the same: as intangible cultural heritage²⁸ (ICH) or as a cultural and creative

²⁰ Hauser 1956, Wolff 1993, Pesole 1997, Shiner 2001, Hobsbawm, Ranger 2002, Vettese 2005, Guerzoni 2006, Sennett 2008, Colombo 2009, Micelli 2011, Groys 2012, Focillon 2014 among the others.

²¹ Danto 1964, Danto 2013, Dickie 1969, Dickie 1974.

²² Klamer 2017; Mignosa, Kotipalli 2019.

²³ Bourdieu 1986; Klamer 1996; Klamer 2017; Throsby 2001; Hutter, Throsby 2008.

²⁴ Brulotte, Montoya in Mignosa, Kotipalli 2019, p. 21.

²⁵ UNESCO, ITC 1997.

²⁶ «Artisanal products are those produced by artisans, either completely by hand, or with the help of hand tools or even mechanical means, as long as the direct manual contribution of the artisan remains the most substantial component of the finished product. [...] The special nature of artisanal product derives from their distinctive features, which can be utilitarian, aesthetic, artistic, creative, culturally attached, decorative, functional, traditional, religiously and socially symbolic and significant» (Vencatachellum in Mignosa, Kotipalli 2019, p. 26).

²⁷ Fariello in Buszek 2011, p. 25.

²⁸ «The practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity» (UNESCO 2003, art. 2).

industry (CCI). In the interpretation of craft as part of cultural heritage, the protection is usually endorsed by the Ministry of Culture through a series of listing tools and policies focused on the transgenerational transmission of skills. In this case, the cultural relevance of craft is not circumscribed to the specific object but to its making processes. UNESCO's typical tool to safeguard these practices is the creation of international or national lists, such as the Living Human Treasures with the names of craftsmen for each craft production, or the listing of techniques in the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity²⁹. In the interpretation of craft as CCI the ministries responsible are the Economic Development one and protection includes tools and tax incentives to facilitate the production and sustainability of craft intended as a market. The inclusion of craft in the CCI implies that the economic exploitation of products can come from copyright and commercialization of the same from an industry good-based perspective. The dual nature of craft as part of ICH and of CCI varies from country to country, which adds complexity to the identification of common definitions and practices. In Italy, the different application of policies and funding varies also on a regional basis, according to the interpretation of the craft chosen and to the specificities of the territory.

Concerning the legislation over artworks, the difference between artefacts and artworks varies from country to country, for instance in Italy the artwork is included in the legislation on cultural heritage as goods of artistic, historical, archaeological, ethnoanthropological, archival and bibliographic interest. The artworks are specifically protected by intellectual property law which reserves economic and moral rights³⁰ explicitly to the author. The protection of art is, then, strictly attached to the object (i.e. the artwork) which is why the authentication process and the distinction between fake, copies and multiples is here very relevant³¹. The multiples are an artistic practice, used from the '50s, to enlarge the artist market and earnings by addressing the bigger audience of lower-income art lovers. The multiple is based on the creation of an artwork

²⁹ Vencatachellum in Mignosa, Kotipalli 2019, p. 28.

³⁰ A very important moral right attached to artworks is the *diritto di seguito*, which guarantees the artist a percentage over the selling price applicable to every re-selling of the artwork. Like all the rights of the Intellectual Property law, also the *diritto di seguito* is inalienable, irrevocable and lasts until 70 years after the death of the author, acting as an economic protection for the artist (Act n. 633/1941, Intellectual Property Law).

³¹ The authenticity of an artwork generally relies on the signature of the artist, who is considered the only author of the piece or, if the artwork is unsigned and the artist is dead, the foundation of the artist or his/her heirs or an expert can produce an authentication certificate. The distinction between a copy, a fake and a multiple is fundamental in relation to craftsmanship production. Clearly, what distinguishes a fake artwork from a copy is the fraudulent animus of the creator that confirms it as an illegal practice, whereas the copy is an authorized reproduction made from a model or a prototype.

with a technique that allows its identical/mechanical reproduction so that the economy of scale permits the sale of it at a lower price than the single artwork. Regarding the distinction between multiples and original copies, there is no clear regulation but only common practice: the criterion used to distinguish between single artwork (*opera unica*) and multiple/serial artworks (*opera seriale* or *multipli*) is taken from the sculpture field, stating that single artwork can include up to nine samples (usually divided between single pieces and some artist's proofs³²), while multiples are more than nine copies. Even if it is paradoxical, the nine samples are considered by market agreement as single artworks, finding in market practices the definition of artwork's originality. These practices are different from craftsmanship, where the concept of single artwork is not present and the production of limited series but also copies are common practice.

3. Methodology

The research uses a qualitative approach based on the collection of data through 15 semi-structured interviews with artisans and producers. Each of the interview³³ was done in person (2 hours ca. each), recorded and transcribed. The interview took place in the studio or workshop of the artisans. The contents of the interview are structured according to the following questions:

- *Juridical definition*: which is your juridical form?
- *Production*: how is your production between artistic work and commercial activity divided? Which other production activities do you do?
- *Artistic production*: how many artistic productions do you do in one year? How do you get in contact with artists: are they contacting you or are you actively seeking them and proposing collaborations? How do you select artistic commissions? Do you mainly produce series, multiples or single artworks? Are the artistic commissions decreased/increased in the last five years? What are the major criticalities of your work in terms of production techniques, raw materials, manual skills, timing, etc.? Do you work only on commission (as *contoterzista*) or do you have also an in-house artistic production line?

³² The artist proofs, if not recognized by the artist as valid (*buono da stampare*), should not be included in the nine samples of single artworks but numerated apart with the label "A.P." since they are preparatory samples, with no artistic or economic value equal to the others. However, as a matter of fact, it is not infrequent to find them sold as single artworks.

³³ The interviews were carried on in 2014 as part of the master thesis of the author and were never published before. Later, the interviews were re-checked and updated in April 2023 with the interviewees and anonymized.

- *The clients*: Do you work mainly with/for public or private actors? Do you get more commissions from emerging, middle career or established artists? How many of them are Italian artists and how many are international? Do you work more with artists or designers?
- *Relationship with the artist and work organization*: How do you organize your work with the artist? How do you manage production problems with the artist? How much does your opinion/know-how weigh in the final decision over the final production of the artwork? Who has the last word on it? How is the payment of the artwork production organized: are the artists paying for the production or are they financed by the galleries? Do you work for galleries or art institutions frequently/regularly? How much are you integrated into the art system (e.g., participation in art fairs, organization of exhibitions, etc.)? Do you participate in art fairs? How do you live the “invisibility” of your production in the final artwork: do you think your work needs more institutional recognition or not?

The sample was purposely composed of artisans working with different materials (glass, marble, ceramic, bronze, paper, etc.), in different geographical areas of Italy (Veneto, Emilia Romagna, Lombardia, Toscana) to gain a general overview of their relationship with the artist-commissioner and their working conditions in terms of creativity (value creation), visibility and salary. The sample was composed using the snowball addition sampling technique, fieldwork, and bibliographic research. The sample is composed of Italian craftsmen working with contemporary artists and is divided as follows: 3 makers for glass production in Murano, 3 makers for marble sculpting in Tuscany (Carrara, Querceta, Pietrasanta), 3 bronze foundries in Milan and Pistoia, 2 ceramics makers in Faenza and Albisola Marina, 3 letter pressing laboratories in Modena and Milan, and one maker of neon production in Casale sul Sile (Veneto).

4. Results

The results and the different case studies are presented aggregated and following the themes which emerged from the interviews: (a) craft work organization and business models, (b) relationship between the maker and the artist, (c) signature and institutional recognition.

4.1. *Craft-work organization and business models*

In Murano glassblowing, usually, artisanal production companies or studios carry on multiple production lines: a commercial one for tourists, and

an artistic one which includes a personal artistic production and third-party commissions from artists. Only one glassmaker has a specific business model slightly different from the others and with a specific orientation toward the art market:

My business model is different from others. I am not a producer, I am a publisher: I see an artist, I see his work, I like it, I think it can be made in glass, and I invite the artist. The artist coming here does not pay for the production unlike the norm: one goes to a bronze factory, commissions his sculpture and pays for it. I try to function, when I can, as a publisher. I make the product, I invest in the product and somehow, we divide the product: if we make two works, one is kept by the artist and one by me. The artist is very often also happy because he discovers a new dimension and, in the end, he also gets a work for free (Glass-maker in Murano, author's translation).

In proposing new collaborations with artists and defining his profession as the one of a “publisher”, the strategy is a commercial one: glass productions are mainly proposed to artists who are already established in the market and the art system, so the ones who represent a good investment. So, by producing eight samples of the artwork³⁴ and dividing them between himself and the artist – as a form of compensation – he invests in low-risk artists with a consolidated market, which guarantees a safe return on the investment.

The practice of paying the artist with a sample of the artwork is present also in other craft fields, such as ceramics. For instance, the owner of a historical ceramic laboratory in Albissola whose production is divided between artistic commissions (30% of total revenues), traditional production (50% of total revenues), re-edition of futurist ceramics for museums' bookshops, and production for the construction industry (e.g., tiles), said that he produces artists' artworks and keeps a copy of it as financial compensation (the so-called *cambi*); indeed, he argued that this was an Albissola habit. However, contrary to the Murano glassmaker, he does not sell these artworks on the market but keeps them in the company's museum. In inviting artists to produce with ceramics, he sees his role as the one of a “technical mediator” between the artist and the artisan, trying to ensure that the piece is made in the best possible way.

Strongly opposing the payment practice of the *cambi* is another ceramic craft maker from Faenza, who explains that this praxis comes from a romantic habit of the '50s, but now it is just seen as unprofessional, especially by the galleries. He added that when an artist wants to donate to the artisan one of his works, generally, he signs it and writes a personal dedication on it, so that it cannot be sold later. Since his production is based on artistic production in collaboration with contemporary artists, commercial production (e.g., home

³⁴ As previously written, it is the maximum number of samples for an “original artwork” considered as a single piece. Moreover, the Italian legislation applies a reduced VAT of 10% on original artworks (max eight pieces) but not on multiples or limited series.

editions of vases, chandeliers, dishes, etc.) and other projects (e.g., designer collaborations or on-demand productions), he also has artworks gifted to him by the artists, which he shows at the ground floor of his laboratory.

The production cost of marble sculptures strongly influences the business model of marble studios, which have different strategies. Pure artistic production is the main activity of a historical studio from Carrara, which produces original artworks and series (up to 12 samples). It privileges collaborations with established artists that can cover the production costs or that have the financial support of galleries. At the same time, it supports emerging artists from *Accademie* who want to approach marble by applying lower prices, as a form of investment for making marble a contemporary material for artistic practice. The collaboration between the studio and the artists can be proposed either way; in any case, the global reach and international diffusion of the artwork are fundamental in these collaborations. As for her role in the production of the artwork, the owner of the studio defines herself as a “conductor” who directs the artist in the choice of the manufacturing process. The craft and handmade dimension are fundamental characteristics of the artistic production, in her opinion:

I am very proud to carry on traditional manual processes and to still have a real team, i.e. structured with precise professional figures who are the roughisher, the moulder, the finisher, and the polisher, precise figures that make it possible to have the highest quality at every stage of machining. There are also anthropomorphic robots that can do 80%-90% (and in rare cases even 100%) of the machining automatically, but all of this aspect, i.e. creativity in the manufacturing phase, goes away. The idea is transposed into a 3D file; from this we proceed to a detailed programming of each phase and it happens that then there can be surprises. I use these machines very carefully and with precise limits: in the case of the production of multiples or limited artist series, it goes without saying that the production is done automatically by machine because they are all identical to each other. But in the case of one-off pieces, I always prefer to steer the artist towards manual production precisely because I know that this relationship is magical, it adds something extra, it generates a diffuse creativity that comes from the performer, from me (who act as a go-between like the conductor), and from the artist (Marble studio owner in Carrara, author’s translation).

So, the adoption of machines is here used only in the case of identical copies for multiples or copies; in the case of single artworks, the production is strictly manual.

A different approach to machines is adopted by the marble company of Querceta, whose main business is architectural production (i.e. excavation) and its major source of income is export. It has also a foundation that has the function of fostering contemporary art collaborations, to make marble a contemporary material and become a sort of art atelier. Generally, in the artistic commissions, the company acts as an «executioner» by producing the artwork together with the artist, who pays for it. The company has no fear of using also technologies and machines:

Using all modern technologies, numerical controls, robotics, etc. today we can express a great production capacity where art is a testing ground for us, an experiment for us, for the technologies, and for the people who work here. So, developing projects with artists means putting those technologies to the test, but above all developing a very advanced software program control management (Marble company president in Querceta, author's translation).

In this case, technology and the use of machines are an advantage and contemporary art is a testing ground for it.

A more traditional business model is that of a marble laboratory in Pietrasanta whose production is based on a mix of commercial and artistic commissions. On a typological level, their production is divided into architecture-ornamentation (i.e. copies of capitals and classic columns), classic art (i.e. classical reproductions), sacred art (i.e. funeral monuments of their production) and modern art (i.e. contemporary art collaborations). Classical reproductions and contemporary art collaborations are the main source of revenues and the major production areas of the laboratory. The production of contemporary artworks is organized more conventionally: they get a commission from the artists who are financially supported by galleries or pay for the production autonomously. The making process is entirely handmade using traditional techniques and tools: the artist brings the model and the craft maker replicates it on a 1:1 scale or in a bigger size.

Foundries also have high production costs, especially because of the many stages required by the production process³⁵. Similarly to marble laboratories, also foundries used to have a commercial funeral production, which however has today almost vanished in favor of artistic production. The main production areas of a foundry in Milan are third-party artistic production on behalf of artists and designers, and restoration activity. Artistic production starts with a commission from a gallery or a museum or a collector. Sometimes it is the artist – usually an established one – that pays for the bronze fusion. It is important to understand who finances the artwork because it determines the property of the cast, from which other copies of the artwork can later be produced. Generally, is the artist who decides the total number of artwork samples or limited editions – still, the standard production by foundries is up to eight single pieces plus artist proofs. Another common way of operating is

³⁵ The fusion comprehends six phases: (1) the artist brings the model to the foundry; (2) the craftsmen create a wax copy of the model through a negative cast in chalk and rubber; (3) the craftsmen apply casting canals on the wax copy, this is a very technical phase which determines the how the bronze pour into the cast; (4) the wax model is covered with clay and chalk and put into a stove to create the last negative cast that will be preserved for future fusions; this phase lasts twelve days for the cast to be baked and the wax to evaporate in the stove; (5) the bronze is poured in the cast and let cooled down; in the end, it will be refined with a chisel; (6) the last passage is the choice of the patina, meaning the external covering which can vary greatly according to the chemical procedure chosen.

the co-participation of an artist with a museum: in this case, one copy of the artwork goes to the museum and the other to the artist, the foundry usually only preserves the cast.

Another foundry in Pistoia acts more as a commercial production company rather than as an art atelier, even if its production is entirely artistic. It creates reproductions of classical statues, religious statues, funeral art, decorative statues, and contemporary art (which counts for 60%-70% of its entire business). The making process is similar: the artist or the gallery brings the model and the foundry replicates it in bronze. It does not keep a sample of the artwork, but it has an exhibition space with classical copies and maquettes that serve both as a deposit and a showroom.

A foundry in Milan operates in the same way, relying 90% on artistic commissions which it executes following traditional craft processes. It is called «fonderia d'arte» because it aims to position itself at the highest quality level possible by producing only single artworks, not multiples. For this reason, it not only receives commissions, but it actively engages with artists to develop collaborations.

Letter pressing and paper-based artisanal production have been very much connected with artistic production not only for the creation of multiples of graphics or drawings but also to produce artists' books. The Modena graphics laboratory's production is divided between third-party commissions and an editorial one based on the collaborations with artists, which the graphic designer actively invites. He defines his artistic activity as an editorial one, based on the selection of artistic commissions on a quality basis, according to his taste.

The graphics laboratory in Milan, on the contrary, only works on artistic commissions (generally single artworks, not multiples), without an editorial in-house production. The owner said: «we are printmakers, not art critics», separating his technical competencies from his taste.

Neon has recently become a contemporary art material, even if it was used for industrial production. It is composed of a glass part which constitutes the tubular container of the gas. The neon company (now closed) used to have a commercial production (i.e. advertisement, design, lighting industry, etc.) and an artistic one based on commissions. Counterintuitively, the commercial activity stopped being remunerative because of the substitution of neon with cheaper LED technology, leading to the closure of the shop, whereas the artistic activity continued in the form of consultancy for art galleries and artists.

4.2. The relationship between the maker and the artist

The working relationship between the maker and the artist, as previously described, seems to be more or less the one between a commissioner of a project and an executor. However, what is usually overlooked in this passage is the

creative addition of the maker to the final project, brought by his/her technical competencies and problem-solving abilities.

In the end, the finished product is always something more than the artist's idea. From idea to practice: how much is there in the finished work of the initial idea? I have always seen, even in my work as an artist, that in the transition from idea to realization there is something more that goes into the work, which in the end belongs to the maker. So yes, artisans should be more valued. On the other hand, the recognition of the craftsman by the artist is an act of courtesy, because hierarchies are there and must be there. The craftsman must reproduce what is already on paper in the artist's drawing (Neon maker in Casale sul Sile, author's translation).

So, there is an addition in creativity from the initial idea, but this is not recognized institutionally. The maker expresses the need for a recognition of the value of his work but at the same time he recognizes the single authorship of the artist of the final artwork even if, in this specific case, the object is entirely hand-created (i.e. glassblowing and coloring of the neon) by the maker from the artist's drawing.

The maker does not only have technical competencies, though but he/she is required to also have a specific sensitivity to understand the artist's intentions and ideas:

Our profession has its difficulty, which is that of reading the painting, i.e. from Paladino I go to Pistoletto, from Pistoletto to Guttuso. I have to know how to read the different artists and their different languages. Because some artists start from the black background and arrive at the light and others start from the light and arrive at the black. There are superimpositions of colour that have a certain semi-transparency and the result changes completely according to the colour underneath. [...] What makes the difference in this type of activity is the sensitivity of the craftsman to adapt his technical knowledge to the artist's vision (Letter pressing maker in Modena, author's translation).

The artisan is, then, an interpreter of the artist's vision and a technical consultant with his sensitivity. Aligning his sensitivity with that of very different artists is one of the difficulties of the maker's job because it implies both technical competencies and artistic or aesthetic ones. This accentuates in the circumstance where the intervention of the artist in the process is minimal (e.g., in the foundry, the artist can retouch the wax model and choose the finishings of the patina) or non-existent (e.g., in marble sculpting, the artist gives a maquette or sometimes just a drawing and the maker produces it from zero; in neon creation as mentioned above). Exactly because of this intimate and sensitive relationship, some craft makers prefer not to have any intermediary (i.e. no curators, no assistants) between him/her and the artist. In other cases, intermediaries seem to be mostly present (e.g., the owner of the studio, the president of the company, the curator), especially in organizations in which the owner is not a craft maker or is not only a craft maker.

The relationship between the artist and the maker has almost always been described as one of connection, openness and humbleness regarding the material, and trust in the other's competencies:

The quality of the work can be seen in the relationship that is established here, at the print laboratory, a relationship based on the work that then becomes even more personal. It becomes a much broader human experience. There is a need to enjoy these things together (Letter pressing laboratory in Modena, author's translation).

A working relationship based on trust easily becomes a personal relationship. A good relationship takes place when the artist approaches the craft production with curiosity, trying to understand the peculiarity of the material to translate it into a meaningful artwork, not just to satisfy the market needs (e.g., producing multiples to diversify the offer). The relationship is described as human, in contrast to an economic transaction or a mechanical reproduction, as a commission may be seen. Understanding each other and respecting the specificities of the material is fundamental for a successful outcome and a long-lasting collaboration. The quality of this relationship and the sensitivity of the maker is what differentiates a work done by an art craft maker and a regular craft maker or an industrial production (e.g., difference between a «fonderia d'arte» and an industrial foundry). According to different makers, their creative relationship varies with the types of artists they deal with: younger generation artists, for instance, usually arrive at the laboratory with a 3D drawing of the object and they commission it without any material knowledge and are generally not interested in learning about it. Older generation artists, instead, have some material-based competencies or, if they do not, they are interested in learning by living at the laboratory with the artisans for a while. This differentiation can be partly justified by the different artistic education of contemporary artists compared to previous generations. One craft maker stated his preference for working with emerging artists because of their «passion and curiosity», and «artistic freedom and authenticity not spoiled yet by the market».

Of course, controversies in this relationship have emerged, for instance, initially the artistic collaboration between artists and marble makers was not easy: artisans refused to produce non-figurative sculptures and objects because they did not consider their works «well done». So, a long cultural work (i.e. founding a magazine on marble, organizing workshops, instituting a prize) was done by the owner of the studio company to make marble contemporary and new manufacturing acceptable to artisans.

Innovation and creativity come from both ways and influence not only the final artworks but sometimes also the artistic process and the craft maker's knowledge. The artisan feels stimulated by the artist's challenges, which is why, for instance, some glass makers prefer to work with artists who have never used glass before – «perché mi stimolano maggiormente» – meaning

their requests are not material-based but abstract and hence are more challenging to be translated into glass. Working with contemporary artists forces the process to be more flexible by finding new solutions, thinking about new ways of creating and embracing new visions of the material. External stimulation brings innovation in the craft field, which is why many masters, especially glass makers, are engaging with artists, and designers but also in educational activities with young artists from *Accademie* for a period of apprenticeship. Only one craft organization stated that creativity is placed not only in the hands of the artisans but in the mix of technology, craftsmanship and management. The exchange of ideas and innovation are at the core of their way of working, not only the hand skills of the artisan.

Finally, it is interesting to note that – at least in the '50s -'60s – the relationships between artists and craft makers were interconnected also at a cross-material level. For instance, many artists who worked with ceramics craft makers in Albissola ended up working also with a letter pressing laboratory in Milan because the owners of the craft laboratories knew each other and reciprocally suggested artists possible collaborations. So, informal networks based on artistic sensitivity and personal esteem among craft makers also influenced artistic production.

4.3. *Signature and institutional recognition in the art market*

The need for recognition of the value of the craft work, of the specific material, of the maker's work and creative addition to the artwork is a shared concern and opinion among all the makers. How this need is addressed is different, but it mainly follows two options: (a) putting the signature of the maker on the artwork (or in the catalogue) or (b) through contemporary art-based activities.

One of the most direct forms of recognition is signing the artwork by the maker and the artist. Even if all the makers understand that their role is not that of the artist, some of them still put their company mark on the artwork, adopting a practice widely used in other craft fields, such as design:

In all works there is also my signature, of course, everywhere. I do it *ex officio*. There are few who don't want it. I kind of looked at it like Venini did with Carlo Scarpa when they both signed the object. Today, even very well-known artists want my signature to be there and that happens much more often than those who tell you they want to sign themselves (Pottery maker in Faenza, author's translation).

If they don't want the mark, they [the artists] leave and work somewhere else. My grandfather used to fine sculptors who didn't want it, he would put the mark even on everyday objects and if he found an object without a signature, he would charge the fine (Pottery maker in Albissola, author's translation).

So, by taking inspiration from what happens in the glass field and design, some makers put their signature on the artwork and for some of them, this is not even a negotiable matter. However, it is not a pottery-related practice, also foundries generally put their mark, even if some prefer to ask permission from the artist first. Letter pressing makers generally add «printed by» on the paper object, especially for authenticity and archival reasons.

There is a need for recognition for sure. Also, in terms of value, when someone says “it costs too much” they have no idea how much work there is behind it. That’s why I do guided tours with schools, to make people understand how things are created, how we arrive at the final form, what value and work is behind it. In art, in particular, there is a hidden quality that comes from the hands of so many people that are not recognized. Of course, putting the signature has always happened and it has helped us rediscover many sculptures for which there was no documentation. We almost always put it, unless the artist does not want to (Foundry in Milan, author’s translation).

In this case, the link between a need for recognition of the maker and of the value of the craft work, in general, is paralleled with the signature and also with educational activities for the schools and visitors. A need for education of the general public is overall felt by every maker that has been interviewed. Moreover, the signature on the art piece has documentation, archival and traceability purposes too.

Other artisans understand their role as the mere maker, a manufacturer – an excellent and value-adding one – whose signature should not appear together with that of the artist.

We have a profession, but we are not artists [...]. Foundries put the mark on it, we don’t normally. We put it more on classic reproductions. There was a company in Carrara that interviewed a manufacturer who claimed to make the works of artists and the artists resented that. We collaborate with artists, we offer a service (Marble laboratory in Pietrasanta, author’s translation).

Working as a manufacturer for artists, being paid for a service, is felt safer and more professional by some makers, while they brand their commercial production. In addition to a perception of major professionalism, some makers also stress the fact that, notwithstanding the value of the craftwork, they do not own any property or copyright over the artwork, so there should be no signature.

Getting recognized in the art market by organizing art-based activities and entering the art system is an indirect and sometimes more appreciated way of instituting the maker’s role. For instance, a glass company in Venice has instituted its private foundation with an exhibition space and it organizes a collateral event and exhibition dedicated to contemporary glass art during the Venice Biennial. The founder uses this strategy to elevate glass from its belonging to the craft world to the contemporary art world. He understood that to

be successful in the art world, he could not compete with other international galleries (which are the gatekeepers of the art system) but instead work *for* them as a producer in the glass sector, bridging between the art world and craftsmanship.

The marble company in Querceta has instituted a contemporary art prize for young artists, which includes the production of the sculpture, and it has organized biennial initiatives dedicated to marble sculptures produced by an artist and the marble company. In creating the prize, the company has constituted a jury of contemporary art professionals and curators, giving them the authority over the quality of the project and maintaining the production of the artwork in-house. The Milanese foundry is used to organize artists' residencies in addition to educational activities, such as guided tours or musical events. In addition to artistic residencies, the pottery laboratory in Albissola opened a museum showcasing their artworks collection made of past collaborations with artists. It also publishes books and catalogues and organizes conferences around the artistic production of the company. Finally, the graphics laboratory in Modena opened a gallery dedicated to graphic art which, however, has not a commercial aim but a cultural one of educating about the paper as an artistic material. Lastly, the same graphic laboratory has created a subscription project that financially sustains the collaboration with an emerging artist and the production of a graphic piece which is donated to subscribers. However, it should be taken into consideration that generally all these art-based and art market-based initiatives can be afforded only by bigger production companies that have financial resources to invest in it, not by small artisans' laboratories.

Generally, the institutional recognition of the maker's name depends upon the artist's preference:

In general, it happened to me that the more established the artist, the greater the recognition we were given, and the more we were recognized as professionals. For example, Claire Fontaine did a work [Interior Design for Bastards, 2008] where the neon sign had my dad's name and the price paid. Bruce Nauman mentioned us in the Biennial catalogue "Topological Garden" and we got official recognition, as well as invited us to the opening parties. But these experiences are rare (Neon maker in Casale sul Sile, author's translation).

So, acknowledging the case of Claire Fontaine as part of the artwork itself, the most frequent recognition by the artist is generally the mention in the catalogue and eventually the personal invitation to the opening of the exhibition.

5. Discussion

5.1. The maker in the art world

Becker argues that the production of artworks is a collective endeavor based on the collaboration of different professionals and figures who contribute to the production, distribution, and evaluation of artworks. The activities of the production of artwork are detailed in figure 1, and they start from the ideation of the artwork, which entails only the artist, passing through the execution made by the artist or the maker, following all the other steps which are not the focus of this article.

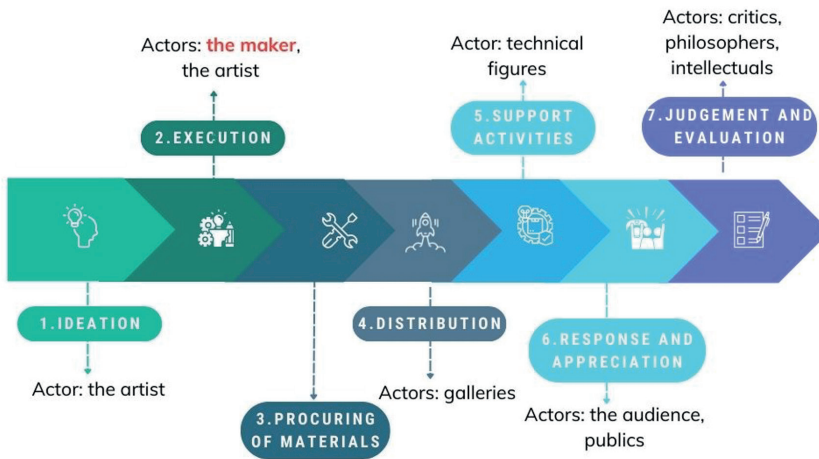


Fig. 1. Art world division of labor. The actors indicated are just exemplars, not to be intended as a systematic listing (Source: Author's elaboration on Becker)

As it can be seen, the maker is part of the execution phase of the artwork, in the case in which the artist is not able to manufacture it on his/her own. Even if it is accepted that the artwork creation process is the result of teamwork which concurs to its value creation, the maker – differently from other actors of the process, such as gallerists or critics – is generally excluded from institutional recognition; indeed, as highlighted by data, very few of them co-sign the artwork with the artist or are cited in the catalogue.

Becker defines «conventions» as practices and assumptions «known to all well-socialized members of a society [that] make possible some of the most basic and important forms of cooperation characteristic of an art world»³⁶.

³⁶ Becker 1982, p. 46.

Becker writes about a wide variety of conventions in different cultural fields, from poetry to music and art, where he presents as an example of a convention the evaluation of paintings by merchants and businessmen based on the geometrical methods and proportions used by the painters. However, he also adds conventions in the art world as a matter of taste, so these refer both to market-related practices and qualitative ones. Then, the lack of recognition of the maker can be seen as connected to the convention of the “artist as the individual genius”.

This image of the artist is culturally constructed and has been narrated in a certain kind of mainstream art history focusing on the life of exceptional single figures (i.e. Vasari) and is still playing a major role in mainstream imagination. Indeed, individualization is very functional to the capitalistic art market where single artists can easily become brands. However, this contradicts the fact that, at least since Duchamp, it is commonly accepted that the artist is not necessarily the one who handmakes the artwork, but instead, the person who ideates it³⁷. Moreover, the art world has already accepted and theorized the loss of the auratic dimension³⁸ of the artwork due to its mechanical reproduction, compared to which the role of the artisan in a craft-handmade production is a much less disrupting phenomenon.

The single authorship of the artwork and the lack of recognition of the maker is quite singular if it is compared with other creative products in other cultural fields, like the movies or music or theatre, where the single authorship of the singer or the film director coexists with the acknowledgement and recognition of other professionals that took part in the artistic creation (i.e. credits). Giving recognition to ancillary roles, such as the assistant, the composer, the light technician, the photography director and so on, does not diminish the authorship of the director or the singer, on the contrary, it turns on the lights on the complexity of a creative creation. Moreover, if it is commonly accepted that a single professional cannot know every single technical detail of his/her production, then also the artist who uses multiple languages and materials should be expected the same, especially in a less material-based artistic education as it is the contemporary one. So, two contradictory dynamics are going on: the critical acknowledgement by the art system and by academia that artworks are more and more the result of a collective effort of which the artist is the general director³⁹, and the modern stress on the artist as the single source of artistry and creativity in the value creation process. Nevertheless, what history proved is that conventions change as society does.

³⁷ Vettese 2005, Groys 2012.

³⁸ Benjamin 1935.

³⁹ Becker 1982, Vettese 2010.

5.2. Possibilities coming from the institutional recognition of the maker

This article argues that the institutional recognition of the role of the craft maker, even in terms of credits or co-signature, would benefit not only the craft sector but also the art world.

The institutional recognition of the maker is not meant to diminish the role of the artist, whose paternity of the artwork and related monetary royalties are not questioned, as all the interviewed makers confirmed. Crediting other professionals for the co-production of an artwork would go, first of all, in the direction of dismissing the already deconstructed and obsolete convention of the romantic notion of the artist as an individual, isolated, genius and lonely creator of an artwork, and acknowledging the already accepted figure of the artist as the conceptual creator of the artwork, intended as a co-creation of value among different professionals. Secondly, in an opaque valuation dynamic which characterizes the art world⁴⁰, revealing how much work, professions, know-how, and making stages are hidden behind the production of artwork would add value and critical acknowledgement of the price paid for it, both in the art market and in the craft sector. As shown in the case studies, the lack of education about the making processes of a craft object is a common problem in every craft sector. Thirdly, having the co-signature or the credits of the maker would be crucial for traceability purposes, to avoid forgery (generally the original matrix or cast is stored by the artisan), and also to provide maintenance to the artwork directly from the maker.

Institutional recognition of the artisan would also benefit the craft sector, which is increasingly shrinking every year. Indeed, the craft sector in Italy is becoming less and less attractive for younger generations, both for fiscal and financial reasons (i.e. low revenues, high costs, long working hours, high fiscal taxation) and social ones (i.e. it is strictly bound to tradition and traditional entrepreneurial mindset), having old *maestri* dying with their technical skills and know-how. The art world's visibility would bring social capital to the artisan, making that profession attractive to younger generations. Visibility in the art sector can also lead to the professionalization of the sector, in this case, art production.

Firstly, recognizing and defining the art maker not only in the art world but in general as a profession and as a career would push to instituting common rules in the art co-production, it would foster job's safeguarding rights and fiscal equality. Moreover, institutional recognition would also answer the biggest issue of the craft sector in Italy: the generational gap. Indeed, strictly regarding contemporary art production, a very interesting reality is that of art production companies or networks. At present time, contemporary art

⁴⁰ Velthuis 2005; Hutter, Throsby 2008.

production companies in Italy seem not to be a common practice but abroad they are an established reality⁴¹. They are business companies in which different craft people work together with software engineers or video makers for artistic commissions. These are creative industries which produce artworks, providing competencies, professionals, technical, and material support to artists who want to produce an artwork without having the technical skills or machinery. Some of them, especially in the UK, are publicly financed through the Lottery, others are proper private-public business companies, used also to restore and inhabit ex-industrial abandoned buildings. So, creating a platform which connects different artistic production companies, either a big art production company which integrates different materials and craftsmanship techniques, could be a possible solution for the Italian situation, which is composed of isolated realities, constituting a highly inefficient system based on individuals (also inside the same company) who cannot transmit their knowledge due to lack of interest of the new generations, lack of awareness and attractiveness of the sector. For instance, art production companies in Italy could integrate the artisanal know-how of *maestri* while offering at the same time an alternative job offer to all those art graduates from *Accademie di Belle Arti* (art schools) who do not continue their artistic career and whose academic titles do not permit them to teach art courses in higher education and universities.

In conclusion, institutionally recognizing the art maker as a profession starting from the art world would produce benefits both to the art system (e.g., traceability and restoration of the artwork, easiness to find makers in the market) and to the craft sector (e.g., structuring the profession, gaining attractiveness, offering new job titles to art students and craft professionals).

6. Conclusions

The article investigated the role and the figure of the art maker, who in Italy is generally a craft maker who works also on artistic commissions. It is not institutionally recognized but it is a central figure in contemporary art production, with technical and artisanal competencies and material-based sensitivity.

The cases analyzed manifest a different interpretation of the role of the art maker, someone understands it as a more active actor – a publisher, an editor – others as an excellent manufacturer. All the craft makers, though, agree on the value added by the artisan and on the lack of recognition of their work, along with a need for clients' education on the craft-making process. Indeed,

⁴¹ For instance, Artangel in London, Locus+ in Newcastle, Mixed Media Berlin in Berlin.

all the makers argued that there is inevitably a creative addition from the initial draft to the final artwork and that is the result of a generative exchange between the artist and the maker, the first as the conceptual creator and the second as the technical and artistic problem-solver. Business models tend to converge around two main typologies: the more traditional craft laboratory which operates traditionally by just manufacturing the artwork; and the more commercial company which is more interrelated with the art world trying to enter the art market. The main objective of this latter group is to valorize the craft material and make it attractive for contemporary artistic productions. So, there is a perceived need for recognition of the value of their technical competencies as professionals, and of the material itself, along with a need for clients' education on the craft-making process.

This article has shown that the maker is already part of the art world since they take part in the execution phase of the production process, as described by Becker. However, two contradictory dynamics are going on in the art world: the critical acknowledgement by the art system and by academia that artworks are more and more the result of a collective effort of which the artist is the general director, and the modern stress on the artist as the single source of artistry and creativity in the value creation process. Moreover, the article has discussed the opportunity to give institutional recognition to the figure of the art maker as beneficial both for the art world and the craft sector. The artist-maker co-authorship or crediting the maker would still recognize the paternity (and royalties) of the artist as the single author but would acknowledge the artwork as a product whose value is collectively created. This would also make evident to the public all the know-how, competencies, the hours of work behind an artwork, justifying somehow the huge prices of contemporary art and educating the public on the value of craft. Moreover, having the name of the craft-maker on the artwork (or in its documentation) would help in the traceability and restoration of the artwork.

Given the huge problem of the generational gap in the craft sector, obtaining visibility and recognition by the art world would give the maker social status and attention, attracting the younger generation and the graduates from the *Accademie di Belle Arti*, and forcing its professionalization (structuring the contracts, the fiscal aspects, accountability, etc.). The enhanced professionalization of the art maker can lead to the creation of new business realities such as the art production companies or platforms, which are an already established international reality.

So, institutional recognition of the maker and its professionalization far from being detrimental to the single authorship of the artist would enhance both the art world and the craft sector – especially in Italy, a country characterized by worldwide famous craft techniques and know-how which are dying with the older generation and also by a huge unemployment rate of the art and cultural sector.

Further research should map all the artistic production realities in Italy and compare them with international case studies. Moreover, alternative art production processes, such as artist residencies, should be integrated into the study and put in relation to artisanal manufacturing to understand possible synergies. Finally, the different figures of the mediators and producers should be studied as well, trying to describe and understand their role in the craftsmanship sector.

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