

The commodification of art continues to be a controversial phenomenon, riddled with tensions regarding the relationships between art and commerce. Although the phenomenon has been studied extensively in various fields, knowledge about more specific processes and practices through which works of art become transformed into market products remains limited. In response, this thesis turns to the case of graffiti and street art as art forms in which tensions regarding art and its commodification are particularly present. The thesis explores how graffiti and street art are transformed into market products by introducing the concept of “exchangification”. Involving practices of objectification, classification, and valuation, exchangification entails the continued negotiation of the balance between legitimacy and authenticity, which enables artworks to remain as artworks while at the same time become products ready for market exchange. The thesis affords a detailed understanding of how graffiti and street art are made exchangeable, and contributes to the understanding of the commodification of art, as well as of market processes more generally.

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Exchangification of Art : Transforming street art into market products | Hanna Borgblad



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Hanna Borgblad



GÖTEBORGS UNIVERSITET  
HANDELSHÖGSKOLAN



*To my parents, to my sisters, and to Ivroj*

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# Abstract

Art markets are filled with tensions, often explained as an inevitable dichotomy between arts and commerce. During the last century, this phenomenon has been defined as the commodification of art. Crucial for the commodification of art is the transformation of artworks into market products, and the role of the artist as a producer of these market products. For graffiti and street art – art forms that are traditionally anti-commercial, unsanctioned, and ephemeral but nevertheless found in art markets – this tension is particularly present.

Previous research on art markets has addressed several complexities involved in art commodification, including aspects of valuation, pricing, and questions of legitimacy and authenticity. However, scant attention has been paid to the specific process of how artworks become exchangeable. This thesis explores this process by attending to the concrete practices that enable the transformation of graffiti and street art into exchangeable art market products. It is based on ethnographic fieldwork, consisting of interviews, observations and archival sources, and draws on constructivist market studies literature and pragmatist research on commodification.

The thesis develops the concept of *exchangification*, which denotes the overall process through which artworks are transformed into market products. *Exchangification* involves three major categories of practices: objectification (making artworks materially ownable and transferable), classification (defining and relating categories to each other and placing artworks in categories), and valuation (making artworks valuable by producing and calculating values).

The *exchangification* process helps to explain how the dichotomy between arts and commerce unfolds in practice. The thesis shows that in order to *exchangify* mobile and mural artworks into exchangeable market products, the actors involved – artists, mediators, buyers – negotiate aspects of legitimacy and authenticity through objectifying, classifying and valuating practices. This negotiation is bi-directional. On the one hand, it strives for legitimacy by detaching subcultural characteristics and attaching conventional art market qualities. On the other hand, it strives for authenticity by re-attaching subcultural characteristics to sustain the artworks' authenticity and credibility.

This thesis brings new knowledge about the phenomenon of art commodification to the arts marketing literature. It sheds new light on how art markets operate, and what constitutes the specific process in the commodification of art that produces exchangeable market products. Previously, this process has been defined as a phase of “commodity candidacy” of an object. With this thesis, it has been refined and developed into a more substantial definition: the process of *exchangification*.

Keywords: *exchangification, commodification, arts marketing, market practice, authenticity, legitimacy, graffiti, street art*



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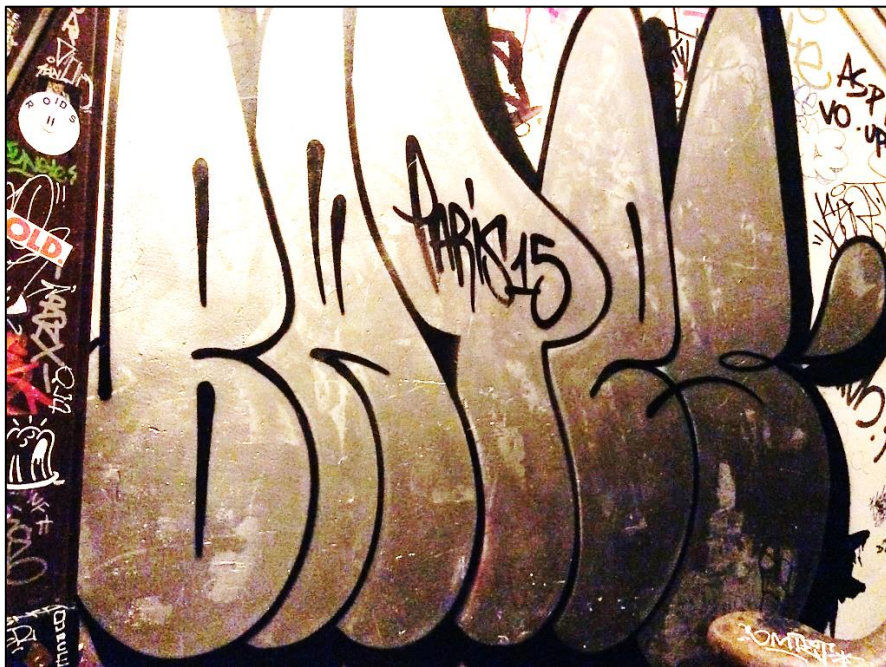
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# 1 (Non-) exchangeable artworks



*Figure 1. Bates tag in a staircase in Paris, photo taken during fieldwork 2015*

Consider this tag<sup>1</sup> by the Danish artist, Bates (Figure 1). “Bates” is spray painted on the wall in a staircase, leading to an art gallery on the basement floor of a Parisian building. The tag is painted with chrome colors, “bubble” letters and is referred to as a “throw-up”. Many others have also marked their presence on this staircase using spray cans, markers or stickers. These practices are part of a global, controversial and more than fifty years’ old graffiti and street art subculture (Schacter 2008). We see graffiti tags every day and almost everywhere. Many people consider these tags to be disturbing and would call them vandalism. Others find them artistic and aesthetically significant. What is particularly interesting here, however, is not the Bates tag itself, nor the other tags on this staircase, nor their ubiquity in public spaces, but how they are also involved in an emerging art market. But how is it possible that this tag, written on the wall of a staircase in Paris, is at the same part of an art market?

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<sup>1</sup> The appropriate definition would be “throw-up” rather than “tag”, but for reasons of comparability and simplicity, I will refer to the works both in Figures 1 and 2 as “tags”

The picture below (Figure 2) shows Bates' tag again, but this time it is screen printed onto paper in multiple copies, and framed in a passe-partout behind glass. The tag is exhibited, it is priced at 2500 SEK and has already been sold (demonstrated by the red dots in the right corner of the painting) at a Swedish art gallery.



*Figure 2. Bates tag as a screen print., photo taken during fieldwork 2014*

The two tags are obviously connected; they are made by the same artist, and they both express graffiti aesthetics. However, there are also differences that distinguish their capabilities of being exchangeable. In contrast with the staircase tag, the screen print tag is mobile and permanent; it is defined and sanctioned as a commercial artwork by being selected by the artist and gallery owners and exhibited in a gallery space; it is priced, and, it is sold. These material, representative and economic features have transformed the tag into an object that allows exchange. Hence, whereas the staircase tag would not be possible for someone to buy as a market product, it has been made possible for the framed screen print tag to be exchanged for money in art markets.

This example above is, at first sight, an easy comparison between what is a non-exchangeable thing, and what is a market product. In the following, I will elaborate on the tensions embedded in the commodification of art, discussing how an artwork's transformation into a market product is complex and

contradictory, not always easy to distinguish, and involves several processual elements.

Parts of these tensions were addressed during a fieldwork observation at the opening ceremony of a Swedish street art festival. A panel was organized, with the artists coming from all over the world. The artists were asked a question about how working professionally as an artist is perceived in the graffiti and street art communities, and to get commissions, which means that they are being paid. “Is there a discussion of being ‘sell-outs?’”, the moderator asked. One artist replied that there are definitely opinions like that, but in the end, artists too need to survive:

You must detach your personal works from your commercial works. You cannot only do unsanctioned work if you want to support your family, that’s the reality. If you like to cure, then you can work as a doctor. If you like to paint, then why not work as an artist? That does not necessarily imply that collectors are interested in you. But if you are lucky enough to get commissions, then why not take them? But I know that not all artists would agree on that.

(Observation 35, field notes 2015)

The other artists in the panel at the festival agreed that street art is not art that can be sold per se, but if it is commissioned, it can be. The tensions involved in the commodification of graffiti and street art are thus not a matter of black or white; they are constantly negotiated and re-negotiated in the artist collectives.

In order to discuss the specific tensions involved when transforming graffiti and street art into market products, it is necessary to understand the conditions under which the art form originated and ultimately under which conditions it is (and has been) performed. As with any subculture, there are many stories about how graffiti and street art started, what the subculture is and what it is not, what the “rulebook” looks like, how the art should be performed, and who is considered a member of the culture (Jacobson 1996). The following brief presentation of the graffiti subculture, its parallel development into street art during the 1980s (Jacobson 1996), and the commercialization and institutionalization of graffiti and street art, mainly builds on academic, editorial and popular literature written by scholars, journalists and graffiti and street art practitioners.

## **Graffiti and street art**

The subcultural form of graffiti is distinguished from traditional graffiti, the practices of which can be traced as far back as to ancient Pompeii (Jacobson 1996, Kimvall 2014) and rock art (Merrill 2015). In this study, the phenomenon of exchangeification relates to subcultural graffiti and street art. The general narrative



of the history of the graffiti subculture is usually described as practices that emerged in Philadelphia at the end of the 1960s, and were further developed in New York at the beginning of the 1970s (Bengtsen 2014, Cooper 2008, Dickens 2008, Jacobson 1996, Kimvall 2014, Lombard 2013, Merrill 2015, Wells 2015). A decade later, the graffiti culture and art practices had travelled across the Atlantic and were adopted by European graffiti writers<sup>2</sup>, in particular in Paris and Amsterdam (Jacobson 1996). The movement also reached Sweden through influential books such as *Subway art* (Cooper and Chalfant 1984) and *Spraycan art* (Chalfant and Prigoff 1987), as well as documentary films such as *Stylewars* (Silver and Chalfant 1983).

During the 1970s, graffiti increasingly developed in its aesthetics and practices. Many of the different forms that graffiti consists of today emerged during this period (Jacobson 1996). The bigger graffiti pieces initially originated from the tags (Cooper 2008, Jacobson 2000). This form of graffiti is also referred to as TTP (Jacobson 1996), which is short for *tags*, *throw-ups* and *pieces*, which constitute the three most common graffiti expressions in varying sizes and techniques (Merrill 2015). Graffiti was usually performed with spray cans or ink markers on walls, subway cars or other unsanctioned public spaces. To some extent, the graffiti art form originated as a radical act of reclaiming public space, and as a protest against the dominating commercial advertising and private ownership of buildings and land in central city areas. But graffiti also developed as an expressionist and colorful art form. Youths who learnt how to use spray cans were amazed at seeing their artworks appear on the subway cars sliding through the city landscapes (Jacobson 1996).

The development of the street art “genre” during the 1980s was, according to Jacobson (1996) and Waclawek (2008), a creative break from the graffiti movement. Artists began to use the public space with aesthetics and devices retrieved from studio settings rather than from the established, but unofficial, rules of TTP graffiti. More recently, the street art movement has sometimes been commercially defined as post-graffiti (Dickens 2008, Merrill 2015, Waclawek 2008). Common practices of street artworks are the use of stencils, stickers and posters, sculptural installations and knitted pieces attached to the physical environment (Merrill 2015). Similar to graffiti, street art is characterized by ephemerality, immobility and unsanctioned production in public space (Bengtsen 2014, Guwallius 2010, Merrill 2015, Wells 2015). The graffiti and street art culture is today, more than 50 years after its origin, still an active and developing movement and has been referred to as the biggest art movement of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries (Cooper 2008, Söderholm 2015).

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<sup>2</sup> “Writer” is the subcultural term for a person who produces graffiti

In the history of art, there is a constant obsession with defining -isms and genres, and dividing art forms into specific categories and sub-categories (Becker 1982, DiMaggio 1987). Graffiti and street art is not an exception; it has been subject to constant re-definitions throughout its entire history (Bengtson 2014, Jacobson 1996, Kimvall 2014). Entirely separating street art from graffiti with clear boundaries has been challenging for art critics, academics and artists. Artists that perform either graffiti or street art, or both, argue that the practices of the art forms are internally embedded in different norms and rules as to how to produce the artworks. In previous literature on graffiti and street art (e.g. Austin 2001, Bengtson 2014, Jacobsson 2000, Merrill 2015, Schacter 2008, Wells 2015), there is a general common understanding of graffiti and street art, however, as art practices that, almost by definition, are unsanctioned, illegal, non-commercial, and cannot be consumed or produced as commodities. It is further suggested that graffiti or street art that is displayed in other settings and produced with other intentions than in unsanctioned space, simply, is not graffiti or street art (Riggle 2010). Not all graffiti and street art is produced in unsanctioned places, however (Cooper 2008, Jacobson 1996, Kimvall 2014). Graffiti and street artists also produce works on legal walls or other sanctioned places, which they then simply may call legal graffiti (Jacobson 1996, Merrill 2015). Kimvall (2014) argues that graffiti is what practitioners out in the field claims to be graffiti. Andersson (2006), Riggle (2010) and Visconti et al. (2010) further suggest that street art is the umbrella term for all art practices taking place in public settings, of which graffiti is one.

What is relevant for this thesis, however, is the fact that artists, who usually produce artworks in unsanctioned or sanctioned public space, are increasingly working as professional artists in market settings (Bengtson 2014). It is argued that the proper term for street art (and graffiti) that is produced as sanctioned or commercial art should be *urban art* (Bengtson 2014). As graffiti and street art are traditionally anti-commercial, the classifications “street art markets” or “graffiti markets” would be oxymora and problematic to use. Hence, the need for an alternative term that defines and represents commercial artworks and distinguishes them from subcultural graffiti and street art practices, illustrates some of the tensions involved in the commodification of these artworks.

The commodification of graffiti and street art is growing globally (Artprice 2013, 2017, Bengtson 2014), but it is not a new phenomenon (Merrill 2015). Ever since the first spray painted subway cars started to circulate through New York and Philadelphia at the end of the 1960s, graffiti and street art as outdoor art practices have had a parallel history of being commodified and institutionalized in indoor gallery and museum settings (Cooper 2008, Dickens 2010, Jacobson 1996, Kimvall 2014). The first commercial success of graffiti is often seen as being part of the general art market boom of the 1980s in the US (Jacobson 1996, Kimvall

2014), but already in the early 1970s, the first organizing of graffiti artists and graffiti exhibitions were appearing (Waclawek 2008, Wells 2016).

Nevertheless, the commodification of graffiti and street art is considered controversial and full of paradoxes (Bengtson 2014, Dickens 2010, Lombard 2013, Merrill 2015, Preece and Bida 2017). Subcultural graffiti and street art primarily adopts an anti-commercial stance, “in spite of its own commercialization in the creative economy” (Merrill 2015:372). Although acknowledging the conflictual art versus commerce dilemma among graffiti and street artists, however, the Australian street artist CDH (2013) claimed that there are still “street art purists” (including himself). Street art purists are defined as street artists who resist the transition into commercial galleries: “The great promise of street art was its capacity to function as a second system of art”, which managed to function outside the economically driven systems of commercial art markets (CDH 2013:43). According to CDH (2013), the spectrum of street art practices has two ends with two opposing goals: remaining subcultural or going commercial. If there is a spectrum of subcultural and commercial practices, however, there are not solely two polarized paths to follow as an artist, but a pragmatic road as well, where both directions are possible.

## **Controversies of art commodification**

Transforming artworks into market products is not a new controversy that has been introduced with the commodification of graffiti and street art. Art markets have for decades been described as irrational mysteries, and have been understood as a never-ending conflict between the logics of art and the logics of commerce. Critical accounts of the commercialization of art markets and the notion of commodification usually refer to Marx’ theories on capitalism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Appadurai 1986, Wood 1996/2003). These theories were developed by critical theorists of the Frankfurt school (Adorno 1935/1973, Adorno and Horkheimer 1969/2018, Benjamin 1936/1968) in their critique against what they defined as an industrialization of the arts (Major 2014). In today’s multi-disciplinary field of arts marketing, there is still an ever-relevant discussion and fascination for understanding the controversies of art versus commerce dichotomies (Bradshaw 2010, Fillis 2010, 2011, Joy and Sherry 2003, Karpik 2010, Kerrigan et al. 2009, O’Reilly and Kerrigan 2010, O’Reilly et al. 2014a, Raviola and Zackariasson 2017, Velthuis 2005). Velthuis (2005:51) claimed that what makes research on art markets an interesting case is “exactly that it is a site where two contradictory logics, those of the art world and of the economy, conflict”.

Previous literature has contributed to an established area of research on the conditions of art markets. It has focused on different aspects in the understanding of complex art markets phenomena, such as commodification (Appadurai 1986, Joy and Sherry 2003, Kopytoff 1986, Pardo-Guerra 2011), artistic incomes

(Abbing 2002, Forkert 2013), artistic branding (Kerrigan et al. 2011, Schroeder 2005, 2010), valuations and pricing (Cowen and Tabarrok 2000, Dar and Schultz Nybacka 2017, Karpik 2010, Modig and Modig 2013, O’Neill 2008, Philips 2015, Preece and Bida 2017, Preece et al. 2016, Rodner and Thompson 2013, Velthuis 2005, Wikberg and Strannegård 2014), networks structuring art markets (Becker et al. 2006, Hanspal 2012, Jyrämä 2002, Jyrämä and Äyväri 2010, Kottász and Bennett 2013, 2014, Moureau and Sagot-Duvaurox 2012, Velthuis 2003), socio-technical processes of developing artistic products (Dickens 2010, Dominguez Rubio and Silva 2013, Strandvad 2012, Yaneva 2003), relation and power structures (Bourdieu 1992, 1993, DiMaggio 1987, Hanspal 2012, Khaire and Wadhvani 2010), and consumer experiences (Ahola 2007, Bengtsen 2014, Chen 2009, Larsen 2014). Although the dichotomous tensions between art and commerce are often taken for granted in this literature, it is further argued that the distinction between art and commerce is rather artificial (Dennis and Macaulay 2010, Joy and Sherry 2003, Preece and Bida 2017, Schroeder 2006). Following Fillis (2010), Preece and Bida (2017:100) claimed, “a consideration of the artwork cannot be separated from the macro-level context in which it is produced, distributed and consumed”.

Due to this seemingly never-ending, repeatedly discussed conflict of art versus commerce, it is claimed that the transformation of artworks into art market commodities is a well-known, trivial and mundane story today (Pardo-Guerra 2011). Because of this perceived triviality, however, the *process* of commodification has been neglected in inquiries into the art markets by scholars interested in these markets (Pardo-Guerra 2011). Although previous literature on art markets is comprehensive and extends over a wide range of art market complexities, it has thus far paid scarce attention to the process through which artworks are made exchangeable in these markets. Hence, although it could be argued that the commodification of art is a trivialized fact as a general phenomenon, there is nevertheless a paucity of knowledge about the particular practices by which artworks become commodified. Due to both formal and informal practices involved in arts marketing, the process of commodification remains opaque (MacNeill and Wilson-Anastasios 2014).

Commodification of art appears particularly complex and controversial for artworks that, similar to graffiti and street art, are characterized by ephemerality, site-specificity and immobility (Bengtsen 2014, Dominguez Rubio and Silva 2013, Forkert 2013, Merrill 2015, Velthuis 2005), and that provoke established norms of what contemporary (and exchangeable) art is (Fillis 2010), such as political happenings and performances (Preece and Bida 2017). These artworks often lack tangible features that can physically be transferred between owners and thus they may resist to becoming exchange objects in art markets. Indeed, in addition to definitions and categorizations, one of the tensions of art versus commerce that

becomes clear in the commodification of graffiti and street art is the possibility of ownership.

By focusing on a fundamental aspect of markets – the premises of exchange (Callon et al. 2002) – this study will explore how artworks are transformed into market products. The emphasis on the process of constructing exchange objects offers the possibility of exploring the tensions between art and commerce, which are assumed to be involved when artworks are commodified. It thus contributes to knowledge about what practices are at work in order to create art market products. Moreover, it provides knowledge on how the multiple actors that are involved manage the tensions between art and commerce in practice.

The concept of *exchangification* is introduced to explain this process. Exchangification does not emphasize the exchange itself, but how artworks are made exchangeable. The study focuses on artworks that are associated with characteristics that traditionally contradict the possibilities of market exchange: anti-commercialism, ephemerality, immobility, illegality and lack of ownership properties. To be specific, it concerns the exchangification of graffiti and street art.

## **A study on the exchangification of graffiti and street art**

In the research tradition of understanding the dichotomy between art and business, graffiti and street art provides a significant example of art commodification. Except for dichotomies such as art versus vandalism, which is closely related to issues of legitimacy (Kimvall 2014), the commodification of graffiti and street art is also found in an ongoing discussion on authenticity (Bengtson 2014, Wells 2015). Accounts from my fieldwork claimed that the growing interest in commercial graffiti and street art has brought with it artists who are aiming for commercial careers as “urban artists” without “passing the streets”, an authenticity phenomenon that is pinpointed in Bengtson (2014) and Wells (2015) as well as in the film “Exit through the gift shop” (Banksy 2010). “Without ‘the streets’, the excitement of the style is compromised” (Wells 2016:473). Questions addressing these issues concern, for instance, how to attribute authenticity to artworks that are produced in the studio and not in the street, and how to legitimize an artist who has a background of illegal street art production. Hence, regarding the traditional legacy of art practices that are considered illegitimate and oppose commercialization (Artprice 2013a, Bengtson 2014, Wells 2015), issues of authenticity and legitimacy are at play in the exchangification process. As will be further deliberated in this thesis, however, there are practices that aim to negotiate these issues in order to make the artworks exchangeable.

Considering the anti-commercial background of graffiti and street art, as well as the common perception that they are illegitimate vandalism on the one hand while they are seen as expressionist and political art forms on the other (Cooper 2008, Kimvall 2014, Merrill 2015, Schacter 2008), it is possible to believe that the comparison at the beginning of the two Bates tags (Figures 1 and 2) may provoke questions, objections, and rage, as well as indifference. For instance, drawing on accounts from fieldwork, one may speculate as to whether the screen print tag was produced with different – not-according-to-the-“rulebook” – practices than was the staircase tag. Also, one may object to the fact that there really is a connection between the tags. Just because *the artist* is the same, one may argue that these tags are two completely separate works of art and hence there is no point in comparing them. Moreover, if one does recognize the connection between the tags, the comparison would also provoke rage from some opponents, who believe that the commodification of art and culture is bad for society. However, this commodification could equally seem natural to the more indifferent laissez-faire proponents. They may argue, within a capitalist economy where things, even art and artistic work, can be turned into market products, that it is a positive consequence that graffiti and street artists eventually begin to sell their artistic labor. Moreover, someone would probably object to the claim that these tags are *artworks*. The question of whether graffiti and street art is to be considered art or vandalism, legitimate or illegitimate, or both at the same time (Blanché 2018), is a never-ending debate even fifty years after the subcultures began to emerge (Dickens 2008).

During my years as a doctoral candidate, I have often been asked two questions when I have told people about my research project. First, they ask, “Is there a market for street art?” (Some have also claimed, “There cannot be a market for street art!”). The answer to this question is pretty straightforward: yes, there is a market for street art. The second question, however, warrants a much longer answer: “But how can you sell street art?” Answering this question constitutes the content of this thesis. By focusing on art forms that represent an extreme case of *non-market* products, this study contributes to previous discussions of commodification of art. A better understanding of how traditionally anti-commercial graffiti and street art transforms into art market products that it is possible to buy and sell contributes to our knowledge about the specific premises of how art markets work. The specific process of how artworks are commodified has been identified as a knowledge gap in existing research (Pardo-Guerra 2011) – a gap this study seeks to fill.

### ***Purpose and research question***

Building further on the existing research on the commodification of art and tensions in the marketization of art worlds (e.g. Abbing 2002, Addis and Holbrook 2010, Appadurai 1986, Bradshaw 2010, Dekker 2015, Fillis 2010, 2011,

Forkert 2013, Joy and Sherry 2003, Karpik 2010, Kerrigan et al. 2009, Kopytoff 1986, Lombard 2013, O'Reilly and Kerrigan 2010, O'Reilly et al. 2014a, Raviola and Zackariasson 2017, Velthuis 2005, Wood 1996/2003), this study responds to the call for research that extends our knowledge of the complex practices by which art markets work (Fillis 2011, O'Reilly and Kerrigan 2010). In particular, research that focuses on product-centered practices are suggested by Fillis (2010) and MacNeill and Wilson-Anastasios (2014). As MacNeill and Wilson-Anastasios (2014) stressed, the conflicting views arise from the art "product" itself: the artwork as a market exchange product or as a pure act of artistic self-expression.

This study aims to contribute to the discussions on art market controversies by exploring the tensions related to the exchangeability of graffiti and street art. It aims to unpack the never-ending tensions and dichotomies that art markets are assumed to be part of, but which the actors involved nevertheless seem able to manage (Fillis 2010, Velthuis 2005). The purpose is thus to explore a specific process in the overall phenomenon of art commodification, namely the process of how artworks become possible to exchange as market products. This process is scarcely explored in previous art market research, and yet it is fundamentally involved in the assumed tensions of art markets. In addition, the purpose is to construct a theoretical framework and models that illustrate this process. The following research question is posed: *how are graffiti and street art being transformed into exchangeable art market products?* The transformation is particularly interesting as it regards artworks that are traditionally attributed with characteristics which seem to contradict the possibilities of market exchange: they are anti-commercial, immobile, ephemeral, illegal, and reject private ownership. The study thus focuses on the controversy of the commodification of artworks that seem impossible to commodify.

The purpose can be achieved by studying the everyday practices through which actors are managing these tensions in the practical situations that result in exchangeable artworks. The majority of professionally working artists do not constitute an elite group of a successful few (Joy and Sherry 2003) – by contrast, most artists are struggling to be paid for their artistic work (Konstnärnämnden 2011, Menger 1999, Paying artists 2019). In line with previous research that mainly focuses on the work and artworks of professional artists (Abbing 2002, Fine 2003, Forkert 2013, O'Neill 2008) situated at what could be called the "lower-end" art market (O'Neill 2008), and not on a few successful artists (Fillis 2015, Preece and Bida 2017, Schroeder 2005, Velthuis 2005, 2011), this study empirically ties in with this tradition. By directing the focus to the practices that are involved in the construction of market products of graffiti and street art, the study thus aims to contribute to arts marketing literature by adding empirical and theoretical insights on a fundamental, but still insufficiently explored, aspect of art markets: how artworks become ready for market exchange.

### ***Outline of the thesis***

The thesis is structured as follows. In chapter two, I will account for previous research on art markets and the research in marketing in relation to which this study is positioned. In chapter three, this literature review is followed by a presentation of the theoretical framework that is suitable for the purposes of this study. In this framework I will explain the concept of *exchangification*, which is the overall process whereby products are transformed into market products. In chapter four, I will describe the methodology and how the fieldwork and analysis have been conducted. In chapter five, I will briefly present who the main actors of the graffiti and street art markets are. Next, in chapters six, seven and eight, I will discuss three aspects of exchangification, categorized in practices of objectification, classification and valuation. In chapter nine, I will describe the overall process of exchangification and account for the contributions to existing research that this study has offered. Last, I will discuss some concluding remarks and offer suggestions for future research.





## 2 Literature review

This chapter presents the research traditions on which this study builds and to which it contributes. It is divided into two parts. First, in order to situate the exchange of graffiti and street art in the context of the commodification of art, previous arts marketing literature addressing the tensions embedded in the commodification of art is presented. Second, I will specify aspects of these tensions that have not been carefully explained in previous research, and how the theoretical approach of constructivist market studies is suitable for such an endeavor.

### **Arts marketing: A broad and multidisciplinary research area**

Already the term *arts marketing* displays ambivalence and tensions. As marketing originates from commercial applications, this ambivalence has unsurprisingly been part of the agenda for this field of research for a long time. Larsen and Dennis (2015) recognize, however, that “the term ‘arts marketing’ is often comprehended narrowly, and perhaps even negatively, particularly when marketing is thought to be about ‘selling stuff to people in order to make lots of money’”. They argue for the definition of arts marketing suggested by O’Reilly et al. (2014b) as “the set of historically situated, social, commercial, cultural, technological and [artistic] production, performance, intermediation and consumption practices and discourses which create [artistic] and other value in the [arts] exchange relationship” (Larsen and Dennis 2015).

As this definition suggests, arts marketing is a multi-disciplinary field and has no exclusive tradition within marketing and management research (Larsen and Dennis 2015, O’Reilly 2011, Schroeder 2006). The cross-disciplinary stream of research that studies contemporary art markets, includes fields such as economics (Cowen and Tabarrok 2000, Hutter and Throsby 2008, Throsby 1994), economic sociology (Gustavsson et al. 2012, Hennion 1997, Karpik 2010, Velthuis 2005), philosophy (Riggle 2010), anthropology (Appadurai 1986, Joy and Sherry 2003) sociology (Becker 1982, Becker et al. 2006, Bourdieu 1993, Dominguez Rubio and Silva 2013, Strandvad 2012, 2014), management and marketing (Evrard and Colbert 2000, Guillet de Monthoux 2004, Kerrigan et al. 2009, O’Reilly et al. 2014, Raviola and Zackariasson 2017, Stenström 2008, Wikberg 2017) and art history (Bydler 2004, Koerner and Rausing 2003, Philips 2015, Wood 2003).

O’Reilly (2011) and Kerrigan et al. (2009) refer to this multi-disciplinary research on the relationships between art and markets as the broad perspective of arts marketing. This broad perspective is opposed to the narrow view of arts marketing, which mainly relates to the marketing management of artistic organizations. It is argued that although arts marketing research finds its

foundation in the application of the marketing mix, as well as within consumer research (Dennis et al. 2011), it is necessary for the research to move forward based around the interplay of market creation (Fillis 2011, 2014). In order to study these interplays, attention must thus be given to the various arrangements of actors and practices that construct these art markets (Becker et al. 2006). According to Thornton (2009:256), the ongoing construction of the art world is a “complex beast mutating all the time”.

The following literature review aims to present the main research of importance for the exchangeification of art. It will thus engage with literature discussing the phenomenon of art commodification. The commodification of art and the marketization of art worlds have been understood to a large extent based on two traditions emphasizing slightly different aspects of commodification. First, from a sociology-oriented tradition, structuralist Bourdieuan field theories and social constructivist Beckerian art worlds, this literature is mainly interested in exploring how art markets are structured and constructed, the actors involved, and their relationships vis-à-vis each other. This literature is central in questions of authenticity and legitimacy, which are significant issues also for the exchangeification process. The second tradition constitutes critical theories of the Frankfurt school influenced by deterministic Marxist theories, and a positivist neo-classical view on cultural economics, which form a debate on the societal and economic aspects of the commodification of art.

Both these traditions contribute to what we so far know about the commodification of art. Thus, the following literature review includes the main discussions from this literature within arts marketing. Integrated in the review is a presentation of previous cross-disciplinary literature on graffiti and street art (Bengtson 2014, Borghini et al. 2010, Davies 2013, Dickens 2008, 2010, Kimvall 2014, 2016, Lombard 2013, Riggle 2010, Schacter 2008, Visconti et al. 2010, Wells 2015). Many of these works build on similar theoretical frameworks to the literature on traditional fine art markets, which comes as no surprise as they also discuss the interplays of art production, consumption and markets, but in the specific contexts of graffiti and street art.

### ***To commodify or not to commodify***

The critical conceptualization of art commodification is commonly dated back to a Marxist tradition in cultural anthropology and critical theory during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The critical theorists of the Frankfurt school, such as Adorno (1935/1973), Adorno and Horkheimer (1969/2018) and Benjamin (1936/1968), applied and elaborated Marxism in art theory, which has provided us with perspectives on what, when and why artworks become exchange objects. Almost a century later, commodification is today an established concept that addresses the tensions between art and business (Velthuis 2005, Wood 2003). Wood

(2003:382) claimed that “the would-be comprehensive theoretical study of art will no more omit commodification from its index of concepts than critics of an earlier epoch would have left out form or feeling”. To theorize on art today, it is hence inevitable to also address the commodification of art. Nevertheless, the term commodification is debated and denoted with various meanings. In the fields of social sciences and humanities, various definitions of commodification are found. Thus, there is a terminological confusion in the literature regarding both the level of analysis (for example, micro or macro practices) and the connotations signified to the term.

Generally, commodification in a Marxist deterministic understanding is often used to describe larger societal movements involving mass production and mass consumption (Appadurai 1986, Kopytoff 1986), as Marx discussed how commodification is an inevitable destiny in capitalist societies (Björk 2016). Although departing from Marx’ sole attention on production and capital as the components of commodification, Appadurai (1986:15) agrees that in modern capitalist societies, it is likely that more and more objects become commodified in contrast with non-capitalist societies. Economies have a built-in force that drives objects and people towards commoditization to the greatest degree that exchange technology allows (Kopytoff 1986).

According to Appadurai (1986), the commodification of art implies the commercialization of a product that was not intended to be commercial. Artworks have often been perceived as uniquely valuable and thus should be protected from commodity spheres (Kopytoff 1986, Velthuis 2005). Velthuis (2005:142) argued that artworks are “goods whose essence is considered to be non-commodifiable”. Hence, in this definition by Appadurai (1986) and Velthuis (2005), one finds the main conflict of the art versus commerce dichotomy, i.e., that artworks should not be exchanged as products in markets. The focus in this discussion is on the social values and meanings that are attached to the objects that are being commodified. Moreover, the total trajectory of the commodified object, including exchange, distribution and consumption, is taken into account (Appadurai 1986, Kopytoff 1986). Commodities are objects that, at a certain phase in their “lives” and in a particular situation, meet the criteria of commodity candidacy, which means that they are exchangeable (Appadurai 1986). Artworks, during the course of their lives, flux between being either commodities or non-commodities (Appadurai 1986, Kopytoff 1986). The only time when an object without doubt has commodity status is in the moment of the actual exchange (Kopytoff 1986). According to this reasoning, some artworks stop being commodities when they have been purchased and enter the “phase” of being in the buyer’s ownership. The artwork then regains its commodity status next time it is exchanged in the secondary market. Velthuis (2005) argued, however, that the commodity phase is already happening when the artwork is moved from the artist’s studio to the gallery. Following Wood (1996, 2003), Velthuis (2005) further argued that

artworks that are transferred to new owners as “gifts”, and not exchanged for money, resist the transformation to being commodities.

In the literature on the commodification of art, commodification is often equated to the establishment of exchange values. Wood (2003) claimed that “commodity” is essentially an economic category, which is why its relevance to art (as something that opposes economy) needs to be explained. The question of prices is delicate as “price is not conceived of as a legitimate marketing tool on the art market” (Velthuis 2005:40). Valuations and pricing have thus been of particular interest for research on art and markets (Cameron 2014, Cowen and Tabarrok 2000, Hutter and Throsby 2008, Throsby 1994, Velthuis 2005). This is not surprising, considering that art as a research subject has a long history of stressing the difficulties of art valuations (Dekker 2015, Velthuis 2005). The topics regard the never-ending dichotomy between art and commerce, where art is considered priceless on an abstract level (Kopytoff 1986), but nevertheless may generate six-digit prices in galleries and on auctions on a very concrete level (Philips 2015, Preece and Bida 2017, Velthuis 2005). Indeed, Fourcade (2011) opposes the idea that commodification is an abstract process: “It is, instead, a very concrete one which (1) relies on technologies designed to make things comparable so that they *may* be thought of as exchangeable (Espeland and Levine 2002) and (2) uses money as the privileged medium of exchange” (Fourcade 2011:46).

The idea that art is considered to be a non-commercial thing was radically provoked and questioned by Andy Warhol and other artists in the pop-art movements in the 1950s and 1960s (Joy and Sherry 2003, Schroeder 2005, 2010), and also later by artists such as Cindy Sherman (Joy and Sherry 2003), Barbara Kruger (Schroeder 2005), Jeff Koons (Wood 2003), Damien Hirst (Belk 2014, Preece and Kerrigan 2015, Velthuis 2011), and Tracy Emin (Velthuis 2011). In line with this research, recent literature also discusses how not only the artwork is being commodified, but also the artists themselves, as they build up their brands (Kerrigan et al. 2011, Preece 2014). Representing the artist as a commodified product is obviously questioned in historical debates about art and commerce (Preece 2014), however. The words *consumer* and *consumption* are criticized as definitions for engagement with art (Larsen 2014). In addition, the terms *marketing* and *branding* are only acceptable in the popular and creative sectors and not in the traditional “high arts” sector, where consumers are termed *audience* instead (Preece and Kerrigan 2015). Similarly, the discussion of an artist’s brand is sometimes equated in the art world with the less commercially associated term *reputation* (Kottász and Bennett 2014).

In line with the discussion above, which emphasizes the negative connotations of economic terms in contexts of art, Rose (2005) agrees that the word commodification is of a certain sort – it is not neutral – although it is a term that is supposed simply to define a general phenomenon. Due to its Marxist heritage

and association with critical theory in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the concept of commodification is filled with denotations. The use of the word commodification conveys a certain set of analytical commitments, in the Marxist case a set of negative undertones (Rose 2005).

In addition to the humanist and sociologist critical perspectives on commodification, however, studies on art markets have an established tradition in cultural economics. In a positivist tradition, this research approaches creativity versus commercialism (e.g. Cowen and Tabarrok 2000, Florida 2002, Throsby 1994) with a less critical stance than the Marxist view, but yet addressing the tensions embedded in the commodification of art (e.g. Abbing 2002, Cameron 2014, Lombard 2013). In a recent introductory reading on the contribution of cultural economics to arts marketing, Cameron (2014) states that a main focus in this research is its attention to the price setting and valuation parameters of fine art. For economists, value is defined as exchange value, i.e. price (Koerner and Rausing 2003). Instead of emphasizing cultural and societal aspects of commodification, production and consumption of art are in this literature mainly discussed in conventional economic discourses on value, investments and supply and demand.

Building on this literature of cultural economics, Lombard (2013) discusses how today's graffiti artists get incorporated into mainstream channels, defined as advertising (representing commerce), art galleries (representing institutions) and public commissions (representing government). This research is critical to the negative connotations associated with artists working with commercial organizations (Lombard 2013). Lombard (2013) argued that commercial pop-cultural industries have a creative impact on artists' work. By collaborating in these new fora, artists are given opportunities to develop their creativity (Fillis 2014, Lombard 2013). Graffiti and street artists are hence not exploited when engaging with capitalist markets; instead, it is claimed that they are negotiating with their art in fruitful ways (Lombard 2013).

Similar to the critical accounts of commodification, however, neo-classical economist research also recognizes that artists balance between retaining their artistic integrity and making a living (Abbing 2002, Cowen and Tabarrok 2000). This research has been criticized, however, for not being interested in human intentions and beliefs and thus leaving these aspects unstudied and "black-boxed" (Koerner and Rausing 2003). It is argued that theories stemming from economic sociology is a response to the failure of neo-classic economics to explain these value aspects (Beckert and Aspers 2011, Velthuis 2005). The difference between the two approaches could thus be understood as follows: for a neo-classic economist the human beliefs and intentions are black-boxed, while for the cultural anthropologist (and sociologist) these boxes are opened (Koerner and Rausing 2003). Koerner and Rausing (2003) claimed that these approaches

complement each other. Cultural economics research on prices, valuations and incomes, contributes to the discussion that art and artists are subject to economic calculations (e.g. Abbing 2002, Cowen and Tabarrok 2000, Kottász and Bennet 2014, Throsby 1994). This research has traditionally focused on the questions of *what is* the value of art. Economic sociologist and humanist research represents a tradition that instead aims to understand *how* values and prices come to be produced in art markets and cultural industries (e.g. Beckert and Aspers 2011, Dekker 2015, Karpik 2010, Kornberger et al. 2015, O'Neill 2008, Philips 2015, Rodner and Thompson 2013, Strandvad 2014, Velthuis 2005).

Moreover, the debate as to whether it is morally defensible for artists to produce commercial works or not is further described as a dichotomy between two art market perspectives (Dekker 2015, Ertman and Williams 2005, Velthuis 2005). On the one side is the Marxist and critical “hostile worlds” thinking, whose core argument is that artistic values and economic values are dichotomous categories, which is why art should not be commodified. The street artist CDH (2013) argued that when street artists enter the institutional systems of art, there are other economic structures with which to engage and negotiate artistic practices than those of the non-institutional systems of art. Moreover, in general, contemporary artists are uncomfortable with what they perceive as the values and practices of the art market (Forkert 2013). This inconvenience partly depends on the fact that much of contemporary art production is often too conceptual to sell as commodities (Forkert 2013). On the other side, however, is the neo-classical “nothing but” thinking, where artworks are perceived as nothing but an economic category. Kottász and Bennet (2014:364) put it quite frankly when they claimed: “One thing visual artists have in common is their need for exposure: they need to get their artwork to market and to sell their outputs”. Although artists and their mediators and buyers are managing products that are difficult to commodify, however, they still (sometimes) manage to do it, simply because they need incomes.

In line with the value debates addressed in Beckert and Aspers (2011) and Koerner and Rausing (2003), it is argued that there are strengths and weaknesses with both perspectives on art markets (Dekker 2015, Hutter and Throsby 2008, Williams and Zelizer 2005). Although the critical approach is understood as the antagonist to the neo-classic economist approach (Velthuis 2005), they both contribute to the understanding of commodification (Dekker 2015). The weakness of the critical thinking is that it is not specific enough about particular art forms and markets and the agency of individuals. This is, however, the strengths of the “nothing but”, economic thinking. The strengths of the critical thinking lie in the concrete distinction of art from other market products, which is a distinction that the “nothing but” thinking ignores (Dekker 2015). According to a critical approach, cultural artifacts constitute a certain context where the question of “to commodify or not commodify” is different than for other objects

(Bourdieu 1993, Kopytoff 1986, Wikberg 2017, Williams and Zelizer 2005). It is claimed that art settings in general differ from other settings of consumption and production (Hanspal 2012). The commodification of artworks originating from a community who opposes artworks being turned into commodities, “rips the objects from their original, often sacred, context and shoves them unceremoniously into the rough-and-tumble arena of market norms” (Williams and Zelizer 2005:374). This issue indeed appears in discussions on the commodification of graffiti and street art (Bengtson 2014, Lombard 2013, Riggle 2010, Stewart 1988, Wells 2015). The “hostile worlds” critics would claim that these artists are sell-outs who choose to alienate themselves from the subculture, and have “fallen prey to the laws of capitalism” (Velthuis 2005:145), whereas the “nothing but” advocates would think that these artists are nothing but artists who should be able to live on their artistic skills.

In short, these two perspectives present two opposing views of the phenomenon: one where commodification is always appropriate and one where it never is (Williams and Zelizer 2005). However, the perspective that one should either be pro-commodification or against commodification is criticized for being too narrow-minded. Several scholars reject this dichotomy of perspectives and suggest an alternative approach to the understanding of art markets (Dekker 2015, Dennis and Macaulay 2010, Kornberger et al. 2015, Radin and Sunder 2005, Velthuis 2005). In the edited volume “Rethinking Commodification” (Radin and Sunder 2005), the authors addressed a pragmatic approach to the often assumed two-sided perspective of the coin (Williams and Zelizer 2005). The pragmatic approach does not agree with either the Marxist view of alienated artists, or with the neoclassic view of rational and profit-seeking artists, but argues that art markets are cultural constellations that involve complex social processes (Velthuis 2005). Instead, it stresses the intricate practices that adhere to both approaches. Commodification needs to be analyzed in a case-by-case manner in order to nuance the understanding of what commodification may imply (Appadurai 1986, Radin and Sunder 2005).

Based on the above discussion, it is possible to distinguish legitimacy and authenticity as two key issues that relate to the question of “to commodify or not to commodify art?” (Radin and Sunder 2005), and the complex negotiations of the commodification of art and other cultural spheres (e.g. Adorno 1935/1973, Bengtson 2014, Beverland et al. 2010, Fine 2003, Hietanen and Rokka 2015, Karpik 2010, Preece 2014, Velthuis 2005, Wells 2015). The literature commonly addresses the challenges of managing authenticity at the same time as managing the commercial practices. The question of “selling out” products as they undergo marketization attempts is addressed as a situation of lost authenticity or a crisis of legitimacy (Beverland et al. 2010). Not surprisingly, these issues are also part of the tensions that graffiti and street artists are assumed to struggle with (Bengtson



2014, Wells 2015). Below follows a review of previous literature that particularly addresses aspects of legitimacy and authenticity in the commodification of art.

### ***Key aspects of art commodification: legitimacy and authenticity***

Discussions on legitimacy and authenticity in art commodification are often understood with a Bourdieusian approach suggesting field positions underlying markets (Preece et al. 2016): where in the art communities the artist is situated, inside or outside (Bengtson 2014, Bradshaw et al. 2010, Fine 2003), and what sort of capital it is that legitimizes the artwork and the artist: authentic, social, cultural or economic capital (Fine 2003, Karpik 2010, Preece and Bida 2017, Wikberg 2017). Discussions also adhere to a Beckerian perspective, however, stressing how the multiple stakeholders in the collective networks that constitute the art world partake in constructing legitimacy and authenticity (Bengtson 2014, Fine 2003, Preece and Bida 2017, Preece and Kerrigan 2015). In addition, the established institutionalist perspectives (drawing on Dickie 1971) in arts marketing, often theorize with connections to both Bourdieusian structures and Beckerian networks (e.g. Bengtson 2014, Dar and Schultz Nybacka 2017, Fine 2003, Preece et al. 2016, Rodner and Thompson 2013, Velthuis 2005, Wikberg 2017). Moreover, regarding legitimacy in markets for products not traditionally intended to be commodified, previous literature (e.g. Beckert and Aspers 2011, Mears 2011, Velthuis 2005) to a great extent builds on Viviana Zelizer's work (1979, 2004) on moral, social and economic valuations.

The legitimization process is usually understood as a chain of events (albeit not necessarily in a fixed, linear order) including art schools, grants and residencies, representation by dealers, reviews in art magazines, inclusion in collections, museum exhibitions, exposure at biennales, and high resales at auction houses (Joy and Sherry 2003, Kottász and Bennett 2014, Preece 2014, Rodner and Thompson 2013, Schroeder 2005, 2010, Velthuis 2005). Networks of experts (critics, dealers, academics, collectors), who decide on an artist's or an artwork's potential worthiness of a place in art history, are considered to be a major proof of a successful legitimization process (Preece et al. 2016). Moreover, legitimacy is often discussed in relation to the artist's professional status (Fine 2003, Rodner and Thompson 2013, Wikberg 2017), and the branding of the artist (Preece and Kerrigan 2015, Schroeder 2005, 2010).

Dar and Schultz Nybacka (2017) further pinpoint a crucial insight into the art versus commerce debate with regards to legitimacy. Drawing on different "orders of worth" (Boltanski and Thevenot 1991/2006), this perspective positions "art and business as so different ideas in essence that the logics and values of either would negate legitimacy in the other" (Dar and Schultz Nybacka 2017:121). Taken to its extreme, this implies that an action that is considered legitimate in the business world, for example setting a price on an artwork and thus making it

legitimate as a market product, would delegitimize the same product and make it illegitimate as an artwork in the art world. "To be valuable in the market, goods must not only fulfill a need but must also find legitimation as being tradable in market terms" (Beckert and Aspers 2011:7). The economic activities where actors transgress the boundaries between the marketable and non-marketable thus need to be legitimized (Velthuis 2005). In addition, as the artist and the artwork are inextricably linked to each other (Preece and Kerrigan 2015, Preece et al. 2016, Schroeder 2005), it is not only the artwork that needs to be legitimized but also the artist. In line with Kopytoff (1986), Preece and Bida (2017) argued that to understand the relations between economic forces and social capital involved in legitimizing artworks as they are contextualized, interpreted and ultimately commodified, it is necessary to consider the reasons behind the creation of the artwork, as well as its perceived meanings. Similarly to the different sorts of legitimacy in art markets (Dar and Schultz Nybacka 2017), there are different types of capital that legitimize an artwork; within the art world it is mainly aesthetic and social value that counts, while within the market it is the economic value (Preece and Bida 2017). Actors within the art market legitimize their business actions through relational cultural values that infuse everything from the architecture and the interior design of galleries (Joy 1998) to the management of pricing artworks (Velthuis 2005). Their business actions are thus legitimized if they enhance other forms of capital than just the economic, namely symbolic and cultural capital (Bourdieu 1993). Indeed, market behaviors are enriched by non-market behaviors (Sjögren and Helgesson 2007).

In the graffiti and street art markets, however, legitimacy is not only negotiated as a market versus artistic dichotomy. Legitimacy and illegitimacy also refers to the more formal definitions of legal versus illegal practices. The dichotomized discourse on legitimacy and graffiti is usually positioned as either art or vandalism (Kimvall 2014). In institutionalist marketing and consumer research, several studies have discussed the legitimization of markets and resistance to commodification in certain sectors, which previously have been considered illegitimate (Giesler 2008, 2012, Humphreys 2010), and in informal economies, in which illegal or illegitimate entrepreneurship are active (Webb et al. 2009). Members within informal economies consider the market activities to be legitimate, although they are formally illegal and informally perceived as illegitimate by general societal norms, values and beliefs (Webb et al. 2009). These informal economies may eventually transform into being formal economies, depending on the character of the production of market products and the products themselves (Webb et al. 2009).

The institutionalization of graffiti during the 1970s and 1980s contributed to legitimizing graffiti as being perceived as art and not only as vandalism (Kimvall 2014). At the same time, the parallel commodification of graffiti and street art during this period is claimed to have ruptured the subculture (Waclawek 2008).

Although processes of marketization and institutionalization have become more established, there are still tensions and disagreements that seem inevitably embedded in these practices (Bengtson 2014, Kimvall 2014). It is claimed that citizens who are non-producing consumers, and who involuntarily consume the art forms, perceive the consuming and producing of street art as illegitimate (Visconti et al. 2010). Hence, it is suggested that because graffiti is both “outlawed and venerated” and ephemeral, it provides a good example to discuss how it challenges the status of art as commodities (Stewart 1988). Although this was suggested in the late 1980s, the argument is still valid due to the claim that graffiti is still constructed within the discursive formations that describe it either as art or crime (Kimvall 2014).

Regarding the authenticity issue in commodification debates, it is claimed that authenticity is particularly at risk in a world of consumption where the distinction between the copy and the original is blurred (Baudrillard 1972/1981, Massi and Harrison 2014, drawing on Benjamin 1936/1968). The threat to the authenticity of artworks was addressed in the advent of new technologies that enabled reproducibility (Benjamin 1936/1968). Since then, the authenticity issue has addressed other concerns than questions of individual originals or mass-produced copies. Authenticity is one of the coordinating mechanisms of conventions and judgments that encompass these markets (Karpik 2010). Moreover, authenticity is often discussed with regard to artists who are defined as being “self-taught” (Fine 2003). These artists are, like many graffiti and street artists, characterized by the assumption that they have no formal art education and that they are thus situated outside of the art world (Fine 2003, Wells 2015). Such artists are usually *related to* the contemporary art scene instead of being perceived as *part of* the contemporary art scene.

Authenticity is often connected to legitimacy within valuation processes (Karpik 2010, Preece 2014, Preece and Bida 2017, Wells 2015). To access the art market, the artwork needs to be infused (authenticated) with value from the art world, which will legitimize the artwork as a market product (Preece and Bida 2017). Hence, the artists must learn how to be “authentic” before they can become legitimate members of the art world and access the art market (Fine 2003, Preece 2014, Wells 2015). It is the authenticity capital – qualities of originality, genuineness, handmade creation – of the artists and the artworks that valorizes them, i.e. gives them value as artists (Fine 2003, Karpik 2010). Moreover, in the fine art markets, artists and dealers try to keep the public ignorant about the business and commerce side of their galleries and art sales, in order to appear authentic (Velthuis 2005). Artists who are too attuned to the market (desires) are seen as non-authentic (Fine 2003), for instance, if they market themselves, or if they create works that are too routinized or adjusted to customer needs. The association with business and economic values is proof of non-authenticity. Accordingly, it is claimed that the shaping of countercultural markets is a

negotiation between market-*shaping* and market-*restricting* practices (Hietanen and Rokka 2015). The inherent contradiction needs to be sustained in order to maintain authenticity.

According to Fine (2003), Preece (2014), and Wells (2015), the level of authenticity is based on three aspects: the artist, the product and the career of the artist. “To be authentic is, typically, to have an authentic biography. Biography becomes a market asset for an artist, even if he or she does not recognize it.” (Fine 2003:175). To achieve authentic capital, the dealers for these artists offer biographical details about them, as these biographies serve as a primary criterion of evaluation (Fine 2003). This authenticating, which is an attempt to gain legitimacy at the same time, is found among artists and mediators also within graffiti and street art markets (Bengtson 2014). Knowledge and expertise are crucial to authenticity because of the radical quality uncertainty that exists in markets of art (Karpik 2010). The authentic experience of art events is therefore important as it attempts to transfer knowledge to the consumers and enable a sense of collectivity (Osborne and Rentschler 2010). The active participation and the form of apprenticeship associated with the art objects are desirable in the authentic experience, but so are other forms of knowledge input such as expert rankings, guides and critique (Joy and Sherry 2003, Karpik 2010). Authenticity in works of art is often defined by the criteria that the work must be signed or at least that the artist must be identified (Karpik 2010, drawing on Benjamin 1936/1968). Regarding graffiti and street art, authenticity issues also relate to the phenomenon of removing artworks from the street in order to sell them, and to what extent these artworks may be perceived as authentic after they have been separated from their authentic place in public space (Bengtson 2014, Preece and Bida 2017).

In particular, the authenticity of subcultural graffiti has always been threatened by its exposure to the art markets’ commercial forces (Merrill 2015, Wells 2015). In a similar discussion, Kimvall (2014) refers to Stewart (1989) on subway graffiti that “moves into galleries” as attempts by graffiti writers who cease to make *graffiti* and begin making paintings *of* graffiti. The authenticity debate is further situated in subcultural consumption as practices of “being versus doing” (Beverland et al. 2010). Within subcultural settings, those consumers who are less involved in community practices and ideals – which means that they are not “being” – are less authentic (Beverland et al. 2010). Greater status and credibility is attributed to subcultural members who have more experience and expertise (Beverland et al. 2010, Wells 2015). Previous research has positioned the attention to narrating history as part of addressing subcultural authenticity (Kimvall 2014). The history writing becomes an important aspect of reproducing the subculture among its members. However, Bengtson (2014) also observes a possible paradigm shift regarding the authenticating aspect of “street credibility” in market settings. The new generation of both creators and collectors of graffiti and street art do not

adhere to the unwritten rule that commercial artists need to have many years of production in the street to be credible as graffiti and street artists.

As the above literature review shows, the question of commodification is still vital in contemporary debates about art and markets. However, as the interest in art market research is growing and increasingly attracting attention in journals, at conferences and in education (Evrard and Colbert 2000), there is a call to develop this area of research by adding and extending theoretical and methodological perspectives (Fillis 2011, Kerrigan et al. 2009, O'Reilly and Kerrigan 2010).

### ***Call for new approaches to arts marketing***

Previous literature on the commodification of art has provided knowledge on aspects of some of the tensions explored in art markets. This research has contributed, for instance, to culturally oriented explanations drawing on Bourdieu (1993) and Becker (1982) on why artists are doing commercial artworks, and on how artists, consumers and mediators make this commodification meaningful (Preece and Bida 2017, Preece et al. 2016, Joy 1998, Joy and Sherry 2003, Fine 2003, Forkert 2013, Hanspal 2012, Kopytoff 1986, Velthuis 2005). Previous art market research predominantly aims to discuss the intentions behind human actions, and centers on practices attributed solely to human actors. In line with Peñaloza and Cayla's (2006) discussion of consumer behavior research methods, this comes with the risk of overlooking *nonhuman* actors that are equally important in art commodification. Art worlds are settings that are traditionally associated with materiality, techniques, artisanship and physical form. "Clearly materials have agency, they can move as well as act and have a life of their own, challenging an anthropocentric post-Enlightenment intellectual tradition. And those who have been listening to them, who are not intimidated by materials, have not predominantly been academics but artists, designers, architects, conservators or technicians" (Lange-Berndt 2015, in NyMaterialism 2018). Hence, art markets do not only concern human actors such as artists and consumers. Within the heterogeneous networks that construct market products of graffiti and street art, there are other socio-technically composed actors that make this transformation possible, such as spray can factories and frame makers, price lists and smart phones, as well as documents for making decisions on building permits.

The attention to heterogeneous agency has been introduced in sociologist and humanist accounts of the dynamics in art production and consumption (Dickens 2010, Dominguez Rubio and Silva 2013, Strandvad 2012, Yaneva 2003), but has been less addressed by marketing scholars studying art markets. As previous research is mainly occupied by tracing the social and cultural meanings in the objects people choose to commodify and exchange, it thus focuses on the question of *why* artworks are being commodified and exchanged. The primary focus is on the performance of the humans in their experiences, meaning making

and intention, but it offers fewer insights into how the material aspects are part of the commodification. Studies on consumption (and markets) should focus not only on “meaning”, however, but also on “action”, which implies that the mundane, rational, functional, material aspects of consumption deserve as much attention as their cultural counterparts (Cochoy 2008). Although the knowledge that previous art market research has contributed to is important for understanding art market exchanges, it raises further questions, which so far have remained scarcely explored in art research. These questions regard the actual and pragmatic conditions of *how* artworks – including human and nonhuman actors – are made exchangeable in the first place: i.e., *how* the artwork is transformed into a commodity.

Based on the long tradition of multi-disciplinary research that has positioned art and markets in a dichotomous relationship, it almost appears as if these structures are polarized by nature – essential to the existence of art and of markets. As has been shown, this dichotomy is well known and taken for granted also for the commodification of graffiti and street art. Other assumed binaries in the commodification of graffiti street art in addition to art versus markets, however, are art/crime, street/gallery, inside/outside, and high art/low art (Dickens 2010). Previous literature (e.g. Cresswell 1996), as well as news and popular media discussing graffiti and street art markets, mainly view the transformation of the subcultural artworks to commercial and institutionalized artworks as a binary formation: from “the streets” to “the galleries” (Dickens 2008). Indeed, headings and descriptions such as “street art moves from the public space into the fine art galleries” are not rare in trade reports, advertisements, news articles and other editorial texts in media (Archival material 16, 33, 34, Artprice 2007, 2010, Söderholm 2015, Nilsson 2013). These binary descriptions are black-boxing the commodities of graffiti and street artworks. When black boxes are opened, however, one “becomes aware of all the objects within the objects” (Finch and Geiger 2011:901). The commercial trajectories of graffiti and street art are not binary, but dynamic, and occur in various places in the process of their transformation to a new setting (Dickens 2008, 2010). Instead of emphasizing the binary transformation of street-to-gallery, street art practices take place “in-between”, such as in studios and in the factories of supply firms (Dickens 2010). Dickens (2010), particularly, gives the materialities of the studio a more active role in the production of both unsanctioned and commercial street art. Hence, by opening the black-boxed artworks, it will be possible to explore what human and nonhuman elements, relations and potential tensions are part of creating the artworks.

Although the attention to materiality and the flattening of relations between humans and nonhumans is absent in most art commodification research, it is present in art curatorial practices. Recently, the exhibition “New materialism”, with 13 international artists at the contemporary art gallery Bonniers konsthall in

Stockholm, highlighted the new-old interest in material and crafts in contemporary artistic practices (af Petersens 2018). At a public lecture on October 16<sup>th</sup> 2018, held at Bonniers konsthall as part of the exhibition program, the German art historian Susanne Witzgall claimed the importance of taking labor and material into consideration when discussing art. With reference to Karen Barad and Bruno Latour, she argued for the attribution of agency, not only to the artist, but to the artistic material. In line with this claim, it is thus suggested that materiality should be included in the study of art market practices (Dominguez Rubio and Silva 2013, Strandvad 2012, Wikberg 2017), and that we should explore what performative power human *and* nonhuman objects have in the construction of markets (Araujo et al. 2010, Callon 1998, Callon et al. 2007, Hagberg and Kjellberg 2010). Moreover, Strandvad (2012) argued that there is a need for a new sociology of the arts, which considers material performativity and rejects the Bourdieusian “old sociology of the arts” and its dependency on social structures and institutions. A research perspective that gives attention to materiality helps us to recognize other than human actors and practices that are involved in art commodification processes. This thesis takes the opportunity to respond to these calls by exploring processes of art commodification with a theoretical and methodological perspective that has been less used in the previous literature, but which will be able to explain some of the still unanswered question in this study: how are artworks becoming exchangeable as market products?

Summing up the argument put forward so far, most literature on the commodification of art has addressed questions on *why* artworks become exchange objects from the point of departure that artists struggle with the conflict between artistic integrity and market success (e.g. Abbing 2002, Addis and Holbrook 2010, Forkert 2013, Lombard 2013). This conflict is assumed almost as a natural law, but how this conflict is managed in practice has not been sufficiently explored. Apart from theories on mass production and mass consumption as larger movements in society, commodification also refers to specific and individual micro-processes (Appadurai 1986), and the more pointed focus on these micro-processes opens up the questions of *how* artworks become exchange objects and *how* artists balance the tension between art and commerce.

With some exceptions in sociology (Dominguez Rubio and Silva 2013, Hennion 1997, Strandvad 2012, 2014, Velthuis 2005), anthropology (Schacter 2008), cultural geography (Dickens 2008, 2010), and art history (Yaneva 2003), the potential for research approaching the art markets with more pragmatic and socio-technical perspectives has not been fully explored. In order to extend the research area of arts marketing with a more materially and pragmatic oriented approach, I follow the call by Dekker (2015) and turn to the inter-disciplinary area of constructivist market studies addressed by e.g. Araujo et al. (2010) and Callon et al. (2007), which builds on science and technology studies (STS) and actor-network theory (ANT). Thus, to develop the existing literature on art and markets

that uses – as well as refuses – the term commodification, I introduce the concept of exchangeification, which is understood as the process of transforming artworks into exchangeable market products. Exchangeification draws on previous concepts from market studies, which build on a more pragmatic and constructivist approach to markets.

## **Constructivist market studies**

The approach to markets advocated in this study is positioned within the theoretical and methodological tradition of constructivist market studies (e.g. Araujo 2007, Araujo et al. 2010, Çalışkan and Callon 2010, Cochoy 1998, Ewertsson 2014, Kjellberg and Helgesson 2006, 2007, Mason et al. 2015). This literature is situated in the intersection between marketing, economic sociology and the sociology of science and technology, to a large extent influenced by Callon (1998), Latour (1999), Callon et al. (2007) and Araujo et al. (2010). This literature builds on a practice-oriented epistemology and a constructivist ontology, which implies a heterogeneous perspective on actors and agency. It is attentive to materiality and distributed agency, which does not assume a priori what actions and actors that construct markets, but instead views these as questions worthy of empirical investigation. This perspective is closely related to the flat and relational ontology of ANT, which pays attention to the actions of humans and nonhumans (Latour 1999, 2005, Law 2009).

### ***ANT, pragmatism and the principle of flat ontology***

As shown in the literature review above, art commodification in general, and the graffiti and street art markets in particular, bring to the fore controversies. An approach informed by ANT literature is suitable for a study on controversies (Latour 2005). Rather than agreeing to an essentialist explanation of the relations that reproduce the antagonists of controversies as taken-for-granted positions (Alcadipani and Hassard 2010) in art markets, ANT provides a perspective whereby it is possible to look between dichotomies (Jackson 2015). This perspective traces dichotomies as performative *outcomes* of practices. The scientific approach of not taking controversies and actors for granted is part of the principle of a flat ontology, which thus provides for an initially symmetrical point of departure (Callon et al. 2007).

The importance of nonhuman actors in markets is stressed explicitly in the constructivist market studies literature. In their discussion on economization, Çalışkan and Callon (2009) recognize Appadurai's (1986) and the anthropologist contribution on commodities and valuations as milestones in the move towards a processual view of economization rather than understanding economies as fixed entities. They disagree, however, on the ontological asymmetry between humans and objects stressed by Appadurai (1986) and later research on cultural products



following this ontology. According to Çalışkan and Callon (2009), this asymmetrical view prevents studies of economization from further exploring phenomena of commodification. They claimed that it is crucial to "... drop the hypothesis of an ontological asymmetry between *valuating* subjects/agents and *valuated* things/objects..." (2009:393, *author's italics*) and integrate the active role of materialities more generally. This initial flattening helps to disclose actors that might have been difficult to detect in studies that solely focus on human action and that assume power relations from the beginning.

### **Market practices, marketing collectives and valuation studies**

As mentioned above, constructivist market studies build on a practice-oriented epistemology. The practice-oriented "turn" in marketing has been growing for decades (Cochoy 1998, Kjellberg and Helgesson 2006) and thus the notion of practice has come to define a rather broad and diverse concept (Schatzki et al. 2001). Kjellberg and Helgesson (2006, 2007) define practices as denoting what actors *do*, such as sayings and doings on an everyday micro-level. Accordingly, a *market* practice is defined as something that denotes what an actor does that contributes to constructing markets. As with ANT studies, practice studies focus on actions. Actions are defined as both doings and sayings because it is both what actors do and say that brings about change and further actions. Studying actions is useful in art settings, which are not usually defined as traditional exchange markets. The actions being taken may still be tentative and pragmatically adapting to unexpected situations (Lindberg and Walter 2012).

The concept of market practices goes for *all* activities that contribute to constituting markets (Kjellberg and Helgesson 2006). It is important to note, however, that this concept does not postulate that *all observable practices* are market practices. It is the outcome of the empirical fieldwork, rather than a priori assumptions about markets, that should decide what is a market practice or is not. Market practices do not only include economic exchanges, although they are fundamental (Kjellberg and Helgesson 2006, 2007). Always underlying economic exchanges, however, are other practices such as rules, laws, norms and representations of the market. These practices are continuously creating and recreating markets, leading to many and differently constituted markets. Thus, this perspective postulates that when studying markets, researchers do not study ready-made markets but markets in the making (Helgesson et al. 2004).

Of importance for market studies are the influential works of Callon (e.g. 1998, 2007, 2010), and the idea of *marketing collectives*. This concept views markets as constituted by all socio-technical actors engaging in their formation. This includes the usual representatives of supply and demand, such as producers and consumers, but also other actors, such as political authorities, legislation bodies, and workers' unions. The marketing collectives also include socio-technical

devices, such as smart phone applications and shopping carts, which engage in market and consumption practices (Cochoy 2008). These active devices in markets are referred to as *market devices* (Callon et al. 2007). A device is as much a technical object, such as metric scales, apparatuses, machines, scripts and protocols, as it could be a theoretical concept such as a pricing model (Bajde 2013).

In market studies literature, it is stressed that marketing research should not assume that marketing is exclusively what *marketers* do (Andersson et al. 2008, Araujo et al. 2010, Callon et al. 2007, Cochoy 2008, Hagberg and Kjellberg 2010, Kjellberg and Helgesson 2006, 2007). This approach corresponds well with the inclusive idea of arts marketing (Kerrigan et al. 2009, Larsen and Dennis 2015) and art worlds (Becker 1982, Becker et al. 2006). Graffiti and street art markets, for instance, involve artists and how they go about producing artworks using spray paint and canvas; galleries, auction houses and artist associations and how they mediate the sales of these artworks; art supply stores and how they support these artists and mediators with materials; authoritative bodies and how they decide on tolerance policies and building permits; and art festival organizers and how they commission artists to paint sanctioned works in public space. Moreover, in line with art commodification debates, it is stressed that the actors within the marketing collectives that enable marketing do not necessarily all strive towards one single, profit-maximizing goal (Callon 2010). Marketing collectives may consist of actors with multiple and conflicting intentions, constituted by both economic and non-economic values (Sjögren and Helgesson 2007).

Closely related to the theoretical approach of market practices is the growing research program commonly defined as valuation studies (Helgesson and Muniesa 2013). Studying value, pricing and valuations is indeed significant for marketing research (Helgesson and Kjellberg 2013). The concept of valuation studies as it is (broadly) defined, aims to move beyond a conventional understanding of values as something stable and essential (Helgesson and Muniesa 2013). Instead, this literature addresses a constructivist, performative and pragmatist perspective on valuations and stresses the inquiries into *how* values are shaped by practices and what devices help to shape them. The pragmatist tradition of valuation studies (Callon and Muniesa 2005, Helgesson and Muniesa 2013, Kornberger et al. 2015, Vatin 2013), and economic sociology specifically addressing art markets (Karpik 2010, Velthuis 2005), approach values as the outcomes of ongoing valuations and not as naturally inherent in products. Hence, similar to the constructivist approach of market studies, this valuation literature encourages studies of values and valuations empirically with no a priori explanations of *what they are* (Helgesson and Kjellberg 2013, Kjellberg and Mallard 2013). Rather, the question of importance is *how they come to be*. Through which practices, technologies and devices, are objects made valuable? (Kornberger et al. 2015).

The constructivist market studies tradition further recognizes the importance of examining the construction of market exchange objects (Callon and Muniesa 2005, Callon et al. 2002, Finch and Geiger 2010). The market object, or the market *product*, is for example conceptualized as “an object that can be assessed solely in the market space” (Finch and Geiger 2010:239). Callon and Muniesa (2005), Hietanen and Rokka (2015), Kjellberg and Helgesson (2007), Kjellberg et al. (2012) and Diedrich et al. (2013) point to a paucity of empirical studies on performativity and market practices in settings other than financial and everyday markets, and there is a call for studies on other types of markets that may extend the theorization of marketization (Araujo et al. 2010). Mapping a construct and its implications is a valuable theoretical contribution when studying emerging phenomena such as new market products (Fischer and Otnes 2006). This study on the exchangification of graffiti and street art not only contributes to the art marketing literature, but also adds to the existing market studies literature on the construction of market products, which have thus far focused mainly on mainstream, financial and mass-markets (Callon and Muniesa 2005, Callon et al. 2002, Finch and Geiger 2010) where market exchanges are more to be expected and are not intuitively paradoxical. The theoretical framework of this thesis – drawing on market studies literature – of the construction of art market products, which is the outcome of the exchangification process, will be elaborated in the following chapter.

### 3 Getting artworks ready for market exchange

It is argued that the possibility of exchanging products is at the heart of the dynamics of economic markets (Callon et al. 2002). Drawing on this argument, the aim of this study is to explore how artworks, which *resist* being exchanged in markets (Kopytoff 1986, Schacter 2008), acquire exchange capabilities. I propose *exchangification* as an overall term to denote the process of transforming an artwork into an exchangeable market product. Conceptually, this process involves three parts: objectification, classification and valuation.

In the vocabulary of arts marketing and the commodification of art, the term *exchangification* is helpful because it focuses on the specific process of getting artworks *ready for* market exchange. Hence, by not emphasizing the actual moment of exchange, or the consumption of the artwork after the moment of exchange, it provides a focus on the actions taken before exchange – as well as providing a word that captures these actions. Moreover, *exchangification* focuses on the transformation of individual artworks, and not on a larger, societal movement of commodification of art. *Exchangification* explains how artworks, through objectifying, classifying and valuating practices, become exchangeable market products. As such, the concept of *exchangification* relates to previous notions – qualification, calculation, and singularization – of commodification processes. Therefore, it is important to distinguish these previous notions, and why a new concept is needed for a better understanding of the phenomenon of art commodification. To begin with, however, I will explain why the term commodification itself would not be useful for this specific process.

Commodification is often used as a notion for addressing tensions in art markets (Addis and Holbrook 2010, Velthuis 2005, Wood 2003) but also other markets where products resist being exchanged (Appadurai 1986, Radin and Sunder 2005). For this reason, it is a powerful marketing concept, to which I aim to make a contribution. As discussed above, however, commodification is commonly understood as a description of a larger societal movement, the industrialization of culture and the alienation of artists from their artworks, mainly addressed by critical theorists (Benjamin 1936/1968, Wood 2003). In Callon (1998), the term commodification is also referring to objects that become alienated from their producers, former users or prior context, adhering to a “hostile worlds” approach, rather than a pragmatic approach.

Another reason for questioning the usefulness of the term commodification for this study is that it is usually associated with and sometimes equated to pricing and giving things monetary exchange values (Appadurai 1986, Kopytoff 1986, Velthuis 2005, Wood 2003). Although exchange values are crucial, other major

practices also enable artworks to become exchange objects. As is clear from other literature on art markets, the production and the very materialization of artworks (Bengtson 2014, Dickens 2020, Dominguez Rubio and Silva 2013, Strandvad 2012), as well as how artworks are classified (Khaire and Wadhvani 2010, Kottász and Bennett 2014, Pardo-Guerra 2011, Preece et al. 2016), are important aspects for constructing market products. Indeed, the very production of artworks was central to early criticisms of commodification (Benjamin 1936/1968).

My hesitation about using the term commodification further draws on Radin and Sunder (2005) and Holbrook (1999), who argue that the notion is criticized for being tired, worn out, outdated and too laden with political connotations. In addition, it draws on Appadurai (2005), and Dekker (2015), who argue that commodification is too strongly associated with either the Marxist macro-understanding, which is in general critical to art commodification, or the neo-classic perspective, which is in general indifferent to the dichotomy between art and commerce. Commodification thus remains cumbersome and ungainly as a concept that describes the concrete and pragmatic processes (Radin 2005) of turning artworks into market products. As Radin (2005:82) claims, “no one theory is suitable for all cases of contested commodification”. For the process of getting artworks ready for market exchange, an alternative and more pragmatic concept is needed for that does not shadow the analysis with connotations and already assumed perceptions.

Exchangification is primarily related to *qualification* (Beckert and Aspers 2011, Callon et al. 2002, Callon and Muniesa 2005, Karpik 2010), *calculation* (Callon and Muniesa 2005, Cochoy 2008), and *singularization* (Appadurai 1986, Callon and Muniesa 2005, Karpik 2010, Kopytoff 1986). Substantially, these terms describe similar processes. They differ slightly, however, in their explanation and articulation of the specific and defined practices that are part of the concept – for example, it is not only the process of *creating* market products that is included in these notions, but also the very moment of exchange and what happens to the market product after the exchange. Thus, although exchangification has many resemblances with these existing terms, I will explain below how it also significantly differs and why a new concept is useful.

## **Qualification**

The concept that most resembles exchangification is the notion of *qualification*. Indeed, as will be demonstrated, the exchangification framework draws substantially on qualification. Qualification is defined as the process whereby a thing is transformed into a tradable product (Callon et al. 2002), as the process that precedes the exchange (Callon and Muniesa 2005), as the process of a product undergoing changes that make it into a commercial product (Karpik 2010), as the process of defining and stabilizing a good (Finch and Geiger 2010), and as the “development of shared cognitive and normative understandings of the qualities

of the products exchanged” (Beckert and Aspers 2011:17). According to Callon et al. (2002), the basic mechanisms of qualification are the singularization of products, and the attachment and detachment of the qualities of the product by consumers – which they sometimes define as *re*-qualification. The process of re-qualification happens when the qualities of a product are challenged by alternative sets of qualities and the product thus needs to be re-qualified to be able to transform into a market product again (Callon et al. 2002, Dubuisson-Quellier 2010, Millo 2007). Conceptually, qualification thus consists of attributing qualities to a product. The qualities are stabilized, objectified and arranged together with other products (Callon et al. 2002). A product’s qualities are the outcomes of multiple interactions between heterogeneous, socio-technical actors, with which the product itself is involved (Dubuisson-Quellier 2010, Millo 2007, Sjögren and Helgesson 2007). The qualification of a product includes the involvement of politics, discourse (rhetoric, classifications) and regulatory authorities (Millo 2007), which also relates to its legitimacy as a tradable market object (Beckert and Aspers 2011). Beckert and Aspers (2011) further describe these qualities as the result of negotiations between different values.

## Calculation

The qualification notion is built on further and partly extended with the notion of *calculation* (Callon and Muniesa 2005). In a pragmatist-oriented approach, it is claimed that exchange goods are brought into being through calculations (and *qual*culations (Cochoy 2008)), situated between rational and irrational actions (Callon and Muniesa 2005, Cochoy 2008). In theory, calculation entails a similar process to qualification (Callon et al. 2002), but the processes are described in more detail. According to Callon and Muniesa (2005), calculation constitutes two steps – objectification and singularization – which happen simultaneously. In order for a product to be transferred between sellers and buyers, it must be objectified. Objectification is thus the practice where the product is given ownership properties (Callon et al. 2002, Callon and Muniesa 2005). However, just being objectified is not enough for a product to transform into a market product. A product is only exchangeable if it also represents a value that makes it attachable to the buyer, such as a price or affection (Callon et al. 2002, Callon and Muniesa 2005). This attachment of value is described as the moment of singularization (Callon and Muniesa 2005, Callon et al. 2002, Karpik 2010). Also included in the calculation process, are the moment of exchange and the actions taken *after* the exchange of a specific product (Callon and Muniesa 2005).

The notions of entanglement and disentanglement, or attachment and detachment, define the practices that enable calculation (Callon 1998). This implies that the commodity (e.g. an artwork) must be decontextualized, dissociated and detached, which means that the artwork must be detached from the artist (producer/seller) in order to become owned by the buyer. Building on Appadurai (1986) on the changing status of things and commodities, Callon

(1998) suggests that the detachment is necessary in the very moment of exchange, which means that a product – an artwork – can become re-attached to the artist's world again after the exchange. Hence, it does not imply a total detachment from “the outside world”; detachment and attachment may occur at the same time (Callon and Muniesa 2005). According to Velthuis (2005), and in line with others who have stressed the inextricable links between artists and their artworks (Preece and Kerrigan 2015), the artworks are never completely disentangled from the artist even after an exchange has taken place and the artwork has changed ownership. The concept of attachment and detachment can thus be used even in art market theorizing, adjusted to the conditions of the artist as a particular kind of producer, as previous research has already recognized (Fillis 2010, Karpik 2010, Larsen 2014, Preece et al. 2016, Velthuis 2005).

In later works drawing on Callon et al. (2002) and Callon and Muniesa (2005), calculation (as well as qualification) is mainly defined as the ordering and stabilizing activities of classification and valuation (Azimont and Araujo 2010, Finch and Geiger 2010), whereas there is less emphasis on the concrete objectifying practices of the things that are to be exchanged. For instance, calculation is defined as the “process by which objects are ordered into a single space (such as the market) and then compared, applying certain rules. Disentangling and qualifying are part of this process” (Finch and Geiger 2010:239).

### **Singularization**

Instead of qualification or calculation, Karpik (2010) suggests *singularization* as the proper concept for creating market products in markets of “singularities”, which are equated to things that are unique and incommensurable – such as artworks. In fact, a singularized product is even defined as a non-exchangeable product (Kopytoff 1986). Markets of singularities struggle to make products calculable too, but under different conditions than for example mass retail, where products are initially standardized rather than singularized (Karpik 2010). Hence, art markets must be discussed separately because they belong to another market category (Beckert and Aspers 2011). Karpik (2010) regards judgments – which he claims to be irrational and qualitative – as the practices that value singularities, whereas calculations – which he perceives as rational and quantitative – are the practices of valuating mainstream and mass-produced products. As these discussions on singularization show (Beckert and Aspers 2011, Karpik 2010), more attention is paid to the practices of valuation than to the practices of objectification and classification.

As is mentioned above, singularization is also part of the calculation process (Callon and Muniesa 2005), and means that the product can be compared to other products (Callon et al. 2002). It thus implies that the product has been classified and positioned in a category that differentiates it from other products. In the

singularization notion, which consists of both valuating and classifying practices (Beckert and Aspers 2011, Callon et al. 2002, Callon and Muniesa 2005, Karpik 2010), however, the difference between classification and valuation is not entirely clear.

### ***Why a new concept is needed***

In summarizing the above brief review of previous concepts, the central mechanism of the process of qualification, calculation and singularization seems to be: the detachment of products from the world of the seller, and the attachment of products to the world of the buyer (Callon et al. 2002, Callon and Muniesa 2005, Karpik 2010). Although providing a thorough foundation for understanding the general trajectory of market exchange processes, I argue, however, that none of these notions offers a sufficiently suitable framework to explain the specific process of transforming artworks into market products, which means that the artworks are *ready for* exchange, although not yet exchanged. Thus, without ignoring the significant contributions to studies of market exchange in Beckert and Aspers (2011), Callon and Muniesa (2005), Callon et al. (2002), Cochoy (2008) and Karpik (2010), the concept of exchangification contributes to further and pointed insights on the process that precedes the exchange.

To explain the process of how graffiti and street art is transformed into exchangeable market products, the exchangification framework is needed for four reasons. First, exchangification specifically addresses and accounts for the distinct practices of objectification, classification and valuation, which are present in the previous notions to various degrees but are referred to inconsistently. Qualification is often equated to and sometimes substituted by the concepts of classification, valuation, calculation and singularization, as well as re-qualification (Beckert and Aspers 2010, Callon and Muniesa 2005, Finch and Geiger 2010, Karpik 2010, Sjögren and Helgesson 2007). This non-distinct and interchangeable use of terms makes it difficult to distinguish the substantial conceptual differences between objectification, classification and valuation. For the transformation of non-market artworks such as graffiti and street art, objectification, classification and valuation have shown to be of great importance in my field material, and thus each deserve detailed attention in a theorizing framework. In contrast to qualification and calculation (Callon and Muniesa 2005), which are separated only in the two categories of objectification and singularization (where the latter includes classification and valuation), exchangification can be separated into three analytical categories: objectification, classification and valuation. Thus, in the exchangification process, classification is not conceptually grouped together with valuation (Beckert and Aspers 2011, Callon and Muniesa 2005, Kornberger et al. 2015), or equaled to the overall process of qualification (Sjögren and Helgesson 2007). Classification, which plays an important role in art worlds in general (Becker 1982, DiMaggio 1987), is distinguished in the exchangification process.



Moreover, objectification is not satisfactorily elaborated in previous concepts, nor what this implies for products that oppose ownership, although Callon and Muniesa (2005) briefly expand on related cases in terms of how intangible services (such as leasing cars) are also materialized in order to obtain objectified properties. In the exchangification of artworks, objectification is significant as it is concerned with the production of artworks and the artist as a producer. Even though the practices that constitute exchangification may happen simultaneously, they each need specific attention in order to articulate their importance in the process of objectifying what is difficult to objectify, classifying what is difficult to classify and valuating what is difficult to value. Similar to the commodification of art literature (Appadurai 1986, Kopytoff 1986, Preece et al. 2016, Velthuis 2005, Wood 2003), there is also a tendency in previous market studies concepts to emphasize valuations in the process of creating exchange objects (Beckert and Aspers 2011, Callon and Muniesa 2005, Karpik 2010, Velthuis 2005) to a greater extent than classification and, in particular, objectification.

Second, although it is argued that qualification is the process that precedes exchange (Callon and Muniesa 2005), it is difficult to distinguish the limits of this process. Qualification, as well as calculation, takes into account the calculative actions after the exchange moment through the practices defined as singularization, which constitute a re-qualification of existing products (Millo 2007). Exchangification describes the practices that precede the exchange, but do not focus on the practices that succeed the exchange. Exchangification is hence more apt for the purposes of this study. If calculation is understood as a complete process that includes the moments before, during and after the market product has been exchanged, the exchangification can be understood as constituting the “before” part of the calculation process.

Third, it is argued that the study of calculative practices fits well in “ideal” commodity markets such as mass retail or financial markets (Callon and Muniesa 2005, Dubuisson-Quellier 2010, Karpik 2010, Muniesa et al. 2007), because these markets are obsessed with the differentiation of products and price setting. It is questioned, however, whether this framework helps us to understand markets that are seemingly the opposite of ideal cases, such as art markets (Karpik 2010, Velthuis 2005). Karpik (2010) argues that products in art markets cannot be valued according to the same dimensions that are used in everyday and financial markets. Similarly, Beckert and Aspers (2011) distinguish between valuation dimensions in standard markets and status markets, where the latter characterizes the markets of art. In arts marketing research, the inextricable links between artworks and artists are often addressed (Kerrigan et al. 2011, Preece 2014, Preece and Kerrigan 2015, Schroeder 2005, Velthuis 2005). Hence, as the artist is considered both a producer and a product (Preece 2014, Schroeder 2005), this may imply different conditions for the construction of market products (Fillis 2010, Karpik 2010, Larsen 2014, Velthuis 2005), than the conditions for products

in everyday consumer markets and financial markets. These markets have been the predominant setting in previous literature discussing qualification and calculation (Callon et al. 2002, Callon and Muniesa 2005, Cochoy 2008, Dubuisson-Quellier 2010, Millo 2007, Muniesa et al. 2007). Callon and Muniesa (2005), indeed, claim that the calculation framework is by no means exhaustive, but is open for further research. This study on the exchangification of art thus takes this opportunity to add to these conversations.

Fourth and finally, there is a literal argument as to why exchangification is a more useful concept for describing the process of how artworks become exchangeable market products. Compared to qualification, calculation, singularization, and also commodification, exchangification literally describes what this specific process is about: creating *exchangeable* market products. Commodification, as is argued by Holbrook (1999) and Radin and Sunder (2005), is a concept that is laden with negative and political connotations, making it a non-neutral concept to use for theorizing about markets of products that resist being exchanged. The concept itself assumes tensions, which prevents a more pragmatic and initially flat approach to the study of art markets that evade ex-ante explicative principles (Muniesa et al. 2007). Qualification, on the other hand, is a more general term, but therefore it also has many uses. For example, qualification can imply that a person is qualified for a specific work task. Hence, although qualification stems from the *qualities* attributed to a commodified product, the term is already used for describing other things than market exchanges; the term does not exclusively pinpoint that an object qualifies to become an exchange product. Moreover, calculation leads mainly to associations of valuations, rather than also including objectifying and classifying aspects. Singularization, finally, is neither equally generic (qualification) nor signified (calculation, commodification) as a word, but as a descriptive term it is not as literally powerful as exchangification. Thus, to avoid the connotations of the word commodification, and for readers who are not familiar with the theoretical concepts of qualification, calculation and singularization as they are understood in market studies literature, I suggest that exchangification is a more articulate and neutral term for describing the process of getting objects ready for market exchange.

To conclude, through exchangification I address a framework that will be fruitful for discussing objects that clearly seem to resist possibilities of exchange, such as graffiti and street artworks (Schacter 2008), although some objects nevertheless end up being exchangeable. Building further on previous research on issues of commodification (Appadurai 1986, Ertman and Williams 2005), resistance to countercultural market emergence (Hietanen and Rokka 2015), discussions of non-exchangeable things (Kopytoff 1986), and specifically the concepts of qualification (Callon et al. 2002, Muniesa et al. 2007) and calculation (Callon and Muniesa 2005), exchangification is used in order to explore the transformation of graffiti and street art into market products.

## **Exchangification: objectification, classification, valuation**

Exchangification is specifically understood as the process of transforming artworks into exchangeable market products. This process involves objectification, classification and valuation. The exchangification concept adds to the vocabulary of art market research as it is introduced without connotations, as opposed to the commonly used term commodification. By drawing on previous concepts in market studies literature, exchangification provides both a pragmatic and detailed way of understanding the micro-practices that enable artworks to be exchangeable in a market. Thus, the exchangification process is positioned as a complement to the phenomenon of art commodification. It defines the process, which previously has been defined but not specified as a phase of commodity candidacy (Appadurai 1986, Kopytoff 1986). Exchangification particularly helps to understand the process for artworks that resist market exchange, but nevertheless may transform into exchangeable market products.

Based on previous research and my own empirical fieldwork, I have identified three major categories of practices that contribute to enabling this transformation. These practices concern 1) *objectification*, in order to make objects materially ownable and transferable between owners; 2) *classification*, which defines and relates categories to each other and place objects in categories; and 3) *valuation*, in order to produce values of objects, which later transform into exchange values.

**Objectification:** materializing objects into ownable products, which makes them transferable between owners

**Classification:** defining and relating categories to each other, and placing objects in categories

**Valuation:** making the product valuable, consisting of valorization (producing values) and evaluation (negotiating and calculating prices)

Drawing on Callon and Muniesa (2005) and Millo (2007), the concept of exchangification acknowledges that objectification, classification and valuation often happen simultaneously, and do not follow a strictly linear order. Hence, the interrelatedness of these notions reflects the difficulties in distinguishing the differences between the previous notions discussed above. Nevertheless, they also compose distinct categories that serve in analytical arguments. Moreover, the focus on artworks in markets also draws on the purpose by Callon and Muniesa (2005:1244), which they claim to be: “to render the calculative character of markets theoretically less controversial and empirically more realistic”. Adjusted to this study, the purpose is also to render the dichotomies and tensions that characterize understandings of art markets less controversial and, in the empirical case of graffiti and street art, to explore how these markets work in reality. Thus,

the exchangification framework is particularly apt for studying contemporary art markets.

In the following text, I will briefly introduce the practices that constitute the theoretical framework of exchangification, building further on the previous literature discussing objectification, classification and valuation.

### **Objectification**

The first aspect is objectification, which refers to practices of materializing objects into products that can be owned and transferred between owners. It is proposed in the literature on market exchanges and the making of commodities that property rights need to be attached to exchange objects in order for exchanges to occur (Appadurai 1986, Callon 1998) and for markets to function (Beckert and Aspers 2011, Çalışkan and Callon 2010). For instance, the attachment of ownership qualities may include devices for controlling the production and regulations of the transfer of ownership (Holm and Nolde Nielsen 2007).

Objectification is a necessary step for commodifying things in mass retail and financial market exchanges (Callon and Muniesa 2005). It is equally relevant, however, to study how these processes unfold in markets where artworks are exchanged (Pardo-Guerra 2011). As is mentioned above, the characteristics of graffiti and street art of being site-specific, immobile and ephemeral often provoke questions about the possibilities of making this art form into a commodity which involves ownership. In order to buy artworks that are not traditionally materialized objects such as canvases, sculptures or prints, the artworks must transform to become ownable and transferable. The materiality of an artwork structures its consumption – it is only possible to be a collector if there is something that can be collected (Larsen 2014).

The objectification of graffiti and street art relates to the objectification of other ephemeral and site-specific artworks, such as performance art. Performance is an art form that also rejects the principles of ownership (Dominguez Rubio and Silva 2013). When consuming art forms that are ephemeral and primarily intangible, such as theater plays and concerts, consumers often purchase merchandise or other memorabilia to store their memory of the experience (Larsen 2014). Tangible ownership of cultural products generates a greater sense of connection to the artists (Chen 2009). Previous research has discussed the commodification of conceptual artworks that initially lack tangible features (Larsen 2014, Preece and Bida 2017), but that become ownable by making the artworks tangible, durable and portable (Dominguez Rubio and Silva 2013, Joy and Sherry 2003). Objectification thus to a great extent concerns the production of artworks in order to make them materially available. In research on graffiti and street art, there are several works that discuss, directly and indirectly, the involvement and agency

of material and physical objects in the practices of art production (Bengtson 2014, Dickens 2008, 2010, Schacter 2008, Visconti et al. 2010). The materials and techniques of production matter for how artworks are objectified and contributes to making commercial artworks appear more authentic, by mimicking subcultural aesthetics and practices (Bengtson 2014) and appear more legitimate, by mimicking conventional fine art practices (Dickens 2010).

Drawing on previous research that discusses the objectification of tangible and intangible things (Bengtson 2014, Callon and Muniesa 2005, Callon et al. 2002, Dickens 2010, Dominguez Rubio and Silva 2013, Holm and Nolde Nielsen 2007), objectification is defined as the practices of making things ownable and transferable between owners.

### **Classification**

The second aspect is classification, which refers to practices of defining and relating categories to each other and placing objects in categories. Classifying things in systems and categories is a social practice with a long tradition (Douglas 1986, Foucault 1969/1989). Art worlds are overwhelmed by classifications (Becker 1982, Bengtson 2014, DiMaggio 1987, Dominguez Rubio and Silva 2013, Harrison 2009, Khaire and Wadhvani 2010, Kottász and Bennett 2014, O'Brien 2014, Pardo-Guerra 2011, Preece et al. 2016, Velthuis 2005, Wikberg 2017), and so also are graffiti and street art worlds (Austin 2001, Bengtson 2014, Cooper and Chalfant 1984, Graffiti Art 2014, Guwallius 2010, Jacobson 1996, Kimvall 2014, 2016, Lombard 2013, Schacter 2013). Coming back to the discussion in the introduction of this book, previous research on both sanctioned and unsanctioned graffiti and street art highlights difficulties in defining and categorizing these art forms (Bengtson 2014, Dickens 2008, Kimvall 2014). Common definitions are, for example, TTP graffiti, aerosol art, spray can art, graffiti art, hip hop graffiti, style writing, writing, the G-word, graffiturism, post-graffiti, street art, stencil art, independent public art and urban art.

Classifications are used even when the users neither believe in them nor agree with them (Bowker and Star 2000). Moreover, classification systems are often invisible due to their inscription in infrastructures and taken-for-granted routines (Azimont and Araujo 2010, Beunza and Garud 2007). One object can have multiple classifications depending on the classifying actor (Sjögren and Helgesson 2007). Indeed, defining the art form and subculture is complicated even among actors within the subculture. Street art, as opposed to graffiti, could be understood as less associated with illegal practices (Andersson 2006, Ten Eyck 2016), which is one of the reasons for the various renegotiations of the graffiti word (Kimvall 2014). This debate is part of legitimization processes (Kimvall 2014), but classifications also reflect how the art forms have developed. New techniques,

methods, material, settings and consumers have motivated new definitions (Guwallius 2010, Jacobson 1996, Kimvall 2014, Waclawek 2008).

Previous research in market studies has demonstrated that classification involves a diversity of practices, such as different classification logics, multiple actors that produce classifications, and devices through which classifications are materialized (Azimont and Araujo 2010, Beunza and Garud 2007, Mallard 2007, Sjögren and Helgesson 2007). Literature on classifications in art markets often regards the construction of values and valuations of artworks (Beckert and Aspers 2011, Karpik 2010, Khaire and Whadhwani 2010). Categorizing thus involves a consideration of multiple elements, of which some consist of valuations (Bowker and Star 2000, Kornberger et al. 2015). Hence, classifications and valuations are sometimes difficult to distinguish, as they both constitute ordering activities (Kjellberg and Mallard 2013). A conceptual difference between valuation and classification is that – in their pure form – valuations aim to signify (making something important and meaningful, hence valuable) and classifications aim to represent (grouping entities in typologies) (Kjellberg and Mallard 2013). In the exchangification process, the distinction between classification and valuation draws on Kjellberg and Mallard's (2013) suggestion of a continuum of ordering practices. At the one extreme of this continuum, classifications emphasize the representation of products, which in the exchangification process means the categorization of artworks in relation to other artworks. Representation techniques are, for example, the construction of lists, hierarchies and statistics (Azimont and Araujo 2010). At the other extreme of the continuum, valuations emphasize the signification of products, which in the exchangification process means evaluating how multiple values of artworks transform into prices.

Classifications are necessary for market exchange (Callon and Muniesa 2005), as they position and differentiate objects in comparison with other objects to be assessed in the market space (Finch and Geiger 2010). Classifying market products in categories accomplishes many things; it generates understandings about collective identities of artists (producers) and their artworks (products), it defines boundaries, and it sets expectations about similarities and comparability within the category (Khaire and Whadhwani 2010, Preece et al. 2016). The practices of defining the products being exchanged play a key role when constructing new product markets (Rosa et al. 1999). By being labeled and defined in a category and thus by being related to other product categories, the product is made distinguishable to producers and consumers. Hence, situations where calculation is impossible are created partly by paralyzing attempts at classification (Callon and Law 2005). Indeed, there are moments when things are not easily classified (Bowker and Star 2000). Thus, being reluctant to classify whether an artwork should be considered urban art, contemporary art or street art, makes the artwork difficult to exchangify.

The constant discussion on the efforts at defining and classifying artworks, artists, and the art markets in which they are involved, indicates that it seems to matter for exchangification how they are defined and categorized. Also significant for classifications in art markets is that it is often the artist (producer) rather than the artwork (product) that is the object of classifications (Preece and Kerrigan 2015, Preece et al. 2016). Drawing on the pragmatist and socio-technical approach to classifications (Azimont and Araujo 2010, Bowker and Star 2000, Muniesa et al. 2007, Dominguez Rubio and Silva 2013, Kjellberg and Mallard 2013), classification is defined as practices of defining and relating categories to each other and placing objects in categories.

### **Valuation**

The third aspect is valuation, which refers to practices of making the product valuable. Valuation consists of valorization, which produces values of an artwork, and evaluation, which negotiates and calculates these values into a price. As shown in the literature review on art commodification, the debates on how to make artworks tradeable in a market to a great extent concern valuations and price setting. It is generally argued that value of art is constructed as an assemblage through cultural policy, civic morality, education, financialization, mediatization, aesthetics and liberal taste (Philips 2015, Preece and Bida 2017, Preece et al. 2016, Shukaitis and Figiel 2014), as well as through norms, standards and traditions (Belfiore 2018, Kopytoff 1986, Velthuis 2005).

In the discussions within valuation studies, there is a call for a more diverse range of studies to be included in the valuation field (Haywood et al. 2014). Valuation of art is an example of practices that do not necessarily involve economic measures (Haywood et al. 2014), as values of art are created in both market and non-market settings (Belfiore 2018, Dekker 2015, Joy and Sherry 2003, Kopytoff 1986, Preece and Bida 2017). Graffiti and street art markets constitute sites that are not yet highly economized and where actors “grapple with different registers of value as well as with multiple tools and objects of valuation” (Helgesson and Kjellberg 2013:366). As art is associated with humanist values as much as economic values, this makes the pricing of artworks generally problematic to legitimize (Joy and Sherry 2003, Preece and Bida 2017). Moreover, like classifications, it is not only the artworks but also the artists that are subject to valuations (Preece and Kerrigan 2015, Preece et al. 2016, Velthuis 2005). Coming back to the discussion of authenticity and legitimacy regarding conceptual art and street art, it is argued that the aura of the artist and the narrative of the artist’s background and personality add value to the artwork (Bengtson 2014, Preece and Bida 2017). In arts marketing, this is discussed as artistic branding (Kerrigan et al. 2011, Preece et al. 2016, Schroeder 2005). It is part of the legitimization of the artwork, as the artist and the artwork are inextricably linked (Preece and Kerrigan 2015).

In order to perform valuations in markets, knowledge about the object to be exchanged is of importance (Beckert and Aspers 2011). Compared to markets of mass-produced and standardized products, however, art markets are filled with uncertainty about the products (Appaduari 1986, Joy and Sherry 2003, Karpik 2010, Menger 1999, Velthuis 2005). Due to uncertainty, it has previously been claimed that artworks are valued on the basis of guiding principles, such as price scripts (Velthuis 2005), judgment devices (Karpik 2010), and conventions (Beckert and Aspers 2011). The guiding parameters that matter for valuations are both intrinsic and extrinsic (Callon et al. 2002, Preece et al. 2016, Velthuis 2005, Wells 2015), and regard both the artwork and the artist. Previous research disagrees on whether intrinsic or extrinsic aspects dominate pricing strategies (Fine 2003). Valorizing based mainly on intrinsic aspects, such as production expenses, are understood to be craft oriented, whereas valorizing based mainly on extrinsic aspects, such as reputation and brand are art world oriented (O'Neill 2008). Most social science research on art markets is art world oriented, concerned with values that derive from extrinsic qualities of the artist, according to Wells (2015). In line with this claim, it has been argued that in art markets, the Marxist view of labor work and production seldom matters in the valuation of artworks, at least not in price setting terms (MacNeill and Wilson-Anastasios 2014, Philips 2015, Shukaitis and Figiel 2014).

Other literature argues that in order to understand how valuations are performed, one cannot neglect to examine the production of the good, where much of the production of values takes place (Vatin 2013). Except for a few artworks that sell for extraordinary prices (Joy and Sherry 2003, the production-related aspects of artworks do indeed matter for pricing decisions in the average pricing of artworks (O'Neill 2008, Veltuis 2005). There is a call for revisiting the value of labor as an object of valuations in markets (Vatin 2013). By recognizing the generating of value in production and labor, it is claimed that these practices, leading to market exchanges, deserve attention as the new pragmatic approach to valuations emerges in economic sociology and market studies (Vatin 2013). Similarly, market exchanges are preceded by qualculating actions, meaning that they are based on both economic and emotional evaluations (Cochoy 2008). Hence, the pragmatist approach suggests that judgment and calculations are both involved in valuations and that these dynamics are revealed through empirical investigations (Appadurai 1986, Çalişkan and Callon 2010, Cochoy 2008, Dekker 2015, Grzelec 2019, Navarro Aguiar 2017, Vatin 2013).

//... Goods and workers arrive on the market already calibrated, classified, and measured in many ways. The market price doesn't freely invent itself on the market as "standard" economic theory would have us believe: the price doesn't result from a disembodied negotiation in the marketplace, because the objects being exchanged



are already indexed by all these prior metrological operations...//  
(Vatin 2013:38-39).

Drawing on previous pragmatic approaches to valuations and pricing, and in particular Vatin (2013), valuation is defined as practices of *valorizing*, meaning the production of values, and *evaluating*, meaning the negotiations and calculations of values that lead to prices.

### ***Interrelated practices***

The three groups of practices that constitute the exchangification process have now briefly been presented. These practices may happen simultaneously, overlap and integrate with each other. As previous research about objectification, classification and valuation shows, when an object is being objectified, valuations are also taken into consideration; when an object is being valued, classifications are also considered, etcetera. Depending on the specific artwork and the specific situation in which it is exchangified, some practices may be more dominant and require extra efforts.

In chapters six, seven and eight, I will discuss the exchangification practices one by one through the analysis of the field material. As Bowker and Star (2000) suggest, things must be placed in some kind of order before calculating work can be done on them. The process of exchangification should not be understood as having *one* chronological order. Although the exchangification practices do not unfold in a linear process, however, the format of this thesis suggests a linear reading, which requires me to present them in a certain order. For that reason, it makes sense to choose a narrative where artworks are first objectified, then classified and finally, valued. As the discussions in these chapters will disclose, however, the practices of the exchangification of graffiti and street artworks seldom appear in total isolation from each other. In chapter nine, I will return to the discussions of how they are interlinked and, in particular, discuss how authenticity and legitimacy is played out in the process. Accordingly, in chapter nine I will present conceptual models that illustrate the process.

In the following chapter, I will discuss the method and the scientific approach, and how the study was conducted in order to achieve the purpose.

## 4 Methodology

This chapter presents how fieldwork was conducted and how the field material was analyzed. It goes on to discuss challenges, ethical considerations and reflections regarding scientific rigor and credibility in constructivist research.

Coming back to the theoretical approach of interdisciplinary market studies, the ANT approach of following actions has been used primarily as a methodological device for designing the set-up of the fieldwork (Latour 2005, Alcapadini and Hassard 2010). It helped me to direct and conduct the fieldwork in a snowballing method. This means that by following actions I have been studying practices (Czarniawska 2014). The aim of employing parts of a methodological theory is to offer other perspectives, which will develop and produce more knowledge about a domain theory (Lukka and Vinnari 2014). This methodological approach helped me to outline the exchangification framework, which contributes to theories of art commodification (domain theories). Hence, I use parts of the ANT methodology to expand the theorizing on the commodification of art. This means that I have analyzed what practices have been formed through the studying of actions and how this can explain the exchangification of artworks.

As with any scientific perspective, this choice has consequences for how to collect empirical material. In order to answer the research question: *How are graffiti and street art transformed into exchangeable market products?*, I have chosen an ethnographic approach. Below I will account for how this ethnography has been conducted.

### **How the study has been conducted**

This part is divided in two sections, following Czarniawska (2014). The first part refers to what has been going on *out in the field*, describing how I conducted the fieldwork and constructed the material. Although the fieldwork itself implied tentative analyses on what I observed, the main analytical work was done when all material was collected. The second part thus refers to what I have been doing *at home at my desk*, and it describes how the material was analyzed.

### **Constructing the fieldwork material out in the field**

This fieldwork is to a large extent conducted through the method of “follow-the-action”, which relates to “follow-the-actor” from ANT (Latour 2005) and the concept of action nets (Czarniawska 2004, Lindberg and Walter 2012). This snowballing technique was a suitable method as I was not involved with the art markets for graffiti and street art before I started the fieldwork, and thus potential informants were therefore hard for me to approach directly (Preece and Kerrigan 2015). The advantage of being an outsider to the phenomenon of study is that it helps the researcher to take a neutral stance, in line with the methodological

principle of flat ontology. Due to my initial lack of knowledge about graffiti and street art, however, I could not myself identify what practices were important to study. As soon as I was out in the field, the follow-the-action technique partly solved this problem, but the first step in this process was to find a valid entrance point to the field.

I started the fieldwork by contacting an art gallery in Sweden that specialized in graffiti and street artists. At the gallery, I had access to interviews with staff and observations of the gallery actors' various activities. In a snowballing manner, these meetings led me to other galleries, artists, art collectors, municipal board meetings, street art festivals, supply stores, auction houses and public lectures and seminars, in several Swedish cities and Paris. By referring to other people or things (such as documents, spray cans or smart phone applications) in interviews and observations, I continued to follow further actions in what seemed to be a never-ending net of actions. Eventually, more or less stable practices of exchange emerged. Below follows a more detailed description of this fieldwork.

### **Time and places**

Most of the fieldwork took place between September 2014 and October 2015, with some additional observations, interviews and archival searches complementing the material afterwards. There is a recognized methodological problem with the ANT approach (Jackson 2015, Latour 2002, Strathern 1996) and that is: when to cut the network? When to stop following the actions? A network is never-ending and thus the story being told from this material will be nothing other than a selection of possible stories, which excludes other possible stories that might never be found. Jackson (2015, following Law 1987) suggests that when there is no more need to “open up black-boxes and examine their contents”, there is perhaps an end to the actor network. In other words: when the findings from the fieldwork seem saturated, it is time to exit the field. Similarly, building on Glaser and Strauss' (1978) grounded theory approach, Czarniawska (2014) argues that fieldwork should stop when the researcher has reached theoretical saturation – when there is a relatively consistent theory of the phenomenon – and when no new insights on critical topics are being generated. From the material I collected, there were certain practices that were more significant and frequently appearing than others and thus it was possible to distinguish a certain saturation level in the amount of material. But as much as there was repetitiveness, the fieldwork also disclosed ad hoc actions in situations which were new to the actors.

Most material was collected in Sweden, although two interviews and approximately six hours of observations (including 12 conversations) were conducted in Paris, where the action nets took me. All the Swedish galleries I visited worked with international artists and many of them are based in France.

In general, Paris is a city that was often referred to when discussing the markets for graffiti and street art. An artist that I met in Paris told me:

If you can make it in Paris, you make it good. There are 1000 galleries here. So this is where all the really, really serious art collectors go first, I think. There are so many things going on here. The best market for art. But of course also the competition is harder for artists.

(Conversation 20, field notes 2015)

The marketing collectives that are formed in the exchangification of graffiti and street art frequently cross national borders. An actor may consist of humans and nonhumans physically situated in different Swedish cities as well as in other countries and on the internet. But the dominance of Swedish settings that constitute the fieldwork displays specific cultural and political conditions. For example, both Swedish and French informants argue that prices may differ a lot depending on where the artwork is exhibited and sold. Moreover, the zero tolerance graffiti policies also have their impact in both Sweden and France, for example regarding permission to paint public murals, as well as regarding attitudes towards the art forms. Although artworks by graffiti and street artists are today increasingly considered to constitute important emerging art markets (Artprice 2013, 2017, 2018), in Sweden these markets are still in their early days. This aspect makes studying the construction of market products in Sweden of particular relevance, as it is stressed that it is of interest to study commodities whose market is emerging (Holm and Nolde Nielsen 2007). The practices that are performed to construct these market products disclose many of the conflicts, challenges and competing logics that are part of the exchangification, but that might have been harder to spot in studies of more established markets. Thus, the national politics, norms, culture, and bureaucracy that contribute to forming the art climate in Sweden constitute a fruitful setting for studying the exchangification of art.

### **Summary of field material**

The field material includes 35 interviews (on average one-two hours long, see appendix 1), and approximately 93 hours of observations, including 45 conversations (see appendices 2 and 3), as well as a diverse collection of archival material (see appendix 4).

### **Interviews**

In total, I have conducted 35 interviews with artists, collectors, gallery owners, festival organizers, museum directors and auction house managers (see appendix 1 for details). I followed a thematic structure for the interviews, i.e., they were semi-structured. The questions varied depending on the persons who were interviewed – for example if it was an artist or a collector – and if it was one of the early interviews, which tended to be more unstructured, or one of the later

interviews, which tended to be more structured. There were some issues that I wanted to discuss with most of the informants. Questions regarding these issues could be:

*How do you work with artworks? What does an ordinary workday look like? How are the artworks priced? Who are the buyers? How do you define/describe these artworks?*

For most of the interviews, I let them unfold as informal conversations, which moved in a direction mainly steered by the informant. These interviews resemble narrative interviews (Czarniawska 2014), where the informants are encouraged to talk about their practices in their own words, and ethnographic interviews (Mol 2002), where the informants themselves describe what they have done and how they have done something. This means that I asked the informants questions about the practices in order to get information without observing them. These questions were formulated, for example, as in the following: “What did you do then?” and “How come you did that?” The interview set-up was sometimes revised, for instance by removing irrelevant questions or adding new questions. The 35 interviews were transcribed verbatim and generated approximately 500 pages of transcribed Word documents.

## **Observations**

The observations were conducted in various settings such as festivals, gallery openings, meetings, in studios and in public spaces where both sanctioned and unsanctioned artworks were produced. I also observed what was happening on websites and in social media. When planning the interviews, I also tried to meet the informants in their workplaces or similar relevant environments to get the opportunity to do observations as well. The observations helped me to study what actors do, what devices are used and how actions lead to further actions. Field notes were nearly always taken in a note book during observations. Occasionally I found a secluded space to dictate the observations onto a recording device, particularly if I wanted to remember quotes from conversations.

The observations were conducted both overtly and covertly, depending on the access to the observation setting, on the group of people that were being observed and on the characteristics of the practices. Sometimes my contact person at less public observation sites announced to the other people who I was and why I was there, which helped me to negotiate informed consent. Sometimes I announced that I was a researcher doing a study on graffiti and street art (or urban art) markets. Often I mentioned that I came from a business school but sometimes I also pinpointed that I have a background in art history and within the arts sector as well. I mentioned this to gain credibility as a person genuinely curious about art, and not only as someone interested in the commercial aspect. The informants had various reactions to my affiliation with the business school. Some were a bit reluctant and hesitant and seemed suspicious of my interest in studying them.

Others thought it was perfectly justified, expressing that artists too need to engage with business and money. Most informants did not seem to care at all. Moreover, I noticed during conversations and interviews that the informants, and especially the artists, sometimes became uncomfortable when we were talking about practices relating to unsanctioned graffiti and street art. In order to make them feel at ease, I tried to show as curious and neutral an attitude towards the art form as possible.

Most of the observations were carried out through shadowing, which implies observing without much participation, but sometimes I helped to do tasks, such as writing a price list for a gallery exhibition, picking up an artist at the airport and handing out flyers before an exhibition opening. These participatory observations provided more insights into micro-level everyday practices, although they do not mean that I was “going native”. I was still an observing researcher, reflecting on things from an outside perspective. During observations, I often tried to talk to people as much as possible to ask questions and to get their view of what was going on. Sometimes I wanted to tape record the conversation and then I asked the informant for permission, but usually I just took notes during or immediately after the conversation. If a recording device was not used, I wrote down or dictated specific quotes that were particularly interesting or illustrating. I tried to write the quotes as verbatim as possible, but they could only be written as verbatim as I comprehended them. Words, sentences and expressions in the reconstruction of quotes might have been affected by my ability to remember them. The quotes from observations are marked as “field notes”, as opposed to the quotes from interviews, which are marked as “recording”. Moreover, many of the interviews were conducted in Swedish. Hence, some quotes in the text are translated from Swedish into English with the linguistic annotations that a translation cannot express.

Photos and videos were also taken with a smart phone and iPad during observations and interviews. These photos and videos helped me to document situations involving a wide range of actions and provided a visual complement to the written note taking and tape recording. The focus has been to study actions including both doings and sayings. By making notes through photos – “writing pictures” (Peñaloza and Cayla 2006) – it is possible to let the nonhuman things speak, and not only humans. Thus, the photographic material was used to help recall and reconstruct field experience (Peñaloza and Cayla 2006). With permission from the informants, some photos are also published as illustrations in this book. In total 1013 photos were taken and 39 videos were filmed.

The approximately 93 hours of observations and conversations were later typed into Word documents and constituted 172 pages of field notes (see appendices 2 and 3 for details).

## **Archival material**

Following the network of actions, I have also collected archival material, such as magazine articles, news reports, annual reports, press releases, advertisements, consumer guides and popular literature. Most settings that are visited by contemporary ethnographers overflow with documents and texts, which constitute “ethnographies of things” (Fuentes 2011). Hence, it is important also to collect these accounts. Many of these archival artifacts were physically collected during observations and interviews while some of them were searched for and collected afterwards. Following the principles of ANT regarding symmetry and flat ontology (Latour 2005), this methodological practice is utterly necessary as these nonhuman artifacts might be as much part of the actions as the humans who produce or use them. As I will describe in the next section on the analysis of the fieldwork material, I have treated all material as texts. Finally, the archival material constituted images and texts in the form of posts in social media, news media, marketing material, such as folders and advertisements, policy documents, sales reports, art magazines, documentary films, websites, and curatorial and editorial texts (see appendix 4 for details).

These empirical sources – interviews, observations and archival material – have disclosed practices involved in the exchangification of artworks into market products. The following sections will describe how this material was analyzed and how it eventually became a written text.

### ***Constructing the fieldwork material at my desk at home***

When the main part of the fieldwork had been conducted, I transcribed all tape-recorded interviews and written and tape-recorded field notes from observations and conversations into Word documents. I printed and coded the transcribed interviews, observation notes and conversation notes in the chronological order in which I had gathered the material. The photographic material (and some of the archival materials) were used during this process, as it helped me to recall and reconstruct my observations from the field (Peñaloza and Cayla 2006). The interview transcripts are attentive to larger pauses that may imply something important, but they are not transcribed as verbatim as they would be if used for conversation analysis. Some of the archival materials that consisted mainly of images were transcribed into text by describing the content (for example describing an advertisement in a magazine or a post on Instagram). I transcribed everything myself and coded the material manually. The repeated listening to and reading and writing of text sequences gave me the benefit of getting very close to the material. For example, the manual process helped me to detect significant details and illustrative quotes.

## The coding and analysis process

The analysis process consisted of different steps in coding, which constitute different levels of analysis (Crang and Cook 2007, Czarniawska 2014, Styhre 2013). However, the analytical process had already started during fieldwork. Notes written on the side during interviews and observations, with insights and thoughts that could be relevant for the theory building, were reviewed regularly. Coming back to the previous discussion on theoretical saturation, the abductive approach following grounded theory implies that codes may start to emerge from the material even while the researcher is still in the field (Charmaz 2000). For example, I sensed quite early that definitions of artworks and artists were an important issue. Moreover, I gradually understood during fieldwork that various efforts at striving for legitimacy were at play. The analytical process thus evolved from the field to the desk and back again (Czarniawska 2014). These early analytical thoughts were also influenced by reviews of previous literature and theory. It is challenging for a researcher to bracket previous theoretical knowledge completely. The dilemma of prior knowledge was avoided to some extent, however, by my lack of empirical knowledge about the graffiti and street art settings.

The main analytical work resembles what Styhre (2013, following Catino and Patriotta (2013)), refers to as three levels of coding. The first level *describes* the empirical material, the second level *analyzes* the themes described, and the third level relates and patterns – *theorizes* – the analytical themes to each other.

Initially, the first step in the coding process and the first level of analysis were as detailed as possible to identify all actions that constituted potentially significant practices. I read the transcripts one sentence at a time and made notes in the margins about what action was going on and to which theme the text should be related. Any sentence from the transcripts that seemed analytically relevant got copied and pasted into a new document named with a certain theme of practices, such as “social media”, “permissions” or “zero tolerance”. Some sentences were placed in multiple themes. For example, when an account described an action of selling an artwork and communicating about this sale in social media, the action got coded both in “sales and commissions” and in “social media”. This multiple categorization helped me to discern relations between the themes, which would be important observations in the following coding steps.

From the coding of the two first conversations I had (with two gallery owners) and one full interview (with an artist and gallery owner), I identified 33 different themes of practices. When all of the ethnographic material was coded, I ended up with 39 themes of practices. After the coding of the interviews, observations and conversations, I coded the archival material by copying and inserting texts or transcribed descriptions from the material into the 39 theme documents. Hence, I analyzed all of the material – documents and interview and observation



transcripts – using the same coding system. Some texts were considered important but not easily coded, hence these were categorized as “uncategorized”, until I found (or did not find) the theme that fitted them. The final document containing “uncategorized” text did not turn out to be large, however, and constituted only one page.

At this first level of analysis, the themes were unfolded mainly from the field material and less from predetermined analytical categories relating to art markets, art commodities, pricing, etcetera. This is in line with the ANT approach to fieldwork (Latour 2005), about not knowing in advance what actions, relations and actors to look for when conducting the study. However, the more transcriptions I coded, the more colored was my further coding by the previously established themes. The initially inductively oriented process became more abductive and iterative the more material I analyzed. Hence, the themes were not solely generated from the field material. They are both emic (from the field) and etic (from theory/literature/the researcher). This regards, for example, themes relating to defining the art forms. Both theory and practice have discussed whether to define the artworks and artists in terms of street art, graffiti, urban or contemporary art. However, while it is nearly impossible to present a perfect binary between emic and etic categories as data are inter-subjectively constructed, the analysis should consider from where these representations stem (Crag and Cook 2007).

The 39 initial themes thus constituted the first level of analysis. The next step in the coding process and the second level of analysis was to analyze the 39 identified themes of practices (Styhre 2013). During this stage, it was obvious that some of the themes were similar, such as various practices that concerned definitions (“urban art versus graffiti and street art”, “street art versus graffiti”, and “contemporary art versus urban art”). At this second level of analysis, these themes were assembled into a bigger theme called “classifying the market”. Eventually, six themes were constructed from the 39 themes. Filtering out irrelevant issues when undertaking thematic analysis is a common stage in interpretative approaches to data analysis (Kerrigan et al. 2011). The themes that did not make the cut into the final analysis because they were insignificant or had too little substance for the purpose were “networking and collaboration”, “gender issues”, “global art form and travelling”, and “sponsoring”. However, some of the materials from these themes were of use when writing chapter five, the brief introduction to the graffiti and street art market actors.

The final step in the coding process and the third level of analysis was to relate and pattern the practices into six larger themes from the previous step. The analysis finally evolved into three major themes that constitute the exchanging practices of graffiti and street art: objectification, classification and valuation. The third level of analysis was elaborated with guidance from the theoretical insights

from previous research on marketization, art markets and exchange processes. This process of coding was thus part of the theorizing (Styhre 2013) – the theoretical framework of this study, which is discussed in chapter three. Summing up the coding process and the different levels of analysis, the 39 first-level themes were eventually reduced to six second-level themes, which were formed into the three main themes of objectification, classification and valuation practices. Finally, in the writing process, each of these three main practices was divided into three sub-practices, i.e. nine sub-practices in total.

## **Writing process**

During the writing process, it was necessary to revisit much of the literature I had already reviewed. In particular, the literature on commodification, legitimacy and authenticity in art markets, and on classification, objectification and valuation was read again and more thoroughly. This continuing review practice is similar to what Czarniawska (2014) discusses as the three different stages of the literature review: explication (reproducing the text), explanation (contextualizing the text) and exploration (constructing new texts). This review process resulted mainly in chapter two, the literature review, and in chapter three, the theoretical framework.

The process of writing the empirical chapters six, seven and eight and eventually the discussion chapter nine evolved through numerous re-readings, re-writings, re-arrangings and re-structurings. At times, when writing the empirical chapters, I struggled with the issue discussed by Czarniawska (2014) regarding the rhetorical distinction between mimesis – describing – and emplotment – arranging and theorizing. This struggle generated multiple versions of these chapters, which sometimes took a more descriptive and sometimes a more theoretic orientation. Finally, I dealt with this negotiation by theorizing the descriptions but arranging them as subordinate to the emplotment (Czarniawska 2014). Thus, I structured the chapters in the analytical themes of objectification, classification and valuation, which each consist of sub-themes containing thick descriptions of my findings. As has been mentioned previously, the empirical chapters are not ordered in a *chronological* sequence of how exchangification should be explained, but in what I believe forms a logical argument about how exchangification is most easily understood. At the end of each chapter, I summarized the main conclusions from the content of the discussion and how they relate to the overall concept of exchangification. It should be noted here that, as many findings in these chapters are illustrated by quotes from fieldwork, I am grateful to the informants who have thus co-authored this text with me. Finally, a thorough discussion of exchangification, final conclusions and future research is presented in chapter nine. This way of writing resembles the ending-embedded story where all plots (elements of theory) are subordinated to the one (theory) that is announced at the beginning but revealed in full at the end (Czarniawska 2014).

### ***Challenges, ethical considerations and scientific rigor***

The method of follow-the-actions has not always been easy. The human actors of the art networks are everywhere and they are not regular nine to five-workers. In general, the artists I have interviewed and observed have been working part time at their artistic work and part time in other day jobs. This means that, as their work is spontaneous and irregular, I have not always been able to be present on site and observe their actions. As I explain above, however, I have dealt with this difficulty by asking questions about prior events, to construct the actions retrospectively, although the descriptions have thus been based on the informants' accounts and not on the informants' actions observed as they were happening. I believe this is a common challenge for researchers doing ethnographies. Nevertheless, although it makes it harder to conduct the fieldwork, it also helps to say something about the practices that I have studied (Czarniawska 2014).

Jacobson (1996) and Bengtsen (2014) discuss the ethics of their studies on graffiti artists and street art practices. For example, Bengtsen (2014) discusses the role of the participating observer out in the field when studying artists creating unsanctioned street art: "... given the illegal nature of the artistic practice I participated in, I felt I had to balance my wish to present a detailed account with the potential implications of doing so" (Bengtsen 2014:44). Considering the ethnographic approach of studying actions as closely as possible, this dilemma has in some situations mattered to me as well, although in most cases I observed situations involving sanctioned art practices. But this issue also relates to the accounts given by informants during interviews and not only to observations. My concerns have mostly regarded the need to maintain the anonymity of the artists. For that reason, I have chosen to make all informants as anonymous as possible, even the informants who did not directly ask for anonymity in order to participate. Due to this decision, the Swedish cities in which the interviews or conversations took place are not published, as the Swedish scene is not as crowded as the French, where anonymity is easier to sustain. For the same reason, the exact date of interviews or conversations is also not published. These decisions affect the transparency of the field material, but I feel it is more important not to risk the integrity and trust of my informants. Without their accounts this thesis would have been impossible to write. The way informants are referred to in the text is, for example, "Interview 11, recording 2014", or "Conversation 9, field notes 2015". Nevertheless, writing about practices, without putting the artists and other informants at risk who have been kind enough to let me be there with them, has been a struggle. As discussed by Bengtsen (2014), a detailed description of an artist's practices may well identify who that artist is to peers and other informed actors. Hence, I have been especially careful to avoid possible recognition and maintain anonymity for the informants who have explicitly asked for it.

Moreover, in ethnographic studies, there is a potential for bias depending on which informants have the opportunity to be heard. Accounts therefore need to be approached with some caution. Although it is helpful that many artists and other actors happily talk about their practices and growing careers, Jacobson (1996) also notes that the informants' suggestions as to whom else it might be important to talk to or not, need to be treated with careful consideration; it is possible that this advice might be affected by competition as well as friendship. Another issue to be aware of, particularly in ethnographic and interpretative research, is that of reflexivity: to critically reflect on the self as a researcher (Guba and Lincoln 2000). This reflexivity forces the researcher to reflect on how she interacts with the actors in the field and how the interaction affects what field material is constructed. The reflexive mindset thus needs to be present throughout the fieldwork and analysis process. Moreover, by being as transparent as possible about how material was produced and how the analysis was constructed (Denny 2006), the importance of scholarly rigor and credibility (Styhre 2013) has been considered and presented.

Finally, regarding scientific rigor and specifically the common request for generalizability in scholarly work – is it possible for a study based on a constructivist epistemology and ethnographic field material to provide generalizable analyses? And is it even desirable? Statistical generalizability is best achieved in studies using quantitative methods aiming at reliability (Sandberg 2005). In qualitative and interpretative studies, such as this one, it is more accurate to strive for relevance (Fischer and Otnes 2006). This kind of generalizability is aimed at making the study useful for other scholars studying related phenomena, and not only for the specific practices, situated in specific times and places, discussed in this book. This relevance is shown in the literature review, which reveals an inadequacy in the existing conceptualizations (Fischer and Otnes 2006) about commodification in general and about the commodification of art in particular. This inadequacy may prevent specific phenomena from being observed and hence may prevent specific knowledge from being produced (Sandberg 2005). The rich field material and the analytical connections that can be made to previous literature (Fischer and Otnes 2006, Locke 2001) further strengthen the relevance of this study to the wider scholarly discussion of commodification. Moreover, Arnould et al. (2006) highlight the critique against “extreme contexts” of markets and consumption, such as the commodification of graffiti and street art. This critique questions whether it is possible to produce a generalizable analysis based on extreme phenomena. Arnould et al. (2006) respond to this criticism by claiming that “going to extremes” helps researchers to transcend assumptions about consumption and markets generated by “overly familiar contexts” (Arnould et al. 2006:110). They continue: “de-familiarizing in extreme contexts helps theoretically interesting factors emerge more readily.” (Arnould et al. 2006:110). Thus, this study contributes to theoretical insights about the commodification of art in general and about the exchangification of graffiti and street art in particular.

In the succeeding chapter five, I will discuss the main actors of the graffiti and street art markets. Who are the artists, the buyers, the mediators, and the devices that are involved in exchangeification? This chapter constitutes an empirical point of departure and offers a background to the practices that will be discussed analytically in the chapters that follow.

## 5 Setting the stage: key actors in graffiti and street art markets

In this chapter, I will briefly introduce the phenomenon of the exchangeification of graffiti and street art. This provides the background for the analysis in the following chapters on the conditions that enable the exchangeification process.

Owning street art has been recognized as a growing desire, particularly works by Banksy and other famous graffiti and street artists (Artprice 2013, 2017, 2018, Bengtson 2013, Nilsson 2013). At international art fairs, prime galleries and auction houses – domains usually reserved for “high” art rather than street art (Preece and Bida 2017) – graffiti and street artists are coming to be recognized and art collectors are adding artworks produced by these artists to their collections. According to the art market index site Artprice<sup>3</sup>, the urban art sales of 2012 indicated a growth rate of over 90 % from 2002 to 2012 (Artprice 2013), which is similar to the overall growth of the contemporary art market category between 2002 and 2012 (Artprice 2017). More recent figures from Artprice (2017, 2018) disclose that the markets for commercial graffiti and street art continue to grow in terms of number of artworks sold, 20 years after Bonhams arranged one of the first urban art auctions in 2008 (Meir 2011).

According to *The contemporary art market report 2018* (Artprice 2018:4), “four iconic Street artists rank among the Top 5 most frequently sold Contemporary artists in the world”. One of these “iconic street artists” is Banksy. The hype over Banksy and other street artists in the contemporary art market is illustrated by an event that took place at Sotheby’s in London on 5<sup>th</sup> October 2018. The famous Banksy work, “Girl with balloon” was the last lot for sale at Sotheby’s *Contemporary art evening auction* (Sotheby’s 2018). Seconds after the auction hammer confirmed the winning bid of over 1 million British pounds, half of the canvas was shredded to pieces right in front of the auction audience. The framed artwork had a hidden, built-in document shredder, arranged to destroy the canvas the moment the artwork was sold<sup>4</sup>. This event got immense attention in the news and social media. Art experts and critics speculated that the physical destruction of the artwork only increased its value (Blanché 2018, Kinsella 2018, Sveriges Radio 2018), although all that was left of it was a half canvas (according to Banksy, the ambition was to

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<sup>3</sup> Artprice is an international index site that keeps track of the sales and trends in the secondary art markets, and that is used to value artworks by various actors in art markets, such as buyers, mediators, and artists.

<sup>4</sup> The description of the Banksy lot at Sothebys.com, “Unlike the other editioned iterations of this famous motif, the present work is a rare unique painting that was given to the present owner by Banksy in 2006 following the artist’s warehouse show”, indicates that this was the first time the work was for sale.

destroy the full canvas (banksyfilm 2018)) and a remarkably thick, golden frame. Through this spectacular show at Sotheby's, the artwork symbolically and visually resisted market exchange (Blanché 2018) – reminiscent of unsanctioned street art in public streets – but became even more desirable because of this anti-market performance. Indeed, the art historian and auction appraiser Fredrik Anthony (2016:73) states that the substance of Banksy's medial brand is “money and hype”.

There are several practices that aim to delineate the markets of graffiti and street art. Kjellberg and Helgesson (2007) claim that in order for there to be a market, it must be represented as such. Some organizations clearly operationalize commercial graffiti, street art and urban art as an art market that is distinct from a “traditional” contemporary art market. Artprice, the auction houses Artcurial and Bonhams, the magazine Graffiti Art, the galleries urban art room and Wallery, and the festivals No Limit and Artscape are some of these actors, who contribute to show that there is a market for graffiti and street art.

### **New product in an old market?**

Despite the delineating and representational efforts, it is misleading to define street art markets as a case of completely new and emerging markets. Although there are practices that distinguish commercial artworks both from subcultural graffiti and street art as well as from contemporary art, the street art markets mimic and adopt the market practices of the contemporary fine art markets. Graffiti and street artworks are sold through the same auction house infrastructures as other artworks. Pricelists and red stickers signaling that an artwork has been sold are used just as they are in traditional art galleries. It is rather a case of a new and emerging product in an already established market: the contemporary art market. Artprice (2017) refers to street art as a sub-segment of contemporary art. However, one could argue that defining these products as “new” is misleading too. The commercialization has existed since the art form began (Cooper 2008, Dickens 2010, Jacobson 1996, Kimvall 2014). But as the reports from secondary graffiti and street art markets signal (Artprice 2017, 2018), graffiti and street art is perhaps not a new, but at least a growing category in contemporary art markets.

While the commodification of graffiti and street artworks is relatively well established in the US, France and other European countries (Artprice 2018), in Sweden it is still in its early days, according to most of the informants I encountered during my fieldwork. Artprice (2017) describes auction houses in France, such as Artcurial, as leaders in the street art segment, while the British auction house Bonhams describes itself as the market leader in this sector (Bonhams 2018). Bengtsen (2014), Merrill (2015) and Visconti et al. (2010) claim that street art movements are global in terms of aesthetic codes and languages, ideologies, target audiences, history and marketing. But in line with the

observation that street art subcultures can be distinguished with respect to cultural and national settings (Merrill 2015), and according to the artists and gallery owners that I have interviewed in both Sweden and Paris, graffiti and street art settings in France and Sweden differ in a number of ways. Prices, taxes, tolerance policies and the general consumption of contemporary art are factors that imply differences in how artists work with both their unsanctioned and sanctioned art. Although there seems to be a common ideology behind the subcultures, graffiti and street art are still produced differently in different parts of the world due to differences in how local conditions work out in practice.

Graffiti and street art are not new forms of art in Sweden, but as art forms that may be performed legitimately with public money, they are still young. Public commissions of large murals in Swedish cities are allowed today, but they have not been common. Regarding the allocation of public money in cultural budgets, the largest sum usually goes to institutionalized culture (Modig and Modig 2013). As graffiti and street art have had difficulties in being institutionalized in Swedish public art activities<sup>5</sup> (Malm, interviewed in Anthony 2017), its practitioners have lacked the public resources to realize bigger projects. A recurring claim from fieldwork informants is that alternative forms of art either need to convince political decision makers or institutions, or rely on commercial interests in order to get financed. Artists find that they are more often commissioned to do murals or other collaborations for commercial companies than for public art institutions. Thus, according to Jacobson (2000), other markets than the contemporary art markets have driven graffiti and street art to commercialization. The commercial offerings from pop-cultural industries have been the alternative for graffiti and street artists to work as professionals with their art form. Advertising, fashion and other pop-culture consumer markets have adopted the aesthetics of graffiti and street art in their products (Merrill 2015). “It is a heavily exploited art form” (Blom, interviewed in Anthony 2017).

Although these practices in commercial markets other than art markets might be common elsewhere, however, they have not been significant in my material. Most of the practices on exchangification that were unfolded in the field material relate to two general examples of artworks, on which I will focus in the following chapters. The first example is mural artworks, such as site-specific artworks on walls purchased by private or public commissioners. Becoming professional in

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<sup>5</sup> The characteristics of the art form imply that graffiti and street art are difficult to collect for public institutions, whose mission it is to preserve and display contemporary aesthetic expressions (Malm, interviewed in Anthony 2017). These challenges imply that ephemeral art forms risk losing their place in art history and hence their artistic legitimacy. On the other hand, preserving graffiti and street art would be inauthentic to the art form, as the subcultural practices imply ephemerality and destruction (Merrill 2015).



the sense that one can make a living through one's artistic practices, for many artists implies getting commissioned to do murals. These practices, to some extent, resemble the unsanctioned graffiti and street art production, at least superficially. The murals are site-specific, the size of the artworks is large and the spray can technique more or less remains the same. Murals can be bought by private art buyers, for example when artists get commissioned to paint part of a wall in someone's private living room. Murals can also be acquired by organizations who, for instance, commission artists to paint site-specific artworks inside or outside their office buildings. Moreover, artists also get commissioned by cities to paint public murals. These public artworks are often produced as part of a festival organized by the city.

The second example is mobile artworks (hereafter referred to simply as mobiles), such as tangible objects for sale at galleries and auction houses. Some artists who want to have commercial careers also produce mobile artworks. Mobile artworks are those where the artists have used media that can be moved; hence, in opposition to murals, these artworks are physically transferable. Common media are canvas and screen prints (such as the canvas "Girl with Balloon" by Banksy, or the screen print by Bates presented in the introduction (Figure 2). Buyers of these exchangeable mobiles are both private and public art buyers and collectors. They are usually sold through galleries, auction houses, e-trade websites or through the artists' own websites, which are common sales places for contemporary art (Joy and Sherry 2003, Kottász and Bennett 2014).

## **Places, people and objects**

By exploring how graffiti and street art transform into exchangeable artworks, I draw on the concept of marketing collectives (Callon 2007) and on a dynamic rather than binary view of cultural production (Becker et al. 2006, Dickens 2008, 2010). Thus, instead of assuming a transgression from street to gallery, and exclusively studying the practices that happen in the street versus those in the gallery, the places, people and objects in between are equally important to consider. There are multiple actors involved in the process of getting artworks ready for exchange. Cochoy (2007:110) claims that exchanging products "always involves moving them from one point to another, through a wide range of physical channels and equipments." Along with recognizing the range of actors who can be considered to take part in art "work" (Becker 1982, Dickens 2010, Dominguez Rubio and Silva 2013, Preece et al. 2016, Strandvad 2012), I consider graffiti and street art market actors to include not only the buyers, mediators and artists involved in the specific transactions of artworks, but also several actors that in one way or another are engaged in this collective activity of creating art market products (Becker et al. 2006). Before entering the empirical analysis of exchangeability in chapters six, seven and eight, I will thus briefly introduce the reader to the main actors that participate in setting the market stage for graffiti

and street art. These main actors constitute (in no hierarchical order): 1) zero tolerance policies, 2) studios and supplies, 3) artists, 4) mediators, and 5) buyers.

### ***Zero tolerance policies***

In the following two sections, I will discuss the conditions – practical and ideological – required to produce graffiti and street art in public space. “It is probably more difficult to paint illegal graffiti in the UK than in Sweden, but it is harder to paint legal graffiti here [in Sweden]” (Interview 18, recording 2015). This quote from a Swedish festival organizer describes the recent context of producing graffiti in Sweden. During the 80s and 90s in Sweden, when graffiti tags started to show up in public space and the first pieces appeared on trains and subway cars, graffiti seems to have been perceived both as vandalism and as an interesting and important art movement that was encouraged and highlighted (Jacobson 1996). Since the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, however, graffiti policies have usually been formulated as zero visions, implying zero tolerance against graffiti in most Swedish cities. The zero tolerance policy against graffiti in Sweden was adopted from the version that was implemented in New York in the 1980s (Kimvall 2014). The idea behind a zero tolerance policy against graffiti is a belief that the less graffiti (or “klotter”, as is usually the Swedish term in these policies) one encounters in public space, the less interested one becomes in producing new graffiti. According to the rhetoric of zero tolerance policies, the appearance of graffiti in a neighborhood is equal to a vandalized and hence less safe place to live (Ten Eyck 2016).

The zero tolerance policies in New York were mainly a police strategy, whereas in Stockholm they evolved into a broader political agenda (Kimvall 2014). Hence, whereas the zero tolerance policies in New York primarily targeted unsanctioned graffiti, the Swedish version (and in particular the Stockholm version, which is infamous among graffiti artists and has influenced the rest of Swedish cities) was implemented rather differently and more literally: not even sanctioned or legal graffiti was tolerated (Kimvall 2014). In practice, this had consequences for publicly funded events, such as gallery exhibitions involving graffiti and street artists, which had to close; street art festivals that included graffiti workshops for children and youths, which were stopped; as well as the advertisement of street art festivals with posters showing graffiti letters, which were banned. This non-support from the city of Stockholm has been referred to as sort of censoring practices of an art form (Kimvall 2014). The illegitimacy attributed to the art form in Sweden led to a general ban of legal graffiti walls in several Swedish cities.

The years between the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and today are relevant because stories about and references to the zero tolerance policies and their implementation frequently occur in the field material. The zero tolerance policies have been normalizing as they impact on how artists are able to work and produce

artworks. Although the implementation of the policies made the streets of Stockholm clean of graffiti within 24 hours (which was the ambition of the Stockholm graffiti policy (Stockholms stad 2015)), however, it did not prevent the graffiti from being produced. According to several informants, the graffiti artists just had to produce the graffiti faster in order not to be seen and caught by the guards. An artist explained:

It's not painting the train that takes time, it's all the hours we spend screening the area. If we only get three minutes to paint, then we probably need to be three writers painting together. And if we get 10 minutes!? Then it's really good!

(Conversation 6, field notes 2014)

The time pressure has paved the way for a specific Stockholm graffiti style, which is characterized by its simplicity and is famous within the global graffiti scene (Kimvall 2014). The artist continued: "We have developed a style that is adjusted to look good by painting for only 10 minutes. We spend hours to prepare just to paint for a few minutes" (Conversation 6, field notes 2014). An owner of a supply store selling spray cans and other artistic material also told me, regarding the time aspect:

In Paris and Germany for example, they maybe get three-four hours to paint, whereas in Sweden the writers only have 30 minutes. Thus you adjust your plan according to 30 minutes, regarding colors, size, etc.

(Interview 10, recording 2014)

According to Kimvall (2014) and Ten Eyck (2016), it is a matter of societal discourses to decide how graffiti is perceived and thus is performed and consumed. The zero tolerance policy associates the graffiti practices with something criminal and thus represents the practices of graffiti and street artists as illegitimate, which impacts on their professional legitimacy. The graffiti and street art market is represented as illegitimate, as the policies describe the art form as being equal to vandalism. According to Dickens (2008), however, the zero tolerance policies in New York and London have had a direct impact on commercial practices, as the policies have prompted artists to move from painting on trains to painting on canvas.

During the years 2013-2015, bigger cities, such as Stockholm and Gothenburg, started to adjust their level of tolerance towards graffiti (Stockholms stad 2015, Göteborg stad 2014). In September 2014, the newly elected municipality government in Stockholm revised the graffiti policies in order to be more tolerant, no longer advocating *zero* tolerance (Stockholms stad 2015), which implies that as long as there is permission, graffiti is allowed to be produced in public space.

Whether the revised policies in Stockholm – as well as in other Swedish cities such as in Gothenburg – have made any big difference to the commercial practices of artists, gallery owners and other market participants in Sweden, is still a question of debate, according to accounts from the field material. Not everyone agrees that the commercial aspect of the graffiti and street art scene was ever influenced by zero tolerance. But there seems to be consensus regarding the legitimizing effect that the new policies have had for the art forms as such. In recent years, the attitude towards commissioning street artists for publicly art projects in Sweden has been changing. The attention and interest in graffiti and street art has also led to an increasing number of initiatives (Nilsson 2013), such as several festivals in Swedish cities, public commissioned murals by artists and a growing number of galleries specializing in street artists. In addition, with the new policies, it has become easier for artists to produce sanctioned murals through which they may promote gallery shows. According to a commissioner and administrator responsible for public money, there is definitely a newly tolerant mindset among civil servants and politicians regarding graffiti and street artists. One artist also told me:

There are lots of things happening right now. And there must be some profit in it, because people keep doing it. Had it all been a failure then people would quit, but people can actually live on it now. So it has definitely changed.

(Conversation 44, field notes 2015)

It is not only the streets that constitute the physical context where graffiti and street artists produce artworks, however. The studio environment is often an important place. The artistic material, such as spray cans, brushes and pens, is also crucial.

### ***Studios and supplies***

Graffiti and street art are first and foremost unsanctioned outdoor art practices. The studio work is mainly referred to in previous literature as the place where commercial street artworks are being made (Bengtson 2014, Dickens 2010), although it is also here where many of the preparations for unsanctioned street art take place (Guwallius 2010). Due to the zero tolerance policies, many of the artists explained to me how access to an indoor studio or an outdoor “studio wall” is a necessity in Sweden where there are few legal walls to paint. Without their “own” walls, the artists would be forced to paint and to practice only on illegal walls in public space. The alternative of spray painting at home is not an option as many do not have enough space to allow for bigger murals. “The studio is absolutely necessary. I cannot paint at home with my kids running around and there would be color everywhere as well” (Interview 2, field notes 2014). When artists get access to bigger walls, they can try different spray cans and colors,

experiment with motifs, practicing techniques and developing their skills. Some artists told me about agreements they have with building owners, who let the artists rent parts of their buildings to use as studios and storage. One artist told me that he had a contract for five years. He emphasized that it was a real, printed contract. It stated that he could not paint anything inappropriate. The more serious the contracts appeared, the better, in case guards or the police came and told him to stop painting, he claimed. Another artist told me about his studio:

I have my own studio wall in an industrial area outside Stockholm. I have had a contract with the owner for eight years. The wall is 10 meters tall and 100 meters long. It's a demolition contract so they have started to demolish it now, but before I had walls indoors too. It was awesome, I just stood there in a t-shirt and it was minus degrees outside but I just painted and painted. I did some fantastic projects there.

(Interview 12, recording 2014)

Graffiti and street artists often work with sketching practices in order to develop the tag, trying out ideas and improving their techniques and drawing skills. The sketches are drawn in sketch books and on particular types of sketch paper and are sometimes saved systematically in archives for future use or for sentimental reasons. Some artists use the sketches not only for training on techniques but as inspiration or guidance when they paint bigger mural pieces:

I usually bring my sketch book everywhere, for sketching and just doodling stuff. I think it's important that the sketches don't have to be very good, it's just for experimenting/.../ it's probably the most important for my art, what's in this book. So many ideas are being born in this, although they may become something else in the finished artworks.

(Interview 15, recording 2015)

In Jacobson (2000), a graffiti artist is cited saying that he sees no difference between a sketch on a piece of paper and a mural on the wall. They are both part of the same experience, of which the sketch is the starting point. Another graffiti artist in Jacobson (2000) is cited saying that the sketch is the artwork and the mural is just a reproduction.

The studio also functions as a storage room for all the material. In the studio of an artist in Sweden, the artist showed me that he used it for storing artistic material such as spray cans, pencils, brushes and ground color. Other objects that he needed in order to produce the artworks were ladders and reflective vests for safe outdoor work. There was also a big fan attached to the ceiling for indoor painting. According to the artist, this was a necessary device because it made the air much

easier to breathe. Although many spray cans today are less toxic and adapted to suit indoor work, some of the products still smell and make the air difficult to breathe without a mask. When using water based spray cans, they release tiny dust particles, which spread and settle on the floor and on clothes. The fan made the particles disperse. Thus, the artist thought that the fan was one of the most important and irreplaceable pieces of equipment in this particular studio. The fan made the indoor space much more similar to the outdoor working environment with which he was familiar.

As spray cans are frequently used tools for producing both murals and mobiles, competence in using a spray can is important. The quality of a piece of work is often evaluated based on the spray can technique. It is in many cases this skill that knowledgeable collectors and fans are interested in. For people outside the subculture, however, it might be difficult to understand whether a graffiti piece or tag is technically considered good or bad (Merrill 2015). To produce graffiti murals, as well as the signature tags, is to master a craft:

To do a good piece you need an awful lot of experience and preparations/.../You can't buy yourself the skill of drawing a straight line from this point to this point. You need to practice, practice, practice/.../you feel so much respect when you see a well-produced work. You know all the time it takes.

(Interview 12, recording 2014)

A gallery owner was impressed by the skills of one of the artists that they exhibited, who had been active as a graffiti writer for 30 years:

Other people have told me, and I can see that now, that [the artist] is so technically skilled. When he painted the wall over there with his tag, I was skeptical and thought "what the hell is he doing", and he made some few more lines and shadows and told me to "go back 10 meters". And it looked... amazing. He knows immediately what to do with the spray cans, without any retakes.

(Interview 13, recording 2014)

As the graffiti art form and practices are based to a large extent on specific techniques and methods of using the spray cans, artists find it helpful to watch how other colleagues produce their artworks. If they have larger walls, outdoors as well as indoors, artists can invite artist colleagues to come and paint together. The work of producing murals is often done as a collective activity between artists. Artists regularly get together to sketch and to talk about their work and how to improve techniques, and to try out new colors and characters. Sometimes a mural is planned as a collaborative piece from the beginning and it is decided beforehand which artist will do the letters, who will do the characters and who

will do the background. Also, when artists are doing individual murals, they still often help each other to finish a piece by suggesting how it could be improved or what final touches could be added by including this or that detail. This collaboration was observed during a mural production in Sweden:

I'm in the car, observing. It's raining heavily outside. The artists are a bit annoyed about the rain and seem worried. R has sketched some lines of a character on the wall, they discuss it. They use plastic gloves and talk about caps. They want to use "original caps". They have placed ladders against the wall. N has turned his jacket inside out because he doesn't want to get color stains on the outside. J steps out of the car, brings his face mask, leaves his sketch book in the car and says that he will improvise. He has prepared a sketch but he doesn't want to bring it outside in the rain.

They are handing out cans and shake them before they start to use them. Every time someone takes a new spray can and a new cap, they spray a little bit in the air. Later I was told that it's because when they change caps they may have been used for another can with another color, thus they release some of the new color in order to "clean the cap".

J walks up and down the ladder, he walks backwards in order to get a better overall look at the mural. They had planned beforehand where each of them would stand and how the mural would be composed. Their tags and characters float into each other. One hour has passed now. J told me that they were here earlier and prepared the wall with ground color. R takes a new spray can, changes the cap and spray a little in the air before he starts painting on the mural. S paints over parts of the mural with pink spray paint and then paints new lines with green spray paint. J seems finished with his part of the mural. He asks N "Do you want me to do something? Should I help you finish the background?"

(Observation 28, field notes 2015)

These field notes further illustrate how the artistic supplies, such as spray cans, sketches and ladders – as well as the weather conditions – affect the work of the artists. Many cans of spray paint are needed when doing a mural. According to an informant, approximately 100 spray cans are used when a mural of a "regular" size is to be produced. The cost of a spray can is on average 4 euros, and a normal mural artwork may cost 400 euros to produce. As an art collector noted: "It is when the graffiti is being sold that the artists make any incomes on their art. Before that, on the streets, they have only a lot of expenses" (Interview 3,

recording 2014)<sup>6</sup>. Well-known artists within the graffiti and street art subcultures are sometimes sponsored by the spray can companies. Getting a sponsor agreement makes a big difference for an artist who works with murals. The artists' duty in these sponsor agreements is usually to mention or show on pictures or on film the spray can brand that they are using, which is posted in social media or on the spray can companies' webpages. The sponsoring support of spray can companies also gives artists the possibility to inviting artist colleagues to travel to their city or country to paint with them, as they are able to offer their friends free cans.

Indoor studios and indoor practices have always been part of the artistic practices of graffiti and street artists, but they have not always been suitable for the use of spray cans. According to a manager of an art supply store, which specializes in graffiti products, spray can companies started to produce cans more apt for indoor use only a few years ago. The supply store owner told me: "These water based spray cans are much healthier to use indoors than the solvent based spray cans" (Interview 10, recording 2014). In addition to the development of non-toxic paint, the cans have also been improved in order to function for all kinds of technical and artistic needs: glossy paint, fluorescent colors, super thin lines, high pressure, low pressure, opaque paint, transparent paint, fast bind, pocket size, XL size, child size, and etc. The product development of the spray cans can partly be understood as being driven by the growing commercial art market for graffiti and street artists. For example, some spray cans have had to adjust to the material of canvas rather than to outdoor concrete or metal. However, at the same time as spray cans are being developed to be of indoor use, spray can brands are continuously improving their products to better assist the unsanctioned practices as well. Some of the spray cans are being developed and improved for conditions where artists need to work fast, such as in subway stations before guards discover them. The spray can thus continues to be a symbol for and associated with the illegal practices of unsanctioned graffiti and street art production.

The sections above have discussed the context of producing artworks with regards to practical and ideological constraints due to zero tolerance policies as well as the opportunities of the studios. In the next section, I will take a closer look at those who inhabit the spaces of the streets and the studios: the artists.

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<sup>6</sup> Indeed, in an interview in Jacobson (2000), Kimvall states that as graffiti has continuously been problematized and battled by Swedish authorities, the clean-up firms are the only ones who have been able to make money out of the production of the art form. In United Kingdom, too, the anti-graffiti industry is a multi-billion-pound business, according to Schacter (2008).



## **Artists**

Previous research has shown that artists are actively involved not only in practices of production, but also distribution and pricing (O'Neill 2008). In addition, artists should also be considered to be consumers (Preece et al. 2016). Graffiti and street artists produce unsanctioned public art that is not for sale (and sometimes do sanctioned and commissioned public art that they are not paid for), and are consuming as much as producing this art (Visconti et al. 2010). In the process of exchanging graffiti and street art, this aspect pinpoints some of the tensions of transforming artworks into market products. Conflicting practices emerge when artists are being paid for their art. The artists must deal with the two different roles of being graffiti and street artists (subcultural consumers) and the role of being paid artists (producers), which some of them find inconvenient and odd. Previously, the artists have produced art in the streets that is free for everyone to experience without buying, created as a radical statement *against* commercialization and private ownership (Schacter 2008). But the involvement with formal sales contracts, commissioners' requirements and monetary exchanges forces some artists to engage with work conditions that were previously foreign to them. They must negotiate and calculate their work, not only as consumers within the subcultural community, but also as producers and entrepreneurs. Moreover, they need to adapt to or at least accept another institutional form of art criticism (Stewart 1988).

In previous literature discussing artists' careers, trajectories through the art world, and their eventual legitimization as professional artists, the first step in these careers is often defined as the graduation from art school (Joy and Sherry 2003, Preece and Bida 2017, Rodner and Thompson 2013). A conventional view is that graffiti artists do not have any formal art schooling, but in fact, today many of them also apply and go to art school (Wells 2016). Indeed, Preece (2014: 347) argues, "each artist's trajectory exhibits a different story". Nevertheless, most of them have spent several years developing their skills by practicing on their own as well as learning from older peers (Kimvall 2014). According to Bengtson (2014) and Wells (2015), this street credibility is what legitimizes these artists' commercial careers. An artist told me how he learnt graffiti by watching, for several years, the older graffiti writers working: "You could sit all day and just watch and learn from the older writers. You know, I was absurdly interested in how they painted these super thin and straight lines" (Interview 12, recording 2014). The importance of the art school as a legitimizing and authenticating factor in an artist's career is not so much due to the technical skills they learn, but the social capital they attain through their art school degree (Preece 2014, Wells 2015). But although informal schooling in the streets is also important for artists' social status and street credibility (Bengtson 2014), it is particularly important for the development of technical skills. When the artists get commissions for which they are paid, their non-commissioned productions have prepared them for the professional jobs.

The unsanctioned works must hence be understood as part of their professional practices, as much as the sanctioned commissions. The artists whose work is exhibited for the first time in galleries are perhaps rookies when it comes to exhibiting their artworks in a gallery setting, but they are usually already well known elsewhere, in their own communities. Many graffiti and street artists began doing graffiti in the streets in their teenage years or even earlier. This informal and non-institutional schooling may last for about ten years before many of them start exhibiting in galleries.

Adapting to new formats brings about new artistic practices, however. Just because an artist has 30 years of experience of producing tags and pieces on trains, does not necessarily imply that these skills can be adapted to canvas without struggles. It is not always possible to paint the sharp lines one gets while painting outdoors when maneuvering the spray can on a smaller canvas. There are different caps that adjust how thin and sharp the color line can get, but there is still a minimum thinness and sharpness that it is possible to make. Although many artists would not use stencils on wall pieces, which is considered to be against the traditional “rules” of graffiti, some artists do use stencils on canvas to get the sharp contrasts, lines and patterns that they intend. An artist showed me how he had used stencils in order to produce sharp lines of spray paint as well as tiny, circular dots on a canvas, which would not have been possible without these studio tools (Interview 2, field notes 2014). Both literature (Stewart 1988) and informants claim, however, that regarding illegal graffiti, the quality of a piece is relative to its place: the more extraordinary or dangerous the place of the creation, the less it needs to be created with technical perfection. For studio produced artworks, then, which are created in a safe place, there should be a greater emphasis on the execution of style and motif, which is confirmed by an informant who stresses the specific skills graffiti artists get from practicing in studios.

According to a French gallery director, and one of the early actors in the Parisian street art market scene, the specific quality of the artists they represent is their ability to produce artworks that are equally interesting in studio *and* in the streets. In my interview with this gallery director, she claimed:

We consider them as the most important artists of the art field now, because they are *also* street artists. In French we say “*valuer ajotée*”, because this is a more complex perspective on the art. The outdoor work influences the indoor work and vice versa. The indoor work influences the outdoor. We consider them as the real contemporary artists of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

(Interview 21, recording 2015)

A Swedish gallery owner did not think it mattered to the buyers whether the artists still maintained their “careers” as street artists, as she wanted to emphasize that it

was indeed not street artworks that were for sale in her gallery. But later she argued that the unsanctioned street art practices did matter for the artists' commercial careers, because the artists then maintained progress in their artistic development. Schacter (2008) argues that it is the extreme conditions of producing unsanctioned street art that lead to the artists' aesthetic innovation and development. The French gallery director claimed, however, that street artists who aspire to have a commercial career sometimes approach the gallery with one of their canvases, and they say: "I used to work in the streets for 20 years, now I do my first painting, do you want to buy it?". She was frustrated by these situations:

When you are in front of their paintings, you're just "yeah, this is a graffiti painting. This is shit, start to work". Because, this is a new career, this is completely different. That is why we want to focus on these guys who are in the studio and work for many years.

(Interview 21, recording 2015)

A gallery assistant at another French gallery told me that they work with two hundred artists on outdoor projects, but that the gallery director is very selective when it comes to exhibiting artists inside the gallery: "Not every artist can make the transition between the walls and the canvases, it is not the same work, it is quite different" (Interview 20, field notes 2015).

Some of the artists point out the new commercial conditions as a positive boost for the artistic creativity. This relates to the discussion in Lombard (2013), in which she argues that the commercial jobs imply creative opportunities rather than the exploitation of creativity. During a visit to an art gallery in Paris, I got to talk to an artist who was there to discuss an upcoming exhibition with the gallery staff. I asked him if he was doing street art in public space as well. He told me that he did both, but that obviously he could not sell a public wall. The main reason for him starting to do studio work, however, was because he could not do all that he wanted outdoors. For example, colors behave very differently on a canvas, he told me. He gave me an example by pointing at one of the gallery walls. The artist liked to drip spray paint in a certain way. When he did it on canvas the colors dripped in just the way he wanted them to, but on the rough surfaces of the outside walls, the colors dripped haphazardly:

But I get inspiration from both sides, from both the studio and the outdoor practice. I like to research and experiment with techniques and tools and what I learn from painting outside might be possible to translate to canvas and vice versa.

(Conversation 13, field notes 2015)

In line with this artist's motivation, the experts at Artprice (2013) also observe that graffiti and street artists professionalize their art partly because they want to move to a more durable medium. The canvas is not only a source of income, but is thus claimed to be a possibility for these artists to develop and experiment with technique. As the artist at the French gallery stressed, the large size of walls and the textures of the outdoor surfaces are different from the techniques and motifs of the smaller canvas format. In addition, another artist thought that after several years of doing graffiti outdoors across the world and "in every subway system there is" (Interview 2, field notes 2014), the only possible direction for new artistic challenges might be to move indoors and try the new formats that the studio offers. Most of the artists whom I have interviewed, however, prefer to work in total freedom and with their professional judgment to decide what artwork would be suitable for the commissioner. Some artists even refuse to accept mural commissions, if their artistic freedom is not absolute. "If a company commissions something specific for the mural, if they require a certain style, for example, then I won't do it. It's my way or no way, haha" (Interview 26, recording 2015).

For some artists who are still doing unsanctioned graffiti, it is necessary to make a distinction between the subcultural graffiti alias and the professional artist alias. A US artist told me: "Before I was an artist, I was a writer, a so called graffiti writer" (Interview 11, recording 2014). At the same time, it seems inevitable to connect their subcultural aliases with their commercial work. Although the artists are not getting paid for their non-commissioned works, these are part of the valuation for the commissioned jobs that they eventually get. As will be further discussed in the chapters on classifications and valuations, many artists refer to the unsanctioned walls as their marketing and branding strategies that lead to them getting commissioned and paid work.

This section has discussed graffiti and street artists and their artistic practices. In the next section, I will discuss the main mediators of exchange in the graffiti and street art markets: the galleries and the auction houses.

### ***Mediators***

Art market mediators consist of humans and objects that through various practices aim to assist in exchanges of artworks between artists and buyers (Hanspal 2012). Mediators are not only the actors in the concrete sales situations, however. Magazines, news media, social media and publishers who produce and distribute information and knowledge about graffiti and street art and these art markets are also involved in mediating the transformation of the artworks into market products. In addition, graffiti jams and street art festivals also mediate knowledge about and exposure of artists to an interested and potentially buying audience.

Certain mediators in the graffiti and street art markets, which will be a main focus in this thesis, are the galleries and auction houses. Art markets are usually discussed in terms of primary markets – for example, galleries, agents/dealers, where artworks are supposedly sold for the first time – and secondary markets – for example, auction houses, where artworks are supposedly sold for the second time and beyond (Kottász and Bennett 2014). Except for galleries, common sales places for primary graffiti and street art market exchanges are also cafés, bars and restaurants. The distinction between primary market mediators and secondary market mediators, however, is not always clear-cut (Joy and Sherry 2003, MacNeill and Wilson-Anastasios 2014). Despite claims in previous literature (Velthuis 2011), the sales at auction houses are not always *secondary* sales. In fact, they are sometimes the primary sale of the artwork, handed in by galleries or the artists themselves. Stories about these kinds of primary exchanges in “secondary” art markets have repeatedly occurred in the field material. In what follows, I will use the term mediator when referring to the actors who participate in and/or assist in the exchange with regard to the relationship between artists and buyer, such as galleries and auction houses. Instead of using the term sellers, I will simply refer to them as artists, as they are the producers of the artworks (Preece et al. 2016). Moreover, in graffiti and street art markets, further mediators are also the festival organizers, who mediate the production of artworks between the artists and the buying organization, usually the municipality.

Kottász and Bennett (2014) argue that, if possible, it is important for artists to select mediators carefully. According to Preece et al. (2016) and Velthuis (2005), art dealers, being experts and functioning as gatekeepers, are the single most important indicators of trust in visual art markets. In line with these observations, experts at Artprice (2014) argue that street artists who collaborate with galleries gain access to an “efficient form of legitimacy in the eyes of market participants”. Moreover, as is claimed previously with regard to multiple agencies in consumption situations (Cochoy 2008), material and spatial mediators that facilitate the exchange of the artworks in galleries obviously involve the physical environment of the gallery space itself (Joy 1998): walls and spotlights that help to display the artworks, as well as the presence of a price list.

The choice of mediator will very much depend on the type of primary market in which the mediator is involved. Velthuis (2005) distinguishes between two types of galleries, the traditional and the avant-garde circuit. This division corresponds to Mears’ (2011, also drawing on Zelizer (2004) and Bourdieu (1993)) distinction between “editorial” and “commercial” market spheres in another aesthetic job market, the modeling and fashion industry. The graffiti and street art market is described by Artprice (2017) as “vibrant and creative, non-elitist and attractive to the mass-media”, which seemingly corresponds to the commercial (Mears 2011) or traditional (Velthuis 2005) market spheres. According to Velthuis, what makes the difference between the gallery circuits is not only the type of artworks that are

exhibited, or the institutional recognition within the art world, but the ways business is carried out. Within the traditional gallery circuit, actions that aim to facilitate sales, profit and commodification are not as stigmatized as in the avant-garde circuit. In fact, according to Velthuis (2005), dealers within the traditional circuit claim that there is a dignity in selling artworks that should be appreciated only for its decorative value and that these galleries serve a moral purpose because they offer artworks to a broad range of prices and thus for a broad range of buyers.

Sometimes a distinction can be made between the roles of art agent and art dealer (Kottász and Bennett 2014, Velthuis 2005) to specify whether the mediator is mainly acting as a business person or as an art curator. This distinction corresponds to the circuits of avant-garde and traditional galleries (Velthuis 2005). However, conceiving of the avant-garde and traditional gallery circuits as two distinct fields of practices that underlie markets risks the drawback of not detecting the practices that take place between the fields (Czarniawska 2004), which thus blurs and dissolves the boundaries that are assumed to embrace each circuit respectively (Mears 2011). It happens that a mediator may assume all three of the roles of art curator, dealer and agent when working with an artist. This is often the case for smaller galleries with no or few employees.

The last key actor in the graffiti and street art markets that will be discussed is the buyers and consumers of graffiti and street artworks.

### **Buyers**

“It’s the market that disagrees with it staying on the streets. The art-buying public wants to own it” (Williams, interviewed in Meir 2011). Gareth Williams, who is responsible for the urban art sales at the auction house Bonhams, claims in this interview that art collectors are not satisfied with admiring street art in public streets. Instead, they want to buy it and have it in their homes. The quote by Williams is interesting in relation to the observation that some consumption modes are undergoing a paradigm shift from ownership to access (Giesler and Humphreys 2007, Bardhi and Eckhardt 2012). According to this observation, consumers increasingly prefer to pay to access things temporarily instead of buying and owning them (Bardhi and Eckhardt 2012).

The question of buying and owning versus consuming and accessing things is relevant when it comes to public artworks such as graffiti and street art. Graffiti and street artworks are not traditionally owned, but temporarily accessed. Although street art consumption may involve both access and ownership, when it comes to the exchangeability of graffiti and street art, it is mainly the status of ownership that is foregrounded. Someone owns the street artwork that others may access, and ownership is required for exchangeability. In studying

exchangification, it is thus the possibility of owning the artwork that is of interest regardless of the succeeding consumption mode of that artwork. Even if the buying of an artwork has the purpose of putting it on public display, which implies that consumers will have access to the artwork, it is the practices that enable the initial owning that are of interest for this study. Notably, in the exchangification concept, buying and owning are not attributes of private consumers only, but of all varieties of buyers: from private persons to large organizations. Moreover, in line with ideas about different forms of capital – symbolic, economic, cultural (Bourdieu 1984) – the different desires to buy art are perceived by gallery owners as either the “right” or the “wrong” reasons to buy art (Velthuis 2005). The right reason is a collector who buys for the love of art or who buys with an intellectual idea about the artwork. The wrong reason, according to this view, is a collector who buys for the potential investment, for the status generated by the purchase, or for decorative purposes.

Many gallery owners and artists I have talked to claimed that graffiti and street art buyers constitute a diverse group with various interests in the art form. However, the market is described by Artprice (2010, 2018) as “a younger market” than other contemporary art markets, because the buyers are perceived as younger than “traditional” art collectors. At the same time, they agree with informants from my fieldwork that there is a diversity among the buyers: “Street art is a strong trend involving a variety of collector profiles... some modest, other wealthy” (Artprice.com 2017 b or a?). Generalizing from the field material, however, it is possible to distinguish groups among the various buyers and consumers of graffiti and street art. Drawing further on previous categorizations of art and cultural consumers (Bengtson 2014, Chen 2009, Dickens 2010, Holbrook 1999, Karpik 2010, Lombard 2013, Mundel et al. 2007, Preece et al. 2016, Wells 2015), five groups of potential buyers have been identified.

The first group is the younger members within the graffiti and street art communities. This group consumes graffiti and street artists’ commercial artworks mainly by following them on social media such as Instagram, which is a generally increasing consumer trend among contemporary artists and their followers or fans (Kottász and Bennett 2014). Some of these fans also buy cheaper artworks or merchandise, but they are primarily interested in these artists because of their unsanctioned graffiti and street art production. This group is often described as consumers who do not know how art markets work; they are not familiar with bidding practices at art auctions or how to approach artworks at galleries. To the artists and mediators, however, the fans are considered important as potential buyers. Hence, for the exchangification of street art, these non-buyers (or not-yet-buyers) are taken into account. A French gallery owner told me that they wanted to offer “cheap artworks for the fans, for people who don’t have the money to buy the originals” (Interview 21, recording 2015). Kottász and Bennett (2014, referring to Wires (2011)), believe that online media and website sales have

not challenged the traditional galleries' sales of original artworks, but have "simply opened up a new lower-end market to buyers who are not serious collectors and to artists who are at best semi-professional" (Kottász and Bennett 2014:366).

A second group of potential buyers resembles the teenage fans but are usually older. This group is often referred to as the "typical" buyers by artists and gallery owners. These consumers are attracted to the commercial artworks partly because they grew up when the subculture was emerging, and now they have enough income to spend on purchasing art (Wells 2016). Previous literature sometimes refers to this consumer typology as millennials, or Generation Y, born between 1977 and 1994 (Mundel et al. 2017). A Swedish gallery owner thought that her generation particularly appreciates the aesthetics and the cultural background of graffiti: "Now when we all work, we also have money to buy artworks" (Interview 4, recording 2014). Indeed, several gallery owners in my fieldwork grew up with the graffiti and street art culture. Some of them are street artists and former graffiti writers themselves. Another Swedish gallery owner agreed:

The "regular" art market will have a hard time surviving when graffiti and street art comes booming like it does now. My generation, 40 something, is really interested in this art form and they want it hanging on their walls in one way or another.

(Interview 28, recording 2015)

Moreover, to these potential buyers, the prices of graffiti and street artworks are still reasonably cheap compared to other contemporary artworks.

A third group of potential buyers consists of more experienced art collectors, both private persons and companies, who are fascinated by this "new" product category in the art market. These buyers want to include mobile graffiti and street artworks in their more traditional art collections or they commission artists to do murals in their homes and company offices. They can afford to buy the more expensive artworks and they also estimate the potential return on monetary investment in these artworks and artists. A Swedish gallery owner claimed:

We want to attract the collectors too, the 500 000 SEK clients, you know, who think it's reasonable to pay that much for an artwork. And they think this [graffiti and street art] is cool, exciting and unique. They know so little about it. It's not like they go down the subways to view the latest pieces of street art and graffiti.

(Interview 6, recording 2014)

A fourth group of potential buyers is represented by public organizations, such as the municipalities, who contract graffiti and street artists to produce murals in the city as public commissioned artworks. The director of the Swedish Arts Council



claims, however, that although public sector agencies do have an interest in street art, the art form is not easy to commission: “Street art is often spontaneously created instantly in public space – hence it does not always fit the more planned processes” (Malm, interviewed in Anthony 2017, *my translation*).

Further, there is a fifth potential buyer group, which could be defined as a group of occasional buyers. Their (subcultural) consumption is not as high as the fans’ and the typical, middle-aged buyers’, because they are not as knowledgeable about or interested in graffiti and street art. Further, their spending is not as high as art collectors’ and public commissioners’ as they are not big spenders on fine art in general. Without further analysis, one could state that this group roughly constitutes “the rest” of the potential graffiti and street art buyers.

The wide spectrum of graffiti and street art buyers is partly what makes exchangeification complex. There is a need to attract both ends of a continuum: the (young) members of the subculture with low purchasing power and less experience of art markets, as well as the established collectors and public funders with high purchasing power but less knowledge of the art form. Mapping the buyers of graffiti and street art was not the aim of the fieldwork, however. The categorization into five potential buyer groups should thus not be understood as fixed and exhaustive, but it is indicative of the varied range of artworks that are exchangeified. It is therefore relevant for the practices of exchangeification that will be discussed further. Moreover, drawing on Harrison and Kjellberg (2010), the segmentation of buyers into “markets in the making” is a constructive practice, which shapes the market and the buyer segments in it, as much as it is a descriptive practice, which aims to describe already existing segments. Thus, it is relevant to perceive the identified categorization of graffiti and street art buyers as being constructed through the efforts of the artists and mediators in order to create a graffiti and street art market.

### ***Getting ready for exchangeification***

This chapter has provided a brief presentation of the key actors that engage in the graffiti and street art markets. A more detailed account of the interactions between these actors in the exchangeification process will be given in the following chapters. As this chapter has demonstrated, the exchangeification of mobiles and murals involves specific conditions for the production of artworks, which constitute many of the objectification practices. These will be discussed in the next chapter.

## 6 Objectification

The exchangification process consists of three main practices: 1) objectification, 2) classification and 3) valuation. In this chapter, the objectification of mobiles and murals are discussed, which means that the artworks become possible to own and thus transferable between artists and buyers. At a first glance – although we will discuss in the next chapters how the classification and valuation of street art is filled with tension as well – objectification appears to strike at the core of the tensions in the exchangification of street art. The traditionally ephemeral and site-specific artworks are here produced and materialized in a way that enables ownership, and that allows for the transfer of ownership. The quote below by an art specialist at a Swedish auction house illustrates this difficulty in practice:

Graffiti is about... a spatial expression in public space, which belongs to everyone. And to move graffiti into an auction house to sell it, to move the ownership... I think what is cool with graffiti art is that it is *non*-owned. But when it comes to us, to the auction houses, it is all about owning. How do you do it? How do you sell street art?

(Interview 27, recording 2015)

Graffiti and street art share similar characteristics with other contemporary art forms that are also ephemeral and situated in time and space. Significant for this discussion is previous literature on the objectification of contemporary art, describing the acquisition of modernist and conceptual artworks by the Museum of Modern Art in New York (Dominguez Rubio and Silva 2013). The acquisition was difficult to achieve given the ephemeral and site-specific media that characterized these artworks, which included installations, video art, performance and computer art. Indeed, the characteristics of these art forms dictate that they cannot, or should not, be owned and individually possessed (Belk 2014, Joy and Sherry 2003).

Objectification thus refers to how artworks are made ownable and transferable between owners (Callon et al. 2002). This chapter is structured around the three sub-practices of 1) domesticating, 2) art-tributing, and 3) authorizing, which constitute the objectification of graffiti and street artworks. The chapter will discuss the circumstances and devices that are used to produce ownable murals and mobiles. Domesticating entails that artworks are made permanently suitable for privately and publicly owned environments. Art-tributing emphasizes that the production pays tribute to the graffiti and street art subcultures and uses artifacts from public space. Authorizing means that actors with an authoritative mandate formally approve the ownable features and the transferability of ownership of an artwork. To what extent domesticating, art-tributing and authorizing take place

during the process of exchangification may differ and depends on the circumstances – for example, what type of artwork, what type of artist, what type of buyer or what type of mediator.

At the end of the chapter, there is a summary of the objectification, in which I will discuss the relationship between domesticating, art-tributing and authorizing and how issues of legitimacy and authenticity come to matter, issues which were discussed in chapter two as central aspects of the commodification of art. This chapter on objectification, as well as the following chapters on classification and valuation, will address how the questions of legitimacy and authenticity are at play in the exchangification process of street art. Throughout the process, there is, on the one hand, a striving for legitimacy in order to be able to sell graffiti and street art as contemporary fine art, but also a striving for authenticity in order to maintain the artworks' belonging to the subcultural art form. In chapter nine, the issues of legitimacy and authenticity in the exchangification process will be discussed more elaborately.

## **Domesticating**

To make graffiti and street artworks – traditionally ephemeral, unsanctioned and site-specific – ownable, involves efforts to make the artworks' materiality permanent. Domesticating street artworks means that they are assigned with qualities that adapt the artworks (or parts of the artwork) to stay permanently in private households or public areas. I borrow the notion of domesticating from previous research on graffiti and street art (Jacobson 1996, Kimvall 2014, Merrill 2015) to describe these qualities. In this existing literature, domestication denotes a general phenomenon of assimilating illegal graffiti into art-institutional structures, such as by encouraging graffiti writers to work professionally as graffiti artists. Whereas domestication has previously been understood as an approach that rejects illegal graffiti but encourages the legal initiatives (particularly in Jacobson 1996 and Kimvall 2014), domesticating in this study is understood as more pragmatic, in line with the pragmatic approach to the commodification of art (Dekker 2015, Velthuis 2005). Here I will use the term domesticating in a market-oriented definition to describe the objectification of materializing graffiti and street artworks to fit private and public environments. This means that the artworks are produced to stay somewhere permanently and that they are produced according to the requests of the buyer, which I will discuss below. Domesticating further entails that mobiles and murals should be perceived as legitimate artworks.

To produce artworks that are created for or adjusted for permanent exposure, the domesticating qualities are often the result of commissions from the owner-to-be. Commissions are made both for mobile and mural artworks, and both for private and public ownership. Commissioning mainly regards the exchangification of mural artworks, however, as their site-specific production

involves a commission before they can be produced. As previously mentioned, a street art festival is one situation where artists are commissioned by public organizations to create murals. In the last few years, graffiti and street art festivals and public street art events with commissioned artists have increasingly been organized in Swedish cities, such as Northern Light at Ljusterö in 2014, Artscape in Malmö in 2014 and in Gothenburg in 2016, No Limit in Borås in 2014, 2015 and 2017, and Örebro Street Art Festival in Örebro in 2016.

In an interview with two festival organizers, I was told about the process of commissioning artworks, which starts by selecting artists and selecting “nice” walls of buildings on which to produce murals. When I asked how they decide whether a wall is nice or not, they answered that it depends on the surface, the height and the width. The curator of the festival told me about a situation from a previous year:

Some want windows and some don't want windows, some want flat surfaces /.../ these guys, they did all this with markers, so they couldn't have a rough wall, like this one that has that texture to it. They have to have a completely flat wall. So that took us some time to go and find a wall that is like that.

(Interview 22, recording 2015)

During the festival, I talked to one of the participating artists. His work demanded a lot of preparations on the ground, hence he had asked for a wall that was at street level because he did not want to have to run up and down a ladder. Moreover, it was important to him that the surface was flat. Brick walls did not work for his artwork, which was composed of very sharp and detailed shapes made by stencils.

The selection of walls also depends on location. As public guided tours were organized during the festival, the walls should preferably be located within a suitable walking distance from each other. An organizer of another Swedish street art festival explained how they walked around the city to scout out suitable potential walls. The organizer referred to this scouting as “wall safari”. After the selection of artists and potential walls, the organizers approached the building owners to get their approval and then the city planning office to apply for building permits. For commissions in public space, such as these street art festivals, the murals require official building permits in order to be produced. The permits allow the murals to stay permanently on the public walls for as long as the permission lasts, usually for a year or more. In addition, the artists usually sign contracts on these commissions. Later in this chapter, under the heading of “Authorizing”, I will discuss these approvals, permits and contracts in more detail.

In the spring of 2015, I observed a different kind of street art event. It was an independent graffiti jam, which was held in a private industrial area outside the city. Official building permits were thus not required and the artists were invited to participate voluntarily. Hence, they were not commissioned to produce murals for a fee (although the artists were partly sponsored by a spray can brand). The selection and preferences for the walls, however, were equally as important as they were for the public street art festivals in the cities. I asked one of the artists at the jam about the arrangements for the mural that she had painted. She told me that she had been assigned a wall that corresponded to her request: a high wall. She was used to produce works on lower, wider walls, which is usually the format of legal walls. With this high wall, she could challenge herself and develop her skills as she had to paint according to different measurements than she was used to.

Training on techniques could thus be equated to product development, as was discussed in the previous chapter. The more works the artists produce, the more knowledge they develop on aspects such as what colors work well on specific surfaces and what motifs look good with specific measurements (Schacter 2008). Most artists that I met during my fieldwork think that the artworks that they have produced, both commissioned and non-commissioned, are at the same time an outcome of training and a finished work. Each mural is approached as an opportunity to train on techniques and to execute an idea of a work. Unsanctioned and non-commissioned murals are as much included in the artists' "portfolio" as the commissioned artworks that become exchanged.

It is not only artists, walls and permits that are involved in these paid mural commissions. As shown in Figure 3 (p.81), the devices that enable the very production are also part of the murals: sky lifts, ladders, spray cans, airbrushes, and paint rollers, for example. Professional mural artists master these devices. A gallery owner who was involved with one of these city street art festivals got upset when he heard that the city was about to commission amateur artists:

I almost got a heart attack. Because I know that there are only ten, perhaps twenty [artists] in Sweden, who can produce these kinds of large murals. It's not something you smash up in a second. It requires huge preparation, huge knowledge, and an energy that is absolutely sick.

(Interview 28, recording 2015)



*Figure 3. Artist and spray cans in a sky lift during a mural production, photo taken during fieldwork 2015*

The domesticating of commissioned private indoor murals does not require building permits as is required for murals in public space, but experience and skills are equally important. Another Swedish gallery owner whom I interviewed also represents artists who are commissioned to do private murals. The buyers often, at least initially, request to see sketches of the planned artworks beforehand. For these productions, there are usually also directives on the size of the mural, and sometimes there are suggestions on colors and types of motif as well. The Swedish gallery owner, however, compared these commissions to any specialized craft or service that is requested by private persons or by companies. The gallery owner argued that it is the specialist who best knows the work, as the experience is theirs. In the case of graffiti artists, the specialist experience might constitute of their years of unsanctioned street art production. As the gallery owner explained:

These people have painted more than five thousand trains in their lives. There is no one in the world who would know better what colors to use and how to paint on certain surfaces.

(Interview 1, recording 2014)

The buyers can of course select different artists with different artistic styles, however. The gallery owner continued:

We provide a catalogue with different artists and the buyers can see their previous works in a portfolio. They can choose what style they want, at various prices. It's like getting a very expensive wallpaper.

(Interview 1, recording 2014)

The organization GraffitiFrämjandet (an association promoting and supporting graffiti and street artists) provides a similar service (GraffitiFrämjandet 2019). Affiliated artists get their own page on GraffitiFrämjandet's website, where they can upload examples of previous works. By enabling the artists to be contacted through GraffitiFrämjandet, the organization makes sure that the artists are also paid according to standardized and fair hourly rates. These catalogues and portfolios, which show both artists and prices, thus signal to potential buyers that the artworks will be domesticated to fit their requirements.

Starting to work with artworks in mobile formats offers other possibilities than mural commissions. As mentioned in the previous chapter on studios, street artworks, such as stencils and posters, are usually prepared in indoor studios before they are placed in public spaces as unsanctioned artworks. Hence, many street artworks (in contrast to graffiti) are already mobile. Moreover, the mobile artwork resembles more the format of conventional, legitimate art products that collectors are used to owning. Nevertheless, the ownability of mobiles is sometimes made explicit to potential buyers. During an observation of a gallery exhibition, I found a text on a wall that described the artist and the artworks. The text further described the convenient procedures for buying the artworks. According to the field notes below, I noticed:

On some of the walls in the exhibition room, there were printed texts on A4 paper where one could read about the artist. In these texts there was also info on how the sale, payment, and delivering of the artworks were carried out. That part of the text almost took up as much space as the description of the artist. It was kind of arguing why people should buy.

(Observation 20, field notes 2015)

In an interview, an art expert and auction appraiser pointed to the importance of making artworks permanent and physically movable: "If you're going to sell it, it must be something that you can pack" (Interview 35, recording 2018). Permanent and movable artworks enable transfer between owners. Domesticating thus also occurs through framing mobile artworks or packing them in cardboard wrapping if they are going to be shipped. The domesticating makes the artworks convenient for buyers to own and to bring to their homes. In particular, framing the artwork

seems important to both mediators and buyers. A Swedish gallery owner explained to me the day before an opening:

We had to go to IKEA yesterday and buy frames. [The artist] simply arrived with the paintings unframed. We spent three hours just to decide: “black frame or white frame, should we have glass on the inside, real glass or plastic?”. The artworks must be framed. It looks unprofessional otherwise. Even if we buy cheap frames from IKEA.  
(Interview 6, recording 2014)

The mobile artworks are further made permanent by adjusting them to material conditions that are appropriate for private ownership. This means the use of durable materials and the right measurements for the paintings in the production. The adjustment to smaller measurements, however, appears to be more obvious to some of the mediators than to the artists. Several gallery owners have told me about artists who want to exhibit large canvases – larger than what the gallery owners think is appropriate for the potential buyers. A Swedish gallery owner conceded that the big canvases were indeed cool, but unfortunately difficult to sell:

When I started the gallery, the artists often brought very big pieces that could almost cover an entire wall. Framing that work is a cost, and transportation too, and buyers should actually be able to have it on their walls as well. I have to guide these artists a little bit.  
(Interview 4, recording 2014)

The gallery owner further claimed, however, that it is usually important to exhibit artworks of various sizes in order to appeal to people’s various motives for purchasing, whether it is a matter of price or space. During an exhibition at another Swedish gallery, I heard one of the owners talking to a couple – potential buyers – about a specific canvas. They were not discussing the price, but the couple were deliberated whether the painting would fit in their apartment. The gallery owner reasoned that as a collector, one would need to re-organize the hanging of the collection sometimes.

A French gallery director also had experiences with graffiti and street artists who were new as commercial artists. They had no knowledge, according to the gallery director, about the material conditions that were important for the artworks for sale in the gallery. The director told me about one artist who was about to have his first exhibition:

For the very first exhibition he brought a drawing. It was 175 cm and 150 cm and it was on a very fragile paper, and he had spent maybe 400 hours on that piece. And we were just “what could we



do with that?! How much do we need to sell this for?! The frame will cost, like, 500 euro!” and he said “... oh, sorry, I will think next time...” But, we sold it and the collector loved it.

(Interview 21, recording 2015)

Indeed, some collectors appreciate the bigger canvases, although they realize their domesticating limitations. A Swedish collector told me that if he buys artworks by artists with graffiti background, he definitely thinks they look better the bigger they are: “I think the best graffiti canvases are the ones that are so big that it kicks. But you can’t have them at home, not I at least” (Interview 8, recording 2014). According to most informants, the artworks usually become smaller in size when graffiti is translated to mobile forms. A US artist who was one of the graffiti writers in New York in the 1970s told me, during his exhibition in Sweden, how he had started to produce the smaller canvases:

In the early 80s, to go from big trains to three meters, seemed very small. From 90 feet. So that was difficult. And then for the 90s we kept going smaller and smaller. Upstairs is a book (with photos of his unsanctioned work, *author’s note*), with a whole train of 90 feet. So I duplicate it on that canvas up there (talks about a painting that hangs in another expo room, *author’s note*). And I try to make it small, but it still looks like the train. I do it with spray paint and markers. I just imagine it smaller. You know, it took years to do it, but now, it works. And people can see what it’s like to paint a train in New York.

(Interview 31, recording 2015)

The exchanged artworks were thus reproduced in smaller scales in order for potential buyers to acquire permanent versions of the unsanctioned works for their collections. For this artist, however, it was important to preserve the status of these artworks as authentic. Hence, the artist had brought to the exhibition a book with photos of his unsanctioned graffiti from the 1980s, which could be shown next to the exchanged artworks.

The artist Bates showed me a similar way of producing a permanent mobile from a site-specific artwork. Again, I revisit the mobile screen print by him that was presented in the introduction (Figure 2). At the gallery where he exhibited, he had spray painted his tag in black colors on a white wall. He made a joke about the phenomenon of removing street art from its site, and noted that the only way to sell this site-specific mural was to remove the wall. Instead, the gallery owners had taken a photo of the tag and reproduced it as nine prints for sale at the gallery. Thus, the mobile artworks to some extent were a reproduction of a performance (Dominguez Rubio and Silva 2013). The gallery was able to produce nine mobile artworks of the site-specific wall piece that could not be exchanged. The

domesticating often aims to imitate conventional art collecting (Bengtson 2014, Dickens 2010). For example, screen prints, which are a common mobile format for exchangified street art, are numbered according to standards when selling contemporary art prints (Joy and Sherry 2003). This contributes to making sure that the prints are taken seriously as collectable and precious commodities (Dickens 2010). The domesticating of graffiti and street art thus contributes to legitimize the artworks so that they fit into conventional fine art markets.

Coming back to the importance of studios, discussed in the previous chapter, at a Parisian gallery where a US artist was about to exhibit, the gallery had at this point also turned into a studio. Thus, the get-togethers for graffiti production and sketching discussed in chapter five are continued in the indoor studios for discussions of mobile works as well, which is a format that is new to many of the experienced mural artists. During my visit, I observed the exhibiting US artist and his French assistant while they were finishing the artworks prior to the exhibition. They had worked out techniques for translating the artist's usual large murals to mobile canvases. The assistant explained to me how these particular canvases were being produced. Initially, the creation involved sketching ideas of characters to draw onto the canvas. Characters such as animals, cartoons or people are common in graffiti pieces. The characters are sometimes associated with the specific artist and thus adding them to a canvas becomes a means to mark the artwork with the artist's alias instead of marking it with the tag. The characters were drawn on a transparent vellum paper, which was carefully placed in the painting's composition. With a certain technique, they were then transferred onto the canvas.

Prior to a gallery opening in Sweden with a Latin American artist, I was observing when the artist finished some of the last artworks in the gallery:

When I arrived at the gallery, [the artist] was sketching on a few stretched-out canvases, pretty small and square-shaped. According to [the gallery owner], these canvases were in fact prints, printed in some kind of white-shaded relief. The artist will color them by hand, hence they are both printed but they will also each get an original painting added. They were discussing how many remained to be colored.

(Observation 16, field notes 2015)

These artworks aimed to signal authenticity and originality even though they were produced in an edition of similar prints.

Temporary studio arrangements like these are common in galleries – particularly if the exhibiting artists have travelled from other cities and countries. The canvases are usually rolled up and shipped to the gallery, where they are finished

by the artist on site. This makes the transportation costs much cheaper than if the artworks are shipped in their final condition, all stretched out and framed. Prints are usually finished when they arrive at the gallery, except for the frame. A benefit of producing artworks in printed media such as screen prints is that shipping is cheaper. People all over the world can easily purchase them.

When street art becomes a commodity, it becomes extremely international. People know it's a globalized art form. If you have a print that is this convenient to put in a cylinder tube, well, you do that and you send it to Singapore, or France.”

(Interview 35, recording 2018)



*Figure 4. Photographs and postcards for sale at a gallery opening, photo taken during fieldwork 2015*

The production of mobiles mainly involves canvases, prints and other media, aiming to make each artwork a unique piece, but there are also mobiles that more resemble what some informants call “merchandise”. Products such as stickers, postcards, caps and t-shirts are common merchandise. In fact, photo or print copies of artworks that lack unique features, such as those shown in Figure 4 (p.86), may be categorized as merchandise as well.

With perfect copies of artworks, however, the feeling of authenticity and the authority of the original artworks may be lost (Baudrillard 1972/1981, Belk 2014, Benjamin 1936/1968). But, although these art objects are distinguished from the unique artworks, they yet provide the possibility of tangible ownership, which the unsanctioned street art lacks. Tangible ownership of artworks may generate a greater sense of connection to the artists (Chen 2009). The consumption of merchandise also accounts for other ephemeral art forms, such as theater plays or concerts. To purchase a permanent artifact becomes a way of storing the memory of the experience (Larsen 2014). The production of street art merchandise is similar, but also relates to the ambition of offering affordable items in the diversified range of exchangeable graffiti and street artworks, as will be discussed further in chapter seven on valuations.

As these examples of domesticating of mobiles illustrate, the artworks to some extent “reproduce” graffiti and street art performance on mobile material. In this way, domesticating legitimizes the artworks, as they may be exchanged as market products, compared to non-objectified and unsanctioned subcultural graffiti and street art. The objectification of artworks still strives to maintain authenticity, however, in order to avoid the feeling of being copies (Bengtson 2014, Dominguez Rubio and Silva 2013) or being too mass-produced (Benjamin 1936/1968). In the next section, I will discuss objectification of graffiti and street art that contributes to maintaining authenticity by either literally or symbolically attaching the street to the artwork.

## **Art-tributing**

Art-tributing is the second objectifying aspect. It connects two materializing qualities, hence the hyphenation of the term. Art-tributing means that the artworks are produced or presented with *artifacts* and attributes that pay *tribute* to the subcultural graffiti and street art. This also materializes the artwork to allow ownership, but instead of emphasizing the domesticating qualities of the artwork, art-tributing aims to associate with the subcultural graffiti and street art. Whereas domesticating functions to legitimize the artworks as ownable products, art-tributing rather contributes to authenticating the products as artworks.

Producing and displaying the artworks with and on certain materials and media contributes to making exchanged artworks appear authentic (Bengtson 2014).

Hence, although produced in new domesticated formats, the street is often literally present in the production of mobile artworks, for instance through artifacts taken from the streets. Common artifacts are road signs, subway maps, and cobblestones, cardboard and wood panels, which are objects that often are used for unsanctioned art production in public spaces. Like the ready-mades of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, these artifacts first become artworks when they are being transformed as such and displayed in the new commercial settings. At the same time as art-tributing brings street objects physically inside the gallery, it also symbolizes the settings where unsanctioned graffiti is often produced: on trains, along subway systems, and in the city traffic and space. Many graffiti artists who make mobile works have embraced the use of subway maps in commercial art production. These paper maps usually have the artist's tag spray painted on them. Other mobile objects that are common in unsanctioned graffiti and street art are stickers with the artist's tag. Stickers can be placed in all sorts of available spots in the public room. They are also collected among the artists as a sort of gift-giving; the stickers are exchanged between the artists. The mobile format of stickers also makes them easily adapted to exchanged artworks. For example, an artist showed me a series of mobile artworks that he had composed using a big part of his sticker collection from artists all over the world.

The previous section discussed the importance of physically framing the artworks to domesticate them for convenient consumption. At a gallery exhibition that I visited, the artist had painted a big graffiti piece on a green tarpaulin, which seemed to be taken from a construction site. The tarpaulin was reminiscent of a big canvas as well as of a real outdoor graffiti piece. Hence, the mobile artwork reflected the “dirty graphics” and “human errors” of graffiti and street art aesthetics (Dickens 2010). According to the gallery owner, the artist initially wanted the tarpaulin to hang loose on the wall to maintain the “street-ish” condition. The gallery owner on the other hand, was convinced that they had to frame the tarpaulin for buyers to purchase it:

[The artist] looked disappointed when we stretched it and hung it up on a frame. He wanted it raw on the wall. But I see it differently. We thought it wasn't as good when we just hung it up like a tarpaulin. Buyers don't want to manage this themselves. They want to hang the piece at home immediately, nice and prepared, not go and frame it first. You have to display the works properly.

(Interview 13, recording 2014)

The framing of the tarpaulin illustrates this negotiation of both using street artifacts in the artwork to sustain “street credibility” while at the same time domesticating the artwork and preparing it in a convenient way to appeal to buyers. However, collectors also appreciate the raw aesthetics of exchanged street art (Bengtson 2014). Cultural artifacts are part of negotiating authenticity in

countercultural markets, where market-restricting practices are as important as market-shaping practices (Hietanen and Rokka 2015). The artist wanted to sustain the authentic “vibe” on his art by using street artifacts and resisting the domesticating of framing. At the same time, the gallery owner wanted the artwork to adjust to legitimized consumption, which facilitates market exchanges. In addition, art-tributing means that the commercial productions of graffiti and street artworks often use tropes in the motifs, which are aesthetic references that associate with the subcultural artworks (Bengtsen 2014). Among the various exchangeable artworks, there are often positive or critical references to topics such as rebellion, vandalism, authorities, and capitalism, pop-cultural icons and brand logos. These are common tropes in both subcultural as well as commercial street art (Bengtsen 2014).

As discussed above, to objectify a mural entails commissioning and authorizing it in order for it to stay permanently. It is difficult to objectify an unsanctioned mural that is produced on a wall where it will likely either be painted over by others or removed by cleaning firms. However, buying a sketch from a graffiti writer is a way of circumventing the fact that it is not possible to collect subcultural graffiti on a wall, because the sketch becomes a permanent and transferable piece of art.



*Figure 5. Artist holding a sketch and a spray can, preparing for a mural, photo taken during fieldwork 2015*

Sketches can thus be objectified as independent artworks for sale. Artists who use sketches when preparing for a big mural, and who bring these sketches to the site of the mural, could later sell these as exchangified artworks. The sketch is clearly connected to the final mural, but it lacks some of the non-objectified features of the unsanctioned mural: it is not ephemeral, it is not site-specific and it is not illegal (e.g. see Figure 5, p.89). Thus, it can be exchangified as a permanent artwork by being a mobile artifact from a mural production. Of course, artists who work with sketches prior to their mural pieces do not always consider that the sketches may become artworks with a price. According to an artist: “Normally when I make sketches, I don’t make them to sell; I just make them to have as a reference when I paint. Sometimes I feel like they are good enough for someone to own” (Conversation 20, field notes 2015). Another example is a US artist whom I met in Sweden, where she exhibited at a group show. She had made a sketch for a mural that she was commissioned to produce for a public festival. When the mural had been created at the site-specific wall at the festival, the artist went back to her sketchbook and drew a replica of the finished mural in the smaller format of the paper sheet. This replica was framed and exhibited later at the gallery show. In addition, the initial sketch also turned into an artwork, which similarly was colored, framed and exhibited. These three objectified artworks were translations beginning with a paper sketch, transformed into a mural, and reproduced as a mobile replica.

A Swedish gallery owner, who thought that his artists’ sketch production would also be interesting for his clients, told me that he would then have to encourage the artists to sketch on acid free drawing paper. This paper has a more permanent, mint quality than paper in regular sketchbooks, thus making the sketches transferable. Hence, due to the importance of using durable materials in the artworks to make them permanent and transferable, domesticating was also considered. According to another art dealer’s observation, however, the graffiti connoisseurs who collect works of old graffiti legends find the rough sketches on poor quality paper from the 1980s to be more valuable in terms of authenticity. Likewise, members of the graffiti and street art culture suggest that these sketches are “more graffiti” than the mobile canvases. A US artist that I met in Paris tried to explain it to me:

We use sketches. You can’t say that you *use* a painting the same. A sketch is something you fold up. You put it in your pocket. It is a tool. Some people like to have those. Some artists paint all their pieces with sketches, so it becomes very significant to have a sketch that they did. Like if I had an original sketch from Dondi. You know it was folded up, and it has paint stains, and is a little dirty. It has some art on it. It is an artifact, I imagine this thing being with him in the 1980s. In his pocket, he touched it, has his fingerprints on it.  
(Conversation 16, field notes 2015)

An art collector explained to me how he went from appreciating graffiti canvases to preferring sketches:

First you want canvases, then you want *old* canvases, because you think the older the better, especially if it's graff... Then you start thinking that sketches, that's how authentic it can possibly get. You imagine how they were planning their piece, perhaps in a style that was not even established then. And even better it is if they actually used the sketch for a real piece, and if there are color marks on it! And maybe there is a photo of the final piece that you can get hold of too.

(Interview 8, recording 2014)

The sketches described by the artist and the collector above are hence collectable exchange objects, which have not been “manipulated” to have objectified domesticating qualities. It is their authentic condition of having been used by the artist in a not-for-sale situation that enables their objectification. Commercially produced artwork may get a raw patina from the artists anyway – “artist condition” (Bengtson 2014) – to look like the authentic street artworks. Authenticity can thus be manipulated (Preece 2014) and constructed in the sense that it is sometimes enough that the artwork is associated with authentic elements (Fillis 2015).

Coming back to training on techniques, sketches are also part of improving the artist's writing skills and developing the tag. The tag has sometimes taken several years to develop to perfection (Schacter 2008). For many graffiti artists, the little tag is as much an artwork as any big mural piece (Cooper 2008, Jacobson 1996). By members of graffiti and street art communities, the tag is often considered to be the purest and most beautiful version of an artist's various forms of writing. “Tagging”, however, is also described as the graffiti form that is most often associated with vandalism and the illegitimate version of graffiti (Merrill 2015). The association with vandalism can nevertheless be used for objectification purposes. A Swedish artist told me about a famous French graffiti writer who had been tagging all over Paris. “And now people pay him to come and write his tag on their houses. And it should really look like a *tag*” (Conversation 6, field notes 2014). In fact, the tagging sometimes gets more attention than the exchanged mobiles in gallery exhibitions. During a gallery show in Sweden with a US artist who started as a teenage graffiti writer in New York in the 1970s, canvases in various sizes were exhibited for sale. A fair number of buyers attended the opening and purchased some of the artworks, which the gallery owner claimed to be “very price worthy”, considering the artist's legendary status. A lot of attention, however, was also given to the moment when the artist was sitting at the table in the middle of the gallery, signing photos and postcards for a line of people. The gallery visitors surrounded him, took photos, and observed how he wrote his tag.



This small-scale live performance of tagging paid tribute to the subculture in the otherwise commercial and sanctioned setting of the gallery.

Other exchangeified artworks maintain authenticity by paying tribute to the conditions and characteristics of the *production* of unsanctioned graffiti and street art rather than the artifacts of graffiti and street art, such as road signs, subway maps, or the reference to street art tropes. These artworks instead contribute to reflecting the authentic conditions of graffiti production, which are described as challenging and extreme: “not only must the artists reach perilously inaccessible sites, from train tracks and railway bridges to central city locations, but once there they must spend hours perfecting their work, whilst constantly ready to sprint from authorities” (Schacter 2008:41). Hence, in order to pay tribute to the street, some artists choose to objectify artworks by associating with public space more conceptually. In Paris, a French artist told me that he preferred to create artworks by using props from public spaces where graffiti is produced, rather than producing sanctioned and legal graffiti on walls and canvases:

I exhibit graffiti by “talking” about graffiti. I take artifacts from trains and yards, in order to recreate the feeling of what it is like to paint. I found a door from an old train. It was an important door because through the window you could see if the guards were approaching. Also, I made a collage of bits of fake leather, which were textiles from train seats from a specific train that was very cool to paint on. And I used gravel, because it reminds you of how carefully you must walk on the yard so it doesn’t crackle, because then you get caught.

(Conversation 12, field notes 2015)

Many artists and mediators dislike the solely decorative use that many buyers as well as critics associate with “graffiti on canvas” (like the criticism expressed by the French artist above), but they are aware that some clients buy artworks for the decorative purpose of graffiti aesthetics without knowing or caring much about graffiti culture. The unsanctioned production of graffiti and street art makes the art illegitimate, but the often figurative and colorful motifs make it aesthetically available at the same time. These artworks function as “art for above the couch”, referring to the artworks in the traditional gallery circuit in Velthuis (2005:45-51) or the commercial gallery category in Kottász and Bennett (2014).

This phenomenon was literally confirmed by another artist I met in Paris. He told me that he wanted his canvases to create a nice atmosphere in people's living rooms, that they complemented the sofa, and that they gave an extra lift to the room:

Because a lot of people, if they have money they have nice furniture, nice TV, but nothing on the walls. And when they have a nice painting, that gives it the extra lift, the atmosphere, the feeling in the apartment when there is a painting there. So I try to do that. And some people think it's cool.

(Conversation 20, field notes 2015)

The French artist who tried to work more conceptually with graffiti, however, was aware that this art was difficult to sell. Although he found his art to be much more interesting than the graffiti-on-canvases, he knew that these were what most art buyers looked for. Obviously, there are various opinions about what is qualitative and interesting commercial (as well as subcultural) graffiti and street art. The French graffiti artist argued that there is no point in painting tags on a canvas, because it does not make sense to the graffiti culture. Another informant argued, however, that some of the more experimental artworks that some artists were doing just did not work out well: "They are trying some very strange styles... they should stop this weird abstract painting. Just throw up the tag. Bam. On canvas. I'd rather buy that" (Interview 32, recording 2015).

In the examples described above, the mobile works pay tribute to the graffiti and street artworks by using street artifacts or contextual artifacts from the street. Some artists create associations with graffiti and street art by other means. A way of producing mobile artworks that resembles site-specific artworks is to put white canvases on a wall, on which a mural piece is spray-painted. The artist thus produces a site-specific mural, which stays permanent in its entirety as long as the canvases hang on the wall. At the same time, the artist is objectifying artworks that are part of the site-specific mural but that can also be sold as unique pieces. This occurs often in gallery exhibitions. In this way, the artists may show their skills as muralists and pay tribute to traditional, unsanctioned graffiti, while simultaneously producing both mobile and permanent artworks. It adds authenticity to the artworks as they have an ephemeral quality similar to that of unsanctioned murals in public space.

The examples above describe artworks that more or less translate the skills of subcultural graffiti, street art and sketching to the objectification of murals and mobiles. Sometimes, the artistic preparations prior to gallery openings as well as the scenography of the exhibition, also pay tribute to subcultural graffiti and street art in order to emphasize the authentic feeling. Coming back to the gallery I visited in Paris, where I observed the preparations for an exhibition, the French artist

assistant stressed that this temporary studio production reflected subcultural production. The paintings that the US artist was about to exhibit were so detailed and involved such a long process that he would not be able to finish them in time by himself. Within two months, he was going to produce 15 canvases, hence the French artist was assisting him to finish the paintings. This tight deadline of producing mobiles is reminiscent of the short time-frame for producing unsanctioned graffiti. Unsanctioned large murals usually require several artists to work on them within the short time frame they have at their disposal to work. The collaboration per se was also similar. The French artist explained:

I paint with similar techniques and I find it very interesting to work with [the artist], to learn how he paints. In exchange, he explains to me how I can paint on my canvases. When I paint in the street with my friends, we do the same thing. We create a big mural and we decide who will do the front and who will do the back. It is characteristic of graffiti to have an exchange between writers. So we do the same thing when we do canvas.

(Conversation 19, field notes 2015)

These artists in Paris argued that time pressure and collaborative work was important for commercial work as well, but obviously they had more time to paint than during unsanctioned production. A Swedish artist told me that the time aspect is something that changes dramatically when starting to paint in studios instead, as well as the site-specific situation. During an interview, we talked about how he perceived going from producing unsanctioned artworks outside to painting artworks inside the studio:

It's a big difference I think. It's much more difficult for me, this thing that you have plenty of time to paint and you have time to think about and adjust tiny details. It's never really the same. To me it's so much about going somewhere, and you have only a few hours to finish the piece, so much nerves, you must make quick decisions, work fast. It always becomes better in a way. So I have tried to start working like that when I do exhibitions. To do site-specific artworks, directly on spot on a wall in the gallery, the day before the opening. So it is really brand new. Then I can maintain that feeling of no return, haha, and I can't redo it if it's not good/.../And the site-specific, that you can't bring [the artwork] home with you, it's only there for the show. Which means that people who come and see the show can only see that work right there and nowhere else.

(Interview 15, recording 2015)

In a similar way, the physical space of the gallery is sometimes transformed into a bigger exhibition scenography. The walls display not only the hanging of the

exchangified artworks but are also designed with temporary murals and artifacts to add authenticity to the exhibition. At a street art gallery in Paris, they had built temporary brick walls on which the exhibiting French artist had painted site-specific works. These artworks were not for sale but paid tribute to his outdoor street art production. I talked to some of the visitors at the gallery, who thought that these site-specific, not-for-sale artworks were the best pieces, because they looked much more like the outdoor works. The gallery staff confirmed this opinion:

We always do an installation. Because we don't want to have just some canvases on the wall. We consider, because we are a street art gallery, that we have to do something on the wall, directly on the wall. Like an installation. It cannot only be canvases.

(Interview 20, field notes 2015)

So far, this chapter has discussed how objectification does not only imply that artworks are domesticated to appeal to private and public buyers, which was discussed in the first section. This section, on art-tributing, shows that the objectification of artworks is used to maintain subcultural authenticity by paying tribute to unsanctioned graffiti and street art and using artifacts from public space. In the next section, I will discuss authorizing.

## **Authorizing**

The third aspect of objectification, authorizing, means that the artwork's status as ownable is authorized by someone with a mandate to authorize. Authorizing actors can be the artists themselves, the mediators, or external actors, such as public authorities. The authorization of ownership further entails that transfer of ownership is allowed, which at the same time legitimizes the market product (Holm and Nolde Nielsen 2017). Authorizing involves, for example, the signing of contracts between commissioners and artists, the granting of building permits for the production of public murals and the certificates of authenticity attached to certain artworks, approved by artists or artists' agents. I will also discuss other authorizing devices that are used to signal that the artworks are approved as being ownable, such as price lists and auction and sales catalogues.

Coming back to public street art festivals, I previously discussed how the murals were domesticated through commissioners' involvement in the production and the material qualities that provide the conditions for permanent murals. This means that the mural gets ownable qualities. The approvals from building owners and the building permits illustrate the authorizing of the ownable qualities of public murals. The mural becomes objectified because the production is authorized and sanctioned through the approvals and building permits that relate to specific sites. As the local governments in Swedish cities usually consider

unsanctioned graffiti and street art to be an illegitimate art form, commissioned street art often passes through bureaucratic processes before being authorized.

One example of authorizing is the policy document “Vägledning för gatukonst på kommunens ytor” (Guidance for street art on municipality space, *author’s translation*), which was published in 2014 on the website of Gothenburg city (Göteborgs stad 2014). The guidance is a complement to the previous zero tolerance policy (Göteborgs stad 2007) and is supposed to direct and help building and land owners to make decisions on applications for murals in publicly owned spaces. There is no longer *zero* tolerance, but as there are still degrees of non-tolerance, decision-makers need to evaluate what kind of graffiti and street art is considered tolerable and what is not. In the policy document, it says for example that the originator (usually the commissioner or the artist) should “have prepared a detailed project plan with a description of the project, contact persons, timetable, financing and preferably a description or sketch of the motif”. (Göteborgs stad 2014, *author’s translation*). The document also states that the building owner should “inform the originator that the motif of the street art must not be offensive and that the building owner has the right to remove the artwork, for example due to complaints” (Göteborgs stad 2014, *author’s translation*).<sup>7</sup> This guidance illustrates how policies and norms in several Swedish cities may affect entrepreneurial activities leading them from being illegitimate to becoming legitimate (Webb et al. 2009).

The complexity of being both legitimate and illegitimate is visible in the hype and interest around public street art festivals. During my fieldwork, I was following one of these city street art festivals more closely. What unfolded as being of main importance in these more official and public settings was indeed the issue of approvals and the formal applications that the artists or mediators, such as gallery owners or festival organizers, used when applying for building permits to produce public murals. A few months before the festival was to start, I attended a project meeting with the project group organizing the festival and other actors involved: the city architect, representatives from the tourist office, the art museum and the department of culture. The leader of the project group opened the meeting by announcing that their most important point on the agenda was to discuss the building permits. Almost the whole meeting concerned the walls that they wanted

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<sup>7</sup> It should be mentioned here that even though there are formalized practices and devices, such as these applications and the granting of building permits, board meetings and contracts between commissioners and artists, the question of ownership versus copyright is still complex, not only because of all the actors involved and the bureaucratic process, but also because of the legal grey zone with regard to the public walls and the artistic copyrights of the murals (e.g. Davies 2013).

to be painted during the festival and the permits that were hence required. The process of applying for a permission to paint on a public wall followed certain routines. First, for each wall, they sought approval from the building owner. The project group discussed the possibilities of getting certain walls. In order to attract the interest of building owners and to get their approval, the project group provided the building owners with sketches and previous work by the artists in order to help them make decisions. The festival curator explained:

Sometimes they ask for mock-ups of the artists' previous works in other cities. And we just photoshop that onto the building, to show them what the building might look like. And those things are never publicized, it is just strictly for the building owners in order to get an understanding of what we are trying to do. And I think that helps a lot.

(Interview 22, recording 2015)

The building owners were not allowed to decide which specific artist they wanted for their walls, however. That was a decision made by the artists themselves. According to the project group, some of the artists had certain requests for their murals. The curator continued:

We let [the artists] select the walls, because we want them to feel comfortable /.../ So what we do here is that we kind of send them an email with options [of walls]. Each artist gets a folder. And then they get to pick the one they feel most comfortable with.

(Interview 22, recording 2015)

In case there was a building owner who specifically requested a certain artist, however, the project group let that artist know about it:

What we would sometimes do, is if a specific building owner requests certain artists. So all these building owners see the same images of the artists we are inviting. And somebody might say, "I really love this one". What we would do is that we send that building to them first, and say, "The building owner specifically requested you, would you mind?" If they say yes [i.e. agree], it's done and then the other artists don't see it. If the artist says, "well that one has windows on it, it won't work with that", then we say, "ok we tried" and then it goes to the rest of the artists.

(Interview 22, recording 2015)

The curator further explained that although the building owners were shown mock-ups, they were not shown sketches of what the final murals would look like:

We never ask for sketches. So when the artists show up, we have no idea of what they are going to paint. And that's the beauty of it, it is kind of a surprise for us as well when they go up on the sky lift.

(Interview 22, recording 2015)

As shown by this quote, the artists also authorized some of the conditions of the project, which enabled these public mural commissions to take place. In an information folder about the festival, this artistic integrity of selecting walls and motifs was pinpointed as something that was important for the success of the festival. Artistic integrity sustained the authenticity of this particular art movement, according to the folder:

[The city] decided early that the festival must be authentic to the spirit of this movement and therefore did not ask the artists for sketches in advance. Instead, it made sure to accommodate them by providing large walls as canvases for them to paint whatever they chose. Thanks to a permissive municipality and brave building owners, the artworks now got a place in the public space to everyone's great appreciation.

(Archival material 44, 2015)

Previous literature discusses similar ways of authorizing acquisitions of site-specific installation art by imposing conditions set by the artist, for example, on how the works should be displayed (Dominguez Rubio and Silva 2013). A gallery owner who worked with mediating mural commissions, agreed about the importance of respecting the integrity of the artistic profession:

The buyers can choose which artist they want, but they shouldn't interfere with the artists' work. You can't buy a station wagon and then require of it to act like a two-seated sports car.

(Interview 1, recording 2014)

The curator of the street art festival, however, admitted that they took the citizens of the city into consideration as well. For example, they avoided bringing in artists who have a history of creating extremely controversial work:

It is not because of censorship or anything like that, it's because we are trying to creating a more, haha, I would use the word family-friendly festival/.../Because we want to have something that caters to people from three years old to 70 years old.

(Interview 22, recording 2015)

This consideration of offensive motifs resembles the conditions stated in the Gothenburg policy document (Göteborgs stad 2014) mentioned previously.

When accepting commissions, artists also sign contracts with the commissioner, which is another way of authorizing the objectification. For the street art festival discussed above, the contracts were written together with the city solicitor. The contracts contained paragraphs on payment and other reimbursements, security during production, copyright and consequences of breeches of the agreement.

Coming back to the project meeting about the street art festival, after getting authorization from the building owners, the project group applied for building permits from the municipal planning board. This board, represented by local politicians, took decisions on applications regarding “temporary permissions for changes on facades” (Archival material 30). In the application for building permits, there had to be a written text about the intended mural, but it could not be too detailed, as the artists were allowed free rein to do their work. Even though there were no sketches of the final artworks at this point, the city architect, who was going to the planning board meeting, asked for photos of the artists’ previous works to give the board members a hint of the quality of the artists. Hence, photos were also used to facilitate this authorizing: “I’m going to the meeting next week. Can I show them something? These really amazing [artists]. Because I really think there is a high level of art this year” (Observation 29, field notes 2015). Thus, to objectify these commissioned murals, they were first formulated as paper applications which the authorizing actors were capable of referring to and making sense of. In addition to photos and photomontages, other documents that were attached to some of the applications were written commentaries from clean-up firms, in which they stated that it would be possible to remove the murals. Further, it should be stated in the applications for how long the building permits would be applied. Hence, the building permits did not allow the murals to remain on the walls indefinitely, but for a long-term period of approximately two-four years. However, the building permits could be re-applied for, allowing the murals stay on the walls for even a longer period.

Not all applications for building permits were approved, however. In the official minutes from the board meeting of the municipal planning board, represented by local politicians, three out of nine applications were rejected, due to a vote following a proposal that “the city milieu should be preserved in its current state” (Archival material 30, *author’s translation*). The official minutes do not account for how the discussion prior to the voting went, but it is possible to note how the different politicians voted. The right-wing politicians voted predominantly to reject the applications, while the left-wing and green politicians voted predominantly in favor of the applications. This voting result corresponds well with the observation on political attitudes towards graffiti and street art made by a director responsible for public art in a Swedish city. The objectification of



unsanctioned and sub-cultural graffiti and street art that transform, through authorizing practices, into legitimate graffiti and street art, is thus enabled or prevented due to policies and laws as well as norms and values (Webb et al. 2009).

Authorizing that enables the objectification of artworks does not only regard murals that get approval from external parties such as public authorities. Actors closely involved with the sales of mobile artworks also authorize them in order to objectify them. An example is the authorization regarding mobiles that are sold through mediators such as auction houses. Auction houses usually have high standards on assuring the authenticity of the artworks for sale. A signature is not always a proof of an authorization. Certificates of authenticity, COA, are therefore an important device to objectify mobile artworks for exchangeability. For example, Pest Control, the authenticating agency of Banksy's commercial art production, manages Banksy's COAs. Artworks by Banksy are almost without exception sold together with COAs. At Pest Control's website, they state: "Change of Ownerships are only for works that are currently accompanied by a Pest Control Office Certificate of Authentication" (Pest Control 2019). This has become particularly important as Banksy's street artworks are repeatedly removed from public space in attempts to sell them (Bengtsen 2014, Preece and Bida 2017, Thompson 2012). These COAs are granted only for artworks that *have not* been produced as street artworks. Pest Control would not authorize street art works by Banksy that are removed from the street and put on sale, no matter how credible the copyright of the work is. The artworks are considered illegitimate without their COAs and consequently, do not pass as exchangeable market products. A manager at a Swedish auction house, who was about to sell a road sign attributed to Banksy but without a COA from Pest Control, discussed this dilemma:

Pest Control couldn't approve it, probably because it was a road sign and, well, perhaps it is not legitimate to remove a road sign and then paint on it. But, it doesn't have to be a non-authentic Banksy piece just because it hasn't got this certificate. Which never can be given to these things. So in the end we had to remove the lot from the auction.

(Interview 9, recording 2014)

This artwork had both the domesticated and art-tributing features otherwise sought after for objectification, but the artwork still lacked authorization. An art expert at another auction house faced a similar situation. They were about to sell a commercially produced Banksy artwork, but they could not provide a COA attached to the lot. Nevertheless, they tried to sell it, because they had carefully compared the artwork with other artworks that had COAs, and thus they were sure it was authentic as a commercially produced artwork (hence, authenticity here should not be understood in terms of subcultural authenticity). The art expert was aware, however, that they would probably get many concerned questions from

potential buyers about its authenticity. The authorizing certificates by Pest Control clearly signal that Banksy street artworks should not be objectified solely by removing them from the street and domesticating them in order to make them transferable. As with the murals, they require authorization, which is granted by the proper actor.

Not only are the approvals, official permissions, contracts and certificates important for objectification, but the specific material features of a gallery also help to authorize the artworks. The hanging of artworks on the gallery walls, the spotlights, the price lists, the texts in catalogues and exhibition folders, may help to authorize the artworks as sellable and thus ownable items. Moreover, during exhibition openings, the focus is more on the social meeting of the artist and the invited guests than on the sales of artworks. According to Velthuis (2005), this downplaying of the sales should be understood as aiming to legitimize the commodifying transition of the artworks. Ironically, several gallery owners I interviewed mentioned the opening as the main occasion when people purchase artworks, *because* it is a social meeting: they get in the mood, they meet the artist, they see all the other guests, and sense the popularity of the artist.

During the preparations prior to an exhibition opening in Sweden, I got the opportunity to participate and I could observe in detail how a great deal of attention was paid to these gallery and exhibition features:

[The gallery owner] explains to me how I will write about the artworks on the price list. It needs to be in English. The order should be Artist, Title, Technique, Price, Measurements. Almost all artworks have a title. I need to measure all artworks. [The gallery owner] thinks that the measurements should include the frame because the artworks are sold *with* the frame.

When I've finished the price list, [the gallery owner] will print texts about each artist. They will be put on the walls so visitors can read them. [The gallery owner] also thinks she should print the texts as folders and place on tables, because it will get too crowded on the walls otherwise.

(Observation 26, field notes 2015)

As these observation notes demonstrate, authorizing also takes place through the display of the artworks in a commercial setting. The price list shows potential buyers that the artworks can be detached from the seller (the artist or the mediator) and attached to a new owner (Callon et al. 2002) by paying a certain price. The artists themselves are obviously authorizing actors in these settings. They approve which artworks can be transferred to a new owner and which cannot. When I observed the preparations prior to the opening of another

exhibition by a US artist who was exhibiting at the same gallery, as is mentioned above, the artist had brought eight artworks from his private collection that were not for sale (Observation 11, field notes 2014). He wanted to exhibit the artworks but he had not authorized their transferable ownership properties. On the price list of the exhibition, the eight artworks were listed, but they had no price. Instead, the artworks were listed as “PRIVATE COLLECTION” and “NOT FOR SALE“. These non-exchangified artworks made a contrast to the exchangified artworks *for* sale and emphasized their authorization.

Coming back to the issue of the removal of street artworks (and not street artifacts) from the street, it is a phenomenon that upsets many members of the graffiti and street art communities (Bengtson 2014). To show how auction catalogues help to signal that removed artworks can still be authorized for sale, however, I turn to an example from the French auction house Artcurial. Among the lots at the street art auction sale *The writing's on the wall* at Artcurial on June 26 2018, there was a work by the artist Invader. According to the auction catalogue, the work comprised “mosaic tiles in a Plexiglas box with its identity card; signed and dated” (Artcurial 2018). Other mosaics by Invader have previously been removed from the streets and sold through auction channels such as eBay (Bengtson 2014). The identity card that the catalogue refers to was a photo of the corner of a building where the mosaic tiles had originally been placed. Thus, together with the actual artwork – the mosaic tiles in a Plexiglas box – the buyer would also receive an authorizing device – “the identity card” – in order to guarantee the authenticity of the work’s provenance (coming from the actual streets of Cologne, Germany) and its transferability to a new owner. A well-grounded provenance for artworks, as well as the informal but authorizing “blessing” of the artist (Dominguez Rubio and Silva 2013), may compensate for a lack of COAs in terms of authenticity (Bengtson 2014). It is argued, however, that the symbolic value of street artworks is neutralized and that the significance of the artwork is lost when the work is removed from its public place of origin (Bengtson 2014, Preece and Bida 2017). Invader’s mosaic tiles at the Artcurial auction had estimated prices of 15 000 – 20 000 euros and 20 000 – 30 000 euros. Hence, they still had an estimated economic value although the symbolic value of the artwork may have been lost. As long as the artist authorizes the new circumstances of the removed work (such as Invader’s artwork at Artcurial’s auction), the financial value of the artwork can be maintained (Bengtson 2014, Wells 2016).

As this chapter has shown, objectification enables the transfer of ownership; it allows for the exchange of the artwork between artists and buyers. Through these efforts, objectification is thus part of the exchangification process. Below follows a summary.

## **Summing up objectification: legitimacy and authenticity aspects**

Objectifying graffiti and street art means that this traditionally ephemeral and unsanctioned art becomes possible to own and to transfer between owners. This chapter has discussed aspects of objectifying mural and mobile artworks, categorized as: 1) domesticating, 2) art-tributing, and 3) authorizing. *Domesticating* entails that artworks are produced in order to stay permanent in privately and publicly owned environments. *Art-tributing* means that the production pays tribute to graffiti and street art subcultures and uses artifacts from public space. *Authorizing* entails that actors with an authoritative mandate formally approve the ownable features and the transferability of ownership of an artwork.

Murals and mobiles are objectified differently due to their different socio-technical conditions, such as: site-specificity, mobility, public exposure, means of production, choice of mediators, and buyers' requests. Depending on the circumstances, the objectification of an artwork may involve more of some practices, and less of the other practices. Which practices actually take place is affected by the ambition of achieving either legitimacy or authenticity, the main drivers in the process of exchanging art. Domesticating and authorizing mainly contribute to the association with traditional contemporary art markets. These could further be understood as attempts to legitimize the artworks. There is also the objectification through paying tribute to the traditional subculture of graffiti and street art. This rather attempts to connect the artworks to their authentic background.

Domesticating murals implies that they are commissioned and produced in order to stay permanently in public, and sometimes private, ownership. Public murals at street art festivals and indoor murals in organizations and private households are common examples of these kinds of commissions. Compared with unsanctioned graffiti and street art production, the artists translate and adapt their subcultural experience and skills to these sanctioned and permanent artworks. This means that artists adhere to the commissioner's requests, such as a specific spot, measurements and sometimes motifs. Mediators of murals may present artists' catalogues to their clients in order to let them select the artist they prefer, with regard to aspects such as price and style. This domesticating, which corresponds explicitly to buyers' preferences is a way of legitimizing the artworks, which elsewhere in their unsanctioned condition would be considered non-authentic.

The production of murals is not only domesticated in order to be objectified, however. Their production also entails authorization. Two authorizing actors are the building owners who approve the potential murals that will decorate their buildings, as well as municipal planning boards, who approve the applications for

building permits. Building permits are required because a public mural is considered to be a change of façade in the public milieu. A third authorizing actor for murals is also the artists themselves. They accept the terms and conditions of the commissions sanctioned; they sign the contracts and thus authorize the commission to take place.

Art-tributing contributes to the authentication of the artworks. This sub-practice is not as frequent for murals as it is for mobiles. Given the material aspects of a commissioned mural, such as the large measurements, the site-specificity and the public exposure, these murals resemble unsanctioned graffiti and street art to a greater extent, and thus sustain authenticity in that aspect. As stated above, domesticating and authorizing imply rather non-authentic conditions for street art. Hence, in order to maintain the authenticity of the artworks in such circumstances, commissioners and mediators respect artistic integrity to the extent that they let artists work freely and demand no sketches beforehand. Thus, by sustaining artistic integrity and freedom, as the artists may have requests with regard to the walls, motifs and colors, the authorizing by the artist also contributes to authenticating the artworks.

The objectification of mobiles is different from that of murals but does also involve domesticating, art-tributing and authorizing. As public murals are made permanent by means of building permits, one could argue that mobile artworks have already solved the problem of ephemerality just by being produced on mobile media. Mobile artworks can be transferred between owners because of their mobility, which enables them to be physically detached from the seller (the artist) and attached to the potential buyer. Moreover, indoor mobiles do not risk being destroyed by weather, painted over by other artists, or washed off by cleaning companies. Nevertheless, the production of mobiles also involves domesticating efforts in order to objectify them. They are produced according to certain measurements to fit indoor spaces; they are framed to allow convenient indoor hanging; and they are produced with durable materials to sustain permanence and enable collecting. In addition, the mobile artworks can be exhibited in galleries, which is a setting with domesticating features that also objectifies the artwork as an ownable product. Exhibition texts signal that the artworks can be owned. This domesticating reflects the standards of conventional fine art markets. They contribute to legitimizing the artworks, in contrast to unsanctioned street art in public space, which is considered to be illegitimate.

Because of these objectifying conditions that legitimize the artworks, however, the mobiles lack some of the original characteristics of the street. Thus, to maintain authenticity and not appear to be mere “reproductions” of the street performance, the production of mobiles often pay tribute to the street. The sale of authentic sketches is an example of these objectifying means. Other forms of art-tributing are associated either with the conditions of producing unsanctioned

works, or with street artifacts, such as road signs, subway maps, and tarpaulins. As unauthorized removals of real street artworks (and not only artifacts) occur, which has been the case particularly with some of Banksy's artworks, mobile artworks are authorized in order to be objectified. Mediators such as auction houses thus strive to get the artists to authorize the artwork that they put on sale.

To conclude this chapter, objectification is not a one-way direction from artist-detachment to buyer-attachment. The domesticating and authorizing of the artwork's ownable status detaches the artwork from the artist, but the aspect of associating with the conditions of the street artworks, the art-tributing, re-attaches the artwork to the artist and to the artist's subcultural context. Domesticating mobiles contributes to making these artworks attachable to buyers by materializing them in a way that resembles other contemporary artworks with the use of frames and standard measurements on the canvas. Murals are objectified by other means as the artworks are site-specific and cannot physically be transferred between owners. Murals become objectified by being produced as commissioned and sanctioned artworks that have been authorized by the owner, such as on walls in private homes, at company offices, or in public spaces belonging to the city. A building permit or a contract on the commission is a device that materializes the ownership. Thus, commissions from public festivals and authorizations from building owners and municipal decision makers legitimize the mural artworks as market products. The artworks are detached from the artist as the murals are produced as sanctioned commissions for which the artists are paid. However, the site-specificity, the measurements and the public exposure of murals are characteristics that resemble unsanctioned street art, and they do not risk appearing as "reproductions" in the same way as mobiles. This chapter has shown how objectification contributes to legitimizing the artworks to fit the market conditions that potential buyers expect when purchasing contemporary art, as well as to authenticating the artworks to sustain the characteristics of the authentic, unsanctioned subculture.

## **Getting ready for classification**

The objectification of artworks is part of the exchangification of graffiti and street art into market products. At the beginning of this chapter, I claimed that objectification appears to strike at the core of the tensions of exchangification, due to the physical circumstances of street art that make (the transfer of) ownership difficult. It has been disclosed above, however, that there are also tensions with other exchangifying practices. Objectification, which in this chapter has partly emphasized the work of producing mobiles and murals, is often related to valuations. Indeed, production is an important part of equipping products with value and preparing them for the exchange (Vatin 2013). Moreover, it has been noted in the discussion on unsanctioned versus commissioned street art production and the status of street art as either illegal or legal, that classifications

of street art are also part of the exchangeification. I will focus on classification in the next chapter.

## 7 Classification

Having discussed objectification, I will now turn to the subject of how classifications contribute to the exchangification of graffiti and street art. Classification is defined as two-dimensional. First, it refers to how categories are defined and represented *in relation* to each other. Second, it refers to how artworks are *placed in* categories in order to be transformed into market products. This dual definition entails that classifications do not only represent categories of the world; they are also performative, as classifications themselves contribute to the construction of categories (Azimont and Araujo 2010, Hagberg 2008, Mallard 2007). Classification contributes to the exchangification process by enabling comparability between artworks, and by facilitating sense making (Beckert and Aspers 2011, Foucault 1969, Kjellberg and Mallard 2013) about the artworks that are being exchangified.

Classification has unfolded as a major topic of debate in my field material. In a conversation with a practitioner who worked with public street art commissions in a Swedish city, he argued that there are two general means of classifying graffiti. The first is based on aesthetics, such as various styles of graffiti lettering and characters. The second is based on method, which he referred to as unsanctioned practices (Conversation 45, field notes 2017). However, there are indeed variations on these definitions. From the 35 interviews, I have received 35 different views on how to define graffiti and street art. For example, one artist and gallery owner claimed that there are strict rules when producing graffiti; for example, that no stencils or similar tools are allowed (as opposed to producing street art, which allows stenciling). Another artist argued that the only rule is that graffiti must be produced outdoors. A third artist argued that graffiti is simply about the lettering and characters. A fourth artist claimed that graffiti can be experimental and can be of different styles as long as it is painted illegally, while a fifth artist argued that it can be both legal and illegal but must always be painted with spray cans. Given these different opinions, it thus becomes clear that classifications seldom reach consensus (Bowker and Star 2000).

The discussion on the constant negotiations around how to classify subcultural graffiti and street art – and ultimately, how to classify the artworks to be exchangified – is also among the dominant themes in the previous literature on graffiti and street art (Bengtson 2014, Kimvall 2014). Generally, in the literature, it is suggested that graffiti belongs to a regulated stylistic tradition, whereas street art is a more inclusive set of art practices and techniques; the common characteristics of these art forms are the unsanctioned use of public space (Andersson 2006, Bengtson 2013, Guwallius 2010). Street art can further be understood as graffiti in *an expanded field* (Kimvall 2014). Moreover, street art, as opposed to graffiti, could be understood as being less associated with illegal



production (Andersson 2006, Ten Eyck 2016), which is one of the reasons for the various negotiations of the word graffiti (Kimvall 2014).

The classification discussed in this chapter will disclose that what classifies as legitimate art market products for some actors may classify as illegitimate non-market products for others. The negative connotations associated with graffiti are part of the discursive formations of graffiti that aim to define the art form as vandalism (Kimvall 2014, Ten Eyck 2016). In many countries, among which Sweden is an illustrative case, these discourses are materialized in more or less tolerant policies on graffiti. According to the informants, however, during the last decade, it has become easier for public murals to be commissioned by cities. Street art festivals are being organized in an increasing number of cities. Moreover, art galleries are exhibiting more street artists than ever before, and auction houses are trying to value and sell street artworks because their clients are becoming interested in these art forms. Classification becomes important when previously illegitimate objects suddenly appear in legitimate settings of production or consumption (Humphreys 2010, Kimvall 2014, Webb et al 2009, Wells 2015). In addition, classification is of importance when products in a market are represented as new (Khaira and Wadhvani 2010, Rosa et al. 1999), as is the case with graffiti and street art (in Sweden particularly). Hence, accompanying these new market practices and more tolerant policies are the challenges of classifying the artworks, the artists and the markets. An auction appraiser argued that classifications have become much more important in his daily work:

It has become relevant when I talk to buyers and sellers, this categorizing. It is problematic. You call something graffiti, but what is graffiti, really? It is not street art, and street art is not graffiti. And the more you talk about it, the clearer it becomes that it is part of contemporary art.

(Interview 35, recording 2018)

In this chapter, I will elaborate further on the classification of artworks into categories. It will be disclosed that in order to place artworks in categories to make them exchangeable, it is not necessarily the artwork that is the object for classification. Instead, a significant aspect is that the object that must be classified into categories of art (in general – not only categories of graffiti and street art) is often the artist (Wells 2016). In comparison to objectification, which focuses on the transformation of the artwork's ownable qualities, classification focuses on the representation of the artist. Hence, to place an artwork in a category in order to make it an exchangeable market product sometimes means that the *artist* must be placed in a category. The attention to the artist that classifications bring forward further affects the issue of negotiating legitimacy and authenticity in the exchangeification process (Wells 2016). During my fieldwork, there often seemed to be moments when things were not easily classified (Bowker and Star 2000).

Paralyzing attempts at classification (Callon and Law 2005), which can prevent exchangification, were often solved as the actors often chose to classify the artist, the producer, instead of the artwork, the product.

Drawing on previous literature on classification (Bengtson 2014, Bowker and Star 2000, Callon and Law 2005, Hagberg 2008, Khaire and Wadhvani 2010, Kimvall 2014, Preece et al. 2016, Rosa et al. 1999, Sjögren and Helgesson 2007), I will discuss classification by considering: 1) differentiating, 2) category making, and 3) fluxing. *Differentiating* entails emphasizing differences between artworks and between art categories, in order to represent the artworks. *Category making* entails the construction of a new category in order to represent the artworks. *Fluxing* means adjusting the category to specific situations of exchangification. At the end of the chapter, I will discuss how differentiating, category making and fluxing relate to each other, and how the key issues involved in the exchangification process, legitimacy and authenticity, are played out in classification.

## Differentiating

Differentiating means emphasizing the differences between artworks and between art categories in order to represent artworks. The point of departure of differentiating is that the artworks belong to a wider genre, or to wider street art (and graffiti) worlds (Bengtson 2014). Hence, by being classified in a category that differentiates the artwork from other artworks within these worlds (or other art worlds), the differentiating indirectly recognizes both the differences as well as the similarities between categories (Cochoy 2004, Finch and Geiger 2010, Hagberg 2008). Differentiating entails situating an object in a system of categories, but it focuses mainly on the boundaries between categories. Differentiating should ideally be based on a consensus about the categorization, that the categories are mutually exclusive, and that there are clear boundaries between categories (Bowker and Star 2000). These practices not only define what the objects *are*, but also emphasize what the objects *are not* (Foucault 1969/1989). For example, graffiti and street art *are not* vandalism; street artworks *are not* graffiti; graffiti and street art *are not* conventional contemporary art. Hence, in the exchangification process, differentiating strives to represent specific artists and artworks by emphasizing the differences between street art, graffiti and other art forms. In addition, in order to distinguish artworks from other categories of contemporary art, differentiating strives to emphasize the significant positions of graffiti and street art in art history.

Traditionally, the main claims of graffiti and street art form a dichotomy of being either art (conceived as legitimate) or vandalism (conceived as illegitimate) (Dickens 2008, Kimvall 2014, Wells 2015). This dichotomy also occurs in commercial reports (Artprice 2013a), as opposed to what has been argued in previous research (Wells 2016). As this chapter – as well as this entire thesis –

shows, this dichotomy is managed in most graffiti and street art sales. In order to legitimize commercial artworks created by graffiti and street artists, differentiating strives to represent graffiti and street art as *not* being vandalism or “klotter”. Indeed, in Sweden, the term graffiti is also complex because it is an English word with various connotations. It is ambiguously translated and used in Swedish discussions (Jacobson 1996, Kimvall 2014). In American English, the term graffiti has a less favorable meaning than it has in Swedish (Jacobson 1996). An artist from the United States who was now based in Sweden equated graffiti with klotter, but distinguished it from art:

I used to do graffiti when I was 13-14 years old, but people ask me now, ‘do you do graffiti?’, I say ‘no, I haven’t done graffiti for 20 years because I don’t go and do the klotter’. I stopped. I do art, on the walls, that is how I see it.

(Interview 22, recording 2015)

The term graffiti is used even in Sweden, but the graffiti policies are in Swedish defined as “klotterpolicy” (Stockholms stad 2015). A reason for this definition is to distinguish klotter (which could be translated as tags in English) to graffiti. Whereas klotter is considered equivalent to vandalism in the policies, graffiti is supposed to refer to artistic practices. This terminology of the Stockholm policy is problematic for two reasons (Kimvall 2014) and has consequences for classification. First, klotter, in terms of tags, is *part of* the graffiti art form and thus, theoretically, should not be distinguished from graffiti. Second, although the terms graffiti and klotter are differentiated in these policies, in practice they are used arbitrarily in the Swedish media and political discourses. For example, artworks at a sanctioned and legal graffiti festival in Stockholm in 2015 were referred to as “konstklotter” (“konst” is the Swedish word for “art”) in a Swedish newspaper (Dagens Nyheter 2015). Two years later, however, the same newspaper published an article where graffiti and street art were referred to as art, and the klotter definition was rejected (Pallas 2017). It is further claimed that the Swedish zero tolerance policies have been influenced and used by lobbyists with political and commercial interests trying to generate a public image of graffiti as something undesirable and not appreciated in public space (Kimvall 2014). These “klotter” definitions usually embrace all forms of graffiti, which make graffiti equal to vandalism. An art collector thought that the zero tolerance policies have to some extent affected the classification of street artworks:

When it comes to graffiti or street art, there is a societal debate as well, due to the zero-policies/.../It is quite easy to, hate, uhm, “klotter”, and say: “this is not art”/.../There is obviously a tension and a polarization whether to call it this or that/.../And I guess there are various motives to put it in different genres/.../And street art, I guess street art is easier to sell in a frame, it doesn’t share the same

history [as graffiti], which has been perceived as vandalism and ugly. A lot of people find tags ugly/.../People must find it difficult to hang something on the wall and pay money for something they have perceived as ugly/.../I can see why not everyone would think my Dondis are art, you know.

(Interview 8, recording 2014)

It seems to be that most conflicts involve the differentiation of graffiti from vandalism, as opposed to the differentiation of street art from vandalism. Street art, which by its very term is recognized as “art”, is perceived as a more innocent expression and less radical than graffiti (Riggle 2010). To avoid being associated with vandalism, artists and mediators often use the term street art instead of graffiti to classify artworks. Hence, the differentiation here strives to classify artworks as street art, and *not* as graffiti. As the quote above by the art collector suggests, graffiti is more often seen as illegal, non-art, or vandalism than street art. Almost everyone I met during fieldwork agreed that the term street art “sounds” more legitimate than graffiti. While graffiti is mostly associated with tags on walls, street art sounds a little bit more proper.

The difference in perception between graffiti and street art is also notable in the implementations of zero tolerance policies. Theoretically, they imply that all unsanctioned works in public space must be removed. According to several of my informants, however, as well as confirmed by previous research (Schacter 2008, Merrill 2015), unsanctioned street art is rarely removed to the same extent as unsanctioned graffiti. Although unsanctioned street art is as illegal as unsanctioned graffiti, graffiti is still associated with crime and vandalism to a greater extent than street art is (Schacter 2008, Ten Eyck 2016). A Swedish gallery owner told me: “Street art is perceived differently. I’ve noticed that there are still street artworks in public spaces that are not removed, compared to all the graffiti next to them” (Interview 4, recording 2014). A representative from GraffitiFrämjandet, a graffiti promoting association, had noticed the same phenomenon:

I know a tunnel that was completely cleaned from graffiti, apart from a little street art stencil depicting a pink penguin. The tunnel was repeatedly cleaned but they never removed the penguin.

(Interview 16, recording 2015)

According to the representative, the graffiti style is too complex to be appreciated by people outside the graffiti culture, whereas street art is more aesthetically accessible than the complex typography of graffiti lettering:

You need to have knowledge to appreciate graffiti. It’s like modern ballet, it just looks weird to many, and you need to know something

about it to enjoy it. You could say that street art is a little bit like “regular dance”, and graffiti is the modern ballet. That’s why people find the penguin nice but not the graffiti tags.

(Interview 16, recording 2015)

The difference in legitimacy between graffiti and street art seems to be a reason for the preference for using the term street art, and not graffiti, when promoting public events, such as publicly funded city festivals. A festival curator explained to me how they reasoned regarding classifications:

I think the reason we use street art as a word is because it now has become very commercialized, you know. When companies, like the Google, and everybody else, are using that, it is much easier for people to understand what we are talking about.

(Interview 22, recording 2015)

Indeed, it is observed that graffiti is less marketable than street art (Bengtson 2014). This observation relates to the argument that street art has been perceived with more tolerance from society than graffiti has (Andersson 2006). Moreover, it legitimizes street art as an art form that engages more easily with art markets. The curator working with the festival replied to my question apropos of whether the artists had a graffiti background:

Yeah, most of them do. Most of them either used to be active or are currently active in doing graffiti on the side. But that is not what they do when they do their art. They are professional artists, you know, they do gallery shows. [The artist] sells his art professionally for a living, for the last 10 years./.../ We are not a graffiti festival.

(Interview 22, recording 2015)

The project manager of the festival was also annoyed by all references to graffiti. “People always say graffiti festival. And last year we had only two graffiti artists. The rest of them don’t do graffiti at all, they do street art” (Interview 23, recording 2015). Hence, although both graffiti and street artists were invited to participate in the festival, the differentiation from graffiti was maintained in favor of the less controversial term street art. At a meeting with the municipality and the project group planning the festival, a big part of the discussion concerned the definition of the art form. This issue mattered because the festival was supported financially by the city and, as such, it was part of the city’s tourism program. The city had (what the people at the meeting defined as) a zero tolerance policy against graffiti. Hence, they had to decide how to classify the artists and the artworks when communicating about the festival. At the meeting, a member was reluctant even to associate with these policies, however, as they relate graffiti to vandalism:

When people say, “well there is zero tolerance”, there is not where we see ourselves. This is not graffiti, it is not clutter, and therefore it should not be under the same umbrella. Hearing the word graffiti is frustrating because I think graffiti is so different to what we are.

(Observation 29, field notes 2015)

The festival project group agreed that street art should be the official definition for all art involved, both because of its more generous denotation embracing all art produced in the streets – including graffiti – but also because its connotations were perceived as less provocative than were those of graffiti. Later, when I was visiting the festival and joined one of the guided tours, this discussion was reflected in a conversation between the guide and a tour participant. When answering a question regarding the graffiti versus street art terminology, and why the city could not call it a graffiti festival when they clearly commissioned graffiti artists, the guide mentioned the hesitancy to define the artworks, or artists, in terms of graffiti. The guides were supposed to use the term street art throughout the tour, although they knew that some of the artists were considered to be graffiti artists elsewhere.

As cultural bureaucrats are involved in the classification of publicly funded art production (Harrison 2009), public authorities thus become involved in the exchange process. It also matters for valuations how regulators and policy makers choose to classify products (O’Brien 2014). Another example of the differentiation of publicly commissioned street art was offered by a public gallery director in a Swedish city. The director occasionally gave lectures about the city’s projects and about graffiti and street art, to inform building owners and civil servants who became affiliated with these projects. I asked the director what terms he used during these lectures. He told me that he preferred the term street art and explained:

I rather say street art. Because graffiti is too much associated with tags and that stuff. I may say “graffiti in the genre of street art” or something, because... it has a negative tone, I mean, people see what the streets look like, all the vandalism. And then graffiti is blamed for that. The *good* graffiti, I mean. Yeah, absolutely, the definitions really matter in these situations.

(Interview 34, recording 2015)

The differentiation that prefers the term street art in favor of the term graffiti does not seem to be as important in privately funded, purely commercial galleries as it seems to be in publicly funded arrangements. The commercial galleries do not have to relate to municipal graffiti policies to the same extent. Hence, they seem less concerned about using the terminology used by the members of the subculture. Rather, they strive to belong to their discourse. An owner of a

commercial gallery specializing in graffiti and street artists referred to his gallery and similar galleries, simply as graffiti and street art galleries:

I just talk about street art, well, graffiti and street art. And the reason to why I do that is because there is a very, very, big difference to the traditional art market. It is something else.

(Interview 6, recording 2014)

The differentiating here emphasizes the difference between the artistic practices of graffiti and street art and the artistic practices of conventional contemporary fine art. According to the gallery owner, the big difference between these markets was mainly due to the background of the artists. He emphasized the artistic skills these artists had because they had been doing graffiti for many years:

Some have artistic education and some have not. That is so cool /.../ you start painting in the streets to learn how to do art. And if you're good at it you can move on, start to exhibit in galleries and make money to support your family. Without a traditional art education. It is very fascinating. I mean, painting trains...! Awfully talented, some of them. That is very different to someone who went to Valand, Mejan or Konstfack<sup>8</sup>.

(Interview 6, recording 2014)

While classifications contribute to detaching artists from their (illegitimate) graffiti background, there are also classifications that strive to highlight the specific subcultural background of the street artists, and sometimes also their lack of education. As this quote illustrates, this background makes them unique and distinguished as artists, even though it may associate them with vandalism. Although lack of education could be seen as a drawback to legitimizing the artists (Preece et al. 2016, Rodner and Thompson 2013), it is an aspect that at least authenticates the artist (Well 2015). This discussion pinpoints a significant aspect of the classification of graffiti and street art, concerning how it is rather the artists themselves and not the artworks that become the objects of classification.

Differentiating also means that it is important for mediators and artists who situate themselves within the street art markets to position their activities as something different from other actors in the street art markets (Joy and Sherry 2003, Preece and Kerrigan 2015). A former gallery owner reflected on other galleries' exhibiting artists: "Well, they exhibit graffiti legends from the old schools, who have been active since the 80s. The artists I exhibited, however, were the edge, really, no other gallery had brought them to Sweden before" (Interview 19, recording 2015).

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<sup>8</sup> Three of the biggest art schools in Sweden

The privilege of being represented by a gallery is important for artists who want to exchange their art according to legitimized, standard practices of art markets (Wells 2016), and for the enhancement of their brand (Preece et al. 2016). It also matters for the galleries which artists they represent. For some galleries, it is important to claim: “That gallery is really focused on graffiti artists. We are more open to artists we consider as urban contemporary artists” (Interview 21, recording 2015). Moreover, some gallery owners strive to represent various artists almost as if in segments, which are differentiated from each other. For example, this means differentiating between their segment of graffiti artists and their segment of street artists. A gallery owner in Sweden told me:

I have just signed him. I have been trying to get him for a long time because I didn't have many talented *street* artists at the gallery/.../and you hear that people say “oh, he is the shit in the street art scene”.

(Interview 28, recording 2015)

A French gallery director further told me that they chose to buy advertisements in different magazines depending on the profile as well as fan and collector base of the artists:

We bought an ad for [the artist's] show in a French magazine that is more in street culture, *Be Street*. Because [the artist's] fans are around 20-30 years old. So we want to aim at this kind of public as well. And for [this artist], we will have an ad in *VNA*, a London magazine. It is a budget [issue], but I think it is quite interesting as well, to be known by collectors in London.

(Interview 21, recording 2015)

The differentiating of graffiti and street artworks also means positioning in history writing. The legitimization process of artworks comprises of a network of experts, such as artists, dealers, curators, academics, art teachers, critics and collectors, who negotiate the value of the artworks and decide on their potential place in art history (Preece and Bida 2017). The writing of art history is also occurring among graffiti and street art market actors. It strives to position graffiti and street art as authentic art forms with a history and a tradition of artistic development (Wells 2015), and not as an art form that emerged with the exchange products. Previous historical reviews claim that graffiti and street art has been omitted (Waclavek 2008) or marginalized (Jacobsson 1996) in art historical surveys. In the surveys where graffiti is mentioned, the art form is discussed only briefly (Kimvall 2014). In addition, there are usually references to art markets when graffiti and street art are integrated into the canonization and history writings of fine art (Kimvall 2014, following Miller 2002). One of the markers of an artwork's identity as fine art is the market transaction (Wells 2015). In order to position graffiti and



street art as historical and important art movements, market success becomes a legitimizing aspect (Pardo-Guerra 2011), at the same time as market exchanges, particularly through auctions, make the artworks appear as commodities (Velthuis 2011). The two most frequently mentioned artists in history surveys on graffiti and street art are Keith Haring and Jean Michel Basquiat – artists who for many within the graffiti culture would not even be considered *graffiti* artists (Kimvall 2014, Wells 2016). Nevertheless, these artists are also the ones that Artprice identifies as the most successful “street artists” in terms of auction sales (Artprice 2007).

History writing also takes place through the ambition of differentiating one’s project or artistry within the line of big breakthroughs of the graffiti and street art movement. In order to be remembered as important in the history of graffiti and street art, one strives to be in a unique position in relation to the other actors. This is notable in the arrangements of gallery shows, street art festivals and publicly funded street art projects. There seems to be an urge to represent these projects as the first, the most pure, the most unique, the biggest, or the most international event that has ever taken place in Sweden or in Northern Europe. When the contemporary history of graffiti and street art is about to position itself in the greater canon of fine art, the hard working actors making it happen obviously want to be remembered as playing a key role in the narrative. Moreover, mediators, such as galleries and publishing firms, have contributed to history writing by representing graffiti and street art in seminal collections and artists’ biographies. For example, the Contemporary Urban Art Guide (hereafter called the Art Guide), which is published annually by Graffiti Art magazine, provides a survey of the 100 most important urban artists of the current year (Graffiti Art 2014). Moreover, in connection to their gallery exhibitions, artists have also been invited to lecture about their years of being graffiti and street artists. Prior to two exhibitions with international artists in Sweden in the winter of 2014 and the spring of 2015, the artists participated in public seminars about the history of graffiti and the contemporary graffiti scene in their countries. Through these public events, they positioned themselves as contemporary artists in today’s graffiti and street art scene. At the same time, they were differentiated from conventional artists due to their history in the subculture.

This section on differentiating has mainly discussed practices that strive to differentiate graffiti from vandalism, street art from graffiti, and graffiti and street art from contemporary fine art. Moreover, as a principle which is expressed by most informants, it is claimed that graffiti and street art by nature *cannot* be sanctioned or commercial, and therefore, as a principle, there is no such thing as graffiti and street art for sale as exchangeable artworks. A gallery owner stated: “Street art is street art. It’s out in the street/.../It’s not that graffiti ‘moves’ into the galleries, no, that’s two different things/.../but of course, you see that the artists come from graffiti background” (Interview 4, recording 2014).

Moreover, the editors of Graffiti Art (2014) make the following distinction between subcultural and exchangeified artworks:

In view of this theoretical basis, we must make the distinction that *graffiti and street art* are confined to the public arena and *cannot* be used to describe anything which can be found at exhibitions in galleries or museums.

(Graffiti Art 2014, *author's italics*)

As shown, most informants agree that the artworks *for sale* should *not* be classified as graffiti or street art. If there is any guiding principle that unites the actors regarding the transformation of graffiti and street art into exchangeable market products, it seems to be this: the market products are not *graffiti and street art*. However, from the differentiating that has been discussed in this section, follows the question of how to represent these market categories, which are distinguished from subcultural, non-market categories. The following section of the classification chapter will discuss the constructing of a new category. In contrast with differentiating, which emphasizes differences, category making rather focuses on the characteristics shared among objects that form a category.

## Category making

Category making strives to construct a new product category into which commercial graffiti and street art can be classified, which entails representing the artworks as novel products in already existing art markets. The definition of the objects being exchangeified plays a key role when constructing new product markets (Rosa et al. 1999). Classifying artworks into product categories accomplishes many things: it generates shared understandings about identities of artists and their artworks by a collective of actors, it defines boundaries, and it sets expectations about similarities and comparability within the category (Khaire and Wadhvani 2010, Preece et al. 2016). Without a shared understanding of the labeling of the artwork, it is simply an ambiguous “configuration of color, shape, sound and smell” (Rosa et al.1999:66). Hence, as categorizing accomplishes many things in the exchangeification process of art, category making addresses situations when a suitable existing category is missing and there is a desire for a new category. As was discussed in the section on differentiating, the *artist* is often the object of classification, and not necessarily the individual artwork.

Our main focus is graffiti and street art, but then there is also urban art and that interpretation space is quite vast... it is sort of contemporary art, but stemming from an unconventional background.

(Interview 1, recording 2014)

This quote from an artist and gallery owner who specializes in graffiti and street artists, was a reply to my question about how the gallery usually defined the exchangeable artworks. The previous section discussed how artists and mediators strive to differentiate commercial graffiti and street artworks from conventional contemporary art. It was not clear, however, what terms that would serve as an accurate definition instead. Indeed, the debate on classifications is perhaps particularly ambivalent when graffiti and street art are discussed in market terms. When introducing a new product, producers usually adapt to locally agreed-on market definitions to enter markets (Hagberg 2008, Rosa et al. 1999). The classifications try to fit into already established systems (Foucault 1969/1989). In this case, suggestions on local market definitions could be “street art market”, or “contemporary art market” – definitions that adapt either to graffiti and street art subculture or to contemporary fine art. As mentioned previously, however, it is assumed to be an oxymoron to classify a market as street art market or graffiti market, as graffiti and street art are traditionally anti-commercial art practices. But simply categorizing these artworks as contemporary fine art seems problematic as well, as the art practices traditionally reject being institutionalized.

There seems to be a relevant difference between the category making of mobiles and murals. It is less problematic to categorize murals as graffiti or street art, as these artworks – although sanctioned and commissioned – are still being produced in public space. Hence, at first sight, murals may be more reminiscent of subcultural graffiti and street art than are mobiles. Regarding mobiles, a gallery owner and artist claimed:

You cannot bring stuff from the street and sell. You have to produce new works. If you are exhibiting street artist X, then it's not *street* art, really, but it is art by X who is a *street artist*, who made artworks adapted for this gallery space.

(Interview 1, recording 2014)

Another gallery owner agreed: “In principle, it is street artists exhibiting in a gallery. But the artworks themselves are not really street artworks” (Interview 10, recording 2014).

The resistance among actors who work with graffiti and street art against classifying commercial artworks as graffiti and street art was made more obvious when I called an art collector to whom I had been referred by previous informants. In answer to my question as to whether he would be interested in participating in an interview about “the art markets of graffiti and street art”, he responded that he did not understand what he had to do with this. He did not even believe this market existed:

Artworks that are made by street artists, but not made in the streets, are *not* street art. Street art is public art and it would be very weird to collect those artworks.

(Conversation 3, field notes 2014)

I asked him what he then called studio artworks that are made by graffiti and street artists, and he answered that it was just art.

To make graffiti and street art exchangeable in art markets, artists, mediators and buyers hence strive to find terms for the artworks that classify them as objects that can be bought and sold. In an interview published on the website of the Swedish auction house Bukowskis, an art collector refers to graffiti and street artworks for sale as “art that relates to graffiti and street art” (Sundin, interviewed in Anthony 2017). This formulation could be an attempt to avoid negotiating the authenticity of anti-commercial graffiti and street art practices of authentic artists (Wells 2015), while still recognizing their connection to the exchanged products. An artist observed:

I notice that people are confused and don't really know how to classify this art. I do graffiti inspired art, I guess. But I think the graffiti word is a bit worn out, and there are so many negative presumptions when you say “graffiti”. It's quite wise to use another word.

(Interview 15, recording 2015)

These quotes clearly show the resistance to classifying the individual artworks as something other than “artworks”, whereas it seems less complicated to classify the artists as “graffiti and street artists”.

There are also attempts, however, to classify the artworks too with something other than just the generic term “artworks”. As the market for graffiti and street art often strives to differentiate itself from the graffiti and street art subcultures, which usually classify the artworks as vandalism, new categories have emerged. During the last decade, the term “urban art” has been introduced as the definition of a category that embraces exchangeable artworks created by artists with a graffiti and street art background. The term urban art is proposed “to describe commercial art products made by artists who are somehow associated with the street art world” (Bengtson 2014:66). In this way, the artworks are removed from their web of relations (the subculture) and rearranged with equivalences (other contemporary artworks) to which the artworks can be compared (Pardo-Guerra 2011). The definition of urban art includes artworks that are produced in studios, exhibited in galleries or in other institutionalized forms, such as city festivals (Kimvall 2016). Moreover, an urban artwork can be sanctioned without being commercial. Equally, an urban artwork can be commercial but composed of

unsanctioned elements, such as artifacts taken from the street (Bengtson 2014). Hence, according to this definition, urban artists are artists who create unsanctioned graffiti and street artworks in public space *as well as* sanctioned and commercial urban artworks for sale. Some artists and mediators, such as the editors of Graffiti Art, who publish the Art Guide, add “contemporary” to the category. According to the editors, it is a mix of artists that fit the criteria of the category of contemporary urban art (Graffiti Art 2014). They claim in their 2014 edition of the guide:

The borders between contemporary art and urban art have become more and more blurred/.../we therefore named it urban contemporary art for clarification purposes and to focus on an approach encompassing several artistic areas such as the street, studio, gallery and institutions for artists from all horizons. Urban contemporary art describes a movement made up of artists working in the public arena and the studio as both are intrinsically linked and feed off each other.

(Graffiti Art 2014)

The *urban contemporary art* classification is thus slightly more inclusive than the *urban art* classification, which only embraces former graffiti and street artists and distinguishes between the sanctioned art form and the unsanctioned art form. Categories may thus constitute rather loose criteria, or may be composed of a mixture of typical aspects, such as different movements, schools, styles and genres (Preece et al. 2016). Regarding the contemporary urban art classification, the editor of Graffiti Art, also the director of a French gallery, told me:

There is no criteria [of technique]. I mean, it can be like, X is drawing, photograph, installations, Y has cut out paper, drawing, painting, and Z is abstract, very graphic.

(Interview 21, recording 2015)

Nevertheless, the classification of (contemporary) urban art enables a discussion on these artworks for sale, as it avoids the assumed oxymoron of street art markets. At the same time, the word “urban” is associated with graffiti and street artists’ traditional performance in public space, which facilitates the sense making of the new category.

Several galleries, publishers and other mediators chose around the 2010s, to use the urban art definition in order to classify commercial graffiti and street artworks. Particularly in a European context, the urban art category has become established both in academic (Bengtson 2013, 2014, Kimvall 2014) and popular (Nguyen and MacCenzie 2010) literature, as well as in practical accounts (Artcurial 2015, 2016, Artprice 2013a, Bonhams 2008, 2018, Graffiti Art 2014), as the proper definition

for the commercial artworks that are produced by graffiti and street artists. As classifications usually materialize in devices (Sjögren and Helgesson 2007), so was this new category found in devices, such as auction catalogues, books, art guides and sales reports. As mentioned, some of these category making actors were the market index site Artprice (2013, 2014), the art magazine Graffiti Art (2014), and the 400 page heavy coffee table book “Beyond the Street. The 100 Leading figures in Urban Art” (Nguyen and Mackenzie 2010). The Art Guide (Graffiti Art 2014), for instance, summarizes all of the various groups of artists that work in contemporary urban art. At the end of the guide, the reader finds full-page portraits of 100 artists in the urban art movement (Graffiti Art 2014). Stories like these artist portraits may be understood as market stories, which are tools for making sense of classification when new product markets are emerging and stabilizing (Rosa et al. 1999). With a substantial collection of artworks – a critical “mass” – an art category can be materialized (Dominguez-Rubio and Silva 2013). Hence, the classifications are performative as they participate in constructing categories (Azimont and Araujo 2010, Hagberg 2008). The category cannot exist without the artworks, but the categories also form the artworks.

Auction houses have a particular role when new product categories are introduced into art markets (Khaire and Wadhvani 2010). An art collector recognized the problem of classifying exchangeable graffiti and street art to make people understand. He stressed the auction houses’ efforts at sense making:

In a way it is a genre/.../But it’s a kind of advertising thing to call it urban art, street art or graffiti/.../If you go to a contemporary art auction and you see a Zevs print, I guess 99.5 % of all the buyers there would not know he is a street artist. But if you show him in another context, in an urban art auction, perhaps one of the most proper, adapted artworks that fits in their modern homes, then the buyers know it is urban art/.../I guess you just need to put genres on stuff/.../people know what to expect if you call it urban art, street art, graffiti. Personally, I think it is just contemporary art.

(Interview 8, recording 2014)

Indeed, actors who participated in constructing the category of urban art are the auction houses Bonhams (2008) and Artcurial (2015). In an interview from 2011, the manager responsible for urban art sales at Bonhams questioned the term street art for describing the market:

“Street art /.../ by definition it is an ephemeral art form, disappearing as quick as it appears. Urban art is an attempt to redress this by leaving a more permanent legacy” (Williams, interviewed in Meir 2011)<sup>9</sup>.

Some artists also prefer the term urban art. One artist, who has a long experience of being a graffiti writer and is famous in the graffiti culture, claimed that he preferred the term contemporary urban art when he had to place his artworks into categories (Interview 2, field notes 2014). Sometimes he used the term street art as well, but he knew that graffiti is particularly associated with something negative. Street art was better than graffiti, he believed, because at least it involves the word “art”. He did not think, however, that anyone in these art markets really knows what proper definitions to use. People just try to be pragmatic, he thought.

Another sense making device that mediators and artists use to construct a new category is the reference to other artists, again addressing the phenomenon of artists as the objects of classifications. Linking artists to other celebrated artists helps potential buyers to make sense of the classifications of new artworks (Preece et al. 2016), almost like a metaphor of the classification (Bowker and Star 2000). It is claimed both by informants and in previous literature that Banksy opened the door for the acceptance of graffiti and street art as fine art in prestigious international institutions (Wells 2016). When the art collector quoted above talked to me about sales of street art prints, he mentioned Banksy as an example. Immediately he apologized for this popular reference: “well, sorry for keep mentioning Banksy all the time, but it is so handy, because then it’s so easy to understand” (Interview 8, recording 2014). A festival organizer also thought about Banksy as the most convenient reference for people even within the “traditional art world” to make sense of this urban art category:

The art world hasn’t let these artists in, and hasn’t even read about street art. You must mention Banksy or someone. Then people know what you are talking about.

(Interview 19, recording 2015)

As these quotes show, established artists become backdrops against which new artworks make sense (Rodner and Thompson 2013). In this way, urban artworks are defined for potential buyers through strong, personal brands in order to be recognized as having value by target audiences (Kottász and Bennett 2014). In the case of urban art, Banksy and other famous street artists such as Os Gemeos, could thus be understood as sense makers to the less informed actors, as they are

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<sup>9</sup> However, today there is no longer an urban art department at Bonhams, and artworks by Banksy and other graffiti and street artists seem to have been moved to the category of “Post-war and Contemporary Art” and “Prints & Multiples”, retrieved 30-10-2019, <https://www.bonhams.com/departments/>

referred to in order to classify other, similar artists and artworks. For example, the artist Fintan Magee has a reputation for being “the Australian Banksy”, the artist brothers Sobekcis are referred to as “the Os Gemeos of the Balkans”, the artist Ernest Zacharevic as the “Banksy of Malaysia” (Graffiti Art 2014), and the artist Dran as the “French Banksy” (Artcurial 2016). These artists, within the same movement as Banksy and Os Gemeos, are co-branded due to the associations of the sense making artists (Preece 2014). This is defined as a halo effect (Kottász and Bennett 2014), or specifically, as in the case of Banksy, as the “Banksy-effect” (Bengtson 2014). Some artists argue that although many artists, especially graffiti writers, find Banksy too commercial or consider that the fuss about him is silly and overrated, they nevertheless agree that his fame has helped them and others to classify their art:

He is not the godfather of it, but he definitely placed us on the map.  
His name is important for people who don't have a clue on graffiti  
or street art. But they still know about Banksy.

(Conversation 6, field notes 2014)

Other artists thus become legitimized due to the successful categorizing of an already legitimized artist (Bengtson 2014, Preece 2014).

A new category is stabilized when relevant actors, such as art historians, critics, gallery owners, auction houses, and collectors, collectively define its identity (Khaire and Wadhvani 2010). Several informants claim that the urban art movement is still in its emergence. For that reason, a festival organizer argues, it is difficult but exciting to wonder where the movement is heading:

This culture has an identity crisis. It's like a teenager who was a kid  
for many years, it was wearing diapers and you just put it in the  
stroller, and it was easy to define. But now it's a teenager and it just  
“heeeeyyy I can do whatever I want!”

(Interview 18, recording 2015)

It is hence probably too early to say whether the category “urban art” has reached enough consensus within the collective concerning the category's identity to make it a stabilized category. Rhetoric by authorities, such as art historians and art critics, plays a key role when new market categories are constructed and stabilized (Khaire and Wadhvani 2010). To become established and used in common language, however, classifications need continuity (DiMaggio 1987, Foucault 1969/1989). A former gallery owner claimed:

Urban contemporary art, that should be the definition, but it's not  
used much. One uses graffiti, street art, urban art, but then what is



what, really? The umbrella term for everything should be urban contemporary art.

(Interview 19, recording 2015)

Producers may try to impose categories, but consumers may reject rather than accept these attempts (Beckert and Aspers 2011). Among artists, there are often objections to the perceived hype and buzzword connotations of the use of the term *urban art*. Moreover, in recent reports from Artprice (2017), the common reference term in the market for graffiti and street artists seems to be street art. In practice, graffiti and street art are still often used as the classifications for commercial artworks. Moreover, in a five-year ethnographic study on graffiti and street artists who work commercially in a US context (Wells 2015), the term urban art is not even mentioned. Instead, the study distinguishes the subcultural art from the commercial art by using terms such as “street graffiti” or “street writer”, to represent non-market products, and “graffiti art” and “street art” to represent market products. Perhaps it is simply a matter of national setting. As the commodified form of graffiti and street art has a long history in the US particularly, it might be weird to motivate an entirely new category called urban art. Indeed, none of my US informants used the term urban art.

The conceptual use of the term urban art suggested in theory (Bengtson 2014, Graffiti Art 2014) is thus constantly challenged in practice and it is frequently used in combination with the terms it is supposed to detach from. In the various representations of exchangeable art, such as in galleries, at auction houses, in books and on artists’ websites, the importance of the unsanctioned practices in public space, where graffiti and street artists originally produce artworks, is constantly referred to. When artists are represented and promoted as “urban artists” in the media as well as at gallery exhibitions, auction sales, festivals, and etcetera, there is a tendency to refer to the graffiti and street art subcultures and the artworks that they produce in these settings. Actors on “both sides” of the exchange face the task of classifying novel products and relating them to existing product categories (Rosa et al. 1999). Classification is then understood as performing “demand-side” classifications or “supply-side” classifications (Sjögren and Helgesson 2007). In graffiti and street art markets, however, that distinction is not as easily made, as the producing artist (“supply-side”) is often also a consumer (“demand-side”). Hence, managing classifications is complex because actors are members of many communities at the same time (Bowker and Star 2000). Coming back to the introduction to “Beyond the Street: The 100 Leading Figures in Urban Art” (Klanten, in Nguyen and Mackenzie 2010:5), it is claimed that:

For some [artists], this has meant eschewing public glory and commercial success. And yet, we can still sense a diffuse, deep yearning for public acceptance from these artists that contrasts with

the ever-popular Robin Hood-ideal of the anonymous and sensitive vandal rooted in graffiti subculture. This dilemma and dichotomy have all the ingredients of a classical drama.

A Swedish auction appraiser claimed that the more he thought about it, the more apparent was the interface between street art, graffiti, urban art and contemporary art. Nevertheless, he was aware of the significance of the subversive facet of the art form:

People want to emphasize the autonomous position of the art form, otherwise it loses its power. I think many realize that. And that's why you *want* to be an outcast. I think it's extremely important in a way, for survival.

(Interview 35, recording 2018)

The discussion above describes how the terms street art and graffiti are used in order to relate urban art to its subcultural heritage of graffiti and street art. As the above cases illustrate, urban art is still a concept that is used arbitrarily in practice (Dickens 2008) and has no consensus definition in theory (Bengtson 2014). The use of the term urban art could be understood as a strategic representational practice (Kjellberg and Helgesson 2006, 2007) in the exchangification of street art. This classification is thus part of the aim of authenticating graffiti and street art as art forms with a specific history, culture and aesthetics. However, the terms urban art and urban contemporary art are also used, not to authenticate the artworks, but rather to *legitimize* the artworks as something that can be classified as a fine art category, and not as a subcultural category (such as either graffiti or street art). As will be demonstrated in the following section on fluxing, the category of urban art is definitely not the only category used for classifying commercial graffiti and street art. Moreover, when new categories emerge, the question is what happens with the already existing ones (Khair and Wadhvani 2010). At the same time as new market categories are being delineated, old boundaries are in flux.

## Fluxing

Fluxing means that in order to make artworks exchangeable, there is a movement – a flux – in the representation between the various definitions and categories of graffiti and street art. As opposed to differentiating, the boundaries between categories are intentionally sustained as blurry. Fluxing enables adjustment to the category that best serves the exchangifying situation, which means choosing in which category it makes most sense to classify an artwork. Hence, although the classifying actors are aware of the usefulness of sometimes positioning the artist or the artwork in distinct categories, they also flux across category boundaries to slip easily into different categories when desirable. For example, artists may in

some situations define themselves as graffiti artists, if the target buyers for the artwork to be exchanged are members of the subculture. In other situations, artists may define themselves as urban contemporary artists, if the artworks are exchanged for an auction sale.

Positioning towards different consumer groups is often understood as segmentation in consumer and marketing research (Mallard 2007). Fluxing entails segmentation in flux, but could also be understood as pragmatic segmentation. This pragmatism addresses the controversies of art commodification. As has been made clear by now, the exchangification of graffiti and street art does not happen without criticism. There is a common argument in subcultural settings claiming that graffiti and street artists who do commercial work are “sell-outs” (Bengtson 2014). However, it has already been discussed in previous chapters that although artists claim that they separate their street artwork from their studio work, using different labels on each practice, they seem to depend on the connection between the practices. Some artists’ commercially oriented Instagram posts are mixed with posts on unsanctioned artworks to show that the artist is still active on the streets. Other artists have different Instagram accounts, with commercial artworks posted on one and subcultural, unsanctioned works on the other. A festival organizer in Sweden confirmed this fluxing pragmatism:

They are writers. They have been painting in streets for 10-15 years, but they have their artist career as well. They separate these. Because what they do in the street is illegal. So they do graffiti with their illegal alias and they exhibit in galleries with their real names. Of course some people know they are the same, but officially there is no connection between these two identities.

(Interview 18, recording 2015)

Graffiti and street artists hence usually have two aliases, their subcultural name and their “real” name. This double media presence helps the artists to maintain authenticity and sustain their identities (Beverland et al. 2010) as street artists in the subcultural communities. The artist’s maintenance of authenticity through classifications also legitimizes the artist’s commercial practices within the subculture (Wells 2015). According to several artists, it is tricky to decide when to use which alias. It usually depends on the circumstances of the exhibition:

I use both, actually. I started exhibit with my graffiti name, as graffiti was where I started in a way. When graffiti artists exhibit their art, they often use their graffiti name. But I feel a bit ambivalent. If I exhibit in more pure, fine art contexts, I usually have my real name. However, I often end up having both names, because I can’t really decide, haha.

(Interview 15, recording 2015)

At a gallery in Copenhagen, I visited an exhibition that was “celebrating street art”. In the folders about the exhibition, two of the participating artists were represented by their real name, and apart from the exhibition’s overall reference to “street art”, these artists had no other classifications, nor did the artworks that they exhibited (Archival material 35). The four other artists were represented by their subcultural aliases. In addition, as artists they were classified as street artists and graffiti *maler* (painter). This exhibition showed that there is also a flux in how artists are represented, even when they exhibit together under a common theme.

It is discussed both in previous literature (Bengtsen 2014, Wells 2015) and in my fieldwork how artists should have an authentic background as street artists in order to give credibility to their commercial practices. An art collector claimed:

Artists may appear as not very authentic if they have never been doing it for real. You can’t call yourself graffiti artist and sell graffiti on a canvas, if you have never done numerous graffiti pieces and tags and so on.

(Interview 8, recording 2014)

It has also been claimed, however, that this belief may be going through a paradigm shift, where the artist’s street origins are no longer important (Wells 2016), and the distinction between what is street art and urban art is becoming blurred (Bengtsen 2014). The editors of the Art Guide 2014 (Graffiti Art 2014) find it difficult to clearly delineate the border between urban art and contemporary art. In addition, the hashtags *#spraycanart* or *#aerosolart* are sometimes used in social media posts to classify artworks for sale. These hashtags are associated with artistic techniques and material rather than either unsanctioned space or commercial galleries. This is perhaps an attempt to differentiate the exchangeable artworks both from the subculture’s associations with vandalism, which some art clients may find intimidating (Wells 2015), and from the commodification of the subculture, which some artists may find intimidating. The editors of the Art Guide notice that some artists try to distance themselves from graffiti and street art representations whereas others try to embrace them. The editors claim:

The artists from the streets are confirming their establishment in contemporary art, trying to remain apart from any assimilation into the graffiti and street art movement in their communication, but other artists are developing their careers in specialized galleries. (Graffiti Art 2014).

Another art collector shared the opinion that it is difficult to classify exchangeable graffiti and street art in a category. He claimed that for many people, the classification criteria is more about the aesthetics of the artwork than the

production of the artwork: “The definition street art seems to be rather a look than something that must have been made in the street” (Interview 8, recording 2014). Indeed, fluxing further means that classifications are used even when the users neither believe in them nor agree about them (Bowker and Star 2000), but use them for pragmatic reasons. A Swedish artist was annoyed at being categorized as a street artist, as he claimed that his commercial work was not street art. His criteria for classifying graffiti and street art were definitely dependent on the production:

Of course, people see that I come from graffiti culture, but I would never call my artworks *street art*, because it is not made in the street. Street art is not an art form, it’s not a style. It’s exactly what it says it is: *street art*. I’m so provoked by people who ask me: “oh, is this street art?” Or who call me a street artist. What the hell, I paint on canvas and I exhibit in galleries. What’s street art about that? When I *don’t* work? Well, yeah, I do graffiti.

(Conversation 6, field notes 2014)

The artist further claimed that it was not his goal to situate himself in the “street art scene”. He continued, however:

Well, I was very anti this thing before, but now, you know what, if you’re a gallery owner, do whatever you want to sell my art. You wanna call it street art? Please, go ahead.

(Conversation 6, field notes 2014)

These quotes above reflect the principle discussed previously, that subcultural graffiti and street art is differentiated from exchangeable graffiti and street art; it *cannot* be displayed in museums and galleries, and is thus a reason for the making of the category of urban art. The quotes further reflect, however, that although many artists and mediators hold to this principle, it often appears to be a principle and not a practice. For example, the principle is expressed on the first page of the Art Guide (Graffiti Art 2014), but the galleries advertising in the guide do not make the same distinction (Archival material 33). A German gallery is called “Street Art Gallery”, thus ignoring the assumed oxymoron stated on the Art Guide’s first page. The fluxing between definitions of the artworks entails that an object can have multiple classifications depending on the classifying actor (Sjögren and Helgesson 2007). Gallery owners, festival organizers and auction houses often do not make a distinction between the terms street art, graffiti and urban art when promoting artworks in public media. In Instagram posts promoting artists and exhibitions, galleries use the hashtags *#graffiti*, *#streetart* and *#urbanart* altogether. Some Instagram posts display specific artworks and announce that they have been sold. Moreover, these hashtags do not place the artworks in specific categories, but offer many alternatives. Similarly, in the press

release of the Artcurial urban art sale in February 2015 – “Urban art’ – a week dedicated to street art” – the director of the Urban Art department Arnaud Oliveux is quoted on the first page of the release:

Since the first sale dedicated entirely to urban art in 2008, Street Art has become an internationally renowned artistic movement, celebrated by the art market/.../The 9<sup>th</sup> sale, a truly artistic and cultural event, reflects this commitment to contemporary art/.../  
(Artcurial 2015)

In a few sentences, the artworks composing this sale are classified as both urban art, street art and contemporary art. In addition, in the presentation of some of the most “remarkable urban artworks” among the lots, according to the release, a canvas by Dondi White from 1983 is represented as early American graffiti. Moreover, the auctions of street artworks for sale at a Swedish auction house in 2011 and 2012 were promoted as a “street art and graffiti auction”. News media reported on the sales also using the terms graffiti and street art in captions such as: “graffiti under the hammer”, “graffiti for sale”, “street art entering the art world”. The manager of the auction house was confused about the classifications and various categories:

If you say graffiti, then people object, “no, that’s not graffiti, that’s street art”. And then they say, “no, that’s not street art because it’s on canvas...” well, what should you call it then? You need to call it something.

(Interview 9, recording 2014)

Indeed, Haring and Basquiat are sometimes defined as graffiti and street artists (Artprice 2007), and sometimes as artists who are *inspired by* graffiti (Kimvall 2014). When Artprice presented sales numbers of artworks produced by graffiti and street artists in 2007, the category was referred to as “graffiti art” (Artprice 2007). In 2008, the category was referred to as contemporary art (Artprice 2008). A few years later, Artprice represented artists such as Keith Haring, Basquiat and Banksy, sometimes as part of the street art market, sometimes the urban art market, and sometimes the contemporary art market (Artprice 2010, 2013, 2014). Fluxing means that it may be important to classify graffiti and street art as *art*, but it seems less important to make distinctions between specific art categories or to position the artworks in one specific category.

Underlying the fluxing is sometimes a criticism of the distinction between street art and contemporary art. Some artists and mediators argue that the commercial works made by graffiti or street artists should be acknowledged in the contemporary art world without a specific sub-category association. Urban art is also a term that has been used for rallying around the market hype of the art form,

as “urban” in some readings could be conceived of as a buzzword (Dickens 2008). A collector even claims that he thinks urban art has become a degrading term to use (Sundin, interviewed in Anthony 2017). An art expert and appraiser at a Swedish auction house claimed that it has become problematic to categorize street artworks as a sub category of contemporary art, because today there is no clear delineation between these categories. However, when street artworks were new to the auction world, the delineation was necessary, he argued:

It has become problematic. In the beginning, I thought just the opposite. Then it was important. To introduce street art, not necessarily as a sales object only, but to highlight the art form in relation to the contemporary art.

(Interview 35, recording 2018)

A festival organizer and artist agent had a similar argument about the importance of making sense when introducing the art form, but, as some artists are becoming well known, the new categories are unnecessary: “Some artists jump between categories when they are famous enough. You don’t have to put the label ‘urban art’ on Banksy when his works are on sale” (Interview 18, recording 2015). These non-consistent and seemingly arbitrary classifications should perhaps be understood as pragmatic and (more or less) strategic. The artworks are classified in order to gain legitimacy and become entangled in the categories of the established art world (Pardo-Guerra 2011), but they are at the same time classified to communicate what “kind of art” they are all about, thus also being entangled in the graffiti and street art worlds. This pragmatic fluxing entails the management of tensions between divergent viewpoints, and contributes to compromises that arise in order to reach coherence across intersecting communities (Bowker and Star 2000).

The classification of artists at auction houses also relates to monetary worth, however, according to a Swedish gallery owner and dealer in contemporary art. He observed about the Banksy works sold at auction houses: “Christie’s have their Contemporary Art section, and they have their Urban Art section. And if they sell really expensive lots by Banksy, it ends up in Contemporary” (Interview 13, recording 2014). According to this observation, works by Banksy would normally be classified in the urban art category, as long as these lots were not valued highly enough to be comparable to artworks within the category of “contemporary” artists. The classification of urban art was thus a category with lower value estimations on the artworks. The ability to reclassify a product into a new category is a strategic resource, as it enables the product to be re-positioned in order to fit a certain clientele in the market better (Callon et al. 2002, Finch and Geiger 2010). This may explain why more expensive Banksy lots suddenly move from one classification category to another. Although the categorizing of artworks may indicate the value of the artworks, the artists cannot always control this

classification (Kottász and Bennett 2014). A former art gallery owner claimed: “Basquiat is not classified as street art at the auction houses. But that’s what he was” (Interview 19, recording 2015). Thus, when the contemporary art category includes a greater number of works by street artists, the classification system shifts from building on principles of aesthetics or methods, to principles of economic values. The destabilization of new and established product categories triggers sense-making among the communities that are affected by the new product (Rosa et al. 1999). In the case of Banksy and other expensive artists such as Basquiat and Keith Haring, who are sometimes referred to as street artists and sometimes as contemporary artists, the category boundaries between contemporary art, urban art, and street art seem to be a matter of economic value.

The fluxing between contemporary art classifications – and the potential destabilization of existing categories (Rosa et al. 1999) – is possible to discern also in publicly commissioned murals. For example, when the category of “urban art” is used to classify publicly commissioned murals by street artists, the question is how this category relates to the established and institutionalized art category of public art. It has been discussed previously whether publicly funded murals in public space should be classified as public art, street art or urban art (Bengtson 2014). The director of the Swedish Arts Council, which is the department responsible for public art commissions, argues that it would be a challenge to commission street artists to work with sanctioned and planned processes, as the (subcultural) art form is often spontaneous (Malm, interviewed in Anthony 2017). Although graffiti and street artists work with the surfaces and artifacts of public space when they do commissioned artworks, public art and street art are often classified as separate categories of art. Mural artworks produced at street art festivals, however, aesthetically more often resemble public art than street art (Bengtson 2014). Indeed, sanctioned street art has sometimes been defined as Independent Public Art (Schacter 2013).

As the question of commissioned *public art* versus commissioned *street art* above shows, objectification and the conditions of production also matter for classifications, which enable flux between categories. An illustrating example is the murals that were created for the Swedish street art festival that I observed more closely. At the project meeting that I attended, the members discussed how there were different regulations for commissioning a “street artwork” in public space and for commissioning a “public artwork” in public space. Publicly commissioned street art is usually classified as temporary artworks and thus gets temporary building permits, whereas public art commissions get permanent building permits (Observation 29, field notes 2015). Classifications are thus involved in domesticating and authorizing. Moreover, except for the different building permits that are involved, street artists argue that they also are paid differently depending on whether they are commissioned to do a “public art” mural or a “street art” mural. Hence, classifications involve the consideration of



multiple aspects (Bowker and Star 2000). Apart from production, they also involves pricing (Hagberg 2008). Regarding the city festival mentioned above, an artist told me:

The artists got 10 000 SEK<sup>10</sup> each, which is a terrible payment considering the large murals the city got for that money. If they would have contracted the artists according to the guidelines of public art commissions, the artists should have got like 100 000 or something/.../if it's considered a public art festival with famous artists, they know it's going to cost, but when they consider it a graffiti festival with a bunch of "graffiti kids", then they can pay them really cheap.

(Interview 15, recording 2015)

The delineation between commissioned street art and public art is not only concerned with the socially constructed meaning of public art versus street art discourses (Bengtson 2014). Practices that delineate street art categories from other public artworks are also disclosed through how they are commissioned, performed and paid for. According to several informants, street art has not yet become institutionalized in the established art scene in Sweden, which could explain why commissioned street art has not been given the same status as commissioned public art. However, an artist and former graffiti writer was commissioned to do a site specific artwork for the Swedish hospital Nya Karolinska. As the artist was commissioned to do a public artwork, he was paid accordingly. In the information folder distributed by the Culture administration at Region Stockholm, the description of the artwork refers to the graffiti background of the artist (Region Stockholm 2017). The folder states that although the artist's early graffiti works have been removed, as they were illegal, the artist has since then participated in legitimizing graffiti in public space. Hence, even in market settings, the non-commercial terms of graffiti and street art are still a point of reference when representing the market. Again, it is shown that fluxing means that an artwork may have multiple classifications depending on the classifying actor as well as the target for the classification. The classifications are rather pragmatic choices that end up with certain definitions, adapted to the specific situation.

Coming back to the claim that ideal classification systems, which are consistent, mutually exclusive, and complete, are almost impossible to achieve (Bowker and Star 2000), fluxing also indicates that there exist no ideal classifications of graffiti and street artworks for sale. Although street art, graffiti, urban art, and contemporary art are regarded as differentiated categories, they are yet constantly associated, seen as overlapping, or even as equal art categories. The fluxing makes

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<sup>10</sup> At the time of this festival, 10 000 SEK was roughly equal to 1000 euros

the phenomenon that seems impossible in theory – the oxymoron “graffiti and street art market” – possible in practice. The possibility of fluxing between categories is required in order to exchange graffiti and street artworks, as there is a need to adapt the classification to the different situations of exchange. The fluxing cannot work alone however; it requires that categories are made and that they are differentiated from each other in order for there to be categories to flux between. The following section will summarize how differentiating, category making and fluxing together contribute to the exchange process.

## **Summing up classification:**

### **legitimacy and authenticity aspects**

This chapter has discussed the classification of graffiti and street art to make the artworks ready for market exchange. In order for the artworks to become exchangeable market products, classification refers to how categories are defined and represented in relation to each other, and how artworks are placed in categories. Classification contributes to the exchange process by facilitating sense making about the artworks and the artists, and by enabling comparability between artworks that are being exchanged. Idealized classification systems are difficult to achieve, however. The various representations of graffiti and street art depend on other conditions than a set of fixed classifying principles. In classification situations, it is possible to distinguish: 1) differentiating, 2) category making, and 3) fluxing. *Differentiating* means to emphasize differences between artworks and between art categories, in order to represent the artworks as market products. *Category making* means to construct a new category in order to represent the artworks as market products. *Fluxing* means to adjust the representation of the artwork or the artist to specific situations of exchange.

Classifications of graffiti and street art are difficult to conduct but important for the exchange to occur. Part of the difficulty of classifying graffiti and street art as market products relates to the difficulties and non-consensus discussions on classifying subcultural graffiti and street art. It seems to become even more difficult when the market gets involved in the classifications. An often-claimed principle is that graffiti and street art *cannot* be sold as market products. When market exchanges occur, the artwork is no longer graffiti or street art. Although people agree on classifying principles, they may often fail to agree on how to classify in practice. The classification also varies depending on *who* is classifying: actors with public money, private collectors or subcultural fans. As graffiti and street art are perceived differently in society, the terms are used strategically and pragmatically in order to offer different representations of the market products.

Just like objectification, classifications often turn out to be pragmatic. The main drivers of the exchangeification process are authenticity and legitimacy. This means that, depending on the circumstances, classifications strive to negotiate for more or less authenticity and more or less legitimacy when artworks are transformed into market products. Although there are many similarities, however, there is a significant difference between objectification and classification. The domesticating, art-tributing and authorizing contribute to the ownable qualities of the artwork. The differentiating, category making and fluxing rather contribute to the representing qualities of the artist. Hence, when classifications occur, it is often the *artist* who is placed in categories in order to make the *artwork* exchangeable. This means that it is the classification of the artist that strives to balance the aspects of authenticity and legitimacy in the exchangeification of the artwork.

Differentiating strives to position graffiti and street artists in a unique position with regard to other contemporary artists. To place artists in the graffiti or street art category contributes to the representation of these artists as belonging to an authentic tradition of subcultural practices. As has been discussed in this chapter, artists' authentic background as street artists gives credibility to their commercial practices. It is more difficult to classify the artworks as authentic graffiti or street artworks, as they have been produced to be exchangeable in markets. The classification of the artist as a graffiti or street artists thus becomes a way of associating the artwork with authenticity. The differentiation is shown in the attempts to canonize and write the history of some of the artists who are active in gallery exhibitions, festivals and auction sales. This history writing attempts to position graffiti and street art in an authentic tradition of artistic development, and not as an art form that has emerged due to market interests. Ironically, however, in order to position graffiti and street art as historical and important art movements, their market success nevertheless becomes a legitimizing aspect.

At the same time as it strives to achieve authenticity, however, the exchangeification process endeavors to attain legitimacy. This aspect makes the categories of graffiti and street art complicated to use, as these art forms are associated with vandalism and illegitimate practices in public space. Hence, in order to legitimize artworks created by graffiti and street artists as market products, differentiating strives to classify graffiti and street art as *not* being vandalism (or "klotter"). Moreover, there is a different discursive legitimacy in the terms graffiti and street art. This difference in legitimacy has been a reason for the preference for the term street art, and not graffiti, when promoting public events, such as publicly funded city festivals. Public events, at least in Sweden, often need to deal with zero tolerance policies against graffiti. The public organizers thus try to avoid associations with "illegitimate" graffiti. Another reason for using street art instead of graffiti is to include a greater range of artists, as street art is often seen as an umbrella term that embraces all art practices originating in public space.

Moreover, just as with the objectification of artworks, mobiles and murals are classified differently due to their different conditions. As the mobile format is similar to that of conventional collectable artworks, such as paintings and prints, whereas murals are similar to unsanctioned graffiti and street art, it is less problematic to call murals “graffiti” or “street art” – they are still in the street.

As the exchangification of graffiti and street art has increased in European market settings, however, such as in galleries, auction houses and in public festival events, it has been called for a new terminology for this transformed art form and market product. As several actors are reluctant to classify market products as graffiti and street art, compromises such as “street art that relates to graffiti and street art” or “graffiti inspired art” have been used. For many actors, however, the new term has become urban art or contemporary urban art. This category making refers to the introduction of urban art as a new product category in the contemporary art market. With a new category of urban art, actors avoid the paradox of selling “street art”, while at the same time sustaining the association with urban space and the graffiti and street art subcultures. Urban art becomes a more legitimate term than graffiti and street art, which are traditionally associated with vandalism, graffiti in particular. Hence, when classifying artworks as urban art, they are defined as being similar to other products that are defined as art. But they are also defined as urban, which differentiates them from other contemporary artworks. This could be understood as a pragmatic result of negotiating the tensions between authenticity and legitimacy: the classifications strive to make a distinction between vandalism and art (aiming for legitimacy) while at the same time not distancing themselves too much from the subculture (aiming for authenticity). The urban art definition is thus an attempt to describe a specific genre of artworks, without using the assumed oxymoron “street art market”, and yet associate to urban subcultures. The notions of urban art and urban artists could be seen as sense-making devices that attempt to overlap the boundaries of sanctioned and unsanctioned artistic practices.

The pragmatism of classification is mostly emphasized through fluxing. Here it becomes clear that placing objects into categories is sometimes standardized and sometimes ambiguous and conducted in a more ad hoc manner. Fluxing entails the management of tensions between divergent viewpoints, which appear when authenticity and legitimacy are negotiated. The representations of the artworks that are being exchangified are constructed by means of catering to various buyers in order to gain legitimacy and maintain authenticity. Another aspect that may become a motivator to flux or differentiate between categories is the national language issue. Street art perhaps works better in Sweden and the US, whereas urban art works better in the UK or France.

This chapter has discussed how classification contributes to the exchangification process by facilitating sense making about the artworks that are being

exchangified among the actors involved in the exchangification process. Hence, the problematic situation of placing artworks into categories, the classification of individual artworks, is often solved by placing the *artist* in categories instead. For instance, the artwork is an artwork, whereas the artist is a graffiti artist. This aspect of classification emphasizes the strong link between producer and product in the exchangification of art. Grouped together, the artworks are categorized seemingly unproblematically as either street art, graffiti, urban art or contemporary art, whereas as individual objects, the classification focuses on the artist instead.

### **Getting ready for valuation**

The discussion in this chapter has disclosed that part of classification relates to how an artwork is objectified, which was elaborated on in the previous chapter. Hence, so far in this book, I have discussed how objectification and classification contribute to the exchangification process. These practices are not enough to transform artworks into market products, however. The exchangification also includes the attribution of exchange values to the artworks, i.e. prices. These valuations are affected by how artworks are classified in different movements, schools, styles and genres (Preece et al. 2016), as well as how they are produced (Velthuis 2005). Before calculative practices are possible, however, it is suggested that things must be placed in some kind of order (Azimont and Araujo 2010). This claim, at least tentatively, suggests that classifications precede valuations. In the next chapter, I will elaborate further on these valuations.

## 8 Valuation

Valuation contributes to the exchangeification process by generating exchange values in order to transform an artwork into a market product. This chapter discusses how murals and mobiles are valued in order to produce monetary exchange values (prices), which make the artworks ready for market exchange. The exchange values regard both the prices set on mobile artworks, and the payments to artists for their murals. The previous chapters on objectification and classification have discussed two of the three main practices that take place in order for exchangeification to come about. These practices regard the transformation of an artwork to make it ownable and possible to transfer between owners, as well as the transformation of an artwork to become classified and represented as a market product. Moreover, it was discussed in the previous chapters how objectifying and classifying artworks often relates to valuations of art. The categorization into different customer segments or price categories impacts on the valuation of the artworks (Beckert and Aspers 2011, O'Neill 2008, Preece et al. 2016), as does the production of the artworks. This third and last empirical chapter, discussing the valuation that leads to the pricing of artworks, thus ties in with the previous chapters in exploring the process of exchangeification.

In the previous literature, the commodification of art is often equated to the establishment of exchange values (Appadurai 1986, Velthuis 2005, Wood 1996/2003). Indeed, a fundamental aspect of the existence of (art) markets is obviously pricing (Çalışkan and Callon 2010, Hagberg and Kjellberg 2014, O'Neill 2008, Velthuis 2005). In addition to monetary exchange values, there is a wide register of values to take into account when studying valuations in art markets (Belfiore 2018, Dekker 2015, Hutter and Throsby 2008, Karpik 2010, Modig and Modig 2013, Philips 2015, Preece and Bida 2017, Preece et al. 2016, Rodner and Thompson 2013, Strandvad 2014, Ten Eyck 2016, Velthuis 2005, Wells 2015, Wikberg 2017). Hence, due to these multiple, possibly competing values, frictions often emerge when actors are trying to agree on prices (Beckert and Aspers 2011). Many artists and gallery owners complain about the struggle to negotiate pricing. The difficulties in negotiating prices are also due to the disputed identity of the artwork – should it be considered a commodity or a cultural good (Velthuis 2005)? In an interview, a graffiti workshop organizer discussed the traditional (non-commercial) exchange of graffiti:

Graffiti is a sort of Potlatch system, which existed with the native North Americans; you compete in giving away things. It's the same with graffiti. You decide to paint a wall, you invest time, money and risk. And then the piece is given away for free to everyone.

(Interview 32, recording 2015)

These anti-commercial activities thus indicate that the artists are often willing to pay for their input without receiving payment for their output (Ten Eyck 2016). A representative of the graffiti association GraffitiFrämjandet further thought that, according to the logics of economics, the graffiti culture is perceived as having no *raison d'être*, because of its lack of interest in making profits:

Perhaps this is the most provocative with graffiti, that there is actually people who spend time, they buy paint and stuff, they risk a lot, and for what? Just for the sake of art. People outside the culture find that to be provocative: why are they doing this for no profit?!

(Interview 16, recording 2014)

During fieldwork, it was often difficult to talk to artists about monetary values in relation to their own work. It appeared to be a very delicate issue. Some artists explicitly claimed that they did not want to talk about it, while others said that it was too complex a question to be able to give a fair response. It was a little easier to discuss values in general, and particularly social, cultural and aesthetic values. Findings from previous research (Velthuis 2005) also suggest that mediators and artists find pricing to be a haphazard, inexact, ad-hoc and arbitrary practice. It has been claimed that the acquisition of monetary values in art markets is seen as something mysterious and opaque to outsiders (MacNeill and Wilson-Anastasios 2014, Preece et al. 2016, Preece and Bida 2017), embedded in secrecy (Philips 2015), and tacit code systems (Velthuis 2005). In addition, the artist represents both the product and the producer, which makes the valuation of artworks more complicated (Fillis 2015).

The perception that pricing artworks is complex, mysterious and delicate to discuss draws on the claim that it seems paradoxical to attribute economic value to artworks that are strongly associated with anti-commodification (Kopytoff 1986). Unsanctioned graffiti and street artworks have always been produced without payments to the creator, and the non-monetary values of subcultural graffiti and street art mean that pricing is characterized both by inconvenience and insecurity. It has been disclosed, however, that many contemporary artists – not only graffiti and street artists – often work without being properly compensated, neither by publicly funded institutions (Konstnärsnämnden 2008, Paying Artists ) nor by gallery sales (Abbing 2002, O'Neill 2008).

Conditions are often similar, but there also seem to be differences between the possibilities of payments for graffiti and street artists and for other contemporary artists. Contemporary artists, who want to live on their artistic work even though their artworks, such as performances, to some extent resist engagement with commercial art markets, still aim for some sort of monetary compensation, for example through project grants, scholarships or salary fees for museum exhibitions. Many graffiti and street artists would not even expect this sort of

compensation for their artworks, as the art practices they work with have not been institutionalized or legitimized to the same extent. It is also claimed that the political values of public street art are neutralized when it is commodified and transformed onto canvas (Preece and Bida 2017, Ten Eyck 2016). The loss of seemingly non-economic values could also affect the monetary exchange values (Wells 2015) that are needed for exchangeification.

In the previous chapter, it was discussed how it is often the artist that is the object of classification, in order to represent the artwork as a market product. In the objectification chapter, it was disclosed that material elements of the production of the artwork were aimed at enhancing potential buyers' willingness to purchase the artworks. Thus, it seems important to revisit the intrinsic qualities of artworks in order to understand how valuations are conducted. In fact, previous research has shown that, according to artists (particularly at the lower end of art markets), the two most common aspects in pricing decisions are the costs related to production, and the size of the artwork (O'Neil 2008).

Drawing on a pragmatist approach (Beckert and Aspers 2011, Helgesson and Muniesa 2013, Vatin 2013), valuation in the exchangeification process entails producing values for an object (valorizing), and calculating the exchange value – the price – of an object (evaluation). These two-fold dimensions of valuation mean that the price of an artwork is calculated on the basis of multiple aspects of values (Dekker 2015), which could be economic, cultural, symbolical, moral, aesthetic, or production-related. Valuation thus means that the monetary exchange value is calculated and determined by taking these aspects into consideration (Vatin 2013). “Performing valuations has to do with producing economic value, namely, valuable transformations in the world that will be worth the price for others” (Vatin 2013:32). In the exchangeification process, valuation thus leads to a monetary exchange value of an object – that is, pricing.

Building on previous literature on valuations and pricing in (art) markets (Beckert and Aspers 2011, Callon et al. 2002, Karpik 2010, Preece et al. 2016, Preece and Bida 2017, Velthuis 2005, Wells 2015), and particularly Vatin (2013), this chapter is organized in following sections: 1) intrinsic valorizing, 2) extrinsic valorizing, and 3) evaluating. To explain more clearly how valuations of graffiti and street art are performed, valorizing and evaluating are here treated separately, although these dimensions do indeed overlap and are interlinked (Beckert and Aspers 2011, Vatin 2013). *Intrinsic valorizing* means that the values of the artworks are produced through intrinsic guiding rules, which mainly consider material and production-related qualities of the artwork, such as size, media, motif, technique, and hours of labor. *Extrinsic valorizing* entails that the values of the artworks are produced mainly through extrinsic qualities and references, such as the creation of the reputation and brand of the artist and the references to similar artists. *Evaluating* entails that the pricing actors involved negotiate, calculate and determine the



monetary exchange value from the multiple values that have been produced through valorizing.

## **Intrinsic valorizing**

Intrinsic valorizing means the production of values for graffiti and street artworks mainly by emphasizing the intrinsic qualities of the artworks, which relate to the production of the artwork. The intrinsic aspects constitute size, material and technique, aesthetic elements, and labor, that is, the hours of work involved in producing the artwork to be exchanged.

Some of the intrinsic aspects of graffiti artworks have already been discussed in the objectification chapter. For example, one of the collectors quoted above argued that the larger a graffiti canvas, the better it was. The canvas appeared more authentic the more similar it was to the graffiti pieces produced as unsanctioned artworks in public space. The collector further claimed that sketches were even more collectable, as he perceived them to be even more authentic. Hence, he valorized the intrinsic qualities of size and technique with regard to how authentic the pieces appeared. The authenticity of artworks is a valorizing quality in general (Wells 2015), but so is legitimacy (Daar and Schultz Nybacka 2017). Size and material also influences the valorizing of artworks because these aspects enable ownership, which legitimizes graffiti and street art as market products similar to other ownable and mobile contemporary artworks. Another intrinsic aspect is the motif or figure content of the artwork. As was discussed in the objectification chapter, artworks may include artifacts from public space in order to pay tribute to the subculture. This art-tributing, which would enhance the authenticity of the artwork (Bengtson 2014), at the same time as the production was adjusted in order to make the artworks ownable, are clearly also related to valorizing. This intrinsic valorizing is thus closely related to the production of artworks. According to a gallery owner, who was quoted in the objectification chapter about the commissioning of murals, the labor of the artists is valorized differently: “We provide a catalogue with different artists and the buyers can see their previous works in a portfolio. They can choose which style they want, to various prices” (Interview 1, recording 2014). The intrinsic aspect of labor is thus also related to the extrinsic aspects of the artist’s reputation and brand, as more well-known artists are priced more highly.

Both the objectification and the classification chapter discussed how the aesthetics of graffiti and street art are perceived differently in terms of legitimacy. This difference is shown for example, in building permits for public artworks and in the implementation of tolerance policies. These legitimacy issues regarding aesthetics and material also have an influence on how graffiti and street art are intrinsically valorized. Although both art forms are often performed with spray

cans, graffiti is more associated with illegal practices and vandalism than is street art.

In the interview with the director responsible for public art commissions in a city, I was told that during the former municipal government (right-wing politicians), it was not easy to hire graffiti artists for public (or private) commissions (Interview 34, recording 2015). With the new (left-wing) municipal regime and the revised, less harsh, tolerance policies against graffiti, street artists were starting to get public commissions. As has been claimed, the publicly funded production of art reflects the turbulent currents of a society (Joy and Sherry 2003) as well as its political traditions and power struggles (Belfiore 2018).

The issue of legality relates to how the classification of art forms contributes to the valuation of publicly funded cultural arrangements (Bengtson 2014), and the importance of knowledge about the product to be purchased (Karpik 2010). Product knowledge in art markets is important in order to valorize artworks (Joy and Sherry 2003, Karpik 2010, Khaire and Wadhvani 2010). Indeed, the valorizing of the production aspects of the artwork, regarding size, material and technique, hours of labor, and aesthetic elements, is useful for exchangeability only if the buyers know that material and aesthetic values matter. As graffiti and street art are often considered to represent a new product category in art markets, several actors have identified a lack of knowledge about these art forms. Hence, as aesthetic and technical values matter for pricing (Velthuis 2005, Wells 2015), it is often pointed out that one of the challenges for the exchangeability of graffiti and street art is the lack of knowledge of the techniques, craft and skills involved in producing the artworks. For example, the specific production of studio artworks is often overlooked in the literature focusing on street artists (Dickens 2010). Without devices that help buyers gain knowledge about the artwork, it will be difficult for buyers, artists and mediators to valorize – and evaluate – the artworks.

In a conversation with a Swedish artist, he told me that it was tricky to give offerings to commissioners, because the commissioners know so little about the skills and craft behind the art form, and hence they cannot value the qualities of the work properly. Moreover, according to a Parisian gallery owner, the clients of his gallery knew nothing about graffiti. “Everyone wants a canvas”, he said, but claimed that the potential buyers lack insight into the skills and crafts behind the graffiti art form. They just know that graffiti and street art is hip and is an exciting new category in the contemporary art market (Conversation 17, field notes 2015). This account is supported by a general discourse on potential buyers’ (lack of) knowledge. A Swedish gallery owner and artists’ agent thought that the graffiti and street art market would only grow when potential buyers started to learn about and appreciate the craft and skills of spray painting. He claimed that only a

few people outside the graffiti and street art culture fully understand how difficult it is to paint with spray cans.

To encounter this shortage of knowledge, there are educational efforts targeting the uninformed potential buyers. These potential buyers constitute both occasional buyers and experienced art collectors, who have more or less knowledge about the established contemporary fine art markets, but who have not much knowledge on how to valorize contemporary graffiti and street artworks in terms of their intrinsic qualities. These potential buyers are usually ignorant of the spray can skills that graffiti artists have developed through years of practice, what material and devices they use apart from spray cans, and how they have learned to translate the craft of producing public pieces to private canvases. The educational efforts aim to teach potential buyers how to valorize graffiti and street art in line with their intrinsic qualities of production.

As was discussed above, the potential buyers also include politicians, civil servants and property developers who are deciding on public art commissions. Due to the previous years of zero tolerance towards graffiti and street art in public space, there is a knowledge gap in the public sector, where educational activities are in demand. The director of the public art gallery argued that decision makers who were involved in these projects needed to be educated about the art form. He admitted that this included himself, as he defined himself as belonging to the “old school”, knowing how to appreciate classic oil paintings but not spray paintings. As was discussed in the previous chapter, the director had therefore arranged street art lectures at the public art gallery, to which he had invited property owners, politicians and civil servants in order to increase their knowledge on graffiti and street art:

We have organized seminars on graffiti art to communicate what is going on. And I notice, because there was zero tolerance before, that a lot of actors are interested in these projects and want to jump on board.

(Interview 34, recording 2015)

The increasing interest in commissioning graffiti and street artists for public projects was also noticed by the graffiti workshop organizer quoted above. He believed that the former zero tolerance policies had affected their activities in a positive way:

It has made graffiti more exciting. Many civil servants within the culture sector are really enthusiastic, “damn, let’s do this”, because they haven’t been allowed to do it before, which has curtailed their professionalism.

(Interview 32, recording 2015)

Another way of intrinsically valorizing through the activity of educating buyers is to arrange live performances of mural or mobile productions in connection with gallery exhibitions. Galleries may get permission for the artists to paint an artwork on some of the outside walls in the city of the exhibition. These live events give the audience and potential art buyers an idea of the origins of the artistic production. Viewing graffiti artists producing outdoor artworks on a large scale provides a “lecture” on how mural artworks are produced from start to finish, as well as giving the artistry an air of authenticity. Similarly, auction houses also organize live events. In connection with the viewing of the “Urban Art” sale in February 2015, the French auction house Artcurial organized live performances with three groups of artists. According to the auction house, these live events provided a chance for potential buyers to watch how the artists created works on canvas (Artcurial 2015).

Taking these educational activities further, mediators such as galleries and festival organizers also offer public graffiti workshops. At these workshops, audience members are encouraged to try the various types of spray cans, and they are taught how to produce different types of graffiti lettering. The workshops thus add an interactive element to the task of learning about graffiti and street art. When I met a Swedish gallery owner and artist agent at a graffiti and street art jam organized outside Stockholm, he stressed the importance of the interactive element for potential buyers exploring the graffiti and street art scene. He thought that graffiti and street art festivals should definitely include workshops for inexperienced visitors. Later, in an interview, the gallery owner further explained:

If you have never held a spray can and do not know how to work with it, you cannot understand the difficulty of drawing a straight black line, 150 centimeters long, one centimeter thin, without the colors dripping. That is what graffiti painters do, they do these lines every day. That is quality. And when people will start to appreciate this quality, they will start to appreciate the graffiti lettering. And that’s when they want to have graffiti letters at home. If these novices are not already aware of the difficulties of mastering a spray can, they will be convinced as soon as they try to spray a straight and sharp line on a wall.

(Interview 28, recording 2015)

These educational efforts also contribute to reducing the image of graffiti and street artists as vandals. The gallery owner continued:

People will discover that these graffiti and street art guys, they are no vandals, they are just everyday girls and boys like us. They just

happen to love a certain art form, which we did not even know was an *art form* until recently.

(Interview 28, recording 2015)

In order to valorize the artworks, the educational efforts thus also contribute to legitimizing the art forms by producing knowledge about the products to be exchanged. A Swedish publishing company, whose intention it is to spread knowledge about graffiti and street art to people and organizations that usually have more or less biased preconceptions about these subcultures, offer a range of educational activities apart from their publishing services. They give lectures about graffiti at museums, art schools and art events; they provide guided street art tours; and they organize graffiti workshops for companies as team building activities. During these workshops, the participants are first introduced to the foundations of sketching the various typographies of graffiti letters. After the introduction, the participants may try to sketch the letters themselves. Initially, they begin to sketch with pencils on paper only, but after a while, they may try to use the spray cans on a bigger format. The workshop organizer described a typical workshop program:

We start with a street art tour down town where I talk about graffiti, problematize it, and discuss issues of democracy and citizenship, which I believe connects to graffiti. Then we go to the location of the workshop. I start by showing them how to do some graffiti lettering, and they get to try themselves with pencils and markers. Then they get to try the spray cans, which they usually think is really fun. At the same time, they realize it is damn difficult, because the lines get all shaky.

(Interview 32, recording 2015)

The publishing company was participating at a book fair that I was observing. By their booth, they also organized free workshops for the book fair visitors:

Two visitors came and were interested in the workshop. The workshop leader showed them how to make tags and told them briefly about the history of tags and graffiti. Then he took out two spray cans, one green and one red and he encouraged the visitors to paint. They wrote their names and then he showed them how he would have written their names in graffiti lettering.

While the workshop leader showed them the tags with the markers, he explained that the workshops have an educational purpose. He wants people to re-evaluate what they see in the streets when they know more about it. When they realize that graffiti is actually difficult.

While he talked about the different styles and tags, he compared and gave examples from one of the books about graffiti styles.

(Observation 38, field notes 2015)

As these accounts above show, the educational efforts aim to spread knowledge about the subcultural, artistic skills of graffiti artists in order for potential buyers to valorize the material and aesthetic values.

There are also educational efforts that focus more on the work performed in studios. As was discussed in chapter six on the objectification of artworks, galleries often turn into temporary studios for their exhibiting artists. These are activities that also educate potential buyers about the studio work of graffiti and street artists. The galleries invite the artist to work in the gallery prior to the exhibition, where the artworks are finished by the artist a few days before the show. During the gallery's opening hours, collectors and other visitors can come and view how an artist works in action in a studio setting. My visit to one of the Parisian galleries illustrates this gallery/studio work:

The exhibition space had turned into a studio prior to the upcoming show with an American artist. The artist and his French assistant sat in the middle of the studio. They were bending over the canvases and they were just about to finish them. On the tables were brushes in different sizes, spray cans and color bottles. Clients and curious art consumers walked around, looked at the canvases, took photos and observed how the artist and the assistant worked.

(Observation 23, field notes 2015)

The editors of the magazine *Graffiti Art*, who also run an art gallery in Paris, claim that the media coverage is lacking in describing what studio-produced street art is. Usually, the editors argue, the media emphasize the street production and the subcultural background of the artists, but not so much the studio work: “publishers tend to publish books in the form of image compilations presenting art in the street rather than pieces from the studio” (*Graffiti Art* 2014). Hence, the *Art Guide*, which was discussed in the previous chapter on classification, attempts to present the most talented and successful street artists in the world, and focuses on their commercial work. The editors argue that the guide has “an educational role”, and that it is:

*/.../ a veritable learning tool for knowledgeable amateurs (collectors) and professionals (artists, gallery owners, art dealers, auctioneers, curators etc.) who see it as their annual assessment of the state of the market.*

(*Graffiti Art* 2014)

In an interview with the editor, she claimed, regarding the guide:

I'm an art historian, my education comes from the university. So this is an essential tool. We thought it was needed, and *we* wanted to read it, so we wrote it, haha. It speaks to the students, to teachers, to collectors, to galleries, to artists, to everyone who is a bit interested in urban art and wants to know more.

(Interview 21, recording 2015)

The fact that the editor of the Art Guide emphasized that she is an art historian also indicates that she thinks it is important to enhance the academic legitimacy of the art form. Obviously, there are commercial interests as well, as the editors of the Art Guide also run an art gallery. These educational efforts are nevertheless a way for artists and mediators to help buyers valorize the artworks by learning how to appreciate the intrinsic aspects of the artworks – qualities that matter for material and aesthetic values.

Education through magazines such as the Art Guide (Graffiti Art 2014), as well as the street art lectures, workshops, live painting performances and studio visits mentioned above, constitute devices that help potential buyers to valorize the artworks. As the quality of the artists' skills is difficult to agree on, consumers are also dependent on judgment devices in the form of normative expert opinions that are constructed among actors such as gallery owners, curators, academics and collectors (Beckert and Aspers 2011). The buyers' pleasure in an artwork may be enriched by what they think they know about its artist (Preece et al. 2016). A Swedish gallery owner told me that he often gets questions from potential buyers, who ask for opinions about artworks in which they are interested:

The client may say, "I think I like this painting, but what do you think?" I'll say what I think about the artwork, and perhaps there is a conceptual idea behind it as well. But I probably add a lot about the artist as well, the way he or she works, to amplify the qualities of the artwork.

(Interview 28, recording 2015)

As has been claimed previously, the artist and the artwork are inextricably linked (Fillis 2015, Preece and Kerrigan 2015, Schroeder 2005, Velthuis 2005). Mediators, such as the gallery owner quoted above, frame the artworks with the right "stories" or use the proper vocabulary in order to legitimize a price, for both the artist and the buyer (Velthuis 2005). The accounts above stress the importance of legitimizing the intrinsic qualities of the artworks themselves and their production. The accounts also show, however, that extrinsic aspects of the artworks also matter for valuation. This section has discussed the production-related intrinsic valorizing of artworks, focusing on materials and technical and

aesthetic elements, which result in material and aesthetic values. The extrinsic aspects will be the focus of the next section, on extrinsic valorizing.

## **Extrinsic valorizing**

Extrinsic valorizing means the production of values for graffiti and street artworks that regard extrinsic aspects, such as the reputation and branding of the artist (Preece and Bida 2017, Preece et al 2016, Velthuis 2005), expert knowledge and history making (Fine 2003, Karpik 2010), and references to other artists (Wells 2015).

Regarding branding efforts, one could revisit the authorizing of the artist's signature in the objectification chapter, which also contributes to both extrinsic and intrinsic values. Signatures and names of the artist written somewhere on the artworks are characterized by cultural theorists as aspects that are "extrinsic" to art (Velthuis 2005). According to the critical theorists, the obsession with authentic signatures is due to collectors' interest in "sign value", instead of intrinsic factors such as the composition of the artwork itself (Velthuis 2005). In the case of graffiti and street art, however, the signature of the artist is not only extrinsic, but very often intrinsic. The signature is, in part, the verifying letters that confirm who the artist is, but more importantly, sometimes it literally also constitutes the artwork (Stewart 1988). Several informants in my study claim that the signature – the tag – is like a piece of art itself. Nevertheless, this interest in sign value, or symbolic value, could also be understood as the branding of artists, which is becoming increasingly important (Preece and Kerrigan 2015).

The extrinsic value of the artist's reputation means that previous exhibitions at renowned galleries matter for the valorizing of the artwork, as gallery representation and institutional expertise legitimize the artist (Khaire and Wadhvani 2010, Preece and Kerrigan 2015). In artistic labor markets, it is common that "jobs", such as exhibitions at galleries and museums, are compensated with so-called symbolic values, such as reputation and institutional recognition, rather than economic values, such as a monetary fee (Borgblad 2017). Hence, "prestige" is a recognized form of currency in aesthetic markets (Mears 2011). Although prestige and reputation are not a monetary compensation for the artists, however, they valorize the artist in terms of cultural and symbolic value, which (may) transform into a monetary exchange value for the artist's works later.

The valorizing aspects of reputation and exposure depend not only on the artists, but also on the mediator and the potential buyer of their artworks. A Swedish former gallery owner had found it troublesome to manage the different valorizing logics of the artists whom he represented, who were new to the commercial market, and of his clients, who were experienced art buyers:



The DIY culture within graffiti makes it difficult for some of the artists to play the unwritten rules of the gallery game, which for example imply that as an artist you can only exhibit a certain number of times per year, at a certain type of galleries. But these artists exhibit as soon as they get a chance! It created problems for me because my clients are used to buy expensive artworks, by well-known artists, who exhibit at the right places. And when the clients come to me, they take a chance and buy urban art by artists they don't know about. Then they walk into the pizzeria next door and see the same artists' works hanging there, and they realize that the value of these artworks will never rise because the artworks are everywhere.

(Interview 19, recording 2015)

The former gallery owner was not surprised that this happened, however, because the aim of being heavily exposed aligns with cultural values within the graffiti culture: as a graffiti writer, you *should* be seen everywhere. Among the more traditional and seasoned fine art gallery clients, however, the rule is the opposite (O'Neill 2008). A fundamental condition for constructing tradeable market products is sometimes restricted access (Holm and Nolde Nielsen 2007). The values that are produced by being associated with certain galleries may differ depending on the artists, the mediators and the potential buyers, and thus the artist's "reputation" through exposure is not necessarily always a valorizing aspect. The former gallery owner continued:

The collectors think, "It is valuable to be seen at my house and with some other respectable collectors, then it is fine art. But if you're seen at everybody's houses, well, then you're damn not valuable".

(Interview 19, recording 2015)

As is stressed in previous research, gallery owners and artist agents carefully try to control where and to whom their artists' works are sold (Preece et al. 2016, Velthuis 2011). The accounts from this gallery owner show that valorizing does indeed depend on the different buyer and consumer groups. Too prolific exhibition activities can be a problem for artists' careers as it is perceived that artworks exhibited in cafés, restaurants, or shopping malls are generally seen as decorative and kitsch rather than as "artistic" fine art (Fillis 2015, Kottász and Bennett 2014). Hence, what appear to be market shaping activities may at the same time be market restricting activities (Hietanen and Rokka 2015). The dilemma this gallery owner discussed can also be understood as an urge to be affiliated with the avant-garde gallery circuit as a gallery owner, while managing artists who happily affiliate with the traditional gallery circuit (Velthuis 2005).

The conventional assumption that artists mainly earn their money on the sales of artworks, however, leads to a valorizing structure, where the unpaid (non-commercial) exhibition is seen as the marketing platform for artists' future sales of exchangeable artworks (Borgblad 2017). A similar marketing phenomenon also occurs in the extrinsic valorizing of graffiti and street art. A Swedish auction appraiser and street art expert argued that a "previous exhibition" could imply different things depending on the category of contemporary art involved. Graffiti and street artists may lack previous representation at galleries, but their works may have been seen in the streets in many cities: "It should be possible to designate also street presence as a form of gallery representation, but in public space" (Interview 35, recording 2018). The professional curriculum of graffiti and street artists could thus consist of the unsanctioned work, and the expertise could consist of the gallery owners' frequent former membership of the graffiti and street art cultures.

On several occasions, I have observed artists, who are exhibiting at galleries, also producing public murals for which they are not paid, as a means of "advertising" or "branding" (as some call it) their exhibition. According to some informants, these public walls that promote exhibitions became easier to organize and produce when the zero tolerance police became less harsh. Moreover, according to most of the graffiti and street art practitioners that I met during fieldwork, artists who are commissioned for festivals are often not paid, but the artists see their participation as marketing for future paid commissions – both murals and murals. The sanctioned but unpaid murals valorize the artworks to be exchanged in galleries. A festival organizer told me:

This artist and his assistant came to the festival and they both worked for free, no discussion about that. They didn't even ask for pay. But they had recently been to Hong Kong for a gallery exhibition, where they had sold all artworks. Canvases, for hundreds of thousands. And why does this artist sell? Because he is famous. And why is he famous? Because he paints murals all over the world. Artists on this level build their brands by touring all over the world and paint murals on festivals. And then they cash in on gallery shows. Exposure at festivals is marketing to them. It sounds crass, but that's what it is.

(Interview 18, recording 2015)

A Swedish artist confirmed this unpaid "marketing strategy". He also added and emphasized the importance of the exposure of the *unsanctioned* artworks, particularly on Instagram. The followers within the graffiti scene could see that he was still active, which would make his name more valuable:

You're not earning money on painting subway cars, but in the end, they matter. To keep painting subways is really good for my marketing, it makes my other artworks more valuable. The knowledge that I've painted thousands of trains makes people want one of my originals. I didn't realize this before. But all my bombing has been an investment. I mean, the teenagers will soon get enough money to buy art.

(Conversation 6, field notes 2014)

The artist referred to the importance of still being part of the graffiti scene to maintain authenticity when engaging with exchangifying artworks. The people within the subculture would see that he was still painting illegally, which would valorize the artworks to be exchanged. This account is confirmed by previous research, which claims that artists negotiate the appearance of being “authentic” in the art world (and the subculture in this case), and yet being “branded” in order to achieve recognition and legitimacy in settings where the market operates (Preece and Bida 2017, Wells 2015).

Similarly, a group of international artists, who had an ongoing group exhibition at a gallery in Sweden, were also involved in several side-activities during their stay. On the day before the opening of the gallery show, the artists were scheduled to give a lecture at one of the city's art schools and talk about the contemporary graffiti scene in their country. The day after the opening, they were participating in a mural production in an area outside of the city. As with the educational efforts discussed in the previous section, which aimed at teaching potential buyers to valorize the material and aesthetic values of artworks, these side-activities could also be understood as educational efforts, focusing on the cultural and symbolic values of the artists. These educational activities constituted both authenticating and legitimizing purposes by reaching out to people within and outside the graffiti and street art culture, while at the same time promoting the exhibition. A staff member of a reputable organization which supported these events with PR activities told me that this specific combination of events was successful:

They were allowed to operate at different levels, so they connected with students, they were participating in painting a mural, but they also were in the gallery itself. They had a professional level, a pedagogical level and you got something that is very close to the origin of street art, which is really in public space. So what I thought was phenomenal was that street art was encouraged to have the multiple identities it does have. This was the reason we found the project excellent.

(Interview 25, recording 2015)

With this combination of events, the artists engaged with legitimizing institutions such as the art school and the art gallery (as well as with the PR supporting organization), at the same time as they engaged with the authenticating project of producing a mural in a well-known graffiti area.

Several of the Swedish informants argue, however, that there is a difference between Swedish artists and international artists regarding the values produced through reputation and promotion. In Sweden, where the commercial gallery and auction market is still marginal for street artists, this marketing argument is not as convincing as for the artists in other countries, whose markets are more established. For them, the valorizing exposure at unpaid festivals actually makes a difference in sales of mobiles and paid mural commissions. For Swedish artists, it is not necessarily the same. A festival organizer in Sweden told me that he had a discussion about payments with one of the participating Swedish artists. According to the organizer, the artist had told him that he had to lie to people about the lack of payment. Otherwise, potential commissioners would think he would work for free in the future as well. To the organizer, this argument was a little absurd:

I had, just the minute before, commissioned two international super celebrities in the street art world, and they had not even mentioned payments. They earn their money on doing other stuff.

(Interview 18, recording 2015)

Another Swedish artist claimed that it was difficult for street artists to valorize their work in the “institutionalized art world” due to the perception of graffiti and street art as illegitimate. He argued that because of this institutional perception of illegitimate art, some artists chose to work with corporations (Conversation 44, field notes 2015), who could see the benefit of using graffiti aesthetics (Borghini et al. 2010, Lombard 2013). The artist had recently been commissioned to produce an artwork for an investment bank and was confused by this step in his professional career. Working with capitalist firms implies the risk of losing the moral values relating to the democratic aspect of the subculture. This artist experienced a negotiation between being legitimate in market terms while being non-authentic, as well as illegitimate, in subcultural terms.

You know, traditionally, graffiti is anti-corporate. And suddenly, a corporation is backing up your incomes. That’s a conflict. I used to be out in the streets a lot, and within the culture, people will think this commission is crap, that I’m a sell-out.

(Conversation 44, field notes 2015)

This account pinpoints the traditional subcultural values of producing what could be called democratic art, to which all citizens have access (Ten Eyck 2016), and

the conflict that emerges when professional artists find themselves trapped in this negotiation of either fighting commercialism or being perceived as sell-outs.

As has been discussed above, a problem with valorizing based on extrinsic qualities is the lack of knowledge about the artist. Extrinsic valorizing devices, such as guide books and critics, as well as personal networks (Karpik 2010), are thus crucial for mindful and experienced consumers who plan to invest in artworks (Preece and Kerrigan 2015), especially if the artist in question is new to them (MacNeill and Wilson-Anastasios 2014, O’Neill 2008). A Swedish gallery owner explained that when he discusses artworks with potential clients, he usually tries to add stories about the work: “The clients always want to have the history behind the artwork. I mean, they love to retell these stories for their friends” (Interview 28, recording 2015). The importance of these biographical narratives is confirmed in the previous literature, as stories about the creation of an artwork add authenticity to the artwork (Fine 2003). Moreover, at a Swedish auction house, this knowledge gap was targeted in the website by providing a Wikipedia-like service with short texts about the artists whose works they sold. An art appraiser, who had authored many of these texts, explained the importance of such information:

I believe that graffiti and street art still needs to be explained, in order to give a prospective buyer the keys or tools to assist the understanding of what they look at. And obviously, we wrote those texts to enhance the sale of the artworks.

(Interview 35, recording 2018)

A similar educational service is offered on the website of the auction house Christie’s, where they have published a “Collecting guide: 5 things to know about street art” (Christie’s 2019). It is claimed that “Christie’s specialists discuss Keith Haring, Banksy, Stik and other artists who are *bringing the street into the home*” (Christie’s 2019, *author’s italics*).

Educating buyers is critical, as every effort is made by mediators to ensure that collectors purchase art objects (Joy and Sherry 2003). This inevitable focus on the market exchange of the artworks in auctions, however, is the reason why auctions are claimed to frame artworks as commercial commodities, rather than as cultural goods (Velthuis 2011). Thus, the intrinsic and extrinsic valorizing efforts of education, which contribute to legitimizing the aesthetic values of the artworks and the symbolic values of the artists (Dar and Schultz Nybacka 2017), could be understood as an attempt to represent the artworks as less commercial (Preece and Kerrigan 2015). Sometimes, however, the educational efforts strive for the opposite: to emphasize the artworks as market products. The education of potential buyers does not only concern art collectors and public commissioners, who are informed about the skills of the graffiti and street art craft in order to

valorize the artworks. The fans of graffiti and street artists, who consume the artworks by following the artists' Instagram accounts and blogs and who participate in the subcultural discourses (Bengtson 2014), are also subject to educational efforts. Artists and mediators see this consumer group as potential buyers when they grow older and have sufficient income with which to buy artworks. This group of consumers knows a lot about the subculture and the graffiti skills, but according to artists, gallery owners and auction managers, they are not frequent visitors to traditional art galleries and auctions. Due to the potential of these young fans to become future collectors, the educational efforts also attempt to valorize the possibility of owning graffiti and street artworks as market products.

In Paris, an artist explained to me how he used his Instagram account in order to approach his fans. The artist had a manager who helped him with the sales and home deliveries of the artworks. When the manager delivered the purchased artworks to the collectors' homes, he also helped with the hanging of the artwork. Sometimes, on behalf of the artist, he was allowed by the collector to take a photo of the artwork in its new domestic surroundings. The artist then posted this photo on his Instagram account:

I want my audience to believe that they can have a painting by me hanging in their home. Because I don't think that they connect that the stuff I do in the street and the stuff I do on canvas, is now, together. And that they can actually appreciate it and have it on their wall. And that's the stuff I try to show on Instagram.

(Conversation 20, field notes 2015)

These efforts at educating fans to valorize the possibilities of owning artworks can be understood as "confluences" (Karpik 2010), which are used to channel consumers (where they are already present) into buying the artworks.

As was discussed in the previous chapter on classification, another extrinsic valorizing device that helps buyers to appreciate the cultural value of graffiti and street artworks is the reference to similar artists' market success, such as Banksy and Basquiat. New product categories, in particular, are introduced with these branding efforts (Joy and Sherry 2003). Artprice (2017b) claims that "The Banksy phenomenon has allowed street art to gain popularity and impose itself as one of the new profitable segments in the market". A Swedish gallery owner shared this view: "In a way, Banksy has helped graffiti and street art to increase its prices. Today, artists can actually support themselves" (Interview 13, recording 2014). Thus, within an art market category, artworks can be valorized by being associated with other artworks in the same category (Preece and Kerrigan 2015).

As is stressed in previous research on art markets (Preece et al. 2016, Rodner and Thompson 2013, Velthuis 2005), there are extrinsic valorizing efforts to situate graffiti and street art in a historical context. High exchange values have often been the motivation for adding graffiti and street artists into historical writings (Kimvall 2014), but history making also increases the cultural value of artworks. Art market experts at Artprice (2017) stress the importance of collectors' roles in the valorizing of artworks through history writing. This history making mainly regards a few well-known artists, however: "the popularity of street art owes much to Basquiat, and to Banksy, whose media-hyped career opened a new chapter in art history 10 years ago" (Artprice 2017). Dealers and collectors want to deal with artists and artworks that will be of artistic importance in the future. They may even argue that they distribute artworks for history, not for the market (Velthuis 2005), similar to the collecting role of museums (Joy and Sherry 2003). It is claimed, however, that this seemingly altruistic intention cannot be separated from the expectations of future profit (Preece and Bida 2017).

Although legitimizing efforts at history making and art criticism valorize the artwork, which may lead to a monetary exchange value, they also provide the function of protecting the artwork from commodification by giving it its cultural value (Joy and Sherry 2003, Preece et al. 2016). In the objectification chapter, I discussed how certain artworks in a gallery exhibition were on display but not for sale, which enhanced the ownable aspect of the artworks that *were* for sale. These non-exchangified artworks also worked as extrinsic valorizing devices for the artworks to be exchanged, as they added a historical value to the artist and to the artworks. When the show was about to open, I asked the artist whether the works for sale were new or old, and he said that they were all new. He showed me the other works from his early days as a young high school writer, such as tags and sketches. They were framed too, but he wanted to show them as exhibition objects only, and not as commodities for sale (Observation 10, field notes 2014).

So far, this chapter has shown that valorizations involve intrinsic and extrinsic aspects. This valorizing does not determine the exchange values of artwork, however. Rather, it produces various values from which the exchange value can be negotiated and calculated. Extrinsic valorizing contributes to the production of symbolic, cultural and moral values. Intrinsic valorizing contributes to the production of material and aesthetic values. As these multiple values influence the calculation of monetary exchange values, they are sometimes difficult to balance. The following quote by a Swedish artist, illustrates the difficulties of pricing:

It's hard to find the proper price level. Because, it has to be quite expensive, as you put in so much work. And it is difficult to value those hours. But on the other hand, I think it is sad to be expensive, because then my friends cannot buy the artworks. But I've decided to price the larger works at 45 000 SEK, and the smaller around

20 000. I also have a lot of screen prints, they may cost 1000 each. These sort of “mass-produced” products are really good, because almost anyone can afford buying them at that price level.

(Interview 15, recording 2015)

The valorizing practices and devices cannot alone govern pricing. The calculation that determines the price must also be negotiated and discussed by the actors involved in each situation (Callon 1998, Beunza and Garud 2007, Kornberger et al. 2015, Preece et al. 2016, Navarro Aguiar 2017). How are material, aesthetic, cultural, symbolic, and moral values calculated and transformed into a monetary value? In the next section, on evaluating, I will discuss further how the values that are produced through valorizing are negotiated and calculated to put a price on the artwork.

## Evaluating

Evaluating means the transformation of intrinsic values (material and aesthetic) and extrinsic values (cultural, symbolic, and moral) into a monetary exchange value, which makes the artworks finally ready for market exchange. In addition to these multiple values, there are other actors and devices which participate in negotiating and calculating prices: the artists, the mediator, the potential buyer, and references to previous prices on similar artworks. Evaluating can thus be understood as calculation, or qualculation, which implies quality-based rational judgements, i.e. it involves both calculative and qualitative aspects of evaluation (Cochoy 2008). The actors negotiate as to which aspects should be considered in each pricing decision, and which aspects should be left out (Karpik 2010). The valuating elements vary depending on the art product category in question (Rodner and Thompson 2013, Velthuis 2005), as well as on the individual artist (Preece and Kerrigan 2015, Preece et al. 2016).

Regardless of which price mechanism – negotiated price, fixed price or auction price (Beckert and Aspers 2011, Velthuis 2011) – is used to reach the *paid* price, which is the outcome of the exchange moment (Hagberg and Kjellberg 2014), there are calculations that precede the exchange moment (Cochoy 2008). In addition to the paid price, a price representation may also refer to the *future* price at which a product can potentially be acquired (Hagberg and Kjellberg 2014). It is these prior calculations – that negotiate future prices – on which this section of the valuation chapter will focus. Hereafter, I will use both the terms *price* and *exchange value* to discuss these practices.

In a conversation with a French artist, who was exhibiting in Sweden, he shared his thoughts about pricing artworks: “It’s always difficult to price graffiti because graffiti has no price, it’s supposed to be free, you know” (Conversation 23, field notes 2015). This quote addresses the issue of moral and symbolic values, and the



legitimation of anti-commercial objects in order to make them tradable in the market (Beckert and Aspers 2011). The existence of markets *implies* that the valuations result in some form of pricing (Çalışkan and Callon 2010). However, as the premises for graffiti and street art are founded in a subcultural tradition not intended for pricing, for some artists it feels awkward to engage with pricing decisions. A Swedish artist told me:

It was really cool when suddenly you could get paid. But then the tough question came: what should be my pay? What's a decent fee? I've done so many graffiti things for free all my life.

(Conversation 44, field notes 2015)

Mural commissions differ widely in terms of prices, that is, the payment or compensation to the artists. The pricing is influenced by who the artist is, by the potential buyer, and also by the mediator. For example, GraffitiFrämjandet (2019) mediates work commissioned to graffiti and street artists and tries to make sure that the artists are paid properly. They provide templates and checklists for negotiating and calculating costs related to the work and labor hours involved in producing the murals. The prices suggested by GraffitiFrämjandet are thus calculated based on material values related to labor and production, rather than the symbolic values usually attached to festival murals. The association uses the same hourly rate as is recommended by KRO (2019), the National Artist Association for visual artists in Sweden. A representative of the graffiti association told me that the rates that they suggested were higher than what graffiti artists usually get when doing commissioned murals (Interview 16, recording 2015). The prices on festival murals, for example, are usually set based on how graffiti artists are normally paid, which often equals a low (or no) fee. At festivals officially organized by municipalities, the artists are usually compensated for expenditures related to travel and the production of the artwork, and sometimes they get a monetary fee as well. The compensation for graffiti and street artists is thus often calculated in terms of normalizing practices (Kjellberg and Helgesson 2006) based on how commissioners believe that this job market works. Hence, to calculate the price of a mural, comparisons are sometimes made between colleagues in the practitioners' networks, which function as reference devices (Karpik 2010).

When I was observing one of these city festivals, I was told that they paid their commissioned artists a sum that would put the festival a bit above some of the more intriguing (international) festivals, who would perhaps pay the artists less (Observation 36, field notes 2015). These prices were thus calculated based on references to similar work. It was also important for the festival, however, to pay each artist the same amount of money, regardless of their celebrity status or experience. Cultural values produced through the artists' brands and reputations were not part of evaluating the price given for the murals, nor were the material and aesthetic values of the production work considered. One of the guides who

led the public tours during the festival replied to a question from a tour participant about the artist payments:

The fees were decided in an early stage when planning the festival, and equal payment to all artists. Whether or not they have a long street art background. And, because this is something the artists do for the street art community and getting the art form to be more widely accepted, the payment was more of a symbolic sum.

(Observation 36, field notes 2015)

The organizer justified the low payments by referring to this democratic treatment. These accounts indicate that before the payment was set, both the festival organizer and the artists had negotiated the sum of the payment based on moral values: the artists wanted to honor the subculture and thus participated for a symbolic payment. According to an artist who participated at one of these festivals in Sweden, the fees that the artists got were indeed low in relation to the hours spent on the artworks (Interview 15, recording 2015). They were definitely not evaluated based on material values. A formal public art commission is usually considered a well-paid job for a contemporary artist, as it takes production into consideration. The artist thought that other contemporary artists working in public space and with public support, which these street artists were, would be compensated according to general standard tariffs, for example those provided by KRO (2019).

It's quite obvious. Almost every time I've been commissioned to do a graffiti mural, they just assume I am so happy to do something sanctioned and large, that I don't need any pay. Whereas when I've been contracted to do serious public art commissions, they pay you well. Then they know it'll cost.

(Interview 15, recording 2015)

The artist further claimed that this is characteristic of the art genre; most people are used to the idea that graffiti artists happily work for free as soon as they get the chance to paint a sanctioned mural:

The sad part is that all graffiti artists get so flattered to be invited to these festivals, so you can't really say no to low fees either. I was happy to be part of it, it was a really big event, a really big wall, I couldn't say no.

(Interview 15, recording 2015)

As is mentioned above, the possibility of being able to support oneself as a professional artist is small for most artists (Konstnärsnämnden 2008, Menger 1999), both street artists and other contemporary artists. They share the feeling

of being easily replaceable among a big “supply” of artists (Abbing 2002, Menger 1999), a situation that gives commissioners the upper hand in terms of payment and conditions. A festival organizer told me:

The problem is that if one artist says “no” to poor offerings, then the next artist will accept them. Because some just want to paint. And they want to be seen. Artists accept jobs for 500 SEK, because at least it is 500 SEK more than zero SEK. But because of that, these artists will never be able to get 50 000 SEK.

(Interview 18, recording 2015)

In addition, publicly supported graffiti and street art events legitimize the art form even though the artists are being paid relatively low fees. At the inauguration of a street art festival that I observed, the chair of the city council gave the opening speech. In a conversation with the director of the tourism office, I was told that choosing a politician for the speech was symbolic. It demonstrated that public money was involved and that the municipality supported the festival. It would not have been legitimizing enough with a civil servant, the tourism director claimed. In the end, it is the politicians who make the decisions about the spending of public money (Conversation 39, field notes 2015). Public money confirms that something is worth funding (Belfiore 2018). Symbolic values thus contributed to the calculation due to the legitimacy of this kind of buyer. When an artist’s works get preserved by institutions, it signals that the work is worthy of preservation for future audiences (Joy and Sherry 2003, Kimvall 2014, Preece et al. 2016, Rodner and Thompson 2013, Velthuis 2005, Wikberg 2017).

There is a cynical saying among artists that pricing on artworks sometimes depends on “how hungry they are”. In previous research it is stressed that pricing artworks is puzzling, particularly for emerging artists, because they are often in desperate need of money (Major 2014). Most artists argue that it is difficult to set a price on their artworks based on intrinsic qualities such as labour hours. At a group exhibition in Sweden, I asked one of the exhibiting US artists if she had considered time and material expenses in her pricing. She told me that it had not affected the prices. “There are expenses”, she said, “but it has nothing to do with the price.” Instead, she said that prices are completely emotional: “It is difficult to detach yourself from your artworks, and it is also about being humble to the buyers. I believe most artists are humble when it comes to pricing” (Conversation 41, field notes 2015). This quote relates to the discussion that artists may feel greedy and may be perceived as sell-outs when demanding a monetary compensation for their artworks (Hietanen and Rokka 2015), which is why evaluations take moral and cultural values into account. Artistic legitimization partly depends on being seen as non-commercial (Preece and Kerrigan 2015), particularly for subcultural artists (Wells 2015).

Evaluating based on production-related values do exist, however. To negotiate the exchange value of an artwork in line with Marxist theorizing on the values produced through labor, one must estimate the “abstract labor”, which Marx “conceptualized as the (quantifiable) work that had gone into its making” (Koerner and Rausing 2003:429). A recurring problem with production-based pricing, however, is that it is often difficult to identify the actual production costs of artistic work – the quantifiable work – which implies labor hours, material costs and indirect costs (Major 2014). Moreover, one also needs to estimate what potential buyers are willing to pay (Beckert and Aspers 2011). Hence, regarding pricing based on production-related values, there is a difference between murals and mobiles. The prices of murals are calculated pre-production, whereas the prices of mobiles are usually calculated post-production. Some artists have mentioned that this issue may result in a “humble” pricing on murals, because they do not dare to offer a high price on an artwork that the buyer has not even viewed. Moreover, another significant difference between murals and mobiles regards the estimated purchasing power of the typical buyers of the artworks. Murals are more often commissioned by larger corporations and municipalities, whereas mobiles are usually bought by private individuals. Some artists claim that in pricing negotiations, they take into consideration where the money comes from, whether it comes from taxpayers, or if the work is to be performed for a commercial organization.

Artists who get mural commissions (other than festivals), however, either try to calculate the hours that they will spend on a work in order to calculate the price, or they base it on the size of the mural. A Swedish artist told me about the mistake he had made when he set a price for a mural before the work was done. Afterwards, he had calculated that his hourly rate had been 100 SEK/hour, which he considered as very low<sup>11</sup>. At that moment he had realized how “super important” it was to estimate the hours of work involved and to calculate a decent price accordingly (Conversation 44, field notes 2015). Moreover, the artist told me that he and his artist partner did not have a fixed hourly rate, but that they sometimes asked the commissioner “How much *can* it cost?” After that, they decided what “quality level” they would offer and how much effort they would put into the work. As the offerings did not always become real commissions, the artist did not want to work too much on a sketch, for example. He had learnt this by previous mistakes. A “qualitative” sketch takes hours to do and is a piece of art in itself. Thus, the artists should charge for that too and not only for the final commission, the artist thought. And sketches are often required: “Even if I present a portfolio of previous works, the commissioner still wants to see a sketch” (Conversation 44, field notes 2015).

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<sup>11</sup> Indeed, according to standard rates, artists should charge 750 SEK/hour (GraffitiFrämjandet 2019)

Another Swedish artist confirmed this kind of pricing strategy based on intrinsic aspects of aesthetics, materials and size. She told me that her colleagues usually calculated the price of their murals by estimating the total hours that the job would take. She had decided to price per square meter instead, because of the difficulties of estimating the total hours:

I don't want to work while hearing the clock ticking. What if I get stuck on a tiny detail or something? I want the time I need to finish and thus I calculate by square meter instead.

(Interview 26, recording 2015)

As these accounts from informants tell, pricing based on production work does indeed exist, although it is sometimes difficult to assess. As often with murals, artists who produce mobile paintings also try to estimate how much work they put into a piece. A US artist, who exhibited in Sweden in a group show, had tried to find a way to calculate the prices of his artworks based on labor hours:

I was creating five to ten of each particular work. Then I calculated how much time I put in, as if I was putting in an average workday. And I would break that up, divided by how many pieces I created, and then I would come up with a price.

(Conversation 43, field notes 2015)

As is demonstrated by these accounts, evaluating is not always formally institutionalized, as in the case of Graffitifrämjandet and KRO's standard tariffs (Graffitifrämjandet 2019, KRO 2019). Often evaluating strategies are shared as a form of tacit knowledge, or informal conventions, within specific art communities or gallery circuits, which thus help to legitimize the price calculations (Karpik 2010, Velthuis 2005). For instance, other intrinsic aspects that assist artists and mediators to negotiate the prices on artworks are the aspects of size and media (O'Neill 2008, Velthuis 2005). Certain kinds of media and certain sizes get conventional minimum prices, which work as reference points for the pricing of artworks (Velthuis 2005). Several gallery owners in Sweden and France have pointed out the importance of pricing according to size. In the objectification chapter, it was discussed how some gallery owners complained about their debuting artists, who wanted to sell large canvases, which were not only difficult to domesticate, but also to price. Artists with more experience, however, seem to have understood the game of sizes and prices. An artist in Paris told me:

What I have learnt now is that there is a price for each canvas, depending on what size it is. So this means that this size [shows with his hands] has a certain amount of value. And it doesn't matter if you work two months on an artwork, or a couple of hours on

another of the same size. It would still be the same price. So that's a thing I start to learn.

(Conversation 20, field notes 2015)

A benefit of having intrinsic guiding rules is hence that mediators and artists do not have to evaluate the quality of the artwork to set a price, as quality may be considered too delicate, subjective and abstract to constitute a concrete pricing principle. It is even claimed that gallery owners and art dealers avoid the abstract and subjective notion of “quality” in pricing practices (Velthuis 2005). Although art markets are claimed to be status markets as opposed to standard markets (Aspers 2009), valuation according to such a concrete measurable determinant as size, however, makes the art market at least to some extent standardized. Pricing actors use standards that avoid the subjective quality discussion, and simply focus on objective principles, such as size.

Coming back to the aspect of calculating with regard to the wide range of potential buyers, it is also important to produce artworks in various sizes in order to provide artworks at various prices. The price span on mobile artworks in galleries, as well as on auction (Artprice 2017), is usually wide because it aims to target different consumer groups: from the teenage fans who are able to buy digital prints for less than 100 euros, to big canvases bought by collectors for 10 000 euros. A gallery owner who exhibited a famous graffiti artist argued:

He knows that some of his potential buyers are fans about 12-14 years old. Hence there must be artworks for not more than 1500 SEK. Then the parents can buy artworks for these kids for Christmas.

(Interview 13, recording 2014)

At an exhibition in Sweden with an American artist, described as a legend in the New York graffiti scene in the 1970s, the artworks were priced from 3500 SEK for the smallest ones, to 74 000 SEK for the most expensive.

This approach to pricing at exhibitions, however, is not always desirable for gallery owners. A Swedish gallery owner, whose gallery visitors were often new and inexperienced buyers, had a different view on pricing:

It is better to have 15 or 20 small artworks, for 1800 SEK each and you can sell all of them. More people afford to buy those than if you have a few artworks for 10 000 SEK.

(Interview 4, recording 2014)

The economic logics of art markets, which have been characterized as a quality over price competition (Karpik 2010), are hence not always at work.

As price negotiations imply consideration to previous prices, this also affects situations in which prices on artworks should increase – and when they might decrease. An artist told me about a show some years ago when his prices were set within a relatively low price spectrum, around 4000-5000 SEK for a print (Conversation 44, field notes 2015). The exhibition was successful as he sold almost every artwork. Recently, however, he had sold an expensive artwork for about 100 times those previous prices, and now he was troubled about the next move in his pricing strategy. He knew that he had to relate to the latest price, although he did not believe that he would sell many more artworks for that amount of money, and thus be able to “settle himself” in that price category. He could not ignore his “record” price, however, and hence he knew that he should no longer sell his cheapest works for 4000 SEK. In fine art markets, there is said to be an unwritten but compulsory rule that reduced prices on artworks should be avoided (Velthuis 2005), even if a lower price makes the artwork easier to sell (Menger 1999). In fact, the risk of price reduction is a reason for artists and mediators to avoid auction sales (Velthuis 2011). Thus, reference devices further imply that, when determining prices, one must be aware that price levels are path-dependent (Velthuis 2005). The current price is based on the past price. The artist had to ask himself “What price am I?” Indirectly, for this artist it would imply a price decrease if his prices “went back” to 4000 SEK. At the same time, he did not want to lose the buyers who had purchased the artworks for 4000 SEK, if his new artworks got too expensive. “Would they still be buying?” he worried (Conversation 44, field notes 2015).

Another Swedish artist confronted a similar situation regarding prices and how they corresponded to different buyers’ purchasing power. At a previous exhibition, he had sold original artworks in oil, watercolor and spray paint, for a certain amount of money. He felt that his career was about to progress, also internationally, and thus he wanted to raise the prices on these artworks. Therefore, at his recent exhibitions, he now also sold what he defined as “merchandise”:

I’m starting to raise my prices now because I have started to offer some merchandise, like prints and drawings, which makes room for raising the price on the originals to another level. And the buyers who don’t want to pay the new prices, they can buy the cheaper stuff.

(Conversation 6, field notes 2014)

These pricing strategies again disclose that moral values are involved when artists negotiate their prices. Within an artist’s oeuvre, there may be different price categories based on intrinsic qualities, such as material and size (O’Neill 2008, Velthuis 2005), which may indeed include merchandise (Preece et al. 2016). These

cheaper prints, sketches and stickers make it possible to push up the prices on the originals without losing the buyers who cannot afford them, the artist hoped. This strategy provided various artworks at different prices to different consumers, which is a strategy that is also discussed in the literature on the consumption of “affordable luxuries” (Mundel et al. 2017). It is claimed that price increases generally depend on rules of demand, time or reputation (O’Neill 2008, Velthuis 2005). Indeed, the artist knew that the young teenage fans constituted an important group, as he thought they would still be buying his more expensive works when they got older and earned more money: “They are my retirement!” the artist claimed (Conversation 4, field notes 2014). A diversified supply enabled his prices to increase. In one of the artist portraits in the Art Guide, the following is claimed about the artist Jace: “He is also a success on the art market: Jace achieves high prices at auction yet also aims to satisfy his fans by selling artworks and merchandise to suit all budgets” (Graffiti Art 2014:114). The production of cheap and accessible artworks, however, has been part of the criticism against the commodification of art (Adorno 1935/1973, Benjamin 1936/1968). Artprice (2008, 2010) has also discussed graffiti and street artists as part of the “affordable” art market, with artworks that are financially accessible to a new generation of collectors. Prices carry different meanings for different actors, which may signify the artworks with either cultural or commodity characteristics (Velthuis 2005).

Regarding the benefits of merchandise and other cheaper artworks, buyers may be willing to pay more for original paintings than for editions of prints (Dickens 2010), because the paintings are perceived as more authentic, or “closer” to the creator (Preece and Kerrigan 2015, Velthuis 2005). The struggle over increasing the prices of artworks in order to get proper payment thus also implies that graffiti and street artists negotiate their subcultural authenticity (Wells 2015). Sometimes artists release cheaper artworks such as prints on their websites, which is a way for fans and younger consumers to get hold of artworks for less than gallery and auction prices. As graffiti should not traditionally be for sale, the prices of these cheap artworks are a way for artists to maintain some of the authenticity associated with non-owned art in public space.

There seems to be some sort of authenticity pride involved when artists release cheaper artworks. I’ve heard artists themselves say that they do this to gain some sort of credibility, that they are not completely sell-outs in the gallery business.

(Interview 8, recording 2014)

At a gallery show I was observing, I heard the exhibiting artist talking to some visitors about the prices of the artworks. He thought it was important to offer low prices, because it should not only be wealthy people who have the possibility of buying the artworks. It is the entire oeuvre of an artist’s works that is part of the artist’s brand (Preece and Kerrigan 2015), and the lower prices on some



artworks within this oeuvre are thus part of the cultural value. At another opening I attended, with a US graffiti legend who was visiting Sweden, a fan told me that the gallery had organized a pre-show for a group of fans, who was offered the possibility to buy some artworks for a lower price (Conversation 37, field notes 2015). The fan, who was a former graffiti writer himself, also told me that he had bought one artwork on installment, which made it even more affordable for him.

The art market for graffiti and street art is described, by informants as well as by secondary sources in my fieldwork, as a “young” market – not only because the artworks constitute a new category, but also because the buyers are younger than the perceived age of traditional collectors. As was discussed in chapter five, the typical buyers of graffiti and street artworks, according to several of my informants, are in their 40s, and relatively new to art collecting activities. There are, however, also traditional and experienced art collectors who purchase graffiti and street art because they find it fascinating and can scent the potential of the cultural and monetary values of these art forms. An art collector whom I interviewed, who possessed what he called a quite serious art collection from the 16<sup>th</sup> century to today’s contemporary art, had started to collect graffiti and street art a few years ago. He was attracted to these artworks because he perceived them to be a refreshing addition to his otherwise traditional art collection. Among the art collectors of his acquaintance, he did not know many who, like himself, had also started to buy graffiti and street art. He perceived the other buyers to be much younger than the general art collecting clientele. And, he added, as long as the buyers are young, the prices will be low (Interview 3, recording 2014). Prices become judgement devices when buyers interpret high prices as a quality signal (Beckert and Aspers 2011). Some of the traditional collectors are only interested in a work if the price is high, because to them that signals a valuable artwork and a valuable part of a collection (O’Neill 2008). Many of my Swedish informants believe that prices will stay low, at least in Sweden, due to the “young market”. A gallery owner who specialized in street art shared this belief:

It is mostly young people who buy artworks here, probably because it is cheap, and that is of course good, so that they can afford it. But as long as the artworks are cheap, perhaps the older art collectors won’t buy them. *Because* they are cheap.

(Conversation 10, field notes 2015)

This phenomenon could be compared to Veblen’s theory of conspicuous consumption and consumption of luxury goods, where price often becomes the principal indicator of quality for buyers (MacNeill and Wilson-Anastasios 2014). The art collector quoted above, however, admitted that the low prices appealed to him. At auctions, the prices on these artworks did not go very high, in his opinion. Due to the low prices, he perceived it to be of no risk to purchase

artworks by artists of whom he knew nothing, and hence, could not estimate their artworks' long-term value:

I thought the prices were reasonable, for an artist I had never heard of. Thus, you never know if the prices go up or down. Well, it doesn't matter if you really like the artwork. But I wouldn't take that risk with an artwork for 100 000 SEK.

(Interview 3, recording 2014)

Regarding increases and decreases in prices, in a conversation with a Swedish artist, he mentioned an artwork which had quite high production costs, due to its use of exclusive materials. The artist's agent had recently sold the artwork for what he thought was an extreme amount of money, partly because of the high production costs, and partly because the buyer was known to spend a lot on artworks:

It's pretty unusual to get this much for graffiti. Graffiti and street art needs other elements to increase in value. A work painted on cheap boards, no. There is a price limit for graffiti, but if I add this material aspect, I can raise the price.

(Conversation 44, field notes 2015).

The artist told me that he was proud of this sale. He thought that graffiti and street art would get a higher status because of the high price. He added, "And, if I succeeded, I know several others who will succeed too. Someone will think, 'Oh shit! Perhaps there's a market for me!'" (Conversation 44, field notes 2015). As shown by the accounts above on sizes, technique and prices, buyers, mediators and artists are influenced by pricing and comparable prices as much as by material aspects of the artworks when they negotiate prices. This rather successful artist also told me, however, that some of his artist friends just could not price their artworks according to the labor and production costs they had put into them:

I have friends who work on a piece for weeks and then sell it for 1500 SEK. "Don't do it!" I say, "You're worth more than that!" But they say that they can't get more than 1500, because their name is not that big: "This is my pricing, otherwise I won't get it sold at all".

(Conversation 44, field notes 2015)

Indeed, as was discussed in the previous section, pricing according to intrinsic qualities of the artwork is difficult for some artists, because the values that also matter for evaluation are the extrinsic values – symbolic and cultural – based on the artists' brand and reputation. It seems particularly difficult for new artists who have not exhibited much to set prices based on an hourly rate. Several gallery owners claim that artists who are exhibiting for the first time cannot expect high

prices on their artworks, also due to their lack of institutional recognition and reputation. The exchange value of the artworks is then directly linked to the biographies of the artists (Fine 2003). Hence, when evaluations are based on the artist's curriculum, or the dealers' own expertise, it is difficult to price "neophyte" artists (O'Neill 2008, Rodner and Thompson 2013), who have not exhibited much. A gallery owner told me:

Many artists believe it is the number of hours spent on a piece of work, but it is the number of previous exhibitions. I don't give a damn about the hours you've worked, sorry, if no one knows who you are, if you have never exhibited... that will determine the pricing.

(Interview 1, recording 2014)

A gallery owner in Paris had a similar opinion:

Guy, you just arrived, what do you think you are? You're a beginner, you can't do that, it is not fair to the collectors, to the other artists. Take it easy.

(Interview 21, recording 2015)

Evaluating further means that the negotiation of prices of artworks also depends on whether the artists' previous artworks have been sold in the auction markets or not. Auction prices may serve as a benchmark for pricing artworks (Joy and Sherry 2003), a traditional art phenomenon discussed as the "barometer of value" of artworks (Velthuis 2005, 2011). The auction houses, which are generally defined as a secondary market, are in fact sometimes part of the primary market for artworks, meaning the first time an artwork is exchanged in a market (see p.72 in chapter five on mediators). The auction house prices are registered at Artprice, and become – to a greater extent than previous sales prices at galleries – reference prices. Previous sales of products valorize future prices of products (Hagberg and Kjellberg 2014). A French artist told me that the auction price is important to get because "it gives you a *code*" (Conversation 13, field notes 2015), which is a note of the monetary value of an artist's works. The artist also told me that it happens that friends of the artists – and sometimes their agents or galleries – bid on their artworks in auctions, in order to get a high code (or to sustain a high code, Preece et al. 2016, Velthuis 2011), which is an ethically questionable tactic known as "ramping" (MacNeill and Wilson-Anastasios 2014). If the friend gives the highest bid and wins the auction, for example 1000 euros, then this price becomes the code for this artist's future works. Price references such as the information on Artprice thus influence future pricing practices. Moreover, the reference to the artist's previous auction lots enhances and legitimizes the artwork's canonical position in art history and in the oeuvre of the artist (Pardo-Guerra 2011).

When calculating prices, extrinsic reference also entails comparisons with other artworks by comparable artists. As was shown in the previous chapter on classification, categories serve as a basis for judgments of aesthetic value and price. Artists must position themselves within the art markets in order to have their works valued. The artworks in a category have shared criteria based on which the evaluations can be made (Khair and Wadhvani 2010). When artworks by new artists with no price references at Artprice are valued at auction houses, it is common to start with the artists' cheaper works, such as lithographs:

Lithographs are a great gateway to auction sales. Many recorded sales of lithographs lead to a stable pricing for that artist. Then, you can bring in the original works. But you shouldn't start with those.  
(Interview 35, recording 2018)

Pricing devices such as Artprice are thus composed both of extrinsic and intrinsic aspects, as it takes into consideration the prices on other, similar works, but compares them to the intrinsic qualities of the artwork to be priced. As was addressed in chapter six on objectification, the physical condition of artworks is obviously a valuating aspect. Whether a work is on canvas, sketch paper, wood panel or print, whether the artwork is damaged and/or repaired, as well as the framing equipment, the measurements and material of the paintings, influences the valuations.

In an interview, one of the managers at an auction house in Sweden, told me about a themed street art auction that they had organized, and in which had to deal with several issues related to the valuations. The auction manager claimed that they found it difficult to evaluate and set a starting price on the artworks by graffiti and street artists. First of all, the artworks' reference prices differed widely because some of the artists were international and established, and some were known only to the Swedish public, but more as graffiti and street artists than as commercial artists. Second, many of the Swedish artists had never sold at auctions before, and hence, they had no reference prices registered at Artprice. This made the prices of their artworks difficult to negotiate in relation to the artworks by the established artists. The international artists' artworks, however, were also difficult to evaluate, even though they had reference prices. The auction manager told me:

We look at Artprice when we estimate prices. But it is not always easy to relate to the winning prices if the artworks have been sold in the US or in France at specific street art auction houses. They have a different price level that is difficult to reach in Sweden. And we are supposed to estimate what people *here* are willing to pay.  
(Interview 9, recording 2014)

Due to the mix of both Swedish and international artists at the sale, there was a broad spectrum of prices on the artworks. In addition, the fact that graffiti and street art is a new category at Swedish auctions was reflected in the bidding, according to the auction manager. The potential buyers at this auction were not regular art auction buyers and hence not used to the practices of bidding: “It wasn’t our traditional clientele, really. The buyers were perhaps not used to how the bidding process works, for example, about the timing and the closing of an auction” (Interview 9, recording 2014). Hence, although art auctions are sometimes claimed to constitute a “democratic” market setting because they cannot exclude potential buyers from buying (Velthuis 2011), they are far from accessible to everyone in terms of the tacit knowledge that is usually required.

As this account of the themed street art auction showed, price negotiations are further influenced by aspects such as the national (Velthuis 2005) and local (O’Neill 2008) setting in which the artwork is to be exchanged. Price calculations based on previous sales are suddenly not so simple, as the transnational street art auction discussed above showed. International artists who come to Sweden to exhibit must adapt to the Swedish conditions and consider in their calculations, the potential buyers’ willingness to pay. A Swedish gallery owner told me:

With street art and graffiti, you can’t have the same pricing as in France, for instance. We try to say that to all artists, “Come on, you’re in Sweden, you need to decrease your prices<sup>2</sup>.”

(Interview 6, recording 2014)

Two French artists that I talked to said that they found the national differences in pricing problematic. They were participating in a group show at a Swedish gallery and they were not familiar with the market in Sweden. They knew it was a “new” market, however, so they had to set low prices. But, at the same time, they must relate to their French and international prices. They could not become too cheap; they must compromise. This issue of international artists who sell their work adapted to local prices, may lead to situations where the artist or the local mediator runs the risk of insulting these artists’ foreign collectors if they find out that they could have purchased works at a lower price in another country (Velthuis 2005). One of the artists said that they had done the pricing together in their group so that they were on an equal level. In addition to this transnational pricing issue, however, a US artist who exhibited in Sweden told me that he not only experienced national differences between prices, but also between different neighborhoods in New York, where he worked:

I’m selling in different galleries in different areas that have different clientele. If I show works in a gallery in Williamsburg, a photograph will be 400 dollars. And then a gallery in Chelsea would want 1400.

(Conversation 43, field notes 2015)

This chapter on valuation has discussed valorizing, which contributes to producing the intrinsic and extrinsic values related to materials, size, aesthetics, labor hours, reputation, brand, and stories about artworks and artists. The chapter has also discussed how these multiple values are evaluated in the negotiations and calculations involved in creating monetary exchange values: the artworks' prices. In the next section follows a summary of this chapter.

## **Summing up valuation:**

### **legitimacy and authenticity aspects**

Continuing the pragmatist tradition in the studies of valuations, this chapter has discussed the valuation of graffiti and street artworks in making them ready for market exchange. Valuation thus contributes to the exchangification process by generating exchange values on artworks. The artworks are valued both through valorizing, which produces multiple values, and through evaluation, which calculates the exchange value (the price). The discussions in this chapter illustrate that valuations in art markets are not only concerned with monetary worth, but also with cultural, symbolical, moral, material and aesthetic values. What matters for exchangification, however, is how these multiple values are transformed into prices. These multiple values are negotiated with the aim of striving for authenticity on the one hand, and for legitimacy on the other, when exchangifying artworks.

More specifically, valuation consists of: 1) intrinsic valorizing, 2) extrinsic valorizing, and 3) evaluating. *Intrinsic valorizing* means that the artworks are valorized through intrinsic aspects that focus on the materials and techniques, size, aesthetic elements, and labor hours involved in the artwork. *Extrinsic valorizing* means that the artwork is valorized based on aspects which focus on the creation of the reputation and brand of the artist, the story making around the artwork and the artist, and references to other artists and art history. *Evaluating* means that the exchange value (the price) of an artwork is calculated based on the multiple values that the artwork is composed of through valorizing. In addition, when negotiating prices, evaluating also takes into consideration the potential buyers, the mediator, and previous prices on artworks. Valuation hence entails that the price is determined through negotiations and calculations involving a range of pricing actors and devices. Moreover, whereas intrinsic valorizing mainly focuses on aspects of the *artwork*, extrinsic valorizing mainly focuses on aspects of the *artist*.

Artworks to be exchanged made by graffiti and street artists are difficult to value in monetary terms almost by default. Within the market category of graffiti and street art, the artworks appear in different forms, there are various buyer groups, and thus the prices cannot be determined according to a single price mechanism.

The graffiti and street art market products consist of a broad range of artworks: from rather mass-produced, cheaper artworks (sometimes defined as “merchandise”), to sketches, to canvases and larger murals. The aspects that influence valuations thus differ depending on whether the artwork is a mural or a mobile. Obviously, they are valued differently partly depending on who is valuating. For someone outside the graffiti and street art culture, the mobiles may be valued more highly because they appear more legitimate in line with other contemporary artworks. For members of the graffiti and street art culture, however, the murals may be valued more highly because they resemble the unsanctioned artworks to a greater extent and thus appear more authentic. The element that unites the variety of artworks is often the association with the streets. Important aspects for the pricing of graffiti and street artworks are thus the subcultural background of the artist, as well as conventional art market activities used to calculate prices at galleries, auctions and public institutions.

A reason for people’s insecurity and unfamiliarity in pricing graffiti and street art is that these artworks are a relatively new product in both private and public art settings. As has been discussed above, there is still a knowledge gap about these artworks. This lack of knowledge is mostly found among the potential high spenders and collectors whom the artists and market mediators aim to target. The educational efforts discussed in this chapter are hence a way for artists and mediators to increase potential buyers’ knowledge in order to increase their perception of value of the artworks and the artists. These efforts, through lectures, workshops, magazines and live performances, help both to legitimize and authenticate the artworks. For example, as street art and (particularly) graffiti are perceived historically as illegitimate vandalism, the educational activities legitimize the artworks by emphasizing the cultural, symbolical, material and aesthetic values of the art forms. The educational efforts that contribute to teaching potential buyers about the historical background to graffiti and street art and discuss the social and political aspects of the art form, help at the same time to authenticate the artworks by connecting them back to the subculture. These educational activities are conducted in order to produce values on artworks that the potential buyers should appreciate.

The attempts at authenticity and legitimacy is also shown also in the pricing of artworks. Regarding mobiles, the gallery owners as well as the artists argue that they need to cater to different buyers. Artists thus purposely produce artworks in various media, sizes and techniques in order to be able to offer various prices. The valuations are thus embedded in the complexity of the target groups, as artists aim to attract a wide spectrum of buyers: both the young fans and the experienced collectors. Artists and gallery owners agree that there should always be some cheaper work for the younger or less affluent fan groups or first time buyers who are not used to buying art, but are approaching the art markets through their interest in the graffiti and street art scene. As mass-produced mobiles are more

reminiscent of commodities, however, in physical terms at least, these artworks are more likely to make the artist be perceived as a sell-out. Nevertheless, due to the common perception that public graffiti and street art is supposed to “be free”, many artists strive to set low prices on these artworks in order to maintain some of that authentic, subcultural ideal of democratic art that is available for all. The question of who the buyers are and their purchasing power and abilities, thus matters in the negotiations. While they try to keep prices low to maintain authenticity, however, artists get legitimacy by achieving higher prices at auction sales, and thus appearing attractive to art investors. As was shown in this chapter, higher prices on artworks sometimes appeal to buyers because they estimate the intrinsic value of the artwork to be higher. Hence, there is also the valuating aspect, whereby prices themselves valorize artworks and legitimizes the artist in the established art market.

The mediators at galleries and auction houses use similar means and devices in order to value artworks to be exchanged. They use Artprice as a reference device to set a price on artists’ artworks. This auction “code” thus affects the pricing in galleries as well. Coming back to the use of educational activities, both galleries and auction houses are aware of educational efforts in order to raise the value of artworks. At the same time as the artworks are getting ready to be exchanged through valuations, these efforts generate academic legitimacy for these art forms. The greater legitimacy of street art makes it easier to valorize these objects as tradeable market products. Pricing strategies thus involve the delicate balancing of making the artworks appear less like commodities (market illegitimate but authentic) by retaining their values (social, cultural, aesthetic) other than economic, even though they are exchanged to become market products (market legitimate but non-authentic).

In addition to mobiles, graffiti and street artists are also paid to do mural artworks commissioned by festival organizers. These murals, however, are often produced with low (or no) monetary exchange values. The payment is low because symbolic values are given priority. The reputation from being exposed at festivals increases the artist’s brand, which later may valorize the artist’s mobile artworks in monetary terms. This issue of symbolic values rather than monetary exchange values on public murals brings to the fore the discussion on street art versus public art classifications. This debate is significant in relation to legitimization, as public art is considered more legitimate than graffiti and street art, and hence affects the professionalization of the artists who produce these artworks. Not only do the classifications fall into different permission categories, as the objectification chapter showed, but they also lead to different compensations for the artists. The unpaid work should not only be understood as promotion and exposure in value increasing terms, however, but also as a consequence that graffiti *should not* be paid for. Hence, for the same reason that commercially successful artists still choose to price some of their mobile artworks symbolically low, the unpaid murals are



sometimes also related to the credibility of being an authentic graffiti and street artist.

Apart from festival murals, artists are also paid to do privately funded murals as site-specific design missions. Mural commissions are usually priced either per square meter or per hours worked. The hours that the artists estimate they will spend on a commissioned wall may result in a price that is based on a combination of their labor (material value) and reputation (symbolic value). In addition, the hourly rate may differ depending on the commissioner. Sometimes the artists know that the client is a successful corporation who usually spends large amounts of money on art. Hence, they may propose a much higher price that they believe corresponds to the client's purchasing power. The hourly rate obviously has extrinsic aspects, because more well-branded artists may valorize their labor hours more highly and thus set higher prices than beginner artists. The value of labor hours thus involves both intrinsic and extrinsic aspects.

### **Getting ready for the exchangification process**

With this chapter on valuation, the three main practices of the exchangification process have been discussed. It has been shown that valuation, objectification and classification are interrelated and often influence each other in individual situations. As the findings in these chapters show, the objectification of an artwork also partly involves its valuation, as well as its classification. It has further been discussed how each of these practices is involved with the issue of negotiating legitimacy and authenticity. In the next chapter, the overall exchangification process will be further elaborated and the conclusions of this research will be presented.

## 9 The exchangeification process

In this chapter, I will demonstrate how the thesis has achieved its purpose and how it answers the research question. The chapter will continue the discussion from the previous chapters and elaborate on how the issues of authenticity and legitimacy are negotiated in the exchangeification process, through objectification, classification and valuation. Towards the end of the chapter, I will summarize the conclusions. I will explain how the exchangeification process relates to and contributes to previous research on the commodification of art. Finally, I will close the book by suggesting future research endeavors in the areas of commodification and art markets.

The purposes of this thesis have been twofold. First, in order to gain more knowledge on how the tensions between art and commerce are managed in contemporary art markets, the purpose has been to explore how artworks are transformed into art market products. Second, in order to provide analytical tools for future research on the commodification of art, the aim has been to create a theoretical framework and models that help us understand this process. To achieve these purposes, the study has explored markets of graffiti and street art – art forms that traditionally resist commodification and which are perceived as anti-commercial, ephemeral and illegitimate. In these markets, the double concerns of authenticity and legitimacy are constantly present (Bengtzen 2014, Lombard 2013, Riggle 2010, Stewart 1988, Wells 2015).

The following research question has been proposed: *how are graffiti and street art being transformed into exchangeable art market products?*

Graffiti and street art are transformed into art market products through the exchangeification process, which consists of objectification, classification and valuation. When artworks are exchangeified, aspects of legitimacy and authenticity are negotiated. In the following sections, the different parts of the exchangeification process will be elaborated further.

### **Objectification**

Objectification is mainly concerned with the production of the artwork. It makes the artwork ownable and transferable between owners. As shown in chapter six, objectification takes place through *domesticating*, *art-tributing* and *authorizing*, which materializes the qualities of ownership. As subcultural graffiti and street art are traditionally ephemeral, unsanctioned and site-specific, the production of artworks needs to adapt to the conditions of ownership, which depend on the potential buyer. The ownership qualities are adjusted to private households, workplaces of organizations, or public space.

Domesticating entails that artworks are produced in order to stay permanently in privately and publicly owned environments. This means that mobile artworks are produced on canvas, as screen prints or on other mobile media that resemble more conventional fine artworks. It also means that the artworks are produced in a size that fits private households, as opposed to the traditionally large murals in public space. Similarly, they may be produced with durable materials, as opposed to the ephemerality that characterizes unsanctioned public artworks. Domesticating also entails the physical framing of artworks, in order to make them convenient for buyers to hang in their homes after purchase. Moreover, domesticating often means that the artworks are produced based on requests from the buyer, which is usually the case with private mural commissions. In these situations, the buyer may request that the artist produces the mural on a specific wall, with specific measurements and with a specific color scheme and motif. The buyer sometimes ask for sketches that give a hint of the final mural. On some occasions, such as when a mediator manages the commission, the buyer may also request a specific artist, which best corresponds to the buyer's preferences, to produce the mural.

Art-tributing entails that the artworks are produced or presented using artifacts and attributes which pay tribute to the subcultural graffiti and street art. This practice also materializes the artworks' ownable qualities, but uses or associates with artifacts that are taken from the streets, rather than imitating conventional fine art. Artifacts could be flat objects, such as cardboards, tarpaulins and subway maps, but also more sculptural mobile objects, such as paving stones and road signs. Another example of art-tributing is the objectification of sketches. A sketch is usually an artifact associated with the artist's subcultural production, as it may either be produced as a piece of paper where the artist practiced techniques, or as an actual guiding sketch for a site-specific mural. It thus pays tribute to the graffiti and street art subcultures, while at the same time its small, mobile format makes it convenient to objectify.

Authorizing means that actors with an authoritative mandate formally approve the ownable qualities and the transferability of ownership of an artwork. The authorizing actors can be the artists themselves, the mediators, or external actors, such as public authorities. Authorizing regards the signing of contracts between commissioners and artists, the granting of building permits to produce public murals and the certificates of authenticity attached to certain artworks, approved by artists or artists' agencies. In particular, building permits are a recurring authorizing practice for graffiti and street artists who produce public murals. They are needed, for example, for the mural artworks produced at public street art festivals. Moreover, the authorizing of public graffiti and street art murals also means that the artworks are approved as legitimate art forms, which has not always been the case as a result of harsh implementations of zero tolerance policies. The authenticating certificates attached to specific mobile artworks work

to authorize both the copyright of the artist, as well as the rights to sell the artwork, and hence, to transfer the ownership.

## **Classification**

Classification is concerned with representing the artworks as market products, and arranging them in different categories of market products. This categorization helps to communicate to potential buyers that the artworks are exchangeable. Classification is two-dimensional. First, categories are defined and represented in relation to each other. Second, the artworks are placed in categories in order to be transformed into market products. Moreover, whereas objectification focuses on the ownability of the artwork, classification focuses on the representation of the artist. Classification is constituted by *differentiating*, *category making* and *fluxing*.

Differentiating entails emphasizing differences between artworks and between art categories in order to represent artworks as market products, which indirectly means that similarities between categories are also recognized. Similar to positioning strategies, differentiating focuses on what the categories *are*, but more on what the categories *are not*. For example, to some artists, it is important to claim that they are not street artists, but contemporary artists, or vice versa. Likewise, it may be important to represent artists as street artists, and not graffiti artists, which to some are equivalent to vandals. An important aspect of differentiating, however, is the guiding principle that many of the informants agree on: the commercial artworks, the market products for sale, *are not* graffiti or street art. According to this principle (which is not always followed in practice, however), “graffiti and street art market products” are an oxymoron. Moreover, in order to authenticate as well as to legitimize the art forms, differentiating strives to emphasize the position of graffiti and street art in art history. Similarly, many of the art market actors strive to differentiate themselves as being in a unique position in relation to the other actors. For example, in comparison to other projects, gallery owners and festival organizers often try to represent their projects as the first, the most “pure”, the most unique or the biggest.

Category making means constructing a new product category – urban art – into which graffiti and street art can be classified as market products. This means that the artworks are represented as novel products in already existing art markets. The making of a new category stems from the need to differentiate and position what the market products are (when they apparently are not graffiti and street art, according to the principle). In contrast to differentiating, which emphasizes differences, however, category making rather focuses on the similar characteristics among artworks that form a category. Urban art (or urban contemporary art) is a definition that many actors use in order to represent commercial graffiti and street art as a new product category. Urban art embraces exchangeable artworks created by artists with a graffiti and street art background. Hence, urban artists are artists who create unsanctioned graffiti and street artworks in public space *as well as*

sanctioned and commercial artworks for sale. The benefit of the category of urban art is that it enables a discussion around these artworks for sale, as it avoids the assumed oxymoron of graffiti and street art market products. In addition, the word “urban” is associated with public space, which facilitates the sense making of the new category.

Fluxing means adjusting the classification to specific situations of exchangeability. In order to make artworks exchangeable, there is a movement – a flux – in the representation between the various definitions and categories of graffiti and street art. Fluxing enables adjustment to the category that best serves the exchanging situation, i.e. selecting in which category it makes most sense to classify an artwork. For example, in some situations, artists may prefer to call themselves graffiti artists, if they exhibit at a gallery that is specialized in graffiti and street artists. On other occasions, it may work better for them to define themselves as contemporary urban artists, for instance, if it regards artworks that are to be sold at an auction house. Hence, the fluxing is possible because of the differentiating and category making. Fluxing cannot work alone. It requires categories to be made and differentiated from each other in order to allow for fluxing between categories.

## **Valuation**

Valuation entails producing values (intrinsic and extrinsic valorizing) of artworks and of artists, and calculating the exchange value (evaluating) of artworks, in order to make them exchangeable in art markets. Exchange values regard both the prices set on mobile artworks, and the payments to artists for their mural artworks. The exchange values are calculated based on multiple aspects of values, which could be cultural, symbolical, moral, aesthetic, and production-related. Valuation is constituted by *intrinsic valorizing*, *extrinsic valorizing* and *evaluating*.

Intrinsic valorizing means that the values of the artworks are produced through intrinsic guiding rules, which mainly relate to material and production-related qualities of the artwork, such as size, media, motif, technique, and labor hours, that is, the hours involved in producing the artwork. Intrinsic valorizing contributes to producing the material and aesthetic values of artworks. The valorizing of these intrinsic aspects, however, is possible only if the buyers know that these production-related qualities matter for the exchange value of the artwork. Hence, valorizing to a great extent consists of educational activities, where potential buyers get the chance to learn about these intrinsic aspects. Potential buyers are often ignorant about the spray can skills that graffiti artists have developed over years of practice, what materials and devices they use apart from spray cans, and how they have learned to translate the craft of producing public pieces to private canvases. For example, to educate potential buyers, workshops are held, where participants may try to paint with spray cans or sketch

their names on paper, in order to make them understand the level of skills and technique that professional artists have acquired.

Extrinsic valorizing means that the values of the artworks are produced mainly through extrinsic qualities and references, such as the creation of the artist's reputation and brand, and the references to similar artists. Extrinsic valorizing contributes to producing symbolic, cultural and moral values. The valorizing aspects of reputation and brand depend not only on the artists, but also on the mediators and potential buyers of their artworks. This means that exposure through unpaid work at festivals and certain galleries, as well as unsanctioned exposure in public space, may enhance the artist's reputation and thus the exchange values of their artworks. As with the valorizing of intrinsic aspects, however, educational efforts are also used to produce extrinsic values. These activities focus more on the artists' backgrounds and the history of the subculture, than on the techniques of the art form. For example, gallery owners organize lectures given by artists in connection with exhibitions, and auction houses provide artist biographies on their websites.

Evaluating entails that the pricing actors involved negotiate, calculate and determine the monetary exchange value from the multiple values that have been produced through valorizing. This means that the price is negotiated with regards to material, aesthetic, cultural, symbolic, and moral values. For example, the size, media and labor hours of an artwork are material values that are taken into consideration when calculating prices. But the cultural value of the artist's brand is also part of calculation. Hence, both the artwork and the artist are the focus of evaluating. In addition to these multiple values, the artist, the mediator, the potential buyer, and references to previous prices on similar artworks, participate in evaluating the exchange value. Reference prices on secondary sales of artworks are usually set at auction houses, but galleries and artists also use these prices when they price an artwork for its primary sale. The potential buyers partake in calculations of prices, both directly in terms of commissioners, but also indirectly as artists and mediators aim to cater to the various groups of buyers. Hence, prices are set low on cheap artworks such as prints or "merchandise", which target younger and less affluent fans, while they are set high on large original canvases or commissioned murals, which target more wealthy buyers and collectors.

To summarize, objectification, classification and valuation constitute the exchangification process. These main groups of practices consist of nine sub-practices, which are more or less involved when artworks are transformed into exchangeable market products. As shown, these practices both authenticate and legitimize the artwork.

## **Legitimacy and authenticity**

Each of the nine sub-practices that constitute the exchangification process, works either (or both) to authenticate and legitimize the artwork as it is transformed into a market product. As shown in the previous chapters, some sub-practices more clearly contribute to legitimizing the artwork as a market product, whereas some rather contribute to authenticating the artwork. For example, by framing the artworks in conventional picture frames and *passee-partouts*, domesticating is an effort that legitimizes graffiti and street art as legitimate artworks for sale in conventional art market settings, such as galleries or auctions. Similarly, authorizing also contributes to legitimacy, as the COAs attached to mobiles, or the applications for building permits for public murals, legitimizes the graffiti and street artworks so that they can become ownable. The legitimacy of new categories is built partly through authoritative devices within the market into which the new products are about to enter (Khaire and Wadhvani 2010). By being framed or applied for, domesticating and authorizing thus imply rather non-authentic conditions for graffiti and street art. Art-tributing, on the other hand, contributes to authenticating the artworks by using artifacts from the streets in the production of mobiles, and paying tribute to the subculture. Art-tributing is a more common practice for mobiles than for mural production. Given the material aspects of a commissioned mural, such as the large measurements, the site-specificity and the public exposure, murals resemble unsanctioned graffiti and street art and thus sustain authenticity in that aspect.

Sometimes both authenticity and legitimacy are achieved through the same practice, such as the category making of the new product “urban art”. The new term strives to avoid the assumed oxymoron of “graffiti and street art market”, a term that could decrease the authenticity of the artwork – and the artist – due to its associations with commodification. However, by avoiding the words “graffiti” or “street art”, it further contributes to detaching the artworks from subcultural practices, which could be associated with vandalism. Hence, by representing artworks as “urban art”, artists and mediators appear legitimate as actors in the contemporary art worlds, and artists differentiate their commercial work from their subcultural work in order to sustain authenticity within their subcultural communities. The artworks are thus classified in order to gain legitimacy and associate with the established categories of contemporary art, but they are at the same time classified in order to communicate what “kind of art” it is all about, thus retaining their connection with the graffiti and street art worlds.

The educational activities that are part of intrinsic and extrinsic valorizing also contribute to both legitimizing and authenticating the artworks and the artists. Many of the art collectors and potential buyers lack sufficient knowledge about graffiti and street art to be able to appreciate the value of the artworks. Some of the educational efforts emphasize the subcultural background of these artists, which authenticates the artworks, whereas some emphasize the professionalism

of the artists, which legitimizes the artworks. Evaluating also involves both authenticating and legitimizing efforts. Some artworks are priced low in order to stay close to the subcultural ideal of producing artworks without profit, to which everyone has access in public space. At the same time, other artworks (by the same artist) are priced high, in order to attract potential buyers who perceive expensive artworks as being more legitimate as market products.

### **Interrelated practices**

As the findings show, objectification, classification and valuation are interrelated practices and are not isolated from each other. Although they have been categorized to allow us to examine their conceptual characteristics, they are interrelated and not easily distinguished in practical situations. In order to objectify an artwork, consideration is also given to how the artwork will be classified and how it will be valued. In order to classify an artwork, one also pays attention to how it is produced. In addition, certain categories will affect valuations. Thus, in order to value an artwork, one needs to consider material aspects as well as how it relates to other categories of artworks. Moreover, as is mentioned above, although the chapters are organized in a certain order, the exchangeification process is not always conducted in a chronological or linear way. There is a general difference between murals and mobiles, however. In the case of mobiles, objectification usually precedes valuation due to the order in which production and pricing occurs. On the other hand, in the case of murals, valuation usually precedes objectification due to the order of production and pricing. Hence, whereas mobiles usually are produced *before* they are priced – pre-production – murals are usually produced *after* being priced – post-production. Aspects of production thus affect in what order the artwork is objectified, classified and valued, and whether some practices may take place simultaneously. Regarding mobiles, the gallery owners as well as the artists argue that they need to cater to different consumers. Artists thus purposely produce artworks in various media, size and techniques in order to be able to offer various prices.

An objectifying practice that relates to valuation is the spray can technique and the media that are involved in the materialization of mobile artworks. The artistic skills, the media (for example canvas or screen prints) and the material arrangements for hanging the artwork on a wall are objectifying features that will be valued by consumers when they are standing in front of the artwork in a sales situation. Moreover, as the mobile format is similar to that of conventional collectable artworks, such as paintings and prints, the objectification contributes to helping potential buyers making sense of and to classify the graffiti and street artworks that are being exchangeified as market products. In particular, the category making of “urban art” becomes a sense-making practice. The potential buyer knows that urban art has something to do with subcultural graffiti or street art, while it does not appear as illegitimate as graffiti “vandalism”, as it is presented as a canvas in a gallery setting or auction setting. Moreover, artists with strong



brands become representatives for a whole movement, and as such, other artists become legitimized due to the successful categorizing of an already legitimized artist (Preece et al. 2016). The practice of simply referring to the famous artist Banksy becomes a classifying device to make sense of what kind of artists this market is about, as Banksy is known both for street artworks and exchanged artworks.

Objectification, classification and valuation have several aspects and conditions in common. They are all affected by the potential buyer, the mediator, and what specific type of artwork is about to be exchanged, whether it is a mobile or a mural. Due to the multiple actors involved in exchange, the practices are also the results of pragmatic negotiations. Other aspects that influence all three practices are the traditional perception (often materialized through zero tolerance policies) of graffiti and street art as illegitimate art forms, as well as the fact that graffiti and street art is a relatively new product category of artworks in contemporary art markets.

There are certainly differences between the practices as well. Objectification is easily separated into the sub-practice that mainly contributes to authenticity (attributing) and the sub-practices that mainly contribute to legitimacy (domesticating and authorizing). In situations of classification and valuation, the contributions to legitimacy and authenticity are more integrated in all sub-practices. Another difference revealed in these three chapters, is the different focus of these practices on either the artwork or the artist. Objectification mainly focuses on the artwork, in order to make it exchanged. Classification, by contrast, mainly (but not solely) focuses on the artist, in order to exchange the artwork. Valuation focuses both on the values of the artist as well as the values of the artworks, in order to make the artwork exchanged. Moreover, in the transformation of the artwork into a market product, objectification sometimes has a more visible “before and after” effect than classification and valuation. Objectification often implies a clearly distinguishable change in the exchange process, due to the necessary new materialization of the artwork, which is a more stabilized change than those involved in classifications and valuations.

It is stressed in previous literature that mainstream marketing practices are not always applicable to the production of artworks because artists do not bring forth products in response to the desires or interests of consumers (Hirschman 1983, Preece and Bida 2017). Instead, it is claimed that artists produce artworks rather to achieve self-fulfillment through the creative process (Schacter 2008). While this claim may be observed in many other situations, it is often the exact opposite in the exchange of graffiti and street art mobiles. The mobile work is certainly part of the creative process and artistic development, but for many artists, it is also due to the desires of the buyer: they cannot buy the artist’s unsanctioned

pieces; hence, the artists often create mobile artworks that can more easily be purchased for display in private households.

Moreover, as mass-produced mobiles are more reminiscent of commodity goods, in physical terms at least, these artworks are more likely to lead to the artist being perceived as a sell-out in subcultural settings. Public murals are accessible and can be consumed by a larger number of people, and not only in private households. For that reason, the exchangification of mobiles might be more associated with the perception of the artist as a sell-out, than the exchangification of the murals, because in murals the medium, in a material sense, stays the same.

Regarding the aspects of legitimacy and authenticity, objectification and valuation imply greater tensions between the drive to appear legitimate and the drive to appear authentic, than do classification. Making artworks ownable and giving them prices seem to contradict the characteristics of subcultural graffiti and street art, more than defining an artwork as “urban art”, for instance. The exchangification thus partly tries to imitate established art market practices: numbering, framing, pricing, segmenting, and adapting paintings to various measurements, which means they resemble the commercial practices found in galleries and auction houses. These practices contribute to legitimizing graffiti and street art as a contemporary fine art form that it is possible to exchange in a market. However, the exchangification also contributes to maintaining authenticity with regard to subcultural graffiti and street art. These practices are disclosed in the use of artifacts and tropes in the production, in categorizing the commercial artworks as urban art (while the artists may be categorized as graffiti and street artists), and in setting low prices to avoid the perception of being a sell-out. As valuations of art are traditionally subject to tensions and competing values (Preece and Bida 2017, Ten Eyck 2016, Wells 2015), the pricing of art must be legitimized (Velthuis 2005) without the artworks losing their authenticity (Fine 2003). The exchangification of traditionally anti-commercial graffiti and street art emphasizes this legitimacy issue of pricing: the artworks must find legitimation as being tradable in market terms, that is, as objects that are even exposed to pricing (Beckert and Aspers 2011), recalling Zelizer’s work on moral valuation (1979, 2004).

The model below (Figure 6, p.182) illustrates the process of exchangification.

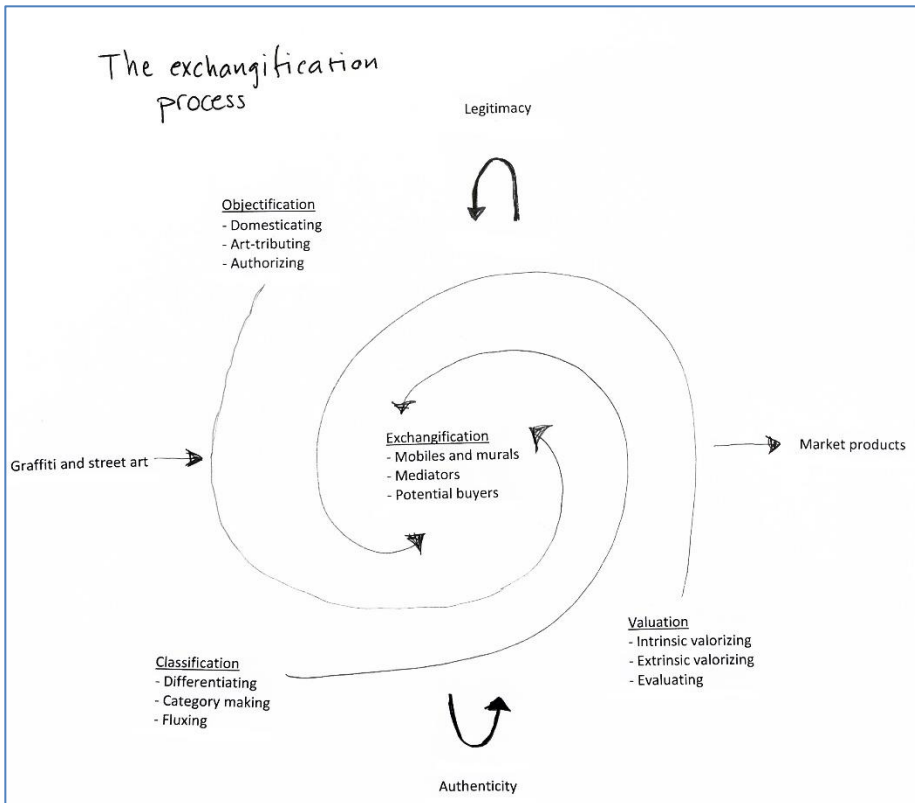


Figure 6. The exchangefication process

The model shows how graffiti and street art (art forms, artistic ideas, artists) enter the process (the arrow on the left) and get involved with the interrelated practices of objectification, classification and valuation. Through these exchangefying practices, the process consists of a gradual transformation of the artwork, which is influenced by whether it is a mobile or a mural, and who the mediator and the potential buyer are. The artworks are shaped in such a way that they can be attached to various potential buyers, which are generalized into five groups: the public or private organizations, the traditional art collectors, the typical middle-aged buyers, the subcultural fans and the occasional buyers. The vertical arrows above and below the model that strive towards authenticity and towards legitimacy and then back to the process, illustrate how these aspects are involved in and influence the exchangefication. The process strives both to gain legitimacy (Beckert and Aspers 2011, Dar and Schultz Nybacka 2017, Joy and Sherry 2003, Preece 2014, Rodner and Thompson 2013, Schroeder 2005, 2010, Velthuis 2005), and to maintain authenticity within the artists' former world and subcultural context (Bengtsen 2014, Beverland et al. 2010, Fine 2003, Hietanen and Rokka 2015, Karpik 2010, Preece 2014, Wells 2015). The outcomes of this process,

through which graffiti and street artworks have been exchanged (the arrow on the right), are market products.

Perhaps paradoxically, the exchange process is enabled through the market products' connection to the non-exchanged artworks. The ambition of selling artworks in art markets leads to a conflict between the aim for legitimacy and the aim for authenticity (Fine 2003): a non-exchanged artwork is seen as an authentic creation, but is not a legitimate market product. The exchanged artworks are seen as non-authentic but are legitimized as market products. This also pinpoints the role of the graffiti and street artist as being a professional with one foot in each world: the illegitimate and the legitimate. The market products and the unsanctioned artworks are hence detached from the artist and re-attached to the artist at the same time (Callon 1998). This dual state can be understood as when an artwork is exchanged "it is only partially decontextualized, dissociated, detached and disentangled from its maker" (Velthuis 2005:45). In the exchange process, this is explained in relation to the aspects of authenticity and legitimacy. The artwork becomes detached from the artist and legitimized as a market product, but the practices by which the artwork is authenticated enable it to re-attach with the artist.

Below follows a discussion on how the exchange framework relates and contributes to the previous literature on the commodification of art, which has addressed the key aspects of negotiating legitimacy (Dar and Schultz Nybacka 2017, Joy and Sherry 2003, Preece and Bida 2017, Rodner and Thompson 2013, Velthuis 2005) on the one hand, and authenticity (Beverland et al. 2010, Fine 2003, Hietanen and Rokka 2015, Karpik 2010, Preece 2014, Preece et al. 2016, Wells 2015) on the other hand.

## **Negotiating Authenticity and Legitimacy**

Connecting to the previous debates on the commodification of art, and to what has been shown in previous chapters, the practices of exchange largely regard issues of authenticity and legitimacy. The detachment of the artwork from the seller and the attachment of the artwork to the buyer (Callon 1998) is a legitimizing aspect, whereas its re-attachment to the artist is an authenticating aspect. Market (legitimizing) activities may be enriched by non-market (authenticating) activities (Sjögren and Helgesson 2007).

When graffiti and street art, which are traditionally perceived as a democratization of art – inherently political and usually illegal – is transferred onto canvas and sold in galleries or auctions, the works' political and social values in some ways diminish (Preece and Bida 2017). The practices through which street art is transferred into relatively affordable artworks, such as screen prints, help to maintain the democratic aspects that characterize graffiti and street art (Dickens

2010). The collecting of inexpensive art, like the cheaper graffiti and street artworks, is valid for the consumer's satisfaction, but does not add to the creation of value for art in the art world (Rodner and Thompson 2013). However, the inexpensive works, which attract subcultural fans of graffiti and street art, are still seen as creators of value for the artworks, as the gallery owners and artists perceive these potential buyers as future collectors. Some artists price their artworks very cheaply, not only to attract the young fans with low spending power, but also to "stay authentic" to the original unsanctioned artworks, which do not have a sales price at all. Thus, this type of exchangification is not aimed at attracting *all* consumers to this object that is relatively new in the art market, but the *right* consumers. "Mass-produced" cheap artworks may decrease the authenticity of the individual works (Adorno 1935/1973, Fine 2003), but at the same time makes them more accessible to buyers. Hence, the more "democratic", the more authentic, even as commodities. Free work and low prices could be understood as practices of resisting market legitimation and the growth of an artist (Hietanen and Rokka 2015), but they are nevertheless exchangifying as they are aimed at attracting young potential buyers.

Many of the artists, however, make sharp distinctions between the artworks they produce for gallery shows, the commissioned artworks they do at festivals, and the unsanctioned and illegal artworks. This distinction mainly concerns their own artistic practices in the production and aesthetics of the different artworks, and also how they use either their real names or their graffiti aliases. The practice of sometimes doing unpaid artworks, and producing graffiti and street art without being compensated directly, is a way for the artists to sustain their authenticity in the subculture, while at the same time being aware that the unpaid jobs may also lead to paid commissions. However, these commercial activities can support the artists' non-exchangified artistic work, such as artists who produce profitable mobiles in order to do other work without payment, such as festivals.

As opposed to mainstream commodity and retail markets, exchangification in art markets and other markets for cultural goods strives to repress the commodity status of the things being exchanged (Hietanen and Rokka 2015, Velthuis 2005). At auctions, the commodity character of artworks becomes explicit: "no attempt is made to separate art and commerce in the architecture of the auction house" (Velthuis 2005:88). The art appraisers' use of historical databases, however, associates artworks with their previous owners, which builds provenance and contextualizes the artworks historically (Pardo-Guerra 2011), and is a core practice of artistic legitimization. Graffiti and street artworks also become entangled with history in their exchangification, but as a means for attaining authenticity (e.g. Sotheybys 2018). The exchangified artworks are not only entangled in the historical narratives of the artists, the subculture or previous owners, however, but also in the materials of the street. Seeing as the artwork that is exchangified is far from its authentic non-market object state, the aspect of

authenticity needs to be maintained and represented to a greater extent by the artist, who can keep a foot in each world, the business world and the art world/subculture. However, the artist and the artworks also need to depart from authenticity (i.e. illegitimate and unsanctioned art practices) in order to be considered legitimate in the art market.

As has been claimed previously, it is important to define what sort of legitimacy is at stake in art markets, as there is both market legitimacy and artist legitimacy (Dar and Schultz Nybacka 2017). In this graffiti and street art study, artistic legitimacy is often equated to market legitimacy. For many graffiti and street artists, being considered a legitimate artist entails having success in art markets. The greater legitimacy of graffiti and street art makes it easier to valorize these objects in terms of tradeable market products (Beckert and Aspers 2011). As has been discussed above, however, the issues of legitimacy and authenticity are hence interdependent. The conditions of the subcultural production of the artworks authenticates the artists, and legitimize the status of the artworks as exchangeable market objects (Fine 2003), and here too graffiti and street art are perceived differently. It is stressed that graffiti artists are able to maintain a greater subcultural allegiance than street artists, due to their earlier careers as “taggers”, which signal authenticity and hence valorize their commercial production (Merrill 2015).

One could assume that being involved with the commercial and institutionalized art world implies the status of legitimacy for most contemporary artists, but being commercial and institutionalized is just as much considered to be an illegitimate practice by members of the street art world (Bengtson 2014), which may matter just as much for the careers of graffiti and street artists. Legitimacy, both within the subculture and within the art market, builds on the artist’s ability to balance the aspect of authenticity. Authenticity is needed in order to be considered legitimate as an artist in the contemporary fine art world, which thus eventually makes the artist appear authentic in the art market (Fine 2003, Preece et al. 2016). Hence, for graffiti and street artists, authenticity is needed in order to be considered legitimate as artists in the subculture, which makes them appear authentic in the art market.

The artist’s legitimacy in the exchangeable market of graffiti and street art, however, is not only about artistic versus market legitimacy (which could be equated rather to authenticity versus legitimacy), but is often positioned in the dichotomy as either art or vandalism (Kimvall 2014). On the one hand is the legitimacy dimension of subculture versus art market; on the other hand is the legitimacy dimension of artistic practices versus vandalism. Experts and critics, and other authorizing art world actors, must legitimize graffiti and street artworks as artworks (and not vandalism), in order to be accepted in the art world. The transformation of graffiti and street art into art market products hence involves a

re-negotiation of the illegitimate (Webb et al. 2009). The educational activities discussed in the valuation chapter are examples of this negotiation, which contribute to both legitimizing and authenticating the art practices, the artworks and the artists. These artworks and artists are thus situated in a balancing act between what is informally perceived as legitimate and what is formally regarded as illegal production (Webb et al. 2009). Previous literature has identified a risk that if all graffiti were to be sanctioned, it would *de*legitimize and neutralize the values of the subculture (Kimvall, interviewed in Jacobsson 2000, Preece and Bida 2017, Stewart 1988), which emphasizes the contradictions of authenticity and legitimacy embedded in art markets.

Let's revisit the screen print by Bates (Figure 2) that was discussed in the introduction as well as in chapters five and six. As a tag that was spray painted on a wall within a short time period, it has an air of authenticity attached to it; it becomes an authentic piece of work, associated with the subculture. However, in order to sell the tag, it has to be objectified according to the properties of ownership. The tag thus needs to be permanent and framed, for example in a passe-partout and behind glass, in order to be ownable and able to be transferred between the artist and the potential buyer. However, the objectified art print alone cannot reach the moment in the process where it becomes an exchange object. Before that moment can happen, art collectors need to learn more about graffiti and street art, i.e., they need to learn more about the stages in the progress of an artwork when it is even farther away from being exchangeable. It needs to be closer to its authentic subcultural stage – the point of being non-exchangeable graffiti or street art. When these potential buyers have acquired more knowledge about graffiti and street art, such as techniques, the cultural history of the art form and its place in the art historical canon, they can also make sense of this new art product, and thus become attached to graffiti and street art as legitimate artworks. Due to this attachment, graffiti and street art can thus be valued and detached from their non-market artwork stage, and transformed into their exchanged market product stage.

It is not an entirely new object that is formed in this transformation. It is formed using entities from the previous subcultural network, such as the tag and the artist, and with new entities such as the frames and the price. What unfolds is a network of exchanging elements, which need to connect to the authenticity of graffiti and street art, as well as to legitimate market features, such as permanence, exchange values and product categories, in order for the artworks to be transformed into market products.

The efforts towards authenticity and legitimacy are illustrated in the Authenticating and Legitimizing of Art (ALA) model (Figure 7, p.187).

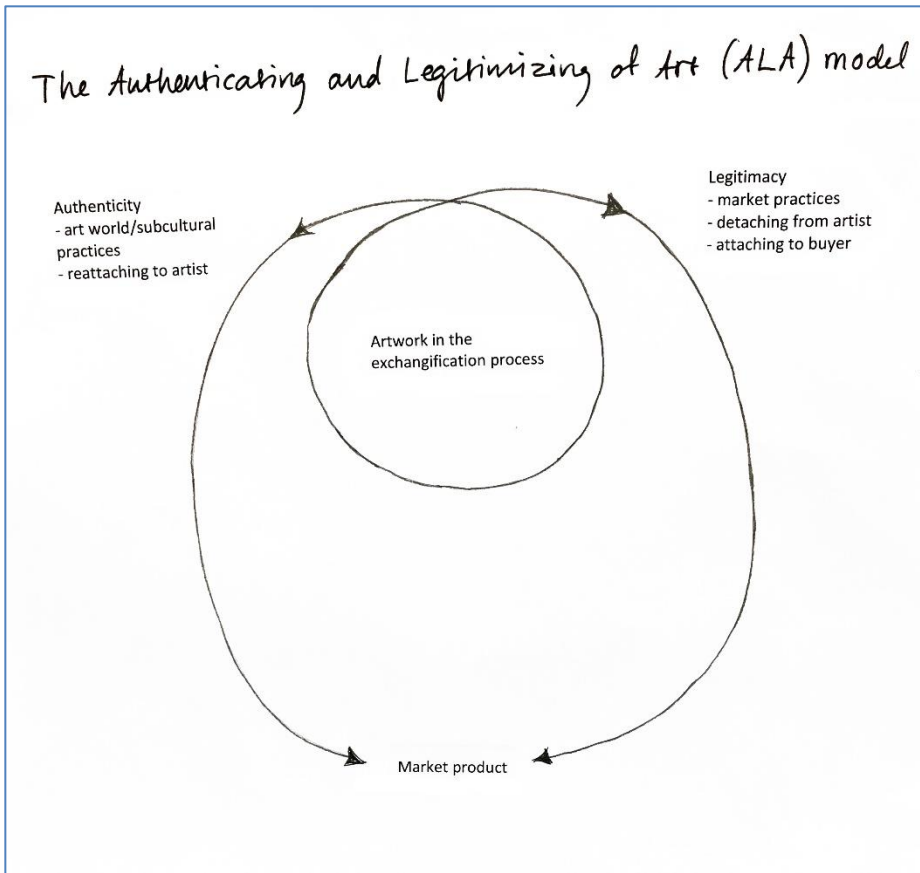


Figure 7. The ALA model

The middle of the model – artwork in the exchangeification process – illustrates the situation where an artwork is about to be exchangeified. The arrow on the right leading towards “market product” illustrates how the aim for market legitimacy is involved in exchangeification. The arrow on the left leading towards “market product” illustrates how the link to the authentic “raw material” – the subcultures of graffiti and street art – is maintained. Indeed, it is a necessary link in order to exchangeify the artworks into market products, in order for them not to appear as mere commodities, but also as cultural goods (Velthuis 2005).

This thesis shows that the exchangeification process does not imply that artists reject their artistic authenticity and integrity just because they produce market products; instead, it shows how they pragmatically negotiate authenticating and legitimating efforts in order to keep a foot in each world: the art market and the subculture. Previous research has discussed how authenticity is negotiated in the controversial marketization of subcultures through market-shaping and market-



restricting practices (Hietanen and Rokka 2015). Similarly, it has been stressed how legitimacy is gained through various aspects of the art world (Preece et al. 2016, Rodner and Thompson 2013). By focusing on how both dimensions of authenticity and legitimacy are negotiated in a particular phase of the commodification movement, where the artworks become exchangeable, this thesis provides tools that help to explain how commodification is made possible.

### **Exchangification – a phase in the commodification of art**

This thesis has explored a specific phase in the commodification of art, a phenomenon that must inevitably be addressed when theorizing on art today, as argued in previous research (Pardo-Guerra 2011, Velthuis 2005, Wood 1996/2003). Art market products are of a particular type, which deviates from conventional goods and services, addressed for example by Adorno (1935/1973), Beckert and Aspers (2011), Dekker (2015), Hanspal (2012), Karpik (2010), Wikberg (2017), and Williams and Zelizer (2005). As opposed to other producing actors in conventional commodity markets, artists are in general uncomfortable with, and sometimes hostile to, what they perceive as market practices (Forkert 2013). The thesis has thus also shown that the commodification of art is significantly different from other conventional markets because it is not only the object – the artwork – that is being commodified, but also the producer – the artist – as has been highlighted previously (Kerrigan et al. 2011, Preece 2014).

The discussion on the commodification of art has predominantly debated whether the commodification of art is to be considered good or bad for the art, the artists, and the society (Dekker 2015, Williams and Zelizer 2005, Wood 1996/2003). This discussion is still important. What has been addressed as a significant gap in the existing literature on the commodification of art, however, is an examination of the process of *how* artworks are made ready for market exchange (Pardo-Guerra 2011). This thesis has provided this examination. Drawing on the debates in previous art market literature, this thesis has focused on two less explored aspects regarding the commodification phenomenon. First, it has focused on the process, or the phase, through which an artwork becomes a market product (commodity), which has not been clearly described in previous literature (Appadurai 1986, Kopytoff 1986, Pardo-Guerra 2011, Velthuis 2005). This process regards the question of where to draw a line between artworks and artworks *that are also market products*, as it has been argued that artworks move in and out of the commodity sphere (Kopytoff 1986). Second, the thesis has focused on how the aspect of legitimacy, which has previously been discussed as a key aspect of art markets (Dar and Schultz Nybacka 2017, Joy and Sherry 2003, Preece 2014, Rodner and Thompson 2013, Schroeder 2005, 2010, Velthuis 2005), is negotiated and balanced with the aspect of authenticity, which is also a debated aspect in previous research (Beverland et al. 2010, Fine 2003, Hietanen and Rokka 2015, Karpik 2010, Preece 2014, Wells 2015).

In this thesis, it has been shown that exchangification constitutes a phase in the commodification process, which has previously been defined as a situation of “commodity candidacy”, in which the criteria of being exchangeable are defined (Appadurai 1986, Kopytoff 1986). The exchangification framework makes this commodity candidacy situation specific, by explaining what practices are involved when graffiti and street art are transformed into exchangeable market products. The exchangification process contributes to a conceptual theorization of where the line is drawn between non-commodified artworks that are just artworks, and artworks that have also become market products, but have not yet been exchanged.

The exchangification process draws on the conceptual distinction suggested in Appadurai (1986) and in Callon et al. (2002) between a thing and a market product, where the thing is seen as a process and the market product as a stabilized moment in that process. These previous conceptualizations of the transformation of market products, however, do not clearly separate the phase before the exchange moment from the overall process of a product’s life, including the singularization (when a market product has been exchanged and enters the world of the buyer). The exchangification process conceptualize this phase, which entails the phase in which the artwork becomes exchangified before it is exchanged.

The exchangification process is thus described as a phase in the larger commodification process. The figure below (Figure 8, p.190) illustrates how exchangification complements the process of commodification and the notion of singularization (Appadurai 1986, Callon and Muniesa 2005, Callon et al. 2002, Kopytoff 1986).

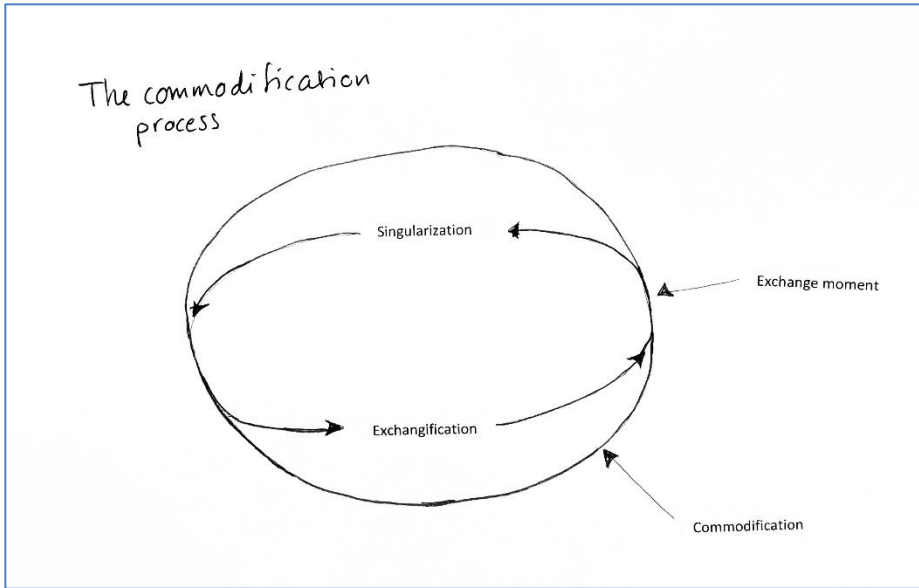


Figure 8. *The commodification process*

According to Appadurai (1986) and Kopytoff (1986), the total trajectory of the commodification includes exchange, distribution and consumption. With this thesis, I propose that also exchangification is included in this trajectory. The model illustrates how artworks transform into market products during the phase of exchangification. When it has become exchangified, the market product enters “Commodification” – the commodity sphere (Appadurai 1986, Kopytoff 1986) – in waiting for the exchange moment. When the market product becomes exchanged, it leaves the commodity sphere and enters the phase of being a non-commodity, which is defined as the singularization phase (Callon and Muniesca 2005, Kopytoff 1986). If the artwork is about to be made ready for market exchange again, it re-enters the process of exchangification. An artwork does not become a market product, or commodity, in the moment it is exchanged, as has been suggested previously (Kopytoff 1986, Velthuis 2005, Wood 1996/2003). The artwork needs to be a market product *before* it can be exchanged.

This study of the process of exchangifying artworks thus contributes to the commodification literature by explaining the commodity candidacy (Appadurai 1986) of artworks, which means the phase in the artworks’ life when they become exchangified – which means able to be exchanged in markets – but before they are exchanged. In the commodification of art literature, commodification is often equated to the establishment of exchange value (Appadurai 1986, Kopytoff 1986, Velthuis 2005, Williams and Zelizer 2005, Wood 1996/2003). This thesis further contributes to this literature by focusing on how art commodification also involves the production of ownership qualities, which means that the artworks

are objectified, and their representation in market categories, which means that the artworks are classified.

## **Conclusions and final reflections**

In the introduction of this thesis, I posed the research question of how graffiti and street art are transformed into exchangeable market products. This transformation is a process of exchangeification, enabled by objectification, classification and valuation. These practices are required in order for artworks to get ready for market exchange. Non-objectified, non-classified and non-valuated artworks would be difficult to exchange. The outcome of exchangeification is thus products which are ready to be exchanged in markets.

The exchangeifying practices, to a greater or lesser extent, contribute to either legitimizing or authenticating the artworks as they are becoming market products. Authenticity and legitimacy are sometimes achieved in opposition to each other, meaning that tensions arise, and sometimes they reinforce each other in the process leading towards exchangeification. It becomes clear that the exchangeification of graffiti and street art is to a great extent about a constant negotiation of attaching and detaching between the illegal, unsanctioned and authentic artworks of graffiti and street art, and the legitimate, sanctioned and exchangeable market products. There needs to be a connection with the non-exchangeable art in order to produce exchangeable artworks that appear authentic, but the connection cannot be too strong, as the exchangeable artworks may appear too illegitimate and less tradeable as market products. In order to exchangeify, one needs to take into consideration both the legitimization within the commercial and established art market and also the maintenance of authenticity within the subculture. This negotiation is thus bi-directional. It contributes to

- legitimacy: exchangeifying graffiti and street artworks by detaching subcultural characteristics and attaching conventional art market qualities.
- authenticity: exchangeifying graffiti and street art by re-attaching subcultural characteristics.

As earlier examples from modern art history show, making artworks into exchangeable objects does not happen without criticism and has often been the result of provocative acts (Belk 2014, Joy and Sherry 2003, Preece and Kerrigan 2015, Schroeder 2005, 2010, Velthuis 2011, Wood 1996/2003). Some of the particularities of graffiti and street art, such as ephemerality, immobility, and unsanctioned features, are shared with other contemporary forms of art, for instance, performances, happenings and installations (Belk 2014, Blanché 2018, Preece and Bida 2017). With this thesis, I bring new knowledge about the phenomenon of contemporary art commodification to the arts marketing

literature, which has been called for previously (Fillis 2011, O'Reilly and Kerrigan 2010). The study has produced new insights on how art markets operate, and what constitutes the specific process of art commodification in order to produce exchange products, which has been particularly identified as a significant lack in existing research (Pardo-Guerra 2013, Preece and Bida 2017). This phase has previously been defined but not specified as commodity candidacy of an object, but with this thesis, it now has a more substantial definition: the process of exchangification.

### ***Contributions and future research suggestions***

This thesis has resulted in theoretical, empirical and methodological contributions. First, the process of the exchangification of art contributes to the commodification of art theorizing by explaining the phase in the commodification when artworks become exchangified – which means able to be exchanged in markets – but before they are exchanged. This has previously been defined as a situation of “commodity candidacy” (Appadurai 1986, Kopytoff 1986), but until now it has not been specified what this candidacy entails in art markets. The thesis has further contributed with a new term that defines this process: exchangification. The exchangification process contributes to a conceptual understanding of where the line is drawn between non-commodified artworks that are just artworks, and artworks that have become market products. These theoretical models will be useful for future research studying commodification – in art markets as well as in other markets where there is a resistance against commodification.

Second, this thesis further contributes to arts marketing literature by explaining that art commodification involves more aspects than just valuations, which has been the dominant focus in the previous literature (Appadurai 1986, Koerner and Rausing 2003, Kopytoff 1986, Rodner and Thompson 2013, Velthuis 2005, Wells 2015, Wood 1996/2003). This study on exchangification has demonstrated that the production of ownership attributes, which concerns objectification, and the representation in market categories, which concerns classification, are of equal importance for the commodification of art. In addition, authenticity and legitimacy have mainly been discussed previously as related to valuations of artworks and artists (Karpik 2010, Preece 2014, Preece and Bida 2017, Wells 2015). The exchangification process shows that objectification and classification also contribute to authenticity and legitimacy, while it also shows how these aspects are negotiated in relation to each other, and not as separate concerns.

Third, previous research in the market studies literature points to a paucity of empirical studies on performativity and market practices in settings other than financial and everyday markets, and calls for studies on other types of markets that may extend the theorization of market practices (Callon and Muniesa 2005,

Diedrich et al. 2013, Kjellberg and Helgesson 2007, Kjellberg et al. 2012). Based on rich empirical material, this thesis on the exchangification of art contributes to diversifying the existing literature on market practices. Moreover, the ethnographic work in art market settings that this thesis has pursued, further contributes with valuable insights in an area which is known for being secretive and mysterious to outsiders (MacNeill and Wilson-Anastasios 2014, Philips 2015, Preece and Bida 2017, Preece et al. 2016, Vetlthuis 2005).

Fourth, with the methodological approach of flat ontology and the studying of actions (Latour 2005), it has been possible to observe the practices through which an artwork is transformed to fit economic markets, which involve human actors such as artists and politicians, as well as nonhuman actors, such as spray cans and building permit applications. The symmetrical attention to human and nonhuman objects, which this approach advocates, is particularly well suited for an exploration of art worlds, as it is claimed that they consist of multiple actors (Becker 1982, Becker et al. 2006, Dominguez Rubio and Silva 2013, Kerrigan et al. 2009, Larsen and Dennis 2015, Strandvad 2012). This approach contributes to the discussion on the interplay of artistic practices and business practices and thus nuances the dichotomized view of art versus business. Hence, the theoretical and methodological perspective of constructivist and pragmatist market studies contributes to arts marketing literature through the explicit attention to material agency: the performative power of the nonhuman objects so prominently present in art settings.

Finally, future research possibilities have been identified. The exchangification framework is useful for understanding commodification processes in fine art markets, and was developed for the purposes of this specific study on graffiti and street art. I suggest that the concept of exchangification serves purposes of future research as well. For instance, the production processes in art markets have received less attention in previous studies on art markets, than have valuations and prices. The materiality of the production process is an important aspect regarding the objectification of artworks – also for artworks that are seemingly intangible or immobile, such as performance art, digital art and installation works. As this study has shown, the production process is greatly involved in the commodification of art, and also affects valuation and classification. Focusing on the concrete production of artworks is hence a great possibility for future research to continue to explore aspects of art markets and art commodification. In addition, the exchangification process, as outlined here, can provide understanding about other markets filled with tensions between legitimacy and authenticity, for instance, in the tourism sector (Cohen 2002, Macleod 2006).

Another future research possibility that I would like to address, and which has not received the attention it deserves in this thesis, is the gender aspect. During fieldwork, most of the artists I met were male, and so were the collectors. Among

mediators, such as gallery owners and auction staff, both men and women were fairly equally represented. Although most artists in *my* study were men, however, this does not necessarily imply that men are more successful in their artistic careers. In fact, some of the women artists with whom I tried (but failed) to book interviews, were simply too busy doing professional artistic jobs. Without drawing any conclusions from this experience, an investigation on exchangeification practices and gender issues would contribute significantly to the arts marketing research. How is gender played out in the process of exchangeifying artworks? Are the practices gendered? Following previous research on this topic (e.g. Flisbäck 2013, Miller 2016), future research using a feminist perspective could provide answers to these questions and disclose potential gender inequalities in artistic work.

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1: interviews

Interview	Position	Place	Length (min)	Device	Date	Country
1	Swedish artist, gallery owner	restaurant	50	iPhone	10-06-2014	Sweden
2	Danish artist	studio, gallery, bus	120	notebook	03-10-2014	Sweden
3	Swedish collector	home	70	iPhone	20-10-2014	Sweden
4	Swedish gallery owner	gallery	90	iPhone	21-10-2014	Sweden
5	Swedish artist	telephone interview	45	iPad	29-10-2014	Sweden
6	Swedish gallery owner	restaurant	100	iPhone, iPad	10-11-2014	Sweden
7	Swedish gallery staff	gallery	30	iPhone, iPad	13-11-2014	Sweden
8	Swedish collector	restaurant	70	iPad	13-11-2014	Sweden
9	Swedish auction house manager	office room	110	iPhone, iPad	14-11-2014	Sweden
10	Swedish supply store and gallery owner	office room	90	iPhone, iPad	05-12-2014	Sweden
11	US artist	gallery	70	iPhone, iPad	05-12-2014	Sweden
12	Swedish artist	café	180	iPhone, iPad	06-12-2014	Sweden
13	Swedish gallery owner	office room	90	iPhone, iPad	08-12-2014	Sweden
14	Swedish gallery owner	office room	90	iPhone, iPad	08-12-2014	Sweden
15	Swedish artist	studio	100	iPhone, iPad	19-01-2015	Sweden
16	representative, graffiti association	restaurant	110	iPhone, iPad	27-01-2015	Sweden
17	Swedish artist	gallery	70	iPhone	20-02-2015	Sweden
18	festival director,	café	120	iPhone, iPad	27-02-2015	Sweden

Interview	Position	Place	Length (min)	Device	Date	Country
	former artist agent					
19	festival director, former gallery owner	café	120	iPhone, iPad	27-02-2015	Sweden
20	gallery assistant	gallery	20	notebook	25-03-2015	France
21	gallery director	gallery	80	iPhone	26-03-2015	France
22	festival curator, artist	office room	50	iPhone, iPad	13-04-2015	Sweden
23	festival project manager	office room	50	iPhone, iPad	13-04-2015	Sweden
24	art exhibition manager	restaurant	40	iPhone, iPad	15-04-2015	Sweden
25	cultural attache	telephone interview	30	iPad	22-04-2015	Sweden
26	Swedish artist	telephone interview	30	iPad	23-04-2015	Sweden
27	curator modern art, auction house	meeting room	50	iPhone, iPad	24-04-2015	Sweden
28	gallery owner	telephone interview	50	iPad	24-04-2015	Sweden
29	supply store owner	telephone interview	20	iPad	28-04-2015	Sweden
30	Swedish artist	telephone interview	20	iPad	05-05-2015	Sweden
31	artist	gallery	25	iPhone	09-05-2015	Sweden
32	publisher	office room	100	iPhone	25-08-2015	Sweden
33	publishing coordinator	office room	25	iPhone	25-08-2015	Sweden
34	public art gallery director	office room	60	iPhone	26-10-2015	Sweden
35	art auction appraiser	café	120	iPhone	09-11-2018	Sweden

## Appendix 2: observations

Observation	Activity	Place	Length (min)	Device	Date	Country
1	on-participant observation of artists and gallery staff working in gallery, chatting with visitors and staff	gallery 1	45	notebook	24-09-2014	Sweden
2	Non-participant observation of gallery staff working in gallery, meeting customers, sales, rearranging artworks, wall-spotting in neighborhood	gallery 1, streets close to gallery	90	notebook	25-09-2014	Sweden
3	Non-participant observation of artists and gallery staff working in gallery, chatting with visitors and staff	gallery 1	30	notebook	27-09-2014	Sweden
4	Non-participant observation of party and live music at the gallery, chatting with visitors and staff	gallery 1	240	notebook, iPhone	10-10-2014	Sweden



Observation	Activity	Place	Length (min)	Device	Date	Country
5	Non-participant observation of live mural painting, chatting with artist	Outside mini grocery store	20	iPhone	10-10-2014	Sweden
6	Non-participant observation of exhibition opening, chatting with staff, artist and visitors	gallery 1	50	iPhone	15-10-2014	Sweden
7	Participant observation of preparing exhibition opening, meeting artist at airport, private event at gallery	gallery 1	180	notebook, iPhone	06-11-2014	Sweden
8	Non-participant observation of exhibition opening	gallery 2	60	notebook	08-11-2014	Sweden
9	Participant observation of preparations exhibition opening (cleaning, pricing), customer preview, chatting with visitors and staff	gallery 1	240	notebook, iPhone	29-11-2014	Sweden

Observation	Activity	Place	Length (min)	Device	Date	Country
10	Non-participant observation of preparations exhibitions opening, chatting with artist and staff	gallery 2	60	notebook, iPhone	04-12-2014	Sweden
11	Non-participant observation of exhibition opening, chatting with staff, artist and visitors	gallery 2	180	notebook, iPhone	06-12-2014	Sweden
12	Non-participant observation of staff working in exhibition space, back office, storage	gallery 3	45	notebook	08-12-2014	Sweden
13	Artist's work-in-progress in studio, observation related to interview	artist's studio	60	notebook	19-01-2015	Sweden
14	Non-participant observation, chatting with visitors	Public debate on zero tolerance policy against graffiti	80	notebook	26-01-2015	Sweden
15	Non-participant observation of studios, chatting with art students	art school	60	notebook	27-01-2015	Sweden

Observation	Activity	Place	Length (min)	Device	Date	Country
16	Participant observation of artist preparing works in gallery/studio, administration	gallery 1	120	notebook	05-02-2015	Sweden
17	Non-participant observation of artist creating sanctioned public mural before exhibition, chatting with staff, street art consumers	gallery 1/ public wall	120	iPhone	06-02-2015	Sweden
18	Participant observation of handing out flyers (about exhibition opening) with gallery owner	city streets, stores	60	notebook, iPhone	05-03-2015	Sweden
19	Participant observation of handing out flyers (about exhibition opening) on my own	city streets, stores	40	iPhone	06-03-2015	Sweden
20	Non-participant observation of exhibition opening, chatting with staff and visitors	gallery 1	60	notebook, iPhone	07-03-2015	Sweden

Observation	Activity	Place	Length (min)	Device	Date	Country
21	Non-participant observation of (and chatting with) two artists doing unsanctioned graffiti, buying cans and caps	Streets, stores and cafés	55	notebook, iPhone	24-03-2015	France
22	Non-participant observation of exhibition, chatting with staff, artist and visitors	gallery 4	90	notebook, iPhone	25-03-2015	France
23	Non-participant observation of preparations exhibition opening, finishing artworks, chatting with artists, owner and visitors	gallery 5	120	notebook, iPhone, iPad	25-03-2015	France
24	Observations in connection to interview	gallery 6	60	notebook, iPhone	26-03-2015	France
25	Non-participant observation of art fair and chatting with exhibitors of galleries and magazines	art fair	60	notebook	26-03-2015	France

Observation	Activity	Place	Length (min)	Device	Date	Country
26	Participant observation of preparations exhibition opening (hanging, pricing), chatting with staff, artists, visitors	gallery 2	180	notebook, iPhone, iPad	27-03-2015	Sweden
27	Non-participant observation of preparations exhibition opening, exhibition opening, chatting with staff, artists, visitors	gallery 2	420	notebook, iPhone, iPad	28-03-2015	Sweden
28	Non-participant observation of live mural painting	graffiti area outside city	240	notebook, iPhone	29-03-2015	Sweden
29	Non-participant observation of meeting with festival project group	project meeting city festival	60	notebook	13-04-2015	Sweden
30	Non-participant observation of preparations graffiti festival	studio, public streets	60	notebook	16-04-2015	Sweden

Observation	Activity	Place	Length (min)	Device	Date	Country
31	Non-participant observation of preparations murals, live mural painting, sales of cans, chatting with artists, organizers, visitors	graffiti festival	480	notebook, iPhone	17-04-2015	Sweden
32	Non-participant observation of live mural painting, sales of cans, chatting with artists, organizers, visitors	graffiti festival	480	notebook, iPhone	18-05-2015	Sweden
33	Non-participant observation of live mural painting, sales of cans, chatting with artists, organizers, visitors	graffiti festival	300	notebook, iPhone	19-04-2015	Sweden
34	Non-participant observation of exhibition opening, chatting with staff, artist, visitors	gallery 1	180	notebook, iPhone	09-05-2015	Sweden

Observation	Activity	Place	Length (min)	Device	Date	Country
35	Non-participant observation of festival opening ceremony, chatting with staff and organizers	city festival	120	notebook, iPhone	04-09-2015	Sweden
36	Non-participant observation of guided tour of festival murals, chatting with guide, artists, visitors	city festival	300	notebook, iPhone	05-09-2015	Sweden
37	Non-participant observation of exhibition opening, chatting with curator, staff, artists and visitors	gallery 7	120	notebook, iPhone	05-09-2015	Sweden
38	Non-participant observation of graffiti workshop, chatting with publishers, staff, artists and visitors	book fair	300	notebook, iPhone	24-09-2015	Sweden
39	Non-participant observation of live mural painting	restaurant	90	iPhone	25-09-2015	Sweden

### Appendix 3: conversations

Conversation	Position	Place	Length (min)	Device	Date	Country
1	artist, curator	gallery 1	15	notebook	27-09-2014	Sweden
2	artist	outside mini grocery store	10	notebook	10-10-2014	Sweden
3	collector	telegphone call	10	notebook	24-10-2014	Sweden
4	artist	gallery 1	15	iPhone	06-11-2014	Sweden
5	consumer, street art blogger	gallery 1	5	notebook	29-11-2014	Sweden
6	artist	gallery 3	45	notebook	08-12-2014	Sweden
7	artist, curator	artist studio	10	notebook	19-01-2015	Sweden
8	artist	gallery 1/ public wall	20	notebook	06-02-2015	Sweden
9	consumer, street art blogger	public wall	10	notebook	06-02-2015	Sweden
10	gallery owner	gallery 1	10	notebook	07-03-2015	Sweden
11	artist	streets and cafés	30	notebook	24-03-2015	France
12	artist	streets and cafés	30	notebook	24-03-2015	France
13	artist	gallery 4	5	notebook	25-03-2015	France
14	photographer	gallery 4	5	notebook	25-03-2015	France
15	artist	gallery 5/ studio	5	notebook, iPhone, iPad	25-03-2015	France
16	exhibiting artist	gallery 5/ studio	15	notebook, iPhone, iPad	25-03-2015	France
17	gallery owner	gallery 5/ studio	5	notebook, iPhone, iPad	25-03-2015	France
18	artist	gallery 5/ studio	5	notebook, iPhone, iPad	25-03-2015	France



Conversation	Position	Place	Length (min)	Device	Date	Country
19	artist, assistant	gallery 5/ studio	10	notebook, iPhone, iPad	25-03- 2015	France
20	artist	gallery 5/ studio	15	notebook, iPhone, iPad	25-03- 2015	France
21	gallery staff	art fair	10	notebook	26-03- 2015	France
22	gallery staff	art fair	5	notebook	26-03- 2015	France
23	artist	gallery 2	5	notebook	28-03- 2015	Sweden
24	entrepreneur	graffiti festival	10	notebook, iPhone	17-04- 2015	Sweden
25	store owner	graffiti festival	10	notebook, iPhone	18-04- 2015	Sweden
26	sales assistant	graffiti festival	5	notebook, iPhone	18-04- 2015	Sweden
27	sales assistant	graffiti festival	5	notebook, iPhone	18-04- 2015	Sweden
28	artist/AD	graffiti festival	5	notebook, iPhone	18-04- 2015	Sweden
29	gallery owner	graffiti festival	15	notebook, iPhone	18-04- 2015	Sweden
30	artist	graffiti festival	10	notebook, iPhone	18-04- 2015	Sweden
31	publisher	graffiti festival	5	notebook, iPhone	19-04- 2015	Sweden
32	publishing coordinator	graffiti festival	5	notebook, iPhone	19-04- 2015	Sweden
33	artist	graffiti festival	20	notebook, iPhone	19-04- 2015	Sweden
34	artist	graffiti festival	15	notebook, iPhone	19-04- 2015	Sweden
35	organizer	graffiti festival	5	notebook, iPhone	19-04- 2015	Sweden
36	artist	graffiti festival	5	notebook, iPhone	19-04- 2015	Sweden

Conversation	Position	Place	Length (min)	Device	Date	Country
37	artist/AD	gallery 1	20	notebook, iPhone	09-05-2015	Sweden
38	gallery CFO	gallery 1	25	notebook, iPhone	09-05-2015	Sweden
39	director tourist office	city festival	5	notebook	03-09-2015	Sweden
40	curator, gallery owner	gallery 6	20	notebook	04-09-2015	Sweden
41	artist	gallery 6	15	notebook	04-09-2015	Sweden
42	curator, gallery owner	gallery 6	20	notebook	04-09-2015	Sweden
43	artist	gallery 6	30	notebook	04-09-2015	Sweden
44	artist	book fair	30	notebook	24-09-2015	Sweden
45	festival organizer	public lecture	10	notebook	27-04-2017	Sweden



## Appendix 4: archival material

Archival material	Media type	Date	Title/Author/ Publisher	Description
1	annual market report	2013	Contemporary art market 2011-2012. Artprice Annual Report/Artprice	Analysis of auction sales reported by Artprice during 2011/2012
2	municipal policy	2015	Policy mot klotter och liknande skadegörelse i Stockhol (Stockholm City's graffiti policy)/Stockholms stad	Policy declaring the municipal stance on graffiti and street art in Stockholm City
3	municipal policy	2014	Vägledning för gatukonst på kommunens ytor (Guidelines for street art on municipal spaces)/Trygg och vacker stad, Goteborg stad	Policy and guidelines for municipal civil servants on how to respond to commissioned and non-commissioned street art and graffiti, and applications to produce public street art
4	TV news report	2015	Omtvistade Fascinate officiellt K-märkt/SVT	News report on the Swedish graffiti mural from the 1980s and its new status as an officially listed building
5	movie	2010	Exit through the gift shop/Banksy	Film by the street artist Banksy on the complexities and paradoxes of street art, fame, commercialization

Archival material	Media type	Date	Title/Author/ Publisher	Description
6	movie	1983	Stylewars/ Silver and Chalfant	Documentary on the various graffiti styles that evolved in New York in the 1970s and 1980s
7	movie	2012	How to sell a Banksy/Thompson	Film discussing authenticity and the problematic practices of removing, restoring, marketing, valuing and selling a (Banksy) street artwork
8	website	2019	Artprice.com	Website that compiles, analyzes, categorizes and reports on art auction sales
9	website	2016	Urbanartroom.se	Website of the physical and online art gallery urban art room
10	book	2009	Seven days in the art world/Sarah Thornton	Ethnographic narrative about the seven main institutions constituting the art world
11	magazine article	2015	Gatans röster. Så tog graffitin sig in i finrummet/ Antik och auktion nr 3 mars/ Söderholm	Article in a Swedish magazine discussing graffiti and street art markets
12	book	2013	The world atlas of street art and graffiti/R. Schacter	Book aiming to cover the global street art and graffiti movements

Archival material	Media type	Date	Title/Author/ Publisher	Description
13	magazine article	2013	Konstperspektiv nr 1 februari/ Olofsson	Article in a Swedish magazine discussing graffiti and street art markets
14	magazine article	2013	Sveriges bästa graffitimålare/ Konstvärlden nr 5/ Nilsson	Article in a Swedish magazine discussing graffiti and street art markets
15	book	2010	Beyond the street: the 100 leading figures in urban art/Nguyen and MacKenzie	Book discussing the most influential actors in the urban art world
16	website article	2011	The urban art market at a glance/L. Meir	Article about urban art and quotes from an interview with Bonhams' urban art manager
17	magazine article	2013	Konstperspektiv nr 1 februari/ Kimvall	Article in a Swedish magazine discussing the history of graffiti and street art in Sweden
18	book	2012	Noll tolerans: kampen mot graffiti/Kimvall	Book discussing the zero tolerance policy on graffiti in Stockholm
19	journal article	2011	Art in the streets/Kimvall	Article in Journal of Art History discussing the exhibition "Art in the streets" at MoMA in LA 2011
20	book/ dissertation	1996	Den spraymålade bilden: graffitimåleriet som bildform, konströrelse och läroprocess/ Jacobson	Art history PhD thesis on graffiti

Archival material	Media type	Date	Title/Author/ Publisher	Description
21	book	2000	They call us vandals: Swedish graffiti/Jacobsson	Book that presents and discusses Swedish graffiti writers
22	book	2010	Sätta färg på staden: obeställd kreativitet i det offentliga rummet/Guwallius	Book discussing street art
23	art guide/ magazine	2014	The urban contemporary art guide 2014/ Graffiti Art Magazine	A guide to the most important international urban art actors in 2014, listed by the publishers Graffiti Art Magazine
24	book	1984	Subway Art/ Cooper and Chalfant	Documentary book about subway graffiti in New York
25	magazine article	2013	Notes on the commodification of street art/CDH	An article by the street artist CDH in Art Monthly Australia on the marketization of street art
26	book	1987	Spraycan Art/ Chalfant and Prigoff	Documenting street art and graffiti in New York
27	book/ dissertation	2014	The street art world/Bengtsen	PhD thesis on the social construction of the street art world
28	magazine article	2013	Gadekunsten og den komercielle kunstverden/ Konstperspektiv/	Article in a Swedish magazine on the exhibition "Art in

Archival material	Media type	Date	Title/Author/Publisher	Description
			Bengtson	the streets” at MoMA in LA 2011
29	book	2001	Taking the train: how graffiti art became an urban crisis in New York city/Austin	Book about graffiti in New York in the 1960s and 1970s.
30	several meeting minutes	2015	Decisions on rejections, Decisions on temporary building permits/[The City]	8 official meeting minutes on rejections/approvals of building permit applications for street art festival murals
31	website article	2017	Perspektiv på gatukonst/Fredrik Anthony	Interview about street art on the website of the Swedish auction house Bukowskis
32	sales catalogue	2015/2016	Uppdrag & tjänster/[Company name]	Information catalogue about the products and services provided by the company
33	several exhibition and gallery advertisements	2014	Galerie Mathgoth/ Street art gallery/ Tough cookie shop/ Espace Dalí	Advertisements for “street art”, “graffiti”, “urban art”, published in the Urban Contemporary Art Guide 2014
34	several exhibition and gallery advertisements	2014	Creteil Maison des arts/Fondation EDF/Espace Dalí/David Pluskwa/Maisons Folie	Advertisements for “street art”, “graffiti”, “urban art”, published in the Graffiti Art Magazine no 23
35	several exhibition folders	2016	Overground. Celebrating street art/Bredgade Kunsthandel	Folders about five of the six artists participating in the exhibition



Archival material	Media type	Date	Title/Author/Publisher	Description
36	price list	2016	Overground. Celebrating street art/Bredgade Kunsthandel	Price list for 33 artworks, priced between 2 800-62 000 DKK
37	festival catalogue	2014	Northern Light Graffiti./Ljusterö Konstmuseum	Catalogue about the festival
38	festival catalogue/report	2014	No Limit	Catalogue/report about the festival
39	several brand folders	n.d. retrieved 06-12-2014	Montana colors	Information about spray can products, color charts, sizes, etc.
40	brand folder	n.d. retrieved 18-04-2015	Loop colors	Information about spray can products, color charts, sizes
41	auction sales catalogue	2016	Made in urban: 10 years of street art/Artcurial	Information about the artworks on sale and about the artists
42	book	2008	Tag town/Martha Cooper/Dokument	Book about the evolution of New York graffiti writing 1963-1982
43	several Instagram posts	2014-2015	wallerygallery/urban artroom/greatbates / konstartxsthlm	Posts showing artworks for sale or sold artworks, with hashtags such as #streetart, #graffitiart, #urbanart
44	Information folder/map	2015	[Festival name]	Information about the artists and the festival, map over the festival area